

The Rātana Church

Where Christianity, Politics and
Māori Culture come together



Thesis submitted for the Masters Degree in the History of Religions

Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages

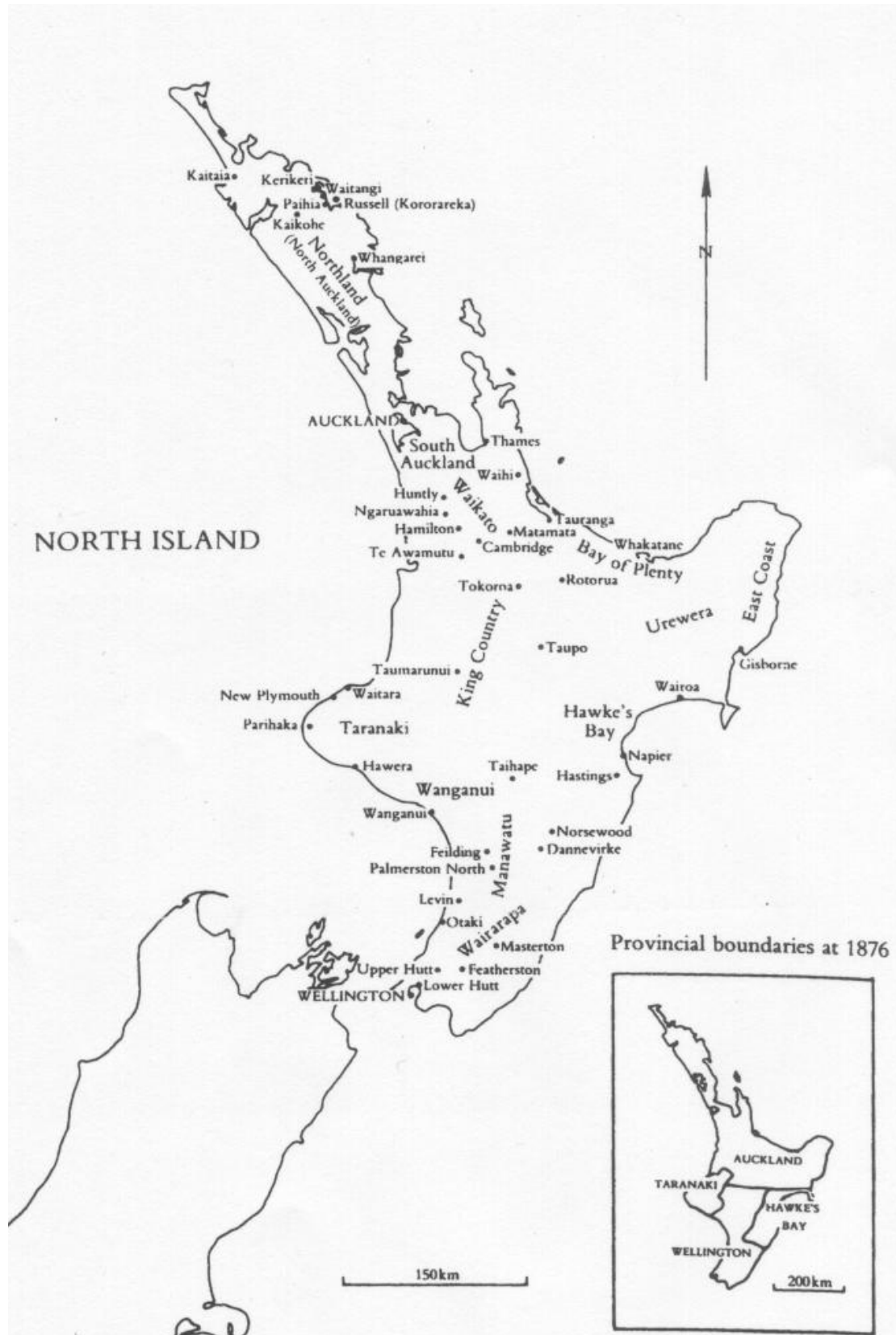
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By Mari Saugestad Mathiesen



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¹ Map of the North Island of New Zealand. Rātana is just next to Whanganui, in the South-East
 From the Oxford History of New Zealand, Rice (ed) 1992

Summary

The Rātana Church; where Christianity, Politics and Māori Culture come together

The Rātana Church is a Māori-Christian church, consisting of approximately 40,000 members, most of them Māori, the indigenous people of New Zealand. They are *te Iwi Mōrehu*, the surviving non-tribal tribe of T. W. Rātana.

According to the Church, T. W. Rātana was visited by the Holy Spirit in 1918, and chosen to be His mouthpiece of earth. He healed many people, and attracted a large following, based on non-tribal Christianity. The world view of the Church is dualistic; divided into the spiritual and the physical. The Church combines Christian spirituality with the emphasis on the material welfare of the Māori people.

I have examined in what way the Rātana Church is both a Christian church, and a Māori movement. This is an empirical case study, describing the Rātana Church in light of the historical as well as anthropological context that it was born from.

I have analysed the Rātana Church in contrast with ‘traditional Māori spirituality and culture’.

The extent of identification with traditional Māori elements among the Mōrehu, the adherents of the Church, varies not only from person to person, but also according to the context. The members of the Rātana Church may appear to be stuck ‘betwixt and between’; not fully Māori, but certainly not Pākeha (white), both a creolised Māori culture and a syncretistic form of Christianity.

They told me “It’s not a Māori Church; it’s a Christian Church, with Māori people, open for everyone.” I have tried to show that it *is* a Māori-Christian Church, in the ethnicity of its members, the Māori cultural practices, and most importantly in the Māori identity of the Mōrehu.

It is my understanding that the Rātana Church is a form of collectivism based on Christianity, with political roots, ethnic membership and cultural practice; religion, politics and culture coming together.

Chapter One - Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The Rātana Church is a Māori-Christian church, consisting of approximately 40,000 members, according to the latest available census². In 1996 the Māori,³ who are the indigenous population, made up 15% of the total population of Aotearoa⁴ New Zealand of nearly 4 million. The history of the Rātana faith began on the 8th of November 1918. Tahupotiki Wiremu Rātana was standing on the porch of his farm house, and he saw a great cloud approaching. The cloud turned out to be the Holy Spirit, who told him that He has chosen this man and his people, to spread His message. Today T. W. Rātana's house is surrounded by Rātana Pā, literally 'Rātana Village', the physical centre of the Church.

Technically, the Rātana Church is a Christian sect,⁵ which broke away from mainstream Christianity, to create its own religion, on Māori terms. It was established as a separate Church in 1925. Culturally, it's all Māori, but in a special way, combining Christian religion with the political goal of empowering the whole ethnic group. In 1936, T. W. Rātana formed an alliance with the Labour Party, formalising the political aspect of the movement. The members of the Church are referred to not as Christians, but as Mōrehu, meaning remnant, survivor.

Religion, Politics and Culture; Uniting and Separating

In this thesis I want to examine in what way the Rātana Church is both a Christian church, and a Māori movement. Initially I would like to say that the Christian side of it, the Church, is the aspect most firmly established, both in a formal sense, but also in the identity of the adherents. It is a lay church, with un-paid clergy, based on the New Testament principles of personal faith in God and good work for the people. The Māori side of it all is somewhat more ambivalent, as I wish to demonstrate in this

² <http://www.stats.govt.nz/quick-facts/people/religion-and-ethnicity.htm>
Accessed on sept 20th 2005

³ Vowels with macrons are lengthened, and usually stressed. Thus Rātana is pronounced Raatana etc.

⁴ Māori name for New Zealand, meaning "Land of the Long White Cloud".

⁵ In the sense described by McGuire 1992

thesis. In doing so, I will describe both the Church's own ideas of the notion of Māori culture, and its relationship with the surrounding Māori nation, what is known as Māoridom.

So, we are dealing with religion and politics. Religion separates the Rātana Church from the rest of Māoridom, as it explicitly rejects traditional Māori spirituality. However it also unites the Rātana Church with other Māori, as most Māori are Christian anyway. The Rātana Church is Christianity wrapped in Māori cultural practices. From early on the emphasis within the Rātana Church on the political empowerment of the Māori people, especially the recognition of the Treaty of Waitangi (further described below), has united the Rātana Church with the rest of Māoridom, in a common cause, that of improving the conditions for all Māori, and preserving the language and certain aspects the culture. In practice, however, the Rātana Church has gradually become more distant from the political process over the years. The Rātana-Labour alliance in Parliament has in effect left the politics in the hands of Labour, today the opinion vary as to what extent the alliance is still valid.

To re-phrase; what separates the Rātana Church from the rest of Māoridom, is the rejection of traditional Māori spirituality, and the political collaboration with the Labour Party. However, what continues to unite is the combination of Christianity and Māori culture. The Christian faith and the formal recognition of both the Treaty of Waitangi as well as the Māori language and certain Māori rituals give the Rātana Church an important place within the nation of Māoridom. This has ensured the Church's position as an important Māori organisation, often referred to as a giant.

Christian Ethno-Politics

When T. W. Rātana founded the Church, he proclaimed it was with the Bible in one hand, and the Treaty of Waitangi in the other. The Treaty of Waitangi is the document drafted by the representatives of the British Crown, and signed by 500 Māori chiefs in 1840. In the recent decades this Treaty had become the object of intensifying debate. Within Māoridom, the opinions vary. Some see it as the document not only formalising Māori ownership of the land, but also affirming the authority of Māori

over that of the newcomers, making the Crown “firmly subject to tikanga Māori”⁶ (Māori custom and procedure). Others, like the Rātana Church, see the Treaty of Waitangi as a contract of partnership, “a relationship that had been entered into”⁷. In this view, the Treaty grants the Māori people certain rights, which were denied them in the decades following the arrival of the Europeans. This is also the view that has been held by the New Zealand Governments of the previous decades, and serious measures have been taken to recompensate tribes, for the land confiscated during the 19th century, and up until the Second World War.

So, the Rātana Church holds the Treaty in one hand and the Bible in the other. T. W. Rātana’s ministry lasted 21 years. The first ten years he spent building the Church organisation, and acting as faith healer, curing the sick and the blind, under the mantle of *te Mangai*, literally the mouth, of the Holy Spirit. In 1929 he put that title aside, took a new title, and started the political part of his mission, as promised in 1920; “First let us unite in the Father, and then we shall unite in the land.”⁸ This political programme involved addressing a number of serious breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi. After being subjected during the 19th century to land confiscation, disease and warfare, in addition to the culture shock of colonisation, the Māori were at the time the under-class of a nation sinking gradually into the depression which affected most of the world in the years following 1929. This was also a time when the New Zealanders of European descent considered New Zealand to have “the best race relations in the world”⁹. A few attempts had been made earlier, to address the error of this judgment, but none had been successful, so the task at hand was formidable. In 1935 the new Labour Party, a socialist coalition, won the election, promising “a benign socialist millennium”¹⁰. In 1936 T. W. Rātana formed an alliance with the Labour Party, and in doing so he ensured his Church political authority, but also provided the Labour Party with Māori legitimacy. In the decades following his death, the political force of the Rātana Movement grew to be considered a giant of Māoridom. However, the actual political work was conducted within Labour Party, and gradually became removed from the hands of the Church. With time the distance

⁶Mikaere in Williams 2004

⁷Turia in Williams 2004

⁸Henderson 1972:27

⁹King 2003:471

¹⁰King 2003:355

between the political representatives and the Church authorities also grew to distance the Church from the rest of Māoridom. The Rātana Church gradually became a minority within the Māori minority.

On the cultural and theological sides, there are other issues that simultaneously connect and alienate the Rātana Church from the rest of Māoridom.

The theological part is the one which mostly divides, while the cultural side unites.

To this day, the Rātana Church carries the Bible in one hand, and the Treaty of Waitangi in the other. While the Church remains separated, they remain politically united with all Māori working towards a common goal, that of the continual recognition of the Treaty of Waitangi.

In the middle of all this, there is the Māori culture. This is the glue which keeps it all together. It all starts with the *marae*, the central meeting place of any Māori community, and on the *marae* the gathering, *hui*, is held. Further there is the welcoming at a large gathering, *powhiri*; the importance of song, *waiata*; and most importantly, the continual use of, and emphasis on the Māori language, *te reo Māori*. All these cultural practises firmly establish the Māori identity of the Mōrehu, as the adherents of the Rātana Church are called.¹¹

As few Māori today are fluent in the Māori language, discourse on Māori matters is usually conducted in English. However certain terms that are considered to be of special cultural or spiritual significance, are often used in their Māori original, to retain their importance. As the Māori language is thought of as having a special, spiritual power, especially in the Rātana Church, I will be using some of these Māori words in my thesis. As Māori culture is traditionally oral, all important knowledge should preferably be transmitted orally, from the old to the young. This is still considered important, also within the Rātana Church, as oral transmission ensures the proper context of the knowledge. Obviously, this thesis does not comply with the proper Māori standards for transferring knowledge. Further, it must be specified here,

¹¹ Māori words are in italics the first time they appear. Nouns remain in italics, while important theological concepts do not.

that Māori are regionally based, and many cultural traits vary from one area to the next, making the Māori a very heterogeneous group.

Thesis Outline

In this part of the introduction I have tried to give a brief outline of the aspects of the Rātana Church which I will be focusing on. I chose to examine the Rātana Church as a Māori-Christian Church, with particular emphasis on the relationship between the Rātana Church and the Māori context as I observed it in the declared bicultural nation of New Zealand in 2004. After describing my fieldwork and sources, I will account for some theoretical concepts which I have based my empirical analysis on.

The second chapter gives a description of the setting for my fieldwork, based in Auckland, and including field-trips down to Rātana Pā. Since the thesis focuses on the relationship between an ethnically based church and that church's relationship with the rest of that ethnic group, I have included some statistics regarding religion, ethnicity and tribe.

The third chapter gives the historical background, against which the Rātana Church is usually interpreted. One reason for including in the thesis both the mythological origins of the Māori people, as well as a historical record of the first encounter between Māori and Europeans, is the importance which New Zealand culture in general lends to history. This is true for the European *Pākehā* culture, intensely concerned with the two centuries during which New Zealand has become what it still is, a supposedly bicultural nation under the British Crown. Within Māori culture the same importance has traditionally been given to the knowledge and recital of genealogy, *whakapapa*. *Whakapapa* connects the living to the first creation, as well as connecting them all to the land.

Whakapapa is one of the most prized forms of knowledge, and great efforts are made to preserve it. All the people in a community are expected to know who their immediate ancestors are, and to pass this information on to their children so that they too may develop pride and a sense of belonging through understanding the roots of their heritage.¹²

¹² Barlow 1991:174

Thus the third chapter attempts to draw a time-line from the mythological origins of the Māori people, through the first contact between Māori and Europeans, and the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi 1840. This leads up to a description of the new religious movements that arose between the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 and the arrival of the Rātana Movement in 1918. These movements and their leaders in particular, are important as T. W. Rātana is seen as the heir to all of these, the latest in line and by far the greatest in terms of the number of followers. As my account includes social change as well as religious, the chapter is organised thematically, not chronologically.

The fourth chapter then gets to the main story, to quote the title of the only academic book published so far on the Church; “Rātana; the Man, the Church, the Movement”. So, first comes the story of Tahupotiki Wiremu Rātana, born in 1873, died in 1939. This part of the story starts with Rātanas grandfather, and his wife, who inherited the farm where her grandson received the Holy Spirit, the farm which today is the centre of the town that emerged from this, Rātana Pā. The inclusion of the grandparents is in accordance with the above mentioned importance of history and genealogy, a crucial part of the Māori cultural tradition within which I believe the Rātana Movement must be understood.

Chapter four then proceeds to describe the Rātana Church itself. The important thing about this Church is that it is a church as well as a movement, concerned with religion as well as politics, things spiritual as well as matters of the people. I first describe this duality, before giving a fuller account of the two parts. This part of the account of the Church is according to emic description (as I understand it), giving to the best of my ability the insider point of view. I have emphasised the covenants that were signed by the leaders as well as members of the Church in the formative years.

In the last chapter I try to give a description of how the church’s teachings are reflected in the actions and practices I observed during my fieldwork. This presentation is according to my own interpretations and experience, more than those of the adherents of the Church.

Here I focus on the religious roles of the three sons of Rātana who died during his ministry and who became saintly figures, each assigned to a certain aspect of the church. The two first are Arepa and Omeka, which are Māori transliterations of Alpha and Omega from the Book of Revelations. These two correspond respectively to the above mentioned duality of the spiritual and the physical. But then there is the third son, Hamuera, and this is when the analysis gets challenging, in my opinion. Hamuera was the youngest of the three, and the last to die. He was ‘responsible for closing the door to the past’, as it has been explained to me. This involves the cutting of the spiritual ties to traditional Māori spirituality, notably the authority of the spiritual leaders, the importance of genealogy, the spiritual entities residing in objects and parts of the land, and so on. This is a part that in my understanding remains unresolved, considered painful by some. Further, this is the aspect of Church tradition which the adherents will not easily admit to.

In my presentation Hamuera represents the Māori cultural tradition, i.e. those parts of the tradition which the Rātana Church rejected for theological reasons, effectively separating the Rātana Church from the rest of Māoridom. However, these traditional elements remain a part of ‘mainstream Māoridom’ and by relation also of the Mōrehu’s world view. So this cultural element is the part of the Church which continues to unite the Church with Māoridom. And so when I suggest that the door was never ‘fully closed’, internally this is a problem, but in relation to the Māori world outside the church, ironically this may be helpful, as it ensures the Mōrehu’s Māori identity.

As I will be outlining my theoretical approach and my central finding in the analytical introduction, the ‘end?’ is more of a summation, starting with the beginning, and taking it from there.

1.2 Methodology

Fieldwork

I stayed in Auckland, the largest city in New Zealand, for six months, from January to July of 2004. The first month of my stay, as well the last two weeks, I stayed with a prominent family of Māori anthropologists, who belong to the *Ngati Whatua* tribe, the *tangata whenua* (people of the land) in the Auckland area. These people are friends of my family, and they have several Mōrehu (members of the Rātana Church) in their *whanau* (extended family), providing me with valuable connections. The remainder of the time I shared a flat with another Norwegian student, who was also conducting fieldwork on Māori issues. During my stay I attended three *hui* (gatherings) at Rātana Pā, as well as several other traditional Māori (tribally based) *hui*. I also attended a *te reo*-Māori (language) class at the University of Auckland, and I regularly attended a Rātana Church at the *marae* (meeting place) of my ‘host family’.

During the New Zealand autumn of 2004 I was able to observe an intensifying political situation, as far as Māori issues are concerned. When the Labour government changed their stance on Māori property rights to the beaches, this brought about significant changes in the long standing Labour Party-Rātana Church alliance. At the easter-*hui* at Rātana Pā many people stood up and announced that now, apparently for the first time, their vote was entirely their own. In May 2004 the Māori Party was formed, under the leadership of a Labour dissident from a Mōrehu family. These political events were important as they shaped the discourse on Māori politics during the six months I stayed in New Zealand, and so they also shaped part of my own focus during fieldwork.

Around Easter 2004 I started the process of conducting nine un-structured interviews (loosely based on the questions included in the appendix) recording them on Mini-Disc. As I was on friendly terms with most of the Mōrehu I interviewed, these interviews were more like good conversations rather than formal interviews, on topics considered important by both of us. I attempted to interview people of different age, education and formal commitment to the Church. There is however a strong tribal tendency, as four of my informants are *Ngati Whatua* (see above), and four are *Nga*

Puhi, the neighbouring tribe to the north, a traditional Rātana stronghold. This is relevant as some of my questions go directly to tribal identity. With Mōrehu living within their tribal area, there tends to be a stronger tribal identity than the Rātana ideal of inter-tribal *kotahitanga* (unity) recommends. Thus these interviews are not statistically representative.

Throughout my stay, I conducted several conversations with people I met along the way, some of which included so many of the questions in my interview guide that they may be describes as informal interviews. These conversations, as well as my more practical observations, I recorded as accurately as possible in my field journals. The recorded interviews, as well as the conversations, have served to inform me about the Rātana Church, and issues of culture and identity amongst its adherents. Their main purpose has been for my own education. My interpretation of the written sources outlined below, has relied heavily on the insight which I gained during all these conversations. I am forever indebted to all the people who took of their time to help me understand their world views. Any misinterpretations or misunderstandings are entirely my own.

On a personal note, I gradually developed a loose definition of my own religious background, as this is considered to be relevant to many Māori, and Mōrehu in particular. The fact that I am not baptized was seen as an anomaly, and a few of the old ladies expressed heartfelt concerns towards the spiritual health of my family who, as I told them, do not attend any church. One old lady asked me, sadly; “So... they just go to the doctor, and... that’s it??” Clearly this was unheard of. I did my best, however, to assure them that I consider all faiths to be cultural expressions directed towards the same higher powers, and I explained that I certainly do not deny these powers, I just don’t feel particularly close to them (most of the time). Similar universalistic notions are common amongst the Mōrehu, although their level of personal commitment is quite different from mine. So, with this loose definition of personal spirituality, along with as much humility and patience as I could possibly muster, I believe that I was to some extent taken seriously both as a person and as a scholar from a foreign land.

Previous Research about the Rātana Church

A significant part of my field work consisted of gathering as much relevant literature as possible. Concerning the Rātana Church, there is one single published academic book, J. McLeod Hendersons *Rātana. The Man, the Church, the Political Movement*, first published in 1963. This book was based on research carried out with the approval of the *Tumuaki* (President of the Rātana Church) at the time. Henderson is an historian, and his book was written after extensive fieldwork at Rātana Pā. However, reading the book it is apparent that Henderson is also a Christian, and many times Henderson comes across as if he is speaking for the Church, in very apologetic terms. In my opinion it seems that in this book he does not attempt to keep within the standards of scientific objectivity.

By the time of the second edition of the book in 1972, there was a new *Tumuaki*, who did not approve of the book. Thus the second edition was published without the consent of the official head of the church. This is the edition I have used, as it was the only copy I could find. As chronology is a point, I will refer to the 1963 edition. Both editions have long been out of print, and are hard to come by. In my opinion there are at least two reasons why consent was denied the second time. Firstly, there is a general scepticism amongst Māori towards Pākeha (white) academics. They (we...) are seen to be using the *taonga*, traditional treasures of Māori, for writing books which make us rich, doing nothing for Māori. In my case, I have received oral permission from one person at the Church Office, to write my thesis, as long as I don't make money from it. The second reason why consent for the only published book about this movement was withdrawn for the second edition, is the strong conviction within the Church that all spiritual matters should be discussed orally in Māori. If any publication is to take place, this too should be in Māori. This is the case with the newsletter of the Church, the *Whetu Mārama*.

According to most Mōrehu I spoke with, the single most significant book of the Rātana Church is the Blue Book, the Rātana hymn book. When I first arrived in Rātana Pā I was told that the Blue Book is all I need to understand the Rātana faith. This is a very small book, containing the hymns of the church. The hymns are all in

Māori, based on the tunes of traditional Methodist hymns. The Māori tradition of singing, *waiata*, is an important part of any event.

However, in 1997, in the interest of educating the young ones, the back issues of the newsletter *Whetu Mārama* were analysed systematically in order to create a more comprehensive written presentation of the Church's teachings and traditions. The result was four booklets named *Nga Akoranga* (the teachings). Like the *Whetu Mārama*, these are not published as a book, but printed on a photocopier at the Church Office in Rātana Pā. Radically enough, these include English translations, and some parts are written only in English, while a few parts are only in Māori. Book number one includes a general description of the Church, the autobiography of the founder as well as the hymns of the Church (the ones in the Blue Book). Number two is a collection of quotations by the founding father, T. W. Rātana, and number three describes the material works of the Church, *Ture Tangata*. Book number four includes prophecies, those predicting the coming of Rātana as well as T. W. Rātana's own prophecies, as well as a listing of important days, an account of the construction of the Temple and the establishment of the Brass Bands. The Brass Bands are known as the *Reo*, meaning language. Originally there were four bands, one for each 'corner of the land', corresponding to the four Māori seats in Parliament. Today the number has risen to seven, still organised after region. These bands travel around to play the Rātana hymns to the Mōrehu, and they are highly treasured.

Returning to my account of the few published works on the Rātana Church, there is *Rātana, The Māori Miracle Man; The Story of His Life! The Record of His Miracles!* a small book of 30 pages, containing what seems like a magazine-article from 1921. Writing under the Māori pseudonym Rongoa Pai, a journalist named Hector Bolitho travelled around talking to people who had been healed by Rātana. He tried to get an interview with T. W. Rātana himself, but Rātana did not give interviews. So Bolitho had to settle for a glimpse of the man through the crowd. Bolitho is clearly fascinated by the accounts he has gathered, conveying a sense of living in a time of miracles.

Finally, there's the website *tehaahiratana.co.nz* which is published by a group of younger Rātana Church members, called *Uri Whakatupuranga* (New Generation). This is a highly controversial group, who amongst other things are responsible for the

so-called 'pink book', the 'unofficially' published translation of the Blue Book, the Rātana Hymn Book. Their main feat, however, is the formation of the Rātana Archives Team. This team has conducted an unprecedented amount of research into the history of the movement, and displayed it all in a small building at Rātana Pā, with the aid of government funding. By Māori standards these are young people, in their thirties through forties, and ideas like 'websites' and 'government funding' are comprehensible to them. The research conducted by the Archives Team form the basis of an MA-thesis submitted by team member Arahi Hagger, called *The Last of the Great Prophets, Sacred Icons of the Rātana Movement and Rātana Church*. Due to the controversy between the Church Committee and *Uri Whakatupuranga*, the thesis is restricted from circulation. This thesis however, is the basis for the website, published by the same person, who has given me his personal permission to use it as a source for my own thesis. Unfortunately this web site was taken down for reconstruction during the time I was writing the historical chapter about the Rātana Church, so I have not used the web-site as much as I would have liked to.

On August 6th 2006, the long awaited book *Rātana Revisited* was launched at Waipapa Marae, at the University of Auckland. Written by journalist Keith Newman, this is the second published work ever on the Rātana Church. I have not yet read it, and in the interest of finishing my thesis, this brand new publication is not used as a source here.

Secondary Sources

I would here like to introduce three of the sources that I rely on. For the historical account, I have chosen Michael King's *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, published in 2003. Michael King was known for several books about significant Māori personalities, making Māori history available to non-Māori. He also wrote the book entitled *Pākeha*, where he described and defined the tribal identity of the white New Zealanders, the Pākeha. In March 2004, at the beginning of my fieldwork, Michael King was finally recovering from a long struggle against cancer, when he and his wife were killed in a car-accident. With Māori politics intensifying at the time, his death was considered a huge loss. He was the scholar who managed to bridge the two worlds that co-exist in New Zealand, and his death was mourned by the whole nation.

For the religious history of Christianity among Māori, I have relied on the authority on the field, Bronwyn Elsemore. Her book *Mana from Heaven, A Century of Māori Prophets in New Zealand* from 1989 outlines the history of Māori-Christian spirituality from 1830, up to the Rātana Church. Then there is Lindsay Cox' *Kotahitanga, The Search for Māori Political Unity*, from 1993. This book accounts for the struggle to build a pan-Māori political alliance, to allow Māori to work together in spite of tribalism. In the foreword the late Sir Kawharu describes the book as; "a sensitive struggle of a striving for unity among the Māori people confronted with challenges to their identity".¹³ In my account of the Treaty of Waitangi, I have relied on the English translation of the original Māori text, as translated by the late Sir Kawharu, published in *Waitangi, Māori and Pākehā perspectives of the Treaty of Waitangi* from 1989, edited by Kawharu.

Sir Ian Hugh Kawharu was Professor Emeritus of social anthropology at the University of Auckland, as well as *Rangatira*, paramount chief and elder of the *Ngati Whatua o Orakei* sub-tribe of Auckland. He was also a friend of my family, and I cannot begin to describe how much his assistance and guidance helped me during my fieldwork. He passed away September 19th 2006, and his death was a tremendous loss to many, myself included. My feelings are echoed by the words of a woman who will be further described below (1.4):

Māori Party co-leader Tariana Turia said "it was a humbling experience to sit with him, and to benefit from the wisdom and knowledge of someone as accomplished as he was in all worlds".¹⁴

¹³ Kawharu in Cox 1993:vii

¹⁴ New Zealand herald article "Ngati Whatua leader was a man of wisdom and knowledge" September 20, 2006 by James Ihaka. retrieved 05.11.06
<http://www.nzherald.co.nz/search/story.cfm?storyid=0007CD59-AC45-150F-923683027AF1010F>

1.3 Analytical introduction

Terminology: Perspectives on Culture

I would now like to make a few clarifications regarding terminology. The purpose of my thesis is to understand the Rātana religion as it is understood by its adherents using the tools of the social sciences.¹⁵ After returning from the field, I wanted strongly to write my story in way that ‘everyone’ would accept, without offending anyone. This is, however, impossible. In his “Thesis on Method”, Bruce Lincoln describes the problem:

History of religions is thus a discourse that resists and reverses the orientation of that discourse with which it concerns itself. To practice history of religions in a fashion consistent with the discipline’s claim of title is to insist on discussing the temporal, contextual, situated, interested, human, and material dimensions of those discourses, practices, and institutions that characteristically represent themselves as eternal, transcendent, spiritual and divine.¹⁶

In struggling with the insider/outsider problem, I decided to try to do first the one, and then the other. This implies that chapter four is written with an emic terminology, using terms as close as possible to those of its adherents, the Mōrehu, explaining the Church organization, function and teachings as well as the miracles which form its basis. Chapter five takes a different perspective, viewing the Rātana Church from an etic point of view. Some formulations in this chapter may be interpreted as disrespectful, and may even be regarded by some adherents as heretical. However, when I announce that I will be taking an outsider position, I will continue to use insider-terminology. I have selected four concepts, literally ‘three sons and a house’, and I will be examining these concepts in order to understand some of the cultural mechanisms which shape the Rātana world view.

Thus the terms 'culture', 'tradition' and 'religion' have different meanings in these two chapters. In a simplified way, the two chapters may be seen as presenting respectively an essentialist and a constructivist point of view. In other words, chapter four sees culture as something which a particular people *has*, tradition as something constant, and religion as divinely inspired. Chapter five on the other hand, sees culture as

¹⁵ This problem is discussed in McCutcheon (1999).

¹⁶ Lincoln in McCutcheon 1999:359

something that people *do* and the significance that people attach to these actions, tradition as a specific selection of such cultural practices, and religion is a way of coping with difficult circumstances. I would here like to note that my personal opinion lies in the combination of these two apparently opposing perspectives, and that any contradictions between the two are more or less intentional in the sense that I cannot see any good reasons for trying to harmonize differences where they exist.

A Descriptive Empirical Analysis

As there is little previous research done on the Rātana Church, this thesis is in large part descriptive. The only academic publication on the Church is J. M. Henderson's *Rātana. The Man, the Church, the Political Movement*, first published in 1963, is as mentioned very close to that of the adherents of the Church, at times taking an insider view. I want to give a wider account using a variety of sources. Because of this, I have chosen to give much attention to the context of the Rātana Church. I believe that it can be understood in light of the historical as well as anthropological context that it was born from. This is in part because in my experience the Māori themselves, both within the Church and outside of it, are very concerned with relations between people, groups, churches etc. as well as historical context. In my analysis I try to include the multitude of perspectives in order to present a fuller picture of the Church. After the introductory chapters accounting for the anthropological and historical background, I proceed in chapter 4 to describe Rātana the man and the church, in a way which is in line with the emic description. Finally, I end with a description based on how I have with time come to understand the internal logic and the world view of the Rātana Church and the wider movement.

My primary source is my own understanding and interpretation of what I heard and observed during my six months in New Zealand from January to July 2004. I draw a line at the end of 2004, in order to make my own material manageable. I draw upon all the sources presented above (1.2), written as well as oral, primary as well as secondary literature in order to conduct my own analysis of the cultural mechanisms of the Rātana Church. This is an empirical case study, and I have not made any comparisons. While I do not claim this case to be unique, I would for the purpose of this thesis like to describe it as such.

Cultural Discourse in New Zealand

In New Zealand the discourse about Māori culture is what I consider to be intensely essentialist. This is especially true since the 70ies, and the so-called Māori Renaissance. This may be seen as a counter reaction to the critical attitude to Māori culture in New Zealand's official discourse prior to the 70ies when Māori culture was considered an exotic relic from the past, and the ethnic group as a whole was associated with socio-economic problems. The Māori Renaissance involved a cultural awakening and an appreciation of the Māori heritage. In New Zealand everyday discourse today, the terms 'ethnic' and 'culture' seem to be synonymous with 'Māori'. I would here like to suggest some other interpretations of the terms.

As mentioned, in this thesis I consider culture to be 'what people do' more than, but not directly opposed to 'what people have'.¹⁷ In light of the cultural discourse I have observed in New Zealand, I consider this distinction between an essentialist and a constructivist perspective to be important. In his book *The Multicultural Riddle*, anthropologist Gerd Bauman describes the relationship between view of culture; as what may appear to be "a choice between a false but popular theory of culture and a scientifically productive but unpopular one."¹⁸ However, he points out that the essentialist view must be taken seriously, in that it partly shapes the realities we are trying to understand. He continues to describe the way in which the two positions are applied; how 'ordinary' people negotiate between the two. He describes an example, where a leader is trying to encourage an historical awakening among his or her followers, by making claims about how the group has 'always been'.

Yet employing this essentialist rhetoric is in fact a creative act. The leader propagates a unity that, empirically, has never been there in the past. The rhetoric is essentialist, yet the activity is processual. Culture is said, by such a leader, to be rooted in an unchangeable past, yet the leader can only hope to create it *because* he or she knows culture to be malleable and pliable, open to change and new consciousness.¹⁹

This ability to navigate between cultural perspectives Bauman calls double discursive competence. He argues that all people can be observed to command this double

¹⁷See the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus which includes both habits and ideas. For a general overview of the concept, see Kuper (1999) and Eagleton (2000).

¹⁸ Bauman 1999:90

¹⁹ Bauman 1999:91

discursive competence, and this competence is developed as people engage in multicultural practice.

Culture is thus not the tied and tagged baggage that belongs with one national, ethnic, or religious group, nor is it some spur-of-the-moment improvisation without roots or rules. Culture is two things at once, that is, a dual discursive construction. It is the conservative “re”-construction of a reified essence at one moment, and the pathfinding new construction of a processual agency at the next moment. It vacillates between the two poles...²⁰

So far on culture. Ethnicity as defined by Fredrik Barth and formulated by Hylland-Eriksen is not the character or quality of an ethnic group, but rather; “ethnicity is essentially an aspect of a relationship, not a property of a group” and it is “constituted through social contact”.²¹ “The critical focus of investigation from this point of view becomes the *boundary* that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses.”²² These are social boundaries, and the idea of these boundaries creates the difference between ‘us and them’, forming an understanding of contrast.

On this note, it is my understanding that on a sub-ethnic level, within an ethnic group, the tribe functions in a similar way as Barth has described ethnicity. In traditional Māori culture, when people from one tribe come to visit another, the encounter is highly ritualised. The visitors have to walk on to the *marae* (meeting place) in a certain way, while being welcomed by the hosts. Once on the marae, the *manuhiri* (visitors) sit on one side of the space, the *tangata whenua* (hosts) on the other. This ritual, called the *powhiri*, is all about the relationship between the two groups, and through the ritual the boundary between the two groups is suspended for the duration of the visit.

When the Mōrehu tell me the Rātana Church is not a Māori Church, it is because their whole world is Māori. Within Māoridom, the boundary between the Rātana Church and other Māori is more apparent than the boundary between Māoridom and the rest of New Zealand. When observed by a Norwegian, the Rātana Church seems distinctly Māori.

²⁰ Bauman 1999:95

²¹ Eriksen 1993:12 and 18

²² Barth 1969:15

Throughout my thesis I will contrast the Rātana Church with ‘traditional Māori spirituality’, and ‘traditional Māori culture’. In using the term ‘traditional’, I do not mean to imply that these cultural elements have remained unchanged since the beginning of time. I do assume some cultural continuity, which connects contemporary practices to those of the past.²³ But most importantly, I wish to imply an *understanding of continuity*, where ‘traditional’ Māori concepts connect the living with the past; keeping Māori practices in their daily life thereby maintaining the link with their ancestors, who performed these same actions throughout history. This strong idea of continuity from the past to the present is in itself typical of Māori culture.

In the following I will describe the Māori culture as a part of the Rātana Church, in the sense that the Church includes certain Māori features; in the ethnic background of the founder and the church members, but also in terms of Māori cultural practices, and most importantly in the Māori identity of the Mōrehu. It is not my ambition to define Māori culture but to analyse the Rātana Church in its context. The Rātana Church enabled its adherents to deal with the strong European majority presence in New Zealand in the 1920ies; the question is whether it does so today. Since the Church did not take active part in the Māori Renaissance, it lost touch with the nationalist rhetoric which has formed the idea of the nation of Māoridom. However, some of the young Mōrehu I spoke to manage to bring it all together.

Syncretism?

Although some would reject the term, it is my opinion that the Rātana Church *is* a Māori-Christian church. The presence of the hyphen easily invokes the term ‘syncretism’. Syncretism as defined by Stewart and Shaw is when two religions combine to form a new one.²⁴ Similarly, creolisation is when two languages combine, and becomes the mother tongue to one or more people. As defined by Thomas Hylland-Eriksen, creolisation can also be used to describe the same process in the cultural field.²⁵ It is my claim, that the Rātana Church can be described as a form of

²³ This is the most widespread use of the concept of tradition (see Eriksen 1999).

²⁴ Stewart and Shaw 1994

²⁵ Eriksen 1994

creolised syncretism, i.e. a creolised Māori culture and a syncretistic form of Christianity.

The terms syncretism and creolisation have been criticised for having a derogatory meaning when applied to such wide concepts as religion and culture. Furthermore, when using terms that focus on processes of cultural mixing, there is the risk of implying that some religions and cultures are somehow more whole, and more authentic than others.

'Syncretism' is a contentious term, often taken to imply 'inauthenticity' or 'contamination', the infiltration of a supposedly 'pure' tradition by symbols and meanings seen as belonging to other, incompatible traditions. Diverse local versions of notionally standard 'world religion' such as Christianity or Islam are often pointed to as prime examples of syncretism in this critical sense.²⁶

To some extent, syncretism in a descriptive neutral sense, might suggest that there may exist a religion or a culture 'out there' which did not come about through inter-cultural communication and adaptation. Nevertheless, I wish to state that the Rātana Church is the result, the love-child if you like, of the combination of imported Christianity, Māori culture and stressful times. I believe this can be said for most religions but will not be stressing this point in my thesis.

The concepts of syncretism and creolisation are important for my thesis because it deals with an emic discourse which *does* include claims of purity and authenticity. In line with this discourse, I want to stress that the Rātana Church for a long time has presented itself as both a pure and authentic tradition. Not even a hundred years old, quite young for a religion, it has seen its adherents through some times of drastic cultural and political change. In the midst of dramatic changes, the Church has appeared as a constant element of continuity in a changing world.

It is my understanding that the Rātana Church entails innovative Christianity within a Māori cultural space. It is religion, politics and culture coming together. In other words, a form of collectivism based on Christianity, with political roots, ethnic membership and cultural practice.

²⁶ Stewart and Shaw 1994

Chapter Two - Setting

2.1 How many of which live where?

Religious Landscape in Numbers²⁷

In 2001 the Māori people made up 15% of the NZ population of three and a half million, and 12% of Auckland's population of a little more than 1 million people.

The largest denomination in New Zealand is the Church of England, which holds 17% of the total NZ population, and 13% of Auckland Māori. The Catholic Church comes in second, with 14% of the total population, and 15% of Auckland Māori. The total number of Christian denominations account for 59% of the total population, and 50% of the Auckland Māori population.

The 2001 census shows Rātana numbering 48 972 on a national level, 12 594 of these in Auckland. This puts them at 1.2% of the NZ population, 1.4% of Auckland's population. Of the Māori population, Rātana holds 9% of the national population and 10% in Auckland. The total number of Māori Christians is at 12% of national Māori population and 11% in Auckland, making Rātana by far the largest Māori Christian church. Second place is Ringatū, with 2.7% of the national Māori population, most of these in the Bay of Plenty religion.

Tribes of Auckland in Numbers

The local tribe, the *tangata whenua* of the Auckland area is Ngati Whatua. This puts them in a special position, as the host tribe of New Zealand's largest city, which is home to 24% of all New Zealand's Māori population. However Ngati Whatua is not a large tribe, and in Auckland they account for only 4% of the Māori population, 2% nationally. The largest tribe in New Zealand is Nga Puhī, the *tangata whenua* (local

²⁷ All statistics are from www.stats.govt.nz Accessed on sept 20th 2005
<http://www.stats.govt.nz/census/2001-Māori/default.htm>
<http://www.stats.govt.nz/census/2001-iwi/default>
Links are unfortunately no longer functional. Percentage calculations are my own.

tribe) of Northland (the area north of Auckland), which accounts for 17% of the total Māori population. In Auckland the Nga Puhi make up 28% of the Māori population.

While Nga Puhi and Ngati Whatua account for respectively 17% and 2% of the total Māori population, their relationship is slightly different when it comes to membership in the Rātana faith. Among Rātana adherents there are 23% Nga Puhi and 6% Ngati Whatua. This makes the area from Auckland and northwards a Rātana stronghold.²⁸



²⁸ This is reflected among my main informants, as four are Nga Puhi, three are Ngati Whatua, one is Pākeha and the final is “Iwi Mōrehu”.

²⁹ Snapshot from Roturua, showing traditional carving alongside a modern steel cross. My photo

2.2 Māori in Auckland



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I conducted my fieldwork from January to July of 2004 in Auckland, New Zealand. Throughout my fieldwork I attended several *hui* (gatherings) at Rātana Pā as well as on other *marae* on the North Island, and these were probably my most intense field experiences. But as most of my fieldwork was conducted in Auckland, I wish to start my presentation with a brief account of the religious and tribal landscape of *Tamakai Makaurau*, which is the Māori name for Auckland.

Auckland is the largest city in New Zealand, with a population of more than one million, out of a total population of four million in 2004. Though it is not the capital of the country, in many ways it is the cultural centre, and certainly the centre of urban culture. While the local *iwi* (tribe) of the area is Ngati Whatua, Auckland is also home to a number of Māori from other areas. Since after WWII they have migrated to the city for work, and many of them settle in South Auckland.

Te Ao Māori vs the Pākeha World

The Māori people live in a bi-cultural world; Māori at home and Pākeha in what they call ‘mainstream’ society. This is especially so in the big cities, where family is more peripheral, and the Pākeha element is stronger. Measurable success in today’s society is to be found exclusively in the Pākeha sphere. I have overheard conversations

³⁰ Waipapa marae at the University of Auckland, the house where I attended my language class <http://www.arts.auckland.ac.nz/dePartments/index.cfm?P=5617>

among young Māori, complaining that you can't escape Pākeha reality. This is a dilemma for many Māori, especially for so called 'nationalist activists' in the cities. According to them, the problem is that the most effective way of helping your people is through Pākeha education. In this way you can increase the financial and political status of your tribe, which in turn makes greater recourses available for the people. So, in a practical sense, this would be the way to go. However, in a cultural sense, as well as a spiritual one, some see Pākeha education as a problem, as it might lead to the spread of Pākeha values, specifically the emphasis on money and power, and the subsequent decline in Māori values.

Denomination vs Tribe

In Auckland, as for Māori all over New Zealand, the primary category of identity is tribe. In meeting other Māori, tribe and place of origin will often be the first subject that comes up. In my Māori language class at Auckland University, we learned to say where we're from before learning to say our names.

In meeting a Pākeha, tribe is a category which does not really carry any significance. Places are meaningful, but tribes are not. One of my informants told me that among the Pākeha denomination is a relevant category.³¹ Due to colonization, New Zealand is a patchwork of denominations, compared to Europe. Amongst Māori, if the two parents are from different denominations, sometimes half of the children will be baptized into one church, the other half in the other.

When attending a *hui* at Maketu I joined a guided tour of the town, led by the noted historian Don Stafford. He took us around to see the small wooden churches. At one, we all stopped and Mr Stafford told us about the Christianisation of the area. The Methodist missionaries had suddenly received competition from the Catholics, and they saw the potential for conflict, so they called a town meeting at the church. They then divided the assembled congregation in two, straight down the middle. They declared one half Methodist, the other half Catholic. In doing so, they divided many

³¹ After a while, I was not considered to be Pākeha ... Partly because I'm a foreigner, but mostly because I was there studying Māori issues.

families, a division which in many cases remains today. It is my impression that this is a division that is not seen as divisive.

So, one may say that amongst most Māori, tribe and denomination are two complementary categories of identity. One is cultural with spiritual implications, the other religious, containing cultural implications for some. Denomination is a Pākehā category, tribe is Māori. For most Māori, the co-existence of these complementary categories is unproblematic. Spiritually, it seems that the Christian God and His rituals are not seen as contradictory to respecting the powers of the traditional spiritual forces, notably the ancestors (*tupuna*) and the traditional spiritual leader, the Tohunga.

An Inclusive Approach

In the religious sphere, religion and tribe are seen as two complementary categories, made relevant in different contexts. If they do meet, it's usually seen as unproblematic. Attending church is one thing, and attending a Māori cultural function is something else. At a Māori function, such as a large *hui* or a intimate family dinner, *karakia* (prayer, incantation) will always be said at the beginning, to set the stage, to make sure that the higher powers are in attendance. Depending on the situation, the *karakia* can be either traditional or Christian, and many see the two as interchangeable.

At the end of the Maketu *hui* mentioned above, a Sunday service was scheduled. When the Sunday arrived, people would ask what denomination would hold the service. When it turned out that the attending minister was Catholic, the old ladies would joke about how it really didn't matter to them, and any denomination would do fine.

Two Exclusive Approaches

Māori obtain their religious identity by birth, belonging to a Christian denomination through baptism, family history and the wishes of one's parents. But the personal importance of religion varies greatly. It seems that for some, Christianity is an important factor, to the extent that it becomes both a cultural as well as a spiritual

identity. In its extreme form, religious identity becomes so important that it rules out any acceptance of traditional spiritual elements.

Others, the so-called ‘activists’, reject Christianity as the white mans religion, taking their Māori identity extremely seriously. These people often reject education too, viewing it as too Pākeha. Among young city ‘kids’, a revivalist tradition which started in the 70ies, a sort of nationalism is widespread. This is nationalism combined with rebellion and a sense of urban frustration. There is also an element of bitterness here, inherited from previous generations who were denied the right not only to learn their language in school, but even to speak it. Their critical attitude towards what is experienced as colonial oppression makes them seek out what they consider to be the true Māori religion, through the process of retraditionalisation³². Some elders have a problem with this, as the traditional Māori religion often lacks a real continuity with the past. Many elders would prefer these kids to ‘come home and learn at the feet of their elders’³³, instead of protesting on their behalf, so-to-speak.



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³² As described by Flood 1999

³³ Not so much a quote, more of a saying really...

³⁴ Whare Whakaue, at the marae at Maketu, where I attended the hui mentioned above, my photo

2.3 Rātana in Auckland

Ngati Whatua Rātana in Auckland; a Double Identity

Most of the Rātana adherents, Mōrehu, I met in Auckland are Ngati Whatua. Many of these live in traditionally tribal areas, such as Okahu Bay where I attended Sunday Church regularly for three months. This church is right next to the *marae*, so church life and *marae* life are both parts of communal life in this traditionally tribal area. The congregation of this church is humble, usually five to ten people, sometimes up to twenty, most of them from the area. The Apotoro,³⁵ minister of the Church I attended also functions as a *kaumatua*³⁶ (elder) at the *marae*.

One woman I interviewed, a Ngati Whatua who grew up and still lives at Okahu, told me that for her it's like she has two hats, one tribal and one Mōrehu.³⁷ This woman's father was an Apotoro, a Rātana minister, and so she was raised not to get emotionally involved in tribal politics. But because of an accident, which affected the entire extended family, she gradually became involved in these matters anyway. She told me that in tribal matters she has a tendency to become *hoha*, really angry and hot headed, and she doesn't like that part of herself. She much prefers her Mōrehu temper, she said, as this is gentler. Among other things, the Blue Prayer Book³⁸, helps; when she gets angry, for instance because of the tribal politics, she can take out the Blue Prayer Book, and although she can only understand a few words (having limited knowledge of the language), she can feel a spiritual peace by reciting the sacred hymns.

Rātana in South Auckland

South-Auckland is often thought of as a ghetto, a huge and growing low-income area. This is home to a number of Māori from all different tribes, as well as a lot of immigrants from the Pacific Islands and East-Asia. While there has been some racial

³⁵ Words of special importance to the Rātana Church, such as Apotoro and the Blue Book, are capitalised according to precedence.

³⁶ Traditional institution, an elder who is active at the *marae*, tribal meeting ground, and centre of the community.

³⁷ According to my notes from a lecture by Otto Krogseth, sociologist Peter Berger has at some point said that he has two hats; one sociologist and one protestant.

³⁸ The Rātana Hymns, traditional Methodist tunes with Māori lyrics. The one book all Mōrehu are supposed to read.

prejudice from Māori towards the Pacific Islanders, they are still Polynesians, and as a people they are considered to be sort of distant cousins to the Māori. The Asians are a different story, and at times it seemed that dislike for them is one of the few things that unite Māori and Pākeha (the White people of European descent).

The concentration of low-income households makes the South-Auckland area a breeding ground for gang culture, drugs and violence. With the combination of gang culture, foreigners, Pākeha and *manuhiri* (visitor) tribes, South-Auckland is a patchwork of different collective identities. The only Rātana Church I attended except for the one in Okahu Bay was in Tamaki, South-Auckland. This was a congregation of about 50 people, gathered in a local community hall. It is my impression that traditional tribalism is not as strong here, as most people living there are not from the local tribe. This makes the non-tribalism of the Rātana Church more relevant, and may explain its relative success in this part of the city.

2.4 Rātana at the Pā; Te Iwi Mōrehu³⁹

The place; Rātana Pā

Pā is the Māori word for village. In a tribal setting, the word refers to the area of the traditional village, dating back to before colonization. In some places this area is still inhabited, other places it is long deserted, but in any case it is considered *wahi tapu*, a sacred space.⁴⁰

In 1918, when Rātana founder Tahupotiki Wiremu Rātana received the Holy Spirit, Rātana Pā did not exist; there was just the farm his grandfather established, called Orakei-nui, and a little train-stop near by called Rātana, named after his grandfather who initiated it. The Pā emerged as people came for the healing and blessing going on. This means that their holy place, Rātana Pā, was never a tribal place; this is the place where Te Iwi Mōrehu can really be an *iwi* (tribe), a non-tribal tribe in their own way.

It's a small town, counting 109 homes,⁴¹ a school and two small shops. The wind blows strong here, and the un-insulated houses get really cold in the winter. The Manuao (the *whare nui*⁴²) and the Temepara (the temple) are two huge buildings, striking giants dominating the little town. These two buildings are the physical centres of the Rātana world, one for the people and one for the spirit, according to the division of *Ture Tangata* and *Ture Wairua*; Things of the people, and things of the spirit, corresponding to the two parts of the ministry of T. W. Rātana, represented by respectively the Treaty of Waitangi and the Bible. This duality will be extensively described below.

The old farm house where T. W. Rātana lived, Orakei-nui, is still there, right next to the Manuao, in front of the *marae*, still inhabited by the Rātana family. This family

³⁹ Literally the surviving tribe, the name of the non-tribal tribe of Rātana...

⁴⁰ I'm not sure Pā are tapu in a theological sense, but together with urupa (trad. cemeteries) they have come to be defined as wahi tapu in negotiations with the government, to ensure the protection of these areas.

⁴¹ New Zealand Herald article, 'Politics put aside for church celebration' 26.01.06, by Jon Stokes <http://www.nzherald.co.nz/search/story.cfm?storyid=000ED83C-2785-13D7-9B8D83027AF10210> retrieved 30.10.06

⁴² Literally the big house, aka *whare tupuna*, the ancestor house. This is the community house on the *marae*, the gathering place of any Māori community.

still holds the power of the Church, all Tumuaki (President) since T. W. Rātana have been his siblings and children, and the present Tumuaki is the first of his grandchildren to hold this position.



The importance; The Little Centre of the Universe

Spiritually, this is the heart, the centre of the Mōrehu universe. This is where, on the porch of Orakei-nui, T. W. Rātana received his vision. And this is where the angels dance in the field behind the Temepara. I am supposed to have seen the angels, which have the form of lights in the field. Being raised to be a sceptic myself, all I can say is that I have seen un-explainable lights-in-a-field. Four times I have gone to see them, and they have been there each time. They were white and red, far away, and moved a little bit, but not much. I have been told that some are also blue and purple, and that sometimes they move around quite a bit, and come really close.

During *hui* time (traditional gathering) the Pā becomes the centre in a practical sense. On these occasions, the Rātana members, the Mōrehu, come together from all the different tribes. Mōrehu living all over the country, living as *tangata whenua* or *manuhiri*, in tribal areas and mixed ones, are on these occasions one single people, the Mōrehu of the Rātana Church. I think this adds to the festive spirit of *hui* at Rātana Pā. The January 25th *hui*, which celebrates the birthday of T. W. Rātana, is the

⁴³ Front view of the Temple at Rātana Pā, the graves of T. W. Rātana and his wife in the middle, in front of the entrance. My photo

highlight of the Mōrehu social calendar, usually drawing a crowd of 40 000 people, transforming the little town into a busy festival. Most Mōrehu I spoke with had fond childhood memories of going off to this *hui*, and meeting up with friends and relatives. This *hui* combines two daily church sessions, with the grand talks of various tribal leaders and politicians, as well as sports tournaments. In the evenings there are concerts, movies and hamburgers. The children roam freely, and are (mostly) watched by some relative.

Now, I've never been to a Rātana Pā outside of *hui* time, but I have the impression its peaceful and quiet. Most people from here report that they are either related, or they feel like they are. I have seen the place during very small *hui*, and it seems like a very humble little town. But they do get angry down at Rātana too, all *hoha*. Like Māori everywhere else, they disagree and insult their adversaries to their face, in the traditional style of Māori oratory. But they always kiss and make up afterwards, and I have the impression that they're slightly better at getting over their differences here, compared to tribal Māori. I guess it's hard to describe, but it really is a pretty special place, with a unique feeling to it. I probably felt more welcome there than anywhere else in New Zealand, although it is also the place where I was the most obviously out of place, often the only White person around.



⁴⁴ Rātana Road, behind the Temple at Rātana Pā
This is the field where the angels dance at night (see text above) My photo

Chapter Three - History

3.1 A Brief History of Aotearoa New Zealand

Arrival, Contact and Settlement

Mythology tells us that the Māori arrived in Aotearoa⁴⁵ New Zealand from the mythical island of Hawaiki a long long time ago, arriving in seven *waka*, traditional canoes. Archaeological research places their arrival from East Polynesia at approximately 1200 years ago⁴⁶.

In 1642, Dutch East India Company Commander Abel Janszoon Tasman and the crew of the *Heemskerck* sailed past New Zealand, without setting foot on land. The first recorded encounter between Māori and Europeans took place, when a group of Māori warriors came to greet them in their canoes. Lives were lost, and Tasman was not amused, so he continued on his way to Australia.

More than a century later, in 1769 British Royal Navy Lieutenant James Cook of the *Endeavour*⁴⁷ lead the first party of Europeans to actually set foot in New Zealand. Cook seemed to quite like it there, and he stayed a while. By the 1820ies the Europeans established the first trade stations on New Zealand shore⁴⁸

The Treaty of Waitangi

The Treaty of Waitangi marks the formation of New Zealand as it is today, as a country under the Queen of England, consisting of the People of European decent and the indigenous Māori people, not infrequently in conflict with each other. To this day, this idea of bi-culturalism is central to the idea of New Zealand, both socially and politically. It is my impression that the present situation is more multi-cultural than it is bi-cultural, and New Zealand would benefit from recognizing this.

⁴⁵ Māori name for New Zealand.

⁴⁶ Rice 1992

⁴⁷ The Heemskerck and the Endeavor are depicted on the front of the Manuao (meeting house at Rātana Pā) along with a selection of waka, showing a desire for national unity.

⁴⁸ King 2003

In 1840 the Treaty of Waitangi was signed by Governor Lt. Hobson, representing the British Crown, and nearly 500 Māori tribal chiefs. By this act, the chiefs formally signed over leadership and authority to Queen Victoria, and in return she promised the Māori special protection of all their treasures, as they were now British subjects. The Treaty marks the foundation of New Zealand as a sovereign nation under the British Crown, and the principles of this Treaty are still being extensively discussed. Over the years this continuous ‘discussion’ has given rise to violent disputes between Māori and the authorities.

I can not here give a complete presentation of the disagreements over the Treaty, but I will point to a few central issues. A significantly controversial aspect of the Treaty is the difference between the English version signed by Lt. Hobson, and the cultural significance of the Māori text signed by the chiefs. The late Professor Sir Hugh Kawharu, professor of anthropology and paramount chief of Ngati Whatua o Orakei, has translated the Māori text to English, and his analysis of the translation reveals significant differences between the two versions. For instance, in the first article of the Treaty, the chiefs promise to “give absolutely to the Queen of England for ever the complete government over their land”⁴⁹. The word for government used here is *kawanatanga*, which is a transliteration from the English *governor*⁵⁰. According to Kawharu, the chiefs had no idea of what they were agreeing to:

“There could be no possibility of the Māori signatories having any understanding of government in the sense of "sovereignty" i.e. any understanding on the basis of experience or cultural precedent.”

In fact, Māori did not have any concept of private ownership of land, nor did they have a concept of land being a property, an object which could pass from one owner to another. Tribal people and tribal land were to them indistinguishable entities, as was the role of the chief. He was not a feudal lord, but rather a representative of collective community. In a speech on this topic given at Orakei *marae*, I heard the chief himself, professor Kawharu, elaborate on the welcoming of the Europeans by his own ancestors. The Europeans had given gifts, and Kawharu’s ancestors had given the Europeans an area of their land, for them to settle down. His point was that this

⁴⁹ All quotes are from Kawharu 1989:319-321

⁵⁰ *Kawana* means governor, and the suffix *-tanga* turns a word into sort of an -ism...

never implied that the Europeans *owned* that land; this was a foreign concept to the chiefs of the time.

Another problematic point revealed by Professor Kawharu's translation, concerns the use of the word *taonga*, which means treasure. In the English text, the Crown promises the Māori "the full exclusive and undisturbed possession of their Lands and Estates Forests Fisheries and other properties". In the Māori version of the text, the Māori are promised "the unqualified exercise of their chieftainship over their lands, villages and all their treasures". As mentioned above, the word used here for treasure is *taonga*, which according to Kawharu has both material and spiritual dimensions:

“... "taonga" refers to all dimensions of a tribal group's estate, material and non-material heirlooms and wahi tapu (sacred places), ancestral lore and whakapapa (genealogies), etc.”

Some people feel very strongly that possession of land and property is quite different from chieftainship over land and treasures. Due to the discrepancies between the English and the Māori versions of the text, the Treaty of Waitangi left much room for misunderstanding and conflict between the government and the Māori people.

Post-Treaty; the Effects of Colonization

From a Māori point of view, the men representing the Crown did not honour the Treaty. During the rest of the 19th century and well into the next one, the majority of Māori tribal land is confiscated, sometimes as punishment for disloyalty to the Crown, other times for the so-called general benefit of the people of New Zealand. The Māori population dropped rapidly, as the Māori people were subjected to wars, poverty and diseases, a usual side-effect of the colonization. In New Zealand the indigenous population was strongly affected by European diseases that their immune systems were not equipped for. The Spanish flu epidemic in 1918-19 hit the Māori people especially hard.

During the 20th century the European view was gradually turning away from the blatant racism which was central during the 19th century. The attitude now was that of the new humanism, which recognised the humanity of the non-white people, and thus emphasised their education and civilisation. The prevailing attitude was that if they

were taught European ways, they could become almost like Europeans, and thus become productive members of society. The Māori culture was considered a relic from the past, and it was not expected to survive. In one of the first historical publications about the nation of New Zealand, Hon. William Pember Reeves writes, in 1924, about the Māori in general:

“They take life easily and would be all the better for a share of the white man’s ambitions. However, they live comfortably enough, and the gradual infusion of European blood into the race may increase its energies as time goes on. ... Rātana has gained fame among Whites as well as Browns as a faith healer.” (1924:361)

In 1921 Hector Bolitho⁵¹, (under the Māori pseudonym Rongoa Pai), wrote in praise of Rātana:

“He is lifting the Māori people to higher living and higher thinking. Would that his kind could be born in Fiji or Samoa and bring the glory of sane Christian ideals and living before the indolent natives.”⁵²

Post WWII; the Country Changes, and the Counter Culture Grows

During World War II, there was a separate ‘Māori battalion’. It appears no-one finds it strange that Māori were in a separate battalion, and today this is a source of pride to those who had relatives in the battalion, as well as to the veterans themselves. After the war, Māori increasingly moved to the cities to find work, as more and more land was being confiscated by the government. As Māori in the cities got into contact with Māori from other tribes, this brought on a certain weakening in the sense of tribal identity, but it also led to an increase in the pan-Māori feelings of unity.

An important national treasure to all New Zealanders is the national rugby team named the All-Blacks, which includes a majority of Māori and Pacific Island players. In 1960 an all-white version of the All-Blacks (!) travelled to South-Africa to play against the Springboks. This caused fierce protest, and intensified the so-called ‘race relations’ in New Zealand. In 1971 the Race Relations Act was passed in Parliament, prohibiting discrimination based on race or ethnicity. Nevertheless, when the South-African Springboks toured New Zealand again in 1981, with the counter culture having gained strength during the 60ies and 70ies, this sports event caused an

⁵¹ Journalist, see 1.2

⁵² Bolitho 1921:23

unprecedented amount of protest and anger.⁵³ The connection between the Māori fight for equal rights and the struggle against apartheid in South-Africa increased the self-awareness of the Māori movement of the time.



Tino Rangatiratanga: The Māori Renaissance

In 1975 the first *hiko*i, the Māori Land March took place. Dame Whina Cooper led the march from the northernmost tip of the North Island, to Wellington, the capital in the south, to draw attention to the continuing loss of Māori land to the Crown. On October 13th five thousand people approached Parliament, carrying a petition with 60 000 signatures⁵⁵, demanding a review of the Treaty of Waitangi. Later that same year the Waitangi Tribunal was established, to address claims of breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi. The Tribunal was limited to addressing grievances occurring after the passing of the Act, and its power was limited to making recommendations, so few claims were submitted.⁵⁶

In January 1977 a group of Ngati Whatua protesters occupied Bastion Point in Auckland, the stunning piece of land connecting Orakei *marae* to the beach. As the tribal land of the Ngati Whatua tribe is Auckland, New Zealand's largest city, they hold claim to the most valuable real-estate in New Zealand. Originally the tribe had been granted an 'inalienable reserve, but this reserve had gradually been reduced by compulsory acquisition'⁵⁷, which is what provoked the occupation. In May 1978, after

⁵³ King 2003

⁵⁴ The Māori flag, my photo. The lower part of the flag is red.

⁵⁵ King 1983

⁵⁶ Kawharu 1989

⁵⁷ <http://www.treatyofwaitangi.govt.nz/timeline/treaty1950.php>

506 days, the protesters were arrested by the police. By this time Bastion Point had become a symbol for all land rights protest.

As the protests continued, in 1985 the Waitangi Tribunal was given mandate to address land claims dating back to 1840. In addition to causing a massive increase in Treaty claims, this also opened up the proverbial ‘can of worms’ regarding the entire history of colonization and land acquisition. The 80ies and 90ies was a period of world wide recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples, and this has continued to strengthen the Māori fight for self-determination.

In January 2004 the leader of the National Party delivered a speech where he argued that Māori should not be granted special privileges, as ‘we are all one people’⁵⁸. This speech provoked massive protest and intensified race relations.⁵⁹ Under pressure, the Labour government proposed to make all marine land the exclusive property of the Crown, extinguishing all Māori customary rights to the foreshore and seabed. This angered Māori, and caused a new *hikoī*, Māori Land March in May 2004. The Foreshore and Seabed Act was passed in November, in spite of the Waitangi Tribunal finding the Act to be a violation of the Treaty of Waitangi, as well as the principles of fairness and non-discrimination.⁶⁰

Re-retrieved on 04.11.06

⁵⁸ Don Brash; “Nationhood”

<http://www.national.org.nz/Article.aspx?ArticleID=1614> Retrieved on 27.10.06

⁵⁹ For more on this, see Interlude and 5.5

⁶⁰ Waitangi Tribunal Report quoted from “The Indigenous World”, published by IWGIA

3.2 History of Māori Religion; the Old World

Creation⁶¹

In the beginning was *te Kore*, the Void, nothing. In this void was *Io-Matua-Kore*, God-the Father-of the Void, God-the Fatherless. He is the starting point of a full *whakapapa* (genealogy).

From *Io-Matua-Kore* sprang *te Po*, the Darkness, the world of becoming. In this darkness were *Rangi-nui* and *Papa-tuanuku*, Father-Sky and Mother-Earth. They were locked in a tight embrace, never letting go of each other. From this embrace came many strong sons, cramped together in the darkness between their parents. They wanted more space to move around, so the eldest of the sons, *Tane-mahuta*, placed his hands on his mother and his feet on his father and pushed his parents apart. His arms became the roots of trees, his legs became the branches, and thus *Tane-mahuta* is god of the forest. His brothers rule over the wind, the ocean, cultivated and un-cultivated plants. *Tumata-uenga* is god of war, and the youngest one, who was still in his mother's womb when *Tane-mahuta* separated their parents, remained there, and is god of volcanoes.

From this separation sprang *te Ao Mārama*, the World of Light, the being. By separating his parents, *Tane-mahuta* let light into the world, and thus established the world as we now know it, with the sky above and the earth below us. *Tane-mahuta* then created the first woman from earth, and breathed life into her. Then he slept with her and created a line of men-like gods, and god-like men. The most famous of these is *Maui*, a mischievous demi-god, who fished a fish so big they could live on it, and today it is known as the North-Island of New Zealand, the South-Island being his boat, and Stuart Island the anchor.

Cosmology

The creation myth above tells the story of the *atua*, gods. All gods as well as humans descend from the same divine creator, *Io-Matua-Kore*. And in some traditions he is held as the supreme creator God, in a more or less monotheistic sense as described by

⁶¹Based on King 2003, and Hyland 2003

the late Reverend Māori Marsden⁶². There is however some discussion as to whether this monotheistic tradition is a modern, post-contact tradition inspired by contact with Christianity. It is also possible that this is an ancient tradition which was kept secret, only accessible for the initiated.

The distinction between the gods and the ancestors is a gradual one, thus the gods and demi-gods are seen as very distant ancestors. The more immediate ancestors are seen as present in a very real sense. Technically, they are supposed to live in Hawaiki, the mythical island where the Māori came from a long long time ago.⁶³ But it is believed that they may return for special occasions. The *karanga* (call) welcoming *manuhiri* (guests) on to the *marae* (the tribal meeting ground), specifically addresses the ancestors as well as the visitors.⁶⁴ The traditional Māori world view also includes several ‘super-natural’ beings, such as ghosts, *kehua*, and the *taniwha*, a guardian spirit, which lives in the water and protects a given area. It can be dangerous, especially to people not from the area it is protecting. The most striking example of spirituality made relevant in land matters is when the construction of the highway through the Waikato was delayed for two months because the construction would disturb the one-eyed *tahiwha* which lived in the river. After negotiations with the local tribe, the highway plans were altered, to minimise disturbance to the creature.

In the ‘old world’, pre-contact, the gods had to be consulted before most actions could be performed. This consultation was the job of the Tohunga. Now, the word Tohunga just means expert, and notes all different fields of expertise that existed in the old Māori world.⁶⁵ The status of the Tohunga has changed significantly after colonisation; today this has become a cultural category.

⁶² Marsden, 2003

⁶³ Orbell 1985

⁶⁴ During the Apotoro hui at Rātana Pā, the names of all Mōrehu who had died since the last hui. Afterwards, an old *kuia* (female elder) stood up and addressed one of her old friends who had passed away. Her talk was mostly in Māori, but one thing she said in English, that I understood; “I know you can hear me now, so I’ll say this directly to you”.

⁶⁵ For instance, according to Ryan 1995, an anthropologist is a “Tohunga tikanga tangata”, literally an expert in the customs of people.

Theology; Mana and Tapu

The most common way of summing up traditional Māori spirituality, is through the notions of *mana* and *tapu*. *Tapu* is a sacred and dangerous quality, which must be kept separate from the secular, *noa*. *Mana* is the divine power and authority, given to man through genealogy, *whakapapa*, and protected by the laws of *tapu*.⁶⁶ The powers of *tapu* act as protection, keeping important matters separate.

I would like to point out that traditional Māori spirituality has an implicit quality. The spiritual realm is not seen as being a separate sphere of society, but rather it is present in everyday life. This world view still prevails today. For example, a meeting that is considered secular, but culturally Māori, will usually open with a prayer, *karakia*, to set the scene, as it were. In my Māori language class at Auckland University, the older one of the teachers would always open with *karakia*, the younger one did not.

Practice; Whanau and Whenua

Traditional Māori spirituality can be approached through the core notions of *whanau* and *whenua*. These seem to me to be the most significant, in the anthropological sense of being important concepts in everyday life. *Whanau* is the extended family, which exists within the sub-tribal unit of *hapu*, a part of the tribe, *iwi*. The members of the *whanau* are related through *whakapapa*, genealogy, connecting those who are living today back to the earliest beginnings of time; *Io-Matua-Kore*. Literally, *whenua* means both land and placenta. This double meaning suggests the fundamental importance of the concept. Every family and every tribe is connected to a specific area, and in particular to the *marae*, the central meeting place of their area. Without access to this center, or removed from their land, the *whanau* becomes up-rooted, injured; literally robbed of its identity.

⁶⁶ Marsden in King (ed) 1979

3.3 History of Māori Religion; the New World

Settlement of Missionaries

Samuel Marsden of the Church of England's Church Missionary Society was the first missionary to arrive in New Zealand in 1814. He, and the missionaries that followed, brought alien ideas, customs and values to the Māori. In addition to the massive social change brought on by British colonisation, the increasingly powerful newcomers also introduced a radically different world view, and a new understanding of man, as well as land, to the Māori.

The major points of Christian belief that would contrast with tikanga Māori [traditional Māori culture] were the notions that natural man was a fallen creature needing to be redeemed by Christ's suffering and death; and that every human life – whether rangatira, commoner or slave – was of equal value in the eyes of Te Atua and those who acknowledged Him.⁶⁷

This latter point would be essential for the dispossessed people who would later come to follow T. W. Rātana a century later. The traditional religion was based on a hierarchical view of man and on the secretive knowledge of the experts, the Tohunga. As mentioned the Tohunga was both priest and crafts expert. Religion was inseparable from culture, and all important actions were accompanied by *karakia*, prayer. This implied that religion had material implications, and material matters had spiritual implications. This too is significant in understanding the Rātana Church.

To Māori, the culture from which the missionaries, traders and settlers came was obviously blessed with great material wealth, and this was seen as evidence of the great power of the God of that culture. The gods were meant to protect and provide for their people. ... That the missionaries, as representatives or priests of the new Atuanui⁶⁸, would then supply the people with the articles which came along with that power, was an obvious conclusion. In this case, then, the prayer 'give me a blanket in order that I may believe' is not merely a trade-off, but an invitation to the deity to prove its power and so earn allegiance. This was entirely in line with the Māori concept of the atua.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ King 2003:140

⁶⁸ Big god

⁶⁹ Elsmore 2000:19

Prophets and Kings, in a time of War and Conflict

New times called for new faiths for the Māori people. A new breed of prophets arise all over the country throughout the 19th century, blending traditional and Christian elements in different ways, some more peaceful than others.

After the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, a group of chiefs attempted to unite all the Māori tribes under one monarch. This could end inter-tribal conflict, and allow the tribes to stand united in the face of an increasing European settlement. The King would then achieve a combined authority more comparable to that of the British Queen. In 1858 Waikato chief Te Wherowhero was installed as the first Māori King, and took the name Potatau, although his authority was limited to the Waikato federation of tribes. This action was seen by the British as an act of disloyalty to the Crown, while the Māori saw the two monarchs as complementary. It was also seen as an attempt to limit further land sales, and this sparked the Taranaki War of 1860-61 (and 1863), as well as the Waikato War of 1863-64.⁷⁰ The Waikato War cost 1000 Māori lives and 700 European, and resulted in the confiscation of 1,3 million hectares of land from the Waikato Māori as punishment.

After the fighting a new messianic and syncretistic movement arose in the Taranaki. It was called Pai Marire, *pai* meaning good and *marire* meaning quiet, gentle⁷¹. The founder, Te Ua Huamene, had very peaceful intentions. But several followers saw the movement as a spiritual weapon, and they proceeded to take up martial weapons against the British troops. During 1864-66 several different attacks and rebellions came from this. Meanwhile, the Pai Marire rebellion had travelled to the East Coast. After one of their campaigns in 1865, one of the men arrested was Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuki. He had fought on the government side, but he was suspected of helping the Māori, so he was sent to the Chatham Islands⁷² without trial. In prison he had several visions, which would later lead him to found the Ringatu faith. In July 1872 he escaped captivity, and:

⁷⁰ King 2003

⁷¹ Ryan 1997

⁷² Cold, southern island used as a penal colony.

waged one of the most effective guerrilla campaign ever seen in the country. (...) Finally he withdrew to sanctuary in the King Country in 1872, and he was eventually pardoned by the Government in 1883. The shots fired by Gilbert Mair's Flying Arawa column at the retreating Te Kooti in February 1872 are regarded as the last engagement of the New Zealand Wars.⁷³

In the aftermath of the New Zealand Wars, a new movement arose in the Taranaki, under the leadership of Te Whiti and Tohu. They promoted pacifist resistance, such as pulling out survey pegs and removing fences on the land about to be confiscated. But also this movement was shot down, as the leaders were arrested without trial in 1881, and their land was taken by the government.

The irony is that all this warfare came from Māori organising themselves to prevent further land loss, and the result was usually confiscation of more land, in an attempt by the government to punish Māori for actions committed during wars the government started. Regarding the relationship between Māori and Pākehā (white people) in New Zealand this period represents the lowest point.

The greatest of these religious movements, the ones who are still cherished by the descendants of the followers, all emerged during this period of warfare and conflict. Of the movements mentioned above, Ringatu is the one still active, today accounting for 2.7% of all Māori. The Kingitanga, or King Movement is an important institution for the Waikato tribes. They hold an annual gathering commemorating the coronation of their reigning monarch. In 2004 I attended this *hui*, honouring the now deceased Māori Queen, Dame Te Arikinui Atairangikahu. Pai Marire remains as the flag raising morning prayer ceremony, which I observed during this *hui*.

The 20th century saw the rise of two new religious leaders. The first was Rua Kenana, who took an extreme stance against anything or anyone Pākehā, and he was seen as a threat to the general order of society. The Tohunga Suppression Act of 1907 was directed specifically at him.⁷⁴ This Act, as described in chapter 5, stated that “every person ... professing supernatural powers ... or foretelling of future events, is liable

⁷³ King 2003:219

⁷⁴ Binney et. al. 1979:35

... to a fine". Although it was never enforced, it set the tone, between Rua and the authorities.

And then came Rātana. Most of the movements above were based on the Old Testament, which was translated first. So when Rātana emerged at the beginning of the 20th Century, he in many ways represented something new, while continuing something old.

Chapter Four - Rātana

4.1 The Rātana Church, Te Hāhi Rātana



The Duality of the Spiritual and the Physical

One of the most central aspects of the Rātana faith is the duality of the spiritual and the physical, Ture Wairua and Ture Tangata. Literally, these terms mean ‘Law of the Spirit’ and ‘Law of the People’, *ture* being a Māori transliteration of ‘torah’. The two are different, opposites, separate but working together. Both are necessary to complete the world of the Rātana Church.

This dichotomy, or dualism starts with T. W. Rātana himself; the two different parts of his ministry, and his two names, as seen in the picture above; te Mangai and Piri-Wiri-Tua, the Mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit, and the Campaigner working for the people. Also depicted are the two sacred buildings at Rātana Pā; the Temepara and the Manuao, the spiritual temple and the people’s meeting house. The plane and the car in the picture symbolise the heavenly and earthly works, respectively. The same duality appears in the two texts which the Rātana Church holds sacred; the Bible and the

⁷⁵ ‘Plane-Car’, From the website <http://www.tehaahiratana.co.nz/twratana.html>
Used with permission, re-retrieved 01.11.06
For the full colour version, see the front page

Treaty of Waitangi. The same symbolic dualism is found in the importance of his two sons Arepa and Omeka, who were ‘responsible’ for the spiritual and physical works, respectively. In a story below, when T. W. Rātana and his two sons encounter two whales washed ashore, again these two whales represent this dualism; one is the spiritual, while the other represents the physical.

The terms Ture Wairua and Ture Tangata may be compared to the terms ‘theology’ and ‘anthropology’. As Ture Wairua refers to the affairs of the spiritual, theology in the literal sense is the ‘logos of theos’, the study of God. Similarly, Ture Tangata is the affairs of the people, which include the practical action of holding church service, as well as cultural activities and political works. In other words; what people do. What people do is the object of study for anthropology, the ‘logos of the anthropos’, the study of people.

The story about the Rātana Church begins with the man himself, Tahupotiki Wiremu Rātana. I begin with an account of his family background, before describing the miraculous events which are the fundament of the Rātana faith, and finally his last political years. I will then describe the theological teachings of the Rātana Church, under the heading of Ture Wairua, meaning the law and the affairs of the spiritual. I will then describe the practical (cultural and political) aspects of the Church, under the heading Ture Tangata. In this chapter I have tried to stay close to the emic account of things, describing the church in terms which (hopefully) adherents would agree to. In the final chapter, I will be giving a more critical account, addressing the more problematic aspects of things.

4.2 Tahupotiki Wiremu Rātana (1873-1939)



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Family Background

In accordance with the importance Māori culture lends to family and genealogy (*whakapapa*),⁷⁷ I will begin the story of Tahupotiki Wiremu Rātana with his grandfather, Rātana Ngahina, aka Te Rātana.⁷⁸ He was the last in a line of chiefs of the Ngati Awa and Ngati Raukawa tribes. Te Rātana married Erina Waitere, who owned the farm Orakei-nui, which T. W. Rātana later inherited, today the centre of the village Rātana Pā. Te Rātana was a member of the Church of England, but he also supported Wesleyan, Catholic and other missions that had settled in the area. The family had been pro-British during the wars, and two of his ancestors signed the

⁷⁶ From <http://www.tehaahiratana.co.nz/history.html>

⁷⁷ See 1.1 Introduction for details on the importance of *whakapapa*.

⁷⁸ Literally “The Rātana”

Treaty of Waitangi,⁷⁹ the contract signed between 500 chiefs and the British Crown in 1840.

Te Rātana's son, Te Urukowhai Wiremu married Ihipera, a Methodist and daughter of a Ngati Apa Chief.⁸⁰ On January 25th 1873 she gave birth to the future founder of the Rātana Church, Tahupotiki Wiremu Rātana. He was baptized Methodist, and as one of many siblings he was fostered by a relative, something which is very common amongst Māori.⁸¹

Growing up, T. W. Rātana was influenced by his grandparents, who wanted him to receive proper Methodist religious training. Another strong influence was his aunt, Mere Rikiriki, who founded, the Church of the Holy Spirit, *te Haahi o te Wairua Tapu*.⁸² This church is important in the spiritual history of the region, and she often prophesied that a leader would rise in the area, and grow to become a giant in Māoridom. In his youth, however, T. W. Rātana paid little attention to spirituality, in spite of the wishes of his elders. When he was not busy farming, he would drink and gamble. Due to the events that would follow, T. W. Rātana would gradually give more and more thought to spiritual matters, often in conference with his aunt.

In 1900 Tahupotiki Wiremu Rātana married Te Urumanao, his first wife, and over time they had eighteen children, 11 of whom were fostered, 7 children raised in the family.⁸³ Two of these children became central in mythology of the spiritual events to come; his two sons Arepa and Omeka, transliterations of Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. These two sons are usually referred to as twins, because the first Omeka was Arepa's twin brother who died in infancy. They were born in 1910. The second Omeka, who became the 'saint' responsible for the politics, was born in 1916.⁸⁴ According to Henderson, the twins Arepa and Omeka were named in 1910 by Mere Rikiriki. But she "refused to touch them and baptise them after naming them

⁷⁹ Henderson 1963

⁸⁰ Te Whetu Mārama, Special edition, November 8th, 2000

⁸¹ This whole paragraph mostly according to Henderson 1963

⁸² In Māori terms, aunt just means female relative of parents' generation.

⁸³ The Whetu Mārama Special edition 2000, as well as Henderson 1963

⁸⁴ <http://www.tehaahipatana.co.nz/history.html>

The sources differ on the details of the twins, but after comparing different accounts, in my opinion the website's version accounts for the differences in the other versions.

because she said they were too ‘high’ or too strongly endowed with spiritual powers.”⁸⁵ According to T. W. Rātana’s autobiography⁸⁶, the boys were named by his grandfather. T. W. Rātana protested, “that the names were too high for the children, for I feared that I would be unable to sustain the respect attributed to these names”.⁸⁷ But Rātana’s grandfather insisted that “those names were given by the Holy Spirit, to be materialised on the face of the earth”⁸⁸.



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T. W. Rātana later took a second wife, Iri Te Rio. In the book *The Māori as He Was* Elsdon Best writes in 1924: “Polygami was not uncommon amongst the chieftain class, and it was supposed to add to their dignity. The principal wife was the first one; she possessed more authority than the others.”⁹⁰ Although T. W. Rātana was not a chief in the traditional sense, he was nevertheless a leader for Māori, and surrounded by traditional culture. Iri Te Rio bore him two sons, one of these being Hamuera. Hamuera was symbolic of leaving behind the traditional Māori spirituality, considered to be old superstitions; “The evils of Tohungaism, Devil Worship and Witchcraft”.⁹¹

⁸⁵ Henderson 1963:23

⁸⁶ *Akoranga Tuatahi*, The Teachings Book One, p 52-59

⁸⁷ *Akoranga Tuatahi*, The Teachings Book One, p 53

⁸⁸ *Akoranga Tuatahi*, The Teachings Book One, p 53

⁸⁹ The family Rātana; First wife Te Urumanao with six of her children; Omeka to the left of his mother, Arepa in front, to the right.

From <http://www.tehaahiratana.co.nz/history.html>

⁹⁰ Best 1924:112

⁹¹ *Akoranga Tuatoru*, The Teachings Book Three, p9

This is why he “had to die”, October 22nd 1934. By dying he closed the door to the past. And this is also why Rātana had to take a second wife, so that Hamuera could be born.

The Holy Spirit comes to Visit

The event which laid the foundation for the Rātana Church took place on the 8th of November 1918. In the time leading up to this special event, certain signs would appear, and to this day these stories are told as evidence of what happened.

For some time Rātana would hear voices, while ploughing the field. Some said that he was going insane, but others, including his wife and his aunt, said that the Holy Spirit was working through him, and they should all wait and see. Then, on March 17th Rātana was camping on the beach with his first wife Te Urumanao, and their two sons, Arepa and Omeka. This is when, according to Henderson, he received ‘the sign of his calling’, when two whales washed up on the shore. One was killed on impact, and the other lived a short while. The dead whales provided food and oil which was needed half a year later, as masses of people flocked to Rātana. In his autobiography T. W. Rātana writes about the significance of the whales;

”Satan ruled the deep waters of the sea, and that therein, the whales, Satan himself allowed these Fish to come ashore; To signify to us that he has withdrawn his Yoke from the Māori People. He has freed you the Māori people from himself. The first Fish that was washed ashore signifies the fulfilment of the Spiritual Law. The second Fish signifies the fulfilment of Physical/Material (Mans) Law”⁹²

The dual symbolism here represented by the whales is central in the Rātana Church doctrine of the two separate realms; the spiritual and the physical. Arepa symbolises the spiritual (Ture Wairua) and Omeka symbolises the physical (Ture Tangata). This same dualism is evident in the two parts of the ministry of Rātana, as described above.

The next thing that happened was that Omeka became ill. As the doctors could do nothing for him, Rātana sat with him and prayed and prayed. After three days of praying, a needle came out from his knee, and the boy was healed. This was the first miracle, confirming that Rātana was chosen by God, according to Henderson.

⁹² *Akoranga Tuatahi*, The Teachings Book One, p 54

On November 8th 1918 Tahupotiki Wiremu Rātana was standing on the porch of his farm house. The house was situated in a large open field, and standing, overlooking his land, T. W. Rātana sees a great cloud approaching.

The Cloud was very similar to most; The outside, was like a dark Cloud; The centre, was pure White, the back, very similar to a Bright Flame ... When it was directly over me, it broke open, and my thoughts were overwhelmed. This was when I saw all the paths/Roadways of the World, leading towards and joining up to this house.⁹³

According to Henderson, the cloud reveals itself to be the Holy Spirit, announcing:

Fear not, I am the Holy Ghost⁹⁴. I have travelled around the world to find the people upon whom I can stand. I have come back to Aotearoa to choose you, the Māori people. Repent! Cleanse yourself and your family as white as snow, as sinless as the wood pigeon. Rātana, I appoint you as the Mouthpiece of God for the multitude of this land. Unite the Māori people, turning them to Jehovah of the Thousands, for this is his compassion to all of you.⁹⁵

Returning to T. W. Rātana' own version of events:

I was at this time, as if in a stupor, glowing as if being burnt by fire; I turned to warm myself, in the Kitchen. ... I jumped, and stood on the table; I uttered these words:- "Peace Be Unto You All, For I Am The Holy Spirit That Speaks Unto You All, Straighten Yourselves, Repent." From there I said to my wife, that the Spiritual Doctors are here now to heal our son. After that, I was made to see everything in my body, the roots from whence all illness/sickness stemmed.⁹⁶

According to the autobiography, the days and weeks following this vision the Holy Spirit put him through rigorous tests, in order for Rātana to repent for his sins.

Also the angel Gabriel visited him, telling him of the special task the Holy Spirit had in mind for Rātana. The autobiography ends:

Go forth and unite the Māori People under me, "Ihoa"⁹⁷, heal them in all their infirmities, in the name of The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit and the Faithful

⁹³ *Akoranga Tuatahi*, The Teachings Book One, p55

⁹⁴ In English, the Holy Spirit is also referred to as the Holy Ghost. But for many Māori, ghosts are quite real and not to be taken lightly, and certainly not to be confused with God. Both Henderson and Elsemore translate the Māori term *Wairua* with Ghost, but the correct translation is Spirit. *Kehua* is the word for ghost, which is something quite different.

⁹⁵ The Holy Spirit according to Henderson 1963:25

⁹⁶ *Akoranga Tuatahi*, The Teachings Book One, p55

⁹⁷ Jehovah

Angels – Those of the Māori People who will follow you shall be called Mōrehu, (Remnants) from this day forth, you shall be called “Te Mangai”. Because if Ihoa’s love, when he descended upon Tahupotiki Wiremu Rātana on the 8th November 1918, The Gift of Healing and Miracles were pronounced in the name of the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit and the Faithful Angels and to be endorsed by Ihoa’s own Word and Mouth, (Te Mangai) so be it.⁹⁸



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Te Mangai; a New Spiritual Leader

From 1918-1928 T. W. Rātana was known as *te Mangai*, which means the mouth or mouthpiece, of the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, T. W. Rātana had received the gift of healing. In 1918 New Zealand was in the midst of the influenza epidemic, which took four and a half times as many Māori lives as non-Māori (5516 to 1200), according to historian Michael King. This must be seen in light of the fact that the Māori in 1891 Māori made up only ten percent of the population.¹⁰⁰ These numbers reveal the poor socio-economic conditions of Māori at the time. So when people heard of this new faith healer, they came. Rumour of the events mentioned above spread quickly, and people travelled long distances to come and take part in the wonders that were happening. Many sold all their belongings to afford the journey, as they had little to loose.

⁹⁸ *Akoranga Tuatahi*, The Teachings Book One, p 59

⁹⁹ Crutches left behind after the faithful were healed.

<http://www.tehaahiratana.co.nz/history.html>

¹⁰⁰ King 2003

He had a special appeal to those he called the Mōrehu – the growing number of detribalised non-chiefly common people, most of them at this time subsistence farmers, farm labourers or rural town workers.¹⁰¹

Today, T. W. Rātana's house is surrounded by the village, Rātana Pā, which grew as people came to witness the faith healings and miracles. I have heard some of the elders maintain the idea that T. W. Rātana was the second coming of Christ. Most people, however, emphasise that he was just a man, who healed through faith. T. W. Rātana would heal the sick, not through himself, but through people's own faith in the Holy Trinity. Some healings were even conducted by correspondence. The most famous such incident is the healing of a white woman, Miss Fanny Lammas of Nelson in the South Island. She had been ill since childhood, and when not in bed she used a steel frame which secured every part of her body to keep her up. In 1921 she wrote to Rātana, who replied:

Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, with all thine heart and soul, believe in Him and His power to heal for all things are possible with the Lord.

Pray to Him with sincere truthful and reverent heart, appeal to the Lord with earnest and unwaning prayers, therefore repent ye of thine sins, and whatsoever thou may asketh of the Lord in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Angels shall be granted, as I shall also pray to the Lord to grant thy request.

Sanctify His name and sing His praise for ever and ever. Amen.

Matthew VI: 24

Luke VIII: 44-48

I am not attending or interviewing Europeans personally.

- T. W. Rātana, Mangai¹⁰²

Journalist Hector Bolitho¹⁰³ visited and interviewed Miss Lammas. She told him about the day she received the letter, she had prayed all day, but felt little change.

Early next morning when I [started] praying again, my back suddenly received power. To my great delight I was able to sit up in bed and then to stand and walk without aid, the first time for years. For the previous twelve months I had not been out of bed.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ King 2003:336

¹⁰² Henderson 1963:32

¹⁰³ Described in 1.2 under Sources

¹⁰⁴ Bolitho 1921:20



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The World Tour

In 1924 T. W. Rātana gathered together a large group of followers, including elders as well as cultural performers, and set out on the first world tour. The main destination was Britain, where they would seek audience with the King of England regarding the Treaty of Waitangi, and have the Māori nation represented at the British Empire Exhibition. They also wanted to spread the word, to preach their faith, their *Māramatanga* to the world. Travelling by boat, the route was: Australia, South Africa, Canary Island, England, Scotland, Ireland, Belgium, Germany, France, Switzerland, Sicily, Egypt, Sri Lanka, Singapore, China, Japan, and the Philippines.¹⁰⁶

While they were received warmly as a cultural rarity, their request for an audience with the King was denied. They were however informally received by the League of Nations in Geneva. The League was not in session, but they were invited to dinner, and according to Henderson, the League was quite impressed. Finally, in Japan they made a lasting friend in Bishop Juji Nakada, who would later come to New Zealand to visit Rātana. To this day Japan is considered to be a ‘spiritual friend’ of the Rātana Church.

¹⁰⁵ Letters from people asking to be healed by T. W. Rātana.

<http://www.tehaahiratana.co.nz/history.html>

¹⁰⁶ <http://www.tehaahiratana.co.nz/worldtour.html>, retrieved 30.10.06

In August 1925 another group travelled with T. W. Rātana to America. According to Henderson, their intent was to:

“show the Māori race for the world and to gain learning and experience for the Māori race. ... He is reported to ... have been influenced by Mormon ideas to the extent of taking a ‘spiritual wife’¹⁰⁷ who would bear him children for the salvation of the Māori race.”¹⁰⁸

On July 21st 1925 The Rātana Established Church of New Zealand was founded, and in 1928 *Te Temepara*, the Temple, was opened at Rātana Pā. Throughout his ministry T. W. Rātana travelled all over Aotearoa New Zealand, to spread the message of uniting in one God, *Kotahi Atua*.

Piri Wiri Tua; Turning towards Politics

T. W. Rātana’s aunt Mere Rikiriki had prophesised that a man would rise carrying the Bible in one hand, and the Treaty of Waitangi in the other. In the early years of his ministry, T. W. Rātana had declared:

In one of my hands is the Bible; in the other is the Treaty of Waitangi. If the spiritual sided is attended to, all will be well on the physical side.¹⁰⁹

These two texts came to symbolize the dichotomy which balances the spiritual, *Ture Wairua*, with the physical/practical, *Ture Tangata*. This dichotomy is emphasised by the two different titles of TW Rātana, *te Mangai* in spiritual matters, and *Piri Wiri Tua* when attending to the physical. Although the latter in practice has nowhere near the same importance today as it did at this time, the ideal of balance between the two is still considered to be at the core of the faith.

After functioning as *te Mangai*, minister and healer for the people, for several years, T. W. Rātana now wished to minister to the physical needs of his people. In 1928, as New Zealand was about to sink into the Depression, T. W. Rātana put aside his spiritual works, to attend to the political Part of his campaign until his death in 1939. He now took the name *Piri Wiri Tua*. Piri is Māori for Bill (which is short for

¹⁰⁷ The details around T. W. Rātana taking a ‘second wife’ are not elaborated in any of the sources. Henderson never mentions her name.

¹⁰⁸ Henderson 1963:68

¹⁰⁹ Henderson 1963:55

William, and Wiremu means William). Wiri means to ‘drill, screw, auger, muscular tremor’, and Tua means ‘Back, other side, beyond, on far side’¹¹⁰. The name translates to ‘Billy Bore Right Through’, or just ‘the Campaigner’ for short.

On June 25th 1928 he gave a public speech:

Listen to me, now that I have turned my attention to the Land, I am now to work in the Ture Tangata. All of my efforts will be directed towards the work of the Ture Tangata. I have already told you ‘First unite under Ihoa’, then turn your attention to the Treaty of Waitangi.¹¹¹

Taking a new name was important in order to differentiate between the two realms. In Particular, it was important that the spiritual works not be ‘tainted’ by money and greed. This is why today all the Apotoro, the ministers of the Church, as well as the Awhina, the female helpers, receive no money for their work.

In 1932 TW Rātana submitted a petition to Parliament to review breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi, but the petition was ignored. Then, in 1935 he made a deal with Labour Prime Minister Joseph Savage, agreeing that Labour would not contest the four Māori electorates, while Rātana, if elected, would support Labour in the House of Parliament. From that point onwards the Rātana-Labour alliance held all the four Māori seats in Parliament for nearly 50 years, until a new Māori political movement, the Mana Motuhake Party arose in the 1979, under the leadership of Matiu Rata, a Labour dissident from a Mōrehu family.¹¹² The Mana Motuhake Party did not get elected into Parliament. 25 years later, in 2004, during my fieldwork in New Zealand, another Mōrehu left Labour to co-found the Māori Party. This woman was Tariana Turia, who will be described below. The political works of T. W. Rātana will be further elaborated in the Ture Tangata section of this chapter, as well as the Omeka section of chapter five.

¹¹⁰ Both according to Ryan 1995

¹¹¹ *Akoranga Tuatoru*, The Teachings Book Three, p34

¹¹² Cox 1993

The Leadership of T. W. Rātana

In the eyes of some traditional Māori, Rātana followed the tradition of Māori leadership. The idea of leadership is strong in traditional Māori culture. The position of *Rangatira*, chief, is inherited, and the *mana*, authority reflects on the whole *whanau*, extended family. However, T. W. Rātana lived in a different time, a time when aspects of European modernity had been forced upon the Māori people, and the Māori population was weakened by war, poverty and disease. As described in chapter three, several new prophetic leaders had attracted large followings before Rātana. While T. W. Rātana combined the spiritual with a degree of political leadership, he and other spiritual leaders before him offered a form of spirituality and leadership better adapted to the situation at the time. The institution of a distinctive spiritual leadership contested the traditional position of the chief.

Today, although the position of chief (*Rangatira*) has no official status, the traditionally powerful families are still just that; powerful. And this includes the Rātana family. As mentioned elsewhere, every president of the Rātana church has been close family members of the founder, first two of his sons, then his sister, then his daughter and now his grandson. And in spite of some internal differences of opinion within as well as outside of the Church, most Māori recognise the genuine *mana* of the Rātana family. In this way we may say that the Rātana Church has undergone a process of institutionalisation. The new, eruptive force of a spiritual leader has adapted to suit a traditional world view where social position is ascribed not primarily on personal merits, but on family ties.

4.3 Ture Wairua; a Church for Māori



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A Church with a Heart

The theology of the Rātana Church is vaguely defined. This is in part due to the practice of oral transmission, which is central to Māori culture, and allows for considerable regional variation. In traditional Māori society, the welfare of the community, the collective unit, is strongly emphasised. In the Rātana Church the words of love, *aroha*, compassion and care, *awhina*, and peace, *rangimarie*, are constantly emphasised, and are often used as female first names.

When the Church was registered on July 21st 1925 the official creed of the Church was also registered, formulated in ten points¹¹⁴. It opens with the glory and praise to the holy Trinity, and the more sober honour to the faithful angels. The ten points then list the belief in Jehovah, the creation of man, the Son of God, the Holy Spirit, the Faithful Angels, the Christian Church, honest work for the community, the Holy Bible, the light and joy found in the Love of God, and finally the belief that T. W. Rātana is the mouthpiece, spreading light and truth.

¹¹³ Side view of Temple, My photo

¹¹⁴ See Appendix I

At the core of it all is a monotheistic Christian faith, concerned with the social welfare of the people, and with recognising the angels who carry messages for God, putting in a lot of work, keeping the world of humans in contact with God. Notice that working for the community is listed before the Bible, indicating the priority of action before scripture, a priority which in my experience is followed by the Mōrehu. Unlike the covenants below, this creed does not mention traditional spirituality.

In the formative years of the Church, before the Church was officially registered, there was both the need as well as the chance to formulate some central points of faith in order to communicate to the new followers what this was all intended to be about. They set up a covenant, *kawenata* in Māori, The originals were signed by thousands of Mōrehu, and one of them is buried under the Manuao. a concept which still is important to the Church. Every year at different *hui*, *kawenata* is signed by all the participants, to confirm adherence. The first covenant was signed by several followers in 1920 and reads as follows;

- 1 To unite under Ihoa o nga Mano, acknowledging that Ihoa is the Power and Authority over all things, and in doing so, ask that Ihoa be their Protector and Refuge in Whom they were willing to put their Trust for ever and ever.
- 2 To Repent before Ihoa and ask forgiveness for the wrongs they had done.
- 3 In return for Ihoa agreeing to be their Protector and Refuge, to worship no other but Ihoa, and to join T. W. Rātana in spreading the Good News of Ihoa's Power, Glory and Great Love.
- 4 To work to atone for the wrongs of their Ancestors.
- 5 To cast away the shackles of the Evils of Corruption, Tohungaism, Devil Worship and Witchcraft which had become rife among them.
- 6 To work to tear down and cast away all Tribal Barriers and Jealousies, and, instead, to live together as one Family of Mōrehu.
- 7 To work together for the Glory of Ihoa Only and for the Good of the people generally, without any thought, or desire, for personal gain.¹¹⁵

Unlike the Creed this text is concerned with making a break from the past, promoting the welfare of a united people, and the importance of ethical rules of conduct. Again the focus is on the practical actions of people, and how to best live together.

According to the Rātana website¹¹⁶ the second covenant was drafted in 1924 and was closed Easter Monday 21st May 1925, at Rātana Pā. It was signed by as many as 21

¹¹⁵ *Akoranga Tuatoru* The Teachings Book Three p 10

¹¹⁶ <http://www.tehaahiratana.co.nz/temple.html>. Re-retrieved 02.11.06. This site is not officially recognised by the Church committee, but it is based on Church archives.

932 Māori. This one is even more practically oriented, which gives us an idea of the focus of the founding fathers of this Church. This second *kawenata* is only quoted in Henderson, who claims it was set up in 1921, and signed by 19 000 Māori.¹¹⁷ The *kawenata* reads as follows:

- 1 Obedience to Rātana's message.
- 2 Acceptance of absolute faith in the Christian God.
- 3 The renouncing of all Māori superstitions.
- 4 All who are not baptised will be baptised forthwith.
- 5 That marriage will be more sincerely honoured.
- 6 That greater care should be taken of children who should be wisely fed and tended.
- 7 That people pray for power to eschew intoxicating liquor.
- 8 That cigarette smoking among children and women nursing infants be discontinued.
- 9 That family prayers be held in every home.
- 10 That the duration of tangi be curtailed.
- 11 That people should retain membership of churches founded on Christian faith.
- 12 That even if Rātana himself should fail, he has now shown them the right way.¹¹⁸

This text addresses several social issues, and shows great concern for the general benefit and welfare of the Māori people. It also specifies that people should stay with their respective churches, and this was written before the official registration of the Rātana Church, thereby implying that Christianity is the proper religion for the Māori people. In line with this it takes a stand against the so-called superstition of traditional Māori spirituality, promoting the Christian God and T. W. Rātana himself. Finally it advocates cutting down the time spent for the traditional Māori funeral (*tangi*), which traditionally could last up to three weeks. As the funerals involve the corpse lying in state, for health reasons it was recommended that funerals be limited to three days, as is the practice today.¹¹⁹

Creating Theology

In my opinion the most strikingly syncretistic¹²⁰ element of the Rātana Church is the expansion of the Holy Trinity, adding on first the Faithful Angels, and later the founding father, T. W. Rātana. This addition to traditional Christian theology was a gradual process, and T. W. Rātana performed all of his healings in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. To Māori at the time this expanded Trinity

¹¹⁷ This may be a different *kawenata*, but I believe the two sources are referring to the same one.

¹¹⁸ Henderson 1963:42

¹¹⁹ Walker 1990

¹²⁰ See 1.3 Analytical Introduction

provided a more complete and more powerful range of available assistance. So, what started out as ‘just another Christian thing’ gradually grew into something new, a Māori-Christian Church. However, in the Quinary¹²¹ that became holy to the Rātana Church, the original Christian idea of God still holds a privileged position, as the original Trinity is still seen as “the most holy”.¹²² Often it is referred to separately, acknowledging the Faithful Angels, the Mangai and the Holy Trinity (*te Tokoturu Tapu*). The first book of the *Akoranga* explains this difference; “This Māramatanga does not say that the Angels have the same degree of Power, Glory, Holiness etc. as do the Holy Trinity. It is Truth that the Angels are the servants of the Holy Trinity”.¹²³

During T. W. Rātana’s time, many theological concepts were given new names, in order to emphasise the new content of the new faith. As all Church matters should be conducted in the Māori language, *te reo Māori*, the terminology was important as they wanted to make a clean break from the past and introduce a new world order. This included taking away all symbols of the past, for instance traditional Māori carving. These are necessarily tribal, and thus were seen to lead to division among the faithful. Also new terms were introduced for spiritual matters, for instance *karakia* (prayer, incantation) was from then on to be known as *whakamoemiti* by the followers of Rātana, who were to be known as Mōrehu (survivor, remnant). Also Christian terms were altered. This new faith was Christianity in *te reo Māori*, and thus the meanings of some concepts were altered in the translation process. For instance the Māori found that the white people were taking the name of Christ in vain, using ‘Jesus Christ’ as a swear word. This is why the Rātana Church never uses his name; they call him the Son, *te Tama*. They also took the cross out of use, as it was considered macabre, a symbol of death.

The most striking and problematic aspect of the Rātana theology was the breaking of *tapu*, the aspect which determines what is holy and what is forbidden in traditional Māori religion. This is a sensitive and problematic subject, relating to the Māori culture, and this is further described below.

¹²¹ Of the number five, having five Parts, Oxford Concise Dictionary 1982

¹²² Elsemore 1989

¹²³ *Akoranga Tuatahi*, The Teachings Book One, p 9

So, at the start of it all, the foundation of the church was an act of creation. But as so often with new religious movements, with the death of the founder comes a new conservatism, which attempts to freeze the structure and meaning of the movement. After T. W. Rātana passed away, everything he had said and done became the standard, against which everything else is measured. This conservatism has grown with time, and is in my opinion part of the reason why there is a certain degree of generational conflict within the Church today.



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The Symbol; Te Whetu Mārama

Given the oral basis of the Māori culture, the visual and symbolic cultural expressions are very important. At Rātana Pā, in the main meeting house, the Manuao, there are several pictorials; wall-charts depicting the events which formed the Church, scenes with angels and scenes from the World Tours as well as the early symbols and flags. These are all strictly copyrighted, so I can not show any of them here. These pictorials, as well as the sacred buildings at Rātana Pā, are the teaching tools. Because of this, it is recommended that as much teaching as possible, regarding the Rātana Church, should take place at the Pā. The plane-car picture on the front page is a modern version of these pictorials.

The symbol underwent several changes before arriving at the Whetu Mārama, which today is the easily recognisable emblem, the *tohu* of the Church, as seen above. In 1923 the three-leafed clover was the symbol, with the name T. W. Rātana written at the base of the clover. This represented the Trinity, and the Faithful Angels were represented by the stem. During the first world tour in 1924 the sighting of the crescent moon with a star placed between its extremities led the leadership of the

¹²⁴ Pendant of Whetu Mārama, my photo

movement to appropriate the four-pointed star within the moon as their new symbol; the Whetu Mārama, literally the Star Moon. At the formation of the Church in 1925 the star was expanded with a fifth point, representing te Mangai, forming the symbol seen above. The word *mārama*, in addition to meaning moon, also means understanding, enlightenment, hence the word Māramatanga. As some of the elders explained to me once, the Māramatanga is the spirituality, the heart of the Church, separate from the organisation.

The fourth book of the Teachings, *Akoranga Tuawha*, explains the symbol:

The Emblem as a whole is an Emblem of Tolerance, the Star representing the Star of David, and so the Christian Churches, and the Crescent Moon, represent other Beliefs (such as those of Islam etc). It reminds us to always respect the beliefs of others.¹²⁵

So, as seen depicted in colour on the front page, the symbol of the Rātana Church is the five pointed star encompassed by the crescent moon. The moon is blue, as is the point on the star representing the Father, *te Matua*. The Son of God, *te Tama* is white, the Holy Spirit, *te Wairua Tapu* is red, and the Faithful Angels, *nga Anahera Pono* are purple. The part representing T. W. Rātana is usually gold (or yellow) for te Mangai, but sometimes, (such as on the front page of my thesis) it is pink for Piri-Wiri-Tua. In other words, the founding father, T. W. Rātana is represented by a different colour according to which part of his work is referred to; gold for his first years as faith healer, or pink for the later years as the campaigner for the people. This is yet another reflection of the duality outlined above. Notice that in the ‘plane-car’ picture on the front page, the word Mangai is written with a different colour for each letter. As there are six letters, both of T. W. Rātana’s colours, gold and pink are present. This is a common way of ‘depicting’ the word Mangai. The full version of the Whetu Mārama also includes the initials A and O, placed at the two tips of the moon, representing the two sons Arepa and Omeka, Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, again symbolising the whole duality. These two sons and their brother Hamuera are further described in chapter five.

¹²⁵ The Teachings book four, *Akoranga Tuawha*, p 57

4.4 Ture Tangata; the Māori People's Movement



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As mentioned several times, the Rātana faith divides the world in two; a dualism consisting of a spiritual and a material realm. Ture Tangata literally means ‘the law of people’, but in practice it translates to affairs of the people, referring to the material part of the Rātana world. The concept of *tangata* is central to Māori thought. Those who are most concerned with their minority identity prefer to refer to themselves as *tangata whenua*, people of the land.

Ture Tangata refers to the material realm, including the physical (places, people and things) as well as activities related to religious and political matters. Ture Tangata is subdivided in to two parts; internal affairs of the church, such as ritual activities, and the political realm, particularly relating to the Treaty of Waitangi. Ture Tangata is also the name of the third book of the Rātana teachings (the *Akoranga*) which contains accounts of the political ministry of the founding father, T. W. Rātana, and explains the physical works of the Church:

When we look at the Structure of the Ture Tangata, we see that there are, apparently, two Sections:-

A: That Section which deals with the work, activities, policies and teaching concerning the Church and it's peoples.

¹²⁶ The Manuao, meeting house at Rātana Pā, my photo

B: That Section which deals with the Treaty of Waitangi, the Mana Motuhake, Māori Land Claims and Politics.¹²⁷

The ritual institutions of the Rātana Church are based on Methodist practices,¹²⁸ combined with Māori social institutions, most notably the *hui* (gathering) held on the *marae* (meeting place) as described in the Māoritanga section below. In addition, there are several different kinds of activities which are organised by the Church, including the brass bands, the choir and the rugby team. The two most significant statuses in the Church are the Apotoro and the Awhina, literally the Apostles and the Helpers. Only men are Apotoro, and only women are Awhina. The Apotoro are the priests, conducting Church service and attending official functions. The Awhina are like social workers, attending to the practical and physical needs of the Mōrehu. As seen in the two covenants, *kawenata*, cited above, social welfare has been important to the movement since the beginning. In my opinion, this aspect reflects the values and ideas of the New Testament, as well as traditional Māori values emphasising the importance of good work for the people, the collective unit.

The practice of Māoritanga within the Church

Māoritanga means Māori-ness, or Māori-dom, and I'll use it here to refer to the traditional Māori world view. It all begins with the *marae* is the physical centre as well as the spiritual and cultural centre of any Māori local community. In a strict practical sense, the *marae* proper is the area in front of the meeting house. The meeting house is called the *whare nui*, the big house, or *whare tupuna*, the ancestral house. In practice the *marae* has come to refer to the whole complex, including both the *whare nui* and the *whare kai* (dining house), as well as the space connecting them. A gathering is generally referred to as a *hui*. This ranges from a one-day local meeting, to a grand annual festival spanning over a week, including funerals, weddings and town meetings. During my fieldwork in New Zealand I attended three *hui* at Rātana Pā, three *hui* at other Pā as well as a few gatherings held in Auckland.

¹²⁷ *Akoranga tuatoru*, the Teachings Book Three p. 27.

¹²⁸ Elsemore 1989:343

The social institutions of the *marae* and the *hui* are seen as essential to Māoritanga. The practice of getting together with other people, in a spiritual space, goes right to the core of the value Māori culture places on people and places. At Rātana Pā, these institutions remain, but the little details are different. Thus the *huis* I attended at Rātana Pā were essential for my understanding of Rātana culture, known as the Mōrehutanga. The three non-Rātana *huis* were interesting as they provided me with an insight into the Māoritanga which surrounds the Rātana Church.

A Political Movement Emerges

In 1920, the Māori king's uncle, Tupu Taingakawa attended the large Christmas gathering at the emerging settlement of Rātana Pā, a gathering of the then unregistered Rātana Church. In 1913 Taingakawa and King Te Rata had travelled to England to address grievances regarding the Māori people, unsuccessfully seeking audience with the king. As World War I broke out, the Party was told to "go home and to take their grievances to the New Zealand Government".¹²⁹ Seeing the emergence of what would become a powerful leader, Taingakawa travelled to Rātana Pā:

'Mangai, I have come not for the healing of my body and soul, but for healing of the sickness of the land.' And Rātana's reply was:
Good! First let us unite in the Father, and then we shall unite in the land.¹³⁰

So, in 1928 T W Rātana set aside his spiritual work, including the title *te Mangai*, the Mouthpiece. He then took the new name *Piri-Wiri-Tua*, meaning the campaigner, the champion of the people. He had spent the first ten years of his ministry building the Church, and conducting faith healings. As of 1925 the Church had become registered, and an organisational structure established. By 1928 T. W. Rātana had more time on his hands, as the running of the Church organisation was left to others, and seeing the people increasingly 'united in the Father', he returned to his earlier promise, and set about addressing the issues of the Treaty of Waitangi.

In 1932, the newly elected Eruera Tirikatene delivered the following petition, with 30128 signatures,¹³¹ to Parliament:

¹²⁹ *Akoranga Tuatoru*, The Teachings Book Three p 9

¹³⁰ Henderson 1963:27

That the Treaty of Waitangi be embodied in the Statute Book of the Dominion of New Zealand, ... in order that all may know that the Treaty of Waitangi is operative, also to preserve the ties of brotherhood between Pākehā and Māori for all time.¹³²

This period of the life of T. W. Rātana elaborates the importance of the welfare of the people, as outlined in the covenants which the Church drafted during its formative years. This is also reflected in the significance that traditional Māori society places on the collective unit, and the notion of ‘the people’, *he tangata*.

A pan-Māori Political Movement; the non-Tribal Tribe of Rātana

Originally it was also a political movement, one of the first pan-Māori such, based on recognising the Treaty of Waitangi. Due to the miracles and wonders happening around T. W. Rātana, a lot of people came from far away to take part in all this. Many sold all their belongings to join the new movement. An important feature of the movement was the rejection of tribalism.

However, the collective group of people making up the Rātana Church is called *te iwi Mōrehu*. Iwi means tribe, but also bone and strength. So, in their own words, they are a non-tribal tribe of their own. Depending on who I asked and the context, people gave different explanations regarding the Rātana Church's relation to the wider Māori community. While some describe themselves as a member of the non-tribal tribe, *te iwi Mōrehu*, others stated that their membership in the Rātana Church had no impact on their tribal identity. In other words, the emphasis on tribal versus church identity varied significantly from individual to individual. Since my method does not allow me to draw any quantitative conclusions, I am not able to establish any clear patterns.

When the European people came to New Zealand, the Māori became increasingly aware of themselves as an ethnic group, in contrast to the colonizers. Tribalism, however, remained strong, and inter-tribal conflict continued, increased by the socio-economic decline that followed colonization. Because of this tribalism, earlier attempts at forming pan-Māori alliances have had varying degrees of success.

¹³¹ Cox 1993

¹³² Henderson 1963:88

During the 19th century various attempts were made to form pan-tribal Māori movements such as, notably, the formation of a Māori kingdom as a response to the British monarchy. There was an early attempt at creating a pan-tribal kingdom in the 1850ies, but this succeeded only in uniting the tribes of the Tainui/Waikato *waka*. The first truly successful pan-tribal non-religious movement was the Māori Women's Welfare League, formed by Dame Whina Cooper. She was also the one, who initiated the Māori Land march of 1975¹³³, where thousands Māori marched from the northern tip of the North Island¹³⁴, to Wellington, the capital in the south. This feat was repeated in 2004, due to strong disagreements over rights to the foreshore and seabed. On April 28th I was privileged to join this march briefly, and I will never forget crossing the Auckland Harbour Bridge in the pouring rain with an estimated 2000 people, the bridge swaying considerably with the rhythm of our steps. When the march walked onto the *marae* at Rātana Pā, en route to Wellington, the New Zealand Herald headline read: "Marchers challenge Rātana to rise up".¹³⁵ This particular article reveals the division within the Church today, when it comes to Māori politics. This division is further described in the Omeka section of chapter five.

¹³³The formation of the Kingitanga, as well as both *hikoi* (marches) are all described further in the historical chapter (3.1).

¹³⁴ Actually, the starting point of both marches was Te Hapua, a Rātana stronghold, and the homestead of several of my Nga Puhi friends and informants.

¹³⁵ The title of an article in the New Zealand Herald 04.05.04, by Renee Kiriona <http://www.nzherald.co.nz/search/story.cfm?storyid=69FE6B30-39E1-11DA-8E1B-A5B353C55561> re-retrieved 05.11.06

Interlude – Sitting on *the* Bench at Rātana Pā

I arrived in Rātana Pā for the first time on Wednesday, January 21st. The large annual gathering was just beginning, the first guests arriving through the evening, like myself and my friend, the niece of my ‘host father’. This was a week and a day after my arrival in the country. The *hui*, gathering, is referred to as the January 25th *hui*, commemorating the birthday of the founder of the Church. This year the 25th was on a Sunday, so the main celebrations took place on the weekend. The woman I travelled with is an *Awhina* of the church, a helper for the people. On this particular gathering she was in charge of the mini-sports on the *marae*, the lawn area which is the central gathering area for any Māori community. As I was with her, I helped her out with this children’s activity, which took place on the Saturday, January 24th, in the morning. Saturday was also the day for the ‘Very Important People’ to arrive; the politicians. They come every year, the Labour Prime Minister with her entourage, and the leadership of the largest opposition parties. They are all welcomed on to the *marae* in the traditional fashion, which is called a *powhiri*. Labour feels especially at home here, as T. W. Rātana founded an alliance with the Labour Party in 1936, and most members of the Church have voted Labour ever since. Until recently, that is...

As we were conducting our mini-sports, we were suddenly informed that *manuhiri*, visitors were arriving, of the ‘important’ kind. The official welcoming of these official guests was to take place on the *marae*, where we were doing our activities, so we had to hurry up and clear the area, leaving a few children somewhat disappointed. So we gather our things, and then we sit down and wait. And I look around, and I see that I am sitting on the *paepae*. On a *marae* the *paepae* are the important benches in front of the main house, where the important local elders sit, welcoming on the visitors.

Anthropologist and traditional spiritual leader Cleve Below explains:

The *paepae* refers to the place where the male elders sit in Māori ceremonial gatherings on the *marae*. The male speakers who occupy this special place are considered to be expert in the art of oratory, genealogical discourse, tribal history, ritual incantation, and the songs of their people. If a person in unschooled in these matters, then it is inappropriate for him to occupy this place, for he may cause shame and embarrassment to the tribe through his

ignorance. ... In most areas, women are not permitted to occupy a place on the *paepae*.¹³⁶

In other words, not the appropriate place for a ‘little white girl’ who arrived in the country just twelve days earlier. With all the children and everything happening, I didn’t really notice where I was sitting, until I realise that I’m on an important bench, amongst a group of important people, waiting for a very different bunch of important people. So I turn to my friend and say “I’m not really supposed to be here, am I?” “Nah” she replied, “It’s no big deal”. On the one hand, after attending Church on the first morning of my stay, and walking in the procession on to the *marae*, I had been officially welcomed, and now I was technically considered “a local”. On the other hand, these ritual considerations are not regarded as terribly important in Rātana. Anywhere else in Māoridom, I might have been in trouble, in breach of the *tapu* rules; very important spiritual rules, that should not be taken lightly. But these traditional rules do not (technically, if not in the practical sense) apply at Rātana, so it was “all good”, she assured me.

All the same, I felt like an intruder, in breach of anthropological ethical codes; ‘the little white girl pretending to be a local’. To my relief, I’m sitting at the back, not under the marquee which protects the leaders from the sun. But I was sitting in the middle of the row, and if I was to get up and leave, I would only draw more attention to myself, and I really didn’t want that. So I take the opportunity to have a look around, and observe this particular welcoming ceremony from this unique view. In front of me are the *Tumuaki* (the President of the Rātana Church), his wife, the general secretary and the chairman. At this point I knew their faces, only later would I learn their titles and their position in the Church. Behind me was a friendly looking woman named Tariana Turia. I was told she was a Labour politician, but also a local woman, and one of the *Mōrehu*, the Church members. She spent most of that day at the back of the *paepae*, where the cameras could not reach her, as there are no cameras allowed on the *marae*.

So we sit on the *paepae*, all of us, and we wait. We are waiting for Don Brash, I’m told. He was the former Governor of the Reserve Bank of New Zealand, and the then

¹³⁶ Barlow 1991:85

newly elected leader of the National Party, the main opposition party. And we wait some more, and it turns out that Don Brash is searching for a Māori male to walk with him on to the *marae*. This is necessary according to *kawa*, traditional Māori protocol. While my presence was apparently not a problem (me sitting in an internal, ‘backstage area’, after taking part in the gathering) Don Brash was appearing in an official capacity, and it was my impression that both Rātana and the National Party wanted ‘everything in order’. Eventually, he found a man, and all the political parties were welcomed on to the *marae*, one party at the time, the leaders giving their speeches in English (most of it sounding pretty much the same to me, at the time). Afterwards I got the strong impression that most Mōrehu, were not at all impressed with all these VIPs, coming down looking for votes and media coverage, and definitely achieving the latter.

The Nationhood Speech

Back in Auckland the following Tuesday, suddenly everybody’s talking about “Don Brash at Orewa”. He had delivered a speech that would come to have a significant impact on Māori politics in the months to come, as it struck a cord with many non-Māori.

“So let me begin by asking, what sort of nation do we want to build?
Is it to be a modern democratic society, embodying the essential notion of one rule for all in a single nation state?
Or is it the racially divided nation, with two sets of laws, and two standards of citizenship, that the present Labour Government is moving us steadily towards?
But the spirit of the Treaty of Waitangi was expressed simply by then Lt-Gov Hobson in February 1840. In his halting Māori, he said to each chief as he signed: He iwi tahi tatou. We are one people.”¹³⁷

Since the establishment of the Waitangi Tribunal (see 3.1) many tribes have received recompensation for the tribal land previously confiscated by the government. Other measures have been taken to attempt to strengthen the standing of Māori culture, such as Māori language kindergartens, as well as health services for Māori, and a continuing formal recognition by the government of tribal authority.

¹³⁷ Don Brash; “Nationhood”
<http://www.national.org.nz/Article.aspx?ArticleID=1614> Retrieved on 27.10.06

Nevertheless, the idea of being ‘one people’ is to my knowledge not shared by most Māori. It is my impression that the recompensating measures have in many ways fuelled the notion of a bi-cultural New Zealand, one nation with two peoples. Further, I believe that considering the past, these measures are absolutely necessary, to heal the rift between Māori and Pākeha.

The Consequences of the Nationhood Speech

At the time of Don Brash’s speech, the government was considering to what extent the Waitangi Tribunal should include the foreshore and seabed in tribal settlement claims. To put it briefly, the result was that the Labour government caved under pressure. In November 2004 an Act was passed extinguishing all Māori customary rights to the foreshore and seabed. This in spite of the Waitangi Tribunal finding that:

“The policy clearly breaches the Treaty of Waitangi. But beyond the Treaty, the policy fails in terms of the wider norms of domestic and international law that underpin good government in a modern democratic state. These include the rule of law, and principles of fairness and non-discrimination.”¹³⁸

The Foreshore and Seabed Act angered most Māori, and led to a massive political move within the Māori population. On May 6th the Māori Land March led 20 000 people to the House of Parliament in protest. Tariana Turia, the woman sitting behind me on the *paepae*, left Labour in May 2004 and co-founded the Māori Party. The official leaders of the Rātana Church did not support the Māori Party. The general secretary of the Church told the New Zealand Herald that: "We're not even getting excited about it. We didn't support them in the first place.. and we're still where we were when our founder made the alliance with the Labour Party."¹³⁹

In July 2004 Tariana Turia re-won her seat in Parliament in the by-elections. Running against her, for Labour, was the son of the Tumuaki, the leader of the Rātana Church. In a speech later that year, Turia announced “that the pact the Rātana Church founder, Tahupotiki Rātana, made with Labour had been broken, because the Party had failed to meet its agreements.”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Vinding (ed) 2005:231

¹³⁹ New Zealand Herald 14.07.04

¹⁴⁰ New Zealand Herald 29.11.04

Chapter Five – Three Sons and a House

5.1 Arepa, Omeka, and Hamuera



In the biography of T. W. Rātana (4.2), I wrote about his two sons, Arepa and Omeka. They symbolise the duality of the Rātana Church; the spiritual and the physical. There was also a third son; Hamuera. His was the one who symbolised the rejection of traditional Māori spirituality. All three boys died young. Today, the story is that the three boys died for the sake of their father and the movement, to enable the completion of their various missions. The picture above shows their graves, Arepa to the right, Omeka and Hamuera to the left. Arepa died at 20, Omeka was 17, and little Hamuera was only seven. Of the three sons, Arepa and Omeka are the ones most frequently mentioned and depicted.

In 1963 the leader of the Church at the time, T. W. Rātana's sister Tumuaki Puhi o Aotea Ratahi told the story of the three boys to historian J. M. Henderson, describing the roles of the three children as saintly figures. I would now like to quote him at some length, to indicate how a mainstream Christian Pākeha historian understands this story:

... Te Arepa represented the Spiritual Works, *Te Ture Wairua* and Te Omeka represented the Material Works, *Te Ture Tangata*. After Rātana came back from America, he said that his spiritual work was complete. Arepa saw that his life was over. He went to bed and was sick for a long time and died as the bells of the Temple rang out the old year at 12 p.m. on December 31st. 1930.

When Tirikatene was elected to Parliament he took the other boy Omeka to the House of Representatives and showed him Speaker's Chair. Then Omeka said "Thanks, Tiri. There is no need to go further." Then, because the material works were completed, he came back home and went to bed. He died on [November 11th 1932] ... as the bells rang at 11 a.m. ...

Similarly Hamuera, who was the son of Rātana's second wife, died in 1934 representing the Annihilation of Tohunga-ism. As the young Hamuera passed away in October at the age of only seven years, a [bird was singing] to herald the spring of the new age free of superstition and fear.¹⁴¹

The website, tehaahiratana.co.nz, tells us:

There are different forms of sacrifices mentioned in Biblical history. T.W.Rātana's three sons Arepa, Omeka and Hamuera were pre-ordained by the Holy Spirit to play a very important role in the work endowed to their father T.W.Rātana. Arepa was the price paid for in the spiritual work (Ture Wairua); Omeka was the price paid for in the physical work, Ture Tangata and Hamuera was the price paid for in the annihilation to wiping out evil influences of Tohungaism and evil practices amongst Māori.¹⁴²



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¹⁴¹ Henderson 1963:77-78 This quote may seem long, but I want to get the "he knew his life was over" phrasing in full context.

¹⁴² <http://www.tehaahiratana.co.nz/history.html> Retrieved 20.10.06

¹⁴³ The three sons, Hamuera in the middle.

From <http://www.tehaahiratana.co.nz/history.html>

Arepa and Omeka

As mentioned, the names Arepa and Omeka are Māori transliterations of Alpha and Omega, from the Book of Revelations. The boys were named by Rātana's grandfather, who insisted that "those names were given by the Holy Spirit, to be materialised on the face of the earth"¹⁴⁴. In the last chapter of the Bible, the Son of Man is speaking;

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. (Rev 22:13-15)¹⁴⁵

In this passage, Alpha and Omega stands for Jesus Christ, describing a point when his work is being fulfilled, and the Revelations have come to an end. In the Rātana Church, they symbolise the central duality of the Church, the division between the spiritual and the physical, the two elements which makes it both a Church and a Movement, uniting tribal people under one God, while also working for the material benefit of these same, dispossessed people. The duality reflects a central theme in the traditional Māori world view, that of the clear distinction between *tapu* and *noa*, which evokes the Durkhemian distinction between the sacred and the profane.¹⁴⁶

The Power of Hamuera

In the passage from Revelations cited above, Alpha and Omega represent the Son of Man, holding power over the gates of Jerusalem, the gate which separates the believers from the 'others'. In the Rātana mythology, this particular gate is watched by the third son, Hamuera. Hamuera symbolised the rejection of traditional Māori spirituality. Traditional Māori spirituality involves an aspect of magic, and Rātana contributed much of the suffering at the time to the direct involvement of "sham

¹⁴⁴ *Akoranga Tuatahi*, The Teachings Book One, p 53

¹⁴⁵ King James Version

¹⁴⁶ Durkheim 1995 [1912]

tohunga, ... who professed to cure ... [and] were greatly feared for they could place malevolent spirits in objects, and could cause sickness and death”.¹⁴⁷ Under the heading “The Complete Rejection Of The Evil And Misleading Works Of Tohungaism And Devil Worship” the Akoranga describes the suffering of Hamuera:

Each time T. W. Rātana travelled out to drive out, or destroy those evil spirits, his small son Hamuera became very ill. Every time he did this work, Hamuera’s body suffered; great boils and carbuncles would break out on his body, especially on his neck, arms and legs. They were a terrible sight. However, when his father had finished that work and returned to the Pā here, the boils and carbuncles disappeared, but ugly pitted scars remained on his body.¹⁴⁸

While Arepa and Omeka are the ones most frequently remembered, Hamuera had the toughest job, as the passage above reveals. He was ‘responsible’ for the closing of the door to the past. This is the tricky part, the rejection of what is to this day referred to as ‘these things’, that is to say, the things we don’t speak openly about. This term demonstrates a lasting ambivalence, a sense that maybe the door to the past was not fully closed, maybe they just put up a fence, and today’s Mōrehu stand on their side of the fence, with an undisturbed view of the Māori spiritual tradition on the other side.

If Arepa is the spiritual, and Omeka is the physical, I would like to suggest that Hamuera represents the element of change, and breach with the Māori past of the Rātana Church. Hamuera symbolises the movement taking history into their own (divinely inspired) hands, and defining their own spirituality.

The Difficulties of Hamuera, or ‘why the door must not be touched’

It is my impression that the closing of the door towards the past was never fully completed. It could not be. For one thing, the whole Rātana movement, then as well as now, was very concerned with the welfare of the wider Māori society. Secondly all Mōrehu are (at least in the Māori sense of the word) related to people who are not Mōrehu. This means, among other things, that the scary spirituality lives on in the surroundings of all Mōrehu. This is the one thing they don’t want to speak about, what they refer to as ‘these things’, as illustrated by the following story.

¹⁴⁷ Henderson 1963:11

¹⁴⁸ *Akoranga Tuatahi*, The Teachings Book One, p 45.

One of my informants was telling me about the Māori House, (te Whare Māori, described below), as we were driving down to Rātana. She was describing the powers that can lie in *taonga*, treasures, especially carved pendants. The problem is, she said, the more you think about these things the stronger they will become; and if you allow a *taonga* to become too important to you, one day you wake up and it has made you sick, or caused harm in your life. “They get like that you know, if you let them.” This is why parts of the following text will not be approved of by several Mōrehu, who would (I presume) argue that by giving attention to the incompleteness of Hamuera, the problem will only become worse. On the spiritual side, I can neither confirm nor deny the validity of this. On the cultural side, however, it is my claim that by bringing these issues into the light, then at hopefully they can be better understood.

Trying to tell the Full Story

The way the story of Rātana, the man, the church and the movement, has been told in hindsight, Arepa and Omeka are awarded all the power and the glory. They are the beginning and the end of everything. But there were three brothers of importance, all of whom died and became equally ‘sanctified’. Further, it is my impression that only Arepa’s side of things was fully realised. At the time of T. W. Rātana, most Māori were more or less Christian, yet the old powers were just as strong as they had been all along. Rātana wanted to liberate people from the controlling aspects of traditional Māori spirituality. The most effective way of doing this was breaking *tapu*. With *tapu* broken, anything could happen. *Tapu* was the single most controlling aspect of the old world. Arepa, Omeka and Hamuera were the three children of Rātana who died in his lifetime. T. W. Rātana lived at a time when, due to poor economic and sanitary conditions, children died, this was part of life. Sceptics could argue that there are psychological mechanisms at work here, giving meaning to personal tragedies by explaining them as miracles. Faced with tragedy, humans struggle to find meaning, purpose. I do not claim to argue anything for sure. I just try to give various explanations, hoping they may shed some light on the meaning of the Rātana religion. In this way I want to describe the different aspects of the movement, including both their success as well as their failure. While trying to explain using their own terms, the following is nevertheless entirely my own version of events.

5.2 Arepa; Re-formulating Christianity



The Survivors; Nga Mōrehu

As briefly mentioned, T. W. Rātana found his following in the growing number of Māori living in the cities. These people felt alienated on two sides; removed from the traditional world, and excluded by the white one. In the hierarchical traditional Māori world, many held a low social standing to begin with. For those who held a low status in traditional society, the ties to this society were easy to sever. Arriving in the cities, many unable to find work, they found themselves surrounded by other Māori of similar status, united by a shared frustration and experience of powerlessness.

I have also heard mentioned that the ones who would end up following Rātana were the ones who had sold their land, and thus had broken the traditional rules.

Whatever their sins, many of the first followers of Rātana were lost people. People excluded by both of these overwhelming power structures, caught between the traditional Māori 'rock' and 'the hard place' of early 20th century urbanisation. They were living in times of drastic change, unable to make the changes work for them. This is just what Rātana did; he made the changes work. He built a movement based on Christian solidarity among the dispossessed. Based on Christian faith, and the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit, the movement was nevertheless of Māori, for Māori. In this, the movement sought to act in the times, wanting to improve the

¹⁴⁹ <http://www.tehaahiratana.co.nz/history.html>

physical living conditions for its followers. In this attempt the Rātana movement found an unexpected friend in the Labour Party. At the time this was a newly formed alliance of Workers Unions, actively working to advocate workers rights, and still untainted by actual power.

A Chosen People

According to the official teachings of the Church, the Holy Spirit had searched all over the world, before coming;

back to Aotearoa to choose you, the Māori people. ... Rātana, I choose you as the Mouthpiece of God for the multitude of this land. Unite the Māori people, turning them to Jehovah of the Thousands, for this is His compassion to all of you.¹⁵⁰

In Rātana's autobiography, the Holy Spirit says: "I have come to you the Māori People, the smallest Race of People on the Face of the Earth, to the People who do not claim authority".¹⁵¹ These are the only quotes from the Akoranga¹⁵² which distinctly emphasise the role of the Māori people in all of this. Both these quotes emphasise that the Māori people were chosen, out of all the people in the world, to be the carrier of the message of the Holy Spirit. So, from this chosen people, one man is especially chosen; chosen to speak directly on behalf of the Holy Spirit. At the end of Rātana's own version of events, the Holy Spirit returns to ask:

Wiremu! I have been deliberating whether to make you a Holy person, or just an ordinary man... My reply was, whatever you so desire oh Lord. ... The Holy Spirit replied, So be it! You shall remain an ordinary man. Tohungaism, Prophets, Intellectuals¹⁵³ will not rise in your presence; You shall destroy all things Evil..¹⁵⁴

As the story goes, the Mōrehu were the chosen ones. Much like the first Christian Jews, they were the few amongst the Chosen people, who really understood the new message from God. Mōrehu means remnant, survivor. As it has been presented to me by most people, referring to themselves as Mōrehu, the term means that they are the

¹⁵⁰ Henderson 1963:25

¹⁵¹ *Akoranga Tuatahi*, The Teachings Book One, p 57

¹⁵² The official teachings, see 1.2

¹⁵³ Notice that Intellectuals are mentioned in the same category as Tohungas, traditional spiritual leaders. This points to an anti-intellectual attitude, which is the reason why Henderson was until recently the only one who published a book about the Rātana Church, and also why some will be unhappy with my thesis.

¹⁵⁴ *Akoranga Tuatahi*, The Teachings Book One, p 59

surviving children of God, in line with the semi-chosen status I have described above. The time of T. W. Rātana was a time of suffering for the country in general, and Māori in particular. There was great need for unity and hope, and this is what T. W. Rātana had to offer the people:

From now on I will not address you according to your Tribes, or Sub-Tribes: It doesn't matter where you come from in this land, those of you who are in this Māramatanga will be welcomed as follows: Welcome oh Mōrehu – that is what my Chosen People are called.”¹⁵⁵

New Words in a New World

In order to emphasise the Christian basis of Rātana's new Māori faith, new terms were introduced for spiritual matters. As mentioned the faith was formulated in the Māori language, *te reo* Māori, within a Māori cultural setting. Thus these new terms were necessary to draw a line between the past and the present at the time, turning their back on parts of the old world of Māori.

A central new term was changing the word *karakia*, meaning prayer, or magical incantation, to *whakamoemiti*, meaning to thank, praise. This word has come to mean Christian prayer in general. The Māori word *atua*, meaning god, was changed to *matua*, father. Likewise the Christian term Jesus Christ, *Ihu Karaiti*, was taken out of use and replaced with the word *Tama*, son, because the Māori felt the white people were taking the name of Christ in vain. Thus was formulated the Holy Trinity; *te Tokoturu Tapu*, consisting of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit; *te Matua, Tama me te Wairua Tapu*. Also interesting here is that the word *tapu*,¹⁵⁶ described above as meaning sacred in a separate and forbidden sense, here comes to mean holy, in the Christian sense. Today this is common in mainstream Māori Christianity; for instance the Bible is called *Te Paipera Tapu*, The Holy Book.

¹⁵⁵ *Akoranga Tuatahi*, The Teachings Book One, p 12

¹⁵⁶ Described briefly in 3.2 and further in 5.3

The Closing of the Bible

T. W. Rātana said that “in one of my hands is the Bible; in the other is the Treaty of Waitangi”.¹⁵⁷ Having described the Treaty of Waitangi in Chapter two, I will now turn my attention to the Bible. In his early life, T. W. Rātana made an attempt at Bible School:

[In 1897] my Grandfather – Te Rātana, decided that I was to attend a Theological School; from then on I began reading the Bible, my thoughts being to find out how long it would take before I completed it. I had almost finished the Bible, when my eyesight began to fail me as a result of staying up late at night to read. Unfortunately I was unable to complete reading the Bible. Following this – I turned to Physical/Material side of the world, backing horses, consuming alcohol. As a result of this, my Grandfather’s desire of my attending Theological School was not fulfilled.¹⁵⁸

Years later, T. W. Rātana became the leader of his own brand new church, and needed to take a stance on theological matters. According to historian Bronwyn Elsemore it was in 1927 that he “declared that the Bible was now ‘closed’ and that no further interpretation was to take place”.¹⁵⁹ This provoked various reactions, among the other churches, and also amongst the growing number of members of this new Church, some of whom left the movement because of this. The Akoranga comments;

That [T. W. Rātana] said we should leave the Bible aside” ... The Founder of our Church did say this, ... for the Heads of various Churches were always using quotations from the Bible as “Bullets” in their fighting against each other and arguments about whose Church was right, and so on. That is why Mr Rātana said to then at that time – “Stop mis-using the Bible, stop using it in your arguments; leave it aside and let me explain its teachings to you”¹⁶⁰

In my experience, among the Mōrehu of today the Bible is usually referred to in an implicit way, as if there is complete agreement regarding the content of the Book. It is my impression that many Mōrehu are familiar with stories from the Bible mainly through anecdotal knowledge. Some Mōrehu, particularly those whose fathers were ministers, did attend ‘mainstream’ Sunday-school as children, and have studied parts of the Bible since. The fact unfortunately remains, that most Mōrehu statistically

¹⁵⁷ Henderson 1963:55

¹⁵⁸ *Akoranga Tuatahi*, The Teachings Book One, p 52

¹⁵⁹ Elsemore 1989:340

¹⁶⁰ *Akoranga Tuatahi*, The Teachings Book One, p 38

represent the part of the population with the lowest level of education, as is the case with Māori in general.

Further down on the same page, there is an unaccredited quote, offering this advice;

When we read the Bible, we should study each text closely and with an open mind; do not depend on someone else to teach the Bible to you, but sit down yourselves and read and seek for yourselves the Fruits and Treasures that are in the Bible.¹⁶¹

It is my impression that this represents the wishes of the Church elders, that the Mōrehu should have better knowledge of these things. On that note, I was recently informed that Uri Whakatupuranga (the team responsible for the website, described in 1.2) have been allowed by the “Father Committee of the Church”, te Komiti Matua o te Hahi, to work out a proposition for the “Bible and Treaty College” that they wish to establish at Rātana Pā.

¹⁶¹ *Akoranga Tuatahi*, The Teachings Book One, p 38

5.3 Hamuera; Breaking off from the Past

There is a saying that ‘Māori see the world with their back to the future, facing the past’.¹⁶² This involves that Māori are intensely concerned with their past. So, for Māori to choose to set aside traditional concepts, especially the most important one, the most dangerous and feared of them all; *tapu*, then there needed to be a very good reason for doing so. According to the Rātana adherents, the reason was the Holy Spirit, and according to their new world view, Hamuera was the facilitator. He made change possible; he died to allow for something new to come, and something old had to be left behind. Hamuera symbolises, as well as personifies, that change, the shift from a past which at the time seemed to have little left to offer, and a future full of possibility, with a brand new spirituality, a Church of Māori by Māori for Māori, on their own terms.

Breaking Tapu

The followers of T. W. Rātana belong to a chosen people, their leader especially so. This provided the authority, popular as well as spiritual, for the most controversial move; the explicit break with Māori tradition. The most significant issue in this break with Māori tradition was the lifting of *tapu*. In the traditional sense, *tapu* means sacred as well as forbidden. *Tapu* is a spiritual boundary, setting aside sacred areas for sacred actions. For instance, the process of carving is *tapu*. After a carving is completed, a ritual must be performed, often involving the sprinkling of water. This makes the object *noa*, which means secular, safe to wear. This is the traditional way of lifting *tapu*. What Rātana did, was he broke *tapu* altogether. This is by far the most controversial aspect of the Rātana Church, as seen by other Māori.

During a tour of Rātana Pā which I was fortunate to attend, the guide told us that in many places, there where *tapu* areas rich with food, in the sea as well as on land. Because of *tapu*, this food was unreachable, and at the time, there was much poverty and suffering in the land, and people were starving. So Rātana would travel around and lift the *tapu* in these places, allowing people to gather food. This shows that in some cases T. W. Rātana’s influence was as much economical as religious. But more

¹⁶² I have no formal reference for this one, but I have heard it said many times.

importantly, it shows Rātana's power as a leader who was courageous and strong enough to break with the powerful Māori tradition.

An example of breaking the tapu-rules can be found in the way the *marae* (meeting house) complex at Rātana Pā is built. The *whare nui*, (main house, the house of the ancestors), the *whare kai*, (the eating house) and the *whare paku*, (the bathroom section) are all connected. Traditionally, the ancestors' house is *tapu*, and the eating house, in fact all cooked food, is *noa*, which is not only secular, but anti-tapu, and actively used to lift *tapu*. In the minds of traditional Māori *tapu* and *noa* do not mix. To put the bathroom in the middle of all this is just outrageous, according to traditional rules and values. The *Whare Māori* is another building at Rātana Pā which breaks the traditional rules. I have spoken to young secular Māori, who are not Rātana, who consider it personally as well as culturally and spiritually offensive. This 'Māori House' is further described below.

Another controversial aspect of the Rātana religion concerns genealogy, *whakapapa*. The ability to recite one's genealogy is seen as central to being a culturally knowledgeable Māori. This knowledge is also crucial in land claim matters, because with knowledge of genealogy comes historical knowledge about the land, who lived where and when. Therefore the very existence of this knowledge is important for proving a tribal connection to the land, politically as well as culturally. According to T. W. Rātana, people were acquiring this knowledge for financial reasons (land), and not for spiritual or cultural reasons, and this was seen to corrupt the knowledge. So when Rātana told his followers not to learn their *whakapapa*, the reason given was to avoid materialism and corruption. For many Mōrehu today, *whakapapa* starts in 1918, with the first followers of Rātana.

T. W. Rātana introduced a whole new way of relating to spiritual as well as cultural matters. In many ways he simplified things, making daily life easier for his followers. This way, people no longer had to fear the consequences of breaking tapu, fearing ghosts and all the other ambivalent spiritual creatures that live in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Process of Breaking Tapu at the Time

With the breaking of *tapu*, a boundary was set, between the past and the present of the time. The exact procedure used by T. W. Rātana to break *tapu* is unknown to me. However one of my informants, a young artist and carver, told me that Sir Apirana Ngata would make a similar break from the past, when he taught carving. Ngata was a famous Māori with western education, and a powerful political voice. He would pull a string across the room, and then he would say that on his side was the old world of Māori. On that side, strict *tapu* rules would be observed. Incantations were used to ask Tane¹⁶³ for the wood and to protect the *tapu* process, and no cooked food and women were allowed near the place where carving took place. On the other side of the string, his students would carve their own carvings, in the ‘new world’, a space free from the rigid rules, without fear of *tapu*. The students couldn’t enter Ngata’s side, but he would teach them from his side, where the old rules still applied, and on the other side of the ‘fence’, *tapu* was broken, without causing harm.

My informant believes that this is what Rātana was trying to do. He wanted to free the people from the old world, a world of strict rules, frequent incantations, and fear of *tapu*. Being a devout Christian, Rātana went about it in a different way. In many ways, it was a scary world, and the fear persists among many Māori today, as the traditional forces of old are not denied, but simply refused.

Another one of my informants also touched on this subject. He said he had thought a lot about how things would have been if they had kept their old religion. Among other things, that would have involved a lot of praying, all the time, all day long, he said.

“If we had kept that religion, we would have kept all of our culture, cause it was all integral. ... We still do some of those things, but we don’t do everything. But then you know, is that necessarily a bad thing? I’m not sure I’d wanna be chopping some dude’s head off, and drying it out, and gloating over it. Or worse yet, being the dude who’s head got cut off ... Back in the days, the average Māori fellow, his whole life was dictated by his chief and the Tohunga. Now we have a lot more individual freedom, possibly.. Possibly?”

¹⁶³ God of trees and forests, eldest son of Rangi and Papa, the one who forced them apart. See 3.2

The Tohunga Suppression Act

For Māori, like for so many other indigenous peoples, modernisation was not an internal, gradual process, but was brought on by an external power, and forced upon them. The result was a sort of culture shock, and the after effects of that are still around. As described in 3.3, during this transitional period new spiritual leaders emerged, blending the old with the new, sometimes in conflicting ways. These conflicting reactions to modernisation, combined with the bias of white, Christian rulers, led to the formal suppression of traditional Māori religion in the Tohunga Suppression Act of 1908. The Act states that:

“Whereas designing persons practise on the superstitions and credulity of the Māori people by pretending to possess supernatural powers ... and thereby induce the Māoris to neglect their proper occupations and to gather into meetings their substance is consumed and their minds are unsettled ... every person ... professing supernatural powers ... or foretelling of future events, is liable ... to a fine not exceeding twenty-five pounds”. (Henderson 1963:11)

This law criminalising all Tohunga, all Māori spiritual leaders who were not explicitly Christian, was never enforced. It was Dr Maui Pomare, a Māori doctor and politician who in the minds of some Māori was going too far with his Pākehā education, who “begged the government for the measure to abolish the ‘demoralising practise of witchcraft’”, according to Dr Ranginui Walker.¹⁶⁴ So, while some Māori were embracing modern practises, others were fighting against them, leaving the Māori communities in internal conflict.

All this makes up the scene on which Tahupotiki Wiremu Rātana entered. After receiving the Holy Spirit in 1918, carrying the Bible in one hand and the Treaty of Waitangi in the other, he arrived with a promise of a new era for the Māori people. In effect what he did during his ministry was to construct a way for his people to follow this new Christian God which had revealed himself to him, while at the same time allowing people to reshape their own Māori identity. As a religious as well as political leader, he ensured his followers’ identity as ‘a people’, a collective unit larger than the sum of its parts. This way, he could offer his followers the personal and individual freedom prescribed by modernity and to some extent by the New Testament, while retaining the security of their collective Māori culture. What started out as an attempt

¹⁶⁴ Walker 1990:181

at building pan-Māori identity, a modern phenomenon, ended up becoming in effect a new non-tribal tribal unit; te Iwi Mōrehu.

5.4 Te Whare Māori



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First Hui at Rātana Pā

The traditional Māori meetinghouse, the house of ancestors, *whare tupuna*, is usually decorated with elaborate carvings, depicting ancestors. The carvings are thought to manifest these ancestors, and the carving process is *tapu*. As they depict ancestors, the carvings are tribal, which is the official reason why they are not used by the Rātana Church. Te Whare Māori literally means The Māori House. It is a small carved house next to the *marae*, the only carved house at Rātana Pā. Some call it the museum, others ‘the boogey house’, ghost house.

The first I ever heard of it was just before my first visit to the Pā. A Māori anthropologist who is not Mōrehu told me they have this house. He said the house is filled with precious treasures, *taonga*, and it’s ill-managed and rotting away. He told me the Church considered the old artefacts to be evil relics from the past and that in his opinion the place was a disgrace, a tragedy. *Taonga* can refer to all sorts of treasures, material as well as cultural. In daily speech, the term usually refers to

¹⁶⁵ Te Whare Māori, my photo

carved pendants. According to tradition, they contain a spirit and they are often blessed before being taken into use, in a more-or-less Christian ritual.¹⁶⁶

During the seven hour drive from Auckland to Rātana Pā, my informant was telling me about the church, trying to prepare me. I asked her about the *whare Māori*, and she told me the *whare* was a prison, for *taonga* gone bad. These *taonga* had turned against their owners, at a time of turmoil and suffering in the land. Specifically they had been upset that this new faith was rejecting them. In the *whare*, they are under the *mana* (authority) of the Rātana Church, locked up and unable to harm anyone. This is why they need to stay there, forever. Also, she told me that it is best not to give them any attention, as this will only increase their power.

When I arrived at the Pā, I was told that the *whare* was opened once a year, for about an hour or so, during the Jan 25th hui, which was the one we were attending. But it turned out the *whare* was closed that year, as “the board is currently developing a project that will renovate this building”, according to the note posted on the window. So I left the Pā without seeing the *whare*, merely peeking through the window into the dusty room. Already at this time I sensed a reluctance to even speak about the place, seemingly dismissing it as not particularly interesting. I felt myself increasingly intrigued by this house, and for a while I considered making it the main topic of my thesis. This was before I realized just how controversial and difficult, not to mention disrespectful that would have been.

Nevertheless, there is an ongoing attempt at developing the house into a museum. This is partly due to pressure from families who are applying to have their family *taonga* returned. This is apparently a slow process, and due to the spiritual concerns mentioned above, this is highly controversial.

But the house is not only filled with scary *taonga*. The reason why it is referred to as a museum as well as a boogey house is that among its contents are the crutches and eye-glasses of those who were healed by T. W. Rātana. These items were apparently intended for exhibit, so that coming generations can learn about what happened. Thus, the house has two aspects; one of containing the forces of dangerous objects, warning

¹⁶⁶ The concept of *taonga* is further explained in 3.1

and protecting against harmful forces, the other that of teaching about the miracles of the Holy Spirit as manifested through the work of T. W. Rātana.



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Third Hui at Rātana Pā

A week before my fieldwork ended, I attended the annual Apotoro *hui*, where the ministers of the Rātana Church come together to discuss their work in the parishes. On the last day of the *hui*, which was to become my last day at the Pā, I was running around trying to get a few more interviews with people who were busy arranging the *hui*, and thus temporarily unavailable. I was quite anxious to make the most out of the end of my fieldwork. And so I walked into the office, much like on my first day at the Pā, and I asked the secretary: “Do you think it might be possible for me to perhaps see the Whare Māori?” She gave me the same sceptical look she had given me on my first visit, and said something like “maybe, it might be possible, but it’s really not done, and I’m not sure”. At that moment, the head of the Church Wardens, the *Katipa*, walked by, and I was told to ask him. We had a long talk in the Church office, about the ‘special’ nature of the place, and he concluded that I should ask the shop-keeper, who is also the ‘keeper of the keys to special places’. Also, I had to promise not to

¹⁶⁷ Crutches inside the Whare Māori, picture taken after restoration work began
From <http://www.tehaahiratana.co.nz/history.html>

take any pictures or make notes while inside the *whare*. We proceeded to the shop, and after a bit of a talk with the shop-keeper, he said that “sure, why not”, and apologized in advance for the state of the house.

The Chief-Katipa, myself and the daughter of one of the Apotoros eventually went down to the *whare* to have a look. By this time I had heard several stories about visits to the *whare*, some of them dramatic. Apparently some react quite strongly to the ghostly presence in the *whare*. Our visit, however, was quite sober. Due to the plans for development, the artefacts had been taken down from the walls, and the interior looked more or less like the picture below. All the pictures had been taken off the walls, and the crutches were bundled together in the corner. Along the walls, the tables displayed many *taonga*, scattered around and surrounded by pieces of paint flaking off the walls.



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¹⁶⁸ Inside Whare Māori, after development work
<http://www.tehaahiratana.co.nz/history.html>



My notes, scribbled down afterwards, reveal a long list of treasures. Most of the items along the walls were carved pendants and traditional artefacts, mostly greenstone and some bone. There were traditional Māori weapons, *mere* (short flat club) and *taiaha* (long club), next to guns and other weapons from the time of T. W. Rātana. In the mid section stood two busts of Māori men, carved with *moko* (tattoos), and wearing traditional *piu piu* (flax clothing). A whole display case was filled with old watches. On the floor at the back stood a cardboard box filled with large un-cut chunks of greenstone. The Katipa kicked the box, and told me many of these things were not good. On one table in the room were two large, ornate bibles, next to several old rosaries. Among the artefacts along the walls were eye-glasses, as well as beaded necklaces, only the beads remaining, as the thread had withered away with time. In addition to all of this, there were items seemingly in storage, boxes of stuff, what looked like accounting books, and an old printing press, apparently the one used to print the earliest editions of the newsletter, the *Whetu Mārama*.

Many of these priceless historical objects are considered cultural heritage, as well as family heirlooms. In many cases, little or no information about them remains today. This makes identification and preservation difficult. According to many Mōrehu, this is the intention of the house, as these are dangerous things.

¹⁶⁹ Inside Whare Māori, before development plans
<http://www.tehaahiratana.co.nz/history.html>

‘These things’

It is my impression that, as indicated by the name of the building, ‘the Māori House’ seems to symbolise the most difficult and controversial parts of the Mōrehu’s relationship with their own Māori origins and identity. It goes straight to the painful core of the issue, the rejection of traditional Māori spirituality. Furthermore, the ambivalence and avoidance Mōrehu seem to show the building, gradually revealed a very interesting point to me. While T. W. Rātana rejected ‘these things’, they are still there, and the fear that people have of them is very much real. I gradually realized that while the Rātana Church originally wanted to eliminate these spiritual powers, today the Church functions as protection against them, in a practical sense.

The avoidance of the subject is evident in the vague term ‘these things’, which is often used to refer to traditional Māori spiritual powers. As mentioned, ‘these things’ include animated objects as well as the ghosts of the deceased as well as several different nature spirits. There is no term in Māori that refers to all of this, just like there is no one word for ‘religion’. The notion of *tapu* is one that protects against ‘these things’, by keeping them separate and forbidden to approach. ‘These things’ can be benevolent, but they can also be very dangerous, and have traditionally always been regarded with some amount of fear.

Te Whare Māori in the Literature

The ambivalence and avoidance towards traditional Māori spirituality is reflected in the brevity with which it is mentioned in the literature. The official teaching books of the Church, the Akoranga, mention it only once, briefly, under the headline “The Complete Rejection of the Evil and Misleading Works of Tohungaism and of Devil Worship”:

There were also many Treasures and Artefacts upon which the people believed the Tohunga had imposed evil spells, and which they believed were causing pain, sickness and death among them. Many people handed these kinds of Artefacts to T.W. Rātana that he might cast out the spells put upon them.. Those Artefacts may now be found in the Whare Māori (Museum) here at Rātana Pā.¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ *Akoranga Tuatahi*, The Teachings Book One, p 45

J. M. Henderson, who wrote the only academic book on the Church, mentions the house in passing as the only carved house of the movement, as carvings are necessarily tribal, and thus are seen to lead to division. His emphasis is on the break from the past, the *whare* symbolizing both the past itself, as well as the rejection of it.

The website, tehaahiratana.co.nz, has devoted several long passages to this topic. In speaking with one of the main people behind this website, published by the controversial group Uri Whakatupuranga (the New Generation), I mentioned my intentions at the time, of trying to research the *whare*. His eyes grew wide, and he said; "Oh no, they'll never let you get near that thing", referring to the elders of the church. He told me that the *whare* was gifted from the tribe Ngati Tuwharetoa, and that he had personally taken inventory of every single item in the whare. He said that he was never scared when he went in there, because he knew the powers couldn't touch him, his faith was too strong for them. On the website he writes:

Many people handed various kinds of artefacts that were infected by curses over to T.W Rātana Mangai so he might cast out those evil spells that were placed upon them by the tohunga. ... some of these artefacts have a far "darker side", and thus should be not be taken from the Whare Māori. Others are suitable for exhibit in order to enhance the faith of those believers who understand the power of Jehovah's Māramatanga and miracles performed through T.W.Rātana Mangai. ... It is taught that these evil spirits in some of the objects were only 'put to 'sleep'. Mōrehu must not go back to the old evil customs from the stone age of our forefathers or the Atua Māori bowing down to false idols and praying to false Atua worship, this would awaken causing harm and destruction tenfold. The old saying is: "Ko Hamuera Te Whakaotinga" or Samuel's work is the Annihilation of Tohungaism.¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ <http://www.tehaahiratana.co.nz/history.html>

5.5 Omeka; the Challenges of Politics



Omeka was the son who was ‘in charge of’ politics. Omeka represents the last ten years of the ministry of T. W. Rātana. In 1928, at the onset of what would become ‘the Depression’, T. W. Rātana went into political work for the benefit and welfare of the people, taking the new name Piri-Wiri-Tua. In 1936 the Labour Party won their first election, promising “a benign socialist millennium”.¹⁷³ At this point, T. W. Rātana formalised the alliance with the Labour Party. The agreement was that Labour would not contest the four Māori electorates (corresponding to the four Māori seats in Parliament), while Rātana’s representatives, if elected, would support Labour in the House of Parliament. Rātana had a strong position among the Māori people as a highly regarded leader, and for the newly formed Labour Party, the collaboration was very valuable.

The idea of this alliance is strong among the Mōrehu; as the alliance was made by the founder of the Church, it is considered to be of spiritual significance. I have spoken to several Mōrehu, who told me of the first time they were old enough to vote, being informed by their parents to vote Labour, as this is the Mōrehu vote.

¹⁷² <http://www.tehaahiratana.co.nz/history.html>

¹⁷³ King 2003:355

The Rātana-Labour Alliance 2004

Does this imply that the Rātana church should leave all politics to Labour? For decades it seemed so, as the Rātana-Labour alliance held all the Māori seats in Parliament from 1943 until 1980.¹⁷⁴ Increasingly, this has become controversial. The deal was made at a time when Māori were the under-class of a nation suffering from the depression, a time when the Labour Party were opposing the established white power, advocating rights for the common people, a goal shared by T. W. Rātana. Since then, Labour has become part of the established powers, and there is an increasing sentiment among Māori, that Labour does not have the best interest of Māori in mind. This became obvious during my fieldwork in 2004, with the Foreshore and Seabed Legislation (see Interlude).

In 1999 the present Labour Government was elected, partly on the basis of their ‘closing the gap programme’, intended to ‘close the gap’ between Māori and Pākehā. Thus it may seem that this is still the same Labour Party that T. W. Rātana turned to for support. In January 2000 then newly elected Labour Prime Minister Helen Clark delivered a speech at Rātana Pā, taking

... personal responsibility for one of the country's most intractable problems - closing the social and economic gaps between the races.
"The economic and social policy changes which have taken place in New Zealand through the 1980s and 1990s have seen the position of both Maori and Pacific peoples deteriorate relative to the others. That has to change."¹⁷⁵

In August 2006 the New Zealand Herald headline read: “Closing the gaps' policy fails Maori, report shows”. This article delivers the following key indicators:

Maori life expectancy: 89 per cent of non-Maori.
Maori employment: 80 per cent of non-Maori.
Maori poverty: 150 per cent of non-Maori.¹⁷⁶

These numbers reveal that in spite of all the good intentions, there is something not working, something is very wrong. Many Māori wish to attribute this to the errors of the Labour Party. Nevertheless compared to the alternatives, at least Labour tried.

¹⁷⁴ With an exception for Eastern from 1963-1967. Cox 1993

¹⁷⁵ New Zealand Herald article: Clark to take up challenge of racial gap. 25.01.2000,
<http://www.nzherald.co.nz/search/story.cfm?storyid=A9CC9DBC-39D8-11DA-8E1B-A5B353C55561>

¹⁷⁶ New Zealand Herald, Source: Social Report 2006
<http://www.nzherald.co.nz/search/story.cfm?storyid=00085700-5E95-14D8-91A283027AF1010F>

Furthermore, history reveals the Rātana-Labour alliance to be a significant source, from which there continues to emerge attempts at Māori selfdetermination.

Two times in history has there been made an attempt at forming a political party exclusively for Māori. The first time was in 1979, when Matiu Rata, a Mōrehu, left Labour to form the Mana Motuhake Party. Rata was not re-elected. The second time was in 2004, when Tariana Turia, also Mōrehu, left Labour to co-found the Māori Party. She was re-elected. The Labour candidate running against her was the son of the Tumuaki of the Rātana Church.

May 3rd 2004 the Māori Land March walked on to the *marae* at Rātana Pā, on their way to Wellington. The New Zealand Herald reported that:

Rātana Church leaders were told to "wake up" and "rise up" when the hikoi against the foreshore and seabed legislation arrived at their marae near Wanganui yesterday.

The challenge was presented to the paepae (traditional panel of speakers) at Rātana Pā by those from the visiting group.¹⁷⁷

The official leaders of the Rātana Church were not talking to the press that day. But the other son of the Tumuaki, the one not running for Labour, was talking. He told the press that:

"There was a covenant between the church and the Labour Party but that is on its way out the door because Labour has failed to deliver what it promised us." ... Mrs Turia said the church's covenant with Labour was not set in concrete.¹⁷⁸

Conservative Mōrehu vs. Māoridom

Since T. W. Rātana's death in 1939, a religiously grounded conservatism has ruled the Rātana Church, freezing everything at the point of his death, not changing since. This is hard for the young heirs of the movement to understand. After the founding of the Māori Party in 2004, Labour, now a traditional power base in its own right, hardly seems the natural choice for many Māori. The Rātana Church has no official

¹⁷⁷ New Zealand Herald 04.05.04, by Renee Kiriona
<http://www.nzherald.co.nz/search/story.cfm?storyid=69FE6B30-39E1-11DA-8E1B-A5B353C55561>
re-retrieved 05.11.06

¹⁷⁸ same as above

connection with the new Māori Party and I had the impression that among its members the Labour Party remains strong among the older generation.

The Rātana movement created a unique combination of traditional Māori and modern European political culture during the ministry of T. W. Rātana. In my view, this combination, this one culture encompassing the two, has much to offer New Zealand of today. However, according to Lindsay Cox:

“The Kotahitanga [Unity] movement of Rātana had all the ingredients of a solidarity based on dispossession, belief in God, cultural uniformity, and political determination. Missing was the tribal base, traditional leadership, and confidence in conservative Māori hierarchies.”¹⁷⁹

In the latter half of the 20th century, the Māori people went from being a native race under European dominance to become an indigenous people staging their own cultural renaissance. This is a dramatic change, just like the reverse process of colonisation the century before had been. But the end of the 20th century were different times (as all times are), and change has become all the more rapid through the years.

Through all of this, the Mōrehu have been a distinctive group by their own choice and admission. That is, the ‘Official Mōrehu’ as defined by the Church committee. In particular the elders at the Pā, but also elders from all over the country, have taken a conservative stance. Unlike other Māori who have been fighting for minority rights and against suppression, the Mōrehu have lived in the beginning of their own New Kingdom, centred around their own Jerusalem (Rātana Pā). This has left conservative Mōrehu at odds with much of the rest of Māoridom, something which became increasingly clear during my fieldwork, with the political events that took place in 2004 when the time for Māori to vote Labour seemed long gone. But conservative Mōrehu are not only at odds with Māoridom. Younger Mōrehu, living in different tribal areas, grew up during the Māori Renaissance. Many of them identify more with the general Māori tendencies of the time, than with the church elders at the Pā.

¹⁷⁹ Cox 1993:127

The Authority and Knowledge of the Elders

In traditional Māori society, the elders, the *kaumatua*, hold a position and an authority *mana*, which is unparalleled in European culture. The true, correct knowledge, the knowledge which contains the *mana*, is that which is held by the elders. Transmission of this knowledge must traditionally be done orally, face to face, from an elder to a young one who is considered worthy. In ‘pre-contact’ times, all knowledge was oral, and the elders were literally the history books of the community. From this perspective, knowledge must be earned, and cannot be demanded. Consequently, these past decades several elders have taken a significant amount of knowledge to their graves. In many cases, as I approached Mōrehu to ask them for an interview, the reply was that “I know nothing, I’m only young, ask the elders, they know“. Right here, there is a certain parallel between some of my younger informants, and my own quest for knowledge, for the sake of my own education. It was always my intention to talk to Mōrehu of all ages and at all levels of commitment to the Church. To me, the voices of my youngest informants are as relevant as those of the staunch *kaumatua*, who (perhaps wisely) chose not to sit down for interviews. However, this failure of mine to interview *kaumatua* can, from a traditional Māori perspective, be seen as a fact that discredits my research.

It is my impression that there is a certain mutual impatience between young and old Māori. The elders want to be awarded the respect and authority which their culture grants them. The young people want the elders to ‘get with the times’, and accept that the world is in fact changing. I have experienced this latter impatience myself.

However:

Kaumatua and kuia¹⁸⁰ are elders and, as such, should be respected, cared for and acknowledged. They are respected for their life experience; they are respected for their knowledge; they are respected wise counsel. ... Thus kaumatua have an honoured place in the whanau.¹⁸¹

The kaumatua are the holders of knowledge, and as such they are precious taonga¹⁸², treasures of the community.

¹⁸⁰ Female elder

¹⁸¹ Tauroa and Tauroa 1986:123

¹⁸² Treasure, see 3.1 and 5.4

The End?

The Beginning

It took me a long time to gain an understanding of the Rātana Church world view; how the different elements work together. Arriving in New Zealand I had some previous knowledge of Māori culture and politics. But I had little knowledge about the Rātana Church, as this was before the website tehaahiratana.co.nz was launched, and my only sources about the Rātana Church were two short articles posted online, (written by Keith Newman, who in 2006 published the book *Rātana Revisited*). I had originally wanted to study the “religious expressions in popular music (hip hop/reggae) amongst the Māori of Aotearoa New Zealand”. I was interested in how the ‘young generation’ negotiates their individual identity in what I understand to be an increasingly complex world. The philosopher Charles Taylor points out that “[we] define our identity always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us. ... [The] making and sustaining of our identity ... remains dialogical throughout our lives.”¹⁸³ As the Māori culture is very concerned with the collective, I was interested in how traditional collectivism is maintained or re-shaped in a modern world.

Having abandoned my original research project, I arrived in New Zealand to study the Rātana Church. My host family, who were Māori anthropologists and not Mōrehu, told me: “they are not really Māori these Rātanas. They abandoned *tapu* and *whakapapa*, they abandoned tribalism.” These are concepts which my friend saw as essential for ‘being Māori’. It was all very discouraging. But then I travelled down to Rātana Pā to see for myself. What I saw was a group of people very much concerned with their Māori identity, although in their own way. The faith of the Mōrehu, in the healing powers of the Holy Spirit, gives them the strength to be different, a special kind of Māori.

During my first visit to Rātana Pā for the January 25th *hui*, I was introduced to the brother of my informant. As I was off buying our burgers, my friend had told him that

¹⁸³ Taylor quoted in Baumann 1999:107

what I was doing was “like theology, without God”. So when I came and joined them, I had no idea of the challenging conversation I was about to have. “You will notice that both my arms and my legs are crossed”, was his opening remark, accompanied by a sceptical glare. How could I be studying this Church, and leave God out of it? It seemed that I was missing the point completely. And so I stuttered and tried to explain. In my confusion I made my first faux-pas; I put the cake I had so proudly bought for desert, down on a chair, as there were no tables where we sat. In Māori culture, I might as well have put it on a toilet-seat, and no-one would eat it. After a while, however, I managed to explain that I’m not ignoring God. I am, however, putting the people at the centre of my research, allowing mine as well as their relationship with God to remain personal. I explained that I was studying religion in terms of ethnicity, which is what I thought I was doing at the time. The term ‘ethnic’ seemed crucial; “so, tell me, are there others? Other religions that are ethnic, like us?” I explained that according to ‘the theoretical definition of ethnicity’,¹⁸⁴ we are all ethnic; in the sense of belonging to a social group that gives a sense of belonging and a contrast to others. This was a new way of thinking about ethnicity, and my new friend was quite surprised that even I, being white and Norwegian, had ethnicity.

Many times, while talking to Mōrehu, I asked them about what I understood to be a ‘Māori-Christian Church’. I was often corrected; “It’s not a Māori Church, it’s a Christian Church, with Māori people. But it’s for everyone.” I have tried to show in my thesis, however, that it *is* a Māori-Christian Church. Clearly, it is Māori in the ethnicity of its members. But beyond that, it remains a Māori-Christian Church in the Māori cultural practices, and most importantly in the Māori identity of the Mōrehu; although not proclaimed, nevertheless ever present.

Bridging the Gaps

T. W. Rātana wanted to build bridges in a time of conflict. A time when the white people had ruled New Zealand for nearly a century and the Māori population had been on a steady decrease for a long time; their culture was thought to be heading for extinction, and the cultural shock of colonisation was bringing division to Māori communities. Some Māori were advocating the abandonment of a traditional world

¹⁸⁴ Barth 1969, see 1.3

view, for the advancements of modern civilisation, medical science, and above all; Christianity. Others were following religious leaders preaching the rejection of anything European. Some religious leaders were trying to resolve these things peacefully, only to have their intentions understood by the rulers as hostility and separatism.

Against the backdrop of all this, T. W. Rātana wished to build a Christian Church for Māori, which would also present Māori grievances to the rulers, seeking an adjustment of the situation. In their understanding the spirit of the Treaty was that of ‘partnership’ and ‘fairness’. The Treaty had been broken, and wars had been fought. It was still the early stages of the new century, and things could only get better. In light of all this, the newly elected Labour Party was a more than welcome alliance, a partner in the re-addressing of the Māori-Pākeha partnership, having been agreed to in the Treaty, and subsequently abandoned.

Since then, a lot has happened. And the Rātana Church has gradually become outsiders to some quite dramatic political changes. The alliance with Labour left the practical aspects of political process out of the hands of the Church. Adding to this, the cultural consequences of the Churches rejection (if not denial) of elements of traditional culture, left a gap between the Rātana Church and the rest of Māoridom. The conservatism within the Church that followed the death of T. W. Rātana in 1939 only contributed to widening this gap.

The present Labour Government was elected partly on the basis of their ‘closing the gap programme’, intending to ‘close the gap’ between Māori and Pākeha, as befitting the Labour Party which T. W. Rātana had turned to for support. Nevertheless, the numbers reveal that something is not working, with Māori poverty at 150 per cent that of non-Māori.¹⁸⁵

In spite of this, it is my understanding that the gap which needs to be closed is no longer simply the old ‘black and white’ division between the ruling majority and the ruled minority. This simplistic and dualistic world view belongs to the previous

¹⁸⁵ New Zealand Herald, Source: Social Report 2006
<http://www.nzherald.co.nz/search/story.cfm?storyid=00085700-5E95-14D8-91A283027AF1010F>

century. The differences in the world views, what Geertz calls *ethos*,¹⁸⁶ not only between Māori and Pākeha, but between Rātana and the Māori Party, between Labour and the National Party, as well as within the Māori communities; these differences need to be addressed in a way which increases the mutual understanding of the different sides, what many social scientists refer to as ‘accommodating differences’.¹⁸⁷ In his attempt at “rethinking national, ethnic and religious identities”¹⁸⁸, Gerd Bauman recommends that we rethink our idea of what culture is. After analysing reified, essentialist cultural discourse, as well as the constructivist view advocated by the social sciences, he looks at the dialectical way in which people negotiate between the two. He thus recommends

... a processual discourse of culture, that is, a theory of culture that understands differences as relational, rather than absolute. It recognizes that there are many cleavages of identification and that these cleavages cut across each other. Instead of viewing society as a patchwork of five or fifty cultural groups, it views social life as an elastic and crisscrossing web of multiple identifications. People make choices whom to identify with when and where, and they even make choices when to engage the reifying discourse of culture and when to engage the processual discourse. We have thus progressed from a reified through a processual to a discursive understanding of culture.¹⁸⁹

The members of the Rātana Church may appear to be stuck “betwixt and between”; a liminal *communitas*,¹⁹⁰ not fully Māori, but certainly not Pākeha. It became clear to me during my fieldwork that the extent of identification with traditional Māori culture and spirituality among the Mōrehu varied not only from person to person, but also according to the context; where we were and what was happening. New Zealand is proclaimed to be a bi-cultural nation, made up of Māori and Pākeha. But in light of Bauman’s view of multiculturalism, adherence to the Rātana Church is simply one of many identifications available. Being Mōrehu represents one of many ways of being a New Zealander.

¹⁸⁶ Geertz 1973

¹⁸⁷ The title of a research project at Norsk Senter for Menneskerettigheter.

¹⁸⁸ The sub-title of the book, *The Multicultural Riddle*.

¹⁸⁹ Bauman 1999:139

¹⁹⁰ While Turner (1969) originally used these term exclusively for a particular point in rites of passage, I believe these terms to be useful for describing the appearance of an in-between identity.

Towards a Discursive Understanding of Culture?

During my fieldwork I conducted nine long interviews, and several shorter ones, all of them qualitative and unstructured. I was trying to understand how the Mōrehu see the world, the physical as well as the spiritual one. So I had some long talks, while loosely based on the questions in the appendix, I generally preferred to let the conversation flow. The lack of structure as well as the length of these conversations made them very difficult to analyse for the purpose of this thesis. What also strikes me now is that I may have been asking the wrong questions. My questions were specific, regarding matters which I found interesting at the time. I asked ‘how’ culture and religion was important to my informants. I see now, that I never really asked people ‘why’ these matters, most importantly the Church, were important to them. As long as I was conducting qualitative, unstructured interviews, I should have asked more ‘open’ questions. Nevertheless I remain convinced that these conversations were essential to my understanding, and to all the people of Aotearoa who took the time to talk to me; I can never thank you enough.

In the introduction I outlined my central findings, and I made some theoretical claims. I have tried to demonstrate in this thesis how the Rātana Church was formed through adapting Christianity into a Māori cultural setting; both a creolised Māori culture and a syncretistic form of Christianity. I believe that the Rātana Church may be seen as a form of collectivism based on Christianity, with political roots, ethnic membership and cultural practice; religion, politics and culture coming together.

I outlined my findings and my analytical position in the introduction, because I wanted the stories within the story about the Rātana Church to speak for themselves. I wanted to tell the same stories over and over, from different perspectives. I wanted to tell the stories as the Mōrehu see them, as well as how I understood them. Finally, I wanted to tell my part of the story, in order to emphasize that these are all my interpretations, produced by my own process of understanding, which is still ongoing.

There’s a way the older people have of telling a story, a way where the beginning is not the beginning, the end is not the end. It starts from a centre and moves away from there in such widening circles that you don’t know how you will finally arrive at the point of understanding, which becomes itself another core, a new centre.¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ From the novel *Baby No-Eyes*, by Māori author Patricia Grace 1998:28

Thank You

First and foremost, thank you to my parents, Per Mathiesen and Sidsel Saugestad.
Without you I never would have even begun this long journey,
And without your help, in so many ways, I do not know how I would have finished.

Thank you to my supervisor, Anne Stensvold, for encouraging me all the way,
through some difficult times.

And most of all;

Thank you to all the New Zealanders I met along the way.

Thank you for the help, the care and concern, the support.

Thank you!

Arohanui, Mari

Appendix I: The Creed of the Rātana Church¹⁹²

Glory and Praise be to Jehovah of Hosts, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and honour also be to the Faithful Angels.

1. I believe in Jehovah of Hosts, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Creator of all things that do exist, and the Author of all life, who in Infinite Wisdom and Love presides over all His Creation.

2. I believe that man was created in the image of Jehovah, but that through wrongdoing, he lost the possibilities and joy of this his heritage; thus the necessity arose for a Saviour/Redeemer to deliver him from the power and consequences of sin in this life and the life that is beyond the death of the body.

3. I believe that Jehovah sent His Son in the human form (of Jesus Christ) to redeem man and to conquer the power of sin, of darkness and of death. Heaven is now Christ's throne and the earth is his foot-stool, but His chosen dwelling place is in the hearts of those who truly believe in Him and have union with Him in His Victory and Glory.

4. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Breath of Jehovah, the giver of life, who proceeding from the Father and from the Son is to be worshipped with the Father and the Son. The Prophets spoke by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He reveals to man's consciousness his sins and their correction and leads man to trust, and rest firmly upon the Saviour, transforming his heart and mind until he becomes Christ like in Holy Love.

5. I believe that the Faithful Angels of Jehovah are ever active doing His will. They are His workers and messengers. They are the helpers of all those who truly believe the Gospel of Jehovah. They are Co-Workers with man. They render continuous loving service to Jehovah.

6. I believe in the Holy Christian Church, the company of all those who have truly received the Christ and are united with Him and with each other; in seeking righteousness and in rendering loving service to God and to man, and fighting against all evil beliefs and sinful practices.

7. I believe as Jesus Christ has taught us, that Jehovah is our Heavenly Father and all men are brethren; that all our labours should be, not for personal gain, but in co-operation with each other as co-workers with Jehovah for benefit of mankind and the honour of God; that all men should be honest workers, and in love and justice and knowledge, each bear his share of the burden of life, thus serving Jehovah and his fellowmen.

8. I believe in the Holy Bible, in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, for it is the record of Jehovah's greatest revelations concerning the eternal life of the Spirit and the vitality of the body.

¹⁹² Quoted from Henderson 1963 App. II

9. I believe that in Jehovah is the light and the great joy for my Spirit and for my body. This fact is experienced through union with Christ in the Infinite Love of the Father and the power of the Holy Spirit and the Faithful Angels, and active fellowship with the true Christian believers.

10. I believe that Tahupotiki Wiremu Rātana is a mouthpiece of Jehovah, spreading abroad new light as the above truths concerning the salvation of the Spirit and the vitalising of the body.

Ae, Amen

Appendix II: Interview outline

- ★ Personal background
 - Age, occupation?
 - Where did you grow up?
 - What did your parents do?
 - Family background?

- ★ Māramatanga
 - Were you always Mōrehu?
 - What were you taught as a child about being Rātana?
 - How, why has your understanding of being Rātana changed as you have grown up?
 - How would you describe the church today?
 - How important is it in your life today? In what ways? Under which circumstances?
 - Did you ever take a particular interest in any other religion?

- ★ Māoritanga
 - What were you taught as a child about Māori culture?
 - How, why has your understanding of the culture changed as you have grown up?
 - How would you describe the culture today?
 - How important is this in your life today? In what ways? Under which circumstances?
 - How, in what way, is your iwi significant to you?
 - In what way is whakapapa important to you?

- ★ In what way do you consider Māori culture to be part of the Rātana Church?
How is it significant, that the Church consists of mainly Māori people?

- ★ How is this church *different* from other churches?
How are Mōrehu different from “Christians”?
(How, in what way, are Māori different from Pākeha?)

- ★ What is the spiritual significance of the Treaty and the Bible?

- ★ What do you consider to be the spiritual significance for the hikoī 2004, and the ideal of *kotahitanga*?

- ★ How important is it for you to belong to the communities of the Rātana Church and the Māori people? (Collectivism as opposed to the modern individualism.)

- ★ How do you see the relationship, for you, between being Mōrehu and being Māori?
How important is being Mōrehu and being Māori for *your* identity?

Appendix III: Māori vocabulary

Based on Ryan 1997, with my additions in italics, on meanings specific to the Rātana Church and other religious matters.

The letter ‘wh’ is pronounced ‘f’.

Vowels with macrons (ā) are elongated, and usually stressed

akoranga	learning, lesson
anahere	angel
Anahera Pono	<i>Faithfull Angels, 4th entity of Rātana quinary</i>
Aotearoa	New Zealand
āpotoro	apostle, <i>priest in Rātana Ch.</i>
aroha	love
āwhina	help, assist, <i>female position in Rātana Ch., “sisters“, helpers</i>
hāhi	church, denomination
hapū	sub-tribe, pregnant
hīkoi	walk, march..
hui	gather, meeting
Io	God
Ihoa	Jehova
iwi	tribe, bone, strength
kaumātua	old man, elder
karakia	prayer-chant, religious service, incantation
kēhua	ghost
kotahitanga	unity, solidarity
mana	integrity, charisma, <i>authority</i>
mangai	mouth, advocate,
Mangai	<i>the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit, spiritual name of T.W. Rātana, 5th entity of Rātana quinary</i>
Māoritanga	Māori culture, Māori perspective
marae	meeting area of whānau or iwi, central area of village and its buildings, courtyard
māramatanga	comprehension, <i>the blessings of Rātana Ch.</i>
matua	parent (<i>usually father</i>)
Matua	<i>Holy Father, 1st entity in Rātana quinary</i>
mōrehu	survivor, <i>member of Rātana Ch.</i>
mōrehutanga	<i>the cultural and spiritual ways of the Mōrehu</i>
noa	<i>secular</i> , free from tapu
pā	village
Pākehā	non-Māori, European
pou	support, pole.. <i>the Āpotoro and Āwhina of Rātana Ch.</i>
rangimārie	peace

reo	voice, language, <i>the brass bands of Rātana Ch.</i>
taiaha	long club
tama	son
Tama	<i>The Son of Man (Jesus Christ), 2nd entity of Rātana quinary</i>
tangata	person, people
tangata whenua	<i>people of the land, refers either to the local tribe of an area, or to all Māori</i>
taniwha	water monster, powerful person, <i>guardian spirit</i>
taonga	property, treasure, <i>cultural and spiritual treasure, animated pendant</i>
tapu	sacred, forbidden, taboo
tohunga	expert, specialist, priest
tumuaki	principal, <i>President of Rātana Ch.</i>
ture	statute law, justice system, rule, <i>from the Hebrew: torah</i>
waiata	sing, song
wairua	spirit, attitude
Wairua Tapu	<i>Holy Spirit, 3rd entity of Rātana quinary</i>
whakamoemiti	praise, thank, <i>prayer and church service of Rātana Ch.</i>
whakapapa	genealogy
whakapono	faith, religion
whanau	extended family, give birth
whenua	ground, country, placenta
whetū	star
Whetu Mārama	<i>the symbol of the Rātana Church, a five pointed star partially surrounded by a crescent moon, symbolizing the quinary, and the enlightenment it brings</i>

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