

Songlines from Aotearoa*



IN LATE TWENTIETH-CENTURY AOTEAROA New Zealand, Maori are actively renegotiating their relationship to and roles within the modern state. The political dialogue is about sharing the substance of power and resources. The past is in sharp focus, particularly as the Treaty of Waitangi Tribunal, reconstructed in 1985 to examine grievances stemming from the Crown's actions and its failures in its fiduciary obligations towards Maori since 1840, is investigating many Maori land claims. But Maori use of the past is not just to rekindle a history of grievances and dispossession. Maori history is a living presence, and while Maori society is now a literate one, history is still remembered and told in the oral, marae environment that has survived colonization: the complex of meeting-house and open assembly space, which belong to whanau (families), hapu (local tribes) and iwi (ancestral tribal groups) across the land. In the ritual of formal encounter on the marae atea (the open space before the meeting-house) and within the sheltering walls of the house itself, history is sung, enacted and narrated.

Maori history is not only woven as a means of explaining the present. The living, multiple interpretations of past events give birth to new actions. The telling of history sets in motion, and will continue to set in motion, new histories, for Maori leaders act according to the understandings worked into narratives, songs and predictions. These oral forms of recalling and shaping history may also be transmitted through manuscript texts in a manner that is not dissimilar to the circulation of early biblical narratives.

This chapter arises from an increasing historical awareness of ways in which communal oral narratives are sustained while being continuously reworked. Its particular origin lies with narratives I was told when researching a biography of Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuki, the nineteenth-century Maori prophet leader.¹ Some of these narratives flow into and are a part of the lives of leaders who followed after him. The narratives explain the transference of mana (authority) in the Maori world and they indicate, too, the contestations of mana that exist in that world. The stories are often concerned with leaders who challenge the established or hereditary chiefs, as Te Kooti did.

In Maori thought, the past (the deeds of the ancestors) is actively confronted by the living. The past is called 'nga ra o mua', the days in front: these are the times that encompass and direct the actions of the living. In Maori, the diacritic marker for 'the past' and for the space that lies 'in front of the viewer' is expressed by the same term in the language: 'mua'. The Maori Bible recovers the original Hebraic 'timelessness' where prophecy blazes forth 'now', for the continuous present dominates.² Thus, for Maori, narratives recalling ancestral deeds from a distant past are templates for the present. In speeches on the marae, in prayers and in songs, ancestors of those present are spoken to directly. They are summoned from the realm of the dead for the particular occasion — the

opening of a new meeting-house, the launching of a canoe, or the negotiation of trusteeship for taonga (valued resources). In the karakia (prayers) used for lifting the tapu (controlling restrictions) from a new meeting-house, chiefly leaders of the past are called upon to awaken.

Leading Maori figures of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries shaped and reshaped oral narratives concerning the transference of mana to the living. In the 1940s, for example, a Ngai Tahu elder from the South Island, Te Ari Pitama, depicted the decision of a nineteenth-century North Island tohunga (religious leader or priest), Hamiona Turoa, to divide his power: 'Endowed with the mystic powers over life and death, he [Hamiona] was strongly insulated with the power of Tapu. His exemplary way of life was Christlike. Cognisant of the fact that if his work for the good of his people was to survive, then his mana must be such as to show to all other tohungas that his powers exceeded theirs When he realised that his last days were numbered he decided that his power should be borne by four people, and so four quarters were selected.'³ Three of the four inheritors, the narrative states, passed their spiritual mantles to the visionary, Tahupotiki Wiremu Ratana, founder of the Ratana faith in the twentieth century. The three included Mere Rikiriki, Ratana's aunt, who herself stood in a line of descent tracing from the famous nineteenth-century prophets Te Ua Haumene and Te Whiti-o-Rongomai. Ratana, in his turn, declared that he would divide himself into four: that is — as it is usually understood — he chose the four who would, commencing in 1932, capture the four Maori parliamentary seats.⁴ In Te Ari's narrative, however, Ratana had sought the last quarter in vain: the power entrusted by Hamiona to Mananui Te Rangi Hiwinui of Rangitane. Mananui's spiritual inheritance had instead been 'seized' by his younger son, Mahuri Manawatu, when he bit, as his father lay dying, his father's big toe — thus appropriating his knowledge. Further, Mahuri's mother, who had once seemed to be barren, was blessed by another of the inheritors of Hamiona's power, thus giving birth to two sons and averting the catastrophe of wharengaro, a house without issue. In this South Island oral narrative, the story of Mahuri's seizure of mana visibly interconnects with narratives of the fear of the failure of their line.⁵ Mahuri, who became the tohunga for his mother's people at Christchurch, in turn blessed the chiefly leader of the city, Ropata Wahawaha Stirling, who died in August 1997. Two other 'mighty totara' trees also fell in the winter of 1997. For each of the three, narratives of inheritance of mana are already evolving.⁶

In Maori narratives time is often collapsed. The present is explained by actions that are construed as having occurred yesterday: the ancestors walk with the narrator; the narrator is hero. In the years after their colonization from Europe, dissident Maori leaders all constructed narratives about the pillars of their authority. The same narratives were expanded and redirected by the next generation of leaders. All these stories are myth-narratives in that they are 'chronicles of the impossible'. Yet they directly influence and shape political actions and judgements taken by the living in successive generations. Stories like Te Ari's lie behind every one of the major Maori political movements of the nineteenth century, and they have engendered significant history in Aotearoa New Zealand.

All Maori history is relational in that mana is transferred though the lines of descent, or passed from one chosen person to another. In the nineteenth century, kinship was not necessarily the only path of inheritance to power: prediction, and accomplishment of prediction, offered an alternative path. But the hau (the essence of life) in all cases was summoned into the present from the ancestors. In this sense, ancestral authority, no matter how it was transferred or seized, remained crucial to each successive leader.

Three East Coast nineteenth-century leaders of very different political styles traced their descent from the same matakite (visionary), Toiroa Ikariki (Ikarihi). Toiroa lived at Nukutaurua on the Mahia Peninsula in the early nineteenth century, and Nukutaurua is famous in East Coast traditions as the final landing place of the Takitimu canoe, from which Kahungunu and Rongowhakaata, the two eponymous ancestors of major East Coast tribes, took their descent. Toiroa himself claimed descent from Nga-Toro-i-Rangi, the great tohunga of the founding Arawa canoe who called up the fires within the icy volcano, Tongariro. In the narrative account recorded by the nineteenth-century prophet leader Te Kooti he stated: ‘Na ko ahau (Te Kooti) te kai whakaatu i matakitetia mai ai e ia, a ki te whanau ahau ka tae mai he iwi hou ki tenei motu. He Atua ano to ratau, ara ko Tama-i-rorokutia he Atua pai otira ka ngaro te tangata/Now I (Te Kooti) was the one to reveal what he [Toiroa] prophesied, that when I was born a new people would come to this land. They would have another God, that is Tama-i-rorokutia (Son-who-was-killed), a good God, however the people would be oppressed.’⁷ This version of the narrative of Toiroa is a foundational text for Te Kooti’s vision, designed to assert a continuity between the new prophecy and the old. While the narrative evokes the colonial predicament of Maori, it also anticipates that hope might be derived from the new religious teachings. It indicates that Te Kooti would be the leader for the people in their greatest time of trouble. Two other contemporary East Coast leaders attributed their legitimacy, and in one case his actual survival, to Toiroa. Hamiora Mangakahia, who became the first premier of Te Kotahitanga, the separate Maori ‘parliament’ of 1892, considered that he had been chosen to fulfil Toiroa’s quest for peace. This, Hamiora said, Toiroa had called for in 1858 — on the eve of the colonial wars, and nine years before Toiroa died in the midst of the strife he had foreseen. In 1898 Hamiora quoted a prediction of Toiroa that it would be the ‘distant descendant’ (‘te Miha’) who would, one day, bring peace,⁸ implicitly applying this description to himself. In his turn, Ihaka Whaanga, senior chief of Mahia and Nuhaka, who led war-parties in the government’s sweep against Te Kooti in the late 1860s, attributed his survival as a small child to a premonition of Toiroa, followed by his direct inter-vention. Toiroa rescued him, the potiki (littlest) of six children (a descriptive template derived from the widely known Maui myth-cycle), from a canoe, just before his father and all his own siblings were betrayed and killed by kinsmen.⁹

Toiroa was consulted widely on the East Coast during the 1850s and early 1860s. When times of great significance approached, as these years certainly were, tohunga from different parts said, ‘it is the time of Toiroa’, and journeyed to Nukutaurua to seek his predictive wisdom.¹⁰ It is still remembered of Toiroa that, when the spirit of prophecy entered him, he would assume the appearance

of the small brown lizard (papateretere), with his back arched and his fingers played:¹¹ the lizard is the sign of the person who belongs with the world of the spirits.

Respectively Te Kooti, Hamiora and Ihaka told the story of themselves, establishing their direct link to Toiroa. In a similar fashion, indigenous leaders of the northern Andes, from the late seventeenth century to the 1980s, narrated events that established themselves and their legitimacy through their ‘descent’ from earlier culture heroes. Don Juan Tama de Estrella of Páez, as an old man in 1708, narrated an account of the defeat and exile of neighbouring people as his own deeds (events that had occurred at least 75 years before he was born). Juan Tama is a mythic hero in twentieth-century Páez oral and written narratives, and is believed to inhabit the lake that now bears his name, appearing at times of great danger, such as La Violencia in the 1950s, to aid his people. He was born at a time when the Morning Star, Venus, was at its brightest and was, he said, ‘the son of the star of the Tama Stream’, that is, the local river into which little ‘stars’ fall when the water runs quickly at the June solstice.¹² Thus, Estrella (Star) is the name he assumed in his own lifetime. Not only did Juan Tama telescope history in his narratives; he also projected his mythic image into the future, creating himself as divine emissary for his people. In the twentieth century, the activist leader of Páez, Manuel Quintín Lame, in turn, considered himself as the bearer of the inheritance of Juan Tama.

Te Kooti Arikirangi and those who claimed to be his successor deployed history similarly. There were ancestral tasks and quests, which Te Kooti set and which his narratives revive; there were, and are, new tasks and quests that the later narrators set for future generations. The Tuhoe prophet Rua Kenana Hepetipa claimed his baptismal name Hepetipa (Hephzibah) in 1906 from a prediction of Te Kooti’s uttered in 1885: ‘Te kupu whakaari mo te maungarongo . . . e ki nei ka karangatia koe ko Hepetipa, to whenua ko Peura, no te mea ka hua reka a lhoa i a koe, a ka whai tahu to whenua/The prophetic saying concerning the abiding peace . . . it says you shall be called Hephzibah and your land Beulah, for the Lord is well pleased with you, and your land shall have a spouse.’¹³ The scriptural text upon which this predictive message had been based was Isaiah 62:4, which looks to restoration of fruitfulness in the land. Rua was baptized as Hepetipa by Eria Raukura (Tutara-kauika), the senior tohunga of the Ringatu faith, which Te Kooti developed in exile. Eria baptized Rua in the flowing waters of the Waipaoa River, which courses down from the mountains into Poverty Bay, Te Kooti’s tribal area, to which he was never able to return. In taking this name Rua was stating that he was indeed the daughter of Zion.¹⁴ The quests Rua undertook as prophet stem variously from tasks set by Te Kooti for his successor, from Rua’s own interpretations of Tuhoe history, and from contemporary political events.

As the aspirant but divisive leader of Tuhoe, the mountain people of the Urewera, Rua had to undertake encounters with the taniwha, the monster-guardians of their lands. In 1909, on a much photographed boating expedition on Waikaremoana, Tuhoe’s wild and beautiful lake, Rua ‘pacified’ Haumapuhia, the lake’s turbulent protector. According to traditional accounts, Haumapuhia was betrayed by her father and drowned there; her struggles to free herself

created the wandering arms and channels of the great lake. She lies, face down, so that her mana will always return into the land, and her long hair ripples the lake's waters.¹⁵ The story of Haumapuhia 'explains' the lake, and constantly reminds of its dangers, for she is Tuhoe's tipua (ancestral force) of hidden power. 'Rua Tupua', as Rua's name was written in the East Coast dialectical variant on a flag made for him in 1906, went to Waikaremoana to wrestle with Haumapuhia — tapu against tapu, mana against mana. Rua's son Heta described the contest between the tipua: 'Haumapūpia boy isn't it? — his grandfather, or something, killed him, dumped him in that lake. You can almost see the outline of him in that lake on a clear day, lying down flat. Taniwha is the Māori [word], you know, water god. Well, if you do anything wrong, it don't hesitate to kill you. It'll drown you or do anything. 'Cause he [Rua] went to stop it, so it wouldn't do any harm to anybody.'¹⁶

Three years earlier, Rua had journeyed to Wairoa Harbour on a similar mission. Wairoa is within the tribal area of Kahungunu's descendants, Rua's father's people. Rua was brought up in the region when a youth. He went to calm the taniwha who lies in the Wairoa Harbour. As Heta told the story:

That one there is Hinenui-Te-Pō [Great Woman of Death], that's a kuia [old woman], right in the middle of the harbour, the Wairoa Harbour. That is the reason, more or less, he went there, you know. To take that curse away from that. Nothing else. To stop that thing so nothing happened to his own people. He didn't take very many people with him, only his apostles — his followers — about six or seven of them, I think. He just took the main people to do the service, and a few other things . . . I don't know what year he went, but I think it's when he went to Pātūtahi, you know, Rongopai.¹⁷

This visit to Wairoa took place in 1906. Rua was accompanied by about four men, who allowed themselves to be photographed with him.¹⁸ Rua's entry into the meeting-house Rongopai in March 1906 is also documented, but only the Maori oral narratives remember the purpose of that journey.

For Rua, his entrance into Rongopai was a conscious reenactment of myth-histories and, simultaneously, the completion of a contemporary quest. Rongopai was the great painted meeting-house built for Te Kooti in Poverty Bay in 1887. He himself never saw the house, as government intervention prevented him from returning home despite his pardon of 1883. The house, therefore, became extremely tapu, and it was closed by its guardians. Entry into Rongopai would be Rua's public proclamation that he was Te Kooti's predicted successor. Lying behind this quest are templates derived from and reflected in other great myth-histories: among them the ancient Polynesian cycle of the man-god Maui, the narratives of Tawhaki, the Wanderer,¹⁹ and Ngai Tahu's grim story of Tuahu-riri's misdirected search for his father. These are all stories about claiming descent lines.

Entry into the meeting-house usually represents the establishment of one's ancestral lineage. The foundation myth tells of the hero, Maui, who fished up the first ancestral meeting house, together with the land/fish upon which it stood. There the narrative indicates unequivocally Maui's transformation — from the troublesome youngest child — and his rebirth as man-god.²⁰ Tawhaki brought knowledge from the heavens back to this world, and is consequently seen as

the protector of *tohunga*. His second task was to recover his wife and daughter, whom he had lost by his own foolishness. He went disguised as an old man but was revealed by the flashing of lightning from his armpits; a power that is unique to him. As a result, at daybreak, the rear wall of the heavenly meeting house was broken open by his wife's kinsfolk, so as to allow the child to go out into the world of light: Tawhaki picked up his daughter and began his first prayer, which led them outside.²¹ Similarly, Tuahu-riri, when searching for his lost father, entered as a guest into the meeting-house and was there identified by his 'kin'. He was then passed out through an opening in the back wall of the house, because he, like Tawhaki's daughter, was still in a state of *tapu*. However, Tuahu-riri failed to complete the *tapu*-lifting rites, as he refused to eat with his newly discovered 'kin'. His rudeness and anger flowed from his realization that these people had originally intended to kill and eat him while welcoming him as their guest. The uncertainty of the claim that he belonged to this *whanau* is hinted at by his failure to complete the *tohi* (baptismal) rites. Tuahu-riri (The One-who-stood-angry-at-the-altar) would soon return to bring death to these people.²²

Rua's entry into Rongopai in 1906 belongs to this myth structuring. The narratives of the *Iharaira* (the Israelites, the followers of Rua, who are mostly *Tuhoe* people of the *Urewera*) state that Rua successfully claimed the house, the land and his descent as the 'son' of Te Kooti. Some versions tell how Rua entered the locked house by bursting through its rear wall. Similar stories are told of Te Kooti himself: at Koriniti, on the *Whanganui* River, for example, where the people had previously shown hostility to him, he is said to have burst violently through the back of the house, riding his white horse, and claimed space for himself and his faith in the centre aisle.²³ At Patutahi and Pakowhai in Poverty Bay, the local people had been similarly hostile, rejecting Rua's claims. From the house Rongopai, it is told, Rua re-emerged through the door at the front, or variously, through the big front window. In every version of this narrative Rua is described as riding the white horse of Te Kooti. In the narrative sequences of Rua, the white horse is named Te Ia (The Crest of the Wave), and photographs exist of Rua and Te Ia from the period 1905–1906. Many of the stories state that it was Te Ia who gave Rua his entry into Rongopai. Tumeke Onekawa, who married Rua's daughter Putiputi, told the narrative this way: 'He [Rua] was going to meet with Te Kooti at Rongopai. He got to Pākōwhai — they never gave him the key to open the house. But his horse went straight in — and he had the key. Horse was in, and opened the door for Rua to come in. That's how they knew. Because of Te Kooti. He said, "I'm going. My time is up. But my son is coming. You will find that son." He was to go to Pākōwhai. The *horse* had the golden key.'²⁴ This narrative, which derived from Rua, emphasized the fulfilment of the quest.

Two myth-templates most visibly underlie the actions of Te Kooti and Rua: further elements in Tawhaki's tale, and the story of the *marakihau* (sea-creature), Te *Tahi-o-Te-Rangi*, who succours his descendants. The Tawhaki cycle is widespread in Polynesia, and is particularly well known on the East Coast of the North Island, in the *Urewera*, and in the South Island, where descendants of *Kahungunu* migrated. Te *Tahi-o-Te-Rangi* seems to be particular

to the Mataatua canoe tribes of the Bay of Plenty and the Urewera. I suggest that Te Kooti, at times, *became* Tawhaki, his ancestor. For, like Tawhaki, Te Kooti became the Wanderer, as he passed through the tribal boundaries of the nineteenth-century Maori world. He enacted crucial parts of the Tawhaki cycle, certainly in the later stages of his life.

In 1867–1868, on Wharekauri (Chatham Island), Te Kooti was referred to by other Maori prisoners as Tawhaki, the twice-born, after his unexpected recovery from tubercular fever. Like this ancestor, he had been subject to the jealousy of his ‘brothers-in-law’, the Poverty Bay chiefs who had been, in part, instrumental in having him sent into exile. On the island, Te Kooti had been set aside in the house of death, his winding sheet prepared.²⁵ And like both Maui and Tawhaki he was reborn with a new role: to bring the prisoners home, and to give new life to the land. A narrative from 1878, when Te Kooti was sheltering with Ngati Maniapoto after the wars had ended, implicitly portrays Te Kooti as Tawhaki. Thrown out of a large gathering at Hikurangi, which had been called to negotiate with the governor and where Te Kooti had broken the ban that the Maori King, Tawhiao, had placed on alcohol, Te Kooti raged wildly through the night, while a tempestuous storm echoed his mood. At dawn, Te Kooti returned to his followers transformed: dressed in white albatross feathers, with only his face visible. He entered their meeting house like an old man, shuffling, coughing, and doubled over. When he reached the central sustaining post of the house, he stood with his head bowed, and told the assembled crowd that, although goodness belongs to humans they would inexorably corrupt it. Permanent peace was of God, not of humankind.

Tawhaki is known as the master of disguises and was famous for his capacity to transform himself into a stumbling old man. When the lightning flashed from his armpits, however, he threw off this disguise and asserted his power. In this story, Te Kooti is seen as Tawhaki, and his costume of albatross feathers visually depicts his message of divinely inspired peace. He was manifesting his profound distrust of the earth-bound political negotiations taking place at Hikurangi.

When Rua first claimed the mana from Te Kooti, he undertook a quest that took him to the summit of his mother’s tribal mountain, Maungapohatu. Here, according to the narratives, the hidden diamond on the mountain was revealed to him. This bright stone remains covered and protected by Te Kooti’s shawl (horo), just as Tane’s younger brother covered the bright stars with his mats (whara), before he gave the stars to Tane to create the skies.²⁶ In the Tuhoe narrative, Rua is the last to have seen the diamond on the mountain. It is sometimes said to be hidden within one of the three strangely coloured lakes on the mountain’s plateau, and in some versions the diamond was revealed to Rua by Whaitiri, the grandmother of Tawhaki, who is also ancestress of the Tuhoe people. In all versions, Rua encountered Whaitiri on the mountain’s summit. She is described, at first, as disguised in rags but revealing herself to be like ‘an angel’, possessing wings, and as ‘more or less Rua’s sister’.²⁷ This particular quest-narrative was already in circulation by 1905, that is, before Rua went to Rongopai. As Heta Rua consistently emphasized, it was after Rua saw the diamond, which Te Kooti had covered with his ‘rainbow shawl’, ‘that’s how he [Rua] started off That’s when that gift was given to him.’²⁸

This narrative implicitly identifies Rua with Tawhaki, who had travelled to heaven to meet Whaitiri. On his journey, Tawhaki entered one of the meeting houses of Ngahui Whatu, and there identified and recovered his father's bones. Ngahui Whatu are the whatu kura, precious stones, who are the gathering of the stars, and the ancestors to whom Tawhaki prays.²⁹ The first karakia Tawhaki had been taught by Tama-i-waho in the highest heaven, to fix his new knowledge was Te Whatu, the Stone, and it is commonly said that Tawhaki brought back the first 'whatu kura' to humankind.³⁰ Whatu kura were used in the East Coast schools of learning to seal the scholars' knowledge, and the tiny stones they had to search for, and swallow, were usually coloured red or white. On Wharekauri, in 1868, Te Kooti set the prisoners a riddle to resolve before their escape: how to eat a small white stone that he said had been revealed to him. The solution, to pound the stone and share it, bonded the prisoners and sealed their grasp of the escape plan.

Diamonds, like the one revealed on Maungapohatu, are precious stones not found naturally in New Zealand. The story has several imaginative sources: one was quite possibly the North American Indian legend of the diamond hidden in their land, which had been retold by Nathaniel Hawthorne in 1851 as 'The Great Carbuncle', and then widely circulated; another, I suggest, was the narrative of Tawhaki, who had encountered the whatu kura. In a version from inland Poverty Bay, the Ringatu elder Ned Brown told the story of the portion of Te Kooti's diamond, which Ned's ancestor, Te Hira Uetuku, who had been a prisoner on Wharekauri, brought to his tribal mountain, Maungahaumi, as a gift from Te Kooti. This was the mauri, the local guardian stone for the land and its people. In this version, Te Kooti's diamond was shaped like the Lamb of God, 'Te Reme', and their portion was its foot (waewae), thus preserving their turangawaewae (footing). Ned then went on implicitly to connect the diamond with the large, glittering quartz-stone that used to be visible when the sun shone on the Mangatu River, whose several sources flow down from Maungahaumi. The stone disappeared 'when the Europeans started the wars', but little white quartz pebbles, called the 'children of Mangatu', still tumbled in the river when it was clear — before the land was deforested and the river began to flood uncontrollably.³¹ The little 'glittering' stones were like the stars of the Tama stream, and they existed before the environment was damaged by 'prominent men'. This narrative of the river tells how 'it once was', and suggests also how 'it should be'. The story is part of a system of knowledge that is particular and local, but which carries warnings of the dangers created through ignorance, corruption and greed.

The story of Te Kooti's diamond, hidden on the sacred mountains of each of the tribes who had sheltered him during the colonial wars, was given new life by Rua in 1905. In January of that year, the largest diamond in the world, the Cullinan diamond, was discovered in South Africa. The Boers called it 'God's stone', and after much public discussion, the parliament of the recently defeated Transvaal Republic voted, in 1907, to give it to King Edward VII as a statement of their loyalty. Rua, a regular reader of the *Auckland Weekly News*, a popular photographic magazine, and who later papered the walls of his home and surrounding buildings at Maai with its pages, pre-empted the Boers

by his own pilgrimage to Gisborne in 1906. His stated purpose was to meet King Edward. According to some narratives of this pilgrimage, which followed Rua's successful entry into Rongopai, he carried with him a large diamond. Rua's purpose was to 'buy back' New Zealand from the son of Victoria — to whom the land had been 'given' by treaty in 1840. It was to be a ritualized exchange in terms that Europeans could understand.

On this journey, Rua took with him all the chiefs of Tuhoe and Ngati Awa from the eastern Bay of Plenty: 80 men. In so doing he was consciously fulfilling an earlier prediction of Te Kooti. In 1872, Tuhoe had formed their union of chiefs, Te Whitu Tekau, the Union of Seventy, as a shelter (tawharau) for themselves and their land. In a famous story that dates from March 1892, the Tuhoe chiefs asked Te Kooti to help them with the survey difficulties affecting their land 'within the Shelter of Mataatua' ('ki roto i te Tawharau o Matatua'), 'that is, the Seventy' ('kia 70 tekau nga Tangata'). Te Kooti had replied:

'He Aitua he Tawhara he pouaru hoki — engari kia toopu, na ka whakaekea ki te 80 hei whakahaere mo nga rarururu. Ko Te Hurinui hei Tiaki.' A oat-itia iho e Te Kooti taua whakahaere. Tu ana ia herea ana e ia tona tatua maurea ki te pou tokomanawa o taua whare.

'It was an Omen, an Odd number, a widow (a solitary branch left behind on a tree) — rather, when they do assemble, let the number be 80 to deal with the difficulties. Let Te Hurinui [Apanui] be the Guardian.' The plan-ning was put under oath by Te Kooti. He stood up and tied his belt to the main post of that house.³²

In this dramatic manner Te Kooti tied the tribes of the Mataatua canoe and the meeting-house together as one with himself. He also chose the leader to fulfil the new directive: Te Hurinui Apanui, chief of Ngati Awa who also had close kinship connections with Tuhoe, was to form the Eighty. Again, there are multiple layers of meaning encoded here. The original concept of the Union of Seventy derived from the Scriptures, for it was the number chosen for the elders of Israel, who were to accompany Moses and to whom God later gave 'the spirit' when he lifted it from Moses. They then became the prophets, those with foresight.³³ In the New Testament, Christ appointed 70 to journey before him wherever he should go; the Tuhoe elder Mangere Teka explicitly drew this parallel when he discussed Rua's 70 'police', as he called them in his limited English.³⁴

In Maori tradition, it is Tawhaki who brought to humans the knowledge that Whaitiri, his grandmother, invented: the skill of counting in lots of ten.³⁵ Te Kooti's task of completion, that is, adding ten to create the Eighty, has been interpreted in different ways. In June 1906, Rua himself chose to take 80 men, among them Te Hurinui, to Gisborne, to fulfil Te Kooti's instruction.³⁶ Behind this action also lay the revelation Rua experienced on 12 April 1906 (for the Ringatu faith, the twelfth of the month is the sacred day of the month, a practice that, at this time, Rua was still observing):

Maungapohatu, Aperira 12th 1906

I tena ra ka whakaaturia; i [te] 25 o Hune haere au ki runga i te torona, ka tae mai a te kiingi ki Turanga.

Maungapohatu, April 12th 1906

On that day it was revealed; on June 25th I will ascend the throne, the king will arrive at Turanga [Gisborne].³⁷

This pilgrimage was reported by journalists and photographed for the *Auckland Weekly News*.³⁸ The latent meaning of the journey was then ascribed by Rua's followers: instead of King Edward, who did not come to Gisborne, it was Rua who was properly king. It was a claim to sovereignty.

Rua's continuing relationship with Whaitiri extended at least into the late 1920s. Whaitiri's appearance was identified, in the Tawhaki myth cycle, by her unique perfume.³⁹ Heta Rua described Whaitiri's presence, often experienced at Maungapohatu, in the same way:

The only time you can notice her is she has a beautiful perfume. When Rua was passing you, you'd be trying to follow where it comes from. Well, it's on him. That's the only time you know that lady is there somewhere . . . Once you get that perfume, she is there all right. That's the only time when that lady appeared, when there's a church service, or when he was going up to the pā in Maungapōhātu's going ahead of you, then you get that perfume smell. It comes on the wind and you wonder where it is coming from. So that lady must be there, looking after somebody.⁴⁰

Another ancestral figure with whom Rua identified was the sea-creature Te Tahi-o-Te-Rangi, who became famous for his saying that, rather than destroy people in revenge, 'Waiho ma te whakama e patu. Waiho hai korero i a tatau kia atawhai ki te iwi/Leave them for shame to punish. Let us acquire fame by means of mercy.'⁴¹ Te Tahi appears on the porch of the carved house built by Tuhoe for Te Kooti, Te Whai-a-te-motu (The Pursuit-across-the-land). Te Kooti opened this house in 1891, and there could be little doubt that Rua was among the large gathering assembled to discuss the future of Tuhoe's land. This principle of mercy, or tolerance, for which Te Tahi-o-Te-Rangi was remembered, Te Kooti had taken as his own when he eschewed war from 1873. Rua, in his turn, used his Tuhoe ancestral figure as his charter (or guide) when he adopted Te Kooti's principle of maungarongo, lasting peace, and he had Te Tahi's name stitched onto one of the flags he flew at Maungapohatu.

There is, of course, another set of templates that all the Maori nineteenth-century leaders applied to their own situation: the scriptural texts and stories. Maori internalized the redemptive messages of the Scriptures, as they identified with the genealogically structured, orally composed narratives of the Bible, the Israelitic tribal traditions of journeying, and the Jewish history of dispossession. The identification strengthened rather than weakened as the situational parallels grew, once the confiscation of land was rammed through in all the regions where war was fomented by government actions from 1863.

Each of the Maori prophet leaders saw themselves as Moses. Encoded in this identification is the premise that another leader would rise to fulfil the quest of Moses: to return the people to their homeland and to their autonomy.

This template shaped many of Rua's decisions. He called himself Moses,⁴² and in the early years of his community at Maungapohatu the people tried to live by Mosaic codes:

Ka whakaritea e ia i te wā i a Mohi ra ano Engari rawa to nohoanga whakamutunga nei na . . . ko te nohoanga nui tēnei . . . i whakakorea ai te tapu ra, na, ki a Ihairaira, ngā Riwaiti, ngā Ihairaira katoa, ana, i tapahia ai ngā makawe-roroa . . . Ae, kua mutu ngā taurira. Kua rmutu ngā taurira i whakaritea mai ai i te wā i a Mohi ra. Kua mutu ēra whakarite ki ana tāngata makawe-roroa Engari i kī taku papa, 'Ko ia tonu te Tapu, ko ia tonu te Noa.' Ana ka kī ia me noa ia, ana, me te katoa rātau, ka noa katoa 'A, hoi ano', kua kī, 'hoki ia kua mutu. Kua rite tēra whakarite i te wā i a Mohi ma . . . a me hoki ano ki te tikanga tuatahi, a me whakapotopoto ngā makawe o rātau katoa ko ana tāngata.'

He likened it to the era of Moses But the last sitting here . . . that was the biggest sitting [in 1915] . . . when the tapu was lifted, from Israel, from the Levites, all of the Israelites, and when their hair was cut Yes, the pattern was ended. The example set down had been achieved from the time of Moses. All those laws were finished with his long-haired people Rather, as my father [Tatu Horopapera] said, 'He was the Sacred One, the Remover of Restrictions.' When he [Rua] said the tapu was to be lifted from him and his people, so it was . . . 'Oh, well', he said, 'it is finished. The things of Moses' time have been fulfilled . . . we must return to the original custom; we must all shorten our hair.'⁴³

These templates were, however, also modified by Maori cosmological principles. The whakanoa rituals, as described here, belong not merely to the transition from the times of the Old Testament to those of the New. They also pertain to the notion of being 'clear' or 'cleansed', the alternate state to living under the 'restrictions' of extended tapu, the rules by which the community had operated since 1907. The tapu-lifting rituals followed those of traditional hair-cutting rites for a child, the situation where 'one tapu acknowledges the other', allowing the restrictions to be lifted.⁴⁴ This new state of being, noa, has its own positive qualities. The name Maai, which Rua gave to his new home, built before his trial and imprisonment in 1916, affirmed these qualities. Maai means the very 'clean', or 'clear' place.

In some versions of Rua's entry into Rongopai, Christ awaited him inside the house, along with Te Kooti. But increasingly Rua came to identify himself with Christ; and Whaitiri was seen as his own 'sister' or female relative (tuahine). In 1915, when Rua was first imprisoned for the illicit sale of alcohol, to the intense irritation of the government, which had orchestrated his arrest, the sentence imposed upon him by the local magistrate proved to be counter-effective: '[H]is recent conviction and imprisonment, instead of, as was hoped, destroying his "mana", will have the effect of adding to it as it is looked upon as the test of allegiance of his followers. Their usual remark is that "Christ was also persecuted".'⁴⁵ Rua's second, and similarly orchestrated, arrest occurred in 1916. This time, armed police were sent, and two Maori youths (including one of Rua's sons) were killed in the assault on Maungapohatu. The violent arrest of Rua and of his eldest son, Whatu, served, in the eyes of his followers, to affirm his identity as Christ: 'They made Rua and his son dig their own

holes, three holes. The pits were to bury them, alive. They stand there, and Rua told the policemen, “Well, if you are going to put me to death, I want you people to shoot me, once. One shot. If you don’t kill me with one shot, that is to let you people know that I am the Son of the living God.” So they shoot him all right . . . Well, he lived from that day, from 1916, right up to 1937. And no medical treatment; he only had the Māori way.⁴⁶ Maori myth-narratives often focus on the transference of power to the next generation. Thus, they follow the general pattern of narratives about a son who claims his paternal, or maternal, lineage and who completes the unfinished tasks, just as Tawhaki identified, and recovered, his father’s lost bones. As Hirini Mead commented in his introduction to his recent retelling of the Tawhaki cycle, ‘Nowadays we think that sons should complete the tasks not finished by their fathers during their lifetime.’⁴⁷ Mead thereby indicated, in simple form, the quest-formulae that have continued to evolve, seeking to address modern Maori concerns.

Other succession narratives are couched as continuing quests, undertaken by rival claimants who each sought to prove that they were Te Kooti’s predicted successor. Between 1921 and 1923, Wi Raepuku (Ohana) undertook a series of tasks to establish his claim that he had opened the ‘seven seals’ that he said had been laid on the land by Te Kooti. Wi Raepuku began his long journey from Whanganui to Te Wainui, the land given to Te Kooti’s followers in the eastern Bay of Plenty, on 1 July 1921. On this date (one of the pillars of the Ringatu year), at Otoko marae on the Mangawhero river, Wi announced himself to be the predicted child of Te Kooti (‘te tamaiti a Te Kooti’).⁴⁸ The little meeting-house at Otoko, called Tauakira, had been renamed by Te Kooti in 1891 ‘te Parakuhihi’, the Breakfast, indicating its importance in the turn of his fortunes in the Whanganui district. He then span a riddle for the house, which Wi Raepuku set out to fulfil:

Otoko . . .

1. Tenei whare koTauakira, me hua e ahau ko te Parakuhihi, a ka tina ahau ki konei.

Otoko . . .

1. This house is named Tauakira, but I shall name it the Breakfast, and I shall have dinner (repletion) here.⁴⁹

Wi Raepuku led a pilgrimage of believers from Otoko through all the places associated with Te Kooti. They likened themselves to the children of Israel, ‘nga tamariki a Iharaira’, just as Rua’s followers had done. Their journey took them through Kauangaroa and Karioi, along the Desert Road by the great snow-capped mountain Tongariro, from where Toiroa traced his descent, and to Whakatane in the eastern Bay of Plenty. At every spot they rested they planted trees to mark the stages of their pilgrimage. On 1 January 1923 (the first pillar of the Ringatu year), at Te Poroporo marae, Whakatane, Wi Raepuku claimed to have opened the ‘fourth seal’, Te Umutaoroa, or ‘the hangī (earth-oven) of long cooking’. Then, on the following 1 July he made the first of several unsuccessful attempts to exhume the bones of Te Kooti in order to take them back to Poverty Bay, Te Kooti’s birthplace. In this quest, to find the hidden bones of Te Kooti, which Wi Raepuku called the ‘sixth seal’, he failed.

The stories and narratives that link the present to the past and from which Maori leaders have taken their guidance were not and are not static. Maori did not and do not live by rigid myth structures and ritual, inhibiting their capacity to respond to the unique or the unexpected.⁵⁰ Rather, oral narratives and metaphors, while sustaining historical memory, allow for an infinite variety of meaning and active response. The narratives change, and new philosophical frameworks can be incorporated, as the myth-narratives stemming from the scriptural texts — and the *Auckland Weekly News* — demonstrate. Therefore, they continue to be told within local communities and on marae. The narrators hold the stories; the narrators may also be the main actors. The stories are brought forth to help make sense of their political decisions and to guide the choices they make. They are told so as to evaluate contemporary political, spiritual and cultural problems in the light of the people's past experiences. If the stories hold a 'sacred truth', as Te Kooti and Rua believed they did, they are also ways by which those leaders came to understand contemporary problems and suggest choices of action for their people.

During the three-month occupation of Pakaitore (Moutoa Gardens) at Wanganui in 1995, the leaders of the protest, both the rangatahi (the young men in charge of the temporary perimeter fence that had been erected around the two-acre public gardens) and the kaumatua, the elders, who came from all the marae of the Whanganui River, variously spoke of the principles lying behind their actions. Niko Tangaroa, a Ringatu elder and former trade union leader, stated firmly that their 'kaupapa' (that is, the plan, the track, their purpose and their medium of communication with the divinity) was 'the prophets' themselves, whom he then named: Te Whiti-o-Rongomai, Tohu Kakahi, Titokowaru, Te Kooti and Rua Te Kenana, as he called him — Rua the Canaanite.⁵¹ After an episode that occurred on 1 April, when police seized a young man for carrying a 'hidden weapon', the kaiwhakahaere (the leader of the young men's group for that day) reiterated the protesters' commitment to peace. After a full-stepping wero (ritualized challenge), in which he evoked the hideous ngarara, the great lizard that circled over them, dropping down with monstrous claws, he gathered up the rakau, wooden sticks or batons that some of the rangatahi had worn in their belts. He carried the sticks into the meeting-house, which had been built for the occupation, and 'buried' them all inside the house. The prayers that accompanied this lengthy ritual called for peace, rangimarie. The prophet evoked to support them was Te Whiti, who had led the passive resistance defending the lands of Parihaka in 1881. The tactics Te Whiti had adopted at Parihaka were analyzed later that night on the marae atea. It was generally understood that, in 1995 at Pakaitore, the police were using similar strategies — verbal abuse and piecemeal arrest — seeking to pick off the young men and to provoke a broader response that would allow them the opportunity to retake this public space. Were the memories, or the narrative-metaphor of the circling ngarara, or indeed the analysis of strategies inappropriate? I do not think so. Nor was the lengthy archival research that had been undertaken by the Whanganui River hapu to trace the history of the river and the trading reserve, formerly created for the tribes. And nor were the computers that had been brought into the tent-headquarters to link the protest and its purposes to the outside world.

In the winter of 1997, when the three tall totara fell, the candidates who might follow were discussed openly in terms of their whakapapa (genealogies) and their personal abilities. Their experiences range from activism to academia (as one would expect), but the mantles will pass on, and structurings from the past will be present in the stories. Spiritual power may be divided, for it might be feared, as Hamiona Turoa believed, that 'no one was sufficiently insulated with tapu' to carry on the work alone.⁵² Mana may, however, be claimed tribally by one person through a series of actions, which will convey multivalent meanings to a watching Maori audience and will also be affected by that audience. The patterning of significance in the narratives is the knowledge of the past, which lies in front, woven onto the warp of the future that is unknown. The narratives transmit moral truths even as they are reworked in the hands of each and every narrator for their times.

NOTES

Originally published in Klaus Neumann, Nicholas Thomas and Hilary Ericksen, eds, *Quicksands: Foundational Histories from Australia and Aotearoa*, 1999. Republished with the permission of the University of New South Wales Press.

*I wish to express my gratitude to Te Maire Tau, Jane McRae and Angela Ballara for their generous advice.

- 1 Judith Binney, *Redemption Songs: A Life of Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuki*, Auckland, 1995.
- 2 George Steiner, 'A Preface to the Hebrew Bible', in *No Passion Spent: Essays 1978–1996*, London, 1996, p.58.
- 3 Undated manuscript, Te Ari Pitama Manuscripts, private collection, Te Maire Tau, Christchurch.
- 4 From 1868 until 1996 there were four seats in the lower house of Parliament for the Maori electorate.
- 5 I am indebted to Te Maire Tau for oral knowledge surrounding the written text.
- 6 'Nursery of the Mighty Totara', *New Zealand Herald* (NZH), 9 August 1997; the *Press*, Christchurch, 12 August 1997; *Mana*, 18 (October–November 1997), p.9. The NZH article was written after the deaths of two leaders, Matiu Rata and Sir Hepi Te Heuheu, in late July; the *Press's* article was written after Wahawaha Stirling's death. Matiu Rata had held one of the Maori parliamentary seats for Ratana, until his resignation from the Labour Party in 1979. He was described by the president of the New Zealand Law Commission as a 'Maori Moses', who, as Minister of Maori Affairs, in 1975 created the act establishing the Waitangi Tribunal (NZH, 29 July 1997).
- 7 Manuscript notebooks compiled by Robert Biddle, secretary of the Haahi Ringatu (Ringatu Church), vol.1, 1927, p.239. Private collection.
- 8 Hamiora Mangakahia, 10 May 1898, in *Te Puke ki Hikurangi*, 7 June 1898.
- 9 Grace Smit, 'Mana Maori: Questions of Authority on the East Coast During the Nineteenth Century', MA thesis, University of Auckland, 1997, p.18.
- 10 Bronwyn Elsmore, 'Te Hahi o te Kotahitanga Marama (The Religion of the Reflection of the Moon)', MPhil thesis, Massey University, Palmerston North, 1983, p.7.
- 11 Oral Source (OS): Sir Monita Delamere of Te Whanau-a-Apanui, 14 December 1981, Opotiki.
- 12 Joanne Rappaport, *The Politics of Memory: Native Historical Interpretation in the Colombian Andes*, Cambridge, 1990, pp.66, 72–73, 141–2, 154.
- 13 25 January 1885, Maungapohatu notebook 1880–1916, pp.90–91, MS C-22, Auckland University Library.
- 14 For a fuller account of this prophecy, see Judith Binney, 'Myth and Explanation in the Ringatu Tradition', *Journal of the Polynesian Society* (JPS), 93 (1984), p.368.
- 15 Elsdon Best, *Tuhoe, Vol. One*, 3rd ed., Wellington, 1977, pp.190–1, 978–80.
- 16 OS: Heta Rua of Tuhoe, 23 May 1982, Whakatane. Haumapuhia is usually said to be female.
- 17 OS: Heta Rua, 23 May 1982.
- 18 See Judith Binney et al., *Mihaia: The Prophet Rua Kenana and his Community at Maungapohatu*, 4th ed., Auckland, 1996, p.27.
- 19 John White, *The Ancient History of the Maori, His Mythology and Traditions, Vol. One*, Wellington, 1887, p.128 (English).
- 20 See Agathe Thornton, ed., *The Story of Māui by Te Rangikaheke*, Christchurch, 1992, p.25 (Maori), p.50 (English).
- 21 Hirini Moko Mead, *Tāwhaki: The Deeds of a Demigod*, Wellington, 1996, pp.73–75; White, *Ancient History, Vol. One*, p.118 (English), p.104 (Maori) (Ngai Tahu).
- 22 For a version of this narrative, see Herries Beattie, *Tikao Talks*, Dunedin, 1939, pp.116–18. I am indebted to Te Maire Tau for details of the story of the eponymous ancestor of his hapu, Ngai Tuahuriri, and particularly the account of the incomplete hakari, which is omitted by Beattie.
- 23 Binney, *Redemption Songs*, p.342.
- 24 OS: Tumeke Onekawa, 10 December 1978, Kutarere.
- 25 W. Leonard Williams, diary, 9 August 1868, typescript, Auckland Institute and Museum.
- 26 See the story of Tane, who also created humankind, in Manu van Ballekom and Ray Harlow, eds, *Te Waitatanga mai o Te Atua: South Island Traditions Recorded by Matiaha Tiramōrehu*, Christchurch, 1987, p.30.

- 27 OS: Heta Rua, 23 May 1982.
- 28 OS: Heta Rua, 18 May 1978, Matahi; 23 May 1982.
- 29 Based on the Ngai Tahu version in *Te Waiatātanga mai o Te Atua*, pp.39–40; but see also Mead, *Tāwhaki*, pp.32–36. In Bay of Islands traditions recorded in the early nineteenth century, the stars were said to be the left eyes of departed ancestors: Thomas Kendall, 11 March 1815, Journal, MS 55/12, Hocken Library, Dunedin.
- 30 Mead, *Tāwhaki*, p.65; White, *Ancient History, Vol. One*, p.125 (English), p.112 (Maori); Margaret Orbell, *The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Māori Myth and Legend*, Christchurch, 1995, pp.194, 248.
- 31 OS: Edward (Ned) Mokopuna Brown, 30 November 1983, Mangatu.
- 32 Biddle manuscripts, Vol. Five, p.131.
- 33 Exodus 24:1, 9–10; Numbers 11:16, 24–25.
- 34 OS: Mangere Teke, 20 May 1978, Ruatahuna. The scriptural text is Luke 10:1, 17–19.
- 35 Mead, *Tāwhaki*, p.49.
- 36 *Poverty Bay Herald* (PBH), 28 June 1906; Royden Newman, ‘Rua and his Followers Pass Through Ormond 1906’, typescript in the possession of the author.
- 37 Wi Te Pou, diary, quoted in Jeffrey Sissons, *Te Waimana: The Spring of Mana*, Dunedin, 1991, p.190.
- 38 *Auckland Weekly News*, 5 July 1906.
- 39 Best, *Tuhoe, Vol. One*, p.908.
- 40 OS: Heta Rua, 23 May 1982. Rua’s distinctive perfume had been noted by one journalist writing about 1908, who put it down to mere dandyism: ‘An odour of scent also emanates from the Mehaia [sic], for, if King Louis was the First Gentleman of France, Rua is certainly the First Dandy of the Urewera.’ Undated clipping, Elsdon Best scrapbook M4, 34, Alexander Turnbull Library (ATL), Wellington.
- 41 Best, *Tuhoe, Vol. One*, 962. Translation by Best.
- 42 PBH, 10 June 1907.
- 43 OS: Te Puhī Tatu, 22 January 1978, Maungapohatu. Transcription and translation by Rangī Motu.
- 44 Michael P. Shirres, *Te Tangata: The Human Person*, Auckland, 1997, pp.42–44; ‘Tapu’, JPS, 91 (1982), pp.43–44.
- 45 W.H. Bowler to Native Department, 13 June 1915, MA-MLPI, 1910/28/1, pt 2, Archives New Zealand, Wellington.
- 46 OS: Mau Rua, son of Rua, 19 May 1978, Matahi.
- 47 Mead, *Tāwhaki*, p.8.
- 48 ‘Prediction of one to follow’, manuscript volume in the collection compiled by Frank Davis, Dossier on Te Kooti, vol.10, p.13, ATL.
- 49 ‘Prediction of one to follow’, pp.8, 72 (slightly variant texts). Translation adapted from Frank Davis.
- 50 Yet this has been the interpretative framework created by the anthropologist Marshall Sahlins and the linguist Tzvetan Todorov, when writing about primarily oral cultures that experienced the dramatic arrival of European strangers in their land. Sahlins, in his *Islands of History*, Chicago, 1985, came dangerously close to arguing that Polynesians could perceive events only ritualistically.
- 51 OS: Niko Tangaroa, 25 March 1995, Pakaitore. Kenana (Canaan) is usually stated as simply being Rua’s father’s given name, although of course it is scriptural in origin.
- 52 Te Ari Pitama manuscript.