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**HAERE WHAKAMUA, HOKI WHAKAMURI
GOING FORWARD, THINKING BACK**

**Tribal and Hapū Perspectives of the Past
in 19th Century Taranaki**

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in History
at Massey University

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ABSTRACT

This thesis advances a range of historical processes and frameworks through which tribes and hapū constructed their knowledge of the past. The thesis, in so doing, constructs an intellectual landscape upon which tribes and hapū assembled and managed that knowledge of the past. It focuses specifically on the nature of tribal and hapū history in Taranaki, though aspects of this study may apply to tribes and hapū in other parts of New Zealand. The thesis suggests ways in which tribes and hapū in Taranaki organised that knowledge of the past, and the reasons why.

The thesis first suggests a distinction between tribal narratives and tribal histories. Tribal narratives provided accounts of the past in largely unmediated form. From these, tribes constructed tribal histories assembled for specific purposes. Such constructions were achieved through certain customary frameworks and processes. Whakapapa and mana are advanced as the two central factors influencing the shape and focus of these histories, whakapapa as primary organising device with mana serving as primary organising principle. This is illustrated by an examination of how various tribes of Taranaki constructed such mana histories comprising whakapapa selections of celestial descent (mana wairua), mortal forebears (mana tūpuna) and occupation of the land (mana whenua). Such histories were important because they validated tribes in the past and present. The thesis examines select tribes in Taranaki establishing their mana whenua presence on the land over time. Major landmarks of Te Atiawa whānui in the north especially illustrate how the sense of mana whenua was constructed over and attached to an ancestral landscape. After 1841, changes in the perceptions of landscape are noted following large-

scale immigration. Some implications arising from such changed perceptions as they influenced new law and public policy are detailed. Thereafter, the study focuses on how the tribes sought to maintain and assert their mana whenua in the new environment based on the authority of their tribal histories as source of tribal mana. These validated continuing independence of activity commensurate with longstanding tribal precedence and practices, a source of authority that underpinned tribal activity from 1841 to at least 1900 (when this study concludes). Such frameworks of past knowledge continued to override new imperatives introduced into the Māori intellectual domain after 1841. The Māori past has normally been examined in a race-relations context. This thesis proposes an alternative theoretical basis for the examination of tribal and hapū history in the last century. An afterword considers the wider implications of this study for Māori and New Zealand historiography.

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PREFACE

This thesis examines certain historical processes and frameworks through which tribes and hapū over time assembled their histories and traditions. It focuses specifically on the nature of tribal and hapū history in Taranaki, though aspects of this study may apply to tribes and hapū in other parts of New Zealand. The thesis suggests ways in which tribes and hapū in Taranaki organised their knowledge of the past, and the reasons why. It examines Māori perspectives on the past in Taranaki and explores ways in which these perspectives provided authority for continuing collective activity.

The idea for this study primarily arose out of my earlier New Zealand history University studies. These studies always seemed to consider a certain representation of a Māori past, limited by a conventional race-relations framework. Such depictions of Māori people always seemed to fall well short of how Māori people appeared to see themselves. This became evident to me over time, largely on the strength of my early years spent in Pungarehu, a predominantly Māori town in coastal Taranaki. There, though relatively young, I took part in or observed numerous local customary tribal occasions; and this has continued into the present.

These were occasions where the past was remembered, invoked and even constructed as integral to the present. This was a normal enough process of recall and representation, ingrained into and forming an important part of what might be called a traditional and longstanding Māori interpretive framework.

Opportunities to talk at length with many kaumātua came later, especially while working and travelling with the Department of Māori Affairs in

Wellington and, more recently, Taranaki. In all this, constructions of the past seemed important. They were often sought, and argued over, as precedence for various Departmental policies. This provided for an interesting dimension to Department liaison work with Māori communities, always cause for debate and reflection in the company of many committed people giving effect to a certain Departmental ethos of allowing the people to do the talking.

This Doctoral research presented an opportunity to reflect on the nature of that Māori process of historical recall and representation, especially as it functioned a century ago; to reflect also on the extent which Māori thinking of the present might inform Māori thinking of the past. This thesis proposes an interpretation that suggests how, and on what basis, and for what purposes the tribes and hapū in Taranaki utilised such a process, especially last century.

In recent years, the Waitangi Tribunal process in Taranaki has brought to light many of the histories of the tribes and hapū in Taranaki, there and elsewhere generating an enormous body of research material for iwi and academic research. Tribunal hearings were always major occasions, and important histories were heard. Most accountings of the past however were of recent origin, essentially addressing the land grievances of the last century, a matter of considerable importance to the tribes of Taranaki.

What substantially emerged from the hearings, out of necessity given its purpose, was an accounting of the nineteenth century focused on the complex land grievances. Material and historical evidence gathered by claimants served this important accounting. In presenting a paper to the Tribunal in early 1991 on behalf of my hapū, Ngāti Te Whiti, I was given an opportunity, albeit a limited one, to canvass some alternative approaches to the researching and construction of our hapū and tribal histories. The material generated by the Tribunal process was interesting if utilised differently.

This research has presented an opportunity to examine some of these issues further. Tribunal material and evidence has here been used for largely different purposes to that which informed claimant presentations. My purpose has been to

examine processes of history, of how constructions of the past provided validation for the present.

Much of the evidence that informs this thesis is oral, obtained from interviews with a number of Taranaki elders. The value of this evidence lies primarily in its reconceptualising nature, not historical content. How elders saw the processes of constructing a past was often of more interest to me than the narrative material itself. However, some of this material was obtained and is presented here because invariably it served as essential focus and conduit for observations about the nature of the Māori past in Taranaki.

The documentary evidence presented here is utilised primarily to support the examination of these processes of history. It comprises evidence which illustrates how Māori people represented themselves and their past last century as validation of their descent, occupation of land and ongoing activity.

Most issues of terminology are generally explained in the text. Unless otherwise indicated, the name "Taranaki" is used to denote the Taranaki whānui tribal district. "Taranaki" is also the name of the mid-coastal tribe of Taranaki, called here "Taranaki iwi" which is their preferred name, although Taranaki tūturu is also used locally. Most other names and phrases are intended as explained. There is a glossary of Māori words at the end of the thesis.

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