

The various accounts of the history of the whare tapu, Miringa Te Kakara, have one thing in common: sources are suspect, they are without acceptable authority-within the framework of traditional Maori historical accountability. Rather, the versions are folklore, having its origins (in part) in the breakdown of Maori schools of learning, one of which was Miringa Te Kakara.

In an account given to the author by the Tainui historian Pei te Hurinui in 1956, Miringa Te Kakara was described as one of four Io cult centres in the King Country; the others being Whenua-tupu on the Waimiha stream; Kete-maringi or Hurakia, on the Hurakia Range at the headwaters of the Ongarue River; and Papaawaka on the Ongarue River approximately a mile above its juncture with the Waimiha Stream.

Built at Tiroa in 1887, under the direction of two Io priests, Rangawhenua and Te Ra Karepe, Miringa Te Kakara was constructed by adherents of a dissident group of Ngati-Maniapoto named Pao Miere, who refused (in 1886) to participate in local land sales, and as a result were not given titles to tribal lands or were awarded only small shares. According to Te Kohinga Taniora, both Te Ra Karepe and Rangawhenua died at the same time as King Tawhiao, in 1894.

At the death of Te Ra Karepe, a book in which was recorded the teachings and history of Miringa Te Kakara, were placed under tapu and buried in a box at the base of a post in Te Tokanui-a-Noho, the Te Kuiti meeting house built by the followers of Te Kooti Rikirangi in 1874. The book had been in the possession of King Tawhiao (who was



sympathetic towards the teachings of both Ra Karepe and Pai Marire prophet Te Ua Haumene). After a lapse of time, the book was to have been recovered by Hotu-Taua Pakuku-Kohatu, but wasn't. In 1928, the grand-daughter of King Tawhiao (Piupiu) and Taumuri, daughter of Te Wehi Rangitana wanted the book recovered to mark the renovation of Miringa Te Kakara. However, this was decided against by elders of Ngati-Maniapoto; the book remaining under tapu.

In his account of Miringa Te Kakara, Pei te Hurinui, provided a detailed ground plan of the cruciform building, in addition to notes on inscriptions and incised symbols on posts and wall panels; among them, the following:
Support post (south): Ngare o Kaha-1887

Centre post: Ko te Rata-Maltese cross
Ko te Tawake o te Oranga
Turakina te Atua Ae
Crescent moon

Inner corner (north-east): Nga te 12
Mauri tane

Inner corner (south-east): Nga te 12
Mauri wahine and Maltese cross

Sliding door (south): The meeting of the words of the year.

Support post (north): Tukua tukua ae ae.

The term **mauri** (active life principle) appears on several panels and on **exterior** niu posts, of which there are eight: three in a northern alignment, two aligned west, two set east and one to the south. Surviving recent destruction of Miringa Te Kakara, the posts have, over the years, been greatly reduced in height. It is undoubtedly the niu posts that have suggested a connection with the Pai Marire or Hauhau cult which featured them in certain rituals. In classic Maori ritual, niu were connected with divinatory rites.

Pei te Hurinui underlined the sacred Hawaiki origin of the name Miringa Te Kakara, at the same time listing common alternative (but in-accurate) names for the building; among them, Wirianga Te Kahara, Waerenga A Kahara. In conclusion, he observed that there was a prophecy that Miringa Te Kakara would, one day, be burned down, only to arise from the ashes.

Alan Taylor

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