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The Mandate of Leadership and the Decision-Making Process

As negotiations between the Crown and the tribes of Aotearoa increase and as leaders on both sides ponder the questions of how *effective consultation* can be achieved, several important issues arise which require attention. The first of these has to do with the *bases of a leader's mandate* or the *rangatiratanga* of a leader. An essential part of the mandate is focused upon the *talents and expertise of a leader*. The expectations of two key 19th century Maori experts are explored in some detail and a profile of the ideal traditional leader is described.

From here the discussion turns to how decisions were made in traditional times and highlights the *critical role of the leader*. An important principle is identified – the *runanga or democracy principle*. The traditional leader was also expected to know how to handle and manage disputes. There is a discussion on this important role of a leader.

The concluding section of the paper examines the *mana of decisions*, discusses their acceptance by the people and raises some questions. The importance of the *runanga principle* is confirmed because without it there is no effective involvement of the people in decision making.

Rangatiratanga or Mandate

The question asked today is this: What is that person's mandate to represent their people? How was that mandate given and what is it based on? In 1850, Te Rangikaheke asked a similar question.

He aha te rangatiratanga o tera tangata? (What is the basis of such a man's chieftainship?) (Grove 1985:11).

Rangatiratanga in Te Rangikaheke's terms was concerned with the *mana and mandate of a leader*, with the basis upon which a leader was recognised as a chief.

a) *Whakapapa – Moenga Rangatira*

He believed that a leader (*rangatira*) came from a chiefly union of parents which he described as a *moenga rangatira* (chiefly marriage bed). This was the most important aspect of the leader's mandate. Williams' dictionary (1971:323) defined *rangatiratanga* as "evidence of breeding and greatness". This definition certainly accords with Te Rangikaheke's views. Many writers since Te Rangikaheke have emphasised the importance of "proper" birth credentials as an essential aspect of leadership, for example Mahuika (1981). Thus the *whakapapa* (birth credentials) of the leader needed to be right.

b) *The Pumanawa (Talents)*

A person coming from a *moenga rangatira* inherited certain *pumanawa* or talents and both Te Rangikaheke and Tikitu are agreed that these come from "*te koopu of toona whaea*" (the womb of his mother), Tikitu's opinion, or from *te moenga rangatira*, according to Te Rangikaheke.

A leader was expected to possess certain talents; to have knowledge relating to some high priority areas; and expertise to manage the affairs of the *iwi*. This is the second factor. The two authorities differ on the priorities and on the listing of talents and I deal with these later. But they are agreed that expert knowledge is required. Firth (1959:132) described the particular talents as "executive capacity".

c) *Acceptance and Confirmation by the People*

The third aspect of a mandate is acceptance by the people. After the people have considered the *whakapapa* (genealogical) qualifications and the talents of the leader and seen some evidence of expertise they will say, "*Koia, katahi na no te tino rangatira ko tena!*" (There indeed is a true *rangatira*!) (Grove 1985:150, 155). From this point Te Rangikaheke argues that if the qualifications are right and the leader performs well, it all goes back to good breeding. It is because both the father and the mother were great people. Firth (1959:132) puts it another way: "But birth alone did not suffice for chieftainship. Personality and executive capacity were also required to maintain rank and authority. An incapable *ariki*, as we already know would be set aside in practical affairs, and only called upon to perform certain religious rites."

d) *Identity of Leader Known by Other Iwi*

The fourth aspect of a mandate is that the name of the leader is heard (*Ka rangona atu na tona ingoa*) (Grove 1985: 150). This means that over time other

people become familiar with who the leader is for a particular iwi. A rangatira is not a surprise that appears from nowhere but is a person who is known to be a leader and whose name is associated over time with a specific group of people.

e) *The Turangawaewae Principle*

Just as it was important for the leader to have the appropriate birth credentials it was equally important for the leader to be based in rohe (territory). The leader's feet must be firmly grounded on land that is associated with the descent group to which the leader belongs. In the context of the land the leader is able to call upon the symbols of the people that are part of the natural environment – the mountain, the river, the sacred places, the lake, the harbour. These symbols are part of the leader's aura or spiritual significance and are an important part of the leader's mandate.

f) *The Gender Aspect*

Both Te Rangikeheke and Tikitu assumed that the leader, chief or ariki was a male. Most chiefs were male and being male imbued the mandate with the concerns of men, the style and nature of male leadership. Mahuika (1981), however, points out that there were many instances among Ngati Porou where the leaders were women and often leaders of ariki status. Women brought their own qualities to bear on leadership but by and large the expectations of them were the same as for men.

g) *Mana and Tapu*

A leader who possesses all of the qualifications above and satisfies the criteria is a person who is said to have mana tangata. According to Mahuika (1981:67), this gave the leader or chief "the authority to control and direct the activities of the tribe or sub-tribe". The qualities of mana and tapu are an essential product of moenga rangatira and become attached to the person. How the qualities are expressed is subject to the personality of the leader and to performance over a period of time. While one aspect of "mana tangata" refers to authority, another important aspect refers to charisma. A leader blessed with the qualities of mana and tapu is a person of charisma.

The Negation of Mandate

When a person fails to meet the criteria, the mandate is removed, or more typically, usurped by someone else. This type of leader is contrasted against

the hereditary leader who was the ideal and most preferred leader. The next choice is a more junior member of the same *moenga rangatira*, who could be the youngest brother. Mahuika (1981:66) lists several ways by which the mandate of leadership can be acquired in a competitive environment. Briefly these are:

1. By a younger sibling taking over the role of leader.
2. By leaving the district and seeking promotion elsewhere.
3. By forcing a division of the empire.
4. By arranging a political marriage to improve one's prospect.
5. By establishing a new leadership line and by inheriting the mandate from this *moenga rangatira*.

There are two more which can be added to the list. They are:

6. By waging war occupying the land of another tribal group, that is by *raupatu* (by blade of a patu) or *ringa kaha* (the strong arm).
7. By cunning and sometimes outright murder.

Ambition finds expression in many ways and it is a myth that leadership roles in traditional Maori society were preordained and non-competitive. Ambition was certainly a variable in the politics of leadership.

Through time the tendency is to return to the *matamua* or senior line but, whatever happens, *the whakapapa credentials cannot ever be extinguished*. Only the mandate to be an active leader can be negotiated. As Mahuika (1981:67) puts it, the right to be leader can be forfeited but the privileges and rights of chiefly birth remain.

Nga Pumanawa o te Rangatira (The Talents of a Leader)

Tikitū was very clear about the attributes or talents of a chief and what they must be able to do in an ideal situation. He lists eight talents as follows:

1. *He kaha ki te mahi kai.*
Has the knowledge and is industrious in obtaining or cultivating food.
2. *He kaha ki te whakahaere i nga raruraru.*
Able to mediate, manage and settle disputes.

3. *He toa.*
Is courageous in war.
4. *He kaha ki te whakahaere i te riri.*
A good strategist and leader in war.
5. *He mohio ki te whakairo.*
Has knowledge of the arts of carving.
6. *He atawhai tangata.*
Knows how to look after people.
7. *Te hanga whare nunui, waka ranei.*
Has command of the knowledge and the technology to build large houses or canoes.
8. *He mohio ki nga rohe whenua.*
Has a sound knowledge of the boundaries of tribal lands. (Grove 1985:6-7)

At the time that Tikiri gave his list of talents to Elsdon Best, the land wars were over and iwi were involved in a different sort of war, namely, contesting ownership and entitlements to various land blocks in the Maori Land Court. In this context it was essential that the leader representing an iwi in the Maori Land Court, knew the boundaries, the history of battles, the sacred or significant places within blocks of lands, and was familiar with the boundaries of other iwi. This level of knowledge had to be broader than knowing about one's own hapu or iwi.

Te Rangikaheke's list of 1850 was given at a time when traditional values were still strong and before the divisive and debilitating land wars of the 1860s had occurred.

His list of six talents is set out below:

1. *He mohio ki te whakahaere i nga korero o te mahi kai.*
Has command of the knowledge, science and technology of food acquisition and production.
2. *... o te tangohanga whare, waka, pataka, hereimu.*
Has command of the knowledge, technology, rituals and traditions pertaining to the construction and acquisition of houses, canoes, storehouses and cooking sheds.

3. *Ka mohio ia ki te whakahaere i nga korero mo te whawhai, toa tonu ki te riri, hopu tupapaku tonu atu, whati rawa mai ka riri, nana ano i whakahoki atu te whati.*
He knows how to conduct discussions on the strategies of warfare and is himself courageous in battle, is not afraid to kill, and can turn adversities into victories.
4. *Ko te korero manuhiri ano tetahi.*
Inviting and welcoming visitors is another (talent).
5. *Ko te korero runanga ano tetahi.*
Conducting meetings of the people to discuss important issues is another.
6. *Ko te atawhai ano tetahi.*
Yet another is being able to offer hospitality and to take care of people.

Te Rangikaheke puts a lot of stress on warfare which, in his day and following the Ngapuhi raids, was an issue of paramount importance. He covers all aspects of warfare. The leader had to be a good fighter as well as a good manager and strategist.

Another important value was placed upon being able to plan, explain and convince people about important issues, by means of a runanga (meeting). Although the leader was expected to lead by example, equal emphasis was placed upon the people being a part of the discussions on strategy and on any decision made on behalf of the group. This is the significance of the specified talent for conducting meetings of the people (item 5 above).

Categories of Leaders

Te Rangikaheke emphasised the talents required of leaders and did not comment on categories of leadership. Later, writers such as Buck and Firth discussed this aspect of leadership. A generalised summary view was given by Maharaja Winiaia (1956) but this more formal arrangement is not typical for all iwi. There were chiefs and leaders. Within the category of chiefs there were two classes; the ariki or paramount chief, and the rangatira or chief. Dave Simmonds (1986:129-30) suggested there was a ranking system: in place and above the rank of rangatira there were the taiopuru, the ahupiri, the noia, the konini, the kaitahutahu arikinui and the kaitahutahu ariki but there is little evidence to support such a fine grading of ranks or levels of leadership. The South Island iwi might have followed a different system for there the social groups were much more dispersed, they tended to have few members, and were multi-hapu in nature. (Anderson 1980). They had high chiefs and other chiefs.

To return now to Winiata's description of the leadership system:

Ariki or Paramount Chief The iwi (tribe) was a collection of several hapu (sub-tribes). All of the hapu recognised one of their number as paramount chief or ariki. The word "paramount" means "foresmost in importance, preeminent, highest in rank or orders superior to all others" (Websters 1971:687). Thus, implied in the English translation is some kind of hierarchical ordering, the ariki being at the top of the hierarchy. To some extent, this mirrors the meaning of ariki. There was an ordering process according to whakapapa (birth credentials) and the variables were the *matamua* (first born) preference and the *ruakana* (seniority) preference. The ariki was the person who was born out of a senior descent line (also ariki, chiefly thread) which ideally was a line of first born sons without interruption. But as Buck (1987:344) pointed out, the ideal is very difficult to demonstrate. What happens on the ground is that the hapu leaders work out the details and then agree as to who best qualifies to be the ariki.

The Rangatira or Chief

The second level of chief was the rangatira who was head of a hapu social group. According to Winiata (1956:222), the status of the rangatira "was slightly lower than that of the ariki, to whom he was related". The whakapapa or moenga rangatira mentioned by Te Rangikaheke is important. All of the chiefs were related to one another and ideally belonged to the same moenga rangatira, though in practice it was not necessary. The rangatira was the social, political and economic leader of the group. The rangatira and the ariki together formed an informal power group that discussed important issues and made decisions on behalf of the iwi.

The Kaumatua or Elder

In Winiata's opinion, a kaumatua was a leader of a whanau or extended family. The status of the kaumatua depended on whakapapa, age, wisdom and experience. In traditional times, according to Winiata, the kaumatua was not a rangatira or chief. The head of a whanau was the spokesperson for that group and was the person who represented the whanau in the deliberations of the hapu. Thus all three groups – the whanau, the hapu and the iwi – were interlocked into a socio-economic and political system. The whanau provided the workers, fighters and specialists, the hapu, the numbers to make up large groups, for organised activities and the chiefs who formed an informal representative group of advisors to the ariki. But it was the iwi who protected the political and economic interests of the entire social system and

it was the iwi that was capable of putting together a fighting battalion called a hokowhitu, consisting of 140 warriors.

The Tohunga or Specialists

In his paper, Winiata (1956) restricted this category to the priests or ritual leaders. But he recognised that the term also referred to "specialist". It is useful to focus on the general meaning of the term "tohunga" because it appears on linguistic evidence that it was an inclusive term that admitted several persons, men and women, to leadership roles. This does not mean that it was easy to become a tohunga. The evidence of woodcarving and tattooing, tohunga whakairo and tohunga ta moko respectively, suggests that a long period of training and a high standard of performance was demanded. Youths could not become tohunga and had to prove themselves over several years of performance to qualify.

In summary, there were chiefs, elders and specialists who covered a wide range of activities from food production, to fishing, preserving food, making fish nets, weaving cloaks, making floor mats, shaping adzes, to making decorated kites. The various levels of leaders acted within a structure of whanau, hapu and iwi.

Decision Making

The leader of the group plays an important part in the decisions that are made on a host of different activities. Those mentioned specifically by Te Rangikaheke and Tikitu include:

1. All activities relating to the food quest.
2. All aspects of warfare.
3. Large scale constructions such as large houses, storehouses, cooking sheds, canoes and probably fighting pa.
4. The arts (whakairo). In the dictionary (Williams 1971: 80) *whakairo* refers to carving, tattooing, painting and weaving.
5. All public events such as welcoming visitors and extending hospitality to them and meetings of the people.

For all of these activities there is a set of precedents to follow which have become the "kawa" (*protocol*) and there are names given to the procedures followed or to the method of resolving a particular issue. In warfare, for

example, if the decision was "*kokoti moe roa*" (divide the long sleep), then everyone understood what had to be done and the major decision then was to select the small group of men who would show themselves at the pa and try to lure the defenders out. An ambush would be waiting for the pursuers (Best 1941:2:237). In an action of this sort, the men had to be "convinced" that the activity was necessary and that their participation in it was "correct" in a personal sense.

There had to be a leader. In warfare, if the leader was killed, the army often abandoned the fight immediately, even if they were winning (Vayda 1960:26). In a Bay of Islands incident, in 1772, the French force which was taking punitive action against a village aimed their rifle fire against the leaders (Vayda 1960:26). As one lot of leaders fell another took their places until finally all the leaders were killed and the battle was over.

Commentators such as Vayda point out that the leaders did not give orders or command by virtue of their rank. Rather they led by example (Vayda 1960:29). It is not clear what all of this means. If the strategies are well understood there is little need for extended discussion or for orders.

Mahuika speaks with great confidence about the authority and power to control and direct the people (Mahuika 1981:67). And it could well be the case that some chiefs had this sort of authority which means that they made the decisions. But this has to be balanced against the following factors:

1. Affiliations to hapu were often fragile and individuals could change allegiances.
2. If there was real authority this is bound to assert itself in warfare where lives were at stake but the evidence is not clear on this point.
3. The value placed by Te Rangikaheke on a chief being able to conduct public meetings to discuss issues of great moment indicates that the guiding principle was a *democratic one*.

In other words the people had a right to participate in decision making through a hui where the pros and cons could be argued and where the leaders had to be persuasive and convincing. Where argument did not win the day, the word of a priest might. It was common practice to seek the advice of a "*matakite*" (seer) before embarking on any important activity. The seer was able to give confidence about a decision by predicting success or to stop an action by predicting failure.

There were other sorts of decisions which did not require a calling together of the people to have a runanga-type hui. These would be the executive type decisions alluded to by Firth. They were obvious, non-contentious

decisions which the leader would make in the everyday activities of the group. In these instances the leader would know that his decisions would be accepted and supported; and to make sure this was so he would take part in the activity. His *mana tangata* would help give him the authority and the confidence to make the necessary decisions.

It is difficult to find a description of the traditional decision-making process in the literature. But many contemporary Maori have sat through many meetings that followed a "traditional" pattern. Writing in 1931, Sir Apirana Ngata referred to it in this passage:

"The average European has not realised that the promulgation of the ideas he has persistently sought to impose on the Maori people was not possible without recourse to the old-time method of discussion on the *marae* (the village courtyard) or in the *runanga* or meeting house." (Ngata 1940:37)

Sir Apirana Ngata makes it clear that there are two sorts of *runanga* where issues are discussed. One is outside in front of the "*whare runanga*" (meeting house) where issues are introduced. The other is inside the *whare runanga* where issues requiring concentrated attention are discussed – even today. The inside *runanga* take many hours of discussion and the procedure is to follow a set, clockwise pattern where every speaker is given an opportunity to speak. An issue is explained and examined at length and speakers make their contribution without interruption or heckling.

The role of the leader or chief is to listen to the discussion, summarise the main points and indicate, if it not already apparent, where the consensus view lies. Then the speakers focus upon the consensus view and try to persuade those speaking against, to change their minds. At one meeting I attended the discussion lasted four hours and by the end of this time three people out of 54 remained apart from the consensus view. Other meetings take longer than four hours and may take a whole weekend.

The Western Majority Model

While there are Maori communities who have adopted the Western model of debate, which ends in a vote, many others do not approve of it. Borrowing from the debating procedures of Parliament, some groups engage in an adversary style of discussion, which is personally damaging and discourages many people from joining in. In the end only the "bush lawyers" and the persons who think they are educated in a Western sense do the talking. Wisdom does not necessarily emerge in such a hui.

Decisions based on slender majorities do not last, are not widely supported and can lead to dividing a community for long periods of time. The consensus model allows people to state their views without rancour and without damaging personal relationships. Where *individuals really stand on issues becomes known during the course of discussion*. In order to reach a conclusion though, some compromises have to be negotiated. Finally a consensus decision is made that everyone in the community can accept as their group's decision.

Te Whakahaere i Nga Raruraru (Settling Disputes and Making Decisions)

Himiona Tikitu gave a high priority and value to the ability and expertise of a leader to manage the procedures for settling a wide range of disputes. A good *chief* was expected to manage conflict; to keep in his mind an account of old scores that need responses in the future; to actually carry out some *utu* (revenge) satisfying adventures successfully; to have a rich store of precedents for handling internal disputes and to be ready to apply the most appropriate precedent to fit a particular dispute.

The settling of disputes was not always viewed as an onerous and boring chore. Conflict was seen to be a natural part of life and was often thoroughly enjoyed by the participants (Hanson and Hanson 1983:123). There was a tendency, however, for some conflicts to get out of hand and to occupy too much time and resources for doubtful results. For example, Tuhoe and Ngati Awa were locked in a conflict that lasted 200 years before being brought to an end (Best 1972:355).

The quest for honour and glory builds reputations on the one hand and destroys men, women and children on the other. Hundreds of fighting men die for the larger goal of acquiring territory and resources or of protecting them against attack.

Settling old scores did not always mean utterly destroying the enemy. There are many cases of diplomacy being applied, such as allowing certain captured enemy to go home as in the case of Tauroa (Best 1972:357) who was allowed to go by Te Rangikawehea of Ngati Awa, only to be killed later by a different hapu of Ngati Awa. But that did not detract from the gesture of goodwill. Te Rangikawehea also allowed the members of two hapu who had been defeated on the battleground to leave the district in peace and unmolested rather than be hunted down and killed. This action brought honour to him as a leader.

A reading of *Tuhoe* (1972) reveals many cases of where a dispute was settled by banishment of a whole group of people who were later allowed to return home. There are cases of where efforts were made to prevent loss of life by freeing captives, by warning the enemy or by requiring only one life to settle a long standing dispute.

Settlement by Runanga

The type of issue that called for a runanga-type hui was a grievance that threatened the well-being of a hapu. The procedures have already been described. All that needs to be said here is that the settlement had to be seen to be fair and the community had to judge carefully how much public censure and *whakama* (the institution of shame) to apply. Too much resulted in the victims either leaving the community or in *whakamomori* (suicide) which indicated that the process of conciliation had failed. Too little would not be accepted as sufficient *utu* (payment) for the *take* (cause).

The assertion by Apirana Mahuika that a chief had the authority and power to control and direct the people, coupled with Tikitu's *pumanawa* (talent) to manage disputes, leads one to speculate that many minor issues were settled directly by the chief. There is no statement in the literature to support this claim and no detailed analysis of how minor grievances were differentiated from major ones. It is reasonable to assume that an effective leader was able to settle many disputes without recourse to the runanga. Moreover, as in Western law, there were precedents well established in the experiences of the people so that the leader's task was to select the appropriate precedent that would elicit immediate wide support from the community.

The Mana of a Decision

In this paper the basis of the mandate of a traditional leader was discussed and some key elements identified. A leader who satisfies the criteria and possesses the requisite talents and expertise is accepted by the people and supported by them. The utterances of the leader are accepted by the group as representing their views.

Acceptance and support depend upon a process of continuing validation by being with the people not only in their moments of great triumph but also being with them to share in their disappointments, failures and grief. The leader is expected to call the people together to discuss issues where an *iwi* position is required. This is the runanga principle mentioned by Tikitu in his eight talents and it takes time.

The leader's mandate is validated and confirmed by the *kanohi kitea* principle (being seen in person among the people) and by Te Rangikaheke's runanga principle or democracy principle where the people share in the shaping of their decisions, which they have to live by and accept as being best for them.

Tests of adequacy of both principles are open to interpretation. *How frequently must the leader's face be seen among the people? When is the runanga principle properly fulfilled? What proportion of the people should be consulted? Who among the people should be present at a hui? Is one long hui adequate? Is one pan-tribal hui outside and in front of a runanga house adequate? Do the people feel that they have been adequately consulted and informed?*

The key factor is *the runanga principle which allows democracy to work and to be seen to be working*. Eventually the effectiveness of a leader in today's world is measured by the degree to which the runanga principle is applied. The final judges are the people. If they are not involved in the decisions of their iwi they will be dissatisfied both with the leadership and with the lack of democracy. Expecting the people to make hurried decisions, because Government has imposed a deadline, subverts the runanga principle. Time must be given for marae-based democracy to work.

Finally, the tendency in traditional times was for generalist chiefs and to depend on one person to carry out many tasks. Despite the fact that *tohunga* or specialists were recognised as leaders and decision makers at one level, more often than not the chief was the builder, the canoe expert, the general, and the orator. As emphasised by both Te Rangikaheke and Tikitu a chief was expected to have many talents. A consequence of such a value was that leadership roles at the level of chief or rangatira were restricted with a tendency to focus upon one "paramount" chief. In this type of system there is one reference point for decisions one person to consult and one person to represent the group. The chief speaks for the people, is of the people, looks after their survival and development, and is a symbol of people

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