

A Collection Management Strategy for Taonga and Archives for Raiātea: An indigenous hapū based whare taonga

Whina Te Whiu

*Archives and Taonga Coordinator for Raiātea and Curator
at Te Ahu Museum Kaitiāia*



Proposed building plan for Raiātea, Motuti Marae Trustees, Feb 2016, p.39.

This article highlights the aspirations of a small hapū, Ngāti Tamatea, to build a whare taonga, or house of prized items, on their ancestral lands in the Hokianga Harbour. This has prompted the hapū to review what the collection management practices will be and, in the endeavor to preserve taonga held by Ngāti Tamatea, whether those practices will reflect museum and archival standards. The hope is that these practices will contribute to the overall tikanga (cultural practices) and hapū strategies for the museum, and enable hapū members to fully participate in kaitiakitanga (principles of guardianship).

*Mā te mōhio ka mātau, Mā te mātau ka mārama,
Mā te marama ka whai-ō, mō te ara o te ora
By being informed one gains knowledge,
By having knowledge one is enlightened
By being enlightened one is enriched,
with provisions for the journey of life*

Pa Henare Tate (2015)

Charles Royal (n.d.) describes kaitiakitanga as guardianship and protection; it is a way of managing the environment based on a Māori worldview. It is the explicit desire of Ngāti Tamatea to fulfil their kaitiakitanga responsibilities in regards to housing the taonga in their care, appropriately, to ensure taonga are preserved while remaining accessible. This will benefit whānau, hapū and iwi; as well as researchers and students, both of today and generations to come. The desire of Ngāti Tamatea and the wider community to care for these taonga is a major priority for the hapū. As such, a purpose-built whare taonga called Raiātea will have its foundations laid on the tribal homelands at Motuti marae in late 2018.

A project working group – Ngā Kaihoe, the paddlers – has been established to oversee development of the physical building, policies to guide overall operations of Raiātea, and the formation of a preservation strategy. This will involve reaching out to the GLAMS sector and meeting with diverse experts in the area of taonga preservation and conservation. Assistance will be especially sought from practitioners in the museum sector through Te Papa’s National Services Te Paerangi.

Here I will describe some of the perceived issues, challenges and opportunities that face Raiātea and the Motuti community. In particular, those relating to the inclusion of museum and archival practices and the implementation of the intangible values of mana and tapu, which underpin the hapū approach. I will be specifically discussing collection management in relation to the care of and access to taonga from the worldview of Ngāti Tamatea.

The impetus for Ngāti Tamatea to physically manifest a whare taonga called Raiātea is to allow the hapū to fully express and exercise their kaitiakitanga and guardianship over a storehouse of whakapapa, knowledge and stories. It is the hope of Ngāti Tamatea, and the wider community, that Raiātea will nourish and inspire the minds and hearts of whānau, hapū and iwi; and all visitors in search of treasures held in Raiātea.

Kōrero O Nehera – Brief History

Motuti is a small community on the north side of the Hokianga Harbour in the Northland district of Aotearoa/New Zealand. Ngāti Tamatea is the main hapū in Motuti and the people have resided in the Hokianga for over 1000 years. The whare tūpuna (ancestral house) is named after the eponymous tūpuna (ancestor) Tamatea for which the hapu is also named.

Motuti and other surroundings communities are largely Catholic

communities. In the mid-1800s Bishop Jean Baptiste Francoise Pompallier traveled from France to Aotearoa on the schooner Rai'atea. He was New Zealand's first Catholic bishop who brought the Catholic faith to Māori in the Hokianga. In the early 2000s a contingent of pilgrims from Aotearoa uplifted Bishop Pompallier's remains from France and interred them beneath the altar of Hata Maria – St Mary's church in Motuti. A center for Pomapallier was built thereafter and holds a photographic record of the trip from France to Motuti.

He Kohikohi Ngā Taonga – A Collection of Treasures

Motuti Marae is the caretaker of many Māori and Catholic taonga. These make up a sizeable collection of over 10,000 taonga comprising of early printed material, manuscripts, ephemera, letters and maps pertaining to Māori history of Hokianga and other tribal regions in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The collection includes glass plate negatives, photographic prints, ngā whakairo (carvings), ngā korowai (cloaks), ngākete (woven baskets) and Catholic relics.

It is important to acknowledge the huge contribution of taonga donated by Pa Henare Tate. His personal collection is an accumulation of his life's work as a hapū member and leader, priest, author, genealogist and theologian. Pa Tate has provided the vision for Raiātea and expert advice on tikanga, particularly in the application of tapu and mana. Sadly Pa Tate passed away in April 2016 but his wairua continues to lead Ngāti Tamatea towards its destiny, to safeguard the knowledge and narratives imbued within the taonga; acknowledging that each taonga is part of the living and tangible heritage of Motuti.



One of the only carved houses on the north side of the Hokianga Harbour. Tamatea Marae, Motuti. Photo: Whina Te Whiu, 2016.

*E hara taku toa, I te toa takitahi, engari takimano no tātou tūpuna
It is not my strength, the strength of one, but the many from our ancestors.*

Ngāpuhi saying

Te Kaupapa o Marae – Foundation Principles

Raiātea will be part of the Motuti Marae complex, situated on Ngāti Tamatea marae reservation land. Raiātea is not seen by the hapū as a separate entity but rather as an extension of the marae and therefore falls under te kaupapa o te marae (marae cultural principles).

The Motuti Marae Charter (2015) states that:

“te kaupapa o te marae, the foundation principle of the marae, is to provide a marae complex for the benefit of te hunga kāinga hapū members living in the community of Motuti, in the context of whanaungatanga (their relationships), and founded on the kaupapa, the principle of addressing, enhancing and restoring their tapu, sacred being and dignity; and of the rightful exercise of their mana; their spiritual power and authority.”

This is a powerful statement of intent that the hapū is absolutely committed to. It is articulated in their ability to address their own wellbeing as te hunga kāinga, and their continual actions of hospitality towards visitors to the marae. Ngāti Tamatea kaupapa o te marae principles are also expressed in the way they utilise the whare tūpuna as a whare wānanga, a school of learning. As such it is a place of education and learning focused on tūpuna; connecting with ancestors through stories and iwi histories depicted in the whakairo, tukutuku and kōwhaiwhai, carvings, lattice-work and rafter paintings. Every cultural ritual activity is regarded as a learning situation. Knowledge is imparted by the kaiwhakakapi tūranga position holders on the marae; roles played by the kaikaranga (caller), the kaikorero (speech makers), kaiwaiata (singers), kaikarakia (prayer makers) and kaitangi (mourners) and others.

As an extension of the marae, the proposition of Raiātea is founded on the intangible values of tapu and mana expressed in *te kaupapa o te marae*. The taonga are tapu and will be handled as such, and kaitiakitanga is the rightful exercise of Ngāti Tamatea’s mana.

He manaaki tatou i a tātou, he tautoko tātou i a tātou, ko tātou, tātou tēnā.

*We look after each, we support each other, we are a part of each,
this is who we are.*

Te Rarawa saying

Mana o te Hapū – Self Determination

Marsden (1992) explains kaitiakitanga in the following way; a 'kaitiaki' is a guardian, keeper, preserver, conservator, foster-parent, and protector. The suffix 'tanga' added to the noun means guardianship, preservation, conservation, fostering, protecting, sheltering. Heritage New Zealand (NZ Historic Places Trust, 2017) describes Māori heritage as a living spirituality, a living mana that transcends generations. It comes to life through relationships between people, the material and the non-material. Ngāti Tamatea's rightful exercise of mana is expressed in kaitiakitanga and their responsibility for the guardianship and preservation, conservation and protection of the physical, spiritual and intellectual aspects of the taonga housed in Raiātea.

Highlighted here are principles of kaitiakitanga and taonga for Ngāti Tamatea:

- The tapu of taonga is addressed, enhanced and restored for the wellbeing of tangata (people) and taonga
- The preservation of taonga and its mātauranga (knowledge, understanding) is central so that both may be accessed and interpreted for the wellbeing of whānau, hapū and iwi.
- For the conservation of taonga, tohunga (experts) and other specialists are called upon to provide advice and guidance.

Gordon (2004) suggests that museum professionals can provide useful input, facilitation, training and resources; however, they need to be led by the communities. In order to actively and appropriately care for and conserve the taonga, and fulfil their kaitiakitanga, Ngāti Tamatea recognize the need for assistance from conservators and museum experts. Therefore, National Services Te Paerangi have been invited several times to Motuti. They provide valuable training, expertise and resources. The relationship between the hapū and National Services Te Paerangi continues with respect for each other and a growing sense of shared responsibility for the taonga and Raiātea.

*Ko tou rourou, ko toku rourou, ka ora ai te iwi
With your basket (of knowledge), with my basket (of knowledge),
the people will be nourished.*

Ngāpuhi saying

Te Kaupapa ki Tētahi ki Tētahi – Māori Principles and Museum Practices

Simmons (2015) describes collection management as everything that is done to care for, document, develop and store collections, and make them available for use. He further defines the different areas of collection management; acquisition, accession, registration, cataloguing, care, use (for exhibition, education and research), and disposal of objects and specimens, collection security, conservation, storage environments, and access. Here I will discuss the care of and access to taonga in relation to the collection at Raiātea.

Tapū

Shirres (1997, p. 33) writes that tapū is the “potentiality for power” and the mana “authority” of the spiritual powers. The extensions of tapū are the restrictions. He further explains that noa is simply a state of freedom from the restrictions of tapū. Barlow (1991, p. 128) explains tapū as the power and influence of the gods. Barlow further proposes that tapū is maintained by one's desire to remain under the influence and protective powers of the gods.

Tate (2012, p. 43) extends on the definition of tapū as one concept with three related perspectives. Firstly, tapū is the restricted and controlled access to other beings: atua (gods), tangata (humankind) and whenua (land). Secondly, tapū is being-in-relationship with, such that those relationships enhance, sustain, restore and empower those relationships. Thirdly, tapū is ‘being’, understood as ‘being tapū in itself’.

Collection management of taonga for the hapū has been the greatest challenge for the Ngā Kaihoe project team because as Simmons suggests, there are so many aspects of collection management to cover. There is the additional challenge of aligning collection management practices with the values and exercise of tapū. For this reason the Ngā Kaihoe have agreed that the two aspects are very important for Ngāti Tamatea:

1. Te kaupapa o te marae – tapu o te taonga is adhered to, and
2. Collection management strategies are considered and adhered to, as long as it does not compromise the first principle of te kaupapa o te marae and the intangible values of tapū.

In the next section I will be examining the application of tapū to two different taonga. Identifying the levels of tapū associated with each taonga, and secondly the practices of access and care to manage the

taonga which acknowledges its tapu condition.

*Te tapu, te ihi, te mana, te wehi, e heke mai ki a ahau, no tatou tūpuna.
The sacred, the awe, the power, the fear from our ancestors it descends
to me.*

Ngāpuhi saying

Kaitiakitanga and Colleciton Management

Ko Ngā Kōiwi I Roto I Ngā Mea Tāpu – A Relic

A Catholic relic is the physical remains of a saint or the personal effects of the saint or venerated person as a tangible memorial. In the Raiātea collection there is a relic encased in a crucifix that was, at one time, placed inside the altar of a local church. It was later removed and placed in the hands of Pa Henare Tate for safekeeping.

Aspects of Tapū

The human remains, a shard of bone from a saint, are tapū. The bone in itself is tapū because it is part of the anatomy of a human skeleton. Within a Māori worldview any part of a human being living or deceased is deemed tapū, in itself.

The crucifix, the object that holds the remains is also tapū for two main reasons. Firstly, it is a vessel holding the human remains of bones therefore an extension of the tapū of the remains. Secondly, it became tapū at the time the relic was blessed by a priest when it was interred into the altar. The taonga is considered to have a very high level or value of tapū because of its relationship to tangata (people) and atua (god).

Level of Care – Storage Isolation

Currently, these taonga have the highest level of tapū in the collection. They are regarded with the greatest care and respect; and it has been recommended that they have their own room isolated from other taonga so as to not be in violation of other spaces and taonga. *Te kaupapa o te marae* fully extends to this isolated and restricted area, exercising the customs of karakia (prayer) and hīmene (hymn) to address the tapū of the deceased. Mihi tūpapaku (acknowledging the deceased) is to enhance and to restore the tapū of the deceased.

Level of Access – High Restriction

The area where this taonga is housed is restricted and a hapū member cannot enter this area without the permission of the Raiātea director and

must be accompanied by designated kaumātua and kuia. The relic may not be displayed around or near food areas, nor may food enter the area where it is displayed.

Horekau te tangata he taonga, ko te tangata he tapu
People are not taonga(per se), people are intrinsically sacred
Ngāpuhi saying

Ngā Tuhinga O Ngā Tūpuna – Writings of the Ancestors

The paper archive comprises original handwritten letters, notes, journals and the writings of various authors dating from 1900 to 2004. This manuscript collection is large – 45 authors have been identified, the majority of hapū and iwi descent. Subjects are varied and relate to whakapapa (genealogy), wairuatanga (spirituality), tikanga (protocols), kōrero pūrākau (local legends), mana whenua (land authority), as well as kōrero nehe (iwi, land, people history).

Aspects of Tapu

The manuscripts were written by tūpuna and have tapū. The aspect of tapū is a different frequency to that of human remains. It is tapū because of its relationship to tangata(people), in this instance tūpuna, but the physical manuscript is not tapū in itself. In some cases, but not all, the body of knowledge written about may have restrictions placed on them. An example might be whakapapa, but this is not always the case.

Level of Care

Museum standards fully apply to manuscripts and they are stored following archival conservation principles. If a manuscript is damaged it is appraised and may undergo conservation treatment to ensure its longevity.

Level of Access – Restricted

Te kaupapa o te marae again exercises mana of the hapū. Whānau or hapū may impose restrictions to different bodies of knowledge, for example, whānau whakapapa, esoteric knowledge. The restriction to access may be based on the heke tika (direct line) descendants or to kaumātua or kuia accessing a particular manuscript. The hapū might decide that some but not all manuscripts could be handled by other whānau. Or alternatively, copies may be made available for whānau to take the information away with them to be studied and used for educational purposes.

*E hara I te mea, no naianeī te aroha no ngā tupuna tuku iho.
It is not a thing of today, it is love from our ancestors.*

Ngāpuhi saying

Kōrero Whakamutunga – Closing Remarks

To the casual observer, incorporating intangible values of tapū in relation to the collection management of taonga may seem too complicated to proceed. However, Māori taonga are a living spirituality and mana that transcend generations, and therefore for Ngāti Tamatea the investment in their descendants' wellbeing is worth the effort.

I have briefly described here some of the perceived issues, challenges and opportunities that face Ngāti Tamatea and the building of Raiātea so as to fulfill our kaitiakitanga responsibilities. For it is the sheer determination of Ngāti Tamatea to succeed that drives the hapū forward; and it is important to the hapū that their values will be intrinsically connected to the management of taonga as a daily practice, as well as embedded in our long-term strategies, especially in relation to managing the care of and access to taonga housed in Raiātea.

Just as Kreps (2007) advocates for community-based museums, success might rest on the degree to which these institutions are fully integrated into a community's cultural life, how they help sustain and conserve its cultural traditions, as well as contributing to community socio-economic development. The physical building of Raiātea began in 2017, however it is already in operation as an indigenous cultural centre and museum managed by Ngāti Tamatea. Ngāti Tamatea also acknowledges that museum standards are important to the tapu of the taonga, and the responsibilities of Ngāti Tamatea as kaitiaki is integral to a management strategy for these taonga. With these provisions, I am certain that Ngāti Tamatea are ready for the journey ahead and that Raiātea isn't a distant dream or shore, but a destiny unfolding.

*Mā te marama ka whai-ō mā te ara o te ora.
By being enlightened one is enriched with provisions
for the journey of life.*

Pa Henare Tate (2015)

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