

The rising of empire in New Zealand: The relationship between the WMMS and Governor George Grey of New Zealand in the provision of Maori education, 1845-53.

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Missionaries were a crucial factor in both the shaping and dismantling of the British Empire. In New Zealand, missionaries from the WMMS (as the MMS was known in the 19th century) and CMS (Church Mission Society) had been vocal supporters of an official British presence to curb the activities of lawless traders and potential colonists. Once British rule was established, the missions continued to have an influence – particularly in the area of education.

Under the Governorship of George Grey, the missions' model for educating the Maori population was absorbed into the government's system. The Education Ordinance of 1847¹ laid down the laws that governed Maori education and ordained that the government would work with the mission societies in order to provide a national framework of 'native' education.

Prior to the appointment of Grey as Governor, the Wesleyan mission had attempted to educate the Maori at every station that they had established in the islands, with missionaries devoting time to teaching both children and adults in their regions. In 1844, a Native Institution was proposed that would take the Wesleyans' education of the Maori a step further. It was intended that this institution would educate a group of Maori men to become either preachers or teachers, thus enabling the furtherance of education within the Maori community. Under Grey, this became the Wesleyan Industrial School at Three Kings – an institution that was renowned in New Zealand, and received much attention from the Governor. It is therefore interesting to examine the relationship between the WMMS and Grey – who appeared to look upon the society so favourably.

The role of the WMMS in providing education for the Maori population also needs to be examined within the context of the international treatment of indigenous populations. New Zealand was one of the last of the white dominions to be settled and was the first whose constitution made specific provisions for the protection of its native population.

¹ Education Ordinance, New Zealand Acts 1841-1925, October 7th 1847, CO 210/1

The aim of this paper is to show the way in which the relationship between Governor Grey and the WMMS affected policy relating to the education of the Maori, between 1845 and 1853.

Grey and the Education Ordinance of 1847

Grey arrived in New Zealand in 1845, having previously been Governor of South Australia. He served in New Zealand between 1845 and 1853, moving on to the Cape Colony in southern Africa, but returning for a second term at the height of the Maori Wars. His journals from his time in Australia as well as the policies he enacted, indicate a strong interest in the plight of Aborigines and what the government should do to help them. For example, Grey stated: “*The Australians have been most unfairly represented as a very inferior race...*” and as a result, European prejudice manifested itself in “*uncertain and irregular demand for their labour*” which in turn did little to persuade the Aboriginal population that employment was a better alternative to their previous “*wandering habits*”.² As the Aborigine’s labour was not valued, they were not paid well enough. “*The evil consequence of this is, that a native finding he can gain as much by the combined methods of hunting and begging, as he can by working, naturally prefers the former and much more attractive mode of procuring subsistence, to the latter one.*”³ In effect, Aborigines were missing out on opportunities to better themselves as a result of the prejudices held by the Europeans.

The Education Ordinance that Grey enacted in 1847 was a landmark piece of legislation, both in terms of native policy throughout the empire and in terms of relations with the Maori and the mission societies in New Zealand. The ordinance advocated education in three equal parts: religion, industry and the English language. The purpose was to use the mission’s model of schooling that had been developing since the arrival of missionaries to the islands. Grey believed that these three areas of education were essential in ensuring that the Maori were both assimilated and civilised. Religion was seen to be the key to civilisation, whilst the English language and a form of industry would enable the Maori to play a full part within *pakeha* (European) society.

Grey’s intention was to ensure that the Maori did not suffer the same fate as the Australian Aborigines and the Native Americans. As illustrated by his report to the then Secretary of State for the Colonies - Lord Russell - in 1840, Grey felt that more needed to be done to both protect Aborigines, and aid their progress into ‘civilisation’. His ‘*Report upon the best Means of Promoting the Civilisation of the Aboriginal Inhabitants of Australia*’⁴ drew on the conclusions he had reached on his expeditions, and then made recommendations as to how this could be accomplished in the colonies. At this time, his suggestions focused upon the areas of law and employment,

²Grey, G. Journals of two expeditions of discovery in North-West and Western Australia during the years 1837, 1838 and 1839, (Two Volumes), London, 1841, p. 367

³Grey, Journals of two expeditions of discovery, p. 368

⁴Grey, Journals of two expeditions of discovery, p. 373

recommending that the Aborigines required laws that were “*mild and favourable to the development of civilisation*” so as bring the race to “*knowledge of Christianity and civilisation*”.⁵

Interestingly, in 1840 Grey made no mention of the importance of education in ensuring the protection of indigenous populations. The most logical reason for this is that he did not come into contact with it on his expeditions. There was little missionary activity in the Swan River colony at the time of his travels. For example, the WMMS had intended to send a missionary there in 1838, but the candidate was shipwrecked off the coast of Adelaide, and remained there because the colonists wanted him to work with local Aborigines.⁶ The first evidence of Grey’s involvement with native education comes from his time as Governor of South Australia. A missionary in that colony reported to the WMMS in 1844 that: “*A few weeks ago, a Native School was opened in Adelaide, for the instruction of the female children in sewing. His Excellency has placed it under a Committee of twelve Ladies in connection with our Society...The Governor is anxious to bring these children under efficient instruction. To this end he has provided food, raiment, a house, and a matron to look after them, at the public expense.*”⁷ It can therefore be argued that Grey built upon his experiences with the aboriginal population in each of his appointments, so that by the time he reached New Zealand he had clear-cut ideas as to how to achieve his aims.

The Education Ordinance did not just benefit the WMMS. The Ordinance ensured parity between the three major denominations that had missionaries in the islands, according to their relative size. Therefore, the WMMS received £800 p/a; CMS £1000 p/a and the Catholics £600 p/a.⁸ The legislation was in effect until the passing of the Native Schools Act in 1858. This act did not however, mark a change in policy regarding the co-operation between the colonial government and the mission societies. Government subsidies continued under the terms of this act.

Benefits to the WMMS of receiving Government support

The Education Ordinance enabled the WMMS to be equipped with both greater and more regular income than they had previously been given by the society’s headquarters. From 1847 onwards they received an annual contribution to their work with the Maori population and had the opportunity to ask for one-off ‘Colonial Grant for Schools’. This increased revenue enabled the society to act upon plans that they had previously not had the resources to put into action.

Prior to the arrival of Walter Lawry in 1844 as the General Superintendent of the New Zealand Mission with responsibility for Tonga and Fiji, the mission

⁵ Grey, *Journals of two expeditions of discovery*, p. 377

⁶ Report from Australia, *WMMS Reports*, 1839 p. 27

⁷ Report from South Australia, *WMMS Reports*, 1844 p. 29

⁸ Rutherford, J *Sir George Grey*, London, 1961 p. 218

has been under-staffed. This meant that although the missionaries wanted to give time to educating the Maori, they struggled to do so. In 1843, the mission was educating approximately 5000 in Sabbath Schools,⁹ but felt that this was not the most effective method. Instead, the WMMS wanted to establish either regular day schools or central boarding schools. In 1844, the first plans for a 'Native Institute' just outside Auckland, at Three Kings, was proposed. The guarantee of income from the Education Ordinance meant that the missionaries could build upon these plans and confidently move forward.

The missionaries, prior to the Ordinance, concentrated their efforts on Sabbath Schools and a small number of day schools. In 1844 they struggled to maintain two day schools,¹⁰ yet by the end of 1847 there were 106, spread over 12 mission stations. Between 1847 and 1853, there was an average of 3,800 Maori attending day schools.¹¹ Additionally, they had the financial resources to equip mission stations with dedicated school buildings, rather than having to use missionaries' homes. For example, in 1850 the WMMS received reports from both Waima and Wairoa stating that new school houses had been built with government aid. *"A good School-House has been erected at the public expense, and a considerable number of Youths and Children have been received as Residents..."*¹²

They were also able to employ dedicated teaching staff, although the number of teachers at any one time did not rise above 15, largely owing to the expense involved. For example, the combined outfit and passage of the Reids and Fletchers (who were sent to Three Kings and the Wesleyan Seminary for the children of missionaries) in 1849 cost the society £476 18s 9d. It was therefore often more logical to spend money on things that were desperately needed – like buildings.

Central Boarding Schools were seen as a preferable means of educating the Maori, but prior to the Ordinance, the WMMS had lacked the funds to begin them. With funds and political guidance from Grey, the missionaries built upon the plans first suggested in 1844 to found a Native Institute at Three Kings. In 1846, the missionary James Buddle, outlined the improvements they would like to see in their education of the Maori, which could happen after the Ordinance was enacted: *"To meet their case, a system of elementary teaching, combined with Christian instruction, and, if possible, a knowledge of the English language, seems to be required. To aim at this, then, is our duty. But how are we to accomplish it? It supposes the establishment and maintenance of schools; and this again involves the necessity of funds. But we have none ourselves, and the local Govt. has not yet provided any for this purpose."*¹³ To this end, they were able to employ the Revd Reid and his wife

⁹ Schedule of Missionaries, WMMS Reports, 1836-1843 & Tabular View, WMMS Reports, 1844 p. 43

¹⁰ Balance Sheet 1845, WMMS Reports, 1846

¹¹ Schedule of Missionaries, WMMS Reports, 1836-1843 & Tabular View, WMMS Reports, 1844 p. 43

¹² Waima & Wairoa School Reports, WMMS Reports, 1850 p. 33

¹³ Letter from J. Buller, Tangiteroria, December 23rd, 1846 in: Missionary Notices, 1847 p. 173

as teachers in 1849 and the extra teachers that were taken on enabled an influx of 100 pupils.

The stable income also enabled the WMMS to make plans for additional institutions elsewhere in New Zealand. In 1848 the 'Grey Institute' was proposed (as a tribute to George Grey), to be located in New Plymouth. The school report from the Taranaki region from 1849 states: "*There is a large School-building now in the course of erection, provided for by the funds of the Government, which, it is expected, will be opened for the reception of Native pupils, as boarders, early in the ensuing spring. They will receive a religious education, be instructed in the English language, and trained up in the several branches of the industrial system.*"¹⁴ Another was proposed near Wellington in 1853, but this project did not succeed, largely owing to tribal conflict that escalated into the Maori Wars.

The developments that the WMMS were able to put in place with this additional support also improved their standing in the eyes of the general public. Three Kings became a model of Maori education and received many visitors. As the *New Zealander* reported in 1851: "*Many hard things have been said of the expenditure of public money in the support of Maori schools. Let any man visit the Three Kings, and see for himself what has been accomplished there, and think what, judging from the present, may be confidently anticipated there in future years; and if, after such an examination, he ever again asks – What good has been effected for the aborigines of New Zealand, under the operation of the Education Ordinance? – we can only say that we shall not envy either his head or his heart.*"¹⁵ Lawry also wrote along similar lines: "*Most respectable visitors make a point to see the Three Kings and some declare it is the only thing worth coming to New Zealand to see, this is perhaps going too far, there is, thank God, much worth seeing in this land...*"¹⁶

Central boarding schools were of great importance to the education system because it had already been established that they were a more effective means of education than day schools, for a variety of reasons. For example, the boarding schools took children away from non-Christian influences in the villages, who might otherwise prevent them from attending school. Additionally, because of the conflict with Europeans, the Maori population had become scattered over a large area. Therefore regular attendance at day schools was demanding (often involving journeys of over 15 miles each way) or impossible. As a result, the Ordinance enabled the missions to pursue a more effective method of education properly and effectively.

Three Kings

¹⁴ H. Turton, New Plymouth School Report, *WMMS Reports*, 1849 p. 33

¹⁵ *New Zealander*, quoted in: *WMMS Reports*, 1851 p. 37

¹⁶ Lawry, W. to WMMS Auckland, October 9th 1850, *WMMS Australasia Correspondence*, FBN 10, No. 451

It is important to examine the case of the institution at Three Kings separately because it was essentially the flagship of the whole education policy, particularly for the WMMS, but was also looked upon favourably by Grey. It was first proposed in 1844, “*with a view to their having the stores of English literature, and also their becoming more efficient teachers of their countrymen in matters of religion and civilisation.*”¹⁷ The proposal went before a public meeting, who agreed that the “*continuance of the native race*” was dependent upon such an institution being founded.¹⁸ The purpose of the institution was that the Maori should also be trained in skills to help them integrate with the *pakeha* society, such as gardening/ground work or housework.

Owing to the fact that the institution shared one of the Governor’s main aims (the protection and assimilation of the Maori) the missionaries were able to gain the support they needed in order to make it a success. But the WMMS also placed significant importance upon religious conversion, which was not a direct aim of the ordinance (although religion was a component of it).

Communications between the society’s headquarters and the stations illustrate that this was the focus of much of their work. A typical example of this is a letter sent by Thomas Buddle in September 1846. The majority of the letter (two pages) describes the religious experience of a student, whilst only the final paragraph details academic progress. He begins: “*When the young men came here, but one of them could give a clear account of his conversion.*” He then describes in great detail the way in which the student experienced conversion, “*One of those, Hemi (James), found peace in a remarkable way, he was powerfully awakened under a sermon from John 9.4, and had no rest till he obtained pardon.*” The passage regarding education simply reads: “*The young men have greatly improved in writing and their knowledge of arithmetic, the study of the English language is a slow process, but some of them are now able to read and translate the New Testament with comparative ease...*”¹⁹ The missionaries were also dedicated to the task of training the Maori to continue their mission work. At this point, there were already instances of Fijians and Tongans acting as missionaries in their own islands and beyond. For example, many of the students at Three Kings spent their Sundays visiting local Maori villages, or the hospital, in order to lead services.

The Three Kings site also benefited directly from the Ordinance, as it received funds needed for new buildings, as well as receiving the funding for further buildings in 1852 from Colonial Revenue. “*His Excellency the Governor, who has recently authorized an expenditure of six hundred pounds from the Colonial Revenue for the enlargement of the School-buildings.*”²⁰

¹⁷ Journal Extract of W. Lawry, May 14th 1844, in: Wesleyan Missionary Notices, 1845 p. 37

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Buddle, T. to WMMS, Auckland, September 18th 1846, WMMS Australasia

Correspondence: New Zealand, FBN 9, No. 421

²⁰ WMMS Reports, 1852 p. 36

Relationship between WMMS (particularly Lawry) and Governor Grey

Before the Education Ordinance, there is evidence that Grey was already providing the WMMS with his support. In 1845, Lawry wrote to Grey regarding the need for land at Three Kings and for advice on the subject of the mission's ship Triton (which was essential for trips to the Pacific islands and for transporting supplies).²¹ In response, Grey provided advice even though the ship (unlike the land issue) was not an 'official' matter. This illustrates the fact that Grey supported the WMMS' work as a whole, not just its education policy.

Additionally, even though the Ordinance gave equal support to all the mission societies (according to their size), privately Grey seemed to give more support to the WMMS. For example, he gave personal funds to Three Kings in the form of a 10 shilling per week subscription, as recorded in a letter from Lawry to the General Secretaries of the WMMS in 1847: "*His Excellency Gov Grey was there [Three Kings] a few days ago, and urged our applying more power in that direction; and when told that we could only lay out funds as we received them, he said no more for the time, but quickly after sent us and our families an invitation to dine with him...and then said, "I have made up my mind to subscribe ten shillings weekly to your Inst..."*"²² Grey also appeared to pursue a 'long vendetta'²³ against the CMS mission family – the Williams. The family was embroiled in controversy regarding the purchasing of land from the Maori. Grey took a strong stance against the purchasing of Maori land by *pakeha* as it went against his central belief of protecting the indigenous population's rights.

It could be argued that Grey only supported the missionaries so that he could receive their support on other issues connected with the Maori – especially the land issue, where he disagreed with Colonial Office instructions. It would have been possible to use the societies' connections in Britain to support his views, thanks to their large networks and influence amongst humanitarians in Parliament. However, this is unlikely as he supported their work from the outset. Additionally, the WMMS were unlikely to compromise their own beliefs in order to receive more benefits. When disagreeing with Colonial Office instructions regarding land, they were vocal in their opposition. They trusted Grey's judgement, but would not have hesitated to speak out if he went against their own beliefs. They saw him as having "*wisdom and good faith*".²⁴ Grey did share the missionaries' religious values, and this may have been why he gave them an official outlet in order to support them. He saw that their system of education was succeeding and therefore did not attempt to

²¹ Lawry, W. to WMMS, Auckland, January 2nd 1845, WMMS Australasia Correspondence: New Zealand, FBN 9, No. 403

²² Lawry, W. to WMMS, Auckland, 30th April 1847, WMMS Australasia Correspondence: New Zealand, FBN 9, No. 421

²³ Sinclair, Keith, 'Sir George Grey', The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Wellington, 1990 p. 161

²⁴ The Wesleyan Missionaries of New Zealand (headed by T. Buddle in the absence of W. Lawry) to WMMS, Auckland, July 31st 1847, WMMS Australasia Correspondence, FBN 9, No. 431

establish any of the other education systems used elsewhere within the empire.

Conclusion

During the period of official co-operation between Governor Grey and the WMMS (1847-53), it is clear that much was achieved. Grey aimed for education to be made available to as many Maori children as possible. The missionaries were facilitated by government funding, which enabled this education to happen. Both the WMMS and Grey came from a similar viewpoint on the treatment of the Maori, this was a result of Grey's experiences in Australia and the WMMS' experience in other countries as well as its strong humanitarian background. The partnership between the mission societies and Grey enabled the governor to use an existing, effective system that simply needed increased financial support. It also enabled him to further (indirectly) his personal desire to see religious conversion spread.

It is difficult to assess the level of personal friendship between Grey and Lawry, partly because Grey's personal correspondence remains in New Zealand and also because scholars have recognised that he was known to be guarded in even personal correspondence. However, the communications that do exist clearly show that there was friendliness between the two men.

Ultimately, the relationship between the WMMS and Governor Grey was one of mutual benefit: Grey required a system of educating the Maori; the WMMS were educating the Maori, yet needed money in order to be more effective.

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