

STRANGE WHAKAPAPA:
COLLIDING AND COLLUDING CLAIMS
TO ANCESTRY AND INDIGENEITY IN AOTEAROA

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ABSTRACT

Recent pronouncements by the author Barry Brailsford (Song of Waitaha, Song of the Stone, and so on) represent a non-standard but popular version of prehistory underpinning claims to ancestry and indigeneity in Aotearoa New Zealand. According to this vision of the past, the conventional dividing line between the generally recognized indigenous category of Maori and those who link their identity to subsequent arrivals is blurred by the assertion of a precursor Polynesian population whose identity can be traced to a spiritually linked collective humanity composed of archetypal personalities. Reading Brailsford and listening to him speak reveals a complex narrative of ancestry that mixes new age beliefs and selected scientific evidence. His work also draws on ideas that used to be more widely accepted and so demonstrates that the boundary between science and ideology is more permeable and changeable than commonly thought. While Brailsford's views are unique in some ways, they bear comparison to other alternative versions of prehistory in terms of the comfort they provide to white nativism in New Zealand.

INTRODUCTION

In the current official version of New Zealand biculturalism, two kinds of people are seen as woven into a relationship established in 1840 by the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. On one side are *tangata whenua* 'people of the land', who claim indigenous status as Maori; on the other side are *tangata tiriti* 'people of the Treaty', originally designated as Pakeha but now extended to include all those who cannot claim Maori ancestry. Increasingly, in recent years, the Treaty relationship has been officially designated a partnership. The resulting almost covenantal nature of this relationship has also arguably produced a fictive kinship tie between the two parties, a quasi-consanguineal bond that

mirrors the affinal one produced by historically high rates of intermarriage between Maori and non-Maori in New Zealand society. It is as though the legally recognized indigenous inhabitants of the land have a kind of elder status vis-à-vis everyone else.

Many Pakeha feel indigenous simply by virtue of having been born in the country (or, even better, by having several generations of ancestors who were so). Some, in deference to the Treaty, conceive of this as a kind of lesser or junior indigeneity while at the same time asserting their seniority over those who arrived more recently. Some actors in New Zealand and other settler societies, however, imagine ancestral ties in a radically different way. They do so by positing historical connections that are, to put it charitably, highly contestable and at odds with accepted scientific findings. Yet they resonate. Despite their 'fringe' quality, white nativisms appeal to significant portions of the New Zealand population (though exactly who and how many is difficult to gauge because of their subalternity).

These nativisms subscribe to several kinds of 'mythistorical' narrative, some of which overlap. These include narratives which maintain (a) that white people actually arrived in New Zealand before anyone else, setting in train a history that has been occluded; (b) that both Maori and subsequent white settlers were preceded by migratory or autochthonous groups whose claims to priority unsettle all others; (c) that, well before the conventional histories allow, Europeans arrived in New Zealand, interbred with the local population, and so created a hybrid indigenous population that complicates the standard model of biculturalism; and (d) that Maori and European are simply the arbitrarily successive waves of a collective cultural diffusion harking back to Asia, the Middle East or the Mediterranean. In the past, some of these narratives (for example, versions of the second and fourth variants just listed) have been regarded as hypotheses worthy of mainstream scholarly support. The boundary between orthodox and unorthodox thought is permeable: the latter often draws on the former to underpin its truth claims.

Lacking the space to address all such arguments, I hope, by exploring one kind of settler indigeneity claim in some detail, to draw out some broader conclusions that shed light on a range of similar ideologies in other white settler societies, some in the Pacific and some not. This view blurs the divisions between Maori and non-Maori by divining the presence in Aotearoa of a precursor population of earlier Polynesians whose origins go back even further to a spiritually linked human collective unity composed of fundamental archetypes. The ethnic cleavage of present-day New Zealand and its ensuing clash

over indigeneity is therefore trumped by older and more powerful influences. This argument clearly draws on some of the narratives just sketched (e.g., the second and third) though it also contains unique features. In the next section I outline a public presentation of the claim and in the following one I attempt to situate it in a wider context. We shall see, in particular, that the United Nations' argument that to be truly indigenous one has to have suffered from the effects of colonization can be adapted for purposes that were never intended.

AN EVENING WITH BARRY BRAILSFORD

Imagine yourself set down in the Exhibition Hall of the Hamilton Gardens Pavilion on the evening of Wednesday, 15 October 2008. You are there for what has been advertised as 'an evening with Barry Brailsford'. Brailsford, who lectured at the Christchurch College of Education for many years, is an established and prolific New Zealand author with a reputation for taking Pacific archaeology and giving it a New Age twist (Howe, 2008). His advertising promotions and website give equal pride of place to his MA(Hons) degree in history and his MBE (Member of the British Empire), an official honour bestowed on him in 1990 for services to Maori history and education (<http://www.barrybrailsford.com/>). Having launched his public career in archaeology with a fairly conventional work called *The Tattooed Land* (1981), a volume consisting mostly of a detailed survey of South Island historic sites, he is now better known for pushing his interpretations of the evidence in increasingly mystical directions. He has even taken to issuing new editions of his early books in order to recast his original arguments in ways more consonant with his recent views. *The Tattooed Land*, for example, first published by the mainstream house of Reed, was reissued in 1997 by StonePrint Press, a firm dedicated to this genre. Another book, *Greenstone Trails: The Maori and Pounamu*, first published in 1984, came out as a revised edition in 1996 from the same source. A new StonePrint edition of his book *Song of the Stone* (2008, first published in 1995) is to be launched at tonight's event.

The publicity poster that you saw pinned to a notice board at the University of Waikato earlier that day features a small photograph of the man himself with medium-length grey hair, full grey beard, glasses, dark open-necked shirt and a *hei tiki*-style pendant made of what appears to be bone. Next to that, the largest image on the page is a picture of a round carving in a Maori idiom [figure 1]. It has no caption or explanation of any other kind but carries a Maori motto in the bottom quadrant of the carving's rim, '*Takina nga moka o te pae ka korara a parirau*'. A Maori speaker of your acquaintance has translated this as, 'Go to the ends of the earth as the wings of a bird go in different directions.'

When you arrive at the Pavilion hall, you find a large room with rows of chairs arranged in a splayed out semi-circle facing a low platform to your right. Directly opposite the entrance, where you have paid \$15.00 for admission, is a table covered with piles of books. With about ten minutes to go before the advertised start time of 7.30 pm, you inspect the book display. Almost all of the works are by Brailsford himself or are co-authored with others. Occupying centre stage, at the reduced price of \$10.00 each, are copies of the four in-print novels in the 'Chronicles of the Stone' sequence ('fiction but based firmly on fact' the woman selling them assures you): *Song of the Circle* (1996a), *Song of the Eagle* (1998a), *Song of the Silence* (1998b), and *Song of the Sacred Wind* (1998c). Volume 2, *Song of the Whale* (1997a), is out of print because, or so you are informed by a woman later revealed to be Cushla Denton, Barry's partner, 'whales are very popular'.

You eschew these bargains in favor of the book of the moment, *Song of the Stone*, which is available at the special launch price of \$30.00. Though *In Search of the Southern Serpent* (Miller and Brailsford, 2006) and the magnificently illustrated *Song of the Old Tides* (Brailsford, 2004) looked of interest, they are both much more expensive. At the end of the table are copies of *Wisdom of the Four Winds*, a kit set containing '50 exquisitely illustrated Sacred Path Cards plus two spares' and a '[h]andsome 280 page, casebound, full colour book of readings and guidance to the cards'. These sets are more than \$50.00 each and exceed one's limited fieldwork budget.

Meanwhile, a steady trickle of fellow pilgrims enters the hall, about two dozen of them by this stage, three quarters of them women (a ratio that does not change as more people turn up). Most seem to be in their forties and fifties and all look white or Pakeha to me – with the possible exception of a young woman who looks Maori. By the end of the evening, there are more than forty people present.

You sit down towards the right rear of the semi-circle and start to flick through the book you have just bought. It opens with a brief preface by 'Te Pani Manawatu at Tuahiwi,... Chief of Tuahuriri Ngai Tahu'. The first paragraph gives a flavour:

You [BB] have been chosen to write the record of our ancestors and tell the story of Waitaha because of your skill and the awhi ['support'] you gave the people of Ngai Tahu during the Tribunal hearings. This is not the easiest of tasks because of the things that have been hidden away from the majority of the people. People will ridi-

cule all the things you say and do in the name of Waitaha (Brailsford, 2008:7).

You recall that Ngai Tahu (or Kai Tahu in its own dialect) is the largest South Island *iwi* ('tribe') and was the second such grouping to sign a Treaty of Waitangi settlement with the Crown in 1998. This settlement included, as compensation for illegal land deals in the nineteenth century, a payment of \$170 million, the return of some land, exclusive rights to the commercial development of *pounamu* (New Zealand jade or greenstone), and joint stewardship authority over a large part of the conservation estate. As with many such settlements, fierce controversies have arisen within claimant coalitions about who should get what. Some members of a constituent Ngai Tahu group called Waitaha have argued that they are a separate and sovereign 'nation', who deserve official recognition and, if not their own settlement, at least their own share and control over its distribution. Brailsford's involvement as an expert witness in the Waitaha claim was the occasion for Te Pani's remarks (Brailsford, 1988). He is undoubtedly one of the targets in Ngai Tahu chief negotiator Tipene O'Regan's searing critique of the political uses of New Zealand history (1992; see also Ballara, 2001), though O'Regan deliberately refrained from naming the targets of his wrath.

Reading on, you are struck by an interesting rhetorical move in the introduction to the new edition of *Song of the Stone* (2008:9). Most writings that posit different origins of the Maori than those conventionally accepted, including Brailsford's, emphasize a trajectory that begins elsewhere and leads to New Zealand. In so doing, they resemble the orthodox scientific view. But here Brailsford writes of a journey in the opposite and outward direction:

When I opened the ancient stone trail over the Southern Alps of Aotearoa New Zealand, I had no idea that trail ultimately spanned the planet. Why take the sacred stone of this land to North America? Why continue on in later days to reach out with it to Europe? And after those journeys why was I told to see that stone carriers gifted it to every nation and placed it in the most remote of lands (2008:9)?

The answer comes swiftly:

Waitaha was a nation, an ancient gathering of many peoples from Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas. That nation, founded in the ways of peace, was swept aside by invading warrior tribes several hundred years ago. Yet when it was destroyed, the sacred knowledge

it had cradled for fifteen hundred years did not die. The women who survived carried it into the new tribes (2008:10–11).

And, even as they were being overrun, ‘the old ones, the wisdom keepers, spoke of wondrous days that would come to pass in a distant time’ (2008:11) – the Waitaha Prophecy, Brailsford calls it, predicting an ‘age of hope’. It is an era that certain signs reveal has already begun at the turn of the twenty-first century (2008:11–15).

There is still no sign of the speaker. You assume he will emerge from behind a screen that blocks off a door to the rear of the podium so you keep flicking your eyes up from the page to catch his entrance. Still you miss it. Suddenly he is there, standing to the side of the podium and looking silently at the audience: a short sturdy figure in green cargo pants, a dark open-necked long-sleeved shirt with ‘Go 2 Run’ on the left-hand sleeve, and a patterned green and purple sleeveless jacket over the top. His hair seems whiter than in the photograph but otherwise he looks the same.

He stands for some time leaning forward on a walking stick but eventually breaks into a softly spoken Maori *mihī* (greeting) that begins with the classic ‘*Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa*’ and continues to the accompaniment of gestures from his stick. Then in English he thanks us for journeying here and says that we are going to visit old times. Briefly returning to Maori, he concludes with the divine sneeze ‘*Tihei Mauriora*’.

He mounts the platform and your attention is belatedly drawn to the visual aids that had been there all along. On the right hand side is a standard roll-up world map hanging from a metal stand. In the middle is a small folding blackboard on an easel with pictures and words drawn on it in coloured chalk – in effect a kind of diptych. To the left is another metal stand from which hangs a large laminated version of the carved image on the poster seen earlier. Brailsford pauses to tell us about this image, which features on the cover of his book *Song of the Old Tides* (2004). It transpires that the two-metre tall carving was sculpted by a multi-racial group of thirty 11 and 12 year old children at Chisnallwood Intermediate School, Christchurch (2004:314). He starts his exegesis with the two large heads at the top that he says represent grandparents (‘teachers’), moves to the side figures that represent parents (‘guardians’), and then to the central figure of the child. A woven pattern forms the background and a pair of flax sandals dangling at the bottom left symbolizes the journey of life. When you inspect the book a couple of days later in the University Library, you discover that the ‘official’ translation of the motto at the bottom is more

oblique and poetic than the literal one offered by my translator: 'Challenge the margins of time and explore what is beyond' (2004: page opposite the title).

The main body of the lecture begins, with Brailsford using his stick to point to the map from time to time. He lauds the great explorer, Captain Cook, who was the first outsider to recognize that the Polynesians spoke a common language. Language is a great 'tracking device' but conventional linguistic procedures can trace links back only about 6000 years before hitting a 'wall'. To go beyond that you need a newly discovered technique (he refers to a woman in California but not by name), which analyses commonalities of grammatical structure, rather than vocabularies. This allows the tracking to go back 50,000 years. He even talks of the mitochondrial DNA passed from mother to daughter that gives humans the capacity for language. As for dating, Brailsford says, that is where C14 comes in and he points to where the formula has been written on the blackboard. With a smile, he explains that every living thing is radioactive (this draws some slightly nervous laughter from the audience) because they all absorb radioactive isotopes of carbon throughout their lives. But at the moment of death, C14 starts to decay with a known half-life that allows the remains to be dated.

Polynesians explored the vastness of the Pacific with the aid of fast double *waka* (catamarans) that could sail into the wind. What they discovered were islands that, with their teeming fish and shellfish, were the most protein-rich places on the planet at that time. Not only were the fish abundant, they were generally larger than present-day specimens because they had never been culled. And there were many more species to choose from, a repertoire now sadly reduced to some 4500. The hitherto baffling word 'supermarket' chalked on the blackboard becomes clear. Pointing to it, he states, 'This [the Pacific] was a super, super, supermarket'. In addition to the local species, the voyagers brought with them other foodstuffs from Southeast Asia: sugarcane, taro, breadfruit, and coconuts. But the study of middens reveals that at the lowest, and hence earliest, levels little gardening was going on. It would have been too much work in comparison to hunting and gathering.

There came a time, however, when conservation was required. But because it took a while to get on the people's agenda, there were occasional food shortages. This led to migration. By the time the Polynesians reached New Zealand, their knowledge of bird life began to develop enormously. The men who specialized in bird hunting with long spears observed nesting practices carefully and at length in order to identify the 'target bird', usually an unattached male who would otherwise disrupt nesting couples (again, nervous laughter). In

effect, hunting increased the size of flocks. That's sustainability. (He doesn't mention the moa.)

The *waka* explored further, reaching California, Chile, and Easter Island. How did the Polynesians survive these voyages? First, because of their amazing boats, but also because of their faith in their own ability. They sailed without provisions – no dried food or water in gourds. 'You have to put yourself in a different space', Brailsford urges us. These people saw themselves as of the ocean, the children of Tangaroa. If things went wrong, their fate would be to sink into his arms. The ocean was their road, their playground, their home. To supply themselves with food, they had long plaited ropes of *harakeke* (flax), which had been seeded with mussels at home and now trailed behind the *waka*, creating remarkably little drag because of the way the mussels angled themselves against the current. Periodically, the mussels would be dragged up and smashed as bait for fishing or, if that was unsuccessful, eaten directly.

What did the voyagers drink? Here he would let us into a secret. Yes, they could collect rainwater off their sails but there was an even more reliable way to survive without stocking up with water beforehand. We all know the 'rule' that you can't drink seawater, as lots of people have died trying to do so. But, if there was no rain, these people simply caught fish, sliced them finely with shells, dipped the slices in the ocean, and ate them. The moist flesh of the fish was not salty and satisfied their needs.

Above all, they had no fear. There was always another island over the horizon.

The evidence that they had reached the coast of Chile came from an archaeological discovery the previous year. Seven metres down in a midden, chicken bones had been excavated. These had been sent for analysis to New Zealand, where they have some 'pretty amazing scientists' (again he mentions no names but you presume he is referring to Lisa Matisoo-Smith). The bones were clearly of the central Pacific species known from Tonga and Samoa that characteristically lay blue eggs. 'Yeah', whispers a woman sitting to your left. The find was even reported in the *New York Times*, evoking another 'yeah'.

Those who sailed were carefully chosen. It was not just a matter of being related to the navigator or the chief. The vessel was a survival capsule so there had to be principles of selection. 'They had a law for this', states Brailsford. There needed to be a balance of men and women. Some of the crew would be teenagers already betrothed to each other. Their first child always belonged to the tribe. After that the woman could decide if she wanted to maintain the relationship.¹

Underlying the issue of gender was an even more profound selection principle. Brailsford clears his throat. ‘This brings me to what the elders told me quite some time ago about my family. Not my children. My ancient family.’ He segues into a discussion of how spiders can always produce the same web design. It’s carried in their blood, in their DNA. The same with the songs of the *riroriro* (grey warbler). “Are we”, he quotes the leaders, “less than they?” We all have ancient families. They gifted things that are in our blood and we can bring them forth today. ‘We are all here today’, he goes on, ‘because of an extraordinary sequence of ancestors who survived long enough to breed (‘yeah’). You’re the result of survivors down through time’.

What are these ancient families that had to be identified in order to select the right crew members for the voyages of the *waka*? The first one was the family of stone ancestors. Some people understand that kinship deeply. Starting as children obsessed with gathering stones at the beach, they may have later collected crystals (‘yeah’) or become geologists or stone carvers. The stone people are an old, old family. You know you’re one of them if, when in need of ‘sustenance’, you go back to stones, when you take pleasure climbing in the mountains or walking along riverbeds. At these times, your family sustains you. (No prizes for guessing which primary ‘family’ Brailsford identifies with. The titles, themes and dedications of his work make it obvious.)

Other sorts of people essential to the community are the tree people. When they’ve had a hard day, they can’t wait to get out in the garden (‘yeah’). After an hour or two, they are utterly revived (‘yeah’). They’ve been with their ancient family.

Of course there are also the water people. When they’re tired, they have to go to the ocean or a river. Sometimes they go fishing but they’re not interested in whether they catch anything. Sometimes they go surfing. Sometimes they just perk up after a shower.

Other people are starwalkers (see 1994:97) – the navigators and explorers. Star people are restless souls (‘yeah’); they love to get over the next horizon or round the next bend of the river. They have ‘that nomadic streak’.

To find your family, think of where you get your excitement, where your passion is. But if it’s not clear, don’t worry. You may have several families. Strands of DNA intertwine. ‘You are the sum of all you have ever been. You are your ancestors.’

All of these types of people had to be on the survival capsule.

An hour has passed. Brailsford takes the folding blackboard down from the easel and replaces it with another. Directing his pointer alternately to this and the map, he begins a new phase of his talk and of the history of the world. Europe, he says, experienced a Little Ice Age about 1200 AD. For a long time, scientists thought this had also affected the Pacific, but ten years ago they found exactly the opposite had occurred. In fact, this region had experienced the 'Little Warm Age' (a phrase repeated on the blackboard). This was discovered through analysis of the ratio between two isotopes of oxygen, O16 and O18, in the growth rings of coral.

Warming might sound good but its effects were far from benign. Coral died off, leading to a chain reaction in which 80% of food resources were destroyed. El Niño no longer happened about five times a century but more like twenty-five times a century, leading to frequent droughts. Climatic extremes led to fiercer storms. As a consequence, people shifted their settlements inland and built fortifications in high places to defend themselves (he points to a picture of one such fort on the blackboard).

The Pacific Polynesians had experienced 2500 years of peace ('wow') but this new period of devastation led to conflict. War came to the Pacific. Some people sought a new way and became imbued with a warrior code. The new code represented a transition from Rongomatane (the god of peace) to Tumatauenga (the god of war). Great waves of these warlike people came to Aotearoa.² The new arrivals came with the assistance of maps gifted by the families already here. For, unlike the long-held scientific view that New Zealand had been settled through accident by only one or two *waka*, there had been much deliberate two-way voyaging.

We can't change the past but we can heal it, and we can heal it now. In Yugoslavia, people attempted to heal it by ethnic cleansing but that doesn't work. 'When I spoke of this in Upper Hutt,' Brailsford says, 'a Maori elder came to see me the next day. He told me, "Only the truth of the past will heal the past".'

Just to compound the problem, another group of people came to Aotearoa, whom Brailsford calls 'the regiments.' They were fleeing desperate times in their homelands and looking for ways to benefit their children.³ 'We need a journey into healing,' is his solitary direct comment on the arrival of Pakeha and colonialism.

Now he turns to the subject of Hawaiki, the Polynesian homeland. Or, rather, homelands, for there are many Hawaiki, each one further back than the preceding one. If we go back far enough, it would take us back to Africa ('wow'), 200,000 years ago, to a place just here on the coast (he doesn't specify where but points to the Horn of Africa). Our mother, Black Eve, can be traced back to here. The population grew: 6000, 10,000, who knows? They came forth with amazing brains, twice the size of a chimpanzee's. This allowed language and all sorts of other fascinating developments. They seemed to have been faced with a huge challenge about 65,000 years ago. Maybe it was drought. There is evidence that what is now the Sahara desert had many lakes and forests thousands of years ago. The people dispersed in many directions. They crossed into the Arabian Peninsula and pressed on to India, usually staying close to the coast. They came to a huge continent south of China, one that included the Philippines, Borneo and much of present-day Indonesia. They had arrived at the continent of Sunda, formed by the drop in sea level caused by the global Ice Age of between 80,000 and 19,000 years ago [BP].

It is time to replace the blackboard with yet another, only fifteen minutes after the first changeover. The new one shows the drop in sea level (120 metres) and some other words and pictures that Brailsford goes on to explain. With the formation of icecaps and icebridges, people migrated from Europe across the northern Pacific into North America. The Ice Age lasted until 19,000 years ago when there was a sudden and catastrophic great melt. The continent of Sundaland reverted to thousands of islands. In fact, as recorded in many traditions around the world, there were three great floods, among them a huge inundation of the land occupied by the people who had come out of Africa. Most of them died. But one group had developed wonderful seagoing skills. Starting in eastern Indonesia, they made their way to China.

Brailsford says that Cushla and he had been invited the previous year to a special village being excavated by Chinese archaeologists at a site just south of Shanghai. It revealed a civilization 7000 years old. Exact reconstructions showed large houses capable of sleeping 300 people. Their woodworking skills were extraordinary, including the use of mortise and tenon joints, and they constructed amazing boats. They were also the first rice planters. These people, whom he calls the Hemudu, also had an astounding ability to work with stone, especially jade, which they must have cut with diamonds, so accurately did they shape their artifacts.

The Hemudu were eventually driven out of China by the Han people and went to Taiwan. From there they ventured into the Pacific, their 1500 years of wan-

dering taking them on an incredible expansion into the ocean. The Polynesians can thus trace their origins 14,000 years ago to East Asia. And the scientific study of all this is not finished yet.

Now comes the peroration. No matter what our colour or our race, says Brailsford, we all come from here (pointing to East Africa on the map) and we are all descended from Black Eve. He repeats his refrain that it is time to heal the past.

He concludes with a brief *whakamutunga* and announces that anyone who feels like it can offer a *waiata*. Having issued the invitation, he then closes his eyes and leans on his stick planted in front of him. No one responds. A minute or two passes. Ah well, if we can't come up with one ourselves he knows one that many others might know and we are welcome to join in. As he starts to sing, Cushla walks down the central aisle and joins him. It is indeed a well-known song, one that often serves as a default *waiata* on public occasions:

*E hara i te mea
No inainei te aroha
No nga tupuna
Tuku iho, tuku iho.*

In the event, quite a few members of the audience do know it and join in, albeit quietly. As it ends, several call out 'kia ora' and there is some brief applause. Brailsford sits down at the side of the stage. A middle-aged woman asks if he will take questions and he answers no with a firm shake of the head. 'But I will take questions from individuals,' he says, and moves a small table in front of him, presumably to conduct his consultations over it. Cushla interjects to say that we are welcome to stay for the questions or to look at the book display or to just go.

NEW AGE GENEALOGIES OF THE PRESENT

By temperament, I am not receptive to New Age beliefs. On matters of Pacific prehistory, moreover, I have no reason to go beyond the provisional and contested conclusions of the consensus among professional archaeologists. But I can see how Brailsford's message might appeal to a substantial section of the New Zealand public. It appears to embrace ethnic diversity on the basis of a common underlying humanity. It espouses peace and rejects violence. It passes many of the crucial New Age litmus tests that encourage people to feel better about themselves or find explanations for their troubles. Tolerance? Check. Pacifism? Check. Conservation? Check. Hey, he's probably even anti-nuclear if

you discount his disarming little joke about C14. The calls for ‘healing’ sounded like optimistic psychobabble to me but they resonate with a widespread demand for complementary and alternative systems of medicine and curing in New Zealand at the present time.

There may have been an element of groupthink going on in terms of the audience composition and reaction but the people who turned up were not blindly rapturous in their response. Even the woman who repeatedly muttered ‘yeah’ and ‘wow’ did so quietly. There was no atmosphere of revivalism. Was Brailsford preaching to the converted? Possibly, but not to the extent that they treated him as an infallible guru. Overall, Brailsford and his supporters were friendly, courteous and life-affirming.

There was also the apparently impressive extent to which he recruited science to his narrative. The references to mitochondrial DNA, ‘Black Eve’, seafaring technology, blue egg-laying Polynesian chicken bones, C14, Sunda and sea level drops induced by climate change were all unexpected. All of these topics have been the subject of research by well-respected geologists, palaeontologists, geneticists and climatologists, much of which Brailsford clearly had read. By blending this science with empirical information gleaned apparently from tribal specialists in traditional lore, he was able to construct some very functional explanations of what might otherwise have seemed inexplicable.⁴

As I read some of Brailsford’s work, however, especially (but not solely) his recent revisionist maunderings, I sense a tension between the scientific matrix of the Hamilton talk and the much more mystical rhetoric of his writings. The talk, it seemed, was designed to persuade any doubters who might be present. If you take the next step of buying the books, you become committed.

And there’s the rub. Brailsford’s magic works by choreographing an intricate dance between scientific findings and supernatural mysteries. The latter are privy only to a select few wisdom seekers, though it is possible for all of us to gain insights if we are willing to open ourselves up to ways of knowing that are simultaneously very new and very ancient. If through introspection or intuition we can work out which ancient family or families we belong to, we have suddenly discovered a new mode of erasing some differences among peoples while creating new ones that are not hard-edged – not ‘bad’ differences that make a (political) difference but ‘good’ ones that create a super-family out of the complementary qualities needed for the survival capsule.

The main overt lesson of his talk was that we are all universally human in

quirkily different ways. Universalism with a dollop of relativism: it's hard for an anthropologist to skewer such a view since it is one that many of us would recognize as a tacit belief of the discipline. But there was a subtext that dissolved this warm and sharing inclusiveness into a much more specific claim. Brailsford implied not only that indigeneity must take second place to the role of nomadism, movement and displacement in humanity's mission but also that we can (re)discover ourselves to be indigenous anywhere.

This 'revealed indigeneity', if I can call it that, becomes much more blatant as you read his publishing writings, especially the more recent ones. In 1988, for example, when Brailsford gave evidence to the Waitangi Tribunal, he introduced himself thus: 'My home is Mawhera and my tribe is Ngati Pekeha'. Since there is no tribal grouping of that name in any list I have consulted, I'm convinced that 'Pekeha' is a typographical error and that the text was meant to show 'Pakeha', a reading strengthened by the presence of three other typos in the first two paragraphs (1988:98). To claim membership of the tribe of settlers in this way is a reasonably common strategy of Pakeha when they speak in Maori contexts, such as on marae. While not overtly claiming indigenous status, it allows those who set store by such things to feel that they are subtly inserting their identity into the Maori grammar of tribalism.

In 1988, then, Brailsford used an indigenous idiom to present his non-indigenous status. Twenty years later, in the new edition of *Song of the Stone* (2008:6) and almost as its opening statement, the claim had changed dramatically:

My name is Barry Brailsford
My mountain is Tuhua
My river is Mawhera
My marae is Te Aka Aka Poutini
My ancestor is Rakaihautu
And Waitaha is my iwi

Brailsford represents only one point on the Pakeha nativist continuum and an ambiguous point at that. Nevertheless, there are some recurrent features in that congeries of viewpoints. In the remainder of this essay, I want to briefly suggest the ways in which Brailsford both resembles and differs from others of that ilk.

My first generalization is that Pakeha nativism often entails surprisingly intense alliances with sections of the Maori population, some based on presumptive shared descent, some more nebulous. Occasionally, this is a reflection of political fractures within Maoridom (as, for example, with Waitaha trying to

assert its independence from Ngai Tahu). Sometimes it seems to stem from a sense of rivalry within families over disputed rights to knowledge, titles or seniority. Often it is impossible to disambiguate the various motivations at stake. Whatever it was that prompted Hohepa Te Rake's collaboration with Ettie Rout to produce one of my all-time favourite fables of Polynesian origin, *Maori Symbolism* (1926), there is no question that Rout traded on Hohepa's insider status as an 'Arawa noble'.

Brailsford's work often demonstrates this special relationship with indigenous elders and teachers. Indeed he assiduously cultivates testimonials from them, like the one that prefaces *Song of the Stone* (2008:7).⁵ That some of these people may not have actually been alive at the time is no impediment to communication. In the same book he recounts 'five journeys that opened old trails and spanned the planet'. The first, in late 1988, took him to the Rakaia River in the South Island where he 'was initiated into the [Waitaha] Nation in accordance with ancient ritual'. The second was to the American Southwest: 'I came to ask the ancestors of the First Nations if the old lore might now be shared. However, I did not meet any of their descendants on this journey' (2008:12).

My second generalization is that Pakeha nativism often blends apparently disparate religious and spiritual traditions into creative new prophetic belief systems. Brailsford's philosophy is a classic example of this at the New Age pantheistic end of the spectrum. On the other hand, Cruikshank's (1998) attempt to rewrite Maori and Polynesian origins through the prism of scriptural belief is fervently Christian. His interpretation of New Zealand, Pacific and world history comes from a long line of polemics that see the people of the Pacific region as, for example, remnants of the lost tribe of Israel or that trace all flood myths back to the story of Noah.

My third generalization is that, notwithstanding the faith-based dimension of many of these ideas, they are routinely bolstered by the selective use of orthodox science and scholarship. I have already shown Brailsford's predilection for this. Similarly, Martin Doutré's startling 'revelations' of a pre-Maori Celtic past in New Zealand (1999) depend on the exhaustive and exhausting accumulation of archaeological, astronomical and trigonometrical measurements and calculations. A famous proponent of Middle Eastern origins for Maori, Barry Fell (1975a, 1975b) was a world renowned palaeozoologist before his detour into speculative prehistory, and one of his most dogged supporters, Ruel Lochore (1977a, 1977b, 1977c) had a PhD in comparative linguistics and had even delivered the Hocken lecture at the University of Otago (1974).⁶

A fourth generalization concerning this kind of ideology pertains to the almost mandatory requirement of access to hidden or secret knowledge. Not just Brailsford but all the complementary and alternative archaeologists who have cast their eyes over the New Zealand scene seem particularly prone to this fetish, as indicated by the titles of their works: *The Secret Land* (Cook and Brown, 1999), *Secret Landscape* (Tasker, 2000), *New Zealand's Hidden Past* (Wiseman, 2001). The evidence that archaeologists depend on is of course often concealed from immediate view by its very nature. But claiming privileged access to such wisdom about the world assists white nativists in making the connection between scientific and religious arguments referred to above. On this reasoning, the world is full of puzzling and mysterious phenomena, as scientists frequently acknowledge, but there have to be more holistic ways of understanding them than through the technical monopoly science enjoys. A story on Radio New Zealand National's Maori news bulletin, Waatea News, on 5 November 2008, a few weeks after his Hamilton book launch, gave Brailsford an opportunity to claim he was shedding new light on Pacific oceangoing. He acknowledged that his views were controversial in Ngai Tahu and challenged by many of the tribe's scholars. His answer was that he had access to material 'previously kept secret'. He was using 'old lore' but placing it alongside 'the latest scientific material' and information gleaned from American Indian groups, such as the Haida and the Chumash. This deliberate linkage between science and revelation is the most striking characteristic of his approach.

I am less confident in proposing any political generalization but will succumb to temptation nonetheless. Brailsford's views are not explicitly political but if I had to classify them they would rate as a relatively benign expression of Pakeha nativism. Sir Tipene O'Regan, lead negotiator of the Ngai Tahu settlement process, might disagree. But I think the case could be argued on the grounds that Brailsford's stance is not intentionally a zero sum view, that is, one requiring the indigeneity of those who arrived here before the white settlers to be disproven and another put in its place. Instead it complicates and unsettles Ngai Tahu claims by siding with those who assert that the tribal histories that underpinned the claim to the Waitangi Tribunal were incorrect or incomplete. Contrast this view with the theories of those who use racist ideologies to deny Maori indigeneity in favour of a Celtic or some other European kind of past. The aforementioned Doutré may not be guilty of such tendencies⁷ but I cannot say the same about all those who share his historical agenda. For example, Kerry Bolton refers deliberately in his self-published book *Lords of the Soil* (2000) to a pre-Maori group of white *tangata whenua* ('people of the land'). Bolton knows exactly what he is doing in this and his more recent works (2003, 2004). He is a former secretary of the New Zealand National Front, an organization

devoted (like its cousins elsewhere) to Aryanism, white supremacist ideologies, and a cultish veneration of the memory of Adolf Hitler. The Celtic fantasies and the fascist ones are linked.

Ultimately, whatever their overt political loyalties, commentators at that end of the white nativist spectrum give strength to the strident undercurrent of Treaty denial in New Zealand. Brailsford's more complex interweaving of indigenous and settler histories attempts, by contrast, to co-opt the Treaty process. It's a kinder, gentler form of usurpation but one that still merits critical analysis in light of the politics of race relations in Aotearoa.

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NOTES

- 1 The material presented on survival techniques and crew selection at the Hamilton lecture mirrors that published in *Song of Waitaha* (1994:70–74).
- 2 Though Brailsford's public talk made only veiled references to the ensuing violence, the descriptive phrase in some of his publications is 'Long Night of the Patu' (2004:226; Miller and Brailsford 2006:200).
- 3 The word 'regiments' echoes his usage in *Song of the Old Tides* (2004:232).
- 4 I concede that archaeologists are not generally as charitable in their assessment (see Clark 2011) but the rationalist criticisms of New Age beliefs fail to address how those beliefs take hold, other than through willed self-delusion and irrationality.
- 5 See too another 'Dedication' by Te Pani in *Song of Waitaha* (1994:5) and his 'Patriarchal Blessing' (1994:301). The book concludes with a letter from Dame Whina Cooper that is not specifically addressed to Brailsford but seems to praise his work (1994:305). *Song of the Old Tides* opens with 'In the Light of the Ancestors' outlining Brailsford's relationship to Andy Pona (2004:4–5) and continues with a general greeting 'From the Elders of the House' (2004:8).
- 6 Elsewhere, I have presented some preliminary research into Fell and Lochore that sketches their ideas in more detail (Goldsmith 2008).

- 7 But it is worth noting that he has written another self-published work that joins a mounting chorus arguing that the officially accepted English version of the Treaty of Waitangi suppresses a truer one, the so-called 'Littlewood' version (Doutré 2005).

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