

**“TITIRANGI IS THE MOUNTAIN”:  
REPRESENTING MAORI COMMUNITY IN AUCKLAND**

Daniel Rosenblatt  
*University of Chicago*

Although “culture movements” of the sort that have become increasingly common in the Pacific and elsewhere are reactions and responses to colonialism and globalization, and are often at least partly inspired by imported models, they nevertheless have locally (culturally) specific content and effects. This is because the things that are “revived” are always grounded in particular local institutions, genres of practice, traditions of interpretation, and modes of expression. Form in these cases carries content, and the content is for that reason rooted in local socially inherited traditions. Contemporary New Zealand Maori liken urban communities to those based on kinship, and they do so by employing a variety of representational conventions, ranging from songs to carved meeting houses. These forms connect asserting kinship to making claims about land, and link land to culture and to a distinctive status within the nation-state.

FROM THE TIME they began to live in cities in large numbers (in the wake of the Second World War), indigenous Maori New Zealanders have talked about urban life as inimical to many values they hold dear. They have attempted to combat this problem by establishing institutions in cities within which those values may find expression. Foremost among these are urban “*marae*,” community gathering places centered on carved meeting houses of a type once found only in rural, kin-based communities. The houses facilitate a discourse about community in contemporary New Zealand that links it to kinship, culture, and land. By examining that discourse I hope to be able to say something about how Maori have understood and reacted to “the here and now”—to borrow Arjun Appadurai’s resonant phrase (1996). In so doing I aim to con-

tribute to recent discussions of what “modernity” and “being modern” mean among people other than Western Europeans and their colonial progeny (Mitchell 2000; Rofel 1999).

This essay began its life as part of a conference session devoted to looking at the ways Pacific peoples constructed communities in urban settings. “Urban,” the participants agreed, was really our way of talking about the processes to which the people with whom we worked had been subjected: Cities stood for (and were part of) the destruction of older community norms by the cultural flows associated with globalization, the imposition of alien disciplines typical of colonialism, and the incorporation of people into a capitalist economy centered on wage labor and commodity consumption. The people we wrote about had come to live in cities because their prior forms of existence had become somehow unsatisfying or untenable. Sometimes migration was prompted by the pull of jobs and the excitement of bright city lights; at other times it was a result of the push of rural overpopulation and loss of land. All of these reasons applied in the case of Maori. But, however Pacific Islanders came to be in cities, they found them strange—and estranging. As Modell notes in the introduction to this collection, cities are places of diversity in which people constantly encounter others who not only are strangers, but have different customs, values, beliefs, and ways of life. More starkly, cities are places of alienation and anonymity where persons are presumptively individuals rather than members of a collectivity. None of this is unique to the Pacific, nor are Pacific Islanders the only people to be disenchanting with these aspects of urban life. I highlight them here partly because the ways Maori have sought to create community in cities have been explicitly framed as responses to their experiences of disaffection and dislocation.

For Maori, who are now a minority within their own country,<sup>1</sup> living in cities surrounded by people with different values and customs has provoked a crisis of “identity” as well as a crisis of “community”—both the individuality enforced by urban life and the diversity encountered within it are seen as threatening their continued existence as a distinct group with a distinct “culture.” Urban living threatens both the boundaries between different Maori groups (generally referred to as “tribes”) and those between Maori and other New Zealanders. Early on in the course of Maori urbanization, the problem (and one possible solution) was apparent to Maori observers. The following passage is from a proposal for an urban *marae* complex written sometime in the 1960s by two Maori women who had moved to the suburbs of West Auckland. Here is how they contrast the urban situation with the rural past:

*Urban Situation*

While the majority of tribes lived in the rural areas, there was freedom to build maraes, tribal houses, upon lands they owned, which maraes they used unmolested by the pressures and standards of modern society. . . . Today we find the Maaori population,<sup>2</sup> mainly for economic reasons, is becoming more urbanised, city dwellers, owning homes or living in rented accommodation, adjusting as far as is humanly possible to modern standards of living. Today, then, Maaoris of different tribes are, in a sense, de-tribalised. As city dwellers, they find themselves living side by side with members of other tribes, daily meeting as work mates, oft engaging in social and welfare work for the common good, befriending one another, socialising, and intermarrying as well. So it can be fairly said that the distinct tribal identities of urbanised Maaoris have given way to but one grand identity, Maaoritanga [Maoriness]! Let us accept this change as an indisputable fact, for it has everything to do with planning maraes in an urban situation.

*Cosmopolitan People of the New Zealand Nation*

Let us look outward from the Maaori tribes. We find that we have immediate and close neighbors: the Paakehaa [settlers], the Mangumangu [blacks], the Tareraa [Yugoslavians], the Hainamana [Chinese], the Hamoa [Samoans], the Tahiti, the Niue, the Rarotonga and other Polynesians, all living, working and striving for a place under the sun. We find intermarriage taking place quite normally between members of the Maaori ethnic group and members of these other ethnic groups, as if no ethnic identity existed, the highest common factor being plain love. This being so, the children of these marriages tend to lose their ethnic identity and so tend to become known by the politically-created identity, New Zealanders: citizens living together under one law. While however, there is this tendency for ethnic identity to be submerged, the cultural survival of some groups is not so easily submerged, as witness the positive upsurge of Maaori culture and its language. (Brown and Hakaraia n.d.; glosses and note added)

I quote Brown and Hakaraia's position paper at length because of the remarkable grasp they have of what is at stake in urbanization: As they make clear, it is not only that the practices and experiences of everyday life change

with the move to the city, but as a result, the basis of understanding the self in relation to society as a whole is transformed. Citizenship takes over from things like genealogy and connections to land as the foundation of identity. For Brown and Hakaraia the submergence of Maori identity is not a foregone conclusion—the interest of urban Maori in their “culture” and their language is a response to the possibility of such submergence, and the purpose of their paper is to argue for the establishment of institutions in which such a cultural revival can flourish. The *marae* complex they propose, the John Waititi Memorial Marae in West Auckland, was in fact built, and it was the primary site of the research I conducted some twenty or thirty years after they wrote.

Below I examine the way Maori “cultural” identity is imagined, looking both at some of the forms in which culture is expressed and at the nature of the *marae* complexes that are thought to enable it. As Brown and Hakaraia make clear, some of the emphasis on “culture” is a response to urbanization and consequent dislocation.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, however, the efforts of urban Maori have been grounded in an understanding of “community” rooted in the institutions and ways of thinking that characterized their previous rural existence. Before beginning a more focused discussion of Maori practices, I want to address briefly some of the larger theoretical issues at stake by situating the analysis of such a “culture movement” in the context of current debates about the nature of global modernity, the future of cultural difference, and the aftermath of colonialism.

### **Community, Culture, and the Global**

First, what are the implications of the term “moral community,” which we agreed (at the conference where this collection was born) captured the things that the people we wrote about understood as making life “humanly possible” under “modern standards of living”? The term is Durkheim’s, and he used it to discuss precisely the dilemma that Brown and Hakaraia see as central to the urban situation, namely, the felt need for something to belong to that is more immediate than the state and for ties that are more satisfying than those of economic interdependence (Durkheim [1893] 1933). As Modell notes in her introduction to this volume, the insistence by Maori and other indigenous people on such ties comes to stand for an opposition to the subsumption of all forms of morality by an overriding economic logic. For these reasons the term “moral community” makes sense—it apprehends something important about what Pacific Islanders have sought to create in cities and why they have done so. But in Durkheim’s hands, the idea of a moral community is part of a more general historical or evolutionary theory of how

complex societies are constituted, what kinds of problems they face, and what might be done to alleviate those problems. How much of that theory we might want to endorse or adopt in the process of importing the term “moral community” is an issue I will return to at the end of this essay, when I can do so in light of the particular ways that Maori practices have instantiated the idea.

More generally, to speak of cultural revival or constructing community as a form of resistance to colonialism is to evoke a whole series of debates about both the state of the world and the proper direction for anthropological research. A whole field, “postcolonial studies,” has grown up largely in celebration of forms of resistance that eschew localism in favor of some sort of cosmopolitan hybridity, understood as a refusal of reified ethnic identities imposed by the colonial process.<sup>4</sup> While I can hardly review the arguments on postcolonial discourse here, I do want to state my view that such a hybrid identity is (despite claims to the contrary) as local—that is to say, as culturally and historically particular—as any more traditional “ethnic” identity. Of course, hybridity shares this localness with the allegedly universal Enlightenment discourse it seeks to challenge. Hybridity, Western rationalism, and various cultural (and other) nationalisms (not to mention class-consciousness) are alike partly products of and partly creative responses to the conditions in which they were formed (so much for the Hegelian idea of the “subject of history”). All of this suggests two things: (1) that hybridity is not a better subject position from which to critique the West than some more specific form of cultural alterity (it is merely an alternative one) and (2) that a social movement is not reduced to merely participating in the reproduction of that which it opposes simply because it shares some categories (like the idea of culture or Maoriness) with it—whether something amounts to social reproduction or social transformation being, in any case, a matter of perspective.

Within anthropology, “culture” has become an increasingly problematic term for many analysts, for reasons related to (but not entirely congruent with) its rejection by theorists of the postcolonial. Talk of “cultures” has been seen as a form of anthropological collusion with colonialism (Abu-Lughod 1991; Fabian 1983; Fox 1985; Obeyesekere 1992) but also as a kind of self-delusion engendered by mistaking the representations of culture anthropologists create in collaboration with our informants for something that is really there (Clifford 1988; Clifford and Marcus 1986). One result has been to shift culture from an analytic concept (which can help account for other things, like the way people act) to a “folk” concept (which needs to be accounted for *by* other things, like colonialism or globalization). The vast and contentious literature on the “invention of tradition” and the “politics of culture” mostly emphasizes the political forces that shape and give significance to

aspects of custom that have become emblems of identity for subjugated non-Westerners.<sup>5</sup> Again, without addressing this literature in any detail, I want to take a position with respect to it—namely, that culture, in the analytic sense in which it “names and distinguishes . . . the organization of human action by symbolic means” (Sahlins 2000:158), both helps to shape the particular forms that emblematic cultural differences take and makes it possible for such differences to take on political significance.

This essay is part of a larger project whose goal is to make that argument with respect to the cultural revival known as the Maori Renaissance—to show that both the things Maori revive and the ends they hope to achieve have emerged out of the history of their relationship to the settlers, which was in turn molded by the understandings, values, and institutions that they brought to the encounter. To that end, in other contexts, I have looked at the emergence and institutionalization of the meeting house in the colonial context, at the symbolism of the house, and at the history of its use as site and symbol of Maori community life (Rosenblatt n.d.). Here I address one piece of my more general argument, having to do with the significance of the fact that cultural ideals are usually represented and expressed in particular forms that are handed down or adopted from the past. Using such forms has an impact on the meaning of that which is thereby promoted. The forms reflect indigenous systems of meaning and understandings of the world, and they introduce such understandings into contemporary political activity. Less abstractly, what I look at below is the way Maori liken urban communities to communities based on kinship and the political implications of the representational conventions by which they do so.

### ***Whakawhanaungatanga*: Making Kinship at Hoani Waititi Marae**

“*Whakawhanaungatanga*” is a word Maori use to describe activities that facilitate people getting to know one another in an informal and relaxed way. Such activities are often included in gatherings devoted to other ends, so that participants will develop feelings of affection and solidarity for one another. For example, at a gathering I attended of Maori language students from all over New Zealand, one night was devoted to entertainment: Classes from different areas presented songs and skits to each other.<sup>6</sup> I mention the word here, because it betrays what is at stake for Maori in the act of creating a sense of community around affective ties: *Whanaunga* are relatives, and the literal meaning of *whakawhanaungatanga* is “the making of relatives”—the sense of community created in groups such as the one consisting of language learners from around the country is modeled on kinship.

While talking about communities and groups of various sorts as being

“like families” is common in many places and contexts, the representation of community as kinship by Maori goes far beyond such easy metaphors, both in its scope and in its implications. The culturally particular forms these representations take determine their force as social action. Below, I will look at how these representations function and the field of discourse from which they emerge by discussing some of the specific forms in which kinship is evoked by urban Maori and by looking at their implications for understanding the political content of the Maori Renaissance. Specifically, I will look at two songs and at carved meeting houses. I hope to show that at the same time that these cultural forms enable people to talk about themselves as united in kinlike terms, they also enable them to assert claims to land, to connect land to culture, and to claim a distinctive status within the nation-state.

“Ko Titirangi te Maunga” is a song I sang many times while I was in New Zealand. The title translates as “Titirangi Is the Mountain,” and it is the source of the title of this essay. I learned the song by being part of a group of mostly young people taking a six-month course in the Maori language that met at Hoani (John) Waititi Marae every day from 8:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. We sometimes sang the song when we had guests to entertain, and we sometimes used it in ritual contexts in which a group might be required to sing a song in support of someone who had just made a speech representing them. Why a language class might need to provide hospitality or participate in rituals will become clearer below when I talk about *marae* complexes, but for the moment it will suffice to say that those commitments were among the consequences of reckoning ourselves as kin. The song “belonged” to the national organization that had developed the curriculum and trained the teachers for our language class, and the chorus of the song promised that the language would not be lost. But my concern here is with the first verse, which was modified by each group who sang it to adapt the song to their local circumstances—the verse proclaimed the identity of the singers, which is part of what made the song appropriate for ritual use. The version my class sang was this:

<i>Ko Titirangi te maunga</i>	Titirangi is the mountain
<i>E karanga atu nei</i>	Which calls out to you
<i>Ngā Tumanako whare</i>	Nga Tumanako is the house
<i>E powhiri nei. . .</i>	Which welcomes you here. . .

By referring to a mountain and a house, the song evokes (indexes) a genre of speech act called *pepeha*, which are a kind of proverb about a tribe or an area. For example, a *pepeha* about the Ngati Porou people is

<i>Ko Hikurangi te maunga,</i>	Hikurangi is the ancestral mountain,
<i>Ko Waiapu te awa,</i>	Waiapu is the river,
<i>Ko Ngāti Porou te iwi.</i>	Ngāti Porou is the tribe. <sup>7</sup>

*Pepeha* assert the identity of a descent group and connect its people to features of the landscape in the territory they claim as home—or, as Maori would say, the territory over which they “hold the *mana*” (*mana*, a word found throughout the Pacific, is famously difficult to translate but in New Zealand today carries the senses of the English words “power,” “authority,” and “pride”). By echoing the structure of the *pepeha* in our song—by naming “our” mountain and “our” meeting house—we, the members of the language class, represented our group as being analogous to a descent group.

Such representations abound these days in Auckland. Part of their logic derives from other references to kinship in talking about urban groups, such as the ubiquitous use of the term *whanau* (extended family) in the name of such groups. The language group I belonged to was Te Whanau Iti Kahurangi (The Small, Precious Family), and a social-services provider in the area was Te Whanau o Waipareira Trust (The Family of Waipareira Trust).<sup>8</sup> Because the use of terms like *whanau* is reinforced by borrowing motifs from the *pepeha*, the representation of urban groups in kinship terms often takes the form of asserting a connection to land—a connection that is in some sense a claim. These claims have multiple meanings. As a general assertion of a connection to land and a claim to land based on that connection, the song I quoted resonates with Maori attempts to regain land that was stolen from them and with more general resistance to the consequences of colonialism. “Culture”—songs and the like—is thus tied to a broader politics. But because claims to land embodied in cultural performances are paradigmatically expressed in ways that can’t help referring to specific lands, they can complicate relationships between different groups of Maori. From a Maori point of view, Maori residents of Auckland are divided into immigrants and “home people” or “people of the land” (*tangata whenua*). The latter are urban not because they came to the city but because the city came to them—they are descendants of those who traditionally hold the *mana* of the land on which Auckland was built. All Maori, immigrants and home people alike, recognize that the home people have a distinctive position within the city, but the exact nature of the relationship is subject to negotiation. Songs such as “Ko Titirangi te Maunga” are a possible site for such contention—the traditional owners of the land may feel that for others to use such imagery relating to land fails to respect their own claims and therefore, as they put it, tramples on their *mana* (see Tapsell, this volume; Kawharu 1968).

Land, cultural revival, anticolonial struggle, and the modeling of commu-



nity on kinship are even more complexly intertwined in another song, this one composed by Pita Sharples, director of Hoani Waititi Marae and the leader of a cultural performance group that practiced at the *marae*. The song is what is called a *patere*, a “song of defiance” (Ngata and Hurinui 1959:xxiv), and it is a type of “*waiata tawhito*” (old-fashioned song), which is to say that it employs a traditional Maori scale rather than the standard Western scale and is otherwise modeled on older forms of composition.<sup>9</sup> According to Dr. Sharples, the song was meant for all performing groups in the Auckland region, and it therefore talks about the land of that area.

*E Noho Ana Au*<sup>10</sup>

	<i>E noho ana au</i>	As I rest upon
	<i>I te tara Waiatarua</i>	the summit of Waiatarua
	<i>Ka huri nga whakaaro</i>	my thoughts are turned
	<i>Ki te wa a mua</i>	to a bygone age
5	<i>Ki te wana ki te wehi</i>	A time of the might and power
	<i>O nga iwi Maori</i>	of the Maori people
	<i>Uhia nga kanohi</i>	My eyes feast below
	<i>Kei raro te whenua</i>	upon the land of
	<i>O te awa papaku</i>	the shallow stream
10	<i>Te wai tohi i tohia rangatira</i>	of holy water wherein were
		baptized chiefs
	<i>Ka roaka te ingoa</i>	This stream has become known as
	<i>Waipareira</i>	Waipareira
	<i>Tera takoto ra</i>	Further out lies
	<i>Te riu o te awa Whau</i>	the bilge of the river Whau
15	<i>Kopikopiko atu tae ake</i>	meandering northwards
	<i>Ki Te Atatu</i>	to Te Atatu
	<i>Ka ringihia ki te tai</i>	spilling into the sea
	<i>O Waitemata</i>	of Waitemata
	<i>Papaki ake nga ngaru</i>	The waves clap
20	<i>Ki nga matamata</i>	along the headlands
	<i>Kokoru</i>	and beaches
	<i>Tae atu ki nga wai</i>	reaching into the waters
	<i>O Okahu</i>	of Okahu
	<i>Ki te takutai</i>	to the foreshore
25	<i>Kei Orakei</i>	of Orakei

- E tu mokemoke ana*  
*Te maunga Rangitoto*  
*E titiro iho ana*  
*Ki nga waka*  
 30 *Me nga tamariki a Tangaroa*
- Standing quite forlorn  
 is the mountain Rangitoto  
 mounting watch over  
 the sea vessels  
 and the children of Tangaroa
- Kai uta hei parepare*  
*Ki nga whenua*  
*Ko Maungawhau*  
*E tu noa*  
 35 *Ko Maungakiekie*  
*E toha ra*  
*Ki te tai whakarunga*  
*Ki te tai whakararo*
- Inland as a fortress  
 to the surrounding land  
 stands  
 Maungawhau  
 while Maungakiekie  
 stretches upwards to  
 the four winds
- Ko te awa whakatauki*  
 40 *E hahae tonu ana*  
*I te rawhiti*  
*Me te kohikohi haere*  
*I nga awa ririki*  
*Tuakina rawatia*  
 45 *Ki raro tamaki-makau-rau*
- To the east  
 continually tearing at the land  
 is the proverbial river  
 gathering as it flows  
 the small streams  
 to be finally disemboweled  
 in the North, Tamaki of a  
 hundred lovers
- Tu ke Mangere*  
*Ki te matakitali*  
*Iwi ki te rawhiti*  
*Me te tai tamatane Manukau*
- Standing alone is Mangere  
 watching over the  
 settlements to the east  
 and the western sea of  
 the Manukau
- Ko te whai*  
 50 *Tiehutia ake*  
*Ki Te Ru O Te Whenua*
- where a stingray  
 splashes its way  
 westward to Te Ru O Te Whenua
- Ka hoki nga whakaaro*  
*I Waitakere e*  
 55 *Koa ana kei roto*  
*Tu tonu nga tohu*  
*A mua e*
- And now my thoughts return  
 upon Waitakere  
 Happiness abides within me  
 for those symbols of an age gone by  
 remain with us still.

Understanding “E Noho Ana Au”—especially understanding it as a political statement—depends on a familiarity with Maori conventions of compo-

sition and narrative. The song is a tour of the landmarks of the Auckland area, offered to all the culture groups who live and practice in that area as a lesson about their home and something they can use as a statement of their identity. Apirana Ngata called such songs “*poi*,” a word that usually refers to white balls attached to lengths of string, which are held in the hand and spun by women in another genre of Maori performance. Here the word is used to capture the way the words of such songs “skim over the tribes, in pursuit of genealogical links.” Ngata applies the term to any song that “takes a spiritual journey over various territories or battle grounds, or is a recital of the deeds of the ancestors” (Ngata and Hurinui 1959:xxiv). Part of the traditional function of such songs was to proclaim the identity of the descent-based groups who sang them, so their use in asserting a more general Maori ethnic identity is an extension of their previous use, much like the references to mountains in the song “Ko Titirangi te Maunga” is an extension of the *pepeha*.

Like “Ko Titirangi te Maunga,” “E Noho Ana Au” links identity to land (and like the former it might be seen as offensive by those with a more traditional claim to the land named in the song than those who were singing it). But beyond performatively linking the identity of the singers to land, the song is a political statement about what it means to revive culture. The song is a narrative, which begins with the narrator resting on a mountain, at which point his thoughts turn (line 3) to the past—to a time when Maori people had power. Then they had *wana* and *wehi* (line 5), which are the energy of growth and the power to inspire fear or awe.

Two things are worth commenting on at this point. The first is that the position of the narrator, sitting on a mountain, is itself in a certain sense a position of power: Mountains for Maori are beings with *mana*, and for a person to be represented in the song as sitting on top of a mountain implies that that person also has *mana*, enough at least to contain the *mana* of the mountain.<sup>11</sup> To put it another way, as a position from which to speak, the top of a mountain implies more than simply the ability to see in all directions. The second thing to remark on is the implications of the narrator’s “thinking” in line 3. The feeling in English is reflective; the idea of thoughts turning to the past suggests a kind of nostalgic contemplation. But in Maori the phrase evokes a common narrative device that takes thought to be not the opposite of action, but its root. As Gregory Schrempp describes it (with reference to the idiomatic phrase “*ka tupu te whakaaro*”—“the thought grew”—which is used to introduce new episodes in Maori stories), “There is a sort of narrative-suspense created by the sense of major new situations developing first as ideas or schemes, and then in their physical implementation” (1992:101). This attitude toward thought and action seems to persist today;

often when people told me stories about the origins of things (such as Hoani Waititi Marae), they would begin by telling when people had begun thinking about them.<sup>12</sup> So the mood invoked by the first verse of the song is less one of contemplation and more one of anticipation.

The rest of the song is a journey through the Auckland region, naming its landmarks with their Maori names (some of which are still in use, and some of which are not). Most important to notice about this section of the song (comprising all of it except for the first verse and the last) is that the landmarks named are all rivers and mountains. These are the most important features of the landscape to Maori, who often think of them as ancestors, and it was by naming rivers and mountains that more traditional versions of such “landscape skimming” songs asserted at once the tribal identity and claims to land of those who sang them. So one implication of describing the Auckland region in terms of its mountains and rivers is to remind people that, although it is now a city built and run along Western lines, it was once land that belonged to tribes.

*Koa ana kei roto*—“Happiness abides within me” (line 55). The narrator ends the song happy. Why? Because “these symbols of an age gone by/ remain within us still” (*Tu tonu nga tohu/A mua e*). The narrator is able to draw strength and joy from seeing these signs of the past, which are evidence of a different New Zealand. Through the journey recounted in the song, the movement from thought to its physical embodiment has been effected. As long as the mountains and rivers remain (or as long as their names are known), the song argues, that other New Zealand to which the narrator’s thoughts turned will not really have disappeared, and the *mana* of the land described in the song will still be held by those who descend from those mountains.

“Culture,” in the multiple senses of the song performances and of the knowledge contained in the song and required in order to appreciate it, is thus given a political importance: Through culture Maori are able to maintain *mana*, *wehi*, and *wana*—pride, authority, power, and the ability to inspire awe and trembling. The act of proclaiming identity, especially the act of proclaiming identity in kinship terms, which involves invoking a connection to land, gives the land itself new meaning—it becomes a sign of the continued Maori claim to it. In another context I have argued that some performances of culture construct the nation as a kind of palimpsest in which a precolonial nation is overlaid by the colonized one but is nevertheless still readable (Rosenblatt 1999). Something similar is going on here: The song genre in which identity is proclaimed embodies within its form the continued existence of a Maori claim on the land of Auckland.

### Carvings and Community at Urban *Marae*

*Marae*—carved meeting house complexes used to provide hospitality for guests—are the most important means through which Maori identity is asserted and talked about. Like the songs just looked at, *marae* proclaim identity in ways that involve claiming much else as well: In particular, they assert claims to land and to a special status for Maori within the nation-state. Meeting houses are complex and richly symbolic objects, and they have long been sites of resistance to various aspects of colonialism. Numerous houses were built in connection with anticolonial prophetic movements in the second half of the nineteenth century, and many others were constructed as part of a conscious effort to preserve traditional Maori arts and knowledge in the first years of the twentieth century. While a full explication of the meanings associated with *marae* complexes is beyond the scope of this essay, a brief description (with a bit of history) will clarify just how it is that meeting houses allow people to represent contingent urban communities as being analogous to rural tribes organized around descent. I start with a physical description of a *marae* complex.

At the center of every *marae* complex is a meeting house. A rectangular gabled building, the house always presents its short end to a plaza or courtyard, on which ritual welcomes are staged. The word *marae* actually refers to this courtyard, which is a transformed version of the empty space at the center of eighteenth-century Maori fortified villages. In addition to the house and the courtyard, a *marae* complex will almost always have a separate large building for cooking and dining and a small building with toilets and showers for the guests. Other buildings may be present but need not. The whole arrangement is also usually marked off from the surrounding area by some sort of wall. In rural areas this “wall” might be as insubstantial as a row of stones on the ground or a waist-high wire fence serving mainly to keep out stray animals, but in cities it is usually something more solid.

The meeting house itself is elaborately carved, painted, and decorated with woven panels, both inside and out. The house is thought of and named as the body of an ancestor of the group to whom it belongs. At the point of the gable, there may be a small figure or a face (or both) representing this ancestor or someone closely related to him or her. The ridgepole, running the length of the house, is his or her spine, and the rafters coming down from each side are ribs. The interior of the house is the bosom of the ancestor, and the whole house may be named something like Te Poho a Rawiri—The Bosom of David. Inside the house, attached to each rafter, are large carved panels (*poupou*) that represent more recent ancestors and their deeds. An-

cestors more recent still are often represented in photographs, which are framed and hung from nails or hooks on the walls. Woven panels (*tukutuku*) between the carvings have more abstract designs, which may stand for things like “knowledge” or “courage.” The porch of the house is also carved and may present tribal history, mythology, or more genealogy. In short, houses are richly meaningful objects, interpretable in complex ways. In particular, because the carvings in a house represent not only the body of a group’s founding ancestor but the lines of descent that connect present-day people to that ancestor, houses become representations of genealogies and thus objectifications of descent groups.

It is partly because they are presumptively objectifications of descent groups that meeting houses in cities are able to represent the communities that are formed around them as kin or kinlike groups. There is a kind of “grammar” to the house (as John Kelly [1988] uses the term) that assigns a meaning to various aspects of its structure. Individual houses, which are all different, are able to signify in terms of that already given structure—the particular carvings on a house represent a particular set of people as a group. While in rural situations such groups are usually existing kin groups, it is possible to use the grammar of the carving to represent other kinds of groups and other kinds of connections between people—and urban houses exploit that possibility.

In general, the carvings at urban houses are less specific than in tribal houses or refer to more-remote ancestors. For example, the house at Hoani Waititi is not named after a person. Rather, it is called “Nga Tumanako,” meaning “The Dreams” or “The Desires,” which is said to commemorate the fact that the house exists because the people of West Auckland wanted it there.<sup>13</sup> Other urban or otherwise nontraditional houses take a different strategy, naming the house after someone genealogically remote enough to be ancestral to everybody, so that the meeting house of the Maori Studies Department at Auckland University is called “Tane Nui a Rangi” after one of the sons of Ranginui the sky father and Papatuanuku the earth mother, who gave birth to the entire cosmos.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, the anonymous Polynesian canoe paddler above a house commemorating the Treaty of Waitangi and the figure of Kupe (the legendary discoverer of New Zealand) above the meeting house at Victoria University in Wellington can serve as ancestors for all Maori.

Inside the houses the differences between urban and rural continue. Throughout New Zealand there are a number of different regional and tribal styles of carving that experts can distinguish. The carvings inside Nga Tumanako show ancestors from many tribes and exemplify all of these different styles so that the house can be a home to anyone, regardless of tribal back-

ground. Underneath the window at the front of the house, there is even a carving of three European ships, including James Cook's *Endeavour*. Such carvings are said to represent the Pakeha community and to express their right to stand and speak on the *marae*, just as the carvings from every part of New Zealand express the right of any Maori person to speak there. Similar kinds of strategies inform the carving in other nontraditional meeting houses: Carvings are chosen that provide openings to many different kinds of people and that can represent, in some fashion, the unity of the group the house is to serve. What is achieved in the carving of these houses is an apparent paradox: a cross-tribal unity in an urban community that is built not outside of kinship or in opposition to kinship (which is commonly seen as dividing people) but through it.<sup>15</sup>

Because houses are so symbolically rich, their use as focal points for urban communities and their prominence within the renaissance generally has many consequences. Here, I focus on those that relate to land and to the relationship between making claims to land and making a claim about the place of Maori within the nation as a whole. *Marae* effect a claim to land in a number of ways—most simply because the *marae* plaza, the area in front of the meeting house, *is* land. It can thus stand for “the land,” both in the sense of the land that was taken from Maori and in the sense of the land to which they claim a unique relationship. The *marae* plaza is sometimes addressed as Papatuanuku (the earth mother), emphasizing its relation to the land from which Maori claim descent. *Marae* are also a kind of Maori “public space” (Sinclair 1990; Salmond 1975) that serves as a reminder or remnant of an uncolonized nation. This symbolism is facilitated by the wall that surrounds the complex and helps to emphasize its distinctness. The existence of such a public Maori space suggests that Maori identity is not simply a matter of private affiliation for individuals who are otherwise New Zealand citizens like any others. Rather, it implies that New Zealand is a country with a Maori side—that it is not simply Maori (or even settlers) who need to be “bicultural” but the state or the nation.

The rituals of encounter that take place on the courtyard of the *marae* reinforce and extend this last claim. In these rituals, the hosts—the *tangata whenua*, or people of the land—welcome their guests to their territory. During the ritual, genealogical connections between hosts and guests are traced and recited, and the guests are temporarily absorbed into the home group. For the duration of their stay, the guests are said to have become “people of the land” as well. The protocol employed during the ritual varies from group to group, and that of the hosts is always followed, out of respect for their dignity and their connection to the land.

In the urban situation these relationships are generalized. Because of the

way the carvings in the house generalize the idea of the kinship group to include all Maori, so too the notion of “people of the land” is generalized to refer to Maori as a whole. Indeed, *tangata whenua*, the Maori version of the phrase, is the way Maori refer to indigenous peoples generally, no matter what country they live in. In the ritual this identity is enacted with respect to groups who may include settlers, again reinforcing the modeling of the colonial relationship on that between hosts and guests on the *marae*. Among the implications is that Maori culture or custom is also due a certain respect, as a way of acknowledging their prior occupancy of the land. In this way, Maori can attempt to resist being reduced to—in the words Letty Brown and Tuini Hakaraia used in the proposal quoted at the beginning of this essay—“New Zealanders: citizens living together under one law.”

### **Conclusion: Modernity and Culture**

I began this essay by offering the practices I describe as an example of the way Maori have responded to the here and now, and I suggested that the way Maori have tried to make urban living congenial says something about the nature of modernity—and in particular about the significance of cultural difference today. Against a tendency by many writers to think that the most important thing about cultural difference is that it is a way of making a *difference* (Abu-Lughod 1991; Appadurai 1996; Turner 1993; Young 1995), I think I have offered evidence that it is at least as important that the difference made is *cultural*.

Perhaps I should elaborate. What I mean is simply this: “Culture” has become the focus of an enormous amount of political activity over the last few decades, and this fact has in turn become the object of much social theory. Overwhelmingly, the emphasis in most of that theory has been on the way culture functions to construct groups and create boundaries. From this point of view, the particular content of culture matters little. What I have tried to show by looking at what it means for Maori to sing certain kinds of songs or to build meeting houses in cities is that the politics of culture is not only about making boundaries and marking identity—the content does matter, and in order to understand the import of what people are doing when they revive aspects of culture, one needs to know where those things came from, what they meant, and how they fit into a particular vision of the world. For example, “community” for Maori is linked with kinship, and kinship is in turn connected to land, and by building community people question the nature of the modern nation-state and its assertion that all the people under its jurisdiction have identical status. Moreover, I would generalize this argument



from the Maori instance: Culture is everywhere revived or preserved by reviving or preserving particular customs, institutions, and practices whose meanings give political import to the act of reviving them.

How much political import, for whom, and when are more complicated issues than I can account for here. Whether and how the readings of songs and meeting houses offered here achieve some kind of real social existence (whether someone really understands them in the way I have suggested they can be understood) is a more complicated problem, and the possible political effects of these readings is even more complicated. For example, the friction sometimes created when nontribal urban groups sing songs about local mountains suggests that the possible claims to land implied by such acts are understood by some. But just how salient those claims are and exactly how they are understood (as referring to specific lands or to land in general) need to be determined in particular instances. Similarly, the implications for the way the nation-state is imagined of performing a ritual in which Maori are figured as “people of the land” are hard to specify in general and in advance. Certainly Maori and the government understand differently the implications of the idea that some people “belong to the land.” Different interpretations may be made salient in individual ritual performances, and there is no reason to suppose a priori that Western interpretive schemes are the only ones in operation or will always win out in the end—the history of the colonial relationship in New Zealand is filled with such contested events and practices, which are neither always won by the settlers nor ever fully settled (Belich 1996). As for the political effects of practices and institutions of the sort I have considered in this essay, they too are hard to specify in general but not necessarily trivial for that reason. Once practices are revived, they are out in the world and can frame experiences; as Bourdieu argued (1977), the experience of living in a Kabyle house can shape dispositions and subjectivities that in turn shape both interpretation and action—and thus affect the survival of a sociopolitical system. Certainly the proliferation of urban meeting houses and the implied recognition of a Maori public sphere mean that New Zealand is unlikely to return to the situation of the mid-1960s, at which time a prominent white analyst and advocate of Maori could state without controversy that “biculturalism” was mostly a matter for people’s private lives rather than a concern of the state (Schwimmer 1968:17–18).

And what of alienation and urban life? The kinlike groups created by the people I worked with at Hoani Waititi bound them to each other by ties of sentiment and obligation, and formed a kind of intermediary between them and the state. Durkheim saw such intermediary bodies as necessary cures for the anomie created by the absence of familial ties in modern life, but

where Durkheim saw such groups as replacing kinship bonds with a more generalized morality, the situation I found is more complex. Kinship bonds are replaced with kinship bonds of a different sort.

More generally, the movement Durkheim describes in *The Division of Labor in Society* ([1893] 1933) from mechanical to organic solidarity is an evolutionary scheme in which the European past is taken as a model for the future of the rest of the world. Kinship and bonds based on a similarity of beliefs are to be replaced by relations based on functional interdependency, and urban life is seen as everywhere characterized by relatively impersonal relationships between independent individuals. The concept of moral community was for Durkheim the exception to the general rule, the place where the kinds of ties characteristic of simple societies remained important in complex ones. In that sense it is an appropriate description for what is found in the Pacific, but perhaps it is best to throw out the rule, even if the exception is worth keeping. Alternative stories of modernization may be possible. To the extent that peoples are able to maintain a distinct identity, they may also be able to develop multiple modernities, multiple ways of being modern persons, whose form in particular cases emerges in a unique historical process out of the particular tools available and in response to individual historical circumstances.

## NOTES

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1. Maori are some 15 percent of New Zealand's population today. European settlers (mostly British) and their descendants make up 76 percent of the remainder, with the remaining 9 percent divided among people of Pacific Island, South Asian, and Asian descent.

2. Some people use doubled letters to represent long vowels in Maori. When quoting other people's writings, I follow the usage in the quoted text. Otherwise, I have not marked vowel length. Brown and Hakaraia also use an "s" to form the plural of Maori words used in English. Because words in Maori do not generally change form in the plural, contemporary practice, which I follow except in quotation, is to refrain from marking the plural when using Maori words in English, allowing the reader to infer number from context.

3. I qualify this assertion because preserving "culture" first became an important part of Maori political aspirations around the turn of the century, well before urbanization had begun. Maori had been aware of cultural difference long before, and had even indexed identity as a marker of different moral universes from the first moments of contact, but culture became more important politically when the settler government achieved substantial sovereignty over Maori at the end of the nineteenth century (Belich 1996; Rosenblatt n.d.).

4. The critique of identity grows out of the work of Edward Said (1978, 1989), and hybridity has been celebrated most forcefully by Homi Bhabba (1994) and Robert Young (1995). For criticism of the postcolonial celebration of hybridity, see, among others, Cheah 1998; Dirlík 1997; and Thomas 1996.

5. This literature has also been criticized for its seeming deconstruction of Pacific Islanders' political projects (arguments on both sides of the debate include Hanson 1989, 1991; Jolly 1992; Jolly and Thomas 1992; Keesing 1982, 1989, 1992; Lindstrom and White 1993; Linnekin 1983, 1990; Sahlins 1993; Thomas 1992b, 1992a; and Turner 1997).

6. The event was called a *po whakangahau* (a party), but we were cautioned that the aim of the singing was not competition (which is sometimes the case when people engage in performing arts), but rather "*whakawhanaungatanga*."

7. This is a widely known *pepeha*. This version comes from a list of similar *pepeha* at the beginning of the *Reed Dictionary of Modern Māori*, which is also the source of the translation (Ryan 1995:21). Note that Ryan translates "*te maunga*" as "ancestral mountain." The word "ancestral" isn't written, but is implied in the Maori version by the context—the fact that the text is a *pepeha*. In translating the line of the song, the issue is more ambiguous: Is "ancestral" implied? While the form of the line argues for an answer in the affirmative, the identity of the group doing the singing suggests that the answer must be negative. The ambiguity is the point. This is a simple illustration of the issues involved in the way people represent their connections.

8. Waipareira is a name for the part of the West Auckland area where the trust is situated. The social-services provider was also known as an urban "tribal" (*iwi*) authority and in some contexts had legal status similar to that of a more traditional tribe.

9. Most Maori performance combines singing or chanting with gestures. In a *waiata* these are individual rather than in unison (as they are in the twentieth-century genre called an "action song"). While *waiata* are modeled on older forms of music, they are still being actively composed today: Culture competitions, which are a primary context for Maori performance, award points for originality. "E Noho Ana Au" was performed in an Auckland regional competition in 1993 by "Te Toi Huarewa," which was made up of members of Te Roopu Manutaki who weren't performing in the regular group.

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11. Jeffrey Sissons relates a story in which an ancestor of the Tuhoe tribe climbs a mountain on top of which he finds a spring. The waters become riled as he approaches, and a fearsome creature emerges that he is only able to subdue by plucking a hair from his own head and throwing it in the stream—thus containing the *mana* of the mountain with his own *mana*, which is represented by the hair, something that comes from a highly *tapu* (sacred) part of his body (Sissons 1991:9).

12. A genealogy given by the historian Pei Te Hurinui for the high god Io (from whom the rest of the cosmos descends) reflects a similar conception of thinking. Given in the form of a list, as Maori genealogies often are, the genealogy traces Io's emergence out of the potential-filled void (Te Hurinui 1959:257):

1. Te kore	The formless void
2. Kotahi te ki	The one unspoken thought
3. Kotahi te korero	The one spoken word
4. Kotahi te wananga	The one sacred assembly
5. Te kore whiwhia	The intangible formless void
6. Te kore Makiki hi rere	The formless void pierced by a line extending into space
7. Makaka	The sacred curve
8. Io	The Supreme Being

13. This doesn't necessarily mean that the house is not an ancestor: According to Peter Sharples, the director of Hoani Waititi Marae, every carving in the meeting house is an ancestor, whether it is "a person or an event" (Peter Sharples, February 1995, in a speech given to a group of young people starting employment training courses at Hoani Waititi Marae).

14. Tane is not only the creator of the first woman and the father to all people, but he is said to have ascended to the twelfth heaven and returned with three baskets containing different kinds of knowledge—hence he is a particularly appropriate ancestor for an educational institution.

15. The potency and appropriateness of using houses to construct groups in this way is increased by the fact that they emerged in the nineteenth century, partly as a way of making more concrete local groups whose coherence and cohesiveness was threatened because their other functions (making war and organizing collective production) had been disturbed by colonialism (Neich 1993; Rosenblatt n.d.).

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