BEING MAORI IN THE CITY: INDIGENOUS EVERYDAY LIFE IN AUCKLAND

by Natacha Gagné
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Gagné is an Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the Université Laval (Canada). She presents a classic anthropological study of participant observation and ethnography with contemporary nuances. Studies such as Gagné's are part of the whakapapa of anthropology in Aotearoa New Zealand – international anthropologists who study Maori in their lived realities. Gagné does so with respect and humility, and an astute scholarship, to produce an important book for Maori as well as other indigenous peoples who have major urban populations. As Gagné notes, there have been relatively few studies of urban Maori, a surprising circumstance given the early urbanization of Maori and the very high rate of urbanization that exists today.

Gagné has the indigenous reality of most (if not all) Maori today – blood of both the colonizer and colonized. This book is partly about how these often dichotomous, contested and complex identities are negotiated today in the context of a steadily strengthening Maori political and social presence. She does so with a case study of urban Maori in Auckland city, where she 'takes [the] experiences of voices of Maori who live outside tribal areas seriously' (p.12). It is noted however, that her account is 'partial' (p.18) as it is dependent on her own unique outlook and perceptions, and her interpretations of the thoughts and lived experience of those she met.

Gagné conducted two years of fieldwork between February 2001 and March 2011. In this time she collected 250 hours of taped, formal and semi-structured interviews, that were enriched by participant observation and informal conversations that were 'at the very centre of my research' (p.16). While having a

core group of 'informants', some of whom she lived with for weeks and months at a time, Gagné also spoke with many other Maori within and away from Auckland, from many backgrounds and circumstances. For this book however, she focuses on the lived experiences of several whanau living in Auckland at the time of her initial fieldwork from February 2001 to June 2002. The book focuses on the 'everyday lives' of 'ordinary' people and the ways in which they express who they are as Maori and as citizens of Aotearoa. This includes their negotiated relationships with other Maori, and non-Maori who make up the majority of the world around them.

Being Maori in the city provides a wide ranging look at urbanization for Maori. It looks closely at the microsocial worlds of those she engaged closely with, and at the macrosocial and historical conditions that have helped create those microsocial worlds. Gagné employs the concept of 'universes of meanings' that is 'less all-embracing than a term such as "culture" and allows for recognition that people…participate in more than one universe of meanings' (p.12). While her study shows how Maori in the city affirm their culture and existence as Maori through their everyday lives, what Gagné also affirms is that most contemporary Maori live in an urban milieu that is impacted upon by global forces in large and small ways. For urban Maori, these 'universes of meanings' come from their inclusion in whanau, hapu and iwi, from being Maori in another tribal territory, from the whole history of colonisation of this and other lands, from living in the land of their ancestors and descendants, but from which they have too often been marginalised. 'Continuity is made possible through change' (p.13), Gagné writes, and this book shows how Maori have enabled themselves to innovate and recreate ancestral traditions to fit with the new realities in which they live today.

The Maori renaissance which began near the end of the 20th century made possible for many Maori, reconnection to - and reclamation of – a positive Maori identity. There are, however, a multiplicity of backgrounds, experiences and perceptions of being Maori in the city, as well as a multiplicity of ways and depths of that connection to Te Ao Maori. One aspect of the renaissance is that it also raised notions of (in)authenticity that impacted negatively on many Maori who did not know the full depths of their culture and language or the history of their tupuna to nurture them in what was often a hostile environment. Gagné writes of the strong emotions experienced by many of those she researched with who articulated the impact of the 'processes of exclusion brought about by the rhetoric of Maori authenticity as well as their desire for their experiences to be acknowledged and considered as much Maori as any other. This book responds to that request' (p.15).

As is commonly known today, many Maori in cities became increasingly separated from rural kin and culture, becoming 'urban Maori', connoting notions of (un)real Maori in contrast to rural kin who kept the home fires burning and were therefore more 'authentically' Maori. There were those who managed to find a balance between urban realities and rural/tribal obligations, and such persons were considered more 'real' than those who did not. Yet the experiences of the '(un)real' urban Maori are, as they claim, as much Maori as those of any other. Urbanization and cultural loss (and reclamation) are part of what has formed particular 'universes of meanings' for the participants in Gagné's research, as well as for many others.

Gagné shows, however, that even for those whose connection to Te Ao Maori was not as strong as that of others, there was the ability to express 'being Maori' in the city. No matter the circumstances, one fundamental value of Maori culture that was explicit was that of whanau. Gagné writes that a 'major theme of this book is that of the whanau as a central site not only for economic development but also for the day to day affirmation of Maori identities and presence in the city and in society at large' (p.40). Through living with three whanau groups in Auckland, Gagné gained some in-depth understanding of the contemporary nature of whanau by experiencing the highs and lows of whanau life, the challenges and almost constant negotiation of identities, culture and being. Whanau is about belonging, about comfort, and about continuity of connection to people (living and dead) and places (known and unknown). Whanau is about the everyday life; about ordinary lives lived in extraordinary ways because they are unique to those who live them.

Whanau is also about home, and Gagné writes of the 'plurality of home' that many urban Maori experience. Urban Maori are often 'at home' in the city, but also have a larger sense of 'home' that exists in those connections to tribes and (usually) rural kin. This plurality of homes 'thus emerges in the movement between places….The meanings of home(s) themselves are in movement. The movements are physical as well as cognitive, and relations exist between both physical and cognitive movements' (p.78). Home is about comfort and being self-confident in the city, about being part of a whanau that nurtures and provides a solid foundation from which to reach outwards to the world.

Part of this foundation, for some, is in recreating marae in their homes in ways that keep those connections closer. While for some this may seem a 'bastardization' of culture, for those living in cities and whose access to tribal marae is difficult for a myriad of reasons, opening their homes as a kind of 'mini marae' is meaningful. Gagné demonstrates this from the experiences of those homes

she lived in, as well as that of others she spoke with. Basic principles are those of sharing resources, of whanaungatanga and manaakitanga. Homes were open to many others who visited for a few days or came to live for longer periods of time, who called in on the way home for work for a cuppa and korero, and for more formal meetings in which whanau and/or tribal matters were attended to. Such homes provided entertainment and a social gathering place for the whanau and those connected to it. It was a space of nurturing for children, in which all adults took some responsibility for the care of the children. And it was a place where cultural knowledge was shared between generations. As Gagné writes, 'Applying the marae principles to a house thus represents a way of coping with city life' (p.124), as well as providing an avenue for continuity of culture.

Being Maori in the city is an important book that adds richness to the relatively sparse literature on urban Maori. While this study does not reveal the experiences of 'all' Maori in the city – nor does it intend to – it nevertheless gives an in-depth account and an astute perception of the lived experiences of the individuals and whanau Gagné lived and worked with that can be generalized to some extent to increase understanding of such experiences. This book encourages further research into the worlds and 'universes of meanings' for urban Maori. These include those urban realities of Maori that are expressed in the negative social statistics that convey the challenges that some of our people live with on a daily basis. By understanding these better, Maori are better armed to create solutions which include drawing on strengths such as the universes of meanings of whanau and people.

And as Gagné argues, it is by examining the everyday life of people that we gain a richer understanding that foregrounds the local, as well as the impact of larger social, political and economic forces. *He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata*. But Gagné acknowledges also that those larger forces have impacted on the practice of anthropology within many universities, and such long-term studies are no longer possible for many. If we believe that to a certain extent we can create our worlds however, then perhaps it is incumbent upon us to ensure that there remains the space for classical anthropological study that nevertheless acknowledges the contemporary forces which shape people, culture and society. Gagné ably demonstrates the value of such studies with *Being Maori in the city: Indigenous everyday life in Auckland*.

VIOLENCE EXPRESSED: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH

Edited by
Maria Six-Hohenbalken and Nerina Weiss
Ashgate Publishing, Farnham, Surrey, 2011.
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This book is the latest in the now long-established tradition of edited volumes on the anthropology of violence initiated by Fried, Harris and Murphy (1968) and subsequently elaborated by, among others, Riches (1986), Schmidt and Schroeder (2001), Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2003), Whitehead (2004), and Ghassem-Fachandi (2009). It presents an excellent example of the contemporary anthropology of conflict, violence and war, with a mixture of contributors including both well-established and emerging new leaders in the field. Instead of a primarily North American perspective (like the Schmidt and Schroeder volume), it is also a product of workshops organised by members of the European Association of Social Anthropologists, in this case in conjunction with the Austrian Academy of Sciences, and most – though not all – of the contributors are European (including Israeli) anthropologists.

Like previous volumes on the anthropology of violence, the editors and contributors seek to illustrate the broad cross-cultural diversity in the manifestations and meanings of violence, employing an eclectic variety of analytical perspectives and methodological approaches to analyse an equally diverse range of societies or contexts. They continue to rely on the classic epistemological balance or juxtaposition between *etic* (structural/objective) and *emic* (subjective/personal) perspectives on violence, but in this case also reflect the increasing interest that has emerged in recent years in studies of perpetrators – such as soldiers – rather than victims.

In a thoughtful Introduction the editors identify and discuss the key analytic themes which tie the chapters together: *Memory and Silence* (with key subthemes Remembering the Past, Silences, and Aesthetics), *Manifestation, Representation and Discursive Strategies* (with key subtheme Shifting Gender Roles), and *How to Study Violent Expressions*. The twelve empirical case studies which follow are then presented under three headings reflecting major contemporary issues, concerns, and tropes in the anthropology of violence.

In Part I *Normalization and Aesthetics*, Linda Green (University of Arizona) writes about the 'normalization' of frontier violence against indigenous peoples, in this case the Yup'ik people of Alaska; Andre Gingrich (Austrian Academy of Sciences) looks at male role models of warriors in southern Arabia; Military anthropologist Eyal Ben-Ari (Hebrew University) examines public events held by the Japanese Self-Defence Forces; and Øivind Fuglerud (University of Oslo) looks at the aesthetics of martyrdom among the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) in Sri Lanka. In Part 2 *Discursive Strategies – Muted Language*, Erella Grassiani (VU University of Amsterdam) presents a study of the discursive strategies employed by Israeli conscripts when recounting their experiences in the field; Nerina Weiss (University of Oslo, Norway) analyses narratives of violence and silences with regard to the discourse of victimhood in the Kurdish community in Turkey; Janine Klungel (Radboud University, Nijmegen) writes about the metaphoric expression of sexual violence on the French Antillean island of Guadeloupe; and Esben Leifsen (Norwegian University of Life Sciences) discusses the ease with which children talk about or express violence in a poor neighbourhood of Quito, Ecuador. Finally, in Part 3 *Remembering and Aftermath*, Antonius Robben (Utrecht University) describes silence, denial and confession about state terror by members of the military in Argentina; Adelheid Pichler (University of Vienna) presents a methodological challenge for anthropologists in an analysis of memory as practice in the contemporary cultural memory in Cuba of the violence and terror of slavery in the colonial era plantations; Michaela Schäuble (Martin-Luther University) looks at how memories of violence are presented in *Waltz with Bashir*, an award-winning animated film about the experiences of Israeli soldiers in the 1982 Lebanon War; and, finally, Maria Six-Hohenbalken (Austrian Academy of Sciences) closes the volume with an analysis of personal memories and accounts of Austro-Hungarian soldiers who witnessed atrocities and acts of genocide during World War One.

A major contribution to the literature on violence, *Violence Expressed* is a *tour de force* elucidating the human experience and cultural complexity of violence on the one hand, and its contemporary theoretical analysis on the other, particularly with regard to what is now sometimes referred to as 'Fourth Generation Warfare' (4GW), or conflict characterised by blurring of the lines between war and politics, victim and perpetrator, and soldier and civilian.

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