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**The usage of traditional Māori narratives as cognitive models
and educational tools**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in
Social Anthropology
at Massey University, Albany Campus, New Zealand.

Sebastian Pelayo Benavides

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Abstract

The present research consists of an interdisciplinary approach which combines mainly sub-disciplines from the anthropological and psychological perspectives as theoretical background. Regarding the latter, from the cognitive anthropology perspective the research highlights Bradd Shore's (1996) view on cognitive models, together with the theories put forward by the sociocultural approach in psychology based on Vygotsky's school of thought.

The main objective of the study is to achieve a broad view on the use of traditional *kōrero paki* and *kōrero o neherā* (Māori folktales/legends and myths) as pedagogical tools and as cognitive models. The latter includes a bibliographical review which covers the analysis of narratives and their usage from different areas, such as Māori epistemology and education, cultural psychology and cognitive anthropology.

Being a research stemmed from an anthropological concern –how do people from different sociocultural backgrounds construct and transmit knowledge- it considered as a fundamental element an empirical or “fieldwork” approach to the matter. Therefore, the research analyses –based on semi-structured interviews- the perspectives and understanding of the usage of traditional Māori narratives as educational tools of scholars in the Māori studies/education field and of a sample of Māori teachers, most of them connected to a *Kura Kaupapa Māori* school, constituting a “study case” for this qualitative study.

A period of complementary participant observation was also carried out, focusing on the pedagogical practises and styles of the participant teachers. Through this, the research aims to contextualise the bibliographical and theoretical findings, considering the contemporary applications, limitations and understandings encountered through concrete experience.

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Finally, I would like to thank our extended family and my wife Marcela, without whom all this project would have been unattainable.

“Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou ka ora te manuwhiri ”

(With your food basket and my food basket the guests will have enough)

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The present research stems, to a certain extent, from the natural connection -in my very personal view- between two academic fields that have been awkwardly separated for a long time. The two fields are Psychology and Anthropology, and somehow this uneasy relationship has greatly influenced my own personal and almost existential position regarding the study of human nature. I am referring here to the fact that I have as undergraduate formation a psychology degree, and as a postgraduate student I have been immersed in the field of anthropology. Inevitably, the tensions between the perspectives and methodologies implied have generated some problems when trying to focus on certain angles of a phenomenon. Consequently, the latter has transpired to my writing and to some discussions with my lecturers, which in turn has given me a subtle feedback of the friction present between these approaches.

Despite my personal convictions regarding the approach to cultural phenomena, I cannot deny that there are several aspects which the two fields have faced differently, often claiming a distinct basis and methodology. In fact, some decades ago, Cole and Scribner (1975:251) affirmed that psychologists and anthropologists “assumed” that they shared a common topic of inquiry -the link between social experiences and cognition- and a common terminology to tackle its study. However, in their perspective it would be an unfounded assumption, considering that “anthropologists and psychologists do not mean the same thing when they speak of cognitive “consequences”; they do not agree on the characteristics of culture that are potential “antecedents”; and they distrust each other's method for discovering the links between the two” (Cole and Scribner 1975:251).

At that time, Cole and Scribner (1975:252) proposed that the disagreements between anthropologists and psychologists on the nature of cognition and how it was to be studied could be considered in terms of three dichotomies: 1) emphasis on content or process in defining cognition; 2) choice of naturally occurring or contrived situations as contexts for data collection; and 3) reliance on observational or manipulative research techniques. In Cole and Scribner's (1975:252) view, generally anthropologists

emphasized contents, natural occurrences, and observation, while psychologists stressed processes, contrived situations, and experimental control.

Therefore, far from recognising their connections in historical terms (Cole 1998:7-37), or in regards to the fact that both disciplines “want to extend the power and range of their theories about the intellectual consequences of differing sociocultural experiences” (Cole and Scribner 1975:260), they have seemed to identify themselves with the old separation between “natural” and “cultural-historical” sciences (Cole 1998:19). The latter would bring me to a well known image used by Isaiah Berlin (1998:436)

There is a line among the fragments of the Greek poet Archilochus which says: 'The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing'. Scholars have differed about the correct interpretation of these dark words, which may mean no more than that the fox, for all his cunning, is defeated by the hedgehog's one defence. But, taken figuratively, the words can be made to yield a sense in which they mark one of the deepest differences which divides writers and thinkers, and, it may be, human beings in general. For there exists a great chasm between those, on one side, who relate everything to a single central vision, one system, less or more coherent or articulate, in terms of which they understand, think and feel -a single, universal, organising principle in terms of which alone all that they are and say has significance -and, on the other side, those who pursue many ends, often unrelated and even contradictory, connected, if at all, only in some *de facto* way, for some psychological or physiological cause, related to no moral or aesthetic principle.

I am aware that a crude and simplistic division between two factions, represented by the scientific and reliable though rigid “hedgehogs”, versus the humanistic and flexible but vague “foxes” is artificial. Nevertheless, as Berlin (1998:437) stated, it should not be “rejected as being merely superficial or frivolous; like all distinctions which embody any degree of truth, it offers a point of view from which to look and compare, a starting-point for genuine investigation”. Therefore, the feeling of being caught between these two apparently divergent disciplines has, in a way, shaped part of the present research and its concrete outcome.

In this sense, I agree with Cole and Scribner's (1975:260) assertion that when examining the oppositions between anthropological and psychological approaches to intellect, it is obvious that “each discipline rests on a very narrow and specialized data base from which it makes overly broad and often improper generalizations”. Therefore, my personal choice in order to overcome the breach between the two disciplines has

been to focus on the research areas from both camps that have been silently working in a collaborative way: cognitive anthropology and cultural psychology, the latter having strong ties with the cognitive psychology field. This position is backed up by Bruner's (2008:33) view on the matter, asserting that among the efforts to overcome the mentioned shortcoming, “cognitive anthropology” would be perhaps the most striking example, a movement principally inspired by the cognitive revolution in mid-1950s and the decade following, being “cultural psychology” the German counterpart of this movement. Fortunately, there is a current growing international academic interest in this “middle ground” of culture and cognition¹, which has served as an encouraging background to my particular interest in the usage of traditional narratives as educational tools and knowledge construction systems.

In fact, in Bruner's (2008:43) view, the separation between the two disciplines is “a happenstance of academic life”, which fortunately is lessening. The whole study area would need, according to him, hybrids such as cultural psychology or psychological anthropology to convey the effort, “perhaps because they are such fruitfully fraught dilemmas”, although with no definitive solutions in sight yet. Consequently, “A truly general psychology cannot ignore culture in its effort to understand mind. Nor does it suffice for a truly general anthropology to rest content with the view that culture is exclusively “superorganic” ” (Bruner 2008:43).

I firmly believe that in this hybrid terrain, anthropology and psychology work well together, merging and separating in productive ways; this in turn has inspired me to present here a study with complementary perspectives, one that could be metaphorically termed as a “Hedgefox”. I therefore assume the risks entailed in the presentation of an unorthodox product that may not convince either disciplines completely. Despite this, I am convinced that it might help in the efforts to narrow the gap between two areas that present enough common aspects so as to be called “sister disciplines”.

Hence, this study intends to cover a range of elements and theoretical perspectives related to the specific topic of Māori “traditional narratives” and their role as knowledge transmission and construction devices. As a natural extension of the latter, it tackles their functions in the cognitive development of individuals, and

1 Among current academic initiatives in the field are the International Cognition and Culture Institute (ICCI), related to the LSE and Institut Nicod; Queen's University of Belfast's Institute of Cognition and Culture; The University of Sheffield's Hang Seng Centre for Cognitive Studies; and the University of Oxford's Institute of Cognitive and Evolutionary Anthropology, with its Centre for Anthropology and Mind.

therefore in the educational patterns established in formal and informal settings. In its literature review section, it aims to describe and analyse the main characteristics of Māori traditional narratives and the ways in which they are used from a cognitive anthropological and cultural psychology perspective. For the latter, the literature review also focuses on the aforementioned perspectives and describes their core aspects and applications regarding the research's main objectives. All of these approaches would, in the end, provide analytic tools and systematic models to the study, going beyond the mere description of phenomena in order to understand the structure, objectives and distinct uses of traditional Māori stories, and their connection with other relevant socio-cultural aspects.

With the aforementioned, the research concentrates on a series of interviews with scholars in the Māori studies and/or education field, and with Māori teachers from a *Kura Kaupapa Māori* school. The latter was taken as a “case study” for participant observations, in order to contrast the information coming from bibliographical sources and from interviews, and to contextualise it according to the teachers' practices.

The latter brings me to another important matter in the study, regarding my position as anthropologist in the field. Being a research concentrated on traditional Māori narratives, from the very beginning I felt attracted to the story of *Māui* and his role as a culture hero/trickster figure, in particular to the story of how he obtained the jawbone of his ancestress (according to others, an ancestor); a revered object that would symbolize the knowledge contained in the oral transmissions from previous generations. As I will explain, the aforementioned would mirror my own placing in a theoretical “liminal” space -between the psychological and anthropological fields-, together with the very concrete form of another “liminal” space, in this case the fieldwork experience.

It is well acknowledged that, from a certain angle, the anthropologist plays the role of a “trickster”; a figure that as van Meijl (2005:240, 243) argues -also with *Māui* in mind- embodies ambiguity and is equivocal in several senses, not pertaining to one specific domain and shifting between detachment and involvement. In the same sense, Mac Arthur (2002, cited in Roberts 2007:188) asserts that in the very positioning of ethnography, as with most intercultural contact, the ethnographer and his consultants must move between two worlds -their own and the “Other's”. In the present case, the Māori scholars and Māori school community which generously opened a space for this study to be developed, had to deal with a researcher who was not only non Māori, but

who came from a different cultural background altogether. Therefore, I played a trickster role not only regarding the Māori world, but also the Pākehā world.

This is why I decided to use as a fictitious name for the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* school “*Te kauae o Muri-ranga-whenua Kura Kaupapa Māori*” or “The jawbone of *Muri-ranga-whenua*”. At the same time, similar to *Māui*'s case when asking for the powerful jawbone, I feel deeply indebted to the school community and all Māori participants to whom I asked for knowledge, which was handed to me asking nothing back. I am conscious that this precious knowledge carries also part of the accumulated wisdom from previous generations, and therefore I did my best to treat it with all the respect it deserves.

Thesis structure

The way in which the study is divided gives the reader an approach that goes from a broader view to more specific perspectives on the main topic, progressing into the empirical stage of it. The thesis is consequently divided into five chapters, the first one being the present introduction; the second chapter tackles the methodological aspects of the research, providing details about the different steps taken in order to develop it. With the latter, the chapter covers the decisions taken in terms of the strategies used in the study and also gives a succinct chronological account of the diverse stages of the process.

The third chapter of the thesis is dedicated to the literature review, which can be further divided into three sections due to the ample scope of areas conveyed in it. Hence, the first section of the literature review deals with general aspects of traditional narratives, their definition and classification.

The second section of the literature review addresses the theme of Māori knowledge, primarily through the description and analysis of its particular epistemology and its ties with traditional narratives. The latter is followed by historical and current conditions of Māori education, involving institutions and theoretical backgrounds, as the natural extension of the epistemological understandings revised, paying particular attention to the role played by traditional narratives as strategic tools in their implementation.

The third section of the chapter comprises the cognitive anthropology and cultural psychology perspectives considered to analyse and interpret some of the most outstanding aspects of the structure and use of Māori traditional narratives as cognitive

constructs for several goals. The use of these approaches not only stem from the set of personal choices and academic background informing the study, but would also coincide with some of the perspectives used by Māori authors when analysing models used by Māori education, and therefore have also influenced the present work.

The fourth chapter in this study consists of the data analysis, mainly focused on the information coming from the interviews and the participant observation period. It is divided into different dimensions, which were constructed according to themes proposed by the questions in the interview schedules, together with other emergent issues. This information is complemented by field observations and fieldwork reflections which resulted from the participant observation period in the selected educational institution.

The fifth and last chapter of this study concentrates on the discussion of various elements of interest, theoretical and hypothetical constructs and major findings of the fieldwork staged together with those presented in the literature review. Its main objective is to connect different notions and understandings exposed through the different chapters and sections, in an effort to interweave and summarize the most pertinent arguments to create a platform for further research and new perspectives on the issues involved.

A last element that must be noticed here is the section presented as “Appendix 3”, which provides a useful complement to the main corpus of the thesis. It consists of two parts, the first dedicated to give a general overview of the main Māori mythological accounts or traditional narratives; the second part concentrates on the development of the study of myths as an academic field, particularly regarding the discipline of anthropology. As both sections constitute a background for the study and may present – to a certain extent- information already known by potential readers, it was decided to place them in the appendices section, to avoid overloading the study.

Finally, it is important to stress the fact that the selection of the topic has been based on the strong appeal exerted by the rich Māori narrative tradition and its sophisticated traditional knowledge construction system. At the same time though, the urgent importance of good educational results for students in different countries - showing uneven educational opportunities for their population-, has also served as a guiding line for the election of this topic. The latter echoes the concern expressed by Smith (1999, cited in McCarty, Borgoiakova, Gilmore, Lomawaima and Romero 2005:4) regarding the “overwhelming educational concern” of underachievement in

schooling for Indigenous and other minoritized peoples, together with the view that Indigenous epistemologies “can lead to a different kind of schooling experience and a different kind of learner”.

In this sense, I hope that this thesis may add to the thorough research on effective strategies that could narrow the gap between elite and deprived groups, particularly in the case of Chile and its indigenous groups. Good educational results should include a holistic approach, comprising affective, attitudinal, and cognitive enhancement, involving the recognition and appreciation of distinct cultural identities and traditions. Therefore, the study of traditional narratives and its interpretation as educational tools in schooling and non-schooling settings, framed in a cultural psychology and anthropological approach, could provide a novel strategy and clues for possible better implementation and understanding of them in current culturally diverse school contexts.

Chapter 2

Methodology

The idea of conducting a study in which I could observe and analyse the usage of traditional narratives as educational tools was something that I brought from Chile, connected with my prior work on issues related to Indigenous Knowledge and alternative epistemologies. During my first year in *Aotearoa*/New Zealand, when studying my Graduate Diploma in Arts-Social Anthropology, I maintained my original idea, considering the possibility to study in a comparative way two Māori educational centres, with a first interest in the *Kōhanga Reo* institutions.

In this way, a first research proposal was designed as part of the “Practice of Fieldwork” paper, developed during the second semester of the year 2006. This proposal served as a basic skeleton for the final structure of the present study, with considerable changes in its scope and reach. It was during the re-elaboration of this proposal that the idea of focusing the research mainly on a case study was established, i.e. the study of the perceptions of only one Māori educational institution's group of teachers. With the latter, it was also considered necessary for the study to obtain contextualising information regarding the perceptions on the matter of Māori scholars and/or Māori studies' scholars, as part of the training background of the teachers working in the Māori education centres.

During the year 2007, while studying the Master of Arts-Social Anthropology programme, as a requisite I had to conduct a research project, which I originally planned to be a smaller version of the aforementioned research proposal. Following the suggestions of my supervisor and lecturers from the Social Anthropology Department, in order to manage my research time-frame in *Aotearoa*/New Zealand in the best way possible, the research project was changed into a bibliographical research, designed primarily to be improved and expanded into a “literature review” section for the present Master's thesis. Part of the reason for this shift was the undeniable fact that I needed time to find Māori contacts willing to counsel and orient me through a highly complex area of study.

Being only theoretically based, the study lacked a considerable amount of complementary data expected to be acquired from a fieldwork enterprise, in contact

with current social actors, interpretations and events. The latter was seen as necessary to enhance several aspects of the theoretical constructions and interpretations present throughout its analytical approach, giving a solid basis to the results and various hypothetical constructs displayed in the research.

The literature review for the thesis was therefore conducted during the year 2007 and 2008, using the university library system, internet sources and other relevant libraries present in Auckland. It concentrated on several issues, regarding mainly a scholarly analysis of traditional narratives and their definitions; Polynesian and Māori mythology; Māori epistemology and the most formal and explicit aspects of *Te Kōhanga Reo* and *Kura Kaupapa Māori* educational systems and their objectives. Through a broad scan of journals, books and on-line sources, the survey covered theoretical aspects of the educational use of traditional folktales, legends and/or myths. It also included data from other experiences through the world, together with a deeper investigation on cultural-historical psychology material and cognitive anthropology models. The bibliographical research extended itself through all the process, diminishing its intensity four months before the submission of the report, with a final review on the last month to include any new source that could have emerged.

The following step in the study, between the end of the year 2007 and the beginning of the year 2008, was the process of contacting possible participants and centres for the semi-structured interviews and the participant observation respectively. Two interview scripts were designed in parallel to the contact process -one for the scholars and one for the teachers-, fairly similar but with differences in some questions and varied emphasis on certain issues. Both scripts allowed considerable flexibility to incorporate other emerging themes, together with possible extensions in areas that could be of more interest to the interviewees.

This stage proved to be the most challenging one -even frustrating on certain occasions- of the whole study, due to the fact that, because of my foreigner status in the country, the possibilities of getting in touch with the institutions through closer channels were scarce. A first broad selection was done, considering localization variables (in a certain range of proximity), followed by contacts through email, letters and phone calls in order to evaluate their interest in the study. Nevertheless, from the array of people and institutions I tried to contact, almost none succeeded; several contacts started auspiciously, but after some time people did not return the emails and/or the calls. Considering the latter, I tried to bear in mind that it was perfectly normal and

understandable that people could be not interested in the study, or even plainly suspicious of it, but it resulted in a wearing out process in which, at a certain point, it seemed that it was not a viable research considering my time frame.

All of this proved once again that the “face to face” contact -or as Māori call it, *kanohi ki te kanohi*- and the help of intermediaries was fundamental for the task. Fortunately I received the generous help from classmates, scholars and Māori people connected to the university, together with external acquaintances linked with the educational area. Through them it was possible for me to contact the Māori and/or Māori studies scholars and a mainstream Māori teacher interested to take part in the study.

The interview process with Māori academics and/or Māori studies scholars:

In regards to the four scholars interviewed, they belong or are connected to three different *Aotearoa*/New Zealand tertiary education institutions, with two of them pertaining to the same one. Their expertise areas range from Māori studies to anthropology, to Māori education. Terehia Robinson and Waiatara Smith preferred to maintain their real identities undisclosed, while Ngahuia Whiu and Dr. Tetuhi Robust had no problems with the use of their actual names. Nevertheless, further details from their institutions will not be disclosed in order to ensure the anonymity of the other interviewees.

The interviews were conducted during the months of June and July, in their working places, taking approximately from one hour to one hour and a half. It must be pointed out that Dr. Robust's interview followed a different structure, in which he did a presentation of several topics connected to the study, answering afterwards to further questions. All the interviews were recorded, with the exception of Ngahuia Whiu's one; they were also transcribed by me and copies were handed to them for a review before using them in the data analysis.

As an added case, a Māori secondary teacher from a mainstream school -in charge of a Māori unit- was also included and interviewed, to provide a comparative parameter to the information obtained from the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* school teachers.

The *Kura Kaupapa Māori* school case:

In the same sense, through the aforementioned social net, it was possible for me to get in touch with *Te kauae o Muri-ranga-whenua Kura Kaupapa Māori* school² in the month of October 2007. This first meeting was held with the principal of the school, to whom I was introduced through a mutual Māori friend, who kindly went with me to the place and accompanied me through this first contact. A general idea of my intentions and of the research were discussed, and the Principal agreed to consult the teachers if they would accept being part of the research. It was also communicated to me that the final word on the issue would be given by the *whānau* -the group of parents related to the institution- being the final body in charge of the school and this kind of decisions.

The contact with the school Principal was maintained through email and it was informed to me that on the second of April of 2008 the *whānau* were having a meeting where I could explain the research and seek permission for it. I was consequently received in a regular meeting with around four or five parents and two other members of the school. During the time given for my presentation I explained who I was, gave details about my professional background in Chile and the general idea of the thesis, being explicit about the fact that it was not the children who would be subject of the study, but the teachers and their practices. After this, the parent in charge told me that the matter was going to be discussed with the other members of the board and that after a week or two an answer would be sent to me through the Principal.

The *whānau's* answer was delayed for several reasons regarding major changes in the institution, but I was finally granted permission to begin, and a new meeting with the Principal was held, in which details for the commencement of the research were outlined. The institution put forward as a condition that it should not be identified by its real name, and therefore that no pictures of the venue or the students should be displayed in the thesis. In the same way, it was also agreed that any further publications apart from the thesis, in *Aotearoa*/New Zealand, in Chile or anywhere else, in which information from the research was used, would have to count with the previous approval of the institution and its *whānau*.

Regarding other practical matters, it was also explained to me that, being the institution a full immersion Māori school, English language was not allowed in most of

2 As previously mentioned, this is not the real name of the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* institution, which asked formally to remain anonymous as a condition for the research to be conducted in it.

the venue, to ensure that children would use and practice *te reo Māori*, and also to maintain coherence in the Māori cultural environment. It was also agreed that I would provide each participant with a copy of the thesis, and that a presentation with the main results would be done for the *whānau* and teachers.

In this way, a *pōwhiri* was organised for the third of July, day in which I could also conduct the interviews, and the date for the beginning of the observation in classes was set for the fourth of August, initially planned for at least two days during each week.

Interview process in *Te kauae o Muri-ranga-whenua Kura Kaupapa Māori* school:

After the *pōwhiri*, in which one of the teachers (*kaiako*) greeted me with a welcoming speech, and the children -divided into *pōtiki*, *teina* and *tuakana* according to their age, from five to fourteen- performed the *waiata* (songs) and *haka* appropriate for the occasion, with a final and customary *hongi*, I could proceed with the interviews.

A comfortable room was provided just beside the kitchen, in which enough privacy was granted, together with a relaxed environment. The *kaiako* arrived in turns, divided according the blocks of activities of the *Kura*, and while they left their classes, the school Principal replaced them. Even though information sheets were left for them beforehand in the last meeting with the principal, another one was given to them when they arrived, together with a brief explanation of the idea of the research. The expected procedure of signature of participant consent forms followed, and it was also reminded to them that any questions regarding the research were welcome and could be done at any stage.

Due to the time constraint, three of the four *kaiako* were interviewed that day, with the final interview with the Principal conducted at the end of the same month. All the interviews were recorded with their prior consent, and they were transcribed by me on the following weeks, coinciding with the school break. Parallel notes of non verbal aspects of the situation and of any other significant data were taken during them, although they were not used that much because the process of writing tended to cut the visual contact between the interviewee and me, which in turn disrupted the flow of the interaction most of the time.

Participant observation process:

The participant observation phase followed, in terms of technique, general guidelines studied through the Social Anthropology programme, together with extra sources found through the literature review. A particular concern was the amount of time that should be spent doing the observations, which was finally addressed in a less rigid manner in agreement with Bernard (2006:342-386), who argued that the time frame would depend on the particular phenomena and aspects that wanted to be studied. Taking into account my time frame limitations, the Master's thesis requirements and the fact that the information from the observations would be complementary to the main focus on the interviews, five months appeared as a reasonable period.

In this way, this phase was divided in two main initiatives, the first one being a series of observations conducted at a tertiary education institution, involving a Māori studies paper for pedagogy students. These observations were facilitated by the lecturer in charge -a participant in the research-, who obtained permission from the institution and the students for me to observe her practices during the different sessions in the semester. The permission was granted with the condition that the institution would not be identified, therefore it is not named and the lecturer's name has been changed, to ensure the desired anonymity. The observations were held once a week during the second academic semester of the year, although the programmes of the students had a different layout, progressing into the following year. Each lecture lasted one and a half hours, and covered different issues concerning Māori culture, customs and protocols, together with educational issues such as overviews of the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* schools and the bi-cultural curriculum. The main objective of these observations was to register the way in which the lecturer worked with traditional Māori topics and especially traditional narratives during the classes.

In the case of the *Kura* centre, observations started the fourth of August, with prior consent and permissions of the relevant actors involved with the school. They were divided on a basis of mornings and afternoons, from Mondays to Fridays, combining days, to get a view of the different daily contexts in which the stories may be used. Because of the division of activities though, most of the observations were held on Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays, and the last two months only in the morning blocks, from nine until half past twelve. Each morning block was divided by a mid-break at half past ten, period that I also used to move from one classroom to the other, apart from

spending some time with the teachers in their lounge, asking them about aspects of their classes that I could not grasp -if it seemed appropriate- and talking about various topics.

Field notes were recorded during all the observations, in the tertiary education institution and the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* school, in order to use them afterwards to contextualise and complete the data analysis from the interviews. The notes were registered mainly in a highly descriptive -almost “ethographic”- style, incorporating some of my reflections about the observed situations, together with drawings of settings, activities and materials of interest. The most typical setting in the case of the school was, at the beginning of each lesson, asking for permission to observe and sit at the back of the class to take notes. If eventually I could help the *kaiako* (teachers) in anything, I did so trying not to interfere with the children and their activities, but at the same time I avoided behaving in an exceedingly artificial manner with them.

Because of the nature of the organisation and the activities at the school, it was appropriate -and sometimes necessary- to take part in several activities that diverted from the typical school lesson, but that were part of their educational process, such as planting trees, cleaning up the school grounds, playing games and sports, attending *pōwhiri* and *hui*, between others.

It is important to highlight at this point the fact that my lack of Māori language was, at the same time, useful in a certain way, and also a limiting aspect³. To overcome the limitations, the *kaiako* were extremely generous in dedicating time to explain things to me during coffee breaks or during classes at a safe distance from children, and the rest of the time I figured out things through the little Māori I was learning and from contextual clues. The useful dimension of this deficit was that it limited the possibilities of my interaction with the children, and therefore, I represented less of a distraction for them during classes. The latter though, was far less problematic than I thought, due to the fact that the novelty of my presence was lost quite fast, and I soon became part of a familiar background during their lessons.

In addition to the aforementioned, the students of intermediate (*teina*) and senior (*tuakana*) levels very quickly understood my limitations and position, and behaved accordingly in a very helpful way. Children in the youngest level (*pōtiki*) could not figure out exactly where I could fit, being a remarkably non-skilled adult in their -

3 I achieved a very basic level of Māori language, partly because of the sole exposure to it at the school and also because of the generous help of the *kaiako*. With the latter, I attended a Māori language programme offered at a public school in North Shore, which gave me the basics in grammar and some vocabulary.

understandable- view, who could communicate with them in a very rudimentary way. Nevertheless, they were also extremely patient and understanding, and I felt accepted among them as a tolerable “adult-extra *pōtiki*” hybrid sort of classmate.

Data codification and analysis:

The codification of the data was carried out through a qualitative approach, clustering information from the interviews and field notes according to similar emerging themes, like “importance” or “functions”. Once the interviews were translated, broad dimensions were considered for their analysis, already established in the interview scripts used. These dimensions were, in turn, intimately connected with the specific objectives laid down as a starting point for the study. With these in mind, each paragraph and section of the interviews were read and given an Arabic numeral, while each interview was given a Roman numeral. Summary phrases and concepts were written at their margins, and afterwards, all these phrases and concepts were grouped according to their similarity and connections, dividing them between those pertaining to the Māori scholars and those pertaining to the Māori teachers.

The different concepts and phrases under general dimensions -which served as “umbrella” concepts for the former- were written down with their Roman and Arabic numerals, in order to connect them if necessary with the exact material present in the transcriptions, facilitating also the task of extracting appropriate quotes for the data analysis. Thus, this led to the construction of main dimensions associated to the issues pointed out and considered through the interview outlines construction, presented in some cases in a more clustered way in the final version in the body of the thesis.

In parallel, more elaborate notes –usually put in diagrammatic way- were taken every time that certain ideas emerged from the reading and analysis of the interviews. This material was added to other notes made during the reading of different sources during the literature review process. In this way, more complex material was being connected for the future stage of analysis and discussion, where the material was finally transcribed.

Feedback process:

A first step in the devolution of information process took place in a meeting with two of the *kaiako* and a replacement teacher during September 2008, to give a preliminary view of some of the observations and also to open a discussion space for

some of its issues. It was an informal meeting with certain time constraints, where only general perceptions were discussed, with a succinct theoretical background explanation.

A second, more formal occasion for information devolution was held in December 2008, with the four participant teachers and a member of the staff. During this meeting the discussion was concentrated on the main conclusions, due to time constraints in the teachers' schedule. Afterwards they gave feedback regarding the whole process and some of the points presented, and it was accorded that, apart from giving a copy of the thesis to each of them, I would also distribute a more concise report. The latter would contain the main results of the research, particularly from the educational point of view, suitable also for the usage of the school's *whānau*.⁴

Finally, before handing in the definitive version of the thesis, I visited again the school in order to distribute a copy of the thesis to each participant, plus one for the school library. In the same way, copies of the study were given to the rest of the participants in the research in person, or were left for them if they were not present, with a letter thanking their support and collaboration.

⁴ The presentation to the *whānau* was finally not carried out due to their lack of time and full schedule, especially at the end of year 2008. It was replaced then by the final report and by the presentation to the teachers.

Chapter 3

I) Traditional Narratives and Mythology

I.I) The concept of “traditional”

The instructional use of narratives, the main theme of the present work, revolves around the central term “traditional narratives”, which is used for the purposes of the research as a broad category that groups folktales, legends, and myths. The word “traditional” though, can be highly controversial depending on the meanings attributed to it, and sometimes conveys a sort of essentialism when it is used, especially in the sociocultural field. According to Powell (2004:3) the word traditional comes from the Latin *trado* meaning “hand over”, and therefore traditional stories were understood as those stories of anonymous origins orally transmitted, as vehicles for a generation's thought to be handed over to the next. This characteristic of oral transmission would also explain –in several cases- the constant changes and variability among the stories; a built-in flexibility that serves different purposes.

However, it is important and unavoidable to address certain issues connected with the use of the term “tradition” or “traditional” from an anthropological perspective. The use of such a term is based -in the present work- on the need to characterize a certain corpus of knowledge, beliefs and behaviours that tend to be repeated consistently by a social group in time, and that tend to have shared meanings that go beyond mere practical reasons. Traditions play a fundamental role in the sense of identity of social groups, acting as a common “unifying” background for all its members, despite the fact that among larger groups they might not be actually shared due to smaller groups' and individual differences.

As Hanson (1989:890) affirms, in anthropology and history there is a significantly widespread notion that culture and tradition are not stable realities transmitted intact from generation to generation. In his view, the term “tradition” is understood quite literally as an invention to serve contemporary purposes, “an attempt”, as Lindstrom put it (1982, cited in Hanson 1989: 890), “to read the present in terms of the past by writing the past in terms of the present”. The use of the term “invention” in his statements proved, though, to be a poor choice and quite misleading, conveying a sense of inauthenticity, when actually his main statement was about the natural variation

of cultural contents in every human society⁵. This “error-potential” is, in fact, acknowledged by the author in a reply to his critics, asserting that “*invention* when applied to culture and tradition is a systematically misleading expression that should not be perpetuated” (Hanson 1991:450).

This view of tradition stresses the fact that cultures have always been “a sort of nonlocus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions come into play” (Derrida 1978, cited in Hanson 1989:898). In the Māori case, a logocentric view -of historically fixed traditions- would argue that a traditional Māori culture existed in a determinate and static form before European contact and that the cultural essence was distorted after this, representing a less authentic or acceptable culture (Hanson 1989:898).

The problem with the term “tradition” is that it almost automatically communicates ideas of certain permanence or fixation in time, together with ancient origins, as Linnekin (1991:446) argues, where notions of authenticity are implicitly equated with the transmission through time of traditions, understanding them as a definable essence or core of customs and beliefs. Also, the term has been used frequently in reference to pre-literate societies as a descriptive concept, mainly influenced by the oral transmission patterns and other “small-scale culture” (Bodley 1999:2-7) characteristics. Currently, the weight of this concept in the sociopolitical struggles of Indigenous Peoples around the world has charged it with even more power, turning its use and possible critiques into a matter of high sensibility.

Nevertheless, the use of the words “tradition” or “traditional” in the Māori narratives' study will necessarily clash with these limitations, and in this sense, they are intended to be understood in a non-essentialist way, with the view of tradition as an ongoing process (Sarris, 1993 cited in Eder 2007:291), acknowledging the fact that they present various grades of variability according to the contexts and historic frames in which they are presented. It would be almost impossible to generate a clear cut classification of which of them have gone through more changes, especially in the field of narratives, taking into account the variability they present as a result of other factors

5 Although Hanson (1989:899) further argues that “As a first approximation, it might be said that inventions are sign-substitutions that depart some considerable distance from those upon which they are modeled, that are selective, and that systematically manifest the intention to further some political or other agenda”. The problem with this would be the ambiguity of the classification criteria, immersed in the same complex continuum that frames the phenomenon to be defined as invented. Which would be the “considerable distance”? Can it be “measured” in some way?

like geographical location and group divisions⁶. However, they will be considered as such because of their non-individual authorship, their strong links with other cultural elements and their similar structural characteristics among different sources -oral and written- through a considerable time arc (i.e. at least a century and a half).

I.II) The concept of “Narrative”

Through the present study, the term “narrative” will be used as a synonym of story, although as a concept it is much more complex and flexible in terms of meaning. Therefore, it seems necessary to display some efforts in the definition and general understanding of it from an anthropological perspective, and particularly explaining the way in which it will be interpreted here.

To begin with, a definition is given by Kerby (1991, in Rapport and Overing 2007:318): “Narrative can be conceived as the telling (in whatever medium, though especially language) of a series of temporal events so that a meaningful sequence is portrayed -the story or plot of the narrative”. Expanding the latter, Rapport and Overing (2007:318) assert that it can be seen as an account involving a sequence of two or more units of information (concerning happenings, mental states, people, etc.) such that its meaning would change if the order of the sequence was altered, a sequentiality used to differentiate this medium from various other forms of conveying and apprehending information about the world.

However, as Herman (2003:170) states, complicating matters, the notion of “narrative” itself refers both to the “abstract cognitive structure” and the “material trace of that structure left in writing, speech, sign-language, three-dimensional visual images, or some other representational medium”. The latter follows the idea of Bradd Shore (1996, cited in Herman 2003:170), that on the one hand the term identifies the “activity of adjusting and creating reality through talking it out” - meaning-making accomplished through the depiction of experience in terms of narrative, according to Rapport and Overing (2007:319)- , and on the other hand, the “instituted result of this structuring process” -aspects that will be further developed in the discussion section of this study. Therefore, narrative would be at the same time “a class of (cultural) artifacts and a cognitive-communicative process for creating, identifying, and interpreting candidate

⁶ The divisions contemplate the following terms *iwi*: a group of *hapū* or tribe; *hapū*: a sub-tribe or group of *whānau* conforming lineages, clans; *whānau*: extended family (Ryan 1997; Walker 2004:63-65).

members of that artifactual class” (Herman 2003:170). It is precisely this interpretation of “narrative” the one that will be employed in general in the present research, construing it as a “basic and general resource for thought” (Herman 2003: 170).

Another important aspect to bear in mind when talking about “narrative” is that its structure reflects “a particular way in which the world is ordered and understood: temporally”. In this way, “narrative” -through an orderly developmental sequence of events- would express the quest for coherence through time, providing human lives with a sense of order and meaning within and across it. Thus, narrative would “transform the potential discordance of humanly experienced time: the experience at once of fragmentation, contingency, randomness and endlessness”. But perhaps more important is the fact that “narrative” would also make time an aspect of sociocultural reality, or in other words, time would become human in being articulated within a narrative sequence (Rapport and Overing 2007:318).

As it will be seen further in the study, several aspects regarding the structure and the contents of these narratives will be addressed and analysed in terms of sociocultural variations. Nevertheless, it is important to remind that the more literary aspects of the theory of narrative will not be covered -due to the lack of expertise and space-, keeping our analysis in the field of cognitive anthropology and cultural psychology. However, as an ideal, as Herman (2003:184) asserts, it must be acknowledged that “the object of analysis is neither tellers, nor tales, nor interpreters of tales, but rather the combined product of all of these factors bearing on stories viewed as a tool for thinking”, something that inevitably change the methods and claims of narrative theory.

I.III) Distinction among narratives

All of the so-called “traditional narratives” -especially the myths- perform, according to Campbell (1991:38-39) diverse functions regarding the mystical, cosmological, the sociological and pedagogical dimensions. Despite this common background, these different kinds of narratives present some variations that are necessary to address in order to understand the reach of them in their use, and consequently they will be defined and succinctly analysed separately.

a) Folktales

From an instructional point of view, Arbuthnot (1964, cited in Black, Wright and Erickson 2001:126) conceives folktales as the cement of society, for they codify and express a people's thoughts, feelings, beliefs and behaviours. In a similar sense, Zipes (2003: xlvi) commenting on the work of the Brothers Grimm, acknowledges their “uncanny sense of how folk narratives inform cultures” and uses this argument as an explanation for the great interest for them demonstrated by the most diverse disciplines.

Folktales though, would be difficult to define compared with legends and myths, because of the great variety of traditional stories grouped under the concept, with some scholars considering as such any traditional story that is not a divine myth or legend, even considering fables as a special type of folktale. As common traits, their central characters are human beings, with some participation of divine beings and spirits, or animals acting as people. The main distinctive aspect of folktales would be that their primary function “is to entertain, although they may also play an important role in teaching and justifying customary patterns of behavior” (Powell 2004:10).

Following a similar line of thought, Kirk (1970:41) asserts that when comparing myths to folktales, the former have “some serious underlying purpose beyond that of telling a story”, whereas the latter tend to portray simple social situations, “playing on ordinary fears and desires as well as on men's appreciation of neat and ingenious solutions”, in which the introduction of fantastic subjects would respond more to widen the range of adventure than to any imaginative or introspective urge.

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica-Mycropaedia (1993) “folktale” is defined as a prose story, traditional in content, that is transmitted orally through many generations, that may contain elements of myth but lacking the religious aspects of the latter (Vol.4: 81). In Campbell's view, agreeing with Powell's (2004), “folktales” or plain “tales” would be narratives understood mainly as a pastime, eventually furnishing lessons in different senses. Composed primarily for amusement, they are regarded with differing degrees of seriousness by the different people who narrate them “reshaped in terms of dramatic contrast, narrative suspense, repetition and resolution” (1990:17).

Finally, a different and relatively recent category is the one containing “fables”, which are openly didactic -frequently with a moral maxim at the end- and not revelations of transcendental contents, like myths would do. Fables would be clever illustrations of political or ethical statements, and not to be believed but understood (Campbell 1990:17).

b) Legends

“Legends” are defined also as traditional stories, resembling folktales in content but associated with particular places or people and told as a matter of history (Encyclopaedia Britannica-Mycropaedia 1993 Vol.7:244). Other authors, like Campbell (1990:16-17), define “legends” as reviews of a traditional history or of episodes from it, which permit mythological symbolism to inform human events and circumstances, in occasions with some of the religious power of myth.

From Powell's (2004:6-7) perspective, if divine myths were analogous to science in oral cultures, legends were analogous to history, trying to answer to the question of what happened in the past. The central characters in those tend to be human beings and although there might be supernatural beings playing a part, their roles tend to be subordinate to those of the human characters. Some legends also served an aetiological function, as divine myths, but their events are placed in a current world order, though in a distant past.

c) Proverbs

Even though proverbs, or traditional sayings, do not match completely with what is considered here as a narrative (i.e. a story with a certain plot and characters), because of the huge importance of them in Māori culture, and also because of their strong interconnection with themes present in Māori legends, folktales and myths, they will be considered in the present work as a sub-type in the corpus of traditional narratives. They are defined as succinct and pithy sayings that express commonly held ideas and beliefs. Considered as part of every spoken language, they are related to other forms of folk literature -such as riddles and fables- that have originated in oral tradition, generally used for the transmission of collective wisdom and rules of conduct. Across cultures, proverbs tend to repeat central themes, coming from many different anonymous sources difficult to trace (Encyclopaedia Britannica-Mycropaedia 1993 Vol.9: 749).

According to Patterson (1992:47), probably one of the most intriguing aspects of their use is that, unlike a rule-based ethic, as a corpus they contain conflicting messages that are used according to the occasion and to the wits and wisdom of the person who calls upon it. In this sense, as myths, proverbs would provide a set of precedents for proper behaviour, but they would not specify exactly which must be followed and in

which situation, depending heavily on the context and the ability of the person who remembers it to properly apply it.

d) Myths

The concept of “myth” has consistently entailed a diversity of problems when efforts to define it have been displayed, partly because of the wide spectrum of disciplines that have studied it in the “Western” academia. In Carroll's (1996: 827-828) perspective, relying on an anthropological background, it is preferable to avoid this “definitional morass” and concentrate on three characteristics that myths generally present. These would be (a) Myths are stories, (b) concerned with sacred aspects; “persons or things surrounded with reverence and respect in the society where the story is told”, (c) in which events are set initially in a previous time qualitatively distinct from the present one.

Despite the lure of Carroll's argument, it is necessary though to briefly display part of the contesting and complementary definitions created to tackle the study and definition of myths. According to Eliade (1976:24-25), in societies where myth is still alive, its members carefully distinguish myths as “true stories”, from fables and folktales, seen as profane stories that can be told in any place and at any time. In the author's view, from a traditional framework, myth would be a matter of primary importance, while tales and fables however amusing they might be, are not⁷. Therefore, according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica-Mycropaedia (1993), “Myths” would be especially associated with religious rites and beliefs, relating with actual events to explain practices, beliefs, institutions or natural phenomena (Vol.8: 470-471). Therefore, “Myths” would be rehearsed not for diversion -although both legends and myths, in Campbell's perspective, may provide entertainment incidentally, but their main objective would be essentially tutorial-, but for the spiritual welfare of the individual or the community, as “religious recitations conceived as symbolic of the play of eternity in time” (1990:17).

In Campbell's (1991:38-39) view, specifically regarding myths, there would be four main functions associated with the common dimensions already mentioned. The

7 This is also probably based on the work of Malinowski (1974, cited in Jackson 2002:26-27) who noted that the Trobrianders made a distinction between *liliu* (“sacred myths”) in contrast to *kukwanebu* (“tales”) and *libwogwo* (“legends”). According to the author, while myths were seen as “venerable and true, giving legitimacy to the existing social order”, legends fell within the range of things actually experienced, and tales were considered just made up narratives.

first one would be the mystical function of opening to human beings the dimension of existential mystery. The second one would be the cosmological dimension, or “scientific” one, giving accounts of the shape of the Universe. The third one, the sociological function, would be used to support and validate certain social orders, a dimension related to ethical laws. Finally, the fourth function would be the pedagogical one, teaching how to live a human lifetime under any circumstances.

Following one of the most canonical analyses of myth, according to Eliade (1976:15) the linguistic root of the term, the word *mythos* in Greek, meant “fable”, “tale”, “talk”, or simply “speech”, but in time it came to be used in contrast with *logos* and *historia*, thus coming to denote “that which cannot really exist”. This kind of use seems to come from -among other Greek philosophers- Plato, referring to the stories about gods in contrast to descriptions of historical accounts (Hinnells 1997:337; Powell 2004:3). Strictly speaking though, myths would not be construed as lies, nor fiction, being stories that express spiritual aspects that are “beyond the scope of rational statement” (Thornton 1999:25).

Myths then are currently understood as stories that narrate a sacred history, which are intended to convey important meanings relating to the origin of the world, of the social group and other existential issues. They are also often described in terms of symbolic language, often related to rituals, and used to explain or provide didactic support to the practices and beliefs of religious groups (Eliade 1976:23; Hinnells 1997:337; Metge 1998: 3). According to other perspectives, myths can be also seen as stories performing an explanatory function towards philosophical issues, or an etiological function when explaining the range of phenomena in the world, as socializing tools for members of a community, or even as justifications of certain social orders and dominant groups (Parker and Stanton 2003:10-11).

Myths would be interpreted in the social sciences as a “social institution”, and being hallmarks of mainly verbal cultures, they tended to be transmitted through generations by word of mouth. They have been also construed as aids to human memory in recording historical events of extreme natural, mental and social significance, and therefore can be seen as storage boxes of human knowledge about nature, mind and society (Parker and Stanton, 2003:375).

From an anthropological perspective, according to Schultz and Lavenda (2005:161), myths would be stories whose truth seems self-evident, due to the effective integration of personal experiences with a wider set of assumptions about the way

society, or the world in general must operate. The content of myths usually concerns past events (usually at the beginning of time) or future events (usually at the end of time), being socially important because, if they are taken literally, they tell people about their origins, sometimes their future, and also how they should live right now. As social products of high verbal art involving tellers and audiences, frequently the former constitute the ruling groups in society -the elders, the political leaders, the religious specialists- exerting different degrees of tolerance towards speculation about key myths.

II) Māori Epistemology and Education

II.I) Epistemology

In a study concentrated on the matter of knowledge, its construction and the ways in which it is transmitted, it must be understood that the particular approach towards these aspects from different cultural backgrounds cannot be assumed as a homogeneous one, mirroring the Western academic and/or scientific rationale. As Patterson (1992:15) asserts in the case of Māori sociocultural constructs “Deep down, Māori tend to view the world and their place in it in ways that are radically different from typical Pākehā ways”. In the same sense, Māori have expressed in multiple ways and through various avenues that mythology, history and kinship with the natural environment, are key interrelated aspects of their worldview and cultural survival (O'Connor and Macfarlane 2002: 232).

This different worldview argument, and particularly the distinct approach towards the issues of knowledge, its management and transmission, is strongly backed up by various authors that have reflected and conducted research on the topic (Benally 1994, cited in Eder 2007:288; Hendry 1999:208; Brody 2002: 46-47, 253-254; Bodley 1999:18-29). On the differences between traditional knowledge and Western science, from an epistemological perspective, Nakashima and Elias (2002:11-12) argue that scientific knowledge is considered a highly systematic corpus in regard to how it describes, explains, establishes claims, expands and represents knowledge. It also has an ideal of completeness that needs inbuilt dynamics aiming to the improvement of knowledge, particularly to increase its systematic character. In contrast, “traditional knowledge” is defined as a cumulative body of knowledge, practices and

representations maintained and developed by peoples with long histories of interaction with the natural environment. It has, in general, originated independently from Western scientific influences and in particular cultural settings, but it has informed scientific knowledge in time, and probably after several contacts might show certain level of influence from the former in certain areas.

In the case of *Aotearoa*/New Zealand and its particular cultural setting for the emergence of traditional knowledge, according to Henry (2000:7), pre-European Māori society lived in a kinship society, founded on notions of humanism and obligatory reciprocity, a society underpinned by an “economy of affection”, antithetical to nineteenth century British culture which was imposed by a systematic colonising process. King (2003:80-81), commenting on the characteristics of pre-European Māori society, asserts that even though rank differences existed, between commoners and nobles, *tohunga* -expert, specialist or priest, according to Ryan (1997)- and not chosen, freemen and slaves, etc., their society was relatively homogeneous. Their categories were much more flexible than the European counterparts, and despite the fact that the primary social responsibility was towards their own familiar and tribal groups, and that inter-tribal war was relatively frequent, its results did not have the devastating results that they later acquired with the introduction of European weapons. Overall, King asserts that trading between groups was regular and highly developed as an extension of their common reciprocity principle, creating conditions for long lasting periods of peace and concentration on daily subsistence, including the development of arts (2003: 82-83, 88).

Considering this socio-historical frame, Anne Salmond (1985, cited in Harrison and Papa 2005:61) describes Māori epistemology as a complex and open system, through which terms related to knowledge were acquired by familiarity, ancestral accounts and the “exercise of intelligence”. The transmission of cosmological and historical accounts and in general of traditional knowledge involved the assistance to public assemblies of all members of the communities, since early age, strengthening in the process the community ties.

In Henry's (2000:7) view, the traditional Māori philosophy and ethics informed traditional values and beliefs and were translated into particular cognitive frameworks - ways of perceiving and knowing the world- and social practices. An important part of this “traditional knowledge” background or Māori epistemology has been rescued and used to inform the *Kaupapa Māori* framework, an overall body of knowledge that has

influenced -among others- a research set of directives. The latter has been discussed by Māori scholars since the 1980s (Smith 1999: 183-193), which in Henry's view (2000:14) is both a set of beliefs and a set of social practices, founded on collective consciousness (*whānaungatanga*); human interdependence (*kotahitanga*); a sacred relationship to the gods and the cosmos (*wairuatanga*); guardianship of the environment (*kaitiakitanga*), and the interconnection between mind, body and spirit.

The colonial encounter between Māori people and the British army and settlers traduced itself into the more or less prototypical colonising enterprise, in which the indigenous people were defined as primitive and barbarian -almost inhuman-, and their knowledge and culture regarded mainly as an exotic piece of fossilized evolutionary history worth studying from that perspective (Smith 1999:25). It is interesting then, to compare the current views on traditional Māori society with the one that the first Pākehā researchers in *Aotearoa*/New Zealand had, heavily influenced by the prejudices of their time. Even the well known Elsdon Best (1995:31), as we have seen regarding the mythological accounts, had a patronizing view on Māori achievements in the philosophical and cognitive fields, stating that “Uncivilized folk, such as our Maori [sic], may not do any great amount of thinking, or purposely indulge in metaphysical studies, but they certainly feel human weakness and experience fear of supernormal powers”.

The impact of colonization and the introduction of Western schooling system were devastating for Māori language and epistemology, where the replacement task was accompanied by a persistent and systematic devaluation of the local knowledge. In this sense, Salmond (1985, cited in Harrison and Papa 2005:62) argues that there is a significant difference between the evidence of Māori philosophical outcomes, capacities and debates in the 1840s and 1860s, and European accounts of Māori intellectual abilities in that period “a disparity which became institutionalized with the development of Native schools, and the suppression of Maori [sic] language and culture in education”.

This out-dated view of Māori capacities and intellectual production contrasts strongly with what Graeber (2001:168) asserts on the matter⁸, when analysing the studies of authors like Marcel Mauss, where the Māori appear largely as strong

8 Of course, this view contrasts even more strongly with the views of many Māori writers, scholars and intellectuals who have thoroughly described, deconstructed, and analysed the racist approaches of academic research towards Māori people and their culture.

theorists. This would not be surprising, according to the author, due to the fact that already in Mauss' time, the products of Māori priestly colleges (the *Whare wānanga*) had developed a reputation in the fields of cosmology, philosophy and metaphysics - characterizing a society that seemed obsessed with “essences”-, portraying them as the great intellectuals of the “archaic” world.

Indeed, exploring deeper aspects of the rich metaphysical field in Māori society, Graeber (2001:170-171) argues that of all the metaphysical concepts the Māori have contributed to anthropology, the most salient would be *mana* and *tapu* (“taboo”), often used interchangeably in Māori language, since they imply two different aspects of power: the first, power in its capacity to act; the other, power in how it must be respected by others. While in most of Polynesia “*mana*” is the power of the gods, or by extension, any invisible power capable of making things happen or “appear”, among the Māori it also takes an explicitly political meaning, meaning “prestige”, “authority” or “influence”. The term “*tapu*”, on the other hand, would refer mainly to restrictions or to a state of being surrounded by them, delineating a sacred, pure space, “set apart” from a relatively profane (*noa*) world characterized especially by biological processes (cooking, eating, excretion, sexuality).

However, it is necessary to stress the fact that *mana* and *tapu* are extremely complex and rich concepts that cannot be defined in “clear-cut” and constrained ways. From my perspective -based on the different sources that I have reviewed-, Māori authors tend to capture in a better way this rich diversity, best portraying the highly textured “possibilities” of understanding of them. In this way, Catherine Love (2004:25), based on Rose Pere's model of *Te Wheke*, asserts that several concepts are employed when attempting to translate a sense of the essence of *mana* into the English language, such as

'authority and control; influence, prestige and power; psychic force; effectual, binding, authoritative, having influence or power; vested with effective authority; be effectual, take effect; be avenged' (Williams, 1971, p.172); and 'prestige, authority, control and status' (Rolleston, 1989) (Love 2004:25)

Despite the latter, the author summarises her position affirming that the notion of “Power” discussed here should be thought of in terms of “empowerment” rather than “power over” (Love 2004:25). Even further, she expands the notion of *mana* and

exposes the ways in which it can be conceived, acquired and maintained, in the concepts of *Mana atua*, *Mana tūpuna*, *Mana whenua*, *Mana tangata*, *Mana Māori*, *Mana wahine* and *Mana tāne* (Love 2004:26-30).

From a similar perspective, Ngahuia Te Awekotuku (1996:27) explains that *mana*, like *tapu*, is a pan-Pacific concept with multiple layers and levels of meaning that concerns primarily, power and empowerment, together with authority and the right to authorise. In her view

Charisma, personal force, social status, princely charm, leadership inherited or achieved are all forms of *mana*; it is a subjective human quality, measured by various means. Two of the most important were *mana whenua* and *mana tangata*. *Mana whenua* implies stewardship of vast acreages of land in which one controls the economic resources - fisheries, horticulture, rat runs, bird snaring and related activities. *Mana tangata* reflects the importance of the people, of the complex social and political relationships that secure a community's alliances and effective leadership; a successful chief would embody *mana tangata*. (Te Awekotuku 1996:27)

In the case of *Tapu*, Te Awekotuku (1996:26-27) considers its many meanings, references and interpretations, including a descriptive or prescriptive condition, “making an object, person or environment restricted and inaccessible to human contact, prohibited and out of bounds”. The author also explains its usage as a “framework” defining particular behaviours or sensations, conducive to certain expected responses. In this way, between other elements and states, sacred items may be regarded as *tapu*, like those associated with death ritual, or the body parts of a chiefly person, particularly the head, and women when menstruating, because of the associations with fertility and its cycles.

Following the general Māori logic described regarding knowledge, Te Awekotuku (1996:27) explains that the notion of *tapu* also affected certain types of knowledge, like genealogy patterns, chant forms, navigational mnemonic and astronomic devices, and healing techniques, among others. In this way, “within the framework of *tapu*, information and its dissemination were regulated and controlled, and only people properly trained and initiated gained access”. Similarly, as a protective function, several places such as burial caves, sites of the disposal of miscarriages, afterbirth or incidental remains of hair and nail clippings, menstrual napkins and

medical dressings, were considered *tapu* and sacred, preventing a misuse of them or their contents.

According to the author (Te Awekotuku 1996:27), as a balancing counterpart of the notion of *tapu*, although not in perfect dichotomy, is the notion of *noa*, pertaining to ordinary objects and functions, like household and serving utensils, and to the acts of preparing and eating food, as well as the ordinary interactions of everyday life. In this way, *noa* is safe, or in other words, lacking preternatural sanction or restricted association, which can also be achieved by the lifting of the condition of *tapu* from a particular environment or object. Making a *tapu* place *noa* -like “a newly built house, ornamented and fresh (...) considered unsafe, prohibited, raw with spirit and inaccessible to the common touch of people”- or “blessing” it as is named in current terms, would involve ritual, and the crossing of the threshold, “usually by a high-born woman, whose special form of *tapu* would counter the energies within the house, and thus render it *noa*, and safe for general entry”⁹ (Te Awekotuku 1996:27).

These metaphysical aspects cannot be separated from the epistemological frame surrounding the Māori knowledge system. In this sense, Stokes (1992:npn¹⁰) argues that the spiritual dimension -in the terms *wairua* (spirit, soul) and *tapu*- to Māori attitudes regarding knowledge, is alien to the usual Pākehā research activities, governed by scientific standards. Commenting on this particular issue, King (1978:12) explains that the concept of *mana* and its accrue, for instance, were proportionate to the range and depth of knowledge that a person commanded, hence their prestige and power, and on the other hand, *tapu* would be also involved, especially with ritual and genealogical knowledge due to their sacred origins. Overall, knowledge was regarded as having a life of its own, hence capable of contributing to the life-force of the person who absorbed it, a characteristic that was translated into the concept of *mauri* (life-force), present in knowledge as in other things (King 1978: 12).

It is important to notice that the very basic conceptions of knowledge differ considerably when comparing the Western notions with the Māori ones, as Salmond asserts (1982:82-83), starting by the metaphoric notion of knowledge as a landscape crossed by a multitude of pathways where, as a “product” is endlessly producible with

9 On this matter, Te Awekotuku (1996:27) asserts that this ritual continues to be observed currently, even in the context of an ethnological or fine arts exhibition, in order to “appease the ancestral forces who may generate *tapu*, which imbues the objects with dread or beauty. It also renders the space safe for mere curious mortals, most of whom may not otherwise have the *mana* to cope.”

10 In the present work, “npn” refers to “no page number” in the cited document.

new facts to be discovered. These images do not match with Māori metaphors on knowledge (*mātauranga* or *wānanga*) as a precious, scarce, exhaustible and destructible resource¹¹. This would reinforce the already mentioned traits surrounding knowledge transmission, the caution and even reluctance to hand it –especially the knowledge associated with ancestral power and efficacy- to others under certain circumstances, an approach shared by other indigenous peoples (Eder 2007:280). In a similar sense, Love (2004:1) explains that in Māori terms, knowledge is viewed as a *taonga* or treasure, “to be guarded and protected and to be passed only to those who can be entrusted with preserving and using it wisely, for group rather than individual benefit”, referring to its not necessarily benign nature, of spiritual and temporal origins.

Finally, a last important aspect that must be considered as a noticeable difference between the Māori approach to knowledge and the Western-scientific approach is the one regarding the notion of truth. According to Salmond (1982:83), claims of *pono* (truth) went hand in hand with the status of the claimer and the empowerment received by ancestral precedents and descent. This notion of situational truth and the accompanying flexibility are the foundational elements in the acceptance of differing – and sometimes contradictory- accounts of some events (e.g. alternative versions of legends and other traditional narratives), forcing them to develop tolerance and elaborate strategies to deal with ambiguities. As can be seen, this flexible kind of approach matches coherently with the notion of contextualised morality sustained by the systematic use of *whakataukī* (proverbs) and of several depictions present in the traditional narratives (see Appendix 3).

II.Ia) Māori epistemological models:

Considering several salient cognitive elements that could be included in the core of Māori approach to knowledge, it seems though that two of them tend to position themselves as cornerstones of the system. These would be the “genealogical pattern” or *whakapapa*, and “the three *kete* (baskets) of knowledge” model, explained through the story of *Tāne* and his pursuit of wisdom in the heavens. The latter would be perhaps the most direct example of the strong bonds and deep interconnection between the traditional Māori narratives source and the Māori knowledge construction system.

¹¹ This kind of metaphor would be more tuned with other Western ones, like the view of knowledge as “power” or as “wealth”, less used than the spatial metaphors according to Salmond’s work (1982:84).

In this sense, it is important to bear in mind what Rev. Māori Marsden (n.d., cited in Royal 2003:56) asserted about myth and legend in the Māori cultural context, considering them neither fables linked to primitive faith in the supernatural, nor “marvellous ancient fireside stories”. In his view, they were constructs “employed by the ancient seers and sages to encapsulate and condense into easily assimilable forms their view of the World, of ultimate reality and the relationship between the Creator, the universe and man” (Royal 2003:56). In like manner, Harrison and Papa (2005:65) assert that what is characterized in English translations as myths and legends is in fact a corpus of historical accounts for the Māori people of different locations. These events would be understood as occurring in a different place and time connected to the present ones, a particular kind of interpretation of alternative cosmological and historical accounts which as we have said, according to Salmond (1985, cited in Harrison and Papa 2005:65) has a long tradition and a series of special conventions developed to deal with them.

The latter position is shared by other authors like Doig (1989, cited in O'Connor and Macfarlane 2002:225) who openly asserts that Māori traditions and myths are not just narratives or “fantastic events cast in the mists of time. They are meaningful and real in the sense that they validate our existence, order our chaos, and help guide our destiny”. This view would be connected to the Māori notion that the past is inextricably woven into the present and future, where dead ancestors (*tipuna*) are always present in spirit (*wairua*), to provide psychological and spiritual nurturance and guidance (O'Connor and Macfarlane 2002:225; Harrison and Papa 2005:66).

In relation to the first Māori cognitive element mentioned, the genealogical pattern or *whakapapa*¹², it is interpreted as a concept commonly used in a “family descent” context, which can be also applied to the layering of knowledge, with one needed to be set down before adding a new layer (Moon 2003:43). It is defined by Barlow (2005:173) as the genealogical descent of all living and non living things, from the gods to the present time, and the concept is translated as “to lay one thing upon another”. *Whakapapa* would be a basis for the organization of knowledge in respect of the creation and development of all things. In Barlow's view, the genealogy of the Māori is organized under four main categories: In first place, the cosmic genealogy

12 Barlow (2005:173) also talks about the almost synonymic term *tātai*, which would refer to the structure and order of certain domains, like the organization of the stars, or the forest, or of a collection of genealogies, rather than the system of descent from one generation to another in the case of humans.

concerning the universe creation process; secondly, the genealogy of the gods (*atua*) and organic life on earth; thirdly, the genealogy of the precursors of humans or the primal genealogy, starting in one version, with *Tāne Nui a Rangi* and *Hineahuone*; and finally, the genealogy of the canoes that arrived from *Hawaiki*, bringing the ancestors to *Aotearoa/New Zealand* (2005:173-174).

The concept of *whakapapa* is also construed, according to Hemara (2000:33), as an open proclamation of the origins of individuals and communities, which can also be used as tool for scientific enquiry and as a “social agent that describes a full range of co-generational and inter-generational relationships”. As a social and historical blueprint, *whakapapa* would clarify the positions of individuals in a continuum -including the relationships with outsiders and non-members-, a matter incumbent to all *iwi* and *hapū* members.

In a similar perspective, Marsden (n.d., cited in Royal 2003:61) argues that genealogy, as a tool for the transmission of knowledge, pervaded Māori culture. As a very practical method to classify different groups of flora and fauna, it was also useful for the establishment of the order in which processes occurred and in which prolonged and complex activities such as ceremonies should be performed. Overall, it is precisely this sort of general impression and interpretation the one that will be further analysed from a cognitive framework.

According to Graeber (2001:168-169), the “tradition” of comparison between Polynesia and the Northwest Coast of North America launched by Irving Goldman (1970, 1975) and developed by Marshall Sahlins (1988) sets a basic argument which states that Polynesian societies tended to see the entire universe as structured on a vast genealogy, where everyone is descended from the gods in one way or another. One of the results of this conception, for instance, was a tendency toward social homogenization, in which nobles were constantly trying to set themselves apart by some unique or astounding act, feats that would result in an increase of prestige, a recurrent theme in the stories revised in this work. But this model, as we have seen, not only involved people but all the living creatures and objects in the world, therefore according to Salmond (1982:85), this sense of connectedness could not enable a system of thought with concepts such as subjectivity and objectivity, so important in the Western-scientific frame.

Going further with his analysis, Graeber (2001:169) asserts that the Māori universe is a vast genealogy completely generated by the single principle of the interior,

creative powers of gods and humans, though imagined as an almost entirely sexual, and therefore naturalized, type of creativity. The result of this model in the metaphysical field is a remarkably rich philosophy of interior powers, with little explicit attention to external forms¹³. In this sense, Māori traditional narratives connected in the form of a huge *whakapapa*, begin with abstract entities like Day and Night, or Thought and Desire, proceeding through the gods and ultimately including everything in the entire cosmos -forests, sea, crops, human, even clouds and stones. All living creatures and aspects of reality in which humans live are seen as generated according to one single principle of sexual procreation (Graeber 2001:169).

The genealogical pattern strongly outlined the social net, interweaving the legendary accounts of the great canoes that carried the first immigrants from the mythical island of *Hawaiki* to *Aotearoa*, and of the wanderings of the men and women who became ancestors of the different Māori *iwi*, later of *hapū*, with the social order lived by the story tellers (Graeber 2001:169). This is why, according to Smith (1992:npn), the knowledge of *whakapapa* was so important in establishing individual relationships and rights and in asserting influence or credibility, and consequently, on an *iwi* level it was used to maintain political relationships, assert dominance, to sort out allegiances, lay claims, to remember significant past events and to maintain a time scale. In the author's view, when given knowledge of this nature, it was important that the *tauirā* (learner) got it right and used it for the good of the whole *whānau*, as a collective enterprise. Any mistakes and/or misuse of it “would take away mana from the whole whānau and would certainly reduce a student's chances of gaining more knowledge” (Smith 1992:npn).

It is interesting how in Graeber's (2001:170) perspective, one of the most important results of this general sense of genealogical interconnection was -in the same sense explained by Smith (1992)- the great historical armature that provided the framework for politics, basically because most people among the Māori were capable of tracing back their ancestors for several hundred years. Genealogies were interpreted as the basis of rank, since children were ranked in order of seniority; in theory everyone could be placed somewhere on the same genealogical structure, therefore everyone

13 It is interesting to compare the latter with the Kwakiutl case of the Northwest coast of North America, in which a different model creates results precisely the other way around, where everything is surfaces, containers and masks, and interiors would always turn into yet more surfaces again, something graphically displayed through their “opening” masks (Graeber 2001:169).

should know precisely where they stood in relation to everyone else. In concrete terms though, things were more complicated, since Māori kinship was cognatic and people could trace to famous ancestors through either male or female links. Consequently, almost any free Māori could claim to be a *rangatira* (highborn noble) through some connection or another in the pattern.

Continuing with the second epistemological cornerstone -the narrative of *Tāne* and the three baskets of knowledge-, diverse authors have tackled the issue for its metaphorical organization and its foundational influence in Māori epistemology. Through the different versions of the story, some variations are present in the description of the contents of the baskets and in the name of these. In one of them, according to Parker and Stanton (2003:407), the first *kete* is associated with darkness and contains the unknown; the second *kete* is associated with light and contains the things we know and the third *kete*, associated with “pursuit” would contain the knowledge humans currently pursue through study. In Best's (1995:103) account, the first basket is *kete tuauri* and contains ritual chants connected with all matters regarding *Ranginui* and *Papatūānuku*, and also with the offspring of them; the second basket, *kete tuatea*, is the basket of evil, all evil things practised by the primordial parents and their offspring; and the third basket, *kete aronui*, contains love, sympathy, compassion, peace-making and all the actions and crafts that benefit the creation as a whole.

In one of the most well-known versions (paradoxically, the so-called “esoteric” version) of the narrative, the story basically depicts the senior god *Io* as the source of all knowledge, who sends messengers to the sons of *Ranginui* and *Papatūānuku* that he wants to meet one of them. After the strong opposition of *Whiro* (a deity associated with darkness and evil, disease and death), his brother *Tāne* is selected and ascends to the twelfth heaven to receive from *Io* three baskets of knowledge: *kete-urūru-matua*, the basket of knowledge of peace, goodness and love; *kete-urūru-rangi*, the basket of knowledge of *karakia* (invocations, prayers) and ritual; and *kete-urūru-tau*, the one with knowledge of warfare, agriculture and other crafts. *Tāne* finally brings the baskets down to earth, struggling with *Whiro* and his allies in the way, and to this day the baskets of knowledge are said to form the basis of Māori traditional knowledge (Smith 1913, cited in Patterson 1992:163; Best 1995: 99-106,185).

Just as Marsden (n.d., cited in Royal 2003:57) argues, apparently such a story may be regarded from an external point of view as a fairytale, a fantasy for the amusement of children, but in his perspective “Nothing could be further from the truth

for this legend is part of the corpus of sacred knowledge and as such as not normally related in public”. In the same sense that Campbell (1990; 1991) tends to construe myths, a literal interpretation of these ignores the most important and deep aspects of them, therefore Marsden asserts that the way in which the story was phrased ensured that its inner meaning could not be understood without the proper preparation to unravel it (Marsden n.d., cited in Royal 2003:57).

According to Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1992, npn; 1999:172-174), the notion of the quest for knowledge embraced by *Tāne*¹⁴ would represent the first “Māori research project”, in which the *atua* (god) pursued wisdom not only for him, but for everyone else, establishing a central Māori “epistemetic” imperative, which would be that of the use of knowledge in behalf of the group. In this frame, knowledge was divided between the common one for daily activities, and of popular “secular” versions of traditional narratives, which was acquired through the guidance of *kuia* (elderly women) and *kaumātua* (elderly men). The highly specialised and hierarchical knowledge, on the other hand, was stored by smaller groups on behalf of the larger community, with more esoteric versions of the traditional narratives that were passed on to only selected students. Nevertheless, each aspect of the two types of knowledge was essential to the well being of the whole *whānau* and *iwi*, pertaining to them.

On the same matter, Patterson (1992:163) further argues that ritual or esoteric knowledge in particular has a *tapu* status because of its divine origins, inheriting part of the gods' *tapu*, and therefore must be treated with special care, avoiding alterations or misuse by the ordinary folk. In strong contrast with the Western frame, regarding the status of the experts, despite the respect directed towards them, their knowledge is not exempt from scrutiny, any item of knowledge may -or should- be questioned and challenged, and of course replaced if it is seen as necessary by the academic community. In a traditional Māori context however, the *tapu* is seen as protecting traditional knowledge -already sanctioned, revised and accepted through other means and channels- from any kind of scrutiny, obeying to a very different logic in regard to the possible results of such initiative.

One characteristic aspect of *Tāne*'s quest for the baskets reinforces the notion of the protected status of Māori knowledge and that is the image of the basket in itself,

14 In her account, based on Buck (1966), the first *kete* contains the knowledge of peace, love and goodness; the second one, the knowledge of prayers, rituals and incantations; and the third *kete* would contain the knowledge of war, agriculture, woodwork and earthwork (Smith 1992:npn).

which transmits the idea of a fixed and finite body of knowledge. In this sense, as Salmond (1982, cited in Patterson 1992:163) argues, Māori and Pākehā ideas differ radically in respect to the boundaries of knowledge, where the Western frame conceives of knowledge as indefinitely extended and open, not as finitely bounded and closed, represented by the metaphorical image of the *kete*. In Patterson's perspective, this difference helps to explain some Māori teaching and learning characteristics that seem odd to many non-Māori. Therefore, practices like the committing of traditional knowledge to memory to be recited verbatim would ensure that no alterations creep in, avoiding the misfortunes associated to such an action (Patterson 1992: 163-164; King 1978:11; Marsden n.d., in Royal 2003:57).

In the same sense, the *tapu* nature of traditional knowledge would also help to explain some common Māori attitudes towards the written word and the creation of texts containing traditional knowledge. Patterson (1992:164) argues that the restrictions involved in a *tapu* condition require the certainty that the knowledge does not fall in the wrong hands, risking losing its *tapu* and therefore its power. Consequently, it seems that the oral control of it would ensure a safer transmission avenue, controlling directly to whom the knowledge is handed over, and not carried away in an external device.

On the same matter, King (1978: 9) argues that the latter would be one of the aspects that have led to more divergence in Māori and Pākehā attitudes than any other single factor. In his view, societies conditioned to preserve and communicate information orally have often been reluctant to use other methods, being also suspicious of those who sought to do so. The latter tension would be connected, as other authors also assert (Eder 2007:282), to a system of education that has over-valued the literate and under-valued the oral, “suggesting that a people without written literature is a people without a culture worthy of examination; that puts information transmitted by word of mouth on a par with gossip -interesting, perhaps, but unreliable” (King 1978:9).

After years of research, specialists no longer see non-literate societies as backwards groups with no cognitive resources apart from the ones that colonisation brought from abroad. Other kinds of sophisticated devices were in fact developed and frequently used by these groups, frequently misinterpreted as mere craft objects or at best as art pieces in the first encounters with literate societies. In the Māori case, the traditional learning systems employed memory aids, like the *rākau papatupuna*, or “notched sticks” to assist in the recitation of genealogies, knotted cords were used to codify certain instructions and the whole array of carving, weaving and painting

patterns were in themselves used as a visual language to communicate several messages¹⁵. But in the end, it was memory and oral tradition that were the core elements in the transmission of knowledge, of the “great body of personal and tribal information that people needed to know to establish and retain their identity, and to help them survive physically”, complemented by the strategies and devices already mentioned (King 1978:11).

Overall, this epistemological frame was tightly connected with several other aspects of social life in Māori culture, but probably much more with the regular educational practices than anything else. This argument could be considered circular though, because of the merged nature of general education with everyday life activities in small scale societies, excepting the special training performed by *tohunga* to prepare their apprentices (King 2003: 80; Robinson 2005:83-95; Royal 2003:14-15; Salmond 1982:83-84), as will be further detailed. Nevertheless, as a frame, Māori epistemology (including its use of traditional narratives) is –according to the literature- still in use and adapted to new initiatives in the educational and research fields, informing practices and aiming to the strengthening of Māori values and skills, a phenomenon that is addressed in the following section, together with a more detailed view on the Māori educational methodologies.

II.II) Māori education and traditional narratives

To understand some of the core aspects of the use of traditional Māori narratives as knowledge construction and transmission devices, we must examine some of the characteristics of Māori education present in the literature, regarding the pre-European period and the one marked by the introduction of the Western schooling system. Following this, a more detailed view on the recent Māori educational developments will be tackled, together with the background model of educational process that frames such initiatives.

15 Māori facial tattoo or *Tā Moko* is in fact a whole codification system, through which one can read a person's face and extract a considerable amount of information about origins, ranks, family position and occupation, and were sometimes used as a signature of important documents (Simmons 2004:22-30,70-71). On the same issue, according to King (1978:11), Elsdon Best wrote about “the carrying of a message about an intended victim by the drawing of part of the man's *moko* on a kumara”.

II.IIa) Traditional Māori education

The “traditional” background of Māori education would refer to elements transmitted from generation to generation regarding the specific culture context in *Aotearoa*/New Zealand. These would entail the whole array of educational aspects distinct from the formal Western schooling system, teaching and learning strategies and general setting. From a broader perspective, regarding the situation of the Polynesian region before the contact with Europeans, Black, Wright and Erickson (2001:129) explain that oral literature was the way in which island cultures were codified, maintained and preserved. This was a corpus in which traditional narratives were used not only to teach proper behaviour to their young members, but also to “pass on the values, traditions, lifestyles, and even skills of the people to future generations: “a form of cultural memory” (Livo & Reitz, 1986, p.92)”.

It is fairly clear, then, that when Europeans arrived at *Aotearoa*/New Zealand they contacted people that had sustained for hundreds of years a dynamic society with a material culture, a subsistence economy, a particular social system, artistic traditions and an educational system “in the sense of conscious and successful attempts to hand on various aspects of the culture to the young” (Davidson 1984, cited in Snook 1990:220). Māori have been characterised by Howie (2003:62) as having “a rich and unique history of learning and teaching”, in which specialised scholarship had a prominent role, a fact researched by Tizard (1940, cited in Howie 2003:62) in the 1940s, probably the first academic study of Māori learning conducted in the country. In it, between other practices, the author detailed the use of story-telling by elders, of *waiata* and chants, reciting of *whakapapa*, and teachings from memory and practical experience (Howie 2003:62).

According to other authors (Metge 1984:4-7; 1990:62-63; Pere 1994:75), the deep *Māori* educational philosophy and some of its techniques since old time have been strongly centred in practical knowledge in proper settings, in the close observation and imitation of the demonstrations of elders or more experienced people, and learning in groups over the individual working. In fact, Metge (1984:3-4) states that a distinction could be made between the specialised education that took place in the *Whare wānanga* -described as formal, occasional, selective and exclusive-, the education by tutorial apprenticeship, with a close cooperation between a more experienced person and the learner, and the regular education called by her “education by exposure”, characterised

as informal, semi-continuous, open, inclusive and embedded in everyday situations. In all of these settings, Smith (1992:npn) argues that sloppiness and laziness were not tolerated, and were properly sanctioned in legends and proverbs, giving us another clue in the use of traditional narratives in the educational processes.

On the same matter, Pere (1994:55) in referring to older generations of *Ngāti Hika*, and Hemara (2000:23) in a more general sense, assert that Māori had a flexible but thorough system of transmitting cultural practices of the tribe to their young members, through history, mythology, tribal and local legends, tribal *whakataukī*, *waiata*, *whakapapa* (genealogy), *karakia*, various crafts, hand-games and other leisurely pursuits. This would underscore the already mentioned fact that educational tasks merged in a fluent way with other types of activities, combining also with elements of traditional narratives. A very interesting case is provided by the string-games practised by the Māori – a highly complex and abstract modelling activity-, according to Andersen (1927:1) much more widely known in pre-European times, which is generally termed *whai*, or “*Te whai wawewawe a Māui*”, and occasionally, *Māui* and *huhi*. Its origin is, in myth, accredited to *Māui* and because of that it is sometimes called by his name. It consists in the forming of many varied patterns representing various things and legendary events, and in former times the game was practised by both young and old.

In fact, it is quoted by Elsdon Best (1925, cited in Andersen 1927:3) that the informant *tuta Nihoniho*, of the *Ngāti Porou* tribe, supplied some explanatory notes about the use of the *whai* for other means apart from amusement. *Nihoniho* affirmed that in the interaction between young and old while playing “any child who was clever and quick in learning to make or set up the more intricate patterns was deemed worthy of being taught higher things -perhaps even to be entered as a pupil in the *whare wānanga*.” There are quite a consistent amount of sources indicating the strong ties between the already described string game of *whai*, and traditional narratives, especially myths. Taylor (1855, cited in Andersen 1927: 1) affirms that in the *whai*, the cord is made to assume many more forms than in the European “cat's-cradle” game, “and these are said to be different scenes in their mythology, such as Hine-nui-te-po, mother night bringing forth her progeny, maru and the gods, and Māui fishing up the land”. In this same sense, Smith (1900, cited in Andersen 1927:1) argues that these string games were wonderfully complicated and had stories and songs connected with them, something asserted also by Tregear (1889, cited in Andersen 1927: 1) and White (n.d., cited in Andersen 1927:2).

In Hemara's perspective (2000:36-39), aspects of “constructivism” in the relationship between learned adults and children were displayed in the pre-European educational setting, directing learning and introducing signposts, like metaphorical allusions, for the apprentice to retain the knowledge. At the same time, “enactivism” was also fostered, where the learner had to rely on her or his own judgement in order to advance in the educational process, reinforcing autonomy in the youth. All of the latter was complemented by “peer assessment”, including also teachers and others that could be affected by the results, underscoring the dynamic interplay between the personal and the social dimension of the learner's process.

After the European arrival and contact, the process of colonization changed this epistemological and educational environment and a new knowledge frame was imposed over the Māori population. The latter produced what McMurchy-Pilkington (1996:26) describes as a “competition for cultural legitimacy”, resulting in a differential distribution of power according to who controlled the knowledge construction and transmission processes, mainly through formal institutions as schools for its reproduction. Hence, as Smith (1993, cited in McMurchy-Pilkington 1996:26-27) argues, the power to define knowledge and history gave substantial political advantage to those who held power, in this case, the foreign settlers. This control of knowledge and power marginalised the Māori population and what was taught in schools, based on European, empirical and rational thought, was assumed as superior to *Mātauranga Māori* (Māori knowledge), which was considered to be based on myths, magic and superstition.

The aforementioned situation was nevertheless, acknowledged by Māori people in due time, and after a series of social and political changes through history, new efforts and critical views generated a revival of Māori education and knowledge -with a particular place for traditional templates- that continues nowadays.

II.IIb) Modern initiatives in Māori education:

The use of traditional education patterns in contemporary *Māori* culture in *Aotearoa*/New Zealand is represented mainly by educational endeavours like the *Kōhanga Reo* system, the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* and the *Whare wānanga*. These initiatives derive from deep philosophical and socio-political perspectives, based on the

Kaupapa Māori (Māori culture; philosophy, plan, purpose) principles that reclaim ancient wisdom and challenge mainstream views, provided as an alternative “for *Māori* by *Māori*” perspective in education and other areas (Pihama, Smith, Taki and Lee 2004:34; Barlow 2005:43).

As a general basis, Metge (1984:15) argues that the view of education sustained by Māori people, as their view of life, emphasises wholeness and connectedness, pursuing several goals at a time and covering subjects in parallel. On the same matter, Stokes (1992: npn) argues that the Māori education process is conceived as flexible and open-ended, continuing for life. Through it, the Māori person would acquire a sense of cultural identity well represented in the terms *aroha* (love and compassion), *whānaungatanga* (family, togetherness, communal contribution) and *tūrangawaewae* (“a place to stand”, identity with particular tribe, *hapū*, *marae* and tribal region).

Referring to the current Māori educational institutions already mentioned, the *Kōhanga Reo* centres, or “Language Nests”, are defined as early-childhood centres in which children are immersed in *te reo Māori* (Māori language) and *tikanga Māori* (customs, protocol) with a supportive and safe environment provided by the *whānau* members. They were set up as a strategy for the nurturing and revitalisation of Māori language, culture and traditions that could maintain a distinct lifestyle, enhancing access to power and equal opportunities (Pihama et al. 2004: 34-39; Royal 1996:45).

Kura Kaupapa Māori, or total-immersion Māori-language school for primary-aged children, are educational centres that follow a curriculum validating Māori knowledge, structures, processes, learning styles and culturally specific administrative practices. Their aim is to produce bilingual students capable of achieving an equally high competence and proficiency in English and Māori language, together with a deep understanding of both Pākehā and Māori cultures (Waho 1993:5).

The *Kaupapa* of learning behind these institutions is, in general, based on the philosophy of the *Te Aho Matua* described by Nepe (1991, cited in Waho 1993:5) as a doctrine incorporating the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of Māori society, linking with the Māori metaphysical realm. In his view

The whole child must be developed including their mauri, tapu, wehi, iho matua, mana, ihi, whatumanawa, hinengaro, auahatanga, ngakau and pumanawa. The ngakau must be acknowledged as the door to the wairua of the child which is intrinsically Māori (Nepe 1991, cited in Waho 1993:5).

For these institutions, and especially regarding the education of the younger children, the immersion in *te reo Māori* is the most basic and fundamental aspect, mainly because, as Nepe (1991, cited in Pihama et al. 2004:37) states, Māori knowledge would be inextricably bound with Māori language, placed within it and shaped by its dynamics. Therefore, *mātauranga Māori* would not be fully comprehended unless it was done in *te reo Māori*, acknowledging the fact that plenty of information, coherence and vital subtleties are lost in translation.

From an historical point of view, concerning the development of these institutions, Snook (1990:220) argues that in the beginning of the colonization process, inevitable conflicts emerged between the Pākehā and Māori due to their distinct educational approach. In time, though, the system imposed by the invading settlers was established for both groups of inhabitants, which after the “Land Wars” experienced new turmoil due to the different attitudes assumed by the Government when in 1877 it opted for a secular educational system. The latter clashed with the Māori view of interconnectedness between spirituality and all other aspects of life, something present in their educational approach until now.

According to Walker (1991:9), in the end of the 1970s Māori people had a radical potential to reform the regular educational system imposed on them, which limited their possibilities by the covert proletarianisation through curriculum manipulation, with results of educational failure and the progressive retreat of *te reo Māori*. On the same issue, Smith (1990:10-11) asserts that prior to the 1960s, the low educational achievement by Māori pupils was not a major social concern; a phenomenon reverted by the Hunn Report in 1960 which centralised this issue. Since the latter, *Aotearoa/New Zealand* education embarked on a series of intervention strategies to deal with Māori underachievement, initially focused on the Māori child, family, home or culture as the “problem”, tending to produce a “victim-blaming” orientation in both research and subsequent interventions, finally failing to make any significant impact on the problem.

In Smith's (1990:11) perspective, during the 1970s and 1980s the focus shifted from the Māori individual and cultural explanations of the educational deficit, to an increased questioning of the official educational system and its structures (knowledge, curriculum, pedagogy, teachers, administration, the 'hidden curriculum', etc.). In this way (Walker 1991:9), in 1981 Māori leaders responded to the critical situation by proposing the establishment of *Kōhanga Reo*, representing not only “one of the most

dynamic and innovative education programmes in the country”, but also a political movement seeking educational independence from the Pākehā control, and “For the first time Maori [sic] were initiating change in education instead of being mere objects of educational policy determined from above” (Walker 1991:9).

Following this process, a pressure for bilingual programmes in primary education mounted, with the subsequent creation of the *Kura Kaupapa* schools for primary level and the *Wharekura Kaupapa Māori* schools for secondary level, (Walker 1991:9; Waho 1993:4), an educational development that in time called for an extension into the tertiary level of education, represented by the *Whare wānanga*, or “houses of higher learning”, Māori language-universities that took the name from the pre-colonial institution (Henry 1999:19).

The *Kōhanga Reo* centres are not constricted by rigid curriculum directions or contents (Harrison and Papa 2005:65), therefore they interconnect the Māori language with the values, traditions and customs of their local Māori social context and with the notions of inter relationships and interactions between people (Royal 1996:45). These elements and the procedures to connect them are framed by the principles that shape *Te Whāriki*, or the “Mat model” that represents the basis for Māori education (Cooper, Arago-Kemp, Wylie and Hodger 2004:1-2; Ministry of Education 1996:13). Following the principles and emphasis in the “traditional” perspective, to achieve the proposed educational aims, *Māori* narratives and other oral tools are considered fundamental for the task.

The *Whāriki* model is understood as the Māori version of the early childhood curriculum and it became the framework for these centres. According to Royal Tangaere (1996:48), it was developed by Carr and May of the School of Education at the University of Waikato and the *Kōhanga Reo whānau* conducted by Tilly and Tamati Reedy for *Kōhanga Reo*, merging the two world views in one model. In the latter, the principles at the centre are (Ministry of Education 1996:14-16)

1. ***Whakamana***: empowerment, aimed towards the child, to learn and grow
2. ***Kotahitanga***: holistic development, reflecting the way in which children learn and grow

3. *Whānau Tangata*: the family and community, representing the wider social world as an integral part of the early childhood curriculum
4. *Nga Hononga*: or “relationships”, pointing to the fact that children learn through the reciprocal contact with people places and things.

From the four basic principles of *Te Whāriki*, five strands arise and interweave with the former, entailing several goals, which are

1. *Mana atua*: representing the “well being” of the child, experiencing an environment where health is promoted, together with emotional and physical safety.
2. *Mana whenua*: this principle points to a sense of belonging, including the children's families. The connecting links between the family and wider world would be affirmed and extended, and a secure sense of limits is given to the child, marking the acceptable behaviours.
3. *Mana tangata*: meaning “contribution”. Children should experience an environment with equitable opportunities for learning, where they are affirmed as individuals and encouraged to learn with and alongside others.
4. *Mana reo*: this term refers to the “communication” aspect in the centres. The languages and symbols -including the stories- of their own and other cultures are promoted and protected as a basis for the enhancement of language skills, non-verbal communication, their creativity and expression abilities.
5. *Mana aotūroa*: represents the “exploration” element promoted in the centres. Children should gain confidence and control over their bodies, also learning strategies for thinking and reasoning. Through the validation of their play, they would also develop theories to make sense of the natural and social worlds that surround them.

In the next educational level, the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* schools, according to Smith (1990:11-13), have been able to produce fruitful interventions building on the successful elements of *Te Kōhanga Reo* and on several key elements which are embraced within the former, briefly consisting of:

1. ***Tino Rangatiratanga***: the “Self Determination” principle, which seeks control over one's own life and cultural well-being' in order to achieve greater autonomy over key decision-making in schooling, especially in regard to administration, curriculum, pedagogy and Māori aspirations.
2. ***Taonga tuku Iho***: the “Cultural Aspirations” principle through which Māori language, knowledge, culture and values are validated and legitimated. Hence, through the incorporation of these elements, a strong emotional and spiritual factor is introduced to support the commitment of Māori to the intervention.
3. ***Ako Māori***: or “Culturally Preferred Pedagogy”, through which teaching and learning settings and practices are able to effectively connect with the cultural backgrounds and socio-economic circumstances of Māori communities.
4. ***Kia Piki Ake I Nga Raruraru o Ngā Kāinga***: the “Mediation of socioeconomic and home difficulties” principle. The *Kaupapa* (philosophy) of *Kura Kaupapa Māori*, through its emotional and spiritual elements, commits Māori communities despite other social and economic impediments, working at the ideological level, and assisting in mediating a societal context of unequal power relations.
5. ***Whānau***: the “Extended Family Structure” principle supports the ideological basis “won” in the previous category by providing a practical support structure to alleviate and mediate social and economic difficulties, parenting difficulties, health difficulties and others. These would be seen as located in the total *whānau*, which takes collective responsibility to assist and intervene, entailing a reciprocal obligation on members to “invest” in the *whānau* group. In this way, parents are culturally “contracted” to support and assist in the education of all the children connected to the *whānau*.

6. ***Kaupapa***: the “Collective Vision” or philosophy principle, which is written into a formal charter, entitled “*Te Aho Matua*”. This vision provides the guidelines for what a good Māori education should include, acknowledging also Pākehā culture and skills required by Māori children to participate fully and at every level in modern New Zealand society. “*Te Aho Matua*” is based on the *Kaupapa* of *Te Kōhanga Reo* movement, providing the parameters for the distinctive aspects of the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* system.

With respect to the *Kōhanga Reo* centres and their use of traditional narratives, it seems though that *whakataukī*, *waiata* and *karakia* have been given a more prominent place in the references in documents, which traditional folktales, myths and/or legends do not have in such an explicit way (Aitken 1997:19; Metge 1990:62; Royal 1997: 24-44; Cooper, Arago-Kemp, Wylie and Hodger 2004:26). In the same sense, in the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* schools, the vital role played by the *kaumatua* (elders) is addressed, as repositories and transmitters of Māori knowledge; of the *karakia* as part of the educational routines, and the *pū kōrero* (oral language) as part of the curriculum that includes all the regular elements of the national programme (Waho 1993:5,11). However, the specific use and role of traditional narratives is not tackled in an open or thorough way in the official documents regarding the *Kura Kaupapa Māori*, giving the sense that their presence and use is taken for granted due to their prominence elsewhere as knowledge transmission devices and strategies.

Some authors have addressed this fact stating that “storytelling was but unfortunately is no longer one of the sheet anchors of Māori education” regarded not as children’s fare but as very sophisticated theology, philosophy and exploration of the *tikanga*, not heard frequently in ordinary Māori circles (Metge 1984:10). Regarding this same issue, King (1978:15) asserts that on occasions, schools introducing Māori studies programmes have encountered “a reluctance on the part of local elders to allow local mythology and traditions to be discussed in the classroom”, probably due to the feeling-based on the more traditional Māori settings for knowledge transmission- that misfortunes may occur if material considered *tapu* is given or displayed with no proper supervision and control (King 1978: 15).

Nevertheless, considering the latter situation and probably as an initial reaction to a system that in those years was just being structured and starting, old and current guidelines in the implementation of *Te Kōhanga Reo* programmes explicitly instruct in the use of stories as important educational activities (*Te Kohanga Reo* manual 1982:16; Ministry of Education 1996:79). The strong preference for the use of traditional narratives among indigenous cultures has been further argued by Bishop and Glynn (2003: 178- 179), affirming that they remain as a highly valued method for imparting knowledge in Māori society. In their view, different types of stories and different genres demand a variety of levels of adherence to accuracy (e.g. contrast between the accounts relating to *whakapapa*, and certain folktales), thus opening a space for flexibility and differing versions.

But not only the contents of the stories form the corpus of knowledge to be transmitted, considering the power of the vicarious experiences elicited through the storytelling, enabling the listeners to increase their interpretation, knowledge and experiences scope through the identification with the narrator (Haig-Brown 1992, cited in Bishop and Glynn 2003:180; Eder 2007:282). It is because of all these advantages that these authors propose the use of “storying” in the classrooms, following the assertions of Wiremu Kaa (1994, cited in Bishop and Glynn 2003:180) regarding the importance of storytelling in fostering the capacity to think in children, avoiding their transformation into product learners. This use of stories as pedagogy employs them as an adjunct to established curriculum; as a stand-alone activity; to develop oral skills in students and as a curriculum catalyst, for its exploration and co-construction of certain areas with the students, responding to the context and cultural needs (Bishop and Glynn 2003:181-184).

Overall it could be assumed, based on the literature reviewed, that traditional narratives do play an important part in the Māori educational institutions, including its secondary level although a more detailed and practical approach would be needed to have a closer perspective on the issue. A first glimpse on the latter is therefore provided by the case study contained in this research, with the information obtained from the interviews and the participant observation.

II.IIc) A Māori model of the educational process:

Sustaining the Māori educational initiatives, certain traditional “core” concepts can be found and analysed from other theoretical perspectives that share similar principles, proving that they are not closed, self-contained models that cannot be discussed from broader angles. Starting from a traditional Māori concept, Royal (1997:10) argues that the image of human development in Māori culture is based on the “life principle of people” or *Te ira tangata*, also viewed as the essence of the Māori knowledge. The latter, as we have seen, is conceived as brought by *Tāne* from the twelfth realm in the three *kete*, according to one version of the myth, a quest that is represented in a *tukutuku* or lattice weaving design called *poutama*, which graphically depicts the stairways to the heavenly realms.

In the author's view, the *tukutuku* of the *poutama* clarifies what learning and development represents for Māori people, acknowledging the property of the *poutama* image or design to convey important information, asserting that “there are many messages held in that one image or concept. The layered design of steps ascending upwards tells me of Tāne's climb to gain knowledge and the challenges he faced during his journey” (Royal Tangaere 1997:10). The many facets of personality are contained within *Te ira tangata*, and four of them are considered in *Te Whāriki* model (*Tinana* or physical development; *Hinengaro* or the cognitive development; *Whatumana* or the emotional development; and *Wairua* or spiritual development), connecting both models working at different levels (Royal Tangaere 1997:10-11).

Interestingly, one of the main ideas related to the *poutama* model is the gradual development of the process involved. Each plateau's step would indicate the process for *titiro* (looking), *whakarongo* (hearing) and *kōrero* (talking) (also construed as repeating, practising, sorting, analysing, experimenting, and reviewing) to achieve the pursued ability or contents, and once this is done, the person is ready to climb to the next step and start a new process, always supported by the surrounding *whānau* (Royal Tangaere 1997:11). Related to the latter, the aspects of observation and imitation and proper practical settings mentioned by Metge (1984:4-7; 1990:62-63) and Pere (1994:75) when commenting about the proper Māori educational approach, are precisely framed in the model of the *poutama*, to be climbed progressively. Hence, in Royal Tangaere's words

Therefore the *poutama* can be interpreted from a physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual perspective as well as reminding te iwi Māori of the specialness of knowledge. It reminds us of the responsibility we have when imparting that knowledge. It is a *taonga*, a gift to us through Tāne nui a Rangi. (Royal Tangaere 1997:11)

The *poutama* model has an important proximity to the concepts described, analysed and systematized by Vygotsky on “scaffolding” (progressive children’s support installed and then removed) and the Zone of Proximal Development (Royal Tangaere 1996:48, Schultz and Lavenda 2005:121,130-132). In Vygotsky's approach (1978, cited in Royal Tangaere 1997:11), particularly centred in the language development among children, it is argued that it initially arises as a means of communication between the child's social environment and herself, an interaction governed by the situation or context in which they are positioned. The variety of internal developmental processes generated by the continuous use of language and the social feedback are progressively internalised by the child, becoming part of the independent set of abilities to be exercised with others and to direct independent “mental” activities.

The aforementioned internalisation of a concept or a set of abilities would be evidenced in the person's automatic or non-conscious interaction with the environment, particularly of complex set of behaviours aimed towards the resolution of diverse problems. Noticeably, regarding the higher mental functions, their process of internalisation entails the fact that they were first external and social in nature, before acquiring a truly individual “mental” function, reasserting the role of the social and cultural group in the development of the individual (Kozulin 1990:116).

The process for the acquisition of these abilities, contained in the hypothesis of the “Zone of Proximal Development¹⁶” would go from one area in which the child needs external help to solve the tasks, to a new one when the child has mastered the task, needing again external aid in the next level, in a very similar way to that described by the *poutama* model. Technically speaking, the zone of proximal development would be the area of development between what the child can perform in an autonomous way, and what would be able to achieve with external help from a more experienced person, generally an adult or a more advanced peer. In this way, the zone of proximal

16 The concept of Zone of Proximal Development is also termed as ZBR, in Russian, *Zona Blizhaishego Razvitiia* , and it is used sometimes to contrast some differences between Vygotsky's use of it and later redefinitions of the term (ZPD, Zo-ped) (Valsiner and Van der Veer 1999:4).

development keeps moving forward -or upwards, depending on the model- expanding the knowledge fields to be mastered (Royal Tangaere 1997:11; Kozulin 1990:170; Valsiner and Van der Veer 1999: 8-11).

Another meeting point between the Māori methods of teaching and learning and the psychological developments inspired by the group organised around Vygotsky¹⁷ - specifically by their approach to education-, is the concept of “scaffolding” and the *tuakana/teina* method. The latter entails the concepts of *ako* (teaching/learning) and the strong ties present in the *whānau*, depicting the relationship between older and younger siblings in which the eldest teach and take responsibilities over their younger siblings. This facilitation and assistance process, the basis for an advancement in the zone of proximal development, is traduced as a “scaffolding” process, a graduated assistance that is progressively removed by the social environment of the learner, adapting to the bio-psychological conditions for the installation of new skills and/or eventually fostering their emergence (Royal Tangaere 1997:12-14; Valsiner and Van der Veer 1990:18-19).

There is plenty of evidence of this “scaffolding” process in Māori education, as in other “naturalistic” educational settings typical of small scale cultures and non-formal schooling patterns. As Metge (1984:4,7,10) and other authors (Andersen 1927:2; Howie 2003:62; Robinson 2005:83-95; Pere 1994:75; Hemara 2000:37) show, the close relationship between more experienced ones with the learners, the importance of learning from peers, the ad hoc settings in which the lived situations indicate which knowledge is needed to be taught, between other characteristics, provide examples of human and material mediation that can be clearly interpreted from the neo-Vygotskian frame.

According to Metge, even though Māori adults might take (or have taken) the latter educational strategy for granted, others recognise it as a distinctively, coherent and articulate Māori way of teaching that covers from everyday activities to specialised knowledge, opposed to the “Pākehā school system”, with an underlying deep comprehension of the educational processes (1984:4,11). It is therefore this interesting link between some of the “traditional” Māori educational patterns -which have been applied again in modern Māori initiatives- and other cognitive theoretical perspectives

17 This group has been called the “Cultural-Historical School of Psychology”, formed initially by Lev Vygotsky, Alexei Leontiev, and Alexander Luria. Later, the famous troika attracted new members, namely Lidia Bozhovich, Roza Levina, Natalya Morozova, Liya Slavina and Alexander Zaporozhets (Cole 1996:104-105; Kozulin 1990:111).

that would establish a natural bridge between these fields in order to make use of “Western” analytical models to construct some interpretations and analysis on the matter.

III) The Approach of Cognitive Anthropology and Cultural Psychology

As we have seen in the previous section, some theoretical frames derived from Western science have proved useful in the analysis of indigenous knowledge systems and traditional ways of transmitting that knowledge. The main frames used for this task have been taken from cognitive psychology and “cultural psychology”, a rather novel perspective in the broader discipline, which according to Cole (1996:1) is defined as “the study of the culture’s role in the mental life of human beings”. This new approach has worked as a sort of new bridge between the psychological and anthropological endeavours, though we must also bear in mind that anthropology has consistently maintained a fluent contact with the cognitive sciences’ developments through its sub-area known as “cognitive anthropology” for at least thirty years.

In the following sections, several of the latest advances in the cognitive area applied to anthropological issues will be briefly described and analysed, in order to use them later to interpret some of the most important aspects in the role of myths in culture, specific aspects of Māori education and the use of traditional narratives as educational tools and as knowledge construction systems.

III.I) The perspective of cognitive anthropology

From a current cognitive anthropology perspective, “culture” can be understood as an extensive and heterogeneous collection of models, which exist as public artefacts “in the world” and as cognitive constructs “in the mind” of members of a community (Shore 1996:44). This definition can be complemented with Hutchins’ (1995, cited in Cole 1996:129) notion of culture, which states that it should be conceived as a “process” taking place inside and outside the minds of people. The use of the latter definitions as a basis for this study framework has the advantage in that it overcomes a more or less pervading contraposition in anthropology that has set discussions since the

beginning of it as an academic discipline, mainly, the opposition between idealistic and materialistic theories for the explanation of sociocultural phenomena. Moreover, the definitions above mentioned necessarily entail a conception of “knowledge” as the basis for those constructs, construed by some authors as extremely complex, of many different kinds, and impossible to locate, integrated in single minds at different levels (not only as conscious contents) and inseparable from action (Bloch 2005:98). These approaches would appear as complementary and coherent, agreeing that cultural knowledge is best portrayed as a widely socially distributed system of models, where not all members of a given community necessarily use exactly the same models or variant of models, sharing though some properties motivated by a general framework (Shore 1996:312). But where do these coinciding concepts and perspectives come from originally?

Deriving from cognitive psychology research, in recent years one of the most promising areas of research in cognitive anthropology has been the analysis of cultural representations and their relation with psychological processes. The former can be classified as “cognitive representations”, consisting of properties, prototypes, schemas, models and theories, all of which “make up the stuff of culture in the mind” (D'Andrade 1995:182). All of these representations provide, in first place, maps of the world, giving us clues of how the world is organized in order to function in it, and are therefore adaptive. But their influences do not stop there; under certain conditions, they would have significant effects on psychological processes such as perception, memory and general reasoning, depicting an interactionist relation between culture and psychology, avoiding extreme cultural constructionism on one hand and psychological reductionism on the other (D'Andrade 1995:182).

It is important to notice though that this theoretical approach rests on a particular cognitive perspective on how human beings develop thought processes and reasoning, a theory known as “connectionism”. This position emerged as one of the rival theories to the “folk model” associated with how human beings think, widely assumed in Western philosophy, in which thought is presented in a logic-sentential and language-like manner. As Bloch (1998:23) argues, “We tend to imagine thinking as a kind of silent soliloquizing wherein the building blocks are words with their definitions and the process itself involves linking propositions by logical inferences in a single lineal sequence”. By contrast, recent work in cognitive science strongly suggests that regular thought is not “language-like”, not involving linking propositions in a single sequence

in the way language represents reasoning, but relying on clustered networks of signification which require a multi-stranded organization (Bloch 1998:23).

In this sense, the core of the “connectionist” perspective is the idea that most knowledge, particularly the one involved in everyday practice, is organized into highly complex and integrated networks or mental models, with interconnected elements arranged in a variety of ways. These models would form conceptual clumps which are not language-like due to the simultaneous multiplicity of ways in which information is integrated in them. Furthermore, these mental models would be only partly linguistic, integrating visual imagery with other sensory cognition, cognitive aspects of learned practices, evaluations, memories of sensations, and memories of typical examples (Bloch 1998:24-25).

In the author's view, information from these non-linear mental models can be accessed simultaneously from many different parts of it through “multiple parallel processing”, enabling people -and probably other animals- to assimilate information in a very fast way, as it is shown in normal, everyday situations (Bloch 1998: 25). The advantage of using the connectionist approach to analyse cognitive matters related to sociocultural issues is that, when it is reproduced through artificial external models (e.g. connectionist networks with decision units), they respond in a very human fashion, filling in missing values with default ones, learning underlying structure, context sensitivity, content addressable memory, generalization, priming, memory distortion, stimulus averaging, etc¹⁸. This would also reflect the nature of the human brain as a massively parallel connectionist network of nervous cells, capable of several complex operations at a time at amazing velocities (D'Andrade 1995:139-140).

Going back to the different representations considered in cognitive studies, which are precisely the units of the integrated networks described before, they can be arranged –for the sake of analytical purposes- in an “Ontology of cultural forms”, sketched as a working basis for more specific analysis of certain cultural products. According to D'Andrade (1995:179) these cognitive forms have certain “Properties” that can be classified as:

18 However, the connectionist models are still unable to do certain things that humans and other animals can, like “matching”, or “oddity problems”, discriminating between instances and variables, or between types and tokens, showing that they are not the perfect match. There is still a lot of work to be done in the area (D'Andrade 1995: 142-143).

- 1) Criteria attribute: present in objects or classes of objects, distinguishing them from other objects and classes of objects (e.g. “maleness” would be a criteria attribute to differentiate between stallions and mares, cows and bulls, etc.).
- 2) Dimension: this property would form a continuum in which objects can be placed (e.g. maturity would be a dimension along which babies, toddlers, teenagers and adults can be placed).

The same cognitive forms can be also divided between “Objects” and “Configurations of objects”. The first category is divided into:

- i) Schemas: these are organizations of cognitive elements into abstract mental objects, suitable to work with making use of the “working memory”, understood as bounded, distinct, and unitary representations (D’Andrade 1995:152).
- ii) Prototypes: these are the typical examples of a class of objects, suitable for the “working memory”, presenting a series of chunked properties associated to them (e.g. a common prototype for a bird would be a Robin, a much more likely case than a Penguin).
- iii) Symbols: they are physical representations with a meaning or sense (the schema to which the symbol signifies) used to denote things in the world. Hence, the schema that represents the symbol (e.g. the sound of a word) is different from the schema that represents the thing in the world (e.g. the thing in the world referred to by the word), although they are tightly connected.

On the other hand, the “Configurations of objects” are subdivided into (D’Andrade 1995:180):

- i) Taxonomies: these are sets of schemas arranged in a hierarchy of abstraction, as sets and subsets of elements.
- ii) Models: understood as schemas or interrelated sets of cognitive schemas used to represent something, reason with or to calculate from by mentally manipulating its parts to solve a given problem.

- iii) Propositions: typically they are sentences in which something is said about a certain state of affairs, involving the integration of a relatively small number of separate schemas into a more complex one.
- iv) Theories: seen as interrelated sets of propositions that describe the nature of some phenomena, being explicit formulations in language.

Taking into account the latter division, among the cognitive representations that will be of main interest for this work are the “propositions”, which tend to be culturally codified in slogans, clichés, wise words, maxims, sayings and proverbs, among others. Although they seem to stand alone, they actually rest on large and complex bodies of shared implicit cultural understandings, which can be organized into even larger units such as stories, poetry, syllogisms, arguments and theories (D’Andrade 1995:151-152). According to the latter, traditional narratives would be classified as propositions, which makes sense considering the portrayed characteristics, reflected in the interconnections between Māori myths and the numerous proverbs that derive from them, and in the underlying *whakapapa* pattern common to different Māori constructs, which is thoroughly displayed in the creation myths.

The other two cognitive representations of interest for the study are “schemas” and particularly “models”, understood as “cultural models”. It is important to notice though that the use of these concepts varies slightly between authors working in the same field, and that in this sense, in a first stage, we will partially interconnect two perspectives that present these differences, but later the analysis will be guided mainly by Shore's (1996) theoretical perspective. The reason for this choice is that his approach encompasses a broader range of issues related to the general theme of cognitive constructs and their relation with culture, partly solving the problem of slight separateness between the ideal and material sides of culture presented by D’Andrade’s perspective, pointed out by Cole (1996:129). Shore’s analysis and categories would then display a more detailed analysis of possible variants among models, consequently accomplishing to a greater extent a thorough and comprehensive framework.

As an introductory note to the concept (Rice 1980:153), the British psychologist Frederic Bartlett is usually credited with being the first to utilize a “schema” notion in a theory of perception and memory, defining it as “an active organization of past experiences”, also postulating that schemata are regularly used in the reconstruction of past experiences, this reconstruction being the basis of what we call “remembering”

(Bartlett 1932, cited in Rice 1980:153). It must be stressed though that Bartlett was strongly influenced by the anthropologists of his time, particularly Haddon and Rivers, and therefore the concept of a memory schema had a strong social or cultural component from the very beginning (Rice 1980:153).

According to D'Andrade (1995:151-152) schemas can serve as simple models for they represent objects or events, but many models are not schemas themselves, although they are composed of schemas. Models would not be considered schemas when the collection of elements is too large and complex to hold in short-term memory, remembering that by definition, a schema must fit into short term memory. In contrast, Shore (1996:44-45) uses these concepts in the same way, taking schema as a synonym for "model" or "cultural model", representing the structural nature of cultural knowledge, or culturally formed cognitive schemas. They would be divided between "Mental Models" and external-public forms or "Instituted Models", understood as "the great variety of human institutions that are the projections of conventional understandings of reality set in time and space" frequently represented in material culture.

Mental models are defined as adaptive and creative simplifications of reality achieved by a process of formalization and simplification –also called "schematization"–, sub-classified as "personal" models and "conventional" ones. The latter division refers to the fact that although people's experiences are culturally modelled, this is not done to the same degree in every case, considering also that certain classes of experiences are culturally shaped to various extents in different societies. Consequently, personal aspects and contexts would mingle with the wider cultural processes, generating idiosyncratic or personal models not shared in their details by other members of the community, but complementary to the internalized "conventional" or culturally shared models, acquired through socialization (Shore 1996:46-47).

On the other hand, the "conventional mental models" would emerge from a more complex process, because of their external and internal nature. These models are transformed through use and can eventually disappear, with a contingent existence negotiated through multiple social exchanges, constituting the conventional resources of social groups for meaning making. In order to sustain them and assure their survival, they must be re-inscribed each generation in the minds of the community members, becoming in this way personal cognitive resources for the individuals (Shore 1996:47).

In this sense, it is important to bear in mind that it is almost impossible to generate a clear cut classification of these constructs, which present variations and fuzzy boundaries. It is the case of some differences between personal models and culturally mediated models, where the former can be understood as cultural models but not always. According to Shore (1996:47), cultural and personal models are constructed as mental representations almost through the same processes, but the internalization of cultural models is based on experiences that are surrounded by particular social constraints (social norms), which guide the perception of salient aspects and leave very little to personal choice, a process reinforced by positive and negative social feedback¹⁹.

It is obviously on the sociocultural influences where anthropology focuses its interest when it analyses the formation and dynamics of these models, an emphasis that differentiates it from the perspective commonly held by cognitive psychology on the matter. The latter would think of mental models as subjective representations formed by individuals in a relatively close relationship with a physical environment, whereas cultural anthropologists assume that cultural models are intersubjective representations, constructed by individuals in relation to a given social environment. This would transform the problem of models into one involving not only individual adaptation to the environmental challenges, but also the issue of intersubjective communication. This is why the author, although more inclined to the second view, also admits that several mental models would be highly idiosyncratic and with no intersubjective connections, in other words more focused on the adaptation of the person to a specific situation and problem resolution, presenting even opposite views to those shaped by the cultural models in several cases (Shore 1996:49-50).

III.Ia) Instituted models

Having revised the definitions and differences between personal models and cultural conventional models, it is time to analyse the role of the so called “instituted models”, which are understood as social institutions or conventional, patterned public forms. They would work as models in a twofold manner, as part of the external social

19 This process would be well represented in cases such as rites of passage, or other highly scripted ceremonies, in which personal memories tend to be socially shaped in a much stronger way than in other experiences, generating a certain overlap between the reported memories of these events by members of the same social groups (e.g. similar accounts of birthdays, marriages, funerals, etc.) (Shore 1996:47-48).

world, representing the externalization in the social world of particular models of experience, and as products of internal behaviour, guiding the concept formation of newly socialized individuals, as “models from which individuals construct more or less conventional mental models” (Shore 1996:51).

An important issue to be tackled by cognitive anthropologists -one that involves precisely the function and role of traditional narratives in the cognitive shaping of individuals-, is the explanation of how do external (or publicly available) “instituted” models become “personal” cognitive models. To start with, Shore (1996:52), quoting Berger and Luckmann (1966), asserts that models are “institutionalized” when they are objectified as publicly available forms, with examples such as performance genres like rituals, carnival, dance genres, or games.

The “institutionalized” condition of such cultural performances as expressive cultural artefacts is emphasized by performance frame makers and highly formalized behaviour, setting them apart from everyday events. In this sense, “highly objectified verbal conventions like proverbs and myths are also easily detachable from the contexts of their ongoing creation and production in the flow of discourse”, commonly shifting into relatively stable cultural institutions “in the world”, where it is relatively easy to distinguish them from their instantiations as conventional mental models “in the mind”. However, other cultural models not marked as performance frames are also modelled in social discourse and tend to behave as implicit cultural models, much less conspicuous than ritual or games, and therefore much less consciously identifiable for people (e.g. patterns of elevator behaviour, restaurant scripts) (Shore 1996:52).

Interestingly, the complex relationship between the mental and instituted models mirrors the Vygotskian approach to the fundamental role of sociocultural influence in the development of the higher psychological functions or higher mental processes (verbal thought, logical memory, selective attention). These are first developed and modelled by the social environment of the individual and therefore used to interact with it, and only after the progressive internalization of them are increasingly used to control the personal reasoning processes (Kozulin 1990:112-114; Valsiner and Van der Veer 1999:6). This is why it is stated in the Vygotskian theory that the process has a double genesis, corresponding to what Shore (1996:68) calls the “twice born character of cultural forms” with an original external public life, and a second one as mental representations (Shore 1996:52).

It must be noticed that Shore (1996:52) stresses the fact that in the internalization process, there is no simple correspondence one-to-one between conventional models and instituted models, or in other words, between a cognitive model and a social model. This difference would explain the vanishing of certain cultural models when they turn incompatible with the personal experiences of the social group, and the emergence of marginal cultural representations or cultural innovation, respondent to the dynamics of each context. Furthermore, social models are given their second life as mental representations through a complex process of meaning construction that is far from being a simple copying process, which Strauss (1992, cited in Shore 1996:52) has termed as a “fax view” of internalization.

Another important distinction to be made for both “mental” and “instituted” models is between those that have a special purpose and tend to be quite concrete, particular and specialised, and the cultural models that are more abstract, global and frequently connected with other cultural models, although in the end the differences between them tend to be more relative than absolute or intrinsic. The latter are defined as “foundational schemas”, which tend to link with groups of more specific cultural models that would be instantiations of these, sharing a common background, hence displaying shared traits in a sort of “family resemblance” grouping²⁰. Once again, not all of the more concrete cultural models would derive from a broader foundational schema, preserving their specific orientation and independence, and those which present such connection have a special status in social groups “contributing to the sense that its members live in a world populated by culturally typical practices and common worldview” (Shore 1996:53).

Finally, for the correct understanding of this theoretical approach, it must be taken into account that, to avoid the same mistakes and shortcomings that the structural anthropology of the 60s and 70s made, an important new distinction must be considered when analysing the dynamics of models and the role of the anthropologist in their study. The latter would refer to the difference between the actors’ models and the models generated by the observer, where dynamic and graded “symbolic forms” enable the actors’ representation of their changing relationships towards any phenomenon, creating “dynamic ecological models that govern the negotiation of a changing landscape”

20 An example of these types of foundational schemas is the “centre-periphery” schema in Samoa, which influences dwelling construction arrangements, speech styles and dance structures, between other things (Shore 1996:54, 265-283).

(Shore 1996:56). In the case of the observers, their models focus on the representation and social coordination of abstract general perspectives, organized in terms of categories that permit mutual orientation²¹ (Shore 1996:56).

Therefore, this perspective of cultural models would make it possible to explain the importance and pervading effects of traditional narratives among societies, because these can be understood as “instituted models” for those communities, shaping the way in which individuals think about the world and elaborate their thoughts. But it is necessary also to distinguish in a more specific way how these cultural models are present in different societies, and where do traditional narratives fit in the proposed organization.

III.Ib) General classification of models

According to Shore (1996:56-60), the classification of models can be guided by two main criteria; the first one could be termed as a “structural” distinction, and the second one as a “functional” distinction. In the first one, the following sub-divisions can be found:

a) Linguistic models:

a.1) *Scripts*: they are standardized conversation patterns, used to organize interactions in clearly defined, goal-oriented situations (e.g. turn taking in conversations).

a.2) *Propositional models*: they correspond to abstract, language based representations (e.g. the “Ten Commandments”).

a.3) *Sound symbolic models*: conventional phonological patterns that transmit information in certain contexts (e.g. pronunciation styles).

a.4) *Lexical models*: these use sets of related terms to shape various forms of experiences (e.g. taxonomies in ethnoscience).

a.5) *Grammatical models*²²: they are highly abstract models of time, space, movement and causality codified in noun classes, tense structures, verb aspects, etc.

21 Structuralism emphasised particularly the models of the observer and failed to recognise that “the flow of attention and action was also subject to modelling of a quite different kind” generating an objectivist knowledge that was interpreted as a sufficient account for the whole culture (Shore 1996:56).

22 According to Shore (1996:57) “An early analysis of the cultural implications of such grammatical models was contained in classic papers by Edward Sapir and particularly by his student Benjamin Whorf”.

a.6) *Verbal formulas*: they would encode specialized and traditional knowledge in highly conventional forms of speech including proverbs, sayings, traditional narratives, prayers, spells and nursery rhymes.

a.7) *Tropes*: they are models that enable language to transcend literal reference, represented mainly by metaphor models and metonym models.

b) Non-Linguistic models:

b.1) *Image schemas*: they are highly abstract “general spatial models” used to organize and relate a variety of different cultural models. They tend to be derived from the somatic experience and grounded in relation to the body, although they differentiate from the kinaesthetic ones (e.g. up-down, centre-periphery, container schemas).

b.2) *Kinaesthetic schemas*: these models shape people’s relationship to the environment through conventions that influence postures, interpersonal space and muscle tone.

b.3) *Action sets*: gestural conversation scripts for coordinated interchange (e.g. the “peek-a-boo” game with infants)

b.4) *Olfactory models*: these models present an inarticulate nature, having a special relation with long term memory.

b.5) *Sound-image models*: they are the musical forms prominent in life events, studied mainly by ethnomusicologists.

b.6) *Visual-image models*: divided in “iconographic models” or culturally salient paintings and decorative motifs in a given society, and “colour symbolism”.

The second criteria of classification, the “functional” one would present the following divisions and sub-divisions (Shore 1996:61-67):

1) Oriental models: they constitute a common framework for orienting individuals to one another and to their behavioural environments. These are classified as:

1.1) *Spatial models*: various kinds of models that orient people to the physical environment (e.g. area maps, navigational models, route maps, models for interpersonal space, context markers).

1.2) *Temporal models*: these models provide temporal order and are at the base of culturally specific time frames (e.g. cyclical models, rhythmic models, biographical ones).

1.3) *Social orientational models*: they orient individuals and groups to one another and to a socially differentiated environment (e.g. metaphorical models for mapping kinship; iconic representations and verbal formulas like proverbs, chants and narratives which shape social relations; rituals that provide social coordination; social role sets, like the division of labour in a given society; and emotion models).

1.4) *Diagnostic models*: they provide conventional means of taking “readings” of important phenomena (e.g. medical diagnostic models, checklists, divinatory models, meteorological models, intention displays).

2) Expressive/Conceptual models: these models crystallize for communities important but otherwise unspoken understandings and experiences, and through them, shared personal experiences become objectified, conventionalized and transformed into cultural artefacts. They are further classified as:

2.1) *Classificatory models*: examples of these are lexical taxonomies of flora and fauna, kinship classifications, etc. They also involve prototypes and the formation of exemplars such as object, person, event and narrative exemplars, which in turn are found in myths, stories and verses.

2.2) *Ludic models*: involving games, sports and joke-telling formulas.

2.3) *Ritual and dramatic models*: represented in all kinds of dramatic performances; together with the “ludic models” they crystallize key cultural “problems” as public artefacts.

2.4) *Theories*: they provide conceptual pictures of complex states of affairs to the communities (including scientific, folk and scholarly theories). They are not always in propositional form but frequently can be displayed in diagrams, pictures and/or action sets.

3) Task models: culturally modelled strategies or programs for getting practical things done. They would facilitate the memorability of complex procedures, the predictability of the results and the social coordination of complex tasks. They are sub divided into:

3.1) *Scripts*: general performance models with verbal and non-verbal dimensions.

3.2) *Recipes*: conventional task models used to perform complex sets of routines like dancing, tool making, food preparation, agricultural techniques, etc. They are not

always displayed in language forms, existing in kinaesthetic and/or visual forms, where actions are modelled by images or gestures. In these cases, the mimetic models play an important part, with close interaction of teacher and learner and a combination of repeated observation and guided participation.

3.3) *Checklists*: standardized inventories of functionally related objects or persons (e.g. lists of ingredients before the cooking recipes).

3.4) *Mnemonic models*: in oral traditions mainly, they are prosodic devices like rhythm, rhyme, melody and formulas used as aids for remembering.

3.5) *Persuasion models*: they represent conventional ways to exert influence on others, displayed in a wide array, like prayers, sacrifices, debates, sorcery, begging, commands, promises, etc.

As can be seen, traditional narratives can interconnect with various cultural models when we consider their functional aspects, working at different levels. This would show once more the difficulty in trying to create well defined categories, acknowledging the substantial overlapping between the different kinds of models in this sense. For instance the Māori creation myths would cover classificatory functions, but would also work as social orientation models, taking into account the fact that all living beings are interconnected, and could even be thought as theories in the way in which they explain the current state of the physical environment, how things came to be, or even social affairs.

However, it is rather easier to analyse traditional narratives as cultural models following the structural criteria, where they can be identified as particular types of “verbal formulas” among “linguistic models”, specifically as “narratives”. In Shore’s (1996:58) view, the narrative represents one of the most complex and important kinds of cultural model, though presenting an ambiguous status compared with other verbal formulas. Partly, this is because it also refers to the action of shaping, adapting and giving sense to reality in the process of talking about it, where the flow of events acquire an articulate form through the interchange of speech, or in other words “Experience is literally talked into meaningfulness” (Shore 1996:58). But narrative also refers to the result of the structuring process, ranging from gossip, to ordinary accounts of everyday life, to sacred myth narratives; all negotiated –and renegotiable through further talk- end products of the narrative process in which a creative relationship between the activity and the product is reciprocal.

A novel aspect related to the use of narratives as models –and therefore of traditional narratives- is tackled by the author, who asserts that one of the clearest examples of meaning construction through narratives is its use after anomalous, disturbing or unexpected events, where the indigestible turns into palatable through the telling and retelling of the events. These in turn would become “domesticated into one or more coherent and shared narratives that circulate among the community of sufferers”, with meanings that emerged in the narrative process and that will “provide comfort in the familiarity of their sedimented forms” (Shore 1996:58). Furthermore, according to the author

In this way we can see the connection between the kinds of homespun narratives created on the fly to make sense of anomalous situations and the work of traditional narrative forms like fairy tales and children’s bedtime stories (Bettelheim, 1976). Both narrative genres provide a comforting framework within which to relate often discomfoting events. (Shore 1996:59)

From a functional point of view, traditional narratives would perhaps perform their most important tasks as “classificatory models”, which in turn have a number of different functions, such as diagnosis and orientation, apart from the most important one, which is the clarification of experience. Part of this classification process is done through basic level categorization, employing part-to-whole associations (synecdoche, metonymy), which in turn serve as “exemplar models” for the identification of related objects, general and specific. These exemplars are defined as culturally salient instances of objects, people, or events, that “typify experiences” in representing a best case or ideal version, thus turning into models for other similar experiences. In this way, exemplars “account for many of the prototype effects in human categorization where not all examples are considered equally good instances of a category” (Shore 1996:64).

According to Shore (1996:65), exemplars come in many forms, classified as:

- i) *Object exemplars*: these are the basis on which people classify objects and typical cases of objects (e.g. Tool: hammer).
- ii) *Person exemplars*: they form part of the classification of significant others and are frequently modelled in stories, drama, pictorial forms, or through verbal tropes like metaphor or synecdoche. These exemplars are used to define heroes, villains, and personality types on the basis of which people make sense of their social worlds [e.g.

For Māori society, *Māui* as the epitome of the trickster, underscored by proverbs like “*Ko Māui tinihanga*” -*Māui* of many devices (Riley 1990, cited in Patterson 1992:59)].

iii) *Event exemplars*: they help to classify events in relation to typicality or predictability (e.g. The expected sequence of events of a particular ceremony).

iv) *Narrative exemplars*: are found in myth, story and verse, playing an important role in most religious traditions. They help to establish “foundational scenarios” and “event structures” that form the basis for comparing and clarifying other events and situations (e.g. the family structure portrayed after *Tāne's* incestuous relationship with his daughter established limits and a model to follow for Māori society).

Therefore, narrative exemplars would structure backgrounds and set foundational schemas that would in turn connect with several other more specific cultural models. For example, in Murngin society in Arnhem Land (North of Australia), the aborigines, in addition to numerous local tales, have several key narratives which are used as foundational schemas for the entire region, shaping important rituals. From these stories, a crucial pattern is set, the “inside-outside” pattern, which is reproduced in the physical walkabouts performed by the groups, their view of the reproduction of knowledge, and also in the rites of passage of boys emerging from the feminine orbit to then take part of the masculine group, among others (Shore 1996:212-231).

III.II) Traditional narratives, cultural psychology and education

Having already seen some of the theoretical approaches to the deep cultural and cognitive importance of traditional narratives, the more specific relationship between their functions and their use as educational tools gains importance as a particular articulation to be analysed. According to some authors, the use of traditional narratives in “formal Western-culture education” has lost certain pre-eminence as educational tools, an importance that has been maintained though, in “small scale cultures” and several indigenous peoples’ groups around the world, probably due to their more regular use of oral transmission of knowledge, and in other cases to the “strengthening of identity” effect of their preservation (Black, Wright and Erickson 2001:126,129; Nakashima and Elias 2002: 3-10).

Despite the aforementioned views, from the perspective of the present work it will be argued that they had and still have an important task in the development of

human beings –especially of cognitive aspects- across different societies. The latter situation is portrayed through several international experiences in which traditional narratives have been used and studied in formal educational settings, or in which they are being acknowledged as a much needed resource. In this last sense, Penjore (n.d.:52) argues that modern education rarely transmits important cultural and social values, knowledge and behaviours, whereas indigenous knowledge systems, and age-old institutions and rituals related to life-cycles could supplement those deficiencies.

As a general characteristic of traditional narratives as educational tools, it can be stated that particularly through their oral transmission, powerful and effective mental strategies linked with emotional charges are set in motion, fixing patterns of meaning in the memory and enhancing the probability of storage and retrieval (Eder 2007:282). This trait would make them an especially effective device for the transmission of more complex contents connected with processes of moral evaluation and strategies for the resolution of “real life” problems, frequently ambiguous and without clear-cut categorizations, like the Navajo trickster stories depicting Coyote’s adventures. In the end, as we have seen with the Māori case, these stories would also be the most important means to transmit and reinforce a distinct epistemological and thought process model (Eder 2007: 288-290).

In the view of other authors, the teaching associated with the use of traditional narratives connects with traditional patterns of education, mainly in practical settings and contextual, with an important level of vicarious learning and gradual participation. Together with the aforementioned, as in the Māori case, traditional narratives transmitting important moral messages tend to be further packaged by proverbs, in which the portrayed wisdoms “have been time-tested through many years of interaction of experience with the real world” (Penjore n.d.: 54).

Another interesting case is the call for use of African Yoruba²³ oral literature in formal schooling of Akinyemi (2003:161, 177-178), as a source of indigenous education for children. According to the author, (Akinyemi 2003:161-162, 170), a special role is played by the “moonlight stories”, which explain to the children the common rules and etiquette of daily life. These stories are told with puzzles and riddles in between, to exercise the intelligence of the audience, combining genres to give a more complete and entertaining session. The moonlight stories are generally aimed toward value formation

23 Group located in the south western region of Nigeria (Akinyemi 2003:177).

(against greed and pride, for instance), describing the exploits of the Tortoise as the paramount trickster and the embodiment of a series of negative characteristics as well, complemented with proverbs as remarking endnotes to the narrations (Akinyemi 2003:173-177).

In a study by Bennett, Nelson and Baker (1992: 120-121, 125-127), a gender specific activity known as “storyknifing” is described and analysed, with results that connect with some of the views upheld in the present research. The phenomenon is generally described as a storytelling activity in which Inuit girls -almost exclusively-, meet in small groups around a muddy patch which is used to draw on. The advantage of such medium is that it is wiped out easily and no material investment is needed, except the knives used to draw with, made of different materials. Each girl takes turns to tell a story and draw while narrating it, using special symbols and sometimes letters to give an accompanying graphic account.

In the specific case of Yup'ik “storyknifing”, Ager (1980, cited in Bennett, Nelson and Baker 1992:133-134) describes three types of genres developed through the activity: traditional stories, containing usually some kind of moral; everyday happenings, based on biographical or autobiographical accounts, and introduced stories, involving material acquired through the media. Interestingly, this last type of stories is inspired by what others identify as a threat to the traditional ways in their society, but in this case it would be indirectly fostering one of the very traditional activities among girls. The latter would represent another sign of the extreme complexity and flexibility of cultural adaptation and mutual influences that occur along the permeable boundaries between societies.

In the authors' view, the importance of this activity is rooted in the fact that traditional Inuit culture, as most of the small scale cultures around the world, relies on an oral tradition, with people learning primarily through listening to, and observing the activities of others. Hence “Stories, rather than explanations, are paramount in the enculturation process. Stories told in storyknifing help reinforce cultural traditions, values, and skills” (Bennett, Nelson and Baker 1992: 138). Some of the basic contents and abilities learned through this activity are related to cultural knowledge about kinship patterns, gender roles, and community norms and values, all of them cognitive skills necessary in the communities in which they live. Adding to the latter, the authors also found that “storyknifing” strengthened cognitive skills such as observation, sequencing, classification, inferential processes, predictions, problem solving, logical

reasoning, and the development of spatial relationships and memory skills (Bennett, Nelson and Baker 1992: 121-122).

One of the most interesting and recent studies on the matter is the experience of several schools in the Navajo region in the United States. According to Eder (2007:279-283) among the Navajo teaching practices, principles are conveyed in an implicit way through the use of traditional stories, contrasting with the explicit and more lineal forms regularly used by formal Western schooling. Through the experience of inserting storytelling as a central educational activity in several Navajo schools, a reinforcement of their culture and customs is achieved, considering also the importance of maintaining as much as possible the contexts and procedural key aspects of the activity, ideally in the hands of knowledgeable elders. The latter would reaffirm the notion that not only the contents –more related with text-based stories and cognitive styles- are important when the narrations are being transmitted, but also other embedded practices and non-verbal elements.

Other types of uses of traditional narrative have also been explored, according to the literature, like the use of native North American folktales in astronomy and space science education (Meyers 2005) and the use of Polynesian folklore to deepen children's understanding of their culture (Black, Wright and Erickson 2001). Nevertheless, to properly address the dynamics at the base of the use of traditional narratives in educational settings, it is necessary to explain in more detail the ways in which these cultural constructs perform the job, considering all the explanations of their role as cultural models and foundational schemas.

III.IIa) The Vygotskyan and Neo-Vygotskyan perspectives

In first place, the Vygotskyan School of psychology or “cultural-historical” school of Psychology (Holland and Valsiner 1988:265) will be used to provide a social developmental perspective to the cognitive anthropology frame already described. This will also coherently connect this complementary approach with some of the Māori educational perspectives already analysed, that also linked the Vygotskyan theory as a compatible analytical model.

To begin with, prior to a deeper development of some of Vygotsky's ideas, it is necessary to acknowledge some of its shortcomings, in particular from the

anthropological view. A useful analysis is put forward by Wertsch (1991:15) who explains the replacement of the terms cultural or sociohistorical -used by Vygotsky and his colleagues- by the term “sociocultural” in his work, in order to address the way in which mental action is situated in cultural, historical, and institutional settings. In this way, the author affirms that through the selection of this term, rather than “cultural” or “sociohistorical”, important contributions of several disciplines and schools of thought to the study of mediated action would be recognised.

However, in Wertsch's (1991:15-16) view the danger in using the term “sociocultural” would be the displacement of the historical dimension that Vygotsky had in mind. Despite the latter, he asserts that

(...) failing to incorporate *cultural* into the title risks an even greater error, that of reducing cultural differences to historical differences, which is precisely what Vygotsky tended to do. Building on the ideas of Hegel, Marx, Levy-Bruhl, and others, he tended to see what we would now term cross-cultural differences as “cross-historical” differences. As Lucy and Wertsch (1987) have noted, this is a major point that distinguishes Vygotsky's ideas from those developed in American anthropology by Franz Boas, Edward Sapir, and Benjamin Lee-Whorf. (Wertsch 1991:15-16)

In Wertsch's perspective, the latter is an important aspect to clarify, due to the fact that -as Cole and Scribner (1974, cited in Wertsch 1991:16) and other authors have stated- “cultural differences, especially those between Western and developing societies, continue to be widely interpreted in psychology as differences in stages of historical development”. Although these claims tend not to be explicitly stated in current times, the author asserts there are still implicit comparisons between the reasoning processes of children in Western societies and those of adults in “primitive” societies present in the academic field, which would reflect the continuing presence of this assumption.

A second important point addressed by Wertsch in regards to the extended Vygotskian approach is the interpretation of the term “Mind”, in order to incorporate aspects related to self and emotion. In the author's view (Wertsch 1991:14), the understanding of the concept of “mind” and “mediated action” “cannot be tied to the individual acting in vacuo”. In this way, he uses the perspective of theorists such as Bateson and Geertz, for whom mind is viewed

(...) as something that “extend beyond the skin” in at least two senses: it is often socially distributed and it is connected to the notion of mediation. According to the first, the terms mind and mental action can appropriately be predicated of dyads and larger groups as well as of individuals. This is not to harken back to notions of collective consciousness that have been discounted in social psychology; rather, it is to recognize the power of the insight of Vygotsky (1978, 1987), Bruner (1986), Hutchins (in press), LCHC (1983), and others that mental activities such as memory or reasoning can be socially distributed. (Wertsch 1991:14)

Therefore, following the aforementioned theoretical perspective, the more specific analysis will be focused mainly on Holland and Valsiner's (1988) approach on the use of certain symbolic cultural products, termed as “mediating devices”, for the cognitive transformation and adaptation of the individuals to their physical and sociocultural environment. This view would present several advantages for the study of the dynamics and role of traditional narratives in formal and non-formal educational settings, interweaving the anthropological angle with the cognitive-psychological one.

In Holland and Valsiner's view, the construction of a typical mediating device starts by the assignment of meaning to a given object or behaviour, which is then placed in the surrounding environment in order to affect the mental events of people. Regarding the latter, these mediating devices (e.g. language) would function in the mental world as tools do in the physical world, i.e. arranging and organising the stimuli, always maintaining a strong connection to the sociocultural background of the individual (Holland and Valsiner 1988:248). These particular tools that transform the structure and processes of actions can be further divided into those provided as technical tools -like pens, computers, or text books- and those which work as psychological tools, like language, writing or number systems (Jacob 1997:6). It is important to bear in mind -as a clear link between the cultural-historical school and anthropology- that Vygotsky's conception of the use of a mental tool was partly influenced by anthropological accounts of mediating devices of different cultures, in particular the descriptions provided by Levy-Bruhl, Thurnwald and Taylor. These accounts, together with Marxist conceptions developed by Engels, influenced Vygotsky's view about culturally constructed means to control mental processes and states, like elaborate objects used by messengers in certain traditional cultures in order to remember information (Holland and Valsiner 1988:249).

One of the central aspects of Vygotsky's perspective was his notion that all of these mediating devices were "supremely social and cultural" products of history and part of collective meaning systems. This statement would point to the fact that although human beings construct and reconstruct the mediating devices in use, most of the work is based on previous understandings and uses that have been handed down from generation to generation, learned in the course of social interaction with others. This same notion is acknowledged by Hemara (2000:37) when she asserts that Māori learners are "thrown into a world of historically prescribed conditions" to which they must add information, re-create part of it and contribute to its evolution.

In this way, sensory objects first encountered in a series of social exchanges evolve from being simply part of an interactional routine into symbols that are internalized into intrapersonal processes (Holland and Valsiner 1988:250, 252). It is in this sense that regarding the case of Yup'ik "storyknifing" (Bennett, Nelson and Baker 1992: 122) the authors quote the Vygotskian understanding that external dialogues or interactions with people, like the ones performed collectively by the girls while storytelling, are necessary to develop inner speech and awareness of individual thought processes.

Interestingly though, Vygotsky did not propose in his theory a term for what has been understood by anthropology as "cultural interpretations of the task", probably due to the fact that he neglected this interpretive angle of the contexts of use of the mediating device²⁴. In contrast, anthropologists in cognitive studies have generated, debated and reassembled particular constructs for "culture", but they lack a proper label for "mediating device", situation that has highlighted not only two separate weaknesses but mostly two areas of almost natural and necessary complement between both disciplines (Holland and Valsiner 1988:257). A closely related state of affairs has also been pinned down in the educational field, where anthropologists have successfully worked on the contexts of education, but not fully addressed the "taught cognitive learning", the opposite situation to that of cognitive researchers (Jacob 1997:3).

The historical tendency among cognitive researchers has been to consider culture and/or context as independent variables when studying intellectual processes and products, thus assuming them as static and given. In contrast, and despite the fact

24 In fact, the authors openly assert that the cultural historical school of psychology and Neo-Vygotskian theory could be improved with the incorporation of anthropological concepts, especially to overcome "the impoverished notion of the contexts in which mediating devices are used" (Holland and Valsiner 1988:265).

that the consideration of context was not fully developed by their main figures, the cultural-historical tradition opened new possibilities to integrate a more complex perspective on cognitive matters, considering the rich corpus of anthropological perspectives and data available (Jacob 1997:11).

Taking into account the latter, the notion of “cultural models” as we have been describing and analysing them seems to fit the functional slot to which the notion of “mediating device” points, and “since cultural models are learned devices that aid individuals in organizing and managing their thoughts and feelings”, they are also considered “mediating devices” in a general sense (Holland and Valsiner 1988:258). However, the aforementioned authors underscore the usefulness of thinking of cultural models as broader constructs or complex of mental representations, understandings “of” and assumptions “about” the world, compared with a more limited meaning of “mediating device”. In their view, it is better to restrict the notion of mediating device to limited “tangible activities or objects of sensory dimensions -an Abelam painting, a frightening masked figure in Murik society (Barlow 1985), a marijuana cigarette, a printed text, or the stewardess's activity of counting to ten” (Holland and Valsiner 1988:258).

Consequently, in anthropological accounts, individuals are seen as interpreting situations in which these particular mediating devices are used according to learned collective models of the world. The latter are then used as backgrounds to set goals, make plans, manipulate environments, predict behaviours and describe experiences, stressing the fact that people interpret contexts and the use to which mediating devices can be put in these contexts on the basis of relevant cultural models which they have learned (Holland and Valsiner 1988:257).

It is important to note though, that in many respects what has been called here “mediating devices” can be understood as “symbols” by other frames in anthropology. This conflation has been avoided because of the special role that only certain symbols, actions and objects play in the development of individuals and societies, which incorporated from social life into cognitive models end up mediating personal processes of thought (Holland and Valsiner 1988:258-259). This acknowledgement of the significance of an interpretive activity of the tasks by individuals when using mediating devices would also highlight the basic dynamic and dialectical nature of the processes involved. In this way, a possible fixation and static approach to their use and functions is tackled beforehand, stressing the fact that these devices are not incorporated in the

same way everywhere, with historical, cultural and individual differences emerging in the process of incorporation (Holland and Valsiner 1988:254).

Therefore, traditional narratives would be good representatives of this kind of devices, as products of history and collective creation, which in turn are used as means to develop and enhance complexes of mental representations, understandings and assumptions about aspects of the world, in other words, of broader “cultural models” (Holland and Valsiner 1988:258,263). It is in this sense that Shore (1996:303) affirms that what may seem as simple representations of evil for children in fairy tales are reinterpreted in the adult's view -using broader and more sophisticated supporting cultural models- as complex human dilemmas that connect with important life experiences, surpassing the mere conventional morality used in previous stages of cognitive development, a multilayered complexity also acknowledged in the use of the Navajo stories in adult settings (Eder 2007:280).

In this way, it can be stated that traditional narratives hold a particular status, playing a dual role among other cultural representations. As complex and multilayered cognitive constructs, sedimented through dynamic socio-historical processes, they are construed, according to the revised perspectives, as abstract and general cultural models that set foundations for other, more specific models, and also as more specific models that can be aimed to circumscribed goals. Hence, connected with this last view, they can also be interpreted and used as concrete and even tangible developmental tools, in a rich interplay with broader cultural models, or in other words as devices to mediate with the environment or with other constructs. And it is this interplay process that, according to Holland and Valsiner (1988:263), elaborates and develops cultural models, establishing an interrelationship “with narratives, metaphors, proverbs, and artifacts such as paintings- all of which we would label mediating devices”.

But another special characteristic of traditional narratives also grant them that unique status, a transitional and almost liquid nature that embodies their simultaneous condition as material and ideal artefacts. This notion follows the statements of Holland and Cole (1995:475-476), who argue that the concept of “cultural artefacts”, defined as aspects of the material world that have a collective remembered use, are material in the sense that they are created in the process of goal oriented actions, but also ideal because of their historical ties to different generations that shaped and are continuously shaping them while interacting with them. These properties would then apply to language and genres of speech in the same manner as other forms such as tables, spades or computers.

According to the latter, traditional narratives would be materially present in the impersonation of the storyteller, through the perceptible sounds and the physical displays of those taking part in the narration, or through the writing and printing of the stories in diverse means.

Again, this perspective would try to avoid the excessive idealism embraced by a strict schema theory, and would therefore reinforce the notion of the material and ideal nature of cultural models and of mediating devices, even though these last are bounded in a much more concrete way. Furthermore, it should be noticed that the importance of certain cultural devices for mediation is not confined only to cognitive developmental aspects, but to a whole array of social situations.

In this sense it must be also noticed that traditional narratives would also be used and directed according to social agendas and power relations crossing the sociocultural contexts in which they emerge²⁵, and this acknowledgement would make necessary other kinds of analysis, like the one derived from the Discourse Theory (Holland and Cole 1995:481-483) to complement a thorough view of their use. Following a similar perspective, Jacob (1997:7) also gives evidence based on other authors (Gallimore and Goldenberg 1993; Goodnow 1990; Litowitz 1993) about the importance of taking into account the power relationships established between participants in any cognitive process exchange. Beidelman (1980:32) also acknowledges the tension and moral ambiguity that is portrayed in traditional Kaguru trickster narratives from East Africa, regarding the social distance between “gerontocratic” figures and younger people who try to rise toward the top of the lineages²⁶.

Finally, the previous acknowledgement of the necessity of other anthropological and social perspectives on cultural constructs -like traditional narratives-, cognitive operations and their inextricable connection with other social processes that make part of the shaping and reshaping contexts of use, can open several connecting points to other anthropological, sociological and psychological endeavours and theories, contributing to a growing interdisciplinary understanding of the social sciences.

25 As Penjore (n.d.: 57) notes in his work about some cases, “...oral literary forms serve manipulative functions of privileged social groups whereby plots of folktales usually authenticate their privileges”.

26 According to the author, among the various trickster figures present in the narratives, Kaguru elders – male and female-play a noticeable role, together with youngest brothers, scabious youths, hares, hyenas, snakes and birds (Beidelman 1980:29,30,32).

Chapter 4

The Data Analysis: Dimensions ²⁷

A) Importance: functions, benefits and effects

The first and probably most central dimension constructed to cluster empirical information from the interviews is the one related to the perceived importance of the traditional stories in Māori education and, in a more general sense, in Māori culture. As a dimension, though, it does not present strictly defined boundaries, considering the fact that usually during the interviews, the answers combined elements from the functions or the expected benefits as reasons for the perceived importance of the traditional narratives. Therefore, just as an academic exercise and in order to facilitate the analysis of the information provided, I have followed this rather 'artificial' separation, adopting a more holistic analysis in the discussion section.

In the scholars' views, the idea of the traditional narratives as 'knowledge containers', or as means for the transmission of knowledge seems to be at the very nucleus of the various answers provided. In this sense, for instance, Terehia Robinson (Māori studies lecturer) affirms that they are vehicles not only for transmitting knowledge -in which several cases of *tapu* knowledge would be embedded in them- but also for the continuation of culture. Part of their vital role, especially in her classes where new teachers are being trained, is that they would demonstrate the philosophy and the world-view of Māori people.

In a similar line of thought, Waiatara Smith, a Māori academic with anthropology training, also affirms that traditional stories would work as containers of knowledge, mediums to transmit information of different kinds. Important part of this knowledge would be represented, in her view, by information about the origins of things, and also by messages pointing to the development of a “moral sense” in children, providing general knowledge on how to behave in society. In her own words

(...) so it's passing on morals and standards of behaviour, and knowledge about the world in general... so that's what you get from stories. So today,

27 Along the present section, whenever the double quotation marks (‘’) are used it refers to something said by the participants or an author. When the simple quotation marks (‘) are used, it refers to something that I have chosen to emphasize.

for Māori children to learn... learn the use of Māori stories and Māori views... it's giving them that knowledge of the sense of right and wrong and all the rest of it through a Māori context, in a Māori perspective, and which can be quite different to a mainstream one.

According to her, these devices would also present an important advantage as practical educational elements because of their mnemonic power, due to the effect of their plots in the listeners, where certain contents would be easily retained and identified as important elements in the story lines. In this way, traditional narratives, in their different themes, would also portray role models for young generations, together with “practical knowledge to deal with challenges”, where she included a sub-genre of cautionary stories about respecting *tapu*. Similarly, Terehia affirmed that part of why the usage of them is fostered among teachers is because of the stimulation of the imagination in children, probably related to their stage of development and the generation of certain skills like “free play” or “imaginative play”.

This view of stories as ‘repositories’ for the knowledge was also held by the Māori school teachers interviewed, who associated them to protocols and customs. In this way, Simon (*Kura Kaupapa Māori* teacher) asserted that stories contained the *tikanga*, rules or *ture* for Māori people, with messages which were still valid today for Māori society. As a ready example of this, concerning the concrete usage in classes -an aspect that will be developed further in another point- he mentioned the story of *Rata* and the felling of a tree for the construction of a *waka* (canoe), as a means to understand conservation principles associated to the proper *tikanga* when extracting 'products' from the forest.

In the same sense, Eddie Hudson (in charge of a Māori unit) explained, from the mainstream school experience, that the usage of the stories in that context supported the idea that “Through traditional history, customs, protocols or *kawa*, our belief systems have been derived”, coherent with his assertion that through these narratives is how people held the knowledge in the “traditional” times. In his view, the Māori world-concept, perspectives and behaviours, are all based on those old stories, working as a background and, again, as a deposit of knowledge. Therefore, as an expected effect of their usage, Eddie talked about the acknowledgment of the past and of certain protocols by the students, and the appreciation of them, understanding the reasons for how things “have come about”, why do Māori people do certain things and see the world in a distinct manner.

Interestingly, both teachers -Eddie and Simon- gave as an example of the importance and validity of certain customs and protocols their own practice of returning the first fish they catch, every time they go fishing. Considered the proper *koha* for *Tangaroa*, it is seen as a signal of respect to return one of his creatures when people are extracting riches from his domain, but also something that is understood due to the traditional narratives. As Eddie asserts

(...) it allows us to explain why things have come about, why do we do this, why do we toss the first fish into the water when we go fishing, and I've done that with a lot of my friends, Pākeha friends you know, and the first fish I catch on my boat, even if it's a good sized fish, I throw it back, and they can't understand that, and it can be the only fish that I pick in all that day... but you now it's just the way of saying to *Tangaroa*, the god of the seas, that we have taken one of your children, I'm going to give him back so he can go and produce more children, so in a sense is conservation, but also just to say “thank you” so that whatever fish you get from now on, I'll thank you, prior to it, so in that way I'm being blessed, I can feel that I'm not guilty, I feel good about it (...)

And regarding the same example, Simon gives his own perspective on the matter, also connecting the case with the breach between the Pākeha and the Māori world views on the matter

(...) we went and had a dive and got some *kina* and all that, so before we left I told them, you know, the story about always returning your first whatever you've taken to *Tangaroa* like if you're fishing, you're fishing and you return your first fish, and they asked me “Oh! why is that?”, so that you're returning, giving something back, so you only take what you need to eat, always give back, hmm...and that story you can use it for your life as well, you know, you only need so much (...) that's how I was brought up, you know, you grow up a garden, if you have extra or if it's plentiful, you always give it away. I think it's hard for... the concept is hard for some Europeans to grasp, that's how Māori people are, well that's how I've been brought up anyway, from my parents (...)

Another very important aspect regarding the traditional narratives, commented by scholars and teachers, is that part of their perceived importance is based on the view that they are “history” for Māori and not simple made-up stories. In Simon's words

I think it's really important, it's our history too, some people think they're only legends, but Māori believe in it, at the beginning of the Earth, *Papatuanuku* and *Ranginui* and *Io*, you follow that, the *atua Māori*, why we have *karakia*, those are some of the stories that some Māori believe and some Māori don't, they got religion and all that too to believe in (...)

Related to this, Waiatara, when commenting about the role of traditional narratives and their characters, explained “(...) because those people, as far as Māori are concerned are not just stories, they actually existed, (...) we can connect ourselves, each individual, to these people through our *whakapapa*”. During her interview, she also made a key connection with a basic epistemological Māori perspective; the idea of the Māori people advancing or moving into the future looking backwards. In her own words

(...) usually Māori believe that we face the past and move into the future backwards, and what that means is that you look to the past, to the stories if you like, of the ancestors, for knowledge of how to live your life in the present world, and in that way to create and build the future... so a lot of the knowledge, the cultural knowledge is held within those stories you know, stories we use as a medium in which to pass that knowledge. And I think it's quite common in oral traditions, as well...

This basic premise of the Māori perspective towards knowledge is further developed by other authors, like A.T. Hakiwai (1996:53) who asserts that 'the past' represents “an important and pervasive dimension of the present and future”, where the Māori social reality is seen as looking back in time from the past to the present time. Even more interestingly, he explains that in Māori language, the word for 'the front of' is *mua*, a term also used to describe the past, as “*Ngā wā o mua*”, or the time in front of us. In like manner, the word for back is *muri*, a term used for future, and therefore it would bring us to the notion that the past is something known, or already seen, thus in front of the observer, contrary to the future, the unknown or the not seen, at the back of the observer. In the author's (Hakiwai 1996:53) words

The point of this is that our ancestors always had their backs to the future with their eyes firmly on the past. Our past is not considered as something long ago and done with, known only as an historical fact with no contemporary relevance or meaning. In the words of a respected Maori [sic] elder: 'the present is a combination of the ancestors and 'their living faces' or genetic inheritors, that is the present generations. Our past is as much the face of our present and future. They live in us...we live in them' (Mead 1985:16)

Related to the latter, lecturer of Māori studies Ngahua Whiu affirms that stories would precisely work as multi-layered devices in terms of meanings, enabling children and adults to extract appropriate messages from them in accordance to their levels of maturity. As an example of this she mentions the case of *Māui*, and how his adventures can be enjoyed by the younger, and at the same time, adults can interpret several messages related to social mobility from them. Traditional narratives would, according to her perspective, make people “think about themselves and their spiritual state”, helping in the instillation of a sense of value in the listeners, affecting positively identity aspects and enhancing a sense of belonging.

In a parallel manner, traditional narratives would also work as “timeless links” or connective elements between different generations and also between people and nature, transmitting a general sense of “interconnectedness”, a cornerstone principle which is easily seen reflected in the *whakapapa* and all its associated concepts. Together with the aforementioned, deeper spiritual aspects would be embedded in much of the dynamics and contents of traditional narratives, thus part of the importance of their usage would rely on the transmission of what she terms “the divine spark”, esoteric and spiritual aspects which, in Ngahua's words imply that “we can't know about these things if we are not told these stories”.

According to Dr. Te Tuhi Robust, scholar in Māori education, the corpus of traditional Māori narratives constitutes important part of the basis of common knowledge, which was imparted from the traditional *Whare wānanga*, illustrating their role as intergenerational conduits. Likewise, he stresses the sense of connection between the traditional stories, seen as tools of “transference of knowledge” and the current ones, a continuum that would have stories playing the vital role of vehicles for the flow of information, all of it in the frame of Māori language as the matrix of any possible cultural endeavour. Therefore, he asserted that

Within that particular context then, my discussion with you in the retelling of those histories and stories is included as an integral part of the language; without the language, you don't have a culture... without a culture, you don't have a “people”, and in our case, our particular stories transcend thousands of years, since the beginning of time.

In Dr. Robust's view, traditional narratives would be used as "a canon of knowledge" for its transference, a view that connects directly with the epistemological model of the three baskets of knowledge retrieved by *Tāne mahuta* in his special quest and journey to the twelfth heaven. The stories and the knowledge contained in them were also used as tools for the preparation of certain individuals for special roles, like the one of a *puhi* ("eligible girl of status" Ryan 1997:224), highlighted by Waiatara when remembering their usage at her *marae* during her childhood.

The previously mentioned 'interconnectedness' would be also associated with the social dimension of the stories, in the sense that, as information containers, traditional narratives would carry social values embedded in their plots and events, fundamental for the functioning of Māori society, and also for what could be termed as 'social orientation'. This kind of orientation would be tightly knitted with identity aspects, another central 'umbrella' concept in regards to the importance of the stories.

In the view of some of the teachers and scholars interviewed, the usage of traditional stories affected positively the sense of belonging to Māori people and culture, especially of children. This is how, in Te Ao Marama's perspective (*Kura Kaupapa Māori* teacher), traditional stories are considered a part of Māori identity, deriving from this the importance to keep them alive, and not only stored in books. With the latter, there would be an unavoidable link with Māori language as a living language that must be maintained and expanded, endeavour in which stories would be intimately involved. This was also an aspect highlighted by Eddie, who directly connected the importance of the stories to their use for the survival of language, due to the fact that numerous old stories are still kept in original "old language texts" or old 'oral-style' language.

It could be said, then, that the traditional narratives, their usage and Māori language are seen as entwined components, and co-dependant in terms of survival. This is consistent with the view of various scholars and teachers interviewed, especially in regards to the transformation of the narrations when translated, and also when fixed into a printed form. The latter tended to be seen by some as problematic in the sense that it introduced a foreign style to the stories, making them more rigid and even transforming them to a more palatable product for the non-Māori recipients of the stories, losing authenticity.

One of the main functions of traditional narratives, pointed out by teachers and scholars, is the one of 'social orientation' that was previously mentioned, which implies

giving an idea of who the person is, where does he come from and to whom is she/he connected. One of the results of this would be the re-assertion of their value, as a group and also as individuals, or as Ngahaia explains the stories would clarify “their place and the sense that they are needed, that they have something to give to others”. With the latter, another important function or objective is to instil social values as part of a greater philosophy, the world-view of Māori people -entailing beliefs and value systems- embedded in the stories, as it was already asserted by Terehia. According to her view about the usage in tertiary institutions, the narratives benefit the students in enabling them to see an alternative world-view, cultural philosophy and knowledge, as well as reinforcing the Māori world-view in others who are already linked to it by genealogical means. A similar idea is sustained by Eddie regarding the situation in the mainstream school context, giving an alternative point of view of existence and about the current way things are.

It is interesting to notice, though, that the way in which the concept of “world-view” is used by the Māori scholars and teachers seems to be broad enough to contain several interpretations of its meaning. In this case, my own understanding of it would follow what Rapport and Overing (2007:432) explain, referring to the distinctions made by Geertz (1973), who adapting an earlier usage of Bateson's (1936) differentiates “world-view” from “ethos”. According to the authors, for Geertz, “world-view” would refer to “an intellectual understanding of the world, a way of thinking about the world and its workings, which is common amongst a particular group”, placing “ethos” in the area of emotional appreciation, or as “a way of feeling about and evaluating the world” (Rapport and Overing 2007:432)²⁸.

Continuing with the idea of ‘social orientation’ and its close connections with ‘identity’, according to Marama (*Kura Kaupapa Māori* school teacher and Principal), stories would give a sense of ownership of who the Māori are, working as an identity link to a whole socio-cultural background. In this linkage effort, it was her view that Māori individuals could connect to those stories through *whakapapa*, in a similar line of thought to what Waiatara asserted. In Marama’s words

28 From a Geertzian anthropological perspective, it is through the work of religious rituals that “world-view” and “ethos” sustain a mutually supportive relationship, reflecting the fact that culture remains integrated and that “what is thought remains emotionally acceptable and what is felt remains intellectually reasonable” (Rapport and Overing 2007:432), a position which I think is quite debatable for its rigidity.

(...) hearing about *Rangi* and *Papa* and all those things and then you realize when you are learning the traditional stories that you actually have a link to those, that is not just things that happened, they are actually yours and by *whakapapa*, you can *whakapapa* back, you know, I'm *Ngāi tahu*, and so, our *atua*, my *atua* is *Tangaroa*, we have this link with them, you know, and I think it makes you respect them more (...)

This central ability to orient socially through *whakapapa* would have a beneficial impact on self esteem, according to her, “because you know who you are and where you come from”, providing a sense of direction and security associated to it. In her view, and related to the context of the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* system, the sense of belonging and self worth would be an expected effect of the usage of traditional narratives, fostered by the information provided by the stories about their ancestors. This display of traditional indigenous knowledge and its associated achievements would enable children to see them as wise people and therefore change the negative stereotypes currently present in *Aotearoa*/New Zealand society about Māori people.

According to Marama’s view, the information and connections provided by the traditional narratives would help to fill the vacuum that exists among some Māori children resulting from the lack of information about their origins, or in other words, knowledge of their *whakapapa*, and as she put it “it all comes through those stories, the traditional stories that have been passed out”. Summarizing her position, she affirmed

(...) like I've said, for me is the link, the link that they belong to something, that through a story (...) they realize that our people are, were very knowledgeable people, that they were very worthy people, they were not like what we are projected to be now, you know (...) I would like them to think that our people were adventurers and explorers and that they would inspire them to follow and be the same, through the use of stories you know, and again to be proud of their people, proud of who they are, they were amazing people...with what, sort of technology they had back then looked what they achieved, and I believe that's what I would like them to think, that they can do it, anyone can do it, you don't have to have a million dollars (...), you don't have to be the best person, that everybody has a... a uniqueness about them, and teach them to the best of their potential, that sort of thing we can take from our stories, and hear about what our people achieved, it's just amazing.

Among the expected effects from their usage, and in linkage with the social orientation aspect of it, one of the results would also be that of modelling and vicarious learning. The latter entails that the children would talk about the traditional stories with

their parents, sharing the values and the discussions held during classes with them, ideally with further application of the principles learned through the stories, to other situations, as Vicki (*Kura Kaupapa Māori* school teacher) said “they can apply some of those principles, if they're relative, or they can see through that principle, how that might look in another situation...in another context”. In the same sense, Simon also stressed the importance of ‘cultural reproduction’ in regards to the connection between children and their families:

(...)we teach our kids their *whakapapa*, their *pepehā*, we get them to go home and talk about their genealogy and bring it back to school so when they do stand up and talk in the mornings and that sort of stuff, they know where they come from, who they are, so that has direct link back to *pūrākau* because those stories that people think are just stories are actually Māori history, it's actually been happening since time began with *Io* and of course *Rangi* and *Papa*, and *atua*, and down to the *tangata*, down to us, and there's all that, it's all linked up (...)

And again, another expected result from the usage of the narratives, according to him, would be to acquire a sense of social positioning, in which “*waiata*, *kōrero o neherā* and all that stuff, remains important, you get a balance of both worlds; the old world and the new world, so *whakataukī*, *pūrākau* and all that stuff are still valid today to guide them for their tomorrows”.

However, the container view and the identity aspects related to the stories were not the only dimensions associated to the importance of traditional Māori stories and their usage. Noticeably, and consistent with some of the theoretical approaches towards them, they were also considered important because of their potential as ‘thinking devices’. This is how Marama affirmed that an expected effect of the usage of the narratives on the students was that “they will inspire them to think of other ways and not to just think of what is being taught through the curriculum as the only way to do it, no”. On the same matter, Te Ao affirmed that a “hooking” effect was expected from the usage of stories with children, in order to “make them think” about their current relevance and “make them relate to 'now' for them”, hence using them actively as ‘thinking devices’.

In a similar sense to the aforementioned, Vicki asserted that, although she considered the traditional narratives as an integral part of identity, and also as “bodies of knowledge”, she affirmed that “I think they 're more about how we think, I think these

contain clues to how the Māori mind thought, and those are the clues that are more interesting than the ones of identity”. In this way, myths would reveal the strategies of previous generations on “how do we encapsulate a world of knowledge in a way that can be passed on to our children”, proposing consequently that these traditional narratives still performed as currently applicable and expandable bodies of knowledge, or as she said “(...)however it directly relates to today as a body of knowledge, and it leaves you room to grow it, not just to stay in that past, it's applicable today because the body of knowledge is growing (...)”.

Last but not least, it is important to remember that the dimension of entertainment, according to the literature, plays a central role particularly regarding folktales and legends. Therefore, considering the complex socio-performative dimension implied in storytelling, scholars also mentioned their usage as entertainment means or pastimes, which in turn would cover parallel functions like that of concentrating people in order to share and socialize, as a leisure time activity. In this case, it was their ‘social cohesion’ effect that was highlighted and deemed as important for Māori culture.

B) Usage in the Institution: 'concrete' use and objectives of their usage

One of the objectives of the present study is to clarify some practical matters regarding the usage of the traditional Māori narratives. One of these practical aspects is precisely the perceived 'concrete' use of them in educational institutions -in terms of declared objectives of usage-, according to the informants. In a first stage, it is the tertiary education institutions -where these scholars work- the ones serving as referential context, with the mainstream school and *Kura Kaupapa* cases following.

Several perspectives were presented by the academics; among those who explained the functions of them in their work, Terehia asserted that she frequently used them in classes, as a way to introduce students to Māori cultural beliefs mainly through the transmission of distinct knowledge and particular perspectives. During my observations in her classes, in one session she explained to the students the concept of *Te Ao Māori*, highlighting its different world-view and, for a clearer depiction of it, Terehia used a graphic depiction of a *whakapapa*. Through the latter she was able to illustrate the connections between human beings and the different creatures and elements in the world, as part of the descent lines from the gods, therefore using the

'Creation cycle' as a basis. In doing this, she overtly pointed out the contrast with the Judeo-Christian perspective on it, widespread in the 'Western' sociocultural frame, in which the basic assumption is represented by the notion of "Created by", comparing it with the Māori notion of "Descended from". In the following discussion, Terehia illustrated the deep differences embedded in each notion, and how these affected the way in which humans related with the natural environment and with each other. Finally, in a similar manner, she also presented a general introduction to the theories of *Aotearoa*/New Zealand settlement, comparing them with one of the Māori versions of it, regarding *Kupe* the Navigator, where interestingly she used again a *whakapapa* graphic to trace back the story and its origins.

In a similar sense, Ngahaia affirmed that her use of them followed the model of a "starting perspective", where stories would launch the students into a personal journey of discovery of Māori cultural elements. This would in turn reaffirm aspects of oral tradition, in which the *kōrero* or the act of speech and listening would act weaving or interlinking spiritual aspects with bodily aspects. In her view, certain practices displayed by old storytellers, like the importance of the non-verbal language, the image and voice tone, between others, had to be considered for the use of stories, and consequently for their absorption in the teaching/learning dynamic.

It is important to notice, though, that the role played by traditional Māori narratives in the tertiary education institutions would be observed not only in the actual telling of stories in classes, but also through other cultural expressions. As Dr. Robust explained, the powerful presence of the University of Auckland's *whare nui* or meeting house, called "*Tāne Nui a Rangi*", presents embedded in its construction and carvings, the story of *Tāne* and his pursuit of the three *kete* of knowledge, representing a physical manifestation of an ever-present story for Māori people.

But the usage of traditional Māori narratives in academic institutions has also another dimension, related to its very nature: the fact that they are stories. In this sense, Waiatara asserted that, although she used them in her relationship with students, to illustrate ideas and important aspects of their conversations, they were not really accepted in mainstream academia. As narrative products, in her view, the formal milieu of academic production considered them merely as 'made up stories', not logical, not rational and therefore non-useful for academic writing parameters. This clash of perspectives is, of course, something that pervades industrial societies that frame themselves in the Western post-enlightenment scientific model.

Nevertheless, as Jackson (2002:101) asserts using his African fieldwork as a background, this could be seen as pattern that comes from the confrontation between sanctioned “true ancestral charter myths and antinomian folktales; in urban-industrial societies it is between scientific facts and science fictions”. Interestingly, in both cases, reason and administrative order would get associated with the first, while emotionality and license would be connected to the latter. According to the author, arts would represent the criticism towards the sciences, following the path laid by folktales as satires on the myths of rulers, and in our society's current case, both barely tolerated and underfunded, as a way to control their reach.

In the aforementioned context, factuality would side with administrative control, in opposition to a threatening fiction, which in many cases is represented by “storytelling” in new and varied modes, which are consequently marginalised (Jackson 2002:101). In this way, the reactions of academia towards the use of traditional narratives, according to Waiatara, would follow the strategy of assignment to the private domain as a modality of leisure, described by Jackson, in which storytelling would be construed as

(...) a discourse of the uneducated, an artefact of childhood, it loses even the moral authority that not so long ago attached to the folktales. As Walter Benjamin noted, the demise of storytelling goes with the disparagement of experience, which is set up in opposition to knowledge as a refractory or raw material that only becomes intelligible and meaningful when subject to rational reprocessing (Jackson 2002:101).

In terms of the usage in the schools, Eddie asserted that the 'official objective' for their usage in his Māori unit is to enable kids to realize that there are “very different ways of looking at things” and to provide a connection with the 'ethos' of their ancestors. Connected to this, for non-Māori kids, the objective would be to understand that “Māori do think differently”, in order to enhance their intercultural awareness through learning about different customs and knowing the reasons behind them. Expanding on the usage of the narratives in the school, Eddie affirmed that he used them at junior level to supplement the language and the topic (*kaupapa*) at the time, stressing particularly those involving the *pepehā* -their lineage, personal *whakapapa* plus information about their place of origin- or in a broader sense, the *whanaungatanga*, and the importance of being interrelated.

Moving upwards, he explained that at senior level the stories are used for language enhancement, to understand concepts, the message and its connection with the reader. With the latter, he talked about their usage as a tool to show protocols and customs, and the reasons behind certain actions, especially regarding social protocols and formal occasions.

In regards to the 'official objectives' and the usage of traditional stories in the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* school, Marama affirmed that the objectives coming from the Ministry of Education were very broad, allowing flexibility and a variety of avenues to fulfil them. The latter would answer to directives that are based more on the acquisition of certain 'essential skills' than on what to teach, consequently allowing the usage of traditional stories as a way to achieve them. In her own terms “(...) how you do that and what you teach them, and the contexts you use is up to you, so we're lucky, we've been able to use our own sort of... knowledge, you know, our own stories and things like that (...)”.

It is important to add to the latter that, according to her, the Ministry was testing a new Māori curriculum, that should be out the year 2009, which although having a high level of participation of Māori teachers, their schools lacked the time for meetings to analyse its contents, and participate effectively in the proposal. Related to this, Marama highlighted the need of models to follow and apply more directly, due to the general overload of work and the “snowed-under” feeling of teachers when trying to work and analyse curricula in parallel.

Not surprisingly, considering the small size and coordinated work of the teachers' team at the *Kura*, this view of the 'official objectives' was strongly shared among them. Thus, Vicki commented on the non-official status of the objectives when using traditional narratives, being stated in a very general way in the regular curriculum. As Marama said before, these were seen as more 'skill focused' than 'content focused', concentrated on the achievement of certain abilities, going even further by asserting that they did not exist in the *Kura* as such. Following a similar line of thought, Te Ao affirmed that the traditional narratives were used with general objectives in mind, not attached to specific activities but to a range of them, and therefore mainly used as guides. In this sense, the usage of them and the aims of that usage would depend primarily on the *kaiako*, stressing the more informal nature of the narratives, coherent with the flexible quality of these.

On the same issue, Simon also affirmed that “unofficial” objectives existed behind the usage of the stories

(...) to be used as if it's part of the contents that you're teaching at that time, like we were teaching (...) *kaimoana* last year, so I used *Tangaroa* and *whakahoki koha*, like giving back to *Tangaroa* first, before you take what you need, yeah, so I use that unofficially, that was part of my planning so it went into my planning, for that trip, but we follow *Te Aho Matua*, so that's part of the curriculum, that's our philosophy we follow, in our *Kura*, so I'm not quite sure if it's really official, like you don't write it in your... we don't plan as such, like... to put those *pūrākau* in there, but if it's in the teaching context that you can use, or you've talked about or it's there...you teach it, you use it, and you teach it to the kids.

In Simon's view, even the coverage of stories during his teacher training programme -in the sense of the transference of any formal or specific strategy to use them- was slim. He recalled using a story in a *hanga* (technology) class, about two brothers who had a contest using spinning tops, which was told to him during his training course, but in general he asserted that the use was not specific, again depending on the teachers.

Nevertheless, when stating what could be called more 'formal' or 'common' objectives for their usage in the *Kura* –objectives that tended to be discussed with the other teachers in the planning- Marama explained that one of them was to connect children with their own people, making the knowledge of their *whakapapa* a central aspect of their education, where traditional stories would play an important role. In her words

So the objective really is... for the children to fully understand that they belong to a wider...base, they are part of a *hapū*, they're part of an *iwi*, they're not just on their own, once they've made that connection then they have got support, and they've got all that history behind them they can stand proud anywhere, (...) it's a real important link to *whakapapa*, that's what I think is the main objective of teaching traditional stories, is to let them know that our people are an amazing people (...)

Part of the latter, in Marama's view, again had to do with the importance of showing the children a different portrayal of Māori people and culture to that of common stereotypes of Māori people, “they collect the benefit, they're druggies, they're in jail, that's what you ever hear in the media”. Therefore, traditional stories would be

used as “exemplar models” (Shore 1996:64); in order to show them an alternative depiction, it is necessary to create the link between these new generations and their roots, together with the knowledge associated to the aforementioned.

B.1) Settings and procedures

Another objective of the study is to get a clearer, operationalized view on the kinds of settings and procedures in which the traditional narratives were used through Māori history and in current times. The idea of the latter is to see what types of contrasts can be generated with the former, and the analytical outcomes of them.

It is in general mentioned that the privileged social space for storytelling was, and still seems to be, the family and its various social activities construed, as Dr. Robust asserts, as the centre of diffusion of Māori knowledge, with the instillation of four fundamental values: Respect, Responsibility, Reciprocity, and Contribution. In this frame, one of the settings pointed out for the transmission of these traditional narratives is quite a classical image among diverse cultures, and that is the exchanges between grandparents and grandchildren, where the last ones would play the recipient part of ancestral knowledge handed down from the elders. Usually, it was done as a winter time activity, and according to Waiatara, it was still quite present in the rural context 30 years back, as she remembered her own childhood experience.

Another important setting referred to by various informants was that of family gatherings, in which, as Waiatara explained, family members would meet and tell stories as a “natural” thing, understanding the -apparently- simple act of conversation as “storytelling”. Some of the examples of these gatherings include Easter, long weekends, and birthdays, in which people -according to Ngahuia- used to be given stories and *whakataukī* as part of their growing process, appropriate to each life stage. The latter represented also an important aspect of the survival of certain stories, and the way in which they are maintained and transmitted in the families. These descent lines would represent -in Ngahuia's view- a complex receptacle of the stories and knowledge contained in them, flowing through the genealogical connections as blood through veins and arteries. Therefore, a deeper spiritual aspect would frame the way in which these stories disappear and come back in those families, considering the weight of the enduring associations with the ancestors.

Other special events where traditional narratives have played a central role are the more “formal” social occasions, such as weddings and/or *tangi* (funerals), in which

they were used to cheer up people after days of mourning. However, it is necessary to stress the fact that traditional narratives play a central role in the formal *kōrero* or speeches delivered by orators in any formal social occasions that require them, although not always in complete form or delivered as a storytelling piece. In this sense, an example given by Terehia is quite eloquent

I've just come back from, as I said to you, the opening of the *wānanga* and everybody, all the time in their speeches and things like that, were referring back to the *karakia* and the stories and pinning things around, stories that they can... sort of relate them to... so it's very much used.

In the same way, Waiatara extended the 'naturalness' of telling stories to this kind of formal occasions when she said “(...) telling stories is natural, it's just totally natural... is just what we do. You know, if someone was standing... if you've got a formal meeting, and someone stands up, they tell a story, you know? It's just... it's just the way you are (...)”.

Consequently, it could be said that they are an ever present reference point in the particular activity of oratory, where they are merged with other genres such as *whakataukī*, *kīwaha* (idioms), or local stories of specific relevance to the place and occasion. But even further, as Dr. Robust asserts when talking about the depiction of the 3 baskets of knowledge and the story of *Tāne* in the carving at the University's *Whare nui*, perhaps the extent of the usage of traditional narratives would transcend these settings, and -as forms of knowledge- would be enacted “within our culture, our Māori culture in our everyday lives”.

It is important to notice that, as a setting, the formal educational environment was few times mentioned, considering particularly cases of Māori formal schooling like the *Kōhanga Reo* and the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* institutions, in which “a new forum” has been created for the traditional narratives, and even college or tertiary institutions, but not the mainstream school system. Partly, it seems, this is taking into account the experience of the scholars and teachers and their own educational experience as children at those schools, at a time when Māori culture was not enhanced by the curriculum and pedagogical practices. The new conditions in mainstream schooling were represented mainly by Eddie, as teacher of a Māori unit, therefore, it must be accepted that the sample was not representative of the general situation of *Aotearoa*/New Zealand's primary and secondary educational area.

Taking into consideration the historical variable, Simon detailed how he was taught about *Māui* and some of his adventures, with material in English and with no efforts to deliver or to understand other aspects involved in those stories, saying that

(...) most of it was in English, yeah, as far as I know, our school was in English and you do it because they're teaching you, it's not, there was no...depth in it (...) Stories, stories...just stories...here, here is part of the curriculum we're doing "*Māui* and the Sun", here's part of our curriculum, we're doing "*Māui* fished up the North Island", you know, no Māori to it, just the only thing it would have was "*Māui*", that would have been the only Māori word (...)

In a similar way, Waiatara explained how in the "old times" those stories would have been commonly known, but she clarifies that the ones she knows were not learned at school, describing the situation at that time and the differences with the present time conditions

(...) because at that time we were taught about kings and queens at school, but we did hear those stories at home (...) when I was at school there was very little about Māori people, and Māori culture and Māori knowledge at school, very, very little, so we had the basics... but as time is going on, there's more input from Māori people into New Zealand's society (...)

Related to the aforementioned, the settings mentioned by the scholars seem to be part of a diverse milieu, where nevertheless they are positioned in distinct areas. Following the line of thought proposed by Waiatara, the settings for the use of traditional Māori narratives would be related to a particular background, in this case, the Māori 'world', in the sense of several contexts with certain characteristics. In her view

(...) probably all Māori will tell you the same thing, **there is a difference** between being in the mainstream world and being with the group of Māori,... it's just different, the whole feeling, (...) but it's still a difference being with Māori than being with people of another group...which is good. So there are at least two worlds, you now, or two different ways of seeing the world, and telling the stories I think is very much essential to being Māori. And I wouldn't say this is how all the Māori, definitely wouldn't say this is how Māori are, because some are connected to greater or to lesser degrees.

It could be said, from an interpretation of the previous statements, that as part of the settings, environments which feel familiar, comfortable, and safe in Māori terms, i.e.

which count with Māori language, cultural elements, family connections, etc., would be essential for the performance of the act of storytelling.

Finally, and aligned with some of the already revised aspects of Māori epistemology and education, it is highlighted that the usage of stories -when and how to use them- would in general respond to situational and contextual elements, not conforming itself to rigid or well defined scenarios. This is explained by Terehia through an example

I think for Māori every aspect of learning is contextual and situational, and I'm just thinking, for example, of my friend who lives in Whangarei and I went up there at Christmas time, and we took the children down to the beach, and a little boy was asking a question... I can't remember now what it was... but my friend told him an ancient story that actually fitted with the area where they were, that passed on to his boy some knowledge (...) from the area because it was important for him to have answered his question in a way, and entertained them while they were there playing on the beach, so...yeah, I think, rather than saying, you know, that they use these bedtime stories in these settings, I would say they are very situational and contextual.

Interestingly, this example would also show the manifold nature of stories and the capacity of them to cover more than one area of needs at the same time. In a sense, it is because of this potential, this ample scope of activation, that they would respond primarily to dynamic or shifting contextual conditions better than to specific or predetermined settings.

When asked about the procedures involved in the delivery of traditional Māori narratives, the scholars in general did not identify many of them, or provide many details about them. From a more traditional perspective, Ngahuia talked about the importance of the figure of the storyteller and the idea of this person as a finely attuned or calibrated instrument. The latter is again, connected to the relationship of the narrator with the environment or general setting, and important questions had to be considered for a correct delivery: Is it a rainy or sunny day? Is it a clear or a foggy night? Are we gathered because of a happy or sad occasion? Which are the main issues of concern for the audience? Do they want to be just entertained? In this way it can be seen that the performance, to be successful and meet certain standards, had to be coherent with the mood of the occasion, the weather characteristics and the physical traits of the surrounding space.

In current times and situations, though, some of the previous conditions and considerations are still taken into account, but with that, other protocols must be respected too. The case provided, in particular, has to do with the transferral of knowledge -in this case, traditional narratives- in a tertiary education institution, described by Terehia and observed by me during several classes which I attended to

(...) from my own personal perspective in the classroom I'm always very...hmm... I was going to say cautious, but it's not quite the right word, I always follow protocol, so if we're having a lesson which involves what I would term "traditional knowledge", there are certain protocols that I would ask my students to observe, with regards to the transmission of knowledge, even though they are stories that they might hear in a kindergarten setting, that they might see portrayed as a cartoon on a TV channel, they can pick up, you know, kids' storybooks and read, if I am sharing the knowledge of that story with them I do it according to protocol, so we will begin each session with a *karakia* and an appropriate *waiata*... hmm... we will have no food or drink in the room, and students will remove their shoes (...) and I will also ask them not to take notes, so it's only an oral transmission of the stories(...)

Terehia further explained that the intensity of those protocols would not vary, regardless of the kinds of stories they were, although some narrations and some knowledge would not be taught in a classroom setting because she deemed them to be *tapu*, sacred or important and not for general dissemination, being in that sense "selective" as to whom that knowledge and stories are transmitted to. All of these steps and protocols were, in fact, observed by me during the various classes I attended as an observer, having to follow them, except the removal of shoes, which was made an exception due to the fact that they were using a regular classroom and also to certain practical matters of storage for such a quantity of them. *Karakia* and *waiata* were performed at the beginning of each session and another *karakia* at the end, with no food or liquids allowed to be ingested during the sessions. This was in general accepted respectfully by the group of students, some of them being more experienced on the matter thanks to previous courses of Māori culture.

In terms of procedures, it has to be taken into account that there is a considerable overlapping of aspects when the teachers were asked about this. What follows then, is an effort to rather artificially –and for the sake of an analytical exercise- isolate some elements of their discourse that could be considered as an 'operationalization' of them. Consequently, when asked about what could be considered as a 'procedure' for the usage

of the traditional narratives, Eddie explained that “they are stories, so generally I like to say them as stories, keeping them in a certain context”. Their usage at the beginning or the end of a unit would depend on the context, the central theme and the general “feeling” of teacher and students at the moment. The weight of the 'context' variable was recognized by other teachers too, like Vicki, who asserted the importance of the so-called “teaching moments”, spontaneous and emergent opportunities to use the stories. In her own words

Hmm...sometimes I just come up...there are teaching moments, you'll be teaching something and you'll think of something that's relative, so you're just there in that moment and you just use it, so you say “Like when -so and so- did this”, “So and so” was from somewhere and he did “tadadada” and you start to unpack the bit that you need to unpack, that happens a lot (...)

Interestingly, the latter was also commented by Te Ao in her interview and months after, during a teacher's meeting, to which I was invited to talk about some of the partial results of my participant-observation work. The topic was alluded to, precisely when we were talking about the display of certain procedures and settings during the lessons, occasion in which she commented about the importance of making the most of those “teachable moments”. In her view, expressed during the interview, it was important to maintain the narratives “*kaupapa* specific”, to avoid an aimless usage of them, relating stories to current times, but keeping them authentic, i.e. without major changes. Te Ao explained the long term consequences of this

So it's about keeping it authentic, but also using it so that they can see the relevance for it now, so they will tell their children, so they will carry on the stories as well, yeah, so if they're excited about it they'll talk about it again and again, you know, and that's what I want, I want them to just...use them in conversation and become a relevant, you know, part of relevant... be relevant for now and for the future, so we don't lose them (...)

Broadening her comments on the matter of concrete usage, Te Ao asserted that traditional stories worked as good motivational tools, dealing with topics that stimulate the imagination of children, consequently employing them as a “general introduction” to certain units, to “put a Māori spin on it”. A clear example of this was given when she explained how the story of *Mahuika* and *Māui* was used by her when studying a unit dedicated to “fire”, connecting it to the understanding of it and also to learn about the

Kura Kaupapa's evacuation plan in cases of emergency. But at the same time, Te Ao affirmed that the stories were used to reinforce previous knowledge and contents that the children already brought from the *Kōhanga Reo*, and in other cases, of cultural elements that otherwise would not be delivered at home, building up a strong cultural base in the children.

Regarding the latter, I could directly observe Te Ao using the story of “*Māui* and the snaring of *Te Rā*”, with her *pōtiki* students. The lesson started with the children seated on the floor in front of her, listening and looking at the book (in Māori) that she showed them. Full of colourful pictures in Māori style, Te Ao started by explaining about the length of each day, in terms of the availability of sunlight. For this, she asked them to jump and then immediately to sit again, trying to show them how short was each day before *Māui's* deed. Then she continued reading the story, showing them the pictures and using gestures, changes in the intonation of her voice and using other dramatic resources.

In a parallel manner, Te Ao engaged the children with questions, encouraging them to answer and debate about some of the story's aspects. Afterward, she wrote some concepts on the board and drew columns, which were filled through the system of questions and answers regarding who the character was, where was he placed, his description and his name. But the activity had a further objective, as Te Ao explained to me during the break, which was to connect the activities that they would start with the general topic of the planets, stars and other 'astronomical' topics, which were going to be covered by the whole school during a period. This was the case in fact, as I could witness in the *teina* and *tuakana* levels, where they worked with the computers retrieving information from the NASA site and other resources, elaborated models of the planets and wrote essays on diverse connected issues.

In the case of Vicki and her perception about the matter, she explained that she used the stories in the school mainly to instil principles and to raise questions about their applicability in current times. With the latter, she explained about her usage of stories and characters to introduce some topics, like the case of the Māori god of war *Tūmatauenga* and how she connected him with units referring to weapons and several important armed conflicts through history.

As a way to have a glimpse of another concrete example of the procedure used when working with a traditional narrative, Vicki talked about the story of *Ueoneone* -a

powerful and wealthy man- and the two sisters who were going to marry him, where the youngest ended tricked and abandoned by the eldest, wanting to marry *Ueoneone* alone:

(...) I just sort of relate the story, then I ask them...hmm...for examples that they could see in...(...) actually it was an example of pulling things out from that story, ok, that's what happened, they had to pull things out of that story that they could relate to in this sort of day, and that's how it sort of got to a rich man, one wanting things all for themselves, and you know, the sisters, and what they thought of that, you know, was that...a nice thing to do to a younger sister, would you do that to your younger sister, you know, all that sort of...social (...) talk, around that...that's right, that's what it was. And so it's bringing that to a modern context and to, what they thought of that, what do they think of that? You know, and what do they think of the man? You know, because he was considered to be older, so what do they think of that? You know, that sort of thing, and what about the family, you know, down at the *marae*, what do they think about all these things? That sort of... so you put it into a modern context and see what they think (...)

It is interesting to notice that the account matches well the actual 'Socratic' pedagogical style of the *Kura Kaupapa* teachers, which I was able to witness during numerous lessons. Most topics were put forward and discussed with the children, especially in the *teina* and *tuakana* levels -mainly because of their attention span and more developed skills- before starting any other activity related to them, like writing or reading, in open exchanges where questions and discussions were actively encouraged.

The concept of 'context' surfaced again as an important element regarding the settings and procedures for the usage of the narratives when Simon explained his point of view on the matter, saying that “I would refer back to a story if it's within my context that I'm teaching at that time”. He stressed the importance of studying well the stories before delivering them as a teacher, underlining also the importance to give them complete, and not only fractions that could be consequently mixed or misunderstood. At the same time though, Simon asserted that some contents related to traditional knowledge, and their associated means of transmission (i.e. *whakataukī*, *kōrero o neherā*, *waiatara*, *karakia*) would not be handed over “because it's not appropriate for our children at the moment, the depth of *tikanga* might not be enough for them to grasp reality or what was said at that time”. Simon provided an interesting example of the use of traditional narratives for an appropriate sexual education, in the sense of a Māori context, saying that, when he asked himself

(...) but how do you teach that a Māori, so what do you use in Māori? So I go back to *Hinetītama* and *Tāne*, and *Hineahuone* and the creation of men, and then that brings out stuff that some of the older kids can understand, and it talks about a way of teaching, and then there is the other side of *Tūmataurangi* and he's the father of men, so there's another tool there that needs to be discussed, so I use those *pūrakau* to inform my children in a Māori way instead of just give them sexual education and they don't understand and they might have all that stuff about what it means in English, about puberty and all that sort of stuff, and Māori is totally different...

According to Marama's perspective, there was no fixed procedure for the usage of the traditional narratives, although these were expected to be used in the *Kura* prior to units, to stir the creativity of the children in connection with the main topics, taking advantage of emergent opportunities, concurring with the assertions of the other *Kura* teachers. Nevertheless, this flexible activity frame would take into consideration the curriculum and their planning as a team, maintaining the coherence and general educational aims of the institution. In this way, she gave the example of *Hatupatu's* story, and how they connected it with places, names and *whakapapa* lines when they visited the *Te Arawa* area, generating a more complex and complete historical background for the students.

Another point of view on the issue was suggested by Marama when reflecting about the procedures and settings in the *Kura Kaupapa* school. According to her, one of the main problems for the usage of the narratives in class settings was that the level of training of teachers in general, regarding the traditional stories, was not as strong as the one Māori people had in previous generations. This implied that teachers probably were not brought up with the stories, and most of them were second language speakers, being the generation succeeding those that were punished for speaking Māori and who were target of aggressive strategies of assimilation in the formal education system, planting the seeds for that cultural gap.

Consequently, in Marama's view, this generation of teachers had to deal with the pressure of re-connections and closure of cultural clefts, and at the same time answer to the pressure of restrictions imposed by curricula demands, generating an overload of work, or as she put it "We tend to get snowed-under with the curriculum sort of restrictions or requirements". Notwithstanding, she considered the levels of preparation and performance of the rest of the team of teachers at the *Kura* as very good, with high levels of commitment.

Finally, in the same way that Eddie spoke of the importance of the 'knowledge base', the “strength” and “skill” of teachers for the usage of the narrations in the mainstream system, for Marama this would be also a major factor, expressing her confidence in the fact that with more practice and study, it would become again a natural strategy for teachers in the Māori educational system.

C) Perceived differences with the “ancient” usage

In order to try to understand how the traditional Māori narratives have been used and -more or less- how do they work as instructional tools, it would be necessary to delineate some contrasts between the perceptions of how they were used in the past and their current usage, according to the informants. In this sense, Ngahua affirmed that usage and contexts have changed, in terms of differences in the application of the narratives, although the expected results would be the same, reflecting that the essence of the *kōrero*, the *whakataukī* and other associated forms is the same.

Connected to the latter, Terehia affirmed, following the same line of thought, that in terms of the final purpose of their usage -like to inform, guide, and keep alive the traditional knowledge- it is very similar to that of the 'old days', though the procedures or ways in which the stories are imparted have necessarily changed. Regarding the aforementioned, she talked about new avenues and mediums for the imparting of those stories, such as cartoons, radio and television programs, etc., in which possible changes to make them more attractive for children and other viewers would not affect the core of the stories, the reasons for their delivery remaining the same.

However, another point of view -regarding the changes in time- was put forward by Waiatara, asserting that their usage had a distinct characteristic, derived mainly from the fact that current Māori people have not been raised with the stories as before, and therefore are not trained to think in a particular way, in tune with their style. To start with, she explained that in the more 'traditional' times the stories would have been commonly known, forming a general basis of knowledge for Māori people. This view was shared by Dr. Robust, who explained how there was a common acceptance and dissemination of certain Māori knowledge in the old days, where different people and institutions were responsible for that delivery of a common basis, pointing to travelling *tohunga* and several *Whare wānanga*. In his words

So, no matter where you went to, those stories were the same... how they were imparted (...) the curriculum that existed in the traditional learning institutions or *wānanga* (...) those *wānanga* were held at certain times, they had all to do with seasonal patterns, (...) a storyteller that actually transcended the distances, the various teachers or the *tohunga* who were the repositories of these stories, travelled... there were forms of peer review, there were forms of benchmarking, these are common elements within a contemporary context now.

In Waiatara's perspective -in spite of her assertion that the usage of the traditional narratives had increased with the Māori renaissance in the last twenty or thirty years- in the “old days” people grew up with a lot more stories and less distractions, more time and possibilities to concentrate on certain matters, where there was an “atmosphere where the spoken word was the only form really...or the main form of communication between the children and the natural world”. The usage of stories, then, entailed other 'time consuming' analytical procedures, according to her, like the patient usage of “several sieves” to filter the important aspects of them -related to the context or central problem raised- and progressively pulling back the layers of the stories to extract the message. Consequently, the lack of “training” in the cognitive style associated with the early education through the traditional narratives, and the disappearance of certain learning contexts, would inevitably have generated a loss of deep meaning of the stories for the new generations.

Taking the aforementioned into consideration, I argue that there would be a different 'cognitive style', visible through the way in which older generations tended to address certain issues and still do, represented by the current *kaumatua* over certain age. This is partially supported by the bibliographical sources present in the study and also by the information given by the participants in their interviews. It is an argument that will be further developed in the 'discussion' section, but it basically proposes that, because of a different educational setting and perspective, the usage of stories went hand-in-hand with a cognitive dynamic that gave priority to the process rather than time efficiency.

Regarding this issue, in the case of the school teachers, Te Ao -concurring with some of the scholars- suggested that the main differences present in the usage of traditional narratives existed in terms of the way in which stories are imparted, remembering that her father told her that they were used to impart critical messages, for keeping the *tikanga* alive, and used as 'cautionary stories'. However, she also recognized

the fact that in more 'traditional times' the knowledge was in the rearing environment, distributed as a surrounding context, in the *marae*, or when more specific in the *Whare wānanga*.

In contrast to the aforementioned, Te Ao described the new conditions which, on one hand, are characterized by the impact of 'missing links' in terms of knowledge transmission. This is how she explained that she had to rely on a training college for her formation "because by then my father had passed away too, so that spring of knowledge had gone, and a lot of people aren't going home to their own *marae*, so...they're not getting that wealth of knowledge that was there before, you know?" Consequently, on the other hand, the school and teachers have taken that role of imparting the knowledge and people have to pay for it, whereas before it was something that people just absorbed from the environment.

The same position was put forward by Marama, saying that the objectives of the stories were the same as in the 'old days', with differences in the depth of knowledge and the delivery of them. The latter was reflected in the fact that teachers currently tended to rely on books to tell them to the children, creating an inevitable contrast between the literary accounts and the oral tradition. In a similar way, Simon asserted that probably the way in which the stories were told and expressed would have been different, because they were a live part of their everyday activities, saying that "those stories have become stories now because the time passed". However, in his view, the *tikanga* and the story remained the same, affirming that in the future, as more people speak Māori language, they would be told in different ways, using "different ways of communication" that would still preserve the stories in their core aspects.

From another angle, Vicki's perspective on this issue stressed the fact that in previous times, the Māori specialists were able to "unpack" meanings, information and contents from the stories that Māori people were not able to do nowadays. In this sense she asserted that "we don't have the capacity that we had in the past, as people (...) a lot of our people lost socially and...identity wise, they are looking for themselves (...)". Related to this, she explained that the current context for Māori educators and students was strongly conditioned by the focus on basic levels of achievement that mainstream society expects and asks from Māori people, curtailing deeper approaches and pursuits in the educational area. In spite of this, she still maintained an optimistic view of the way in which Māori culture was being enhanced, suggesting that probably in the future

other “thinkers” would be able to decipher and understand the deeper meanings of the Māori stories.

This view on the differences in the depth of knowledge and performance in the usage of traditional narratives compared to the usage in the ‘old days’ was shared by Marama, who also commented on the differences in the contexts where these stories were taught also influence the outcome. However, the optimistic light in which Vicki saw future outcomes on this matter was reaffirmed by Marama, who stated that in time and with practice, Māori teachers would be able to develop those skills.

D) Most popular stories

When asked about the best known traditional narratives or the most popular ones nowadays, the school teachers and scholars mentioned several cases, which were deemed to be a common background in terms of knowledge for Māori people, or, as Terehia called them, “generic”, only with slight variations as compared to the case of local narratives, bound up with specific areas and groups of people.

The first group of these generic stories would be the ‘Creation cycle’ or “Creation myths”, as some of the academics and teachers named these narratives, which tended to be identified as probably the best known traditional Māori narratives among people. Under this name they included not only the parting of *Rangi* and *Papa*, but also the derived stories of conflict between the *atua*, and some related to the creation of other beings, apart from the first human being *Hine titama*. One example is given by Terehia when, talking about her usage of the “generic” stories in the academic setting, mentioned the “Creation” legends as particularly well suited for the demonstration of an alternative world-view, in particular because of the “philosophical underpinnings of the culture” present in them, affirming that the “spirituality of the people is encompassed in that story”. This could be in fact observed in her classes, specifically when she had to explain and develop the issue of traditional narratives with her students. In order to do that, after a general overview during the lecture, she distributed sections of the 'Creation cycle' and instructed the different working groups in the class to present them to their classmates. This was done the next session, where the different groups opted for combinations of reading and theatrical displays.

Regarding its importance, most interviews interpreted these stories as a historical milestone, a common cosmogonical account that interconnects all Māori people. This

was explained in a particularly clear way by Marama, when asked which stories were best known:

I think it would be *Rangi* and *Papa* because they relate to everybody, regardless of what *iwi* are you from, no matter where are you from you'd have land, you'd have sky, so I think *Ranginui* and *Papatūānku*...stories related to them are always the starting point,(...) I think is like...less controversial (chuckles) so like I said we're from *Ngai Tahu*, *Tangaroa* down there is their main god, while people up here north refer more to *Io* as their main god, but no matter whether we are down south or up here we've all got *Papatūānuku* and *Ranginui* so that's why I think to me is a "safe bet" (chuckles), you know when you're teaching sometimes you're not sure where the children are from, but surely they've got *Papatūānuku* and *Rangi* there, so that's why among people they are the most common.

The second 'cycle' pointed out by scholars and teachers, was *Māui*'s corpus of stories, accepted as a very present and well known group of Māori narratives. Part of the popularity of this demigod and his exploits would be connected with his role as discoverer of *Aotearoa*/New Zealand -fishing it up-, and the observable signs of his deed in the geographical characteristics of the islands. This well-known story has been delivered to people since childhood, emphasizing the easy way in which children relate with *Māui*'s adventures, according to Ngahuaia. In her view, the different escapades of the Polynesian culture hero/trickster would also entail deeper meanings for adults, consequently maintaining them as a popular reference point.

On the same point, Marama also highlighted the fact that younger children would be very familiar with his stories coming from *Kōhanga Reo*, but also due to the fact that they would have an easy association between his image and powers and some of the characters they see on TV, movies, comics, among others. According to her, from a young child's perspective

(...) it's just normal, he is a super being, he did do this and he can do that, and that's how we got fire, that's why the day is longer, had these brothers, can turn into a bird, now, they watch things like 'Pokemon', they watch things like (...) super beings, so it's normal...for young children, and you know such and such, Superman, Spider-man...so why is there a difference with *Māui* who can turn into a bird?

Nevertheless, at the same time, Marama asserted that his popularity also came from the outcomes of his exploits, which still stand today, or in other words, the

‘culture-hero’ accomplishments of his life. In the same sense, according to Waiatara, the popularity of *Māui* derives from the practical application of his exploits, in particular considering *Māui* as an image of the innovation among Māori people, or in her own words “ (...) because that's how you can translate what he does... I mean he is an incredible innovative and creative person, you know, he seeks new ways of doing things that improve life in some particular way, I mean that's the basics of what he does...”.

It would seem that the impact of *Māui*'s role as culture hero/trickster exerts a powerful influence on the memory of listeners and/or readers, especially when considering the concrete outcomes of his exploits and the way in which the narratives worked as explanations in the 'old days'. Te Ao explained this when asked about *Māui*'s stories and their popularity; in her words

Wow! (chuckles) how many guys do you know can turn into a bird and fly away, you know, how many people do you know can fish up New Zealand, you know?(chuckles) It's just sooo fantastic! But in saying that, they're talking about real life stuff, I mean, if you take a picture of New Zealand you can see... that looks like a *waka*, a boat, and that looks like a fish, you know? (...) to me it speaks to the cleverness of our people, you know, they had explanations for everything, (...) to me, our people think everything is bigger than themselves, it's about a whole, it's not just about saying I'm here, I'm here on this land, but haven't this land get here before me? It was here before I did, so somebody great has provided these awesome things for me, so, yeah...it's just the magic of all it, and he was a Māori (laughs) and did all these incredible things, so yeah, I think he's great!(laughs)

But even further, it is also *Māui*'s personality, and not only his adventures, part of the focus of attraction²⁹. According to Vicki, there would be a reflection of human nature embedded in the stories, a reflection of mischievous and, to a certain extent, comical aspects of human beings in the actions of this very famous 'younger brother' (*pōtiki*), and as Ngahuia asserted, a layer of social comment is set in the portrayal of social mobility amid traditional hierarchies.

Nevertheless, other variables were also named as reasons for the popularity of the *Māui* cycle, related to schooling and availability of materials. In this way, Simon affirmed that *Māui*'s stories are seen as the most common, partly because of their

29 The extent to which the figure of *Māui* is incorporated in current Māori life seems to be considerable, as I could notice when, during a coffee break in the teachers' lounge, I heard Leslie (a member of the *Kura* staff) talk in a light-hearted way about her young nephew's mischief, exclaiming “He is a little *Māui*!”. This is also backed up by the existence and use of the proverb “*Ko Māui tinihanga*” or “Māui of many devices”, which encourages the use of cunning instead of brute force (Patterson 1992:59).

teaching through English material in mainstream schooling. Even though it is commonly accepted by teachers and scholars that Māori culture was a marginal aspect in the curriculum two or three decades ago, some contents were transmitted, like some of *Māui*'s stories, according to Simon, in a 'watered down' manner. In his words:

Māui might be appealing because it's a thing you got taught when you were a child, so you learn all that stuff, and then you've got to teach it, well, you look back on what you've been taught and you enrich it because what you got taught was only half of it, in English, and they don't understand the ...depths of what *Māui* is, I don't think they do, I don't think some Māori people do, I don't think we understand that we have a richness here that we need to cherish.

(...) I'd like to teach the children what they didn't get taught, what I didn't get taught going through mainstream, I'd like to teach them the depth of *Māui*, the things that he did do, the importance of those stories to Māori custom, the importance of those stories to Māori *tikanga* about your life, about *tangi hanga*, about all those sorts of things that a teacher in mainstream never taught me because they didn't follow it up, they never knew the story (...) I like to teach them "why", how come *Māui* was doing that, why was he the *pōtiki*, why was he *atua*, a *tipua*, where did he come from, what stories are those stories, how do they pertain today!

In Vicki's perspective, the popularity or diffusion of certain stories would also respond to the availability in terms of material resources and personal preferences of writers when reproducing into printed texts some stories, or as she affirmed "(...) part of it is because that's what the writers chose to write about, that's why they are popular...if people try *Kupe*, then *Kupe* would be popular".

Another important narrative mentioned by scholars and teachers -although not a cycle itself- is the one of *Tāne* and his journey to the twelfth heaven to get the three *kete* of knowledge. Frequently depicted in carvings and other mediums such as the *poutama* panels, it has a powerful epistemological reverberance, as Dr. Robust explains

The name of our meeting house here is *Tāne Nui a Rangi*, now *Tāne Nui a Rangi* was the first of... who was chosen to go to the twelfth heaven from which... to collect these baskets of knowledge and bring them back to the earth for the benefit of mankind. Of course the baskets of knowledge are of common acceptance throughout Māoridom, and this is my view and my findings from my research, is that while there are tribal differences, while there are different people delivering, all that...responsibility, or created the responsibility for themselves, of imparting that knowledge in the traditional way and institutions, the *wānanga*, there was common elements right through (...)

In general, the other stories mentioned were about several *atua* like *Tangaroa*, and *Tawhirimatea*, and legends about the *maunga* (mountains) and their love affairs, in the era when they were able to move around. Some of the interviewees highlighted aspects of ancient indigenous knowledge related to stories and stressed the importance of local stories which were some times less known in mainstream social scenarios, obscured by the generic narratives.

However, some of other well known stories were recalled, like *Tāwhaki* and his quest, which has certain similarities with *Tāne's* quest; Marama highlighted the case of *Hatupatu*, partly because of his connection to *Te Arawa* people (being herself also of *Te Arawa* descent), but also saying that his mischievous nature seemed to attract the listeners, just as others associated this trait of *Māui* to his appeal. Another important mention was regarding *Rata* and his story of the felling of the tree in the forest, which according to Simon and Te Ao is a story with a valuable conservationist foundation. In her perspective

(...) that's a really good lesson for our *tamariki* to learn how to look after the forest, how to look after those things, you know, you say thank you for that, and too it's a lesson about being polite, you don't take from people without asking or without saying thank you, so those kind of things are really relevant (...)

Finally, it is interesting to notice that, in Marama's view, there were a considerably high number of new stories available in Māori language, written by new authors. This, in fact, was easy to notice during my participant observation in the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* school, where plenty of books are found in each classroom, plus all the volumes in the school's library, being all in Māori language. They covered the most diverse themes: birds of the forest; family activities; the adventures of a dog and of an anthropomorphic cat, between many others in the *pōtiki* and *teina* levels. In the *tuakana* level there is also a wide array of books, including the Māori version of Shakespeare's "The Merchant of Venice/*Te Tangata Whai Rawa O Weniti*".

Apart from books, the *Kura* displayed several special magazines published by the Ministry of Education, like "*Eke Panuku*", with several issues covering different topics and activities. In the special room assigned for the *tuakana* books I could observe the different shelves with them ordered according to reading levels, with a few bilingual cases. Most of the material came from the Ministry of Education, a publishing division called "*Manu-kura*" and another publishing house called "*Huia Publishers*".

Nonetheless, according to Marama, a good part of those new stories still had recognizable links to traditional material and plots, which was in fact observable in cases like a section in one of the *Eke Panuku* (No.10) magazines about *Kae's* teeth, regarding oral hygiene, a bilingual book called “He Taonga Tuku Iho: Ngāti Porou Stories from the East Cape” (McConnell, 2001), or the book “*Te Mura a Tangaroa*” about the domains of *Tangaroa*, the oceans *atua*, which connected with traditional narratives.

E) Possible improvements

The teachers and academics interviewed had several proposals in terms of possible improvements to the usage of traditional Māori narratives, involving not only formal educational settings. Ngahuia, for instance, affirmed that there should be more usage of these in places where there are particular social needs like community organizations oriented towards the solving of certain problems or in prisons with Māori inmates, as a way to reconnect them with traditional values. According to her experience, the best usage of these narratives would be obtained when people work together in a multicultural setting, which is precisely the current situation of *Aotearoa*/New Zealand's society.

Another source of improvements named was the pursuit of new and creative avenues to present the stories to the new generations. In a heavily interconnected world where new technological mediums emerge every year, without discarding the most typical way of delivery of traditional narratives -the oral transmission in 'face to face' encounters-, the creation of complementary means to present them seems to be a growing need. Therefore, apart from new books, the cartoon form, video-games and theatrical productions would appeal to new generations accustomed to them because of their own rearing environments and experience. In this context, one of the examples given with more enthusiasm by some of the academics was the stage performance “*Māui* and the Gods”, widely publicized and acclaimed. Connected to this, Waiatara asserted

(...) it is about innovating our traditions, to give them meaning within the current context, the historical context, the social context that we have, which is very different now, I can talk on and on about how it was in the old days, but the reality is we are here in 2008, so we have to find ways to innovate those traditions, innovate those stories so that they have meaning

for our children today (...) and then you are left with these messages that help you live life in a really good way, so, I mean that's saying, messages can be conveyed from stories, and more meaningful stories but it's still based on that tradition of passing knowledge to the children, to the next generation, through stories... it's just the forms of the stories that change.

More specifically related to their usage in educational contexts, Terehia commented about the difficulties with the settings in the tertiary institutions, and consequently also about the possible improvements. She questioned the appropriateness of these environments and conditions, such as teaching to numerous groups of students in theatre-like classrooms, compared to her view of an ideal setting, affirming that

I'm trying to teach this to students, but I'm not able to model it. So for me the optimum transmission of knowledge in any way I perform, but in particular with stories would be to be in an environment that is safe, that is culturally appropriate, and if I could have, you know, my “golden wishes”, I would have a *kaumatua* coming in to tell the stories rather than me (...) but we should be in an arena, in an environment that is respectful of the knowledge that we're actually dealing with (...) so that would be the only way that I would change it.

When asked about the conditions in the schools and possible improvements in that context, she explained that if her students were going to work in mainstream education, the advice for them was to prefer the usage of Māori stories over others, ideally contacting a local *kaumatua* to receive help at school, to have them tell the stories. With a strong sense of legitimacy provided by the contact and involvement of *kaumatua*, Terehia's discourse also pointed to the obligations under the *Tiriti o Waitangi* (Treaty of Waitangi), in order to ensure partnership and participation with the Māori people and their culture, “going that extra step to do it in ways that are culturally appropriate”, demonstrating at the same time respect for the knowledge contained within the traditional narratives.

In terms of the possible improvements in the usage of the traditional narratives at the *Kura Kaupapa* school, the specified areas differed, although some overlapping was observed in the suggestions offered. As a first point, Vicki argued that for a usage of the stories to their full potential, it would be necessary to foster several changes in conditions like the receptivity of children to them. She developed this view, explaining that a correct attitude for the proper reception of the material was needed, considering some of the challenges of teaching the new generations, who seem less willing and/or

prepared to listen to their teachers and to older people. With the latter, Vicki criticised positions of “extreme liberalism” with children, where an extreme 'voluntarism' was tolerated, contrasting with the very little obedience and humility to accept certain teachings that was inculcated. In this sense, she argued about the need for equilibrium, distant from authoritarianism -recognised as detrimental and negative- and from a 'laissez faire' style.

The other area considered by the school teachers was the one regarding material resources and new avenues for the instruction of traditional stories. In Te Ao's perspective, it was important to keep the stories relevant without losing their authenticity, when trying to put them into new materials. With the latter, she stressed the significance of the creation of educational resources specific to the stories, like CD's, games, puzzles, and devices of new technological trends, making them more available to children in the *Kura Kaupapa* institutions.

Simon held a similar view on the matter, connecting the improvement of the usage with the popularization of the traditional narratives through new channels, pointing to mass media, new technologies, and artistic performances like *kapa haka*, between others. As part of this, he commented on the usage of Internet as a useful tool, but with caution, considering the need of a proper background to any Māori content related to traditional knowledge.

In regards to the artistic avenue, just like some of the scholars, he used as an example the staging of “*Māui* and the Gods”, and how he showed it to his *tuakana* students at the *Kura Kaupapa* school thanks to a DVD that was produced with the performance³⁰. At the same time, he commented on the works of transliteration of old language and formal speech into new manifestations, referring particularly to the case of the Māori staging of Shakespeare’s “*The Merchant of Venice*”, as an interesting model.

In this sense, he asserted that an improvement would be to make better connections with non-Māori audiences through the usage of these new mediums, but also through the presence of more traditional storytellers that could reach out, and put the stories in a Māori context. The latter would have the final objective of enhancing the appreciation for Māori culture in a broader sense and for a broader population.

30 It was through this medium that I was also able to see the performance, thanks to a Māori scholar who kindly lent it to me, proving in a certain way the reach of it.

In connection to this issue though, Te Ao criticised the lack of variety in Māori resources connected with the stories, particularly regarding new technologies, affirming that

(...) I don't think the Ministry or whoever makes resources are actually keeping up with the new technologies and...feeding those stories to our children in different ways, I mean if I want to get a story of *Mahuika*, I'd have to put it on tape, you know what I mean? I'll have to put that on a CD myself, it's not something that...hmm...they will do, if you know what I mean? So it's not happening in such...hmm...I think we have an opportunity to actually complement each other, it doesn't have to just be oral from the teacher, can be in video, it can be in CD's, it can be in any sort of form, but I don't think that the resourcing side of it is catching up with...but I do know in English speaking schools you can get the story of the "Three Little Pigs", all on tapes, all on videos, all in books, you can't necessarily get the story of *Mahuika*,...you can get it in a book, but could you find a CD to complement that, or a video to complement that?

According to Te Ao, it seemed that Māori schools were in a constant -and unfair- race to "catch up" with the resources of the mainstream schooling system, relying on the teachers to do the catch up and make the resources themselves. In the same line of the artistic avenue, Marama asserted that in the case of the *Kura*, an improvement in the usage of the stories would be the staging of a 'production' "to make it come to life" and in that way connect it in a more significant way with the children and their families.

On the more technically pedagogical side of it, Marama highlighted the necessity of more preparation and research by the teachers, in the area of traditional narratives, again despite the fact that their standard in the *Kura Kaupapa* school was considered by her as very high. Partly, the latter was asserted because of her strong conviction that the skills of the storyteller -and not only the knowledge of the story- do matter, and therefore, the impact of practice would be of paramount importance.

Finally, considering the case of the Māori unit in a mainstream school, in Eddie's perspective main improvements could be obtained through the contact with legitimized knowledge sources, in this case, the *kaumatua*, elders with the oral knowledge of the stories. The contact with the sources would necessarily entail the connection with the *marae*, as the traditional environment for the sharing of Māori knowledge, impregnated with the customs and the language, and where these elders can be more easily found dwelling. Therefore, the ideal for Eddie -similar to what Terehia asserted- would be to

have the people with the knowledge as guest speakers in the lessons at school. As Eddie said, connecting with “people brought up with it, and get their versions of the stories, it's something different. Because some things can't be said on paper, you know?”.

F) Social axis: personal experience with stories

Another important aspect in the understanding of the usage of the traditional stories, particularly in the case of the *Kura Kaupapa Māori* school, is the personal history and relationship between the teachers and the narratives. Believing that the previous experiences with them would in a way or another shape the teachers' practice, they were asked about this, allowing them to expand their answers and connect them to any other topic they thought could be important.

According to Te Ao, she did not have a close relation with stories as a child, stressing the fact that her father did not teach her Māori because of the social backlash at that time, being her father part of the generation which was actively discouraged - physical violence included- of speaking *te reo Māori*. Consequently, Te Ao connected her childhood experience to her current sense of responsibility to pass the Māori language and knowledge on to the next generations. The latter would have been influenced also by her decision to put her daughter in a *Kōhanga Reo*, which motivated her to learn Māori language and then to follow a teaching career. In terms of memories, she recalled the influence of a radio programme that she listened to when a child, in which ‘Western tradition’ stories were told in English, and some occasions in which her father told her some Māori stories related to his area

(...) every now and again dad would tell us one from when he was a kid about his area and stuff like that, not necessarily about the more commonly known stories, like *Mahuika*, the separation of *Rangi* and *Papa*, but more things pertaining to his area, where he came from so, yeah, but I couldn't remember them now, I just remember sitting there and listening to him about it (laughs) bummer! I wish I could remember!

In a similar manner, Vicki recalled a minimal contact as a child with Māori contents, like singing sometimes at school a Māori song, as a poor representation of how Māori culture was lived and portrayed in mainstream school system. In her view, this limited contact happened partly because her parents pertaining to the “smacked” generation and consequently did not teach her the language, and this lack of Māori language would have affected the transmission of certain contents, like stories.

Nevertheless, she maintained contact with *Māoritanga* through social occasions, which involved going back to the *marae*, encountering Māori language again as an adult, which she links to an 'identity' need.

In terms of the kind of stories delivered, she asserted that the stories that her father told them were generally from the recent past, or very old, and occasionally he would give them stories from a more intermediate time frame, linked to characters such as *Hongi hika* or *Hone heke*, as she asserts “my father would sometimes give us examples of great people in the past, but he talked about *Rongo*, he would talk about...so he was not limited, because my dad is not a limited man, so we were never limited”.

An interest aspect in her discourse though, was the account of her father’s dialogic style when delivering the stories and having conversations, but at the same time it could be also a ‘riddle’ style. In her view, he would give her stories, but it was difficult for her to get to the point, or decipher the final message, affirming that

(...) he would give us stories, yeah, and sometimes they wouldn't make sense, or I couldn't get the point, I never got the point, because they were just miles way up there, one day I might get them, one day I may recall...oh! I do, occasionally I recall stories as I get older and grow, these things begin to make a point, make sense to me, “Ahhh! That's what he was talking about!” you know, and it's like a thought that is way out on a limb... miles away, yeah...great thinker, hmm, different paradigm...

It is interesting to draw a comparison with what Waiatara explained about her own experience being instructed as an adult by a Māori mentor, in the sense of a very similar situation, with a very similar dynamic in terms of a thinking process fostering, triggered by the usage of stories

(...) he told me stories, ...he told me stories all the time..., but back then I was so kind of.., out of.. instead of being “normal” I couldn't understand what he was doing, and I found that quite...frustrating?, because I'd ask questions and he would tell me a story.., and I'd ask another question and he would tell me another story, you know, and then finally one day I just said to him “Why don't you just tell me the answer?!” and the thing he replied to me was “Who am I to take away your learning?”, and I've never forgotten that, and when later I realized that every answer I was looking for, was in those stories, but I'd forgotten how to.., how to know that, to look for that...

These particular examples would provide an interesting evidence of what was termed in the literature review as “mediational devices”, particularly in the sense of the thinking processes and the development of higher mental functions, an issue that will be discussed in depth in the discussion section of the study.

In the same way as the previous cases, Simon characterizes himself as a second language learner, who was raised in a *marae* and followed the *tikanga*, in spite of not being taught the language as a child. Again, the root cause for this is identified by him in the fact that his father was also part of the “smacked” generation, and spoke Māori at the *marae* with other speakers, but not at home, something that changed when Simon learned how to speak in Māori and started to practice it together. Therefore, his early contact with the traditional stories was restricted, being difficult to learn them from the *kaumatua* when at the *marae*, orators referred to the traditional narratives in their *kōrero*, on special occasions.

However, some of the stories were taught at his school in English -as it was seen in the 'settings and procedures' section- where they were transmitted just as 'simple narrations' or as 'untrue' stories, disconnected from the main Māori corpus and background, hence with no epistemological roots. In Simon's view, the acquisition of the language would add a whole new dimension to the stories, enabling the person to understand new facets and deeper meanings, partly because of the connections to many other cultural expressions and understandings.

When asked about her experience with traditional stories as a child, Marama basically stated that, in terms of general environment, in the sense of mainstream social context, there was a lack of support for Māori culture, with very few stories transmitted in the educational system. This environment affected her early learning process regarding Māori culture, with no contacts at school or in her urban context, but maintaining the link with her Māori background through their rural family *marae*, visited for special social occasions. In this way, these conditions ended up setting a dual relationship with Māori culture, while she moved between these two different 'worlds' or social contexts.

Interestingly, Marama also recalled memories of Sunday stories radio broadcasts, where few Māori stories were told, like the one of “*Marama-the Moon*”, and one about the Kiwi bird, although she stated that it was delivered without the deeper meanings associated to its figure. These deeper contents she learned about through her adult education and through the work in the *Kura*, stressing the fact that most of the

knowledge of traditional Māori stories was acquired through her personal development, in her adult education process.

Nevertheless, through the contact with her *marae* and her family members there, Marama asserted that the stories she heard from her parents and grandparents were in general 'cautionary tales' in which “they were teaching us respect”, associated to practical ends, and mainly for protection. In saying this she further explained the differences between more local, cautionary stories and the 'big narratives', distinguishing two types of *kōrero* (speech) in a *marae*; one very formal, utilized by skilled speakers, which regularly quoted big narratives and proverbs, and the *kōrero* of people doing tasks apart from the formal speech area, including the children. In her view, these kinds of experiences also influence the sorts of stories that people end up knowing and using; any disruption in the regular processes of advancement from one stage to the other in this more traditional context would also affect the final result in terms of the expected skills.

G) Connection with *whakataukī* and other cultural expressions

Another aspect developed by the teachers when they were interviewed was the connections with other cultural expressions. In regards to this, because of my own interest in the links between *whakataukī* and traditional narratives observed in the literature, I asked them to comment on this aspect. This is how Te Ao mentioned other 'tools' in the educational activities, like the usage of art, the *whakapapa*, *whakataukī*, and *kīwaha* (idioms) between others, asserting that “they all work together”. Nevertheless, she stressed the fact that stories worked well with other cultural expressions as “a way of engaging the imagination”.

In a similar way, Simon characterised the Māori proverbs as “manifold” and “deep”, probably used as normal language in the old days, but currently used as part of the formal speech in meetings. This metaphorical language or *huahuatau* would be used accordingly to the audience and context, where all these manifestations would come together as *te reo Māori*, asserting that “they're all linked up-pretty holistic”. One of the expressions highlighted by Simon -*tauparapara*, a chant used to start a speech according to Ryan (1997:288)- was further developed by Marama as a different type of narrative, construed as “real” or “more true”, which she defined as what a *kamatua* would actually start off with when doing a *kōrero*. This goes hand in hand with the differentiation made by her between two types of proverb defined as “basically a

sentence that tells a whole story”: *whakataukī* and *whakatauākī*, the latter being a proverb with known authorship.

Finally, it is relevant to give a concrete example of the pervasiveness of permeable boundaries among certain Māori cultural constructs. Marama, referring to the children, affirmed that “we teach them *whakataukī*, we teach them *tauparapara*, *whakatauākī* and those are what I also call Māori stories, I don't know if that is the sort of stories that you refer to, but they are Māori stories you know”. Therefore, it is clear that from her perspective, *whakataukī*, *tauparapara*, and *whakatauākī* could be construed as Māori stories or narratives, coming from particular *iwi* and linked to particular reasons in terms of their transmission.

Chapter 5

Discussion:

What I have been trying to argue along the different sections of the present study can be seen as a rather “simple” idea, but perhaps because of its simplicity it may be easily overlooked by academic approaches to the broader matters of the linkages between sociocultural variables and education. Part of this pseudo-omission is also triggered by a very important aspect that has been succinctly mentioned in the research, and that is the fact that, for Indigenous Peoples, most of the theoretical framework presented and analysed here works as an obvious -almost transparent- basic assumption. There is nothing new or innovative in the sole understanding of traditional narratives as educational tools, a well known resource for them, and most of their intricacies as complex, flexible and far reaching devices are better understood by them in their own contexts of use, than by multiple scholars specialized in the field.

Because of the aforementioned situation, indigenous scholars have written less about the place and roles played by traditional narratives in their cognitive and educational frames, compared with other educational, political and economical issues of greater urgency. In this sense, the state of affairs follows the understandable pattern described by Smith (1999:10,169-179), in which the concerns of Indigenous Peoples and therefore the research issues that present more interest for them, do not always coincide with external perspectives, and in several cases just contribute to describe and analyse topics that are already clear for them, or for which the indigenous knowledge have enough explanations and specific understandings.

Considering the position described before, my intention in this study has been double: in first place, it has aimed to show recent scholarly approaches to the field that may help academics from related disciplines to better understand the importance and benefits of traditional narratives for the cognitive development of individuals, together with the knowledge construction and transmission functions vital for all human societies. Taking into account the particular way in which Western epistemology frames the minds of people, and the very distinct models it establishes to understand the world, I believe that a study of this nature might work as a bridging effort between different epistemological settings in regard to these cultural constructs. In other words, the

articulations portrayed here are aimed to present in a more comprehensible way sociocultural constructs that have been used for many years by Indigenous Peoples -in this specific one by Māori people- in ways that Western perspectives have abandoned progressively, and therefore, have lost fundamental insights and connections regarding their use.

It is necessary then to address the fact that this study situates itself in the very cracks of the friction points between the Western academic epistemology and the Māori epistemological models, starting from the way in which the concept of “mythology” has developed in scholarly interpretations (see Appendix 3), and the roles that these narratives play in current times. What may be concluded from the epistemological directive lines detailed here is that, among the various differences between those perspectives, the Māori approach presents a very strong “epistemethic” structural arrangement, fairly common to other “Traditional Knowledge” frames (Nakashima and Elias 2002: 9-10). This is not to say that this aspect is absent from the Western system, but it clearly plays a lesser role, on several occasions dominated by the criteria that considers only short-term results and tend to be related to power.

To illustrate this argument I will take as an example *Tāne*'s three baskets of knowledge story, which I believe clearly constitutes a model to think about the connotations of knowledge, the boundaries and the ethical demands associated to it. It seems that from the strong sense of connectedness between elements in the world portrayed in Māori narratives and supported by the *whakapapa* notion, knowledge is non detachable from social aspects and therefore affects this level too. This is why it is bounded by “epistemethic” considerations in a way that Western knowledge does not, with its “compulsion for dissection”, tending to have a separate perspective to tackle it (the ethics of research), but not as an inseparable, embedded aspect of it.

In second place, the research has intended to take a further step in the comprehension of the use of traditional narratives as cognitive and educational tools through concrete “anthropological” approaches to a field situation. The latter has been done in order to contrast the uses and understandings of the people that are employing these -as cultural models and/or mediating devices- with the information present at a theoretical level. The former have provided the study with some of the elements necessary to begin to understand the complex current settings informing such perspectives and practices, together with new aims and goals present in the real actors of the intergenerational exchange of those tools.

In a certain way, the issues discussed in this study are also closely related with a more general anthropological concern, an important matter that has been seriously debated for a long time, and that is the problem of “meaning” and its level of common use and understanding. The use of cultural models, especially of those conventionalized or assumed as common for a given group, clashes with some anthropological views about multivocality and the impossibility to address a collective or general cultural background. As Shore (1991:9) puts it, “The problem of shared meaning in a culture has been bracketed even before it has been well understood, and transformed into problems of history and power”, a perspective that pushed to its extreme form generates, in my view as in other authors' perspectives, a short-sighted approach. The latter would ignore the centrality of social action as collectively meaningful human behaviour, a misunderstanding in part stemmed from the lack of incorporation of new discoveries from cognitive studies and a certain fixation on folk “thinking process” theories (Shore 1991:9; Bloch 1998:16, 23, 44).

The multiple functions of traditional narratives

In an effort to summarize the most important aspects of the arguments exposed in the research, as a sort of central beam for its structure is the notion that traditional narratives perform several tasks as sociocultural constructs. In first place, and perhaps the most apparent one is that they are vehicles for the transmission of knowledge of different kinds, in a range that goes from very concrete tasks to abstract moral understandings and explanations about the world and its elements. The latter tend to incorporate deep metaphysical conceptions, interconnected with the social and non-human spheres and their continual exchanges.

The aforementioned view is precisely what was found through the empirical approach of the research, in the data that emerged from the interviews and the participant observation. In the former, the view of scholars and teachers was that they worked not only as tools for the transference of knowledge, but also as tools that reflected and fostered certain thinking processes.

As complex constructs, they were viewed as multi-layered, polymorphous or multi-purpose devices, where the image of “a diamond with different facets” was directly used by Ngahuia Whiu, asserting that every time it was observed, it shined in different ways. These diversity of light reflectance would represent, in my view, the

traditional narratives' sensitivity to the contexts in which they are used. It must be remembered then -in order to avoid an image of rigidity and predetermination- that all “mediating devices” are deeply context and task dependent constructs. Therefore, for a given situation, a formula, a picture or a “laundry list” could be preferred over a story, something that I witnessed during my observations and that was put forward by the teachers of the *Kura* when they explained that several mediums were used in classes. It is precisely the net of complex connections between all of these devices the most remarkable aspect of their dynamics.

Therefore, it can be seen that this first layer in the analysis of traditional narratives is in turn interconnected with other functions and structural aspects of them. While the contents of the stories are very important, they do not exhaust the possible uses and ways in which they perform several functions. It is here when the concepts of schemas and cultural models come into play, enabling a novel analysis in the matter. Traditional narratives would work as dynamic cognitive clusters that set guiding lines for individuals to behave and think about the world; some of them would work as specific models for specific situations, and probably would help in the generation of idiosyncratic models. Other narratives work as greater, encompassing models shared by a given community, understood as foundational schemas interconnected with various other cultural models, influencing publicly displayed sociocultural constructs in several different levels.

This is why, from my point of view, the image of a traditional narrative as a multi-layered construct would be better represented by a “marble cake” model of diverse layers interconnecting, rather than simply formed by separate strata. We must remember that the stories are not isolated “chunks” of information, but elements that interconnect with several other stories, other narrative forms and other mediating devices. In this sense, it could be said that traditional stories tend to be perceived non-analytically, as “gestalts”, although they can be modelled analytically if necessary. They would work as structural metaphors which schematize cultural models represented and/or embedded in them, depending of the point of view and type of story analysed.

Therefore, traditional stories would provide not only the knowledge in terms of contents but would also put forward a framework in terms of pre-existing and prescriptive categories, i.e. particular ways of thinking, patterns deeply linked with performative aspects and with abstract categories rooted in “language”. The latter would stress the importance of their original language versus translated versions. An example

of this is the term *whakapapa*; if translated only as “genealogy” it would transform and re-arrange several meanings of the stories that contain the construct. Based on my own experience on the matter, and not being a Māori language speaker, I could nevertheless see that, when trying to interpret the concept in a broader way and not only as genealogy, other levels of comprehension and intellectual effort had to be displayed. This insight, I believe, would be the basis for the view of stories as “thinking devices”, in terms of the structure and also because of their influences in shaping a given “thinking process”.

The latter brings me to another concrete case of the usage of the narratives as “thinking devices” in the school. I could observe that when the *kaiako* used stories (not only the traditional ones), they displayed a strategy in which several questions about events, alternatives and other facts were directed to the children intermittently. Therefore, rather than using them as simple, univocal message containers, they were used to mobilize and foster rational processes, apart from practicing more complex uses of their language. Consequently, more than giving answers, they were modelling and installing a particular way to “think about” and “through” the stories, or in Vygotskian terms, dragging the development of superior psychological functions. Interestingly though, when the teachers were asked about the procedures in the usage of stories, a slight hesitance emerged, a difficulty in putting into words their actions. It seemed to be a less conscious “procedural” knowledge, consequently hard to explain in a declarative or “recipe mode”³¹.

It is useful to draw a comparison between this kind of usage of stories and variants in terms of kind of narratives and/or kinds of use. An example of this is presented by Wertsch (1991:77-79), when he explained how Kohlberg's dilemma was interpreted in a different way by a group of boys compared to a group of girls. The former tended to stick to logic connections and sets of abstract rules linked to the situation, but the girls used it as a “thinking device”, raising new questions about the problem, looking at it as a device with which their voices could interact, instead of construing it as the source of an unalterable, univocal message. This last view of the device is akin to the one that Bakhtin (1981, cited in Wertsch 1991:78) characterised as typical of “authoritative discourses”, which would not function as generators of

31 This is indeed a phenomenon that would be of great interest to study in more detail. The latter would imply figuring out if this is a skill developed in their training colleges or if it comes from their domestic sociocultural background, among other possibilities.

meaning, and therefore cannot be used as “thinking devices”. These discourses would demand unconditional allegiance, rejecting flexible transitions or creative variants, like religious, political or moral texts.

Therefore, it is important to bear in mind that Māori stories, -according to the literature and to the perspectives and usage of scholars and teachers- are not used as authoritative discourses. Although there is a sense of sacredness regarding the most important Māori narratives, this does not resemble a sense of rigidity towards the corpus of stories, and a considerable degree of malleability in their usage is evident. This would connect with what Rapport and Overing (2007:315) argue when analysing the academic approaches to traditional narratives, and particularly to mythology, questioning the representational view of myth, or the view that there could be a one-to-one relation between myths and social structures. Consequently, what is behind the usage of traditional narratives would be far more intricate than a pure representational task, as Rapport and Overing (2007:315) assert “Myths and mythic narration are more complicated than this, in that they are often intended more as a reflection upon reality than a reflection of it”. It is precisely that reflection upon reality the aspect that is mediated -in the studied Māori case- by the stories and many associated narrative forms, in their diverse material expressions.

The case of *whakapapa*

Taking the case of the *whakapapa* pattern as a central one in this discussion, it can be seen how it plays a fundamental explicative and supportive role in the more general setting of Māori cosmogony and cosmology, in which the different stories revised in the third chapter of this research are necessarily embedded. The *whakapapa* provides a blueprint for the explanation of how things came into existence in certain ways in the universe, but it also works as a map to orient individuals and communities in different dimensions of life, like kinship patterns, but also that of the surrounding species (Roberts, Haami, Benton, Satterfield, Finucane, Henare and Henare 2004:1-4). In other words, it is a “foundational schema” (Shore 1996: 53-54) that can be applied to natural classification, social classification and socio-historical orientation, together with cosmological and cosmogonical accounts. The aforementioned would also show, as I stated before in the study, the substantial overlapping between the different kinds of models in regard to their functions.

This argument has strong support from views such as the one sustained by Hakiwai (1996:52), in which he asserts that the Māori world is a world of unity and coherence, in which people, mountains, rivers, stars, the whole universe is connected through this genealogy pattern. In terms of its strength and importance as a “social orientation” model, he asserts that “Through genealogy we identify our kin, relationships are known, and expectations and responsibilities stem from it. The world is a big family tree where everything has a place and position of importance” (Hakiwai 1996:52). It is not surprising then, that Waiatara commented to me, as a very natural fact “remember that among Māori, everything has to do with connections”.

In this sense, it was particularly interesting that during an observation in the *tuakana* level at the school, as a spontaneous dynamic the youngsters started asking me questions about my country and my background. After a while, Simon started to help me with my limited understanding of the language and participated with the students in the activity, highlighting geographical facts and other aspects which I assumed he, as a teacher, was interested in showing them. Consequently, when more questions emerged about my family, I began to annotate on the whiteboard names and connections, conscious that it would be the easiest way to explain my *whakapapa*. At the moment, due to the positive feedback and engagement- I felt that the activity not only clarified my place regarding my family, but in a certain way made my position in the *Kura* more comprehensible and “digestible”, because I was being “framed” by a well known device which provided more information about this outsider presence³².

Therefore, it could be said that *whakapapa* works as a sub-text, as an organizing principle broader than its mere emergence in an isolated story. This apparent isolation is in turn only an illusion, product of a “cookie cutter” perspective imposed by a given analytical frame or a subject; each story represents part of a complex matrix of stories interconnected through *whakapapa*, as a foundational schema to be delivered and reinforced through these same narratives. In this sense, the schema would work as a structural part of the stories and, at the same time, as a structuring principle.

In synthesis, my hypothesis in the particular case of the *whakapapa*, construed as a foundational schema, is that the eventual instruction received through the use of

32 I had a similar experience with the *pōtiki* level, in a much more simplified way, where I gave the children some information about my background using the *pepehā* pattern, which not surprisingly they understood perfectly well. I could observe, in fact, that family was a big concern even for the very young, when they asked me if the people portrayed in a postcard from Chile that I gave to their teacher were my *whānau*.

traditional narratives integrating this schema seems to go directed not only towards a thought process “about” the *whakapapa* as a powerful orientational model or about its contents, for instance, but also directed towards the process of thinking “in” or “through” *whakapapa*, using it as a “meditational device” and generating new applications of the model to novel situations. Therefore, people would be instructed in how to think in a distinct way through the use of that particular cognitive pattern -partly introduced through traditional narratives-, just as in mainstream formal schooling students are instructed to think “in” and “through” a four dimensional matrix, and to interpret the surrounding world according to such pattern.

So, in this way, for example both the creation myth, with its fundamental setting of the all encompassing *whakapapa* and *Tāne*’s quest for knowledge story install a way to think about the world and its related knowledge in the listener’s mind, a model that is negotiated through the personal experiences associated, the social models present in the *whānau*, in the probable discussions about the stories, and their uses –frequently by mention of small chunks of them- in other oral performances displayed in *hui* and several other gatherings. All of this would reveal parts of the complex structure supporting the “oral dynamics” of knowledge, a system in which its various parts reinforce the others by mutual citation and through differentiated distribution of it would secure its handling and transmission.

Just as the Inuit girls use the “storyknifing” activity as a means to reconstruct the kinship system of their communities (Bennett, Nelson and Baker 1992:139), listening and talking about myths and other stories that highlight the *whakapapa* models would help children to arrange the kinship information and natural classifications, between other functions. The continuous use of the *whakapapa* related to genealogical matters would serve as a basic pattern and training from which other possible uses and applications would flourish, as it is the case of its use as classification for elements in the world and the consequences of their alteration. Although it is a function already established in the creation myths, the notion of interconnectedness between elements in the universe is further analysed through the model, as Roberts et al. (2004:21-24) state, but what is perhaps even more interesting and important is that as a cultural model is embedded in diverse traditional narratives working as mediating devices, playing a new role to support a political position regarding the genetic manipulation of plant and animal species in *Aotearoa*/New Zealand.

The aforementioned argument would connect with the perspective offered particularly by the teachers when they stressed the importance of traditional narratives in the school. What emerged clearly from their arguments was the intimate linkage between the stories and the notion of *whakapapa*, being probably the most vital aspect to be enforced in terms of its comprehension and usage. This would, in turn, reinforce the distinctive general organization of experience that such a model -or foundational schema- provides, which can be also called “world-view”. Taking into account Shore's argument, which states that “Educational institutions are among the prime ways in which a society explicitly tries to reproduce its worldview” (1996:126), the latter, with its embedded set of belief systems, would be weaved into the subjects lives by the pertinent educational institutions -*Kōhanga Reo*, *Kura Kaupapa Māori*, and *Whare wānanga*-, through the usage of specific cultural constructs (mediating devices), expressions and concepts.

Consequently, according to Shore (1996:116-135) just as “modularity”, an important “foundational schema” in the United States, influences homes, design, education, commerce, furniture, malls, etc., stemming from the industrial and political arrangements that emerged in the XIX century, *whakapapa* would influence the Māori epistemological basis and taxonomies, together with the spiritual, social, geographical and historical organisation of the world.

The power of narrative and its influence

In connection with the previous topic, Māori teachers and scholars expressed the view that stories and the telling of them related to a different world-view, raising the issue of the way in which narratives influence people and their cognitive functioning. As an ubiquitous aspect in human societies, perhaps it is the power of narrative to create temporal order which makes it so universally pervasive, together with its potential to offer new versions of the established order (Rapport and Overing 2007:319).

However, what gives momentum to the research on the issues regarding narrative is, according to Roberts (2007:9), the widely accepted idea that a single narrative and its relationship to a society can tell us much about several aspects of its functioning, including the fact that “there is much *more* to be discovered, as Williams (1980) notes, in multiple versions of narratives and their changes over time” (Roberts 2007:9). From a more specific cognitive perspective, narrative would afford

“representational tools for addressing the problem of how to chunk the ongoing stream of experience into bounded, cognizable, and thus usable structures” (Herman 2003: 173). According to the latter, stories would help organize experience through giving people the possibility to choose from the total set of “sequentially and concurrently available inputs; pre-process those inputs into internally differentiated chunks with (...) a beginning, middle, and end; and then use those temporally structured segments as a basis for further cognitive operations on new experiential inputs” (Herman 2003: 173).

This view of narrative and stories performing a fundamental cognitive task has roots, as we have seen, in the structuralist approach of folklorists and anthropologists. In this sense, Dundes (1968:xv) argued that Propp’s work in the morphology of folktales laid the basis for its consideration in studies of thinking and learning processes. The questions raised by this author connect with aspects such as the extent to which the structure of the fairy tale related to the structure of the ideal success story in a culture; how precisely is folktale structure learned -including extrapolations- by continuous exposure to them and whether actual behaviour is critically influenced by the type of folktale structure found in a given culture.

Connected with the aforementioned, Herman (2003:182) asserts that viewed as a tool for thinking, stories can be studied in a more specific manner, or “microanalytically”, suggesting ways in which they provide models for behaviour in physical as well as moral-cultural worlds. This would again interconnect with what has been argued by Shore (1996) and D’Andrade (1995) in terms of the usage of schemas, models and templates. The example given by Herman (2003) consists of stories in which the protagonist is seen orienting herself in space as well as time. This kind of narrative would consequently function to support human navigational abilities, representing how agents trace particular trajectories through a complex, dynamically emergent spatial environment. As the author asserts “Putting the same point another way, narrative supports 'cognitive mapping' (Downs and Stea 1977; Gould and White 1986; Herman 2001b; Ostroff 1995), i.e., the process by which things and events are mentally modelled as being located somewhere in the world” (Herman 2003: 182).

All of this brings me to a particular instance in the school which I could observe first hand. In the *tuakana* level some of the students were working on their own, and being the teacher absent at that moment they spoke in English for a while, commenting about their weekend activities. Eventually, the conversation connected with a visit to a place out of Auckland and therefore with the family relations in the place; from that

point onwards they immediately started to discuss -in a natural way- about their *whakapapa* and the links to several *iwi* and *hapū*. It is my impression that these youngsters employed the *whakapapa* as cognitive tool to make sense of part of their distinct narratives regarding events and places. In this sense, I believe that their own narratives ended up utilizing the cognitive construct because of its pervasiveness among traditional Māori narratives, which in turn have in one way or another modelled the former.

My particular stance towards the issue would embrace Herman's (2003:183) view of narrative as “a resource for coordinating behavioural sequences with the progress of thought; stories are a tool for interweaving doing and thinking, navigating and knowing”. According to this author, the process of telling and interpreting stories would insert people into the environment they struggle to know and understand, indicating them at the same time that people cannot know their own world if they consider themselves outside of or beyond that world, or if the person merges with it randomly, in a structureless, indistinguishable way (Herman 2003:183). In the author's words

If cognition is, as Hutchins (1995a, 1995b) suggests, a functional gestalt, stories afford ways of differentiating between elements within that gestalt and assigning them complementary functional roles. (...) Insofar as it is distributed, intelligence requires, instead, an ongoing coordination of cognitive activities -an orchestration of precisely the sort that the telling and interpreting of stories entails. Most basically, then, stories furnish a way of structuring the individual-environment nexus, constituting a principled basis for sharing the work of thought. (Herman 2003:185)

From a cognitive psychology perspective, an interesting empirical support for the latter argument is presented by Rice (1980) and her experiment on the recall of unfamiliar traditional narratives. In her view, psychology was starting to appreciate the degree to which what anthropologists might call a “world view” affects even basic processes of comprehension. Consequently, their investigations have increasingly been aimed towards the comprehension of meaningful materials coinciding with cognitive anthropologists' efforts to provide formal descriptions of cultural knowledge. These studies would acknowledge what anthropologists have long known: that human beings are not simply “data-driven responders”, but active creators of meaningful environments. In turn, the aforementioned would stress the fact that comprehension of

the world is mediated by the prior knowledge that people have of it (Rice 1980:152, 155).

In her study -based on Bartlett's work- she used the schema concept which, as it was seen in previous sections of the thesis, is similar to concepts that are familiar to anthropologists as cognitive maps, plans, or rules. The difference between these lies though, in that the “schema” combines structural and processing aspects of knowledge, and therefore can be thought of as an abstracted pattern into or onto which information can be organized, like a set of rules (Rice 1980:152-153).

The experience consisted basically in the recall of unfamiliar traditional narratives (Inuit) by participants from the United States, which were read by them weeks before. The result of the experience was that stories were modified, sometimes radically, to fit them to the native's understanding of natural and social laws. In other words, what would happen is that when the story presented was alien or strange to the hearer, “his culturally derived schemata would find it necessary to distort the story somewhat, through additions or deletions, in the process of assimilating or comprehending it” (Rice 1980:156). In the author's view, these results showed clearly that cultural schemata are used in the comprehension of stories, resulting in the stereotyping in recall of both the form and the content of unfamiliar stories. The systematic distortion of the original stories so as to conform to the cultural expectations -of form and content- of the hearer would therefore show that, at least in the case of stories, it appears that comprehension would go hand-in-hand with the cultural background of people (Rice 1980:152-153).

Rice's approach to the issue is not new; apart from the references to Bartlett, according to Wertsch (2008:123) the notion of a schematic narrative template can be traced to a variety of sources, among which once again the Russian folklorist Vladimir Propp is more noticeable. From his ideas of generalized narrative forms, Wertsch (2008:123-124) –as Dundes (1968) suggested before him- proposes that specific templates may underlie a range of narratives in a cultural tradition, which would also include the narratives of collective memory. Nevertheless, in order to avoid rigid interpretations, this author also stresses the fact that “schematic narrative templates” would not be “universal archetypes”, belonging instead to particular narrative traditions, used on several occasions in an “unreflective, unanalytical and unwitting manner” (Bartlett 1995, cited in Wertsch 2008: 124) and expected to differ from one cultural setting to another.

Where would all of this leave us? As Rapport and Overing (2007:319-320) affirm, when trying to understand the ways in which human cognitive processes work, it must be taken into account the universality of human narration to throw some light on the matter, where the human “readiness or predisposition to organise experience into a narrative form” (Bruner 1990, cited in Rapport and Overing 2007: 319) would tell us something significant about human consciousness³³. In their view, members of a society or culture who share similar ways of organising, presenting and remembering information, and therefore, of knowing the world, shaped in an important degree by the narrative stock of their culture (Rapport and Overing 2007:322).

In other words, the modes of narration would be seen “as determining collective modes of perception, of the encoding of information and of its remembrance and recall”(Rapport and Overing 2007:323), or as it has been proposed in this study, as “models” with different reach according to the kind of narrative and to contexts. In this way, in sharing the knowledge to produce and read narratives in distinctive or conventional ways, members of a cultural group would “share ways of thinking about, of framing, schematising and memorising experience, and will thus come to share a collective memory (cf. R. Werbner 1991)” (Rapport and Overing 2007:323). The latter would also imply a collective work, an inheritance from the views and experiences of ancestors, something absolutely in tune with the Māori historical and epistemological perspectives. In terms of what Wertsch (2008) asserts, “Paraphrasing Mikhail Bakhtin (1981:293), this means that narratives are always half someone else's, and it leads to questions about how narrators can coordinate their voice with those of others that are built into the textual resources they employ” (122).

Finally, as a summary of the argument for the sociocultural determination of narrative and narration, it can be said that we perceive, anticipate, remember, tell stories and moralise from them in conventional ways, creating meaning out of experience through our narrative acts. The latter would be done only in terms of pre-existing and prescriptive categories, which have been handed down by previous generations. This would mean then, as Rapport and Overing (2007:323) affirm, that “We can but narrate ourselves in and into sociocultural space”. My argument regarding the latter would therefore be that the inherited conventional ways of ordering and understanding events

33 According to Wertsch (2008:122) “Bruner goes on to argue that narrative is “our preferred, perhaps even our obligatory medium for expressing human aspirations and their vicissitudes, our own and those of others. Our stories also impose a structure, a compelling reality on what we experience, even a philosophical stance” (2002:89)”.

would be strongly influenced by traditional narratives, which work transmitting contents in a declarative manner, but also installing a cognitive structure used in a dynamic and constructivist way, constituting in this sense, a procedural knowledge.

The interplay between the “ideal” and the “material”

Another angle in the study of traditional narratives as “highly objectified verbal conventions” working as stable cultural institutions “in the world” (Shore 1996:52), has been its use in the shape of more concrete devices to mediate the cognitive understandings and development of individuals. In this case, individuals would be made part of their social groups through these kinds of devices, which are also understood as cultural models, but limited and instantiated in one way or another through a material means. In this way, as ideal/material entities they would be present in the public space of the interpersonal exchanges, regularly used by other members to introduce new ones into a shared corpus of understandings. This of course is never accomplished in an absolute way, leaving enough space in the internalization process for personal variations and idiosyncratic adaptations.

The encounter between the ideal and material worlds is interestingly depicted in Māori culture through the way in which oral tradition informs the material world. This interaction would also show how the process of “information compression” was progressively stylised and used as a surrounding matrix by Māori through the development of their complex arts³⁴. This can be witnessed in the words of Hakiwai (1996:54) when he explained that “Maori [sic] artworks are like history books brought to life and transformed through the creative process to provide meaning and significance”. In his view, *taonga* or treasures embody the histories, myths and traditions, memories, experiences and stories of Māori people, “all those things that represent our culture”. Furthermore, Hakiwai (1996:54) asserts that messages and *kōrero* or stories associated with these treasures would “provide the meaning and significance that are central to Maori [sic] art”. In this sense, every Māori art expression would be a manifestation of a larger whole, where “Tribal traditions, the stories of ancestors, genealogical relationships, symbols and metaphors, the *taha wairua* or

34 An interesting example of sophisticated mnemotechnic assisting devices in the case of Māori cultural products, like the ones that Vygotsky frequently used as classical examples of mediating devices, are the mentioned *rākau papatupuna* or “notched sticks” used to assist in the recitations and other oral performances.

spiritual element that unifies our world” represent the essential elements of their art (Hakiwai 1996:54)³⁵.

A noticeable case would be that of the carvings, in which the traditional narratives are conveyed through a smaller number of key aspects depicted in each figure or composition, like the indented edges of the carved spiral patterns, called *Te-Kata-a-Kae* (“The Laughter of *Kae*”), which refers directly to the story of *Tinirau*’s stolen whale (Parker and Stanton 2003:416), also called “*taratara-a-kai* or *taratara-a-kae*, where *taratara* means prickly, barbed, peaked or even crooked” (Neich 1996:89). According to this author, the difference in the spelling depends on whether the name is simply related to food (*kai*) or to the story of *Tinirau*, in which “*Kae*’s guilt was revealed when he was made to laugh, thereby showing his crooked teeth, *taratara*, with the flesh of the whale still caught between them”³⁶(Neich 1996:89).

This of course cannot be understood if one lacks the knowledge of the story, which in turn informs the listener about a series of moral dilemmas, but when the instruction has been delivered, these deep messages can be thought about with the sole act of looking at the pattern, as a condensed text would be read. This would also happen with tattoo patterns, paintings, and weaving patterns, like the already mentioned *poutama tukutuku* panel by Royal Tangaere (1997:10), which in turn refers to *Tāne*’s quest for knowledge, interpreted with novel implications, showing its flexible properties.

Bearing in mind examples such as those we have recently mentioned, together with the analysis previously displayed, is that the following case put forward by Hakiwai seems much clearer

Pāki Harrison, a well-respected master carver of the Ngāti Porou tribe, says that the most important element in carving is, *te kupu*, the word, or *ngā kōrero*, the message. 'Without the *kōrero* you have nothing to carve. Without the *kōrero* you have nothing to learn. Without it you have nothing to understand'(Winitana 1994: 14). 'The principal component of carving is *kōrero*. Many people think it's how it looks, but that's just one

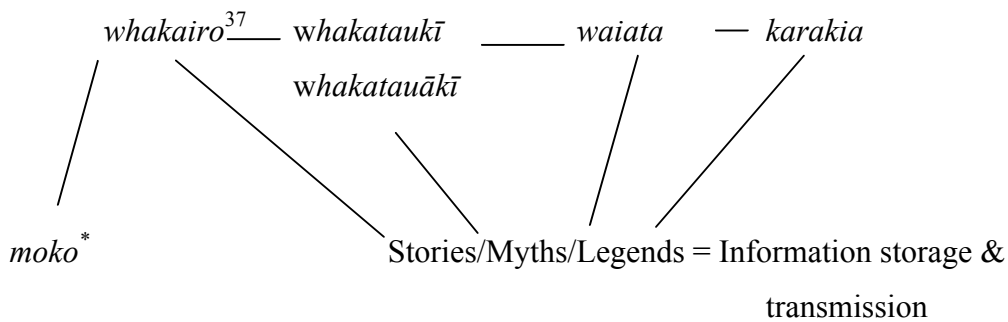
35 However, as the well known Māori artist Arnold Wilson reminded me in an informal meeting, there is interplay between the individual/personal contents and experiences of the observer, projected over the art form, and the elements put there by the artist. Bearing this in mind would prevent us from embracing a static and passive perspective of “art interpretation” and perception (Arnold Wilson, oral communication, 27 November 2008).

36 According to the author, “Since this pattern is mainly used on storehouses where whales are the predominant motif on the front barge boards (i.e. In the Hauraki to eastern Bay of Plenty area), both these names make sense in linking food, whales and storehouses” (Neich 1996:89-90).

consideration. Your carving has to say something to people' (Winitana 1994:20). (Hakiwai 1996:54)

Connecting some of the aforementioned ideas, the interplay between the ideal and the material in regards to “mediating devices” can be schematised through the following diagram (with only some examples among many possible expressions), which considers the view that several cultural expressions work together and are used in that manner in the *Kura Kaupapa* school:

Fig.1



To a certain extent, as it has already mentioned, there is an important level of knowledge concentration and condensation in the top cultural expressions in the diagram, which in turn can display interconnections with each other. Consequently, certain themes are mentioned or referred to in a brief way, such as in *whakataukī*; not surprisingly it has been repeated in a couple of interviews used here that they represent short stories, contained in one line. Nevertheless, the basis would be formed by the broader narratives, mediating devices in themselves, which inform other mediating devices for perhaps more specific objectives or for more specific conditions present in given contexts. Therefore, considering the connection between cultural expressions, and the mutual activation of them in the appropriate environments, it is understandable why the surrounding artistic elements in the *Kura Kaupapa* school displayed abundant Māori forms and styles, and why the students were encouraged to use them in creative ways in their own work.

37 I have used the word *whakairo* for “carving”, considering mainly wood carving (*whakairo rākau*), but also other possible cases in contemporary trends, like stone carving (Neich 1996: 69).

* I have placed *moko* below because, although it is interlinked with carving, it would be more associated to information of social nature, related to ranks, descent and personal skills, than with traditional narratives (Simmons 1997). It is of course a tentative diagram for the sake of an analytical exercise and therefore not authoritative.

Modifications and adaptations in the usage of traditional narratives

In the present study, it is assumed that the surrounding sociocultural dynamics, with its political and economical variables, present a new scenario and challenges for Māori people. These conditions would ask from them adaptations and use of novel strategies to cope with, and these are represented by the re-utilization and re-adaptation of old mediating devices and basic cultural models in the form of foundational schemas. This would prove, in a sense, the usefulness, flexibility and pervading influence of these tools as fundamental components of the Māori understanding of the world, giving further evidence of the well-stated perspective among Māori people of their position as “people who walk backwards into the future”, looking for answers to contemporary challenges in the wisdom of the past deeds of ancestors and mythological heroes (Roberts et al. 2004:21). Likewise, the situation described could be used as an indication of the suitability of the cognitive approach presented here to explain the dynamics of certain cultural constructs interpreted as cultural models and mediating devices.

It is important also to mention the acknowledgement of the use of traditional stories as cognitive devices in contexts where they provide support in the scaffolding process present in developmental contexts. As it was previously explained, the Māori conception of gradual ascension represented through the *poutama* pattern and *Tāne's* quest for knowledge is matched with Vygotsky's notion of the Zone of Proximal Development and the neo-Vygotskian concept of scaffolding. In the process of providing support to a learner and then retiring it when a certain ability is developed, the guidance of more experienced people -elder siblings, parents, relatives and/or teachers- is fundamental, being the main source of support for the internalization of sociocultural constructs. It is in this process where traditional narratives play a significant role as tools that convey whole packages of information, covering diverse areas through seemingly a single action. Therefore not only a single, very concrete or specific topic is addressed by a story, but also spiritual and moral aspects related to it, and also other elements that are embedded in the oral transmission of knowledge (e.g. learning to hear, development of attention span, dialoguing patterns, social manners).

Another important idea to bear in mind is the notion of models and mediating devices as culturally and historically constructed elements, a fundamental understanding

that permits a complex and deeper grasp of their ties and functions in social settings. In fact, it is a conception that connects in an articulate way with other anthropological propositions that call attention to the multi-layered structure and dynamics of several social practices. In this sense, Bloch (2005:128) analyses the continual “deferential” chains present in the sets of conventions that frame the lives of individuals in society. These conventions would be also products of “a long historical process of communication and quotation, and which are experienced as 'given', that is, without specific minds intending them”(Bloch 2005:128). These conventions become so internalized that are assumed as unconscious, and in the author's view they are the object of deference, the creations of others in a long sequence of historical linkage that are quoted even though sometimes there is no particular understanding of them, but they are lived as truths nevertheless.

The latter interpretation can explain some of the characteristics of traditional narratives and their use, in fact, also matter of quotation of anonymous sources when thinking about their origins, mainly attributed to ancestors and divine beings. This creates a chain of quotations and, as we have seen in the Māori case, of responsibilities associated with the use and transmission of such conventions. Whether construed as cultural models or as mediating devices, traditional narratives would indeed reflect the collective, socio-historical sum of indeterminable others' comprehensions about the world that are passed on from generation to generation, with several levels of reshaping and remoulding responsive to contextual changes.

Another noticeable aspect to be analysed here, is the use of narrative as a way to turn “digestible” certain kinds of events, an evident aspect in a wide variety of traditions. For instance, Bettelheim’s (1976, cited in Shore 1996:59) notion of a secure space in fairy tales and folktales for the processing of basic fears is mirrored in the findings of Bennett, Nelson and Baker (1992: 140) when they assert that “storyknifing” “offers the girls a therapeutic palette on which their experiences can be described and then quickly wiped away (...) Fantasies and fears can be expressed, shared with close friends, and then wiped away”. In this same sense, Māori traditional narratives, with the depiction of several conflictive social situations, like the well known tension with the brother-in-law, seniority ranking in the families, or other moral dilemmas, and even through the representation of occult and esoteric powers in supernatural entities (e.g. *taniwha*) (Marsden n.d., cited in Royal 2003:19), provide a secure space for the cognitive and emotional processing of such conflictual forces, drawing them into a

dynamic equilibrium. Thus, the potential of Māori traditional narratives to enable individuals, specially children, to confront current complex and sometimes unpleasant life situations is another avenue to be further explored in the formal schooling settings of contemporary Māori education.

Māori stories and “History”

One of the emergent aspects in the fieldwork that must be highlighted is the way in which the participants construed the traditional narratives as part of their history/historical narratives. This was openly stated by teachers and scholars, affirming that stories were seen as a history of Māori people, regarding language, protocols and world-view and allowing a strong linkage with the past.

It is also important though to stress the fact that the distinction between the different genres of traditional narratives was quite blurred in their accounts, bringing back Jackson's (2002:27) argument about clear cut categories being “imposed” over the narratives. In this sense, it emerged that the best known myths and stories, or the more distinctive cycles are seen as a common starting point for Māori people, representing a common binding story-theme, regardless of *iwi* or *hapū*.

However, there is a whole array of local stories, connected to particular peoples and areas that tend to be less widespread, but not less important. In the view of some interviewees, precisely as a result of those strong ties with certain geographical areas and descent groups is that they should be taught. This would, in turn, emphasize the need to go back to those *marae* and -ideally- listen to the old local stories there, in order to make the link and accomplish a bridging effect. A better understanding of these local stories would give a better understanding of the socio-historical spot on which the person is placed, which in turn would help strengthening identity aspects and eventually those related to self-esteem.

According to Marama, these would be the kind of stories that are not in the books, stories about the *iwi* and the *whānau*, which would be “more true” as stories, in the sense of the historical links and backgrounds provided. This “intangible heritage” - as UNESCO characterises it³⁸- would be, in my perspective, particularly valuable

38 For more information about UNESCO's approach to the matter, visit the link http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=34325&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

because of its power to re-connect the social matrix, disrupted to a certain point by the intense migratory phenomenon from the rural areas to the cities, specially in the second half of the last century (Walker 2004:197-209; King 2003:469-487). What in fact emerged from some interviews was a “feeling” or perception of discontinuity in behavioural patterns, related to the relationship of individuals with the “Māori world” and the “Pākehā world”. The former was associated with the *marae*, the extended family, rural places and traditional stories, while the Pākehā world connected with the cities, mainstream education, isolation and prejudice. This breach was portrayed by some as something that prevented combinations; two different areas so apart that one of the scholars, when talking about her children, explained that they rather “go to” places where the Māoridom is performed, than “being” Māori all the time, as an ontological aspect.

It is therefore understandable that in the interviews, the participants expressed their concerns regarding the contact between the urban Māori and their *marae* of origin, as something that had to be reinforced. Relating to the aforementioned, I believe that traditional stories interact awkwardly across these discontinuous planes, seeming to flow in the physical spaces reconstructed and preserved by Māori³⁹, like urban *marae* or Māori educational institutions. Nevertheless, in the Pākehā arena things change and the dominant world-view inevitably interfere to a certain extent; personally, this was something that made me understand the insistence of the institution in maintaining the communication in Māori among the students.

Regarding this disjunction between worlds, again the *whakapapa* construct plays an important role as the structuring principle that connects generations, events and eras, always present as a background for the stories; this in fact was clearly stated by Terehia when she asserted that the Creation stories were a whole “story of genealogy”. As Hakiwai (1996:52-53) asserts, within the context of this “genealogical” pattern, an important dimension of the Māori world must be understood, which is the composite notion of time and place. In this way, the *whakapapa* would be “the common thread or principle of the Maori [sic] world by which people, events and history are linked, and the reason why Maori [sic] people behave as they do” (Hakiwai 1996: 53).

39 Interestingly, among Mapuche people in urban settings in Chile, something similar happens. As I could directly witness during the 90s, in several places around the capital city, community centres reproduce a space related to the rural south of the country (Mapuche territory). In these, traditional houses (*ruka*) are sometimes constructed and multiple rites performed, involving healing practices and religious events.

This particular framework, regarding the relation between “History” and the traditional narratives, brings me to its clash with the “Western” scientific view of historical accounts. Clearly “our commonsense view of history” as a “corpus of ascertained facts” (Carr 1987:9) would indicate that our current day-to-day narratives are more or less connected to what we see as a kind of more abstract level of narrative and study at the same time, i.e. History. But this relationship is altogether dissociated from traditional narratives, folktales, and myths, which are relegated to the realm of the non-factual, illustrating an epistemological gap with the Māori view. Therefore, from an outsider's perspective, in the Māori model presented by the participants, “History” would be inter-weaved with myths (mainly) and local stories; once again, as it has been said, the connective and organising device of this interconnection would be the *whakapapa* model. The following diagram intends to represent part of the phenomenon, with translations according to Ryan (1997):

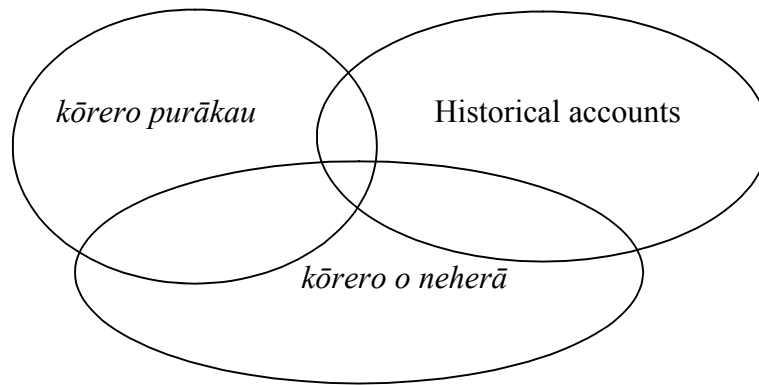
Fig.2

Myth	<i>kōrero o neherā</i>	“True” background
History	<i>kōrero nehe</i>	
Fuzzy boundaries / “Grey” zone		
Fairytale, legend, story	<i>kōrero paki</i>	“Less true” background
Fiction, storytelling	<i>kōrero pakiwaitara</i> <i>kōrero pūrākau</i>	

As can be seen, although there is a specific Māori concept for “History”, according to the interview material and bibliographical sources, the boundaries between itself and other forms are porous enough to accept in the same category of a “true” background the main myth cycles. But, at the same time, influences and connections with other forms of narrative would be present, stressing a difference of “levels of truth” rather than a clear cut division between categories. The latter would connect with Metge’s (1998:8-9) reflection about the difficulties that the Māori historical framework offer to “Western-trained historians”, stressing the fact that the former is accompanied by their “own scholarly approach to history, including their own ways of testing reliability and validity”, based on a long tradition of oral history and transmission.

Therefore, from an insider's or “emic” perspective, there would be a degree of superposition of “History” and traditional narratives, framed by their belief system and the Māori world-view, in which the participants established a difference between the made-up stories and the ones linked to “History”. However, there is a clear overlapping of both genres in terms of their understanding of different narratives simply as “stories”, conceptualizing them in a broader sense. It seems then that what would make a real difference between the diverse narratives would depend on specific situations and contexts, but would not exist as prior categories. The overlapping could be illustrated through a Venn diagram:

Fig.3



A possible example for the point of triple intersection could be the case of legendary figures such as *Kupe* the explorer, or *Tama te Kapua*, leader of the *Arawa waka* (Orbell 1995: 92-94,178-179; Ruatapu 1993: 148-149), figures that are related through their ancestral lines with mythical figures, but that do not show supernatural traits themselves. Their exploits, nevertheless, are extraordinary, but keep a close connection with recognisable patterns and events that fall into oral historical accounts, or that can still be seen in terms of geographical milestones.

An alternative “Cognitive style”

Another emergent issue that seems important to highlight is that of the distinctive cognitive style framing the use of traditional stories. Through the present study, particularly when it has been focused on Māori epistemology and on the ancient usage of stories, the presence of a different cognitive pattern could be witnessed as part of a broader framework. I would further argue that this alternative cognitive style is also

present in other Indigenous People's epistemologies across the globe, and it tends to be associated to societies which have relied more on the oral transmission of knowledge, and therefore have used traditional stories for this objective more intensively (Henige 1982; Welchmann and Watson-Gegeo 2001; Nakashima and Elias 2002; Barnhardt and Kawagley 2005).

The latter, however, does not mean that Western or more literate societies have simply erased this style from their practices; it would be rather a matter of proportion in terms of its usage. The strong influence of the schooling system, more or less uniform in its generic aspects (e.g. Concentration of groups of children in a specially instituted space; groups under supervision of a single adult; emphasis on literacy and basic sciences, set by a general curriculum) have probably influenced the decline of traditional non-school based education and pushed to the margins the “traditional” exchanges of sanctioned knowledge.

Evidence of this alternative cognitive pattern can be seen in the accounts of the participants, in which they refer to elders “speaking in riddles” to them, or telling stories as answers to certain questions, in stark contrast with the “Western” style, particularly in mainstream education.

In reference to the latter, my personal view on one of various possible situations regarding the “question-answer” exchange can be translated into a tentative formulaic model:

$$\begin{array}{ll}
 Q1 \xrightarrow{t} A(n) & Q = \text{question} \\
 Qn \xrightarrow{\quad} Ax & t = \text{time} \\
 & A = \text{answer} \\
 & Fx = \text{fact } x
 \end{array}$$

* “Efficient answer” represented by $Ax = \frac{Fx}{t}$

In the previous model⁴⁰, a question is put forward, to which “n” number of answers “A” can be provided, in a sequence that can be repeated “n” times. These answers are composed by facts “F” that can be of course varied, consequently

40 It is clear that the model here presented is a rigid and reduced view of the whole array of possibilities that emerge every time someone raises a question. However, the idea behind this model is purely “experimental” and by no means intends to propose a definitive view on the matter. On the contrary, it just aims to open a discussion about the issue at hand.

represented by “x”. But in the process, the variable “t” is taken into account, to reach a measure of efficiency, particularly in school lessons settings (e.g. students raising their hands anxiously to answer the teacher's question first). Added to the aforementioned, the result in terms of “Ax” in this case tends to be similar to a two-way process of unilinear thought in which, if the correct fact is delivered in less time, the answering process is deemed as more efficient, and frequently it has a certain association with higher intelligence according to Western educational parameters (Miller 1997:280-284).

However, the alternative cognitive style and process that has been referred to -at least in cases of a certain kind- seems to put the variable “t” in brackets when thinking of the answer “Ax”. In other words, it does not matter if it takes long to provide an answer, or to decode it from a complex construct such as a story or a proverb. To make things even more different, the process seems to follow a sort of “spiral” structure⁴¹, through which a whole range of connected issues is covered, and not only in the two way manner already mentioned. This would tend instead to produce multi-branched results, like “fig-tree” diagrams with several interconnected possibilities, which interestingly tend to be very similar to the *whakapapa* pattern.

Again, this is not to say that the “spiral mode” would be the only pattern followed by the Māori and other societies, even in pre-European times. It could be viewed as a mediating device, a model suitable for certain situations and contexts, as Wertsch (1991:94) asserts, part of a “tool kit” which would allow group and contextual differences in mediated action. Therefore, in other situations, people would choose strategies that could be far more similar to the “formulaic example” displayed; my contention would be that the “spiral” cognitive approach has been increasingly replaced by the time focused “direct question- direct answer” approach in fields where the former was conceived as the most adequate one.

Consequently, there might be a strong link between the spiral structure of answering or delivering information, and traditional *ako*. Speaking in riddles, not giving straight answers, usage of stories and proverbs, and the allowance of mistakes, all would be construed as important parts of the learning process, with a different time efficiency criterion in mind. Thus, through the spiral mode, the final answer sought

41 Although I played with this notion for the first time in 2005, when I was working on ethnobotanic models in Chile -connected to a particular Mapuche knowledge cycle-, I encountered a similar spiral model used by Manuka Henare (1998, cited in Henry 2000: 22) based on the *koru* design, to explain aspects of Māori ethics regarding research, among other areas.

would come later in time and often after lengthy reflection, something that in the end can enhance the quality of the answer.

Final remarks

Finally, it is necessary to consider a particular fact that I could observe during my fieldwork. Its importance derives from its connection with one of the objectives of the study, set from the very beginning. At the same time though, it was an aspect that was immediately pointed out by the Principal of the school and was therefore in some way expected during the fieldwork phase. I am talking about the fact that the direct usage of the stories in the school was rather scarce considering my observations.

However, it is even more important to put this phenomenon in context and understand the limitations of the present research. Firstly, my observations extended for approximately five months, twice a week in average; this would hardly qualify as a statistically representative sample, and it was never intended to be so. Hence, as a qualitative approach, my observations would only give a glimpse to a situation that needs to be studied in more depth and with more intensity.

Secondly, several elements can explain this situation, most of which I could witness first hand and which were also explained to me by the teachers in their interviews. Curriculum pressures, multiple areas' demands and the endeavour of keeping the children focused on a given task -between other challenges- suffice to understand that there seems to be never enough time to develop certain activities. As it has been explained, the amount of time needed to develop the spiral or “*koru mode*” of thinking through the traditional narratives is simply not available, at least in the current schooling setting. Therefore, “snowed-under” *kaiako*, juggling diverse demands from each lesson context, manage nevertheless to cover different subjects and foster skills, but only sometimes through the stories.

In this way, my abstract, theoretical image –and desires- of what might be happening in this particular *Kura Kaupapa* school clashed with the real, in-the-field conditions, where everything is much more complex and dynamic. Notwithstanding, it is the field situation that completes the picture, making it more interesting and exciting, and consequently it gave me some new material to think about. My first reaction to the situation was to think that perhaps there was a contradiction between the bibliographical sources and the scholars' views, and what was really happening in the day-to-day

practice of Māori education. Maybe this showed that as a practice, the educational usage of Māori narratives was slowly disappearing under the pressure of modernization and new educational contexts. However, as I continued to observe and to ponder the information given through the interviews, I began to realize that I was just focusing on a snapshot of a greater process, and that because of this I was looking at it in the wrong direction.

In time I understood that it was natural that the teachers gave me a condensed view of years of practice; they never said that this was taking place every lesson, they simply answered to my broad questions in the most logical way. The final matter did not relate strictly to frequency, but to perceived importance and associated examples. During my observations I could see the usage of traditional narratives, and even more references to them, counting on the fact that the children knew them from the *Kōhanga Reo* or from other available sources. There was also the influence of a lack of upbringing in the practice of regular usage of stories, already pointed out by the teachers, which would impact in the classrooms.

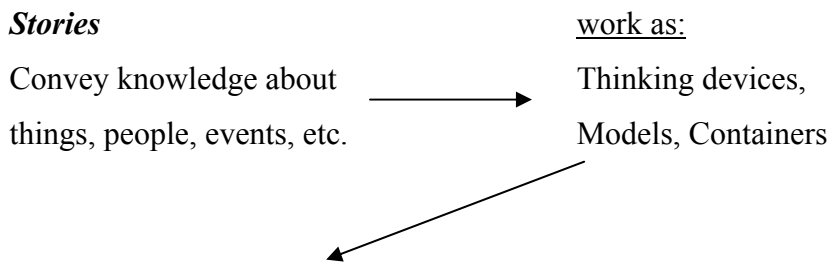
Taking into account the indirect references to several traditional narratives, the surrounding educational material and related practices applying principles connected to the stories, I would affirm that the usage of the latter is not diminishing. The illusion of vanishment is based on a concentration on the imagined conditions present in pre-European times, ignoring the conditions immediately previous to the so called “Māori renaissance”. For a correct appreciation, I would argue that the line must be drawn from the latter onwards, illustrating rather a process of growth; in other words, what I could see was not the ending of a trend, but the beginning of the inverse case. One of the strongest arguments to back up this perspective would be the departure from the cultural “weaknesses” in the social background of the teachers interviewed; a grim inheritance from an oppressing period suffered by their parents and older relatives.

Another important element that I would highlight here has to do with the objectives of the usage of the stories in the school. According to their interviews and to my observations, it seems to me that it is the “social orientation” effect achieved through the usage and understanding of the *whakapapa* -as a structure and structuring principle- the force behind the usage of the traditional stories. The social positioning of the individuals would be, in my perspective, one of the most important current sociocultural challenges of Māori people. The latter would imply a re-connection, reconstruction and interweaving of the social fabric, giving a sense -in this case to the

students- of who they are, who are they connected with and to which places. Therefore, traditional stories would work as connective elements; devices to maintain links between areas and peoples, reinforcing the subjacent *whakapapa*. Furthermore, I suppose that when stories are used as “stepping stones” to connect with current study units in the *Kura*, it would represent another way of interweaving the past with the present, in a more indirect way through relevant topics.

In this way, I would condense some of the most important aspects of the usage of traditional stories, according to the present research, in the following diagram:

Fig.4

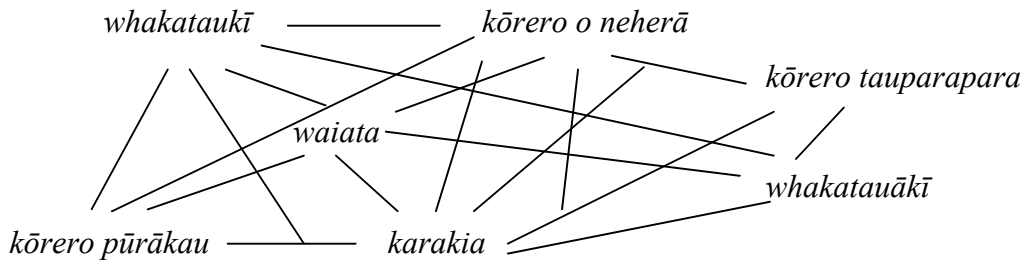


Listeners: Enabled to do certain things, among others:

- Understand the environment/contexts
- Socially oriented in terms of self knowledge, self esteem
- Aware of the importance of social nets

As I have previously stated, traditional stories -in the eyes of the participants- are not clearly separated entities from the other cultural expressions in narrative and non-narrative form. They could be arranged, more than in separate boxes, in a “spider-web” configuration, full of interlinking threads, a pattern in which the activation of any device results in the activation of all of them. In this configuration, as a background structural element, *whakapapa* would play a central role, working at the same time as a “structuring principle”. The latter would be similar to the “schema” nature, functioning as process and structure at the same time; or in other words, as data structure and data processor (Rice 1980: 168). An exemplary diagram of some of those elements could look like this:

Fig.5



It is important to remember that models are embedded in a matrix of elements and meanings, and due to this, their comprehension goes hand-in-hand with the understanding of the surrounding elements and frame. My contention is that the “sociocultural environment” would have a structuring influence on the individual's “mind”, in terms of structure and processes, through the interaction with certain contents, models, and patterns that include particular narratives and stories. Regarding the structures and processes mentioned, these would be represented mainly by superior cognitive structures and functions -in Vygotskian terms-, which would also be fostered through the usage of mediation devices. The latter would, once again, be represented by traditional narratives, among others, continuing the cycle.

Therefore, the insistence on the transmission of several cultural contents in a particular framework -in this case, the full immersion school with its Māori philosophy, or special Māori units- makes sense; the more complex and subtle levels of traditional stories would not be understood if they are simply delivered as “loose devices” for other aims. It would be, I suppose, as trying to understand religious subtleties from a few Bible stories, framed by a very different cultural environment to the Christian one, a case that of course can be applied to a huge array of social institutions.

The aforementioned is illustrated by Georges (1969, cited in Rapport and Overing 2007:322) when he affirms that a “storytelling event” ends up being a condensation of “the content of the narrative, the performance, the listeners and the knowledge, the interpretive procedures and aesthetic mechanisms which they bring, the setting, the use of the narrative to persuade or to negotiate social relations, rights or whatever (...)”. In the case of this study, this contextual dependence and immersion would, in the end, be summarised and reflected in the holistic understanding of Vicki,

when she affirmed that stories were seen as a foundation on which to build “to use, pull out of, to refer to, more reference points...that's the beauty of stories”.

Finally, it is important to highlight that the incredibly rich and broad spectrum of possibilities present in the study of traditional narratives forces all related research endeavours to an unavoidable focalization, in order to prevent an unproductive dispersion. This would, in turn, explain at least some of the limitations and shortcomings in the present analysis, in which -most probably- several important aspects have been succinctly addressed, partially represented or not considered at all. Nevertheless, its enormous breadth as a study field presents the potential for further and progressive improvement of its studies, generating an even richer area where increased academic exchange and collaboration from different disciplines would be, in my perspective, greatly beneficial for a better understanding of other sociocultural frames and for the improvement of educational initiatives in several contexts.

Appendix 1: Interview Schedules

Form A: Teachers and Principal of the centre

- Are *kōrero paki* and *kōrero o neherā* (Māori folktales, legends and myths) important in Māori culture? Why do you think so?
- Do you use *kōrero paki* and *kōrero o neherā* (Māori folktales, legends and myths) in your institution? Why do you use them? (If not, ask the reasons)
- Are there official objectives for the use of them? Which are they?
- In which situations are they used?
- What are the procedures when they are used (if necessary, ask for a description of typical settings apart from the observed ones)?
- Why do you think they are good for the education of the children?
- What results and/or effects do you expect from their use?
- Can you name some of the *kōrero paki* and *kōrero o neherā* (Māori folktales, legends and myths) in use? Why were they selected?
- In which ways do you think their use could be improved and/or enhanced?
- Do you think that their actual use differs from the traditional use? In what sense?

Form B: Māori academics in Universities and/or Wānanga

- Are *kōrero paki* and *kōrero o neherā* (Māori folktales, legends and myths) important in Māori culture? Why do you think so?
- Do you use *kōrero paki* and *kōrero o neherā* (Māori folktales, legends and myths) in your institution? In which ways? (If not, ask the reasons)
- Do you think *kōrero paki* and *kōrero o neherā* (Māori folktales, legends and myths) are used in Māori domestic settings or in other contexts? (If not, ask the reasons)
- Are there clear or well defined objectives for the use of them? Which are they?
- In which kinds of “non-formal schooling” situations have you seen them in use? / If not directly seen, in which situations do you think they are used?
- What are the procedures when they are used (if necessary, ask for a description of the typical setting)?
- Why do you think they are good for the education of the children?
- What results and/or effects do you think are expected from their use?
- Can you name some of the *kōrero paki* and *kōrero o neherā* (Māori folktales, legends and myths) that you think are in use? Why are these selected?
- In which ways do you think their use could be improved and/or enhanced?
- Do you think that their actual use differs from the traditional use? In what sense?

Appendix 2: Glossary

ahuatanga: literally “likeness”; in the *Kōhanga Reo* context, Māori pedagogy or Māori way of doing things.

ako: learn/teach

akonga: learners or students

Aotearoa: literally “long white cloud”; in common usage as the Māori name of New Zealand

aroha: love

hapū: subtribe, subdivision of an *iwi*

hinengaro: mind, heart, intellect, conscience

ihi: power, essential force

iho matua: intellect

iwi: tribal group

karakia: invocation, prayer

kaiako: teacher

kaupapa: strategy, theme, philosophy, plan, purpose

kaumatua: respected tribal elder

kaupapa Māori: Māori culture

Kōhanga Reo: literally “language nest”; a preschool education centre using the Māori language and run according Māori *kaupapa* and *tikanga*

kōrero (-tia): speak, news, narrative and/or quotation

kōrero ahiahi; *kōrero paki*; *kōrero pūrākau*: folktales, legends, fairytales

kōrero o neherā: myths, mythology as a whole corpus

kuia: respected elderly woman

Kura Kaupapa Māori: total immersion Māori language school for primary aged children

mana: integrity, charisma, prestige, formal, jurisdiction

marae: meeting place; cultural centre of local Māori community

mauri: life principle

mokopuna: grandchild(ren), young generation

ngākau: heart, sentiments

Pākehā: New Zealander of European ancestry

poutama: stairway to knowledge, stepped pattern of weaving in *tukutuku* panels

pūmanawa: ability, ingenious, skills

reo: language, voice, speech

tapu: sacred, forbidden, confidential, taboo

Te reo Māori: Māori language

Te Whāriki: the 'mat', the early childhood curriculum

tikanga: customs, protocol

tikanga Māori: Māori values

wehi: awe, formidable

whanau: family

whanaungatanga: support and love, living as part of an extended family

wharekura: term used to describe the secondary school component of *Kura Kaupapa Māori*

whare wānanga: institution or course of higher learning, university

whatumanawa: emotions, feelings

Appendix 3:

A) Māori Mythology and other Traditional Narratives

A.1) Polynesian mythology background

As a specific body of mythological knowledge, Māori myths and other traditional narratives are strongly connected with the bigger complex of traditions and narratives of Oceania and especially of the Polynesian region (Best 2005:197-198). According to Parker and Stanton (2003:374) mythology in Oceania can be seen as a system of knowledge where people organize themselves in relation to nature and the environment. Therefore, mythology would function as an instrument of both investigation and exploration, symbolically explaining how things work in reality, but also working as an effective means of communication, or oral tradition. In their accounts, Oceanic myths would bring nature, morality and society into conflict, as different themes are portrayed in a stronger way than others within several mythological stories, a characteristic enhanced by the unavoidable variability of the diverse genres comprehended.

As we have seen, there is a consensus among specialised authors in the field that all societies possess collections of narratives which explain the past, and therefore the present. In the case of the Māori, according to Orbell (1995:10), their myths attribute the origins of the world and its inhabitants mostly to the achievements of powerful early ancestors, whose stories were carefully memorised and passed from one generation to the next. The sources of many of these stories, connected to the Pacific region, can be traced back two thousand years to the time when Samoan explorers sailed out from their islands, taking with them their ancestral myths. Some of these narratives were retained in Eastern Polynesia, in variant forms, but also new myths developed in the region, spreading to considerable length.

A.2) The traditional Māori narrative corpus

The study of Māori mythology, with its richness in contents and huge scope of aspects covered, poses considerable difficulties to anyone seriously interested in their analysis. Several authors seem to coincide in their view on traditional Māori narratives as a complex corpus of knowledge of almost intractable systematization, with an important amount of variability between them. In his work about the relationship between philosophical metaphysics and mythological accounts, Schrempp vehemently states that many of the Māori formulations are extremely intricate and complex, considering an attempt to arrange them -all formulations that are in some way related- into a unified schema “not only imprudent but also, practically, impossible”(1992:56).

From the perspective of a study of embedded values, Patterson (1992:155) asserts that it would be almost pointless to try to give a comprehensive coverage of the narratives, mainly because they are tribal and consequently it would be very difficult to encounter all the versions available. Perhaps more importantly, these kinds of narratives have a built-in flexibility, and therefore can be used to convey a range of messages depending upon the occasion. In the same sense, Orbell (1995:21) affirms that Māori tradition is such a large and diverse field that the narratives, these accounts of mythical and historical people, cannot be covered comprehensively considering again that “Every region has endless stories of its own, along with others that differ in subtle ways from those told elsewhere”.

Despite the variability encountered between the narratives and the general consensus about this fact among scholars, there is a strong “family resemblance” and basic elements common to a considerable number of these narratives. In this sense, Orbell (1995:11) talks about a “general similarity” between traditions from different parts of *Aotearoa*/New Zealand. It is a basic tenet among the diverse versions of the cosmogonic cycle, the pattern of interconnection between everything in the created universe. As Parker and Stanton (2003:403) assert, Māori beliefs about the evolution of the universe are embodied in a variety of genealogical forms, with quite a number of recurring themes. In the very origins of the process, for instance, creation was likened to a series of periods of primal source or primeval potentiality, unknown darkness and light, each qualified by some descriptive term and/or quantitative sequence. Consequently, each of these distinctive periods of time would correspond to eons of cosmological time, “when the seeds of the universe scattered through the vast emptiness

of space came together to form the Sky Father and Earth Mother” (Parker and Stanton 2003:403).

In the same sense, Orbell (1995:11) affirms that since everything in the world was alive and related, there was no distinction of the kind found in Western thought between nature and culture, a model where humans and other life forms are bound by the indissoluble ties of kinship. The natural world and human society were construed as one entity from the beginning and the sky, *Rangi*, as the first male and the earth, *Papa*, as the first female, embodied the basic gender roles for all people. Furthermore, *Tāne* – the main deity associated with fertility and creation- is considered to have fathered trees and birds before making a woman from the soil of *Hawaiki* and becoming the progenitor of human beings, the latter becoming as a consequence especially close to life forms that belong to the land. This general and pervasive model of genealogies is precisely one of the aspects to be further analysed in this work, and must be considered of extreme importance when other theoretical frames are used to examine it thoroughly.

The scholarly study of traditional Māori narratives was developed since the very early years of the colonization of *Aotearoa/New Zealand* by various authors, such as Sir George Grey (*Polynesian Mythology*), John White (*The Ancient History of the Māori*), Percy Smith (*The Lore of the Whare-wānanga*) and Elsdon Best (*Māori Religion and Mythology*) (Reed 1999:9-10). But the approach of these first authors to the matter was strongly ambivalent, heavily influenced by their historic context and the popular evolutionistic theories in anthropology and history. Therefore, an important part of their analysis may strike the reader as a prejudiced and racist account, as can be seen in extracts like the following by Sir George Grey, originally written in 1855 in the preface to his book

That their traditions are puerile is true; that the religious faith of the races who trust in them is absurd is a melancholic fact (...) I believe that the ignorance which has prevailed regarding the mythological systems of barbarous or semi-barbarous races has too generally led to their being considered far grander and more reasonable than they really were.(....)

It must further be borne in mind that the native races who believed in these traditions or superstitions are in no way deficient in intellect, and in no respect incapable of receiving the truths of Christianity; on the contrary, they readily embrace its doctrines and submit to its rules; in our schools they stand a fair comparison with Europeans, and, when instructed in Christian truths, blush at their own former ignorance and superstitions, and look back with shame and loathing upon their previous sate of wickedness and credulity; and yet for a great part of their lives have they, and for thousands of years before

they were born have their forefathers, implicitly submitted themselves to those very superstitions, and followed those cruel and barbarous rites. (Grey 1956: vii-viii)

Some of these prejudiced and racist views were also held by Elsdon Best, the famous recorder of Māori knowledge of the beginning of the twentieth century, as can be seen in the following extract

It is quite clear that many inferior peoples are much more religious, as we term it, than is civilized man. The former have a great fear of supernatural powers, and their very ignorance of natural laws, and superstitions concerning natural phenomena, &c., force them to rely on their gods -that is to say, on religion- to a much greater extent than does civilized man. (...) In the case of many such inferior peoples we must admit that they feel the need of religion more than we do. (Best 1995:10)

Nevertheless, it seems that these same authors were caught in an ambivalent attitude towards this corpus of knowledge, considering it puerile on some occasions, shifting then to a stance of admiration, considering them as a cornerstone in the understanding of Māori culture and society. Therefore, Grey (1956: iii-iv) realizing that in every communication he had with Māori chiefs there were fragments of poems, proverbs or mythological allusions, convinced himself of the necessity of learning their language and study their traditional narratives, in order to improve the relationship.

In the same sense, Best (2005:194-195) asserted that there was much to be learned from Māori traditional narratives, regarding their mental characteristics, habits and mode of life, and even though these myths could be seen as “meaningless, puerile, or downright absurd, may have been the result of much thought, as in the case of some origin myths”. Probably one of the most interesting insights of this author in the direction of cultural relativism is his reflection about the attribution of truthfulness to different beliefs among different cultures

Yet another matter worthy of mention is that of what constitutes a myth. For instance, our teachings concerning the Supreme Being, the origin of the universe and of man, etc., are not viewed as myths by us but as solemn truth. But the beliefs of the Maori [sic], as taught by his ancestors, concerning these same matters, we describe as myths. Are truth and falsehood matters of ethnic origin, or of locality? In this connection we must place myths in the same category as religion, the deciding factor is not that of truth or falsehood, but of birthplace or training. (Best 2005:193-194)

Nevertheless, although the work of scholars like Best and Grey are still referred to by Māori due to the huge amount of data they collected from knowledgeable people, as Collins (2007:3) argues, it must be acknowledged that as strong proponents of the “Europeanisation” of Māori people, they contributed to the perpetuation of hegemonic and colonising practices. In this way, a sense of greater equilibrium can be sought when using their materials, with a less simplistic analysis of the matters involving a different religious frame and also their own socio-historical and contextual limitations.

A.3) The main Māori mythological accounts

In order to follow a more recent interpretation of the main Māori traditional narratives, contrasting with some outdated views and analysis of them, it was preferred to use the main approach of a Māori scholar, in this case Ranginui Walker, with the addition of other recent Māori and Pākehā authors.

To start with, probably mirroring the importance and ancient use of the traditional narratives, Māori culture has varied terms to refer to folktales, fairytales and/or legends indistinctively, like *kōrero ahiahi*, *kōrero paki* and *kōrero purākau* contrasting with the term *kōrero o neherā* for mythology as a whole corpus, all probably derived from the term *kōrero (-tia)* that means ‘speak’, ‘news’, ‘narrative’ and ‘quotation’ (Ryan 1997:124).

From a Māori perspective, according to Walker (1978:19), there should be nothing outmoded or discredited about mythology in Māori society at any given time, because properly understood, Māori mythology and traditions provide “myth-messages” to which the Māori people can and will respond, where all that is needed is that these myth-messages be more clearly sign-posted. In this sense, according to Patterson (1992:155), regarding the transmission and discussion of values, Māori have relied mostly upon sets of precedents recorded in traditional narratives, seen as providing authoritative information for correct or *tika* behaviour, depicting virtues and ideals.

In Māori narratives, the central characters are often endowed with supernatural powers as they act out their dramas in an age of miracles and supra-normal events. These events, performed by demigods or legendary heroes, would provide lesser

mortals with larger than life models for human behaviour, establishing sets of precedents. These actors, heroes and villains, love, hate, fight and pursue revenge just as their human counterparts do, dramatising the age-old conflict between good and evil, and occasionally providing prescriptions for practical behaviour in given situations. Thus, all of these would be the myth-messages of the culture (Walker 1978:19).

According to Walker (1978:19-20), one way of looking at mythology is to read it as a mirror-image of a culture, reflecting the philosophy, ideals and norms of the people who adhere to them as legitimate charters. Myths can be construed as the outward projection of an ideal against which human performance can be measured and perfected, or they might provide a reflection of current social practice, in which case they would have an instructional and validating function. In the Māori case, though, the validity of the mythological system was not questioned until the post-Christian era when it was displaced by the new mythology of the colonizing culture. Consequently, in the same fashion that was prevalent in Western thought, “*kōrero purākau*” ended up with the same negative connotation of untruth carried by the word “myth”.

The latter was not always the case, as Best (2005:198) argues, asserting that old-time Māori authorities explained to their people that “the expert retainers of native lore clearly understood that all folk tales, *kōrero purākau*, *kōrero tara*, were quite distinct from genuine traditions of tribal history, etc.” Such popular folk tales were known as *kōrero whaihanga*, or invented stories -differing from the term *kōrero o neherā* for mythology-, which sometimes entered into historical traditions, due to the oral transmission characteristics. In other occasions, these kinds of stories evolved in order to emphasise some social usage, disciplinary measure, or moral lesson, for instance through tales of persons carried off and/or devoured by monsters, because of their transgression of some rule of *tapu*.

Therefore, the distinction between myths, seen as stories of transcendental content and truths in diverse levels, from invented fictions with specific goals or only for amusement, was lost and confused in time. The interpretation of Māori myths as mere false stories is regarded as unfortunate by Walker (1978:19-20), stating that a serious analysis of them would show that current Māori society would respond to the myth-messages and cultural imperatives embedded in them. In his view it is possible to follow a recurrence of themes in a continuum across mythological, traditional and historic times, a connection that has been deteriorated by the erosion of Māori culture

by that of the European. The myth-messages now need to be spelled out to be understood by the modern Māori.

In an effort to spell out the most salient Māori myths to be understood by the modern Māori society, Walker (1978:20) goes over a series of them, arranged in a progressive sequence of three story complexes, a progression from the creative activities of gods and demigods to the activities of real men, corresponding to the cosmogonic myths, the *Māui* myths and finally the *Tāwhaki* myth cycle. The latter sequence, in Metge's (1998:4) view, entails a linkage by relations of kinship and descent between the main actors, reflecting once again the importance of the *whakapapa* as a pervading structuring principle in Māori society.

In the following analysis, based on Ranginui Walker's perspective, several key aspects or myth-messages are highlighted, some of which will be considered in further analysis in this work.

a) The creation myth

As Patterson (1992:156) asserts, a familiar version of the Māori creation myth starts with *Te Kore* (Nothingness) at the beginning of time, with the evolution of a series of *Te Pō* (Nights) resulting after aeons of time in the creation of *Rangi* or *Ranginui* (the Sky Father) and *Papa* or *Papatūānuku* (Earth Mother) who were continually embraced with their offspring between them (Alpers 1964, cited in Patterson 1992:156). Other accounts include a previous almighty deity, *Io*, with a complex relation of evolving night ages and their correspondent genealogies (Best 1995:56-72; Robinson 2005: 19-26). The children of *Rangi* and *Papa*, in need of space and light to grow, discuss the procedures⁴² to separate their parents with the opposition though of *Tāwhirimātea*, each of them trying to accomplish it but only one of them, *Tāne Mahuta* -the deity associated to forests and birds and many other creations- succeeds. According to Walker (1978:20) this separation indeed let light and knowledge into the world, and although this was a necessary precondition for the growth and development of man, the act of separation itself is seen as the first sin in creation, an act of *kohuru* (cruelty) against the first parents. *Tāwhirimātea* (deity associated with the winds and the control of meteorological events), the brother who opposed the separation, turns against his siblings, aligning himself with his father going therefore to

42 One of the siblings, *Tūmatauenga* -the deity identified with war and confrontation- considers the possibility of killing them, but is convinced by their brothers not to (Grey 1956:2; Robinson 2005:24).

the heavens, and for this is seen as introducing the theme of *utu* (compensation, revenge) so basic to Māori society⁴³.

According to Patterson (1992:159), *Tāwhiri's* action on behalf of his father *Ranginui* is the foundation for one of the great duties in old-time Māori society: obtaining *utu* for any wrongs suffered by the ancestors and especially in the case of the father, an important and frequent theme in traditional narratives. With the latter, the conflict between the brothers would show the dialectic and shifting characteristics of this relationship, in which is expected mutual support, but also disagreements and individual pursuits of interests.

In Walker's account (1978:20) in the face of the battle between the powerful *Tāwhirimātea* and the rest of his brothers, *Tūmatauenga* was the only one who confronted him and stood his ground, and as the personification of the fierce and warlike nature of man, he won an exalted place in the Māori cosmogony as the god of war. But, according to the author, although *Tūmatauenga* emerged superior, he was a god made in man's image, and in the end he was neither defeated by nor victorious over *Tāwhirimātea*. The latter would be seen through the fact that the elements wage a continuous war against man who in turn has to maintain constant vigilance to resist their attacks (Walker 1978:21).

As a result of these events, *Tūmatauenga* resented having been left alone by his brothers, and attacked them in revenge, debasing them by turning them into food and elements of common use. According to Walker (1978:21) although “the myth does not explicitly say so, it is possible to argue that *Tūmatauenga's* actions introduce a basic dichotomy in Māori life between the sacred and the profane”. *Tapu* in the sacred sense would emanate from the gods, and by the act of eating his brothers or turning them into artefacts, *Tūmatauenga* profaned them⁴⁴. Finally, the revenge on his brothers for their desertion during *Tāwhirimātea's* attack metaphorically would justify man's superordinate position in nature, according to this version of the events.

Through another reading of the narrative, though, Schrempp (1992:69-70) affirms that the opposition of *Tāne* and *Tū* is one of the most interesting and significant within the original sons of *Rangi* and *Papa*. They would represent the two essential

43 The central cosmogonic theme of the separation of Sky and Earth is common in other mythical accounts, as Joseph Campbell (1993:281-288) shows in his comparison between the Māori narration, the ancient Greek, Egyptian and Mesopotamian versions.

44 According to Walker (1978:21) here would lay the ritual and cultural significance of ancient cannibalism among Māori people, as the ultimate debasement of a defeated enemy.

modes of self-affirmation and self-expansion -also tribal affirmation and expansion-, procreation and conquest, activities which are in many different ways analogized in Māori mythology and proverb. In his view, *Tāne* would father all, creating encompassing genealogies, and *Tū* would conquer all in battle, each having an expansive cosmogonic role, where both accounts could be seen as “competing or complimentary stories- resting on the two different essential modes of expansion- of man's rise to superordinancy over the other beings that live on earth”. Finally, in one version, the supremacy claim is interpreted through the fathering of nature, and man would be *Tāne*'s privileged descendant (remembering that from the beginning *Tāne* searched for an adequate partner, a human female that he ended up creating). In the other version (i.e., *Arawa*) man's claim over nature is that of conquest: Man (*Tū*) defeats in battle the rest of nature and empowers himself over it.

As can be seen in previous examples, the idea of the introduction of certain themes or the establishment of primordial precedents for existing phenomena is, in Walker's perspective, particularly important in Māori myths. Referring to *Tāne*'s creation of a human woman and his later sexual relationship with his own daughter *Hinetitama*⁴⁵, the author asserts that Alpers (1964, cited in Walker 1978:21) sees *Tāne*'s offence against his daughter as the first sin in Māori mythology, a clear indication of the incest taboo. Although incest in the creation myth was necessary to increase the population, *Hinetitama*'s flight from *Tāne* indicates that as a practice it was socially unacceptable. Its place as the first sin, though, is disputed: in Grey's (1956, cited in Walker 1978:21) account on *Māui*'s fishing up the land and the desecration of the fish by his brothers, the narrator considers it the second evil, after the separation of *Ranginui* and *Papatūānuku*, which is interpreted as the first evil or sinful act ever done.

In Patterson's view (1992:161-162), another pattern is laid through the fact that *Hinetitama* took refuge with her grandmother *Papatūānuku*. This would be the principle that grandparents have special responsibilities towards their *mokopuna* (grandchildren) whenever they are mistreated or in need of other kind of help. Part of this protection role model is also strongly performed in the narratives by *Papatūānuku* as a mother, when she gives refuge to her weaker sons in *Tāwhiri*'s attack, *Rongo-ma-Tāne* -the cultivated food, and particularly the associations with the *kumara*- and *Haumia-tiketike*,

45 According to one of the versions, *Hinetitama*, or the “Dawn Maid” aware of the sinful relation with her father *Tāne*, escaped to the underworld and changed her name to *Hine-nui-te-pō* (Great woman the night), who receives the people when they die (Orbell 1995:57,64; Best 1995:116).

representing the edible fern root and other uncultivated foods (Patterson 1992:160; Grey 1956:8; Orbell 2005:49-50).

b) The Māui complex of myths

The *Māui* myths have several versions within *Aotearoa*/New Zealand and according to Best (2005:337) their sequence has no proper order except the accounts of his birth and death. This cycle of myths is an important complex of stories that crosses Polynesia, coming early in the genealogies, when the world and its inhabitants still lack many of the vital things to survive. Therefore, *Māui* acts as a “culture-hero”, shaping the environment and providing resources and skills to the human beings (Orbell 1995:114).

According to Parker and Stanton (2003:411), *Māui* is the most ancient mythological figure carried to *Aotearoa*/New Zealand by the ancestors of the Māori, and his stories are widely known not only through Polynesia, but also through Melanesia and Micronesia, a range that goes from the island of Yap to the west, to *Mangareva* in the east and from *Hawai'i* to *Aotearoa* in the north-south axis.

Many of the exploits of *Māui* set precedents for several forms of behaviour, but also explain how several tools and useful elements came into being (like fire, barbed fishing hooks, eel traps, the dog, longer days, and string games.), which is one of the central aspects of culture-heroes. But *Māui* also sets precedents regarding the importance of intelligence and trickery, an aspect considered by Patterson (1992:165) as a recurring theme through Māori traditional narratives; deceitful actions that nevertheless are depicted as worthy of imitation⁴⁶. This would be partly explained by the acquisition of *mana* through these means, a sufficiently important task in the sociocultural order to justify those ambiguous means.

On the matter of the importance of intelligence, trickery and wits in traditional Māori narratives, Schrempp (1992:27) argues that probably no cultures have given more emphasis to athletic prowess than Polynesian ones, where tales of great athletes abound. In the Māori case, the system of establishing initial claims to tracts of land involved a sort of athletic code, in which the fearlessness and endurance, swiftness and agility of the early navigators culminated in certain kin groups and their canoes reaching and

46 In Orbell's (1995) perspective, *Māui*, which is the term for the left or *noa* part, is associated with adventures where *tapu* and boundaries are consistently broken, with no feats of war and plenty of domestic events. This is also stressed by the fact that *Māui* had a closer relationship with his mother, and the feminine aspects were also considered *noa*, or profane (114-115).

traversing certain tracts of land first, and thus having a claim to them. But this athletic code was mixed with instances of victory through clever deceit and strategy, showing “a value system's self-reflection, in which, in the triumph of brains over brawn, a purely athletic code, if not wholly transvalued, is at least called into question with regard to its adequacy as a life-strategy” (Schrempp 1992:27).

It is important though, in this analysis of the praise of trickery and the accounts of *Māui*, to briefly differentiate between the figure of the “trickster” and that of the clever culture-hero; two categories which, although presenting fuzzy boundaries, tend to be mixed in an extremely broad way. According to Carroll (1984: 106), the trickster is strongly associated with North American Indian mythology, where they are portrayed foremost as not very clever “selfish-buffoons”, that eventually contribute to humanity (and therefore considered a type of culture hero), but whose primary motivations are personal and quite basic⁴⁷. On the other extreme, the clever heroes -like *Māui*'s case- consistently outwit stronger opponents, consequently their intelligence being the most salient trait in their stories, some of which also perform actions associated to contribute to human beings with knowledge, or other benefits.

Expanding on the concept of the “trickster” figure, Roberts (2007:174) asserts that it is usually an animal or supernatural being, or at the very least, not quite human. Described as living on the margins, between domesticity and the wilds (Abrahams 1985, cited in Roberts 2007:174), he is unbound by social conventions, placed in a domain that has been characterised as “a tolerated margin of mess” (Babcock-Abrahams 1975, cited in Roberts 2007:174). Nevertheless, this particular “in between” condition points more to “liminality” than to “marginality” as a defining characteristic, considering though that both can be sites of power (Roberts 2007:173-174)⁴⁸.

In Walker's (1978:21-22) perspective, the importance of *Māui* as a culture hero derives from the circumstances of his birth, from the fact that he was the *pōtiki*, the last born of five brothers, who in certain versions was an aborted child cast away on the ocean by his mother in the top-knot (*tikitiki*) of her hair consequently gaining his name

47 Following the same argument, Beidelman (1980:35) argues that in several cases, the term “trickster” is assigned according to the analyst's ethnocentric evaluations of deviance and disorder, not always shared by the members of the groups to which the stories pertain.

48 As a final reflection on the matter, Roberts explains that “the very contradictions and ambiguities of Trickster narrative developments *are* what define his meaning. Trickster is contradiction, and that is highly significant” (Roberts 2007:174).

*Māui-tikitiki-a-Taranga*⁴⁹. On one hand, in a society where succession was based on primogeniture, a low rank such as his was a great handicap for social success, but the *pōtiki* in Māori society is the indulged child, who tends to be precocious because of this. Hence, the figure of *Māui* – a model for all men and particularly for *teina*, junior children- concentrated the much needed qualities for a junior member in order to be an outstanding character. He was quick, intelligent and resourceful; bold, yet cunning and deceitful, and from his tendency to deceive his elders he was called *Māui-nukurau-tangata*, “the trickster of men”. As a result, in the author's view

Maui [sic] is the epitome of the idealised character in Maori [sic] society. (...) Provided they had the traits so admired by society they too could aspire to leadership, to a place of honour. Maui [sic] is the hero who rises above circumstances to prove that the principle of primogeniture was not incontrovertible. (Walker 1978:22)

According to Parker and Stanton (2003:411) in one of the various versions, on reaching adulthood *Māui*'s first exploit was to find his family, dramatizing the pivotal nature of identity, assuming that in the Māori world, talent without identity is insufficient to succeed. *Māui* legitimized his ancestral credentials when he found his kin, and with his place in the world secure, he set about acquiring knowledge from his ancestors, balancing talent and identity with knowledge.

Māui's encounter with his parents points out a model for different important social aspects, also illustrating an important social convention that would still persist today concerning the identification and introduction of strangers in Māori society, according to Walker (1978:22). When *Māui* presented himself to his family, his mother was not certain of his identity and preventing a breach of etiquette in asking directly who he was, she opted for locating the direction of the stranger's origins. Once territorial and hence tribal origins have been established it is relatively easy to identify the person and search for mutual relatives, a custom also practiced in urban settings.

The social recognition of *Māui* was completed by his father performing the *tohi* (purification) ritual, legitimating and reconciling him to his father. The *tohi*, though, was performed in an incomplete way, and this mistake in the ritual is the Māori's

49 According to Orbell (1995:114), as a miscarried foetus that survives and grows in the sea, he has an ambiguous background, considering the Māori belief in which an aborted foetus or stillborn child could turn into a dangerous spirit (*atua kahukahu*), with no kinship ties and ill-disposed towards the living. The efforts displayed by *Māui* to be considered part of his family draw attention on this fact.

rationale for the loss of immortality⁵⁰. But the incident, in Walker's (1978:23) perspective is a myth-message that emphasises the correct performance of ritual, in which *waiata* (songs) and *karakia* (prayers) must be recited word-perfect, assuming that the penalty for failure is misfortune and death (Patterson 1992:168-169).

Another important feat of *Māui* is the receipt of the jawbone of his ancestress *Muriranga-whenua* (Grey 1956:24-25). According to Parker and Stanton (2003:411), the jawbone was a magical device that would be interpreted as a symbol of the acquisition of knowledge from the elders, in this case, his ancestress, a device from which he created hooks and weapons, beginning his journey as a benefactor for humankind. In Walker's (1978:23) view, *Māui*'s encounters with *Muriranga-whenua* and *Mahuika* -the ancestress that possessed fire- illustrate an important principle in Māori life. The elders, as repositories of wisdom, knowledge and tribal lore presented an ambivalent attitude and even reluctance to give up the knowledge pursued by the young people, construed as a diminution of their *mana*. *Māui* sets a model in which he had to wrest their secrets from them by persistence and deceit, wisdom that gives elders an advantage over the young, and only a child with the requisite qualities, like those of *Māui*, would be able to get the better of elders.

According to Patterson (1992:169-170), *Māui*'s attitude towards the acquisition of knowledge from his elders also shows a dynamic tension between the expected values in Māori society, on one hand exalting the respect and acceptance of the elder's authority, and on the other, the necessary pursuit of personal *mana* and individual growth, a contradiction that must be decided every time according to the context, time and situation.

Probably the most spectacular achievement of *Māui* is his fishing up of the North Island of *Aotearoa*/New Zealand, a deed characteristic of his figure among many other Polynesian accounts of his adventures, portrayed as the land-fisher of many islands in the Pacific (Parker and Stanton 2003: 379). In the midst of the ongoing conflict between *Māui* and his brothers, their rivalry around who caught more fish emerged. After tricking them they were forced to take him on a fishing journey, in

50 This mythical theme follows the same rationale of other stories in which the invulnerable hero acquires a weak spot due to a flaw in the process of immunisation to death, like Achilles' heel due to the place where her mother picked him to submerge him in the waters of the river Styx, or the leaf that fell over the back of the Germanic hero Sigfrid when he was bathing in the dragon Fafner's blood. Hence, death is portrayed as an unavoidable destiny.

which he was able -with the assistance of correct *karakia* and his powerful devices- to fish up *Te-Ika-a-Māui* (Grey 1956:28-33; Patterson 1992:171-172).

Once the fish was on the surface, the crime perpetrated by the greed of *Māui's* brothers in cutting up the fish before the appropriate ritual had been conducted is interpreted as the second sin, emphasizing the need to conduct appropriate thanksgiving rituals for the gifts of nature; an important theme that is repeated in other traditional narratives. The myth-message teaches that failure to respect nature brings its own evil consequences; in this case, the gods turn the fish into rough, mountainous largely useless to man: the geography of the North Island of *Aotearoa/New Zealand* (Walker 1978:24; Patterson 1992:173).

Another recurrent theme through Māori traditional narratives that is covered by another of *Māui's* exploits is the conflictive relationship between brothers-in-law, hence Walker (1978:24) affirms that, contrary to what Alpers (1964) suggests, the episode where *Māui* turned his brother-in-law *Irawaru* into a dog is more than just an origin myth for the dog. In his view, the relationship stands for treachery and murder and the theme is reiterated in subsequent myths and traditions, providing a good example of the continuity between myth and tradition, transmitting a myth-message and social imperative of the first order. The latter, in Patterson's (1992:174) perspective, would remind us that relationships with in-laws are very different from blood ties, bearing no claims of loyalty in certain critical situations.

Māui's trickery and deceitful manners through his life enabled him to gain knowledge and power, for him but also for humanity: he tricked his mother as a boy darkening the house and pretending it was night time to see where she went in the mornings; he refused his ancestress *Muriranga-whenua* her food in order to obtain her enchanted jawbone from which he designed the fishing barbed hooks; he concealed himself to trap the sun and in that way make the days longer; and he deceived his ancestress *Mahuika* to obtain fire (Patterson 1992:165).

However, the last of *Māui's* exploits confronts the hero with his fate, sealed since the performance of his *tohi*, or purification rite. It is his final encounter with the goddess of death *Hine-nui-te-pō*, which ended in death for *Māui*. According to Walker (1978:24), the episode justifies the Māori belief in the predictive powers of omens (the flaw in his purification rite) as well as providing a rationale for death, therefore introduced by *Māui*. The final myth-message is that death for mankind is inescapable, so man should resign himself to its inevitability. Regarding the latter, Parker and

Stanton assert that the whole complex of adventures of *Māui* reflect the inescapable human reality, in which “great things can be accomplished through a combination of talent, secure identity, and the acquisition of knowledge, but only within the boundaries of life and death as laid in creation”(2003:413).

c) Social duties

In Patterson's (1992:178) view, the re-enactment aspect present in traditional Māori narratives is of paramount importance. They are seen as providing a range of archetypes which act as guides to present-day conduct, and correct behaviour or *tika* would consist in the re-enacting of these ancestral deeds, the idea also developed by Ranginui Walker (1978) through this analysis. Bearing the latter in mind, other recurrent themes are covered by traditional Māori narratives apart from the ones already examined, especially the ones related with the family obligations and the importance to honour them. One case is that of *Rupe*, *Māui*'s brother, who went in the search for their sister *Hinauri*, grieved by the transformation of his husband into a dog, a story in which the central theme is the obligation on a hero figure to search for parents or siblings, indicating that Māori society held these primary relationships as particularly binding (Walker 1978:24).

In Graeber's (2001:185-186) perspective, when one goes through Māori oral histories, rich and detailed as they are, it can be seen that heirlooms and property rarely play much part, being mainly, as we have seen, the histories of migrations, of begetting, insults and vengeance, exploitation and romance, with occasional feats of magic or even exploits of hunting or fishing. Consequently, he asserts that they are very much about reciprocity, where the notion of *utu*, of paying back debts, is the central theme of most of them⁵¹

The social duty of *utu* is also represented in the story of *Tinirau* -*Rupe*'s brother-in-law- and the theft of his pet-whale *Tutunui* by the invited *tohunga* (specialist, priestly class) *Kae*. According to Patterson (1992:177), the narrative can be seen as setting a precedent also for the correct treatment of important guests; in this case, the way in which *Tinirau*'s village treated *Kae*, highlighting hospitality and etiquette. But this was betrayed by *Kae* when, craving for the whale's meat, he tricks *Tinirau* and rides the

51 Graeber (2001:186) adds, though, that the idiom of reciprocity in the traditional narratives is overwhelmingly one of violence.

whale back to his village where it is killed⁵² and eaten. *Tinirau's* village send a party of women to abduct *Kae*, only recognizing him by his crooked teeth, which are revealed when the women on purpose make him laugh with certain chants and dances. While he is asleep, he is transported to *Tinirau's* village and once awake is confronted to his situation (humiliating him and therefore gaining more *mana* for the village), and finally slaughtered (Patterson 1992: 177; Grey 1956:69-76; Reed 1999: 91-95)⁵³. The myth-message, for Walker (1978:25) would be quite clear: revenge is a social duty, villains deserve to die, and the revenge should be executed with subtlety, cunning, and an appropriate strategy designed to achieve its purpose. But, as the mirror-image of society, mythology reflects social practice, and the death of *Kae* does not close the account, engendering a continuing vendetta in subsequent generations.

d) *Tāwhaki's* cycle of stories

In *Tāwhaki's* cycle of stories, the central mission of the hero is to avenge the death of his father, humiliated even after death by his enemies -the *Ponaturi*, an underwater race- by the hanging of his bones as trophies. In the end, *Tāwhaki* manages to deceive his enemies -again the archetypical presence of tricks and strategy- making them believe that is night-time when in fact it was not, and therefore dying because of the sun light (Grey 1956:46-51). *Tāwhaki's* victories against his enemies spread his fame far and wide, even to the heavens, where the celestial maiden *Tangotango* lived and started to pay nightly visitations to the hero's bed. In Walker's (1978:27) perspective, this would be an indication of the sexual mores of Māori society, a social precedent and legitimation of actual social practice where women had equal liberty with men to initiate love affairs. But after some time, the hero's wife abandoned him because of the rude remarks he made about their daughter, going back to the sky, from where she came, leaving him certain instructions if he wanted to go after her (Grey 1956:52-53).

Eventually *Tāwhaki* went in search of his wife, and just as in previous myths *Māui* and *Rupe* searched for parents and a sister, *Tāwhaki's* search for his wife indicates the equal importance of this pivotal relationship to those of parents and siblings, a

52 According to Walker (1978:25), "As previously indicated, myth systems are not perfect. Occasionally they exhibit curious errors in minor detail. The myth relates that sand entered the fish's gills whereupon it suffocated and was dragged ashore to be cooked and eaten. This is another indication that peripheral details are unimportant in myths. It is the myth-message that counts".

53 Elsdon Best (2005:276) asserts that another version of this story ends with *Kae* eaten by *Tinirau's* group, establishing the origins of cannibalism.

socially important bond that should not be lightly given up (Walker 1978:28). In Metge's (2005:158) perspective, through the structural, psychoanalytic and functionalist interpretations respectively, *Tāwhaki's* story would reflect the perennial problems that arise from the tension between life and death, together with social tensions between men and women and “helps identify the roles, relations and actions valued in Māori society”.

But there is also an important teaching concerning the instructions left by *Tangotango*, which *Tāwhaki's* brother *Karihi* fails to follow in a first attempt to climb to the heavens through certain vines, and almost dies. In the same way, one of their slaves dies failing to follow *Tāwhaki's* instructions not to look at the *pa* (fortified place) of *Tongameha*, for its *tapu* would be too powerful for their status (Grey 1956: 53, 55-56). Patterson (1992:179-180) and Walker (1978:28) argue that it is clear that the teaching portrayed in these events is the importance of following instructions from higher rank people in order to avoid misfortunes and calamity, reaffirming the hierarchical order of traditional Māori society.

e) Practical themes

But there are also very practical matters covered by the traditional narratives, in a wide range of human needs, like hygienic issues combined with the notion of *tapu* elements. According to Walker (1978:25), in *Rupe* and *Hinauri's* story, when the god *Rehua* offers birds which live in his hair eating lice, as food, it deliberately portrays a disgusting and revolting scene. The head being the most *tapu* (sacred) part of the body, this creates a repulsive notion of eating food which has been in contact with it. This would be the precedent for the social taboo that anything which has been in contact with the head (combs, hats, or articles of toilet) “should not be placed on a table where food is prepared or consumed. *Rehua's* repast is an effective dramatisation of an important myth-message” (Walker 1978:25).

On *Rupe's* second visit to *Rehua's* courtyard, he found the place filthy with excrement, therefore *Rupe* carves wooden scoops and constructs a *heketua* (privy) providing the model for the proper disposal of human waste (Walker 1978:25). Although in the story *Rehua's* son, *Kaitangata* dies falling over a cliff when using a wrongly built privy, this would also carry additional messages: first, for its correct construction, but also, according to Buck (1950, cited in Patterson 1992:176), it can be

seen as a revenge for the lack of cooperation in the cleaning of the place by *Rehua* and the rest of his village.

Also the management of certain concrete critical situations is portrayed by the narratives, as the case when *Māui* was rescued from the sea by his ancestor, and the myth relates how he was revived by being suspended over a smoky fire. Walker (1978:22) argues that this was the method used by Māori to revive a drowned person, representing a reflection of a current social practice in dealing with a particular crisis and also a directive, an instruction on how to proceed.

The importance of *utu* and war as a means to achieve it are portrayed in the exploits of *Whakatau-pōtiki*, *Tinirau's* son when he looked for revenge for the death of his brother, events that end up reading like a military manual. Walker (1978:26) together with Parker and Stanton (2003:416) affirm that the myth sets out a model of military behaviour, how to review warriors -the hard core of well-drilled capable warriors for a dangerous mission, the *hoko-whitu-a-Tū*, the hundred and forty warriors of *Tūmatauenga*, the fighting unit favoured by the Māori-, how to practise order of battle and to arrange for their disposition in assault columns, support columns and reserve columns. Consequently, the myth-message would be that it is possible to defeat an enemy with superior forces by strategy and subterfuge, and it would also give concrete directions on how to proceed.

Finally, one of the stories that interconnect in the most direct way teachings for correct behaviour and mythical elements is the story of *Rata*. Concentrated in the construction of a proper war canoe to avenge the father of his father *Wahieroa* and recover his bones, he forgets to recite the proper *karakia* to *Tāne* to take one of his trees. Consequently, each time he chopped the great *Tōtara* tree he needed, the spiritual guardians of the forest -creatures of the forest and fairy folk- replaced the chips and restored the tree back in place. Only when *Rata* is confronted to his fault by the spirits and shows remorse for it, does an agreement emerge and they help him with the task (Patterson 1992: 181-182; Grey 1956:86-88).

The incident of *Rata's* canoe is, for Walker (1978:29) a myth message of conservation, in which propitiatory rites to the appropriate deity must be observed before natural resources are appropriated for man's use, ensuring that nature is not treated wantonly but with care and respect. In Patterson's (1992:182) view, this story would be one of the most graphic expressions of the general Māori vision of the

environment not as a collection of resources to be exploited but as a community of beings that deserve respect and are all important in them.

Finally, it is necessary to highlight the connections between some of the stories reviewed, bearing in mind that they can -again- only be seen as separated sections for academic purposes. A more faithful portrayal of them would be that of a “fabric”, in which common themes run along its threads, something clearly understood by academics such as Poignant (1967:65) referring to the chain of stories regarding *Hema-Tāwhaki-Wahieroa-Rata*. This author affirms that this particular cycle demonstrates the interdependence of successive generations, in which the conduct of each man is determined by that of his father before him. Therefore, the success of any initiative depended on the “cooperation of the spirit world, particularly on the supernatural forces controlled by a man's maternal ancestors” because of the extended reach of its power, showing the interdependence in the temporal dimension, and also between the spiritual and earthly ones.

A.4) Māori proverbs and traditional sayings

The *whakataukī* or *pepeha*, Māori proverbs and traditional sayings, play a very important role in Māori society, as oral tools for the transmission of values and in general for educational purposes. According to Patterson (1992:47), they cover a very wide scope of matters –too big in fact to be properly addressed here-, from small issues related to etiquette or very practical activities, to fundamental issues related to ethics and spirituality. Therefore, they are related with issues regarding conservation and the relationship with the gods who watch over the natural resources, like the one that is recalled in connection with Rata's lack of respect for *Tāne* when he felled a tree with no permission of the god “*Kei te raweke koe i tō tupuna i a Tāne*” (You are interfering with your ancestor *Tāne*) (Karetu 1987, cited in Patterson 1992:48).

Also, the importance of land is remarked by some of them, shaping and/or reflecting the scale of priorities in Māori society: “*Toitū he whenua, whatungarongaro he tangata*” (Land is permanent, man disappears) (Riley 1990, cited in Patterson 1992:50), or remarks that shape desired values in people, also connected with other narratives, like the one that says “*Tēnā te mana o Rēhua*” (Behold the greatness of *Rehua*), referring to the god of kindness, when a gift is given (Karetu 1987, cited in

Patterson 1992:54). Other traits are also included, like the reference to gluttony commenting “*Ko Uenuku tō korokoro*” (Your throat is like that of *Uenuku*), alluding to the rainbow god *Uenuku*, famed for his huge appetite (Riley 1990, cited in Patterson 1992: 53).

In like manner, the saying “*Ka mahara ki te hē o Rona*” (Remember *Rona*'s mistake), recalls the story of *Rona* and her placement in *Te Marama* (the Moon) because of her cursing towards it; in another version *Rona* was a chief, a *rangatira*. The event is seen as the origin of curses or vilification, and the social sanction is hence reflected through the proverb (Parker and Stanton 2003: 418).

As it has already been argued, the huge number of proverbs that could be quoted here, covering themes like family, work, humility, bravery and cowardice, peace and war, hospitality, love, etc., form a corpus of sometimes conflicting data, but not unsystematic. The use of proverbs arises from concrete situations that provide the context and setting for their use, unlike abstract sets of rules. Consequently, the meaning of the Māori proverbs is given by the situations more than by the actual words, in which the timing and the way in which they are delivered are also crucial. These proverbs, then, have been classified through history by continuous trials and errors and experience, mirrored in other narratives that end up forming an interdependent net with the sayings, and linking concepts in *whaikōrero* (speeches) and *karanga* (calls) (Patterson 1992:74-75; Hemara 2000:31)⁵⁴.

A.5) Final remarks

At the end of the present section, we have been able to analyse briefly some of the most important aspects in traditional Māori narratives, especially myths, which clearly set up models of expected behaviour, correct procedures regarding several tasks and organizing social principles. The strong connection between myths and certain traditions is tackled by Walker (1978:29) asserting that, despite the difference between the immemorial time of mythical accounts compared with the approximately seven centuries of traditions, the distinction between both is not sharply demarcated. The

54 The cited book of Wharehuia Hemara (2000) in the bibliography of this study is an interesting case of the use of *whakataukī* and *whakatauākī* in a current research work, where almost every description and analysis is supported by a pertinent Māori proverb.

activities of real men in the early traditions – which also transmitted myth-messages-would have much in common with their mythological predecessors, being remote enough in time to be endowed with supra-normal powers and personality traits reminiscent of the heroes of mythology.

According to Walker (1978:31), myths and traditions would possess the same dynamism as the culture that bears them and although the moral truths which are contained in the myth-messages are relatively stable, a series of details may be altered to suit local circumstance and time. It would be precisely this reworking of myths that sometimes creates an incongruity between observed facts and those in the stories, or the noticeable variations between versions. The dynamism of a culture's myth-system would also be reflected in the elevation of ancestor heroes -such as *Ngatoroirangi*- to the realm of mythology, showing that “not only are myths reworked but they are continuously being added to from the expanding fund of stories from tradition” (Walker 1978:31).

On a similar matter, Patterson (1992:157) asserts that, as far as Māori values are concerned, the point is not whether myths, for instance the creation narratives, give an accurate factual account of how the earth and its populations came into being. Even if they do not do this and are considered scientifically inadequate from another epistemological framework, they still express important spiritual or ethical messages. No amount of scientific explanation of origins could possibly affect the great importance that Māori place upon close spiritual relationships with their lands. Therefore, to understand these creation narratives it is necessary to see them as expressing value judgements and not as some sort of primitive and possibly discredited science.

The latter is also underscored by the traditional Māori concept of personal identity in terms of *whakapapa* or genealogy, in which *whakapapa* makes the people who they are, connected since the first ancestors in the original *whakapapa*, “in which Rangī and Papa 'sprang from a series of forces', were physically and spiritually united, and produced children” (Pere 1992, cited in Patterson 1992:157). Here too the connection is both physical and spiritual, with the human race literally evolving from the materials of planet Earth, seen by the Māori as their nurturing mother, someone to whom in turn we owe important duties of care (Patterson 1992:157).

As a final summary, Walker (1978:31-32) states that Māori myths and traditions conform logically arranged and related systems that fulfilled explanatory, integrating,

validating, historic and socialisation functions for the people who owned them. Despite the supra-normal powers in an age of miracles, the heroes of myths and traditions behave basically in human ways, driven by the same emotions and therefore, embedded in the stories are themes and myth-messages that provide precedents, models and social prescriptions for human behaviour. In the end, though, these myth-messages, in many occasions surprisingly similar to the existing reality of human behaviour, would challenge our notions of whether myth is the prototype or the mirror image of reality, a riddle that will prove to be, of course, irresoluble.

B) Anthropology and the academic development of Mythology

Taking into consideration the stated definitions of the term “myth”, in order to understand the “western” approximations to the concept/topic it is necessary to give an account of part of the history of this scholarly field, in which anthropology has had an important level of influence. As it has already been mentioned, according to Eliade (1976:15) the earliest Greek philosophers criticized and rejected myths, in particular the Homeric ones, as fictions. Xenophanes (sixth-fifth century B.C.) rejected the immorality of the gods described by Homer and Hesiod, and especially criticized their anthropomorphism. This criticism of mythic traditions took on a special character among the scholars of Alexandria in the Hellenistic age, but the myths of Homer and Hesiod continued to interest several groups throughout their world and until our times. Other authors, like Theagenes of Rhegium (flourished ca. 525 B.C.) went further in their rational approach and suggested that the names of the gods in Homer represented either human faculties or natural elements⁵⁵.

According to Eliade (1976:15), Euhemerus, about the beginning of the third century B.C. in his romance entitled *Sacred Writings* stated that myths merely represented the confused memory or imaginative transfiguration of the exploits of the great primitive kings. Therefore these two forms of interpretation, allegorical and euhemerist, preserved in a certain way the stories about Greek gods and heroes after the

55 This line of thought was followed by the Stoics more than any other group, developing the allegorical interpretation of Homer and of all religious traditions (Eliade 1976:15).

long process of “demythicization”, or even after the triumph of Christianity in the Mediterranean region.

As a scientific field of study, according to Eliade (1976:15-16), “mythology” did not begin until Karl Otfried Muller's *Prolegomena zu einer wissenschaftlichen Mythologie (Introduction to a Scientific Mythology)* was published in 1825. Later, through numerous works of Friedrich Max Muller in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the study of myth took on a more general popularity. In time, his theory of solar mythology collapsed, thanks to his main critic Andrew Lang, who used a novel source of data for his attacks: anthropology. His main backup came from E.B. Tylor's *Primitive Culture* (1871), which stated that primitive tribes of his day were living in a mythmaking stage of the mind, one that corresponded to the human intellect in its early child-like stage. Hence, the study of myth had to begin among the less civilized peoples -according to a firmly believed evolutionistic notion-, the nearest representatives of primeval culture.

Tylor's evolutionist perspective proposed an underlying religious dynamic to the mythic phenomena, arguing that the main cause of the transfiguration of daily experience into myth was the general belief of primitives that nature is animated and because of this, susceptible to personification. Therefore, the belief in spiritual beings but not yet gods, “animism”, was the first stage of religion, with the consequent higher levels of polytheism and finally, monotheism. Based on Tylor's work, Lang asserted that myths reflected actions, ideas, and institutions which actually existed in the past, but after the study of certain reports on the High Beings of the Australians and other tribal peoples, Lang ended up rejecting the theory of animism as a first stage of religion⁵⁶ (Eliade 1976:16-17).

At the end of the nineteenth century, three main groups of scholars with different approaches towards the study of myths could be distinguished: classicists, anthropologists, and Old Testament specialists. Among these, there was a widely spread idea of myth as the interpretation or explanation of ritual, a theory developed by W. Robertson Smith in his work of 1888, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*. The latter was a popular view among classicists, but British anthropologists also worked with it, and through A.M. Hocart and Lord Raglan, proclaimed “ritual” as the most important

56 Basically, Tylor affirmed that the idea of God emerged from the belief in nature spirits and the cult of ancestors, something that was not found among the Australian aborigines and Andaman Islanders, who although had a belief in a remote deity. This was the beginning of a long controversy over the origins of religion and of primeval monotheism (Eliade 1976:17).

element to understand human culture, asserting also that all myths had a ritual origin in which they were only the impersonated speech of their corresponding rituals (Eliade 1976:18-19).

According to Eliade (1976:19), the “ritualist” approach “takes for granted that the fundamental element of religion and of human culture is the act *done by man*, not the *story of divine activity*”. Eventually, this perspective was also assumed by Freud in his psychoanalytic perspective and studies of mythology, which according to Metge (2005:156) explain the events displayed in myths at the unconscious level of the individual personality, “and is to be sought in the experiences of early childhood, particularly in the individual's relations with his or her parents”. Therefore, Freud identified a primordial act which established the human condition and opened the way to mythic and religious creation: the primordial parricide⁵⁷. This supposed fundamental origin of religion, culture and society has although been thoroughly rejected by anthropologists, historians and other psychologists, as an extreme simplification and reductionistic approach (Eliade 1976:19-20).

Mythological interpretation from a psychological perspective did not end with Freud, acquiring with Carl G. Jung new dimensions. His theory, interdependent on his theory of the “collective unconscious” postulated its existence due to the strong similarities between myths, dreams and symbols of distant peoples and cultures. The images and structures of the collective unconscious manifested themselves in regularly repeating forms, called by the author “archetypes”. Jung also considered that myths, dreams and in general fantasy contents were indifferent products of the unconscious, though not construing the unconscious mind as a reservoir of repressed personal libido. The mythical images were, in his view, structures of the collective unconscious and for that, an impersonal possession, present in all people in a potential state and activated in myths or dreams at different occasions (Eliade 1976:20; Gellner 1995:111).

According to Jung and Kerenyi (1949, cited in Eliade 1976:20-21) the so called “primitive mentality” would not invent myths, but would experience them, preceding any type of culture, with their verbal expressions moulded according to different cultural styles. Therefore, for Jung, myths would be “the expressions of a primordial psychic process that may even precede the advent of the human race”, and because of

⁵⁷ The accounts of primordial parricides are numerous and coincide among Greek, Viking, Polynesian and other cosmogonic narrations.

this they would not need rituals to emerge from the deep layers of the collective unconscious.

From the anthropological perspective Malinowski, as one of its leading figures in the beginning of the twentieth century, introduced a new approach to the study of myths shifting away from the “protoscience” view popular among armchair anthropologists, hand in hand with his new approach to the study of foreign societies, interpreting them as “charters”, a perspective therefore characterized sometimes as the “charter theory” of myth (Powell 2004:650; Metge 2005:156). Based on his work in the Trobriand Islands and his study of the patterns of land possession, clan membership and other issues, he stated that to understand myths it was a prior condition to understand the social context in which they were embedded. Thus, under a functionalist perspective, myths were used as justifications for current social arrangements, maintaining at bay social challenges to the existing order which in case of being successful, ended up changing the myths in order to give a new stability to the latter (Schultz and Lavenda 2005:162; Carroll 1996:830; Gellner 1998:134). This “functionalistic” view of myths, basically a diachronic conception of them because of its anchoring to a primeval time, would in time be updated to include a more synchronic conception of myth as model, a shift generated by the structural analysis (Dundes 1968: xiii).

In Eliade's view (1976:21), the investigation of myths and mythical thought was continued by several authors between philosophers -such as E. Cassirer, Suzanne Langer, G. Bachelard and Paul Ricoeur-, anthropologists and folklorists. Among these last scholars, some have considered myths as special forms of folktales, or traditional dramatic oral narratives, with two main orientations: the “historical” one, and two other related perspectives, the “morphological” one and the “structural” perspective.

The “historical” perspective was developed by authors like Franz Boas and C.W. Von Sydow, in which the former argued that myths reflected social organization, therefore, through the study of “what myths said about kinship, economic structure, and social organization, it would be possible to reconstruct the nature of traditional societies”. This is why in the cultural anthropology tradition of the U.S., collecting information about myths was a routine part of ethnographic research (Carroll 1996:828). In the case of the other two related perspectives, the “morphological” one had as main developer the Russian expert in folktales Vladimir Propp, and the

“structural” one boasted a major figure in the discipline, the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (Eliade 1976:21).

Lévi-Strauss considered that myths could be studied as musical scores, focusing mainly on their structure (Schultz and Lavenda 2005:162-163). Particularly concerned with the deep “meanings” of myths and not so much with their apparent use, Lévi-Strauss relied on the concept of “structure”, which in linguistics and ethnology is assumed as a combinatory game of unconscious nature. The author construed myths as expressions *par excellence* of primitive thought, arguing that they “were primarily good/goods for thinking with” (Metge 2005:155), with the purpose of providing a logical model to overcome contradictions (Eliade 1976:21). These contradictions and oppositions present in social life (e.g. rules of residence after marriage; life to death; natural world to cultural world) were in Lévi-Strauss's view, arranged and explained through the complex syntax of myths, framing insoluble problems in concrete forms (Schultz and Lavenda 2005:163).

In Lévi-Strauss's perspective, this basic characteristic of mythical thought -its concreteness- would be expressed through their work with “signs” which lie between images and concepts. Signs would resemble images in that they are concrete, unlike concepts, but their power of reference would relate the former to the latter ones, with the result of mythical thought being a kind of intellectual *bricolage*, working with all sorts of heterogeneous materials available (Eliade 1976:22). Consequently, myths were seen as not only talking about the world as it is, but also describing it as it could be, transforming them into effective devices to think with, and appropriate for a “symbolic game” kind of exercise (Schultz and Lavenda 2005: 163). In this sense, according to Lévi-Strauss (1963, cited in Eliade 1976:21)

(...) the kind of logic which is used in mythical thought is as rigorous as that of modern science, and the difference lies not in the quality of the intellectual process, but in the nature of the things to which it is applied (...) man has always been thinking equally well.

In his own words, Lévi-Strauss (1978:11-12) affirms that, driven towards mythology by chance, after working on kinship systems and marriage rules he realized that the situation with myths was analogous, with a concealed order behind its arbitrary, meaningless and absurd facade, sustaining that it is impossible to conceive of meaning without order as a basis. With the latter, the author had also the answer for the question

about common patterns of mythology around the world, being the similar underlying *structure* of the human mind responsible for this, and not the shared contents proposed by authors like Jung (Gellner 1995:111).

In Sperber's view (1994:76), the four volumes of *Mythologiques* -one of Lévi-Strauss's most important works- constitute a conspicuous illustration and development of the central idea that “concrete categories can serve as intellectual tools to express abstract notions and relationships; and that “untamed” thinking tends to order its world in this way”, an idea that runs as the principal argument of his book *The Savage Mind*. Sperber further affirms that for Lévi-Strauss, most cultural phenomena, such as technology or political organization, are inevitably constrained by a variety of ecological and sociological aspects. Contrasting with the latter, myths, as orally transmitted and culturally selected narratives, “tend to ignore any determination other than cultural ones. Hence the study of myths should provide a direct insight into the spontaneous working of the human mind” (1994:76).

As a final remark on this author, it is important to bear in mind that, as a core aspect of Lévi-Strauss's approach, his theory of myth can be summarised by his statement that the purpose of the former is to display “a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction” (Kirk 1970:48). In this sense, as Dundes (1968: xii – xiii) argues, it is perhaps the notion of myths and other forms of folklore as “models” and the attempts to relate the paradigms found in them to broader areas of culture, such as cosmology and world-view, the most valuable aspects of the application of the results of a theoretical approach regarded in general as sterile and formalistic.

The anthropological perspectives in the study of myths, though, did not stop with Lévi-Strauss, taking into account several criticisms⁵⁸ directed towards his overtly rigid and structured models, regarded as a-historical, unverifiable and even neglectful of human creative activity (Eliade 1976:22; McGee and Warms 2004:368; Abercrombie, Hill and Turner 2000:348). Going even deeper in the criticisms to his perspective, Kirk (1970:59) asserts that a recurrent contradiction emerges between the assumption of a “privileged plane of meaning” in practice, and the theoretical view of meaning as a purely abstract reflection “about the mode of operation of the human mind”, frequently delivered through a baroque and obscure writing style.

58 For a concise and at the same time detailed critical analysis of Lévi-Strauss perspective, highlighting his cryptic style and somehow arbitrary method, see Dan Sperber's (1994:64-93) essay “Claude Lévi-Strauss today”, in his book *On Anthropological Knowledge: Three Essays*.

It is important to bear in mind that anthropology, with its eighteenth-century Enlightenment background, connected to nineteenth-century evolutionism, has not been “immune to parental images of rationality that sharply distinguish healthy, adult reality from the dangerous or childish land of fantasy” (Rappport and Overing 2007:309). Anthropologists can believe in the intelligence of other people (i.e. of “other” cultures), but not that their accounts about the world are true, or rational. In fact, since its very beginning, much anthropological debate has concentrated on the problem of how to interpret other people's beliefs systems, and many anthropologists “continue to view mythology as one of those *falsities* of other cultures that we anthropologists might study” (Rappport and Overing 2007:309).

According to various authors (Schultz and Lavenda 2005:163; Rappport and Overing 2007:315), recent anthropological thinking has taken a more reflexive approach, regarding particularly the unconsciousness of people about their myths, their structure and functions. New research has recognized that ordinary members of a society are often quite conscious or aware of how their myths structure meaningful messages, allowing a manipulation degree in order to make an effect, prove points or “to buttress a particular referential perspective on human nature, society, or history” (Schultz and Lavenda 2005:163). Nevertheless, other anthropologists like Carroll (1996:830) have a more sombre perspective on the matter, affirming that “the most important thing to note about the current status of myth studies is that it seems once again to have slipped to the periphery of anthropological investigation”.

It is important to highlight, amid all the theoretical discussion displayed, that the variation observed between religious, psychological and structural interpretations, with no theory capable of achieving universal acceptance, is according to some interpretations partly due to the fact that myths in themselves are constructed as complex devices composed of different layers and interwoven elements, working in diverse ways in different religious and cultural contexts (Hinnells 1997:337; Carroll 1996:830). In this way, a univocal meaning and interpretation turns to be a highly improbable -and perhaps undesirable- result, in the academic approach and also in the regular use of them by their societies of origin.

Even though there is a fairly consensual distinction between the different genres of traditional narratives, it is also true that there are plenty of mutual influences and areas in which fertile overlapping occur (Kirk 1970:41; Csapo 2005:9). According to Schrempp (1992:10), the variety of communally based popular representational frames

belonging to vernacular tradition (folk genres) - including epic, riddle, litany, and even proverb- can have links to cosmological constructs, displacing the exclusiveness attributed to “myths” regarding this. Therefore, considering the case of folklore as a corpus of “little silly tales of not much account” he asserts that “such familiar little images are, in philosophy and mythology, and within and without Western knowledge, precisely the stuff out of which some of the most grand mental creations have been brought to life” (Schrempp 1992:10).

Finally, it can be remarked from an anthropological point of view that, despite the overlappings and fuzzy boundaries between the different genres of traditional narratives, there is a certain sense of order and hierarchy -given mainly by the “social importance” of their contents and figures- that is useful as a criterion for their study. In this sense, as Csapo (2005:9) argues, greater ceremony and taboo surround more important stories, which in term will be regarded more as collective property than other minor tales. Even further, narratives with greater social importance will be repeated or alluded-to more frequently, and through different means they will be ingrained into social discourse.

Nevertheless, it is also important to remember that, as Jackson (2002:27) asserts, this kind of typological splitting of narratives into essentially different categories, in a post-Enlightenment manner similar to the distinctions between science and religion, distorts their interdependence. The same “smoke screen” can be created through these divisions, to cover the instability of the epistemological contrasts between fact and fiction, real and imaginary, which inform such genre separations. This is how, for example, while considering folktales as fictions, we can see them containing real moral truths, and though charter myths may have a powerful religious or ancestral basis, they can be used for antisocial ends, or “...through migration and the vicissitudes of history, myths may atrophy and become mere tales” (Jackson 2002:27). Consequently, this is a dynamic that cannot be minimized and must be considered when studying these constructs in the empirical settings.

It is because of the aforementioned that we should be cautious when referring to these narratives as “traditional”, a term as we have already seen that may lead us to freeze them in time and form, and “to confuse a symptom of their function of transmitting something of collective importance for part of their essence” (Csapo 2005:9). Myth would be, in this sense, a “function of social ideology” or “ideology in narrative form” (Lincoln 1999, cited in Csapo 2005:9), and therefore we should not

forget how popular usage and transmission through diverse means still reflect their built-in flexibility and adaptations to current conditions lived by the social milieu (Metge 1998: 8-9).

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