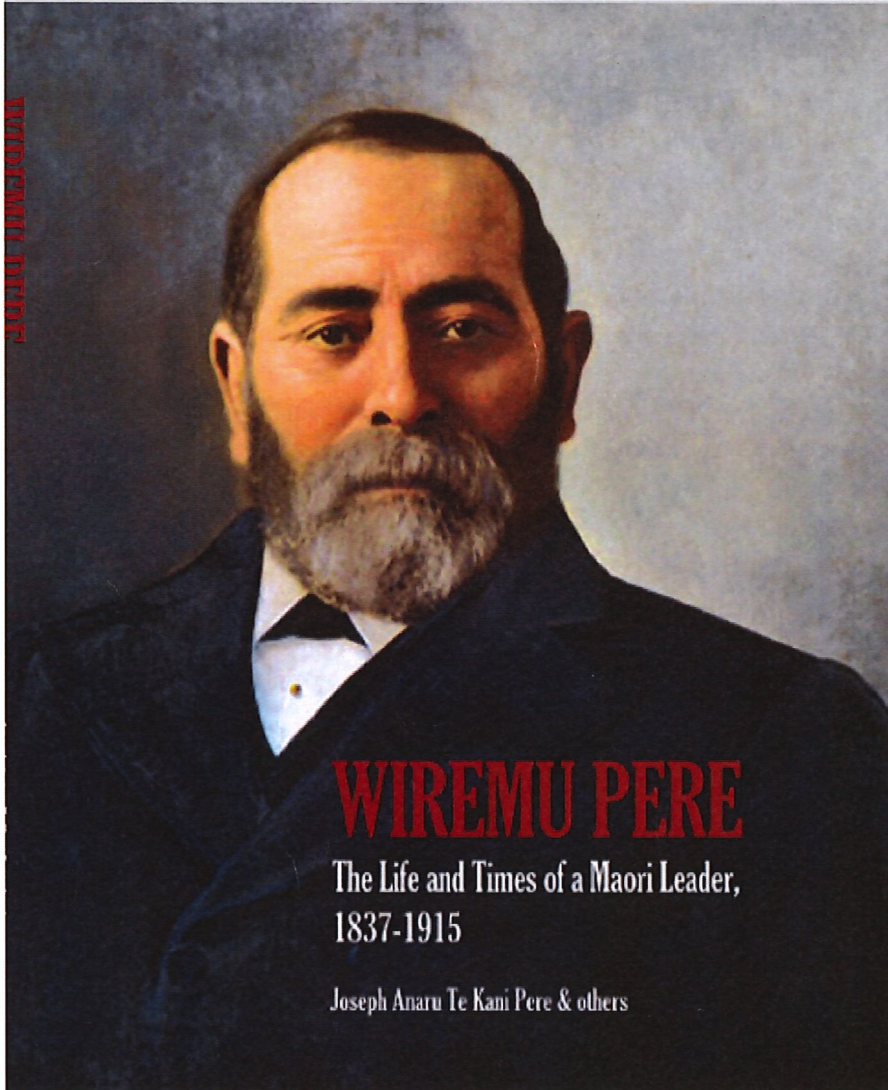


Te Kani Pere, 2010



WIREMU PERE

The Life and Times of a Maori Leader,
1837-1915

Joseph Anaru Te Kani Pere & others

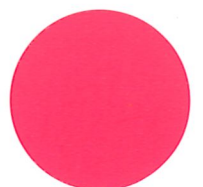
WIREMU PERE lived from 1837 to 1915, through some of the most turbulent chapters in New Zealand history. As a chief of the East Coast *whānau* Rongowhakaeta and Te Atanga a Mahaki, Wi Pere stood resolute against the tidal wave of change that threatened the Maori way of life. He resented the march of colonialism, and entered Parliament in 1884 seeking to protect his Eastern Maori constituents against Pakeha encroachments, land seizures and dishonouring of the Treaty of Waitangi.

At the same time, Wi Pere was proactive in seizing on the potential business opportunities afforded through the coming of Pakeha settlers. This position could not but leave him compromised. In his life he was loved and hated by both Maori and Pakeha, regarded as a hero or a villain depending on whether or not one benefited from his work. His historical legacy has been ambivalent, and many of the details of his personal circumstances have been unclear.

This book sets out to clarify Wi Pere's life and contribution to the Maori people. Not a simple, linear biography, it approaches Wi Pere the man and leader from a number of angles and in various contexts. Part 1 considers Wi's eventful life and those who had an influence on him, while describing the environment that faced Maori in his lifetime. Part 2 lays out his *whakapapa*, which can be traced back to ancient *rangatira* lines in the migration of the *Harouta* and *Takitimu* canoes from Hawaiki. Part 3 is an appendix covering The Wi Pere Trust, one of Wi's legacies that prosper and grows today.

Compiled over many years by a dedicated group of his descendants, *Wi Pere: The Life and Times of a Maori Leader, 1837-1915* is a fascinating study of this colourful *rangatira*. It will appeal particularly to students of Maori and political history, the people of the East Coast, and those who seek to understand the conflicting forces that shaped New Zealand's post-colonial identity.

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proved impossible to make any impression on the people, even in districts where Te Kotahitanga was being held.

Carroll's attitude to the bills introduced by Wi and Heke followed the lines of a speech he gave at the Waitangi meeting of April 1892 where he claimed that the act admitting Maori representation had, in more practical form, fulfilled the spirit of the Constitution Act. The legislature had done all it could to ameliorate the conditions of the Maori race and had moved in the direction of:

consummating the behest contained in the Treaty of Waitangi, to make the Natives British subjects in every particular way.¹⁰

The majority of Maori themselves felt that the provision of the act of 1900 establishing the New Zealand Maori Council represented the maximum concessions that they could expect from the government. Ngati Porou, one of the few tribes that had never had any serious quarrel with the government, called the meeting at Waiomatatini on 21 March 1902, which brought to a close the ten-year-old Kotahitanga movement. At that meeting Wi pointed out to the assembled tribes that the purpose of Te Kotahitanga had been to make the voice of the Maori people heard. The perception was that Maori grievances were being heard and the government had heeded the cry of the people and the movement should be brought to its end:

It has not done away with wrong doing but its progeny has emerged in the world, the act of 1900 ... There is no work for the Kotahitanga Movement today. Let each Council show its grievances to the House and show its wishes.¹¹

It is significant to note that the tribes of the west and east coasts of the North Island were in the majority at the meeting to bring Te Kotahitanga to an end. These people had suffered the least loss of