

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND

Private Bag, Auckland.

WORKING

PAPERS

IN

ANTHROPOLOGY

ARCHAEOLOGY

LINGUISTICS

MAORI STUDIES

Suggestions for a Maori Studies
Syllabus for Secondary Schools.

Working Paper

No. 2

MAORI POLITICS AND
LOCAL ORGANISATION

MAORI STUDIES

PETER SHARPLES.

JANUARY 1970

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MAORI POLITICS AND LOCAL ORGANISATION

PETER SHARPLES

Junior Lecturer in Maori Studies

MAORI POLITICS AND LOCAL ORGANISATION

This topic covers the organisation of local Maori groups. It should include: groups based on traditional organisation; non-traditional groups; and local ad hoc groups which are Maori in some way, and which are actively functioning within the community.

Traditional organisation includes those groups within which membership is defined by descent factors, and in which the operating force within the group is kinship. As background to the study of traditional local groups, the teacher should spend some time explaining: the importance of descent and kinship amongst the early Maori; the traditional grouping of the Maori into IWI 'tribes', HAPU 'sub-tribes', and WHANAU 'extended families'; the relationship of these groups to the land; and the fact that the Maori was never organised Nationally throughout New Zealand. An example of a traditional group within the community would be the Marae Committee.

Non-traditional organisation includes those groups which function to serve the local Maori people in some way, and for which membership is not determined by descent. One such group is the Maori Womens Welfare League.

Other groups, however, may be part-traditional organisations in that although membership is virtually 'open', the mobilizing and stabilizing factor operating within the group is kinship, e.g. the Local Maori Committee.

The above discussion could form the framework upon which the local organisation could be studied by the pupils. Although a small bibliography is included below, the value of this course would undoubtedly be in the student's participation. Visits to meetings of the various organisations should be arranged by the teacher, so that the student can attend and determine for himself the following:

- a) Is the meeting basically a kinship or 'open'.
- b) Are kinship factors important in the meeting (e.g. Are the decisions and the major discussion dominated by the elders of one family etc.)
- c) What nature of business is dealt with by the meeting.
- d) What is the format of the meeting (e.g. Is there correct committee procedure, or informal procedure, or is formal Marae etiquette observed, is the business discussed in Maori or English etc.)
- e) How active is the group.

LOCAL GROUPS:

- (A) The Marae & The Marae Committee.

Originally referring to the courtyard in front of the main meeting house of a Maori Settlement, the term Marae is now generally accepted as applying to the whole complex of buildings and the land they

are on, which the Maori people use for gatherings. Although here defined in terms of buildings and land, the Marae more properly expresses to the Maori a pattern of social ties, obligations and privileges amongst people, rather than the actual material construction.

The Marae is tribal (subtribal and family), both in its membership and locality. It is the means by which each Maori obtains his identity and status among Maoris.

It serves as a forum for discussion on any matter concerning the Maori people, be it education, housing, land development, local affairs, or traditional matters such as whakanapa (genealogy), tribal history or whatever. It is a place to meet for greeting, honouring or farewelling, (including farewelling the dead) or indeed any public circumstance concerning the Maoris.

Thus the Marae for the Maori can serve as church, town hall, craft centre, recreation and cultural centre. It may be used to accommodate small committee meetings or to sleep hundreds who have gathered for a hui (large meeting) or a tangi (funeral).

The student should visit the marae, and study its membership (local participants), its leaders, its main orators etc. Following this, a study of the administering body or the marae committee could be made, which is simply referred to as the Marae Committee.

(B) The Maori Committees: The Maori Executive Committees, The Maori District Councils, and the New Zealand Maori Council.

The New Zealand Maori Council was set up under the provisions of the Maori Welfare Act of 1962, and is the top of a pyramid of Maori Associations which first came into being with the Maori Economic and Social Advancement Act of 1945. The New Zealand Maori Council is thus the National body of several hundred smaller organisations all over the country.

At the base of the pyramid are Maori Committees known for many years as Maori Tribal Committees until the name was changed by the 1962 Act.

Then there are the Maori Executive Committees to which the Maori Committees send representatives. The next tier comprises the Maori District Councils. There are eight District Councils in New Zealand:

Tokerau (Northland),
Auckland
Waikato - Maniapoto (Waikato, Hauraki Plains, Kawhia, Tauranga)
Wairiki (Rotorua, Taupo & Eastern Bay of Plenty)
Aotea (Taranaki, Wanganui and Southern Taupo)

Tairāwhiti (Gisborne north to East Cape)
Ikaroa (Wellington, Manawatu & Haurarapa)
Te Wāipounamu (South Island).

Each District Council sends three representatives to the New Zealand Maori Council which thus has 24 members. The Maori Committees then, are an example of a Maori organisation to which membership is defined by residence but not descent. However in rural areas, these Committees are in fact composed predominantly (and in some cases entirely) of kinsfolk and thus function as a traditionally organized group. Maori Committees are numerous throughout New Zealand and are active in most areas with Welfare and social work amongst the Maori people.

(C) Maori Wardens

These are the welfare wardens which are appointed by, and are responsible to the Maori Committees. In some urban areas there are Warden Sub-Associations.

(D) The Maori Womens Welfare League

Older than the New Maori Council, the Maori Womens Welfare League is recognised somewhat as a parallel organisation for Maori women. It also has a National body which in pyramid fashion has District Councils, with Branch Leagues at the base.

A very active organisation the M.W.W.L. admits Pakeha members, and is concerned with the interests of the Maori people especially in welfare and local affairs.

(E) Maori Culture Groups, Action Song Groups Etc.

These groups may be either traditionally or non-traditionally based. In the rural areas traditionally based groups are common, and are often associated with a marae, certainly with an area of land. Items learnt may be the more serious and traditional: waiata, haka, wero, powhiri, etc. which would be performed at Maori Hui on a marae: or the more lighthearted action songs, stickgames, poi etc. which are usually learnt for their entertainment value.

In the urban areas various groups have formed in the nature of Clubs. Similar items are taught with a strong emphasis upon the haka, actionsong, and poi.

(F) Miscellany

Various miscellaneous and/or ad hoc groups may exist in the particular area, which if they have a strong Maori membership could also be studied, e.g. In some areas there are Maori Play Centre Organisations, Maori Church organisations etc.

The value of this course lies in the fact that it is up to date and acquaints the student with contemporary Maori 'thinking', and offers a medium through which the youth of the community (students) can become

appreciative of the position of the Maori in a greater New Zealand way of life.

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A few references are listed below, mainly as background material. It must be reemphasized here that the success of this course lies in the students attending and evaluating meetings.

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