

CHAPTER 2

NGA IWI ME NGA AWA O TE IKA WHENUA

2.1 IDENTITY

At the hearing of the energy assets claim in Rotorua, the claimants identified themselves and established their relationship to their rivers by whakapapa, whakatauki, and waiata. At the first hearing of this claim at Tipapa Marae, they expanded on this evidence in the customary way. This included a version of the whakatauki establishing the claimants' relationship to their rivers, which referred to the ancestor of the house in which we were sitting and not to the iwi as at Rotorua:

<i>Ko Tawhiuau te maunga</i>	<i>Tawhiuau is the mountain</i>
<i>Ko Rangitaiki te awa</i>	<i>Rangitaiki the river</i>
<i>Ko Tangiharuru te tangata</i>	<i>Tangiharuru is the person¹</i>

No one challenged the traditional evidence recited at Tipapa Marae.

2.2 ANCESTORS

In support of the present claim, evidence was presented on the history and tipuna relating to the various original land blocks in the claimant area.²

Much of this evidence came from *Kuranui-o Ngati Manawa*, a booklet compiled by the late Henry Tahawai Bird, a kaumatua of Ngati Manawa.³ This was supported by extracts from Opotiki and Whakatane minute books of the late nineteenth century recording whakapapa and other evidence given by Te Ika Whenua tipuna to establish their claims to blocks of land being put through the Native Land Court.⁴

According to these traditions, Te Ika Whenua people today generally claim descent from the original inhabitants of the upper reaches of the Rangitaiki Valley, as well as from those who came later and conquered them.⁵ The original inhabitants were the Marangaranga, descendents of Toi Kairakau, who preceded the arrival in the Bay of Plenty area of the Mataatua waka in about AD1350. Henry Bird wrote:

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1. Compare with Waitangi Tribunal, *Te Ika Whenua – Energy Assets Report 1993*, Wellington, Brooker and Friend Ltd, 1993, sec 2.1
 2. Document B4
 3. Henry Tahawai Bird, *Kuranui-o Ngati Manawa*, Rotorua, Rotorua Printers, 1980 (doc B4(c)(3))
 4. Document B4(b)
 5. Document B4, p 8



Figure 6: Tributaries and special places in Te Rohe o Ngati Manawa.
Map submitted by claimant counsel (doc A8(2)(a)).

The Marangaranga occupied the upper reaches of the Rangitaiki valley from Putauaki in the north the Hikurangi range to the east, the Kaingaroa plateau to the west and as far south as Runanga on the Napier–Taupo highway.⁶

The Marangaranga were conquered by Tangiharuru, who journeyed from Waikato to the Bay of Plenty with his uncle, Wharepakau, and invaded the Rangitaiki Valley.

At the junction of the Rangitaiki and Whirinaki, Tangiharuru and his uncle divided their forces. Tangiharuru led one force up the Rangitaiki and met very little resistance. Wharepakau led the other force up the Whirinaki and was sternly opposed.

At Hinamoki, they joined forces once more and attacked and captured Whangonui, defended by the Marangaranga. The survivors fled to Runanga and Tarawera, where they finally surrendered. Tangiharuru and Wharepakau divided the captured lands between them, Tangiharuru taking the land in the Rangitaiki Valley, including the Kaingaroa Plains, and Wharepakau taking the Whirinaki Valley. The Marangaranga were absorbed by the people with whom they came into contact.

Tangiharuru was the main ancestor of Ngati Manawa and the meeting house at Tipapa Marae was named after him. Wharepakau was the eponymous ancestor of Ngati Whare of Te Whaiti and Minginui.

Whakapapa and the story of Tangiharuru and Wharepakau show that both these hapu were connected to descent lines going back to Tangiharuru and Toi Kairakau and that the middle reaches of the Rangitaiki, the Whirinaki, and the Wheao flowed through their rohe. Places of significant historical and genealogical importance in Te Rohe o Ngati Manawa were described and located for us by a claimant witness, Thomas Higgins (see fig 6).

Claimants stressed that in order to understand the traditional history of Te Ika Whenua hapu it was necessary to appreciate that they were a border people sandwiched between Tuhoe to the east, Te Arawa to the west, Ngati Kahungunu and Ngati Tahu to the southwest, and Ngati Awa and Ngati Pukeko to the north,⁷ effectively making them a buffer between the Arawa and Urewera tribes.⁸

Ms Ertel pointed out that you could not just draw lines on a map to show tribal boundaries:

There are certainly areas of exclusive domain but there are hinterlands of overlapping rights and interests. And really the way of telling you who you are and where your boundary is is by the reaction of those around you.⁹

A Tribunal member observed that kinship relationships reflected this. Where boundaries overlapped, there were whanaunga relationships. At the boundary, there would be areas of common usage. Your boundary was really determined by the way the people on your borders regarded you and your rohe.¹⁰

6. *Kuranui-o Ngati Manawa*, p 13

7. Document B2, p 1

8. *Ibid*, p 8

9. Kathy Ertel, oral submission on behalf of the claimants, third hearing, 13 October 1994, tape 5, side A, 1554–1567

10. Georgina Te Heuheu, oral comment, third hearing, 13 October 1994, tape 5, side A, 1584–1613

2.3 THE RIVERS: A MAJOR FOOD SOURCE

In the *Energy Assets Report 1993*, we described the geographical location of the three arterial rivers – the Rangitaiki, Whirinaki, and Wheao – that flow through Te Ika Whenua’s rohe, and briefly summarised claimant evidence that was directed to establishing that the rivers were taonga, steeped in tribal lore and history, as well as a main source of material and spiritual sustenance and wellbeing.¹¹

More evidence on the rivers was given by claimant witnesses at the first hearing of this claim. Much of it dealt with what Maanu Paul termed the ‘eel culture’ of Te Ika Whenua. Some of it demonstrated the ihi (awesomeness) and the wehi (power to instill fear) of the rivers. Clearly, the rivers were of central importance in Te Ika Whenua’s extensive traditional resource area, bounded on the east and west by bush and to the south by the dry, barren, tussock- and scrub-covered Kaingaroa volcanic plateau. As claimant witnesses explained, in this harsh environment, characterised by long, cold winters and short, hot, dry summers, traditional resources were very localised. Main settlements and cultivations were in bush-covered areas that provided humus and shelter. The tangata whenua were mobile within their rohe, ranging seasonally from place to place, where they had temporary dwellings called patutu, to gather foods such as fern root and berries, and to catch birds, rats, eels, and other fish. The Rangitaiki and its eels, which were available at any time, were a major secure food source and the river was also a source of harakeke (flax) and raupo.¹²

Extensive evidence given by the witnesses indicated that ‘Eels and eeling and the rivers have always been the lifeblood of the people of the Ika Whenua valley’.¹³ Different varieties of eel once available in the rivers included black eels, called Mataamoe, which lived in holes in the Okahu Stream; the silver-bellied eels of the Rangitaiki, which Patuheuheu called Paewai; blind eels, called Piharau, which lived in the tributaries that flowed through the pumice lands; and yellow-bellied eels, which lived in swamp lands.¹⁴ In different places, they tasted different; some were ordinary, some were special, but all were considered taonga.¹⁵

While the eel culture was common to all the people of Te Ika Whenua, certain individuals and families possessed special knowledge about eeling. It was their responsibility to protect this knowledge and to pass it on to the next generation. A Patuheuheu whanau with special knowledge was said to carry the mauri of the eels.¹⁶

Claimants named special places where specific varieties of eels could be caught, and they described traditional methods of eeling.¹⁷ These included whakarapu tuna (eeling in holes) or such devices as hinaki and retireti (see figs 25–27), rama tuna (a flame at night), fern beds or boxes, or simply a line and noke (worm).¹⁸ The claimants explained that the people of Ngati Manawa, Ngati Whare, and Patuheuheu had their

11. *Te Ika Whenua – Energy Assets Report 1993*, secs 2.3–2.4

12. Document B2, pp 9–18

13. Document B4, p 17

14. *Ibid*, p 19

15. *Ibid*, pp 20, 49

16. *Ibid*, p 43

17. *Ibid*, p 20

18. *Ibid*, pp 22–23

own maramataka or fishing calendar. The appropriate time for eeling was at hinapouri or when the moon was darkest.¹⁹

2.4 THE MAURI OF THE RIVER

According to Wiremu McAuley, whenever you set out to fish or eel, a special karakia would be recited in anticipation of receiving bounty from the river and in thanksgiving for your catch.²⁰ Water from the Rangitaiki was used in rituals, and many tangata whenua ensured that whanau living outside the rohe had a supply of water for such occasions:

The water from the puna wai [water of the spring] of a whanau is considered a taonga to that whanau as it carries the Mauri [life force] of that particular whanau. Of course all the waters of the puna wai find their way into the river and thereby join with the Mauri of the river. In essence then the very spiritual being of every whanau is part of the river. . . . In this sense the river is more than a taonga[;] it is the people themselves.²¹

Korero purakau (legends) about friendly and hostile taniwha of the rivers, including Murupara, were related at section 2.4 of the *Energy Assets Report 1993*. Claimants identified and named several taniwha and the places with which they were associated, noting that the taniwha often assumed eel-like forms.²²

The claimants said that the mauri of the Rangitaiki River was in a rock, called Tokokawau, which was associated with kawau or shags.²³ It protected the inhabitants of the river and ensured an abundance of food:

It is not known just when and [by] who[m] the Mauri of the river was instilled in Tokokawau, but it is believed that it must have been done by one of the tipuna of Ngati Manawa and it symbolises the protective role of Rangatiratanga of the people over the river. . . .

. . . It seems that if the people protect the Mauri then the Mauri will in turn protect the people 'it is a reciprocal thing.'²⁴

2.5 THE RIVERS: A MEANS OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION

Waka were used in all the rivers of the Ika Whenua area both for transport and for trading. People cut big logs that were brought down the Horomanga Gorge to the Rangitaiki and the Aniwaniwa Falls, portaged them around the side of the cliffs, and delivered them to Whakatane for canoes.²⁵ The rivers were also a means of

19. Ibid, p 22; doc B4(a)(4), p 8

20. Document B4, pp 44-45

21. Ibid, p 45

22. Ibid, pp 30-33

23. Ibid, p 42; doc B4(a)(6), (7)

24. Document B4, p 42

25. Document B18(a), p 16

communication for whanau living on their banks. Before the building of bridges, canoes were left at tauranga (landings) for river crossings. Documentary evidence supports claimant testimony:

The Rangitaiki River was often used for transport to and from the coast for there was only one real obstacle, the Aniwhenua Falls, but it was only a short portage around this and many hands made light work. Coming back upstream, with canoes heavily laden with seafoods, would be heavy going. The Rangitaiki has a strong current and the paddles would be moving fast to maintain progress. In many places of shallow rapids the occupants would need to get out and push or drag the canoes using ropes made from the Flax that grew so handy.²⁶

In the post-contact period, the Rangitaiki was used for timber floating, which was impeded by ‘numerous substantial eel weirs’.²⁷ Canoeing and timber floating notwithstanding, the Crown conceded, and the claimants accepted, that these rivers with their waterfalls, narrow gorges, and white-water rapids could not be described as ‘navigable’ in terms of English common law presumption or statute (see ch 7).

2.6 CUSTOMARY USE RIGHTS

Claimant evidence for both the energy assets and the rivers claims was further directed to establishing that Te Ika Whenua had customary water rights and rights to mahinga kai in the middle reaches of the Rangitaiki, Wheao, and Whirinaki Rivers. Most of this evidence related to the customary rights of individuals and family groups, or hapu, to use special resources of the river and to occupy special places in the river such as pa tuna (eel weirs), tauranga ika (landing places for canoes), and fishing stands.

To ensure such rights were recognised and respected by all those living along the river, and by neighbouring iwi, pou (posts) were erected and rahui (prohibitions telling others to keep away) were imposed.²⁸ Manuka posts were placed in the river with a personal item such as a garment attached, indicating that this place was reserved for a particular person or whanau to fish.²⁹ Rahui were imposed after drownings for a period of nine days, the time it took for a body to rise to the river surface.³⁰ Evidence recorded in the Native Land Court minutes for the Kaingaroa 1 and Whirinaki blocks indicated that there were ‘many rahui on the banks of the Rangitaiki River’ in the old days.³¹ It was thought that ‘the practice of rahui for eels began to die out in the heyday of forestry development and the migration of people into the area for logging’.³²

26. A A Coates, ‘The Galatea Story’, *Whakatane District Historical Review*, monograph, 1980, p 8

27. Document B2(d), p 93

28. Document B4, p 48; doc B4(a)(2), pp 1–4; doc B4(e), pp 17–18

29. Document B4, p 24

30. Ibid, pp 26–27

31. Ibid, p 25

32. Ibid, p 26

2.7 MANA AND RANGATIRATANGA OVER THE RIVERS

The claimants stated that they had ‘never relinquished the mana of and over their rivers or tino rangatiratanga over them’.³³ Claimant consultant Maanu Paul spoke of tino rangatiratanga as ‘governance by iwi [which] succeeds because of the relationships they have with their surrounding area’. Governance, he added, depended on ‘the skill of your pakeke (your elders) in maintaining the relationships with the surrounding iwi so that there never arises the idea that somebody will come and demand to take some other portion’.³⁴ Tribal mana, he explained, was derived from the abundance of special eels for hospitality and traditional gift exchange as koha; Ika Whenua saw themselves as obligated to support others with eels.³⁵ As they saw the eels disappear, however, it became harder and harder to maintain mana among neighbouring iwi and hapu.³⁶

Native Land Court minute books and oral testimonies obtained from pakeke and recorded by claimant researchers indicated that the claimants’ tipuna had proprietary rights to pa tuna in the Rangitaiki River and its tributaries and to house sites, cultivations, and mahinga kai on adjacent banks. These sources also indicated that the activity of fishing and marking personal fishing places with tauranga was a means of establishing and exercising tino rangatiratanga, as was the erection of pou and the imposition of rahui. Tino rangatiratanga was asserted and maintained by the protection of the mauri of the river, which was instilled in the rock Tokokawau as a symbol of Te Ika Whenua’s guardianship of resources for the next generation.³⁷ Without such manifestations of tino rangatiratanga, those people would not have had the right to control the river in this way:

you can’t have Tino Rangatiratanga if you don’t have your Mauri and your Mauri must be recognised by your whanau, surrounding whanau, by your hapu, surrounding hapu, surrounding iwi and so on. They give credence and credibility to your Mauri.³⁸

The following historical example of the recognition of Te Ika Whenua’s tino rangatiratanga over the rivers in their rohe was given by claimant researchers. When Ngati Manawa returned to Karamuramu after fleeing to Rotorua, they found the Native Contingent under Captain Preece was catching eels in the Ngatamawahine Stream. They asked him to cease eeling and he did. Obviously, Preece recognised their mana over the rivers.³⁹

33. Claim 1.1(e), para 7

34. Document B18(a), p 1

35. Maanu Paul, oral submission on behalf of the claimants, first hearing, 11 November 1993, tape 5, side A, 1858–1873

36. Document B4, p 49

37. Document B4(a)(6), pp 2–3

38. *Ibid*, p 6

39. Document B4, p 25

2.8 CONCLUSION

Claimant evidence clearly established that the middle reaches of the Rangitaiki and the Whirinaki and Wheao Rivers were a taonga over which the hapu of Te Ika Whenua had mana and rangatiratanga. Not only were they a vitally important food source and means of transport and communication, but they were also essential for spiritual and cultural wellbeing. From the Te Ika Whenua perspective, the people belong to the rivers and the rivers belong to them.