

Maori Development Corporation Report

Chapter 2 - Maori Banking Initiatives

2.1 - Introduction

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The interest shown by those present at the 1984 Hui Taumata¹ in setting up a bank to facilitate Maori economic development, was only the most recent example of a pattern which began in the 1850s. However, the hui in 1984 was the first initiative to elicit a positive response from government.

In the 1850s, a growing concern among Maori over the loss of their land and rangatiratanga together with a seeming inability to control their situation by implementing tikanga Maori, led them to modify the new Pakeha institutions in order to meet the demands of the political and economic realities. These took varying forms in different places and at different times.

Waitangi Tribunal, Department of Justice, Wellington.

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2.2 - The Kingitanga

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The establishment in 1858 of the Kingitanga with Potatau Te Wherowhero as the first king was one of these. Tawhiao, his successor had a cabinet of "about twelve members including ministers for lands, laws, justice, taxes" and Pakeha affairs.² Revenue was raised by various means; voluntary donations, taxation, ferry charges in the Waikato district, fees and fines taken by the local runanga and tithing the salaries of Maori who worked for the government. All the income from these sources was paid into the "King's Treasury".³

Waitangi Tribunal, Department of Justice, Wellington.

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2.3 - Te Whiti o Rongomai

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In Taranaki the protest movement of Te Whiti o Rongomai began about 1869. He and his relative Tohu organised the development of Parihaka into a prosperous settlement.

At this time over a hundred large thatched whares were grouped in an orderly plan around two maraes, one Te Whiti's and one Tohu's. Strong picket fences enclosed intensely cultivated clearings.⁴

Despite the hostile actions of government officials, or perhaps because of them, Te Whiti attracted strong support from Maori from many parts of the country. Contributions in cash flowed in over a period of many years. The money was stored in Nuku Te Whatewha a small building on Tohu's marae that held common funds. This was known as Te Whiti's bank which held the "Day of Reckoning Fund" believed to amount to thousands of pounds.⁵

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2.4 - Rua Kenana

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In the early 1900s Rua Kenana emerged claiming to be the prophet succeeding Te Kooti. He was both the centre of a religious movement and the energetic leader of a programme of land development. A savings bank was set up and placed under the control of his Council of Elders together with a "well stocked general store". Written ledgers were kept of the transactions and a visitor in 1908 reported that "liberal interest rates" were being paid on money deposited. "At least some of the money put in by wealthier residents was given out according to need".⁶

The bank was also an attempt to adapt institutions to help the progress of the settlement, for the Tuhoe lacked any of the institutional features associated with economic development. It did not function exactly like a Pakeha bank but originally, at least, its purpose was to promote savings and attract capital.⁷

Waitangi Tribunal, Department of Justice, Wellington.

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2.5 - Tahupotiki Wiremu Ratana

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Towards the end of 1918, Ratana had a vision which effectively began the Ratana movement. The Maori people were in a poor state due to the devastating influenza epidemic, disaffection amongst returned servicemen and the primitive living conditions

in many rural areas. Ratana's message of faith in religion and the unity of the Maori people (Kotahitanga), a promise of prosperity to come and his success as a faith-healer

appealed to many ordinary Maori particularly those living at the subsistence level.⁸

On the secular side he concerned himself with farming and the political situation. During the 1920s a group of Ratana's followers established a bank. It was actually an "investment society." which had three aims:

- o to enable the Kotahitanga to "force the government" to provide for Maori welfare,

- o to "advance money to needy members of the movement" and

- o to "provide a means of gathering contributions" from the Morehu for Ratana's work.⁹

There appears to have been some confusion among the followers as to how a bank should operate and the Native Minister of the time was suspicious of the scheme. Ratana himself disapproved of the bank which may have led to its decline.¹⁰

While these attempts to provide financial support for Maori were not successful the need for that support continued to exist.

References

1. See chapter 3, p 7
2. John A Williams, Politics of the New Zealand Maori (Auckland University Press, Oxford University Press 1977), p 45
3. J E Gorst, The Maori King (Christchurch Capper Press Reprint 1974), p 181
4. Dick Scott, Ask That Mountain (Auckland Heinemann/Southern Cross 1975) pp 37-38
5. Ibid, p 159
6. Judith Binney, Gillian Chaplin, Craig Wallace, Mihaia (Wellington Oxford

University Press 1979) pp 17, 63, 65

7. Peter Webster, *Rua and the Maori Millennium* (Wellington Victoria University Press 1979) p 205

8. J M Henderson, *Ratana* (Wellington AH & AW Reed second edition 1972) pp 16-17, 24, 31-40

9. *Ibid*, p 66

10. *Ibid*, p 67

Waitangi Tribunal, Department of Justice, Wellington.