

MANA TAONGA AND THE MICRO WORLD OF INTRICATE RESEARCH AND FINDINGS AROUND TAONGA MAORI AT THE MUSEUM OF NEW ZEALAND TE PAPA TONGAREWA

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ABSTRACT

At the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa) an important principle known as Mana Taonga guides the practice of all staff and their work with collections of art, cultural, natural and historic material, including taonga Maori. The principle is an encompassing concept premised on values and modes of understanding that are intrinsically Maori, but observed for all the collections housed and cared for within Te Papa. Within the context of Aotearoa museum studies, this paper examines how this principle is pertinent for Maori curators who are involved in intricate and intimate research around Maori communal treasures.

INTRODUCTION

Through a handful of case studies that outline contemporary understandings of Maori material culture and of the taonga principle, this paper explores how curators actively engage in research processes that re-enhance the inter-relationships between peoples and their cultural material. In so doing, it follows the call put forth by such authors as Bennett (1995), Allen (1998) and Gosden and Knowles (2001) for an increased need to chronicle the ways in which exhibitionary complexes change, and are changed by, the dynamic relationships between indigenous cultures and colonial states. Within the context of Aotearoa museum studies, I shall argue that curatorial research assists in determining a future wellbeing for taonga held in the National collection, as well as for those vested interest groups who have been separated from their material culture.

The Mana Taonga principle acknowledges spiritual forces such as wairua and mana, which are concepts that exist within everything (Moon 2003: 131).

Mana may also reside in people, animals, and inanimate objects, including the physical symbols of identity, such as personal taonga held in museum collections. The Mana Taonga principle readily acknowledges these spiritual dimensions or qualities as within taonga and draws upon them to enliven connections between iwi, hapu or whanau representatives.

The Mana Taonga principle recognises the authority that derives from the whakapapa (genealogical reference system) of the creator of the cultural item. Such knowledge becomes the foundation for wider affiliated Maori participation at the museum, and especially when research reconnects key people to taonga. From a customary and contemporary viewpoint, it is well understood that whakapapa remains the reference system that orders intricate connections and intimate relationships between iwi, hapu and whanau members, between other Maori and entities. Whakapapa is the essential expression of whanaungatanga between a wider Maori cosmology, peoples, language, and visual culture that also reaches to valued environmental properties and resources within lands and waterways. Whakapapa is an interdependent system that requires careful use, care and management by knowledgeable and proficient tribal adepts. Whakapapa becomes an important methodological system to revitalise connections with iwi, hapu and whanau representatives and cultural material that reside within museums. Curators may use whakapapa reference systems to check their research work, but what is most important is the sensitive and careful referral to tribal elders or respected leaders for final verification of research findings.

By recognising the ancestors after whom the taonga is named and the whanau, hapu or iwi to which the taonga belongs, the Mana Taonga principle acknowledges the worthiness of the individual, and his or her mana, regarded as personal influence and authority. While mana is not a quality that is bestowed on oneself,¹ it is linked to personal, highly valued taonga both old and new, where meaning, values, histories, and associated stories about people or the bearer have accumulated and appreciated over generations and time. Te Papa enhances the rights of iwi and other diverse communities to care for taonga or cultural material, to speak about them, and to determine their use by the museum (Anon. 1992). Research of this sort enhances associations between peoples and taonga Maori, which in turn enriches others' understandings of the taonga held within the museum's collection.

Today it is true that some iwi and hapu representatives remain connected to their ancestral taonga, extant whare tupuna, marae complexes and other tangible treasures such as kakahu (cloaks), hand-held weapons, fighting staffs or

personal adornments. Such taonga may still be used ceremoniously, be present at tangihanga, warmed by human interaction in home regions, or worn by kaitiaki as living embodiments of an ancestral past with the responsibility to care for them into the future.

Prized personal possessions like hei tiki were often given spontaneously at important public events. This exchange of gifts is a widespread custom in the Pacific, acknowledging the significance of an event and honouring both the giver and the recipient. In other cases, personal adornments were also offered as peacemaking tokens between peoples, both Maori and non-Maori. Hei tiki with these associations, are present within the collection at Te Papa.

CASE STUDY ONE: Personal Taonga

Of interest are the personal adornments that become family treasures worn by descendants today as marks of respect for the continued guidance of ancestors in contemporary life. This is obvious for kaitiaki or guardians like Glenis Philip-Barbara (Fig 1).



Figure 1. Glenis Hiria Philip-Barbara (1967-) Ngati Rangī, Te Whanau a Tapuhi, Ngati Porou. This family hei tiki has been passed on from great, great grandmother Taukuri to Glenis, who is the current kaitiaki or guardian. Reproduced courtesy of Glenis Hiria Philip-Barbara. Photograph by Jacqui Spring, 2006

In Glenis's case, adornments like the hei tiki have ancestral or personal significance to the whanau. This taonga has been charged with the tapu and mana of revered ancestors, and has acquired the history and vitality of each succeeding person within the generation who wears and looks after them. For Glenis, this taonga is not a possession or seen as her own property. As kaitiaki she holds this treasure in trust for future generations, responsible for preserving the knowledge of stories or events, associated with it. Glenis has responsibility in her lifetime as the eldest granddaughter of her whanau to care for the family hei tiki of pounamu she is wearing. Whanau members come to collect the hei tiki to wear for special occasions, events, or performances, and they return the taonga afterwards to Glenis for safekeeping. As Glenis says, 'It will pass from me to my eldest granddaughter when I feel that she is responsible enough to care for this taonga on behalf of the whanau.'²

Other taonga are held in museum collections for safe keeping, whilst silent others languish with memories and associations within them in danger of evaporating as their associated population outside the museum ages. This makes the research process more complex as the stories, memories and associations with taonga are not passed on.

Maori Curators at Te Papa recognise the many ways iwi and hapu Maori have become disassociated from the cultural significance of taonga. There are a variety of complex reasons for this: the legacy of colonial regimes; alienation of lands; migrations; reinterpreted histories; the activities of nineteenth century collectors interpreting culture within a context of colonial museology; and other disturbances (McCarthy 2007). The Mana Taonga principle, however:

reminds the museum of its obligation to be aware of historical and contemporary contexts that surround taonga. Particularly those that passed out of Maori hands during times of conflict and social disruption [...] Overtime, many taonga were bought, stolen, confiscated, or bartered: some were removed without ceremony from sacred places. This severance continues to impact on descendants today (Smith 2004: 2).

A kete or toolkit of research methods that reflects a philosophical perspective related to a Maori conception of continuous time, with a deeper respect for the highly dynamic nature of complex interplay with multiple agencies, including both Maori and non-Maori, creates a system that forms the focus of this study. Such a research method can awaken taonga and regain a sense of order in the complex mix of familial relationships and associations. Maori curators tap

into these systems of understanding to address and overcome disassociations between people and cultural treasures.

As observed at Te Papa, the wider context for Mana Taonga has its origins in Article 2 of the Treaty of Waitangi (1840). The English text of the Treaty determined that Maori leaders and people, collectively and individually, were confirmed and guaranteed 'exclusive and undisturbed possession of their lands and estates, forests, fisheries and other properties'. In the Maori text of the Treaty, Maori were guaranteed 'te tino rangatiratanga', the self-determination or the unqualified exercise of their chieftainship over their lands (known as whenua), their villages (known as kainga), and all their treasures (taonga katoa). The phrase 'taonga tuku iho' refers to valued treasures passed on, and also encompasses an indigenous cultural landscape perspective of environmental and cultural properties within land and waterways. Taonga in this way are treasured as intangible entities and tangible resources respected and used by generations. Mana Taonga also covers language and associated social narratives and histories. All these taonga are interrelated with customary practices and objects, and material or structures of cultural expression, which stand within marae complexes or within museum collections around the country.

The Mana Taonga principle has long signalled that the national museum no longer has a unilateral right to determine how a taonga should be stored, exhibited, represented or reproduced. In a practical sense, Mana Taonga provides iwi and communities with the right to define how affiliated taonga within Te Papa should be cared for and managed in accordance with their tikanga and custom. These rights cannot be erased and continue to exist for those taonga held within Te Papa's care.

A Kete or Toolkit Employed in Research at Te Papa

Any research conducted for exhibition, publications or collection development is framed within a bicultural, cross-disciplinary or trans-disciplinary framework. The table below (see Appendix 1) contains a kete or 'woven basket' of research activities that lists and briefly describes a range of aims, theories, methods and resources, that may be employed by curators when executing research initiatives around taonga Maori.

The tools listed within the kete have primarily emerged from a Maori epistemology of knowledge development (Tuhiwai Smith 1999). Many of these tools are similar to methods, resources, and aims used by western trans-disciplinary researchers. Indeed, trans-disciplinary researchers (involved in what they refer

to as joint-problem-solving research), recognise the highly context dependent and dynamic manner in which research methods of this kind are applied (Nicolescu 2005).

Similar research methods have been applied at Te Papa in an attempt to highlight how the research process has not been linear in nature with a clearly defined starting and end point. To explain this further, the whakatauki, *a muri kei mua, a mua kei muri, te wero ko naianei* -refers to the past as being before us, with the future behind and a range of challenges facing us now: ‘The present is a combination of the ancestors and their living faces or genetic inheritors that is the present generations. Our past is as much the face of our present and future. They live in us [...] we live in them’ (Mead 1985: 16).

This whakatauki explains from a Maori perspective that the past is not seen as a fixed point, but an important and pervasive dimension of the present and future. Furthermore, the past may be regarded as an ‘ever-present now’. Maori continue to benefit from these models, protocols, and the revitalisation of customary thinking emerging from this concept of inter-related time. These dynamic models are incorporated into modern life and contribute to future developments across spheres of activity that involve Maori. Taonga in collections are therefore more than mere objects—they are living entities. Any activities and research around them emboldens these dimensions and revitalises their relationships to people. Known narratives around taonga and their peoples enhance their intrinsic power that is still revered today. Taonga Maori in collections still spiritually link the past with the present, and, in so doing, contribute to positive futures for Maori.

Another important distinction in the complex Mana Taonga approach to research is how a matauranga Maori method is not based on the dualistic assumptions of a western knowledge epistemology. A more holistic Mana Taonga research approach subsumes past and present relationships around cultural material. Such thinking is central to a Maori worldview around taonga Maori. It actively considers a whole-of-person, and a whole-of-system theory of knowing in direct relation to the taonga. The approach emerges from a need to re-engender the role of human interdependencies, inter-relationships to each other and to the spiritual and cultural context that is present within taonga (Smith 2007: 22). When approaching research in this way, it is vital to activate intricate relationships in order to enhance this form of knowledge development.

The potential of iwi members researching taonga gives rise to a range of positive activities that can improve, maintain, and enhance relationships between taonga and their people. For example, when kaumatua retell stories, engage with tribally affiliated taonga, or have encounters with taonga in the collection rooms at Te Papa, they highlight a value system that is based on spiritual protection not only for themselves but also for others who work around the taonga housed there. Many believe that spiritual entities within specific taonga dialogue with them in order to guide their practice and relationships. For many, when visiting taonga as guardians or relations to the ancestral, it is a warming and engaging experience for all involved. Relationships can proceed further within the highly dynamic and unfolding Maori worldview of taonga cared for within museum collections.

The practice of Mana Taonga offers unique, intricate, and at times challenging, ways to research taonga in the collection. As the Matauranga Maori team of curators and collection managers work closely with taonga, they readily revive and re-edify knowledge and relationships to people based upon well-established oral narratives, dialogue or whakapapa reference systems. These activities can be augmented further by talking with kaumatua and other knowledgeable people to synthesise the research findings. This facilitates relevant connections with communities of interest, whanau, hapu or individuals. During the process of combining affiliated people, and different ideas and influences around taonga into a new whole, the curatorial experience of doing this actively reweaves relationships between hapu, iwi and their associated taonga.

CASE STUDY TWO: The Pou Rahui in *Blood Earth Fire Whangai Whenua Ahi Kaa: The Transformation of Aotearoa New Zealand* exhibition, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

The main formal practice for protecting mauri, or the life essence and vitality of areas, was the custom of rahui, which Rev Maori Marsden describes as follows:

In order to conserve the resources and ensure their replenishment and sustenance the Maori introduced the tikanga or custom of Rahui. Rahui was a prohibition or ban instituted to protect resources (Marsden & Henare 1992).

Placing a rahui on a site or resource usually involves rituals and prayers (or karakia). Kaitiaki may erect a post (pou rahui) with some fern fronds or piece of clothing attached to mark the site (Best 1898: 83; Mead 1984). Sometimes, a

rahui involves placing a ‘mauri stone’ or other object to ‘aid the pro-life processes of recovery and regeneration by focussing the mauri of particular species within that area’ (Marsden 1988: 27). In other examples of rahui that protected the mauri in landscape, ancestors used certain forms of cultural marker as evidence of their kaitiaki rights in regions along the coast.

In the Otaki or Foxton Native Land Court, transactions or ancestral accounts over lands and associated resource use rights, recorded critical connections to lands and wetlands. The tikanga or custom of rahui set up a prohibition or ban to protect resources from overuse, to conserve and ensure the replenishment of mauri. Certain formalities, karakia or incantations around the practice of rahui demarcated areas and protected the resources within them from unsustainable use. For example, in the Horowhenua to Kapiti region, resource users erected pou or pou rahui at different stages to protect their harakeke supplies for flax dressing, often times at areas within the Waitohu areas near Otaki (Wehipeihana, 1889:171–173.)

This taonga or pou rahui is from Maungaraki, near Gladstone (Figures 2.1–2.3). It is associated with Hurunuiorangi Marae and the many hapu that make up Te Kupenga o Nga Hapu o Hurunuiorangi (the net containing the hapu of



Figure 2.1. Pou rahui (post denoting restriction) on display in *Blood Earth Fire Whangai Whenua Ahi Ka* exhibition, in the Ahi Kaa Roa section.



Figure 2.2. Pou rahui (post denoting restriction) 1800–1900. Carver unknown, recovered from Maungarake, near Gladstone, Wairarapa. Made of wood and pigment. Purchased 1904.



Figure 2.3. Pou rahui (post denoting restriction) 1800–1900. Detail of pou rahui showing ancestral figure and mokomoko (lizards).

Hurunuiorangi). According to past collection managers it was in 2000 that an emotional meeting was witnessed between this pou rahui and its associated kaumatua (elders) and tribal affiliates from Hurunuiorangi marae. The meeting of people with their taonga occurred in Ahuru Mowai, the main Maori collection storeroom at Te Papa. A group of Hurunuiorangi marae elders advised the curators and collection managers about the significance of this carving.

During the curatorial research period for the *Blood Earth Fire Whangai Whenua Ahi Kaa* exhibition, the aforementioned experience witnessed within the store, was used as the basis to create a memorial to the kuia Hine-potaka-ariki Kauauria Hawea-Paewai. The pou rahui was set against a large scale photograph of the landscape overlooking Hurinuiorangi Marae. The display honoured the words uttered by the kuia Hawea-Paewai when in the storeroom that day. In a trance like fashion she recalled and recited a local whakatauaki or proverb that honoured the mokomoko or lizards:

*Pupuhi ngahau mauru
Rongohia te mahana
Ka neke nga mokopupu-riki
Ka pakoko nga kohatu o Hurinuiorangi*

*The warmth of mother Earth is full
The guardian lizards emerge to enjoy its splendour
Their movements through the pebbles and rocks can be heard
at Hurinuiorangi*

The mokomoko is kaitiaki or guardian for the local hapu who lived near the Ruamahanga River. When the nearby stony river was on the rise, the movement of mokomoko moving further up the bank to escape the rising waters was heard at the marae. They made a noise not unlike a 'pako pako pako' sound. This sound was a natural indicator for the local hapu, because, if the river was indeed rising, everyone needed to be aware and move to higher ground as soon as possible. Another kuia Lou Cook, who was also present at that spiritual interaction between peoples and taonga, was equally moved to see the five lizards marching up and down the pole, with ancestral figures at the base and tip, reminded her of the power of kaitiaki.

Pou rahui, like the aforementioned example, were boundary markers that used natural contours or land features to demarcate areas of tribal and cultural significance and occupation. The photograph above indicates natural or topographical features that demarcate this area and record significance to the hapu

of Hurunuiorangi. The pou rahui remains a tangible reminder of important tribal areas and hapu/iwi affiliations. It is charged with meaning and energy as a liminal threshold, suggestive of passages between spiritual, natural and physical worlds, as well as cultural practices. These 'between-world places' are inclusive rather than exclusive spaces, where a meeting between the imaginary and the symbolic, the aquatic and the terrestrial, and the spoken and unspoken, take place (see <http://www.carolbrowndances.com/docs/tepourahui.doc>).

Maori curators readily acknowledge that other taonga in the collection have been bought, stolen, confiscated, donated, bartered, or fossicked from wahi tapu or sacred places such as burial grounds without ceremony from around the country. With this in mind, the Maori curatorial team well recognise their own obligations and responsibilities as intermediaries in the care, management, and research around the taonga on behalf of iwi, hapu and whanau, or when collaborating with specialists or informants. While a curator brings their own localised perspective and associated narratives around affiliated taonga, they acknowledge the spiritual and cultural relationships therein, and seek ways to bolster relationships between people and taonga within the museum.

More often than not, the team deal with taonga that have been disconnected from iwi, hapu or whanau. A protective, guardianship role is assumed to help substantiate hidden narratives within taonga. When actively engaging with key iwi, hapu or whanau researchers, the team encourage participatory or collaborative research. In recent years Maori collection managers and curators have physically audited the collection, compiled iwi inventories, and created databases into the holdings, at times supported by iwi researchers or post-graduate students from national and international universities.

The Mana Taonga principle and complex research methods remind curators to extend museological practices, and recognise and reconcile the sensitivities and intricacies of what have often been difficult contexts for culturally and spiritually valued items. This is particularly so for those taonga that entered the collection at times of conflict and considerable social and economic disruption. From the 1860s until the early 1980s, museums in New Zealand often collected and then re-interpreted taonga without any referral to, or contribution of, iwi or hapu. While some taonga in the collection may have been gifted to individuals to cement intricate relationships, descendants of recipients have at times, inevitably sold taonga onto collectors or dealers. These taonga then later make their way into the museum through the acquisition process.

CASE STUDY THREE: Peace Mission, the Peace Chalice and Land

The museum's interest in the carving featured in Figure 3, began with an email and image from a private collector based in Canberra, Australia, in October 2000. The bowl, balanced on the upraised arms of an intricately carved figure has only one equivalent, and resides in the Rotorua Museum. The email



Figure 3. Peace Chalice, Te Huringa I (1800–1900). Carved by Anaha Te Rahui (c 1820s–1913), Ngati Tarawhai, Totara, 488 x 138 x 184 mm. Purchased 2001 with New Zealand Lottery Grant Board funds

explained that an accompanying note with the carving stated that Anaha Te Rahui had presented this carving to Robert Graham. The information on that note had presumed that Graham was a Land Court Judge who had dealt fairly with local Maori about the return of confiscated land in the Rotorua region.

In order to develop context for this taonga, it is important to investigate the key players in this alleged gift exchange. First, Anaha Te Rahui (c. 1822–1913) of Ngati Tarawhai was an esteemed leader and carver. He was born at Te Koutu, Lake Okataina, southeast of Rotorua. He was the son of Te Rahui, a major chief and canoe builder. His mother was Rangihonea of Ngati Pikiāo. While taught the craft of canoe building by his father, Anaha learnt his carving skills from other tribal adepts. Anaha Te Rahui became a Land Assessor in the early 1860s and later fought in the 1864 land war campaigns. From the 1870s onward he participated in some house carving activity but most of his time was devoted to Land Court hearings, as both an Assessor and claimant.

Robert Graham (1820–1885) was born at Lambhill, Lanarkshire, England. He arrived in Auckland in 1842 as a 22 year old where he began a very entrepreneurial and adventurous life, including brief sojourns in Sydney and California. He held a number of parliamentary posts as MHR for the Southern Division of Auckland from 1855 to 1860 and for Franklin from 1861 to 1868. On the Auckland Provincial Council Graham represented the Southern Division from 1855 to 1857. He also made major land purchases, beginning in Waiwera in 1845. He survived two shipwrecks in the 1860s and established a number of successful farming ventures in Auckland and offshore islands. From his earliest experiences with Maori, Robert Graham was very aware of the impact colonial changes wrought on iwi and hapu. He became fluent in the language and was sympathetic to their loss of prestige and their bitterness towards settler governance usurping their mana. Many regarded him as a diplomat.

In trying to find out why such a special and unusual gift was made to Graham, it was revealed that he played a key role in quelling a potentially explosive battle between the significant chiefs Te Pokiha Taranui of Ngati Pikiāo and Petera Te Pukuatua of Ngati Whakaue at Maketu in June 1878. A battle loomed between the two tribes due to complex frustrations created over incomplete government transactions, whereby they had distributed disputed lands to the wrong peoples and made proclamations over other areas in the region. Graham heard of the brewing trouble between these chiefs from Auckland. There was a troubled state of affairs in Maketu. Graham was advised to visit and use his influence to settle the impending difficulties emerging between these esteemed warriors.

He travelled via a relay of horses to Pukemaire pa at Maketu. From the time of his arrival on the 8th (and his meeting with the chiefs the next day), to the 12th June 1878, Graham negotiated day and night between the two camps of Pikiāo and Whakaue. The cause of the disturbance lay in the Government partially purchasing portions of land in the surrounding districts. They had paid deposits to some while others also refused to sell. The incomplete transactions continued over four years and created considerable dissatisfaction. Others were in direct negotiation with Europeans willing to pay three times the price, only to find there were Government proclamations placed across their lands prohibiting Europeans from purchasing:

The Natives wanted money and those who had not taken Government money were pressing the Europeans to buy, declaring the Government should never get their land and those who had taken Government money were also dissatisfied because the transactions had been so long in abeyance and the land had become much more valuable (Robert Graham, 1878).

Another concern over land included a matter that Sir Donald McLean had instigated some years before, referred to as a 'claim of the braves', or known as 'Toa' claims. What the Pikiāo and Whakaue chiefs wanted was for the Native Land Minister to fulfil his promise and meet with the chiefs *before* lands in question were investigated by the Native Court. There was considerable concern that if 'Toa' claims went into the Court without instruction, the Court may decide against them. This had happened in Tauranga in 1870, where the Government officers had 'led the Natives to believe that the Government would insist upon keeping the natives to complete arrangements thus compelling those who had not taken money from the Government to sell only to the Government at their own price when the land passed through the Court.' They were also led to believe that the Government would not recognise McLean's decision respecting the 'Toa' claims.

These were the difficulties that Graham found the chiefs and tribes labouring under. He worked through the complexities with each chief in turn, utilising Captain Gilbert Mair as interpreter. There was considerable anxiety for all parties involved. Graham finally managed to convince both to postpone the fighting and pull back their parties until he had communicated with the Government over the land troubles. The Native Minister Sheehan later met with the chiefs where the trouble over land was thrashed out.

On the 9 December 1878, in appreciation of Graham averting a potentially

devastating war amongst iwi and hapu and closing the Bay of Plenty to colonisation, leading chiefs and approximately one hundred and fifty tribal members of the region proceeded to Te Koutu and Kawaha with the Graham family, in order to gift 1,500 acres of land to Graham. It was at the tribes' behest that he live amongst them and continue to adjudicate on matters affecting them. According to Mrs Jane Graham's diary:

It was something to remember to have those Maori chiefs welcoming Robert Graham and his family ... I could feel by their attitude and excited gestures that they were making him a gift of something, which they valued in gratitude for what he had done for them... The purport of their talk on this occasion was the gift of land on which we stood, and other lands... besides several smaller gifts, including two beautifully carved paddles, and two handsome Maori carvings to their friend and benefactor, Ropata Karema – the Maori name for Robert Graham... The carvings were all beautiful. They were done especially for Mr Graham and were very finely executed (Wilson n.d. 13).

Around 1972 a branch of the Graham family sold the carving through an antiques shop in Taupo. The vendor family referred to the carving as a 'peace chalice' or 'peace bowl'. It was deduced that due to their ancestor's peace making actions, that this taonga was one of the 'handsome Maori carvings' handed to Robert Graham on that exceptional evening where Maori appreciation and gratitude for actions taken for averting war was shown to the family through the ritual of magnanimous gifting. Unfortunately, the government intervened again and disallowed the gift of land to Robert Graham due to the Government's right of pre-emption.

From Taupo the carved chalice went to a dealer in Auckland, before making its way to Australia, and then finally to a retired dealer in Noosa Heads, Queensland. It was purchased by the then owner in Canberra, who on sold it to another dealer in Melbourne. Further negotiations took place before Te Papa ultimately purchased the carving.

CASE STUDY FOUR: Disconnected Mere Pounamu Come Home

An example of disconnected taonga coming home is further expressed in these mere pounamu, or greenstone hand-held weapons, that were returned to New Zealand through very protracted means. The mere pounamu embody and commemorate two significant ancestors named Kauwhata and Wehiwehi,



Figure 4.1. Kauwhata, Mere Pounamu (Greenstone Weapon) Te Puawaitanga, Ngati Kauwhata/Ngati Haua. Kawakawa (nephrite), cord / 289 × 99.4 × 18.3mm, Purchased 2002.



Figure 4.2. Wehiwehi, Mere Pounamu (Greenstone Weapon) Te Huringa II, Ngati Wehiwehi/Ngati Mahuta. Kahurangi (nephrite), cord / 336 × 92.7 × 14.6mm, Purchased 2002.

who have whakapapa relationships to the southern Waikato region of Te Kōkaoroa o Patatere, and to their contemporary communities who remain in the Waikato region. There are also affiliated Ngati Kauwhata and Ngati Wehiwehi descendants who migrated south in the early 1820s to the Manawatu and Horowhenua regions, who also express an interest in these taonga.

When these taonga left Maori guardianship, it was because they were gifted to the Prince of Wales by the fourth Maori king, Te Rata Mahuta (Ngati Mahuta) and King movement leader Tupu Taingakawa Te Waharoa (Ngati Haua). This was during a royal tour to Aotearoa and the gifting took place on 29 April 1920. Te Arawa of Rotorua hosted this part of the royal visit. It was well attended by many tribes from the wider region and beyond. In inimitable Maori style and as expressions of manaakitanga in hosting their esteemed guest to their region, they bestowed gift upon gift of taonga Maori to the Prince of Wales.

To couch the practice of gifting in a Maori framework, there is tikanga known

as kopaki. It is the:

Custom of using taonga, such as mere pounamu, to ‘envelope’ a particular issue or matter... The kopaki represents an issue presented for discussion, which is introduced by the group who have brought the taonga. The recipients of the taonga understand that the visiting group are presenting a take, an issue for discussion... The kopaki is a custom used only sparingly and only for the most important issues. The importance of the issue at hand is symbolised in the taonga itself (Royal 2004: 66).

Research helps us understand that these noteworthy Waikato leaders most likely sought a form of kopaki or audience with the Prince of Wales, who was to be a future King of England. There is no doubt that the Maori king, Rata Mahuta, and the Tupu Taingakawa Te Waharoa, wished to discuss the ongoing social and economic difficulties that their iwi and hapu continued to experience, over ‘the confiscation (raupatu) of Waikato land by the Crown after the wars of the 1860s [where] 1.2 million acres (480,000 hectares) were taken from the Tainui people as punishment for their so-called rebellion’ (Orange 2004: 222). Claudia Orange also notes that the government and the King movement held differing views about sovereignty. Despite half-hearted attempts at negotiation by Governor Grey, coupled with Maori mistrust over Grey’s suspicious road making ventures into the Waikato, it was the war in Taranaki in May 1863 (with the noted involvement of Ngati Maniapoto chief, Rewi Maniapoto) that hastened the government troop invasion and the outbreak of war in Waikato on 12 July 1863.

According to historian Michael King, in 1972 Tainui tribal representatives sought the return of at least one of the two mere after the Duke of Windsor’s death. Consistent with tribal accounts recording the way the taonga were actually presented, it is alleged that one was handed to the duke with its handle pointing to him while the other one was presented with its handle to the donor. This action signified that the hand-held weapon still belonged to Tainui people and should be returned to them after the duke’s death. It is likely that the ancestral taonga known as Kauwhata (who in genealogical terms is the father of Wehiwehi), was possibly the mere pounamu that was gifted with the blade to the Prince, with the handle still facing its donor. It is also alleged that Potatau Te Wherowhero, a great Waikato warrior and later the first Maori King (from 12 May 1859 to 25 June 1860), was the bearer of this pre-contact mere pounamu. Most importantly the gifted backwards gesture indicated that the mere needed to return one day.

Wehiwehi (as the son of Kauwhata) is a mere pounamu of later manufacture, possibly around the early 20th century and before 1920. It was deliberately gifted with the handle to the prince, therefore it was intended as a personal gift for keeps. The suggested gesture of kopaki or the use of mana or personal authority emanating from taonga to secure dialogue or establish a special relationship with the duke was, unfortunately, never reciprocated.

Later, in 1988, Dr King contacted the late duchess' lawyer on behalf of Tainui to try and trace the mere again. The lawyer told him that the mere could not be found and might have been sold. Tainui tribal members dropped their case then, only to re-engage with the issue when the mere pounamu resurfaced in 1998.

By this time, it was clear that the taonga had not been lost or sold. The mere pounamu had come into the possession of Mohamed al-Fayed, Egyptian businessman and former owner of Harrods department store in London. He had purchased the house and entire contents of the late Duke and Duchess of Windsor's Paris estate in 1986. The auction of this extensive estate of some 40,000 household and personal items included the mere pounamu. The auction was scheduled for late September 1997. Just three days before the Sotheby's auction in New York Dodi Fayed and Diana Princess of Wales were tragically killed in a car accident in Paris. Out of respect at their unexpected demise, the auction was postponed until 22 February 1998. The proceeds of the original auction at Sotheby's were to go to a Mohamed al-Fayed directed trust. In light of the significant loss Al-Fayed later assigned all takings of the 1998 auction to a children's charity trust named in his son's memory – the Dodi Fayed International Charitable Foundation.

Meanwhile back in New Zealand, political and tribal attempts to intervene over the pending sale of taonga at auction created renewed interest in the mere pounamu. The Tainui Maori Trust Board, then New Zealand First Minister of Maori Affairs Tau Henare (with his 1996 private member's bill known as the Taonga Maori Protection Bill) and Te Tai Hauauro MP Tukoirangi Morgan, all demanded the withdrawal of the mere from the rescheduled auction. These politicians campaigned publicly for their return to Waikato, much to the consternation of some Tainui Board members, including chief negotiator for the Tainui Raupatu Claim, Sir Robert Mahuta. He was disturbed by the controversy raised over the taonga. Undeterred, MP Tukoirangi Morgan contacted the consigner of the collection and asked that the taonga be returned in accordance with Maori custom because they were no longer wanted or held by the recipient. Further attempts at intervention extended to the then Cul-

tural Affairs Minister Hon Simon Upton, and again to the Minister of Maori Affairs, Hon Tau Henare. Henare faxed a letter to Mr Al-Fayed asking for the mere back, stating that the 'New Zealand Government would be immensely appreciative'.

The protocol of Maori gifting or kopaki in its original context is more complex than what is generally understood or reported in the media. The possible gesture and symbolic intent behind the kopaki was obviously incomprehensible to the Prince of Wales in 1920. Contemporaneously, the significance of gifting or kopaki was also lost on the trustees of the Dodi al-Fayed International Charitable Foundation. Along with Sotheby's New York,³ the auction house responsible for the sale, they too rejected the appeal and proceeded with the rescheduled auction as planned.

As reported in the media, the mere sold for \$NZ41,465 for Kauwhata and \$NZ46,650 for Wehiwehi, around eight times the estimate. Conversely, this information was also incorrect as the mere actually went for US\$59,000.00 in total (approximately NZ\$143,000) with US\$27,600.00 paid for Kauwhata and US\$31,000 for Wehiwehi, an exorbitant price overall. At the time of final sale, no one knew who the mystery bidder was or who had secured the taonga at the inflated prices. It was later revealed that an auctioneer in New Zealand had made a telephone bid on behalf of a Wellington purchaser.

What is of particular interest from a Maori curatorial perspective is that Kauwhata is actually the elder of the two mere pounamu in both whakapapa, and in terms of manufacture. This mere has a purported provenance to Potatau Te Wherowhero, a provenance unknown by the auction house. It achieved the lesser price. Wehiwehi, the mere pounamu named after the son of Kauwhata, is a larger and more glossy mere, proving soundly that aesthetics (without all the other more interesting details) plays a compelling part in determining hammer price overall.

Te Papa staff attempted to secure the taonga but they were outbid by a significant margin. Due to the media coverage generated both nationally and internationally, the national museum's bid was unsuccessful. The final hammer price achieved at auction escalated the price beyond everyone's expectation. The MP Tukoroirangi Morgan would then appeal to the anonymous New Zealander through the media to return the mere to Tainui at no cost. 'What a magnificent gesture that would be coming up to the year 2000,' he was quoted as saying in the Waikato Times (Te Anga 1998: 3). This was not to be.

In late 2001 a letter concerning the mere pounamu arrived from Germany at Te Papa and it was placed on my desk. The mere had been held in safe keeping overseas on behalf of the Wellington purchaser since 1998. Direct negotiations were then entered into at Leadership Team level so the taonga could be secured for Te Papa's collection. The price achieved at auction in 1998 would be the price paid in 2001. Due to an annual allocation of central government funds specifically for collection development in 2000, the museum was able to purchase the mere pounamu.

By 2002 the historic mere were back in New Zealand and had their first presentation at the kawē mate or return of the wairua or spirit of the late Sir Robert Mahuta. He had been a previous board member of Te Papa and a direct descendant of the fourth Maori King Rata Mahuta. His elder sister Dame Te Atairangi Kahu, the late Maori Queen, and Sir Robert's whanau attended an emotionally charged event, held on the Rongomaraeroa marae at Te Papa. For those who witnessed this important outpouring of love and respect for Sir Robert Mahuta, it was a moving extended family reunion with the mere pounamu at a ceremony led by Te Papa kaumatua, key Maori tikanga experts and supported by Te Papa staff. In September 2002 an equally elated and emotional crowd numbering nearly two hundred who were affiliated to Ngati Kauhata and Ngati Wehiwehi (predominately from the Horowhenua and Manawatu regions) warmed and welcomed the mere pounamu home again. Due to multiple iwi interests in the mere pounamu from Waikato, Horowhenua and Manawatu, considerable time and effort is required for all interested iwi parties to agree to shared terms of engagement with a Memorandum of Understanding. This process is important in order for the mere to be warmed and supported by all their affiliates. Te Papa is well aware that any Memorandum of Understanding over taonga Maori can take many years to complete.

In the four case studies discussed above, considerable effort and investigative research was required when working with peoples, places, and taonga. Combine this effort across the curatorial team with enhanced contextual research completed over many taonga—the Mana Taonga approach to research encourages them to negotiate a wide range of historic and contemporary complexities and contexts. Curators are expected to examine the many intricate and intimate connections that exist between peoples, narratives, histories and exchanges made over, or with taonga. In emphasising a kete of aims, theories, methods and resources that support a Maori way of knowing, as present within taonga (whether residing in New Zealand or overseas public or private collections), curatorial research is greatly enriched when the relationships forged between people and taonga are strengthened.

NOTES

- 1 Mana is acknowledged by a tribe which recognise a leader's accumulated achievements in upholding their culture.
- 2 Personal Communication collated for the *Tokyo National Museum Mauri Ora: Maori Treasures from the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongawera* project, 2006
- 3 It is not known if Sotheby's were aware of previous attempts to reclaim the mere or whether they deliberately disregarded any acknowledgement of the early attempts of Maori intervention in 1972.

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APPENDIX 1:

A summary of, aims, theory, methods and resources associated with the kete employed

Aims	Theory	Method	Resources
Focus on the range of interdependencies between people and taonga as valued treasures	Augmented by kaupapa Maori or Maori research guidelines and practices	Oral narratives and tribal knowledge for verification	Use of respected local leaders Discussions with kaumatua and other contacts
Focus of interrelationships between people and taonga as valued treasures	Recognition of localised systems of knowledge	Whakapapa reference systems	Use of respected local leaders Discussions with kaumatua and other contacts
		Dialogue with participants; Oral interviews	Conceptual aids through use of metaphor and allegory
		Visual Assessments; Creating Taonga Inventories	Local knowledge archives and inventories of taonga collated using iwi and hapu participants to assist
		Active revitalisation of fragmented relationships between peoples and taonga	Taonga Inventories; Reports
		Co-created solutions	Co-joint project particularly iwi exhibitions
		Use of co-intelligence strategies with people and taonga	Taking time to visit hapu to discuss taonga at home and associated taonga tuku iho/cultural landscape projects

Aims	Theory	Method	Resources
		Encouragement of constructive working relationships between people and taonga	Kaupapa; Iwi exhibitions; Augmenting knowledge on taonga for Waitangi Tribunal Claims and Inventories
		Restoration of symbiotic relationships between people and taonga	Use of Tikanga, karakia and appropriate strategies with iwi and hapu
		Creating tangible experiences between people and taonga	Back of house Tours; Wananga or gatherings dedicated to learning to imparting knowledge around taonga
		Articulation and capture of cognitive 'maps' around taonga	Working directly with iwi and hapu
		Use of Intuition; Sharing of perceptions	Karakia
		Consultation	Working closely with iwi and hapu
		Participation	Working closely with iwi and hapu
		Using cultural memory	Working closely with iwi and hapu
		Collaborative research with other participants	Working closely with iwi and hapu
		Synthesis of information	Working closely with iwi and hapu
		Negotiating complex activities	Working closely with iwi and hapu especially for multiple iwi/hapu interests in taonga