

This episode contains references to war and everything that goes with it. Listener discretion is advised.

Kia ora, gday and welcome to the History of Aotearoa New Zealand. Episode 115: The House of Tūmatauenga. This podcast is recorded in Te Whanganui a Tara on the rohe of Muaūpoko, Taranaki Whānui, Te Atiawa and Ngāti Toa Rangatira. We are generously supported by our amazing Patrons, including Andrew, John, Paul and Antoinette. If you want to support HANZ go to patreon.com/historyaotearoa. In our last topic, we discussed Māori religion from the high concept mythology right down to how the average person would interact with the gods. After that we had a chat about how medicine worked in pre-European Aotearoa including an amazing interview with rongoā Māori practitioner Donna Kerridge that I highly recommend you give a listen if you haven't already! Today we will be starting our final topic in the pre-European era. It's one that, through colonialism and racism, has come to define Māori in the view of Pākehā and the wider Western world. Warfare. I purposefully left this topic to last, in part, for this reason. I wanted to break the stereotype and show that Māori culture isn't solely based around battle. It was and is complex, had art, music and science, that they were a society as rich as any other throughout our history. So hopefully I have managed to show that in the 100 or so previous episodes. However, like all societies, Māori had different groups with different interests and often these interests conflicted with each other. Although there were many diplomatic ways to resolve these conflicts diplomacy doesn't always win out and so violence was a tool that could be used to get utu or otherwise get what you wanted. In the following episodes we are going to discuss what happened when things boiled over, when enough was enough and the drums of war needed to be sounded.

Before we get into weapons, strategy and all that stuff, for there to be a war there needs to be a reason for that war. Usually that's conflicting goals between two parties, in our case hapū, and it's pretty rare that humans in general would enter an armed conflict for basically no reason. You may have heard this be called a *casus belli*, a Latin term that essentially means 'the reason for war', in Te Reo Māori the word *take* (pronounced *tah-keh*) fulfills the same purpose. There are lots of actions made against a hapū that could result in a take but they all revolved around the diminishing of a hapū's collective mana which would need to be repaired via utu. That is the real key concept to understand how war happened in Māori society. We have spoken about utu a lot in the past, this idea of reciprocity. It's another part of Māori culture that is often mistranslated because it encompasses a range of actions such as positive things like if someone gives you a gift, you should give one back of equal value or if you go to someone's house and they feed you, there is a reasonable expectation that you will do the same for them when they are next at your place. The mistranslation comes in where Europeans boiled it down to its other aspect, the negative one. Revenge. And of course in war that is mostly what is going on, rangatira and the wider hapū are wanting to get vengeance for some sort of insult to their collective mana, with the goal being to restore it.

A hapū's mana could be diminished and generally insulted through a variety of means, the sorts of insults that resulted in take were fairly significant, like not providing good enough food or hospitality at a feast, insulting a rangatira's wife, turning someone's kin into fish hooks or good old fashioned murder with bonus points if the person was tapu. In fact, a taua, war party, who were out specifically for revenge or blood vengeance was called a taua toto or taua hiku toto. If someone was killed, often it would be put to the children of that person to avenge their death which was called *purapura ora*, translated as 'living seed'. Sometimes the social pressure laid onto the children would be so great that it was expected they would make it their life's mission to avenge their parent. This could even be done from birth with a special rite performed over them that had a focus on revenge. In saying that

though, just like wars in other cultures, Māori fought for all sorts of shit, such as the Girls War of 1830 where the current and ex-wives of a ship captain were playfully throwing insults at each other until it gradually got a bit out of hand with the insults becoming less and less playful. In the end, a decently sized battle occurred where a bunch of people died. That isn't to say Māori were frivolous with their wars, some could be very serious. For example, in one case a chief wanted to go to war because another hapū had harvested from a whale that rightfully belonged to him. However, when explaining his take to Samuel Marsden he said that he was going to war because his father in law's bones had been defiled a few years before by the same people. Generally an offence of defiling bones or burial sites was cause for instant retaliation, it's pretty much the highest form of offence, so this was significant in that the rangatira had decided to keep his cards close to his chest for a bit despite having every right to go after them immediately. Overall though, holding onto a take for years wasn't too uncommon. It could be so that the hapū could built up its strength or to wait for the political or economic situation to be more favourable.

Although wars could be fought for all sorts of reasons, big or small, a take was actually a relatively high bar to reach. Māori had a number of non-violent means to resolve conflict, which we will talk about in a minute, so usually they would go for those first before committing to a fight. Military campaigns are costly, in resources, manpower, time spent away from the fields, you need to consider the logistics of feeding your soldiers, is the fight even winnable and many many other factors. So it isn't surprising that for a rangatira to convince a hapū to risk their lives, the take needed to be fairly significant, especially given the consequences for losing could be dire. However, if a hapū wanted to go to war with another, say because they had some sort of blood feud, but perhaps didn't have quite the right pretense to do so, they would sometimes try to cause deliberate offence such as giving threats, using offensive language in regards to their head or other tapu parts of the body and talking shit about their ancestors (particularly if the shit talk involved cooking and eating, both in the sense that the tīpuna were doing the cooking which was slaves work or the ancestors being eaten themselves, which was a huge insult). Rarely was this said to the hapū's collective face though, the idea was that this information would eventually make its way back to them via gossip and get them riled up to attack. Generally speaking, a take for land acquisition to increase power, wealth or status was seen as not super valid but if you were fighting to take land because your hapū were kicked out of their own due to losing a war, then that was fine.

However, all out war was usually the last resort. Again, armed conflicts are risky and expensive so their not something people do unless other roads to obtain utu have been explored, generally speaking. Utu could take the form of marriage to a rangatira's daughter, gifts of pounamu, land and stuff like that. This would smooth over most minor disputes so that everyone was happy. If the aggrieved party weren't too fussed on pleasing the other side and more interested in getting their pound of flesh, but weren't keen to commit to a full military campaign then utu might be achieved through just killing one specific person, performing mākutu or insulting the enemy through various means like making a song that denigrates them or fashioning mundane items from their relatives bones. Of course, this may lead to resentment by the other hapū and eventually more conflict down the line. Even at this point though, a hapū may not decide to go for open war, they had a couple more tools at their disposal to keep the relative peace. The first was a kinda unofficially recognised group of people called 'pacificators'. These were tohunga or ariki who were very interested in maintaining peace and would help secure it any time they could. Usually they were related to multiple hapū and aided in keeping peace between those particular groups. It seems the idea was that these people were expert diplomats whose job it was to ease tensions between hapū and they were well respected for their work. These diplomats usually travelled in a teretere, the name given to delegations that were sent from one hapū to another for diplomacy, peace or trade. These groups

were meant to be allowed to come and go without disturbance but sometimes that isn't what happened and the opportunity to catch an enemy unawares was sometimes too good to pass up. So this is where cultural institutions like pōwhiri come in to help alleviate the fears of either side when they came to meet. The main downside to these pacificators is that they weren't independent or neutral, they represented their own side and so it wasn't a perfect system. Once a conflict turned violent, these people were still very important, often allowed to freely enter the camps of each side. Once the war was over, someone who was related to both parties, called a taharua, would often be spared by the victors. Taharua were an important asset to have as they would often warn either side of impending attacks and it wasn't uncommon for them to switch sides if the other hapū had more close relations.

The other option was a bit more drastic, the taua muru. In English some sources translate this to stripping party which makes it sound very sexy but I'm afraid it was far from it. The stripping is a weird translation of the word muru, which means to confiscate or plunder so it means the stripping of wealth from one hapū by another. Given that, a more accurate translation of taua muru is more like raiding party. Reasons to form a taua muru could be a small encroachment on a hapū's rohe, damage to their crops, adultery with a lower rank person or murder of lower ranked people, suspicion of mākutu or just general insults like calling someone a fuckhead. They could also be used if the collective mana of a hapū had been diminished due to a public humiliation or insult of a high ranking person. Although taua muru were essentially raids to steal or destroy property, they were inherently non-violent. The goal wasn't to kill anyone, just enact a bit of payback on their material goods. As such, you might expect this to be a stealthy affair, getting caught could result in an outbreak of violence, but the taua muru would often openly brandish their weapons and make themselves known when they arrived. Naturally, this meant that the whole idea of a taua muru absolutely relied on those being attacked understanding what was going on and not resisting. To avoid a battle, sometimes the taua muru would actually send out a messenger to alert a hapū that they were on their way and that as long as they didn't resist, they would turn up, smash some stuff and then leave. Naturally this meant that the hapū got advance warning to gather up any valuables, like crops in the field, and move them to a safe place before the taua muru arrived. This didn't always work though so sometimes a battle did ensue, and generally the violence would be directed at those who were lower on the social ladder and thus seen as less valuable than those at the top. Unless both sides gave as good as they got, a hapū may wish to escalate hostilities to something more long term. Of course, taua muru weren't a perfect system either, it brought the aggrieved parties together in a heated situation, where at least one side was armed and it was likely either side would work for their own benefit rather than try to come to some form of mutual justice. Again, the system kinda hinged on the attacked party being willing to hand over utu or allow it to be taken without resistance which is a big ask, even at the best of times. In saying that, taua muru were peaceful endeavours, they never went out with the idea to fight or kill. The only exception to this was slaves who in this context were considered as fair game as destroying a house. So although it may seem like it wouldn't really work, the system of taua muru was actually fairly successful in keeping the peace, especially when you consider the alternative was the death, destruction and trauma of war.

In terms of us in the modern day looking back at these events, it's hard to distinguish between aggression from a taua muru and a full on war. War and peace is hard to define in the pre-European period and as we will see in future episodes describing it more as a temporary cease of hostilities is kind of more accurate. However, we can differentiate taua muru and wars slightly in that wars and the military campaigns that resulted from them had different objectives. There was intent to take a pā, secure land, kill specific people or take some other aggressive action that would likely result in death, rather than the more comparatively peaceful objectives of the taua muru. Though, it was

common for war to break out because a hapū believed that a taua muru had taken too much, which could be fairly often as the lust for loot in the heat of the moment could be overwhelming, resulting in a taua muru taking more than what they had initially planned.

An unusual idea that came from one source said that since there was no form of public justice between tribes or any “inter-community mechanisms of authority” then war was the natural way to sort out disputes or get utu. To explain that a bit more, where the writer is coming from is that institutions like parliament, the judiciary and that sort of thing allow for peaceful resolutions between individuals and groups. Alternatively these entities could be called a “third party or disinterested authority” which funnily enough also encompasses a diety. Remember though that the Big Six Māori atua weren’t terribly active in the lives of humans and the lesser ones that were tended to not be impartial. This source also says that there is no evidence to suggest that ariki would adjudicate disputes between hapū that were under them, though other sources I read disagreed with that. So, since Māori didn’t have a national, cohesive institution that all hapū recognised to peacefully resolve disputes, whether that be a court of law or a god, they had to resort to violence. However, I think this misses the point that hapū were essentially sovereign nations unto themselves, it’s the same as England and France going to war and saying they should resolve their issues through a third party. Which in way kinda does exist today through bodies like the UN or the International Criminal Court but even those don’t work like that and they definitely didn’t exist back in the 19th century. That’s more of an interesting side note than anything else so if it doesn’t make sense, don’t worry too much.

Diplomacy doesn’t always work out though and wars do happen but sometimes it isn’t because someone insulted you, sometimes it for reasons far outside anyone’s control. In the 16th century, warfare increased dramatically and Māori were on the move, hapū making large migrations across the country. The reasons for these migrations is somewhat cyclical in nature, if a hapū had to migrate from one area to another, they would sometimes have to fight the local hapū for the land which could result in the locals getting kicked out and migrating to another area where they would fight the locals who get kicked out and the cycle continues. This didn’t happen all the time, sometimes a hapū could live with another who they were friendly with and have no issues or the hapū could move into unclaimed territory, so what we see is once these migrations start to happen more regularly the Māori population begin to spread to areas they hadn’t been in before, erecting brand new settlements. What kinda kicked all of this off was a few different factors that occurred in the 16th century. This was the time that agriculture came into widespread use so the population was increasing quite dramatically, which started to put a strain on the limited resources Māori had. Additionally, resources were being even more constrained by the cooling climate making it harder to grow the crops that Māori had just started farming. So it’s a weird combo of lots of resources but also kinda not enough resources, all pushing and pulling in their own ways, causing conflicts with the result being some people needing to find new places to live. Interestingly, what we also see is a shift in the oral historic record. Initially Māori record their whakapapa in relation to the whenua as it was being discovered and claimed by the various waka of the Great Fleet, chronicalling the spread of people across Aotearoa as they begin to settle it. However, sometime in the 16th century the record becomes very detailed and starts to talk more and more about the people’s relationships with each other, in particular, the wars between hapū, the motivations that caused them and the migrations that occurred because of them. This was important to help track historical claims to land throughout history, if problems arose with multiple people claiming rights to the same parcel of land then they would be able to determine who had rights to what. This had pros and cons for us as history nerds. The pro was that because Māori didn’t develop a unified state across the country there wasn’t a trend towards keeping the history of just the monarch, which is what happened in places like Tonga

and Hawai'i. Instead, each hapū kept their own histories which meant there is a good level of granularity in the information they kept, it's a lot more detailed than just what charters the king was signing. That isn't to say they didn't suffer from selective remembrance of events though, that's the con side. By the nature of having to remember histories and pass them orally, some more minor events needed to be discarded from the collective memory in favour of the more important ones. However we don't know what criteria there was for this so we aren't able to piece together events from incomplete data. This isn't to say that the oral histories of Māori aren't accurate, they are. Most stories, tales and histories across hapū tended to agree on the broad strokes of events and the conclusion of those events, even if the more nitty gritty details of how that conclusion came to pass is somewhat disputed. Edward Shortland found that Māori histories were accurate, even from hapū that had little contact with one another. He also found that the stories differentiated, quite carefully, between mythological and historical elements, such as the spiritual and physical places of Hawaiki.

It's also interesting where these migrations originated from, cause we mostly see them coming from areas in the central or southern North Island. More northern hapū tended to dig their heels in a bit more and made small border adjustments with each other whereas central or southern hapū decided it wasn't as worth it and just packed up and left. This difference in reaction to the same pressure could be down to a few different things but my guess would be that the more northern regions had a lot more arable land with the warmer climate and volcanic ash, making them much more desirable to defend. There was also just a lot less of it, we're talking the smaller slivers of land around Tāmaki Makaurau and Kororāreka. Whereas the land in the rest of the North Island was... fine but it wasn't as bananas as further north and there was also a lot more of it so the desire to stick it out in one place when someone else was throughly smashing you wouldn't be quite as strong and instead they decided to move to greener pastures. Even within this we find other trends, like how longer migrations tended to originate on the east coast and shorter migrations on the west coast, most likely spurred on by climate change. These hiko, marches, would often mean that they needed to cross through another hapū's rohe. If tangata whenua allowed it, the hapū may be granted permission to stay with them for a while to rest up before moving on. For example, Kāti Kurī, a hapū of Kāi Tahu moved from Heretaunga (Hawkes Bay) down to Kaikoura in the South Island which took them through the Wairarapa, Wellington and Marlborough before reaching their eventual settlement place on the east coast of Te Wai Pounamou. Migration being one of the key factors in warfare also means that between periods of widespread migration, warfare may have been significantly less frequent. This is reflected in the three major periods of widespread Māori conflict, the wars that pushed proto-Māori out of Hawaiki in the 13th century, the expansion of agriculture and the subsequent construction of pā fortifications in the 16th century and then the acquisition of muskets changing the state of war in Aotearoa in the early 19th century.

While all of this is really interesting, the real juicy part is the way these migrations and conflicts affected Māori society and in fact their entire trajectory as a culture. After a battle, individuals would often seek protection with nearby hapū that they may or may not be related to or they would form their own new communities. This had occurred so often by the time Europeans arrived that many villages had multiple hapū represented which had a number of societal effects. This started, once again, in the 16th century with the rise of agriculture, the construction of pā, forts, and an increase in warfare, which saw a monumental amount of change in Māori society. Specifically, this took the shape of power consolidation into the hands of a few hapū and by extension the rangatira that led them. This was primarily done through not just military conquests but the emphasis of association with successful ancestors, it was good to say that you were descended from a victorious war leader and distance yourself from someone who got himself stabbed in the back cause he was a dick. It's

similar to the Western medieval idea of placing yourself as the rightful successor to a kingdom because you are descended from a previous king.

This 'major tribal reformation' saw the rise of many of the iwi that we know today such as Ngāpuhi, who originated from merging tribes in the mid 18th century becoming a dominant force in Northland a hundred years later. Ngāti Mahuta also rose to prominence through these methods after being part of the victory at Hingakaka in the early 19th century, a road that led their ariki to becoming the first Māori King 50 years later, a line that continues to this day. An example we have discussed previously is the rise of Ngāti Toa under Te Rauparaha, though they were a little bit of an outlier since they formed a bit later into the 19th century, in part due to the military prowess and mana of their leader. In the South Island, the big one is the absorption of Kāti Mamoe into Kāi Tahu, creating a unified identity that was strengthened when Te Rauparaha and Ngāti Toa came south to fight. Ngāti Kahungunu, Tūhoe and others all came out of this period either just before or just after European arrival that saw much war, migration and merging of hapū. This consolidation of power into the hands of a few powerful chiefs may have been the first steps of Māori society towards a more central form of government, which would be/had been seen in other Polynesian peoples like the kānaka maoli of Hawai'i. This process, which was firmly started before Europeans arrived, was only sped up by them with the introduction of muskets and trade goods which made the chiefs richer and more powerful.

Overall, because different hapū were mixing and living together in villages more than any time before this period saw a shift in how Māori viewed their relationships with each other both on the individual and community level. Ties to others by whakapapa were becoming less important than ties of a more political nature because they were often living nextdoor to people they had absolutely no relation to. The focus began to shift to rangatira who could show their wealth and power by giving gifts, often through feasting, thus affirming the bonds of loyalty in their people. This was further supported by the marae system, a place where the community could meet and discuss issues or celebrate. Marae became more prominent with bigger and bigger ones being built by the time Europeans arrived. Previously leadership was more determined by battle prowess or whatever other challenges the hapū was facing at the time, now it was being centered around the mana of rangatira. People were slowly starting to care a bit less about how they fit into a multi-village web of blood tied individuals but instead began to identify with the community of people they lived together with on a single place, regardless of their whakapapa, with a common goal of survival. In short, to me it looks like Māori were on the way to forming the equivalent of medieval kingdoms. This was an extremely important step in the development of Māori society because, as you may have picked up on, the hapū was their main political and military unit. Whānau and iwi didn't tend to go to war as a group, hapū were the ones making diplomatic choices and fielding armies. This meant there was more division between Māori as a whole, the fact that Māori didn't have a more centralised form of governance to resolve disputes meant they had to be constantly vigilant of their neighbours. Again some of those other hapū would also have members who were related to you and perhaps didn't have very much in common with you, complicating things even more. Hapū were the largest organisational unit that could effectively do things like tend to farms and mobilise military forces meaning there was a limit to what could be achieved and how much land could be effectively controlled.

The result of all this movement, all this war, all this turmoil meant Māori society was changing, they were organising into groups not based on shared kinship but on political common ground, namely their loyalty to a chief and his interest in his people's prosperity. Hapū would combine and merge, following a single leader whom they owed the allegiance. Anthropologically speaking, this was an

absurdly exciting time. Māori culture was rapidly turning into something new, more centralised, coordinated and, ultimately, more powerful. Unfortunately, this amazingly dramatic development in their cultural history was interrupted as large sails with even larger ships under them were spotted on the horizon.

Next time, we will move away from this high level societal thinking more into the actual art of warfare, discussing some of the weapons Māori used.

If you want to send me feedback, ask a question, suggest a topic or just have a chinwag you can find my email and social media on historyaotearoa.com. You can also find helpful resources there like transcripts, sources and translations for some of the Te Reo Māori we have used. You can help support HANZ through Patreon, buying merch or giving us a review, it means a lot and helps spread the story of Aotearoa New Zealand. As always, haere tū atu, hoki tū mai. See you next time!