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# **Cloaked in Life and Death: Tangi and Taonga in a Contemporary Māori Whanau**

A thesis  
submitted **in fulfilment**  
of the requirements for the degree  
of  
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by  
**Vincent A Malcolm-Buchanan**



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**ABSTRACT**

This thesis is an examination of tangihanga (indigenous funerary practices) unique to the lived experience of the Māori of Aotearoa New Zealand, drawing on fieldwork undertaken amongst Māori, by a Māori. The introduction and influence of modern practices, ideologies, and articles of significance are considered, in the context of the ongoing traditions of tangihanga, a unique and critical collective occasion. This research navigates a tribally distinct journey by way of familial experiences of death in the Māori world. In particular, this work discusses and elucidates the select materials, objects and taonga (artefacts) observable during our funerary processes, as they engage the rubric of death, burial and initial mourning.

**Part I:** speaks to theoretical and methodological aspects pertinent to the scope of the interdisciplinary work undertaken, and intellectually framed, by the disciplines of Anthropology and Tikanga Māori Cultural Studies. This includes participant observation fieldwork; death, ritual, liminality and oral traditions; the marae context; western and indigenous worldviews and epistemologies; as well as compositional mechanisms and tensions.

**Part II:** addresses some logistics of tangihanga, and introduces key ethnohistoric and ethnographic reflexions, which lead into select participant interviews that act to inform the work. These provide the anthropological *other* voice, and explore realities and concepts which are at the same time distinct from, yet similar to, my own.

**Part III:** relates five brief tangihanga narratives which present genealogically-inflected ethnographies of death, and facilitate discussions pertaining to the core focus of the thesis. Thereafter the substantive chapter material deliberates upon processes and experiences of the arrival of death in the Māori world, as we return to the marae and eventually embrace the final moments of closing the lid of the casket in preparation for interment.

With time, we can see different, innovative ideas and practices being introduced as each new generation, with their respective priorities, subsequently metamorphose the complex rubric of tangihanga. For example, transnational Māori must find new ways to cope with tūpāpaku on foreign shores, and they can also be seen to introduce non-traditional elements when returning tūpāpaku home to Aotearoa. Concern regarding the dietary health of many Māori means we are more aware of the need to reduce fat, salt and sugar intakes, so on many marae meat is becoming leaner, whilst vegetarian and gluten free options are being increasingly considered. Also, premium wall space is diminishing as growing numbers of images arrive with the passing of kin members, so the likes of digital photo albums are being introduced; reflecting increasing new technologies on marae that also includes mobile phones, iPads, laptop computers and so forth. Change seems inevitable and change, in many forms, will continue to encroach on our cultural sensibilities and abodes.

As older generations perpetuate age-old traditions, and younger generations acculturate new priorities, change is no longer on the horizon of our marae, but has arrived to affect tangihanga and marae practices. This said, the Māori remain pragmatic and resilient to the winds of change, and this study shows our ability to adapt, as and where need be, whilst also foreboding future generations be as adaptable and ready to change; at the same time as maintaining core cultural traditions and practices. In its most basic form this thesis shows that whilst it matters what clothes we dress our tūpāpaku in, the taonga displayed, the form of burial vessel chosen, mode of disposal and so forth, the rubric of tangihanga nonetheless prioritises the interests of Maori as a collective, communally sharing the complex logistics and burdens of death, as we celebrate a life lived, and lost, collectively.

This research will primarily consider the use of tangible materials, objects, and artefacts observable in contemporary tangihanga experiences and question how modernising or secular ideologies have impacted funerary practices for 21st century Māori. Throughout the course of this research I also intend to look into:

- What taonga, materials, and objects are observable at tangihanga and why?
- Are these items deemed ritually symbolic, and if so how and why?
- What is the familial and cultural relevance and significance of such items?
- What (if any) values and ideologies do these items express, transpose and/or communicate?
- What garments and or taonga are permitted (or not) to adorn the tūpāpaku? Why or why not?
- Are all types of photographs and/or images permitted to be displayed, if so where, are there restrictions, and if so then what and why?
- Does the immediate physical environment make any difference to the use of materials, objects and artefacts in funerary practices, and if so how and why?

Twenty-first century Māori continue to hold fast to age-old traditions, at the same time as being flexible and adapting with changing times. This body of work considers aspects of our earlier funerary traditions, and discusses current traditions, before concluding with postulations regarding potential new practices. As Māori and Pākehā of Aotearoa NZ there is much we have yet to learn from each other, and still much more we might share with our other global contemporaries.

**Moe mai ra koutou i te moengaroa o te Ariki  
He tohu aroha tēnei mō koutou katoa**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost it is appropriate to acknowledge my mentor who has been a living exemplar of Māori and academic excellence, Professor Ngahua Te Awekotuku. Together with Associate Professor Linda Waimarie Nikora, their considerable Tangi Research Programme resourcing made this thesis work possible; as well as the excellent supervisory guidance of Dr Tom Ryan. My gratitude to you all is heartfelt, for providing inspiring pedagogic guidance and unwavering support throughout.

It is with pride that in the folds of these pages I have proffered a chapter revealing names, tribal and marae affiliations, images, voices, and words from whanaunga whose at times poignantly intimate interviews, taonga and stories unfold herein. The consequent scope and depth of this work would not have been possible without your invaluable contributions.

A considerable undertaking such as a PhD cannot be realised without whanau support. I thank my uncles 'Stormy' Iharaira Hohepa, Horowai Hohepa, Nua Hohepa, Takutai Hohepa, Jack Tapui Ohlson and Te Hata 'Olly' Ohlson; and aunties Nini Kelly, 'Bubby' Veronica Parekaimakawe O'Neal, Donna Sorenson, Hikitia Duggan, and Maria Hohepa. Also my siblings Ihaka, Dawn, Ihimaera, Ropata, and cousins Rehua John Pussell, Erina Swift Cullen, Miriama Ohlson, Pikihuia Hohepa-Paringatai, Tatiana Hohepa, Marion Paul, and Kesla Utawaka. I must also thank TRP colleagues, including our community researchers, alongside Professor Pou Temara, Te Kahautu Maxwell, and valued friends including Dr Justin Hyde, Dr Marama Muru-Lanning, Ngaire 'Babygirl' Tihema, Stuart Melville, Kim Solomon, Gemma Piercy, Mark Patchett, Bjorn Frith, Matt Wardlaw, Rohan and Jo Wells, and the Homestead Jabberwocky quiz team.

Several entities provided financial contributions which aided in various aspects of this research, including The Royal Society of NZ Marsden Fund which facilitated my primary doctoral scholarship; Ngā Pae o te Maramatanga; the University of Waikato Scholarships Committee, as well as SMPD and FASS doctoral resourcing funds including Louise Tainui, School Manager in SMPD. I similarly extend gratitude for annual education grants received from the Onuku Māori Lands Trust, Rotoiti 15 Trust, Rotoma No.1 Incorporation, Te Tahuna Trust, Whangamoā Trust, Paehinahina Mourea Trust, Te Whāiti Nui a Toi Trust, and the Peti Tira Whanau Trust.

Lastly, it is appropriate to extend my utmost honour and respect to those five whanau of whom aspects of their precious lives, and tangihanga, are henceforth revealed. My beloved parents Te Heta Hector Tamehana Ohlson and Cairo Makarena Te Wao Hohepa Ohlson, treasured sister Roimata Kiterangi Frances Ohlson, koroua-dad Āpotoro Takiwa Tutere Michael Hohepa, and kuia tūpuna Te Pae Mihikore Hohepa.

**Perhaps this entire work was in some small fashion my way of ensuring you would always be remembered.**

**- Pumau ki te Aroha -**

## PREFACE

I am fortunate that the lands and people of Ngāti Pīkiao embody home for me. They are the tūrangawaewae that grounds my indigenous reality, at the heart of which Ngāti Tamateatutahi-Kawiti maintain our homeland fires. My hapū are proud members of the confederation of Te Arawa, and can be found at Lake Rotoiti ki te a Ihenga, in a district renowned for its many surrounding lakes and geothermal wonderlands. Raised initially in the rural enclave of Rotoiti, I blissfully revelled in our native lakeside surrounds. By the age of six I was relocated to the Rotorua suburban jungle of Fordblock then Owhata, and I still recall scraping melted chewing gum off the hot suburban sidewalk so as to taste the enticing pink gooey substance. Then by the age of fifteen and unable to afford to sit High School exams, I left the public education system behind me.

Fortune was kind, because in the changing sociocultural landscape of late twentieth century NZ, without qualifications, I found a career that allowed me to travel the world. That was at a time when such travel was rare for many Māori of my generation. It was a good life, and many years later in 2003 fortune shone again. My serendipitous journey to becoming an accidental anthropologist was inspired and due in no small part to my best friend, Dr Thomas Klein of the University of Ohio. I remain indebted for your friendship, Tommy. It was several years later, when I finished my third formal qualification of a Master's Degree that I realised we, Māori, are capable of achieving much. Then in 2009 my mother requested that if the opportunity to do a PhD arose, then I was to do so, for the whanau. She asked that I return to Ngāti Pīkiao, Te Arawa and Māori, a taonga deserving of our bloodline. We had no idea at that time what the focus of such an unlikely imagining might be, and sadly that same year my mother joined our tūpuna in the final journey of death.

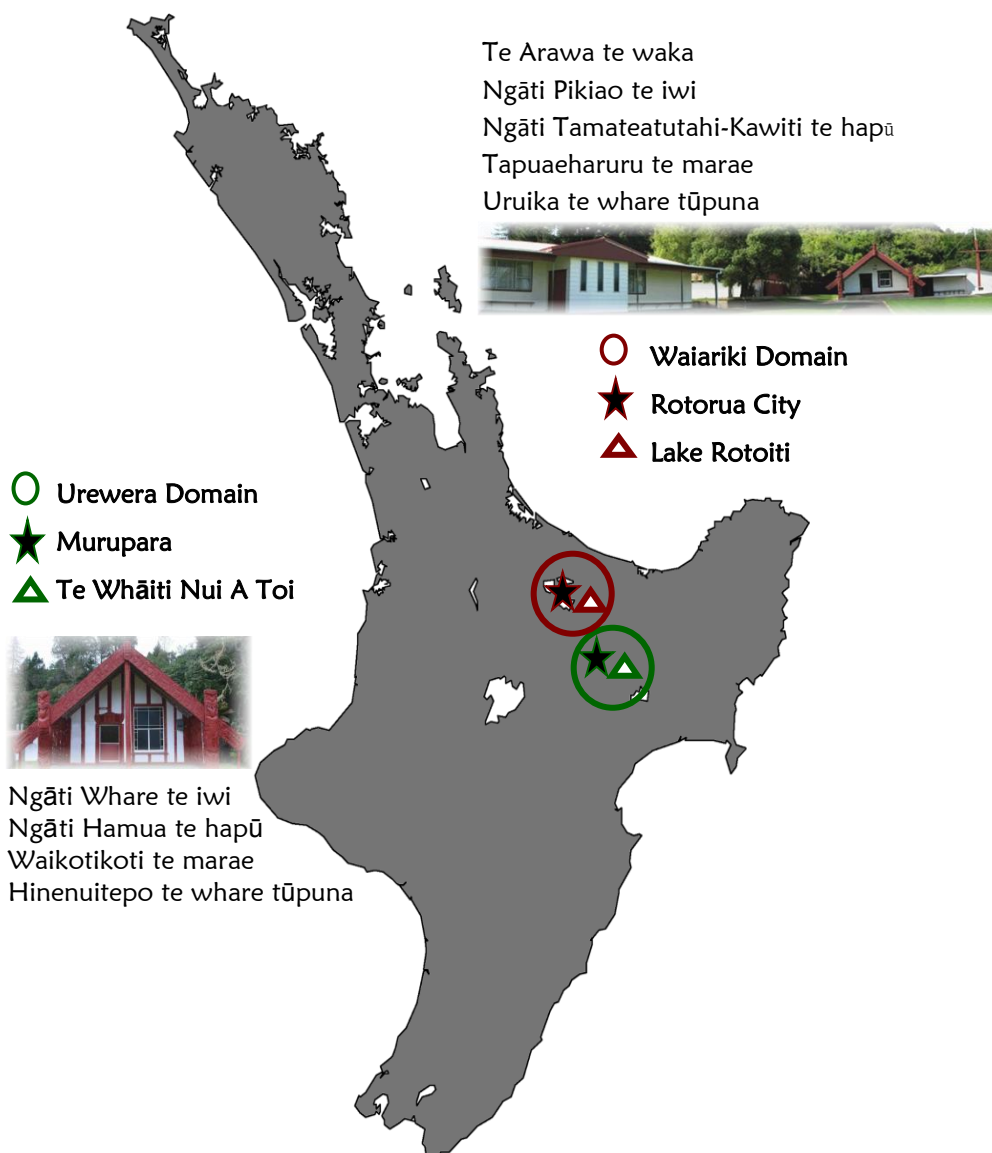
Then by way of the Tangi Research Programme, fortune revisited again. As if conspiratorially, my academic training in religious studies, penchant for philosophy, and graduate pathways in anthropology combined. Filtered through the unique worldview of an indigene with entrenched funerary traditions and correlating lived experiences, I took up the all-too-rare opportunity of this doctoral research. I have been fortunate. The various research narratives and notions proffered here are the synthesis of both academic and life-long training, with this thesis being the outcome. Yet there is a bitter irony that my mother, in life, prompted me to undertake a body of research that subsequently delves into aspects of her death, as well as those of my father, sister, koroua-dad and kuia tūpuna. My father used to say that I was the type of child you could leave alone with nothing, but who would still find something to do, while my koroua-dad used to say I was ambitious.

**In their absence I can only pray that, by aspiring to such ambitions, I have taken that which is appropriate, created something of which they might be proud, and fulfilled my mother's wish of a taonga deserving of our bloodline... returned herein to our people.**

**Diagrammatic Schema 1  
A Locational Map**

The genealogic and ethnographic material discussed in this thesis refers primarily to both of my principal marae, Tapuaeharuru located on the verge of Lake Rotoiti, and Waikotikoti, nestled in the Whirinaki.

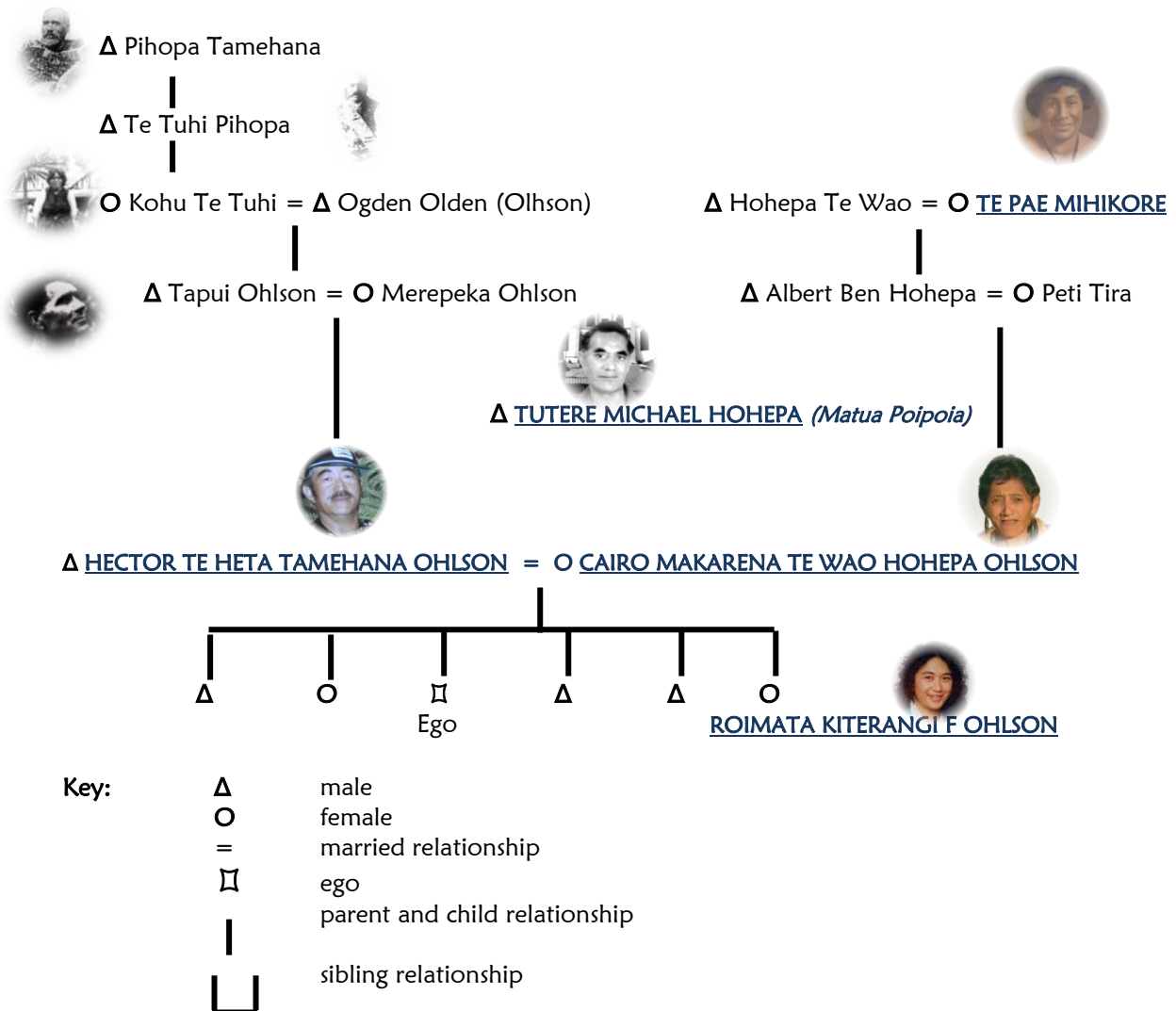
**NORTH ISLAND of AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND (NZ)**



## Diagrammatic Schema 2

Elemental Kinship Connectivity  
WHAKAPAPA

With the exception of 'ego', being the author, the persons identified in this schema are deceased, and their lives, and aspects of their deaths, are discussed throughout this thesis.

Ngāti WhareNgāti Tamateatutahi Kawiti

I descend from Ngāti Whare and Tūhoe by way of my father's proud lineage. His father was Tapui 'Jack' Ohlson of Te Whāiti Nui a Toi, son of Kohu Te Tuhi, daughter of the Ngāti Hamua rangatira and tohunga whakairo Te Tuhi Pihopa, whose rangatira father Pihopa Tamehana was the nephew of the Tūhoe chief Tutakangahau – a key informant of Elsdon Best. By way of my mother's lineage I descend from Ngāti Pikiāo and Ngāti Rangitīhi. My koroua-dad was Āpotoro Takiwa Tutere Hohepa, a rangatira of Ngāti Tamateatutahi-Kawiti and son of Te Arawa weaver Te Pae Mihikore. All of this is herein discussed in further detail.

In mātauranga Māori our deceased depart the world of light, te ao Marama, returning to the other-world realms of our bygone tūpuna and atua; to occasionally revisit us in dreamtime, or returning back towards us, in shared memories and stories.



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## LIST of ABBREVIATIONS

AAS	Australian Anthropological Society
ANSA	Australian Network of Student Anthropologists
FASS	Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Waikato
MPRU	Māori and Psychology Research Unit
NZ	New Zealand
IUAES	International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences
SMPD	School of Māori and Pacific Development at the University of Waikato
TB	Tuberculosis
TRP	Tangi Research Programme
ASAANZ	Association of Social Anthropologists of Aotearoa New Zealand

## LIST of COLLOQUIALISMS

Bullrush	a 'chasing' game played on open spaces such as fields and empty marae
Counters	small objects used to cover numbers when playing Housie/Bingo
Housie	a game, also known as Bingo
Piggy	a playing-cards game
Skonking	a child's game using small round marbles to 'skonk' and win your opponents marble
Kiwi	colloquialism for a person of NZ heritage; a term derived after the image of the Kiwi had been seen used by uniformed soldiers during WWI

## Māori to English Translations Glossary

**Please note:**

- a) This glossary is an additional supplement for use where I have not provided in-text translations.
- b) The tohutō or macron is used to indicate the customary stressed vowel.
- c) Te Arawa vernacular may at times be used \*.
- d) Translations are contextual only, and have been adapted from Te Aka Māori Dictionary, and Te Ara - The Encyclopedia of NZ

ahikā	burning fires of occupation - title to land through occupation by a group, generally over a long period of time.
aituā	ill omen, misfortune, death
ao	world, daytime
ariki	paramount chief, high chief, chieftain
aroha	love, yearning
apakura	lament, song of grief
Āpotoro Takiwā (o te Hāhi Rātana)	Regional apostle (of the Rātana church)
ātea	courtyard, public forum, open area in front of the wharenui
āhua	appearance, likeness, nature, figure, form, character
aku	my, of mine, belonging to me
atua	God, supernatural being, deity,
awa	river, stream, creek, canal, gully,
awhi	to embrace, cherish, to surround
awhina	to assist, help
haka	performance of vigorous posture dances with actions and rhythmic vocalisations
hara	sin, transgression, offence
harakeke	NZ flax ( <i>Phormium tenax</i> )
hapū	kinship group, clan, tribe, subtribe
hea	where? what place?
hei tiki	carved figure, image, a neck ornament usually made of greenstone and carved in an abstract form of a human comb-accessory for adorning hair
heru	to press noses in greeting
hongī	gathering, meeting, assembly, seminar,
hui	sumptuous meal, feast, banquet,
hākari	hymn, psalm
hīmene	be peaceful, gentle, amiable, nice, affable, genial
hūmārie	unveiling: a ceremony at the urupa to unveil a headstone
hura kōhatu	gathering, meeting, seminar, conference
hui	now, at present
inaianeī	people, tribe, extended kinship group
iwi	ability, power, strength, energy, stamina
kaha	kiwi feather cloak
kahukiwi	royal family of the Kingitanga, aristocracy
kāhui ariki	a feather cloak/garment
kāhu huruhuru	food
kai	caller - the woman (or women) who has the role of making the ceremonial call to visitors onto a marae, or equivalent venue, at the start of a pōwhiri. The term is also used for the caller(s) from the visiting group who responds to the tangata whenua ceremonial call.
kaikaranga	

kaikōrero	speaker, narrator
kaimahi	worker
kaimoana	seafood, shellfish
kāinga	home, residence, village, habitat
kaitiaki	guardian, custodian, trustee
kākahu	garments, clothes, cloak, apparel (verb) to dress, to clothe
kanohi ki te kanohi	face to face, in person
kapa haka	Māori cultural group
karakia	to recite ritual prayers, say grace, incantations, chant
karanga	to call, summon – a ceremonial call of welcome
karanga whānau	family call (to return and unite)
kaupapa	topic, policy, matter for discussion, plan, proposal,
kawa	agenda, subject, programme, theme
kei hea koe?	where are you?
kete	basket, kit
ki	to, into, towards, on to, upon
kirimate	mourner, near relative of the dead
Kingitanga	King Movement - a movement which developed in the 1850s, culminating in the anointing of Pōtatau Te Wherowhero as King. Strongest support comes from the Tainui tribes. Established to stop the loss of land to the colonists, to maintain law and order, and to promote traditional values and culture.
Kiwi	North Island brown kiwi, kiwi feather, ( <i>Apteryx manteli</i> and <i>tokoeka</i> , <i>Apteryx australis</i> ) flightless, nocturnal endemic birds with hair-like feathers
koha	donation, contribution, offering
kohunga	a superior variety of flax used for muka
kokowai	red ochre
kore	be nil, nothing, not, no longer, zero, zilch, nought
koro/koroua	elderly man, elder, grandfather, male elder
koroua tūpuna	ancestral elder, including great grandfather
korowai	*** Te Arawa vernacular is used to denote cloak
koutou	you (three or more people)
kua	has, had, have, will have
kuia	elderly woman, grandmother, female elder
kupu	word
kura	school, education
kuri	dog
mahau	porch, veranda
mahi	work, job, employment,
mahunga	head
mākutu	witchcraft, magic, sorcery, spell
mamae	ache, pain, injury, wound
mana	authority, influence, prestige, power
manaia	stylised 'sea horse' figure used in carving
manuhiri	visitor, guest
Māori	native, or belonging to Aotearoa
Māoritanga	Māori culture, practices and beliefs
marae	courtyard – the open area in front of the wharenui (meeting house, large house), where formal greetings and discussion take place
matakite	seer, clairvoyant, prophet
mātou	our (their and my - more than one thing)
mātauranga	understanding, knowledge, wisdom, education
mauri	life principle

mihi	to greet, acknowledge, pay tribute, thank
moana	sea, ocean, lake
mōhio	knowledge, wisdom
moko/mokopuna	grandchild
mōrena	good morning
mōrehu	survivor, remnant
mōteatea	lament, traditional chant, sung poetry
motu	island, country, land
muka	prepared flax fibre
murua	forgive
ngā	the (plural of <i>te</i> )
noa	ordinary, unrestricted, free from the restrictions of tapu
nui	large, big, many, plentiful, numerous, great, abundant
ōhākī	dying speech, parting wish, last words
ope	entourage, contingent - group of people moving together
ora	life, health, vitality
pā	fortified village, fort, stockade
paepae	orators bench, threshold
pahū	gong – usually made of wood
pai	good
Paipera Tapu	Holy Bible
Pākehā	New Zealander of Non-Māori descent
pani	bereaved person
papakāinga	original homestead
papakura	a type of insect
parakuihi	breakfast
patu	to strike, hit, beat ; weapon, club
patupaiarehe	fairy folk – fair-skinned mythical people who lived in the bush on mountains
pēpe	baby
piupiu	a flax skirt used in modern times for kapa haka
pō	night, darkness
pōhara	be poor, in poverty
poipoia	to nurture, toss, swing, wave about
poroporoaki	eulogy, panegyric, leave taking
pōtiki	youngest child
pou	post, pole, pillar
pounamu	greenstone, jade
pūrākau	myth, ancient legend, story
puta	to appear, come into view; opening, hole
pūtea	finely woven bag; fund, finance; sum of money
rangatira	chief, chieftain, chieftainess
raranga	to weave; weaving; plaiting technique
raru	to be in difficulty, perplexed, troubled ; problem, trouble
reo	language
rewena	bread made with potato yeast, leaven, yeast
ringawera	kitchen worker, kitchen hand
rohe	boundary, district, region, territory, area
roro	brain ; front end of meeting house, veranda, porch
roto	the inside, in within, interior; lake
rourou	small flax plaited food basket
taha	side, beside
taiaha	a long combat weapon of hard wood, often carved
tamariki	children
tangata	people
tangata whenua	indigenous/local people of the land



tangi	to cry, grieve, mourn; a part of the funeral lamentation
tangihanga	funerary processes
tāniko	border for cloaks; to finger weave, embroider
taonga	property, goods, possessions, treasure, something prized; objects or artefacts
tapu	under religious/ceremonial or superstitious restriction
tauā	mourning wreath (for the head), chaplet - garland of greenery worn by female mourners at a tangihanga
tautoko	support, advocate, verify, agree
te	the (singular)
te ao Māori	the Māori world
tekoteko	carved figure on the gable of a meeting house
tika	be correct, true; be straight, direct
tikanga	correct procedure, custom, habit, lore, practice; meaning
tinana	body
tohunga	trained specialist, chosen expert, priest
tohutō	macron – a symbol to mark long vowel sounds
tokomanawa	centre ridge pole of a meeting house
tokotoko	staff, walking stick
tono	to request, ask for
tonu	continue, still – continuance, permanence
tohu	sign, mark, symbol
tua	the further side of; in addition to
tuarua	second ; to repeat
tūtī	parson bird
tuku	to release ; to present, offer
tūpāpaku	corpse, deceased
tūpuna	ancestors
tūrangawaewae	foundation; domicile, place where one has rights of residence and belonging through kinship and whakapapa
tūreiti	be late, too late; lateness
tūturu	authentic, true, actual, fixed, permanent
umu	oven, earth oven
uri whakatipu	uri-offspring, descendant, relative, progeny, blood connection, successor / whakatipu-to cause to grow, rear, cherish, bring up, raise
urupā	burial ground, cemetery, graveyard
wā	time, period of time
waewae	leg/s; foot/feet
wahine	woman, female, lady
wai	water, stream, creek, river
waiata	(verb) to sing, (noun) a song, chant
wairua	spirit, soul
waka	canoe, vehicle
wānanga	seminar, forum
whaikōrero	to make a formal speech; oratory, oration, formal speech-making
whāriki	mat, floor covering
whaea	mother, aunt
whakaahua	photograph, illustration, portrait, picture
whakaaro	to think; thought, opinion, understanding, idea
whakahīhī	to sneer, deride, mock, ridicule
whakairo	to carve; carving
whakamoemiti	to praise, express thanks
whakatauāki	proverb
whānau	family, family group

whanaunga	relation, relative, kin, blood relation
whānau pani	chief mourners, bereaved family – the relations of the deceased
whāngai	to feed, nourish, foster, bring up, adopt; foster child, adopted child
whare	house, hut, habitation
whare whakairo	carved house
wharekai	dining hall
wharemate	house of mourning
wharepaku	toilet, bathroom
wharenuī	main building of a marae, meeting house, large/big house,
wharepaku	toilet, lavatory, latrine
wharepuni	principal house of a village, sleeping house.
whakapapa	genealogy, genealogical table, lineage, descent; kinship connectivity
whakawhanaungatanga	relating well to others, the process(es) of establishing and maintaining familial relationships,
whatu	to weave – double pair twining
whenua	land, ground, country; placenta

### PERSONAL NAMES:

Kupe	the great Māori explorer who discovered Aotearoa
Kuramārōtini	the wife of Kupe
Papatūānuku	the earth mother, the earth
Ranginui	the sky father, the great heavens
Rātana	family name of the founder of the so-named religious movement
Te Pēhi	a transliteration of the Pākehā name Best
Toi	an early and great ancestor of the Māori
Tutakangahau	a Tūhoe elder and informant of Elsdon Best
Tapuaeharuru	** the name given to our marae, and bay, on the shores of Lake Rotoiti ki te a Ihenga
Uruika	the eponymous name given to the wharenuī at Tapuaeharuru marae
Whātonga	an early oceanic Māori voyager

### TRIBAL NAMES:

Ngāti	tribal prefix
Ngāpuhi	tribal group of Northland
Ngāti Kahungunu	tribal group of the southeast North Island
Ngāti Pikiao	a tribal group, member of the Te Arawa confederation

Ngāti Porou	tribal group of the East Coast area of the North Island
Ngāti Rangitahi	a tribal group of the Te Arawa confederation
Ngāti Whare	a tribal group who assumed their eponymous ancestor's name (Wharepakau) and whose lands include Te Whāiti nui a Toi and the Whirinaki
Te Arawa	the eponymous name of a legendary canoe, taken as a principal name by several tribes of Rotorua-Maketu that chose to be confederated
Tūhoe	tribal group of the Bay of Plenty

## PLACE NAMES:

Aotearoa	'land of the long white cloud' the name given by Kupe and his wife Kuramārōtini who is believed to have called this out on first sighting these lands
Hawaiiki	the source and destination of all life, Māori place of origin in mythology
Maungapōhatu	a sacred mountain of the Tūhoe people
Rarohenga	underworld, netherworld
Rotoiti ki te a Ihenga)	Rotoiti: a lake and enclave location for the Ngāti Pīkiao people
Tapuaeharuru	The name given to our marae, and bay, on the shores of Lake Rotoiti ki te a Ihenga  According to an article by Greg Taipari (Dec 12, 2008), titled Marae Centenary Celebrations, my late Uncle Arapeta Tahana (1945-2009) is quoted as saying: "...Ngati-Tamatea-tutahi and Kaiti ancestors came to Rotoiti and drove away ancestors of Tuhourangi, who were living in the area. The name Tapuaeharuru came from the stomping feet of the Maori warriors who were doing a haka prior to the battle."
Te Whāiti nui a Toi	an isolated valley located on the western borders of the Urewera mountains, and is also known as The Great Canyon of Toi, in the Whirinaki
Te Rerenga Wairua, Whirinaki	Cape Reinga, leaping place of spirits (Te Reinga) a forest park in the North Island which flanks part of the Urewera National Park, comprising rolling hills, valleys, waterfall systems and rainforest.

**PART**

**ONE**

# CHAPTER 1

## THEORISING DEATH

Throughout modern history there have been many and diverse attempts to record the lived realities of the indigenous Māori of Aotearoa New Zealand. That most southerly native population of the Pacific has been variously represented, visualised, recorded, and memorialised in numerous fashions and forms. Such imaginings, postulations, and deliberations regarding the lives and histories of my people have provided considerable pedagogic sustenance for those so inclined. They have been written by non-Māori from foreign lands, as well as from within our own shorelines. From time to time the Māori themselves have emerged to authenticate our own perceptions, narratives and lived experiences. Yet despite living side by side on the same (often disputed) lands, Māori and non-Māori of these islands remain, at times, worlds apart. Nonetheless, my people have crossed many of modernity's cross-cultural divides, even etching out a place in the once foreign, hostile and privileged spaces of the ivory towers of academia. In this chapter I explore relevant theoretical perceptions of Māori, and critical aspects of our lives and deaths, considered initially by the non-Māori outsider, looking in on the realities of the anthropological *other*.

The lives of the Māori of Aotearoa, from our first breath to our final hours, have been scrutinised, recorded, objectively described, and subjectively ascribed by non-Māori. The earlier multitudinous fruits of those labours, which propagated notions such as the native or exotic savage, remain evident in libraries, museums and private collections the world over.

We have now and at various times and in divers [*sic*] journals ushered the Māori into the world, and noted the quaint rites pertaining to reproduction. We have told of his origin, his religion, his myths and folk-lore. We have described his food-supplies, his amusements, his arts, and superstitions. His woodcraft and war-customs, his mentality and ideality, have been reviewed. We have married him, and watched him in his last hours. We have dispatched his soul to the underworld, and cried him farewell to the dim shores of Hawaiiki. And I do not think that we can do much more for him.

Best, 1905, p.239

This quote from Elsdon Best's (1856-1931) definitive text *Māori Eschatology* reveals much about the preferred but now antiquated language of the time, his privileging of the male gender then common to that epoch, and use of the royal *we* positioned in a context of self-sacrificing servitude unto the *other*. Inferred, perhaps, but nonetheless perceived by my eyes.



Fig 1

He was amongst the more prolific non-Māori authors who wrote enthusiastically of my people, and whilst I am tempted, it is not my intent here to critique his writings. In truth, when I set out on the journey of this intellectual undertaking, my Ngāti Whare Uncle Jack Ohlson (1931-2011) asked that I not use Best if it could be helped. My people are still today aggrieved by his incorrect material, written and available for all and sundry to peruse and utilise at will, usually ignorant of the various errors. "... research of Māori is marked by a history that has shaped the attitudes and feelings Māori people have held towards research" (Smith, Linda T. 1999, p.183). However, and with the well-known flexible aptitude of the Māori, I shall take

from his work that which best serves the purpose of this exercise, and leave the Best criticisms, debates, and refutations for others. He was, after all, welcomed into the world of the Tūhoe, regardless that almost a century later many of my elders question aspects of the prodigious written materials he left in his wake. In spite of the latter, those works still provided material, both reputable and contentious, for later Treaty of Waitangi Tribunal hearings and reports. Writing on the universal topic of death, as realised in the Māori world, the text *Māori Eschatology* cannot be passed by, though admittedly it is used cautiously here. It has proven most informative whilst researching ways in which the non-Māori have perceived our tangihanga or Māori funerary processes. To my people these are indubitably unique and critically collective occasions that reveal our distinct indigenous mortuary practices.

During these processes, it has been my experience that the materials, objects and taonga, observable within the immediate surround of our deceased, are relevant, or significant, for many and varied reasons. That is to say, those items are neither meaningless nor inconsequential to the poignant occasion at hand, or for the social collective involved. Such materials, objects and taonga have relevance to various people, and their presence serves a purpose that will be explored and discussed throughout the body of this thesis.

## 1.2 Mauss and Taonga... → gifting, reciprocity, anthropology...

Taonga Māori, over time, become repositories with critical narratives that can reveal much about their owners, those owner's families, and even the histories of the collective entire. "The taonga are, at any rate with the Māori, closely attached to the individual, the clan and the land; they are the vehicle of their mana..." (Mauss, 1954, pp.7-8). I concur with Mauss, though notably where he says *the vehicle* I would have said *a vehicle* of their



Fig 2

mana. By definition our taonga are treasured, and are often seen to be used as gifts imbued with mana, and aroha. They are proudly retained within the safekeeping of many Māori families as well as found in the keeping of non-Māori, treasured even so. Symbolic and economic notions advanced by Mauss (1872-1950) abound in his classic 1924 text (translated in 1954 from French by Cunnison), aptly titled *The Gift*. As gifts taonga can be seen as being constantly exchanged in the fashion of Mauss, who postulated on the social implications and obligations of gift-exchanges, especially reciprocity. In the 2006 biography simply titled *Marcel Mauss*, Fournier writes that,

The idea of reciprocity, insufficiently developed by Durkheim, now assumed its rightful place and led to a formulation of the problem of "social cohesion" in fairly new terms... to discuss the (Durkheimian) image of a society functioning as a "homogeneous mass" with the image of a more complex collectivity, groups and subgroups that overlap, intersect, and fuse together. There were certainly communities, but there was also a system of reciprocity between them.

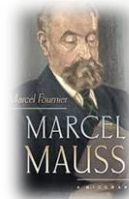


Fig 3

2006, p.245

From the outset Fournier introduces Mauss as the acknowledged French father of ethnography, a description he attributes to G. Condominas (2006). In his text he delves into Mauss' relationship with his mother's brother Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), who no doubt significantly influenced his nephew's thinking. As a multi-lingual outsider looking in on the world of the *other*, Mauss developed an intellectual line that concurred with his British contemporary Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) who similarly applied intellectual lenses to the *other*, in this case the people of the Trobriand Islands in the Western Pacific.



Fig 4

### 1.3 Modern anthropology, oral histories... → and the indigene...

Malinowski's deliberations about the behaviour of the Western Pacific Trobrianders, and their treasured Kula shell exchanges, reflected the



predisposition of Pacific peoples to not only engage in the practise of reciprocity, but to also collectivise at will, as with Māori. He had entered academia at a time when anthropologists had begun to rethink their research methodologies, and the last of the great armchair theorists (the likes of Sir James Frazer 1854-1941) recognised that the discipline was transforming. In their stead arose the new breed of anthropologists, such as Malinowski, who departed their cloistered institutions to make direct contact with their research subjects, the *other*, up close and personal. Regarded as the father of ethnography, Malinowski was instrumental in emphasising the research imperative of fieldwork, in which participant observation became an essential standard of practise in anthropology (Gary Ferraro, 1998). In time he established a three-part methodology of living amongst the culture being observed, participating in their lives, and learning their language, all of which became foundational in modern anthropology.

At the same time, Franz Boas (1858-1942), sometimes referred to as the father of American anthropology, similarly insisted on rigorous empiricism. This helped the discipline to come of age in a new academic era where the requisite theorising became axiomatic with a methodological ethnographic approach.



Fig 5

Furthermore, Boas realised that the culture of a society could be best understood when perceived through that culture's own values, beliefs and worldviews. He is often noted as being the first to articulate this research imperative, which later came to be called cultural relativism. Though, in so saying, the actual term appears to have first appeared in a debate between the first African-American Rhodes Scholar, social theorist A. L. Locke (1885-1954), and anthropologist Robert Lowie (1883-1957). Each was by various means instrumental in academia with complementing pioneering notions, and all acknowledged the necessity of learning the language of a people in order to best understand a culture.



Fig 6

However, academics in their ivory towers had yet to bridge the divide between the language of a culture *other* than their own, and the learned validity of oral traditions incumbent in those cultures. This was no more evident and disconcerting than in societies seen as preliterate, which included the Māori of Aotearoa. Our significant histories were recorded not by way of the eurocentric and exclusivist written word, but rather were embedded within ancient oral traditions with accompanying performance arts and tangible objects; our taonga Māori. Academics such as anthropologists and historians openly acknowledged the evident juxtaposition, tensions and problems of treating oral traditions as history.

That was until the 1970s when Jan Vansina emerged to emphasise the validity of oral traditions as historical sources. Having spent many years amongst the peoples of Central Africa, Vansina sought to elucidate such issues, as I previously noted.



Fig 7

While written texts in literate societies are essential and invaluable sources of information, many pre-literate societies relied on highly developed, and often specialised, oral communication systems which were augmented by a diverse array of performance and artistic expressions... Vansina claims a human capacity for memory retention which is reliable to the extent that individual and group memories are faithful records of a society's experiences, supported by the recall of correlating incidents and explanations. He links this highly developed memory retention with the encultured transmission of traditions. In so doing he convincingly argues that oral societies, previously perceived as lacking valid historical knowledge because they did not have documented evidence, nonetheless possess unique and valid histories in the form of these memorised oral traditions; many that have since been supported by archaeological finds. In his view these bodies of knowledge are comparable, if not equal to, the histories of literate societies... Vansina claimed extant oral traditions were vital sources for reconstructing the past of tribal societies. He sees oral traditions as rich, multi-faceted phenomena which exemplify the way in which the initially simple

process of the generation of messages becomes the complex process of maintaining a memorialisation of past generations.  
2009, pp.2-101

Although his extensive ethnographic fieldwork in Africa was culturally worlds away from the Māori, Vansina's pioneering efforts showed that written history was as valid as the oral foundation upon which it was sometimes premised.

#### 1.4 Taonga ... → inalienable properties, and death...

When we bring together such critical ideas in correlation with taonga Māori, it is clear to see that taonga relate ethnographies and histories, whether as reciprocated gifts or simply in being treasured. It is earlier ideas such as these that would subsequently be central to later assertions by academics the likes of Annette Weiner (1933-1997) who wrote with specific reference to Māori,

Even after a person dies, these possessions remain active... some taonga are buried with the deceased; others, with the tapu removed, are stored... These most highly prized taonga, owned by individuals of distinguished rank, remain inalienable, transmitted only to those reckoning the same ancestors and, through time, all efforts are made to keep them...

1992, pp.61-62



Fig 8

In her book titled *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping While Giving*, Weiner recognised and acknowledged the understated intimations taonga convey for Māori. Hence her assertion that taonga maintain inalienable properties, indivisible qualities subtly reflected in the manner that they are treasured.

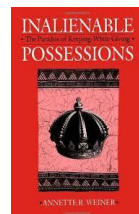


Fig 9

These qualities will be expounded in my following narratives. Granted, Valerio Valeri proposed Weiner was unmindful that "the great theoretician of the importance of reciprocity in social life is Aristotle, who lived in a world closer to those of the Māori..." (1992, p.447). Valeri determined that as a general theory some of Weiner's methodological notions were inadequate.

Nonetheless he conceded that her approach was useful, and described her work as undoubtedly provocative and brilliant. So to the outsider looking in, the inalienable wealth Weiner ascribes may seem elusive, at least until that point when the narratives pertaining to our taonga are shared and recounted amongst family members. This is often during tangihanga as we collectivise and share the burden of grief incumbent on Māori and our collective experiences of death.

The finality and burden of grief that death brings into play, involves a multitude of obligatory processes, required by either the society within which one is situated, and/or the culture to which one belongs. That is to say that death is an existential process, similarly encountered, yet variously expressed by all cultures engaged in the complexities of life. This is regardless of philosophers' debates on the sacred and profane dimensions of death's transcendental realities. Death is a universal event that nonetheless remains ineluctable and final. In his cultural critique work *Death, Desire and Loss in Western Culture*, Jonathon Dollimore speaks of the French cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard (1929 – 2007).

What those like Baudrillard find interesting about death is not the old conception of it as a pre-cultural constant which diminishes the significance of all cultural achievement, but, on the contrary, its function as a cultural relative – which is to say culturally formative – construct.

1998, p.125

Certainly for all peoples, the arrival of death is axiomatic with culture-bound engagements. The numerous mortuary and funerary processes that attend the indigenous experience of death in turn involves a diversity of specific socially sanctioned practices, customs, beliefs, worldviews, and rituals. Much of this I will address in the body of the thesis. Suffice at this juncture to, as an example, touch on the critical aspect of ritual.

Academics in numerous and distinct intellectual traditions have long sought to theoretically understand the complex of ritual, with its rubric of mechanisms, underlying meanings, and pragmatic utilities. Rituals position, or situate, behaviour that follows culturally informed, constructed and prescribed imperatives articulated by observed systems of conditional formulas. These are formally and informally sanctioned within the specific context of a given society. Rituals have meaning, express purposes, intellectual intent, and more specific to the purpose of this thesis, they involve symbolic representations, elaborate structuring, and the invocation of *other world* authorities. The latter combine to act as socially shared cultural engagements that simultaneously reflect the relations between participants, as well as creating or reinforcing social bonds. As Daniel de Coppet says in *Understanding Rituals* "... [rituals] are at the core of the social identities of all communities" (1992, p.1). Whether permanent or passing, rituals remain continuously subject to spatial and temporal influences, both internal and external to their given social situations. Rituals embody "... symbols and messages and allusions. A ceremony activates or presents selected ideas related to larger cultural frameworks of thought and explanation" (Moore and Myerhoff 1977, p.16). Many works on theories of ritual have a subset that explores death rituals involving notions of material culture. This is a particular genre examined by Hallam and Hockey in their book *Death, Memory and Culture*, where they write (2001, p.2) "Material culture mediates our relationship with death and the dead; objects, images and practices, as well as places and spaces, call to mind or are made to remind us of the deaths of others and of our own mortality". In the same text they go on to discuss their explorations in to,

... the ritualized movement of objects and bodies in space, mediating the living and the dead and forming memory processes. Rituals associated with death involve embodied action

and the manipulation of material forms and... dimensions of memory, embodied in ritualized practices....

Hallam and Hockey, 2001, p.32

People live death and subsequently intellectualise, compartmentalise and ritualise this ultimate universal of the human condition. As with the corresponding universal of life, death in modernity involves social, political, and economic impacts at both the individual and community level, with potential corollaries that can be seen to exceed the immediate experience and subsequent processes of death. Neil Small considers theoretical approaches to comprehending death. In his substantive analysis '*Death and Difference*' published in *Death, Gender and Ethnicity* (1997). Small echoes the line of thinking posited by Ivan Illich (1995) who wrote of distinct iconographic stages, evident throughout the last five centuries, wherein death was initially seen as divinely ordained (1997, p.207),

This was followed by a shift whereby death changed from being a lifelong encounter to the event of a moment. By the mid eighteenth century the relative egalitarianism evident in death up until then was replaced by a social hierarchy. There were now those who could afford to keep death away.

Catherine Bell writes that "Most simply, we might say, ritual is to the symbols it dramatizes as action is to thought..." (1992, p.32). Such logic is echoed by social anthropologist Victor Turner (1920-1983) who recognised symbols as being the smallest element of ritual, and subsequently effective mechanisms of transformation and integration. Turner's publications *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (1969) and *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (1974) remain as outstanding today as they formerly were ground-breaking.

Given that so much of modern history (at least the last two centuries) is characterized by historical and societal change, particularly in those periods of the great dyings that came from

epidemics like TB, Victor Turner's discussion of ritual process shows that it's at these times that liminality and *communitas* offer distressed people a chance to experience renewal and revitalization.

Tengan, Ty. Personal communication, June, 2014

Turner was a fervent cultural theorist whose scholarly interests repeatedly returned to the works of French ethnographer Arnold Van Gennep (1873 – 1957) of whom, in *The Ritual Process*, Turner, referred to as "... the father of formal processual analysis" (1969, p.155). Van Gennep had earlier engendered his own repute in anthropology when he determined cross-cultural uniformities in rite of passage rituals, and pioneered his tripartite formula of exclusion, liminality and reabsorption.



Fig 10

Academic observations such as these are without doubt elucidating. Even though written by outsiders looking in, the foreigner writing of the native *other*, the intellectual writing of ordinary folk, they are nonetheless revealing. Their body of work has proffered material which at the least has proved thought-provoking, and in most cases remains current. Such authors have written at times passionately of the anthropological *other*, perhaps in part because they were detached, separate, not of the same cultural beliefs, values or worldview. In NZ this predilection of non-Māori writing of the Māori, the foreigner writing of the native *other*, has been a dual edged sword.

## 1.6 The knowledge of NZ non-Māori... → the wisdom of Māori...

Since the arrival of the earliest sailors, whalers, and sealers, followed by traders, missionaries and settlers, the perceived realities of the Māori have been variously deconstructed and examined. Reflections proffered not by foreign distant voices as such, because many of these individuals eventually made their home in our homelands, becoming the Pākehā of NZ, and some bearing progeny with Māori. Yet as Pākehā they were at the same time not

from long-lived lines of Māori descent which harken back millennia, to ancestors who had traversed oceans and centuries before becoming the indigene of Aotearoa. Those first colonising Pākehā narrators were of the same world as subsequent countrymen who would attempt to annihilate the Māori populace, and in failing there, nevertheless sought to disenfranchise and disempower them. However this thesis does not examine the NZ Land wars or the various early assimilationist efforts imposed on Māori by Pākehā. From the outset, and over the next two centuries, as various materials by Pākehā of NZ and the Māori emerged, general knowledge of our unique social and cultural environment expanded. Often times these narratives were written by well-meaning Pākehā, with intentions of informing their brethren and the powers-that-be of a new world. They depicted a way of life that offered resources, and land aplenty, on an idyllic island haven in the Pacific. Amongst them were the likes of George Craik (1798-1866) and his 1830 text *The New Zealanders*, Edward Shortland (1812-1893) with his 1854 *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders*, and Joel Polack (1807-1882) with his 1840 *Manners and Customs of the New Zealanders*, and.



Fig 11

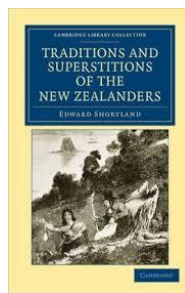


Fig 12



Fig 13

The titles alone reveal the rapidity with which the Pākehā were determinedly constructing a new demographic identity of the New Zealander, even prior to the Treaty of Waitangi being legitimated and Māori interests acknowledged. Unsurprisingly those authors favoured a style of narration now seen as antiquated, with their privileging of both the male gender and the European worldview, wielding theories that reinforced their own perceptions and



agendas. They spoke enthusiastically of legendary European voyagers including Abel Tasman (1603-1659), Marc-Joseph du Fresne (1774-1772), Jean de Surville (1717-1770) and their ultimate champion James Cook (1728-1779). All these significant persons 'discovered', navigated, mapped or explored the antipodean shores of NZ. In those texts Māori were often described unflatteringly, using such terms as heathens, savages and indians who were seen as less civilised than *the* newly arrived, and arriving, European colonials.

The phenomenal scale of the colonial incursion that came to be was unimaginable to my ancestors. Otherwise I believe my tūpuna would never have spread their arms in welcome, allowing access to land and resources which would open the floodgates of change that eventually came to pass. Our much earlier ancestral oceanic voyagers such as Kupe, Toi and Whātonga were rendered mythical. Our ancient pantheon of Ranginui, Papatūānuku and the numerous progeny, with their amazing cosmological adventures, were relegated to superstition; while our own numbers were decimated through warfare and introduced diseases. Many texts espoused narratives akin to story-book myths, as will be spoken to momentarily, and which were designed to beguile and entertain a foreign white colonial audience who inevitably arrived en masse to dominate as the Pākehā benefactors. As we understand it today, the Pākehā emigrated, settled, and engraved their indelible mark upon a landscape that would witness the diminishing of many Māori voices, histories, and futures. Supposedly deserving of the European's monotheistic and omnipotent doctrinal salvation, Māori inevitably feature as secondary background characters in myth-narratives that distort their indigenous world.

The literary penchant for myth-making about both Aotearoa and the Māori began early, and in some instances continued for decades. For example, according to Percy Smith (1840-1922) a fleet of canoes concertedly

disembarked Pacific shores to arrive here simultaneously. I can attest to as much because in the 1970s and 80s when I was at High School we were taught the narratives regarding how the Māori had undertaken a great migration en masse in 1350AD. We learnt of this at different levels of school, sang of it in kapa haka, and embraced the theory whole-heartedly. Premised on notions of social diaspora and so-called methodological re-tracing, Smiths' migratory theory involving a Great Fleet has since been successfully debunked. However, that was not before having been thoroughly engendered in the NZ mind-set by way of our nation-wide education system. Furthermore, whilst composing this chapter, and out of curiosity, I asked my thirty year old nieces to recall their school days, and queried the time period they had been taught Māori had arrived here. One can but imagine my response when they instantly answered 1350AD, by way of a Great Fleet. Notably Smith was not alone in casting aspersions about the proud histories of my people; albeit he was perhaps one of the more culpable. But like his contemporary Best, one should not throw out the baby with the bathwater.

## 1.7 The Best times in NZ... → Māori emerge...

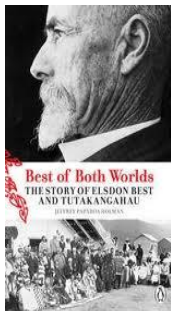


Fig 14

As already touched upon, Best wrote of the lived realities of my tūpuna, who he acknowledged as having befriended in a way unique to the privileged outsider. His ethnology revealed that their lives, and his, were distinct, and often juxtaposed. However, while Best's life was in many aspects worlds apart from the lived



Fig 15

realities of his indigenous counterparts, they and he, both Māori and Pākehā, were nonetheless forging cross-cultural pathways between. Their mutual interests can be seen in Jeffrey Holman's 2010 book aptly titled *Best of Both Worlds* which examined the extraordinary connection between Best and Tutakāngahau (ca.1830-1907). The elder native Tūhoe chief spoke and wrote

fluently in both English and Māori. Tutakangahau was not alone in this bilingual fluency, for example there was also Pihopa Tamehana, another ranked chief, of Ngāti Whare and Tūhoe. In my Ngāti Whare whānau we maintain narratives of 'the pito line', as it was referred to by my Uncle Jackie. This included a junior kinship connection between Pihopa Tamehana (who was another of Bests' informants) and his Uncle the more senior ranked Tutakangahau. When my Uncle Jackie would refer to this relationship, he used the words "the true blood pito line", and as we understand it, Tutakangahau often sent his nephew's son, Te Tuhi Pihopa, to hui with Pākehā. Te Tuhi Pihopa was my great-great-great grandfather and I speak of my koroua tūpuna further on in this work. So, Best peaceably lived and worked amongst my people, and a large part of his working life unfolded within the realms of the Tūhoe. Māori had smilingly received him, embraced him within their native surrounds, and hearts, permitting him to gaze into the lives of the other.

The honour bestowed to Best was such that Tutakangahau eventually entrusted him with the welfare of three of his mokopuna. They attended the native school at Te Whāiti to learn literacy so as to best engage with a quickly changing bicultural world.

There is no better indication of the old chief's bicultural literacy than this aspect of his attempt to straddle both worlds... He was now taking out insurance that the same children for whom he had done this would be prepared to embrace a future where a bicultural education was imperative – that they would be literate like him, and be able to participate fully in the new world.

Holman, 1997, p.147

Half a century later, this was the same native school that my father and his siblings would attend; but I am getting ahead of myself.

Holman writes that when the favoured mokopuna Marewa-i-te-rangi died from influenza around 1899, Best was present throughout, witnessing the

drawing of her last breath and attending the poroporoaki. He then reluctantly travelled to Tutakangahau at Maungapohatu, arriving with the whānau for the tangihanga. There Best's presence was acknowledged, with his demeanour revealing "... guilt by association with the European disease that had killed her..."



Fig 16

(1997, p.148). Marewa had after all been in his care. Nonetheless Best, also known as Te Peehi, was still held dearly within the folds of the whānau, of the tūpuna, of Tutakangahau. This was no more evident than following the tangi, when Best was gifted a precious kahu huruhuru from the child's parents. According to records at the Museum of NZ - Te Papa Tongarewa (the beneficiary of this part of Best's estate), there were accompanying handwritten notes that show he had wondered if it had been woven for Marewa before her death. He knew all too well the significance of the gifted feathered cloak and its bequeathal at that tangihanga. Furthermore the little child's death, and the parent's gift, poignantly remained in his mind when a handful of years later, in *Māori Eschatology* he reminisced to some extent about the event, writing that,

... all the dead child's possessions, except her ordinary wearing-apparel, had been collected and displayed in the middle of the room. There were also other articles, presented by her elders. The items comprised beautiful feather cloaks ; greenstone-both worked and polished ornaments and blocks of the rough, unworked stone ; cloaks and capes woven from dressed and dyed flax-fibre ; as also other articles...[sic]

Best, 1905, p.210

All of these were gifted to the people of Te Whāiti, with whom she had been living at the time of her death. They are my father's people and still reside there today. It was at this juncture in the tangihanga when Best was no doubt gifted the aforementioned cloak, that he wrote, "We have noted that when a body was laying in state, relatives of the dead would produce their finest garments, and prized greenstone weapons and ornaments, which were

exhibited near the corpse. It was a token of respect to the deceased” (1905, p.197). Yet Best was still an outsider looking in, albeit privileged.

Following in his stead was another Pākehā outsider who would be advantaged still further; by way of whakapapa. Anthropologist Roger Oppenheim (1931-1986) married the petite Amelia Tukariri of the Ngāpuhi. In so doing, the Pākehā outsider of Jewish heritage, with a military family background, became the intermarried cross-cultural insider, giving rise to whakapapa by way of their daughter. As such, he subjectively and objectively partook of his core subject group, his wife and daughter’s indigenous ancestry. Oppenheim implemented the previously mentioned research methodology of participant observation advocated by Malinowski, whose own students included Ralph Piddington (1906-1974) who would go on to become the founding Professor of Anthropology at Auckland University. Piddington, and his student and colleague, the Māori anthropologist Bruce Biggs (1921-2000), who supervised Oppenheim’s Master’s thesis, which was reworked for publication as *Māori Death Customs* (1972). Oppenheim extended gratitude to each of them in his acknowledgements, and dedicated the book entire to his wife Amelia “... whose love for the past of the culture which is her inheritance was the first stimulus for my own enquiry...”. This text remains a critical source in the field of anthropology regarding death studies and Māori. “The *tangihanga*, much modified, remains basically the most important ceremonial in Māori culture. Many aspects of it have changed. The religious aspects have been replaced... but the basic elements of the gathering remain” (1973, p.121).



Fig 17



Fig 18

Through intermarriage and the subsequent responsibilities of whakapapa, many of my elders believed that *the* Pākehā of NZ became *our* Pākehā. My own descent line is an exemplar. My mother’s birth certificate verifies that she was of full-blooded Māori descent borne into Ngāti Rangitihī of Te Arawa,

whilst my father is of proud Ngāti Whare descent and Tūhoe. However, his whānau name of Ohlson exposes our *other* heritage.

Our private family narratives still fondly speak of two tall, strong, young Scandinavian men, stowaway brothers, who one night jumped ship as it passed the eastern coastline of the North Island of NZ. Their covert swim to shore separated them; causing each to believe the other had sadly drowned.

That was in the late nineteenth century, and after my great-grandfather deliberately changed his name so as to evade the authorities; he ventured inland to the isolated Whirinaki district in search of a new life. There he met a beautiful young woman, the progeny of a long line of Māori chiefs. My great-grandmother Kohu



Fig 19

was the daughter of Tamehana Te Tuhi, son of the Ngāti Whare chief Te Tuhi Pihopa, who like Tutakangahau was a confidant of Best's. Thus arose my father's proud dual heritage bloodline in the hills of Te Whāiti nui a Toi. In the intervening century or so, subsequent generations learned that in fact both brothers had survived, to marry and bear uri, progeny. Today both remain respectively recognised as our koroua tūpuna, regardless of being Pākehā.

Clearly the histories of Māori and Pākehā are indelibly linked, particularly when whakapapa is involved. In the twenty-first century I like to think our populations are parallel, contrasting and complementing peoples, rather than opposed and subsuming social groupings, as seen in the nineteenth century. However, the reality is that this ideal is not always the case. Furthermore, each generation has seen increasing inter-marriages and subsequent descent-lines born of both the Pākehā and Māori populaces. So whereas we in earlier times were differentiated one against the other, we have come to find common ground in the shared lives and whenua of progeny. It was in pursuit of such common ground that my people inevitably departed their

former safe havens, to become scattered throughout the motu, seeking employment, education and advantage. Leaving rural lands and tribal enclaves, after World War II, they undertook a great migration to urban centres, eventually and increasingly entering the privileged halls of academia.

### 1.8 The anthropological *other* ... → from native whare to ivory halls...

During the same time period that my Scandinavian great-grandfather Ogden was courting my kuia tūpuna Kohu, young Ngāti Porou leader Apirana Ngata (1874-1950) had arrived at Canterbury University. There he completed a BA in 1893 and an LLB in 1896, becoming the first Māori to graduate from a university. Ever since Ngata and his contemporaries arrived in the hallowed halls of the university over a century ago, the *other* has slowly etched out a place in academia and the global intellectual arena. Ngata went on to enter the Pākehā world of politics, alongside the likes of Ngāti Kahungunu James Carroll (1857-1926), Peter Buck/Te Rangi Hiroa (1877-1951) and Maui Pomare (1875/76-1930) both of the latter being of Ngāti Mutunga and Taranaki descent. They all contributed to the changing social landscape of Māori in NZ, earning the admiration of Māori and Pākehā alike. But while they each wrote scholarly works, particularly Te Rangi Hiroa, their intellectual legacies reflect the inherent Māori reluctance to commit analytical and critical words to paper, regarding the complex confluence of death and the Māori.

Hence we can see various works on the subject by the likes of Best, Oppenheim, and other Pākehā, all unperturbed by this juxtaposition, but comparatively less material borne of our early Māori academics. That is not to say that they did not address the crucial subject. Certainly there remains a considerable body of material authored by Māori that includes waiata tangi, apakura, and various notional reflections on death. Such Māori academic authors included the esteemed aforementioned, as well as Makereti 'Maggie' Papakura (1873-1930) whose work is addressed further in this thesis, and the

first Māori to gain a doctorate overseas, Maharaiia Winiata (1912-1960). However, it would be more than a century following the conferment of the first male Māori academic, before indigenous researchers would be brought together as a united intellectual team focused wholly on the subject of death and the Māori. This time it was not as the anthropological *other* being objectified of by non-Māori, but rather as the indigenous *insiders* speaking about their own world.



Fig 20

Today's Māori share a nation and a past with Pākehā. Māori and Pākehā also share an interweaving future. All too often, however, it is a future premised and woven on strands of non-Māori history and worldviews. This is despite numerous intellectual expositions of Māori histories and worldviews, by Māori, exponentially increasing with the incremental emergence of new Māori academics and authors. In the twenty-first century we can now proudly say that the Pākehā's *other* has not only arrived but succeeded in academia. Undertaking indigenous research as passionately as Pākehā, if not more-so, Māori have emerged to write, as well as ethnographically articulate and share their, our, own observations, as the educated indigene and learned insider.

### 1.9 The Tangi Research Team... → Changing times...

The indigenous worldview and principles of Māori remain persistent and resilient, nowhere more so than on our marae and urupa. Life processes continue and therefore so too do the processes of death and tangihanga for the Māori. Even so, as Te Awekotuku and Nikora state, "Tangi and death rituals have yet to be rigorously examined in the Māori oral canon, or in the archival and historic record that may be discarded or reinforced by current practice" (2013, p.169). In 1994 Tollerton wrote frankly of Te Awekotuku stating "Ngahuaia had attended two other Catholic schools... as well as Rotorua Primary... and



Fig 21



went on to become the first Māori woman to gain a PhD from a New Zealand university” (p.125). We can infer that Tollerton was aware of the first Māori woman to receive her doctorate from Oxford University, anthropologist Ngapare Hopa. Te Awekotuku, together with Associate Professor Waimarie Nikora, undertook the challenges regarding researching the complex confluence of death and the Māori; a notable task, particularly for Māori. Referred to under the encompassing name of the Tangi Research Programme (TRP), different disciplines combined, including Psychology, Philosophy, Anthropology, History, and of course Māori and Pacific Studies. The team’s academic outputs include published papers, national and international keynote appearances and numerous academic presentations. They have also undertaken nationwide community engagement that has included wānanga, symposiums, and hui, with the benefit of select community researchers. Also, the senior members of TRP have conducted the supervision of summer internships, dissertations and notably several Masters and Doctoral theses. With all of this in mind, clearly the time had arrived for Māori to collectively take on this critical and crucial task, thereby authenticating the lived realities of our own people.



Fig 22

We started our research into Māori ways of death about five years ago. It has rapidly evolved into a very large programme of research, with scholars and students excited by the prospects offered by this pool of enquiry... The influences are many and complex. If we are to be successful in pursuing research in this area, we must take the time to unravel this complexity and, indeed, the taken-for-granted aspects of tangi that we, as members of our own respective communities, enact without much thought.

Nikora and Te Awekotuku, 2013, p.188

My work has been a small part of the team’s overall endeavours, and this doctoral thesis is due in no small part to the Tangi Research Programme.

From the outset of the journey of this thesis I was aware that Western epistemology privileged logic and the rational. However, in the lived reality of Māori, such thinking is superseded by the indigenous knowing born of pragmatism and intuition, both of which my people are well known for. Furthermore, our preliterate history goes back far beyond our literate history, and my people still exercise the gift of impressive oratory as a means of framing and explaining our lives. Those centuries-old skills employed allegory and euphemisms which accentuated already embedded narratives and multi-layered story-telling. This meant that within a singular statement our most skilled orators could say either nothing, or something, or even both; it was entirely dependent on their intent and audience.

I liken this to the oratory skills of Socrates (470-399BC) and his ilk, even Christ, neither of whom committed knowledge to written form, but instead relied on the skills of oratory and memory for which they remain distinguished as teachers. To this day, when listening to our old people speaking in this fashion, what they do not say is equally as relevant as what they do say. The contextualised details are as important as the event to which those details pertain; and silence can communicate a vast array of messages.

For these reasons, Māori do not so much concern ourselves with literary analytical aspects of the reality of our tangihanga, but rather and by contrast we express sentimental and emotive knowing, born of experience rather than hypothesis. This is echoed by Te Awekotuku and Nikora when they write that,

Māori talk constantly about death, compose elaborate orations and enduring chant, but seldom write about it... Ethnographic observations and speculative reminiscences (Best 1924, Buck 1966) reiterate or question the variant historical record... and require further study. One scholarly monograph appeared nearly forty years ago (Oppenheim

1973). Apart from Metge (1976) and Salmond (1975) commenting on tangi and other Māori gatherings, accounts remain informative rather than analytical... Currently there is no definitive published account of tangi documenting its fluidity, transformation and effect.

2008, p.6

There undoubtedly exists poignant written material regarding the Māori and our attitude to the universal experience of death. Harry Dansey (1920-1979) wrote succinctly in the 1960s of Māori fulfilling obligations within death processes fraught with temporal and spatial transformations, regardless of the name or symbols.

Death is the only certainty, all come soon or late to Te Rerenga-Wairua, to Te Rarohenga, to Te Reinga, to that state – no matter what name or symbol diverse cultures choose to signify that last act of those who have lived... It is much more difficult to write of the Māori attitude to death today than it was a century ago because the impact of European civilisation has brought many changes.



Fig 23

Dansey, 2006, p.106

Located usually on marae, the cultural phenomenon of the Māori tangihanga complex is congruent with the indivisible and diametrically opposed indigenous principles of tapu and noa, which have many meanings and interpretations. Henare (2003, p.49) writes that "Tapu is a cosmic power imbued in all things at the time of creation.... noa is a state where tapu is in balance, and is passive". Te Awekotuku similarly writes (1998, p.17) that,

*Tapu...* may be a descriptive or prescriptive condition, making and object, person or environment restricted and inaccessible... prohibited and out of bounds... Sacred items may be regarded as *tapu*; for example, those associated with death ritual... Personal ornaments – hair combs, earrings, and pendants – were *tapu*, and especially so if they adorned an aristocrat, for they carried his or her vital essence, and, if handled inappropriately or malevolently, could cause considerable harm...

As already alluded to, our tangihanga, by academic standards, are a rarely touched but fertile possibility, combining indigenous cultural knowledge, the ancient wisdom of elders and multiple pragmatic practices. "Tangi is the

ultimate form of Māori community expression. It is the topic least studied by Māori or understood by outsiders, despite televised funeral rites of Māori leaders, and media intruding in humble family crises” Te Awekotuku and Nikora (2008, p.1). Tangihanga are without doubt unique and invaluable culture-bound opportunities for distinctive education, knowledge transference, indigenous learning, and communal sharing. This was unmistakably evident at the poignant large scale funeral of Te Arikinui Dame Te Atairangikaahu (1931–2006). Members of our research team recalled the Waikato Times headline, ‘*Tears For Tainui*’ (Wednesday, 16<sup>th</sup> Aug, 2006), writing,

There was no great shock or surprise. It was deliberately worded, gently, with a quiet reassurance and confidence. Evoking the symbolism of sacred mountains and valleys, the sad but expected passing was communicated simply, succinctly, and in a deeply moving and very Māori way.

Nikora , McRae, Te Awekotuku and Hodgetts, 2013, p.194



Fig 24

By measure of indigenous events, this tangihanga was unparalleled in the modern history of Aotearoa, for many and diverse reasons including modern technological advances. The University of Waikato went so far as to send free buses from campus to the funerary venue for all enrolled students wishing to attend, deemed tangata whenua due to their University status, regardless of actual heritage. The University also made an impressive presence with academics and alumni in full regalia. The mourning process at the Turangawaewae Marae continued for six days, soaked in tears and rain as Māori conducted this sad event in accord with ancient customs and practices, watched over by eminent elders from all iwi of the nation.

At a less voluminous but nonetheless significant scale, were the recent tangihanga of Dame Digeress Te Kanawa (1920-2009) and Dr Paratene Ngata (1946-2009). Furthermore, a recent example of modified aspects of tangihanga occurred during the deeply moving and media conscious tangi of Te Arawa and NZ icon Sir Howard Morrison (1935-2009). At this event, loads

of camera equipment, microphones and entire film crews were accommodated throughout the event, which was fascinating to witness. That is not to say that the smaller scale, more everyday tangihanga – if such a notion can be posited – are not devoid of relevance and innovation. Rather, I would suggest that high-profile tangihanga are simply inclined to be more emphatic exemplars of their smaller scale counterparts, each being equally affecting. Regardless of the scale, tangihanga are to my mind a contradictory but crucial indigenous phenomenon - contemporary vehicles for knowing the way of life for a people who have simultaneously maintained customary practices, and integrated modernised aspects of their lives. This occurs for modern Māori at the same time that we hold fast and dearly to an array of ancient traditions, and practices, framed by our unique cultural worldview.

Additionally, Māori and English are each recognised today as formal languages of our nation. To some extent this is an indication that the two are no longer as polarised as they were a century ago. As time has passed, many cultural divides have either been resolved, or bridges have been built. Now, both cultures of NZ, Māori and Pākehā alike, can be seen to have increasingly introduced elements - the one from the other – as the universal of death becomes subject to change with each new generation of practitioners, proponents and participants. This phenomenon has become more evident with the growing cross-cultural population.

Of considerable current interest is the recent shift in Western thinking about death and the borrowing that has occurred from indigenous peoples to inform therapies, rituals and processes of healing and memorialising. As the 'baby-boomers, second-wave feminist women, alternative lifestylers and mature 'greenies' come into their senior years, different and more expressive approaches to death's rituals and commemorations are being considered and designed. Māori and Pacific practices often inform them.

Nikora and Te Awekotuku, 2013, p.189

Even so, the Western hegemonic construction of death, as a private and socially constrained epigrammatic event, continues to contrast directly with the customary Māori practice of death as a socially shared combination of processes. At a micro-level, each society still maintains its established rituals, whilst at a macro-level, each has become manifestly influenced by shared aspects. These can include the venue, eulogies, religious involvement, burial vessels, ritual and ritualised articles, objects, draperies, and artefacts. At the point of death, such items can come to be simply imposed within cultural practices, and thereafter curiously and seemingly revered in rituals.

It is consequently unsurprising that our taonga are seen at that most significant collective event for Māori. Their presence can be subtle, while their significance can be historically and culturally far-reaching, movingly evocative and even controversial. On numerous occasions I have witnessed controversies over the use or misuse of kākahu, korowai and whāriki, greenstone and whalebone taonga, tokotoko, taiaha, family bibles and heirlooms, hymn books, photographs, toys, ornaments - an array of articles, objects and artefacts featured either on or within the immediate surround of tūpāpaku. It is such controversies as these that have led me to the current investigation.

For example, I have come into custody of several heritage pieces following the deaths of different whānau members, amongst which is a small green glass vase with a matching lid. It is a quaint object that was for many years the receptacle of holy water used during the numerous baptisms conducted by my mother's Āpotoro Takiwa father. It rests amongst the silverware in my living room cabinet, and when whānau visiting from Australia recognised it, they asked why it wasn't still in the custody of an Āpotoro, or the Rātana Church. Their remarks struck me as overly sentimental at the time, albeit grounded in altruistic perceptions. I similarly received an 1887 Paipera Tapu, an old bible in need of some repair but nonetheless in reasonable condition.

It is written entirely in te reo Māori and would appear to have been, at some point, used for the Rotoiti Parish of the Rātana Church (being so stamped on the inside). It is another inheritance piece that was part of my Āpotoro koroua's private estate. So it has familial, cultural, and some historical significance. However, I resist whānau suggestions regarding its utilisation, or the belief of some of them that it should be returned to our Rotoiti wharenuī, for safekeeping in a storage box of taonga that resides at our marae which, as Tautini Hohepa recalled, "... our tekoteko in the wharenuī used to have a cape/kākahu and a piupiu of its own. But slowly, over time, we started putting them away. There used to be a box next to the door. That box is now in the garage..." (T. Hohepa, personal communication, 2011). For some whānau that box at our marae would be the appropriate place for such taonga, though my Uncle Tautini did not agree, believing instead that private custodianship of taonga was acceptable.

With the latter in mind, I also received legal custody of a large photo-portrait of my Ngāti Pikiao great-grandmother, Te Pae Mihikore, wearing a treasured taonga pounamu. The aged timber oval frame and curved glass pane were fragile and my mother had been unable to find a framer willing to repair a small blemish on the outer edge. That treasured portrait attended numerous whānau tangihanga and it also sat at the foot of my mother's casket throughout her tangi. When her tūpāpaku was removed from the marae for interment, and in compliance with whānau wishes, I agreed it should remain alongside the portrait of my koroua tūpuna Hohepa Te Wao, as well as other pictures of deceased tūpuna and whānau, inside the carved house Uruika. I conceded, despite my conflicted personal thoughts regarding the introduction of photographic images within the indigenous precincts of the wharenuī and marae. Regarding the Māori use of painted and photographic images within the precincts of our marae, Te Awekotuku writes, at the official website for the Lindauer Online Project, that they are,

... taonga tuku iho, treasures of an earlier time... Some are displayed in the whare whakairo context, safely installed and constantly admired... Others continue to occupy pride of place above the mantelpiece or in a welcoming position before the descendant's front door... These images are also viewed as living beings; they are comforting, they imbue power and confidence, they also oversee ceremonial events... In modern times, commercial prints also line the walls of Māori homes, and they too are elevated as important attendants at tangihanga ritual. They are effective memento mori, remembrances of the chiefly dead; and yet also recent enough to be in the memories of many living today. As part of the whakapapa, the lines of ancestry, they present a focus of identity and pride.

*Lindauer: Gallery of Memories, 2009*

A post-colonial phenomenon, this was for many iwi, especially those bereft of whare whakairo, a crucial reinstatement of ancestral images. In his thesis *Unearthly Landscapes* Stephen Deed asserts "Changes in the way Māori buried and memorialised their dead were wrought through interaction with Europeans... [who] introduced the Pākehā material culture relating to death..." 2004, p.57. Deeds' idea has validity, though as a counterpoint my research presents another view of death in which the Māori and indigenous perspective is explored and emphasised. This will become more evident as we delve further and engage with the ethnographic aspect of this thesis.

Using participant observation, I have simultaneously sought to not only be physically present and objectively consider the matter of tangihanga experiences amongst my own people, but I have also chosen to employ their words and perceptions as best possible here. The logistics of this are best explained in the forthcoming Methodology section.

### **1.11 Te Ao Māori... → participant observation and ethnography ...**

This thesis has been intellectually framed by material which draws on anthropological scholarship. With this in mind, an ethnographic approach was realised as wholly appropriate, particularly with rich familial narratives such as



those already mentioned or alluded to. Along this line of thinking, in the Māori world a tangihanga exemplifies an unfolding story for the living. It is a story which tells of, and thereby shares, aspects of the life-story of the deceased, and numerous other interconnecting stories for those left living. This sharing of information occurs everywhere during our tangihanga. In the wharenuī, albeit in a more formal context, on the mahau, and even quietly as iwi stride the expanse of the marae. Less formally but nonetheless effectively, we exchange stories while in the dining room, the kitchen areas, the carpark areas as we wait, and even in the shower blocks as we wash. So, deathly silence is unwelcome during tangihanga; what does occur is respectful 'loaded' silence. As such, our individual stories, as well as familial narratives and intersecting collective histories, are exchanged and where applicable revised throughout. That is to be expected in a people long-skilled in oratory of all forms. Like the copious tears which fall for our dead, so too do words spill forth of their life story, as those who wish to, reflect publicly in the safe indigenous precincts of our marae.

While the tribal affiliations of TRP members are diverse, our work is simultaneously informed by data derived from shared indigenous knowledge systems. For example participant narratives were a key methodology for those TRP members involved in Community Psychology. So it is understandable that amongst those academics who comprise TRP, ethnography was a preferred methodology. This is regardless of the array of academic disciplines involved or the varying data-gathering techniques used. TRP work has facilitated different pathways for Māori endeavouring to articulate our own histories and rich narratives and I concur with colleagues, (T. Moeke-Maxwell, L. Nikora and N. Te Awekotuku, 2013, p.208) who write that,

Ethnography involves a systematic data-gathering method useful in natural settings that captures cultural settings, relationships, processes and social contexts, as well as meanings relevant to

the issue being investigated (Richardson, 2000a). Strong emphasis is placed on the relationship between the researcher and members of the community of interest. Research procedures such as unobstructive direct observation, face-to-face interviews using structured or semi-structured interview schedules, questionnaires, focus group discussions, textual analyses and case studies characterise ethnographic research – all of which may or may not use audio, visual and textual aids to support data gathering.

Cultural and social anthropologists have long advocated ethnography as a sound qualitative research tool of rigorous empiricism, involving participant observation fieldwork, which thereby necessitates training in scientific description and interpretation. This, combined with theories such as cultural relativism and functionalism, meant ethnography was quickly recognised as a valid scientific apparatus by the new breed of modern anthropologists. Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), Mead's text *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928), or Evans-Pritchard *The Nuer* (1940) best exemplify this approach. In each, the researcher is seen as actively undertaking fieldwork, living amongst the core populace, acquiring and exercising the language of the *other*. Crucially, studying the culture on its own terms, and pondering and questioning at a grass roots level (rather than hypothetically at a distance). With this in mind, it is appropriate to deconstruct some generic aspects of tangihanga, and discuss physical parameters pertaining to this work, as well as several taken-for-granted standard practices.

### 1.12 The immediate surround... → some typical Māori funerary practices

The immediate surround of tūpāpaku is visually shown in the orange oval on the schematic overview given here, and further explained on page 37 in the Methodology section. It comprises the width and length of the relevant casket or burial vessel, allowing for everything inside with the tūpāpaku (speckled light blue), and whatever may be positioned in the immediate space



Fig 25

outside (speckled green). For tangihanga of a single person, this entire area typically does not exceed two metres wide and three metres long. So the immediate physical space, or surround, of a tūpāpaku is easily identifiable and relatively confined. At the casket's top end, the surround follows up the wall against which the casket is aligned. This wall space allows for images and taonga to be mounted for display. At the lower end, space is left available for the presence of floral arrangements, other family portraits and so forth. So the immediate surround is literally only a small area but one which can contain a potentially vast number of items, deliberately situated, for many and different reasons which will be variously discussed throughout.

Māori abide by the principles of tapu and noa, as previously mentioned. Our tūpāpaku are inherently tapu, and as such they are treated according to cultural restrictions intended to manage, or at the least minimise, the risk of contamination or pollution. In her work *Purity and Danger*, British anthropologist Mary Douglas (1921-2007) wrote: "what is clean in relation to one thing may be unclean in relation to another, and vice versa" (1966, p.9). On the matter of ritual purity and impurity, she went on to say, " ... rules of uncleanliness pay attention to the material circumstances of an act and judge it good or bad accordingly. Thus contact with corpses, blood or spittle may be held to transmit danger... " (1996, p.11). Appropriately, then, food and the consumption of food is forbidden when present with tūpāpaku, in order to avoid potential pollution. "For the Māori of earlier times, death was a constant presence, mediated by a range of sanctions, behaviours and prohibitions..." Te Awekotuku (2009, p.4). However, the state or condition of tapu could be countered. "Balancing the notion of *tapu*, though not in perfect dichotomy, is the notion of *noa*. This pertains to mundane, ordinary objects and functions..." (Te Awekotuku, 1998, p.27). Using various means, including ritual, karakia, and physical transformation, the condition of tapu could be countered, to the condition of noa.

Furthermore, the tapu state of tūpāpaku situates them as subject to exclusion, and it is at this juncture that members of the Māori populace will tono or challenge for burial rights. My people prefer that tūpāpaku are returned to their point of origin, hence we will hui so as to tono or challenge, in order to fulfil the tribal obligation of appropriate interment amongst other members of the same descent lines. Regarding interment, I speak to the Māori practise of primary and secondary burials in chapter seven. Suffice to say that our pre-contact interment process allowed for the subsequent bones and skeletal remains of a tūpāpaku to be reclaimed, as Te Awekotuku writes:

... the preservation of tattooed heads, were an integral part of mourning and memorial traditions in the ancient Māori world – the visage of a beloved spouse, relative or exalted chief was kept close and cherished, brought out to converse with or admire, dressed and elevated to inspire and motivate. Even those of old enemies were accorded respect.

1998, p.112

Bones could also be physically transformed into diverse taonga Māori, changed into the likes of ear-rings or other jewellery, clasps, fish hooks, even musical instruments. Such practices are no longer common, but do still occur. This was another example of deliberate transformation that negated tapu, thus allowing for social reabsorption as taonga. Typically, select materials, objects and taonga or artefacts generally reside in spaces and/or circumstances that are noa, so they are free from the restrictions of tapu. This may include children's toys found in their bedrooms, photos hanging on the walls of our homes, taonga worn on our persons, or resting safely behind glass door cabinets, or simply placed in storage until called upon. Once utilised during tangihanga however, then the tapu nature of the tūpāpaku extends to all such items within its immediate surround. The tapu state of taonga is then maintained, until such time as the tūpāpaku is absent, and the relevant item is then made noa, or free from restriction. So, as with the tūpāpaku, we again observe what Van Gennep spoke of in his tripartite formula. Taonga during tangihanga are tapu (subject to exclusion)

throughout (the period of liminality) until they are made noa and returned to everyday circulation or use (social reabsorption).

Given our lore of tapu and noa, it is perhaps unsurprising that good hygiene is absolutely concerning to my people, though Māori are not afraid of dirt. We walk upon it, live on it, cook in it, as children we may consume it, and in death we return to it. Thus we have a healthy worldview of dirt that should not be mistaken with notions of being dirty. We have always washed our deceased, whether using naturally heated thermal waters, fresh water, or ocean water, and we did so long prior to the western introduction of mortuary regulations.

Also the time period between the moment of death and burial, in modern times is usually three nights, though in earlier times it could be several days, even weeks, as was the case of the tangihanga of King Tukaroto Matutaera Potatau Te Wherowhero Tawhiao (ca.1825-1894).



Fig 26

"... he lay in state for many weeks so that Māori from all over the country could pay their respects... I remember Dad telling me that... they kept him, and knew how to preserve the body back then, and it was Winter so it didn't get too hot..."

Dr Marama Muru-Lanning, private communication,  
December, 2013



Fig 27

One of the immediate realities of death is the subsequent breach and social vacuum created for the distressed people mentioned by Tengan (pp.10-11). Turner's liminality and communitas are exemplified because Māori as a hierarchically ranked collective society feel these social vacuums immediately. With death, our cultural capital diminishes, momentarily, and so whānau, hapū and at times iwi will look to quickly restore social continuity. Thus our tangihanga can be seen to provide the temporal and spatial conditions which facilitate cultural processes that allow my people to collectively address this

vacuum, from the outset. In our wharekai ringawera continuously encourage our young people to pitch in and be involved, whilst in our wharenuī tūpuna watch vigilantly for those men and women ready to be trained to conduct marae formalities. Hapū and iwi observe so as to determine whether whānau have a member ready to step in to the breach, and if not, the collective will deliberate ways by which to address any vacuum. Throughout various liminal processes, tūpuna provide wisdom and solace, ringawera cater sustenance, kaitiaki contribute variously, as our taonga reflect notions of love, respect and mana mirrored in the presence of all. Where the Māori collective has been impacted by the arrival of death, our tangihanga, as well as our taonga, provide social continuity that reinforces and revitalises life.

Notably, this study will also proffer many familial narratives alongside various ethnographic materials, and as such this work is not intended to be seen as definitive or conclusive. There remain a vast number of personal accounts, familial narratives, and ethnographic resources yet to be examined, as well as the rich narrative and experiential resources of people from other tribal groups, and communities, presenting their own perspectives.

Throughout this thesis the focus is on select materials, objects and taonga or artefacts which feature in or around the immediate surround of tūpāpaku. As such, those that are considered herein are defined according to how they are perceived by the core social group involved. That is to say, these pertinent cultural items are discussed in the context of their communities and whakapapa. This maintains continuity with the principle of cultural relativism, acknowledging that what is deemed as much is in accord with the people and culture whose practices are being observed. For example, one of the many taonga I inherited following my mother's passing was a cast iron umu. My mother had been a stalwart ringawera for Uruika, cooking



Fig 28

and baking in our marae kitchen for many decades. Her rewena bread was renowned in the whānau, baked in an umu or Victorian camp oven, which had been left for her by her grandmother. According to Mum, her grandmother Te Pae had used it more in the fashion of a traditional camp oven, sitting it in the embers of the outdoor fire pit and heating it through, cooking the contents. By the time my parents moved to Rotorua city in 1971, the expensive electric oven of the Pākehā had started to become commonplace for Māori in urban homes. So, as with many Māori women of her generation, she used the umu to bake rewena in the electric oven. Like the living potato yeast or rewena bug, which required vigilant care, her umu was constantly oiled and kept pristine, ready to make bread for any who asked. The smell of baking rewena today sends me immediately back to a simple and unspoiled childhood. I had been taught how to make rewena, however I was notorious for neglecting my bug and more often than not I'd simply ask my mother to bake it. When Mum was dying, she asked that the umu stay in the whānau and be given to someone who would use and treasure it, as she had.

Consequently when I was settling my mother's estate, I sent great-grandmother's umu to my mother's niece, Di Di. In my generation she is renowned for sending copious quantities of wonderful baking to our marae whenever we have tangihanga. Whilst to Pākehā it would be recognised as a well-kept Dutch Oven, it is to my whānau a vessel long-used to sustain our members. Passed on through the generations, the umu is a taonga for reasons far beyond its sole physical qualities. As we progress through this research, this aspect of taonga will be further clarified, evidenced and substantiated.

Fortunately ethnography allows the researcher to descriptively map the journey of the study at hand, in such a way as to incorporate the perspectives of both the participant and the observer. With this in mind, I

shall trust that as the descriptive map or ethnographic journey of this thesis unfolds, so too the life-stories of those now passed may be shared, for those still living to learn from.



# RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

## Approaching the field and gathering the information:

This research brings together various ethnographic materials derived from a considerable body of fieldwork and other sources, which collectively provides the empirical basis for the work. It offers some comparative analyses of tangihanga in Ngāti Pikiao and Ngāti Whare, and practices observed in other iwi. In addition some cross-cultural analyses of funerary practices between Māori and non-Māori are provided. When I approached this section, requiring that I review the work overall and methodologically clarify the compositional process involved, I was astounded at the vast resources, materials, writing mechanisms, and different concepts which emerged. It was also humbling to discuss various and numerous juxtapositions, concerns and tensions involved.

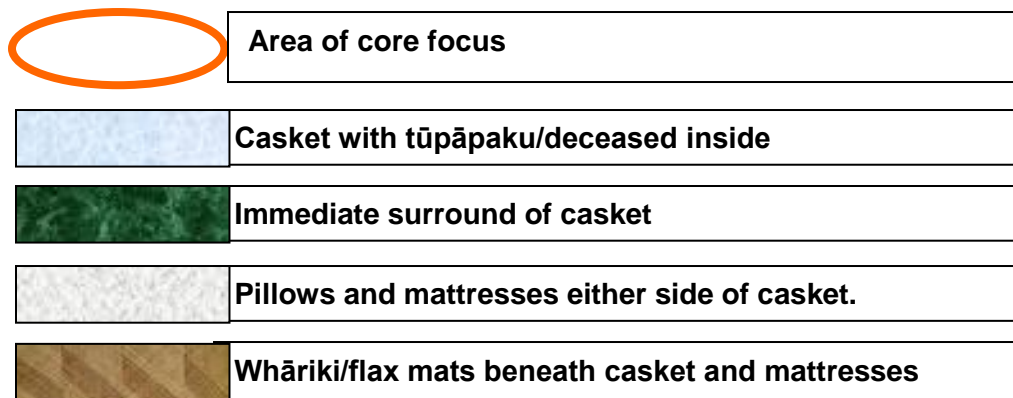
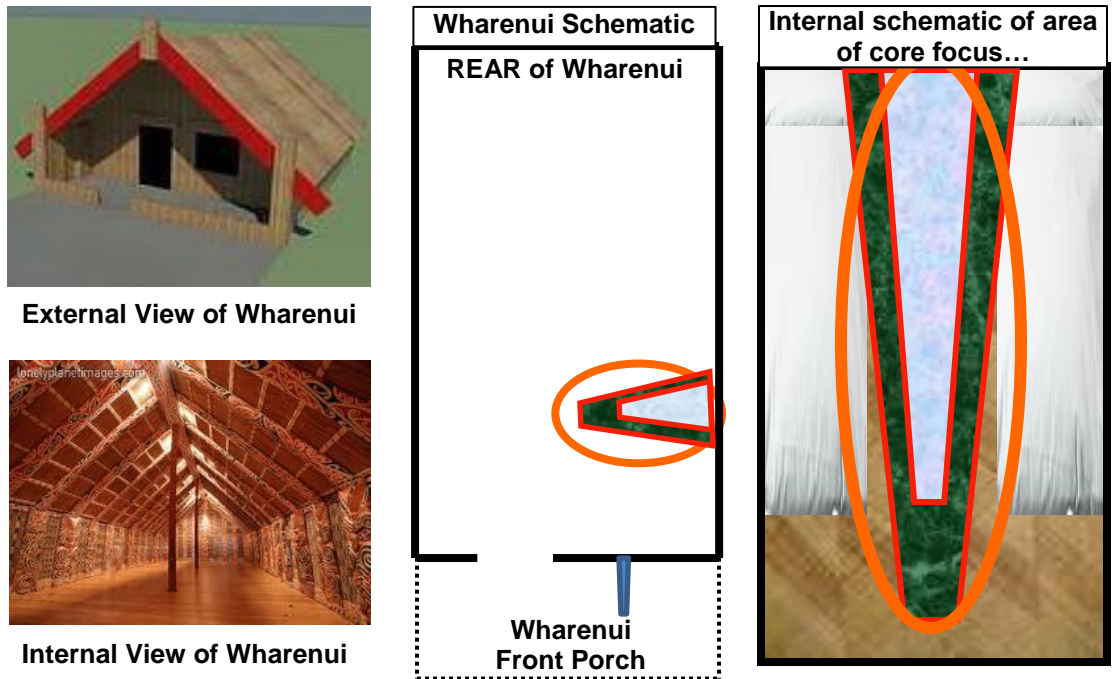
For anthropologists who claim a native identity... this may be felt more keenly because of the multiplicity of obligations, responsibilities and audiences they are held accountable to, especially given the stakes riding upon their work... These issues have become increasingly important for all ethnographers to reckon with, as distinctions between insider/outsider, home/away and engaged/disengaged have become difficult to maintain, especially in the Pacific.


Ty P. Kāwika Tengan, 2005, p.247

Notably, this work is independent, but has been located within the Tangi Research Programme, a unique initiative that received generous funding, and was conducted in the SMPD, and the MPRU of FASS. Appropriately several methodologies and processes were therefor applied.

## 2.1 Diagrammatic Schema 2 Visually identifying the area of core focus

This thesis is an examination of materials, objects and taonga or artefacts, within a related complex of indigenous processes which comprise the Māori tangihanga. The area of core focus is a physical space that does not exceed two metres across by three metres long, depending on the actual size of the tūpāpaku.



Note: For Ngāti Pikiao and other Te Arawa iwi it is common that during daylight hours we will situate our tūpāpaku on the front porch, (indicated by the  symbol), then return them inside the whareniui before sundown.

If the beloved tūpuna of my childhood were here today, I believe they would simply say that the beginning of the ethnographic aspect of this thesis occurred decades prior to my arriving at university. While in infancy, it is said I showed a sensitive nature, which to some elders indicated I was suited for learning, as opposed to a more physical career such as in farming, roadwork gangs or forestry work. To our elders, every infant was born with purpose, and all pathways were equally important, no matter the work involved. The hopes of my kuia and koroua were that I would eventually work with Māori, for the benefit of Māori, like my grandfathers before me. Their lived memories taught them that astute insight and generational forward-planning had ensured the survival of our people in a perilous and rapidly changing bicultural world. Though by the time of my birth they were no longer fighting for their lives as such, but rather for the lives of their uri, so the elders would watch and listen to their progeny. Each of my descent lines had scholarly members with pathways in various religious institutes, and in time I was nurtured and influenced towards the teachings of the Rātana Church. The priorities of being Māori, and notional religious principles, were foremost in a rural childhood during which we initially lived adjacent to our marae, and attended it daily. There were always tasks to undertake such as cleaning, planting, maintenance work, as well as hui, wānanga, whakamoemiti and tangihanga, and I was present throughout. Much of this I reflect upon further in the thesis. As was the way of my elders, learning tikanga, kawa, the ways of Māori and tangihanga started early. This is the reflexive component of my thesis.

In so saying, the genesis of the methodological research skills required to undertake this thesis can be first seen in my 2003 undergraduate work, in a Religious Studies course at the University of Canterbury, titled 'Sex, Death and Salvation'. A few years later I extended that field of research in a

Directed Study which completed a BA in Religious Studies and Anthropology at the University of Waikato. My subsequent Honours degree was in Anthropology, and graduate courses such as 'Ethnographic Writing' contributed to my growing pedagogic skills. The combination of this training, together with an inherent interest in notions of indigeneity and Māori today, led to my Master's thesis titled *Fragmentation and Restoration: generational legacies of 21st century Māori*. That research synthesised aspects of being modern and Māori, with anthropologic work which was by nature comparative. The consequent 2009 completion of my Master's degree then brought me to the attention of the principal researchers of a newly emerging Māori research team. That was also the year my beloved mother died, and some might consider it serendipitous that I was approached by the research leaders, and invited to join the Tangi Research Programme. Their invitation was subject to a single issue: addressing the question of what, if any, relevant topic might I pursue as a doctoral candidate and anthropologist on the team. The answer is herein evident.

### 2.3 Case studies... → narrative portraits...

By January 2010, as the TRP sought to investigate the complex experience of death and the Māori, my determined focus and subsequent doctoral candidacy were duly formalised. From the outset I planned to compose five specific case studies of tangihanga of members of my immediate whānau. I intended to use my lived experiences to articulate exemplars which portrayed, as best possible, a wide and encompassing range of temporal and spatial circumstances pertaining to the core focus of this thesis. As I have mentioned, my beloved mother had died in 2009, and I was confident that she would have approved of some of her life and death stories being a part of this ethnographic journey. Prior to her death she had alluded as much during bedside vigils when she would ask of my academic aspirations and read some of my work. This said, her father, my koroua-dad, had died in

2006, and I could not see myself speaking to my mother's life and death stories without doing the same for him. This notion similarly applied to my youngest sister who had tragically passed away in 2004. In addition, the first tangihanga at which I had been required to undertake so very many roles spoken of herein, was that of my treasured father, who had died suddenly in 1996.

These four tangihanga were sadly poignant milestones in my life, and to be frank, I intuitively knew I was safe and protected discussing their deaths intimately simply because it was them. There was minimal risk. To my mind, researching or writing intimate details of the deaths and tangihanga of others would have been inappropriate, as well as potentially complicated and even harmful. So who better to speak of than those whom I had known and loved, who had known and loved me, and who in the intuitive context of *other world* perspectives, would keep me safe. This is how I came to select the first four individuals. Then I reflected that many of our whānau taonga, and various inheritance pieces I had received as the sole benefactor of my mother's estate, were directly connected back in time to my great-grandmother, Te Pae. She had been a well-known Te Arawa weaver, a stalwart self-sacrificing mother of twelve children, and a protective kuia, as will be discussed further on. Thus I arrived at another intuitive moment of *knowing* that were I to pursue this topic of taonga tangihanga and death in te ao Māori, then some of my great-grandmother's life and death stories also had to be included. These five incredible persons would comprise the individuals whose life and death stories could frame the ethnographic narrative of my work, and as case studies they could simultaneously provide contextualised exemplars.

Perhaps as an aside, during the fieldwork process of fact-finding, though I think it is relevant methodologically and interesting nonetheless, I chose to take photographs of numerous memorial headstones of various family at our whānau urupa. I spoke to kaumātua from my father's tribe of Ngāti Whare as

well as my mother's of Ngāti Pīkiao, before proceeding. The purpose here was simply to acquire accurate (or at the least approximate) birth and death dates of whanaunga, as well as checking their full formal names, the formal names of their parents, siblings, and where possible an image of them. Where there was an image of them on their headstone, I intended only to use that as a trigger to recall them, their life, and if I had been present, then memories of their tangihanga.

## 2.4 Concerns... → and resolutions...

At the whānau urupa of Waharoa at Rotoma, as I photographed the headstones of select whanaunga, with some whānau simultaneously visiting the urupa and happily smiling and chatting merrily, all the while indulging me; one whanaunga arrived and voiced their objection at my work. They did not want their mother's headstone photographed for my research, nor did they want her headstone details available for 'a strange Pākehā in a strange place' to have access to. I was respectful of my cousin's request, and even embarrassed that my actions had caused inadvertent offense. It was not in my nature to do so. Then a kuia and an aunt who were visiting the urupa moved closer to us and interjected. Each made it clear to my cousin and I that the permission was not his to give, and that if any of the people whose headstones I photographed objected, then the digital image simply would not work; meaning it would not be discernible or usable. So the camera would decide

Unknown to me, my kaumātua had already reached agreement about what I was doing at our urupa, and were supportive. In their long-lived worldview, the dead were still present (albeit in an *other world* context) and able to indicate as much, by various means. Our kuia and aunt also suggested to my cousin that their mother would have loved to have been a part of the work, and that she was well known for voicing her envy when missing out on a

whānau event. Before my cousin left the urupa, he shook my hand and asked for my assurance that if the image did not work, then I would take that to mean his mother did not want to be involved, and abide. I agreed and was even prepared not to take the photograph, but then I also did not want any dreamtime visitations by my deceased aunt bemoaning exclusion!

In this instance I did not ask for permission to use names, and so I shall not. However, and if they should ever come upon this work, I would like take the opportunity to acknowledge and thank my kuia and my aunt for being present and sharing their wisdom that day; and my cousin for keeping me honest and humble in this undertaking. Notably, all the photographs I took at both my mother's and father's urupa came out beautifully. Some of the case studies details such as birth and death dates were verified by using photographs of the headstones, but none of the images of their faces have been used in this thesis. Furthermore, whenever I present research I do wonder if the images that I use of those who have passed away will work.

Only one instance has arisen where the image of my koroua-dad would not appear, on a remarkably huge screen in the auditorium of a church we were using. That was in Whakatane at the 2011 Mai ki Waikato Doctoral Conference. I did find it curious that my koroua-dad was reluctant to appear that day and even quietly whispered 'Come on Dad, please' as an organiser, a mature Māori woman, entered and came to my aid. As she worked I wondered if he was reluctant to appear because it was Whakatane and not Rotorua, or because it was in a church auditorium that was not his beloved Hāhi Rātana. The organiser quickly managed to get the PowerPoint to reload and as my koroua-dad's image emerged slowly on that huge screen, she surprisingly and audibly gasped. She remained visibly transfixed throughout the twenty minutes wherein I presented case study work. Later and privately when I asked her why she had cried out, she explained that as a young woman many years earlier she had known my koroua-dad briefly, though

well. She even called him by his lesser known familial alias of '*the galloping padre*'. He had apparently inspired her, and her life had been good and fulfilling. She appeared honoured to meet the moko of a friend from her youth, and to see aspects of his life portrayed so eloquently (as she put it) in the case studies, as I was referring to them at that time.

Then following astute supervisory advice, the case studies were realised as in fact being narrative portraits. This is how I learnt that case studies are constructed narratives intended as analytical and processual records of an event used to illustrate a point. The five familial tangihanga narrative portraits, with accompanying images, feature accordingly and appropriately in a stand-alone chapter.

## **2.5 Fieldwork research... → tensions and university requirements...**

Between 2010 and 2012 I undertook fieldwork, travelling as required to Rotorua and Rotoiti for the purpose of conducting participant interviews. As this thesis deals specifically with the lived and historical experiences and perspectives of Māori, and by its very nature the rubric of tangihanga is a Māori phenomenon, all participants were appropriately of Māori ethnicity. Furthermore, this work is a genealogical ethnography, and because of varying shared kinship connections to either Ngāti Pūkiao and Ngāti Whare and/or Tūhoe there was the probability of bilateral connection. Where applicable, those kinship connections are divulged, and at no time did this influence the ethical relevance of conducting the work. Appropriate ethics approval was granted from the University of Waikato by the School of Māori and Pacific Development Human Resources Ethics Committee prior to conducting all fieldwork. The purpose of undertaking fieldwork was to collect information, raw data, and relevant narratives in regards to the core focus. The thesis core focus meant I deliberately sought interviews with tangihanga proponents, practitioners and/or kaitiaki (designated whānau custodians of



taonga). These included essential whānau members, as well as respected koroua and kuia. The selection of these participants was done in consultation with kaumātua and my supervisory panel, who were kept fully informed of the content and conduct of interviews. Initially it was recommended that twenty to thirty interviews would be enough, to providing adequate raw data from which to extrapolate for the purpose of this thesis. That quantity was quickly revised and reduced after the first few open-ended interviews revealed much more content and data than had been anticipated.

Participants were initially approached via either written communication or face to face. Those who agreed to participate were given a research information sheet and mandatory consent form before confirming a date, time and venue of their choosing. Completed consent forms were received at the time of all interviews. Notably all participants agreed to have their full name and iwi affiliations acknowledged in the concluding thesis, with an accompanying image used. In order to address the anthropological concern of reducing the occurrence of ethnocentrism, each participant's ethnic distinctions and tribal affiliations were self-ascribed and are herein divulged. In some instances participants not only offered their poignant personal stories, but also private photographic images and other contributing materials: all of which are herein acknowledged where utilised, and for which I shall always remain grateful. There also tended to be a standard point made by participants at the beginning, indicating that they did not believe they had much to offer or help me with in this undertaking. Yet without exception every interview exceeded an hour, some went for several hours, two continued for days, and in the majority of cases I would have allowed participants to keep talking had circumstances permitted. The interviews were digitally recorded, with accompanying personal researcher's notes. Later, all recordings were then transcribed, before being deliberated upon for inclusion into the thesis. It was at this juncture that compositional tensions arose.

## 2.6 Compositional tensions... → the perils of transcription...

The first compositional tension to emerge occurred when transforming digitally recorded oral communications into accurately transcribed scripts that were *workable* without compromising the participant. That is to say, I quickly realised there was tension between the *said* and the *read*. For example, every verbal exclamation of ah, um, oh, eh, hmmm or cough, splutter, sniffle and so forth, was appropriately interpreted in the context of the participant's oral retelling, but often seemed extraneous when transcribed. Furthermore, the well-honed oral skills of some Māori are such that an expression as simple as a cough can infer an unspoken but apparent notion, such as an objection or refutation, without the offense of words. Similarly a derisive snort may infer disbelief, or silence can infer a change of subject might be appropriate. All of this can be complicated when attempting to translate into script. This also applied to all background noises such as doors opening, phones ringing, children calling out, and visitors arriving, that could distract or even derail the flow of conversation. Furthermore, whilst my own thoughts and interpretations were relevant in the context of the thesis, I was reluctant to interject these into their narratives and affect *their words*. At this early point I was concerned that had I used those initial verbatim transcripts then some of the participants would either be *read* as ignorant, or worse, unintelligent. Let me state categorically that this was never the case, and in fact the problem was a consequence of writing verbatim *that which was intended to be heard, not read*. So while interviews were originally transcribed verbatim, I subsequently removed all extraneous materials.

The next tension emerged again through no fault of the participants, but as a result of the fact that interviews were open-ended. The unstructured open-ended interview style was deliberate so as to allow participants to say, reflect, and contemplate the topic of tangihanga as they so chose to. Being the researcher I did not want to consciously control the content of their

contributions. Therefore in the context of the actual dialogues, their informal yet intimate conversational pattern when transcribed, *read* haphazardly. That is to say, that the actual conversations made sense in the context of being heard, but in written form the subsequent topics and sentence structures were such that they appeared at times fragmented, and seemingly lacked continuity and the smooth transition suited to the formality of the likes of a thesis. This reflected to me the altruism of each participants heartfelt monologues, and the fact that when filtered through the lens of my intellectual intent, this compositional tension arose.

So at this juncture, to accommodate the university's logistical requirements, and aware of the need to be true to the material, I consulted with my supervisors and we agreed to approach the matter much like a giant jigsaw. We could not, and did not want to, change the picture(s) being portrayed, but we had to position the jigsaw pieces (lines of discussion) in such a way that they could be perceived in accord with the intentions of both the participants, and the researcher. As a Māori, and an insider with kinship connections to the participants, I believe that I was advantaged in undertaking the steps required to resolve these specific tensions. I could use my *knowing* of the people involved to ensure their intimate narratives were communicated as articulately as possible, thereby maintaining their integrity without compromise, at the same time as maintaining the academic acumen and integrity of the research. This was a two-step process undertaken with supervisory consultation throughout.

First, the seemingly fragmented or disjointed lines of monologue were connected. This meant that when, at different points in an interview a participant reflected multiple times on the same topic, such as burial clothing, these lines of discussion were brought together in cohesive and logical paragraphs. The second step involved constructing a workable overview, which was achieved by applying a thematic schema to the array of material

offered, making the vast quantity of data easier to work with. To this end numerous thematic sub-headings were applied, the likes of Dressing Tūpāpaku, Kaitiakitanga, Urupa and Burial Practices, Tangihanga. Material which did not fit into the thematic framework was identified as comprising a 'Miscellaneous' category and these were surplus to the thesis. An interesting anomaly which occurred in this process was that the unstructured open-ended nature of the interviews meant the thematic schemas applied were different between the various participants. My supervisors and I did consider devising a thematic schema that would overlay all of the interviews. However we decided to leave them as they were, individually distinct. For my part this reflected the fact that each participant was similarly Māori with kinship connections, but their lived realities were at times equally different.

With the bigger picture of the thesis in mind and the edited *readable* transcripts in hand, I set about determining how best to situate the various and considerable array of data. I initially sought to expand my knowledge base and various relevant frames of reference, to be further articulated in the body of work. That is to say that I saw the interviews first and foremost, as a means of acquiring raw data, to be inserted appropriately as direct quotes, or evidential narratives, or substantive assertions and so on. However, and from the outset, it seemed to me that the depth and scope of the interview material was remarkable, so that I was struck by the concern that in pulling apart these wonderful narratives (to suit my academic intent) I would consequently be dishonouring the rich content each offered, which conflicted with the spirit of the work itself. In other words, I had embarked on this thesis as a means of facilitating the sharing of lived experiences according to my people. How, then, could I subsequently risk diminishing my people and their narratives in any manner, regardless of my pedagogic priority.

After struggling somewhat, tensions remained between my writing style and the interview material. So, as was often the case with this work, I left the

material alone till a later date when I could look at it all with fresh eyes. What I was unknowingly dealing with here was a simple issue perhaps best described as the difference between apples (participants' narratives) and oranges (my own narrative). As the researcher, as well as a whanaunga, I was obliged to 1) honour their contributions, 2) fulfil university requirements for a thesis, and 3) present an easily read synthesis. Wanting this to be a readable thesis was premised in the original consideration that it should be understood by the very people upon whom it is premised, the generous and trusting communities involved, and Māori more generally. So after some time, I realised that the individual interview material of participant monologues combined, would be suited as a stand-alone chapter. Eventually my supervisory panel agreed that as a genealogical ethnography, the thesis would benefit by allowing participant narratives to be read accordingly, and distinct from my own. The apples and oranges could remain separate, with the synthesis occurring in the analytical body of the research. By presenting each participant's transcript with a personalised introductory text, I could construct a semblance of cohesion throughout. The thematic structure meant I could frame the material in such a way as to keep it entirely relevant. Then, at the end of each interview, a summary could introduce my voice, offering reflections to critical aspects of their korero. The summaries could then act to transition the interview material within the bigger picture of the academic body of work.

Most importantly to me, as a stand-alone chapter the material was thus identifiable as derived from *their voices* in the process of sharing *their words*. In so doing I was able to maintain the reality, altruism and the authority of each participant's monologue, while also fulfilling my thesis obligations according to University standards. Thus several intimate and poignant whānau interviews are presented in the chapter titled *Their Voices Their Words*.

## 2.7 Additional logistics, writing mechanisms... reflections & reflexions...

In the aforementioned interviews there occurred some repetitive content, and material that was not directly relevant to the focus of this thesis. This surplus material was removed, and some reflections abraded. I have used writing mechanisms such as ... to denote that the monologue has been abraded. In cases where I found it appropriate to interject within a participant's script, perhaps to clarify a point, I have used [ ] closed square parenthesis to indicate as much. As a matter of logistics, not all those interviewed, or indeed all interview materials were utilised, and any inclusion or exclusion was at the discretion of the researcher (in consultation with the supervisory panel). All original research material, including digital recordings, transcripts, interview summaries, and images, remain in the custody of the researcher. Participants received a copy of their transcript and interview summaries. A copy of the interviews also has been retained in a secure repository under the custody of the Tangi Research Programme. All participants gave their written approval for this in the knowledge that strict access protocols would be enforced. Throughout, all members of the Tangi Research Programme, being a Māori and Pacific collective, remained culturally aware in respect of the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, and vigilant in protecting our people's interests. The tribal affiliations of each participant were recorded and all efforts were taken by the researcher to abide by the protocols and etiquette of the respective iwi. In undertaking this research I was also guided by the Principles of Professional Responsibility and Ethical Conduct as stipulated by the Ethics Committee of the Association of Social Anthropologists of Aotearoa/NZ.

Often I found myself writing something, and then asking whether my mother or grandfather would be able to understand the material. I regret I may have failed in this aspect. My koroua-dad used to say I had a penchant for playing with words, and a decade of academic training has not harnessed that dual edged sword. In fact some would probably say that whilst I am articulate and

can communicate well, I tend to use big words where smaller words would suffice. Too often my well-meaning supervisors (and mentors) had to remind me to “keep it simple”, or they edited drafts in such a way as to infer as much. The journey of this work has involved much learning, which continues still, and for which I remain grateful.

## **2.8 Australia... → Rotorua hui, and Hamilton wānanga...**

In 2011, as part of the team’s overall international conference portfolio, several members of the TRP attended the Death Down Under Inaugural Conference held at The University of Sydney in Australia. Following a keynote presentation by Te Awekotuku and several successful presentations by research members over three days, the team returned to NZ, while I went directly onto Perth. There I attended the IUAES/AAS/ASAANZ Conference at the University of Western Australia. As the NZ indigenous representative for the ANSA Postgraduate Showcase, I presented work derived from this thesis. However, I raise the matter because the fortnight I spent in Perth also was variously propitious. My time there allowed me to travel to, stay with, and interview several key whānau and tribal members who had relocated years earlier to Australia. Regardless of overseas residency, they all remained in constant contact with their NZ homelands, returning to our marae for tangihanga as appropriate, and perhaps too regularly. These were transnational whānau whose homeland roles were pertinent to this thesis, as will be discussed at relevant points throughout. It is appropriate at this juncture to acknowledge that although I was overseas, it was nonetheless like being at home as my whanaunga accommodated, fed, transported and entertained me for the full duration. They agreed to be interviewed, photographed, and took me to cemeteries to visit whānau whose tūpāpaku had not been returned to home shores. This said, they voiced their belief that if they were ever financially able, then they would indeed uplift those whānau and bring them home to Rotoiti to rest. They also collectively attended my

thesis presentation at the University of WA. I took great pride arriving at that venue with ten beautiful, excited and enthusiastic whānau accompanying me with wide eyes, open hearts and pride. I will always remain grateful to them that while I was not upon home grounds, they ensured I was nonetheless treated as if I had been. Before departing homeward, I was privileged to be gifted a copy of the *Kawa of Te Arawa*, as well as the singular original version of a whānau whakapapa compiled by Te Arawa tohunga Irirangi Tiakiawa in collaboration with Waretini Hoani as will be discussed elsewhere. These are rare and significant documents that in my custodianship will be treasured. In the context of this thesis their contributions, and voices, are a true gift.

In so saying, I likewise had the gift of whānau who attended presentations on home grounds, where they also reflected and provided feedback. In 2012 the TRP hosted a wānanga, one of many, in Rotorua at Te Roro o Te Rangi Marae in Ohinemutu. Alongside the principal researchers, all TRP hui and wānanga were also guided by our community researchers: whaea Ngamihi Crapp of Rangataua Marae at Poroporo, whaea Heeni Marsh of Hauti Marae at Uawa, and whaea Vicki-Mae Bhana of Te Roro o te Rangi. This occasion was my first public presentation, at which key members of Ngāti Tamateatutahi Kawiti of Ngāti Pikiāo collectivised as the invited local Te Arawa contingent, arriving under cover of light rain. My elders believe that light rain during a formal process is a propitious omen. I smiled as they arrived and we all eventually made our way inside Te Roro. After the hui was opened, the head of our whānau, my Uncle Stormy, formally known as Ihairaira Hohepa, gave the karakia, and everyone settled in for the duration. I had already presented thesis work on Te Arawa whenua in 2010, at the annual Association of Social Anthropologists of Australia and New Zealand Conference. That occasion however was a Pākehā conference in a Pākehā setting with a Pākehā agenda. The Te Roro hui was undoubtedly indigenous, inside the precincts of a treasured Te Arawa whare whakairo, with several of my elders present, each with brilliant and critical minds. I wholly admit to



being filled with trepidation and fear before standing in their midst. I had forewarned whānau that if they wanted to object or refute my work, then this was the occasion to do so, on Te Arawa grounds, in the safety of the marae. I was also prepared that if they objected publicly, then I would cease all further work, and the thesis entirely. I was after all speaking of the tangihanga practices of my people, and here they were present, to object, criticise, or even refute the work if they so chose to. The following quote is derived from the TRP Wānanga Papers – 12<sup>th</sup> October 2012, an unpublished report which, in this instance, provides an appropriate summary regarding feedback from Ngāti Pikiao:

Two significant points, one from the kai karanga o Ngāti Tamateatutahi Bub O’Neal, who enquired about wairua and spiritual connection, and the involvement of the clergy or church people. Ngamihi responded to this in her position as a Deacon of the Anglican Church, and also as a hospital chaplain. We all emphasised that this has been a priority from the project’s beginning. The most positive comment was offered by their senior orator Iharaira (Stormy) Hohepa: “... this morning has been an eye-opener for me, I think for us... all this korero i te ata nei, this morning, is something new... learning about the old ways of mourning, of being amongst our koroua, our fathers... all this here today has been an experience for me... we’ve learned a lot, and I just want to congratulate you all on your mahi... kia kaha koutou...

TRP, 2012, p.4

My whānau had arrived, remained present, listened, and watched, at times animatedly; that alone is a statement. On invitation they had offered reflections, and departed satiated and safe in the knowledge that our work was good.

Along with hui, the TRP also conducted numerous wānanga, many of which I attended, and benefitted from immensely. These was another means by which to keep in touch with academic and community research team members similarly *out in the field*, as well as hearing from invited specialists. This was the team’s informal quarterly time and space, during which we

collectively updated each other, discussed ongoing tangihanga experiences and possible research hurdles, as well as provided a group forum with which to focus and brainstorm various significant topics. Those group discussions offered potentially invaluable material. For example one discussion focused on the positioning of tūpāpaku in whareniui, according to different iwi and various traditions, as well as the underlying reasons for such. Another invaluable discussion was in respect to whakaahua and taonga tangihanga, again according to different iwi and various traditions, as well as possible underlying reasons. At these events, and many others, I made copious personal notes, sketched schematics and in the fashion of being Māori, I took that which was purposeful to my work.

Methodologically speaking, the many hui and wānanga were important opportunities to collectively question aspects of death in the Māori world, and then refute, validate, substantiate, evidence accordingly in the presence of like-minds seeking to learn. I equated these events to spending time at the library researching various texts. At those hui and wānanga our books were living and breathing tangihanga specialists, published academics, and worldly community researchers. Their texts, their korero, were authentic, honest, and premised on realities borne of countless marae experiences. As a TRP researcher the diversity and array of resources at our disposal have been inspiring and phenomenal. For example, in her postgraduate course lecture 'Understanding Theory' Te Awekotuku mentions [and translates from Māori to English] a poignant quote from Tamaro Nikora, "The ancient schools of learning worked at analyzing, refuting, unravelling, and resolving an issue. Such an ideal should thus be aspired to constantly." (Ngā Taonga o Te Urewera, 2003). I also attended and participated in various national and international academic forums in the disciplines of Anthropology, History, and Indigenous Studies. All of these similarly provided a variety of sundry materials including programmes describing in-depth studies of relevant academic topics.

## 2.9 Supplementing materials... → incidental materials...

Supplementing all of the aforementioned materials were the likes of personal journals and diaries, some that date back decades and which chronicle poignant times of life and death, love and loss. As mentioned, I inherited my mother's estate, and she had inherited her father's estate. They had been astute record keepers, maintaining and storing a variety and array of resources. During numerous tangihanga, they had acted to account for koha, funeral home accounts and marae grocery lists, and this information was kept abreast in various forms including using old fashioned Collins two-column accounting journals. Having both been lifelong tangihanga proponents they had kept A4 Clear Pocket Files filled with neatly cut-out newspaper clippings of death notices, as well as memorial service notices, of deceased whānau. They also kept memorial service programmes which it appears they retained as keepsakes. Notably the modern email was not a feature in their lives, but they did keep many private letters and correspondences. Some I had written more than two decades earlier, at different times as I had travelled the world. I initially took little notice of those until I realised that some letters contained beautiful reflective monologues about tangihanga, including those I missed attending but had been told about in letters.

The final resources relevant to this section have been at times the most heart-rending for me to momentarily delve into. My koroua-dad, in his capacity as the head of the whānau (and as a Justice of the Peace) had been the recipient of various coroner's reports. These reports pertained to whānau who had died in unnatural circumstances, and as reports they are clinically detailed, with accompanying police affidavits, court summaries and so forth, and in one case a suicide note.

## 2.10 Literature and other sources...

There is substantial literature on the topics of i) New Zealand, ii) death and funerary processes involving materials, objects, and taonga, and iii) the Māori. However, when these diverse and distinct subjects converge into a specific subject, such as in the case of this research, the scope of that literature narrows considerably. As part of a Mai ki Waikato event in 2011, I undertook archival research at the Alexander Turnbull Library and the National Archives, both located in Wellington, and independently returned in 2012 to do further archival research.

My 2012 presence in Wellington was due to the Programme of Anthropology at the University of Waikato sending me to present thesis work. This was in the form of two full-colour, laminated, A0 (approximately 840 x 1200 mm) posters, with accompanying TRP flyers, and my presence in order to answer queries. Both posters featured at the 2012 Pacific History Association Conference and then immediately at the 2012 Association of Social Anthropology of Aotearoa/New Zealand (ASAANZ) Conference, each hosted by the University of Victoria. Whilst in Wellington I also attended the Museum of New Zealand – Te Papa Tongarewa where I was granted access to all of their taonga Māori. I would like to acknowledge the wonderful staff of Te Papa, several who took time out to be interviewed as professional kaitiaki of taonga Māori. It is regrettable that in this thesis I did not reach that point of analysing and including those interviews.

## 2.11 Final methodological declarations...

It is pertinent to state that throughout the period of this research I was physically present for numerous tangihanga scattered throughout the motu, and as such I subsequently made various private fieldwork observations and personal diary entries regarding many of those experiences. These ranged

from observations of what did or did not surround the tūpāpaku, various taonga tangihanga used, or not - and if not, then why? - differing processual conduct, gender-specific behaviour, contrasting protocols to those of my iwi, and so forth. I would also like to stipulate that the nature of tangihanga on marae, and the way that I was brought up by elders, was such that I did not deliberately seek to attend tangihanga for the purpose of this research. To do so would have been personally abhorrent, and culturally offensive to me and my people. Instead, I attended tangihanga in accord with inherent kinship obligations being of proud Ngāti Pikiao and Ngāti Whare descent. Suffice to say I am a Māori of particular descent lines, proudly active amongst my people, as well as being proactive in the interests of my people, and interactive marae engagement is inherent to my lived reality.

At this juncture, it is appropriate to emphasise that this study is interdisciplinary, and has been based in the School of Māori and Pacific Development. SMPD is an academic location that primarily favours an indigenous Māori perspective, and analytical position. But this thesis also draws significantly on robust experience and post-graduate work, in the discipline of Anthropology. Because it emerges from the seminal TRP, the work is simultaneously a part of the growing international research arena of Death Studies. Therefore much of the critical emergent Death Studies scholarship theoretically informs this work. On a final note here, at times I have treaded this multi-faceted interdisciplinary journey with trepidation, cognisant that what was relevant to one discipline was not necessarily relevant to the other. For example, stating a deceased persons' year of birth and death is, in Anthropology, not required for citations. However, in Death Studies and Māori Studies, these dates are perceived as pertinent information as they indicate age, and relationships with the deceased's contemporaries. This said, I have attempted to address and resolve these juxtapositions and tensions. The journey had to be undertaken, and I am grateful that my supervisors guided me with wisdom.

**PART**

**TWO**

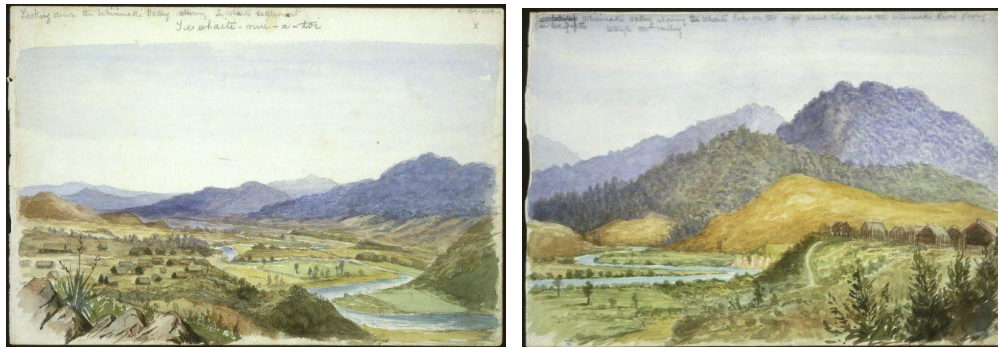
# ETHNOHISTORIC REFLECTIONS and TANGIHANGA LOGISTICS

Aotearoa has for centuries been understood as a lush bountiful landscape possessing vast potential; particularly for those peoples fortunate to call this island country home. Our nation's history is colourful, and as was the case with so many other nineteenth century colonised nations, Aotearoa transformed, becoming New Zealand, as increasing migrating Europeans established local settlements and rapidly became the Pākehā. Throughout, Māori struggled... and it would certainly be true to say that Māori endured much, we survived, transformed, to on the one hand become a contemporary western-styled co-governing pan-tribal people, whilst at the same time, on the other hand, remaining tribally, indigenously distinct.

I envy the world of my ancestors, because theirs was, comparatively, a good and more technologically simple world, contrasted by our world today, with our modern pursuits and more technologically complex lives. Perhaps they might be similarly envious that the complexities of a westernised modern world belie opportunities denied them. This chapter considers ethnohistoric reflections and relevant aspects of our marae, urupa, and some tangihanga logistics.



**Fig 29:** Māori Settlement at the head of Rotoiti, 1905, by Charles Blomfield (1848-1926) courtesy of the A.F and R.M Hoyle Collection



**Fig 30 & 31:** Looking down the Whirinaki Valley showing Te Whāiti settlement, 1891, by Thomas Darby Ryan (1864-1927) in the Alexander Turnbull Library Collection

This concept of the land is a central aspect of our personal and cultural identity... If we, the people of this generation, allow our lands to pass to strangers then we are depriving our future young people of the chance to stand tall as Māori – on ground which they can regard as their own.

John Rangihau, Tūhoe elder, 1975, p.158



### 3.2 Of land, life, loss and liberty...

The following introduction positions and identifies me as Māori, imparting a mihi that calls on names which speak to my whenua, descent and heritage.

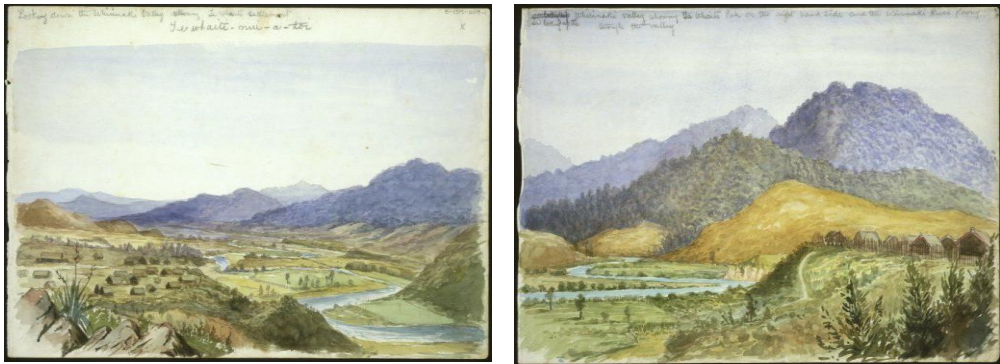
Matawhaura me Tūwatawata ngā maunga  
Rotoiti taku moana me Whirinaki taku awa  
Ngāti Pūkiao me Ngāti Whare ngā iwi  
Ngāti Tamateatutahi me Ngāti Hāmua ngā hapū  
Uruika me Waikotikoti hoki ōku marae

Those names call to mind sacred mountains, waterways, tribal collectives, and whareniui. Such introductions, spoken in my people's native tongue, address significant landmarks and eponymous ancestors - those initial forbearers whose accomplishments were so significant that their names were taken, to memorialise the individual and event. For example, the tribe of Ngāti Pūkiao and hapū of Ngāti Tamateatutahi Kawiti are kinship based collectives who bear the names of two of our renowned warriors whose impressive accomplishments were deemed memorable, and as such, they remain eponymous ancestors of note.

They were direct descendants of those oceanic voyagers who first settled these lands, perhaps a millennium past, having traversed vast geographic spaces, and periods of time. In an open landscape teeming with abundance, those robust proto-ancestors brought their histories, narratives, divinities, traditions, worldviews, and hope, to establish a new homeland, and culture. Little did those tūpuna realise that the geographic, environmental, and climactic circumstances of their newfound island home, would in time transform them from Polynesian proto-ancestors, into an *other* and formidable people. Biological determinism was unavoidable, because Aotearoa was considerably wider, longer and steeper than any previous

island location they had traversed and occupied. Nonetheless it was an island with multiple and different climates scattered throughout various wetlands, plains, rainforests, mountain and valley systems, all providing exciting new conditions on new whenua with new resources. Different wildlife and plant life also meant that their diet transformed, as did almost every physical aspect of their indigenous lives. They were from the outset relatively egalitarian tribal peoples, prone to migratory tendencies which saw them traverse the breadth and width of the country according to available seasonal resources of the ocean, the land, and the inter-connecting waterways. As they settled, adapted and over centuries yielded to biological determinations, they became the native Māori and first people of the nation, forever differentiated from all other populations who would arrive on these lands.

By the nineteenth century many impressions had been recorded of our ancestors and their unencumbered sprawling tribal territories. Such early pre-contact history shows that much of our people's lands remain shared within the tribal collective. These two 1891 watercolours by T Ryan are of Te Whāiti nui a Toi located in the Whirinaki gateway of the Urewera.



This is whenua which has been in my father's tribe of Ngāti Whare for centuries – land that admittedly had been previously occupied, but which Ngāti Whare, in time, came to possess. Although as modern twenty-first century individuals we are less coherently tribal than previously, we still exemplify a holistic worldview, wherein we are kaitiaki, guardians, of taonga nowadays also known as shared resources. We remain committed and

responsible to tribal collectives, and as such we oversee those inherent shared resources, according to kinship and descent. From the outset of his 2008 doctoral thesis Shaun Awatere states as much writing that,

Māori, the indigenous people of New Zealand, recognise the interrelatedness and the interdependence of all things in the world. Whakapapa (genealogy), an important concept within the Māori worldview explains the relationship Māori have with each other, natural resources, the environment, and the world, as well as with spiritual and cosmological entities... Whakapapa is an integral part of all traditional Māori institutions and is a major determinant of rights to use, access and manage natural resources... Land, mountains, valleys, rocks, water and sea ways are viewed not only as resources, but more importantly, as manifestations of collective identity. They are the essential roots that entwine the component parts of what it means to be Māori. Such resources are vital taonga (treasured possessions) to be protected.

2008, p.1

That is to say, that as shared collective resources, access to taonga is confined to those with appropriate genealogical connection. Many Māori genealogies can trace centuries of descent, which privileges consanguine connectivity premised on blood-ties, whilst our cognatic connectivity recognises the relevancy and significance of extended kin. Our genealogically recognised descent locates us within long-established kinship systems, and knowledge of genealogy, or at the very least some awareness of whakapapa, is critical. However, whilst the land remained intact, not all Māori families survived the transition from the pre-contact era into the post-European era. So it was that the indigenous Māori, who for centuries had maintained occupational and demographic dominion in Aotearoa, from the nineteenth century onwards, came to face new obstacles which almost brought about our moribund demise. The major nineteenth century social obstacles Māori encountered were unanticipated and three-fold, in the form of the sudden advent, phenomenal numerical arrival, and just as swift encroachment of the colonial masses. As well as the betrayal of a genuine covenant; that being the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi, which is as controversial now as it was at the time

of inception. All of this came to pass as the final nail in a coffin initially constructed in 1814, with the arrival of Christianity.

What was initially conceived of as Māori extending welcome to British allies in pursuit of mutual advantage, almost immediately transformed to en masse colonial incursion and colonisation.

In a very short period of time, the tables had been turned. Māori had shifted from being a self-determining dominant majority with a population of about 70,000 in 1840, to an increasingly landless and subjugated minority of about 48,000 in the 1870's. Massive immigration, lack of immunity to disease, famine, poor living conditions and colonial force had ensured this reversal.

Nikora, L.W. 2007, pp.22-24

Thus Māori faced hurdles that, at times, to my tūpuna, must have seemed insurmountable. History shows that the non-Māori prevailed, as Māori sought and fought to survive, and the NZ Pākehā identity came to be etched out on our social landscape. For Māori that was an arduous and hard-fought social transition, which had to be navigated by way of both warfare and introduced diseases, all which contributed to the decimation of our populace.

Some Māori inter-married and bore progeny with Pākehā early on in our cross-cultural histories, the descent lines of which remain evident today in families who still carry their colonial ancestor's names - such as Rogers, Tapsell, Melbourne, Reedy, Maxwell, Bennett, Black and Morrison. Thus in the face of at times extreme historical adversity, including incursion and occupation by those who would eventually become our neighbours and intermarried Pākehā contemporaries, Māori survived. In spite of cross-cultural warfare, and assimilation tactics such as the 1907 Tohunga Suppression Act which legislated against Māori, suppressing my people from perpetuating the teachings of our cultural specialists or tohunga, yet we endured. We adapted, and with little option adopted the Pākehā language, so well that we almost lost our native tongue entirely. Suffice to say that as vast quantities of our

native customary lands were being confiscated, Māori encountered numerous historical travesties:

Problems identified included the partial adoption of European food and clothing; consumption of alcohol; and prolonged stays within heated whare atmospheres, themselves prolific sources of disease, followed by sudden exposure to the cold outside without clothing or shelter.

Keenan, D. 2012, p.202

Thus Māori communities that survived were subsequently disenfranchised and disempowered. From the time of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840, my people had to learn and adapt quickly, as our numerical advantage plummeted, and our dominant authority came to be superseded. Our indigenous authority had been successfully compromised as Māori became second-class citizens on their own lands. In this regards Keenan goes on to write that,

Such observations as these seemed borne out by Census figures, which revealed a significant decline had occurred, from 1840 estimates of 80,000 to the 42,650 enumerated in the Māori Census of 1866.... On 18 October 1900, the Māori Councils Act was passed, establishing a nationwide network of nineteen Māori Health Councils appointed at regional and village levels.... As he travelled, [Dr Maui] Pomare speculated on the causes of the 'decline of the Māori'. According to his reports, bad housing, feeding, clothing, nursing, unventilated rooms and unwholesome pā 'were all opposed to the perpetuation of the race'.

Keenan, D. 2012, pp.202-203

### 3.3 Te Hahi Rātana...

Māori went from being tribally ranked societies to haphazardly and eventually becoming part of a larger, homogenous, stratified society, as we also variously embraced institutionalised religion. So much so that hybrid indigenous and non-indigenous religious movements arose in the form of Māori Christian Churches. In her text *Mana from Heaven* Elsmore speaks to a century of socio-religious responses by Māori, which by the early twentieth century culminated in the advent of formal religious movements the likes of

the Rātana Church. In the case of my Te Arawa whānau, this was the religious movement to which they gravitated as numerous dispossessed Māori desperately sought healing and spiritual refuge. Founded by the faith healer prophet Tahupotiki Wiremu Rātana (1873-1939), the eponymously named Church was registered in 1925, and a year later, Rātana opened his temple Te Temepara Tapu O Ihoa at Rātana Pa. In the introduction of his Master's thesis Herewini fondly reflects that,



Fig 32

When I was a young child we would return to Raatana Paa every January the 25th, to celebrate the birthday of a man I knew as T.W.Raatana. On arriving at Raatana my family would enter the Temepara and have whakamoemiti for our safe arrival. On completing this part of our pilgrimage we would walk to our relative's house and wait for the main service with the mass parade...

1999, p.1

The Rātana Church would become one of the predominant Māori religious communities with tens of thousands of members, of which mōrehu, including my whānau, share such wonderfully rich childhood memories. In the twenty-first century the Rātana



Fig 33

Church remains popular, and according to Keith Newman "In 2006 the church had 50,565 members in 127 parishes, as well as several thousand members in Australia." (Te Ara - The Encyclopedia of NZ). The Rātana Church was also instrumental regarding social change amongst my people, promoting such ideologies as the renouncing of all Māori superstitions, and reducing the duration of tangihanga.

The organisation of the Rātana Church incorporated several points taken from the established churches, but it also varied from its model in its more widespread involvement of members as functionaries. Although Rātana himself was honoured as the māngai, the running of the affairs of the body was in the hands of the synod, committees and registered ministers. In addition there were orders of apostles (Āpotoro Rehita and Āpotoro Wairua), assistant curates (Akonga), and the deaconesses or helping sisters (Awhina).

Elsmore, 1999, p.343

Māori increasingly turned to such institutions as our way of life changed. For Ngāti Tamateatutahi Kawiti, our descent line was severely impacted by introduced diseases, in our case particularly TB, which wiped out so many of our people, and of which I speak of in other areas of this thesis. Of those Māori who survived and who adapted to a new world, many incrementally shifted from former rural settings to establish urban, and more westernised realities, alongside Pākehā contemporaries. My Pikiāo and Ngāti Whare whānau were amongst the masses that shifted geographically, as well as in mind-set.

### 3.4 Trust Boards and land interests...

Throughout the twentieth century Māori departed their rural lands, migrating en masse to urban centres for work, better incomes, access to higher education for their children, and for a chance to improve our lot. In so doing they also mobilised the Māori worldview and their indigenous way of being. As described by Nikora, "When Māori moved into urban areas, they did not just arrive with a suitcase of belongings and aspirations for a better life; they also brought their culture and sense of being Māori with them, albeit in an often hostile city environment" (1991, p.52). As family upon family, brothers, sisters, and generations became separated by distance and by location, our people became demographically fragmented between the urban and the rural. Te Awēkotuku and Nikora write (2007, p.163) that,

By the closing years of the twentieth century, Māori had become a largely urban population... Alternate social groupings grew in the low-income suburbs of the towns and cities, and new communities, connected not so much by whakapapa or kinship ties, evolved into a dynamic force.

As the majority of Māori migrated, fewer were left to maintain the ahikā of our rural hinterlands. In so saying, connections were regularly maintained as urban *townies* would visit the old rural homesteads, and all would nonetheless be reunited at various occasions and familial events. To this end,

marae remained communal retreats where, as individuals or groups, my people could return whenever they so chose, to be reunited with our rural cousins and reminded that they, and we, belonged always within the tribal collective, regardless of location. Many of Ngāti Tamateatutahi Kawiti urbanised to the nearest large township of Rotorua, which was fortunately just a half hour drive from our Rotoiti homelands. This meant my people were able to maintain constant contact, continuing various industries that kept our homeland fires burning. It was little effort to keep up with the maintenance of marae, stay abreast of tribal affairs at a hapū and iwi level, and attend Trust Board hui as and where required. Trust Boards were the formal legally recognised modern entities mandated with ensuring the collective land and asset interests were managed appropriately. Entities such as Rotoiti 15 Trust, Rotoma No.1 Incorporation, Te Tahuna Trust, and Whangamoā Trust, represent a small handful of individual trust boards which my family belong to.



**Figs 34, 35, 36:** The official logos (from left to right) for Rotoma No.1 Incorporation, Rotoiti 15 Trust and Whangamoā Trust

Our Trust Boards oversee the collective land, asset, and nowadays financial interests of those specific kinship-connected families. Trust Boards comprise whānau elected members who function with direct input from owners and beneficiaries. These include whānau, hapū and iwi whose complex kindred genealogies sometimes go back centuries. In each Trust Board reside thousands, sometimes tens of thousands, of cognatically connected members. Fortunately modern Māori, with bilateral notions, became educated and articulate in the ways of the Pākehā, and realised that we required know-how in economic management and financial acumen in order to benefit from such lands and resources. Furthermore, especially in the past several decades, increasing Treaty of Waitangi land and grievance litigation with the



Government meant that previously non-existent financial resources and assets were becoming available as part of the settlement outcome. So as the years have unfolded and many social transformations come to pass, my generation and certainly succeeding generations will benefit. It would also be true to say, that all too often our preceding generations rarely benefitted financially from collectively owned and managed resources and assets, which sadly included my parents and grandparents.



**Figs 37, 38:** photographic images of (top) Rotoiti, as aforementioned, (left) Rerewhakaaitu and (right) Kawerau

The above images reveal the spectacular land and waterway resources managed on behalf of the tribal collectives to which I belong. A Trust Board could have several blocks of land and interests of significant size and monetary value. In addition, not only do we benefit from these various resources, but for centuries, as with many iwi throughout the motu, we deliberately erected pa and marae on tribal lands. Pa consisted of dwellings (whare), fortifications (tuwatawata), and the ritual spaces of marae. Pa and marae were culturally defined precincts that established dominion over that territory, and which today remain integral to our indigenous identity and realities.

### 3.5 Marae, whareniui, and urupa...

Māori have always been people of the land and our earlier patterns of migration often required the erection of temporary residences, although pa tended to be more substantial fortified settlements, not necessarily occupied full time. However, in modern times a widespread emergence of increasing numbers of marae came to be located on our tribal lands. Furthermore, and increasingly, large numbers of urban marae arose, such as these two impressive exemplars. The first is Ngā Hau E Whā national marae in Christchurch. It is the South Islands first national marae and one of NZs largest urban marae. The name means the four winds and is symbolic of being a meeting place for all peoples from everywhere. In more recent times many marae have also sprung up at schools and other



Fig 39

educational institutes, such as the comparatively newer Tangatarua marae located at Waiariki Polytechnic in Rotorua, with the whare whakairo Ihenga opened in 1996. Our marae are sites of tribal significance where Māori history-making is simultaneously reflected upon and engaged in. For many families, our marae were always, and have remained, safe havens from western influences, where we were able to continue our indigenous practices, our language, and our worldviews, unobstructed by Pākehā constraints prevalent elsewhere. With our sea-faring histories well behind us, the pre-contact mana of the carved waka ultimately shifted to the marae. As Neich remarks concerning most Māori tribal communities "... canoes became obsolete and were replaced by the meeting house as the main vehicle of group pride and prestige, parts of old war canoes were incorporated into the houses" (2001, p.174).



Fig 40

Within the confines of tribal whareniui we could be Māori, and everything that entailed. Our people could speak our native tongue without fear of social and

physical reprimand. Our elders could recount rich histories of *other-world* deities unimpeded, and call to mind long-lived ancestral navigators, chiefs and warriors without need of empirical substantiation in accord with western standards. Not only do we collectivise on our marae for hui, wānanga and an array of family events but also we conduct tangihanga upon our tribal grounds. And we prefer to inter our dead in urupa, sacred burial grounds, where we can effectively look after them.



**Fig 41:** Wahanui Urupā at Rotomā

So for many Māori, our urupa are adjacent to our marae, or at the very least located on tribal lands usually within walking distance and appropriately private. Each of these critical aspects will be addressed further in this thesis.

To the Māori of Aotearoa our land, our waterways, pa and marae sites, as well as urupa, have always been held in highest regard, as have our artefacts and all other taonga. To my people these are all beloved treasures, second in priority only to the first priority, people, connected by kinship and who mobilise and collectivise when called upon. It is therefore understandable why whakapapa remains a critical link for the individual and collective. Our marae is the site of our wharenui or meeting house, where as a collective we prefer to conduct the numerous, culturally framed, private funerary processes unique to my people.



**Trust Board and Marae Committee**  
**WHĀNAU and HAPŪ and IWI**

**3.6 Māori and logistics of tangihanga**

At this juncture it is appropriate to speak briefly to various cultural mechanisms and logistics undertaken so as to conduct the ceremonies and rituals involved in our burial practices on marae. I cannot speak in regards to all marae throughout the motu; and neither would I choose to. There was a time in early childhood that, as in the case of so many New Zealanders, I believed Māori were all the same. As a result, I believed that we as Māori all spoke the same reo, adhered to the same tikanga, and followed the same kawa. Along similar innocent lines of thinking I believed all marae had tall ornately carved whare tūpuna, which were filled with rare chisel-sculptured carvings and unique tukutuku lattice panels. I thought all whareniui had

accompanying wharekai with separate walk-in pantries, butchers' quarters, steamers and walk-in fridges. These buildings were on marae with uniformed box hedging, manicured lawns and rose-garden strips, as well as multiple wharepaku. At the enclave of Rotoiti this was certainly the case, and several of the marae of Ngāti Pikiao iwi were much the same; as was the case throughout Te Arawa. They were comparatively similar in aspects of physical outlay, basic architectural design, and functionality, however, our indigenous precincts were definitely, almost defiantly, distinct, and we could differentiate them at a glance. Thus I concede personal iwi-centrism and prejudice, in so much as once believing that what I experienced as being of Ngāti Pikiao, and a part of Te Arawa, therefore translated to all other iwi and Māori.

Of course I grew up to learn that the latter was not at all the case, that all Māori were Māori but not at all alike, and that different iwi spoke different dialects of te reo. I came to realise that the landscapes of the Māori marae varied, sometimes drastically. That is to say that not all wharekai had electricity or even running water; that wharepaku in some particularly remote marae were pit-toilet outhouses also known as long-drops; that not all wharenuī were carved; and that a wharenuī was constituted by the iwi who named and called it as much, not by virtue of being carved or even containing tukutuku – lattice wall panels. These differences are illustrated by marae from my own background. I would also learn that marae can situate more than one wharenuī, albeit uncommon, as well as wharemate, that were wholly unfamiliar in Te Arawa.

### **3.7 Murumurunga... an exemplar of marae distinctions...**

This brings me to an exemplar of those contrasting distinctions in the form of Murumurunga, which is one of my father's Ngāti Whare marae. Located at the village of Minginui in the Whirinaki river valley, one of the two marae of my father's people, Ngāti Whare, is Murumurunga, pictured hence.

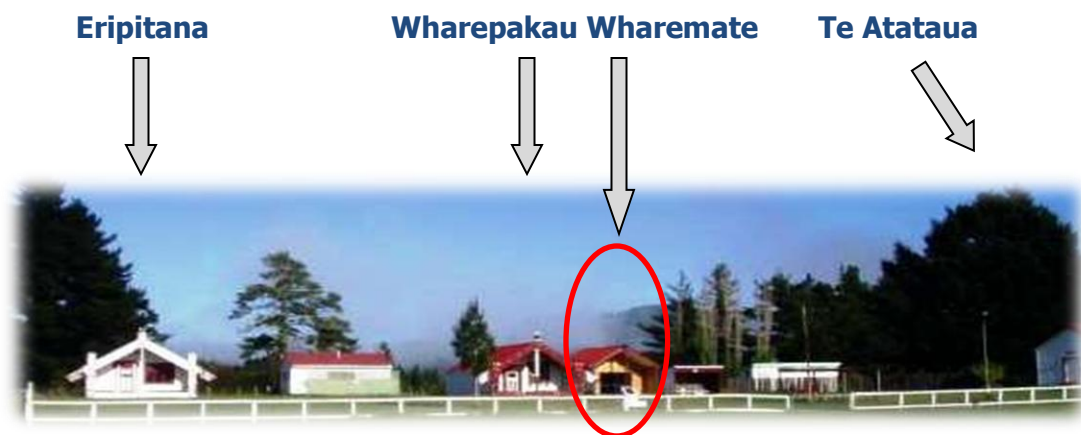


Fig 42



Fig 43

**Eripitana**  
(opened 1884)



Fig 44

**Wharepakau**  
(opened 1930)

Murumurunga marae is located on tribal land whereupon sit two distinct whare whakairo. Eripitana was opened in 1884 by the renowned prophet and founder of the Ringatu faith, Te Kooti (1832-1891). The other whare whakairo, Wharepakau, was opened in 1930. Between them you can see the ablution block, whilst to the side of Wharepakau can be seen the typical Tūhoe wharemate (which I speak to briefly forthwith), and sitting off to the far side of the marae is the wharekai named Te Atataua. Rapata Wiri, who in 2001 submitted an impressive doctoral thesis that had been undertaken amongst Ngāti Whare, writes that,

According to Tutakangahau of Tūhoe, Murumurunga was originally a burial ground which contained one marker to indicate a mass grave site. Tutakangahau stated that some of the Tūhoe people who died at Te Whāiti were buried there but their bodies were later exhumed and returned to Ruatahuna (*kua tereputia katoatia ki Ruuatāhuna*) in order to



Fig 45

fulfil the custom returning the dead to their homeland... the history of Murumurunga is characterised by much misfortune and controversy...

2001, p.180

Wiri recounts narratives imparted by select informants, one in particular who was Jack Tapui Ohlson of Ngāti Whare. This was my father's older brother, my uncle, who was one of the 21 children born to my Ngāti Whare grandparents, Tapui Jack Ohlson and Merepeka Ohlson. Tapui Jack Ohlson was the son of Kohu Te Tuhi, my great-grandmother, who I mention in Chapter One. Te kuia tūpuna Kohu was the daughter of te koroua tūpuna Tamehana Te Tuhi, son of the Ngāti Whare chief Te Tuhi Pihopa, who like Tutakangahau, was a confidant of Best's.



Fig 46

I still recall my father and uncles telling me stories about the inauspicious opening of Eripitana, those same stories that Wiri beautifully articulates and discusses in-depth in his thesis. How, at that opening ceremony, the horse that Te Kooti rode suddenly shied from the wharenuī; thus a tohu was imparted, a sign for the gathered masses. Te Kooti, foreseeing danger befalling the people of Ngāti Whare, prophesied an omen of ill fortune that has since been variously interpreted. To dispel the bad fortune the house was painted sky blue and remained uniquely coloured until a recent 'traditional' renovation in the early 2000s. Te Kooti's words were nevertheless prescient. That familial and indeed tribal narrative with its accompanying kupu whakaaro was seen to come true when Ngāti Whare whenua came to be surveyed. Our lands were quickly alienated and then rapidly torn asunder to allow for the laying of public roadways that would open access to all and sundry who chose to enter our precious domain. It would be more than a century before the government redressed those heart-breaking offenses.



Fig 47

In his thesis, Wiri acknowledges the late Ngāti Whare kuia Rangi Ruri who spoke of three previous wharepuni that sat at Murumurunga, including the original which the tohunga whakairo Te Tuhi Pihopa had dismantled, using some of the materials to build Hinenuitepo. Te Tuhi Pihopa was my koroua tūpuna, my ancestral grandfather, and like his father, Pihopa



Fig 49

Tamehana, had resided at Murumurunga. Te Tuhi Pihopa had been a confident of Best, and in that same tradition, Pihopa's great great grandson, my Uncle Jackie, was a confident and informant for Wiri. Furthermore, in the undertaking of this thesis my Uncle Jackie was also my Ngāti Whare whānau advisor, until his sad and sudden passing in 2012. Regrettably, at that time, our whare tūpuna of Hinenuitepo at Waikotikoti was not in use, and so his tūpāpaku lay at Murumurunga, inside the wharemate, for the tangihanga.



Fig 48

Wharemate are purpose-specific structures, traditionally not very large, and they tend to be unadorned, single room spaces, detached from other marae dwellings. These are sacred places of power that were once highly restricted, and Hare Rua discusses how access was only permitted by those of the kirimate or senior kuia and koroua. In his dissertation *Waikirikiri Marae: Shared Stories and Experiences of the Wharemate*, he notes that "The wharemate for our people is the house or structure where the body of a deceased person lies over the duration of their funeral" (2010, p.4). He mentions that children were not permitted to enter them, that talking was prohibited to the bare minimum, that food was forbidden, as was mention of food and even those who had partaken of food in the wharekai (2010, p.31). In olden days they were deliberately temporary; being quickly erected huts used for a single tangihanga. They were then just as quickly burnt or destroyed in some way so as to ensure the tapu of death in residence would not traverse upon the spaces of the living. However, in time they became



semi-permanent (Rua makes mention of tents previously being used), and eventually they became permanent structures, as can be seen throughout Tūhoe marae, and as is the case at Murumurunga. This said, for Ngāti Whare, while we have a wharemate at Murumurunga marae, we do not have one at Waikotikoti. They are not the preferred dwellings wherein my own Ngāti Whare whānau situate our tūpāpaku for tangihanga.

In 2012 when my uncle Jackie died, his tūpāpaku laid at Murumurunga, begrudgingly, in the wharemate, the structure specifically designed to cater for the dead, regardless that there were two whare whakairo on the marae. I use the word begrudgingly here because the whānau were aware of his reluctance to lay inside a wharemate; he had openly mentioned and/or discussed as much with several of us. Nonetheless, at Murumurunga he was denied the opportunity to lay inside either Eripitana or Wharepakau. One of the reasons given was that to leave the wharemate empty during a tangihanga was potentially calling on death, karanga aituā. Sadly, prior to conclusion and before his tūpāpaku was removed from the wharemate for interment, death indeed returned and took the precious young life of another, who simply fell on the marae and died suddenly and shockingly. Alas, that is not my story to tell, but it is a narrative that continues to be spoken of in the whānau. Wharemate are not found on Te Arawa marae, so when tangihanga arise they do not feature as a logistical aspect requiring consideration.

### 3.8 Ngāti Tamateatutahi Kawiti, Tapuaeharuru and Uruika...

From the outset of tangihanga in Pikiāo lands, there are two priorities for Ngāti Tamateatutahi Kawiti. First, is the tūpāpaku



Fig 50

being readied then accompanied by whānau pani as they prepare to return home to Tapuaeharuru marae for the duration. The other simultaneous

priority is opening and preparing the marae in order to be ready to receive the tūpāpaku and contingent entourage on arrival. So we contact our marae key-holder, our Chairman of the Marae Trust. All facilities are unlocked, and the power switched on while we ensure that marae kuia and kaumātua have been contacted and informed of the impending arrival of the tūpāpaku and bereaved family. Our koroua and



**Fig 51**

kuia can prepare themselves to return to co-ordinate and conduct the unique customary formalities of salutational tangihanga ceremonies. These continue from the moment the tūpāpaku arrives until it is removed, as will be discussed throughout this thesis. Our wharenuī of Uruika is immediately readied with seating for manuhiri and the paepae, as well as ensuring the whāriki and mattresses are laid-out correctly for the tūpāpaku and whānau pani. The looming return of the people also means



**Fig 52**

wharepaku need to be stocked with toiletries, and if there is time then our koroua would ask the children to tidy the carpark areas, and marae grounds. The dining room of Kauiarangi, our wharekai, must be set up with seating, trestles, and condiments; and of course groceries are a priority so that food is ready to cater to the soon-to-arrive masses. One of our key ringawera, my Aunty Sharon, said (personal communication, April, 2011),

... a lot of that duty has fallen upon our two nieces who do a wonderful job of making sure the shopping is done... we usually just do a shopping for the one day... after that it falls back onto that whānau immediate... so basically you have two to three hours while they're at the funeral parlour, and in that time you have to have had the marae set up ...

### **3.9 Some generic tangihanga logistics...**

Throughout the course of this work, numerous tangihanga logistics are addressed and discussed. Clearly many individual efforts merge as increasing

numbers of workers source supplies, plan menus and begin the arduous tasks involved in catering to any number of manuhiri. Any number of people may arrive, without forewarning, during the full duration, which is generally three nights. This is because tangihanga mobilise whānau and whanaunga from combinations of hapū and iwi, many of whom may travel from throughout the motu to unite as tangata whenua upon marae readied with sleeping, washing, and eating facilities. This is the traditional tribal collective transformed, and in modernity it can be an impressive mobilisation.

Both manuhiri and tangata whenua participate, for reasons that are as much voluntary as they are obligatory. It is why many Māori prefer to work alongside Māori so as to avoid cultural misinterpretations and be able to tautoko each other when appropriate. This said, for many Māori, our obligation to attend is relative to one's kinship proximity to the tūpāpaku or whānau pani, as well as such circumstances as the whānau and hapū status at a tribal level, and the overall status of the tūpāpaku. At a hapū and iwi level, where appropriate and at the least, a representative will attend. Such is the way of Māori and our whānau, hapū and iwi responsibilities within tribal collectives. Of course, tangihanga attendance also is subject to different factors including one's availability, the location of the marae, and any number of potential external influences, so attendance is not always possible. That said, absent Māori increasingly send koha to the marae including money, kai, flowers with their written sentiments, or telegrams and messages from overseas in lieu of their physical absence. In modernity it can be easier to send koha, and thoughts as opposed to attending.

However, where possible Māori will attend, though I have known of kinsfolk who themselves were too ill, but who nevertheless deliberately sent their younger generations, to contribute and work, as and where required. Furthermore, we have had young people hitchhike hundreds of kilometres home to Uruika, to pitch in wherever, and then at the end of the tangi

happily thumb a ride home, via others who have attended from a distance. There was a time in my life when those who attended the marae stayed to attend the interment at the urupa. Nowadays, however, I see increasing numbers arriving for either the final marae service (just prior to the departure for the urupa) which, in their ignorance, they refer to as "the tangi". Or they simply attend the burial, with a large number absent for the hākari afterwards. The hākari is being unattended by many of our young people who consider splashing water on their head at the urupa to be ritually sufficient for the liminal traversing from tapu to noa. However, the hākari is vital as a transitional process, from the world of the dead (the urupa) to the world of the living (the kai), and for many it is essential and considered risky to overlook. Enjoying the hākari is the proper thing to do.

In closing at this juncture, by various means I am often reminded that Māori, in their experiences of tangihanga, all have a story about koro's taiaha, kuia's korowai, mum's jewellery, dad's work boots and suchlike. Some of those stories will be part of my fieldwork research. Suffice to say, tangihanga stories abound regarding the choice of garments tūpāpaku are dressed in, adorning korowai, whāriki, taonga, accessorising jewellery, or the lack of such items, taonga. Te Awekotuku writes about these prized artefacts that acquire power from those many people who have looked after and enjoyed them (1998). In addition there are concealed items discretely tucked within the folds of the casket lining, collections of photographs and so on - all matters little often discussed in the scholarly literature. This is all part of the empirical expanse, observable and deserving of deliberation, as well as the multiple levels of cultural engagement evident in the phenomenon of the present-day tangihanga complex.

# ETHNOGRAPHIC FAMILIAL REFLEXIONS

This is a reflexive narrative intended to serve as the foundational ethnography from which the social and cultural context of this thesis emerges. It relates Māori awareness of processual reality, outlining multiple inter-connecting familial and indigenous practices that communicate grass-roots life experiences of death in our world. This requires speaking to tribally distinct and relevant lived experiences of marae as centralising locations for Māori. Marae facilities in turn provide the fundamental resource of whareniui; each animated by the collective resource of family, in its widest sense of the term, perhaps no more crucially than upon the ultimate occurrence of death, and the penultimate final journey of tūpāpaku. With the inevitability of death, tangihanga arise, and for my people, so too does the rhetorical whānau call to return home to the marae. This research engages the principal site of ritual significance, around the tūpāpaku in whareniui. By means of multiple, eclectic and divergent processes we eventually come to observe, and participate in, the exhibiting of select taonga, objects and artefacts of Māori funerary processes.

## 4.1 Modern exemplars of Arawa Marae...



**From top left to right, (Fig 53) Tāheke Marae at Mourea, (Fig 54) Te Waiiti Marae at Rotoiti, (Fig 55) Punawhakareia Marae at Rotoiti, (Fig 56) Te Papaïouru Marae at Ohinemutu, (Fig 57) Taupaeharuru Marae at Rotoiti**

The marae is the focal point of Māori culture and communal activities... Despite the corrosive effect of missionaries on the culture of Māori society in New Zealand and the assimilationist policies of successive governors, the marae as an institution has persisted into the modern era...

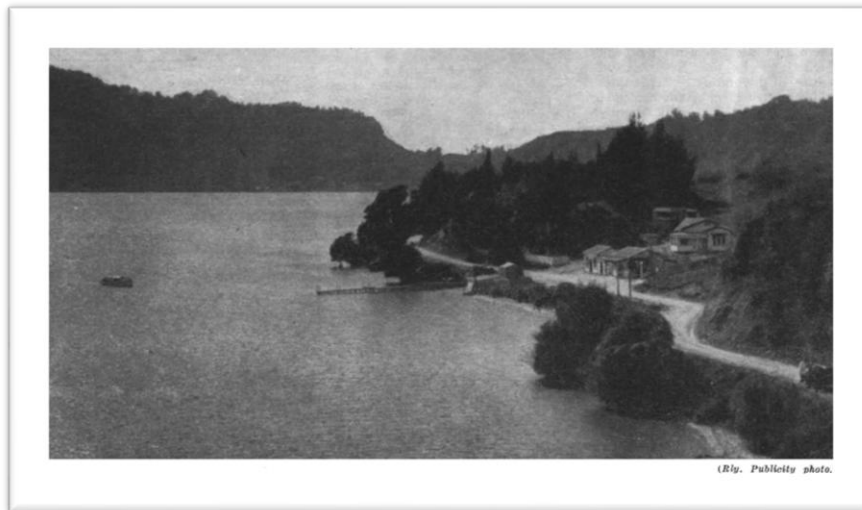
Walker, R. 1992, p.17



**Fig 58**

## 4.2 Memories of Tapuaeharuru Marae at Rotoiti...

It is impossible, on my part, to separate Tapuaeharuru Marae from my formative childhood memories of Lake Rotoiti ki te a Ihenga and Ngāti Tamateatutahi Kawiti of Ngāti Pikiao, Te Arawa. Like the fibre of the woven harakeke, they are thread together. Our maunga, Matawhaura, seated within the protective waters of Rotoiti, looks much as it did centuries ago; unpopulated, pristine whenua.



(Fig 59) Top, (Fig 60) left, (Fig 61) right: Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century images of Lake Rotoiti ki te a Ihenga

Today however, the blackberry, raspberry, bramble bushes, and sprawling tree-lines of my infancy which once surrounded Tapuaeharuru marae entire, are gone. The abundant fish and our previously free flowing stream, adjacent, have vanished. I rarely swim in the waters of our moana Rotoiti

now, such is its condition. To my mind, over the last four decades the skyline has darkened with wilding conifers, and temperatures have risen as global weather patterns have shifted. As well, holiday homes are now dotted along foreshores that were once exclusive to the papakāinga and whare tūpuna of Ngāti Pikiao and Te Arawa. The enclave of Rotoiti has become increasingly subjected to ever-modernising demands, with new improved roadways, growing numbers of residences with multi-cultural residents and of course the changing landscape of our flora, fauna and waterways. But such was not always the case and this is a reflection of earlier times, not too long gone, of Tapuaeharuru marae. I recall Uruika, my whare tūpuna which has stood proudly upon those grounds since its whānau inception more than a century ago; nestled on native land which has been in my Pikiao family for centuries. Our carved ancestral house has remained an enduring sentinel watching over the lives of my tribe, Ngāti Tamateatutahi Kawiti; such was the mind-set of ancestral houses fostered by my people. This landscape was then, and is now, a safe haven where my ancestors, our families, have defended, protected, fought, compromised, loved, bred; and at life's ultimate juxtaposition with death, have come to lay in state.

In my grandfathers' case, Tapuaeharuru Marae quite literally cast its silhouette upon his humble homestead for many years. Uruika was then in its entirely original state, though subsequent decades saw the marae and whare tūpuna progressively modernised. It is appropriate to clarify the familial construct and some terms of endearment used, and perhaps unique, in my whānau. Throughout my life I addressed my koroua, my mother's father, as dad, though for the purpose of this work I shall use the pseudonym koroua-dad. He was not my father nor was I his son, and we never purported as much. However, I had lived intermittently with him in childhood, travelled extensively alongside him for many years, and was essentially raised belonging to both my parents as well as my koroua-dad; the progeny of them all, individually and collectively. His conviction that whānau was the core



construct to being Māori was superseded only by his belief that aroha sustained such convictions.

My koroua-dad, Āpotoro Takiwā Tutere Michael Hohepa (1929-2006), remembered fondly by some in the district as *the galloping padre*, had navigated the spectacular Rotoiti landscape by horseback in an era when the current highway connecting Kawerau to Rotorua was still a coarse gravel road,



Fig 62

albeit well-travelled by the burgeoning whānau and hapū of Rotomā, Rotoehu and Rotoiti. His childhood memories spoke of a harsh and at times unforgiving social climate during which many iwi were still recovering from colonial as well as earlier inter-tribal conflicts, and pervasive introduced diseases which decimated so many. My great-grandparents, Koroua Hohepa

Te Wao and kuia Te Pae Mihikore had retreated into the papakāinga at Rotoiti to raise their quickly growing whānau within the protection of ancestral lands. At a young age, my koroua-dad had revealed a natural affinity for matters of a cultural and spiritual nature. It was therefore with little surprise that his formal induction into Te Hāhi Rātana was advocated by the whānau before he had reached the age of twenty. It is reputed that Ngāti Pīkiao, and other representatives of Te Arawa,



Fig 63

travelled to Parliament to petition the Government to lower its age restriction of twenty one, in order to enable my grandfather to officially enter the ministry of the Rātana faith early. My beloved kuia Te Pae, having determined that her son would succeed in both the Māori and Pākehā worlds, also ensured that my grandfather was bilingual and well prepared to find work as a civil servant. Thus arose a challenging and at times paradoxical duality of social identities which would increasingly suffuse through each succeeding generation, up to its most manifest; evident in twenty-first century family members. My koroua-dad went on to raise his poipoia children in the papakāinga below Uruika, and his full-time work at the Rotorua Ministry of

Works remained secondary to his religious ministrations of the hapū. When for various poignant reasons, discussed in later chapters, he was implored to poipoia children born to his siblings, he did not hesitate, though such magnanimous responsibilities came at a high cost to his independence. But then to my koroua-dad, the individual was constituted by the cultural collective; the whānau, hapū and iwi. The one necessitated the other; therefore the one did not exist without the other; and to understand either required recognising the inherent symbiotic and inseparable aspect of both. Such was his beautifully simple way of perceiving the indigenous culture he was part of; and any other notions of familial construct or identity were Pākehā notions, best left for Pākehā peoples.

In so saying, I was only an intermittent, albeit regular, resident in his home; whereas he had, in a fulltime capacity, singularly raised my mother along with her five poipoia brothers (and indeed my parents' first born son, my oldest brother). Brought up as his children, my mother was the oldest sibling, and only daughter, followed by her poipoia brothers Ihaka (Sooky), Ropeta (Bob), Tautini (Charlie) and Waretini (Wally). Uncle Sooky had sadly passed away when I was but a teenager. Uncle Bob still lives in the Waiariki, whilst Uncle Tautini and Uncle Waretini chose different pathways that led them overseas. Tautini and Waretini were two of twelve children, all who came to be variously raised by different whānau following the premature deaths of their parents. Their mother, my Kuia Bella (1926-1962), an awhina in the Rātana Church and older sister to my grandfather, had died of TB at the young age of only 36 years. Her beloved husband, Koro Pita Hoani (1915-1963), a Rātana āpotoro, died within a year of his wife's passing; it is said he followed her into death because of his broken heart.

As an adolescent, Waretini was, in his own words 'not a good child'. He kept running away from that beloved old weathered papakāinga at Rotoiti, only to be returned later, given a beating, but eventually rebelling again. Then he

joined the NZ Army and travelled the world. Many years later he would marry my Auntie Josie and settle down to raise his own whānau. They were a well-known and popular couple, who performed together in the concert party circuit of the Rotorua Hotels. To hear their voices in duet was pure joy. As a rebellious teenager myself I had been taken in by him and his wife, in their rundown derelict home in Rotorua, where food and money was scarce but life was immeasurably exciting. His children became my pseudo brothers and sisters, and we were all trained to perform kapahaka throughout Rotorua venues as part-time evening jobs. To this day I am proud to say that he still calls me Son. They eventually relocated to Perth where he, like his fathers, would be ordained as a Rātana āpotoro, and where he has lived for many years now.



Fig 64

His older brother Tautini was notably the only poipoia who my koroua-dad had legally adopted. One of my clearest early memories of our lives at Rotoiti was of my uncle Tautini's 21st birthday held at Tapuaeharuru in 1974. Dad had inherited my great grandparent's papakāinga at Rotoiti (amongst other assets). Just prior to my uncle's birthday, Rotorua had hosted a whirlwind visit by Queen Elizabeth II. As a part of her visit, the Rotorua Council had commissioned and erected a floral arched walkway at the Lakefront, upon which she stood to deliver a public address. It was a substantial and stunning piece of work, and following that whirlwind visit my koroua-dad, who at the time worked for the Ministry of Works, purchased that arched walkway which he then used as the centrepiece on the stage in our wharekai for my uncle's 21<sup>st</sup>. It was utterly, some would say ridiculously, impressive, particularly with tall fern and giant plants both sides, and the live band which performed standing around it. Many years later my mother informed me that in order to cover the apparently exorbitant cost of that 21<sup>st</sup> celebration at Tapuaeharuru, my koroua-dad had in fact sold the land upon which my great-grandparents'



Fig 65

papakāinga had stood. That however is a story for another chapter. Their childhoods and life experiences were at times challenging, and they recounted much to me during a recent sojourn in Perth. My Uncle Tautini recalled how...

I was regarded as the too-goody-good boy. I was the one that never did anything damn wrong... We had a hard life, a real hard life. Especially up at the marae. We had one of the most beautiful marae around Rotoiti... we had to go down to the lake and wheelbarrow big rocks to do gardening at the marae. We had beautiful plants, beautiful roses, and everything was put in place by Dad. Everything had to be just bang-on, and so we had a tough upbringing. There was a lot of times there that I wanted to run away, a lot of times there that I couldn't take anymore, I didn't know what to do... our upbringing at home and with those connections to the marae, was very hard. Especially when the old fella had his services every weekend, every Sunday. We had to get up at half past five in the morning, clean the house, sweep the ground outside the main door, you know it was dirt; we had to sweep that right out to the gateway. Everything had to be so spick and span, the house had to be clean, and we had to do sandwiches and what not for the people that was coming to church... we were always the last, regardless of whatever, even inside our own home, we were the last. Your mother [fig66] gave us a hard time as well, back home in those days...

Hohepa, T.C.M, personal communication, June, 2011

It was a hard time, a different time; some would argue that it was a better and simpler time. Then in time they each grew up, as all children do, and found life pathways of their own.

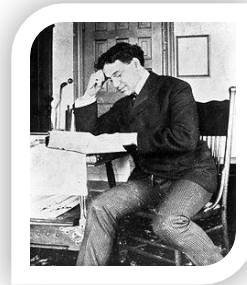
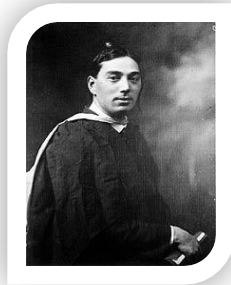
### 4.3 The times they are a changing...

In time my mother, Cairo Makarena Te Wao Hohepa (1941-2009) of Ngāti Rangitihī and Ngāti Pīkiao descent, married my father in the small forestry township of Murupara in 1963. However, at the insistence of my koroua-dad, they reluctantly migrated to my mother's native lands which



Fig 66

ranged throughout the confederated Te Arawa domain, where employment was readily available in nearby Rotorua. This was the 1960's and though unknown to me in childhood, the future for Māori was shifting dramatically in the wake of political, economic and cultural reforms by prominent Māori leaders such as Sir James Carroll (his nephew Sir Turi Carroll would follow much later), who courageously paved the way for subsequent leaders such as Sir Apirana Ngata, Sir Peter Buck (Te Rangi Hiroa), and Sir Maui Pomare. As exemplars of our nation's first Māori academics and politicians, they had exerted considerable combined pressure upon the NZ Government to assist their people in the recovery of diminishing histories, heritage, language and land.



**From left to right: (Fig 67)** Sir Apirana Ngata 1874-1950, at the University of Canterbury. **(Fig 68)** Sir Te Rangi Hiroa 1877- 1951, at the University of Otago in 1904 and **(Fig 69)** Sir Maui Pomare 1875-1930, at Battle Creek College in Michigan, USA, in 1899.

By the end of the 1960s, my parents were well ensconced at that old wooden homestead where the radio was the latest novelty, preceding the advancement of television which had yet to reach homes en masse. As an infant I contentedly played with marbles on the earthen entrance to our whare, imploring visitors to join me in digging holes (much to Mum's frustration) and skonking Cleary's (a child's game involving small colourless glass marbles). My mother's daily routine was typically long and laborious for a young, bright and strong woman of twenty six. She was required to nurse the babies and keep house in a whare that had no running hot water, though the tap plumbing for cold water had been newly installed in 1967 just after

my birth. Linen was changed regularly and the laundry, which included copious linen nappies, was washed by hand in a large old aluminium tub that also served to bathe the children in. Home cooking was done on a wonderful old black pot-belly stove, next to which the wood for this and the fireplace was kept stacked tidily for ready-use. The large faded mats had to be hung on the sturdy wire clothesline out the back and struck repeatedly with the hard-brush broom, to rid all dirt. With all the wooden furniture dusted and brass implements polished, the entire house had to be swept out (the vacuum was not yet a common commodity), then its timber floors pristinely washed and scrubbed; all by hand, all daily. My grandfather's old but treasured possessions had to be kept in scrupulous order, so that he could conduct his religious ministrations and civil servant business without hindrance. That wooden homestead which sat in the protective silhouette of our whare tūpuna was a huge hallowed dwelling where I, as the baby, was showered with adoration in a home filled with abundant love. On Sunday mornings, always before the sun rose, we would be roused, dressed in our best clothes and commanded to stay clean (which amongst other things meant avoiding those all enticing blackberry and raspberry bushes). The whole whānau would then meander up the slight slope which separated our homestead from the marae of my childhood, where my koroua-dad conducted the weekly Rātana church services to the gathered hapū.

#### 4.4 Memories of Uruika on Tapuaeharuru Marae...

Ornately carved Uruika always stood tall and proud sprawling against the hillside of Tapuaeharuru, ready as though serenely awaiting whānau to arrive and animate it with activity. My koroua-dad and



Fig 70

Mum told me that Uruika had been erected in the opening decade of the 1900's. As was the intent of its carver, Uruika was a twin of the wharenui Te Tākinga II, which sits at the opposite side of Rotoiti. Apparently, each whare

whakairo had been constructed in the traditions of old, by the same tūpuna, whose descendants connected the lineages of both sides of the lake. Anthropologist Roger Neich (1944-2010), in his 2001 publication *Carved Histories*, determined that Uruika was carved by Te Ngaru Ranapia, though Neich relates that he had worked alongside his father. Mead (1986, p120) asserted that Te Ngaru Ranapia, son of the famed Ngāti Pikiao carver Te Ngaru Whakapuka, was the carver of Uruika and Te Tākinga II, while his father had been the carver of Te Tākinga I. Furthermore, Professor Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, also of Ngāti Pikiao descent, has spoken of another carver, Rapata Curtis of Ngāti Rongomai (who was based at Maketu and involved in carving the house Te Awhe) also working on the construction of my tūpuna whare.

For me, Uruika was my backyard playhouse (albeit shrouded in the sanctity of what the elders did there), in a native landscape where children find numerous exciting distractions. There was a thick, sturdy, hedge brush-line that acted to demarcate the marae boundary. The cropped wild-grass ātea offered a perfect play area for us children while the adults mingled amongst themselves, no doubt discussing important family or tribal business that was of little or no concern to their young. Inside the whare tūpuna were elaborately woven tukutuku lining the walls, and as a child I imagined they were like magical Arabian carpets, with intricately coded patterns that held pūrākau which Pākehā had yet to fully grasp. The dramatic and potent whakairo or carved panels were our god-like immobile playmates imbued with arcane knowledge. On special occasions, simple and cherished whāriki made by the hands of my departed kuia would be unfurled; their aged familiar flax scent filling the wharenuī with temporal reminders of our kuia's otherworld presence. On even more special occasions, the whānau would bring out the korowai, treasured and beautiful feathered cloaks that we children would quietly and surreptitiously slip beneath to dream undisturbed. The children of the hapū were the most treasured members in a twentieth century kanikani

of life that seems so much simpler than that of the technologically distinct twenty-first century. Our precious world revolved around fun, food and sleep; very simple. Whenever we were brought together, fun was the utmost unequivocal priority of the moment, until we got hungry. Some would start a game of bulrush or tag, while others would head around the side of the wharekai where you could find excellent dirt patches for digging holes and skonking all the other kid's marbles. I however, would more often than not play fetch with our three-legged golden spaniel-cross named Maea, whose familiar canine presence at the marae was largely tolerated because of my grandfather's status. Maea had already earned a formidable reputation because he had lost his rear limb defending children against a much larger attacking pig-dog, who had broken the confines of a leash while supposedly tethered on the back of a truck parked at the marae. The older kids, like my brother and sister, would regularly run off to the adjacent stream because it seemed to have an endless supply of fish which was wonderful for practising various tickling techniques. We younger children always had to be accompanied by the older ones if we went out of view from our elders, which generally meant our siblings would try to escape from us before being burdened. But sometimes we'd get to accompany them (especially if my grandfather commanded it in order that the adults could have a hui), and I'd merrily kick stones with Maea hobbling happily alongside as we made our way to the stream, where I would watch in wonder as they tickled and flicked the fish out, only to throw them back for another day.

As I left infancy, and Mum was caught up with the younger ones, I would escape up to Tapuaeharuru under the pretence of berry picking or some other pretext. There was little more that a child such as I could ever wish for. I could play hide-n-seek with Maea amongst the bramble brush, pick berries in the bushes to make milkshakes, or climb any number of trees. If I got bored, then I had multiple whānau homes to drop in at. On the regular days when I would go tree climbing I always had a choice of spectacular views. I



could gaze longingly down upon the sparkling diamond-like waters of Rotoiti with her shifting shades of blue, green and turquoise; and wait impatiently for school to finish so that someone, anyone, would return and walk me across the road to go swimming. Other times I would stare forlornly upwards, at proud Uruika, supported within by its pou tokomanawa, the roofline rising above the marae, surrounded by profuse brush, shrubbery, native tree-lines and the adjacent stream that led down to our lake, in whose abode rested our maunga. Wondering how many sleeps before the hapū would gather, games would be started, voices would be raised in laughter or song, food prepared and, most importantly, I'd have playmates with marbles to skonk. It was simply an idyllic childhood setting. Tapuaeharuru stood then, as now, the silent ineffable kaitiaki of whānau events, and so very much more.

Regardless of living in the silhouette of Uruika (or not, as the case was in later years), it was common practice for me to attend marae events with my koroua-dad. More so than my younger siblings, because my whānau had intended that I would follow in his footsteps, eventually entering ministerial training in the church. I had few reservations though, because such occasions were adventures and my koroua-dad always spoiled me with store-bought treats. His presence, on numerous marae, was most-often obligatory because of his dual role as a kaumātua/orator and equally as an Āpotoro Takiwa.



**Fig 71:** 1887 Paipera Tapu, written in te reo Māori.

My initial attendant obligation was to carry my koroua-dad's monogrammed travel-case with his Justice of the Peace materials, church robes, Paipera Tapu, hymn books, documents, treasured baptismal vessel, and so forth.



**Fig 72:** glass baptismal vessel

Once I had that safely installed in the corner of the wharenuī, I could disappear to play with the cousins until such time as I

would be called on again. With each passing year however, that negligible childhood obligation was married with various and increasing marae duties, from the routine tasks to those more complex, and which carried more responsibility. My koroua-dad insisted the ātea had to be cleared of all rubbish, particularly if manuhiri were coming. The smaller children were duly nominated to do this, as well as stocking the wharepaku with soaps and toilet rolls, and ringing the bell to signal it was time for church.

During formal occasions, the dining room had to be always readied for ope, the arriving visiting parties. We were required to vigilantly alert the kitchen of the appearance, and size, of arriving ope - then again when the ope was about to make their way from the wharenuī to the wharekai. Plates filled with steaming kai had to be served, tea poured from large urns, condiments, juice jugs and dining table platters replenished, and all personal requests by manuhiri responded to. Thereafter, we then undertook clearing and re-setting the dining room all over again. There was consistent washing, drying, and stacking of the copious crockery, cutlery and dishes, as well as in the evening making beds in the wharenuī; and cleaning, seemingly never-ending cleaning, of every possible surface of the marae.

As young adults we eventually found ourselves instructing the smaller children, while we were in turn were shown how to organise the kitchen's various operations. This informal learning in the wharekai often acted as foundational for those few individuals encouraged to make their way to the wharenuī pae, wherein lay the responsibilities for conducting and managing more formal aspects of marae activities. Our culture bound training was rigorous, but it ensured we were kept actively occupied on marae, whether the event was a whānau hui, church service, wedding, birthday celebration, or any number of functions, including tangihanga.

My mother and koroua-dad believed I was capable in the traditional skills of memory retention and the ways of our people. During a tangi one particular evening at the tender age of four, my mother informed the whānau that she and I would sit in the wharenuī with the tūpāpaku while they went to the wharekai for dinner. When we were alone, she told me it was alright to approach the tūpāpaku. This was to be her way of introducing me to the physical reality of death (prior to being instructed by my koroua-dad in the metaphysical reality of life), and so began her teachings of the sanctity, processes and intent of tangi. On that first occasion, the tūpāpaku in the open casket was my great-aunt and Mum told me not to be afraid as I tentatively reached out to touch the still, silent, unassuming weathered old face. I descend from a lineage well known for long full-bodied tresses and my kuia's waist-length tresses of soft silver white hair were now motionless as she seemingly lay sleeping in her silk lined casket. From that evening forward tūpāpaku and open caskets have never worried me. By way of my parents, elders such as my koroua, kuia, aunts, and uncles, I came to realise the tasks and responsibilities of being kin, and that everyone and everything had its appropriately designated function and/or place when upon marae.

As innocent children, we learnt acceptable and appropriate behaviour sometimes by trial, but admittedly most often by error. The imminent arrival of tūpāpaku at Uruika meant the ātea had to be cleared, no matter what significant children's game was happening or the pivotal stakes involved. Borne solemnly into the wharenuī, caskets were placed on a mattress always arranged on whāriki laid by aunts; and whāriki were not to be trodden on with footwear clean or otherwise, or treated like common household mats. Caskets were always positioned in the same designated space, top end flush against the wall. So located, they were not to be shifted unless directed by kaumātua, even if desperately searching for lost coins, or worse, mislaid

marbles. The lid of the casket, placed discretely at the far rear-end of the wharenuī, was not to be dragged onto the ātea and used as a make-believe flying carpet; regardless how really good the idea seemed at the time. Caskets were at all times shrouded with at least one korowai, again arranged by the aunts; and korowai were not to be removed and used as superhero capes, no matter the invincible superhero being emulated. Objects such as playing cards, dice, hymn books, and toys, placed discretely by whānau within the folds of the casket lining, were not to be removed and used to barter or bribe with. Taonga such as patu or taiaha laid on the korowai, were to remain so, not wielded in friendly, or unfriendly, combat. Photographs were not to be pitched to and fro in assumed innocent frivolity. They were never placed randomly, and if disturbed, had to be correctly re-placed. Floral arrangements which accompanied the tūpāpaku and sat at the feet of the casket were to remain so, never to be taken into the wharekai and used as centre pieces on the tables, despite the impressive decorative affect. By way of these experiences, and many more, I learnt the extent of the sanctified reverence with which tūpāpaku were accorded, and just as importantly, how to appropriately conduct myself in their presence.



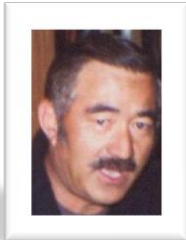
**Fig 73:** Tapuaeharuru Marae today: to the left is the modern whare kai Te Kuia Kauiarangi and in the foreground is Uruika, my whare tūpuna. Between these you can just make out the abluion block. To the right of the wharenuī is the storage building which houses the whāriki, mattresses and linen.

We grew up understanding all marae as kinship oriented landscapes upon which to play, learn and work, as well as crucial opportunities to connect with whanaunga. I now realise the marae of my childhood encapsulated so very many contemporary utilities, which in Pākehā settings are typically separate

or distinct. Tapuaeharuru marae functioned as my private playhouse, the community playground, neighbourhood kindergarten, and the families' cultural, religious and ceremonial sanctuary. Throughout, it was a constant site of safety, protection, kinship connectivity, munificent love, innumerable activities, and of course, wonderful food. Eventually I also came to see Uruika as a vital house of learning, a community hall for familial celebrations and events of significance, and ultimately the centralising funerary venue of the whānau and hapū. Today, with its modern and once controversial ablution block, new wharekai, storage facilities, treated timber fence-line, conditioned lawn, butcher's room, visitor's gable and additional ablution block, it continues to stand witness to the metamorphoses of time and people. The tūpuna whare, Uruika, remains proud and tall, offering its seemingly timeless sanctity, and protection, as it stands ready to continue to embrace the lives of new generations of Ngāti Tamateatutahi Kawiti. When the karanga whānau arises, I return to my Pikiao marae.

**4.6 Memories of Waikotikoti Marae at Te Whāiti Nui a Toi...**

My father, Te Heta (Hector) Tamehana Ohlson (1943-1996) was born of Ngāti Whare and Scandinavian descent. Poverty was prevalent in the lives of mid twentieth century Māori. It was evident in both my maternal and paternal whānau systems, but it was



**Fig 74**



**Figs 75, 76:** Thomas Ryan (1864-1927) water colours of Te Whāiti-nui-a-Toi; looking down the Whirinaki Valley showing the settlement of Te Whāiti 1891. Alexander Turnbull Library

particularly emphasised in the more rural and isolated settlements such as those of my father's iwi. Located at the periphery of the rohe of Tūhoe, Ngāti Whare prospered as kaitiaki in remote enclave settlements such as Te Whāiti Nui a Toi and Minginui. In contrast to my mother's comparatively urban and therefore more advantaged iwi, my father's rural-based, therefore less advantaged iwi, had their native lands, and marae, ranging along the Whirinaki River, within the Urewera Ranges. Whereas we regularly engaged with Ngāti Pikiao who remained a predominant hapū in our lives, we only sporadically engaged with Tūhoe and Ngāti Whare who, in hindsight, nevertheless enhanced our experiences and subsequent awareness of what it meant to be Māori.

Because of forestry and the timber industry, by the mid-twentieth century Te Whāiti had become an active settlement with a number of scattered papakāinga, a modest picture theatre and a few simple stores. As forestry and commerce interests shifted inevitably closer to the urban centres, so too did the people who were the life-blood of the enclave. Subsequently, the Te Whāiti of my childhood was a depopulating rural settlement with few inhabited homes, and even fewer larger wooden buildings overrun by fantastic arrays of sweet-smelling wild flowers and a profusion of multi-coloured wild berry thickets, strewn throughout with sharp-edged wild grass. There was the old picture theatre outside which, family stories say, my dad and two of his brothers would sit astride their horse so they could watch the new phenomenon of moving pictures through the small cracked glass pane in the raised window. One of my father's two brothers, Te Hata (the pōtiki), grew up to become the talented actor also known as Olly Ohlson, who hosted a daily television show called *After School*. In childhood they used to lament that they never got to see an entire movie, because the operator would always come out, and shy their horse away. Nonetheless, they kept returning, and kept being sent on their way, content at having at least glimpsed the far distant future through fragmented snippets of 1950s black

and white film. By the time I was roaming through the area as a child, the theatre had come into disrepair and disuse. The small high window was still there, though by now pane-less, and I used to lay amongst the wild flowers staring up and imagining my dad and uncles as young boys excitedly balancing astride a wild horse momentarily mesmerised by fleeting celluloid fantasies like Tarzan, the Lone Ranger and Mandrake the Magician, where the seeming impossible was possible.

Changes occurred at a much slower pace in isolated rural areas, and unlike urbanised areas, changes subsequently arrived much later. I remember in 1977 learning of the novelty of an old style telephone at my aunt's home over the road from Waikotikoti. Unlike the phones in our homes throughout Rotorua, which had a large round spinning dial on the face plate, this one had a side-panel handle which when vigorously rotated, would connect you with an operator who would then ask what number you wished to be connected to. We came to realise of course that the phone in Te Whāiti was in fact the outdated precursor to the modern models that were already in Rotorua. It became common for contemporary commodities available in urban centres to take a decade or longer to be introduced at Te Whāiti.



Fig 77

In many ways it was apparent that my father's people were far more socially disadvantaged than my mother's. However, Ngāti Whare were also one of the nation's few fortunate iwi, whose rural isolation acted as a shielding mechanism, protecting their language, culture, cosmology and indigenous worldview. The initially limited and difficult access meant the people were more cosseted from intercultural social factors that the majority of modernising Māori were succumbing to. Whereas the nation's urban populace were becoming increasingly familiar with grocers and butchers shops, supermarkets and fast-food outlets, Ngāti Whare had at their doorsteps the natural abundance of the Whirinaki. The richly laden native forest valleys and

canyon, with innumerable plant and wildlife resources, multiple and steeped waterfall systems, and intricate tributaries continues to provide natural sources of food, medicines, even raw materials for clothing and housing, as well as multiple sites for recreation and entertainment. As kaitiaki of the Whirinaki, my father's people both enjoyed and protected its plentiful treasures, which in time would sadly become cause for money-motivated dissention. Te Whāiti was not then encumbered with overhead power cables or telephone lines, and the sole access highway was still only a long winding, pothole ridden, harsh dirt road, until my teen years when it was finally sealed.

#### 4.7 Memories of Hinenuitepo at Waikotikoti Marae...

At home in Te Whāiti, my father's whānau regaled excitingly rich stories of being raised in the hallowed land of 'the children of the mist'; of growing up amongst free-flowing mountain waterfalls, copious wild fern valley slopes, and spectacular tree-covered forests teeming with countless mischievous patupaiarehe. There were also the stories of distinguished tūpuna; none more contemporaneously so then our Koroua Te Tuhi Pihopa, who had painstakingly laboured two decades in total, to single-handedly carve and erect our whare tūpuna Hinenuitepo, which was formally opened on Waikotikoti marae in 1920.



Fig 78



Fig 79 Left Hinenuitepo in 1930 with Chief Whatanui in front (Alexander Turnbull Library Collection) Fig 80 Right: Hinenuitepo in the 20<sup>th</sup> century



Te Tuhi Pihopa, in western estimations of kinship, was my great great grandfather who, according to ethnographer Elsdon Best, was a chief of Te Whāiti renowned for his unique skills of both weaving (typically a female art) and carving (traditionally a male art). Neich relates that my Koroua Te Tuhi was likely the carver who Ngata, in the early 1900's, had identified as one of only two surviving carvers outside the Te Arawa rohe (2001, p.159). He was by all accounts an accomplished kite maker, weaver, builder and carver, whose rare eclectic artistic skills were etched into every part of his whare whakairo.

I was not as familiar with the treasured carvings of our whare tūpuna Hinenuitepo at Waikotikoti. They were by no means alien or foreboding to me, simply unfamiliar for two reasons, the obvious stylistic variations between Ngāti Whare and Ngāti Pūkiao, and because we simply didn't spend as much time in their presence as we did in the case of Uruika. Hinenuitepo was initially flanked with my grandparent's weathered old papakāinga to its right, while to its left was the original wharekai, which I remember as this gloomy and claustrophobic space, filled with the distinct aroma of wild game and often overflowing with frantic

activity. Today, that worthy old dining room, which once catered to masses, stands derelict though readied for restoration; and in place of the whānau papakāinga stands Te Hau o Pu, the replacement wharekai erected in 1991, already in poor condition and disuse.



**Fig 81, 82:** Today, Te Whare Kooti during the Urewera Commission hearings of 1904-1907 which had been our original wharekai.

Sadly, we did not often return to the Whirinaki region with our father, perhaps just once or twice a year, and then only in the case of tangihanga. As a parent, he had deeply private reasons to keep us restrained within the whānau embrace of Te Arawa; making it clear that Tūhoe kawa allowed for

children to follow the genealogical lineage and kawa of the female, our mother. My father also never spoke his native tongue formally on the marae, and was reluctant even to do so in the privacy of his own home.

My father and his siblings had been born into a generation who had predominantly been forced to suppress their indigenous cultural knowledge, including the language... they had strategically adapted to the necessity of recognising the precepts of the Presbyterian Church, although they surreptitiously continued to acknowledge the Māori pantheon and worldview; a common practice prevalent to Māori families of this generation. In later life, my father would exclusively assert the validity of the Māori worldview.

Malcolm-Buchanan, V. 2009, p.19

Waikotikoti marae, as with Tapuaeharuru, and by a lesser degree Murumurunga, which was my paternal family's alternative marae if required, featured prominently in the lives of my whānau, each remaining pivotal locations of a myriad of life lessons and experiences.

#### **4.8 Our marae - our urupa...**

Our marae, and our private, interlinked, family urupa, operate according to the kawa of the respective iwi, and in the case of my parents marae, each revealed comparable practices as much as noticeable variations. One of the distinctions which remains etched in my memory and which diverged between my parents' marae, was the modern use, by Tūhoe, of whare mate. On Te Arawa marae tūpāpaku are confined to the precincts of wharenuī for the duration of tangihanga. This was also the case at Waikotikoti. However, at Murumurunga marae, they use whare mate, as discussed in Chapter Two. On the occasion of my first visit, as a teenager in 1982, I found it fascinating that between the wharenuī and wharekai they had an entirely separate, smaller, less elaborate whare, wherein for the duration of tangihanga lay the tūpāpaku in the vigilant company of the immediate whānau.

On our Ngāti Whare urupa it is common to see an array of objects atop burial mounds and surrounding memorial headstones, as can be seen in the following image of my father's burial plot. Those objects often include money, jewellery, vases, ornaments, novelty toys, and numerous other items. One outside visitor to the urupa was astounded by the number of weathered wrist watches left on gravestones; some modern and expensive. However, and as opposed to our Arawa marae, another distinguishing practise was the Ngāti Whare insistence that, prior to entering our consecrated urupa, all jewellery, wallets, loose cash and modern accessories were to be removed from your person. If you did not abide, and during your period on the urupa you accidentally dropped such items, they were deemed irretrievable, remaining as the appropriated property of the deceased occupants. Sometimes the innocent allurement of forsaken items such as cash was alluring, but the stories of ill-fortune which befell those brave enough to remove them from the urupa, were too frightening for the likes of me. History is not static, and today that ritualised practise is no longer adhered to at Te Whāiti.



Fig 83

Conversely, much of our ritual behaviour at marae and urupa is almost automated; for many it is so instinctive that we need not think twice about what to do, and how to do it. This aspect of ritual can be seen in behaviour as basic as arriving and entering marae and urupa, or as complex as catering to the multiple needs of manuhiri and whānau. Marae and urupa, to the Māori, are sites of tribal significance where Māori history making is simultaneously reflected upon and engaged in. Part of this history-making includes the subtle and overt introduction and/or influence of modern ritual mechanisms (like formal religious services) ideologies (including Christianity) and objects of significance and memorialisation. Our marae and urupa experiences bear out, and emphasise, the uniqueness of our indigenous funerary processes; where everyone and everything can be seen to have its

respective place and purpose, often veiled in ritual conduct and activities. This is perhaps no more obvious than on the occasion of death, and during the numerous, and often heart-rending, processes of tangihanga. Our marae and tangihanga are inextricably intertwined in the Māori experience of bereavement, and whether to await the imminent arrival of death or to deal with death's occurrence, with the whānau call to return, death in the Māori world unfolds.

## CHAPTER 5

# THEIR VOICES – THEIR WORDS

This section presents five key interviews from tangihanga participants who at times reflect upon heart-breaking memories as they speak to critical aspects of tangihanga. It was crucial on my part that their own words were afforded space to be read, their voices heard, distinguished, and their whakaaro understood in their given context. Some of the topics they touch on include receiving the news of the arrival of death, contacting hapū and iwi, preparing and dressing tūpāpaku, getting marae ready, differing and at times gender-specific marae roles, the presence of photographs, flowers, korowai, mere, pounamu and other precious taonga, as well as critical realities of death in te ao Māori. Their individual and industrious presence upon our marae has indubitably contributed to the epistemological rubric that constitutes my sense of Māori(ness), of Pikiāo(ness), Tūhoe(ness); of the whakawhanaungatanga that indelibly augments the cultural framework at the heart of my peoples collective conscious. Each consented to be named, giving their tribal and marae affiliations. My commentary is provided [in closed square parentheses] to maintain the narrative flow. I also provide individual introductions, offering relevant kinship connection or tribal/familial contexts, before concluding each with a summary.

\*\*\* In a privately documented late 20<sup>th</sup> century whakapapa authored by renowned Te Arawa tohunga Irirangi Tiakiawa and his protégé Waretini Hoani they use the term **poipoia** (adoption) rather than the generic term whāngai. Therefore, in the Arawa context, I do likewise according to my elders, using **poipoia** as opposed to whāngai.

#### 5.4 Bella Perata Bristowe

p109

Ngāti Tamateatutahi of Ngāti Pikiao, Te Arawa, Tapuaeharuru Marae

##### \*Introduction

**\*Themes:** Marae Roles, Karanga Whānau, Dressing Tūpāpaku, Taonga, Absence of Taonga, Weaving, Photos and Flowers, Non-traditional 'other' items (in the casket), Memorial Headstone

##### \*Epilogue



Fig 84

#### 5.5 Tautini Charles Michael Hohepa & Waretini Wally Hoani

p120

Ngāti Tamateatutahi of Ngāti Pikiao, Ngāti Pikikotuku, Ngāti Hikuwai, Tapuaeharuru Marae, Ngā Pumanawa E Waru Marae

##### \*Introduction

**\*Themes:** 'TB and influenza... that was our cancer...', Rotoiti, Tūpāpaku, Traditional Embalming, Taonga, Kaitiakitanga, Final Wishes and Dying Oaths, Urupa and Burial Practices, Death and Being Māori in Australia, Kuia Te Pae

\*Also, matua Irirangi Tiakiawa, Kawa o Te Arawa, and Nga Whakapapa e Pa Ana ki aku Whānau

##### \*Summary



Fig 85



Fig 86

#### 5.6 Sharon Te Whetumarama Hohepa

p132

Ngāti Tamateatutahi of Ngāti Pikiao, Te Arawa, Tapuaeharuru Marae

##### Ema Hawira

Ngāti Te Tākinga, Ngāti Hinekura, Tuhourangi, Te Arawa, Te Tākinga Marae, Houmaitawhiti Marae

##### \*Introduction

**\*Themes:** Pa Kids, News of Death - Karanga Whānau, Preparing the Marae, Tangihanga, Dressing Tūpāpaku, Paying the Ferryman,



Fig 87



Fig 88

Taonga, Inside the Casket, Whāriki, Photos, Multiple Tūpāpaku, Murua o Matou Hara, Changes and Compromises

**\*Summary**

### 5.7 Elaine Mamaeroa Kameta

p145

Ngāti Pikiao/Te Arawa, Ngāti Rongomai/Te Arawa, Ngāti Ranginui, Te Whānau a Apanui, Te Punawhakareia Marae, Nga Pumanawa e Waru Marae, Rakeiao Marae.

**\*Introduction**

**\*Themes:** Rotoiti Life Lessons, People remember, Whānau and Hui, Tangihanga, Tangi, Photos, Korowai, Non-traditional 'other' Objects, Taupiri, Koha, Makutu, Hei Tiki, Changes

**\*Summary**



Fig 89

### 5.8 Vicki Mae Bhana

p155

Ngāti Whakaue, Ngāti Rangiwewehi, Te Roro o te Rangi Marae

**\*Introduction**

**Themes:** Kaitiakitanga, Tūpāpaku, Kākahu, Storage and Conveyance, Taonga, When Taonga are Ready to Sleep, Flowers, Other Items, Tikanga and Gender Issues and Changes, Kawa of Te Arawa

**\*Summary**

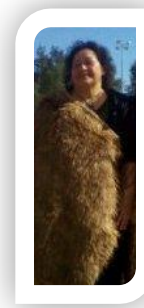


Fig 90

### NOTES:

i) A large number of interviews were conducted during this research. Regrettably we were unable to include all of the interviews in this thesis. However, my sincere gratitude is extended to those who offered the gift of their voices and their words, particularly my father's younger brother Te Hata 'Olly' Pihopa Ohlson, as well as several staff at the Museum of NZ - Te Papa Tongarewa.

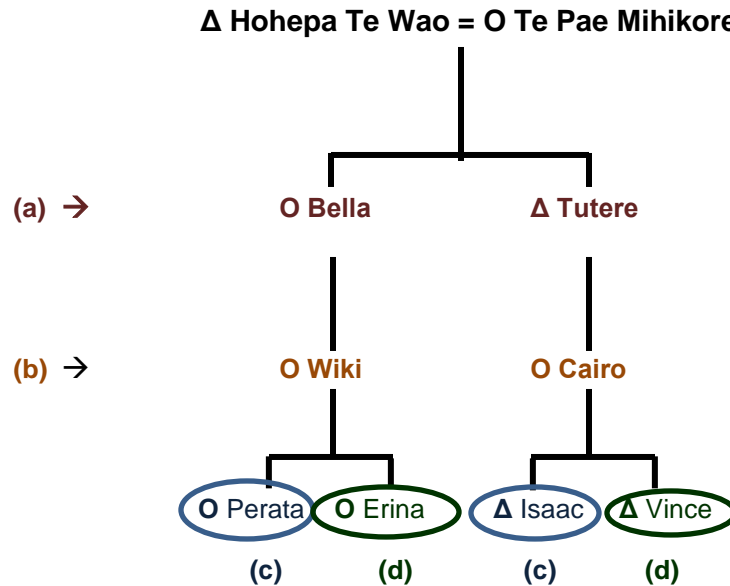
ii) Notably the interviews in this chapter have been edited, and critical aspects of the editing process have been discussed in Chapter Two: Research Methodologies.

## 5.2 FAMILIAL TERMINOLOGIES...

For Māori, our intimate familial terms are not so much aligned with standard anthropological kinship classificatory models, but instead engage Māori concepts of relational interaction and priority. For example, my mother had lost her mother and siblings to tuberculosis and she was subsequently raised with several poipoia who were biological cousins, but whom she naturally called 'brothers'. They were after all being raised by the same poipoia father. However, she also had half siblings who shared with her the same biological father, and step-siblings from that same father's two later marriages; some who were simultaneously cousins, even if only distant. She therefore grew up accustomed to referring to many of those cousins closest to herself as 'brother' or 'sister'. As an aside, I was reminded recently by my chief supervisor that some lactating mothers also shared the feeding of babies, for numerous reasons, and these children thereafter saw each other as siblings. An example that will become apparent shortly is that my grandfather Tutere and Perata's grandmother Bella were brother and sister, so our mothers were first cousins who, from memory and according to family stories, were socially and privately 'as thick as thieves' and constantly referring to each other as 'sister'. So my siblings and I applied such lines of thinking to our familial relations. Many of our cousins were generationally aligned (born within a year or so of each other) and referred to as siblings. That is to say that my older brother Isaac always referred to Perata as 'sister' regardless of her younger biological siblings Erina, John and Anita. Likewise Perata's sister Erina and I, generationally aligned, refer to each other as 'brother' and 'sister'. Although Perata, John and Anita are my mother's cousin's children, Perata was 'sister' to my brother Isaac and my 'sister' Erina. In the eyes of non-Māori this standard familial yet reassigned use of kinship terminology could be confusing, but not to Māori. I have provided an exemplar on a schema on the following page, to further clarify this.



**5.3 Diagrammatic Schema 4**  
 Elemental Kinship Connectivity  
 Generationally-aligned 'Cousins as Siblings'



**(a)** Perata's grandmother **Bella**, and my koroua-dad **Tutere**, were brother and sister.

**(b)** Our mothers, **Wiki** and **Cairo**, were first cousins, generationally aligned (born within a year or so of each other), who referred to each other as siblings.

**(c)** **Perata** and **Isaac** are generationally aligned cousins who refer to each other as siblings.

**(d)** **Erina** and **Vince** are generationally aligned cousins who refer to each other as siblings.

Hence my older brother Isaac always referred to Perata as 'sister' regardless of her younger biological siblings Erina, John and Anita. Likewise Perata's sister Erina and I, generationally aligned, refer to each other as 'brother' and 'sister'. In the eyes of non-Māori this standard familial yet reassigned use of kinship terminology could be confusing, but not to Māori.

In the process of composing this section of the PhD I could hear my cousin's clarion voice asking me not to place her interview first, before the whakaaro of respected uncles and aunties; such was her humility and awareness of our whānau roles. However, her interview differs from all others; a point of difference which will become evident momentarily. Most people called Perata by her Pākehā name Bella, but our 'olds' tended to prefer using our Māori names, so to my mother and I, having been raised by the 'olds', Bella was always Perata. The first born female, of a first born female, who also bore a female child first, and although male primogeniture is evident amongst my iwi, we nonetheless accorded respect to the first-born regardless of gender.



Our life experiences and pathways had been different, perhaps in main because Perata was closer in age to my older siblings. But we had grown up with lives constantly intertwined at our marae. As a chief ringawera within our wharekai Te Kuia Kauiarangi, she and her sister Erina often functioned together to manage the combined resources of our kitchen pantry with a microwave, copious catering crockery, cutlery, and condiments, as well as overseeing store room and dining room areas during marae functions, particularly tangihanga. Our marae resources included butchers' quarters where our men prepared the home-kills direct from our tribal farm holdings. They also took care of peeling the numerous sacks of potatoes, carrots, and any combination of vegetables; and undertook the shelling, gutting, scaling or preparing of kaimoana, seafood such as mussels, fish and kina. Te Kuia Kauiarangi also boasted industrial sinks, ovens, steamers, and a huge dishwasher that I have never seen used because of the preference for communal washing and drying by hand. Doing dishes manually was a lengthier process but one which allowed ringawera space and time to do our obligatory hongis and catch-ups, before exchanging the all-

important whānau gossip, with ever-present jovial banter. The kitchen sink of any marae is an invaluable resource for far more than simply doing copious dishes. In truth our Pikiāo resources may well have been taken for granted, as was expressed by my Ngāti Whare whānau who tended to envy such modern facilities that contrasted starkly with our less economically advantaged Te Whāiti marae, which were reliant on far more basic resources. I fondly recall, during my beloved mother's tangihanga in 2009, how we had deliberately called on our Ngāti Whare whānau to stay and help in the wharekai for the duration, knowing it would be a well-attended tangi. Throughout, I had to constantly ask my Pikiāo whānau to stop chuckling derisively at my Tūhoe whānau who would innocently pass such remarks as "ohhh a microwave, chur flash eh... ohhh a steamer cuz that's the bomb... ohhh there's more than 100 plates and everything... ohhh what's that cuz, a bain-marie you say, what's that for?... ohhh...". Conversely, our Pikiāo dining room was able to cater to individual sittings of up to 300 at a stretch, accommodating the deeply entrenched Ngāti Tamateatutahi and Te Arawa creed that all manuhiri visiting our tribal grounds were to depart only after having been lavishly sated, in mind and body. This is a creed achieved by way of both our carved ancestral wharenuī Uruika with its adept kaikaranga and kaikōrero, in tandem with our wharekai Te Kuia Kauiarangi and willing ringawera.

I had interviewed my brother's sister Perata in Rotorua on the 4<sup>th</sup> of April 2010, basking outside my older sister Dawn's home with the sun streaming down and all three of us in high spirits; smiling, laughing, and relaxing. That interview focused on allowing Perata to share lived aspects of death, tangihanga reflections as perceived by a chief ringawera of our marae. Whether menu-planning, shopping, cooking or cleaning, she had appeared to effortlessly manage the array of catering responsibilities in our wharekai, and so in the context of my research the interview was appropriate. Job commitments aside, Perata and Erina would function together during marae occasions such as tangihanga and those few times when they could not attend

simultaneously than one or the other would try to be present. As my mother used to say, their commitment to Tapuaeharuru and Ngāti Tamateatutahi has been a true blessing for our families.

This said, none of us had any reason in April 2010 to contemplate on that stunning summer's day as we sat talking and reminiscing, that at 49 years of age Perata would have only two years left to live. Unknowingly, cancer was already invading her body as it had her mother's, incrementally and all too soon stealing her life from our world. I did not foresee on that day while talking to my cousin about death, that death was already in our presence. This is why I proffer her voice and words at the beginning of this chapter...

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#### **Marae Roles:**

I think everybody's got a place you know, we all got a belonging at the Pa, and at the Pa you all got a place, so I think. Either you're in the kitchen, or you're in the wharenuī and for me I'm in the kitchen and I really don't want to take on the wharenuī. It's bad enough doing the kitchen! [in the wharenuī] I know little bits and pieces, but I wouldn't dare do it by myself hell no... but maybe in years to come the wharenuī work will come to me, but I've never really been a wharenuī person anyway... my job's washing dishes, their job is looking after taonga, and I think it's up to the whānau to give the responsibility to the right person, to look after those pieces. The Pa, it's my home, I cook in there; I clean in there like how I do my own house. Whoever comes in the house, same as at the Pa, you make them a cup of tea; you give them a kai, that's just how it is. It's not a marae, I've taught my kids to say the Pa, not the marae, to me marae is a Pākehā version of the word. It's called the Pa, we're going to the Pa. It's a nicer word too. Yeah it was called the Pa. We grew up, even Mum'n'm said 'we're off to the Pa', it was just the Pa and we automatically knew it was Uruika, not Ruatō or Punawhakareia, we just knew it was Uruika. Everything I been taught was taught at Tapuaeharuru, by those

people, those nannies and koros, even though they all rolled at all the maraes, but my teaching was all at Tapuaeharuru.

### **Karanga Whānau:**

We were brought up at Rotoiti so everybody knew about tangi by word of mouth. But I think these days with all the technology around, it's going to be used, Facebook, as a form of communication to tell that whānau at Christchurch for instance, that there's a tangi up here, or Aussie to let them know so-and-so has died. And I think we've got to use that technology too. I would use it... if I had to tell Wally and Charlie something about somebody died then I would... if I had access to that technology, which I don't. Embrace it I reckon, if you can use it use it. Especially for things like that and not just tangihanga.... babies, weddings... The first person we phoned after Mum died was Taku, and he put it [the karanga whānau] out there, that was the only phone call we had to make... she didn't know she was dying, she got cancer on the Monday and was dead on the Wednesday! We didn't have much of a chance to do anything. We had plans. I'm going to move to Erina's, and I'm going to help Erina to look after Mum, and Jeff's going to look after my house. But it didn't get that far...

### **Dressing Tūpāpaku:**

I didn't actually dress her, Mum. I was in there, but I couldn't touch her... I don't know why, I just couldn't. There was Erina, Aunty Bubby, and Pikihiua who dressed her. So it wasn't really about you had to be a daughter or anything to dress her... I couldn't touch her, I don't know why, and yet when we get to the Pa I'm all over her, I'm touching her [laughter], but I couldn't dress her. Her clothes, we dressed her like how she would've dressed herself. Immaculate, her clothes that were laid out for her, her jewellery that she was wearing, it would've been what she would've picked, and she was fussy! We did put a purple scarf on her, and one of the Rātana pendants on her. Her best clothes, her stockings cos she was a stockings lady, she was a high heels lady, we put slippers on her but we put in her high heels, one inch

bloody heels at her foot for a change. I don't know if that was the going thing but hey that was the old lady. She had Rātana ear-rings, and that was it...

That's how we came about picking out what she was wearing, Erina and I decided, and Mum didn't even talk to us about what clothes she was gonna wear... mind you our Mum she was told a Monday she had cancer, and then she died on a Wednesday. So she didn't get much time. I think all she done was straight from the doctors she made sure her Will was ready, because the day she died that was a Wednesday, Thursday her Will came through the letterbox.

#### **Taonga:**

There was the whānau's korowai, Koro Mickey's, the long one, and the little one too, Kuia Te Pae's, and the mere [pounamu] too. That's the one Auntie Hilda looks after eh, I thought there was two of them, just lately I've been seeing only one. The portrait of Kuia Te Pae sat at her feet... the tiki, yes, Koro laid it on her when we got to the Pa... they sat on the coffin... but to me that's not my area, that's for someone else, whoever's looking after it, that's their job to do. That's not my job to do... [but ] it doesn't belong to that person, their job is to look after it on behalf of whānau, and to take it to where it should be taken to. That's not my job, maybe years to come but for the moment, no... We've got more whāriki now, I know cos Tuari's just made some, another two I think. I saw them at Koro Cam's tangi last time we were down there. I think we've got about six, I know because I clean the garage and they all go in the garage after we've cleaned up. We have two greenstones. One my daughter wears one that belongs to my great-great-grandmother. It's been handed down name to name. So my daughter got it from her mother, it comes under a Wiki name, and my mother got it from her grandmother, who was a Wiki. So this taonga is seven generations old I think, this tiki. And the one I wear, it's gone from my nanny Bella to me, and she's a grandmother, I think my greenstone might be three generations... and we've been told, and I've told my daughter, if there is no namesake to pass it on to it

gets buried with her, and same as mine... here's mine, and Denise always wears hers... this is nanny Bella's. Mum looked after it for me until I was to wear it, and I broke this thing three times. That gold band was cos I broke it. She gave it to me when I was sixteen, thinking I was ready to wear it, to look after it, and I was throwing it around in the air and it smashed on the concrete and my mother took it back off me again saying 'no you're not ready for that' and I didn't actually get it to keep until she died, until my mother died. But by then I got the concept it's a taonga, it's not a toy, it's not a jewellery statement, just to wear to tangis when you go to tangis. I don't take it off at all and neither does Denise's. It's a little arrowhead, that one's seven generations old and goes all the way back to the Coast.

#### **Absence of Taonga:**

I have been to a tangi where we've moved him from the house to the Pa and he hasn't had a korowai at the house, and he's gone onto the Pa without a korowai on him, he went on to the Pa with a minky blanket on him... so yeah... but when he got there he had one put on him, when he got there. He lay at his house for two days without, then when he got here he had one put on him.

#### **Weaving:**

Mum done mean tāniko and feathered bags, and weaving, but it's never been in me. I've got a mean feathered bag of hers. She made the Sorenson's one, a tāniko kete. She made Aunty Bubby one. Koro Mickey wanted her to do a kākahu, and she was getting her feathers together to do one but she never got to do it. But I still got the feathers she was collecting to make it. It was in her mind to make us a whānau one. It would mean more if we had one for whānau made by whānau, than going somewhere to buy one, I reckon eh. I don't know [who taught her], herself I think, she's always done tāniko. She won first prize for the Māori Women's Welfare League and she was dead, they come to see me, Joyce Gardner'n'm, at my house to ask if they could take Mum's feathered kete, bag, to the Women's Welfare down in Wellington and put it in. Well she won it, and she'd been dead for two years! Erina wore

it at her wedding; she carried it at her wedding. I only take it out on special occasions; I don't carry it when I'm working at home cos I've got nowhere to put it. It's feathered, gee I don't know what the feathers are - it goes dark brown, fawny brown and then off white. I don't know who trained her, no-one, herself! Didn't go to any special person like the Lawless's. [Those feathers] I'm not giving them unless they're to the right person, who's gonna use them. Her patterns of all her tāniko, her books I still hold those and I'm not giving those away until I know it's to the right person. If one of my sisters took it on, chur, it's yours, automatic. I don't like fiddly, I'm not a fiddly person, can't even knit.

#### **Photos and Flowers:**

The photo that we had of Mum at the tangi I've got that now and that got blessed when we left the Pa, so now that sits in my house, and whenever we go to tangis now, that are her brother's and sister's, or important, she just comes, I just take her, to sit at that tangi... Her photo sat on her, with Koro Peter above her and after every tangi I pick them up before I leave... she has her own special pillow case that she gets wrapped up into and then off she goes. Maybe seeing everybody else do that I maybe got the same idea, but yeah, she has her own special pillow cases. So the pillow case is to transport her in, so she's not sitting on the back of my car window open and I pull her out every Christmas when I'm cooking in my kitchen, and my kids know, if I'm somewhere and I need them to pick up Nan, they know what pillow case to get to put her into... I'm supposed to take her [photo into Uruika] and leave it there. I should do. That's a mission I have to do. Get a copy done of my photo and hang it up at the Pa. The flowers they all stayed at her feet in the wharenuī and then when we went to the urupa they all got put on top of her.

#### **Non-traditional 'other' items (in the casket):**

For mum, her housie cards, her smokes, her counters, her lighter, her heels. We put in a change of clothes, a toilet bag with a toothbrush, which I didn't



know anything about until Aunty Pansy goes 'did you put in a toilet bag, toothbrush, hairbrush...' and I went 'for real?', and she says yes! So I did.

### **Memorial Headstone:**

At the back she's got the Housie Cards cos that was her, play Housie, play cards... I've seen it there at the urupa before, I think Aunty Polly's got it. I think it's got more to do with the person so when we unveiled it... she died 2000 and we unveiled 2001... it was all symbolic of who she was.

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In April 2010 those were my beautiful cousin's uncomplicated words; her precious koha to my doctorate.

### **EPILOGUE:**

On Christmas morning in 2012, two years after that interview, I was preparing for a day of food, wine, good company and cheer. Such were the humdrum tribulations of the day that I couldn't decide whether or not to start with preparing the simple herb stuffing for the chicken, or the apple sauce for the pork. Or the marinade for the fish so that it would have time to saturate the few expensive snapper fillets that I had feebly justified buying on the pretext that it was after all a holy day; even though I was no longer a practicing Christian or proponent of any one specific western religious doctrine. So when my sister Dawn phoned asking if I had received the news that Perata had died the night before, I was stupefied. She had died Christmas Eve and I was informed Christmas Day; Christmas Day for goodness sake. I had never encountered the arrival of death in the whānau on a Christmas Day. So with as much in mind, I sat digesting the news, trying to get my head around the fact that my cousin, my brother's sister, my sister's sister, had died. Death had arrived, and mobilisation home was now the priority. Having given my car to my younger brother, transport would be

required at a time when public transport was likely to be more expensive than usual, if at all available. Of more concern was the fact that I had no ready cash flow whatsoever, albeit my pantry and fridge were superbly well-stocked; it was Christmas day for goodness sake. So I reached out to one of my Pīkiao whanaunga who promptly instructed me to book my coach home for the next morning, and she would meet me at the coach with whatever help I required to undertake a tangi back home at Christmas. We do that, Māori, we dig deep if someone needs help to undertake a tangi. That koha allowed me to coach back to Rotoiti on Boxing Day, arriving at the marae just before the tūpāpaku; ready to tautoko and awhi my sister, Erina, as they brought her older sister Perata home with the whānau in tow.

At this juncture I'd like to mention two anomalies which I'll touch-on again later in this thesis. As they brought my cousin's tūpāpaku onto the marae, an aunt of ours gave the karanga from the manuhiri side, which had me wondering about tikanga and



**Fig 91**

kawa. Typically karanga would, for Ngāti Pīkiao, not be done by an aunt closely related to the tūpāpaku; just as a whaikōrero would not be done by an uncle closely related to the tūpāpaku. While seated on the pae in the wharenuī with the kaikōrero, I watched another anomaly unfold for me in Uruika. An ope arrived that had a young kaikōrero stand and begin with a fragmented mihi before speaking in te reo Pākehā. This was in spite of the fact that they had in their midst a koroua who was a known reo speaker on Arawa marae. Although not unheard of during karakia or poroporoaki or hui, I had never previously seen this happen inside my own wharenuī during whaikōrero for a tangi. The pae then finished with a short mōteatea before doing mihi and convening everyone for lunch. Notably as we departed for the wharekai, one of my uncles seated on the pae, aware of my research, quietly made the query "You're not going to write about all of this in your thesis are you Nephew?"

During my cousin's tangi our pae was thin on the ground inside the wharenuui; and our wharekai also waned noticeably on that occasion. It is a dilemma that has become more evident with every passing tangihanga on marae throughout the motu. But in this case, of course, one of our stalwart industrious workers was in the wharenuui, laying peacefully in her casket for all to see, one final time. At the same time some whānau were caught up with pre-made Christmas plans that had them located far from home, so they could only return briefly rather than be present the full duration. Yet others were overseas with whanaunga living on foreign shores. Consequently, I stayed throughout, behind the scenes, taking care of matters to do with the catering for our manuhiri and whanaunga; with the invaluable help of all our kids. The next morning whānau and iwi gathered on Tapuaeharuru marae for the final whakamoemiti and karakia of my cousin's tangihanga, before proceeding with Perata to our private urupa of Wahanui. In another first for me on my own grounds, I did not attend the interment where I would normally have joined my voice with the whānau choir to bid our final farewells in waiata. Instead I remained working in the wharekai. We had a duty that all manuhiri visiting our tribal grounds were to depart only after having been well sustained, in mind and body. Uruika had fulfilled its role; Te Kuia Kauiarangi would do likewise. When it came time to open our dining room doors for the hākari, the ringawera and whānau lined up to perform waiata welcoming everyone back into the tribal fold for the final shared meal, before all heading back to our individual lives.

That was the first time I had encountered a tangi at home at Christmas time; a tangi which, as it turned out, would reveal a few *firsts* to me. It had been a sadly poignant life process which was wrong for so very many reasons. Perata had been too young to die, only a handful of years older than I. She had young children, and infant grandchildren, whose lives she would not get to watch, grow, and add to the tribal collective, the cultural capital of our people. Her singing voice was unique, adding to the combined harmonic

vocals of our whānau choir. It was also an occasion that echoed poignantly how while my people were proudly holding fast to many of our traditions, at the same time we were witnessing changes in the midst of our collective reality.

## 5.5 Tautini Charles Michael HOHEPA and Waretini Wally HOANI

Ngāti Tamateatutahi ki Ngāti Pikiāo, Ngāti Pikiākotuku, Ngāti Hikuwai  
Tapuaeharuru Marae, Nga Pumanawa E Waru Marae

Uncle Tautini and Uncle Waretini were two of the younger poipoia who my koroua-dad took in after their mother, his older sister Bella, had died of TB at just 36, followed a year later by their heart-broken father. Just a few weeks prior to my trip to Australia in 2011 my Uncle Tautini had sadly lost his wife, my Aunty Toni, and the whānau in Perth had collectively returned her tūpāpaku to us, so that we could hold her tangi in customary fashion upon the ancestral grounds of Uruika. So, understandably, Uncle Tautini was still in the acute stage of grief. For that reason I had been initially reluctant to involve him in my research endeavours. But he chose of his own accord to attend the interviews at his younger poipoia sister's home where I was staying. It had been such a huge loss for him, and he was only just starting to awaken to the full reality of being a widower. At his own home, he was still unable to return to the marital bed, instead sleeping on a sofa in the lounge, and waking constantly. So my Uncle Waretini was staying with his dear older brother, sleeping on another sofa in the lounge, and remaining vigilant and ready when my Uncle Tautini would restlessly stir. Offering company, someone to talk to, or simply sit with for a quiet cup of tea; most importantly, to not leave him alone.



My Uncle Waretini had always been a strong minded, strong willed man, who at a young age rebelled against being forced to leave Waimana for Rotoiti, after their parents passed away in the early 1960s. Even so, Rotoiti became home, and Uruika became the singular marae that would feature consistently throughout their lives. In



time, he became one of the few protégé of Irirangi Tiakiawa, an old time tohunga of my people. So my Uncle was trained in numerous indigenous skills, as well as preparing tūpāpaku for tangihanga. I leaped at the opportunity to interview him regarding our whānau/hapū funerary practices, and to record his wonderfully rich life experiences, including shifting to Australia. Sadly he had lost his own wife, my beloved Aunty Josie, a few years earlier, and having been unable to afford the costs of returning her tūpāpaku to NZ, had laid her to rest in Perth, with quiet hopes of one day bringing her home.

I was proud and honoured that they had both agreed to be interviewed, though on their arrival it was all too evident that Uncle Tautini shouldn't have been out and about; he was so exhausted and weary. But they had gone out of their way and made the effort so I had to be professional. I didn't shed any tears during these interviews, but the tears did trickle much later as I listened back to the weary though strong voices of my Uncles recalling the good, and the not so good, parts of their childhood and adolescent years, all to assist me with this mahi. This interview was conducted on the 6<sup>th</sup> of July 2011 at the private residence of their poipoia sister, Pikihuia Maria Hohepa-Paringatai, in Mirrabooka, Perth.

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#### **'TB and influenza... that was our cancer...':**

**Uncle Waretini:** She had TB our mother. But she also had... like in those days, our people had TB and influenza, went right through the whole of NZ, and a lot of them got sick through that. That was our cancer in those days. Our father died a year after our mother. Heartbroken. He actually wasn't a sick man, even though he only had the one leg, he wasn't sickly. He never got TB. But when you love someone, it can be a heart-breaking thing.

**Uncle Tautini:** He was a lovely old man our father.

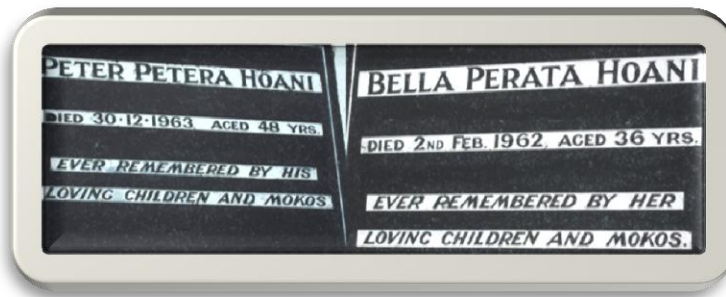


Fig 92

**Uncle Waretini:** Our parents were lovely. They were both in the Rātana Church. He was an Āpotoro Wairua, she was an Awhina. Our mother never drank. Our father did, but in those days it was different. If you had all those Hohepa's together, you imagine what a great time they had. Very different to nowadays their parties, very different, cos they enjoyed what they had as brothers and sisters, that's why. So it was totally different. Sometimes they would just go to Mickey's place and just sing, without beer they just sang. Koro Tu'n'em used to come down from the hill. That's the way Rotoiti was. We're not talking just the Hohepa family here; it was Rotoiti as a whole. They had a great life, but those days they were lovely people. Cammy and Maria used to drive just from up their house down to the Karaka trees, and then everybody would be there. They enjoyed each other's company.

#### **Rotoiti:**

**Uncle Tautini:** Yeah, well I was regarded as the too-goody-good boy. I was the one that never did anything damn wrong. But don't get me wrong, I was bad... and I also used to take a lot of beatings for your uncle there. We had a hard life, a real hard life. Especially up at the marae. We had one of the most beautiful marae around Rotoiti. Your grandfather, we had to go down to the lake and wheelbarrow big rocks to do gardening at the marae. We had beautiful plants, beautiful roses, and everything was put in place by your grandfather.

**Uncle Waretini:** Tutere brought us up in certain things. In telling us about karakia and such things, Rātana and things, and the language. I find it's easier to live that life then the life today. The reason is because it was easier

to grasp... during my infancy, and the way I was being brought up by Tutere... I wasn't a good person, so therefore what I'm saying is I didn't take notice of things to do with Pākehā, because it was easier to learn Māori, and to understand things Māori, or it's tikanga, then it is to do Pākehā, even though we were brought up in both, to do both Māori and Pākehā, but my thoughts were more for Māoritanga. Now during my later stage, when I had more time to deal with Irirangi Tiakiawa, this is where I started to understand and gauge a bit more knowledge of our tikanga, of our kawa, and our kaupapa in what we do and how we do things.

**Uncle Tautini:** Everything had to be just bang-on, and so we had a tough upbringing. There was a lot of times there that I wanted to run away, a lot of times there that I couldn't take anymore, I didn't know what to do, but because I started work I had something to occupy myself. But our upbringing at home and with those connections to the marae, was very hard, and especially when the old fella had his services every weekend, every Sunday. We had to get up at half past five in the morning, clean the house, our ground outside the main door, you know it was dirt, we had to sweep that right out to the gateway. Everything had to be so spick and span, the house had to be clean, and we had to do sandwiches and what not for the people that was coming to church. And we were always the last, regardless of whatever, even inside our own home, we were the last. Your mother gave us a hard time as well, back home.

#### **Kuia Te Pae:**

**Uncle Waretini:** The old man Tutere would've told Tautini more about our kuia more than me. ... only what the old man has told us about her. I only knew her in memory. Of people telling us, of Mickey telling us, of Ben. She used to go down to the road, call out to swaggers [unemployed men walking from town to town seeking work] to come up, and the old man had to go make them some kai. She would feed them, clothe them, and give them some kai to go on their way. She did that for years at Rotoiti. A lot of swaggers got to know her.



**Uncle Waretini:** She was a mighty woman. Now what I mean by mighty in Māoridom, she had a lot of knowledge, but she never was one to get up on marae, she never karanga for a start. It just wasn't her. Like anything else in Māoridom, there are people within families that have been picked for certain things on the marae, and it just wasn't for her, simple as that. Though she had a lot of knowledge, but she did share her knowledge. I knew, through stories.

#### **Tūpāpaku:**

**Uncle Waretini:** There has been a lot of changes concerning tangihanga back home. In the old days they used to put pennies on the eyes, in the coffin, when everybody is ready to go to sleep eh. Our mother's tangihanga, they put pennies on her eyes.

**Uncle Tautini:** And years ago we used to put our tūpāpaku through the window.

#### **Traditional Embalming:**

**Uncle Waretini:** Irirangi used to take Josephine and I to Maketu, used to be called Te Akeake. We used to go to the sea there, to get pink seaweed. At that time it wasn't far before the tide went out and you would find it just below the rocks. This pink seaweed, like a straw, you could pierce it and this scent would come out of it, a fresh smelling scent. Now through that, in the old days, let's call it a Māori way of embalming. They used to pierce the body, normally under the lung, because the liquid comes out quicker if you pierce just under the last rib. They used to gather all this pink seaweed, and squeeze it out into like a small bag. They then used a grass. Up home at Rotoiti we used to have this straw and you could blow it. We used to blow the frogs up with it at school... They used that and they get the scent and put in your mouth and they'd blow through it to put into the body. So it was a Māori way of embalming and it kept the body for a long time because it was a scent. They stopped it in the 1900's because don't forget at that time we had to bury the bodies laying down then, because of health reasons. This is when the law

came in so our people couldn't do all our things no more. I'd know that seaweed if I were to see it again...

#### Taonga:

**Uncle Waretini:** We had a lot of artefacts you know. But there was a different person within each family as the kaitiaki, and the mere pounamu is held by Aunty Hilda... so each brought down to tangihanga what they brought.

**Uncle Tautini:** Now when our korowai started fraying away, getting tethered and what not, we used Aunty Mon's, and now and again the Whata's used to bring theirs over. Aunty Mon's are now with Tuari. We brought the one's we used for Toni and those colours are Ngāpuhi. Marion will talk to you about those, she and your aunty Josie made those one's and they are here with us.

**Uncle Waretini:** Uruika, it used to be covered with whāriki from the back right to the doorstep, also important was knowing what the pattern was, because they all had a pattern, and it was always to do with the moana... The whāriki, they never used to roll them up otherwise they get ruined, better to leave them out the way they are. So it was fully covered. When you start to lay beautiful whāriki on the floor, no matter what floor, and you have mattresses on top, that's not a problem. It's when you take the mattresses off and you start walking on them, and kids started doing that, well that's the problem. So there are times when we needed to pack them away...

**Uncle Tautini:** And our tekoteko in the wharenuī used to have a cape, a kākahu and a piupiu of its own. But slowly, over time, we started putting them away. There used to be a box next to the door. That box is now in the garage. I don't know what's happened to the taonga used to be in that box.

#### Kaitiakitanga:

**Uncle Waretini:** This is where we should not allow our ways or our thoughts to get into tapu or any such things. I believe that taonga of Te Pae's doesn't have to go to a female. It goes to a kaitiaki who we may think will be able to look after it for a certain length of time. We must think of the kākahu for example. If that was the case then the kākahu would only be put on women, if

that was the case. So where our family is concerned we need not to look at such things. What we need to look at is that are we able to maintain that Stormy holds it, or does it really have to go to the female? In which case you gonna have to look at the whakapapa and say 'who is rightful?' But is any of us rightful in today's world? It's no good going backwards, we need to go forward.

**Uncle Tautini:** So that pounamu should sit with Stormy, he is also the head of our family, so leave it with him.

**Uncle Waretini:** Sometimes it's the people in the whānau who need to support things and this is good so we need to support it.

### **Final Wishes and Dying Oaths:**

**Uncle Waretini:** Each to their own thing, eh, just everyday things that they loved put in with them. It's not a cultural thing but certainly they may have asked for those things so that's individual. Like our Aunty Mona Wilson, before she died she asked "don't ever put me in a tomb, cos it's too cold!" Their wishes, their stipulations, are like a Will. Before Mihikore died, she said one thing to Mickey "Please look after all my kids". And then when our mother died, when they did the last hymn of Whaka Piki Ora, she'd said the same thing to Mickey, her brother. She made Mickey promise her that he would look after all her kids. So it's the same thing, it's a dying oath.

**Uncle Tautini:** If you were a smoker then that's what went down with you.

**Uncle Waretini:** Like Mac, he was a diver, he died on his job, so his gears went down with him. In Māoridom tā moko had meaning. If you were a fisherman, you would recognize the moko of fishermen. If he was a person of Tāne Mahuta, then fronds would go down with him. So it's not new to put things down with them, but it's just now we put Pākehā things with them. But Church always came first with this family, Māoridom second.

### **Urupa and Burial Practices:**

**Uncle Tautini:** It's a case of having to change with the times eh cos the times have changed. In days of old, we all used to do the big damn holes that you

could fit a double mattress in, and this was when people would put down whatever mattresses they slept in, and those the holes we used to dig years ago. But now, I've sort of, well when I was back home, before I came here, I was in charge of the urupa and I did a lot of changes. I now put family on top of each other, family on family, and as you saw, I have templates which is the shape to the casket, so all those things have changed. Well we were running out of space very quickly, because we had these enormous holes, so we had to do something about it. Even the single mattress is still too big unless you're a small size person... mattresses used to go down, their full wardrobe used to go down, because those were their possessions, their belongings.

**Uncle Waretini:** The way where tangihanga was concerned, where the dead were concerned, a tūpāpaku and its belongings were treated the same as if they were still alive. So therefore the respect to that was that all their belongings went with them in the hole. So they had a particular mattress that they always used to sleep on, that is the mattress that will go in the hole and the casket will go on top of.

**Uncle Tautini:** Which I did... I asked your koro Pere, when I first approached him about putting whānau on top of whānau and he says "oh no, that doesn't happen, we don't do that". So I says to him do you mind if I give you an example? And he says ok... So I said, well Uncle, when you and Aunty make love, does it matter who is on the bottom or on the top? And he said "No boy it doesn't". So I said well there you go... Husband or wife, brother and sister, can go on top of each other, can't they? And he said "Well ok, if you wanna make the change then you make the change", and so that's what I started doing. People will let me know, the family, our family, will let me know that they will be going on top, then I go to the full depth, which is seven feet. But if they don't, then I just go down to the normal five, five and a half feet.

### Death and Being Māori in Australia:

**Uncle Waretini:** It works fine for me here. I'm still able to maintain our culture, our Māoridom, our language, because it's easier, even in the world of today, because it's easier to focus around where you've come from as a

Māori, and put it in line as a Pākehā, not the other way around, because in Pākehā there are so much things in the world of today that we can't maintain in memory. So therefore it's easier to bring our culture forward, into today. Even though we learnt the Pākehā world of today... The great orator, Irirangi, used to tell me, he used to say "When you grasp our ways, not just our language, but our ways of living, you take on-board what is good for you, and don't worry about what is not". But as we know in Māori, everything is good for us, everything, cos Māori is never wrong, it's just that we have different tribal ways. By us taking on certain things, as we grow into our 30's and late 40's you get to understand more and you become calmer, you don't become so depressed, as if it was in Pākehā, because there was a standard. In Māori there is no standard, why, because everything was good. I came to my taha Māori when I was about 26, even though been raised at Rotoiti, as you got older you learnt more and could say more and mixed with more people at different levels and status.

## 5.5 Summary:

At the time of this interview, both my Uncles were widowers. Uncle Waretini had lost my Auntie Josephine five years earlier. However, four years prior to her passing, their mokopuna Tikitikiorangi had died, in infancy, and had been buried at a cemetery in Perth. In 2006, when my Auntie Jo was dying, and despite her initial wish that her tūpāpaku be returned to Aotearoa, she requested that she instead be interred next to her mokopuna.



Fig 93

According to whānau accounts of my aunt's Perth tangihanga at home, managing her tūpāpaku, in the Australia heat, required fast, and pragmatic, thinking, on the part of the whānau pani. Throughout the home, electric fans

were used to try to keep the air temperature low, and at night, the whānau would deliberately open the fridge and freezer doors, so as to circulate cooler air. Also, and in order that she visually appeared as ‘natural’ as possible, different and copious oils were lovingly applied to her exposed skin. The casket was draped with two korowai (pictured here), that my Aunty Jo and her daughter Marion had made. My cousins told me that while it was unlike any tangihanga they had conducted or witnessed, nonetheless the whānau were determined to give her a tangihanga, and not a funeral. Throughout the duration, kawa and tikanga were adhered to, as best possible, and as though they were home in Aotearoa. That was in 2006, and in 2011 my Uncle Waretini confided that if he were ever financially able, then he would uplift his moko and his wife, and return them home for reburial upon their own whenua.



Fig 94

By contrast, when my Aunty Toni died suddenly in Perth in 2011, she had an insurance policy that enabled my Uncle Tautini to do what his younger brother Waretini was unable to. Eventually, when he and the entourage of the whānau pani arrived home to Uruika with her tūpāpaku, her casket was draped with the same korowai shown above. Thereafter, those modern, different, but treasured korowai returned to Australia.

In 2011, having been given the opportunity to observe the Australian lives of whanaunga, I was quietly impressed. Because as Māori-Australian transnationals, they had maintained, upheld, and perpetuated critical cultural aspects of their indigenous identities as Māori. This said, I was admittedly disoriented when meeting my cousin’s children, who identified as Māori, although they had never tread the lands of Aotearoa. This was another indicator for me, that the times continue changing.



## Whakapapa and Kawa of Te Arawa:

Upon departing Perth to return home to Aotearoa, my Uncle Waretini gave me his only hard-copies of our Whakapapa and the Kawa of Te Arawa, which he and our Arawa tohunga Irirangi Tiakiawa had mutually worked on. Uncle Irirangi was a renowned tribal representative, who had been pro-active amongst Māori, particularly Ngāti Pikiao; teaching kapa haka and many other skills including haka and waiata. Irirangi was a personality in Te Arawa, he could sing, dance, haka, compose, and orate beautifully. I was honoured that Uncle Waretini trusted me as a kaitiaki for such invaluable documents, which remain in my keeping, and aspects of which will be discussed throughout this thesis.



Fig 95

## Nga Whakapapa e Pa Ana ki aku Whānau



Fig 96: Cover and inside page of *Nga Whakapapa e Pa Ana ki aku Whānau*

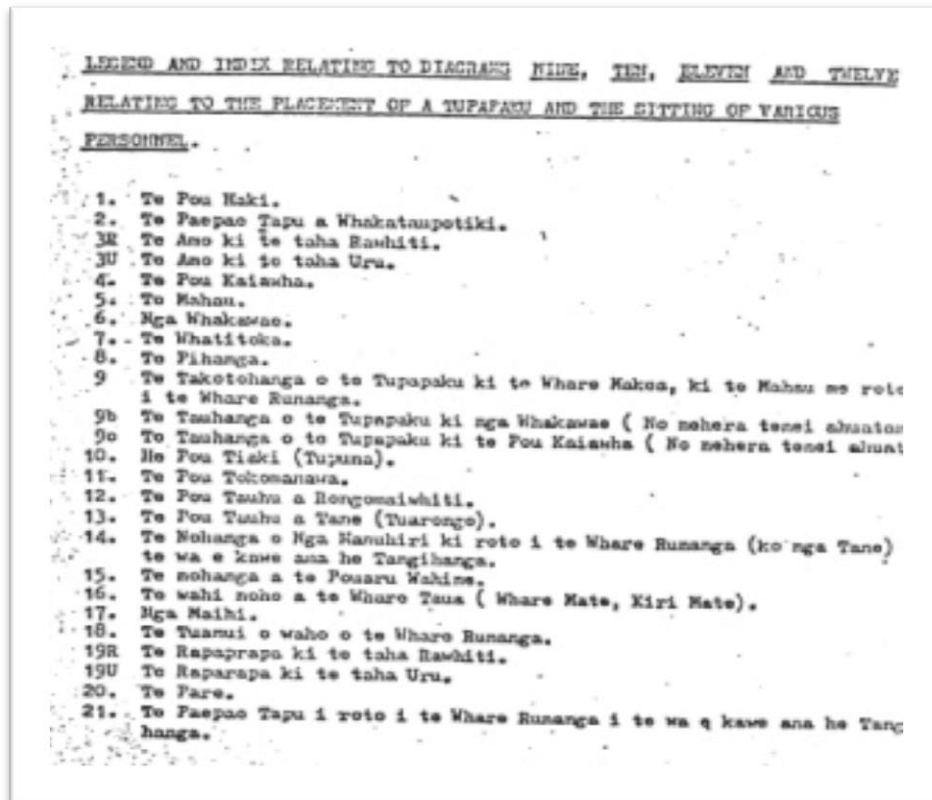


Fig 97: A page exemplar from the Kawa o Te Arawa



**Sharon Te Whetumarama HOHEPA**

Ngāti Tamateatutahi ki Ngāti Pikiāo, Te Arawa, Tapuaeharuru Marae



**Ema HAWIRA**

Ngāti Te Tākinga, Ngāti Hinekura, Tuhourangi, Te Arawa, Te Tākinga Marae, Houmaitawhiti Marae



In the ways of my people these wahine are my whaea, my aunts. Aunty Sharon’s mother, Kuia Bella, and my grandfather, Tutere, were brother and sister; therefore she was my mother’s first cousin. My mother was very close to Aunty Sharon, whose public long-term intimate relationship with Aunty Ema helped my whānau to keep open-minds when it came to alternative lifestyles. These amazing wahine have remained pivotal figures throughout my life and in regards to Tapuaeharuru marae. Little happens upon the grounds of Uruika without the awareness and engagement of these two. Their every-waking moment exemplifies the Māori principle of whakawhanaungatanga, and their humility can be disquieting at times. This interview was conducted in April 2011, at their Mallard Drive residence in Rotorua. It was late afternoon when I arrived into an atmosphere of curious confusion. Aunty Sharon was unsure why I would want to interview her, and was doubtful of having anything to contribute. This said, and after I clarified my intent, they agreed to be interviewed, and it turned out that they had quite a lot to say. It is appropriate to note that each of the interviewees often started, interjected, and finished each other’s lines of discussion. Also, unlike one-on-one interviews, these dialogues oftentimes intertwined. Their contributions are real, learned, and to be treasured.

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## Pa Kids:

**Aunty Sharon:** We're a big whānau, our father is one of twelve brothers and sisters, and they did everything together... As one family, we were able to take care of both, the wharenuī and the wharekai... My Dad, as the youngest of the twelve, was basically in the kitchen with a couple of other brothers. Three uncles, who took the other side of the marae which was the wharenuī, and they knew everything they had to do there. Unfortunately we are not as big a whānau now. Growing up as a kid and going down to tangis all we knew was it was time to play, because all our lives we've been what we term as the Pa kids, all our lives, and that's because our [poipoia] mother and father were always there for the duration of the tangihanga. And so it is today, if we are there so are our children, but what we've tended to do over recent years is we've had to pull in our children to make them aware of what goes on at marae. They're very young, our children, as well as their children, but we're definitely getting there... it's got to fall back now on the few that have been left behind and we have to pool whatever we can to be able to take care of a tangihanga.

## News of Death - Karanga Whānau:

**Aunty Em:** More or less just word of mouth, my brother he came over personally. Then I had a phone call from my big sister, I was so damned angry and mad because I thought I should be told face-to-face that my brother had died, instead of getting a phone call. But other than that yes its word of mouth, and phone calls.

**Aunty Sharon:** For me eighty percent of the time is by a phone call, or word of mouth.

## Preparing the Marae:

**Aunty Sharon:** The whānau gets hold of the [marae] chairman, to let them know that we need the marae because there's a death. If there is already somebody occupying our marae it means that they must let them know, and make an alternative plan to go, because at our marae all tangihanga take

precedence. Then we usually go and do shopping. At our marae we have what we call a tangihanga corporation, and usually our chairman will ask who your designated shoppers are, and those will be the only two or three people that can go and get shopping. But if it's a private tangi, than it's really up to the whānau immediate, that is either brothers or sisters to that tūpāpaku, who get together and decide what they can and want done. Then getting in touch with the pae, so they are ready and at the marae, and for us anyway it's to see your Auntie Tuari to come down and help do up the wharenuī. Someone always has to know before the tūpāpaku arrives. So basically you have two to three hours while they're at the funeral parlour. In that time you have to set up the marae, and prepare the first meal or cup of tea for after their arrival.

#### **Tangihanga:**

**Aunty Em:** I lost my mother when I was only two. I don't recall anything about her tangihanga or how we knew she had passed on. My first recollection of going to a tangi, I went because I was looked after by the neighbours while all the aunties were gone to work. I think I was about eight or nine at the time.

**Aunty Sharon:** At our mother's tangi, we were allowed to decide things for ourselves, and that right was given by your father [the author's 'koroua-dad' in the role of Rātana minister]. Like when we closed her, and when her funeral was going to be. Your father respected us for our choices, but he also let us know what was expected of us...

#### **Dressing Tūpāpaku:**

**Aunty Sharon:** I've dressed four... you are first asked by the funeral parlour... for the ones I have dressed it was our preference that we did it ourselves. It was basically for us the last private moment that you get to enjoy, that you didn't have to get a Pākehā to do, so it was a very personal thing. I wouldn't go around willy-nilly dressing anybody, but those that I have dressed... well actually there was one that was different, but the other three were personal to me. That was my big sister, my mother, and my father... right back to your

nanny and she died 85-86? Our mother stipulated what she wanted to wear, and my sister well...

**Aunty Em:** She said she wanted to be buried in pyjamas and slippers...

**Aunty Sharon:** And that's what we put her in, cos to her it's just a long sleep so she wanted to be dressed like she was going to bed... As for jewellery, touchy subject, touchy subject! Well, with our mother we took her jewellery off her, for our mother, and the same for our sister, her greenstone was taken off and another was put on. For our father, he wasn't a jewellery person...

**Aunty Em:** All I know is that he went down with his reading glasses. But there are so many things that go on during those three days that you forget eh...

**Aunty Sharon:** Like with Mum, we forgot to put her teeth in. So we had to go back after her funeral and bury them!

**Aunty Em:** With Aunty Chris, I've always known her as a woman with earrings. At her tangihanga, she never had any on, so I took mine off and put them on her, but of course I asked her husband first.

**Aunty Sharon:** Our mother wanted this particular suit and that's what she got... we remembered everything except her teeth. You always have to dress with another person. It is impossible for you to try and dress them alone... I do my own karakia, and I talk to them. Like I just spoke to Dad like I would speak to him if was still alive... and that is "Oh come on father... we have to get this on this way... there's no other way for us to do it" and I found them wonderful. I think within the last couple of days Dad resigned himself to the fact that he was near to death. He was wonderful to dress, and that's just us talking to him, and there was me, Darcy [female mokopuna], Tag [son] and Cam [male mokopuna/namesake]. Even to roll him over, I think the only thing that the funeral parlour ever did was to actually put on the underwear. To give our father his last respects they covered his private parts up, and it would be the same as for a woman, cos sometimes you would find a son that would help dress her. But for everything else yes we dress them, right to the shoes and the socks... for reasons of that nature, when you come out, you've already decided who will dress.

## Paying the Ferryman:

**Aunty Sharon:** Oh and you pay the ferryman with coins placed on their closed eye lids... We pay for our tūpāpaku to go from here to heaven, and only the ferryman takes you on that travel... our tūpāpaku is given the highest denomination in currency that we have in silver, and only in silver. It pays for your ferry ride, and we try to give him extra for any of our whānau who didn't go with a money. Otherwise you have to jump off the cliff and swim, and we didn't want ours to swim, and it's something I've been brought up with all my life, why silver?... it's a family tradition, we have always paid the ferryman, as far as I know because it came from your father Michael, I forget the story now...

## Taonga:

**Aunty Em:** All the placement of taonga is as if the person were standing. I have seen a few taonga – I've always believed and this is from nanny Raku'n'em going back – that you always place the taonga as if the person was standing. The korowai around the shoulders, and if you have one down the bottom then it's as if it's around the waist, the bottom part, and then the korowai over the top. The taonga, the patu and the mere, are as if the person is holding it... and yet sometimes I see it right down at the bottom of the feet, placed down that area... but I try and keep it as the old people taught. If someone from a particular line passed away than their whānau korowai was used. Just like with our whānau, as long as it's our whānau than we have the kiwi korowai. If a whānau owns one, then that becomes a prominent one to lay on your tūpāpaku. If the whānau does not own one, then you go back to the hapū one.

**Aunty Sharon:** As for multiple korowai I think it all depends on status within the hapū, the iwi, I think with most of mine they have had two korowai. I have seen one tangi though, I can't remember who, where they had none and that was really sad, but that is very far and few between – or was that someone's house? I think if it's held at a home than those are the places that maybe you don't see it... and some taonga such as portraits are kept in pillow cases, they

are all covered until they are placed on the tūpāpaku. The pillow cases would've been for protection. I myself have personal taonga and I have them wrapped in a scarf, and they're not out in the open unless I bring them out. You don't want your kids poking at them, and pulling out the feathers now would you, so they're not out in the open.

**Aunty Em:** To me it's [about] protection and a way to transport them...

**Aunty Sharon:** We take care of the kitchen and the people, as the kaimahi. Which is why I said there have been quite a few tangihanga that I have never been able to get over to, and the next time we get to go over there is actually during the final church, and by then of course they're closed. As for multiple, far as I can remember it's always been two korowai for us. I've never seen a tangi with just one. I have never seen one without a korowai at the Pa. Now I have known a few Pākehā who have been at home, and they've had korowai... We believe if you have been taken to our marae there has got to be a reason, and whatever ethnic group you may belong to, there is a reason you have come to our home marae, so you are entitled to the full ritual of what happens at tangihanga. You have a korowai.

#### Inside the Casket:

**Aunty Sharon:** You're there from the very beginning so we know or hear if there have been things slipped in with the tūpāpaku... I did one, and that was to my big sister, I gave her a packet of smokes, and a crossword book.

**Aunty Em:** We made sure Dad had his pen... I was going through the old photos of Koro, he just had a singlet on, but the first thing I noticed he got a pen, even though he just had a singlet on.

#### Whāriki:

**Aunty Em:** I remember... when the whole wharenui used to be covered in whāriki. Now it's where the tūpāpaku lies, only certain marae had whāriki to cover the whole wharenui – also on what they call the noa side, covering there... There were marae that never had enough whāriki to cover their floors but I think that was for different reasons ah, like due to wear and tear on the

whāriki, the dying of the art of making whāriki, and then the introduction of the Pākehā carpet... the marae that were lucky enough to have the whāriki makers within the hapū made the whāriki for their wharenuī. There were some that could only cover the floor halfway and there were some that could only cover where the tūpāpaku lay. I remember back in the old days, you know, where women used to remove their shoes to go into the wharenuī but the men allowed, then they treasured our whāriki and yet our men-folk were able to walk all over them, and they still do that today.

**Aunty Sharon:** Even I can remember when our marae was covered with whāriki, but over the years, as Em said, a lot of it was wear and tear, and we never ever had anybody who could fix them up, because by that time our nannies had died, and it used to be one of our nannies who used to make all the whāriki for our marae. So whatever you had left you tended to protect. In the garage on the marae we made sure that they were all laid out on the floor and not rolled or anything like that, but you were never ever allowed to go and get them for anything other than tangihanga, and we only used so many by then because we had a carpet and it was just to protect what few we had left.

**Aunty Em:** They used to have a special whāriki for the tūpāpaku... but now I'm not so sure anymore, but I remember back then they used to have a special whāriki.

**Aunty Sharon:** We also had a particular mattress that was never ever used other than for that tangi, and so that whāriki and that mattress were always together, and always apart from all the other whāriki and things. That wasn't long ago!

**Aunty Em:** I also still remember the days when women sit on the floor, no matter what, not sit behind the pae as they do today. The other thing was, and I find this hilarious, the pillows now have new pillow slips with the name Tapuaeharuru on it, and the opening always goes in and not out towards the door, and if you place the pillows with the name Tapuaeharuru on the top than the opening is facing the door. So they always turn them over so you can't see the beautiful embroidery...

**Aunty Em:** And the roro, the verandah. We're lucky now because Tuari's gathered together a group and they've made new ones. Those were the three that were laying during Koro Cammy's... she did a wānanga eh, and that's what it was for.

#### Photos:

**Aunty Em:** With my knowledge of the photos and how they're placed, well... it's always the person, tūpāpaku, it's always them, than normally their father, grandfather, or whoever, like your big brother, the eldest, the head. But that centre post is always of the generation coming down to the tūpāpaku. In the front of the tūpāpaku normally the photo of the kuia or the mother or the wife. No female is to go up on the pou. Only females around the waewae, on the floor... I remember at Dad's tangi [Koro Cammy] we placed Bella and Peter on the wall above, and they said - somebody mentioned - the females don't go up on the wall. But I always believed females can go up on the wall, but always to the side, and only if they're with a male.

**Aunty Sharon:** I think we have the same here eh cos we belong to Ngāti Pikia.

**Aunty Em:** I've never seen the female single, on the wall, never ever. And normally it's just the couples eh, mother father, that's the only way you'll get the photos up, but it will be to the side wall and not on that centre post. I'll always remember that from Nanny Raraku, she was our mentor then, in those days, but I noticed that times are changing eh – that some people do put the women up by themselves, not us though.

**Aunty Sharon:** Like if that was your mother or your sister – immediate though, wouldn't it be? Surely! And I've always had the belief that it's not right for the names of people still living to go down with the dead. That's not right either. Even people putting photos of themselves in with the tūpāpaku, eh, that's not right. I've experienced that, but we managed to catch that guy that was gonna do it...

**Aunty Em:** Anyone living, in photographs on display, are covered. I guess that goes back into old beliefs. If I remember correctly, it's always supposed



to be of the dead because in those beliefs they say if the living person is seen as well than that's the next person to go. Went to Uncle George's brother's and they used a digital album there, but that's Pākehā. So haven't as yet had that at tangi – only at celebrations, haven't seen it done at a tangihanga, their life stories so to speak... I reckon it's a good thing .

**Aunty Sharon:** Stormy, he brought the picture of Komea down off the wall, and he of course knew exactly who she was.

**Aunty Em:** As long as they stay up on the back wall our children really don't worry about it, but as soon as they come down, they start asking questions... like the old lady Komea. We all asked who she was, and it turned out she was closely connected to the tūpāpaku... Otherwise they just hang up on the wall, like you said, they just part of the hapū, but once they come down from that wall, and around the tūpāpaku, well then, there's learning...

#### **Multiple Tūpāpaku:**

**Aunty Sharon:** The hard sorts of decisions were never given to the whānau. and if your father Michael were here, well he never split two tangi... yes there was a tangi where two died in a car accident, then a third one occurred, he had been sick. They were all done together.

**Aunty Em:** They all had a korowai, they were all covered, all three of them. I have witnessed a lot of tangihanga where you have one first, then one of the same whānau has died a day after.

**Aunty Sharon:** It wouldn't matter whether it was single, or multiple, as far as formalities are concerned, well other than the economics of it all. I have been to a lot of tangi where the first tūpāpaku was held back for burial the same-day. The only difference is that the first one's lid might be put on earlier. But they are buried on the same day, with only the one hākari.

#### **Murua o Mātou Hara:**

**Aunty Sharon:** Many tragedies have changed our whānau, which is the reason why we were turned around at the cemetery. Why everybody turns east and we turn straight to the road.



Fig 98

It was to stop all the deaths in our whānau. I forget their names those particular kuia and koroua. To stop the deaths at that time there was a big hui of our whānau of that time. I think at that time it was one of the big epidemics. The koroua tohunga told us to choose who would be sacrificed. They believed totally in tohunga, our old people, and when they were told 'then you must turn your people around' and that is how they got turned, to face the road. This kuia actually put up her own hand, and said that it would be her, because she was old and ready to go. They made her hole, and every night till the time she died, she would go and sleep in her hole, and then one morning they went, and she was gone. We've had to change other things in order to stop deaths, but that is how they got turned, to face the road.

#### Changes and Compromises:

**Aunty Em:** It's amazing how many of our people in Australia still had their loved ones in the urns, because they're not ready to come home or not financial enough. My niece died over there and her husband cremated her. Now she flies the Tasman every time he comes back! He's not ready to let his wife go, so he brings her back for that purpose, to have her ashes scattered, and then takes her back again!

**Aunty Sharon:** We had a tangi where they used a little canoe box, like a Red Indian canoe... and at another tangi you took because they said that was for all the kids to write on, and draw on, for their koro... and I think some of them, if they want to do it, they'll do it... The biggest thing for me though, is the seating of the whānau around the tūpāpaku. For us, one side of the tūpāpaku must be the wife and children and that's going out towards the door, and the other side is for the sisters, the aunties, the rest of the hapū, whānau, and the

reason that was given to me, so that when the manuhiri come in, they know which. Today, they are now mihi'ing the wrong people, the wrong person, because of the way they are seated anywhere next to the tūpāpaku. The olds, the ones who still follow that tradition, will fall into the trap, whereas the young ones don't know it, they sit wherever... that's one of the biggest shifts I've seen in today's tangihanga. At one time, no females were allowed to carry the box. And then things started to change. What we've done is, we've compromised, and we were allowed to compromise, that was with your father's sanction, being allowed to compromise that practise. You take Dad, he's just died, and it was Darcy'n'em who wanted to carry him. It must be males to bring them back home onto our own marae, and those men have to be from there. You can't have a son-in-law who is Pākehā, they must whakapapa back on the marae, in order to bring the body on and take it off. However, our compromise to our nieces was to take him from the hearse into the urupa. But to put him where he will lay forever, that duty must come back to males. So that was our compromise, to let our girls take Dad straight from the car up to the urupa, but before you turn the corner his male moko took him. We were allowed to do that, and that was your father's compromise with us as females.

**Aunty Em:** And today it's all on Facebook. A lot of people find out who's passed away on Facebook. Papers like the Daily Post, and if they're in the high end status than of course Te Karere. Once upon a time when we used to listen to Uncle Mickey on Te Reo Irirangi o Te Arawa...



Fig 99

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## 5.6 Summary:

Each of my aunts shared their anxieties about what lays ahead for our people. My koroua, kuia, and parents were stalwart about whānau returning home to our




marae, and so are my aunts. It is the way of the Māori collective. Not only to attend tangihanga, working bees, and other functions, but also in encouraging the uri to 'take it home'. Weddings, significant birthdays, wānanga, hui, and hura kōhatu. Whatever the event, my aunts advocate whakawhanaungatanga, and the notion that a burden shared is a burden halved. The logistics of undertaking such events can be complex, and expensive. Increasingly, my whānau combine these events, and share our logistical burdens. For example, the image on the following page is the cover used for a whānau 2012 Memorial Service Programme.

For this event many of the whānau took up residency at Uruika the day before, in order to prepare the hākari. Throughout, I was amused that so many of our young people (particularly those who had travelled from Australia) were constantly seeking out power point sockets, so as to recharge their mobile phones, laptops and iPods. Then during the next morning's church service, we allowed for any whānau and their children wanting to be baptised, (and there were many) before the iwi departed to the urupa for the multiple 'unveilings'. All of this was undertaken as part of a singular hura kōhatu event. By this means our hapū and tribal collective were able to spread the various workloads, and expenses, in such a way that it was made easier, and more manageable, than had we done so as individual whānau. In so doing, it was only for the one formal day that we drew on our combined limited resources as well as the energies of our kaumātua, koroua, kuia, and whanaunga. It is my belief that to preserve our indigenous identities, we must uphold our unique customs and traditions. These critical indigenous aspects of culture, in turn, require the safety of marae, the cultural precincts wherein Māori are free to express themselves. This is how we remain NZers at one level, and Māori at another, apart, whilst still a part, of the cross-cultural world of modern, multicultural NZ.

*He Johu Whakamaumakara*

**LOVING**  
*Memory*



*Saturday 14th July 2012*

*23 Sept 1932 - 11 Dec 2010*  
**Cameron Sonny Nutana Hohepa**

*31 Oct 1941 - 13 Mar 2009*  
**Carro Makarena Te Wao Hohepa Ohlson**

*29 Aug 1961 - 15 July 2010*  
**Christine Tangiwai Hohepa (Nee Hughes)**

*27 September 2011 - 03 October 2011*  
**Miharo-Aroha Sharon Sian Hawira-Sao**

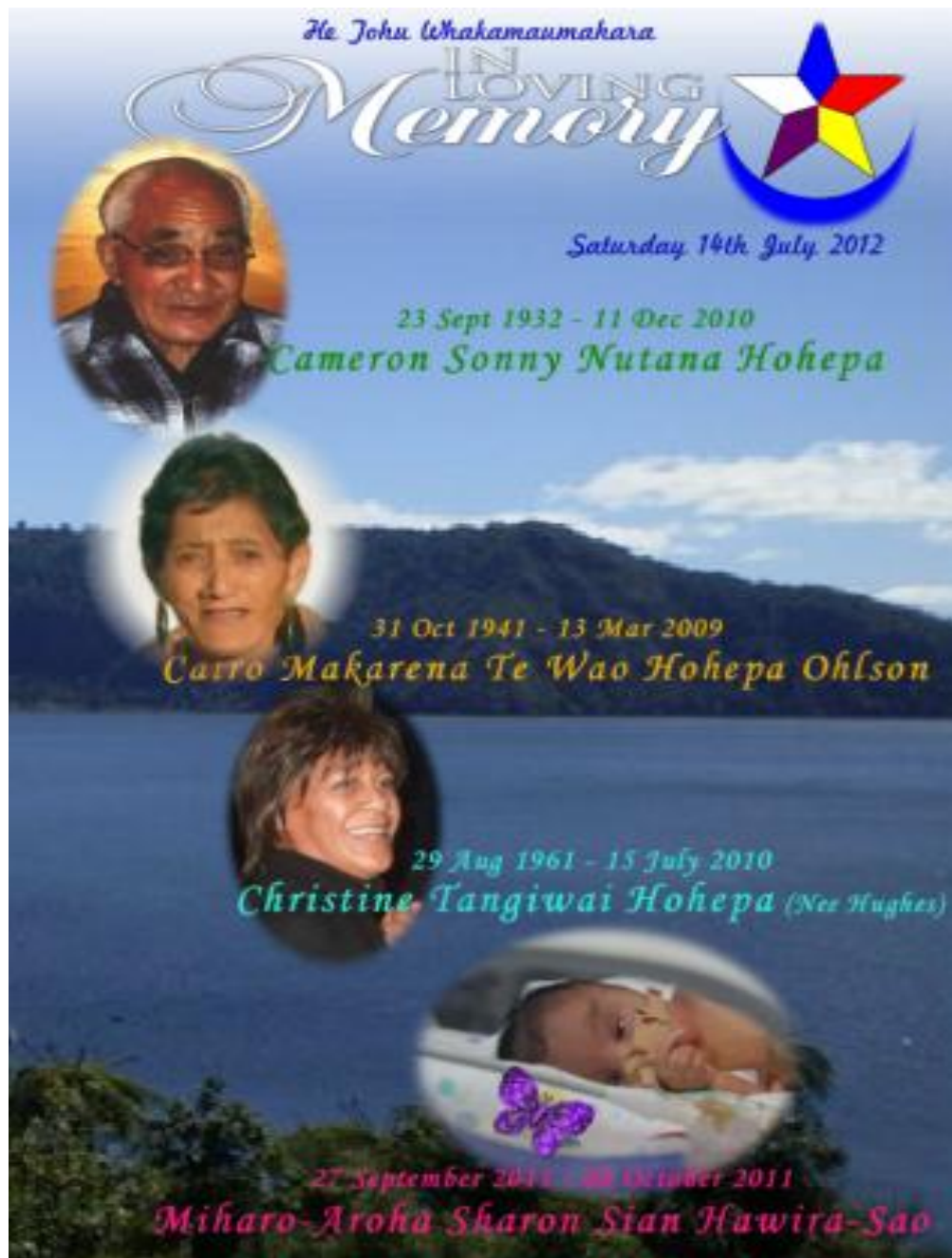


Fig 100:



Fig 101

Ngāti Pikiao/Te Arawa, Ngāti Rongomai/Te Arawa, Ngāti Ranginui, Te Whānau a Apanui.

Te Punawahakareia Marae, Nga Pumanawa e Waru Marae, Rakeiao Marae.



By way of Pikiao descent, Elaine is my kinswoman. We never grew up together, but each of our whānau has variously intertwined connections - histories which indelibly connect our past and present. So it is, that in the way of our people we refer to each other fondly using the Māori sense of the term of cousin.

This interview was conducted on Tuesday the 18th of January 2011, at my residence in Hillcrest, Hamilton. It was undertaken just months after the loss of her new-born infant, and that acute reality remained evident throughout the interview. It was not the easiest time for her, but she was bravely determined to contribute and proceed. For this I remain indebted.



Fig 102: Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Rotoiti.

## **Rotoiti Life Lessons:**

Living in Rotoiti, born and raised there, we would drop everything in order to shoot home for tangi, and it was just a natural thing we did out there. It didn't matter if the tangi was happening at your main marae. If it was happening at any of the marae across the lake... even if it wasn't your immediate family... what we'd do as we were growing up was we'd just automatically go to the tangi. If we didn't know the person, we'd go to the tangi. My grandparents instilled that into us. Even though it came from the kura, it also came from them... me and my cousin... I often refer to him cos I guess we look at things differently. Mention our names back home and they know who we are and it's not just tangihanga... I remember when my great grandparents were alive... I was probably one of the mokopuna tuarua that spent a lot of time with them, me and Jade. We both moved to Waikato at the same time, and we both did whatever our great grandparents told us... Me and Jade, we've been through kapahaka, we've gone out and done other stuff, and we've actually gone out and learnt more about Te Arawa as a whole... am I allowed to mention names? Taini Morrison, Atareta Maxwell... those are tangi that we went to, and of course they're whanaunga. We were lucky, we were the only two in our family who did kapahaka with these two beautiful women, so our connection with them was a bit more closer, which has made our connection with other Te Arawa closer than what it is with other whānau...

## **People remember:**

People remember... when somebody dies back home, that family know 'these people were at that tangi'. So it kind of went in a circle if you get what I mean. My Mum Jocelyn, if you go back to Rotoiti... she is a - I don't know how you put it - maybe tino kaimahi... she is at every tangihanga back home and I guess it's just been passed down to me through her, 'this is what our parents and our grandparents used to do so let's carry on doing it'. With me moving to the Waikato, when I do hear that somebody has died I just look back to what used to happen before and think 'I've got to go there'. I guess I feel it's a part of my duty... if you don't go to tangi... nobody's going to come to yours... But

the more prominent families and stuff back home... the one's that do follow tangihanga and stuff... you know people notice things like this... that is still my tūrangawaewae, and it will always be my tūrangawaewae...

#### **Hui:**

We often have hui at home about different things, about starting up a tangihanga fund and stuff, and... I'm in Hamilton... I get the call somebody's died, I go back to the tangi, and we always put the koha and stuff down on behalf of our family, well on behalf of our more extended family... She's an in-law my mother, and you know what, with all my Dad's first cousins and that... they know that they can depend on her...

#### **Tangihanga:**

The tangihanga back in Ngāti Pīkiao... I often get told by a lot of people back home 'well it's amazing that you drop everything'. My grandparents saw that there were particular people in the family who they thought would carry on with it, so I guess I was one of the chosen one's, I'm not quite sure, but I think they saw it [in me] cos I used to do it... and in my heart, it's the right thing to do. I feel that every tangi I go back to at home their family has done something for me, somebody and I feel maybe I'm giving back to them... that's a beauty about my mother too, she gets broken if she hears that somebody's died, even if it's a friend from back in school, and she hasn't had contact with that particular person she's still broken.

#### **Tangi:**

I would not like my baby's name used in the transcript Cousin. It's still quite fresh for me, so I might use his name but would not want it to appear in the transcript. You know just not so long ago when I lost my son, my Nan was there, my grandfather's sister, she is one that I've looked up to ever since I was little. Lovely, lovely, lady and she teaches me a lot of stuff actually. She's in Auckland. She is another one; if she hears that somebody's died back



home she is there... Mihikore... Mihi is my granddad's sister. At my baby's tangi she was there, and I know I can depend on her. My other Nan probably would've been there but she was in Brisbane at the time. But Nan Mihi is one of the one's that's always pushed me to get out of my comfort zone. I guess because she saw that I could do better than what I was doing at home. She was one of the ones who made me come to Uni, she saw a bit of potential in me... at my baby's tangi a lot of my whānau weren't there, some of them for obvious reasons, like they live in Aussie and stuff. But there's still my whānau back in Rotoiti that just didn't come... after everything that I'd gone through and I'd had a bit of time to think about it, and I reflected on what they're like, and I guess I just had to suck it in and say to myself 'it's not new'. There's a lot of stuff, like I know that back home they would not have been allowed. I wanted to throw in lollies, I wanted to throw him packets of chocolate biscuits in his coffin... I've been to tangi back home where they've said no you can't put kai in there. Kai is prohibited from the urupa and of course my baby is buried up at Taupiri, so... we weren't allowed to do that. When me and my partner went away to Sydney, to the Rugby World League Cup, he bought me this ring. It's a black ring, it's just beautiful. It's really funny actually, cos when we were shopping he goes "Oh you go and have a look in there", and then I lost him. Then when I got back to him, and we went to sit on the Parramatta River, and he gave me this ring, and he said this is to bind us together for the rest of our lives, and when my baby died I put that in his coffin.

#### **Photos:**

The girls wanted to put a photo of themselves inside, but they [it was unclear who 'they' are, but it would have been a whanau member] weren't allowed, it was taken out. The whānau took the photo out, and as we speak we're preparing to do the unveiling, which is coming up in June, and we've decided, we've got beautiful photo's we're not actually going to put that on his headstone, we're going to put his footprint on there... but I do remember, and I think I had a conversation with you not too long after the tangi, is that when we were called into the home? and you know, people just weren't thinking,

that my partners photo and the kids photos were still on the walls, and I think it was you, that actually pointed it out, and they were taken down.

### Korowai:

As recent as five weeks ago we had a tangi and I actually wasn't aware, one of our nana's passed away. This is my grandfather's brother's wife. Now my grandfather's brother passed away years ago. His wife has been single and she's still part of the family, she's been to everything. She laid at the same marae, didn't get another partner, and... there was a big raru about our whānau korowai... and what had happened was that one of her daughters went to go and see one of my nans... and says to her 'We want the korowai'. She tried to claim it as her own and all the family said 'that is ours and that is going on nanny when she arrives' and she said 'You's make sure you's bring it back to me cos this is my korowai'... I guess it's because she's held it for years and years and years, and of course she's quite old now, so maybe she does believe that it's her's... It did appear at the tangi and from what I heard cos of course I was one of the kaimahi, just hearing the korero around me is that they weren't going to actually take it back to her, she's just an in-law. The korowai was actually going back to the family who would not try to claim it. Even though my great-grandfather had passed, and my uncles had passed a little while ago now, but I do remember that korowai spread over the coffin. So it's a whānau korowai, not actually a marae korowai but a whānau korowai... I've got to refer back to my cousin, me and Jade, we have a korowai from our great-grandfather. When Jade graduated he had it on him, which was just so beautiful. We have multiple korowai but we never used to lay two cos this one was lost for a while, and it is so old, you know people from everywhere comment on it. I don't know who made it sorry.

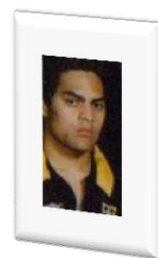


Fig 103

### **Non-traditional 'other' Objects:**

What else comes to mind is my great-grandmother. She played 'piggie' and patience so packs of cards and that went in with her. With an uncle of mine, this is the one I remember when he passed, this was the one that my Dad was at when he said 'It should've been me'. He was a wanna-be gang member. So course you know they had scarves and stuff – he wasn't patched or anything, he was a wanna-be, cos he'd drive around in his blue Honda Prelude... they put scarves and that in but they also put Waikato bottles in with him... dope. With another brother, he was the Chair of the Eight Ball Club so they put down a number eight pool table ball, the black one, and they got a trophy for the Eight Ball Club which is from the whānau that they have.

### **Taupiri:**

Taupiri, as we know, is one of the most sacred urupa of Tainui... for my babies tangi there are a lot of things I would've liked to have done differently. I would've loved to have had his brothers and his sisters paint their hands, and put them on the coffin, and do the balloon thing, but because he was stillborn, and it was only a one night tangi, time was scarce, so many things I would've liked... they wrote beautiful poems... that were put in, but at that time when they were writing the poems, and at the funeral when they were being read out, I don't remember... I wasn't 'there' even though I was there... and when I talk to my friends and that, and they talk about what was being said, about the tangi, and its slowly coming back to me... and its really funny, when I've done clean outs and stuff, I've found draft copies, of what was being written for my baby, and it's just amazing. And today when we drive past Taupiri, not just me and my partner notices, the whole whānau in general... my two year old has a connection with baby... we will drive passed Taupiri and he'll say 'Oh we're going to see pēpe, we're going to see baby' and if we go passed he'll say 'No that way that way'. He wants to stop. So we'll stop and go up to the cemetery. My last visit up there, which was just last week, we all went up and as soon as we got there he sat down and

zoned out. This is a two year old, at a little baby's graveside... just zoned out in his own world, just pottering around doing his thing, throwing the balls into the trucks that we bought Baby for Christmas, and yet when we drive passed there at night, totally different story. He is so scared he screams, he wants to hold somebody, we don't know what it is to this day, me and my partner we always drive back home through the back roads, Gordonton. When we drive at night we try and leave Huntly before it gets dark or when he is asleep.

#### **Koha:**

I remember when I was growing up, when I was younger, each of the families used to put \$30 in and that used to be on behalf of the whole whānau. It got to the point where it was only a few people, then it got to the point where it was only us... When it's at a marae that's not our primary marae, as we're getting called on, we give it to whoever the male is taking the koha on behalf of all the manuhiri in the group as we're going onto the marae, for him to place the koha down after his whaikōrero and stuff. However, if it is at our primary marae, we have an aunty that takes care of that and so it goes to her.

#### **Makutu:**

There's one thing that I've got to mention, and that's all my Dad's brothers and his first cousins were actually told a little while ago – they all passed before they were 40 – and apparently when we went to go see a tohunga it was something that was put on our whānau, mākutū. So when my Dad was approaching 40 of course we got so worried. Tragic... one was told he had gall stones and he actually had cancer, and two weeks later he was you know, gone. Just really tragic deaths and they were all under the age of 40. So when my Dad was approaching 40, you can imagine, we were all worried, especially me and my Mum. The year before my Dad turned 40 his younger brother got really sick and we were told to all meet, and on his final day my Dad, I remember, we were all in this room, and my Dad is so quiet he very rarely speaks, and he just broke down, and he said 'It should be me'. His brother was about six years younger than him 'It should be me, it should be

me'. After that point, we went to go see the tohunga, and they said there's something on us, and we got to, you know, do this and that. My Dad made it to his 40<sup>th</sup> and he's still here today at 55.

#### **Hei Tiki:**

As for pounamu and stuff, I have my own... and Jade uses it, I very rarely use mine, to be honest with you I used to hear people who had pounamu and stuff passed down to them, I never had that. It's a symbol of Ngāti Pikiao, my own tūpuna and stuff, and it's a big lovely one, and I guess our whānau don't have one, that I've heard of anyway. With mine this is gonna be passed down many generations. And I've been asked by whānau, 'Can I use your taonga' for special events like graduations and stuff, and that's what I want it to do, that's the purpose of it. I've worn it twice. I've had it for ten years, it's beautiful... I want something for my children, for my grandchildren, for my great-grandchildren.

#### **Changes:**

Personally, as a female, I wouldn't want to speak on the marae, and I'd rather it be left for the poroporoaki for the female... that's my personal opinion. In my lifetime I actually can't see it changing within our hapū. The male there are still really staunch to that. I'm a great believer, that what they're doing at the moment with just the male speaking is right. I guess a lot of it depends on the situation as well, see with my baby, with it being at home... one of my friends spoke, and she spoke beautifully, I'm so proud of her, and I'm so happy she done so. I guess it depends on the situation at the time. Regardless that we had advisors from the King's office who conducted the service, as well as the Kings brother there. However, if it was back at the marae it would've been quite different, and as we know with Ngāti Pikiao, that would've been full poroporoaki, not the actual service itself, but the whakawhanaungatanga. I'd just like to say that with tangihanga, even though I do what I do, I get up and go. Even though that's what I've done all my life, I've got a different way of viewing tangihanga and stuff because of what's happened to me. You don't

know. You don't know until it's happened to you personally. I'm sorry, I've been trying not to breakdown during this whole interview. But when it's your own, your own child, especially your baby, you know even though I've gone on about tangi and stuff that happened before... now I know how they feel, and it's just totally different since I've been to tangi after my own baby's tangi. I feel the way they're feeling...

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## 5.7 Summary:

As my cousin Elaine recalled wanting to be able to put photographs of the living in her infant's casket, I sympathised, and at the time, pondered on the matter. Almost two years later, after watching a NZ Television article, those ponderings returned when news journalist Tim Wilson discussed the CataCombo Sound System (Dec 14 at 8am, on TV1, 2012). Priced for retail in the tens of thousands of US dollars, Wilson explained how this was essentially a high-priced iPod speaker system. Music is played in customised caskets, tombs, and even, apparently, memorial headstones, via inbuilt hi-fi speakers. I chuckled at the fantastic absurdity of such a contraption. By general Māori estimations, to spend such a large amount of money on an item for the dead, would be considered absurd. Or is it? A leisurely stroll amongst the memorial headstones at the whānau urupa of Waharoa at Rotomā would surprise many, as regards the phenomenal finances we invest, on behalf of our dead, and their memorialisation. There are rows upon rows of memorial headstones that individually cost thousands of dollars, and every year they seemingly become more elaborate, and more expensive. Truth be known, my aunts jokingly refer to the row with my mother's headstone as 'the Hilton Hotel row'! Iwi-centric perhaps in so much as maybe my mother's people are the only iwi to exhibit such behaviour, but I suspect not. Alas, I digress.

In so saying, a decade or so ago in NZ, it was unheard of to 'upload' numerous images of our precious deceased, into a single compact picture

frame. A digital device that you could then programme to display the images, like an automated slideshow, contained entirely within the frame. Nowadays the modern digital picture frame is real and indeed being considered as an alternative option in wharehenui and wharekai, where wall space has become a premium.

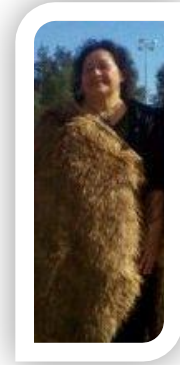
I was reminded by Ngahua Te Awekotuku that a number of people, especially our young ones, have been interred with iPods, MP3s, and mobile phones. In earlier times she had certainly heard of CD players and transistor radios also being interred. So pondering on the CataCombo, I had to concede that perhaps, one day, parents who lost their infant, as my cousin had, might well contemplate a device that would ensure their beloved infant was sung lullabies, for eternity.

Personally, I can't imagine the CataCombo being introduced on our urupa by Tamateatutahi Kawiti or Ngāti Whare. But then it would seem that the unimaginable is the province of tomorrow which lays in the hands of the next generations and tangihanga proponents, so who knows what may come in the years ahead.



Fig 104

Ngāti Te Roro o te Rangi,  
Ngāti Whakaue,  
Ngāti Rangiwewehi,  
Te Roro o te Rangi Marae



The Tangi Research Programme had just concluded a wānanga when I was informed that one of the older women attending had agreed to be interviewed and to contribute to my doctoral research, I was thrilled. The interview, which took place on Friday the 22nd of June 2010, was conducted in the Wānanga Room of the School of Māori and Pacific Development at the University of Waikato.

This would be my first fieldwork interview with a wahine of Te Arawa, active in the cultural lore and tangihanga of our people. Vicki Mae Hineiwahia Bhana resides in Rotorua, and her tribal affiliations include Ngāti Whakaue, Ngāti Rangiwewehi, and Te Roro o te Rangi.

Vicki is also a Community Researcher with the Tangi Research Programme. We have been blessed to have the gift of her voice and life experiences; contributing with her presence and sharing her knowledge at wānanga, as well as at symposiums, conferences, and marae throughout the motu when attending tangi together. She has become one of our team's stalwart supporters whose mere presence is a calming influence.



### **Kaitiakitanga:**

I look after the whānau kākahu. I'm from a whānau where I have been whāngai by my grand-aunt, Paparoa, the sister of my maternal grandfather, Rawiri. She brought me up and she looked after the taonga. She weaved, my kuia Hera was the weaver who made the kākahu, and her mother Mariana. I've got a whāngai brother and a sister, but I am the only direct descendant of that weaving lineage, so I was trained as kaitiaki. My whāngai sister Ngahuia and our brother have known and accepted that all the taonga came straight to me, and that I was the one who was brought up to say what was going to happen with the taonga. Whakapapa still plays a major role in these decisions. Basically I know who's going to get the kākahu, so there's no worry because I just know that this is a direct family member. I've got the kākahu for our family, so they go... If the taonga go, I go, because the deceased must be a close family member, and I must go. Not only because the taonga are there, but because I must be present as that is my close whanaunga. Apart from that I'll be rung up to run the kitchen, so I'll be there anyway. Even if I'm half crippled, I have to go down there – I'll be there because I have to do all the ordering – this is what we're gonna have for kai on all the days... so, you know, we have, I have, to be there.

### **Tūpāpaku:**

The tūpāpaku can, I think, set the tangi. We've had tūpāpaku that have been gang related and those tangi have just gone to bits, because we've got young men who are aggro who haven't been raised in the Māori way and they come in. Our old people get a little frightened and we had one tangi where they left the pae and they never came back. And it was sad, because it was a boy who grew up here in the Pa. But because of the behaviour of his gang mates with their patches on, and their drinking, and arguing and that, that tangi just went to bits. I had a cousin who was in the Mob who died, that was the most horrific tangi at a marae out of town. The mob went in, picked him up out of the coffin, zoomed around with him, and had no respect. So the tūpāpaku in a lot of ways can you know direct how their tangi's going to be. And unless, and

I have to say it, unless the women stand there and growl, things can change for the better, but in some situations they just don't want to listen. And gang members, they all staunch out when they're all together, and you get a lot of that. We just go 'Oh get, we don't want you here at our marae, you know, and grow up'. We don't let them in. That's a prime example of the tūpāpaku framing how the tangi is going to be run. Thank goodness a lot of men have grown up, but there are those few odd occasions where the whānau, the mates just go overboard and won't listen to any one... and I think they know that we will not ring the police to come to the marae. You know and we try and work it out between our poor old koroua and those blinking fella's...

### Kākahu:

We've got three generations of kākahu that I look after – and that's just on one family line. The fuzzy areas are my father's family, who are pōhara in kākahu. They think that they should be able to share in the kākahu of my mother's family, and I get numerous phone calls from them, from my own



Fig 105

paternal family when someone dies, 'Can you bring down your kākahu' and you know it's like every time I have to say 'No, they don't belong to this whānau, they belong to my mother's side'. It can get a bit tetchy, because my simple answer is 'get someone in the whānau to make a kākahu for you, for us, because these kākahu belong to my mother's family'. I get phone calls from funeral parlours, wanting to borrow kākahu. If we've got a tangi down there and one of the funeral directors knows me, they think 'Well ring up Vicki and ask if we can use one of theirs'. I as a rule don't allow our kākahu to be used by anyone else but my mother's family. They are very old, in some places the kiwi feathers are getting loose, and they could be lost... and my kuia always said those [kākahu] are only for our whānau. When her third husband died, she wouldn't put a kākahu on him (one of her kākahu). She put on a beautiful cream lace bedspread. She wouldn't allow the kiwi kākahu or old korowai to be put on him. They are so precious now, they are falling to

bits. They're all muka one's, and all with kiwi feathers. My kuia was an expert maker of kākahu, as was her mother. They had a special way of ending/finishing their kākahu, so that we would know whichever kākahu's are theirs, we can tell. Her kākahu were often given away as VIP gifts, and they always came to my kuia to make them. But it is a very sticky situation when people in the whānau who aren't from the line that own them, want the kākahu. I think that you have to say 'No'. The kākahu have their own whakapapa. So looking at it, the taonga have their own whakapapa and that is how I look at it... if you're not in the whakapapa of that kākahu then you can't use it. So to circumnavigate all of that, I've also got one that's made of dish cloth cottons, a recent modern one that's been made, and if they ring up now, I say 'Well you can use this one', and they get quite offended because I won't give them the kākahu kiwi. I say 'Well you either take this one or not at all'. This one has been made for me, and I will allow family to use it, but if you've never looked at it, all our taonga have a whakapapa. Whereas my cousin, down the road, who has got taonga too, who looks after their family taonga, she allows her kākahu to be used by anyone. At most tangi that we have they have two kākahu that covers the whole casket... from just below the neck down, so the whole casket is covered with kākahu. If the whānau only have one, well kei te pai, they've only got one – but you've seen one and they look kind of naked, some whānau's don't have them at all. You know that's just the way things are nowadays, they don't have them. But we have multiple kākahu on our tūpāpaku. For my whānau, I take down two kākahu that will cover the whole casket. Placement [on tūpāpaku] is left up to the iwi of each marae. At one stage the tie (where you tie the korowai up) used to be put up the top, and then the second kākahu lay on top. Now, because kākahu are so rare amongst our people, they're turning them around the other way, so that the neck tie is facing towards the manuhiri as they come in. That signifies that those kākahu, even though the person who they're laying on is whānau, nonetheless those kākahu are to go back to the family that brought them there. They're just there for a loan, they're not being passed onto that whānau. So that when you drag them off they're coming off, they're not the

other way, neckline up as if they're staying with that whānau... Some families might turn up with four korowai... but once dressed, that's it for us, we do not undress them again until they're taken off the marae. So if they're rich in korowai, they'll put them up on the wall and put the photos over the korowai. The korowai go up on the wall. We've already got markings and that on the wall where the photos go. I suppose it's just a little thing of just putting the photos over on the hooks and over the top of the korowai...

### **Storage and Conveyance:**

Every now and again I take them out and hang them on the line to give them a bit of an airing. One of the kuia said 'You know they like to be seen, they like to see what's happening, the tiki and all that. Wear them so they can see what's happening, don't lock them away'. So they go out on the line so they can see. I think 'Oh well it's a nice day, you fellah's can go outside and get some fresh air and all of that...'. I talk to them as if they're living, breathing, part of us, that was how we were told, you know, don't lock them away... Ngahuaia used to have them [kākahu] draped on the walls with velcro on the back so they stuck to the walls – so that they weren't pulling. Then we all got that paper that you wrap them in and now pack them in tubes. That's how we store them. Then for tangi, I take them out and wrap them in a sheet, because taking them in the tubing would just be too cumbersome to have in the wharenuī. At our marae we cover the korowai, too, as we carry them in, we either put them into pillow slips or wrap them in a sheet and take them in wrapped. Once the tūpāpaku is laid there and the mihi's are finished, then they are unwrapped and placed onto the coffin... then they are usually removed in the wharenuī, before they take the tūpāpaku out. So after the last karakia, following the last hīmene, the kuia of the marae will take off the kākahu, take the photo's away, move all the flowers. Then the boys will uplift the coffin, and take it away. Then the taonga are placed on the mattress that the tūpāpaku laid on, and they wait there to be blessed. They must always be blessed. We take them out covered again. Like I'll go in to get my korowai, put them back in the pillow cases. I don't know why the reason is, maybe it's

to keep them clean when we put them in the car. Stop the children from jumping around on them, the same as the photos. I know the photos aren't allowed into the dining area when we take them on. It's just something we practised all this time.

#### **Taonga:**

I have the photos, I have taonga, the tikis and that... If we have a tangi, I'll wear the tiki. I'll take him out for a walk, and you know I'll take him to the tangi. I'll wear him. I won't place him on the tūpāpaku, the coffin. There have been many stories of other whānau members coming along and taking them before you even can blink – the taonga. The patu and that, that's alright they're pretty big. But once again we don't take any of those sort of taonga down to the marae. I don't know if it's because my kuia and my mother were very humble people, and I think it made them feel a bit whakahīhī to take them, to have them placed on the tūpāpaku and that, so they've never done it, and so I'd never do it. But I will take the hei tiki out because he belongs to us, and the tūpāpaku is the hei tiki's whanaunga so I take him out. For reasons of security and because once again we're quite hūmārie and my Mum and Kuia weren't ones to... they'd be too whakahīhī. They wouldn't do that sort of thing so people could go 'who do they think they are?' and our people are great for that, so we just don't do it. No, most families don't do it. also, if you can't be sure that you're gonna be there when that tūpāpaku's being taken away and the taonga are lying there... it has been known that one of your whānau members will pick up that hei tiki or something and take it, and when you ask what... 'Oh I don't know, what are you talking about?' you know... it does happen.

#### **When Taonga are Ready to Sleep:**

We've got a korowai that really is ready to be put to rest, and afforded the ceremony which goes with a tangi. Maybe it'll go on one of my sisters from my real family or one of my aunties. The hei tiki that I wear, that used to be buried with our whānau, and then dug up again and taken out. I don't know

after how long a period it stayed in the ground for. Mum used to always say 'See how nice and shiny it is – that's from all the body oils off of all the bodies'. The greenstone takes all the oils from the body. The hei tiki always used to go down, and that stopped two generations ago, with my Kuia and my Mother, it was never buried again. I suppose because of the rules nowadays, what is it, the Health rules, where you can't re-dig up bodies to take the taonga back. So our hei tiki used to be buried, and the toggle on the cord was a finger bone, I don't know whose. So like I said, it's always been treated as a living thing – it is a living thing – it carries all the oils from all my kuia's who have worn it, generations and generations before me. Anyways, he's lovely to touch, you can rub him and he's nice and soft and oily, very shiny. When you don't wear him, he starts getting dull. So you have to 'Oh, come on then, on you go, off we go somewhere, you know it doesn't take much to bring him back'. In our whānau the hei tiki used to be buried. It is a tie between us and our kuia. A kuia I never knew, but a kuia who's kept alive for us in our whakapapa, in her weaving and taonga we still hold, and so it's something that keeps her with us. When and if we decide the old kākahu's going to go, and it goes on someone at a tangi, for us, we would be saying farewell to our kuia too. Whoever's going to dress the deceased, and I'd go with the kākahu, and I'd say 'Oh well, here dress them in it', and there won't be any questioning of things. My sister is she doesn't whakapapa to the kākahu, so basically she doesn't have any say. On the same thing, when her mother's sister died, she put a feathered kākahu she had made herself down with her. She laid it over her inside the coffin, so that it went down. I suppose it all depends on how you choose to dress your tūpāpaku... but I don't go and dress them cos my main function is at the marae, making sure everything's running smoothly down there for my whānau.

#### **Flowers:**

They are watered in the early morning and taken out at night. They are put on the ātea at night, maybe cos that's when everybody's sleeping and they take up a lot of room. They're not usually put onto the coffin, because colours in

them will leak out and stain your kākahu. Now if you've got red and yellow flowers, you don't want red yellow stains on your kākahu. In the morning they're returned. Often the children, the mokopuna, out of all innocence, the pēpē will make their own arrangements in jam jars, and put them near their kuia, and we let that cos that's the mokopuna's aroha... cos we can look and say 'Well they're gonna be dead by tomorrow anyway'. It's something the kids enjoy doing, and we can't alienate them by saying 'Oh get those blinking flowers out of there', so we allow them... We don't bring flowers that have been in the wharenuī into the wharekai... but this brings to mind an incident that we had down at the marae, though not with the flowers. The tūpāpaku was taken away to be buried and the sister-in-law collapsed and died in the kitchen after the tūpāpaku had left. So there was this big 'Oh crikes what are we gonna do?' because the old fella said 'We can't serve the kai – we've had someone die in here'. So it was naughty, but we glossed over it and said 'Oh no, she got into the ambulance and then passed away' cos we had manuhiri waiting to come for the hākari and we just had to say 'Well she could have passed away in the ambulance'. We don't know, cos people were trying to revive her on the floor and that in the dining room... so I suppose it's the same thing as with the flowers... you're bringing something that's dead in with the living. So there are little things that we gloss around, and we can't really say if she was dead in the dining room or she passed away in the ambulance – but we glossed around that. So we can't put something that's dead, or been with the dead, in with the living. [When it's all over] we give them back to the whānau cos they can take them to the urupa – it's up to the whānau.

#### **Other Items:**

The only thing that we're told is we cannot put in a photo of the living. Once again, we're committing our tūpāpaku to Hades, and that's a place for the dead, not for the living... We've had packs of cards put in, Housie cards put in, cos that's what they liked to do, they liked to Housie so they're gonna play Housie when they go wherever they're going, and they're gonna play cards you know. We've had kids draw pictures of their nannies and tuck them in

with stories about how much they love them, and you know we just let it be. I've also been at the urupa when they've buried, and they throw in the flowers. One man was a great gambler, so they had been to the TAB and got TAB tickets and that's what was thrown in because that's what he loved and that's what the family wanted... If some in the picture were living the picture has just had a piece of paper put in it covering the one that's alive. For the same reason as above, and I think it's because the manuhiri have come to say farewell to the dead, and all the photos there are of the dead, and you whakapapa to all the dead people, you mihi to all of them, and then you've got someone there whose alive and it's like 'Crikes'... so you're there for the dead. But I think people are slowly tucking in their photos now, without anyone knowing... But I would never stick a photo of myself into any coffin... even though I'd like to think I'm a bit enlightened, but you know there are a lot of Māori customs and different kawa that I would not even think of transgressing.

### **Tikanga and Gender Issues and Change:**

Māori are basically a patriarchal society. Yet many of our tamariki are being brought up by their mothers, without being told who their fathers are. These tamariki, some of them might even be the oldest in the male line. But because we're a patriarchal society, and they don't know who their fathers are, and their mothers are bringing them up so that they've got no input into their father's side... there are problems. Koroua think that they should have every right because if their father's from here, those kids have a right to know where they're from and who they are. They see it as keeping the patriarchal bond strong. But in the next 30 years, most of our kids will have been from one parent families, from their mother's and they won't know their father's side. Our culture doesn't allow for the female lines to be really pushed to the forefront. But we're going to have to start looking at it... so we'll be putting forward our tamariki who only know one side of their whakapapa, and that's their mother's side. For Māori, revolutions have always been happening. The kuia have always sat by the koroua, and straightened them up on



whakapapa, on most things – maybe because when ope come in, our men are so busy thinking of what they're going to say to them, that they're not listening to what the ope is saying. But the wahine are, when our koroua get up and they might go wondering off onto a completely different direction to what was said, you know, you've heard the kuia yourself go 'Oh' and put them right... and pull them back in line. That is our revolution, that we can direct our paepae, by just sitting behind them, or when they go on too long and the kuia will talk louder and louder. At our marae at the moment, no, and I can't see it happening in the near future. Maybe a lot of it is that our pae now has to start looking at themselves, and looking at our young men, and bringing them in, if they don't start teaching them... At our marae we've got really one/two confident whakapapa koroua who can do the whakapapa to all the waka. We've got a young boy who knows all the whakapapa, but he's from the sixth son, and won't ever have the chance of getting up there to speak. But he has all the knowledge. So maybe we're going to have to look at changing that... if the sixth son's mokopuna can do the whakapapa and everything, maybe he should be given the chance to come forward and do it. But some of the first son's, second son's children just don't want to do it. You can sit there twiddling your thumbs and hoping... but, oh cripes, there's no-one from this whānau who can do it, but there's someone, down the line in the whānau, who is very competent, but they won't hand over the reins to allow them to step forward. Tuakana still hold the power. Tikanga has to shift, to allow our kawa, our tikanga, to go forward... We've got really two competent males, who do our tangi, who are both very... one of them is very pro-active in business, so when his phone goes he goes 'Oh, I'm off to Wellington now', and he's left the pae. You know, making money is a bit more important now than sitting on the pae for three days. Then we're all 'oh crikes, ring up so-and-so and get them to come down and sit down here' and that... and sometimes our pae is manned by very young people eh... if there's someone in the dining room, in the back, we say 'Tidy yourself up and go and sit on the pae' and just sit there... they don't know what to say but at least there's a man sitting there. So we're gonna have to really look at it, to change

the lines of how/who is gonna speak and all of that. We aren't afforded the opportunity now where the whole whānau can korero Māori, the whole whānau knows the whakapapa, the whole whānau can intermarry this person with that person and bring in their hapū and marry the two hapū's together so we know how we're interconnected. So yeah, and the big push will come from the wahine... because if we don't start pushing it, we're gonna lose it.

### **Kawa of Te Arawa:**

The Kawa of Te Arawa its used as a guideline only... as an aside, with the old people they never called it a whare tūpuna, it was called a whare makea. This guide, some of it is really... you know, no13 on sheet 4 'when a man marries a woman and they should desire to have children, it is the man who will place himself on top of his wife, thus this is known as the piercing by tiki'. So you know, this is our 'bible' and some of us go 'Oh cripes'... 'when a woman reaches the stages of menopause her duties become the making of mats and clothes, and to teach her grand-children of these arts. It is also required that she uphold the name and rights of her husband'.

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### **5.8 Summary:**

I grew up accustomed to the presence of kaitiaki. These often taken-for-granted unremarkable guardians of my people's taonga tended, to my mind, to be quietly remarkable, and very deliberate thinkers. In my childhood, they tended to understand whakapapa, tikanga, kawa, and exemplified responsibility, staying in-touch with whānau at a very real, grass-roots, marae and papakāinga level. Our kaitiaki were kuia, koroua, uncles and aunts; they were notably not the frivolous young. They were also very much hands-on people, often capable of managing 'at the back' whilst mediating 'at the front', during marae activities. Yet regardless that the times have changed, today's kaitiaki, such as whaea Vicki Mae, are as vigilant and knowledgeable now, as

they were in my childhood. Perhaps it would be true to surmise that as long as Māori have taonga, we will have such treasured kaitiaki.

Kaore i hangaia te kupenga hei hopu ika anake.  
Engari i hangaia kia oioi i roto i te nekeneke o te tai.  
The net is not fashioned purely to catch fish, but also to  
be flexible so that it may flow with the tide.

Na Te Aho o te Rangi Welsh, 1984, p.42  
Ngāti Pikiao - Ngāti Rangiteaorere



An underlying theme of this interview was the very real concern Vicki touched on, regarding the fast-waning numbers of ringawera, kaimahi, kaikōrero, and kaikaranga, observable on marae throughout the motu. Sadly, in the Māori world, there is a growing chorus of uneasy voices, echoing this same concern. As an example, during one tangihanga at home, I recall my mother being appalled to find our kaikōrero from the pae rushing to plate up food for an ope that he had just welcomed. My mother's solution that day was to immediately phone all of her other children, as well as several nieces and nephews, 'motivating' them home to the marae, where they were needed, and belonged.

As the world of our uri expands far beyond the world I grew up in, I admit to not knowing the solution to this quandary. Change can at times be fearful, but perhaps therein lies a solution. I believe it is enough that our women are cooking, cleaning, nursing our children, and calling manuhiri on to our grounds. I do not wish to see them one day have to whaikōrero as well. Similarly, the notion of a male doing karanga, or a recording being used, is utterly incomprehensible to my sensibilities. And neither do I wish to see the uri of a pōtiki-line supersede uri of a tuakana-line. Yet needs must, and change, even incomprehensible today, may hold tomorrows solutions.

**PART**

**THREE**

# TANGIHANGA PORTRAITS

Throughout the following five reflective narratives I have brought to mind specific tangihanga experiences. These portraits markedly reflect on the personal subjective experience; relevant aspects of which I will analyse, postulate upon, and critique throughout the course of proceeding chapters. In this undertaking, I have drawn from personal diary entries, whānau interviews, familial narratives, and memory recall.

In hindsight, it is curious to me that there are those details which I can bring to mind without difficulty, and others which, for whatever reasons, are difficult to retrieve. As with all tangihanga, these were exceedingly private occasions, and in an effort to be prudent with the personal interests of whanaunga, I have deliberately selected tangihanga which involved the passing of members of my immediate whānau. I have also chosen to be forthright regarding their identities because each was a significant member of my life, a critical participant in my world, and the loss, at an individual and familial level, has been profound.

Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone  
 Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone  
 Silence the pianos and with muffled drum  
 Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.

Hugh Auden Wystan (1907-1973) - Funeral Blues  
 Song IX - Two Songs for Hedli Anderson



Fig 106

*“En Afrique, quand un vieillard meurt, c’est une  
 bibliothèque qui brûle.”*

"In Africa, when an old man dies, it's as if a library is  
 burning."

Amadou Hampate (1901-1991)  
 1960 at UNESCO.



Fig 107

If teardrops were pennies and heartaches were gold  
 I'd have all the treasures my pockets would hold  
 I'd be oh so wealthy with treasures untold  
 If teardrops were pennies and heartaches were gold

Rosemary Clooney (1928-2002)



Fig 108

"Death is the occasion above all others which brings  
 Māori together"

Professor Dame Joan Metge  
 1962, Lecture 5, p6



Fig 109

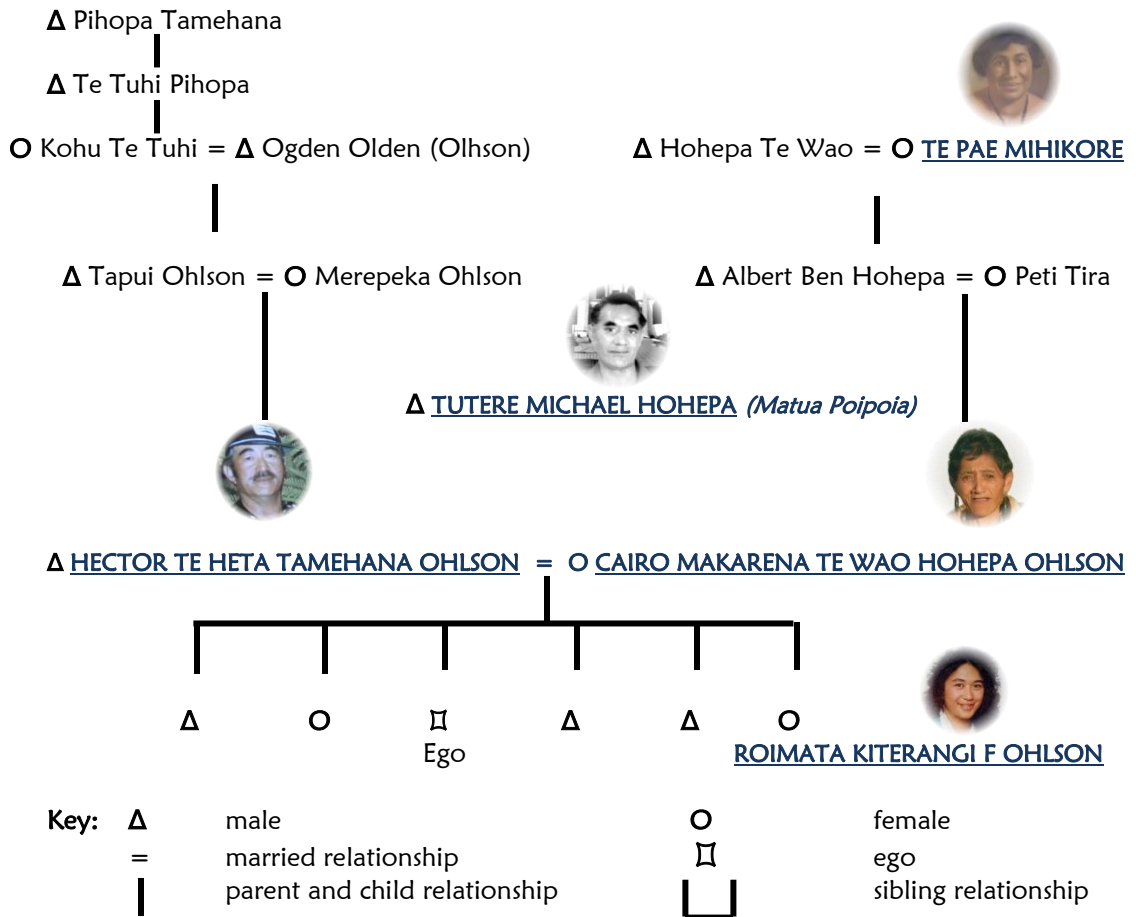
## 6.2 Diagrammatic Schema 5

### Elemental Kinship Connectivity WHAKAPAPA

With the exception of 'ego', being the author, the persons identified in this schema are deceased, as discussed throughout the forthcoming five specific tangihanga portraits.

#### Ngāti Whare

#### Ngāti Rangitihi – Ngāti Tamateatutahi Kawiti



I descend from Ngāti Whare and Tūhoe by way of my father's proud lineage. His father was Tapui 'Jack' Ohlson of Te Whāiti Nui a Toi, son of Kohu Te Tuhi, daughter of the Ngāti Hamua rangatira and tohunga whakairo Te Tuhi Pihopa whose father Pihopa Tamehana was the nephew of the Tūhoe chief Tutakangahau – a key informant of Elsdon Best. By way of my mother's lineage I descend from Ngāti Pikiāo and Ngāti Rangitihi. My koroua-dad was Āpotoro Takiwa Tutere Hohepa, a rangatira of Ngāti Tamateatutahi-Kawiti and son of Te Arawa weaver Te Pae Mihikore. All of this is herein discussed in further detail.

In mātauranga Māori our deceased depart the world of light, te ao Marama, returning to the other-world realms of our bygone tūpuna and atua; to occasionally revisit us in dreamtime, or returning back towards us, in shared memories and stories.

### 6.3 TANGIHANGA PORTRAIT ONE

**Kuia Te Pae Mihikore Hohepa Te Wao (nee Waretini)**  
ca. 1887 - 30th March 1952



*Throughout my life, whenever whānau have shared their indelible memories of my great-grandmother, it was done so with the highest of esteem, respect, and indubitable love; such was the aroha and mana accorded to my Ngāti Tamateatutahi kuia tūpuna. Her exact date of birth eludes me, although I have heard different guesstimates, from whānau who simply loved her regardless, and who saw her as an exemplar of a bygone era of Māori nowadays found only in the annals of history. She was a Pikiāo weaver of some repute who would come to bear ten children to my great-grandfather Hohepa Te Wao. She was also determined and successful in ensuring all their children were educated in both Māori and Pākehā, in readiness for a newly emerging bicultural world. Ironically, she spoke only her native tongue. As a much-loved and highly regarded individual, she lived giving, and died leaving our Pikiāo whānau a private collection of taonga that has, since 1952, continually affirmed her ongoing presence in the lives of her uri. These reflections are those of her son, my koroua-dad, and my mother, his daughter, told to me and recorded as I remember them.*

Although the eponymous and renowned 16<sup>th</sup> century chieftainess Mākino, daughter of the famed warriors Tamateatutahi and Kawiti, had centuries earlier departed the Pikiāo hinterlands for te ao wairua, Makino's expansive cultivations at Rotoiti and Rotoehu remained in our tribal custodianship. Centuries later those very same silvery sparkling streams and waterways still teemed with plentiful fish, watercress and other bounty (though this would sadly come to change in my lifetime). Our surrounding forests abounded with copious wildlife such as deer and wild pig, as well as animals farmed in the commonplace rural yards flourishing with profuse fruit trees and wild berry bushes. All of these provided both sustenance and any number of childhood imagined hideaways, tunnels, and make believe castles.



Our Kuia Te Pae grew kumara and other vegetables at the Tapuaeharuru papakāinga; and the whānau raised cows and sheep which combined with year around hunting and fishing provided adequate sustenance for the growing hapū. Regardless that Pākehā clothing, food, and commodities were available from the ever-increasing number of stores and markets in nearby Rotorua, she had little understanding, or patience, for money and economics as the Pākehā understood it; preferring instead to effortlessly weave garments from harakeke to clothe the whānau. Conversely, when she wove at the behest of others, the obligatory reciprocation was that of taonga or kai, or anything else the recipient chose to give willingly and respectfully. This is how in a poverty stricken time and area she nonetheless accrued taonga.

In comparison to the vastly modern lives of Ngāti Tamateatutahi Kawiti today, our kuia's was an era so much more innocent; and free of the incursive social issues of alcohol, and of illicit drugs which all of NZ would eventually have to deal with. But hers was nonetheless an era of great significant change as she witnessed first-hand the impacts of the Great War, the Great Depression, and World War II. It was also a time and place of widespread and devastating epidemics which would change so many aspects of the Māori world, and life as they knew it. Perhaps it was significant social impacts such as these which created in her a nature that was forward-thinking; because she was sometimes described as *a woman before her time*.

I remember my koroua-dad Tutere saying that his mother's life was not an easy lot, in a vastly different world and time where he and his siblings would otherwise have likely not survived were it not for her unconditional sacrifices, hard fought achievements, and abundant love of whānau. This said if one were to have listened solely to the voice of my koroua-dad, than I suspect the life of my kuia Te Pae would have been cast in a shadow-filled world born from painful memories of his stalwart disciplinarian father. His early childhood narratives were void of life's most vivid and exciting colours, replaced instead by different

shades of grey more symptomatic of a childhood where pain, loss, heartache and grief echoed mournfully above all else, except the memories of his treasured mother. My koroua-dad was never shy to emphasise how his mother's death was our family's greatest loss. By contrast, my mother's lilting voice was always uplifting, proud, and strong, when she would reminiscently return to her childhood years and recall the rainbow coloured life and times of her grandmother Te Pae, who had saved her life and helped to raise her. I also came to hear about, and learn of, my matrilineal great-grandmother when she would occasionally revisit in those precious shared whānau memories and stories heard only on marae amongst the tribal collective. During tangihanga, in narratives filled with soft laughter, quietly murmured by gossiping women-folk, and others, seated behind the pae from which our men-folk would be conducting formal matters. Alternatively, as our ringawera prepared the wharekai in the late evening, with the lights low in the wharenuī where we tamariki would be snugly curled up beneath blankets; the older siblings soothing younger ones as parents worked on the next day's activities. Our gently smiling great-grandmother would silently return to our whare tūpuna Uruika, to the uri, unhurriedly arriving on the tenderly spoken words of elders recalling her to mind, and presence, in softly spoken night-time reminiscences.

Te Pae had died prior to my birth, nonetheless we were accustomed to hearing stories about her amazing life of providing for, and protecting, her daughters, sons and treasured mokopuna. One such story relates how Ben, one of her young sons, was enlisted and fighting overseas in WWII, while at home in the coastal settlement of Matatā his wife and their three older children had tragically succumbed to the TB epidemic which ravaged the nation and the Māori. The story goes that Te Pae called on another younger son Tutere to take her into those TB ravaged Ngāti Rangitihī lands against the wishes of her husband, the whānau, and the hapū. She ignored them all, and travelling under cover of darkness they arrived in Matatā at the whare of her absent army son. Rife with the stench of death, she found the last of his children still alive. Addressing the

few Rangitihi elders present, she stated her name, whakapapa, and informed them that she would change the child's identity, birth date and anything else that might connect her mokopuna back to what she perceived as a cursed land. She had lost three mokopuna and a daughter; she would do whatever was called for so as to lose no more. It is said that no-one challenged her as she then proceeded to uplift her mokopuna, and removed her to be raised elsewhere, by another name, with another birth date. That mokopuna would in time marry and bear her own children. So it would be true to say that were it not for my great grandmother saving that child's life, than my mother would most likely have died in Matatā along with her three older siblings.

Decades later in 2004, when my mother was in her sixties, she applied for a passport, which required her birth certificate. The eventual birth certificate that was furnished gave details my mother could not make sense of. After enquiring throughout the whānau and hapū, searching far and wide, it was realised that in Matatā there lived an aged kuia, not long for this world, but whose memory might hold answers to my mothers' dilemma. With confusion and little hope, our mother journeyed back to those coastal lands now free from TB. That aged kuia not only recalled 'the child who was taken, the one who lived' as she put it, but she was a cousin to that child's mother who had sadly died; she was of the Moingaroa whānau of Rangitihi. They never knew what came of the child who was taken, though over the years there were stories that she lived. So my mother spoke what she knew of her infancy. The kuia, realising the sixty year old, tear-stained face in front of her was that very same child who had been taken, her grand-niece, she informed my mother of what had happened, all those years back in 1943. She recounted how one day amidst the turmoil of TB and death, a Pikiāo kuia had arrived to break their hearts; the day Ngāti Rangitihi had let a child of theirs be taken, whose identity would apparently be changed forever; all in the hope that at least one of that lineage might survive.

Before leaving Matatā, that kuia found and handed my mother, her grand-niece, an old worn but clearly treasured black and white photo. In it the kuia said was her husband seated on a wooden crate covered with a potato sack, holding their infant child. It was taken in the backyard of their whare, the same whare in which they sat at that moment, and at his feet sat a young boy, another of their young children. However, standing next to her husband was a young strapping Pīkiao man holding a wide-eyed infant with her legs wrapped around him. That young man was the enlisted husband of her cousin who had died all those decades ago, along with their three children; and the infant in his hands was the only known picture of 'the child who was taken, the one who lived'. Tears flowed copiously as my mother looked upon her infant image, one she had never seen, yet one which she somehow knew. Tears flowed for many years thereafter whenever my mother would hold that precious photo which the kuia had insisted she keep. She realised on that day for the first time that her enlisted father had seen her, held her, and touched her. He had known her before she had become the proud poipoia of his younger brother Tutere; in accordance with the wishes of their mother, my Kuia Te Pae. My mother and my koroua-dad never spoke of my great grandmother's tangi at Uruika in 1952; such was its profound impact on their lives. Nonetheless I am well informed that she was a selfless woman whose own life wove threads which to this day continue interlinking tendrils of the uri of Ngāti Tamateatutahi Kawiti.



Fig 110



Fig 111

## 6.4 TANGIHANGA PORTRAIT TWO

**Tutere Michael Hohepa**

4th of October 1929 - 21st February 2006



*Religion was a foremost priority to my people; particularly as the religions of the Pākehā were seen to potentially invoke spirits and entities capable of healing Māori in circumstances where our own other-world spirits and entities seemed insufficient. Out of the devastating embers of introduced epidemics which struck down Māori faster than any war or enemy we had known previously, my people did what we had to, so as to survive. Thus it was that my koroua-dad Tutere, my grandfather, who at a young age had been recognised as gifted, would enter the Rātana Church; ministering to his faithful flock, known as mōrehu or survivors, for more than five decades until his passing at seventy six years of age. The ninth of ten children born to my koroua tūpuna Hohepa Te Wao and Te Pae Mihikore, he never married, though not for want of trying. Nonetheless he would poipoia five of his siblings' children, who came to be raised as his own, and whose lives would become a testament of his determined doggedness to perpetuate the ways of Māori, our whakapapa, stories, and the legacies of Ngāti Tamateatutahi Kawiti.*

My Pikiāo koroua knew haka, taiaha, whaikōrero; while my kuia knew whatu, raranga, and karanga. They were a generation disadvantaged in the Pākehā world, yet abundantly advantaged in the realities of te ao Māori. All knew karakia, mōteatea, waiata, pūrākau; the toils of kaimahi, the duties of whānau, and the responsibilities of life's greatest gifts, tamariki. My experience of this generation was that their mere presence was mana personified. In crises their calming and serene conduct could swiftly quell the anxiety of the fraught and panic-stricken, while their singular utterance could command an entire kapa haka troupe to instant activity, or a pan-tribal gathering into stillness. When they raised their voices in waiata, they did so knowing all of the words from start to finish; often able to call on a varying vocal scale, so as to harmonise

other's voices. If they did not know the waiata, than they simply did not raise their voices. Such was their self-discipline and love of song. When they did karakia, it was by no means rote or generic, or a mere translation of a popular Pākehā prayer. Rather their karakia were composed for, and often at, a special occasion; therefore appropriate to the given social context, whether Pākehā or Māori or often both and specifically addressing all those present. Such was their confident articulation in both their first language as well as English. At alcohol-free whānau gatherings, when they played a six string guitar, the minimum strings required were three, with little notice given to missing strings. In the absence of a guitar, they were often masters of other apparatus, including playing the washboard, or desert spoons. Such was their level of instrumental talent.

Their newly emergent bicultural post-WWII generation was seemingly rife with perfectionism. That's not to say I thought they were perfect at all, because they were not, and they never attempted or pretended to be. Besides, our treasured old people were too humble for anyone to assert otherwise; though it may be said that their humility was on occasion to their detriment. I was taught that they knew what they knew; or so I was told, and perhaps more importantly, they knew what they did not know. Furthermore, what they did know, they were amongst the best at; and what they did not know, they ensured was learnt and known to others within the hapū. My elders were revered, honoured, to be listened to, learnt from, guided by, and occasionally feared; just as in the way of parents. Their homes were ours, and it was commonplace to live equally amongst them. It was this generation in whose awe-inspiring shadow I walked; towering shadows that had paved pathways hard-fought and hard to follow. Therefore, and understandably, in te ao Māori when we lose a koroua or kuia to death, the loss is inescapable, and multifariously echoed in every corner of our indigenous world. Their deaths instantly reflect in our lives, manifesting grief such that few are unaffected as we readily acknowledge the falling of a Totara. Upon our marae, workloads increase because our collective has decreased, choir

voices quieten as our numbers reduce, and with furrowed brows our cultural capital fearfully diminishes as our kete of knowledge lessens.

In my childhood I had naturally come to call my Pīkiao koroua Dad, which was not at all an uncommon practise with my people or for my generation (though I see this ever-less nowadays). Few people confronted him, and even fewer bettered him; such was his mana, his āhua as the acknowledged patriarch of our family. He was many things to many people, including a church minister, kaumātua, counsellor, inter-cultural orator, and philosopher. He steadfastly advocated our lifelong responsibilities to the Rātana Church. At the same time he cultivated in all of us a proud heritage of being Māori; a trait that has served me well.

Throughout my life I had never really been one to celebrate birthdays, but I had planned a small soiree to celebrate the last year of my thirties; wanting to pointedly mark that final twelve month transition period leading into my forties. So I was looking forward to quietly enjoying the day just before my thirty-ninth birthday. It was late morning, the sun was high, and I was in my student union office, conducting an advocacy meeting, when the office secretary opened the door announcing "Vince, I think it's your mother on the phone, she says its urgent and sounds pretty upset, can I put it through?" While she transferred the call I emptied the office for privacy and when I lifted the handset, mum's hysterical voice beckoned across the distance "He's gone, I don't know what to do, what do I do love... oh god darling, your grandfather..."

My mother had dropped into her father's home to deliver his lunch, and check in on him. He'd become ever more reclusive as his twilight years passed, preferring quiet seclusion rather than the company of others. As usual, mum had to use her spare key, opening the front door, only to find him curled up in the bathroom, cold and grey. The shock was intense for mum. He had been her pou tokomanawa in life, and his passing would affect her profoundly. I had to

quickly cancel birthday plans for the next day, and just as hastily make my way home to my mother's side.

We the hapū, conducted his tangihanga in traditional fashion at Tapuaeharuru marae on the shores of Lake Rotoiti. For over half a century he had devoted his considerable, and at times fierce, industries to the church; and my entire whānau complied, with rare exception, to his sometimes religiously myopic demands. Each time he donned his imposing ministerial robes, he made a striking impression from out of the full length layers, folds, and hues of the exclusivist religious attire. For the duration, many were observed whispering surreptitiously that he had not been dressed in those same foreboding religious robes which had for decades both mesmerized and transfixed so many of us. I learnt later that when it had come time for my mother to dress his tūpāpaku at the funeral home, she had reluctantly followed his privately conveyed wishes. Mum recounted to me how my grandfather had stipulated that the robes of the church were to remain above ground with the living; as was their purpose. Instead, and in a mix of both modern ideology and customary practice, he had asked that his tūpāpaku be dressed in a simple plain black suit, and then wrapped discretely in a treasured korowai that had been made by his mother. This was one of the last two remaining whānau korowai above ground woven by my long deceased great grandmother's hands. Much to the disappointment of whanaunga, his final wishes were carried out without dispute.



**Fig 112**

The day before interment my mother, older brother, and I, returned to his home where we proceeded to pack many of his personal belongings which would be interred with him; as was our family tradition. It was at this time that my mother handed to me various items that had personal, familial, and some historical significance, and which dad had instructed were best left to my custody. In particular were his monogrammed travel-case that went everywhere



he conducted ministerial duties, with his 1877 Paipera Tapu, and his treasured, delicate, glass baptismal vessel which he'd used for decades to baptise so many Rātana mōrehu. The following day, our whānau choir raised our voices, singing his favourite hymns for the last time, as my koroua-dad, and many of his belongings were interred at Wahanui Urupa, with the appropriate ceremony.



Fig 113

## 6.5 TANGIHANGA PORTRAIT THREE

**Hector Te Heta Tamehana Ohlson**

6<sup>th</sup> December 1942 – 1<sup>st</sup> November 1996



*It is purported that my Ngāti Whare grandparents, Tapui and Merepeka Ohlson, found themselves pregnant twenty-one times, although that number changes depending on which family members are addressed on the matter. Some whānau narratives account for my grandmother's pregnancies (not including multiple births). Some account for all of the births, including multiple and still-born; and yet other accounts allow only for those children who survived infancy. Additionally, the whānau phenomenon of whāngai would provide additional confusion regarding the number of children, their full names and actual locations. Furthermore, as whānau have eventually passed from this world into the ancestral realms, so too has familial knowledge they lived and walked with. But one definitive factor remains undisputed; the second to last born child was my amazing father. During my childhood he had told me that his Māori names Te Heta (which referred to the sun) and Tamehana, were age-old, and recurred throughout generations of our whānau. He also said that his only younger brother Te Hata (the 1970-80's NZ television personality known as Olly Ohlson), had another age-old familial name, which referred to the moon. These two youngest brothers of twenty one siblings would remain close throughout my father's entire life.*

My father had been my childhood hero, and for me, he was the archetype of Māori masculinity. He was kind, gentle, uncomplicated, tall, good looking, always ready with a well-honed humour and melodic singing voice. In the 1970's, an era when single-parent households in NZ were held in widespread disdain, he had sacrificed much in order to keep his young family together; and my relationship with him was one of indubitable love and respect. However, we had our differences, and at fifteen I'd left home after a heated exchange; though on that day he emphasised that his door would always be open. Whilst for several years we had ceased speaking, we eventually breached that divide,

and he had learnt to end telephone calls with those crucial words that every child craves to hear, "I love you".

By the summer of 1996 I had established a name as an artist (with handmade jewellery in NZ and abroad) and settled into a comfortable life in Christchurch. It was perhaps an overly busy life; certainly my mother thought so. Nonetheless I managed to keep in touch with whānau at home on the North Island, who similarly maintained communications. I also visited at every opportunity, keeping up to date with the domestic gossip and family happenings.

So it was that with such little forewarning, the first idea I had of my young fifty-two year old father's sudden failing health was by way of a phone call from his younger brother Te Hata "Your dad's ok Vince, he had a heart attack and is in Auckland hospital, but I've spoken with him, he's up and about and laughing". In a subsequent call, later that day, my father's wife reiterated my uncle's earlier sentiments that dad would be okay; and all six of my siblings were in attendance at the hospital, keeping his spirits up, so I relaxed.

Nevertheless, that night, I curled up in bed realising my unquestionable childhood hero was in my adulthood questionably mortal, and crushing pillows against my chest I entreated the gods to spare my father as the bed-linen soaked from tears of melancholy and love. Then in the early morning hours, when the sound of the phone roused me to alertness, I knew before I answered that the gods would not be bargained with. "He's had another heart attack son..." my step-mother's voice was composed but her veiled anguish was all too apparent in her clear but hollow tone. My hero, my dad, was dying. For several hours thereafter I was emotionally numb, functioning on automatic because to do otherwise was too painful; my hero was mortal, and the gods were calling him. Time had become condensed, space had become self-contained, and when I finally disembarked at Auckland airport I made my way straight to the hospital. On arrival I sought out the nursing staff, desperate for an informed medical

opinion; some tendrils of hope with which to cling to. However, having never been in such a fraught and delicate situation, I was ill-prepared to be advised by a charge-nurse that the most recent heart attack had been fatal, they hadn't expected him to last as long, and it was only a matter of moments. The shock started setting in.

I found the whānau gathered in his room; some whispering quietly, some humming gently as they rocked to and fro, others standing against the wall, hugging silently. Around the bed were gathered my siblings, who shifted apart, clearing the way to his bedside, and I saw my dad, unconscious, eyes closed, chest softly rising and falling. As the last of his children to arrive, I was so very lucky because my father had held on, he had waited for his namesake to arrive. When I sat on his bed, one hand clasping his, the other placed on his face, I allowed the tears to unabashedly fall as I leaned to lay my head on his chest and told him, for the last time, it was ok, I was there, as the room filled with sobbing, wailing, and weeping. Over the next couple of hours I could talk to him, saying all those emotive words a son hesitates to say to his father, and that had lain unspoken too long. I could joke and be flippant in the misguided hope that he would come back to us. And I could cry, breathe in his presence, feel his mauri, and thank him, for everything he had given us, his precious children. He never regained consciousness, and his fingertips very slowly turned blue as his oxygen intake slowed, before he eventually took his last breath, and succumbed to death. It was the first significant loss of such magnitude for my siblings and me.

Nurses and a doctor came and went, offering us a few moments privacy though warning us of the looming removal of our father's body, so as to undertake their own death processes. Without time to think, or so it seemed, our Uncle Waretini took us, the children, aside, and explained that decisions had to be made, people contacted, plans put into action, marae and Māori consulted with. He sympathised with our loss but I remember him clearly saying "Your time has

come now, it is a hard lesson in the learning but it is now your turn... you are all old enough, and it is right that you do this last act for your father" (W. Hoani, personal communication, November, 1996). It was all so fast as time seemed to stop, and I was again condensing an assortment of emotions, thoughts, and processes. Logic necessarily prevailed, grief had to be forestalled.

Our uncle pointed out *kawa*, the concern that the *tūpāpaku* had to be vigilantly watched over; regardless that individually we each had yet to fully prepare ourselves to collectivise for the *tangihanga*. There were very real apprehensions as to which tribes would venture to Auckland to *tono* his *tūpāpaku*, claim my father's body, when all we wanted was to say he was ours and to take him home. In so saying, we knew our individual voices would to be guided and likely superseded, by the voices of the Māori collective, as is the way of our people. Somehow we had to decide which *marae* our father would lay in state at, and how we would make it all come together and happen; without forewarning or preparation. It was all so very fast, as we struggled with both the death of our father, and simultaneously grappled with the far-reaching logistical aspects of death within the immediate family. It also seemed ironic to me, that no sooner had I responded to the *whānau* call that death was imminent, and with little time to think, I suddenly had to make the *karanga whānau* to *whanaunga* signifying that death had arrived; beginning with the heart-breaking call to my mother.

Mum was at work in the Te Puke kiwifruit sheds when I eventually reached the shed manager by phone, forewarned him of the reason for my call, and waited as he quietly gathered several *whānau* members together. Moments later I could hear my mother's nervous voice trembling through the earpiece. She was resisting taking the handset, knowing I was on the other end of the line and fearfully aware of what that meant. Her sister and daughter-in-law eventually convinced her to speak with me, and when she did, her voice was uncharacteristically scared and so very weak "Son... son?". "Yes mum, it's me.

You must take a deep breath darling... you must be strong mum, dad has gone". I will never forget the breathless, high-pitched, guttural sound of my mother's heart-wrenching scream, before hearing what sounded like the phone striking the floor. I could make out the sounds of people obviously scrambling in the room to catch her, as she collapsed at the news of the death of the father of all her children, and the passing of her first, and only, true love. At my end of the phone I was helpless, and simply wanted to close my eyes and turn back the hands of time. To open my eyes up back in 1973 watching from atop the backyard shed as mum hung out the washing in our Fordblock state housing home. There was dad laughing, as my brothers and sisters took turns standing astride his feet, while he spun in ever-widening circles, dancing with us balanced and safe in his clasp. A time before my parents had separated and life had taken so many different directions, a time long before 1996. But there was no time to retreat into the happy solitude of yesteryears memories. There was little enough time to engage at a self-expressive level, regardless that inside I was, like my mother at the other end of the phone, collapsing heart and soul. Alas, death did not await our readiness, and neither did the numerous processes of death incumbent in the Māori world. The logistics of tangihanga had to be learned, addressed and contended with.

After speaking with the Māori funeral home directors, who ensured me he would be safe in their custody, we left my father in their care and made our way from the hospital to his Papakura home, where he would lay for the night before returning him to the marae. The lounge had to be set up as a make-shift wharenuī, furniture moved, mattresses laid, photographs of the living removed, living plants taken outside, catering organised for manuhiri and more phone calls to be made; more lives to be impacted.

Later, back at the funeral home, with our step-mother and step-sister present, my younger brother and I dressed our father; through stifled words and relentless tears, before finally returning him to South Auckland. Approaching his

home, we were met by the startling sight of rows upon rows of vehicles, packed with waiting Māori dressed in black, from three distinct tribes; each who came to demand final and rightful claim of our father's tūpāpaku. We chose to take our father's tūpāpaku, followed by a considerable entourage, from Auckland the next day to Matatā, where he lay in state for the night.

Rangitihī Marae was my step-mothers as well as our mothers' tūrangawaewae, and although we, the children, were unfamiliar with local practices, Ngāti Rangitihī were amazingly accommodating and generous. Inside the whare tūpuna Rangiaohia his



**Fig 114**

casket was shrouded with a stunning feathered korowai belonging to the local iwi, who catered an unforgettable feast of kaimoana during our brief time there. Then just before leaving the next morning, Ngāti Rangitihī emphatically refused a koha; emphasising the esteem in which our father had been held by them.

The growing entourage then escorted our father from eastern coastal lands inland. We would take him back to his treasured Whirinaki lands, where Ngāti Whare awaited his return, and tear-stained whanaunga took claim of their koroua, uncle, brother, and nephew, for the last farewell, with his heart-broken younger brother Te Hata waiting on the pae.



**Fig 115**

On the dawning of the final day, my brothers and I congregated at our adjacent whānau urupa, to prepare our father's grave. The whānau tradition was that the younger male members of the whānau pani participated in this charge. In so saying, I am better known for my culinary skills as opposed to particularly strenuous physical labour. After they had been at it a while, my brothers and cousins took a brief break from their work. This allowed me to jump into the dug-out cavity so as to scoop a few shovels full of dirt, before they hoisted me

out. They were satisfied that I had done my duty to my father, and instructed me to return to the wharekai and prepare parakuihi, before waking all those still sleeping in the wharenuī.

Our treasured father had lain in the embrace of Hinenuitepo at Waikotikoti Marae for the last time. Later that morning we agonizingly walked him out of the marae, along the highway, and up the virgin hillside slope. We took turns carrying his tūpāpaku to the whānau urupa, and finally laid our precious father to rest amongst the ever-elusive patupaiarehe, and earlier departed children of the mist.





## 6.6 TANGIHANGA PORTRAIT FOUR

**Frances Roimata Kiterangi Ohlson**  
12<sup>th</sup> August 1974 – 17<sup>th</sup> August 2004



*Our parents had endured two difficult miscarriages prior to conceiving their eighth and last-born child. Mum and dad had therefore agreed this would be their final attempt at child-bearing, and a subsequently uncomplicated full-term pregnancy and easy birth eventually quelled my mother's miscarriage fears. For these reasons our parents considered her serendipitous birth at Rotorua Hospital a blessing from the gods, and appropriately our tribe's tohunga karakia, our grandfather, was called upon to bear witness to his daughter's final birth, and to also name his rosy-cheeked new-born mokopuna. With all of this in mind, she came to be named Roimata Kiterangi, meaning teardrops from heaven; a child whose gentle infectious smile always lit up our lives. When her birth was registered they unfortunately took her English middle name as her first Christian name; but Pākehā bureaucratic errors aside, to our whānau she was always simply Roimata Kiterangi, our teardrops from heaven. Three decades and fifteen days later, that same tohunga karakia, our grandfather, would be called upon once more to bear witness for this same mokopuna; though on this occasion it would be to painfully identify her tūpāpaku for the New Zealand Police.*

It was a cool mid-morning in early August 2004. I'd gotten to bed late the night before because of an undergrad deadline, and I was hardly in the mood to respond to some stranger repeatedly knocking on the door. The house was atypically quiet because my flatmates had gone away with their children for the weekend, and I was enjoying the rare luxury of lazing in bed on a Saturday; although the incessant knocking wouldn't stop. I was alone, and when I stretched to look out the bedroom window, the sight of a Police Cruiser in the driveway made me bolt from the bed, dash to the far end of the house grabbing my bathrobe on the way. Ignoring my dishevelled appearance, I questioningly opened the front door as my weary grey cells suddenly came on alert.

"Sorry to wake you sir..." he was young, tall, in a crisp well-pressed Police uniform. "I'm from the local station, we've been asked to locate a Vincent Malcolm-Buchanan who we understand may live at this address..."

"Yes, that's me, how can I help you...".

"Your mother has been trying to phone you since yesterday Vincent, there's been a death in the family, she needs you to phone home..." In that split second I was utterly mystified, maybe stupefied, as his next words were "I'll wait just here while you make the call."

The call had only ever come from whānau, so this startling engagement had yet to register as such. Not thinking of the ramifications of his words I made my way to the lounge, grabbed the handset, and dialled my mother's mobile. It rang at the other end only briefly, and her clarion though exhausted and distraught voice carried a simple sentence.

"Darling, where've you been... your sister, she's done it, she's gone..." her breathing was laboured, her pronunciation was empty and her natural lilting voice was now that of a child, monotone, lost, alone; and I had failed to comprehend her statement.

"Mum, who are you talking about sweetheart, calm down, try to talk slowly..." I was already slipping into care-giver mode, immediately concerned for my wonderful elderly mother who was clearly in the throes of distress.

"Your baby-sister, she's done it, she's killed herself... you need to come home, we have her at Rotoiti, how soon can you get here...". When the call arrives, you answer, but I don't remember the end of that conversation. I do vaguely recall going back to the front door and thanking the Police Officer for his effort, assuring him that I would be ok. There were logistical matters to deal with and

ever pragmatic, I phoned my older sister Dawn. "Bub, it's me, what happened..." my voice was calm, monotone, level; a protection mechanism.

"She was found yesterday brother, we've been trying to reach you since yesterday... she was found hanging in the garage..." my alerted grey cells struggled to comprehend her words, I could barely engage, let alone comprehend "... you need to come home, mum needs you, we need you here brother... our baby is gone...". My sister's voice was similarly calm and level, but my lifelong intimate knowledge of her meant I could detect that faint quiver which belied her distant composed facade. Although at that moment we were physically apart, in that instant we had both arrived at a mutual space which only she and I could understand. Disengaging was not an option, such is death in the whānau and its interlinked call to return, "I'm on my way, give me time to pack and organise things here... I'll be home in a few hours bub" and with those words I shakingly replaced the phone in its cradle, sat back, and tried reinforcing my own façade as I struggled to quell the oncoming emotional and psychological onslaught. I remember making it back to my bedroom, crawling under the covers and praying that I was in fact asleep and would be woken from the unimaginable nightmare of what had just transpired. But the respite of slumber evaded me. It was not a nightmare from which I would awaken, the bed-covers would not provide dreamtime solace or reprieve. The call had come, in its most brutal form, and it was time to return to Uruika.

Gratefully alone in the house, I sorted through academic work so that I could depart to make the two hour drive home to Ngāti Pīkiao. I packed then unpacked, sat in silence then prostrated in agony, kneeled pleading to the gods, and stood in defiance of all unearthly entities. There were moments of clarity, when I could think logically and articulate well enough to speak briefly with a handful of people by phone as I readied myself. But those brief moments of clarity were brutally interjected by gut-wrenching instances of pain which would have me physically keeling over, collapsing, in a chaos of emotions, barrage of

thoughts, and questioning diatribes which I could only describe later as incomprehensible. At times the wrenching pain in my gut kept me grounded, literally, on the floor. This must be how it feels when a parent loses a child. This must be that unspeakable heartache that, in the nature of things, no-one who has raised a child should endure. This was the reason my older sister and I had arrived at a mutual space dissimilar to our other siblings, and our mother. Our baby-sister, Roimata Kiterangi, who had just turned thirty the week prior, had been named teardrops from heaven, and had only been a few months old when our parents had separated. So it was, at the age of eight and six, Dawn and I changed nappies, bottle-fed, toilet-trained, taught her the alphabet, nursed and comforted her, our baby; as our father, who was holding down two full-time jobs, did his best to house, educate, clothe and provide for five children single-handedly. He had no-one else to turn to, and although so young, Dawn and I learnt to cook and clean, wash and dress, comfort and calm our siblings, in a household that was nonetheless permeated with unadulterated love. It was the only childhood that we knew, where you did what needed to be done and got on with things. People who only ever knew us as siblings could never understand how it was that with a simple change of tone in my voice, I could still my baby-sister's arguments; or worse, make a short declaration which would have her in tears. Not that I was ever proud of those moments. It took years before I realised there were times our baby-sister reacted as a child responded with a parent, and in that moment of utterly relentless anguish, I had started responding as a parent - resisting the full brutal impact of having lost a member of my whānau who was at the same time a sister, a friend, and a child who I had helped raise for the first several years of her life. Now, three decades later, we had entered foreign territory where death was the ultimate enemy, and we again had to do what needed to be done. I tried repeatedly to picture my darling baby-sister's face in my mind's eye. But it kept distorting, disappearing in a haze of tears that wouldn't seem to stop, no matter what I tried. I would call out to her memorised image to come to me, for her to come to me, and in failing, I knew though resisted, that she had finally left my grasp,

been torn from my life, and with every fibre of my being I resisted. There were instances of paralysis that overcame me without warning, immobilising me in time and space. Regardless whether inside sorting the house or outside packing up the car, I would be literally frozen, lost in a lifetime of memories; paralysed because the only way forward required accepting the unacceptable. Aporia, contradiction, illogicality. The call, in its innocuous commencement, had elicited a paradox of conflicting processes which I instinctively struggled against. When the inevitable shock of the full impact of my sister's death had finally set in, it was a grateful reprieve.

That evening I arrived at Uruika, alongside Ngāti Whare whanaunga, in semi-darkness. The whānau were in the wharekai having a meal, and we were instructed to walk straight in to the wharenuī. I was still resistant and every step was a struggle. When I made it on to the mahau, I sidled up against the right side of the doorway to tentatively peer in, and there she lay, her tūpāpaku resplendent in the casket shrouded with the whānau korowai. She had been dressed in black and red, adorned in Rātana jewellery, with her Rātana hymn-book clasped in her hands. To my wishful eye she, at first glance, simply appeared to be sleeping. Dawn sat waiting, calling me to her and moving aside as I staggered forward to touch our baby-sister. Placing my hands around her mahunga, my cheek against hers, I tearfully whispered "It's okay sweetheart, I'm here now darling, you can wake up now baby..." but no matter how quietly I whispered, how gently I cradled her, or how yearningly I implored, there would of course be no awakening.



Fig 116

Two days later, in a rare configuration of iwi protocol and tradition, we held her hākari, and then removed her tūpāpaku from Tapuaeharuru. It had been decided that she would lay next to our beloved father, in the native fairy-filled Ngāti Whare lands of the children of the mist. Ngāti Pīkiao and Te Arawa escorted us as we travelled through to Waikotikoti Marae, where her tūpāpaku sat briefly on the marae, before we took her on the final traditional walk, along the highway, and up the hill. I was the last to depart the whānau urupa that day, as death's toll echoed throughout the secluded valley of Te Whāiti nui a Toi.

## 6.7 TANGIHANGA PORTRAIT FIVE

**Cairo Makarena Te Wao Hohepa Ohlson**  
30<sup>th</sup> October 1941 – 13<sup>th</sup> March 2009



*In my beloved mother's lifetime she not only observed, witnessed and participated in a new history unfolding in the ever-increasing multicultural fabric of our society, but she was also a casualty of complex social juxtapositions far and beyond her understandings. My Ngāti Rangitīhi grandparents, my koro Ben and kuia Peti, had borne four children in the East Coast hinterlands of Matatā. As the pōtiki, she had arrived into the world while her father Ben, a member of the history-making Māori Battalion, was fighting for the honour of NZ, and to the esteem of all Māori back on the shores of Aotearoa. He was in Egypt's capital city at the time of her birth, and so she came to be auspiciously named Cairo. Eventually she was relocated by my great-grandmother and raised in the Pīkiao enclave of Rotoiti where she became the eldest poipoia to her father's younger brother Tutere. So it came to be that my mother was proudly brought up as the only daughter of a tohunga karakia; one of several poipoia siblings.*

I was uncharacteristically restless on the night of Thursday the 12<sup>th</sup> of March 2009, unable to sleep. So after a few hours of trying, I decided to get up, shower and make coffee before sitting at my desk at home and getting back into my dreaded and all-consuming academic work. The plan was that as soon as I finished the Master's thesis I could head home to Rotorua and be the fulltime primary care-giver for my mother. I would be free to help my sister Dawn, whose copious energies were finally waning, and more importantly, to be there fulltime for mum. She had spoken to me of her grief at having found her father's still body on the cold wooden floor of his home, lifeless and alone; and I had promised that I would never let that happen to her, that she would not be alone, and that I would be there for her at the end.

For the first time in my academic career I was a full week ahead of schedule on the thesis, as well as with tutorial reports, and quietly pleased at myself.

So after a few of hours of writing, on the morning of that ill-fated Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>, I took a break to grab groceries before heading into my graduate office on campus to continue working. Then my mobile phone rang. It rang at 8.15am, and I didn't think anything about my earlier sleepless night or uncharacteristic restlessness. I answered, albeit sluggishly from the lack of sleep; and was pleasantly surprised to hear my older sister's voice softly announcing "You better come home...". Over the previous few years those words had become such a familiar line that I jokingly thought of them as a whānau mantra.

Mum had been valiantly fighting increasingly different and compounding ailments, but I had assured her I would be there every time she needed me; particularly when it came to hospital admittances and stays. Dealing with professional medical personnel tended to stress her. Well-meaning strangers using foreign terms or as she would say 'those big flash words', speaking of her body and its myriad functions and dysfunctions as though she should understand their every utterance. So she would smile, nod politely, sometimes ask if she could phone me, or simply say "Its ok, my son Vince will be here soon, he's doing his Masters at University". This was her gentle, demure, Te Arawa way of telling them she couldn't understand, she hadn't been to University. To have said anything else would, to her mind, have possibly offended them, and as Māori, to cause offense upon someone there to help you, was not appropriate. Unfortunately it was often the medical professionals who did not understand or realise their own failings. They had not been trained in cross-cultural communication. So for fear of being seen as an ignorant ungrateful Māori patient, my unwell but well-meaning mother would pretend; and at the same time be nervously afraid of the prodding, poking, and new medications with unknown side-effects. Unsurprisingly I was therefore on a first name basis with most of her specialists. Professionals as well as several of the Rotorua Hospital nursing staff, whom in learning of my mother's culturally sensitive proclivities, had no compunctions in calling me direct when consulting with her. They were good people, who she avoided calling upon for anything; particularly if it was for something which



whānau could do instead. This too was her Māori way of taking from the Pākehā only that which was required, and for all else exemplifying the culturally entrenched belief that otherwise, the whānau were to be self-sufficient. They allowed me to make mum's bed daily, changing the bed sheets and pillow cases. I suspect my mother would have had me washing, drying and ironing that linen if she could have. I was allowed to serve her homemade meals that she preferred to the hospital catering; which she nonetheless politely received (again avoiding causing any offense) and she would then give them to me to take to University for my lunch. Whenever I was home and she was admitted, than I would sleep in an armchair in her room, where she and I would have some wonderful, hilarious, intimate conversations into the late evening or early morning hours. I knew even during those all too few occasions how precious that private time with her was. There were those quiet stolen moments when she would talk intimately of how she had met my father and ensured he fell in love with her. Mum was a good-looking woman yet she always maintained that her children got their good looks from our father. She would wistfully share stories of her at times tumultuous childhood, eclectic education in the native, public and then private systems; not to mention being raised Māori in a Rātana home environment, and educated in the wider Pākehā world by means of a private Catholic school. She openly talked of the births of my siblings, and of the two pregnancies with infants who had not survived to full-term; finally explaining the gap of a few years between particular siblings. Longingly she spoke of tūpuna she remembered, some with great affection, others with disdain, but always with utmost respect. She told me of kawa and tikanga which had served her well as a Māori in a Pākehā world; principles she wanted to ensure I remembered and would hold fast to. Mum also communicated her death wishes for that time when she would be in absentia, entreating me to make few promises to be kept after she departed our world; an unfathomable imagining for my part. One of the promises she had entreated of me was to "please take care of your brothers and sisters. Keep them together son, no matter what... they will fight, there will be hard times, but

you keep them together on this side love, and I'll find you all and bring us together when the time comes to meet on the other side".

"You better come home... it's time to come home brother". I remember immediately thinking oh shit, ok, can do, if mum's deteriorated to that point then it was time to disregard all else and return to her side. "Did you hear me..." my sister's voice was monotone, empty, something wasn't right... " it's time to come home brother". I remember saying "Ok bub..." and before I could say anything else, my big sister would say the two words that would, on that day, briefly unhinge my world, "She's gone".

Dawn had knocked on mum's door early that morning; she always checked on our mother before leaving for work. Mum woke consistently at 5.30am, but on this morning her residence was in darkness. So after no response Dawn had retrieved mum's spare house-key. When she had gotten inside, the lights were still not on, and entering the bedroom she had found our mother, still, cold, with her hands clasped across her breasts... and she was gone.

I vaguely recall saying to my sister "Ok bub, I'm on my way..." as I ended the call, told myself to breathe, and emailed my supervisor and my boss, advising them of mum's death and the need to depart Hamilton immediately. I texted my cousin Elaine to ask for petrol money to get home urgently, texted my sister Cathryn and cousin Tatiana to phone me, and finally texted my partner AJ to meet me back at my home. Then I took a deep breath, composed myself so as not to break down, and left campus.

I was back at my place unpacking groceries when Elaine arrived, handed me a koha, gave her condolences, and we both made small talk. I was unable to engage at any intimate level as such, pretty much operating on automatic and just trying to keep breathing. Then AJ arrived, Elaine left, I closed the front door, turned to my partner, looked him in the eyes, calmly pronounced "Dawn said mum was gone... my mum's gone hun..." and I fell apart in his

arms as we both broke down crying. With his patient help it took a few hours to organise myself before I could depart Hamilton safely enough to drive back to Rotorua, and face the challenge of laying my mother to rest.

My mother's poipoia status as the daughter, and eldest child, of a tribal chief of Ngāti Pīkiao, meant none from the coastal hinterlands of Matatā challenged her request to lay at the Rotoiti whanau urupa of Waharoa. My mother had previously let us know where she was to be interred, and had also stipulated as much in her Will. So we were blessed that Ngāti Rangitihī attended en masse, and wholly participated without controversy, throughout the duration.



**Fig 117**

Furthermore, my mother had also left private wishes, imparted to my father's brother, my Uncle Jackie. So it was no surprise when my father's people of Ngāti Whare arrived. They remained in residence on the marae, throughout, with my Uncle Jackie permitted to sit on the pae, and his children, and mokopuna, working in the wharekai. Just as my mother had honoured them each time she had returned to tautoko a tangi at Te Whāiti, so they now did in kind, and honoured their aunt and kuia, my mother, upon her whenua, for her tangihanga.

In the ways of our people, and in accordance with her wishes, for three nights we conducted her tangi at Uruika, and then laid her to rest alongside her father at Wahanui urupa. My treasured mother had now joined the ethereal world with my dad, koro, and beautiful baby-sister and my own life would never again be the same. Recently installed, my mother's memorial headstone reads "Your presence calmed us, your voice enraptured us, and your love sustained us".



**Fig**

### ‘KARANGA WHĀNAU’

Tangihanga, as a rubric of funerary processes both complex and interlinking, begins for my whānau with the karanga to return, back within the collective. Throughout my life the karanga whānau as my koroua-dad referred to it, has taken multiple and varied forms, indirect and direct, impersonal and personal, whilst alone and not alone, by empirical means as well as intuitive. The call is rhetorical, and in the case of whānau, often accompanied by brutal repercussions, and only the one acceptable response regarding how quickly you can return. Time condenses, space becomes self-contained and all manner of decision-making processes demand attention. The whānau call reverberates, from the familial proximity of whānau, through the hapū and iwi, reaching into Māori communities and wider society as the private tragedy of death shifts into the public arena, and relatives, friends, and associates are drawn together. With varying levels of comprehension, action and reaction, social relationships immediately begin to shift, and resistance, while natural, is to no avail. The call is a life prompt, one which arrives regardless of your location, schedule or commitments, and before the paralysis of shock sets in, you must answer the call; or so it is in my whānau.

“When someone died – or perhaps when tidings of death arrived – a watcher by the bed would go to the door and raise her voice in a long, heart-crushing wail, that cry which is the quintessence of human sorrow. Then another door would open and the cry would be repeated, quivering, moaning, across Te-Roto-a-Tamaheke, echoing on the cliffs of Tuturu and dying away in the forests of Moerangi.”

H. Dansey, 1992, p.111



**Figs 119 Above:** a kuia cries out the wailing welcome to tangata whenua escorting tūpāpaku onto the marae.....

**Figs 120 Below:** exemplars of differing mechanisms used, at various times, to convey the call of death...



The karanga whānau, as my koroua-dad referred to it and as I understand it, creates a temporal gap, a short space in time, wherein the initial word of death is delivered to recipients all too often unsuspecting. For the Māori it is that briefest interaction wherein respondents are regrettably led, called, guided onto the processual pathway of tangihanga, and it is definitive. It is such a simple action, to be called upon by the family or as a matter of due course, because of interconnecting kinship obligations; called to unite because of death. For Māori, and our Pākehā counterparts as they increasingly understand our indigenous priorities, lores, and worldview, the consequences of death and the karanga whānau are life transforming and crucial in maintaining indigenous cultural practices long established and well entrenched.

For Māori it is only natural that tangihanga immediately mobilise individuals from combinations of hapū and iwi, many who may well travel from throughout the motu to unite upon marae that have been readied with sleeping, washing, and catering facilities. For my people this collective mobilisation of iwi as well as resources eventuates after the karanga whānau have been conveyed. By their very nature these are exigent communications, they are demanding, taxing and fraught with obligation; albeit mayhap conveyed with empathy.

For my family the karanga whānau is delineation thrust upon life because of death, imposed without exception; and in responding, or not, there can be no returning back past that delineation, except perhaps in cathartic reminiscences. For all Māori the wail of karanga is recognised everywhere. "As soon as death had occurred the community was notified. This, in pre-contact times, was by means of the wailing which immediately started at the death house and was carried from homestead to homestead across the district..." (Oppenheim, R. 1973, p.42). As Oppenheim alludes, in early pre-contact times, when my people lived as scattered collectives, the karanga

served well as a mechanism to inform those in earshot of the arrival of death. Similarly, in Dansey's previous eloquent quote his poignant words articulate the unique ethereal, often spine-tingling, notes and rich vibrato tones of a woman's wailing call. Her beckoning could, if she were trained well, be carried on the wind so as to traverse across neighbouring homesteads, valleys, and landscapes, to be heard by whānau and whanaunga alike.

However, in the Māori world, the karanga was not the only means whereby my ever-pragmatic people would communicate the presence of death in their midst. My paternal grandmother Merepeka Te Raita (1901-1967), wife



Fig 121

of Tapui Kohu Ohlson (1900-1954), was a matakite, a seer of Ngāti Whare. Matakite and tohunga featured continuously in my father's whānau and her intuitive gifts were recognised and sought out by many. My paternal koroua tūpuna, Te Tuhi Pihopa, had similar unique attributes. He was recognised and acknowledged as such by the likes of Best. Smith, L.T writes how Best's nephew and biographer Elsdon Craig stated as much whilst reflecting upon his uncle the researcher and Tūhoe ethnographer:

...there were a number of incidents which show some insight into how the people dealt with [Best] the researcher... Ngāti Whare called a meeting of the tribe and discussed Best's proposals at some length before deciding to make their records available to him free of charge... Te Tuhi Pihopa had a dream about Best which turned out to be accurate...

1999, p.132

For numerous reasons matakite and tohunga were traditionally invaluable in the Māori collective. As seers and healers they could make sense of dreams, interpret nature with its constantly ebbing and flowing tides, the ever-shifting cumulous cloud formations, even the presence or absence of specific animals. They bridged the divide between the corporeal world and te ao wairua, and as such their ilk could foretell and even forestall death. They were, if and when they so chose, intuitive heralds of what my koroua-dad called karanga whānau.

In so saying, Tūhoe were also known to have used the resounding percussion borne of the pahū to announce the arrival of death. This was a unique wooden instrument which early Pākehā sometimes called wooden gongs. A pahū constructed out of the hollow remnants of a dead



Fig 122

tree can be seen in this 1869 pencil sketch by Captain Gilbert Mair (1843-1923), drawn during a sojourn at Te Whāiti. A unique tree-instrument, which if not carved by my tūpuna koroua Te Tuhi was no doubt known of and perhaps even used by him as he peaceably lived, toiled, and carved his whare whakairo Hinenuitepo at Te Whāiti. In time the resonantly splendid pahū was displaced by the introduced colonial musket. That devastating weapon produced an unmistakable reverberating gunshot that carried for miles. It was a tool of destruction which Māori realised acted equally as efficiently to inform the neighbouring valley-scattered papakāinga of the arrival of death.

I like to imagine that the deeply resonating pahū was used to carry forth the message of our tohunga Te Tuhi's passing at Te Whāiti in the early twentieth century; but alas, I know not. By that time my grandparents Tapui and Merepeka had started bearing their twenty-one progeny, their uri who rode



Fig 123

wild horses bareback, roaming the native virgin slopes of the Whirinaki. My father Te Heta was but a young adolescent attending Minginui Forest School, when in 1954 his father Tapui passed away in those Whirinaki hinterlands. A labourer laying roadways and railroad tracks that would further open the landscape of Aotearoa for ravaging by the outside world, my grandfather Tapui was, according to my father, a tall solemn quietly spoken strongman. When he joined his Tūhoe tūpuna in the ultimate journey of death, the modern telegram had come to supersede the pahū and then the musket



Fig 124



as the means of conveying news of his passing amongst his surviving seventeen children scattered throughout the motu. Thirteen years later his wife Merepeka, and the sole mother of their twenty-one children, not only foretold of her own death, but she had purportedly delayed it by two years. The whānau story narrates how in 1965 she deliberately did this upon learning that her youngest child was in a relationship with a Pākehā. She therefore determined to forestall joining her beloved husband until their pōtiki was *back on track*, in a healthy relationship; which to her mind could only have been with a Māori, preferably of the Tūhoe. Eventually, in 1967, forewarning of her impending passing was unsurprisingly conveyed amongst the majority of her then fifteen living progeny scattered to the four winds of the nation.

My father fondly recounted to me how his older, stalwart, anti-technology brother Noa, still alive and living in Minginui today, had in 1967 reluctantly used the switchboard assisted telephone to call him. This was a foreign, boxed contraption mounted on the wall of my great-aunt's Te Whāiti whare, requiring the user to hold the earpiece with one hand while spinning the rotating handle with the other to get through to an operator who would ask you what number you required before connecting you. According to my Dad, this particular uncle loathed the outside urban Pākehā world in preference for his uncomplicated, nature-filled tranquil native world. He also avoided using the modern Pākehā telephone-machine-thing with its bits and pieces, and spinning handle. Perhaps more poignantly, because it had a voice with no face, an unnamed 'operator' who spoke only English, and in disregard of Māori formalities simply stated "What number please?". My father said that call was brief. With little time to get over the surprise of hearing his older brother's voice on the phone, the next he heard were the simple words "Is that you Boy? Time to come home Heta, the old lady's ready", followed by the unmistakable disconnection click! I was new-born at the time that my Ngāti Whare matakite kuia chose to join her husband in death. Our growing whānau were living at the Rotoiti papakāinga with my koroua-dad Tutere.



In another whānau narrative, my mother and Pikiāo whānau believed my Ngāti Kahungunu kuia had in 1967 attempted to take me with her into death. Apparently when my kuia Merepeka died I fell deadly ill with a burning fever, and the Pākehā medicines failed to help. Then my koroua-dad asked if there was anything upon or around me that could carry mate Māori. My mother realised instantly that the blanket I was swaddled in had been a last-minute gift from her recently deceased mother-in-law. So my koroua-dad burnt it immediately and called on his Pikiāo skills of tohunga karakia to pull me back into this world and away from my grandmother Merepeka's *other-world* calling. Nonetheless my matakite kuia had gently beckoned, with expectant welcoming arms spread wide. That was a vision I had in infancy and have always carried, knowing I remain connected with her. My koroua-dad ever-after watched over me with vigilance to ensure I was safe and abiding by the call of life, not death.

#### 7.4 Calls of Ngāti Pikiāo...

My Ngāti Whare and Tūhoe whānau were not alone in their intuitive and *other-world* gifts, as they were natural traits similarly exhibited throughout my Ngāti Pikiāo and Te Arawa kin. In the following two narratives, whanaunga share poignant exemplars, of intuitive experiences with the karanga whānau. The first is from a private communication, in 2013, from a kuia of Ngāti Pikiāo and Ngāti Rangiteaorere who recounted how,

There was a knock on the door. I was living in a remote city. It was 1970. I knew that knock. It was 10 in the morning. I refused to answer the persistent rapping knock knock knock. On and on. I peeked through the curtain and saw an attractive Māori woman in a smart P & T uniform, holding the buff envelope of a telegram. I already knew what it said, so I refused to answer the door. Knock knock. A flatmate finally opened it. I took the envelope addressed to me. I knew what it said. My kuia had died. I had to go home.

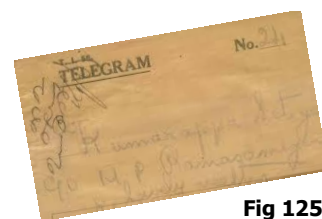


Fig 125

My Ngāti Tamateatutahi whanaunga Urukeiha Raharuhi also pondered the topic in another private communication, writing that,

A few years ago I was working as a kaimahi in a woman's residential facility... when a fantail [*Rhipidura*] quite deliberately flew between my head and a nearby wall to enter the house via some sliding doors... At the time I was not aware of the symbolism of the fantail. I immediately felt a strong sense of relief and comfort. It was a very strong and definite feeling and it was warm. Naturally the entrance of the fantail into the whare brought a strong reaction from the women staying there and there were some expressions of "Who is going to die?" and a general sense of foreboding. I asked them why... and they proceeded to explain to me the significance of the fantail as they understood it. I immediately replied "Don't worry... it's for me" meaning that although I didn't know the meaning, I instantly and with certainty knew that I was the intended recipient of that message. My father's brother was very sick at the time... That night I received a phone call (I was still at work) informing me of his passing.



Fig 126

(private communication, 2013)

My Ngāti Pīkiao whānau regaled rich narratives of our Tamateatutahi Kawiti history with tangihanga, and the karanga whānau. In my great grandparent's era, the whānau call was often delivered by someone who had hurriedly arrived on horseback, with a fittingly solemn demeanour. In tight-knit rural whānau settings such as at Tapuaeharuru Bay, there would most likely have been others present or nearby to share the burden of grief, shock and pragmatism; it was an environment conducive to the familiarities of kinship. That was the case more than six decades ago, in 1952, for the Pīkiao families nestled on the shores of Lake Rotoiti. The karanga whānau was then still typically conveyed by the traditional and prevalent form of kanohi-ki-te-kanohi or face-to-face communication, when the close-knit families were gathered in their neighbouring, scattered homesteads awaiting confirmation of a death that had been publicly anticipated. My great grandmother's health had been slowly deteriorating. A Te Arawa weaver of some repute, Te Pae Mihikore has been described by two of her living grandsons as "...a quiet, hūmārie woman, never heard on marae, but known on all of them..." (Hohepa, T.C.M. private communication, June, 2011). She had made the time to hui with her children, informing them that upon her passing their

younger brother Tutere would poipoia the moko she had been raising. The hapū of Ngāti Tamateatutahi Kawiti, hearing of those hui inside Uruika, knew to listen for the karanga whānau that would mark their loss. When the time arrived, my koroua-dad, also known fondly in the whānau as *the galloping padre*, rode to the homes of the whānau pani. Addressing those who would be the chief mourners, he personally and tearfully delivered confirmation of his beloved mother's passing. Her death and tangihanga in 1952 was a tribal burden of grief shared.

Raised in the protective cultural embryo of Pikiāo, we, my siblings and I, grew up enculturated within Te Arawa as well as simultaneously acculturated to the wider context of Kiwi life. However, we learned to understand the reality of death in exclusive accord with our Māori sensibilities. So in 1996 when I was called to attend my father's hospital bedside, it was paradoxically both a familiar social landscape in so much as a hospital vigil, at the same time as being fearfully unfamiliar; because unlike any previously, this was one of my beloved parents. It was not a karanga whānau to return home because of a tangi, not yet, but rather the whānau call was to attend an all too brief vigil which, due to medical advancements, happened to forestall the inevitability of death. On my part this event was to be a brutal introduction to the often taken-for-granted, complex logistics of death as my people experience it. Up to this point, my brothers and sisters and I had always had other, older whānau who would deal quietly and subtly with everything. But that was not the case when on that late November afternoon I watched helplessly as our father let go of his grip on life. And thus it was that I first became a herald who would bear the grave news of death, raising the karanga whānau so as to gather the multitudes. In the absence of my koroua-dad or mother I had to retrieve many lived memories so as to initiate the tangihanga processes in the ways which they had exemplified, the ways of Tamateatutahi Kawiti of Pikiāo. Our father had died, in Auckland, so very many miles from either our Te Arawa or Ngāti Whare homelands with their immediately available marae and whanaunga, as well as hapū resources. No horses would be ridden, muskets fired, or pahū struck to beckon the

collective. The lore of *kanohi ki te kanohi* would not be logistically possible and so I had to reach out using the telephone. Asking elderly *whānau* to be seated, checking if there was anyone else with them, before conveying the news that their brother, cousin, uncle, *koroua* had passed away. It had been just twenty four hours earlier when my father's brother Te Hata, the *pōtiki*, had quelled my concerns saying he had spoken with my father and they hoped he would be ok. Now I had to locate him at a conference somewhere in the far South Island to tell him his beloved brother was no longer amongst us. Ngāti Whare, Ngāti Rangitahi and Ngāti Pūkiao would be advised and all would begin their swift journeys to Auckland to *tono* his *tūpāpaku* as the rest of the collectives readied themselves for *tangihanga* - a consequent fact I became aware of with each *karanga whānau*. It is the way of Māori. My father's *tangi* was large and complex, due to the three select overnight locations, as indicated in the following locational schema.

From his Papakura home, then inside *te whare tūpuna* a Rangiaohia, at Rangitahi Marae in Matatā, and finally home inland, to the *patupaiarehe*-filled Whirinaki, and the *whareniui* carved by our *tūpuna koroua* Te Tuhi, Hinenuitepo at Te Whāiti. At each were the respective collective who had been mobilised by the *karanga whānau*, all anticipating the large entourage travelling in my father's wake, ready with resources, memories and abundant love, waiting to contribute to his *tangihanga*.

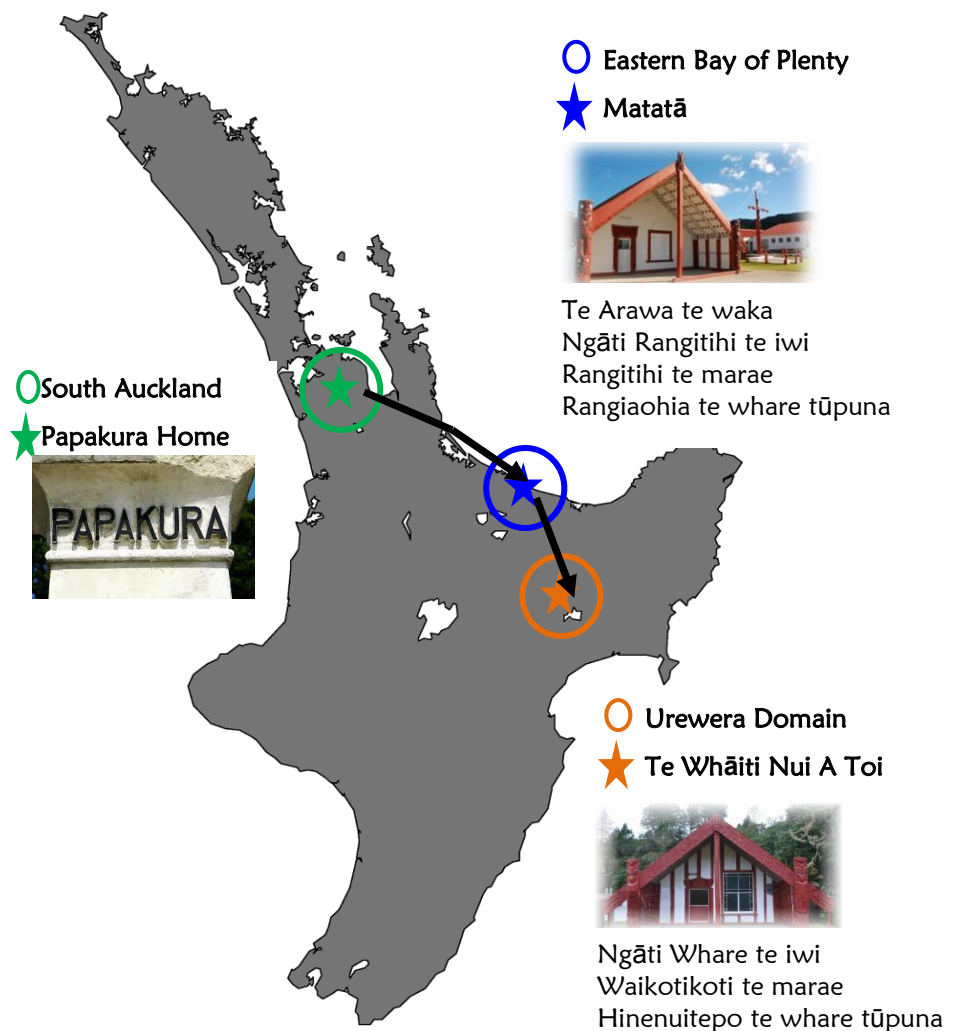
## Diagrammatic Schema 6 A Locational Map

This schema indicates the three locations at which my treasured father's tūpāpaku lay in rest, and the long slow journey the funeral entourage undertook.

From his Papakura home at South Auckland, 250kms away to Rangitihī Marae and te whare tūpuna Rangiaohia at Matatā.

Then another 100kms inland home to the patupaiarehe-filled Whirinaki, and the wharenui carved by our tūpuna koroua Te Tuhi, Hinenuitepo at Waikotikoti in Te Whāiti nui a Toi.

### NORTH ISLAND of NEW ZEALAND



I mentioned at the outset that throughout my life the karanga whānau has taken multiple and varied forms, both indirect and direct, conveyed in ways impersonal and personal, whilst alone and in company. In 2004, several years after losing our beloved father all too soon, we were again rallied by karanga whānau for a death that was heart-rending for many different reasons. The loss was that of a young, vibrant, thirty year old mother of two. She was a typically demure wahine of Te Arawa, whose sudden shocking death was to add another casualty to our nation's growing statistics regarding suicide and addiction. This was how I came to learn that karanga whānau can be conveyed by a total stranger; in this case a uniformed Pākehā Police Officer who arrived to solemnly inform me that there had been a death in the family.

My mother had been trying to reach me since the day before, and that calm sympathetic uniformed stranger waited patiently while I phoned home to Rotorua to learn of my beautiful baby-sister's suicide, and to hear my mother's lost and frail voice calling "Kei hea koe... we need you home...". The whānau were readying to leave the funeral home for our marae when I spoke with my mother. So by the time I arrived that evening at our Pikiāo whare whakairo Uruika, alongside Ngāti Whare, my sister's tūpāpaku had already been ensconced a few hours earlier. No ethereal wailing karanga would call us on because darkness had already fallen; this is the way of Te Arawa. Ngāti Tamateatutahi Kawiti were having dinner, and so placing formalities momentarily aside our small late ope, all known to the whānau pani, were permitted to discreetly walk directly into Uruika to unite in the collective shared grief, loss, and heartache. My older sister sat waiting next to our baby sister while our mother lingered in the wharekai briefly before returning to resume her position alongside the tūpāpaku of her last born child. My koroua-dad was typically micro-managing the tangihanga of his precious mokopuna, and quietly waiting till I was ready, before addressing the tangihanga business at hand and all of the decision-making processes.

He had started teaching me how to distinguish and record all koha which would be reported to the whānau at the final meeting on the last day, and more importantly to ensure that those koha were appropriately returned in equal kind.

We were so fortunate that our grandfather was with us during that tangihanga, blessed to have his reverential guidance. However, I suspect that sentiment was by no means mutual for his part because this was sadly the third moko whose tangi he had overseen and endured. Two years prior in 2002 his teenage grandson Tutere had died after tragically falling into a hot pool at Kuirau Park in Rotorua. Then only three months prior to my young sister's suicide, we had lost our teenage nephew, my grandfather's great-grandson, who at fifteen had chosen to take his own life. My koroua-dad was profoundly religious with an unwavering faith in the existence of heaven, but each death took its toll on him as he lived to witness the passing of his grandson, great grandson, then the granddaughter who he had named Roimata Kiterangi, meaning teardrops from heaven. She had only just turned thirty, yet for one so young her tangihanga was well attended. But then I realised the presence of so many kaumātua and other hapū was because she was the moko of a rangatira of Tamateatutahi Kawiti who was an Āpotoro Takiwā of the Rātana Church; as well as the daughter of a lifelong tangihanga proponent, well known upon Arawa marae. In August 2004 my whānau upheld the formidable reputation of Tamateatutahi Kawiti, Pikiaio, and Te Arawa, facilitating according to tikanga and catering with abundance and aroha, much to the pride of the rangatira of our whānau. Sadly, however, it was to be but a few short years before we, the hapū, would be undertaking these same duties for him.

On the morning of February the 21<sup>st</sup> 2007 my older sister Dawn drove Mum to her father's Rotorua whare so that she could check in on him. Since the tangihanga of our pōtiki, my koroua-dad had become increasingly reclusive, with his health failing markedly. At that time and at the age of 78, he had quite literally been preparing to shift from independent care, into Whare



Aroha, a community elderly care facility. Much later, my sister told me how she had watched our mother head inside her father's whare as she took a call on her mobile. She had sensed something was wrong, and even asked our mother to wait while she took the call, and so when she heard our mother's scream, she knew our grandfather had gone. Mum had opened the door to find her father's still cold body curled on the wooden floor. In acute grief mum phoned me on campus in Hamilton to say, "He's gone, I don't know what to do, what do I do love... oh god, darling, your grandfather... what do I do love".

I remember well my humble and sometimes fearfully learned grandfather whom I called Dad, son of Te Arawa weaver Te Pae Mihikore. In my Master's thesis I recount many things which he gifted me in the way of learning. Regaling stories of my Pikiāo and Rangitihi tūpuna, of his childhood exploits on horseback gallivanting throughout the Waiariki domain, and of inherent lived principles such as that of kanohi ki te kanohi. In his mind, and throughout his life, to convey karanga whānau was to do so face-to-face. But alas the times had changed. This had been perhaps the most influential person in my life, alongside his daughter, my mother.

When I eventually arrived at the funeral home all the arrangements had already been put in place, arrangements my koroua-dad had made himself. So as vast numbers of whanaunga gathered, readying themselves for the brief chapel service at the funeral home before departing with his tūpāpaku back to his treasured Rotoiti shores, I was left to select the floral spray which would rest upon my koroua-dad's casket. I was unwittingly becoming ever more proficient at embracing the numerous logistics and challenges of dealing with tūpāpaku, officials, distraught whānau, and the inherent complexities of micro-managing tangihanga. I would need to.

Losing my koroua-dad was not hard for me. At 78 he was well-lived for a Māori male of his generation. When I would sit and talk with him he would let his mind wistfully wander to memories of people long since passed, such

as his mother and sisters who he said had visited him more than they ever had when alive! I knew at that point when our conversations were focused more on the dead than the living, that he was already contemplating his own journey to join them all. So we talked, about many topics he was otherwise reluctant to discuss, and in his own way he let me know he was letting go, and that it was alright. He had led a hard life, a full life, and he deserved to be, as he saw it, reunited with everyone he loved who waited for him upon heaven's eternal plains. Sadly, however, his passing had a profound impact on my mother. No matter what we tried, she too started being visited by whānau who had not lived for many years. Her mood swings became acute and extreme as her health deteriorated and her grasp on life in this world weakened fearfully fast. Then, on the morning of Friday 13<sup>th</sup> 2009, a karanga whānau verified for me, once and for all, that the call to return is definitive, and never again will the simple words "You better come home...." ever mean the same, as my sister then solemnly revealed "... she's gone brother...".

The karanga whānau as my koroua had taught, had been conveyed. Individual shock, grief, and heartache had to be quelled so as to unite back with the collective, where the burden of death and its complexities are shared. It is the way of my people.

# DRESSED in LIFE and DEATH

In the contemporary South Pacific the naked reality of birth is to my mind juxtaposed by the common practice of being modestly clothed in death, and this part of the NZ Māori tangihanga has seen growing, and sometimes dramatic, shifts. As we understand it today, many pre-contact cultural practices have persevered, such as; the post-mortem death vigil requiring that people remain present with the tūpāpaku until final committal; utilisation of korowai and taonga; the restrictions of food; the tūpāpaku being addressed as though still living. Other aspects have changed, such as the body's trussed upright position now being horizontal, bathing of the deceased no longer occurring in fresh flowing water by moonlight, tohunga overseeing the entire tangihanga replaced by religious ministers or celebrants. This chapter looks solely to the matter of dressing the tūpāpaku prior to the deceased laying in state. I will examine how, and why, earlier pre-contact practices have changed, and consider the significance and/or relevance of: what our deceased are wearing in death, who is responsible for such decisions, and what is permitted to clothe and/or adorn the tūpāpaku. Lastly, I will consider whether modern western dress is preferred to formerly traditional indigenous dress, concluding with a discussion of how clothing signifies the shift within death rites from the private to the public world.

The reality of dressing the dead is immediate, intimate and a potentially haunting process:

So soon as the death of a man occurred his body was “trussed” for burial – i.e., before it became cold; albeit would not be buried for some days...  
Best, E. 1906, p.188.



“The first duty of the nearest relations, after death had occurred, was to prepare the body for its subsequent lying in state”  
Oppenheim, R. 1973 p.43



**Figs 127, 128:** Exemplifying the dressing process of the deceased.  
Photographs by Devika Bilimora and used here with the kind permission of  
Dr Pia Interlandi.

Universally we enter life naturally free of the social construct of dressing, and to my mind the usually jubilant nakedness of childbirth is juxtaposed by the common practice of coming to be dressed in death. Clothing and the art of wearing clothing remains a transformational social phenomenon; and with rare exception, clothing, and accessories used to dress our dead for funerary occasions have become universal to the human experience of death. So on the one hand, whilst dressing the dead is ostensibly universal, on the other hand, the act of dressing our dead is by no means a typical experience for all Māori people. That is to say that few undertake the actual task, even though all come to be dressed, albeit variously. Death-wear, as it is referred to in the 21<sup>st</sup> century fashion industry and exemplified by Pia Interlandi's doctoral work and images, has become a growing global niche market; even if the act of dressing our dead continues to disturb the living. In this critical juxtaposition, where life and death intimately intersect, I have rarely observed people openly discussing the naked and harsh reality of dressing our dead.

This aspect of tangihanga has seen growing, and sometimes dramatic shifts for my people. As western ideologies and modernisation have increasingly come to encroach on our indigenous reality, so our early customs, lores and traditional practices have come to be challenged. Before colonisation and western ideologies were imposed upon my ancestors, our burial practices were distinctly different. Prior to the nineteenth century colonial incursion, Māori practised entrenched and unique interment traditions involving both primary and then secondary burial processes. In earlier times tūpāpaku were wrapped in matting and/or woven cloaks for the public mourning process of tangihanga, after which time they were interred to decompose; thus concluding the primary burial. It is at this point however that modern practices depart our earlier traditions. In his definitive text *Māori Eschatology* Best writes that "The general scheme of burial among the Māori people was first the burial, or other disposal of the body, until the flesh had disappeared;

and secondly the disposal of the bones of the dead in a permanent manner” (1906, p.188). To this end tūpāpaku were placed in a cave, or the elbow of a tree, or upon a cliff ledge outcrop or interred in the ground, left to naturally decompose. Following a sufficient time period, often of twelve months, the skeletal remains would then be exhumed or retrieved from the primary burial site in preparation for the secondary burial process. Bones were cleaned and sometimes painted with red ochre (an aspect to which I shall speak momentarily); all the while being mourned over again. Following cleaning and some elaborate decorating, the remains were publicly visited by mourners for the final time before being removed and privately re-interred. However, this second interment was to the confines of concealed spaces such as burial caves and hollow trees; particularly secret locations only known to very few. There the remains would rest, undisturbed in an inviolable space intentionally safe from visitation or unwanted visitors; forever after.

Admittedly such complex burials appear to have been confined to those of rank and noble birth; an aspect which Best addresses when he writes that only those of ‘good birth’ were granted such elaborate ceremonies and sacred rites. He goes on to say that “little ceremony was wasted on common people...” (1906, p.188). Nonetheless all Māori of old co-existed in a ranked society, along with those of ‘good birth’, and so participated in, witnessed or observed as much; regardless whether they were in turn so treated.

The primary burial can still be observed today, with tūpāpaku appropriately dressed and laying in the precincts of marae for public mourning till the point of interment. However and as Deed alludes to in the abstract of his Master’s thesis, Māori adapted, and critical aspects of our burial practices transformed.

Māori had developed a complex set of burial rituals by the beginning of the nineteenth century, practised within the framework of tangihanga. These included primary and secondary burial and limited memorialisation, with practices varying between iwi. Change and continuity characterised the development of Māori burial practices and materials, translated traditional practices into new materials, and new practices into traditional materials. Although urupa came to appear

more European, they were still firmly embedded in the framework of tangihanga and notions of tapu.

Deed, 2005

### 8.3 Cleansing and readying tūpāpaku...

By the late nineteenth century we had stopped undertaking secondary burials, instead confining ourselves to primary burials as concealed and obscure burial spaces shifted into the urupa and public realm, taking on semblances of the European cemetery. Nonetheless Māori held fast to many traditions, particularly in the preparation of our tūpāpaku.

The first duty of the nearest relations, after death had occurred, was to prepare the body for its subsequent lying in state. It was first trussed in the sitting position with the knees drawn up to the chin and the arms around them. The body was washed in shark oil and sometimes ornamented with red ochre paint... and dressed in its most elaborate garments.

Oppenheim, R. pp.43-44

Whilst cleansing and preparing the tūpāpaku is indeed one of the first duties of the nearest relatives, along with the karanga whānau notifying iwi to prepare for the tangihanga, Oppenheim's words, written four decades ago, relate to even earlier pre-western practices found amongst some Māori, though not all. Furthermore, I question the order which his writing purports. As explained, I suspect the tūpāpaku would have first and foremost been washed, using water. Then tactile manipulation might have been applied before positioning and trussing the tūpāpaku, after which time oils, ochre, garments, and any number of accessories could be applied, before the body was either wrapped or shrouded in kākahu, ready for public viewing.

Oppenheim states that shark oil (with its preservative qualities) was used to wash the tūpāpaku, a process that he says occurs after having been already trussed. I dispute this assertion. To the Māori of old, and even in modern times, tūpāpaku are by their very nature tapu, therefore the likely foremost part of the preparatory process would have been to ritually wash them entirely in water. This was the most readily available natural means of ensuring that the tapu state of the body was temporarily negated so it could

be handled, albeit cautiously, by the living. For some coastal iwi salt water would have been used to wash and cleanse the tūpāpaku, whereas for landlocked iwi spring or lake water was preferred. Amongst my people, various Pikiāo elders at different times have spoken to me about how we had, prior to the nineteenth century colonial incursion, been known to wash our deceased by moonlight in a private, sheltered, and highly restricted natural hot spring-water runoff not far from our marae. This would concur with Best's assertions that "Near every Native village in former times a pond, spring, or Brook was utilised as a place where sacred rites were performed, and set aside for that purpose. These waters would not be used for domestic purposes" (1906, p.199). On the basis that those Pikiāo elder's accounts are accurate, then I suspect this ritualised act was undertaken at night in main to preserve privacy, with moonlight facilitating the process. In rare exceptions tūpāpaku were washed at the verge of our adjacent moana, our tribal lake, wherein those select few would lightly scrub and cleanse the tūpāpaku. But it is my understanding that in such rare circumstances the tūpāpaku in no way made contact with the lake; instead lake water was conveyed to the tūpāpaku. On occasion, the leaves of the endemic kawakawa (*Macropiper excelsum*) would be used as a means of scrubbing and scenting the tūpāpaku, though this plant also has other relevant properties and applications.



Fig 129

There were traditional management practices of a tūpāpaku which allowed the living to keep it for a goodly period without sign of putrefaction. The body would first have undergone massaging and binding techniques that equated to today's modern embalming processes. The body and hair would then be dressed and adorned in finest traditional dress, both having already been fragranced with oil and kawakawa leaves. Additional to these practices certain karakia (incantations and prayers) were recited by specific tohunga while at the same time removing putrefying elements out of the body.

Herbert, 2001, p.7

In a journal article titled *Parekawakawa: He tohu o te mate*, and as to the use of kawakawa during tangihanga, Rangihurhia McDonald wrote (and kindly translated, in a private email communication) that,



The corpse and surrounding area would start to smell. This is the reason the kawakawa was utilised, to minimise the stench... And seeing as the chief mourner and bereaved family had to sit there, they too would wear wreaths of kawakawa on their heads to disguise the odorous smell... The kawakawa was an important plant for the work of tohunga. It was known for its medicinal qualities, which cured many physical ailments. However, kawakawa wasn't used purely for physical complaints, it was used as a cleanser and healer for the spirit in other circumstances.

2010, p.7

So it is common for traditional headdresses or wreaths made of kawakawa to be seen worn during tangihanga as a sign of mourning. To the Māori, kawakawa is revered for its perceived potent healing properties, whether as an elixir taken orally or as a poultice used externally, "The healing properties of such plants contributed to a successful operation..." (Te Awekotuku 2007, p.34).

Combining such knowledge with the fact that all Māori understand the head to be the most sacred part of the human anatomy, it is unsurprising that taua, or wreath headdresses, were made of kawakawa. As an aside, my mother used to tell me that if the tangi gave rise to too much mamae, particularly acute emotional trauma in cases such as the death of a renowned chief or a tangi for multiple accidental deaths, than they were all encouraged to wear taua of kawakawa as a means of alleviating the mamae, emotional and psychological, residing in that most tapu part of the Māori.

Oppenheim mentions that Māori occasionally used the highly prized kokowai or red ochre, a naturally occurring earth pigment (of differing colours) in death and burial rituals. Numerous archaeological and anthropological scholars speak to Neolithic burials that similarly evidence the use of red ochre pigments,

... rituals involving ochre were practised throughout all, or almost all, the necropolis' period of use. Indeed, the symbolic use of ochre seems to be very ancient and distributed over a Broad geographical area (d'Errico, 2003 and Hovers et al., 2003). In particular, this pigment was commonly used (also in association with burials) by the Iberomaurusians and Capsians of North Africa (Roche, 1963 and Balout,

1987), but also by European populations of the Upper Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, and Neolithic.

Mariotti et al., 2009

Scholarly debate continues regarding the symbolism involved with these different times, periods and cultures. Nonetheless red ochre can symbolically represent blood, whether that be the blood of the earth to which the dead are returned, or possibly as a form of ritual rebirth. Ochre could also have been used to differentiate those of noble birth. For the Māori the use of red ochre should not be under-emphasised, as I suspect Oppenheim inadvertently did. According to information on the site 'Maori of New Zealand: Maori Art - meaning and symbolism', kokowai had a number of applications including practical, aesthetic, symbolic and genealogic significance.

...the origin of this important colour is as follows. There was much bloodshed during the separation of Papa-tu-a-nuku (Earth) and Ranginui (Heaven), the primeval parents. The blood of Ranginui is sometimes seen as a red glow in the sky. The Māori call it papakura and they look to it for signs and omens. The blood of Papa-tu-a-nuku, the Mother Earth, flowed into the earth itself and became red clay. This is the origin of kokowai, the sacred red of the Māori... When applied in conjunction with a karakia it becomes tapu.

Kokowai was extracted from rich clay silicates which were dried then ground on specific and often tapu grinding stones, into a fine powder. Mixed with differing oils such as fish, whale, shark, and a range of plant oils, kokowai pigment could then be used as face paint, or to grease and colour hair, or to paint waka or whakairo of all forms. To the Māori of old kokowai was in widespread usage, but ready quantities were contrasted by limited amounts of a high quality; therefore a deposit of worth was understandably prized and well-guarded. Kokowai and kawakawa also had practical applications as both a perceived deterrent against flying insects, an old time insect repellent so to speak, as well as possibly providing a secondary skin, a protective layer against temperature and climatic changes. However, its cosmetic applications would appear to be largely aesthetic and symbolic, so in the case of tūpāpaku, kokowai was possibly used as a visual means of distinguishing and emphasising those of high-born lineage and rank.

Other naturally occurring material could be applied if the tūpāpaku were expected to lay in state for a prolonged period, so as to counter natural decomposition that would eventually occur over the duration of the tangihanga. In the following interview extract, my Uncle Waretini speaks of embalming experiences in the 1970's, under the tutelage of renowned Te Arawa tohunga, the late Irirangi Tiakiawa:

Irirangi used to take Josephine and I to Maketu... we used to go to the sea there, to get pink seaweed. At that time it wasn't far before the tide went out and you would find it just below the rocks. This pink seaweed, like a straw, you could pierce it and this scent would come out of it, a fresh smelling scent... let's call it a Māori way of embalming, they used to pierce the body, normally under the lung, because the liquid comes out quicker if you pierce just under the last rib. They used to gather all this pink seaweed, and squeeze it out into like a small bag. They then used a grass. Up home at Rotoiti we used to have this straw and you could blow it. We used to blow the frogs up with it at school in the grass. They used that and they get the scent and put in your mouth and they'd blow through it to put into the body. So it was a Māori way of embalming and it kept the body for a long time because it was a scent... they stopped it in the 1900's because don't forget at that time we had to bury the bodies lying down then. This is when the law came in so our people couldn't do all our things no more.

Hoani. W, personal communication, July, 2011

Thus washed, cleansed, scented and trussed with their back upright and knees bent, tūpāpaku were then wrapped in purposefully woven flax matting and perhaps shrouded by kākahu. An example can be seen in this pencil sketch by



Fig 130

Maureen O'Rourke of the Lake Hauroko cave burial. There are numerous commentaries, images and accounts regarding the 1967 discovery of a burial cave at Mary Island on Lake Hauroko. Inside were the well preserved remains of a female who, it has been estimated, was about forty years old when she was buried trussed upright on a bier, interred wearing a cloak decorated by dog and bird skin. Vines were used to hold both the tūpāpaku and cloak together and upright. The ethnologist Simmons confirmed in 1967 that the burial and cloak had been radio carbon dated to the seventeenth century. Interestingly, burial remnants indicate she had earrings, ribbons, of Tapa cloth, while the cloak and the cave burial

indicate she was of noble birth, though the remains fail to confirm her headdress at the time of burial.

#### 8.4 Dressing accoutrements...

The renowned luxurious Māori hair with its abundant natural curls and a propensity to be worn long would have been fashioned for this final interment. Hair could be left natural with tresses long-flowing, or oiled, slicked back, braided, or teased upward into the elite top knot; a headdress might be effected so that the deceased appeared ready for the utmost formal of occasions. Māori were known to enjoy elaborate feathered headdresses using the likes of the now extinct and highly prized Huia or NZ Wattlebird (*Heteralocha acutirostris*), the distinctive feathers of the Tora or Albatross (*Diomedea sanfordi*), the Amokura or Red-tailed tropicbird (*Phaethon rubricauda*), as well as many other birds. Comparable with the use of kokowai, the feathered headdress denoted high-born lineage and rank differentiated according to the species of bird's feathers used and its perceived value and considered worth to the Māori.

Other select taonga could then be utilised from any number and array of traditional accoutrements, including significant treasures made of bone, wood or jade, the likes of heru or ornamental hair combs, ear-piercings, hei tiki and numerous other treasured and customary taonga. This reveals the Māori proclivity for aesthetics, further emphasised by the fact that many of these taonga would be interred with tūpāpaku and then usually retrieved years later then returned to the whānau, to be repeatedly and likewise utilised again; an ongoing cyclic process that continued in some cases for centuries.

In her posthumously published text *The Old Time Māori*, Makereti Papakura (1873-1930), a renowned Te Arawa guide, Oxford scholar, and Māori ethnographer, wrote of such a treasured family heirloom, a taonga hei tiki made of



Fig 131

pounamu named Te Uoro. In this striking late nineteenth century portrait image she can be seen wearing Te Uoro, along with two other significant taonga Māori which are the domain of the chiefly and elite: a prestigious and rare feathered korowai, and a highly prized Huia feather atop her luxurious long tress. According to Makereti, Te Uoro was over five hundred years old, and had been buried with tūpuna at least five times, before being dug up after thirty years and restored to the living whānau. Te Uoro was by all accounts a revered taonga tangihanga which traversed the landscapes of both the living and the dead for centuries. It conveyed with it the whakapapa, histories and very possibly tangible remnants of the body oils of the deceased with whom it had resided temporarily during interment.

This said, earthen interment as an option for committal was by no means the common pre-colonial preference or tradition. In earlier times tūpāpaku were ultimately intended for either elevated committal on the likes of secluded cliff ledges, or within the elbows of tall sacred trees, or for safe entombment within hidden caves. However, the times and options have changed, as indeed they continue to. This can be seen in the observations of Te Awekotuku, who shared several personal reflections in her opening keynote address at the Death Down Under Inaugural Conference in Sydney in 2011. Speaking of modern Māori disposal practices;

The final resting place was remote, and a number of families still observe this. Less than a year ago, a young chief's body was helicoptered to an inaccessible ridge on Mount Taranaki... a month ago, an elderly woman in the Rotorua lakes district was rowed across inland waters to a small leafy island. Usually, the urupa, or cemetery is the chosen place of final rest, and the focus of community activity, visiting, and remembrance... and cremation is also considered when populous families all want to 'go down in a pot and be in there with Mummie' after years of visiting and remembering her so fondly.

Te Awekotuku, 2011

## 8.5 Modern Times and Practices...

In contemporary times different, alternative burial practices are being engaged in and witnessed by Māori who continue adapting to an increasing

and eclectic array of environmental, social, and cultural concerns regarding death and disposal.

While the colonial business of Undertaking arose in Aotearoa in the mid nineteenth century, by the mid-twentieth century the industry had transformed into a formal body of Funeral Directors with Funeral Homes and their all-too-often sterile and culturally alienating viewing parlours. Nonetheless, modern funeral homes can provide an impressive range of services that allow you to have the tūpāpaku collected then returned having been washed, embalmed, dressed, and appropriately prepared for public viewing. They can also process the legally required official documentation, as well as providing an option of caskets, vessels and containers, public notification services, wreaths or floral sprays, ceremonial and celebrant options, as well as modes of transport and catering should you so choose.

However, many Māori families, including mine, preferred where possible to maintain their pre-colonial preference of preparing, dressing, and interring their deceased themselves. So with the exception of the washing and embalming process, professionally undertaken in main so as to forestall natural decomposition over the length of the tangihanga, for Ngāti Tamateatutahi Kawiti of Pikiāo we almost exclusively undertake all other funerary processes independently. For my people it is not uncommon to personally take custody of the tūpāpaku at the funeral home, from the point of being readied for dressing. In so saying, this may sound simple enough, dressing a loved whānau member, but for my part the dressing process of a tūpāpaku remains simultaneously tapu, and poignantly intimate.

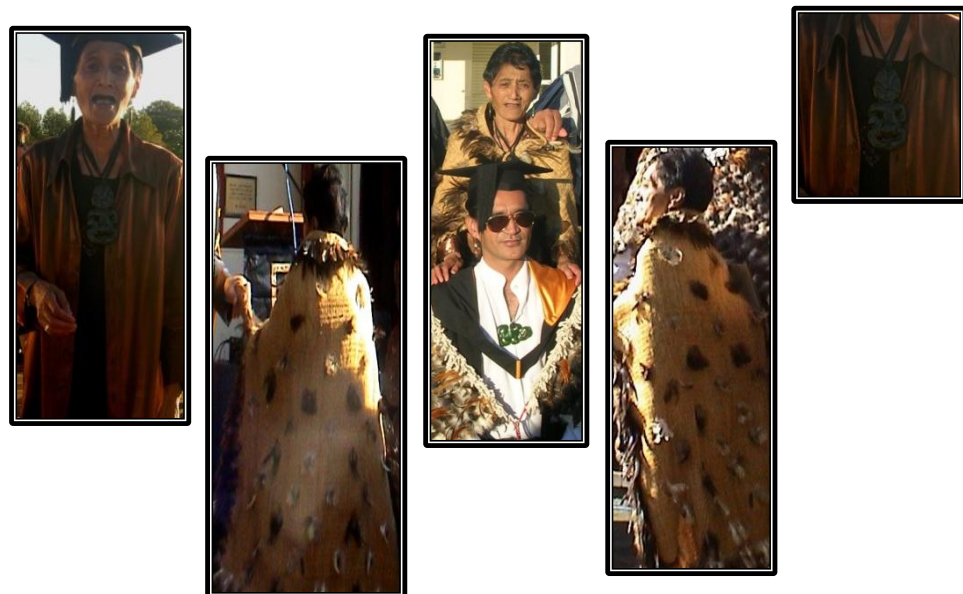
## 8.6 Dressing our dead...

Growing up in a big family I often prepared all of my younger siblings, nieces and nephews for school each morning, and taught many of them how to dress themselves. I had also dressed, or helped to dress, elderly whānau. Therefore the notion of dressing someone was by no means at all foreign.

This said, I hadn't anticipated that the process of dressing somebody was quite distinct from the process of dressing a deceased body, and this pivotal yet seemingly easy enough task would prove unlike any dressing process I had known.

In 2009, on March the 13<sup>th</sup>, an ominously so-called Black Friday, I was with whānau at a Rotorua funeral home awaiting the readied tūpāpaku of our beloved mother. All of us bringing to mind snippets of her life story fondly recounted as we, her surviving children, consanguine and affine alike, along with whanaunga, waited patiently outside to undertake our tradition of dressing. It was quite late by the time the funeral home had readied our mother's small frail body, left naked, beneath a sheet, on a gurney, in the bay of their enclosed fold-down-door garage. The small newly establishing Māori funeral home had been inundated with business that Black Friday, and although Mum had been washed and embalmed, their viewing parlour had been occupied longer than anticipated by another tūpāpaku and whānau in grief. So our mother had been left naked, in a garage, on a metal gurney, with only a sheet protecting her modesty, and slightly uplifted electronic aluminium doors separating her vulnerable form from the world at large. Upon learning of this, our whānau were, to say the least, offended, for the mana of both our mother and our hapū. To have been left in such a diminished state, without benefit of whānau present and waiting alongside her, would've been wholly humiliating to our humble mother, as it was for the entire family gathered. When the dilemma was revealed to the whānau and we were asked if we could wait, we adamantly refused and took immediate custody of our mother's tūpāpaku, securing the fold-down-door of the garage, and using makeshift screens for privacy. The funeral home had brought into question our mother's dignity; so we were determined to maintain at least her modesty. We were affronted but by now in control of the situation, as the elderly head of our family offered tearful prayers, before we proceeded with our family tradition of dressing our dead. Our female kin, closely related, attended to her first, dressing Mum in her fresh undergarments, or as Mum referred to them, her 'personals'. I then stepped

in to help fit and arrange the clothes which our mother would wear into the afterlife. Following her personal wishes, we dressed her in a bronze and gold pant-suit ensemble she had worn only on the occasion of my 2006 Bachelor's graduation. My older brother then stepped in to lift our mother's tūpāpaku, while I arranged our great-grandmother's last flax woven, feather-adorned, tāniko-bordered korowai into which he laid our mother gently. Our wahine placed her simple, formal, black dress-shoes on her feet, and then stepped away, allowing me to wrap her lower body in the feathered folds of the last whānau korowai as I had been instructed by my older brother. He had by now discreetly slipped our great-grandmother's taonga, the hei tiki, beneath Mum. Following the final command of our kaitiaki in this regards would prove, later, particularly contestable within the whānau. Mum had also newly purchased a Rātana jewellery set, enamelled with their theological colours and symbols, so our wahine dutifully adorned her with the necklace, earrings and pendant. In the final act of dressing her tūpāpaku, we laid her cherished Rātana hymn book in her hands. Mum had privately though openly stipulated "I want to be the first and best dressed at your next graduation son".



**Fig 132:** Mum and I at my 2006 Bachelors Graduation with Mum wearing everything in which she had requested she be dressed for interment.



She was well known to have been an immaculately dressed woman, and it was clear that she intended for this to be the case in death as in life. She had in adolescence been a devout Catholic, whilst having been raised according to the Māori holistic worldview, within the precincts of the Rātana Church. In hindsight I now wonder whether she insisted on being thus attired for her own sake (the deceased), our sakes (the living), Rātana, Saint Peter, or our tūpuna with whom she would be meeting i te ao wairua. Mum was a perfectionist who catered to the notions of others; so perhaps she had intended for her full mourning attire and accoutrements to accommodate an eclectic combination that she hoped in some way satisfied us all. That was so like Mum, trying hard to somehow please everyone. Nonetheless, she was now ready to be escorted directly home to our marae and ensconced in Uruika before sundown; to be embraced by her people amongst whom she would lay in state for the obligatory period of three nights prior to interment. And during that time our great-grandmother's taonga hei tiki would find its way from beneath her tūpāpaku, out of the casket, to remain in the world of the living.

In retrospect, the heart-rending tactile aspects involved in the act of dressing our mother were cathartic. We had been raised in private, fairly cosseted small village environments where bathing in naturally occurring free-flowing hot water springs was undertaken communally, with no necessity for clothing or modesty. So we understood nudity as a natural state of being. This was further reinforced because Mum had no compunctions in reminding us that her body was our earliest kāinga, the first home out of which we had emerged into the outside world. Therefore we were fine with our mother's natural nakedness in life and in death. However, we made certain that no other non-whānau members saw her naked form while we were dressing her; to have done so would've been abhorrent to our mother, and to ourselves. Furthermore, handling her lifeless tūpāpaku was intriguingly comforting, albeit perhaps disconcerting for others. We of course all knew by this point that she had died; she would otherwise have been busy verbally admonishing us throughout the process! But there was a level of intimate

tactile communication which seemingly passed silently and clandestinely between everybody present, centred entirely on our mother's body. As one of her children, I would like to think that this silent empathic communiqué was the necessary reconfiguration of that physical relationship between a deceased mother and her child. We, her children, were now physically preparing to literally sever that final corporeal umbilicus that connected her to the world of the living, knowing in those last moments that the physical link would never again be so exquisitely tangible or real.

Of course the inevitable brevity of the occasion was by no means lost on us either. There were the unavoidable tears, and stilted periodic sobbing, as we all tucked, straightened, folded, tugged, patted, prodded and smoothed. But there were also lighter moments, like when I suggested Mum may prefer to be wearing 'prettier personals' with which to 'greet' our father in the afterlife. They had after all had a healthy marriage that had resulted in eight pregnancies (with six full-term births). There was also jovial banter, such as when her daughter-in-law asked whether we thought Mum would notice if the stockings we put on her had a very small run; and after the briefest of pauses everyone emphatically, unanimously agreed to 'not even go there', so a new pair of stockings were quickly sought. Moments such as these - precious respites from the inevitable submission to grief - gave rise to the calming, depressurising mirth found present where Māori are sharing that inimitable burden of loss which accompanies death. That same gravity had weighed just as heavily many years earlier, though the location, circumstances, and logistics were considerably different. Dressing our beloved mother's tūpāpaku was, all things being relative, a gentle walk in the park compared to the experience of dressing our treasured father's tūpāpaku thirteen years prior.

The year was 1996, and our lifelong childhood hero, our amazing father, had passed away suddenly, prematurely, in Auckland. Our father had been very much a grass-roots, down-to-earth, typical Kiwi bloke, who worked as a



**Fig 133**

labourer, coached rugby, and adored his wife and seven children. On Friday nights he could be found relaxing at the local pub, or at home, typically enjoying a few cold beers, and exercising his wonderfully infectious and vigorous laughter.

Although his mid to late twentieth century NZ life was rife with ethnocentric British customs, he was rarely tolerant of what he saw as pompous airs and graces, and his wardrobe full of casual clothing reflected as much. Nonetheless, our step-mother had chosen his seldom worn, two-piece, baby-blue suit, with a white dress shirt, and brown tie, belt, and shoes.

The time had arrived to ready our father's tūpāpaku for public viewing. In my whānau such preparatory processes are traditionally undertaken by the eldest children. However, on this occasion my older siblings could not be present, so my younger brother Bobby and I undertook the harrowing task. This was the first actual occasion I would find myself in the perplexing situation of dressing a tūpāpaku. To some extent I am grateful that at that time my brother and I were still in shock from having just lost our beloved Dad, so we were pretty much operating out of absolute necessity. The first, and one of the most poignant acts which retrospectively comes to mind, arose after we had been led into the room where our father's tūpāpaku lay on a cold sterile gurney. His still, pale body was wholly covered by a simple white sheet which the kind-hearted Māori mortician withdrew enough so that we could see our father's now strangely inanimate silent face. As the mortician intoned a brief karakia I remember thinking that our Dad had been an invincible, towering, giant in life who had single-handedly raised his children in the back-blocks of Rotorua; yet now on the gurney he was but an echo of his former self. Our step-mother's guttural but hushed sobbing echoed from the corner of the room, as my baby-brother and I reached out to our father, and my brother suddenly realised that he would be entirely naked beneath the sheet. "Bro, Dad's not gonna have anything on under there eh? I don't think I can do this Bro...". We, my older sister and I, had always protected our younger siblings where we could, but this would not be

such an occasion. "It's alright Son...", this being the term I used to refer to our baby-brother, "It's only Dad Son, he'll understand, we have to get him ready...". "Nah Bro, Dad wouldn't like us seeing him down there without anything on eh...". By now his own muffled sobbing was making his words difficult to distinguish. As I watched him physically choke up in a moment of utter confusion, his body momentarily frozen. This was going to require some quick thinking on my part, and through my own veiled tears I whispered, "Alright Son, we can leave the sheet on him while we slip his underpants on beneath it ...". So that was mini-crisis number one averted, with mini-crisis number two only moments away. After slipping underwear on our father, we removed the sheet, then hastily slipped his suit pants on, before attempting to put on his dress shirt. Thus arose crisis number two, and at this juncture it is appropriate to reflect, as I did on that night in 1996, on the earlier teachings of elders who had gratefully ingrained upon me indelible lessons, stories and values during childhood.

## **8.7 Life lessons and learnings...**

Growing up on our marae meant we were participants in, and witnesses to, numerous private practices, often involving poignantly lived cultural lores which will be touched on presently. Such customary practices meant that there were many occasions when my koroua-dad would be called to the hospital to conduct the poroporoaki, gathering with the whānau for the final time together involving prayer services for those whose physical well-being was deteriorating in anticipation of the *tuku wairua*. I was regularly sent to stay with my koroua-dad, so I would partake in these services, which more often than not became death vigils, alongside the respective families; sharing loving thoughts, singing quiet hymns, and waiting with ever-diminishing hope. This was how I learnt that when a patient was shifted into a private room, in an already over-burdened public hospital, then the staff most likely had an expectation of imminent death, and were allowing the family some privacy. As an aside, during my mother's final days she used to always insist on being placed into multiple-occupancy ward rooms, as though that act

would in and of itself stave off death; however, I digress. One of the earliest customary practices I learnt was that, after a death occurred, a living person, preferably connected to the deceased, was required to be physically present to protect the tūpāpaku from unforeseen (and occasionally foreseen) transgression, until such time as they were relinquished, by way of the ritual practices of tangihanga, back through the folds of Papatūānuku to the ancestors. This lore thus required a custodial vigil which could last for days, involving the physical presence of interchanging family members.

So it became part of the process that following the death my koroua-dad and I would wait patiently for the tūpāpaku to be released by the hospital, and transferred to the funeral home for preparation, before being made available to the whānau for tangihanga and burial. There were those few occasions when my koroua-dad would wait directly outside the mortuary room quietly sucking on his favoured black-ball lollies. I use to marvel at his loyalty, wondering, in my youthful naivety, if those seemingly ever-present black striped, white, small round sweets somehow provided him with divine sustenance. Or if he was contemplating the delivery of a sermon then he might wait in the comfortable discreet hospital chapel, notes and Paipera Tapu in hand, occasionally gazing wistfully at the simple Christian symbols which occupied that sanctified space. Other times, when he knew the hospital staff with the tūpāpaku, then he would go visiting living patients briefly; as was appropriate for an Āpotoro with a parish that covered the entire Waiariki domain. The Rotorua hospital was a familiar feature of my childhood landscape, and if it was daytime when I was with him, then I was permitted to visit a nearby favoured comic store, close to the second-hand bookshop, not far from the local library, while he attended to his custodial vigil. If it was night, then I would be wrapped in layers of blankets and laid on the back seat of the car safely left parked in the hospital grounds, with comics or books, lollies, and penlight at the ready, to quietly rest until we could follow the tūpāpaku to the funeral home. I was never afraid to be left in the locked car at night; Rotorua was a safe city in the 1970's. I would eat,



Fig 134

read, sleep, and wake when the car was moving again; immediately flinging blankets aside to jump nimbly into the front passenger's seat next to my koroua-dad driving while sucking on one of his blackball lollies, humming Rātana hymns, with me quietly watching the newly introduced and mesmerising city neon lights that seemed to leap out at me in an impossibly bright rainbow array of colours. At the funeral home we would eventually leave the deceased in the charge of a whānau member who would wait in our stead, allowing us to return home briefly, wash, collect clothes and other supplies before returning when the tūpāpaku was fully dressed and ready for its penultimate journey, home to the marae. Our marae and indigenous precincts of which Firth writes, "The marae of a village was bound up with all the most vital happenings, with warm and kindly hospitality, with stately and dignified ceremonial, with the grouping of hosts and visitors in positions determined by etiquette and traditional procedure." (1959, p.96).

Many of these vigils took place in my youth, and often during such times my koroua-dad, mother, aunts, and other older whānau members would regale stories of lived histories, and their touching memories of earlier vigils and tangihanga. They would so easily and lovingly harken back to other yesterdays; processes that became familiar to the extent that I learnt how to read the private language of their weary, waiting bodies, and softly animated peaceful faces. I would watch as their alert eyes would slowly drift downwards, bringing back to mind something emotional, poignant; using those acute reminiscences to psychologically, spiritually, some might say even physically, escape into the private protective world of memories. The attendant whanaunga were quietly returning to yester-times where the deceased was still living, still laughing, still singing, ever waiting to be revisited in privately shared, lovingly articulated reminiscent narratives. As I watched, their bodies might stoop slightly, and I knew, they had left me behind in real-time, so that they could smile, argue, sing, and dance again in the company of those who were still but only alive in memory. They were still physically in the room of course; right there in front of me, with their eyes downcast as I would watch them, wondering where they had gone to,

who they had gone to. In so saying, I knew they had left the physical reality of the hospital (or the funeral home, or the wharenuī) allowing their lulling words to seemingly hypnotise all within hearing; happily slipping back, albeit briefly, into the sounds, tastes, smells and very real world of their exquisite lived reflections.

Then abruptly, suddenly, their conscious presence back would be made all too evident as their eyes would roll, then focus ceiling-ward, their voice unexpectedly addressing those physically present, and perhaps others unseen. They would be speaking as if admonishing the very air surrounding us, reaffirming those cherished memories, and on occasion giving voice to less pleasant past realities, accompanied with an array of arbitrary statements which remain with me still. "Hey Sis you remember when they went to carry his tūpāpaku out the whare, he was a stubborn one eh, got heavy, just like that... didn't want to go, took a few more of the boys to get him on his way, must've had unfinished business eh, well tureiti inaianei, ma te wā ne... when your time is up it no good holding on, makes too hard for those of us left on this side eh...", "Gee you know what, I'd forgotten we used to have them longer than three days eh, and no morticians then, but we didn't have no problems with them stinking up the wharenuī... well not too many problems anyway, cos there was Uncle so-and-so, eh, he started going off, so the old man had to come in and growl him; he stopped smelling straight away, behaved himself quick and fast cos no-one went against the mōhio of those kaumātua eh, Sis, hehe... you remember eh...", "Yeah, and there was cousin so-and-so, you remember when we were dressing her, it was one thing after the other with her, jolly petticoat slipping down, that dress she always loved but the darn pleats just wouldn't sit straight, and those lovely patent shoes she always wore but they wouldn't fit properly on her feet... she fought hard our cousin, but the old man came in, said his karakia, and it was all okay after that, just as well the old man was still with us eh... we haven't forgotten about you cousin...". To non-Māori, maybe even non-whānau, these were conceivably nonsensical rantings, but not to me. In my inquisitive adolescent mind I was becoming aware that such

personal reflections were in regards to aspects of corporeal decomposition, rigor mortis and so forth; after all, these were simply aspects of death of which we lived with as intimately as life. But such sterile, tactless western concepts were quickly rejected out of hand in preference for the real-life loving memories shared amongst whānau, who were drawing on their learnt behaviour through their own lived memories, and who were at the same time creating the basis of memories which I would, certainly in 1996, come to draw on, as we struggled to dress our beloved father.

#### **\* Dressing our dead continues...**

Rigor mortis had set in, and thus arose crisis number two, wherein the crisp freshly ironed white dress-shirt our step-mother had chosen simply would not, no matter what my brother and I did, slip easily on Dad. Stress accumulated as the minutes ticked by; all present knew that whānau and manuhiri alike were waiting for the return of his tūpāpaku, so as to begin the tangihanga. Our step-mother made suggestions, all futile; our step-sister offered her advice, to no avail, as my brother and I tried to get that damned white dress-shirt to go on Dad. Then the undertaker intervened, suggesting that we, the whānau, might like to 'pop' into the parlour come family waiting-room, while they finished 'dressing' Dad. Immediately, from out of nowhere my mind recalled long past waiting vigils sprinkled with those questionably nonsensical diatribes, and I knew instantly the undertaker was asking us to vacate the room in order that they could do what we apparently could not. They were prepared to force our father's tūpāpaku to the extremes, and I utterly refused to expedite matters and allow them to break our Daddy's body for the sake of a damn freshly pressed, white dress-shirt. Once again I was required to do some quick thinking which found me kneeling on a stool at the top end of the gurney. Copious tears flowed down everyone's faces as we quietly begged our father's body to behave - me pulling my Dad's arms upward and backwards, coaxing his tinana into fearfully vulnerable positions, all the while knowing I was on the cusp of doing what the undertaker was prepared to. Then suddenly our father's body



seemed to miraculously relax for one brief moment in which my baby-brother managed to tug the shirt tail at his end, and to our surprise, and relief, the shirt slipped on... as did the suit jacket moments later. Sweet blessed relief! While it had taken considerable strain and effort for my baby-brother and I, we finally and lovingly completed that difficult task without the mortician's intervention. Our treasured Tūhoe father's dignity, along with his body, would remain unbroken and intact for the funerary process. It had already been decided that his watch would not be placed on his wrist, although we did slip cufflinks onto his shirt.

The dressing process complete, we lifted his now dressed form into the casket his wife had chosen. Karakia followed, and we sang the hymn 'Whakaariamai' before making our way back to his South Auckland home, where he would lay for the night before returning him to our marae. I had set up the lounge earlier as a make-shift wharenuī, with furniture moved out, mattresses laid on the floor, photographs of the living removed to other rooms, live plants taken outside. Then approaching his home we were met by the startling sight of rows upon rows of vehicles, packed with waiting Māori dressed in black, from three distinct iwi; each had arrived to demand final and rightful claim of our Dad.

## **8.8 Death down under... cremation...**

In 2011 I attended the 'Death Down Under Inaugural Conference' held at the University of Sydney. This was the first event of its kind that I had attended and would impress upon me the growing relevancy and pedagogic interest in both death studies and, of particular interest to me, the perceived and considered aesthetics of death. I was in fact surprised to learn that the fascination with funerary or mourning garments was not restricted solely to those in the industry and/or the academic realm of Death Studies.

In her conference presentation Dr Pia Interlandi spoke of fellow alumni Donna Franklin, who during her Master of Art studies at Edith Cowan University, was awarded an artist residency at The Art and Science Collaborative Research Laboratory at The University of Western Australia. The focus of Pia’s presentation was addressing the question of what people wear in coffins. At the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery, Franklin exhibited a garment simply referred to as a living fungi dress.



Fig 135

Cultural eclecticism is abundantly evident as new generations pragmatically approach cross-cultural interests. “In almost every human culture, when an individual is prepared for burial or cremation, their body is dressed in a garment that will literally and symbolically become part of the body as it decomposes” Interlandi, P. (2011, p.18).



Fig 136: Dr Pia Interlandi and several of her revolutionary death-wear designs

Death is no exception, and in the dressing process often Māori can be seen to combine Māori, Pākehā, and other significant life-interest aspects such as military, academic, political and so forth. One such exemplar can be seen in the writings of Te Whaiwhaia Ritchie, whose 2010 Directed Study was titled Reflections on a Bicultural Tangi. Reflecting on the dressing process undertaken at the funeral home following the sad passing of his distinguished grandfather Emeritus Professor James Ritchie (1920-2009), Te Whaiwhaia writes that,



Fig 137

We were greeted and supported at the funeral director’s premises by close friends and whānau... My mother and Aunt Helen then dressed my grandfather in some of his favourite clothes which we had brought with us from home. Jane had particularly wanted him to be wearing his

manaia necklace and his Order of New Zealand Merit medallion. Linda Waimarie Nikora and Ngahua Te Awekotuku, both former doctoral students of my grandfather, arrived to join us at the funeral parlour, bringing with them a korowai with which to drape the coffin, and they instructed us in the appropriate tikanga for this.

Ritchie, T.W, 2010, p9

Te Whaiwhaia, born of Māori and Pākehā descent, writes fondly of his koroua who was born Pākehā but who had publicly been accepted into the hearts and lives of Māori by none other than Princess Te Puea Herangi and Tainui. I alluded from the outset that my people have learnt to adapt to shifting resources, contemporary circumstances, and an ever-increasing multi-cultural world as we undertake our multitude of processes when preparing and dressing our dead for tangihanga.

To my anthropological mind there is without doubt a level of aesthetic preference to the garments and so forth chosen to be worn in death. However, before such measures of aesthetic preference are applied, there would seem to be a prior measure of real-life, lived, emotive, spiritual and cultural connectedness. Although we entrust the washing process to undertakers as an inherent part of embalming, in recent conversations with contemporaries it was agreed that many of us would much prefer to be washed in a source of natural water as opposed to formaldehyde. Regarding our burial practices, while we no longer seek out elevated spaces such as caves or trees for committal, today earth interment is but one choice in this the modern era that is seeing increasing numbers of Māori choosing cremation, as well as other options.

Cremation – the burning of the dead - was not a common traditional practise, but it did occur. The most famous recent event was Te Rangihiroa himself, supported by specific Te Ati Awa narratives (Dansey, H. 1992). For many and varied reasons the incidence of cremation is increasing. During this research, one of the most poignant stories shared involved a happily married Māori couple based in Australia. Unfortunately the wife passed away overseas. Her husband, determined to fulfil the tribal obligation of interment within the whānau urupa, had her cremated, with the intent of returning her

home. When I was told this story, he had 'crossed the ditch' home to Aotearoa a few times. However, on each occasion he was not ready to be parted from her. So the convenient portability, of her ashes in an urn, meant that he transported his wife, back and forth, between the whānau here in Aotearoa, and their Australian home. As my Aunty Ema said in her interview, "It's amazing how many of our people still had their loved ones, in their urns, because they're not ready to come home or not financial enough..." (private communication, April, 2011). In another narrative, a whanau received word that a tūpāpaku was arriving home from overseas, so the marae was prepared for the tangihanga. However, they were surprised to discover that what was returned for burial was in fact an urn, containing ash remains. This is not a common occurrence in NZ, not yet. However, as our urupa reach capacity, and as we continue to take up residency on foreign shores, the formerly uncommon option of cremation, is becoming ever-reasonable, as another means of returning to our whenua.

As the select family members undertaking all preparatory responsibilities for our tangihanga, we openly comply with every known wish of our deceased, and their wishes most often supersede those of the living. Dansey's words reflect our commitment of care-giving for our deceased,

Another attitude to death in which the Māori differs from other members of the total New Zealand society is that the dead are to be cared for, cherished, mourned, spoken to, honoured in a way which others might consider to be over-emotional and over-demonstrative... The Māori – and I am sure this still applies to most Māori – want to see their dead, to have them with them until that ultimate committal to the earth...

(1992, p.108).

In our Māori world we have been taught that during the numerous funerary processes, the sole primary focus must, throughout, remain as regards to the interests of the deceased. Certainly there was a historical time, when my people traditionally maintained a constant vigil with the bodies of our deceased, keeping their kinship and shared heritage intact. Yet if my family's lived memories of yesterdays, not too far gone, are anything to go by, then the need for that constant vigilance remains, in order to safeguard our loved

ones against acts of disrespect and humiliation borne at the hands of strangers. In so saying, sadly, and as in the case of the large greenstone heirloom which escaped the confines of my mother's casket shows that vigilance is sometimes required against acts that arise from the hands of our own people.

Nonetheless, our deceased still typically lay-in-state on our marae. Though they now lay horizontal, within a casket, with earthen burials the prevalent method of disposal; although as aforementioned, alternative disposal methods are being utilised by our people. It would also be true to say that we prefer to conduct our private funerary processes on the personal ancestral grounds of our marae, though as times have changed we have had to adapt because of imposed and acculturated modern practices.

In closing at this juncture, suffice to say, that whether washing, preparing, dressing, or adorning our deceased for the various mourning processes; throughout, Māori remain directly engaged in the process, with our dead addressed and dressed, present as if still living. Such was the processual order of death in life for my people in centuries past and nowadays, where possible, this remains the case.

# CLOAKED in LIFE and DEATH

This aspect of the research considers tangible aspects of funerary practices involved in tangihanga, or Māori death rituals. Māori, and increasingly non-Māori, participate in and observe first-hand a multitude of inimitable culture-bound activities combined with distinct aspects of indigenous identity. A common practice is the deployment of korowai adorning our burial vessels. Korowai, the contemporary term for cloak in the Ngāti Pikiao domain, is central to this study which investigates the practice of traditional hand-woven korowai used at tangihanga. It considers aspects of their origins, ownership, safekeeping; their multi-faceted utilisation, and the consequences of doing so, or not, as well as their eventual disposal. Throughout, the critical involvement of kaitiaki is evident. This chapter will also speak briefly to a reflexive ethnographic approach that acts as the foundation for this work, framed by ethnohistoric research of archival and artefactual material, as well as some fieldwork observations.

\*\*\* Throughout this chapter the Te Arawa vernacular of the word **korowai** is used to denote cloaks

## 9.1 Exemplars of caskets and cloaks...

...korowai are familial, and often trans-tribal, taonga tuku iho that subtly weave combinations of events, histories, genealogy, and love, into the hard-sought flax threads out of which they originate, becoming cultural objects which bear the hallmarks of preceding generations...

**Fig 138 Right:**

This pencil sketch image by Conrad Pharazyn is based on a New Zealand Herald photograph taken during the tangihanga of the Māori King, Koroki, in May 1966. The image was used on the cover of Oppenheim's 1973 text Māori Death Customs.



**Figs 139, 140 Left:**

These colour images were published during the poignant tangihanga for the Māori Queen Te Arikinui Dame Te Atairangikaahu (1931 – 2006) in which stunning kahukiwi can be seen draped on the casket (and on the wall of the mahau of Mahinaarangi).



**Fig 141 Right:**

Published image of the tangihanga for the tohunga raranga and doyenne of whatu, Diggeress Te Kanawa (1920-2009) in which her barely discernible casket in the background is draped appropriately with 13 cloaks and bedecked with floral arrangements and family pictures.



## 9.2 Origins, pragmatism and functionality...

This chapter considers tangible aspects of funerary practices involved in tangihanga, or Māori death rituals. Māori, and increasingly non-Māori, participate in and observe first-hand a multitude of unique culture-bound activities combined with distinct aspects of indigenous identity. A common practice is the deployment of korowai adorning our burial vessels. Korowai, the contemporary term for cloak in the Arawa tribal domain, is central to this study which investigates the practice of traditional hand-woven korowai used at tangihanga. It considers aspects of their origins, ownership, safekeeping; their multi-faceted utilisation and the consequences of doing so, or not, as well as their eventual disposal. Throughout, the critical involvement of kaitiaki is reflected upon, exemplifying how living dimensions of taonga unfold, and how relationships and responsibilities are maintained and perpetuated by uri whakatipu. To a great extent, the acknowledged cultural treasures of today originated from pragmatic processes intended to obviate particularly harsh living conditions; and the Māori of old drew on a rubric of technical abilities that would increasingly allow for the development of aesthetic aspects.

The first Pākehā explorers noted the richness of the chiefs' costume and the regal manner of their bearing; their immaculately dressed hair fastened by combs of wood or bone; their glowing pendants and curious amulets of polished nephrite; their shimmering fibre cloaks and brightly textured dogskin wraps...

Te Awekotuku, N. 1991, p.137

The earliest simple, functional, and protective dwelling over time became the ornate whare whakairo; basic bone fish hooks conveyed around the neck, eventually became highly crafted, elaborate, and at times ostentatious taonga; sturdy practical woven rain capes evolved into uniquely flax woven, tāniko, feather adorned korowai. Archaeological artefacts evidence that the proto-Māori and first generation of settlers arrived on these shores bearing unique korowai and taonga, which were adapted, as required, to suit the materials and resources unique to Aotearoa. These included the use of flax fibre for weaving, as well as native timbers and pounamu used for carving.



Many of the technical and cultural practices have remained, but some things necessarily changed. Attempts by our ancestors to translocate Aute or Mulberry (for bark cloth) as a productive and feasible crop in Aotearoa failed, and consequently our weavers experimented with other local fibres. Te Awekotuku points out: "So the enterprising weavers – mat-makers, garment-makers, sail-makers, basket-makers – set out in search of new resources. And they discovered harakeke..." (1993, p.278). Harakeke or flax (*Phorium tenax*) was the most prolific and successful. The entire blades and fine inner fibre became essential elements of traditional economy. Colour schemes were similarly dependant on the natural resources of this land, as opposed to the flora and fauna of previous lands. New, different bird's feathers were used variously and which enhanced the mana of whoever received and donned the garments.

Traditional Māori dress was the product of an ongoing process of discovery, experimentation, and creativity. Far from being static, it evolved continuously from the practices associated with the Eastern Polynesian origins of the first settlers. Familiar techniques were applied and adapted to semi-familiar materials in Aotearoa. Functional and effective procedures were passed on through successive generations.

Wallace, 2007, p.13

### 9.3 Weaving korowai...

Historically, the art of weaving korowai has remained primarily the traditional realm of women (with few contemporary exceptions), whose articles have often come to be imbued with mana unparalleled by any other hand-woven kākahu. Korowai are perceived as emerging from a female tradition involving stringent training, steeped in centuries of generationally transmitted matrilineal knowledge and rituals which verify, and perpetuate, the time-honoured wisdom of our foremothers. In the foreword to Hirini Moko Mead's classic ethnographic study of Māori clothing, E.S Dodge asserts,

Woven clothing, in its various forms, elaborations, and decorative borders is among the most admired products of Māori technology... Dogskin cloaks and feathered capes highlight the fashions of other days. Their rise and fall in popularity, their craftsmanship, their significance...

1969, p.12

The technical aspect of all korowai initially arises with the extraction of the raw materials, an act which in and of itself draws directly upon the female deity Papatūānuku. It involved growing, selecting, and cutting, taking only the most suited and required blades of the kohunga, and appropriately returning any unused part to the base of the parent plant (Te Kanawa, 1992), so it may become a regenerative source of sustenance. Flax reacts to rain, frost, and wind, making summer and autumn the preferred gathering seasons, leaving winter and spring as the ideal times for weaving. Stripping, sorting, sizing, and extracting the muka then provides the weaver with the basic raw materials, to be coloured, worked, woven and accentuated accordingly. Such were the technical and environmentally conscious responsibilities of our weavers (Puketapu-Hetet, 1999), whose conduct exemplified the Māori concept of kaitiakitanga - acting as guardians for both the perpetuation of mother earth's resources upon which they were drawing, as well as for the kākahu, korowai, and so forth which would come to be produced. Māori often drew on the abundant resources of Papatūānuku, and this is demonstrated in the lived experiences of my whānau.

In my whānau, according to several historical accounts verbally communicated down through the generations, my Ngāti Whare koroua tūpuna Te Tuhi Pihopa carved our wharenuī Hinenuitepo, at Waikotikoti Marae, beginning his work in the dawning of the twentieth century. He would not live to see the completed achievement of his industries that came to fruition two long decades after he began, and which was gratefully finished with the help of carvers from Te Arawa. Wiri writes that our whare tūpuna was:

... bestowed with the name, Hine-nui-te-pō (the Maiden of Death), by the prophet Rua Kenana... the carver was Te Tuhi Pihopa of the Ngāti Hamua hapū of Ngāti Whare. It was predicted that because of imperfections in his work, Te Tuhi would meet an early death and this prophecy was fulfilled when he died two months later...

2001, p.181

Just a few years following his passing, this whare whakairo was formally opened in 1920, and still stands proudly in the embrace of Te Whāiti Nui a

Toi. His eclectic building, carving, and rare weaving skills (in that era more typically a female art) can be read about in the writings of Elsdon Best, to whom he was a friend and informant. Neich relates that my koroua Te Tuhi was likely the carver whom Ngata, in the early 1900's, identified as one of only two surviving carvers outside the Te Arawa rohe (2001, p.159). He was by all accounts an accomplished kite maker, weaver, builder and carver, whose rare artistic skills were etched into every part of our whare whakairo.

My Arawa kuia Te Pae Mihikore was similarly skilled in the indigenous arts of our people, in particular, the art of whatu. Although in many aspects my iwi was considered poor, we had largely retained our language, lands, and numerous other precious taonga, including treasured korowai woven by my kuia Te Pae, as well as revered kākahu and korowai woven by other esteemed kuia. We have been privileged to possess, and continue to utilise, numerous such artefacts that harken back to tūpuna long gone but who also are never far from our lived memories and developing worldviews.



**Fig 142**

In Te Ao Māori, korowai are often trans-tribal taonga, meaning they may traverse from the tribe of the weaver to the tribe of the recipients, forging inter-tribal bonds long-lived and remembered; albeit, perhaps, the taonga are acquired and treated differently from iwi to iwi, throughout the ages.

From the simple rourou food basket to the prestigious kahu kiwi, weaving is endowed with the very essence of the spiritual values of Māori people. The ancient Polynesian belief is that the artist is a vehicle through whom the gods create...

Puketapu-Hetet, 1999, p. 2

As prestigious garments of aristocrats, they could symbolise personal semblance, tapu, and mana. Mead speaks of korowai that were known to have been thrown over captives or people under threat of death; lives that were subsequently spared because of the korowai acting as a semblance of its owner's mana. He goes on to discuss how they were used to both dress up corpses, or as wrappings for corpses prior to burial, as well as being used for payment to specialists, and to claim an article or set it apart (1969,

pp.176-179). Such was their prestige that some received personal names, such as Karamaene, a kaitaka class garment, which was exchanged for the carved war canoe Te Toki a Tapiri, (Te Awekotuku, N. 1993, p.278).

From the threading of an idea in the mind of a weaver, to corporeal threads of actuality, ownership of korowai as a commodity often differs from the custodianship and safekeeping roles of whānau and hapū, many of whom have designated kaitiaki. These are often noteworthy generational guardians who retain and communicate their taonga's whakapapa, oversee their utilisation, invariably with strict parameters, maintaining specific methods of storage and conveyance.

#### 9.4 Kaitiakitanga...

Unlike my great grandmother who was a reputed weaver as well as a revered kaitiaki, neither of my grandmothers, nor my mother, were gifted with the skills of whatu. Their generations were obliged to assimilate, and in the case of my mother, Catholic schooling and a relatively urbanised upbringing precluded training in traditional weaving. These select whānau members were however designated kaitiaki of taonga tuku iho, korowai as well as many other treasured heirlooms, which were, in my whānau, hapū and iwi, retained in the safekeeping of kaitiaki perceived, by their life's conduct and accomplishments, as capable of bearing the ongoing responsibility of guardianship and knowledge transfer. Māori have customarily displayed korowai on the occasions of death. Unique flax-crafted cloaks which had previously demarcated social classifications that in modern times have, by contrast, come into less use. The tūpāpaku is always treated with reverence, and publicly seen in garments befitting the appropriate level of prestige and status.

In 1952, during the tangi of my kuia Te Pae, two of her treasured korowai were draped over her tūpāpaku in Uruika, our Ngāti Pīkiao wharenuī. On the removal of her tūpāpaku for interment, the korowai and other taonga were

conveyed to her sole living daughter, my kuia Irihapeti. When my kuia Iri departed this world in 1981, those same korowai and taonga were again appropriately displayed draped on her tūpāpaku, until removed from the wharenuī for interment; and in the absence of another female of their lineage, her brother, my koroua-dad Tutere became kaitiaki. When in 2006 my koroua-dad eventually followed in the universal journey of death, my beloved mother became the designated kaitiaki, until her passing in 2009, at which time I inherited them as part of my mother's



Fig 143



Fig 144

estate. My mother and her father had kept each of my kuia Te Pae's revered korowai in white pillow cases that had been hand-embroidered with the symbols of the Rātana Church. These were in turn wrapped in plastic, and safely stored in the wardrobe while not in use. The treasured significance of korowai often required that they be stored in places where they were well protected. Mead cites a case in Te Teko where korowai were stored in the wharenuī at the marae, and another case on the East Coast where the korowai and whāriki used for tangihanga were kept in a neighbouring church. Some korowai were retained by the hapū, and others moved from place to place. Mead describes one as 'the traveller' that circulated throughout tangihanga with whānau (1969). Additionally, some families chose to deposit precious legacies including taonga tuku iho in the safekeeping of local museums, with a mutually consented access agreement for both parties. As humble kaitiaki, my kuia, koro and mother fulfilled their unspoken obligations of guardianship without exception, and the silent conveyance of our taonga to appropriate tangihanga was unquestioned. In their twilight years, when ill health meant they could not be physically present at tangihanga, then we, the next generations, would be instructed to uplift the taonga, deliver them immediately to the wharenuī, and ensure their presence was overseen, until such time as they were returned. Each whānau occasion of death, whether at marae or not, saw my kuia's special flax treasures fittingly draped over the burial vessel until interment. By various means, the korowai always arrived at the appropriate tangi, and always returned to their kaitiaki. Upon reflection, I now realise that the role of

kaitiakitanga or guardianship was, and still is, distinct from modern notions of ownership. In wider society, ownership of valued commodities, as a rule, generally involves an identifiable possessor, who likely has an accompanying deed or formal document of purchase or entitlement. This is most often not the case with Māori. Certainly in my whānau, I know of no circumstances in which korowai were documented as part of the chattels of a private estate, and to the best of my knowledge, kaitiaki received the taonga just prior, or immediately following, the death of the former kaitiaki. These noteworthy familial guardians also often find they have to mediate in disputes of utilisation, as observable in this extract from the 2010 interview with whaea Vicki Mae Bhana, a respected kaitiaki of taonga tuku iho, from three hapū around Lake Rotorua,

I look after the whānau kākahu. I'm from a whānau where I have been whāngai by my grand-aunt, the sister of my maternal grandfather. She brought me up and she looked after the taonga. She weaved, my kuia was the weaver who made the kākahu, and her mother Mariana. I've got a whāngai brother and a sister, but I was the only out of the three who is a direct descendant of the weaving lineage, so I was trained as kaitiaki. I am a direct descendant. My whāngai sister Ngahuia and our brother have known and accepted that all the taonga came straight to me, and that I was the one who was bought up to say what was going to happen with the taonga. Whakapapa still plays a major role in decisions.

### 9.5 Korowai, tūpāpaku and tangihanga...

The often taken-for-granted, discrete presence of korowai at tangihanga is evocative, and can speak a thousand subtle though significant words, whilst their observable absence can be deafening. For Ngāti Pikiao of Te Arawa and Ngāti Whare, it is rare, though not unheard of, that a tūpāpaku will be present in our wharenuī without, at the very least, a korowai – which raises the issue of the significance of korowai draped over burial vessels during their time on our marae.

Korowai embody, as well as compel, both spatial and temporal connectivity, revealing aspects of liminality which engage the past within the present, subsequently acting as the corporeal conduits of what the ethnologist Van

Gennep called a tripartite process (which was discussed in Chapter One and Two). That is to say that, in this context, while the tūpāpaku is perceived as being in a state of 'in-between here and there', the korowai acts as an anchor, connecting the deceased to both the 'now' and the 'before', which correlates to the whānau who are present today, and the deceased tūpuna from which the whānau descended. Mead relates how the korowai acts to mark "the importance of the deceased during transition from corpse to ancestor" (1969, p.179). He refers to the transitional period during which korowai were used to ensure the deceased is kept warm. Along a similar line of thinking, Corey-Pearce asserts that feather cloaks evoke a bird-like stature, which "may be advantageous when performing ceremonial roles, as birds occupy a liminal space – that between sky and earth – and have long been believed by Māori to mediate between the living and the dead" (2005, p.79). The korowai may thus be perceived as acting to keep the tūpāpaku warm whilst still in the embrace of the whānau, securing it while in liminal transition, until such time as the tūpāpaku is returned to Papatūānuku.

Today, our reasoning for continuing the tradition of tūpāpaku being cloaked during tangihanga remains multi-faceted. Speaking from my whānau experiences, we, the current generations, are ensuring the perpetuation of earlier traditions and practices which our elders taught were significant to our identity as Māori; setting us apart from our modern non-indigenous contemporaries; demarcating the 'them' from the 'us' so as to better comprehend ourselves and our place in the wider world. So it is that we, the living, place precious cloaks upon the tūpāpaku of our beloved dead. To so bear a cloak in death reflects familial respect, honour, love; degrees of tribal mana are thus publicly acknowledged. To bear more than one cloak reflects increasing respect, honour, love, asserting the mana of perhaps more than one tribe grieving their collective loss.

In some cases, such as in Tainui, multiple korowai may adorn the wall behind the deceased. One of the most dramatic illustrations of this was during the immense 2006 tangi of Dame Te Arikinui Te Atairangikaahu, with

the mahau of Mahinaarangi enhanced by remarkable korowai. However, this practise is confined to kahui ariki, who deliberately choose for whom this comes to pass, and can draw from a veritable wardrobe of ancient and prestigious cloaks. Though a similarly spectacular layering of textiles was also observed during the tangihanga of the doyenne of whatu, Diggeress Te Kanawa (1920-2009), in a display of whānau creativity which saw her tūpāpaku covered with thirteen cloaks. However, such impressive displays are by no means common, though each clearly infers public acknowledgement of pan-tribal mana and collective grief shared across the nation. With these notions in mind, it is understandable that the atypical absence of korowai during tangi can prompt hushed though obvious remarks of disdain whispered surreptitiously amongst workers toiling in the kitchen, or kuia curled up in the back of the wharenuī blissfully gossiping. Social apprehensions have been known to be quietly spoken by manuhiri milling in the car-parks, catching up quickly with whanaunga, smoking and gossiping before their contingents simultaneously depart homeward bound. I cannot claim that the latter is a pan-tribal social behaviour, but I can personally attest to such disheartening scenarios coming to pass on both my Ngāti Whare and Arawa marae. I say disheartening because, unlike my Arawa whānau, there are many whānau who are not blessed with possession of taonga tuku iho such as korowai passed down through the generations, or open access to suchlike. My Ngāti Whare whānau are such a case. For many Māori, korowai became too aged, and so were disposed of, and often the modern demands of urban life precluded following generations from learning and perpetuating the art of weaving, so their reparation simply was not possible.

## **9.6 Improvising, disposal and familial ramifications...**

There is prolific material regarding the industries of Apirana Ngata who, alongside others, foresaw such eventualities and who fought hard and long to counter them. Nowadays however, some families cleverly improvise and in the absence of hand-woven flax cloaks they use readily available inexpensive



'mink feel blankets'. These are available in an array of exotic colour combinations of fluffy feathery faux textiles that have also been adapted and deployed by contemporary kapa haka groups as makeshift cloaks. They are visually tolerable, particularly at off-shore locations such as in Australia, but by no means are they the korowai that my people treasure. Today the effort of many Māori and iwi to re-invigorate our indigenous arts continues. I can attest that Ngāti Pikiao of Te Arawa waka are gradually albeit incrementally increasing our number of weavers, and in turn our future accessibility to such taonga.

One of the final rituals of tangi on our marae occurs at the closing of that liminal juncture when the korowai are removed and ritually cleansed, in order to be kept above ground and used again. Alternatively, and at the behest of the kaitiaki, korowai may also accompany the tūpāpaku for interment, returning it from whence it came, back to Papatūānuku. Another Ngāti Pikiao relative deliberately and consciously placed a korowai on the tūpāpaku, inside the casket. This was mentioned by whaea Vicki Mae Bhana, who said "when her mother's sister died, she put a feathered kākahu she had made herself down with her. She laid it over her inside the coffin, so that it went down." (personal communication, June, 2010). Sadly, and poignantly for my generation, the latter is what came to pass for both of my kuia Te Pae's treasured flax-woven korowai, one of which accompanied my mother, and another that attended her father, in that ultimate journey of death. He had stipulated that the aged condition of the older and larger of his mother's korowai warranted its timely return to Papatūānuku; in this case as a shroud for his tūpāpaku. Then in 2009, my much-loved mother followed her father in that same journey of death, and again we adhered to her final personal wishes. With tear-filled eyes we followed the instructions stipulated prior to her death. In the presence of our sisters, my older brother and I gently proceeded to discretely wrap our mother's dressed tūpāpaku in the flax-woven folds of my kuia Te Pae's final remaining, treasured, aged korowai. There were subsequent familial ramifications for using our kuia Te Pae's final feather and flax korowai to shroud our koroua's and mother's

tūpāpaku, some of which came to the fore when the hapū addressed the whānau on the matter, before finally departing the marae; other ramifications remain ongoing and unresolved. At the formal conclusion of tangihanga, my whānau come together kanohi ki te kanohi on the mahau of our carved house, to account for financial aspects of the tangi. This tradition was once common amongst whānau, but I am informed it is now becoming less practiced. Nonetheless, it is during this hui that questionable actions, which may impact the entire whānau, can be raised for discussion, "... the last act in the drama of the tangi is a business meeting of the 'family', at which accounts are settled and all loose ends tied up" Metge (1962, p.8). With heartache, whānau and whanaunga questioned our choice of adhering to the final wishes of our koroua Tutere and our Mum. A confrontation occurred between my whānau and members of the wider hapū, especially individuals who had not been given the benefit of bidding farewell to their revered taonga. To this day, I still hear whispers of discontent on our marae, accompanied by short sideward glances in the direction of my family. We are not socially shunned as such. Neither is the mana of our kuia Te Pae, koro Tutere, or our beloved mother at all diminished in any way; they were all too loved for this to occur. But in my whānau, specifically in my own generation and with my siblings, we are socially, quietly, even silently with the simplest of glances, reminded that we made a decision for the hapū which, as decisions go, belonged rightfully to the hapū. This perhaps indicates the multi-faceted complexities that can arise when adhering to the final wishes articulated by kaitiaki, particularly if those wishes seemingly disregard the collective interests of the sub-tribe. If required, my siblings and I would, regardless though regretfully, do the same again. The older members of the whānau are determined to somehow replace what was (for their part) so unceremoniously taken from them. In so saying, how this will come to pass, or even when, is yet to be determined.

## **9.7 Alternative utilisation...**

Suffice to also say that korowai have many uses other than being brought out during tangihanga. They have been seen to act as proxy entities, used in

lieu of absent tūpāpaku. For example, Mead cites the 1820's case of the Perekiko whānau, as reported by Cruise, in which "... the family of Perekiko wept over the cloak of their son who died at Parramatta... the family gathered around it and cried over it as though it were the corpse" (1969, p.176). Correspondingly, and almost two centuries later, in 2005, an impressive feather adorned, woven flax korowai was seen draped over the vacant member's seat of the Green Party Co-leader Rod Donald as Parliament paid its respect on the occasion of his sudden death. Mead, Buck, and Best (who each cite the likes of Cruise and Te Rangikāheke) have all discussed the use of korowai as gifts, some acting to nullify hostilities, both historical and potential. Mead mentions Te Rangikāheke's earlier work, which noted korowai as crucial components in compensatory gifts; where an arranged marriage, intended to pacify combating family and/or tribal factions, required that the bride and her whānau were appropriately presented with taonga. Te Rangikāheke discussed a case where a tattooer received gifts, which included korowai, in return for moko work. "To undercut the value of such taonga was unthinkable, and Te Rangikāheke, in his manuscript on moko, offered salient advice on the appropriately substantial payment for the services of a moko artist... (Te Awekotuku, N and Nikora, L.W., 2007, p.61). They were known to be offered as bereavement gifts; evident social mechanisms intended to strengthen genealogical connections. Certainly korowai privilege the occasion at which they are used, and to my mind they are silent woven repositories which discretely speak a thousand silent words.

During the occasion of my Master's graduation dinner, one of my uncles shared a touching story about his reluctance, many years earlier, to don a korowai at his Bachelor's graduation. He related how the korowai had been quietly delivered, with instructions from my koroua-dad that he was to wear it over the requisite University robes. On the basis that this korowai had laid on the burial vessels of numerous whānau throughout the course of multiple tangihanga, he refused. My gentle and learned uncle was firm that he did not want this exceptional occasion coloured by any connection to a garment

which he associated as used during the tangihanga process. It was not often that people refused my grandfather's requests, which admittedly we perceived, more often than not, in the manner of commands. My uncle shared with all those gathered at my graduation how at his own earlier graduation his Āpotoro uncle had arrived, only to learn of the korowai dilemma. My koroua-dad had then quietly emphasised to my uncle that donning the korowai was not for the purpose of that particular, albeit monumental occasion, but rather a public acknowledgement of all the tūpuna who had come before; and whose lives had led my uncle to that moment in time. He was subsequently conferred in full University regalia, with my kuia's korowai proudly draped upon his broad shoulders.

Thus, korowai are familial, and often trans-tribal, taonga tuku iho that subtly weave combinations of events, histories, genealogies, and relationships, into the hard-sought flax threads out of which they originate, becoming cultural objects which bear the hallmarks of preceding ancestral lines. Of course from the moment that korowai depart our indigenous environments, their ownership and form raises new social questions. Korowai continue to be unique indigenous artefacts sought after by tourists, collectors, museums, and, increasingly, Māori alike. At the same time, they act as unique and rare exemplars for succeeding generations who continue, albeit slowly and cautiously, to perpetuate the ancient skills of whatu. Korowai continue to provide a symbol of the mana of the weaver, and that weaver's whānau; they transpose and accumulate mana for the whānau to whom they belong to. The select, and often unsung kaitiaki of korowai ensure their protective safekeeping, their selection for particular tangihanga, whether or not they will be used during tangi, their eventual disposal, as well as overseeing any alternative utilisation. Above all however, these treasured objects remain as revered taonga tuku iho of the people to whom the art of weaving korowai remains distinct, while the legacies of generational kaitiaki verify that their safekeeping, selection, and use at tangihanga are in good hands.

# REGARDING DEATH in LIFE

One of the prevalent themes that emerged during fieldwork was that of final wishes made by a loved one and the promises made by whānau wherein they are obliged to fulfil an oath made to their dying kinsperson. By this means, the final wishes of our deceased become death-bed oaths, the onus of which falls upon the living. As the focus of this thesis is on the materials, objects and taonga tangihanga or funerary artefacts seen in the immediate surround of our tūpāpaku, the matter of these wishes is pertinent. Final wishes may involve footwear, eyewear, dental-wear, playing cards, housie cards, soft toys, taonga and artefacts, inheritance pieces, specific funerary clothing, personal belongings, pets, and significantly the welfare of surviving children. In te ao Māori these final wishes often involve much personal deliberation by the person making them, with equal consideration by those who must fulfil a death-bed oath. This chapter speaks to auto-ethnographic and participant narratives that reveal some touching, intimate final wishes made by close whānau, and how the whānau responded. At times the final wishes and dying oaths were simple to fulfil, at other times this was by no means the case. There can be challenges and potential confrontations involved. Nonetheless, where practicable our people will traditionally comply with the final wishes of our deceased, at times openly, other times perhaps surreptitiously.

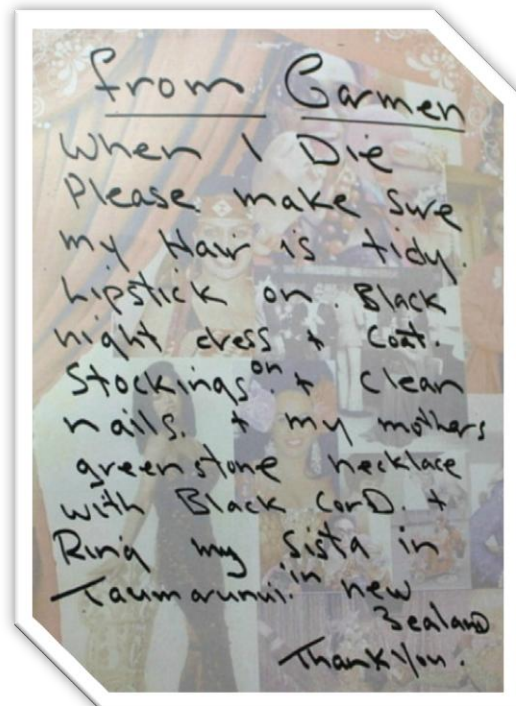
## 10.1 Exemplars of Final Wishes and Dying Oaths

Their wishes, their stipulations, are like a Will. Before Mihikore died, she said one thing to Mickey “Please look after all my kids” and then when our mother died, when they did the last hymn of Whaka Piki Ora, she’d said the same thing to Mickey, her brother. She made Mickey promise her that he would look after all her kids... it’s a dying oath... Like Mac, he was a diver, he died on his job, so his gears went down with him. In Māoridom tā moko had meaning. If you were a fisherman, you would recognize the moko of fishermen. If he was a person of Tāne Mahuta, then fronds would go down with him. So it’s not new to put things down with them, but it’s just now we put Pākehā things with them.

Waretini Hoani 2011



Fig 145



Figs 146, 147: Carmen Rupe 2011

In my family, and for many Māori, there already exists a cultural practise where we will inter personal belongings without being compelled by final wishes, as revealed in my Uncle Waretini's interview statement:

Each to their own thing eh, just everyday things that they loved put in with them. It's not a cultural thing but certainly they may have asked for those things, so that's individual... The way where tangihanga was concerned, where the dead were concerned, a tūpāpaku and its belongings were treated the same as if they were still alive. So therefore the respect to that was that all their belongings went with them in the hole.

Hoani, W. private communication, June, 2011

At this juncture, it is pertinent to speak to the tradition of the ōhākī, or dying speech, which is a significant feature of the tangihanga process, for both Ngāti Pikiao and Ngāti Whare. This custom is particularly relevant in regards to matters of succession. Ōhākī can involve land and personal property, but they are also more than simple dispositions of property. As exemplified by Ngāti Tamateatutahi Kawiti whānau, ōhākī can also pertain to social arrangements involving children, as well as instructions regarding burial. In their 1997 Waitangi Tribunal Report, Tom Bennion and Judi Boyd discuss how ōhākī are recognised as verbal expressions of wishes and intensions made shortly before death. They occur in the presence of, or are made known to, near relatives, and they were seldom or never made in favour of a complete stranger. Importantly, upon death "... ōhākī were always held as binding, and to be acted on, without question" (1997, p 11). The ōhākī or dying speech is opportunity to impart final wishes. Furthermore, such is the inherent authority of this custom, that ōhākī can circumvent arguments, and avoid bad feelings developing amongst relatives or descendants.

Throughout the course of fieldwork interviews with participants whose stories contribute significantly to this thesis, one of the prevalent recurring themes was final wishes conveyed prior to death. These were generally private communications, wherein the living, or rather specific living people, were entrusted with a dying loved one's final personal wishes. The fulfilment of

those final wishes then became the recipient's responsibility in the knowledge of having made an oath to their dying kinsperson. At an initial glance, these were simple enough final wishes involving personal belongings such as eyewear, dental-wear, pyjamas, slippers, favourite outfits, as well as playing cards, Bingo cards and counters, in fact an impressive array of *other* items perhaps best described as *non-traditional funerary objects*. By simple final wishes, I'm referring to private requests that were fulfilled without complication on the part of those select people so entrusted to fulfil an oath made to the dying.



Fig 148

### 10.3 Of garments...

Burial garments were undoubtedly significant as participants revealed the personal and at times poignant relevance of the clothing which loved ones requested they wear in death. For example, in the case of my great-grandmother, according to one of her many granddaughters, our Kuia Te Pae had requested she be dressed exactly as she had been captured in a rare whānau portrait. So wearing her own simple handmade wrap and one of her pounamu hei tiki she was thus interred, fulfilling a final wish that to my mind befitted the fact that our kuia was an uncomplicated humble woman. It could be said that she chose to be thus interred in order to spare her whānau any further funerary expenses, which I suspect would have appealed to my kuia's sensibilities. I find the portrait regal in an unwitting and innocent way. It also reminds the whānau that there was a time when generic ready-to-wear garments were not the fashion of the day. So, understandably, that particular portrait is treasured within my whānau and hapū, and when I inherited it as part of the estate my mother left to me, I chose to place it alongside the portrait of my great-grandfather, Hohepa Te Wao, which resides on the rear portrait wall of our whare whakairo, Uruika. It made sense to me that husband and wife remain side by side, even unto death. I would have loved to have retained that portrait in my personal



Fig 149



keeping, but alas she belonged to all of us. In 1952 my great grandmother's simple wish regarding her burial garments was fulfilled without complication.

Similarly, and as I have touched on in the tangihanga portraits of chapter three, when her son Tutere, my koroua-dad, passed away in 2006, he had left very specific final wishes that he was to be dressed in simple black dress pants with a formal white shirt and black cardigan. Like my great-grandmother before, my grandfather was a humble and unpretentious person. He was always tidily clothed without doubt, but he had no need for high fashion garments, and his final wishes in this regard were of little surprise to me. However, what had surprised me was that he had chosen not to don his imposing Hāhi Rātana vestments. In so saying, he nonetheless left very specific final wishes in that regard. For many years, on many marae, I conveyed his small monogrammed suitcase which carried those robes and various official essentials, so I remember them well. Robes that comprised a starched white clerical collar, which nestled in a purple vest that lay beneath a full length cassock, over-covered with a three-quarter length billowing pleated white cotton tunic. My koroua-dad used to stash any number of things underneath the wide brimmed full length sleeves, including packets of lollies for the kids, his personal hymn book, or handkerchiefs and tissues for the newly married as well as recently grieving. The ensemble was then accentuated with a hood that dropped to the back, akin to academic regalia but which was blue on one side and red on the other. The vestments were finished by a silk sash that draped as a stole, the colour of which denoted one's ministerial rank in the Church. In my koroua-dad's case this was purple with the Church insignia hand-embroidered on both sides, and fine pink tassels at each end. He was after all an āpotoro Takiwā, and in charge of multiple parishes, and also as a registered minister he was mandated to act legally if so required.



Fig 150



Fig 151

He was invariably meticulous with his robes, and confident of what they represented. My koroua-dad walked with the mana of a proud indigenous person, an embodiment of chiefly mana imbued in few. He did not need to don his religious regalia in order to wield that mana, the two were distinct. However, wearing his vestments effectively magnified that mana through the sanction of Church and God, and I suspect he subsequently liked the idea that his natural-born mana combined with his ministerial role, culturally accommodated both Māori and non-Māori aspects.

He was also fully aware that for more than half a century the effect of those robes was mesmerising, even terrifying, for some. I say this because there were times in my childhood at Tapuaeharuru village when my koroua-dad would change out of his everyday clothes for whakamoemiti, and in full regalia he would sweepingly stride towards Uruika, with the bell ringing in readiness to deliver his latest sermon. As I would stand outside the wharenuī slowly ringing that cumbersome old bell, out of the corner of my eye I would glimpse whānau furtively scoot around the back of the wharekai, briefly escaping the marae gathering. Mum told me those were the people avoiding whakamoemiti because of the guilty weight of whatever transgression might reveal itself if they remained in the presence of a fully robed tohunga karakia. He was simultaneously a whānau rangatira and also their brother, uncle or koroua. It made me quietly chuckle, particularly as in later years my own siblings joined the few escapees who always returned when whakamoemiti was over.

So in accordance with his wishes, those robes and accoutrements were indeed retained above ground. He had made it clear that this was because they were to stay with the living, where he believed they served their purpose. So my mother ensured that his final wishes, without exception, were honoured. When in 2009 I received my mother's estate, it contained remnants of her father's estate, including that old battered monogrammed suitcase, and inside were his pressed and folded purple sash stoles carefully wrapped in plastic, along with other church memorabilia. When my mother

joined her father and grandmother in the final journey of death, we likewise ensured her own specific final wishes were abided by. In chapter six I proffer a narrative describing how and what Mum had specified were to be her burial garments. In this undertaking my siblings and I ensured everything was clean, freshly ironed, and that she was scrupulously prepared to meet her beloved kin.

Conversely, our kinsfolk's final wishes were clearly not restricted to formal wear, religious accoutrement, or tailored apparel. For example my Aunty Sharon, who had dressed four tūpāpaku, and my Aunty Ema, recalled likewise (as seen in this extract from their interview) one of the more poignant final wishes given them in this crucial undertaking.

**Aunty Sharon:** Our mother stipulated what she wanted to wear and my sister well...

**Aunty Ema:** she said she wanted to be buried in pyjamas and slippers...

**Aunty Sharon:** and that's what we put her in, cos to her it's just a long sleep so she wanted to be dressed like she was going to bed... Our mother wanted this particular suit and that's what she got...

So the array of options regarding burial garments would seem as diverse as the imagination permits, and it can be said that for Ngāti Tamateatutahi Kawiti at least, my people's final wishes act as directives when undertaking their tangihanga. The Māori concern regarding burial garments is predominant, and so therefore are final wishes in this respect. Furthermore, with such final wishes about specific burial garments, dying whānau also imparted wishes regarding other objects they wanted interred with them.

#### 10.4 Of non-traditional funerary objects...

As my Uncle Waretini alluded to, it was an easy enough task to inter my Uncle Mackie's diving gear after he passed away, a symbol of the passion he had for the water sport and the importance it played in his familial identity as a well-known diver. Correspondingly, as a lifelong ringawera for our marae, my



Fig 152

mother was known to have a clean pressed apron always folded and at the

ready; even in her sixties, when we wouldn't let her work in the kitchen anymore, she nonetheless had one in her bag. Therefore it made sense to us that a clean pressed apron was interred with her. I do not mean to sound trivial here, the apron was admittedly one of several items interred at her behest, all which were relevant to Mum's identity. She had



Fig 153

been religiously devout to both the Rātana faith in which she had been raised, and the Catholic faith, having attended Saint Josephs Māori Girls College in Napier. So her Rātana hymn books and simple though elegant gold cross were also interred. I have seen many dead, many times, and I can say that my mother looked resplendent in her casket, with her hands clasping her hymn book, appearing as though ready to lead our whānau choir in song once more. Another final wish Mum had insisted upon was having an overnight carry case which contained a change of undergarments, nightwear, a small bag of toiletries and a pair of slippers. In fact, the slippers she insisted upon are the main characters in a whānau story, and this I suspect is the reason she wanted them with her.



Figs 154, 155

In 2006, on the morning following my Bachelor's graduation in Hamilton, Mum had set about making breakfast for the whānau before everyone departed back to their own homes. Aunty Sharon and Aunty Ema were sitting at the breakfast table happily making small talk and buttering toast while Mum merrily fried bacon and sausages, creamed mushrooms, and poached eggs, as we younger ones emerged out of our post-celebratory slumbers. We were all ready to indulge in a hearty parakuihi and some last-minute connections before everyone again scattered to the four winds. Whānau went in and out of bedrooms, passing through the kitchen to pack up their cars, as we all kissed our mothers, bade each other 'mōrena', and reflected on the past 24 hours, laughing, talking, and enjoying a beautiful family-filled start to the day. Like so many Māori, we all led lives which kept us busy with our individual pursuits, and as a general rule we tended to collectivise en masse only when called upon, which was primarily for tangihanga. Happy

occasions of gatherings seem relatively rare. This is an often heard sorrow, voiced on marae throughout the motu by Māori of all generations, so on this occasion we were all revelling in the opportunity to be with each other for a reason other than death.

As we variously milled about contentedly it became apparent that our two aunts, keeping Mum company in the kitchen, had started talking furtively amongst themselves and were pointing at the doorstep. The three talked quite animatedly, with our aunts sounding quietly insistent, and my mother curiously refuting the point of contention. Then we heard our mother humorously declare defeat and call our older brother's name, in *that* tone. We all knew he'd done something wrong and took some pleasure in knowing he was about to get an ear-lashing in front of everyone. One must keep in mind that Mum was an immaculate dresser, meticulous with her wardrobe and accessories. As



Fig 156

Isaac stood outside leaning against the car, Mum stood on the doorstep staring down at the culprit objects, and asked him if he could see whether anything was wrong with her slippers. These were brand new and earlier in the week Mum had sent Isaac to the Warehouse to buy them, because she was too busy with her Hamilton trip preparations to go herself. But our older brother could discern nothing wrong whatsoever with them, and in all honesty neither could any of us, being the younger generation congregating outside watching this scenario unfold. As slippers go they looked perfectly functional, albeit bright pink with white woollen cuffs. Then from the kitchen table looking out towards us, our Aunty Sharon said, quite matter-of-factly, "Isaac ,you got Mum two left feet Nephew...". Amidst a simultaneous chorus of stunned realizations and guffaws, Isaac just as matter-of-factly retorted (more to himself than any of us) "Oh well there'll be two right feet at the Warehouse waiting when I go back then...", and Mum laughingly returned to her cooking, shaking her head in resignation at her first-born's carefree response. It was such a rare, precious, entertaining and unexpected moment for the whānau that several of us photographed them as evidence that our

meticulous immaculately dressed mother had worn those slippers, and had let them be seen in public, before the truth of the matter was realised.

## 10.5 Of taonga tuku iho...

At this juncture it is appropriate to acknowledge that by the economic estimations of Pākehā, my families, my tribes, were poor. We utilised that which was at hand and drew on nature's bounty as a means of supplementing lives that were financially constrained, but were nonetheless filled with abundant love, joy and peace. Still, my whānau happened to have been blessed with the possession and custodianship of various family artefacts, including several taonga tuku iho such as unique korowai, pounamu, hei tiki, mere, patu, taiaha. My Uncle Waretini pointed out in one of his interviews "We had a lot of artefacts you know... there was different person within each family as the kaitiaki, the mere pounamu is held by Auntie Hilda... each brought down to tangihanga what they brought." (personal communication, June, 2011). Many of these taonga, such as our pounamu, have been passed down through the ages and by way of various familial lineages, each piece extolling a distinct whakapapa. Generally our custodianship of these taonga is temporary, as they are conveyed from one generation to the next. This was the case of the taonga pounamu my cousin Perata spoke of:

We have two greenstones. One my daughter wears, it belongs to my great-great-grandmother... this taonga is seven generations old I think, this tiki. And the one I wear, it's gone from my nanny Bella to me, and she's a grandmother, I think my greenstone might be three generations... and we've been told, and I've told my daughter, if there is no namesake to pass it on to it gets buried with her, and same as mine... and I broke this thing three times. That gold band was cos I broke it.

Bristowe, B.P. private communication, April, 2010



Fig 157

As Perata alluded to, there are taonga tuku iho which engender generationally-conveyed inherent final wishes, reaffirming the Māori principle

of guardianship communicated from kaitiaki to kaitiaki. Although this is not always the case, as with the hei tiki pounamu I wear. When it was conveyed to me at my Bachelor's graduation my mother simply imparted its whakapapa and asked that it be worn and then passed on with love, absent of any specific final wishes. In so saying, the Māori affinity and empathy with pounamu is indisputable, so these taonga tuku iho will often be spoken of in our loved one's final wishes. Even for those Māori who may have lived overseas for decades, distanced from whānau, iwi, marae and the home fires - apart though not separate - nevertheless they variously maintained a sense of belonging, home.



Fig 158

In December 2011 I watched stilted Trans-Tasman news coverage with curiosity, as vague and non-committal reporters largely sensationalized a life that had spanned three quarters of a century, and which had framed an epoch of indelible and socially defining events in NZ history. Legendary Māori transgender icon Carmen Rupe had died at her home in Sydney at the age of 75. I never knew her personally, but in a way all of Aotearoa knew her. Although we had met, she had never touched my life directly, yet without her life's many and at times controversial accomplishments my life would not have been the same. Before departing our shores for Australia, Carmen, as an antidiscrimination activist, had been pivotal in influencing our nation to address evident discrimination of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities alike (Martin, Paul. 1988). She was never one to shy from controversy, in fact embracing it successfully as indicated when in 1977 she ran for Mayor of Wellington, with the support of NZ business man and former politician Sir Bob Jones. So when word was received in Aotearoa that she had died, and her tūpāpaku would remain in Sydney, it was a sad day.



On the inside page of Carmen's Funeral Service Programme was revealed a copy of her hand-written personal message that had been found in one of

her coats, a note declaring her final wishes. Although many decades ago NZ had lost this icon, she had never lost her indigenous connectedness. That note shows that she was as much concerned with aesthetic aspects of death as she was with her connectivity back to Aotearoa and whānau. By way of taonga Māori, specifically her “mothers greenstone necklace with Black corD”, she acknowledged her loyalty to her iwi of origin in Taumaranui, Aotearoa, even unto death. As an iconic and legendary transgender artist who lived, travelled, and performed regularly between NZ and Australia, her wardrobe was impressive, with copious jewellery pieces and accessories to match. Yet her final wish was to wear her mother’s simple greenstone. It is clear that her personal choice in this matter was poignantly significant, and indisputably Māori.



Our taonga tuku iho are distinct from those mentioned earlier, more novel personal items and non-traditional funerary objects. This rubric additionally allows for more traditional, albeit modern, western funerary jewellery and accessories. In the undertaking of these and similar final wishes, matters seem relatively straight forward. Māori are undoubtedly a sentimental people, prone to bouts of emotional attachment. For example, my mother had insisted on wearing her Rātana Church ear-rings, pendant and ring, each emblazoned with the Church insignia.

**Aunty Sharon:** As for jewellery, touchy subject, touchy subject! Well, with our mother we took her jewellery off her, for our mother, and the same for our sister, her greenstone was taken off and another was put on. For our father, he wasn't a jewellery person...

**Aunty Em:** All I know is that he went down with his reading glasses. But there are so many things that go on during those three days that you forget eh...

**Aunty Sharon:** Like with Mum, we forgot to put her teeth in. So we had to go back after her funeral and bury them!

private communication, April, 2011

Thus, whilst we the living, and dying alike, may seem to let go of some things relatively easily, others we may choose to hold on to with passion. Which brings me to the matter of final wishes not so easily undertaken.



When I was a young teenager, one of my koroua-dad's two constant canine companions, our three-legged golden spaniel-cross named Maea fell ill. All the moko were getting older and visiting less, so his dogs were his best friends in residence, always ready with their natural attention and unconditional love. But Maea was aged, and had increasing ailments that meant he physically deteriorated before our eyes. It was a crushing realisation that Maea was dying, particularly when our grandfather had little choice but to put him to sleep.



Fig 159



Fig 160

Then in time his canine companion Janine, affected by grief from Maea's absence, also died. Janine had originally been my older sister Dawn's dog, but had become Maea's fast and lifelong companion, a natural process given that they were brother and sister. The two were inseparable, at home or at our marae. So where you saw Maea hobbling along, you would see Janine patiently keeping stride beside him. Our childhood family pets were well known throughout the various marae around Lake Rotoiti, both were loved by children and parents alike.

When they died respectively, my koroua-dad had them at home for a couple of nights, in small simple caskets surrounded by flowers in the lounge, exemplifying the semblance of a tangi at home in Uruika. Thereafter he was open about having buried them on Tapuaeharuru. Unfortunately, later his private decision to do so was publicly opposed by some disgruntled members of the hapū, and our marae Trust gently requested that he remove them, which he did. However, it was one of his final wishes that Maea, Janine and he would be reunited when his own time came to join them in death. Consequently, and with quiet pleasure, he disclosed privately that what he chose not to inform the Trust was how he had exhumed them from the marae and surreptitiously shifted them, to the private abode of our whānau urupa. In this way his final wish would be realised, albeit by his own hands.

This juxtaposition of death, the human experience, and our connectedness to pets, is little-often discussed in general public forums, let's face it you don't read these stories too often. Nonetheless, such intimate narratives certainly arose in participants' transcripts and this was another theme where everyone seemed to have a story. Another participant, Rohataitimu, speaks to the matter of a dying loved one's final wishes, and a beloved family pet.

We had an aunty who had a kuri who was old and wouldn't have settled with anyone. So her children went and got the dog put down, and the night of the poroporoaki, early in the morning after everyone was asleep, they sneaked in with the dog that had been put down, uncovered aunty, and put the dog in the coffin at her feet. The dog would've just pined away and died anyway so they thought, oh well, we're gonna put her dog in with her, cos they loved each other eh, and so you know we've had a doggy put in... I suppose while you're all asleep you don't know what's being tucked into the coffin.

private communication, June, 2010

The Māori affection for, and compatibility with dogs goes back through the ages to our oceanic sea-voyaging affinity with the kuri who travelled alongside our eponymous ancestors. So it strikes me as unsurprising that those Māori with pets would, in death choose to maintain intimate companionships established in life. It is, I think, akin to final wishes wherein people choose to be interred at the same burial place as their parents, spouses, or children, maintaining connection even unto death.

## **10.7 Of tamariki...**

This brings me to that most sacred and treasured taonga of Māori, our tamariki, our uri, thus it is appropriate to address the critical matter of poipoia, or whāngai, in regards to the final wishes of our loved ones. In the best of circumstances our children and their siblings are raised by biological parents, within the collective of the hapū and iwi. However, there are numerous reasons why this best of circumstances scenario is not always the case. For example, there are many accounts and stories of our tamariki being raised by whanaunga and others following the loss of parents, which is an

issue I speak to in other areas of this thesis. Suffice at this juncture to say there are times and circumstances where our children are not raised by biological parents, or alongside biological siblings. However, this is not to say that they will not have parents or siblings, and they will nonetheless have a place within a whānau, hapū and iwi.

In the tangihanga portrait about my great grandmother, I stated that the close-knit families were gathered in their papakāinga awaiting confirmation of a death that had been publicly anticipated. The reason her passing had been anticipated was twofold. Firstly, the widespread, prolific and tragic impact of TB and influenza was such that it was not uncommon in that era for hapū to gather at local marae and hui about how to manage and cope with increasing tangihanga. Each death drew on already constrained economic funds at the same time as incrementally diminishing the resource of the indigenous collective. Subsequently, the wider familial groups of Ngāti Tamateatutahi Kawiti and Pikiāo tried to keep abreast of the state of health of various likely vulnerable individuals within the different whānau, particularly our elderly. Secondly, the immediate whānau had conducted private hui at Uruika addressing my great grandmother's fears for the future of the two youngest children in her care, the mokopuna she had been raising. The eldest was my mother, who as I've discussed was the sole surviving mokopuna from Te Pae's older son Ben's first marriage. The other was my Uncle Sooky, the first born son of Te Pae's eldest daughter, Irihapeti. However, my Kuia Te Pae was staunchly determined that whilst various whānau were prepared to take either child, she wanted them kept together as brother and sister. So she had made the time to hui. Eventually she informed them that upon her passing, her younger son Tutere would poipoia both children as his own and fulfil an oath not to separate them. My koroua-dad was only 22, with his whole life ahead of him, when he chose to fulfil his mother's final wish on the matter. This was how he became an instant father of two young and traumatized children aged 11 and 9.

This is, I believe, also why my great grandmother bequeathed my korouadad several significant land holdings, assets and taonga, although all of her children still inherited other land interests and assets. When my Kuia Te Pae died, all of her children were alive, but sadly, within a decade TB would strike down her daughter, my kuia Bella who passed away at the young age of 36. An awhina in the Rātana Church, she followed in her mother's stead and left a final wish with her older brother Tutere (who they affectionately referred to as Mickey) about the welfare of her twelve children. In the following testament extracted from an interview, my Uncle Waretini recalls how he and his eleven siblings had come to be poipoia.

Their wishes, their stipulations, are like a Will. Before Mihikore [Te Pae] died, she said one thing to Mickey [Tutere] "Please look after all my kids" and then when our mother [Bella] died, when they did the last hymn of Whaka Piki Ora, she'd said the same thing to Mickey, her brother. She made Mickey promise her that he would look after all her kids... it's a dying oath...

Hoani, W. private communication, June, 2011

Sadly, no one individual could take all twelve children. Nonetheless, they were kept within the bounds of their parent's bloodlines and grew up aware of their proud origins. They each knew that their mother had entrusted her older brother Tutere with a dying oath that meant he, in fulfilling her final wish, would continually oversee their survival and welfare. Some of the elder children were poipoia to their father's side of the whānau at Waimana, whilst the younger children were poipoia within their mother's descent line. My koro Cammy and nanny Maria raised the three youngest children as their own, at Lake Rotoiti, whilst my grandfather took my Uncle Tautini and Uncle Waretini as his sons. Although raised variously amongst different whānau, all twelve remained simultaneously in touch with each other and connected.

This said it is one matter to raise children as your own in circumstances where their biological parents are still living, as is commonly the case with whāngai. It is a different matter to receive final wishes from a loved one, requesting that following their death you take children which they have raised as their own, to be raised as your own. I believe this is why my

whānau preferred the word poipoia, as a distinct term possibly denoting a correlation with the Pākehā concept of adoption, as opposed to fostering. I have an aged red hard-cover Swanson Ledger book, gifted to me by my Uncle Waretini and which he said had been his father's, Koroua Petera Hoani. In it, on one of the back pages, are the Māori and Pākehā names of Koro Petera and Kuia Bella's twelve children, alongside their birthdates. Each name has been recorded in beautiful free-flowing handwriting which when I was a child being taught to write, we called double handwriting. Underneath this list are written the words 'Poipoia – Adoption'.

Date of Birth	
Whakana, Harold	Apr 26 <sup>th</sup> 1942
Karaitahi, Rachel	Jul 9 1946
Hauiti, John	June 5 1947
Emma Te Whakawaka	June 16 1948
Mehaka, Kae	Sept 5 1949
Mata, William	Apr 29 1950
Karaitimona, Veronica	Mar. 1951
Tautini, Charles	June 2 <sup>nd</sup> 1954
Koraiti, Ralph	June 19 6 55
Takaiti, Simon	Sept 7 <sup>th</sup> 57
Whakawaka, Simon	" 19 <sup>th</sup>
Tawangi, Roger	Nov - 61
Poipoia - Adoption	

Fig 161

My grandfather watched over his sister's twelve children for more than four decades, just as she had asked, until his passing in 2006. Such an undertaking is not, by any stretch of the imagination, a simple final wish to be either made, or dying oath fulfilled. I used to wonder sometimes why he continuously kept abreast of what was happening with each of them, and watched as he would repeatedly get involved in their lives. I did not learn of his sister's final wishes until recent years. At times my koroua-dad could be a stalwart disciplinarian, but then that was how he and his siblings had been raised, sternly, lovingly, respectfully. He reflected as much in a personal communication, writing,

As a strict disciplinarian, having been raised under very firm house rules whereby I was taught to be seen only and not heard, that has been the pattern of my own family's upbringing... Like other members of [the] family, I have always been treated with the greatest respect. A lesson they [the whānau] have learnt to practice upon their elders.

Hohepa, M. personal communication, 1994

There were times I think when my mother was irked by the vigilant attention paid to her cousins and two younger brothers by her precious matua poipoia, although in later life she became particularly protective of them all. My grandfather took his responsibilities to heart and was proudly committed to the whānau. That is not to say that there weren't challenges in the final wishes he fulfilled through his life, and when he died in 2006, as we fulfilled

his own final wishes for his tangihanga, other complex challenges arose for the whānau and hapū.

## 10.8 Challenges...

As the whānau kaitiaki, my koroua-dad was custodian of rare heirlooms which bore familial, historic and genealogic significance. One in particular is a large hei tiki pounamu originally owned by my Kuia Te Pae. My great grandmother had several taonga pounamu, including the one she asked to be interred wearing, and others which she gifted. However, this pounamu of my kuia's which I am referring to was a large, rare, older exemplar of taonga Māori. Previously I showed an image of the large hei tiki pounamu which I wear today. But this one of my kuia's was easily more than twice the size of mine, with a beautiful sheen to it that made it appear oiled. The impression it made was such that I would watch whoever was privileged to wear it as they would have to deal with people approaching to reach out and touch the tiki. This was a taonga which from 1952 adorned numerous tūpāpaku of my whānau during their tangihanga. Before my mother's father had died he had stipulated that his mother's taonga should be left to the whānau with love. He believed that she would not have wanted it causing disharmony in the whānau. So he told my mother, who inherited his estate, that his mother's taonga pounamu was not to be fought over. If she thought that might happen, then she was to leave final instructions that it be interred with her and returned to his mother in death. When Mum was dying she believed it would indeed be fought over following her passing, so she left final wishes that it was to be discreetly placed beneath her tūpāpaku. The controversy that ensued was sad. Before we interred Mum at our urupa, various people's expectations of that tiki gave rise to a hui of our Pikiao Tamateatutahi Kawiti hapū, unlike any I had ever witnessed. My mother had died and the arguments began immediately, then in the middle of my mother's tangi the tiki was removed from her casket. Today it remains above ground, gratefully in the custody of the head of our whānau, my Uncle



Fig 162

Stormy, although it is still being fought over by various whānau who believe it should be in their custody.

That treasured hei tiki was not the only taonga tuku iho which has come into dispute. In this image from my 2006 graduation, my mother and I wear whānau korowai from different time periods. Both are muka with feathers, although the korowai I am wearing is more modern and exemplifies the contemporary incorporation of wool. As children and during family and tribal gatherings at Uruika we, certainly I, would sneak beneath the korowai in the wharenuī and nap while the big people did all their big talking. Being the grandson and son of guardians, I took much for granted, and my doctoral chief supervisor has informed me that this was not common, for a whānau to possess several cloaks, and multiple other artefacts. It was equally uncommon to have unfettered access as I did in childhood, when I used to listen to my aunts, uncles, and parents jokingly make statements to the effect that 'If you got the chance, then don't wait till you're dead and they're solemnly draped over your body for the three nights. What's the point if you're already pushing up daisies!'. I discuss in chapter seven how our korowai are most often seen in public, draped over the caskets of our tūpāpaku, as is customary for my people. We had retained two particular whānau korowai made of muka and feathers that had been woven by my great grandmother's hands and that were treasured in the whānau. One can be seen draped over my mother's shoulders in the previous image, it was smaller, suited to a shorter person or woman. The second one was also made entirely of muka but considerably larger, hand-woven but with more feathers and intricate tāniko work. Each had been used during many of our tangihanga as well as during other formal occasions including graduations and weddings.



Fig 163

Although they were well cared for and protected, they had for some time been deteriorating. My mother used to noticeably flinch if another feather fell loose whenever they would be brought out from careful storage. She and my

grandfather were all too aware that we did not at that time have a living weaver in the whānau who could repair or replace our korowai. My Auntie Wiki had learnt to weave, as my cousin Perata stated in her interview “Koro Mickey wanted her to do a kākahu, and she was getting her feathers together to do one but she never got to do it. But I still got the feathers she was collecting to make it. It was in her mind to make us a whānau one...”. Perata herself passed away during this research, still so very young. So my koroua-dad had been seeking a weaver in the whānau, but alas to no avail. By 2006 the larger aged korowai was badly frayed and in disrepair. My koroua-dad believed that in the absence of a whānau weaver, this warranted its timely return to his mother, and Papatūānuku, in this case, shrouding his own tūpāpaku. As kaitiaki, this was his prerogative, and one of his final wishes. My mother inherited her father’s estate, and the responsibility of fulfilling her father’s wishes. That treasured korowai was wrapped around his lower torso as he lay in his casket. Much to the disappointment of whānau and whanaunga, whose preference would have been to retain the korowai above ground, my grandfather’s final wishes were carried out without much dispute. Two years later, when my mother died, we repeated this process with the last remaining smaller korowai. I am grateful we at least captured an image of her wearing it. That was a challenging final wish to fulfil on the basis that the whānau knew of our actions, and had already seen to the removal of my great grandmother’s taonga pounamu. Still, my older brother and I had wrapped this korowai around Mum’s lower torso, and I am confident that is where it remains.

These few exemplars of our people’s final wishes and challenges raise the question of how Māori deal with complex and potentially controversial situations. What I can assert from these experiences, and in doing this research, is that it is during tangihanga that our people can most be seen to engage in exigent discussions. It is these unique culturally confined circumstances where we necessarily dialogue, negotiate, and perhaps compromise, ultimately bringing into play decision-making processes and resolutions: little understood or even realised by our non-Māori counterparts.



In my experience, whilst I believe our people often avoid challenges and prefer a simple life, I concede that we are by no means an uncomplicated people. I've found that, as an indigenous population, our allegedly simple lives can be superbly complex at times, and this is reflected in the challenging nature of some final wishes.

On a final note in this chapter, I have already mentioned in this work that my mother had left her estate to me. Upon her passing, I inherited her chattels and belongings entirely. My siblings had been forewarned and so were prepared. They knew my mother's final wish was "If you get to the point that you are able to do a PhD son, I know it will be hard, but I want you to do this for me, for our whānau and our hapū. Return to my



Fig 164

people a taonga deserving of your whakapapa". These were the words imprinted on our hearts, and printed on the invitations to my Master's graduation in October 2009, several months after her passing. I initially embarked on this thesis because my mother had made that final wish. She had realised the magnitude of the potential challenges involved, and she had left me her estate, as a means to alleviate the considerable responsibility of the oath I made her. I had assured her that if it were possible, then I would do so. I am trusting that her final wish has, herein, been fulfilled.

In closing at this juncture, I consider death as unadorned. It is nature unspoiled, a life experience unparalleled. I marvel that death is humanity's final unconquered frontier, an imagined landscape paradoxically uncharted, yet arrived at by all.

# CHAPTER 11

## CONCLUSIONS

This study of tangihanga has allowed me to deliberate on, and discuss, numerous and diverse aspects of our former and current funerary traditions. From the outset there were various lines of query posited, several were stated on the thesis abstract, all which were herein variously considered and addressed. Certainly the many mortuary and funerary processes that attend our indigenous experience of death involves an array of specific, socially sanctioned rituals, customs, beliefs, worldviews, and practices.

For Māori, particularly of my generation and upbringing, the marae is indubitably intertwined with our lived experiences and with our belonging to the land. We are frequently at our marae, visiting our urupa, and on our whenua, attending various cultural occasions. Sadly, our tangihanga are the most common and centralizing of them all. With every death and tangihanga we attend, life, at times, seems poignantly framed by these events.

This brings us to the concluding section of this thesis, succinctly considering key critical aspects, before closing with ideas about potential new practices. In truth, the work has been a dual-edged challenge of participating whilst observing. Of being subjective sometimes while objective at other times, and when required, being emotionally present, yet intellectually detached. Nonetheless, it has been a grave challenge worth the undertaking.

## 11.1 When all is said and done... mā te wā ne.

In the Māori world, tangihanga rituals for the dead reveal and expound many stories for the living. They are stories that tell of aspects of the life-story of the deceased, at the same time as interconnecting with the numerous life-stories of others. During our tangihanga my people deliberately exchange both information and knowledge. In the wharenuī, on the mahau, and even quietly as iwi move across the marae. We exchange stories and narratives while in the dining room as we eat, in the kitchen as we work, in the carpark areas as we wait, and even in the shower blocks while we wash. As such, our individual stories, knowledge, as well as familial narratives, and intersecting collective histories, are shared, and where applicable, revised throughout. Perhaps this is to be expected, in a people long-skilled in oratory of all forms. I wrote earlier that like the copious tears which fall for our dead, so too do words spill forth of their life story, as those who wish to reflect publicly in the safe indigenous precincts of our marae. Our stories are significant; particularly as ours is an era of intercultural engagement. The contemporary world is a time and space wherein the cacophony of modern distractions often juxtaposes age-old customs and traditions. In NZs present cross-cultural cacophony however, it is our cultural traditions, customs, and practices, which frame, emphasise, and continually inform, Māori identity.

So, twenty-first century Māori continue to sustain and practice many age-old traditions, at the same time as being flexible and adapting with changing times. Our former, pre-colonial, subsistence-living days are far-distant memories. However, those migratory tendencies which first brought us to these shores, and saw us traverse the length and breadth of our islands, remain within us, as we continue to mobilise, migrate and collectivise when required. Some of my Tamateatutahi Kawiti elders would say that those age-old migratory tendencies reinforce the Māori traits of adaptability, flexibility, and collectivism. Thus, today we are a contemporary, western-styled, co-governing, pan-tribal people, whilst at the same time remaining tribally, indigenously distinct. If experiencing death is the ultimate universal of the

human condition, then we the Māori have developed a heightened awareness, and preparedness, for the life processes of death. Those processes see us compassionately make allowances for the grieving process, as we prioritise this final concluding celebration of, and reflexion on, the life of our deceased.

During our tangihanga we deal with numerous logistics, as well as complex and potentially controversial situations. This can be seen at that most crucial temporal tangihanga juncture of *tono*. Therein unfolds exigent discussions, negotiations, compromises, and decision-making processes little often discussed, or even revealed, in the presence of non-Māori. Regarding the bodies of our deceased, we maintain constant vigilance against the potentially harmful actions of strangers, and equally questionable behaviour by non-strangers. So we prioritise taking care of our deceased, and the collective.

To my mind, informing this entire thesis is the human propensity for care-giving, as we cater to the final wishes as well as needs of another. Whether living or otherwise, that human propensity has, with Māori, become socio-culturally emphasised by way of our distinct, unique funerary and mortuary practices. This suggests that some of our social behaviours are reminiscent of long-lived pre-contact histories, having formerly, and for centuries, been at the outset a ranked and utilitarian society. Regardless of being *iwi*-centric in modern times, Māori have always functioned in the interests of the collective, which is evident in our communal nature and social conduct during tangihanga at *marae*.

From the outset of tangihanga, our dead are dressed, and addressed, as if still living, all the while remaining the primary focus. In the process of dressing our *tūpāpaku*, aesthetic preferences are preceded by a prior measure of real-life, lived, emotive, spiritual and cultural connectedness. This can be seen in those discussions regarding the diverse choices of clothing, accessories, *taonga*, objects, and other articles observable in the immediate

surround of tūpāpaku. These items are not haphazardly selected, neither are they neutral or generic, nor even displayed randomly. Rather, the materials, objects and taonga observable tend to be selected for personal reasons. They are displayed - positioned - with care and even caution, on marae that are culturally defined precincts where everything, and everyone, has a place and purpose.

Logistically, our marae are treasured, and utilised, as highly organised centralising environments. Like silent tribal sentinels, our marae are ready-in-waiting, to be activated by collective events such as tangihanga. At those times, increasing numbers of workers will arrive, while elders prepare, for tūpāpaku being readied to be returned home for the final and public process of tangi. Any number of people may come, Māori and non-Māori alike, with little forewarning, over what is generally a two or three night period. This is the earlier tribal collective transformed, and in modernity it can be an impressive mobilisation to witness. Tangihanga mobilise whānau and whanaunga from combinations of hapū and iwi, many of whom may well travel from throughout the motu, and the world, to unite upon marae readied with sleeping, washing, and eating facilities. This is the way of my people, at times of death, openly giving their own skills and time, exchanging valued knowledge, and ultimately sharing the incumbent burden of grief.

It is true to say that we are a generous, giving, hardworking people with a seemingly ongoing sense of responsibility when it comes to the final wishes of our deceased. For many of my people it is as though we will be answerable in death, for the fulfilment of wishes received in life, albeit undertaken in the absence of the one who imparted those wishes. If Māori do not treat death as an end of life process, but rather as a collective metamorphosis, then death is but another of life's fantastic journeys, to be celebrated, and thus we, the Māori, live death.

I have long posited the notion that my people have developed a heightened awareness, and subsequent preparedness, in matters regarding death. To

my thinking, it is our collective, culturally-defined, empathy. Therefore, and unlike many of our western counterparts, when it comes to the deaths of our people, we can be seen to make allowances for each other. In so doing, we are able to fulfil the ongoing living interests of the dead and living alike. This notion, in turn, makes me wonder whether such occurrences arise as frequently amongst, and for, non-Māori, or whether our contemporary *others* are simply less sentimentally motivated than their indigenous *others*.

The extent of that compassion has also struck me when we, the living, are farewelling our deceased. Many Māori families, such as mine, seemingly treat the dead as if they were simply going on an extended holiday. During the research for this thesis my sister Dawn reminded me that she had slipped a fully equipped toiletry bag into mum's casket, along with a change of clothing, her 'personals', and those two left slippers. In this aspect, it would be true to say that Māori often believe that they will see their tūpuna and beloved dead again, somehow, somewhere. Tangihanga is the final farewell, with countless interpretations and perceptions of what lays ahead, when we all ultimately make the journey ourselves. Also reflecting the notion that we are a sentimental people, is the fact that taonga tangihanga are an entrenched and indelible social feature of our funerary landscape. Our taonga, those treasured objects and artefacts involved in our funerary processes, are repositories of the histories of whānau, hapū and iwi. As taonga, they embody, and compel, spatial and temporal connectivity, manifesting whakapapa, and thereby engaging the past within the present. This is evidence that there is as much to be treasured in our taonga, as there is to be treasured in the accompanying stories, the precious narratives, which speak to our lived memories of shared reality, whakapapa, mana, and aroha.

Māori also tend to have few, if any, conflicts when combining features of traditional tangihanga, such as taonga like korowai, and kākahu, with Pākehā aspects, such as modern everyday-clothing and jewellery. Yet, and ironically, more Māori are returning to earlier traditions and practices, such as burial in hand-woven flax whāriki. With as much in mind, the often-times challenging

role of kaitiakitanga, or guardianship, cannot be overlooked or underestimated, as the crucial significant tribal position which it truly is. Those who undertake the role are all too rarely acknowledged, as cultural custodians who are able to distinguish both traditional and modern notions of ownership. We are but temporary custodians, guardians who ensure, as best possible, that taonga continue being circulated, whether amongst the living, in the realms of the dead, or between each.

Within the body of this death study, the anthropological *other* and *others* remain in constant comparison. Perhaps this reflects the increasing intercultural descent lines of Māori, who nowadays routinely negotiate cultural eclecticism, the extent of which was previously unknown by my ancestors. That is to say, with ongoing cross-cultural intermarriages, and uri, our marae, and tangihanga, are increasingly involving progeny who are more than Māori. Therefore, many contemporary wishes concern taonga, jewellery, as well as any number and diversity of non-traditional funerary items. The newest tribal members are also introducing different food products, recipes, and *other* practices. They are not the only heralds of change, as our young people bring fresh ideas, new products, and innovations, that help them in fulfilling their cultural duties of attending and contributing at tangihanga.

On the basis of what has happened in the preceding century, one must consider what will come of Māori, our marae, and traditional tangihanga practices in the next 100 years. For example, as technology advances, so Māori continue to take that which is of use, and discard all else. It is not uncommon at marae to see mobile phones, laptops, and any other number of electronic devices in use, or plugged in to power sockets for recharging. The precious portraits and images well-admired, within wharenuī and wharekai alike, continue to encroach on limited wall space. So ever-pragmatic, Māori debate the utility of digital picture frames that can condense a number of images into a singular, self-transitioning, slide-show. I have mentioned the CataCombo sound system, and alluded to cameras,

television crews and the World Wide Web already being seen on marae throughout the motu. Social network sites increasingly harvest and disseminate public announcements of our tangihanga, and other funerary details. That is new and evolving, accommodating far-distant needs and the curiosities of physically absent Māori, including a growing number of transnationals on foreign shores. I would like to believe that, just as we have proven in the past century, we the Māori will be capable of transitioning into the next century without losing critical aspects of our traditions and practices. In so saying, if the recently introduced digital picture frames become a new feature on marae, and at tangi, then logic dictates we must posit the matter of *where to from here*.

Amongst TRP colleagues, as well as koroua and kuia, we have hypothesised how, in the not too distant future, we may well witness push-of-a-button electronically recorded karanga, or the digital ready-at-a-moments-notice *generic* whaikōrero. Perhaps this may come across as abhorrent and unbelievable to the sensibilities of the older generations, as would have been the case with my koroua-dad and parents. However, the future is held in custody for the uri, and it is they who hold the key to tomorrow's pathways. So, one day, perhaps, Maori may have to consider male kaikaranga upon the mahau, or the female voice formally speaking from our pae, as gender specific roles continue to be debated amongst my people. Admittedly it is a challenge for me, and many Māori, to consider such possibilities, but consider we must, even if only in the interests of our uri.

I am grateful that this work has been supported by many other voices. The narratives, sentiments, and thoughts shared with me, and discussed herein, verify that we must be open-minded - even to change - at numerous levels. I would like to believe that we the Māori continue to embrace change. We are continually learning, and we are not alone on this journey of discovery about death, in life. From the outset of this work I stated that as Māori and Pākehā of Aotearoa NZ, there is much we have yet to learn from each other, and still much more we might share with our *other* global contemporaries.



Lastly, upon reflection on the matter of select materials, objects and taonga or artefacts which feature in, or around, the immediate surround of tūpāpaku, I personally consider death as unadorned. It is nature unspoiled, a life experience unparalleled. So I marvel that death is humanity's final unconquered frontier, an imagined landscape, paradoxically uncharted, yet arrived at by all.

**Haere atu ra koutou  
hei whetu ki te rangi,  
Tiaho mai nei  
Mo ake tonu atu**

**Farewell to you;  
become stars in the heaven,  
Shimmering and immortal  
shining forever**

**Appendix 1: Anthropological Terminology**

In the following, terminological descriptors have been adapted using the Glossary contained in Peoples and Bailey (2006), and the Oxford English Dictionary.

acculturation	the cultural changes that occur whenever members of two cultural traditions come into contact
affine	'in-laws' - people related by marriage
anthropology	the academic discipline that studies all of humanity from a broad perspective
assimilation	the merging of the members of one ethnic group into another, with the consequent abandonment of the former group's identity
bilateral kinship	a kinship term wherein individuals trace kinship relationships equally through both parents
biological determinism	the idea that biologically (genetically) inherited differences between populations are important influences on cultural differences between them
cognatic descent	descent classification wherein relationships may be traced through both females and males
comparative methods	testing hypotheses by systematically comparing elements from many cultures
consanguine	'blood' relatives – people related by birth
descent group	a group whose members believe themselves to be descended from a common ancestor
egalitarian	a society that emphasise the equality of all peoples, particularly in regards to economic and political aspects (Tom Ryan, personal communication, 2014)
enculturation	(socialisation) the transmission (by means of social learning) of cultural knowledge to the next generation
eponymous	giving one's name to a tribe, place, people
ethnic group	a named social group based on perceptions of shared ancestry, cultural traditions, and common history that culturally distinguish that group from other groups
ethnocentrism	the attitude or opinion that the morals values and customs of one's own culture are superior to those of other peoples
ethnography	a written description of the way of life of a human population
ethnohistoric research	the study of past cultures using written accounts and other documents
ethnology	the study of human cultures from a comparative perspective
fieldwork	ethnographic research that involves observing and interviewing the members of a culture
genealogic(al)	the study or tracing lines of family descent
indigenous peoples	culturally distinct peoples who have occupied a region longer than people who have colonized or immigrated to the region
indubitable	that which cannot be doubted

inimitable	that which defies imitation
interviewing	collecting cultural data by systematic questioning; may be structured (using questionnaires) or unstructured (open-ended)
holistic/holism	the assumption that any aspect of a culture is integrated with all other aspects, so that no dimension of culture can be understood in isolation
kindred	all the bilateral relatives of an individual
lineage	a unilineal descent group larger than an extended family whose members can actually trace how they are related
matrilineal descent	form of descent in which individuals trace their primary kinship relationships through their mothers
myths	stories that recount the deeds of supernatural powers and cultural heroes in the past
participant observation	the main technique used in conducting ethnographic fieldwork, involving living among a people, and participating in their daily activities
patterns of behaviour	within a single culture, the behaviour that most people perform when they are in certain culturally defined situations
ranked society	a society that has a limited number of social positions that grant authority; groups are ranked relative to one another
reciprocity	the transfer of goods between two or more individuals or groups
rite of passage	a public ceremony or ritual recognising and making a transition from one group or status to another
ritual	organised, stereotyped, symbolic behaviours intended to influence supernatural powers
rubric	an established mode of procedure, a category, a class
society	a territorially distinct and largely self-perpetuating group whose members have a sense of collective identity and who share a common language and culture
stratified society	a society with marked and largely or partly heritable differences in access to wealth, power, and prestige; inequality is based mainly on unequal access to productive and valued resources
symbols	objects, behaviours, sound combinations, and other phenomena whose culturally defined meanings have no necessary relationship to their inherent physical qualities
transnationals	members of an ethnic community living outside their country of origin
tribe	an autonomous political unit encompassing a number of distinct, geographically dispersed communities that are held together by sodalities
unilineal	descent through one line (male or female but not both), including patrilineal and matrilineal descent
worldview	the way people interpret reality and events, including how they see themselves relating to the world around them

## Appendix 2: Principal Oral Sources

Bristowe, Bella Perata (interviewed in April 2011 by Vincent Malcolm-Buchanan, in Rotorua, NZ) digital audio recording.

Bhana, Vicki Mae (interviewed on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2010 by Vincent Malcolm-Buchanan, in Hamilton, NZ) digital audio recording.

Hawira, Ema (interviewed in April 2011 by Vincent Malcolm-Buchanan, in Rotorua, NZ) digital audio recording.

Hoani, Waretini Wally (interviewed on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2011 by Vincent Malcolm-Buchanan, in Perth, Australia) digital audio recording.

Hohepa, Sharon Te Whetumarama (interviewed in April 2011 by Vincent Malcolm-Buchanan, in Rotorua, NZ) digital audio recording.

Hohepa, Tautini Charles Michael (interviewed on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2011 by Vincent Malcolm-Buchanan, in Perth, Australia) digital audio recording.

Kameta, Elaine Mamaeroa (interviewed on 18<sup>th</sup> Jan 2011 by Vincent Malcolm-Buchanan, in Hamilton, NZ) digital audio recording.

Throughout the course of this work, many people contributed variously, and often informally, influencing how I approached different critical aspects of this thesis. Some did so by way of korero at tangihanga, or during cups of tea at their homes, or at hui and wānanga, where I found myself listening to them with fascination. Others did so by way of emails, text messages, and phone calls, offering snippets of critical material, and these included:

**Whanaunga:**

‘Stormy’ Iharaira Hohepa of Ngāti Tamateatutahi Kawiti of Ngāti Pūkiao, Rotorua  
Jack Tapui Ohlson (Junior) of Ngāti Whare of Tūhoe, Murupara  
Ngaire Amiria Tihema of Ngāti Manawa, and Tainui  
Urukeiha Raharuhi of Ngāti Pūkiao, Te Arawa

**Institutional Colleagues:**

Dame Joan Metge, former Professor of Victoria University, Wellington  
Dr Marama Muru-Lanning, of the University of Auckland

**Tangi Research Programme Members:**

Professor Pou Temara of Tūhoe  
Dr Tess Moeke-Maxwell of Ngai Tai ki Umupuia, Ngāti Pukeko.  
Te Kahautu Maxwell of Whakatōhea

Whaea Ngamihi Crapp of Tūhoe and Ngāti Awa  
Whaea Heeni Marsh of Aitanga a Hauiti, Ngāti Porou  
Whaea Vicki Bhana of Te Roro o te Rangi, Ngāti Whakaue

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# PhD Conference POSTERS

(A4 versions of A0 actuals)

## **1: An Ethnography of Tangihanga**

Malcolm-Buchanan, V., Te Awekotuku, N., & Nikora, L. W., (2012, June). "Regarding Death in Life: Stories of our loved one's final wishes". A conference poster presentation (derived from a paper) delivered at the 2012 International Death Down Under Conference. University of Otago.

Malcolm-Buchanan, V., Te Awekotuku, N., & Nikora, L. W., (2012, December). "An Ethnography of Tangihanga: Our taonga, our stories". A conference poster presentation delivered at the 2012 Pacific History Association Conference. University of Victoria. Wellington.

## **2: A Genealogic Ethnography of Tangihanga**

Malcolm-Buchanan, V., Te Awekotuku, N., & Nikora, L. W., (2012, December). "An Genealogic Ethnography of Tangihanga: Our taonga, our stories". A conference poster presentation displayed at the 2012 Association of Social Anthropology of Aotearoa/New Zealand (ASAANZ) Conference. University of Victoria. Wellington.

# AN ETHNOGRAPHY of TANGIHANGA:

## Our taonga, our stories...

- by Vincent Malcolm-Buchanan of Ngāti Tamateatutahi of Pikiāo and Ngāti Whare of Tūhoe, MSocSc (Hons). BSocSc (Hons). BA. -  
Poster derived from ongoing doctoral research which is part of the Tangi Research Programme, a collaboration between the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS), and the School of Māori and Pacific Development (SMPD).



The core focus of this research is our taonga, artefacts and objects found in the immediate surround of our deceased during tangihanga. It is premised on ethnographic narratives situated in te Ao Māori, and the wider multi-cultural social fabric of Aotearoa NZ. The thesis combines several methodological techniques including auto-ethnographic reflexions, distinct case-study narratives, fieldwork research together with participant interviews, and ethnohistoric findings drawn from a plethora of death studies literature, focusing on the interwoven culturally specific lenses of:

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### TANGIHANGA

Unique culturally defined rubric of funerary practices distinct to Māori during processes of death; universally encountered but variously experienced.

### WHAKAPAPA

Familial connectivities that harken back to eponymous ancestors...

### MARAE

Where Māori history-making is both reflected upon and engaged in...

- DOCTORAL RESEARCH WHICH SPEAKS TO INDIGENOUS NZ PRACTICES such as -

**KARANGA WHĀNAU:** the politics of death and communication wherein exigent exchanges, using an array of means, call Māori to return to the whānau, because of death. In our world these exchanges are a definitive prompt, demanding an immediate response...

- i) they are as often pre-mortem as they are postmortem interactions,
- ii) immediately collectivise the whānau, hapū, iwi, and wider community,
- iii) are increasingly communicated via electronic means, often nowadays across continents.



**CLOAKED IN LIFE and DEATH:** the inimitable

culture-bound activity and tribal custom of using rare traditionally hand-woven flaxen cloaks to shroud our deceased as they lay in state...

- i) often taken-for-granted guardianship of rare traditional flaxen cloaks,
- ii) artefacts that relate origin stories, familial histories, controversies, and whakapapa,
- iii) their presence speaks a thousand silent words while their evident absence can be deafening.



**REGARDING DEATH in LIFE:** whether openly or

surreptitiously, we customarily comply with the final wishes of our loved ones. At such times we can be seen to engage in complex negotiations, compromises, & decision-making processes little-often realised by non-Māori...

- i) narratives that reveal touching, intimate final wishes, and how the family responded...
- ii) juxtapositions, controversies, and confrontations,
- iii) the simplicity of death illuminates the complexity of life, as Māori, in the modernising world.



1. Images from my private whānau collection: Kuia Te Pae Mihikore Hohepa (1887-1952), Āpōtoro Takiwa Tutere Michael Hohepa (1929-2007), Kuia Iritana Te Wao Sorenson (1915-1979), Kuia Merepeka Kohu Ohlson (1901-1967), Koroua Tapui Jack Ohlson (1900-1954), Hector Tamehana Ohlson (1943-1996), Cairo Makarena Ohlson (1941-2009), Roimata Kiterangi Ohlson (1974-2004).
2. Above: Te Whare Tupuna a Uruika at Tapuaeharuru Marae, Lake Rotoiti-i-kite-a-Ihenga

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**DRESSED IN LIFE and DEATH:** of care-giving and clothing for our deceased. Case-study exemplars of that final, exquisitely intimate undertaking when we privately prepare their body, for the public processes of tangihanga...

- i) vigilant care-giving, from final breath to final view, of the body of our deceased,
- ii) shifts in aesthetic preferences,
- iii) former traditional practices being revived.



**TOUCHING LIFE and DEATH:** non-traditional

objects observed within the immediate surround of our deceased - wherein everything has its place and purpose during indigenous praxis long since established, and fervently maintained.

- i) photographs, portraits, and floral arrangements...
- ii) a change of clothes, shoes, nightwear, toiletries and so forth; just like going for a holiday...
- iii) stuffed toys, a deck of cards, cigarettes and lighter... the array is diverse...



## ~ Our Taonga, Our Stories ~

### ~ FIVE SPECIFIC CASE STUDIES of DEATH in the MĀORI WORLD ~

- by Vincent Malcolm-Buchanan from Ngāti Tamateatutahi of Pīkiao and Ngāti Whare of Tūhoe, MSocSc (Hons). BSocSc (Hons). BA. -  
In mātāuranga Māori our deceased depart the world of light, te ao Marama, returning to the other-world realms of bygone ancestors and deities; to occasionally revisit us in dreamtime, where once again we share memories, stories, and life journeys.

- ◆ This doctoral research is a personalised articulation of familial narratives.
- ◆ These case studies speak to poignant life experiences of death across four generations within the one whānau, and of taonga tangihanga; private artefacts and objects observable in the immediate surround of our deceased.
- ◆ This research refers primarily to the author's two principal marae. Tapuaeharuru located on the verge of Lake Rotoiti, and Waikotikoti, nestled in the Whirinaki gateway of the Tūhoe.

Matawhaura te maunga  
Rotoiti te moana  
Te Arawa te waka  
Ngāti Pīkiao te iwi  
Ngāti Tamateatutahi te hapū  
Uruika te whare tupuna



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#### GENEALOGY - WHAKAPAPA

Cognatic and bilateral kinship connections interweaving families, tribes and peoples histories...

#### FUNERARY PROCESSES - TANGIHANGA

Culturally defined, unique funerary practices...

#### INDIGENOUS GROUNDS - MARAE

Where history-making is reflected on & engaged in...

#### Case Study 1: Kuia Te Pae Mihikore (nee Waretini) 1887-1952:

§ My great-grandmother was a Pīkiao weaver of some repute, who lived giving, and died having bequeathed the whānau a private collection of taonga that has, since 1952, continually affirmed her ongoing presence in the lives of the uri.

§ "She was a hūmūrie woman... one who never spoke on marae, but known on all of them throughout the rohe..."

§ We came to learn of her during tangihanga, in loving narratives filled with gentle laughter, quietly murmured on our marae, or in late evening as our ringawera prepared the wharekai for the next day's events... with the wharenuī lights low, tamariki curled beneath blankets, as older siblings soothed younger ones, our great-grandmother would silently return to Uruika, to the uri, unhurriedly arriving on tenderly spoken words by elders recalling her smile, her voice, and her life - returning her to mind, and presence, in richly interwoven marae reminiscences.



#### Case Study 2: Āpotoro Tutere Michael Hohepa 1929-2007:

§ Religion was a foremost priority to my people, and my koroua Tutere, my grandfather who I called dad, had entered the Ratana Church at the young age of 19, ministering to his faithful flock for more than five decades until his passing at seventy six years of age.

§ He never married, though he would poipoia five of his sibling's children, who came to be raised as his own, and whose lives would become a testament of his determined doggedness to perpetuate the ways of Māori, our whakapapa, stories, and the legacies of Ngāti Tamateatutahi.

§ Our elders were revered, honoured, to be listened to, learnt from, guided by; and it was this generation in whose awe-inspiring shadow I walked. So in te ao Māori when we lose an elder to the call of death, our loss is inescapable. Their deaths reflect in our lives manifesting grief such that few are unaffected as we readily acknowledge the falling of a totara.



#### Case Study 3: Hector Te Heta Tamehana Ohlson 1943-1996:

§ My Ngāti Whare grandparents had 21 children, and the second to last child was my amazing father, who grew up roaming the Tūhoe Te Whāiti hinterlands.

§ In the 1970's, an era when single-parent households in NZ were held in widespread disdain, he sacrificed much in order to keep his young family together. He had been my childhood hero, and for me, he was the archetype of Māori masculinity. Kind, gentle, uncomplicated, tall, good looking, he was always ready with a well-honed humour and melodic singing voice.

§ When my hero, my father, passed away suddenly, we eventually returned him to his treasured Tūhoe lands, laying him to rest amongst the eternally young, elusive, and mischievous patupaiarehe; to sing and play amongst other departed children of the mist.



#### Case Study 4: Cairo Makarena Te Wao Ohlson (nee Hohepa) 1941-2009:

§ As the pōtiki, my mother was born while her father, a member of the history-making Māori Battalion, was fighting for the honour of NZ, and to the esteem of all Māori back on the shores of Aotearoa. He was in Egypt's capital city at the time of her birth, and so she came to be auspiciously named Cairo.

§ Sadly tuberculosis claimed the lives of vast numbers of Māori and thus it was that my tupuna kuia Te Pae deliberately removed her mokopuna from TB ravaged coastal lands; to be raised in the Pīkiao enclave of Rotoiti, the only daughter of a tohunga karakia, and the oldest of all his poipoia children.

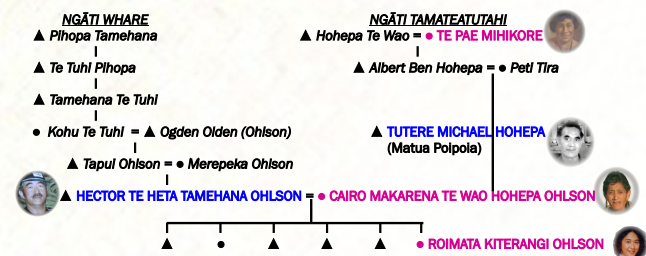
§ Recently installed, my mother's memorial headstone reads "Your presence calmed us, your voice enraptured us, and your love sustained us".



#### Case Study 5: Roimata Kiterangi Frances Ohlson 1974-2004:

§ The birth of our parents last-born was considered serendipitous, a blessing from the gods. So appropriately our tribe's tohunga karakia, my grandfather, was called upon to bear witness to his daughter's final birth, and to proudly name his rosy-cheeked newborn mokopuna.

§ Named Roimata Kiterangi, meaning teardrops from heaven; she was a child whose gentle infectious smile always lit up our lives. Three decades later, that same tohunga karakia would be called upon once more to mournfully bear witness for this same mokopuna. Though on this occasion it would be to painfully identify her tūpāpaku for the NZ Police, as my treasured pōtiki became yet another tragic statistic of suicide in Aotearoa.



NB: With the exception of ego (being the author), all persons identified in this kinship schema are deceased.

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