

Allan Hanson

CHRISTIAN
BRANCHES, MAORI
ROOTS: THE CULT
OF RUA

During the first third of the twentieth century a New Zealand Maori named Rua Kenana, proclaiming himself to be a Messiah and the brother of Jesus, or even Jesus himself, headed a millenarian movement that attracted many adherents among Maoris of the Tuhoe and Whakatohea tribes.¹ The movement included the express intention to eradicate all traces of the old Maori religion. Nevertheless, the cult contained much that derived from indigenous Maori culture. This essay attempts to sort out the Judeo-Christian and Maori sources of

Thanks are due to Judith Binney and Peter Webster, without whose careful scholarship this paper could not have been written. I am also grateful to Louise Hanson and Fransje Knops for critical comments.

¹ Rua's cult had received very little scholarly attention prior to the appearance of two books, researched independently but both published in 1979. Judith Binney, Gillian Chaplin, and Craig Wallace, *Mihaia: The Prophet Rua Kenana and His Community at Maungapohatu* (Wellington: Oxford University Press, 1979), tell the story of the movement by means of a wealth of contemporaneous photographs conjoined with a carefully researched narrative by Binney. Peter Webster, *Rua and the Maori Millennium* (Wellington: Prince Milburn for Victoria University Press, 1979), perceptively analyzes the cult in terms of a general, cross-cultural theory of millenarian movements. Binney has published two further essays on Rua's cult, "Maungapohatu Revisited: or, How the Government Underdeveloped a Maori Community," *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 92 (1983): 353–92, and "Myth and Explanation in the Ringatu Tradition: Some Aspects of the Leadership of Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuku and Rua Kenana Hepetipa," *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 93 (1984): 345–98. I have relied on all these works for factual information because, working in the United States, access to primary sources (largely in the form of manuscripts and contemporaneous newspaper accounts) has been impossible.

Rua's movement. While it is not difficult to identify surface elements from both traditions, my more fundamental conclusion will be that although many overt customs and beliefs had changed, underlying cultural templates that have been identified as lending structure and meaning to the course of events in traditional Maori culture are still visible as organizing principles of Rua's movement.² In addition to advancing our understanding of Rua's cult in particular, this analysis may be of more general interest as an example of the remarkable resilience of cultural institutions in conditions of stress and change.

THE PROPHET EMERGES

Rua was one of a number of Maori prophets who arose in the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.³ The Maoris had suffered disastrous losses of land and many of their people had been killed in battle or died from disease as a result of their encounter with European settlers. The prophets promised an antipodean recapitulation of divine intervention in history: as God delivered the ancient Israelites from bondage in Egypt, so would He deliver the Maoris from their oppressors and return them to supremacy in their promised land of New Zealand.

Rua was the son of Kenana Tumoana, who fought beside the charismatic Maori leader Te Kooti and was killed in 1868. As Rua described the circumstances of his birth and early childhood:

My mother was engaged to be married to a man called Kenana, but before they could be married, he went off to the Wars and was killed, and three years after I was born. Kenana was only my father as Joseph was the father of Christ. My people rejected me, and I was homeless, so I was brought to Napier, and stayed here at Pakipaki and Waimarama until I was nine years old. Then I went back, but I was again rejected by my people, so that the Bible words were fulfilled: but as the Scripture says "The Lord called, and I knew what I had to do."⁴

As a young man Rua became active in Ringatu ("upraised hand," the church founded by Te Kooti) and began to draw attention to himself as a healer and outstanding orator. His most definitive calling as a messiah was an experience on the summit of Maungapohatu, the sacred mountain of the Tuhoe people, located deep in the Urewera country on the East Coast of the North Island. Rua, and his wife

² See F. Allan Hanson and Louise Hanson, *Counterpoint in Maori Culture* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983).

³ Other Maori prophets were Aperahama Taonui of Hokiana, Te Ua, Te Whiti, and Titokowaru of Taranaki, and Te Kooti (see Binney et al., pp. 17–18).

⁴ Quoted in Webster, pp. 155–56.

Pinepine, were directed by an angel to climb to the top of the mountain. There they met a woman who appeared before them several times to point out the path. Then Christ appeared beside the woman, and he talked with Rua. Christ directed Rua and Pinepine to the hiding place of a large diamond that Te Kooti had concealed on the mountain. They did not disturb it, for it was the protector of the mountain. Rua returned from the mountain by sliding down a rainbow.⁵ Another version of the story holds that during his wandering on the mountain Rua was tempted by the devil.⁶

After this experience Rua began to travel throughout the East Coast, claiming to be the leader whom Te Kooti had foretold would arise to continue his work. Eria Raukura, a Tuhoe who had been one of Te Kooti's lieutenants and was an influential leader in the Ringatu church, was convinced by Rua's claim and baptized him as the Messiah in 1906. Eria's imprimatur and the endorsement of several other important East Coast chiefs greatly added to Rua's credibility as a prophet and enlarged his following.⁷

Rua's first dramatic prophecy bore the markings of a cargo cult. On June 25, 1906, King Edward VII would arrive at Gisborne (an East Coast town). He and Rua would meet and diamonds, gold, or the sum of four million pounds would pass between them—some versions say from the king to Rua, others from Rua to the king. In any event, the wealth would be used to buy back the land that Maoris had lost to the Europeans. Most whites would then be deported, and New Zealand would return to Maori control. The message had a strong millennial quality: Rua encouraged his followers to sell their possessions in order to free themselves from material preoccupations that might distract their attention from the last days to be ushered in at Gisborne.⁸

On the appointed day Rua and several hundred others—some his followers, others the merely curious—waited on the wharf at Gisborne for King Edward. Several days passed, Rua assuring the crowd each day that the king would arrive on the morrow. Finally the on-lookers grew restless and asked, "When will the King come, Rua?" The prophet shifted his ground drastically and replied, "I am really that King. . . . Here I am, with all my people."⁹

Sources differ as to the significance of this movement. For Webster it was a case of failed prophecy that, as commonly occurs in millenarian

⁵ Binney et al., pp. 18–20.

⁶ Webster, pp. 189–90.

⁷ Binney et al., pp. 20–21.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 26–30; Webster, pp. 163–70.

⁹ Binney et al., pp. 29–30.

movements, caused Rua to redefine his goals. Binney et al., on the other hand, interpret it as the fulfillment of one of Te Kooti's prophecies. Te Kooti had said that "his son"—the one who would continue his work—would bring the Tuhoe people together at Gisborne. By engineering this gathering and then claiming to be the king and saying, "Here I am, with all my people," Rua legitimated his claim to be the leader foretold by Te Kooti.¹⁰ In any event, the failure of Edward to appear did not diminish Rua's appeal. On the contrary, his movement continued to gather strength, to the extent that by the next year (1907) nearly all the Maoris of the Urewera and neighboring Bay of Plenty areas were his followers.¹¹

Before turning to the next phase of the movement we might pause to consider the Judeo-Christian and Maori influences in Rua's emergence and rise to prominence. The prophetic aspect—Rua's efforts to fulfill prophecies in order to validate his claim to be the leader who would follow Te Kooti—draws of course on well-known Judeo-Christian precedents. Although less well-developed, a prophetic tradition of sorts also may be identified in pre-European Maori culture. An isolated example is the seer Te Toiroa, who prophesied the coming of Europeans well before their arrival and also foretold the emergence of a leader who is generally thought to be Te Kooti.¹² More, the notion of fulfilling a prophecy may be found in reiterated stories in Maori lore in which an individual is recognized by a name. Hotunui, for example, was forced to leave Kawhia before his pregnant wife gave birth, and he instructed her to give the child a certain name. Years later, his grown son presented himself to Hotunui, who recognized him on the basis of the name he bore. The son was even a savior of sorts, in that after their reunion he wrecked vengeance upon the people who had insulted his father.¹³

Rua's wandering on Maungapohatu—where he met Jesus and was shown the diamond—combines a riot of meanings drawn from both the Judeo-Christian and Maori traditions. As a calling to lead his people this story clearly evokes Moses—certainly the encounter with

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 25, 30.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 35.

¹² Binney, "Myth and Explanation in the Ringatu Tradition" (n. 1 above), pp. 351–52.

¹³ Sir George Grey, *Polynesian Mythology* (1855; reprint, Christchurch: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1956), pp. 192–201, translated from the Maori: *Nga Mahi a nga Tupuna*, 4th ed. (Wellington: Reed, 1971), pp. 114–19; John White, *The Ancient History of the Maori* (Wellington: Government Printer, 1886–90), 4:39–47, 194–200 (English), 29–36, 187–93 (Maori). For a similar story concerning Rangi-te-ao-rere, see Elsdon Best, *Tuhoe: the Children of the Mist*, Polynesian Society Memoirs, vol. 6 (Wellington: Polynesian Society, 1925), pp. 257–63.

the burning bush at Mount Horeb and perhaps also receiving the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. The rainbow by which Rua descended from the mountain was a sign of God's covenant with him, just as the rainbow is identified in Genesis as a sign of God's promise to Noah never again to destroy the world in a flood. The account of Rua's temptation by the devil while on the mountain adds an association with the forty-day wandering of Christ in the wilderness. Rua frequently associated himself with Jesus. He would point to pictures of Christ, saying, "I am that fella." More commonly, he presented himself as a Maori counterpart of Jesus. He was the brother of Christ, sent as Messiah for the Maori people as Christ had come to save the whites. There were even two Jacob's ladders to heaven—one for the whites and the other for dark-skinned people. Rua promised that he, too, would rise on the third day after his death. Once, late in his life, he claimed, "You know, I got shot. I dead three days, then I cough and come alive all the same Jesus Christ."¹⁴

So far as Maori tradition is concerned, many Maori tribes had sacred or tutelary mountains, and for Rua's Tuhoe tribe this was Maungapohatu. Deep in the remote, tangled bush of the Urewera country, Maungapohatu stands forbidding and mysterious. The mountain is often shrouded in mist, and Tuhoe say that if a stranger approaches, the bluffs will cloud over and mist, rain, snow, or hail will force the intruder to turn back. Fissures and caves on the mountain have served for generations as depositories for the bones of Tuhoe dead.¹⁵ Occurring as it did on Maungapohatu, Rua's call to God's service symbolically linked him not only with Moses and Christ but also with the ancestors of the Tuhoe tribe.

The woman who guided Rua on the mountain is said to have been *Whaitiri*, a Maori goddess associated with thunder and lightning and from whom the Tuhoe tribe claims descent.¹⁶ When Rua's wife *Pinepine* asked him who the woman was, he told her, "That was my sister."¹⁷ Other versions hold that *Whaitiri* is the sister of Christ and Rua is Christ's brother.¹⁸ Thus Rua, the new messiah, is the son of God and ties of siblingship bind him to both Maori and Christian deities.

The element in Rua's experience on Maungapohatu that derives most specifically from Maori sources is *Te Kooti's* diamond. I refer not to the object itself—diamonds were unknown in pre-European New

¹⁴ Binney et al. (n. 1 above), pp. 73, 76, 151–52, 168, 174–75.

¹⁵ Webster (n. 1 above), pp. 187, 191–93.

¹⁶ Binney, "Myth and Explanation in the Ringatu Tradition," pp. 359–60.

¹⁷ Webster, p. 189.

¹⁸ Binney, "Myth and Explanation in the Ringatu Tradition," p. 360.

Zealand—but to its status as a *mauri* of Maungapohatu and the Tuhoe people. A *mauri* is a talisman that would be hidden in a forest, plantation, or village and that ensured the fertility or security of the place it protected. Similarly, the diamond “looks after the mountain.”¹⁹ Should a *mauri* be removed from its hiding place, that which it protected would lose its potency: edible birds and rats would desert a forest, cockles would absent themselves from a beach, sweet potatoes would not grow, the men of a tribe would not prevail in battle nor the women conceive. Hence Rua and Pinepine left the diamond undisturbed so that it might continue to protect and invigorate the mountain and the Tuhoe tribe.²⁰

Because she was with him on the mountain, Rua declared his wife Pinepine to be a *tapu* woman.²¹ A good deal of debate swirls around the proper translation of *tapu*. My view is that it refers to the state of being under the influence of a god.²² While Pinepine’s *tapu* doubtless pertained to her having encountered Christ on the mountaintop, and while the Maori concept shares something with the Judeo-Christian notion of “sacred,” the behavioral markers of *tapu* as they applied to her were specifically Maori. For example, cooked food was considered to be extremely detrimental to the *tapu* state.²³ As a result of her strict *tapu*, Pinepine did not engage in cooking. Only late in her life, when Rua released her from *tapu*, did she attempt to cook for herself. Whenever she did so, it is said, she invariably burnt her food.²⁴

Rua also declared the summit of Maungapohatu itself to be *tapu*, and he would not allow anyone to go there. While this particular declaration pertained to his miraculous experience on the mountain, doubtless the area was already *tapu* because of the ancestral bones deposited there. Indeed, the summit remains *tapu* to the present day, and Maoris will not allow smoking, eating, or drinking while on that part of the mountain.²⁵

One of Rua’s major goals was to break the *tapu* of the old Maori gods. Christ had come, he said, to save the Europeans, and they were fat and prosperous while the Maoris declined. Now Rua had been sent to save the Maoris so they too might prosper, but to achieve this it was necessary to destroy any lingering influence of the old gods.²⁶ While

¹⁹ Binney et al., p. 20.

²⁰ Binney, “Myth and Explanation in the Ringatu Tradition,” p. 359.

²¹ Binney et al., p. 19.

²² Hanson and Hanson (n. 2 above), pp. 49–50.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 94–99.

²⁴ Binney et al. (n. 1 above), p. 58.

²⁵ Webster (n. 1 above), p. 192.

²⁶ Binney et al., p. 25.

this goal was avowedly Christian, the means adopted to achieve it and the ways of conceptualizing the situation were decidedly Maori. As mentioned above, Maoris understood cooked food to be an effective agent for dispelling *tapu*. The hands of someone who had engaged in the highly *tapu* activities of planting sweet potatoes or cutting hair, for example, were ritually made *noa* by passing a morsel of cooked food over them.²⁷ (*Noa*, the contrary of *tapu*, refers to the state of *not* being under the influence of a god.) Early Maori converts to Christianity would sometimes act to release themselves from the influence of their former gods by washing their heads (the primary locus of *tapu*) with water heated in cooking pots.²⁸ Rua and his followers had very much the same end in view when they flaunted traditional conventions by eating in cemeteries (where spirits of the pagan ancestors were thought to lurk). He also encouraged his followers to sell their woodcarvings and other examples of Maori art in order to free themselves from the *tapu* of the old gods that lingered in them.²⁹

THE NEW JERUSALEM

After the episode of King Edward's expected arrival at Gisborne, Rua shifted direction. Ideas of negotiating the buy-back of land from the whites and their departure from New Zealand were abandoned in favor of a distinctly separatist tack: Rua exhorted his followers to pick up stakes and establish a community where they could live apart from the whites. The site he selected was, not surprisingly, Maungapohatu—a village lying at the foot of the mountain of the same name. In addition to the mountain's rich symbolism—already discussed—Maungapohatu village was Rua's birthplace.

Rua had surrounded himself with a council of twelve disciples, called Riwaiti (Levites) (see fig. 1). Although the number evokes Christ's Apostles, their primary biblical association is the Levites whom Moses appointed and consecrated to tend to the tabernacle.³⁰ Rua's Riwaiti were drawn from different sections of the Tuhoe tribe, and now he sent each of them to his own area to gather pilgrims for the trek to Maungapohatu. By the middle of 1907 some five or six hundred settlers had arrived. This constituted about half the entire Tuhoe trip together with the neighboring Whakatohea tribe, which had been

²⁷ Elsdon Best, "Maori Agriculture," *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 39 (1930): 346–80, esp. 374.

²⁸ Elsdon Best, "Omens and Superstitious Beliefs of the Maori," *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 7 (1898): 119–36, 233–43, esp. 136, and "Spiritual Concepts of the Maori," *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 10 (1901): 1–20, esp. 4.

²⁹ Binney et al., p. 26.

³⁰ Num. 1.49–53, 8.5–26.



FIG. 1.—Some of the Riwaiti. All photographs from Judith Binney, Gillian Chaplin, and Craig Wallace, *Mihaia: The Prophet Rua Kenana and His Community at Maungapohatu* (Wellington: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 44. Reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press. Photograph by George Bourne, in the collection of the Auckland Institute and Museum.

rendered almost landless due to confiscations by the whites. The migrants to Maungapohatu called themselves Iharaira, or Israelites. The symbolism evoked the exodus of the Old Testament Israelites out of Egypt and migration to the promised land.³¹

The community itself was divided into two sectors. On the periphery were the dwelling and cooking houses for the ordinary inhabitants. The inner area, surrounded by a fence, was the sacred sector (*wahi tapu*). No food was allowed here, work clothes could not be worn, and containers of water placed at each of the two entrances to the sacred sector were used for washing upon entering and leaving. The Israelites maintained that these measures constituted a new, Christian *tapu*. In fact, however, they perpetuated traditional Maori ideas about *tapu*, such as that *tapu* persons, places, and things had to be isolated from

³¹ Binney et al., p. 45.



FIG. 2.—Rua with some of his wives and some of the Riwaiti on the verandah of Hiruharama Hou, 1908. From Binney et al., p. 46. Reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press. Photograph by George Bourne, in the collection of the Auckland Institute and Museum.

many everyday activities and objects, that cooked food was destructive to *tapu*, and that *tapu* could be dispelled by washing.³²

The sacred sector of the village contained the bank, general store, and, most prominently, Rua's own house and the court or meeting house. These last two remarkable structures require description. Rua's house was named Hiruharama Hou, or New Jerusalem (a designation also occasionally applied to the community as a whole). It was a two-gabled structure, with two doors opening onto a front verandah and two corridors running the length of the house (see fig. 2). The effect was much like two bungalows set side by side. In its overall dimensions the house was modeled on that of King Solomon.³³ The two halves represented the two tribes, Tuhoe and Whakatohea, united at Maungapohatu.³⁴ The house had sixteen rooms, and here Rua lived with his wives.³⁵

³² On the last point, see Hanson and Hanson (n. 2 above), pp. 75–77.

³³ 2 Chron. 3.8.

³⁴ Most of the Whakatohea left the community in about 1911 when Rua's inability to prevent the death of one of their number, the wife of Rua's eldest son, precipitated a crisis of faith among them (see Binney et al. [n. 1 above], p. 73).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 46; Webster (n. 1 above), pp. 200–202.

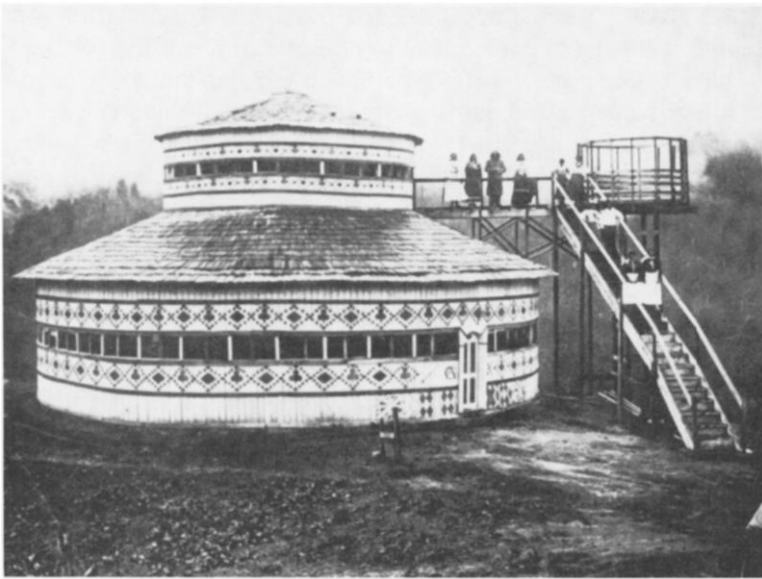


FIG. 3.—Rua and some of his wives on the staircase of Hiona, 1908. From Binney et al., p. 47. Reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press. Photograph by George Bourne, in the collection of the Auckland Institute and Museum.

Rua did not associate himself with Christ in the matter of celibacy. Here, as with his house, his model was Solomon, by comparison with whom he called himself a poor man because he had only twelve wives. These were drawn mainly from the different segments of the Tuhoe tribe, it being Rua's intention to unite the people through personal bonds with himself. He had children by all his wives, seventeen of them by his first wife, the *tapu* woman Pinepine.³⁶

The most striking building in the community was Hiona (Zion), the court house and meeting house (see fig. 3). This was a circular structure of two stories. The lower story was about sixty feet in diameter, and the upper one was considerably smaller, only some twenty feet in diameter. The sole access to the upper story was by means of an external staircase. A round platform at the top of the staircase, outside the building, was the point from which Rua would address the people and commune with the Holy Ghost. Only Rua, his wives, and his two

³⁶ Binney et al., pp. 57, 190.

closest advisors were allowed to enter the upper story of Hiona. An opening in the floor enabled Rua to hear and observe any meeting or court trial taking place below. Although circular huts did occur in traditional New Zealand, particularly in the South Island, they were of rude construction and (with the exception of a church built in the mid-nineteenth century) were not used for ceremonial purposes.³⁷ Hiona's roots appear to have been purely biblical, the structure having been explicitly modeled after Solomon's court house.³⁸

Outside, Hiona was painted white and decorated with yellow and blue playing-card symbols of diamonds and clubs. The diamond represented the Holy Ghost. Rua's church was (and still is) known as the church of the Wairua Tapu or Holy Ghost,³⁹ and he sometimes identified himself with that being. "Well, there were three, after all," he would say, "and I could be one of those three. . . . I could be the Holy Ghost."⁴⁰ He inserted this suggestion into the minds of his followers with enough force that, when they slept with him, his wives thought they were having sexual relations with the Holy Ghost.⁴¹ A second symbolic reference of the diamond designs on Hiona was the diamond that Rua had seen hidden atop Maungapohatu, the *mauri* or sacred talisman of the mountain and the Tuhoe tribe.

In addition to appearing on the exterior wall of Hiona, the trefoil or club design also figured prominently on the eastern gate to the sacred sector of the community, together with the word "Mihaiia," or Messiah (see fig. 4). The trefoil, with its three bulbs, was used by earlier Maori prophets to symbolize the Trinity. In Rua's cult it also represented the king of clubs, the last king in the line of David. Rua preached that the other three kings in that line had already been "played," and now the last king, who would bring everlasting peace, had come. The king of clubs was, of course, Rua himself.

Rua also preached that, just as there were three previous kings in the line of David, there had also been three Maori prophets (all of whom pertain to the Christian nineteenth century): Te Whiti, Titokowaru, and Te Kooti. These three had fallen; the fourth (Rua) would stand. Hence Rua, the king of clubs, claimed to embody the culmination of the lines of both David and the Maori prophets.⁴² Here, as with his claim to be sibling of both Christ and the Maori goddess Whaitiri, Rua

³⁷ Atholl Anderson, "'Makeshift Structures of Little Importance': A Reconsideration of Maori Round Huts," *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 95 (1986): 91-114.

³⁸ Webster, pp. 203-5; Binney et al., pp. 46-47.

³⁹ Webster, p. 31.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Binney et al., p. 79.

⁴¹ Webster, p. 213.

⁴² Binney et al., pp. 47-49.

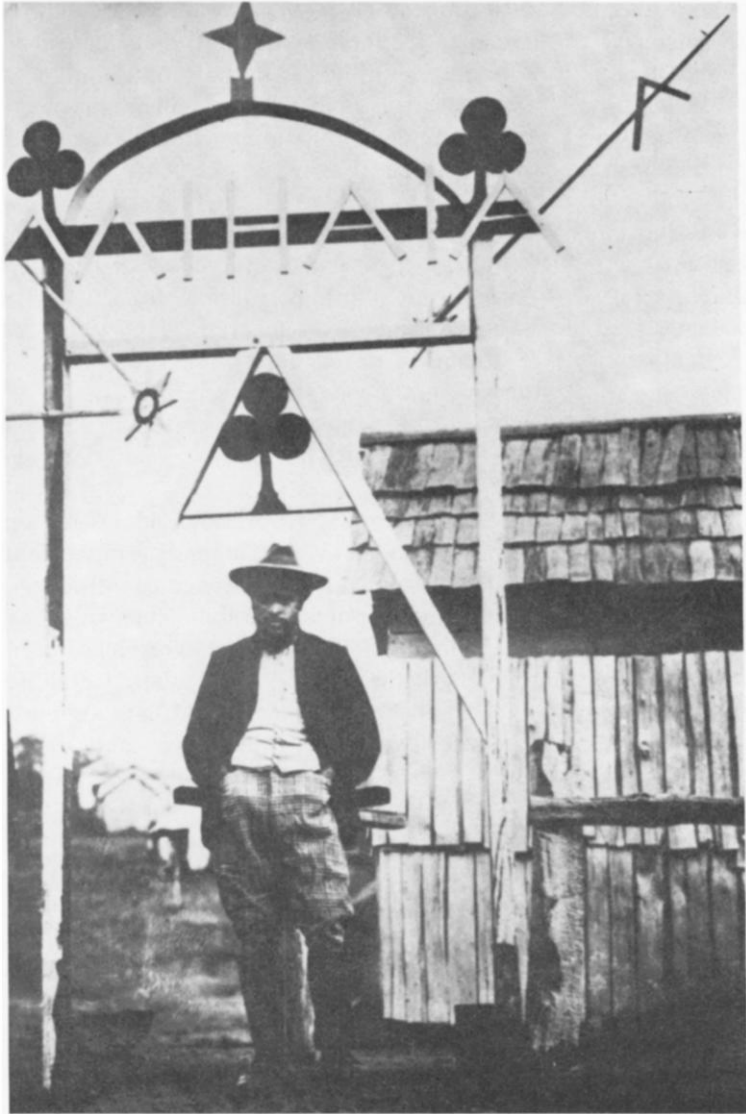


FIG. 4.—Rua at the eastern gate to the sacred sector, 1908. From Binney et al., p. 48. Reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press. Photograph by George Bourne, in the collection of the Auckland Institute and Museum.

positioned himself at a confluence of Judeo-Christian and Maori cultures—although in this case the Maori tradition was already Christianized rather than pre-European.

In keeping with the majesty of these preachings, Rua claimed that his court house Hiona would supersede the Parliament in Wellington. In 1915 he foretold that, with the advent of the millennium, all the kings in the world would congregate at Maungapohatu. Thrones for them had been prepared in Hiona, the highest one being reserved for Rua.⁴³

Rua's movement flourished at Maungapohatu during the years between 1907 and 1915, and most especially in 1907–8. His influence apparently rested on more than simple persuasion, for some of his followers feared him as a practitioner of witchcraft (*makutu*). At least three deaths have been attributed to this dark power—one of them a disciple who sought too much influence for himself, and another (did Rua also take David as one of his models?) who was the first husband of a woman whom Rua desired and who later became his favorite wife.⁴⁴

In principle the faithful had withdrawn from the world into his own, separatist community. This was true, however, more in a spiritual than a physical sense. Residents of Maungapohatu were constantly moving in and out of the community and its population fluctuated widely with the seasonal labor cycle. As many as 800 might be in residence during the winter (some sources place the maximum population at 1,500–2,000, but Webster doubts that the settlement could have supported that many for more than a few weeks), but the figure would drop to only 100 to 150 in summer, when most of the people were away on laboring jobs.⁴⁵

The isolation and independence were not to last. Government officials had always viewed Rua's activities with suspicion. Although he had never advocated violent opposition, his early prophesies about lost lands being restored to the Maoris and the deportation of Europeans obviously did not receive a sympathetic hearing among whites, who later wondered if he might be preaching sedition at Maungapohatu. By 1908 speculation was widespread that gold might be found in the Urewera region, and complicated negotiations ensued between various Tuhoe leaders—Rua being prominent among them—and the government concerning rights to issue prospecting and mining licenses and

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 74–75.

⁴⁵ Webster (n. 1 above), p. 205.

the disposal of royalties. The alienation of land also continued, with the Tuhoe selling over half their land to the Crown between 1910 and 1921. Much of the capital stemming from these transactions came under Rua's control. It was important for building the Maungapohatu settlement, and it rendered him more powerful and potentially a greater aggravation to the government.⁴⁶

Illicit trade in liquor provided the opportunity to bring him in check. In the beginning Rua prohibited liquor at Maungapohatu, but when (in about 1910) it became clear that drinking could not be forbidden, Rua elected to control it. Liquor laws discriminated against Maoris, however, and Rua was refused a license to sell intoxicants. He found such bias galling, one of the four flags that often flew in front of his house at Maungapohatu bore the slogan "One law for the two peoples."⁴⁷

In 1911 Rua was fined for selling whiskey, and in 1915 he was imprisoned for three months on the same offense. The court chose a complicated and, it seems, devious procedure in the sentencing. The 1911 fine was for four or five counts of selling whiskey, but one additional count was "held over" without action at that time. The 1915 arrest stemmed from five new counts of "sly grogging." His imprisonment after the 1915 trial was, however, for the 1911 charge that had been held over, and all five of the 1915 counts were, in their turn, held over for possible future use. The upshot was that when Rua was released after serving a three-month prison term in 1915, he was liable to arrest and prosecution at any time for the charges still pending against him. The judge, Robert Dyer, explained that in this way the law would "have a hold over him," making it possible to remove him from his community at any time.⁴⁸

When Rua returned from prison in August 1915, he instituted a dramatic change that was one of the pivotal moments in his entire movement. Curiously, Webster makes no mention of it at all, but there is a good account in our other major source. A great gathering was held, during which Rua announced that he was ending the separation of the community unto God. Up to that time the men of the movement had worn their hair long, but during these ceremonies they cut it and consigned the locks to a fire. Rua also ended the special restrictions which had applied to his circle of closest disciples: the council of twelve *Riwaiti* (*Levites*). They could now go where they please, including

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 225–35; Binney et al. (n. 1 above), pp. 35–41.

⁴⁷ Binney et al., p. 61.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 81–82; Webster, pp. 235–38.

kitchens and other places where food was prepared. Up to this time the Riwaiti had been an essential element in the organization of the community, but now the order was broken. Although individual Riwaiti continued to serve important roles in ritual and as healers and seers, their role as a corporate group was ended and, should a Riwaiti die, he would no longer be replaced.

Similarly, all of the Israelites—that is, the entire community—were released from their special separation unto God and were given leave to scatter into the world. The process had in fact been going on for some time as, over the preceding several years, people left the community temporarily for summer work or permanently. It was during the ceremony of 1915, however, that Rua set his official seal on the dispersal of the Israelites.

Another important development was the physical restructuring of the Maungapohatu community. Up to this time the core of the settlement had been the *wahi tapu*, or sacred sector. Now Rua had the fence separating it from the rest of the community removed and all of the buildings within the sacred sector were torn down, with the exception of Rua's own house Hiruharama Hou (New Jerusalem) and Hiona (Zion), the circular meeting house.⁴⁹ Only Hiruharama Hou and a new house built for Rua's first wife, the *tapu* woman Pinepine, retained their *tapu* or sacred standing. As for Hiona, the exterior staircase leading to its upper level was taken down and the building fell into disuse, serving eventually as a barn for hay or wool.⁵⁰

As with so much else in Rua's movement, the developments of 1915 draw their symbolic significance from both Judeo-Christian and (somewhat less explicitly) Maori sources. Turning first to the biblical associations, when in 1907 Rua urged his Israelites to separate themselves from the world and gather at Maungapohatu, in his mind they were treading the path of the Nazirite. As ordained in Numbers 6, the Nazirite vows to separate oneself to the Lord, constituting perhaps "a type of temporary lay priesthood."⁵¹ The status of the Nazirite was marked by abstinence from strong drink, avoidance of contact with corpses, and allowing the hair to grow long. Samson is the best known Nazirite.

While Samson was committed for life, the usual vow of the Nazirite was for a limited period, and this is how Rua understood it for his

⁴⁹ A photograph shows the small circular *whare kanikani* ("Cancan house," or dance hall), built before 1914 and apparently located within the sacred sector, still standing in 1916 (see Binney et al., pp. 68, 98).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 77–78, 144–46.

⁵¹ Frederick Carl Eiselen, Edwin Lewis, and David G. Downey, eds., *The Abingdon Bible Commentary* (New York: Abingdon, 1929), p. 300.

Israelites at Maungapohatu. True to the biblical injunctions, he and his people allowed their hair to grow and the community had special provisions for the disposal of the dead and (until about 1910) prohibited drinking.⁵² When in 1915 Rua announced that the Israelites were ending their separation unto God, his model was the termination of the vow of the Nazirite, and the cutting and burning of their hair conformed to the scriptural directions for accomplishing this.⁵³

Doing away with the sacred sector of the settlement can probably be understood in terms of the same purpose of ending the community's special dedication to God and returning to normal existence. Binney et al. suggest that Rua might also have been mindful of the New Testament passage about destroying the temple of God and rebuilding it in three days when he ordered the destruction of most buildings in the sacred sector and the physical reorganization of the settlement. In his ledger, at any rate, Rua noted that the entire task was to be completed between the sixteenth and the eighteenth of September 1915.⁵⁴

In addition to its Judeo-Christian significance, the ceremony of 1915 also instantiated a traditional Maori ritual procedure known as *whakanoa*. Very briefly, traditional Maori religious observances amounted to bringing the gods into contact with persons, things, or places in order that the power or fertility of the divine influence might be appropriated, and then dismissing the gods when the purpose for which they had been sought was accomplished. *Tapu*, as I have already said, is the state of being under the influence of the gods, while its antonym, *noa*, means to be free of divine influence. *Whaka-* is a verbalizing prefix, so *whakanoa* means to make *noa*, to dispel the state of *tapu*. Hence the initial phase of Maori religious observances—which invited the gods—was a matter of establishing a state of *tapu*, while the final phase—accomplished by rituals termed *whakanoa*—dismissed the influence of the gods.

These two phases of Maori ritual are visible in the Maungapohatu period of Rua's movement. His call to the people to establish a new community, where they might separate themselves unto God, ushered in a period of *tapu*. The notion of *tapu* was prevalent at Maungapohatu: Rua himself was a *tapu* man, as were his disciples the Riwaiti (Levites) and his first wife Pinepine; so too was the summit of the mountain and, perhaps most prominently, the entire central section (the *wahi tapu*) of the settlement itself. Moreover, traditional Maori restrictions concerning *tapu* were observed at Maungapohatu. The rule

⁵² Binney et al., p. 60; Webster, pp. 235–36.

⁵³ Num. 6.18.

⁵⁴ Matt. 26.61; Binney et al., p. 77.

about washing upon entering and leaving the central section of the town was certainly consistent with Maori concepts. Maori tradition was unquestionably behind the prohibition of cooked food (considered to be extremely detrimental to the *tapu* state) in the central sector, as well as Pinepine's refraining from cooking for decades after Rua had pronounced her a *tapu* woman.

It is equally clear that the ceremony of ending the Israelites' separation unto God in 1915 conformed to Maori understandings pertaining to *whakanoa* ritual. Hence the major accomplishment in the ceremony was to terminate the *tapu* of most of the central sector of the settlement, of the Riwaiti, and of the Israelites themselves. The ritual of burning the shorn hair of the Riwaiti, one of the high points of the ceremony, closely followed biblical injunctions, as already noted. But it also was consistent with traditional Maori ideas concerning fire, for *tapu* objects in pre-European New Zealand could be disposed of by burning them. For example, a man named Ta-manuhiri developed a nosebleed while fishing in another man's canoe. Some blood spilled on the canoe, rendering it *tapu*, so Ta-manuhiri confiscated it from its owner and burned it.⁵⁵ Ranking women of the Kahungunu tribe would give birth in a special structure known as *whare kohanga*. Parturition was considered to be an intensely *tapu* process, as a result of which the *whare kohanga* itself became *tapu*. It was necessary to destroy it following the birth, and one means to accomplish this was by burning.⁵⁶ Finally, we have already commented upon the capacity of cooked food to render *tapu* persons and things *noa*. This certainly derives from the cooking—that is, from the exposure of the food to fire. Therefore the burning of the hair of the Riwaiti during the 1915 ceremony, signifying the end of their separation unto God from a Judeo-Christian point of view, was also a *whakanoa* procedure from the perspective of traditional Maori culture.

Precisely why Rua decided to change the direction of the movement by means of the ceremony of 1915 is not entirely clear. One possibility pertains to Rua's acquiescence in the presence of liquor at Maungapohatu. Among the biblical rules regarding the Nazirite is that "he shall separate himself from wine and strong drink."⁵⁷ This regulation had fallen by the wayside at Maungapohatu by about 1910. Perhaps Rua

⁵⁵ Elsdon Best, *The Maori Canoe*, Dominion Museum Bulletin no. 7 (Wellington: Dominion Museum, 1925), pp. 60–61.

⁵⁶ Elsdon Best, *The Whare Kohanga (the "Nest House") and Its Lore*, Dominion Museum Bulletin no. 13 (Wellington: Dominion Museum, 1929), p. 21.

⁵⁷ Num. 6.3.

was influenced in his decision to end the community's separation unto God because the rules governing the Nazirite were not being fully observed.

It is also possible that Rua acted on the basis of changes in his personal ritual status. From a Maori point of view, the indignity of being imprisoned would have been detrimental to his personal *mana* or *tapu*. The violation of his *tapu* might have been exacerbated when his long hair was cut during imprisonment,⁵⁸ for the head is the most *tapu* part of the body. Judeo-Christian considerations run parallel to Maori ones in this case, for the cutting of Rua's hair in prison would have affected his status as a Nazirite (as, indeed, happened to Samson in similar circumstances). If Rua, as messianic leader, considered his personal circumstances to be crucial to the corporate condition of the Israelites, the violation of his own *tapu* and position as Nazirite by imprisonment could have influenced his decision to end the special status of the community as a whole.

THE LATER CHAPTERS

It was not long until the government decided to rein Rua in again. Rua's doctrine included the tenet that the time of war had passed with Te Kooti and that these were days of peace. Accordingly, he opposed the recruitment of his followers to join the Maori contingent of troops to fight in World War I. War hysteria transformed his pacifism into rumors that Rua favored German victory, that he was arming his followers, and that he anticipated a fraternal visit from the Kaiser.

In January and February 1916, two efforts were made to bring Rua to court on the liquor charges that had been held over from the previous year. Rua refused to go, claiming that he had already served his time for that offense. This fueled rumors that Rua was an armed desperado who might be expected to resist arrest, and the government was determined not to be put off again. On April 2, 1916, a party of over sixty-five armed police arrived at Maungapohatu to capture him. Although Rua received them cordially, nervousness was high on both sides. Apparently a movement by Rua led the police to think that he was trying to bolt, and they wrestled him to the ground. During the struggle the first shot was fired. A confused gunfight ensued, with people running and firing in all directions. When it was over, two Maoris (one of whom was Rua's son) lay dead and two others were seriously wounded, while four constables were wounded, two of them

⁵⁸ Binney et al. (n. 1 above), p. 77.

seriously. Rua, his head bandaged from a blow he had received during the fray, and five other Israelites were taken away from Maungapohatu in handcuffs.⁵⁹

Rua was tried and sentenced to two and one-half years imprisonment. When he returned to Maungapohatu in 1918 he instituted a number of changes—which, however, I interpret as a continuation of the process of ending the community's *tapu* of “separation unto God” rather than the inauguration of a new phase. He ordered the two preeminent buildings in the settlement—his own house Hiruharama Hou and the court house Hiona—to be torn down. This was required because the 1916 police raid had violated his house (which, it will be recalled, had remained *tapu* after the 1915 ceremony). Moreover, according to Maori thought bloodshed creates a state of *tapu* in its own right, rendering the place where it occurs unsuitable for mundane activities.⁶⁰ Rua used the lumber from Hiruharama Hou to build a new house of the same name for himself and seven of his wives. It was located at a *tapu*-free place called Maai, a few hundred yards from the original Maungapohatu community. Hiona was also dismantled and its lumber, whitewash covering the diamond and trefoil designs, was used to build other houses.

The general drifting of the Israelites away from Maungapohatu, which had begun even before the *whakanoa* ritual of 1915, continued. The process was abetted by the harsh winters of Maungapohatu and epidemics—measles in 1916, typhoid in 1925, and especially the influenza epidemic of 1918.⁶¹

Then, in 1927, Rua prophesied that the end of the world was at hand, and he called for the people to gather again at Maungapohatu. Two weeks of total darkness would be followed by a great flood, and the stars would rain down from the sky. Jesus would return to be reunited with his brother, Rua, and the world would end. By March some two hundred people had converged on Maungapohatu, and they rebuilt the settlement yet again, according to Rua's new specifications. Houses were set neatly along two main streets, and roofs were of corrugated iron because only that would protect the people from the anticipated shower of stars. For several months Rua led the people in careful study of the Bible, decreeing that no one might be absent from the community for more than a single night during this period. Rua's purpose was to make the people ready for the coming of God. At the

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 85–121; Webster (n. 1 above), pp. 238–58.

⁶⁰ Elsdon Best, “Maori Eschatology,” *Transactions of the New Zealand Institute* 38 (1905): 148–239, esp. 157.

⁶¹ Binney et al., pp. 149–50, 154.

same time (hedging perhaps against the possibility that God might prove to be as unpunctual as King Edward) he told them that if the world did not end on the appointed day, it most certainly would before the year 2000, and they should use the extra time to make their community prosper and to prepare themselves for the end.

As it happened, the world did not end when expected, but for a few years thereafter Maungapohatu did prosper, supported primarily by the men's summer earnings from shearing and other farm labor. A village council enforced strict rules pertaining to sanitation, the prohibition of drink, and other community matters. By 1931, however, the harsh winters of Maungapohatu were taking their toll and the community dwindled. Rua himself resided only seasonally in Maungapohatu after 1930 or 1931. A final, rather feeble revitalization occurred in early 1933, when for a period of two months he prohibited the faithful remnant of the Israelites from leaving Maungapohatu while he again led them in diligent study of the Scriptures. Later that year, however, he left Maungapohatu permanently.

Rua died in 1937. Six hundred people gathered for his funeral and their keening took on a more heartbreaking quality when, on the third day, his prophecy that he would rise from the dead did not come to pass.⁶²

PLUS ÇA CHANGE . . .

Our analysis has identified certain elements of Rua's movement, such as his self-designation as the brother of Christ, which derived exclusively from Judeo-Christian sources. Others seem purely Maori, for example, the prohibition of cooking in the sacred or *tapu* sector of the Maungapohatu settlement. More interesting, still others are entirely consistent with both traditions. Most notable was the 1915 ceremony designed to end the Israelites' separation unto God, which simultaneously adhered to biblical injunctions and constituted a Maori *whakanoa* ritual.

This concluding section takes a more general view, examining not so much the surface elements of the movement as their deeper structure. The outlines of that structure may be discerned in an overview of the history we have been considering.

Rua's movement went through several distinct phases. The first, before 1907, was dominated by the expectation that King Edward would meet with Rua at Gisborne to arrange the repurchase of Maori lands and the deportation of most whites. The second phase, from 1907

⁶² Ibid., pp. 154-75.

to about 1915, was the period when the Israelites withdrew from the secular world and separated themselves unto God in their isolated community at Maungapohatu. In the third phase, about 1915–27, Rua ended that separation or *tapu* and encouraged his followers to return to the outer world. A fourth phase began in 1927 when Rua called the Israelites to gather again at Maungapohatu in order to prepare for the end of the world. The fifth phase was another dispersal as the people (including Rua himself) began to move away from Maungapohatu in about 1930 or 1931. The movement was clearly running down by this time, but sixth and seventh phases are dimly visible in Rua's gathering of the faithful for two months isolation and teaching at Maungapohatu in 1933, followed by a final dispersal later that year.

This historical synopsis reveals an unmistakable pattern. It consists of alternating periods when the Israelites would disperse and interact with the larger world on the one hand, and when they would gather at Maungapohatu, in isolation from the outer world, on the other. These two modes of being were qualitatively distinct. The periods of dispersal were secular, while the times of isolation were religious in character.

So far as the source of overt symbols is concerned, it seems beyond question that traditionally Maori elements in Rua's movement diminished over time. Thus the original period of isolation at Maungapohatu, beginning in 1907, drew much more from Maori culture— notions and practices pertaining to *tapu*, for example—than did the subsequent gathering there two decades later. My contention, however, is that the overall historical pattern of oscillation between secular dispersal and religious gathering is much more Maori than Judeo-Christian.

The attempt to redeem that claim begins with a comparison of Judeo-Christian and Maori concepts of changes in the relationship between the human and the divine. Both have a notion of periodic proximity with the alienation from the divine, but the meaning is different in the two traditions. In Judeo-Christian thought alienation from God occurs because humans willfully and sinfully turn away from God, who, in response, wrathfully puts them out of his sight (Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden and cursed by God because of their disobedience; God destroyed humankind in the flood because of their violence and corruption). Proximity to the divine, on the other hand, occurs in the Judeo-Christian tradition when human individuals or groups dedicate themselves to God, or when God seeks to reconcile mankind to himself—often through the agency of a divinely inspired leader such as Moses or Jesus.

The point to be stressed here is that, in Judeo-Christian thought, proximity to the divine is unequivocally desirable and alienation from God is always a bad thing.

As a hart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for thee, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When shall I come and behold the face of God?⁶³

My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?
Why art thou so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?
O my God, I cry by day, but thou dost not answer; and by night, but find
no rest.⁶⁴

In Maori tradition the states of being, in proximity with the gods and separated from them, are also of immense cultural significance. These two states are explicitly identified, as we have already seen, by the terms *tapu* (to be under divine influence) and *noa* (to be free of divine influence). But the import of and relationship between these two states is entirely different from the Judeo-Christian tradition. The state of *tapu* is highly desirable for many purposes. A warrior cannot expect to prevail over his adversary, nor can a woodcarver or tattooist accomplish his art, unless he is *tapu*. Similarly, *tapu* is necessary for the growth of crops, the reproduction of fish and other forms of wildlife, and all sorts of other human necessities.

On the other hand, however, trouble, inconvenience, and restrictions often accompany the *tapu* state. For one thing, the deity under whose influence one finds oneself may be malicious, so that the *tapu* stemming from it produces disease or ill fortune. Even those states of *tapu* that are necessary and desirable have drawbacks. The *tapu* artist, for example, may not use his hands while eating. His product—say, a finely carved house or canoe—is likewise *tapu*, and it may not be used while it is in that state. Similarly, although sweet potatoes will not grow unless they are *tapu*, that same *tapu* makes them unfit for human consumption. Hence, from the Maori point of view, it is often necessary to terminate the *tapu* state—to become *noa*—when the *tapu* in question is detrimental or after its benefits have been realized.

Thus in the Maori view neither proximity to the divine (*tapu*) nor alienation from it (*noa*) is intrinsically good or bad, desirable or undesirable. Each state is necessary in its appropriate time. Indeed, the proper regulation of affairs often demands oscillation between the two states, as when *tapu* is necessary while a crop is growing, the *noa* when it is to be consumed, *tapu* again when the next crop is planted, and so on through the seasons. The alternating states of *tapu* and *noa* constitute, according to an analysis developed elsewhere, an important part of a Maori structure for the sequence of events, which may be termed

⁶³ Pss. 42.1–2.

⁶⁴ Pss. 22.1–2.

complementarity.⁶⁵ The first incantation below is a warrior's invocation, requesting the *tapu* of the war god Tu as he prepares to enter battle. The second incantation has a *whakanoa* quality. A formula frequently recited at the beginning of Maori orations, it invites the spirits of the dead to depart to the mythical Maori homeland and abode of the dead so that the activities of the living may proceed unimpeded by their *tapu*.

The face of Tu is angry.	Ka riri te mata o Tu.
The face of Tu flames	Ka nguha te mata o Tu.
O Tu, divide the heavens.	E Tu, wahia te rangi.
Give me strength to abide.	Homai taku tu kia numia.
That I may be quick to take	Kia rawea
Long and strong anger and	He maro riri, he maro
flaming;	nguha;
Strong to devour the battle;	He maro kaitaua;
Strong for the play of war.	He maro takarokaro whenua. ⁶⁶
Depart, you ghosts.	Haere, nga mate.
Depart and return to Hawaiki.	Haere et hoki ki Hawaiki.
To great Hawaiki,	Ki Hawaiki nui,
To long Hawaiki,	Ki Hawaiki roa,
To distant Hawaiki.	Ki Hawaiki tawhiti.
Depart, depart, depart.	Haere, haere, haere. ⁶⁷

It is not difficult to detect implications of these differences between the Judeo-Christian and Maori traditions for cults or other religious movements. Those grounded in Judeo-Christian principles are concerned to establish a special proximity to God, and to maintain that proximity permanently. This applies, for example, to monastic orders in the Roman Catholic church, to Protestant communal movements such as the Hutterites, and to highly orthodox Jewish sects such as the Chassidim. Separation from the divine constitutes a failure of the movement in its primary purposes. The result of such failure is the dispersal of the members and the end of the movement.

A religious movement founded on Maori concepts about the human relationship to the divine, on the other hand, may be expected to

⁶⁵ The traditional Maori pattern, of which Rua's cult is a twentieth-century example, has been analyzed under the label of "complementarity" in Hanson and Hanson (n. 2 above). See also F. Allan Hanson, "Syntagmatic Structures: How the Maoris Make Sense of History," *Semiotica* 46 (1983): 287-307.

⁶⁶ Richard Taylor, *Te Ika a Maui, or New Zealand and Its Inhabitants* (London: Weithem & Macintosh, 1855), p. 79, Taylor's translation.

⁶⁷ My translation.

behave very differently. It might easily conceptualize itself as close to the divine at certain times and removed at others, without sensing that anything is amiss. Such oscillation might, in fact, be understood as the proper state of affairs. The history of Rua's movement, with its periodic shifts between secular dispersal in the larger world and religious gathering at Maungapohatu, exemplifies precisely this pattern. On this basis I conclude that, regardless of the biblical content of its surface teachings, on the deeper level of understandings concerning the relationship between the human and the divine, Rua's cult was more Maori than Judeo-Christian.

This conclusion may allow additional insights into some aspects of the movement. For one, it generates a suggestion as to why Rua chose the Nazirite as model for his movement. It was, I suggest, precisely for the same reason that the Nazirite image is found in few if any Western cults: because the special relationship that the Nazirite established with God was *temporary*. Antithetical to the typical Judeo-Christian yearning for permanent nearness to God, it accords well with the Maori closeness to and separation from the gods. Although close, however, the fit is not perfect. The Maori expectation is for an *oscillation* in the relationship with the gods: now close, now distant in a reiterated cycle. The biblical discussion of the Nazirite carries no such connotation. The Nazirite's vow appears to be something quite exceptional, to be taken by relatively few people and probably only once in a lifetime (analogous, perhaps, to making a pilgrimage).

The actual history of Rua's movement is closer to the Maori expectation than the Nazirite model, in that his Israelites drew close to God and separated from him not once but three times. The most dramatic—and, so far as this analysis is concerned, the pivotal—moment of the entire movement was the *whakanoa* ceremony of 1915, which ended the community's separation unto God and sent the Israelites back into the world. Had Judeo-Christian principles been dominant, this development would have been understood as a failure to maintain the desired closeness to God, and it would probably have signaled the end of the movement. But Rua's movement did not die with repeated dispersals. The reason, I suggest, is that Rua and his followers were operating on the basis of Maori principles. He reasoned that they had reaped what benefits they could by means of their *tapu* period of closeness to God at Maungapohatu, and now it was time to draw away from that special proximity and return to the *noa* world.

A similar interpretation might apply to the developments (or lack of them) at Gisborne in 1906. From a Judeo-Christian perspective, the failure of King Edward to appear would have undermined Rua's legitimacy as a prophet because his prediction did not come to pass.

But the historical fact is that, far from being weakened, Rua's cult entered its strongest phase immediately after this episode. How can this be explained? The view of Binney et al. that Rua in fact did fulfill one of Te Kooti's prophecies by uniting the Tuhoe tribe at Gisborne, already noted, may have merit. But it is also possible that so many Maoris were willing to follow Rua to Maungapohatu, where they would separate themselves unto God, for reasons more peculiar to traditional Maori culture. Their interactions with the whites in basically secular (*noa*) conditions had been unsuccessful: the suffering and confiscations of the land wars, the generally depressed circumstances of the Maoris when contrasted with the whites. The failure to produce King Edward may have constituted still more evidence for the indigenous Maori understanding that human efforts undertaken in the absence of divine participation are ineffectual. Perhaps this event was the catalyst precipitating the decision by Rua and his followers to establish a closer relationship with God in the *tapu* community of Maungapohatu, as a means of fortifying themselves against the threats posed by the whites.

If this analysis is correct, it signals a final irony in Rua's prophetic movement. One of his aims was to free the Maoris from the grip of their heathen past. Yet his movement and its history, as the new Messiah and his Israelites fashioned and conceptualized it, was itself patterned on traditional Maori concepts of the course of events and the relationship between the human and the divine.

University of Kansas