

Māori Texts and Official Ventriloquism



IT IS NOW MORE THAN 38 YEARS since Ruth Ross drew historians' attention to the fact that there were two versions of the 'Treaty of Waitangi' and that the then-familiar English-language version was not the one signed by the vast majority of Māori. In her seminal article 'Te Tiriti o Waitangi: Texts and Translations', Ross also discussed other matters relating to the way in which British ideas were translated into te reo Māori, including the possibly deliberate absence of the word 'mana' in that Māori-language text. She suggested that the Māori wording may have been chosen with a view to the end result that the translators sought to secure.¹ However, that explanation might also apply to a number of subsequent examples of translation which were suited to government needs as well as some significant lacunae in the English-language record. Discrepancies between what Māori actually said or wrote in te reo Māori and how their messages were translated by official interpreters, especially in the government-sponsored newspaper the *Maori Messenger: Ko Te Karere Maori*, continued well beyond 1840. That reality needs greater recognition because more and more historians are incorporating Māori voices in their work by consciously seeking out Māori speeches, letters and other writings while not always appreciating that, by accepting such translations, these voices may, in fact, be grossly distorted. As Aroha Harris has reminded us, history is 'one of the most powerful of all the colonising tools'.² It behoves historians to ensure that any quotes they cite in support of their arguments are faithful renditions of the speakers' intent and not words put into their mouths by others.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, ventriloquism is: 'The art or practice of speaking or producing sounds in such a manner that the voice appears to proceed from some person or object other than the speaker, and usually at some distance from him.' That definition aptly captures what has happened to the words of Māori speakers who are no longer alive to put the record straight. And it means that what most readers believe to be the words and thoughts of Māori ancestral figures may actually be that of a Pākehā 'ventriloquist'.

The Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975, which established the Waitangi Tribunal, and its 1985 amendment, which allowed retrospective claims concerning breaches of the Treaty since 1840, launched a tidal wave of linguistic debate that took Ross's work further. Bruce Biggs, for example, conceived what he referred to as the 'Humpty-Dumpty principle' for the strategy adopted by some translators in order to convey concepts from a source language into a receiving one which has no equivalent. Biggs's principle was inspired by the familiar egg-shaped character who, in Lewis Carroll's book *Through the Looking Glass*, explained that when he used a word it meant 'exactly what I choose it to mean, neither more nor less'.³ In the case of government-sponsored official translations, the choice of meaning appears to have universally suited the sponsor.

However, the Treaty of Waitangi was not the earliest victim of ‘cultural misunderstanding or deliberate mistranslation’.⁴ The copious literature pertaining to how the words ‘tuku’ and ‘hoko’ in early land deeds should be understood, instigated by the Muriwhenua Land Claim to the Waitangi Tribunal, is clear evidence of the ongoing and potentially permanent effect of culturally inappropriate translation or possibly deliberate mistranslation. As this article will show, there have been other casualties of this phenomenon, including the 1835 He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiranga o Nu Tireni, or Declaration of Independence, which has been assigned to the ‘dead files’ of New Zealand history.

But to return to the more familiar case of the Treaty, William Colenso recorded his concerns about the way that agreement was being explained orally to Māori as it was being signed in 1840. And it seems that Māori words were soon being filtered to remove unwanted responses, too. For example, at a meeting between Bishop Selwyn and a number of Bay of Islands leaders in July 1844, all the chiefs present signed a letter to the governor in support of Hone Heke’s grievances, which had been symbolised by the cutting down of the British flagstaff at Kororāreka. However, Selwyn’s chaplain William Cotton doubted the bishop would present that letter as the statements made in it appeared to him to be ‘very unsatisfactory’.⁵

Historians typically take account of historical context when considering primary sources, defining context as including the political climate, the writer’s agenda, and so on, but may be less conscious of the contexts and agendas which lie behind translations. Research in bilingual newspapers certainly suggests that Pākehā editors found some Māori statements to be as unsatisfactory as Cotton had found them in 1844. We have noted several instances of translations so inaccurate that they might be described as misleading, sometimes grossly so. In some cases the effect is insignificant, but in others it is substantial. Moreover, there is always the possibility of mistranscription from the original handwritten document to the published version; a matter that may not necessarily be evident. Taken together, these instances give the impression that when Māori voices uttered inconvenient words, there was a tendency to replace them with official ventriloquism.

In that connection, a particularly curious item appeared in March 1856 when a group of 24 leading Northland rangatira sent a letter to the governor setting out a brief history of their relations with the British monarch and affirming their sentiments:

Tena ra ko koe; kia ora tonu koe, a ma Te Atua te Kuini e tiaki, a koe ano hoki. Na kia whakarangona ata whaitia, mai e koe, a matou kupu rua rua.

Kua rongō matou, kia Hone Waiti ki au kupu; kia whakamutua te whawhai; ka whakaae atu matoa [*sic*] ou tamariki ki a koe; ae, ekore matou e pai ki te whawhai: ko tamatou ae e hara i te penei ae ae, kahore, kahore, otira he ae ano he amene.

E maharatia tonutia ana e matou, te pukapuka i kawea e te Peti ki Ingarangi; ka whakamatuatia a Kingi Wiremu kia matou; no reira, ka tonoa mai a te Puhipi, ka whakaritea i reira, he Ture mo tenei whenua. Ka kawea atu ano he pukapuka ki Ingarangi, kia Kingi Wiremu; a taea noatia nga ra o Wikitoria te Kuini o Ingarangi; a taea noatia te Tiriti o Waitangi.

I penei ra te korero o taua pukapuka. Ko matou ko nga Iwi o Nuitireni i raro mai o Hauraki, ka oti nei te hui hui ki te runanga ki Waitangi, a te ngahuru i tenei tau; ki te whakarite ture, kia tika ai te hoko hoko; kia mau pu te rongo; kia whakarerea te whawhai; kia mahara ano, ki te whakaoranga mo to matou whenua; koia matou ka mea ai ki te Kingi o Ingarangi, kia waihoia hei matua kia matou, i to matou tamarikitanga; *kia whakakahoretia to matou Rangatiratanga*; ko te kingitanga ko te mana i te whenua: o te whakaminenga o Nuitireni ka meatia nei, kei nga tino Rangatira anake i tomatou huihuinga: ka kawea atu ano tenei pukapuka ki Ingarangi: ka tahi ka tukua mai ko te Kawana tuatahi; no reira te Tiriti o Waitangi; (ara te pukapuka whakaetanga a nga Rangatira o Nuitireni, ki te Kawanatanga mo tenei whenua.)

Na ka whakatika Ngapuhi ka patua te Pakeha; kihai i mahara ki aua ture, a takahia ana; whakaaro ana matou nga Rangatira o Hokianga, ki te pehi i taua he, mo nga ture i takahia.

Heoi e mea ana nga iwi katoa, i he to matou whakatikanga ki te pehi i taua whawhai. Otira kihai ratou i matau ki te whakaritenga o ana ture.

Koia matou ka mea atu nei; chara ta ma matou ae i te penei ae, ae, kahore, kahore, koia matou ka mea ai; ko ta matou mahi tenei, he takahi i te kino; a ake tonu atu.

E rongo koe i tetahi raru raru e tupu ana kei Hokianga; he mea noa ano, ki ano i rangona noatia e te runanga.

Me ta enei kupu ki te Nupepa; ka whakahoki mai ai e tahi kia matou, kia tu katoa ai matou i te Nupepa: mo te paanga ki te he, ka maharatia ano aua kupu; kei pera me ana ture i mua, na te wareware, na te kuare takahia ana, otia kei a kao te whakaaro.

Tenei ano te tahi o matou kupu; ekore ranei koe e pai, kia ruritia nga kainga o Hokianga nei; kia nohoia ai e te Pakeha ina haere atu te Pakeha ki te hoko kainga ia koe. He hiahia ou [*sic*: no] matou ki tetahi Pakeha hei hoa noho mo matou. Otia ki te pai koe. Heoiano na ou hoa aroha. (*italics added*)

Being somewhat synonymous with interpretation, translation is open to a variety of possible word usages and understandings. However, the English translation, which appeared in the bilingual newspaper following the letter, is clearly not a literal translation but appears to have been deliberately rendered so as to obscure the real meaning of the Māori text. It reads:

Friend the Governor, Salutation to you; long may you live; and may God protect the Queen and yourself. May you be pleased to hearken kindly to these our words, which are but two or three.

We have heard from Mr. John White the word you sent by him, that all quarrels should cease; we your children consent, and say yes; we do not say yes yes, no no; but we say yes and mean yes and amen.

We still remember the letter which we sent to England by the Rev. W. Yates; the answer to which was this King William became our Parent and sent Mr. Busby the British Resident, when laws were made for this land.

Then again there was another letter sent to England to King William containing our thoughts, which we have continued to cherish even to these the days of Victoria Queen of England. These were our thoughts in the Treaty of Waitangi, which Treaty was worded thus:

We the tribes of New Zealand residing to the North of the Thames being now assembled in the tenth Moon of the Native year to make Laws, to protect commerce and prevent war, and protect our Land, since we asked the King of England to become our Parent in this our childhood *let our chieftainship be lost* with the Sovereignty of our Land, which is held by the principal chiefs of this Assembly. This Document was also

sent to the King of England, and in answer to which he sent the first Governor.

The Treaty of Waitangi was the giving-up of the Sovereignty of this Land. When some of the Ngāpuhi people fought against the Government, they did not think of these documents, and the agreements which they contained. We, the Chiefs of Hokianga remembering these things, rose up to put a stop to this evil, because by it the laws were made of more effect, and for this many of the tribes condemn us; but these tribes do not remember the laws, viz., the Treaty of Waitangi.

We say again, our consent is not yes, yes, no, no, but we mean yes. And we further say our work shall be to prevent all evil for ever and ever. If you should hear of any quarrel in Hokianga, heed it not: be assumed that we, the Chiefs, will unite to preserve order and peace.

Let these words be printed in the "Maori Messenger," and send us each a few copies, so that these, our words, may be always with us, lest by forgetfulness and stupidity the laws may again be broken, as in days gone by.

This is also another word from us. Will you have the old Land Claims in Hokianga surveyed? So that Europeans may buy them when they ask for land from the Government. For we desire to have white people to live amongst us. This must be as you like.

This is all from your loving friends.⁶

While this is, in several respects, not an unreasonable interpretation of the Māori text, it seems to be one that would better serve Crown interests and, with hindsight, there is irony in the chiefs' explicit desire to ensure that their words remain. The translation indicates that 'taua pukapuka' (the aforementioned book, document, or letter) is the Treaty of Waitangi, while the Māori text implies that it is the 1835 He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tireni. The fourth paragraph, which contains no word that could reasonably be construed to mean 'cherished', indicates that the Treaty of Waitangi was a consequence of the earlier communication with King William, which is the one they continue to remember.⁷ However, a particularly troubling section is that which reads, 'since we asked the King of England to become our Parent in this our childhood let our chieftainship be lost with the Sovereignty of our Land'. Were all these great chiefs really conceding that they had given up the sovereignty of the land, and also their chieftainship? That seems so unlikely that the text has remained a source of puzzlement for a number of scholars.

Alexander McDonnell, whose collection of Māori newspapers was copied and digitised for the Alexander Turnbull Library's Niupepa Māori website, clearly thought it unlikely, too. His original hard copy of this issue has some hand annotations indicating that he was disconcerted by the use of the term '*kia whakakahoretia*' in connection with the writers' 'rangatiratanga'; he not only underlined it but also wrote the word 'whakahonoretia' on the page. The inference that might be drawn from this is that he found it difficult to believe that the chiefs had accepted the annulment of their chieftainship. However, it appears probable that the Māori word 'whakakahoretia' was correctly rendered as it was used by Ngāpuhi and Ngāti Hine in other contexts, which are discussed below, and that it was the word immediately preceding it, 'kia', that was incorrectly transcribed. Whether done deliberately or inadvertently, the result was that the word conveyed a meaning virtually the opposite of that intended.

Lachy Paterson discussed some of these issues in his book *Colonial Discourses: Niupepa Māori 1855–1863*, suggesting that this example provided ‘a salutary lesson for historians who might rely purely on “official” translations’. Paterson also noted the hand-written notation on the archived copy of the newspaper and questioned whether it was a ‘wilful alteration’.⁸ While that must remain a matter for speculation, our explanation is supported by an announcement that appeared in another Māori-language newspaper, *Te Korimako*, in August and September of 1887. That announcement followed a huihuinga whakaminenga of Ngāti Hine (the assembly of Ngāti Hine) that had been held in April of that year. The phrase used there was not ‘*kia whakakahoretia*’ (so that [our chieftainship] be nullified) but ‘*kei whakakahoretia*’ or ‘lest [our chieftainship] be nullified’. ‘Kia’ has a number of meanings, including ‘in order that’ as the translator has interpreted it here, while ‘kei’ means the direct opposite: ‘let not’ or ‘lest’. Our proposition that ‘kei’ was the term used in the original wording sent by the signatories is further supported by an extract from Kawiti’s *Ko te Ture mo te Whenua Papatupu: Tau 1874*, printed by Wilson and Horton in Auckland in 1887. The relevant extract from that document reads:

Tua 4. Ka mea matou kia tuhituhia he pukapuka ki te ritenga o tenei, o to matou whakaputanga ki te Kingi o Ingarangi hei kawē atu i to matou aroha nana hoki, i tuku mai i te kara mo matou a, no te mea ka atawhai matou, ka tiaki i nga Pakeha e noho ana, i uta e rere mai ana ki te hokohoko, koia ka mea ai matou, ki te kingi kia waiho ia hei matua, kia matou, i to matou tamarikitanga, *kei whakakahoretia*, to matou rangatiratanga, e te kawanatanga o Nui Tireni kua whakaaetia, katoatia e matou, e te whakaminenga rangatira, i tenei ra i te 28 Oketopa, 1835, ki te aroaro, o reehi teneti o Ingarangi, ka tuhia nei, o matou ingoa. (*italics added*)

4. We agree to a copy of this, our Declaration to the King of England and to convey our appreciation, for he did send a flag for us, and we have undertaken to care for and to protect Pakeha that have settled on these shores and those arriving for the purposes of trade. Hence we say to the King to be a Parent (Protector) to us in our young state *lest* our chieftainship *be deemed null (and void)* by the Government of New Zealand.⁹ (*italics added*)

It is important to recognise here that although the literal meaning of the word ‘matua’ is father or parent, it is used in paragraph four above as it typically is by Māori, even today, as a term of respect. In this context the King is being asked to act as a protector for Māori (like a father would for his children) in their ‘tamarikitanga’ or young/new state and, on that basis, they trust him to protect/respect their chieftainship.¹⁰ That understanding was implied when Kawana Te Hakeke wrote to Donald McLean in 1850. His salutation of ‘E taku matua aroha’, translated as ‘My dear father’, was followed by ‘Tena ra koe te aroha o aku matua’, or ‘Greetings to you, the one respected by my elders’, with the official translation providing some indication of the word’s broader meaning.¹¹ Such metaphorical allusions are common in a society based on kinship. As Margaret Mutu noted in a 1992 article, the word ‘tamariki’ had been translated as ‘heirs and assigns’ in documents relating to 1830s land

transactions. In those examples, the intention of the Māori land holders was transformed from a statement binding the settler, his family and descendants to Māori tribal structure for the mutual benefit of the two parties, into a commercial transaction implying rights of sale or legal transfer to persons potentially unknown to those with mana whenua and severing the anticipated ongoing personal relationship.¹²

Moreover, the text of this extract from *Ko te Ture mo te Whenua Papatupu* is almost identical to the wording of the 1835 He Whakaputanga and is clearly intended as a reference to that document but with the added suggestion that it was now the New Zealand government that was threatening to nullify or dishonour Te Tiriti. The relevant extract from the original Whakaputanga reads:

Ka mea matou kia tuhituhia he pukapuka ki te ritenga o tenei o to matou wakaputanga nei ki te Kingi o Ingarani hei kawae atu i to matou aroha nana hoki i wakaae ki te Kara mo matou. A no te mea ka atawai matou, ka tiaki i nga pakeha e noho nei i uta, e rere mai ana ki te hokohoko, koia ka mea ai matou ki te Kingi kia waiho hei matua ki a matou i to matou Tamarikitanga *kei wakakahoretia* to matou Rangatiratanga.

Kua wakaetia katoatia e matou i tenei ra i te 28 Oketopa, 1835, ki te aroaro o te Reireneti o te Kingi o Ingarani

They also agree to send a copy of this Declaration to his Majesty the King of England, to thank him for his acknowledgement of their flag; and in return for the friendship and protection they have shown, and are prepared to show, to such of his subjects as have settled in their country, or resorted to its shores for the purposes of trade, they entreat that he will be the parent of their infant State, and that he will become its Protector from all attempts upon its independence.

Agreed to unanimously on this 28th day of October, 1835, in the presence of His Britannic Majesty's Resident.¹³

Based on this evidence, which strongly suggests that 'kei wakakahoretia' has been mistranscribed as 'kia wakakahoretia' in the *Maori Messenger*, we offer the following literal translation of the relevant section of the letter as published:

These were our thoughts in the Tiriti o Waitangi, which was worded thus:
We the tribes of New Zealand residing to the North of the Hauraki being now assembled in the tenth month of this year to make Laws, to regulate trade and to maintain peace, to prevent war, and protect our Land, hence we asked the King of England to become our Parent in this our childhood. *Lest our chieftainship be null and void* and the kingship has authority over our Land, of this Assembly of New Zealand which was held by the principal Chiefs at our gathering. This Document was also sent to the King of England, to which he sent the first Governor.

From thence was the Tiriti o Waitangi (that is the agreement of the Chiefs of New Zealand to the Governorship for this land). When Ngapuhi fought the Pakeha, they had no regard for those laws, disobeying them. We the Chiefs of Hokianga decided to deal with the offending; because of the laws that were breached.¹⁴

While it is difficult to say whether the mistranscription and consequent

mistranslation of this 1856 item was the result of mere naivety or deliberate machination, it was very convenient for the Crown's contemporary political needs.

However, by early 1860, it was the word 'mana' and how it should be understood with regard to the respective rights and authority of the Crown and Māori under the Treaty that gained prominence. A *Taranaki Herald* editorial, published in May 1860, summed up the crux of contemporary feeling. In connection with Wiremu Kingi's objections to the sale of land at Waitara, the paper proclaimed that:

Wiremu Kingi stands for the prouder and less sagacious party among the natives most hostile to the Queen's authority. His claim is to the 'mana,' — the chieftain's veto — the sovereignty. To allow his pretension is to sanction the authority of Potatau.¹⁵

As Claudia Orange noted, Māori often referred to the mana of the land when seeking to preserve sovereignty, and questions relating to the extent of power and authority vested in the rangatira and the government under the Treaty were central to the Kingitanga and the Waitara dispute.¹⁶ Largely as a response to these circumstances, Governor Thomas Gore Browne arranged a conference of rangatira at Kohimarama in 1860 to shore up Māori support for the government, encourage commitment to the Treaty, and endeavour to obtain condemnation of Wiremu Kingi and the King Movement by those tribes not yet pledged to support either.

The meaning and import of 'mana' had been a matter of wide discussion in the months and weeks leading up to the conference. As Orange pointed out in her 1980 article on Kohimarama, British sovereignty somehow had to be confirmed, but 'without appearing to trespass on Māori rights, or mana, particularly those relating to land', and so the 'chiefs were encouraged to understand "sovereignty" in the protective sense, as the Crown's benevolence'.¹⁷ That was evident when Governor Browne, who did not speak Māori, opened the conference with an address in English which was then translated by Donald McLean. McLean was a fluent speaker of Māori who appears to have been at pains to play down assertions of sovereignty when translating the governor's words. Take, for example, Browne's statement, beginning with the words:

On assuming the Sovereignty of New Zealand Her Majesty extended to her Maori subjects her Royal protection, engaging to defend New Zealand and the Maori people from all aggressions by any foreign power, and imparting to them all the rights and privileges of British subjects; and she confirmed and guaranteed to the Chiefs and Tribes of New Zealand, and to the respective families and individuals thereof, the full, exclusive and undisturbed possession of their lands and estates, forests, fisheries, and other properties which they may collectively or Individually possess, so long as it is their wish to retain the same in their possession.

This was translated into Māori for the chiefs present as:

I te whakaetanga a Te Kuini ki a ia te Kawanatanga o Niu Tirani ka whakatauharetia mai tona maru kingi ki runga ki nga tangata Maori hei tiaki; ka whakaae hoki ia

mana a Niu Tirani me nga Iwi Maori e tiaki kei tikina mai e tetahi hoa riri Iwi ke; ka whakawhiwhia hoki e ia nga tangata Maori ki nga tikanga katoa rite tahi ki o Ingarani tangata: a i whakaetia, i tino whakapumautia hoki e ia ki nga Rangatira Maori me nga Iwi Maori ki nga hapu ki nga tangata hoki, ko o ratou oneone, me o ratou whenua, me o ratou ngaherehere, me o ratou wai mahinga ika, me o ratou taonga ake, o te iwi, o ia tangata o ia tangata: whakapumautia ana e ia ki a ratou hei noho mo ratou, hei mea mau rawa ki a ratou, kua tetahi hei tango, hei whakaoho, hei aha, ara, i te painga ia o ratou kia waiho ki a ratou mau ai.¹⁸

His audience is likely to have understood these words in Māori as:

When the Queen agreed to the Governorship of New Zealand — her rule was extended to include the Māori people. She agrees to protect New Zealand and the Māori People against the enemy from a foreign land, she also offers to Māori all the same rights as those of the people of England and she also agrees to and promises the Māori chiefs, the Māori people, the hapū, the people also, to remain with them, their shores, their lands, their forests, their fishing grounds, their property; belonging to them as a people and as individuals. She also promises that these shall remain in their exclusive possession and that no other person shall take, disturb, or whatsoever, for as long as they would like these to remain in their possession.¹⁹

Several leaders from the Bay of Islands spoke strongly of their loyalty to the Crown and of their expectations of protection. So it is significant then that the term ‘maru’ was subject to consistent misrepresentation in the translation of the proceedings that appeared in the *Maori Messenger* newspaper and elsewhere.²⁰ For example, in a written reply to the governor’s opening address to the conference Wiremu Tete from Waikare made clear his understanding that Te Tiriti had been signed for these reasons, saying:

Heoiano, e pai ana tenei he; tena ko te Kingi Maori, he kino tenei, na te mea e pehi ana i te maru o te Kuini. Kahore, e kore te temepara nui e pau i te whare Maori, no te mea he whare nui te whare Pakeha; tena ko tenei, e kara, e te Kawana, kia rongu mai koe!²¹

... The Māori King is a bad affair as it seeks to do away with (put down) the Queen’s sovereignty. (official translation as published)

The Māori King is a bad affair as it seeks to do away with the Queen’s protection. (our translation)

Tango Hikuwai made similar remarks. He stated his disapproval of the Kingitanga and gave his view of the governor’s position:

E mea ana hoki koe kia tau te rangimarie ki runga ki te maru o te Kuini, kia noho tika, kia noho pai ki runga ki te maru kotahi.

You wish peace to be maintained under the Queen’s rule, and that we may all live in an orderly manner and in quietness under one protecting power. (official translation as published)²²

In this example, it is noteworthy that the newspaper's translator has translated 'maru' as 'rule' in the first clause, and 'protecting power' in the second. We would translate the sentence as: 'You say peace should be maintained under the Queen's protection, that we may all live in a proper manner and with good intention under one protector (or protection).'

Several native speakers of northern Māori who have been consulted confirm that the word 'maru', used by Wiremu Tete, Tango Hikuwai and others, does not translate to the English word 'sovereignty' but refers to being under the protection, umbrella, shadow or shelter of an entity. Having said this, we note that William Williams's *Dictionary of the Māori Language* indicates that maru may also mean 'power and authority'. The 1844 edition of the dictionary provides an example of the word being used in that sense:

Na te maru i a ia koia matou i matakū ai

In consequence of his power, we are afraid

When the first edition of the dictionary was published, long vowels were not marked and we believe that has led to confusion with marū (a beating). That supposition is supported by the use of the word in *Te Paipera Tapu*, the Māori Bible, which was translated into Māori by William Williams and other members of the Church Missionary Society. All instances of maru in *Te Paipera* were found to mean bruise, hurt, wound/wounds, smite, strike, or broken; the last often in the sense of broken heart or broken spirit. The only exception was in *Isaiah 57:15*, where it was used to mean contrite. Those usages would explain why several linguists and native speakers of te reo Māori from Northland understand the sentence to mean: 'Because of the/his beatings, we were afraid (of him).'

Marumarū, on the other hand, meant shelter, shade or protection. References to the 'maru' of the Queen in the chiefs' speeches at Kohimarama are in line with the word's traditional use wherein members of one tribal group might place themselves under the maru of another group who had power to protect them in a particular circumstance. That was the case with Hongi Hika, who put the early missionaries under his maru or protection. On that basis, the wording used by these rangatira is further evidence that they understood that Te Tiriti o Waitangi guaranteed them the Queen's protection as well as the retention of their rangatiratanga. That understanding is further supported by the *Warwickshire Advertiser & Leamington Gazette's* report of a meeting between a Māori group, including Kamariera Te Hautakiri Wharepapa, and the Queen in 1863. That paper quoted Wharepapa as saying that 'their hearts beat high within them in expectation' when they were presented to 'their great mother Victoria, she who had authority to protect them and was mighty to quell the disputes of their land'.²³

Given the nature of the translations of speeches from Kohimarama and the absence of Waikato representatives from the conference, it is significant that another 'very large native meeting' had been held at Waiuku on 8 March 1860, just four months before Kohimarama, which was attended by King Potatau Te

Wherowhero and his retinue. Of the 20 rangatira who spoke on that occasion, all but six were said to be in favour of the Kingitanga. There was a call for ‘a division and demarcation of the races’:

Pakehas not interfering with the Maories [*sic*], or their government; and they, likewise, not interfering the Pakehas.

The meeting was also reported to have been ‘very unanimous on one question, namely, — the keeping of the “mana” of New Zealand’.²⁴

The *Maori Messenger*’s 15 March issue reported that meeting and its concerns regarding the ‘mana o te whenua’, suggesting that ‘the speakers had very confused notions on the subject’. On this occasion, the paper was not translating the speech or writings of those Māori present but merely giving its own editorial impressions and opinions in English and in te reo for its Māori readers. It is noteworthy, therefore, that it denied Pākehā were claiming the mana of the land to the exclusion of the Māori (as had evidently been stated at the meeting), saying that this ‘mana’ was nothing more than ‘the right to protect’. ‘Where was the “mana” of New Zealand before the Queen took these Islands under the protection of her flag and made all its people her subjects?’ it asked. Continuing with what Māori might consider to be a very confused discussion, including the question of what consequences would ensue if the Queen removed her flag and gave up the mana of the country, the item asked, ‘Would the Māori Chiefs possess more “mana” than they now do?’ before answering that, ‘It is foolish therefore to object to the “mana” of the Queen. Those who do so cannot understand what they are talking about.’²⁵

These issues appear to have instigated a raft of correspondence to various English-language newspapers around the country on the question of mana and whether Māori were entitled to claim it. That correspondence included a letter from John Hobbs, who had previously been a missionary in Northland, which was published in the *Southern Cross* in June and the *Colonist* in July 1860.²⁶ Hobbs claimed that the word ‘mana’ was ‘not a usage’. Citing the definition of mana from William Williams’s Māori dictionary, he added that it was ‘probably not correct to say that a Chief’s “Mana,” and that such a Usage was recognized by the Treaty of Waitangi’ [*sic*].

Negative or simply glib characterisations of mana persisted. Indeed, in October 1860, James Mackay Jnr responded to criticism by Ngāti Kuia spokesman Manihera of the government’s actions in Taranaki by suggesting that Māori mana was useless and damaging: ‘Wherefore do you cry about this mana which never did any good, has it not always been a source of evil.’²⁷

More worryingly, the enduring consequences of the government’s faulty translations extend beyond scholarly work to the wider public arena where the political implications may be even more harmful, especially now that Māori texts and their official translations are more readily available on the internet. That was evident in June 2007 when *Investigate Magazine*’s Ian Wishart questioned the concept of ‘Treaty principles’, asking what he deemed a major question: ‘is the modern interpretation of the Waitangi Treaty correct?’

To answer that question, Wishart published what he referred to as ‘a direct transcript of speeches’ from the Kohimarama Conference, so that his readers could decide ‘whether Maori in 1860 believed in Maori sovereignty, or that the Treaty was a partnership in the modern sense of the word’. However, the ‘direct transcript’ he quoted was not from the Māori speeches but the government’s ‘translation’, published in the *Maori Messenger* and elsewhere and which, in many instances, is not a fair and honest representation of the sentiments expressed by the rangatira present on that occasion.²⁸

The 1850s and 1860s were a pivotal period in New Zealand history. It was the period during which political and economic power was transferred from Māori to Pākehā.²⁹ But it may also be the case that it was one in which understandings of the agreements between Māori and the British were being reinterpreted in the nation’s memory. Has mistranslation, non-translation and a tendency to avoid the use of evidence in te reo Māori altogether had profound ongoing consequences for New Zealand history? Recent debates concerning He Whakaputanga suggest that this may be so.

As has been made clear in recent academic work and the hearings pertaining to the Ngāpuhi claim before the Waitangi Tribunal, He Whakaputanga did not disappear from Māori memory but remains an important component in the relationship that was built up between the signatories and the British. Contributions to te reo Māori newspapers through the nineteenth and into the twentieth century attest to the document’s enduring significance — not only in Northland, home to the majority of the signatories, but in other areas as well.³⁰ It is also now more evident that the idea behind that document is unlikely to have originated with the arrival of James Busby as historiography tends to suggest; instead it is likely to have been mooted and debated by members of Te Whakaminenga or the Chiefs of the United Tribes over several years prior to the signing.³¹ Moreover, for Māori, the Treaty did not supersede the 1835 document but rather confirmed it. While Pākehā treated it as defunct, Māori retained the centrality of He Whakaputanga orally and repeatedly referred to it in their writings, typically associating it with Te Tiriti, the document that the majority signed. Following the passing of the New Zealand Constitution Act 1852, Section 71 of which provided that the laws and customs of Māori would apply between Māori in districts set aside by Order in Council, various combinations of these three documents, which mutually reinforced the legitimacy of their rangatiratanga or independent autonomy, were cited at hui and in Māori writings.³² However, the attitudes of newspaper editors and government translators suggest that they were contributing to the ‘forgetting’ of all three in very real ways.

It might be argued that all history students intending to continue with postgraduate work relating to New Zealand and, especially Māori, history should be required or at least encouraged to include courses in te reo in their undergraduate degrees. But, until that day arrives, these few examples might serve to caution against relying solely on official translations. The voice that resounds may be that of the ventriloquist rather than the voice of Māori. As Mohi Tāwhai said at an 1845 meeting held at Hokianga ‘for the purpose of obtaining the Adherence of the native Tribes of that District to the Treaty of

Waitangi’: ‘the sayings of the Pākehā float light, like the wood of the whau tree, and always remain to be seen, but the sayings of the Māori sink to the bottom like a stone.’³³ Well, that is what we are told he said; his words in te reo appear not to have been recorded.

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NOTES

- 1 Ruth Ross, 'Te Tiriti o Waitangi: Texts and Translations', *New Zealand Journal of History* (NZJH), 6, 2 (1972), pp.139–41.
- 2 Aroha Harris, 'Theorize This: We Are What We Write', *Te Pouhere Korero*, 3 (2009), p.87.
- 3 Bruce Biggs, 'Humpty-Dumpty and the Treaty of Waitangi', in I.H. Kawharu, ed., *Waitangi: Māori & Pakeha Perspectives of the Treaty of Waitangi*, Auckland, 1989, p.304.
- 4 From the title of a 1992 article by Margaret Mutu, 'Cultural Misunderstanding or Deliberate Mistranslation? Deeds in Maori of Pre-Treaty Land Transactions in Muriwhenua and their English Translations', *Te Reo, Journal of the Linguistic Society of New Zealand*, 35 (1992), pp.57–103.
- 5 William Cotton, 18 July 1844, *Journal*, Vol. VII, pp.191–92, MS microfilm, University of Auckland Library, cited in Judith Binney, ed., *Te Kerikeri 1770–1850: The Meeting Pool*, Wellington, 2007, p.17.
- 6 *Maori Messenger: Ko Te Karere Maori*, 31 May 1856, pp.12–13.
- 7 The Māori text as published in the *Maori Messenger* was not broken into paragraphs but breaks have been inserted to approximate the paragraph divisions in the official translation.
- 8 Lachy Paterson, *Colonial Discourses: Niupepa Māori 1855–1863*, Dunedin, 2006, pp.140–41.
- 9 Translation by Hohipere Tarau. The word was spelled 'wakakahoretia' in the 1835 version.
- 10 For a fuller discussion, see Margaret Mutu, 'The Humpty Dumpty Principle at Work', in Sabine Fenton, ed., *For Better or For Worse: Translation as a Tool for Change in the South Pacific*, Northampton, MA, 2004, p.24.
- 11 Kawana Te Hakeke to McLean, 14 May 1850, Inward Letters in Māori, MS-Papers-0032-0674B, Object #1032442, online at: <http://mp.natlib.govt.nz/static/introduction-mclean?!=en>.
- 12 Mutu, 'Cultural Misunderstanding', p.92.
- 13 Claudia Orange, *The Treaty of Waitangi*, Wellington, 1990, pp.255–56.
- 14 *ibid.* *Maori Messenger: Ko Te Karere Maori*, 31 May 1856, pp.12–13.
- 15 *Taranaki Herald*, 19 May 1860, p.2.
- 16 Orange, *Treaty of Waitangi*, p.136.
- 17 Claudia Orange, 'The Covenant of Kohimarama. A Ratification of the Treaty of Waitangi', *NZJH*, 14, 1 (1980), p.73.
- 18 *Maori Messenger: Ko Te Karere Maori*, 14 July 1860, pp.5–6.
- 19 Translation by Hohipere Tarau.
- 20 Orange, 'Covenant of Kohimarama', pp.73–74.
- 21 *Maori Messenger: Ko Te Karere Maori*, 30 November 1860, p.8.
- 22 *Maori Messenger: Ko Te Karere Maori*, 30 November 1860, p.9.
- 23 Cited in Brian Mackrell, *Hariru Wikitoria! An Illustrated History of the Maori Tour of England, 1863*, Auckland, 1985, p.56.
- 24 *Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle*, 7 April 1860, p.4.
- 25 *Maori Messenger: Te Karere Maori*, 15 March 1860, pp.6–9.
- 26 *Southern Cross*, 5 June 1860, p.3; *Colonist*, 3 July 1860, p.3.
- 27 James Mackay Jnr to the Native Secretary, Report of Pelorus Hui, 12 October 1860, Outwards Letterbook, MA-Collingwood, 2/1:173-178, Archives New Zealand, Wellington, cited in Hilary and John Mitchell, *Te Tau Ihu o te Waka*, Vol. 2, Wellington, 2007, p.461.
- 28 http://www.thebriefingroom.com/archives/2007/07/voices_from_the.html, accessed 30 June 2008.
- 29 See, for example, Hazel Petrie, *Chiefs of Industry: Māori Tribal Enterprise in Early Colonial New Zealand*, Auckland, 2006, pp.223–26.
- 30 See, for example, Tuiti Makitanara (Sweet MacDonald), MP for Southern Māori at a Ratana hui in 1930, *Te Toa Takatini*, 1 May 1930, p.2060.
- 31 See, for example, Lindsay Cox, *Kotahitanga: The Search for Māori Political Unity*, Auckland, 1993, p.43 and Mutu, 'The Humpty Dumpty Principle', pp.14–16.
- 32 For example, *Te Korimako*, 22 August 1887, p.5; 20 September 1887, p.4; *Huia Tangata Kotahi*, 11 November 1893, p.7; *Te Toa Takatini*, 1 May 1930, p.2060.
- 33 *Great Britain Parliamentary Papers*, 1845, XXXIII, 108, p.10.