

Whakaahua Māori
Māori Portraits

Hone Heke

Ngāti Rahiri, Ngāpuhi (1869-1909)



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A political activist for Māori, Hone Heke, was a renowned orator and a person held in high regard by both Māori and Pākehā during his short life.

Hone Heke Ngapua was born in 1869 at Kaikohe, and traced his whakapapa to the Mataatua waka. Descended from Rahiri, founder of the Ngāti Rahiri branch of Ngāpuhi, his parents were Hone Ngapua and Niurangi Puriri. He was named after his great uncle, Hone Heke Pokai, famed Ngāpuhi chief of Te Tai Tokerau (Northland).¹

Hone Heke entered Parliament at the early age of 24 in 1893, and in the following year, introduced the Native Rights Bill, which sought a separate Parliament and constitution for Māori and protection of Māori rights under the Treaty of Waitangi.² Although this Bill did not become law, two Acts of 1900 pertaining to Māori land, contained

some of the principles of the earlier Bill. As the Member of the House of Representatives (MHR) for Northern Māori, it has been said that, ...'Maori representation in the House was invigorated and emboldened by his presence, and he gave new cause for his Maori colleagues to aim for'.³

Comfortable in both Māori and Pākehā worlds, Hone Heke responded to Lindauer's patron, Henry Partridge, on the meaning of the phrase, *kia ora*, with a full explanation and he was one of the signatories to a published welcome statement to the Duke and Duchess of York on their visit in 1901.⁴ Hone Heke also signed the Māori Visitors' Book at the Lindauer Art Gallery in Auckland which he visited on 6 June 1901. He noted that his place of residence was the Bay of Islands but left no other comment.

There are reports of at least two instances where his intervention prevented bloodshed of both Māori and those fighting on the Government's side. James Cowan, who was known personally to Hone Heke, wrote of how he 'hurried up from Wellington and rode at top speed ... to Waima (in Northland), using frequent relays of horses',⁵ to persuade Hokianga resident, Hone Toia, and his followers to lay down their weapons, on the occasion of their refusal to pay taxes, including the dog tax, imposed by the Government and local council.

Lindauer's portrait of Hone Heke, in a suit and tie is similar to that of an official government portrait of him during his political career. This was cut short by his untimely death from tuberculosis at the age of 39.

CM

¹ Freda Rankin Kawharu, 'Heke Pokai, Hone Wīremu ? - 1850', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, updated 22 June 2007, accessed 24 February 2010.

² John Wilson, 'Government and nation - The origins of Nationhood', Te Ara - The Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 3 March 2009, accessed 24 February 2010.

³ Paul Moon, *Ngapua: The Political Life of Hone Heke Ngapua, MHR*, (David Ling: Auckland, 2006), p 350.

⁴ FMS Papers 1619-049/1, Seddon Family Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

⁵ MS Papers 0039 Series 6, James Cowan Papers, article titled, The Last Rebel, 29/8/33, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

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