

CHAPTER 1

THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF LAND SALES: LIFE ON THE RESERVES, 1860–90

By the end of 1856, the Maori communities of the northern South Island had sold almost all their land. Throughout the process of land purchase, various reserves had been made for Maori. The New Zealand Company had set out to reserve an eleventh of its land for Maori purposes, but had in fact made ‘tenths’ only in the Tasman Bay part of its purchases. These tenths were supplemented by occupation reserves created in Tasman and Golden Bays after the Spain award in the mid-1840s. The first Crown purchases were accompanied by the setting aside of reserves for ‘present and future needs’ in the late 1840s, including the creation of a very large reserve in the Wairau district. The second round of Crown purchases in the mid-1850s, however, swallowed up the Wairau reserve and set aside much smaller reserves in Marlborough. The reserves were more generous for some communities in the Nelson province, with the setting aside of three comparatively large areas: Taitapu on the West Coast; D’Urville Island; and Wakapuaka in Tasman Bay. The future social and economic well-being of Maori communities now depended on the size, quality, and usefulness of their reserves, which would dictate whether or not they were able to maintain desired elements of their traditional lifestyle, and/or to engage with the Pakeha pastoral and agrarian economy. The social and economic impact of land sales may be traced through an assessment of life on the reserves.

1.1 TOWARDS A WORKING DEFINITION OF ‘RESERVES’

The definition of a ‘reserve’ is a complicated matter. There does not seem to have been a detailed or comprehensive Government policy on reserves in the 1840s and 1850s, so that general principles have to be deduced from practice. This is always a difficult and problematic process for historical research, but especially for Tribunal research, where a great deal depends on the Government’s public pronouncements about what it was doing and how it intended to do it. In terms of resources, New Zealand Government officials appear to have believed that Maori should retain sufficient land for their ‘present and future needs’. This phrase was used widely by those responsible for reserve-making in the 1840s and 1850s.¹ There

1. For example, instructions of Major Richmond, cited in Fox to W Wakefield, 22 July 1847, co208/88; D McLean to Colonial Secretary, 7 April 1856, *Compendium*, vol 1, p 301

were a number of models for the reservation of land for this purpose by the time of the first major Crown purchase in the northern South Island, including the large, self-contained reserves favoured in the United States, and the small, scattered, non-occupation reserves of the New Zealand Company.² Government officials in New Zealand tended to draw from these and other varying models, which created some degree of confusion about the nature, purpose, and ownership of reserves in this country. The confusion was exacerbated by the fact that very little was recorded at the time of the making of reserves about their exact boundaries, nature and functions, leaving future governments to come up with a working theory to cover their supposed purposes and status.³

There seem to have been two basic approaches to the purpose of reserving land in New Zealand. The first was that Maori needed land to live on and to continue their economic activities. They themselves would choose to keep land vital for these purposes. The underlying reasoning on the part of Government officials was that Maori ‘used’ very little of their nominal estates for economic exploitation. Whenever the Crown purchased a large block of land, therefore, part of it would need to be reserved for Maori to continue to have the benefit of the small sections which Government officials understood that they actually ‘used’. Under this theory, Maori lost nothing by selling the wider block. This seems to have been the principle behind the practice of always reserving part of any large block of land sold to the Crown.

The creation of these ‘occupation’ reserves was a complex process on the ground. There do not seem to have been any formal guidelines as to how much land was necessary for ‘present and future use’. It depended on the use to which any particular piece of land had been put in the past, and its potential for the European style of economic development in the future, with which many Maori were actively engaged by the 1840s. Neither of these considerations accounted for non-economic reasons to retain a particular piece of land. Nevertheless, land kept because it was the site of a burial ground or had important historical associations, was invariably included in any calculation of land left in Maori hands for economic use. In terms of the nature, extent and purposes of land retained by Maori, a great deal depended on how proactive Maori had been in the process of setting aside land for reservation. Many so-called ‘reserves’ were actually huge areas of land which Maori had decided not to sell to the Crown in spite of pressure from land purchase officials. This was held to be ‘unsold’ land and therefore still under Maori customary title. The other type of occupation reserve was land excepted from sale within a particular block. It was sometimes (but not invariably) held that the Government had purchased this land and returned it to Maori, thus extinguishing the Maori customary title. It could be returned to Maori as land held under Crown grant, but more commonly it was left under de facto customary tenure but without a clear title in terms of British law.

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2. A Mackay, ‘Memorandum on the Origination and Management of Native Reserves in the Southern Island, 15 May 1871, *Compendium*, vol 2, p 263
 3. For example, ‘Report of Interview with Ngati Toa Deputation’, 25 May 1880, MA 13/17, 680/1835, NA. The Native Minister told the Ngati Toa delegation that if the 200-acre reserves had been given to them in 1853 they would have been made inalienable.

The difference between these two categories of reserve was unclear in the northern South Island, where the ‘blocks’ sold to the Crown were so vast and all-encompassing, involving the extinction of all rights over the whole island, that any piece of land retained by Maori was technically a reserve from a wider block. In practice a distinction seems to have been made according to the size of the reserve. The three large reserves were treated in a variety of ways. The two largest reserves, Taitapu and D’Urville Island, had been specifically excepted from the sale of wider ‘blocks’ in the purchase deeds. Taitapu was defined as an official reserve and at times was held to belong to those who had signed the deed of sale, and at other times was understood to be under customary tenure as though it had never been the subject of a sale.⁴ When the Government finally made a definite statement as to whether the northern South Island reserves were inalienable, Taitapu was the only one defined as alienable, possibly on the pragmatic grounds that its size made it desirable for European acquisition.⁵ In contrast, D’Urville Island was not defined as a reserve and was left out of Government reports on the reserves, and calculations on the amount of reserved land left to Maori. There was also a third anomalous large reserve, Wakapuaka, which was excepted from sale in the 1855 negotiations at Nelson, but was not mentioned as a reserve in the deed of purchase, although it was included on the official map. This was probably because McLean still wanted to purchase Wakapuaka and did not want to give it the status of an official reserve. As a result, Wakapuaka could most accurately of the three large reserves be defined as unsold land and still under customary tenure.⁶ These definitions were very important because they formed part of the way in which the Government treated the reserves in the 1860s and 1870s, when it had to define boundaries more carefully, and make decisions about the legal and moral status of ‘reserves’.

In addition to the reservation of land for direct occupation and use, the Government was committed to the idea that land should be reserved to provide a permanent fund for the social ‘improvement’ of Maori. Both the New Zealand Company and humanitarian pressure groups in Britain and New Zealand argued that churches, schools, hospitals, and the personnel to staff them, should be provided for the Maori as one of the benefits of ‘civilization’, which was held to be a corollary of the settlement of the country by British settlers and a British form of legal and social organisation. The early Governors accepted these ideals to varying degrees, with the result that a series of experiments were made in the form of reserved sums of money, lands, and trusts. Some Maori supported these experiments and welcomed the idea of practical benefits in the form of education and health care. Others were determined that if land was leased for the purpose of obtaining money, it should not be spent on their behalf but should be paid to them directly in the form of rents. The officials charged with the administration of land reserved for Maori benefit were sometimes of the view that the best return for Maori from their occupation reserves as well would come from rents rather than farming the land themselves. A second category of reserves was created in the 1840s and 1850s, therefore, in which Maori were held to be the beneficiaries of reserves

4. See pt i, ch 11

5. ‘Return of Lands Reserved Exclusively for Natives’, AJHR, 1883, G-7

6. See pt i, ch 9

actually owned and administered by the Government, and frequently leased to Europeans. These reserves included the New Zealand Company tenths, the occupation reserves created in Tasman Bay by Commissioner Spain, and any other reserves which Maori later chose to bring under the Native Reserves Act 1856.⁷

In practice, therefore, there were two categories of reserved land in the northern South Island after the activities of the land purchase agents and other Government officials in the 1840s and 1850s. The first category was the land excepted from sale during the purchase process for Maori occupation and use. The second category was land which had come under the Native Reserves Act 1856, for leasing to provide rents and a trust income for social purposes. The distinctions were sometimes blurred, however, and there were uncertainties as to the legal status of the reserves, whether or not they were inalienable, who actually owned them, what had been intended by Maori and the Government as their original purpose and functions, and how the Government should fulfil its apparent role as the moral guardian of all the reserves. Some of these issues, especially those of legal ownership, will not be dealt with in this report and require separate treatment.

1.2 PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS

Before assessing the adequacy of the northern South Island reserves for the ‘present and future needs’ of their Maori occupants, it is necessary to pose some preliminary questions. First, did Maori in fact get all the reserves that they were promised, and/or in the form and to the extent that they were promised? This report is not the appropriate place for a seriatim consideration of this question, but a few examples may be given which indicate that there were problems in the way in which the reserves were finally marked off and allocated to Maori. Claimant and Crown researchers should conduct detailed research into all of the identifiable promises which were made about reserves, and the way in which each actual reserve was created from a very complex process of swapping sections, adjusting boundaries, and surveying reserves with ‘natural boundaries’ long after the initial contracts were made, and without the presence of the officials who had made informal oral agreements, or of some of the leading rangatira who were parties to those agreements.

The Golden Bay reserves in particular were subject to constant adjustments in the 1840s and 1850s, as suburban sections were swapped for larger rural ones (and vice versa), boundaries were pared to take natural features into account, and reserves were relocated to encompass old cultivation and pa sites, or because mistakes had been made when the original sections were set aside. Mackay’s *Compendium* provides material which may serve as a starting point for research on the details of reserve-making in Golden Bay. It seems clear that there were a number of real problems which required adjustment by the 1850s, but it is not clear whether or not the solutions were satisfactory in terms of Maori interests.⁸

7. A Mackay, ‘Memorandum on the Origination and Management of Native Reserves in the Southern Island’, 15 May 1871, *Compendium*, vol 2, pp 263–267. See also AJHR, 1873, G-2a.

8. *Compendium*, vols 1, 2, passim

In addition to the complicated situation in Golden Bay, there were clear instances of problems with reserves made in the later Crown purchases. The Taitapu or West Wanganui reserve was incorrectly mapped (and in fact halved by the map), and its area was under-estimated by many thousands of acres even after the map had been corrected by a new sketch map.⁹ The boundaries of the Wakapuaka and Ngati Koata reserves were surveyed several years after their initial creation, and the written records left by McLean were insufficient to establish where the boundary was supposed to have been between the Ngati Tama and Ngati Koata reserves.¹⁰ The Wairau reserves were also the subject of much contention. The Pukatea (White's Bay) reserve was much smaller than it was supposed to have been, and even the larger amount of acres McLean admitted to when pinned down in the 1860s was much smaller than that recorded in his diary in 1856.¹¹ Furthermore, Rangitane later petitioned Parliament with their complaints about the Wairau reserves, claiming that McLean had promised them sole title to the reserves (which they shared with Ngati Rarua and Ngati Toa), and that they had wanted a reserve of 60,000 acres.¹² It is unlikely that McLean would have agreed to such a large reserve in 1856, but Rangitane may have felt that it was reasonable given the much larger reserve that had been made in 1847, but subsequently sold to the Government.

Ngati Toa also protested to the Government that promises made at the time of the 1850s' purchases had not been kept. The promise to make individual reserves of 200 acres each for prominent chiefs, and to give some of them scrip as well, has already been the subject of discussion in this report.¹³ It is sufficient to note here that other leaders were also promised Crown grants and individually-owned reserves in separate arrangements, some of them also the reserves promised to the wider communities, and that the allocation of Crown grants to individuals was gradually carried out in the 1860s. This process requires detailed analysis by Crown and claimant historians. In addition to this type of promise, there were also oral agreements about the reservation of specific pieces of land which never made it into the written deeds, and were disregarded (in all ignorance) by Government officials in later years. In 1884, for example, Atanatiu te Kairangi petitioned Parliament about an island called Paruparu, situated at the north-eastern end of the South Island, which he claimed was specifically excluded from sale when McLean purchased the neighbourhood, because it had a landing-place for their boats and a burial ground. He 'says he has made repeated applications to the Government for the island, which have been taken no notice of. He prays that it may be restored to him.' The Native Affairs Committee reported that the Ngati Toa deed of cession did not mention the island and that it had sold all their claims on the South Island.¹⁴

A similar petition was more favourably received in the same year by the Native Affairs Committee of the Legislative Council. Ngati Toa asked that the same island, Paruparu, and also three others (Kakapo, Nukuaiata, and Motungarara), at the

9. See pt i, chs 9, 11

10. Pt i, ch 9

11. Ibid

12. 'Petition of Teoti Makitonore and 10 Others' and 'Petition of Rangitane of Wairau', AJHR, 1889, I-3, p 7

13. See pt i, ch 8

14. AJHR, 1884, I-2, p 14

entrance of Pelorus Sound, be returned to them. The Government argued that the islands were included in the general meaning of the blanket cession deed of 1853, but the committee held in 1884 that as the Ngati Toa deed specified woods, rocks, streams, lakes, and mines, but omitted islands, and since Ngati Toa maintained that they did not intend to cede their adjacent islands, they ought to have been reserved. Sir George Grey told the committee that he had drawn up the deed and presided at its execution, that he did not intend to include the islands, and that ‘it was expressly agreed on both sides that they should not be included in the cession.’ In 1860, Ihaka followed up the 1853 oral agreement with a visit to Auckland to ask Governor Gore Browne for a ‘clear title’ to one of the islands, Paruparu, but he was refused. In 1868, he applied to the Native Land Court to hear the islands but the court decided that it had no jurisdiction. The Crown assumed ownership of the islands and leased two of them for pastoral farming under the Land Act 1877, but Ngati Toa continued to visit the islands every year for fishing (and was still doing so in 1884). The Native Affairs Committee recommended that the Government should confirm the title of Ngati Toa to the islands by Crown grant ‘to their proper representatives’, by which they may have meant a communal title in contravention of the Native Land Act 1873.¹⁵ The Government declined to act on the committee’s recommendation, and Matenga Te Hiko and 15 others petitioned Parliament again on the issue in 1913.¹⁶

Given the evidence of Sir George Grey, it seems clear that the Pelorus Sound islands were one example of what may have been numerous oral agreements to reserve particular pieces of land. These oral agreements made their way into the written record if they became the subject of a series of protests. Ihaka’s visit to the Governor in 1860 and its purpose may not have been recorded. The significance of his application to the Native Land Court in 1868 could easily have been overlooked even in a careful study of the minute books. It was only because the tribe decided to try again in 1884 with petitions to Parliament that their oral agreement with the Governor in 1853 became part of the accessible written record. It is up to claimant historians to discover whether this type of information has been preserved in the traditions of the people, or whether the oral traditions have served a different purpose and did not preserve these oral agreements. Some historians might suggest that the only way to test such traditions is to ascertain whether they were the subject of sufficient protest to make them part of the written record. In the case of the Ngai Tahu claim, there was also debate over how quickly they made their way into written history, and whether a lengthy delay meant that they were evolved understandings of events which may not have been entertained by the people at the time.¹⁷ There are a number of difficult issues to consider in this respect, but the Tribunal will need to assess how far the Maori people of the northern South Island received the reserves that they were promised, and in the form that they were promised, by the Government of the day.

Issues of population and entitlement pose a second preliminary question: before we can assess the sufficiency of the reserves for ‘present and future needs’ we have to have some idea of how many people were supposed to be supported by them.

15. AJLC, 1884, no 5

16. ‘Petition of Matenga te Hiko and 15 Others of Porirua’, AJHR, 1913, I-3, p 12

17. A Ward, ‘A Report on the Historical Evidence: the Ngai Tahu Claim’, Wai 27 ROD, doc T1, pp 99–105

This is a remarkably difficult question to answer. Population data is statistically unreliable before the first censuses of the 1870s. It consists of guesses and estimates, and usually exists only for different regions and in different years. The early censuses themselves included a substantial component of ‘estimates’, although they became more reliable towards the end of the nineteenth century. Ideally, a collaboration between a demographer and a historian such as that between Ian Pool and Tony Walzl for the Ngai Tahu claim, would be necessary before any substantive quantifications could be made as to the exact ability of the reserves to sustain the resident population of Maori. The question of geography complicates this matter further, as the census regions seldom fit tidily into the Rangahaua Whanui district. Nelson Province included parts of the West Coast, and the Marlborough figures included the Kaikoura district. It is not always possible to get a further breakdown of the figures in order to exclude these extra districts. Iwi affiliations are also suspect in the nineteenth-century census data, as ascription was often made by information collectors rather than respondents per se, and any number of people would be described as ‘Ngatiawa’ or ‘Rangitane’, involving the conflation of hapu and sometimes of iwi.

It is still possible, of course, to detect broad population trends. The population of the northern South Island declined to some extent during the period 1856 to 1900, but the decline was not as great as it seemed because a large part of it was due to the constant departure of people for the North Island. Even were an accurate population count possible, therefore, there were other complicating factors which need to be taken into account. The northern South Island was part of a wider world of kin associations and land rights stretching from Waikanae and Wellington in the south of the North Island as far north as the Ngati Tama ancestral lands in Taranaki. There was a constant stream of migrations from the northern South Island to Taranaki in the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s. Nor were such migrations confined to the Taranaki peoples. In 1855, McLean reported that there were 170 Ngati Rarua living in the northern South Island, 30 in Porirua, and 60 who had returned to the ancestral lands at Waikawau and Mokau.¹⁸

There were also seasonal visits to parts of the Wellington region, some of them lasting for several years, but it is impossible to quantify such movements. On the other hand, there were reports of North Islanders either coming to live in the South Island or possibly coming back to live in the South Island.¹⁹ In terms of the amount of land necessary for the support of the local Maori communities, the potential for migration and counter-migration was known to Government officials at the time of the making of reserves. Indeed, according to James Mackay it was the reason why Te Atiawa hapu were given such supposedly generous reserves in Queen Charlotte Sound – not in case hundreds of relatives suddenly turned up to live there, but so that they would not be tempted to return to Taranaki and complicate the land question in that province.²⁰ By the 1890s, when the reserves were up for grabs in the Native Land Court, the local residents stressed that they considered a return to Taranaki as disqualifying former inhabitants from any rights in the reserves.²¹ In

18. D McLean, notes and journal, 1855, McLean papers, box 3, ATL

19. For example, J Mackay to McLean, Nelson, 31 December 1858, McLean papers, folder 421, ATL

20. J Mackay to McLean, Picton, 24 October 1859, McLean papers, folder 421, ATL

terms of rents and a moneyed income, however, the question was more complicated. Long-term Taranaki residents could not physically live on the South Island reserves, but distance was no barrier to the passage of money, and they might have drained some of the rental income from the area. Further research would be necessary to establish whether or not a significant amount of rent or food or both was sent from the South Island to people living in Taranaki, and not counted in the Nelson and Marlborough censuses.

The second qualifying factor in any consideration of how many people the reserves were supporting, was the individualisation and Crown granting of the various sections. Much of this process took place as a result of promises made by McLean and others to particular families and chiefs during the purchase process in the 1850s, and the adjustment of the Golden Bay reserves.²² James Mackay, Native Commissioner for the northern South Island, held a hui at Motupipi to discuss reserves and other issues in 1860. It was attended by about 100 Maori, including most of the major rangatira of Golden Bay. The chiefs pressed Mackay to fulfil earlier promises and give them Crown grants for their land, but this was not necessarily accompanied by a desire to subdivide the reserves into individually-owned blocks that would form separate farms. They wanted to have Crown grants for individual interests which ran across all their reserved sections, enabling them to continue the current system of joint, communal farming. In 1863, Mackay wrote that:

the greatest difficulty was in persuading the Natives to give up innumerable small holdings, and to get them to understand that 18 acres in one block was better than the same quantity of land distributed over the whole reserve.

This suggests that they did not actually want to stop communal farming just because they wanted Crown grants, but Mackay himself was pushing for consolidated, rationalised family holdings instead of joint cultivation. He argued that it would break up the ‘confined and unhealthy Pas’ and lead to each farmer improving his land, something not possible when land was under joint cultivation. He argued then that he had carried this out at Takaka and that it had worked well there.²³

At the hui, however, he presented a less positive view of his Takaka experiment and warned the assembled Maori of the dangers of obtaining Crown grants. No restrictions against alienation had been placed on these titles:

If you have Crown Grants and sell your Reserves, what will become of you. You will be beggars (tangata rawa kire) in your own country. You are a youth you require looking after.²⁴

At Takaka, he had divided a 150-acre reserve into six lots, which were Crown granted to individuals:

21. Nelson minute book 2, fol 191

22. For example, McLean to Tinline, Nelson, 12 November 1855, Tinline papers, MS papers 26/1, ATL

23. J Mackay to Native Secretary, 3 October 1863, *Compendium*, vol 2, p 139

24. ‘Minutes of Proceedings at a Meeting of Natives held at Motupipi, Golden Bay, on Saturday 4 August 1860’, MA 13/51, NA

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I ask you who owns that land now. Has it not become the property of the pakeha. You sold it to him. Well if the Governor gave you all Crown Grants for your Reserves tomorrow what proof would you give me that you will not do the same.²⁵

Furthermore, since they could not agree on how to subdivide the land, it was impossible to give them all Crown grants for it. As well as making this point, Mackay suggested that the Government should be very careful and only give grants to those who could be relied upon not to sell the land.²⁶

In the same year (1860), Governor Gore Browne drew the attention of the Colonial Secretary to the fact that promises had been made for Crown grants which had not been fulfilled by the Government. The Duke of Newcastle instructed the Governor to pass an enabling Act through the New Zealand Parliament, which led to the passage of the Crown Grants Act 1862.²⁷ This Act empowered the Governor in Council to fulfil the promises of the 1850s even if there was only oral evidence to support them, so long as the Government had investigated the claims and satisfied itself that the promises had been made. As a result of this initiative, James Mackay investigated the various claims and by 1864 had certified that numerous sections ought to have been Crown granted to individuals.²⁸ In 1865, the Governor gazetted an Order in Council vesting many of the Golden Bay reserves in the hands of individual Crown grantees. Very few of these grants were restricted – the great majority could be alienated absolutely at the wish of the new owners.²⁹

The process by which Mackay investigated the claims that promises of Crown grants had been made, or decided who should have grants and to which sections or parts of sections, has gone entirely unrecorded in the published official sources. There is also little indication of how Mackay overcame the problem that he had earlier recorded, that Maori did not wish to subdivide their reserves. It is possible that he dealt with this problem by granting the reserves of communities to one or two individual as absolute owners. The Te Atiawa settlement at Pariwakaoho, for example, consisted of about 30 people but was Crown granted to one individual, Eruera Tatana.³⁰ On the other hand, the populations of these villages and sections were so small that the grantees may actually have been family heads for all the inhabitants, many of whom would have enjoyed rights of succession. Further research should be undertaken to establish whether the process of allocating Crown grants was carried out in a manner consistent with the Crown's Treaty obligations, and whether the land thus granted was effectively alienated from communities to individuals, reducing the amount of land available for the 'present and future needs' of Maori in the northern South Island. There should also be research to ascertain whether Mackay's fears had been justified, with a wholesale alienation of Crown granted reserves by sale to Pakeha farmers.

25. Ibid

26. J Mackay to McLean, Collingwood, 13 August 1860, MA 13/51, NA

27. Memorandum from Native Land Court to Public Trustee and attached extracts, 1 November 1900, MA-MT/1/149.41/54, NA

28. *New Zealand Gazette*, 14 January 1865, p 10

29. Ibid, pp 9–10

30. A Mackay to Native Minister, Wellington, 6 December 1865, *Compendium*, vol 2, p 310

A further complicating factor in assessing the sufficiency of the reserves was the purchase of extra land by Maori, which was Crown granted and never included in the calculation of land available to sustain Maori in the nineteenth century. There are occasional mentions in the various reports of Alexander Mackay, that Maori had purchased extra land, but we have very little information to enable us to calculate how much land had been bought by individuals, and how far this extra land provided an effective supplement to the reserves. There is some suggestion, however, that Maori could not have actually bought much land in the 1860s and 1870s, because complaints were made that the Provincial Governments were obstructing the sale of Crown land to Maori, and that they were being thwarted in their efforts to supplement their reserves.³¹

Another facet of this quandary is that the northern South Island Maori may have owned shares in North Island land, from which they may or may not have derived some form of benefit. It is possible that only the most prominent chiefs were actually given shares in land which passed through the Native Land Court or Compensation Court if they were still resident in the South Island. Huria Matenga, for example, was awarded title in some of the Ngati Tama reserves in Taranaki, but she was of very high status in the iwi and may have been an exceptional case.³² Without further research, it is not possible to judge at the present time whether or not northern South Island Maori were obtaining any significant benefit from land which they had purchased over and above their reserves, or from land which they owned in other parts of New Zealand.

1.3 LIFE ON THE RESERVES, 1860–90

The preliminary questions discussed above make it clear that an authoritative quantitative analysis is not possible within the bounds of the present report. An overview of life on the reserves, however, and an assessment of their sufficiency for the ‘present and future needs’ of their inhabitants, is still possible through the use of impressionistic evidence.

Government officials, especially Commissioner of Native Reserves Alexander Mackay, wrote regular reports on the social and economic state of Maori in the northern South Island district. These reports were usually published in the *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives*. Unfortunately, there is little information for the period after Mackay’s withdrawal from South Island affairs, when the reports were made by a local police magistrate and became very sketchy. The period 1860 to 1880 is relatively rich in published observations of the northern South Island reserves, allowing a series of ‘snapshots’ of conditions on the reserves at particular times.

It is the intention of this report to reproduce those ‘snapshots’ as fully as possible, although this must be done with a caveat as to their limitations. The question of what should be used as indicators of ‘wealth’ or ‘poverty’, for example, and how

31. J Mackay to Native Secretary, 3 October 1863, *Compendium*, vol 2, p 138

32. G Byrnes, ‘Ngati Tama Ancillary Claims Reports: Ngarautika and Pukearuhe Town Belt Sections 6–8’, Wai 143 ROD, doc M21(c), pp 22, 32

they should be interpreted, is a complex one. Recent historians, such as Danny Keenan, have pointed out that the impressionistic evidence of European observers has to be interpreted very carefully. Europeans who visited pa and kainga and recorded their experiences tended, according to Keenan, to see either what they wanted to see or what they expected to see. In either case, their observations had more to do with European concepts of how life should be lived and society should be organised, than with social realities as Maori saw and experienced them. Apart from the more obvious moral judgements, there were also more subtle ones which underlay the use of words like 'comfortable' or 'uncomfortable', 'poor' or 'rich', 'hygienic' or 'unhygienic'. These were loaded terms involving culturally-specific value judgements. The use of such words by colonial observers needs to be carefully weighed and evaluated against alternative Maori points of view, insofar as these are recoverable from written and oral sources.³³

A further consideration, however, is the extent to which Maori of the time sought to engage with the colonial economy, obtain European forms of 'wealth', and began to adopt European standards of health and comfort. Whether or not one believes that this amounts to 'colonisation of the mind', the social and economic impact of land purchase and reserve-making must be measured against the contemporary aspirations of both races. Keenan points out, for example, the tensions in the world view of Maori health reformers Maui Pomare and Peter Buck. He argues that Pomare and Buck understood the rooting of 'bad housing, feeding, clothing, nursing, unventilated rooms, unwholesome pas' in what Keenan identifies as long-standing customary communal living practices. In order to justify departure from those practices, Pomare looked back to a pre-European lifestyle as something markedly different from the communal living of 1906: 'the ancient Maori lived on mountains which in itself was a cure . . . he was able to withstand the inroads of this disease . . . now he has left the higher altitudes and lives in overcrowded, squalid whares'.³⁴ The result of this re-interpretation of past and present by Maori in the nineteenth century was an active engagement with aspects of the colonial society and economy, adoption and adaptation of some features, and hearty rejection of others.

For the Maori people of the northern South Island, the success or otherwise of their efforts to engage with the colonial economy and adopt elements of the Pakeha lifestyle depended on the utility of their reserves after the sale of all their land by 1856. Our first snapshot of the aftermath of these land sales came in 1863, when James Mackay wrote a general report on the 'present conditions and prospects' of South Island Maori. His overall impression was that they 'have not made such an advance, either socially or morally, as might have been expected from the close contact into which they have been brought with Europeans.'³⁵

One of the primary reasons, according to Mackay, was that their reserves were too small:

33. D Keenan, 'Incontrovertible Fact, Notwithstanding Estimates: Passing Impressions to Resounding Expectations – Maori People Observed in the Early Contact Period', unpublished article, 1995, *passim*

34. *Ibid*, pp 18–20

35. James Mackay to Native Secretary, 3 October 1863, *Compendium*, vol 2, p 138

Since the greater portion of the Native lands in the Middle Island have been purchased by the Crown, the Natives have been confined to their reserves. One of the consequences of this, and of being hemmed in by settlers, is that they are now unable to breed or run the pigs which, at one time, formed a large item of their income, and a staple article of their food. The same reason will also prevent them from ever possessing any very large quantity of horned cattle, or sheep.³⁶

He also identified other reasons for the lack of economic development (and indeed a perceived decline in Maori farming), such as the difficulty of carrying on crop farming without fences, which led to the frequent destruction of crops by the cattle of European neighbours.³⁷

Farming of all types had been further undermined by the gold rushes, which had lured many Maori into prospecting and digging. Mackay suggested that many had been successful but had wasted their money on alcohol and ‘useless finery’. As a result they were now in debt to storekeepers and others, and had developed ‘lazy and vagabond habits’. These were fairly standard criticisms made at the time of goldminers of whatever race, but we can assume that Mackay would have been aware of any significant investment of new capital in land purchasing or development by Maori in his district. Instead, he reported that some people did have money available to buy land, but that they had been disadvantaged by the provincial government’s refusal to honour the central government’s promise that Maori would be able to repurchase land at a flat rate of 10 shillings per acre. In addition, the provincial governments seemed actively to oppose the expansion of Maori land-holding. Mackay gave an example of trying to arrange for the purchase of land at Tua Marina to allow Ngati Rarua and Rangitane access to timber and the river bank. The Crown Lands Office took steps to prevent the arrangement because ‘they did not want the Natives to form a settlement there’. He had made several attempts to help Maori repurchase land and met similar difficulties, and this had lowered confidence in the Government.³⁸

The result was, in Mackay’s impression, the creation of a ‘desponding feeling’. He identified the low survivorship of children as a further cause of this observed phenomenon, arguing that ‘the idea has become deeply rooted into their minds, that the race is doomed to extinction’. There had also been constant rumours that Europeans were going to massacre them, many of these originating in the North Island. Mackay was not surprised that the ‘natural result is the creation of a desponding feeling’. Like many officials of the time, he doubted the ability of the Government to carry out the amalgamation of the races, although he stressed its duty to try anyway: ‘It is far easier to prognosticate the ultimate degradation and extinction of the Maori, than to prescribe the proper course to be pursued to avert those evils.’³⁹

36. James Mackay to Native Secretary, 3 October 1863, *Compendium*, vol 2, p 138

37. *Ibid*

38. *Ibid*

39. *Ibid*, pp 138–139. It had been argued by humanitarians for many years that the Government had a positive duty to try to reverse any population decline which took place as a result of contact with Europeans. See, for example, Selwyn to FitzRoy, November 1845, G 19/1, NA.

Having discussed the economic problems of life on the reserves, Mackay went on to describe the political and social state of Maori in his district. In this area he painted a different picture, despite his report of a general despondency and fears of massacre. He described the people as ‘outwardly very loyal, because they dare not be otherwise – the numerical disproportion between them and the settlers being so great’. He argued that they saw the Kingitanga as an anti-land selling movement, and that they secretly supported the King’s policy of holding on to unsold lands, presumably because they were regretting their own actions, although Mackay did not draw this conclusion. They secretly supported the King’s contention that the Governor had no mana over unsold lands, and circulated rumours of huge losses on the European side of the war.

The South Island Maori had also created runanga for themselves, independent of Mackay’s control, which led to the somewhat peevish remark that the runanga were:

an admirable institution for extorting money, and for making endless litigation. I have therefore done everything that lays [sic] in my power to discourage Runangas in every place under my control.

Assessors were settling minor cases with Mackay’s permission, and the overall impression is one of a people politically healthy and organised, but aware of their subordinate position, and secretly wishing success to the Kingitanga. There are two subtexts to Mackay’s letter in this respect: first, he was suggesting to his political superiors that Maori loyalty could not be taken for granted in the South Island at this time of war, and that he was doing a successful and important job in controlling the situation; but secondly, it also makes it clear that in spite of their economic frustrations, or perhaps because of them, South Island Maori were politically active and were pursuing the new North Island forms of community and political re-organisation.⁴⁰

Although Mackay did not support the runanga and the new forms of political control and the administration of justice, he was in fact advocating a social revolution on the land. Maori were pressing for Crown grants and a more secure title to their remaining lands, and the commissioner was using this movement to encourage the subdivision and individualisation of the reserves. From Queen Charlotte Sound in eastern Marlborough all the way across to Golden Bay and the West Coast, the northern people were still carrying out joint cultivation on communally-controlled reserves. Mackay hoped to use the desire for Crown grants to create consolidated, rationalised family holdings, breaking up the ‘confined and unhealthy Pas’ and enabling each farmer to improve his own piece of land.⁴¹

In addition to the incentive of Crown grants, the commissioner had a further instrument for pressuring Maori, assisting the social changes of which he approved, and rewarding political loyalty. The Governor had just appointed him to control the native reserves fund, which administered the tenths and other leased reserves under the Native Reserves Amendment Act 1862. The fund was still in some disarray but it was producing a ‘considerable’ income from its Nelson properties. There was still

40. J Mackay to Native Secretary, 3 October 1863, *Compendium*, vol 2, p 139

41. *Ibid*

no system in place, however, as a ‘fixed scheme for allotting or apportioning these funds’. The commissioner was charged with establishing such a system, and he suggested that there should be one fund for the whole South Island, to support Medical Officers and health care, schools, and farming (by aiding in the purchase of farm equipment). He also suggested that the fund support the indigent and the infirm, and pay the expenses of Maori involved in Government business. Social change could be assisted by a system of agricultural prizes and rewards for the building of new houses.⁴² Commissioner Mackay was not in charge of the fund for long enough to establish the system he proposed, but some of his ideas were followed through by Alexander Mackay when he took over the management of the reserves fund in 1865.

The use of the native reserves fund for welfare and material assistance was endorsed by Alexander Mackay in 1865. He felt that it was wrong, however, for the Government to force the fund to pay for the sorts of assistance that it had elsewhere accepted as its own duty to fund from the taxes of the whole community, especially education. This was one of the major themes of our second ‘snapshot’, Mackay’s report as the new Commissioner of Native Reserves for the northern South Island, which he wrote in December 1865.⁴³ His report includes a description of many of the individual reserves, and has been included in this report as appendix i. The situation in Golden Bay was still confused at this point, because the old reserve names and titles were still being used officially, despite the exchanges and adjustments which had been made by James Mackay and others. The new commissioner’s comments about the worth and usefulness of the Golden Bay reserves were almost entirely negative. His description of the huge Taitapu reserve, which was actually twice the 44,000 acres recorded by Mackay, is worth repeating in full, as it formed the main part of any calculation of acres per head of population made by Government officials.

Mackay wrote that its ‘character is very indifferent, consisting chiefly of high hills covered with black birch, portions of it being very rocky and precipitous, but a small portion might be made available for a cattle run’. There was constant traffic to and from the gold fields, and West Wanganui had a harbour, which meant that there was both a local market for meat and a means of servicing it, had the reserve been suitable for pastoral development. With rich coal resources as well, there was considerable potential for a permanent income from this reserve. There were also rich timber and gold supplies, but local Maori had surrendered a lot of their rights to use these and other resources when they agreed to allow Taitapu to become an official Goldfield. The local inhabitants, of whom Mackay says there were only 10 (who would have been supplemented seasonally) could still use the reserve at this time for low-scale cropping in a few small valleys, and for harvesting of native plants, hunting, and fishing. He noted that ‘there are others interested in it, as it is a reserve set apart for all the Natives of the Ngatirarua, Ngatiawa, and Ngatitama tribes residing in Blind and Massacre Bays’.⁴⁴

42. J Mackay to Native Secretary, 3 October 1863, *Compendium*, vol 2, pp 139–140

43. A Mackay to Native Minister, 6 December 1865, *Compendium*, vol 2, pp 310–312

44. *Ibid*, p 310. For the mistake with the true extent of Taitapu, see pt i, ch 11.

The commissioner's description of the other Golden Bay reserves was not very flattering. Some of them, of course, had been made for non-economic reasons, as the sites of burial grounds and other wahi tapu, but Mackay assessed them on the grounds of economic viability alone, partly because the inhabitants were expected to support themselves from these reserves, regardless of the reason for which they had been made. A block of 41 acres at Wainui River was described as 'of very little worth, a great portion of it being bare sand hills'. Another block of 200 acres on the same river supported 20 people. Part of it was cultivated but it was mainly in bush, and some of it was very low and swampy. The occupants were only able to run a tiny number of sheep on it. Allotments at the Tukurua River were too hilly, while the Atiawa settlement at Pariwakaoho had land which was 'very indifferent, in fact there is barely sufficient arable land on it to maintain the resident population'. Their further block of 59 acres on the coast had five acres of cultivable land, the rest consisted of hillsides so steep as to be unusable. The land reserved on the Aorere River was heavily timbered and liable to flooding, while that at Wharangi Bay and Separation Point was 'rough' and barely sustained its tiny population. Occasionally Mackay mentioned that a piece of land had been reserved for fishing purposes, such as the 100-acre block at Ligar Bay which was 'very useless and swampy', but mainly he evaluated the reserves in terms of European-style farming.

According to the commissioner's assessment, sections 12 and 13 on the Takaka River, and a block of 300 acres not listed in the official return (presumably because Maori had repurchased it from the Crown), were 'really the only good land the Natives resident in Massacre Bay possess'. The land was heavily timbered and of 'good quality', situated at the lower end of the Takaka Valley, and could be let to Europeans at £1 per annum. Mackay felt that this particular community 'have plenty of land for their own use' and should be persuaded to set aside land to pay for a Medical Officer.

In summary, Mackay felt that the Golden Bay Maori had a lot of reserves in terms of acreage, but that most of it was either too hilly or too swampy to be used for either agrarian or pastoral farming. There were only 600 acres of really good land in the whole of the Golden Bay reserves. Furthermore, many of these reserves were in the process of being Crown granted to individuals, although Mackay noted that some of these grants were 'life interests'. He concluded: 'although the area appears numerically large, the land on the whole is of such indifferent character as would leave little or none beyond what is required by the resident Natives for their own use and occupation'. They could neither supplement their income by leasing land, nor develop it themselves for pastoral farming.⁴⁵

Their neighbours in Tasman Bay were little better off. On the western side of the Bay, Maori were confined to the company reserves and the supplemental sections allotted to them by Commissioner Spain's award. Mackay noted that a population of 100 people had a total of 1000 acres of suburban land (10 acres per head), some of it of very good quality, which was theirs on sufferance in 1865. He took the view that the land actually belonged to the Native Reserves Trust, under the Native Reserves Amendment Act 1862, and that Maori were squatters on the reserves: 'on

45. A Mackay to Native Minister, 6 December 1865, *Compendium*, vol 2, pp 310-311

the death or removal of any of the occupants to other localities, the land will revert to the Trust and become available for lease'. Although the Ngati Rarua and Te Atiawa on this side of the bay were confined to a very small land base, they received some assistance from the leased lands of the trust, as did the Golden Bay people.⁴⁶ They may also have had rights in the Golden Bay reserves, and elsewhere in the northern South Island at this time.

On the other side of the bay, Ngati Tama had the large reserve of Wakapuaka, although this was not counted as a 'reserve' in the official statistics because it had been excepted from sale and was still under customary tenure. Ngati Rarua had given up any rights in this reserve, so that the 18,000 acres were available for the support of the local Tama population under Wi Katene Te Puoho, and possibly their relatives over on the coast. Next to Wakapuaka were the Ngati Koata reserves of the French Pass–Croixelles district. Mackay commented that these reserves, 'although large, are very useless, consisting chiefly of rough hillsides. The land is poor, so much so, that the Natives have been induced to purchase land for cultivation from the Nelson Provincial Government'. As well as these worthless reserves, however, Ngati Koata still had access to the substantial lands and resources of D'Urville Island, which was not included in the commissioner's survey for the same reason that Wakapuaka was excluded.⁴⁷

Marlborough Maori were not as fortunate as Ngati Tama and Ngati Koata. Mackay was only able to praise the reserves in the Pelorus Sound and Valley, where Maori had 1010 acres of land, which was very good quality on the whole but liable to flooding. He even thought that part of these reserves might be set aside to support a Medical Officer. The Te Atiawa reserves at Queen Charlotte Sound, however, were 'large reserves, but, with the exception of a block at Waikawa, near Picton, the rest is of a very indifferent character, chiefly steep hillsides, with small patches, suitable for Native cultivation, scattered here and there on the shores of the Sound'.⁴⁸ This account was even more disturbing in light of the events of 1848 to 1851, when Mackay's best reserve (Waikawa) had been described as basically unsuitable for the Maori to use.⁴⁹

The commissioner was also scathing in his description of the Wairau reserve of Ngati Rarua, Rangitane, and Ngati Toa. He suggested that only 50 of the 770 acres were suitable for cultivation, the rest was a deep swamp (which itself might have provided traditional food resources). The amount of good land was so scarce that residents had been forced to buy land from the Government, although Mackay did not say how much land they were able to buy, or comment on the extent to which it alleviated pressure on the reserves. In addition to the Wairau reserve, there were a further 770 acres of reserves in Marlborough, all 'worthless' for cultivation, but some of it serving as a run for stock. The commissioner's report painted a bleak picture for the economic future of Marlborough Maori. His overall conclusion was

46. A Mackay to Native Minister, 6 December 1865, *Compendium*, vol 2, p 311

47. Ibid, pp 311–312. See also A Mackay, 'Memorandum on the Origination and Management of Native Reserves in the Southern Island', 15 May 1871, *Compendium*, vol 2, p 267, where the amount of unsold, non-reserve land (D'Urville Island and Wakapuaka) is given as 51,170 acres.

48. A Mackay to Native Minister, 6 December 1865, *Compendium*, vol 2, p 312

49. See pt i, ch 5

that the Government could not look to these reserves to supplement public monies for 'Maori purposes' in the South Island.⁵⁰

In 1870, Major Charles Heaphy took up his duties as Commissioner of Native Reserves for the whole of New Zealand. He made a fairly detailed report on the northern South Island reserves to the Government, although he drew heavily on the views of the local commissioner, Alexander Mackay. Heaphy's report on the Nelson reserves revealed additional information on the western Tasman Bay reserves to that of Mackay in 1865. The Tasman Bay Maori were supposed to have had 1350 acres of occupation reserves, but in 1853 Governor Grey had granted 350 acres of their land, and 568 acres from the Tenths Trust, to the Anglican Church for an industrial school at Motueka. The remaining 1000 acres had since been surveyed and partitioned among the inhabitants, and it was considered possible to lease 140 acres, which yielded £189 per annum by 1870. The rents were paid to the Maori living on the other 860 acres. Heaphy judged that only half of the land in these Motueka and Sandy Bay reserves was of good quality: 'This gives on the average to each adult Native about six and a half acres of good land, and a similar amount of an inferior quality.'⁵¹

Heaphy did not discuss the Wakapuaka reserve in eastern Tasman Bay, nor the Ngati Koata reserves in the Croixelles district. The only Golden Bay reserve which he mentioned in any detail was the huge Taitapu one:

The West Wanganui Reserve is chiefly of poor hilly land, but it contains a few small sheltered glens fit for cultivation in the Native manner. It is chiefly valuable however in containing a coal field; which, lying along the shore of the harbor, promises to become of much importance.⁵²

The commissioner suggested that the Native Trust should provide money to develop the coal field. He had no other comment to make on the Golden Bay reserves, except to state that they were so poorly shaped that they would need very long and expensive fences.⁵³

Heaphy calculated that Maori in the Nelson Province (including some of the West Coast Ngai Tahu and their reserves) had 58,365 acres, 2 roods, 7 perches, for a population of 483 people, 'giving ostensibly 120 five-sixths acres to each Native'. He qualified this figure with the point that the 'true proportion is, however, less for the local Natives, as Maoris from both sides of the Straits hold interests in the large – 44,000 acre – reserve at West Whanganui'.⁵⁴ Furthermore, this reserve was (by his own account) not much use at present to its resident beneficiaries. Heaphy's figures did not include Wakapuaka or D'Urville Island.

The commissioner had very little to say about the Marlborough reserves. He calculated that there were 21,404 acres in 44 blocks for a population of 369 people, but these figures included the Kaikoura reserves and their Ngai Tahu inhabitants.

50. A Mackay to Native Minister, 6 December 1865, *Compendium*, vol 2, p 312

51. C Heaphy to Native Minister, 'Report on the Native Reserves of the Province of Nelson', 26 July 1870, AJHR, 1870, D-16, p 37

52. Ibid

53. Ibid, pp 37, 39

54. Ibid, p 37

Heaphy averaged land ownership to 58 acres per head, although this took no account of the differences in quality and quantity of land available in different areas to the various communities. He asserted that the Government was directly responsible for five reserves, which had been brought under the Native Reserves Act 1856, and was 'indirectly responsible for the inviolability of the remainder', an important statement on the part of the Governor's agent for the administration of reserves. Heaphy judged that the Marlborough reserves were 'fully equal in value to the bulk of land, respectively in each district'. They were mainly unleased and in use for 'plantation places, villages, fishing stations, and woodcutting bushes'. There were no town reserves, and no educational and charitable endowments like the ones on the West Coast. On the whole, however, Heaphy felt that Marlborough Maori were adequately provided for, and concluded:

The very ample reservation of land for the Natives in these districts, where in Marlborough the average is 58 acres, and in Nelson 120 acres for each Native, has not failed to have a good effect on the minds of the Northern Natives. 'If', the latter argue, 'the Pakeha means eventually to dispossess us of our lands, why does he take care of a handful of slaves who are powerless against him, on the other side of Cook's Strait?'⁵⁵

In 1872, Alexander Mackay wrote a relatively detailed report on the political, social, and economic state of the Maori people in his district, similar to that written by his cousin James in 1863. In terms of their political state, he judged that they were loyal to the Government and well-disposed to the settlers, mainly because their small numbers made it impolitic to take any other stance. A few 'restless spirits' had secretly favoured the Kingitanga at first, but emissaries from the King had made no headway in recent years. Similarly, the new Hauhau religion had made no converts. The local people supported peace, and the establishment of schools in the North Island.⁵⁶

In terms of their social condition, Mackay suggested that the people were in a very good moral state, citing the fact that there had hardly ever been any criminal convictions among them. They were law-abiding and referred disputes with European neighbours to the authorities. Although such claims need to be treated carefully, as education and schools represented very different things to different people, Mackay felt that there was a 'strong desire' among them, especially at Wakapuaka, for schools to educate their children. Apart from the Motueka Anglican school, there had been no schools since the heyday of the Wesleyan missionaries in the 1840s. The local Maori refused to support the Motueka school, in case that support was interpreted as acceptance of the alienation of their reserved land to the Bishop of New Zealand. Mackay recommended that the Government establish village schools.⁵⁷

55. C Heaphy, 'Report on Native Reserves in the Province of Marlborough', 6 August 1870, AJHR, 1870, D-16, p 43

56. A Mackay, 'Report on the Condition of the Natives in the Provinces of Nelson and Marlborough and the County of Westland, for the Period Ended the 30th June 1872', 18 July 1872, AJHR, 1872, F-3, p 16

57. *Ibid*, pp 16-17

In terms of other social indicators as recognised by Mackay, he reported that the Maori were mostly ‘well housed and clothed and enjoy a good condition of health’. Drunkenness had declined as a result of determined efforts on the part of Maori leaders. Their clothing ‘as a rule is not inferior to that worn by the [Pakeha] labouring classes’. He also thought that their domestic lifestyle was becoming more ‘European’, citing as evidence that most houses were now built of wood and had doors, windows, and chimneys. He had encouraged this trend of building new houses to replace the old ‘hovels’ by providing bricks for chimneys, windows and doors, and ironmongery, through the native reserve fund. Mackay used this fund to assist Maori and carry out social engineering at the same time. By 1872, the fund was paying for medical attendance, clothing for the elderly and the sick, and half of the cost of crop farming equipment, such as carts, ploughs, harrows, harness, and other agricultural tools.⁵⁸

Mackay claimed that Maori enjoyed a good state of health but he also reported that medical treatment had been provided for 820 cases of illness over the past three years, out of a population of about 920 people. Chest diseases were most common but there had also been several deaths from low fever. The commissioner estimated that the population had been stationary for the past year, but that it was declining overall, citing as evidence that three quarters of the current population were adults.⁵⁹

Mackay’s most important comments, for the purposes of this report, were on the economic state of Maori by 1872. In terms of agriculture, he wrote that in the early years of the colony there had been a steady demand for pigs, grains, potatoes, and other crops, which had led Maori to vie with Europeans in cultivation. Demand had dropped steadily, however, and Maori now paid very little attention to agriculture, except to grow a ‘bare sufficiency for their own wants’. The drop in prices had also retarded agriculture among Europeans, many of whom had successfully turned to pastoral farming as an alternative. Furthermore, the lure of gold had caused many to abandon cultivation, but with little long-term benefit. Maori, however could not turn to pastoral farming as the Pakeha had done, while in the meantime they were finding it increasingly difficult to maintain elements of their traditional lifestyle. Mackay’s comments on these matters are worth quoting in full:

They own comparatively very few horses and cattle, and the breeding of pigs, which used to occupy their attention in former years, has fallen into disuse, excepting in a few localities, chiefly in consequence of their having no room to run them, owing to the gradual settlement of the country by the European population. The same reason will also prevent them from owning any number of sheep.

Since the sale of the bulk of their lands to the Crown, the Natives have been mostly confined to their reserves, which, although large in the aggregate for the number of persons to whom they belong, are small in comparison to the extent of land owned by them in former years, over which they could hunt or fish without hindrance or fear of transgressing some unknown law; now they can hardly keep an animal about them, without its becoming a source of anxiety, lest it involve them in some trouble with their European neighbours. The increase of civilization around them, besides

58. Ibid, p 17

59. Ibid

curtailing their liberties, has also compelled the adoption of a different, and to them a more expensive mode of life, which, owing to their improvident habits, they find it very difficult to maintain. ('From long use, European commodities have become necessities of life. Hitherto the Natives have possessed the means of paying for them; but in proportion as their expensive habits and tastes increase, so does their poverty.'⁶⁰)

All this is very perplexing and bewildering to the Maori, whose early habits and mode of life were so different to ours, and it is not surprising that, perceiving his incapacity to keep pace with his European neighbours, a want of earnestness should predominate all he undertakes. The quantity of land set apart for the Natives is ample, if they would only put it to good use; but in many instances they prefer letting, in place of cultivating it. This practice is not objectionable when they have plenty of land to spare for the purpose, and the rent is commensurate with its value. At Motueka, the Natives, who occupy a portion of the Trust Estate, derive an income from letting their surplus land, at £240 per annum – this amount is independent of rent accruing from land in the occupation of tenants under the Trust. The Natives of Queen Charlotte's Sound and the Wairau also receive an income of £100 per annum from rents.⁶¹

Some of Mackay's comments were ambivalent. He recognised that neither Europeans nor Maori found arable farming a very profitable pursuit in the current economic climate, but that Maori reserves were too small to allow them to adopt pastoral farming. They could, however, lease any small pieces of suitable land to European neighbours to form part of their large runs, and obtain a limited income from it that way. Mackay approved of this where there was still enough left to the lessors for subsistence farming and therefore survival, but he implied that this situation was relatively rare.

In 1874, the commissioner commented further on the increasing pressure on the reserves. His comments in this case were directed towards the southern Ngai Tahu reserves, but would have applied with equal strength to the northern districts:

A much larger area is necessary to afford subsistence for a Maori than for a European, owing to the difference in their mode of tillage. The Native system of husbandry is a very exhaustive one to the soil, and so soon as it is worn out it becomes of no further use to them. This forms the chief cause of their impoverished condition. In former years, before the country was occupied by Europeans, they could roam all over it in search of edibles, but now they are hemmed in by civilization, and have no chance of obtaining the necessary supplies should the few acres they cultivate fail to produce a sufficiency. Every year as the settlement of the country progresses, the Natives are necessarily restricted to narrower and narrower limits, until they no longer possess the freedom adapted to their mode of life. The settlers hunt down, for pastime or other purposes, the birds which constituted their food, or, for purposes of improvement, drain the swamps and watercourses from which they obtained their supplies of fish; their ordinary subsistence failing them, and lacking the energy or

60. Author's interpolation, taken from J W Stack to Native Minister, Kaiapoi, 30 April 1873, AJHR, 1873, G-1, p 20

61. A Mackay, 'Report on the Condition of the Natives in the Provinces of Nelson and Marlborough and the County of Westland, for the Period Ended the 30th June 1872', 18 July 1872, AJHR, 1872, F-3, pp 17–18

ability to supplement their means of livelihood by labour, they lead a life of misery and semi-starvation.

All this might have been obviated in the case of the Southern Natives, had the precaution been taken to set apart land to provide for the wants of the Natives, in anticipation of the probable effect of colonization on their former habits. It would have been an easy matter for the Government to have imposed this tax on the landed estate, on the acquisition of Native territory. Such reserves would have afforded easy relief to the people who had ceded their lands for a trifle, and formed the only possible way of paying them with justice.⁶²

In discussing his theories for the causes of population decline for the whole island, Mackay commented that Maori of all ages lacked sufficient food and clothing. He argued that this did not act as a check to marriage and having children in a 'prudential' sense, however, as the want of necessities was 'a matter of familiar occurrence to which they have been accustomed from childhood'. He blamed Maori subsistence agriculture as well, arguing that they 'depend principally for subsistence on that which is most easily obtained, and consequently suffer through the variations of the seasons'. He also added that there had been an increase of population in Marlborough, which he ascribed to half-castes, and that the decline in the north was largely due to migration – in 1860 the whole of the Ngati Rahiri, living at Anakiwa, left for Taranaki, and since then members of other tribes had done the same. Mackay felt that there was a much more pronounced population decline in the south.⁶³

By the early to mid-1870s, therefore, Maori were facing serious economic constriction on their reserves. The Native Reserves Trust did its best to assist, and frequently stood between the northern Maori and disaster. In 1873, for example, Mackay reported that food had been very scarce in his district for the past 18 months, due to flooding and then droughts. The destruction of the potato crop, and the inability to grow seed potatoes for the next crop, would have led to starvation at Motueka if the fund had not stepped in and supplied them with necessities and seed potatoes. Maori in other parts were able 'through their own exertions to relieve themselves from want'. The Wakapuaka Maori would have been in the same position as the Motueka people if they had not been involved in building a road through their land, which enabled them to buy food. The line between subsistence and destitution was clearly very narrow in the case of the Nelson Maori.⁶⁴

The trust's main income-producing lands were in Nelson and the districts of Moutere and Motueka – 52 town sections, and 4100 acres of suburban land. The rents amounted to about £1500 per annum at this time. From this sum, £300 per annum was paid to the Motueka people for the leased 'occupation' land. The rest of the money was spent on administration and salaries, aiding Maori agriculture, assisting house-building, medical attendance (a doctor's salary), and the provision of food and clothes for the sick and indigent. There seemed to be a good number of sick, poor, and elderly people who had to be supplied with food and clothes.⁶⁵ In

62. A Mackay to Under-Secretary of Native Department, 24 June 1874, AJHR, 1874, G-2c, p 2

63. *Ibid*, p 6

64. A Mackay to Native Minister, 15 April 1873, AJHR, 1873, G-1, p 19

65. A Mackay, 'Report on Native Reserves, Middle Island, 30 July 1873', AJHR, 1873, G-2a, pp 1–2

terms of Mackay's administration of this money, both contemporaries such as Heaphy, and modern historians such as Graham Butterworth, have argued that he did an excellent job.⁶⁶ Pamariki Paaka, however, petitioned Parliament in 1886 for the return of these lands and their leases to the direct control of Maori owners, and for an accounting from Mackay as to the 'former payment of rents'.⁶⁷ Further research is necessary on the issue of reserves administered by the Crown, the quality of that administration, Maori satisfaction or otherwise with that administration, and Maori aspirations for control over lands in their beneficial ownership.

One of the key tasks of the trust was to assist the Government in its aims to provide schools for the education and socialisation of Maori children. During the 1870s, the trust was involved in building schools and paying the salaries (or part of the salaries) of teachers. By 1877, Mackay was very concerned at the inroads which this had made on the money at his disposal for other purposes, especially after flooding had damaged some Motueka properties and reduced the trust's income. A great deal had been spent on building schools and roads, which 'may be fairly considered to be outside the purpose for which the fund is properly intended'. He also pointed out that the payment of salaries for teachers and medical officers was an unfair burden for the trust, since the Government had accepted its duty to pay them everywhere else.⁶⁸

The new education initiative of the 1870s met with a mixed reception from Maori, partly because it came in the middle of a determined political campaign to undo the effects of land sales and recover either land or monetary compensation. Mackay was asked to report on the claims of the northern South Island people and he did not argue in support of them, as he felt that the deeds of 1853 to 1856 had expressed a clear sale of all interests everywhere by Maori of the time.⁶⁹ He did not mention the political campaign for redress in his general report of 1876: 'the Natives generally are pursuing their usual avocations; their general conduct has been good, and there is no case of crime to record'. He added that the schools had made little progress, and blamed this on the indifference of parents.⁷⁰

James West Stack, however, was more forthcoming on the other reasons for the problems experienced by the schools. Stack was a Canterbury clergyman with a very long experience of working with Maori, and he was entrusted with the task of inspecting the schools each year. According to Stack, the teachers were the new missionaries and their schools were designed to be 'one of the chief civilizing agencies', which would wean Maori from their 'prejudices' and make them more loyal to the obliging Government that had provided them.⁷¹ In 1876, he reported that the education of Maori in the South Island was being carried on against the determined opposition of a large number of Maori. Without the interest taken by

66. C Heaphy to Native Minister, 'Report on the Native Reserves of the Province of Nelson, 26 July 1870', AJHR, 1870, D-16, p 37; G Butterworth, *The Maori Trustee*, Wellington, 1991, pp 16-18

67. 'Petition of Pamariki Paaka', AJHR, 1886, I-2, p 16

68. A Mackay, 'Report on Native Reserves, Nelson and Greymouth, 6 August 1877', AJHR, 1877, G-3a, pp 1-2

69. See pt i, ch 9

70. A Mackay to Under-Secretary of Native Department, 17 May 1876, AJHR, 1876, G-1, p 37

71. J W Stack to Native Minister, 29 June 1875, AJHR, 1875, G-2a, p 14

Government officials and a few important chiefs, the number of children at schools would be even less:

The absence of schools supplies the Maoris with a good cry that they are neglected; when they are provided with them they either do not send their children, or, if they do, they seem at pains to hinder their advancement in learning . . . It is hopeless to expect any improvement as long as the Maori believe that by letting their children grow up in ignorance they are strengthening their claims to compensation for their lands.

Stack felt that this was a ‘silly whim’ and that parents should be compelled by law to send their children to school.⁷²

The school inspector cited the Wairau School as one example of this situation. He reported that without Rore Pukekohatu’s support, the school would be deserted: ‘many are opposed to it, having adopted the views that prevail among the South Island Natives that in making use of the schools they are prejudicing their claims to further compensation for their land.’⁷³ Stack expanded on this theme in 1877, asserting that it was usually difficult to get Maori parents to send children to school, and to get children to stay there, but in addition there was the ‘systematic opposition of those who regard these institutions as having been established as a set-off against their claims to further monetary compensation for their lands’.⁷⁴ Stack equated opposition to the schools with moral decline, and reported that the Wairau teacher complained about the extent to which the children were allowed to smoke and drink by their parents, and that the Wairau Maori, especially the Rangitane, were ‘very much addicted to drink’. Their determined opposition to the school, however, was also another aspect of an ongoing struggle between Ngati Toa and Rangitane. Because Rore Pukekohatu supported the school so strongly, and had brought in children from outside to attend it, Rangitane were trying to discredit and destroy the school. Stack was horrified by the reported spectacle of children smoking and drinking, and predicted that the Wairau community was sinking into a state worse than that of their ‘savage forefathers’. There were also tensions between the teacher and the community – Stack, however, dismissed their complaints about the teacher as ‘frivolous’.⁷⁵

At Motueka, Stack presented a picture of a community in disarray, and once again he equated opposition to the school with social disharmony and drunkenness:

At Motueka, as elsewhere in many parts of the country, the Natives are in a very pitiable condition. While the old chiefs were alive, they were able, by virtue of the prestige attaching to the position they once held – before colonisation – to restrain the lawless, and to maintain a certain standard of propriety: now they are dead, every one sets up to be a leader. The whole social system of the Maoris is disorganized; they are loosed from the old restraints, and are not bound by the new; the slave sits on the same mat with his master, and the prostitute and the drunkard flaunt their

72. J W Stack to Under-Secretary of Native Department, 27 May 1876, AJHR, 1876, G-2, p 10

73. Ibid, p 11

74. J W Stack to Under-Secretary of Native Department, 12 June 1877, AJHR, 1877, G-4, p 15

75. Ibid, p 21

vices before the chaste and the sober. But however disheartening the result of the efforts now being made to elevate the Maoris may be, it would be wrong to give them up; it would be a shame to desert the few who, however feebly, are trying to adopt the customs of civilized life in their entirety – the few who are struggling to emancipate themselves and their children from those customs which are rapidly dragging down their race to destruction.⁷⁶

In 1878, Stack presented a similarly negative view of Waikawa, where a new school had been built with 28 children on its roll, but here the problem was that the local Te Atiawa objected to the role of assimilation assigned to their new school. The children were very defiant, an attitude which Stack blamed on:

the constant intercourse that exists between the disaffected Taranaki Natives and those living about Cook Strait. The manners of the Maoris in this neighbourhood are very disagreeable, and they evidently do not wish to acquire our language or habits. The masters engaged in the schools are deserving of much sympathy for with the most strenuous efforts they can hardly make headway against the thinly-concealed antagonism of the adult Maoris . . . On my way to examine the school I had to pass through the village, where every person I met seemed under the influence of drink. The master was just returning from the house of the Chairman of the School Committee, whom he found sitting with some Maoris round a grog-bottle, and deaf to all his advice. Under the circumstances it was impossible to invite any of the Maoris to attend the examination. I trust Mr Lewis's [the teacher] influence will in time effect some improvement in the moral condition of this village.⁷⁷

Stack's views were clearly very sincerely held, but there was little of this fire and brimstone, or social dislocation, in Mackay's reports of a quiet, law-abiding people whose 'general conduct has been good'.⁷⁸ He did, however, report a continuing decline of population in the late 1870s. In 1878, he took a census in his district. There were 470 adults and 222 children. This represented a considerable decrease since the last census, partly because of many more deaths than births, and partly because of a large migration. Since 1874, 146 had left the area, and 135 had died, while births amounted to 92. Mackay pointed out, however, that almost all of the deaths were adults, and mainly from old age, which meant that infant survivorship was high. In Queen Charlotte Sound there were more births than deaths. Mackay accounted for this by 'the large admixture of European blood amongst the parents'. He suggested that the population of Marlborough, Nelson, and Westland was 1214 in 1858, and had decreased by 45 percent since then (to 692), but 20 percent of that decrease had been by migration. Mackay had no real explanation for the population decline. His earlier suggestion that malnutrition played a part was forgotten as he argued that 'they usually possess an abundance of good land with every facility for obtaining the necessaries of life, to which is added the advantage of dwelling in a climate of greater salubrity than is enjoyed in most parts of the world; but, notwithstanding all these advantages that tend to keep a population in a normal

76. J W Stack to Under-Secretary of Native Department, 12 June 1877, AJHR, 1877, G-4, p 22

77. J W Stack to Native Minister, 29 June 1878, AJHR, 1878, G-7, pp 9–10

78. A Mackay to Under-Secretary, 17 May 1876, AJHR, 1876, G-1, p 37

condition, the Maori is gradually passing away'. This statement was in stark contrast to earlier comments about the economic situation on the reserves, and to his later comments in the 1880s.⁷⁹

By 1881, the northern population had declined from 692 to 623, with 43 births outweighed by 71 deaths, and the departure of 25 people for the North Island.⁸⁰ This reduction in population does not seem to have reduced economic pressure on the reserves. Mackay sent a report to the Native Department on the dire straits of Ngai Tahu in that year, and it is worth quoting at length, as many of his observations would also have applied to the northern reserves, especially as the one large area left for shifting agriculture and hunting (Taitapu) was about to be sold in its entirety two years later in 1883:

At many of the other settlements poverty is steadily on the increase amongst the residents, and without some change is effected, the people will ultimately drift into a state of semi-starvation. The increase of civilization around them, besides curtailing the liberties they formerly enjoyed for fishing and catching birds, has also compelled the adoption of a different and more expensive mode of life, which they find very difficult to support; this gets them into debt with the tradesmen, and the puzzle is how they manage to exist at all, as regular employment is not to be obtained, and the scanty crops that are raised are insufficient for their own use. A few of them receive a small income by letting their land; but the money is usually anticipated a year or so in advance . . .

A matter that has inflicted a serious injury on the Natives of late years, and for the most part ruined the value of the fishery easements granted by the Native Land Court, is the action of the Acclimatization societies in stocking many of the streams and lakes with imported fish. These fish are protected by special legislation, consequently the Natives are debarred from using nets for catching the whitebait in season, [n]or can they catch eels or other Native fish in these streams for fear of transgressing the law. They complain that, although they have a close season for eels, the Europeans catch them all the year round. In olden times the Natives had control of these matters, but the advent of the Europeans and the settlement of the country changed this state of affairs and destroyed the protection that formerly existed, consequently their mahinga kai (food-producing places) are rendered more worthless every year, and, in addition to this, on going fishing or bird-catching, they are frequently ordered off by the settlers if they happen to have no reserve in the locality. This state of affairs, combined with the injury done to their fisheries by the drainage of the country, inflicts a heavy loss on them annually and plunges them further into debt, or keeps them in a state of privation. All this is very harassing to a people who not long since owned the whole of the territory now occupied by another race, and it is not surprising that discontent prevails, or that progress or prosperity is impossible. The small quantity of land also held per individual – viz, fourteen acres, and in some cases the maximum quantity is less – altogether precludes the possibility of the Natives raising themselves above the position of peasants. A European farmer finds even a hundred acres too small to be payable, and is frequently compelled by circumstances to have recourse to the money-lender, and probably in the end loses his farm through inability to meet his engagements. This is by no means an isolated case, and demonstrates forcibly that

79. A Mackay to Under-Secretary of Native Department, 27 May 1878, AJHR, 1878, G-2, p 8

80. A Mackay to Under-Secretary of Native Department, 30 April 1881, AJHR, 1881, G-3, p 9

small holdings in the present state of New Zealand are not conducive to prosperity, even when managed to the best advantage, which is not the case with land occupied by the Natives.⁸¹

The tenor of Mackay's remarks about the southern reserves probably held true for the north as well, and indeed he repeated the gist of them about Marlborough five years later in his landless natives report.⁸² Further research would be necessary to establish the particulars, especially for Golden and Tasman Bays. The general legislative system, for example, of protecting species was the same for the whole island and should be assessed, but further research would be necessary to show whether acclimatisation societies stocked the northern lakes and rivers with the same fervour that they did in the south.

By the mid-1880s, the situation had deteriorated further in the north. In 1883, the Native Land Court heard the large blocks of 'unsold' land and awarded title to selected individuals. The huge Taitapu reserve was sold in the following year, removing the one area in Golden Bay over which Maori could still hunt and fish with some degree of security. The Government had taken over the reserve as a gold field long before, and had had the right to lease land to Pakeha farmers for logging and pastoral farming if it chose to do so, but the *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives* suggest that this right was not exercised and that Maori could still exploit most of the reserve for traditional sources of food.⁸³ Alexander Mackay had been very derisive about the non-traditional economic potential of this reserve, but by the 1880s it was clear that there were new ways to exploit its rugged resources if the capital and ability were present. The timber industry had reached such proportions that the exploitation of distant forests was now a distinct possibility, and the Government had just woken up to the fact that it possessed vast forests on the former Maori lands which it had purchased but not on sold to settlers, and many of these forests were in the Marlborough and Nelson districts.

The forests of New Zealand, according to a Government report in 1881, covered an estimated 20 million acres, of which the Crown forests amounted to 10 million acres. The Government was assessing how to make more profit from the growing value of the timber industry, including logging for the building industry and firewood for towns and settlements. In the 1860s and 1870s, the Government had sold forest land simply for clearing and farming, but by 1881 it wanted to cash in on the growing timber industry by taxing private forests, and selling timber from Crown forests. If Maori had retained the forests in Marlborough and Nelson Provinces, they would have been an asset capable of expanding exploitation by the end of the 1870s. The profits from the timber industry would have more than compensated for the taxation of private forest land, and 'it may be asked whether forests, as well as agricultural lands, are capable of producing permanent revenue'. Using the model of forests in Europe, the Government concluded that forests were indeed capable of producing permanent revenue if logged properly. One acre of managed forest produced about 15,000 superficial feet of timber. One hundred

81. A Mackay to Under-Secretary of Native Department, 6 May 1881, AJHR, 1881, G-8, p 16

82. A Mackay, 'Report on Native Land Claims in Marlborough, 9 May 1887', AJHR, 1888, G-1a, pp 1-2

83. See pt i, ch 11

superficial feet could be sold for 2s 2d, so the yield of one acre would be £16 2s 11d, but with the proviso that forests had to be fairly large to be managed in this way and produce an annual income. The writer of this report (an unidentified Government official) asserted that the optimum age for felling trees was at 125 years old, and that management of a forest for permanent income would involve felling one acre a year for every 125 acres of forest. As a very bare minimum, therefore, a forest would have to cover 125 acres – but one acre on its own per annum might not justify keeping 125 acres in forest so an exploitable forest would have had to have been much bigger. The Crown forests were certainly large enough in aggregate to produce a huge income, and strong suggestions were made that the Government should start exploiting its forests more systematically.⁸⁴

Taitapu was the only northern South Island reserve large enough for the systematic exploitation of timber in this way. The other reserves were only capable of providing enough wood for their inhabitants' direct use. Taitapu also had important mineral resources, and its loss was a blow to both the traditional economy of the area, and any attempt to develop a modern resource base. On the positive side, the Maori owners received £10,000 for Taitapu (which was probably a lot less than it was worth, as it was resold 10 years later with no real improvements for £25,000).⁸⁵ Research would be necessary to show whether this injection of capital was used for the long-term economic benefit of the local Maori people.

The alienation of Taitapu was accompanied by the loss of the other large reserve on the mainland, the 18,000-acre block at Wakapuaka, which had been reserved for Ngati Tama at the behest of Wi Katene Te Puoho, and over the strong opposition of Donald McLean. The Native Land Court awarded the title of Wakapuaka to a single individual, Huria Matenga, daughter of Wi Katene te Puoho. Huria's husband, Hemi Matenga, proceeded to drive the other inhabitants off the reserve with a determined campaign of harassment, which included the burning of houses.⁸⁶ I am not sure how many people were still living on the reserve in 1883, and how many lost their land as a result of the Court's award and Matenga's actions, but it is clear that this reserve was lost to Ngati Tama as a community after 1883. The only large piece of land still in Maori ownership was D'Urville Island, most of which was leased to Pakeha pastoralists in the 1880s. It will be necessary for claimant historians to examine the nature of the leases and the amount of income which Ngati Koata received from the retention of D'Urville Island at this time. According to the census of 1886, they ran a few sheep, pigs, and cattle on the island but had all their cultivations on their tiny mainland reserves.⁸⁷

By 1886, Alexander Mackay had become a Native Land Court judge and the flow of detailed reports on the northern South Island had ceased, although the police magistrate made occasional comments when he sent census information to the Government. The new style of census included the recording of economic statistics, however, which supplement our picture of Maori in the late 1880s. According to the

84. 'Forests in New Zealand: Papers Relating to Colonial Revenue Derivable from, June 1881', AJHR, 1881, H-11, pp 1-4

85. See pt i, ch 11

86. See ch 2

87. Summary of Maori census, 1886, AJHR, 1886, G-12, p 18

data collected by enumerators, there were 96 Maori living in Tasman Bay, subsisting on 41½ acres of potatoes and 89¼ acres of other crops. They had 50 acres in sown grass, and had 400 sheep, 114 cattle, and 107 pigs. In Golden Bay, there were only 25 people, who had 4 acres of potatoes, 5¾ acres of other crops, and 156 acres in sown grass. Their livestock consisted of 21 cows and two pigs. According to the data, this very small-scale agriculture was carried out by individual farmers – there was no more joint cultivation in Nelson Province. In the Sounds County, there were 185 people, supported by 25¾ acres of potatoes, 24¾ acres of other crops, and 75 acres of sown grasses. These people had 2739 sheep, 117 cattle, and 285 pigs. In addition to the individual crop-farming, there were two acres of potatoes and three acres of other crops in common cultivation. The population of the rest of Marlborough (not including Kaikoura) was 87 people, with 48½ acres of potatoes, 248½ acres of other crops, but no sown grasses. They had no sheep but did have 84 cattle and four pigs. In addition, they had 700 acres of crops in common cultivation. There were 38 people living on D'Urville Island, and they had no crops on the island, although they did have 150 sheep, 24 cattle, and 70 pigs.⁸⁸

A small population, therefore, was eking out a subsistence existence. In May 1886, partly as a result of political pressure from Ngai Tahu, Alexander Mackay was commissioned by Parliament to inquire into cases of Maori who had no land in the South Island, or who were dependent on land which had been set aside for them but was inadequate for their maintenance and support, and also any half-castes who had no land. Mackay's commission charged him with the further task of listing all such cases, recommending how much land they should receive from the Government, and where it could be located for 'cultivation and settlement purposes'.⁸⁹ The Government's intention was to provide a bit more land for subsistence cultivation, and not for the main rural occupation of pastoral farming.

Mackay held a meeting at Wairau Pa of the Wairau and Pelorus Maori on 19 May 1886. He does not seem to have inquired into cases in Golden and Tasman Bays, presumably because he felt that Maori had enough land in those districts for subsistence farming. He reported that the 1853 Ngati Toa deed specified that reserves would be made by the Governor for the resident Maori. Seven hundred and seventy acres were reserved at Wairau for cultivation purposes and 200 acres at White's Bay for a 'fishing-station'. Mackay gave the old acreage of the White's Bay reserve, before its enlargement in the 1860s, possibly because the larger area was only suitable for fishing. Also, the Wairau reserve later turned out to be about 900 acres when it was more accurately surveyed in the 1890s. These adjustments would have affected the figure of seven acres per head reached below, but the fact is that Mackay inquired how much land each individual had in 1886 and concluded that they did not have enough.⁹⁰

Nine hundred and ninety-eight acres were reserved at the Pelorus, but since 238 acres of that land were 'allotted to certain persons as a special award, this area cannot be reckoned as a portion of the general estate'. The general estate would have been 760 acres. The gross total in both places was 1530 acres, not counting the

88. Summary of Maori census, 1886, AJHR, 1886, G-12, pp 17–18

89. A Mackay, 'Report on Native Land Claims in Marlborough, 9 May 1887', AJHR, 1888, G-1a, p 1

90. Ibid

200 acres at White's Bay, which was 'of inferior quality and unfit for cultivation'. According to Mackay's calculations, there were 219 people in 1856 when the reserves were made, 120 living at the Wairau and 99 in the Pelorus:

The acreage set apart for Native purposes in both districts, averaged over the whole number, amounts to seven acres per individual, and had the Natives not supplemented the quantity by purchasing Crown land they would have been very badly off. They did not feel so much the want of an increased area in the early days while the country was only sparsely populated by the Europeans; but as they are now hemmed in on all sides, and their requirements are much greater than in former times owing to their food supplies being cut off or considerably interfered with, they now find that the land set apart for them, for the reasons stated as well as other causes, is inadequate to their wants.

At the inquiry it was ascertained that there were 245 persons, inclusive of half-castes, who were insufficiently provided for; and I would beg to recommend that land to the extent of five thousand acres should be selected and set apart in suitable localities, for the purpose of enabling an area of twenty acres to be allotted to each individual, less the quantity already possessed.

It is impossible at present, owing to their reserves not having been subdivided amongst them, to determine the quantity now possessed per individual; and this can only be ascertained after the Native Land Court has sat in the locality. In the meantime, however, it would be advisable that action be taken to secure the land needed to increase the reserves.⁹¹

Mackay tried to select land as per his instructions but was prevented from doing so. When he went to the Land Office at Blenheim, all the desirable spots on the shores of Queen Charlotte and Pelorus Sounds 'suitable for Native occupation, and which they desired to acquire as possessing some peculiar advantages', were, for the most part, already set aside as sites for fishery reserves, or were occupied under lease or license for pastoral farming.

Mackay had no better luck inland:

The Pelorus Natives were very desirous to secure a block of land up the Rae Valley, at the junction of a stream called the Rongo with the River Rae; but all the country in that locality has been proclaimed under the State Forests Act. Other localities where they desire to secure land are within the Wakamarina Goldfield, and unavailable without specially withdrawn.⁹²

Mackay listed the names and residences of 74 Ngati Kuia, 57 Rangitane, 11 Ngai Tahu (resident in the north), 22 Ngati Toa/Koata, 48 Ngati Rarua, and 33 'half-castes', all under-provided with land.⁹³ It is puzzling, however, that Mackay had earlier informed the Government that small holdings of less than 100 acres simply could not be made to pay, and yet in 1887 he recommended that these Maori should have up to 20 acres each, inclusive of both their existing land and any supplementary land.

91. Ibid, pp 1-2

92. Ibid, p 2

93. Ibid, pp 2-7

By the end of the 1880s, therefore, the official sources provide a strong impression of a people in economic difficulties, confined to reserves that were too small to allow them to continue their traditional modes of cultivation or resource-gathering, but which were also too small for European-style subsistence farming, let alone pastoral farming. As for the various factors which might have ameliorated this situation, such as the purchase of further land from the Crown, the shared owning of land from coast to coast and possibly in the North Island, and the decline in population as deaths outstripped births and people continued to return to their ancestral lands in the North Island, there is no hint in the official sources that these factors were sufficient to alleviate pressure on the reserves. Mackay was particularly scathing in his comments on the Marlborough reserves, which he continually characterised as worthless, and it was in this province that he held his inquiries with regard to ‘landless natives’ in the northern South Island in 1886.

Nevertheless, the situation was also serious in Golden Bay and Tasman Bay. The Motueka/Riwaka people were confined to land of which Heaphy said that only half was useful, with very few acres per head, and only the Native Trust to stand between themselves and serious privation. On the other side of the bay, Ngati Tama had lost Wakapuaka to the sole ownership of Huria Matenga and her heirs, which forced at least some of them off the land. In Golden Bay the one reserve with any potential for major development had been sold, and the rest were again mainly worthless, according to Mackay, who wrote in 1865 that 600 acres of land at Takaka was the only good land in the whole of the Golden Bay reserves. By the 1880s, however, the Maori population of Tasman and Golden Bays was so small that they may have been able to survive on the basis of subsistence farming, rent from a few leases, and occasional assistance from the trust, whereas those in Marlborough could no longer maintain a subsistence lifestyle. Ngati Koata (and possibly some Ngati Kuia) may have been in a better position – we would need to know a lot more about the D’Urville Island leases before an assessment of this community’s economic position could be made. Overall, however, the situation was an indictment on the reserve-making of the 1840s and 1850s.

1.4 LANDLESS NATIVES RESERVES

This chapter has attempted to describe in some detail, through the use of official sources, the economic and social dimensions of life on the reserves for the first thirty years after the final large-scale alienation of land in 1856. The next 30 years were also important, with the focus still on the reserves. The Maori people of the northern South Island were still fairly dependent on their reserves by 1916, although certain elements had broadened their economic and social role, making them more a part of the wider settler community by the time of the First World War. The growth of wage labour on neighbouring Pakeha farms, and gradual acculturation through the schools of the period, which concentrated on making English the sole medium of communication, led to social change on the reserves and the development of new sources of income. There was a further change in social trends with the gradual recovery of the Maori population, and its growth in the early decades of the

twentieth century. Many Maori were still dependent on the reserves by 1914, and there were more of them to be accommodated on the land.

The Government response to Maori landlessness in the South Island began before the real turn around in population growth, when Alexander Mackay held an inquiry in 1886 into the state of landholding in the Wairau and Pelorus districts. The process of creating and allocating landless natives reserves, however, took more than thirty years to complete. Nevertheless, it was not designed to accommodate population growth; the Minister of Native Affairs decided that children born after 1896 would not receive land.⁹⁴ In 1888, Mackay investigated the situation in Queen Charlotte Sound and made a list of people who were either completely without land or did not have enough for their own support. Parliament set up a joint committee in the same year to assess Mackay's work and carry out further investigations. As a result of the deliberations of this committee, which met from 1888 to 1890, 6111 acres were set aside for Marlborough Maori. Appropriate pieces of land were selected in 1892, probably by Mackay and Percy Smith, and by 1894 they had been surveyed and were ready for selection. This land was awarded to 191 people, some of whom were in occupation of the land by the time that Commissioners Mackay and Percy Smith reported on the matter to Parliament in 1897. The new reserves represented, together with what these people possessed elsewhere, 40 acres of land per person, of which three acres was kept aside from each share to make villages. A further 175 landless people in Queen Charlotte's Sound were to receive 6442 acres at Tennyson Inlet, but that had not been surveyed by 1897. In addition to these reserves, however, the commission noted that there were still 460 people in the Kaikoura and Marlborough districts who were either landless or nearly so, and that it would be very difficult to find suitable land for them.⁹⁵

The maximum allocation of 40 acres per person was 10 acres less than that considered necessary for each Ngai Tahu individual in the south. Mackay explained to Parliament:

This difference in area – 40 and 50 acres – arises from the fact that the southern Ngaitahu people had a special claim to consideration in fulfilment of promises made at the cession of their territory, whereas those to the north had no such rights, and are indebted solely to the generosity of the Crown for the increased area. Moreover, the minimum area for these latter people had been fixed before we [Mackay and Percy Smith] took the matter in hand.⁹⁶

By 1905, the land at Tennyson's Inlet had still not been surveyed, and the commissioners were expressing concern at the many problems which they had encountered in the process of creating the reserves. The greatest delays had come from the:

94. 'Landless Natives in the Middle Island: Report Relative to Setting Land Apart for', 28 September 1905, AJHR, 1905, G-2, p 1

95. 'Landless Natives in the South Island: Report Relative to the Setting Apart of Land for', AJHR, 1897, sess 2, G-1, pp 1–2

96. 'Landless Natives in the Middle Island: Report Relative to Setting Land Apart for', 28 September 1905, AJHR, 1905, G-2, p 2

absence of suitable blocks of land in which to allocate the claims when ascertained. In the end, lands have actually been found to meet all requirements as to area, but much of the land is of such a nature that it is doubtful if the people can profitably occupy it as homes.⁹⁷

In Queen Charlotte Sound, for example, enough suitable land was found to allocate three acres to each individual for homesteads grouped into villages, with the remainder awarded as large blocks held in common (presumably for sheep farming).⁹⁸

In 1906, Parliament passed the South Island Landless Natives Act, which authorised the Governor to grant titles for the new reserves, and made them inalienable except by lease for a period of 21 years. The Governor could lease the lands in consultation with their owners, and the Maori Land Court was given limited powers to decide successions and authorise exchanges, although it could not decide the actual title in the first place. This Act was repealed in 1909 by the Native Land Act of that year, but the reserves did not actually come under the definitions contained within the new statute, so that there was no provision for deciding successions and land transfers for these blocks of land. New reserves were proclaimed under the Land Act 1908, but this may have been illegal and the grants issued were in need of retrospective validation.⁹⁹ The process of surveying land and of making a few more reserves continued piecemeal in the period from 1905 to 1914, when Parliament appointed a second royal commission to examine what had been done by the previous commissioners, and the extent and value of the landless natives reserves.

The 1914 commission was not particularly impressed with the quality of land which had been reserved, the commissioners basing their opinions on the reports of Crown lands rangers and Government valuers:

The lands vary in quality and degrees of inaccessibility, and range in value from £2 10s an acre to 5s. There are a few fertile patches, and these are occupied, but the blocks on the whole are unsuitable for closer settlement or Native cultivation. The Marlborough lands seem well adapted for selection in fairly large areas by sheep-farmers with moderate means . . .¹⁰⁰

The large Tennyson's Inlet block of 6408 acres had still not been allocated, and was 'very rough and broken, and in parts mountainous'. It was unfit for cultivation and was also being considered for proclamation as a scenic reserve, despite its theoretical status as a landless natives reserve. The Maori owners felt that the land was useless for their purposes and asked the commission to get them land of equivalent 'value' nearer to their homes in the Wairau Valley.¹⁰¹ The other blocks were often heavily wooded and some were suitable for sheep farming, and had been

97. 'Landless Natives in the Middle Island: Report Relative to Setting Land Apart for', 28 September 1905, AJHR, 1905, G-2, p 1

98. Ibid, p 2

99. 'Reserves for Landless Natives: Report of the Commission of Inquiry', AJHR, 1914, G-2, pp 3-4, 9

100. Ibid, p 6

101. Ibid

leased to Pakeha or to one or two of the multiple owners, who were able to make a going concern of the block. Distance from villages and from other lands was sometimes a problem, and the timber could not necessarily be turned to good account because of the distance of timber mills. There were also problems with obtaining legal grants, and not all of the land had been allotted. The commissioners seem to have felt, however, that the other reserves were superior to Tennyson's Inlet, and that benefit was being derived from most of them.¹⁰²

There is no substantial historical account of the landless natives reserves for the northern South Island. Further research would be necessary before any conclusions could be drawn about the process of their creation, and the extent to which they served the purpose of providing for the 'present and future needs' of Maori in supplementation of the original reserves. Owing to considerations of time, it has not been possible to prepare a fuller overview of the landless native reserves within the context of the present report.

102. *Ibid*, pp 6–7, 9

