

TRANSFORMING MY WHAKAPAPA (GENEALOGY): ISSUES AROUND THE TRANSLATION OF WHAKAPAPA USING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT)

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ABSTRACT

Historically, for Maori, ways of knowing have evolved through an oral tradition where such information is memorised by successive generations. Knowledge is given to only those who merit it. Whilst digital information pertaining to Maori identity is widely available through the Internet, I am predominately concerned in this paper with the taonga (treasures) of my own whanau (extended family), Ngatuere (my surname). If I share my Maori identity, my whakapapa through the Internet is this appropriate or is such information tapu (sacred)? What are my responsibilities as a kaitiaki (guardian) of this knowledge and how does this work in an online world?

INTRODUCTION

This paper allows me to share my work in progress of my thesis study. The purpose of this study is to deliver information, knowledge via the Internet of my culture, where some knowledge is to be shared publicly and, or privately.

Digital information is a medium of exchange in a technological culture (Laituir, 1998). The use of ITs in its many forms has spread to all countries in the world; its acceptance has been both embraced and adopted by all nations and nationalities. Advancing ITs, particularly the Internet, the size and growth as a global resource is changing individuals, their cultures and laws associated within.

Information is knowledge; knowledge guides values. People such as our parents, family members and friends influence values. A culture is accompanied with values. Randerson (2002) emphasises:

‘The choices we make in life, whether as individuals, whether as a nation, reflect the values we hold. Values give rise to goals, which in turn determine policies and strategies. Values are often hidden or unnamed, and when this happens there is a danger of becoming lost in a debate about strategies and losing sight of what we ultimately want to achieve’ and ‘sharing similar values, however, does not mean that everyone will necessarily reach the same

conclusion about strategy to give effect to those values’.

There are unimaginable concerns’ relating to what is culturally acceptable knowing that: ‘more and more people are involved in collecting, handling, distributing, and using information than previously thought imaginable’ (Kamira, 2001), and ‘theoretically public databases may be rendered inaccessible by patented portals or consultation mechanisms (Norman, 2003).

In the context of Maori spirituality, how are issues of IT assessed and conducted? How do I build the context of computer technology, particularly the Internet, in the context of values? How do I assess values and cultural values? How do I adhere to my Maori culture whilst also pertaining to my Pakeha culture? Is one culture separate from the other or do they belong together, as, I myself are of both cultures? Does this matter? Is there a moral view that is more correct than another or others? Who is right, whether there should or can be someone or one answer, which is right? What is right?

The Maori language is just becoming part of history, and the dramatic growth and size of IT, like the Internet is increasingly creating growing concerns for Maori culture. How is the Maori oral language transformed, protected, managed, and maintained in a digital world, privately, collectively, or publicly when one has or does not have

respect for culture, in particular Maori culture and the usage of IT in that matter?

WHAKAPAPA AND KAITIAKITANGA

To apply what is cultural is not only to pertain to a culture but also to be cultured, or educated to appreciate the ways of that culture. Maaori.com web site defines whakapapa as the following:

'Papa is anything broad, flat and hard such as a flat rock, a slab or a board. Whakapapa is to place in layers, lay one upon another. Hence the term Whakapapa is used to describe both the recitation in proper order of genealogies, and also to name the genealogies. The whakapapa include not just the genealogies but the many spiritual, mythological and human stories that flesh out the genealogical backbone'.

Whilst Everton & Kamira (2001) describe kaitiakitanga as the following:

'Kaitiakitanga is from traditional Maori concepts about stewardship, guardianship and an inter-generational responsibility to protect and sustain knowledge, land and other resources. Maori are becoming more aware of the need to increase protection and support for intellectual and cultural property. Kaitiakitanga seeks to enable the following:

1. *Maori as first beneficiaries of information systems*
2. *Collective ownership, use and access to data*
3. *Collective privacy as a valid form of control for grouped data'*

RESEARCH QUESTION

Transforming my whakapapa (genealogy): Issues around the translation of whakapapa using IT.

In order to answer this question, I will gain an understanding of:

- Cultural property, private property, and public property from a Maori perspective.
- Concepts of identity, distributed presence and whanau relationships.

- Epistemological and philosophical issues within an online world in relation to Kaupapa Maori.
- Transformation of Maori oral knowledge of my Ngatuere whakapapa into a digital environment.

Further questions to consider:

- What method/methodology is the most suitable for delivering my tapu Ngatuere whakapapa knowledge online?
- If this is not possible, why and does this apply to all Maori culture or only one iwi (tribe)?
- How does the national and international legislation on the ins and outs of Aotearoa information protect Maori cultural data?

WHERE WILL MY RESEARCH BE BASED?

My research will be based in Aotearoa; most of the data collection will take place in Wairarapa with as many Ngati Kahungunu ki Wairarapa iwi members as possible. The study will include both rural and urbanised areas of analyses. It will also include international interviews, if this is highlighted as a requirement through the study.

HOW WILL I CONDUCT THE RESEARCH?

Qualitative Research Methodology

Academically and culturally experienced Maori researchers have challenged common research paradigms where development of a new research paradigm is founded, Kaupapa Maori research (Bishop, 1996; Wihongi, ----; Cram et al, 2000). Kaupapa Maori research enables 'realisation of self-determination and power sharing' (Bishop, 1996, pg. 19) that legitimises Maori philosophy.

Data Collection

Of Kaupapa Maori research, the method I use to collect my data is whakawhanaungatanga. Whakawhanaungatana embodies three interconnected elements (Bishop, 1996, pg. 26). One is to establish whanau relationships; two is participant-driven approaches to power

and control; and three is researcher involvement as lived experience.

Sample Size

Initially, contacting about 30 whanau members for 'interviews as Chat' (Bishop, 1996, pg 31). These interviews will be carried out individually or as a group, depending on what is most suitable for the participant/s. Networking with whanau will facilitate the identification of research participants.

The research participants who will turn out to be the whanau research participants for this study, will be people who have self-determination for the research and who will benefit from the research itself. It is important to realise that there will be an ongoing relationship for the duration of the research once the initial interview as chat is carried out.

These key whanau research participants will be a mixture of Maori or both Maori and Pakeha, male and female, young and old, urbanised and colonised, educated in IT and not educated in IT. They will have involvement in the research, accountability in the process of data collection, analyses, and representation.

Research Plan

Like a koru, which grows from the centre out, growing as each day goes by. My research plan will work in this sort of fashion, whereby I will set out proposed dates and descriptions to these dates, but depending on the data collection and the participants requirements will, in some cases change what I as the researcher originally proposed. This is due to the participant driven aspects of Kaupapa Maori.

Proposed Timeline

May – September 2003: Literature Review: First draft completed and sent to supervisors.
October 2003: Proposal to Graduate School, Ethics Application submitted.
October 2003: Method and Methodology: First draft completed
November 2003: Completed above drafts.
December 2003 – January 2004: Data Collection

February – March 2004: Data Analysis and findings.

April – May 2004: Recommendations and refining.

June – July 2004: Photocopying, binding and submission.

Data Analysis

From the interviews as chat, discussion notes and audio tapes (transcribed) will form a database of findings. Of these findings common themes will be drawn out and concluded by the whanau research participants.

Research Ethics

A tikanga (customs, values, beliefs and attitudes) Maori approach will form the ethics of the whanau research participants. This will be negotiated and agreed upon by the whanau research participants.

Ethical approval for the research is sought from the UNITEC Institute of Technology Ethics Committee.

INDIGENOUS CULTURE

Maori Originally...

'After food, shelter and reproduction, there is culture' (Kamira, 2002). Maori: 'te tangata whenua, the indigenous population' (http://www.stats.govt.nz/domino/external/web/Prod_Serv.nsf/h... 11/8/03 (25.A)) and Pakeha: 'New Zealander of European descent' (Bishop, 1996, pg 262). Maori and Pakeha are defined as the two peoples of Aotearoa ever since the original signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi) (Public Health Association (PHA) of New Zealand (NZ) Inc web site) on 6th February 1840.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi is also commonly known as the founding document of Aotearoa and was to serve 'as a base in which Maori could assert their mana' (Moeke-Pickering 1996). Cram (2003) comments 'for Maori the purpose of knowledge's to uphold the interests and the mana of the group ... fighting for the betterment of their iwi and for Maori people in general'.

Makareti (1986 (first published 1938)) comments 'The Maori did not think of himself, or anything to do with his own gain. He thought only of his people, and was absorbed in his whanau, just as the whanau was absorbed in the hapu, and the hapu in the iwi'. Smith (1992) comments 'the tapu nature of knowledge also meant that when it was entrusted to individuals it was transmitted accurately and used appropriately. This ensured the survival of the group and maintained its mana'.

Maori societies consisted of tribal groups or iwi, each independent iwi possessing land and autonomy within those lands. Lee (1999) explains:

'Tribes often existed separate from one another, developing individual histories and cultural variations over time. The tribe was a descent group in the broadest sense in that ideally, every member of the tribe was a descendent of the founding ancestor. It was the quality of the descent line, then, which was factor of social status. Those who derived the greatest mana (power) from their superior ancestors were the leaders, presiding over everything from ceremonial occasions to the more mundane aspects of everyday life'.

Historically, all literature in Maori was oral. Literature could include 'haka (dance), waiata (song), tauparapara (chant), karanga (chant), poroporoaki (farewell), pakiwaitara (stories), whakapapa (genealogy), whakatauki (proverbs) and pepeha (tribal sayings)' (Karetu, 1975), and Bishop (1996, pg 25) adds 'moteatea (poetry ... kauwhau (moralistic tale))'.

Due to the strong oral tradition, knowledge was not universally available unlike the Internet, commonly used as a public domain. Through oral transmission, whakapapa information was learnt and retained by each new generation. Bishop (1996, pg 25) reinforces

'Some stories had to maintain strong criteria of accuracy, for example whakapapa (genealogy) and associated raranga koreko (stories of genealogical figures and events). Others did not have such restrictions. Other stories were meant to be embellished to maintain the interest that invoked the wairua

(spirituality and the mauri (life force) of the story'.

Maori Colonised...

After the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the coming of the Pakeha and their superior technologies, life in Aotearoa for the Maori people changed. Te Tiriti o Waitangi did not create a partnership to govern the country; this function was passed onto the Crown. The Crown recently introduced 'The Principals which set out guidelines about how the treaty should be used today. The parliament has never adopted Te Tiriti o Waitangi however different Maori and European law systems allow these two peoples to approach the treaty differently' (Hewson, 2002).

'Due to colonisation, predictions were made that Maori would disappear early last century' (Hiroa, 1949, pg 409, 537; Waker, 1996a, pg 176). Maori, 'their demographic, economic, social and cultural position is continually changing' ([http://www.stats.govt.nz... \(25.A\)](http://www.stats.govt.nz... (25.A))). 2001 Census Snapshot 4 ([http://www.stats.govt.nz... \(25.I\)](http://www.stats.govt.nz... (25.I))) states, 'one in seven people were counted in the Maori ethnic group; nearly 90% live in the North Island; while one in four people of Maori ethnicity speak the Maori language'.

2001 Census Snapshot 16 ([http://www.stats.govt.nz... \(25.K\)](http://www.stats.govt.nz... (25.K))) iwi overview details '80% of the 604,100 people of Maori descent counted in the 2001 Census reported one or more iwi affiliations, according to Statistics New Zealand. The remaining 20% did not know the name(s) of their iwi. Most iwi members lived in urban areas in 2001'.

'In just 200 years, a shift in language use from a strict oral culture into an expanding evolving complete language-based system has emerged. The written word in Maori has become the widely accepted mode of communication amongst all its users' (<http://kel.otago.ac.nz/maaka/datasets/PhD/Chapter-1.pdf>). 'Due to modern practice of writing whakapapa from the top of the page to the bottom the visualization seems to be slowly changing to that of European genealogy, of 'descending' from our ancestors'

(<http://maori.com/whakapapa/whakapap2.htm>) . 'The introduction of the pen and paper technology' (Kamira, 2001) 'encountered by Maori was the first of a series that separates knowledge from its spirituality'.

Aotearoa and IT

'School children are now working in an interactive technological environment' (<http://www.stats.govt.nz/domino/external/Web/nzstories.nsf/09...> (25.M.)), '83% of primary and 94% of secondary schools had Internet access by 1998' within Aotearoa, continuing to add 'the percentage of households with a computer has continued to rise at about 14% since 1986; assuming this growth rate continues, over 50% of New Zealand households will have a computer by 2002'.

Copyright, intellectual property, 'fair use and public good, need to be viewed broadly in the context of cultural legacies and access to human heritage' (Norman, 2003) within Aotearoa. Also, 'no amount of data collection or model-building can ever capture all this wisdom and knowledge' (Nadler et al, ----, pg 4) that Maori culture retained in such tight communities.

An interview as chat was held on the 1st May 2003 with Ella Henry, Head of Puukenga, UNITEC and myself. As a result of this interview Ella referred me to the Library and Information Association New Zealand Aotearoa (LIANZA) with regards to an unfinished project of September 2001. This unfinished project (project name unknown) was detailed at the LIANZA September 2001 Conference, which was to translate whakapapa of each iwi for library and museum purposes. This project never took place as 50% of iwi supported the project whilst the other 50% of iwi threatened the researchers (and any other bodies involved), tapu on anyone who tried to translate Maori whakapapa into a digital arena.

Maori and IT

In Aotearoa, 2001 Census Snapshot 2 (25.G), 'almost 4 in 10 households have access to the Internet; People of Maori ethnicity – 1 in 4 of these people live in households with access to the Internet; Household Internet access rates differ within urban and rural areas; 1 in 9

people of Maori ethnicity live in households that do not have telephone, fax or Internet access'. 2001 Census Snapshot 16 (<http://www.stats.govt.nz...> (25.K)) iwi overview details 'most people of Maori descent (90%) lived in households with access to a telephone and 29% had Internet access'.

'Many indigenous peoples accept that IT will advance with or without them, and it is logical to be a part of it, rather than on the periphery' (Kamira, 2001, pg 2). However, 'digital colonisation practices, dispossessing and usurping cultural heritages which should be respected as an inalienable aspect of human life and dignity, need to be checked' (Norman, 2003).

Norman (2003) indicates 'conventional reading and writing skills are a prerequisite to the assimilation of new media technology, thus to its use as a vehicle for cultural development'. In turn, Cram (2003) comments, 'colonisation has not necessarily eroded this tradition' because 'Maori could benefit by producing a large share of the generation who will expect to be advantaged by a huge difference in the ease with which the Internet generation adapts to this new world' (<http://www.stats.govt.nz...> (25.L. pg 5)).

Of what is culturally sensitive in an electronic environment, in particular the Internet and Maori culture, the study will need to consider 'peoples values from all walks of life' (Blackman et al, 2003). Values of 'ethnicity, politics, location and environment' (Moeke-Pickering, 1996).

Marshall (2000) mentions, 'the general historical story is that Maori sought the Western technology that the settlers brought to New Zealand'. Durie (1997, pg 35) states Maori, 'once alienated from their economic base, the land, sea and forest resources, the capacity for technological innovation to work against Maori interests becomes apparent' and, 'because IT is controlled by the dominant culture, it has become a modern, and rapid tool for further colonisation' (Everton and Kamira 2001).

CONCLUSION

For Maori culture, defining who you are is not merely about your ability to identify relationships with other people, whanau, hapu (sub-tribe), and iwi (tribe), but also to include relationships with objects in the natural world, such as land (i.e. trees and mountains) and water (i.e. rivers and seas).

As Maori, IT is difficult for us. Societies are moving into an information age whether we like it or not. Information about whakapapa knowledge's are becoming more and more widely available via the Internet as a public domain.

Ancestry, genealogy, whakapapa and self-determination are key considerations in Maori culture. Whakapapa information can be private, collective private or public whilst the Internet is simply a public domain. Tribal information that is private and collective private is considered highly tapu.

The survival of an indigenous culture as a distinct and separate people, like Maori culture, is the loyalty that one has to that culture, and obviously their knowledge's about that culture. Other than being loyal to my Maori culture, there is no governing body that determines the way in which my whakapapa, my iwi or Ngatuere verbal and non-verbal knowledge is digitised, secured, delivered, managed, or maintained in an IT environment, in particular, the Internet.

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