



(Royal, 2010)

Waikato tribes

War and its aftermath

The confiscation of Waikato land

The great calamity that befell the Waikato people in the 19th century was the confiscation of millions of acres of tribal territory after the Waikato war of the 1860s. The government wanted to obtain the fertile Waikato lands for Pākehā settlement, but the King movement, which was centred in Waikato, resisted the loss of land and control.

British and colonial forces crossed the Mangatāwhiri Stream on 12 July 1863. The stream, just north of Meremere, was established by King Tāwhiao as a boundary line (aukati) between land to the south controlled by the king, and land to north under government control. Tāwhiao had warned that should the British forces cross that boundary, war would ensue.

Troops pushed south into the Waikato region, engaging King movement forces in a series of battles at Koheroa, Rangiriri, Rangiaowhia and finally at Ōrākau, a pā just outside Kihikihi. Following that battle, the Waikato people were forced into exile in what became known as the King Country, and the Waikato lands were confiscated by the government.

Ōrākau

It was at the battle of Ōrākau (31 March–2 April 1864) that the famous declaration of defiance was uttered:

Ka whawhai tonu mātou, āke, āke!

We shall fight on forever!

Some attribute this cry to the great Ngāti Maniapoto leader Rewi Maniapoto, but there are different versions of what happened. In 1888 one of the veterans of the Ōrākau battle, Hitiri Te Paerata of Ngāti Te Kohera, was invited to give an account of the conflict at Parliament buildings. This was recorded and published. He said,

The General decided to send a summons calling upon us to surrender. ... Then up rose my sister, Ahumai, amongst the women, and said, 'If our husbands and brothers are to die of what profit is it to us that we should live? Let us die with the men.' Seeing that the women were all of one mind, then Hapurona, Rewi, and my father said, 'Ake, ake, ake [We will fight on for ever].'¹

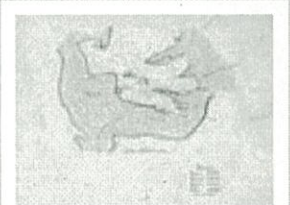
20th-century resurgence



Māori land ownership, 1860 (1st of 2)



Monument at Ōrākau



Site of the battle of Ōrākau (1st of 2)



Sir Robert Te Kotahi Mahuta

The revival of the Waikato people and the King movement began with the construction of Tūrangawaewae marae during the 1920s and 1930s. Attempts to secure proper compensation for the loss of land which had begun in the 19th century gained momentum from this time. Along with her brother, Sir Robert Mahuta, the late queen, Dame Te Ātairangikaahu, brought to conclusion the Waikato raupatu (confiscation) claim in 1995. A settlement delivered compensation for the 1860s confiscation of lands and an apology from the Crown.

The settlement of the claim in 1995 was a particularly significant event for Waikato people, as they secured a range of resources and economic assets. Older structures of the King movement remain in place, supplemented by initiatives such as Tainui Endowed College, a university graduate facility, and Raukura Hauora o Tainui, a major provider of health services.

Today, the Waikato people are vibrant and active, maintaining numerous marae throughout their region. A range of businesses and trusts oversee the tribes' assets.

Footnotes

1. Hiriti Te Paerata, *Description of the battle of Orakau*. New ed. Christchurch: Kiwi, 1999, pp. 8–9 (originally published 1888). › Back

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