



Rangikapiti Pa Historic Reserve

Historic Heritage Assessment

Kaitaia Area Office

Melina Goddard 2011



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Rangikapiti Pa: Historic Heritage Assessment

Melina Goddard, DoC, Kaitaia Area Office
2011

Cover image: Aerial of Rangikapiti pa historic reserve. The pa is seen in the grassed area

Peer-reviewed by: Alan Macrae (DoC Historic Ranger), Joan Maingay.

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Contents

Site overview	5
History description	5
Fabric description	6
National context	7
Historic significance	7
Fabric significance	8
Cultural significance	8
Management history	8
Management documentation	9
Management recommendations	9
Sources	10
Maps and images	11-14
Endnotes	15

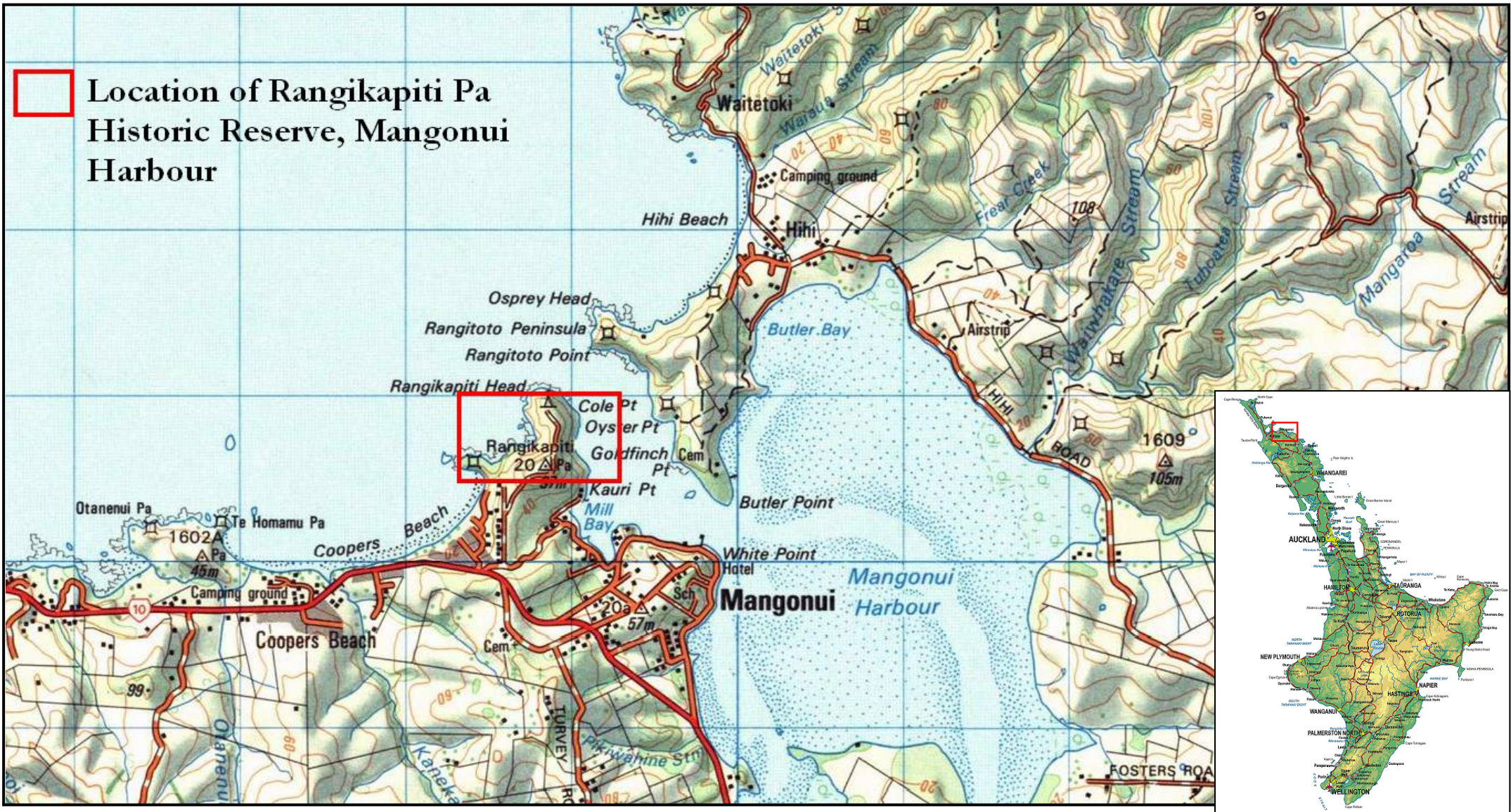


Figure 1: Location of Rangikapiti Pa in the Mangonui Harbour, Northland

Site Overview

Rangikapiti Pa is situated on the south western headland of Mangonui Harbour in the Doubtless Bay area (fig 1). The pa is a dominant feature on the Doubtless Bay landscape and has always attracted a high amount of visitors due to its close proximity to the Mangonui Township and its stunning views of the harbour and the Doubtless Bay coastline. The site has significant Maori oral traditions attached to it that relate to an early Polynesian explorer, Kupe. It is in good condition and the fabric of the pa represents the immense effort and ingenuity that went into its construction. The pa is highly significant to Ngati Kahu and it is protected under the Historic Places Act 1993.

Land status: *Historic Reserve.*

Administered by: *Kaitiaki Area Office.*

Access by: *Rangikapiti Road.*

Visitor numbers: *annually 35,000.*

Heritage status: *protected under the Historic Places Act 1993, the Conservation Act 1987 and the Reserves Act 1977.*

Site area: *34.4 hectares.*

Functional location number: *DN-61-300-3000.*

NZAA site record form: *O04/15*

History Description

Northland is almost certainly one of the first areas of Aotearoa to be settled by Polynesian voyagers. This is because its sub tropical climate was similar to that found in their tropical homeland and was able to support cultivation of hot climate cultigens including yams, gourds, kumara and taro. Today the archaeological landscape of the Doubtless Bay area reflects intensive Maori occupation. The area was abundant in seafood resources and had areas of rich gardening soil. As the population increased numerous battles were fought for control of these resources.¹ This is in turn reflected in the number of pa sites along the coast, Rangikapiti Pa being one of them.

The Doubtless Bay region has numerous oral traditions, some of which can be traced to Rangikapiti Pa. One of the stories relates that in circa A.D 900 the great Polynesian explorer and navigator Kupe, who some credit with the discovery of New Zealand, landed at Otengi Bay, near Taipa, in the canoe *Mamaru* (or *Matuborua*). It was hauled ashore on tawapou skids, (a rare Maori plant) which were planted on a nearby headland and grow there still, carrying a strong tapu. From this landing place at Otengi Bay, Kupe journeyed around New Zealand before returning back to his homeland of Hawaiiiki.²

The *Mamuru* is said to have returned to Aotearoa circa A.D 1350 as part of what has been called the great migration. The chiefs Te Parata and Tumoana were now in command, bringing the ancestors of the Ngati Kahu tribe to Mangonui. One of the waka named the *Ruakaramea* had the chief Moehuri in it and it is said that he was guided by a large shark to the Mangonui Harbour, thus he named it Mangonui "large shark". Moehuri decided to build a pa at the harbour entrance and he named it after his wife, Rangikapiti. He settled here permanently and he ordered the waka, *Ruakaramea* to be

taken to a deep spot in the harbour and laid to rest there, ordering no fishing to be done in this spot.³

At Rangikapiti the years passed for Moehuri and his people and his children grew. His son Tukiato showed all the signs of being a worthy successor to his father. However Tukiato would not take the advice of his elders and one day he and some other young men caught the tapu shark that had guided his father into the harbour. They were preparing to cut it up when Moehuri arrived. He told the offenders that whoever had hurt this shark had hurt him and he banished his own son Tukiato and his accomplices from that area.⁴ Tukiato went and built a small pa approximately 2 miles west of Rangikapiti and named his pa Otanenui (the place of the huge old man Tamure or snapper). He regretted his past misdemeanours and became a respected member of his tribe.⁵

Rangikapiti is located on a strategic point overlooking and controlling the entrance to the Mangonui Harbour and the Oruiti river valley. It is also associated with a number of other pa along the coast including Whakaangi on the eastern side of the harbour, which was also built by Moehuri. In addition Otanenui and Ohumumu pa 2km north along the western coast were built by Moehuri's son Tukiato and his grandsons Korewha and Puneke.

Fabric Description

The reserve is focused around the pa, which is built on the headland hilltop. Apart from some coastal pohutakawa, much of the reserve is covered with regenerating 2-4m high manuka that nearly encircles the hill. The remaining area is covered in grass, and includes the southern approaches and the highly visible hilltop pa (fig 2). The pa was originally recorded by D. Robinson in the 1960's. It was only in recent years that accurate archaeological plans were drawn (fig 3).

Rangikapiti Pa is a typical design of later Maori prehistory. The construction of this pa involved extensive earthworks. Pa sites were used as places of refuge and the surrounding peninsula would have been used for habitation, gardening and other settlement activities.

Features of the pa are a summit tihi (platform), upon which a modern cairn and survey marker have been erected. The tihi is surrounded by concentric rings of more than forty terraces, with a defensive ditch and bank intermittently surrounding the southern slope. Beyond the defences are several outlying isolated terraces and a series of terraces also run down the slope to the north towards the headland (fig 4).⁶ Further unrecorded features can be expected north to the end of the peninsula and down the eastern and western sides.

The pa would have had palisades encircling the terraces and across the two ditches on the outer edges of the pa stopping enemy entry. The tihi would have been associated with the chiefly resident. To have the traditional name of the pa and also its oral traditions is fortunate and these can be interpreted and appreciated in addition to the fabric of the pa site.

Although the pa has suffered damage over the years with the road going to the upper terraces and the track running over the features to the tihi, it is largely complete and in

good condition. The features that make up the site are diverse; these include terraces, tihi and midden. These represent a range of Maori settlement activities. On a local level the fabric of the pa site is not rare as there are numerous pa sites on this coastline and within Northland. However it is an important site within the archaeological landscape of the Doubtless Bay/Mangonui Harbour area. Rangikapiti is part of the wider archaeological fabric of this coastline and the other pa sites recorded here are all culturally connected.

National Context

There are many variations in the traditions of Kupe and many place names drawn from the stories of his explorations and adventures. Pakeha scholars have written much about these traditions and have strongly divergent views about them. Maori tribal authorities also give regionally different accounts of Kupe.⁷ In all of these traditions there are some common elements. Kupe was a very early exploring ancestor, most say the first of the Polynesian ancestors to arrive here in Aotearoa from Hawaiki. Most traditions name his canoe *Matawhaorua* or *Matahorua* although some say these were different canoes. In all of them he is credited with dividing the land or cutting the land in half, a reference to his journeying through Raukawa Moana (Cook Strait) as he explored the coastline. The place names associated with Kupe occur from Raukawa Moana northwards to Te Tai Tokerau (Northland). This suggests he is principally an ancestor of Te Ika a Maui (North Island) tribes.⁸

The three regions where the Kupe traditions are the strongest are Heretaunga (Hawkes Bay), Ruakawa Moana and Te Tai o Aorere (Cook Strait and Tasman Bay) and Te Tai Tokerau (Northland). Rangikapiti Pa fits into these oral traditions through association with Kupe's visit to Doubtless Bay.

Pa sites are found in large numbers throughout New Zealand and in particular Northland. They are defensive fortifications strategically located on hilltops, headlands and ridges. Pa construction tends to reflect the landscape and political and social situations of the time.

In the historic period of Mangonui, European traders, whalers, sealers and missionaries arrived here and Mangonui became a thriving port providing supplies, repairs and rest for the many ships and their crews. Kauri trees grew in abundance and their trunks were sought-after for their length and diameter to serve as spars and masts.

Rangikapiti is part of the historic fabric of the Mangonui township which has many of its historic buildings still preserved. These buildings are not limited to but include The Mangonui Courthouse (1892), Mangonui Hotel (1905), the Wharf Store (1890), the Mangonui Hall (1894) and St Andrew's Anglican Church (1860). Mangonui is one of the few historic towns in New Zealand that has a large number of its heritage buildings still intact and Rangikapiti and its associated pa are all linked with the history of this region.

Historic Significance

The significance of Rangikapiti pa lies in the cultural traditions attached to the site. In addition to telling the story of Rangikapiti, its people and how it came to be, additionally

tradition has linked the past with the present and future by providing a name for the township; Mangonui after Mochuri's great shark.

Fabric Significance

The fabric significance of Rangikapiti Pa is the overall good condition, the diversity of its archaeological features and the position it plays within the larger archaeological landscape. The pa is part of Aotearoa's built heritage and represents the enormous effort and ingenuity that went into building these impressive earthwork structures.

Today coastal subdivision development has increased in the area and the Rangikapiti Reserve and the nearby Taumarumaru Reserve have become the last significant areas of undeveloped coast between Taipa and Mangonui. This has made the reserve a focus of interest for both local people, for its recreational potential and its natural values (specifically through weed control and tracks) and tangata whenua who wish to protect and promote its archaeological and traditional values.

Cultural Significance

Rangikapiti Pa is highly significant to Ngati Kahu who hold manuhenua of the pa and other iwi who may claim ties. The significance lies in the cultural traditions and the fabric of the pa which are intertwined. It is also significant to all New Zealanders as part of their early history.

Management History

- 1800's the Oruru Land Block was purchased, Rangikapiti Pa being part of this block.
- 1907- 54 acres of the block were gazetted as a scenic reserve.
- 1980's several small adjacent parcels of land were acquired extending the reserve to 54 hectares.⁹
- 1980 The Lands and Survey Department re-gazetted Rangikapiti Pa as a historic reserve in recognition of the significant traditional and archaeological values.
- Authority # 1993/26 issued by the Historic Places Trust to modify part of the site to repair the access tracks and steps (built in the lands and survey days which were found to be too steep and dangerous) and weather proofing of the site.
- In 2008 an authority was applied for and approved, however the upgrade work is still pending.

Under the management of Lands and Survey steps were excavated into the scarps of the terraces, these became increasingly steep through wear and erosion. To avoid the potentially dangerous steps new informal paths have been formed spreading the damage across the features of the pa. These have recently been taken out to install safer and archaeologically sensitive steps, however for various reasons this has not been carried out

and these parts of the pa remain too steep to comfortably walk down and damage to the features of the pa is increasing given the high visitor numbers. This pa has significant values and it is unfortunate that these are being affected.

Past management of the reserve has revolved around vegetation control to minimize possible fire risk and to maintain open views for the public. Included in this was the need to maintain access on to and around the pa for the benefit of the public and to enable servicing of the navigation beacon at the harbour mouth. Until recently grass was maintained by grazing with sheep.

Management Documentation

Current historic DoC management file numbers: HHA-01-01-08 NLK-1 03/09/1996; HHA-01-01-08-01 NLK-1 18/10/2004

Heritage assessment: 936609

Baseline inspection: *Rangikapiti Historic Reserve Conservation Plan. Department of Conservation.*

- 1993. A. Macrae and J.Maingay. Rangikapiti Pa remedial work plan. Department of Conservation, Northland Conservancy.
- 2001, Barr, C., A. Macrae and J Robinson. AHMP 11 Rangikapiti Pa. Actively managed historic place heritage inventory. DoC Northland Conservancy, Whangarei.
- 2006, Robinson, J. Archaeological assessment for proposed new carpark. Unpublished report for the Department of Conservation, Kaitaia Area office
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- 2008, Geometria. Archaeological assessment of proposed track upgrade on archaeological site O04/15 Rangikapiti Pa, Rangikapiti Pa Historic Reserve, Mangonui.

Management Recommendations

- Follow the maintenance regime as set out by the historic ranger
- Archaeological survey needs to be conducted of the headland, to the north of the pa and also the eastern and western sides as there will be archaeological features associated with Rangikapiti Pa.
- Further damages from foot traffic over the pa needs to be addressed and prevented.

Sources

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<http://www.doubtlessbay.co.nz/heritagetrail.htm>- for information on the Mangonui heritage trail



Figure 2: Rangikapiti Pa as seen from Mill Bay in the Mangonui Harbour facing northwest. M.Goddard 2011

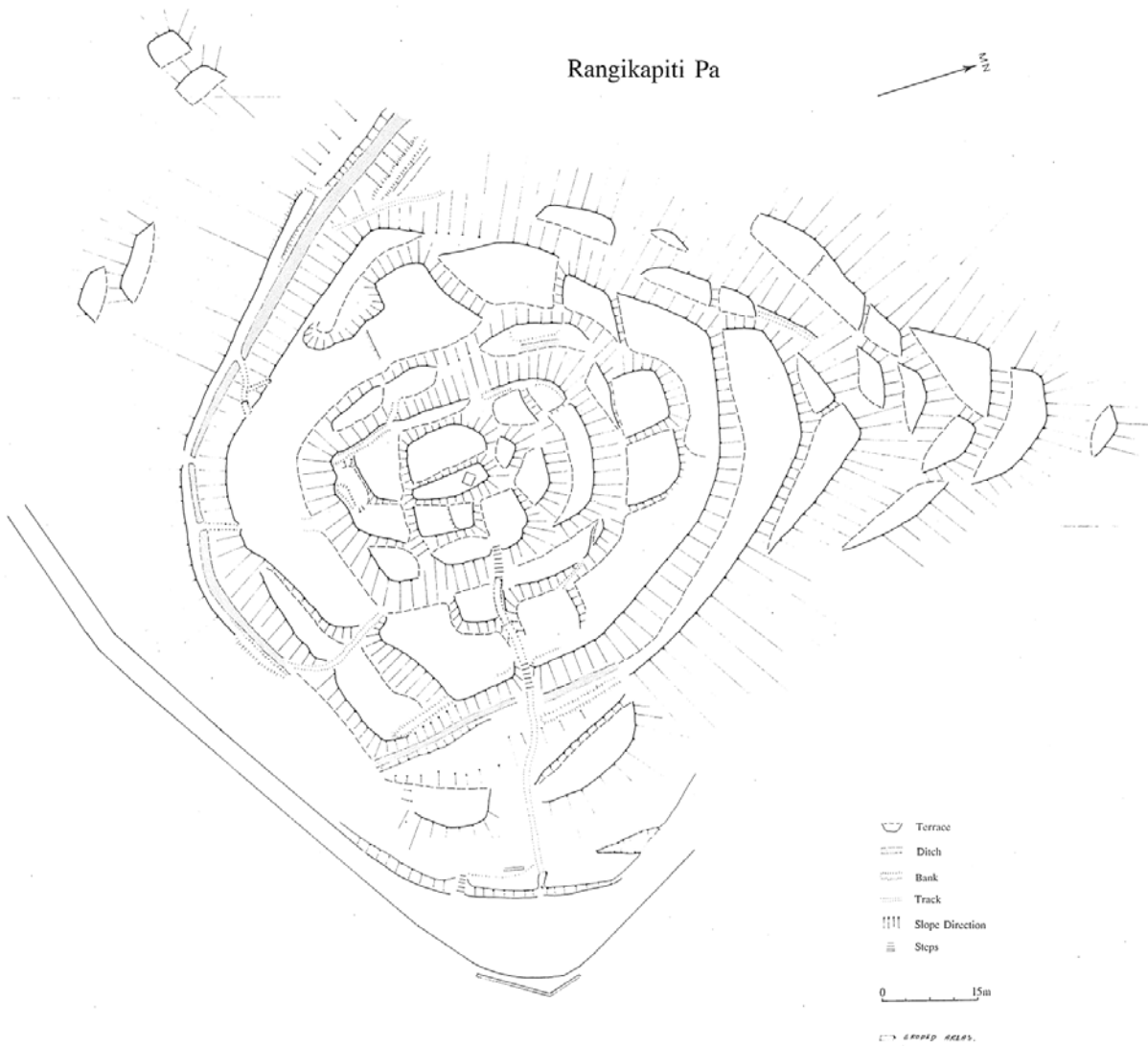


Figure 3: Map of the archaeological features of the pa (J. Maingay, J. Robinson)



Figure 4: Aerials taken of Rangikapiti Pa in 2004 Kevin Jones



Figure 5: Aerials taken of Rangikapiti Pa in 2004 Kevin Jones

Endnotes

¹ Robinson. J: 1999:9.

² Mckenna. N.C:1

³ Rangikapiti pa file DoC 1955

⁴ Piripi et al: 1934-1941:1

⁵ Piripi et al: 1934-1941:2

⁶ Geometria:2008:9

⁷ Davis, Te Aue. 1990:14.

⁸ *ibid*

⁹ Robinson. J. 2005:2