

## **Belonging to New Zealand**

Keynote Presentation to the Creating Spaces, Teachers' Refresher Course Conference  
Tapu Te Ranga Marae  
Island Bay  
Wellington  
2 July 2007

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'Belonging to New Zealand' - What is it we belong to? Who does the belonging?

My purpose this morning is to explore these questions. I want to start by looking at the 'what' – what is New Zealand?

New Zealand is a liberal-democratic nation-state – a socio-political structure that was established in 1852. This makes us one of the oldest continuous democracies in the world. Such past stability is, of course, no guarantee that the future will be equally as stable. Indeed there have already been two occasions when New Zealand's viability as a nation was at risk, - the first in the 1860s with threats of secession by the 'Mainlanders' in response to Auckland's bankruptcy and general profligacy, and the second in the 1880s, as the worldwide Depression drove more people to leave the country than to immigrate here. Today I will argue that tino rangatiratanga (the political project for Maori self-determination) is a third, and potentially more serious, threat to New Zealand's viability as a nation.

This is the case because certain conditions are required for any nation to come into existence and to remain in existence. New Zealand is no exception. However tino rangatiratanga projects, such as the kaupapa Maori system in education, are threatening these conditions. I want to look at how this is happening in order to argue that the new conditions established by tino rangatiratanga politics are laying down a new set of socio-political conditions, and in the process, destabilising the conditions which underpin and enable the liberal-democratic nation-state. Potentially, this subversive process could see New Zealand's liberal democracy replaced by an undemocratic ethno-nationalism, - i.e. the racial structuring of a society.

New Zealand came into existence as a result of certain forces and conditions that structured the nation in certain ways. There is no reason why that structure should continue to exist if the conditions holding the structure together no longer exist. Like New Zealand, other nations came into existence

during the most active period of nation building from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. Some have survived, others have not – collapsing into various fragments, - often into fragments structured on racial or religious divisions. One can think of the former Yugoslavia and the former USSR to realise that there is nothing ‘natural’ about a nation. There is nothing to ensure that a nation – any nation – will, of itself, maintain its structure. Nations are made up of various parts, parts which must be held together in order for the nation to survive. W. B. Yeats’ potent lines, - ‘Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold’ from *The Second Coming* – provide a vivid metaphor of the interdependence of these parts and what happens when their integrity is lost.

### **What parts make a nation?**

So what are the necessary constituent parts of a liberal democratic nation-state? They are the geography, the nation, the state, and the citizen. The first and least complex is the geographical region itself. In New Zealand’s case, this was the area annexed by British Statute in May 1840. The second and most complex part is the ‘nation’. This is the concept and symbol of a unified society based on the democratic principle of universal human rights and the liberal principle of individuality. It is a new (eighteenth century) revolutionary concept of a society to which people can belong even if they don’t share the same history, race, and religion.

The system of binding together non-kin, non-racially linked people enables a society to exist based on what John Locke and others called a ‘social contract’, - in other words individuals agreeing that some of their number shall be permitted the authority to govern. The move from ‘status to contract’ (i.e. agreement) is recognised as the greatest of all socio-political changes in the history of the world because it shifted the principle of social organisation from one based on kinship and ethnic or racial criteria to one based upon a ‘contract’ between individuals.

The social contract is held together by the laws that give to individuals the authority to elect or reject those in power. It is modern democracy – as Abraham Lincoln said, - it is the rule ‘of the people, by the people, for the people’. The ordinary individual is now the bearer of legal and political rights and the ultimate source of sovereignty. That individuals, as citizens, can vote to remove those they themselves had placed in authority could never happen in traditional socio-political structures with elites whose authority depends upon ideologies of birth status or simple brute autocratic power, - societies such as Tonga or Turkmenistan today.

Of course, such a seismic shift of power from birth-privileged individuals to all people often started in revolutionary violence, - traditional elites weren't going to give up their total power without a fight – and the establishment of democracy took time and struggle to reach what is still a minority of the world's people. Indeed, in New Zealand, although we haven't known the revolutionary birth of democracy experienced by England, France, and the USA, democratic rights took the second half of the nineteenth century to reach all adult New Zealanders. While men with a certain income over the age of 30 (both Maori and non-Maori) could vote from 1852, women over the age of 21 from all groups had to wait until 1893.

The shift to democracy – the transfer of ultimate sovereignty to the people – took several centuries to reach all peoples in those nations which today are considered to be democratic. This is unsurprising given democracy's revolutionary nature. Oppressive traditional hierarchies needed to be deposed by the new socio-political structure to enable societies to exist that weren't based on the kin and race groups of the past. Understanding this is the key to understanding the nation. The nation is the idea and symbol of this revolutionary form of social organisation, one in which ordinary individuals, not birth-ascribed elites, are the source of authority, and one to which a person of any race and religion can belong. People could identify with a new type of society in a new way – no longer using kinship or racial grouping as the means of identity but using a modern, non-kin, non-race, non-religious form of identity based upon belonging to a new type of socio-political structure - the nation.

Education played a major role in creating nations. It is no surprise that the age of nation-building was the age of national education systems. The new socio-political structure needed systems to integrate people who were not connected in the old ways – by kinship and race, if the structure was to hold together. New Zealand's education system, established in 1877, was about integrating the various groups that formed the fledgling and vulnerable nation: Maori, a range of settlers (mainly of British origin but of different classes and ethnicities), - with the notable and shameful exception for a period of settlers of Chinese and Indian ethnicity. Given the critical role that education plays as one of the main integrative mechanisms of these non-kin, non-race and non-religious socio-political structures, what happens to the new structure when education no longer performs this role? Is a new form of education, such as kaupapa Maori with its tino rangatiratanga political purpose, based as it is on kin and race categories, able to perform this function? What happens to the constituent parts of the structure when the means of pulling them together no longer works? However, these questions take me ahead of myself. I first need to complete the description of those constituent parts – the state and citizenship.

### **The State**

The third component of the liberal-democratic nation-state is the 'state' itself. This is the organising infrastructure of the nation. It consists of parliamentary institutions, laws, and the systems, policies and practices of government – all systems that bind the parts together. People's willingness to accept the 'social contract' and to allow the state to have authority over them depends upon the degree of trust they have in the institutions of the state, whether the rule of law is just, whether parliament truly represents the people. If they feel included and represented then they are more likely to identify as members of the nation that the state organises and administers.

This realisation that, in the absence of the old kin and race connections new ways of trusting one another were needed, was behind education policies towards Maori. For example, the compulsory requirement in the 1877 Education Act was deliberately not applied to Maori – the idea being that voluntary attendance, not compulsion, was more likely to engender trust given that some Maori were opposed to European education. The desire to use education to integrate people into the new non-racial and non-tribal structure was also behind the promotion of Maori culture in education during the 1930s and again in the post-1970s' period.

Probably one of the contributing conditions to New Zealand's success in creating itself as a liberal-democratic nation-state was the early establishment of a national education system, and, despite its imperfections, the degree of trust that sufficient numbers of New Zealanders have had in the system over the 130 years. Given this, does the existence of an ethnicised education system – kaupapa Maori, - one that specifically rejects the very principles of the modern nation-state for a kinship, race based socio-political structure, threaten this trust, and if so, with what consequences?

### **Citizenship**

The fourth component of the liberal-democratic nation-state, is 'citizenship'. This is the legal and political status that links each individual to the other three parts, the geographical site, the nation, and the state, and cannot be separated from them. Each component is interdependent and contributes to the whole, - to the liberal-democratic nation-state. It is impossible to have one without the other. For example, citizenship exists because citizens are citizens of something, that is, they derive legal status from the laws enacted by parliament (the site of the nation's sovereign authority) and administered through state institutions. The political status of the citizen is derived from the status of New Zealand as a sovereign nation with authority over the citizens and its geographical area. Without the nation as the concept of a society's sovereignty and the state as the organiser and administrator of that authority, the idea of citizenship is meaningless.

Given the constitutive role of citizenship in maintaining the structure of the nation-state, what happens when a new type of 'citizen' is proposed, - one that is not linked to the other constitutive parts of the nation and the state, but to non-national structures. I refer here to the notion of a 'world citizen' proposed in the Durie Principles at the last three Hui Mataranga and to the reference made by Tahu Potiki and others to an 'iwi-citizen'. Both these terms pose a significant conceptual problem. In terms of our current socio-political structure, the liberal-democratic nation-state, both terms are, in fact, nonsensical.

They are meaningless for two reasons. Firstly, to be a citizen, that is the bearer of political and legal rights, one must firstly be an individual, not an undifferentiated group-member, ie. a person whose political status derives from the group not from the person's individual status. Liberal-democratic nation-states were revolutionary not only because they demolished traditional hierarchies based on birth status, but because individuals *took up that authority*. That is what the status of the individual citizen means – individualised political authority. This was only possible because of the liberal notion developed by the Enlightenment philosophers, such as Immanuel Kant, that individuals had rights, rights that accrued to the individual separately from his or her group membership. The location of the citizen's political status is in the individual. According to Michael Ignatieff (2002, p. 142) 'human rights are based on moral individualism: they are entitlements of the individual against superior powers such as the state, the church, or the family'. Those rights depend upon the concept of the individual as someone who could think for him or her-self. This person is Kant's 'turbulent individual' who can criticise authority because authority is not a natural birth entitlement but the result of enough individuals agreeing to their peers exercising that authority on their behalf. This concept of the individual as the source of authority is the reason we educate children as autonomous individuals who can think for themselves. It is also why critical thinking is included in the curriculum. Is it possible, therefore, for an education system that does not differentiate the political status of the individual from that person's tribal status, - that is the concept of 'iwi-citizen' - to develop the independence and critical disposition of the autonomous individual?

Secondly, the concepts of 'iwi citizen' and 'world citizen' are nonsensical because to be a citizen one must be a citizen of something. Citizenship is a status, - something must exist to award that status, a structure from which political rights are derived. At present we do not have a world state – a global structure that can organise and administer world-wide political relationships and activities. In addition, the concept of an 'iwi citizen' (if one were to come into existence), is negated by the notion

of a world citizen? How can a member of an undifferentiated foundational group, (that is, a racially constructed primordial group), connect to people to whom he or she is not related?

### **Putting the parts of the liberal-democratic nation-state together**

Given that the liberal-democratic nation-state is comprised of these four interdependent components: the geographical site, the nation, the state, and the citizen, how is it that the Yeats' prophecy of things falling apart as the 'centre doesn't hold' has not come true for New Zealand – or not yet at least? How does this nation remain an integrated stable whole? There are two reasons. Firstly each component still operates as it should; for example, citizens do indeed feel represented by our parliamentary institutions. We do trust our legal institutions and do identify with the nation despite the fact that various groups in society come from vastly different backgrounds. As iwi develop into increasingly autonomous political entities will this identification with and trust in the centre still hold true for those who identify as 'iwi-citizens' or Durie's 'world citizens'.

Secondly, but related to the first reason, each component is held together by the underpinning principles of liberalism and democracy that engender the required trust. These are the democratic principles of universalism, human rights, the rule of law, and the liberal principle of the free, autonomous individual. Universalism means that human rights apply to all individuals regardless of race/ethnicity and religion and that any individual can be a citizen of the democratic nation. This is not the case in nations such as Morocco and Saudi Arabia that are based on traditional principles of socio-political organisation. In Morocco one must be of Moroccan ethnicity to be a citizen. In Saudi Arabia one must be a kin member of the Saud tribe to qualify for membership. In New Zealand kaupapa Maori writers have rejected universalism and human rights as so-called 'Western' ideas and called for the replacement of 'Western' law by 'tikanga Maori' (Mikaere, 2004, p. 39). Yet without those principles, especially that of universalism, how can a society include non-kin people, people who are of different racial ancestries?

The principles which tie citizenship to the other three components of the liberal democratic nation-state must be sufficiently strong to ensure that the interdependence is maintained. That link is the concept of citizenship *as national identity*. This links citizenship to the nation, just as political and legal status connects the citizen to the state component. However, if enough people decide to identify in different ways, that is, to identify as members of an older ethnically-based society then the national

identity may be insufficient to hold their allegiance. New Zealand, despite its lengthy democratic life, is vulnerable to claims based on such ideologies of traditional forms of social belonging, such as kinship and race.

### **Ethno-nationalism**

Mason Durie's 'Framework for Considering Maori Educational Advancement' (MOE website) sets out the principles and goals for the future of Maori education at the annual Hui Matauranga. Two of these goals are 'to live as Maori', 'to participate as citizens of the world', and the omission of national citizenship are all potentially destructive of the nation-state. The concept of iwi-citizen which is behind the first goal, 'to live as Maori', is the real threat to New Zealand's existence as a liberal-democratic nation-state. (Actually the concept of a 'world citizen' only makes sense if a world state exists to which the 'world citizen' adheres.) However the strength of the ideology behind these concepts - of 'iwi-citizen', 'world citizen, and the omission of 'New Zealand citizen' operates as a type of fifth column, subverting the components which structure the liberal-democratic nation-state and establishing the beliefs and processes that lead to ethno-nationalism.

That a political project to establish ethno-nationalism is underway can be seen in a number of other ways. Firstly, in the insistence by iwi elites that the contemporary tribe is the revived tribe, and therefore the inheritor of traditional systems, economic resources and customs. This is open to debate. In my own research (Rata, 2000) I show that the contemporary tribe is in fact a neotribe, a contemporary private economic corporation, like any other except for its political ambitions and the ensuring access to economic resources that political success brings. Secondly, moves to have the tribes recognised as a political 'partner', even to constitutional level, have been vigorously pursued since the 1980s, first using a Treaty of Waitangi justification, and more recently, turning to a particular interpretation of English common law, to argue for political status. Both these arguments are debatable (Rata, 2006).

The point here is that serious efforts are underway by a neotribal elite to establish a constitutional status for the tribes that will undermine the sovereignty of the New Zealand liberal-democratic nation-state. We see it in Ani Mikaere reference to the establishment of a tribal system of law. 'I regard tikanga Maori as the first law of Aotearoa' (Mikaere, 2004, p. 38). 'The fundamental purpose of Maori law . . . is to maintain appropriate relationships of people to their environment, to their history and to each other' (p. 40). We see it in Whatarangi Winiata's desire for tribal sovereignty. 'Failure by our nation to take steps in this direction so as to change the management of our affairs and ways of

governing ourselves, will create the circumstances where the fury of *tinu rangatiratanga* will produce the true believers, namely, those who will die for the cause. Time is running out.’ (Winiata, 1998, cited in Tremewan, 2006, p. 96). And it is the driving force behind the Maori education system being developed through the Hui Maturanga, a system that will be to the ethno-nation what the national education system was to the establishment of liberal-democratic New Zealand.

Some might argue that, even if we are moving down the path to ethno-nationalism, it is not a problem. They may see ethno-nationalism as a valid way to deal with a multi-ethnic population, especially one where there are claims for a special political status based on indigeneity. However, there are in fact sound reasons why the liberal-democratic nation-state, with all its limitations, is the better political system, not least being that the alternative, ethno-nationalism, leads to social disintegration and violence.

It should be remembered that violence on the level of ethnic cleansing and genocide is never the result of mob violence. It is always planned and prepared for – ideologically as well as strategically, - as the most recent examples in the world demonstrate. Intellectual elites played a major role in inciting the violence and genocide in Rwanda, Bosnia, and Cambodia. Rwanda is a particularly interesting case because the 1994 genocide, where a 100,000 people were slaughtered in three months, shows the way by which ideas are developed, then moved into policy, - a process by which they become naturalised – i.e. people think this is the right way for society to be organised. The Mahutu Manifesto was first developed by 11 intellectuals in 1953. It took until 1994 to achieve the outcome these well-educated indigenous claimants wished for, - and it was a well-prepared outcome. The machetes (the killing instruments of choice for those promulgating the restoration of an ‘indigenous’ peasant society, whose pre-2002 national emblem was a hoe, a bow and arrow and a sickle) were imported in their tens of thousands especially for the task of ‘purification’ as outlined in the 1957 manifesto. Guns would not have had the same ‘purity’.

### **So why is ethno-nationalism a threat to New Zealand?**

Ethno-nationalism or the ‘iwi-nation’ will exclude all those not ‘of the blood’. ‘Iwi-citizenship’ is, by its very definition, restricted to those who share a particular genetic heritage. Ethno-nationalism is the antithesis of democratic nationalism because the former creates its political categories from the past while democratic nationalism has one political category – that of citizenship, a category that quite rightly looks more to the future than to the past in order to include individuals of all ethnicities, religions and lifestyles.

At present New Zealand is a society made up of people with different interests, histories, values, religious beliefs, racial/ethnic heritage and cultural identification. It coheres in a stable way to form a nation to which individuals are willing to identify and a form of authority that they are prepared to accept.

New Zealand's continued existence as a nation-state depends on the continued willingness of its people to identify as its citizens, their willingness to maintain the social contract, and to agree upon values, norms, and mutual understanding. The fundamental shift from the principles of liberal democracy sought by retribalists will, if successful, destroy the mechanism that integrates the four constituent parts of the nation-state as well as directly destroying the components themselves. It is a powerful and highly effective form of subversion – one that will not be apparent until it is too late.

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