

## **A PILGRIM'S GUIDE**

**'A CHILD SHALL LEAD'  
THE STORY OF  
TĀRORE OF WAHAROA**

# ‘A CHILD SHALL LEAD’ THE STORY OF TĀRORE OF WAHAROA

In an open field just outside the Piako village of Waharoa there is a small grave surrounded by a white picket fence. A white cross adorns the resting place of a twelve-year-old girl who was martyred nearby in the year 1836. Around this grave, being the traditional site of the great Ngāti Hauā Pā of Matamata and adjacent to the large Māori settlement of Tāpiri in a previous age, there have been ordinations and many pilgrimages over the years. A steady trickle of people, Māori, Pākehā, of all sorts, make their way to this place. Why?



The name of the girl is Tārore. She died bearing *Te Rongopai a Ruka, the Gospel according to Saint Luke in Māori*, amongst her own Ngāti Hauā people and the people of Tauranga Moana. From about the age of seven she had been taught to read and write Māori through the medium of *Te Rongopai a Ruka*, the first gospel and the first ever book to be translated and distributed in the Māori language. Her tutor was Charlotte Brown of the Church Missionary Society who, with her husband Alfred Nesbitt Brown, had established a school at the Matamata Pā in 1835. Right is an early photo of Te Wai o Turongo at nearby Waharoa.



Although this educational mission only remained for a year and closed for safety reasons narrated below, it lasted long enough for Tārore to become a very able pupil. Tārore's great uncle, the Ngāti Hauā paramount chief Tarapīpipi Te Waharoa, had been baptised with the name Wiremu Tāmihana and had also learned to speak, read and write fluent English as well as use written Māori to great effect.



Wiremu Tāmihana later became the greatest political letter writer and statesman of the country as a whole in the nineteenth century, pursuing a mutual sovereignty with the British crown and a Māori King from 1858.



Charlotte had been very well educated as a teacher in England and brought her considerable skills to the mission schools she helped to begin and run. She imported the first piano.

Tārore's father, Wiremu Ngākuku, became a catechist and lay evangelist amongst his people, and encouraged Tārore to read and narrate the new-found faith. It is said that crowds of Ngāti Hauā would gather to listen to the great poignancy and novelty of the parables and messages from Luke's gospel which were recited from written Māori for the first time. It must have been a remarkable scene of mutual fascination. The second Epistle of Timothy Chapter 3, verse 15 had laid down the foundation of Tārore's education:

**“Ki a koe anō i mōhio o tōu  
tamarikitanga ake, ki ngā karaipi-  
ture tapu, ko ngā mea ērā e whai  
mātauranga ai koe, e ora ai,  
i runga i  
te whakapono ki a Karaiti Īhu.**

**“From childhood you have known  
the sacred writings that are able  
to instruct you for salvation through  
faith in Christ Jesus.”**

In *Te Rongopai a Ruka* there is a clear emphasis on the compassion and justice of Jesus' message. The author of the gospel and the community that received and worked with his writings, placed a special emphasis on a practical and down-to-earth expression of the universal love of God in Christ. The parables, in particular, seem to be very clear witnesses to radical demonstrations of unexpected love. This way of communicating a new faith had its own drama and immediate effect.



It has been argued that, with this in mind, there are several parallels between Māori ways of thinking and living and the Aramaic language and lifestyle of Jesus of Nazareth. When Tārore, Ngākuku, and Wiremu Tāmihana, first shared the parables in Māori amongst Ngāti Hauā, the effect on the listening audience could well have had parallels with the first dramatic gospel messaging by parable of Jesus of Nazareth 1900 years before.

The ground-breaking work of Kenneth E. Bailey's *Jesus through middle eastern eyes: cultural studies in the gospels* has been crucial in drawing out the dramatic cultural and linguistic creativity and impact of the parables in their Aramaic language-telling by Jesus. For example:

**The parable of the great feast in Luke 14:15-24 could well have resonated immediately with Māori experience of the open and inclusive custom of kai hākari, communal feasting.**

**The parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32 could well have resonated with Māori experience of the primacy of whānau and family above all.**

**The parable of the sower in Luke 8:4-15 could well have resonated with a people who depended on their very sustenance from the successful cultivation of crops from the earth.**



It has also been argued that there is a significant linguistic parallel between the language style of Jesus and Māori ways of speaking. In both languages there is no verb ‘to be’ in the present tense, which means that both ways of expression are very process or verb oriented. The emphasis is on what is happening rather than defining moments with nouns. This gives Jesus’ way of speaking a flow of action rather than a more philosophical turn of phrase. He is interested in what is coming through in the action, in what is happening, rather than a detached description of the categories involved.

This is also similar, in some ways, to Māori forms of expression. Both languages, although with their own unique development and integrity, often see experience holistically and dynamically, before it is analysed into its parts. Experience is described as greater than the sum of its parts and is in continuous inter-relationship with every other dynamic around. Earth, sea and sky, people, tribe and language, an individual, a happening and a message, are all deeply interdependent in the here and now.

This can be seen very clearly in Aramaic terms when Jesus is asked in Luke’s gospel chapter 7 verse 18 if he is the Messiah, and he replies with this typical Aramaic and similarly Māori way of thinking:

**“Ā, ka kōrerotia ēnei mea katoa ki a Hoani e āna ākongā.**

**Nā ka karangatia e Hoani ētahi o āna ākongā tokorua, ka tonoa ki te Ariki, mea ai, “ko koe rānei tērā e haere mai ana? Me tatari rānei tātou ki tētahi atu?”**

**Ā, nō te taenga mai o aua tāngata ki a ia, ka mea “kua tonoa mai māua e Hoani Kaiiriiri ki a koe, mea ai, Ko koe rānei tērā e haere mai ana?**

**Me tatari rānei tātou ki tētahi atu?”**

**I taua wā pū anō he tokomaha te hunga i whakaorangia e ia i ngā tūrorotanga, i ngā mate, i ngā wairua kino; he tokomaha ngā matapō i meinga kia kite.**

**Ā, ka whakahoki ia, ka mea ki a rāua, “Haere, kōrerotia ki a Hoani ngā mea e kite nei, e rongō nei kōrua; ko ngā matapō e titiro ana,**

**ko ngā kopa e haereere ana, ko ngā rerepa kua mā, ko ngā turi e rongō ana, ko ngā tūpāpaku e whakaarahia ana,**

**“The disciples of John reported all these things to him.**

**So John summoned two of his disciples and sent them to the Lord to ask,  
“Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?”**

**When the men had come to him, they said, “John the Baptist has sent us to you  
to ask, ‘Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?’”**

**Jesus had just then cured many people of diseases, plagues, and evil spirits, and  
he had given sight to many who were blind. And he answered them, “Go and  
tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame  
walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have  
good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.”**

The way of thinking here is clearly verb orientated, based on what is happening and the interrelationship of happenings and contexts. It's also a clear example of the Lukan emphasis on healing and wholeness as the central reality of the mission of the Messiah, and the incoming Kingdom of God in Christ.

When Wiremu Tāmihana, Ngākuku and Tārore narrated parts of Luke's gospel in Māori at the Matamata Pā, in a totally by Māori for Māori context, the message would have resonated in thought form as well as its appeal to a new form of compassion and hope.

This also partly explains why Te Rongopai, the Gospel itself, eventually spread so quickly and easily across ngā Iwi Māori, the Māori tribes, all over Aotearoa, often beyond Pākehā mediation. Te Rongopai seemed to spread as a taonga and

treasure with a life of its own, from hapu to hapu and iwi to iwi. It was often a by Māori, with Māori, for Māori process.



The process closely resembled the natural scattering of seed on good soil, as the parable of the sower describes it in the gospel according to Saint Matthew chapter 13 verses 1 to 23, the gospel according to Saint Mark chapter 4 verses 1 to 20 and the gospel according to Saint Luke chapter 8 verses 4 to 15.



There are some parallels with this kind of fruitfulness in the story of another gospel-bearing girl, Rotu of Ngāti Rongo at Rūātoki, over two generations later. Rotu's father Numia Kereru Te Ruakariata, the local Ngāi Tahu chief, sent her to Hukarere Anglican Girls' School for her education in 1903. From there she was baptised and sent to a mission in Whakarewarewa where she honed her education and faith-based skills.

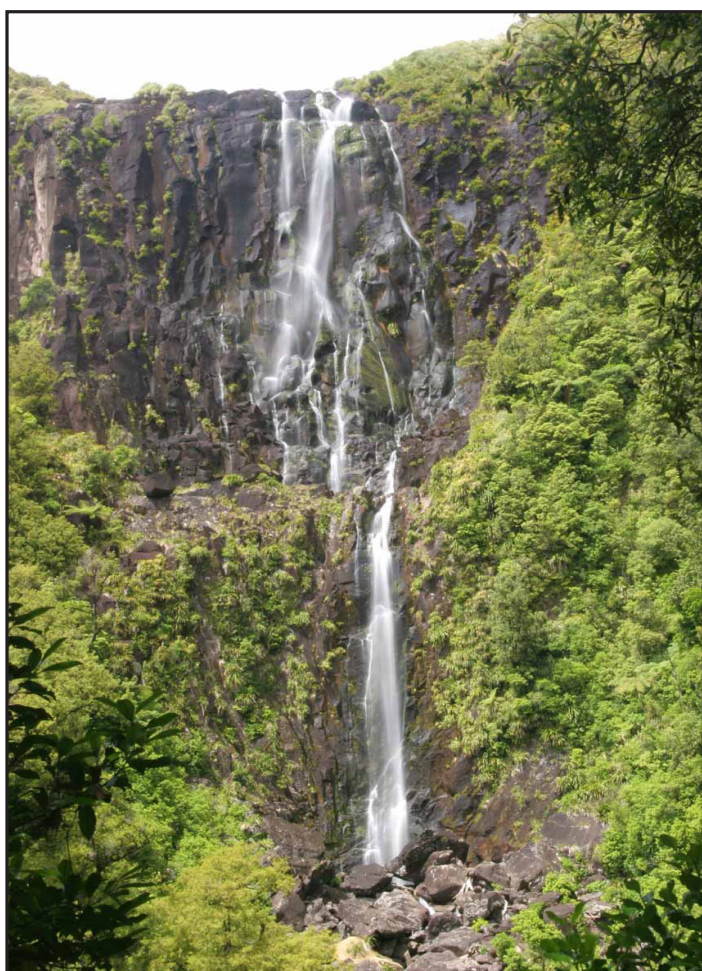


Rotu then returned to Rūātoki and with Deaconess Kathleen Doyle, planting the seeds of the gospel amongst Ngāti Rongo. The same cultural gospel appeal must have been operating as at Waharoa; the mission flourished and resulted in many baptisms and confirmations at the expanding mission house, which is there for the same purpose to this day. A church building had also been planted in 1917. Rotu's father's grave lies beside it, marked by a fitting monument.



Rotu's life story became very different than Tārore's though; she later married and had a family. Her mission passed naturally and effectively to the Revd Peni Hakiwai who planted ngā purapura pai, the good seeds of the Gospel, as far as Whakatāne.

By contrast, in 1836, the danger to Tārore and her family from inter-tribal conflict with the Te Arawa people from Rotorua intensified for the community at Matamata and the Christian mission. A small party set out from the Matamata mission for the safer mission site at Tauranga.



*For All the Saints records the tragic story of what happened next:*

*“Ngākuku and the CMS missionary John Flatt led a party of children over the Kaimai Range. The journey took them to the Wairere Falls where they made camp.*

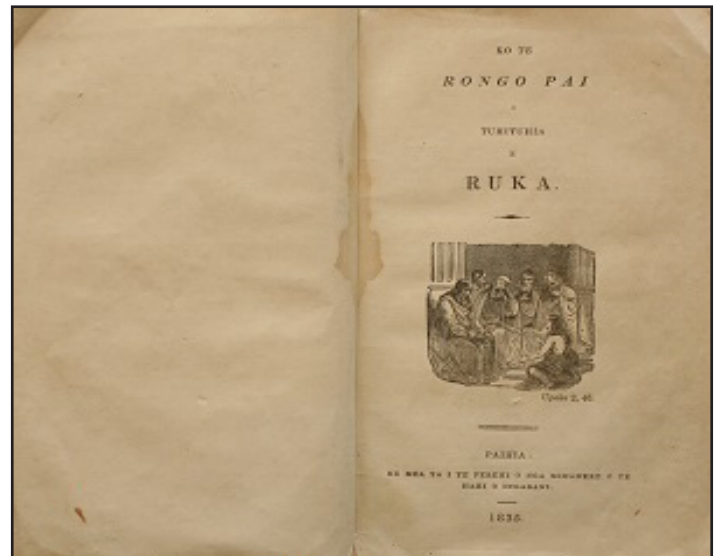
*The camp fire attracted a raiding party from Rotorua, led by Uita. Those in the camp responded quickly, and after some fighting the raiding party withdrew. In the confusion Tārore had been left where she had fallen asleep. When Ngākuku and the others returned to the camp they found Tārore had been killed, still on her sleeping mat.*



*She was twelve years old. Her death immediately created a desire for utu, but at her funeral the next day at Matamata, Ngākuku preached against revenge, saying there had been too much bloodshed already and that the people should trust in the justice of God.*

*Tārore's copy of the Gospel of Luke had a continuing history. Uita had taken Tārore's Gospel during the attack, thinking it might be of value. However, he was unable to read, and it lay unused in his pā. Sometime later a slave who could read, named Ripahau, was brought to the pā. He read to the people from the Gospel. This led to the eventual reconciliation of Uita and Ngākuku (The war between Ngāti Hāuā and Te Arawa also came to an end due largely to Ngākuku's forgiveness and Uita's repentance. It is said that the justice of God was the conversion of Tarore's killer and the arrival of peace). Later, the slave Ripahau left Uita's pā and returned to Ōtaki, coming into contact with Tāmihana Te Rauparaha from Kāpiti Island, the son of Wiremu Te Rauparaha, the great Ngāti Toa chief.*

*Ripahau again was invited to read from the Scripture to Tāmihana and his cousin Hēnare Mātene Te Whiwhi. In this way the two learned to read. However, Ripahau had only a few pages at his disposal, and in time a messenger was sent back to Rotorua for more books. The book that was returned to them, now somewhat worn, was the Gospel that Tārore had used, still with Ngākuku's name on it.*



*In time Tāmihana and Mātene became Christians, and Ripahau himself was converted. It is said that Tāmihana and Mātene took Tārore's book with them when they travelled to the South Island, preaching the gospel of peace and reconciliation."*



Archdeacon Alfred Nesbit Brown's record of Tārore's funeral on 20 October 1836, is deeply moving.

*"I buried poor Tarore, at the Pa. Those who escaped a like death, followed the corpse to the grave; around which were arranged the various groups, from the different native residences. After singing a hymn, and addressing the assembled party, Ngakuku asked me if might also say a few words; and on my assenting, he said, with deep solemnity of feeling – "There lies my child: she has been murdered, as a payment for your bad conduct. But do not you rise to seek a payment for her: God will do that. Let this be the finishing of the war with Rotorua. Now, let peace be made ..."*

*"Can I doubt who it is that has given calmness, resignation, and peace ... at a time when we could expect little else than the wild tumult of unsubdued grief? Let those who treat the operations of the Holy Spirit upon the heart as an idle fable, account on natural principles for the scene which I have this day been privileged to witness. It was not insensibility on the part of Ngakuku for his feelings are naturally keen: it was not indifference towards his family, for he was fondly attached to his child. No! It was the manifestation of His power, who, amidst the loudest howling's of the wildest storm, distinctly whispers to His children, It is I, be not afraid; peace, be still!"*

It is for these reasons that the words on the white cross above Tārore's grave record:

*"Aged 12 years whose Māori Gospel of St Luke brought peace to the tribes of Aotearoa. The daughter of Ngākuku of Okauia and great niece of Te Waharoa of Matamata. She died at Wairere falls on 19th October 1836."*

This cross was placed at the grave in the presence of 'Te Arikinui, o Te Iwi Māori' in 1977. On the reverse side it reads: "The blood of this child became the seed of the church." And from the gospel according to Saint Luke Chapter 18 verse 16: "... **nō ngā pēnei hoki te rangatiratanga o te Atua.** ... For it to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs."

There is a commemorative book as well, Tārore's Story, Remembering Tārore, including Ko te Rongopai ki te Ritenga a Ruka, the Book of Luke, published by the Bible Society in 2016. The booklet includes her story in Māori and English with vintage water colour paintings, and the text of the Gospel According to Saint Luke is written in full in both Māori and English.

This most poignant and powerful story of transformation challenges us all to never underestimate the grace and healing powers of the gospel, even in the most tragic, complex and fraught of circumstances. People of faith are reminded again of the truth of the Psalm 77 verse 19 which remembered the liberating power of the grace of God when Moses and the children of Israel were faced again with oppression and death at the Red Sea:

**“I te moana tōu ara,  
i ngā wai nui tōu huarahi,  
e kore anō e kitea ōu takahanga.**

**Your path led through the sea,  
your way through the mighty waters,  
a pathway no one knew was there.”**

Tārore’s story is now shared in many parts of the Christian world, and remains one of the taonga, treasures, of the church in these islands. In the book of the prophet Isaiah, chapter 11 verse 6 there is a phrase which has continued to move faith communities to their core:

**“Ka noho tahi anō te wuruhi rāua ko  
te reme, ka takoto tahi te repara rāua  
ko te kūao koati;  
ko te kūao kau,  
ko te kūao raiona,  
ko te mea mōmona,  
kotahi anō rōpū; ā,  
mā te tamaiti iti rātou e ārahi.**

**“The wolf shall live with the lamb,  
the leopard shall lie down with the  
kid, the calf and the lion  
and the fatling  
together, and a little child  
shall lead them.”**

This text can apply to any peoples who are at war, where the animals represent conflicted and longstanding enemies. The message includes the meaning that one born to bring peace, even as a child, has by the grace of God the potential to make a pathway into reconciliation and peace through the sharing and outpouring of their own life. This is what came into the world with the Messiah after his birth; it is what came through Ngāti Hauā in the message, the martyrdom and the ongoing commemoration of Tārore of Waharoa. She, being dead, yet speaks. The Collect for her feast day on 19 October, the day of her martyrdom, is found in the guide to the Hāhi Mihinare Anglican Prayer Book lectionary, *For All the Saints*:

**E te Matua i te rangi  
i karangatia mātou kia rite ki te tamariki nohinohi  
i te mea nō te pēnei te rangatiratanga o te Rangi.  
Ka whakawhetai mātou mō Tārore  
i kawē nei i te Rongopai a Ruka.  
Hanga ki roto ki a mātou i tāu whānau hoki  
he aroha kia pono kia hōhonu kia noho tahi ai mātou  
i roto i te aroha me āu tamariki katoa,  
i roto i te kotahitanga o te Wairua Tapu.  
Ko te Karaiti hoki te Hēpara pai. Āmine.**

**Gracious and loving God,  
we thank you for Tārore,  
whose death brought not vengeance but reconciliation;  
create in us, your whanau,  
a gospel love and a truth so deep,  
that we too may live together in love with all your children,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit;  
through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.”**

In 1838 after the death of the paramount chief Te Waharoa, and Tārore his relation, Tarapipipi became the chief of Ngāti Hauā. He set up a Christian pa named Tāpiri near Waharoa, where services could be held undisturbed and where the inhabitants could live a Christian life. His life and mission from there is another story.

**Tārore of Waharoa**

**Holy book,  
holy whānau,  
holy child.**

**Tārore of Waharoa,  
your life poured out  
like the cascading waters of Wairere,  
like the death of the innocents.**

**May we who drink from your wellspring,  
be refreshed by the grace that enlightened you:**

**Gospel bearer,  
Child martyr,  
Life giver.**

**Your life and death become a parable,  
like the tales of the Christ,  
like Te Rongopai a Ruka.**

**Of such as these is the Kingdom of God.**



**Notes**

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