

The old people had a great veneration for Tapuinikau, and looked upon the stronghold as *tapu*. Should visitors arrive and wander over the old fortification, they were warned not to touch any of the trees or shrubs. Clumps of flax growing on the summit were especially sacred, and should any one pull or cut the flax they would be destroyed with *makutu* (witchcraft). The tuatara lizard, that strange New Zealand reptile which is a survival of antediluvian days, were to be found on the pa. The Natives took particular care not to molest them, as they were under the particular care of Tane Mahutu, the Maori god who controlled all affairs of the forest. A Maori informant told the writer that up till recent times the bark around the foot of many sloping trees could be seen worn quite smooth and polished. This was caused by the lizards drawing their scaly bodies over the bark as they climbed the trees to bask in the warm rays of the sun.

Most of the old people were well versed in the ancient songs of their tribes, and on sunny mornings and at eventide would sit for hours near the river-bank at the base of Tapuinikau and chant the history of their forefathers. There are several clumps of native bush on the river-banks in the locality, and the note of the tui and makomako (bell-bird) may be heard occasionally. Of fantails there are considerable numbers, and their friendliness as they pirouette out over the water in search of gnats are the only movements that disturb the quietude of this interesting old home of the departed Maori people.

On the lower slopes of Tapuinikau is situated a large boulder named Rangi Hauku. This stone is sacred to the memory of the dead. For many generations Natives have paid periodical visits to the spot to pay tribute to their departed. When the mourner or mourners reach the boulder they deposit green leaves on it, and then sit beside it and softly croon their ancient chants to the spirits of their ancestors. The custom still prevails. A recent chat with a Native resulted in interesting information being given respecting Rangi Hauku, the Native intimating that his people still remembered their old folk, and liked to show their remembrance, as does the pakeha in the services held on Anzac day.

[EDITORIAL NOTE.—Section 33 of the Native Land Amendment and Native Land Claims Adjustment Act, 1926, authorized the Governor-General, by Proclamation, to declare that certain lands should become vested in the Crown, to be held and administered as a reserve under the Scenery Preservation Act. The lands in question included the Tapuinikau Pa site of 2 acres 2 roods 25 perches, which area was duly declared a scenic reserve by Proclamation dated the 10th October, 1929. In accordance with the terms of the legislation, the special Board of control set up to administer the reserve includes three members of the Ngatimaehau hapu. It is hoped at an early date to make arrangements for the fencing of the reserve.]



Inia te Ngongohau (the last Trustee of Tapuinikau), and his Wife, Mihi Rameka.

[By courtesy of the *Taranaki Daily News*.