

Page 5. Resistance: 1866 to 1872

1866

Confiscation

In 1866, 448,000 acres (181,000 hectares) of land belonging to the 'rebel' tribes of the Bay of Plenty – Tūhoe, Te Whakatōhea and Ngāti Awa – were confiscated by the government. This area was subsequently reduced to 211,000 acres (85,387 hectares), of which Tūhoe lost 14,000 (5,700 hectares). Tūhoe lost Ōpouriao and Waimana, their only substantial flat lands, and their only access to the coast through Ōhiwa Harbour. This injustice fanned the flames of war.

Te Kooti

In June 1866, Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Tūruki, of the Te Rongowhakaata tribe of Poverty Bay, was exiled to Wharekauri (Chatham Islands) on suspicion of being a spy for the Hauhau. Two years later in July 1868, following prophetic visions, he led a mass escape of 298 captives aboard the *Riflemen*, returned to the East Coast of the North Island and began a guerrilla war that set the country ablaze.

Clashes with militia on the East Coast culminated in a bloody and unsuccessful attempt by Te Kooti to take Poverty Bay. Te Kooti and his followers turned inland to the forests of Te Urewera. He waited on the eastern Te Urewera borders for permission from Tūhoe to enter the territory. In March 1869, at a meeting at Tāwhana in the Waimana valley, Tūhoe committed themselves and their lands to Te Kooti. In return Te Kooti made a promise to Tūhoe, using the words of God to Moses:

Ka tango ahau i a koutou hei iwi mōku ā, ko ahau hei Atua mō koutou ā, ka mōhio koutou ko Īhowa ahau. Ko koe hoki te iwi o te kawenata.

I take you as my people and I will be your God; you will know that I am Jehovah. You are the people of the covenant. ¹

The pursuit of Te Kooti

The government waged a bitter campaign in Te Urewera in its search for Te Kooti and his followers. Old enemies of Tūhoe fought on the side of the government; they carried out most of the raids into Te Urewera during a prolonged and destructive search between 1869 and 1872. In a policy aimed at turning the tribe away from Te Kooti, a scorched earth campaign was unleashed against Tūhoe; people were imprisoned and killed, their cultivations and homes destroyed, and stock killed or run off. Through starvation, deprivation and atrocities at the hands of the government's Māori forces, Tūhoe submitted to the Crown. The whereabouts of Te Kooti, however, were never revealed.

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In 1872 Te Kooti escaped to the King Country where he remained in exile. In 1883 he received an official pardon from the government. Although best remembered as a guerrilla fighter, he was for Tūhoe a spiritual leader in their time of need, and the founder of their pre-eminent faith, Te Hāhi Ringatū.

Footnotes:

1. Judith Binney, *Redemption songs: a life of Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuki*. Auckland, Auckland University Press/Bridget Williams, 1997, p. 154. >
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