

CHAPTER 1

ALIENATIONS BEFORE 1860

1.1 TRADITIONAL TENURE

It is assumed that claimants will prefer to present evidence concerning traditional links between iwi and hapu and the land themselves. The following is therefore a very brief overview drawn from reports, documentary evidence and publications on the district.

In the north of the Rohe Potae, major iwi traced descent from their ancestor Turongo and the Tainui canoe which made its final landfall at Kawhia harbour. Of these, Ngati Maniapoto had major land interests in the west of the district extending from Kawhia in the north to Mokau in the south, and taking up much of what became known as the Aotea block. Ngati Raukawa also had interests in the north east of the district in the area north of Taupo, east of the Waipa River and Rangitoto range and east and west of the Waikato River, including the Patetere plains. Other related groupings such as Ngati Hikairo, Ngati Matakore and Ngati Whakatere also had interests in the area. As usual, there were also areas of intersecting and overlapping interests. For example Ngati Maniapoto had interests in the Mokau region, intersecting with those of Ngati Tama of north Taranaki. Some iwi including Ngati Raukawa had interests further north of the district while some northern iwi such as Ngati Haua also claimed interests south of the Puniu River.

In the east of the district, Ngati Tuwharetoa traced descent from Te Arawa. Ngati Tuwharetoa interests centred in the huge area surrounding Lake Taupo, intersecting with Ngati Raukawa interests in the north around Titiraupenga and with Ngati Maniapoto in the northwest in the area of the Hurakia range. In the south Tuwharetoa had intersecting interests with upper Whanganui peoples in Mount Ruapehu.¹

The iwi and hapu relationships within the district were complex and only crudely portrayed by lines drawn on a map. This has been explained in more detail in the *Pouakani Report* for the Pouakani blocks, but was also true throughout the district:

The land (and its resources) was not ‘owned’ by Maori in the sense that it was property, a disposable commodity that can be bought and sold. Maori people occupied land in extended kin groups, whanau and hapu, under a system of interlocking and overlapping rights of use (usufructuary rights).²

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1. For more detail, see Waitangi Tribunal, *The Pouakani Report 1993*, Wellington, Brookers Ltd, 1993, ch 2; Evelyn Stokes, ‘Mokau; Maori Cultural and Historical Perspectives’; and Alan Ward ‘Wanganui ki Maniapoto’, report commissioned by the Waitangi Tribunal, 1992, pp 11–12.
 2. *Pouakani Report*, p 13

In the area later known as the Aotea block, traditional Maori settlements were often small and tended to be located along major waterways and tributaries. For example, there were settlements along the Mokau River, along the fertile Waipa River valley and around the major west coast harbours of Kawhia and the Mokau. Rivers, forests and the coastline provided rich sources of food and materials. The people were mobile, gathering resources on a seasonal basis and many settlements were therefore constructed as temporary habitations. Access to important seasonal resources meant hapu boundaries could often overlap and recognised interests could be located well away from traditional occupation sites. For example, inland hapu commonly also had traditional rights in coastal areas or fisheries. There were also complex interests in areas rich in resources and in sites of strategic importance such as the Kawhia and Mokau harbours.

Evelyn Stokes has described traditional interests in the Mokau region in some detail.³ This provides a good example of traditional settlement patterns and interests. This region was rich in food sources and the meeting point of two significant communication routes. It was also an area of intersecting iwi interests. Both Ngati Maniapoto and Ngati Tama had interests and settlements in the area and it was a major communication route, providing inland Ngati Maniapoto with access to coastal resources. Further inland, the Mokau River provided Ngati Maniapoto settlements with a 'main highway, source of food, spiritual sustenance, and focus of tribal settlement patterns and mana'.⁴ Similarly, around Kawhia harbour, also a site rich in resources and of strategic importance, there were complex interests claimed by Ngati Maniapoto, Ngati Hikairo and Ngati Raukawa.

Stokes has also described how major rivers and their tributaries were the most important means of communication within the district and inland tracks were often portages between these waterways. This meant that populations could be highly mobile and move long distances to take advantage of various land and resource interests. For example, iwi and hapu could travel from the Waikato River, the main highway of Waikato iwi, along the Waipa River, which gave access to northern Ngati Maniapoto settlements. At Otorohanga, travellers could canoe further south along the Mangaorewa and Mangapu tributaries of the Waipa. After a portage of about 10 kilometres they could then join the Mokau River as it flowed through the Aria district. This required smaller canoes until about Totoro where travellers could then use large canoes to the Mokau harbour mouth.⁵

Traditional tenure was also influenced by the changing nature of iwi and hapu relations in the Rohe Potae and by population movements within and through the area. In some areas there was a long pre-European history of inter-iwi and hapu disputes, for example, in the Mokau district between Ngati Maniapoto and Ngati Tama. There was also a long history of alliances between various groups, particularly through marriage. Stokes has described how there were a number of large population upheavals in the district in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. There were a series of migrations from around Kawhia harbour and areas

3. Stokes, p 15

4. Ibid, p 47

5. Ibid, p 34

north, mostly down through the western part of the district and on to Taranaki and, in some cases, Wellington and Nelson–Marlborough in the first three decades of the nineteenth century. A large Ngati Raukawa migration also moved down through the central North Island and then down the Whanganui River to the Wellington region in the 1820s. There were also a number of large battles, including at Hingakaka in about 1807, which involved several thousand participants and where combined Waikato and Ngati Maniapoto iwi drove off their opposition. Some of these dislocations were aided by European introductions such as muskets. In the late 1840s, in the southern districts, many Taranaki people began arriving back and claimed land interests, including in the Mokau district.⁶

1.2 EARLY EUROPEAN CONTACT UNTIL 1860

Contacts with Europeans in the larger Rohe Potae district appear to have been relatively slight before 1840.⁷ The main contacts occurred in coastal areas around the Kawhia and Mokau harbours. There were European traders stationed at both places from about the 1820s. They were involved in the export of flax and foodstuffs such as potatoes, maize, and pigs and the import of guns, tools, blankets, and other goods. Occasional sailing vessels visited the harbours and there was also some early whaling around Kawhia harbour.⁸ There were some early land transactions at Kawhia as a result of traders taking up residence.⁹ At this time traders were entirely dependent on the goodwill of local Maori chiefs and it seems clear they were generally welcome as a source of trade and goods. They were absorbed into local communities and became involved in their affairs. During the musket wars of the 1830s they were especially welcome as a source of guns.

There was also some missionary activity in the Rohe Potae. Wesleyan mission stations were established around Kawhia harbour in the mid 1830s. North of the district an Anglican mission was established at the confluence of the Puniu and Waipa rivers in the mid 1830s and may have had some contact with northern Ngati Maniapoto. Travelling Maori missionaries may have introduced Christian teachings into the district well before the establishment of formal mission stations.¹⁰

1.3 OLD LAND CLAIMS

By 1840, Kawhia, with the mission station and resident traders, was the only significant point of European settlement in the district. The only land transactions appear to have been around Kawhia. Of these early land claims, the mission station acquired some land. William Johnstone purchased land in the Puketutu area.

6. Ibid, pp 65–76

7. Ward, p 12

8. Stokes, p 85

9. Ward, p 13

10. Stokes, p 103

George Charlton built a substantial homestead at Kawhia which he sold to John Cowell in 1846. Cowell claimed to have purchased 20,000 acres from 'Kiwi'.¹¹ The Treaty of Waitangi itself was signed by relatively few chiefs from the district. The Reverend James Whitely collected some signatures at Kawhia throughout 1840 and a few more were collected at Waikato heads by Anglican missionaries.¹²

During the 1840s, missionary activity continued. More Wesleyan missionaries arrived in the Mokau area in 1843. There was also a Lutheran mission in the Mokau area in the early to mid 1840s. Further inland there were some Wesleyan mission stations along the Mokau and Waipa Rivers in the 1840s. There was also contact with Anglican and Roman Catholic missions just north of the district. However, the missionary influence was declining by the late 1850s and there appear to have been no actual land transactions with missionaries other than at Kawhia.¹³

A few Pakeha settlers came into Ngati Maniapoto territory during the 1840s and 1850s, via Kawhia or up the Waipa valley. They married into local communities and their families were absorbed into them. Their children often became influential in later contacts between Maori and settlers. These early Pakeha included for example, Robert Ormsby and Louis Hetet.¹⁴ Apart from this, the interior of the district was largely untouched by European settlement until the 1870s.

The Crown appears to have recognised at least some of these early land dealings by issuing Crown grants. There were not many of these grants and they were not practically very useful while the King movement exerted authority over the Rohe Potae. However, when the Native Land Court began operating in the district in the mid 1880s, the court appears to have recognised the early Crown grants when creating blocks for title investigation (see figure 2). The Crown also purchased one of these grants in the early 1880s in an effort to reopen Kawhia harbour.

1.4 EARLY CROWN PURCHASES

Although contact with Europeans during this time was slight especially for interior peoples of the Rohe Potae, the impact of what Europeans brought with them was much more significant and appears to have reached right into the interior. Traders and missionaries introduced many types of vegetables, livestock, and fruit which were adopted with enthusiasm and became the basis of a significant trade in produce. Missionaries also encouraged crop and livestock farming and the associated construction of mills and development of pasture. Traders, and to a lesser extent missionaries, also provided an outlet for substantial exports of flax, potatoes, and other crops and livestock such as pigs. In later years timber was also a valuable export. Many of the relics of these earlier industries were rediscovered when European settlers moved into the district decades later.

Maori were also keen to gain access to materials brought in by traders such as tools, clothing material, and guns. These products were absorbed into Maori society

11. Ward, p 13, citing *Turton's Deeds*, old land claims, pp 369–376

12. Ward, pp 13–14

13. See Stokes, ch 2, and mission station map, p 102

14. Ward, p 13

and were used in pursuit of traditional objectives. The introduction of muskets for example, gave temporary power advantages which were quickly utilised until the widespread ownership of muskets levelled opportunities again. Many of the population upheavals from the 1820s were influenced by the introduction of musket warfare. A number of European-introduced epidemics also caused some temporary disruption in the area from as early as 1790. These were apparently introduced from boats in northern coastal areas and then carried through the area along major travel routes.¹⁵

It seems clear that Maori in the area welcomed Pakeha for what were regarded as the substantial benefits of European goods. More research is required into Maori understanding of the implications of selling land in the 1840s and 1850s especially in districts where there had been little contact. However, it is clear that Maori wanted traders and missionaries for the access they provided to required goods and to trading opportunities. As such, Maori appeared willing to provide some use rights to land and possibly also to sell land to achieve this.

In the early 1850s, Government land purchase agents seem to have been most interested in the southern Mokau district, probably because of the harbour and the proximity to New Plymouth. The missionaries located nearby also provided agents with useful assistance. From 1850, Donald McLean and other agents were actively attempting to make purchases in the area. This was apparently the subject of much debate by Maori of the region, including those with recognised interests who lived in the interior.

Eventually the Crown completed four large purchases, collectively known as the Awakino purchases, in the years 1854 to 1857. These included the Awakino block of some 16,000 acres purchased in March 1854 for £530, the Mokau block of approximately 2500 acres purchased in May 1854 for £100, the Taumatamaire block of about 24,000 acres purchased in January 1855 for £500, and the Rauoro block of at least 25,000 acres (the deed did not specify the area) purchased in July 1857 for £400.¹⁶ More research may be required into the circumstances of these purchases. There were evidently some disputes about ownership at the time, and some reserves were made.¹⁷ According to Stokes, a major reason for the sales was that Maori were very anxious to have Pakeha among them, presumably for trading opportunities.¹⁸

McLean also signed a deed of purchase with Waitere Pumipi and several other chiefs for 6000 acres of land at Harihari. £200 was paid on 4 July 1854 and a further £200 on 10 August 1857.¹⁹ (See figure 3 for early Crown purchases of the 1850s.)

These purchases of the 1850s were not followed up by settlement until well after the New Zealand wars and surveys were not made until the 1880s. There were no further sales in the King Country until well after the New Zealand wars. From the late 1850s, the interior tribes became involved in active resistance to further land sales and the King movement effectively prevented further alienations until at least the late 1870s.

15. Stokes, pp 68–69

16. Ibid, p 134

17. Ibid

18. Ibid

19. Ward, p 15, and see the *Pouakani Report*, p 107, map 7.2