

## RITUALS OF ENCOUNTER

The particulars of the encounters ritual have been passed from the ancestors to the present day tangata whenua who have a turangawaewae with the marae. This gives them the right to safeguard or participate in the determining of the kawa or protocols of the procedure and behaviour expected of all people who participate in any event within their iwi or hapu boundaries. The full rituals of encounters will only be experienced when the kaumatua (elders) have decided it is required because of the importance or mana of the person or people involved, or the mana or prestigiousness of the event itself (such as the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the signing of the Tiriti o Waitangi in Waitangi).

Most people will experience a slightly less formal, but no less sacred, ritual of encounter when attending any event at what is now called a marae complex (or a building designated as a marae), which is situated either rurally within traditional iwi/hapu territories or within the city (urban marae). However, whatever the particular differences of kawa are appropriate to each different rohe (region) the basic ritual follows the same step by step process so the visitors move from a position of tapu waewae to balance a position of noa (neutrality).

“Visitors who are strangers to a marae... are deemed to be waewae tapu (sacred feet), people who bring with them their own sanctity and ancestral spirits that might be inimical to the spirits and mauri (life force) of the tangata whenua ...

visitors have to go through a highly formalised ritual... to decontaminate them of their alien tapu..." (King 1992:22)

The kaumatua and kuia (male and female elders) are the principle actors throughout this ritual, although all participants are active, even when still and silent with respect. Kaumatua and kuia are elders of the whanau and hapu, who may also have the additional status of rangitira or tohunga or special status (mana) accorded them because of their lifetime commitment to their people. Tauroa 1986:27, Salmond 1975:120, Malcereti 1986:64

The elders carry with them the knowledge passed down to them from the ancestors along with their lifetime experience. In relation to the rituals of encounter, they possess the esoteric knowledge associated with marae rituals "as prized possession, first bought down from the heavens by the god Tane in the kete tuauri... and it has been tapu ever since". (Salmond 1975:121) The elders have the responsibility to ensure the tapu is respected by attitude and deed.

The various steps of the ritual are led or taken care of by one gender or the other and this shall be described along with each step.

The ritual of encounter begins long before the physical act of visitors and tangata whenua interaction. It begins with the seeds of an event or issue, and preparations for such take place with both the visitors and the hosts. For the visitors it can entail ensuring the marae is available. They then need to prepare

themselves for the encounter, checking travel arrangements so they all arrive about the same time, sending out of panui to invite appropriate people, ensuring they have the appropriate elders to take them onto the marae, the learning of protocol and practicing of whakorewo and waiata, and ensuring the collection of a koha (oha oha).

That tangata whenua clean and prepare the marae complex, organise the food and ringawera (cooks), taking care of the tamariki (children) and the elders health and welfare so that all is ready on the day of the encounter.

The visitors gather outside the gates or entrance of the marae complex. Here they greet each other both friends and strangers with hongis or handshake and cheek kissing. Individuals place koha in envelopes and discreetly pass it to the representative who will place all together on the marae atea as their contribution towards covering the costs of the event. The amount given by each individual is not discussed, however it needs to be a respectable amount. During this waiting time the visitors prepare themselves spiritually and emotionally as well as physically. A quietness descends on the group as thoughts turn to the impending encounter, as to the issue of the gathering and the people, past and present, of importance. About this time an elder takes responsibility for calling out a waerea (protective incantation) or karakia (spiritual chant) for spiritual protection of the group (Salmond 1975:117), though nowadays this usually takes the form of a quiet karakia before walking to the entrance.

The visitors group themselves, usually led by the kuia who will karanga the response on behalf of the visitors and other kuia with the rest of the women following. The men are usually on the sides of and back of the group. This is the process for many modern day encounters. At this point it is usual that a kuia (kai karanga) from the tangata whenua will karanga to the visiting group.

Thus the first words spoken in the encounter are by women. The karanga is called by a kai karanga (caller). The karanga is tapu, and the call and response by the kuia from both tangata whenua and manuhiri (visitors) creates a "safe word pathway, along which manuhiri may pass without fear. In a relatively short time period, many of the dimensions essential to Maoridom are involved.

The karanga can only be issued by the women, hence the spiritual dimension, reaffirming the connection of Papatuanuku, earth mother as the sustainer and nurturer of life from whom the first mortal was created. [As such the karanga is the women's equivalent of speechmaking, drawing on a common range of mythological poetic phrases (Salmond 1975:138, Du Plessis et.al. 1992:14)]

The karanga is the process by which the ancestors are acknowledged and whereby "the living and the dead of the manuhiri may cross the physical space to unite with the living and dead of the tangata whenua" (Tauroa 1986:36), thus the physical dimension is acknowledged with homage paid to those who have passed on, the karanga nurtures the emotional dimension, and a time for tangitangi is made during the karanga. It also addresses the cognitive, or mental dimension, as it is a welcoming call from the kai karanga to the visitors

embodying the callers marae, iwi whanau and hapu as is has passed through to her from generations of ancestors. The kai karanga whakautu has a different responsibility, that of representing the visiting group to the tangata whenua, hence including in her response some indication of who they are and why they have come.

The karanga is a solemn responsibility and sacred act, carrying with it a powerful spiritual and emotional dimension that is the representation of thousands of years of essential values and ancestral wisdom. Thus it is the domain of the elder women and among those, those who have been granted both the right and responsibility to practice, through "many years of attendance to marae, of listening and learning" (Tauroa 1986:39). Therefore it is normal for 'younger' women to pay tribute to the mana of their elders by not stepping forward to karanga, even when they may be the only ones present on the visiting side. A kai karanga will only take up this responsibility when the time is right for her people, and would not usually happen whilst her mother or grandmother (or other elderly female relations) are still alive, as this would detract from their, and their peoples, mana. The act of karanga is so powerful, so sacred, that no one may enter into the ritual of encounter, or powhiri (welcome) unless it is issued forth. The next step of the encounter cannot and will not happen without the voice of the women being heard and acknowledged first. (Irwin, Salmond, Tauroa)

In the present day, the wero (challenge) is usually only issued when the actors or the occasion is of accorded great mana. This could be the visitation of an important dignitary or an important issue, tangi or celebration. The wero would then precede the karanga and occur at the gate way of the marae complex (Salmond 1975:118), and the principle actor is a young tangata whenua male, who has learnt the ritual movements and facial expressions of te wero, accompanied by taiaha (spear) holds and swings. It is meant to be intimidatory and ??? of the intentions of the visitors is placed in the form of a taki (challenge dart) in front of the manuhiri. The most honoured male visitor must pick the taki up, and the way this is done shows the intentions of the visitors, the way it is placed showing the intentions or suspicions of the tangata whenua. (Taunoa 1986:33) Nowadays it has been reduced to pageantry, acknowledging the power of the institution symbolised, as a defense to the local marae from potential high powered invaders. (Salmond 1975:136)

Once the karanga draws to an end then the tangi tangi (united weeping for the dead) and powhiri (welcoming chants and movements) begin, sometimes all three overlapping but with an appropriate timing to the occasion. The tangi tangi (wailing) is important as the physical expression of emotions released on the remembering of those who have passed away, or past events. This acknowledgment of emotions is respected and often led by the kuia. The powhiri is a welcoming chant and action, and may be performed by any tangata whenua who wish to be involved, but again is usually led by elders. The words and actions are related to the safe landing of a waka (canoe) to the shore.

Twigs with greenery are moved in a way that indicates relationship with te au and te po (darkness and light, life and death), emphasising the spiritual process to which all actors are connected, and in that acknowledgment ensuring safe passage of manuhiri from their ??? position across the space to their designated seats. As long as there are people and the marae, the rope represented by the voices is a rope that ties and pulls the people together. It stretches from the past, appears in the present, and disappears to serve future generations". (Tauroa 1986:41)

The seating is designated such that tangata whenua and manuhiri face each other across the marae atea, the sacred area in front of the whare nui/whare hui (meeting house). The kuia will usually sit where they can easily move to stand to support the speakers with waiata. The marae atea is governed by Tu Matauenga (God of War or Conflict), "where contrasting behaviours can be practised" (Tauroa 1986:44).

The mihi mihi (speeches of welcome) and whaikorero (formal speeches) then begin across the marae atea. The order of speakers varies according to the kawa of the iwi, hapu and their marae. The main actors of this procedure are the kaumatua, in the form of male speaker, and kuia, who will lead the supportive waiata, with the tangata whenua and manuhiri groups sometimes showing their support for their speakers by standing during the waiata, but at all times are respectfully situated, usually with downcast eyes, and silent

throughout but for the occasional murmur of support when something particularly apt has been said.

The mihi begins with a tauparapara (chant or incantation) that draws attention to both the speaker and the speech. The speaker's responsibility is to the people he is representing in his/her speech making. Some iwi, for example Ngati Porou and Ngati Kahunguru, have female speakers, and it has also been reported that this practice was much more widespread before beliefs and practices of male superiority were introduced by many of the early missionaries. (.....) However, though the main actors of this part of the procedure are male, they speak on behalf of all, are often guided by kuia, are supported by women through waiata. Women have the power to deride a speaker if they are not up to standard or go on too long, or may interrupt and stop a speech by breaking into waiata (Salmond 1975:149, Tauroa 1986:60) or crossing in front of the speaker, though this occurs very rarely.

The Tauparapara (awakening) are traditional, have been passed down through generations and follow a prescribed format. This is followed by the body of the whaikorero. The language of the marae is te reo rangatira, and during this procedure proper Maori names, place names, descriptions and formats are used. "The orator cuts his cloth to fit the occasion, but weaves it out of a large set of phrases.... poetic and mythological, providing verbal embroidery..." (Salmond 1975:164). Whaikorero follow a structure as follows - greetings to the visitors from the tangata whenua, or the marae, environment, tangata whenua and iwi



from manuhiri. This is followed by a greeting to the dead, the sending off of the dead to their spiritual resting place, a turning from the dead to the living by greeting the living (usually by group but sometimes addressing particularly important people as individual) and then some words in support of or description of the take (reason for the gathering). (King, Salmond, Tauroa)

The speech is kinaki (relisted, supported) by an appropriate waiata or chant. There are many types, both ancient and modern. Those who furnish the waiata stand, usually behind or beside the orator, to show their collective solidarity physically and spiritually. Many waiata must be learnt, as it is not appropriate to repeat one. The waiata can be rounded off by a pokeka recited in the manner of a war dance, but most often the orator speaks a last few words and takes up his seat again. If it is the last manuhiri speaker it is now that the koha is placed by them on the marae atea, and picked up respectfully by the appropriate tangata whenua who recites some acknowledgment or are accompanied by a special karanga from the kai karanga. (Salmond 1995:176)

As it becomes obvious that the whaikorero and waiata are finished, the tangata whenua usually gesture the manuhiri to proceed with hongiri and hariru, called te tukakitanga (Tauroa 1986:65), the physical contact. This is to remove the tapu resulting from entering and meeting on the marae atea. The hongiri involves a pressing of noses and sharing the 'breath of life', contact of the foreheads is often made signifying a common sharing of thoughts and meeting of intellects,

and emotions. The respectful holding of hands and touching of elbow or shoulder also convey the connections being made.

Once this has occurred between all those actors, manuhiri are considered as one with the tangata whenua for the duration of their stay (whaka tangata whenua). If the reason for the gathering is a tangi hanga (grieving of the deceased) then the manuhiri would move on to hongī and greet the family of the deceased and the deceased, in whatever order the kawa of the marae lays down. This would usually be indicated by tangata whenua by gesture and eye movement if the manuhiri are strangers to the marae. After respects are paid to the deceased and their hapu, the tapu of the death should be removed by application of water usually by rinsing the hands and then sprinkling water over the head and body. There is usually a container or tap close by the whare hui for this purpose. After the hongī, harīru or cleansing the next part of the encounter is sharing of kai (food) by partaking in a hakari (feast) in a whare kai. In some places the full ritual encounter may not be considered complete until food is shared, even though formally it is the hongī which lifts the tapu.

After feasting the issue of the gathering is attended to, and most of this occurs inside the whare hui or whare nui (meeting house). The entrance door to the whare nui is protected by a female lintel under whom all must pass to enter the house, and Rongo (God of Peace) has dominion inside the house. Hence all participants must remove their shoes so that the dust of Tane Matauenga is not taken into the domain of Rongo. This spiritual living of ancestral wisdom

continues to protect the process of the gathering until it has finished, signified by the last act of encounter, the poro poaki (ritual of farewell).

The poro poaki is the process of thanking and farewelling in a face to face situation between tangata whenua and their visitors. It is begun by the manuhiri and all who wish to may speak. Here expressions of gratitude are made obvious to the tangata whenua and especially the kai mahi (workers) and ringawera (cooks), the speeches are generally less tense than those of the mihi mihi. It is usual that tangata whenua speak last in the farewelling of manuhiri and often will end the process with a protective karakia. The timing of the poro poaki is usually planned to be appropriate but kawa demands that it is up to the tangata whenua to determine this, in remembering that it is people and protocol that are important on the marae, not time. There is a final hongiri or hauriru and manuhiri then take their leave whilst the tangata whenua kai mahi return to the final processes of getting the elders home and cleaning up the marae complex in readiness for the next encounter. (Salmond, Tauroa)

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