

Reason for signing the treaty history essay



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Treaty of Waitangi is a founding document between Maori and Europeans. This essay will discuss the social system and conditions of Treaty of Waitangi signatory, their ideologies, values and beliefs at that time, Maori response post The Treaty of Waitangi and my personal understanding on The Treaty.

Tangata Whenua is a phrase used to describe the position of Maori as the indigenous people of Aotearoa. Some research has suggested that Polynesian ancestors of Maori migrated from Taiwan about 5500 years ago and spread through Philippines and then migrated east into Pacific ocean and reached New Zealand about 1000 years ago. New Zealand was larger than any Polynesian island and covered with thick forest, high mountains and coastline with abundance of seafood (Moon and Biggs. 2004).

Maori arrived in New Zealand in several groups and settled mainly in coastal areas. The first group arrived from Eastern Polynesia in summer time and settled in North Island. Warm weather gave them time to settle and subsequent groups of migrant followed them. Soon these hunters were forced to move to south island as the resources declined in North Island and hence settlement of Mōa hunter is more in South island (Walker, 1990). The second wave of Polynesian settlers was set to work with the environment of Aotearoa and it became their home (Durie, 2005). Different tribe groups were having territory based on the names of the canoes by which their ancestors arrived. Over the time Maori developed their skills in hunting, fishing, agriculture, flax preparation and weaving.

Maori social system is based on their traditional beliefs and myths. Whanau, Hapu and iwi which is family, sub-tribe and tribe (Moorefield, 2011) consequently played a significant role in their life.

Maori tribes were separate tribal states that were ruled by chief who had Rangatiranga (chieftainship) over his or her own tribal state. They used to operate their own territorial boundary, with their own people. They believed in collective relationship and well being of the tribe. With no conception of a written language, they used poems, dance, song and rituals to commit their heritage and history to memory and pass it down through generations (Durie, 2005).

Tangata Tiriti

For 1400 years Christianity had been a major strand of European civilization and became linked with the success at empire building. The Industrial Revolution was a period 1750-1850. Major changes in agriculture, manufacturing, and transportation had a significant impact on the socioeconomic and cultural conditions in Britain. It had a strong positive impact on growth of Britain but initially it appeared to bring negative effect on the society. Manual labour based economy began to be replaced by the machinery. Working class people found employment in the new mills and factories, but these were often under strict working conditions with long hours of labour. People lived in very small houses in cramped streets with shared toilet facilities, open sewers and would be at risk of damp. Huge numbers of the working class died due to diseases spreading due to poor living conditions.

Later Britain obtained much capital from its new international trading with major nations, dealing with the exchange of new and improved industrial machinery. Great Britain started to grow to become the most powerful manufacturing nation and the strongest economy of Europe. With increased production there was an increased need of resources (Anonymous, 1998)

Reason for signing the Treaty

By 19th century there was great competition in Europe for colonial territories. When James Cook spread the news about New Zealand, Britain was going through the industrial revolution and government and army was in the need of capitalism.

Colonisation occurred in five steps. Initially European explores and adventures explored New Zealand and reported internationally. Then traders arrived to the country and quickly learned Maori language and started to barter resources with the visiting ships. Missionaries came to New Zealand to gradually gain Maori support and trust. The Treaty of Waitangi was then signed between the Europeans and Maori to formalise the colonial power. More Europeans were encouraged to migrate to New Zealand and indigenous people became a minority group and lost their own land (Durie, 2005). New Zealand could not avoid the colonization but it was done in a different way.

Edward Gibson and his brother are a unique example of British ideology of colonialism. The two brothers were sent to New Zealand in 1839 to purchase land and prepare it for settlers. Land was to be bought cheaply and sold at a high price to make profits. Three months later Hobson was instructed and sent to New Zealand by colonial office to deal with Maori people with

mildness, sincerity and justice. He was asked to consider the interest of Maori before the interest of emigrants (Alves, 1999).

Britain established a convict in New South Wales in 1788 and soon Sydney became the main place for the traders who were interested in exploiting New Zealand for resources like seals, whales, flax and timber. Most European were temporary visitors but in late 1830 more European liked New Zealand as a place to settle. Trade with New South Wales increased steadily and New Zealand export increased. European settlers started buying Maori land to make their base but most of the land deals were not legal.

Maori society underwent great changes before 1840 especially in the coastal area of North Island. Once cultivators and hunters they organized their labour cultivate suitable crops, learned to read and write language. Gradually it became difficult to maintain this balance between Maori and European and it was not free from violence.

Also different tribes were having constant conflict and fighting with each other on the boundaries of their territory. The musket war is a great example of this. Maori received a terrifyingly effective weapon the musket, in the early years of 19th century. Hongi Hika was the Ngapuhi war leader in north. He increased the mana and power of Ngapuhi through trade with European especially for musket. Hongi Hika defeated many tribes including mighty Waikato under Te Wherowhero in 1820. He was victorious everywhere by 1825 but thousands of people died (Walker, 1990).

Maori and European contact was mutually advantageous. Maori wanted trade goods that European could supply and initially substitutes for traditional

implements and weapon, then musket, and later blankets, clothing, tools and luxuries. Europeans needed Maori co-operation to obtain services and provisions to extract the country products. For European trade or missionary, a chief's protection was essential. It was an uneasy balance of interest for them. Both the partner of Treaty Of Waitangi were interested in coming up with a settlement by which both of them could have a safe environment for their interest, trade, land and culture (Orange, 2004).

Values and Beliefs of each partner

Tangata Whenua

Maori attachment to land is rooted in deep in mythology, tradition and history of tribal wars. They believe when people die their spirit travels to Cape Rienga and climb down into the underworld. It is not clear whether the Maori believed in supreme god but in common their beliefs was, that all aspects of nature under the protection of gods (Atua) or demons. They acknowledge the great gods of earth and sky, forest, sea, mountains and war. The founding hero's of each tribe also become gods and respect had to be shown in their memories and the signs they left (Bohan. 1997)

Tangata Tiriti

They believed that their way of life and religion is superior to all others. They also believe British Empire as sacred. As British political power spread around the world, their missionaries combined Christian beliefs with their firm faith in the moral basis of the British Empire. It was their humanitarian view of the benefits of civilization that made them such a formidable force in early New Zealand and elsewhere. Their technology and their methods of production were better and their motive was profit.

Maori responses towards the Treaty of Waitangi

Initially many Maori welcomed the new experiences and contact with the Europeans. They visited New South Wales and England, enlarging their experience of commerce, the role of monarch, alternative system of law and government, and the treatment of indigenous peoples. Europeans who are settled in New Zealand are called Pakeha. Pakeha economic system was based on individual ownership of land possession and money. In 1840 Maori were more in numbers and powerful than Pakeha and secure in their habitat. Within the next decade the Pakeha population increased and since then subordination of Maori to the Pakeha continues not just in numbers but also in all ways of life.

Maori slowly realized that government's real intention was to seize Maori lands. Towards the end of 1841, a series of events with government dissatisfied many Maori and they started many movements to make changes in the Treaty.

Pre 1840 land purchases

The New Zealand Company claimed to huge areas of land in the lower North Island and also in South Islands. Maori population was unaware that New Zealand Company planned to relocate them from these areas and sell them to settlers but company claimed it to be a verbal agreement between them and Maori (Biggs & Moon, 2004).

Hone Heke brings down the flag

In 1884 the Private Land Purchase Act gave the Crown the exclusive right to purchase Maori land. Hone Heke could see the threat to Maori people. The

northern trade had suffered when capital was transferred to Auckland and duty was imposed on the port of Russell (Alves, 1999). The flagstaff above the town in Russell was a symbol of Maori defeat in their own country to British. So Hone Heke in response attacked the Union Jack flagstaff at Kororareka four times between July 1844 and March 1845. Bringing down the flag struck at British sovereignty without affecting settlers or the economic benefits of trade. On the fourth occasion Kororareka was evacuated and was in Heke hand (Walker, 1990).

New Zealand First Parliament

The New Zealand Constitution Act 1852 set up New Zealand parliament system, based on the British Westminster model. The first elections were held in 1853, and Parliament sat for the first time in 1854. The right of vote was based on the possession of individual property, so Maori who possessed their land communally were not allowed to vote. James Richmond raised the point that natives which were Maori had no right to vote but right to be well governed by Europeans. This racist view began a racist war and Maori were excluded from the parliament for nine years (Walker 1990).

First Maori King

With the changing demographics in New Zealand, Maori population was under the threat of being outnumbered due to increase in European emigrants. A number of meetings were held and on 1858 Waikato chief Te Wherowhero became the first Maori King and took the name Potatu. Te Wherowhero had not signed the treaty of the Waitangi. Maori wanted a leader who would unite the tribes, protect land from further slaves and make laws for Maori to follow. The aim was to create a balance between Maori and

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the Crown. The King movement (kingitanga), was intended to stop the fight amongst the tribes and place all tribes under the king. Many chiefs supported and some chiefs refused to put their mana under that of someone else (Durie, 2005).

The Taranaki Land War

The first conflict in the main phase of the New Zealand wars began in Taranaki in 1860. 4000 Maori owned 800, 000 hectares of land in Taranaki. Governor Gore Browne made a statement that British would take the land by any means. He even in early 1859 announced that anyone who wanted to sell their land could do so individually without chief permission. A ceasefire ended that conflict in 1861 and Governor Browne was replaced by Governor Grey. The warfare between Maori tribes and British forces took place in other parts of the North Island between 1863 and the early 1870s (Walker, 1990).

1882 Maori Deputation to the Queen

The first of the several Maori deputations went to England in 1882 to seek redress from the Crown. They felt they had a special relationship with their Treaty partner, Queen Victoria. In this attempted meeting they were referred back to the New Zealand government on the grounds that the imperial government no longer had the responsibility for such matters (Moon & Biggs, 2004).

Ratana Movement

In 1918 Tahupotiki Ratana experienced visions that led him to found the Ratana Church. The Ratana movement had a strong focus on Christian religion and healing. Ratana proclaimed himself to be mouthpiece of god and

gained reputation as faith healer. Pakeha referred to him as miracle man. Ratana major theme was unity. Its leaders had economic and modernization goals and they demanded that the Treaty of Waitangi should be readdressed. In the 1920s Ratana formed a political arm, and from the mid 1932 entered into an alliance with the labour party. Labour nominated Ratana leaders as its candidates in the Maori electorates. By 1943, Ratana labour candidates had won all the four Maori seats (Walker, 1990).

Reflection on my personal understanding

I was introduced to Treaty of Waitangi recently. I am an international student and knew very little about the treaty prior to commencing this paper. I personally feel close to the Maori culture due to similarities between their culture and my culture which is Indian. Britain had many colonies around the world and India is one of them. I believe that Maori people feel cheated and a minority in their own land. Maori had an impression that treaty was signed to maintain law and order and work mutually as two partners. But after signing the Treaty they soon realised government real intentions was to seize their lands and everything went under the crown. Thirty nine chiefs signed the treaty in English whereas more than 450 signed in Maori language. The Maori text failed to convey the meaning of English version (Locke, nd).

Through the treaty Maori agreed to a central governing body but do not cede their sovereignty. It also stated that the crown will guarantee to protect Maori rights and privileges. Article 3 in the Treaty guarantees equal rights of British and Maori. But the agreement between the two parties was not followed. Discrepancies in the two versions left Maori feel cheated. For the instance the word “ Tino Rangatirtanga” used in article two meant ownership

for the British but for Maori it is an old Maori phrase that meant god rules in heaven and on earth (Round, 1998).

In my view despite of being a legal document Treaty of Waitangi was not done in the best interest of Maori population. It left them feeling betrayed and minority group in their own land. They suffered loss in fisheries, trade, land titles and sovereignty.

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