

## CHAPTER 4

# THE CENTRAL NORTH ISLAND WARS

### 4.1 THE RELEVANCE OF THE WARS TO NGATI AWA

The discussion in the previous chapter informs our assessment of Ngati Awa reaction to the war. The events that led to the New Zealand wars of the 1860s were all outside Ngati Awa territory but demonstrated to them that, just as the authority of other tribes had come under attack, so equally could their own. None the less, their participation in the war was marginal.

With the influx of large numbers of settlers and with successive governors acting as though they were the supreme authorities, Maori leaders were gathering from as early as 1854, when a hui was held at Manawapou in Taranaki, to consider how their traditional law and autonomy might be upheld.<sup>1</sup> As we have said, their mana or authority was their single, most important concern. Several historians have long recognised this and that it was the main reason that Maori had for fighting in the wars.<sup>2</sup> This is not to diminish the significance of land to Maori, but it follows that, if their authority was maintained, their land rights would be kept as well.

As if to assert their Treaty-guaranteed autonomy, in 1858 Maori leaders from throughout the country elected as king Te Wherowhero, one of several ariki of proven leadership and impeccable pedigree. The election was a drawn-out process. Although Ngati Awa themselves did not have a candidate, their representatives participated in Kingitanga hui, and Tupaea, whose people of Ngaiterangi had connections with Ngati Awa, was proposed.<sup>3</sup> Also proposed was Amohau of Te Arawa, a former enemy of Ngati Awa.<sup>4</sup>

This course of action was understandable. Pakeha authority was neatly identifiable under the name of the Queen or the Government, while Maori authority was diffuse and not so readily apparent. Inherently suspicious of centralism and jealous of the independent autonomy of each hapu, Maori could still accept as king a person whose power at a national level would depend on continued support from the people. He would thus be symbolic of Maori authority.

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1. See Waitangi Tribunal, *The Taranaki Report: Kaupapa Tuatahi*, Wellington, GP Publications, 1996, p 61
  2. See *The Taranaki Report*, pp 81–82; James Belich, *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict*, Auckland, Auckland University Press, 1986, ch 4; Alan Ward, 'The Origins of the Anglo-Maori Wars: A Reconsideration', *New Zealand Journal of History*, vol 1, no 1, 1967, pp 148–170
  3. Document A18, pp 51–52; Malcolm McKinnon (ed), *New Zealand Historical Atlas*, Auckland, Department of Internal Affairs and David Bateman Ltd, 1997, pl 36
  4. See *The Taranaki Report*, pp 63–64; James Cowan, *The New Zealand Wars: A History of the Maori Campaigns and the Pioneering Period*, 2 vols, Wellington, Government Printer, 1983, vol 1, pp 150–151, 445–446

The Governor saw the King as a threat to his own authority, but for Maori there was a place for both. As expressed in typical Maori idiom, the kingmakers envisaged the English Queen on one side, the Maori King on the other, God over both, and love binding them together.<sup>5</sup> The symbols were not removed from the relationship that Maori saw in the Treaty of Waitangi and to which those who drafted the Maori text had given expression. It was also consistent with the customary position, where there was no single superior authority and peace depended on acknowledging the mana of all parties. Given the English tradition, which depended on a single and absolute authority, be it the authority of the monarch in person or the monarch in Parliament, it is not surprising that the Governor saw the proposal as a challenge.<sup>6</sup>

Accordingly, in the build-up to the war, the Governor came to think of Maori according to their position over the Maori King. The Kingites were categorised as rebels and the Queenites as loyal. Maori were in fact divided, though how divided is a matter for speculation. We think that the concept of retaining Maori authority was understood by Maori throughout the country. The main difficulty for Maori was possibly that, customarily, their primary loyalty had been to their own hapu.

None the less, it is clear that there was widespread support for the Kingitanga. It may have been more widespread than the records show, in view of the Governor's opposition and continual talk of crushing the King's supporters and the primary concern that Maori have first to look after the interests of their own hapu. Support may not always have been expressed openly.

According to the claimants, the hapu of this district were not unanimous. Some said they supported the King, some said they did not, and others said nothing.<sup>7</sup> We have no doubt, however, that all were apprehensive about the growing power of the Governor and the growing numbers of Europeans in other districts. It was an apprehension expressed by Kawakura, a rangatira of Ngati Awa, as follows:

Why does the Governor send to me? Is it because I am a bad man, or that he has heard that I am an ally of the Maori King? I have not joined the King, but have steadfastly refused to do so in spite of repeated solicitations. I stand between the King and the Queen, quietly watching both. I do not understand the Pakeha; first he brought us Christianity, then guns to destroy each other with; then came the Government and the law and the Magistrates; then Runangas. Now it is a new thing, and bye and bye it will be some other new thing. We are bewildered with all these things, and think we had better be left alone. We know that Christianity has done us good, and we are content with that. Does the Governor think to occupy our attention with these new things, while he is contriving plans to get hold of our land?<sup>8</sup>

These were legitimate fears and Kawakura's position is understandable given the remoteness of Ngati Awa from the main areas of encroachment. It may also be seen as a typical Ngati Awa position of the time. None the less, Ngati Awa became involved in the wars that followed. It was impossible not to be. There was not a tribe in the North

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5. 'Curiosus' in the *New Zealander*, 3 July 1858 (cited in *The Taranaki Report*, p 64)

6. For a discussion of the Kingitanga, see *The Taranaki Report*, pp 63–64

7. Document A18, pp 51–53

8. Smith to Mantell, 28 May 1862, AJHR, 1862, E-9, sec 4, p 21 (RDB, vol 15, p 5648)

Island that was entirely unaffected, and the passage of events was outside the power of Ngati Awa to control.

The war commenced not with an attack on the Maori King but in Taranaki, on 17 March 1860, with a dispute that on its face was about the sale of land but really concerned the recognition due to the traditional authority of Wiremu Kingi. Te Atiawa of Taranaki were attacked, but all Maori had cause to feel threatened. Ngati Awa may have observed that those attacked were their relations. Whether one was Ati Awa (literally, the descendants of Awa) or Ngati Awa (which means the same), the difference was only dialectal, for both came from the one eponymous ancestor.<sup>9</sup>

When Grey replaced Gore-Browne as Governor for a second term in office, lines were drawn, in more senses than one. The Governor decided to move promptly against the Maori King, whom he saw as the real source of the trouble. In 1861, he secured a peace in Taranaki, as a way of holding the fort. At the same time, he developed a military road – the Great South Road – from Auckland through the Hunua Range to the Waikato River at Mangatawhiri. The road was directed towards the Maori King, and the King in turn drew an aukati across that path at the Mangatawhiri River.

Here, we digress on account of the significance of an aukati in Maori law and its later relevance to the Ngati Awa claim. An aukati is a line that no one may cross with any intention that may be judged as hostile to those on the other side. It was a most common custom in Maori law, even better known to Pakeha than the rahui imposed after a drowning is today. Pakeha called it a ‘cut’ or ‘cutty’, which is how it sounded to their ears, especially because it was sometimes abbreviated in the Maori vernacular to ‘kati’.<sup>10</sup>

It was not a declaration of war, as Pakeha often saw it to be. Quite to the contrary, it was usually a declaration in a time of crisis that war was not sought. It was a device used when a collection of hapu felt that they were under threat but did not seek war, but wished to say that, by the same token, they would fight if need be if the line were crossed by anyone with arms or a hostile purpose. It was like saying ‘we accept that there is trouble about us, but until we can settle the problem and to stave off war in the meantime, we will keep to our side of the line if you will keep to yours’.

Nor is an aukati the delineation of a tribal boundary. The site chosen may have symbolic significance, well within the tribal territory, it may represent a usual point of entry, or it may simply be close to a defensible position. Most especially, however, it means that the lives of any who cross it may be summarily forfeited unless their good intentions are manifest, any other Maori law about respecting the lives of others notwithstanding.<sup>11</sup>

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9. Moreover, the Ngati Awa claimant researchers state that some Ngati Awa men went to assist their Te Atiawa kin: ‘A group of Ngati Awa men were captured in Taranaki and held as prisoners in Wellington before being repatriated after the war’: doc A18, p 38. However, no original source is provided for this.

10. See also Wallace to Clarke, 21 February 1865, AJHR, 1865, E-5, no 1, encl 1, p 3, warning that a Pai Marire party had arrived at Whakatane and imposed a ‘cut’ on the port. ‘Cut’ is explained in the margin as a ‘kati’.

11. For examples of aukati, see Matewha to Grey, 5 November 1862, AJHR, 1863, E-12, p 20; translation of Petara and others to Smith, 17 August 1863, LE1/1864/105, NA Wellington (doc 15(a), pp 136–139); Shortland to Smith, 17 September 1863, LE1/164/105 (doc 15(a), p 145)

On 12 July 1863, General Cameron and a large armed force crossed the aukati at the Mangatawhiri River, fully conscious of what they were doing, and the war in Waikato began. It was only natural that many other hapu were anxious to support the King and hastened to his aid. The breach of the King's aukati even more than the events in Taranaki made the war a national Maori cause. Moreover, Waikato was merely the first tribal area south of Auckland. Behind were many others, like a line of dominos. Any Maori apprised of the situation could conclude only that the Governor was in the wrong. He would not respect the law as Maori saw it and had crossed the aukati. If he would not respect the law in the case of Waikato, would he respect it anywhere else?

Maori were not all of one mind on that question. Some hapu sought to protect themselves by supporting the King, others by fighting on the side of the Governor, others again by remaining neutral. Some used the war to settle outstanding legacies of historical intertribal warfare. There were divisions even within hapu. Some runanga decided to remain neutral but could not stop some of the younger bloods, who hastened to Waikato for the sport.

On the evidence, amongst the hapu of Ngati Awa there were those who would support the King and those who would remain neutral.<sup>12</sup> There was no common position.

The policy adopted by certain Te Arawa hapu was to prove significant. Some joined Waikato and some stayed out of the matter, but a large section was eventually to fight on the Government's side. They were thus regarded as loyal to the Queen. There is insufficient evidence as to the basis for their decisions. Their primary loyalty may have been not to the Governor but to themselves after a pragmatic consideration of who had the greatest fire power. Equally, the governing factor may have lain in their objection to other tribes using their land as a pathway to the Waikato war, which could have embroiled the Arawa hapu in the fighting. After Waikato, Te Arawa was next in line. Their lands stood between Waikato and many tribal groups to the east, and if it appeared that Te Arawa had allowed passage to those people, the Governor might next point his guns at them.

There were also some unsettled feuds between those Te Arawa hapu at the eastern edge of their territory and nearby hapu of other descent groups, including Ngati Awa and Tuhoe. There had been a recent history of battles and no love lost between them.<sup>13</sup> It may be no accident that some of those Te Arawa hapu most prominent on the King's side were those closest to the King's territory, while some of those Te Arawa hapu most opposed to eastern tribes crossing their land to reach the Waikato war had lands at the eastern extremity.

Various small groups of the hapu beyond the Arawa territory had gone to the war, but matters came to a head in February 1864, when a contingent of some 400 to 600

12. While Ngati Awa claimant researchers state that it was important to Ngati Awa to provide active support to the Kingitanga and that individuals went off to Orakau on their own accord, they also point out that there were differences in the level of support and some hapu chose to remain neutral: doc A18, pp 52–53. Certainly, only a few of Ngati Awa were involved in actively fighting for the Kingitanga before events took the war into their own territory – Cowan does not even list Ngati Awa in his account of those present at the siege of Orakau, while Belich says that Ngati Awa 'probably also sent men to Waikato': Cowan, vol 1, pp 365–407; Belich, p 128.

13. See D M Stafford, *Te Arawa: A History of the Arawa People*, Wellington, Reed, 1967, pp 171–172

persons from the East Coast moved westwards to support the Waikato people. The originating group were from Ngati Porou, but recruits were gathered on the way from Whanau-a-Apanui and Whakatohea. Some of Ngati Awa were also recruited. These were persons from the western extremity of the Ngati Awa lands, where the East Coast contingent had camped.<sup>14</sup>

Te Arawa declared their neutrality, at least from their point of view, by drawing an aukati across the inland route over their land to Waikato. However, not all of Te Arawa supported this, and about 100 Ngati Pikiāo joined the East Coast force.<sup>15</sup> And just as the East Coast contingent had the right to support the King in Waikato, so was the Arawa action of repulsing the force justifiable. Under the extremely broad terms of the New Zealand Settlements Act 1863, Te Arawa land could also be confiscated if they allowed others bearing arms to cross it.

The consequential battle, at Rotoiti in early March 1864, resulted in the retreat of the insurgents to Matata, though it appears that some got through.<sup>16</sup> Waikato fell in the final battle of Orakau on 2 April 1864, without the support of the large East Coast contingent.

As Te Arawa may have predicted, the Governor next took aim at those other tribes most prominent in supporting Waikato in the war – the hapu of Tauranga. The East Coast contingent regrouped, gained more recruits, including some from Ngati Makino, and began moving along the coast to support the Tauranga hapu. Once more, they had to cross land that was then in the possession of Te Arawa.<sup>17</sup>

Amongst the hapu leaders opposed in principle to participating in the war was Rangitukehu. In his view, some Ngati Awa had little option but to join the travelling party because they were intimidated by the large contingent that had occupied their lands.<sup>18</sup> There is some limited evidence that ‘individuals’ and groups from hapu of Ngati Awa further east were involved as well.<sup>19</sup> But there is also evidence that strongly suggests that other hapu were not involved. We include here the hapu of the local Tuwharetoa. There is one independent European account that makes clear reference to the people of Tuwharetoa of Kawerau, or more particularly of Te Ahiinanga, where it was said that they were determined to ‘sit still, unless the Pakeha came and molested them’.<sup>20</sup>

On this occasion, Te Arawa had the support of British troops garrisoned at Maketu and two British naval vessels lying a short distance offshore. They were also assisted by Tuwharetoa of Taupo.<sup>21</sup>

14. See Cowan, vol 1, ch 41; doc A18, p 54; Stafford, p 369

15. See Stafford, p 370

16. Nesbitt to Smith, 14 March 1864, MS283, T H Smith papers, ‘Official Letters to T H Smith, 1861–1868’, folders 9–11, vol 2, p 60 (typescript) AIM (cited in doc 15, p 13; doc 15(a), p 66)

17. See document A18, pp 54–55, especially page 55, where it states that ‘More men from Tuhoe, Ngati Tama, Ngati Makino and Ngati Porou joined the force at Matata’.

18. Smith to Colonial Secretary, 31 May 1864, BPP, vol 14, p 65 (cited in doc 15, p 20)

19. Cowan lists ‘Ngatiawa’ as part of the Tairawhiti contingent but does not specify which Ngati Awa: Cowan, vol 1, p 415.

20. MS583 Grace, ‘Journal of Grace’s Flight from Pukawa’, box 2, pt 3, AIM (cited in doc 15, p 11)

21. AJHR, 1864, E-3, pp 68–69; Cowan, vol 1, pp 415–416, 418; see also doc 15, p 16

No aukati was drawn on this occasion. It would have been too much of a formality since there was already an existing state of war. A defensible cliff-top position was simply taken, and the battle was fought on the coast between Maketu and Pukehina. This time, the insurgents were routed in fighting between 26 and 29 April 1864, culminating in the battle of Kaokaoroa near Matata. The East Coast contingent suffered heavy losses. Many died during the retreat, when the contingent was bombarded by the navy as they moved back along the coast, to which they were pinned by inland Te Arawa forces.<sup>22</sup>

The Tauranga hapu that had fought with Waikato were, in the meantime, challenged on their home territory. They were initially successful at the battle of Gate Pa on 29 April, but Tauranga fell with the defeat of the defenders at Te Ranga on 21 June 1864. Once again, only a handful of the eastern contingents were there to support them.<sup>23</sup>

In the meantime, the war in Taranaki resumed in May 1863, when contrary to the terms of the truce, the Imperial troops reoccupied land at Tataraimaka. Later in 1863, legislation was passed enabling the Governor to confiscate the lands of tribes in rebellion. The first confiscations would be proclaimed in 1865.<sup>24</sup>

The Governor's breach of the truce and his threats of confiscation were indicative of his resolve to continue the war and crush all Maori resistance to the paramountcy of the Queen. In Taranaki, the war reached new levels of desperation, and things were done by Maori that were out of character with the sort of chivalry with which they had been credited in the wars to that date.<sup>25</sup>

The Pai Marire religion emerged during this time, with doctrines based mainly on the Old Testament. Although to Maori the name 'Pai Marire' indicated a search for peace, amongst Europeans the religion was viewed with horror. The adherents killed and decapitated a British army captain and preserved his head on a pole. Biblical precedent was relied on, David having done the same to the apparently invincible Goliath, but while that was seen to justify matters to the Pai Marire adherents, it led to outrage amongst Europeans. Pai Marire followers became known amongst Pakeha as 'Hauhau', after their form of chanting. Their beliefs and rituals, said to cause a hypnotic state, led to their being labelled fanatics.<sup>26</sup>

In about 1865, the Pai Marire adherents dispatched emissaries to proselytise amongst the tribes that had been turned back by Te Arawa and gain their support. Missionaries from the Church Missionary Society had long observed the keen Maori interest in religious philosophy. This interest assisted the missionaries' entry into Maori villages, but they found to their concern that Maori entertained a variety of religious opinions and faiths. The Pai Marire emissaries were no different from the missionaries in proposing a new religion, and like the missionaries, they were received and given a hearing.

22. AJHR, 1864, E-3, pp 68–69; see also Cowan, vol 1, pp 417–419; doc 15, pp 14–17

23. For a description of the battles at Tauranga, see Belich, ch 10, esp pp 178, 189, 194; Cowan, vol 1, pp 421–440.

24. See *The Taranaki Report*, ch 5; see also Belich, p 119

25. Cowan, vol 2, pp 16–20 (cited in *The Taranaki Report*, pp 93–94)

26. For a full account of the Pai Marire religion, see Paul Clark, *'Hauhau': The Pai Marire Search for Maori Identity*, Auckland, Oxford University Press, 1975; also Belich, pp 204–205; Cowan, vol 2, ch 1; doc 15, p 24

Pai Marire emissaries, with a contingent of uncertain size but estimated to have been about 40, entered amongst Ngati Awa under the leadership of Patara Rakautari of Taranaki and Kereopa Te Rau of Ngati Rangiwewehi. Ngati Rangiwewehi was a Te Arawa hapu that had fought in Waikato on behalf of the Maori King. Kereopa was embittered over the slaying of his wife and daughter by soldiers and had subsequently joined Taranaki Maori in further fighting. At Whakatane, he and Patara demanded that Father Grange, a Catholic missionary, be handed over, but the local people refused. It appears, however, that they gained some converts to their religion. Following a usual Pai Marire pattern, they purported to impose an aukati over Whakatane Harbour against the entry of all Government personnel.<sup>27</sup>

Te Arawa were hostile to the Pai Marire presence on their eastern boundaries because it was thought that the emissaries might goad the local tribes into seeking revenge for those killed in the recent battles.<sup>28</sup> The renowned Whakatohea chief Te Apotonga was amongst those slain while held by Te Arawa as a prisoner of war, and that incident alone gave grounds for a reprisal.<sup>29</sup> Further, Kereopa was of Te Arawa, and it may have been thought that that in itself could expose Te Arawa to the Governor's retribution.

Kereopa's mission would lead in time to the slaying of the Reverend Carl Sylvius Völkner, a missionary from the Church Missionary Society, and that in turn would set in train a new direction in the war, to which we will refer later.

#### 4.2 CONCLUSION

Up until the Pai Marire group came to the Bay of Plenty, the Ngati Awa involvement in the wars had been insubstantial. Ngati Awa were not the key players that other tribes whose lands were confiscated for war had been, so their confiscations must stand in quite a different category. The involvement of Ngati Awa had amounted to little more than that some of them had joined the eastern contingent while it was camped in force on their land and had, with the contingent, endeavoured to pass through Te Arawa territory.<sup>30</sup> There had been no general tribal policy to support that position, but still that was the position that some, an unknown number, had in fact taken.

Though the claimants submitted that persons of Ngati Awa in fact reached their destination, there are no reliable records available that prove that Ngati Awa had been at any of the relevant engagements. In any event, in our view such action as Ngati Awa

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27. See AJHR, 1865, E-5, pp 3-4 (cited in doc 15, p 24); Cowan, vol 2, p 72; doc A18, p 63

28. See AJHR, 1865, E-4, pp 13-19 (cited in doc 15, p 24)

29. Cowan, vol 1, p 419; see also Stafford, p 378 (cited in doc A18, p 56)

30. Although Cowan does not list any Ngati Awa at the battle of Orakau, the claimant researchers themselves state that it was important to Ngati Awa to provide active support to the Kingitanga and that 'sections of Ngati Awa reacted by taking up arms to support the King Movement', though they provide no specific reference for this: doc A18, pp 51, 53. They further state that individuals of Maatua 'went off on their own accord to Orakau': p 52.

took in attempting to render assistance was justified, because the King's lands were wrongly invaded.

Likewise, they were justified in seeking to support Tauranga Maori when the Governor then shifted his guns there. If the Governor was not stopped at Tauranga, who would have been the next to be invaded and have their lands taken?