

# Surveying — the Maori and the Land:

## AN ESSAY IN HISTORICAL REPRESENTATION



THIS ESSAY considers the issue of historical representation, with particular reference to the activities of land surveyors working in New Zealand from the 1840s through to the 1870s. As a case study, it examines surveyors' representations of Maori, and their reflections on their own role in the colonizing process, but will seek to do so without reinscribing or endorsing those same representations. The essay will also discuss the challenges facing historians in dealing with this material and suggests how historians should explore (or explode) these representations. It is also proposed here that deconstructive readings of the past — reading 'against the grain' — while useful in exposing the agendas and attitudes of colonial agents, are severely limited by their reliance on Eurocentric texts. It proposes instead that a more convincing postcolonial reading should have access to evidence from both Maori and non-Maori sources and should focus on the subjectivity of colonial observers.

The task of the colonial surveyor was not a modest one. Surveyors were charged with reining in the wilderness, creating order from chaos and making sense from confusion. Among the vanguard of settlers to the new world, their objective was to create Antipodean outposts of empire that would replicate and then reproduce the values, attitudes, and aspirations of the old world. Colonial surveyors occupied a peculiar position in the practical implementation of colonial policy. Working literally at the 'cutting edge' of implementing colonization on the ground, surveyors were located at the spaces in-between cultures. Moreover, the boundary marks inscribed by colonial surveyors were both symbols of immediate appropriation and portents of the political, social and economic hegemony which would follow.

In the decade which followed in the wake of organized European settlement in New Zealand, field surveyors were in frequent contact with Maori. Surveyors recorded such encounters, often acknowledging their dependence on their Maori assistants. In 1843 William Bertram White and Charles Ligar embarked on an expedition from Wellington to Auckland with 'four Maoris to carry our luggage'.<sup>1</sup> White wrote of one of their guides: 'Henry Murutu was my servant and went with me to Mangonui, he made a splendid servant and after two or three years he was ordered up to Auckland . . . [and] I was subsequently applied to for

<sup>1</sup> William Bertram White, MS Papers 4542, p.32, Alexander Turnbull Library (ATL), Wellington.

a record of his services to enable him to retire on a pension'.<sup>2</sup> The early surveyors also noted that Maori survey hands — accurately referred to by surveyors as 'the compass' — were especially valued for their navigational skills.<sup>3</sup> In 1844 Samuel Stephens recorded how his Maori guide, Gideon, took his party down a river, 'Gideon direct[ed] the canoe through the narrow and crooked channel, without coming in contact with it. He appeared however to be quite competent to contend with the difficulty, and nerving himself to the task, directed his crew with great promptitude and energy to place themselves in readiness in case of emergency.'<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, Maori often proved to be more able than European assistants. John Rochfort, who surveyed in the Nelson and Canterbury provinces in the 1850s, chose to employ only Maori survey hands.<sup>5</sup> While surveying the boundaries of the Canterbury and Otago Provinces in 1858, Edward Jollie wrote how he 'took an old Maori with me named "Governor Grey", who had lived for sometime in the Wanaka District'.<sup>6</sup> Women, too, worked in this capacity. In January 1844, when Jollie travelled from the Manawatu River back to Wellington, he and his party 'secured a canoe to take us the first 12 miles of our journey, the crew consisting of two Maori girls'.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the wives of Kehu and Pikewate joined them in guiding Thomas Brunner down the West Coast of the South Island on his 'Great Journey' of discovery in 1846-48.<sup>8</sup>

European surveyors were heavily reliant upon Maori for guidance, hospitality and labour. Maori guides proved to be invaluable to surveyors with their navigational skills, knowledge of local customs and topographical details of the country. In this context, Maori employed as guides for surveyors played a contradictory role in the surveying and exploration of New Zealand. These contradictions were particularly acute when European 'explorers' and surveyors paid Maori guides, who were already familiar with the area, to assist them in their 'discovery'. The irony was that Europeans travelled over the well-worn tracks that had long been used by Maori. In the Australian context, Henry Reynolds has considered how European explorers used Aboriginal guidance to 'open up' the Australian continent. Reynolds identified a 'growing awareness that European settlers did not tame a wilderness but turned a usurped land to new uses and while exploring its surface and testing its potential were highly dependent on Aborigi-

2 *ibid.*, p.18.

3 Nola Easdale, *Kairuri, the measurer of land: the life of the 19th century surveyor pictured in his art and writings*, Petone, 1988, p.15.

4 Samuel Stephens, *Journal*, 12 March-25 September 1844, MS Papers 2698/1A, ATL.

5 John Rochfort, *The Adventures of a Surveyor in New Zealand and the Australian Gold Diggings*, London, 1853.

6 Jollie wrote 'this old Maori was named after Sir George Grey the Governor — twice — of New Zealand, by I believe, Mr Walter Mantel [sic], with whom he had been for sometime travelling about the Waitaki River.' Edward Jollie, *Reminiscences 1825-94*, p.27, MS Papers 4207, ATL.

7 *ibid.*, p.10.

8 John Pascoe, ed., *The Great Journey: an expedition to explore the interior of the Middle Island, New Zealand, 1846-48*, Christchurch, 1952.

nal expertise'.<sup>9</sup> Paul Carter has also observed how in Australia the European explorer was more often led than he was the leader.<sup>10</sup> This was frequently the case in New Zealand. When surveyors relied on indigenous navigational methods, they assimilated this knowledge into their own discourse of exploration. Translated from one discourse to another, this knowledge was transformed, commodified and disseminated to a wider audience.

The contact between surveyors and Maori was often mutually beneficial, as both were acculturated through contact and co-operation, particularly by the exchange of knowledge and goods. Surveyors were transformed by their contact with Maori and their negotiation of the boundaries of cultural difference. Indeed, many surveyors assumed an ambivalent identity, shifting in and out of cultural personae. Samuel Hewlings, for instance, who was for some time employed as a surveyor in Canterbury, married the daughter of a Nga Puhi chief and was versed in Maori custom and lore.<sup>11</sup> In the spaces located between the two cultures, surveyors became acculturated by their reliance on Maori methods of transportation, eating, and survival in the bush. Brunner wrote how he learnt to wear Maori flax sandals, and also walked barefoot 'in the native fashion' on his expedition down the West Coast of the South Island in 1843.<sup>12</sup> J. H. Lowe was proud of his proficiency in a canoe: 'I generally steer myself with a Maori paddle and am getting tolerably skilful.'<sup>13</sup> While surveying at Otaki in 1843, White heard of 'a place inland where the chief Eahu Te Karanui was anxious to have a pakeha'.<sup>14</sup> He went there and wrote: 'we were received at Munoha by a very large party with great enthusiasm . . . all the greeting over I proceeded at once to unpack the parcels which I had brought in payment for the house, which I formally handed over to Te Eahu, for him to satisfy all those he had employed in the building of the house. Besides this I had brought presents for the Wahines, pieces of print and calico and so on and tobacco and pipes for the men. I was to be a real Rangatira. Then I took formal possession of my house.'<sup>15</sup> The comment is significant, for it reveals White's conscious (and some might say arrogant) assumption of his role as an 'honorary Chief'.

The Canterbury surveyor, Arthur Dobson, also acknowledged this exchange of knowledge. He adopted Maori methods in his use of flax-stalk mohiki instead of canoes; his use of ladders made of flax for scaling cliffs; wearing flax sandals for walking on rough riverbeds and beaches; learning Maori canoe-building techniques; and using plaited flax for carrying heavy loads.<sup>16</sup> Edward Tregear, too, had Maori labourers and assistants as constant companions and later claimed

9 Henry Reynolds, 'The land, the explorers and the Aborigines', *Historical Studies*, 19, 75 (1980), pp.213-26.

10 Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: an essay in spatial history*, London, 1987, p.340.

11 Jollie, *Reminiscences 1825-1894*, p.27.

12 See Pascoe, *The Great Journey*, passim.

13 J. H. Lowe, MS Papers 664, ATL.

14 White, MS Papers 4542, p.32, ATL.

15 *ibid.*

16 Arthur Dudley Dobson, *Reminiscences of Arthur Dudley Dobson, Engineer, 1840-1930*, Christchurch, 1930.

that 'for months and months I didn't know what it was like to see a European and naturally became very familiar with their [Maori] ways. Although looked upon as a *pakeha* at first, they soon got to know me and as a bushman to a certain extent I adopted their habits and became assimilated to their ways.'<sup>17</sup>

Surveyors were frequently greeted by displays of hospitality and they remarked on these gestures as signs of welcome. 'At every stopping place', White noted of his expedition from Wellington to Auckland in 1843, 'they [Maori] welcomed us most heartily; there is something very charming about this Maori hospitality, they give you all they have with such free good will'.<sup>18</sup> Interested as they were by these external displays of hospitality from Maori, surveyors devoted much more time to observing how Maori obstructed the conduct of a survey. The progress of a survey was often dependent on the ability of surveyors and Maori to negotiate mutually acceptable contracts and conditions. Maori often had the upper hand in these negotiations. In May 1841, the Manawatu surveyor Robert Sheppard noted: 'It being dark, the natives would not ferry us over for less than 2/- each and afterwards charged 1/- for conducting us to Taylors house. I had no alternative, but to pay them.'<sup>19</sup> Surveying near Nelson in March 1844, Stephens described a more favourable deal:

I bargained with Gideon for the hire of a canoe and party to take me and my camp equipage up the River Aorere for a few days and to remain until my return. After a good deal of pro and con as to the price — for the natives generally are as acute at a bargain as any of the Israelitish tribe, and may for aught I know be identical [to the] lost tribe — we started with Gideon as Steersman . . . At 4pm I got to the place of rendezvous [sic] . . . and wishing to proceed two or three miles to the wood, I directed the natives to carry the tarpaulin and things to the intended spot. But to this they demurred, having previously made up their minds to camp there right on the beach, as it was raining, and they said it would be dark before we reached the place. They also tried to make out that this was not part of their bargain, but to this I paid no attention and plainly told Gideon that I would not pay him one farthing unless he fulfilled his contract. After a little sulking on his part, and finding that I was firm, with also no doubt a little of the irresistible [sic] hawking after the promised 'utu', and perhaps fear of exposure to his brother [the chief] who is as honest and straightforward a man as any I know, he manfully took up his share of the burden, and called to as many of the others as were necessary to take the rest.<sup>20</sup>

According to surveyors who worked in Taranaki, Maori frequently demonstrated their opposition to the conduct of surveys. While laying out the settlement of New Plymouth in the early months of 1841, F. A. Carrington was confronted by 'natives from the interior who said we that we should not cut any more. They flourished their tomahawks, and danced and yelled, and I thought we should all be massacred.'<sup>21</sup> In Taranaki, this reaction was not surprising, given that many

17 Cited in K. Howe, *Singer in a Songless Land: a life of Edward Tregear 1846-1931*, Auckland, 1991, p.20.

18 White, MS Papers 4542, ATL.

19 R. Sheppard to S. C. Brees, 14 May 1841, MS Papers 1094, ATL.

20 Samuel Stephens, Journal, 12 March-25 September 1844, MS Papers 2698/1A, ATL.

21 F. A. Carrington, cited in William H. J. Seffern, *Chronicles of the Garden of New Zealand Known as Taranaki*, New Plymouth, 1896, p.47.

of the purchases were highly contested, both at the time, and later, in the form of submissions to successive government commissions of inquiry.<sup>22</sup> Tensions between Ngati Toa and New Zealand Company surveyors working at Wairau, near Nelson, reached a climax in June 1843, when 22 Europeans (including Captain Arthur Wakefield and the Nelson magistrate, H.A. Thompson) and six Maori were killed.<sup>23</sup> The incident followed an attempt by officials of the New Zealand Company in Nelson to seize by force land from Te Rauparaha, who denied having sold the land. Working near Wellington soon after this event, Jollie wrote:

The natives since the Wairau massacre kept generally friendly. Now and again a party of surveyors would be cautioned not to trespass on certain lands which the natives considered had not been fairly purchased from them and once or twice a settler was found murdered on the land he was clearing. I recollect being up the Hutt surveying with a party on the western hills of the valley when a party of Maoris made their appearance and began to fill up the lines we cut through the trees as fast as we made them and as soon as the theodolite was fixed they immediately commenced cutting down a tree which would fall upon the theodolite. We persevered for some time and pretended that we did not notice what they were doing, but at last they became more demonstrative and the leader stripped himself stark naked, came towards us with a long handled tomahawk in his hands and asked us if we wanted to fight. We, of course, assured him that on the contrary, we wished to be friendly with him, upon which he ordered us to 'be off' and we went off, accordingly leaving the natives masters of the field.<sup>24</sup>

The progress of surveys at the New Zealand Company settlements was continually hampered by such interruptions. In July 1843, Wicksteed, the Resident Agent in New Plymouth, wrote to Colonel Wakefield:

I have had some trouble with Maori . . . at the Waitara. A number of men belonging to Kapiti appeared lately among the Waitara people, and in conjunction with a chief, who lives some miles up the river, stopped a party of surveying men who were cutting a line preparatory to making a road. They were not armed and used no violence, but sat down in the road to the number of about 188, including men women and children, and quietly declared that they would not allow the white men to occupy any land at the Waitara. When the assistant surveyor and some of the white settlers attempted to reason with them they said 'You are all Wicksteed's slaves, and we will not listen to you'. As soon as I heard of this occurrence I withdrew all the Company's men from the Waitara, wishing at present to avoid collision with the natives.<sup>25</sup>

22 The most recent being the Wai-143 claim before the Waitangi Tribunal. See *The Taranaki Report: Kaupapa Tuatahi*, Wellington, 1996.

23 At Port Levy in 1851, Edward Shortland was warned by local Maori that any attempt by Europeans to take land against Maori wishes might end in another 'Wairau' incident. Edward Shortland, *The Southern Districts of New Zealand*, London, 1851, p.287.

24 Jollie, *Reminiscences 1825-1894*, p.10.

25 Resident Agent, New Plymouth, to Colonel Wakefield, 31 July 1843, cited in B. Wells, *The History of Taranaki*, New Plymouth, 1878, p.97.

Maori did not hesitate to make their opposition known to Company and government contract survey parties alike. White recalled the 'flying survey' he had made in the Horokiwi valley in the 1840s, as 'Rangiaia had sworn he would eat the next man who went there, [and] he had already turned two or three surveyors off'.<sup>26</sup> While many Maori read the survey as a direct challenge to their autonomy and identity, surveyors did not see themselves as antagonists. 'As the duty I was called upon to perform, as the Company's Principal Surveyor, was a civil one,' Stephens wrote in January 1845, 'I did not think it expedient that my men should arm themselves, otherwise than with the tools of their craft, neither did I wish . . . that an armed force should accompany me, as I did not anticipate any interruption from the natives whilst cutting the line'.<sup>27</sup>

In 1848-49, Walter Mantell, recently appointed Commissioner for the Extinction of Native Claims, visited Ngai Tahu settlements between Kaiapoi and Otago marking out reserves due to them under Kemp's Deed. He was assisted by Alfred Wills, a New Zealand Company surveyor. Mantell noted the difficulties they encountered with Maori over issues of transport and the marking out of boundary lines: 'After much discussion among the natives and exorbitant demands for payment they agreed to go if I would pay them beforehand for the ferry. This I positively refused to do and ordered the tents to be repitched. Seeing this they consented to leave the payment to me and we set off in two canoes for the Kaika on the Kororuaheka (which they then called the Ruataniwa [sic]). This we reached by about noon and halted to dine. Here the natives demanded payment for the wood consumed in cooking our dinner.'<sup>28</sup> The next day began, Mantell noted, 'with another debate [with] the natives demanding that a district wide as from Waimakariri to Kaiapoi beginning at those places and extending across the [South] island should be reserved for them'.<sup>29</sup> In September Mantell wrote how a local Maori 'set fire to the men's hut [and] attempted to pull the tent down and was about to attack me with a tomahawk but was prevented by the other natives'.<sup>30</sup>

Read in the context of Mantell's actions (and Kemp's Deed), these responses hardly seem surprising. Mantell was of the opinion that Ngai Tahu had sold all their land to Kemp — that they had accepted payment and were bound by the Deed — and he believed he was simply carrying out his duties in surveying the reserves.<sup>31</sup> Mantell and Wills proceeded to survey out a reserve within the Waimakariri block, despite continued objections from Ngai Tuahuriri, and ignoring the fact that Metehau of Ngai Tuahuriri had not been a signatory to Kemp's Deed. Through his actions, Mantell denied Ngai Tahu land they were occupying, contravening the terms set out in the 1844 Select Committee on New Zealand, which had stated that Maori should be allowed to retain land that they actually occupied and cultivated. Indeed, Mantell appeared to be indifferent to

26 White, MS Papers 4542, pp.10-11.

27 Stephens, Diary 1845, p.3.

28 Walter Mantell, 'Journal Kaiapoi to Otago, 1848-49', MS Papers 1543, ATL.

29 *ibid.*

30 *ibid.*

31 Walter Mantell, Sketchbook No. 3, MS Papers, p.36, ATL.

whether Ngai Tahu were occupying land or not, let alone to observing the terms of the Treaty of Waitangi.

For Maori, both in the North and South Islands, the surveyor's theodolite — commonly referred to as the 'taipo' or 'tipu' — rapidly became the symbol of impending conflict.<sup>32</sup> From the 1840s, the erection of survey poles, like the traditional pou whenua marker-poles, signified an explicit act of possession. Maori leaders therefore often regarded the presence of the surveyors and their boundary markers as overt challenges to their mana. While surveying Ngai Tahu land reserves in September 1848, Mantell noted how '[t]wo or three old men not understanding the erection of a pole at their huts at Waituери threw it away with the others which the man carried. I went down [and] lectured them [and] explained the use of the pole and remained there.'<sup>33</sup> Suffice to say, Maori did understand the erection of the survey poles, and their removal of them was a deliberate act of defiance at Mantell's marking out of the reserves. Mantell's unwillingness to acknowledge this understanding highlights the point that, in this case at least, actions speak louder than words. The surveyor Edwin Brookes cited the suspicion Taranaki Maori held towards the theodolite in the 1870s: 'The invariable expression that would come over them after a long drawn breath was "taipo", meaning evil spirit: by my interpretation was — a mystery, or something mysterious. In order to show them a friendly spirit, I would allow many of these natives to look through the telescope, when they would withdraw from it much perplexed.'<sup>34</sup> Maori may well have been impressed by the technology, but they no doubt appreciated its potent role in the conduct of the survey and the alienation of their lands.

By the 1860s surveyors were employing more Maori as survey hands and assistants. Like Rochfort, Dobson also preferred to employ Maori survey hands. 'The Maoris made no roads, but followed a regular route, and in difficult places fixed ladders', wrote Dobson of his survey of the West Coast of the South Island in 1863. 'Thus in one well-known place in the Hurunui, Maori Gully, they had constructed a rough ladder in order to cross the vertical sides of the gully where it ran into the Hurunui.'<sup>35</sup> Dobson also noted that in the absence of canoes, Maori made mohiki (rafts) to ferry survey parties across rivers.<sup>36</sup> Working in isolated regions for long periods of time, Dobson clearly depended on the assistance of

32 Easdale suggests that the 'taipo' or 'tipu' may have been a corruption of the Maori term 'tupua' or 'tipua' referring to 'goblin, demon, object of terror'. Easdale cites Brunner's encounter in 1847 with a distraught Maori woman who claimed to have been 'struck by the Taipo' when there was not an instrument in sight. Easdale, p.15.

33 Mantell, 'Journal, Kaiapoi to Otago, 1848-49'.

34 Edwin Brookes, *Frontier Life: Taranaki, New Zealand*, Auckland, 1892, pp.38-39.

35 Dobson, p.55.

36 Dobson described the mohiki as a raft made of flax sticks laid in bundles of 12 inch diameter, tapered at both ends and tied together. According to Dobson, mohiki were 'from six to eight feet wide, and two to three feet high. These bundles were stiffened by driving thin sticks through them horizontally and vertically, and the whole bundles very tightly bound together with flax. These rafts were very buoyant, and being long and narrow could be easily managed by the expert natives.' *ibid.*, pp.85-86.

local Maori and their ability to ford rivers, transport stores and provide shelter.<sup>37</sup> He noted how 'several parties of men had occasionally got through to the West Coast, and had been saved from starvation by the Mawhera Maoris, who had little to spare from their own supply.'<sup>38</sup> On his West Coast survey in 1863, Dobson considered that: 'the only chance of getting the work done was with the help of Maoris and under the circumstances I was not altogether displeased at the departure of the white men. They were not nearly so suitable for the work as the Maoris, but the question was, would the Maoris stick to the work, and could I depend on them? . . . The men were pleased to have the chance of earning money and plenty of tobacco, at a class of work they were accustomed to . . . handling their canoes on the rivers, swagging stores, and exploring the bush.'<sup>39</sup> Only when Dobson 'had a boat on the Grey [river], a canoe on the Hokitika . . . knew where to find small canoes at every river and lagoon . . . and could get some Maoris at the various villages to work for a few days', did he decide that he could 'work more efficiently with white men'.<sup>40</sup>

Maori responded to the increased demand for their services from surveyors by adapting and expanding their existing economic networks. Dobson noted that, on the West Coast of the South Island, 'as time went on able-bodied young men that I had working for me sent word to the various pas down the coast that I was coming, and that I would pay for help for canoeing on the rivers'.<sup>41</sup> He also observed how local Maori had canoes on every river, on Lake Sumner and Lake Brunner, anticipating paying passengers. When Dobson commenced his duties as district engineer on the Nelson and West Coast goldfields in April 1869, he noted that 'Maori canoes were the only means of conveyance'.<sup>42</sup>

Surveyors also acted as interpreters, operating in the zone of contact and communication between the Maori and European worlds. The ability to communicate in Maori was a valuable tool for the field surveyor. Culturally isolated and frequently bereft of conversation in English, surveyors discovered that learning Maori was both pragmatic and practical for work in the field. Dobson, for example, found it 'most necessary to learn Maori, as I had to ascertain as accurately as possible the native names of all the natural features of the country'.<sup>43</sup> With the aid of his Maori assistant Reti, a 'Testament in Maori', and three weeks living with Maori at the Mawhera pa on the West Coast of the South Island, he believed he had 'gained sufficient knowledge of the language to carry on all conversation necessary for the required work'.<sup>44</sup> When a surveyor found himself 'with no one to speak English to', adaptation was a matter of necessity rather than choice.<sup>45</sup> The New Plymouth surveyor, Wellington Carrington, was

37 *ibid.*, pp.49, 61, 64.

38 *ibid.*, p.53.

39 *ibid.*, pp.65-66.

40 *ibid.*, pp.81-82.

41 *ibid.*, p.66.

42 *ibid.*, pp.66, 124.

43 *ibid.*, p.59.

44 *ibid.*, pp.58-59.

45 *ibid.*

frequently employed as an interpreter in order to settle land disputes at court and in the field.<sup>46</sup> The surveyor, Field, was conversant in Maori and used Maori knowledge of the area to chart road construction in the 1870s.<sup>47</sup>

The initial phase of breaking in the land, establishing European settlements and striving for political dominance did not bring a corresponding decline in the tension between Maori and surveyors. According to survey records, resistance from Maori towards the progress and implementation of surveys was not confined to the early years of contact between Maori and Pakeha. Under the instructions of Wi Kingi Te Rangitake, for instance, women pulled up the survey pegs at Waitara in February 1860 to demonstrate their opposition to the survey of what is now considered to be a highly disputed 'purchase'.<sup>48</sup> In other parts of Taranaki there were frequent incidents of antagonism between Maori and surveyors. While laying out military settlements in north Taranaki during 1865-66, S. Percy Smith often had to work under the protection of covering parties.<sup>49</sup> Given that Smith's surveying was part of the government's punitive policy of land confiscation, it seems hardly surprising that Maori directed their frustration at surveyors, who were the most visible agents of this policy.

By the 1870s, the attention of surveyors working in Taranaki was still fixed on Maori resistance. In early 1872, T.K. Skinner noted that '[t]here is great opposition down here to my surveying and also the road. Titokowaru sends messages up here nearly every day.'<sup>50</sup> That same year, W.H. Skinner wrote how, while working near Ngatimaru, he '[surveyed] about 2 1/2 miles when to my surprise I found the pegs had been pulled out by the Hauhaus and I was obliged to search for the places again in order to continue my levelling, which impeded us very much & I was unable to complete my work this evening'.<sup>51</sup> Nine years after the wars had ceased in Taranaki, in December 1878, government surveyors were turned off the land near Parihaka, when they cut a line through fences and cultivations, including Titokowaru's pa. In the early months of the following year, the surveyors cut through an urupa and Titokowaru's own cultivations.<sup>52</sup> In March 1879, after negotiations between the Native Minister and Te Whiti o Rongomai failed, Maori peacefully evicted the surveyors and their tools. Here the Maori response may be understood, and indeed justified, in that the surveyors had proceeded without consulting Maori. As the Waitangi Tribunal has recently concluded, 'the Government's decision to survey the [Waimate] plains was

46 Wellington Carrington, Diary, 1 August 1865 - 21 September 1869; 26 June 1866; 21 July 1866, Taranaki Museum (TMu), New Plymouth.

47 Sommerville, 'The track that Field made', (ts) p.5, ATL.

48 See further the recent report by the Waitangi Tribunal, *The Taranaki Report*, 1996.

49 S.P. Smith, *Reminiscences*, MS 281, p.42, Auckland Institute and Museum.

50 T. K. Skinner, Diary, p. 40, MS 020/1, p.71, TMu.

51 W.H. Skinner, Diary, MS 020/1, TMu. See also Skinner's comments on 'Native Unrest in Central Taranaki' in W.H. Skinner, *Reminiscences of a Taranaki surveyor*, New Plymouth, 1946, pp.48-49.

52 The West Coast Commission also criticized the actions of the surveyors during the course of their inquiry into the events at Parihaka. See *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives* (AJHR), 1880, G-2, p.xxvi.

negligent . . . contrary to the principles of the Treaty . . . [and] provocative in conception and implementation'.<sup>53</sup>

In the course of laying out the military settlement and surveying confiscated land at Tauranga from 1864 to 1868, government and contract surveyors met with a great deal of resistance from resident Maori.<sup>54</sup> The Tauranga surveys were constantly plagued with disputes as Maori expressed their objections over boundary lines and the conduct of the surveys. Again, Maori expressions of anger and dissatisfaction were not surprising, given that the surveying of confiscated land around Tauranga was implemented without Maori consent. Initial interference by Maori in Tauranga was not read as a serious threat by the District Survey Office, but it soon became clear that this resistance hampered progress. The district surveyor, F.J. Utting, reported to his superior on 3 June 1866 that the surveys had been obstructed: a letter of warning was then sent to the Maori objectors. The objections continued: 'Mr Clarke returned on Saturday evening and after having had some conversation with one of the Surveyors despatched a letter to the Natives who had threatened to molest the Surveyors'.<sup>55</sup> By November, H.N. Warner, the new District Surveyor of Tauranga, cautioned his surveyors of 'the danger of a [pre]meditated attack upon them by 13 armed men . . . which will doubtless cause them to refrain from further operations for the present'.<sup>56</sup> In late December, the surveyor Skeet expressed further anxiety about the surveyors' safety, noting that at Oropi and Te Papa, 'rebel Hauhaus' were 'on their way to seize both Surveyors and camp'.<sup>57</sup> In August 1867, the Civil Commissioner had taken Maori resistance seriously enough to advise surveyors against working on the Katikati block 'owing to hostile Hauhaus'.<sup>58</sup> While working on the Paengaroa and Omanawa surveys in April 1868, the surveyors Potterton and Mitchell 'were warned off by some natives then staying at Paengaroa'.<sup>59</sup> Again, it must be borne in mind that these survey records document only one side of events, and must be read in context, in this case, of the policy of confiscation.

Surveyors also recorded Maori resistance to the conduct of surveys by their sabotage of surveyors' tools. While laying out the Te Papa settlement at Tauranga in September 1866, R.C. Jordan informed the district surveyor that 'the Maories have taken away my instruments and chains . . . will you let me know as early as possible what course to take under the circumstances'.<sup>60</sup> On New

53 *The Taranaki Report*, p.220.

54 See also H.J. Jenks, *Forgotten Men: The Survey of Tauranga and District, 1864-1869*, Tauranga, 1991; Evelyn Stokes, *A History of Tauranga County*, Palmerston North, 1980; Evelyn Stokes, *Te Raupatu O Tauranga Moana: the confiscation of Tauranga lands, a report prepared for the Waitangi Tribunal*, Hamilton, 1990. See also W. G. Mair, Resident Magistrate Opotiki, AJHR, A-20, 1867.

55 Utting to Auckland Provincial Surveyor, 25 June 1866, Tauranga District Surveyor Letter Book (TDSL B), 1866-68, Tauranga Public Library (TPL).

56 Warner to Harrington, 16 November 1866, TDSL B.

57 Skeet to Clarke, 31 December 1866, TDSL B.

58 Skeet to Potterton and Rowe, 18 August 1867, TDSL B.

59 Skeet to Clarke, 16 May 1868, TDSL B.

60 R.C. Jordan to F.J. Utting, 17 September 1866, TDSL B.

Year's Day 1867, his colleague, Skeet, notified the Provincial Surveyor that 'firewood, pegs, and in fact any things whatever left outside the office are being continually stolen [and] the officer in charge of Surveys at Tauranga requests that he may be instructed to fence in the Survey office reserve'.<sup>61</sup> By February 1867, at least two contract surveyors who worked under Skeet had left the Tauranga district in fear.<sup>62</sup> The Maori response is perhaps easier to understand given the history of this contested and valuable site. Situated strategically between the Maori settlements at Otumoetai and Maungatapu, Te Papa held a great deal of significance for Tauranga Maori. It had been the site of the first Church Missionary Society station, established in August 1835, and in 1864 was occupied by the military.<sup>63</sup>

Three decades after the onset of European settlement in Taranaki, surveyors were still exploring the Taranaki hinterland. In a published account of the Ngati Maru survey in 1872, T. K. Skinner celebrated the details of Maori hospitality for his audience:

We were detained on the road by natives belonging to the different settlements up the river banks. Nothing can exceed their hospitality. Food of almost every imaginable description is brought to us, and we ask ourselves sometimes which we shall have — it being a difficult matter to decide out of the abundance of good things. Honey of the very richest quality is brought to us every day. Pork, potatoes, onions, cabbages, eels, &c., are very plentiful, and are at our disposal in any quantity required. I simply mention these facts to show how welcome we are to the natives, and how peaceably inclined they appear to be. They seem to feel quite insulted if you do not accept an invitation to stay with them when they give you one.<sup>64</sup>

On his way up the Waipuku river in Taranaki in 1874, W.H. Skinner witnessed the accurate sense of direction for which Maori guides were often noted. Faced with a forest which cloaked the land on both sides of the river with a dense and impenetrable cover, Skinner relied on his companion, the tohunga Te Peneha Maunga, to navigate a line to Kopuatama on the Patea River. Te Peneha called on 'the atua, the spirits of the forest, to guide him aright in directing the line', and 'after careful consideration had a stake placed ahead of the instrument on the true line to Kopuatama'. The line was then cut for eight and a half miles, arriving exactly at the destination.<sup>65</sup>

Landmarks of the survey assumed a special status as powerful symbols of European occupation. Maori also recognized their significance. The erection of a boundary marker — used to indicate the block to be surveyed — was often accompanied by ritual and ceremony. Surveying near the Mokau river in

61 Skeet to Provincial Surveyor, 1 January 1867, TDSL.B.

62 Skeet to Provincial Surveyor, 23 February 1867, TDSL.B.

63 In September 1838 Archdeacon Brown purchased land at the mission site from local Maori, and in March 1839 he purchased the whole of the Te Papa peninsula extending south to Gate Pa. Stokes, *A History of Tauranga County*, p.49.

64 T. K. Skinner, 'Amongst the Maoris', *Taranaki Herald*, 25 December 1872, p.4.

65 W. H. Skinner, Diary 1874 [no month], MS 020/1, TMu.

Taranaki in 1879, W.H. Skinner was joined by the chiefs Epiha and Takerau in the act of driving the ponga peg into the soil.<sup>66</sup> When Skinner was ferried up the Mokau river, his female paddlers sang a waiata in which both their destination of Kowhatutuae and Skinner's own name figured.<sup>67</sup>

This example also serves to highlight how a Maori system of naming and mapping the land co-existed with the new one imposed by the surveyors. Boundaries on the land formed the basis of an indigenous system of mapping the land. For Maori, land was the basis of tribal economy and community life.<sup>68</sup> Land was identified through a system of rights and privileges which often relied on boundary markers. While whakapapa and 'mental maps' were called upon in navigating the land, geographical features such as hills, rocks and rivers also indicated boundaries. Stones and holes in the ground functioned as boundary markers between tribal areas, and individual cultivation plots were frequently the most enduring divisional marks. Maori also diverted streams and constructed estuarine canals to assist with fishing and act as boundary markers. In traditional Maori society, however, there was usually little need to delineate boundaries. These perceptions of land were to be irrevocably changed by the coming of the Pakeha and the land trade which followed in their wake. Thereafter physical boundaries became symbols of identity, established and maintained in official discourses. The wars, and their issue, the Native Land Courts, were particularly responsible for a fundamental shift in traditional Maori perceptions of land, where European definitions of land tenure became increasingly dominant. While Maori perceptions of land use and ownership still prevailed, European ideas about land usage and administration were legitimized in public and official discourse and given popular currency by government legislation.

Some concluding comments need to be made about surveyors' accounts. Their records are not entirely unreliable: but they must be read with caution. Any reading of surveyors' writings (from the 1840s through to the 1870s, and beyond) which focuses primarily on texts, is a paradoxical and challenging task, for it risks reinscribing the very colonial discourses it seeks to deconstruct. As the objects of the historian's enquiry, colonial texts threaten to be privileged again and accorded the space (and audience) sought in their initial production. By focusing on non-European peoples simply as the objects of European gazes, historians risk reinventing the colonizing discourses and the power of the texts they seek to explode.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, as a metanarrative of crisis, postcolonial criticism has a propensity to universalize; tending toward a transcendent theorizer which is assumed to be outside time, space, and power relations. Postcolonialism suggests an emancipatory progression of precolonial, colonial and postcolonial epochs which threatens to homogenize different societies and

66 *ibid.*

67 *ibid.*

68 I. H. Kawharu, *Maori Land Tenure: Studies in a Changing Institution*, Oxford, 1977, pp.34-88.

69 See Benita Parry, 'Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse', *Oxford Literary Review*, 9 (1987), pp.27-35; Anne Maxwell, 'The Debate on Current Theories of Colonial Discourse', *Kunapipi*, 13, 3 (1991), pp.70-84.

the differences within them.<sup>70</sup> It has also been questioned why postmodern theories should emerge at a time when various minority groups are asserting their claims to political and cultural autonomy.<sup>71</sup>

A successful analysis of colonial discourses must therefore address the strategies and tactics by which these discourses claimed and were accorded legitimacy at specific moments; but it must seek to do so without repeating those same moments. Such a critique should not be entirely self-referential, but it should take into account the wider context within which particular historical events are placed. This approach teases out tensions within texts to reveal how internal contradictions and dichotomies create paradigms which have marginalized and excluded ideas, groups and people. A deconstructive reading of a given text is therefore a powerful tool for unmasking the hidden assumptions that have rendered some people and processes invisible, while treating others as conspicuously important.

While deconstruction is useful for exposing the subjectivity of colonial observers, peeling back layers with the insight that time allows, it is not without its limitations. Postcolonial analyses which entirely depend on European texts cannot provide a full and comprehensive understanding of events. Such analyses in the New Zealand context must, therefore, draw on Maori sources to provide specifically Maori perceptions of particular events. '[T]he transmitting of Maori perceptions', as Judith Binney has suggested, 'allows the colonizers to see the perspectives of the colonized — a necessary step so that the dominant culture changes its attitudes about its possession of "truth"'.<sup>72</sup> But this must be done carefully. As Binney has also cautioned, 'Maori oral history is not merely another source of information, nor even of perception', and the integrity of Maori oral sources must be retained when placing them in a written form.<sup>73</sup>

Surveyors' representations of Maori in the context of surveying were ambivalent, alternating between seeing Maori as guides and hosts, or as rebels and resisters. Encounters between surveyors and Maori were, however, two-way affairs, and moments in two different, and sometimes parallel, histories. A contemporary representation of these moments which claims to acknowledge both histories must therefore include the perceptions of both. The challenge currently facing Western-trained historians is, as Binney has stated, to avoid 'perpetuating colonialist attitudes in their so-called objective histories', while recognizing that 'these histories have served, to a considerable extent, to erase Maori memories and perceptions'.<sup>74</sup>

70 Simon During, 'Postcolonialism and Globalization', *Meanjin*, 51, 2 (1992), pp.229-53. See also Simon During, 'What Was The West? Some relations between modernity, colonisation and writing', *Sport*, 4 (1990), p.77, also *Meanjin*, 48, 4 (1989), pp.759-76; and 'Waiting for the Post: some relations between modernity, colonization, and writing', in Ian Adam and Helen Tiffen, eds, *Past the Last Post: theorizing post-colonialism and post-modernism*, Calgary, 1990, pp.23-45.

71 S. Gunew, 'Postmodern Tensions: reading for (multi)cultural difference', *Meanjin*, 49, 1 (1990), p.22.

72 Judith Binney, 'Maori Oral Narratives, Pakeha Written Texts: Two Forms of Telling History', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 21, 1 (1987), p.27.

73 *ibid.*

74 *ibid.*, p.17.

This essay has presented an interpretation of how surveyors perceived Maori in the course of spying and laying out the land. It is difficult, using European sources, not to reinscribe colonial discourses and again marginalize Maori — unwittingly to depict Maori as *reactive* rather than *proactive* players. While Maori perceptions can be approximated (and even speculated) here, only a complementary account of Maori impressions of surveyors will complete the picture. With this in mind, it is suggested here that many commentators on colonial discourses are looking for a space in which to locate *themselves*. In addressing this problem, the critic Homi Bhabha has called for an increased recognition of historical specificity.<sup>75</sup> Bhabha draws attention to the need to address details and, perhaps more importantly, the context. The issues of location and identity are important because this kind of writing is firmly located in the present. Critics, as the anthropologist Johannes Fabian has insisted, need to see representation as praxis; '[t]he need to go *there* (to exotic places, be they far away or around the corner) is really our desire to be *here* (to find or defend our position in the world). The urge to write ethnography [and history] is about making the *then* into a *now*.'<sup>76</sup>

When writing itself has come to be seen as a way of maintaining and extending the hegemony of colonization, the dilemma facing historians in rewriting the past is no less acute. As Fabian asks, '[i]f writing is part of a system of intellectual and political oppression of the Other, how can we avoid contributing to that oppression if we go on writing?'<sup>77</sup> This is not to suggest that consciousness-raising alone will solve this problem, but writing can, as Fabian proposes, 'be preparatory to a critique that might have a chance of being truly subversive'.<sup>78</sup> Critiques of colonial writing can function positively to unsettle, disturb, or subvert their implied authority by challenging the assumptions of objectivity and neutrality at the heart of colonial texts. Such a reading does not imply uncontrolled relativism, but it does invite a necessary degree of self-consciousness in the writing of history.

GISELLE M. BYRNES

### *Waitangi Tribunal*

<sup>75</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, 'Postcolonial Authority and Postmodern Guilt', in L. Grossberg, C. Nelson and P. Treichler, eds, *Cultural Studies*, New York, 1992, p.57.

<sup>76</sup> Johannes Fabian, 'Presence and Representation: the other and anthropological writing', *Critical Inquiry*, 16 (1990), pp.753-6.

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*, p.767.

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*