Conclusion

In 1826, the same year that Rewa, Te Kēmara and their allies defeated Ngāre Raumati at Moturahurahu, Hongi Hīka embarked upon a war with Ngāti Pou of Whangaroa. Ngā Puhi tradition says that Hongi’s war with Ngāti Pou was in revenge for the killing of his maternal grandfather, Tahapango (Wiremu Wi Hongi). In October 1826, the Wesleyan Mission Station at Whangaroa was attacked, and in January of the following year, Hongi, with a war party of about four hundred, took Pīnia pā (near the Whangaroa heads) and Taratara pā (on the western side of the harbour). The fleeing Ngāti Pou were pursued through Ōtangaroa to the Mangamuka Valley, where a further battle took place. During this battle Hongi was shot through the chest by Maratea of Ngāti Pou. Hongi survived for a further year, but finally died of the wound on 6 March 1828. (Lee, 1983:136–40; Smith, 1910:398; Williams, 1961:37).

Traditions state that Hongi’s body was initially placed in a cave at Matauri Bay, but that his bones were later removed to Wharepaepae Cemetery, south of Kaikohe,

Te take i whakatsupuria ia ki konei, tōna tūa no konei, tōna mana kaha hoki no konei … Ka tākina e ōna tūa, ka mauria ake ki tana pā o Ōkuratope, 3 pō ki reira. Mauria mai ki tana pā i Kaikohe, ki Pakinga, 3 pō, ka mauria ki te wāhi tapu ki Wharepaepae, ki te wāhi tapu hoki o tana tupuna, o Maikuku (Wiremu Wi Hongi).

The reason [that he was brought back is that] he was raised here, his bravery originated here, his mana and strength derived from this place. [His bones] were taken by his warriors and carried up to his pā, Ōkuratope, they were there for 3 nights. They were [then] carried to his pā at Kaikohe, to Pakinga, for 3 nights, [and then] carried to the burial place at Wharepaepae, indeed, to the burial place of his ancestor Maikuku.

With the above passage Wiremu Wi Hongi concluded his wānanga manuscript. It remains to conclude this study with some general remarks concerning the political past recounted here.

Missionary accounts suggest that at the time of Hongi’s death, in 1828, the name ‘Ngā Puhi’ was used in the Bay of Islands to refer to the hapū of the northern alliance only. In February 1828, Henry Williams wrote from Paihia concerning a conflict between the northern and southern alliances as follows,
Tohitapu came for breakfast. He said he had sent a message to Waimate to tell Ngapuis [Ngā Puhi] not to come, but perhaps they would not attend to him. It appears that the quarrel has continued for many years between this tribe [Te Koki’s people of the southern alliance] and Ngapuis. There has been much fighting amongst them and many killed on each side. Tohitapu is a Ngapui and consequently opposed to Te Koke [Te Koki] though they meet here as friends. It has, however, been reported lately

(ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY, NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NEW ZEALAND/TE PUNA MĀTAURANGA O AOTEAROA, 832.11AJ, 1931)
that some of Te Koke’s party have said they would cut off Tohitapu’s head and also that of Tareha ... (Williams, 1961:104).

One month later, referring to a conflict between the Te Waimate hapū, led by Rewa and Tareha, and Te Māhurehure, a hapū of Waimā, Williams wrote,

The eventful day is at length arrived which is to determine the question between these two great powers, the Napui [Ngā Puhi] and the Mahurehure (ibid:115).

It is clear from the above passages that Williams, who had by 1828 gained a good knowledge of Bay of Islands politics, regarded Ngā Puhi as the confederation of hapū principally led by Hongi, Rewa, Tareha, and his nephew Titoare. Of course we cannot be certain that Williams’ understanding reflected that of the Bay of Islands hapū; however, we can see no reason to doubt that it did so in this case (see also Binney, 1968:58n).

A map drawn in 1831, based on information gathered by D’Urville during his visit to the Bay of Islands in 1827, names three main political groupings: Ngatepo (Ngāti Pou), Maoure-oure (Te Māhurehure) and Ngā poui (Ngā Puhi); see map 9. It is significant that the distance between Waimate and Pouke-noui (Pukenui) is greatly exaggerated on this map, probably reflecting the marked political division between the northern alliance (Ngā Puhi) and the southern alliance (unnamed).

This map and the missionary accounts of the late 1820s suggest that the name Ngā Puhi was not extended to the hapū of the southern alliance or to Te Māhurehure of Hokianga until at least the 1830s. In general terms, therefore, the process of Ngā Puhi tribal formation in the Bay of Islands region appears to have proceeded via at least three distinct phases. Firstly, in the mid- to late 1700s, and coinciding with the conquests of Te Waimate and Taimai, there was the formation of the northern and southern alliances. Secondly, there was a growth in the political and economic power of the northern alliance, facilitated by greater access to trade after 1815, leading to their eventual conquests of Ngāre Raumati and Ngāti Pou (1826-27) and a subsequent control of all trading ports (Kororareka was taken by them in 1830). Finally, there was an extension of the name, ‘Ngā Puhi’, from the most powerful northern alliance to other related hapū of the southern alliance and Hokianga.

Tribal genealogies do not name all the ancestors of a particular individual. To a large extent, they are politically motivated in that only certain lines of descent from key ancestors to living individuals or groups, and important marriage ties between ancestors at different generational levels, are remembered and passed on. Thus they are able to reflect and legitimate a contemporary and changing political order. Wiremu Wi Hongi’s narrative presented in part 2 of this study establishes the foundations of Ngā Puhi as a united tribe whose members are descendants of a common ancestor, Rahiri. In so doing it reflects and reinforces the contemporary political order.

But would such an account have been generally accepted in the inland Bay of Islands in 1815? To what extent would the hapū of the northern and southern
alliances have conceived of themselves as belonging to a single, genealogically defined unity? Genealogy, as an ideological expression of politics, and politics, as an active expression of genealogy, are dialectically related. This being the case, one might assume that the later extension of the name ‘Ngā Puhi’ to designate a larger political whole had its basis in some prior conception of genealogical unity. However, it is also possible that the formation of this larger unit coincided with a greater emphasis being placed on common descent from Rāhiri and his two sons, Uenuku and Kaharau.

Such shifts in relative emphasis legitimate claims to greater mana by politically powerful hapū, in this case the northern alliance, effectively denying such claims to others. Thus when Ngāti Miru, Te Wahineiti, and Ngāti Pou leaders departed from Te Waimate and Taiaumai, many of their ancestors began to fade from genealogical memory, their names now only occasionally heard amid the laughter of the pūriri trees.