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# Māori Prophetic Movements as Sites of Political Resistance: A Critical Analysis

## **Introduction**

This article will argue that Māori prophetic movements were sites of political resistance where Māori prophets resisted colonisation and developed syncretic theologies that gave their followers a sense of hope within a tumultuous colonial environment. The movements of four Māori prophets will be discussed in chronological order: Te Atua Wera and the Nākahi movement; Te Ua Haumēne and the Pai Mārire or Hauhau movement; Te Kooti's Ringatū movement; and Rua Kēnana and the Iharaira movement. This article will critically analyse these Māori prophetic movements as sites of religious and political resistance to show how Māori prophets challenged colonisation and land loss.

## **Christianity in Aotearoa New Zealand and the rise of Māori Prophets**

Before their conversion to Christianity, Māori had their own Indigenous spirituality that reflected their cultural and spiritual relationships with the environment. Pākehā contact impacted on Māori irreversibly. According to Len Te Kaawa of Tamakaimoana:

Te ao o ngā mātua, o ngā tīpuna, he whakapono tō  
rātou, he whakapono iho nei i mua i te taehanga  
mai o tauwiwi. He whakapono ki ngā atua Māori, ki

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te pūtaiao, ki te ao e noho ana rātou i roto. Engari, ka tae mai a tauuiwi me āna tikanga, ka whakahurihia, ka pēhia, ka whakamoehia ētahi o aua āhuatanga kia noho tā rātou ki runga ā, i ā tāua ki te ao Māori, kia noho koirā hai whakapono mō tātou. Engari, i te wā i o tātou tīpuna he whakapono rātou, he whakapono tonu rātou ki ngā tohu o te rangi, ki ngā tohu o te whenua, ki ngā tohu o te pūtaiao, ngā tohu o ngā wai, o ngā awa, o ngā aha ake, nā te mea he hononga-ā-wairua tō rātou ki te whenua, puta mai ai rātou i roto. He hōhonu tō rātou whakapono ki ēra mea (Douglas et al., 2013, n.p.).

Te Kaawa makes it clear that in pre-colonial times Māori had their own unique belief system based on atua Māori, the environment, and the world around them. He explains that when Pākehā (tauuiwi<sup>1</sup>) arrived and imported their own worldview and cultural conventions, traditional Māori beliefs were altered, subjugated and disregarded, and Pākehā beliefs gained a foothold, hastening the replacement of the traditional belief system of Māori. Te Kaawa explains that the ancestors were people of faith who interpreted the signs of the sky, of the land, of the environment, of the waters and of the rivers; they were connected spiritually to the land and had a deep and profound belief in networks of spiritual power.

In 1814 the Anglican cleric Samuel Marsden delivered the first Christian sermon in Aotearoa New Zealand (Davidson, 2004; Stenhouse & Paterson, 2004). This event marked the arrival of the gospel in Aotearoa New Zealand. Christianity would bring irrevocable changes to Māori society. In the 1820s (Stenhouse & Paterson, 2004) and 1830s (Davidson, 2004) the rate of conversion to Christianity among Māori increased considerably. The translation of the New Testament into te ro

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<sup>1</sup> Foreigner, European, non-Māori.

Māori, Māori desire for literacy, improved missionary performance and the involvement of unofficial Māori missionaries, led to further accelerated levels of conversion throughout the 1830s and 1840s (Elsmore, 2000; Davidson, 2004; Stenhouse & Paterson, 2004).<sup>2</sup> Stenhouse and Paterson (2004) state that:

Missionary doctrine appealed to many Māori because, like pre-contact religion, it laid out precise guidelines to follow in order to achieve wellbeing. The missionaries could seldom control the new varieties of Māori Christianity that emerged. Many Māori, for example, seeing the Sabbath as an essential Christian tikanga, observed it more strictly than some Pākehā (p. 172).

Once converted to Christianity, "...Māori saw it as being an essential element in a package of new tikanga by which they could advance into modernity" (Stenhouse & Paterson, 2004, p. 172). However, as Barker (1970) points out, Māori observed that Pākehā had multiple interpretations of the Bible, which opened the way for Māori to extract and expound Indigenous understandings of the scriptures. According to Barker (1970):

The multiplicity of Christian missions in New Zealand is an important factor in sanctioning diversity, for the obvious fact that the Pakeha could draw more than one inspiration from the

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<sup>2</sup> Literacy was instrumental in dispersing Christianity; Māori not only gained literacy at an astounding rate, but they taught literacy amongst their people, further accelerating literacy rates amongst Māori (Elsmore, 2000). Missionaries travelling to areas where they had assumed the people to be illiterate were amazed when they learned that Māori had been teaching each other how to read and write in te reo Māori (Elsmore, 2000).

Bible led to the inevitable conclusion that the Maori could also find his inspiration there (p. 46).

Vilaça and Wright (2009) argue that Christianity has always been shaped and re-characterised by the cultures of the nations or ethnic groups in which it has been cultivated. They state: "...given its missionary and inclusive nature, Christianity has always been redefined by the social groups in contact with it" (p. 3). This is certainly true for Māori. Hirini Kaa affirms that Māori interpreted the Bible in their own unique way:

Although the Bible had been brought to this land by Europeans and was tied to Empire, it was no imperial document. Instead our tīpuna saw it through their own cultural eyes as a living embodiment of the divine, which [when] tied to our own ancient knowledge, would provide a source of liberation from and resistance to all that would oppress us (Douglas et al., 2013, n.p.).

Prior to the New Zealand wars (1845-1872), Māori political leadership was based on inherited chieftainship. The struggle against Pākehā intrusion and the severe loss of land resulted in a change in leadership style and function, which included the emergence of religio-political leaders in the form of prophets (Winiata, 1967) in addition to the traditional leaders. Sinclair (2002) states:

Māori prophets were a logical response to an increasingly irrational situation. For the future, this meant that the prophets were able to confer a degree of stability and continuity on circumstances that threatened to be neither stable nor continuous. For Māori, prophetic voices articulated both problems and solutions (p. 21).

The Māori prophets ascended from the margins of mainstream Christianity at an intersection where “...religion, culture and politics interpenetrated and interacted, sometimes explosively” (Stenhouse & Paterson, 2004, p. 171). Boast (2013) points out that:

Māori remained as Christians, but experimented with new forms of religious authentication of their own devising. Thus, as has happened in so many times and places, engagement with Christianity and the Bible set in train transformations which no one could predict or control (p. 81).

Extending to followers a sense of hope, identity and community, Māori prophetic movements represented a powerful religio-political response to colonialism and devastating land loss (Stenhouse & Paterson, 2004). According to Sinclair (2002):

Land and increasing Pākehā control of it have always been an important concern for Māori religious movements. For Māori, the prophets and their teachings represented continuity with their past and insulation from the intrusion of the interlopers. The emerging New Zealand state, however, had every incentive to deny the power and coherence of a religious message with intense political overtones, for the tradition of prophecy expressed an unwelcome challenge to its claim to legitimacy and authority (pp. 1-2).

The loss of land and the efflorescence of Christianity among both Pākehā and Māori forced Māori to confront Pākehā power. The dispossession and despair of the nineteenth century found expression in religious movements, which manipulated the introduced symbols of

Christianity both to explain Māori desolation and to offer hope for redemption. It is clear that Māori transformed a means of submission into a weapon of resistance (p. 21).

These prophetic movements initially centred on the New Testament, transitioning toward an emphasis on the Old Testament and identification with the Hūrai, or Jews (Binney, 2012). Although Māori had associated themselves with the plight of the Israelites, the concept of Hebraic descent had been, Elsmore (2000) argues, introduced directly and indirectly to Māori. Samuel Marsden, for example, had theorised that Māori were descendants of the House of Israel, because of perceived cultural and religious similarities. By the twentieth century, millennialism had also become part of the Māori prophetic movement mix (Binney, 2012).

The English word 'prophet' comes from the Greek word *prophetes*, which refers to one who speaks out or makes proclamations (Tishken, 2007). Prophets are those who deal personally with supernatural forces (Tishken, 2007) and promote great change within communities. From their individual perspectives and frequently from the perspectives of their communities, prophets are women and men who receive revelation from one or multiple divinities and intelligibly impart these messages to their followers (Humm, 2009). From a biblical perspective, Don Tamihere states:

The Bible doesn't shy away from the supernatural or the divine elements of the prophetic call. If anything, the great quality of the Bible is that it seeks to represent the divine and the human condition.... ...the Bible often quite simply and casually mentions the supernatural aspect of prophecy as if it is something that we should all just accept as a reality. And so that supernatural connection, that divine element, is a

very strong part of prophecy; prophecy can't exist without it. ...the majority of prophecy and prophetic utterance has to do with simply stating the truth (Douglas et al., 2013, n.p.).

Before they take up their divinatory role, Webster (1979) opines, prophets are known to experience immense psychological tension manifested as intense dreams, visions, incessant voices, and important communications; this phase is often accompanied by a period of illness. This was certainly true of the Māori prophet Te Kooti, who was afflicted with tuberculosis when he received his divine call (Binney, 1995; Ross, 1966; Webster, 1979).

Although the English terms 'prophet' and 'prophecy' are loaded with Western and Judeo-Christian meaning, conceptually, prophets and prophecy have always been part of Indigenous cultures. Comparing Māori and Xhosa prophetic movements, Wagstrom (2005) states:

Christianity brought by missionaries had a tradition of prophecy to which it often referred, but it was generally associated with voices from the distant past speaking of things in the perhaps distant future, whereas Maori and Xhosa prophecy (i.e., divination and visions) was a continuing experience that dealt with immediate concerns (p. 53).

Thus, Indigenous prophets existed in different forms and with different capacities within their respective Indigenous communities as prophetic guides, seers and spiritual mediators, who foresaw the events that would impact on their people. Relating Māori prophets to their Hebrew counterparts, Elsmore (2000) maintains:

As the Hebrews had their prophet-leaders who were intermediaries between Yahweh and the people, and who were also their political leaders, so a parallel can be found within the Maori culture. Prophecy was an accepted part of Maori life, being practiced by *tohunga* and indeed by anyone who might possess the power of foresight. *Tohunga* acted as intermediaries between *atua* and people in their reading of the divine will. The more political function of the leader was performed by the *rangatira* or *ariki* but very often these figures combined the roles of priest and political leader. Therefore the roles of the Hebraic prophet-figure had their counterpart in the functionaries of Maori society. When religious movements arose in response to the need of the people, the charismatic figures and prophets who arose to lead them had their models in both systems – being relatable to the former *tohunga* and also to the Judaic prophets (pp. 88-89).

The impact and influence of both colonisation and introduced religions on Indigenous people reshaped the function of Indigenous prophets. In the Māori context, for instance, “[t]he oral histories of tribes describe seers and those spiritually gifted, but the prophets who emerged in the wake of conversion, loss of land, and warfare merged Christianity with their own beliefs” (Sinclair, 2002, p. 22) making the post-contact prophets distinct from the traditional *matakite* and *tohunga* of the pre-Christian Māori world. Referring to the links between Māori and Xhosa prophetic movements, Wagstrom (2005) argues: “While these movements were often forms of resistance against the presence and influence of missionaries and of Europeans more generally, it is possible to detect the imprint of Christian teaching on them, mixed with indigenous beliefs and leadership” (p. 66).

These new types of prophets innovatively merged new with old as a means of religio-political resistance against colonisation. The prophets created movements based on their political and spiritual visions and encouraged their followers to maintain a sense of hope in the face of adversity. Webster (1979) states:

Associated with these movements is invariably a prophet or messiah who emerges with a message, or call to action, relevant to the particular situation out of which the movement has arisen in the first place. This message proposes a supernatural solution to the problems confronting the followers, although very often quite practical means are also employed. It is the prophet or the messiah who states the form, time and place of the millennium (p. 49).

There were peaceful Māori movements and there were also those, like the Pai Mārire, which violently resisted colonisation. Prophets like Te Kooti, Tāwhiao,<sup>3</sup> Tohu and Te Whiti,<sup>4</sup> amongst

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<sup>3</sup> The second Māori king, Matutaera, had converted to Pai Mārire and was baptised with the name of Tāwhiao by the first Māori prophet, Te Ua Haumēne, in August 1864; following Te Ua's death, Pai Mārire remained the religion of the Kīngitanga (Binney, 2013a; Elsmore, 1998, 2000). According to Binney (2013a) and Elsmore (1998, 2000) Tāwhiao took the Pai Mārire faith back to the King Country and in 1875 renamed it Tāriao. A blend of Christian and Pai Mārire beliefs, Tāriao also included atua Māori and star constellations as part of the worship services; the Tāriao believed that a new Christ, in millennial fashion, would come and bring in a new age (Elsmore, 1998, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Te Whiti-o-Rongomai and Tohu Kākahi founded a pacifist community in the Taranaki area which they named Parihaka (Binney, 2013b; Elsmore, 1998, 2000). In response to government surveying of Taranaki lands for Pākehā settlement in 1878, Tohu instructed his followers, who hailed from Pātea, Whanganui and Waikato, to occupy and plough the land (Binney, 2013b; Elsmore, 1998, 2000). However, on 5 November 1881, the

others, aside from giving their people hope in the face of colonial injury, were some of the greatest change agents in the history of Aotearoa New Zealand. According to Baker (1970):

The sayings of the prophets Te Kooti and Tawhiao and Te Whiti had helped in some measure to keep their hopes alive, just as the prophets of the Hebrews had often inspired these people to wait for the Day of the Lord when God Himself would restore them (p. 8).

These prophets were religious leaders, political strategists and experts in warfare. Māori prophets syncretically and selectively mixed their old religion and culture with aspects of the invader's religion and culture, thus creating a hybridisation of very different religious and cultural beliefs. Linking traditional knowledge with introduced knowledge served to promote Māori cultural validity at a time when the colonisers sought to erase everything. According to Ranginui Walker:

What the prophets were trying to do in that time was to create a new synthesis using this new religion; a mixture of Christian beliefs and Māori traditional customs. The idea was to use this new religion to unify the people, *ki te whakakotahi te iwi*. And then when they'd succeeded in

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government sent troops to fragment the community by destroying their homes and evicting the 1,600 or so supporters from outside the area (Binney, 2013b; Elsmore, 1998, 2000). Te Whiti and Tohu were incarcerated for six months awaiting trial while the government immediately passed legislation permitting their indeterminate imprisonment in the South Island (Binney, 2013b; Elsmore, 1998, 2000). Te Whiti and Tohu were released after 24 months and returned to Parihaka to rebuild the community. Te Whiti was arrested again in 1886 but was released 1887 (Binney, 2013b; Elsmore, 1998, 2000).

unification, then they would be able to challenge the power of the state (Douglas et al., 2013, n.p.).

Some Māori prophets set up separate communities where they promoted hope and redemption, which Webster (1979) argues, are fundamental concepts of prophetic millennial movements. Prophetic millenarian movements are those that seek salvation in the face of unfavourable conditions, from which the followers and their leaders wish to escape (Webster, 1979). Millennialism is the belief in a supernatural peace on earth where believers organise themselves in such a way as to bring about a new spiritual age (Doniger, 1999; Landes, 2004). Doniger (1999) states that Indigenous millennial movements were often anti-colonial in nature. According to Hirini Kaa: “In this context of the people facing the encroaching loss of their lands and the likelihood of imminent conflict, the prophet evoked a message of peace and goodness, of Book of Revelation inspired redemption and of a ‘better future’” (Douglas et al., 2013, n.p.).

Rosenfeld (1995, 1996, 1999, 2011) argues that Indigenous millennial movements emerged within a particular kind of setting, where there is a disconnection from tradition, caused by a more powerful culture. Hence, “...the end of the world happens to colonized peoples; it is not imagined” (Rosenfeld, 2011, p. 93). Led by prophets, new religious movements emerged where followers invested in the hopes, dreams and visions of their leader. These hopes and dreams were millennial in that they looked to the future, where more positive outcomes were envisioned, beyond the spectrum of colonisation and oppression.

According to Webster (1979), during his Second Coming, Christ is meant to establish a kingdom of saints on Earth - the New Jerusalem.<sup>5</sup> This notion, coupled with the Old Testament

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<sup>5</sup> The notion of the New Jerusalem or Zion actually predates Christianity and was established through the prophetic words of Ezekiel in the Old Testament.

idea of the Promised Land,<sup>6</sup> laid the foundation for those prophets who wished to separate themselves and their followers from society and live according to their own dictates. Webster (1979) argues that the followers of prophetic movements almost always come into conflict with wider society or with the government as they strive to achieve autonomy. The opposition and conflict between a prophetic movement and the rest of society is frequently expressed in some form of physical confrontation (Elsmore, 2000; Roxburgh, 1985; Webster, 1979). This conflict results in a greater isolation of the movement from the surrounding society than existed before the physical confrontation occurred (Webster, 1979). The numbers of people involved in such groups might decrease; or on the other hand, the prophetic movement might become accepted by mainstream society, as was the Ringatū movement (Misur, 2003; Roxburgh, 1985; Webster, 1979).

### **The first Māori prophet: Papahurihia (Te Atua Wera) and the Nākahi movement**

In the Bay of Islands in the 1830s, Pākehā diseases took a significant toll on Māori, who had no immunity to these introduced illnesses (Stenhouse & Paterson, 2004). Papahurihia, also known as Te Atua Wera, was a healer and matakite, and the son of a prominent female tohunga (Stenhouse & Paterson, 2004). Hirini Kaa states:

He was a renowned Ngā Puhi tohunga  
descended from a tradition of healers and

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<sup>6</sup> God's promise to the Israelites that there was a Promised Land set aside for them was first given to Abraham in Genesis 15:18-21 and then to his son Isaac and his descendants in Genesis 28:13. This promise was further renewed after Moses led his people out of Egypt: "Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD sware [sic] unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them" (Deuteronomy 1:8).

possessed visionary powers. Papahurihia was literate and became well-versed in the scriptures. Papahurihia was the product of a society where the merging of Māori thought and biblical insight created politics of uncertainty. Leadership was called for; a vision was needed (Douglas, et al., 2013, n.p.).

Papahurihia attracted many devotees and called them Hūrai or Jews (Stenhouse & Paterson, 2004). Regarded as the first prophet of the post-contact period, Papahurihia established his movement around 1833, during a period when Christianity was being accepted readily by Māori (Elsmore, 2000; Moon, 2011; Walker, 2004). Papahurihia came from a heavily missionised area and he drew on his understandings of the Old Testament, such as the notion of dispossession from the homeland, as inspiration for his movement (Sinclair, 2002). However, he was highly critical of the missionaries, referring to them as murderers who used supernatural means to kill Māori (Stenhouse & Paterson, 2004). According to Elsmore (2000):

The Papahurihia persuasion was one of many adjustment movements of the early contact period, by which Maori attempted to relate the new teachings to traditional beliefs. It is, therefore, a synthesis of old and new, and includes elements of resentment of the alien culture, seen in its ejection of the missionaries (p. 111).

Papahurihia refined his new faith, which was based on fragments of an older Ngā Puhī-based religious philosophy, of which he became the principal proponent (Moon, 2011). He was inspired by Te Nākahi,<sup>7</sup> a spirit that represented the serpent

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<sup>7</sup> Te Nakahi was apparently translated from the Hebrew word, Nahash (Elsmore, 2000).

from the biblical Garden of Eden story (Elsmore, 2000; Moon, 2011).<sup>8</sup> Te Nākahi was not perceived in the same way as the Judeo-Christian God, but was viewed in a similar way to a traditional Māori atua (Elsmore, 2000). The serpent is usually thought of as being a snake, but in a Māori context, where there are no snakes, the nearest animal to a serpent was the ngarara<sup>9</sup> or lizard (Elsmore, 2000).

The significance of the serpent and its link to salvation is noted in the New Testament: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man<sup>10</sup> be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:14-15).<sup>11</sup> Relating the imagery and meaning of the serpent from the Bible to Māori, Hirini Kaa argues:

The snake is a biblical symbol of challenge which Moses used to confront the power of Pharaoh in Egypt. And Moses used the snake as symbol of hope, saving the people as long as they kept faith. To a people [Māori] who had never seen a snake, this was an abstract image that Papahurihia brought to life through the strength of his words. He used the image of the snake as a new

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<sup>8</sup> However, the serpent in the Garden of Eden story represented Lucifer and thus differs quite significantly from the representation of the serpent in other parts of the Bible. For example, in John 3:14-15 and Numbers 21:8-9, the serpent represents the ‘Son of man’, which for some Christians represents the Christ.

<sup>9</sup> Creepy-crawly, insect, reptile (Moorfield, 2011).

<sup>10</sup> The son of man is also known as the son of Adam (Bromiley, 1995). For some Christians, the Son of Man can represent Jesus Christ (Kim, 1983).

<sup>11</sup> This passage refers to the experience of the Hebrew prophet Moses as recorded in the Old Testament: ‘And the LORD said unto Moses, make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived (Numbers 21:8-9).

and powerful message to his followers, that the new forces facing the people could be overcome (Douglas, et al., 2013, n.p.).

During the period between the 1830s and 1860s no significant or enduring religious movements emerged other than Te Nākahi (Elsmore, 2000). This period was punctuated, however, by a series of minor, confined responses, which had in common with the Papahurihia movement the rejection of the religion of the missionaries in varying degrees of intensity (Elsmore, 2000).

The God of the Old Testament issued many laws for the Hebrews, articulated through the words and writings of the prophets. The Old Testament presented an image of a powerful and protective God who demanded that his people follow his commandments to the letter. Drawing upon this sense of power and protection, Papahurihia guaranteed that his people would be immune from bullets during battle, while the bullets of his followers were assured unfailing accuracy (Elsmore, 2000). Te Atua Wera also claimed to be able to raise the dead (Elsmore, 2000).

**Image 1: Te Atua Wera**



(Te Atua Wera, 1847, Auckland City Libraries, NZ MSS 116, p. 97)

*Te Atua Wera, with full facial moko, positioned to the left.*

### **Te Ua Haumēne and the Pai Mārire movement**

The Pai Mārire or Hauhau sect was one of the most prevalent Māori religious movements of the nineteenth century (Stenhouse & Paterson, 2004). ‘Pai Mārire’, which means ‘goodness and peace’, was an expression that described the nature of God, and was frequently repeated by Te Ua’s followers; while ‘Hauhau’ refers to both the winds and the breath of life (Elsmore, 2000; Stenhouse & Paterson, 2004). According to Hirini Kaa:

Pai Mārire was the first Māori religion based on the Bible to have a nationwide impact. It was an attempt to distinguish Māori Christianity from the dogma of missionaries. This religion with its principles of goodness and peace was a sanctuary for a Māori people who were finding out that war

with Pākehā did not bring victory. An enduring symbol to this faith was the flagpole; a link between earth and the new God in heaven. This Māori religion was created by a prophet known as ‘the wind man’ (Douglas et al., 2013, n.p.).

Born of Taranaki iwi descent in the early 1820s, Te Ua Haumēne was the prophet and founder of the Pai Mārire faith, which was the first organised manifestation of a self-determining Māori Christianity (Davidson, 2004; Head, 1984, 1992; Stenhouse & Paterson, 2004). Te Ua’s father had died shortly after his birth and in 1826, Te Ua and his mother were captured in a Waikato raid and were taken as slaves to Kāwhia; Te Ua’s abductors taught him how to read and write in te reo Māori and he became well acquainted with the New Testament, particularly the Book of Revelation (Head, 1984, 1992). Te Ua was baptized with the name Horopāpera (Zerubbabel) by John Whiteley, who had organised the Wesleyan mission at Kāwhia in 1834 (Head, 1984, 1992). Te Ua assisted in the Waimate mission station under the Wesleyans, John Skevington and Charles Creed, and occasionally led church service as a Wesleyan monitor (Davidson, 2004), while maintaining his Bible studies (Head, 1984, 1992).

It is surmised that Te Ua supported the Kaingarara movement in the 1850s, which lifted the tapu associated with traditional Māori spiritual power (Head, 1984, 1992). Te Ua was connected to the anti-land-selling movement in Taranaki and was a supporter of the King movement; additionally, Te Ua fought against the Crown in 1860 and served as a religious minister to the Māori troops (Head, 1984, 1992). Directing local government and upholding the boundaries of the lands that were subject to the authority of the Māori King, Te Ua functioned as a leader of a tribal council at Matakaha (Head, 1984, 1992). A belief in the notion of liberation for Māori, coupled with hostile feelings toward the missionaries were emerging themes in Taranaki during this time; these ideas

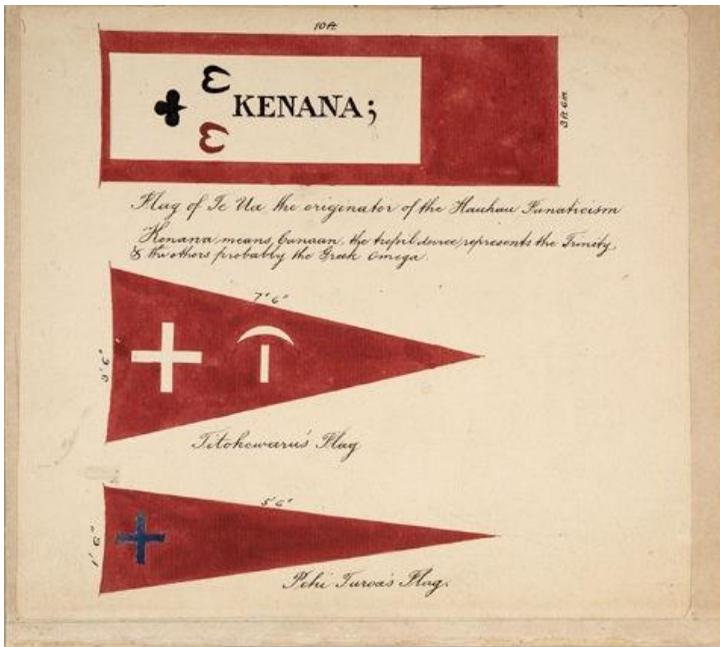
became the fundamental basis for Te Ua's spiritual teaching, while the idea that Māori had the right to protect and preserve their connections with their territories was the keystone to his politics (Head, 1984, 1992). Rejecting his baptismal name, Horopāpera, he took the spiritual name Haumēne in 1864 (Head, 1984, 1992).

On 5 September 1862 the archangel Gabriel visited Te Ua and confirmed his prophetic call, ushering in the last days, spoken of in the Book of Revelation. Te Ua was commanded to break the bonds of Pākehā oppression and he was promised that Māori, as part of the House of Israel, would have their birthright reinstated in the land of Canaan (Aotearoa New Zealand) (Davidson, 2004; Elsmore, 2000; Head, 1984, 1992; Salmond, 1976; Stenhouse & Paterson, 2004; Walker, 2004). Te Ua proclaimed that God's special relationship with the Māori people meant that "Atua Mārire (God of Peace) promised to restore his 'forgetful, naked-standing people in the half-standing land'" (Stenhouse & Paterson, 2004, p. 174). Te Ua was thought by some to be mad, although in his view, the disbelief which followed his vision was a test of faith that further authenticated his prophethood; Te Ua performed biblical-type phenomena which stirred up a following and allowed him to establish his church in three months (Head, 1984, 1992). Te Ua recorded his teachings and the organisation of the church in his gospel, *Ua Rongo Pai*; by December, a flagpole or *niu* (which is said to represent the crucifixion of Māori by Pākehā) hung with *Hauhau* flags, became the centre of his rituals (Davidson, 2004; Elsmore, 2000; Head, 1984, 1992; Walker, 2004). Hirini Kaa states:

Many considered Te Ua mad. But within three months he had completed the organisation of a distinctive new church. Te Ua wrote his own take on the gospel, *Ua Rongopai* – the gospel according to Ua. Te Ua named his church 'Hauhau'. Prophecies would be conveyed to the faithful by the

spirit of God in the wind. Te Ua Haumēne's own spiritual name, 'Wind Man', emphasised the powerful imagery of wind. Te Ua developed a symbolism centred on niu, or tall masts hung with flags. ... His other symbol was the upraised hand. Te Ua told his believers they only had to follow his instructions and they would be bullet proof. They had to say the right prayers and raise their right hand[s] (Douglas et al., 2013, n.p.).

**Image 2: Pai Mārire flags**



(Gordon, n.d., Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa, F.7056/41)

*The personal flag of Te Ua Haumēne, founder of the Pai Mārire faith. The word 'Kenana' (Canaan) indicates Te Ua's*

*identification with the Jews. The flags below are those of Titokowaru and Peehi Tūroa who were two apostles of the faith.*

Te Ua considered his theology to be Christian, without the contamination of missionary error; his conceptualisation of God and the divine was wrapped up in the notion of pai mārire or goodness and peace (Head, 1984, 1992). Kaa asserts:

Te Ua Haumēne's religion would be declared illegal by the settler state; its adherents hunted down and banished. Te Ua himself would be captured, arrested and imprisoned, dying of tuberculosis soon after his release. Te Ua's calling as a prophet was only during his final four years. The story of his early life and times had prepared him for that role (Douglas et al., 2013, n.p.).

According to Te Ua, Te Hau, the spirit of God represented in the wind, transmitted the niu (news) or prophecies to the followers; and his adopted name, Haumēne, associated him with the wind (Head, 1984, 1992). The Hauhau worshipped the Holy Trinity, although Christ was not worshipped separately (Head, 1984, 1992). Consistent with the functions of Christ and the archangel Gabriel, described in apocalyptic texts, the figure of Jesus was combined with the archangel who was addressed as Rura (Ruler) or Tama-Rura (Ruler-Son); the archangel Michael, on the other hand, ruled the hosts of heaven and was known to the Hauhau as Riki (Lord) or Te Ariki Mikaera (Lord Michael) (Head, 1984, 1992).

During Hauhau services, the participants, filled with the Holy Spirit, spoke in tongues and articulated prophecies as they encircled the niu flagpole; the ceremonies comprised teachings that Te Ua developed from English words and phrases written in Māori form and divided into verses (Head, 1984, 1992). According to Kaa: "Hauhau ceremonies would have been remarkable events. The faithful spoke in tongues while they

circled the niu, uttering prophecies. While the angels of the wind swirled about on ropes hanging from the mast's yardarm; frenzy would ensue" (Douglas et al., 2013, n.p.).

The Hauhau were governed by a hierarchy of prophetic leaders, from local priests to the Tuku Pai (Duke of Peace) and Tuku Akihana (Duke of Action), whose responsibility it was to encourage peace and react to Pākehā belligerence (Head, 1984, 1992). The Tuku had the task of discerning the authenticity of prophecy, but they ultimately acted under the authority of the Pou (Pillar), at the national level, while Te Ua remained the first prophet (Head, 1984, 1992).

Te Ua's idea was to produce a society of righteousness and peace; his gospel was based on Christ's parables (Head, 1984, 1992). Te Ua created laws that reflected some of those found in the Bible; he nurtured a discourse of admiration for women by adapting the notion of queenship (Head, 1984, 1992). Te Ua fortified Māori cultural arts, but forbade any traditional practices which were detrimental to the peace and harmony of the community (Head, 1984, 1992). On 6 April 1864, Te Ua's church drew official attention to itself when a government unit, led by Captain Thomas Lloyd, was ambushed and decapitated, their heads preserved and used religiously by Te Ua as reminders of the power of righteousness over evil (Elsmore, 2000; Head, 1984; Stenhouse & Paterson, 2004). According to Salmond (1976): "They believed that once the head had been carried throughout the North Island, legions of angels would exterminate the Pākehā, and the gifts of tongues and all knowledge would descend upon the faithful" (p. 25). Kaa states:

The Hauhau warriors took the decapitated heads of their victims around the countryside to show the power of this new religion. This recruitment drive worked. The number of adherents across the North Island rapidly swelled; by the end of 1865 a niu stood in almost every large village from Taranaki to the Bay of Plenty and from

the north of the Wellington district to the Waikato frontier” (Douglas et al., 2013, n.p.).

Te Ua’s gospel was accepted by Matutaera, the second Māori king, who visited Te Ua in 1864; on 29 August, the king was baptized by Te Ua and given the name Tāwhiao (Head, 1984, 1992; Stenhouse & Paterson, 2004). A communiqué was sent out to the King’s people to cease all warring and ready themselves for millennial deliverance (Head, 1984, 1992).

In December 1864, Te Ua sent two emissaries, Pātara Raukatauri and Kereopa Te Rau, to travel peacefully to Tūranga (Gisborne) to visit Hirini Te Kani of Ngāti Porou; however, the messengers journeyed through the central North Island, provoking armed conflict, mainly toward missionaries (Head, 1984, 1992; Stenhouse & Paterson, 2004). Whilst in Ōpōtiki, the domain of Te Whakatōhea iwi, the Anglican missionary, Carl Völkner, had sided explicitly with the government during the war; he returned from Auckland to Ōpōtiki despite advice to the contrary and was ritualistically slain at a Hauhau initiation on 2 March 1865 (Head, 1984, 1992; Stenhouse & Paterson, 2004). Kaa contends:

Governor George Grey, fresh from his invasion of the Waikato, issued a proclamation that condemned the Pai Mārire for revolting acts repugnant to all humanity. Across the Island and especially in the East Coast, government forces embarked on a mission to crush the religion. Hundreds of followers were arrested; many taken to exile on the Chatham Islands. To the Pākehā mind and authorities, ‘Hauhau’ became a popular catch cry for all things ‘evil’ (Douglas et al., 2013, n. p.).

From this point, Pākehā used the term ‘Hauhau’ to refer to any Māori who was believed to be in rebellion against the

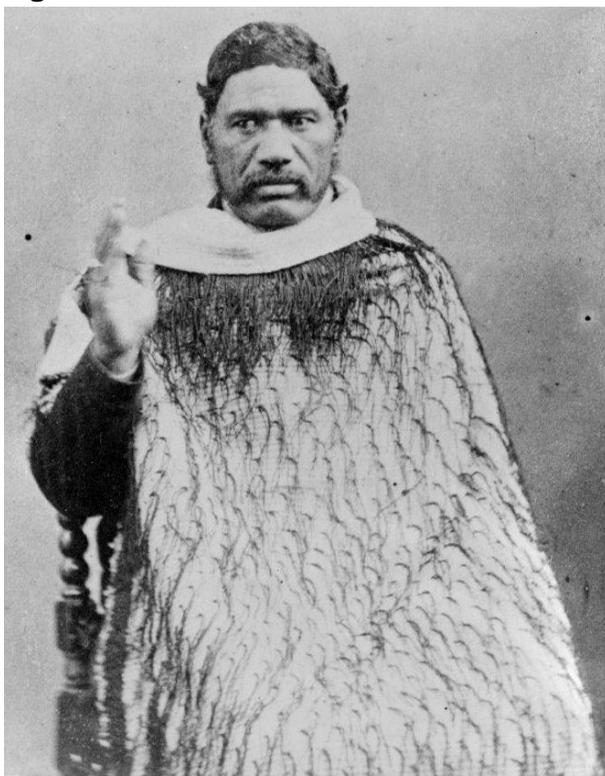
government; Völkner's death was believed by the pro-government Ngāti Porou to be the vehicle which brought war, which persisted intermittently until 1872, to the East Coast (Head, 1984, 1992). By 1865 around one fifth of the Māori population was associated with Pai Mārire (Stenhouse & Paterson, 2004).

Te Ua believed that it was pointless to engage in further military resistance and so entered into negotiations with Robert Parris, a government official. The discussions failed and Te Ua and his followers became anxious about invasions by government militia. The threat of land confiscation galvanised the resolution of Māori to resist, thus motivating Te Ua to continue to assert Māori sovereignty over the land (Head, 1984, 1992). While the millenarian component of the Hauhau faith eventually vanished, the introduction of holy days commemorating Te Ua's vision, and the investiture of the first Māori King, Pōtatau Te Wherowhero, are evidence of a shift toward developing the faith for the future (Head, 1984, 1992). As a consequence, twelve new workers and three new prophets, Te Whiti-o-Rongomai, Tohu Kakahi and Taikomako – all of whom became religious leaders – were sanctified at a meeting that took place on 24-25 December 1865 (Head, 1984, 1992).

At the end of 1865, Te Ua Haumēne lived at a village near Ōpunake, which was a government stronghold; in 1866, the government launched a military attack on the Taranaki resistance (Head, 1984, 1992). Te Ua signed a declaration of allegiance on 2 January; he surrendered to Major General Trevor Chute and was imprisoned (Head, 1984, 1992). In order to humiliate Te Ua and show the people the futility of Hauhauism, Governor George Grey took Te Ua as his prisoner and held him under house arrest at his Kāwau Island home (Head, 1984, 1992). In June, Te Ua was permitted to return to Taranaki where he encouraged peace (Head, 1984, 1992). Hirini Kaa affirms:

Suffering the effects of tuberculosis, his health rapidly declined, and in October 1866 he died.... Governor Grey had done his best to crush the Pai Mārire religion; it looked as if prophetic resistance to colonisation was dead. However, after Te Ua's death, King Tāwhiao brought the religion to his people (Douglas et al., 2013, n.p.).

**Image 3: Te Ua Haumene**



(James Cowan Collection, ca.1860, Alexander Turnbull Library, 1/2-005495-F)

The Hauhau are described by Akenson (2005) as the “...raw ancestor of several Maori indigenous Judaisms and Christianities” (p. 218). Adas (1979) states that the remnants of the Pai Mārire movement can be seen within the subsequent Māori religio-political factions that thrived towards the end of the nineteenth century. One of these is Te Kooti’s Ringatū faith. The Pai Mārire holding up their right hands was reminiscent of Moses raising his hand in the battle against the Amalekites (see Exodus 17:11); the Pai Mārire forces believed this action protected them from bullets (de Bres, 1980; Wilson, 1973; Winiata, 1967). For the Ringatū it was a sign of paying homage to God (Binney, 1995; de Bres, 1980; Wilson, 1973; Winiata, 1967).

### **Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuki and the Ringatū faith**

For his followers, “Te Kooti was accepted as the Maori messiah, no doubt because of his success in the escape from the Chathams, his powers of faith-healing, and his gift of prophecy” (Barker, 1970, p. 17). The Ringatū faith owes its beginnings to the visions that the prophet Te Kooti had while imprisoned with hundreds of other Māori political prisoners, on the Chatham Islands in the mid-1860s. God spoke to Te Kooti and commanded him to teach the people. Inspired by those revelations, Te Kooti promised his adherents their freedom. Te Kooti and his faithful escaped the Chatham Islands on the ship Rifleman. When they landed at Whareongaonga, they raised their right hands in praise and thanks to God for their deliverance; this was the gesture from which the faith received its name, Ringatū – the upraised hand. Following their escape, Te Kooti and his followers were relentlessly pursued by the military. Despite the loss of many lives, that pursuit served only to crystallise and strengthen their convictions. The Ringatū faith was initially a religion of resistance and survival, but later became a religion of peace, fashioned by a history of colonisation and land loss and maintaining an enduring belief

in God. As Walker (2004) states: “Te Kooti’s success emboldened him to announce his prophetic mission of struggle against Pakeha domination” (p. 133).

The Ringatū faith was concerned with the issues of the colonised; for its adherents, it not only provided hope, but offered a scaffold for analysing the Māori position within the colonial spectrum, while at the same time it extended to the people a distinctly Indigenous relationship with God (Binney, 1995; Binney & Chaplin, 1996). In order to provide this religio-political framework, Te Kooti incorporated elements of the introduced faith with Indigenous Māori spirituality in order to produce a prophetic movement that the people could use to make sense of their situation and to reclaim autonomy over their lives. Callaghan (2014) contends:

...we can see that the merging of traditional beliefs and introduced missionary beliefs... was a major form of resistance to being taken over, and an active strategy to assert autonomy. Syncretism was one way the people could overtly express their own sense of agency (p. 181).

The syncretic blending of the missionary church with Māori spirituality was a way of resisting the colonial advances of the Pākehā. Te Kooti foresaw the devastating effects colonisation would have on Māori. He violated Pākehā theology by mixing it with Māori spirituality, thus challenging colonisation. It was a case of accepting Judeo-Christianity, but on Te Kooti’s terms, and with his followers’ spiritual welfare in mind. The amalgamation of missionary faith with Māori beliefs was a hindrance to the Christian missionaries (Callaghan, 2014). They lost converts to religious movements such as Pai Mārire and Ringatū because it was believed that “...these [movements] addressed more directly and without compromise the aspirations of Māori people and their desire to safeguard ancestral lands” (Sundt, 2010, pp. 133-134).

The Ringatū faith also protected Te Kooti's followers, giving them hope, healing and relief from the scourge of colonialism. According to Te Kahautu Maxwell:

E ahau e piri nei ki te Ringatū? Koira te waka whakaora i ōku tīpuna o rātou wairua, o rātou hinengaro. E hōmai ai he tūmanakotanga mō rātou, he āwhero mō rātou, i te mea kua murua te whenua, kua manakore. He kīngi o ōku tīpuna, he kuini o ōku tīpuna i o rātou whenua, ao ina kē ko taurekareka rātou. Nō reira, koinei te waka i hōmai hia ai e te Atua kia Arikirangi Te Turuki hai hoehoenga mōna, hai hoehoenga mō ōku tīpuna hai whakaora i o mātou wairua, o mātou mana (Melbourne & Epiha, 2014, n.p.)

Maxwell argues that the Ringatū faith provided a vehicle of hope and a purpose for his ancestors as they faced devastating, mana-diminishing, land loss. He claims that his ancestors were Kings and Queens of their land, but without land and with their mana reduced his people became enslaved. Thus, Maxwell contends, God gave the Ringatū faith to Te Kooti and to his ancestors, as a way of bringing peace and healing to the people.

Ringatū is a faith based on the Bible and the covenants contained therein. Williams (1999) testifies that Te Kooti, formerly an Anglican, had initially embraced Christianity:

Te Kooti welcomed Christianity because he saw a close relationship between it and Maoritanga. But, it wasn't to last long. He soon became openly antagonistic towards Europeans in general when he saw the loss of land, language, the arts and, his worst fear, the loss of the mana of rangatiratanga – the mana of the chiefs (pp. 76-77).

In spite of the Christian message, Te Kooti turned to the liberation theology of the Old Testament, which had more relevance for Māori within the colonial context (Elsmore, 2000). Binney (1995) avers:

Te Kooti took the people back directly to the scriptures, which seemed to offer them the assurance that their escape from Pharaoh's soldiers was inevitable. They adopted the history of Exodus as their own, and the strength of Exodus history lies in its end: its unconditional promise of the return (p. 70).

Te Kooti and his followers had a deep faith in the literal truth of the Old Testament and they embraced this ancient history as proof that God saves the faithful. Indeed, followers of Ringatū believed Māori were a people in bondage just like the Hebrews of the Old Testament (Barker, 1970; Binney, 1995; Binney & Chaplin, 1996; Elsmore, 1999, 2000; Esler, 1994; Greenwood, 1942; Laughton, 1960; Ross, 1966; Walker, 2004; Webster, 1979; Wilson, 1973). According to Laughton (1960):

...the Old Testament echoed the sentiments of these people under the circumstances in which they found themselves situated, and how they came to identify themselves in thought with Israel of old in her struggles, and to put their faith in Jehovah to do for them as He had done for Israel (pp. 1-2).

The Ringatū saw reflections of themselves and their situation within Old Testament liberation theology. Like the Israelites, they too looked to Ihowa or Jehovah for their comfort and salvation during harrowing oppression. As Barker (1970) contends:

...the Ringatu saw themselves so clearly as the People of God waiting in the wilderness, it is no wonder that they studied the Old Testament at the expense of the New Testament. This is shown in the liturgy of the church. Many of the Psalms echoed exactly the sentiments of the Maori, and such portions of the Scriptures were included in the liturgy as exact quotations. By these means they expressed their faith in Jehovah, and their hope that He would do for them as He had done for His People, the Hebrews (p. 16).

Although the Ringatū faith initially focussed on the deliverance theology of the Old Testament, over time it moved towards using the New Testament (Elsmore, 2000; Binney, 1995; Binney & Chaplin, 1996; Laughton, 1960). Laughton (1960) claims:

We are told that at the outset nothing from the New Testament was used. That was the Christian part of the Bible, and Te Kooti said he had suffered too much at the hands of the Christians to include anything Christian in his liturgy. Howsoever that may be, quite considerable portions of the New Testament are now in the ritual... (p. 2).

Thus, the message of Christ and the New Testament became a part of the Ringatū faith.

Tarei (2011) considers that Te Kooti "...acquired more for the Maori spiritually and taught the Maori more about the word of God and Christianity, than all the other churches had managed to do in twice as many years" (p. 143). Correspondingly, Williams (1999) declares that "...Te Kooti achieved more than any other individual to bring together

Christianity and Maoritanga in a complementary relationship” (Williams, 1999, p. 80).

The liturgy of the Ringatū Church is made up of passages from the Māori Bible. Greenwood (1942) makes this clear when he states: “There is no other Christian organization which uses the Bible so fully as this church. ...all waiatas, panuis, inois, and himines constituting a service are gleaned direct from the Scriptures” (p. 55). More impressive still, is the fact that the liturgy is committed completely to memory (although, in contemporary times, books are sometimes used to assist those learning the liturgy). Garrett (1992) argues: “Te Kooti provided his followers with forms of worship embodying earlier pre-literate spontaneity – and relying substantially on memorization, as in ancient tradition. The Ringatu rituals, festivals and recited karakia (prayers) made many Maori feel at home in Te Kooti’s church” (p. 126). Ringatū services are also conducted entirely in te reo Māori. Tarei (2011) maintains:

The language used by the Ringatu Church, sung and spoken in its services, is classic[al] Maori. This too is an example of the wisdom and foresight of Te Kooti. In the days of our ancestors we learnt our culture from special whare wananga, houses of learning. Today these have been replaced by universities and it’s a great loss for the Maori people; the Maori language spoken today is weakened and corrupted. Te Kooti foresaw that this would happen. Although he was hunted and persecuted, he realised there would be a need to protect and perpetuate the most precious part of the culture of the Maori, his language. And so he devised the practices of his church accordingly (p. 142).

Connections to land are crucial to the Ringatū belief system. Binney (1995) asserts that the original hymn of the faith was

the Lamentation of Jeremiah from the Old Testament which recalls in its final lines: “Our own lands have been taken by strangers, but you will always be my Father, for ever’ (‘Kua riro matou wahi tipu i nga tangata ke, ko koe tonu ia hei Matua tipu moku, ake ake’)” (p. 66; see Lamentations 5:2). With reference to the ringa tū – the raising of the hands – the hymn continues: “But let my heart and my hands be raised up in the search for my God’ (‘Aue kia ara atu toku ngakau me oku ringaringa, ki te whai i toku Atua’)” (Binney, 1995, p. 66; see Lamentations 3:41). Indeed, Binney (1995) claims that the Ringatū practice of raising the right hand at the conclusion of prayers comes from this hymn.

Referring to the Ringatū practice of raising the hand, Barker (1970) argues that this custom bore no resemblance to more orthodox Christian prayer practices. He avers:

In opening and closing prayers, the sign of the upraised hand, from which the movement derived its name, has replaced the sign of the cross which one would have expected Te Kooti to have learnt during his time at the mission station (Barker, 1970, p. 23)

Barker (1970) also states that in the Ringatū liturgy, the expression: ““Glory be to thy Holy Name” [korōria ki tou ingoa tapu] replaces the Christian... “Through Jesus Christ our Lord”. This is to be understood as a direct reference to Jehovah which omits and ignores the mediating word of Jesus” (p. 20). The act of raising the hands in praise to Jehovah – the Hebrew God of the Old Testament – is a way of resisting and rejecting more orthodox Christian practices that makes Ringatū all the more distinct. Furthermore, Barker (1970) asserts that the Ringatū Jehovah is the result of an Indigenous theology that is unique to Te Kooti’s church:

The Ringatu Jehovah is very similar in many respects to the God of the Hebrews, but he is also clearly the end-product of Maori thought. He falls somewhere between the traditional Maori pantheon incorporated into one being, and the Jehovah of the Old Testament (pp. 26-27).

The Ringatū Sabbath is observed on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, rather than Sunday, which suggests that the Ringatū identified more with Old Testament theology and rejected the Sunday Sabbath of Christianity. Another way in which the Ringatū Church rejects Christian orthodoxy is by not including the elements of bread and wine in their Sabbath day services; this exclusion was based on a fear that Te Kooti's followers would believe that the bread and wine were the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and that through partaking in these emblems, they were engaging in cannibalism (Barker, 1970; Greenwood, 1942). The Lord's Prayer is always included in Ringatū services but with some modification. de Bres (1980) argues that the Ringatū Church omits from the Lord's Prayer, the line:

“Give us this day our daily bread”, because in the Māori bible, bread was translated as taro,<sup>12</sup> and for Te Kooti, taro was a rare and high prized food source; and so it was thought that there was no point in praying daily for taro “...when you would be lucky to get it once a year” (p. 42).<sup>13</sup>

In the 1870s Te Kooti developed and instigated the four pillars of the Ringatū faith. The earliest event on the Ringatū calendar was the First of January which was first celebrated on 1 January 1875 and was derived from Exodus 40:2: “On the first day of the first month shalt thou set up the tabernacle of

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<sup>12</sup> Colocasia esculenta (Moorfield, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Greenwood (1942) and Barker (1970) maintain that the word taro referred instead to breadfruit.

the tent of the congregation”; this festival would be the first of the four pillars of the Ringatū religious calendar (Binney, 1995; Binney & Chaplin, 1996). The second pillar, the First of July, was first held in 1876 and solemnised the seventh month as found in Leviticus 23:24: “Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, in the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a Sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation.” This day commemorates spring, the renewal of life, and the rededication of the land to God (Binney, 1995; Binney & Chaplin, 1996).

In 1879, Te Kooti introduced the last two pillars of the Ringatū religious calendar. These are generally known as the huamata and the pure (Binney, 1995; Binney & Chaplin, 1996). Huamata is the Ringatū rite of planting and is held around 1 June; and the pure is the Ringatū ritual of removing the tapu to ensure plentiful crops, and is held around 1 November (Moorfield, 2011).<sup>14</sup> According to Binney (1995), the seed had, for Ringatū, become an emblem of Christ and the resurrection: “Thus the lifting of the tapu on the sacred garden at the time of the first fruits, or the ripening of the year, came to symbolise the resurrection of Christ, as the modern Ringatu prayer-book clearly states” (p. 422). One Ringatū tohunga<sup>15</sup> states:

They had to keep last year’s seed in with the new seed... That’s God’s, to reach all parts of the world. In that garden they had to make certain that there were old seeds and the new seeds, and the intermingling of that growth. It is symbolic of society’s growth, as well as the growth of a people, and the type of Christ – that new crop. He lived again after the Crucifixion... (Binney, 1995, p. 422).

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<sup>14</sup> Binney (1995) notes that the dates 1 June and 1 November for the huamata and pure rites are subject to the seasons and local customs.

<sup>15</sup> In the Ringatū context the term tohunga refers to ministers of the Ringatū Church.

In 1880, Te Kooti inaugurated the first of the month as a day of prayer and feasting, and from December 1885, the first and the twelfth of the month were celebrated; but from 1888, observance of the first of the month was abandoned, and only the twelfth of the month, known as the Twelfth or Tekau-mārua, was honoured (Binney, 1995; Binney & Chaplin, 1996). The twelfth day of the month is significant for Ringatū as a holy day, because it is believed that the Spirit of God delivered the covenants of faith to Te Kooti on 12 May 1868 (Binney, 1995; Binney & Chaplin, 1996). According to the written account of Paora Delamere:

Ko nga tau, me te homaitanga ki a Te Kooti te  
Kawenata Ringatu e te Wairua o te Atua.

1. 1868. Mei 12 te homaitanga a te Wairua  
i te w[h]akapono Ringatu

The years, and the delivering to Te Kooti [of]  
the Ringatu Covenant by the Spirit of God.

1. 1868. May 12 the Spirit delivers the  
Ringatu faith (Binney, 1995, p. 73).

There are other significant reasons why the Twelfth is commemorated, including the celebration of Te Kooti's pardon on 12 February 1883; the remembrance of the Ringatū Passover – the safe landing of Te Kooti and his followers at Whareongaonga; as well as the significance of the number 12 found in the Scriptures (Binney, 1995; Elsmore, 2005; Greenwood, 1942).

**Image 4: The seal of the Ringatū Church**



(Binney, 1995, p. 421).

*The seal of the Ringatū Church was created by the secretary, Robert Biddle, in 1926. The Old and New Testaments of the Bible are featured in the centre; surrounding the Bible are words that can be translated to mean, “The law of God and the faith/truth of Jesus”. On the left is reference to the beginning of the faith at Wharekauri (Chatham Islands) 1867, and on the right, a reference to Te Wainui – the lands that were given by the government to the trustees of the church. While the eagle at the top of the seal represents God, who looks after His children and is referred to in Deuteronomy 32:11-12: “As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: So the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him”.*

In 2013, 13,272 people in Aotearoa New Zealand identified as Ringatū (Statistics New Zealand, 2014) and so despite a history of colonisation and land loss, Te Kooti's Ringatū faith continues to maintain a following. According to Misur (2003):

Of all the Maori prophet movements of nineteenth century origin, it [Ringatū] has been by far the most conspicuously successful in retaining its following, and its members most resolute in proclaiming the lasting relevance of their faith within a changing social environment (p. 97).

The Ringatū Church continues to venerate the prophet Te Kooti, upholding his teachings and performing his liturgy. The survival of the Ringatū faith is testament to the tenacity of Te Kooti and those who followed him. Te Kooti led his people through the darkness of colonisation and instilled in his followers a deep faith in God and hope for the future. Far from being seen as heretical, as in the past, the Ringatū Church is very much an accepted religion:

A little over a century ago, the followers of Te Kooti Rikirangi, the founder of the Ringatu Church, were feared and abhorred by administration and settlers as a threat to life and to the sanctity of the Christian religion. Today, the Church operates as an incorporated society under New Zealand law, and its tohunga, or clergy, are entered on the government register of persons authorised to solemnise marriages under the Marriage Act (Misur, 2003, p. 97).

On New Year's Day 2014, the Ringatū Church anointed Wirangi Pera as the new Pou Tikanga<sup>16</sup> to lead the faithful; the church had not had a leader for over 30 years and so this may signal a revitalisation of the Ringatū Church. It would seem that some sort of Ringatū renaissance might be necessary because in 2006 a greater number of people, 16,419, identified as Ringatū than did so in 2013 (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). Commenting in 1999 on the future of the Ringatū Church, Pou Tikanga Wirangi Pera asserts:

1. The haahi must hold fast to the traditions and teachings that were left to us by our tipuna.

2. The haahi must maintain our language, our waiata, our unique ways of doing things, and must take a more pro-active stance in the promotion of these attributes.

3. The haahi must take an active interest in the promotion of rongoa maori.

4. There is a need to provide spiritual support to a wide range of people and over a wide range of ages (Pera, 1999, p. 17).

### **Rua Kēnana and the Iharaira movement**

Born in 1869, Rua Kēnana believed that he was destined to take on the prophetic mantle left behind by Te Kooti (Binney, Chaplin & Wallace, 1979; Binney & Chaplin, 1996; Davidson, 2004; Elsmore, 2000).<sup>17</sup> According to Dan Hiramana-Rua: "Simply he said to his people: "I am the chosen one; I have been

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<sup>16</sup> According to Te Kāhautu Maxwell, the Pou Tikanga is head of the Ringatū Church with status and responsibility similar to that of a Bishop (Taumata, 2014).

<sup>17</sup> Raised amongst both Tūhoe and Ngāti Kahungunu, Rua was taught the history concerning Te Kooti and the prophecies regarding the emergence of Te Kooti's successor (Binney et al., 1979; Elsmore, 2000).

prophesised by the Almighty” (Slater, Stephens & Ward, 2008, n.p.). Regarding Te Kooti’s Te Umutaoroa prophecy, Kirituia Tumarae of Tamakaimoana states: “The saying was that one day ma te tamaiti tika hai huke Te Umutaoroa” [a child will come and unearth Te Umutaoroa] (Douglas, Mackenzie, Bennet & MacKenzie, 2011, n.p.). Thus, it was believed by some that Rua fulfilled Te Kooti’s predictions about a successor. Rua made his claim as Te Kooti’s successor around two years after Te Kooti’s death; this assertion conclusively split the Ringatū faith (Binney et al., 1979).

**Image 5: Rua Kenana**



(McDonald, 1908, Alexander Turnbull Library, 1/2-019618-F)

According to Tamiana Thrupp of Ngāi Tūhoe, Rua Kēnana said:

Ka whakapono mai nā koutou ki a au, māku koutou hai ārahi atu ki te kainga kua whakaritea mai mō tātou katoa. Hai wehe i ā tātou mai i roto i te ao o te Pākehā, kua whakauru ake ki roto i a tātou kia kore ai e pā ngā mahi weriweri, ngā mahi kino a te Pākehā ki runga i a tātou. Ā nā, tērā me hoki katoa tātou ki uta, ki te take o te maunga.

Ko tērā āhua o Te Rua, i whakaarohia ai e ia, kāre e haramai ā-tangata, ā-kikokiko, i heke ā-wairua mai tērā. Ka whakatōhia ake ki roto i tōna whatumanawa, ahakoa anō tana akohia i roto i ngā karaipiture (Douglas et al., 2013, n.p.).

Thrupp states that Rua had told his followers that if they had faith in him, he would lead them in establishing a new and inspired home, away from the horrific and evil invading Pākehā civilisation. Thrupp explains that from Rua's perspective, his character derived not from a human or physical genesis but from a spiritual one. Indeed, Thrupp concludes, Rua's prophetic character was deeply and spiritually rooted within his being and did not come from the learning he gained from the scriptures.

From 1904 Rua started having visions (Binney et al., 1979; Elsmore, 2000). Tūhoe tohunga, Hōhepa Kereopa claims:

He was visited by the Angel Mikare [Michael]. Well, he was frying bread and then he heard the voice and the voice said: "I want you to come with me. Your job is to heal people". And Rua says: "I want to heal the land. If you heal the land, people will heal automatically". From after that visit, him and his wife Pinepine, packed up in the middle of winter and went up top to Maungapōhatu (Slater et al., 2008, n.p.).

Rua's claim to prophethood came after an experience he had on Maungapōhatu, Tūhoe's revered mountain (Binney et al.,

1979), which for Rua came to represent the Promised Land (Elsmore, 2000). Rua and his first wife, Pinepine Te Rika, were instructed by the archangel Gabriel to climb the Maungapōhatu; other accounts of Rua's experience state that he encountered Christ and Whaitiri – a deified Tūhoe female ancestor (Binney et al., 1979; Elsmore, 2000). Upon Maungapōhatu, a hidden diamond – veiled by Te Kooti's garment – was revealed to Rua (Binney et al., 1979).

In 1907, Rua and his followers,<sup>18</sup> the Iharaira (Israelites), established the City of God at Maungapōhatu, because it was believed that building Zion on the mountain would stop the Crown from taking land in the Urewera for mining or Pākehā settlement (Binney et al., 1979; Elsmore, 2000).<sup>19</sup> They built a circular meeting house called Hiona (Zion), embellished with yellow diamonds and blue clubs; this was Rua's parliament and council chamber (Binney et al., 1979; Elsmore, 2000). The gateway to the settlement<sup>20</sup> displayed the word, Mīhaia,<sup>21</sup> which is how Rua was identified (Binney et al., 1979).

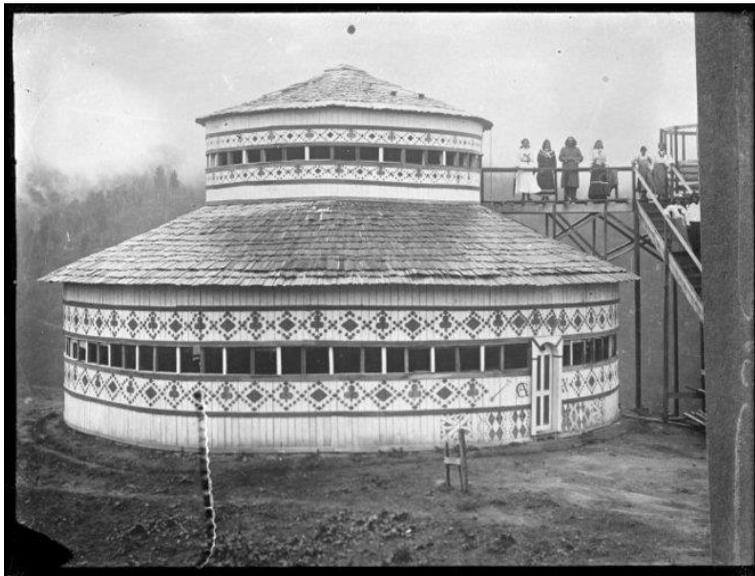
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<sup>18</sup> Te Whakatōhea and Tūhoe devoted themselves to Rua during 1906-08, and expected to return to their confiscated lands in the eastern Bay of Plenty; these were deemed to be the promised lands which formed part of a covenant with God (Binney et al., 1979; Elsmore, 2000).

<sup>19</sup> The Crown was making Tūhoe lands available for prospecting without consent or consultation, regardless of legislation, passed in 1896, to prevent such activity (Binney et al., 1979).

<sup>20</sup> Under Rua's direction, a second building of the community at Maungapōhatu began in 1914 through a ritualistic succession of demolition and reconstruction; the inner sanctuary, including the circular meeting house, Hiona, was demolished, and an orthodox whareniui named Tane-nui-a-rangi was built as a replacement; within this whare food could be consumed, which made it different from many other Māori meeting houses (Binney et al., 1979). The rebuilding of the Maungapōhatu community was the beginning of a sequence of tapu-absolving rites that opened the era of the New Covenant – a time of noa or freedom from the restrictions of the past (Binney et al., 1979).

<sup>21</sup> Messiah - saviour, liberator, anointed one, Christ, person imbued with power from God (Livingstone, 2013). Mīhaia, with the macron, is the modern orthographic form (Moorfield, 2011).

**Image 6: Hiona**

(Bourne, ca. 1908, Alexander Turnbull Library, APG-1679-1/2-G)

Rua was perceived to have a disturbing influence because he declared himself a spiritual healer and prophet; from May 1906, the police were ordered to keep an eye on Rua as he was believed to be a tohunga; in 1907, the Tohunga Suppression Act, which targeted Rua, was passed (Binney et al., 1979; Davidson, 2004; Durie, 1994; Lange, 1999; Webster, 1979). Attempts were made to prosecute Rua under the Tohunga Suppression Act, but these failed due to a meeting between Rua and Prime Minister Sir Joseph Ward in March 1908; this meeting became known amongst the Iharaira as the ‘Ceremony of Union’, because Rua agreed with Ward’s contention that there could not be a separate Māori government and that both Māori and Pākehā existed beneath a single sun (Binney et al., 1979). Rua took this to mean that there would be one law for

both Māori and Pākehā, and so he created a flag made up of the Union Jack with the following words stitched into it: “Kotahi te ture mo nga iwi e rua Maungapohatu” (“One law for both peoples Maungapohatu”); this flag would later be described by Pākehā as seditious (Binney et al., 1979, p. 99). Rua based his leadership style on the notion of one law for Māori and Pākehā, and pacifism; however, Rua’s position came to be viewed as rebellious during the First World War (Binney et al., 1979). In Grace’s (1994) popular reggae song *Rua Kenana*, he expresses:

Rua left his mark on this world...

Rua Kēnana,  
Tūhoe prophet from the Urewera,  
Oh Rua, Rua Kēnana.

He told his people not to go to war:  
Let the white man fight,  
the white man’s war,  
Oh Rua, Rua Kēnana.

They lived under Maungapōhatu,  
“Children of the Mist”  
is what they called you,  
Oh Tūhoe, Tūhoe nui tonu.<sup>22</sup>

Rua advised his people not to volunteer for the war, and so the government used legislation that prohibited Māori from using alcohol to arrest Rua on charges of illicitly selling alcohol (Binney et al., 1979; Elsmore, 1998, 2000). According to Hōhepa Kereopa: “The real reason was to crack his methods of amalgamating people, because the charge was sly-grogging” (Slater et al., 2008, n.p.). In 1915, Rua was sentenced to three

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<sup>22</sup> The researcher listened to this track via a compact disc recording and subsequently transcribed these lyrics.

months' incarceration; however, this sentence was actually for a suspended charge for a comparable offence from 1911 (Binney et al., 1979).<sup>23</sup>

Following a disputatious meeting around the opening up of Tūhoe land, Rua was summonsed to appear in court on the 1915 charges on 19 January 1916, but refused to go (Binney, et al., 1979).<sup>24</sup> A new arrest warrant was issued and two policemen delivered it to Rua on 12 February, but again, he did not appear in court; thus, on 9 March, arrangements were made by John Cullen, commissioner of police, for an armed police expedition to arrest Rua by force (Binney et al., 1979).

The conflict that followed on 2 April 1916, is described as the worst conflict between police and a Māori community in the twentieth century; unarmed and accompanied by his sons Whatu and Toko, Rua was arrested at Maungapōhatu, apprehended on the marae, by an armed force of 57 constables from Auckland and two lesser groups from Gisborne and Whakatāne (Binney, et al., 1979). Rua, Toko and Whatu stood on the marae to greet the police, but a shot was fired – while the police claim the shot came from Māori, the evidence supports the Māori claim that it came from police; consequently, two Māori were killed, one of whom was Toko (Binney et al., 1979).<sup>25</sup> The prophet Rua Kēnana was arrested and was sentenced to serve one year's hard labour and 18 months imprisonment.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> This was the maximum penalty permissible for Rua's crime which was given by the local magistrate, Robert Dyer (Binney et al., 1979).

<sup>24</sup> Rua stated that he could not appear in court because he needed to harvest his cocksfoot grass, but that he would be able to attend court the following month; Dyer deemed this response to be in contempt and issued a new arrest warrant (Binney, et al., 1979).

<sup>25</sup> However, Toko was not killed outright; he was injured, but when he fired back, he was probably instantaneously executed (Binney et al., 1979).

<sup>26</sup> Rua's arrest was not legal because it had taken place on Sunday and was for a minor offence. Cullen used excessive force and probably should have been charged with murder, manslaughter and common assault (Binney et al., 1979). Rua's Supreme Court trial was one of the longest in New

**Image 7: Rua Kenana and his son Whatu handcuffed**



(Breckon, 1916, Alexander Turnbull Library, 1/2-028072-F)

In April 1918, Rua was discharged from prison and returned to his community, which was crippled by legal debts and the

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Zealand legal history; the judge, F. R. Chapman, dismissed the charges of resisting arrest at Maungapōhātu but tried Rua for using seditious language, directing others to murder or incapacitate the police, and resisting arrest on a previous occasion (Binney et al., 1979). The jury eliminated the charge of sedition and was incapable of ruling on the charge of encouraging harm to the police; however, Rua was found guilty of resisting arrest on the first occasion (Binney et al., 1979). Thus, Chapman delivered a sentence of one year's hard labour and 18 months imprisonment. Despite public protest and a petition to the government from eight jury members, Chapman's ruling went ahead, as the judge believed that Rua had an extensive history of rebellion, and was part of a racial group which needed to be reminded who wielded power in New Zealand (Binney et al., 1979).

costs of the police expedition. Rua commenced the rebuilding of his community, complete with a new wharenui built with the timber from Hiona, a short distance from the site of the old community (Binney et al., 1979). Rua's community, however, failed economically, and by the 1930s his followers were compelled to leave Maungapōhatu in search of food and employment (Binney et al., 1979). Rua left Maungapōhatu and went to the community he had established at Matahi in 1910, where he died on 20 February 1937, leaving behind five wives, one former wife, and 22 children (Binney et al., 1979). Rua prophesied that he would be resurrected on the third day after his death, but when he did not rise, he was entombed in a concrete crypt next to his house at Matahi (Binney et al., 1979; Binney & Chaplin, 1996).

Identifying himself as the Māori Messiah, Rua's mission was centred on assembling his people and endeavouring to carve out a sustainable economic future for them in the shadow of their sacred mountain; Rua provided vision for his people during times of devastation (Binney et al., 1979). According to Hirini Kaa:

In Rua Kēnana, Aotearoa had a prophet who straddled two eras: the nineteenth century, in which religion was the dominant social force which influenced every aspect of daily life; and the twentieth century, the age of modernity, where religion would be fighting to share the stage with other social forces. Rua was an inspirational spiritual leader for a dispossessed people who needed a vision. Rua's story has echoed down across the decades as a vibrant symbol that keeps alive the issues Rua fought for: justice and Māori autonomy within a faith framework. (Douglas et al., 2013, n.p.).

Rua's teachings and influence continue to be passed down to the next generation. Referring to the regard that the people of Matahi have for Rua today, Wayne Te Kaawa asserts:

I was at Matahi at a hui with the people down there, ka pātai au kia rātou [I asked them]: Ko wai a Te Rua mō koutou? [Who was Rua to you?] He poropiti? [A prophet?] Ka puta te kōrero: Kao, he atua. [They said: No, Rua was a supernatural being] And I thought, he atua? Ae! [Yes!] They looked at Rua as being he atua. Now, engari ka whakaaro Pākehā koe, ka raruraru koe, nē rā [interpreting this concept with Pākehā thinking is problematic]. Me whakaaro Māori koe [Thus, you require Māori thinking]. Ko tō rātou kōrero ki ahau [They said to me]: If you look at Maungapōhatu at the time of Rua, he moved whole communities of people from Waimana, from Matahi, from Rūātoki, from Ōpōtiki and he moved them up here in the middle of winter. And he built a community of 1,500 people and he re-built that community. And they said to me: That was 100 years ago, who can do that today? And they said: Only an atua could have done that. And I thought: ae, ka pai tō koutou whakaaro [yes, you're thoughts are good] (Douglas et al., 2013, n.p.).

### **Critical analysis of Māori prophetic movements as sites of political resistance**

In a situation similar to that of many Indigenous people, Māori prophets combined the introduced religious ideas of the missionaries with their Indigenous beliefs as a means not only of preserving important aspects of their own culture, but also of resisting the advances of colonisation. Rosenfeld argues: "When indigenous people encounter invaders, a forceful process of

acculturation disrupts the traditional world order, causing a profound disorientation, discontinuity, and a sense of loss” (Rosenfeld, 2011, p. 105). However, Higgins (2012) maintains that “[w]hile European culture was instrumental in the disempowerment of tribes, some Māori used the new culture as a mechanism to overcome and reclaim their power and authority” (p. 419). Indeed, Indigenous prophets in Aotearoa New Zealand, and all over the world, rose up against colonialism by creating new syncretic spiritualities as a means of resistance. Davidson (2004) states:

New religious movements are not peculiar to the Maori but have resulted from the interaction of missionary Christianity and indigenous peoples around the world. They have been variously seen as adjustment, millennial, revitalization, prophetic and liberation movements or in some cases cargo cults<sup>27</sup> (p. 45).

In general, the movements that Indigenous people created can be described as revitalisation movements. Revitalisation movements link the past and present and project visions for the future. Wallace (1956) argues that revitalisation movements arise when people are subjected to psychosocial conflicts caused when a group is forced to adapt to another culture. Haviland, Prins, Walrath and McBride (2005) define revitalisation movements as: “Movements for radical cultural reform in response to widespread social disruption and collective feelings of anxiety and despair” (p. 361). Commenting on the rise of revitalisation movements, Eller (2007) states that “...social conditions change first, and religious conceptions and

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<sup>27</sup> Haviland, Prins, Walrath and McBride (2005) define cargo cults as: “Spiritual movements in Melanesia in reaction to disruptive contact with Western capitalism, promising resurrection of deceased relatives, destruction or enslavement of white foreigners, and the magical arrival of utopian riches” (p. 361).

practices adjust to try to establish some new consonance” (p. 173). Colonisation is a process whereby the world view of one group comes under attack by another group; the colonising group assumes political and economic power and forces the other group to assimilate. In order for the colonised group to cope with this invasion, coping mechanisms must be employed.

Wallace (1956) maintains that as people adjust to a new social order, such as colonisation, they may go through what he calls a ‘period of revitalisation’, which has several stages:

**Cultural/psychological reformulation:**<sup>28</sup> An innovative leader, a prophet, claiming to be inspired by dreams and visions, rises up with ideas about how to face the future, and is often someone who has experienced serious, possibly even life-threatening, illness.

**Communication:** The prophet communicates his or her visions and attracts followers, convincing them that things will be better in the future, that they might thrive again and gain control over their lives.

**Organisation:** As an effective leader, the prophet organises the followers, beginning with an inner circle of disciples or apostles.

**Adaption:** The prophetic movement changes over time to suit the social context and beliefs of the followers.

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<sup>28</sup> Wallace (1956) uses the term ‘mazeway reformulation’, but the researcher decided to use Eller’s (2007) term, ‘cultural/psychological reformulation’ here instead.

**Cultural transformation:** If the movement grows large enough, a new culture emerges which engenders a sense of triumph over evil.

**Routinisation:** If the movement survives, it will ultimately settle into a routine where the organisational structure is established, doctrines are instituted, and lines of succession are determined. As Eller (2007) maintains: “What was once innovative and radical becomes familiar and mainstream” (p. 175).

Anthropologists have identified a number of different types of revitalisation movements. There are five types of revitalisation movements that apply to this research (some revitalisation movements may be a blend of the following types) as defined by Eller (2007):

**Syncretism:** The amalgamation of two or more cultures or belief systems to create a third.

**Millenarianism:** The notion that the world – of evil and darkness – will come to an end and usher in a new age.

**Messianism:** The belief in an ‘anointed one’ who will come and lead the people to salvation.

**Irredentism:** A belief in the occupation or reclaiming of a homeland.

**Nativism:**<sup>29</sup> This type of movement emphasises a return to the Indigenous culture, and resistance to the introduced culture. However,

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<sup>29</sup> Eller (2007) uses ‘nativism/fundamentalism’.

movements may intentionally select certain aspects of the introduced culture as they see fit.

Oakes (1997) states that “...opposition to convention and their ability to inspire others with their visions” (p. 2), is something that all prophets have in common. Prophetic movements gave voice to the anxieties and tensions of Māori and other Indigenous peoples, as they endeavoured to find remedies to their suffering at the hands of the coloniser. Moura-Koçoğlu (2011) affirms:

...the emergence of religious movements reflected indigenous people’s dissatisfaction with the state of Māori affairs. The thorough political and economic marginalization from mainstream Pākehā society exacerbated a widespread sense of personal and spiritual insecurity. The incessant loss of ancestral land as well as the disruption of the traditional life-style contributed to deepening disillusionment and demoralization, resulting in a profound loss of identitary frames of reference. The rise of diverse prophetic movements can be regarded as a direct response to these circumstances (p. 29).

As responses to the tensions and effects of colonisation and land loss, Māori prophets united their followers and gave them a sense of security in a very uncertain colonial context. Walker (2004) argues:

Loss of mana, military invasion, and loss of land by creeping confiscation were the most obvious effects of colonisation. In order to counter the inroads that the Pakeha had made by surveying the land and inserting military there, prophets arose as new leaders to unify the tribes

against their common oppressor. Unity across tribal divisions was to be achieved through the mystical power of religion (Walker, 2004, pp. 129-130).

Māori, like other Indigenous people, used Christianity as an instrument of political resistance against the coloniser. Moon (1993) maintains: “Christianity provided the framework that individuals were able to build upon, fusing traditional Maori religious and spiritual elements with those of the Old and New Testaments to meet the circumstances and expectations of the time” (p. 83). Referring to Māori prophetic movements, Moura-Koçoğlu (2011) asserts that the “...religious cults of the late-nineteenth century had a fundamental bearing on cultural constructions of indigeneity by generating novel, transcultural forms of spirituality, symbolism, and syncretic rituals” (p. 32). Māori politically resisted colonisation using elements of Christianity in order to enhance their identity as Māori. Moura-Koçoğlu (2011) avers:

The striking success of these religious movements in rapidly gaining followers is explicable within the context of the hostile environment for Māori, reinforced by colonial structures of discrimination and oppression. Aside from economic dissatisfaction and political disillusionment among the largely rural Māori population, the psychological situation was a determining factor in fomenting the crisis of identity: Socio-economic discontent and cultural alienation left the original inhabitants of Aotearoa New Zealand in pursuit of leadership and spiritual orientation. The newly arising cults served to strengthen Māori identification... (p. 31).

As well as boosting Māori identity, prophetic movements provided Māori with a means of coping with the psychological, physical, spiritual and cultural trauma that occurred as part of the colonisation process. Douglas and Boxill (2012) opine:

The new economic order and technological transformation wrought by colonization were accompanied by political subjugation to a settler society that denigrated Maori beliefs as both heathen and fanciful myth. Maori responded defiantly with guerrilla warfare and various forms of more passive resistance, including withdrawal. Syncretic messianic movements became very popular; they appeared to be the only hope of redemption for their followers. These religions drew partly on the authenticity of Maori tradition and partly on the Old Testament. Maori leadership has always had a strong element of prophecy... (p. 38).

Referring to the spread of Christianity to Indigenous people, Kaplan (1995) affirms that "...elements of Old Testament and New Testament narrative have been incorporated into the local mythology not as precursors to the acceptance of Christianity, but as new adhesions to traditional belief systems" (p. 2). Furthermore, Kaplan (1995) claims that once the Bible was translated into local Indigenous languages, Native people were able to interpret the meaning of the text for themselves without any regard for imported orthodoxies. Because of this, Indigenous people were able to locate themselves within the scriptures and identify with the ancient Hebrews. Commenting on the use of the Bible in the Māori context, Moon (1993) contends:

The lasting irony of the missionary presence in New Zealand in the nineteenth century is that

without the introduction of the Bible, many of the Maori religious sects, which competed with the missionaries for followers, would not have been possible (p. 83).

The Bible provided a new narrative that Māori prophets used as a platform from which to launch their own visions and interpretations of salvation, in opposition to those of the missionaries. Thus, Māori prophets re-shaped the Judeo-Christian mould to suit their own needs and world views. As Moon (1993) maintains:

This need for the Maori input in and shaping of Christianity, as opposed to simple reverting to traditional Maori religion, shows a sharp awareness by the nineteenth century Maori religious leaders of the strength of organised religion, and of the parallels of Biblical events to the Maori struggle (p. 81).

In relation to how Māori adjusted to Christianity, Grau (2011) affirms: “Maori adopted some of it, adapted other things, and mixed and blended in elements of their own culture, using forms of logic that aimed to make sense of the changes occurring in place and time” (p. 209). While tainting missionary-based Christianity with Māori ideas and beliefs was a coping mechanism for Māori, far from helping the missionaries, religious syncretism was a stumbling block to them. Callaghan (2014) argues:

Syncretism was a practice considered by transplanters of the gospel to be one of the greatest barriers to the authority of colonial Christianity. The mingling of traditions illustrates creative development of indigenous theologies taking place in their midst. In Aotearoa, Christian beliefs were

being integrated into cultural traditions by local tohunga and their followers, and by main religious leaders of the nineteenth century, such as Papahurihia, Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuki and Te Ua Haumēne (p. 183).

It can be argued that the introduction of Christianity as part of the colonial tool kit, was very much a political act. In opposition to this, Māori prophets emerged to unite groups of Māori within religio-politically orientated movements that appealed to a people whose land and way of life was being destroyed. The Māori prophetic movements were in essence political movements that united and mobilised followers to resist Pākehā invasion. Moon (1993) insists:

The Maori sects went beyond simply addressing past injustices or grievances, they provided a focal point for the organisation of resistance – in several forms – and because such groups were doctrine-based as opposed to tribal-based, their appeal transcended traditional tribal boundaries and barriers (p. 80).

Māori prophetic leaders such as Papahurihia, Te Ua, Te Kooti and Rua, and many others, were considered by their followers to be messiahs<sup>30</sup> for their people. As leaders of messianic movements, these prophets were highly political in their resistance to colonial advances. Indeed, Fuchs (1965) affirms: “Messianic movements, being in their very essence revolutionary, become provocative and dangerous to the established government if the leaders are strong and militant. The established government often reacts violently to such

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<sup>30</sup> This word can mean saviour or liberator. The Greek word for Messiah is the word from which the term/title, ‘Christ’ comes (Livingstone, 2013). Messiah can also be defined as: “A person invested by God with special powers and functions” (Livingstone, 2013, p. 368).

provocation and suppresses the movement with great severity” (p. 10). This was particularly true for those Māori prophetic movements that received attention from the colonial government.

**Summary**

This article has examined the effects of the introduction of Christianity to Aotearoa New Zealand and the emergence of Māori prophets. It was shown here that Te Atua Wera, Te Kooti, Te Ua Haumēne and Rua Kēnana, and their respective movements, were sites of political and religious resistance for Māori. This article also argued that Māori prophetic movements gave their followers a real sense of hope and positivity during the tumult of colonisation.

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