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UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO

Centre for Maori Studies and Research

Ngahua Te Awkotuku

The City of Rotorua

And Its Meaning To Ngati Whakaue

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The City of Rotorua and Its Meaning to the People
of Te Arawa

To comment initially on the title **suggested** for this paper, I would like to amend it to "The City of Rotorua and its Meaning for the **Peoyle** of **Ngati Whakaue**". Reasons for this will be more fully **appreciated** later in the **paper**.

Rotorua - the city as we know it today - owes its 'genesis partly to the traffic of missionaries, traders, militia and travellers who foretold an inevitable future for this unique district, and mostly to the **tangata** whenua of that day, the "proprietors of the soil". Of the many observations recorded, here are three confident projections **made** in the earliest days of pioneer **New Zealand**. In 1847, Dr John Johnson, the Colonial Surgeon, wrote:

'Rotorua would be a most agreeable **summer** residence - pleasing scenery, boating and riding parties to other lakes, hot and cold bathing; and it **may** be anticipated that at no **very** distant future, when the true character of its waters as remedial agents has been ascertained, and its beautiful localities and **salubrious** air are known, it will be part of the country much resorted to by invalids, and by those whose leisure will **permit** them to vary their residence.'

Hochstetter was even more positive after his visit **in 1858**:

'I have no doubt that, at no very distant period,* this remarkable lake will become the centre of attraction not **only** for tourists, but also a place of resort for invalids from all parts of the world.'

And Lieutenant **Stratton** Bates echoed similar sentiments two years later:

'**There** is no other scene, I believe, in which the wondrous and the beautiful are so intimately connected.' There can be no doubt that one **day** this place will attract thousands of visitors from **all** parts of the world.'

Thus, once the initial difficulties of colonization were overcome - the effective **subjugation** of armed protest by the indigenous peoples, and the subsequent acquisition of the richest **agricultural** lands for settlement - the interior was opened and invited exploration, **investment** and enjoyment by the colonists. Inevitably, they looked to the wonders of the volcanic region.

Ohinemutu was the **stopover** point for those en route to **Rotomahana**, and the Pink and **White Terraces**, although **many** enjoyed the hospitality of the Ohinemutu people and the beneficial effects of the soothing waters nearby. Unlike Te Wairoa, where local enterprise **had** established a Rates Scale which was posted to a notice board photographed as early **as** 1860, **commerce** in Ohinemutu did not develop until later in that decade. The incidence of accommodation houses is recorded, however. The earliest descriptions vary considerably from Russell (1868):

'We were received by Pererika and lodged in his house, a very nice well **built** one, **with** beautiful **mats**.'

to Stewart's account:

'**Previous** to 1872 accommodation for travellers was a **whare** owned, and business run, by five **Maoris**. The business capacity of this firm was very limited European enterprise soon **stepped** in, and the

native element soon gave way, so far as hotel keeping **was** concerned, and confined itself to **make** the most of travellers otherwise, an art in which **they** acquired great efficiency.'

Commenting on the latter, i.e. European enterprise, by 1875 there were two hotels operating on the **slopes** of Pukeroa, immediately above **Ohinemutu** kainga. One was the "Ohinemutu", probably **opened** by one **Harry** Carter, alias **Ari Katera**, whose **ethnic** origin from this point in time remains, alas, obscure; he soon sold out to Isaac Wilson who was responsible for **much** of the hotel as we know it - the famous "Lake House", now the "Lakes Tavern". The other establishment became known as "**Mrs Morrison's** Family hotel", a **familiar** surname in Rotorua - it was originally built by a Mr Thomas Bennett, father of the first Bishop of Aotearoa. It was not licensed.

By 1880, a third hotel, the "**Palace**" was standing at the intersection of Lake Road and **Ranolf** Street, **immediately below** the Lake house. It was moved to a site on the corner of Arawa and Tutanekai Streets some time after the township area had been finally determined. A poignant reminder of this immensely popular place, and Robertson's stable nearby, may still be seen at that intersection, a weathered horse trough between two oak trees.

There were two main vehicular routes from Tauranga, both via **Maketu** and Rotoiti, both **barely** negotiable. **Although** of **paramount** importance during the military **campaigns** of the 1860's, it was not until the visit of **HRH** Duke of Edinburgh in 1870, that it was made public policy that a direct route be opened from Tauranga to Rotorua. Thirteen years later, a coach road had been carved through the **Mamaku** Forest. By 1873, the **main road** was opened for vehicular traffic, and the first mail coach passed on its way from Napier to **Tauranga**. A telegraph service was **operative as early** as 1870, and the Rotorua office opened at Te **Ngae** in 1871. Later, in 1875, it transmitted from a whare **whakairo** in Ohinemutu, the house "**Tiki**", and later the service snifted to **new** premises near the **Utuhina** stream.

Needless to say, to **accommodate** the **varying** tastes of the visitors, and the newly acquired appetites of the locals, retail outlets were soon established. **Ollivier**, a traveller in 1871, comments thus:

'**There** is a fair accommodation for a limited number of travellers to be obtained at the store, which is **kept** by a most enterprising native who is most civil and obliging.'

And by 1880, **Tapsell** describes the appearance of a flourishing colonial town, no longer **just** a watering place for **those** en route for the fabled Te **Tarata**. That year, the visitor traffic had increased considerably and the government began to contemplate the unique economic potential of that area, billed thus in a tourist guide of 1872 and republished soon after in London:

'How shall I attempt to describe Rotomahana? If photography cannot do it justice, which it does not, how can the effete tracings of my pen soar to the conception of the most remarkable and **most beautiful** phenomena of nature that I have ever as yet seen in the world. **Niagara**, with all its grandeur is after **all** but a gigantic waterfall, and the **Yosemite** Valley is nothing more than a deep gorge unequalled by any other gorge for wilderness and beauty; but the wonders of **Rotomahana** stand, as far as I know, by themselves, not only unequalled, but **incomparable**.'

With such extravagant promotion, and the **timely sightseeing** reconnaissance of F.J. Moss, M.P., it was **becoming evident** that facilities offered in the district at that **time** were by no means adequately **meeting** the ever increasing demand - a demand that promised **gargantuan** capital returns. As the late **Kaniera Kingi**, an elder and **respected** spokesman of **Ngati Whakaue**, observed:

'The botorua area, with its **thermal** wonders and **lakes**, was attracting visitors **from** overseas - the **Pink and White Terraces** were irresistible. The **Government** of the day - 1860 - realizing the district **had** valuable assets to be exploited, **decided** that a town should be founded on a site **central** to these assets.'

At the same time, certain Europeans were entering **into casual** leasehold agreements with **Maoris** whose titles had never been **investigated**, and these paketa enjoyed occupationary tenure with no legal basis - thus, some form of **government** intervention **seemed advisable** and in the interests of all parties. Despite initial opposition **from** the business **community** of **Ohinemutu**, negotiations for a township were soon **underway**. The first meeting was held in **November 1880**, the Chief Judge of the **Maori Land Court**, **Fenton**, acting for the government. In his opening address, he advocated "the creation of a township, and the setting **aside** of the **thermal** springs, "**hei oranga mo nga iwi katoa o te Ao**", for the benefit of the people of the world". He stressed that leases were acceptable and invited the assembly of **Ngati Uhakaue**, **Hgati Rangiwewehi**, and **Wgati Uenukukopako**, to nominate representatives "to cooperate with me in **drawing up** conditions for the **establishment** of a town". Four were from **Ngati Whakaue**, and one each came **from** the other two. From this meeting emerged the historic "Agreement for a Township at Ohinemutu between Francis Cart Fenton for the Government of New Zealand, and the Chiefs of Ngati Whakaue, Ngati Rangiwewehi, and Ngati Uenukukopako the Supposed Owners of the Soil". By this agreement, settled in the **Tamatekapua** meeting house, provision was made for the creation of beneficial public trusts, of which a little **more** later.

Just over six months passed, and on 28 June 1881, the Native Land Court awarded ownership of the proposed **town site** to **Ngati Whakaue**. A Certificate of Title in favour of some 295 members was issued on 27 April 1862 - they comprised the six **hapu** of **Ngati Whakaue** - **Rorooterangi**, **Tunohopu**, **Rangiwaho**, **Pukaki**, **Hurunga** and **Taotou**. By that **time** Rotorua was already a township, declared so by a proclamation of 12 October 1881, in the wake of the Thermal Springs Act that came into being 24 September 1881. This Act endorsed **Fenton's** Agreement with the **Maori** people, and the **preamble** clearly recites the government's intention:

'It would be advantageous to the colony, and beneficial to the **Maori** owners of the land in which the natural **mineral** springs and thermal waters exist that such localities **should** be opened to colonization, and made available for **settlement**.'

With such bountiful prospects, it is not surprising that the leasehold **opportunities** offered by auction, even long before individual ownership of each piece was ever determined, were greedily snatched up. And yet, ironically, the leases which were for a **99** year tenure, soon **became** a highly contentious, even disagreeable issue. In spite of breathless publicity and promotion overseas, the new town **was** hit by the current **economic** recession. One Guide Book reiterates:

'... the **Government** township of "**Fentonville**" has proved a most lamentable failure ... not one in four of the purchasers will pay a second half-year's rent for they can see clearly that the town will never be there.'

And the **Bay of Plenty Times** reported in **May 1882**:

'The only houses yet in "**Rotten Egg Town**" are three **government** buildings,

viz., the Courthouse, which is a **small weatherboard cottage**, the bathing pavilion just **completed**, and the pavilion-keeper's residence.'

Ignoring the somewhat tasteless description, it is intriguing to note from this point in time that between 1881 - 1890, a sum of £27,182 had been spent from the public Consolidated Fund on the Sanatorium, and a sum of £11,749 from the Public Works Fund. This amounts to four times as much as the money paid later to Ngati Whakaue for title to the entire township area. For this investment, the **government must** surely have expected returns which were, alas, not **immediately** forthcoming.

Within three years of the leases being negotiated, by May 1883, unpaid rents owing to Ngati Whakaue exceeded £2,000. In February of that year an Agreement further endorsing the 1880 (Fenton) contract, mending some clauses and adding others, was signed by Ngati Whakaue and Judge Henry **Tacy** Clarke for the **government**.

The **Commissioner** of Crown Lands was instructed by the Attorney-General to recover the rents, but at the same time, by 27 July, the Rotorua Leaseholders Defence Association had formed and sought legal advice confirming their contention that the whole transaction with the **natives** was void. On 18 August, the **Thermal Districts Amendment Act** was passed to ratify the Agreement with Clark. It was described in the Attorney-General's memo to the Auditor-General as an act "to remove several legal difficulties in reference to the Rotorua lands". The Auditor-General had stressed that there could be no doubt that in equity the **government** was responsible to the **Native** owners for the rentals, and that they ought to for that reason be recovered with more than usual punctuality.

To complicate some matters further, but make proceedings seem more judicious, a Land Court judgement of 22 April 1884 stated that the six hapu of Ngati Whakaue were not equally entitled to the block, **Pukeroa-Oruawhata**, upon which the township was planned. It is recorded that for the sake of convenience, the approximate area of 2,766 acres was then divided into 250 shares, of which each hapu got around 30 shares of about 332 acres, until the lot was absorbed. This transpired notwithstanding the preliminary statement - lists of names were drawn up but nothing further **was** done.

Trouble over leases continued to proliferate. In January 1885, a delegation of leaseholders called on the Minister of Lands who was also the Native Minister. In his 1936 Report on the Inquiry into Petitions 55 and 146, which were presented by Ngati Whakaue on the issues of rents and ultimate purchase, Chief Judge **R.N. Jones** maintained that **it was upheld** that:

'**the Government** were in the position where they were **compelled** either to take some action to maintain **what** they had done, or they were placing themselves in **the** position of having deceived the Natives. In conclusion, the **Government** had absolutely no **power** to break the contract.'

The Solicitor-General suggested that the leases could be surrendered with the consent of the lessors. This later proved unpracticable, so provisions were made for re-entry for **non-payment** of rent. By 1888, after the **catastrophic Tarawera** eruption of two years earlier, a considerable number of leaseholders had thus surrendered their leases. About this time, no doubt to salvage their heavy investment, the **government** was investigating the feasibility of purchase. The **Member** of Parliament for the district, and **Taiwhanga**, the **Maori** member of the House of Representatives, were lobbying for the **Crown** to buy the freehold title. Negotiations were soon underway.

According to the Jones Report; on 29 February 1888 (methinks a suitably shady day for such a deal), intrinsic evidence suggests that a list based on 1100 shares, and NOT the original 250 of the April 1884 Judgement, was prepared by Judge Tacy Clark at his Waimate hone. There is apparently no record of this on the Maori Land Court Register of that year. The figure, 1100, was supposedly for use in rent distribution only, rather than in determining individual land interests. But to quote Jones again:

'The parties bought and sold on that list of shares, and it cannot now be altered, but it shows that the Natives were not, as should have been done, told the full facts and put upon their guard, but led to believe the finding as to the shares was unassailable.'

And recalling the words of Raniera King:

'Whatever irregularities the Government practised were validated by legislation.'

- In September 1888, Ngati Whakaue offered to sell the land - 3020 acres which included the Reserves - for 15,000. A few weeks later, the Surveyor-General assessed the land as "very inferior" and worth no more than forty shillings an acre. The Resident Magistrate then announced that the Maoris would, in his opinion, accept 6,400.

The sale of the township was negotiated by May 1890 at 8,250 for 1973 acres, the balance of 1047 being Reserve land.

That same year there was an important case, *Eruera te Urumutu v. the Queen*, in which Eruera alleged the government had been negligent in the collection of rent. This action was barred by the Crown Suits Act because it had not been commenced within twelve months of the occurrence of the alleged grievance. The hearing revealed that in the majority of leasehold agreements, the Commissioner of Crown Lands, or his agent, had re-entered the property for non-payment of rent. Predictably, the issue of leases was never satisfactorily resolved and the frustrations, intrigues and confusion have persisted to this day. Meanwhile, as I have outlined, the sale of the disputed area was finalised, and this effectively, albeit temporarily, defused and thus stabilized the situation.

The township slowly began to develop despite all this. More hotels were built, and after the 1886 destruction of Te Wairoa, the Tuhourangi people were resettled at Whakarewarewa, on land gifted by Ngati Whakaue, but with which the descendants of Wahiao had great traditional affinity. Within five years, the enterprising refugees were again plying a lucrative trade, the Geyser Hotel had opened its doors, and negotiations had begun for a railway facilitating overland access through the potentially affluent areas of Cambridge and the Waikato. The railway opened in 1894 - as many as 400 people were arriving daily - their excursion predicting the package tour bus phenomenon, and Whaka as we know it today. The government had their initially disastrous investment under scrutiny, and subsequently, the First Annual Report of the New Zealand Department of Tourist and Health Resorts was tabled in July 1902. To quote the Report, page 8, heading "Rotorua":

'The popularity of this resort is advancing by leaps and bounds. From the thousands of visitors of more or less note, one hears only a chorus of appreciation regarding its unique and interesting surroundings.'

Five years later, the Government Bathhouse was built and officially opened in 1908.

Meanwhile, litigation on the part of Ngati Whakaue continued as the reality of the **founding** transactions **was** revealed. Little **real** satisfaction was afforded by the government - in **December** 1930, however, certain **interests** were conceded by Order of the **Maori Land Court** to those beneficiaries of **Pukeroa-Oruawhata**. In other words - to the descendants of the **original** vendors of the township site. These interests are in the township boundary, and **moves** are now being made for the **administration** of these properties to be transferred from the **Maori Trustee** to the **people** of **Ngati Whakaue**. Further monetary compensation **was** also considered, as **the** 1936 Jones **report** indicates.

To fully-understand the importance of the city of Rotorua to the people of **Ngati Whakaue**, one **must** recall that of the 3020 acres alienated in the sale of the freehold title, only 1973 were actually paid for by the government. **One** elder once **commented**:

'1047 acres were given **gratis**, which is still, and will ever remain a monument to the generosity of **our people**.'

The conditions of the Trust Reserves were set in both the 1880 and 1883 **Agreements** made with **Fenton** and **Tacy Clark** **respectively**.

Provisions were made to cover Health, Transport, Recreation, **Municipal** and **Education** Reserves, the last especially benefitting from the elders' foresight. It has been since contended that in some specific **instances**, a breach of trust has occurred - **the** ramifications of this are too involved and time **consuming** for this presentation. Suffice to say that a thorough investigation of these instances is continuing.

Much interest was generated **throughout** the resident community of Ohinemutu, and the hapu, by a sudden and unanticipated **move** on the part of the Rotorua City Council **two** years ago in 1974. Whereas in the past, the municipal authority had **tacitly** agreed to maintain and repair the privately owned streets of Ohinemutu kainga - never part of the township proper - more recent councils considered that they were not empowered to do so. **Thus**, the unwritten '**Gentlemen's Agreement**' respected for so **many** decades by **successive** councils was ignored, and the condition of the street surfaces deteriorated dangerously. Little wonder with thirty plus massive scenic coaches sliding by each **day** in peak tourist season! The Council maintained that, in order to repair the roads, they must be dedicated, title to the area being vested in the Council. Despite tremendously effective and well supported opposition organized by the Kotahitanga o Ngati **Whakaue**, a tribal group representative of a wide cross section of the hapu, legislation was passed declaring the roads public and dedicated in 1974. It seemed ironic to the offspring of the first **proprietors** of the township site that so little productive consultation was **permitted** by the ruling powers.

Still, the question remains - what meaning has the city of Rotorua to the people of **Ngati Whakaue**?

There is the history - the siting, the lease, the sale. There are the Reserves - 1047 acres, yet still **subject** to exhaustive inquiry and intrigue.' **And** stretching to the west, to the south, are the rolling **hills** now farmed by the Ngati **Whakaue** Tribal Lands Incorporation, into which the future city **must** inevitably expand.

More significantly, there are the street **names** in the township itself - forever a **memorial** to the **planning** and perception of those ambitious people, and a few of their forebears. These **names**? **Arawa** Street - the tribe; **Pukaki** and **Whakaue** - early ancestors of the donors; **Rangiuru**, wife of **Whakaue**, and **mother** of **Tutanekai**, who is also remembered, and there is **Hinemoa**, his much celebrated wife, and her mother, **Hinemaru**.

And there are the more recent, **immediate names** - Haupapa, Pukuatua, Eruera, Amohau, and Pererika - now living parts of a city in whose beginning they played such a vital role.

Through these people **came** the city of Rotorua today.

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