



Redemption Songs: A Life of TE Kooti Arikirangi TE Turuki

By Judith Binney

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Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuki was one of the best-known Maori leaders of the 19th century. Today he is remembered mostly as a guerrilla fighter: a feared opponent of colonial forces with a price on his head. The stereotype does him little justice. Throughout his adult life, in both war and peace, he sought to redeem his people and the land. He founded the Ringatu church, which continues to this day. The causes of Te Kooti's struggles are larger than personal injustice: he fought a war against land confiscation and illegal land purchases. Though frequently described as a murderer, he limited his attacks—even the most notorious, at Matawhero, Poverty Bay in 1868—to specific targets for precise reasons. Judith Binney has drawn on numerous sources in writing this book. Traces of Te Kooti's many journeys remain throughout the North Island, and he left records of his remarkable life not only in government files but in personal letters and diaries, as well as in songs, stories and sayings among his own people in many places. This biography conveys the Ringatu perspectives alongside a fresh account of major events in New Zealand's 19th-century history.

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