

Kia ora, gday and welcome to the History of Aotearoa New Zealand. Episode 37: Burning a Hole in my Wallet. This podcast is supported by our amazing Patrons, such as Karis. If you want to support HANZ go to patreon.com/historyaotearoa. Last time we began the story of Barnet Burns, an Englishman born in the early 19th century who became a flax trader in Aotearoa. He came over and fell in love with the land and people so much that he wanted to return to live on a permanent basis. To help with this he gained employment with a merchant named Montifore to set up a trade station in Mahia with a local iwi. We left Burns after he had been trading flax and other goods for 11 months until a ship carrying a Mr Sims arrived, who was an agent of Montifore. After a bit of scuffling and negotiation, Burns was given a choice, head back to Sydney or stay in Aotearoa on his own with no guarantee of income. He chose the latter.

Some time after this incident most of the tribe left their village, to tend their potato and kumara or sweet potato fields, that were some distance away. This left the village, called a pa due to its walled fortifications, rather defenceless with minimal people inside it. During this time Burns learned that a neighbouring iwi, Ngāti Te Whatu-i-apiti, were looking to attack the pa and take his trade goods, which Burns stated he would die in the effort to defend them due to the effort it took to get them off Mr Sims. However, his father in law, the rangatira, advised against it as there was no hope they could defend well enough with most of their fighting people away and too far to return in time. Instead, he said they should take a waka taua, a war canoe, load it with his stuff and head for Poverty Bay, the next major bay in the north. There they would be protected by Awahi's allies. Burns agreed, loading the waka with his goods, his Amotawa, their child, Awahi, himself of course and some slaves to do the actual paddling. This left those who had not gone into the fields behind, mostly women and children. The women grieved as they left, cutting themselves with "lava" which I can only guess means obsidian. This was a very common method of showing intense grief as the women felt they were now truly defenceless.

They had some difficulty getting to their destination with the waka and all the goods having to be carried over land at one point for 21km or 13 miles. Despite this arduous journey they made it safely to Poverty Bay and Awahi's allies, Te Aitanga-a-Mahaki iwi. They were very helpful to Burns, saying they would help him trade, supply him with food and protect him. To this end, the local rangatira advised Burns to travel another 19km or 12miles inland to where there were a series of strong pa. He had only been in Poverty Bay for 24hrs before he set out again towards these fortified villages, who also warmly recieved him. Burns says at this point he didn't really have much to do, perhaps as he needed to lay low for a bit. As such he decided to have a bit of a holiday and take in the sights, saying the area was "the finest and most beautiful of all the island" and that he found all sorts of animals and plants in abundance, however these were mostly European ones rather than the unique flora and fauna of Aotearoa. I can only assume this was because Burns wouldn't be able to identify our podocarps, weta or any of our wide range of endemic birds as opposed to the European ones that he was likely familiar with.

It was about three weeks after his escape from Mahia that Burns heard about another European in the area. Her wanted to go meet him for trade and likely just to see someone who was of similar culture but he was unable to. News came that a 600 strong army was heading towards them looking to rumble. Burns doesn't elaborate on why they were looking for a fight only that he was requested by his chief to join the battle. Whether this chief was Awahi or whoever was in command of the pa, Burns doesn't say, just that it was "his chief". This was to be Burns' first battle but not his last and didn't much encouragement to join despite any apprehension, saying that it was better to just dive right in than hesitate. Given that Burns had a number of muskets, shot and powder for trade he was able to help arm those setting out for battle, potentially giving them a significant advantage as we

mentioned earlier. The army was 700 strong when they left the pa looking for their enemies. They travelled 32km or 20 miles to where they thought the opposition army was, a large amount of smoke lifting into the air almost confirming where their camp was. The plan was to catch them by surprise and ambush them, however, this was foiled when one of their kuri, dogs, accidentally walked into the enemy camp during the night. They grabbed it, tied a cord to it and used it as a lead to have the dog take them back to camp of Burns and his allies. Instead of attacking though, they used this chance to run, possibly deeming the fight not worth it potentially due to superior numbers or firepower. Burns and company only discovered their escape the next morning and quickly got to pursuing them. They were long gone by that point though and team Burns was only able to capture some food carried by four slaves. As was typical at the time, the slaves were executed and eaten. Burns also describes his allies performing a "war dance" that they perform before and after a battle to show their joy in victory. The war dance is something that you may be familiar with as you likely have seen the All Blacks do one before every rugby game, a haka. There are many different types of haka so the one Burns would have seen wouldn't be THE haka as you know it as that one would have been written around this time if not a little later. With their enemies driven off, team Burns returned home.

Things were quiet for a time after that until Burns went on a flax buying trip with some of his new mates. Along the way they were attacked by a war party belonging to the Ngāi Te Rangi iwi. Burns says his party "fought to a man" but that they were overwhelmed and defeated with everyone being killed and eaten. Except Burns. The Ngāi Te Rangi party thought they could get a good ransom for him from his chief, given he was a trader, a source of valuable European goods. They took him into the bush to where the rest of the tribe was, Burns saying that "they had no houses belonging to them." So they were a somewhat nomadic group of people, something that was likely unusual at the time. Slavery in Māoridom wasn't unusual, as you might have figured by now but it was a lot different chattel slavery, that of the African slave trade. Slaves, or taurekareka, were given a lot more freedom than their African counterparts. Some slaves even rose to great wealth if they showed aptitude in certain arts or skills. What Burns says though is that he got "friendly" with a high ranking woman. A very high ranking woman as her father was the ariki, the high chief, essentially someone who has multiple rangatira who are loyal to him. A very powerful man indeed whose tapu, spiritual sacredness, extended to his daughter who could stop someone from being harmed by transferring that tapu via laying her kakahu, cloak, on them. According to the woman, the ariki wanted to be his friend and give him land. Although Burns doesn't actually say I assume this was to try and get Burns to stay and trade for them so they got access to the goods he could provide. She also says that due to the favour her father wanted to give him, there were others who were jealous and would likely kill him at the first opportunity. She tells Burns to stick close to her and her father to avoid execution, certainly a good idea given that almost unlimited protection was within their power to give but also potentially a manipulation tactic.

During his time as a slave, Burns was treated pretty poorly. He was taunted, spat on and told "they would eat my very heart the first opportunity they had". Within a few days Burns had had enough and naturally wanted to escape. Despite his poor treatment though, he kept his mouth shut from complaining as he thought this would result in those men being executed for doing something they really shouldn't. This wasn't meant to be altruistic though, their execution would eventually lead back to him complaining and result in worse treatment for him, something that had happened to other Europeans in similar situations. Instead he just watched and waited for a chance to get away, it never came. He was constantly watched so he changed tack and tried to gain their trust and be mates with them. Surprisingly, or at least it was surprising to me, it worked! This led to some of the rangatira wanting Burns to be tattooed as a show of loyalty, that he would "bring them trade, fight

for them and in every way make myself their friend.” This was a huge step in trust as tā moko, tattoo, was not undertaken lightly due to how expensive it was, the time it took and the physical stamina needed. Burns would have likely seen the procedure of moko take place at this point, one that was so painful often only a few centimetres could be done before they had to stop. As you might expect, Burns told the ariki that he wasn’t keen, although there were other reasons too. Burns actually just straight up told the high chief that he didn’t really like them and didn’t have any intention of joining them fully. I can only assume from then on that Burns had difficulty walking due to his giant brass balls. This apparently made the chief cry due to the high regard he held Burns in, although if this did happen and I kinda doubt it did, it would have likely been due to the loss of potential trade. In any case, the ariki was not able to force Burns to undergo the procedure but did warn that if he didn’t it would likely result in someone killing him despite being protected. The ariki was absolutely right as one day when Burns was out hunting birds he was accosted by a small group of his captors. Burns says they intended to kill him and that he “cocked my piece and told them to fire if they were inclined to kill me.” I don’t know about you but I can hear the brass clanging from here. His willingness to stand his ground must have impressed the group as they told Burns they wouldn’t kill him if he fought for them which would also mean he would have to get tattooed. Seeing no way out, Burns agreed. The group thought this was pretty great and cheered, carrying Burns home on their backs. Burns’ later remarks on this was that he did this more out of survival than any desire to actually be tattooed or join them, hoping to be found by his allies soon.

We mentioned it briefly before but the process of getting moko was long, gruelling and, in Burns’ own words, “horribly painful”. So after week of have bone chisels tapped into him not once but twice for every line, Burns was only a quarter done. We aren’t sure which part of his body was tattooed but we do know that his upper was somewhat tattooed in a style typical for English sailors so it was potentially his face that was done. We do know that he got his whole face done after these events so I’ll have a picture in the shownotes to let you see what he looked like. Thankfully for Burns though there was a storm on the seventh day and he managed to escape. He knew that they hadn’t travelled far from where his wife, child and the rest of the iwi were living so that was at least some comfort. The journey was still gruelling though as he was in dense bush with no shoes and anyone who has been out in the New Zealand bush will know, that this not just less than ideal but potentially dangerous. He also had to avoid patrols of his former captors who were sent out to find him when they discovered him missing. All this meant it took him three days to get back to his tribe but he did make it and they were very glad to see him with many muskets being fired in excitement. The women also cut themselves, just like those had when he had left them in Mahia as they used it to express extreme joy as well as grief, which made Burns uncomfortable as you might imagine.

Naturally his friends were pretty interested to know where he had been all this time. Although he doesn’t say, it’s probably fair to guess that he was gone between a few weeks to maybe even a couple of months. They also wanted to know what happened to the rest of the group he was with, who were now obviously not with him and the fact he had no flax as he had left with a large amount of it. This was to make no mention of the fact that he was now partially tattooed which would have aroused a lot of interest. Burns told them his story and they immediately swore to get utu, recompensation, in this case revenge. 60 men were immediately picked out to be part of a taua, a war party. They were armed with muskets before setting out to find Burns’ captors and bring back their heads, literally. Burns himself said that he would have gone but he felt unwell so instead retired to his own house. Ngāi Te Rangi, his captors, figured out pretty quickly that they weren’t going to find him and that when he did reach the rest of Team Burns, they would come after them. So they quickly got out of there, only leaving behind four pigs which the pursuing party found and

brought back. Although they hadn't exacted a violent revenge on their enemies, Team Burns was still pretty chuffed with having driven their enemies off and gotten a feed in the process.

After Burns recovered he went back to his day job, trading harakeke flax. On one particular trip up the Turanganui River in modern Gisborne, he could hear the sounds of a battle outside the village. He asked some of the locals about it, asking them what was going on and who was attacking them. He learned that it was Te Whakatohea iwi who had been stirring up trouble in the area for some time. Not wanting to get caught in the crossfire, Burns headed back down the river and back home. Not long after this word went out from the tribe he had been visiting that they intended to storm the pas of Te Whakatohea and drive them out of the region for good. They couldn't do this alone however and were asking for assistance from Team Burns and other local iwi. The rangatira agreed and an army of 600 was gathered together in preparation with Burns himself specifically being asked to not just join the taua but lead a contingent of 150 soldiers. A sign of not only their trust and respect but his mana, a word meaning things like prestige, gravitas, influence or spiritual aura that you might find around someone important, like the leader of a nation. The army set out, linking up with the others along the way to the pas, which Burns says were very strong although not big, probably only 400 metres or a quarter mile in diameter. By the time Team Burns and co reached the pas, everyone had been rushed inside the fortifications for protection, just like a medieval castle. Overall it had taken them three weeks to reach the pas and surround them, only seeing some minor skirmishes during that time. They were easily won and those captured or shot were eaten. It was at this point that Team Burns and the rest of the army settled in for a siege. Over the course of the siege people would sometimes leave the pa to try and forage food but more often than not, they were captured and usually eaten as was the case with one of the ariki's wives who tried to escape the pa by swimming across the river.

Burns goes into quite grizzly detail on how the chiefs laid claim to various parts of her body to eat, discussing in front of her as she was still alive. The woman was instructed to go to the river and wash the potatoes she was to be roasted with, at the same time the rangatira or their subordinates I guess, dug a pit for the hangi. Burns then says about when the woman returns, "I affirm positively that I saw this woman gather green leaves, lay them down on the hot stones, tie both her legs together herself and then ask one of the party to tie her hands. When this was done, she... threw herself down on the leaves. When she was over fire, she begged some of the party would knock her brains out; they would not; they kept her on the fire a few minutes, then laid potatoes over her and covered her up with earth – aye, before her life was half gone – until she was cooked fit for eating," Burns also mentions that they enjoyed her meat so much, especially since she was an enemy, that it was sent to people 480km or 300 miles away. This would have likely been done by either sun drying or smoking the meat as salt wasn't really used by Māori to preserve foodstuffs. The hangi food I mean, not people. Along with this, Burns describes how to cook a person more generally, saying that regardless of the rank of a person their head would be cut off and preserved in preparation of sale to Europeans or it would be buried in a more tapu fashion. The body was then cut into quarters and he specifically notes that it wasn't really washed at any point, even before it is cut up into smaller portions for cooking in the hangi. Burns notes that no meat is wasted when it was eaten out of flax woven baskets and in fact that these baskets were very clean and never reused. What you probably wonder though is whether Burns tried it himself and although we don't know if he tried human meat specifically, he does mention that he was impressed by hangi cooked food in general saying it tasted pretty good and noting that most often pork and potatoes were cooked this way. I can't help but wonder though whether Burns did have some but didn't know it given that other Europeans who took the chance to try human meat described it as tasting like pork pretty consistently. It is possible that Burns was playing up the gory details for effect, something you could argue for a number of

details in the book, but the descriptions seem to be roughly in line with other sources I've read on the subject.

Anyway, although there was a siege going on there was still some trading between the besiegers and the besieged. Things like flax for gunpowder and food for what Burns calls mats but by the way he describes them he actually means a kakahu cloak. Although this may seem counter intuitive, giving the enemy items they may need, it of course let Burns' side also get items they needed during the siege but also allowed them to get closer to the pa and perhaps even inside them to scope out the weaknesses a little and determine how they would storm them. In the end though, Team Burns decided to just rush the pa that he was sieging. They would cut the vines holding the gates closed or holding the walls together to get inside and smash the enemy once there. As you will be used to me saying by now, Burns doesn't go into any detail of the battle itself apart from that the plan worked and the pa's 400 occupants were captured, presumably minus those who were killed in any fighting, though Burns doesn't mention that either. The prisoners were shared around as war booty with about 60 of them being killed and eaten in celebration.

After their victory, Team Burns headed home, the various iwi splitting off to go back to their respective pa and kainga, villages. Things settled back into their usual routine for the next three weeks until a ship called the *Prince of Denmark* arrived from Sydney to trade. After some negotiation with Burns he managed to get employed by the captain for 3 pound a month with no extra commission on large amounts of flax. A bit of a raw deal compared to his previous employer but likely a much more steady income than what he had been doing since his last employer had given him the sack, which actually wouldn't have been that long ago. The timelines from various sources seem to be a bit varied but in general it seems that the *Prince* arrived in 1832, only a year after he had arrived as a trade master for Montifore! The catch was that he had to relocate again another 48km or 30 miles north along the coast to Tolaga Bay at the mouth of the Uawa River. Thankfully though his wife's brother lived there so they wouldn't be surrounded by those who were totally unfamiliar. So once again, Burns packed up himself, his wife, their child or potentially two children at this stage and a few others to head off up north. As a side note this is the first instance in his book that he mentions any children he may have had.

Next time, we will see Burns continue to rise in prominence in his iwi, until he is faced with the biggest decision of his life that will lead into the end of his story.

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