



# MANA WAHINE READER

A COLLECTION OF WRITINGS 1999-2019

VOLUME II

Mana Wahine Reader  
A Collection of Writings 1999-2019  
Volume II



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Mana Wahine Reader  
A Collection of Writings 1999-2019  
Volume II

**Edited by: Leonie Pihama, Linda Tuhiwai Smith,  
Naomi Simmonds, Joellee Seed-Pihama and Kirsten Gabel**

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# Preface

Over the past few years we have had many requests for references related to Mana Wahine and/or Māori women's writings on Māori feminist approaches. Many of the early writings in this area are difficult to access and as such have become less well known or utilised as a basis for thinking about issues that impact upon Māori women. The growing articulation of the need for intersectionality has prompted more conversations around how we as Māori and Indigenous Peoples engage with the multiple intersecting beliefs, ideologies and practices that both inform, and impact upon, our lives. Mana Wahine is a term that encompasses our own tikanga and which upholds and elucidates the mana that is inherent in our lives as hine, as wahine, in its many forms. It embeds our wellbeing and our ways of being within particular cultural understandings, beliefs and practices that affirm who we are within our whakapapa and whanaungatanga, our roles, our positioning, our responsibilities, our obligations. Mana wahine is not, and should never be considered only about gender relations. It is much more and moves beyond the colonial definitions of gender identity that is construction within dualist notions of biology, femaleness or maleness. Mana wahine is always located within our wider relationships as Māori. And it is within such a framework that we can ensure that we are cognisant of our relationships, responsibilities and obligations to each other as Māori, to our Indigenous relations and to those that live here on our lands.

We are honoured to reprint a range of early works here to make them more readily available nationally and internationally. The writings that appear in these two readers are those that we have been able to gain permission to reprint, often because the original publications either are out of print or are not easily accessible. We acknowledge and thank all of the authors and the publishers who brought these writings to us all in their original form, and who have agreed that we share them in these volumes with free access. We have chosen to create these volumes as online resources so they can be downloaded and shared widely. He mihi mutunga kore tēnei ki a koutou wahine mā.

As editors of these volumes we have retained the original text with only a few minor corrections where required. We have also listed at the beginning of each volume the source of the original article for your information. The cover images have been gifted by Robyn Kahukiwa and represent two commanding atua wahine, Mahuika and Hineteiwaiwa, and who bring the power of their respective domains to this publication. At the commencement of each volume is an original poem that has been gifted for this collection. Volume One includes the poem 'Don't Mess with the Māori Woman' by Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Volume Two opens with 'Ngā Māreikura' by Hinewirangi Kohu-Morgan. These poems are to provide a creative entry into the publications. At the end of Volume Two, we have included four new articles by Leonie Pihama, Naomi Simmonds, Kirsten Gabel and Joeliee Seed-Pihama to bring the volumes to an end with some contemporary discussion of Mana Wahine. The purpose of this publication is to share. To share the words and thoughts of wahine Māori. To share reflections, analysis, practices from a place that is ours. So to you, the reader, enjoy.

Leonie Pihama, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Naomi Simmonds, Joeliee Seed-Pihama, Kirsten Gabel.

## Source Acknowledgments

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# Ngā Māreikura

Nā Hinewirangi Kohu-Morgan



You are the dawn of a new world  
Sit well in your connectedness  
Te Ao Māori needs you

Ngā Māreikura  
Sit well in your historical culture  
Learning all that we need to learn  
Our Reo Rangatira  
Know it intimately  
Know and decolonise  
So we can protect it from being bastardised.  
Our reo  
Wāhine mā, kuia mā  
It's urgent

Ngā Māreikura  
Sit well in your connectedness  
To your whare tangata  
The great gifts  
You are Atua given  
Therefore be Atua driven  
Understand the depth  
Be in a relationship with Hine-te-iwaiwa  
Taking her into your life  
She will guide  
Te awa o te tangata  
The ebb and flow o te awa  
Ngā kawē uri  
Haere koutou ki a Papatūānuku

Ngā Māreikura  
Sit well in your connectedness  
To the natural world of the Māori  
Connect to Papatūānuku

Ngā Māra kai  
Haumie-tiketike me Rongo-mā-Tāne  
Teach the children to māra kai  
Talk of the seasons they will travel  
Talk of what will grow in each season  
Know the seasons kei roto i a koe  
For you are in your early winters  
Ānei ngā māra mō te pātaka

Ngā Māreikura  
Stand in your connectedness in your waka  
Know the pūrākau  
Of Hinemoana  
How the ocean flows within  
Eighty five percent water  
Know the kai of Kaukau  
The kai of Tangaroa  
The kai o Te Moananui a kiwa  
Know how to maroke ngā ika  
How to preserve for kai  
O te iwi

Ngā Māreikura  
Know your connectedness  
With Te Waonui-a-Tāne  
Enter and hear the spirituality be bathed  
in the experience of wairua  
feeling - knowing  
Be knowing the great trees  
Experience the rongoā  
The healing as the energy  
Wraps their arms around you  
You wrap your arms around your children

Ngā Māreikura

Sit in your connectedness of your birth right  
The tipuna have left you  
A legacy of waiata  
Learn your songs that lie deep within  
Old traditional monocultural waiata  
The modern waiata with different  
Rhythms of the rangatahi  
Learn to be free in your voice  
Being able to sing the pain  
Lodged in the fourth door of the voice  
So that your children and others  
Can heal from their pain  
We need to heal our rangatahi  
They are deciding daily to take  
Their own lives  
Huge sadness, not understood

Ngā Māreikura

Stand strong in your connectedness  
To your karanga  
You are the first voice of the marae  
You are rūruhi  
The kuia at the gates of the 12 heavens  
Understand the doors of the esoteric world  
So that you lead your sons and daughters  
If their pūkenga leads to this wānanga  
So you can harness the children  
Who carry this gift  
You will recognise each realm  
That our children will walk  
And guide them to their tohungatanga

Ngā Māreikura

Stand strong in your connectedness  
To your whare tapa whā  
Ensuring the balance in all things  
The duality of all things  
The caring for not just the self  
Though you must start there  
But for all  
You must live this life  
Ngā wāhine mā, ngā Kui mā  
It must be a lived experience  
For you cannot teach unless you  
Are practicing  
It is urgent

Ngā Māreikura

Stand strong in your values and beliefs  
For others will try to change them  
Others, academics, christians, Pākehā  
So many people have influence the lives  
Of our children and people  
But you Māreikura  
Must bring back the wellbeing  
Of our traditions and cultural knowing

# Colonisation and the Imposition of Patriarchy:

**A Ngāti Raukawa Women's Perspective**

Ani Mikaere



## INTRODUCTION

Traditional Cheyenne saying;

A Nation is not conquered  
Until the hearts of its women  
Are on the ground.  
Then it is done, no matter How brave its warriors  
Nor how strong its weapons.<sup>1</sup>

*Pitty the poor squaw*

Beast of burden, slave  
Chained under female law  
From puberty to grave.<sup>2</sup>

Doubtless many will consider this a strange way for a Ngāti Raukawa woman to begin a discussion such as this, an ancient Cheyenne saying and an observation by a colonist of the status of American Indian women. But there is much about the experiences of our North American indigenous sisters and brothers that can help us to make sense of the confusion brought about by over two centuries of colonial influence. After all, they have endured those same colonial processes for over five hundred years. We would be arrogant indeed if we did not recognise that we might learn from them.

I have employed these two quotations as an opening for my discussion because they reveal a stark contrast between the role of indigenous women according to ancient tradition, and the status of these women in the eyes of the coloniser. This chasm between indigenous reality and the coloniser's perception of that reality is a theme that emerges time and time again, in any colonial context. As will become evident later in this discussion, it is a vital factor in the redefinition of Māori women's roles that occurred as part of the colonisation process here in Aotearoa. Some North American writers have suggested that white men misconstrued the significance of the roles of indigenous women simply because their views were coloured by their own experience of gender roles. The same might be said for the likes of Elsdon Best and S.Percy Smith in their descriptions of Māori society, as discussed below. Clara Sue Kidwell asserts that "the position of women in European societies, largely derived from Judaic and Christian ideals of womanhood, led European men to overlook the power that Indian women could wield in their own societies"<sup>3</sup>

Others have been less charitable about motives of the colonists as they attempted to redefine gender relations in the indigenous societies they came into contact with. Native American, Paula Gunn Allen has concluded that "traditional tribal lifestyles are more often gynocratic than not, and they are never patriarchal"<sup>4</sup> She argues that the colonists found this state of affairs to be highly threatening, and that their redefinition of female roles was therefore part of a deliberate strategy to ensure the success of the colonisation project:

The physical and cultural genocide of American Indian tribes is and was mostly about patriarchal fear of gynocracy. The Puritans particularly, but also the Catholic, Quaker, and other Christian missionaries, like their secular counterparts, could not tolerate peoples who allowed women to occupy prominent positions and decision making capacity at every level of society...

The colonizers saw ... that as long as women held unquestioned power of such magnitude, attempts at total conquest of the continents were bound to fail. In the centuries since the first attempts at colonization ... the invaders have exerted every effort to remove Indian women from every position of authority, to obliterate all records pertaining to gynocratic social systems, and to ensure that no American and few American Indians would remember that gynocracy was the primary social order of Indian America prior to 1800.<sup>5</sup>

Some indigenous commentators may not go as far as Gunn Allen in her portrayal of indigenous societies as gynocratic, but they certainly agree with her that such societies have never been patriarchal. Winona La Duke, for instance, insists that there was never subordination of one gender to the other, but rather that "[w]hat native societies have always been about is achieving balance in all things, gender relations no less than any other."<sup>6</sup> This world view is one which sits well with our own, as elaborated upon below.

The erasure of the true state of gender relations from the memory of indigenous people is, as Gunn Allen suggests, a common theme to emerge from indigenous writings. I would suggest that it also casts some light upon our current situation here in Aotearoa. Mohawk woman Patricia Monture-Angus, in discussing the violence that many First Nations women experience within their communities, argues that "from the First Nations perspective the root of our oppression is in collective memory loss. The men must be re-educated about what their responsibilities are."<sup>7</sup>

Another theme which is commonly raised by indigenous women writers in the North American context (and which, I argue below, is applicable to us as well) is the key role that conversion to Christianity played in the redefinition of gender roles. Verna Kirkness put it in the following way.

Some of the teachings of the new religion conflicted with the Native religion. Through these teachings, Native women were affected and many were to lose their otherwise equal status in their societies. Religion became a tool to influence sexist attitudes... Many Native people have embraced Christianity, but by its different teachings, it has contributed to change in the traditional role of Native women.<sup>8</sup>

The purpose of this introduction is to set a context within which to view the following discussion of the impact of colonisation on the status of Māori women. For just as I believe that studying the colonisation process and how it has affected Māori women generally is vital background to a discussion about Ngāti Raukawa women, I also subscribe to the view that colonisation in Aotearoa should not be viewed as an isolated case.

Our experiences are largely shared by those of other indigenous peoples who have been subjected to the forces of colonisation. What their experiences tell us is that the remoulding of indigenous societies to reflect the patriarchal values of their colonisers is just as central to the colonisation process as is death by introduced diseases, theft of land, suppression of language and denial of spiritual beliefs. It is indeed as if the colonisers understood that throwing the hearts of our women to the ground was and is vital to the success of the colonisation project.

From here the discussion turns to a summary of the status of Māori women according to tikanga Māori, Māori law. Following that is an account of how colonisation impacted upon that status. These are subjects to which I have devoted much of my research time over the past few years. Finally, I will attempt to relate the general discussion to my own experiences as a Ngāti Raukawa woman.

## THE STATUS OF WOMEN ACCORDING TO TIKANGA MĀORI<sup>9</sup>

The roles of men and women in traditional Māori society can be understood only in the context of the Māori world view, which acknowledged the natural order of the universe, the interrelationship or whanaungatanga of all living things to one another and to the environment, and the overarching principle of balance. Both men and women were essential parts in the collective whole, both formed part of the whakapapa that linked Māori people back to the beginning of the world, and women in particular played a key role in linking the past with the present and the future. The very survival of the whole was absolutely dependent upon everyone who made it up, and therefore each and every person within the group had his or her own intrinsic value. They were all a part of the collective; it was therefore a collective responsibility to see that their respective roles were valued and protected.

Female strength formed part of the core of Māori existence, and was sourced in the power of female sexual and reproductive functions. This emerged clearly in the cosmogonic accounts, the potency of female sexuality being implicit in the womb symbolism of Te Kore and Te Pō and in the birth of Papatūānuku and Ranginui's children into the world of light, Te Ao Mārama.

The creation of humankind upon the advice of Papatūānuku further reflected this theme, with Tāne Mahuta being sent by his mother to Kurawaka, her pubic region, to gather the red earth containing the necessary uha or female element from which Hine-ahu-one, the first woman could be shaped. Accounts of the first act of sexual intercourse between Tāne Mahuta and Hine-ahu-one indicate that she possessed an awesome sexual power that came from deep within her, thus setting the precedent for the Māori view of sexual relations between men and women as summarised by Te Rangihiroa:<sup>10</sup> "In sex matters, it is the female organ which figuratively kills its male antagonist."

The daughter of this first male-female union to produce human life, Hinētītama, produced many children. When she discovered that her husband, Tāne, was also her father she recited a karakia to render him strengthless to pursue her and she left him. She commanded him to remain behind and care for their children in their earthly life while she descended to one of the underworlds, Rarohenga, to prepare a place for them and to care for them in death. She has remained there ever since, known as Hinenui-i-te-pō, guardian of the spirits of all her human descendants.

The tales of one of her descendants, Māui-tikitiki-a-Taranga, are particularly instructive as to the influential roles that women held. Māui acquired fire from his kuia, Mahuika. It was with the jawbone of his kuia, Muriranga-whenua, that he fished up Te-Ika-a-Māui (the North Island) and made the patu with which to subdue Rā (the sun). And it was to his ancestress, Hine-nui-i-te-pō, that he eventually succumbed when he failed in his quest to attain immortality. These stories tell us a great deal about the role of kuia as repositories of knowledge, and the conditions under which they are prepared to share that knowledge. These kuia possessed vast amounts of knowledge and supernatural powers.

They identified Māui as a special person, one with whom they were prepared to share their expertise to ensure that certain benefits would be passed on to their human descendants. But it was also their role to set the limits of what could be achieved. So when Māui sought immortality by attempting to reverse the birth process, that is, by crawling up into Hine-nui-te-pō's vagina, it fell to her to provide Māui with his final teaching:

Come Māui-tikitiki-a-Taranga... In this your last journey, you will give your final gift to those of earth, the gift not of immortality, but of homecoming, following death . . . I do not cause death, and did not ordain it. Human death was ordained when human life was ordained... I will wait at this side of death for those who follow, because I am the mother who welcomes and cares for those children whose earthly life has ended.<sup>11</sup>

It is here, in the story of Māui's death that the potency of the female sexual organs becomes most explicit of all. The passage through which each of us passes to enter Te Ao Mārama is the same passage through which each of us must pass on our inevitable journey back to Te Po.

The process which brings each of us into being brought the world into being. Our very existence is centred around the sexual power of women. There are numerous indicators in Māori language that there was no hierarchy of sexes. The language is gender-neutral in the sense that there is no he/she (ia) or his/hers (tana/tona) in Māori. The importance of women is also symbolised by language and concepts expressed through proverbs. Rose Pere has written on the association of positive concepts with females, pointing to the description of women as *whare tangata* (the house of humanity), the use of the word *whenua* to mean both land and afterbirth, and the use of the word *hapū* as meaning both pregnant and large kinship group.<sup>12</sup> Pere has pointed out that the common saying:

"He wāhine, he whenua, e ngaro ai te tangata" which is often interpreted as meaning "by women and land men are lost", also refers to the essential nourishing roles that women and land fulfil, without which humanity would be lost.<sup>13</sup>

Pere describes her childhood as being full of very positive female models, and how her elders set the example of men and women respecting and supporting each other, and working alongside one another. She considers her Māori ancestresses, prior to the impact of Christianity, to have been "extremely liberated" in comparison to her English ancestresses.

She points out that Māori women were not regarded as chattels or possessions, that they retained their own names upon marriage, that their children were free to identify with the kinship group of either or both parents, that they dressed in similar garments to the men, and that conception was not associated with sin or childbearing with punishment and suffering but that these were uplifting and a normal part of life.<sup>14</sup> In line with the centrality of female sexuality to Māori existence, Māori women celebrated their femaleness with confidence, both expecting and exercising sexual autonomy. Pere also points out that assault on a woman, be it sexual assault or otherwise, was regarded as extremely serious and could result in death or, almost as bad, in being declared "dead" by the community and ignored from then on.<sup>15</sup> Instances of abuse against women and children were regarded as *whānau* concerns and action would inevitably be taken against the perpetrator.

Traditionally, therefore, the *whānau* was a woman's primary source of support. Her "marriage" did not entail a transferral of property from her father to her spouse. She remained a part of

the whānau. Even if she went to live with her husband's whānau, she remained a part of her whānau, to whom her in-laws were responsible for her well-being. They were to ensure that she was well-treated and to support her. In cases where misconduct was shown, divorce was relatively simple so long as the correct procedures were followed. Divorce carried no stigma, and any issues as to custody and ongoing support of children were sorted out within the whānau context.

The absence of distinction between private and public domains in the context of family arrangements protected and affirmed women. Kuni Jenkins describes the interaction of a couple and their children with the rest of the whānau in the following terms:

In her cultural role the Māori woman was part of a community. The home unit was part of the whole kāinga. Grandmothers, aunts and other females and male elders were responsible for rearing the children of the kainga. The natural parents were not the sole care-givers ... The routines of the whānau were such that couples could not be isolated to lead independent lifestyles. Their communal living required constant contact and interaction with other members of the tribe in a concerted effort to keep the affairs of the group buoyant and operational.<sup>16</sup>

This form of social organisation ensured a degree of flexibility for women not possible within the confines of the nuclear family. The presence of so many caregivers, and the expectation that they would assume much of the responsibility of childrearing, enabled women to perform a wide range of roles, including leadership roles. Iwi histories that have been handed down orally from generation to generation present a picture of a society where women and men featured in all aspects of life, and fulfilled all manner of roles.

It is clear from such histories that Māori women occupied very important leadership positions in traditional society, positions of military, spiritual, and political significance.

In summary, Māori law was based on the imperative to maintain balance within whānau, hapū and iwi, including balance between women and men. The charter for Māori life was laid down in Māori cosmogony, which established the centrality of female sexuality and reproductive capabilities in the creation of the world. The female strength apparent in the cosmogonic accounts was reflected in the daily lives of whānau, hapū and iwi. As valued members of their whānau, women were affirmed and supported throughout their lives. The sharing of work amongst the whānau enabled women of child-bearing years to develop their strengths and expertise in a range of areas and to fulfil leadership roles.

## TIKANGA MĀORI COLONISED

When the missionaries and early settlers arrived in Aotearoa, they brought with them their own culturally specific understandings of the role and status of women. Jenkins describes the conflict in values and the British reaction as follows:

Western civilisation when it arrived on Aotearoa's shore, did not allow its womenfolk any power at all - they were merely chattels in some cases less worthy than the men's horses. What the colonizer found was a land of noble savages narrating ... stories of the wonder of women.

Their myths and beliefs had to be reshaped and retold. The missionaries were hell-bent (heaven-bent) on destroying their pagan ways. Hence, in the re-telling of our myths, by Māori male informants to Pākehā male writers who lacked the understanding and significance of Māori cultural beliefs, Māori women find their mana wahine destroyed.<sup>17</sup>

This re-telling of Māori cosmogony by Māori males to Pākehā ethnographers<sup>18</sup> led to a shift in emphasis, away from the powerful female influence in the stories and towards the male characters. Instead of creation beginning with the womb symbolism of Te Kore and Te Pō, and the female-male partnership of Papatūānuku and Ranginui, the balance was turned on its head by the introduction of a supreme male god, Io. The cosmogonic genealogies were relegated to a phase occurring after the initial creation at the hands of Io. Io created all by sheer force of his willpower, and free from the female taint of any birthing process. Consequently, the balance between the male and female elements was destroyed, male power was inflated and female energy neutralised.

The similarities between the “Io” version of creation and the bible are so striking that many have reached the conclusion that much of it could only have been a post-missionary development. It is possible that there was an atua named Io in the cosmogonic accounts of some iwi, but the elevation of Io into a supreme and male being, and on a national scale seems clearly to be a post-contact phenomenon. Even if there were a supreme being named Io, there is no reason to assume that that being was male, although it is probably inevitable that Pākehā recorders of information would have assumed that to be the case. Monture-Angus has something to say about how assuming the maleness of a supreme being can damage the balance between male and female:

...I use she on purpose when referring to the Creator...I use she because when you make a lot of translations from Indian to English, it is very difficult...our word for Creator is a word without gender.

It is both male and female. When you have a respect for creation, you have a respect for both male and female energies. When you translate that into the English word and you get he, you are tipping creation to one side. Creation cannot be talked about out of balance all the time. I am trying to throw a little energy the other way.

Whenever I refer to the Creator, I use she.<sup>19</sup>

Nor did the negative consequences of the Io version stop with the mere assertion of a supreme male god. The female figures in the creation stories were relegated to passive roles, their power neutralised. The account of the creation of the first woman, Hine-ahu-one, metamorphosed into a tale uncannily similar to the biblical myth of Adam creating Eve from his rib; Tāne became the main figure in the story with Papatūānuku’s essential role virtually silenced:<sup>20</sup> ...she represents the receptive and passive element, while Tāne represents the active, fertilising, creative male element.

Now that we had a supreme male creator, how naturally it followed that the creative element rested with the male, Tāne, rather than with his own mother who created him! Hine-ahu-one suffered a similar fate at the hands of these recasters of Māori cosmogony, becoming little more than Tāne’s seed-bed.

The Māui stories became focused almost solely on the exploits of this male demi-god, his kuia Mahuika and Muriranga-whenua being made nearly invisible in the process. Smith has referred to the Māori women within these stories having been turned into “distant and passive old crones whose presence in the ‘story’ was to add interest to an otherwise male adventure.”<sup>21</sup>

The one figure who could scarcely be characterised as passive was Hine nui-i-te-pō. Given the way in which Māui died, it was extraordinarily difficult to ignore or minimise her supreme strength. Faced with the irrefutable expression of female sexual power that Hine-nui-i-te-pō posed, the redefiners of Māori cosmogony recast her as evil and destructive. This fitted in nicely with biblical notions of woman being responsible for sin. The negative connotations that then attached to the female sexual organs were also entirely consistent with Old Testament notions of women being unclean because of menstruation.

The female figures in Māori cosmogony were not the only target for missionary zeal and redefinition at the hands of the settlers. Their paternalism also coloured their perceptions of the Māori women they found around them. Linda Smith notes:

...Māori women were perceived either in family terms as wives and children, or in sexual terms as easy partners. Women who had “chiefly” roles were considered the exception to the rule, not the norm...Māori women were considered attractive in the absence of a pool of white women. Their autonomy was interpreted as immorality and lack of discipline. Christianity reinforced these notions by spelling out rules of decorum and defining spaces (the home) for the carrying out of appropriate female activities.<sup>22</sup>

Aside from being regarded as the wives and children (the property) of Māori men, or potential bedmates for white men, Māori women were also sometimes regarded by the settlers as potential sources of land and economic security.

The concept of women as leaders and spokespersons for their whānau, hapū and iwi would have been beyond the comprehension of the settlers or the Crown representatives who were sent to negotiate the Treaty of Waitangi. They could only conceive of dealing with men: “Māori men were the ones with whom the colonisers negotiated, traded and treated.”<sup>23</sup> The fact that the Treaty was signed predominantly by men, sometimes pointed to as a reflection of pre-colonised Māori society’s attitudes towards women, is more an indication of the influence of Christianity and the fact that those seeking signatories largely ignored the possibility of women signing. This approach has been recorded as having angered Māori women, thus leading the missionaries to allow some women to sign.<sup>24</sup>

There were also occasions where, exhibiting the kind of intolerance towards a people who were prepared to allow women to act in a representative capacity that Gunn Allen has spoken of in the North American context,<sup>25</sup> Crown representatives refused to give in to pressure for women to be allowed to sign, behaviour which probably cost them some potential male signatories.<sup>26</sup> Thirteen women have so far been identified as having signed the Treaty<sup>27</sup> whereas it was once said that only three or four had done so. There may be many more but because Māori names, like the language, are generally gender-neutral it is difficult to tell how many more women were involved. Over time, people have come to assume that they were all men. This is one area which requires a great deal more research.

One of the most damaging effects of colonisation for Māori women was the destruction of the whānau. It was clear right from the outset that Māori collectivism was philosophically at odds with the settler ethic of individualism. As Māori had their cultural and economic base wrested from them<sup>28</sup> and as they were ravaged by introduced diseases<sup>29</sup> their social structures were inevitably undermined. The disruption of Māori social organisation was no mere by-product of colonisation, but an integral part of the process. Destroying the principle of collectivism which ran through Māori society was stated to be one of the twin aims of the Native Land Act which had set up the Native Land Court in 1865, the other aim being to access Māori land for settlement.<sup>30</sup> Not only was the very concept of individual title to land destructive of collectivism,<sup>31</sup> but the massive land loss brought about by the workings of the Native Land Court<sup>32</sup> meant that, as the Māori population stabilised at a low point towards the end of the century and began to grow,<sup>33</sup> Māori found that they had insufficient land left to support themselves. Whānau were eventually forced to break into nuclear families and move to towns and cities in search of work.<sup>34</sup>

The Native Land Act 1909 declared Māori customary marriages to be valid for some purposes only and required Māori to undergo legal marriage ceremonies. These provisions, coupled with the parliamentary debates of the time,<sup>35</sup> signalled a renewed determination on the part of the state to both redefine and intrude into the whānau. The remoulding of the whānau into a nuclear family arrangement had been on the missionary agenda since their arrival:

Māori marriage was the despair of the missionaries. They made it a high priority for elimination and they preached hell-fire and brimstone to the sinful pagans who continued to practise it. They refused to accommodate or tolerate Māori marriage as being an alternative to their idea of the nuclear family and its demands on the colonial wife to be subservient, lacking in initiative and obedient to her husband. She had to prize highly her role of housewife and mother and believe it to be God's will...the Māori female had to be domiciled very quickly to the values of the new regime that had arrived to civilise her.<sup>36</sup>

The deliberate destruction of whānau and hapū structures and the forcing of Māori women away from their whānau and into the Pākehā model of the nuclear family left them vulnerable in a host of ways. They became dependent on their husbands as breadwinners, while they became increasingly isolated as caregivers at home. Some women were expected to work both outside and in the home, as economic hardship required them to contribute financially while Christian values about what constituted a good wife and mother compelled them to maintain that role as well. Such values also meant that husbands became increasingly the head of the family, wives feeling obliged to remain with them no matter what.

The Church schools trained Māori girls to domesticity, to become good wives in the context of a nuclear family situation. Hukarere Protestant Girls' School was established in 1875 by the Bishop of Waiapu, William Williams, "with the thought of providing good Christian wives for the boys of TeAute".<sup>37</sup> The denominational schools were actively discouraged from becoming too academically orientated, the Director of Education arguing in 1931 that the aim of Māori education should be to turn out boys to be good farmers and girls to be good farmers' wives.<sup>38</sup> In 1906 the Principal of Hukarere described the daily routine of the girls as covering all aspects of domestic work, including cooking, washing, ironing and mending clothes.<sup>39</sup> Judith Simon notes: Māori girls were thus being fitted, not only for manual labour but also to fulfil the subordinate domestic roles deemed, within European culture, as appropriate for females.<sup>40</sup>

To summarise, the colonisation of Māori cosmogony rendered the sexual power of women, so evident in Māori cosmogony, secondary to the supreme creative power of a male being, Io. It marginalised the female figures within the cosmogonic accounts, characterising them as passive and subservient to the male figures. Where such strength was found to be irrefutable, it was recast in a negative light. The negative characterisation of female sexuality and the influence of Christian morality proscribed the sexual autonomy of Māori women. These views were reinforced by the destruction of the whānau network, a result of massive land loss, social upheaval caused by the effects of introduced diseases and the urban migration which occurred during the middle of the twentieth century. The Māori woman was increasingly pressured into fulfilling the role of housewife and mother within the context of the nuclear family model, a model under which she was regarded as her husband's property and which compelled her to narrow her focus to the domestic sphere.

#### MY OWN EXPERIENCES AS A NGĀTI RAUKAWA WOMAN

My research into the impact of colonisation on Māori women has been driven largely by a desire to make sense of what Ngāhuia Te Awēkotuku has called the “baffling inconsistencies”<sup>41</sup> encountered by Māori women in their everyday lives. Certainly, I have felt the weight of those inconsistencies.

Throughout my life I have instinctively resisted the commonly held view (by both Māori and non-Māori) of Māori society as inherently sexist.

For Māori men it appeared to offer too easily an excuse for otherwise inexcusable behaviour; for Māori women, it seemed to engender either a kind of hopeless acceptance of what was unacceptable, or alternatively a rejection of their own men and a sadly misguided belief that Pākehā men were inherently “better”; for Pākehā, it seemed to offer just one more convenient excuse to denigrate Māori ways of doing things. None of these outcomes sat well with me so, while readily admitting the chauvinism of many individual Māori men, I was not prepared to simply accept the argument that this chauvinism stemmed from the nature of Māori society itself.

Yet it was pretty difficult to articulate any reasons for my instinctive belief that there was no gender hierarchy in pre-colonial Māori society. The messages I received about Māori women's roles were so contradictory, so confusing. My grandmother, for example, always stressed the importance of women's role in “supporting the menfolk”. This suggested that women were indeed cast in a secondary role. Yet I was well aware that she herself played a vital leadership role within her whānau, hapū and iwi, a role that she had inherited from her mother.

In fact there are countless kuia within our whakapapa who clearly wielded considerable influence in their time. Consider Waitohi, on whose call Ngāti Raukawa decided to migrate to the Manawatu Horowhenua. Once her brother, Te Rauparaha, had established a strong base at Kapiti in the early 1820s, he needed the support of his Ngāti Raukawa relatives to secure his position. Waitohi asked Te Whatanui to bring back her relatives from Waikato: “Haere ki aku werewere, haria mai hei noho i taku whenua e takoto nei...”<sup>42</sup> One of those who consequently migrated south, Te Manahi of Ngāti Huia, was to relate: “We came at the desire of Waitohi. Had Te Rauparaha called, the people would not have assented. It was at the word of Waitohi.”<sup>43</sup> It was also Waitohi who allocated land to the Ngāti Raukawa hapū who answered her call and came south.

Waitohi's daughter, Rangi Topeora, was also a leader in her own right. She was one of the few women to sign the Treaty of Waitangi, she was fiercely warlike when the occasion demanded, and she was a political force to be reckoned with.<sup>44</sup> She was also a prolific composer of waiata, many of which continue to be sung today. That women played a particularly significant role in the maintenance and transmittal of iwi history and knowledge through the composition of waiata is apparent from the most cursory of glances through the volumes of *Nga Moteatea*.<sup>45</sup> It is entirely logical that those responsible for the physical survival and continuance of the iwi should also play a significant role in the survival of its history and therefore its identity.

Another kuia whose name is indelibly etched upon our identity through her waiata is Erenora who, in the pātere "Poia atu taku poi", celebrated her female sexuality as one of the foundation-stones of her mana.<sup>46</sup> Erenora's high rank and beauty meant that she was greatly sought after by many men. She became attached to a Tūwharetoa man named Te Maraku, a liaison to which his sister, Puiwahine, objected. Puiwahine accused Erenora of being arrogant and adulterous. She was particularly critical of Erenora for entering into the relationship with Te Maraku only a short time after having given birth to a child, alleging that she had not disposed of her child's afterbirth before taking another man. Erenora responded with the pātere in which, through the figurative journey of her twirling poi, she travels the length of the country establishing her whakapapa links with various chiefly descent lines.

At one point, Erenora directly confronts the allegations concerning her not having disposed of her child's afterbirth:

Ka rawe rā māua ko taku tara ki te hāpai ewe ki nga whenua . . . See how well  
my womanhood and I bear the afterbirth throughout the land...

Far from denying her sexual prowess, Erenora celebrates it. Through the language she employs her sexual organs are personified; they become her companions as she makes her journey. Erenora sources her mana, not just in her whakapapa, but also in the power of her female sexual being.

The pātere brings me back to another one of those baffling inconsistencies. When I was quite young, about twelve years old perhaps, my Nanny (who was Erenora's grand-daughter) taught me the pātere. When we got to that line, she tut-tutted a great deal and just could not bring herself to explain it to me, preferring instead to tell me that I should simply learn it but not pay too much attention to its meaning. And yet I had seen her belting out that pātere on the marae, and singing that line without the faintest hint of apology.

I knew the background to the waiata, and I was aware of what the line meant. But I found Nanny's approach a little confusing. Now that I have thought about these things, I realise that her inner Māori self (the one that would allow her to sing the pātere with such relish on the marae) perhaps sat uncomfortably alongside her Christian mother and grandmother self (she was the staunchest of Christians) at the particular moment when it came to sharing that line with her grand-daughter. What a difficult juggling act!

The inconsistencies and contradictions seem to be endless. Despite the fact that accounts of our whakapapa seemed to focus more on the male side, the hapū with which I am primarily affiliated bears the name of a woman, Pareraukawa.

Despite the fact the Te Rauparaha seems to be principally associated (by the world at large, at least) with Ngāti Toa (his father's side), we know that he was just as much Ngāti Raukawa as he was Ngāti Toa (through his mother, Parekohatu). Clearly, that piece of information is vital if we are to make any sense of our migration south. Despite the fact that accounts of that migration south generally credit Te Rauparaha with having convinced Ngāti Raukawa to join him, our own Ngāti Raukawa sources tell us that it was his sister, Waitohi, who was instrumental in our decision to move.

On the marae, we girls were schooled in the myriad of restrictions that applied to us by virtue of our femaleness: never to step over a man, never to sit on the paepae, never to enter a whare that was under construction. These restrictions might be taken as a sign of the secondary status of women. But how to reconcile that conclusion with the extraordinary power of the karanga, and the enormous significance attached to the selection of a puhi to open our whare tupuna, Ngātokowaru? And what about the influence that we saw exercised at every hui by the women, the young ones out the back and the kuia out the front?

Certainly, we were aware that there were restrictions concerning menstruation, but how could such restrictions be construed in a negative sense when the role of women as the nurturers of future generations was so fundamentally important, and children so treasured? How, I was to wonder in later years, could my femaleness possibly be the source of my disempowerment when I had found childbirth to be such an extraordinarily empowering experience?

Linda Smith encapsulates this sense of confusion aptly when she refers to Māori as being "caught in the contradictions of a colonised reality".<sup>47</sup> It is my view that we have become caught somewhere in the chasm that I spoke about at the beginning of this discussion: the chasm between Māori reality and our colonisers' perception of that reality. I am not suggesting for a moment that Māori women, as a result of colonisation, are weak or powerless or that we are incapable of fulfilling anything other than a victim role that we have become the Māori equivalent of the "beasts of burden" that white men claimed to find when they set foot on North America. The stories in this volume alone are more than sufficient to give the lie to that suggestion. It is clear that in many ways we are continuing the strong female tradition that our kuia laid down for us to follow.

However, it is equally clear that we do struggle with the contradictions brought about by colonised perceptions of our roles. We are left to ponder why it is that Te Rauparaha is renowned for his deeds whereas his highly influential sister, Waitohi, is scarcely spoken of. We wonder why it is that knowledge of our whakapapa appears to be so male-dominated. We speak of Erenora's exploits almost apologetically. We are left with niggling doubts about our worth when as young girls we are counselled (usually in hushed tones) about all the limitations placed on us in the marae context. We hear sympathy expressed for those men whose wives are unable to produce sons (and we note with trepidation the inference that this is a failing on the part of those wives).

A huge part of the problem is the extent to which we ourselves have internalised colonised perceptions of male and female roles. How many of us have the sense that our contribution is somehow valued less than that of our male relatives? Still worse, how many of us acquiesce to that view, buying in to what Ripeka Evans has called "a deeply internalised acceptance of powerlessness"?<sup>48</sup> Just as important, how many of our men have bought into the idea that the privileging of men over women is part of our tradition? How many of them

have yet confronted the possibility that colonisation has made them collaborators with the colonisers against their own women?

Recently, I was discussing some leadership issues with one of my close male relatives. He expressed his view that Ngāti Raukawa would never allow a woman to take on a leadership role such as that of Chief Executive Officer of our rūnanga. I should add immediately that he did not make this statement with any degree of approval, quite the opposite in fact. However, he considered it to be a simple statement of fact. I was dismayed, even outraged. How could it possibly be that no women, no matter how well-qualified, could expect to win a top management position within an essentially Pākehā vehicle, an incorporated society, simply because it was our iwi rūnanga?

If he is correct, this is a prime illustration of what Kathie Irwin has described as “people taking a tikanga which relates to the marae ātea, and transferring its cultural power to another location in which it has no meaning”.<sup>49</sup> Irwin also makes a number of interesting points about the number of changes we see taking place on the marae ātea in terms of who can speak (sons of fathers who are still living, teina of tuakana who are still living, learners of the language, Pākehā men, some of whom have almost no language at all) while we continue to impose a blanket ban on women speaking. She observes:

We are currently watching the evolution of strange new cultural practices in which men are bonding to each other, through patriarchy, to give each other participatory rights across Māori and Pākehā culture, in ways which exclude Māori women.<sup>50</sup>

I am not advocating that Ngāti Raukawa women should have the right to speak on the marae ātea. But I do think that careful consideration should be given to such matters, by women and men, and explanations provided for when adaptations of tikanga should occur and when they should not.

I hope that my male relative’s assessment of his Ngāti Raukawa relatives is wrong. I hope that my sisters, my daughters and all my female relatives will be recognised for the strengths that they bring to any situation and not prevented from taking on particular roles by some spurious extension of tikanga. For in the end, it is the imposition of patriarchy which I believe to be the most damaging impact of colonisation.

What better divide and rule tactic than to turn one half of the Māori population against the other, to gain the collaboration of Māori men in throwing the hearts of Māori women to the ground? When that happens we will have been, as the Cheyenne suggest, truly conquered.

## Notes

- 1 (Traditional Cheyenne saying, cited in Bataille, M and Mullen Sands, K *American Indian Women* University of Nebraska Press, 1984)
- 2 (An anonymous white author, cited by Verna Kirkness in "Emerging Native Women" (1987-1988) 2 *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 409)
- 3 Kidwell, C.S, review of *Bright Eyes: The story of Susette la Fleesche, an Omaha Indian*, by Dorothy Clarke Wilson, *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 2 (Winter 1975): 118,122).
- 4 Gunn Allen, P *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Beacon Press, 1992) 2. Gunn Allen defines a gynocratic social system as one which is woman-centred. She provides a lengthy description of the main features of a gynocratic social system at pp 2-3.
- 5 Ibid, p 3.
- 6 La Duke, W cited in Jaimes, MA "American Indian Women at the Center of Indigenous Resistance in Contemporary North America" in Jaime, M (ed) *State of Native America* (1992) 319.
- 7 Monture-Angus, P *Thunder in my Soul: A Mohawk Woman Speaks* (Fernwood Publishing, 1995) 238.
- 8 Kirkness, V "Emerging Native Women" (1987-1988) 2 *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 408,410.
- 9 The following two sections are drawn in large part from Mikaere, A "Māori Women: Caught in the Contradictions of a Colonised Reality" (1994) 2 *Waikato Law Review* 125; Mikaere, A "The Balance Destroyed: The Consequences for Māori Women of the Colonisation of Tikanga Māori" (MJur Thesis, Waikato, 1995) and Mikaere, A "Collective Rights and Gender Issues: A Māori Women's Perspective" paper presented at the *Collective Human Rights of Pacific Peoples* conference, University of Auckland, August 1998.
- 10 Buck, P *The Coming of the Māori* (1958) 510.
- 11 Kahukiwa, R & Grace, P *Wahine Toa* (1984) 58.
- 12 "To us the dreamers are important" in Cox S (ed) *Public and Private Worlds* (1987) 59.
- 13 *Ako: Concepts and Learning in the Māori Tradition* (1982) 17-18.
- 14 Supra note 10, at 56-57.
- 15 Ibid, 57.
- 16 Jenkins, K "Reflections on the status of Māori women" (unpublished paper, 1986) 12.
- 17 Jenkins, K "Working paper on Māori women and social policy" written for the Royal Commission of Social Policy and quoted in the Report of the Royal Commission on Social Policy (1988) Vol III, 161.
- 18 Ethnographers such as Elsdon Best and Percy Smith, see my thesis, supra note 7 for a much fuller discussion of their work.
- 19 Monture-Angus, P supra note 5, 140-141.
- 20 Best, E *Māori Religion and Mythology* (1924) 74-75.
- 21 "Māori Women: Discourse, Projects and Mana Wahine" in Middleton, S & Jones, A (eds) *Women and Education in Aotearoa* 2 (1992) 34. Berys Heuer provides a classic example of the damaging effects of these male-centred reinterpretations of Māori creation stories in *Māori Women* (1972) 55: "Culturally, the role of women was made clear in the account of their creation. The first woman was formed out of a mound of earth and impregnated by her male creator with a life spirit. From this, woman was regarded as being a passive receptacle for the dominant life spirit".
- 22 Ibid, 48-49.
- 23 Ibid, 49.
- 24 Orange, C *The Treaty of Waitangi* (1987) 90.
- 25 Supra note 3.
- 26 Orange, supra note 22, 90 where it is noted that Major Bunbury refused to allow a Ngati Toa wahine rangatira to sign at Cloudy Bay. Her husband also refused to sign.
- 27 Rei, *Māori Women and the Vote* (1993) 8-9.
- 28 First the land was taken through confiscations carried out pursuant to the New Zealand Settlements Act 1863 and later via the operations of the Native Land Court, established by the Native Land Act 1865. Later, seas and waterways were taken through legislation beginning with the Oyster Fisheries Act 1867.
- 29 Pool, I *Te Iwi Māori: A New Zealand Population Past, Present and Projected* (1991) chapter 5.
- 30 These twin aims were spoken of by the Hon. H. Sewell, NZPD Vol 9, 187 0: 361.
- 31 For an account of how the principle of collectivism was undermined by the law, see the *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Native Land Laws* (1891) AJHR, G-1, xi.
- 32 Simpson, T *Te Riri Pakeha: WhiteMansAnger* (1986) 168-173.
- 33 Supra note 27, at 101.
- 34 Ibid, 153-154. Pool refers to the migration of Māori workers from rural areas to smaller centres such as Pukekohe, as having taken place throughout the first half of the twentieth century. However, the most significant urban migration took place in the decades immediately following the Second World War, being described as "perhaps the most rapid urbanward movement of a national population anywhere, at least until the end of the sixties" (ibid, 154).
- 35 The adoption provisions and parliamentary debates concerning them, discussed in Mikaere, A "Māori Women: Caught in the Contradictions of a Colonised Reality" supra note 7, are further evidence of this desire to remould the whanau.

- 36 Supra note 14, at 12.
- 37 Barrington, JM *Māori Schools in a Changing Society* (1974) 164.
- 38 Strong, TB “The Problem of Educating the Māori” in Jackson, PM *Māori and Education: Or the Education of Natives in New Zealand and its Dependencies* (1931) 192. For a general discussion of how the schools were discouraged from focusing too much on academic subjects, see Barrington, *ibid*, chapter 7 and Simon, J “The Place of Schooling in Māori-Pakeha Relations” (Ph. D Thesis, University of Auckland, 1990) chapter 4.
- 39 Supra note 35, at 176-177.
- 40 Supra note 36, at 100.
- 41 Te Awēkotuku, N *Mana Wahine Māori* (1991) 61.
- 42 *Nga Tangata Taumata Rau* (1990) 389.
- 43 *People of Many Peaks* (1990) 353.
- 44 McDonald, Penfold & Williams (eds) *Ko Kui Ma te Kaupapa* (1991) 685-7.
- 45 Ngata, A & Jones, P *Nga Moteatea* Part I (1928); Part II (1961); Part III (1970).
- 46 This account is drawn from Royal, *Kati Au i Konei: He Kohikohinga i nga Waiata a Ngati Toarangatira, a Ngati Raukawa* (1994) 30-35; Ngata, AT & Jones, PTH *Nga Moteatea* (Part 2) (1974) 142; and the writer’s grandmother, who was Erenora’s granddaughter.
- 47 Supra note 19, 48.
- 48 Evans, R “The Negation of Powerlessness: Māori Feminism, a Perspective” in *Hecate: Special Aoteroa/New Zealand Issue* Vol 20, no.2, 1994, 65.
- 49 Irwin, K “Towards Theories of Māori Feminisms” in Du Plessis, R (ed) *Feminist Voices* (1992) 18.
- 50 *Idem*.

# Constitutional Reform and Mana Wahine

Annette Sykes - Ngāti Pikiao



In 1984 at a national hui at Turangawaewae, Ngaruawahia, we asserted:

For Maori, the Treaty articulates and acknowledges our status as the tangata whenua of Aotearoa and it should be respected in a unique way in the country's constitutional system; it should give rise to legally enforceable rights to lands, forests, waters and fisheries. The Treaty gives recognition of Maori as an equal partner with the Crown, hence the necessity for existing constitutional structures to be reformed. Above all the Treaty symbolically reflects, for Maori, the distinctive identification of being Maori, te mana Maori motuhake, mana tangata, mana wairua, mana whenua.

It was further noted that an essential ingredient in constitutional equity is that of equality between the sexes. To this end, Maori groups and individuals asserted the need to recognise principles of equality and justice enunciated in the many Treaty submissions made to the hui. We sought the recognition of these principles, and that they also be applied to Maori women, and endorsed the following remit accordingly:

'That because Maori women constitute over 50 percent of the tangata whenua there must be equal representation, in all areas of decision making in the future.'

A rudimentary analysis of how we have managed to; assert our perceptions of the Treaty guarantees over the last decade or so within the legal and constitutional structure of Aotearoa, suggests that we have at least managed to bring these matters into the political agenda.

There is a very real need, I would suggest, in the present constitutional debate for reform of our electoral system for the kaupapa enunciated in the Treaty to be brought to the forefront, particularly as it relates to the need for constitutional adjustment in this country, and for the need to recognise the participation of Maori women, as of right, in the constitutional arrangements of Aotearoa.

A perusal of the extensive writings on the Treaty reveals that the status, existence and rights of Maori women guaranteed under the Treaty has never been addressed not actively protected through legislation. It is perhaps this issue which has been the motivating influenced behind a recent Maori women's claim to the Waitangi Tribunal.

The essence of the claim, brought on behalf of the past presidents of the Maori Women's Welfare League, some young Maori women including Donna Awatere, Ripeka Evans and Paparangi Reid, supported by Te Runanga o Ngati Hine and Nga Kuia of Ngati Hine including Lady Rose Henare, is to bring to the forefront of the current Treaty jurisprudence the need to look at notions of governance in Aotearoa. In particular, the claim looks at the exclusionary practices which inhibit and prevent participation by Maori women in the tribal models for self-determination that have been erected under New Zealand legislation, and the erosion this has had on the mana wahine in te ao Maori.

Maori women have been at the forefront of efforts to maintain that kaupapa Maori should form the basis of human rights in this country. It is not surprising therefore that Maori women are the first group of individuals who have collectively, across tribal boundaries, now challenged the very essence of the constitutional arrangements that exist in Aotearoa.

Maori women have constantly maintained that all legislation and institutions should be consistent with kaupapa Maori, which was in place long before 1840. The fact is that the rangatira who signed the Treaty bestowed mana on the Pakeha and their rangatira queen rather than visa versa. Those rangatira legitimised the British presence in Aotearoa. Tangata Whenua held their mana intact at the time the Treaty was signed. This historical fact vindicates our claim of sovereign status of women within Maori society and full status as tangata whenua in New Zealand, sharing all rights claimed by us as a people under the Treaty.

As Maori women, our perception of the circumstances of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi cannot help but be influenced and inspired by the personal action and involvement of our tupuna wahine in the solemn compact that was negotiated. It is not generally well known that Maori women signed the Treaty. They included Ana Hamu, the widow of Te Koki who was the original patron of the Paihia Mission, and Te Rau o Te Rangi (Kahe) of Te Whare Kauri and Ngati Toa at Port Nicholson. The same Te Rau o Te Rangi swam from Kapiti Island to the mainland with her baby strapped on her shoulders to warn her people of invaders from Kapiti. There was Rangi Topeora, an Arikitaipairu of Ngati Raukawa and Ngati Toa, a strategist in Te Rauparaha's military, Rere O Maki, a woman of rank from Wanganui, and Ereonora, wife of the chief of Nopera of Te Rarawa.

It is significant that Maori women were party to the covenant which established the modern Aotearoa New Zealand nation, in the hopes of our tupuna for the future. This has been a major revelation to contemporary Maori women, as an indication of our status and mana and the attitude of our tribes towards women in pre-European times. These facts provide a starting point for any kaupapa which has as its objective the advancement of the social and economic status of Maori women. What is startling (though affirming of the mana of Maori women) is the information revealing that more women of high rank and standing could and should have been signatories if they had been allowed by government agents, such as Major Thomas Banbury, to sign the Treaty. Banbury however refused to allow the signing of the daughter of Te Pehi. The celebrated Ngati Toa chief had been of paramount importance in Cloudy Bay and further south before his death some years earlier. The woman was naturally angered by this insult.

Her husband, one of Nohorua's three nephews and possibly inferior to her in rank, would not sign, probably as a consequence. This is a dramatic illustration of the imported cultural values and attitudes imposed by representatives of the English Settler Government. It is perhaps the first recorded example of the continuing practice of Pakeha men imposing their monoculturally based decisions and restrictions on Maori women. It is a specific example of the place of women in the eyes of British men.

The recent furore within Te Arawa as to the current Te Arawa Trust Board elections is a further hangover of this insidious attitude.

It is startling, in this so-called age of enlightenment, that Maori women are still being inhibited by this colonial mentality which has infiltrated, very deeply, the hearts and minds of many of our Te Arawa fathers and brothers.

The Trust Boards were created during the 20th century in response to claims for compensation, by different tribal groups, as a consequence of policies of colonisation which were guaranteed as of right to them under the Treaty.

In a series of legislation, which has its beginnings in 1924, various tribal administration systems were established by the Crown for the purposes of managing and accounting to the Crown the compensation agreements entered into. The Te Arawa Trust Board is no exception to this process of historical rectification for the past evil deeds of the Crown.

The Trust Boards then have their own origins in Crown Legislation, although there seems to be acute confusion as to this historical fact. The Te Arawa Trust Board has, since its inception, asserted that *te kawa o Te Arawa* denies the right of Maori women, descendants of Te Arawa waka, to participate fully in these Crown created tribal administration structures. The argument is difficult to sustain given the historical origins of these administration systems. Rather, access to these institutions is denied as a consequence of the patriarchal methods of decision making which permeate Pakeha power structure. Is this fair?

I call upon us as Maori women to look carefully at our own prejudices that have been learnt, I suggest, from our experiences within this colonial framework rather than from a real understanding of our own tikanga and the essence of ourselves. Our own history abounds with stories of the feats of our tupuna wahine. My own inspiration, as a young Maori woman, derives not necessarily from those brothers and koroua who I respect and value in the spirit of whanaungatanga but from the leadership qualities and the nurturing abilities that my own kuia Tawhitoariki has passed to me which are indicative and reflective of our tupuna wahine of Ngati Makino to whom we have an immediate and direct link. The legends of Hinehopu, within Rotoiti, and Hinemoa in Rotorua, should of themselves affirm the status and rank that Te Arawa women enjoyed well before the process of colonisation. That brilliance should not be denied a participation in our tribal development. It is incumbent on us as a generation of new leaders to reclaim and revitalise our tikanga so as to assert an equal participation by Te Arawa women within the current tribal administration systems.

The rights derive not just from an affirmation of the Treaty of Waitangi but from careful consideration of *those* rights and obligations that are entrenched in our traditions and in the recordings of our tupuna that are entrenched in our very stories of creation.

If argument about our mana wahine begins from 1840, this confines the argument within the parameters of Pakeha history and its British based version of mortality. I urge you to go deeper into the past to recapture the spirit of Hineahuone, the first human form created from the male and heavenly element, the female earthly element, who brought the power of growth and creativity and Hinetitama the first born of Tane and Hineahuone the dawn binding earthly night to earthly day. When she found she was the survivor of incest Hinetitama fled in her shame to the underworld and now denies immortality, holding power over life and death. Murirangiwhenua, Maui's grandmother, gave him both her jawbone and the karakia both of which he used to fish up Te Ika a Maui, the North Island. Murirangiwhenua acts as an inspiration to courage and adventure. Hineteiwaiwa is the patroness of females, the labours of women such as weaving. Female children were also dedicated to her as she presided over childbirth. We earth our mana wahine to Papatuanuku the earth mother and her mauri. From this whakapapa Māori women established their identity as being the land itself, not merely the people of the land as in the general translation of tangata whenua.

The rights which are encapsulated in the concepts of 'tino rangatiratanga' and 'mana motuhake' were not surrendered to the Pakeha when the Treaty of Waitangi was signed in 1840. The Treaty simply reaffirmed the rights, which Maori had always had, and gave some limited rights to Pakeha to look after themselves, subject always to our tino rangatiratanga.

As Professor Biggs of Ngati Maniapoto has highlighted, the distinguishing feature of 'rangatiratanga' was taking care of one's own people. The suffix 'tanga' formed a new word defining the qualities of the original 'rangatira'. Thus it is entirely consistent with notions of rangatiratanga that an essential theme in the power relationships, defined within the Treaty, is that Pakeha should be given the right to govern themselves within the new Aotearoa/New Zealand nation state while retaining and preserving all existing rights and obligations to Maori.

The Treaty thus recognised that we had tino rangatiratanga - not only recognised it, guaranteed it.

The Treaty also stipulated things, both tangible and intangible, over which our tino rangatiratanga re-affirmed the authority of Maori to have both independence and self-determination. This was summed up by Sir James Henare in 1987 when he said: *'Tino rangatiratanga, as used in the Treaty, means the chieftainship over all their taonga, tangible and intangible, animate and inanimate, the Maori way of life.'*

If supreme laws of universal application to indigenous peoples are to be ratified, the measure of the effectiveness must be the statement of principle in the Declaration of Independence, affirmed in the Treaty of Waitangi. For it is in these documents that the two sovereign partners, the Crown and the Maori people, laid down the scope of each party's law-making power. It described and guaranteed what authority was to be retained by the indigenous Maori and what authority the colonisers were to enjoy.

The exercise of kawanatanga has come to mean almost exclusive Pakeha monopoly, authority and power over decisions that impact daily on Maori people's lives. Just as the Treaty inspired out tupuna to defend their mana, the present developments in international law enspirits us to reclaim those usurped obligations set out in the Declaration of Independence and enshrined in the Treaty of Waitangi.

The present government of New Zealand, through the Crown, rejects our views of indigenous rights, for it claims that Maori ceded legal and political sovereignty to them through the Treaty of Waitangi and through subsequent (illegal and immoral) proclamations that they made following the signing of the Treaty.

However, it is our contention that the present spotlight on indigenous people's rights in the international arena provides a useful opportunity to revisit the obligations of the 'founding documents' of Aotearoa/New Zealand and to see how they can be accorded prominence in the day to day constitutional arrangements of the Aotearoa/New Zealand nation state. It has been disappointing to note from transcripts of submissions made at recent United Nation forums that the New Zealand Government claims that Maori only have rights accorded to them by the state. Their assertions that we do not independently exist because we are now 'New Zealanders' cannot be sustained in the light of the historical development of this nation. Their assertions that we have no special status or rights as tangata whenua is blatantly wrong in light of both the Declaration of Independence and the Treaty of Waitangi, nor can it be sustained in light of the International Covenants to which New Zealand is a signatory. It is this tension that is at the heart of the conflict between indigenous representatives and state representatives on this issue. It also reflects the 'talking past each other' that has enshrined the New Zealand nation state's notions of governance since execution of the Treaty in 1840. We assert that the Treaty is an affirmation of Maori sovereignty over our homes, our lives,

estates and esteemed institutions and possessions. It alone is the formula that expresses how power and authority is to be distributed and limited between the Pakeha and Maori. The essence of the guarantee of Maori sovereignty is the right of self-determination, the right to control, administer and decide our own destiny. This principal is at the heart of the United Nations Declaration on Indigenous Peoples also. It is therefore worthy of our fullest support.

It is incumbent upon us as tangata whenua therefore to not only participate fully in the development of the Draft Declaration of Indigenous Peoples, but to now initiate a process of ratification of the Draft Declaration which reflects our traditional status and gives expression to the guarantees in the Declaration of Independence 1835 and the Treaty of Waitangi. We are on the threshold of the decade of indigenous peoples which at the very least will create an environment of goodwill amongst ourselves as indigenous peoples throughout the world for this to occur. What is required is a process of consultation, deliberation, and construction of a process of ratification of one of the most significant developments in Human Rights Law.

Moving beyond our deepest espousals as mothers and as women to consider the appropriate protocols and to canvass the ratification of the Treaty in other forums, is now eminently pressing, regardless of the difficulties.

No reira:

Ma te whenua, ma te wahine, ka mate te tangata,     *For land, for women, the people perish,*  
Ma te wahine, ka ora te iwi!                             *For women the people live.*

The tapu of the Whare Tangata has silenced us somewhat. We hear the Treaty of Waitangi speak, now let the Whare Tangata speak.

Te Kore  
Te Pohurihuri  
Te Po Tangotango  
Te Po te Kitea  
Ki te wheiao, ki te Ao Marama

TIHEI MAURIORA!

*From the world of chaos, striving to the first dawn.*

# Claiming our Ethical Space:

**A Mana Wahine Conceptual Framework for Discussing  
Genetic Modification**

Jessica Hutchings



## WHAKARĀPOPOTO KORERO

*Kua tae te wā kia āta whakatuwheratia te tono, te tūhono me ētahi atu ki roto i tētahi anga kōrero kia āta kōrerotia ngā kaupapa o te raweke ira. Ko te kaupapa o tēnei tuhinga kia tūhono atu me ētahi momo reo mana wahine kia āhei ai te kōrero te whakawhitiwhiti whakaaro mō tēnei momo hangarau hou. He mea whakatū i te wā i puta tuatahi ai ngā kōrero ki roto i te Kōmihana mō te raweke ira ki roto o Aotearoa (RCGM). Kāre hoki te reo o te wahine Māori i whiria mai i taua wā i roto i ngā whakataunga o te mana whakahaere, me te mātauranga. Ko te kaupapa ia o tēnei tuhinga he whakaatu i te anga o tā te wahine Māori titiro. I roto i tā te wahine Māori anga titiro mō tenei kaupapa nui ka ara ake ētahi atu āhuetanga piripono, taumarumarū ki waenga i te mana o te wahine me te pūtaiao. Ka hono atu tēnei tuhinga ki ngā puputu whakaaro o te wahine Māori hāngai ki te GM me te whakaatu i tā te wahine Māori kaupapa whakarite mō te taiao. Ko te anga, ngā pātai, ngā whakataunga ka whakaatutia ki roto i tēnei tuhinga he wāhi whakaaro noa, kia werohia ngā ritenga whānui mō te taiao, ā, huri i te ao whānui.*

## ABSTRACT

There is an urgent need to open up, invite and join with others in a claimed ethical space to critically debate the issues around genetic modification. This article weaves with other mana wahine voices and expressions and claims an ethical space to specifically discuss this new technology. It was developed at the time a Royal Commission on Genetic Modification conducted a debate into genetic modification in Aotearoa. This process did not account for the views of Māori women and perpetuated Māori involvement in existing dominant relations of power and knowledge. This article aims to make visible views pertinent to mana wahine regarding genetic modification through the presentation of a mana wahine conceptual framework. Through the mana wahine conceptual framework critical focus areas and specific questions with regard to genetic modification emerge that reveal wider ethical issues regarding mana wahine and science. The article draws on interviews conducted with Māori women regarding genetic modification and presents a mana wahine agenda for science. The framework and questions and recommendations presented in this article play a small part in challenging dominant ideologies involved in science in Aotearoa and globally.

## INTRODUCTION

We don't need anyone else developing the tools which will help us come to terms with who we are. We can and will do this work. Real power lies with those who design the tools - it always has. The power is ours. Through the process of developing such theories we will contribute to our empowerment as Māori women, moving forwards in our struggles for our people, our lands, our world, ourselves. (Irwin, 1992:5)

Mana wahine is about intellect; it is about how we define ourselves and the space and parameters we place on that definition. Mana wahine discourse has claimed and continues to claim ethical space where analysis and critical discussion is required. They are about resistance and emancipation. More so they challenge processes of colonisation and apply a gender analysis to situations that challenge current hegemonic colonial masculinist ideologies.<sup>1</sup> Mana wahine theory provides a space from which to locate, predict and provide an analysis relevant to the aspirations of Māori women working within mana wahine frameworks (Pihama, 2001). Linda Tuhiwai Smith confirms the validity of the mana wahine space as a place to develop our analysis and as a key place of emancipation. Smith notes the following:

The challenge for Māori women in the 1990s is to assume control over the interpretation of our struggles and to begin to theorise our experiences in ways which make sense for us and which may come to make sense for other women. In helping to determine how that interpretation might be advanced, it is worthwhile analysing the kinds of struggles in which Māori women have been engaged and to set them more explicitly within a Māori orientation to the world. This does not mean rejecting all feminist theories. Rather it means that we, as Māori women, should begin with an understanding of our own condition and apply analyses which can give insight into the complexities of our world. Consequently, the first task of any theory is to make sense of the reality of the women who live within its framework. The second task is to provide women with a framework which will assist in emancipating them from racism, sexism, poverty and other oppressions. (Smith, 1992: 34)

The purpose of this paper is to claim a mana wahine ethical space specifically regarding genetic modification (GM). To develop any form of analysis of GM with the absence of mana wahine voices is to develop an incomplete picture of the technology and its associated risks and concerns. This paper was developed at the time a Royal Commission on Genetic Modification (RCGM) conducted a debate into GM in Aotearoa. This process did not account for the views of Māori women and perpetuated Māori involvement in existing hegemonies. This paper aims to make visible views pertinent to mana wahine regarding GM by drawing from the voices of Māori women engaged in the GM debate.

This paper begins by discussing mana wahine and GM then presents the structure of a possible framework for analysis. In weaving the foundations of the framework, an overview of mana wahine discourse, indigenous and Māori peoples' concern with regard to GM, and a summary of mana wahine voices discussing GM are presented. From the weaving of these three areas emerges a mana wahine conceptual framework. The framework presents critical areas to focus the analysis. To highlight the working nature of the framework, specific mana wahine based questions are developed from these critical areas with regard to GM. These questions reveal wider ethical issues with regard to mana wahine and science and lead to a discussion on a mana wahine science agenda. The framework, questions and discussion presented in this paper represent a small part in challenging dominant colonial masculinist ideologies that dominate and control science. Recommendations are also made for further work in this area.

## MANA WAHINE AND GENETIC MODIFICATION

Mana wahine voices are opposing and speaking out against GM. However, while strong, they are not recognised as *legitimate* Māori voices for inclusion in the GM debate. For example, Māori positions of authority within Crown processes that are regulating the GM debate are, and have been, occupied by Māori purporting dominant colonial values and ideologies. Given that these positions of authority are part of the dominant system for regulating GM in Aotearoa, I am not surprised that mana wahine voices have been excluded and that the voices of those supporting hegemonic colonial masculinist ideologies have been given predominance and legitimacy. In my article, *Molecular Kaitiakitanga* (Hutchings, 2001:10) I discussed how the Māori GM debate is being dominated by patriarchal ideologies, with vital issues of relevance to mana wahine being excluded. I noted the following:

Within Māoridom the GM debate is falling victim to patriarchal ways in terms of who participates how they participate and the issues being placed on the table. It is my deepest disappointment and concern that vital and important issues being debated in the south such as the connection between women and biodiversity, globalisation, biopiracy are often gate kept by those Māori enjoying the fruits of recent Treaty settlements, good salaries and positions of power. Is it too long ago, too painful, too threatening to current positions of some Māori to recall the aftermath of colonisation that we live in?

Clear mana wahine voices with regard to GM are coming from the roopu, Ngā Wāhine Tiaki o Te Ao, who gained interested person's status in the RCGM debate in 2001. This roopu was formed by a group of Māori women concerned about protecting their kaitiaki status with regard to GM. Its membership consists of mothers, artists, filmmakers, doctors, academics, activists, scientists and environmentalists. With regard to GM, Ngā Wāhine Tiaki o Te Ao stated in their submission to the RCGM that:

Aotearoa is Māori land, and therefore any organism grown from it is subject to tikanga Māori which provides a collective basis from which to properly care for the environment and distribute resources. Anything created in Aotearoa will be subject to Māori claims for ownership as kaitiaki, furthermore we will continue to exercise our rights as Māori and prevent the introduction of GM and GMO experimentation in Aotearoa. We expressly do not give permission for our intellectual property to be used for the purposes of GM and GMO experimentation. (Ngā Wāhine Tiaki o Te Ao, 2001: 1)

Māori women have a specific role to play as kaitiaki in regard to ira tangata. "Within tikanga Māori, we also hold key roles in protecting whakapapa, mauri, ira, and tapu" (ibid., 6). I note the following in regard to Māori women, kaitiakitanga and GM:

Within tikanga Māori (Māori culture), Māori women hold unique roles in the protection of mauri (life force), tapu (sacredness) and whakapapa (genealogy). As a Māori woman I am empowered to state that our cultural essence and survival demand opposition to genetic engineering (GE) and biotechnology. While yet struggling to rescue traditional lands, waters and culture from desecration by colonisation, the assumption of the kaitiaki cloak requires we employ the wisdom of our ancient lores to protect the greatest and creative whole of all - the genome. (Hutchings, 2001: 9)

## STRUCTURE OF THE MANA WAHINE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The mana wahine conceptual framework that follows has been developed to bring a critical focus to the area of GM relevant to mana wahine. The framework ensures that areas of importance to us such as decolonisation<sup>2</sup> and emancipation are central to the framework's analysis. Prior to presenting the mana wahine conceptual framework I will present and discuss its structure. Once the mana wahine conceptual framework is presented the critical focus areas emerging from the framework are discussed.

The structure of the mana wahine conceptual framework as presented in Figure 1 is represented as harakeke growing upon Papatūānuku and interacting with Te Taiao.

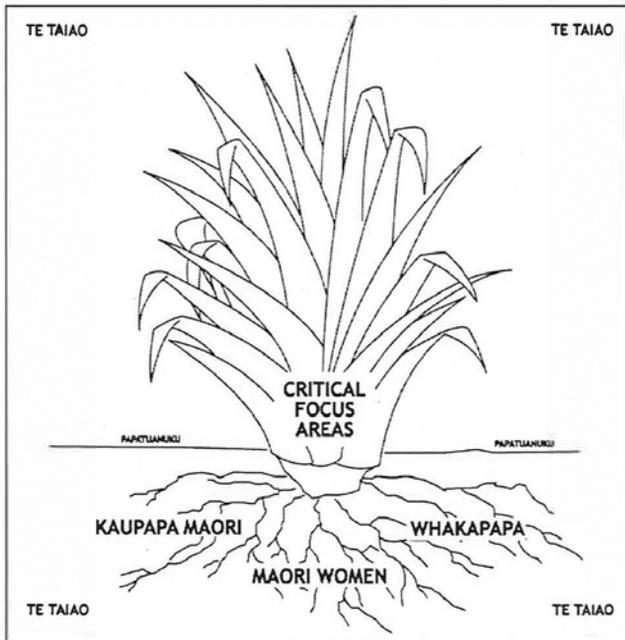


Figure 1 Structure of the Mana Wahine Conceptual Framework

This representation is pertinent, as harakeke is a dynamic and vibrant plant used by Māori women in diverse and creative ways. The leaves and fine strong fibres of the harakeke have a multiplicity of uses. I liken these many uses of the harakeke to the diverse herstories, realities and stories of Māori women. Mick Pendergrast describes the fibre of the harakeke as providing Māori with a material that was multi-purposeful and integral to tikanga. He notes the following:

It [harakeke] gave them [Māori] the raw materials for making baskets for carrying food from the gardens, platters to eat from, containers to carry soil and sand for their cultivations and to build up the fortifications around their pa [settlements], lines and nets for fishing, mats for sleeping on and to cover floors, bands to hold food in their ovens, lashings for canoes and houses, snares to trap birds, sails for canoes, sandals to protect feet and, according to legend, even ropes to catch the sun. (Pendergrast, 1994: 7)

There is a long herstory associated with harakeke that includes whakapapa, preparation, manufacturing and the initiation of Māori girls to the Wharepora (House of Weaving). This herstory is familiar to the herstories of Māori women that are woven through whakapapa and emerge from the land. Like the herstories of Māori women, harakeke is diverse, with some varieties having drooping leaves, others growing leaves stiff and upright as spears. The texture to touch also varies from a silky fineness to a waxy and coarse texture. Some traditional Māori names for varieties of harakeke include, Matawai, Taniwha, Takaiapu, Makaweroa, Pango and Motu-o-nui (Hindmarsh, 1999).

As seen in Figure 1, the structure of the mana wahine conceptual framework grows and emerges from Papatūānuku. The roots represent the foundation, continual life essence

and energy of the conceptual framework and are defined as whakapapa, kaupapa Māori<sup>3</sup> and Māori women. The framework weaves with the dimensions of Māori women, kaupapa Māori and the cosmological order of whakapapa. These various dimensions inform the mana wahine analysis of the framework. The nature and interpretation of these dimensions is fluid and dynamic and can vary among those telling stories within the framework.

Whakapapa is a key aspect of the conceptual framework. Whakapapa identifies the position of Māori women as being one with Papatūānuku. This is seen in the diagram where the roots of Māori women are intertwined and supported by Papatūānuku. Alongside whakapapa and Māori women is kaupapa Māori for this provides the Māori framework or lens through which analysis is conducted. It is pertinent to this framework that analysis be conducted within a Māori worldview. This means framing research within a kaupapa Māori epistemology and being able to identify analyses and the impacts of those analyses that occur outside of a kaupapa Māori framework. To maintain the mauri of this framework, Māori women need to be involved throughout its development. The placement of Māori women within the framework allows them to define and tell their stories and analyse the situations pertinent to them. The framework has been developed in part to make visible Māori women's voices.

The harakeke emerges above ground representing light and clarity of the analysis that occurs from the framework. The analysis is pertinent to Māori women as it is sourced from kaupapa Māori, Māori women, whakapapa and grown from Papatūānuku. The leaves of the harakeke are the critical focus areas and orientate the analysis that emerges from the framework. It is important to note that those outside of a Māori women's worldview are outsiders to this framework. If those outside of a Māori worldview do ask these questions they will, by the nature of being outsiders be unable to interpret the answers congruent to a mana wahine analysis or worldview. This position therefore excludes non-Māori from conducting analysis through this framework. This framework is grounded in whakapapa, as is represented in the diagram, and those without whakapapa are also not positioned within this framework. Similarly, those who are not Māori women cannot participate in this framework, as Māori women are an essential dimension of this framework.

## WEAVING THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE FRAMEWORK

The mana wahine conceptual framework identifies critical focus areas pertinent to a mana wahine analysis. The critical focus areas of the framework have been developed from mana wahine discourse, indigenous and Māori peoples' concerns with regard to GM, and the voices of Māori women (Hutchings, 2003). I have summarised these areas below.

### Mana Wahine Discourse

Although diverse, the writings and thoughts of Māori women on mana wahine have commonalities. In the first instance mana wahine provides a space for Māori women to identify and reclaim Māori women's knowledge and analysis; it provides a kaupapa Māori analysis that focuses on issues relevant to Māori women. Mana wahine discourse recognises the unique place of Māori women as indigenous women living in a colonised land. It is an inclusive kaupapa Māori discourse that allows for diversity of sexuality, cultural understanding, urban or rural realities and tangata, whanau, hapū and iwi realities. Mana wahine is founded upon matauranga Māori and calls for an honouring of the Treaty of Waitangi and challenges hegemonic colonial systems and ideologies.

## Indigenous and Māori Peoples' and GM

Māori concerns reflect the wider concerns of indigenous peoples with regard to GM. These concerns centre around the use of indigenous knowledge by researchers to access indigenous flora and fauna that may be useful in the process of GM. The lack of consultation and decision making power with regard to GM and the lack of benefits, such as monetary benefits and the transfer of technology and skills that are likely to accrue as a result of these inventions also concern Māori and indigenous peoples. Many Māori and indigenous peoples feel that they have and will continue to lose control of their indigenous knowledge and genetic resources to transnational biotechnology corporations. Concern also relates to the western-based market ideology that is driving the GM industry and the commodification of biodiversity resulting in mono-cropping and loss of genetic diversity. Also of concern to Māori and indigenous peoples is the inability of intellectual property laws to protect indigenous or collective knowledge and interests in indigenous flora and fauna, whilst these same laws provide large transnational biotechnology corporations with the tools to increase their profits. In addition many Māori and indigenous peoples see GM as breaching cultural values and tikanga hence causing moral and spiritual offence; for many indigenous peoples, GM does not support the view of an interconnected worldview.

## Mana Wahine Voices and GM

As part of a doctoral research programme the concerns of Māori women with regard to GM were collected (Hutchings, 2003). These concerns focused on a number of key areas. Firstly there was the need to be aware of other indigenous women's analyses of GM specifically the impact GM was having on traditional ways of knowing and doing. Secondly some Māori women discussed the importance of networking and weaving connections with other indigenous women to share knowledge and strategies as essential to building a strong movement to oppose the technology. Thirdly, Māori women talked about a range of ora (well being) issues relating predominately to food, health and children including the safety of GM technology for future generations. A key concern here was the lack of accessible information regarding the safety of GM food and the inability of the majority of Māori to access non-GM food or organic food, given poor food labelling and their low economic status. Another key concern was that the neo liberal market was driving the development of GM based health care options at the expense of more holistic preventative health care options. Further issues raised by Māori women related to kaitiakitanga, tikanga and Papatūānuku.

Māori women interviewed described the nature of their kaitiaki role. One stated that:

First and foremost it's [GM] about my responsibilities as a kaitiaki for my whanau, my hapū and my iwi and those are responsibilities I take seriously. The role of kaitiakitanga is inextricably linked to whakapapa, and basically that role ultimately determines what I do in my life and what I do in relation to my children and future generations. So for me, GM represents a threat to all those things that are important to me as Māori because it has the capacity to basically undermine all the things that are important to me as Māori.

The Māori women interviewed expressed a connection with the natural environment that is holistic, living and breathing. Many defined two relationships with Papatūānuku, one as her child and one as Papatūānuku herself. One described the imagery of the relationship Māori women have with her. She noted:

I've got this image of us being tied to Papatūānuku, we're part of the earth, how we perceive ourselves here and part of our traditions. I have this image of being part of her, that we stand on her in the sense of being part of her and so we see ourselves being tied to a bigger universe.

Other Māori women made the following comments with regard to GM and Papatūānuku:

You know, instinctually there was something wrong with that [GM], and I can only assume that that's part of my relationship to the earth, te whare tangata to Papatūānuku and my responsibility. I was never taught about those sort [Papatūānuku responsibilities] of things I guess you instinctively grow up with it. When she [Papatūānuku] is being raped so are we. And while it might not be that we are physically being raped, we still bear all the stresses and strains, and distress of that feeling. So if damage is being done to her, then damage is being done to us, and it's a spiritual connection to the whenua. But, the strength of that connection is what makes us so passionate about what we do, why we do it, how we think, which makes us passionate about creating a good future for our kids.

Interviewees also discussed GM disrupting whakapapa as well as breaching tikanga Māori. Many raised questions such as: What impact does GM have on mauri? What are the boundaries we are transgressing with regard to GM? What are our cultural boundaries? What is going to be modified according to our cultural make-up? Another woman discussed tikanga as providing the criteria to assess the benefits of GM. She noted the following:

So I guess there's a lesson in it for us about, you know, in that process on the one hand challenging colonisation, challenging imperialism; on the other hand in the process of claiming our own kind of understandings and our own sense of our rights and responsibilities in relation to the environment and that, I guess for me, you know, there are clear codes in our culture which suggest that we don't have the right to be manipulating with the mana, the tapu, the hau, the mauri of other entities.

These Māori women also raised mana wahine issues including the impact GM would have on the lives of Māori women. Many saw GM as a direct breach of their Te Tiriti o Waitangi rights and perceived a need for mana wahine analyses of GM to be visible. The lack of Māori women involved at the decision making level with regard to GM was also raised. The voices of these Māori women interviewed leads me to conclude that Māori women hold unique positions as kaitiaki, nurturers and re-builders of indigenous knowledge and have the right to protect and control the dissemination of that knowledge. Furthermore it is a mana wahine right that Māori women are able to provide an analysis that is relevant and accounted for regarding GM.

#### MANA WAHINE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The mana wahine conceptual framework presented in this paper is a part of the wider mana wahine movement towards decolonisation. Given this, it is important that the mana wahine conceptual framework be developed outside of current dominant colonial masculinist hegemonies, remain a part of the decolonisation agenda and contribute to growing the mana wahine discourse. I now elaborate on each of these points in turn.

## The Development of Views Outside of Hegemonic Colonial Masculinist Ideologies

It is important for Māori women to develop views on GM outside of hegemonic colonial masculinist ideologies to allow issues of power and representation to be visible and to create space for Māori women to choose their methods and means of participation. The development of views outside of hegemonic colonial masculinist ideologies also provides Māori women with space to organise and mobilise themselves.

### Supporting the Decolonising Agenda

In any discussion of the assessment of new technologies, it is important to make moves away from the colonising reality in which Māori live. One way would be to support a decolonising agenda. This agenda moves towards a tino rangatiratanga<sup>4</sup> reality for Māori, is developed by Māori for Māori and is fluid and dynamic in regards to what it includes and excludes at any point in time.

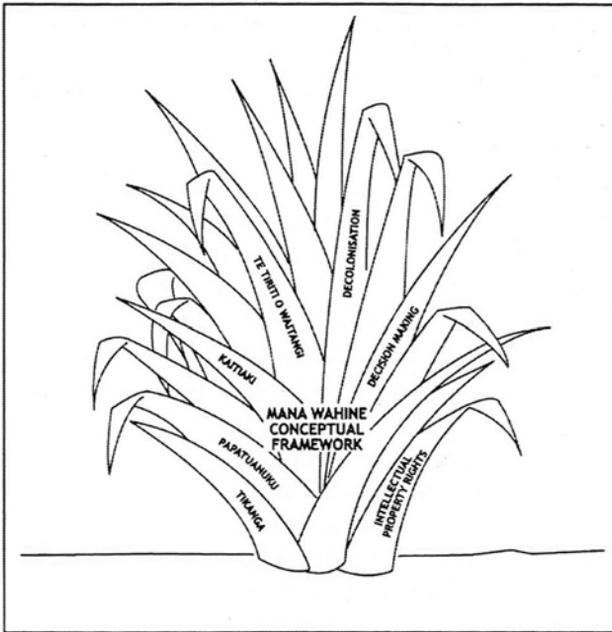


Figure 2 Mana Wahine Conceptual Framework

### Contribution to Mana Wahine

Any mana wahine framework must allow for a diversity of opinions and expressions and contribute to growing the body of mana wahine theory. As wahine takatapui,<sup>5</sup> it is important that mana wahine theory allows for diverse sexualities to be expressed, diverse opinions to be visible and that Māori disconnected from their whakapapa are included. It is also important that Māori women do not exclude other Māori women who do not support mana wahine but rather recognise and support where they are on their journey in claiming mana wahine.

## The Mana Wahine Conceptual Framework

The mana wahine conceptual framework is visually represented in Figure 2. The framework identifies the critical focus areas of; tikanga, Papatūānuku, kaitiaki, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, decolonisation, decision-making and intellectual property rights.

It is my intention that the critical focus areas of the framework are broad, given that mana wahine theory within the academy is young and very much in the developmental stages. The critical focus areas of tikanga, Papatūānuku, kaitiaki, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, decolonisation, decision-making and intellectual property rights are the key areas to engage with when using the framework to develop a perspective or an analysis about an event, discourse or situation. The broad nature of these focus areas allows iwi, hapū, whanau and tangata nuances to be accounted for and to actively participate in shaping the discourse of the focus areas. To engage with this framework it is necessary for others applying the framework to make it relevant and specific to their field. For example the framework could be applied to areas of health, education, justice, language revitalisation, Treaty settlements, and environmental management. When using the framework to engage with the discourse of mana wahine and GM, I have used the critical focus areas to guide the development of specific questions. Others who choose to use this mana wahine conceptual framework may also consider using the critical focus areas to develop questions pertinent to their field to assist in forming a relevant and critical analysis.

The questions I have developed relate to each critical focus area of the mana wahine conceptual framework. For example in the critical focus area of tikanga I ask the following questions with regard to mana wahine and GM; is this technology congruent with our diverse iwi, hapū, and whanau tikanga? And do the canons of tikanga Māori such as whakapapa and mauri approve the use of this technology? With regard to Papatūānuku I ask the following questions; how does this technology protect the uha of Papatūānuku? Is the relationship between Māori women and Papatūānuku enhanced through the use of this technology? Under the critical focus area of kaitiaki I have developed the following questions; as kaitiaki, do Māori women approve the use of this technology? And what are the key elements the mana wahine kaitiaki role protects? In the critical focus area of Te Tiriti o Waitangi I asked; does the development and implementation of this technology endorse our Te Tiriti rights? Has this technology been developed with the full participation of Māori exercising their Te Tiriti rights? And is Te Tiriti o Waitangi being used as one of the decision making tools in the development of this technology? In the area of decolonisation, the following questions were developed; how does this technology assist in the decolonisation of Māori? How does this technology challenge hegemonic colonial masculinist ideologies? In the critical focus area of decision-making I asked; in what ways are Māori women recognised and supported as decision-making participants in the development of this technology? Are mana wahine perspectives visible and validated with regard to this technology? Finally in the critical focus area of intellectual property rights the following questions were developed; does this technology support Māori women protecting their cultural and intellectual property? Is our biodiversity protected from commodification?

The questions that I have developed from the critical focus areas of the mana wahine conceptual framework support a critically informed discussion of mana wahine and GM. For use of this framework elsewhere I recommend that the mana wahine conceptual framework and the critical focus areas be used to guide the development of questions and analysis to the relevant field being studied.

When applying the mana wahine conceptual framework to the area of GM and working with the questions from the critical focus areas, wider issues with regard to mana wahine and science emerge. The questions developed from the framework also contribute to a wider understanding of GM and open up space to develop and explore a discourse relevant to mana wahine and GM.

## MANA WAHINE SCIENCE AGENDA

Currently mana wahine voices represent counter hegemonic responses to GM and the strategic direction of science in Aotearoa. It is important that mana wahine based discourse and actions influence and inform those in the science community, governments and businesses interfacing with science. Mana wahine discourse with regard to science specifically calls for Māori knowledge systems to be supported and located within Māori communities and mana wahine knowledge to be accepted as valid and included in science policy and the ethical assessments of science projects. It is essential that mana wahine voices are included as they are a critical part of a wider Māori discourse and provide an analysis that is relevant and essential to the direction of science in Aotearoa.

Furthermore it is also critical that diverse and multiple sources of expertise and knowledge are accessed and used when formulating science policy. This would mitigate against monocultural knowledge informing science policy. The inclusion of diverse voices and knowledges will ensure that diverse expressions and multiple ways of knowing inform the development of science policy and do not perpetuate colonial and masculinist hegemonic understandings to dominant. Given that biotechnology and bioprospecting have and continue to misappropriate indigenous knowledge with regard to biodiversity, the development of any science agenda needs to uphold the voices of Māori women, mana wahine and communities to protect their cultural and biological diversity and not perpetuate the theft of the cultural and intellectual property of Māori and other indigenous peoples. Structures which legitimise diverse indigenous knowledge (in particular mana wahine knowledge) and support ethical concerns with regard to profit driven science need to be established. A critical area in which the science community is currently lacking is that of communications. A mana wahine science agenda encourages new forums for public participation enabling a deeper and more critical analysis of science projects to be established, including mana wahine kōrero. In addition, where there is the need to develop a responsible and critical independent media that is not bought by the promised profits of science, but which can facilitate and encourage critical debate.

A mana wahine agenda for science provides guidelines and establishes a science framework that positions mana wahine as a living dynamic knowledge and analysis. It is not driven by profit rather it is centred on valuing diversity in people, knowledge and life forms over profit. It recognises the oppressing and dominant role that western profit-driven science has played and works towards a science based around emancipation and a holistic and interconnected world.

It is my hope that this mana wahine science agenda is used alongside the mana wahine conceptual framework as another tool to carry forward mana wahine concerns with regard to GM and other new technologies. In particular, I encourage any Māori researcher engaging in the field of science to develop and apply a kaupapa Māori awareness and analysis to the science in which they are engaging. This is particularly critical when we are seeing a push by Government and Crown Research Institutes for more Māori to participate in science. For Māori women engaging with mana wahine and science discourses, we must ask brave

questions and challenge hegemonic colonial masculinist ideologies that seek to silence our voices and control our participation. It is imperative that such mana wahine voices are accorded visibility, power and representation within science debates.

#### KŌRERO WHAKAMUTUNGA

This article weaves with other mana wahine voices and expressions. The analysis from the framework provides specific tools for those working within mana wahine discourses to engage with GM, other new technologies and science. However, this work represents only a small part in challenging hegemonic colonial masculinist ideologies that control science. There is an urgent need for further work to be undertaken in this area. In particular, I recommend that a mana wahine analysis be applied to the deconstruction of western science and knowledge to provide further understanding of the assumptions, power and systems that they privilege. Furthermore, research needs to be undertaken to understand how Māori women have been constructed and viewed by western science and knowledge over time. This will provide some clarity into the current relationship between western science, nature and women more generally. This research then needs to draw analyses and conclusions that are relevant to a mana wahine and kaupapa Māori epistemology.

In addition further work needs to occur in exploring the issues that arise from the following questions: Whose values and assumptions underpin scientific decisions? Does western science or western knowledge restrict Māori women from carrying out our kaitiaki role regarding children, environment and culture? Is science or knowledge occurring at the expense of a diversity of views? Is the analysis relevant to the concerns of Māori women? And how is our right to self-determination as Māori women impacted upon by hegemonic colonial masculinist ideologies?

With regard to GM there is a continual need to open up and reclaim our ethical space through posing questions such as those above. In an opened ethical space we can discuss with and educate our diverse Māori communities about this technology. Māori communities must be empowered with the tools such as knowledge and relevant ethical frameworks, to make decisions about this technology from tino rangatiratanga positions. Moreover, it is important that our concerns with regard to GM are considered relevant within the debate and that we are able to open up and control an ethical space in which we may invite others to critically debate and discuss the implications of this technology with us. Mana wahine voices and activists must persist in challenging Māori decision-making with regard to GM that supports the continuance of dominant colonial masculinist ideologies that close the ethical space available for such debate. Further research in the area of GM needs to build on existing mana wahine voices including the mana wahine conceptual framework presented here. To obtain and collect Māori views about GM absent of our critical voices is to develop an incomplete analysis of this technology and deny us our ethical space in this debate.

## Endnotes

- 1 When discussing hegemonic colonial masculinist ideologies I am referring to the pursuit of particular interests to maintain domination; systems of thought that maintain the capacity of the dominant group to exercise control. This is not achieved through visible regulation or the deployment of force, but rather through a lived system of meanings and values whereby Māori accept their subordinate status as a colonised race and accept the cultural, social, and political practices of the colonial dominant elite (Johnston, Gregory, Pratt & Watts, 2000). By referring to colonial hegemonies, it can be assumed they are also masculinist; however I wish to emphasise this dimension. According to Johnston, Gregory, Pratt & Watts (ibid., 492), masculinist knowledge “is frequently located in relation to traditions of western scientific rationality, in particular the dualisms between mind and body and between subject and object, plus the presumption that scientific knowledge can and should be objective and context free.” I re-emphasise the masculinist nature of the hegemonic colonial ideologies throughout this article to challenge the universal and exhaustive claim to knowing that colonial masculinist hegemonies presume this is implicit.
- 2 Decolonisation refers to the process of unlearning and disengagement from colonial notions of who we are as Māori women. With the process of decolonisation in relation to mana wahine it is essential for Māori women to recognise the impact western colonial notions of women have had in terms of defining us. Decolonisation challenges western discourse of dominance and claims mana wahine ways of knowing and defining.
- 3 Kaupapa Māori derives from a Māori worldview and is inherently about tino rangatiratanga. Kaupapa Māori are fundamental principles and philosophies capable of providing an explanation of all experience as Māori.
- 4 Tino rangatiratanga positions and realities refer to those that are defined by, iwi, hapū, whānau, tangata, Māori communities and carry a mana wahine analysis.
- 5 Wahine takatapu refers to Māori women who identify their sexuality as being lesbian.

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# Mātauranga Wahine:

Teaching Māori Women's Knowledge Alongside Feminism

Kuni Jenkins and Leonie Pihama



There are always at least two stories that emerge when students on a course are split into separate ethnic groups. This is the story of the Māori women academics who taught and tutored Māori, Pacific Islands and Asian women in a university course exploring feminism and mātauranga wahine (women's knowledge) (see Jones, this issue). They tell of their own experiences and also what they saw happening to students who were facilitated in exploring their own cultural stories before encountering white feminism. They also talk of their experience of teaching non-Māori students.

**Key Words:** Māori/a person indigenous to New Zealand, mātauranga wahine/Māori women's knowledge, Pakeha/someone of British or European ancestry, te reo me ona tikanga/Māori language and customs, tikanga/customs, wahine/woman, waahine/women.

Indigenous women's experiences are grounded in different history from that which is celebrated and known by those who deploy the subject position middle-class white women. We know and understand the practical, political and personal effects of being 'Other' through a consciousness forged from our experiences and oral traditions (Morton-Robinson, 2000: 179).

There is a wariness of theory that exists for Māori people (Smith, 1997; Walker, 1996). This wariness, and at times disdain, is well deserved. However, if we are able to define, develop and control our own theoretical base as Māori women then theory is a tool that we can use for our own interests (Irwin, 1992). For this to happen we need to ensure that our theoretical developments take a wide view of what is happening for Māori women. This requires a framework that is able to place te reo Māori me ona tikanga (Māori language and culture) alongside issues of gender, class, race and sexuality.

Ngahua Te Awekotuku (1991) states that Māori women are making 'fresh inroads' in a range of areas. In the tertiary sector new developments are occurring as Māori women develop and teach courses specific to Māori women's know ledges, tikanga and issues. The development and articulation of Māori women's theories is essential to the ongoing struggle not only for Māori women, but for the well-being of Māori more generally. A key challenge for these theories is to make sense of the contradictions that face Māori women daily (Mikaere, 1995).

Colonization has brought about significant disruption within Māori society (Mikaere, 1995). For Māori women the disruption has been on multiple levels and we are now having to reassert our positions and status in our own communities as well as in wider society (Smith, 1992). The status of Māori women has been seriously misrepresented. Our voices have been silenced for too long. The silencing of Māori women's voices has meant the silencing of our theories and world views. It has meant that Māori women's stories are then able to be defined as 'myths', and therefore as some figment of the cultural imagination.

It is important that Māori women now take control of spaces where our stories can be told. This includes theoretical space. In the education faculty at the University of Auckland this meant the teaching of mātauranga wahine (women's knowledge) alongside western feminisms in order to provide space for Māori women. Kuni Jenkins and, at times, Leonie Pihama are two Māori women who co-taught such a course with Alison Jones. Leonie and Kuni were asked to respond to Alison's article in this issue of *Feminism & Psychology*.

However, they challenged the word 'respond' as being antithetical and decided to talk about the course itself from a Māori woman's position. In this article Leonie Pihama (LP) talks with Kuni Jenkins (KJ) about her experiences.

*LP:* How did the restructuring of the course come about?

*KJ:* When we asked Alison if we could find a home for Māori women's issues within her paper she was very generous in quickly responding and accommodating us. I was always contributing two or three lectures to the Feminist Perspectives paper<sup>1</sup> so I wasn't a stranger to the paper. And so Alison was prepared to let us have as much space as we wanted.

This was really to cope with the number of Māori women who were interested in women's issues. Any paper that had any Māori content was attractive to Māori women. The institution is so hostile to Māori women. But it wasn't just Māori women who came to the paper; there were also Māori men who were attracted to the Māori content. They were interested to hear from us whether there were traditional and historical issues. Some of them did become uncomfortable with feminism but if they got past the first four lectures they stuck with the paper.

*LP:* How was the paper structured at that time?

*KJ:* It was highly theoretical; also dealing with oppression and how strategies for intervening could be adopted. Then, by 1994-95, Alison was heavily into how power operated and she took feminist initiatives up another notch. For a lot of the Māori women that was quite difficult because of the theory. Then it came under the mātauranga wahine [women's knowledge] section where Alison would do two lectures and then I'd do two lectures and we kept the class together.

For Alison's lectures the students would be quiet and attentive. When I was teaching they would still be attentive but there would be interjections when I was presenting the Māori women's point of view. You'd get people making a response and trying to explain what Pakehas meant, or trying to interpret for me the Pakeha experience, or just sometimes plainly saying that I was wrong.

*LP:* Was the group primarily Pakeha then?

*KJ:* Yes.

*LP:* So what do you attribute their responses to?

*KJ:* I don't think that the students were finding my lectures lacking in content. I think the material was presented in a way that prompted them to want to immediately respond; either positively or negatively. The lecture was followed by a one-hour tutorial and I looked forward to hearing back from Māori women about the issues I was presenting to them.

The material on the status of Māori women always created a lot of discussion about what they had thought about or whether this was a first-time experience for them. But many of the Pakeha women didn't get a chance to engage with the material because I

wasn't part of their tutorial; it was over to Alison or one of her tutors. So I don't know how they got on with some of the points that I had raised in the lectures.

The Māori tutorials were just very lively, engaging sessions. The tutorial is for the students to talk, not for me to give another lecture to them. So it was constantly making them talk about the issues from their own viewpoint.

*LP:* Were the Māori women as active and engaging in the big lectures?

*KJ:* No, they were often quiet. They had no way of reading the material into them selves. They actually had to listen and take notes knowing that there was going to come a time when they could talk about the issues.

*LP:* What about the dynamics of being a smaller group of Māori women in a larger, dominant group lecture setting? Does that have an impact on how Māori women were inclined to engage in the big lecture?

*KJ:* When they're sitting through those big lectures listening to feminist issues as they pertain to Pakeha women, that really is the first major insight that they have into western ways of thinking, how Pakeha women organize themselves as women and what the major emphases are in their lives. That really gives them a very reflective position. They have to think about themselves and if that is how they see their lives.

The reason that we became firmly committed to a Māori tutorial and a Pakeha tutorial was because one particular year the group said that they objected to the interruptions from Pakeha women while I was doing the lectures. They said that at no time do they, as Māori women, engage Alison or the Pakeha guest lecturers. At no time is the courtesy ever dented. Even if they don't agree with what the speaker is saying, under kaupapa Māori it's wrong to interrupt the kaikorero [speaker]. Their platform for speaking was in the tutorial session.

*LP:* It raises a whole lot of other issues in terms of the ways in which the power dynamics operate between Māori staff and Pakeha students. These relationships are fragile. Pakeha students can come back on Māori staff, particularly in papers where you're doing change stuff.

*KJ:* Especially where you've got this transformative action that's part of it. Then the structure changed under semesterization.<sup>2</sup> We lost that lovely dynamic which could give you more time to deal with the issues and there was more reading time as well.

*LP:* A change also happened in the internal structure of the course and how Māori women began to see themselves positioned. I recall a discussion around the potential development of a Māori woman's stage III paper.<sup>3</sup> A space seemed to be opening for a wider Māori women's development.

*KI:* Knowledge is a key issue around what is going on in education generally. So the chance to look at what a Māori women's gender paper might develop around, given minimal resources - that's why I chose mātauranga wahine as the focus for the paper and seeing if we could develop more writing around it. Getting at the voices of Māori women to see if they had a different way of thinking, and if they don't have a different way of

thinking, at least seeing what their messages were, what gives them meaning, what helps to shape their thinking, their lives, the way they work with family.

*LP:* I'm interested in the shift to a structure that brought Māori women's theory to the front of the course, for Māori women as well as a clearly defined separation in the lecturing process, for the one year. The course was split into two separate lecture streams. In the Māori women's stream we co-taught mana wahine first up and Alison did postmodern theories with the Pakeha stream. This is getting to the crux of what Alison's article is about - the responses to the separation that she saw in the journals. So why did Māori lecturers think that there was a need for Māori women to engage with Māori women's material first up before they engaged with western theory?

*KI:* That really became quite evident in the way Māori women were writing and responding to their assignments. And evident from watching the way they participated in lectures and the fall-out of some of the women.

The strength of the feminist paper is for the women to find their voice early. This idea of silence is a strong issue that was addressed in those early sessions. And the reading that we used at the time was Belenky [et al., 1997], on what silence does. And for Māori women to suddenly face this heavy barrage of western theory - it just blew their heads; they would just sit there silently. So in our discussions we just said 'put the Māori stuff up first and then once the Māori women feel comfortable they should be able to cope with the other way'. That was actually the perfect strategy because it did have the desired effect.

Once the women felt that they had a place that they could anchor their own thinking and that validated their voice, you couldn't shut them up. They were just away and they would listen closely to this very complex, academic barrage of feminist theory and they could deal with it. They began to try to engage with it and they were not afraid to say 'I don't understand this'. They wanted it explained within a context that they could deal with.

It's had enormous flow-on effects for the way Māori women have engaged not just with that paper, but with other work, with other papers, and they've demanded meaning out of all the courses that they do. What the paper did - it was about them and they were not excused. And that's the other thing that they found quite challenging about the paper - not being excused from making a response, whereas on many other occasions they could go away and be invisible. They suddenly found that they had the power to speak and that they must speak.

*LP:* So that shifting of Māori women's korero [talk] and theory to the front for that particular group was about laying a foundation that gave a clear base from their own context from which to reach out to other theories from. Can you now talk about the politics of Māori women having our theories and our politics as a base?

*KJ:* It accelerated the way Māori women felt about academic study; that they really wanted to engage in the materials. They felt very comfortable and were able to talk with confidence and their voices began to equalize the Pakeha interventions in lectures and the kinds of responses they were giving. Their attendance at tutorials, which, gauging by previous years, had been rather erratic, became more regular. It was the tutorial. If

they were going to miss any lectures for that week they would try not to miss the Māori tutorial. And they felt good about being in that tutorial space. In fact they became very jealous of that space and when there was a suggestion that some of the non-Māori people might want to come and join the tutorial they would have meetings about an invasion of their space.

When we were on our own we could operate at that assumed level; we didn't have to start explaining ourselves as Māori women. We could just operate at this assumed level and everyone understood why certain things are done in certain ways, why we do these mihi [greetings], and the pronunciation of words. All of those just fell into place in the tutorial. We were never being asked, 'Could you write up that word?' 'Could you spell that word?' and those sorts of interruptions in main lectures.

*LP:* Having a separate Māori women's group is about normalizing ourselves; about being able to come from our own place first up and look out to other theories.

*KJ:* When I talk about Māori; in the first year that we operated this, 1997, it really was only the Māori students and then the following year it was Māori and Pacific Islands students. And then we found that one of the Asian women insisted that she was Pacific Islands and so we found that the Asian women came to our tutorial. Some of them would actually break down and cry in tutorials when we were doing seminars they were having to present, or when a particular issue had come up. I remember two or three of them crying and saying that it was the first time that they had been allowed to talk about their issues and think about what it meant to be an Asian woman.

We really did get a really cross-cultural section and the way that Pakeha people wrote about and talked about this surprised us. We were just unaware that they were feeling as if they were missing out on something major.

*LP:* One of the things I recall when we first separated the lectures was that we asked Linda [Smith] to do an initial lecture on the politics of separation. Do you remember what happened in that lecture?

*KJ:* There was quite a negative response from the mostly Pakeha mainstream group. They felt that it was a backward step for us; that we all need to be together so that we can learn what the issues were from the Māori women. And yet they couldn't be specific about what it was that they were actually learning from us. Linda went on to say that what they were asking was for us to remain there under their control and that's really what they were missing.

*LP:* This is the issue around Pakeha women assuming that they should be educated by Māori and in this class Pakeha women students assuming that part of the role of the Māori students was to educate them. That came up in the journals and in the general lectures; there were comments around 'I want to learn about things Māori and how will I do it if you separate us?'

*KJ:* Exactly. It was quite obvious to all of us that while they're saying that they really want to learn from us, what they get out of us they see as unimportant knowledge. However, you could almost see the cringe when our knowledge was set in its place. They really wanted more detail about how close to uncivilized you can get.

*LP:* What do you see as the differences in the responses of the Pakeha women compared with the Māori, Pacific and Asian women?

*KJ:* The differences were quite stark when Alison and I compared the journals. I would look forward to marking the Māori journals to see what their response to the course was, to see how they responded to issues.

*LP:* What about the differences in the journals in terms of responding to the separation?

*KJ:* There was great jubilation in most of the Māori women's journals. One or two women stayed with the panic; most of the Māori women who wrote their journals were absolutely convinced that the Māori tutorial had made the difference for them. They were so glad to be in it. They didn't have to listen to the Pakeha story anymore. It's not that they don't want to listen to it; they do. But they want to be able to take it on board at their own pace and in their own environment and to be able to talk about the issues by themselves because the Pakeha influence is just so powerful on their lives. From since they were in the cradle.

Even though some of those who came into our midst were fluent speakers of te reo [the Māori language], they themselves came to appreciate what the Māori tutorial did for them. They thought it was just us getting into our own little huddle but they began to realize how much they were getting from talking about issues and were absolutely blown away with the level of critical analysis there was among themselves. So they could discuss issues where normally they would be silent, not even trying their academic voice. Suddenly they were finding it and finding that they could plumb some reasonable depths. And they didn't feel whakama [shy] when they made a mistake. Someone would just clarify what some of the terminology was that Alison was using in her theoretical analysis.

Now some of them just never got the theoretical analysis that Alison went through; for example, the difference between the conservative, liberal and radical perspectives. Some of our women never, ever got that and what the tutorial did for them was to say 'It doesn't matter. You're at a particular space and the most important thing for you was just to be able to talk about issues.' What was important was that they were at least able to describe their world and say where they were. I think that if we hadn't had that tutorial group then those women would have failed. Compared with other papers our attrition and failure rate was minimal.

Our paper made them confident that they could go on and do master's papers as well. The paper had a different kind of rigour. The women wanted to be able to engage with the feminist information, to deal with the hard theoretical analysis. They didn't want to feel drowned in it. Even if they could only nibble round the edges of it, at least it was a beginning for them.

*LP:* My sense was that the year before, many of the Māori and Pacific Nations women felt drowned by the western theory. They felt very overwhelmed by it as they hadn't had the space initially to think of where they ground themselves as Māori and Pacific women. In the year when the two streams happened the Māori and Pacific women were very solid in who they were and what they were doing and where they were coming from. So they could look at anything; take anything on.

*KI:* The lectures on re-presentation just blew a lot of those women away. And they started to look at their own photos. Then they tried to retell their own legends, especially when they had lectures about oral literacy and how they told stories to their children. That was really quite revolutionary for Pacific women. Otherwise they tend to have the Pacific represented to them the way colonizers talk about them and they try to ape this style as if it's the only valid and legitimate way to talk about their island. And yet when you get them away from that theoretical heavy stuff and say 'Let's just talk about the everyday lives that you live', suddenly you can't stop them from talking. And without them realizing it the whole philosophical underpinning of how the Pacific actually operates starts to creep out. But they've been so constrained; their academic voice has been so constrained by the various overlays of the knowledge that was reinterpreted for them. They can't think outside the Church as that's the way the missionaries treated the islands. And the way they dress and think about themselves - they can't bear to look at the photos of Pacific peoples naked. There's this contradiction in the kinds of ways of looking at themselves. And so through the Māori experience they're starting to come forward and say, 'This was done everywhere'. To be just allowed to talk about it - they mightn't change anything but at least they're beginning to critique their own experience.

In the Māori tutorials we never had time to feel guilty about taking up our own space or felt that we had to justify it. Time was too short and too precious to waste on thinking about the *mamae* [hurt] that Pakeha women might be feeling because we left. When we were with them they never noticed we were there, so by us moving us away they might have felt *mamae* but at least they had a feeling about us. When we were with them it was like, that's the way life is; the dominant group presides over everything and the world is fine because everybody is in their place. But by us moving out, we weren't in our place under their watchful gaze. The gaze had shifted and suddenly we could gaze back at the world with our own frame works and that's what was so exciting and successful. And yet we didn't realize that that was what we were doing until Alison did her research.

*LP:* I think we probably did know because that's the basis of why that whole structure was set up.

*KI:* No, I don't think that's why we were set up. We weren't set up to worry about them; we were set up to give Māori women a platform to talk. So we thought that was OK for us to do that; that we weren't doing anything out of the norm. And yet when you read the Pakeha journals you realize how vulnerable Pakeha women were feeling. I hope that that doesn't now become something that we have to reflect on in order to lessen the impact on Pakeha women so that they can actually get on because they want the world to be in its place - us in a silent position. Not necessarily subjugated but in that space doing things the way that they are used to.

*LP:* Both the verbal feedback and the journal feedback show that there still remains a white women's assumption that feminism is for all. So there was a lot of feedback about the separation - for example, 'What do you mean that you've got to go and do it on your own, without us?' Meaning that the 'other' should be staying in relation to the dominant group, not taking itself off for its own space.

*KI:* What the feminist discourse was dealing with was the oppression of women by men. So that's the gender struggle. What was wrong with the feminist struggle is that they were

actually fighting Pakeha men and then they expected Māori women to join and fight Māori men. Both Donna Awatere and Ripeka Evans said that our women's struggle is not against Māori men because they are more oppressed than Māori women.

If you leave out the gender bit and just look at the oppression, it gives you strategies for dealing with those power relations; for example, 'Why should that group be dominant while this one is subjugated?' So if you want to even up those power relations you do a range of interventions in order to get that through.

The feminist debate opened up the racial issues for us where we were dealing with oppression on racial levels, not on male-female levels within that group. Although feminists might accept the position that we as Māori women were trying to engage the oppressive structures that bound us, in hindsight the response to the issues had overtones of a racial divide. As Māori, I don't think that at the outset we anticipated the racial consequences of this for Pakeha.

*LP:* I don't think we thought at all about the racial consequences for Pakeha. The whole thing was thinking about how to empower Māori women because the structure that was there was not working for Māori women; not supporting Māori women's theorizing in terms of creating that initial space where we don't get over loaded with a whole range of western theories without knowing ourselves. So it was very focused on Māori women. The offshoot of that was that you all of a sudden become the 'other'; the 'other' are no longer focusing on the dominant group. We're our own focus and all hell breaks loose with the dominant group, with the Pakeha women saying how it disadvantages them, not actually about how it advantages us. I don't think we thought about them at all.

*KJ:* We didn't think about them because we were revelling in our space and that revelry came through the journals. I don't think the revelry was because we had gotten a Māori space. The revelry was because the Māori women were controlling the information; they could engage it and suddenly they were being successful. They felt the pleasure of success at last from their own definition. That was the sudden revelation to them that 'I can do this thing'. And suddenly they were no longer silent; their mouths had been unlocked and they could actually speak. That's very empowering.

What's happened this year is that the Pakeha women have been frightened away. You could count the Pakeha in the course this year [2000], in semester two. There were only 19 on the course and the Māori numbers have not fallen away. Out of the 19 I think five were Pakeha and the rest were Māori, Pacific Islands and Asian. Next year I'm the coordinator of the paper and I'm interested to see what difference that will make.

*LP:* How did teaching on that paper change for you when the class split? We did the Māori lectures to the Māori and Pacific group and Alison did the Pakeha lectures to the Pakeha group. And then we swapped over. So was there a difference in working the two groups?

*KI:* Yes there was. I don't know why Alison and I changed lecturing styles as we anticipated the audience we were lecturing to. When I was lecturing I was influenced. The way I talked to Pakeha groups was different to the way I spoke to Māori groups. It's just the way you emphasize particular points. You'd know that 'Pakeha wouldn't understand this set of Māori concepts so I will need to simplify this a whole lot more, or I will need to put a lot more explanation behind the points'.

And I think Alison did the same. I think she realized to some extent that her complex way of delivering that western theoretical framework would not be suitable for a Māori and Pacific audience. That they would not know what she was talking about and just go to sleep. So she would emphasize the key points that she wanted them to understand.

We would always compare notes afterwards about how we felt about our lecture - how this group took it and how that group took it and how we felt in ourselves about which group we liked to work with most. And both of us liked to work with the Māori and Pacific group. It's because there's no affectation among this group. They'll be quite honest with you about how your material is coming across. In this way students are getting value for the time they put in to the course. It's not about wasting their time giving them 'trick' information - all that blue stocking stuff to show off how much academic misery you can inflict on them.

*LP:* That has a huge implication for Māori students in terms of how lecturers' pedagogy works against them in general courses at this university. When Māori are in the minority in the big lectures then often the information is being pitched to a dominant group level, to their understandings and not to the Māori understandings. Splitting and having the two streams facilitated a more focused pedagogy.

*KJ:* Your material is only good if your audience is listening to you. If nobody understands then you're just wasting people's time; you're just massaging your own ego. If nobody understands you, there's no point.

There's a brutal honesty that comes out in certain groups. I don't think that Māori or Pacific groups were any 'thicker' than the Pakeha group. I think that they clearly understand. It's about packaging the information.

There were one or two Pakeha women who had disguised themselves as Māori or Pacific and they absolutely loved the Māori and Pacific tutorial. They wanted to be there because of the discussion.

I think that to a certain extent the Māori and Pacific women were just afraid of some of the dominant voices that come across in mainstream/Pakeha environments. They had learnt to keep silent and not show their ignorance. And really they weren't ignorant - they just required some clarification. And once the clarification is put there, they can move on. So you get some of them stressing out needlessly because they were too afraid to ask the questions and say what was actually applicable to them.

The Pakeha women, on the other hand, get tested when you put across material that they can't just read a book on. They have to pay attention to the lecturer. And so when you give them the Māori information they have to listen. And for the first time, for them, it irritates them that they cannot assume that they know everything. And then they're having a struggle with themselves: 'Why should I learn this information? I don't want to be a Māori woman. Everybody knows that they're fourth-class citizens! You can see the struggle that's going on for them and they're blaming Alison: 'Why is Alison letting this happen to us?'

They're not really attacking me but they want Alison to hear how they're trying to be tolerant and cope with this Māori stuff that's coming at them. The Māori women who were watching and listening to this interaction in the lecture became quite agitated

because I was giving them information about things which, for the first time in their lives, were being discussed in a learning forum. Many of their Māori relatives and families had seldom addressed and explored the issues of Māori women within political debate or theorized the issues as other ways of thinking about the reality of their human lives. The kind of context the paper offered to deal with Māori women's information was a new platform which the Māori women found was a precious resource. The seemingly negative reaction from Pakeha women to the presentation I was giving was interpreted by the Māori women as a case of 'casting pearls before swine' and it made them quite angry.

So overall it required Alison to be really courageous and give over her class. It could have gone very wrong but she trusted our judgement and she stepped in and piloted this through some rugged water, particularly when Pakeha students got irritable over what was happening to them. But I think she recognized that if any one wants to understand what a radical critique of anything could be, it was right there in front of them.

*LP:* In the Māori women's tutorial we were actually operating kaupapa Māori. We were coming very much from a Māori women's base. And with Pacific women saying at the end of that year 'We need ours, our space'.

*KI:* And their voice is getting stronger and stronger. And I know that this paper is one that helped them make a stand. And they can see from the Māori struggle that it's not enough to let the Pakeha speak for them. That's what Alison saw - she was speaking for Māori and she heard the challenge.

This article has also given us time to reflect on kaupapa wahine and kaupapa Māori and how we deal with the male issue. Our men have huge issues and we need some more of that in our paper. Even the labelling of the article was important. It was labelled 'Mātauranga Wahine' rather than looking for an equivalent of 'feminist'. Just holding it at 'women's knowledge' keeps us from being locked into a gender struggle while we're still trying to deal with the whole Māori struggle. But first of all the main fighters in the struggle are Māori women so we have to strengthen them. We have to make sure that their knowledge base is sound so that they know what they're doing. And when they make decisions they can move forward based on knowing.

We still haven't got the perfect template for a 'matauranga wahine' paper but it gives us a point at which to theorize the issues and to develop strategies for dealing with them. But we have to soon get to the issues of Māori men.

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## Notes

- 1 The Feminist Perspectives paper is a paper (Contemporary Feminist Perspectives: Mātauranga Wahine) offered in the BA and BEd degrees through the School of Education at the University of Auckland.
- 2 The change from a three-term academic year to a two 13-week semester year.
- 3 A stage III paper in the BA degree at the University of Auckland is a third year of study in a particular topic.

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# Reclaiming the Ancient Feminine in Māori Society: Kei Wareware i a Tātou Te Ūkaipō!<sup>1</sup>

Aroha Yates-Smith



## ABSTRACT

With our constant interface with the threat of globalisation, it is timely that we reflect on the words of an ancient god who advised his brother, Tāne, to return to their mother, Papatūānuku (Best, 1923, p. 111). His words, which translate loosely as 'lest we forget the Mother who nurtured us at her breast,' remind us of the importance of considering the feminine, respecting our Earth Mother, and not taking either for granted.

This paper addresses several issues pertaining to the Māori feminine. The discussion of these will begin with a brief reflection on the importance of balance between the male and female in Māori cosmogony and the marginalisation of the feminine as a result of two hundred years of colonisation. The principal focus of the article as a whole will be the last two decades and the efforts made to address some of the negative effects brought about by colonisation, which could be described as forming the first waves in the tide of globalisation.

The key for the ordering of Māori society lay within our cosmogonic beginnings.<sup>2</sup> Recent studies of Māori cosmology reveal that both male and female deities held prominent positions in the pantheon of gods (Yates-Smith, 1998). There was a strong presence of the feminine at the embryonic stage of Māori society.<sup>3</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

Cultural encounter challenged traditional Māori spirituality as the pivotal point of Māori life. Christianity, the Victorian ethos and the European education system collectively impacted on the Māori society of the time.<sup>4</sup> Western civilisation was seen to hold the answers for the future of the Māori.

The traditional Māori belief system changed dramatically, rendering the feminine invisible; women in Māori society became more invisible and powerless (Yates Smith, 1998). A microcosm of the effect of colonisation on Māori society can be found in reviewing New Zealand literature over a two hundred year period. Evidence indicates that the references made to Māori goddesses in books written about Māori life and customs, and in particular, religion and mythology, were fragmented and skimpy. The roles of the female entities were generally downplayed, marginalised, or in many instances, completely omitted from historical records. Yet, by looking at the material available, one can ascertain that the feminine did indeed hold an important and powerful position throughout Māori history (Yates-Smith, 1998, p. 122). Such marginalisation, it is argued here and in other for a (Mikaere, 1995; Smith, 1992) also occurred in the wider Māori society.

To redress the imbalance brought about by such a shift in the belief system and Māori society as a whole, the feminine needed to be restored in the belief system, or at least be given more recognition. Discussion later in this paper will go some way to showing how this is occurring. I suggest here that balancing gender relations in our society will come more easily when gender relations in the belief system are balanced.

Let us now reflect on the feminine, which was a vital component within Māori cosmology and history. References to atua wāhine (goddesses) in kōrero (stories, history), karakia (incantations), whakapapa (genealogy) and waiata (songs) indicate that female power was built into Māori philosophy, religious ritual and cultural experiences of everyday life. Certain atua wāhine emerged very strongly in my doctoral study of Māori childbirth and death.

Papatūānuku, the ultimate source of creativity, along with her female descendants, reflected the nurturing quality of the feminine and the complementary aspects of the creator/transformer figure as embodied in the *whare tangata/whare aituā*<sup>5</sup> concept, connecting women with life and death. Other qualities the deities possessed were identified. The sexuality of the female element was prominent throughout the anecdotes, *karakia* and *waiata*.

The primary sources indicated that a significant aspect of Māori pre-European history has been overlooked or ignored, supporting the argument that the role of the feminine was never appropriately recognised in the early ethnographic works.<sup>6</sup> Generally, the subsequent publications did little to reassert the position of the feminine in historical writings.

Relatively little knowledge has survived about Hineteiwaiwa, Hinerauwharangi and other ancient figures<sup>7</sup> owing to details about them being forgotten or misplaced.<sup>8</sup> The devastating effect of European diseases on the Māori, e.g., the influenza epidemics (Pool, 1991), combined with the personal cost of military conflict and, more recently, the urban drift further contributed to a reduction in the pool of knowledgeable resource people.

#### MANA WAHINE IN A MODERN CONTEXT

Modern Māori women have inherited *mana wahine* from ancient times, retaining some roles of *Hine* in their everyday life: in the home, on the *marae*, as well as in places of employment and recreation. The fundamental role of woman remains as creator and mother thus fulfilling the generative function previously carried out by *Papa*, *Hineteiwaiwa*, *Hinekōrako* and the many other *atua wāhine*. Women are still regarded as *te whare tangata*. Though the role of *ruahine*<sup>9</sup> may have altered (some of her tasks taken over by Christian ministers, or doctors and midwives) on the *marae*, *kuia* and some younger women are still placed in the role of *ruahine* and perform ritual functions including *karanga* and *waiata*. Women continue to compose *waiata* to commemorate certain events and to express their emotions.

The role of *manaaki tāngata* (hospitality) is maintained by women extending hospitality to visitors, some taking part in the formal *kawa* (ritual) process of welcoming the *manuhiri*, and others involving themselves in the preparation of food. The entertainment of visitors is an art at which women excel. In the meeting house the *whāriki* (finely woven mats) are laid out in accordance with age-old custom and the bedding is made ready for the people. If the occasion is a *tangi* then the *tūpāpaku* (deceased) is surrounded by women, and tended with great care; this particular function links women with *te whare aituā*. The old craft of weaving *whāriki* and cloaks has survived with many women learning to weave, and so examples of these *taonga* (precious items) are still to be found in *wharenui* (meeting houses) today.

Many of the modern women mentioned in this paper are fluent speakers of Māori and have a strong cultural and spiritual identity; others are attempting to learn their language and *tikanga*. The achievements of the native speakers show that success is attainable when one is comfortable in one's own world. Those desiring to develop a stronger understanding of *reo* and *tikanga* belong to a diverse range of people, from society 'dropouts' to successful professionals. The common bond is the need they feel to reacquaint themselves fully with their *taha Māori* and assert their identity as Māori, at the inner core of which is the spiritual dimension, *te taha wairua*. Many of the women with strong cultural backgrounds recognize the positive impact that knowledge of the *atua wāhine* would have on Māori women's self esteem. Through such knowledge women are empowered.

The revival of te reo, our indigenous language, has culminated in a Māori renaissance and new Māori initiatives in education, the church, and in government departments, thereby impacting on society in general. Māori have revived the craft of weaving, the art of tā moko (traditional markings which Europeans termed 'tattoo'), and the use of traditional musical instruments. Māori medical practices are commonly used as an alternative to western medicine. The ancient custom of returning the placenta to Papatūānuku on the birth of a child has been revived.<sup>10</sup> The return of such traditions coincides with the call for further knowledge about the feminine.

The energy and success of Māori women is evident in every sector of society. Māori women are providing leadership in numerous ways, on marae, in voluntary community groups, as well as in high profile professions. They have been a driving force behind the Kōhanga Reo and Kura Kaupapa Māori initiatives. The accomplishments of Te Rōpū Wāhine Māori Toko i te Ora, the Māori Women's Welfare League and the efforts of Māori women in the Women's Health League continue to make huge inroads into improving aspects of Māori health. These groups have been responsible for assisting in the setting up of marae-based health centres and special programmes for Māori mothers and children, e.g., the Tipu Ora<sup>11</sup> programme in Rotorua. In the wider community some women are matakite (seers or psychics), having inherited these particular powers from their ancestors; some are healers<sup>12</sup> who use traditional techniques combining karakia, massage and rongoa (medicine) on their patients. Some of the matakite and tohunga practise in Māori health centres, as in Ngā Miro at Ngāruawāhia, and the Tunohopu Health Centre at Ohinemutu, Rotorua. Politically, women have been active leaders in the campaign for the return of tribal land. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, a large number of women in the Māori community feel unsuccessful, lack self esteem and confidence, women who merely 'survive' the stresses of modern living.<sup>13</sup> Knowledge about the feminine is particularly relevant for these women. Education is a key to self-empowerment.

Change is evident within the education system; the young are being taught about Rangi and Papa, although the emphasis is still placed largely on their male descendants. The kōhanga reo preschools and kura kaupapa primary schools have provided the forum. Reconstruction and revival of tradition is taking place, with the modern generation fitting elements of past traditions into a modern context.

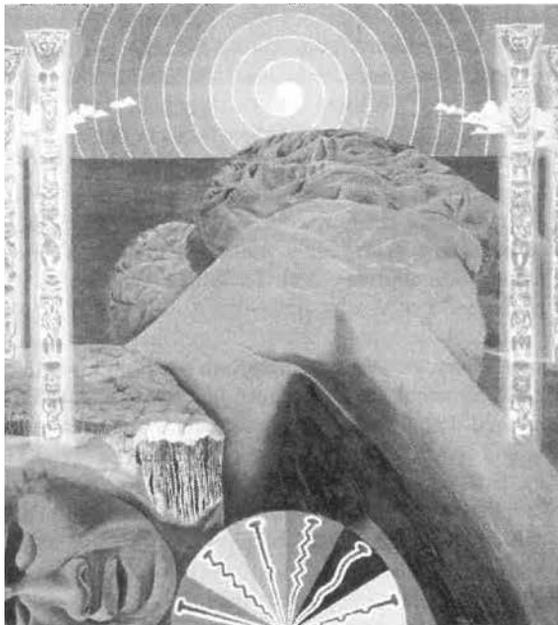
In the performing arts the same vibrancy can be found. Such productions as 'Ahorangi Genesis', although mainly focussing on the male gods, paid tribute to the mana of Papa, Hineahuone, Hinētītama/Hinenuitēpō, Mahuika, and Murirangawhenua. The play 'Wāhine Toa' (staged in 1992) presented Māori cosmology from a woman's perspective. Modern Māori compositions focussing on the feminine in cosmology and society have had their debut at Māori Performing Arts Festival events where kapa haka performers display their prowess through competition. The compositions are in the form of traditional waiata, haka, poi and waiata-ā-ringa, examples being Wakahuia's 'He mana tuku iho' which contains the words 'Ko Hineahuone tōku mana e', and Te Whare Wananga o Waikato's 'Ko Papatūānuku'.

From waiata to written poetry, new compositions are appearing with references to the more well-known Māori female deities. The poems, a number of which are written by Māori women, are imbued with a strong sense of the feminine. There is also evidence of great pain, sorrow and anger, not only for the plight of the general Māori populace over the last century, but particularly for the marginalization of Māori women and knowledge about the feminine. Mahinarangi Tocker sings her message and frequently introduces female deities

into her musical compositions, as with 'Papatūānuku (will survive)' (1993, p. 44). Keri Hulme is another writer who has articulated her feelings about Papatūānuku through poetry, e.g., 'Papatuanuku E Tu!' (1992, pp. 33-34). Hinewirangi Kohu has entitled her book of poetry *Screaming Mako* to describe her anguish. Her reaction towards early Pākehā researchers' opinions is expressed in her poem 'Historians' where she recalls how Māori were described as 'savage,' 'devil worshippers' and how the 'white historian' became 'an expert' on her (1986, pp. 28-29).

Māori men, too, have produced poetry about the great mothers of time. Hirini Melbourne's songs about Nature include many compositions celebrating Māori female deities. Apart from the importance of these songs in Māori music, they also serve to remind people of some of the lesser-known female entities such as Hineraukatauri and Hinemoana (Melbourne, 1993). Other poets have alluded to Papatūānuku or Hinenuitēpō, as with Haare Williams (1981), and Apirana Taylor (1981). Writer Witi Ihimaera has produced fiction revealing the strong influences of the feminine in his tribal area. The *Matriarch* (1986) and its sequel *The Dream Swimmer* (1997) have powerful statements on *mana wahine*; in the second book a local female *taniwha*, *Hineteariki*, has a prominent role in the story.

Ngāhūia Te Awēkotuku's writings, both literary and academic, have a strong feminist thread running through them, *Mana Wahine* (1991) being one with particular relevance here. The work of Anna Rogers, Miria Simpson, Mira Szaszy, and Margaret Kawharu in publishing *Te Timatanga Tātau Tātau* brings a fresh approach to oral and written literature regarding Māori women. In a similar way Amy Brown's *Mana Wahine: Women Who Show the Way* (1994) records some philosophies and experiences of Māori women. The Māori magazine *Mana* informs the country of Māori issues and success stories; women feature prominently in its articles. *Wāhine Toa* (1984), with artwork done by Robyn Kahukiwa and text by Patricia Grace, is a first in depicting so many goddesses in pictorial book form.



Papatūānuku  
Oil painting by Robyn Kahukiwa

Women artists Robyn Kahukiwa, Jolene Douglas, and June Northcraft Grant incorporate the feminine into their creations. Each modern artist has made a significant impact in restoring the feminine to her rightful place in Māori culture. This reconstruction takes place at the various levels of Māori society, strongly influencing the psyche and attitudes of our people, and thus the structure of Māori culture itself.<sup>14</sup> The present findings provide material to assist the artists' research in their respective areas; further subjects for future compositions may be found in the collated information. The ancient stories, karakia and waiata of the tūpuna hold a depth of knowledge which many Māori today have not yet tapped.



Hineteiwaiwa  
Pastel on archival paper. By Jolene Douglas.

In the male domain, Māori carvers are continuing to create images of the feminine. The brilliance of the feminine is reflected within the whareniui Te Ihorangi,<sup>15</sup> the inspiration of master carver Kereti Rau Tangata. A strong presence of the atua wāhine can be found in the house's carvings and tukutuku. Smaller creations such as the nguru Hineteiwaiwa, crafted by Rangi Skipper, are indicators of the renewed awareness about atua wāhine. In fact atua wāhine have been portrayed in stone and wood for centuries. Although many of the taonga are still situated in their original locations, hundreds are to be found in museums throughout the country. Several atua, including Horoirangi and Pani,<sup>16</sup> are stone effigies presently housed in Te Whare Taonga o Te Arawa. Pani was found near Lake Taupō and was taken to the museum in 1971, while Horoirangi was returned to Rotorua in 1993.<sup>17</sup> These stone atua provide physical evidence of the goddesses' influence on traditional Māori society.

Instrumental in the success of women is the changing attitudes of many Māori males. Again this has come about through education, a stronger sense of equality and partnership in people's relationships and the economic need for the woman to have an income. Indeed it is increasingly common to find the male partner at home caring for the children while the woman is out working. Despite this social shift in thinking, tension remains, with change varying regionally (more so in urban areas as opposed to rural) and tribally. At a domestic level many Māori women are being abused by men; idealistic as it may seem, one of the aims of my research is to assist in providing information to victims and their families to aid their healing and rebuild their self-esteem.

It is suggested here that the achievement of Māori women, once empowered with the knowledge of their 'Hine' heritage, would be greatly enhanced. Women, who are already considered successful, value the recognition given the atua wāhine and acknowledge the sense of security and increased self-esteem that comes with connecting with the feminine

powers. Positive responses from such diverse groups provide a strong indication of the need for knowledge about the goddesses to be made readily available.



Horoirangi

Courtesy Te Papa Whakahiru - Auckland War Memorial Museum

Some understanding of the feminine aspects which have been recovered would aid Māori men in reassessing their role in light of the changing Māori lifestyle. Only then might the balance between the feminine and masculine at a spiritual, cultural and social level be fully restored. Such a balance would re-establish Māori women as coinheritors of the Māori spiritual tradition. In addition, conveying a holistic Māori view<sup>18</sup> to the younger generation is critical to ensure a perpetuation of the traditional Māori spiritual beliefs. Spiritual knowledge provides a mechanism for coping with the difficulties of living in a modern society which places more stress on material wealth than on the metaphysical and physical wellbeing. Furthermore, revival of the spiritual dimension within Māori life is held by Māori to be fundamental to the survival of our language and culture. Hence the desire of Māori people, particularly the young, to reclaim the traditional element in Māori spirituality, *te taha wairua*.

Recognition of the inter-connectedness between the spiritual plane and the political plane could enhance the wider participation of Māori women in decision-making at all levels of society in Aotearoa (New Zealand). The consequences may have impact not only on the cultural, social and political scene but also on the environment, with people adopting a

more caring and informed attitude towards Nature, thus affirming the importance of Papa and her offspring. Then perhaps will the inter-connectedness of humankind, te ira tangata, and the gods, te ira atua, indeed the entire Universe be recognised.

The power of the feminine is being re-asserted to establish the balance needed in these modern times. The positive effect of the shift in consciousness will filter out from the individual, to the whānau, the hapū, tribe, nation, extending to our natural surroundings, to Papatūānuku and Ranginui from whom we descend.

The goddesses' names collectively form the feminine principle, Hine, the ultimate source of creativity born of the primal parents. Together with the male gods and all of our tūpuna they guide us into the future. It is therefore with the renewed vigour of the ancients that we Māori move forward, intent on retaining that which is uniquely Māori in a modern world.

How then is this relevant to any discussion on globalisation? In reflecting on the impact of European colonisation on the Māori belief system and culture, one should consider the continuing influences of modern American capitalist policies on our society. Although claims are made that globalisation delivers economic growth for some, little heed is paid to its negative impact on indigenous peoples' cultural beliefs and ways. Joseph Stiglitz, author of *Globalization and its Discontents*, notes that managers of globalisation "all too often have shown an insufficient appreciation of this adverse side, the threat to cultural identity and values" (2002, p. 247). Having moved painfully through two centuries of European colonialism, we are now faced with new threats, imposed by collective corporate powers. Globalisation poses a financial, economic threat to the Māori spiritual and social fabric, and unmanaged, directly threatens intellectual and cultural property of Māori.

In the footsteps of our ancestors, we need to maximise opportunities presented by this new phenomenon to assist in developing our cultural integrity. This, combined with the implementation of ancient knowledge to advance our people, will provide a paradigm or model for the future. We need to protect all that is inherent in our culture from the most recent tide of global capitalism, which assaults our shores.<sup>19</sup>

## Endnotes

- 1 Paper presented for the 7th Joint Conference "Preservation of Ancient Cultures And The Globalization Scenario", 22-24 November 2002, University Of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand.
- 2 Other studies confirm the important relationship, which exists between a culture's spiritual belief system, and the social structure. For instance, research conducted by Fletcher and La Flesche described the influence of Omaha cosmogony on the organisation and ceremonies of the Omaha society (in Ridington, 1988, p. 136).
- 3 Information found in literature suggests that there was a strong presence of the feminine in Māori cosmology, that the atua wāhine held very powerful positions, and that they influenced the traditional Māori values and way of life. The numerous stories and waiata which hold references about them, and the karakia which invoke them, reinforce this conclusion (Yates Smith, 1998, p. 96).
- 4 See Mikaere (1995) for a fuller discussion about the impact of colonisation on Māori society and in particular, on Māori women.
- 5 Definitions as used in the context of this paper: whare tangata - lit. human house (referring to women as bearers of humankind); whare aituā - lit. house of misfortune or death (referring to women as descendants of Hinenuitapo, the guardian of the spirit world, and therefore their connection with the spiritual realm).
- 6 Bernard comments on the impact of male bias in disciplines such as sociology and history, stating for instance that "what history we have is almost exclusively a history of men" (1973, p. 780).
- 7 In contrast, places in Hawai'i where the goddesses Papa and Hina had resided are still known by the local people and can be visited to this day.
- 8 See Yates-Smith (1998).
- 9 The term ruahine applies to a woman of high rank, usually the eldest daughter (Best, 1976, p. 271), who possessed knowledge of karakia and ritual behaviour which enabled her to carry out her tasks among her people.
- 10 This practice was not lost in all tribal areas, but until recently, it was not a common occurrence in hospitals to return the whenua (placenta) to the child's parents. For traditional practice, refer to Chapter Four of 'Hine! E Hine! Rediscovering the Feminine in Māori Spirituality' (Yates-Smith, 1998).
- 11 The Tipu Ora programme was founded by the President of the Women's Health League, Inez Kingi, and Dr Jacqueline Allan. This Women's Health League initiative has its base in the Mataatua/Te Arawa (Bay of Plenty) region, with another centre in Christchurch.
- 12 Some healers also possess powers of matakite (seers or psychics).
- 13 See Mikaere (1995, p. 153), and Smith (1992).
- 14 Echoes of this phenomenon can be found in the statement of philosophy of *Woman of Power: A Magazine of Feminism, Spirituality and Politics*: '... we transform our outer world, by recreating our personal lives and relationships, our communities, and our world' (1990, p. 1).
- 15 Te Ihorangi stands on Te Aratiatia Marae at Fairfield College, Hamilton.
- 16 Pani, carved from pumice stone, was found at Tutuhouhou pā site, Te Hope Bay, Lake Taupō. The atua was acquired by Te Whare Taonga o Te Arawa (the Rotorua Museum of Art and History) in 1971. Pani measures 297mm x 132mm.
- 17 Horoirangi had been held in the Auckland Institute and Museum for approximately seventy-five years when she was returned to Te Arawa on long-term loan.
- 18 Te taha wairua, te taha tinana, te taha hinengaro i.e. the spiritual, physical and psychological/intellectual dimensions of personal and iwi health are encompassed in this holistic view.
- 19 I wish to end by acknowledging and thanking all of those ancestors and contemporaries whose creativity and intellectual endeavours have provided the basis for this discussion. In addition to those contributors mentioned directly in this paper there are numerous others whom I wished to acknowledge but were unable to name individually here. Tānā koutou, te hunga pupuri i ngā taonga a kui mā, a koro mā. Tēnā koutou katoa.

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# Mana Wahine Theory:

Creating Space for Māori Women's Theories

Leonie Pihama



*Just by being Māori and a woman, who thinks about her life and her people - one is on the cutting edge. That is where Māori women live - on the cutting edge.*<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

Aotearoa (New Zealand) is a colonized space. The colonial invasion of this country has, as is the case with Indigenous Peoples across the world, disrupted many of the fundamental values that underpin Māori epistemologies. As we are well aware, the strategies of colonizers to undermine Indigenous Peoples' language and cultural practices have been deliberate and calculated. This is without doubt the case in Aotearoa for Māori people.

The notion of collaboration for change is not one that has a high priority in many radical Māori circles. Where it is acknowledged that as a minority population in our own land the support from *tauiwi*<sup>2</sup> is important, it has been the experience of many Māori involved in movements for reclamation of our rights that those movements must and can only be led by Māori. This position is also taken by many Māori women who are seeking change regarding issues of gender oppression. Such a notion is inherent within Te Tiriti Waitangi, signed in this country between Māori and the Crown on February 6, 1840. Te Tiriti o Waitangi is a crucial document in the articulation of Māori sovereignty within this country.<sup>3</sup> It also affirms and guarantees the maintenance of fundamental right Māori as the Indigenous people of this country. These rights are encapsulated in Article 2 which notes:

Ko te Kuini o Ingarangi ka wakarite ka wakaae ki nga Rangatira ki nga hapū ki nga tangata katoa o Nu Tirani te tino rangatiratanga o o ratou wenua o ratou kainga me o ratou taonga katoa. Otiia ko nga Rangatira o te Wakaminenga me nga Rangatira katoa atu ka tuku ki te Kuini te hokonga o era wahi wenua e pai ai te tangata nona te Wenua ki te ritenga o te utu e wakaritea ai e ratou ko te kai hoko e meatia nei e te Kuini hei kai hoko mona.<sup>4</sup>

The struggle for tino rangatiratanga as noted within Te Tiriti o Waitangi is a struggle for Māori sovereignty, and as is the case for many Indigenous Peoples around the world, that struggle has been a part of the experience of this country since colonization. Tino rangatiratanga is an expression of Māori aspirations for self-determination, Māori autonomy, Māori sovereignty. As such it is expressed as a key objective in many Māori movements. For Māori women there has been an increasing movement towards validation and affirmation of our positions, understandings and theorizing from a distinctively Māori foundation. This chapter asserts that Western feminist analyses are inadequate in providing in-depth analysis of Māori women's experiences, and that there is a growing focus on the development of what is termed 'Mana Wahine Theory'. Mana Wahine Theory is a theoretical framework that provides analysis drawing upon Māori knowledge and in particular with a decolonizing intention in regard to the position and voice of Māori. Theory is important for Māori women; however, it is emphasized that theory must be developed from our own place.

Western feminisms have been dominant in the explanation and analysis of gender relations in this country. The history of Black and Indigenous women's attempt to be 'included' within those explanations has, on the whole, been unsuccessful. In many instances, this has meant a retreat by Black and Indigenous women from 'white women's' movements, and a reformulation as black women's groups. For Māori women, there has been a movement away from Pākehā/Western feminisms to a reclamation of Māori women's theories. An exploration of this movement is critical to this thesis. The development of Māori women's theories is not however contingent on the existence of Western feminisms. It is my argument that Māori

women's theories are not dependent on Western theories. Mana Wāhine stands irrespective, and often in spite of, the existence of Western feminist frameworks. On the whole, Western feminisms have denied the existence of 'others' and have tended to serve the interests of white women. It is argued that there is a growing need for Māori women to be active in the development and articulation of theoretical frameworks that are more able to engage issues pertaining to Māori women, with all our diversity. It is my opinion that there is a need for Māori women to speak to and for ourselves; to focus our work on engaging the issues that are important to us.

It is my contention that given the current context of colonization within which we find ourselves, theories are needed that are able to engage the complexities of Māori women's experience and the discourses that have been presented. To date there has been limited discussion in regard to how those theories may be developed. Much of what has been advanced has come directly from Māori women. It is my view that this is not only appropriate but is essential to the articulation of Māori women's analyses. I do not argue for a singular theory. I do not argue that Western theories are totally irrelevant to Māori women's analysis. Nor do I seek to impose a framework on all Māori women. What I am arguing is that it is critical that Māori women take control of spaces where our stories can be told. This includes theoretical space. Our voices have been silenced for too long. The silencing of Māori women's voices has meant the silencing of our theories, worldviews. It has meant that Māori women's stories are able to then be defined as 'myths', and therefore some figment of the cultural imagination. The marginalization of Māori women's theories is such that we are constantly having to try and 'find' ourselves within the texts of the dominant group. We are forever trying to see ourselves in the images created by the colonizers. This has been the case in regard to the dominance of Western feminist analyses in Aotearoa and has led to an active debate by Māori women in regard to the usefulness, or otherwise, of Western feminist frameworks.

#### DEBATE OVER USEFULNESS OF WESTERN 'FEMINISMS'

The label Māori Feminism is problematic for many Māori women. This problematic is located within an analysis that identifies a fundamental contradiction in the use of the label in relation to Māori women's analyses and theories of the world. Much of the criticism is based in an idea that the terms Māori and Feminism do not sit comfortably together, and that for some Māori women their experiences of Feminism and/or what is often termed the 'Women's Movement' has not been a healthy one but has mirrored their experiences of wider Pākehā society, where Māori ideas and concepts have been marginalized and denied and Māori women's voices been silenced.

I've been involved in civil rights issues, socialism and feminism. Being a black woman requires you to have a split personality. The Women's Liberation Movement is racist, the anti-racist movement is sexist and the socialist movement is both racist and sexist. This leaves black women out on a limb.<sup>5</sup>

The question of 'what is feminism?' took up a great deal of discussion. Feminism to me is a many splendoured thing. Its analysis covers all forms of oppression, not just sexism but racism and capitalism. It's not reformist like the Women's Liberation movement of the 60's and 70's, which sought equality and the 'laundry list' through the system. Being 'given' your freedom is hardly freedom; the power to give is also the power to take away. Feminism is a revolutionary concept that seeks to destroy that power, that questions the foundations that

cause oppression - not ask for handouts! 'Feminism' in the white woman's movement touches only on sexism. Racism and capitalism aren't seen as relevant issues.<sup>6</sup>

We are in fundamental tension with the project of white women. Where western feminism may have provided some useful analyses of patriarchy there continues the imposition of whit matriarchy.<sup>7</sup>

Māori women, like indigenous women, black women and women of colour worldwide, have consistently voiced outrage at being constantly located as 'Other' within dominant discourses, raising issues of difference and marginalization. Representation and definitions of Māori women have been, in many instances, historically constituted through the voices of the colonizer. We have been defined, painted, filmed, researched, imaged within dominant Pākehā frameworks and assumptions. The voices of Māori women have been marginalized or made invisible within the power relations that exist in our colonial experience. It is understandable then that feminism as a concept is viewed as problematic, particularly for Māori women who have historically been on the margins of what has been seen as a predominantly white women's movement. This does not mean that all Māori women have thrown out the term feminism. Ngahuia Te Awekotuku and Kathie Irwin argue that the fundamentals which underpin the notion of feminism are not unknown to Māori, and therefore to negate the term in its entirety would not be useful to Māori women.

Ngahuia Te Awekotuku notes that Māori women's work preceded feminism as Māori women. As is shown in the discussion of Māori women's movements, our tūpuna wāhine have consistently worked to shift the effects of colonization. For many this meant that their work was focused in the Māori community and therefore few joined the feminist movement. She raises the point that some Māori women find the term feminist a contradiction, and view feminism as an imported idea that is Pākehā and therefore has no relevance to Māori. Feminism, some argue, *imposes a foreign way of seeing, and of being*<sup>8</sup> The Strength of the antifeminist position for some Māori is noted in a prevailing belief that Māori women's involvement in feminism is "un-Māori"<sup>9</sup>. Ngahuia disagrees with such a position, arguing instead that the term feminism can be defined by Māori women to be what Māori women want to be, that our definitions are related to our own experiences and definitions of how we describe and analyze our oppression as Indigenous women in the world. Māori women have been oppressed, denied of economic, political, social power, and a feminist analysis can be used to view and explain what has happened. Like the need to redefine the term theory, it is therefore necessary to redefine the concept of feminism, drawing from the potential that exists within the term. In Ngahuia's terms feminism constitutes "Women-initiated political action – at its ripest and most elemental"<sup>10</sup>.

Similarly Kathie Irwin argues that there is no one single theory of feminism but that there are many.<sup>11</sup> She maintains that in order to understand more fully the positioning and needs of Māori girls and women it is essential to develop Māori feminist theories even when groups of Māori do not perceive this as necessary.

The development of theories of Māori feminisms is an urgent task facing both the women's and Māori movements if the life chances and life styles of Māori women are to be improved. This assertion is likely to be denied by some traditionalists, to be debated but not seen as a priority by some activists, to be laughed at by some chauvinists and patriarchs, to be taken up by increasing

numbers of Māori feminists. However it is received, it will remain permanently on the agenda of both movements.<sup>12</sup>

Ripeka Evans also argues for the effectiveness of Māori feminism in making change for Māori women. Again, as with Kathie and Ngahuia, she states that there are real differences between Māori feminism and Pākehā feminism. Māori feminism, she argues, is distinctive in that it is founded in Māori philosophies and values and because the outcomes for Māori women are not solely located in gender but lie in much wider political change.<sup>13</sup> However, Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Donna Awatere are more cautious in regard to feminism. White feminisms, Linda notes, while useful at one level, can perpetuate 'otherness' at another. Linda argues that existing feminist analyses fail to recognize the cultural and historical realities of Māori women.<sup>14</sup> She asserts that race and class may mean that Māori women's alliances with Pākehā women may at best be tenuous, reminding us that cultural institutions are sites of struggle, and therefore it is not surprising that some Māori women view Pākehā feminism with suspicion. She notes that in the building of a *wharenuī* in a mainstream Pākehā girls school, 'issues of race and class differences tended to struggle against any potentially common interests of gender.'<sup>15</sup> A similar theme was outlined in Donna Awatere's book *Māori Sovereignty*, where she explored the possible alliances available to Māori in the struggle for sovereignty. She writes:

The first loyalty of white women is always to the White Culture and the White Way. This is true as much for those who define themselves as feminists as for any other white woman.<sup>16</sup>

Further to which, Donna Awatere raises a number of other criticisms of the ways in which Pākehā women position themselves as the voice for all women. Firstly, she argues white feminists assume a position of defining feminism for all women, while denying the struggles of Māori women. The ability to control definitions is, she argues, a consequence of white power and privilege.<sup>17</sup> Secondly, in assuming a right to speak for all, individual Pākehā women are able to then view themselves as 'spearheading' a challenge to patriarchy that all will benefit from. The flaw in such an assumption is the underestimation of the strength of patriarchal institutions and the liberal belief that individual success necessarily means real change for all.<sup>18</sup> Statements such as this are not limited to Māori women. Indigenous women, Black women, women of color have raised major concerns about the inability of white women to engage through feminism with the multiple experiences of women who are not white, heterosexual, or middle class.

Lee Maracle, a member of the Stoh:lo Nation, challenges the inadequacy of white women's theories to engage the issues for Native women.<sup>19</sup> She reminds us that the idea that white women are racist should not be a surprise, nor is the idea that white people create definitions that serve their own interests. The white women's movement is no different in this regard in that it is created and defined in ways that serve the interests of dominant group women. However, like Ngahuia, she argues that Indigenous women are a part of the struggle for emancipation of women and that we must define that movement on our own terms. It is a movement that is about the liberation of all from domination and therefore must be a struggle against all forms of oppression.<sup>20</sup> This is also indicated by Devon A. Mihesuah, who argues that the focus of white women on gender oppression and their overlooking of racial and cultural considerations is often alienating to Indian women.<sup>21</sup> What is also crucial for Indigenous women is that locating of gender issues clearly within the gambit of wider social, cultural, and political issues. Winona Stevenson of the Cree nation notes,

I believe that while feminists and Indigenous women have a lot in common, they are in separate movements. Feminism defines sexual oppression as the Big Ugly. The Indigenous Women's movement sees colonization and racial oppression as the Big Uglies. Issues of sexual oppression are seldom articulated separately because they are part of the Bigger Uglies. Sexual oppression was, and is, one part of the colonization of Indigenous Peoples.<sup>22</sup>

Hawaiian academic and activist Haunani Kay Trask has been a consistent voice in the Indigenous women's networks bringing forward challenges to the limitations of Western feminisms and the need for Indigenous women to articulate our own theories and practices.<sup>23</sup> A key to the relationship of Indigenous women to feminism is the need to recognize that Indigenous women seeking to achieve self-determination or sovereignty work towards this goal as a people. For Haunani this means that Haole<sup>24</sup> women need to position themselves alongside Hawaiian people in the struggle to overthrow an oppressive regime; however, she points out that this is a rare and difficult alliance. The centrality of gender in white feminism and the limited definition of what constitutes struggle for women means that few Haole women are active in alliance with Hawaiian women in the wider struggles of self-determination. Haunani argues that in Hawaii Haole feminists have refused to support sovereignty movements and have defined feminism in their own interests - interests which fail to include the positioning of Indigenous women.

In Hawaii, they see oppression of women but they refuse to see the oppression of Hawaiian women as a product of colonialism. To grasp the nature of our oppression requires an understanding that haole - feminist, marxist, etc. - are part of the colonial forces.<sup>25</sup>

As with Māori women's critique of Western feminism, Haunani argues that the universalizing of feminist issues as being the same for all women does not serve the interests of Indigenous women where issues of race and culture are critical. She argues that Indigenous women are exploited by both white men and white women, and that exploitation by our colonizers cannot be separated from sexual oppression.<sup>26</sup> Haunani emphasizes that the universalizing tendencies of Western feminism have reduced oppression for all women to a common denominator of gender, when this is not the reality of many Indigenous women.

Nor is it the reality for many Black women and Women of Color. The *publications This Bridge Called My Back*<sup>27</sup> and *Making Face, Making Soul: Hacienda Caras*<sup>28</sup> provide article after article of analysis and critique by Women of Color, Indigenous women, and Black women. In her preface to *This Bridge Called My Back*, Cherrie Moraga discusses the analogy of 'the bridge' for women of color. A bridge is walked over, and walked upon, as are the backs of Black/Indigenous women and Women of Color. The symbolism of such an analysis is not lost on Māori women. We too know the state of being walked upon, of being walked over, of being trampled upon. Since the theft and desecration of Papatuanuku, the Earth mother, by the colonial invaders of this land, Māori women have experienced 'this bridge called my back'.

In an open letter to white feminist writer Mary Daly, Audre Lorde highlights the invisibility of Black women in white women's writings and calls into question processes of selective marginalization of Black women by white feminist authors. In a challenging statement she questions Daly's use of Black women's writings:

So the question arises in my mind, Mary, do you ever really read the work of

black women? Did you ever read my words, or did you merely finger through them for quotations which you thought might valuably support an already-conceived idea concerning some old and distorted connection between us? This is not a rhetorical question. To me this feels like another instance of the knowledge, crone-logy and work of women of color being ghettoized by a white woman dealing only out of a patriarchal western-european frame of reference.<sup>29</sup>

What is most evident in the anthology *This Bridge Called My Back* is the fundamental agreement that Women of Color must of necessity engage the complex interrelationship of race, gender, class, and heterosexism in their analysis. This means that there is a clear place for feminist analyses that incorporate the intersections of all forms of oppression, and therefore all forms of struggles. For many of the writers there is a need to develop alliances with those groups that are able to engage those oppressive structures. The Combahee River Collective's 'Black Feminist Statement' outlines clearly a desire for analysis that is complex and which actively engages all forms of oppression. In providing background to the formation of the Collective it is noted that this group of Black women were drawn together by analysis that was antiracist and antisexist and grew to include analysis of heterosexism and economic oppression.<sup>30</sup> A key concern is also that of the need to actively address the racism of the white women's movement. This is a common theme through the writings of many Black women, Indigenous women, and Women of Color. Such challenges to racism in the white women's movement are heard internationally, just as is the call for Black women, Indigenous women, and Women of Color to focus upon our analysis from our own cultural, social, and political identities.

As the Combahee River Collective asserts, it is for Black women to realize the liberation of Black women. This must also be said for Māori women. An area of particular interest for Māori is that of *tino rangatiratanga* and sovereignty, therefore an analysis of the relationship of feminism to sovereignty movements is a critical one. It is also one that is fraught with complexities in regard to the positioning of gender, race, and Indigenous rights. This is highlighted by Devon A. Mihesuah:

Indian women who participated in the takeover at Wounded Knee in 1873 washed clothes, prepared food, and stayed in the background while the flamboyant males spoke to the media. Deb Lamb's research on the takeover reveals that some Indian women could not have cared less about the opinion white feminists held about what appeared to be their subservient roles. Many Indian women concede that male American Indian Movement leaders were and are sexist, having learned misogynist ways of thinking from white society. Nevertheless, the women agree that combating racism against their tribes is more important than personal gain.<sup>31</sup>

Here Devon asserts the need for Indian women to define themselves in their own terms. That is necessary for Indigenous women if we are to represent ourselves from a position in our own context. However, articulating the need to focus energies solely on racism maintains an assumption that racism and sexism can exist separate from each other. For Māori women this is not an assumption that can be made, and to do so is to repeat the mistakes that we so fervently critique in regard to white feminism, that is the nonrecognition of the intersection of oppressive ideologies and practices. What this means is that many Māori women, while rejecting the singular focus on gender of Pākehā feminism, do attempt to engage the wider

issues for Māori within a framework that is inclusive of race, gender, and class.

Māori women's involvement in the so-called 'second wave' of feminism through the seventies corresponded with Māori women's activeness in Māori sovereignty movements. Māori women's groups were clearly a feature of Māori nationalist movements through the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>32</sup> Powerful statements were made by Māori women in the movement and these appeared in feminist magazines such as *Broadsheet*. It may be stated, however that Māori women's involvement in both past and present expressions for *tino rangatiratanga* have often been overlooked by the mainstream media, and in fact Māori women's leadership in Māori communities more generally has often been denied. These issues are engaged by Geraldine Heng<sup>33</sup> in relation to Third-World struggles, where ThirdWorld feminisms are described as having had a tenuous and often contradictory relationship with nationalism. She notes that Third-World feminism rose in tandem with ThirdWorld nationalist movements, and that female emancipation is a 'powerful political symbol.'<sup>34</sup> In this discussion, Third-World feminism has aligned with nationalism and expresses a feminism that is directly relevant to its own context. Nationalist movements can, however be equally antifeminist, and feminism can be presented by antifeminist nationalism as being: 'of foreign origin, and influence, and therefore implicitly or explicitly antinational.'<sup>35</sup>

The analysis from Geraldine Heng raises the contradictory nature that feminism may be constructed as within nationalist movements. Similar discussion is given by bell hooks,<sup>36</sup> Cheryl Clarke,<sup>37</sup> and the Combahee River Collective.<sup>38</sup> These issues remind us of the necessary complexities of Indigenous women's analyses, in that we are seeking to provide forms of analysis that are able to express issues of sovereignty, race, class, and gender in ways that recognize the interconnection.

Bell hooks a prolific Black woman writer in this area, challenges Western feminism to be more expansive, in analysis. She asserts that feminist analysis must be open to the wider possibilities that are a part of engaging gender alongside analyses of race, culture, class, and sexuality. In a groundbreaking analysis of feminism, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*,<sup>39</sup> bell hooks reminds us that feminism in America did not emerge from those who are victimized and that feminist writers themselves wrote as if those women did not exist. The invisibilization of black women, women of colour, Indigenous women existed both through sexist oppression and through the development of white feminism that centered on the 'plight' of the white middle-class woman. As such, feminism in America was constructed within what hooks refers to as a 'one-dimensional perspective on womens reality.'<sup>40</sup> Racism is inherent in such a positioning, and the failure to recognize that leads to the refusal to recognize and acknowledge the experiences of Indigenous women, Black women, and Women of Color. As hooks so powerfully writes;

The idea of 'common oppression' was a false and corrupt platform disguising and mystifying the true nature of women's varied and complex social reality. Women are divided by sexist attitudes, racism, class privilege, and a host of other prejudices. Sustained woman bonding can occur only when these divisions are confronted and the necessary steps are taken to eliminate them. Divisions will not be eliminated by wishful thinking or romantic reverie about common oppression despite the value of highlighting experiences all women share.<sup>41</sup>

Angela Davis provides cutting-edge analysis in her writings related to gender, race, and

class.<sup>42</sup> Her writing is strongly influenced by involvement in radical Black movements and therefore is theorized from a location where race, class, and gender are viewed in their interrelationship to each other. Angela Davis notes that from as early as 1895 Black women were organizing after having been 'shunned' by a 'racially homogenous women's rights movement'.<sup>43</sup> The contemporary women's movement continues its 'racially homogenous character through the ongoing assumption that Black women's experiences are marginal to a gendercentric analysis. As Angela Davis states:

'They have falsely presumed that women's issues can be articulated in isolation from issues associated with the Black movement and the labor movement. Their theories and practice have frequently implied that the purest and most direct challenge to sexism is one exorcised of elements related to racial and economic oppression - as if there were such a phenomenon as abstract womanhood abstractly suffering sexism and fighting back in an abstract historical context.'<sup>44</sup>

For feminism to be useful for those women who have been rendered invisible there must be a serious commitment to the inclusion of wider issues that impact on Black women, Indigenous women, and Women of Color. Trinh T. Minh-ha<sup>45</sup> provides a discussion about the ways in which selected Women of Color become constructed in the position of 'specialness'. In such a position a white First-World women audience expects Women of Color to express their differences. Specialness and difference is affirmed only if one is able to paint oneself as authentic as defined by white First-World women.<sup>46</sup> The notion of specialness as the chosen 'Other' is one that is not uncommon to Māori women, particularly in regard to the white women's movement. Māori women continue to be published as 'special editions' and to appear on the fringe of women's conferences. Only select Māori women are viewed as acceptable speakers, and others, even when deemed appropriate speakers by Māori women, are often rejected by Pākehā women academics.

Few Māori women have published books either as sole authors or editors. Most literature published in Aotearoa regarding Māori women, and likewise women of the Pacific more widely, is edited by Pākehā women. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith has noted, Māori women have tended to be anthologized by others.<sup>47</sup>

The women referred to in this discussion have been instrumental in my own thinking about how Māori women engage feminism. They have each provided analysis of not only the ways in which Western feminisms have rendered nonwhite women invisible, but have done so in a context of recognizing the need for analysis that is incorporative of gender in ways that are connected to wider social, economic, political, and cultural realities. None of these women dismiss the need for focus on women's experiences; rather they promote analyses that position gender as interrelated to issues of colonization, capitalism, hetero-sexism, classism, and racism. For Māori women, such an analysis is absolutely essential as we live within a context of colonialism that has been both driven and justified by acts of racism and capitalist exploitation.

While it is important, as Ngahua Te Awekotuku, Kathie Irwin, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith have reminded us, to utilize what is useful within Western feminism, it is also important to know more intimately the aspects of Western feminism and its development that have not been so good for us as Māori women. The critique of Western feminism is not solely located in notions of who controls the definition but also in engaging some fundamental tenets of

the various forms of Western feminisms that exist from liberal to poststructural. In order to do that, however, it is important to outline the theoretical analysis that will provide the foundation from which the critique emerges. Lee Maracle, on the relationship of Western feminism to Indigenous women's developments, affirms the desire of Māori women to voice our own theories. She writes,

The women of the world are re-writing history with their bodies. White women of CanAmerica are a footnote to it all. I am not in the habit of concerning myself with footnotes. I am concerned about us, though. White women figure too largely in our minds. Let us stop chasing them and challenging their humanity at every turn. Let us begin by talking to each other about ourselves. Let us cleanse the dirty shack that racism left us. Let us deal with our men-folk and the refuse of patriarchy they borrowed from white men.<sup>48</sup>

The movements towards Māori women's theories are an extension of what our *tūpuna wāhine* have laid down for us since the time of Te Kore. It is from this understanding that the relationship to Western feminism is engaged. It is not necessary to totally dismiss Western feminism. The concepts underpinning feminism do not belong solely to white women. Indigenous women, black women, and women of color have all voiced some degree of distrust in white women's movements. The distrust has often been in regard to the inability of white women to see and engage the racism within their own movements. There has also been strong critique of how white women, feminist or not, are benefited by acts of colonization and therefore are resistant to the need for an examination of colonialism and racism. There are Māori women who see the term 'Māori feminism' and recognize that the underpinning notions of affirming women's worldviews and struggling against oppression are not owned by Pākehā women. Māori feminism names a form of feminist approach that affirms Māori women naming our own realities and solutions. The critique of Western feminists' tendency to universalize all women's experiences within their own framework is one that is voiced by a range of Māori and Indigenous women. Women's experiences are socially, culturally, and politically bound, and must be engaged in that way. The notion of gender oppression as culturally bound raises issues in regard to the role of Māori men in challenging white patriarchal and internalized sexism. It is argued that Māori men have a role in challenging all forms of colonial oppression including those forms that may serve the interests of Māori men. There are few Māori men that actively analyze the gendered nature of colonization; however, it is argued that challenge to colonial patriarchy benefits not only Māori women but all Māori people in that it is a challenge to an unjust social form that has been imported to Aotearoa and therefore has no place here. Māori men must be called into account in regard to challenging not only racism, classism, and colonization, but also sexism. The challenge is clear; however, Māori women can't wait for Māori men to catch up, we need to continue with the struggle, and the affirmation of Mana Wāhine as theory is one part of that movement. Before looking any further I need to signal the many ways in which Māori women name their theorizing. Mana Wāhine, Kaupapa Wāhine, Māori Feminism are all concepts drawn on by Māori women. The naming of the analysis is an important part of the theorizing process.

## MANA WĀHINE

There are two key components of the term 'Mana Wāhine': the concepts 'Mana' and 'Wahine'. Rangimarie Turuki Pere maintains that *mana* is fundamentally beyond translation. It is multidimensional and relates to notions that she describes as psychic influence, control, prestige, power, vested and acquired authority and influence, being influential or binding

over others, and that quality of the person that others know she or he has!<sup>49</sup>

The multidimensional nature is also highlighted by Manuka Henare.<sup>50</sup> According to Manuka, in order to understand Māori worldviews there must be an understanding of *mana* and its related concepts. As with Rangimarie Pere's description, Manuka highlights that *mana* cannot be translated as a singular English concept. Mana Māori is noted as being 'Māori wellbeing and integrity, and emphasises the wholeness of social relationships, it expresses continuity through time and space'. Mana is also referred to as 'generative power'; 'linked to powers of the spiritual ancestors', and implies 'purity as a potency'.<sup>51</sup> *Mana*, Henare writes, is connected to every form of activity within Māori society and is generated through collective relationships.

Mana is a quality which cannot be generated for oneself; neither can it be possessed for oneself, rather mana is generated by others and is bestowed upon both individuals and groups. In the Māori world, virtually every activity, ceremonial or otherwise, has a link with the maintenance of and enhancement of mana. It is central to the integrity of the person and the group.<sup>52</sup>

Māori Marsden also notes the social relations that are central to *mana*, noting that *mana* is a 'divine authority' that is bestowed upon a person to fulfill particular functions. It is bestowed by the people and enhances a person's prestige to undertake obligations in social and political matters.<sup>53</sup>

The concept 'Wāhine' is translated in general terms as meaning 'woman'. Conceptually we can see Wāhine as being the intersection of the two words *wā* and *hine*. *Wā* relates to notions of time and space, *hine* relates to a female essence. The term Wāhine designates a certain time and space for Māori women, but is by no means a universal term like 'woman' in English. There are many times and spaces that Māori women move through in our lives; Wāhine is one of those. There are others. There are varying terms that relate to times in our lives and relationships. From birth we begin a journey through those many spaces. As such, the term Wāhine should not be seen as a dualism with the term *tane*, as we see in the constructed binaries of female and male that exist in the West and which are defined in biological terms. To acknowledge the many ways in which Māori talk about various stages of life is to recognize the complex ways that our people have always viewed roles and relationships. There are a range of terms within *te reo Māori* which all relate to differing stages of life and to the various relationships that exist.<sup>54</sup> Some relate specifically to female essences, others to the interrelationships between people. The point I am making here is that there is not, as we are often presented with, a simplistic dualistic or oppositional relationship between Māori women and Māori men, but there are varying ways in which roles and relationships are negotiated. This means that analysis that relates to Māori women cannot be simplistic, but needs to recognize that relationships within Māori society are multiple.

## MANA WĀHINE THEORY: RECLAIMING MĀORI WOMEN'S THEORETICAL SPACE

Theory is identified as a tool that Māori women can use actively to explain and debate with the world. In my view it is crucial that Māori women define and control theory, while simultaneously providing critique of those non-Māori theorists that have defined theory within which we are supposed to 'fit'. We need to control our own theories of the world and construct theories that embrace the experiences and realities of all Māori women and not just a selected few. Mana Wāhine is identified as a framework through, which we can develop theories that will support the projects of Māori women.<sup>55</sup> Kathie Irwin argues

strongly for the development of Māori women's theories. She asserts a need to take from Western feminism what may be useful for Māori women, while simultaneously framing Māori women's theories within Māori epistemologies, *te reo me ōna Tikanga*. She argues the need to develop theoretical frameworks which allow for Māori women to position themselves within Te Ao Māori while providing for critical analysis and much-needed research into what is happening for Māori women now and what Māori women themselves determine to be important aspects of Māori feminist theories.<sup>56</sup>

This is a view that has been expressed by many Māori women. It is a call to recognize and acknowledge that Indigenous Peoples have been debating issues of oppression for many generations and therefore we as Māori women have a history of analysis that can be drawn upon in terms of understanding, analyzing, and explaining our position and context.<sup>57</sup> This is expressed powerfully by Kathie Irwin, who notes theory is

a powerful intangible tool which harnesses the powers of the mind, heart and soul. It has the power to make sense of a mass of ideas, observations, facts, hunches, experiences. With the right theory as a tool we can take the right to our into rangatiratanga, our sovereignty as Māori women, to be in control of making sense of our world and our future ourselves. We can and must design new tools - Māori feminist theories, to ensure that we have control over making sense of our world and our future. This is a feminist position in which the artificial creation, inflation, and maintenance of male power over women is unacceptable.<sup>58</sup>

Māori people have a wariness of theory. This wariness, and at times disdain, is well deserved. However, as Kathie Irwin so clearly states, if we are able to define, develop, and control our own theoretical base as Māori women, then theory is a tool that we can use for our own interests of Māori women to be catered for in theoretical discourse we need to ensure that our theoretical developments take a wide view of what is happening for Māori women. That then requires a framework that is able to place *te reo Māori me ōna tikanga* at the center alongside issues of gender, class, race, and sexuality. For Mana Wāhine theory there needs to be an ability to engage the wider contextual issues for Māori while ensuring that there is a strong analysis of the specific ways in which Māori women are positioned in the world. This is crucial, as we are located within a societal context where Māori women often bear the brunt of government policies, although I would argue, they are holding up Māori society.

Ngahua Te Awekotuku states that Māori women are making 'fresh inroads' in a range of areas. In the tertiary sector, new developments are occurring as Māori women create and teach specific to Māori women's knowledges, *tikanga*, and issues. This is happening in two languages, *te reo Māori* and English, and in terms of practice, research, theoretical developments, and presentations. As such Ngahua has argued that Māori women 'are reaching a critical milestone in our own political growth, with the writing and discussion of our own theory and analysis.'<sup>59</sup>

I agree with these sentiments and argue further that the development and articulation of Māori women's theories is essential to the ongoing struggle of not only Māori women but for the well-being of Māori more generally. This assertion is made in light of the developments of Mana wāhine that assert the need for analyses that are able to engage the multiple realities of our lives and therefore move beyond simplistic definitions or analysis. A key role for Mana Wāhine theory is to undertake the challenge referred to by Ani Mikaere

of making sense of the contradictions that face Māori women daily. Ani has laid significant groundwork in her writing, drawing on a specifically Māori women's analysis to identify key problematics in the ways in which Māori women are represented.<sup>60</sup>

The assertion of Māori women's theories is not new. Mana Wāhine Theory has its foundation and origins in Māori knowledge, much of which is itself ancient. What we as Māori women are having to do in our present context is reassert our positions and status within our own communities as well as wider society. The status of Māori women has been seriously misrepresented. Mana Wāhine as a theoretical framework asserts that Māori women must be recognized in many roles that are ours, and that includes our leadership, *rangatira* positions. Mana Wāhine is an assertion of our intrinsic *mana* as descendants of our ancestors, as holders and maintainers of knowledge. An underlying tenet of Mana Wāhine is that Māori women have always had critical roles in Māori society. With this as a fundamental understanding is not presented in day to day-to-day, common-sense discourse about Māori women, and most importantly, whose interests are served in the denial of such an understanding.

For the Māori woman academic Kathie Irwin, the experiences of Māori women and the theorizing of those experiences need to be undertaken with both a focus on being female and being Māori, and those can be analyzed through Māori frameworks that incorporate at the center of analysis Māori concepts of the world. In promoting these ideas Kathie identifies that there is a need for, Māori women to struggle against any beliefs that attempt to deny Māori women access to the necessary knowledge and tools that will enable us to take control of our own definitions and knowledge bases. In her article 'Towards Theories of Māori Feminisms', she argues that the tools of analysis need to be developed by Māori women:

We don't need anyone else developing the tools which will help us to come to terms with who we are. We can and will do this work. Real power lies with those who design the tools - it always has. The power is ours. Through the process of developing such theories we will contribute to our empowerment as Māori women, moving forward in our struggles for our people, our lands, our world, ourselves.<sup>61</sup>

The message is clear. It is for Māori women to determine our own theories. However, this cannot be done in isolation but within the context of what it means to struggle against patriarchal institutions and also against colonial oppression, for they are inseparable. The struggles for our people, our lands, our worlds, ourselves are struggles that are a part of our daily lives as Māori women, they are never about just being Māori or just being women but are about a combination of what those things mean. What this then opens is an idea that race, gender, and class are interacting in complex ways, and that any form of analysis needs to incorporate these considerations. The term Mana Wāhine Theory is seen as an umbrella term under which Māori women's theories can be located. I agree with Linda Tuhiwai Smith in her assertion that Mana Wāhine is an appropriate notion as any form of Māori feminism draws from *te reo Māori me ōna tikanga*.<sup>62</sup> Ngahua Te Awekotuku explains that Mana Wāhine is not reactionary, it is not a response or reaction to male violence against us, but a process whereby Māori women are able to be pro-active in determining our future. It is also a process of rediscovering the strength of Māori relationships.<sup>63</sup> Mana Wāhine is a framework that enables us to engage in the rediscovery and pro-active work that Ngahua contends is necessary for Māori. Mana Wāhine Theory refers to Māori women's analyses that encompass the complex realities of Māori women's lives. It is defined within cultural terms

and in a context that affirms fundamental Māori values and the ways in which they are negotiated. As such, Mana Wāhine brings to the fore a need for analysis that will reclaim Māori worldviews in terms of gender and gender relationships. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes,

It is a strong cultural concept which situates Māori women in relation to each other and upholds their mana as women of particular genealogical groupings. It also situates Māori women in relation to the outside world and reaffirms their mana as Māori, indigenous women. Mana Wāhine Māori is the preferred Māori label for what counts as Māori feminism. It is a term which addresses both the issues of race and gender as well as locates the struggle for Māori women within two distinct societies.<sup>64</sup>

## Notes

- 1 L. T. Smith cited in Ngahuaia Te Awakotuku, 'He Whiriwhiri Wahine: Framing Women's Studies for Aotearoa', in L. T. Smith (ed.), *Te Pua 1* (Auckland: Te Puawaitanga, 1992).
- 2 *Tauiwi* refers to those peoples that have settled on our lands but are not *tangata whenua* or people of the land, therefore are not Indigenous Peoples.
- 3 E. T. J. Durie, 'The Treaty in Māori History', in William Renwick (ed.), *Sovereignty and Indigenous Rights: The Treaty of Waitangi in International Contexts* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1991), pp. 156-69.
- 4 A translation provided by Hugh Kawharu of this article is as follows:  
The Queen of England agrees to protect the Chiefs, the Subtribes, and all the people of New Zealand in the unqualified exercise of their chieftainship over their lands, villages, and all their treasures. But on the other hand the Chiefs of the Confederation and all the Chiefs will sell land to the Queen at a price agreed to by the person owning it and by the person buying it (the latter being) appointed by the Queen as her purchase agent. (Ibid., 319)
- 5 Jan, cited in *Broadsheet* (Auckland: Broadsheet Collective, Nov. 1980).
- 6 Mona, cited in *ibid.*
- 7 Smith, 1992.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 10.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 11.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 K. Irwin, 'Towards Theories of Māori Feminisms', in Rosemary Du Plessis et al. (eds.), *Feminist Voices: Women's Studies Texts for Aotearoa! New Zealand* (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 1-21.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 4.
- 13 Ripeka Evans, 'The Negation of Powerlessness: Māori Feminism, a Perspective', *Hecate* 20(2) (1994): 53-65.
- 14 Smith, 1992.
- 15 L. T. Smith, 'Getting Out From Down Under: Miiori Women, Education and the Struggles for Mana Wahine', in M. Arnot and K. Weiler (eds.), *Feminism and Social Justice in Education* (London: Fahner Press, 1993), p. 73.
- 16 Donna Awatere, *Miiori Sovereignty* (Auckland: Broadsheet, 1984), p. 42.
- 17 *Ibid.*
- 18 *Ibid.*
- 19 Lee Maracle, *I Am Woman: A Native Perspective 011 Sociology and Feminism* (Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1996).
- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 Devon A. Mihesuah, 'Commonality of Difference: American Indian Women and History', in *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).
- 22 R. Jonson, W. Stevenson, and D. Greschener, 'Peekiskwetan' 1993 6 CJWL 1.53, at 159, cited in Ani Mikaere, 'The Balance Destroyed: The Consequences for Māori Women of the Colonisation of Tikanga Māori', unpublished dissertation, Master of Jurisprudence, University of Wrikoato, Hamilton, 1995.
- 23 Haunani K. Trask, *Eros and Power: The Promise of Feminist Theory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986).
- 24 *Haole* refers to the white American colonizers of the Hawaiian lands.
- 25 Haunani Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawaii* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1993).
- 26 Trask, 1986, p. 177.
- 27 C. Moraga and G. Anzaldúa (eds.), *This Bridge Called My Back* (New York: Kitchen Table Women of Color Press, 1983).
- 28 G. Anzaldúa, *Making Face, Making Soul: Haciendo Caras* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Foundation, 1990).
- 29 Moraga and Anzaldúa, 1983, pp. 95-6.

30 Combahee River Collective, 'A Black Feminist Statement', in Moraga and Anzaldua, 1983, p. 212.

31 Ibid., 41.

32 Recently at a dinner held by one of the few remaining Māori women's groups, from that time, Amorangi, it was noted that at least 10 Māori women's groups were formed through this time period.

33 Geraldine Heng, "'A Great Way to Fly": Nationalism, the State, and the Varieties of Third-World Feminism', in M. J. Alexander and C. T. Mohanty (eds.), *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

34 Ibid., 31.

35 Ibid., 34.

36 b. hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990).

37 Cheryl Clarke, 'Lesbianism: An Act of Resistance', in Moraga and Anzaldua, 1983, pp. 128-37.

38 Combahee River Collective, 1983.

39 b. hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Boston: South End Press, 1984).

40 Ibid., 2.

41 Ibid., 44.

42 Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Culture and Politics* (New York: The Women's Press, 1984).

43 Māori women also sought involvement in the women's movement in Aotearoa through the late nineteenth century.

44 44 Davis, 1984, p. 18.

45 Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Post coloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989). This is perhaps an example of who defines what is 'appropriate' writing in terms of feminist publications: Minh-ha attempted 33 times to have her book published before being successful (personal communication).

46 Ibid.

47 Smith, 1993.

48 Maracle, 1996, p. 139.

49 Rangimarie Turuki Pere, *Te Wheke: A Celebration of Infinite Wisdom* (Gisborne: Ao Ako Global Learning New Zealand Ltd., 1991).

50 Manuka Henare, *Ngā Tikanga me ngā Ritenga o te ao Māori: Standards and Foundations of Māori Society*, Report of the Royal Commission on Social Policy, vol. III, part 1 (Wellington: Government Printer, 1988).

51 Ibid., 16.

52 Ibid., 18.

53 Māori Marsden, *The Natural World and Natural Resources: Māori Value Systems and Perspectives* (Wellington: Ministry of the Environment, 1988).

54 *Kotiro, hine, tamawāhine, tuakana, teina, tamahine, tuahine, Wāhine, whaea, ruahine, juiā, kaumātua*, are all terms that relate to different phases of the life of a Māori girl or woman.

55 Te Awekotuku, 1992; Smith, 1992; Irwin, 1992. R. Evans, 'Miiroi Women as Agents of Change', paper presented to Winter Lecture Series, University of Auckland, reprinted in Te Pua, vol. 3, no. 1 (Auckland: Te Puawaitanga, 1993). L. Pihama and D. Mara, 'Gender Relations in Education', in E. Coxon, K. Jenkins, J. Marshall, and L. Massey (eds.), *The Politics of Learning and Teaching in Aotearoa - New Zealand* (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1994), pp. 215-50. Toni-Kristin Liddell, 'Mahuika: He Ahi Komau: The Post-Colonial Invisibilisation of Mana Wahine in Māori Mythology', unpublished Master of Arts dissertation, University of Auckland, Auckland.

56 Irwin, 1992.

57 Smith, 1992.

58 Irwin, 1992, p. 5.

59 Te Awekotuku, 1992, p. 12.

60 Mikaere, 1995.

61 Irwin, 1992, p. 5.

62 Ibid., 58.

63 Te Awekotuku, 1992.

64 Ibid., 62.

# Te Ukaipo - Te Taiao:

**The Mother, the Nurturer - Nature**

Aroha Yates-Smith



An ancient Māori god once advised his brother, Tane, to return to their mother, Papatuanuku.<sup>1</sup> His words, which translate loosely as 'lest we forget the Mother who nurtured us at her breast,' remind us of the importance of considering the feminine, respecting our Earth Mother, and not taking either for granted. It also signals the important role of women as nurturers, at one level as mothers, lovers, daughters, friends, and at another, as kaitiaki, caretakers or guardians of the environment.<sup>2</sup>

The title of this article, 'Te Ukaipo - Te Taiao: the Mother, the Nurturer - Nature,' links us to our Earth Mother, Papatuanuku, and all our grandmothers extending back through the mists of time to Te Kore and Te Po, a time of pure potential, the very essence of which was to produce humankind and all forms of life. Te Ukaipo refers to woman in her capacity as mother and nurturer - feeding her baby in the wee small hours of the night (literally, 'the breast which feeds at night'). The term also refers to Mother Earth to whom we humans turn for sanctuary and nurturing, particularly when we need healing or quietude. Te Taiao is the environment, the universe at large.

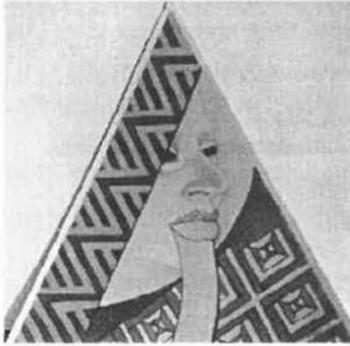
I will provide a brief overview of how our ancestral mothers such as Papatuanuku, Hineteiwaiwa, Hinerauwharangi, Horoirangi and Hinenuitepo were models for women through time and how we Māori women maintain the role of nurturer in our contemporary lives. This role will be identified specifically through elements of the human life and death cycle as viewed by Māori.

It is in Papatuanuku that the creative, generative principle resides, and it is because of Papa that her female descendants are imbued with these traits. Papatuanuku, the ultimate source of creativity, along with her female descendants, reflected the nurturing quality of the feminine and the complementary aspects of the creator/transformer figure as embodied in the *whare tangata/whare aitua* concept, connecting women with life and death.

The *whare tangata* was established when Hineahuone was created from Papatuanuku's sexual organs, the fertile region called Kurawaka, and the womb, housing humankind in its embryonic form, was implanted in Hine, vesting her with the powers of reproduction.<sup>3</sup> The *whare aitua* is represented by Papatuanuku, who receives her offspring back into 'te kopu o te whenua' (the womb of the earth) when they move from the realm of living into death. While the physical body is protected in the womb of mother earth, the spirit returns to the spiritual realm, to be cared for by Hinenuitepo, the goddess of death.

The term *whare o aitua* might also be applied to Papa, the earth mother, for she is the personification of the female principle. Her descendants... who dwell on her broad bosom, *i.e.*, man, birds, trees, &c., all perish and are received back into the earth mother. For Papa said to Rangi: 'Our offspring shall return to me in death, and I will conceal them.'<sup>4</sup>

Papatuanuku, in co-habiting with Ranginui, the Sky Father, created a family of godly beings, thereby providing a genealogical base for the elements and features of our environment, for instance, the flora and fauna of the forest, rocks and stones, marine wildlife. One of Papa's mokopuna (granddaughters), Hineteiwaiwa, had a profound knowledge of karakia (prayers and chants) and possessed supernatural powers. She was a tutelary deity of women, of childbirth and women's arts and crafts, and was closely connected with the sea and the moon.



## Hineteiwaiwa

*Pastel on archival paper by  
Jolene Douglas. Permission to  
publish courtesy of artist.*

For the purposes of this article, I will focus on some specific examples of how women have displayed that nurturing role through generations of time. Let us first consider the creation of new life and its passage into this world.

Our Māori ancestors considered the creative, fertile element to be the most important gift and, therefore, to be cherished.<sup>5</sup> The children of nobility, as future leaders of the tribal group, were generally treated particularly well, as it was believed that they would ensure the survival of their people. In traditional times, chiefly, rangatira women were accorded due respect and special attention was paid to their nutritional needs and comfort and to their spiritual wellbeing. The kuia, older women, would give wise counsel to the younger generations, particularly when the younger women were unwell, or moving through the various stages of the life cycle, as in this case, giving birth to a child.<sup>6</sup> Such counsel was provided within all sectors of Māori society.

There is evidence that invocations were used throughout a woman's pregnancy and to herald the birth of a member of the noble class. One such karakia, 'te tuku o Hineteiwaiwa,' was used during difficult births.<sup>7</sup> This karakia was recited to aid the process by invoking Hineteiwaiwa and to encourage the mother, reminding her that Hineteiwaiwa herself had had difficulties delivering her own child, Tuhuruhuru. Indeed it was at his birth that this karakia was first used.

The words of the karakia follow through the stages of the birth process, encouraging both mother and child, and invoking the gods to participate in the safe delivery of the baby. The opening line, 'Raranga raranga taku takapau,' refers to the weaving of a ceremonial floor mat which may be used as a sleeping mat. The ancient karakia is filled with phrases, now obscure in meaning, but certain lines such as 'Tu te turuturu no Hinerauwharangi, Tu te turuturu no Hineteiwaiwa' clearly refer to the weaving pegs, turuturu (stakes placed at either of a garment being woven to support it), belonging to Hineteiwaiwa and Hinerauwharangi. Turuturu was also the term given for props used for support by the expectant mother during labour. Doubly significant, then, are these lines which relate to the connection of the goddesses and women through weaving and childbirth.

Another karakia acknowledges the noble, ariki qualities passed down through the ages to a baby girl via the words used to address her: 'e hine kahurangi ariki'. It is credited as having been the very karakia used after the birth of Hinerauwharangi (a goddess connected with the spiritual and physical growth of humans, flora and fauna) when her mother, Hinetitama,

was seated on the verandah of her home and the following words were recited:

Nau mai, E hine wai roto!  
Whakaea, whakaea to uru tapu  
Whakaea, whakaea to uru tipua  
Whakaea, whakaea to uru waiora ki taiao nei  
E tipu, e rea, E hine kahurangi ariki!  
Whakamau tai, whakamau o Rongo  
Whakamau taketake toitu ki taiao nei, E hine ariki rangi..e!  
E tipu, e rea koe he whatu ioio nui, he whatu io matua  
He io taketake ki taiao nei, E Hine-rauwharangi..e!<sup>8</sup>

The term 'hine wairoto' represents 'te wai o roto i te wahine' (literally 'the water/liquid within the woman'), thereby investing the 'Hine' in the young girl whose femaleness is in its infancy; she is at the rudimentary stage of becoming a wahine, a woman. The noble, ariki qualities passed on through the generations to the child are recognised when she is addressed as 'e hine kahurangi ariki' and 'e hine ariki rangi'. Her connection with the natural environment is secured with these words of welcome and finally her name is spoken, Hinerauwharangi.

As the child grows, the singing of tribal songs instils a sense of history and identity in the mind and the very psyche of the young person. Close relatives would massage the child from infancy through to puberty - yet another way in which the physical and spiritual dimensions were nurtured. Today, Māori children brought up with a strong affiliation to things Māori continue to be influenced by aspects of the oral tradition and customs of yesteryear.

Through karakia and the careful tuition of experts, such qualities found in the ancestor Hineteiwaiwa, for instance, were fostered in young girls that they might become strong, capable women, able to extend hospitality to others (by providing food and entertainment for them), to raise children, weave fine garments and mats, participate in for a of a social, political and educational nature, and to draw on the leadership qualities inherited from their ancestors. The gifts of the ruahine (wise woman), knowledge of karakia and healing, were given to those seen to have a propensity for these roles.

Thus far, the focus of this article has been to reflect on that significant time in a human's life when the spirit becomes embodied in the physical body and a child is born. Let us now consider the process aligned with the spirit's departure from the physical form.

Traditional Māori beliefs maintain that the wairua (spirit) of a dead person travels to the domain of the spirits, where it joins Hinenuitepo and the ancestors, while the body is interred in te kopu o Papatuanuku (Earth 's womb), to rest. Hinenuitepo, the guardian of spirits, awaits the arrival of her descendants in Te Reinga, the gathering place of the spirits, where she takes them into her care.

At tangihanga, Hineteiwaiwa was manifested in the numerous whariki (mats) and fine garments used to adorn the tupapaku (the deceased), and the house or the area in front of the meeting house known as the marae atea. It was usual practice, too, for the bodies of nobility to be wrapped in garments and/or whariki before being laid to rest. These finely woven cloaks and mats were the result of many long hours of dedicated weaving on the part of women.

As a goddess of spiritual and physical growth, Hinerauwharangi, too, was symbolically represented or manifested in the greenery used at tangihanga, the branchlets held by the tangata whenua when extending a pohiri (welcome) to the group of visitors approaching the marae atea, and the pare kawakawa, chaplets of greenery worn by the mourners, along with the greenery adorning the deceased's body and the meeting house. One could equally attribute the use of green leaves to Papatuanuku, as mother earth, or to her son Tane, as the male deity of the forest, or as suggested here, to Hinerauwharangi, the deity of growth. The symbolism evokes the sense of connection between the human dimension and the ancestors present in the surrounding environment, the tangible link between the physical and spiritual dimensions, and the fragility of life.

Women surrounded the body of the deceased, and were the chief mourners at a tangi. The group of mourners approaching the body would usually be led by the women of the party, with the men following.<sup>9</sup> The foundation for this positioning in the group was that women were regarded as the puna roimata, the spring of compassion, or quite literally, fount of tears. Their spiritual connection with Papatuanuku and Hinenuitepo also meant that they were able to liaise closely with the spiritual realm through karanga, when the women would raise their voices in a high-pitched tone, calling to the dead. The high frequency of sound was said to be heard by the spirits. On a more practical level, the stirring wail prompted the physical release of the iwi's grief. By virtue of the fact, too, that women housed the whare tangata, and were connected cosmogonically with te whare aitua (through Hinenuitepo and ultimately Papa), they were destined to play these particular roles in the tangi process.

In considering the modern context, my observation is that Māori women continue to maintain many of their grandmothers' roles in everyday life: in the home, on the marae, as well as in places of employment and recreation. The fundamental role of woman remains as creator and mother, thus fulfilling the generative function previously carried out by Papa, Hineteiwaiwa, Hinerauwharangi and the many other goddesses. Women are still regarded as te whare tangata. Though the role of ruahine may have altered (some of her tasks taken over by Christian ministers, or doctors and midwives), on the marae, kuia and some younger women are still placed in the role of ruahine and perform ritual functions including karanga and waiata.

The concept of manaaki tangata (hospitality, and caring for others) has remained a fundamental principle within modern Māori society. The energy and success of Māori women is evident in every sector of society. They have been a driving force behind Māori educational and health initiatives, the revival of our indigenous language and the education of our children through Kohanga Reo (pre-school language nests) and immersion primary and secondary schools. The Māori Women's Welfare League and the Women's Health League have made significant contributions to our society during the past 50 years. In the area of health, many Māori women have revived Māori medical practices as an alternative to western medicine. In many instances, traditional karakia and the woman's karanga (call) feature in welcoming the child into the world. The ancient custom of returning the placenta to Papatuanuku (the whenua or earth) on the birth of a child is now widely maintained; where possible the placenta (also termed whenua) is taken to the family's tribal area.

Why are our women such strong advocates for the retention of these values? I propose that, as a result of numerous generations being taught the importance of caring for our loved ones, tending to the needs of others and striving, sometimes struggling, to ensure that our young can aspire to successful futures, for the ultimate benefit of our people and

our environment, we possess what could be described as an innate sense of the necessity to nurture. This continues to be the general case, despite the disempowerment created by colonisation, the poverty of many, the resulting breakdown of social norms, and the alienation of so many of our people from their Ukaipo, their mother figures and ancestral lands. The situation certainly is not perfect, but the foundation remains firm, with the interweaving of fundamental values.

An example of alienation from one's tribal land can be found in the following account about one of my female ancestors, Horoirangi. Horoirangi was a cousin of Tamatekapua, the captain of our canoe, Te Arawa. She was of noble lineage. However, it was because of her dedication to caring for her people and the environment that she is remembered today. This image of her (shown below) was carved into the rhyolite rock face of a cliff at Tihitonga, at the southern end of the Rotorua caldera. My elders told me that her image was crafted in stone as a tribute to her capacity to care for the environment. For hundreds of years she received the first fruits and game of the forest, the first crops from the land; our people of the Uenukukopako tribe would take the offerings to her and would invoke her guidance and protection.



### **Horoirangi**

*Courtesy of Te Papa Whakahiku  
– Auckland War Memorial  
Museum.*

About eighty years ago, she was removed from her cliff location and taken to the Auckland War Memorial Museum. When I first saw her in the early 1990s, she was lying on a storeroom shelf in the museum. I had an overwhelming sense that she wanted to return home to Rotorua; through consultation with our elders and the permission of the Ngati Whatua people and the Auckland War Memorial Museum, this became possible.

Horoirangi now stands in the Rotorua Museum of Art and History among the taonga, the treasured items, of our people. She represents for us today a woman, who, through her exemplary behaviour, has nurtured both humankind and the ancestral components within our environment. Many believe that Horoirangi continues to guide and protect her people in her spiritual form. Horoirangi also provides us with an example of one who was removed from her people, albeit in the form of her stone image, to be returned generations later. The

great sadness I personally felt on her return to her ancestral home was that so few people knew who she was; in fact the orators who welcomed her assumed she was male, until one elder explained that she was a female kaitiaki, long removed from our people.

Horoirangi, Papatuanuku, Hineteiwaiwa, Hinenuitepo and the many other Māori goddesses all continue to guide us through the trials and tribulations of this life. Collectively the atua wahine, these goddesses, our ancestors, form a constellation symbolising 'Hine', connecting humanity with the land and the source of life, connecting the newborn child with Nature, and the dying person, through her or his ancestors, with the Universe.

In this modern world, one might ask if focusing on women's roles as nurturers might restrict the consideration of women's wider roles in society. In traditional Māori society, women were never confined in this way; despite the fact that such whakatauki as, 'He puta taua ki te Tane, he whanau tamariki ki te wahine' refer to the roles of men as warriors and women as bearing children, the European concept of 'a woman's place is in the home' was foreign to our people as able-bodied men and women were needed to undertake the tribe's work, which often entailed moving around the countryside. Women's roles were diverse - some women were noted leaders, politicians, strategists in battle, warriors, medical practitioners, composers.<sup>10</sup> Today, Māori women are actively involved in a diversity of occupations, but the value of manaakitanga, which is exemplified through consideration of others and the extension of hospitality to visitors, is a value of Māori society, maintained by women and men alike. Men's roles complement women's - at a marae gathering, men and women work together in the kitchen, while others perform appropriate rituals on the marae atea and in the whareniui.

The goddesses provide role models for us in the modern world. The impressions I have gained through years of listening to stories and waiata, and through reading manuscripts which describe these deities, suggest that they were extremely strong women, not to be treated lightly, who would fight to protect their people but who still retained the core qualities of aroha and manaakitanga, compassion and hospitality. My observation is that those same qualities continue to be displayed by women today. At a time when globalisation and global warming are having an impact on societies across the world, I believe it is critical that we 'remember the Mother who nurtured us at her breast,' whether she be a maternal, human figure, our spiritual Mother or the Environment - Te Ukaipo - Te Taiao: the Mother, the Nurturer- Nature. The commitment to nurture ourselves, each other and the environment will surely have positive outcomes.

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## Notes

- 1 Elsdon Best, 'Māori Personifications. Anthropogeny, Solar Myths and Phallic Symbolism as Exemplified in the Demiurgic Concepts of Tane and Tiki', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 32 (1923), pp. 53-69, 103-20.
- 2 The focus of this article is the feminine, therefore the nurturing qualities of men will not be fully addressed here.
- 3 G.R.A. Yates-Smith, 'Rediscovering the Feminine in Māori Spirituality', Ph.D. thesis, University of Waikato, 1998, p. 141.
- 4 Elsdon Best, 'The Lore of the Whare Kohanga', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 14 (1905), pp. 205-15.
- 5 Yates-Smith, p. 159.
- 6 Makereti [Maggie Papakura], *The Old-Time Māori* (New Women's Press, Auckland, 1986 [orig. 1938]).
- 7 Makereti (1986); Edward Shortland, *Māori Religion and Mythology* (AMS Press, New York, 1977 [orig. 1882]).
- 8 Te Matorohanga in Elsdon Best, *The Whare Kohanga ('The Nest House') and Its Lore*. (Government Printer, Wellington, 1975 [orig. 1929]), p. 27.
- 9 The men provided protection in the rear, should the group be attacked from behind.
- 10 A. Mikaere, 'The Balance Destroyed: The Consequences for Māori Women of the Colonisation of Tikanga Māori', (M. Jur. thesis, University of Waikato, 1995).

# Echoed Silences in Absentia:

**Mana Wahine in Institutional Contexts**

Hine Waitere and Patricia Johnson



## ABSTRACT<sup>1</sup>

The journey mapped herein is based on a women's studies conference paper written and presented in 1999 (Waitere-Ang & Johnston, 1999)<sup>2</sup>. When we (Hine and Trish) wrote the paper, we worked together in Te Uru Maraurau: the Department of Māori and Multicultural Education at Massey University. A decade later Hine works in the Masters of Educational Administration Programme at Massey and Patricia is a professor and the Head of the Graduate School at Te Whare Wananga o Awanuiārangi, a "Indigenous University" in Whakatane. Engaging the original paper we create a reflexive dialogue in which we work to connect tacit knowing to explicit knowledge (Cunliffe, 2002). As we re-enter a conversation that decried the absence of mana wahine in institutional spaces, uppermost in our thinking as we look back and talk forward is the question – what has changed for us?

**Key Words:** Indigenous feminism, mana wahine, reflexivity, speaking across difference.

## PROLOGUE

*Me aro koe ki te ha o Hine-ahu-one.  
Pay heed to the dignity of women.*

We enter into the discussion of feminism in practice knowing that as we take up the invitation to speak, it does not guarantee a hearing. Being afforded a hearing even by those sensitively inclined – those who we might choose to speak with, or to, in solidarity – is difficult. Why? In response, we would argue, it is because hearing is dependent on much more than the amalgam of body fluid and tissue. As argued elsewhere (Waitere-Ang, 2002), while we recognise the laudible desire to invite other to speak we need to dispel the associated myth that other has been historically silent. By all accounts Māori women are noisy. They have historically spoken about a variety of things, across numerous contexts (locally, nationally and internationally) over a significant period of time.<sup>3</sup> Putting the onus on indigenous peoples to speak, then, without a concurrent focus on the social conditions that afford a hearing, in effect, renders the speaker mute. Speaking and listening cannot be split into productive and receptive modes, abdicating the listener of any responsibility in the communicative act. To not only listen (to detect sound) but to hear someone is to be actively engaged in socially constructing relational meanings. We would argue, therefore, that the ability to hear is significantly effected by shared spaces that traverse socio-political histories, linguistic, cultural and, yes – theoretical, epistemological and ontological airwaves which connote levels of resonance or dissonance in the auditory range of the listener. So while we believe there is evidence in Aotearoa New Zealand that the institutional acoustic is expanding, unless feminism takes account of the multiple forces of subjugation where sexism, racism, colonialism and class combine and overlap with the political aspirations for

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1 We would like to thank the reviewers for their feedback and the constructive criticism given.

2 This paper is based on an abridged version of a conference paper: *In absentia: Mana Wahine in institutional contexts* presented at the Women's Studies Association Conference Hui Raranga Wahine, Victoria University Wellington, November 5–7, 1999. The full paper, without the interlocution, was reproduced in the unpublished conference proceedings of the same conference.

3 See, for example, the history of the Māori Women's Welfare League established in 1951. Through this organization, women were able to represent themselves in government for the first time. Whina Cooper, the first president of the League at the age of 80, led a national land march in 1975. King (1977) attributes Te Puea's mana to being catalytic in bringing the Kingitanga movement to a place of national significance. Māori women have formed delegations to the UN, participating in indigenous rights forums. We have also engaged in our own internal struggles both intra and interculturally.

self determination, feminist studies will only ever, at best, take account of part of indigenous women's realities.

As we adopt a critically reflexive approach to mapping our academic journeys we are cautious like many indigenous women (see Green, 2007) as we evoke and write under the auspices of feminism. This is not because we deny a place for feminist understandings in our lives, or because we want to spurn alliance building with non-Māori; on the contrary, it is because our position is tempered by scepticism of feminisms that do not take account of the specificities of socio-political, historical and cultural contexts that need to be accounted for when engaging with the muddy realities of indigenous women's lives.

In this paper we commence, as we did at the conference a decade ago, with a poem about names (Burgess 1998). We did, and do so, to mark the struggle over the power to name, claim, define and theorise our lives (Smith, 1999). We move on to look at what mana wahine means to us before locating it within the broader Māori positions being articulated in academia. We then turn to outline our focus on absenteeism before returning, in the style of cyclic reflexivity, to consider the centring of mana wahine before drawing the paper to a close with a canonical refrain.

Puanani Burgess' poem demonstrates for us the ways in which we see and describe ourselves and how others see and describe us. The bifurcated gaze results in a myriad of positions that at times collide sometimes complement, and at times muddy what might otherwise form neat distinctions and boundaries.

As Puanani Burgess (1998) writes;

### **Choosing My Name**

When I was born my mother gave me three names:  
Christabelle, Yoshie, and Puanani.

Christabelle was my 'English' name,  
my social security card name,  
my school name  
the name I gave when teachers asked me for my real name  
a safe name.

Yoshie was my home name,  
my everyday name,  
the name that reminded my father's family  
that I was Japanese, even though  
my nose, hips and feet were wide,  
the name that made me acceptable to them  
who called my Hawaiian mother kuroi (black)  
a saving name.

Puanani is my chosen name,  
my piko name connecting me to the 'aina  
and the kai and the po'e kahiko -  
my blessing;  
my burden;  
my amulet;  
my spear.

### **Puanani Burgess (1998)**

They are names borne by children standing in a crossroads of abraded relationships. Similarly, when we were at school, children often called us by other names. Hine was called Henni Penny, and children delighted in telling her 'the sky was falling, the sky was falling'. When she thumped the instigator on the head and asked him if he meant 'like that,' he just called her Penny. Patricia was supposed to be a safe name but she was often called a 'dirty little half- caste' because her name and her colour didn't match. She also resorted to thumping children but 'they' just called her a nigger instead.

A sensitive teacher told Hine that names were important, relating to the rest of the class that her name meant girl. But some of the children laughed and asked her why her mother called her girl – as if she didn't know that she was one. Patricia knew that she had another name but didn't tell anyone because she knew it was a special name that related to a specific event in her hapu history, knowing intuitively that to tell 'them' was to invite ridicule.

Mere called her daughter Hine-tu-whiria-o-te-rangi and Ngahipara[s] mother Heeni named her mokopuna Maringi Noa nga Roimata. These were names that many of their school friends could neither say nor even begin to imagine their significance, their history, or their connectedness to wider events and circumstances. Like Puanani, these names have been our blessings, our taonga tuku iho, our patu, and our burden.

While the poem serves the purpose of reflecting on our childhood in institutional contexts it also helps us identify other forces at play in the 'naming' of Christabelle, Yoshie and Puanani. These names mirror the 'dead ends,' 'cul de sacs,' crescents and avenues that this paper explores in terms of Māori women and their positions within institutional settings. Christabelle signals a 'dead end' – to know one's self as the colonised other, to bear witness from a position of relative safety, the cultural genocide of our view of the world, subjugated to the political and imperial filters of another – to bear witness to the demise of the mana of wahine Māori in institutional contexts. We know the sound, the structure, and the form of forces by which each name is formed. Historically Christabelle and Yoshie have represented the forces of supplication and domestication (names drawn from dominant vernaculars) that discriminate. Names adopted that require us to work to our own erasure under the auspices of 'sameness,' that suggest 'one people' while treating similarity differentially – unable to disguise the body that bears it. We have come to know such forces as colonisation, imperialism, assimilation, racism, subjugation and dependency.

Although different to Christabelle, Yoshie represents for us a series of crescents, the pathways added to the main arterial route – added to maps, demarcated as subsidiary 'byways'. Rarely in this position is the mana of Māori women at the centre in institutional contexts. Rather, Yoshie signifies our partial inclusion – invited to be physically present, – and encouraged to provide the ethnic additives without modification to structures that invariably provide pathways that re-route those traversing institutional terrains back to the central highway of Eurocentric norms. In other words, Yoshie indicates partial acceptance, the parallels of which can be seen in Māori-friendly/girl-friendly approaches where the ethnic and gendered additives become the fashionable adornment of unchanging structures and processes.<sup>4</sup>

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4 See, for example, the later work of Andrea Smith (2007), particularly in relation to the forums around indigenous feminism without apology accessible from the Association for Women's Rights in development website - <http://www.awid.org/eng/content/search?SearchText=feminism>. In her article Smith shows how making space and achieving indigenous women's politics, needs and aspirations can work in opposition to each other.

The name Puanani is no less complex, potentially representing both a crescent and an avenue. As an avenue, Puanani has the potential to provide a parallel route. Accessibility for Māori women on this plain is not contingent on being the other; rather, both physical and cultural presence is taken for granted, embedded within institutional structures and processes. Such a position allows us to know self in ways that we recognise (Smith 1999). The taonga tuku iho, that which is handed down as a gift to be treasured, not unused or untouched provides the patu, the analytic tool to parry and thrust, to assert a way of knowing self and contributing to the world in which we live. Juxtaposed is the potential burden of co-optation implied in the crescents, signalling the ever present threats encased in the creeping highways of newly configured hegemonic norms. Cast as the burden, Puanani in the material and discursive formations of the imperial empire recognises us as those who are destined to be deficit, inferior, state-dependent, the blight of modern society seen to draw from but rarely contributing to that which is considered positive in institutional settings.

Personal names – though not always – can also serve as indicators of basic group identity. Two group names common to Aotearoa New Zealand used as identity markers and the focus of ongoing debates are Māori and Pākehā. Although both names are of Māori vernacular, their attendant socio-historic meanings are best understood within the discourse of colonisation and imperialism (Smith 1999).

As we paused to reflect on the poem, Hine asked Patricia: A decade on, what, if anything, do the names Christabelle, Yoshie and Puanani signify for you?

The first two enable me to work within environments which sit outside where I am currently located at Te Whare Wananga o Awanuiārangi. Patricia (or Trish) still enables movement within dominant/colonised/institutional spaces that might otherwise exclude 'Maringi' and what the latter might signify or represent. Within the wananga environment, however, Patricia, Trish and Maringi are equally viable naming forms that draw from specific contexts to evoke which name is used. Prof. Patricia Johnston is used for example in a formal academic context that positions me in terms of my position and qualification: Maringi is invoked in terms of whakapapa that serves to locate my relationship to mana whenua, Mataatua and Awanuiārangi; Trish is my everyday name which is used most often outside the whakapapa (traditional) or formal forums.

It is not uncommon for many Māori women in institutional contexts to continue to struggle against the precepts of colonisation, to find the spaces in which they are able to pose questions, write and theorise without the constant pressure of assimilation working under the weight of institutional norms that remind us of our 'abnormalities'. For those with a particular interest in women's issues we are drawn into debates that raise questions about definitions of mana wahine, according to whom, and in what context. The process of definition is often fraught with structural and procedural barriers tainted by a worldview derived from socio-political, colonial origins that have been hostile to our cultural growth and development. In the attempt to articulate our own positions we are confronted with a labyrinth of ever-changing ideological and methodological pathways leading those who seek answers to continually have to redefine the question.

The spaces sought in institutional contexts are not then those based on dichotomies that separate us from us, that fractionate, deconstruct and attempt to dissect us; rather, they

are spaces where we can understand our links and our connections. Mana wahine is a connective highway. The question of our presence and our absences is thus predicated not only on our physical presence but also on the structures and processes that constrain our very ways of knowing and engaging with the world as Wahine Māori.

What do the names Christabelle, Yoshie and Puanani signify for you Hine?

Well, all three signifiers walk the same institutional hallways I do. They chafe each other and jockey for attention and certainly Puanani as the signifier for mana wahine continues to be the blessing, burden, taonga and patu we claimed it to be a decade ago. In negotiating the tensions that continue to exist (even in the face of the shifts that have been made, spaces won, alliances forged, recognised and celebrated), I find myself increasingly challenged by Ruruhia's comment that mana wahine is a relational phenomenon. Of course it makes sense in a Māori context, but it makes me think about what it looks like when I bring it with me into academia. If the relational principle is to have any saliency then the mana within others has to be recognised. What I mean is that, the realisation of mana wahine as a way of my being and the blueprint by which I live, how am I to recognise the mana embodied in my 'other' in the face of my own being takatakahi (stomped on)? That's hard! The dilemma it causes lands squarely in the hyphenated space between the ethical and the political. To be clear, if the relational nature of mana wahine is to remain central to a way of being and applied as implied by Ruruhia Robin: if I takahi (stomp on) my 'other' I run the risk of re-inscribing the pathologies created by the historical practices that stomped on us (as signified by the totalising tenets signified in the name Christabelle and the partial ones marked by Yoshie). In other words I am forced to centralise the very thing that I find abhorrent – the denial of us, by being forced to act like 'them', the resistance to which motivated our initial writing a decade ago. In that scenario, do I already forfeit my mana because I play or re-centre 'their game'? I need to find a way of acknowledging the mana of others in ways that do not denigrate my or our own because clearly that is unacceptable, I would not simply accept that. So for me the ethical and the political, embedded in each of these signifiers, cohere in the space where the mini, individual me, and the macro, collective ME, meet. How can I be, and allow my 'other' to be, when their being is dependent on me ceasing to be – me? So the relationships are neither necessarily comfortable nor evenly contested but they are important to grapple with, particularly if we are to leave a legacy that has a different institutional reality.

Together we suggest that these complexities in all their nuanced gradations continue to exist. They are complicated by contexts that require the constant negotiation of the cultural borders Puanani alludes to. They are contexts where at times our assertions are not considered radical enough and in others where just being present is considered over the top. In whatever context, mana wahine is not, nor has it ever been, about changing the sex of the winning team. Mana wahine is much more complex than that; it is about recognising the dignity and authority of women and, yes, often that means engaging in political work to ensure that that same dignity is recognised by others.

## MANA WAHINE

As articulated by Ruruhira Robin (1991), a kuia of Ngati Kahungunu, Rongowhakaata and Ngati Porou, the interrelated nature of mana Māori and women is both diverse and dynamic.

Well, it's a very serious thing 'mana wahine' and I don't think it can be separated from 'mana whānau', 'mana hapu', 'mana iwi', 'mana tangata'. You see, mana wahine is very special but it doesn't live by itself. (p. 3)

In her thesis, Hine (Waitere-Ang, 1998) suggested that the layers and levels of mana, as indicated by Ruruhira, attributed to individuals and collectives, are given expression through mana atua, mana tupuna, mana whenua and mana tangata, providing a framework in which power and authority become the basis for ritual encounter. Arguably no academic encounter is as ensconced in ritual as that of research. At the risk of grossly understating each facet, mana atua recognises the power/authority of the celestial realm delegated to earthly agents. In this sense people "remain always the agent or channel, never the source of mana" (Barlow, 1994, p. 119). Mana tupuna is a channel through which people maintained their status and connection to whānau, hapu and iwi through human descent lines (Barlow, 1994; Mahuika, 1975; Marsden, 1992; Pere, 1982; Te Awekotuku, 1996). Mana tangata provides the means through which the mana of individuals and collectives is established, recognised and potentially multiplied. Mana whenua is derived from the connection to land and the authority to provide, produce and maintain guardianship of resources.

Mana is thus recognised as an integral component of encounter between people, and in the relationships that link cosmological, spiritual, human and physical elements. The origin of mana emerges from the earliest of cosmological narratives and extends beyond simply human interaction. Increased mana is a collective exercise in which individuals and/or collectives elevate their mana by collective recognition of significant acts or enabling processes rather than by self-ascription. Mana embodied in self and other is as much about authority as it is about power. Consideration of mana in processes of encounter emphasises, for example, a researcher's ability to potentially diminish the mana of others if it is ignored or disregarded. What this suggests is that mana is an integral component of inter-personal relationships that requires the consideration of accountabilities extending beyond that of a particular discipline.

In institutional contexts, the mana of Māori women continues to be calculated in terms of our physical presence and the conceptual absence of the messages embedded within our voices. We are undeniably present in social indices that suggest Māori women reside in the precarious spaces outside the norm of quality standards of living, protection within the law, good health, quality education, and policy processes. Often, however, we are absent in the forums that attempt to give us a voice to resolve our dilemmas.

Where we are physically present, we are often vocally absent, while in the spaces where we are vocal, the forces of the already powerful act to deny our physical presence. Hence we continue to speak and to participate from the dominant group's margins that form our centres. This is particularly poignant for Hine with colleagues who would actively encourage her absenteeism.<sup>5</sup> In a wananga context, that engagement is made complex by the positions

5 See for example Openshaw and Rata (2008), who argue that Kaupapa Māori is essentialist, built on cultural elitism, relativism and ethnic politicisation framed as 'cultural ideological conformity', which they suggest is the dominant, detrimental intellectual orthodoxy in Aotearoa New Zealand. Culturalism, it is argued, limits the university's ability to be the critical conscience of society and needs to be stopped to allow 'weighty inquiry' to remerge. Andreotti's (Forthcoming) response in the journal *International Studies of Sociology of Education*, while rightly defending Openshaw and Rata's right to speak and the defence of the university as a site of open debate, finds that their own 'culturalist-universalist' tradition also compromises these goals. She concludes that "intellectual leadership in the 21st Century cannot be confined to one tradition of critique. Critical engagement must take account of power relations, complexity, contingency, partiality and uncertainty: for thinking to become more 'independent', it needs to acknowledge the social, historical and metaphysical roots of its privileged logics" (Andreotti, forthcoming: 9)

of mana whenua, iwi/hapu dynamics by age, position or whānau name, where precedence is made on traditional interpretations (which might be clouded by colonial discourses or strongly dichotomised because of it), where the mana of wahine is celebrated and enhanced through traditional practices often unspoken, unstated but practices where not knowing or recognising the 'codes' can complicate further relationships amongst wahine and between wahine and tane.

At the precipice of the new millennium our presence was not marked by our contribution to the technological revolutions or the scientific achievements of the previous two thousand years. Nevertheless, perhaps in a more telling way, the health and location of indigenous peoples marks the distances travelled in terms of humanity, societal values and ethical practices. In too many areas we see technological revolution and ideological stagnation used as indicators to mark growth (Waitere-Ang & Durie, 1999). In the field of education, for example, time and space often delineate an authentic Māori identity. In the first instance authenticity as Māori is constructed as a relic of traditional times, something that existed before European contact. In the second, if the mana of Māori women survives and is considered in contemporary contexts it is demarcated in a spatial sense by the distance between the marae and the metropolis, considered only to exist on rural marae. In either instance the mana of Māori women in mainstream institutional contexts is listed amongst the absent. Our feminism is best understood then as a practice, which emerges out of a broader analytic front.

## EVOLVING MĀORI POSITIONS

Exploring some of the routes traversed by Māori women who seek a place to stand in educational institutions, we recognise a growing number of Māori academics drawing from cultural paradigmatic positions that take for granted 'Māori as the norm'. Four that we identify here are: Māori-centred approaches (A. Durie, 1998; M. Durie, 1997; Waitere-Ang, 1998); Kaupapa Māori (Mead, 1996; G. Smith, 1997); a combination of both (Johnston, 1998), and a new evolving paradigm referred to as Matauranga Māori (Royal, 1998). These approaches posit a 'taken for granted' position in which the cultural locations of the researcher and the participants are made transparent.

M. Durie (1997), in advancing a Māori-centred approach, explicitly argues that biological survival alone will not ensure our cultural presence.

... Whereas one hundred years ago the main problem facing Māori was one of biological survival, the challenge today is to survive as Māori, to retain a Māori identity, while still being able to participate fully in society, and in the communities of the world. Although the 1996 census has confirmed that any probability of genocide is remote - at 579,714 the Māori population has never been more numerous - there is some justified concern that mere survival will achieve little if it is not linked to a secure identity, and a Māori centred approach to development, and a wider access than currently exists to the range of disciplines necessary for advancement in today's world. (p. 1)

Physical presence does not equate to being included, nor does it contribute to a secure identity, Māori norms or centredness. Durie maintains that other factors need to be present, what he refers to as three principles underpinning a Māori centred approach: (i) whakapikitanga - enablement, (ii) whakatuia - integration, and (iii) Mana Māori - Māori control, drawing on the concept of tino rangatiratanga - Māori self-determination. In the

context of research, the first principle posits activities that “should aim to enhance people so that either their position improves as a result of the research or they are better equipped to take control of their own futures” (M. Durie, 1997, p. 10). The second recognises holistic Māori views linking well-being, culture, economics and social standing into a matrix that takes account of the individual, the collective and the complex interactions between past and present. The third principle locates the locus of control of research involving Māori, or aspects of Māori society, culture or knowledge with Māori. Associated with this principle are issues of intellectual property rights, guardianship, and management of research design and processes.

The vulnerability of maintaining a secure Māori identity, Māori-centred approaches and enhanced access to knowledge generally have historically been reliant upon the slippery terrains of political alliances. With the recording of our knowledge passing through the intellectual thoroughfares of disciplines maintaining the high ground regarding what is to constitute notions of truth, what was Māori(ish) is seen to be more preferable (digestible) than what is Māori. Māori represented in the research archives combined with the political power to enforce external ‘impressions of’ provided a context where violation by research and legislation has previously denied the earlier development of Māori-centred approaches. Yet clearly researchers and educators:

... have the capacity to both empower and to devalue. All too often New Zealand’s past policies have erred on the side of devaluing Māori realities and in the process undermining Māori confidence and the impetus for positive development. It is time now to do the opposite: to employ research methodologies and approaches to teaching which place Māori at the centre; to facilitate a more secure identity for Māori by increasing opportunities for accessing Māori resources; to avoid misappropriation of Māori intellectual knowledge while encouraging ongoing retention, transmission and development of that knowledge; to enable greater Māori participation across the range of sciences, humanities and professions without compromising a Māori identity (M. Durie, 1997, p. 14).

The secure Māori identity Durie speaks of requires more than knowledge of tribal affiliation, or whakapapa, or an abstract sense of being Māori. More significantly, it will demand a high level of the access to Māori resources, both economic and cultural, as well as access to the institutions which characterise modern Māori society. The second point, a Māori-centred approach, locates Māori at the centre of research, knowledge and development generally, rejecting the practice of simply adding on a Māori perspective to otherwise unmodified highways. And the third point Durie makes is that under-representation in most disciplines and professions requires a renegotiation of the terms of access so that being Māori is compatible with other callings.

Linda and Graham Smith incorporate some of the same facets as Durie in terms of Kaupapa Māori theory and practice. While they state that the term ‘Kaupapa’ is commonly referred to as a collective vision or philosophy, the notion of Kaupapa is not easily defined. What constitutes a ‘Kaupapa’ shifts considerably from one situation to another, and is influenced by circumstances characteristic to those situations. The implementation of Kaupapa Māori in any given context will thus result in practices relevant (and often unique) to that particular context. G. Smith (1997) asserts:

Kaupapa Māori theory is more than simply legitimating the 'Māori way' of doing things. Its impetus is to create the moral and ethical conditions and outcomes which allow Māori to assert greater cultural, political, social, emotional and spiritual control over their own lives. (p. 456)

Linda Mead (Smith) (1996) defines kaupapa as a philosophy in which cognition plus action are intertwined. It involves a plan: a programme or a set of principles "which incorporate Māori preferred ways of operating and embracing Māori values" (p. 201). It is a theory related to being Māori that does not posit objective distanced forms of scientific inquiry. It predicates the validity and legitimacy of Māori as the taken for granted, where the survival of Māori language and culture is assured.

In terms of Māori women attempting to define their own space, Smith has argued that white feminisms have come dangerously close to smothering us (Māori women) in their metaphors. What she further argues is that we need to assume control over our own struggles without being caught up in someone else's – not to reject feminism – and to begin from a vantage point that is clearly one of our own (L. Smith, 1992, p. 34). As Mead (1996) states, "the struggle for autonomy over our own cultural well-being, and over our own lives is seen as vital to Māori survival" (p. 27). Being Māori in Aotearoa is about being normal; Māori ways of knowing have validity and legitimacy; people can make strategic changes that have emancipatory potential and theorising our understandings and experiences is an important activity for Māori (Mead, 1996).

The struggle for Māori women within academic institutions is fraught at the academic level as we vie to be heard, seen and represented – as academic, as 'real', as legitimate, a position where two worlds meet or collide. Waitere-Ang (1998) couched the problematic in terms of borderlands.

In her thesis, Waitere-Ang (1998) provides an illustration of a Māori woman who visually represents the meeting of two worlds, who looks both culturally and contemporarily Māori, depicted on one side as wearing a heru and korowai, and on the other, university graduation regalia. In describing the points where both worlds meet, she states that:

The multi-layered boundaries and borderlands that Māori women are frequently compelled to negotiate are detectable at the critical points where the heru meets the mortarboard, the moko meets the lipstick, the korowai meets the gown, and the kete meets the briefcase.

The meeting of the heru and the mortar-board is about the negotiation of ideological centres and boundaries of knowledge – what is known, how we come to know it, and how such ways of knowing are validated – delineating the borderland where western male histories teach us that rationality and scientific objectivity resides. The meeting of the moko and the lipstick indicates the contested spaces of sound and voice – in which one speaks of the world, names the word, and lays claim to space. Again it is about from whose centre does the word emerge, who has the right to speak and most significantly, who will be heard. The meeting of the korowai and the gown covers the regions of the heart, used figuratively to represent the realm of emotion and by association subjectivity. Appropriately cloaked, because the presence of subjectivity in institutional borderlands and academic research is often

actively obscured. The kete and the briefcase, as two cultural repositories, also delineate cultural borders by the processes that construct them and by the nature of what they contain. In the construction of either, both philosophical and methodological forces underpin the process. In terms of the contents, they are the receptacles in which the outcomes and consequences of research are contained. Boundaries are no more clearly evident than for those not included within them (Waitere-Ang 1998: 1).

Johnston (1998) argues for a position that incorporates both Māori-centred and Kaupapa Māori approaches, drawing on the two approaches indicated previously. In doing so, however, she also identifies a contrasting 'institutional' procedural framework, which she calls Māori-friendly approaches to addressing Māori needs and interests. These latter approaches are based on Pākehā conceptions of how Māori should be catered and accounted for within specific contexts.

Johnston (1998) argues that the former position of Māori-centred/Kaupapa Māori has a political stance, a focus of activism, contestation, resistance and protest that culminates in challenges by Māori to institutional ineptness in addressing Māori interests and aspirations in those institutions. The political aspect encompasses Māori aspirations for autonomy and self-determination as a means to address the position of Māori. It focuses on structural rather than cultural factors, and because the focus is on structures, decision-making and identifying how Māori are excluded from participating, a Māori-centred/Kaupapa Māori approach places Māori at the centre; it recognises structural and political considerations (as well as cultural dynamics) and locates them as pivotal to addressing Māori inclusiveness within tertiary institutions. More importantly, these approaches are underpinned by a philosophy that aims at addressing the unequal power relations between Māori and Pākehā by incorporating appropriate decision-making forums for Māori, that is, decision-making by Māori for Māori.

On the other hand, 'Māori-friendly' approaches are cultural in focus – an approach that professes to make individuals bicultural through personalising biculturalism as an individual matter (Johnston, 1998). A Māori-friendly focus is purely one of culture – providing access to Māori culture as a means to reduce children's (and adults') prejudices and discrimination toward matters Māori. As such, a Māori-friendly approach does not address the unequal power relations between Māori and Pākehā, and Māori involvement occurs within parameters controlled by Pākehā. In institutional contexts, an example of such 'Māori-friendly' techniques is Māori karakia in particular forums, representation on committees, contributions to teaching 'a Māori face' – but clearly maintenance of the status quo. Māori-friendly approaches contribute little towards addressing the needs and interests of Māori, but instead are more about 'ticking boxes,' being seen as sensitive and demonstrating understanding towards Māori.

We reminisce,

*It's ironic really that we still participate in these things, 'the brown voice,' 'the brown body,' the presence of one to 'represent the many' on committees. These institutional moments are complex, they irk when they are 'end point practices' where our presence provides an end point; an evaluative tick in the box. At other times, the same processes can be inoffensive; a commencement point on the way to developing a meaningful relationship.*

Matauranga Māori is yet another form of dialogue and practice but is inextricably linked to traditional cultural contexts and te reo Māori. Royal (1998) argues that Matauranga Māori, while based on traditional concepts, is 'handed down' from generation to generation and in citing Whatarangi Winiata, is defined as "...Māori knowledge...according to a set of key ideas and by the employment of certain methodologies to explain the Māori experience of the world" (Winiata, cited in Royal, 1998, p.2). In terms of mana wahine then, a matauranga Māori view would incorporate a distinctly Māori worldview or paradigm of Māori culture and experiences of women. The uniqueness of such a position, however, would recognise an equally valid and dichotomous relationship with mana tane.

Presence equals fitting within the norms of other – their construction and representation of us. Absences are forged when we define ourselves.

In examining Māori-friendly and Māori-centred approaches to addressing Māori women in institutional contexts, we recognise that there are those within the inner sanctums of research fraternities that have also questioned the arbitrary constraints of traditional approaches to the advancement of knowledge and truth claims. Research as a fundamental cornerstone of the highways and byways in institutional contexts indicate some of the cul de sacs, crescents and avenues. Taking the specific example of research, the complexities of the positions we occupy become more apparent. In terms of research, our position is a tenuous one as we negotiate the boundaries and labyrinths posed by institutions – boundaries that operate to block us, send us up the garden path, or merely to circumnavigate us down pathways that sideline us into support roles, cultural icons, the token voice, the latter clearly not pathways that lead us to the centre where critical decisions are made but ones we are forced to traverse.

Historically within institutional contexts, Māori women have been located in a number of 'dead-end' positions – as the cleaners, the tea-ladies and sometimes as support staff. Today, we also occupy other spaces – as students, academics and researchers. Because the core business of academic institutions to which we are attached is one of research, we engage in that business; however, we know that our involvement is perilous. The mana (integrity and authority) of wahine Māori has fared particularly poorly through the Euro and Androcentric precepts of what Scheurich and Young (1997) maintain constitutes the real (epistemology), the true (axiology), and the good (ontological disputational contours of right and wrong) in science. We have been subjected to the unchecked desires to be known, to be discovered and have been positioned as other – a central tenet of Western research in the social sciences.

As argued elsewhere (Waitere-Ang, 1998) for Māori, the problem of research revolves around the inheritance of a scientific discourse arising out of a sociocultural history, which traditionally, under the rubric of positivism, advanced notions of its own scientific neutrality. That 'neutrality' maintains that such inquiry is unbiased and therefore equally applicable to all. Over time this Eurocentric 'scientific' discourse was to gain acceptance through hegemonic processes of knowledge creation, validation and dissemination. Foucault (1982) asserts that knowledge did not:

... slowly detach itself from its empirical roots, the initial needs from which it arose, to become pure speculation subject only to the demands of reason ... Where religions once demanded the sacrifice of bodies, knowledge now calls for experimentation on ourselves, calls us to the sacrifice of the subject of knowledge. (p. 208)

Historically, epistemological, ontological and axiological positions that emerged from positivist assumptions provided the distinction between scientific and non-scientific inquiry. Said (1993) while concurring with Foucault, extends the problematic beyond one scientific paradigm. Said maintains imperialism and its consequent dichotomisation of the rational observer/ irrational actor, civilised/savage, Christian/heathen, is the catalyst neutralising and inhibiting any “attempt at representing reality mimetically” (p. 3) of racialised groups and the differential impact on various subgroups within them. Within the social sciences, objectivity and the value-driven nature of research, universalising discourse and bias in general have been extensively critiqued (for example, Chalmers, 1982; Doyal & Harris, 1986; Longino, 1989; Scheurich & Young, 1997; J. Smith, 1989). However, the effects of discourse resulting from early pseudo-objective observations and consequent universalising accounts of colonised groups continue to be borne, by Māori. Through more than one scientific discipline (Foucault 1982) the mana of Māori women has been the sacrificial lamb upon this metaphorical altar of knowledge.

Māori, historically caste as ‘native’, have been slotted, defined, classified and objectified within predefined Western parameters of validity. Validity was not to be sought within the communities under scrutiny, but to meet the externally derived validity checks divorced from the objects of study by time, space and culture. Historically, tenuous positions casting Māori as ‘other’ have been fed back to us as fact (Waitere-Ang, 1998). The objectified ‘us’ referred to by Foucault (1982) historically positions the ‘other’ as the subject of knowledge within an intra-cultural context. For indigenous people and many groups of colour, ‘otherness’ (hooks, 1984, 1992; Johnston & Pihama, 1995; Mead, 1996; Said 1978, 1989; Waitere-Ang, 1998) is defined by those looking from outside the cultural milieu. Furthermore, until recently this has been the only viewpoint deposited in the Western archive.

The assumptions enmeshed in the ‘othering’ process need to be deconstructed, not as a means of how Māori see themselves in particular, but as a means of understanding the discourse about us, that is reflected back to us, through an archive that has had a vested interest in our objectification. The “rules of practice” (Foucault, 1982) for the objectification of subjects, according to Said (1978, 1993), are based on the constitutive role of the observer, the history of geographical disposition in ethnography and intellectual dissemination of discoveries. These rules come to represent a set of textual strategies that are seen to have more to do with sustaining positions of power and authority over others than with the advancement of knowledge (Said 1978).

Foucault (1982) argues that objectification lies within dividing practices, in the separation or isolation of easily distinguishable sub-groups in intracultural contexts. He claims that “the subject is objectified by a process of division either within themselves or from others” (p. 209), and the outcome of this process is the categorisation and designation of social and personal identity.<sup>6</sup> Rabinow (1984) provides a synopsis:

...essentially ‘dividing practices’ are modes of manipulation that combine the mediation of a science (or pseudo-science) and the practice of exclusion - usually in a spatial sense, but always in a social one. (p. 8)

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6 Foucault does not provide a complete historical analysis adequate for Māori, but rather, identifies a recent demarcation point at which a major set of disjunctives occurred. The disjunctives highlighted by Foucault and based in the histories of Europe only intersect with our history at the point of European contact.

Said (1978) deconstructs the study of racialised others, arguing that imperial anthropological practice is linked to a socio-cultural milieu in which political and economic interest is adhered to a context in which discourse about other is made both possible and sustainable. Imperial strategies centred on modes of classification that encompass physical, intellectual and spiritual parameters have, in effect, been used to control and contain those othered by race. Such strategies simultaneously canonise the power and knowledge of the invasive European.

For Māori women, the effects of objectification have been devastating – easily seen in the literature, through research and the very positions that we occupy or are absent from, within this society. Because of the numerous ways by which Māori and women were defined through colonisation, there have been a number of consequences. In the documentation of Māori ‘history’, for example, Māori women became invisible, written out of our own ‘stories’. Those who recorded and rewrote the stories assumed the lead characters within Māori history to be only Māori men. The invisibilisation of Māori women was a direct consequence of the colonial process, and through schooling practices in particular, Māori history became Māori ‘mythology’ with Māori women portrayed in non-consequential unimportant roles (L. Smith, 1992).

There is much that has been written in this area.<sup>7</sup>

Waitere-Ang and Durie (1999) discussed absence in a paper. We argued that the forces of globalisation historically and contemporarily used Māori taonga as national icons that distinguish Aotearoa/New Zealand identity in both national and international forums. A growing interest in ‘branding exercises’ provide slick slogans and images touted as indicative of national, institutional and corporate cultures that suggests that there is a place for Māori. However, we also argued that the use of Māori cultural artefacts, cultural values and the presence of Māori bodies (in advertising), rather than being illustrative of inclusion, provide exemplars of coopted bodies, voices and cultural icons called to the discursive and material service of an ever- increasing imperial regime.

Discourse about ‘others’ have been the vehicle through which a myriad of dominant groups have vested in themselves the power and authority to definitively define what Māori look like, how Māori behave, what Māori believe and how Māori need to change. This has in turn been translated into support for political agendas that have a greater interest in the subordination of indigenous cultures and the pacification of colonised groups rather than in enabling partnerships. Hall articulates the use of ‘cultural power’ and ‘normalisation’ as a means of centring the dominant cultural group while simultaneously decentering other:

... Black people, black experiences were positioned and subjected in the dominant regimes of representation [these] were the effects of a critical exercise of cultural power and normalisation. Not only ... were we constructed as different and other within the categories of knowledge ... by those regimes. They had the power to make us see and experience ourselves as ‘Other’. (Hall, cited in hooks, 1992, p. 3)

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7 See for example, G. Smith (1997); L. Smith, (1992, 1999); Johnston (1998); Johnston and Pihama (1994, 1995); Waitere-Ang (1998).

Māori similarly grow up being the pseudo-other, confronted with curriculum, pedagogical and assessment practices that centre the cultural precepts of the dominant group. The result is greater proficiency, for example in the dominant language and with credentials in the dominant culture that have been gained often at the cost of our own. This necessitates the posing of questions about the levels of our own complicity with our objectification and about:

... the relationship between activism and research, between power and method, (which) immediately brings to the fore a whole set of issues about the social role of research, about the conceptual and epistemological grounding of knowledge claims, about what such knowledge is for, and about who ultimately benefits from its generation. (Apple 1994, p. x)

These questions challenge historical foundations and current practices that continue to exclude those outside the 'regimes of cultural power'.

#### THE CENTRING OF MANA WAHINE

What draws iwi Māori together, in more recent times, are the homogenising effects of colonisation; adhering an opaque veneer to the window through which Māori women are viewed by the world. Through this veneer have emerged discourse mutations that have powerfully normalised the abnormal, dramatised the mundane and turned halves into whole.

It is a discourse that sees male as owner and provider, casts female authority as secondary and insignificant, and simultaneously fractionates gendered roles customarily based on complementarity and collective good. The ideological dichotomisation of male and female, hierarchical division within society based on ethnicity, and individualism has meant that Māori women have been (re)defined, (re)fashioned, (re)named and (re)organised into a colonial social order that atrophies who and what Māori women represent (Waitere-Ang, 1998). The result is that at times Māori women must (re)mind Māori men, as much as non-Māori men and women, about who they are and from whom they descend. Many Māori women – writers, film makers, academics and artists are located within the position of 'talking back', 'filming back', 'writing back' and 'painting back' (Irwin, 1992; Jenkins, 1992; Mead, 1996; Mita, 1993; Pihama, 1995; Te Awekotuku, 1991) in order to (re)assert their authority through (re)uniting the status of Māori women as complementary and equal to that of Māori men, a position that was corrupted by colonisation (Johnston & Pihama, 1995). This becomes particularly important when non-Māori have vested in themselves the power to (re)define the position and function of Māori women in both Pākehā and Māori contexts, and when many Māori men accept such (re)interpretations uncritically. This is particularly evident when, some Māori women:

... have also been led to believe that this loss of dignity and the right to be involved with decision making stems from Māori tradition. (Pere, 1982, p.95)

Hegemonic discourse that envelops and then subverts the customary positions of Māori women is a tool of colonisation that has simultaneously subjugated women while trivialising its own catalytic subordinating role. This is achieved in part by relocating such subversion within reinterpreted Māori cultural precepts. A measure of hegemonic power is the extent to which European renditions of who we are were accepted uncritically.

The combination of scientific discovery of indigenous groups and further ideological impositions attached to industrialisation and the rise of capitalism (Churchill, 1992; Fanon, 1961) provides a mindset in which Māori women become the recyclable waste products of a colonial process. This process has more often than not seen those being colonised as either expendable commodities or raw material privy to the deft hand of the colonial manufacturer (Waitere-Ang, 1998). Who Māori women are and how they see themselves are rarely given expression in such schema.

Māori women have experienced the application of such 'dividing practices' by a coloniser eager to differentiate themselves from the colonised, while rationalising the way colonisation would proceed under the guise of science. Knowledge locating women centrally in customary Māori society has been ignored or rewritten to become more conducive to colonial belief. Such beliefs have reconstructed Māori women as a multi-layered other. L. Smith (1992) illustrates the contemporary impact of this dividing practice on Māori women:

Māori women belong to the group of women in the world who have been historically constructed as 'other' by white patriarchies and white feminisms. As women we have been defined in our difference to men. As Māori, we have been defined in terms of our difference to our colonisers. As both we have been defined by our difference to Māori men, Pākehā men and Pākehā women. The socio-economic class in which most Māori women are located makes the category of 'other' even more problematic. (p. 33)

Feminist discourses have been grappling with the multidimensional complexities of differences between Māori women and Pākehā women, and although are aware of the issues relating to 'othering', can impose the same forms of objectification and subjectivity as research has imposed on Māori more generally.

While Pākehā feminists have striven to include Māori women in the broader struggles of feminism, such an inclusion has excluded Māori women's 'multiplicity of practices, cultural symbols and difference', because feminism can include Māori women, but it cannot account for us. The history of colonisation and oppression, which have been Māori women's experiences, is not the same history for Pākehā women. Pākehā women, in comparison to Māori women, have a history of privilege based on racial distinctions and beliefs. Pākehā women also have a history based on the oppression and subjugation of Māori women. As Yeatman (1993) quotes from Huggins et al. (1991) in relation to Aboriginal women:

...just because you are women doesn't mean you are necessarily innocent. You were and still are, part of that colonizing force. Our country was colonized on both a racially and sexually imperialistic basis. In many cases our women considered white women worse than men in their treatment of Aboriginal women. (Yeatman, 1993, p. 240)

One of the difficulties associated with how Māori women are included in particular tertiary forums is that much of the analysis, research and 'inclusiveness' is controlled by white academics including men. Thus Pākehā women control the contexts within which we as Māori women attempt to define our 'spaces' both within and outside of the contexts that we as women meet, engage and participate. An over-riding consideration in terms of how we engage appears to be influenced by a common perception that 'sisterhood' signals commonalities. The result is that Māori women have been defined through the discourses,

experiences and realities of Pākehā women. When we have attempted to move beyond those perceptions, there is almost a frantic (even if laudably advanced) scramble to pull us back into the fold. A more sinister strategy is a move by some academics, in positions of authority over Māori students, to utilise the latter voices to discredit and attack those of us who choose 'not to toe the party line' because we critique their work and argue back to their Māori-friendly positions.

The struggle for Māori women has subsequently been the act of distancing ourselves from Pākehā women and men, as a means to explore our differences, centre ourselves and [re]claim, [re]define who we are (Johnston & Pihama, 1994). Seeing the two positions relationally and juxtaposed in a space where we are able to meet and engage in rigorous debate is what is sought.

This has meant the development of parallel positions that enable those 'poor' minority and indigenous peoples that many well intended liberals talk about, to identify their own interests and agendas where one can claim the space to contest, deconstruct and revitalise after the onslaught and destruction produced by colonisation. We need that space, and we need non-Māori women to support us in it.

*Within that space, the mana of wahine Māori is validated, and what rises to the fore are the dynamics of whānau, hapu, iwi, matauranga Māori, which enable the reinforcement and practice of ahuatanga, tikanga and te reo. There are no apologies for those who do not understand the reo; there are no apologies for those who have not learnt their whakapapa, their tikanga, their matauranga, but there is a tolerance for those who seek to learn, for the practice of tuakana/teina, of 'ako' (Pere, 1982), of manaakitanga, tautoko – all unencumbered by the 'others' whose questions of why and how can distract and fractionate the learning/supporting and teaching relationships.*

*The fire that burns in our belly continues, but the modes of resistance change. While we can still resist construction of us as other living rent free in our head spaces, that does not mean that we have finished evicting the colonial tenants or the neo-colonial interlopers that continue to seek residence in the nooks and crannies 'between our ears'. Our practice emerging from the puna (a deep and enduring pool) of mana wahine is the essence of our passion: for change, for healing in uneven worlds (knowing that both the coloniser and the colonised are – albeit differentially – damaged by colonisation). We can still be reduced to tears when we think of Māori kids being consigned to rubbish heaps not of their own making and belly laugh with those same kids when their quick witted and pointed critique show they are so much more than a statistic.*

## CONCLUSION

Māori women in institutional contexts have been in absentia throughout the institutional spaces we have traversed. This paper has argued that we are [re]strained, [re]stricted but seek [(re)lease from the shackles that have bound us to institutions and all they have historically re]presented].

We are restrained by the validity checks and balances derived from a research culture that has historically been detrimental to our cultural growth and development, where we have been:

Considered both a dangerous species...and an endangered species (suffering pathetically from a 'loss of authenticity'), I am to remain behind the safety grille for the visitors' security and marvel. (Minh-ha, 1987, p.14)

These restraints have resulted in 'dead-end' pathways and cul de sacs that lead to our being caught by scientific rationality, lab-rats – death by microscope – physically present, but for all intents and purposes voiceless and still, the motionless dance of the institutionally dying, where we are told:

You may keep your traditional law and tribal customs among yourselves, as long as you and your kind are careful not to step beyond the assigned limits. (Minh-ha, 1987, p.6)

We are restricted within discourse that privileges individualism over collectivism that prefers to see us as a nexus of conflicting and contradictory centres inadvertently supporting the status quo of individualising discourse – detached and fragmented. Benevolence dependent:

I will grant you autonomy – not complete autonomy, however, for 'it is a liberal fallacy to suppose that those whom freedom is given will use it only as foreseen by those who gave it. (Minh-ha, 1987, p. 6)

The fragmentation process invariably leads us to no place – ever moving forward to our ultimate demise. Our presence is acceptable as long as we don't move beyond the boundaries and parameters of those spaces:

With a kind of perverted logic, they work toward your erasure while urging you to keep your way of life and ethnic values 'within borders of your homelands'. (Minh-ha, 1987, p. 6)

Where our physical presence is tolerated but we remain ideologically absent, though the crescents, seductive in their curvilinear shape, beckon our attendance. We continue to struggle to mark our presence, to find normative entry points into places that continue to struggle to see us as normal, resisting being marked absent within the terms of those who control our points of departure and [re]entry.

What would mark our attendance – thus removing us from the list of absentees – is when our avenues are embodied within the institutions in which we stand, recognised as equally valid as those institutional avenues that we already traverse; where the mana of Māori women is not divorced from that of Māori men; where Puanani is unshackled by Yoshi or Christabelle; where the colleagues of Hine-tu-whiria-o-te-rangi and Maringi Noa nga Roimata can say their names, imagine their significance, their history, and their connectedness to wider events and circumstances. A decade later Hine walks along hallways with some colleagues for whom absenteeism or the expunging of Māori critique is actively advocated. Those same hallways house academics willing to complicate the space they walk in knowing that it is to be a shared space of critique. Now (in 2009) as then (in 1999) to simply turn up, to attend, to be present, be seen and be heard is an expressive act of resistance against being marked absent. Simply, turning up, taking up our right to be present marks movement toward the realisation of mana wahine (the dignity of being a Māori woman) in institutions that have historically shut us out.

We seek release within our practices and situations that reinforce who we are, and to a certain extent Maringi finds release within an institution that supports and recognizes my 'culturalness', my identity, my being Māori. However, that is not to say that this is a perfect example either. The difficulty of traversing a culturally-based institution is one of being able to recognise and challenge cultural 'norms' from those imposed colonial ones, to separate 'tika' and 'teka', to know that there are forums, places and spaces whereby such discussions can be had without men – to know that one is not alone, to seek support of kuia and other Māori women, to challenge them also about their own beliefs and practices that might contribute to our own denigration, and to be safe to do so.

To be silenced because one thinks one might appear disrespectful or be moving beyond one's place/space into a male domain can be a highly powerful controlling behavioral mechanism of Māori women, but one that is equally open to being subverted through our resistance. Leaving a room can often relay far more than voicing the concern because the subtlety of the message is immersed within a cultural paradigm that recognises those subtleties. To not participate through choice as a means to mark dissatisfaction, to be silent and be saying no (instead of yes) (Johnston, 1998) are other forms of cultural practices that pay heed to who we are.

*Me aro koe ki te ha o Hine-ahu-one*

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# Mana Wahine:

**Decolonising Politics**

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## ABSTRACT

Mana wahine, often referred to as Māori feminist discourses, is a theoretical and methodological approach that explicitly examines the intersection of being Māori and female. There is little published academic work that engages with Māori women's embodied, spatial and spiritual experiences from an explicitly mana wahine standpoint. The exceptions, however, are significant. I draw on these, in this article, to highlight the exciting possibilities of mana wahine, an extension of Kaupapa Māori theory, as a localised and place-specific theoretical approach that examines the diverse and complex geographies of Māori women. The article reflects on Linda Smith's discussion of four mana wahine projects: wairua, whānau, state, and indigenous and white women's discourses. It is argued that the need to sustain and further develop mana wahine as an epistemological framework is still as pressing as ever. I contend that applying a mana wahine perspective not only challenges the dominant hegemony that continues to Other Māori women but, and more importantly, validates mātauranga wāhine (Māori women's knowledges) and subsequently mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledges).

**Keywords:** Mana wahine, indigenous feminism, decolonisation, childbirth.

## INTRODUCTION

We as Māori women can, and do, provide analyses of our positions which, based on our own experiences, allow us the space to present and re-present our world. In doing so there remains a desire to be visible in our differences ... *We are different, and those differences count.* (Johnston & Pihama, 1995, p. 85, italics in original)

Difference has always been intricately woven into the fabric of my life. Similarly, a number of Māori women have reflected on how the intersection of being Māori and being a woman posits us in complex and tricky spaces that require careful negotiation (see Johnston & Pihama, 1995; Johnston & Waitere, 2009; Smith, 1992; Webber, 2008). Our difference(s) matter(s). Historically, our difference(s) has been defined for us, usually by non-Māori men but also by others, and has been defined predominantly in negative terms. That is, that Māori were/are different, and therefore somehow lacking, because they were/are 'not white'. The search for the tools to make sense of my lived and embodied reality, as a young Māori woman/mother/daughter/ academic of both Raukawa and Pākehā descent, is on-going. I, at times, feel trapped in a space between worlds. Mana wahine, as art, as theory, as method, and as practice, recognises and provides for this in-betweenness and enables the exploration of diverse Māori realities from a position of power rather than having to talk or write 'back'.

Mana wahine is often understood to be a type of Māori feminism. It extends Kaupapa Māori theory by explicitly exploring the intersection of being Māori and female and all of the diverse and complex things being located in this intersecting space can mean. At its base, mana wahine is about making visible the narratives and experiences, in all of their diversity, of Māori women (Johnston & Pihama, 1995). Kathy Irwin (1992a, p. 7, italics in original) contends that 'Māori women must be provided with the time, space, and resources necessary to develop the skills to undertake this work, starting with the exploration, reclamation and celebration of our herstories, our stories as Māori women'. Mana wahine, then, is a space where Māori women can, on our own terms and in our own way, (re)define and (re)present the multifarious stories and experiences of what it means, and what it meant in the past, to be a Māori woman in Aotearoa New Zealand.

This article highlights the exciting possibilities of mana wahine as a localised and place-specific theoretical approach that explores the everyday geographies of Māori women. First, I discuss briefly the difficulties in defining mana wahine using the English language. The fact that mana wahine is intimately woven with mana tāne, mana whānau, mana whenua, and mana atua is one of its distinguishing features and is vitally important to any theoretical considerations. In the second section, I promote mana wahine as an exciting theoretical development that enables Māori women to (re)present and (re)claim our knowledges, experiences, and practices. This discussion is framed around four key 'projects' identified by Linda Smith as being central strands to any articulations of mana wahine (Smith, 1992). These projects are spirituality, whānau, state, and the projects of both indigenous and white women. She defines these as 'projects' as they are made up of a constellation of social, political, and cultural discourses that inform and are informed by Māori women's lived realities. While some progress has been made, I believe that these are still key spaces where the energies of many Māori women are directed and that many of the same arguments still hold true in 2011. The need, therefore, to sustain and further develop mana wahine as an epistemological framework is as pressing as ever. It is argued that applying a mana wahine perspective to any of these spaces not only challenges the dominant hegemony that continue to Other Māori women but, and perhaps more importantly, provides a necessary space where mātauranga wāhine (Māori women's knowledges) are centralised and validated. Finally, I briefly offer my Ph.D. research on Māori women's embodied, spatial, and spiritual experiences of childbirth as one example of how mana wahine could be applied to deconstruct and reconstruct discourses pertaining to Māori women.

#### MĀORI FEMINISM: A COMPLEX WEAVE

'Defining Māori terms in English can be a difficult task given the multiple meanings and understandings that each term carries' (Pihama, 2001, p. 29). Within Te Reo Māori there exists a uniquely Māori way of explaining and relating to the world. This does not necessarily mean Māori concepts are incomprehensible to those not fluent in Te Reo Māori. To suggest otherwise would mean that many Māori who, as a result of colonisation, have been denied their own language, cannot possess an understanding of concepts such as 'mana' or 'wahine'. It is important, however, to recognise that there are definite and distinct limitations when translating into English (Pihama, 2001). Providing a concise and accurate definition of mana wahine, then, is problematic. Much of this difficulty lies in trying to convey the multifarious nature of 'mana'. Dictionary translations of 'mana' most commonly refer to it as authority, prestige, power or control (Moorfield, 2005; Ngata, 1993; Williams, 2006). Numerous authors have attempted to tease out understandings of 'mana'. In discussing the complexities of the term they describe it as multi-layered, relational, spatial, and informed by spiritual influences (for a more detailed discussion see Johnston & Waitere, 2009; Pere, 1991; Waitere-Ang, 1999; Winitana, 2008).

Wahine, too, simply translated is often taken to mean 'woman'<sup>1</sup>. Again this does not always reflect the highly relational and spatial nature of the Māori language. Leonie Pihama (2001) makes the point that while wahine generally refers to being a woman, to assume it carries the same culturally embedded meanings as the English term woman is problematic, in that Māori women move in and through a range of subjectivities at different times and in different places<sup>2</sup>. As Pihama (2001, pp. 261-262) states:

The term Wāhine designates a certain time and space for Māori women but is by no means a universal term like the term woman in English. There are many times and spaces Māori women move through, in our lives, Wāhine is one of those. There are others. There are varying terms that relate to times in our lives and relationships. From birth we journey through those spaces.

Mana wahine grows from and is supported by Kaupapa Māori (Māori centred) theory (for more on Kaupapa Māori theory see Lee, 2005; Pihama, 2001, 2006; Smith, 1999, 2003; and Walker, 2006). Pihama (2001) promotes mana wahine as an exciting development of Kaupapa Māori which explicitly engages with gender relations. She notes (Pihama, 2001, p. 232) that 'the struggles for our people, our lands, our worlds, ourselves are struggles that are part of our daily lives as Māori women, they are never just about being Māori or just being women but are about a combination of what those things mean'. Mana wahine is often referred to as Māori feminism; this article shows, however, it is not quite as straightforward as this. Patricia Johnston and Hine Waitere (2009) acknowledge the complexity of mana wahine, which is about recognising the authority, dignity, and power (the mana) of Māori women. Its central strand lies in the intersection of being both Māori and female, and thus Māori women are often intimately entangled in multiple oppressions - those arising from sexism, racism, and colonisation, but others too, such as homophobia.

Māori, in fact indigenous peoples the world over, have never merely been passive recipients of 'colonisation' and have always engaged in the struggle over how to live in the multiple worlds created by our colonial history. Indeed, Māori women have been involved in the struggle to retain and regain their sense of self from the very moment colonial discourses and hierarchies reached our shores. Mana wahine, as an extension of Kaupapa Māori, is located in the wider indigenous struggle that has emerged because 'we' were unwilling to continue to try and 'find' ourselves in the words, texts and images of others.

A number of Māori women in the arts dedicate their work to (re)presenting and canvassing the diversity of Māori women's realities using, what I would describe as, a mana wahine perspective (for a few of the many examples see Grace, 1993; Hulme, 1983, 1992, 1993; Kahukiwa, 2000; Kahukiwa & Potiki, 1999; Mita, 1993a, 1993b; Tocker, 1993). Until relatively recently, however, mana wahine has been represented and enacted largely in 'non-academic' ways - through the creative arts, through flax roots political activism, through iwi, hapū, marae and whānau based projects, and in the lived and embodied struggles of individual Māori women. Important progress has also been made to promote mana wahine as a valid and necessary theoretical framework within the space of the academy. Over the past 30 years numerous women, both within and outside the academy, have written on mana wahine in various ways. Relative to wider feminist literature, and even more general Kaupapa Māori scholarship, there is still little published academic work that engages with Māori women's embodied, spatial, and spiritual experiences from an explicitly mana wahine standpoint. The exceptions, however, are significant and I draw on these throughout this article.

The explicit assertion of mana wahine has been met with resistance from some. It was thought, in the 1980s and 1990s (and perhaps this still persists today), that being a 'feminist' was anti-Māori, specifically anti-Māori men; that in the struggle for rangatiratanga it was not appropriate to divert one's energies towards what was seen as predominantly a white women's struggle (Jenkins, 1992). Mana wahine is not anti-Māori or anti-Māori men (Johnston & Waitere, 2009; Pihama, 2001; Smith, 1992, 1996). It is not about seeking some

'oppressive matri- archal alternative' (Diamond, 1999), neither is it nor has it ever been 'about changing the sex of the winning team' (Johnston & Waitere, 2009, p.18). Rather, it is premised on the argument that pre-colonisation, mana wahine and mana tāne existed as complementary parts. The roles of men and women, while distinct, were not mutually exclusive or necessarily hierarchical (Jhanke, 1997; Mikaere, 2003; Yates-Smith, 1998). This is evidenced by the lack of gendered pronouns in the Māori language - 'ia' meaning both he or she and tona/tana his or hers (Smith, 1994). That is not to suggest that pre-colonial Māori gender relations were a utopia of equal- ity, and it is difficult to definitively argue that no form of sexism existed pre-colonisation. Power (or rather mana) existed, as did hierarchy; however, it was likely to be through claims to whakapapa rather than gender (Mikaere, 2003).

There is no denying that the effects of colonisation have been devastating for all Māori. The (mis)appropriation and (mis)representation of Māori knowledges historically and more contemporarily have, however, impacted on Māori women in specific ways. Numerous authors are quick to defend their focus on Māori women specifically, and rightly so. Extending this argument, others exact a challenge to those Māori men who have been co-opted and have internalised 'colonial paternalism', and thus continue to silence and marginalise mana wahine knowledges (for further discussion see Hutchings, 2002; Irwin 1992a, 1992b; Jahnke, 2000; Matahaere, 1995; Mikaere, 2003; Pihama, 2001; Te Awakotuku, 1991; Smith, 1992, 1996; Whiu, 1994). I agree with Pihama (2001, p. 253) when she states: 'Māori men that chose to address issues of colonisation and racism whilst being sexist, homophobic and abusive in their relations with Māori women should not be considered "leaders" and definitely have no right to the label "radical"'. Furthermore, as part of any mana wahine project we must also reflect on the extent to which we as Māori women have internalised and thus perpetuate colonial dis- courses (Johnston & Pihama, 1995).

At its core, mana wahine is about the intersecting spaces of being Māori and being female; however, it does not exist in isolation but is entangled with mana tāne (Johnston & Waitere, 2009). It is this that is one of the distinguishing features of mana wahine and locates it firmly in the wider social and political fabric of New Zealand. Colonisation has attempted to disrupt the balance between mana wahine, mana whenua, mana whānau, and mana atua. Mana wahine is but one space within which we can critically analyse the impact of colonisation on all of these institutions – there are many others.

## COLONIAL DISRUPTIONS IN THE HISTORY OF MANA WAHINE

On numerous occasions Smith talks of colonisation as a disruption of the Māori world (Smith, 1992, 1996, 1999, 2005, 2006). Others describe it as creating fragmentation, disturbances, disjuncture and disorder (Johnston & Waitere, 2009; Pihama, 2001). The impact of colonisation on mana wahine has been all of these things. As stated previously, mana wahine has grown out of wider cultural and political struggles of which Māori women have often been at the forefront (Johnston & Waitere, 2009). In other words, it is not new; it has existed in the minds, actions and spirits of tūpuna wahine for thousands of years<sup>3</sup>. It has only been relatively recently that mana wahine has begun to occupy theoretical space within the academy (albeit still only a comparatively small space).

Real gains in the struggle to make mana wahine visible within the academy have been made by Māori women such as Linda Smith, Patricia Johnston, Aroha Yates-Smith, Leonie Pihama, Hine Waitere, Ani Mikaere, Kathy Irwin, and Jessica Hutchings, to name a few. Indeed, this journal has featured a number of articles and a special issue dedicated to mana wahine<sup>4</sup>. All

of this work has progressed mana wahine substantially.

In 1992, Linda Smith identified a number of projects important to mana wahine. She says 'by projects I mean a combination of politics, work, orientations and organisation of the activities in which Māori women were grouped' (Smith, 1996, p. 286). In what follows, I weave my way through each of the projects first discussed by Smith in 1992 and use examples from a number of mana wahine projects, to highlight the potentialities and complexities that may be involved in a mana wahine approach nearly 20 years later. While progress has been made, a central argument in this article is that many of the same assertions made by Smith and others remain vital sites of struggle for articulations of mana wahine in twenty-first century Aotearoa New Zealand.

## WAIKUA

Christian missionary discourses ascribed the cultural mores of European women to Māori women from very early on and the effects on mana wahine knowledges, particularly spiritual knowledges, was immense. These discourses portrayed Māori women as wanton, immoral, and undisciplined (Johnston & Pihama, 1998). Christian moral codes were also extended to matters of reproduction. The symbolic power of Māori women as the bearers of future generations and sustaining whakapapa that is derived from Māori cosmology was quickly trampled. Māori cosmological narratives stressed the importance of Māori women in sustaining whakapapa. The interconnectedness of waihua and the reproductive role of Māori women can be seen in the duality of words that can have both a sacred and everyday translation (Pere, 1991). For example, whānau can mean family and to give birth; hapū can mean subtribe and also to be pregnant; whenua can mean the land and also the afterbirth. Perhaps the term that highlights this most clearly is whare tangata, which can mean house of humanity and also womb. Therefore, the marginalisation of Māori women's reproductive processes and practices had a direct impact on mana wahine waihua knowledges. References to whare tangata, for example, were virtually erased with the introduction of Christianity, and colonisers were quick to impose shame upon the reproductive roles of women, thus disregarding the power and tapu of whare tangata (Mikaere, 2003).

Aroha Yates-Smith (1998) has directed her energies to the immense task of reclaiming and re-privileging the power of the feminine within Māori spirituality. Research on Māori spirituality, she says, was carried out by white male ethnographers who privileged the stories of male gods while female goddesses and ancestors have been misrepresented as 'passive, old crones whose presence in the "story" was to add interest to an otherwise male adventure' (Smith, 1992 p. 34). Yates-Smith (1998, 2006) notes that the oversimplification of Māori spirituality by non-Māori, predominantly male, ethnographers firmly established a hierarchy of knowledge, and female atua were quickly replaced with Eurocentric ideologies of God. It did not take long before this hierarchy was entrenched in legislation by the state.

The 1907 Tohunga Suppression Act was perhaps one of the most aggressive assaults on waihua knowledges. At its very core, the Act was about defining what was considered important and legitimate knowledge. Māori spiritual knowledges were viewed by colonisers as superstitions or tales on the pathway to reality (Johnston, 1998). This law outlawed a whole class of Māori intellectuals and the ability of our ancestors to access their own cultural and spiritual experts was stripped away (Smith, 1996).

The marginalisation of waihua persisted and continues today. Māori spirituality is commonly described as symbolic and not real. While scientific knowledge is given credibility,

almost un-problematically, discourses premised on the spiritual are lumped with the burden to prove their validity. Western feminism has been criticised as being 'spiritually impoverished' (Pihama, 2001) and it has been argued that wairua marks the clearest contrast between indigenous knowledges and the West. Smith (1996, p. 112) makes the point that 'for Western trained academics the whole area of wairua or "the spiritual", unless embedded in Christian theology, cuts across the rationalism and empiricism which is part of our training'. The spiritual realities of Māori women are inextricable from their physical realities; therefore spirituality discourses remain vital to any articulations of mana wahine (Hutchings, 2002; Pihama, 2001). One of the most exciting possibilities of mana wahine is that it allows researchers to draw from a blend of lived and embodied experience, mythology and spirituality.

A degree of caution is required, however, and it has been argued that to isolate and analyse aspects of wairua could threaten its very fabric (Te Awakotuku, 1991). Engagement with the spiritual must, therefore, be informed by culturally appropriate tikanga to ensure that the tapu of that spirituality is maintained. That being said, spirituality discourses are an important platform through which many Māori women experience and make sense of their everyday geographies. Furthermore, a mana wahine approach which holds wairua as a core element challenges the hegemony of rational, masculine, and empirical discourses that continue to marginalise and silence Māori women's knowledges.

#### WHĀNAU: A CORNERSTONE OF TE AO MĀORI

Not only have mana wahine knowledges faced spiritual disempowerment, but those institutions that were vital to Māori society were subject to equal pressure to adapt and conform to Pākehā norms. The meaning of whānau as it is used here is not simply meant to denote the nuclear family – mother, father and children. Whānau is much more. It can include extended family, and wider still the hapū or iwi. Jessica Hutchings (2002) also makes the point that it can include non-traditional situations and relationships. It is argued that whānau is a cornerstone of Māori society (Pihama, 2001). The importance of whānau to any mana wahine framework, then, is immense.

The dislocation of women from their means of extended support through urbanisation and land confiscations has had devastating effects on Māori whānau. As the whānau unit became progressively smaller, the responsibilities of individual women grew. Many young Māori women live the effects of the fragmentation and marginalisation of 'whānau' on a daily basis. In their research on access to adequate health care for Māori women, Cram and Smith (2003) note that the impacts of the fragmentation of whānau on intergenerational knowledge transmission has meant that some Māori women have a lack of cultural knowledge to express cultural needs to healthcare professionals. For example, they point out that a lack of cultural knowledge about modesty and whare tangata can leave women bereft of a language to express what is culturally appropriate when they require treatments or examinations such as cervical smears. Wikitoria August (2004, 2005) has also discussed the disruption of intergenerational knowledge transmission in relation to Māori women's embodied performances. A number of her research participants knew of and partook in tikanga surrounding the body, such as not cutting hair and nails at night, and not gathering food while menstruating or pregnant. The reasons behind these tikanga, however, were unknown to them. She states that often more convenient routes are taken by women at the expense of tikanga, or tikanga is enacted in hybrid and sometimes contradictory ways. Colonisation, she says, has provided Māori women with more convenient alternatives, but at the same time has left us with very few alternatives.

Whānau is an important site for the future of mana wahine. A mana wahine analysis would necessarily require a (re)framing and (re)claiming of whānau and would serve to empower wahine by 'reconnecting them to a genealogy and geography that is undeniably theirs' (Smith, 1996, p. 292). In addition, whānau discourses ground mana wahine in the lived - and often stark - realities of Māori women and their whānau and thus require a very practical application of mana wahine in order to prompt change for better realities. As Smith (1999) points out, simply theorising about whānau does not enable better access to culturally appropriate health care, nor does it stop violence and abuse against Māori women and children.

## DECOLONISING STATE DISCOURSES

In 1994, a group of Māori women filed a claim with the Waitangi Tribunal arguing that mana tāne had been affirmed and protected (to an extent) by political dealings with the government and that mana wahine had not (Irwin, 1993). The claim sought to remedy exclusionary practices of the Crown which inhibited and prevented participation by Māori women in decision making. Annette Sykes (1994, p. 15) makes the point that 'because Māori women constitute over 50% of Tangata Whenua there must be equal representation in all areas of decision making in the future'. The mana wahine claim highlights the guarantees for equal participation promised under the Treaty of Waitangi for all Māori, including Māori women, many of whom signed the original Treaty (Mikaere, 2003). Te Tiriti o Waitangi must be a central theme of any mana wahine research. Any mana wahine analysis is also an analysis of Tiriti rights. Some 16 years later, this claim is still yet to be heard.

The role of the state in marginalising mana wahine knowledges cannot be stressed enough. Decolonisation is a critical strand to any mana wahine analysis (Hutchings, 2002; Pihama, 2001). This necessarily requires deconstruction and critique of state policies, practices, and ideologies in order to reveal taken for granted assumptions. Hutchings' (2002) research provides an example of how the application of a mana wahine framework can provide another language of critique of state policies. She engages mana wahine theory to contest the government's position on the introduction of genetic engineering technologies in Aotearoa. In doing so, she not only challenges the hegemony of scientific knowledges, but also uncovers dominant assumptions underlying the introduction of GE technologies as patriarchal, imperial, and colonial. Using a mana wahine approach, Hutchings demonstrates the continued marginalisation of Māori women's knowledges within the GE debate.

In her research, Pihama (2001) uses historical documentation and her own experience to demonstrate the way that colonial and patriarchal ideologies, entrenched in legislation and state policy, have posited Māori women as inferior not only to non-Māori, but also to Māori men. She promotes mana wahine as a transformative theoretical perspective in its own right. Mana wahine could provide another lens with which to engage the immense and on-going struggles to decolonise the state. From this standpoint, decolonisation is not about fragmentation resulting from colonisation, but about unlearning, disengagement, and strengthening Māori at multiple levels.

## INDIGENOUS AND PĀKEHĀ FEMINISMS: MAKING DISTINCTIONS AND FINDING CONNECTIONS

The experiences of Māori women are not entirely unique. Indigenous peoples all over the world have, to various extents, been systematically displaced from their lands and deprived of their knowledges (Anderson, 2001; Smith, 1999, 2005). It is important, therefore, to locate

our struggles within an international context. Finding links with other indigenous women is useful and not difficult. While there are definite flows and disjunctures within and between indigenous epistemologies, at their most fundamental they share a language of critique; a critique of hegemonic, masculine, disembodied, 'white' discourses. To borrow from Lavell-Harvard and Corbiere-Lavell's (2006, p. 2) discussion of the commonalities between indigenous women, 'indeed if we have nothing else in common we share the experience of being different from (and fundamentally opposed to) the dominant culture'.

Given the history of Western/Pākehā feminism, finding workable links with 'Pākehā' feminists has perhaps been somewhat more of a struggle. Māori women were not the first to launch attacks on the supposed racially homogeneous 'sisterhood' being promoted by Western feminism in the 1970s and 1980s. In the book *This bridge called my back* (1979), a number of 'women of colour' reflect on the racism that existed within the 'women's movement'. They say that they cannot afford to ignore racism as many 'white' women did/do, as it has been 'breathing or bleeding down our necks' (Moraga, 1979, p. 62). Closer to home and some 15 years later, these same sentiments were powerfully reiterated by Leah Whiu (1994, p. 164) when she stated: 'it seems that my struggle necessarily takes account of your struggle. I can't ignore patriarchy in my struggle. Yet you can and do ignore the "colour" of patriarchy, the cultural-specificity of patriarchy, and in doing so you ignore me'.

Many Māori women have lodged criticism towards Western feminism over the years and have been quick to distinguish mana wahine as distinct and unique (Irwin, 1992; Jahnke, 1997; Johnston, 1998; Johnston & Waitere, 2009; Whiu, 1994). Trying to fit our experiences within existing and/or imported frameworks is difficult given the 'cultural borderlands' within which many Māori women are located (Johnston & Waitere, 2009). Mita (1993a, p. 287) states: 'the way I see it, if you're a Māori woman and that's all you are, that alone will put you on a collision course with the rest of society and its expectations'. Other wahine Māori reflect on the 'baffling inconsistencies' (Te Awekotuku, 1991a), 'harrowing contradictions' (Te Awekotuku, 1991b, p. 21) and experiences of 'multiple contradictions and marginalities' (Middleton, 1992). Mikaere (1999, p. 45) sees that these 'inconsistencies and contradictions seem to be endless' as a result of the complex amalgam of colonising influences in twenty-first century Aotearoa New Zealand. In a similar vein, Smith (1992, p. 33) notes that:

As women, we have been defined in terms of our differences to men. As Māori, we have been defined in terms of our differences to our colonisers. As both, we have been defined by our differences to Māori men, Pākehā men and Pākehā women. The socioeconomic class in which most Māori women are located makes the category of Other an even more complex problematic.

These feelings of in-betweenness, contradiction, complexity, and inconsistency expressed above, all highlight the distinct yet diverse realities of Māori women. As Ani Mikaere (2003, pp. 141-142) so eloquently states:

All Māori women are involved in the struggle, some consciously, others without even realising it; whether rural or urban, whether fluent or not, whether they choose to bear children or not, whether lesbian or hetero-sexual, whether proud or ashamed of being Māori. Ultimately, we are all connected by whakapapa, to one another and to our Māoriness. To question the authenticity of one another's Māori womanness, as though there is a standard definition to which all "real Māori women" must conform, is to deny the complexities of colonisation. It is

also highly destructive, introducing divisiveness which Māori women can ill afford.

Mana wahine, therefore, must be multiple, plural and provide for the diversity and complexities of Māori women's lived realities (Hutchings, 2002; Mikaere, 1999, 2003; Pihama, 2001; Smith, 1992, 1996). This is a potential strength. It is also problematic, however, as any attempts to describe mana wahine run the risk of delineating definable parameters that may exclude the very women we wish to represent. Donna Matahaere-Atariki (1998) issues a word of warning that as Māori women academics, we must be conscious of the unequal power relations that are produced in our attempts to speak for Other Māori women. She goes on to argue that:

[b]ecause our location is always measured in relation to Pākehā women, we never have to question our relationship to other Māori women. Therefore, in our desire to speak on behalf of our silenced sisters, we may be in danger of participating in their continued exclusion (Matahaere-Atariki, 1998, p. 73).

This article argues that engaging with Māori women from a position where mana wahine knowledges are centralised, rather than having to justify and struggle for the legitimacy of such knowledges as has been the case, enables us to critically reflect on our relationships, not only with non-Māori women, but amongst ourselves.

There are important connections to be made to 'Pākehā' feminisms, and the shift of Western feminism from the monocultural bias of the 1970s and 1980s to a feminism that is concerned with multiplicity and diversity makes it somewhat easier to find commonalities. Pihama (2001) draws on Taina Pohatu's (1996) notion of 'hoa mahi' when utilising other non-Māori critical theories. I draw on this in my research and agree that simply dismissing the entirety of 'Pākehā feminism' is not helpful and does not account for the interplay of both cultures in the formation of our subjectivities (Matahaere, 1995).

Johnston and Waitere (2009) rightly point out that Pākehā feminists can never fully account for our struggle. They can, however, support Māori women in the struggle to create and (re) claim space to explore our own histories and geographies on our own terms. They go on to point out that there will be important times and sites where we must meet, debate and connect with others. At other times, however, Māori women must distance themselves from Pākehā men and women, and Māori men, 'as a means to explore our differences, centre ourselves and [re]claim, [re]define who we are' (Johnston & Waitere, 2009, p. 27). I believe that mana wahine is one space where we can do just that.

#### DECOLONISING POLITICS OF CHILDBIRTH IN AOTEAROA: A MANA WAHINE PERSPECTIVE

This article has emerged from my Ph.D. research which seeks to (re)present women's embodied, spatial, and spiritual childbirth narratives within a mana wahine framework. By providing a 'spatial imperative' to understandings of Māori maternities, this research contributes to the on-going theoretical and methodological development of mana wahine. I am cognisant of the fact that the lived realities of Māori women are central to any mana wahine research project. Narratives from ten first-time Māori mothers are woven with my own autobiographical narrative and ground my research, and it is from these stories that my Ph.D. thesis takes form. While I do not have the time or space to include empirical material in this article, I take inspiration from the everyday instances that affirm mana wahine

knowledges shared with me by wahine Māori and their whānau as part of this research. In what follows, I provide a very brief glimpse into a mana wahine perspective on the marginalisation of Māori maternities. My aim here is to offer a mana wahine framework as a useful lens to explore the complexities of Māori women's lived and embodied geographies.

I was unprepared for having to have a standing bath supervised by someone I didn't know ... I was unprepared, when taken to the theatre in the early hours of the morning, to have to lie on my back while strangers pushed my knees up under my chin and a mask was held over my mouth and nose. I pushed the mask away, I pushed my baby down, heard myself scream, unprepared for the sound of it, felt myself breaking in two. Then little Gloria came, my own wet baby, into the hands of strangers, but I don't mean to say they were unkind. At last she was given to me, but there was no one there to see her except for *kind strangers* ... That night I woke in the dark and thought of the placenta, wondered what had happened to it. Where was the little parcel wrapped by Kui Hinemate, or the basket made by Keita, for the whenua to be buried in? I tried to sleep. *It was best not to think of such things* (extract from *Cousins* by Patricia Grace: Reflections on birth by Missy, 1992, p. 233).

I include this passage by Grace not simply to add a 'nice' or 'interesting' quote, but rather, I use it purposefully. While *Cousins* is fictionalised it is based on historical events and accurately depicts the struggle for mana wahine from the 1930s onwards (Banks, 2000; Donley, 1986; Wood, 2008). There are important connections between Grace's work and mana wahine as an epistemological framework. *Cousins* focuses on the geographies of Māori women; it is authored, and therefore the parameters of the story are defined, by a Māori woman, and it provides insight into the diversity of Māori women's lived and embodied realities<sup>5</sup>. In addition, the above passage highlights that Missy's embodied experience cannot be understood outside of the milieu of discourses that shape and are shaped by her location - as a young Māori woman birthing at hospital in post-World War II Aotearoa New Zealand.

Just as Missy was unprepared for what was about to happen to her in hospital, I believe that our ancestors, too, were unprepared for the extent to which Māori culture would be impacted upon by the arrival of these 'kind strangers'. The fragmentation of mana wahine knowledges surrounding birth, and subsequently of whānau, began with the deeply held assumption by colonisers that hospital birth was safer and 'cleaner' than Māori ways of birthing. The move from home to hospital, however, did not support this belief. Māori maternal mortality by the 1960s had risen to be three times that of non-Māori. The supposed safety of the hospital space had failed to reduce inequalities. Discourses questioning the hygiene and safety practices surrounding Māori birthing were thus replaced by discourses of blame and questions about the moral capabilities of Māori mothers and whānau (Donley, 1986). For example, the 'Hunn Report' in 1961 blamed Māori women for poor antenatal care, unsatisfactory feeding of babies, and labelled Māori women as apathetic and ignorant. Over 30 years later, similar sentiments were expressed by a number of health professionals working in maternity service provision (Ellis, 1998). They continue to label Māori women as shy, passive, and complacent. This is in stark contrast to the 'ideal consumer' who they say is confident, assertive, and well informed. A mana wahine analysis, in my opinion, offers new ways to conceptualise discourses of blame and inadequacy of Māori mothers and whānau.

The state too was instrumental in marginalising those Māori institutions surrounding child-birth. For example, the Midwives Registration Act of 1904 required midwives to be registered

by law. Traditional Māori birth attendants or tāpuhi were not recognised as qualified, and therefore had to be trained in Pākehā ways of birthing to warrant registration. Although many Māori managed to continue birthing at home with tāpuhi for quite some time, by the end of World War II legislation ensured that childbirth was largely relocated into state-owned maternity hospitals (Kenney, 2009). When Māori women were slow to move into hospitals to birth, the state began to link eligibility for benefits to birth registration, which had to be done at hospitals with doctors in attendance. Over the course of the following three decades Māori birthing became almost completely institutionalised, so that by 1967, 95% of Māori births occurred in the space of the hospital. The marginalisation of mana wahine existed in a very material sense, forcing many Māori women to birth in foreign spaces.

To return to Missy: her experience, unfortunately, is representative of a number of Māori women in post-World War II Aotearoa. Unfortunate also is that the marginalisation of wairua, whānau, whakapapa, and atua wahine through colonisation continues today to contribute to the fragmentation of mana wahine knowledges. While there was a time (and sometimes I, too, still feel this way) when *'it was best not to think of such things'*, it is promising that a number of Māori women are reclaiming these knowledges. It is hopeful to see the energies, no matter how dispersed and/or fragmented, of Māori women, not only in the academy but in whānau, hapū, and iwi and as individuals, being directed towards consideration of *'such things'*. Despite the marginalisation of mana wahine maternities they still exist and are enacted, in various and often hybrid ways, through Māori women's birthing experiences. While I have not had the time or space to provide empirical material in this article the women that have shared their birthing experiences as part of my Ph.D. research have all affirmed that they are not passive recipients of continued colonising discourses but instead are able to negotiate multiple, complex, and at times contradictory geographies, owing to their location in post colonising Aotearoa, by (re) claiming, and often (re)creating, mātauranga wāhine pertaining to pregnancy and childbirth.

## CONCLUSION

In this article I have highlighted the multiple challenges for mana wahine theorists. Not only must we challenge the hegemonic discourses and assumptions that posit Māori women as Other, we must also create space for mana wahine knowledges to be reconstructed and reclaimed, whilst at the same time being mindful of our power in speaking for those voices we seek to privilege. The first section of this article was framed around four key spaces, identified as 'projects' by Linda Smith in 1992: spirituality, whānau, state, and indigenous women's and 'white' women's projects. The ability to (re)claim and (re)centre wairua and whānau discourses from a mana wahine perspective will go a long way towards (re) connecting Māori women to a whakapapa, whenua, and mana that is rightfully theirs. As is shown in this article, this necessarily requires a deconstruction and decolonisation of state ideologies, policies, and practices. In addition, as Māori we must question the internalisation and co-opting of patriarchal and colonial ideologies into our own tikanga. Those practices that continue to marginalise and oppress Māori women under the guise of 'tradition' too must be challenged. The distinctiveness of mana wahine is such that it enables Māori women to analyse and understand our place in the world on our own terms. This is important, as Pākehā feminisms, while able to support us, can never fully account for us. There are, however, connections to be made with other indigenous women, with women of colour, with third world women, and with Pākehā women.

In the final section of this article I offered a glimpse into my Ph.D. research as one way in which a mana wahine framework may be used to reconceptualise knowledges, experiences, and practices surrounding pregnancy and childbirth. In using a mana wahine

epistemological and methodological approach, I hope that my research not only challenges those discourses and practices that continue to Other Māori women, but will also offer new ways to conceptualise experiences of pregnancy and birth in a way that affirms and celebrates the individual and collective experiences of Māori women in twenty-first century Aotearoa.

While many of the arguments made by Smith and other mana wahine theorists are relevant nearly 20 years later, progress has been made on a number of fronts and across a number of spaces within the academy and outside. I am inspired by the energies that many Māori women have invested and continue to invest in mana wahine, and I am excited by the possibilities housed in mana wahine as a theoretical (and methodological) framework. It is important to remember, however, that mana wahine must not only be theoretical but inform and empower the embodied and spiritual geographies of Māori women in a very material way. Mana wahine emerged to describe and analyse Māori women's lived realities, and it must always be remembered that 'beyond the label are the lived experience of generations of Māori women' (Smith 1996, p. 288).

Difference in twenty-first century Aotearoa is being reconceptualised through exciting theoretical developments such as Kaupapa Māori and mana wahine. If we are to create space for the multiple realities of Māori, then there must be multiple articulations of mana wahine. This article weaves together a number of important threads to offer but one conceptualisation of mana wahine. There must necessarily be many more.

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## Glossary

Aotearoa	New Zealand
Hapū	be pregnant, sub-tribe
Hoa mahi	a friend that works alongside
Iwi	tribe, human bone
Karakia	prayer, chant
Kaupapa	topic, subject, theme
Mana	prestige, authority, control, power, influence
Mana atua	power and authority of celestial realm
Mana whānau	power derived from whānau
Mana whenua	territorial rights, power from the land
Noa	be free from the constraints of tapu, ordinary, unrestricted
Rangatiratanga	self-determination, sovereignty, right to exercise authority, ownership
Raranga	to weave, weaving
Taha	side
Tapu	be sacred, set apart, under atua protection
Te Reo Māori	the Māori language
Te Tiriti o Waitangi	the Treaty of Waitangi
Tikanga	procedure, custom, practice, habit
Tohunga	healer, skilled person, chosen expert, priest
Tupuna	ancestor
Tūpuna	ancestors
Wairua	spirit, spirituality, soul
Wahine	woman
Wāhine	women
Whakapapa	genealogy, descent lines
Whānau	family, to be born, give birth
Whare tangata	womb, house of humanity
Whenua	land, placenta

## Notes

- 1 A macron over the 'a' of wahine changes the term to mean women – woman in the plural.
- 2 This complexity occurs with the English term too. Being a woman can mean experiencing multiple and diverse realities.
- 3 Much of the mana of wahine is said to be derived from the cosmological narratives of Papatūānuku and other atua wahine such as Hine-ahu-one, Hinetitama and Hine-nui-te-po. Furthermore, Māori women have been at the forefront of the Kohanga Reo movement, battles for land rights and political struggles such as the formation of Nga Tamatoa, to name a few.
- 4 See the *Women's Studies Journal Special Issue* (2007), Vol 21, Issue 2; Beets (1997); Hoskins (1997); Hutchings (2005); Johnston & Waitere (2009); and Yates-Smith (2006).
- 5 *Cousins* is framed around the lived experiences of three cousins - Mata, Makareta and Missy - who are all located in very different social, cultural and political spaces. Their diversity and struggles offer insight into the multiplicity and complexity of Māori women's geographies in contemporary Aotearoa.

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# Te Awa Atua:

**The River of Life! Menstruation in Pre-Colonial Times**

Ngāhuia Murphy - Ngāti Manawa, Ngāti Ruapani,  
Tūhoe, Ngāti Kahungunu



E ako au ki te haka  
E ako au ki te ringaringa  
E ako au ki te whewhera  
E kāore te whewhera  
E ako au ki te kōwhiti  
E kāore te kōwhiti  
E kōwhiti nuku  
E kōwhiti rangi  
E kōwhiti puapua  
E kōwhiti werewere  
E hanahana a tinaku...e!  
(Karetu, 1993, p. 15).

I begin with the words of an ancient haka that some say was the first ever composed (Karetu, 1993, p. 15). It is attributed to our beloved atua wahine, Hinataiwaiwa, who with a war party of up to 40 women performed it to rout out of a crowd the murderer Kae, marking him for death. I open with these words because they illustrate the boldness with which our tīpuna celebrated the fecundity, ferocity, and fabulousness of the vagina, singing songs and performing haka, often with graphic enthusiasm! This is in complete contrast to many Māori women today, who have been taught not to sing, but to shuffle and stammer over language about our own sexual bodies.

An extreme example is the subject of menstruation and menstrual blood. Our tīpuna kuia composed the most loving, intimate songs of reverence about menstruation and menstrual blood. But for many of us, there are “no words for the blood ‘down there’” (Smith, personal communication, 8 June, 2010).

The ambivalence and silence that surrounds the subject of menstruation is the direct consequence of our colonial history in which colonial ethnographers distorted our menstrual ceremonies beyond recognition and presented menstruation as something putrid, something paru. Many of us have been told that this belief is a traditional Māori belief, that our tīpuna thought this. Nothing could be further from the truth.

In former times menstrual blood was considered not putrid, but potent; not paru, but powerful. It was seen as a symbol: a symbol of the mana and tapu of Māori women; a symbol of whakapapa, carrying ancestors and descendents, linking us back to our atua and creation stories; a symbol that bonded the genders through nurturing tikanga; and a symbol that bound the generations through ceremonies of reverence and celebration.

In 2010 I embarked upon research examining the stories, ceremonies, practices and attitudes regarding menstruation in the pre-colonial Māori world. I had grown increasingly suspicious of references to menstruation as some filthy women’s sickness. How could menstruation be considered “paru”, I wondered, by a culture that referred to women, as the “whare tangata”—“house of humanity”? If Māori women’s reproductive bodies were a source of uncleanness and inferiority, why were there countless mōteatea that celebrated female sexuality in graphic detail?

My research began by examining what the colonial ethnographers and historians had written about menstruation, and Māori women more generally. It soon became clear that the Victorian, patriarchal and Christian lens of many of the colonial ethnographers had

distorted their interpretations of the menstrual practices that they observed, and that those misinterpretations had acquired the status of authority. I also studied Māori oral literatures such as karakia, mōteatea, tribal and navigational histories, and our creation stories to investigate how our ancestors conceptualised menstruation. I used the insights gained to reinterpret the menstrual rituals and practices recorded by the colonial ethnographers. I also interviewed Māori cultural experts, historians and exponents of mana wahine to bring a deeper understanding to the subject.

I used a kaupapa Māori and mana wahine theoretical lens in my research, locating menstrual rituals and tribal practices within Māori cultural paradigms.

Kaupapa Māori celebrates Māori language, traditions, and philosophies and emerged from within the wider context of Māori cultural revival and politicisation (Bishop, 2005, 2008). It also emerged in response to a history of cultural redefinition by Pākehā. This is particularly relevant to the subject of menstruation. What was once regarded as a symbol of female power has now come to be regarded as a symbol of female inferiority due to the misinterpretations of some colonial ethnographers and historians.

Mana wahine theories address the patriarchal nature of colonisation, which has impacted on Māori women and girls differently to the way it has affected Māori men and boys. Leonie Pihama details the marginalisation of Māori women's knowledge and roles in colonial ethnographic texts, stating:

Māori women's knowledge has been made secondary to Māori men's knowledge and Māori women's roles redefined in line with colonial notions of gender relations. Information related to Māori women has been ignored or rewritten to become more conducive to colonial belief systems. (Pihama, 1994, p. 39)

Through this process Māori women's reproductive bodies, and menstruation in particular, have been demonized by language reminiscent of the Witch-hunts of Britain and Europe. This language has continued into recent "authoritative" texts, creating oppressive dialogues about the inferiority of Māori women and girls. Once again, these descriptions are contrary to some of the earliest recorded karakia and mōteatea.

## THE COSMOLOGICAL ORIGINS OF MENSTRUATION

There are at least three cosmological stories that reflect themes of menstruation as a medium of whakapapa, connecting us to our atua and creation stories.

The oldest begins in the cosmogonic cycles of Te Pō (The Nights) where the earth and sky were born. Ranginui, the sky father, and Papatūānuku, beloved earth mother, clung to one another in union, birthing a pantheon of male and female gods. The pantheon multiplied within the darkness until it could no longer contain them, demanding an evolutionary leap. According to this version, the leap was realised by Tāne and enabled through the medium of his mother's menstrual blood. Intuiting the existence of another world beyond his parents stifling embrace, Tāne rode out of the darkness of Te Pō into Te Ao Mārama, the world of light, on his mother's menstrual tide (Smith, 1913, p. 120).

This story reflects the idea that menstruation was regarded as a medium: a medium between worlds; a medium of evolutionary expansion; a medium of atua; and a medium connecting

Māori women to our atua and our creation stories at the beginning of time. Indeed one of the ancient names for menstruation used across the country in former times was atua (Williams, 1991, p. 20).

Within some of the colonial ethnographic accounts, menstrual blood is presented as a malignant demon called the atua kahu, described by Goldie as the “wasted souls of humans” (Goldie, 1904, p. 26). According to Goldie, Māori women are “possessed by a demon during menstruation— or rather, she becomes dispossessed of a malignant disease-dealing demon” (p. 91). The repeated colonial misrepresentation of atua kahukahu as malignant demons has progressed the idea that menstruating women house dangerous forces and therefore need to be contained by the enforcement of restrictions. This has furthered a colonial and patriarchal agenda of female subordination.

Goldie describes menstruating Māori women as “unclean”, comparing them to Hebrew women, whose movements are restricted lest they “contaminate” others (Goldie, 1904, p. 91). This interpretation reveals the infiltration of Christian ideologies which present menstruation as the “Curse of Eve”. In the Old Testament menstrual blood is referred to as polluting, impure, and unclean and is accompanied by restrictions that segregate the menstruating women from the rest of the community (Lev. 15: 19– 26 King James Authorised Version). The influence of Christian teachings is also evident in the prolific works of Elsdon Best. In relation to the reproductive body of Māori women, Best translates tapu (which in all other contexts he translates as sacred or restricted) as a state paralleling “the condition termed ‘unclean’ in the Scriptures” (Best, 1924a, p. 107; Best, 1929, p. 7). Thus Best presumes to design a whole new “kind” of tapu for women, one that is in line with Christian doctrine and one that denies the power and significance of Māori women’s reproductive bodies as te whare tangata—the sacred house of humanity.

Menstruation was considered tapu, not because it was unclean, but rather because it was acknowledged as a medium of whakapapa. There are two other cosmological narratives that speak to this theme. Hineahuone, the first human, was sculpted from what is delicately described by scholars as the “red clay” at Kurawaka, the mons veneris of the great mother earth goddess, Papatūānuku. In popular accounts it was the god Tāne who discovered the altar of humanity. He had searched in vain for the uha, according to legend, but the female element had remained concealed within the confines of his own birthplace (Best, 1924; Kahukiwa & Grace, 1984). Under his mother Papatūānuku’s counsel, Tāne approached her pubis, discovering the elusive material that ushered in humanity (cited in Cram, 2000; Kahukiwa & Grace, 1984; Mikaere, 2003; Yates-Smith, 1998).

What is consistently down-played across the colonial ethnographic literature is the significance of the location of Kurawaka, and the force inherent within the “red soil” that made Hineahuone’s creation finally achievable (Yates-Smith, 1998). Tāne is singularly celebrated for his act of procreation, denying the raw and very female sexual potency imbued in the “red soil”. The following is a typical, standardised version of the creation of Hineahuone:

Tane the god created the first woman out of earth; he formed her by scraping up the earth into human shape and endowed her with life. He lay on her and breathed life into her and he called her Hine-hau-one... he took her to wife. (Cowan, 1930, p. 8)

Cowan's example denies the generative sexual centre of Papatūānuku, the mother of the gods, and relegates Hineahuone to a pile of dirt with language that erases the vocabulary of women's sexuality and power. The divinity of Hineahuone is negated, and so, correspondingly, is the divinity of Māori women as her descendents. Papatūānuku's status as an atua, as the mother of Tāne himself, is overlooked in the colonial literature. This kind of presentation of the origins of humanity, and women, has informed and perpetuated the myth that women are inferior to men "even as Hineahuone was inferior to Tane" (Best, 1924, p. 74). Here at the genesis of humanity, in what could be a story reflecting the intense power of women, sourced from the creative force of the earth, we find a subdued story of female reticence. Translated in such a way, this story became the hook on which to hang chronicles of masculine supremacy within the Māori world that continue today.

Hineahuone, far from the submissive Victorian caricature portrayed in colonialist literature, contained her own power, a force derived from Kurawaka which can be translated as a precious, sacred, red medium, synonymous perhaps with older descriptions of menstrual blood. Aroha Yates-Smith (1998) confirms that Hineahuone was imbued with her own autonomous power, inherited from her mother's genital organs. This power Tāne encountered upon entering Hineahuone, experiencing "a tremendous force from within Hine, a powerful force, such as he had never experienced before" (Pere, 1982, pp. 10–11). This force was the raw primal sexual power of Hine, as a being created from the menstrual soil of her mother. Thus *ikura* is another old name for menstruation derived from the saying *mai-i-Kurawaka* (from Kurawaka). Menstrual blood, in this story, is an ancient matrilineal river connecting Māori women to our ancestress Hineahuone and, through her, to Papatūānuku, the mother of the gods.

Similarly, the Ngā Pōtiki, Ngā Uri-a-Māui story about the origins of menstruation reflect the idea of menstruation as both a medium of whakapapa and a conduit back to the gods. Māui, a demigod, observed that Hineteiwaiwa, the moon god, could make her world wax and wane every month. Deciding that he too wanted continuity like the moon, Māui approached his mother, the god Hinenuitēpoteao, to receive immortality. His plan was to reverse the process of birth, entering her womb through the birth canal. As Māui entered Hinenuitēpoteao, she awoke. Māui told her about wanting to be like the Moon, to which Hinenuitēpoteao responded that she could grant this wish; she then crushed him and made him the first menstruation to come into the world. As long as woman menstruates, Māui will live on (R. Pere, personal communication, July 11, 2010). According to this version Māui did not die but achieved immortality after all, reappearing "like the moon" in the blood-tides of woman. Māui's monthly appearance signals continuity and the "immortality" of the people down through the generations, through whakapapa. Whakapapa, according to Angeline Greensill, is the "foundation stone" within a Māori perspective because it represents relationships across generations and species with all things interconnected through a shared lineage back to our atua (cited in Cram, 2000, p. 5). Menstruation provides humanity with a link back to our atua and the cosmos. According to Rangimarie Pere the flowing blood was once known by the name *māui*, heard throughout Te Urewera at one time in the saying "*kua tae mai a māui*" (menses has arrived).

## MENARCHE RITES

In former times the arrival of menstruation was welcomed as a sign of the continuity of the whānau and hapū. Menarche rituals included the ceremonial cutting of hair, piercing of ears, receiving an adult name (often after an ancestor), receiving a moko kauae, and a

presentation of gifts along with a community feast (Hohaia, 2010, personal communications; Kent & Besley, 1990; Tregear, 1904). At this time girls were formally initiated into different ritual arts and knowledge traditions. The following mōteatea from the George Grey collection, entitled *He Whai Kanohi Me Ka Pohea* (tribal origins unknown), is described by Williams (1991) as an “occult rite” and references the welcoming of menarche as a symbol of the vivacity of life:

Te ra e hara mai ra,  
Rere kura, rere toro hai,  
Te marama e rere mai ra,  
Rere kura, rere toro hai,  
Ka whekite,  
Ka whekaro, te kahui tupua,  
Nau mai ki waho;  
Te ritorito,  
Te wai whereo; Tupu te ora, He ora, ora.

The sun arising, flying red,  
Seeking its journey,  
The moon arising, flying red,  
Seeking its journey,  
One perceives it dimly,  
For the first time, the supernatural being,  
Welcome, come forward;  
The potential of life,  
The menstrual blood;  
Let life grow,  
Life itself.  
(Grey, 1853, p. 281).

The arrival of menarche provided an intimate opportunity for intergenerational bonding. Rangimarie Pere states that in Te Urewera all the girls were told to inform the kuia (elder women) when their time arrived:

My kuia washed all my clothes after my first menstruation and cried in regard to seeing the ‘sacred river’ that had come through her, and yet there was a spirit of celebration between us, because I brought in the continuity of our tangatatanga, atuatangā, whakapapa. (Pere, personal communication, July 12, 2010).

According to this account the arrival of menses was carefully observed and cherished between kuia and mokopuna (grandchild) in Te Urewera. It was celebrated as a medium of humanity, divinity and genealogy and was regarded as an intergenerational gift, epitomised by the saying “Kua mimiti taku puna tamariki engari kua timata to puna” (My blood has run dry but yours has begun) (Pere, personal communication, July 12, 2010). Aroha Yates-Smith of Te Arawa also shared knowledge about this particular ceremony, commenting that her own daughter’s menarche was received in this way.

In Te Urewera the teachings that a kuia passed on to her mokopuna within the ceremony of menarche built on the foundations of a tribal education. Menstruation, according to Pere, was talked about in detail in the whare puni (whānau meeting house) in front of both genders and including all generations: We had intergenerational teaching and learning in my family with both genders, so that my tribal brothers knew all about menstruation, and I knew everything about their development. Since those teachings that we had in our family whare puni, there has always been a deep respect and a lot of aroha between my tribal brothers and myself. (Pere, personal communication, July 12, 2010).

Makereti Papakura (1938) also wrote that menstruation was discussed frankly by the whole whānau, without the squeamishness she observed within Pākehā society in the 1920s. Papakura insists:

Every phase of life was freely discussed by the parents in the presence of the children, even things which western people deem most intimate...there was no word considered rude; in the body there was nothing unclean; no bodily functions were treated as being unworthy of mention in plain language. (1938, p. 101)

Pere's and Papakura's accounts cut across some of the ethnographic reports that insist shame haunted the steps of a menstruating girl, who always had to maintain discretion about her "condition" lest she be humiliated (Best, 1906; Goldie, 1904). On the contrary, Pere insists that her brothers always knew when she was menstruating and respected that. She asserts that the bond she developed with her tribal brothers through those formative years has continued throughout her life, remarking that during her hapūtanga (pregnancy) her tribal brothers went out of their way to give her the best of everything, bringing her flowers and special foods every day. Gift giving, according to Pere, was not unusual, rather it was the continuation of an ancient tradition that acknowledged the whare tangata as paramount (Pere, personal communication, July 12, 2010).

According to Pere, menstruating women were free to enter any of the houses and, whilst they bled, the men would cook special meals for them. Another woman, raised by learned kuia, commented on the same, remarking that in her tribal area menstruating women would go to the whare kōhanga, the birthing house, to rest. Men were free to come and go from this space and it was their duty to prepare food for the women. Hinewirangi Kohu also stated that menstruating women in some tribal areas retired to the whare kōhanga in the past, to rest and to learn. According to Kohu, this space was a whare wānanga, a learning house of women where matrilineal knowledge traditions were handed down the generations (Kohu, personal communication, July 16, 2010). Similarly, Te Wai Hohaia stated that in Taranaki the women would retire to a space that could be considered the original women's whare wānanga. Because workload eased off throughout menstruation, it was considered a good time for in-depth wānanga, kōrero, learning, teaching, resting and nurturing. Karakia, whakapapa and waiata were absorbed in these spaces, as during this time "you are at your best for those things, in tune with the natural elements" (Hohaia, personal communication, August 18, 2010).

## MENSTRUAL "RESTRICTIONS"

Whilst there are tribal variations, there is consistency in the claim that our tīpuna whāea (ancestresses) were regarded as being in a sacred state when menstruating. This relinquished them from their daily chores and community responsibilities. Pere explains that so-called menstrual "prohibitions" were a time when women could rest. Menstruating women did not enter the gardens to perform work, set traps, or gather kaimoana (seafood) because menstruation was a time of rest and nurturance that was supported by the whānau. In a society motivated by working toward the wellbeing of the collective, menstruation must have provided a welcome reprieve from the daily demands of community living.

Restrictions around the cultivation of food reveal cultural codes of conduct that are grounded in Māori metaphysics. Menstrual blood was seen as carrying ancestors and descendants. Shedding this blood in food spaces, like gardens, was considered culturally inappropriate because of the risk of consumption, relegating the ancestors and descendants to food. The thought is anathema to Māori. Parallels of this kind of thinking can be found in practices that observe the careful storage of whakapapa charts and karakia. You would not place such materials on a food table or kitchen bench.

Some restrictions, Ngahua Te Awekotuku points out, are simply commonsense. For example, the prohibition on women entering the sea to gather food, Te Awekotuku suggests, is sensible. She recounts the story of her friend whose blood attracted the interest of a giant stingray: “It’s not because you’re dirty, it’s because you smell tasty!” Te Awekotuku exclaimed (Te Awekotuku, personal communication, June 18, 2010). Similarly, Te Awekotuku points out that in former times a woman’s kope (a pad made out of kohukohu—sphagnum moss) was held in place by a tukaretu (thin woven string belt) or a maro kopua (woven triangular apron). These may not have been as reliable as modern inventions. “There is a risk when you weave, particularly whāriki, your legs are all over the place and one splash of blood could ruin months of work” (Te Awekotuku, personal communication, June 18, 2010).

The significance of menstrual traditions has been eclipsed by the early ethnographers’ automatic equation of restriction with “contamination”, “impurity” and female inferiority (Buckley & Gottlieb, 1988; Grahn, 1993). Menstrual restrictions, when interpreted through a patriarchal lens, are easily distorted to convey a message of male control over the wild and uncivilised female body. Menstrual restrictions are slavishly documented in ethnographic literature as a means to contain menstruating women who are “possessed of an extremely harmful influence” (Best, 1982, p. 614) during menstruation, the dreaded and malignant atua kahukahu mentioned earlier. Themes of menstrual demons are littered throughout the colonial ethnographic accounts, providing a political agenda that subordinates women by claiming their inferiority due to some menstrual malevolence.

The myriad of menstrual restrictions recorded in some of the ethnographic accounts use language that is near identical to biblical scripture and some of the restrictions are the same. Other ethnographic recordings contradict these restrictions. The claim that a man must resist the sleeping and sitting places of menstruating women “lest he lose his clairvoyant powers” is an interesting contradiction to the accounts of the employment of menstrual blood and female genitalia in rituals to attract the benevolence of atua and restore clairvoyance, courage, and vitality. According to Best, if a man lost his “powers of sight”, if he angered the gods and they deserted him, in order to regain their favour and protection, he would lay down and a woman from a leading family would step over him. Correspondingly, men who lost their nerve in battle anointed themselves with menstrual blood to restore the favour of the gods and their courage respectively (Best: 1941, Pere, personal communication, July 10, 2010). “Women possessed peculiar powers in certain directions” (1924, p. 170) Best observed.

“Pollution”, “unclean”, and “contamination” are words systematically used in colonial literature in reference to menstrual blood and menstruating women (Goldie: 1904, Best: 1924a, Best: 1924b). This is an extension of the misogynist, Victorian language that many colonial ethnographers have used more generally when describing the reproductive bodies of Māori women. Best, whose deeply misogynist interpretations have been largely accepted as authoritative representations of Māori culture, writes:

This ‘house’ of misfortune, of ominous inferiority, is represented by this world, by the earth, by the female sex, and by the female organ of generation, which holds dread powers of destruction and pollution. (Best, 1924, p. 74)

The (mis)representations and (mis)interpretations of those early ethnographers have become the foundations of what many Māori assume are traditional values and beliefs, perpetuated in contemporary literature produced by writers such as Berys Heuer (1972),

Jean Smith (1974) and Ann Salmond (1975). Leonie Pihama (2001) points out that Māori themselves have recycled colonial patriarchal discourse, citing Witi Ihimaera's *The Matriarch* (1986) and Ranginui Walker's highly recommended anti-colonial work *Ka Whawhai Tonu Mātou: Struggle Without End* (1990) as examples. Another alarming example is Kent and Besley's (1990) *He Whakamārama: A Bicultural Resource*, targeted as an educational resource for schools and community groups. Drawing on Berys Heuer (1972) who, in turn, was informed by Elsdon Best, the authors proclaim that Māori women and girls feel a shame toward their bodies (unlike the men) and are seen as a destructive force of low status and little power within Māori society (p. 4–5).

Like Makereti Papakura (1938), Kent and Besley (1990, p. 11) reference the fact that in former times there was open discussion within whānau about the onset of menstruation. They observe, however, that this attitude has since changed to a hushed silence as “one did not talk about these things” or the blood “down there”. This reflects the internalisation of textual legacies that present Māori women's reproductive bodies as unclean, contaminating, polluting, and a source of shame and inferiority.

This language, couched within a context of colonial conquest, continues today.

The consequences of presenting menstruation as “unclean”, “an embarrassment” and, in some cases, “demonic” created both a hostility toward the menstruating body of Māori women, and a “lost vocabulary”. Linda Tuhiwai Smith states that for many Māori women there are no words to express what is “down there” (L. Smith, personal communication, June 8, 2010). After almost two centuries of colonial contact, many Māori women shuffle around language about their reproductive bodies, in complete contrast to our ancestresses who celebrated their sexuality through compositions, many of which are still sung today.

## CONCLUSION

Our tīpuna regarded menstruation as a sacred and ancient river, carrying ancestors and descendents and connecting us to our atua. Menstruation was a time of rest and nurturance in honor of the continuity of life. Tikanga surrounding menstruation bonded the genders through a mutual understanding and respect. It also bound the generations through ceremonies of reverence and celebration.

Reclaiming stories that reflect the power of Māori girls' and women's reproductive bodies is not a women's issue: it's a kaupapa Māori issue and it's a whānau issue, because menstrual blood represents our continuity and our inter-connections. To speak of the blood as paru desecrates those connections and attempts to sever that continuity with language couched in the politics of cultural extermination and colonial conquest.

Reclaiming, reconstructing and re-envisioning stories and ceremonies about menstruation is ultimately about decolonisation of a fundamental site—whakapapa—our connections to one another, to our atua and to our spiritual traditions. Profound transformation happens, as my father would say, not in people's heads but people's hearts. Celebrating our daughters, our nieces and mokopuna, when their time comes; teaching our sons and nephews to know and to nurture them; reclaiming language; and continuing to assert the power to tell the stories about our own bodies, are all acts that will bring transformation and decolonisation to the site of menstruation. And for our men, facilitating transformation and decolonization here means grabbing the vacuum cleaner and stirring that pot of kai when women are in our time of power!

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# It's About Whānau:

**Oppression, Sexuality, and Mana**

Kim McBreen - Waitaha, Kāti Māmoe, Ngāi Tahu



## INTRODUCTION

I need to start by talking about who I am, and why this is important to me.

I was adopted at birth by my Pākehā parents, who were guaranteed by the social worker that I was a Pākehā baby, so I grew up entirely in te ao Pākehā. People often asked if I was Māori, and all I could say was, "I don't know". When I was 20, I got my original birth certificate with my mother's name on it, and I tracked her down and met her. She is Pākehā. She and my birth father were kids when they met; they didn't know each other for long, and he was gone by the time I was born. She gave me his name and a decade-old address in Australia for him. It took me another 10 or so years before I committed to finding him, which I did because I wanted to have children. I want my children to know their whakapapa, whatever it may turn out to be. I eventually found him, and on his side, I'm from Ngāi Tahu.

I'd already been a bit involved in rōpū Māori when I was at university, but I'd been uncommitted, because I hadn't known for sure whether I had whakapapa Māori. Finding out that I did meant an obligation to find out more. I needed to find my place, if any future children of mine were going to be comfortable. I committed to meet my father's whānau, and to find out as much as I could about us and Ngāi Tahu, and where I fit in. That went well, but some other stuff was going on that I couldn't ignore.

At the time I was doing Te Ātaarangi, and it was obvious that my girlfriend and I made a couple of people uncomfortable just by being in class. Student whakaari were at times openly mocking of gay or camp behaviour. When I came to Te Wānanga o Raukawa a year later, again, I saw what I would say was open hostility to sexualities other than heterosexual. For whatever reason, some people must have assumed I was heterosexual, and talked to me about how disgusting homosexuality was, and a kaiako talked in class about homosexuality as if it was worse than incest. It was only a few people, but it got my attention.

I'm not suggesting that homophobia is unique to Māori. My Pākehā parents were openly homophobic until a year or so after I came out to them. I've been abused walking down the street, had eggs thrown at me, and been chased by cars for holding hands with my girlfriend. At university it wasn't uncommon to read fantasies about killing gays or lesbians in the letters to the student newspaper. So, by the time I came to Te Wānanga o Raukawa, homophobia was not a new experience to me. But these incidents got me wondering. I'd spent years finding a place for myself in te ao Pākehā - would there be a place for me in te ao Māori? Would that be somewhere I could feel comfortable - as someone who was raised Pākehā, for whom mātauranga Māori is really new, and who is queer. Was it worth trying to find a place here? In the same way that many of us have had to act Pākehā to fit into the colonising culture, was I going to have to act straight to fit into te ao Māori? Would there be somewhere that could accept all of me?

This was a question in the back of my mind when I was a student in Ahunga Tikanga classes, listening to Ani Mikaere, Moana Jackson and Leah Whiu saying lovely stuff about whakapapa, ngā kaupapa, inclusion and balance. Everything they said made sense and sounded great, but at the same time I was getting other messages from other places, messages which sounded pretty similar to my experience in Pākehā culture, about excluding people who are different, about disgust and fear of sexual difference in particular. What was pono? Was there space for me in te ao Māori?

That is where the question started for me, and answering it has taken me in a few different

directions. My understanding of this hui is that it is about making sure our tikanga are true to ngā kaupapa mai rā anō, keeping them relevant and adaptive. Hopefully, by the end of this talk, you'll have some ideas about sexuality and tikanga that adequately reflect our kaupapa.

Before I go on, I want to define two words that I will use in this talk.

**Queer (not kuia):** a label for those of us who don't think well-defined boxes are a helpful way to think about gender or sexuality. My partner pointed out that it's hard to hear the difference between queer and kuia. In this talk, I might describe myself as queer, I am not claiming to be a kuia.

**Homophobia:** the belief that heterosexuality is normal and healthy, and that anything else is wrong, depraved, unhealthy or dangerous.

**Colonisation = oppression = trauma**

Oppression is trauma. Every form of inequity has a traumatic impact on the psychology, emotionality and spirituality of the oppressed. (Akili, 2011)

When Yolo Akili says oppression is trauma, he is not saying anything we don't already know about the effect of oppression on our wairua, but I thought this was a good place to start, because we can agree on it. We can agree on it, because we live with the ongoing effects of colonisation. We know that colonisation is oppression, and we know the trauma of that oppression in our communities and in our lives. Part of the oppression is in the acts of the colonisers - taking our land, spreading diseases, imprisoning us, outlawing our ways of being. The oppression is also perpetrated by the messages that they say about us to justify and minimise their crimes against us.

Many of us have internalised the messages that we have heard, and we know that many of our young people will internalise the messages they hear - that Māori are physical and emotional, meaning we aren't smart enough to look after ourselves or our whenua; that we aren't moral like the colonisers; that we are violent and overly sexual. Politicians and the media go out of their way to find stories of Māori failure, especially those that show us as naive, immoral and out of control.

We know the effects of this oppression: there is massive pressure to conform to the dominant, colonising values. Some of us do eventually conform, while others can't or won't. For all of us, whether we conform or not, oppression tears at our wairua, the sense of self that should make us strong.

Like all indigenous peoples who are living through colonisation, Māori now have high rates of suicide as well as high-risk and anti-social behaviours. This is the effect of the trauma caused by the oppression of colonisation, it is an attack on our wairua. It leads to a whole bunch of outcomes that we all know and that I'm not going to go into - I think we can accept that colonisation is oppression, which is trauma. What I want to discuss now is the fact that, just as colonisation is very clearly oppression, so too is the repression of sexual diversity.

**Sexual repression = oppression = trauma**

What I'm calling sexual repression consists of acts and messages that say that sexual diversity is wrong - that anyone who isn't heterosexual is abnormal, deviant or immoral, and

is somehow a threat to society, or to tikanga or family values, whatever those are. Clearly, that is about oppressing people, and it must therefore be an attack on their wairua.

When I was a child, we used words like faggot and lesbian before we had a clue what they meant, although we knew that they were something really bad. I don't know where we got these words from, but I don't remember anyone being told off for using them. Boys were mocked for being girly by adults and by other kids - there are so many words for boys who aren't appropriately masculine. Sexual or gender difference, being gay or camp, is the punchline of so many jokes. And most of us will internalise those messages. Whoever we grow up to be, these are really damaging and limiting messages. The effect is similar to colonial oppression - there is massive pressure on all of us to conform to the dominant heterosexual standard. Most of us try to do so, and for those of us who can't, if we internalise these messages, we will learn to hate ourselves.

I'm going to talk about shame, because I think it's important to understand what it's like to grow up in a culture that is terrified of sexual difference. I want you to think about a response to that culture which expresses our kaupapa. Should we buy into homophobia? Should we allow ourselves to be silenced and timid? Or should we protect our tamariki and mokopuna?

When I think of my experience as a child, I don't remember any particular homophobic incidents, but just growing up in Pākehā culture in the 1970s and 80s was like soaking in homophobia. Everything told me that heterosexuality was normal and healthy, and that anything else was sick. I remember when homosexual law reform was going through parliament, there was lots of talk about how homosexuals were paedophiles and that law reform was opening the door to bestiality. There was all sorts of hateful fear mongering. My parents were saying this stuff too. I knew that homosexuality terrified people because something about it was so sick and disgusting.

Exactly the same hate came out 20 years later when parliament started talking about the Civil Unions bill, and we're seeing it again now with the Marriage Equality bill. Almost exactly the same words are being used. Whenever anyone tries to remove some anti-homosexual discrimination, we all get a massive dose of hate speech, which is particularly dangerous for children.

I heard all that in the mid 1980s when I was 11 or so, well before I was thinking about what sexuality meant to me. I already knew that something about me was different from other girls. I didn't know what it was, but I knew there was something wrong with the way I was with my friends and with boys. I was 14 when I started going out with girls, and then everything became much clearer - but it was also worse, because I knew what people thought of people like me. No-one could know, so I became secretive. I became physically self-conscious and reserved. I didn't touch anyone, especially not other girls, unless I absolutely had to. I wouldn't go near children. I had this facade of who I was, and it was completely unrelated to me and what I was feeling. For years, everything about me was fake and was about hiding this awful secret. I still carry some of that self-hatred, that expectation that people will be disgusted, or scared to let me be around their children. A lot of people I've talked to who aren't heterosexual relate to these feelings. (Hutchings & Aspin, 2007)

I know that for most children, first crushes are both exciting and terrifying, and coming into your sexuality is also exciting and terrifying. Ideally, children can talk to their friends about

it or, better still, their parents. People are excited when children start showing those signs.

For lots of young queer people, coming into your sexuality is just terrifying. It feels life threatening, and it actually is. By the age of 21, about a third of young people who are attracted to their own gender will have tried to kill themselves (Suicide Prevention Resource Centre, 2008; Fergusson, Horwood & Beautrais, 1999). The messages they hear about homosexuals are so clear and hateful that the thought of being one, or trying to live as one, is just too awful.

Why am I talking about this? My point isn't to bring you down - my point is that how we talk about sexuality or respond to homophobia isn't abstract or academic. This isn't a philosophical debate about rights or political views. This is about the survival of our children, just like fighting the racist environments in some of our schools is about survival. To bring it back to the kaupapa of this hui, our tikanga should be helping us to survive as Māori. It should not be killing us.

We give children messages about sexuality and gender in many ways. Teaching them to be ashamed, controlling how they behave as girls and boys, talking about heterosexuality as if it is the only normal option as opposed to just a common way of being, laughing at people who are different - none of this will make us heterosexual. All it does is make us scared of who we might be. It makes us all police our own behaviour. For those of us who can't be straight, it may teach us to hate ourselves, and make us scared to show ourselves to you. We may become secretive and isolated. It is an attack on our mana and our wairua. At best, it makes it harder for each of us to reach our potential, at worst, it is so effective that it kills us.

These messages are a form of cultural imperialism, just like colonisation. Those with more power are using it to suppress those with less. Those who are heterosexual are trying to impose their way of being over everyone else, sometimes with the power of the state, sometimes with the authority of a religious text, sometimes with nothing more than numerical dominance and the same self-righteousness that the colonisers wear. It's all the same.

When I was putting this together, I was reminded of Whatarangi Winiata's analysis of why Māori do poorly now compared to Pākehā (1995, p. 6). He talks about all the ways that the Crown has on the one hand supported Pākehā ways of being, and on the other hand suppressed Māori ways of being, and the effect that this has had on the success, or otherwise, of Pākehā and Māori. He discusses the effects on how we each see each other, how we see ourselves, and the futures we are able to imagine for ourselves.

The racist practices that Whatarangi describes privilege a Pākehā way of being as normal and right, while pathologising Māori ways of being, and lead to the horrible statistics and health outcomes we all know. To me, this seems parallel to how heterosexual ways of being have been privileged by the Crown, by churches and eventually by our own communities and whānau, while at the same time other ways of being have been suppressed. This has meant that many young queer people struggle with who they will be and what their future will look like, for exactly the same reasons that young Māori often struggle with these questions (and it is likely that this is particularly true of young people who are both queer and Māori). Because almost everywhere we turn, it is being drummed into us that we are different, and lesser, and wrong - and we are then blamed for the inevitable outcomes.

As I've said, this is all true of Pākehā culture, but from my limited experience, and from talking to and reading about the experiences of other Māori, I think there are the same destructive attitudes and behaviours in many Māori communities. I would argue that there is a lack of leadership and willingness to talk about why. I'll talk about our leaders in a moment, but first I want to talk about our children.

## HOMOPHOBIA AT SCHOOL

There are at least two places where our children should expect to feel safe - at home and at school. There is very little research that has been done on sexuality and health, and of the studies looking at youth, they almost all focus on school.

In a survey of New Zealand high school students, compared to students who identified as exclusively opposite-sex attracted, twice as many same-sex attracted students were afraid that someone would hurt or bother them at school, three times as many had stayed away from school because they were afraid someone would hurt or bother them, three times as many were bullied weekly at school, and 54 percent had been physically assaulted in the last 12 months (compared with 42 percent of exclusively opposite sex attracted students); of the same-sex attracted students who were bullied, one third were bullied because they were perceived to be gay (Rossen, Lucassen, Denny, Robinson, 2009, p. 26). A US study suggests that not only is homophobic violence commonly experienced, a surprising number of people are perpetrating it— one in ten university students admit physical violence or threats against people they suspect of being homosexual, and one in four admit verbally abusing them (Franklin, 2000, pp. 339–362).

It is common for students to see their schools as poor at responding to any form of bullying (Carroll- Lind, 2009; Painter, 2009). Many schools aren't proactive about dealing with homophobic abuse. They don't talk positively about sexual diversity. They don't challenge ideas that heterosexuality is normal and everything else is deviant and wrong, or that people who are different deserve abuse and ridicule (Carroll- Lind, 2009; Painter, 2009). Often when homophobic abuse is happening schools won't address the real problem (Carroll-Lind, 2009). Schools might deal with the physical violence, but not the underlying attitude; they might deal with the perpetrator, but not the culture that allows bullying (Carroll-Lind, 2009). It's not uncommon for victims of homophobic abuse to be blamed for provoking the abuse by being homosexual (Carroll-Lind, 2009; Painter, 2009). Even in the face of ongoing physical violence to children because they are perceived to be homosexual, some schools will continue to claim that they provide a safe environment for their students (Kendall & Sidebo- tham, 2004, pp. 71–72). Some principals and boards refuse to see homophobic attitudes as something that they should be addressing in school (Painter, 2009, pp. 12, 20–21).

Whether we're talking about race or perceived sexuality or gender, when schools fail to challenge hatred of any sort, they give a clear message that it is okay, and that there is something wrong with the victims. Studies consistently show that these messages are associated with the physical, emotional and social harm that I've been talking about, the self hatred, the isolation and the suicide.<sup>1</sup>

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1 E.g. Suicide Prevention Resource Centre 2008 *Suicide Risk and Prevention for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth* (Education Development Center, Newton MA, USA), pp 19– 28, and references therein; Ryan, C, D Huebner, R Diaz and J Sanchez 2009 "Family Rejection as a Predictor of Negative, Health Outcomes in White and Latino Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Young Adults" *Pediatrics* 123, pp 346, 350–351, and references therein.

I hope we can all agree that this is something we should be protecting our children from.

## HOMOPHOBIA AT HOME

Much less is known about the effect of attitudes at home. The first study came out in 2009 (Ryan, Huebner, Diaz, Sanchez, 2009, pp. 346–352) and it gives clear indications of how whānau rejection, even in relatively subtle forms, can have a huge impact on the health of queer youth. The researchers interviewed young adults who had come out to at least one of their parents as an adolescent. From those interviews, they made a list of 51 rejecting behaviours - things like, if their parents ever blamed them for anti-gay mistreatment, if they were ever excluded from whānau activity because of their sexuality, if family members ever made disparaging comments about queer people in front of them, or verbally or physically abused them because of their sexuality.

Participants were assigned to groups based on whether they experienced few (0–11), some (more than 11 and up to half), or more than half of these behaviours. These groups turned out to be a good predictor of negative health outcomes, particularly for attempted suicide; over two thirds of those in the group who had experienced more than half the rejecting behaviours had attempted suicide, compared to one in five in the group with the least rejection.

This study only included young people who had come out to a parent during adolescence - you'd expect these people to have come from less homophobic homes than those of us who waited until we'd left home to tell our parents. So these results may be un-derestimating the effect of homophobic experiences at home. Reading this study really drove home to me how dangerous homophobic attitudes and behaviour can be.

I know I've been stressing the similarity between marginalising sexual or gender differences and the way that we are marginalised as Māori, but in the home there is a really big distinction. Most Māori children are raised by at least one Māori parent, and the family knows that their children are Māori. Māori parents know what it's like to be raised in a racist society, and may have some idea of how to protect their children from the racism that they will encounter. Most Māori children probably feel pretty safe talking to their parents about racism that they see or hear, and asking for help understanding or dealing with it. However, almost all queer children are born to heterosexual parents, who have no idea what it's like to grow up queer in a homophobic society, and who don't know that their children will be queer. The parents of queer children may have no idea how to protect them from the messages they will get, or even that they need to. The parents may themselves be homophobic.

Many of our whānau are not safe places for queer children, and I'd argue that if they aren't safe for queer children, they aren't safe for any children. Not just because we can't know who our children will grow up to be, but also because hatred isn't safe for children - white children are endangered by growing up with racists, boys are endangered by growing up with misogynists, and heterosexual children are endangered by growing up with homophobes.

## IS REPRESSION OF SEXUAL DIVERSITY TIKA?

I want to start with the question of whether or not sexual diversity is traditional. This is an impossible question, because the answer will depend on how far back we go, and who we ask. One of the themes through this hui has been the ways that our tikanga may become distorted or co-opted, so that some of us get the idea that something is traditional when it is clearly a relatively new development. The more useful question is whether or not something

is consistent with what we know to be tika - based on kaupapa mai rā anō.

In class recently, Moana Jackson was talking to Ahunga Tikanga students about relationships of various sorts - a parent - child relationship, a relationship between workmates, or between institutions, or sexual partners - and how you know whether those relationships are tika. It seems obvious that the gender or sexuality of the people in those relationships is pretty much irrelevant to that question. If the relationships are based on mutual respect, manaakitanga and aro- ha, then they are tika, irrespective of anything else.

The question of whether heterosexuality is more tika than other ways of loving or relating or having sex with one other seems ridiculous to me. I can't imagine a kaupapa-based argument that justifies marginalising people based on who they are attracted to. I can't think of anything resembling kaupapa that would judge me as more or less depending on the gender of the people I love. Any attempt to reduce my mana based on who I sleep with is an insult to my whānau, my whakapapa and all my tūpuna. I cannot accept that as kaupapa or tika.

One of the comparisons that is often made between western culture and most indigenous cultures is that indigenous peoples know we are all different, and that those differences are not just valid, but potentially valuable. We don't need to feel better about ourselves by trying to dictate anyone else's tikanga - we just have to get our own stuff right for ourselves. I think this is relevant to how we think about other people's relationships.

I expect we all know when our wairua is healthy. We feel good, grounded, sure in who we are, safe. When I start focusing on what other people are doing wrong, I know I need to sort myself out. So I don't see how it can be tika to insult and demean people in healthy relationships because the set up of those relationships is different from what I would choose. If I'm judging other people like that, it's a pretty good sign that there's something going on with my own wairua that I need to address.

So if policing people's sexualities in this way isn't tikanga, where did it come from?

## COLONISATION AND SEXUAL REPRESSION

We know the West is a seriously unhealthy culture. It forces itself on everyone else. It tries to stamp out difference. I don't know why it is so obsessed with who sleeps with whom, but it is, to a really bizarre extent.

When Europeans arrived here, they brought with them their fear and hatred of homosexuality. In English law at that time, homosexuality could be punished by hard labour or even death. It's only been 25 years since the New Zealand state got rid of the law that could imprison men for having consensual sex with other men.

When we look to our parents and grandparents for guidance on how to think about different sexualities, we need to remember that for generations we have lived under that strange legal system. Our parents and grandparents, and their grandparents, have been educated in schools and churches based on western values. There are very few places to avoid the awful messages of that culture - remember that it called our tikanga primitive and violent, then told us that we needed to beat our children, that our men needed to dominate women and that we all needed to hate homosexuality.

Our parents or kaumātua may genuinely believe that there is something wrong with homosexuality. They may genuinely believe that it is traditional to stifle some people's ways of being. After a couple of hundred years of colonisers trying to shame us into rejecting our values and adopting theirs, that's hardly surprising. That's the reason it is so important that we have hui like these to talk about tikanga and kaupapa.

African-American activist and academic Angela Davis is clear about where she thinks homophobia comes from: "The roots of sexism and homophobia are found in the same economic and political institutions that serve as the foundation of racism in this country." (1989, p.12). She is talking about the US, but it's equally true here—it's the desire to force what makes sense to me onto everyone else. As I said earlier, whether we are talking about homophobia, sexism, or racism, it's all about cultural imperialism.

## HETEROPATRIARCHY AND HOMOPHOBIA

I want to talk specifically about how we've come to buy into this western preoccupation with how we have sex, and with whom. I know we're all familiar with the way patriarchy has been creeping into interpretations of tikanga and kōrero tawhito, but I think it's helpful to think about the way that patriarchy privileges certain men more than others, and the effect of that.

For example, at the time the English decided they wanted to colonise these motu, their ideal man was the Victorian gentleman. The men that England sent to control us were pretty much in that mould. They weren't aristocracy, and they hadn't gone to the flash schools but they were earning their place as gentlemen through their occupations - the military, the church, and the government. Like all social climbers, they brought with them an unwavering belief in that society's rules. They taught us what it was to be a leader, and how to get those attributes—through private schools, manly sports and Christianity. I don't think it is too much of a stretch to say some of us are leaning this way now. If we add business people to the list of career pathways, and replace aristocracy with whakapapa, we are starting to describe a path that many of us would see as ideal for developing our young men into iwi leaders.

One of the things that is interesting about this is that, in general, men, people educated in private schools, people who play dominant sports (in this country, rugby, soccer, cricket and softball), and people with Christian beliefs have each been shown to be associated with more homophobic attitudes (Osborne & Wagner, 2007, pp. 599, 601, 607–609).<sup>2</sup> If we follow this pattern for developing leadership, we are pretty much guaranteeing that we will foster and privilege attitudes that consider sexual repression to be normal and acceptable. Our children will be subjected to that sexual repression, which will limit the development and potential of most of them, and will endanger the lives of some of them.

As Cherokee activist and academic Andrea Smith says:

Any liberation struggle that does not challenge heteronormativity cannot substantially challenge colonialism or white supremacy. Rather, . . . such struggles will maintain colonialism based on a politics of secondary marginalization where the most elite class of these groups will further their aspirations on the backs of those most marginalized within the community. (2006, p. 72)

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2 And references therein

## WHAT CAN WE DO?

Re-broaden our concept of leadership.

One thing that I think would make a big difference is if our leadership (whatever we mean by that) reflected the diversity of our communities. I'm not knocking any of the contributions that anyone has made, but I think we should be asking why the people who make up groups like the Iwi Chairs Forum or the Māori Council seem so similar. What messages does it give our young people if they can't see anyone like them being recognised as having mana?

Make our schools safer.

We need to make sure our schools are safe for all our children. This means being proactive. Schools need to talk to children about sexual and gender diversity in a safe and accepting way. This must happen before the negative messages sink in - starting when children are 10 or 11, not leaving it until they're already sexually active, or avoiding it altogether. It means tackling any homophobic attitudes or behaviour that the children bring to school with them. Staff need to be educated and trained so they don't bring damaging attitudes with them. Schools need to be a safe place for staff to be open about their sexuality and gender. Finally, it means educating parents so that they are onboard.

Make our whānau safer.

Most importantly, we have to decide what is more important to us: that our children meet our expectations; or that they are safe to be whoever they may be. Is it more important that we shame our children into acting as we want them to act? That we pretend they're someone who they're not? Or that we have a real relationship with them? What is more tika? What is most in line with our kaupapa?

If we want our children to be safe and happy and to meet their potential, then we have to be prepared to accept them, and to love them whoever they turn out to be. We have to make sure they know that.

## THE CONTINUUM OF AWESOMENESS

I like to think of our goal in terms of an awesome continuum (Figure 1), on which I'd like to see us all pushing ourselves towards the more awesome end of the spectrum.

In the top left, intolerance is anything that tells our children that it's not acceptable to be different—abuse, or statements suggesting that there's no gayness in tikanga Māori, or anything that condones abuse or mocking of difference. It includes treating gay men as if they're women, which reveals disrespect for both women and gay men. Anything like that is intolerant, and we want to avoid it.

Tolerance is a bit better than intolerance. It means not actively excluding or insulting people that we know to be different from ourselves. However, it assumes that heterosexuality is so normal and healthy that we can ignore the reality that not everyone is heterosexual. For example, I might assume that every child and everyone I know is heterosexual unless they tell me otherwise, which means I don't have to be careful about what I or anyone else does that would insult people who aren't heterosexual. It's much like the way the Crown acts around ethnicity, treating us as if we are all white. Māori are not actually excluded from Pākehā society, we're just expected to change to fit in. Because we assume that every child

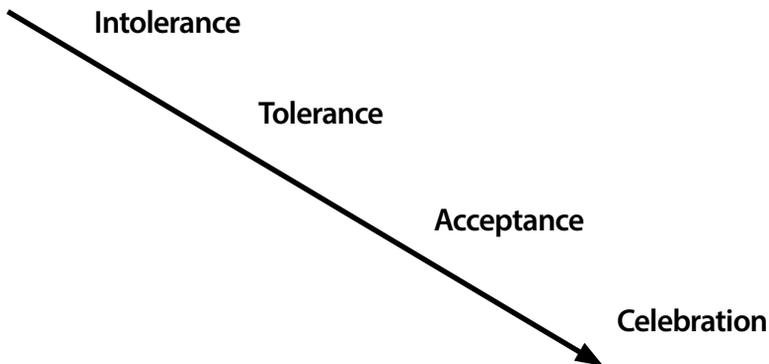


Figure 1: A continuum of awesomeness, where least awesome behaviour is at the top left, and most awesome at the bottom right.

will grow up to be heterosexual, we don't bother to protect them from hate or carelessness. We let them see sexual and gender diversity being mocked or compared to paedophilia, or hear their queer whanaunga being described as disgusting, as if this has no effect. Tolerance actually allows intolerance to flourish.

Acceptance is just that, anything that lets our children know that they are awesome and loved, whoever they are. It is their whakapapa that gives them a place in their whānau, and everything else is just detail. It also means challenging any homophobic behaviour to protect them from those messages.

Celebration means going out of our way to give positive messages about otherwise marginalised genders or sexualities, as away of fighting the messages that our children will get in situations beyond our control. For example, loving acceptance probably isn't a sufficient response if a child has just heard that a prominent Māori leader dreams of a world without gays, or if one of their friends has been beaten up for looking queer, or if they're being called faggot or dyke. If a child tells us that they are queer, we should be stoked that they trust us, that they are sharing themselves with us, and we should show them that. If a child is brave enough to express themselves in a way that others are reading as queer, we should celebrate their uniqueness and bravery. Celebration might mean talking to our children about all the different crushes we've had, or acknowledging all the crushes they have had, not acting like there is something different about their friendships depending on the gender of their friend. Celebration is anything that lets our children know that whoever they are will be awesome.

If tikanga are the behaviours that express our values, I thought I could use Whatarangi Winiata's kaupapa matrix model to work backwards (2012, September). The starting point is to think of each of the positions on the continuum as a set of behaviours. If these behaviours are tika, we should be able to say which kaupapa they are expressing.

Starting with intolerance, which kaupapa am I expressing if I am excluding or attacking my whanaunga based on who they sleep with? It might be a reflection of how little I know about kaupapa, but I couldn't think of any. Looking at tolerance, which kaupapa am I expressing when I am polite to my whanaunga, while judging them as inferior? Or including them, but expecting them to hide who they are? Again, I couldn't think of any kaupapa that

fit this tikanga. The kaupapa become apparent when we look at the behaviours that show acceptance. Acceptance is an expression of a whole bunch of kaupapa—whanaungatanga, aroha, manaakitanga, rangatiratanga, whakapapa. Finally, when turning to celebration, it can be seen as expressing many of the same kaupapa as acceptance.

Some people will feel that celebration is a step too far - that acceptance is enough. In an ideal world, I would say that acceptance is the most tika behaviour. But we live with a dominant culture that condones homophobia. To come back to the analogy with Pākehā culture oppressing tikanga, one response to a culture that makes it hard to live as Māori is that we celebrate what it means to be Māori, we positively promote Māori ways of being. Many Pākehā are resistant to this, arguing that affirmative action and celebrations of our “Māoriness” constitute reverse racism. We know they are wrong. We can extend that analysis to repression of sexual diversity, even if it initially makes us a bit uncomfortable.

The point of this continuum isn't to judge where we each are as parents or friends. We will probably all struggle to overcome the culture that we have been raised in. I certainly do. This is where we need to think about whose kaupapa we are expressing. Western culture has been all about controlling and limiting us; tikanga should be about all of us reaching our potential. My challenge to you is to make sure that you are reflecting the values that you know to be important. Be more awesome, so those around you can feel safe enough to be who they are meant to be. Be brave enough to be uncomfortable. Be brave enough to fight for sexual and gender diversity education in your children's and grandchildren's schools. Be brave enough to love your whole child, and your whole self. We know we aren't going to fully realise tino rangatiratanga unless Pākehā get a bit uncomfortable and give up some power. It's the same with sexual diversity.

As I said earlier, no amount of hatred, bullying or abuse is going to make anyone heterosexual; it will only make people hide themselves from you. Don't be that person. Don't force those you care about into hiding. If you don't know anyone who isn't heterosexual - if you think everyone in your whānau is heterosexual - then that is a reflection of the impression that you have made. You can change that impression.

We need to be clear that homophobia does not come from tikanga. It comes from the colonisers. Whakapapa is about inclusion - there needs to be a really good reason to exclude or demean someone in any way. Who they sleep with is not a good reason. Our children grow up in an environment where they will see, hear and experience hatred of different sexualities. Whoever they grow up to be, these messages are dangerous. These messages will limit how our children see themselves and who they can imagine being.

At the moment, we have so much unhelpful hatred and intolerance passing as debate about marriage and adoption equality. If there's one thing I want you to get from this talk, it's that we need to change that conversation. Our children don't need to be protected from homosexuality, they need to be protected from hate. People loving each other will never endanger children, homophobia will.

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# In search of Our Nannies' Gardens:

**A Mana Wahine Geography of Maternities in Aotearoa**

Naomi Simmonds - Raukawa, Ngāti Huri



E kui mā, e koro mā, rau rangatira mā, tēnei te mihi nui ki a koutou katoa.  
Ki ngā kaiwhakahaere o te hui nei, tēnā koutou.

Ko wai tēnei e tū ana i mua i a koutou? He uri ahau nō Ngāti Raukawa ki te raki. Nō Raukawa ki te kaokaoroa o patetere, nō Ngāti Huri hoki. Ko Pikitu te marae. Ko Pikitu te Pou tuarongo o te whare wairua o Raukawa. Ko Ranginui te tuanui, ko Papatūānuku te papa. Ko te pou tokomanawa kei Ngātira, ko te pou tāhū kei Tarukenga. Ōna maihi taka mai ki Te Wairere Ki Horohoro Ko Naomi Simmonds ahau. It is with a mixture of excitement, anxiety, joy and trepidation that I stand before you today as part of this panel. Yesterday Ani said that in some ways she still felt like a kōtiro in the presence of her aunties and uncles: I can say honestly that standing here before you all I definitely feel like a pēpi. I am currently finishing my PhD thesis in which I examine the birthing experiences of Māori women. Much of the work that I draw on and am inspired by, in my research, comes from many of the speakers who have presented as part of this great conference. So I am absolutely grateful to them for the amazing mahi they do and I am absolutely humbled (and, to be honest, a little overwhelmed) to share the floor with such an amazing, insightful and articulate group of people.

When preparing for this kōrero I struggled to think about what I could add, if anything, to this forum. So much of what I want to share has already been shared. What I hope to offer today are a few strands that emerge and grow from the stories of maternities that have been gifted to me as part of my doctoral research. In thinking about “tikanga as liberation” I hope to weave three strands together that are grouped around concepts of “living colonialism”; “retreat and re-awakenings” and “responsibility”.

The title of my thesis and of this kōrero is “In search of our Nannies’ gardens - a mana wahine geography of maternities in Aotearoa”. This title is taken from Alice Walker’s popular collection of essays originally published in 1983 titled *In Search of my Mothers’ Garden* (Walker 1983). In this book she expresses a commitment to exploring “the oppressions, the insanities, the loyalties, and the triumphs of African American women” (Munro, 1984, 161). She argues that it is important for women today to reflect on and understand the experiences of their mothers, grandmothers and great grandmothers in order to understand and make sense of their own realities. She argues that despite the years/generations of oppression that her ancestors were subjected to, they continued, in various ways, to “live creatively”. She goes on to say: “our grandmothers and mothers have, more often than not anonymously handed on their creative spark, or the seed of the flower they themselves never hoped to see” (Walker 1983, 240).

It is in a similar vein and with a similar sense of hope to Alice Walker that I believe we can find in the “gardens” of our tūpuna the seeds they have planted and nurtured for us. It is to these gardens that we can look for concepts and frameworks, kaupapa and tikanga that enable us to not only make sense of our lived realities, but also to be liberated by our subjectivities as Māori: as Māori women and as Māori men.

It is not for me here, or necessarily even in my research, to define what those concepts or frameworks are, or to define tikanga in relation to maternities. This is not my place; there are people with much greater knowledge and skills who are able to do this. Based on my doctoral research, however, I am of the belief that tikanga is, and should be, as diverse and varied as we are as a people, as whānau, hapū and iwi.

## LIVING COLONIALISM

The first strand of this kōrero is the simple but devastating fact that colonisation has, for the most part, stolen from wāhine and from whānau the ceremonies and celebrations; the reo and the tikanga; and the whakapapa of the maternal body and of birth. Yesterday Ngāhuia highlighted the way in which colonial discourse has been inscribed upon our reproductive bodies in relation to menstruation. Her kōrero reminded me of a Facebook discussion I was made aware of a few months ago that highlighted to me the insidious nature of such discourses and ideologies.

The following question was posted to Facebook:

Why is it tapu for a woman who has her monthly cycle to enter a vegetable garden? Does anybody know? (Facebook Exchange, March 2012).

To which numerous comments were posted including the following:

- It's somewhere in the bible cuz, it's the whole sin thing!
- Something to do with the unclean factor!
- Sounds like a mean excuse to get out of doing work.
- I was told the same thing I don't know why I never asked it's just tapu.
- Everything tapu is either biblical or common sense!
- Well pretty much it's bad/dead blood and if you go into a vege patch then they thought it would spoil their vegetables ... so they got banned more than anything then regarded it as tapu.
- When you have your mate wahine you are considered unfavourable.
- Your body actually emits toxins during a period through sweat and other fluids, some people have called those rules religious mumbo jumbo but there is actually scientific logic there somewhere, there's similar rules in the bibles old testament, just health precautions I guess. (Facebook Exchange, March 2012)

While many of these comments are nonsensical, they are also illustrative of the "presence" of colonial and Christian ideologies that posit women's menstruating bodies as unclean and polluting. That, we can All loudly and proudly say, is incorrect, thanks to the ground breaking work of Ngāhuia. In light of all of this then, it may not come as a surprise that for many whānau birthing experiences are equally as entangled with colonial constructs of the maternal body, and more now with biomedical discourses about pathology, risk factors and safety.

There are many varied ways in which colonialism is manifested in the lived and embodied experiences of birth that I don't have time to go into here. What I would like to say is that consistently, across all of the wāhine in this research, they housed a strong desire and drive to learn more about tikanga surrounding pregnancy and childbirth. For many of them, they felt a sense of sadness (and for some frustration) in relation to the difficulties they faced in accessing whānau, hapū and iwi specific mātauranga pertaining to the maternal body. The experiences of their mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers often remained unspoken, their gardens unseen.

In an interview, one midwife explained: "our grandmothers have had the "works burger" in terms of their birthing experience and so there is lots of unprogramming to do" (Interview,

December 2009). The analogy of the “works burger”<sup>1</sup> sums up the experience of birth for many wāhine (particularly in Aotearoa through the mid-19th century). My Nan birthed 15 babies. The first three she had at home with my Koro assisting.<sup>2</sup> The others she birthed at the hospital on her own. She definitely experienced it all, including internal vaginal examinations by multiple doctors during the birth of one of her children because she was a “special case”—a woman in her 40s who had multiple previous births.<sup>3</sup> This all in the name of teaching and, of course, let’s not forget the discourses of “safety” that are often thrown in for good measure. It is little wonder, given experiences such as this, that many of our Nannies did not speak of such things.

These experiences of colonialism are not only felt by our tūpuna but they are lived and embodied by us. There is no doubt in my mind that calculated colonialism changed Māori birthing. But more than that, colonialism is lived (experienced, embodied, negotiated and resisted). It is living and extant, comprised of active, evolving, not-yet-complete, and ever-present practices. It is a continuing endeavour that continues across myriad geographies (De Leuw & Hunt 2011).

### WHAKAMĀ—RETREAT AND REAWAKENINGS

For many of us, colonialism manifests physically and emotionally when we are reminded of “what we have lost”, “what we don’t know”, “what we think we should know or do”, and “who we think we should be”. This brings me to the second strand of this kōrero. For many of the wāhine in this research the feelings engendered in unsafe or uncomfortable environments or situations were described using the concept of whakamā. I would like to briefly share two moments when wāhine described such feelings in relation to the expression of tikanga.

The first is a story shared with me by a young mother, Oramai,<sup>4</sup> who fell pregnant whilst completing high school. This wāhine was scared of the reaction to her pregnancy by family and friends and thus decided to hide her pregnancy as long as she could. She did this by continuing to smoke so as not to raise suspicions amongst her whānau and friends. She told me that she intended to take the whenua and bury it at her tūrangawaewae, but after she had her pēpi the midwife used the whenua as “evidence” that she had smoked during pregnancy. Oramai was shown the black spots on the placenta that proved this was so, and the midwife proceeded to give her a lecture about the risks of smoking during pregnancy. Oramai reflected on this and told me:

Even with the placenta; just looking at it put me off. I would have buried it but as soon as I saw it I just couldn’t stand looking at it. They asked me “do you smoke?” I say, “oh yes”. They said “Look ...” they show you on the placenta that they can tell you were a smoker; they show you every little part. I went “oh okay”. They asked me if I wanted it. I said “no I don’t want it”. I didn’t keep anything. I wish I didn’t look at it. (Interview, June 2010)

This situation was “unsafe” for Oramai. She was up against the judgement by hospital staff of her as a young Māori woman who smoked during her pregnancy. As a result of this encounter with the midwife she retreated and withdrew into herself and decided against

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1 A “works burger” is a burger with every filling. The analogy is that Māori women have had the full spectrum of birthing experiences—in other words they have experienced it all.

2 Discussion at Wānanga by Okeroa Begbie (September 2010).

3 Personal correspondence with Kimai Begbie (February 2012).

4 Name used with permission.

keeping the whenua and returning it to the earth. Her energies were directed towards caring for her newborn baby rather than “fighting” against hospital staff, and rightly so. She retreated from that situation in order to protect herself and her pēpi from the judgement and condemnation of the midwife, and her decision to practice the tikanga of returning the placenta to the earth reversed.

The second story I would like to share is a reflection by Marama<sup>5</sup> about the tikanga pertaining to the treatment of the pito. It was common to bury the pito or to put in the cleft of a tree. However, colonisation has all but stolen this practice from whānau. Marama explains this:

Unfortunately, despite trying so very hard to do the right thing with our baby’s whenua, our ignorance of tikanga Māori resulted in her pito being thrown out in the rubbish. Auē taukiri e! I think of it now, and cringe at our ignorance. We just didn’t know that the pito was meant to be dealt with in the same way as the whenua. Perhaps if I’d thought about it a bit more I would have realised they are no different. But nobody ever told me or spelt it out to me and I’m embarrassed that neither my partner or I even thought to keep our baby’s pito when it dropped off:

... it is ironic that we took so much care to ensure that we did the right thing with her whenua, and yet when it came to her pito, we were so irreverent. Now when I think of it I am abhorred. But we have to accept it - this is the way things are for Māori brought up, and living in, a mainstream world. We have become so colonised in our thinking, lost so much of our mātauranga Māori that we easily revert back to Pākehā thinking - without thinking. Ka tangi au (I cry).  
(Diary entry, January 2009)

Marama claims responsibility for not knowing this particular tikanga. However, as we know, colonisation has for many severed our knowledge of tikanga and our ability to express it in some instances and in some spaces. I am certain that Marama is not the only one of us who has been made aware of a particular tikanga after the fact; this is a legacy that colonialism has left.

For Marama, her feelings of whakamā (obviously in very different circumstances and not prompted by external judgement or condemnation as was the case with Oramai) prompted a reconsideration of self and ultimately a decision by her and her whānau to reclaim te reo me ōna tikanga so that her daughter would not have to struggle in the same way that she has had to over her subjectivity as a Māori woman. As Kim said this morning becoming a parent, becoming a mother is often a strong catalyst for many to reclaim their whakapapa and to reclaim tikanga.

For many of us these experiences, experiences that resonate deep in our puku, that make us feel uncomfortable and uncertain, experiences that raise red flags that perhaps something is not how it should, be can be the catalyst for a reawakening or a reclamation of self and of tikanga. In some cases whakamā as an emotion is so deeply felt that it triggers a re-evaluation and redefinition of self, and therefore has productive capacity to facilitate change and liberation.

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5 Name used with permission.

The challenge, in my opinion, lies in how we support wāhine and whānau, how we support each other, to move away from the default setting of “retreat” that we have grown accustomed to as a result of the physical, emotional and spiritual violence that we have been subjected to through colonialism. The challenge lies in creating the space and time to reflect on our sense of self, our place in the world, our values, our philosophies and our understanding of and expression of tikanga (in relation to the whole spectrum of our life experiences, including birth). The challenge lies in reconnecting wāhine and whānau to the whakapapa of the maternal body, to the power of Te Whare Tangata. It is within this space that I believe there is the potential to reawaken tikanga, and thus ourselves, our bodies and our spirits.

## RESPONSIBILITY

This brings me to the final strand I would like to weave into my kōrero today. This relates to the question of responsibility. Where does the responsibility for “reclaiming tikanga” or being “liberated by tikanga” lie? The potential for overburdening wāhine, particular women who are in the throes of caring for new babies and infants, is very real. Many wāhine are simply trying to survive from day to day. Coupled with the often confusing and contradictory discourses we are fed as pregnant, birthing and mothering women that I so often see resulting in “mother guilt”, it is little wonder that it can be overwhelming for some women to even contemplate the role of “tikanga” in their pregnancies and births.

Kim Anderson (2006, 775) heeds this caution also in relation to native mothering:

Taken uncritically, ideologies of Native mothering run the risk of heaping more responsibility of already overburdened mothers. With so many Native mothers struggling to raise their children in poverty or in situations of abuse or neglect, we must question the logic of asking mothers to ‘carry the nations’

She asks some pertinent questions that I think apply to this context also: “we must ask ourselves: Where are the men? Where are the communities? Where is the nation and where is the state? And - not to forget - where are the children?” (Anderson 2006, 775). Creating the space and time for wāhine, and for whānau, to share their experiences, to share tikanga and kōrero tuku iho pertaining to birth, is crucial and this necessarily requires the support of tāne, whānau, the state and our communities.

As part of this research we held a wānanga at my marae that enabled wāhine to come together and talk, to share their birthing experiences and to just be with each other, something which many of us do not get the chance to do very often. This was a beautiful space to be part of, but what was also wonderful to see was the role that the men took on that day. They worked in the kitchen preparing kai for us; they looked after the tamariki and did other little jobs to tautoko us in our mahi. There were 17 women, four men and lots of tamariki who attended this wānanga, and the age of women ranged from early 20s through to mid-60s. The wānanga provided a safe space that enabled women to be together and share with each other, and to work towards providing for our babies, what Leanne Simpson (2006, 28) has referred to as “a decolonised pathway into this world”.

The practice of returning the placenta to Papatūānuku - kia whakahoki te whenua ki te whenua - is perhaps the most evidenced tikanga that is being reclaimed by whānau. Whānau, in this research, were practising the tikanga in diverse and evolving ways -

changing the practice in light of the contemporary realities of their whānau. There was a diversity of materials used to make ipu whenua including paper mâché, hue, clay, and kete. For some, the whenua remained in an ice-cream container or hospital plastic/paper bag. Reconceptualisations of “home”, and of whenua, are also evident in the location the whenua is being buried by some whānau. Some have buried the whenua in a pot plant with soil from their tūrangawaewae to keep with them as they travel around. Others have made long journeys (one whānau made a 12-hour round trip) to put the whenua back into Papatūānuku straight after the birth.

Material expressions of tikanga are greatly varied but what I think remained constant across the whānau that I spoke with was the intent of the tikanga. In other words, the ways in which tikanga pertaining to pregnancy and birth are being practiced and expressed are evolving and becoming increasingly diverse, but the kaupapa of the tikanga remains as important as it ever has been.

One midwife made the point that: “Things like using muka, ipu whenua; those are the pretty bits on the edges ... but there’s so much more than that but I can’t say what that is for each woman.”(Interview, December 2009). Neither is it my place to say what that is for each woman or whānau. What I will say is that the dominant strand through all of the kōrero shared in this research was one of hope: wāhine and their whānau are (re)claiming tikanga, sometimes in subtle ways, sometimes more explicitly. Further, they are astute in recognising the structural challenges they face in reclaiming birthing tikanga, but they are also incredibly pragmatic in weaving various strands of tikanga into their (often heavily medicalised) births and, for the most part, they reflected on this as incredibly empowering and liberating.

## CONCLUSION

I think the potential for tikanga to be liberating is absolute. As I mentioned before there are many challenges in getting to this space but I am hopeful that we can get to a place where mātauranga and tikanga pertaining to birth are not just strands in our experiences of birth but are the foundations of it.

I am completely humbled by the kōrero that has been shared with and gifted to me for this research. I am also grateful to bear witness to the strength and determination of wāhine and their whānau in reclaiming, in various ways, mātauranga and tikanga pertaining to maternities, specifically birth. To end then, I would like to posit that it is in the search of our Nannies’ gardens that we begin to grow our own and it is in these gardens that we are able to sow the seeds gifted to us by our tūpuna. These gardens are, will and should be very colourful indeed.

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# Never-Ending Beginnings:

**The Circularity of Mana Wāhine**

Naomi Simmonds - Raukawa, Ngāti Huri



*“Whakapapa is a series of never-ending beginnings” (Moana Jackson, 2008, n.p.)*

Moana Jackson explains that the stories we tell, as Māori, are not always new stories. Neither do they always have an immediate end. Rather, they are born with a particular purpose in mind, told in a specific context and they may end with more questions, signalling new beginnings and highlighting “the never-ending scope of knowledge itself” (Jackson, 2008). This article is a new telling of many old and familiar stories, which considers the ways in which we come to know, feel and practice (or ‘do’) Mana Wāhine. It is an assemblage of moments in my understanding, both professionally and personally, of Mana Wāhine. This article is part reflection, part projection, part critique, part tribute. It circles around on itself, moving around the spiral of time and space that revisits many of the same struggles and triumphs that our ancestors have faced, that wāhine in this collection have experienced and discussed and that our tamariki and mokopuna may themselves reflect on and grow from.

Drawing from the words of Moana Jackson is purposeful in this context; not only because he is an accomplished storyteller and leading legal Māori scholar, but also because his words, which embody mana tāne and Mana Wāhine simultaneously, have prompted me to revisit the stories, feelings and actions of our ancestresses within and through my own research. In considering the work involved in decolonisation, Moana Jackson (2011) says that we need to be brave, to know who we are, where we have come from, where we are going and what we need to do to get there. He says: “there are many ways to transform once we identify what we need to transform, and we will each find our own way in which to do it” (Jackson, 2011, p. 76). Similarly, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012, p. 175) explains that decolonisation is multiple; “it’s not just political; the political does not exist out there. It’s tied to decolonisation of our spirit and about letting our spirit free”. Ani Mikaere (2011, p. 51) argues that we need to have courage:

*Courage to question genuinely held but deeply colonised assumptions about what it means to be Māori; courage to determine whether dubious interpretations of tikanga serve us well or whether they further an agenda that puts our long-term survival at risk; courage to confront those of our own who might have a personal stake in perpetuating such damaging interpretations.*

Mana Wāhine, to my mind, demonstrates the highly politicised nature of what are often deeply personal experiences for Māori women and whānau. Some may compare this to the feminist adage that “the personal is political” (Hanisch, 1969). This, however, is not a new argument for Māori. In fact many Māori and other indigenous scholars provide critical and in-depth analyses of the intimate and everyday within the macro-scale ideologies and processes of colonisation, patriarchy, imperialism and globalisation. This is necessitated by the very real fact that these ideologies, systems and institutions attempt to shape and define our lived realities daily. As such, the work of decolonisation and transformation, while suggesting an ‘end point’, consists, in fact, of on-going processes that will evolve and involve continual reproduction in and through the everyday realities of Māori women, and Māori more generally.

In what follows, I consider two moments within a long and diverse continuum of Mana Wāhine theory and practice – the 1993 Mana Wāhine claim lodged with the Waitangi Tribunal and the 2018 announcement that the claim would finally be heard as a Kaupapa Inquiry (WAI2700) alongside several other inquiries. I do so not to present the facts of the claim and inquiry alone, but rather to demonstrate the long and enduring nature both of

Mana Wāhine and of the sustained attacks on Māori women's knowledges, experiences and roles within New Zealand society and institutions across decades and generations. I also present my own reflections of growing up a Māori girl in a predominantly white rural Waikato town, and being only nine years of age when the Mana Wāhine claim was lodged. Some 25 years later I also consider how different this lived experience is, and may be, in 2019 for my nine-year-old daughter. What I seek to demonstrate in this article is that Māori girls and women continue to navigate systems and structures of power that are not set up to recognise our value(s), that invalidate our ways of knowing and being, and that continue to position us as 'Other' despite what we know, understand, feel and practice as Mana Wāhine scholars, activists, artists, teachers, mothers and daughters. To end, then, I loop back to the navigational prowess of one ancestress, Māhinaarangi, and consider how her physical and conceptual journey to make a place for her son and her descendants can serve as a powerful example of the ways that we navigate and negotiate our lives and futurities as Māori women, and as whānau, hapū and iwi.

### CLAIMING RIGHTS AND REALISING RESPONSIBILITY

In 1993, the Māori Women's Welfare Leagues and other groups of Māori women filed a claim with the Waitangi Tribunal. The claim argued that mana tāne (power and authority afforded to men) had been affirmed and protected (to an extent) by political dealings with the government (Irwin, 1993). Mana Wāhine, however, had not. The claim sought remedy of the exclusionary practices of the Crown, which inhibited and prevented participation by Māori women in decision making (Turner, 2007). In writing about the claim, Annette Sykes (1994, p. 15) argues that "because Māori women constitute over 50% of Tangata Whenua there must be equal representation in all areas of decision making in the future". The Mana Wāhine claim highlights the guarantees of equal participation promised under Te Tiriti o Waitangi for all Māori, including Māori women, 13 of whom signed the original treaty (Mikaere, 2003). Te Tiriti o Waitangi is, and must, be a central tenet of Mana Wāhine.

As the Mana Wāhine Claim asserts, the "Crown's actions and policies since 1840 have systematically discriminated against Māori women and deprived us of our spiritual, cultural, social and economic well-being, which is protected by the Treaty of Waitangi" (Johnston, 2005). In order to address the failures of the Crown in this regard, it is necessary to understand the depth and diversity of Mana Wāhine, and this requires more than just 'adding in' Māori women's voices in a way that leaves the hegemonic, colonial and patriarchal structures of knowledge production intact. In other words, it is not enough to just provide seats at the table for Māori women, especially if the legs of that table are made from colonialism, patriarchy, heteronormativity and racism.

In 1993 I was nine years old, living in a small rural town in the South Waikato. I was unaware of the Mana Wāhine claim and even of the Waitangi Tribunal, but I was, even at this young age, cognisant of the fact that the intersection of being Māori and being a woman meant that my experiences were different from the nine year old Pākehā girls and boys and even the nine year old Māori boys that I went to school with. At the mainstream school that I attended I was set apart as being one of the 'clever Māori girls' because I had learnt at a very young age how to navigate an education system that told me that my Māoriness was not welcome (or perhaps only welcome as song and dance but was not to permeate the classroom walls or disturb the teachers' hierarchy of learning). I was able to 'pass' at school and even at nine years of age I knew that any success I had was attributed by most others to the fact that I had a Pākehā mother. That my achievements were despite being Māori and not because of it! Attendance at mainstream schools throughout my education re-inscribed

the popular discourses of Māori culture, language and identity as marginal, tokenistic and relegated to New Zealand's 'pre-history'<sup>1</sup>

Added to this, my father was a Pentecostal minister for a large part of my childhood. It wasn't until I was in my early teens that my family left the church. For me, the church was a much more frequented place than the marae, hymns were better known than mōteatea and waiata, and God was much more familiar to me than Hine-te-iwaiwa (goddess of childbirth) or Papatūānuku (mother earth). This is not an unfamiliar story, as it was through Christianity that many Māori women were deprived of spiritual knowledge pertaining to Mana Wāhine. The power of Māori women was quickly supplanted with ideologies of shame and sin. Furthermore, research on Māori spirituality was carried out by white male ethnographers who privileged the stories of male atua, while atua wāhine have been misrepresented. Elsdon Best's (1924) writing exemplifies this. Discussing the creation of men and women, he notes:

*On the whole Māori leaned towards agnatic filiation, the male, he possesses greater mana that does the female, for is not man descended directly from the gods, while woman had to be created from earth! (Best, 1924, p. 89)*

Understanding the creation of Hine-ahu-one (the first female created from the earth) from a Mana Wāhine perspective provides a very different interpretation. Ani Mikaere (2003, p. 19) explains:

*Three female figures play a crucial role in the creation of humankind. Papatūānuku provides both the materials and the advice to enable Tāne to form Hineahuone. Hineahuone, while given physical shape by Tāne clearly possesses an awesome sexual power that comes from deep within her female being. It is she who gives birth to the first true human being, Hinētītama. Hinētītama is a woman who expects and exercises absolute control over her own destiny.*

This example is offered to highlight the distortion of Māori spiritual knowledges by colonial ethnographers that serve to isolate Māori women from those stories that speak to their mana and tapu. This was extended to Māori women's bodies, which were inscribed, clothed and supposedly 'cleaned' up by Christian missionaries. As Kathryn Rountree (2000, 52) explains "the missionaries wanted to clean, clothe and control the Māori body, believing this would make them more amenable to the gospel".

The colonial (re)telling of Māori stories, and thus Māori realities, firmly established a hierarchy of knowledge and atua wāhine were quickly replaced with Eurocentric ideologies of God: "God as male, God as ruling, God as natural ... God as white" (Pihama 2001, p. 155). The impact of this on Māori spirituality and thus on Mana Wāhine is immense, fragmenting the knowledges, traditions and whakapapa of Māori women and it did not take long before these colonial ideologies became entrenched in legislation.

The claim to the Waitangi Tribunal made in 1993 was a pivotal moment in a much longer struggle for Mana Wāhine to be recognised and upheld for what our ancestors knew it

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term 'pre-history' here to indicate the way in which Māori knowledges and stories are often consigned to a time that is considered before history. Nepia Mahuika (2012, p. 14) states that Māori stories are relegated to pre-history in that they are posited by non-Māori as "an interesting yet quaint curtain raiser to the more important story that followed".

was. As a nine-year-old in 1993, I knew being a Māori girl mattered but I would not entirely understand the significance of this until I was much older; that the depth of knowledge, critical inquiry, skill and expertise, spiritually rich practices and ceremonies that came from my culture, from my whakapapa, from my whenua would not be recognised or validated within mainstream institutions and systems.

## BEING HEARD, INQUIRING MINDS

Twenty-five years later, in 2018, the Waitangi Tribunal announced that they would hear the Mana Wāhine claim as a Kaupapa Inquiry. For 25 years the claim sat with no consideration, which is telling in and of itself. What is more, however, is that what was argued 25 years ago by several Māori women stands true today. The ideologies and institutions of this country continue to fail wāhine Māori in a number of ways: they continue to disregard the mana of wāhine and have failed to actively protect the sanctity of women and children; and they fail to properly address the racism and sexism that Māori women experience within Crown institutions (and within private organisations). Ultimately, 25 years on the systems of colonial and patriarchal power are continually made and maintained.

Colonialism and patriarchy have denied, and continue to deny, the legitimacy of Māori women's knowledges, bodies and spiritualities. Further, there are new formations of colonialism that are evident: for example, in the silencing of Māori women's voices by promoting hate speech as 'free speech'; in the control and surveillance of brown bodies within and outside institutions; in the spiritual impoverishment (and culture of blame where Māori mothers feel ashamed if their family is ill because it is probably their fault) of health and social services; in the ongoing marginalisation of Māori mothers and whānau; and the violence of the state against children by removing them from their parents (Pihama, 2017).

In 2019, I am now 34 and my daughter is nine years old. The journeys we are now charting in many ways look different – we have moved forward and are navigating new terrain. But in many ways the journey is circling back around and back on itself. We have moved through a spiral over 25 years (and longer) where the view is different, the perspectives are different, the challenges and opportunities have changed, but fundamentally the ideologies and institutions that oppress and suppress Mana Wāhine continue.

At nine years old my daughter understands that being a Māori girl, a Raukawa girl, matters. She knows that she is descended from a long line of strong wāhine Māori and that she is grounded in her land, language and whānau. She knows that there are Māori women and men working every day to create safe and celebratory spaces for her to exist as a Māori girl and to ensure she sees being a Māori woman as the powerful thing that we know it to be. She has been in kura kaupapa and bilingual units in her short time at school and she knows Hine-te-iwaiwa, Papatūānuku and many other atua and tūpuna wāhine intimately. She knows she is born of this land and responsible to this land.

Yet, as I was writing this article, my daughter asks me "Why do some Pākehā wear their shoes inside mum? I thought that we were supposed to be the paru ones". In this moment I was reminded of the pervasiveness of the colonial and patriarchal discourses discussed earlier – those discourses seek to 'clean, clothe and civilise', that imply our culture (and therefore our people) are 'less' than. These very discourses of marginalisation and 'othering' pervade across and through time and space and continue to shape the understandings of young Māori girls about themselves, their bodies and their culture.

Importantly, however, and perhaps using the lens of a mother to a nine-year-old, I also see the enduring nature of Mana Wāhine. That even across 25 years from 1993 to 2018 (and in fact much longer) the Mana Wāhine claim endured, the claimants did not give up, they did not go away, they continued to navigate the pathways for Māori women across the country in multiple and meaningful ways. Mana Wāhine endures as an ancient framework that enables Māori women to understand and (re)present their experiences from a place that takes for granted the mana and tapu of the women. Rather than having to 'talk back' or 'write back' against colonialism, Mana Wāhine enables Māori women to write, talk, sing, and live from a position of power. Mana Wāhine, therefore, involves charting new spaces whereby we can (re)define and (re)present our lived realities as Māori women.

## WHAKAPAPA – ENDURING LIFEWAYS

Within our whakapapa are concepts, values and practices that enables us to project ourselves with confidence into the future. Moreover, whakapapa tells us that we have a heritage of hardship and richness, struggle and joy, that we are descendants of creative, courageous and sometimes outrageous people. Whakapapa also enables us to feel supported in reclaiming and asserting Mana Wāhine. More than simply genealogy, whakapapa is very much a relational and multiply layered term. Whakapapa is about connections and growth and it is within our whakapapa that we can find a wealth of resources that enable us to make sense of and transform our lived realities. Ani Mikaere (2011, pp. 285-286) talks about whakapapa, writing:

*Whakapapa embodies a comprehensive conceptual framework that enables us to make sense of our world. It allows us to explain where we have come from and to envisage where we are going. It provides us with guidance on how we should behave towards one another and it helps us to understand how we fit into the world around us. It shapes the way we think about ourselves and about the issues that confront us from one day to the next.*

Whakapapa, then, is much more than 'genealogy'. It is an intricate web of connections, intersections and relationships that serve to connect Māori women to enduring lifeways that are ancient in origin but that will carry them into the future and enable them to navigate the complex systems of power that are part of our colonised realities.

By way of example I turn to my own whakapapa, jumping back to a time when the ideologies and structures of power were by, of and for this land. Māhinaarangi, of Ngāti Kahungunu, is a prominent ancestress for many iwi in Aotearoa. Perhaps her most famous act was to journey, while heavily pregnant, from the lands of her people in Kahungunu to those of Tūrongo, at Rangīātea. Māhinaarangi purposefully made the journey across ridges and ranges, lakes and rivers. Leaving her home village of Kahotea (near Te Aute) she travelled with a retinue of whānau and supporters (including Tūrongo's dog) some 500km walking north-west via Wairoa, along Lake Waikaremoana, across Huirau range to Ruatahuna, Te Whaiti and to Rotorua. She then carried on, crossing the Kaimai Ranges and giving birth to Raukawa in this area before carrying on through Te Poi and then along to the Waikato River, where they crossed and carried onto Rangīātea, where Tūrongo made a home for them (see Jones, 1945, 1995; and Te Hiko, 2010).

Māhinaarangi demonstrated great mana and foresight through her journey, thus securing lands for her descendants. Her hikoi also offers significant conceptual and physical maps

that speak to: mātauranga and tikanga pertaining to childbirth and mothering (see Simmonds, 2014); the relationships between tribes and between people and the land; intimate knowledges of diverse environments; and the endurance and courage to move through space to new lands, all done with a newborn baby. Māhinaarangi was a navigator and cartographer in her own right - mapping her story, history, language, tradition, ceremony, knowledge and therefore herself and her descendants into the land upon which her footsteps fell.

The reality is that today the locations of many of the places where our ancestors lived, journeyed, birthed and died are no longer accessible, including many of those associated with Māhinaarangi. We only know them through stories and not through a physical relationship. In questioning this we expose “the layers of colonial inscription in the land” (Hamm, 2015, p. 57). Laying claim to places through naming, renaming, surveying, mapping, privatising, and developing land is a key part of the colonial project. Further, patriarchal understandings of land, place and stories of exploration and navigation centre on the so-called “heroic episodes of geography”; the feats of men, based on assumptions that exploration and navigation “was limited to a few elite, white males” (Domosh, 1991, p. 97). It is difficult to see through the colonial and patriarchal geographies layered (often so thick they seem impermeable) on top of Indigenous lands, in this case Māori lands.

Our histories tell us that ancestors have been journeying for generations, be it on foot, or by waka, or guided by the stars or transcending across worlds. Retracing the journeys of our ancestors does more than simply memorialise their feats; rather, in placing our footprints along their pathways we reclaim and remake place in uniquely Indigenous and Māori ways. In my current research I seek to ‘walk the story’ to understand the physical pathways and conceptual lifeways that Māhinaarangi has left us. Through walking, being on and with land, we both take something of that place with us and leave something of ourselves there and thus are involved in (re)storying the place with our own footsteps.

It is through the land that time (and the spiral) collapses in on itself as we place our feet on the same lands where our ancestors have walked and our descendants will walk. The land then becomes the holder of knowledge, a conduit of memory, teacher and student, and perhaps land itself remembers what we may have forgotten. The journeys of our ancestors become a vehicle for the creation of decolonial cognitive and physical pathways – the act of coming together on land reinforces the web of relationships between each other, and the land. What is more, these places produce ways of thinking about being in the world. They tell us not simply who we were or are but who we can be and can prompt us to consider our vision for ourselves as individuals and as collectives.

Whakapapa, like Mana Wāhine, endures; it circles back on itself, taking us back to move forward. It is locked within our lands and our bodies. Leonie Pihama (2012) explains this beautifully:

*Whakapapa remains irrespective of our knowledge of it. Our tūpuna will always be our tūpuna. What is crucial is finding a way of ensuring that all of our people are able to access that knowledge in order to locate themselves and their relationships with their whānau, hapū and iwi. Therefore our agenda cannot be solely one of challenging modernist constructions of identity but it must encompass a process of reclaiming those knowledge bases that have been submerged through colonialism*

## AN END – OF SORTS

It is sometimes suggested that as Māori, or to be successful as Māori, we must walk in two worlds. As I see it, we exist in one world and we navigate that one world with the tools, knowledges and foresight that our ancestors gifted us. That one world, however, is imbued with messages and institutions and people intent on keeping Māori women and Mana Wāhine knowledges as 'Other'. We navigate this world with caution because we know these spaces (even spaces that are supposedly 'safe' or 'Māori spaces' like marae) are not free from the risk of neo-colonial white supremacist violence and oppression. We navigate a democracy that is governed by the majority perspective, we know in our bones and our blood that the majority is not us and therefore we are not and will not be represented accurately or for the beautiful and powerful diversity that we are as Māori women.

In 25 years, a lot has moved and shifted. Some 25 years between the lodging of the Mana Wāhine claim and it being considered by the tribunal, a lot has changed. There are new forms and expressions of Mana Wāhine, new leaders and innovators, and new platforms for resistance and resurgence. We now share stories about what it means to live as Māori in all our diversity, we see each other across board room tables, in positions of power, across a range of diverse industries and disciplines. We see and hear our language and culture in our writing, our art, our research, and in our children.

It is, however, a harsh but very real fact that I will never exist in a world that is not in some way shaped by the colonial, patriarchal and racist oppressions we know now. This article then, is a cautionary and challenging (albeit somewhat depressing) tale of the work that is still needed. The distance between theory and practice still seems vast. This is because the systems of power remain largely unchanged. We teach our children, and tell ourselves, that we are born of a long line of ancestors who have gifted us mana; then those children are launched into a world that is set up to tell them the opposite is true. We teach our girls and boys that who they are is important and they can succeed because of this (not in spite of it) – only for them to be told they are 'too staunch' 'too passionate' 'too spiritual/superstitious', 'non-compliant' or 'too subjective', as if the only people entitled to 'know' and 'succeed' exist only within the confines of rational disembodied masculine thought. Our children learn from a very young age about resilience, resistance and resurgence.

Mana Wāhine continues to be of central significance to the lives and lifeways of Māori women. Māori women are involved in a decolonising politics, whether knowingly or not. Māori women and whānau negotiate the complexities of the intersecting oppressions of colonialism and patriarchy (and often class-based and homophobic oppressions) daily. I have been overwhelmed by the commonality that the wāhine in this research share, in that despite multiple oppressions and hardships, they continue to uphold the mana of our tūpuna and atua wāhine. This is by no means an easy task, and this is not to suggest that these women even necessarily always do so knowingly or purposefully, but rather to assert, and perhaps more importantly celebrate, that Mana Wāhine exists and is embodied, enacted and performed in multiple ways.

This article is a small story that contributes to the bigger story of decolonisation and tino rangatiratanga. It is also intimately tied to my own personal story. It is entangled with my own reflections of how I come to know, feel and do Mana Wāhine and how I contribute to dismantling the structures of power that oppress. Reducing the gap between theory and practice, between knowing and doing, is part of the commitment to ensure that the issues and struggles that consume us as Māori women today will not consume the energies

of our daughters and sons and generations to come. There are many more stories to be told, written and performed. For all the words, however, in the end we must act. The words and stories must turn into work and the work must be turned into words; new stories with never-ending beginnings.

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# Poipoia Te Tamaiti Ki Te Ūkaipō: **Theorising Māori Motherhood**

Kirsten Gabel - Ngāti Kahu, Te Paatu, Te Rarawa



"If,  
you must be disciplined,  
Programmed,  
Time adjusted  
Sleep patterned  
And organised  
Then how, my darling *mokopuna*  
Will I sing you stories of your *tupuna*  
Whilst I cradle you in my arms  
Nestled  
Against my breast  
Breathing in harmony  
Through the night"  
(Kahu Koroheke Hotere, 2011, p. 70)

This paper proposes a theory of Māori motherhood that is entrenched in our traditions, our tikanga and our philosophies. It asserts that despite the best efforts of a colonising agenda, Māori women have sustained, resisted and, where needed, reclaimed our own mothering practices and philosophies. Our histories speak strongly of the maintenance of our traditions, our outright defiance of impositions of the state and our conscious efforts to reclaim spaces of authority and sovereignty in our maternities.

The poem above by Kahu Koroheke Hotere provides a succinct illustration of the premise of this paper - that *Māori maternities are a conflicted space for Māori women and whānau in contemporary New Zealand*. Within the poem, Hotere speaks firstly to the numerous impositions that Western mothering 'experts' have introduced into our communities. Secondly, she refers to the contradictions these interventions have with our traditional methods of mothering. Lastly, it is Hotere's positioning in the poem that also speaks hugely to this kaupapa – she is not the biological mother of the child, rather, the child is her *mokopuna* and yet her role in the child's life asserts the absolute nurturing, love and dedication of a maternal *ūkaipō* figure - Hotere's poem affirms the collective approach taken to the mothering of our children, that the maternal figures in a child's life are not limited to their biological mother, but rather, a Māori child may have many 'mothers'.

#### POIPOIA TE TAMAITI KI TE ŪKAIPŌ: THEORISING MĀORI MOTHERHOOD

Throughout the last few decades Maternal Theory has emerged internationally as a distinct academic subject, with scholarly discussions emerging from feminist studies, women's and gender studies, psychology and the social and health disciplines<sup>1</sup>. Adrienne Rich, in her 1976 book *"Of Woman Born"*, first theorised the place of mothers, mothering and motherhood in a Western context. Rich's commentary was considered a controversial and critical analysis on what she referred to as a 'constructed institution' of motherhood – According to Rich, "[There are] two meanings of motherhood...the potential relationship of any woman to her powers of reproduction and to children; and the institution, which aims at ensuring that that potential – and all women - shall remain under male control" (Rich, 2007 p. 7).

Central to Rich's theory of motherhood is the idea that the term *motherhood* is a patriarchal one – "the patriarchal institution of motherhood which is male-defined and controlled and is deeply oppressive to women while the word *mothering* refers to women's experiences of mothering which are female defined and centred" (O'Reilly, 2007, p. 794). Motherhood,

according to Rich, is an oppressive institution for women because it constructs women within a role of self-sacrificing servitude (Rich, 1976).

Thus, a key theme of early and subsequent Western maternal theorising is the idea that motherhood was a source of oppression, a “source of subordination” (Sanger, 1992, p. 20) and that expectations of mothers to perform in a constructed self-sacrificing model are patriarchal in origin. These theories are grounded in Western feminism and discourses to address the issues raised by maternal theorists who also largely draw from Western feminist theories.

These Western feminist-based foundations have permeated the discussions that have emerged within international maternal theory; however, the majority of this early theorising has focused primarily on the ‘plight’ of white middle-class mothers and has had little consideration of the mothering experiences of other cultural and social constructs.

### RESISTING WHITE IDEOLOGIES AND THEORIES OF MOTHERHOOD

Women of colour have ‘talked back’ to Western maternal theories and have sought to distinguish their experiences and ideologies from that of the dominant Western maternalism<sup>ii</sup>. While establishing their own discourse of mothering, these authors have also sought to deconstruct and critique the imposed ideologies of white motherhood. As Patricia Hill Collins has commented:

Existing feminist theories of motherhood have emerged in specific intellectual and political contexts. By assuming that social theory will be applicable regardless of social context, feminist scholars fail to realize that they themselves are rooted in specific locations, and that the specific contexts in which they are located provide the thought-models of how they interpret the world. While subsequent theories appear to be universal and objective, they actually are partial perspectives reflecting the white middle-class context in which their creators live. Large segments of experience, specifically those of women who are not white and middle-class have been excluded. (Hill Collins, 2007, p. 326)

Patricia Hill Collins asserts that mothers cannot be seen in isolation from their ethnic and social/economic backgrounds (Hill Collins, 2007, p. 312) and refers to the interconnected element of race, work and family experiences. She challenges the idea that mothers can be considered within a single context of motherhood, separate from their wider family, ethnic and economic situations.

Bell hooks (2007) is also critical of the feminist liberation movement, which she feels advocates the position that motherhood is a restrictive and denigrating experience and a source of oppression for women. She asserts that the home has been a site of ‘resistance’ for black women. Motherhood, according to hooks, is “one of the few interpersonal relationships where [black women] are affirmed and appreciated” (hooks, 2007, p. 146). ‘Homeplace’, the special domain of women, is something hooks considers integral to resisting the domination and oppression of Western society (hooks, 2007, pp. 266-273).

Indigenous women have also established a strong and distinctive voice theorising motherhood.<sup>iii</sup> Cree/Metis scholar Kim Anderson is particularly critical of Western maternal theories and asserts that traditional gendered forms of mothering are a source of empowerment for women:

Indigenous ideologies of motherhood are distinct from patriarchal western models of motherhood, and this means that strategies for empowered mothering are also distinct. Rather than seeking to break gendered patterns of family dynamics, Native women may seek to reintroduce gendered roles and responsibilities that come from a time when Native motherhood signified authority. Native mothers do not necessarily seek their status as autonomous individuals, and Native youth may not feel the need to individuate by separating from the maternal authority of their mothers, aunts and grandmas. (Anderson, 2007, p. 775)

Central to the development of indigenous motherhood theories is the identification of key aspects of the colonisation process that have directly affected indigenous motherhood. While our experiences as indigenous peoples are greatly diverse, the persistent and determined nature with which the colonisers sought to impose their own philosophies of motherhood and family structure upon indigenous peoples is a strong and recurring theme. In regards to mothering, indigenous peoples across the world do have a shared experience of colonisation, intervention and resistance.

For this reason it is important that we find spaces within which to share these discussions, to reflect on our experiences and to find connections and common space. D. Memee Lavell-Harvard and Jeanette Corbiere Lavell (2006) refer to the importance of sharing our indigenous mothering experiences and the value they have as a source of empowerment for indigenous and aboriginal mothers:

This expression of our experiences as Aboriginal mothers is of great importance not only because it provides alternatives to the oppressive model of motherhood provided, and promoted by the dominant patriarchal culture, but also because it provides a position outside of the dominant culture from which to critique. (Lavell-Harvard & Corbiere Lavell, 2006, p. 3)

Leesa Watego, an Australian Aboriginal academic, has also made significant commentary on the positioning of Aboriginal mothers and mothering. In a presentation to the MIRCI-A<sup>IV</sup> she asked “who tells the story of *Aboriginal mothers?*” Leesa asserts that the story of aboriginal mothers is “told to *Australia by White people – white academics, white teachers, white critics, white curators*” (Watego, 2011).

While indigenous theorists discuss the need to reclaim and revive traditional native motherhood ideologies, they also warn against the romanticizing of the situation. The evolution of our social and economic structures means that caution must be exercised when considering the place of traditional mothering ideologies in our society. “Taken uncritically, ideologies of Native mothering run the risk of heaping more responsibility on already overburdened mothers” (Anderson, 2007, p. 775). Patricia Hill Collins comments also:

Yet, like all deep cultural themes, the theme of motherwork for physical survival contains contradictory elements. On the one hand, racial ethnic women’s motherwork for individual and community survival has been essential. Without women’s motherwork, communities would not survive, and by definition women of color themselves would not survive. On the other hand this work often extracts a high cost for large numbers of women. There is a loss of individual autonomy and there is submersion of individual growth

for the benefit of the group. While this dimension of motherwork remains essential, the question of women doing more than their fair share of such work for individual and community development merits open debate. (Hill Collins, 2007, p. 315)

As can be seen from the above discussions, theorising our own Māori mothering experiences does not just form a discourse that we as Māori women can draw strength from; rather, it joins a global chorus of indigenous mothering ideologies that collectively challenge Western-based mothering ideologies while empowering indigenous women. Most importantly, it reasserts our voices and our authority to express our own viewpoints and perspectives on mothering – to tell our stories rather than having them told for us.

## MANA WAHINE AND MĀORI MOTHERS

Over the last few decades a strong mana wahine scholarship has emerged that has discussed in depth the marginalisation of the feminine in Te Ao Māori, and the importance of rediscovering and reclaiming knowledges pertaining to our traditional roles and status in society.<sup>9</sup> Mana Wahine theory has largely focused on exploring the effects that colonisation, the introduction of Christianity and the imposition of Euro-Western socio-legal values have had on Māori women. In terms of how our roles in society have altered, Mana Wahine theories explore the overall undermining of the position of Māori women and the marginalisation of our roles within society. Leonie Pihama, a key commentator in this area of scholarship, comments “Colonisation has had a major impact on the position of Māori women. Ideologies of gender and race have interacted in complex ways to corrupt many of the stories, values, beliefs and practises that are linked to Māori women”. (Pihama, 1994, p. 34).

Much of the focus of this work on mana wahine theorising has therefore been on the effect of colonisation on our political standing and leadership roles. This paper, however, looks to explore a further aspect of our positioning in society that has largely remained invisible – our traditional and contemporary values of mothering, our maternal roles as women and the positioning of Māori women within the institution of motherhood.

## ŪKAIPŌ - THE NIGHT-FEEDING BREAST

A Māori theory of motherhood can be sourced within our traditional cosmologies; the stories of our atua and the stories of our ancestors. There are many versions of these stories that not only reflect the diversity amongst our iwi and whanau, but also reflect a comprehensive attack by the colonising written world of Western society. However, these stories have survived; the voices that emerge from them now are reflective of our conscious decisions to speak to the stories of our ancestors from within our own individual and collective realms of mātauranga. And within the diversities that exist, there are also strong universal themes that emerge with the retelling of our stories, and these in particular provide us with consistent messages regarding Māori maternities.

*Ūkaipō* is a most significant and profound concept consistently reflected in these stories. Literally referring to “the night-feeding breast”, Ūkaipō is reflective of a person’s everlasting connection with the maternal (both in the physical and spiritual realm); a person will always be drawn back and return to the ‘night-feeding breast’ of the mother. In life this occurs in a physical manner with the relationship between mother and child, and in death this also occurs with the return to Papatūānuku, the eternal mother from whom all humankind originates.

Our cosmologies reinforce the importance of ūkaipō, the prominence of the maternal figure in the creation of the world, in the creation of humankind and in the finality of death; all involve the reiteration of the power of the maternal body and the recurring theme of returning to the night-feeding breast. Māori maternities reinforced the spiritual underpinnings of ūkaipō by placing significance and authority on the role of the maternal – in both life and death.

This spiritual foundation of our maternities is also reflected further in our physical everyday traditions and in particular in the esteem with which mothers were held in society as bearers of the next generation. Key terms denote further the significance of the maternal figure in Māori society such as *whare tangata*, *whenua*, *atua*, *hapu*, and *whānau*; terms of significance in the Māori world that are inexplicitly intertwined with the prestige and sanctity of the maternal.

Our customary Māori maternities also reflect a supportive and collective approach to the mothering of children, with the involvement of wider family members and especially grandparents. The mothering of children was a role undertaken by many within the collective group and was not just restricted to the biological mothers of children – all women are mothers regardless of whether they physically gave birth to children. ‘Mothering’ did not just involve the care of children but also other important maternal roles within the wider community, as leaders, teachers, keepers of tribal knowledges and within spiritual and formal ceremonies.

Importantly, our *tikanga* affirms the sanctity of the Māori maternal body; our traditions view the maternal body as a source of eternal power and recognise a cyclical system of rebirth and renewal through *te awa atua* – menstruation, and the *tapu* and sacredness accorded to the maternal body during pregnancy and birth. The respect accorded to the Māori maternal body is not just of practical significance but rather reflected a recognition of the profound spiritual significance of the female body in traversing the spiritual boundaries and in bringing life into the world from *Te Pō* (the realm of darkness) to *te ao mārama* (the realm of light).

## COLONISING MĀORI MATERNITIES

The manner in which Māori mothers were targeted in the colonisation process involved a deliberate and sustained attack on our traditional maternities. Colonisers sought to impose their own ideologies, principles and practices of motherhood upon Māori women and Māori *whānau*. Māori mothers were targeted as entities within Māori society who could be civilised and moulded into European citizens (Gabel, 2013, p. 98).

The colonisation of traditional Māori maternities involved a comprehensive attack on maternal customs and, most devastatingly, a sustained undermining of the spiritual underpinnings of our maternities through the introduction of Christian values. A significant devaluing of the feminine in our traditional spiritualities comprehensively destabilised the spiritual significance of ūkaipō and *whare tangata*, which in turn denigrated our maternal positioning and value (Yates-Smith, 1998; Gabel, 2013, p. 98).

The imposition of patriarchy and the introduction of the nuclear family mould also contributed to an overall degrading of the maternal in Māori society, by undermining the position of the maternal within the *whānau* network while simultaneously promoting the superiority and authority of men. Māori *whānau* were the target of colonisation through the

imposition of individualised integration and assimilation policies that sought to impose a nuclear family structure and to invest primary caregiving responsibility in women. This was further reinforced by successive legislative and policy initiatives of the state. (Gabel, 2013; Mikaere, 2003).

A new system of education was introduced - and in many instances forcibly imposed upon Māori children (Gabel, 2013, p. 118), which separated children from their traditional educational and social environments within their wider whānau, and instead placed them under the authority of state-sanctioned teachers and missionaries, who enforced Western-based pedagogies and curriculums (Simon, Smith & Cram, 2001). A significant role of these schools was the assimilation of Māori children, with their native language a specific target of extermination (Simon, Smith & Cram, 2001).

The destruction of traditional land tenure further reinforced the individualisation of Māori whānau, isolating Māori mothers from their traditional support networks, and creating and increasing reliance on state-based support programmes. Western mothering practices were introduced and in many cases imposed on Māori mothers, and the seclusion that characterised the nuclear family structure isolated Māori mothers from their traditional family support networks and traditional mothercraft practices, creating a reliance on state support in their new roles as mothers. This support came in the form of prescriptive, scientifically based mothercraft practices, enforced by state-sanctioned health practitioners and community workers. Failure to adhere to the strict instructions of Western mothercraft resulted in Māori mothers being subjected to more and more intervention, scrutiny and marginalisation. (Gabel, 2013, pp. 128-132).

Western science strongly contradicted the sanctity of the Māori maternal body and instead promoted a medicalised approach to the pregnancy and birthing experiences of Māori women. Māori birthing practices came under attack with the introduction of specific legislation that criminalised tohunga who assisted women in birth. Māori women were increasingly persuaded to give birth in hospitals under the scrutiny of Pākehā male doctors and were discouraged from breastfeeding their children in the interests of 'hygiene' (Harte, 2001; Simmonds, 2011; Gabel, 2019, p. 23).

The colonising of Māori maternities has been effective in constructing a conflicted space for Māori women and whānau. While our Pākehā counterparts navigate the challenges of motherhood in a society that is structurally favoured for their own cultural constructs, Māori mothers on the other hand are caught between the Western and Māori maternal realms. The inherent need of Māori whānau to follow the maternal traditions of our tupuna, whilst attempting to do so within a society that has consistently moved to undermine those traditions, has meant that Māori mothers are engaged in a perpetual process of resistance, reclamation and survival.

## TINO RANGATIRATANGA – RESISTANCE AND RECLAMATION

*By living our self-determination as vital women, we become powerful catalysts allowing our nations to rise through state-prescribed agendas and to carry out pre-conquest visions of self-determination into reality. Reclaiming indigenous traditions of pregnancy, birth, and mothering will enable our children to lead our resurgence as Indigenous peoples, to rise up and rebel against colonialism in all its forms, to dream independence, to dance to nationhood. (Leanne Simpson, 2006, p. 32)*

Despite the impositions of Western patriarchy on our society, Māori women have continued to take leading roles in our communities and to challenge state sanctioned ideologies that undermine this. Māori women have been at the forefront of many of our key activities of resistance over the years, a frontline positionality that has consistently challenged Euro-Western notions of the role of women in society. This assertion of mana wahine has not been without difficulty; it has required a considerable amount of energy invested into conscious raising activities. Reasserting the authority and prestige of the Māori maternal figure requires deliberate actions that disrupt the patriarchal hegemonies that have been constructed within our society.

Our experiences of mothering – the struggles, challenges and successes on a daily basis – are significantly diverse and can exist in a number of different whānau formations. The experiences of many of our mothers who are mothering their children alone are diverse, as are the experiences of our mothers who are mothering within lesbian relationships. Many mothers are isolated in their mothering journeys; others are immersed in extended whānau networks. Regardless of these diversities amongst us, what can be said about our collective experiences of our mothering journeys as Māori is that they reflect a common theme of state intervention that has recurrently compelled us to engage in actions of resistance.

The process of resisting Western maternal impositions is undertaken by many women and whānau, in many different forms and using many different methods and forums. Asserting tino rangatiratanga within the realm of Māori maternities therefore may take the form of protest and placards, political activism and other major activities. But it is also to be found in the simple everyday interactions we have with our children, whānau and communities. It is found in the pages of books and journals and theses that Māori women are increasingly using to challenge the impositions of the state, while simultaneously challenging the constraints of Western academia. It is found on an everyday scale within our educational institutions, hospitals, community and health organisations, and on our marae. Māori women are increasingly asserting their tino rangatiratanga and their right to mother in a way that gives authority and recognition to our own mothering traditions and tikanga.

As Lina Sunseri, an Oneida Nation scholar, has asserted; the very act of mothering within indigenous societies can be seen in itself to be an act of resistance against the state:

Oneida women see mothering as a political act, as a way to participate in the sustainability of the self and the community. They do so by bearing and nurturing their own children, taking care of others' children, and providing for the whole community, in order to resist forms of racial discrimination and cultural genocide. (Sunseri, 2008, p. 23)

Colonisation is a never-ending process; our maternities and our maternal traditions continue to be subjected to the scrutiny and marginalisation of the state. The maternal spaces that we occupy, that we reclaim and that we construct for ourselves, will always be under threat of new forms of colonisation. As Ani Mikaere has commented “..the crown is always searching for ways to enter our space...The consummate predator, it lurks constantly at the margins, watching and waiting for any opportunity to invade and occupy” (Mikaere, 2011, p. 159).

Resistance is therefore a present reality for many Māori mothers. Our maternities represent a colonised space within which we will always find ourselves under threat of scrutiny, marginalisation and intrusion, but as Patricia Monture-Angus also once asserted; “Change

will come not from institutions but from the people. . .(b)eing self-determining is simply about the way you choose to live your life every day” (Monture-Angus, 1999, p. 159).

Our resistances, our endurances, our resiliencies, our actions of transformation that we undertake as mothers within our whānau are significant regardless of whether they involve small or large actions, whether they are undertaken as large iwi collectives or as individuals; they constitute conscious actions that generate ‘ripples of change’. It is these ripples of change that reverberate through our lives and have ever-lasting impact on our future generations.

Tino rangatiratanga for us as Māori mothers can simply involve our everyday actions as mothers. Our everyday survival, resilience and persistence as Māori mothers is in itself a marker of our resistance. Tino rangatiratanga therefore is the language that we speak to our children, it is the names we bestow upon them, the songs we sing to them, the whānau and the individuals that we surround them with, the tikanga we immerse them in, the educational experiences we choose for them. Tino rangatiratanga involves the decisions we make around our birthing experiences, the tikanga we follow during our pregnancies and during our mate marama. It is the choices we make every day, whether consciously or subconsciously. We should not underestimate the impact of these everyday actions on our children and more importantly on our future generations.

Many of our resistances are spaces in our everyday lives where we make choices; choices to follow an alternative pathway to that which the state/Pākehā have set out for us; choices to follow these paths regardless of whether they are scientifically ordained, state funded or follow the norms of the society that we live in. For many, there are aspects of our maternities and of our journeys as mothers that continue to be less than empowering spaces, where our daily lives involve situations of risk, facing microaggression, violence, hardship, poverty, and struggle. These are spaces within which our focus as mothers is not in the first instance *resistance* but in a much more realistic sense *survival*; this in itself is an act of tino rangatiratanga and should not be undervalued.

Despite the ongoing attack on our maternal traditions, Māori maternities have endured, and have found new spaces of expression and empowerment within *te ao hurihuri nei*. The resistance to the ongoing intrusions of Western maternal ideologies has been a continual process that has stemmed from the moment Pākehā arrived on our shores. Māori mothers have been engaged in actions of resistance, reclamation and reassertion for centuries. Naomi Simmonds has commented:

The potential for reclaiming Māori maternities is transformative and empowering. The challenge lies in getting to a place where Māori and Indigenous knowledges and practices are not just strands woven into our experiences, but they are the foundations of it. (Simmonds, 2017, p. 124)

Māori women have continued to sustain their positionality as ūkaipō, of wharetangata and hold fast to the prestige and authority that accompanies it. The maternal roles of Māori women within whānau and within their wider communities continue to emulate Papatuanuku, the eternal earth mother from whom all descend. Her prominence within Māori society continues to be a significant and defining factor of our maternities. Māori women draw strength from her examples and in particular continue to occupy positions of authority and leadership in te ao Māori. (Yates-Smith, 1998; Simmonds, 2009)

Throughout the colonisation experience, Māori mothers have found spaces within which to assert and, where necessary, to reclaim the sanctity and prestige accorded to their maternal bodies. More recently this has taken the form of deliberate and conscious efforts to reclaim birthing practices and the rongoa, karakia and ceremonies that accompany these events (Simmonds, 2014, 2017; Gabel, 2013).

Māori mothers resist further by continuing to have children, in the face of negative and contradictory advice of the state and despite specific policy initiatives intended to reduce birth rates. Māori women continue to have children at a higher rate than other women in New Zealand, to begin having children at a younger age and to birth more successfully with significantly lower rates of medical intervention. (Gabel, 2013, p. 190).

Despite the contradictory legislative provisions, Māori whānau continue to engage in collective practices to raise their children. Grandparents in particular take an active role in the raising of their mokopuna, as do other relatives. Mothering in this context is not a task reserved solely for women but requires the collective the efforts of the entire whānau.

The reclamation of our language has also been a key aspect of our resistance to Western maternal impositions, allowing us to communicate key values, morals and life messages to our children. The role of the Kōhanga Reo movement in facilitating resurgence in te reo speakers, as well as providing a space within society for the expression of Māori maternities, has been paramount. Kōhanga Reo continue to be significant sites of resistance for Māori maternities, providing holistically Māori space within which Māori whānau can access, practise and learn culturally grounded and appropriate maternal practices. (Gabel, 2013, pp. 169-171).

These resistances are not without their challenges. By virtue of the fact that they often involve an outward defiance of the authority of state-sanctioned, medical and scientifically proven policies and the objectives of the state, these actions and sites of resistance themselves become targets of further intervention. Māori maternities will eternally be a site within which Māori women will continually have to resist new forms of colonisation. This means that contemporary Māori maternities are a conflicted space for Māori women and whānau today. Māori mothers in particular are caught in the contradictions of this, having to navigate the challenges of mothering in a way that is culturally and spiritually relevant, while at the same time withstanding the constant intervention and impositions of the state. Despite this, Māori maternities are a significant site of resistance and decolonisation and continue to provide a space of empowerment for Māori whānau in contemporary times.

## KUPU WHAKAMUTUNGA

It is hoped this discussion will be of some benefit to Māori whānau and in particular Māori mothers who are essentially caught in the contradictions of a colonised reality; that is, navigating dual spaces of maternities in New Zealand. This paper has sought to provide an alternative viewpoint to some of the consistent voices we hear as Māori mothers. In light of the emergence of international maternal theory and especially indigenous maternal theories, it is important to ensure that we create space within our society to 'tell our own story of motherhood'. This is to further assert that we are not to be defined or discussed by the experiences of non-Māori, and that we are also not be constructed on the margins of their theories, but rather that we affirm our own kaupapa Māori grounded spaces from which to philosophise about our own experiences.

Māori maternities differ greatly from Western maternities. We acknowledge and celebrate our gendered roles within our societies, and the special and integral role that the maternal plays in all aspects of our lives. Mothers hold special significance within our iwi, our hapu and our whānau, as mothers, as leaders, as keepers/teachers of important knowledges and – most importantly – as carriers of the next generation. These maternal roles construct us within a most powerful positioning in Te Ao Māori, and yet these same roles are not so respected within the Western world.

It is up to us as women, and as whānau, to reassert our traditional maternal standing within our communities. Such reassertion can take many forms and may range from the smallest of actions within our own families to larger actions in challenging existing state constructions. Our maternities are a key site of resistance for Māori communities and provide significant spaces of empowerment and transformation action.

The title of this paper, *“Poipoia te tamaiti ki te ūkaipō”*, is based on a whakatauki that was recounted to me as a first-time mother a few years ago. The whakatauki reinforces metaphorically the connections between mother and child, but it was also explained to me as a practical method for calming an unsettled baby – *poipoia te tamaiti ki te ūkaipō*, that is, to hold the child so that they are facing in the direction of their tūrangawaewae – their physical ūkaipō. This resonated with me as thinking back I had often done this subconsciously with my son when he was unsettled, walking around my back yard or sitting on the back porch of my house which faces to the North, to our tūrangawaewae and to our physical ‘ūkaipō’.

Despite the interruption that has occurred within our maternities, this whakatauki struck me as a significant piece of traditional mothercraft that has survived the onslaught of Western maternal impositions. It captures a strong philosophy of our Māori maternities – that when we are in need, when we are in a period of unsettlement or conflict, we must remember to turn to our ūkaipō - to our physical and spiritual mothers, to our motherlands, to Papatūānuku - for sustenance and guidance and for restoration of soul and body. This is not to say, however, that these maternal roles in our society exist in a mode of selflessness and endless giving, but rather that we must remember to also nurture our mothers in return. Given the appropriate respect and authority, our ūkaipō are an eternal source of wisdom, love, guidance and sustenance - metaphorically, spiritually and physically.

*Kia tūtuki ai te kōrero*

*Poipoia te tamaiti ki te ūkaipō*

## Notes

- i See for example: O'Reilly, A (Ed) (2007), Rich A (1976)
- ii See for example: Collins, P (2007); bell hooks (2007)
- iii See for example: Lavell-Harvard, D & Corbiere Lavell, J (2006); Cull, R (2006); Anderson, K. (2000, 2007, 2011); Sunseri, L (2008); Simpson, L (2006).
- iv MIRCI-A is the Australian branch of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community involvement.
- v See for example: Pihama (1994, 2001), Mikaere (2003); Smith, L.T. (1997) Simmonds, N. (2009, 2014) Hutchings, J. (2002) Grace & Kahukiwa (1984); Irwin, K. (1992); Jenkins, K. (1992); Yates-Smith, A. (2003); and the Te Pua publications (1991-93).

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# Kapohia Ngā Taonga ā Kui Mā:

**Liberty from the Theft of Our Matrilineal Names**

Joeliee Seed-Pihama - Te Ātiawa, Taranaki, Ngāruahine, Waikato



In 1999, Linda Tuhiwai Smith outlined in her seminal book, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, twenty-five Indigenous projects she regarded as critical research areas for the survival of our peoples and in our struggle for self-determination.<sup>1</sup> One of the research projects she listed was 'Naming'. Some twenty years later, I find myself in the post-doctoral stage of my career, researching the importance of Māori personal names in our emancipation from colonial hegemony and the power of our names as a healing intervention for our language trauma. As I reflect on the strength of Linda's vision, work, and mentorship in foreseeing and creating space for important sites of decolonisation, I also reflect on the many other wāhine, within and outside of this book, who have made space, led, battled, stood, advocated, withstood and outright fought – for other women. Mana wāhine work has, without a doubt, been one of the single most important sites of struggle for the survival and flourishing of Māori women and therefore of our whānau.

Naming is an important site of resistance for Māori women and as Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) explains, it is one of the projects integral to remembering and reconnecting to our culture, to our ways of seeing and being:

*This involves the renaming of the landscape and the world around us using the original indigenous names. Naming of places and people with traditional names is an excellent way of remembering and storing our histories. Many children with traditional names literally have their histories stored in their names. Naming is also a way of remembering connections and relationships between people, communities, tribes and the physical environment. (p. 157)*

A Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar, artist and writer, Leanne Simpson (2008), has written extensively on Indigenous thought and resurgence, and argues: "*The problem we have inherited in this generation is our disconnection from what it is to be Indigenous*" (p. 9). In understanding how colonisation has disconnected us from our names and naming practices, it is pivotal that we unravel the impact of colonial institutions and ideologies because in doing so, we reveal the potential for re-connection and healing.

This article is based on my doctoral research, which examined the importance of Māori personal names and naming practices for Māori through the lens of a Taranaki whānau. In this thesis, I argue that the whānau unit is a bastion of resistance, reclamation and resurgence for our personal names, which are expressions of our language, belonging and identity. After hearing, reading and critically analysing the kōrero ingoa (naming stories) of whānau participants (Seed-Pihama, 2017) it became apparent that the attempted erasure of our ingoa, as part of the colonial project, was a story that needed to be told to fill in some hidden or forgotten gaps in our present-day knowledge. In the aforementioned kōrero ingoa, themes of resistance, reclamation and resurgence are revealed and shared; however, there were also silences, things unsaid or unknown. These 'forgotten' stories of oppression, violence and denial are integral to understanding the cultural hegemony that has become internalised amongst our people and manifested in the denial of our ingoa tangata (personal names); in particular, those of our matrilineal whakapapa. In this article, I seek to reveal the attempted erasure of our ingoa wāhine and thereby discuss the politics of naming (Alia, 2007).

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1 The te reo Māori part of the title of this article is taken from a waiata I grew up with about a Māori language revitalisation programme called Te Ataarangi. The specific line "kapohia ngā taonga ā Kui mā" instructs my generation to snatch up the treasures of our ancestresses.

In what follows, several colonial ideologies and mechanisms, such as baptism, marriage and gender, will be critically analysed to highlight the denial and denigration of our ingoa tangata and our ingoa wāhine. Unravelling ideologies of colonialism such as race and gender is pivotal in understanding how colonisation has 'marked' our bodies in foreign ways with new names, and denied us our mother's names. The institution of religion introduced baptisms and christenings, which enforced a uniquely British and Christian and, therefore, patronymic nomenclature of surnames - a concept foreign to our people in pre-colonial times. This article concludes with a focus on the reclamation of our matrilineal names from the suffocation of colonial systems of naming and claiming our women as the property of both man and god.

## BEING RENAMED IS VIOLENT

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) argues the principle of humanity and its relationship to the project of colonisation. The dualism of civilised vs uncivilised is premised on the idea that certain 'races', such as Māori, are unable to use our intellect to create, imagine or develop - that we are not entirely, or even partially, human. Prior to the colonisation of Aotearoa, our British colonisers had carefully refined the tools and instruments of their colonial and oppressive project many times over throughout their invasion of several other Indigenous lands across the globe. Aotearoa was the last large and habitable country to be colonised by the British and as such, the British brought with them several violent and racist beliefs and attitudes toward Indigenous people, which they then imposed on us (L. T. Smith, 1999). Those profoundly violent ideologies and beliefs were firmly entrenched in our settlers even before they had laid eyes on us or our whenua (land); the trauma and abuse they then inflicted with those colonial weapons still reverberates across generations. As Rawiri Taonui (2010) elucidates:

*We rarely recognize that colonization and its concomitant intergenerational impacts constitute violence: colonization is the application of anger upon vulnerable peoples. This violence has a reciprocal reaction within the societies upon which it is inflicted: cultural alienation, forced assimilation, and cumulative marginalization create anger in indigenous societies. Where this anger is not understood, it becomes internalized within the colonized society and inverts upon itself. (p. 199)*

One of the intergenerational impacts of colonisation, which contributes to the anger Rawiri Taonui illuminates, originates from being renamed. Whether this anger arises from the renaming of our whenua (land), our whanaunga (relatives) o te taiao (of the environment) or by being personally renamed by a teacher who can't pronounce your tupuna (ancestral) name, or perhaps, by not being given a Māori name at all because of how society might treat it and you. This is not an anger that only Māori feel, it is a feeling known to Indigenous peoples, from across the four winds, who have been alienated, forced to assimilate and subsequently marginalised on their own land. Ngūgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) argues further that there is a specific anger created by colonisation and highlights our struggle and resistance against that anger from both inside ourselves and in the outside world:

*The oppressed and the exploited of the earth maintain their defiance: liberty from theft. But the biggest weapon wielded and actually daily unleashed by imperialism against that collective defiance is the cultural bomb. The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages,*

*in their environment, in their heritage to struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. (p. 3)*

## HE RAU RENGARENGA: RECLAIMING OURSELVES, ONE NAME AT A TIME

Ruakere Hond, a Taranaki language scholar, explains that the Rengarenga is a type of medicinal plant given when a patient is on their deathbed (Walker, 2015). Its healing power is strong and if a patient did not recover after being given Rengarenga, they would never recover. It is also a term used in an old waiata of my people, of Parihaka,<sup>2</sup> which refers to the health and strength they found in the raukura (a feather plume) as a physical representation of our commitment to active resistance, self-sustainability, and self-governance in the face of colonial military violence, theft and invasion. I argue here that reclamation, namely the reclamation of our names, has a healing power not dissimilar to the 'Rengarenga'. Furthermore, the reclamation of our names is fundamental in our struggle for resurgence as a people. Indigenous peoples around the world have been engaged in the struggle to reclaim Indigenous culture, ways of living, seeing and being since the inception of colonialism. Reclamation has become an essential part of our decolonisation and resistance and the reclamation of our names is an integral step on that journey. As Christi Belcourt, a Métis artist and scholar, states:

*My own attempts at reclaiming are done one name and one word at a time... I'm trying as hard as I can to learn the language. One by one, I am trying to learn the original names of places around me and speak their names out into words. Awakening into sounds and songs my respect for the places of my ancestors and the sacred ground I walk on. (Belcourt, Dec 31, 2013)*

Leonie Pihama (2001), in her PhD thesis, also remarks on the importance of names regarding Māori cultural reclamation and self-determination, stating that:

*The loss of our tūpuna names in my generation was a part of the overall selection process that is a part of assimilation. The impact of that continues, of all of my nieces and nephews only two carry Māori first names. It has been for me, a conscious decision that my two sons carry the names of their direct tūpuna, as reclaiming our names is a part of reclaiming control over our lives. (p. 7)*

## IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

The attempted erasure of our names actually begins much earlier than colonisation itself and finds its roots in the time of the 'great' civilising mission. The missionisation of Māori required missionaries to travel here as representatives of their religions to proselytise us, and save us from certain hell by conversion to Christianity (Steeds, 1999). To 'kill the savage and save the man', meant the imposition of colonial ideologies of race, gender, and religion. Their Christian ideologies of superiority based on a supposed 'relationship' with God and his son, Jesus Christ, deemed any other religion or spirituality inferior, wrong and, therefore, sinful (Smith, 1992; Pihama, 1993). Importantly, Leonie Pihama (2001) argues that these imported ideologies informed the coloniser's whole approach toward colonisation. The assumed superiority of these ideologies was then legalised, proselytised and taught to our own tamariki (children) through institutions such as schools, land court and the church.

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2 Parihaka is a Māori settlement located halfway between the base of the Taranaki mountain and the west coast of Te Ika a Māui, the North Island of Aotearoa/ New Zealand.

Māori were systematically and intentionally renamed with English or transliterated names through colonial practices such as baptism. Baptisms and Christenings as practices of Christianity have impacted our ingoa in very specific ways. One of the major tenets of precolonial naming is the concept of our ingoa being transitory, as being able to be changed as we develop, grow as our circumstances and context change and thereby inform and transform our realities and sense of self. For many, Baptism irrevocably erased this concept from our consciousness, and in its place, a new system of naming was established; a system of naming that introduced surnames and thereby permanently fixed what were often colonial names, to our descendants, and to us, for generations to come. What is more, being christened or baptised required the taking up of a biblical name and although there are many stories of resistance, baptismal names persist to the present day across and in all three spaces of first, middle and last names. The first baptism occurred on September 14th, 1825 for a dying man named Rangi who was baptised Christian Rangi (Davis, 1907). A befitting name for the first recorded baptism. This baptism was to be the first of many, as what soon followed was a rush of baptisms performed by missionaries who desperately wanted to save us from our unholy and savage religion and culture. Of utmost importance to them was to ensure our delivery unto their god and into their assumed 'superior' religious system whereby non-believers went to hell. As an example of how swiftly baptisms gained momentum, in 1858, in Kirikiriroa, now more widely known as Hamilton, 20 adults and 27 children were baptised in just one day, (Russel, 1858).

Many Māori chose or were given new baptismal names by the Missionary responsible for their baptism. However, even if offered the right to choose, they were restricted to names deemed appropriate. A missionary named Henry Williams (1912) noted his opinion of our naming protocols and remarked on their 'primitive' nature. Missionaries such as Williams held an unshakeable belief in the superiority of their race, religion, and nomenclature. He even goes so far as to criticise and hold himself above the Semitic people of his very own bible:

*Any one acquainted with Bible history will be struck by the similarity of the Māori customs in respect of names to those recorded of the ancient Semitic race, the inference being not that the Māoris are Semitic by descent, but that such customs are appropriate to a primitive people at a certain stage of their development. (p. 358)*

Edward Jerningham Wakefield, son of Edward Gibbon Wakefield, a major driving force behind the colonisation of Aotearoa, claimed in his account of 'Adventure in New Zealand', that the maintenance of the Māori language in Baptismal names through the use of 'transmogrified' or transliterated names was absurd. Moreover, he suggested that if they were not going to give Māori individuals English names for the purposes of teaching us to read and to write, then they should have just given us native names to use (as though we didn't already have names or literacy before the British invaded our land). He also goes on to describe Te Reo Māori as being a poor language, which possesses few words and expresses abstract ideas (Wakefield, 1845). This again exemplifies the attitude Pākehā explorers and settlers had toward our language and our personal names at the time.

The names given or chosen after baptism were recorded by missionaries in baptismal or missionary registers. These registers varied from missionary to missionary; therefore, some registers record our traditional names, and others do not. This has made it difficult for descendants to trace their pre-colonial ancestors in some cases. There is recorded suspicion

amongst Taranaki people of the motives behind the recording of baptismal names in registers. A tupuna named Reweti had his words translated into English and recorded in the Taranaki Herald, a local newspaper, where he is quoted as saying:

*Mr. Riemenschneider came and baptised their children, and administered the sacrament to their elders, and wrote all their names in a book; and for what? That their Governor might know how few they were, and make war upon them. His hair would not be grey before he saw us all swimming away in the sea, leaving the whole land to his King. ("Native Intelligence," 1862, line, 19)*

In particular, Missionaries favoured the system of patrilineal nomenclature from their homelands and imposed that system upon Māori, who traditionally had a fluid naming system, with our names being changed and added to throughout our lives. Baptism was the colonial weapon of choice to implement their system. Missionaries are recorded as giving not only Māori biblical or missionary names, but of also taking our traditional names and/or the names of our husbands and fathers and registering those as our surnames. Furthermore, in some cases, a baptismal name consisted of christian and surnames in English, which were transliterated into Māori. These surnames are often still worn by descendants of this tūpuna and are in many cases considered to be Māori names, despite their English and religious origins.

Others have also written of Māori taking on transliterations of prominent English family surnames in their area as baptismal names. Names such as Parana (Brummer), Retimana (Richmond), Tapata (Stafford), Tamihana (Thompson), and Tipene (Stevens) are all common examples, which are still prevalent today. This naming practice, in particular, has affected Māori, who in endeavouring to track our whakapapa have been faced with a lack of recorded information of the Māori names of their tūpuna prior to baptism. This became a particular problem as ancestors were given baptismal names using the surnames of families they did not share any whakapapa connection with (Mitchell & Mitchell, 2007). Another phenomenon that has impacted some whānau is when siblings took different tupuna names as their last names. This has meant that several branches of the same whānau have ended up with different surnames. In my own whānau, we have a similar scenario with Kupe, Wharehoka, and Okeroa being different surnames taken up by siblings. The superimposition of a heteropatriarchal onomastic system such as that of the British on Māori is made very clear when one is reminded that neither taking up of a surname nor the taking on of a man's name upon marriage were part of a precolonial understanding of *tapa ingoa* (naming) in Aotearoa.

#### OUR WĀHINE HAVE BEEN CLAIMED AS PROPERTY, AND OUR TĀNE AS POSSESSORS.

Marriage as an institution of religion is responsible for the perpetuation of colonial naming systems as begun by Baptism. Through marriage, our wāhine were subjected to the colonial ideologies of gender and of law; that women are the property of their husbands. This was clearly not the case in pre-colonial times (Mikaere, 1994). Rangimarie Rose Pere reminds us, in her recollections of childhood, that her elders set the example of men and women respecting and supporting each other, and working alongside one another. She considers her Māori ancestresses, prior to the impact of Christianity, to have been extremely liberated in comparison to her English ancestresses. She also points out that Māori women were not regarded as chattels or possessions, that they retained their own names upon marriage, and that their children were free to identify with the kinship group of either or both parents. Additionally, she states, that they dressed in similar garments to the men,

and that conception was not associated with sin or childbearing with punishment and suffering. Rather, those aspects were seen as uplifting and a regular part of life (Pere, 1987). Makereti Papakura (1938) supports Pere's recollections in her own, where she states that upon marriage both men and women retained their original names and that each child had their own name as well - not taking on the name of either of their parents.

Hanara Arnold Reedy offered the following kōrero about Ngāti Porou, an iwi located on the east coast of Aotearoa, asserting that for them it was common for their children to be known by their mother's names as is evidenced by the name of one of our most illustrious tupuna, named Māui tikitiki a Taranga (Mahuika, 1973). Therefore, the introduction of marriage in the Pākehā sense and the motivations that were set in place to ensure Māori participated in this religious and legal custom were devastating not only for our names in terms of the importance of female names and names from our mothers' whakapapa but for our whole whānau. Marriage was integral to the creation of the nuclear family by denying whānau members their rights to not only their daughters but also our rights to nieces and nephews as our tamariki, in line with our tikanga of raising tamariki within the collective.

One of the integral ways in which we connected and were reconnected to our mothers was disordered and in some cases severed by the superimposition of colonial naming practices such as that of patrilineal surnames. This is argued as the theft of matrilineal descent by Haunani-Kay Trask, a Hawaiian activist and academic. She also highlights the commonality of this issue for other Indigenous peoples living in a colonial context as follows:

*Naming has been, for many of us, a theft of matrilineal descent by Western patriarchal descent. In the case of Hawaiians, legal imposition of Christian, English, and patrilineal names meant the loss of our ancestral names. This imposed system greatly weakened and, in some areas, destroyed our indigenous practice of genealogical naming. (Trask, 1999, p. 104)*

Surnames, in particular, were originally part of a medieval property structure, which transferred all property to the husband upon marriage and thereby contributed to the widespread use of paternal surnames contemporarily (Ross, 2013). Being renamed in the colonial image has marked us as members of the Empire and therefore as contributors to its expansion and wealth. Renaming us collected a labour force for them and provided them the opportunity and capacity to expand their inventory of possessions and power.

Surnames, in particular, originate from heteropatriarchy and represent its symbolic power over Indigenous peoples who have been subjugated by that system of ownership, in which women are the property of their husbands and thereby must take his identity as their own in the form of his surname. Our wāhine have been claimed as property, and our tāne have been claimed as possessors, neither of which were concepts known to us in precolonial times, as they are not present in our pūrākau or any other modes of intergenerational transmission.

## GENDERISING OF OUR NAMES

Of particular importance to this article, and to our mātauranga in general, is the denial of our women and their mana by predominately white, male ethnographers in early colonial recordings. Most of the early colonial ethnographers were male and enforced their patriarchy in their research and writing. Therefore, as they did not see women as valid knowledge holders, they did not speak to them. Their assumption was that all knowledge

belonged to and was controlled by men (Irwin, 1992; Mikaere, 2003; T. Smith, 2000). In my doctoral research, I engaged with a Mana Wahine analysis of several texts. I sought to reveal the importance of women in the pūrākau I found that mentioned naming in some way. Despite the difficulty of not being able to obtain primary sources written by Māori women, I found several pūrākau that spoke to the importance of naming and which, upon the application of a mana wahine lens, revealed some strong messages and discourse about the mana of wāhine and naming. It is also important to note that early written recordings of our pūrākau are not, in my view, the only or most authoritative source(s). Our mothers and grandmothers, who have maintained these pūrākau in our whānau since time immemorial, are the true keepers of this knowledge.

In one such pūrākau, in which Māui goes in search of his mother, the story culminates with Māui recounting the story of his birth to his would-be mother. As he recounts this story, she realizes that he is her long lost son, whom she mistakenly thought dead at birth. His mother, Taranga, then proclaims him as Māui tikitiki o Taranga (Māui - the topknot of Taranga) in reference to the baby she wrapped in her top knot of hair and cast in to the sea, a baby that she thought dead, who had now been returned to her (Te Rangikāheke & Thornton, 1992). The tikitiki is the bun on the top of the head, mainly cut during rites of passage or in the acknowledgement of grief. The hair is very sacred, due in part to it growing on the most tapu part of your body, the head, and as pointed out by Ani Mikaere (2003) this is a significant explanation of why Taranga used her tikitiki to wrap Māui before casting him into the sea. Rangihurhia McDonald (2011) completed her thesis on this very subject and states that the cutting of hair was used to assist in the grieving process; to give part of yourself to a loved one as a parting takoha (gift) (McDonald, 2011).

However, an important aspect of this story is that Māui actually located his mother through the names of his brothers, whom he recounts as *"ko Māui-taha, ko Māui-roto, ko Māui-pae, ko Māui-waho"* (there is Māui-taha, Māui-roto, Māui-pae, Māui-waho) and then completes his recitation of whakapapa by adding his own name, *"anā, ko ahau, ko Māui-pōtiki ahau e noho atu nei."* (and here I am, Māui-the lastborn, sitting here.) In doing so, Māui provided the genealogical evidence needed to prove his lineage. The birthing story is highly significant to the choice of a name for a child and is a naming protocol that has been handed down from generation to generation. This particular protocol illustrates well the power and potency our tūpuna witnessed and celebrated in both birthing and women as *whare tangata* (house(s) of humanity). Importantly, in precolonial times, Māori carried names that openly acknowledged and further reinforced our connection to our mothers and to our matrilineal whakapapa. The story of Taranga and Māui and how Māui came to be called Māui tikitiki o Taranga is a classic example (Mahuika, 1973).

Keelan (2009) argues that Māui and his brothers have the same first half of their names as they are, in fact, all manifestations of Māui himself - illustrating his ability to transform and shapeshift. However, she also states that they might also have been given the same first half of their names in order to link them, similarly to the way in which Māori contemporarily use surnames to connect to one another. Māui refers to himself as 'Māui pōtiki' in the above story, placing himself as the last named, as the last born of his siblings and thereby positioning himself within his whānau via this name. Whether he gave himself this name only to explain his relationship with them, or whether this was his name prior to their reunion is not clear in this version. However, as has already been acknowledged, a common Māori naming practice is to change our names when significant life changes occur, and for Māui, this was clearly one of those moments.

Openly acknowledging our connections with our mothers or even with our fathers as the context may dictate does not, however, mean that Māori names are gendered. In fact, the opposite is arguable, with it being difficult, for example, to identify how many women signed the Treaty of Waitangi for this very reason (Mikaere, 1994). While we do have names that indicate a particular gender, this does not necessarily identify the gender of the named. A compelling example of this is Tamatea Upoko, a chieftainess of Ngāti Porou, whose name has the word 'tama' (boy) in it, but she is, in fact, a woman (Mahuika, 1973). Tāneroroa, the daughter of Turi, the captain of the Aotea waka, is another such example. Her name has the word 'tāne' (man/men) in it, and yet she is identified as female in some accounts. So the assumption that all names with 'tane' or 'tama' are male and all names with 'hine' are female then must be problematised.

Additionally, the word 'tama' has become synonymous with 'boy' in English, but in te reo Māori, it is inherently more complex. 'Tama' as a word in and of itself is gender-neutral, with gendered words such as wahine and tāne being needed to provide the gender indicator where necessary. For example, tamawahine (daughter/girl) and tamatāne (son/boy). This is evidence of our fluid understanding of gender as Māori and of the lack of relevance the gender of the named has to any subsequent name choice. According to Pania Papa (2016), a Māori language exponent, the word 'wairua' has important meaning tied up in its two-word parts of 'wai' and 'rua'. When the wai of the tāne unites with the wai of the wahine, they produce wai-rua (two-waters). Wairua is, therefore, a term that refers not only to a Māori view of conception but of the male and female essence in us all.

#### TAKING IT BACK TO OUR KUIA

As we grow, our role, place and responsibilities within the world change and so too can our ingoa in order to better reflect our development. Our ingoa are thus fluid, adapting to our own development, growth, the ever-changing world we live in and the collectives that we are responsible to. Our contexts and realities change and so too can, and do, our ingoa, just as water can move between being a spring, a stream, a river, an estuary or in to the sea. It is no mistake that 'wai' is both the word for 'who' and for 'water' in the Māori language. To ask someone "*ko wai tō ingoa?*" who is your name? in Māori, is not to ask 'what' their name is, but 'who' they are – from whose waters do you descend? We do not descend from the umbilical waters of patriarchy and Christianity – we descend from the potent birthing waters of Wāhine!

I am a graduate of one of the first Kōhanga Reo or Language Nests established on my tribal lands: a language revitalisation initiative that was established and run by Māori women and female elders to ensure and create a future for the language and the cultural empowerment of their grandchildren. In this nest, I was fed my language and culture so that I could grow strong in who I am, for the betterment of my people, of my family. Kōhanga Reo were in fact mana wahine projects and decolonial projects that sought to repair the trauma and damage of colonisation. Our language was determined to be the medicine, the decolonial tool to heal us all. This is not a logic or a wisdom that could come from men; rather, it was and continues to be the women who lead the way in our healing, particularly in terms of te reo Māori. For weeks now I have had one line from a waiata playing over and over in my head. A song learned and loved during my early years of learning te reo Māori. It seems to me to be that it is no coincidence that as I conclude an article on reclaiming our matrilineal whakapapa, it repeats itself like a broken record in my head, urging me to join the harmonious voices of two women as they sing: "*Ehara taku mana i te mana hōu, nō*

*tuawhakarere, nō whāioio kē<sup>3</sup> ” (My mana is not new, it belongs to ancient times, it comes from long, long ago).*

Our mana tuku iho does not come from the present day and it certainly does not come from being possessed by men (or anyone else). Our mana comes from our ancestors, from our whakapapa, which stretches and connects us to the beginning and continues until the end. Our names remind us of that and for that reason are worth the struggle to reclaim. Beyond Māori names, however, reclaiming our precolonial naming practices and nomenclature, which never denigrated our mana wāhine, is arguably even more important if we are to find liberty from the theft of our matrilineal names and reinstate our tūpuna ways of seeing and being.

*“When we say our names, we quote our ancestors”  
(Oliveira, 2014)*

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3 I believe this song was composed by Poia Rewi but have been unable at the time of printing to confirm.

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# Mana Atua, Mana Tangata, Mana Wahine

Leonie Pihama - Te Ātiawa, Ngāti Māhanga, Ngā Māhanga a Tairi



## Keynote Presentation<sup>1</sup>

He Au Honua,  
Maui Community College,  
Hawaii March 2019

Aloha kakahiaka. Tēnā tātou e huihui mai nei i tēnei ata,  
Ko te tuatahi, kei te mihi ki te hau kainga, ki a koutou ngā tuakana, ngā kanaka maoli, ngā kanaka  
Oiwi, tēnei te mihi mutunga kore ki a koutou e manaaki, e tiaki mai ana i a mātou ō whanaunga i  
runga i o koutou whenua, nō reira e te hau kainga tēnā koutou katoa. Ka huri ki a koutou te rūpu  
whakahaere, me ngā rūpu tautoko hoki, tēnei te mihi atu. Ki ngā kuia, ngā koroua, ngā mātanga reo,  
ngā mātanga mātauranga e noho ana hei pou tuara mo tēnei hui, tēnei te mihi maioha ki a koutou.  
Kei te mihi hoki ki ngā whanaunga o ngā iwi taketake mai i ngā tōpito o te ao e hui tahi nei i raro i te  
kaupapa whakahirahira nei, ko He Au Honua. Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa.

Ko Taranaki, ko Kariori ngā maunga  
Ko Waitara, ko Waikato ngā awa  
Ko Ngā Tai o Rehua, ko Whaingaroa ngā moana  
Ko Te Ātiawa, ko Waikato-Tainui, ko Ngā Māhanga a Tairi ngā iwi  
Ko Ngāti Rāhiri, ko Ngāti Māhanga ngā hapū  
Ko Waitara tōku tūrangawaewae  
He mokopuna ahau o te maunga titohea.

Over the last two days we have heard of the significance of place, of whenua, of aina, to our worldviews and life practices as Indigenous Peoples. The pepeha, (ancestral introduction) that I open with is one way that I, as a Māori woman, introduce myself. It is a form through which we position ourselves as Māori. It locates us with our collective relationships to our mountains, rivers, oceans and the whānau, hapū and iwi (extended family structures, sub-tribes, clans and tribal groupings, nations) of which we are a part. It is a practice of connection that I hear in varying forms across Indigenous Nations globally. These connections define our positioning and inform our understandings of the world and the relationships that we have. They provide us with ancestral knowledge to think about our collective responsibilities and how we bring these relationships to the fore in our lives.

As members of whānau, hapū and iwi collectives we have obligations, responsibilities and accountabilities to these collectives and in turn our relations have obligations, responsibilities and accountabilities to and for us. Collective connectedness is critical for wellbeing (Jackson, 1988). This includes ensuring that we have a secure sense of our relationships to each other and to our lands. In our work related to decolonising healing, our whānau consistently make reference to maunga (mountains), whenua (land), moana (oceans), and awa (rivers) both as a part of our cultural identity and in acknowledgement of our obligations to care for our environment as part of our wider cultural relationships.

Through Whakapapa, the cultural template through which we understand our descent and ancestral relationships, we are reminded that the relationships between and amongst us, as individuals and social groupings, are layered upon each other and extend as wide as our whānau and intergenerational connections reach. Whakapapa refers to a process of placing something in layers. As such, we are intrinsically interconnected in relational ways of being. Within these relationships mana is embedded, and it is through our relational being with each other that mana is recognised, acknowledged, enhanced or diminished. This includes how we operate and move within these cultural relationships.

Mana is both tangible and intangible. It is both internal and external. It is both earthly and celestial. It is both material and spiritual. It is both relationships with others and being in relation with ourselves, our fundamental ways of being in the world and our treatment of others. Mana can be understood in both its simplicity and its complexity. The meaning and embodiment of 'mana' is one that engages us in conceptual, cultural, spiritual, emotional and material ways of being, and encompasses an essence and power of being that we have been reminded is beyond any singular translation (Henare, 1988; Pere 1991).

We know that mana is multi-dimensional and requires an understanding of wider tikanga (Māori cultural practices and protocols) and of the many contexts within which we bring tikanga into practice in our lives. As Māori we are born with mana. It is inherent to our whakapapa. As Jenny Lee-Morgan (pers. comm 2019) reminded us, one way of thinking about mana is in regard to the concept and lived practice of manaakitanga. Manaakitanga is, in essence, the affirmation and enhancing of mana through the processes and practices that we undertake in the care and nurturing of others; the respect and generosity that we show others; and the reciprocity that is embedded within that practice.

Whaea Rangimarie Rose Pere (1991) reminds us that the origins of mana are directly associated to our connections to atua. This affirms the sacredness of all people. Mana, she notes, has multiple forms that include "psychic influence, control, prestige, power, vested and acquired authority and influence, being influential or binding over others, and that quality of the person that others know she or he has" (p.14). There are many ways in which our people speak of mana that move beyond tangata, beyond humanity, including: Mana Atua, Mana Whenua, Mana Moana, Mana Motuhake. These remind us of our relationships, our obligations and the sacredness of our connection to our ancestors, our deities, our lands, our seas, and to each other. The relationship to mana atua is encapsulated in the phrase, 'he atua, he tangata' which highlights the sacred connection to our ancestors and deities, and is a way in which to understand both our celestial and terrestrial connections (Pere, 1991). Māori Marsden (1989) spoke of mana as 'divine authority' bestowed upon a person to fulfil particular functions. It is also enhanced by the collective in order to support people's roles in fulfilling particular obligations, social and political functions; it is a significant contributing factor in how we present ourselves and are seen by others.

Mana is integral to all aspects of our cultural world as Māori, including the ways in which we engage with tikanga in a broad range of contexts, practices, protocols, rituals and relationships. It is important to note that our protocols and practices are interconnected and give us guidance in terms of what is 'tika', what is correct. As Moana Jackson (1988) and Ani Mikaere (2017) note, it is through tikanga that we are provide ways of ensuring, maintaining or restoring balance. With the impact of colonial invasion and on-going structural oppression of Māori lands, we know we must engage more deeply with the restoration of balance, of returning to what is tika, what is pono.

## TE REO MĀORI

We need to draw upon te reo (the language), tikanga and mātauranga (the knowledge), of our tupuna as both learnings and guidance to restore the mouri and mana of our people. It is through the intersection of these understandings that we stand as a resurgent force to colonisation. Te reo, both as language and as voice, tikanga and mātauranga work hand in hand in the recovery of the wellbeing, of the mouri (sacred life force) of our people. That means that we must retain our collective responsibility to work together to reach that goal. I speak in this sense of mana as collective power, which is central to our re-assertion and resurgence of tino rangatiratanga, of our sovereignty, of our self-determination as Indigenous Nations, of our Mana motuhake, our

collective autonomy. Tino rangatiratanga must be for our people the long-term goal; it must be our epic story, which will ensure the wellbeing of generations to come.

We cannot separate language regeneration from our healing of historical trauma, or the resurgence of our weaving traditions from our knowledge of matariki or our understandings of how to heal our waterways, of how to fight for the rights of our people, our language, our knowledges, our lands, our maunga, our moana. These are all connected. We must not buy in to the western colonial obsession that fragments our knowledge into disciplines or reductionist knowledge packages. And we must not buy in to the colonial belief systems that redefine mana in ways that align with a western, colonising, heteronormative, homophobic, transphobic system that reduces our people to nuclear models that not only fail to serve our interests but which act to diminish our mana as peoples and as groups of peoples within our nations.

Colonial literature related to Māori is framed in such a way as to embed dominant western misogynistic ideas and practices of gender and the intersection of gender with white supremacist notions of race and capitalist class systems (Irwin, Ramsden & Kahukiwa, 1995). At the centre of colonisation has been the dispossession and erasure of Indigenous Peoples. Dispossession of lands, Dispossession of culture, Dispossession of language, Dispossession of knowledge. These processes have created a means by which to perpetuate an intentional assault on the roles and status of Māori women, which disrupts the relational balance that is critical to the wellbeing of Māori people (Smith 1992; Irwin, 1992; Pihama, 2001; Mikaere, 2017).

Colonising discourses have had a significant impact on the ways in which Māori women are regarded and how our place in society continues to be marginalised as a direct result. We have been told in colonial literature that as wahine we are 'noa'; that we are without 'tapu'; that we have less 'mana'; that we are the 'wives of' or 'the mother of' someone, generally a man (Heuer, 1972). The sacred place of atua wahine (Māori women deities/goddesses), and the critical roles of Māori women have been denied over many generations of white documentation and domination (Te Awēkotuku, 1991; Jenkins, 1992; Yates-Smith, 1996; Murphy, 2011; Simmonds, 2014; Mikaere, 2017).

Early descriptions of Māori society by Pākehā ethnographers and anthropologists were particularly influential in the re-construction of our relationships within the frame of colonial gendered relations where the mana of Māori women began to be redefined, and colonial dominant views of sexuality, sexual identity and gender identity were imposed upon our people in ways that created layers of oppression for takatāpui, Māori LGBTIQ whānau. The impact of colonisation, both as a range of historically traumatic events and as ongoing structural arrangements of systemic violence on our lands, means that the assertion of our mana motuhake as a people and the articulation of mana wahine is essential in countering the impact of over 170 years of oppressive colonial practices.

Mana wahine supports the formation of Māori women's approaches and resistance to colonisation as a means by which to challenge dominant colonial patriarchal systems. I have at times been confronted with the idea that mana wahine theory and approaches are the outcome of feminisms as a way to deny its validity. However, the construct of mana wahine is not new. It is grounded upon our own understandings of both mana and wahine. We have many examples of our tupuna wahine asserting mana across a range of hapū and iwi and in a range of contexts, both precolonial and within our current context of colonial occupation.

In more recent times, this was expressed through the establishment, in 1893, of 'Ngā Komiti

Wāhine' (Māori women's committees) within the political movement of Te Kotahitanga (Māori Parliament) as a means by which Māori women could deal with issues confronting them at the time. Ngā Kōmiti Wāhine dealt with key issues related to the well-being of Māori women and spoke freely about these issues whenever possible (Rei, 1993). We see it in their contemporary equal, 'The Māori Women's Welfare League'. More contemporary expressions include Māori women's involvement in Te Amorangi; the Black Women's Movement; Māori Women's movement; Wahine Mō Ngā Wāhine o Te Moana Nui a Kiwa (Māori and Pacific Lesbians) (Pihama, 2001). Even more recently we have seen the formation of Māori women's collectives that have been active in challenging sexism, homophobia, transphobia, cultural appropriation and racism, including Ngā Wahine Tiaki o Te Ao (Māori Women Against Genetic Engineering), Te Wharepora Hou (Māori Women's Network) and the Taranaki Māori Women's Network (Taranaki Women seeking the return of stolen lands), to name just a few examples. Mana wahine has also been modelled and affirmed through many actions and practices of critical leaders in our history.

Within te reo Māori we have many indications of the ways in which our tupuna saw gender. What we also know is that translation and interpretation of our languages and practices have been particularly problematic for Māori and Indigenous nations. This requires us to think critically about the ways in which English translations of key Māori ways of being and acting have contributed to the creation of simplistic and palatable definitions that sit most comfortably with colonial ways of thinking and being. Translations that align with colonising views about gender identities contribute to the hegemonic internalisation of such beliefs about ourselves and within wider Māori society. These are fed by the distorted definitions of colonial ethnographers or anthropologists regarding the place, roles or status of wahine Māori. As such, crucial to Mana Wahine as a part of wider Māori resurgence and resistance movements is a process of decolonising the hegemonic impact upon our people (Awatere, 1984; Irwin, 1992; Smith, 1992; Yates-Smith, 1998; Mikaere, 2017).

The regeneration of Te reo Māori is a critical component in locating the position of Māori women within Te Ao Māori (Māori society). Te reo Māori is not gendered in the way that the English language is. Te reo Māori has the single pronoun 'ia' for she/he and pronoun possessives tāna/tōna for hers/his. Neither of these pronouns are gender bound (Pere 1991; Pihama 2001). The identification of the person being spoken about is determined through our knowledge of the context. It is often the case that neither the person nor their gender is of relevance; rather, what is central is identifying that the work is done. This way of thinking about our roles in the world inspires decolonial thinking and practices.

The point I am emphasising here is that there are varying ways in which roles and relationships are negotiated, and the assertion by Māori women is that we are connected in multiple and powerful ways, all of which are embodied within us and within our understanding of Mana Wahine. Clear ways of understanding these relationships lie within the cultural frameworks of whakapapa and whānau tangata. This means that any analysis that is grounded upon Mana Wahine needs to be grounded upon these fundamental cultural templates.

'Wahine/wāhine' is generally translated as woman or women. Wahine also designates a particular phase in our lifespan as Māori women. 'Wā' refers to time and place, 'hine' as a female essence. It is important to understand place and space as they pertain to Mana wahine and Māori analysis of gender. What is clear is that conceptually 'wahine' should not be seen or regarded in the same way as the constructed binaries of female and male that exist in dominant colonial gender ideologies and are defined in reductionist biological terms (Pihama, 2001). As Māori women we journey through many phases, roles, spaces and identities. To acknowledge the many ways in which Māori talk about various stages of life is to recognise the complex ways that our people

have always viewed roles and relationships (Hohepa, 1993). As I noted in my doctoral research:

*To acknowledge the many ways in which Māori talk about various stages of life is to recognise the complex ways that our people have always viewed roles and relationships. The terms kōtiro, hine, tamawahine, tuakana, teina, tamāhine, tuahine, wahine, whaea, ruahine, kuia, kaumatua all relate to differing stages of life and to the various relationships that exist (Nepe, 1991). Some relate specifically to female essences. Others relate to the inter-relationships between people within whānau. Similarly, there are a range of terms that relate to various stages for Māori men; tamatāne, tāne, tūngāne, tuakana, teina, matua, koroua, koroheke, kaumatua. Again, these are just some examples there are many more that define relationships for Māori. Equally some are related specifically to various stages of life and others to roles and relationships. The point I am making here is that there is not, as we are often presented with, a simplistic dualistic or oppositional relationship between Māori women and Māori men but there are varying ways in which roles and relationships are negotiated. This means that analysis that relates to Māori women cannot be simplistic, but needs to recognise that relationships within Māori society are multiple. (Pihama, 2001, p. 262)*

Mana wahine aligns with an urgent need to rebalance. There are components of mana wahine that are about the essence of mana itself, and there are components that are about redressing the impact of oppressive colonising views and practices that deny the place and position of Indigenous women.

It is particularly important to honour the wahine Māori and Indigenous women globally who have been at the blunt end of the colonial abuse instrument; to give honour to those who have and who do work endlessly to return us to our cultural normal, where wahine are honoured and where we all take a role in fighting back against the colonial erasure of Indigenous women. I want to clarify that when I say erasure I speak not only to the marginalisation of our voices, or the denial of our place within our stories and our roles amongst our people, but also to the spiritual and physical erasure through the excessive rates of violence perpetuated upon Indigenous women, to the abuse of Papatuanuku, through the poisoning of our lands and our rivers, to the desecration of sacred sites such as mauna kea, to insidious levels of incarceration of our whānau members, to the denial of our ability to undertake ceremonies such as the return of our whenua (placenta) to the whenua (land), to the thousands of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women on Turtle Island, and to the forced removal of Indigenous children. Erasure is not a philosophical or conceptual experience; erasure is an experience of cultural, spiritual and physical reality.

Mana Wahine brings to the fore the power, knowledge, strength and dignity of Hineahuone, the first wahine shaped at Kurawaka by Tane with the guidance of Papatuanuku and with atua gifting each part of the body form. That is for me the source of mana wahine. It means bringing forward our understandings from a source that is deep within Papatūānuku and revitalising that knowledge to support the wellbeing of Māori women (Irwin, 1992; Simmonds, 2014). It means affirming and recognising the power of Māori women's resistance to colonisation and the efforts of our tūpuna wāhine to defend, protect, reclaim and assert Mana Wahine. This includes a focus on the analysis and deconstruction of colonial discourses. This is not an easy task. The deconstruction of colonial ideologies and practices is a complex process, as we are constantly confronted with the need to decolonise that which we have internalised about ourselves. However, for Indigenous women a commitment to this process is a commitment to both exploding the colonial myths that have been constructed, and being a part of a wider resurgence process. Mana Wahine is embedded

in how I see, feel and come to know the world and all of our relationships – past, present and future. I am deeply grateful for those who have held the knowledge of those sacred relationships generation after generation so that I am able to stand as their descendent and as the mother, auntie and grandmother of generations yet to come. As Kathie Irwin asserts;

*We need to actively honour, to celebrate the contributions, and affirm the mana of Māori women: those tūpuna wahine who have gone before us; those wahine toa who give strength to our culture and people today; and those kōtiro and mokopuna who are being born now, and who will be born in the future to fulfil our dreams. (Irwin, 1992, p. 1)*

## Notes

- i This presentation is based on an article to be published later in 2019 as a part of a Special Edition of the Australian Women Studies Journal to be edited by Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson.
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# Kuputaka / Glossary

Aotearoa	New Zealand
Haka	chant, the performance of which achieves collective preparedness and unity of purpose
Hapū	be pregnant, sub-tribe; extended kin group, consisting of many whānau, a sub-tribe will usually have at least one marae and often several
Hoa mahi	a friend that works alongside
Hongi	a greeting between individuals, in which a person shakes hands and touches both nose and forehead of the other person.
Hui	meeting, gathering of people, occasion
Iwi	tribe, people; descent group, consisting of many hapū, human bone
Kanohi ki te kanohi	face to face
Kaikaranga	Woman who 'calls' people on to a marae. The call generally tells the visitors that they are welcome and often sets out the reasons for the gathering. It is believed that the 'call' is made by women because it is symbolic of the first cry of life when a child is born
Kāinga	community
Kaitiaki	guardians; minder, keeper, steward
Kaiwaiata	people who 'sing' or accompany a speaker; the traditional waiata were chants, but a range of waiata both old and new are frequently sung
Kawa	protocol, custom; the formal behaviours and protocols which determine who speaks, when, how and why. These protocols vary across tribes quite considerably
Karakia	incantations; prayer, chant
Karanga	call
Kaumātua	elder men; elderly men and women, to grow old
Kaupapa	philosophy, purpose, topic, subject, theme
Kuia	elder women, elderly female relative; elderly woman; ancestress
Kura Kaupapa	a system of education based in Māori value and belief systems; Māori medium school
Mana	power, prestige, reputation, standing, authority, control, influence
Mana atua	power and authority of celestial realm; sacred power form the atua
Mana wahine	women's status; theoretical and methodological approach
Mana whānau	power derived from whānau; status of whānau
Mana whenua	territorial rights, power from the land
Marae ātea	open ground in front of meeting house where formal welcomes are often carried out
Mokopuna	grandchild; descendant
Mōteatea	to be fearful, apprehensive, to grieve; lament, traditional chant,
Ngāti Hine	a hapū of the Ngāpuhi tribe located in Te Taitokerau, Aotearoa
Ngāpuhi	an iwi, named after our ancestor, Puhi, located in Northland, Aotearoa
Noa	be free from the constraints of tapu, ordinary, unrestricted
Paepae	speaking platform
Pākehā	English, foreign, European

Papatūānuku	our earth mother
Paru	dirty, soiled, mud
Pōwhiri	formal welcoming ceremony
Rangatiratanga	chieftainship, sovereignty, self-determination, right to exercise authority, ownership
Raranga	to weave, weaving
Taha	side
Tāngata whenua	people of the land; people from that place, hosts, indigenous peoples
Tapu	restricted, be sacred, set apart, under atua protection
Tauparapara	chants; incantation to begin a speech
Te Ao Māori	Māori world view; the Māori world
Teina	younger sibling/cousin of same gender
Te Reo Māori	the Māori language
Tikanga	traditions, Māori philosophies, Māori law, procedure, custom, practice, habit
Tino Rangatiratanga	a term which has been equated with chieftainship and absolute sovereignty. See Rangatiratanga
Te Tiriti o Waitangi	The Treaty of Waitangi
Tipuna/Tūpuna	ancestors, grandparents
Tipuna/ Tupuna	ancestor, grandparent
Tohunga	healer, skilled person, chosen expert, priest
Tuakana	older sibling/ cousin of the same gender
Wahine / Wāhine	woman, women
Waiata	chants, song
Waiata tawhito	chants recording iwi histories and knowledge
Wairua	spirit, spirituality, soul
Whakaaro	idea, thought, belief
Whakamā	ashamed, to be embarrassed, shy
Whakapapa	genealogical links, descent lines, genealogy
Whakapohane	bending over and showing your buttocks as an insult
Whakataukī	proverb
Whānau	extended family, kin group
Whanaunga	kin; relative
Whare Tangata	womb, house of humanity
Whare Tupuna	ancestral house; focal point for hapū meetings and events
Whenua	land, placenta, our earth mother - Papatūānuku

This Glossary has been compiled from the glossaries held within the source texts and from Moorfield, J. C. (2003-2019). Te Aka Māori-English, English-Māori Dictionary and Index Retrieved from <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/>