

Leadership

Te Rōpū Whakahau Hui-ā-Tau 16 February 2018

I've been asked to talk about the theme of "Leadership" today. I thought I'd begin by talking about a tupuna by the name of Waitohi. Waitohi's father was Werawera (Ngāti Toa Rangatira) and her mother was Parekōhatu (Ngāti Raukawa).

Around 1820 Waitohi was part of the Ngāti Toa Rangatira migration that her brother, Te Rauparaha, led from Kāwhia to this region. Iwi authorities record that many of Te Rauparaha's achievements can be attributed to the genius of his sister, and that he rarely acted without consulting her.¹

The extent of Waitohi's influence becomes apparent when we consider the events that led Ngāti Raukawa to join our relatives and allies, Ngāti Toa, in this part of the country. Te Rauparaha was keen for Ngāti Raukawa to come here from Maungatautari to help him hold the lands that he had settled, but his repeated pleas fell on deaf ears. Eventually Waitohi issued the following invitation to a group of Ngāti Raukawa rangatira who were about to return north after a visit here:²

Haere ki aku werewere. Haere mai hei noho i te whenua mai i Whangaehu ki Kukutauaki.

The rangatira in question were all closely related to Waitohi (on her mother's side),³ and there is no doubt that she chose her words for maximum effect. The word "werewere" in Ngāti Raukawa usage means "pubic hairs". An example of the way the term is used in the tikanga: "Tai-tamatane whai i te ure tu; Tai-tamawahine/tamahine whai i ana werewere", which suggests that sons typically follow their male side while daughters follow their female lineage. Waitohi was utilising language that was explicitly designed to sway her mother's people to accede to her request. It worked. Our old people were very clear that it was her use of the word werewere that stirred their emotions.

A number of Ngāti Raukawa migrations occurred during the next few years, all led by Waitohi's close relatives. Each of them was awarded carefully defined areas of land in recognition of their having answered her call, and Waitohi is widely credited with being responsible for that task as well. It is also generally accepted that she set the boundary between Ngāti Raukawa and Te Āti Awa. This was important because, while both were Ngāti Toa Rangatira's allies, the relationship between them was sometimes strained. It may be no accident that armed combat broke out between Ngāti Raukawa and Te Āti Awa in the wake of Waitohi's death in 1839—an indication, perhaps, of the political instability that her sudden loss precipitated.

¹ Carkeek, W *The Kapiti Coast: Maori Tribal History and Place Names of the Paekakariki-Otaki District* (Wellington: AH & AW Reed, 1966), p 23.

² This information was provided by Nicholson, NI Oral communication, 9 November 2016.

³ All were mokopuna of Parewahawaha, who was Parekōhatu's older sister.

You may wonder why I have chosen to focus on Waitohi, as opposed to her brother or her nephews⁴ who led the Ngāti Raukawa migrations south. It is because, even now, the overwhelming majority of material written about Ngāti Raukawa rangatira—and rangatira in general, I suspect—focuses heavily on the men. The glaring imbalance in the way that men’s and women’s contributions to hapū and iwi are often characterised has troubled me for many years. I have long suspected that this peculiar, dysfunctional view of humanity can be traced directly to the rampant misogyny of the early Pākehā observers and recorders of Māori communities, rather than to the beliefs and values of those communities themselves.

Over the past few years I’ve been able to test this theory with a particular focus on Ngāti Raukawa. A key source has been a set of manuscripts, often referred to as the Mātene Te Whiwhi manuscripts. They contain material dictated by Waitohi’s son, Te Rangihaeata, to his nephew, Mātene Te Whiwhi, during the early 1850s.⁵ The manuscripts contain numerous accounts of events and ancestors, interspersed with whakapapa. They provide a valuable insight into the way that our tūpuna understood their place in the world.

From the opening lines of the manuscripts, it is apparent that whakapapa is a foundational concept in Ngāti Raukawa thought. Our philosophical framework is based on the understanding that all facets of creation are connected. Appreciating the implications of our relationships to one another and to the world around us is the key to making sense of our existence.

It is an obvious point that whakapapa cannot exist without the contribution of both female and male. So it is not surprising that Te Rangihaeata builds upon the foundation of the whakapapa he provides by recounting a wealth of stories about men and women who exhibit a wide range of talents and perform all manner of roles—including leadership roles. There is no suggestion that women are somehow less significant than men. On the contrary, the manuscripts reveal that our tūpuna regarded the *whare tangata* as spiritually potent, and that this fact equipped women to undertake particular tasks. They describe women employing their unique strengths in the performance of a wide range of activities, from the formulation and execution of political and military strategy, to the composition and recitation of material, including *karakia*. Te Rangihaeata’s characterisation of women as leaders in their own right is echoed throughout a range of Ngāti Raukawa sources, including *mōteatea*, *pepeha* and oral history.

As I have already mentioned, for many years I have believed that the modern-day marginalisation of *kuia* within so many iwi accounts has come about as a direct result of the toxic influence of Western thinking. So it was deeply satisfying to find, through a study of my own iwi sources, that this diminution of the female was not evident just a few generations ago. However, in order to test my theory about the origin of the distorted views about gender that have become “normal” for so many of us, it was also necessary to look beyond our own sources. I needed to examine the thinking that the colonists brought with them.

⁴ Nēpia Taratoa and Te Whatanui were both grandsons of Parewahawha; Te Ahukaramu was a great grandson. These three played key roles in leading the Ngāti Raukawa heke to this region.

⁵ Te Whiwhi, M *Te Rangihaeata Manuscripts*, GNZ MMSS 46; GNZ MMSS 54; GNZ MMSS 77.

To gain some understanding of the intellectual tradition that the colonists brought with them,⁶ I started with the origins of European imperialism and moved on to consider the lingering influence of the Greek and Roman empires on the politics of Western Europe. I investigated the influence of Christianity, particularly from the fourth century AD, on European thought. I also looked at the way the British Empire developed, from rather tentative beginnings in Ireland in the 16th century,⁷ to the global phenomenon that it had become by the time its agents began arriving on our shores over 200 years later.

I found that the intellectual tradition that the British colonists brought with them is based upon a foundation of white male supremacy. It is simplistic: it divides the world into a series of crude dualisms (white/black; right/wrong; good/evil; Christian/heathen; male/female). It is intolerant: it insists that there can only ever be one true or correct way of approaching life's complexities. It is rigidly hierarchical, premised upon the assumption that every person's worth is predetermined by their ethnicity, religion, gender, colour and proximity to the source of earthly power—originally, the monarch—and, through them, to the Christian God.

To the British, the principle of hierarchy operated as a kind of social cement; they believed that their empire had been built on the understanding that “imperialists could dominate others because they allowed themselves to be dominated”.⁸ They also understood the importance of convincing others of the value of hierarchy. They recognised that normalising the ideas of dominance and subservience was an essential part of preparing the colonised for their subjugation at the hands of their natural-born “superiors”.

When they came to Aotearoa, their problem was this: how to convince an inherently non-hierarchical society of the benefits of hierarchy? I ask this question in all seriousness because, for Ngāti Raukawa, hierarchy was an alien concept. I suspect that the same could be said for many other iwi. Even Elsdon Best, whose interpretations of tikanga were hopelessly distorted by his belief that patriarchy was normal, could not help but notice the “independent spirit” exhibited by Māori:⁹

No chief was able to treat the people in an arrogant manner, and commands were generally replaced by suggestions, proposals for certain lines of action. Any project for concerted action was discussed by the group, clan, or tribe, as the case might be. It would by no means follow that all would agree to it. . . All this meant that anything like slavish deference was impossible to a Maori. . . Deference he certainly showed to respected chiefs, but there was no trace of the sycophant in him that might blossom into slavishness.

⁶ This material can be found in Mikaere, *A Like Moths to the Flame: A History of Ngāti Raukawa Resistance and Recovery* (Ōtaki: Te Tākupu, 2017), pp 77-132.

⁷ See, for example, Ferguson, N *Empire: How Britian Made the Modern World* (Melbourne: Penguin Books, 2003), p 55.

⁸ Ferguson, *Empire*, p 242.

⁹ Best, E *The Maori (Vol I)* (Wellington: 1924), p 348: www.nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Bes01Maori-t1-front-d2.html (accessed 12 /02/18).

With respect to Ngāti Raukawa,¹⁰ I feel entirely confident in my claim that the concept of hierarchy had no place in our thinking because, as I have already explained, whakapapa is the central pillar of our philosophy. Often (somewhat casually) translated as “genealogy”, the literal meaning of whakapapa is “to build, one layer upon another”. In my view, whakapapa is inherently non-hierarchical, dictating that all aspects of creation are important. Based on the concept of whakapapa, the intellectual tradition of Ngāti Raukawa embraces relationships rather than disconnection; complexity instead of simplism; dynamism over rigidity; and open-mindedness ahead of intolerance.

For Ngāti Raukawa, as for many other Indigenous Peoples who were targeted for colonisation, it was the missionaries who initiated the process of normalising the concept of hierarchy. Their insistence that all should rightfully submit themselves to a supreme white male god simultaneously privileged whiteness and masculinity above colour and femaleness. It is not surprising that they turned to Māori men in order to achieve their goal of recreating the colonised in their own image. In a religion which requires all to prostrate themselves before a white male god, the missionaries would have regarded it as self-evident that indigenous men were higher up the pecking order than indigenous women.

Cherokee scholar, Andrea Smith, has pointed out that introducing patriarchy—thereby rapidly gaining the support of half the target population—is a logical first step to naturalising hierarchy.¹¹ Put another way, the most effective way of getting a people to understand and respect tyranny is to encourage them to wield it against one another.¹²

The experiences of the Montagnais-Naskapi people of the Saint Lawrence Valley, in what is now known as Quebec and Labrador (Canada), provide a fascinating illustration of the way that European missionaries approached their work. Jesuit missionary Paul Le Jeune kept a detailed record of the years he spent in the field and this material has proved to be a rich source of information about his goals and his methods. His campaign has been described as a concerted effort to transform a formerly “gentle and humorous people” into “bastard Europeans”.¹³ He actively undermined the status of women, promoting the ideal of male authority, encouraging European marriage practices and introducing the concept of punishment as an appropriate means of controlling women and children.¹⁴

He understood that, unless and until they gained an appreciation for the concept of hierarchy, the Montagnais-Naskapi would be extremely difficult to colonise. He was astonished at their intolerance of anyone who tried to assume “superiority” over others. He condemned what he indignantly referred to as their expectation “by right of birth, to enjoy the liberty of wild ass

¹⁰ For a more detailed analysis of this material, see Mikaere, *Like Moths to the Flame*, pp 29-76.

¹¹ Smith, *A Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Cambridge MA: South End Press, 2005), p 23.

¹² Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop*, p 39. See also Leacock, E “Montagnais Women and the Jesuit Program for Colonization” in Leacock, E & Etienne, M *Women And Colonization: Anthropological Perspectives* (JF Bergin Publishers, 1980), pp 25-42.

¹³ Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop*, p 40.

¹⁴ Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop* pp 38-40.

colts, rendering no homage to anyone whomsoever except when they like”,¹⁵ and he concluded:¹⁶

Alas! If someone could stop the wanderings of the Savages, and give authority to one of them to rule the others we would see them converted and civilized in a short time.

You can see from this statement how central the concept of hierarchy is to the goal of colonisation (and to the companion goal of conversion). You can see how it operates as a strategy for gaining control over the target group. It does this by offering incentives for some of the target population to buy into its logic. In return for accepting subservience to those positioned above them (the colonisers), a select few can expect to enjoy special status as “chiefs”, their assertion of power and control over anyone below them being sanctioned from “on high”.

I find it impossible to look at this material without thinking about how often particular iwi—or even Māori in general—are criticised for our “inability” to speak with one voice. The next time some Crown official suggests that our problem is our inability to unite, you might want to think about their motives. Giving authority to one, to rule the others, is a strategy for gaining control over us. Have you ever noticed how the media report on the “iwi leaders”, almost in hushed tones, as though these largely self-appointed, sometimes self-important men somehow represent the “voice of Māoridom” (and, as though some such thing exists)? Whose interests are being served by this nonsense? Who is being made to feel more important than the rest of us, by virtue of the fact that “the Crown” is giving them the nod, acknowledging that they are higher in the pecking order than the rest of us?

The logic of hierarchy brings out the worst in people, providing a powerful incentive for some to claim “superiority” over others. White people asserting authority over brown or black people; men dominating women; adults claiming the right to punish children; the wealthy exercising political and economic power to further enrich themselves at the expense of the poor: over time, we become convinced that this is the natural order of things. We may even become convinced that this is how things have *always* been.

But things haven’t always been this way in our part of the world. In fact, they haven’t been this way here for very long at all. What has happened, over the past 170 years or so, is that our tikanga has been overlaid with a seemingly impenetrable veneer of hierarchy—but the evidence of how we were, before our thinking was polluted by Western notions of hierarchy, remains. It is often right in front of us, if only we see it for what it is.

A perfect example is provided by the pātere “Poia atu taku poi”, composed by my kuia, Erenora Taratoa. The story behind the pātere is reasonably well-known. It was composed primarily by way of response to derogatory remarks made about her by Puhīwahine. Erenora utilises the imagery of the poi, flitting and skimming around the motu as she recites her genealogical connections. Among other things, the pātere is a celebration of female sexuality,

¹⁵ Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop*, p 40.

¹⁶ Leacock, E “Montagnai Women and the Jesuit Program for Colonization”, p 27.

which Erenora unequivocally links with her mana. Until recently, that was the principal message that I had taken from it.

It took my uncle to point out another layer of meaning—one which, once he mentioned it, was so obvious and yet it had completely escaped my attention. The pātere ends with the following statement:

Ka taupatupatu te rere a taku poi
Ngā ia tuku ki Waikato ko Kīngi Pōtatau ko Te Paea
Ko Matutaera e tāoro nei te nuku o te whenua
Hei mana mō Niu Tīreni, Pōtaea!

Erenora composed the pātere following the birth of her son, my great grandfather, in 1856. This was a period during which the idea of the Kīngitanga was being hotly debated the length and breadth of the country. It was highly controversial, attracting Crown condemnation and receiving a mixed reception from Māori throughout the country. Ngāti Raukawa reactions to its establishment were similarly mixed. Given the all-important matter of context, it's pretty obvious that Erenora is providing a resounding public endorsement of the concept. This is a political statement, designed to inform and to persuade.

I might add that the issue of Ngāti Raukawa support for the Kīngitanga remained a hot topic throughout the early 1860s. Crown officials were quite obsessed with determining where our loyalties lay. Many of them were convinced that Erenora's father, Taratoa, was a "closet Kingite" who would declare himself in the event that they pushed him too far on the question of land purchases within this rohe. It is amusing to think of the amount of time they wasted trying to ascertain Taratoa's loyalties when his daughter had already proclaimed her stance so unambiguously! They could have saved themselves a great deal of second-guessing if they had simply realised that, for Ngāti Raukawa, women were every bit as likely as the men to take the lead in political matters.

They didn't understand that at all. Their own women were relegated entirely to the domestic sphere, not even regarded as legal persons. They were shocked when Māori women stepped up to sign Te Tiriti o Waitangi, as Waitohi's daughter, Rangi Topeora did. In some cases Crown officials refused to allow women to sign, costing themselves male signatures as a result.¹⁷ Their refusal to acknowledge the rangatiratanga of Māori women, and their relentless erosion of that rangatiratanga ever since, eventually resulted in the filing of the Mana Wahine Claim, by past and present presidents of the Māori Women's Welfare League and a number of others, in 1993. I pause to mention that claim here because it looks likely to be heard in the near future, as part of the Waitangi Tribunal's kaupapa inquiry programme.¹⁸

I'd like to finish this kōrero where I began, with Waitohi. And with a statement about the attributes of a rangatira that Bishop Manuhua Bennett outlined in 1999:¹⁹

Te kai a te rangatira, he kōrero

¹⁷ Orange, C *The Treaty of Waitangi* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1987) p 90.

¹⁸ (Wai 381) *Māori Women's Claim*.

¹⁹ Bishop Bennett made these comments when he was closing a hui that had been called by the Crown Forestry Rental Trust in December 1999, at Hopuhopu.

Te tohu o te rangatira, he manaaki
Te mahi a te rangatira, he whakatira i te iwi

The literal translation of first of these statements is that the food of a rangatira is speech. There is no doubt that Waitohi was a gifted orator. She understood the power of language to persuade. In a few words, she succeeded where her brother had repeatedly failed, convincing their Ngāti Raukawa relations to move.²⁰ However, there is more to this statement than the suggestion that a rangatira should be eloquent. Its deeper meaning refers to the importance of keeping one's word. If a rangatira commits to a particular position or course of action, they are expected to meet that commitment. Quite clearly, Waitohi fulfilled this requirement: a significant number of her Ngāti Raukawa relatives uprooted themselves from our former homelands and undertook an arduous journey south, based purely upon her promise. She kept her word, awarding us significant tracts of land to settle upon when we arrived.

The second statement tells us that the sign of a rangatira is the ability to care for others. Generosity of spirit and action are extremely important qualities in a rangatira, who is expected to acknowledge and enhance the mana of others in all that they do. Again, Waitohi was careful to acknowledge the mana of the rangatira who took up her invitation and moved their people to this part of the country. The areas she marked out for each of them were significant: Te Whatanui, for example, was given land throughout the region, including at Ōtaki, Horowhenua and Manawatū. Within their respective boundaries, moreover, the mana of these rangatira was respected—even when they behaved in ways that seemed calculated to put their relationship with Ngāti Toa Rangatira to the test.

The third aspect referred to by Bishop Bennett harks back to the central task of a rangatira, quite literally, weaving the group together. It is probably no accident that a further meaning of the word “ranga” is to set in motion a body of people. There is no doubting Waitohi's ability on this count—no less than three significant bodies of Ngāti Raukawa migrated hundreds of miles, over a period of several years, purely on the strength of her invitation.

Once again, however, there are layers of meaning within this statement. The ability to move people requires the building of consensus. Finding a position on an issue that everyone within the group can feel satisfied with is no easy task, requiring excellent listening skills, an intimate knowledge of the people, a solid understanding of group dynamics, and the ability to inspire and persuade. There is no doubt that Waitohi's nephews, who took her request back home and convinced their people to move, must have possessed exceptional leadership qualities.

²⁰ Waitohi is also credited with negotiating peace between an attacking Waikato taua and her own Ngāti Toa relations at Ōhaua-o-te-rangi, Kāwhia. This incident was one of many in the on-going exchange of hostilities that eventually saw Te Rauparaha lead Ngāti Toa Rangatira south. Waitohi is said to have recognised some of her own relations amongst the Ngāti Te Ata men within the attacking group, which included members of Ngāti Pou, who had recently been responsible for killing some of her children. Her appeal for peace was successful: Oliver, WH (ed) *Ngā Tāngata Taumata Rau 1769-1869* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1990) p 389.

For her part, Waitohi must have demonstrated similar qualities in order to keep Ngāti Toa and Te Āti Awa on board with her decisions concerning the drawing of boundaries between themselves and Ngāti Raukawa. As I mentioned before, the fact that armed conflict broke out between Te Āti Awa and Ngāti Raukawa (with Ngāti Toa involved on both sides), shortly following her death, is a strong indication of Waitohi's role in maintaining cohesion amongst the three iwi.

I think it's pretty clear that the model of leadership described by Bishop Bennett's statements, and demonstrated by Waitohi's words and actions, has nothing to do with the culturally alien concept of hierarchy. It does, however, have everything to do with the maintenance of balance through the careful acknowledgement and nurturing of relationships. It is whakapapa—not hierarchy—that is the driver.