

# **Mātauranga Māori and Museum Practice**

**A Discussion**

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## **Executive Summary**

### *Interest in Mātauranga Māori*

- Interest in mātauranga Māori has arisen in many quarters, including public institutions. The term has become popular to denote something essential about the Māori world and to assist the expression of Māori cultural knowledge in a variety of settings.

### *Defining Mātauranga Māori*

- There remains a lack of clarity about what is meant by mātauranga Māori. Confusion can arise when distinctions are not clearly drawn between the term ‘mātauranga Māori’ and the knowledge which the term denotes.
- Possible definitions can be sociological or epistemological. A suggested sociological definition is as follows:

‘Mātauranga Māori’ is a modern term for a body of knowledge that was brought to these islands by Polynesian ancestors of present-day Māori. Here this body of knowledge grew in response to conditions in Aotearoa and Te Wai Pounamu. The arrival of European people from the 18th century had a major impact on this knowledge, endangering it in many substantial ways. All, however, was not lost, as new knowledge was created through the encounter with the European and through the experience of the creation of the new nation called New Zealand. Important fragments and portions of it – notably, the Māori language – remain today. These fragments and portions are catalysing a new creative period in Māori history and culture and in the life of the New Zealand nation.

### *A Theory of Mātauranga Māori*

- Mātauranga Māori includes a range of perspectives on the nature of knowledge and knowing. These views, presented as an introduction to an *epistemology* of mātauranga Māori, range from explicit knowledge codified primarily through the use of literacy (mātauranga) to the abandonment of *explicit* knowledge in favour of an equivalence between knowledge and the world (tohu).

### *Aspects of the Traditional Worldview*

- A discussion of the traditional Māori worldview is included to provide an understanding of traditional perspectives on taonga. A key theme is that traditional life was lived within the tenets of sacred narratives pertaining to what was considered the essential nature of the world. These narratives told people how they should behave in relation to the world and taonga were used to facilitate this movement from normal reality to these non-ordinary but essential experiences. Rituals, for example, are the re-enactment of myths. By participating in the ritual one is taking one’s place within the drama and the plot of the myth – one is transforming oneself

into one of the protagonists of the myth, not merely acting out a role. Taonga were important instruments in making these transformations.

### *Changes in Worldview*

- The arrival of European literacy, technology, the Bible and so on, brought a new narrative. Many pre-contact concepts were intermingled with new concepts. This change in worldview and experience added to traditional views of taonga.

### *Contemporary Tikanga and Taonga*

- Contemporary Māori culture reflects a range of experiences and ways of seeing the world. Today, aspects of a traditional worldview are intermingled with contemporary aspirations for the restoration and revitalisation of iwi, hapū and whānau cultural knowledge. Making sense of these two different psychologies can be challenging.
- The discussion includes explanations of certain contemporary tikanga of relevance to taonga which still find expression in Māori culture today.
- It is suggested that Te Papa National Services commissions research into contemporary tikanga in relation to taonga in order to discover the perspectives and behaviours that are relevant to museum practice.

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## 1.0 Introduction

This report has been written by Dr Charles Royal of Mauriora-ki-te-Ao/Living Universe Ltd for Te Papa National Services – Te Paerangi. The purpose is to present a discussion pertaining to mātauranga Māori generally and tikanga Māori specifically, and their possible intersection and application in museum practice. Mauriora-ki-te-Ao/Living Universe Ltd has been asked to provide to Te Papa National Services with three documents:

- A *literature search and review* concerning sources of information pertaining to mātauranga Māori generally and the intersection between tikanga Māori and museum practice specifically. This will include some exploration of ‘indigenous knowledge’ and some international comparisons.
- A *discussion paper* concerning the nature of mātauranga Māori and its possible intersection with or expression in museum practice. This document will contain some discussion of tikanga Māori and its possible relationship to museum practice.
- A *project plan containing proposed actions* in response to issues raised in the discussion paper with a view to advancing this project by 30 September 2004.<sup>1</sup>

This report represents the ‘discussion paper’ mentioned above. It is accompanied by a Bibliography and Project Plan.

## 1.1 Mātauranga Māori Culture and Heritage Services Project

Te Papa National Services works in partnership with ‘other museums, iwi and related culture and heritage organisations of New Zealand to support them to enhance their capacity and the quality and sustainability of their services to their communities for the benefit of all New Zealanders.’<sup>2</sup> In pursuing this goal, Te Papa National Services conducts activities in four key priority areas:

- Standards Implementation;
- Training and Skill Development;
- Kaupapa Māori Iwi Development; and
- Strategic Regional and Local Development Initiatives.

In 1996, Te Papa National Services initiated a Museums Standards Scheme which sought to develop and articulate standards for museum practice throughout New Zealand. During the development of the standards scheme,

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Mātauranga Māori Culture and Heritage Services Project, A Discussion paper including a literature review and project plan, Contract for Service’, 19 August 2004, clauses 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.1.3

<sup>2</sup> Te Papa National Services Te Paerangi, Request for Formal Proposal, Mātauranga Māori Culture and Heritage Services Project Literature Review and Discussion Paper, p.2.

Māori participants also expressed the need to develop a set of guidelines strongly anchored in Mātauranga Māori to inform and strengthen emerging Māori/iwi-based culture and heritage services – in addition to the bicultural standards scheme that have been developed for existing museums.<sup>3</sup>

This aspiration was developed further in 2001, when Māori peer reviewers articulated the following objectives:

- Māori develop a unique set of standards as an expression of whare taonga and driven solely by Māori cultural knowledge. These standards could relate to all sectors of whare taonga operations
- The use of whare taonga body of knowledge to inform the expression of whare taonga in a museum. This means the two discrete bodies of knowledge might be developed separately with a view to informing the joint management of collections housed in a museum setting
- Development of a body of knowledge driven by biculturalism, and the expression of two traditions in the one setting where this is appropriate.<sup>4</sup>

These objectives were reiterated in 2002, and in July 2003,

a further meeting was convened by National Services Te Paerangi, which further endorsed the findings from the previous two hui held however, this meeting went further to suggest the development of a set of principles which can be used as a tool for iwi based museum services.<sup>5</sup>

The current contract to prepare documents in the manner described in Section 1.0 grew out of these developments over the past seven years.

## **1.2 Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank Ngāpera Hoerara of Te Papa National Services – Te Paerangi for inviting us to submit a proposal for this project and providing assistance throughout its duration. Thanks are also due to Wharehuia Hemara for assisting with the compilation of the bibliography; to Rhonda Paku of Te Papa National Services; to David Green for editing the text and to Jan Ainsworth for assisting with the completion of the manuscript.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

## **2.0 Interest in Mātauranga Māori**

‘Mātauranga Māori’ is a term that has increased in popularity and use in recent years. It has somewhat eclipsed ‘Māoritanga’ as a way of signifying the essentials of the Māori world – its values, culture and worldview. A number of themes in recent New Zealand history help us understand the growth in interest in and use of the term ‘mātauranga Māori’.

One way of accounting for the rise in interest is to consider contemporary interest in the ‘knowledge economy’. The term ‘mātauranga Māori’ is being used to help facilitate the Māori dimension within New Zealand’s knowledge economy. The 2003 report of the New Zealand Institute for Economic Research (NZIER) on the ‘Māori economy’ suggests that there have been three ‘waves’ of Māori involvement in New Zealand’s economy. The first commenced as soon as the market economy took root in New Zealand in the early 11th century. This ‘wave’ constituted the export of Māori labour and goods to the new markets operating in townships such as Auckland and Wellington, and further afield (Sydney, for example).

The second ‘wave’ of Māori entry into New Zealand’s market economy, as noted by NZIER, came much later and took the form of the significant rise in the value of capital assets held in the Māori world. This rise began after the settlement of various claims heard by the Waitangi Tribunal in the 1980s and 1990s.

The third ‘wave’ of Māori entry into the economy involved the ‘knowledge economy’. It was initiated by such things as the advent of Māori operated educational institutions and the rise of Māori businesses utilising cultural expressions and creativity. For example, Māori tourism uses aspects of Māori cultural knowledge to further its goals. The NZIER report states:

In the third and most recent wave, Māori entered the ‘knowledge economy’. The last ten years have seen the rapid growth of Māori service industries, building on cultural knowledge as well as improvements in the skills of the Māori population. These businesses serve Māori needs or provide access to authentic Māori culture and experience.<sup>6</sup>

The entry of Māori into the knowledge economy signalled a need for terms and concepts that would help facilitate this involvement. It is suggested that ‘mātauranga Māori’ is being used and to conceptualise the Māori dimension of the knowledge economy.

Another reason for the popularity of the term ‘mātauranga Māori’ is suggested by consideration of Māori interest in the prosecution of claims before the Waitangi Tribunal. Whilst land and other tangible assets and resources were and continue to be a significant feature of these claims, it was not long before intangible assets

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<sup>6</sup> *Māori Economic Development, Te Ōhanga Whanaketanga Māori*, New Zealand Institute of Economic Research, 2003, p.5.

such as language and culture also became a focus. The Māori language claim of the early 1980s is an example. Whilst its primary focus concerned the language, its deeper motivations lay with the possible loss of an entire worldview and way of experiencing the world which is facilitated through use of the Māori language. The claim to indigenous flora and fauna (known as Wai 262) is perhaps the most well-known example of a claim possessing a significant mātauranga Māori dimension.

Hence, the claims process has also contributed to the growing interest in a phenomenon called 'mātauranga Māori'. Of course, the claims process and the ability of Māori to participate in New Zealand's economy are deeply connected. Most claims attempt to demonstrate the way in which resources were wrested from Māori, diminishing Māori participation in the nation's economy and national life generally. A few claims heard by the Tribunal have also included discussions pertaining to Māori involvement in the knowledge economy. Invariably, these have invoked the concept of mātauranga Māori. The Whare Wānanga claim (Wai 718) is an example.

A third significant aspect of the growth in interest in mātauranga Māori is Māori medium education institutions. These include:

- Kōhanga Reo (pre-school years)
- Kura Kaupapa Māori (generally 5 to 12 years)
- Whare Kura (high school years)
- Whare Wānanga (tertiary level education)

These institutions have grown considerably since their inception in the early 1980s, and they are now a significant feature in New Zealand's education landscape.

An important feature of these organisations is their aspiration that children and students embody Māori culture. These institutions seek to ensure that mātauranga Māori – the Māori language particularly – exists as a living cultural presence in the lives of their children and students. Whilst this is not the only goal of these institutions, there remains a significant aspiration for these children and young people to become bearers of their culture, not merely students of it. In this way, these institutions distinguish themselves from other providers of education services.

Finally, the nature of Māori participation policies is also catalysing discussion about mātauranga Māori. In the past 20 to 30 years, numerous policy initiatives of relevance to Māori have been taken in all sectors of central and local government. Many of these policies are designed to incentivise Māori participation in the activities of or services provided by these organisations. Examples include scholarships and fellowships, and the creation of mechanisms such as whare wānanga to facilitate Māori entry into tertiary education. They also

include various policy interventions designed to 'make space' for Māori involvement in enterprises such as biotechnology.

More and more, however, discussions are moving toward the question of the tangible outcomes of Māori involvement. If Māori participate in an activity, what is the actual fruit or outcome of that involvement? In this way, policy makers are moving toward interventions designed to support the outcomes of participation rather than participation in itself. These kinds of questions have catalysed discussions pertaining to mātauranga Māori. (Te Papa's interest in mātauranga Māori is an example.)

Thus, there are a number of reasons why 'mātauranga Māori' has become a term of interest in many quarters. We have discussed the following (this list is not exhaustive):

- Māori entry into the 'knowledge economy' has required the application of appropriate terminology.
- Claims to tangible resources (land, water, air, etc.) heard by the Waitangi Tribunal have been supplemented by claims to intangible resources (e.g. language, cultural knowledge).
- The establishment of Māori educational institutions has required terminology to denote the knowledge of interest to these institutions.
- Policy makers wish to assess the creative potential and actual contribution of Māori involvement in activities and enterprises.

## **2.1 Te Papa's Interest in Mātauranga Māori**

Numerous public institutions have begun to use this term in planning and describing their activities. For example, the National Library of New Zealand employs the term and it appears in their Act. (See below) The term has also appeared in a variety of Te Papa documents for some years now. For example, Te Papa's Annual Report for 2001–2002 mentions 'mātauranga Māori' in a statement about Corporate Principles:

Te Papa speaks with authority that arises from scholarship and mātauranga Māori – all of Te Papa's activities will be underpinned by scholarship and mātauranga Māori.<sup>7</sup>

This statement is expanded in a discussion entitled 'Scholarship and Mātauranga Māori (Core Projects) Policy'.

Te Papa's Core Projects Strategy implemented in 2000 aims to ensure that the Museum's research effort is strategic and aligned to the organisation's mission and are based on scholarship and mātauranga Māori and meet established standards of excellence.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Our Space, Te Papa Annual Report 2001 – 2002*, p.1.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10.

Similar statements are included in the *Te Papa Statement of Intent 2004|2005, 2005|2006, 2006|2007*. The Corporate Principles statement reads:

All of Te Papa's activities are underpinned by scholarship drawing on systems of knowledge and understanding including mātauranga Māori.<sup>9</sup>

This is again supplemented by a section entitled 'Scholarship including Mātauranga Māori':

In 2004/05 Te Papa will implement a new framework for scholarship that aims to increasingly align the outcomes of research programmes with the development of the Te Papa experience through exhibitions, events, publications, and learning programmes. As part of this overall strategy, Te Papa will implement a Mātauranga Māori Strategy that will inform all output areas.<sup>10</sup>

The document also notes the appointment of a Director of Mātauranga Māori. Te Papa's interest in mātauranga Māori can perhaps be explained by two key features of the museum:

- Te Papa possesses perhaps the world's most important collection of Māori artefacts and art objects.
- Te Papa is vigorous in its exploration, articulation and innovation of standards and methods designed to inform museum practice. This includes exploring the creative potential of mātauranga Māori to inform museum practice generally and museum practice in relation to taonga Māori specifically.

## **2.2 Other Usages of 'Mātauranga Māori' in Public Institutions**

'Mātauranga Māori' is now being used in a variety of public institutions, including government departments. For example, the Department of Conservation has established a 'Mātauranga Kura Taiao Fund' which is referred to on occasion as 'The Mātauranga Māori Programme'. This is a contestable fund 'designed to increase iwi and hapu participation in managing biodiversity in ways consistent with customary knowledge (matauranga Maori).'<sup>11</sup>

The National Library Act 2003 refers to mātauranga Māori in relation to the establishment of a Library and Information Advisory Commission (Sections 23 and 24) and in provisions relating to the 'Guardians' of the Alexander Turnbull Library (Section 18). Consequently, mātauranga Māori appears in various policy documents pertaining to the operations of the National Library, including the work of its 'Guardians-Kaitiaki'. The statutory function of the Guardians-Kaitiaki 'is to

<sup>9</sup> *Te Papa Statement of Intent 2004|2005, 2005|2006, 2006|2007*, p.1.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.biodiversity.govt.nz/land/nzbs/matauranga/>

advise the Minister Responsible for the National Library on key matters associated with the operation of the Turnbull (Library), including:

- the capacity of the Library to acquire documents to be used for the purposes of research, scholarship, or mātauranga Maori...'.<sup>12</sup>

The Tertiary Education Commission has developed an education strategy entitled 'Te Rautaki Mātauranga Māori'. The use of 'mātauranga Māori' in this way reflects the occasional usage of 'mātauranga' in the tertiary sector to stand for education.<sup>13</sup> (Thus, 'mātauranga Māori' refers to Māori education).

Mātauranga Māori is also referred to in the New Zealand Biotechnology Strategy published by the Ministry for Research, Science and Technology. A section entitled 'Fostering Maori participation in biotechnology research and commercial development' states that:

Maori have much to offer to and gain from biotechnology. As tangata whenua they have a major interest in, and deep knowledge of, natural resources and primary sector industries that are strongly connected with biotechnology.<sup>14</sup>

This comment is developed further in the following statement:

Incorporating knowledge of Mātauranga Maori and Maori culture is seen as part of building New Zealand's science capacity.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, mention is made of indigenous knowledge:

Recognition of Maori collective approaches to indigenous knowledge and intellectual property....<sup>16</sup>

These examples demonstrate how mātauranga Māori has arrived in a variety of policy settings within public organisations.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.natlib.govt.nz/bin/media/pr?item=1062639728>

<sup>13</sup> I suggest that this usage is mistaken. Ako, akoranga, whakaako are Māori words relating to teaching and learning, the education process. Mātauranga, in its simplest form, means knowledge.

<sup>14</sup> *New Zealand Biotechnology Strategy*, Ministry of Research, Science and Technology, 2003, p.7.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

### 3.0 What do we mean by 'Mātauranga Māori'? Towards a Definition

Despite the widespread use of the term 'mātauranga Māori', there remains a diversity of views concerning its meaning. Further, it is clear that among the variety of views expressed, some are not as well formed as others. Despite the unevenness of the degrees of understanding, however, the term is being used in a variety of formal settings (policy documents, for example), meaning that individuals have had to use the term in their work. We hope that this report can make a contribution to our understanding of 'mātauranga Māori' by presenting a view that will assist such individuals.

Let us now consider some of the matters that can lead to confusion and misunderstanding.

*Confusion between the use of 'mātauranga Māori' to indicate a body of knowledge and a type of knowledge.*

The various uses of the term fall roughly into two categories:

- *Sociological* – the use of the term in everyday discussion to refer to a body of knowledge
- *Epistemological* – the use of the term to denote a type or view of knowledge and its place in our experience of the world.

Most usages fall into the *sociological* category. For example, Te Papa (in various documents) uses the term to denote, indicate or refer to 'Māori' knowledge or knowledge held in the Māori world. Most usages of this kind do not discuss the *nature* of the knowledge referred to. Rather, the term is used merely to point to a body of knowledge generally considered to be held within the Māori world.

*Confusion arising from lack of distinction between the term and the knowledge to which the term refers.*

Confusion can arise when a distinction is not drawn between the term 'mātauranga Māori' and the *knowledge* to which 'mātauranga Māori' refers. For example, if we read a sentence which begins:

Mātauranga Māori is modern....

It is unclear whether the statement is about the term 'mātauranga Māori' or the knowledge to which the term refers. On the face of it, most people will take this sentence to mean that knowledge typically associated with the Māori world is modern. (This sentence could also mean that the *term* 'mātauranga Māori' is modern.)<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Difficulties also arise with the term 'Māori knowledge'. Is this knowledge held by Māori, or a *type* of knowledge?

*Confusion arising from a lack of distinction between the contents or examples of mātauranga Māori and the use of the term 'mātauranga Māori'*

On the whole, bearers, practitioners and exponents of mātauranga Māori tend to focus their thinking upon the contents or examples of mātauranga Māori which they know and understand. For example, the views of a person knowledgeable about the customs and conventions of their marae tend to be informed and shaped by that kind of knowledge and experience. Usually, they are less disposed to think about 'mātauranga Māori' in the 'global' way in which the term is often used. That is to say, most mātauranga Māori experts are typically concerned with applications of their knowledge – and the philosophy and practice of such application – rather than with the philosophy of knowledge per se.

The philosophy of knowledge requires a different kind of thinking and way of exploring to that used in philosophy which informs the application of knowledge in a particular field. It requires asking different kinds of questions and the use of dimensional and relational thinking which seeks to find forms and patterns across various knowledge applications. Hence, an *epistemological* approach to 'mātauranga Māori' requires a desire to explore the heart of human experience out of which knowledge and its applications flow. It is not beholden to any one field of 'mātauranga Māori', although it requires the testimony of the tohunga – experts in the various fields – for evidence, guidance and mana.

The sections which follow present a view of mātauranga Māori (the term *and* the knowledge to which it refers) with these thoughts in mind. These views are presented as the beginnings of a discussion to stimulate discourse and wānanga about mātauranga Māori.

***Distinguishing the term 'Mātauranga Māori' from Mātauranga Māori***

In the material that follows, a distinction is drawn between mātauranga Māori and 'mātauranga Māori', as follows:

**'Mātauranga Māori'** denotes the *term* 'mātauranga Māori'

**Mātauranga Māori** is *the body of knowledge* to which the term 'mātauranga Māori' refers.

### 3.1 A Sociological Definition

Here is a brief statement about the *history* of mātauranga Māori and a short note about 'mātauranga Māori':

'Mātauranga Māori' is a modern term for a body of knowledge that was brought to these islands by Polynesian ancestors of present-day Māori. Here this body of knowledge grew in response to conditions in Aotearoa and Te Wai Pounamu. The arrival of European people from the 18th century had major impacts on this knowledge, endangering it in many substantial ways. All, however, was not lost, as new knowledge was created through the encounter with the European and through the experience of the creation of the new nation called New Zealand. Important fragments and portions – notably the Māori language – remain today. These fragments and portions are catalysing a new creative period in Māori history and culture and in the life of the New Zealand nation.

This is a *sociological* definition of mātauranga Māori rather than an epistemological definition. That is, it does not tell us about the *nature* of the knowledge referred to in the term 'mātauranga Māori'. Rather, the statement proceeds on the assumption that a certain body of knowledge exists, and we are calling it 'mātauranga Māori'.

Because of the Polynesian dimension of the statement, it does not satisfy everyone. Some maintain that ancestors of modern day Māori were indigenous to these islands. This view is based upon traditions and genealogies which discuss the appearance of human ancestors from the land itself. A good example of this is Tumutumu-whenua (sometimes Tuputupu-whenua), an ancestor of Ngāti Whātua who is said to have been born from the ground.<sup>18</sup> Other examples are the Aoraki tradition of the South Island and the Hinepūkohurangi tradition of the Ngāi Tūhoe people.

One might say that these traditions are localised expressions of indigeneity which exemplify a general imperative in the traditional Māori worldview to connect with the land. All tribal traditions speak of human descent from Papatuanuku, the earth, and so it is possible to say that all iwi come forth from the earth. The traditions mentioned localise this principle into an actual physical feature such as a mountain or the mist, as in the Urewera example. When approached *epistemologically* – rather than through a desire to demonstrate 'rights' in relation to other groups within New Zealand society – these traditions of indigeneity are a marvellously rich way of thinking about knowledge and its place in our experience of the world.

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<sup>18</sup> This tradition was discussed by the Ngāti Whātua chief Paora Tūhaere, quoted by S. Percy Smith in *The Peopling of the North*, p.49. Supplement to the Journal of the Polynesian Society, 1896.

We shall return to these matters in Section 4.0. For now, let us say that 'mātauranga Māori' refers to a body of knowledge with Polynesian origins – the indigeneity question notwithstanding – which has grown and flourished in Aotearoa and Te Wai Pounamu. European colonisation saw it endangered, yet sufficient important fragments and portions remain today (the Māori language, for example) to catalyse a renewed interest in it.

### 3.2 'Mātauranga Māori' is a modern term

It is interesting to note that 'Mātauranga Māori' is a modern term. Many of our present-day elders are not familiar with the term and did not hear it used in their youth. Nevertheless it often refers to something quite old (such as a traditional karakia). When we use this term today, we are using it to 'brand' or point to a body of knowledge – it is this aspect of the usage of the term which is modern. It has come into use since the 1980s. Perhaps a good indicator of its recent usage is the advent of bachelor and masterate programmes in mātauranga Māori at Te Wānanga-o-Raukawa (in the early to middle 1990s).

However, there are earlier usages of the term which, I suggest, are nonetheless modern. Throughout this document, I will refer to a statement written by an ancestor of mine, Kipa Roera Te Ahukaramū of Ngāti Raukawa, in 1915, to illustrate certain points. In one of his whakapapa books, Kipa wrote:

kaore he whare karakia penei me Rangiatea te hanga i Niu Tirenī i te Ao katoa ranei na te mana na te matauranga Maori ake i hanga....<sup>19</sup>

There is no church like Rangiatea, neither in New Zealand nor in the entire world. It was created by mana and mātauranga Māori....

Rangiatea is a church in Ōtaki. Completed in the late 1840s, it is a fascinating example of an attempt to bring together Māori and Christian concepts of divinity, spirituality and religiousness in one setting. Many things can be said about Kipa's statement. For now, let us note that Kipa is saying that a certain kind of knowledge was responsible for the creation of Rangiatea: 'mātauranga Māori'. In making this statement, Kipa is characterising mātauranga Māori as a distinctive body of knowledge. The need to distinguish it in this way is, I suggest, modern. It arises from the esteem that Kipa has for Rangiatea, and his desire to demonstrate that this great *taonga* was created by mātauranga Māori. It also arises from Kipa's desire to refer to the *knowledge* of which Rangiatea is the product, and his need to distinguish this knowledge from, particularly, Biblical knowledge. It is this *need to distinguish* Māori from European culture, worldview and knowledge, and this *urge to say that we have something unique*, that is modern. We will return to this statement to illustrate certain points and themes.

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<sup>19</sup> Kipa Roera Te Ahukaramū of Ngāti Raukawa, *whakapapa* book written in 1915. Copy in private possession.

Ancestors of pre-contact times would not have used the term 'mātauranga Māori' to denote their *knowledge* in the way we do so today. This is because the need to denote a body of knowledge with the term 'mātauranga Māori' arises from our encounter with other cultures and peoples. Today, as the products of these 'encounters' which have taken place for two centuries or more, we have experienced standing 'outside' or some 'distance' from mātauranga Māori. We now need a term to denote that knowledge in order to distinguish it from other bodies of knowledge and experience that are also part of our inheritance.

There are also other reasons why the term 'mātauranga Māori' would not have been meaningful in pre-contact times. These reasons lie with the terms 'mātauranga' and 'Māori' themselves. Firstly, in pre-contact times the identity 'Māori' would not have been meaningful. 'Māori' as an identity only became meaningful following contact with the European in the 18th and 19th centuries. It is meaningful only inasmuch as it distinguishes the aboriginal inhabitants (whose ancestors were Polynesian, the indigeneity issue notwithstanding) from the newly arrived European. Unfortunately, 'Māori' tells us little about the aboriginal inhabitants themselves, except that they are somehow different from the European. These iwi and hapū communities were collectivised into a new identity called 'Māori'.<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, if pre-contact ancestors possessed a concept of knowledge comparable to our concept today (and I suggest that they didn't), their experiences and motivations informing that concept would have been quite different to ours. That is, a key contemporary motivation for possessing a concept called 'mātauranga Māori' is the idea that there is a *thing* called knowledge. Further, the experience that has driven us to this conclusion is the encounter between cultures and our experience of the loss of knowledge. Today we make our thinking about knowledge *explicit* – we suggest that there is a thing called knowledge. However, it is possible that pre-contact 'Māori' did not possess an explicit concept of knowledge. A small example may assist here. I once asked Rev. Māori Marsden whether his father would have known what mātauranga Māori was. Māori replied that his father would have been quite baffled, 'as a fish does not know what water is'.

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<sup>20</sup> Hence we see a further weakness in the concept 'Māori'. When my ancestors arrived in the southern reaches of the North Island in the early decades of the 19th century, their tenure began with great conflict. I am not at all sure that those with whom they were fighting would have been happy to be collectivised together with my ancestors into a concept called 'Māori'. I expect that they would have been keen to disassociate themselves from my ancestors, as I know the latter were. Similarly, the lumping together of the various European peoples as 'Pākehā' has never been universally accepted because of the diversity that existed and continues to exist. For example, we know about certain tensions that existed between the Scottish and English peoples. It is possible to suggest that the terms Māori and Pākehā are meaningful only when they are used by one group about the *other*. When Māori get together, Māori as a concept becomes less meaningful and individual iwi identities become central. However, the word 'Pākehā' is often used. Similarly, in 'Pākehā circles there remains considerable discomfort with the term 'Pākehā', but not with the word 'Māori'.

### 3.3 'Mātauranga Māori' as a term about the totality of a body of knowledge

We have noted that the term 'mātauranga Māori' is used today to 'brand' or indicate a body of knowledge. We have yet to consider the *type* or *nature* of the knowledge referred to. This will be the subject of the next section. For now, let us note this use of 'mātauranga Māori' to denote, to mark, to indicate, to 'brand' this body of knowledge, and also that it does this in a *totalising* way.

What we mean by *totalising* is that 'mātauranga Māori' is used as an *inclusive* term encompassing and including various *types and uses* of knowledge. Thus, the term 'mātauranga Māori' is used to refer to *uses and applications*, such as knowledge pertaining to:

- Gardening
- Fishing
- House building
- Warfare
- Navigation
- Musical instruments
- Ethics

and so on. Hence, 'mātauranga Māori' also includes these various applications and uses. 'Mātauranga Māori' also includes types of knowledge and traditional concepts of knowledge and knowing – including concepts related to the creation of knowledge – that are being rediscovered. These include:

- Tacit knowledge
- Implied knowledge
- Codified and explicit knowledge
- Scientific knowledge
- Religious knowledge

and so on. Hence, 'mātauranga Māori' denotes a variety of approaches to knowledge present within mātauranga Māori including revealed and experiential knowledge (confer religious knowledge) and scientific knowledge.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> We should note, however, that research into the scientific, religious, experiential and other aspects of mātauranga Māori remains in an embryonic form. That is, an *epistemology* of mātauranga Māori has yet to be attempted in a rigorous and comprehensive manner.

### 3.4 Change in Mātauranga Māori

It is important to note that mātauranga Māori (the knowledge itself, rather than the term) changed in important and significant ways in Aotearoa. When ancestors of modern Māori arrived in Aotearoa they were met by flora and fauna, climate and geography they had not experienced in central Polynesia. Hence, their knowledge needed to grow to account for these new phenomena. Similarly, when Europeans arrived, mātauranga Māori changed dramatically in response to new technologies, languages and worldviews. Change has always been present in mātauranga Māori.

Many consider contemporary mātauranga Māori to be dominated by an earlier mythological quasi-religious worldview which empowered unchallengeable authorities such as tohunga to make closed declarations about knowledge and the processes of knowing. As such, it is thought that mātauranga Māori cannot exist as an open inquiry into the world – where positions are debated openly and democratically and sometimes discarded for an ‘improved’ view or theory. I would suggest that this perception needs to be challenged.

The notion that mātauranga Māori is incapable of change and is administered by unchallengeable tohunga is simplistic. Many who express this view or variants of it are motivated by a desire to criticise Māori culture generally and do not base their view on an epistemology of mātauranga Māori. We suggest that a much deeper examination of mātauranga Māori is required before judgements about the notion of change can be made.

It is important to acknowledge, however, that their experiences of colonisation and deculturation have often led Māori to become inflexible in relation to knowledge and tikanga. The ‘claim psychology’ has been applied by Māori to almost everything in the Māori world, including knowledge. A claim activity commences with an assertion about a relationship between a group of people and an object. This ‘statement of claim’ locates the people and object in space and time. In order for the claim to be successful, this ‘location’ must remain fixed so that various judgements can be made about the nature of the claim. That is, we must have a clear and ‘fixed’ understanding both of who the people are (the claimants) and of the object to which the claim is directed. In the case of tikanga, for example, this situation has encouraged the ‘fixing’ of cultural behaviour.

In addition the spirit of *retention* is also very strong in contemporary Māori culture. Many Māori are rightfully concerned with the retention and revitalisation of iwi and hapū knowledge and, hence, act to halt its decline. This activity has, on occasion, served to ‘stiffen’ mātauranga Māori, to introduce a degree of inflexibility because of anxiety about the possible loss. Some contemporary critics of Māori culture are wont to highlight this inflexible attitude, about which this author too has expressed some concern on occasion. However, we must remember that it is a mistake to suggest that this inflexible approach to

mātauranga Māori is held universally or has always been the prevailing Māori attitude towards knowledge.

Again, with respect to tapu and restrictions placed upon knowledge, some suggest that tohunga were unchallengeable as they were presenting knowledge revealed to them by their deity. This too is simplistic, for all tohunga worth their weight underwent tests and challenges before the 'revealed' knowledge passed into the hands of the community. Iwi literature is replete with examples of such testing. Finally, the nature of an oral culture requires that culture to be disciplined about the knowledge it maintains, and who maintains it. There are very practical reasons for being disciplined with certain kinds of knowledge. For example, if one lived in a desert, one had to be very disciplined with songs and other literature by which knowledge about the location of water was maintained.

A discussion on the nature of change in mātauranga Māori should also consider the following themes:

*Mātauranga Māori is a heritage-inspired knowledge system, one which speaks of the 'wisdom of the ancestors'.*

Many interpret this to mean that the succeeding generations must accept without challenge the knowledge of previous generations. This overlooks the fact that many previous positions are used to inspire the formation of a new position. In this way, successive experts 'move through' previously held ideas to new possibilities which nevertheless honour the position from which the new idea is a departure. (The idea of 'departure' is discussed below.) Further, many interpret 'ancestor' as referring only to human ancestors, whereas in the traditional view, 'ancestors' include antecedents in the entire natural world. Hence, when one mentions the 'wisdom of the ancestors', one is also making reference to the embodied knowledge of the natural world. This is discussed in the next section.

*Because mātauranga Māori is intimate with the natural world, the natural world itself is the final arbiter.*

As will be discussed in the next section, mātauranga Māori contains a significant 'indigenous' dimension. That is, traditional Māori knowledge was inspired deeply by the natural world, so much so that in some quarters it was considered that the highest kind of knowledge occurs when the natural world seems to speak directly into human experience.

*Mātauranga Māori includes the concept of 'departure'.*

Departure has been a significant feature of Māori history since Polynesian times. The outward expression of this theme is the departure of peoples from islands to find new homes, often following conflict. Hence, 'departure' is a notion within mātauranga Māori. In later times, departure took place in the context of tribal movements across land. The southward movement of Ngāti Raukawa from Maungatautari (Waikato) in the early decades of the 19th century is an example of departure. Movement from one region to another within Aotearoa was also

considered to be movement between islands. Te Rauparaha poeticised this idea in his song for Kāwhia. The term he used was ‘taranga’, meaning to ‘be parted’, to ‘be separated’.<sup>22</sup>

### **3.5 Mātauranga Māori possesses a variety of worldviews**

Given the ‘totalising’ aspects of the term ‘mātauranga Māori’, it possible to show that mātauranga Māori possesses a number of worldviews. There is a perception that only one worldview can be found within mātauranga Māori. However, there are at least three intersecting and interconnected worldviews, which can be associated with three periods in history:

- pre-contact (classical/mythological)
- colonial/religious (emphasis upon supreme being)
- modern/post-modern economic (rise of the ‘knowledge’ economy/society).

Today all three (and combinations of all three, plus a myriad of ‘sub’ worldviews) find expression in contemporary Māori culture. As a result it can be shown that a number of ‘schools of thought’ are possible (indeed exist) within ‘mātauranga Māori’

It can also be argued that the term ‘mātauranga Māori’ itself has arisen in the modern/post-modern economic period. But while we use the term today to denote the ‘Māori’ position in the knowledge economy, we have evidence that it was first used in the colonial/religious period. The key point here is that a fluid diversity of worldviews exists within mātauranga Māori. It will not be possible to make a firm statement about the open or closed nature of mātauranga Māori until research which is sensitive to the diversity of its worldviews has been conducted.

### **3.6 Mātauranga Māori is in a state of rediscovery – a new creative period**

Mātauranga Māori is now attracting the attention of a number of institutions, including Māori educational institutions such as whare wānanga. ‘Mātauranga Māori’ is also entering acts of parliament and public policy documents. The growth in the use of the term ‘mātauranga Māori’ indicates a growing and widespread interest in mātauranga Māori.

Perhaps the most substantial evidence for the new creativity of mātauranga Māori can be found in the establishment of new educational institutions – particularly kōhanga reo through to whare wānanga. These institutions are dedicated to, among other things, mātauranga Māori, and the impact of this investment on New Zealand society as a whole will reveal itself over time. Further, the unlocking of Māori creative potential through means such as new educational institutions possesses an important mātauranga Māori dimension.

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<sup>22</sup> See ‘Tērā ia ngā tai o Honipaka’, in *Kāti au i Konei: He Kohikohinga i ngā Waiata a Ngāti Toarangatira, a Ngāti Raukawa*, Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal (compiler), Huia, 1994, p.49.

A second significant aspect of contemporary events relevant to the new creative period which is emerging is the bringing of historical claims before the Waitangi Tribunal to a close. All parties appear to be interested in this outcome, and some claims have been settled. A key result is the introduction of new capital into iwi structures, which has stimulated new thinking about how those structures should operate, their identity, and so on. The re-empowerment of iwi structures will eventually lead to a renegotiation between these structures and the state and wider society.

Finally, a renegotiation is taking place in New Zealand society as a whole. Global *and* internal trends have catalysed New Zealanders to explore the foundations of our nation and, this has involved a reassessment of a range of assumptions. One such assumption is the view that the potential contribution of the Māori world to modern New Zealand society is fairly limited. Related to this is the view that Māori represent a net cost to the New Zealand nation. These kinds of assumptions are being challenged as mātauranga Māori, among other things, is re-examined.

#### 4.0 What is Mātauranga Māori? Towards an Epistemology

We will now to consider more directly the nature of knowledge referred to in the term ‘mātauranga Māori’. We will explore various perspectives on knowledge and knowing that can be found in mātauranga Māori. Let us commence with a view presented by the late Rev. Māori Marsden, an elder and tohunga of Te Tai Tokerau:

Ā, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou. Me hoki tātou ki te taitara i tukua mai hei kōrerotanga māku. Nā, te mātauranga Māori me te mātauranga Pākehā. Ā, me tētahi ngarara e kiia ana, *epistemology*, arā, kīa ake nei ko te āhuatanga o tēnei mea o te, o ngā whakaaro mō tēnei mea... mō te mātauranga. E rua ngā ngarara nei. Te mea tuatahi e kī ana te Pākehā, *metaphysics*, tuarua ko te *theory of knowledge*. Ae, e kore pono e āhei ki te kōrero ki tētahi, ki te kāhore tētahi. E whakaaro ana au me pehea taku timatanga kōrero ki a tātou... Nā, ko tāku haere he whāngai i a koutou ki ngā kai o ngā kete, me timata pea ki reira.

Greetings. Let us return to the title that I have been asked to address, that is, Māori knowledge and European knowledge. There is an endeavour called *epistemology* which concerns thinking about knowledge. In fact there are two. The first is called *metaphysics* and the second is, *the theory of knowledge*. It is said that one can not be discussed without the other. I have been thinking about where I should begin...I should perhaps ‘feed you with the food contained within the baskets’, let us begin there.<sup>23</sup>

Rev. Marsden was speaking at important seminar on ‘mātauranga Māori’ in 1993. This seminar was a critical point in the development of a theory of mātauranga Māori. Marsden is one of the few elders of recent times who considered the notion of an epistemology of mātauranga Māori. Whilst he did not complete such a theory, the 1993 seminar opened the door, ever so slightly, into a world of knowing and experience.

It also sowed the seed for the emergence of a theory about such knowledge and knowing. Marsden presented fragments and kernels of ideas sufficient to catalyse a creative exploration of a way of experiencing and seeing the world that had perhaps been hidden for a long period of time. The confidence one experiences in taking this journey arises from Marsden’s authority to speak for mātauranga Māori, an authority grounded in his time as a student both of the traditional whare wānanga and a student of world wisdom traditions. We shall return to Marsden’s views throughout this section.

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<sup>23</sup> Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal (ed.), *The Woven Universe: Selected Writings of Rev. Māori Marsden*, The Estate of Rev. Māori Marsden, 2003, pp.72-3, 77.

In Section 3.0, a distinction was drawn between the term 'mātauranga Māori' and the knowledge to which the term refers. We have seen that the term is used predominantly for certain sociological and socio-cultural purposes. We have also seen that confusion can arise when one person uses the term simply to 'brand' a body of knowledge, while another has in mind a certain way of being and experiencing the world which they are attempting to advance. As noted earlier, a good deal of confusion can be dispelled by drawing this distinction between the term and the knowledge to which it refers.

In this section, we turn to an epistemological discussion, a consideration of the concepts of knowledge and 'knowing' that can be found in the body of knowledge referred to by the term 'mātauranga Māori'. It is in this discussion that one encounters the truly inspirational and creative aspects of what we might call an indigenous knowledge tradition. And it is these aspects, I suggest, which form the basis of a potentially important contribution to world knowledge.

#### **4.1 Biases of the Author**

I would like to preface this material with several comments. Firstly, in presenting these ideas, I am not interested in developing a theory of mātauranga Māori (an epistemology) for its own sake. I am not trained in epistemology, and it is not my primary purpose to further that branch of philosophy concerned with the nature of knowledge – although a modest contribution may be made here.

As a New Zealander, I am exploring these traditional concepts and developing interpretations with a view to understanding their possible contribution to contemporary Māori culture and the wider society. I do not wish merely to be a theorist about Māori culture; I also, in some sense, seek to be a bearer of it – in keeping with the renaissance of Māori culture of the past three decades. In developing these ideas, I am as keen to understand these matters and what they hold for me as a person, as I am to present a scholarly study of an indigenous epistemology.

Secondly, whilst these interpretations employ a good deal of historical material, my interest is not merely in developing a theory of mātauranga Māori in history. Rather, I am interested in understanding what this body of knowledge may have to say about life today, and how certain aspects of it might be applied in contemporary circumstances. Hence, the passages that follow arise from a combination of the consideration of historical material and an understanding of contemporary matters.

Thirdly, there are gender considerations to take into account. As a male, I possess a view of the world which arises from the particular combination of masculine and feminine energies at play within me. From a traditional Māori point of view, human individuals are the product of both Tāne and Hine, which are seen first as wairua or energy and subsequently concretised into gender. Clearly the Tāne energy is ascendant in the male and the Hine energy in the female –

but this is not always so. On the whole, I recognise the masculine within me and note that this can influence the way in which stories are told, questions are drawn, conclusions identified. However, I also stress that it is simplistic to suggest that the male gender is *only* masculine and the female is *only* feminine. We are an interesting combination of these things, and human life is delightful in the infinite combinations that come into existence. (We should also note the use of male sources in this report.)

Finally, in presenting these interpretations, I do not advocate some kind of 'return' to previous ways of knowing and experiencing the world. My interest is in understanding how elements of traditional knowledge and experience might inform an entirely new way of considering aspects of our contemporary world. Hence, the task is not merely to reconstruct a worldview so as to return to it (if this were even possible), but rather to develop an understanding of aspects of that worldview and to explore how these might inform a new paradigm.

The reason for this is that the revitalisation of a culture – the traditional knowledge bases of Māori communities – has to take place in the context of our lives today. It must occur in a way that is not only internally meaningful to the culture but of relevance to our contemporary world. That is, we Māori need to be Māori contemporaneously with our membership in wider New Zealand society and the global world. This is not a contradiction, nor are these positions mutually exclusive – this is already our reality. In our contemporary situation, we cannot be isolated from the currents and influences of a new global environment. We have to shape a worldview that weaves these elements convincingly into a lived whole. One way to do this is to draw connections between key themes and ideas in our traditional knowledge bases, and critical issues facing human society everywhere. For why revitalise and revive mātauranga Māori if not to make a contribution to our world?

A critical issue facing humankind everywhere is the quest to achieve a better relationship with our natural environment. We have been denuding the natural world of its taonga for far too long. Ecological crises are widespread and numerous thinkers throughout the world have articulated the need to find a new paradigm, a different way of being in the world that is mutually empowering to both human societies and the natural world. Thomas Berry suggests that we need a 'mutually enhancing mode of human dwelling on planet Earth', and he states that 'An indispensable resource in the fulfilment of this task is the guidance of indigenous people.'<sup>24</sup> Hence, the development of an understanding of mātauranga Māori is driven both by a desire to revitalise and renew aspects of Māori culture and by a need to contribute to ameliorating the worldwide crisis in the relationship between human societies and our natural environment.

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<sup>24</sup> Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future*, Bell Tower, New York, 1999, pp.ix, x.

To this end, I am mindful of Richard Tarnas who, after delivering a virtuoso rendition of the history of western philosophy and thought, turns to summarising some key ideas of a paradigm to come. He discusses a 'participatory epistemology' in which the human mind achieves a 'radical kinship with the cosmos'. Tarnas is searching for a new paradigm which seeks to overcome critical anxieties and tensions in post-modern western life. One such difficulty is the relationship between the human mind and the natural world, and his writing edges toward a view which:

reflects the human mind's pivotal role as vehicle of the universe's unfolding meaning.<sup>25</sup>

As one will see, a critical feature of traditional Māori concepts of knowledge and knowing alights upon this key question of our relationship with the natural world. It is highly unlikely that Māori thinkers of 300 years ago would have posed these questions in the way in which we do today. However, I do suggest that there are elements in these traditional concepts which represent fragments upon which an indigenously inspired response to this critical issue facing modern life might be conceptualised and discussed. Indeed the following extract, again from Tarnas, sounds deeply 'indigenous' in atmosphere and style:

The human spirit does not merely prescribe nature's phenomenal order; rather, the spirit of nature brings its *own* order through the human mind when that mind is employing its full complement of faculties – intellectual, volitional, emotional, sensory, imaginative, aesthetic, epiphanic. In such knowledge, the human mind 'lives into' the creative activity of nature. Then the world speaks its meaning through human consciousness. Then human language itself can be recognized as rooted in deeper reality, as reflecting the universe's unfolding meaning. Through human intellect, in all its personal individuality, contingency, and struggle, the world's evolving thought-content achieves conscious articulation.<sup>26</sup>

It is just this direction that I suggest traditional concepts of knowledge are urging us toward. Whilst they do not quite achieve the articulation mastered by Tarnas here, the seeds of this envisaged paradigm can nonetheless be found in traditional concepts of knowledge and knowing. Compare, Tarnas's words with these of Rev. Māori Marsden:

The function of humankind as the envelope of the noosphere – conscious awareness of Papatuanuku – is to advance her towards the omega point of fulfilment. This will mean a radical departure from the modern concept of man as the centre of the universe towards an awareness that man's destiny is intimately bound up with the destiny of the earth. Thus will he embrace a holistic view which encompasses all life. He will thus learn to

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<sup>25</sup>Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind*, Ballantine Books, New York, 1991, p.437.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.435.

flow with and ride upon the vibrant energies of the Cosmic stream. So will he overcome his sense of isolation, that estrangement which breeds despair – the encounter with nothingness. Only then will he recognise inwardly that he has come home.<sup>27</sup>

#### **4.2 Developing an Interpretation of Traditional Concepts**

In presenting the following interpretations, I stress that they have been developed (and they remain in a process of unfolding) in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century by this writer – with all his foibles, blemishes and diverse influences. I stress that these are *my* interpretations that will require discussion, debate and wānanga.

Today, when we think about traditional Māori life and outlooks – the traditional Māori worldview – we often think that Māori generally experienced and saw life in much the same way. We look back and into history with our contemporary eyes, seeking an image of traditional life, one which we can comprehend and understand. In doing so, we look for defining characteristics, features and patterns which we today can hold to be the traditional worldview of a people. What we are actually doing is creating *our* explanation of the way life was and what they considered the world to be. Indeed the word ‘Māori’ itself is a modern lens through which we are looking at the culture of a people who did not identify as Māori yet whom we continue to label as such.

Whilst we can say that certain features and characteristics did exist, the truth is that the worldview of a people is a complex, dynamic and changing feature of their life and experience. A worldview ‘lies at the very heart of the culture’, as Rev. Māori Marsden says, ‘touching, interacting with and strongly influencing every aspect of the culture.’<sup>28</sup> A worldview is, to a certain degree, a mysterious thing, never finally understood until it is experienced.

Hence, in discussing the traditional Māori worldview, we are presenting certain features, ideas and characteristics that strike us as significant. In doing so, we should be mindful of variances and inconsistencies that always exist when humans consider their place in the world. It should also be noted that the Māori world changed immediately in response to their arrival in this country, and continued to grow till the arrival of the European. Similarly, the worldview changed again through encounter with the European, and various influences have resulted in the development of a number of worldviews within Māori society and culture. Hence, it is not possible to say that there is a single worldview in operation in Māori culture today. In presenting these views, I do so with both an eye on the past and a partial (at most) understanding of the preoccupations of the present.

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<sup>27</sup> *The Woven Universe*, pp.46-7.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p.56.

A further and complicating aspect of this attempt to interpret traditional concepts of knowledge is the holistic, multi-dimensional, intuitive and internal nature of the experience of knowledge and knowing. Whilst I present a number of ideas about individual concepts – mohiotanga, māramatanga and so on – it should be remembered that human knowledge and knowing is a mysterious, organic and multi-dimensional phenomenon. Hence, whilst considering individual concepts, let us also be mindful that these exist in complex relationships with each other, for we are attempting to ‘map’ or ‘image’ in certain ways human knowledge and knowing as they may be explained and considered within mātauranga Māori.

### 4.3 Mātauranga

Whilst ‘mātauranga Māori’ is being used today as a title for a body of knowledge, the word mātauranga itself can be considered to denote a perspective on the nature of knowledge. Mātauranga is often used in everyday parlance to stand for knowledge generally. A number of aspects of its usage deserve further discussion.

#### *Knowledge Transfer*

Firstly, we can say that mātauranga is often used to refer to knowledge that is passed, exchanged, transferred between people. For example, uttering words to explain something passes knowledge from one person (the speaker) to another (the listener). We would refer to this type of knowledge as mātauranga.

Drawing on this *transfer* aspect of mātauranga, Rev. Māori Marsden discusses the notion of being able to collect or gather mātauranga and place it in one’s kete (basket):

Nā, ko te mātauranga, hei ā kohikohi. Whakarongo ki te kōrero, kua kohikohia, kia kī ai tāu kete. Tango mai i ngā tohunga kua whāngaia ki ngā kai o ngā kete e toru.

Now, concerning knowledge, this is something we collect. One listens to stories and explanations and gathers these things into one’s basket so that it may be full. One gathers together these things from priests and experts who have partaken of ‘the food of the three baskets’ (sacred knowledge). Your task is to gather together these treasures into your basket.<sup>29</sup>

The essential feature of mātauranga is that it refers to knowledge that is passed between people. In this way, mātauranga is similar to ‘kai’, which is discussed below. We might say that mātauranga, in this sense, is passive, a finite product (compromising mainly words) passed between persons.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp.75, 78.

### *Active Knowledge*

However, mātauranga also possesses an active aspect – in the same way that the English term ‘knowledge’ is both passive and active. That is, mātauranga can refer to knowledge generally – ideas exchanged between people – and it can also refer to a person’s understanding of something. For example:

Ko tāna mātauranga ki te tuhituhi, ko tāna mātauranga ki te kōrero.  
His knowledge of writing, his knowledge of speaking.

This usage is derived from the root word ‘mātau’ – to know, to understand. Hence the expressions:

He tangata mātau tērā.  
He is a knowledgeable person.

And:

Kei te mātau ia ki tāu e kōrero nā.  
He understands the matter you are discussing.

The Williams *Dictionary* glosses ‘mātau’ as ‘know, to be acquainted with’, and provides the following illustration:

E kore au e matau ki nga whakaaro o nga tangata katoa.<sup>30</sup>  
I do not know the thoughts of all people.

The *Dictionary* also includes the derived terms of whakamātau (make to know, teach) and whakamātautau (to make trial of, test). Today, whakamātautau is often used for examination.

### *A Learned Person*

Finally, sometimes mātauranga refers to a learned person. As in:

E ngā mātauranga o te motu, whakarongo mai.  
Knowledgeable person of the land, please listen.

This usage is similar to the use of wānanga to refer to an expert person:

Kihai i tae ki nga pukenga, ki nga wananga, ki nga tauira.<sup>31</sup>  
He did not attend to the teachers, the wise persons, the models.

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<sup>30</sup> H.W. Williams, *Dictionary of the Maori Language*, Seventh Edition, 1971, Reprinted Legislation Direct, 2000, p.191. The quote is from Davis, *Maori Mementoes*, 1855. Please note that as a macron does not appear in the original, it does not appear in this quote. The word used here is ‘mātau’, not ‘matau’ a kind of fish hook.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p.479.

In the following extract, *mātauranga* is again used to refer to a learned person, and the word *wānanga* is used to refer to the deliberation of learned persons. This letter from the Taranaki elder Ōriwa Haddon appeared in the Māori language newspaper *Te Toa Takitini* in 1929. It concerns the name 'Aotearoa':

He mea whakamiharo te ngahau mai o nga matauranga o te Motu, e hau nei i nga Pepa, a ratou wananga mo te Ingoa nei mo Aotearoa....<sup>32</sup>

The contributions to the newspaper by the knowledgeable people of the land have been amazing and greatly enjoyable, particularly their entertaining discussions concerning the name 'Aotearoa'...

To summarise, *mātauranga* is used to refer to knowledge generally. We have noted, though, the idea of *mātauranga* as a kind of knowledge that passes between individuals. We have also seen that *mātauranga* possesses a more active aspect describing a person's understanding of a particular matter. This aspect of *mātauranga* is drawn from the root word 'mātau', meaning 'to know'. We have also seen that *mātauranga* at times can be used to refer to a wise and knowledgeable person.

#### 4.3.1 Use of 'Mātauranga' to refer to Biblical Knowledge

An interesting aspect of the use of the term *mātauranga* is that it has not always meant 'Māori knowledge' in the way that many use it today. Today, 'mātauranga' usually refers to 'Māori knowledge' (for want of a better term). However, we suggest that '*mātauranga Māori*' refers to 'Māori knowledge' (epistemological considerations aside), and that *mātauranga* should be used for 'knowledge' generally (again as a signifier rather than as a statement about a type of knowledge).

For further perspectives on the meaning of the term 'mātauranga', one may consult iwi literature and other genres in which the term is used. In doing so, one can not avoid the widespread 19th and early 20th century association of the term with Biblical knowledge. Here is an example taken from a letter which appeared in the Māori language newspaper *Te Pipiwharauoa* in 1908:

E ki ana a Horomona, 'te whiwhi ki te whakaaro nui, ano te pai! pai atu i te koura: ko te whiwhi hoki ki te matauranga te mea e tino hiahiatia nuitia atu ana i te hiriwa.' Whakatauki XVI.-16. E hoa ma! ma te matauranga nui ka mama noa iho nga mea taumaha, ara, te mahi kai me te tiaki whare, me te tiaki tamariki hoki, me era atu tini mahi a te pakeha.<sup>33</sup>

Solomon tells us, 'It is much better, better than gold, to have wisdom. It is far better to have knowledge than silver'. Proverbs 16:16. Friends, by knowledge all things are made light, that is the preparation of food,

<sup>32</sup> *Te Toa Takitini*, Noema 1, 1929.

<sup>33</sup> *Te Pipiwharauoa*, No. 118, January 1908. My translation.

maintaining a household, care of children and all the many things of the European.

Especially in the latter decades of the 19th century, mātauranga was Biblical knowledge. If, for example, someone asked:

Kei te ako koe i te mātauranga?

The translation of this sentence would read:

Are you learning Biblical knowledge?

Hence, in 1915, when Kipa Roera came to write his statement about Rangiātea Church in Ōtaki, it made sense to add the word 'mātauranga' to the word 'Māori'.

kaore he whare karakia penei me Rangiatea te hanga i Niu Tirenī i te Ao katoa ranei na te mana na te matauranga Maori ake i hanga.<sup>34</sup>

There is no church like Rangiātea neither in New Zealand nor in the entire world. It was created by mana and mātauranga Māori.

Having discovered this historical usage of 'mātauranga' to refer to Biblical knowledge, we can 'read into' Kipa's statement to reveal another layer of meaning. That is, if 'mātauranga' refers to Biblical knowledge then 'mātauranga Māori' refers to a kind of knowledge comparable in nature, quality and importance (mana) to that of Biblical knowledge but sourced in a non-Christian deity. Biblical knowledge is considered to be a sacred knowledge whose source is God 'himself', brought into our present reality through the power of the written word. In writing his statement, Kipa is saying that his ancestors too possessed a knowledge of special power and mana, a kind of knowledge that was singularly responsible for the establishment of Rangiātea in Ōtaki – a church universally lauded by Māori and Pākehā alike.

On this interpretation, therefore, Kipa sees 'mātauranga Māori' as a particular kind of special knowledge – one impregnated and suffused with mana. The implication is that not all Māori knowledge is necessarily the kind of knowledge referred to by this term. In Kipa's usage, 'mātauranga Māori' refers to a special mana derived knowledge, rather than all knowledge held within the Māori world. This way of using 'Māori' is repeated in the expressions 'mana Māori' and 'tohunga Māori', where the word 'Māori' is used to indicate a non-Christian religiosity and spirituality. A 'mana Māori' is a non-Christian divine power, the preserve of a 'tohunga Māori'.<sup>35</sup> As the Biblical use of 'mātauranga' refers to a

<sup>34</sup> Kipa Roera Te Ahukaramū, work cited.

<sup>35</sup> Hence, many of the prophetic movements of the 19th and 20th centuries, following the adoption of a Biblical paradigm, were concerned to overcome the 'tohunga Māori', the vessel of a non-Christian god. The Rātana Church, for example, made explicit its quest to overthrow

special and sacred knowledge, Kipa is telling us that 'mātauranga Māori' refers to another special and sacred knowledge, like Biblical knowledge but with a different source.

Of course, the association of 'mātauranga' with this special and sacred God-derived knowledge begins with the passages in Genesis referring to the 'tree of knowledge'. The well-known story has God explaining to Adam and Eve that they must not partake of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, for if they do they will perish. 'Te rakau o te matauranga' first appears at Te Kenehi 2:9:

A i whakatupuria ake ano e Ihowa e te Atua i roto i te oneone nga rakau katoa e ahuareka ana ki te titiro, e pai ana hoki hei kai, me te rakau ano o te ora i waenganui o te kari, raua ko te rakau o te matauranga ki te pai ki te kino.<sup>36</sup>

He made all kinds of beautiful trees grow there and produce good fruit. In the middle of the garden stood the tree that gives life and the tree that gives knowledge of what is good and what is bad.<sup>37</sup>

At Te Kenehi 2:17, the sanction against eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge is first established:

Ko te rakau ia o te matauranga ki te pai ki te kino, kaua e kainga tetahi o ona *hua*; ta te mea hoki ko te ra e kai ai koe i te tahi o ona *hua*, ka mate koe, mate rawa.

except the tree that gives knowledge of what is good and what is bad. You must not eat the fruit of that tree; if you do, you will die the same day.

The underlying reason for the sanction against consuming this fruit is given in Te Kenehi 3:5:

Erangi e mohio ana te Atua ko te ra e kai ai korua i tetahi o ona *hua*, katahi ka mārama o korua kanohi, a ka whakaatua korua, ka mohio ki te pai ki te kino.

God said that, because he knows that when you eat it you will be like God and know what is good and what is bad.

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'tohungaism' by publishing words to this effect upon the gateway to the temple at Rātana Pā, near Whanganui.

<sup>36</sup> This and the subsequent quotes from Te Kenehi are taken from an 1868 edition of *Te Paipera Tapu*, published by A.W.Watts Press of London for 'Te Komiti Ta Paipera mo Ingarangi mo te Ao Katoa' (Bible Publishing Committee of London for the entire world)

<sup>37</sup> This and the subsequent English quotes from Genesis are taken from *The Good News Bible* published by the Bible Society in 1976.

This sentence (uttered by the snake) is fascinating because it refers to other types of knowledge and understanding. The first is *māramatanga* – referred to in the phrase ‘*ka mārama o korua kanohi*’. Translated as ‘your eyes will see’, by extension this means, ‘you will understand’. A second level of meaning lies in the phrase ‘*ka whakaatua korua*’ – ‘you will be like God’, meaning that ‘you will achieve a knowledge and an understanding commensurate with that of God’ meaning that you will ‘know what is good and what is bad’. Knowledge, therefore, is something of profound importance through which the world is to be known and understood, and by which humans will be able to assess right and wrong, good and bad. These weighty perspectives on knowledge came to be associated with ‘*mātauranga*’ through these translations of the Bible.

There are many other uses of the term in *Te Paipera Tapu*, and it is beyond the scope of this report to conduct an exhaustive study. We can note, however, this first usage of ‘*mātauranga*’ and its association with divine authority and knowledge. We can also suggest that on many occasions – following the widespread adoption of Old and New Testament paradigms in Māori communities – ‘*mātauranga*’ became heavily associated with Biblical knowledge generally, and specifically with a sacred knowledge through which Adam and Eve could become God-like.

#### **4.3.2 ‘Mātauranga’ and Literacy**

This usage of ‘*mātauranga*’ to refer to the Genesis ‘tree of knowledge’ resonates, of course, with traditional and pre-contact perceptions of the tree (that is, Tāne) and the use of its products as materials in various applications. In traditional times, materials derived from trees were said to retain the presence of Tāne in the object into which they were fashioned. For example, when trees were felled to construct a house, the presence of Tāne was preserved throughout the construction process, so that when the new house was opened, orators could refer to the *house* as ‘Tāne-whakapiripiri’. How else could it be referred to when one understands that the tree *is* Tāne?

It is possible that this traditional perception of the use of Tāne-derived materials in a variety of technologies was also applied to literacy, given that paper was made from trees or other plants. This is reflected, for example, in the use of the word ‘*pukapuka*’ for ‘book’. The *pukapuka* is a shrub whose leaves were used in some quarters as rudimentary paper. The *pukapuka* aside, however, when Māori of the 19th century encountered literacy, a new term had to be coined for this phenomenon. My thought is that *mātauranga* was used for this purpose, the major text known to Māori communities in the early and middle 19th century was *Te Paipera Tapu*.

The perception that paper embodied the extended presence of Tāne added to this sense of sacred and mystical knowledge that was associated with Biblical knowledge and brought to Māori communities through the written word. In addition, *Te Paipera Tapu* brought a new language to these communities. Names such as Ihowa and Ihu Karaiti, pregnant with sacred meaning, were brought to these communities through written texts.

To summarise, I argue that the arrival of literacy in association with *Te Paipera Tapu* came to hold deep significance for the meaning of the word 'mātauranga' in the 19th and 20th centuries. In the first instance, mātauranga was associated with a special and sacred God-derived knowledge which became known in Māori communities through the written word. Hence, the intersection of this God-derived knowledge with literacy. *Te Paipera Tapu*, a written text, came to be understood as 'the word of God', and it is my suggestion that the word mātauranga became heavily associated with this new cultural phenomenon.

#### **4.3.3 Is 'Mātauranga' an old or new term?**

But is 'mātauranga' a new or an old term? Was it invented in the 19th century in the context of the arrival of literacy and the Bible, or is it an older term which was appropriated into this new context and applied for those purposes? While it is beyond the scope of this report to address this question exhaustively, it is worth noting that a variety of usages can be found in iwi history. For example, a wāhi tapu near the mouth of Wellington Harbour (Te Whanganui-a-Tara) associated with Kupe (the Polynesian explorer who arrived in Aotearoa 8-10 centuries ago) is called Mātauranga. Elsdon Best refers to this place called Mātauranga in his book entitled *The Land of Tara*. He relates, on page four, that Mātauranga was a person on board Kupe's canoe and who was left at this locality. A genealogy can also be found on page three of that book. Does this suggest a pre-contact use of the term or word 'mātauranga'?

#### **4.4 Kai**

In traditional times, knowledge was also referred to as nourishment (kai), something that was fed (whāngai) from one person to another. This perspective of knowledge as food is reflected in numerous places in traditional literature such as proverbs (whakataukī). For example, the following proverb appears widely:

Ko te manu e kai ana i te hua o te ngahere, nōna te ngahere  
Ko te manu e kai ana i te hua o te mātauranga, nōna te ao.  
The bird who partakes of the fruit of the tree, theirs is the forest  
The bird who partakes of the fruit of knowledge, theirs is the world.

Another proverb states that knowledge is:

te kaimānga a ngā tūpuna (the masticated food of the ancestors).

Pei Te Hurinui uses a variant of this term in his biography of Pōtatau Te Wherowhero when he writes:

Through the ages the peoples of the world have shown resentment toward any man possessed of the treasures of the Baskets of Knowledge. They are governed by their feelings of envy, and will select those of shallow minds like themselves, or those who will give the *maanga* (chewed-over food). The people who continue long in these ways will become possessed of languid souls.<sup>38</sup>

The term 'kaimānga' translates as 'masticated food'. The image used in the proverb is of a mother who chews a piece of food before she feeds it to her baby, to ensure that it is readily digestible and that the nourishment is released to the child.

As the proverb suggests, true knowledge is like a food masticated by our mothers before it is fed to us. Knowledge should not be imparted in large unpalatable and indigestible chunks. It should be broken down into pieces and carefully 'chewed over' before it is passed to another. Teachers should be like our mothers, chewing through knowledge before it is taught to others. As we all know, the best teachers are those who thoroughly understand the knowledge they are passing to others, those who have 'chewed through' the knowledge they are imparting.

The proverb also states that knowledge is the masticated food 'of the ancestors'. That is, knowledge is 'chewed over' and passed from one generation to the next. It reminds us that the best and most effective learning takes place in the family context, where a child partakes of knowledge as if it is a 'kai' fed to them by their parents. The proverb reinforces the 'parents as first teachers' ethos. It also underlines the idea that knowledge that nourishes has the 'feel' of generations upon it. Finally, the proverb expresses the view that a child will always reflect the cultural and family context in which they are raised. If the context is loving, then the child too will be loving. If the context is dislocated, dysfunctional and lacking a moral base, this too will be bequeathed to the child. This small proverb contains a great deal of wisdom about the importance of possessing good-quality and nourishing knowledge.

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<sup>38</sup> Pe Te Hurinui, *King Potatau: An Account of the Life of Potatau Te Wherowhero, the First Maori King*, Polynesian Society, 1959, p.253. On the matter of jealousies and 'languid souls', Pei writes elsewhere, 'Te taenga iho o Tawhaki ki te whenua nei me nga kete o te wananga, tuturu tonu ka tupu te hae, ka ara he pakanga, ka waiho hoki hei mea taruhae (tarahae) ma nga iwi o te ao te tangata e hora ana i nga taonga o te wananga ara o te mohiotanga ki nga whakaaro nunui o te Ao. A, e pera tonu nei i tenei ra.' ('When Tawhaki arrived back to the land, together with the baskets of the *wānanga*, indeed, jealousies and conflict arose. The person in possession of wise and profound knowledge of the world, the person who is able to reveal the treasures of the *wānanga*, is an object of jealousy in all peoples. That is how it is, even today.') Pei Te Hurinui Jones, MS Copy Micro 0698, Reel 15, MS Papers 1885-1976 Micro 0698 Alexander Turnbull Library. Originals in MS Group 0358, Reel 15, Folders 86-94.

Other fragments contained within mātauranga Māori also reflect this notion of knowledge as a food or a nourishment. For example, the puku, or stomach, was the place where knowledge was considered to be stored. Further, the hinengaro, which is translated today as the mind or our intellectual faculties, is also used in reference to the spleen.

#### **4.5 Māramatanga**

Another kind of 'knowing' and 'knowledge' considered here is māramatanga which can be literally translated as 'illumination'. Māramatanga is connected with degrees of understanding (mārama). One might think of a spectrum of understanding on which one end indicates no understanding or illumination, while the other end is characterised by great illumination and knowledge.

Our everyday experience of māramatanga occurs in activities such as conversation through which we pass mātauranga between each other. With respect to māramatanga, it is up to the person who is receiving the knowledge whether they understand or not. Māramatanga is the experience of understanding that takes place inside a person when they have received certain knowledge. Māramatanga does not arise solely through the arrival of mātauranga (knowledge). Some mysterious alchemy takes place inside a person which transforms what they have heard (mātauranga) into understanding (māramatanga).

From the traditional Māori worldview, it might be argued that māramatanga is the highest form of knowledge. This notion is based upon tribal creation traditions which speak of the rise of Te Ao Mārama, 'the world of light and illumination'. Hence, the ubiquitous oratorical phrase used on marae throughout the country:

Tihē mauriora ki Te Whaiao  
Ki Te Ao Mārama!  
The breath and vital energy of life  
To the Dawnlight  
To the World of Light, of Illumination!

Finally, we can note that māramatanga was also a popular concept in the 19th century, following the adoption of a Biblical paradigm in many Māori communities. The various Poropiti (prophets) were gifted individuals who were said to come into possession of a māramatanga out of which certain teachings and statements were made. When the gifted individual went through an illuminating experience by which they came to see deeply into some aspect of existence or felt that they received some special knowledge, the expression used was:

Kua tau mai he māramatanga ki a ia  
An illumination and an understanding has come upon him/her.

The person had experienced a profound learning, the expression of which took various forms.

#### 4.6 Mōhiotanga

Mōhiotanga is a term widely used in Māori language circles. The following quote from Rev. Māori Marsden, demonstrates the relationship between mātauranga, māramatanga and mōhio:

Tēnei mea, rerekē anō te mātauranga i tēnei mea i te mōhio. He mātauranga anō te mātauranga, he mōhiotanga anō te mōhio. Ā, e ū ai te mohio ki roto ki te tangata. Nā te tae mai o te māramatanga o te wairua pēnei i tā ō koutou mātua titiro. Kia puta te māramatanga o te wairua ki te hinengaro o te tangata, nō te mea, ko te mātauranga, he mea nō te mahunga o te tangata, ko te mōhio he mea nō te ngākau, o te hinengaro o te tangata. Ā, kia tae rā anō ki te wā e mārama ai te wairua o te tangata, tana hinengaro, katahi anō ka kiia kua mōhio ia.

Knowledge (mātauranga) is different from knowing (mohio). When the illumination of the spirit arrives, then one truly knows, according to your ancestors. When illumination of the spirit arrives in the mind of the person that is when understanding occurs for knowledge belongs to the head – and knowing belongs to the heart. When the person understands both in the mind and in the spirit, then it is said that that person truly ‘knows’ (mohio).<sup>39</sup>

Mohiotanga can be viewed as ‘internalised or embodied knowing’, understanding that does not require an exchange (of knowledge) to be present in one’s consciousness. An example of this kind of ‘knowing’ is the ability of the new-born child to suckle at his/her mother’s breast. In most cases, a child is not taught to suckle, but somehow it knows what to do.

Examples of ‘mōhiotanga’ can be found throughout the natural world: the movement of a leaf toward the rays of the sun, the ability of a bird to build a nest, the ‘brace’ of the body when one is struck with fear, and so on. These are all aspects or features of ‘knowing’ that do not require the deliberate transfer of knowledge from one to another. ‘Mōhiotanga’ is generally used to stand for this kind of knowing.

The Marsden quote above suggests that mohiotanga might be a higher form of knowing than that suggested by mātauranga. The sense here is that mohiotanga is some kind of ‘embodied’ knowing, suggestive perhaps of ‘consciousness’. A key feature of mohiotanga is the notion that it is *not transferred* as mātauranga is, but somehow resides in the body.

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<sup>39</sup> *The Woven Universe*, pp.76, 79.

#### 4.7 Whakaahua

A further concept relevant to knowledge and knowing that is found within mātauranga Māori is whakaahua. This is the idea of knowledge as an image of the world. For example, words can be considered to stand for an image of the world in the same way as a painting or a photograph depicts a scene. Words can be considered to stand for an object to which I am directing my meaning. However, there is another way of considering this concept.

Today, our notion of 'image' is dominated by technological image-making, in which the image is not considered to retain any essence of the object, scene or person depicted. That is, the images we create are generally inanimate and dispassionate, retaining little essence of the subject. Of course, this is not entirely so, as artists are at pains to explain how the world they inhabit becomes tangible in the art object itself. However, on the whole, a photograph, for example, of a person is not generally considered to be part of the person depicted. Images are considered to be separate from objects.

In Māori communities, by contrast, it is not unusual to hear individuals use an expression like:

Me mihi rā ki ngā tūpuna e whakaahua mai nei i tēnei whare.  
Let us acknowledge the ancestors depicted in this house.

The English translation does not capture the meaning here. The ancestors of the meeting house are not merely depicted but reanimated, brought back to life in the new form of a carved pou. Whakaahua can be translated as 'cause to take form'. During the construction of a carved whareniui, it is said that the mauri, the life force and essence of the tree, remains. Once the carving is completed and the pou is erected in the house, the tree itself comes back to life. This is the depicted ancestor coming back to life in the form of the new carving. The evidence for this newly animated 'life' can be seen in the renewed flow of sap rising through the interior of the wood or the sprouting of new shoots upon the carving.<sup>40</sup>

The depiction of an ancestor in this way does not result in a separate image *representing* a subject but rather is the ancestor itself, albeit in a new form. This idea is illustrated in the following fascinating exchange between the ethnologist Edward Tregear and Te Whetū, a 19th century member of Ngāti Raukawa. Tregear was invited by Te Whetū to inspect a 'huge conical stone' in the Waikato River that was said to be the ancestor Raukawa:

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<sup>40</sup> Some years ago, attention was drawn in the media to a carving which was seen to be 'weeping', I think, in a whare on the East Coast. Water appeared from the eyes of the ancestor depicted on the carving. I suggest that this was the quality sought in traditional times. Following the erection of the house, the trees out of which the house was constructed would come back to life again – the sap begins to move through the wood again. In this way, the ancestors seemed to come back to life again as well. Orators often refer to the carved meeting house as 'Tāne-whakapiripiri', 'Tāne who unifies the diversity of the forest'.

It was about 30 ft. in height.... About 20ft. up was a bright patch of red ochre. The Maori said, 'Do you see the *kura* (red mark)?' I answered, 'Yes, what is it?' He replied, 'That is the blood that flowed from the wound when he was killed. That is my ancestor, Raukawa. He was a giant; he leapt across the Waikato River at the place where Cambridge now stands.' I said, 'I should like to understand exactly what you mean. Do you want me to know that this stone was set up in memory of your ancestor, and made sacred for him.' He answered, 'No, this is my ancestor himself.' I then said, 'You must know that you are talking nonsense. A stone cannot give life to a race of men, nor could it leap across the Waikato. You mean that the stone has been named for Raukawa, or else, perhaps, that your giant forefather was turned into stone by the gods and the petrified hero stands in this spot.' 'No.' he replied doggedly, 'that is Raukawa, and the red mark is the place where he was mortally wounded.'<sup>41</sup>

The object observed was not merely a representation of Raukawa, but Raukawa himself. Such a proposition is not as illogical as it might seem. Our typical thought habit is to see Raukawa as a human being, an ancestor of Te Whetū. As such, he could not also be a rock standing in a river. But, what if Te Whetū was working with a different assumption – that Raukawa was a term for some kind of non-ordinary essence or presence that was able to take a variety of forms. At one point Raukawa is a human being, at another Raukawa is a rock standing in a river. (Raukawa is also a carved meeting house standing in Ōtaki.)

The American anthropologist Michael Kearney discusses this matter in relation to a Mexican 'spiritualist' friend who:

occasionally tells me that a neighbouring *bruja* (witch) has come as an owl to molest her. Now, her thinking might be interpreted as asserting that a human being can also be an owl.... But this is not what she means; she means that the witch comes in *the form* of an owl, which is one of the forms this witch can take. Human form, owl form, coyote form are simply different forms of something called a witch that has underlying essential features and continuity. Such an assertion is logically no different from asserting that water can also appear as ice or steam.<sup>42</sup>

#### 4.8 Wānanga

A further important concept relevant to knowledge and knowing is wānanga. There is much to be said about this term (it is worthy of its own study), but we will restrict our discussion to a few comments. In its simplest form, *wānanga* means to discuss, to debate, to analyse.

Kei te wānanga te hui i te take.

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<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Margaret Orbell, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Māori Myth and Legend*, Canterbury University Press, 1995.

<sup>42</sup> Michael Kearney, *World View*, Chandler and Sharp Publishers, California, 1984, pp,60-1.

The gathering is considering the matter.

Wānanga is considered here as an activity, a process of exploring and considering. The general purpose of the activity called 'wānanga' is the creation of new knowledge and understanding. When someone or some people are conducting wānanga, they are going through a process whose outcome is a new idea, a new understanding, new knowledge. This idea is reinforced in everyday parlance. For example, when we use a phrase like:

Kei te wānanga tātou i te pātai nei.

we are saying that:

We are considering/debating/analysing/exploring the question (before us).

The intention, of course, is to find out something new, to come to a new understanding or realisation. Whilst the sense of 'finding' or 'seeking' is not made explicit in the term wānanga, it is implied and well understood throughout the community of Māori language users. Hence, we can say that at a simple everyday level, wānanga stands for a process by which we can come to some kind of new idea or understanding.

Wānanga is also used to refer to a person skilled in the work of the whare wānanga:

Kihai i tae ki nga pukenga, ki nga wananga, ki nga tauira.<sup>43</sup>  
He did not attend to the teachers, the wise persons, the models.

In traditional times, groups of tohunga met to both maintain pre-existing knowledge and create new knowledge. Tohunga were repositories of knowledge, and early European writers and observers were often astounded by the ability of individual tohunga to retain vast amounts of information and knowledge, and recall items with relative ease. In recent times, we can recall elders who possessed a splendid memory – the King Movement has been notable for such skilled individuals for many years – and even today, there are people whose ability to retain whakapapa, for example, is remarkable. The traditional whare wānanga focused on the maintenance of pre-existing knowledge and wisdom, a task made essential by the oral nature of traditional Māori society and culture.

Another perspective on wānanga is contained in the narrative concerning the flight of Tāne to the highest heavens to receive the baskets of the wānanga. In the following extract, wānanga is referred to almost as an object:

Nā ka mea a Whiro ki ngā tuākana, 'Ka haere ahau ki te tiki i te wānanga i te Toi-o-nga-rangi...'.  
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<sup>43</sup> George Grey, *Nga Moteatea me nga Hakirara*, 1853, p.355.

Now Whiro said to his older brothers, 'I will go and fetch the Knowledge from the Toi-o-ngā-rangi...'.<sup>44</sup>

Thus wānanga is generally concerned with the *process* by which knowledge is considered and created, a process critical to exploring traditional notions of knowledge and knowing. Finally, wānanga is concerned with the creation of knowledge.

#### 4.9 Tohu

We shall conclude this section on concepts of knowledge and knowing within mātauranga Māori with another extract from the work of the late Rev. Māori Marsden. We conclude here because the explanations that follow lead us to the point at which knowledge becomes equated with the world itself. Here the world is seen as knowledge and wisdom, and the task of the student is to become 'open' and 'receptive' to the teachings of the world. The student must 'cleanse the lens of their perception' in order to see the world not merely as his thoughts incline him/her to see it, but as it actually is.

Marsden describes the final examination of the whare wānanga student. He discusses the time spent by a student in the wilderness awaiting an illumination, an understanding. The term used to refer to the arrival of mana in the form of illumination is tohu.

Nā, ka pau ōna marama, ōna tau pea e noho ai ngā tauira nei ki ngā waewae o ngā tohunga whakarongo i ngā kōrero. Ka tae ki te wā, e tohia ai rātou, e whakaarotia ai mehemea kua tohungatia rānei rātou, kua aha rānei. Ā, i reira, ka tonoa rātou kia whakamātautauri.... Mehemea kua mau i a koe ngā kōrero mō Tāne, mohio ana koe he aha ngā kai māu i roto i te ngahere. Engari, ko te tino whai māu ko tēnei, kia whāia e koe kia nohopuku, whakatiki rānei i a koe. Engari, ko tō whai kia puta te wairua o Tāne ki a koe, ki te whakaako i a koe ki ngā mea o te wairua, kia mōhio ai koe ki te whakarāpopototanga o ngā kōrero katoa.... Ā, tuarua, kia kitea e koe ētahi mātauranga hou. Nā, ki te Pākehā, *original knowledge*, mō te ngahere, mō ngā mea a Tāne... Nā, ka haere tētahi, ka tae ki taua wā nei, ka tonoa tētahi ki te ngahere, ki te rapu ki te whai i te wairua o Tāne. Tae atu ki reira, ka noho te tangata nei. Ā, e rua pea wiki. Whai i tana mahi, he nohopuku. E, tiro tiro haere, te rapu haere, koinei e titiro i ngā rākau. Ā, ka mutu, ka hoki mai (i) te wā i whakaritea e ngā tohunga.

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<sup>44</sup> The version is taken from a manuscript written at the dictation of Nepia Pōhūhū of Wairarapa. See Agathe Thornton, *The Birth of the Universe: Te Whānautanga o te Ao Tukupū*, Reed, 2004, p.138. It is possible that the translation provided by Thornton is not quite right. In the various versions of this story, Whiro is usually the elder sibling. The phrase 'ki ngā tuākana...' could be translated to mean 'to the elder siblings...' and not 'to his older brothers...' as suggested by the Thornton translation.

Ka tae mai, ka whakamātautauria. Patapatai i ōna pātai, ka ea ērā pātai. Ka tae te pātai whakamutunga, 'Tēnā, he aha te kōrero a te wairua a Tāne ki a koe?' Ka kī atu te tamaiti nei, 'I a au e noho ana, i te ngahere, e nohopuku ana au i tētahi rā i raro i ngā kahika nei, ngā kahikatea nei, kātahi au ka whakaaro ki a au anō, he aha rā te kahikatea o ngā rākau katoa i tupu tōpū ai? Kahikatea ki kō, kei kō, kei kō, engari tā rātou tupu he tupu tōpū.'

Tangohia e te rākau, ka kerikeria e ia. Ka kitea e ia, he pāpaku tonu te tupu o ngā taketake o tēnei mea o te kahikatea. Kātahi ia ka whakaaro he aha rā i pēnei ai? Ka tae mai te māramatanga ki a ia. Ka mohio ia ki te tikanga i tupu tōpū ai ngā kahikatea nei, koinei anō te rākau e pēnei ana tāna tupu. Ka mahara ia te kōrero i kōrerotia. Mahara ia i te.... i ngā wā o te tūpuhi, ki te pupuhi te hau, ki te ngeri te hau, mehemea e tupu ana ia i runga o tana kotahi, te pāpaku o ngā taketake o te rākau, ka hinga te rākau. Engari, i a rātou e tū nei, kua tuitui rātou i ngā taketake, nā, kua powhiwhi ngā taketake i roto i ētahi o ngā taketake o te rākau, ka pupuhi e te hau, ka mea ki te hinga, kua puritia ngā taketake o tētahi. Nā, ko tērā te māramatanga i tae mai ki a ia. Ā, ki te tū tahi te tangata e kore e hinga. Ā, e ai te tū tōpū. Engari, ki te tū tahanga te tangata, ka hinga. Ka mea atu ngā tohunga ki a ia, 'Pass.'<sup>45</sup>

Months or even years pass during which students have learnt at the feet of the priests and teachers. Following this, it is time for the students to again go through a 'baptismal' ceremony whereby the priests are able to determine whether a student has become the vessel of higher learning, illumination and spiritual authority or not. Hence, students are examined.... If you have learnt correctly the teachings concerning Tāne, you will know the correct foods of the forest. However, the real test is this: the student is sent into the forest to meditate and to fast. The goal is for the spirit of Tāne to come to you, to teach you things of the spirit so that you will know and understand all the things that have been taught to you under the aegis of your 'baptism'. Secondly, so that you may see and understand new knowledge.

According to the European, this is called 'original knowledge', in this case, concerning the forest and things pertaining to Tāne. Now there is one student who arrived at this point in his learning and was sent into the forest to seek the spirit of Tāne. He arrived and took his place in the forest for two weeks perhaps. He did what was required including meditation. He looked around about him and to the trees. After that, he returned to the House of Learning at the time arranged by the priests and teachers.

Upon arrival he was examined. Various questions were posed and he replied to all of them. Finally, they arrived at the last question: 'Now, what

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<sup>45</sup> *The Woven Universe*, p.75.

was the teaching of the spirit of Tāne to you?’ The student explained, “When I was in the forest meditating, I sat one day under some kahikatea trees. I asked myself, why do these trees grow together? One tree might be here, another might be there, but they grow together.’

He looked at this and decided to dig around a little. Then he saw that the roots of the kahikatea trees are somewhat shallow, they do not grow deeply into the ground. He asked himself why this should be so. Then he had an illumination. He understood... why the kahikatea trees grow together. This is the only tree that grows in this way. He recalled what was said (at the House of Learning). He understood...that at stormy times, when the wind blows, if the kahikatea tree should grow on its own, then it will fall over because of the shallowness of the roots. However, as they stand together, the roots have become interwoven with one another. When the wind blows and a tree should lean over, then it is held in place by the roots of another tree. This was the illumination that came to him. Further, if a person stands on his/her own, then he/she will fall, according to the model of standing together. Upon hearing this explanation, the priests and teachers then said, ‘Pass’.<sup>46</sup>

This illustration shows that the *kind* of knowing and knowledge of importance to the traditional whare wānanga is knowledge that arises from an immediate and intimate experience of the world. Here there is no notion of knowledge per se, a discretely created phenomenon standing as a representation of the world and experience, like a photograph. Rather, the world is knowledge. Here finally we arrive at the notion enunciated by Richard Tarnas.

It is on the basis of this interpretation – particularly the perspective which explains that ‘tohu’ is the adjective used to describe the arrival of mana into a vessel – that I promote the idea that a true tohunga (tohunga is the gerundive of tohu) is a creative person, one who is able to bring forth new realisations, ideas and understandings through the presence of mana within them. A tohunga is not simply a knowledgeable person – although they usually are. Tohunga are finally creative people, illuminated with an essential authority which allows them to bring new understandings and knowledge for the benefit of their communities.

#### **4.10 Summary**

The single most important aspect of an indigenous worldview is the notion that the world is alive, conscious and flowing with a perennial energy. The natural world is not so much the repository of wisdom as wisdom itself, flowing with purpose and design. We can say that the natural world is a *mind* in which all minds find their origin, their teacher and proper model. Indigenous knowledge is the fruit of this cosmic stream, arising organically when the world itself breathes through and inspires human cultural manifestation.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp.78-9.

There is so much to learn and to be taught by the designs and expressions that occur naturally in our world. The growth of the tī tree tells us of human autonomy and independence (hence, tī-tahi), and the shallowness and interconnectedness of the roots of the kahikatea is a meditation upon unity and solidarity. The huia reminds us of human community and the kōtuku is a symbol of rare, once-in-a-lifetime beauty. The toroa embodies the great navigators of our Polynesian past, able to travel vast distances across an unforgiving ocean.

To be taught by these things requires submitting ourselves to the dignity and presence of earth, sea and sky. We have to cleanse the lenses of our perception and humbly open our individual mind and knowledge to that of the world at large. Human audacity, achievement and accomplishment is expressed, in this worldview, in the degree to which a human person – mind, heart, body, spirit – becomes the instrument of nature. Our ancestors were at pains to transform themselves from their human state into the forms and expressions of the natural world. The naming of children after trees or birds and the donning of korowai cloaks effected the transformation of the person into a bird or a tree.

When we think about indigenous worldviews and knowledge and how we might understand the behaviours of these cultures, let us remind ourselves of this great yearning of the natural world to speak through human creativity. Human cultural production is a natural organic expression arising from the contours, shapes and colours of the environments in which we dwell.

### **5.0 Aspects of the Traditional Māori Worldview: *Tikanga* and *Taonga***

The previous sections have introduced a range of traditional concepts of relevance to knowledge and knowing. They have presented thoughts that contribute to an understanding of the traditional Māori worldview. In the second half of this report, we will consider the Māori worldview more broadly, and explore the implications of this worldview for museum practice. In doing so, I stress that I am not a museum practitioner, and that the implications of these ideas will be discovered only through the day-to-day activities of a working museum.

At this point we should note that the ideas about worldview presented in the previous sections are not necessarily those that find expression in contemporary Māori culture. The perspectives presented thus far have largely relied upon materials created in the 19th and early 20th centuries – the Marsden material excepted – and it needs to be noted that these kinds of perspectives find uneven expression in Māori communities today. The cultural behaviours and attitudes found in these communities are a combination of a number of themes and influences, including:

- aspects of the traditional worldview including the ideas discussed earlier in this report (plus various changes and adaptations, during the 19th and 20th centuries)
- perspectives and views arising from the *restoration* and *revitalisation* of iwi, hapū and whānau identities and cultures.

The latter phenomenon often presents a psychology quite different to that arising from the traditional worldview. Many Māori today are motivated by the restoration of identity and seek experiences of the former way of seeing and being in the world. This emphasis on restoration, retention and revitalisation can result in quite a different outlook. Making sense of the complex intersection of these two psychologies can be difficult indeed, and many museum practitioners will have had experience (perhaps unwittingly) with attempts to do so.

In this section, we will consider aspects of the traditional Māori worldview as these pertain to taonga or artefacts. As the discussions concerning the worldview of a people can become very wide indeed, we will confine our discussion to matters relating to the traditional use of taonga. We would like to firstly achieve an understanding of the traditional perspective on taonga and, secondly, explore a number of themes in the contemporary use of taonga. The latter task is the subject of section 6.0.

The rationale for discussing the traditional worldview is that despite fragmentation, adoption of a Christian paradigm and a general decline in traditional knowledge, aspects of this worldview still find partial expression in various quarters of the Māori world. For example, the pōwhiri ritual, which continues today upon the nation's marae, retains the mythological, spiritual and

psychological aspects arising from the traditional worldview, even if those aspects are not consciously understood or articulated.

Furthermore, many Māori retain a deep and abiding respect for the knowledge of our ancestors, and seek not only traditional knowledge but also an experience of the realities to which this knowledge points. As we will see, taonga can play an important role in affecting the psychology and experience of Māori people (and others!). This may include experiences of self-worth and esteem – derived from witnessing the *Te Maori* exhibition, – or the deeper, dramatic and emotional experiences which for example occur when taonga are laid upon a tūpāpaku (corpse) at a tangihanga (funeral and memorial for someone recently deceased).

Taonga are not merely static, inanimate and, hence, unloved objects. They are vessels and repositories of special essences, presences and mana. In wielding them, one is ushered towards a primordial, perhaps fundamental experience of life. It is this potential of taonga to facilitate the transformation of the ordinary into the extraordinary that piques the desire, in the hearts of many Māori, for tactile experience. For Māori too live in a post-modern world in which identities have become opaque and communities fragmented, a world in which meaning floats unanchored. Māori too seek some foundation – a weightless weight, perhaps – which can offer them a ‘real’ experience of the world. This desire motivates many Māori in their handling of taonga.

People say that what we’re all seeking is a meaning for life. I don’t think that’s what we’re really seeking. I think that what we’re seeking is an experience of being alive, so that our life experiences on the purely physical plane will have resonances within our innermost being and reality, so that we actually feel the rapture of being alive.<sup>47</sup>

### 5.1.0 The Model of the Mythic Precursor

‘Myth is the history of the soul, the memory of our greater Being’, writes William Irwin Thompson in his seminal work, *The Time Falling Bodies Take to Light*.<sup>48</sup> Far from being fireside stories weakened by falsity pretending to be truth, myth speaks authoritatively of a cosmological design not usually comprehensible in the cold light of rational day. Taking his cue from Carl Jung, the American mythologist Joseph Campbell presents myth as the product of the non-rational mind, stating that this literature comes from the same place as dreams. Nightly we return to this world where teachings are revealed and the deeper designs of the rational conscious day are approached in entirely unexpected ways. It is on this basis that Campbell uttered his now famous phrase: ‘Myth is the public dream and dream is the private myth’.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Joseph Campbell with Bill Moyers, *The Power of Myth*, Doubleday, 1988, p.5.

<sup>48</sup> William Irwin Thompson, *The Time Falling Bodies Take to Light: Mythology, Sexuality and the Origins of Culture*, St Martin’s Griffin, New York, 1996, p.82.

<sup>49</sup> See *The Power of Myth*, p.40.

Rev. Māori Marsden, too, developed a view of myth, which he presented in an essay entitled 'Kaitiakitanga: A Definitive Introduction to the Holistic Worldview of the Māori'. Marsden tells us that 'Myth and legend are an integral part of the corpus of fundamental knowledge held by Maori philosophers'. He explains:

Myth and legend in the Māori cultural context are neither fables embodying primitive faith in the supernatural, nor marvellous fireside stories of ancient times. They were deliberate constructs employed by the ancient seers and sages to encapsulate and condense into easily assimilable forms their view of the World, of ultimate reality and the relationship between the Creator, the universe and man.<sup>50</sup>

Hence, myth and mythology are 'constructs' about the nature of reality. These constructs usually come to us in the form of narrative or story. It is through stories that complex ideas about reality can be transmitted – particularly in an oral culture – and they also give access to the *meaning* of those ideas. Many grand stories and narratives of this type – and every culture possesses this kind of knowledge – contain deeper levels of symbolic meaning which specific training is required to elucidate. Not everyone is adept at acquiring symbolic knowledge.

The hidden aspects of meaning are noted by Marsden in a passage discussing the story of the flight of Tāne to the highest heavens, to obtain the baskets of the wānanga.

This legend is part of the corpus of sacred knowledge and as such was not normally related in public. Furthermore, the way in which it was couched ensured that even when related in public, its inner meaning could not be understood without the key to unravel it. And unless all the parts were known and understood it was impossible to make sense of it.<sup>51</sup>

Hence, possession of the story was not, in itself, sufficient for its deeper meanings to be revealed. Training and discipline was required to obtain the key by which access could be facilitated. This training took a variety of forms and involved experts initiated in this kind of symbolic knowledge.

The 'story' narrated by the myth constitutes a 'knowledge' which is esoteric, not only because it is secret and is handed on during the course of an initiation but also because the 'knowledge' is accompanied by magico-religious power. For knowing the origin of an object, an animal, a plant, and so on is equivalent to acquiring magical power over them by which they can be controlled, multiplied, or reproduced at will.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *The Woven Universe*, pp.55, 56.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p.57.

<sup>52</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, Harper and Row Publishers, 1963, p.15.

Narratives and stories of this kind serve as images and conceptualisations of the world. Furthermore, they present explanations of the essential reality of things, sometimes of an idealised world rather than normal life. Through rituals and other kinds of activities, we are able to access this essential reality. Mythologically grounded ritual, particularly, is an important activity through which the efficacy of a myth can be experienced and understood.

Myths are 'true' in the sense that they present a view of the world which informs the activities of the culture. Their efficacy is tested in the day-to-day empirical experience of a people. If the kūmara harvest was successful, for example, it was because those in charge of the kūmara plantations had complied appropriately with the teachings available to them in mythic narratives pertaining to the kūmara. If the harvest failed, this was not because the mythic narrative was false but because those in charge had not abided by the story and its deeper meanings. They had not adhered to the disciplines required. In this way, the truth of a myth is confirmed in both successful and unsuccessful ventures. The arrival of the kūmara 'proved' the mythic story. Conversely, the failure of the crop also 'proved' the mythic narrative.

Much can be said about world mythologies and their place in human culture in history and today. We do not have space to discuss these matters in depth here. Our purpose is to make the point that, like all cultures, traditional Māori culture possessed a grand 'story' about the world – about its essential reality. This story was appealed to time and again both as an explanation of life and as a guide to how we might behave. In Māori terms, these mythic narratives – the flight of Tāne to the highest heavens, for example – inform tikanga, actual behaviour within the culture. By understanding these narratives and stories, one can come to understand a range of cultural behaviours and why these make sense in their indigenous cultural setting. These mythic and ancestral precursors help us understand traditional Māori perspectives on taonga.

### **5.1.1 The Pōwhiri Ritual**

There are numerous traditional activities in which one can see the influence of mythic narratives on behaviour within the culture. Here are some traditional behaviours which can be analysed in terms of their mythic content or for which a mythic narrative provides the template, example or background upon which the behaviour is based:

- Te Kawa Taki Whare (ritual opening of a new carved meeting house)
- Te Tatau Pounamu (peace pacts through arranged marriages)
- Te Whakatau Mauri (the implantation of mauri, or life force, energy)
- Te Hī ika (fishing)
- Te Kauwhanga-a-riri (practices during warfare)

A *kawa* is a collection of behaviours arranged in a pattern. In mythologically grounded *kawa*, both their order and the behaviours themselves are described in

the accompanying myth. We might say that the 'plot' of the kawa follows the 'plot' of the myth. We could even say that kawa *is* the plot. And as many mythic stories follow the life history of a particular atua or deity, it is said that the deity itself was responsible for the kawa, a set of activities that took place in a 'sacred history'. In its simplest form, a kawa orders behaviours (tikanga) into a set pattern. In 'breaking' the kawa, one steps outside the reality which the kawa and its accompanying myth are attempting to both symbolise and make real.

A particularly well known set of cultural behaviours (kawa) is the pōwhiri, the well-known ritual which takes place upon the nation's marae and, increasingly, elsewhere as well. The essential structure of the pōwhiri as conducted upon the traditional marae ātea – follows the re-enactment of the 'creation' of Te Ao Mārama. The key theme in these creation traditions is the movement from darkness (te pō) to light (te ao). The darkness is a symbol for conflict and tension. Its milieu is the marae ātea, the place where tensions and conflicts are discussed. Hence, the marae is sometimes referred to as:

Te marae tutū te puehu, te wāhi o Tūmatauenga.

The marae where the dust is raised, the domain of Tūmatauenga (the deity of conflict).

By contrast, the carved whare whakairo represents Te Ao Mārama, the 'world of light'. The whare is sometimes referred to as the domain of Rongo (deity of peace) or as Tāne-whakapiripiri (Tāne who unifies, brings together). Here is a list of parts of the house and the corresponding concept in the creation traditions.<sup>53</sup>

<b>Roof</b>	Ranginui (sky)
<b>Floor</b>	Papatuanuku (earth)
<b>Poutokomanawa (posts)</b>	Ngā Pou a Tāne (the posts used to separate earth and sky)
<b>Doorway</b>	Te Tatau Pounamu (the threshold between darkness and light)
<b>Pare (carving above door)</b>	Hinenui-i-te-pō, Hinetītama the kaitiaki (custodian) of the tatau pounamu
<b>Te Mahau (porch)</b>	Te Whaiao (pre-dawn)
<b>Interior of the house</b>	Te Ao Mārama (the world of light)

<sup>53</sup> For a brief discussion concerning the symbolisms of the marae from the point of view of a master carver (Dr Pakariki Harrison) et al., see *Taonga Maori Conference, New Zealand 18–27 November 1990*, pp.23–25. See also Neich, Roger, with Tīwai Amoamo and Tuhi Tupene: 'The Complementarity of History and Art in Tūtāmure Meeting-House, Ōmarumutu Marae, Ōpōtiki', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, Volume 93, Polynesian Society, 1984

Various other *tikanga* (appropriate behaviours) seen upon marae reflect the Marae—Te Pō and Whare—Te Ao Mārama orientation. For example, until recent times it was customary on Ngāti Raukawa marae to erect small *whare mate*, temporary structures within which the body of a deceased person lay for the duration of a tangihanga. The tūpāpaku was not placed within the wharenuī because the deceased had already begun their journey to Te Pō. It is for this reason, I believe, that the encounter ritual is called pōwhiri. Here again the root word is pō. Whiri has numerous meanings, including to deliberate, to consider (whiriwhiri) and to bind and sew together (whiriwhiri). Unity is the goal of the pōwhiri ritual, through which tensions are released, reconciliation is achieved and peace is renewed.

A second example is the custom of welcoming grieving families into the wharenuī after the burial of the deceased person. The sense here is that the families have been through the grieving process (a state symbolised by Te Pō) and now need to be returned to Te Ao Mārama. There are many more examples.<sup>54</sup>

We have seen how the creation mythology provides the 'plot', guidelines and templates for the behaviours of the pōwhiri ritual. The 'action' is a sacred activity consciously and unconsciously designed to give effect to the primordial reality. It is not merely a re-enactment of the story but a tangible representation of it in empirical form. As Mircea Eliade tells us, 'What is involved is not a commemoration of mythical events but a reiteration of them.'<sup>55</sup>

Here is a whakapapa taken from an 1856 manuscript dictated by Hūkiki Te Ahukaramū of Ngāti Raukawa. It sketches the pathway from darkness (Te Pō) to light (Te Ao Mārama). (See Royal, 'Native Traditions', p.15)

Ko Te Pō i mua he pō anake  
Ko Te Pō-nui  
Ko Te Pō-roa  
Ko Te Pō-whāwhā  
Ko Te Pō-te-kī  
Ko Te Pō-te-rea  
Ko Te Pō i a Hineruaki  
Ko Te Pō  
Ko Te Ata  
Ko Te Ao-tū-roa  
Ko Te Ao Mārama

Whilst these mythological aspects may not be consciously articulated or understood by participants in pōwhiri today, these mythic patterns and undercurrents remain nonetheless. Despite the change that has taken place in the worldview of Māori culture since the 19th century, Ranginui, Papatuanuku, Te

<sup>54</sup> It is perhaps for these reasons that in Taranaki visitors are welcomed inside the whare, with the hongī the first act that takes place in their kawa. I understand that the custom of bringing visitors directly into the whare was initiated by Te Whiti-o-Rongomai, the great pacifist leader of the 19th century. This would accord with the fact that the wharenuī is symbolic of Te Ao Mārama, hence of peace.

<sup>55</sup> *Myth and Reality*, p.19.

Ao Mārama and other grand mythological themes endure to a remarkable extent in contemporary Māori culture.

### 5.1.2 Te Āwhiorangi

Let us turn to a discussion of a particular taonga and its mythic basis. We will consider Te Āwhiorangi, the axe that was used to sever the arm of Rangi-nui and thus effect the separation of earth and sky. Here is the narrative as dictated by Nepia Pōhūhū of Wairarapa:

Engari i te whakaaratanga i ngā toko, ka tārewa ki runga, ka whana te toko o ngā waewae, o te upoko. Ka karanga a Tāne ki a Paia, 'E Paia e!' Ka karanga mai a Paia, 'Tēnei ahau.' Ka mea ia 'Whakarewaia ki runga!' He hikitunga, he hāpainga, ka rewa a Rangi-nui ki runga nei. Kāore i āta rewa ki runga i te rarawhi o ngā ringa o Rangi, o Papa, ki a rāua tokorua pupuri ai. Ka karanga a Tāne ki a Tū-mata-kakā, ki a Tū-mata-uenga kia tīkina he toki hei poroporo i ngā peke [o] ō rātau mātua. Ka mea a Tama-kakā, 'E Tāne, kei whea te puna o te toki e tū ana?' Ka mea atu a Tāne, 'Tīkina i te pae-runga o tō tuakana, o Uru-te-ngangana hei kotikoti ake. Tīkina atu te kakau i a Tua-matua, e whakaratarata mai, e whakanoho mai ki te kakau!' Ka tīkina ngā toki e rua, a Te Āwhio-rangi, a Te Whiro-nui. Ka riro mai, ka poroporoa ngā peke o Rangi-nui, o Papa-tū-ā-nuku, kātahi ka māwehe i a rāua.... Nā ka tū hāngai a Rangi-nui i a ia, e tū iho nei. Ka heke te [ngā crossed out] toto o ngā peke o Rangi rāua ko Papa ki te whenua o Papa. Koia te hōrū, te pukepoto, ka waiho hei tuhi mō ngā mokopuna i te ao nei. Ka mau te papakura ki te rangi, e whero nā te rangi, koia tērā ngā toto o ngā peke o Rangi.<sup>56</sup>

But when he [Tāne] was raising him up with the toko, he was lifted upwards, but the toko of the legs and the toko of the head bent. Tāne shouted to Paia, 'Hey, Paia!' Paia shouted back, 'Here I am!' And he said, 'Push him up!' There was a lifting, a raising [karakia], and great Rangi was elevated on high now. But he was not completely elevated on high because of the firm grip of Rangi's and Papa's hands as the two still clung to each other. Tāne called to Tū-mata-kakā and Tū-mata-uenga [telling them] to fetch adzes to cut through the arms of their parents. Tama-kakā [presumably the same person as Tū-mata-kakā] said, 'Tāne, where is the source of the adzes?' Tāne answered, 'Fetch the headrest of our older brother Uru-te-ngangana to separate them. Fetch the handle from Tua-matua who will sharpen them [the adzes], and fit them into the handles.' The two adzes Te Āwhiorangi (Great whirlwind of heaven), and Te Whironui (Great hurricane) were fetched. Once they were brought, the arms of great Rangi and Papa-tū-ā-nuku were cut through, and the two were separated from each other.... So then great Rangi stood opposite her, standing up there. The blood of the arms of Rangi and Papa came down into the earth of Papa. That is the red ochre and the dark-blue earth

<sup>56</sup> *The Birth of the Universe*, p.95.

which remained for the children of this world to use for painting; and when the glow spreads over the heaven and the heaven is red, that is the blood from the arms of Rangi.<sup>57</sup>

In this story (of which there are numerous versions), reference is made to adzes called Te Āwhiorangi and Te Whironui, the instruments employed to separate earth and sky. These are instruments of great mana, imbued with numinous power and mystery. They are the accoutrements of the gods who once held and may still hold, influence within a community.

The wielding of such an instrument by human hands is analogous to its use by atua, in this case Tāne, Tū-mata-uenga and Tū-mata-kakā. Those who can wield these instruments transform themselves into Tāne and Tū. They are not merely actors in the drama of this 'sacred history'; they have become Tāne and Tū. It is for this reason that Te Āwhiorangi and Te Whironui are taonga of great prestige and mana in the Māori world.

For some years now, I have heard references to an axe called Te Āwhiorangi held by the Taranaki people of the south Taranaki region. I can recall the late Ruka Broughton of Ngā Rauru discussing this axe, to which he referred in his biography of Tītokowaru. Ruka told of the entrance of the *Aotea* canoe into 'te korokoro o te parata', an enormous whirlpool in the middle of the ocean. Te Āwhiorangi appeared in the hand of Turi, the commander of the waka:

I te haerenga mai o Aotea waka, ko te waa i tapoko ai i roto i te Korokoro o te Parata, araa he koroirangi. Kaatahi ka rurukuhia e Turi te karakia hei unuhi ake i a Aotea i te hoohonu, me te haapai ake i taana toki i a Te Awhiorangi.<sup>58</sup>

When Aotea was crossing (the ocean), it entered the throat of the *parata*, a whirlpool. Turi then conducted his chants to raise the canoe up from the deep and he held his axe, Te Awhiorangi, upon high.

Later, Ruka made the following statement:

Kua kiia e Aotea i a Turi a Te Awhiorangi. Naa, ko teetehi koorero nui naa te kaihautuu o Taakitimu i tuku te taaonga ra hei taakoha ki a Turi i te moenga o taana kootiro ki te taina o te rangatira o Taakitimu.<sup>59</sup>

Aotea says that Turi had Te Āwhiorangi. However, there is a tradition that says that Te Āwhiorangi was given to Turi by the commander of the Tākitimu canoe upon the marriage of Turi's daughter to the younger brother of the Tākitimu commander.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p.96.

<sup>58</sup> Ruka Broughton, *Ngaa Mahi Whakaari a Tītokowaru*, Victoria University Press, 1993, p.210.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p.213.

Margaret Orbell recounts a story taken from a manuscript by the Ngāti Ruanui tohunga, Hetaraka Tautahi. Orbell explains that Te Āwhiorangi is 'the source of power' of all the adzes in the world, their spiritual prototype.' She refers to the Taranaki tradition (in contrast to the Wairarapa version cited previously) that Te Āwhiorangi was fashioned by Ngāhue and given to Tāne to assist with the separation of earth and sky:

From Tāne it passed down a line of eldest sons to Turi, captain of the *Aotea*. He took it with him to Aotearoa, and there, many generations later, it was hidden by one of his descendants in a forest near Waitōtara, in a tapu burial place of the people of Ngā Rauru. After this Te Awhiorangi was lost for seven generations. In 1887, a woman who was gathering fungus in the forest, and did not know the region, trespassed upon this place. Inside a hollow tree she saw something shining, and she was frightened and ran away.... The spirits of the place sent a terrible thunderstorm, with lightning and snow, and one of the old men knew someone had trespassed there. He lifted up his chants and the storm ceased. When they saw the adze the people recognised it at once. Te Awhiorangi was ceremonially taken from its hiding place and all of them wept over this sacred relic of their ancestors.<sup>60</sup>

Thus some artefacts referred to in creation traditions can also appear as actual objects. In these examples, it is either the instrument of the deity or the deity itself that manifests itself in a tangible object. Perhaps the most well-known example of this is Uenuku, the magnificent pou that stands in the Te Awamutu museum. Discovered in Lake Ngāroto in 1906, it was a centrepiece of the Te Maori exhibition which toured the United States and New Zealand in the 1980s. Another example is Rua-i-te-pūkenga, a carved meeting house now located in the Field Museum in Chicago.

The purpose of exploring these examples is to show that traditional communities lived their lives within the tenets of these 'sacred texts' of earth and sky, darkness and light, energy and fulfilment. Atua walked the earth and made it the way it is. As Mircea Eliade points out:

The 'primitive' could say: I am what I am today because a series of events occurred before I existed events that took place *in mythical times* and therefore make up a *sacred history* because the actors in the drama are not men but Supernatural Beings. The man of the archaic societies is not only obliged to remember mythical history but also to *re-enact* a large part of it periodically.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *Encyclopaedia of Māori Myth and Legend*, pp.199-200.

<sup>61</sup> *Myth and Reality*, p.13.

Hence, a taonga such as Te Āwhiorangi and Uenuku are not only accoutrements for the actors in these cosmic dramas, but provide tangible proof that such mythical time and space in fact existed. As remnants of these primordial events, they are replete with transformative power.

### 5.2.0 The Model of the Ancestral Precursor

We will now consider the instruments and taonga of idealised and important human ancestors. The same principle of the sacred text applies to the model of the ancestral precursor. At some point in time a sacred personage existed and presented certain patterns of behaviour which facilitated access to a sacred reality by those properly initiated. The ancestral precursor is, in most instances, a human being, but one possessing supernatural abilities and powers. All iwi histories contain stories of human ancestors who, having fulfilled certain conditions and disciplines, have transformed themselves into atua and are thus able to perform certain magic feats. Iwi traditions are replete with ancestors who can fly, who are able to travel vast distances with relative ease, who can withstand cold and who can project their voices. The Māui stories are located in a middle world between the grand ancestors of the creation drama – those who fashioned the world – and the ancestors of the human community. These stories tell us about Māui's numerous exploits, fabulous deeds such as his transformation into a bird and his snaring of the sun.

The Māui narratives render the entire islands of New Zealand as an artefact, a *taonga* of this idealised character.

As we know, the North Island is Māui's fish, the South Island his canoe and Stewart Island his anchor stone. Additionally, it is said that Māui stood at Kaikoura in the South Island when he hauled his fish up from the deep. Ngāti Porou tell us that Māui's canoe is located upon Hikurangi. Hence, the evidence of these mythic ancestors – the ones who sit in this half world between pure deities and human origins – can be found in the landscape itself, in the world around us.

Here is a whakapapa taken from a manuscript dictated in 1856 by Hūkiki Te Ahukaramū of Ngāti Raukawa. It presents the sequence from Ranginui and Papatuanuku, across this 'half world' between pure mythological characters and themes and 'human' history in the form of Toi-te-huatahi. (See Royal, *Native Traditions*, p.41 )

Papatuanuku  
Tāne  
Hine-tītama-uri  
Tiki-te-pouroto  
Tiki-haohao  
Te Papa-tū  
Ngae  
Ngae-nui  
Ngae-roa  
Ngae-peha  
Te Āti Tutū  
Te Āti Hāpai  
Toi-te-huatahi

The models of the mythic world (Māui included) flow into the *historical* models of the human community, transforming humans, uplifting them and reminding them of their sacred origins. Whilst these stories tell us about our *human* ancestors, they are nonetheless stories of humans who have successfully given expression to their divine antecedents. We will consider a few examples and show how these inform a traditional perspective on taonga.

### 5.2.1 First Footsteps

All iwi traditions discuss the tangata whenua, a people who lived in these islands prior to the arrival of our Polynesian ancestors. Patupaiarehe are perhaps the most well known of these pre-Polynesian iwi. Tainui traditions record the presence of Ngāti Tarapounamu, a people living at Kāwhia when Tainui arrived there. These early ancestors left their mark, and numerous references to them are made throughout iwi history. Other early peoples included Te Tini-o-Toi, Maruiwi, and Te Tini-o-Māui. These peoples either came into conflict with the Polynesians or joined with them. It is important to note, however, that their influence has not entirely disappeared. Many iwi cite these early iwi as those who held mana in these islands, and some build their subsequent interest here on their association with these early peoples.

Let us consider the arrival of our Polynesian ancestors and the advent of Aotearoa-based iwi by citing a few examples. Kupe is an important Polynesian ancestor whose arrival here is an important precursor for subsequent iwi. He is woven into many iwi traditions; notably those of the lower North Island and the Hokianga region. The mouth of Te Whanganui-a-Tara (Wellington harbour) contains numerous places named by Kupe, many including his name. The pattern is repeated throughout the Cook Strait region and as far north as Wanganui. The Hokianga harbour is another area where numerous Kupe placenames can be found. Indeed Hokianga is called Te Hokianganui-a-Kupe (Kupe's great return).

As well as rock features at the localities where Kupe placenames are found, there are also artefacts of his journeys. For example, standing upon a marae at Pākanāe (near the mouth of Hokianga) is a large stone said to be the anchor stone of his canoe. Another anchor stone associated with Kupe is said to be located on the foreshore at Plimmerton, near Porirua, Wellington.

These are a few examples of traditions pertaining to taonga associated with one early and important ancestor. There are many, many more such traditions throughout New Zealand – stories of actual places and/or objects which are remnants of early ancestors.

### 5.2.2 The Rise of the Iwi

Following these early ancestors, larger populations of Polynesian people began to arrive. There are numerous theories and narratives relating to the arrival of these people, and we do not have space to cover them all here. However, we can cite a few examples of the way in which certain important ancestors have become idealised in iwi histories and traditions. The commanders and crews of the various waka are idealised figures in iwi history. They include:

- Tamatekapua (*Te Arawa*)
- Hoturoa (*Tainui*)
- Toroa (*Mātaatua*)
- Nukutawhiti (*Ngātokimatawhaorua*)
- Tamatea (*Tākitimu*)
- Pōhurihanga (*Kurahaupō*, northern)

There are, of course, many more. They too left artefacts and taonga, some of which survive to this day. These range from the naming of natural landscape features for parts of the body to implements and other physical objects. Examples include the naming of Ōkurei Peninsula (Maketū, Bay of Plenty) as 'Te Kūreitanga o te ihu o Tamatekapua' (the bridge of Tamatekapua's nose). There are many examples of landscape features named in this way. We can also note localities such as 'Te Hoe-o-Tainui' (the paddle of the Tainui canoe), a small hill east of Taupiri in northern Waikato. Finally, a small number of fashioned objects are said to be associated with the crews of the various waka. The Korotangi of Tainui is an example.

These examples of various items and objects heavily associated with esteemed waka ancestors are supplemented over succeeding generations as the iwi of Aotearoa and Te Wai Pounamu begin to grow. Again the eponymous ancestors are idealised. They include:

- Porourangi (Ngāti Porou)
- Rahiri (Ngā Puhī)
- Kahungunu (Ngāti Kahungunu)
- Tahu Pōtiki (Ngāi Tahu)
- Maniapoto (Ngāti Maniapoto)

Taonga are associated with these sacred personages. For example, there is a small mauri stone, now held in the Auckland Institute and Museum, called Marutūahu. This is said to have been one of the taonga used by Marutūahu, ancestor of the Marutūahu confederation of tribes in various ceremonies.<sup>62</sup> Other famous examples include:

- Pūkākī gateway
- Te Tākinga pātaka (Te Papa)
- Te Hau-ki-Tūranga meeting house (Te Papa)
- Hotunui meeting house (AIM)
- Mātaatua meeting house (Otago Museum)

These are taonga associated with eponymous ancestors held in great esteem by their iwi. Of course, there are many, many more examples. In my own iwi can be found two mere pounamu called Kauwhata and Wehiwehi, two important ancestors of the Tainui and Ngāti Raukawa peoples. Ngāti Wehiwehi (and their marae) are located at Manukau, just north of Ōtaki, while Ngāti Kauwhata are based near Fielding. A taonga of importance to my own hapū of Ngāti Kikopiri is Amokura, a mere pounamu once owned by Hape-ki-tua-rangi, a son of Kikopiri and tupuna of many Ngāti Raukawa people. Amokura is now held in Te Papa Tongarewa.

Hape-ki-tua-rangi is an example of an ancestral precursor who successfully (in our minds) fulfilled the preconditions of the mythic precursor. The numerous Hape throughout our iwi traditions all possess this mythical and idealised quality. This immediate ancestor of ours was the ariki of Maungatautari in his time. One of the conditions of being an ariki was to become the vessel for their atua or deity. This is why an ariki is an especially sacred personage. The taonga Amokura retains

This whakapapa written at the dictation of Hūkiki Te Ahukaramū of Ngāti Raukawa draws a connection between these early and eponymous ancestors and Te Ahukaramū himself. From a Ngāti Raukawa perspective, the whakapapa is interesting because it commences with Toi-te-huatahi and proceeds via Kahungunu. See Royal, 'Native Traditions', 2003. pp.41-45

Ko Toi-te-huatahi  
Ko Rauru  
Ko Rūtama  
Ko Apaapa  
Ko Tahatītī  
Ko Ruatapu  
Ko Tama-ki-te-rā  
Ko (Tama-ki-)Hikurangi  
Ko Rongo-maru-awatea  
Ko Rere  
Ko Toto  
Ko Maka-o-te-rangi  
Ko Rongokako  
Ko Te Mātia  
Ko Kahungunu  
(Ko) Kahu-kuranui  
(Ko) Rākai-hikuroa  
(Ko) Tūpurupuru  
(Ko) Rangituehu  
(Ko) Tūaka  
(Ko) Māhina-a-rangi  
Ko Raukawa  
Ko Whakatere  
(rāua ko) Takihiku (nāna)  
Ko Tama-te-hura  
Ko Huitao  
Ko Haehaeora  
Ko Ngātokowaru  
Ko Huia  
Ko Korouaputa  
(Ko) Parewahawaha  
(Ko) Pakake  
(Ko) Te Tāuhu  
(Ko) Te Ahukaramū

<sup>62</sup> See Taimoana Tūroa, *Te Takoto o te Whenua o Hauraki: Hauraki Landmarks*, Reed, 2000, p.43.

the mystique emanating from this special status of Hape-ki-tua-rangi in the histories and traditions of Ngāti Raukawa.

## 6.0 The Worldview Changes: The 19th and 20th Centuries

With the arrival of the European a new story came forth about the world and our place within it. That is to say, the world itself changed. The pale-skinned peoples from across the waters were a marvellous mystery to Māori during first encounters, and it seems that they were mythologised right from the start in Māori minds. Whilst our knowledge of the nature of these first encounters remains sketchy – Dame Anne Salmond has done as much as anyone in exploring this territory – one partial Māori view that is often quoted offers us a glimpse of how Māori conceptualised Europeans during this period of first encounter. The quote below contains elements of ‘myth-making’, and whilst we cannot say conclusively that this was the Māori view of the European upon first contact, it does hint at how the Māori mytho-poetic mind considered such new phenomena.

In the days long past, ... we lived at Whitianga, and a vessel came there, and when our old men saw the ship they said it was an *atua*, a god, and the people on board were *tupua*, strange beings or ‘goblins’.<sup>63</sup>

As we know, the encounter with the European brought a revolution in Māori thinking, experience and worldview. The arrival of technology, literacy, languages and a Biblical narrative changed Māori society and culture forever. The way in which Māori of the 19th and 20th centuries coped – or didn’t – is a fascinating study in itself. The way in which Europeans also changed through encounter with Māori is worthy of study. Whilst the European worldview (if we can call it this) came to dominate Aotearoa in the next 150 years, it is remarkable how much of the Māori world remained. That this report itself is being written in 2004 is testimony to the endurance of certain key aspects of the traditional Māori world. That it is describing the potential contribution of these characteristics to 21st century New Zealand life is remarkable indeed.

## 6.1 The Bible, the Treaty of Waitangi and Literacy

In Section 4.3 we discussed the intersection between ‘mātauranga’, the Bible and literacy. There we considered the heavy association of the term ‘mātauranga’ with Biblical knowledge and how this became connected with writing, given that *Te Paipera* was the most well-known text in Māori communities in the 19th century. The arrival of literacy gave rise to an entirely new and exciting technology. Materials derived from *Tāne* were fashioned into paper upon which were fixed (tā) certain symbols and drawings. These marks could then be reinterpreted and understood by another person – a remarkable phenomenon indeed. One can imagine how marvellous this must have been for members of a thoroughly oral culture. This was a mystery that could only be solved by appeal to supernatural and hence sacred, forces.

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<sup>63</sup> Quoted in Anne Salmond, *The Trial of the Cannibal Dog: Captain Cook in the South Seas*, Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 2003., p.131.

Of course, the 'power' of this new technology intensified when Māori learnt that *their* words, *their* thoughts too could be captured and transferred in this way. This revolutionised thinking about the administration of traditions, communication and, of course, thinking about knowledge itself. It was in this context that the Treaty of Waitangi was written. In Māori minds, the Treaty is not merely a 'contract' but an *object* of great importance. Upon the Treaty were affixed the various moko on the faces of the chiefs. As their faces were sacred, so the Treaty itself – the paper upon which it was written – was sacred. This point was made by the late Sir James Henare of Ngā Puhi to the Royal Commission on Social Policy in 1987.

My own thoughts regarding the Treaty of Waitangi: it is a sacred treasure, made so by signing it with a reproduction of the personal moko of the Chiefs. They, our ancestors, were tapu, possessed of infinite knowledge; they were tohunga because they were Ariki.<sup>64</sup>

Deeds for the sale of land upon which moko were affixed, were also seen in this way. Many sale deeds were considered by Māori to be sacred documents, and the paper upon which they were written was itself sacred.

We can also appreciate the reverence that many Māori have had for whakapapa books. The task of genealogy was already a highly specialised and sacred one and many early Māori were apprehensive about recording whakapapa in written form. Such was the concern about *writing* sacred knowledge that Te Mātorohanga of Wairarapa expressed this view to Te Whatahoro when the latter came to write down traditions at the former's dictation:

No konei kaore he mana e riro i a koe o enei mahi katoa; koia au i ki atu ai ki a koe ko nga mea ka riro atu nei i a koe te tuhi, he pitopito no nga mea tuturu, he wahi no nga mea tapu....

It is for this reason that no mana (adequate power to make use of and apply this ancient knowledge) will be attained by you; and I also say to you that those things which you are writing (from my dictation) are but the ends, fragments of the truth, a portion only of the sacred things.<sup>65</sup>

This was clearly a watershed in the history of mātauranga Māori. A frontier had been reached between the new and the old, and Te Mātorohanga felt compelled to comment on this. One can only imagine the challenge Te Mātorohanga would have faced when he came to consider the full implications of the new task of *writing* whakapapa.

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<sup>64</sup> *The April Report, Volume II, Future Directions*, Royal Commission on Social Policy, 1988, p.38.

<sup>65</sup> See S. Percy Smith, *The Lore of the Whare Wananga: Te Kauwae Runga*, Polynesian Society 1913, pp.12, 13, 105.

## 6.2 Taonga as Evidence of *Mana Whenua*

In the 19th century history of the Ngāti Toarangatira people, examples can be found of the use of taonga to demonstrate rights to land. In 1852 a group of Ngāti Toa elders in Porirua dictated for Sir George Gray, an overview of the movement of the Ngāti Toa people, firstly into the Rangitīkei region and then progressively south and across to the South Island. This extract relates to conflicts about Motueka and how they came into possession of certain taonga:

Haere atu; Motu-eka, ka hinga toona rangatira ko Pakipaki, ka mau te mere pounamu ko Kokopu. Haere atu Te Whanganui, ka hinga toona rangatira, ko Kootuku, ka mau a Te Rarawa, he kahu.

(We) continued to Motueka and the chief of that place, called Pakipaki, was killed. There we obtained a greenstone club called Kokopu. We then went on to Te Whanganui and the chief killed there was Kōtuku. We obtained a cloak called Te Rarawa.<sup>66</sup>

The key point to note here is how mere pounamu (greenstone clubs) and korowai (cloaks) symbolise land. Securing the taonga is analogous to securing the land.

Another example can be found when land is offered for sale. Here a taonga symbolising the land to be sold is offered to a prospective buyer. This was the case prior to the 1867 alienation of the Rangitīkei–Manawatū block. Title to the land was hotly contested by a number of tribes and the sale was not finally effected until a joint group from Ngāti Raukawa and Ngāti Rangitāne offered the land for sale to Isaac Featherston, the Superintendent of Wellington Province. On 12 October 1864 Featherston met with this group at the mouth of the Manawatū river, where he received a mere pounamu called Rangitīkei.<sup>67</sup>

## 6.3 Te Rauparaha's Ear Pendant: The Story of a 19th Century Taonga

One example of a 19th century taonga may illustrate the way how a taonga of that time has come into the present. This taonga remains with the families mentioned in the story and thus finds a presence in contemporary lives.

In the early decades of the 19th century, Ngāti Toarangatira, led by the renowned Te Rauparaha, and Ngāti Raukawa, migrated to the southern North Island and northern South Island. The movement south was not without conflict, not only between these peoples and those already residing in these regions, but also among the various peoples who came south at the invitation of Ngāti Toarangatira.

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<sup>66</sup> From 'Two Letters from Ngaati-Toa to Sir George Grey', translated by Bruce Biggs, *Journal of the Polynesian Society* Volume 68, 1959, pp. 263-276

<sup>67</sup> Information about this alienation of this land is found in numerous places, including T.L. Buick, *Old Manawatu*. A letter written by Ihākara Tukumarū of Ngāti Raukawa and others concerning the offer of sale can be found at 17 September 1864, MA Series 13/69a, Archives NZ.

Conflict inevitably arose between Te Rauparaha's Taranaki kin of Te Āti Awa and his Waikato kin of Ngāti Raukawa. Two major battles were fought: Haowhenua in 1834 and Te Kuititanga which took place near Waikanae in 1839. The latter battle was witnessed by emissaries of the New Zealand Company as they arrived in Aotearoa and weighed anchor off Kapiti Island. During the former battle, which took place at Ōtaki, Ngāti Raukawa appealed to their Ngāti Maniapoto and Ngāti Tūwharetoa kin for help. Among the Ngāti Tūwharetoa group who arrived to assist were the great Te Heuheu Mananui and his younger brother, Pāpaka Te Naeroa. A feature of the battle was a challenge to kill two Te Āti Awa toa, Te Hau-te-horo and Te Tupe-o-tū. Having narrowly escaped hand-to-hand combat with Pōtatau Te Wherowhero, the great Waikato warrior who would become the first Māori King, they were using this occasion to taunt the Ngāti Maniapoto and Ngāti Tūwharetoa people. When the battle commenced, there was a contest among the various warriors to capture the two Te Āti Awa protagonists. As events unfolded, the Ngāti Maniapoto warrior, Taonui, succeeded in this task. He was subsequently named Hīkaka to commemorate the speed with which he did so.

Te Heuheu's younger brother, Pāpaka, disappointed that he had not captured the pair, rushed toward the pā, scaling the parapets despite Te Heuheu's warnings. As he was about to climb over the top, Pāpaka was killed by a musket shot. His body was returned to Te Heuheu who sang a song entitled 'Taku tirotiro noa' that became a classic of the 19th century mōteatea tradition. While Te Heuheu was singing, Te Rauparaha came upon the scene:

I te wa i tangihia ai te tangi nei e Te Heuheu ki runga i tana teina, ka tae atu hoki a Te Rauparaha ki te tangi. Ka mutu te tangi a Te Rauparaha ka takiritia tana koko tangiwai i tana taringa ka hoatu ki a Te Heuheu.

Whilst Te Heuheu was lamenting with this dirge over his brother, Te Rauparaha appeared to join in the obsequies. At the end Te Rauparaha tore his greenstone pendant from his ear and handed it to Te Heuheu.<sup>68</sup>

This greenstone pendant has been retained in the Te Heuheu family. It passed down through the descendants of Pāpaka Te Naeroa until it came into the possession of Hepina Te Heuheu, the wife of Dr Pei Te Hurinui Jones of Ngāti Maniapoto. It was then passed to Hepina's niece (Te Uruwhītikitiki Barton) and her family have it in their possession today.

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<sup>68</sup> See A.T. Ngata, *Nga Moteatea, He Maramara Rere no nga Waka Maha*, Volume 1, Polynesian Society, 1928, pp.210, 211.

## **6.4 Contemporary Examples of *Tikanga***

We conclude Section 6 by discussing examples of contemporary tikanga relating to events and activities of the past 20 years or so. These ideas arise from memories of hui I have attended, primarily in Ngāti Raukawa and Hauraki (and Tainui generally). The following material contains a small sample of tikanga which are presented as a starting point. This material could be expanded considerably by interviews with elders who have had greater experience with iwi and marae life than I have, and who may be able to explain these tikanga in greater depth than is presented here. These items are presented as a contribution to our discussion concerning museum practice.

### **6.4.1 Takai**

The *takai* (to wrap, wrap around) is the custom of ‘clothing’ a taonga with korowai, kākahu or some other kind of cloak. When a taonga is taken to the marae, it is often presented at a hui with a cloak draped about it. If the object is reasonably small – such as a whakakai or ear pendant – it may be laid upon a korowai. I have seen portraits and photographs being brought into the marae with a korowai draped about them.

The sense of the takai is that a taonga is an object of affection and reverence, because it retains the essence and presence of ancestors. The explanation I have heard for this custom is that a taonga should not be seen to be ‘naked’ (tahanga) or ‘exposed’ (hura), which might suggest it is less than esteemed.

Given this custom, when some Māori wish to borrow or obtain a taonga from a museum, they want it to be ‘clothed’ somehow and not merely brought to them ‘naked’. Museums may wish to consider processes for receiving and lending taonga in the light of this custom.

I have seen this custom on a number of occasions, including during the return of a tekoteko to our marae of Kikopiri in Ōhau, Horowhenua. During this hui, two images were also gifted to the marae: an image of our ancestress Rangī Topeora of Ngāti Toarangatira and Ngāti Raukawa, and another of our elder Teri Roera Te Ahukaramū. This hui took place in 1996.

### **6.4.2 Kōpaki**

The kōpaki is the custom of using a taonga such as a mere pounamu, to ‘envelop’ a particular issue or matter. In this custom, a group visits a marae and places a taonga on it during a pōwhiri ritual. The kōpaki represents an issue for discussion introduced by the group who have brought the taonga. Its recipients understand that the visiting group are presenting a take, an issue for discussion. This custom is used only sparingly and for the most important issues. The importance of the issue at hand is symbolised in the taonga itself.

There are numerous historical examples of the use of taonga as kōpaki. We have cited examples associated with the alienation of land (see Section 6.2). In the early 1990s, I was involved in preparing the Ngāti Raukawa-ki-te-tonga claim to be heard before the Waitangi Tribunal. The claim involves land from Rangitikei to Kapiti, and thus also impacts upon our neighbouring iwi of Muaupoko and Rangitāne, among others. As there were many issues to discuss between our respective iwi, an attempt was made to initiate discussions with Muaupoko by laying a kōpaki upon a Muaupoko marae.

#### 6.4.3 Tiwha

The tiwha is similar to a kōpaki in that a taonga is used to ‘envelop’ a particular issue. The taonga represents that issue and the presentation of the taonga is designed to catalyse discussion and action. In the past the tiwha was used to commemorate grievances and, at times, to incite war. A Ngāti Raukawa example can be found in a song composed by Matangi Hauroa. A Ngāti Raukawa group was involved in conflict on the Whanganui river, and some died. Matangi Hauroa appealed to Te Whatanui to seek retribution for these deaths. An extract from the song goes as follows:

Tē puta tō rongo toa, ka pēhia mai e Whanganui  
He toa e whaiātia, ko te pōtiki nā Tūwhakairihau....<sup>69</sup>  
Shortlived your triumph, subdued (were you) by Whanganui  
A warrior to pursue is that son of Tūwhakairihau....

Interestingly enough, the singing of this song was revived in Ngāti Raukawa in the 1980s by the late Ruka Broughton of Ngā Rauru, who taught it to our hui rūmaki which I was attending. The song had not been sung in Ngāti Raukawa for a long time and the version we now sing is the version that Ruka taught us. The late Matiu Māreikura of Ōhākune told me that this song was well known and regularly sung in the Whanganui area.

#### 6.4.4 Taonga and Tūpāpaku

When a taonga is presented at a tangihanga (our term is uhunga), there is a custom pertaining to whether the object will remain with the bereaved family or be returned to those who brought it. If the object is to remain with the bereaved family, its kakau (handle) is turned towards them when it is laid upon the tūpāpaku (corpse). If it is to be returned, then the kakau is turned toward those who have brought it.<sup>70</sup>

This custom was employed recently at the uhunga for Alma Winiata of Ngāti Raukawa and Ngāti Tamaterā. On this occasion, on behalf of my family, I took a

<sup>69</sup> *Kāti au i Konei*, Huia, 1994, p.70.

<sup>70</sup> The custom was explained to me by our late elder, Dr Tūkawekai Kereama of Ngāti Raukawa. This took place at a hui in the late 1980s, at Ngātōkōwaru marae on the occasion of the bringing together of the two taonga of Te Whatanui of Ngāti Raukawa called Te Kāoreore and Rākau-parāoa. The latter is held by descendants of Te Whatanui in the Bay of Islands.

taiaha called 'Wairangi' that was carved by Alma's uncle, Tītī Roera. It had come into the possession of our grand-uncle Kerei Mangōnui Roera (the son of Kipa Roera, who has been referred to earlier), and passed to our immediate family following his death in 1990. At the tangi for Alma Winiata, the taiaha was taken to Ngātokowaru marae and laid upon Alma's coffin, with the rau facing toward Alma's family. This denoted that that taiaha would be left with Alma's family. It is now the responsibility of this family to take it to another tangihanga or uhunga involving a member of the Te Kiriwhiri Royal family.

#### **6.4.5 Hei Hoa mō te Kōrero**

The expression 'hei hoa mō te kōrero' can be translated literally 'as a friend for (your) speechmaking'. The sense here is that as most taonga are a kōpaki, the taonga itself presents a take or issue for discussion. In this way, taonga assist in the maintenance of iwi traditions, stories and histories. The taonga themselves are the repositories of these narratives. In many cases, the taonga were once owned or in the possession of a person referred to in the traditions, which adds great weight, meaning and mana to the kōrero that is being shared. We should also mention presence of the object in one's hand gives the orator special authority to speak on the issues and reiterate the stories attached to the taonga. Wielding the instruments of the ancestors (indeed of the deities) bequeathes to the orator a special authority and mana.

There are many examples of this custom across all iwi histories and traditions. A contemporary example in Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Toarangatira and Te Āti Awa history is the mere pounamu (held by the family of Sir Māui Pōmare) named 'Whakatupuranga Rua Mano'. This name arises from the tribal development project of the same name (translated as 'Generation 2000') that was initiated by the Raukawa Trustees in 1975. Hence, this mere pounamu is a kōpaki that can be used as a 'hoa mō te kōrero'. When it is taken to various places, it not only enables the orator to speak about this tribal development programme, but offers special assistance and authority in doing so.

#### **6.4.6 Use of Taonga in Waitangi Tribunal Claims**

In 2003, I was among a number of people who presented evidence before the Waitangi Tribunal. The occasion was a hearing relating to lands in the 'top' of the South Island, an area referred to in iwi tradition as 'Te Tauihu-o-Te Waka-o-Māui' (the bow of Māui's canoe). This hearing took place at Takapūwāhia marae in Porirua, within the Toarangatira meeting house. In organising the hui, the Ngāti Toa people had placed a large table in the centre of the meeting house upon which was laid a large number of taonga, including mere pounamu, taiaha and other items. Many of the taonga laid upon the table that day were taonga that Ngāti Toa had secured during their tumultuous arrival in the south of the North Island and the north of the South Island in the 19th century. Some were those referred to in the letter to Sir George Grey mentioned in Section 6.2. Again, we see taonga used as kōpaki.

#### **6.4.7 Kaitiakitanga and Ownership of Taonga**

As the worldview of the people changed in the 19th and 20th centuries, so did many of their perspectives and behaviours. One such change was the usurping of collective ownership and responsibility of taonga by individual ownership. When we remember how a taonga could represent a whole block of land, it is possible to suggest that the individualisation of title was reflected in the individualisation of 'rights' and 'ownership' with respect to taonga which symbolised land blocks. Of course, upon this notion of individual ownership was layered the experience of poverty and depressed circumstances. As trade in Māori artefacts grew, Māori discovered that they could sell precious heirlooms for money. On many occasions, this brought real conflict and tension into Māori families.

The kaitiakitanga view, on the other hand, is that a taonga is owned collectively by a group even though the object itself may be in the possession of an individual. This is particularly the case if a taonga has a strong association to an esteemed ancestor to whom a number of people are able to cite a relationship. For example, my own family are the descendants of the 19th century Ngāti Raukawa ancestor Hūkiki Te Ahukaramū. Today we number in the hundreds, and taonga associated with Te Ahukaramū could be held by any of his descendants. However, descendants are not always clear about the collective dimension of ownership and the responsibilities for kaitiaki that arise from this concept.

#### **6.4.8 Deposit of Taonga in Museums to Alleviate Conflict**

Finally, we should mention the use of museums by some elders to assist with the resolution of conflicts and tensions that can arise within iwi, hapū and whānau in relation to their taonga. Whilst a great deal of discussion has taken place about the unfortunate ways in which taonga have been alienated from iwi, hapū and whānau (and made their way into museum collections), we should also note that on occasion, museums have been used by elders to overcome certain problems within iwi, hapū and whānau communities. Our grand-uncle Rev. Māori Marsden, of Te Tai Tokerau, deposited various items in the Auckland Institute and Museum over the years for just this purpose. Māori was a healer, and as he travelled around the country he often discovered that the presence of a taonga lay at the heart of family difficulties. He explained to me on a number of occasions that depositing a taonga in a museum was a way of overcoming or alleviating such problems.

In Section 6.0, we have briefly covered a range of tikanga with respect to the use of taonga in the 19th and 20th centuries. This discussion has been far from exhaustive. Our purpose was to sketch a number of themes pertaining, particularly, to the contemporary use of taonga. Much more could be added here, and it is suggested that Te Papa National Services conduct a survey involving elders and other suitably qualified and experienced people to explore these ideas

and others relating to tikanga and the use of taonga. The resulting information would assist greatly in informing museum practice.

## **7.0 Implications for Museum Practice**

Sections 3.0 to 6.0 have presented a range of ideas about mātauranga Māori and the traditional Māori worldview. The purpose of presenting this material was to describe something of the paradigm that exerts an influence over how Māori people today (and in history) relate to taonga. Numerous ideas have been covered, and it is important to note that we have not considered how other peoples might relate to these taonga. This should be the subject of a separate study that can supplement this material to assist the evolution of museum practice in relation to taonga. Our purpose has been to discover both traditional perspectives pertaining to taonga and aspects of a contemporary view held by Māori people. We have mainly focused on traditional material which, as has been mentioned, finds uneven expression in the activities and thinking of Māori people today.

Of course the relevance of this material to museum practice is that a great many taonga of the type discussed are now contained in public collections. Museums are naturally interested in the question:

What are those values and behaviours (including customary practices) that iwi/Māori hold to be important and would wish to find expressed in museum practice?

Attached to this question are two further questions:

*How do we identify these values and behaviours?*

And:

*How do these values and behaviours become integrated into museum practice?*

Another way of posing these questions is to ask, 'How do we determine 'tikanga Māori' of relevance to museum practice?' How do we identify and decide what these tikanga are (or should be), and how might they find expression in museum practice? What are the expectations of Māori with respect to the way in which museums care for and administer access to taonga?

Hence, future directions for a museum practice which seeks to include a 'Māori dimension' should focus upon tikanga Māori, the set of cultural behaviours which are explained in mātauranga Māori – recalling that what motivates tikanga Māori today is a combination of some traditional aspects with contemporary experience of the restoration of iwi and hapū cultures. The 'Plan' attached presents thoughts about how these goals might be achieved. We conclude this report with a number of summary points.

### **7.1 The Future of Taonga**

The place or role of taonga in our nation's culture is a direct product of the culture itself. Like all artefacts, art objects and cultural expressions, taonga are expressions of how a people see and experience their world. That is to say, taonga relate to a way of being in the world, and it is just this *way of being in the world today* that we have to discover and express in museum practice. This report has presented thoughts about the traditional perspectives on taonga. However, we no longer live in the world that gave rise to these traditional perspectives. We live life today at an intersection of internal and global influences – cultural, economic, social, religious, and so on. A challenge, therefore, lies before us:

What is the nature of our world today, and what is the role of taonga in our experience of the world?

This is a critical issue with respect to any art object or artefact that a museum seeks to preserve in perpetuity. We can rephrase this question by asking:

What is the nature of our world today, and what is the role of museums in our experience of the world?

These are critical questions that any vibrant museum would wish to explore and debate. In the context of our current discussion, we are focusing upon taonga and their ongoing role in the life of our nation. It is clear that we wish to preserve these objects and make them available to the public in a variety of ways. But why should we continue to preserve them? What ongoing role might they play in our lives?

In attempting to answer these questions, it is appropriate to reflect that:

- A New Zealand museum philosophy concerning taonga needs to take into account a variety of matters in addition to the perspectives discussed in this report, including approaches and views held by non-Māori with respect to taonga.
- Museum practice and philosophy should empathise with the contemporary Māori aspiration that Māori culture be a living culture, a vibrant dimension within New Zealand's national culture, not merely an historical phenomenon.

### **7.2 The Future of Māori Culture**

The future of taonga is critically linked to the future of Māori culture. Whilst taonga could remain in our museums as curiosities with little connection to a *living* culture, this outcome would be sad indeed for New Zealand of understanding taonga as a cultural expression unique to this part of the world. We New Zealanders should not relate to taonga in the same way as a dispassionate visitor would. There is something else for us to do here.

However, if taonga are to have a status within New Zealand's national life beyond that of museum curiosity, our thinking must remain in touch with the ongoing discussion pertaining to the place of Māori in New Zealand. The question is not merely one of capturing traditional perspectives on life – and how these are expressed through taonga – but how these traditional perspectives might evolve to inform new perspectives in touch with our experience of life today. This is no small task, but it is in harmony with the overall aspirations of museums to find a role for themselves in the ongoing life of this nation as we struggle with our identity, values and outlook.

Contemporary Māori culture is undergoing change, and the place of taonga will change as well. It is beyond the scope of museums to make a final judgement as to the changing shape and character of a culture; but it is within the scope of a museum to remain in touch with the expectations of a people in relation to their artefacts and the work of the institution.

With respect to Māori use of traditional taonga, it is impossible to return to the earlier worldview we have discussed in this report. Richard Tarnas warns us against a 'regression to naïve *participation mystique*', and William Irwin Thompson offers these words:

The materialist sees myth as superstitious gibberish from the old day before we had science and technology; the idolator takes the myth literally. The problem is that both are interested in power. The materialist wants to dominate nature with his culture, and to dominate feeling with reason, for he is interested in control. The idolator is also interested in control, but he wants to dominate the psychic with his ego; he wants a genie in a bottle to grant him his every wish; he wants a world of magic powers. The materialist and the psychic mechanist are, therefore, not that far apart.<sup>71</sup>

There is much wisdom in this statement. As we move forward in the renaissance of Māori culture, and as New Zealand too changes and grows, what kind of perspective on taonga awaits recognition in the years to come? As the opportunities for Māori culture grow more numerous, are we also facilitating a 'regression' of the type that Tarnas warns us against? Does 'the repatriation of Māori culture to Māori people' constitute a 'return' of this type? Or are we seeking new directions and new horizons with our heritage intact, acting as ballast for our waka as it crosses the sea of life?

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<sup>71</sup> *The Time Falling Bodies Take to Light*, p.38.

## 8.0 Appendices

### 8.1 Types of Taonga Referred to in this Text

On the whole, we have been referring to objects which are filled with certain mythic, ancestral and sacred meanings. We have not discussed everyday and mundane objects that do not have the same depth of meaning and experience attached to them.

Naturally Occuring Phenomena		Fashioned Objects	
<i>Type</i>	<i>Traditions and Examples</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Traditions and Examples</i>
<i>Moutere Island</i>	North, South, Stewart Islands as Māui's fish, canoe, anchor stone	Whare Whakairo Carved meeting house	Numerous examples
		Toki Adze, Axe	Te Āwhiorangi
<i>Kūrae, mātārae Promontory, headland</i>	Kaikoura peninsula, the thwart of Māui's canoe	Mere Pounamu Greenstone club	Whakatupuranga Rua Mano, Amokura
		Pou Whakairo Carved posts	Uenuku
<i>Toka Rocks</i>	Stone standing in Waikato river called Raukawa; Kupe's anchor stone at Pākanāe, Hokianga	Kōkō tangiwai Greenstone ear pendant	Te Rauparaha's ear pendant
		Tuhituhi Moko, kōwhaiwhai, cave drawings	Moko on the Treaty of Waitangi
		Tuhituhi as written texts	Bible, Treaty of Waitangi, whakapapa books

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Charles completed doctoral study at Victoria University in 1998 where he completed a dissertation which presents a new model for Māori performing arts. In 2001, he was Fulbright New Zealand Senior Scholar where he travelled to the United States and Canada to conduct research into indigenous worldviews. He has published five books, all on some aspect of mātauranga Māori. In 2004, Charles was a resident at the Rockefeller Foundation Research and Study Centre at Bellagio, Italy where he will began a new work concerning indigenous knowledge.



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