

Kia ora, gday and welcome to the History of Aotearoa New Zealand. Episode 42: For Today. This podcast is supported by our amazing Patrons, such as Sherilyn. If you want to support HANZ go to patreon.com/historyaotearoa. Last time, we started discussing the instruments under Hineraukauri, the goddess of flutes, mostly covering the kōauau and its variant the pōrutu as well as the rehu and whio. This time we will continue our discussion of these taonga pūoro with more flute and woodwind type instruments.

Lets start today with one of, if not the smallest of taonga pūoro, the nguru or as it is known in English, the nose flute. This instrument was only about 10cm or so long and has one end that was kind of pointed and curved upwards, this being the end that was blown into. It's thought that this general shape may have been derived from the necks of gourds or whale teeth, both of which could be used as materials to make nguru along with wood, stone and clay. Ones made of whales teeth were especially rare and highly prized whereas nguru made from gourds tend to be from the earlier periods dating to around 1500. Due to their small size and that they were only made from a single piece of material, they were actually quite difficult to hollow out and make, especially if they were made from whales teeth, which may have required a stone drill. Some nguru also show evidence of plugging up holes and redrilling, possibly due to them being in the wrong place. Interestingly enough the spacing of the finger holes tend to follow the same placement as the kōauau we discussed last time, however the extra hole on the bottom of the nguru isn't actually played in the same way, it was likely just used to help get rid of any condensation inside the instrument that would clog it up. As the name nose flute might imply, nguru were most famous for being played with the nostrils with the curved end being placed just in front of either nostril. Not rammed into it like you're trying to pick your nose or something! You may have guessed already but these were actually pretty difficult to play so it seems that only those who were important and skilled enough owned them, namely tohunga and rangatira. Though those who weren't very skilled tended to just play them with their mouths but playing with your nose definitely was preferred. This raised the status of the flute, and the player, not just cause you looked sick as but cause the nose and the breath from the nose was considered more spiritual as it was to do with the breath of life, the hongī, that of Tānemahuta breathing life into the first woman, making her sneeze. Best seemed baffled by why people would want to listen to these as opposed to an instrument played with the mouth, which could be more easily manipulated. However I personally think he may have missed the mark, much like a lot of our instruments today, listening to the melodies can sometimes only be half of the fun. Watching someone who is truly skilled at their art, as the nguru players would need to be, is certainly a spectacle in and of itself.

We move now from the world of the small to the world of the large with something that is more like a trumpet, the pūkāea. These were long wooden cylinders that were about 1-2m long that ended in a sort of flared mouth. Unlike most of the other instruments we have talked about these weren't made by taking a single piece of wood that was then carved and hollowed out. Instead the pūkāea would be made by splitting a piece of wood in half, hollowing out each half into a curve and then lashing them back together, sometimes with a finger hole halfway down. The flared mouth at the opposite end of the instrument was often also made from a separate piece of wood and attached as well. The whole thing would be put together so tightly that it could be difficult to see the seams, especially when they were soaked in water to absorb and swell as they sometimes were just before playing. The voice itself was described as "very loud and powerful" not that Europeans really thought much of it, with one saying "entirely discordant, if not absolutely hideous to a European ear". Which is, you know, basically what we expect at this point. On flip side, some Europeans did think it sounded pretty good, commenting that it could even be better than the brass trumpets and bugles that they were used to. This strong, commanding voice of the pūkāea was really enhanced by

two things, other than the players lungs of course. The first was that flared mouth, called a whara, which wasn't exactly flared but just saying curved doesn't really give the image of what it is. It's sometimes described as bell shaped? Anyway, the whara was big and I would guess acted as an amplifier, allowing the voice of the instrument to project further and louder. The other thing that helped is something that you may not have expected. When those two pieces of wood are lashed together to make the pūkāea a little V shaped piece of wood is also put inside the cylinder, sometimes more than one. This piece of wood is called a tohetohe or pūtohe, the tonsil and helps amplify the volume of the instrument as well. Though I couldn't find anything to explain how or why that is and to be honest as someone who doesn't know much about music I doubt I would understand anyway. In saying that though, there doesn't seem to be a huge amount of research done on this specific piece so that may account for it. Apparently only kaiwhiria, a species of vine, had wood with the correct sonic properties to make these tonsils. What is also quite interesting about them is that they were used in the pūtātara as well and carved to fit the ridges of the shell. In terms of what pūkāea were used for, they seemed to fit into a similar niche as pūtātara, that of a war trumpet. Well, that's what they were sometimes called anyway, they in fact weren't exclusive to war. They could announce the arrival of chiefs and even help in ascertaining what chief that was since, again like the pūtātara, each pūkāea would have it's own distinct voice. This was also recorded by Europeans as well, such as a group that arrived at a pā in 1834 and were greeted by the sound of a pūkāea as well as upon their leaving. They could also be used to carry words long distances, perhaps during battles to give commands for troop movements. Which kinda leads to the thinking of did Māori ever develop their own codes to ensure the enemy never found out what they were trying to tell each other? Anyway, pūkāea were also sat on the fortifications of pā to sound the alarm, throw insults at someone besieging a pā or to announce various occasions such as kumara planting.

Pūkāea were quite difficult to make though and required time, effort and skill, any of which could be in short supply. So what if Wiremu was the designated pūkāea player in his rangatira's party and the night before they are scheduled to arrive at a neighbour's pā, he misplaces it! Surely he's bugged right? Well, not if he knows how to make a tētere. Tētere were often used as substitutes for pūkāea or pūtātara being able to be made quickly out of tightly coiled harakeke. Do you remember the leaf telescope of Pixar's *Bugs Life*? Yea, basically that. The way they worked is basically similar to that of an instrument with a reed except these had a doubled over section of leaves at the mouth piece that ensured the whole thing didn't just fall apart when the person started blowing into it and making it vibrate. A slight variation on these was the pupatea which was a bit longer and likely made with a hoe, canoe paddle. The flax would be wrapped around the paddle with hinu, fat, or pia, flax gum, applied at each layer. This would continue, flax, fat, flax, fat, until the whole thing would be slid off the hoe, with the fat or gum preserving the instrument for longer.

Alright then, having covered instruments that you hit, blow and flick it's time to talk about the big one. The man, the myth, the legend, the pūtōrino. As described by Best, the pūtōrino resembles a Western piccolo. Except for one thing. It really doesn't, like at all. As I mentioned before, I'm not a music man so I could be totally missing the mark here but the piccolo and the pūtōrino, at least physically, have little in common that couldn't be compared to other flutes, so I'm not really sure where he was meant to be going with this. Whatever the case, the pūtōrino was essentially a long instrument, around 50cm, that had two pointed ends and a fatter middle, so a kinda oval shape. One of the ends would be a bit less pointed than other and have a hole in it to act as the mouthpiece, no nose for this one I'm afraid. There would also be another hole in the centre of the instrument that could act as an exit hole, finger hole or even as a secondary mouth piece to blow into. Pūtōrino were often carved with figures or faces and this hole was usually portrayed as their

mouth. There were also some that were, what you might call double barrelled, in that they had two oval sections that joined up at either end. These were a bit rarer though, probably because they were harder to make and highly sought after for their voice, which sounded similar to a *kōkako* when played by switching between the two sides. Its construction was similar to that of the *pūkāea* in that a piece of wood was split in half, hollowed out and lashed back together though it was slightly more simple in its design since it didn't have a *whara* or the *tonsil* to attach as well.

The voice of this *taonga pūoro* is really wherein the magic lies and I would guess is part of its air of importance as well as uniqueness, as this sort of instrument isn't really found in any other culture. What I mean is that the *pūtōrino* actually has not just one voice, but three. The funny thing about this though is that it also contributes to a lot of confusing information about them, since many different people describe their voice vastly differently given they are hearing the different voices. Such as Best saying that Māori of his day describe the voice as that of water running into a gourd when dipped in a creek, however Sydney Parkinson, an illustrator on Cook's first voyage, said it made a harsh, shrill sound. In actuality it made both of these sounds depending on how you played it. It has also been described as being like the sound of a bubbling spring which could be due to that hole in the centre being manipulated by the hand. *Te kōkiri a te tāne* was the male voice, which was more of a stronger noise kinda closer to the *pūkāea* or *putātara* and used to call people together. On the other end there was *te waiata a te hine*, the female voice or the voice of the singing woman which was a much lighter noise used to express grief. The third voice is a bit different and described as "seems to come out of nowhere and just hangs there above and all around you". This is the child voice and in fact was the one that was likely being referenced when talking about the sound of a gourd filling with water. I wasn't able to find out what this was used for, as you will realise, there is a lot we actually just don't know about *pūtōrino* as well as *taonga pūoro* in general. However some have theorised that the child voice could be the manifestation of *irirangi*, a spirit's voice. Part of this is that Best records that northern iwi called the *pūtōrino* a *puhoho*, apparently because it was an onomatopoeia of the noise the instrument made. As a bit of an aside, you may be wondering why all these instruments have *pū* in the name, *pūtōrino*, *pūtātara* and *pūkāea*. Well, the simplest answer is that *pū* in Te Reo Māori means, in this case, to blow and is a generic term for flute, as well as gun or musket. It also has a bit of a history in the Pacific as many other Polynesian cultures use similar terms for pursing the lips or in reference to trumpets.

Overall though there isn't a huge amount of information that we know about these *taonga pūoro*, particularly from first hand accounts from Europeans. Some think that this could indicate that *pūtōrino* were an item with heavy *tapu* and only *tohunga* used them with its use declining after European arrival. However we do know that they may have also been used to speak messages into with the words being understood quite some distance away. As well as not being played in the village or where people gathered, according to Best, though he doesn't elaborate on this thought. Now days there are only a few places you can find these instruments. Of course you can see them in person if you know someone who owns one and knows how to play it or you can see them represented in the carvings adorning *whare nui*. However, the place you most likely will see them is in a museum, specifically the British Museum, which has more *pūtōrino* in its collection than all the museums in New Zealand.

That pretty much brings us to the end of systematically going through each instrument and discussing it so for the rest of the episode I'm just going to talk about a few other random bits and bobs that didn't really fit but I think are still interesting. One thing you are probably wondering after I've talked fairly frequently about what Europeans thought of Māori instruments is what did Māori think of European instruments? We did talk about this briefly in our discussion on the *rōria*, the little

comb like thing that you flick near your mouth as there was a European equivalent, the Jew's harp that Māori did take a big liking too. However it seems that there were definitely some that they were really not into at all. Such as when Cook arrived in Dusky Sound in 1773 he records that he "caused the bagpipes and fife to play and the drum to beat. The two first they did not regard, but the latter caused some little attention in them." Again, the bagpipes getting dunked on there... It seems that Māori were really mostly interested in instruments that they could somewhat relate to, such as the drum in Cook's example as Māori were familiar with other percussion instruments as we have discussed. They also showed interest in most wind instruments as well likely given this was the group they were the most familiar with, with the exception of the bagpipes... They even liked the organ quite a lot as well apparently! The group that Māori were really not interested in though was the string instruments, especially the violin with Best saying it was a good way to "get rid of native visitors". Again this is likely down to Māori unfamiliarity with these instruments and not really having an ear attuned for them, versus their more common taonga pūoro of wind and breath. What makes this kinda interesting is that Māori seem to be unique in their dislike for violins and such like as other Polynesian and Pacific Islands tended to have found them pretty alright, such as Tikopia of the Solomon Islands or the Tahitians who thought the bagpipes were pretty cool! Finally! Partly due to all this, Best writes that he and others thought that Māori didn't appreciate what he calls higher forms of music, or art in general and were only interested in basic beats and objects in paintings rather than how notes are brought together in harmony or colours are blended together. Now, ignoring the fact that this podcast alone has disproven that entire point it does lead nicely into another aspect of taonga pūoro, they actually had more subtleties than Western instruments. What I mean is that Māori instruments moved up and down in microtones, which is less than the modern semitone. So although they didn't have as much range as the stuff that Best was used to, they had a lot more, what you might almost call depth to them, and we do hear frequently of nearly every instrument we have talked about in this short series being played with other people, either playing the same instrument or others in harmony. In general, Māori musicians didn't really adhere to any sort of strict scale like their European counterparts with a lot of the change in the voice of the instrument coming from manipulation of the lips, tongue and fingers. This clash between cultures seems to have resulted in both sides not really appreciating many aspects of what the other had to offer musically.

As you should know by now, taonga pūoro had all sorts of uses and functions that they played in Māori society. One of the most common being their use as a warning device or to pass messages and in general they do seem to have been mostly used to accompany spoken word like karakia, challenges or even insults. There were lots of other ways they were used too, like talking to the world around them or talking to the spirits, sometimes for matakite, prophecy. Some were played to aid with conception with it being said that if you wanted to make a baby you needed to play a particularly phallic one like the kōauau. The running of the finger over the third hole meant to replicate the act of pulling back the foreskin. They could also be used to ease the pain of labour, especially if the instrument in question was made from the bones of an ancestor. Whether this was something spiritual or more worldly in nature, say as a distraction, it isn't clear, though I suspect both. Some may have been played over a baby's fontanelle, particularly a small, one finger holed flute called a pūmotomoto by Tūhoe. What's interesting about this flute is that it has a notch at the mouthpiece, something we see in similar instruments all across the world like the Middle East, South America and Japan. This flute would also be played over the woman's belly when she was pregnant right up until a baby's fontanelle ossified, which could be after about 22 months. We of course know that music could be used during the arduous process of tā moko both as a distraction and to call on the aid of tīpuna to give them strength and help them through the pain. One source in particular

recalled his dad playing the flute as the blood dried. Music could be played to help a whole host of injuries, like broken bones, sinus or chest congestion or to help with relief from arthritis or wrist pain through the act of playing.

What I find the most fascinating thing about taonga pūoro, and also what makes them so unique, is that they are a human interpretation of the world around us. Or at least, the world that is Aotearoa. Cause Māori took inspiration for not just the materials but also the voices of instruments from Papatūānuku, primarily the birds and insects that live upon her. One quote which illustrates the variety and wonder of the New Zealand dawn chorus is that of a rather famous quote by Joseph Banks when he awoke in Totaranui, Queen Charlotte Sound on board the *Endeavour* in 1770 “This morn I was awaked by the singing of the birds ashore from whence we are distant not a quarter of a mile, the numbers of them were certainly very great who seemed to strain their throats with emulation... [Their] voices were certainly the most melodious wild musick I have ever heard, almost imitating small bells but with the most tuneable silver sound imaginable.” This is one of those things that I think connects us to those in the past, that desire when we see something cool in nature to imitate it or use it to make ourselves better. In this case to help communicate, heal or pick up chicks. In the modern day the guitar has mostly taken over as the dominant instrument in the Māori realm of music. The art of playing many of the instruments we have discussed has been lost to time as well as colonisation and Christianity removing the rituals and ceremonies taonga pūoro were used for resulting in their gradual disuse. However, in 1991 a hui was held which resulted in three men going out and trying to collate everything that was still known about these instruments and revive their use. On both accounts they were successful, in the 90s taonga pūoro saw a revival of people taking them up and learning their voices and quite frankly without the efforts of those men these episodes literally would not have been possible. With the exception of Elsdon Best’s writings, which despite having typical views for his time is still a useful source, all the sources I was able find were written by one of these three. Brian Flintoff, Richard Nunns and the late Hirini Melbourne essentially brought together and wrote down all that we know about taonga pūoro. So I would like to give a huge thank you and pakipaki, round of applause, for their efforts which has meant that this information hasn’t been lost and can be used for generations.

Next time, I have somebody else come on the podcast to talk more about Māori music, someone who knows a lot more than me. We will be covering a lot of ground of more modern Māori music as well as lot of fun little tangents too! It will be heaps of fun as well as a big milestone for HANZ as our first interview!

If you want to send me feedback, ask a question, suggest a topic or just have a chinwag you can reach me through email at historyaotearoa@gmail.com or Twitter at History Aotearoa or Facebook at History Aotearoa New Zealand Podcast. This podcast is a one man band, if you enjoy listening to me talk history, you can support us through Patreon, buy merch from historyaotearoa.com or give 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!!