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**TITIRO WHAKAMURI KIA MARAMA
AI TE WAO NEI: WHAKAPAPA
EPISTEMOLOGIES AND
MANIAPOTO MAORI CULTURAL
IDENTITIES.**

By Shane Edwards

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KORERO WHAKAMARAMA

The work I have presented here pulls together Maori epistemologies as evidenced in the whakapapa knowledge particularly of Ngati Maniapoto to see if and where connection lies with understandings of Maori cultural wellbeing. Whakapapa knowledge is the unbounded collection of theory, observation and experience as seen through Maori eyes. It is intricately connected by whakapapa, a tool for working with and extrapolating understanding and is the common thread that binds hapu, whanau and iwi (O'Regan, 2001). The aim is to investigate contemporary Maori realities with a strong interest in these traditions of wisdom and knowing.

The rangahau presented here is of necessity both deconstructive and reconstructive. As a deconstructive project the rangahau seeks to place under the microscope of indigenous gaze the colonial theoretical, ethical, moral and political construction of Maori ways of knowing and being and the ontological orders of western paradigms and non-Maori worldview (Romero-Little, 2006). As a constructive project I am concerned with placing on the record and opening up sites for, but not defining, Maori epistemology as legitimate and 'tika' and at the same time putting forward 'alternate epistemologies' (Collins, 1991; Lopez, 1998; Smith, 1999; Marsden, 2003) that challenge certified knowledge and critically challenges dominant constructions of the truth as related to knowing.

The implications of these explorations of epistemologies for Maori lives, opportunities and experience are also considered. This work argues for the maintenance of Maori cultural identities via whakapapa knowledge using connections to Maori ways of knowing. This includes examination of the effects of coming to terms with, of encountering, coming to terms with and engaging with Maori cultural practices, as well as, processes commonly referred to as 'culture shock' (Weaver, 1993) the psychological, emotional and physical responses to the phenomenon of identity reclamation and how these realities can be negotiated.

What I found is that Maori knowledge systems are replete with elements that contribute positively to the maintenance of cultural identities and these identities are uniquely and distinctively contextually and culturally relevant. These systems have been and continue to be threatened by the impacts of colonisation and colonial ideologies. The work has found that elders and relevant contexts retain and provide a large volume of knowledge that when engaged with can provide useful insights into living within Maori paradigms that can enhance wellbeing in the present.

Maori communities and whanau are under high levels of stress with the pressures of contemporary living and the dis-location from ancestral lands, and the living activities, knowledge sharing opportunities and learning practices they support. This work seeks to offer up solutions via the maintenance, enhancement and advancement of cultural identities as a way for mediating and removing some of the effects of the stresses.

The implications are that the continued disconnection of Maori from unique cultural identities informed by whakapapa korero knowledge may serve to weaken important elements and connections to an individual's and group's cultural identity, including personal history, stories, land and people. The potential exists for further investigation of how crucial cultural connections that acknowledge contemporary realities and yet support the maintenance of cultural identities with strong and vibrant connections to whakapapa korero knowledge connections might be maintained, enhanced and advanced. Additionally, the work here opens up the space for and advocates for much deeper exploration of distinctive elements of a groups identity through contextually located knowledge in forms such as waiata, purakau, pakiwaitara, whakairo, rongoa, wairua and the many other knowledge forms of tea o Maori to further depths/heights not yet achieved to reclaim (k)new and subjugated knowledge forms. This potential is exciting but there are a range of risks involved (including appropriations of indigenous knowledge) that requires certain minimum standards of knowledge protection such as discerning which knowledge is suitable for public consumption and that which is not. This is most suitably done after receiving guidance from the knowledge holders as to what the appropriate forums for such knowledge might be and analysing risks for abuse, risks of misinterpretation and risks of unintended use that might cause whakama.

The enquiry suggested above as being of benefit is of course a deeply personal exploration and ideas of what is appropriate for public consumption and what is not is something that must be explored at the time of enquiry. As in my work here I was asked to include some things and to exclude others as a result of views by the elders that the public consumption of some knowledge they contributed was inappropriate to be shared beyond our korero because it could be perceived in a number of ways, some helpful and some not, for the people concerned, or for different groups of people. The knowledge that has been shared here and that which has not has therefore been discerned.

NGA MIHI WHANUI

No endeavour such as the research and writing of a doctoral thesis is done well without the support of significant others. The work presented here owes its success in no small part to significant others who have supported me in numerous ways to completing this work to the level presented here. I acknowledge them all for their support, guidance, friendship, critique and humour.

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Tena koutou, tena tatou.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shane Edwards', with a stylized, cursive script.

Shane Edwards

April 2009

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