

ARE MAORI HAPU ‘HOUSES’? ARE WHAKAPAPA ‘STRATEGIC IMPROVISATIONS’?

THE ETHNOHISTORICAL EVIDENCE FROM NGAI TUHOE

Steven Webster

ABSTRACT

A recent exchange regarding the nature of Maori hapu has revived the old controversy whether or not ancestral descent groups can be organised on the basis of cognatic descent (through either or both parents in each generation). An innovative application of Levi-Strauss's concept of a house society, and Bourdieu's theory of practice, has challenged an answer to the old controversy, widely accepted since the 1970s, that hapu are entire descent categories narrowed to actively involved descent groups. The alternative view argues that Maori hapu were probably never based on such ambiguous grounds, but rather have developed since the 1880s as an ideology legitimating the solidarity of extended families (whanau), other kin, and non-kin closely associated with a meeting house and resourceful leadership able to extend hospitality. In defense of the earlier view that hapu are cognatic descent groups and categories, and probably have been at least since the 1840s, this essay reviews the recent exchange and examines the ethnohistorical evidence from one Maori iwi, Ngai Tuhoe.

INTRODUCTION

The issues raised in the title have been prompted recently by Jeffrey Sissons' essay 'Building a house society: the reorganisation of Maori communities around meeting houses' (Sissons, 2010). Sissons' article and our subsequent exchange (Sissons 2011; Webster 2011) continue in somewhat different terms a long-standing controversy regarding Maori hapu that goes back at least to the 1960s. In 1975, drawing upon leading commentators in Britain and the USA as well as colleagues in New Zealand, I reviewed and attempted to resolve this controversy. My response in 2011 to Sissons' article was primarily a defense of my own much earlier effort. His rebuttal gives me an opportunity to examine

his specific ethnohistorical example from the Tuhoe Maori (also see Sissons, 1991, 2002) in terms of this unsettled controversy, as well as to consider more fully his innovative application of Pierre Bourdieu's influential theory of social practice (1977, 1980) and Levi-Strauss's theory of house societies (1982, 1987).

Like Sissons (1991), my own research has been among the Tuhoe Maori and records of their past, although primarily concerned with another of the two main valleys of the Tuhoe's Urewera mountain domain located above the Bay of Plenty on the North Island of New Zealand (Webster, 2004, 2010, n.d.). Sissons would join me in the hope that this ethnohistorical example can clarify the halting anthropological understanding of Maori kinship in historical context, and prompt further research.

A RECAPITULATION OF THE CURRENT EXCHANGE

Since 1998 Sissons' publications on the Maori have broken new ground in understanding the social history of Maori meeting houses and related ideologies of traditionalism and tribalism. Similarly, his 2010 essay applies Bourdieu's critique of kinship theory to propose a new understanding of Maori hapu in historical context as a 'house society'. His critique of the established anthropological assumption that hapu are based on cognatic descent from particular ancestors is focused on the work of Joan Metge as well as myself, arguing that understanding based on this kinship type is fundamentally flawed in its ambiguous distinction between hapu as descent groups and hapu as wider descent categories (2010:374). Instead, Sissons argues that:

contemporary Maori hapu are best understood not as cognatic descent groups, but as 'houses' in the sense proposed by Levi-Strauss.... Multiple practices of group formation centred on marae bring together principles of descent, marriage, and residence as kin and non-kin become included and identified as tangata whenua – 'people of the land'/hosts. (2010:378)

Based upon his own studies of Tuhoe social organisation and comparisons elsewhere in the North Island, Sissons describes a series of local transformations of communities, hapu, and meeting houses that he suggests was general among Maori between 1880 and 1950. Drawing on the revived anthropological interest in 'house societies', he doubts that hapu were ever primarily based on cognatic descent, arguing that they arose as 'houses' based on papakainga (settlements), their chosen leaders, and meeting houses. Due first to continuing conflict with government and the rise of religious resistance movements after

1880, and later to increasing loss and fragmentation of their lands, these settlements became increasingly dispersed and centred upon leaders able to garner the resources needed to build meeting houses and host visitors on marae. In their earlier florescence these meeting houses were simply identified with the papakainga and various hapu of the settlement; only later did they come to be identified with a particular hapu and increasingly viewed as ‘traditional’ or ‘tribal’, as is generally the case now.

In Bourdieu’s terms, these settlements were founded more broadly on ‘strategic practices’ and ‘improvisations’ concerned with marriage, residence, domestic groups, and whanau, than on notions of ancestral descent. While hapu became increasingly important symbolically especially since the early 1900s, the associated notions of common ancestry and descent groups were largely ideological: the ‘inflated and idealised representations’ of ‘house’ organisations which since at least 1880 were, and continue to be, much more loosely based upon multiple strategic practices responding to particular circumstances.

My brief response to Sissons’ essay was largely a defense of my effort in 1975 to show that hapu were not defunct as was generally supposed by other commentators at that time, and to describe their jural, corporate, and ideological characteristics in a way that would resolve empirically the current theoretical debate between Fortes, Firth, Davenport, and Scheffler about whether hapu could be considered descent groups at all. (My defense was also against Scheffler’s reversal in 2001 of his earlier position). I recapitulated my 1975 article, arguing against Sissons that a crucial distinction between whanau based on marriage, and hapu based strictly on common descent from a particular ancestor, had been confounded in his critique of hapu as ambiguously both cognatic descent groups and categories. I also argued that the manifold role of ideology as a material force in the organisation of hapu had been neglected in his argument that descent played only a superficially legitimating role in hapu. To the contrary, I pointed out that whakapapa or genealogical debate on marae was a rigorous method used to distinguish assumed or false from true claims of descent, especially regarding the inherent ambiguities of whanau and hapu membership in a cognatic descent system (Webster, 1975: 140–143; 2011: 625, 626).

Sissons’ rebuttal of my response cogently pointed out that the main concern of his essay was not to challenge Metge’s and my positions, but to propose a contribution to the anthropological understanding of house societies and cognatic descent through the history of Maori meeting house construction. Correcting charges that I now see as reflecting my failure to recognise his oblique references to Bourdieu’s ‘logic of practice’, he emphasised that he did

not see practice as separable from ideology and was not dismissive of ancestral descent or whakapapa. Instead, he simply asserted that ‘in my view, the formation and reformation of hapu were not processes determined by cognatic descent but were instead determined by actors using their knowledge of ancestry in strategic ways....For me, practice is both material and conceptual’ (2011: 628, 629). Sissons’ rebuttal lucidly recapitulated his innovative thesis in more explicit terms of Bourdieu’s theory of practice.

Reviewing this whole exchange, I have come to the conclusion that the key issue is the social structural distinction between whanau as based on marriage and hapu as based on descent – a distinction I have often emphasised (1975: 124–5, 148; 1998: 4–5). Whereas I view the ‘ambiguity’ of cognatic descent groups and cognatic descent categories as inherent and even functional in Maori hapu, I believe Sissons sees this distinction as ‘fundamentally flawed’ *because* he has conflated the crucial distinction between whanau and hapu. Although I raised this issue in my response (2011: 624) he does not address it. In this essay, I hope to demonstrate the central role of Sissons’ oversight through examination of his ethnohistorical examples.

The confusion of whanau with the ‘bilateral’ inclusiveness of cognatic descent had also led to basic misunderstandings of hapu by the 1970s (Webster, 1975: 122–123; 129–30). However, the symbolic valuation of marriages that are seen to reunite (as iwi, ‘bones’ or ‘tribe’) estranged descent groups of the same descent category – if not its converse, the incest taboo and the relativity of exogamy – should remind us that whanau are *structurally* different from hapu. Likewise, the confusion of whanau with hapu (and both with iwi as ‘tribes’), whether entrenched historically by administrative dogma or rhetorically in the Maori ethic of aroha or inclusiveness, should no longer mislead us.

The misleading assumption that whanau are the ‘parts’ of a hapu appears to be explicit in Sissons’ 2010 article. Following Bourdieu’s critique of kinship studies, he points out that rather than considering the practices in meeting houses and on marae in order to understand Maori society, anthropologists have:

invariably looked to kinship and residence rules that are said to determine membership ambiguously in *hapu...and their component whanau...* (2010: 373, my emphasis added)

Similarly, he later states that:

Webster’s and Metge’s conceptualization of hapu as both descent

categories and descent groups become more problematic when we recognize that their active *hapu* 'cores' are actually *one or more whanau*... if the *whanau that constitute the hapu* are ambiguously defined, sometimes including spouses, sometimes not, then we have here a rather confused picture.... Webster noted an ambiguity at the heart of the *whanau* in 1975.... But he might have gone further and added that since his active *hapu* 'core' *comprised one or more whanau*, this contradiction was also at the heart of the *hapu* (2010: 376, my emphasis added).

This conceptualisation of *whanau* appears to ignore the basic implication of marriage that at least some members may be unable (or unwilling) to claim descent from the same ancestor as the *hapu* of which it may be seen as a 'part'. This implication applies similarly to adoption and other participants in domestic groups or extended families, probably as common in the past as nowadays. Even insofar as marriage and adoption was (and still often is) 'endogamous' within a *hapu*, the insider/outsider status is always a matter of degree or situation that can be determined by *whakapapa* when facts are contested (for instance, with regard to the reuniting of 'bones', or *tuakana* and *teina* /senior and junior lines of descent). Even when descent from a common ancestor is demonstrable for a *whanau* member, the traditional details that are integral with *whakapapa* can reveal relative weaknesses and strengths of participation in one regard or another, even among distant ancestors (for instance, visits or gifts symbolic of membership; *whakapapa taotahi* or *whakapapa whakamoe*, 1975: 140–143). Such details are central in determining the relative strength and weakness of *hapu* rights and responsibilities.

From the potentially rigorous point of view of membership in a given *hapu* (for instance, in the determination of rights to *hapu* lands), past as well as present *whanau* members have no automatic rights at all: through *whakapapa* debate they may be found to have relatively strong, weak, lapsed, or nil rights, but only by ancestral descent and participation, never by marriage, adoption, or association alone. Strictly speaking, members of ancestral *whanau* found to have nil rights by descent can never be *hapu* members, nor can any of their descendants except those born of marriage to a *hapu* member. In analytic terms, these elementary implications of *whanau* or *hapu* membership are the basis of the distinction between a 'cognatic descent group', a 'cognatic descent category', and 'other *hapu*'. Of course these distinctions are 'ambiguous', but they are nevertheless integral as well as inherent in Maori kinship, and thus in many aspects of the wider political economy as well as Maori culture. *Whakapapa*

debates can even be said to celebrate them ritually.

TUHOE HAPU AND WHANAU IN GOVERNMENT SCHEMES 1896 THROUGH 1926

The general theoretical issue of whether hapu contain or are composed of whanau (and for this reason hapu are more like ‘houses’) can be pursued in the ethnographic context of Sissons’ (2010, 2002) Tauranga valley example 1880–1950.

The Urewera domain of the Tuhoe is divided by two major rivers draining this low but rugged mountain range from south to north into the Bay of Plenty. The Tauranga River runs down the eastern half of the domain and joins the Whakatane River from the western half in the lower, wider, and more arable reaches north of the mountains. The Tauranga River is called the Waimana River by the time it meets the Whakatane River, which was traditionally called the Ohinemateroa River. Most of the Tuhoe’s arable land in this area was confiscated in the 1860s, on pretexts that the Crown now admits were unjustified (on this issue and for maps of this region, see Waitangi Tribunal, 2009).

Tuhoe land tenure was transformed twice by government commissions in which Tuhoe participated closely: the establishment of the Urewera District Native Reserve 1896–1907, and the Urewera Consolidation Scheme 1921–1926. Between these periods, a sustained government purchase campaign 1910–1921 bought, from individuals in undivided shares and often illegitimately, about 70% of the lands that had been reserved by statute for exclusive Tuhoe control since 1896. I have examined all three periods in some detail for the whole of the Tuhoe’s Urewera domain, but only the later half 1915–1926 has been published (Webster, n.d.; 2004). Similarly, in addition to a thorough history of the Tuhoe and the Waimana block just to the north of their Urewera domain (1991; 2002), Sissons has examined some effects of these transformations in the Tauranga river valley in the eastern Ureweras (2002: 97–102).

Below I shall briefly discuss (i) hapu as ‘clusters’ in the Ureweras; (ii) the descent structure of lists of owners drawn up for the Urewera District Native Reserve in 1899–1903; (iii) the representation of non-seller hapu in the planning and execution of the later Urewera Consolidation Scheme in 1921; and (iv) the structure of the final groups allocated small blocks scattered throughout the Urewera in 1921–26, representing their surviving shares of ownership from the old reserve.

Following Angela Ballara’s (1998) influential conception of hapu ‘clusters,’ Sis-

sons emphasises that prior to the 1920s, meeting houses in settlements in the Tauranga valley served more than one hapu (2010: 375, 379). He points out that Ballara's discovery of a rapid increase in the number of nationally recognised hapu 1878–1919 is consistent with his thesis that houses developed an ideology of exclusive hapu membership, although this change in the Tauranga valley was later than other areas of the region, such as Ruatoki (2010: 381). However, also recently following Ballara's important insights (Webster, 1997: 329–232; 1998: 11), my view is that Maori communities or papakainga have probably 'always' been clusters of hapu insofar as hapu have 'always' intermarried. In my 1975 article, I attempted to dispel the old dogmas that hapu were localised kin groups and had come to be 'intermixed' through intermarriage. Instead, I argued that they had been demographically overlapped with each other 'from the beginning', that is, inherently or structurally.

In the sway of the enduring dogma that hapu are discrete, localised groups, both the 1896 Urewera District Native Reserve statute and the chairman of the commission assumed that the Tuhoe's Urewera domain could be unambiguously surveyed into blocks belonging to one or another of their hapu. Although the Tuhoe chiefs (five of the seven members of the commission) readily listed 45 hapu at their first meeting in 1899, it is clear that they did not indulge the same illusion. Unsurprisingly, by the end of that year the chairman despaired of being able to match hapu neatly with blocks of land as had been assumed. The list of 45 hapu reported by the Tuhoe commissioners at their first meeting was divided up in terms of the 11 widespread Urewera communities considered large enough to host the sittings of the commission, probably because the chairman assumed hapu would be similarly localised. However, the list instead displayed how hapu straddled or overlapped these communities (n.d., 1: 14–16). It also displayed the commissioners' relative rights to speak for each hapu, probably reflecting Ballara's findings that some hapu were longer or better established and so tended to be dominant over the other hapu of a cluster. Similarly, difficulties encountered by the commission in their attempt to align the land rights of any one of the hapu exclusively with any one of the 34 blocks finally surveyed (n.d., 2: 3–11) revealed the clustering or overlapping of hapu land rights even where smaller settlements or foraging rights were more transient than in the 11 main communities.

Sissons recognised some of the commission's difficulties in his earlier essay (2002: 102–103). Although in this context he perceptively distinguishes between primary and other hapu allegiances of a member, he instead concludes that the associated rights to resources of the land were in practice utilised by whanau in

their ordinary daily activity. However, this practical activity was probably sanctioned by the hapu rights of only some whanau members, that is, as members of the hapu that had maintained the rights. Similarly in Maori communities, insofar as the domestic groups in which Maori ordinarily live are often their 'extended' families, and hapu are less obvious because they operate in clusters and straddle communities, one might readily overlook the importance of hapu and draw the misleading conclusion that they are merely the rationalisation of a house society actually composed of whanau.

To the contrary, I argue that land rights, and the authority to decide and sanction them, rested with hapu. This is strikingly displayed in the block lists of owners drawn up for the Urewera Reserve. Hapu kaawai or branch organisation, not whanau, were carefully recorded in the lists of owners arranged for each Urewera block by the five Tuhoe leaders who acted as the majority of commissioners. In this regard, they were routinely deferred to by the non-Tuhoe minority (Webster, 2010: 30–31). I have furthermore argued, contrary to Judith Binney's as well as Sissons' interpretations, that the Tuhoe commissioners generally dominated the commission, and were largely accepted as representative of their interests by Tuhoe at large (Binney, 2002: 213–62; Sissons, 2002: 101–106; Webster, 2004: 27–31; n.d., 1: 12–28).

Significantly, it appears that Sissons misinterpreted these important block lists as recording whanau rather than hapu (2002: 115). The same mistake was made in the original legal provision for each block: as may be seen in the Tauwhare Manuka block list, the introduction refers to the lists as 'family groups' (Webster, 2010: 11–12). However, the groupings are of siblings, not whanau (let alone 'families'), usually with successive generations of the children of siblings; parents or marriages are not included in the same groupings, and not even readily identifiable (Webster, 2010: 18–31). The 'surnames' are usually their father's *first* name (significantly, this format and its patrilineal bias was required by the chairman). That is to say, the groupings are based entirely on descent, as distinct from marriages and whanau. As I show at some length, the lists are composed of hapu branches laid out by the Tuhoe commissioners, over as many as four living generations, with rigorous adherence to principles of cognatic descent as reflected in hapu land rights usually extending in differing shares over several different blocks. Most strikingly, the ownership lists display the complications of tuakana and teina (relatively senior and junior lines) and seniority among wives (polygynous or successive) and their offspring. The ethnographer Elsdon Best (the secretary of the commission) apparently did not himself fully understand these implications of hapu structure.

Sissons certainly understands these implications, but was apparently led to overlook them because he viewed the block lists as lists of whanau. He provides an innovative ranking of all the main 'whanau' for each block in the Tauranga valley by arranging them in graded terms of the shares of ownership they were collectively awarded (2002: 115–117). Even though he recognises the significant fact that leaders with rights in various blocks held very different shares in them that presumably reflected the relative strength or weakness of their rights in that block, his assumption that these rights were held in virtue of whanau rather than hapu membership probably misleads his interpretation of their significance (2002: 116, 118). My own interpretation of this situation is consistent with the fact that Tuhoe communities were composed of overlapping hapu in 'clusters' with differing degrees of dominance and often straddling communities: hapu ownership of land blocks (or, more precisely, their relative control over the resources of specific lands) were similarly overlapped, usually throughout many blocks of the Urewera domain where hapu ancestors had maintained rights, and similarly differed in terms of the relative strength or weakness of these rights in each block.

One implication of Sissons' oversight is that his rank order of 'whanau' in the valley reflects the relative *size* of sibling groups more than it does the relative strength or weakness of hapu rights in the different blocks. I have worked out the implications of shareholding in the latter regard to determine the priority of hapu affiliations of Tamaikoha's large hapu branch in a sequel essay to my 2010 article (Webster, n.d.[a]). Sissons also concludes that the wide extension of token shares to Tuhoe leaders in several blocks happened 'irrespective of hapu membership in many cases', instead reflecting their attempt to retain collective control against the adverse intentions of the government (2002: 118).

Indeed, I found that Tamaikoha's shares extended to 15 of 33 blocks, although often in token proportions, and his daughter's prestigious husband Tupaea Rapaera's shares extended to 24 blocks. However, contrary to Sissons and in accord with my understanding that membership in a wider cognatic descent *category* is reflected in weaker hapu rights, I found that the range of strong to weak block rights of the Tamaikoha hapu branch in different blocks was relative to other hapu rights in the same block, and these differences reflected the relative strength of their ancestors' claims in that block. Token shares were sometimes extended regardless of very weak hapu rights, and probably even prompted by aroha, much as turangawaewae rights to speak on a marae might nowadays be extended to a manuhiri regardless of a challengeable whakapapa claim.

Perhaps because Sissons dismisses cognatic descent categories as largely ideological, he appears to assume that claims to hapu membership must be based on residence as well as descent (2002:103), perhaps even restricted to the literal ‘residence’ that a whanau can exercise. However, the Urewera block lists ignore whanau, displaying a far subtler array of prerogatives extending beyond locality, derived through ancestral exercise of use rights as well as the intricacies of cognatic descent.

An assumption that whanau rather than hapu were central to the 1921 Urewera Consolidation Scheme continues in Sissons’ analysis of the effects of the government purchase campaign and the scheme on Tuhoe landholding and development of dairy farms (2002:120–134). This part of his study is nevertheless important and clearly lays the groundwork for his current thesis that successful farming supported the efforts of local leaders of a Maori ‘house’ society to build meeting houses and extend hospitality. He also traces the ideological identification of meeting houses with single hapu to this era (2010:381–382). However, my data suggests that hapu remained dominant over whanau in 1921, and in manifold practical, not merely ideological, ways.

The scheme was organised for the government by Apirana Ngata in a spectacular month-long gathering in August 1921 at Tauarau marae in Ruatoki in order to ‘consolidate’ the stubborn non-sellers’ remaining land interests (Webster, 2004: 214–247). Perhaps misled by his assumption that Tuhoe ‘houses’ were actually based on whanau, Sissons is skeptical of the official claim that ‘every “family” of the non-sellers was represented’ at this meeting (2002:121). Although I am even more critical than Sissons with regard to the sincerity and fairness of the government’s (and Apirana Ngata’s) role in the gathering, I found considerable evidence that a large proportion of the 39 official representatives maintained some continuity of ancestrally significant land rights despite the persistence of the government’s purchase campaign. Such sustained resistance probably underwrote the mana of many of the representatives. Of the 31 hapu listed by the Tuhoe commissioners in 1899 and recognised to have rights to the blocks in 1902, 21 of these hapu appear among the probable hapu affiliations of the representatives (Webster, 2004: 244). Thus the mana of many of the leaders probably lay in their representation of one or more hapu, but furthermore in hapu lands that their leadership had helped to defend from the Crown’s depredations. Moreover, many of these representatives remained official leaders among the shifting groups of non-sellers over the several years that were required to put the scheme in place, probably indicating continued acceptance of their mana (Webster, 2004: 246).

This evidence of hapu solidarity is supported in the structure of the consolidation groups formed in the August planning sessions. Ngata's intention in devising these schemes was to consolidate traditionally scattered ancestral rights into economic 'family farms'. Accordingly, the officials had made it clear that they wanted the non-seller groups to be relatively small whanau or domestic groups. Regardless of this persistent policy, the groups that were finally formed in the August meetings and reported to Parliament later in 1921 were based much more on descent than marriages (Webster, 2004: 282–290). The predominant form was several sibling groups with one parent (that is, small descent groups) often related as cousins and with a grandparent included (that is, hapu branches or aspiring hapu). Although these sibling groups often included some spouses (suggesting alliances between small descent groups), spouses were usually listed with other groups among their own siblings—even though they would of course be living together with their spouse and children as whanau. I interpret the predominance of this descent pattern, in many relatively large consolidation groups, as Tuhoe defiance against the government policy of smaller groups based on marriage and whanau.

However, as he had with regard to the Urewera District Native Reserve block lists, Sissons appears to be misled to assume that the groups formed in the consolidation scheme were also whanau. At least initially in the gathering, 'whanau groupings were... publicly created, using the [Urewera District Native Reserve] list recitals as a starting point' (2002:122). Although he does not explicitly imply that the reported 'shuffling and reshuffling...determined by the proposals for location' also resulted in whanau groups, he does not consider that they were instead largely based on descent groups. Although he is careful to construct an insightful tabulation of the Tauranga valley groups and their new blocks from the 1922 legal memorials of title, even correlating the old blocks (abolished by the 1921 Act) in which the new group formerly held shares, he does not comment on the new groups in terms of either whanau or hapu structure.

In any case, Himaima Tumoana discovered important evidence that the 're-shuffling' of consolidation groups throughout the scheme actually continued long after 1922, apparently as late as 1925 (Rotorua Maori Land Court archives item 1D, 'Group Book' 167; Webster, 2004: 716). This record of later transfers of consolidation shares happens to suggest a connection to Tanatana and possibly to nearby Piripari maraes in the middle Tauranga basin, Sisson's central ethnographic example (2010: 375–382).

Several persons whose shares were initially to be allocated at Tawhana in the

upper Tauranga valley (group 14K, noted in Sissons' tabulation, 2002:127) and in Ruatahuna block are recorded to have later transferred them down river to Tanatana and, in one case, to nearby Piripari. Judging by the relative number of shares that they had retained unsold, the most important members of this group were probably Tatu Horopapera and his son Horopapera (or Te Horo) Tatu; the latter was probably about 25 years old in 1921. Between them, father and son held the major shares earlier intended to be located at Tawhana. However, according to 'Group Book' 167, while the son Te Horo Tatu later transferred all his shares from both Tawhana and Ruatahuna to Tanatana in the middle Tauranga basin (and Maungapohatu in the uppermost valley), his father apparently kept his in Tawhana as originally planned. Also in group 14K, transferring her considerable shares from Tawhana to Tanatana was Hokina te Manukura, apparently from an important family and holding major shares from other old blocks in the Urewera (for instance, Karioi) that may also have been transferred to Tanatana. This relocation of important land (and hapu) rights may have been significant in the history of Piripari marae recounted by Sissons, and examined below.

THE FOUNDING OF PIRIPARI MARAE: HAPU OR WHANAU?

Sissons' focus on whanau as a key practical aspect of Maori 'houses' is most fully described with regard to Piripari marae on the middle reaches of the Tauranga river, where he was hosted during his field research in the late 1970s (Sissons, 1991). I will first summarise his account of this marae, which is interspersed with a more general account of the history of several different meeting houses in the valley. He proposes this development as a model for the wider emergence of meeting houses elsewhere in New Zealand as centres of a Maori 'house' society.

In support of his thesis regarding the central role of whanau in hapu, Sissons emphasises that the Piripari marae symbolises married couples in several different ways. In terms of Levi-Strauss's (1987:155) analysis of house societies, this 'solidifies a marriage relation under the guise of descent' (Sissons, 2010: 377). The meeting house and adjacent dining hall represent, and are named after, an ancestral husband and wife who lived some sixteen generations earlier, Tamakaimoana and Taatua, respectively (pp.375–376). Piripari marae was founded between the 1930s (p.382) and 1950s (p.376) by elders who, when simmering tensions finally boiled over, broke away from the Tanatana marae only a kilometer up the road (south) and founded in the 1880s by the prominent leader Rakuraku (pp.382, 380). Like Piripari, the hapu of Tanatana marae also traced their descent from the ancestor Tamakaimoana, but through offspring of his

third wife. To retain their connection with the Tanatana people yet emphasise their formal precedence by seniority among wives, the people of Piripari marae named their hapu as well as their dining hall after Taatua, Tamakaimoana's second wife (p.376). The central symbolism of husband and wife (that is, of whanau) is repeated in further ways. The Piripari marae was built in honour of Te Whiu, while the central pillar that one sees upon entering the meeting house (supporting its roof-beam) represents Tamaikoha, two illustrious war-leaders in the conflicts with government 1868–1872 (p.378). Sissons reports that Te Whiu and Tamaikoha were ancestors of two different whanau of the Ngai Taatua hapu when the marae was established and, furthermore, a marriage between a descendant of Te Whiu and a descendant of Tamaikoha, the latter a leader in the founding of the marae, represented the union of these two whanau (p.378). (Presumably, this is an example of how a marriage relation is solidified 'under the guise of descent'.) Sissons also points out that his hosts often took lead roles as husband and wife when welcoming manuhiri onto their marae, the wife ritually calling them into the clearing, and her husband leading in the welcoming speeches.

Below I propose an alternative interpretation of the establishment of Piripari, which – to reverse Sissons' acknowledgement of Levi-Strauss's insight – 'solidifies hapu under the guise of marriage'. Although it is partly hypothetical and could be dismissed on the basis of facts by the tangata whenua (or Sissons), it or its correction can nevertheless illustrate the radical difference between viewing hapu as houses based on marriage and viewing them as descent groups and categories.

Although Sissons' 2010 account of Ngai Tatua hapu emphasises its establishment at Piripari 1930–50s, his earlier study of the area shows it had a deeper history, and that its later establishment at Piripari might be more clearly seen as a resurrection. In his earlier work, Sissons reported that Tamaikoha was said to be war leader of three hapu during the 1868–72 conflicts between Tuhoe and the government: Ngai Tama (along with his colleague Te Whiu), Te Whakatane, and Ngai Tatua (Sissons, 1991; Webster, n.d.[a]:13). However, Tamaikoha's affiliation with Ngai Tatua appears to have weakened following the war, and he probably maintained it in the name of Te Whakatane hapu, which was earlier known as Ngai Tatua hapu (Webster, n.d.[a]:16–17). In 1899 Tutakangahau, a Urewera District Native Reserve commissioner as well as leader of Tamakaimoana hapu, claimed that four hapu including Ngai Tatua had become part of Tamakaimoana hapu since losing all their best lands to the government confiscations. Elsdon Best also confirmed that Ngai Tatua was a 'division' of Tamakaimoana hapu, part of which (those tracing descent from his first wife)

lived at Maungapohatu, further inland above Tawhana (1973, Vol. I: 214). Apparently in poverty and demise following the confiscations, Ngai Tatua accepted subordination in other hapu of the Tauranga valley, the well-established Tamakaimoana hapu as well as Te Whakatane hapu.

These shifting allegiances of a 'cluster' of hapu in the Tauranga valley (or, to put this in other terms, the overlapping of their cognatic descent categories) can be glimpsed in the specific terms of hapu branches recorded in the 1903 Tauwhare Manuka block list discussed earlier (Webster, 2010: 11–12). This land was located in the middle reaches of the river just below (north of) Tawhana and about 25 kilometers above Tanatana and Piripari maraes. The block was found by the Urewera District Native Reserve commission to belong to Te Whakatane hapu, but the apparent inclusion of some leading branches of other hapu probably shows that Tamakaimoana and Ngai Tatua hapu had important overlapping land rights in this block but claimed them under the mana of Te Whakatane hapu (that is, under Tamaikoha's mana).

Significantly, three of the key leaders central to Sissons' account of Piripari and Tanatana maraes appear more or less prominently on the Tauwhare Manuka (TM) block list. In addition to virtually all of Tamaikoha's very large hapu branch (at least TM 92–153) and at least some of Te Whiu's hapu branch (TM 162, 164–7, 172–3), probably most of Rakuraku's hapu branch is listed (at least TM 184–202). Te Whiu himself is not listed, probably because all his children's rights came through his wife Rautipu te Haunui, who is listed; Rakuraku himself is also not listed, but probably because he had recently died. It is likely his rights in this block reflected his leadership of Tamakaimoana hapu. Sissons reports Rakuraku's leadership role in Tanatana marae, but does not explicitly name the Tanatana hapu from which Ngai Tatua broke away to establish Piripari (2010: 380, 382). However, insofar as both Ngai Tatua and Tamakaimoana hapu traced their ancestry from Tamakaimoana (through his third and second wives, respectively), it was likely to have been Tamakaimoana hapu. Thus both the 'parent' hapu at Tanatana (Tamakaimoana, represented by Rakuraku) and its adopted 'offspring', later to regain independence at Piripari (Ngai Tatua, represented by Te Whiu and Tamaikoha), appear to have had important land rights in Tauwhare Manuka block in 1903, although there they were subordinated to Te Whakatane hapu.

Also appearing prominently in the Tauwhare Manuka block list are Tatu Horopapera and his son Horopapera (Te Horo) Tatu and daughter Te Urunga, the children aged about seven and one years in 1903. As recounted above with regard to changing allocations of consolidation groups, soon after 1922 the

son's large portion of non-seller shares was transferred from Tawhana to Tanatana and Maungapohatu, while the father's similarly large portion remained in Tawhana. This sort of straddling of locations was a common descent group strategy evident in the structure of the earliest consolidation groupings, probably to maintain rights in different ancestral lands but also in anticipation of the government's promised roads (which were never built; Webster, 2004: 619). If Tamakaimoana was the dominant hapu at Maungapohatu (through Tamakaimoana's first wife) and Tanatana (through his second and third wives), it appears likely it was also prominent at Tawhana, and that the Horopapera descent group's rights in these locations derived from their primary affiliation with Tamakaimoana hapu, at least at this time.

However, it is also clear that at this time the Horopapera descent group was furthermore affiliated with Te Whakatane hapu, as reflected in their shares in the Tauwhare Manuka block. Significantly, 'Te Horo' and his sister appear to be of much higher status in the Tauwhare Manuka block list than their father Tatu Horopapera, insofar as they are listed TM 38 and 39 while he is listed at TM 180 among 339 owners (to see how status differences are reflected in the block lists, see my analysis of Tamaikoha's hapu branch Webster, 2010: 18–38). Their higher status in this hapu was apparently derived from their mother, Puru te Kauru (TM 36), who was the wife of Tatu Horopapera (Best, 1898: 25). Her status and that of her children in Te Whakataane hapu, at least in the Tauwhare Manuka block, was apparently even higher than that of Tamaikoha's, Te Whiu's, and Rakuraku's hapu branches—the three leaders in Sissons' account of Piripari and Tanatana marae

The relative role of marriages, whanau, and hapu in the establishment of Piripari marae can now be viewed in this wider historical context of hapu relations in the Tauranga basin. The transfer of significant consolidation shares by the Horopapera family and several others from Tawhana to Tanatana (and, in one case, to Piripari) between 1922 and 1925 was soon followed by the 'simmering tensions' at Tanatana that Sissons reports resulted in the establishment of nearby Piripari marae by a breakaway group about 1930. Insofar as Ngai Tatua had been an independent hapu in the 1870s and regained its independence from Tamakaimoana hapu at this time, one may suppose that its immanent resurrection was part of these tensions.

This speculative illustration can be pressed further: might the marriage of Tatu Horopapera and Puru Te Kauru, or the marriage of one of their children, have marked the opening of Piripari marae by uniting two 'whanau' descended from Tamaikoha and Te Whiu? Although their children would have been in

their late 20s by 1930, the report that the spouse representing the whanau descended from Tamaikoha was an established leader of the 'new' hapu makes their parents the more likely possibility. Puru's high status in the Tauwhare Manuka block suggests at least a distant, perhaps senior, ancestral link with Tamaikoha if not Te Whiu. Tatu's later position in the block list may reflect closer common ancestry with either of them, but key marriages and the incest taboo suggest any common ancestor was more than three generations distant. The position of his sibling group near Te Whiu's children might suggest they were close cousins but, insofar as Te Whiu himself is not listed, any relationship was more likely on his wife's side. Tatu's mother Raiha Tupaea may have been a cousin of the prestigious rangatira Tupaea Rapaera, who married Tamaikoha's eldest daughter Pihitahi (TM 153; Best, 1898: 25). Furthermore, Tamaikoha's second wife Ramari was Te Whiu's eldest sister (2010: 37–38). Although these prestigious marriages suggest that Horopapera was not closely related to either Tamaikoha or Te Whiu, they probably do illustrate the close alliance between the three hapu Te Whakataane, Tamakaimoana, and Ngai Tatua and, at least in the case of this block, subordination of the latter two hapuu to Te Whakataane. In the case of Tupaea and Tamaikoha, they furthermore suggest that Te Urewera, yet a fourth hapu in which both were important leaders (Webster, n.d.[a]) had some subordinate rights in Tauwhare Manuka block. In all these ways, relative rights in the block were a good example of a 'hapuu cluster' extending into other parts of the region.

Whoever the spouses of the founding marriage at Piripari were, the marriage alliances, and more generally the striking overlap of Ngai Tatua rights with several other hapu rights in Tauwhare Manuka block, suggest that it would not be difficult to cite whakapapa that aligned the whanau of each spouse with these founding ancestors. Insofar as the husband was an established leader in the 'new'—that is, the resurrected hapu, the marriage had probably been established a few decades earlier, and the two whanau that it united might have been 4–5 generations deep. The married couple was probably grandchildren or great-grandchildren of Tamaikoha and Te Whiu—or even of both—so it was furthermore likely that these two whanau had long since been united. These implications also raise the possibility that the marriage marking the founding of Piripari was said to be between two different whanau of Ngai Tatua *because* both husband and wife were members of the 'new' perhaps relatively small hapu, and it needed to be made clear that they were not too closely related to marry.

Whether or not this was the case, in view of the wider history of hapu in the basin one must now ask whether this marriage marking the founding of Pi-

ripari is best viewed as solidified 'under the guise' of hapu descent lines or, to the contrary, as hapu descent lines solidified 'under the guise' of a marriage? Centre-staging this marriage may really have been signaling the triumphant *reunion* of Ngai Tatua hapu, finally regaining its independence from several decades of subordination to at least two patron hapu of the valley. At least in this wider context, it was hapu descent lines that were being solidified 'under the guise' of a marriage, not vice versa.

CONCLUSION

The essay has reviewed a recent exchange that raises the old social anthropological issue about how ancestral descent groups can be organised on the basis of cognatic descent. With regard to Maori hapu, a generally accepted explanation has been that they are cognatic descent categories extending potential rights to all descendants of a certain ancestor, but in practice narrowing this extensive social category to a social group that actively sustains their rights in various ways. These selective practices are manifold and have changed historically, but nowadays range from the weakest right of turangawaewae to speak on a marae as a descendant of its founding ancestor, to the strongest rights of tangata whenua maintaining residence on the lands of that ancestor. Against this view Jeffrey Sissons has proposed an innovative application of Levi-Strauss's concept of a house society and Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice, arguing that Maori hapu were probably never based on such ambiguous grounds, but rather have developed since the 1880s as an ideology legitimating the solidarity of extended families (whanau), other kin, and non-kin closely associated with a meeting house and the mana of leadership able to establish such a house and extend hospitality to all.

In defense of my position that hapu are descent groups and categories, and probably have been at least since the 1840s, I reviewed the recent exchange and examined the ethnohistorical example upon which Sissons bases this thesis. I argued that his viewpoint rests on a confusion of whanau as extended families with hapu as descent groups, a distinction blurred in some practices but inherent in Maori social organisation and clarified in the debated facts of whakapapa. Following Sissons' ethnohistorical account of Tuhoe meeting houses in the Tauranga river basin along with his earlier publications on this area, I compared my own research findings on the ethnohistory of the Tuhoe's wider Urewera mountain domain, including the Tauranga basin. I pointed out inconsistencies in his interpretation of Tuuhoe social organisation during the implementation of government schemes between 1896 and 1926 that suggest he had not fully appreciated the evidence that groups continued to be organ-

ised primarily on the basis of ancestral descent and hapu land rights, assuming instead that these groups were organised as whanau on the basis of marriage. Similarly, with regard to his account of the founding of Piripari marae and the Ngai Tatua hapu in the Tauranga basin, I attempted to reconstruct a partial ethnohistory of subordination and independence among hapuu and relocation of hapu land rights that might better explain what he presents as marriages between whanau and the emergence of resourceful leaders.

In view of the importance of Bourdieu's theory of practice and its central role in Sissons' thesis (especially in his rebuttal), a few comments are needed. The occurrence of only oblique references to Bourdieu in his original essay should have been sufficient to alert me, given his well-warranted influence in the social sciences since the 1980s. Key phrases in Bourdieu's magisterial *The Logic of Practice* (1980, relied upon by Sissons) are obviously intended to echo Kant's works almost two centuries earlier. Aside from Book 1 in this work ('Critique of theoretical reason'; compare Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*), just as Kant's *Prolegomena to Every Future Metaphysics* subverted religious enthusiasms in support of the Enlightenment, 'Bourdieu's devastating critique of structuralism contributed to a welcome shift in kinship studies away from rules towards a greater emphasis on strategies that may include the invoking of rules' (Sissons, 2011: 630). Although I have long rejected my early interest in structuralism (more ardently than Sissons!) I must admit that my own theoretical position has often been weakened by the old functionalist fascination with social 'rules'.

However, it occurs to me that Bourdieu's alternative of 'regulated improvisation' in 'multiple practices' (Sissons, 2011: 630; 2010: 374, 376, 378, respectively) may have gone too far in the atomistic and relativist enthusiasms of his own time, much of which ended up in the cul-de-sac of post-structuralisms and finally post-modernisms (Webster, 1998[a]: 225–252). Although Sissons' work is clearly more empirically grounded than Bourdieu's *Logic*, his current emphasis on the practices that constitute Maori 'houses' may need more attention to the social objectivity and empirical force of 'rules' that are not merely ideology 'invoked' in support of agents' 'strategic improvisations' as is implied in the quote above. Bourdieu's hint of caution detectable in the phrase '*regulated* improvisation' is significant. Although Kant's enlightened skepticism helped to put metaphysics in its place, with regard to the persistence of many everyday practices of humankind impervious to his skepticism, he had to fall back rather lamely on what he too (attempting to distinguish it from 'constitutive' reason) called 'regulative' reason.

Insofar as this was also Bourdieu's rationale, I would argue against it that many

of the 'ambiguities' I see as inherent in Maori kinship are 'constitutive' social objectivities with the whole force of whakapapa debates as well as a history of consistent practices behind them. Similarly, against Sissons' reliance on the notion of improvisation, I would paraphrase Marx on the making of history: while Maori do indeed improvise in the making of hapu and whakapapa, they do not improvise just as they please; they do not 'make' hapu and whakapapa under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past.

Whether or not Sissons' thesis conflates hapu with whanau, or follows Bourdieu too far, it is an innovative hypothesis for historical change of Maori kinship that has been urgently needed. At least since 1998 we have both been devoted to a better understanding of Maori culture as changing in historical context, changes that are perhaps qualitatively different from the normal 'waxing' and 'waning' of hapu described by Firth. It probably must be accepted that hapu, in different times and places in New Zealand, might be more accurately understood as houses in the sense Sissons has proposed for the 1880s–1950s. The situation I encountered in the 1970s may have been such a time, with leading anthropologists concluding that hapu were defunct. My case that they were thriving may have reflected the rise of the Maori cultural renaissance at that time, and hapu appear to have been strengthened ever since – but probably not everywhere. As I confessed in my study of historical changes in hapu, I too must be careful not to be caught in the romantic dogma of traditionalism – as I largely was in my 1975 article (Webster, 1998: 5; 1997).

Nevertheless, the historical scope of Sissons' hypothesis is ambitious, and I am inclined to favour my earlier conclusion that hapu have tended to retain their essential characteristics through major changes in the New Zealand political economy since at least the 1840s, although always as 'a whole way of struggle'. Ballara's peerless work could support an earlier date than that. While I doubt that Sissons' alternative understanding can be widely extended among Maori, whether in the past or present, so far it is the best model we have to assess historical change and widespread general weakening or resurgence of hapu as ancestral descent groups operating objectively at the heart of Maori culture.

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