



The Tapu Tradition of Ringatu Houses

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The meeting houses associated with the Maori leader Te Kooti and with the Ringatu religion which he founded are tapu places in very special senses of that word.

In the critical period from the 1870s to the 1890s, and beyond, Te Kooti made a remarkable contribution to New Zealand architecture by keeping alive the tradition of building meeting houses. 'Keeping alive' has been a continuing issue in New Zealand architec-

ture and is also a vital concern for the Historic Places Trust.

Hirini Mead has been emphasising for many years that Te Kooti kept the meeting house tradition alive. Whakairo, Maori carving, was most seriously threatened during the 1840s and 1850s when more and more Maori were converting to Christianity. Christian missionaries found the pagan imagery of the carvings repulsive. They did everything in their power to emasculate the carving tradition. Te Kooti and the Ringatu

Above: Tane Whirinaki, opened in 1886, was on the Waiioeka Marae until the 1920s. It no longer stands. (National Museum)