



The changing role of the leader in Māori society

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Book Title: The changing role of the leader in Māori society **Author:** Maharaia Winiata **Editor:** Merran Fraenkell **Year of Publication:** First published in 1967, reproduced in 2014 **Publisher:** Blackwood & Janet Paul; University of Waikato **Number of Pages:** 206 **ISBN:** 978-0-473-30934-3

In 1952 a momentous event occurred for indigenous people, Dr Maharaia Winiata graduated from the University of Edinburgh, Scotland the first Māori to complete a doctoral degree, a thesis titled *The Changing Role of the Leader in Māori Society*. Nearly a decade later it was published posthumously and more importantly now five decades after the first edition, of Dr Winiata's doctoral thesis, Waikato University honoured its ongoing value to release it as a second edition. One reason for the second edition was to mark the 50th celebration of their establishment; secondly they deemed it just as important as it was for the first edition to share the scholarship of the publication with the academic community and thirdly the political commentary enclosed and its relevance to current times to benefit the wider society in Aotearoa New Zealand and indeed the indigenous community.

Maharaia or Maha as he was known, was born in September, 1912, a life steeped in Māori traditional knowledge. He appreciated, retained and spoke with authority about his own tribal experiences. As noted in his publication the messages reveal a committed effort throughout his lifetime for the retention of a Māori cultural identity and its recognition by all in Aotearoa. This he believed, would unite rather than divide, and enhance rather than degrade national relationships.

Later in life Maha successfully combined his passion for *Te Ao Māori* (Māori world), as a champion for its progress by utilising western technologies all to benefit his people. He respected and endorsed elements in traditionalist Māori culture, while encouraging and advocating for social change where this was desirable, acceptable and easily adapted for his people's development.

Maha, provides through his publication a generous personal viewpoint often communicating his own rich experiences and understandings of traditional systems that honoured hereditary leadership. His wealth of knowledge and eagerness in this area of considering Māori leadership was unsurpassed at that time. This uniqueness of exploration and authorship may even have extended beyond that of the discourse on indigenous leadership of that time. No doubt the ideas and notion would have resonated with the indigenous community then, as it will today.

His scholarship was grounded in social anthropology with the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, who provided the most qualified and skilled professors from this learned institution to guide in the analyses and synthesis of the document. Although the approaches to the study, one of insider interpretation and therefore could have been viewed as biased and the strict adherence to academic conventions seemed at odds with each other, it did not at all present as a barrier. This relationship of Māori viewpoints and relationships enhanced what evolved, making the publication a predecessor to what is now commonly termed as *Kaupapa* Māori research applied in an academic environment.

The Changing Role of the Leader in Māori Society provides insight of a commitment to Māori aspirations and cultural values. An early theme of Maha's book describes the inherited pattern of Māori leadership pre-colonisation, exploring the changes in the role and structure of the Māori leader impacted by loss of land, culture and identity with a sympathetic focus. It concludes with an account of an adaptive Māori society wanting to maintain a self-determined leadership structure.

A fundamental claim is that traditional concepts of leadership adapted and were open-minded. New associations were formed such as the Kingitanga movement established as an enduring institution of self-determination. Maha writes of a close relationship with these social aspirations encouraged by the Kingitanga to politically campaign for the cause with an enthusiasm to maintain a sense of traditional pride. His close association with the movement continues today through the name Te Puea, who was at the time one of the driving forces for the Kingitanga, this name was gifted to Maha's youngest daughter. His own name Maharaia lives on through the brother of the current head of the Kingitanga. His marae Huria in Tauranga continues to host the Kingitanga making it an annual event, remembering the past and celebrating achievements and articulating dreams.

The challenges Maha asserts in *The Changing Role of the Leader in Māori Society* are those that continue to have implications for Māori. These were expressed at a national Māori health symposium, Te Kāhu Kōrako, Toitū Hauora 2017 in Waikato,

the heart of the Kingitanga. Some of the issues raised as pivotal for Māori health leadership now and in the future included the need to be:

- 1) Grounded in Te Ao Māori: reflected in the use of *te reo* Māori (Māori language) and guided by *tikanga* (Māori protocols).
- 2) Accountable to Māori: fulfil the aspirations of Māori and to translate the hopes of Māori into achievements that are felt.
- 3) Informed by old and new knowledge: use both *mātauranga* Māori (Māori knowledge) and science to build a solid knowledge base.
- 4) Strategic and innovative: Embrace new technologies and strategies while retaining Māori cultural values.

These notions of leadership are central to the reasoning that Maha availed in *The Changing Role of the Leader in Māori Society*. In the Author's Preface he encapsulated these ideals when he wrote:

If my research has achieved no other purpose than to confirm through my association with leading British social anthropologists, the conviction that it is possible for the Māori people and their culture to assume an integral part in the wider New Zealand society, then my period of study was worthwhile.

In closing, I take this moment to reflect on these words and celebrate in the realisation that Maha's legacy *The Changing Role of the Leader in Māori Society* remains in the forefront in thinking of Māori leadership today.

*Nō reira e te pāpā Maha
Nau te kaha mai i Tauranga Moana i to maunga
hirahira o Mauao
Tēnei taonga i tuku ki te ao hei painga mo te iwi!
Rire rire hau
Pai Marire*

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