

# TE PIRINGA

BY MATIU DICKSON\*

He kōrero-a-waha te tikanga a te Māori kia tukuna atu te mātauranga i waenga i ngā reanga o ia tangata. Ko ngā kōrero purākau me te whaikōrero ki runga i te marae ētahi o ngā tikanga mo aua mahi. Nō reira e ai ki te pepeha nei: Ko te kōrero te kai a te Rangatira.

Na te tiakina mai o ngā mokopuna e ōna korōua me ōna kūia ka āhei te tuku atu te mātauranga nei ki ngā mokopuna i ngā kōrero nei me ngā taurua o ngā tūpuna nei. He tāonga ngā mokopuna nō reira e tika ana kia manāki i a rātou i ngā wā katoa. Na ngā tūpuna ka tohua ko wai o ngā mokopuna e pai ana kia tohu mo ēnei mahi mātauranga. Ka āta matapaki rātou i te āhua o te mokopuna me tōna whakapapa.

Ko tētahi tikanga kia mau i te pūtake o te korero mo ake tonu, ko te pepeha, te whakatauki rānei. Mō ia iwi aua pepeha, e pa ana ki ngā āhuatanga katoa o te noho a te iwi. He kōrero tohutohu ki ngā uri kia pai ai to rātou noho me te kaupare ake ki ngā kino o te āo. E kiia nei ahakoa no mua noa atu te pepeha nei ko ona tikanga noniānei tonu.

Nō te tau 1858 ka tohua e ngā iwi ko Pōtatau te Wherowhero hei Kīngi mo te motu. Tuatahi, kāre ia i te whakaae nō te mea kua pakeke haere ia otirā ‘kua tō te ra’ ki a ia. Ēngari nā te kaha o te tautoko o ngā rangatira ki a ia, ka eke ia ki te ahurewa tapu o te Kingitanga. E rua ngā tau ki muri, ka mate ia ēngari i waiho ake ia i tenei pepeha (tongi ki a Tainui) ki ōna uri:

Te Piringa, kia paiheretia kōrua kia kotahi  
Ko te whakapono hei kākahu  
Ko te ture hei whāriki  
Kia mau ki te aroha, ki te ture me te whakapono.

Kua mōhio hoki ngā rangatira Māori o aua wā kei te haere tonu mai ngā Pākeha ki te noho ki konei ahakoa te aha. Nō reira, he pepeha tēnei ki ngā iwi kia whakaritea mai ratou i a ratou anō mō aua mahi tūkinu a te Pākeha. Ko aua māramatanga mo te pepeha ko tēnei, kia noho tūturu te tangata hei Māori ko te aroha me te whakapono hei hoa māna. Ēngari kia mau tonu ki te ture. He ohore te mahi o tēnei kupu i te mea he kupu tēnei mō te ture Pākeha.

Ki ōku whakaaro kei te mōhio a Kīngi Pōtatau nei ma te ture te Pākeha e patu i te Māori, e whana-ko, e raupatu rānei i te whenua Māori. Ko ngā tino pūtake o te Kingitanga ko ēnei:

- Kia kōtahi ngā iwi Māori o te motu i raro i te mana o te Rangatira kōtahi;
- Kia mutu rawa atu te hoko o te whenua Māori ki ngā Pākeha, ki te Kāwanatanga rānei.

Heoi anō, ka whaiwhakāro ake a Kīngi Pōtatau, ma te ture ano te ture e akiaki i te ao Māori e whakatika hoki i ōna raruraru. Nō reira he ākina tēnei ki te iwi Māori kia mōhio ki te ture hei awahina atu i a rātou.

I te wā ka tō te whakaaro o te iwi me te Whare Wānanga kia tūmatatia te Kura Ture o Te Piririga, i tākohangia tēnei tongi e Te Arikiniui Te Atairangikaahu ki a Te Piringa. Kua kitea inaianei e te katoa kua ū te kaupapa o tēnei tongi ki ngā tūranga kaupapa o Te Piringa. He mea whakamīharo tēnei i te mea no mua noa atu te tongi nei me tōna kaitito.

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Māori have an oral tradition, that is, the transfer of knowledge within and between generations, which was carried out orally by way of story-telling or the more formal speech-making. *Ngā korero purākau* are the stories and *whaikōrero* is formal talking on the *marae* or ancestral gathering places of Māori people. The value of public speaking is expressed in the saying: *Ko te kōrero te kai a te Rangatira* – (The chiefs thrive on talking and debating).

Such a transfer of knowledge was considered ideal in the situation between grandparent and grandchild. This preferred relationship was because the constant care of the grandchild by his or her grandparents meant that every occasion was a learning situation for that grandchild. *Ngā tūpuna* are the elders/ancestors and *ngā mokopuna* are the grandchildren. Seeing the future was compared to looking into a *puna* (pool) and seeing the *moko* (reflection) of the individual. Thus, the grandchildren were the future of the tribe in a pool attended to by their elders

Except for the transfer of *tapu* or sacred knowledge, there was no formal tuition, rather the child learned by absorbing the knowledge and following the example of the elders. The behaviour, demeanor and character of the child were observed by the elders who chose the pathway of knowledge for that child, to suit and take advantage of the positive aspects of the child's character. The *whakapapa* or genealogy of the child also played a part, for Māori believed that one's *whakapapa* determined one's destiny and position within the tribe. *Whakapapa* means to put into layers. Each generation of an individual was layered, for example all of the generation of one's grandparents were referred to using the same term, *ngā tūpuna*. One's relationship to one's grandparents was the same to everyone else in that generation.

Often grandparents would take the eldest of the grandchildren to *whāngai* or foster because that child as the eldest, carried the responsibility of future leadership for the *whānau* (family) or for the tribe. *Whāngai* is described as an adoption according to Māori *tikanga* or custom. *Whāngai* children were cared for mainly to relieve stress within a family. The children lived with *whāngai* parents (usually grandparents but not always) and were given back when the situation as to their care had improved. The *whāngai* child of grandparents was a favoured child and treated accordingly. Ideally but not always, that child was the first-born male child. I was a *whāngai* in such a way by my maternal grandparents mainly because my mother was young when I was born. I was a special (some say spoilt) child too because I was named after my two maternal uncles who had died in World War II and are buried in Italy.

The *whānau* was the extended family unit inclusive of all the lines of descent close to the individual as in their *whakapapa*. Several *whānau* from a common ancestor formed a *hapū* or subtribe. Several *hapū* from a common ancestor further back in the *whakapapa* formed the *iwi* or tribe. The *hapū* was the usual unit of Māori social organisation which operated at *marae* level.

*Tuakana* and *teina* were terms for the older and younger siblings of the same gender of a family. The *tuakana* was usually chosen for leadership and the *teina* was expected to support the older but also given protection in return. The *teina* had fewer constraints on his/her behaviour and sometimes outshone the older because of this. Good and wise leadership by the *tuakana* brought *mana* (prestige) to the tribe and with it respect for the leader. But it also brought with it the burden of duty. *Mana* was achieved by performing good works for the people and for others. It was the barometer of the respect shown to the leader of the tribe. Bad or incompetent leadership meant the loss of *mana*. *Rangatira*, the word for chief, means to weave (*ranga*) a group (*tira*) together to form a coherent group under the authority of the chief.

Sometimes tuakana were not up to the task and their role was given to another sibling or other member of the whānau for the time being. However, the whakapapa of the tuakana line remained the same and often that line's leadership potential was resurrected in future generations.

There are many stories in Māoridom about the relationships and the disagreements between tuakana and teina siblings. For example in my tribal area of Tauranga Moana, Tōroa was the tuakana leader of the waka or canoe called Mataatua. Mataatua was part of what is called the Great Migration of waka from Hawaiki in the 1400s which brought the Māori people to Aotearoa/New Zealand. The descendants of Tōroa now live the Bay of Plenty region. Puhi was his teina. The two argued about leadership roles and according to the Mataatua traditions, Puhi took the waka, his whānau and his supporters to the North where they settled to form the Ngāpuhi tribe.

The story of Whatihua and Turongo is another which deserves mention. This is an incident from the Tainui waka tradition where Whatihua the tuakana tricked his teina Turongo. However, later history gave more importance to Turongo and his descendants who became the Kahui Ariki of the Kingitanga. So the teina achieved more mana in the end. In stories of female tuakana and teina the role has been more supportive of each other.

The knowledge keepers were referred to as the tohunga or those who had been chosen (tohu) for the task. Some knowledge was considered tapu, therefore the protocols for the learning of that knowledge and its retention was highly prescribed. An example of the tapu knowledge was that of genealogy or whakapapa. Whakapapa is described as being the glue with which Māori establish their social relationships. It was considered imperative that the whakapapa be learnt and recited without mistake. Such a mistake or hapa could bring misfortune to those reciting or to those whose whakapapa information it was. It was also thought that letting all and sundry know one's whakapapa potentially opened that person to the threat of makutu or witchcraft. One had to be very circumspect as to who knew one's whakapapa or where one recited it. If one was disrespectful when the whakapapa was acquired then it was thought that that person would not be able to remember the information. This attitude to learning was similar when learning the stories of the tribe.

One way of encapsulating the essence of a pakiwaitara or story was by the use of pepeha or whakatauāki. Pepeha and whakatauāki are translated<sup>1</sup> as meaning charms, witticisms, figures of speech, boasts and other sayings. They were tribal specific and covered all aspects of tribal life and the world around. They were pithy sayings that gave instructions to the listener as to how to conduct themselves or to explain certain circumstances or phenomena. For example, such pepeha were constructed by the wise elders of the tribe whose experience and instructions kept the members of the tribe safe.

Some say that they are like communications with the ancestors<sup>2</sup> and though they may have resulted from very old events of the tribe, the philosophy contained therein is still relevant in modern society. The language used in the pepeha is sometimes that of the ancient Māori world, as such words usually had several meanings and required the listener to explore all the possible interpretations.

There is a pepeha that explains this: "He iti te kupu, he nui te korero", which means that the word may be small or brief but it conveys a lot. As oral traditionalists, Māori knew the expediency of words as well as the beauty of its use. The composer of the pepeha was also considered as to whether it was important. Some pepeha were left as guidelines for the tribe when the leader was

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1 H Williams *Dictionary of the Māori Language* (Wellington, GP Publications, 1997) at 277.

2 H Mead *Nga Pepeha a Nga Tipuna* (Wellington, Huia, 2003) at 4.

at his death bed. These were sometimes called *ohāki* or oral wills. Much was made of the ability to hear the oral directions from the tribal leader at that time that death was imminent because it set the future for the tribe on his/her death. It was particularly important where there might be potential for disputes as to leadership where there were several brothers or contenders for leadership, or where *mana* over land was contentious.

In 1858 Pōtatau Te Wherowhero was chosen as King for the Māori people. He was reluctant to accept because he felt that his life was nearly over but the chiefs of other tribes led by Te Heuheu Tukino of Ngāti Tuwharetoa and Wiremu Tamihana of Ngāti Haua persisted in the request or *tono* to Pōtatau. He met the criteria of leadership in his abilities and his *whakapapa* connection to all the tribes of the land. Pōtatau relented and became the first Māori King. As he had predicted, he died two years later but not without leaving *pepeha* to instruct his tribe. One of those *pepeha* is the subject of this article and it is this:

Te Piringa, kia paiheretia kōrua kia kotahi

Ko te whakapono hei kakahu

Ko te ture hei whāriki.

Kia mau ki te aroha, ki te ture me te whakapono.

Be united, spread the good word so that we are one (people)

Use your belief in God as a fine cloak

And the law as a decorated mat (for your feet)

Hold onto your love for each other, the law and your beliefs.

The *pepeha* hints at the inevitability of settlement of the country by the Pakeha settlers and like other Māori leaders King Pōtatau was preparing his people for when that would happen. *Paiheretia kōrua* means to be blessed by the Christian God so there is a reference to the growing influence of the Church among Māori. The reference is also to two people becoming as one, that is, the need to settle differences. The missionaries were the first to translate the Bible and to teach Māori the new ways, this new knowledge was keenly sought by Māori who put it to good use. The missionaries were initially trusted but by the time of the land wars, Māori leaders became suspicious of their true intentions. However, Māori generally saw goodness in the Christian teachings because it was not too different to the values they held under Māori *tikanga* law. *Whakapono* is the taking up of the new religions by Māori.

The kiwi feather cloak (*kahu kiwi*) became the symbol of chiefly status and was much prized. On formal occasions Māori leaders were expected to wear such finery as representative of their *mana* and that of the tribe. King Pōtatau's use of the word *ture* is unusual for it is a transliterated word of the Hebrew *torah* and refers to the introduced law, the Pakeha law. The decorated mats (*whariki whakairo*) were displayed on formal occasions, again to enhance the *mana* of the chief and the tribe. The patterns were intricate and woven by women weavers of the tribe for use by all tribal members.

I believe that the reference to the *ture* or the 'law' by King Pōtatau is a recognition by him that the law would play a part in enforcing Pakeha systems which it did, but also that the 'law' could be the answer to restoring the *mana* to Māori. Very quickly Māori leaders at that time, like Te Kooti and later Sir Apirana Ngata, realised that for Māori to cope with the change caused by colonisation, it required that they have a good knowledge of the introduced political system and

the law. This edict is not lost on some Māori students who enrol at Te Piringa as to the role of the law with their ancestors and in the modern context.

King Pōtatau was aware of the uncertainty his people might face if the Pakeha settlers pursued their desire for more land. The Kingitanga which he headed was established primarily to unite all Māori and to halt the sale of Māori land to the settlers and the Crown. However, the Crown considered the forming of the Kingitanga an act of rebellion and used this reason to provoke warfare with Māori. The consequences of the land wars in the end was that Māori land was confiscated and a system of land tenure imposed by the Native Land Courts made the alienation of Māori land easier for settlers and the Crown. Māori social organisation and leadership were in disarray as well. Māori population numbers fell so dramatically that it was thought that the Māori people would die out, but it was not to be.

During the discussions about starting a new Law School at Waikato University in the late 1980s it was thought that a new School should reflect the desires of the Māori constituency of the region and the University. Māori supported the setting up of the new School<sup>3</sup> and were particularly enthusiastic about the foundation goal of the School that the bicultural nature of the law be taught. This included the teaching of the Māori tikanga system of law. Tika means to act correctly. Ngā tikanga refers to a set of values by which Māori behave properly, honestly, fairly and in good faith. The new School would be the first in the country to have such a goal in its establishment.

One of the year one papers offered is Legal Systems and Societies (LAWS106). The first six weeks of this paper covers Māori tikanga law. The students are taught the value systems Māori society was built on, like for example aroha (love), manaakitanga (caring), utu (reciprocity) and whanaungatanga (relationships). It means that the students need to learn new Māori words and ideas; the objective is to show students that Māori had a working legal system though it was not immediately obvious to the early settlers. Given that the law now affects Māori in a negative way above the proportion to their numbers in the community, ways are being sought where Māori value systems can be used to deal with Māori offenders. For example, the Youth Court now sits on marae as the Rangatahi Court when dealing with young Māori offenders. The purpose is to show these young offenders the tikanga of their marae and to reconnect them to their marae and to their whanau.

The mana whenua tribes of Waikato/Tainui were ardent supporters of the Law School because it was established in their rohe or region and the leadership of the time saw the new School as a good opportunity for their young tribal members to study the law. The head of the Kingitanga at that time, Te Arikini Dame Te Atairangikaahu played a prominent role at the eventual opening of the new Law School buildings in 1991.

As is typical of important traditional Māori leaders she also made several gifts to the venture. She gifted carved maihi (barge boards) called Te Rākau Kōtahi. These symbolised the carvings which recorded the oral stories of the elders. She also gifted the pepeha or tongi in the Tainui dialect of her ancestor the first Māori King Pōtatau. That tongi is now part of a waiata sung by staff and students at formal Māori occasions. In doing this the late Māori Queen symbolically cast her mana and protection over the new School. In 2010, the University approved a renaming of the Law School to Te Piringa – Faculty of Law to honour that gift and to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Faculty.

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3 Te Mātāhauariki Report (University of Waikato, 1990).

Next year in 2011, Te Piringa will offer the teaching of a first year law paper (LAW103) using te reo Māori as the language of instruction. This will complement the kaupapa Māori law papers and parts of papers already taught in Te Piringa. Te Piringa is the faculty of choice for Māori law students. Anecdotally, Māori students have mentioned to me that they enjoy being part of a law faculty that recognises their Māoriness and the Māori skills that they can contribute to the whanau of Te Piringa. Also, the mainstream of our law students are supportive of being taught the kaupapa Māori of the law and have come to accept that that is what happens when they attend Te Piringa – Faculty of Law. We are fortunate to have law staff who are supportive and capable of teaching the law in a way it was intended when the Faculty was first mooted.