

Legend of Mt Moumoukai

“MOUMOUKAI became the home of Rākaipaaka after he and his whānau were expelled from Tūranga following an incident involving Tūtekohe and his pet dog Kauerehuanui, in about 1630AD.”

“MOUMOUKAI, the ancestral mountain of the Rākaipaaka hapū of Ngāti Kahungunu, who live in and around the Ngā Nūhaka (commonly mispronounced as just Nūhaka) area, is an impressive mountain. Standing just over 600 metres high, it presents a formidable sight to the traveller on the Mōrere hill road, whether travelling to or from Gisborne.”

“Moumoukai literally means to “waste food”. According to one story (Whaanga), the name derives from an incident in 1824 when the mountain fortress came under attack from Pōmare and his musket-armed Ngāpuhi warriors from the north. It is said that despite the superior firepower of the attacking force, they could not breach the precipitous embankments of the pā, and neither did they succeed in trying to starve its occupants out. The hill-top pā, some 20 acres in size, had an abundance of food and was supplied with water from a spring. It was said too that an underground cavernous route enabled its occupants to travel secretly out of the pā to fishing grounds on the coast. Thus, it was the attackers who ran short of food. Adding insult to injury, the besieged Rākaipaaka people taunted and humiliated Pōmare and his warriors by throwing food at them as they retreated, hence the name, ‘to waste food’. The name Moumoukai is of recent origin and would not have been the name used in the time of Rākaipaaka. However, it was upon this mountain that Rākaipaaka established himself and exerted his control over the surrounding district.”

Walker, W. 2008,
Moumoukai and Ngati Rakaipaaka,
Nga Maunga Korero o Te Tairāwhiti series (17),
Gisborne Herald Newspaper, Gisborne

“After about a month Pomare admitted defeat and prepared to leave. However he learnt that a baby was about to be born in the pa and asked that it be named Pomare in honour of his retreat. There are few remains of this pa left because of erosion of the steep slopes.”

Pishief, E. 2002,
Super sites for education at Morere Springs Scenic Reserve,
Resource kit for teachers, East Coast Hawke's Bay Conservancy,
Department of Conservation, Gisborne