

"You can't sell a marae": campus innovation at Massey University

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ABSTRACT: Te Kupenga o te Mātauranga marae is located on the former Massey University Hokowhitu Campus in Palmerston North and has the distinction of being the first marae built on Crown land. A national hui on Māori Education was held at the Hokowhitu Campus (then Teachers College, not yet Massey University) in 1974 and it was here that Charlie Maitai challenged the then principal Pat Whitwell to build a wharenuī on the new campus. That challenge was complete by the end of the 1970s. In 2015 the marae was sold by Massey University to a local developer as part of a wider real estate site package.

This paper explores the innovative genesis of Te Kupenga o te Mātauranga marae and how it came to be sold as a university asset some 35 years later.

Ko Te Ahu-a-Tūranga te Taumata.

Ko Tararua nga Pae-Maunga.

Ko Manawatū te Awa.

Ko Te Hokowhitu-a-Tiimatauenga te Hāpua. Ko Ruahine te Marae-ātea a Tiimatauenga.

Ko Te Kupenga o Te Mātauranga te Whare. Ko Te Haonui tōna Piringa.

Ko Ngāti Rangitane te Iwi.

Ko Te Tini a Te Kupenga o Te Mātauranga te Whānau

The first marae to be constructed at a New Zealand University was Te Herenga Waka at Victoria University of Wellington in 1986. Over the following two decades almost all tertiary education institutes (universities, polytechnics and wananga) have put in place some form of either marae or building dedicated to Māori studies (or both).

However, it was teachers' colleges who first adopted marae. Palmerston North Teachers College led the way in the 1970s with the development and construction of Te Kupenga

o te Mātauranga (Te Kupenga). Being the first usually guarantees a certain level of attention, whether simply as part of recognising the whakapapa of a typology or to draw lessons for future developments. This hasn't been the case in architectural circles with Te Kupenga. The later developments at universities and polytechnics have received more attention (perhaps reflecting the location of architectural staff?).

Te Kupenga's origins go back to Frank Davis who, as head of the art department at

Palmerston North Teachers College, began to push for a more Māori-friendly environment for students. The arrival of Cliff Whiting and John Tapiata added impetus to Frank's idea of building a meeting house on the new campus being set up in Hokowhitu, Palmerston North. Piri Sciascia, who arrived as a Māori Studies lecturer a little later, described it as an exciting time; "... kaupapa Māori was really taking off at the time and Palmerston North Teachers College was influential in leading the whole movement."¹

¹ Sciascia "Piri Sciascia" p 13.

A national hui on Māori Education was held at the Palmerston North Teachers College Hokowhitu campus in 1974 and it was here that Charlie Maitai challenged the then principal Pat Whitwell to build a wharenuī on the new campus. Pat took up the challenge along with the rest of the staff. At that time, Teachers Colleges were under the umbrella of the Department of Education. The Department of Education was able to exercise considerable influence over the colleges, and the arrival of Norman Kirk's Labour government in 1972 saw a new impetus given to social and cultural development.

For Māori the seventies were a very exciting time, as the Māori voice became more assertive. The Land March in 1975 and the setting up of the Waitangi Tribunal are examples in response to this. Alongside these developments, Māoritanga being taught in schools was becoming an important part of the mainstream curriculum. The movement of Māori from rural settings and a subsistence lifestyle to an urban one was well established and the bringing of a cultural icon such as a meeting house into not only an urban setting, but an educational one seemed like a logical progression. Māori students would feel more comfortable with something familiar and

more importantly they would be able to continue many familiar cultural practices within a mainstream tertiary institution.²

Deidre Brown has written the most on Māori tertiary architecture. Her chapters in *Exquisite Apart*³ and *Māori Architecture: from Fare to Wharenuī and Beyond*,⁴ as well as an earlier SAHANZ conference paper⁵ all include discussion on Māori tertiary architecture as part of an institutional setting. Te Kupenga does not appear in any of Brown's works, her focus instead being on recent developments in the 1990s and 2000s which "are usually well-funded, large-scale projects which have been designed in consultation with an architect, who is often of Māori descent."⁶

A number of themes are explored in Deidre Brown's look at Māori tertiary architecture of the 1990s and 2000s:

- a) the nature of biculturalism expressed through the architecture

- b) architectural difficulties arising from the multi-tribal nature of some Māori tertiary buildings
- c) the importance of process in development and construction.

We can look at each of these themes in relation to Te Kupenga o te Mātauranga – being the first gives us the opportunity to compare the approach taken here with later developments.

Nature of bicultural relationship

The examples used by Brown are all post-1987 once the Treaty of Waitangi had been recognised in legislation. While the 1975 Treaty of Waitangi Act established the Waitangi Tribunal, it did not insert Treaty principles or the Treaty itself into law. It was not until the late 1980s with the State Owned Enterprises Act 1986 and Māori Language Act 1987 that requirements around recognition of the Treaty started to appear in legislation.

The Education Act 1989 was important in this context. It required schools and educational institutes to "discover and consider the views and concerns of Māori communities living in the geographical area" (the modern version of this is in section 61 of the Education Act). This

² *Cliff Whiting* pp 25-26.

³ Brown "Instituting Biculturalism" pp 100-109.

⁴ Brown *Māori Architecture* pp 146-155.

⁵ Brown "Nga Whare Mātauranga Māori" pp 19-24.

⁶ Brown "Nga Whare Mātauranga Māori" p 19.

was an important step in recognising needs and aspirations of Māori, although it stopped short of specifically mentioning the Treaty and thereby avoiding any risks around establishing Treaty-based rights that could serve as a basis for litigation.⁷ Nevertheless, Claudia Orange has noted that this "brought significant institutional change."⁸ Schools and tertiary institutes from this point on had a legislative obligation to be bicultural, and the development of Māori studies departments and related architecture must be seen in this context.

Te Kupenga o te Mātauranga predates this, formulated at a time of the Land March and genesis of the Waitangi Tribunal. The last Native schools were transferred to the control of the regional education boards in 1969,⁹ responses to the Hunn report of 1961 were still reverberating around the social sector, and Gordon Tovey's Māori art advisors had explored the relationship between Māori and Pākehā culture in art education. This context meant that Te Kupenga was generated at a

⁷ Barrett & Connolly-Stone "The Treaty of Waitangi and Social Policy" np.

⁸ Orange *The Treaty of Waitangi* p 244.

⁹ Calman "Māori education – mātauranga - The native schools system, 1867 to 1969" np.

time when being bicultural had very different meanings for institutes.

This difference in bicultural context was demonstrated in the way Te Kupenga was funded. Whereas later tertiary institutes funded marae from their capital budgets, creating an asset that they owned and which established a power dynamic of all others only being "stakeholders," Te Kupenga was funded half from the Students Association and half from the Palmerston North Teachers College principal's discretionary budget. Students were not stakeholders or customers in this relationship, but could claim a level of ownership (though not in an accounting sense).

The design approach meant this financial contribution by students and teachers was matched by a hands-on contribution to both the building of Te Kupenga and connections with the community. Te Kupenga's designer and construction lead – Cliff Whiting – speaks of the house never being finished in terms of its art works.¹⁰ Each cohort of students would finish a pou, a pair of kōwhaiwhai or tukutuku panels, establishing their

¹⁰ Whiting "Cliff Whiting" p 28.

relationship with the whare, with the community, and with the education system. Henare Green, a former teacher at Palmerston North Teachers College, noted that creating a marae identity meant actively connecting with the wider community.¹¹ Students attended hui around the region and country, creating links that built Te Kupenga as a place.

The place of the institution in the bicultural relationship for Te Kupenga is perhaps best demonstrated by the choice of construction material. College Principal Pat Whitwell suggested that they build the whare out of concrete, ""so that no bugger can change it or shift it!""¹² This was in recognition that institutions such as Colleges and Universities are pushed and pulled in various directions, and no-one could be certain whether they would remain "sympathetic toward the function of a meeting house."¹³ Rumour has it that the concrete pad is metres thick, so even if the whare was to be removed it would not go out without a fight. Its concrete construction also speaks to a connection with another significant piece of local Māori architecture – John Scott's Māori Battalion

¹¹ Green "Kaupapa Māori and the College" p 62.

¹² Whiting "Cliff Whiting" p 27.

¹³ Whiting "Cliff Whiting" p 27.

Building – which used concrete in a Tovey-esque manner when creating a Māori modernism.

Architectural difficulties of multi-tribal nature

Deidre Brown notes that a significant architectural issue arising from the creation of multi-tribal marae in a tertiary education context is the uncertainty around whose or what protocols should apply.¹⁴ Brown notes that protocol issues have occurred at Christchurch Polytechnic's Te Mātauranga Māori, Auckland University's Waipapa Marae, and Unitec's Pūkenga to name but a few. Rather than having a set kaupapa, these marae often change protocols depending on who is using the space. This can lead to them getting "a reputation for being difficult, and possibly ritually dangerous, architectural spaces."¹⁵

While these examples of Māori tertiary architecture had issues with protocol, Brown also notes that design drivers are one way of acknowledging their multi-tribal nature. Names and designs are often based on

narrative figures or all-embracing concepts rather than being anchored to iwi- or hapu-specific ancestors. This approach helps ensure the buildings "appear to be available to all potential tertiary students and staff."¹⁶

Te Kupenga was the first in the Māori tertiary archetype to tackle the issue of being multi-tribal in approach. It was helped to some degree by having its catchment prescribed by the Department of Education. It included the Taranaki, Hawkes Bay and Wanganui Education Boards of the time. Palmerston North Teachers College geographical catchment covered from Mokau in the west, to Cape Runaway in the East through to Opiki in the South. However, the iwi covered by this area were not tightly linked by whakapapa, and also some staff and students still came from outside of this catchment. The idea of catchment is reflected in the name Te Kupenga – the net – with the full name Te Kupenga o te Mātauranga (the net of knowledge) reflecting the desire for the knowledge to be thrown over as wide a catchment as possible.

The design response to this multi-tribal nature was developed under the leadership of Cliff Whiting who put together the conceptual framework for the wharenui. This was heavily influenced by his personal and community artistic practice he was developing during this time. The use of atua from the creation stories for the carvings in the mahau reflected not only their pan tribal nature, but also the foundational Māori values and rituals they encompassed. This could be shared and interpreted at different levels - from storytelling for children through to more complex relational narratives for adults – making it particularly relevant to an educational context. Cliff Whiting noted that "Even though those stories are simple, they have a depth and beauty that go beyond the way they are generally understood and represented."¹⁷

Choosing to use these atua from creation stories was not a simple process. Cliff Whiting talked to prominent Māori elders and artists to ensure their usage was appropriate.¹⁸ The in-service training courses (professional development) for arts advisors at Tikitiki in

¹⁴ Brown "Nga Whare Mātauranga Māori" pp 22-23.

¹⁵ Brown "Nga Whare Mātauranga Māori" p 23.

¹⁶ Brown "Nga Whare Mātauranga Māori" p 23. The use of the word "appear" suggests that Brown is sceptical of the ability of such an approach to be successful.

¹⁷ Whiting "Cliff Whiting" pp 27-28.

¹⁸ Whiting "Cliff Whiting" p 27.

the early sixties with Pine Taiapa was one of the places approval was given to use the Māui and atua stories within mainstream education settings. Alongside Pine, others such as John Rangihau, Mac Whakamoe, Rangitamo Takarangi, and Rangi Pokiha all said the same thing – using stories such as Rangi and Papa, Hinenui-te-Pō, and Māui would provide a base from which other art works could connect to and from which karanga and whaikōrero could easily connect. This was not about appearing to make the space available to all, it was about making it accessible to all. This is emphasised by the fact that "All the carving, kowhaiwhai, painting and kakaho panels were done by College personnel" rather than "experts," and that students had significant freedom to choose a relevant narrative for the interior works that they completed over the years.¹⁹

Reducing the use of multi-tribal narrative figures or all-embracing concepts for appearances only denies the interaction that such designs have with the whare itself at Te Kupenga. Cliff Whiting had spent many of his formative years as an artist and arts advisor working with Whanganui iwi, and on one of

¹⁹ Whiting *Te Kupenga o te Mātauranga* p 2.

his many trips up the Whanganui river he saw the whare Te Rangi-tuku-iho at Atene. It had a distinctive design, with the interior walls leaning in and the outside walls leaning out.²⁰ Permission had to be gained from Ngāti Hineoneone of Te Ātihaunui-ā-Paparangi, which was granted and gifted due to Cliff Whiting's long association with the area.²¹ The usage of such a unique design for the whare was not without issue or controversy, as there was concern with whether Te Kupenga would have its own mauri. The simple universal stories used for the carvings meant "Te Kupenga had its own wairua, its own mauri,"²² pleasing Whanganui iwi when they visited for the opening.²³ Multi-tribal narrative figures or all-embracing concepts were therefore crucial to navigating the complex situation of bringing together design drivers from different iwi.

Another layer to this complex accommodating of multi-tribal designs in the architecture of Te

²⁰ Bennett "Henry Bennett" p 20.

²¹ Whanganui can also be seen as the "centre" of the Palmerston North Teachers College's catchment area, placed between Taranaki to the west and Hawkes Bay to the east.

²² Whiting "Cliff Whiting" p 27.

²³ Bennett "Henry Bennett" p 20.

Kupenga is the role of tangata whenua, Rangitane. The land that Te Kupenga sits on was retained by the Rangitane people as part of the original Te Ahu-a Turanga block sale in 1864, with title confirmed in 1873 by the Māori Land Court.²⁴ In 1892 and 1893 the block was eventually sold to European land developers, used for farming until 1943 when it was purchased by Palmerston North City Council.²⁵ In 1959 the property was gifted to the Crown for educational purposes. Rangitane's status as having mana whenua over the land was recognised by making Te Kupenga's back wall available to them. However, the back wall remain blank to this day, with Rangitane never completing it.

Importance of process

"It wouldn't be sold to just anybody."²⁶

Deidre Brown's writings on Māori tertiary architecture place a lot of emphasis on process in the design and construction of Māori tertiary architecture. Two main themes come through – the place of process in defining the outcome as being Māori architecture and the

²⁴ Whiting *Te Kupenga o te Mātauranga* pp 2-3.

²⁵ Whiting *Te Kupenga o te Mātauranga* pp 3-4.

²⁶ Katene, Pers. Comm.

use of Māori architects as consultants to translate the desires and wishes of tangata whenua into the design and construction process (and vice versa).

Brown notes that consultative time for Māori tertiary architecture projects is often extensive.²⁷ Te Kupenga followed a similar path – construction was only one year (1979), with the rest of the decade spent on the required consultation and discussions. Following appropriate protocols before, during and after construction is also noted by Rewi Thompson as being important for ensuring students understand and respect the kaupapa of the architecture.²⁸ At Te Kupenga a large part of this was the involvement of staff and students in the initial design and construction of the whareniui, as well as contributing to its continual interior development. This hands-on involvement of staff and students before and after construction – without architect mediation – is perhaps one reason why Te Kupenga avoided any sense of tribal or cultural alienation by students that Brown notes tended to occur at other carved meeting houses on campuses.

²⁷ Brown "Nga Whare Mātauranga Māori" p 19.

²⁸ Brown "Nga Whare Mātauranga Māori" p 24.

This lack of architect involvement – at least in the formal sense of no registered architect being involved – also meant there was no consultant as translator for Te Kupenga. Design and construction were led by artist and art educator Cliff Whiting, with most of the work being done by staff and students themselves. At no time during Te Kupenga's conception or creation was there a "cultural design consultant"²⁹ that was often used in later Māori tertiary architecture and other institutional developments. Such consultants appear in the bicultural projects that Brown focuses on, navigating the discussions and consultations with iwi and hapu that represent tangata whenua engaging with the Crown. As noted above, Te Kupenga's process avoided this need by having a different concept of the bicultural relationship, with the breadth of Māori being involved in the relationship being significantly wider. No consultant was needed to mediate between two worlds when the process connected the worlds from the outset.

²⁹ Brown *Māori Architecture* pp 100-109. The term "cultural design consultant" is used to describe the role of architects such as Rewi Thompson in projects where consultation with iwi and/or hapū is needed and the design teams acting for the client are not able to do this themselves.

These matters of process became increasingly complicated once Massey University decided to sell the Hokowhitu campus where the Palmerston North Teachers College was sited and where Te Kupenga still stands. While many thought that the sale process would exclude the marae and whare, the sale notice that went up on international media outlet Bloomberg Press made it very clear that it would be included:

Massey University is planning to sell its Hokowhitu campus in Palmerston North. The property, which includes 24,000 square meters of lecture theaters, administration offices, a marae, a student centre and other facilities, has a 2012 rating value of \$43 million. The university is advertising for expressions of interest from property brokers to handle the sale. James Gardiner, spokesman from Massey, said he expected there would be a lot of interest in the Hokowhitu campus, which he described as "prime Manawatu real estate."³⁰

It is likely that Massey University felt confident in making this statement once it had fulfilled what it saw as its consultation requirements. The university had followed the various Crown land disposal processes, submitting the Hokowhitu site to the Office of Treaty Settlements for assessment under the

³⁰ "Massey Plans Sale of Hokowhitu Campus" np.

Māori Protection Mechanism and Te Puni Kokiri's Sites of Significance process. The Minister of Tertiary Education at the time – Pete Hodgson – noted that the Ministry for Education would be engaging with Rangitane o Manawatu to "ensure iwi views on the proposal are taken into account."³¹ The result was that Rangitane had "no interest in the site."

The complication is that Massey University has taken Rangitane's position of "no interest in the site" as meaning no Māori interest. The Office of Treaty Settlement's focus on mandated entities reinforces this approach. This is despite Massey University's own charter recognizing that successful engagement with Māori goes much wider than just iwi:

Successful engagement with Māori will depend on the quality and quantity of relationships with Māori groups. The University will be alert to a range of options for engagement with Māori: iwi, sector groups, communities of interest, Māori educational and research organisations, runanga, trust boards, and professional bodies.³²

³¹ "Proposal for Crown Asset Use at Massey University" np.

³² Massey University *Massey University Charter* Section 7.

This charter statement reflects the process under which Te Kupenga was created – not an iwi-only process but one that drew on students, lecturers, the community as well as multiple iwi. As described above, the funding and construction of Te Kupenga emphasised a particular bicultural relationship, one that was different to the typical Crown-Māori partnership evident in later Māori tertiary architecture. Massey's sale consultation – and that of the wider Crown – followed a process more suited to the type of relationship that Deidre Brown describes for later Māori tertiary architecture. The group that calls themselves Te Tini o Te Kupenga o te Mātauranga (The manyfold of Te Kupenga o te Mātauranga) are those who strongly identify with the marae – students, staff, and the wider community members who created Te Kupenga as a place and as architecture. After 35 years their number is large, but as a community of interest they have not been consulted as a part of the sale process.

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