

their capacity for armed resistance. These may also have been factors motivating later census-taking in New Zealand. However, this essay focuses on other sources for the evolution of the Māori census.

## Māori count Māori

Well before missionaries actively counted Māori, Māori were counting themselves. At the time of first European contact, hapū or tribes often took what was akin to a partial census – counting their fighting men. In an environment where disputes between political units were ultimately settled by warfare of varying degrees of intensity, it was doubtless important to know both one's own military strength and that of plausible political rivals. Quoting Samuel Marsden, J. L. Nicolas describes a harvest-time line-up and head count of fighting men in the tribe:

The chiefs muster all their men at particular times of the year. The great muster is taken after the potatoe [*sic*] harvest. The ground from which the potatoes have been lately dug is cleared of the stones and weeds, and all levelled; upon this ground they all assemble, men, women and children. The men are all drawn up like a regiment or army, and stand in ranks five, six, or seven deep, according to the will of the chief. Then one of the head officers or *rungateedas* begins to muster them, not by calling over the names, but by passing in front of the ranks, and telling their number. At the head of every hundred men he places a *rungateeda*, and continues in this manner to number the whole, leaving a *rungateeda* with each hundred men: thus ten *rungateedas* answer for a thousand men; the women and children are never mustered.<sup>4</sup>

Other near-contemporary information suggests that population counts based on fighting men were not uncommon amongst Māori. In 1793, on a map drawn for Governor Phillip King, the chief Tuki Tahua provided information on populations by fighting men for areas with which he appears to have been most familiar, in units of thousands. He also provided some population numbers in other areas.<sup>5</sup>

While in Sydney, prior to arriving in New Zealand, the Reverend Samuel Marsden recorded information about the Bay of Islands from Ruatara, a local chief who had left the bay in 1805, and eventually ended up in Sydney. Based on Ruatara's information, Marsden wrote, 'Moca is the greatest chief; he possesses the largest extent of country and has more than 10,000 men at this command'. Following missionary arrival in the Bay of Islands, Ruatara also provided Thomas Kendall with the numbers of fighting men controlled by himself and several allies, with numbers rounded in hundreds.<sup>6</sup>