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**The Development of Maori Christianity in the Waiapu Diocese  
Until 1914.**

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## Preface

In making a study and interpreting the development of Maori christianity in the diocese of Waiapu, this work has been confined mainly to the forms and direction assumed by the Maori section of the Anglican Church. Whilst the apparent narrowness of this study is somewhat limiting, this should not prevent its purpose being fulfilled within the given period of the study. Throughout the whole period under survey, that is until 1914, Anglicanism was the predominant Maori religion in the area covered by the diocese. Until the wars in the 1860s it had only one rival for the loyalty of the Maoris in the area, - that of Roman Catholicism, whose adherents were a distinctive minority. By 1914 the Roman Catholic, as well as the Presbyterian Church and the Salvation Army, who were now working in the area, were still minority groups concentrating mainly on various parts of the Bay of Plenty region. Whilst Maori initiative and leadership may also have been emerging here, the emphasis appears, on the surface, to be rather more on the mission aspect. After the wars the Ringatu religion emerged strongly in some areas in the Waiapu diocese, to rank second in numerical strength among the Maori Churches. It would have been impossible within the scope of this thesis to have included more than a brief comparative survey of this religion which has already been the subject of a thesis by Lyons<sup>1</sup> as well as a study by W.Greenwood.<sup>2</sup> Mormonism which developed strongly in the Southern Hawkes Bay area from the 1880s onward, has been treated even more cursorily. However this again has been the subject of a much more recent and detailed thesis by I.Barker.<sup>3</sup> The predominance of Maori Anglican christianity, its longer history and more widespread nature should therefore allow sufficient scope for this type of study. Whilst avoiding too narrow a specialisation for this subject by confining it to Maori Anglican christianity, it has also kept it to manageable limits.

1 E.Lyons "Te Kooti: Priest and warrior and founder of Ringatu church"  
(1931, no location)

2 W.Greenwood The Upraised Hand. (Wellington, 1942.)

3 I.Barker "The Connexion: The Mormon Church and the Maori People"  
(Victoria University, 1967.)

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

The study of the phenomenal growth and subsequent stabilisation of Maori christianity in the Waiapu diocese where emphasis was as clearly on the "Maoris" as on the "christianity", throws into relief some interesting features. These were to have far reaching effects on the Maori Church of the 19th century. These features include: firstly an obvious enthusiastic Maori embracing of christianity; secondly a quickly established Maori control over the spread, direction and intensity of Maori christianity; and thirdly, a certain Maori indigenisation of christianity which allowed it to be both adapted to, and expressed through Maori life and customs, thus enabling it to become an integral part of Maoritanga rather than an unnatural European addition grafted artificially on to Maori life and thought forms.

Although there has been little question about the rapid and enthusiastic Maori response to Christianity in the 1830s and early 1840s, it has not often been made clear that much of the impetus for this response, growth and late stabilisation come from Maoris themselves, who took the initiative in promoting and teaching christianity. In the process of doing this they became adept at adopting salient features of christianity and translating them into the terms of their own culture without doing violence to either christianity or culture. Christianity was in this way made so much part of the fabric of normal Maori life, that as long as the normal Maori life-style in the area which was to become the Waiapu diocese, remained intact, so did Maori christianity. When disruption of the former did occur through various pressures, so was the latter disrupted, - but not extinguished. Disruption of christianity, although accompanied often by anti-Europeanism, rarely resulted however in anti-christianity. Rather it took the form of various aberrant styles of religious activity, in which all, even the Hauhau movement, retained certain Christian precepts accepted and valued by their various adherents. Christianity therefore, in the 19th century, had become indigenised to such an extent that even when its European promoters, or rather their fellow compatriots in the government, with whom missionaries were suspected of collaborating, had become discredited in some Maori quarters, the reaction to this was confined largely to the development of rival forms of Maori christianity. These were as genuine in their content of christianity, as the more orthodox Anglican Christianity was genuinely Maori in its texture.

The area which was to become the Waiapu diocese is divided by its mountain ranges into three distinctive areas. Each of these, both during and after the formation period of the 1830s and 1840s, and the critical 1860s, tended to react to christianity and to function as a religious unit in a fairly distinctive manner. Such factors as isolation from, or proximity and exposure to European influence, - be it missionary, trader farmer or community, as well as the degree of competition for Maori allegiance presented by different christian bodies, appear to be influential. The attitudes developed here were later affected and usually deepened by the degree of involvement in the land troubles of the early 1860s, their alignment with, or rejection of the King movement of the same period, and the position taken in the subsequent wars of the 1860s.

The three areas of the diocese are the Bay of Plenty, including Taupo and the Urewera, with a Maori population of 6092 (1901 census), the East Coast and Hawkes Bay to Mohaka with a Maori population of 6266 (1901) and the remainder of the Hawkes Bay district with a Maori population of 2189 (1901).

By 1914 the Bay of Plenty district was still, from the Anglican viewpoint, mainly missionary. The majority of Maoris here, including the Whakatotea tribe at Waimana and Upper Whakatane; the Ngaiterangi at Tauranga, and part of the Arawa at Rotorua, had all become Ringatu, or followers of Te Kooti. This district had had frequent contact with European commercial activity which competed strongly with the missionary activity for the Maoris' time and interest, especially at coastal towns such as Tauranga, Maketu, Matata and Whakatane. Interest in the King Movement was also very keen here, particularly along the western side of the Bay, where anti-government involvement in the wars was to follow, as well as adherence for a while to Hauhauism. Two of the principal centres, Tauranga and Maketu had been occupied in 1835 by missionaries<sup>1</sup> Rev.A.M.Brown at Tauranga and Rev.P.Chapman Maketu. By the 1860s these centres were also able to support two Maori deacons, Rev.Rihara Te Rangimaro at Tauranga and Rev.Ihaia Te Ahu at Maketu. The Roman Catholic Church had established missionaries at Matata, the Presbyterians at Te Puke and the Salvation Army at Tauranga, also by this time.<sup>2</sup> By 1914 however, although Maori Anglican congregations still existed at Maketu, Te Puke, Matata, Whakatane, Rotorua and Taupo, numbers were small, and little was yet being done by them to support their own clergy.<sup>3</sup> At the same time

1 W.L.Williams (ed) The Maori Mission:its past and present (Gisborne,n.d.)

2 Proceedings of the Synod of the Diocese of Waiapu, 1906, p2

3 W.L.Williams (ed) Mission p9

the Urewera country still barely penetrated by Europeans, had by this date become almost entirely Ringatu<sup>4</sup> with the exception of Ruatoki which was partially won back from the Ringatu movement after the establishment of an Anglican mission house there.<sup>5</sup> In 1910 three areas of the Urewera, - Ruatoki, Galatea and Te Whaiti as well as Whakatane were selected as missionary districts by the newly reconstituted Maori Mission Board a Maori missionary was supported by the Board of each of these centres with the aim of winning back each over from Ringatu to the Anglican Church.

The East Coast division, which is often referred to as the cradle of Maori Christianity, in the Waiapu Diocese is the one which remained the most stable and orthodox during the whole period until 1914. By this date it had been divided into eleven separate districts, each served by a Maori clergyman,<sup>6</sup> although also by this date two vacancies had occurred, and neighbouring clergy had to serve the vacant districts. Clergy were supported in part by proceeds of endowment funds raised by the people themselves, together with supplementary grants made from funds available to the New Zealand Mission Trust Board. Beside the predominant Anglican faith however, several Ringatu groups were functioning in Poverty Bay and Wairoa by 1914, whilst a defection to Mormonism had become distinctive at Mahia, Nuhaka and Wairoa. Again it was at these places that greatest contact with Europeans of a non-missionary character was made. Mahia was by the late 1830s and 1840 in close contact with traders and whalers who often employed Maori labour. The competitiveness here of rival European missionaries for Maori souls is indicated by a letter in October 1841 of W.L.Williams,<sup>7</sup> son of the future Bishop William Williams, who at the age of twelve years accompanied his father and cousin on a visit to Table Cape [Mahia], according to the letter, solely on account of his fathers disputation [waiwai] with one of the Pikipo [Roman Catholic] priests who had landed there.

In Southern Hawkes Bay, the area of settlement most greatly prized by European farmers, individual Maori Anglican congregations were still strong by 1914. However Mormonism was also very strongly entrenched there, particularly at Te Hauke and Bridge Pa, added to this was the fact that Maori tohungas were still operating clandestinely in these areas. Of the

4 W.L.Williams (ed) Mission p8

5 Proceedings, 1910, p7

6 W.L.Williams (ed) Mission p9

7 H.Carleton The Life of Henry Williams (Wellington, 1948) p46

three areas Southern Hawkes Bay was the last to be visited by travelling missionaries. Neither was this area included in the diocese from the early days of its formation in 1859, but was a far-off part of the Wellington diocese until it was finally incorporated in Waiaapu in 1869.