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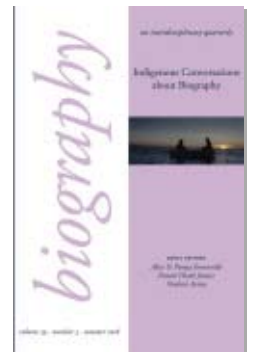
Te Ao Hurihuri O Ngā Taonga Tuku Iho: The Evolving Worlds
of Our Ancestral Treasures

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TE AO HURIHURI O NGĀ TAONGA TUKU IHO: THE EVOLVING WORLDS OF OUR ANCESTRAL TREASURES

NGARINO ELLIS

He aha te mea nui, he tangata, he tangata, he tangata

[What is the most important thing? It is people, it is people, it is people.]

Inside our meeting houses, our orators will often use this saying to bring those gathered together as a single group reinforcing the Māori concept of *tatou*, *tatou*—we are one people. Indeed, our ancestral narratives chart the ongoing importance of both people and the land. These values were made manifest through the creation, reception, and circulation of our *taonga tuku iho* (treasures handed down from our ancestors). These were not merely objects—they were conceived, named, and treated as actual people. This essay will address how biography was articulated in a number of different ways within Māori art, both in the physical sense but also in the concept of the biography of an object (Kopytoff; Tapsell, “Flight”). In doing so, it sheds light on the evolving nature of Māori art through periods of distress and celebration, and the ongoing importance and relevance of *taonga tuku iho* for Māori today.

HE WHAKAPAPA

Māori identify ourselves as tribal peoples by reciting our *whakatauki*, which provides our specific connections to the land and through that our *whakapapa*. In my case I say:

Ko Rakaumangamanga te maunga
Ko Ipipiri te moana
Ko Ngāpuhi te iwi

[Rakaumangamanga is my mountain / Ipipiri is my ocean / Ngāpuhi are my people.]

Ko Hikurangi te maunga
 Ko Waiapu te awa
 Ko Ngāti Porou te iwi

[Hikurangi is my mountain / Waiapu is my river / Ngāti Porou are my people.]

In this way I lay out my ancestral links with mountains, rivers, and oceans, and through that to my tribes, both of which (as with other Māori groups) are named after a single eponymous ancestor. Apirana Ngata described whakapapa as “the process of laying one thing upon another. If you visualise the foundation ancestors as the first generation, the next and succeeding generations are placed on them in ordered layers” (6). Indeed, Ngata offers no less than five methodologies in relation to whakapapa, each one presenting different layers of ancestors.

Our history stretches back some fifty generations to begin with Te Po, the Night-time, when all was dark, before the primal parents Papatuanuku and Ranginui were separated by their children, and the world of light—Te Ao Marama—emerged. Our whakapapa also stretches back some eighteen to twenty generations¹ to the Pacific, to our homeland of Hawaiiki, which is generally believed to be somewhere in the Eastern Pacific, around the Cook Islands perhaps. Our ancestor Kupe traveled to this land around the period 1200–1400 (around the same time others were leaving the area to travel to Hawai‘i), which spurred others also to make the voyage here, taking about a week and using ocean-going waka. These series of migrations were primarily one way, with no evidence (yet) of any return voyage back to the Pacific. The names of the waka, as well as their navigators and captains, have been passed down orally through the generations, and remain vital tenets of Māori individual and community identity.

Once here, our ancestors spread through the new land fairly rapidly, from the top of the North Island, right to the bottom of the South Island and over to Rakiura / Stewart Island (Anderson, pers. comm.). Whānau who had traveled as one soon banded together to form hapū—these societal structures remain in place today. Hapū are known in relation to single ancestors—Te Whānau-a-Takimoana / the family of Takimoana, for instance. All these identities are known today for their exploits—who they married, fathered/mothered, fought with, and other associated stories. Their stories are passed down as important models of behavior, both good and bad. Witness for instance the Māori Child Abuse Program *Mana Ririki*, which runs successful programs for Māori parents by presenting some of these ancestors as role models. These are not ancestors in the past—they live with us in our daily lives.

A MĀORI ART HISTORY

The ideas presented in this essay are framed within the field of Art History. While it would be impossible to provide an in-depth discussion of this field within the scope of this essay, it is important to outline some of the key concerns that characterize Art History in order to understand the position from which this paper comes. Most written accounts of the historiography of this discipline begin with writings by the Italian artist Giorgio Vasari about his painter and sculptor friends and contemporaries. He forged a new way of thinking about art in terms of a development, and this way would influence the study of art for several centuries. Over this time, a series of art movements evolved that were identified based on their distinct styles, and led by key artists. This became what many called the Canon of Art History. Specific methodologies were created over time to study and understand this art, including iconographical (Panofsky; Gombrich), and more recently, Marxist (Greenberg) and Feminist (Nochlin; Pollock and Parker). In the 1960s, Art History underwent a mini crisis of sorts, with many of these approaches, artists, and artworks being scrutinized, and questions raised as to the Eurocentric bias of the discipline as a whole (Said). This was in line with similar conversations going on in Anthropology and Archaeology. Proponents called for Art History to widen its frame (forgive the pun) to include *all* arts of the world, and in doing so a new field was born, that of Global Art Histories or World Art. As James Elkins asked in the opening paragraph of his 2007 book *Is Art History Global?*:

What is the shape, or what are the shapes, of art history across the world? Is it becoming global—that is, does it have a recognizable form wherever it is practiced? Can the methods, concepts, and purposes of Western art history be suitable for art outside of Europe and North America? And if not, are there alternatives that are compatible with existing modes of art history? (3)

As this essay hopes to demonstrate, the practice of Art History has been alive and kicking in communities across the globe throughout time. Certainly the terms, methodologies, artists, artworks, and forms are distinct, but the goal of understanding history and culture through analysis and discussion of the art of those communities is the same. This is controversial, with those I might call “purists” arguing, even in New Zealand, that Art History (with a capital A and H) only originated in Europe with the arrival of the formal teaching of the discipline. Linda Tuhiwai Smith teaches me that the patriarchy and Eurocentrism that is inherent in European-based Art History has sought to classify Māori art within patriarchal and Eurocentric language and ways of

thinking. We need to heed Audre Lorde’s advice that “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house” and choose our own methodologies to come to understand our own practices of Art History.

Thankfully, Māori writers, curators, artists, and academics have been doing just this, and making sense of our history in our own ways. As early as the 1960s, Hirini Moko Mead was usefully providing a chronology of Māori art in this way:²

Ngā Kakano—The seeds from Rangiatea—800–1200
 Te Tipunga—The growth—1200–1500
 Te Puāwaitanga—The flowering—1500–1800
 Te Huringa—The turning—1800 to today (Mead, *Māori Art*)

While we may argue for and against such a tidy way of thinking about Māori art, and his prioritization of the 1500–1800 period as the most significant, Mead’s periods do provide some framework for analyzing the breadth of Māori art that evolved out of early Pacific models. By the late Tipunga period, we can see a shift in the conceptualization of personal and group identity away from the Pacific, and toward a distinctly and uniquely Māori frame. This is charted through the emergence of hapū on the one hand, and distinct forms of art on the other, notably the waka taua, and pātaka, both of which symbolized group pride and wealth due to the quality and quantity of carving in particular.

Māori Art History as a written discipline is an emerging but burgeoning field.³ Like our colleagues, we write histories of curatorship—in the past we called them “tohunga,” and they practiced the collecting and protecting of important works of art. These would be displayed in a variety of ways, such as at the event of Pākūwhā, when a woman would be handed over in marriage, along with taonga such as “fine cloaks, ornaments, and weapons” (Mead, *Tikanga Māori*). Then there was the Hākari taonga as another significant event, which would have been stage-managed by a tohunga:

This was a special feast in which taonga were displayed and exchanged. . . . The tangata whenua [hosts] would display their taonga such as cloaks, blankets, floor mats [whariki] and baskets [kete], and the guests would be expected to add to the collection which would then be distributed ceremonially by calling guests to come forward to receive their allocation of gifts. (Mead, *Tikanga Māori*)

We enjoyed exhibiting our fine works of art at other events too. The tahuaroa (Fig. 1) was where kākahu would be put on display and then distributed by the chief as a demonstration of his or her wealth and power, similar to the Potlatch of the northwest coast of North America (Firth 315–16). As Art



Figure 1. Māori cloaks and flags on display at 100 Putiki Drive, Wanganui, for the tangi for Porokoru Patapu, 1917.

Historians we can think of these events as exhibitions—there was certainly much effort and skill put in by the tohunga to ensure that the collection was brought together and displayed in a specific way to convey specific meanings.

We created sites and spaces in which to collect, and display, our artworks. These were our pātaka and whare whakairo, in which precious treasures would be stored, including weapons, treasure boxes, and kākahu. Carved, woven, and painted artworks would be attached to the architectural forms, and changed over time—parts might be dismantled and reattached to other forms. We could consider this second stage as a *new* exhibition, with certainly new meanings. Take for instance where an enemy's war canoe was disassembled and specific carvings reused by the victors on a new structure, thus symbolizing and reinforcing their military success and political power. These would be “read” by visitors as a history of the people and the land.

Ultimately, we argue that this New Art History, which calls for a dismantling of the patriarchal, Eurocentric history of art and the prioritization of new methodologies such as oral history, has in fact been practiced by

Indigenous art historians for centuries. In sum, we call for Art History as a discipline to be further shaken up, and for the hands holding the pens writing our histories to ease up, to allow for Indigenous scholars to write about our own histories. In the words of Aboriginal curators Olivia Robinson and Trish Barnard, “Thanks, but we’ll take it from here.”

TAONGA TUKU IHO

Taonga tuku iho anchor my practice as a Māori art historian. These are ancestral treasures passed down from the ancestors through the generations. They are not simply materials and forms, but rather are transformed by the artist who “imbues his work with *ihi* (power), *wehi* (fear), and *wana* (authority)” (Mead, *Maori Art* 145). In addition, as Paul Tapsell argues, the object is surrounded and stimulated by three important elements: mana, tapu, and kōrero (“Flight” 327–28). All these elements work in tandem to connect the object with the community in which she or he is created, with whakapapa, and with the whenua. Ultimately, as Tapsell reflects, “In time, such taonga do not just represent ancestors, they *become* those ancestors” (*Art* 10).⁴

Taonga therefore are often considered as living beings, part of the whakapapa and history of the land and the communities with which they are associated. These communities are often fluid, as is the movement of the taonga as they are passed from person to person during ceremonial and familial occasions. In doing so, a taonga might have a number of tribal affiliations and associations, none more important than the other, and the tribes all fulfill the role of kaitiaki. Māori do not consider taonga able to be owned, but rather, as with the whenua, we are here to look after them until we can pass them on to the next generation.

The term biography in Māori is derived from the word “koiora” or “life” (Ngata Dictionary). The National Library translates “koioranga” as “bibliography,” while the Ngata Dictionary provides the interpretation as “biography.” It is interesting to note that it seems that this term was not common if we take as our measure its use in Māori-language newspapers in the nineteenth century.⁵ The National Library provides another related term, “kōrero taumata” or “life stories,” as a literal translation. My sense is that the term “whakapapa” was much more widely used to describe the phenomenon of genealogy into which specific ancestors fitted, and their lives—their biographies—were conceptualized as a series of “kōrero taumata” or “kōrero pūrākau.” The biographies are thus created from a series of key moments in an ancestor’s life. From the whakapapa you would learn about a person’s lineage, parents, siblings, grandparents, and so on. You would find information about their hapū, as they would be descended from specific ancestors who founded

hapū, and later iwi. From the stories passed down through the generations orally, you would learn about interesting things they had done, people they had met, lands they had traveled to. This amounted to what we now think of as a biography.

BIOGRAPHY OF OBJECTS

At this juncture, it is probably useful to explain a little about one of the key frameworks that helps us understand taonga tuku iho and their relationship with biography. Within Anthropology there has been much discussion of the concept of a “biography of an object,” first pitched by Igor Kopytoff:⁶

Where does the thing come from and who made it? What has been its career so far, and what do people consider to be an ideal career for such things? What are the recognized “ages” or periods in the thing’s “life,” and what are the cultural markers for them? How does the thing’s use change with its age, and what happens to it when it reaches the end of its usefulness? (67)

These kinds of questions can be applied to taonga: When were they made? By whom and for what reasons? What makes them distinctively belong to a certain artist or art school? How have their uses changed over time? Are they still circulating or have they stopped being used? To apply these ideas to a larger picture of the art traditions in which these taonga circulate: When did they begin? How are they distinctive? Have they changed over time? The answers should provide some understanding of the life cycle of the art tradition and those involved. Kopytoff’s biography of objects method allows a multifaceted approach to taonga tuku iho, animating the treasure and bringing it to life.

BIOGRAPHY OF THE NAMED ANCESTRAL TREASURES

Probably the most recognizable way to symbolize biography in Māori art was in the naming of specific works after specific ancestors. This was a regular practice for prestige objects, including kākahu, weapons, and items of personal adornment. The case of the hei tiki named Te Arawhiti illustrates TapSELL’s point about taonga literally becoming ancestors. Many facets of the story are recorded in other sites, enabling us to have a very textured picture of the story as a whole. The hei tiki was originally unnamed, and was part of the taonga collection of tribal progenitor Kahungunu, who lived on the East Coast some twenty-five generations ago. According to tribal narratives, he presented the hei tiki to his daughter Tauheikurī. She in turn passed it on as a wedding present to Tuteihonga upon her marriage to Tauheikurī’s brother, Kahukuranui. It was then passed on to their daughter Hinemanuhiri, who gave it to

her son Tama-te-rangi, who in turn wore it into battle. Several generations later it was passed on to Te-o-Tane who named her Te Arawhiti after his mother. It was later acquired by a Pākehā collector but today is in MTG Hawke's Bay under the guardianship of the tribe Ngāti Porou.⁷

Te-o-Tane's naming of taonga was important to maintain knowledge of the whakapapa. He named his patu Te Ate-o-Hine-pehinga after his grandmother, and his taiaha also after his mother, hence Te Atero-o-Te-Arawhiti (Mitira 129). Obviously women were important figures in his life. The taonga in this way stand in for Te-o-Tane on one level, and for the women he named them after on another. This results in a layering of stories and identities on the hei tiki, in some ways acting as kākahu, which both warm the taonga and from which the taonga derives her identity and power. Through these generations, stories are kept and retold within the kōrero of the weapons and the hei tiki.

BIOGRAPHY OF THE MATERIALS

Biography is also recorded within the materials that taonga tuku iho are made from. Taonga are living treasures, and as such they retain the mauri of the materials from which they are made. The materials are part of a living genealogy. One such example is pounamu, from which taonga such as mere pounamu and a range of personal adornments are made. According to Tipene O'Regan, from whose tribal lands pounamu is primarily sourced, greenstone comes from the story about Poutini, who turned the woman Waitaiki "into his own essence—pounamu" (ctd. in Keane). In this way, even before the stone is shaped, it is a descendent of a person, part of a whakapapa. Similarly, when using rākau, the story of Rata and Tane is remembered through the recitation of karakia associated with chopping down wood. In this story, one day Rata chopped down a tree to make a waka, but when he returned the next the tree had magically grown again. The same thing happened day after day, until he hid one night and discovered the insects and birds were putting the tree right again. He demanded an answer, and they replied that he had not paid respect to Tane, God of the Forest, in taking one of his children (the tree). Rata duly recited karakia, and all was well.

The use of materials also invokes the biographies of significant artists whose work is said to have started specific tribal styles of art. Iwirakau from the East Coast, for instance, is remembered as invigorating the art of carving in this area; in the same story his whanaunga Tukaki did the same for his Te Whānau-a-Apanui people nearby. Both men traveled to the workshop called Te Rawheoro of another carver, Hingangaroa, and learned specific designs, their names being remembered today through their use by carvers still. This

history goes even further back, to the time of Tangaroa, God of the Sea and son of Ranginui and Papatuanuku. Hingangaroa used as models for his own work the carvings that had been taken from Tangaroa's house. This shifting between worlds (the Underworld of Tangaroa and this world of Hingangaroa), along with the shifting of ancestors and generations, is a challenge for many to conceptualize—tracing tidy genealogical lines of descent and matching them up to time periods is impossible. Such is the delight of whakapapa!

BIOGRAPHY OF THE FORM

Biography can also be understood in relation to the form of a taonga. In the case of Te Arawhiti, she is a hei tiki, a form of personal adornment worn around the neck. Originally thought to have been made from bone (Buck 291), later our artists used pounamu. Many have thought that the taonga depicts a man, simply because the term “tiki” normally refers to a male figure. However, in this case it seems to refer to a figure in general, particularly given that these taonga were often given to women having trouble conceiving, suggesting they symbolized the Goddess of Childbirth, Hineteiwaiwa. Particularly revered hei tiki would be buried with their kaitiaki upon their death, and later retrieved and passed on to their descendants, thus keeping them “alive.”

BIOGRAPHY OF THE MAKER

Of course, within Western European concepts of biography, it is frequently the artist who is the focus of studies of biography. In Māori art we are often not guaranteed that those types of stories have been passed down. Certainly in the case of personal adornment it is extremely rare to know the identity of the maker, and so it is the object itself that demands a biography. With weaving and carving, however, we do have a much fuller picture of the arts scene. Indeed, at times the biography of the artist subsumes the biography of the object.

Case in point #1—Pareraututu, a kahu mamae—quite literally, a cloak of pain (Fig. 2). She is named after her maker, a Tuhourangi woman born at the end of the eighteenth century. She wove this kakāhu to document and remember the mamae caused by the killing of many in her community, including her husband and grandfather, ironically (and painfully) by relatives from Tūhoe (Tapsell, *Ko Tawa* 53–62). From the moment that the cloak was made, her biography took two pathways. In one we follow Pareraututu, who was later interred in an urupa on Wahanga mountain. This urupa would be destroyed when the nearby tourist destination of the volcanic area called the Pink and White Terraces erupted in 1886, killing many and forever ending



Figure 2. Pareraututu. Kahu mamae / Cloak of pain. Made by Pareraututu (b. circa 1798). Rotorua Museum. Te Arawa tribal ownership. Repatriated from Auckland War Memorial Museum 1993. Consent was granted by the Semmens whā nau to use this image of Te Kahumamae-o-Pareraututu for the purpose of this article.

tourism in that specific area. The cloak then stands in for those who lost their lives on that day, and for those whose graves were devastated by the eruption. On another pathway, we can follow the history of the kahu mamae. From Pareraututu the cloak was later given to Tukorehu's grandson Rewi Maniapoto, who passed it on to Ihakara Tukumarū of Foxton when his daughter was born; and from there on to Poihipi Tukairangi of Ngati Tuwharetoa in 1866, who gifted it to the Pākehā collector Gilbert Mair in 1889. The mamae of Pareraututu continued, though, as many of her descendants were not aware of this full subsequent traveling of their grandmother, through the cloak, and it was only in 1982 that the cloak was "rediscovered" in Auckland War Memorial Museum, and through Tapsell's efforts, sent on long-term loan to Rotorua Museum in Te Arawa's tribal territory (*Ko Tawa* 58). This cloak illustrates well the different ways in which biography has imbued the very fabric of the taonga, and the importance in particular of the element of kōrero in keeping alive the stories of those associated with the cloak, and in doing so, the cloak herself.



Figure 3. Drawings of Korokoro of Ngare Raumati by his brother Tuai (now in Birmingham University Special Collaborations CMS/ACC14 C2, and Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries GNZMMS 147).

Here we see clearly the way in which Pareraututu the woman/weaver/widow *becomes* the kahu mamae and all that she stands for.

Case in point #2—Tuai's portrait of his brother (Fig. 3). The depiction of a specific named person in a portrait is a popular genre within art, and an important way in which to record the person and his or her social, political, and economic status. The same occurred in Māori art, but in a different way. While portraiture of Māori both in photographic and painted form by Europeans became popular from the 1860s, Māori themselves were also depicting their own people and their own selves in new ways from the beginning of the nineteenth century. Previously they had carved representations of others in wood, but now, enamored with new technologies such as metal chisels and pen and paper, Māori began to represent a range of named persons in carved and drawn form. Most fascinating are pen and ink drawings of themselves and their loved ones depicted solely through their moko: the permanent marking of the skin through the carving of the skin, and the insertion of ink, placed on various parts of the body, and most significantly on the face.

In a recent study, over forty examples of this practice were discovered. What makes these so remarkable is that on the paper the chiefs did not (usually) draw any physical details, but rather focused on the moko *as* themselves. They flattened out the design, so rather than seeing the front of the design and then a foreshortened version of the sides of the face as in Western European portraiture, here the chiefs have shown the complete design in a single flat plane, so that we can see and understand and identify each part of the design. These were predominantly produced as “signatures” to land deeds, with either one section of the design of their moko being represented, or at times the whole face.⁸

These were distinctly political acts, often undertaken by chiefs who were also able to sign in script. These rangatira were stating very clearly who they were for a distinctly Māori audience who would be able to “read” the signature and act accordingly, i.e., to sign or not sign. At other times the chief drew the faces of loved ones—in this case a brother—upon request from Europeans (they were mostly drawn in England). For these men, the act of drawing was emotional more than anything else. Te Peehi Kupe, for example, a chief from the tribe Ngāti Toa, was able to draw the moko of his son and brother, and upon completion, kissed them and burst into tears. For some communities, these images are crucial in interpreting the mindsets of their ancestors. For Korokoro and Tuai, for instance, their tribe of Ngare Raumati would be virtually annihilated within ten years of these drawings, and we remember their people as part of the biography of these portraits. These are not, therefore, merely drawings on paper, but to use Tapsell’s analogy, they *become* the person depicted.

BIOGRAPHY AS THE WHARE WHAKAIRO

For many Māori, discussions of biography within Māori art would center on the whare whakairo. These are large single-room structures with a porch, which are often decorated with carving, tukutuku, and kōwhaiwhai. Just because you are not in New Zealand does not mean you cannot experience a whare whakairo too—there are four standing overseas (in Surrey, Hamburg, Chicago, and Lāi’e). These whare whakairo are considered to be the physical manifestation of ancestors. Many are named as such. In my tribal region of Ngāti Porou, on the East Coast of the North Island, the majority of the whare whakairo are named after our ancestors. In particular, they are named after our women ancestors. This is rare, to be honest, and demonstrates the importance of women within our tribe.

The entire house is conceptualized as the ancestor. The front is the head, with the maihi on the façade acting as the outstretched arms of the ancestor

welcoming the people in. The extensions at the lower end are the “fingers” of the ancestor. Inside the porch is the window—the “eye”—with the door being the “mouth.” This space as a whole is considered to be the *roro*. Inside the whare whakairo the *tāhuhu* is the “backbone,” with “ribs” extending down the ceiling covered in *kōwhaiwhai* painted patterns (with red symbolizing the blood of the ancestor) descending down to the carved panels around the walls, which usually depict more recent ancestors. Many houses are named after this concept of the whare as body with the prefix *Te Poho o* / The Body of—thus, *Te Poho o Rawiri* (Gisborne), *Te Poho o Te Aotawarirangi* (Tokomaru Bay), and so forth.

Looking more closely at carvings, we see our artists “wrote” about the lives and times of our ancestors. They did this first by depicting an actual person, and second, by including different types of surface patterns that would amplify who they were. Let me provide an example—inside *Tane Nui a Rangi* at the University of Auckland the master carver Pakariki Harrison carved his (and my) Ngāti Porou ancestor Paikea (Fig. 4). He is shown on the right-hand wall inside the house, where other canoe captains are located, and with a number of objects with which his life is associated—the comb over which he fought with his brother (causing Paikea’s migration to Aotearoa New Zealand), and the whale on whose back he journeyed to Aotearoa. The pattern on the whale (sometimes called a *paikea*) is *taratara-a-Kae*, which is associated with the East Coast and with whales. The spirals on the shoulders and hips are a design named *Maui*, who was another important ancestor from the East Coast, whose *waka* is buried on a lake at the top of Ngāti Porou’s ancestral mountain, *Hikurangi*. On either side of this carved panel are two *tukutuku*: one uses the *takitoru* design, again referencing Paikea’s arrival in Aotearoa from *Hawaiki*, while the other side has a *tohorā* pattern, symbolizing a whale. Read together, Harrison has presented an abundance of information about the ancestor.

Tukutuku designs also record the biographies of ancestors—*Kahukura* for instance is based on the story of an *atua* of the same name, who was associated with a story of net-making and with the rainbow and so is often depicted through abstract designs referencing both of these aspects. From the late nineteenth century, artists began creating new designs on *tukutuku* panels in which ancestors were depicted. In the Ngāti Porou meeting house *Porourangi*, for instance, *Karauria Kauri* was asked to include numerous ancestors on most of the interior panels, and include their names in text in places, in order to respect the *kaupapa* behind the house which was to unify the various *hapū*



Figure 4. The poupou carving depicting Paikea inside the meeting house Tane Nui a Rangi, Waipapa Marae, the University of Auckland. Image credit: Godfrey Boehnke. Printed with consent from Folko Boermans.

on both sides of the tribal river, Waiapu. Ngāti Porou Carver Pine Taiapa (1901–72) wrote about two tukutuku panels there:

We find Hunaara holding a kehe and his opposite Rahuiokehu holding a bundle of Manuka; the significance being Rahui's reply to the plea of Hunaara to wait a while for some sea-food. "Ma wai to kai ka whai ki tua o Tokararangi?" ("Who will wait for the food from beyond the rock, Tokararangi?") (6)

Similarly, Taiapa explains the origin of the Kaokao pattern as being related to the Paikea story again. The design also relates to warriorhood, as warriors were asked to stand on a takapau that had this pattern on it "to inspire them to quit themselves as men" (6). Ultimately, both the carved and woven designs came to stand in for the person they were associated with, and so created a form of "text" about them.

Artists of kōwhaiwhai also articulated histories of local ancestors in their work. Patterns were named after tīpuna such as Maui and Rauru; they were also portrayed as abstract figures, and from the 1870s more naturalistically. This shift was due to many factors, most notably the ready availability of

English-language media such as newspapers, where such figurative styles were included. In addition, at this time a carver, chief, and prophet by the name of Te Kooti Arikirangi emerged to guide Māori seeking relief from the oppression of colonization. Te Kooti in many ways revolutionized Māori art from this period, as he drove a new style of architectural form—the large, primarily painted meeting house—for use also as a church. Throughout many of these “painted houses,” ancestors as well as contemporary figures, both Māori and Pākehā, are recorded, shown with attributes that allow us to understand and interpret the identity of the person, such as weapons (for a warrior), or an animal (for someone associated with this specific animal in a story). Contemporary living people were also included, in which case the painting would actually look like the person, rather than an abstract depiction. Here then we have biography being very clearly recorded.

In all cases the art works would require interpretation by a kai-kōrero to appreciate the history and lives of those depicted. The kai-kōrero would explain the ways in which artists would use designs in carving, weaving, and pattern as mnemonic devices to recall the names and exploits of the ancestors, and in doing so relate them to others depicted elsewhere in the whare as well as relating them to those gathered to listen. These devices were important, and often named after key ancestors to embed these names into the language, and through this, the history. The key was the kai-kōrero, whose reading of the designs and the whare as a whole was not neutral at any time, but rather reflexive of the audience, and of the take at hand. In this way an ancestor might be capable of a number of different understandings based on the politics of the period. Through the ancestral depictions, the kai-kōrero had agency in the performing of the telling of the story to engage in the re-telling of history.

HONE AND PINE TAIAPA

With this framework in mind, we now turn to look at the lives and works of two Ngāti Porou carvers and brothers, Pine and Hone Taiapa. I’ve been stalking the aura of Papa Pine since I was a first-year Art History student, when I wrote an essay on him (Pāpā is a Ngāti Porou term of affection for a grandfather or grandfather-like elder) at the suggestion of my mother. There were also whakapapa imperatives why I should study Papa Pine—both my parents had known him in the 1960s, and he was born the same year as my grandmother and grew up just down the road from her in the rural metropolis of Tikitiki (current population 207). Since those student days I have heard many

stories about him, which has raised him to superhero heights, for me at least. Academically, studying them seemed a natural progression from my doctoral thesis—published in 2016 as *A Whakapapa of Tradition. A Century of Ngāti Porou Carving 1830–1930*—as their careers started conveniently at the end of the 1920s.

The mythologizing of the Taiapa brothers at times seems nothing less than apotheosis. Certainly, provisional research has suggested this, as both men have been written about (and recently a film too), often as part of wider narratives charting the history of either Māori art or New Zealand art, yet their lives as individuals were often subsumed within these master narratives.⁹ In many ways they are voyagers, bringing knowledge from the changing world of the 1920s through to “contemporary Māori art” (now associated with those artists whose prime site of practice is in the art gallery).

Pine and Hone Taiapa were raised in the rural and strongly tribal community of Tikitiki at the turn of the twentieth century, when the local Minister of Parliament, Apirana Ngata, was lobbying for economic independence through land development schemes, starting with his own Ngāti Porou people. Ngata understood clearly the importance of community in driving such ventures, and the importance of the marae as the natural hub for the people. During his own youth, he was pulled out of school to fulfil his whānau’s wishes for a cultural education. This was no trifling matter, as his school was none other than Te Aute Maori Anglican Boys Boarding School, which at that time was one of the most prestigious educational institutions in the country, and certainly one that all Ngāti Porou boys were expected to attend (many of my grandmother’s twelve brothers went there).

One of Ngata’s most significant legacies is the School of Māori Arts and Crafts that he established in Rotorua in 1927. He was concerned about the state of Māori carving in particular, and chose Pine to attend as one of the first students. Ngāti Porou artist and professor Robert Jahnke calls for Māori art to be understood in terms of “critical moments,” in which existing projected futures were radically altered by major events or people. In this case, the formation of the school was a crucial intervention into a generation where very little art was being produced, and even less architecture, and when older artists were passing away, and with them knowledge and skills. Ngata then used his position as Member of Parliament to begin calling on communities to apply to the school to build and decorate new whare whakairo (and wharekai). In many ways we could write a biography about the School as a living being, from its inception (from Ngata) through its various life stages, and finally its demise in the 1950s, when it closed for various reasons. We

could add to this biography the stories of all the students/tutors in the school, whose own students would later champion new ways of creating art, including Sandy Adsett, Cliff Whiting,¹⁰ Paratene Matchitt, and Pakariki Harrison.

THE CONTINUUM THAT IS BIOGRAPHY AND MĀORI ART

In Indigenous Art History we often talk of the idea of a continuum. This is not linear, but rather, as this essay has shown, moves back and forth into and from the past and the present. Onto this line or matrix we can locate biographies in and of Māori art. These are fluid and can shift through time, from talking about a contemporary artist, back to thinking through the ancestor who brought the art of carving forward into physical manifestations of those same ancestors, and so forth. This is complicated and complicating, but enables us to have a much more diverse and much richer view of people, and of art.

Into this heady mix we can add the issue of subjectivity. Sitting among Indigenous colleagues, now friends, in a chilled room at the University of Hawai'i, we discussed this prickly issue. Our experiences as Indigenous scholars blurred geographic and tribal boundaries. Similar issues arose later in a session of six Māori scholars from Pouhere Kōrero (Māori Historians) I was part of in Christchurch, at the New Zealand Historical Association conference in 2015. It was also raised by Ani Mikaere, the Ngati Raukawa law lecturer, who was the keynote at the conference. Disturbingly we were all asking the same kinds of questions. Who, we asked, is writing about our people? What kinds of stories are being told? And are the writers the right ones to tell these histories? Even more difficult is the issue of the identity of the biographer. Just because you come from the community you're researching does not guarantee you access. Far from it. We wondered why so many of our people open up to non-Indigenous scholars who come knocking at the door, when—and here's the rub—others actually from the community are asked to chop up the firewood, get milk from the dairy, and so forth when they ask for kōrerorero.

I like to think of it in terms of legacy and time. When those from outside a community finish "their" projects they can simply stay "away," but for those of us returning, we face up to those same interviewees at the shop, and the marae kitchen. We cannot—and do not want to—simply have the privilege of staying away. That would be our loss, and we are simply not prepared to do this. Because of this, we take extra care, and extra time, when we are researching, lest we succumb to the edict of Linda Tuhiwai Smith, who advised "research is a dirty word for indigenous communities." Today so many more of our people are moving through educational institutions, and returning home to undertake research, so we find that communities are becoming a little more

savvy in dealing with nieces and nephews and cousins keen to record and celebrate our histories and our people. For non-Indigenous scholars wanting to discover a manual on how to research, I advise they talk among themselves to figure it out. Certainly there are enough of them with extensive experience in researching us.

Mikaere writes that “Colonisation is not a finite process” (142). With my Art History students I present a metaphor here. Through colonization, we as Māori have been left very little. Most of our land, language, and culture has been taken, and what remains is small enough to fit inside a small kete. So what is inside is *ours*, and *only* ours. This includes karanga and moko for instance. THIS IS ONLY FOR MĀORI. Many might see this as a very hard line, essentialist even, but it is something that I firmly believe in, having seen our culture colonized and globalized, with all the flattening out of Indigenous cultures that this entails. Māori need to ensure that we protect our taonga tuku iho, be that language, culture, or art. This is something that is our mātāmuatanga, our birthright. My mother Elizabeth uses the phrase “hold the line.” If someone non-Māori uses one of my tribe’s designs, then where does that leave my children? This is the only thing that they can say for sure is theirs, and only theirs. Would others feel comfortable using, say, Japanese designs . . . well, some would, but then we get into a discussion of privilege and power. Those with the power enjoy the privilege of such acts, with little interest into why Māori/Indigenous peoples might react. This is an ongoing debate that can only be truly unpacked once non-Indigenous start to take responsibility for their actions, and as Mikaere would argue, reflect on their reasons for writing about Indigenous peoples.

This essay has been written in Auckland and Honolulu, as part of this special issue of *Biography*. The editors brought us all together on the campus of the University of Hawai‘i, coming from what felt like ngā hau e whā (the four winds). Over the next three days we shared our stories, our research, and our lives, revealing that the experiences that we have as Indigenous scholars are so similar. Academically the workshop enabled us to receive critical yet supportive feedback on our writing from our peers who would not ask annoying simplistic Māori Culture 101 questions, but those which were more searching. We often feel very isolated in our institutions, as lone voices articulating Native perspectives, and forging new pathways in History and Art History. The opportunity to come together and be united was a gift to all of us.

Biography in Māori art has many forms, from the individual named taonga, to the artist, to the life of the art form itself. Indeed, biography is not fixed and static. This is both terrifying and exhilarating for researchers, as there is so much else that needs our attention. The goal is to recuperate the lives and

works of earlier artists and carvings and weavings, and in doing so provide cultural nourishment to our artists today for their own work.

Ka moea ahau ko ahau anake. Ka moea tatou, ka taea e tatou.
If I dream, I dream alone. If we dream, we will achieve.

GLOSSARY

- Atua: God/s
Hapū: Sub-tribe
Hei Tiki: Form of ancestral adornment worn around the neck, usually made from greenstone
Heke: Ribs, in a meeting house these are the painted panels descending from the tāhuhu to the poupou
Iwi: Tribe
Kai-kōrero: Speaker
Kaitiaki: Custodian/caretaker
Kākaho: Battens between the heke in a meeting house
Kahu: Cloak
Kākahu: Dress cloaks
Karakia: Chang
Karanga: Call of welcome made by Māori women
Kaupapa: Concept
Kete: Woven basket
Kōrero: Speech
Kōrerorero: Talk
Kōruru: Figure at the apex of the maihi, below the tekoteko
Kōwhaiwhai: Painted panels
Kuia mau moko: Elder women with moko
Maihi: Slanted bargeboards descending from the tekoteko
Mamae: Pain
Mana: Power, prestige
Mana Iwi: Power of the tribe
Mana Māori: Power of and as Māori people
Manuhiri: Visitors
Marae: Community hub
Mātāmuatanga: Birthright
Matapihi: Window, in a meeting house this is the “eye” of the ancestor
Mauri: Life force
Mere pounamu: Greenstone cleaver
Mōteatea: Chant
Pākehā: New Zealander European
Pātaka: Raised storehouse
Patu: Cleaver
Pounamu: Greenstone
Poupou: Carved panels around the walls of a meeting house representing ancestors

Rākau: Wood
 Rangatira: Chiefs
 Raparapa: End of the maihi, in a meeting house these are the “fingers” of the ancestor
 Roro: Brain
 Tahuaroa: Food presented to visitors
 Tāhuhu: Ridgepole, in a meeting house this is the “backbone” of the ancestor
 Taiaha: Staff
 Takapau: Woven floor mat
 Takitoru: Tukutuku pattern referencing the ancestor Paikea
 Take: Topic
 Tāniko: Form of intricate weaving
 Taonga: Treasure
 Taonga Tuku Iho: Treasures passed down through the generations
 Tapu: Sacredness
 Taratara-a-Kae: Carving pattern referencing the ancestor Kae
 Taua: War party
 Tekoteko: Central figure on the top of the apex of the meeting house
 Te Reo: The Māori language
 Tipuna: Ancestors
 Tohorā: Type of whale
 Tohunga: Specialist, expert
 Tukutuku: Woven panels
 Urupa: Burial ground
 Waha: Mouth, in a meeting house this is the door
 Waka: Canoe
 Waka Taua: War canoe
 Whakapapa: Genealogical ascent and descent
 Whakatauki: Tribal saying
 Whānau: Family group
 Whanaunga: Relation
 Whare: House
 Wharekai: Dining hall
 Whare Whakairo: Fully decorated meeting house
 Whenua: Land

NOTES

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1. Atholl Anderson has written extensively about this time period; see “Te Ao Tawhito,” esp. 51–54.
2. Chronologies are very Eurocentric, with the expectation of a neat timeline from one art movement to the next. This has been recently challenged by Deidre Brown and myself.

3. As one way of measuring this emergence, the number of Māori with PhDs in Art History can be counted still on one hand: Rangihiroa Panoho, Kriselle Baker, Harry Rickit and myself, all graduates of the University of Auckland. All but Harry have written about Māori topics (he chose Baroque!). We bring on board this Art History waka those who have PhDs in related fields, notably Deidre Brown (Architecture, also UOA) and Jo Diamond (Cultural Anthropology, Australian National University).
4. For a fuller discussion of the nature of taonga tuku iho, see Tapsell, “Flight.”
5. Nineteenth-century Māori language newspapers are now available online through Te Puna Maātauranga O Aotearoa National Library of New Zealand (“Papers Past”).
6. Arjun Appadurai also talks of this but in a broader context of commoditization; see his “Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value” in *The Social Life of Things*.
7. This history is quite different from an earlier history published as part of the Te Māori exhibition, where Hirini Moko Mead ascribed the hei tiki to Ngāti Porou. Her real history was only revealed when Ngahiraka Mason was Curator Māori and Indigenous, Auckland Art Gallery, and undertaking research for a major exhibition on Hei Tiki in 2005.
8. For more information, see my essay “Ki tō ringa ki ngā rākau ā te Pākehā? Drawings and signatures of moko by Māori in the early 19th century.”
9. One exception is the chapter on Hone Taiapa in Damian Skinner’s *The Carver and the Artist*.
10. Whiting supervised carving of Te Kūpenga o te Matauranga, Palmerston North Teachers’ College, 1979—the first meeting house on a teachers’ college campus, and later was involved in the meeting houses Te Hono ki Hawaiki, Te Papa Tongarewa (opened 1997), and the octagonal Maru Kaitatea, Kaikōura, home of Ngāti Kuri (opened 2001). For more information on Whiting, see Christiansen.

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