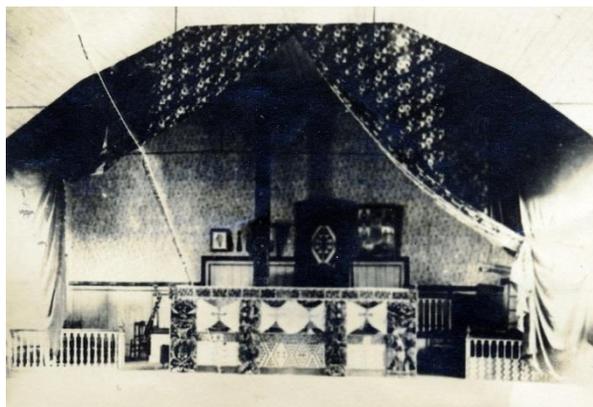


Rawehetiki – the whareniui (meeting house) at King Tāwhiao's parliament in Maungakawa
Cambridge Museum collection

2. Te Kauhanganui – The Māori Parliament

For a number of years King Tāwhiao and his followers deliberated over the need for an autonomous Māori Parliament. In spite of the colonial government's lack of support of the concept Te Kauhanganui was officially opened in 1891, with the seat of the parliament located in the traditional homelands of Ngāti Hauā at Maungakawa. The settlement here was called Rawehetiki (Kawehetiki) which was also the name given to the large purpose-built whareniui (meeting house). Heading the parliament was the King himself, it had a council of ministers and twelve tribal representatives known as the Tekau-ma-rua (twelve). There was a Whare o Raro (lower house) and a Whare Ariki (upper house). Te Kauhanganui met annually during the month of May to discuss pressing issues such as land alienation and compensation. The last assembly took place in 1896 after which the settlement was abandoned leaving the whareniui to be destroyed in 1908 by scrub fire.



King Tāwhiao's throne
Cambridge Museum collection

The Search for Māori Sovereignty



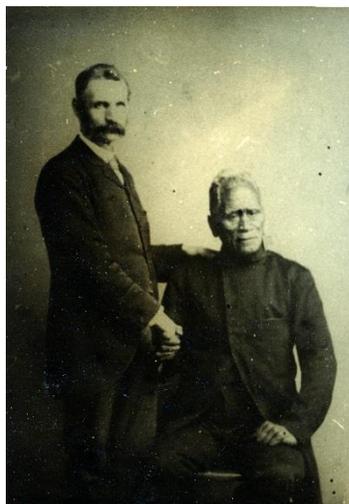
Group portrait including Wiremu Tamihana (centre back)
Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, 34-F56A-5

Some of the confiscated lands were later returned to iwi though not always to the correct owner. However, many dispossessed Māori remained homeless and without resources. Some retreated south of the Pūniu River into Ngāti Maniapoto territory.

King Tāwhiao still held considerable influence there and so the region was called 'the King Country' by Pākehā. Māori called it Te Rohe Pōtae (the area of the hat). It is said that Tāwhiao placed his hat on a large map of the North Island and claimed the land under it as Māori territory with its own rules.

1. The Native Land Court

Established in Cambridge in 1865, the court's original purpose was to translate customary collective Māori land ownership into legal individual land titles recognisable under English Law – effectively enabling the sale of Māori land to Pākehā. No more than ten owners were named and these ten could administer the land to their own benefit, leaving those unnamed owners dispossessed. The system was slow and if the owners did not show up to the court, they lost the right to the land in question. They also had to pay for survey work and the cost of proving their ownership often meant that the land had to then be sold to pay off debts. In its first ten years alone, ten million acres of Māori land changed hands.



King Tāwhiao with Cambridge mayor Thomas Wells
Cambridge Museum collection

3. Te Paki o Matariki

Also during this period the Kingitanga had taken to printing its own newspaper – Te Paki o Matariki o te Kauhanganui (The Girdle of Pleiades). A large Gaveaux printing press was acquired from Mr J S Bond of Cambridge for £125. The coat of arms of the Māori King – Te Paki o Matariki—was printed on every issue and circulated throughout the country. The paper reported on the important political issues of the time such as land alienation. In an edition printed in 1894 the newly finalised Constitution was published in the paper as well as other Pākehā newspapers.



Māori Parliament grounds
Cambridge Museum collection



Ngāti Haua people gathered outside Rawehetiki
Cambridge Museum collection

4. The Maungatautari Bank

In the 1880s, many more Māori were selling their land interests to the Government and were following the Pākehā custom and banking the proceeds. However, like many, they worked out that the banks were making more out of them than they were out of the banks. Iwi around the Cambridge area reasoned that if anyone was to profit from keeping Māori money it should be Māori themselves and so set up their own bank – named Te Peeke o Aotearoa (The Bank of New Zealand).

The Directors were mostly well-known chiefs from various local iwi. Customers flocked to the bank despite it being apparent that some of the funds accumulated were going to support a more lavish lifestyle for those in charge. Eventually the deposits were used to fund a trip to England for the Directors and the bank was burnt to the ground and never reopened.



Maungatautari Bank cheque
Cambridge Museum collection