

1862 MORIORI PETITION
TO THE CROWN
FOR RECOGNITION OF LAND RIGHTS
AND EMANCIPATION FROM SLAVERY



A PROLOGUE

Moriori petitioned Governor Grey in a series of documents and letters from the late 1850s onwards¹.

The 1859 Manuscript

The first document sent to Grey, who was at that time the former Governor, is dated 22 April 1859 and is signed by six elders from Otonga (on the SW coast):

1. Rangi Mariu Rangipa
2. Pahuta Tamaroro Tamako Mahuta
3. Te Awa Ahau Te Ika Rongo Mai Pango
4. Moke Tatahi Tarehu
5. Kokiri Matawhatu Kahuwai
6. Punga Ngamune Kahukura

The document sets out historical and genealogical information about Moriori, and its purpose appears to be to distinguish Moriori from the Māori occupants of the island. It is a Moriori statement of self-determination.

Descendants of the authors believe it was sent to Grey to convince him that Moriori were the rightful owners of Rēkohu. Even though Grey was not the Governor at this time, it is likely that they saw in him someone who would listen to their claims, as opposed to Governor Gore Brown.

The genealogies set out in the document are complex and show the interrelatedness of Moriori and their links to settlement on the islands. A major part of the narrative is the story told by Rakei e Ora Tawiro to his children Pahitoa Tamako Mahuta and Mariu Rangipa (2 of the signatories) about the “epic adventures” of their ancestor Rakei son of Tamatehokopa.

1862 Manuscript and Letters

When Grey returned to NZ in 1861 it may have prompted Moriori to again write to him setting out their claims. There is a series of letters to the Colonial Secretary in 1862. Archibald Shand (the island magistrate) stated:

¹ The translations of these letters and petitions, and the information on Hirawanu Tapu are sourced from Michael King’s “Moriori; a People Rediscovered” and the DNZB entry for Tapu.

I have been urgently requested by the Aboriginal inhabitants of these islands to present their profound congratulations and greetings to H.E....and to represent...that they depend on the Governor's high consideration and sense of justice to grant them a share of any advantage he may be pleased to bestow ...The present petitioners are also urgent in soliciting a certain apportionment of land for their special behoof – more effectively to establish their general freedom. (March 1862)

I have the honour to forward this Summary enclosed of the Petitions of the Aboriginal natives themselves to His Excellency.... In narrating the horrors of the Māori invasion, and enumerating the relatively small no. of their race that now survive (160) they will have it that their numbers once exceeded the flax stalks on the island or the Wild Ducks on the lake: that they were then a very happy people; and assuredly if in entire isolation from the rest of the world, and the most utter ignorance – without the usual ferocity of other Savages – could have made them so, they may well be believed...the Moriori grieve that they have not got a bit of land of their own, but are only under sufferance permitted to cultivate a portion. That this deadens their energies.....and no wonder, for they add....that when at work on land that may be resumed at any moment by its Māori Possessor, they are distracted from devoting their best endeavours to the work, and can only think of their unhappy condition, and can only hear the wailing spirits of their murdered Ancestors in the leafless Karaka trees on what was once their undisturbed grounds (April 1862).

In June-July 1862 the surviving elders gathered at their sacred lands at Te Awapātiki to discuss the nature of the second petition. They remembered the trauma of the 1835 invasion and aftermath graphically. The last Council held at that place was 27 years prior when Moriori gathered en masse to debate how to share their land and resources with the new comers, only to have been slaughtered like animals. It is difficult to conceive how heart rending the recounting of the events after November 1835 would have been for them but it is obvious that their determination to seek justice and honour their ancestors was powerfully motivating.

The 1862 petition is a 131 page long record of proceedings of the Te Awapātiki Council, written in both Moriori and Māori. The petition lists those alive in 1835 (excluding many children whose names could not be recalled) and subsequently killed (*"know by looking at this that those with two crosses by their name were killed and eaten"*); those who had died of *kongenge* (despair) in slavery, and those who had survived. The petition is a further document of Moriori self-determination seeking the removal of Māori from Rēkohu as well as being a plea to the Queen of England for justice and an end to slavery (some 22 years after it had been outlawed in New Zealand). The document is also a taonga for it contains records of Moriori traditions, origins and genealogies.

The list contains 1,663 names. One fifth of the population were killed directly (108 women and 118 men) and 1,336 died of abuse from their captors and many from *kōngenge* or despair in slavery. Only 101 Moriori survived the invasion and subsequent slavery up to 1870.

The accompanying letter addressed specifically to Grey and signed by the 30 elders reads, in part:

Friend, greetings to you with the law of England and the law which comes from the Scriptures...England holds the cause of God and a cannibal people cannot rise above nor refute the law of England because God is the source of Pākehā law...

Friend Grey, here is our word to you concerning...our two islands, let them be sold by us to The Queen. The rights of the Māori are not straight, they are stealing the rights to our land. It was not right and the payments before were not right, but the rights of our land are with us. We are the original inhabitants... This is our word..the law says that land taken unjustly must be returned to those whose it was before. Enough, come to set this island right...the doings here are not in accord with the law.

The 30 signatories are:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| 1. Taputehara Maitarawai (Hirawanu Tapu) | 15. Teika Rongomaipango |
| 2. Tame Tainui Tawarere | 16. Taitupa Tehapa |
| 3. Tumutangi Whakakarau | 17. Pumipi Te Rangaranga |
| 4. Teteira Rangipewa | 18. Eporaima |
| 5. Kutapu Teihi | 19. Tatana Kowao |
| 6. Kume Kahuwai | 20. Tiemi Tamitikaha |
| 7. Torea Takarehe | 21. Ngamaia Tutara |
| 8. Takaupurangi | 22. Tiori Wauero |
| 9. Maikoua Mohewa | 23. Rongomai Akura |
| 10. Tara Rangimanawa | 24. Horomona Rauri |
| 11. Pawa Ngamunanga Kahuki (Timoti Tara) | 25. Rawiri Tamahoata |
| 12. Teiwi Korekaha | 26. Minarapa Tamahiwaka |
| 13. Rangimariu Rangipa | 27. Horomona Makau |
| 14. Tunanga Terangitake | 28. Tuwarurunga |
| | 29. Hone Waiti |
| | 30. Kirapu Rangikei |

The Ouenga leader, Torea, was a key figure in the 1835 Council and 3 of the earlier 1859 Otonga document were signatories to this one as well (Minarapa and Kirapu). Hirawanu Tapu, who had been about 11 years old, in 1835 was the scribe for the petition. He later became a major source of information on Moriori traditions and language for Alexander Shand.

Two accompanying letters to the petition stated:

Tapu will deliver this letter. He knows all about it. Write to Tapu at Kaingaroa. This is a meeting of all our kainga when Tapu came to write up the ancestors. Deliver it to the Queen of England so that she may see the story and our names...this is the voice of Moriori, that is, of the people of this island of Rēkohu. It is their real language....

Tapu's accompanying letter stated:

This is another section in the document for the Governor that I have completed, and you are to give it to him. It sets out the ancestors from the beginning, to the ending of cannibalism. Friend you should know that when the Māori arrived at this island, their plan was hidden to

the Moriori. Afterwards we were killed by them; some were saved as slaves and after a long time in the settlement were killed by them for meat, that is, for food. They kept in killing like this until the gospel of Jesus Christ arrived, and then they stopped. They still hold to much evil-doing, for instance they take women who are actually married as women for them, and as for the men, they hit someone and keep them as a slave. And another thing, they traded them to other men as payment for seeds or pork or whatever.

A further letter to Grey in April that year from 3 of the signatories of the 1862 petition indicated some response had been received from the Governor, but none has survived in the written record.

Friend Governor Grey, Greetings to you in the laws of the Gospel of God, the might of the Queen, in love and in peace. Friend this is a request from us that you come here. You must bring us the law of England. We, the Moriori, are living without the law. Come here so that you may meet the remnants of the Moriori elders. For the documents have come to us – that is to Tapu – hence our request to you to come and save us. The Māoris still hold to the law of enslaving the Moriori. This is another thing. Our lands are being taken by the Māori – they have completely taken over the ownership of our land. It is not us who are sending it off. Although the faith has come, evil still stands in our way. But what we want of you is that you come and ship the Māori back to their home in Taranaki.

There are no records of responses, but the Crown did act on some matters. In 1863 the new island magistrate, William Thomas, summoned a meeting of Moriori and Māori and announced, finally, that slavery was at an end. In 1865 a Court house was built on the beach at Waiteki (Waitangi) adjacent to the site where women and children had been staked out on the beach, killed and eaten. Then in 1870 the Native Land Court was convened.

Hirawanu Tapu



Hirawanu Tapu (known also as Maitarawai and Taputehara Maitara) was born about 1824 at Te Awapatiki on the east coast of Chatham Island. He was a member of the Owenga Moriori tribe. Little is known about Hirawanu's early life. He was still living at Te Awapatiki when Te Ati Awa invaded the Chathams in November and December 1835. Thereafter he was enslaved by Ngāti Tama and taken by them in turn to Waitahi, Ngatikitiki, and finally Kaingaroa, where he was made a slave to Wiremu Kingi Meremere.

Hirawanu Tapu obtained his freedom when Meremere died in 1860. He returned to his own people at Owenga on the south-east coast of Chatham Island. There he became the protégé of and heir apparent to Torea Takerehe, who had been influential in persuading the Moriori not to fight the Māori invaders in 1835 and 1836.

When the Moriori held their second great council at Te Awapatiki in 1862, to record their traditions and genealogies, and their objections to the Maori conquest of the Chatham Islands, Tapu was chosen as scribe for that meeting and the series that followed. From this time, although Tapu was neither a hereditary chief nor, as yet, an elder, he was regarded by everybody on Chatham Island as a leader and spokesman for Moriori. Communications to and from successive governors and governments were directed through him. Visitors who wanted to discuss Moriori history and customs, such as Stephenson Percy Smith and Edward Tregear, began their inquiries with Hirawanu Tapu.

Because of his literacy, numeracy and general reliability, Resident Magistrate William Thomas appointed Tapu tidewaiter at Owenga in the mid 1860s. This required him to record customs transactions at the port and prevent smuggling. He achieved this position over the claims of European and Māori residents, and over the objections of Ngāti Mutunga chief Apitia Punga.

In 1868, with Torea, Rohana and other Owenga Moriori, Tapu moved onto land which Apitia Punga had reserved for them at Manukau, two miles south of Owenga. The status of this largely bush-covered reserve of 2,000 acres, which bordered the sea, was confirmed by the Native Land Court in 1870.

At those court sittings Tapu was the leading witness for the Moriori claims. He was handicapped, however, by the fact that he had never before participated in judicial proceedings and he was ignorant of both procedure and the need for a planned strategy. He placed all his faith in the concept of British justice, which had been explained to him in glowing terms by a visiting ship's captain. In contrast, many of the Maori who gave evidence at Waitangi in 1870 had already done so previously in Taranaki court hearings. Most Māori had returned to Taranaki by 1868 leaving Moriori as the majority on Rēkohu. Some Ngāti Mutunga returned to Rēkohu for the Court hearing in 1870. Māori were awarded ownership by the Native Land Court of 146,289 acres of Chatham Island, or 97.3 per cent; the Moriori 4,100 acres or 2.7 per cent. The Moriori failed to gain any title on Pitt or the outlying islands, which were part of their traditional food sources. The judge had chosen to base his decisions on Māori rather than Moriori customary law, and to recognise their right of ownership by conquest. Moriori believed that they held on to the mana of the land by adhering to their ancient laws of peaceful occupation.

