

A MAN & HIS MANA

Bay of Plenty slave, warrior, prophet and peacemaker Hakaraia was brutally killed in 1870 by the Crown, which finally apologised in 2011. So why don't we know more about him? **by ALISON MCCULLOCH**

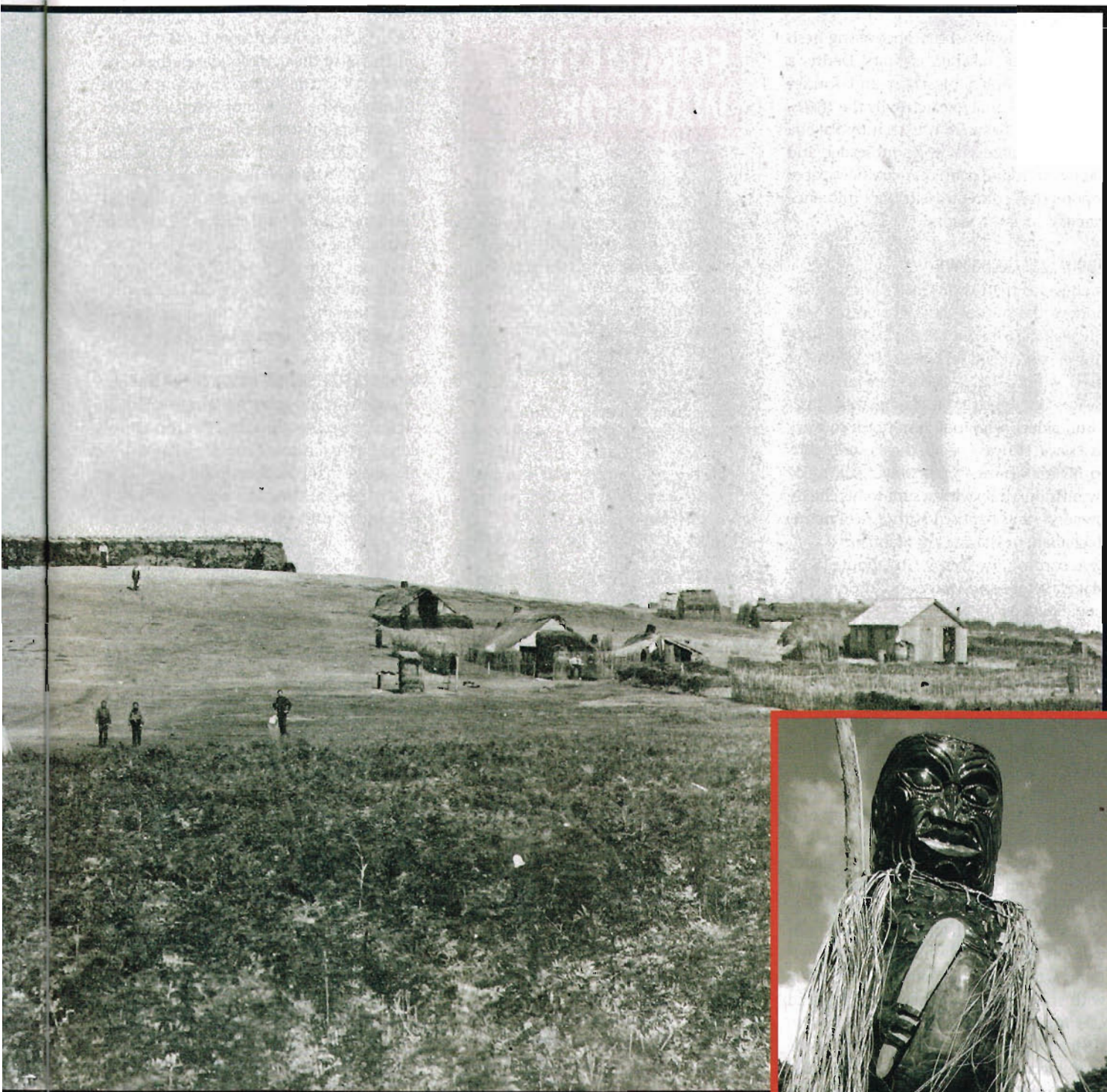


On September 20, 2011, New Zealand said sorry to a man named Hakaraia: sorry for labelling him a rebel; sorry for punishing, pursuing and ultimately killing him; and sorry for continuing the punishment after his death by taking so much land from his tribe that it nearly vanished.

By all accounts, Hakaraia was a remarkable

figure: slave, prophet, Christian peacemaker and warrior, who took to the bush in his sixties and became, as one historian put it, a Robin Hood figure, leading a band of dissidents fighting injustice. Considering the outsized role Hakaraia played in so many pivotal events of mid-19th-century New Zealand, his rare and fleeting presence in histories and other accounts is surprising. As long ago as 1986, for example, the eminent historian of the New Zealand Wars, James

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Belich, described Hakaraia as “a leader who deserves more attention from historians”. Yet the silence continued.

Now, a convergence of anniversaries and events is conspiring to raise the profile of this complex and fascinating character. As part of his tribe’s recent Treaty claim settlement and apology, \$300,000 has been set aside to research and write the stories of Hakaraia and his Bay of Plenty tribe, Waitaha, and a \$3 million education fund

Battle scene: Gate Pa during the New Zealand Wars. Right, a pou carved in Hakaraia’s honour.

was established in his name. In April, a pou, or marker post, carved in his honour was installed in Tauranga as part of the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Gate Pa, in which he fought. And although he’s still absent from the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, research on a possible entry is under way.



One writer who's been uncovering fresh detail about Hākaraia is Mark Derby, a Wellington-based historian and former Waitangi Tribunal researcher. By the 1860s, Derby says, Hākaraia was seen by Pakeha and Maori alike as a powerful leader, and Derby has found contemporary newspaper reports that contend Hākaraia's influence came to rival the Maori King's.

ABOUT 12 YEARS A SLAVE

Mahika, as he was originally known, was born at the start of the 19th century into the Waitaha tribe, part of the Bay of Plenty's Arawa confederation. Nothing is known of his childhood, but in 1823, as a young man, he was kidnapped at Mt Maunganui by Nga Puhi raiders, who took him north to work as a slave. He was freed in the Bay of Islands in his mid-thirties – probably “redeemed” by missionaries paying a sum to his chiefly owners – and baptised with a new name: Zachariah, or Hākaraia in Maori.

According to Derby, in about 1836, Hākaraia made his way to a Rotorua mission founded by the Rev Thomas Chapman. By then, he was a devout and proselytising Christian, who spent his time travelling throughout the Bay of Plenty and beyond, distributing Christian literature, making converts and making peace among rival iwi.

One treaty that would have a profound impact on Hākaraia and his people was an accord that ended what had become Waitaha's decades-long exile. In 1823, around the time Hākaraia was taken north into slavery, his people were driven inland towards Rotorua, and their territory subsequently occupied by Tauranga's Ngai Te Rangi tribe. “In October 1845, in what must have been a deeply moving and symbolic ceremony,” Derby writes, Hākaraia “led his people, along with members of the neighbouring and closely related tribe of Tapuika, in a return to their ancestral lands”. It was there he made moves to settle down, founding a Christian community near present-day Te Puke that he named Kenana, or Canaan – a base for his continued preaching and peacemaking.

The place where Kenana once stood is now bisected by a railway line and noisy highway, with part of the land a similarly divided urupa, or cemetery. I visited the site with Waitaha negotiator Whareoteriri Rahiri and a direct descendant of Hākaraia, Riko Te Kehua o Te Rangi Ahomiro.

The Kenana community, Whareoteriri says, would have stretched across the low hills on either side of the urupa, but the best

FORGOTTEN WARRIORS

Many of the estimated 120 Maori warriors killed in one of the deadliest battles of the New Zealand Wars still lie in the trenches where they fell, covered now by paddocks and a busy road, marked only by a squat concrete cairn. On June 21, it will be 150 years since that battle – at Te Ranga just outside Tauranga – an anniversary that makes the long national neglect of this site and others like it all the more troubling.

Whereas the centenary of World War I is having money lavished on it, including a \$17 million fund from the Lottery Grants Board, commemorating the sesquicentenary of battles fought on home turf has been left almost entirely to iwi and local communities.

The same is true of monuments. By April, more than \$1 million of the lottery money had been set aside to refurbish World War monuments; Te Ranga, meantime, had received nothing. It could do with some support. The cairn, put up in 1964 for the centenary of the battle, sits in a small unkempt plot next to a cow paddock and trough. The roadside fence is falling down, the site is poorly signposted and there's nowhere for visitors to park.

“We've got to find the money ourselves,” said Buddy Mikaere, one of the organisers of sesquicentennial events in Tauranga. “The only money we've received has been from the regional and district councils, but that's entirely to do with environmental enhancement work.”

So far, that's paid for some hedge and grass trimming.

view of it today is from space. He's right. A Google Earth tour reveals intriguing shapes and contours that I didn't see from the ground.

Retreating from the highway noise, we drove farther down Kenana Rd, through what was once swampland, to a farm at Canaan Landing on the Kaituna River. Whareoteriri went whitebaiting there as a child, he says, but the banks are overgrown and he couldn't find remains of the old

wharf he remembered from those days.

Looking at the farm buildings, the cows, the fences and fields, it's simply impossible to imagine the Kenana of Hākaraia's time. One of the mysteries of this man is why such a beloved and committed Christian conciliator, who built this community from scratch, came to take up arms, to fight so ferociously for so long even as others were surrendering and making deals. Why did the Hākaraia of Kenana, Rev Chapman's “peacemaking friend and old teacher”, become the Hākaraia of the bloody battles at Gate Pa, Te Ranga and the Tauranga bush wars?

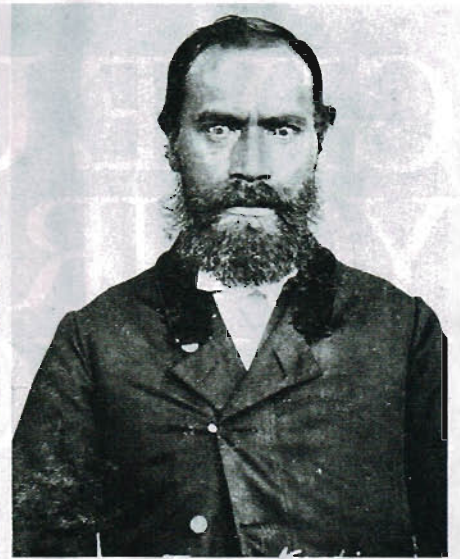
ONE RULE FOR PAKEHA, ANOTHER FOR MAORI

Whareoteriri and other Waitaha believe part of the answer lies in the atrocities committed during a Government attack on Rangiaowhia village in the Waikato in February 1864. A 2001 report, “Waitaha and the Crown”, fleshes out that explanation, noting that Hākaraia was “drawn into the Kingitanga war specifically because the British troops attacked a Maori settlement on a Sunday, which offended Hākaraia's Christian sensibility”. As Whareoteriri explains, it seemed to Hākaraia there was one rule for Pakeha Christians and another for Maori.

Then, of course, there was the land. As a leader who believed in peace, but on equal terms with settlers, Hākaraia's decision to support Kingitanga in its efforts to stop the Pakeha advance was hardly surprising. But the decision had lasting consequences for him and Waitaha. In siding with the Waikato-based King movement, Hākaraia was also rebelling against many of his own kin, in particular those elements of the powerful Arawa who rejected Kingitanga at a hui in 1863 in favour of loyalty to the Crown.

As the Government acknowledges in its recent settlement with Waitaha, this schism fuelled a silence within the tribe about Hākaraia, who was blamed by some for the extra punishment they received at the hands of the Government. And they certainly were punished. In 1878, the Tauranga lands commissioner decided that because “Hākaraia was a rebel and fought against the

Why did Rev Chapman's “peacemaking friend” become the Hākaraia of bloody battles?



Clockwise from top, villagers listen to a preacher; Te Kooti; his pennant; Battle of Gate Pa plaque; scene of that battle between British forces and Bay of Plenty Māori, including Hakaia, 150 years ago.

Crown ... [a] portion of the land of his hapu should be taken in payment for his sin".

Hakaia fought his campaign against the confiscations for the remaining years of his life, becoming an ally of Te Kooti, and succeeding in delaying Pakeha settlement of the Bay of Plenty. But even as he was vilified – the loyalist military leader Major Kemp (Te Keepa) called him “the son of Satan” – he remained an esteemed spiritual leader, known by his supporters as Hakaia Te Heparā – “the shepherd”.

A BRUTAL DEATH

His death, when it came, was brutal. According to newspaper reports, he and about 17 others were “shot in very cold blood” and Hakaia was decapitated. At the time he had with him a Kingitanga flag, given to him by

King Tawhiao, which had flown at Gate Pa.

Whareoteriri and Riko say Hakaia’s remains are now on Mokoia Island on Lake Rotorua, although no one knows exactly where. The new pou at the Gate Pa reserve, carved by Riko Ahomiro’s brother Tupaea, is the only known visual representation of him.

The next major battle of the New Zealand Wars set to have its 150th anniversary marked is Te Ranga, just south of Tauranga. There, on June 21, 1864, as many as 120 warriors were killed after Crown forces attacked their partly built pa. Hakaia, who survived the fighting, had requested reinforcements from among supportive relatives before the battle. Derby says the defeat and deaths of his kin would have reinforced his opposition to the military and settlers.

For this and for Hakaia’s ongoing

resistance, a “stigma of rebellion” came to be attached to the Waitaha people who, the Crown now acknowledges, were undermined “to the point where the iwi itself nearly vanished”. By 1900, Waitaha retained only 2.5% of their former territory.

“The Crown regrets that you have been forced to bear this stigma,” the apology says, “and wishes the mana and reputation of Hakaia and Waitaha to be restored.” The document ends with a Waitaha whakatauki, or proverb, dating from the very 1845 peace-making ceremony that Hakaia had made possible:

*Kua tau te rangimarie
Ki te whare o Hakaia
ake, ake, ake*

*The peace has been settled
In the house of Hakaia
Now and forever more. ■*