

THE *POUKAI* CEREMONY OF
THE MĀORI KING MOVEMENT:
AN ETHNOHISTORICAL INTERPRETATION

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The *poukai* is a ceremonial gathering held on 28 days a year at different *marae*¹ or ceremonial centres supporting the *Kīngitanga*, or Māori King Movement, which is largely based within the Tainui confederation of tribes in the Waikato region of New Zealand's North Island. The *Kīngitanga* was established in the late 1850s in order to unite various Māori tribes under the leadership of a newly elected King in opposition to the imminent threat of colonial domination of New Zealand. The first *poukai* was organised in the mid-1880s, and the annual number of *poukai* has increased to 28 and is, in fact, still growing, attesting to the ongoing vitality of the *Kīngitanga*.

Poukai are often described as loyalty gatherings of the *Kīngitanga*, at which followers of the King (or Queen) are offered the opportunity to express their support of the movement and its leadership. This conventional explanation may be attributed to the personal presence of the Māori monarch at almost all *poukai*. The major and longest phase of a *poukai* is the ceremonial welcome given to the Māori monarch and his or her suite. The welcoming ceremony is followed by a lavish meal offered to the representatives of the Māori royal house and other attendants by the local organising *marae* community. After lunch, some discussions may take place about the origin and the history of the *Kīngitanga* as well as upon more topical issues emerging from the purpose of the monarchy in contemporary circumstances.

In this article, I offer an ethnohistorical account of the *poukai* in order to examine the origin, meaning and function of the *Kīngitanga*'s annual cycle of ceremonial gatherings.² My argument will be that *poukai* are not simply or essentially loyalty gatherings, but that the development and growth of *poukai* ceremonies is intertwined with the history of the land confiscations of the strongest supporters of the *Kīngitanga*. The absence of a land base has meant that the Māori monarchy has remained a movement without its own sovereign state or kingdom. Consequently, it is necessary for the heads of the *Kīngitanga* to tour around their supporting communities in order to periodically re-establish connections with their followers and to hold the whole movement together. A comparison with similar ceremonies in other early states will show that a so-called "royal tour" is not uncommon in

parallel circumstances. Before elaborating on this interpretation of the *poukai*, however, I begin with an ethnographic description of the ceremonies. I should explain at this juncture that my research spanned the reign of both the late Maori Queen Te Atairangikaahu and her successor son King Tuheitia. I will use the term monarch when referring to both and the words King or Queen to differentiate the two.

THE ANNUAL CYCLE OF POUKAI

The annual cycle of 28 *poukai* leads the Māori King from his own *marae* at Waahi in Huntly and Turangawaewae in Ngaruawahia to 26 other *marae* that are affiliated to the *Kīngitanga*. Only three *poukai* are organised by communities that do not belong to the Tainui confederation of tribes from which the Māori royal house originates. In the past *poukai* were also held in Murupara and Te Whaiti, but at the moment Kokohinau in Te Teko is the only *marae* in the territory of the Tūhoe tribe that still arranges a *poukai*. This *poukai* has been held since 1964 when the *Kīngitanga* and the Tūhoe tribe decided that their alliance made originally during the land wars in the 19th century had to be retained and reinforced. In addition to this *poukai* in the Tūhoe area, every year a *poukai* is organised in Huria (Judea Pā),³ a *marae* of the Ngāti Ranginui tribe in Tauranga, and at the Ngāti Raukawa *marae* in Shannon (Poutu) in the Manawatu plains.⁴

The first *poukai* each year is held at Horahora *marae* in Rangiriri on the 1st of January. On that day a list is circulated with the dates of all 28 *poukai* scheduled for the year.⁵ To enable as many supporters of the *Kīngitanga* as possible to attend, most gatherings are held on a Saturday or a Sunday, excepting a number of *poukai* held on fixed dates to commemorate special historical events. Some communities, such as Waikare, asked for a *poukai* to be held on their *marae*, probably to enhance its prestige, so the exact date is moveable, but other *poukai* were initiated for reasons so important that the date cannot be moved. At Papaorotu Marae in Whatawhata, for example, the annual *poukai* is always held on the 10th of April to commemorate the day on which the fourth Māori King, Te Rata, returned from the United Kingdom where in 1914 he had attempted to reach a satisfactory settlement of the land confiscations. On the 12th of October, a *poukai* is held at Mangatangi Marae in Pokeno to commemorate the death of the renowned Princess Te Puea Herangi, while at Waahi Pā, the *marae* where the Māori monarch normally resides, a *poukai* is held on the 8th of October, the date on which the fifth King, Koroki, was crowned in 1933.⁶

Practical preparations for a *poukai* usually start at least one week before the event. Most *marae* organise a sports tournament or cultural activities one or two weekends beforehand in order to raise funds to cover the expenses

incurred. Food is purchased and prepared, the communal buildings on the *marae* are given a thorough cleaning, the lawns are mowed and the edges cut. These preparations are usually co-ordinated by a committee made up of community members who meet regularly in order to ensure everything runs smoothly. At Waahi Pā the *poukai* committee was for a long time convened by Hera Tutawhiao, an aunt of the late Māori Queen, who felt it her duty to ensure that the younger generation would uphold the *marae*'s historical prestige in the future.

For the hosts, the actual gathering begins with a flag-raising ceremony at 7:00am. The *poukai* flag depicts six stars, the daughters of Matariki or the Pleiades, three on each side of an abstract curvilinear symbol in the centre flanked by the words *pou* and *kai*. When the flag is hoisted at Waahi and Turangawaewae Marae, the Māori monarch's home *marae* and official residence respectively, the *Kīngitanga* Brass Band⁷ is always present and plays the hymn *Tama Ngakau Marie* 'Son of the Peaceful Heart'. This opening ceremony ends with the recitation of the ritual chant of Pai Marire, the official religion of *Kīngitanga*.⁸ Thereafter the community has breakfast together in the local dining hall.

At other *marae* the home people have breakfast before the ceremony and then wait for the monarch's party and other visitors to arrive, usually by 11:00 am. Normally the King is accompanied by the Brass Band, especially on weekends. Some people travel to *poukai* in their own cars; others, mainly people who go to every *poukai*, travel by hired buses. The late Queen used to travel in her own car, generally driven by her husband Whatumoana Paki. The current King Tuheitia prefers to drive his own. It is rare that the King does not appear in person at *poukai*, but in those cases he always sends a representative.

As soon as the King and his retinue have arrived the hosts rehearse their performance of the *pōwhiri* 'action chant of welcome', even though the items performed are the same on every occasion. During the *pōwhiri* handfuls of greenery are waved, the symbolic meaning of which is often explained with reference to Biblical accounts of the welcome Jesus Christ received on his last visit to Jerusalem. For that reason and others, the *pōwhiri* ceremony must to be conducted with profound seriousness.

While the local community prepares to perform the *pōwhiri*, visitors assemble at the gate behind the King, his elders, the brass band and the *kuia* 'elderly women' who are positioned to do the *karanga* 'calling (by women)' on behalf of the visitors about to enter the *marae*. The gathering formally starts when the *kuia* on the side of the *tangata whenua* 'hosts' call the guests on to the *marae*. Subsequently, the brass band strikes up a festive march called *Nau Mai* 'Welcome' while escorting the King and his following

on to the *marae*. Sometimes the band begins playing before the hosts start the *pōwhiri* and the visiting *kuia* respond on behalf of the crowd slowly entering the *marae*. Saluting calls, sounds of music and a chant of welcome are exchanged across the *marae ātea* ‘*marae* proper’, the plaza in front of the ancestral meeting house.

As soon as the last tones of the *pōwhiri* fade away both groups, hosts and visitors standing on either side of the *marae*, bow their heads in respect for the dead while women may wail for the loss of beloved relatives. In the meantime, the band forms a circle around the flagpole to play the opening hymn *Tama Ngakau Marie*. Then everybody takes a seat and the ceremonial speechmaking (*whaikōrero*) begins. The King, his associates and other distinguished guests are seated in armchairs located under a specially erected marquee. Empty spaces in the marquee are usually filled by elderly women who take little notice of the men’s speechmaking. Indeed, it is the prerogative of elderly men to exchange ceremonial speeches at *poukai*, as it is at any Māori ceremonial gathering or *hui* for that matter. Separate roles for men and women in Māori ceremonies, however, do not prevent women from taking part in later political deliberations after lunch (see below).

In addition to the ritualised greetings that are characteristic of ceremonial speeches in general, speechmaking at *poukai* is focused on reinforcing connections between tribes supporting the *Kīngitanga* (Mahuta 1974).⁹ The origin of or reason for the *poukai* of the day is often brought up by the hosts, since it is not always known to the visitors except at major *poukai*. Furthermore, reference is made to important events in *Kīngitanga* history, partly to bring up to date the purpose of the Māori monarchy and partly to transmit its history to younger generations. A main thrust of all speeches is paying respect to the concept of the *Kīngitanga* “because it was set up for the people”:

When Potatau was crowned there were no jewels, no gold, no nothing, only a Bible. And only two Kings in the whole world were crowned with the Bible: Potatau and King David. When Potatau died he was buried on Taupiri Kuao [‘offspring of Taupiri’: TvM], a lower peak of Taupiri Mountain leaning against its western slopes. And after Jesus Christ’s burial on Calvary, he was only the second King to be buried on a mountain. (*Kīngitanga* elder)

Not infrequently the founding of the *Kīngitanga* is recalled as well. It is said that Potatau Te Wherowhero had initially declined the request to become the first Māori King. Only after deliberating for a number of years over who should be crowned King did Te Wherowhero remove his white top hat and throw it to the ground to signify his acceptance of the position. As a result, *Kīngitanga* supporters are adamant that they have never promoted

the movement to enhance their own prestige. The Tainui tribes known as The First Circle (*Te Porotaka Nama Tahī*), comprising Waikato, Hauraki, Ngāti Maniapoto and Ngāti Raukawa, who have remained the most dedicated adherents of the movement, consider themselves merely as guardians of the *Kingitanga*. The Tainui tribes maintain they did not instigate the establishment of the *Kingitanga*, but that they have only accepted responsibility to “look after” the kingship on behalf of the 20 or more tribal groupings of the central and southern North Island, who agreed to set up a King at Pūkawa on the shores of Lake Taupo in 1856.

Another event often discussed in *poukai* speechmaking is how Tainui upheld the tradition of not claiming the monarchy when King Koroki died in 1966 and again when Queen Te Atairangikaahu died in 2006. Tainui did not participate in the deliberations as to who should succeed the deceased monarch. They left the decision to be made by the visiting tribes.

Tainui’s belief that the kingship has been conferred on them by other tribes was confirmed during the *whakawahi* ‘raising-up’ ceremonies of Princess Piki on 23 May 1966 and of Tuheitia on 15 August 2006. These ceremonies were carried out by leading elders Henare Tuwhangai and Tui Adams respectively, who addressed the assembled tribes with the following words (see Jones 1971: 52):

What shall we name our daughter/son? Shall s/he be a Toihau? (No response)
Shall she be an Ariki-nui / shall he be an Ariki tau aroha? (No response)

When there was no response to the Māori titles of ‘head’ (*toihau*) and ‘supreme paramount chief’ (*ariki-nui*) or ‘beloved chief’ (*ariki tau aroha*),¹⁰ the masters of ceremony paused, before they asked in a loud voice:

Shall s/he be a Kuini/Kingi [‘Queen’ (in 1966) or ‘King’ (in 2006): TvM]?

Then there was a tumultuous response as hundreds of voices responded:

Kuini! Kuini! Kuini! (in 1966) or Kingi! Kingi! Kingi! (in 2006).

The number of visitors attending a *poukai* depends on the historical importance of the event that caused the *poukai* to be held. The duration of speechmaking varies accordingly from two to six hours. At a minor *poukai* to which the monarch may send a relation of respectable standing to represent him, speeches may last barely two hours with less than 200 people attending. At Waahi and Turangawaewae the ‘old people’ can sit on the *paepae* ‘speaker’s bench’ from 8:30am until the last party of visitors has

been welcomed, often after 2:00pm. To pay homage to the monarch up to 1000 people may attend *poukai* at these *marae*.

After the ceremonial exchange of speeches, the hosts line up to shake hands and *hongi* ‘press noses’ with the visitors (*hongi* is when two people press noses and foreheads in order to share each other’s breath). After these greetings, lunch is served in the dining-hall. Upon entering the hall visitors place their *koha* ‘gift’ in a *kete* ‘flax basket’ held by elderly women sitting at the doorway. Nowadays, *koha* is always a monetary donation given in recognition of the hospitality provided. At *poukai*, however, many people donate more than the cost of the lunch. Ten dollars is considered a reasonable amount for an adult, though some give less, e.g., half that amount, and others may give twice that amount or more. Part of the money collected at *poukai* is transferred directly to the bank account of the royal family (see further below). For many people the basic purpose of visiting a *poukai* ceremony is to support the *Kīngitanga* in a material manner, and those who do not manage to attend *poukai* regularly are generally plagued by a sense of guilt: “We should go more often, but...”

The central importance of the collection of donations at *poukai* is highlighted by the lack of other items on the programme. After lunch, men and women disperse again to different places. Some elderly women might go into the meeting-house to lie down, to chat or play cards. Men and those women more interested in politics gather on the *marae* proper to talk publicly about matters considered important. These discussions usually have a spontaneous nature characteristic of all Māori *hui* ‘ceremonial gatherings’. There is rarely a set agenda and anyone is welcome to bring up a *take* ‘subject’ he or she wishes to discuss. Occasionally people from other tribes take the opportunity to exchange views on inter-tribal issues such as those related to the Treaty of Waitangi. In recent years, it has become common practice to invite representatives of government departments or commercial companies to debate topics pertaining to some development programme.

Late in the afternoon when the discussions and deliberations have finished, the total sum of money collected is usually publicly announced and people are thanked with profound seriousness for their generosity. Subsequently, the *poukai* flag is lowered while the brass band closes the day with the hymn *Ma te Marie a te Atua* ‘By the Grace of God’ (will we be protected), and in most cases the flag is handed over to the people of the *marae* convening the next *poukai*. The visitors depart for home, the hosts clean up and then have a party. Over a weekend or when another *poukai* is being held nearby in the next day or so, some visitors may decide to stay the night in the ancestral meeting-house. In that case, a social evening might be arranged for them and the local people to set the seal on their work. The proceeds from such extra functions may be used to help pay *marae* expenses or may be deposited in *marae* bank accounts

in order to make purchases for the next *poukai*, leaving a larger portion of the following year's *koha* for the support of the royal house.

This ethnographic account of *poukai* ceremonies warrants a more detailed examination of the meanings and functions of *poukai*, which first requires an investigation of the origin of *poukai*, which in turn calls for a fuller account of the history of the *Kīngitanga*. Thus the next section begins with an historical explanation of the establishment of the *Kīngitanga*.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE *KĪNGITANGA*

Captain James Cook initiated European contact with the indigenous population of New Zealand in 1769, but larger numbers of European settlers did not arrive in New Zealand until the early 19th century. In 1814, the English missionary Samuel Marsden established the first European mission station in New Zealand (Elder 1932). Marsden's settlement marks a turning point in European representations of the Māori. The missionaries placed Māori on a comparatively high level of development and assumed they were capable of graduating to civilisation. In the strategies of the early British missionaries, civilising the Māori laid the foundation for conversion to Christianity.

Māori people responded to the civilising campaigns of the English missionaries with great enthusiasm. They appeared receptive to most things that the Europeans were bringing to New Zealand. A flourishing trade between Māori and Europeans emerged on this "frontier" of the British Empire, because European visitors and settlers depended to a considerable extent on Māori for their food supplies. Reports from early settlers made New Zealand seem an attractive country for settlement to the victims of the Industrial Revolution in Britain. The increasing number of British arriving in New Zealand with the intention of settling permanently, however, soon created enormous problems (Owens 1981). The most pressing problem was over access to land.

In order to facilitate European entry to New Zealand, a Treaty was signed at Waitangi in 1840 between the first governor representing the British Crown and a number of Māori chiefs. The debate about the Treaty of Waitangi is complicated by significant differences between the English-language version signed on behalf of the Crown and the Māori-language version signed by most Māori chiefs. There can be no doubt that both signing parties had different understandings of key passages in the document. The English version states that the chiefs ceded "all the rights and powers of Sovereignty", but the Māori version does not use the nearest equivalent to sovereignty, i.e., *mana*, but *kawanatanga*, a transliteration of "governorship" improvised by the missionaries. At the same time, the Treaty guaranteed to Māori the full possession of their lands, forests and fisheries (Orange 1987).

The arrangements made in the Treaty of Waitangi must be understood against the background of early contact history when individual Māori “sold” land to Europeans eagerly, but soon misunderstandings came to light about the precise nature of the rights to be derived from a land deal. Māori distinguished between usufruct rights and the right of disposal. The latter was a collective right about which only tribes as a whole could decide, although individuals were allowed to lease out the right to use a certain part of the tribal territory temporarily. Europeans who had struck a deal with individual Māori, however, routinely assumed that they had acquired the land permanently. When the difference in interpretation of land deals became apparent over the course of the years, Māori became increasingly resistant to the “sale” of land.

The emergence of Māori resistance to land deals coincided, however, with the arrival of growing numbers of English colonists, which obviously led to an increasing demand for land. In the mid-19th century this resulted in pressure on the colonial government to facilitate colonial access to Māori lands (Ward 1973). At the same time, a recession in the New Zealand economy caused Māori to become even more reluctant to sell land. Gradually Māori opinion moved towards a total ban on the sale of land. Representatives of several Māori tribes organised meetings to discuss their common interests.

In order to stop the sale of land and to protect the Māori population against land takeover by the British, Māori felt it necessary to develop a more coherent, pan-tribal political organisation. Several tribes united in inter-tribal councils to discuss a common strategy to maintain control of the political and economic situation in New Zealand. Initially the idea of putting a *tapu* on the sale of land was discussed at the meetings of these councils for *kotahitanga* ‘unity’, but soon the notion of having a Māori king arose.

Ultimately, the competition for land between European colonists and the Māori people led to the establishment of a Māori monarchy in 1858.¹¹ The chiefs of several tribes took the initiative to elect a king who would stand above the tribal organisation of Māori society.¹² The main aim of the *Kīngitanga* and of the alliance of several tribes into a confederation under the authority of a King was to orchestrate the widespread discontent among the Māori about the continuing sale of land by individual renegades and to unite Māori tribes throughout New Zealand.

The crowning of the Waikato chief Potatau Te Wherowhero as first Māori King intensified conflict between Māori and Europeans. The desire of the colonial settlers to have access to the fertile valleys of the Waikato River, where Potatau’s tribe produced a significant portion of the food supply in New Zealand (Petrie 2006: 261-74), was diametrically opposed to the aim of the Māori King to withhold land from the market. Europeans therefore

interpreted the Māori monarchy as a tribal league to stop the progress of colonial settlement and the expansion of European society in New Zealand. In 1859 the conflict between Europeans and Māori escalated into a war, which subsequently spread gradually across large parts of the North Island (Belich 1986, Sinclair 1961). These wars about the control of the political and economic situation in New Zealand lasted until 1864. After the British had declared victory, they confiscated large tracts of Māori land that were considered necessary to offer European colonists a chance to develop a new society in the South Seas. Among the confiscated lands was the entire territory of the Waikato tribe.

KĪNGITANGA AFTER THE WARS

Initially Potatau was supported by 23 tribes. Most of these tribes were of the Waikato district, but some were from the East Coast and Hawke's Bay, and three were even from the South Island. The other tribes, who had declined to pledge their allegiance to the King, were nevertheless supportive of the policy of the movement to withhold land from the market (Van Meijl 1993: 680). Potatau thus provided a focus for Māori discontent regarding the government's land purchase policies, purchases that had been implemented to appease settlers, who were disappointed because land they were promised had not been forthcoming. It goes without saying, however, that crowning Potatau and unfurling the *Kīngitanga* flag could only reduce, rather than resolve, traditional tribal rivalries. Before and during the war tribal divisions were temporarily subordinated to the common, to some extent "royal", aim of denying British colonists access to the land; after the war they would swiftly reappear again.

Directly after the wars several tribes who had initially recognised the Māori King made peace with the government. The second Māori King, Tāwhiao, who had succeeded his father upon his death in 1860, however refused to offer an olive branch to those who had confiscated all the lands of his tribe. Instead, he fled along with his close followers into the forested fastness of the neighbouring Maniapoto tribe, where he subsequently lived in relative isolation from the outside world for nearly 20 years. This united the core of the Māori monarchy and distinguished its strongest adherents from other, marginal supporters (Sinclair 1991: 39-48).

The disintegration of the Māori monarchy's following after the war was reinforced when King Tāwhiao focused his attention mainly on the return of the land of his own Waikato tribe, which had been entirely confiscated. Other tribes had not, or only partly, been affected by the confiscations of large tracts of land. As a consequence, the struggle of the second Māori King for the restitution of his tribal territory was soon identified with the aim of the

Kīngitanga in general. For this reason, too, King Tāwhiao had great difficulty obtaining support for the development of his kingship into a politically effective institution. His ultimate aim of centralising royal authority and thus strengthening his position in the negotiations with the government about a settlement of the confiscations was disputed by other tribes who could not accept his self-constituted claim to rule over the entire North Island (Williams 1969: 47). In spite of inter-tribal dissension about Tāwhiao's actions, however, the second Māori King managed to maintain the allegiance of the tribes that had been most affected by the confiscations. Although not all of them supported Tāwhiao's political strategies unconditionally, the *raupatu* 'conquest', as the Waikato people branded the loss of their land, did provide the *Kīngitanga* with the political purpose of collectively seeking redress for the confiscations.

After almost 20 years, King Tāwhiao ended his isolation (Jones 1968: 137). In the early 1880s, the advancement of European society in New Zealand had proceeded to such an extent that it had also become clear that Tāwhiao would never be able to reach his ideal from his retreat in Maniapoto territory. He made peace with the New Zealand government, though he hastened to add that his decision must not be interpreted as a sign of subordination. He persisted unrelentingly with his campaign for the return of confiscated lands. Although the government was to some extent prepared to compromise, Tāwhiao continued to adopt an uncompromising position as a result of which all negotiations inevitably failed.

In 1884, King Tāwhiao led a deputation to England with a petition to Queen Victoria, in which he asked for the return of all confiscated lands and approval of an independent Māori government. Tāwhiao went to visit the British Queen because he believed she had an obligation under the terms of the Treaty of Waitangi. In the course of time, however, the colonial government in England had distanced itself from the Treaty. For that reason Tāwhiao's petition was declined when he visited Buckingham Palace in 1884. The regal Māori delegation was referred to the New Zealand Government to redress their grievances since, they were told, from the granting of responsible government to the colony in 1852, all Māori matters were to be dealt with by the New Zealand authorities.

When Tāwhiao returned to New Zealand from England he visited several Māori settlements in the area where his following was concentrated in order to share the results of his petition to the British Queen. One of the explanations currently given for the origin of *poukai* is that the ceremony was subsequently introduced to commemorate the days that Tāwhiao visited certain *marae* after his visit to England. Although it is agreed that *poukai* originated shortly after Tāwhiao's visit to England, I know of no further evidence for this hypothesis.

The reasons for the introduction of *poukai* in this period may have been intertwined with Tāwhiao's desire to commemorate his petition to the British Queen and thus to add a heroic deed to the annals of the *Kīngitanga*. When the origin of the *poukai* is situated in the socio-political conditions of the Māori kingship in the 1880s, however, and particularly when the ceremony is compared with the phenomenon of "royal tours" by monarchs of early states, another viewpoint arises.

THE ORIGIN OF THE *POUKAI*

Shortly after the wars, as noted above, King Tāwhiao lost a large part of his following because he was concentrating his activities primarily on seeking redress for the confiscations of his own tribal territory in the Waikato region. The people who continued to support him were mainly members of the Waikato tribe. These remained hopeful of a just solution for the illegal confiscations of their land (Parsonson 1988). Yet, after 20 years of isolation in the Maniapoto region and the disappointing outcome of the petition to the British Queen, it became more difficult to build a future on the hope of regaining the land. Members of Tāwhiao's Waikato tribe were forced to look for other avenues to make a living. When it became apparent that their King had nothing concrete to offer, people began searching for employment and many found jobs as land labourers (Metge 1976: 35). As a consequence, *Kīngitanga* followers became scattered across a wider region.¹³ The necessity of Waikato Māori to seek a livelihood elsewhere meant that the following of the Māori monarchy, hitherto united politically and spiritually as well as geographically in the isolated bush, tended to disintegrate. Under these conditions, it was widely feared that the geographic dispersion of King Tāwhiao's followers would have negative consequences for the political and spiritual unity of the Māori monarchy. The origin of the *poukai* must be interpreted against this background.

Almost without exception, the origin of the *poukai* has been explained from the viewpoint of the followers of the Māori monarchy. The historian Michael King (1977: 30), for example, suggested that *poukai* were organised to create an opportunity for land labourers to meet together in their original community once a year, and to invite King Tāwhiao to the meeting so his followers could also meet with him at least once a year. The circumstantial evidence that is available about the origin of the *poukai* supports this interpretation.

The first *poukai* ever organised is said to have been held in Whatiwhatihoe near Pirongia, following Biblical precedent, at the end of the harvesting season in March 1885.¹⁴ After some time this *poukai* was transferred from Whatiwhatihoe to Parawera Marae in Kihikihi near Te Awamutu (Salmond 1975: 30). Nowadays this *poukai* is still held annually, and from Parawera

the visitors to the *poukai* continue on a tour of six *poukai* at six different *marae* on six consecutive days. The last *poukai* of this tour is held at Okapu Marae in Aotea, after which the people adjourn and pause before the *poukai* held at the official residence of the Māori King at Turangawaewae Marae. This *poukai* is usually organised on the Friday before the Saturday that is closest to Saint Patrick's Day (March 17th) when an annual regatta is held on a stretch of the Waikato River adjacent to the Marae.

The suggestion that the organisation of *poukai* ceremonies was based on Biblical precedents is often repeated by Tainui elders and was investigated by Nanaia Mahuta (1995: 28), who came across the following reference in Deuteronomy:

At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates: And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest. (Deut. 14: 28-29)¹⁵

This passage is interesting for a variety of reasons. The semantic meaning of the concept of *poukai* could well fit into the Biblical explanation that the ceremony was initiated to bring about an annual gathering of the King and his following at the end of the harvesting season. The precise meaning of the word *poukai* is not entirely clear, but it has probably been derived from the nouns *pou* 'pole, post' and *kai* 'food'. Most people take this meaning of *poukai* literally and sometimes translate the concept as 'banquet', derived from their image of food placed at the foot of a *marae*'s post (*pou*). Others have suggested that *poukai* were originally called *puna-kai* 'source of food' (Mahuta 1996: 59), but then it is unclear when people began referring to the *puna kai* as *poukai* (Mahuta 1995: 33). In both senses, the meaning of *poukai* would endorse the original connection with the harvest festival, though there is no available evidence to establish this conclusively.

The significance of food, nonetheless, is central in the historical explanation of the origin of *poukai* provided by the adherents of the *Kīngitanga* itself. In this context the words of King Tāwhiao are usually quoted literally: "*Mo te pouaru pani me te rawakore ko te poukai te kaupapa/* The concept of the poukai is for the widowed, the bereaved and the destitute."

In some situations, the above saying may be used with reference to the custom of *kawe mate*, of 'carrying' the spirit (*wairua*) of recently 'deceased people', onto *marae* at certain ceremonial occasions such as *poukai*. The aim of this traditional custom of *kawe mate* 'carrying dead' from one *Kīngitanga*

marae to another is to bring the widowed together so that the deaths of their loved ones may be remembered. At the same time, the opportunity is created for everyone to share in the loss of family members and relatives, especially for those who were unable to attend the *tangi* ‘funeral wake’ (Mahuta 1995: 68; Salmond 1975: 188-91, 204).¹⁶ Tāwhiao’s saying, however, is normally cited to offer both moral and material support to those who have to move on without one or more close relatives. In the post-war era during the latter part of the 19th century, this concerned first and foremost people whose next of kin had passed away during the wars or who had died as a result of the large-scale epidemics that had plagued the area after the wars. During the social gatherings at the end of the harvesting feasts, they were also offered the opportunity to share in the produce of the land. In this context, however, it is also interesting to establish that central terms in Tāwhiao’s popular saying are similar to the terms used in the quotation from Deuteronomy cited above, which, in the Māori translation, refers to *me te manene, me te pani, me te pouaru!* ‘and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow...’. The only question remaining is whether King Tāwhiao found inspiration in the Bible for organising *poukai* or Tainui elders later legitimated Tāwhiao’s initiative in terms of the Bible.

Nowadays the historical reason of organising *poukai* for ‘the widowed and the bereaved’ is still given symbolic meaning by the Māori monarchs, who is always very concerned to invite people who have recently been widowed to sit next to them at the top table to partake of the *poukai*-meal. This traditional and symbolic meaning of the *poukai*, however, offers only partial explanation for the survival of the cycle of 28 ceremonial gatherings that was initiated towards the end of the 19th century, but which continues to be organised and to grow today.¹⁷ It seems important, therefore, to broaden the perspective on *poukai* and to explore whether Māori monarchs themselves may have an interest in the practice of *poukai* as well. The organisation and continuation of *poukai* takes on an added dimension when the meanings and functions of the annual cycle of ceremonies are viewed from the perspective of the Māori monarch.

THE MEANING AND FUNCTION OF THE *POUKAI*

The meaning of *poukai* has so far been explained exclusively from the viewpoint of the adherents of the *Kīngitanga*. Some scholars of Māori society, as mentioned before, have interpreted the *poukai* cycle of the Māori monarchy as a series of gatherings that are convened in order to offer the movement’s followers the opportunity to express their loyalty to the Māori monarch (Mahuta 1974: 135; Metge 1976: 197, 344; Salmond 1975: 204,

206). The assumption, however, that the adherents of the *Kīngitanga* have been organising *poukai* over a period of more than a century simply to state their support of the monarch is not very convincing since there are other opportunities for people to express their loyalty to these Māori rulers and the *Kīngitanga*, including the annual commemoration of the coronation of the ruling monarch (*Koroneihana* ‘Coronation Anniversary Celebrations’). More importantly, however, Māori royalists themselves offer several different interpretations of the *poukai*.

The explanation that is commonly presented as most important, certainly to outsiders, is that *poukai* are arranged primarily to reinforce the social and political unity among the different tribes that acknowledge and support the Māori monarchy. The annual cycle of *poukai* gatherings is frequently said to provide a forum for related tribes to meet and discuss issues of common concern, such as *raupatu* ‘conquest, confiscations’ of the past (see below), and other more current issues. People belonging to the older generations invariably claim such discussions as the main purpose of *poukai*. Dwindling interest in *poukai*, however, particularly among middle-aged and younger people, suggests that this function of the ceremonial cycle is in practice no longer as significant as stated. An average *poukai* rarely attracts more than 250 people, most belonging to the older generations, suggesting that the importance of *poukai* for the socio-political unity among the tribes supporting the *Kīngitanga* should be not overestimated.

Among themselves, people of younger and middle-aged generations are more direct and open about other functions of the *poukai*. In their view, the main reason for organising *poukai* ceremonies is to raise funds for the head of the *Kīngitanga*. Not infrequently people rather hastily add that *poukai* also have the potential to enhance the unity among the tribes supporting the Māori monarchy, implying that their opinion is not meant to contradict the more official view espoused by *Kīngitanga* leaders and elders. There can be no doubt, however, that the meaning attached to the function of *poukai* varies according to age. *Poukai* ceremonies are mainly attended by older people, who were raised in the traditions of the *Kīngitanga* and who from time to time enjoy the opportunity to socialise with kinsfolk and fellow tribal members in an environment that can unmistakably be characterised as Māori. “It keeps the old people alive”, remarked a middle-aged man who was not fluent in the Māori language. Since he was unable to participate in the ceremonial speechmaking and unable to even understand the less formal deliberations usually also taking place in Māori, he was quickly bored at *poukai*, even though he did not acknowledge this outright. He belonged to the generation of Māori who were often not fluent in Māori. For him and many others of

the same generation, *poukai* were primarily held to raise funds for the head of the *Kīngitanga* and the royal house. This view offers at least an interesting lead to a more complex perspective on the functions of *poukai*.

Although the symbolic meaning of *poukai* for the bereaved and the importance of the aspect of reunion in the cycle of ceremonies organised by the contemporary adherents of the *Kīngitanga* should not be underestimated, the continuation of *poukai* over the years must, in my opinion, also be interpreted from the perspective of the Māori royal house. Out of sheer necessity, the royal house had no option but to share in the produce of the land in the past, while over the years it also became important for the royal house to collect material goods or, more recently, money in order to support its royal ambience and activities. This, too, began after the land wars towards the end of the 19th century.

When in the 1880s the colonial government of New Zealand consistently refused to respond to Tāwhiao's request to restore sovereignty, even in his own tribal territory, this Māori King instituted his own government (Williams 1969: 44). In 1894 he promulgated the constitution of a Great Council (*Kauhanganui*) that was to be part of a governmental structure with wide-ranging administrative functions, of which the main ones were the procedures for leasing land under the King's authority and for enforcing prohibitions on individual disposal of land without the King's consent. To finance governmental activities Tāwhiao announced the collection of tax from each Māori person above the age of four and also for dogs (Williams 1969: 45).

Since King Tāwhiao's loyal followers had spread over a wider region after he had ended his isolation in the Maniapoto region, Tāwhiao had to take steps on the one hand to keep his supporters united and on the other hand to implement his governmental intentions in order to shape his royal authority. The annual cycle of *poukai* may therefore be regarded as an institution that was introduced, not simply to offer people the opportunity to express their loyalty to their leader, but above all to offer him gifts, if not to deliver their "tithes", maybe even following Biblical precedent (see above). After all, to finance the implementation of his political strategies and campaigns Tāwhiao depended in large part on what his supporters offered him. And later Māori monarchs also depended to some extent on the financial revenues of the *poukai* until a settlement of the confiscations was finally signed in 1995 (see below).

Over the years *poukai* have clearly become opportunities to collect money or "tributes" to support the Māori royal house (see King 1977: 30). The amount of money collected at a *poukai* is customarily publicly stated towards the end of the ceremony when the visitors are also thanked for their generosity. Ten percent of the gross proceeds goes directly towards the royal

house, a part called *rau kai atua* or *moni kahi ahi*. The precise meaning of these phrases is not remembered; the literal meaning could be ‘food gathered for god’¹⁸ and, more speculatively, ‘money for the land title of a chief’. This practice is very similar to the Judeo-Christian custom of handing over a tenth part of the yield of the land to the Lord of the town or the local church, which part was formerly also named a “tenth” or tithe (see the quotation from Deuteronomy cited above). After this “tenth” of the *poukai* donations has been deducted for the benefit of the royal house, the local community is then compensated for its expenses, mainly for the cost of the plentiful meal offered to the visiting crowd after the welcoming speeches. Whatever funds remain are allocated to the royal house as well.

The largest part of the revenues that the Māori monarchy receives from *poukai* is, according to the movement’s adherents, spent on the maintenance of the monarchy’s properties, including the official residence at Ngarawahia where the Māori King periodically hosts heads of state from all over the world and other dignitaries.

Taking into account this financial motivation for staging *poukai*, at least during the first decades after they were initiated, it is illuminating to situate the analysis of the ceremonial cycle of *poukai* in a comparative perspective of the so-called “royal tour” that has been offered by the Russian ethnologist Yurii Kobishchanow (1987, 2009). Kobishchanow has analysed a variety of “royal tours” in inter-cultural and historical perspective, and labels the phenomenon with the Anglo-Saxon lexeme *gafol*. According to Kobishchanow, *gafol* is an institution that was established by rulers of Early States¹⁹ in order to keep their states or kingdoms together and to reinforce their connection with the people, as well as to levy tribute, to resolve quarrels, to nip attempts to rebellion in the bud, and, last but not least, to receive gifts (see also Geertz 1983).

As such, *gafol* is a phenomenon that appears in many Early States and which combines a range of different functions of the so-called “divine kingship”. In his explanation of the occurrence of the ceremony of *gafol* in various societies, Kobishchanow draws attention primarily to the absence of a solid infrastructure in almost all situations in which a ruler or king tours around. Rulers of Early States rarely reigned from the throne in a palace so to speak, but rather from the back of a horse, to paraphrase the words of Marc Bloch (1939-1940; see also Geertz 1983: 136). For this reason, too, it is obvious why a comparison of the *poukai* during its early years with Kobishchanow’s analysis of *gafol* is relevant.

The *poukai* may also be understood as a “royal tour”, because since the wars of the 1860s Māori monarchs have belonged to a group of rulers without a kingdom in the strict sense of the term. As a consequence, they have to visit

their dispersed following from time to time to remind them that their fate is still taken to heart by someone who continues to struggle for the return of the land and in this struggle needs financial support.²⁰ In addition, it is important to understand that a solid infrastructure was lacking in 19th century New Zealand. The centre of the North Island in particular, the area where the core adherents of the *Kīngitanga* were based, was opened up for European colonists relatively late, partly because Tāwhiao's exile in the Maniapoto area made it impossible to extend a network of roads into the region. Towards the end of the 19th century an extensive road system was still absent in the Waikato and Maniapoto regions, which was one of the reasons why the New Zealand Government was determined to break the resistance by the Māori monarchy in its forested fastness. The *Kīngitanga* literally stood in the way of a thoroughfare from north to south in New Zealand (Parsonson 1988).

At the time when the *poukai* originated people still moved around on foot and horseback, or in canoes along the many inland waterways. Although the importance of the canoe as means of transport in those days should not be underestimated, it goes without saying that transportation along the waterways did have its limitations: one could simply not reach all quarters of the country. Horses had been introduced in New Zealand by European colonists and for a long time only government officials and Māori chiefs had access to them. Others simply could not afford a horse and for them only the possibility to travel on foot remained. The absence of a network of roads and the limited access to other means of transport was, of course, not conducive to traversing long distances in New Zealand's rough and hilly country. This particularly affected the many Māori who had taken up jobs as land labourers towards the end of the 19th century. In these circumstances, Tāwhiao could not expect his followers to visit him frequently and therefore he himself needed to visit his supporters personally.

So it may be argued that the *poukai* ceremonies fulfil a communicative as well as an economic function for the Māori monarchy. Māori Kings and the late Māori Queen may be regarded as rulers who in the absence of a tightly-knit kingdom had to move around in order to stand their ground and to keep their following united. Thus, the financial value of *poukai* is linked to their communicative significance. Without direct communication with the Māori King or Queen the *Kīngitanga* adherents might be expected to diminish or even to abandon the custom of supporting or contributing financially to the royal ambience and activities of the monarchy.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Over the past 15 years significant changes have taken place in New Zealand, which have also affected the *Kīngitanga* and its annual cycle of *poukai* ceremonies. This process of political change in New Zealand began in the late 1960s when Māori people intensified their demand for recognition of the Treaty of Waitangi. In 1975 the government belatedly noted the rising tide of Māori anger about New Zealand's colonial history of dispossession and responded by passing the Treaty of Waitangi Act. This Act enabled Māori to submit claims about violations of the Treaty of Waitangi to the Waitangi Tribunal, which was established to investigate the claims and to make recommendations to the government on how it could redress Māori grievances. The salient limitation of this act was the exclusion of violations of the Treaty that had occurred before 1975 from the Tribunal's jurisdiction. This restriction, however, was removed in 1985, when a newly elected Labour government led by David Lange amended the Treaty of Waitangi Act and backdated the jurisdiction of the Waitangi Tribunal to 6 February 1840, the day when the Treaty was first signed.

The Treaty of Waitangi Amendment Act also enabled the Waitangi Tribunal to examine claims related to the land confiscations in the 1860s. Consequently, the Waikato and Tainui people submitted a claim to the Waitangi Tribunal, but since the first Māori King Potatau Te Wherowhero had never signed the Treaty as chief of the Waikato people, they did not primarily advocate their claim through the Waitangi Tribunal. The confiscations of their land were not directly related to the implementation of the Treaty of Waitangi; nonetheless they were convinced that the confiscations had been unjust and illegal for other reasons. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the development of the Waikato-Tainui claim after 1985 in any detail. It is sufficient to note that in 1989 the government was forced to move into direct negotiations with the Waikato-Tainui people following a ruling of the Court of Appeal that forbade the government selling a coal corporation, which held coal mines in the Waikato area, without proper safeguards for local Māori tribes. The Appeal Court decided that the Waikato-Tainui people were entitled to the equivalent of a substantial portion of the coal resources in the Waikato, the exact amount being left for negotiation between the Crown and the Tainui Māori Trust Board (Van Meijl 1999).

In 1995, the Waikato-Tainui people, the core of the *Kīngitanga*, finally signed a comprehensive settlement of the 19th century confiscations with the New Zealand Government, representing the Crown. The agreement included a formal apology from the Crown, acknowledging it acted unjustly in dealing with the King Movement in 1863 and 1864, and provided for the

return of about three percent of the land originally confiscated. The value of the lands restored was estimated at approximately NZ\$170 million, while the annual income from the rents and leases of the lands was estimated to amount to between NZ\$7 and NZ\$14 million per annum. In November 1995 this settlement was passed into law as the Waikato Raupatu Claims Settlement Act, bearing the signature of the Commonwealth's Queen Elizabeth (Queen Elizabeth I of New Zealand), who was visiting New Zealand .

Although initially the settlement created some problems with regard to the distribution and administration of the land and monetary compensation, including the position of the royal family therein, it did generally relieve the Waikato-Tainui tribe of a traumatic history of loss and dispossession (Van Meijl 2003). The settlement is also reflected in a changing meaning and function of the *poukai*, which has nonetheless continued to be organised annually. While the protocol of the ceremonial gatherings has not changed, the topics of discussion are no longer dominated by the history of the confiscations. Instead, *poukai* are increasingly used as a platform to discuss issues that are related to the management of the settlement.

Owing to some poor investments and unexpected losses, the value of the settlement decreased significantly during the first couple of years, but more recently the tribe has done very well financially. Currently, the tribal assets are estimated to exceed NZ\$500,000,000. The expansion of the tribal estate has required continuous changes in the management structure. These are a subject of ongoing debate and *poukai* gatherings offer an arena at which tribal management issues can be discussed. Yet *poukai* have become significantly smaller since the settlement was signed in 1995. A number of reasons probably contribute to the decreasing attendance at *poukai*.

The first reason usually advanced by members of the Tainui tribes themselves is that over the past 25 years a whole generation of elderly people has died that was probably the last generation for whom Māori was the first language. More importantly, this generation had grown up during the decades when Princess Te Paea had given the *Kīngitanga* back its *mana*, its prestige and self-esteem. Te Paea managed to uplift the morale of *Kīngitanga* supporters through a whole range of activities; the most important one was probably the establishment of Turangawaewae Marae at Ngaruawahia, which Tāwhiao, after he emerged from exile in the King Country in 1881, had designated as the place where the source of his identity was rooted. Turangawaewae Marae has since become the official residence of Māori monarchs (King 1981). The generation of Te Paea's contemporaries usually attended all *poukai* without exception, as the occasions offered them the opportunity to share their belief and confidence in the cause of the *Kīngitanga* with tribal companions from other *marae* communities.

Another reason mentioned to account for *poukai* attracting fewer people is that nowadays the Waikato people have other platforms to confirm and re-establish the unity among *Kīngitanga* followers, such as the *Kauhanganui*, the tribal parliament made up of *marae* representatives that was set up to administer and manage the settlement of the confiscations. Nevertheless, the *Kīngitanga* also included tribes that were not or were only marginally affected by the confiscations, and these still may appreciate *poukai* as occasions to discuss matters of common concern. Most Māori tribes are increasingly involved in all kinds of commercial activities so there is much more interaction between them than in the past and this may enhance the role of *poukai* in inter-tribal communication. Both new and old common concerns mean that *poukai* tend to be given a different meaning when increasingly members or representatives of other tribes, business partners or government authorities are invited to discuss topical matters. Several people have commented to me that *poukai* are indeed more and more regarded as *marae* meetings between Māori, especially Tainui, and commercial agencies or government representatives with whom Waikato and other Tainui tribes are engaged in joint actions.

Beside these local explanations for the dwindling interest in *poukai*, I would add that the declining attendance at *poukai* also confirms the structural and historical explanation of the *poukai* offered in this paper. Since the settlement of the confiscations was signed in 1995 the *Kīngitanga* no longer endures the trauma that was caused by the confiscations in 1864. Not that all problems have been solved, but the movement has regained its *mana* and the core of its supporting tribes is no longer without any land. The Waikato-Tainui tribes are building and expanding a tribal estate, which enables them to support the ruling Māori monarch in accordance with his *mana* and status. As a result the main reason for the institution of the *poukai* in the late 19th century, namely to create the opportunity for the Māori monarch to meet his following and to keep the supporting tribes of the *Kīngitanga* united, has disappeared. Indeed, it is no longer necessary for the Māori King to tour around his territory, partly because the confiscations have been redressed and partly because in the post-settlement era there are many other opportunities to discuss matters of common concern. There are the *Kauhanganui* meetings and also the internet that is increasingly used as a platform to enhance the integration of the *Kīngitanga* (see <http://www.tainui.co.nz/>).

Finally, the need for the *Kīngitanga* to periodically re-establish unity has diminished since the movement has recently acquired the recognition to which it is entitled, a recognition that dovetails with its role in Māori society and beyond. This first became evident with the settlement in 1995 and became clearly apparent after the death of Queen Te Arikini Te Atairangikaahu in

August 2006. Queen Te Ata had reigned over the *Kīngitanga* for more than 40 years and was a beloved monarch for many Māori, not only from Tainui but also from other tribes, and much admired throughout New Zealand. During her period on the throne she had unofficially become a sort of ambassador of Māori people at occasions of national and international importance for New Zealand. Her funeral ceremony lasted for a whole week and was attended by more than 100,000 people. New Zealand National Television also paid significant attention to her funeral and even broadcast the final day live, including in its coverage a variety of commentaries on the history of the *Kīngitanga* and its ceremonial practices.

The late Queen Te Atairangikaahu was succeeded by her eldest son Tuheitia, who has since been leading the *Kīngitanga*. During his period on the throne the 150th anniversary of the *Kīngitanga* has been celebrated. In 2006 a ceremonial gathering took place to commemorate the meeting at Pūkawa at which it was decided to set up a kingship, and in 2008 a variety of celebrations was organised to honour the sesquicentennial of the crowning of Potatau Te Wherowhero as the first Māori King. Festivities around this anniversary are further testimony to the increasing recognition of the *Kīngitanga*. The University of Waikato in Hamilton, which is located on Tainui land, even announced that as of 2009 it will each year organise a *Kīngitanga* Day on April 21st, the birthday of King Tuheitia. That day all lectures will be cancelled and the University will celebrate its relationship with the *Kīngitanga*.

In light of the increasing recognition of the *Kīngitanga* and also against the background of the settlement of the confiscations signed in 1995, it will be no surprise that the functions of the *poukai* have changed. It is important to add, however, that this does not necessarily detract from its symbolic meaning. *Poukai* may no longer serve the need of Māori monarchs to visit their following in order to raise funds and keep their supporters united, but they still constitute an important platform of communication for *Kīngitanga* tribes, increasingly to converse with business partners and government authorities. However, the most important reason for the continuation of *poukai* ceremonies is probably to reconfirm the main reason behind the establishment of the *Kīngitanga*, namely to unite Māori people under the *mana* of a monarch. This cause is also attested to by the addition of a new *poukai* in 2009 on 23 May, the day on which the late Queen Te Atairangikaahu was crowned in 1966. This *poukai* will be held at Taheke Marae in Kawerau, Te Arawa, and will therefore also serve to commemorate Te Ata's contribution to the recognition of the *Kīngitanga* beyond Waikato-Tainui.

This ethnohistorical account of the annual cycle of *poukai* ceremonies organised by Māori communities supporting the *Kīngitanga* shows that they are not simply loyalty gatherings at which the following of the King Movement is offered the opportunity to express their support of the Māori monarchy and its leadership. Likewise, it is difficult to maintain that the prime purpose of *poukai* ceremonies is to reinforce social and political unity among adherents of the *Kīngitanga*, certainly in more recent decades. A comparison of the *poukai* to the phenomenon of a so-called “royal tour” held by rulers of Early States, as described by the Russian ethnographer Yuri Kobishchanow, who refers to this ceremonial cycle as *gafol*, indicates that *poukai* also accomplish similar functions for the *Kīngitanga* as have been set out by Kobishchanow for *gafol*. These functions may be specified as communicative and economic, which in practice are intimately connected.

The communicative function of *poukai* is important mainly because since the confiscations of their land in the 19th century the Māori royal house never had the opportunity to establish a sovereign kingdom with a solid infrastructure that would make the organisation of a “royal tour” unnecessary. The communicative function, in turn, was for a long time deeply intertwined with the economic function of offering financial support to the royal house. Since the signing of the settlement of the land confiscations in 1995 this latter function has obviously become less important. As *poukai* continue to be organised and even to grow in number, however, there can be no doubt that they are still symbolically significant to commemorate the cause of the *Kīngitanga*, to re-establish unity among its supporting tribes and to care for “the widowed, the bereaved and the destitute”.

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NOTES

1. A *marae* is made up of the combination of a plaza or courtyard used for traditional ceremonies and community assembly, with a set of communal buildings including an ancestral meeting-house, a dining-hall, kitchen and some sanitary facilities (Metge 1976: 227-45, Salmond 1975: 31-90). *Marae* are generally regarded as the final refuge in New Zealand where Māori people are able to maintain their cultural traditions (Walker 1977).
2. In 1995 a preliminary version of this paper in Dutch was published in a volume edited by Henri J.M. Claessen. This earlier version was translated into Russian and published in 2009. The present article in English has been thoroughly revised and updated by the author.
3. This was the home *marae* of Dr Maharaira Winiata, who was from Ngāi Te Rangi but who had strong affiliations to the *Kīngitanga*. When he died in 1960 at the age of 48, this *marae* requested a *poukai* to be held to commemorate his contribution to the *Kīngitanga* as well as to strengthen the kinship links between Waikato and Ngāi Te Rangi and Ngāti Ranginui (Mahuta 1995: 32).
4. The excellent contacts between these (sub-)tribes and the *Kīngitanga* date back to the period before the crowning of the first Māori King. They derive from the migration of Ngāti Toa—led by the warrior chief Te Rauparaha from Kawhia—and parts of the Te Ati Awa tribe, who were accompanied by members of Ngāti Raukawa from the southern Waikato area when they moved to the south of the North Island of New Zealand in the beginning of the 19th century (Burns 1980: 55-63, Wards 1968: 214-19).
5. At present, this list is also published on the Tribe's website: <http://www.tainui.co.nz/>.
6. For an historical account of the *poukai* at Waahi, see Mahuta (1995).
7. The Brass Band is traditionally made up of musicians from the same families belonging to Maurea, Rangiriri and Matahuru, just north of Waahi Pā at Huntly (Mahuta 1995: 71).
8. For a more extensive explanation of the Pai Marire religion, see Van Meijl 1992.
9. This MA thesis in social anthropology, with a special focus on the ceremonial exchange of speeches in the Waikato-Tainui region, among other occasions at *poukai*, was written by the adoptive brother of the late Māori Queen. For a more detailed analysis of Māori ceremonies and especially the role of ceremonial speeches therein, see in particular Metge (1976: 246-64) and Salmond (1975: 147-76).
10. Tui Adams also mentioned one other term, which I could not understand, while none of my informants was able to recall which concept he had used.
11. For a more extensive discussion of the origin of the Māori monarchy, see Van Meijl 1993.
12. It is beyond the scope of this article to elaborate on the highly complex nature of tribal organisation of Māori society and its evolution in the 19th century (see Ballara 1998). Following Māori colloquial use of the English term “tribe”, it is here also used interchangeably to mean *iwi* ‘tribe’ or *hapū* ‘sub-tribe’ (see Van Meijl 1995).
13. Compare Ngata (1940: 171-72) for a preliminary reflection on the consequences for tribal organisations.

14. Waikato and Tainui *kaumātua* ‘elders’ often mention it occurred in the year 1884 but, since Tāwhiao went to England during that year, the first *poukai* was organised in 1885 (see Kirkwood 2000: 228-30, Mahuta 1996: 59).
15. This quotation is interesting because it is from the same book as the phrase that is often cited as the Biblical inspiration for setting up a monarchy: “Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother” (Deut. 17: 15).
16. This interpretation of the traditional custom of *kawe mate* in the Tainui region is slightly different from the explanation offered by Joan Metge, who has worked mainly in other regions and who emphasised that the aim of *kawe mate* is to thank those who attended the funeral (Metge 1976: 263, 338).
17. Although the cycle of ceremonial gatherings was introduced towards the end of the 19th century, the number of *poukai* has over the years increased only to the current 28. In the year 2009, a 29th *poukai* will be added to the ceremonial cycle (see below).
18. This practice may be related to ancient Māori rituals of exchange and sacrifice. Drawing on publications by Elsdon Best on which Marcel Mauss relied in his classic essay about the gift, Marshall Sahlins (1972: 158-59) analysed remarks made by Māori chief Ranaipiri about Māori *tohunga* ‘ritual experts’ placing the so-called *mauri* in the forest, which they believed to cause game birds to abound. Accordingly, successful hunters were constrained to give back a part of their caught prey to the *mauri*, throwing away the first bird killed and still raw into the forest. Later cooked birds were ostensibly given to the forest, though in practice these were consumed by *tohunga*.
19. For a classic introduction into the comparative study of the Early State, see Claessen and Skalnik (1978).
20. Obviously, this motivation has been changing since the settlement of the confiscations was signed in 1995 and as the *Kingitanga* has consequently become more focused on the continuation of its ideals in the future.

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