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A STUDY OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION ON MARAES

AND OF CONTEMPORARY DRINKING PATTERNS

IN RUATORIA:

(A Social, Political and Economic Account of
Drinking on the East Coast).

A thesis presented in partial
fulfilment of the degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

in

SOCIOLOGY

at

Massey University

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the consumption of alcohol ("drinking") which takes place on maraes in and around a rural Maori community of Ruatoria. The town is situated in the heart of Ngati Porou on the East Coast, New Zealand. This study focuses on drinking practices in the community and on maraes, and identifies the views and perceptions of local people towards alcohol consumption. The contradictions, ambiguities and ambivalences people have about drinking are explored. The fieldwork is designed around the principles of participant observation where the task is to "tell it like it is" as I interpret the facts presented.

In examining drinking patterns it is necessary to account for the influences of social, political and economic factors. Drinking on maraes is not a new thing and the historical accounts of drinking in the past provide important facts about the way in which drinking is viewed today. Also, it is important to describe the extent to which such factors affect the marae. Major features of this study are examination and comparison of the views of the younger people in Ruatoria to those of older people. Generational differences are apparent in the way people relate to and perceive their maraes, and in the way they participate in and perceive of their drinking practices.

In society generally, drinking is considered either a good thing or a bad thing depending on the circumstances, this is also apparent on

maraes. Alcohol is accepted as an important feature of hospitality; it ensures that guests enjoy themselves and that unity among marae members is maintained. But on the negative side, alcohol consumption on maraes is subject to abuse like anywhere else. As a result of drinking excessively people fight, cause damage to property and create a lot of pain and suffering for others. In accepting that drinking is the norm, this study concerns itself with establishing why this is the case for maraes.

The marae, however cannot be discussed without consideration of formal procedures (marae protocol) and leadership. Protocol exists as rules which guide and dictate the formal proceedings that occur on maraes. As I point out, however, what people do and what people say are two entirely different things. Protocol is challenged as being past commonsense which people adapt to fit what is considered the commonsense of today. People drink on maraes as part of what is seen as a rationalising process where protocol is given meaning to what is relevant. Marae and community leaders, like kaumatua,¹ are concerned with the question of alcohol on maraes because it affects their power. In seeking to maintain cohesion among the people and progress towards objectives they compromise drinking at the risk of diminishing their own decision-making authority. Drinking is an issue which many marae people must reluctantly deal with.

PREFACE

This study embodies the results of a fieldwork project that looked generally at alcohol consumption in a rural Maori community and specifically at drinking on the marae. The research took place in the rural East Coast township of Ruatoria from March 1985 to August 1986. It was conducted among my own people of Ngati Porou in the area I regard as home. Spending 19 years of my early life here meant a challenge in returning to make this study. Following a five year absence studying social work and sociology at university I gained the necessary skills and training in the field of social research, however, I could not discount the fact that my life experiences as a child - kinship, neighbourhood and friendship ties - provided the foundation of my worldview. Developing this and the university training I had, was as a consequence of my return, subject to the scrutiny of my own people.

The decision to do this study in Ruatoria was not without trepidation and anxiety. I knew instinctively that the task of studying alcohol in the area would encounter criticism and ridicule. There was little that could have been done to prevent this as my activities in interviewing, observing and studying their drinking was reason enough for concern. Following six months of initial difficulty people began to tolerate what I was doing. Some people saw me as bold yet arrogant while others thought the research project worthy of praise

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and encouragement. My biggest critics included those with an interest in protecting the marae with perhaps their own interests also in mind. For the "locals" considering the study of drinking on the marae opened the door to many contradictions, in particular, why drink on maraes was seen as bad although it has social significance. The research was indeed put to the test by such contradictions.

I received consistent criticism from close friends and associates who live in Ruatoria and who attend university, many of whom are Ngati Porou. Despite some difficult moments I saw most challenge and criticism to my work as a healthy sign. I recalled one instance on my first arrival back home when I met up with friends in the pub, whom I had not seen in over a year. I was asked if I was still attending university and what my plans were. When I explained what I intended to do some laughed and joked about it, especially about the fact that I had come back to observe drinking. One friend thought that I will always be a "schoolboy" and that I should try to get a "real job". We all laughed and joked and continued drinking.

The familiarity I had with people and the place meant I was able to minimise time taken to establish rapport, sort out who is who and learn about traditions and marae protocol. Being an 'inside' researcher, however, has its disadvantages. For one thing, familiarity often gave rise to some unintentional mistakes, particularly in dismissing things common or obvious to myself. Other researchers with an outside perspective would probably pick up on such things. They, however, would encounter some working problems themselves, perhaps in interpreting and "living" the experiences of the people, something I as

a "local" had access to.

I was disadvantaged to some extent by the fact that I was not fully conversant in Maori. Often I relied on the help of fluent speakers to translate phrases I could not work out. However, most people I interviewed recognised my difficulty and spoke in both English and Maori.

It was considered that throughout this research people may not divulge information which was personal, delicate, damaging or controversial. This was lessened to some extent by reaffirming confidentiality with those I interviewed. As anticipated information often became the centre for public opinion and though this did have obvious benefits for the research in terms of gaining certain facts I was nevertheless aware not to disclose some facts to certain people. I found it necessary many times throughout my work to appreciate and learn from the the local gossip. During interviews it was apparent that some people were whakama about the use of tape recorders. To avoid this I resorted to pen and paper, often having to be extremely articulate in my writing and recording. Brief notes were taken and expanded upon soon after discussions. Sometimes it was necessary to rely on information supplied by other listeners.

Visiting each of the 16 maraes was an important initial step to take. My going to these places was to pay respects to some of the kaumatua and to acknowledge the importance of all the marae in the area.

My research methods were based on the principles of participant observation: meeting and talking to people, attending public meetings, listening to local gossip, attending social functions, talking to patrons in the pub, at the R.S.A, at rugby clubrooms, at the local shop in the mainstreet and also becoming involved in community activities. In the course of my work I joined the voluntary fire brigade and became a volunteer ambulance driver. I also participated in local sporting events including rugby and tennis. My focus was to "tell it like it is" and it was important to interact with people in order to reflect on how they saw drinking. To maintain confidentiality I have changed people's names, however, I have made no attempt to change any of the facts presented. In Chapter Five I have given names of specific rugby clubs as I felt they needed to be stated to back up my facts. In telling it like it is, certain conditions were followed, such as including a number of quotes with little or no alterations. I have also clarified terms used by locals as they understand their meanings to be. One point I wish to mention is my use of the "s" as a plural for Maori terms. To remain consistent with the colloquial use of words such as, marae, I have used the "s" to represent the plural as people speak it. Therefore throughout the text, "marae", is seen as "maraes". Also, I use the word 'drink' as being the common term for 'liquor' and 'alcohol'. These two latter terms I interchange throughout this study where I have thought appropriate. I use liquor more as a historic term and alcohol for more contemporary useage.

This thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter One is a general introduction to the study of the relationship of alcohol consumption to the marae and Maori culture. It discusses important background

information that the social researcher must take account of in Maori settings. Chapter Two is presented in two parts. First, the setting of Ruatoria and the East Coast region within a wider socio-economic context of New Zealand society is described and analysed. The second part deals specifically with the history of drinking among Maori people in general and people of Ngati Porou in particular. Its connection to the present day is valuable in understanding my observations and interpretations of alcohol consumption. Chapter Three discusses three important related influences which affect people's drinking; first institutional influences, specifically the State and the media; second, community arrangements in relation to drinking patterns and third; an account of the people's views and behaviour toward drinking. Chapter Four describes what the marae is, and its meaning to the people of Ruatoria. Here I discuss the social significance of the marae and marae politics. Chapter Five examines the nature and extent of drinking as I observed on maraes. This chapter "tells it like it is" as I interpreted the information told to me by the people. In Chapter Six I draw conclusions that are based on the evidence I have presented.

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Finally, I must in keeping with my recognition as Ngati Porou pay my deepest gratitude to the tangata whenua of Ngati Porou and in particular the people of Ruatoria. This study has served greatly to increase my own awareness of my Ngati Poroutanga and in the course of writing exposed much of what I knew little of. I wish to thank all those who helped make this research undertaking possible. Also acknowledged are my tribal connections to other areas and to my pakeha side. I wish to express my indebtedness to my family and my parents, Mary and Morris. To the late Joe "Dust" Tawhai, who died while I was in my writing stage, I am also greatly indebted. In concluding this acknowledgement I must stress that I take full responsibility for the writing of facts presented in this thesis.

Aku rangatira, nga pakeke, me rangatahi ka nui taku aroha ki a koutou. Na reira ka tu te mana o Ngati Porou.

Peter J. Mataira

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GLOSSARY OF MAORI TERM

Haka	Statement presented visually as well as verbally, a war chant
Hakari	Celebration usually involving the use of food, banquet
Hapu	Subtribe
Hinengaro	Emotional, spiritual and intellectual element that encompasses a dimension of human existence
Hongi	Pressing of noses
Hui	A gathering
Ihi	Charismatic appeal
Iwi	Tribe, eg. Ngati Porou
Kai	Sustenance, food
Kai moana	Seafood
Kainga	Home, house
Kai Korero	Speakers
Kai whakahaere	Organisers
Kaumatua	A general term for respected elders
Kauta	Cookhouse
Kawe mate	Formal procedure for the purpose of appeasing any residual spiritual element that lingers at the human level that should have departed and for the spiritual world, also, alleviates emotional suffering of the living
Koha	A gift of reciprocated exchange given on maraes usually in form of money

Korero	Utterances, to speak
Kuia	Elderly female
Mahana	Warmth
Manuhiri	Persons with the tapu of other than <u>tangata whenua</u> , visitors
Mate	Deceased
Mauri	The life force generated by all things
Paeke	Speeches made in blocks, that is, where <u>tangata whenua</u> speak first and <u>manuhiri</u> speak last, normally <u>tangata whenua</u> have last speaking rights. This is the protocol of Ngati Porou maraes
Paepae	The line of division between <u>tangata whenua</u> and <u>manuhiri</u> , acknowledged on the marae as the foreground of the speakers
Powhiri	To beckon, welcome
Puremu	Adultery
Ringawera	Those involved in the preparation of food, cooks
Runanga	Tribal council
Ruru	Shaking hands
Takahi te whare	Formal procedure by which the house of bereavement is aired of its memories so that life can be resumed, normally
Tangi	Acknowledge, lament (verb) funeral (noun)
Tauparapara	An introductory statement made in acknowledgement of a speaker's identity during their <u>whaikorero</u>
Tau utuutu	Alternating speeches between <u>tangata whenua</u> and <u>manuhiri</u> . (eg. Te Arawa and Waikato tribes)
Tinana	The physical dimension of human existence, the body

Tipuna	Forebears
Tukutuku	Traditional panel work within the meeting house and dining hall of a marae
Turangawaewae	Situation where <u>tangata whenua</u> have exclusive, geographical and spiritual privileges pertaining to their rights to make decisions
Urupa	Traditional burial grounds, cemetery
Waiata	A recited verse, to sing
Wairua	The spiritual dimension of human existence
Wehi	Awesome fear of the presence of other people
Whaikorero	Formal speeches made between <u>tangata whenua</u> and <u>manuhiri</u>
Whakapapa	Genealogic schedule with events associated with the names of a given <u>tipuna</u>
Whakatauki	Proverbs
Whare	House
Whare karakia	House of worship
Whare Tipuna	Ancestral meeting house central to the marae usually built in honour of a specific <u>tipuna</u>
Whanau	Extended family
Whanaunga	Relatives, used as a general term
Whanau pani	A bereaved family

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TEXT

AJHR	Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives
ALAC	Alcoholic Liquor Advisory Council
CWI	Country Women's Institute
DMA	Department of Maori Affairs
MWWL	Maori Women's Welfare League
NZOYB	New Zealand Official Year Book
NZMC	New Zealand Maori Council
PEP	Project Employment Programme
RSA	Returned Servicemen's Association