



[Back to "Patuone A Life" Index](#)

The Pākehā

Given Patuone's role as Peacemaker, often in consort with Te Wharerahi, he was able to draw on many things. Firstly, his descent through multiple lines from Rahiri, Uenuku and Kaharau gave him the base *whakapapa* as a *rangatira* of great personal consequence. Secondly, his capacities as a *tohunga* and warrior, as well as coming through his father Tapua, also referred back to his grandmother Ripia and grandfather Takare. These birth advantages, which already carried substantial *mana* in their own right, were nonetheless not enough. A *rangatira* and *tohunga* of great *mana* had to create higher status and *mana* through personal exploits and qualities. Once these were also in place, the *mana* of a truly great *rangatira* was both a mantle and a protective shield, a *whakaruruhau*, and it served to attract others. In this way, *rangatira* like Patuone consolidated their positions and their presence and even intentions alone could be used to prevent problems of many kinds. There are many instances throughout Patuone's life where he was called upon to prevent bloodshed, to preside over a process leading to peace between conflicting parties or to preserve the integrity of property ¹.

One of the greatest failings of the British government overall was its incapacity to recognise the capabilities and intentions of the Māori chiefs in the Declaration of Independence of the United Tribes of New Zealand in 1835. Part of this was due to incompetent, arrogant and superior attitudes within the Colonial Office which far outweighed more enlightened and informed positions taken by those such as Lord Normanby, regardless of the latter's superior position in the hierarchy of control. Other commentators too were to lament the lack of capacity in British officialdom to move beyond notions of their own superiority. The British (and French and Dutch) assault and taint upon indigenous and sovereign peoples globally would thus be considerable in scale and depth and in time, be repeated to varying degrees by later colonising powers such as the US in Hawai'i, Portugal and Belgium in Africa, Japan in China. The excesses in colonisation and commercial exploitation would be excused in the interests of so-called civilisation.

The arrival of British administrative structures and persons in New Zealand would lead gradually to a major shift in power locally and the formation of new alliances. These alliances would see Māori aligned with each other in ways which reflected both traditional alliances and dynamics but equally, see Māori aligned with *pākehā*. These cross-cultural alliances would in turn stimulate new responses from Māori in opposition. Famously, the Patuone and Nene alliance with other *rangatira* and the British set their kinsmen Heke and Kawiti to pursue a different course, against them.

Perhaps the greatest *pākehā*-inspired event to impact on Patuone and other Māori following the 'failure' of the British Government to accept the Declaration of Independence was the Treaty of Waitangi, signed initially on 6th February 1840 at Waitangi in the Bay of Islands. While as an event, a process and a 'nation-founding' document the Treaty has been endlessly analysed and deconstructed, the sad facts of a major betrayal of trust and honour remain. Despite its supposed intentions to protect Māori, ironically it became the key to their systematic dispossession, particularly because its fullest meanings were never fully explained to those who signed. Critically, the fact of *kawanatanga* (government power) overrode *rangatiratanga* (hereditary chiefly authority). While there were those *rangatira* like Tareha, Moka and Rewa and others who vehemently opposed the Treaty, regardless of any personal misgivings they might have harboured, influential chiefs like Heke, Nene, Patuone and Te Wharerahi already recognised that *pākehā* were to become an evermore powerful presence and influence over the passage of time. The reality was that *pākehā* had already changed Māori perceptions, outlooks and expectations and this applied particularly to their imported technology and useful manufactured goods. There was of course a down side: diseases against which Māori had no protection, different structures related to ownership of land and other significant property and the enactment and application of laws binding upon all. Becoming a British subject through the signing of the Treaty meant irrevocably that Māori were no longer in control of their own destinies. All were now in theory equal before the law and traditional Māori law, including that exercised within the given and accepted authority of *rangatiratanga* became subservient to all in the name of the Queen. In their own ways, *pākehā* laws and administrative systems were like a rampant and incurable disease. They had the inherent capacity to support and consolidate themselves and to mutate into new forms. With each step, Māori became increasingly marginalised.

As well as being a divisive influence with Māori in the north, the Treaty gave rise to the edifice of government as an institution of place. While the Treaty was conceived and executed initially in the north, with the relocation of the capital from Kororareka to Auckland, any notion of *mana* by association and easy access to key players of the *pākehā* government, moved with it. Whereas within the terms of *rangatiratanga*, the law resided within the person, presence and place of the *rangatira*—wherever he was, so too was the law—in *pākehā* terms, the law was delivered from appointed agents in specific locations.

It was within these dynamics that Patuone moved his base to the Auckland region leaving Nene to supervise matters in the Hokianga, Pēwhairangi and north generally. There was also the matter of Patuone's marriage to Takarangi which had consolidated a peace and an alliance

between Ngāpuhi and Ngāti Pāoa as well as Patuone's status and perceived influence with and *mana* within the edifice and persons of government. The *mana* of *rangatira* like Patuone, Nene, Te Wherowhero, Tamihana and Wahanui was used by the government to, in a sense, 'legitimise' its authority in the eyes of Māori. Whatever the innermost thoughts of Patuone and others might have been, there was also recognition that there would never be a return to a pre-*pākehā* state. For better or worse, Māori had embarked on a new journey; there was a new canoe on the water; *he waka hou*.

Patuone's substantial Waiwharariki estate in Takapuna and a pension were later government 'rewards' for his support. Nene too would receive a pension and while there has been criticism directed especially against both and perceptions that they were essentially paid off by the government, philosophically, both had weighed the options very carefully. Once outsiders had seen the richness and potential of New Zealand, regardless of any sustained and co-operative defence by Māori—even if military unity were possible in the first place—*pākehā* quite simply had endless numbers able to be called upon. What is more, the *pākehā* law defined obligations and punished transgressions, all perceived within its own written confines so that those who did not satisfy societal expectations would be judged in English and their punishment determined. Compared to *tikanga* and Māori summary justice determined by *rangatira*, *pākehā* had a system and a structure which defined all things. It was not perfect but it gave a certain stability and order. And then there was the law of the Book; Christian teachings, often observed more by Māori than others. For Māori, *pākehā* brought a duplicitous 'new world'.

Furthermore, if it had not been the British as colonial power in New Zealand, it would have been the French or the Americans or even another European power or semi-power. No matter what indigenous peoples all over the world thought, they were neither accorded the respect nor consulted in meaningful ways about the future planned out for them. These were the times of colonial powers, seeking to lay claim to as much of the world as they could. Indigenous peoples simply came as part of the deal and their 'civilising' would be their 'reward' from the relevant colonial power.

1. Marianne Williams recounts one instance in her diary (11 May 1828) following the loss of the *Herald* on the bar at Hokianga where in keeping with custom, whatever is cast up on shore can be claimed by those whose territory it is. She reports that "Patuone was marching to prevent them", the local people from stripping and plundering the remains of the *Herald* and its cargo. Davis (pp.34-27) recounts an earlier incident involving the schooner *Fortitude* which stranded at Motukauri and was similarly seized and plundered by the local people (in this case, Te Rarawa). The items taken included the important ship's papers, essential for legal trading activities in New South Wales. The actions of Te Rarawa resulted in armed conflict and deaths on both sides, the matter finally being concluded peacefully through Patuone and Nene's intervention.

[\(back\)](#)

[Back to Top](#) | [Back to "Patuone A Life" Index](#)