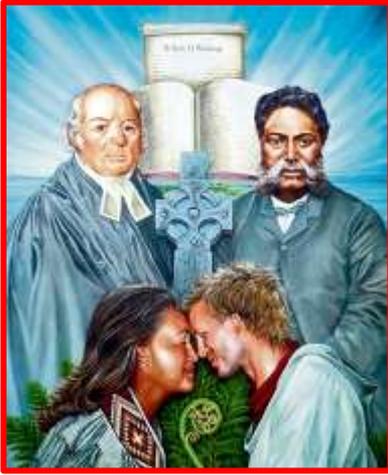


A SACRED COVENANT



¹ [Te Tiriti o Waitangi](#) has always been considered by [Māori](#) as a sacred covenant with the [Crown](#).

In 1840, just as the English were expected to abide by French jurisdiction in France, the same convention was expected here in [Aotearoa](#) by the [Rangatira](#). But Te Tiriti also offered the Crown something that would never have been granted willingly in France – the authority to continue governing its own citizens who lived in this country.

That offer was never accepted by the Crown, but it is absolutely consistent with the reality where the important question was not whether Māori understood sovereignty, but whether the Crown understood [mana](#) and the obligations that [manuhiri](#) were expected to honour.

In one of the first written submissions received by [Matike Mai](#) in 2011, [Erima Henare](#) referred to this reality in quite specific terms –

“From our perspective there is only Te Tiriti ... that is what was signed (at Waitangi) ... The other text ... is just the English version. It is not the same as Te Tiriti o Waitangi and has no mana. It ... meant nothing to our [tūpuna](#), nothing. They signed only what they understood, Te Tiriti i te reo Māori ... (and) because our tūpuna protected the foreigners who lived here at that time ... the Māori way of life and ... sovereignty were acknowledged as ... axiomatic to Te Tiriti ... Any other interpretation that would have us ceding our mana is a denial of historical reality. It is a manipulation of the past to make it fit what exists now ... Had ceding sovereignty been suggested at that time ... all hell would have broken loose.”

Matike Mai also received a copy of the submission that [Rima Edwards](#) had made to the [Waitangi Tribunal](#) in the [Paparahi o Te Raki](#) hearing. He began by noting that [He Whakaputanga](#) is a “[Kawenata tapū](#)” and

“a declaration of independent authority and an introduction to understanding Te Tiriti.”

He then stated that Te Tiriti is also a “kawenata tapū and that its terms are equally clear –

“I te tuatahi, horekau i tukua e ngā Rangatira o ngā Hapū to rātou mana ki a Kuini Wikitoria. Te tuarua, horekau i tukua e ngā Rangatira o ngā Hapū to rātou mana whakahaere o to Hapū whenua ki a Kuini Wikitoria. Te tuatoru i whakae ngā Rangatira o ngā Hapū kia whakatungia he hononga tapū waenganui i ngā mana o Aotearoa me Ingarangi.”

In the first instance, the Rangatira of the Hapū did not cede sovereignty to Queen Victoria. Secondly, the Rangatira of the Hapū did not cede their mana in relation to the land to Queen Victoria. Thirdly, the Rangatira of the Hapū did agree to create a sacred relationship between the sovereign nations – that is Aotearoa and England.”

Next week we will continue to explore the context of this sacred covenant.



Art: Paula Novak from a painting hanging in the foyer of Carey Bible College, 2011 (C)

¹ Fourteenth edited extract from pp. 52 – 53 of [He Whakaaro Here Whakaumu Mō Aotearoa – The Report of Matike Mai o Aotearoa](#)