



Major North Island sites mentioned in the text

Introduction

The Western penetration of Aotearoa New Zealand in the late 18th century and its colonisation by the British in the course of the 1800s wrought many changes both to the land and its Polynesian inhabitants, the Māori, who by at least AD 1300 had settled the islands (Hakiwai 1996: 62–65, Wright 1959). Among the more disturbing results of the European onslaught on the indigenous people, three stand out: the sharp contraction of the Māori population, a trend that was not reversed until the beginning of the 20th century (Prior 1968: 270–72, McCreary 1968: 188–91); the permanent loss of vast tracts of native land to foreigners (Metge 1976: 34–35, Olssen and Stenson 1989: 96–122); and the gradual decline in the ability of many Māori to converse in their mother tongue owing to the late 19th-century legislation of the New Zealand government (Biggs 1968: 73–75, Ball 1940: 271–78).¹ Yet, as in the case of population and other aspects of Māori society and culture, the indigenous language has in the last decades enjoyed a vigorous resurgence. These changes have roundly dispelled the notion — already current in the late 19th century — that the Māori race would disappear, in part as a consequence of amalgamationist and assimilationist ideologies that dominated government policy until the 1970s (Ward 1995: 33–36, Belich 2001: 477). It was only then that the country as a whole took the first steps towards biculturalism, which today informs Māori–European relations (King 2003: 467–68, 482–87, Metge 1976: 306–12).

Colonisation also had deleterious effects upon several branches of Māori art. The art of wood carving, the one most closely associated with architecture and its decoration, and central to Māori identity, at least in Western eyes, suffered decline in many parts of the country and even extinction in some areas (Simmons 1984: 107, Ngata 1940: 318–21). Among several northern tribes, sculptural production ceased as early as the 1820s and 1830s; in areas further south and west of the North Island, where regular contact with European civilisation occurred later, woodcarving was able to survive, but only for a few more decades before finally dying off around the 1860s. On the other hand, tribes such as Te Arawa in the Bay of Plenty and Ngāti Porou and Rongowhakaata on the East Coast managed not only to preserve their sculptural traditions, but also to develop them, in part by relinquishing stone



FIGURE 1. Te Hau-ki-Tūranga, meeting house (c. 1842), originally at Orakaiaapu pā (in Manutūkē), and presently in the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington. Photograph by Mark Strange, 1988. Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington, B.18358

carving tools in favour of steel. Indeed, one of the first masters to take up metal tools was Raharuhi Rukupō (c. 1800–1873) of the Rongowhakaata (Simmons 1984: 107, Barrow 1965: 15–19). In his great masterpiece, the meeting house Te Hau-ki-Tūranga (Fig. 1), which he erected in the early 1840s at Manutūkē (on the East Coast), the carved wall members and the free-standing posts exhibit the deep undercutting of surface detailing and the volumetric treatment of figural form that metal tooling facilitates.

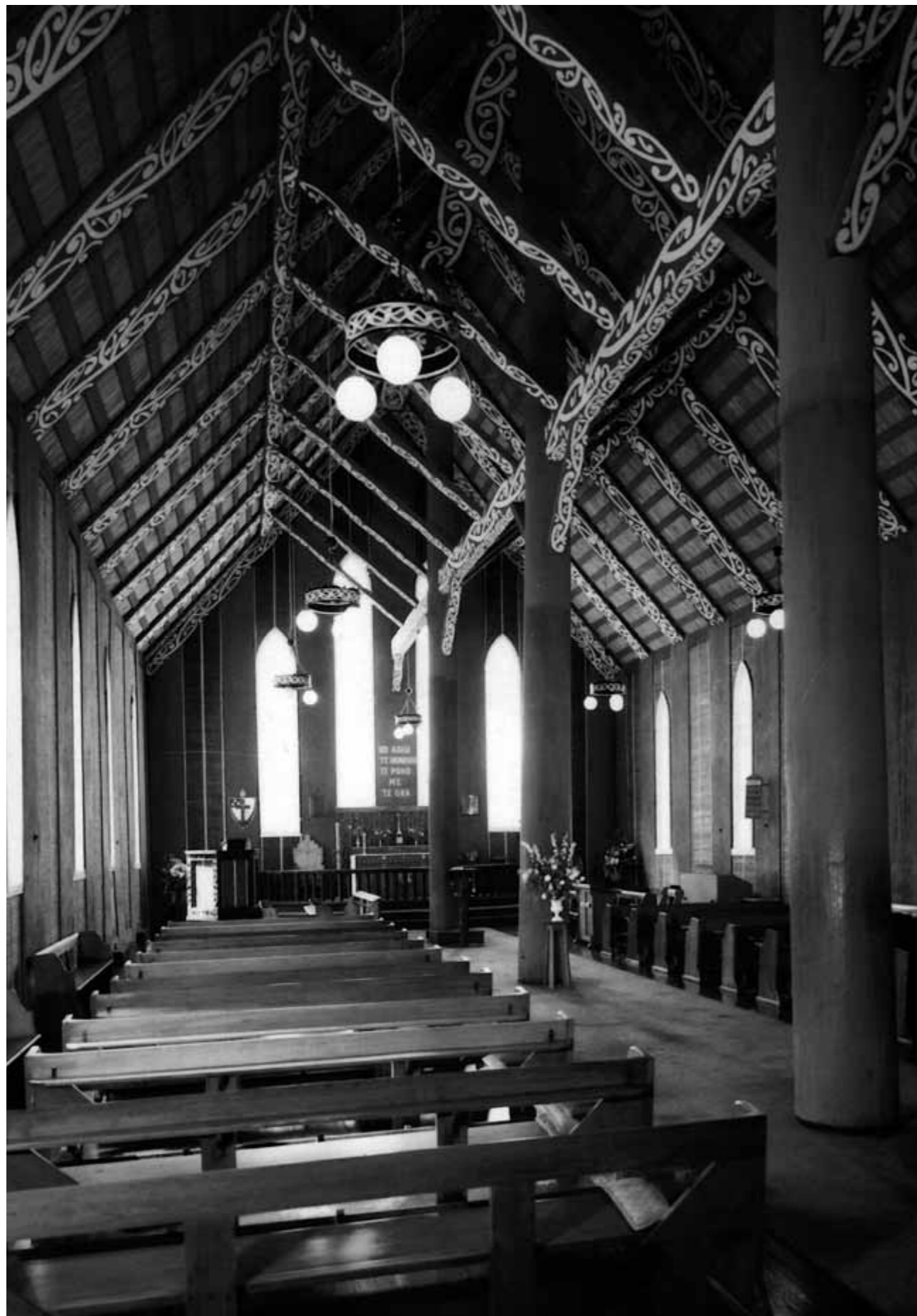
In so far as the Māori whare (house) is concerned,² this most important aspect of indigenous architecture weathered the storms of colonialism rather well;³ in fact, it actually flourished, as Deidre Brown has effectively demonstrated in her 1995 dissertation and now more broadly in her recently published monograph on Māori architecture (2009). Throughout the country, the whare long continued as a viable form for sheltering both domestic activities and larger public gatherings, but it was as a space for the latter that the whare as a type underwent the greatest degree of

development and elaboration. Increasingly, as the 19th century progressed, Māori needed large-scale buildings for holding tribal and pan-tribal meetings in order to confront pressing land issues and other matters (Neich 1994: 109, Brown 1995: esp. I, 35–52, 68–100 and II, 244–50, 285–326). At the same time, there was an ever greater demand in the various church mission stations for capacious buildings to serve as places of worship (Neich 1994: 107–8, Brown 2009: 42–48), since by the 1840s Māori congregations regularly numbered several hundred souls for Sunday services and not infrequently exceeded a thousand congregants.⁴ Colonialism, in fact, rather than contributing to the demise of the indigenous whare, stimulated its development. But this advance sprang not from the missionaries and other colonial agents, but instead from Māori themselves, who in their rapid embrace of Christianity required larger houses of worship. As this study will demonstrate, that need could be better and more quickly met by local people turning to their own architectural traditions than by missionaries attempting to build English-style churches in a new and foreign environment, and without easy access to resources proper to European construction.

The technological process by which indigenous builders transformed the small-to-moderate-sized whare into vast structures has been alluded to in recent scholarship (Mead 1997: 190, 197, 199, Neich 1994: 107), but it has never been the object of detailed examination and evaluation. This is the principal aim of the present study and particularly as it relates to the rise of monumental whare-style churches in the mid 19th century. The best known example of these whare karakia — houses of prayer — is the recently destroyed (1995) church of Rangiatea at Ōtaki (replaced by a replica in 2003) (Fig. 2, overleaf).

Recognition of such a development within Māori architecture naturally calls for an explanation as to why the whare scheme, with its central row of posts, which for Christian ecclesiastical architecture was presumed to be liturgically problematic, succeeded, nevertheless, in becoming the most common building type for Māori churches during the peak decades of the missionary movement (1830s to 1850s). It is not only ironic, but also paradoxical, that while the Anglican establishment and its missionaries embraced the indigenous house as a convenient, if not ideal, model for its missions, the church in New Zealand remained strictly English in the measured tone and conduct of its liturgy and spaces. It held fast to Protestant teaching against the inclusion of figurative decoration in ecclesiastical settings and was slow in drawing Māori clergy into the highest levels of its governing structure (Davidson 2000: 227).

In order to contextualise the whare-style church's form, its decoration and use of space within the larger picture of ecclesiastical architecture in New Zealand and European Christianity in general, Chapter 1 examines the designs of the churches built by the earliest missionaries and how these Western-style edifices were furnished to serve Anglican ritual. Chapter 2 considers the nature and extent of Māori training in European building technology by the missionaries and sets forth the



principles that governed whare design and construction. The lessons indigenous builders learned at the missions and how they subsequently applied this knowledge in their first attempts at church building, both in Western and Māori style, constitute the main topics of Chapter 3. Following a brief overview of methods and sources, Chapter 4 traces the emergence and development of seven large-scale whare-style churches selected from four widely separated regions in the North Island. Chapter 5 considers Anglican attitudes and legislation regarding the employment of human imagery in ecclesiastical decoration and the difficulty missionaries had in reconciling church canons and their own ingrained iconoclasm with a culture that viewed ornamentation of all sorts as an integral part of a house, whether for chiefly use as a dwelling or for ceremonial functions. Chapter 6 explores the reasons for clerical acceptance of the whare plan despite misgivings concerning issues related to the sanctuary's visibility owing to the employment of internal free-standing posts. Finally, Chapter 7 looks at the challenge of adapting traditional Christian, and specifically Anglican, worship to the double-nave system of the whare, both in the conduct of ritual and in the spatial distribution of people and liturgical furnishings on either side of the building's central line of vertical supports, the feature that most clearly defines an indigenous-style church, structurally and aesthetically, as Māori.

Decline in church membership in the 1860s, owing largely to the various social and religious upheavals spawned by the last of the New Zealand Wars (Davidson 2000: 217–18, Sanderson 1983: 177–81), brought the heyday of the whare-style church to an end, and thus a type of ecclesiastical edifice that could be erected in large scale fairly quickly and at little if any direct monetary cost.⁵ But with monumental structures no longer needed, combined with the greater availability of sawn timber, which building in European style required, Māori congregations increasingly looked to Western ecclesiastical architecture to supply the models for their newer whare karakia. Most of these were realised in the prevailing Neo-Gothic style, and all featuring naves unencumbered by the centrally placed supports characteristic of indigenous construction.

What follows in this study is a broad overview of Māori church building in New Zealand between the 1830s and 1860s. Its focus is primarily on Māori whare-style construction in relation to the missionary activity of a single denomination, the Anglican Church. This is particularly appropriate since this Christian body was the first to send missionaries to New Zealand and had the largest following among its indigenous inhabitants. In addition, the documentary sources, both written and visual, that are most pertinent to this research and most immediately accessible for consultation are those generated by Anglicans, ordained priests as well as some laypeople, who, under the auspices of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and within approximately forty years, managed to disseminate the Gospel to nearly every part of the country.

In the process of researching this book, it became evident that in certain parts of the country Māori sometimes assumed the task of building for themselves churches

FIGURE 2. Ōtaki, Rangiatea Church (1848–51). Burned down 7 October 1995. Photograph by Graeme Simpson, April 1995. Rangiatea Vestry Committee

in European rather than in ‘native’ style. The extent of this phenomenon and the circumstances that gave rise to it are only touched on briefly here, but this is a development that deserves further investigation. In the final analysis, this book raises more issues than it can address, the likely consequence of a work entering uncharted waters. I believe that when the reader reaches the final page of this study she or he will agree that Joan Metge’s view of post-contact Māori society and culture applies equally, and perhaps with greater force, to the field of indigenous architecture. As the now-vanished whare-style churches of Ōtaki, Manutūkē, Matamata and several other localities amply demonstrate, the whare, as a central aspect of Aotearoa’s material heritage, was ‘not a static harmonious whole belonging to the past and being eroded by acculturation, but a dynamic living organism continually developing by combining elements taken from both Maori and Pakeha cultures to produce new forms’ (Metge 1976: 306). And to this statement, one can readily add Ralph Piddington’s observation (1968: 264) that Māori did so ‘without renouncing their cultural heritage’.

CHAPTER ONE

Missionaries, Māori and the Beginning of Ecclesiastical Architecture in New Zealand

Anglican implantation of Christianity in Māori New Zealand and strategies of conversion

On Christmas Day 1814, the Rev. Samuel Marsden (1765–1838) (Fig. 3),¹ Anglican chaplain of the Australian British colony of New South Wales, conducted the first Christian service in New Zealand at Oihi, in the Bay of Islands, with many local Māori, including several chiefs, attending (Marsden 1814–37: 93–94, Salmond 1997: 462–65). This event took place under the auspices of Ruatara (c. 1787–1815), a Ngāpuhi chief whom Marsden had befriended aboard ship in 1809 when both were returning home after their respective sojourns in England (Marsden 1814–37: 61–71, Salmond 1997: 405–31, Purchas 1914: 7–24). Nearly two months after the Christmas service, on 24 February 1815, Marsden purchased from local Māori a plot of land in Rangihoua, in the vicinity of Oihi, and there established, in the name of the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the country’s first mission station (Marsden 1814–37: 122–24). This enterprise, centred in the far north of Te Ika-a-Māui — the indigenous name for the North Island — got off to a shaky start and for several years was plagued by difficulties, which stifled efforts to spread the Gospel (Marsden 1814–37: 339–422, Morrell 1973: 4–8). Personal as well as personality differences among the missionaries aside, Rangihoua’s unsuitability for farming, tribal unrest spawned by internal and external circumstances, and Marsden’s questionable strategy for evangelising indigenous people did not make matters any easier (Yate 1835: 167–71, Davidson 2004: 10–11). The establishment of a second station at Kerikeri in 1819, some three kilometres inland from one of the major inlets of the Bay of Islands, did little to further the cause of Christianisation. Marsden believed — wrongly as it turned out — that conversion could be achieved

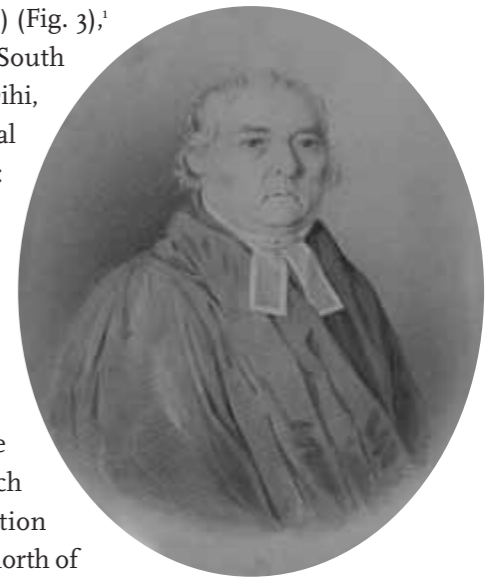


FIGURE 3. Rev. Samuel Marsden, 1833. Pencil and wash drawing by Richard Reed. Alexander Turnbull Library Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa, Wellington, A-039-038