

"... it is an absolute matter of impossibility that these townships will ever progress ..."¹ The growth (or not) of towns between 1900 and 1910 under the Native Townships Act 1895

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ABSTRACT: The majority of the 18 towns created under the Native Townships Act 1895 were formed in the first decade of the twentieth century. A continuation of the Crown's support for settlers, the townships were also part of the modernisation push of the Liberal government under Premier Richard Seddon. Neither city nor rural expanse, and certainly not the untamed bush, the townships were the servants of the farm and the stopovers for the tourist. The growth of the townships quickly slowed through a lack of access to financing and the taihoa policies of leading Māori MPs. The number of new townships being created reduced considerably by the end of the 1910s, and many that had been established struggled to reach their intended and expected potential.

The story of native townships has only really been told through Waitangi Tribunal research, framed through a narrative of claim and a focus on two or three townships in a region at a time. This paper is an exploration of Native Townships and the stories they may hold from a landscape and architectural point of view.

AI Statement: ChatGPT was used to double check *New Zealand Gazette* notice searches as part of researching the proclamation and lease notifications for the Native Townships, and to provide a list of the Native Townships. AI was not used to generate or check the text of the paper.

I came to know about native townships through my whānau ownership of Māori land at Tokomaru Bay on the East Coast. It was a pretty common story – first exposure to the land was from aunties pointing at the landscape from the car as they debated whether that was theirs (often it wasn't, but close enough), the letters received from the Māori Trustee or Māori Land Court about a meeting or application (we hardly ever got any letters about being paid money), and then eventually you start to get interested enough to locate the blocks accurately.

When you go into Māori Land Online, or Pātaka Whenua as it is called now, you can get a list of the blocks of Māori land that you or your whānau are owners in. It was on one of those lists that I became aware of "MT" as part of the legal description for a few of our land blocks. A decade or so later as part of a Māori Land Court hearing I discovered what "MT" stood for – "Māori Township." Sounded pretty obvious to me, yeah there were a lot of Māori in Tokomaru township.

It took another decade before I made the connection between a relatively obscure piece

of late-nineteenth-century legislation – the Native Townships Act 1895 – and the term "Māori Township." Calling it Tuatini Māori Township also made sense because Tuatini was my marae in Tokomaru Bay. Calling it a Māori Township also distanced it from the obvious legislative connection of the Native Townships Act 1895, hidden behind a series of other Māori land legislation that eventually brought it under the aegis of Māori Land Boards and then in many cases the Māori Trustee. At some point in that journey the legislation allowed the title to be renamed to Māori Township.

¹ Native Affairs Committee. Report on the Petition of Te Wherowhero Tawhiao p 19.

"a disorganised heap of particulars"²

Native Townships are an under-studied part of how New Zealand came to be. They struggle to make it into footnotes of academic articles, and rarely achieve a mention in legal history writings.³ Significant legal texts dealing with Māori land law largely forget Native Townships – from earlier texts such as Hugh Kawharu's *Māori Land Tenure: Studies of a Changing Institution* (1977)⁴ through to more modern books such as Richard Boast's *Buying the Land, Selling the Land* from 2008.⁵

Most of the research into Native Townships has been done as part of Waitangi Tribunal proceedings, either as background research commissioned by the Tribunal or by historians working for claimants.⁶ This wealth of information is extremely valuable for anyone coming from any discipline who

² Boast "Māori Land Boards" p 85.

³ For example, in Tom Brooking's 21-page exploration of Māori land policy of the early Liberal Government, the Native Townships Act 1895 appears in one paragraph, and only then is the subject of only half of that. Brooking ""Busting Up"" pp 87-88.

⁴ Kawharu *Māori Land Tenure*.

⁵ Boast *Buying the Land*.

⁶ For example, Bassett Kay Research *Taihape Native Townships*; Woodley *The Native Townships Act 1895 Preliminary Report*; Boulton *Native Townships in the Whanganui*.

wants to learn about towns created under the Native Townships Act 1895. But, by the nature of the Tribunal's work, there are gaps in the research:

- * The coverage is not total, with the deepest research being done on Native Townships in areas covered by claims, but this means the story of a lot of townships are missed. This can make it tempting to assume that Native Townships covered by the Whanganui inquiry or the Te Rohe Potae inquiry (the King Country) are representative of all Native Townships. The variety of Native Townships means this is not the case.
- * Because of what the Tribunal is designed to do, the research into Native Townships is framed from a claim perspective. The history of the township is only important in the context of whether it helps prove or disprove the case for a claim, in the area covered by the claim. How the township fits into the wider context of landscape and New Zealand's spatial history is of little consequence to a Tribunal claim or Treaty settlement.

Native Townships also fall within what can be described as a "quiet decade" for anyone

interested in the history of land loss by Māori. Tom Brooking's analysis of the alienation of Māori land in the North Island highlights the 1890s as the biggest land-buying programme of any administration after the New Zealand Wars, with another significant push in the 1910s under the Reform administration.⁷ The regional and rural nature of all the Native Townships is another potential reason for them being missed, with Tony Ballantyne noting the bias toward national matters by New Zealand historians and significantly more critical interest in questions of race, gender or national identity.⁸ Because Native Townships were created before James Carroll's "taihoa" policy beginning in 1900, but nonetheless arguably had aspects of self-determination that were markedly different to previous land policies, they offer particular insights into the "quiet decade."

Another potential reason for Native Townships being forgotten is the sheer quantity of land legislation for researchers and students to focus on. Richard Boast states that:

⁷ Brooking ""Busting Up"" p 78.

⁸ Ballantyne "On Place, Space and Mobility in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand" pp 50-70.

	Township	Proclaimed**	First offered for lease
1	Pipiriki	6 August 1896	27 July 1897
2	Tokaanu	18 March 1897	17 June 1898
3	Kaimakau	14 July 1897	14 October 1898
4	Te Puia	10 November 1897	15 February 1900
5	Potaka	28 July 1899	9 May 1900
6	Parata	17 August 1899	11 September 1900
7	Tuatini	14 September 1899	16 January 1901
8	Te Araroa	4 October 1899	14 December 1900
9	Rotoiti	14 June 1900	16 May 1902
10	Parawai	29 June 1900	18 December 1903
11	Waipiro	25 October 1900	10 February 1904
12	Te Puru	24 September 1901	13 August 1903
13	Hokio	1 August 1902	11 March 1903
14	Karewa	26 September 1902	18 December 1903
15	Otorohanga	22 January 1903	16 June 1904
16	Te Kuiti	22 January 1903	1 November 1904
17	Taumarunui	27 November 1903	12 October 1904
18	Turangarere	1 February 1907	N/A***

* Ohotu Native Township was proclaimed on 27 December 1900 but then revoked in 10 December 1904, so is technically a 19th Native Township but was never implemented.
 ** This is the date of the proclamation, not the date of publication (which was often a few days later).
 *** Sections in Turangarere were never advertised for lease in the *The New Zealand Gazette*, and Boulton notes that the Crown instead decided to sell the freehold of the sections (Boulton *Native Townships* p 104). Bassett Kay Research state that the Māori owners intended for the freehold to be sold (i.e. outside the Native Townships Act 1895, instead using the Māori Lands Amendment Act 1900, not leased, and the only reason leasehold land remained was that only 12 of the 66 sections offered were sold (Bassett *Taihape Native Townships* pp 219-237).

Table 1: List of Native Townships with dates proclaimed and offered for lease.*

Māori land law may be statutory but it was not, and indeed still is not, a rational structure. Rather, it was a disorganised heap of particulars. The edifice was characterised by no logical structure or by any noble or inspiring ideals: nor was it even the product of any consistently applied cunning or malevolent aspirations.

It was merely layer upon layer of statute, each layer a response to the one immediately before it, constantly patched, chipped away at, and filled in.⁹

⁹ Boast "Māori Land Boards" p 85.

The Native Townships Act 1895 was just one patch of many, another layer between various others, none of which were crucial or central to the others. There was no apparent need to understand Native Townships to unlock an understanding of the whole.

It is no surprise then that Native Townships have not been looked at from an architectural or landscape perspective. Even getting a list of Native Townships is an effort, as the Treaty settlement and Waitangi Tribunal reports never compile the complete list (their focus being on the claim at hand). We are therefore left with scouring the *New Zealand Gazette* (where every Native Township had to be proclaimed) and the Annual Reports of government departments that had oversight of the Native Townships. From these sources we start to get a fuller list.

It is likely that you will recognise a large number of the towns listed in the table above (Table 1). Some may need a modern translation to be recognisable – for example, Tuatini is Tokomaru Bay on the East Coast, Kaimakau is Kennedy's Bay on the Coromandel Peninsula, and Potaka is Ūtiku just south of Taihape on State Highway 1. Many of you with heightened geographical



Figure 1: Approximate location of Native Townships.

awareness may be drawing mental dots between some of the towns, identifying the nearby industries and infrastructure, and the relationships to other towns and cities. These geographic connections are often correct, but do not fully explain the reasons behind how and why Native Townships came to be.

Native Townships: a primer for those who have never heard of them

A Native Township officially came into existence upon publication of a proclamation by the Governor in the *New Zealand Gazette* and *Kahiti o Niu Tirenī*.¹⁰ Once published, the parcel of Māori land referred to became subject to the Native Townships Act 1895. The legislation also required the township to be named at the time of publication.

Following proclamation, the Surveyor-General was required to survey and lay out the site "with such streets, allotments and reserves as he thinks fit."¹¹ Section 6 of the legislation required the Surveyor-General to ensure that up to 20 percent of the total township be reserved as "Native allotments" – these must include every "Native burying ground" and every building occupied by Māori at the time of proclamation. Māori owners had to be consulted on the "Native allotments," albeit with the proviso that "in so far as, in the opinion of the Surveyor-General, such compliance does not interfere with the

¹⁰ Native Townships Act 1895 s3.

¹¹ Native Townships Act 1895 s5(1). This section also allowed the Surveyor General to use any existing plan in whole or in part, in case a town was already laid out and then proclaimed.

survey, or the direction, situation, and size of the streets, allotments or reserves of the township."¹²

The survey of every Native Township had to be exhibited for two months to enable examination by Māori. This allowed for any objections to "the sufficiency, size, or situation of the reserves or Native allotments" to be lodged with the Chief Judge of the Native Land Court, upon which a hearing and judgement would be made.¹³

Once the two-month exhibition and objection period had expired, and any changes made, the Surveyor-General was allowed to certify that the plan was correct and the township officially constituted. The plan was then deposited with the District Land Registrar, at which point:

- * All streets shown on the plan were vested in the Crown and became known as roads as part the Public Works Act 1894.
- * All reserves were vested in the Crown and subject to the Public Reserves Act 1881.
- * All "Native allotments" were vested in

¹² Native Townships Act 1895 s7.

¹³ Native Townships Act 1895 s9.

Crown in trust for "the use and enjoyment of the Native owners."¹⁴

- * All other allotments were vested in the Crown in trust for Māori owners.

Once all that had been done, the allotments vested in the Crown in trust for Māori owners were able to be leased by the Commissioner of Crown Lands, for a term not exceeding 21 years. All rents were paid into a Crown account, and the costs of surveying and constituting the township were deducted from this account. Any remaining surplus was to be distributed amongst the Māori owners twice a year.¹⁵ There was also some allowance for compensation to anyone whose land was restricted as a result of the Native Township being put in place, although this excluded any compensation for the roads that were vested in the Crown.

There were several amendments to the Native Townships Act 1895 – the first in 1898, another in 1899, another in 1903, and then a relatively quiet period until 1910, and then again in 1919. The 1898 amendment removed the original requirement for any Native

Township to be within 10 miles of another one. The 1903 amendments tweaked how the costs of surveying and constitution were paid for (half yearly, rather than waiting until sufficient funds had built up to pay in total). The 1910 legislation was much more significant, including introducing perpetual leases and the ability of lessees to acquire the freehold title.

Significant changes relating to Native Townships were also introduced via other land-related legislation. A key change was the Māori Land Laws Amendments Act 1902 which allowed Native Townships to come under Māori Land Councils as part of attempts to increase the influence by Māori over the townships. Māori Land Councils morphed into Māori Land Boards (who no longer had a Māori majority), and eventually responsibility passed to the Māori Trustee from the 1950s.

The mechanics of creating and leasing a Native Township outlined above misses at least one important precursor – the reasons why a Native Township was thought necessary in the first place.

"What, may I ask, was the use of passing the Act if it was not intended to put it into operation."¹⁶

The purpose of the Native Townships Act 1895 was clearly set out in the preamble to the legislation:

promoting the settlement and opening-up of the interior of the North Island, it is essential that townships should be established at various centres: And whereas in many cases the Native title cannot at present be extinguished in the ordinary way of purchase by the Crown, and other difficulties exist by reason whereof the progress of settlement is impeded.

My interests here are on the first two concepts from the preamble:

- * promoting settlement, and
- * opening up the interior.

Promoting settlement

The Liberal government of 1891-1912 is recognised as laying a number of the foundations for "modern" New Zealand. Richard Boast points to the moral and social beliefs of the Liberals as key drivers behind their push for breaking up large land estates into smaller farming units (and championing closer settlement), and the favouring of rural

¹⁴ Native Townships Act 1895 s12(3).

¹⁵ Native Townships Act 1895 ss19-20.

¹⁶ "Tokomaru's Want" p 2.

life and enterprise over the failings and evils of cities.¹⁷ When added to the technological advances of improved roads and a complete rail network, Liberal policies "led to a mass influx of new settlers into the more remote rural districts."¹⁸ The growth of towns, including Native Townships, were a by-product of these policies.

The majority of Native Townships were already occupied before they were proclaimed. Māori already lived on the parcels of land, and small numbers of Europeans owned businesses and homes on leased land. When Otorohanga Native Township was advertised for lease in 1905 the *Gazette* notice described it as "the oldest of the European settlements in the King-country" and that "it has been known for some years past as a thriving business place."¹⁹ The notice goes on to mention several existing facilities and businesses, including a sawmill, school, public hall, temperance hotel, a creamery within four miles, and a Methodist church.

Taumarunui was similarly advertised as

¹⁷ Boast *Buying the Land* pp 185-187.

¹⁸ Boast *Buying the Land* p 186.

¹⁹ "Sections in the Township of Otorohanga for Lease by Public Auction" p 667.

having existing buildings and businesses, despite the North Island Main Trunk (NIMT) still not being complete (Taumarunui was the terminus of the line in 1904, with the NIMT being completed in 1908).²⁰ Note was made of the school, public hall, library, and arrangements being made for several sawmills. Only 11 miles south of the terminus of the other end of the NIMT (Mangaweka in 1904), Potaka Māori Township (what is now known as Ūtiku) was newly formed compared to Taumarunui but still had "a few stores, accommodation-houses, public school, post and telegraph office, and a daily coach and mail service."²¹

Leanne Boulton notes that the Crown had been discussing the idea of a township at Pipiriki with Whanganui iwi and hapū from the late 1880s, well before the Native Townships Act 1895 came into being.²² Photographs and sketches of settlement at Pipiriki Pā – across the river from where the township would eventually be established – date from the 1860s through to the late 1880s. Similarly, an initial surveyor's visit as part of

²⁰ "277 Sections in Township of Taumarunui for Lease" p 2132.

²¹ "Lands in Potaka Township" p 1646.

²² Boulton *Native Townships* p 27.

assessing suitable locations for the establishment of Hokio Native Township noted signs of a Māori camping ground and evidence of seasonal occupation.²³

As mechanisms for promoting settlement, it is more correct to think of Native Townships as continuing or extending settlement in most cases. Waitangi Tribunal and Treaty settlement reports note that the focus for Native Townships was European settlement, highlighting that prior to establishment the dealings had been direct between Māori owners and settlers (rather than the Crown leasing land held in trust for Māori owners).²⁴ While ascribing European interest as primary under the Native Townships Act 1895, Woodley does concede that "it is indeed clear from the evidence that some Maori played a significant role in the formation of certain townships."²⁵ This was not always the case, but is evident across at least half of the 18 Native Townships.

The focus on closer settlement meant that Māori-style communal ownership of land

²³ Anon. *Hokio Native Township* p 6.

²⁴ For example, see Waitangi Tribunal *He Whiritauonoka* p 813, and Woodley *The Native Townships Act 1895* p 31.

²⁵ Woodley *The Native Townships Act 1895* p 31.

continued to be rejected by settlers seeking access to land in New Zealand in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.²⁶ There was a strong echo of Wakefield's vision of order and prosperity played out through land in the Liberal government's land policies, and the fear of the wastelands (land not intensively worked) extended into the rural town space. That the leasehold approach embedded in Native Townships could work to achieve this vision and allay these fears was demonstrated by Te Kūiti's growth from proclamation in 1903 and first lease in 1904 through till the close of the first decade of the twentieth century:

When the sections at Te Kuiti were opened for selection some three years ago they were all taken up. Buildings, many of them handsome structures, were put up, and the township, the centre of a remarkably fine agricultural and pastoral district, rapidly assumed a most progressive appearance until now it is one of the finest on the Main Trunk line.²⁷

At the other end of the spectrum is Ohotu – proclaimed in 1900 but revoked in 1904. Its brief life as a Native Township (in concept at least) was sparked by Māori, who Leanne Boulton notes had "high expectations of the

²⁶ Brooking "Use It or Lose It" p 145.

²⁷ "Not Wanted" p 3.

financial benefits a township would provide."²⁸ The Crown was hesitant to establish a Native Township until roading into the Ohotu block was completed and more land cultivated, but under pressure from settlers progressed the survey.²⁹ The lack of take-up of leases saw Ohotu withdrawn as a Native Township in 1904. The first Native Township – Pipiriki – was reported by the Department of Lands and Survey in 1904 as "the most successful Native township in the district (from a financial point of view at any rate)," with all sections taken up to that date.³⁰ This success could not be sustained, with the opening of the NIMT in 1908 and the improvement of other roads (and the lack of investment in local roads around Pipiriki) drawing transport and commerce away from the Whanganui River.³¹ Karewa, Parawai and Te Puru on the Kawhia Harbour suffered

²⁸ Boulton *Native Townships* p 37. These hopes included helping to pay for improvements to the surrounding farmland that was owned by Māori.

²⁹ Boulton notes the concerns of the Surveyor-General and Commissioner of Crown Lands (Boulton *Native Townships* p 39), and records of the Surveyor-General's concerns are held in Ohotu Survey Box (R24010797), and in reports by surveyors to the Aotea Māori Land Board (such as "The Ohutu Block" p 2).

³⁰ DLS *Annual Report 1904* p 96.

³¹ Waitangi Tribunal *He Whiritaunoka* p 835.

similarly with the demise of coastal shipping and the completion of the NIMT.

Undoubtedly part of the history of the Crown's alienation of land from Māori, the creation of Native Townships for settlement was significantly influenced by economic factors. There was opportunity available, and in many cases Māori saw this opportunity and were entrepreneurial within the framework of the Native Townships Act 1895. This did not mean land remained in Māori ownership in the long-term. But in the "quiet decade" we see glimpses of settlement done differently through Native Townships.

Opening up the interior

Colonial land surveyors employed two primary modes of vision according to Giselle Byrnes – the material gaze (which included the commercial gaze) and the aesthetic gaze (panoptic and picturesque).³² While Brynes' focus was on the methods employed by colonial surveyors in the early- to mid-nineteenth century, the two modes of vision continue to be relevant for the establishment of towns in the early-twentieth century, including Native Townships.

³² Byrnes *Boundary Markers* pp 39-40.

David Hamer categorises early New Zealand towns as coming into being for two main reasons:³³

- * locations where breaks in a journey needed to occur. This could be to cross a river, or a swamp, or simply due to the distance that could be covered by the means of transport of the time.
- * servicing industries, often a single industry early in the town's creation. This often meant farming, timber milling, and mining, but also included military settlements.

Three of the first four Native Townships - Pipiriki, Tokaanu, Te Puia were created to service the tourism industry. They came in to being first and foremost as part of opening up the natural resources close by, providing accommodation and transport routes for tourists. Pipiriki's placement meant it was also effective at breaking up the tourist's journey, enabling the transition from the Wanganui River steamers to the coach routes to the "Hot Lakes" of Rotorua (or vice versa).³⁴ Tokaanu's

³³ See Hamer "Towns in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand" pp 7-9.

³⁴ This was highlighted in the DLS reports and also lease notices in *The New Zealand Gazette*. See *DLS Annual Report 1904* p 96, and *DLS Annual Report 1905* p 15, and

sales pitch was also heavily tilted to tourism:

The large number of hot springs on the western part of the township has rendered this place famous, and, when facilities for baths are greater, it is sure to become one of the great sanatoria of the country, ... Tokaanu is the most convenient place from which to accomplish the ascent of the mountains, which are fast becoming a resort of visitors.³⁵

Some later Native Townships also had strong connections to tourism. Te Kūiti and Otorohanga were promoted as gateways to the Waitomo Caves, which in 1904 had been proclaimed as a reserve under The Scenery Preservation Act 1903.³⁶ But tourism for these towns was secondary – their primary purpose was to service the agricultural lands and timber industries around them. This was the driver for half of the Native Townships. Tuatini's lease notice in the *New Zealand Gazette* highlighted that it was "the port for a large pastoral country" which was regularly serviced by steamers and had the Main Coast Road going through it (read easy to get goods

"Lands in the Township of Pipiriki for Lease" pp 1138-1139.

³⁵ "Sections in the Township of Tokaanu for Lease" pp 80-82.

³⁶ Department of Tourist and Health Resorts *Second Annual Report* p 2.

in and out).³⁷ The description in the same notice for Waipiro Bay used the same language and highlighted the same points.

The Māori owners of both Potaka (Ūtiku) and Turangarere sought to benefit from the demand for timber facilitated by the NIMT. Bassett Kay Research highlight the provision of railway houses and businesses during construction at Turangarere was an initial driver behind the Native Township, and there was some anxiety from owners as the time taken to organise for the survey and sale meant the NIMT extended beyond the proposed town.³⁸ Timber milling was the backbone for the potential future of both Potaka and Turangarere, with both Native Townships described as having large stands of good milling-timber close by and sawmills already in operation.³⁹

Hokio is the outlier – neither tourist driver nor designed to service a particular industry. Instead, residents of Levin met with the Minister of Lands to urge the establishment of

³⁷ "Land in Hawke's Bay Land District for Lease" p 1702.

³⁸ Bassett Kay Research *Taihape Townships* pp 224, 227.

³⁹ Boulton *Native Townships* p 49. Bassett Kay Research *Taihape Townships* p 42. Also see Cleaver *Māori and Economic Development in the Taihape Inquiry District* p 138.

coastal holiday-homes.⁴⁰ Despite not fitting the purpose of the Native Townships Act 1895, the township was nonetheless proclaimed, surveyed and offered for lease under the legislation. Located just south of Levin, Hokio's lease notice simply states it sits at the mouth of the stream and has a metalled road for about a third of the journey to Levin's railway station.⁴¹ Take up of the sections was slow, and many at a discounted price.⁴²

While all the Native Township descriptions demonstrate what Byrnes called "the commercial gaze" (all except Hokio), there was also plenty of space in *Gazette* notices and departmental annual reports to also engage the aesthetic gaze. Tuatini's lease notice mentioned it was located "in one of the most beautiful bays on the East Coast,"⁴³ Potaka's climate was healthy, and Tokaanu had a combination of both – "much pretty scenery" and "a salubrious climate."⁴⁴ Otorohanga was noted as being "laid out in a pretty valley."⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Anon. *Hokio Native Township* pp 3-4.

⁴¹ "Lands in the Township of Hokio" (23 January 1903) p 203.

⁴² Anon. *Hokio Native Township* p 7.

⁴³ "Land in Hawke's Bay Land District for Lease" p 1702.

⁴⁴ "Sections in the Township of Tokaanu for Lease" pp 80-82.

⁴⁵ "Sections in the Township of Otorohanga for Lease" p

The commercial and aesthetic gaze would work hand-in-hand in many cases. The Commissioner of Crown Lands, JWA Marchant, described Pipiriki's surrounds as "beautiful and unrivalled scenery," partly as a draw for settlers to live there themselves but also to reinforce the likely continued growth of tourists.⁴⁶ Otorohanga was bounded to the south and east by the Waipa River which was well stocked with trout (read recreation but also attraction of tourist), and the same was mentioned at Tokaanu and Rotoiti. Even Hokio's description had improved by the third time it was put up for lease, with the proposed town now being called a "summer resort."⁴⁷

These descriptions were a step beyond the early images of New Zealand's emptiness, indicating untapped potential. The Native Townships were not wild country, the hard work had been done, there was no need for the pioneer settler here. Sections in Potaka were noted as having trees felled and being in grass,⁴⁸ and overall "[r]emnants of the forest

2667.

⁴⁶ "Lands in the Township of Pipiriki for Lease" p 9.

⁴⁷ "Lands in the Township of Hokio" (28 March 1907) p 1086.

⁴⁸ "Lands in Wellington Land District for Lease" p 2036.

stumps and logs still remain."⁴⁹ For Parata it was even simpler – the lease notice stated that the "sections comprise flat grass land; the soil is of first-class quality."⁵⁰ Te Puru comprised "undulating grass and tea-tree land" and the swamp lots were addressed by stating they can be drained easily.⁵¹

The Native Townships were the place for entrepreneurship, where businesses could be founded and flourish. David Hamer notes that unlike other colonies, where governments were responsible for the founding of most towns, or the United States where it was left primarily to private enterprise, New Zealand took more of a mixed model.⁵² With the townships laid out by the government and leases available, it was now up to existing and new inhabitants to make the Native Townships a success. Pipiriki was projected as developing "into a place of some commercial importance,"⁵³ Tokaanu offered "attractive and desirable investments," and Potaka afforded

⁴⁹ "Lands in Potaka Township" p 1646.

⁵⁰ "Lands in Parata Township" p 757.

⁵¹ "Lands in Te Puru Township" pp 1576-1577.

⁵² Hamer "The Making of Urban New Zealand" pp 14-15.

⁵³ "Lands in the Township of Pipiriki for Lease" pp 1138-9.

"an opportunity to business-people."⁵⁴ It was even easier in Otorohanga, which was already "known for some years past as a thriving business-place," but as settlement progressed would "become a place of considerable importance."⁵⁵

Reports by the Department of Lands and Survey would comment on the number of houses and businesses being built as a signal of progress and success for a Native Township. Just as mentions of development in lease notices were designed to entice new settlers to the towns, reports of continued growth helped reinforce original intention and also serve to continue to attract. Pipiriki was highlighted by the Department of Lands and Survey in 1901 by noting that:

A comfortable accommodation-house, two stores, a hall, and several cottages have been erected. There is a reasonable prospect of further development in this township.⁵⁶

While Potaka was noted as struggling in the 1901 Department of Lands and Survey Annual Report, the 1904 report stated that the

⁵⁴ "Lands in Potaka Township" p 1646.

⁵⁵ "Sections in the Township of Otorohanga for Lease" p 2667.

⁵⁶ *DLS Annual Report 1901* p 15.

township was making great progress, "chiefly due to the near completion of the railway, and the fact that a number of sawmills have started, or are about to start, in the locality."⁵⁷ However, at Hokio there had been no start on buildings by the 1904 report, and Parata "cannot be classed as successful, as only one shop (a blacksmith's) and six dwellinghouses have been erected."⁵⁸

David Hamer observed that the survival and then growth of a town in early New Zealand depended on two things – the relationship it established with the surrounding region, and the relationship with other towns.⁵⁹ He also recognised that this dependence became symbiotic, especially in relation to towns that serviced the opening up of surrounding industries, so much so that the towns only grew as the needs of the surrounding country expanded. Pipiriki was a victim of this, its tourists drawn to other attractions and modes of transport, resulting in its decline from the middle of the decade onward. Te Kūiti, Otorohanga, and Taumarunui secured their relationship to each other and their

⁵⁷ *DLS Annual Report 1904* p 96.

⁵⁸ *DLS Annual Report 1904* p 96.

⁵⁹ Hamer "Towns in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand" p 8.

surrounding industries, enabling them to flourish.

As with settlement, most of the Native Townships were about further opening up of existing industry, and they did not do it alone. Taumarunui, Potaka and Turangarere helped open up the local timber industry in conjunction with the newly completed NIMT. Tuatini, Te Kūiti, and Otorohanga supported the further opening up of the already existing agricultural industry. Pipiriki, Tokaanu, Te Puia and to a degree Te Kūiti were based on opening up the growing tourism industry. The interior then was less a geographical space, and more a latent untapped (or not fully tapped) economic opportunity. In this way the interior can be defined as "not the city," consistent with the Liberal government's favouring of the country life from a moral and social perspective.⁶⁰

Impossibility of progress

It is very tempting to read Native Townships primarily from a cultural interaction perspective, whether that is for Treaty settlements purposes or other examinations of the impact that colonialism has had. This lens

⁶⁰ Brooking "Use It or Lose It" p 145.

would place Native Townships as part of the tsunami of land legislation that was effective at dispossessing Māori of land, and even though the majority of Native Townships were created in the "quiet decade" they are of such small scale that they struggle to be seen as offering any counter narrative. Success with this lens would be hard to claim – the Native Townships that thrive on twenty-first century standards have very little Māori-owned land in them (Taumarunui, Te Kūiti, Otorohanga etc), and those that have struggled to grow continue to have large amounts of Māori land (Tuatini, Waipiro, Te Araroa).

Reading them as tools for settlement and opening up the economic wealth of North Island rural areas offers a potentially more favourable reading. From this angle we could argue that Native Townships were an attempt to navigate earlier difficulties around Native title, and provide a platform for the entrepreneurial spirit that David Hamer notes was often so important in the progress of towns. Progress here needs to be considered in the context of the challenges and difficulties experienced by all towns, not just those created on Māori land. The failure of Pipiriki, for example, is partly due to the difficulty in raising finance on Māori-owned leasehold

land, but arguably more so because of the swing of transport and tourist interests. This of course does not detract from the issues explored as part of Treaty settlements and Waitangi Tribunal inquiries, but encourages us to read Native Townships in a wider context.

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