

mo Te Whiti

period was spent in the South Island. Their Pakeha gaolers, in the vain hope that they could tempt them from their purpose, allowed them considerable liberty, and as a consequence Te Whiti was allowed some contact with the Maori people of Te Wai Pounamu. They treated him as an honoured guest, and while in Otakou he sat for his portrait, the only time he ever consented to do this. (A portrait based on this photograph still hangs at Otakou Marae, and a copy is now in the Parihaka meeting-house also. This period is discussed, and the portrait illustrated, by George Griffiths and Maarire Goodall in their recent book, *Dunedin Maori*).

The South Island Maori had also suffered greatly from unjust and illegal land transactions, and Te Whiti's teachings gave many of them new hope and a new focus for their aspirations. Dick Scott, in his eloquent book *Ask That Mountain*, tells us (page 149) that

when Te Whiti and Tohu had returned to Parihaka, and the Taranaki people were engaged in marches protesting the theft of their land, 'contributions of cash and food poured in from all parts of Aotearoa. In one shipment Nelson sent cartloads of mussels, 25 cases of apples and five cases of jam, Otago provided muttonbirds and oysters — each region gave its best to the fighting province'. So it is not surprising that in 1894 a man of Otakou should have carefully recorded this song.

An assertion that life will continue

Like many waiata, the song begins with a lament and ends with an affirmation, an assertion that life will continue and the people survive. In the second line, the clouds come as messengers: possibly from those who have died, certainly also from the people who have suffered persecution. Te Atiawa are Te Whiti's tribe.

In the second stanza the poet speaks

of the hospitality extended to all in Te Whiti's large dining hall at Parihaka, which is named Te Niho-o-Te-Atiawa — literally, 'Te Atiawa's Teeth'. Nohomairangi is Te Whiti's son. Miti-mai was a European-style meeting house built for Te Whiti by men who had returned to Parihaka after being imprisoned without trial; its full name, Miti-Mai-Te-Arero, means literally 'The Tongue Licks Out Towards Me', and must refer to Pakeha aggression. The poet ends, triumphantly, by addressing Te Whiti and asking him to affirm the resolution and the mana of his people by placing in their hair the *rau-kura*, the white feather that is his emblem.

Margaret Orbell

More than a century later te iwi o Te Whiti are still resisting.

Arrival of Waitangi Tribunal at Owae, Waitara. (Photo: Fiona Clark)

