

Max Hailstone

“Te Tiriti” (The Treaty)

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Figure 1
The original Treaty of Waitangi.

The Treaty of Waitangi is the founding and most important document in New Zealand. It is a treaty that forged the terms and relationships between the indigenous people of Aotearoa (New Zealand), the Maori, and the British government. The original sheets of the Treaty are held in the National Archives in Wellington, New Zealand (see *figure 1*). All except one are produced in the Maori language and are, except for the 'Printed Version,' written in longhand. On each are the names, signatures, parts of their *mokos* or marks of the Maori chiefs who wished to support the terms of the Treaty.

By the time the Treaty of Waitangi was signed in 1840, the British and Maori people were no strangers to each other having had seventy years of social contact. After the voyages of Cook, British trade and Christianity were directed towards New Zealand. While the missionaries spread Christianity, the traders exploited the natural resources. The traders were initially concerned with sealing and whaling, but their interests soon turned toward timber, flax, ship-building and finally, general trading.

When the Europeans arrived they found the Maori to have a culture which relied almost exclusively on an oral tradition rather than one based on the written word.¹ Their visual language, while adequate for its purpose, was nevertheless extremely limited. Because of this lack of writing, being asked to 'write a mark on a piece of parchment' thereby pledging one's allegiance to a 'Queen' on the other side of the world may well have been for many of the chiefs their first encounter with a pen. They certainly were unaware of the binding properties and degree of commitment that was the underlying cultural agreement signaled by their signature.

The main 'Treaty of Waitangi Sheet' was signed at Waitangi on the 6th of February, 1840. After the signing, William Hobson, then British Governor General, decided that although two hundred and forty chiefs had signed the document, they did not represent the whole of New Zealand. Seven copies of the Treaty were made and dispatched with government representatives to various regions of the country to obtain the signatures and support of other chiefs who for various reasons had not been

able to travel to Waitangi. These sheets are now identified by the specific region they cover. After they were brought back, the Treaty was set in type, printed and distributed throughout the country announcing more publicly that it had substantial support and was now in force. Five additional chiefs who had not previously signed the original nor any of the other sheets, signed a 'Printed Version' which now constitutes the ninth part of the Treaty of Waitangi.

It is these nine sheets, the original Treaty, the seven copies and the printed version that are the basis for this series of silkscreen prints. The number of signatures on each varies considerably as follows: 240, 132, 41, 39, 27, 26, 21 and 5. Each of the prints is based on one of the treaty sheets and contains all and only the signatures, both European and Maori, that appear on that particular sheet.

Sixteen years ago my own interest in these marks was piqued, when I first came across a set of facsimiles of the Treaty. I was intrigued by the variety and strangeness of the marks, realizing that these marks were in all probability the first marks written by many of the chiefs as well as perhaps among the earliest examples of indigenous writing from New Zealand. The fact that they were made on such an auspicious document made them all the more intriguing.

This interest was again aroused in 1990, when a student of mine was working on a project concerning the land claims of a local but very large and important tribe, the Ngai Tahu. This claim was being heard by the Waitangi Tribunal, a government tribunal set up to hear Maori grievances in terms of the Treaty and to rectify wrong doings if at all possible. Because of the intense interest surrounding the Tribunal and its judgments, much discussion and argument was taking place concerning the wording and intention of these documents in very cool, legal and political terms. This cool approach seemed to forget that first and foremost the Treaty was a document of the people — drawn up by people and agreed to by people and signed in good faith for future generations — it was more of a spiritual guideline than a clinically legal undertaking. It was with this in mind that I decided to reproduce the Treaty from 'the other side'

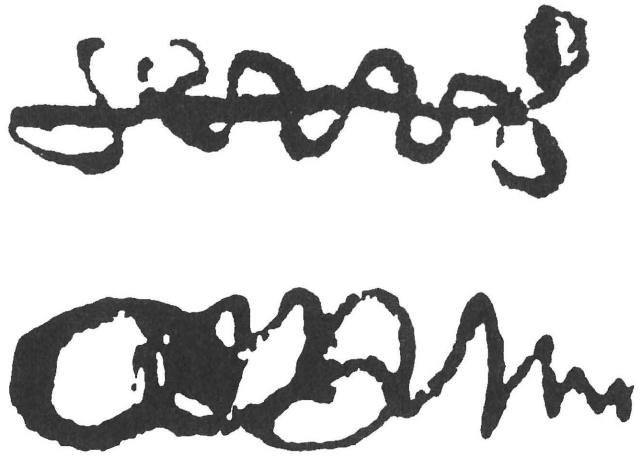


Figure 2
Two separate signatures of Te Rauparaha.

as it were, dealing only with the people and their signatures without which there would be no validity to the document whatsoever. This approach forces the viewer to become involved with the people and their very human contribution. For the Maori people the prints represent much more than simple marks, they are part of their ancestors and as such maintain their spiritual qualities quite often moving them to tears or private reflection, quite unrelated the Treaty's political or legal relevance. For the European, they are seen as art objects which fit European art-making traditions. In either case, cultural consciousness regarding the Treaty is increased regardless of the reference point.

Throughout the project small interesting details came to light. First, it was widely believed that the signing of the Treaty was solely the prerogative of the chiefs who were all men. However, a handful of signatures made by women appear including one on "The Waikato Heads Sheet," an area notorious for its strong male chiefs and strict maoridom. To one signature, "a man alone" was appended, indicating that this chief had signed without the support of his tribe. To

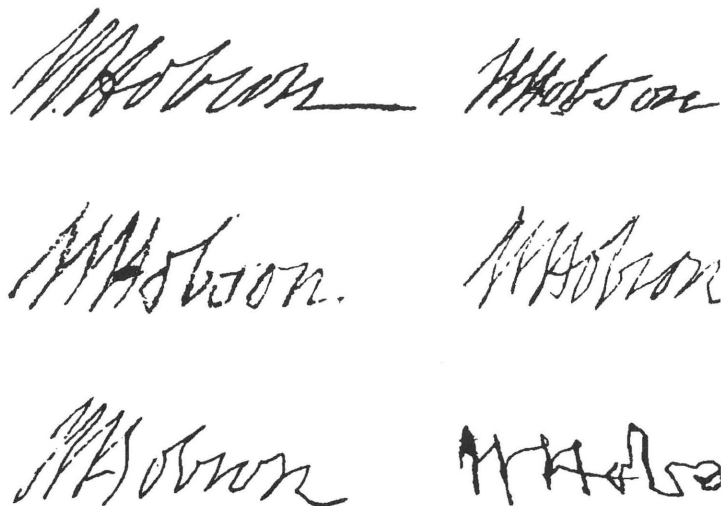


Figure 3
Governor General Hobson's deteriorating signatures.

another was appended "deceased" an indication that the chief was not only dead, but that the tribe was as yet without a new chief and until that was resolved the old one would reign.

Te Rauparaha, a very famous and notorious warrior chief, signed the Treaty once, but at a later date, was asked to sign another copy again. He flatly refused. However after discussion he was persuaded to sign again and did but with a completely different signature (see *figure 2*).

Of the five hundred and forty-four signatures only a handful of names were of European origin. They were mainly biblical such as Timotai (Timothy), Wirimu (William), Hona (Jonah), all others are unique. Obtaining true identification was sometimes impossible if the European scribes' writing was illegible as there was nothing to compare the signature with. It could not be verified.

In the case of Governor General Hobson, it is interesting to note that within the short time that it took to make the seven copies of the original Treaty, Parkinsons' disease overtook him as evidenced in his rapidly deteriorating handwriting documented by his own signatures (see *figure 3*).

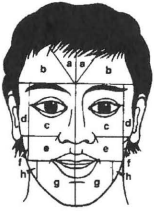
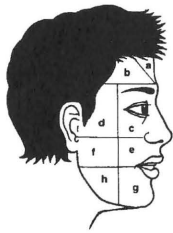


Figure 4

Maori divisions of the face.

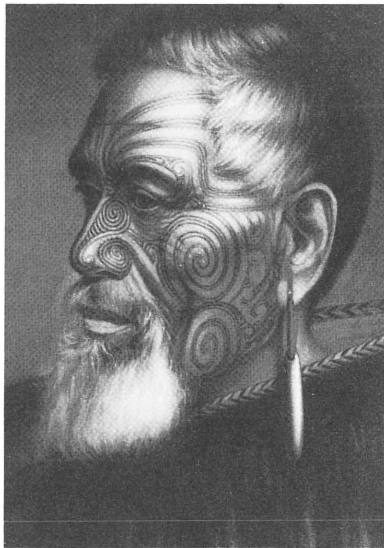
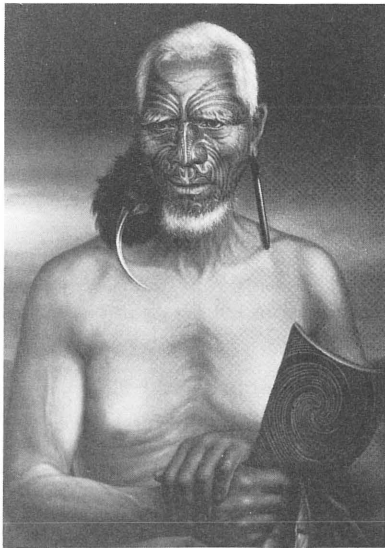
- a) Ngakaipikirau (rank), titi design, center forehead.
- b) Ngunga (position) tiwhana and ngunga designs, brow.
- c) Uirere (hapu rank) pongiangia and paepae designs, eyes, nose.
- d) Uma (1st or 2nd marriage) putaringa design, temples.
- e) Raurau (signature) pitau, rerepehi designs, under nose.
- f) Taiohou (work) putake design, cheek.
- g) Wairau (mana) pukauwae design, chin.
- h) Taitoto (birth status) riparipa design, jaw.

The Maori signatures/marks that appear on the Treaty can be categorized into four main types of mark. First, there are the 'pictorial' or figurative marks which owe much to the spiral of the fern frond almost certainly representative of a part of a particular chief's *moko*. The *moko* which was widely used and may be seen as the closest mark to a written language, is visible in the design and construction of the facial tattoos (*mokos*). These were worn by both men and women, although those of the men were far more ornate and quite often covered the whole face, whereas those of the women were usually limited to the area between the bottom lip and chin. The men were usually men of significance and the designs were constructed within strict divisions of the face (see figure 4). By the use of conventional 'universal' patterns that could be deciphered by all, the identity, importance and lineage (from both parents) could be 'read' and understood by all. The spiral motif and its variations are derived from and characteristic of the naturally abundant and various ferns of New Zealand (see figures 5 and 6). It is therefore not surprising to find among the five hundred and forty-four signatures of the Maori chiefs that some are based upon their own *mokos* (see figure 7).

Second, there are simple crosses which were obviously demonstrated and encouraged by the European representatives at the various signings (see figure 8). Third, there are quasi or "fake" signatures which were obviously modeled on that of Hobson whose signature appeared on the Treaty prior to the Maori chiefs signing and would in all probability have been pointed out by the Europeans present (see figure 9).

Finally, there are true European-style signatures which were made by those chiefs who had been in contact with the missionaries and administrators and who had been taught to write their names using the Roman alphabet (see figure 10).

While looking at the various sheets of the Treaty one might be forgiven for thinking that the signatures/marks were a product of regional imagery or mark-making tradition. While there are identifiable regional differences in woodcarving and weaving, these are not evident in the signatures. Since there was



Figures 5 and 6
Two views of facial tattoos.

no written tradition, it is likely that whichever chief first signed the respective copy of the Treaty, set the precedent for the others who would not wish to lose face — hence the almost total agreement in terms of style and image used on each sheet. This is clearly seen in The Waikato Heads Sheet, The Tauranga Sheet, The East Coast Sheet, The Eastern Bay of Plenty Sheet and The *Herald* Kapiti/South Island Sheet. (See figures 11-15)

On the original sheets of the Treaty most of the signatures were approximately 5mm high and were, in the main, subsumed by the attempted European spellings of the names of the chiefs. This necessitated careful photography and extraction of each signature, at all times being careful not to lose its correct orientation and identification. Bromide prints were then made of each one, 544 in all, to approximately 50 mm high. Each was then carefully identified and catalogued under its respective sheet of the Treaty.

The next stage was to assemble and organize the signatures from each sheet. All decisions concerning the differences in size were made with two main considerations in mind: either marks that were found to be more “interesting,” or marks that were considered to be more useful in compositional terms were enlarged.² There is no difference inferred in terms of importance by the difference in size. To the Maori, all are of equal importance, although a bias towards one’s own ancestors would be quite natural (see figure 16).

Endnotes

1 This does not in any way reflect upon the intelligence of the Maori people — quite the contrary. The Maori were a highly intelligent race and soon embraced the ideas of reading and writing. William Colenso, New Zealand’s first printer, produced many religious publications for the missionaries using an alphabet of nineteen characters designating five vowels and fourteen consonants.

2 The prints are printed in two colors (black and gray), silkscreened on Arches Rives BKF300, 1200 x 800mm in an edition of 20 of which 10 are reserved in complete portfolios of all nine prints.



Figure 7
Spiral motif char-
acteristics of
coiled fern fronds.

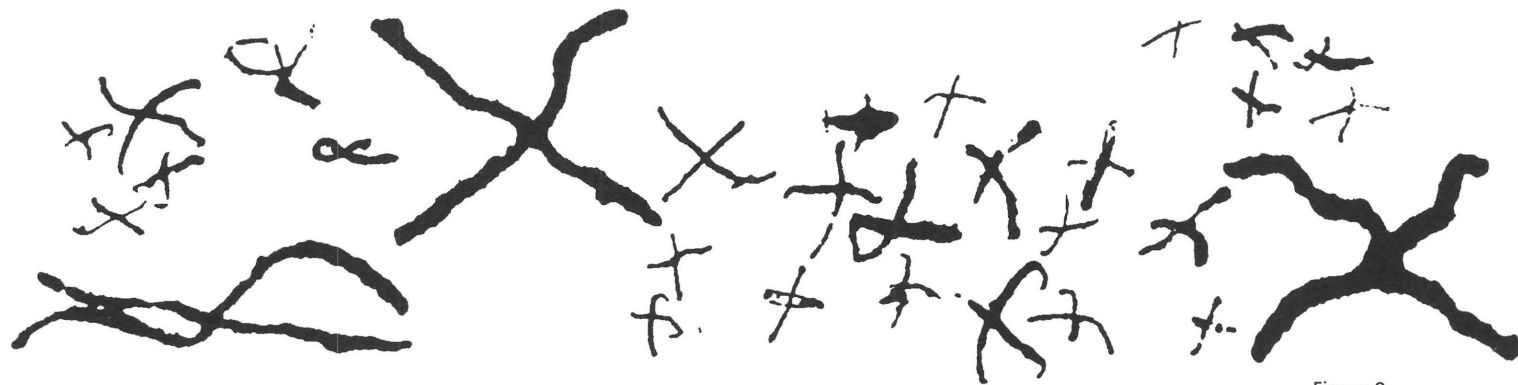


Figure 8
The western-
favored "x."



Figure 9
"Fake" signatures.

Te Mīri
Wīreamu
of Hau
Manaham tautou
Hohepa Metahau

William Hohepa
kaitiaki Mīriakai

Figure 10
"True" European-style
signatures.



Figure 11
The Waikato Heads Sheet



Figure 12
The East Coast Sheet

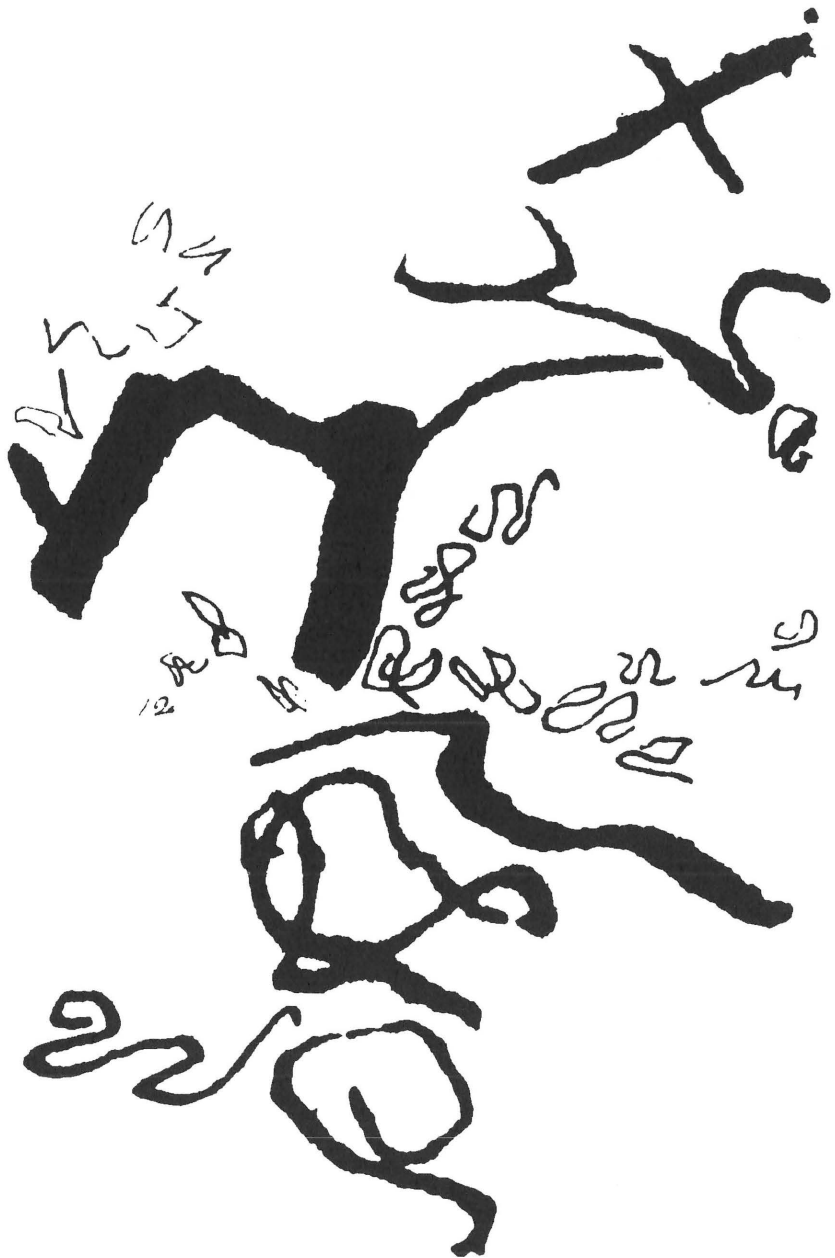
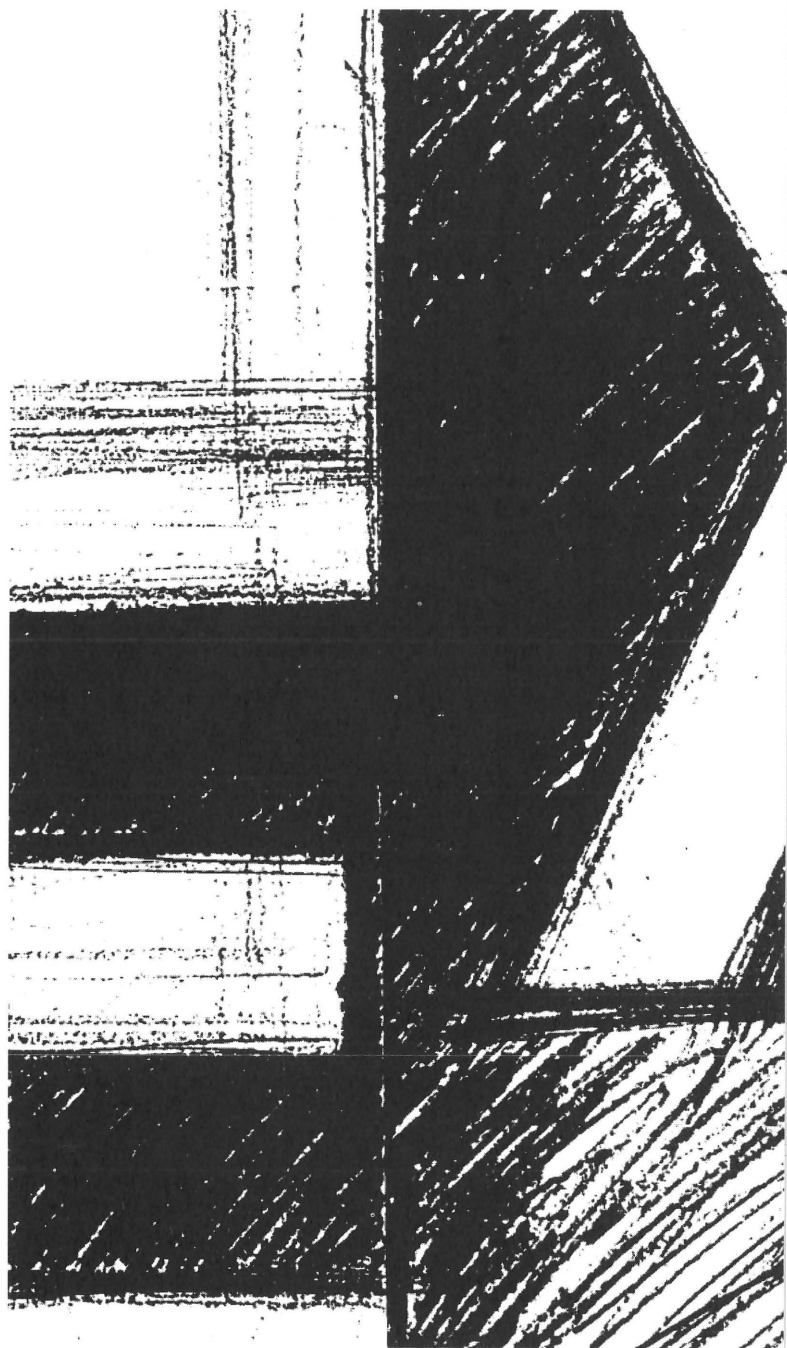


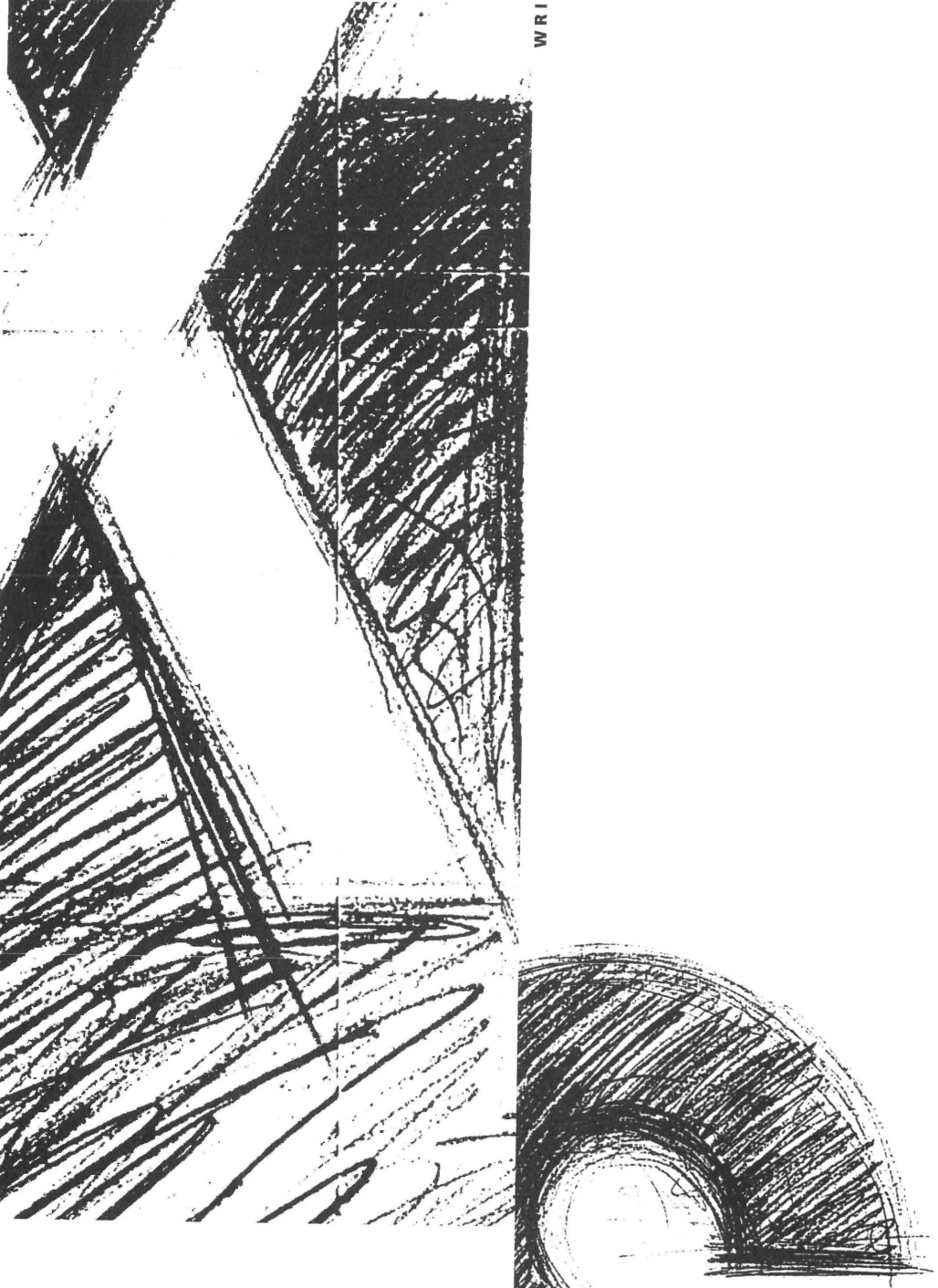
Figure 13
The Eastern Bay of Plenty Sheet



Figure 15
The Main Treaty



WRITING THE TEXT



In order to write using specific, vivid detail, students first need to see that it is possible to communicate subtleties of feeling and perception powerfully through imagery. Davis believes that the interplay between illustrative objectivity and artistic expression is nearly the same, in essence, in the imagery of poetry and in the imagery of painting. He suggests ways in which apprentice writers, in an era in which the hyperaestheticized visual surface of life predominates over linguistic articulation, can, in assimilating visual imagery, feel free for a moment from the requirement to portray their imaginative experience in language, an experience which later allows them to portray their experience linguistically