



1860

(Rutherford, J., 2009)



## MAORI WARS

### THE CAMPAIGNS

#### 1. Prelude: The Fighting Forties

New Zealand colonists had a foretaste of Maori fighting in the turbulent eighteen forties. The rash attempt of the European Magistrates to arrest Te Rauparaha and Te Rangihaeata for resisting the occupation of the Wairau precipitated the massacre of Captain Arthur Wakefield and his 21 companions (1843). Governor FitzRoy made himself very unpopular by blaming the colonists and refusing to punish the Maoris, but he averted a war that might have been calamitous in the feeble condition of the colony. Appeasement, however, damaged Government prestige, and provoked further disturbances. At the Bay of Islands, Hone Heke grew jealous of Te Rauparaha's reputation for killing Pakehas, and defied British authority, first by bullying the settlers, and then, incited by seditious Americans, by chopping down the flagstaff that bore the emblem of their enslavement, the Union Jack. He was joined by Kawiti whose young men clamoured for battle and booty. Fortunately, most of the northern Maoris remained neutral, and important chiefs like Nene, Patuone, and Rewa loyally fielded war parties against the rebels.

The war that followed (1845–6) consisted mostly of reverses suffered by the small British forces engaged, partially offset by successes of their native allies. The destruction of Kororareka (March 1845) and the heavy losses sustained in attacking Puketutu and Ohaeawai pas (May–July 1845) revealed the fighting qualities of the Maoris and the folly of British tactics. Governor Grey, who arrived opportunely in November 1845, quickly decided that the troops, though effective in the open when it came to bayonet work, should never be employed in hilly bush country unless supported by native contingents, under whose cover sappers could cut roads and gunners haul guns, permitting bombardment of the invested position before assault. These tactics were used against Ruapekapeka pa (January 1846). The approach and siege were well conducted, but the usual costly assault was avoided when the besiegers surprised the pa on a Sunday morning, which the defenders had naively imagined was dedicated to rest and prayer. The “victory” did something to restore lost British prestige, and Grey made a generous and lasting peace with the northern tribes.

The southern disturbances took longer to quell. Te Rangihaeata from his pa at Pahautanui, near Porirua, threatened both the coastal road north from Wellington and the Hutt Valley settlements; further north, the 200 settlers at Wanganui were at loggerheads with some of the local chiefs. Grey had only some 500 troops available, whom he dared not commit to the bush to pursue marauders, and he feared using loyal Maoris in case he encouraged tribal feuds. Till reinforced, he tried to play a waiting game, building roads and blockhouses, and winning friends by diplomacy. But numerous raids on isolated homesteads and skirmishes against military outposts (April 1846)

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Yellow circle

1846) forced the pace, and in July, after failing to come to grips with the main Maori forces, he seized the principal chief, Te Rauparaha, at Porirua and held him hostage for the good behaviour of the Ngati Toa tribe. The rebellion collapsed. Te Rangihaeata retreated to Manawatu, and half a dozen unlucky Maori captives were tried for murder and rebellion and punished as scapegoats for the rest. The justice of these proceedings was questionable, but they ended the insurrection with less bloodshed than pitched battles.

There was sporadic fighting at Wanganui (June-July 1847), following the Gilfillan murders, but peace was restored in February 1848, and the repurchase of the Wanganui Block removed the source of friction. Grey had vindicated his boast that murder and theft by Maoris would be punished and rebellion suppressed. He also persuaded them that the Government would treat them fairly and generously. On these terms peace prevailed till 1854, and Pakehas and Maoris had a breathing space in which to adjust their mutual relations.

## 2. The First Taranaki War, 1860–61

The situation deteriorated rapidly in the late fifties, till the fatal course pursued by Governor Gore Browne and his Ministers over the Waitara purchase led to the Taranaki War of 1860–61. The immediate issues were twofold – the right of the Maoris to refuse to sell their lands, and the sovereign authority of the Governor to maintain law and order in native districts. Unfortunately, the Governor, under colonial pressure, did not act impartially. Wiremu Kingi's protests against Teira's false sale were taken for sedition, and his rights were over-ridden without investigation. Kingi had committed no overt act of hostility when Lieutenant-Colonel Murray proclaimed martial law (February 1860). He and his people were driven by troops off the land they had occupied for the last 12 years, and were virtually forced into rebellion in self-defence. Waitara, in Maori eyes, became proof of Pakeha injustice, and Te Ati-Awa had the sympathy of all Maoridom and active support from other Taranaki, Waikato, and Wanganui tribes.

New Plymouth was garrisoned by 1,200 regular troops (chiefly the 65th and parts of the 12th and 40th Regiments) plus gunners and sappers, a naval corps, and some 500 or 600 colonial militia and volunteers. Reinforcements (including the 14th and 57th Regiments) brought the total to over 3,000. The Maoris never had half as many fighters in the field at any one time, but the nature of the country, broken by ridges and gullies, intersected by streams and swamps, and covered with fern near the coast and bush a few miles inland, gave the rebels many advantages. The outsettlers had to abandon their farms and stand to arms behind the town stockades; the women and children were evacuated to Nelson. Meanwhile, the Maoris ran amuck, burning houses and pillaging stock, and property worth over £200,000 was lost.

Military operations were again marked by inept command and faulty tactics. An early instance occurred when a mixed detachment of regulars and volunteers clashed with the Ngati Ruanuis near the Waireka Stream (28 March). Lieutenant-Colonel Murray withdrew the regulars and left the colonists to finish the fight, because Colonel Gold had ordered the troops to be back in barracks before dark. Fortunately Captain Cracroft with 60 seamen and marines made a diversionary attack, and the colonials withdrew with the loss of two killed and 12 wounded. Maori losses were about 50 killed. "The moral of all this," wrote Henry Sewell, "is that the proper force to deal with the natives is the bluejackets and the settlers. Regular military tactics will not do for bush fighting."

Gold blundered again when, after some trivial successes in capturing undefended pas and burning Maori food stores, he sent Major Nelson and 350 men to attack the strong pa of Puketakauere near Waitara River (27 June). Nelson, underrating his opponents, approached the pa without proper reconnaissance. It was winter time and wet, and the troops floundered in swamps and ditches under heavy fire from concealed entrenchments forward of the pa. Gold failed to send help, and the attackers were driven off by a tomahawk charge, leaving 31 dead and many wounded behind them. "Culpable imbecility or worse", Sewell called it.

The elderly Major-General Pratt assumed command in August, the garrison was reinforced, and systematic operations were commenced to clear the coastal area between the Waitara and Waireka Rivers. Pratt's methods were slow but sure. He detested bush fighting and rash assaults on prepared defences, and adopted the patient siege tactics of the drill book. His "mile-a-month" technique excited the ridicule of the colonists – one report said, "The war at Taranaki maintains its peaceful course". But the capture of Orongomai pa (October) showed that the Maoris disliked heavy shelling and grew uneasy as the sap approached their palisades; in fact, they made a hurried exit just before the sappers' mines blew up their stockades.

As the British grew cautious, the Maoris grew rash. A Ngati Maniapoto force had fought at Puketakauere and their exploits and plunder excited the envy of all the Waikato tribes. Another "Pakeha-shooting" expedition was dispatched under Rewi Maniapoto and Wetini, who, as soon as they arrived in Taranaki, rushed to the front of the battle and occupied the old ill-fortified pa site of Mahoetahi, about 7 miles from New Plymouth (6 November). Pratt threw a force of 600 men against them. The mistakes of the previous June were avoided; troops and volunteers skirmished their way competently through the swampy approaches. They then reformed near the earthworks, charged, and drove the defenders off the mound and back over the Waitara, inflicting about a hundred casualties for a British loss of four killed and 17 wounded.

This reverse only stimulated the Waikatos' thirst for revenge, and Auckland was more heavily garrisoned in case of attack. The Maoris, however, for the time being limited their actions to the Taranaki. Their main stronghold, manned by a thousand fighters, was a series of entrenched and palisaded positions at Kairau, Huirangi, and Te Arei, near the historic pa of Pukerangiora. Against these positions Pratt continued to advance his saps and trenches yard by yard, building redoubts and blockhouses as he went. Kairau fell after the heavy bombardment on 31 December, and then began the famous "long sap" towards Te Arei. On 23 January 1861, a picked Maori force tried to surprise the Huirangi No. 3 redoubt before dawn, but the attackers were held back in the ditches below the parapets, taken in the rear by troops from the adjoining redoubt, and slaughtered with bayonets, rifle fire, hand grenades, and short-fused shells dropped amongst them by hand. They lost about 50 killed and 40 wounded, while British casualties were five killed and 11 wounded.

Maori efforts to check the inexorable progress of the sap by filling it up at nights and assaulting the diggers by day slowed it but did not halt it. Wiremu Tamihana came down to Taranaki as peacemaker (12–14 March) but Pratt would not accept his mediation. Te Arei, however, was becoming untenable, and Hapurona hoisted the white flag (19 March). It was arranged that the tiawa should submit to the Queen's sovereignty on promise that the Waitara question would be investigated, and the Waikatos were to return home and restore their plunder.

Fighting ceased but stalemate ensued. Kingi retired with Rewi to the King Country, the Waikatos would neither acknowledge the Queen nor surrender their plunder, nor did the Ngati Ruanuis yield. Gore Browne and General Sir Duncan Cameron, the newly arrived commander, considered invading the Waikato, but had to realise that they lacked sufficient troops for the task and that the lives of all the South Auckland settlers would be imperilled. Thus matters stood when Sir George Grey returned to New Zealand in September 1861.

### 3. Peace Proposals and Preparations for War, 1861–63

Grey's instructions were to make peace if he could, but if not, to wage war resolutely and end once and for all the pretence of Maori independence. The Premier, William Fox, approved the substance of Grey's plans for creating district and village runangas (assemblies), in which the chiefs, aided by European Magistrates, would enjoy a form of local self-government. But benevolence was balanced by calculation. The runanga scheme also envisaged road construction, individualisation of native land titles, and European settlement in native districts. Grey was reverting to his old idea of racial amalgamation, which most Maoris were now disposed to reject and which the colonists viewed without enthusiasm except on their own terms.

Moreover, Grey had to prepare for the possibility of war. The belligerent attitude of some elements amongst the Maoris and the fears (and hopes) of the colonists made this imperative. But his defence measures made his professions of peace suspect. "He maminga pea," said Wiremu Tamihana – "Perhaps it's all humbug". The advance of the Great South Road through the Bombay Hills, the positioning of troops at Te Ia and Queen's redoubt, and Grey's announcement that he would extend the road into the King Country and put bullet-proof steamers on the Waikato alarmed even well-disposed Maoris.

Rewi Maniapoto thought there was no "perhaps" about it. Te Paea, Potatau II's sister, said Rewi was "porangi" (madly incensed) and was doing his best to incite rows in order to start a war. He nearly came to blows with Naera to stop the building of the Raglan road; he caused a fracas at Kohekohe when the Government began building a courthouse there (March); and he expelled Gorst from Te Awamutu (April). He also manoeuvred to make the unsettled Waitara question a *casus belli*. Tamihana implored Grey to be patient, "to give him years", and undertook to restrain Rewi. Whether or not he could have done so is doubtful. Grey was prepared neither to wait nor to surrender his function as keeper of the Queen's peace to Tamihana.

As soon as Auckland's defences were secure, Grey went to Taranaki and reoccupied Omata and Tataraimaka. Then he turned to Waitara, concluded that the purchase had been unjust, and, in order to remove a possible cause of war, proposed to return the land to its former owners. But Alfred Domett had replaced Fox as Premier, and while Ministers demurred, Rewi urged the Taranaki Maoris to violence. "Me patu te Pakeha" ("Kill the Europeans"), he wrote (15 April 1863), and dispatched a Ngati Maniapoto war party to forward that object. On 4 May Maoris of the Taranaki and Ngati Ruanui tribes, hoping to ambush the Governor himself, murdered eight officers and men at Oakura, a few miles out of New Plymouth. As the Kingite emissary Erueti said, "This is the work of all the Maoris for Waitara, and further trouble is at hand".

#### 4. The Maori Wars, 1863–72

Fighting recommenced in Taranaki on 4 June, when a sharp clash occurred at Katikara. But as British strategy hinged on the defence of Auckland, a strong garrison was left at New Plymouth and the main forces were concentrated in the north. All Maoris living in South Auckland were required to take oaths of allegiance and lay down arms, or else get out of the British zone. Cameron's troops crossed the Mangatawhiri, and on 17 July had their first brush with the Maoris at Koheroa. To justify this offensive, it was asserted that the Waikatos were on the point of attacking Auckland, but in fact the colonial Government was again, as in 1860, taking the initiative to extend its authority over Maoris hitherto outside the effective reach of the law.

Reinforcements brought the British strength up to 10 infantry regiments plus auxiliaries; the colonial militia was called out for local defence, and volunteer units of Forest Rangers were formed for more extended operations. Steps were also taken to recruit, chiefly from the Otago goldfields and Australia, some 3,000 military settlers, who were to occupy the conquered areas and guarantee future security. Land confiscation was already contemplated to punish the rebels and to defray part at least of the cost of the war. The General Assembly which met in Auckland in October endorsed this policy. F. A. Whitaker replaced Domett as Premier, and passed the harsh Suppression of Rebellion Act authorising martial law against suspects, the Settlements Act providing for confiscation, and the £3,000,000 Loan Act for war and other expenses.

Meanwhile, Colonel Carey's flying columns, aided by companies of Forest Rangers under Captain W. Jackson and Captain F. von Tempsky, cleared the Hunua Ranges of Maori guerillas, but not before the latter had made some enterprising attacks on the blockhouses along the Great South Road and on the villages of Pukekohe, Pokeno, Tuakau, and Mauku. Aided by two armoured gunboats, the *Pioneer* and the *Avon*, on the Waikato River, General Cameron at length turned the rebel defences at Meremere (31 October) and stormed the entrenched position at Rangiriri (21 November), capturing 183 prisoners, but losing 37 killed and 93 wounded. Ngaruawahia, the

King's capital, was abandoned without further fighting and the Waikatos retired to Maungatautari.

In January 1864 Cameron resumed his advance up the Waipa, bypassed Paterangi where the Maoris offered battle, took Rangiaowhia by surprise, and occupied Te Awamutu and Kihikihi. Then occurred the famous battle of Orakau (31 March–2 April). Rewi Maniapoto and 300 followers, surrounded by 2,000 troops, defied their foes for three days and would neither surrender nor accept a safe conduct for their women and children. Only about a hundred of them, including Rewi, escaped to Hangatiki.

Orakau virtually ended the Waikato campaign, but the war was spreading like fire in the fern. Troops had been sent to Tauranga in January to block the flow of food supplies and reinforcements to the rebels. Their presence provoked skirmishes and ambushes, culminating in a costly British assault on Pukehinahina, Gate pa, when 46 officers and men were killed and 122 wounded. This reverse was avenged at Te Ranga (21 June), where Rewi Tuia and over a hundred of his Ngaiterangi warriors were killed, and the tribe submitted. In the Taranaki, sporadic fighting had gone on without much profit to either side – crop-burning raids by British flying columns, a series of skirmishes at Kaitoke (March), and a pitched battle at Sentry Hill (30 April). Of more sinister significance, Te Ua inaugurated the cult of Hauhauism. His devotees ambushed a small party of the 65th Regiment at Te Ahuahu (6 April), killed and mutilated the victims, and carried Captain Lloyd's head round the country as a prophetic emblem to incite the war fever. A Hauhau expedition against Wanganui was defeated by loyal Maoris in an extraordinary pitched battle at Moutoa Island (14 May).

Efforts to make peace at this time failed because Grey and his Ministers, Whitaker, Fox, and Thomas Russell were at loggerheads over the custody of the prisoners, the amount of land to be confiscated, and the terms of submission. Cardwell, the Secretary of State, authorised the Governor and General to settle these questions without the concurrence of Cabinet, whereat Whitaker complained that responsible government had become a farce, and resigned (November 1864). He was succeeded by F. A. Weld who, rather than tolerate British dictation of native policy, accepted the token alternative of colonial self-reliance, i.e., the withdrawal of British troops. But self-reliance meant heavy taxation, which the General Assembly was not prepared to sanction. The £3,000,000 loan had failed and the General Government had no money to pay for colonial troops, even if the manpower had been available.

In these inauspicious circumstances, it was proposed to launch a campaign against the Ngati Manuans and their confederates in the Taranaki-Wanganui area. General Cameron objected to this move, which he said was “bringing war into [a] hitherto quiet settlement” merely to gratify the colonists' lust for land, and did his best to defeat their purpose by go-slow tactics which earned for him the title of “the lame seagull”. His well-equipped force of 3,000 regulars, outnumbering the enemy by 10 to one, advanced 50 miles in 80 days, then stopped, leaving the principal enemy position, Weraroa pa, uncaptured. Colonial forces and their native allies achieved minor successes at Hiruharama or Jerusalem (March), Pipiriki (3 April), and Kakaramea (13 May). Exasperated at Cameron's obstructiveness, Grey, with his Ministers' full approval, came to Weraroa himself, and after failing to negotiate its surrender, took it with a small colonial and native force while the regulars stood by idle (21 July) – an episode which the Imperial Commander-in-Chief indignantly declared had “no parallel in our Colonial or General History”.

Weld's “self-reliant” policy collapsed when the General Assembly quibbled about voting additional taxes (October 1865), and E. W. Stafford took office, promising to reduce taxation and relying on the Governor to retain enough British troops to defend the country. An impossible situation arose. Cardwell had ordered five regiments home, and was demanding payment for the other five if they were retained. Stafford would neither pay for them nor raise a sufficient colonial force to replace them, leaving Grey in a quandary. Peace proclamations were issued, but they did not stop the war. The Hauhaus murdered the Rev. C. S. Volkner in barbarous fashion at Opotiki (2 March 1865); the crew of the schooner *Kate* were massacred at Whakatane (July); the Hawke's Bay and East Cape

tribes rebelled; and the murder of Broughton and Kereti (September) showed that Weraroa had not pacified the West Coast. A mixed colonial and native force under Major W. Brassey fought a successful bush campaign in the Opotiki region against the Whakatohea and Urewera insurgents, and an Arawa contingent led by Major W. G. Mair campaigned in the Rangitaiki Swamp and captured Te Teko pa. At Hawke's Bay Major J. Fraser and Lieutenant R. Biggs campaigned against the Ngati Porou rebels in the Waiapu Valley and forced their submission (October 1865), whilst similar operations at Poverty Bay captured Waerenga-a-Hika pa near Gisborne, and drove the rebels back to Waikaremoana (January 1866). In the Taranaki-Wanganui sector, General Chute, who replaced Cameron in 1865, vindicated the prowess of British troops by a brisk campaign round Mount Egmont, covering 260 miles in 42 days and capturing seven pas and 20 villages (some of which belonged to friendly Maoris) and killing 50 rebels with little loss.

These successes, it was thought, might have enabled Grey to comply belatedly with Cardwell's demands for the return of the troops. Five regiments were in fact sent back between October 1865 and April 1866, but the remainder Grey thought were indispensable. Hauhauism had become a sort of Maori Fenianism, unpredictable and almost irrepressible. Ngati Ruanui and Tangahoe rebels were still active in the Patea area, despite Major T. McDonnell's bush raids on Pokaikai and Pungarehu (June, October 1866). On the opposite coast a Ngati Hineuru force tried to seize Napier but it was intercepted by an improvised colonial force led by Colonel G. Whitmore, which killed over 30 and captured 88 prisoners. The latter, including Te Kooti, were deported to the Chatham Islands. Rumour had it that the Urewera, Taupo, and Waikato tribes were planning a joint rising. Fighting broke out again at Opotiki and Tauranga, and the Waikatos attacked the loyal Arawas at Koutu pa near Rotorua (March 1867).

In these circumstances, Grey had good grounds for holding on to his troops, and he interposed every possible obstacle in the way of Chute when he attempted to disengage them and get them embarked. His insubordination eventually brought a peremptory instruction from Lord Carnarvon (December 1866) suspending him from his functions as Commander-in-Chief and authorising Chute to direct troop movements irrespective of the Governor's sanction. Shortly afterwards, Grey was curtly dismissed and was replaced by Governor Sir G. F. Bowen (February 1868). Most of the troops left New Zealand in 1867-68; one regiment (the 18th) remained till January 1870.

Still, peace did not ensue. Titokowaru, a Hauhau chief of Patea, fell foul of authority over some stolen horses, took up arms and defeated Colonel McDonnell's ill-disciplined forces at Te Ngutu-o-Manu (7 September 1868), when von Tempsky and 19 others were killed. Whitmore attacked Titokowaru unsuccessfully at Moturoa (7 November), but later drove him back into the forests of the upper Waitara, where he lapsed into sullen quietude.

Te Kooti proved a more formidable and skilful opponent. Embittered by allegedly wrongful imprisonment, he escaped with over 300 fellow captives from the Chathams, landed south of Poverty Bay, and raised rebellion anew. He won his first encounter with the colonial forces at Papatatu (20 July 1868), skilfully evaded Whitmore's efforts to capture him, and gained a large following in the Wairoa and Urewera districts. On 10 November he made a murderous attack on the outskirts of Gisborne and massacred some 70 inhabitants. Pursued by Major Ropata and defeated at Makaretu (November-December) and Ngatapa (January 1869), he retired into the Urewera whence he launched more of his savage raids on the Whakatane and Mohaka settlements. Colonel Whitmore directed an elaborate three-pronged attack which drove him out of his forest fastnesses, and McDonnell thrice defeated him in the Taupo district, but Te Kooti, though several times wounded, miraculously avoided capture. A final expedition searched for him in the Urewera in May 1872, but he had taken refuge in the King Country, and there matters were allowed to rest.

Sheer exhaustion brought the fighting to a standstill. Alarms and excitements recurred in the next 10 years or so, and in particular a quarrel with Te Whiti in the Waimate Plains in 1879 nearly precipitated further hostilities. The situation was at last eased in 1881, when King Tawhiao made formal peace.

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