Whakapapa: A framework for understanding identity

Joseph Selwyn Te Rito

Abstract: This paper focusses on my whakapapa (genealogy) to Ōmāhu and the hapū (sub-tribe) of Ngāti Hinemanu and the consequent link to our tribal whenua (land). Here, the emphasis is on describing the framework and methodology of whakapapa and in applying it to the specific lineage that culminates with me. The whakapapa commences with Papatūānuku (Earth Mother) in mythical times 46 generations ago but focuses particularly on the 16 generations from Rongomaiwahine, high chieftainess of Te Māhia who was courted by the traveller from Northland, Kahungunu. Their marriage gives rise to two modern-day tribes which are Rongomaiwahine and Ngāti Kahungunu. They belong to a region equating roughly to broader Hawke's Bay. The lineage passes down through Hinemanu from which one of the hapū of Ōmāhu, Ngāti Hinemanu derives its name. The whakapapa rendition finally arrives at the author. This paper seeks to illustrate the methodology and to demonstrate the strong connections between whakapapa, and Māori identity.

Keywords: Māori identity, whakapapa (genealogy), whenua (land)

Whakapapa as a framework

The whakapapa paradigm operates at various levels. It exists as a genealogical narrative, a story told layer upon layer, ancestor upon ancestor up to the present day. There are parallel lineages of characters which run vertically side by side, era by era, and incident by incident. The whakapapa can also be presented laterally. There are numerous family whakapapa books in existence along with several tribal histories based on whakapapa. Whakapapa is defined by Williams as "Place in layers, lay one upon another" and "Recite in proper order genealogies, legends etc." (Williams, 2001, p.259)

Apirana Ngata has a similar definition, namely "Whakapapa is the process of laying one thing upon another. If you visualise the foundation ancestors as the first generation, the next and succeeding ancestors are placed on them in ordered layers" (Ngata, 1972, p.6). Ngata also provides definitions for different technical terms used with whakapapa. A selection follows:

> Whakamoe: This is to show the intermarriages on the lines of descent, as opposed to Taotahi, which gives the names on the lines without those of their wives or husbands.
>
> Tararere: This is to trace a single line of descent from an ancestor, without showing intermarriages, or giving other kin on the line. This is the usual method of tracing whakapapa.
>
> Tahu: As the term connotes is setting out the main lines. In another sense it refers to the stock ancestors of a tribe. Thus Paikea, Paoa, Ira, Toi, Uepohatu, Ruawaipu would be called stock ancestors of Ngāti Porou and kindred tribes.
>
> Whakapiri: Literally seek to establish connections with. If you wish to define your position in respect of some person tracing from a common ancestor you count the generations down to him and yourself. If you should be on the same plane, you have to consider whether he or you are of the elder branch, so that you may call him tuakana or taina. On the other hand you may stand in the position of papa and have to call him 'Tamaiti' (Ngata, 1972, pp. 6-7).

The technique of tararere is particularly useful when dealing with the names of ancestors where little is known of spouses and other lateral links. As we come closer to modern times the techniques of whakamoe and of whakapiri become particularly useful, as the knowledge of lateral ancestors like spouses, is more to the forefront of people's memories. Their stories are better remembered and the narratives become easier to fill out. In other cases, for ease of presentation, the whakapapa can be displayed laterally rather than vertically. This method is suitable for example when there are multiple spouses.

Where only main or key ancestors are shown, the technique of tahu is suitable. This technique is also suitable in other cases, for example when some siblings may be more well-known than others for their deeds and may consequently have a high profile, while others may have died as babies on the other hand and consequently be lesser known. Furthermore, with large families it is often quite difficult to represent all its members within the confines of the written page as the whakapapa charts can easily become quite cluttered and cumbersome to manage.

With substantial investigations, a variety of these techniques may be used and adapted (e.g. Te Rito, 2007). For the purposes of the present paper, tararere is the technique used to present the broad over-arching whakapapa to show the main lineage from the distant past to the present day. The information has come from a variety of sources such as: personal, family, tribal texts, history books and the Native Land Court records of the late 1800s. Some of it has been constructed from descriptions by witnesses in the land court. In constructing this whakapapa, it was particularly gratifying to find some information about each and every one of my ancestors since Rongomaiwahine and Kahungunu, in order to complete a continuous genealogical narrative.

Whakapapa as a basis for historical study in Āotearoa (New Zealand)

In 1929 Sir Apirana Ngata presented a paper to the Wellington Branch of the Historical Association on genealogy and history. In his opening statement he writes:

> …research students should master [genealogy], if they value accuracy. Your syllabus comprises an investigation of archives, which…you will unconsciously confine to the written records of the discovery and settlement of these islands by Europeans (Ngata, 1929, p.1).

He is challenging the portrayal by 19th century historians that the history of this country started only with the arrival of the Europeans. The minute books of the Native Land Court are the best sources of information, according to Ngata, who adds that they contain:

> …the most diversified use of the genealogical method as illustrating the Māori customs relating not only to land tenure, but also to birth, marriage, death, war, peace-making, conquest, gifts, mana, chieftainship … and other aspects of pre-pakeha life of the Maori people.
>
> …The cross-check of tradition becomes weaker the farther back we penetrate, but the Maori records pass confidently across the sea to Tahiti, Tahaa, and Raiatea in the Society Group, there to be merged with those of their relatives and in turn traced into the mists of time (Ngata, 1929, p.10).

Making comparisons with European traditions brought to New Zealand, Ngata then writes, "One is reminded of examples from the old testament, where history and tradition fade into mythology" (Ngata, 1929, p.12).

Ngata notes that despite a common belief that Māori adhered strictly to the law of primogeniture i.e. that the eldest male child succeeded to chieftainship and to property; in his study of whakapapa charts and tribal histories there were many examples of younger siblings achieving chiefly status over their older siblings. One example is of Tūpurupuru, the youngest son of Rākaihikuroa (and grandson of Rongomaiwahine and Kahungunu) who was so much more successful than his four older brothers at various feats, that he became chief over them.

Ngata also notes the convention adopted by the Journal of Polynesian Society that the length of each generation be twenty-five years (Ngata, 1972). This is a useful tool for estimating when certain ancestors lived or certain events took place in the past. Of course it cannot be used for estimating time in the mythical period.

Whakapapa as a Māori view of reality

Ranginui Walker (1993, p. 1) writes of a "…sequence of myths, traditions, and tribal histories. They trace the genesis of human beings from the creation of the universe." According to Walker, 'myth' refers to the cosmogeny and the creation stories. He terms it myth because, like Christianity, it is unable to be corroborated by any hard evidence. Walker refers to 'traditions' as being the oral stories of mortal human beings after the time of the gods in the creation era and inclusive of the tribal migration stories to Aotearoa up until the arrival of the European colonisers. He terms the period since the post-colonisation era as 'history' as it marks the arrival of the written word and the recording of events in 'history' books, as compared to the stories being memorised and transmitted orally by our ancestors from generation to generation in pre-European times.

Transmission of whakapapa

Whakapapa was commonly recited by Canon Wī Te Tau Huata during whaikōrero (oratory) which he performed on marae throughout Ngāti Kahungunu and broader Aotearoa. For his fellow tribes-people, this public recital was one means of transmitting knowledge on to his peers and ensuing generations. For those of other tribes, it was an important means of reinforcing links that would help bind the various Māori tribes together.

Ballara makes the following observation in regard to the traditional method of maintaining whakapapa:

> Evidence exists that the most expert tohunga did have phenomenal memories…There is some evidence that genealogies were learned in metric patterns involving changes of pitch for each generation, similar to the intonation of waiata, in formalised patterns designed to aid the memory…Genealogies were often rendered at a speed and in a tone of voice designed to protect both the tapu information and the status of the tohunga. (Ballara, 1991, pp. 550-551)

If there is anything for which we can be grateful to the Native Land Court which was established in the 1860s, it was for the development of written whakapapa records. Referring to the writings of Joan Metge and Anne Salmond, Ballara writes that whakapapa became frozen once the Court was established. A particular effect was that those hapū that were in existence at the time of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in 1840 and the Native Land Court became the permanent hapū right through to the present day (Ballara, 1991, pp. 5-9). This was unlike the normal course of events in the history of Māori in which different chiefs and their authorities waxed and waned over time. As prominent chiefs died off, their successors would come to the fore and often their names would replace those of their predecessors, in some cases as hapū or even iwi names. Some hapū for instance would simple fade away and others would come into ascendancy. For Ōmāhu for example, two hapū we rarely hear mention of

nowadays are Ngāti Mahuika and Ngāti Honomōkai. Rather, we tend to hear common mention only of Ngāti Hinemanu and Ngāi Te Upokoiri.

Whakapapa, identity and survival

Despite the deliberate suppression of tohunga with the Tohunga Suppression Act 1907, it was fortunate that Māori people were quick to grasp 'te rākau ā te Pākehā' (the stick or tool of the Pākehā i.e. technology). This reference is attributed to Sir Apirana Ngata, who urged the Maori people to hold on to their culture for their emotional well-being; to embrace 'the stick of the `Pākehā) i.e. new technology for their physical well-being; and to acknowledge the spiritual creator for their spiritual well-being. In the 1800s, Maori people grasped the writing 'stick' (pen), and proceeded to write whakapapa down. Today, the new 'stick' is the computer. Meanwhile many whānau (extended families) still hold private family manuscripts of whakapapa dating back several generations.

Whakapapa has had a major part to play in the resilience of Māori and their ability to spring back up. It is to do with that sense of being essentially at one with nature and our environment, rather than at odds with it. As tangata whenua we are people of the land – who have grown out of the land, Papatūānuku, our Earth Mother. Having knowledge of whakapapa helps ground us to the earth. We have a sense of belonging here, a sense of purpose, a raison d'etre which extends beyond the sense of merely existing on this planet.

Whakapapa is firmly embedded in the Māori psyche. As Walker says: "…the whakapapa of a tribe is a comprehensible paradigm of reality, capable of being stored in the human mind and transmitted orally from one generation to the next" (Walker, 1993, p.16).

The suburban lifestyle can have a propensity to erode any connection to hapū or sense of belonging to a marae. If people in cities lose their whakapapa links with their traditional papakāinga (village, homestead) they can be left in suspension in the urban situation. The concept of kanohi kitea (being seen) or being in attendance at local marae or community gatherings) is as all-important now as ever it was.

Knowledge of and sense of identity are very important to Māori. There appears to be a consensus of opinion among Māori that is voiced on marae, and in Māori radio and television interviews with the likes of Māori Party co-leaders Tāriana Tūria and Dr. Pita Sharples, that the 'loss' of such identity and whakapapa connections by urban Māori has been a contributing factor to Māori being over-represented with regard to the ills of present society.

Māori renaissance through whakapapa

Despite the negative social statistics about Māori, there is a renaissance occurring in Māoridom. This is evidenced by a number of phenomena such as the growing awareness by Māori of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi); the growth of kohanga reo, kura kaupapa and wānanga (pre-school through to tertiary institutions in which the curricula are based on Māori language and culture); and the development of Māori radio and television broadcasting. Māori are increasingly connecting with their roots and with one another via their whakapapa.

Throughout the impacts and challenges arising from colonisation over the last two centuries, Māori have refused to lie down on the pillow of assimilation. Whakapapa and its innumerable networks to people past and present and to physical places like papakāinga have provided Māori with a life-line. Whakapapa provides links not only to other Māori but beyond, dating back hundreds of years to other parts of Polynesia. For Māori, Aotearoa (New Zealand) is central to existence, which is why Māori need to be proactive in maintaining their whakapapa

connections as modern life takes people away from their papakāinga.

With today's Treaty of Waitangi settlemfents processes, it has become a necessity for the respective tribal authorities seeking compensation from the Crown to prove that they have the mandate of their tribes to act on their behalf. To gain this mandate, these authorities are required to have their respective tribes formally register with them and to prove their membership by delineating their whakapapa links to the common ancestors from whom these tribal authorities derive their existence. This is one means of 'earthing' individuals and of strengthening their whakapapa connections.

Carter's thesis (2003) examines 'modern iwi governance systems and their effect on whakapapa as an organisational framework in Māori societies' (Carter, 2003, p.i). The study is based upon the traditional iwi Ngāi Tahu (aka Kai Tahu) and its modern tribal structure, Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu. Carter raises a legitimate concern and a cautionary note in regard to these modern tribal authorities, that traditional Māori hapū and iwi societies are in danger of disappearing and being replaced by a centralised legal-bureaucratic model of governance shaped by legislation (Carter, 2003, p.i).

The search for Māori origins

Walker tries to bridge the link between our cosmogenic origins and contemporary Māori of today in stating that "These ideas are embodied in the sequence of myths, traditions, and tribal histories. They trace the genesis of human beings from the creation of the universe" (Walker, 1993, p.1).

The present paper uses this paradigm as a broad framework to present the whakapapa of Ngāti Hinemanu. 'Myth' refers to the cosmogeny and the creation stories. While this term may appear to some people as trivialising these stories, Walker's comment is that these are no different from stories in the bible in that there is no hard evidence to corroborate them. 'Traditions' are the oral stories of mortal human beings after the time of the gods in the creation era and includes the migration stories to Aotearoa right through to the arrival of the European colonisers to this country. 'Tribal history' applies to the post-colonisation era and the arrival of the written word and the recording of Māori events in 'history' books when previously they were memorised and transmitted orally from generation to generation.

As the initiator and current end-point of this investigation of whakapapa, I sought the assistance of my aunt Waipā Te Rito who is the whakapapa expert in our whānau. She provided a whakapapa that emanated from within the Te Māhia-Nūhaka area from Kemureti Pani, a kaumātua who was highly regarded for his oratory skills and knowledge of whakapapa. Kemureti was a peer of the likes of Paora Whaanga and Willie Walker – all highly respected whakapapa experts in the local area. This particular whakapapa has been the one that Waipā used in the Rongomaiwahine fisheries claims to the Waitangi Tribunal.

This whakapapa commences with Papatūānuku and passes on down to Rongomaiwahine by way of a Kurahaupō (canoe) lineage. In this sense, this whakapapa was 'indigenous' to Te Māhia and for my case, became more appropriate than the Kahungunu lineage shown by Michell which describes the migratory voyage of the Tākitimu canoe (1944). While our whānau proclaims membership of both iwi, Rongomaiwahine and Ngāti Kahungunu, Rongomaiwahine has been chosen as the more appropriate point of reference in this instance.

Walker's theoretical framework has lent itself well to the exercise and can be seen on the left side of the whakapapa chart in Table 1. The whakapapa emphasised here is of a single vertical lineage of key ancestors via Rongomaiwahine. This choice of lineage is only one of an exponential number of such lineages going back to mystical beginnings. It becomes a matter of deciding which seems to be the most appropriate pathway of ancestral names to track.

In planning the exercise, it became evident that the further one goes back up the lineage, the more generic, or 'accessible' the ancestors become. Relatively recent census data show there to be 51,552 people identifying themselves as Ngāti Kahungunu in 2001 (Statistics New Zealand, 2001). This reflects the number of people from the modern-day tribe who are able to trace a lineage back to Kahungunu (the patriarch) and to Rongomaiwahine (the matriarch).

As we progress down the layers of whakapapa, the breadth of membership diminishes from generation to generation. For example, there would be exponentially fewer people able to claim descent from Hinemanu than from Kahungunu or Rongomaiwahine. A few generations down the whakapapa chart again, the number diminishes even more, generation by generation. For example, on reaching my grandmother Murirangawhenua, the only people who could claim a lineage would be her 13 children; their children in turn (i.e. her 45 grandchildren); their children in turn (i.e. her great-grand-children); and their children in turn (i.e. her great-great-grandchildren) who are the current generation of babies.

As time moves on, new generations will continue to be born into this world. The whakapapa matrix expands exponentially from generation to generation and the potential group membership proliferates. This is more so now than ever before. Māori have a very high birth rate and a very youthful population. Demographic forecasts state that the Māori population is growing rapidly. Census 2001 data shows that 24.3% of the general population were less than 15 years of age; and 13.4% over 65 years of age (Statistics New Zealand, 2001). A household survey conducted in Ōmāhu in 2005 revealed that some 38% of the population were children of high school age and younger, while only 0.05% were aged over 65 years of age (Te Rito, 2007, pp. 220-222). We have an extremely youthful population and very few elders left to guide us. At this rate of growth our hapū numbers are swelling rapidly.

The outline of the whakapapa narrative is presented in Table 1. The 'mythical' and 'traditional' sections have come from an oral source. It is more than likely that the whakapapa did not come from any formal publication but more so from handwritten manuscripts. Perhaps the informant, Kēmureti Pani had a family whakapapa book and memorised the list of names. Alternatively, he could have learned it in the traditional manner by rote from his elders.

As stated earlier, this whakapapa is told from a perspective that is indigenous to Te Māhia. It is the whakapapa to, and from Rongomaiwahine. It does not focus on her first marriage which was to Tamatakutai, however. Rather it focuses on her second marriage, which was to Kahungunu who is the more famous of the two husbands as he has a whole tribe named after him. The couple's oldest child Kahukuranui is represented at Ōmāhu in the form of the large wharepuni (meeting-house) which stands there today. It seems that there were a number of successive whare (houses) in the Heretaunga plains and environs which bore this name Kahukuranui. Ngāti Hinemanu and the papakāinga of Ōmāhu are located in the boundaries of what has become known as the Ngāti Kahungunu region, a large tribe covering much of the broader Hawke's Bay region. The fame and standing of the man Kahungunu was enhanced in this eastern seaboard region by his marrying the indigenous Rongomaiwahine of Te Māhia.

By appending our own localised whakapapa for the Ōmāhu area to that of the kaumātua, Kemureti Pani we end up with a 47-generation long whakapapa. In filling out the narrative of this whakapapa no attempt is made to do so for the 'mythical' and much of the 'traditional' period because of the dearth of comprehensive information. As a result, the narrative has been constructed downwards from Rongomaiwahine and Kahungunu in Te Māhia who are placed as the source point on an equal footing, as a couple in love.

The latter stages of the whakapapa are formed from a variety of sources; such as from existing charts in tribal and historical texts, and from descriptions by witnesses in the Native Land Court. At times, the data were conflicting and confusing with differing spouse and sibling sequences. Other complications arose, like the repetition of names in later generations, and

the impact of multiple marriages. Whakapapa charts are very useful tools for presenting genealogy but they have their limitations when it comes to displaying multiple marriages, multiple offspring and the potential multiplicity of relationships.

Table 1. He Tararere: A Ngāti Hinemanu Whakapapa from Papatūānuku

MYTH		**Papatūānuku**
		Te Pō
		Te Ao
		Te Pō Tupu
		Te Pō Rea
		Te Pō Marutima
		Te Uruehu
		Tonga
		Hahanui
		Irakamaroa
		Mahuika
		Te Kaukaunui
		Te Kaukauroa
		Io Whenua
		Te Ao Mātinitini
		Tangaroa i te Rūpetu
		Māui Tikitiki ā Taranga
		Te Wharekura
		Uhengaia
		Kuramoetai
		Poutama
		Whiro te Tipua
		Whitiwhiti Rangimaomao
TRADITION		**Kupe**
		Haunui ā Aparangi
		Popoto
		Tamawhetūrere
		Rotupatu
		Te Atihau
		Te Awhirau
		Rapa
	PERIOD I **Tamatakutai (1) =**	**Rongomaiwahine = Kahungunu (2)**
		Kahukuranui
		Rākaihikuroa
		Taraia 1st
		Te Rangitaumaha
		Taraia-ruawhare (alias Taraia 2nd)
	PERIOD II	**Hinemanu**
		Tarahē
		Tūterangi
		Peke
	PERIOD III	**Rāmeka**
HISTORY		**Hīraka**
		Tūtewake
		Murirangawhenua
		Aramata
		Joseph

Transformation over the 47-generation whakapapa

The 47-generation whakapapa begins with Papatūānuku and ends with the author. In the detailed narrative (Te Rito, 2007) there has been an attempt to unbury memories of each successive layer of generation. Most mātua-tīpuna (forebears) on the list have a whole life of memories that have been buried. Knowledge of the ancestors from the upper levels of the chart since Rongomaiwahine and Kahungunu is reasonably available and accessible in other texts. However, information about ancestors from the nine generations since the eponymous ancestress Hinemanu has been very sparse. The Native Land Court records of the Ōmāhu Block were fascinating to study – especially the time period just prior to, and just after the ancestor Rāmeka. This was the period of first British settler contact and was followed by the musket wars, major population displacement and upheaval, and prolonged land court hearings.

Table 1 is a chart that has applied the Ngata model of tararere; that is, a single line of descent without showing marriages or other kin on the line (with the exception of lateral connections for the two husbands of Rongomaiwahine). This model is useful in providing a broad and simple overview; otherwise the chart would become too complex. Within that span of 400 plus years (16 generations), calculated on 25 years per generation, the groupings are under periods I, II and III. Each period is respectively headed by Rongomaiwahine, Hinemanu and Rāmeka. Walker's framework of myth, tradition and history is shown on the far left of the chart extending over the 47 generations, thus providing the broad theoretical framework.

The substance of the full genealogical narrative dealing with the 16 generations from Rongomaiwahine and Kahungunu and the details of marriages, siblings and other relationships is very extensive (Te Rito, 2007, pp. 53-118) and beyond the scope of this paper. However, in describing the major features and approaches, the nature of the research techniques, the methodologies and the general outcomes are illustrated.

Summary and conclusions

Given the extent of the detail encompassed in the full narrative, the task of summarising the periods I – III was most challenging. However, it was also fruitful in that it required identifying the major themes and developments illustrated in the underlying stories.

In the beginning, the high chieftainess Rongomaiwahine who descended from the Kurahaupō canoe was courted at her home in Te Māhia by Kahungunu who was descended from the Tākitimu canoe and was born in Kaitāia, Northland (Mitchell, 1944). The whakapapa flows down through their oldest child Kahukuranui and his offspring, who migrated down from Tūranga (Gisborne) via Te Māhia to Heretaunga (Hastings district). From Kahukuranui descended Rākaihikuroa, from whom descended Taraia 1st, from whom descended Rangitaumaha, and from whom descended Taraia-ruawhare. It is through the marriage of Taraia-Ruawhare to Punākiao of Ngāti Māmoe and Wanganui descent, that our eponymous ancestress Hinemanu came into being, hence the hapū Ngāti Hinemanu. One branch of Ngāti Hinemanu remains in the Taihape area today but they are outside the scope of this investigation. The genealogical narrative then leads on to the subsequent generations since Hinemanu, fusing into the 'historical' period that commenced with the written word after the arrival of the Pākehā. The narrative continues down to the newly proclaimed hapū, Ngāti Rāmeka which is comprised of the descendents of Rāmeka who was born in the early 1800s. The narrative concludes in the contemporary context with stories of the author's Ngāti Hinemanu grandmother Murirangawhenua, her daughter Aramata and respectively her son, the author.

In the full study (Te Rito, 2007) the narrative contains transcriptions and/or translations of the words of these women and these are followed by the author's own stories of life as a child in

Te Māhia under the care of his grand-parents who had a large family. The narrative moves on to their migration to Ōmāhu in the late 1950s and of life there since then to the present.

It may be concluded that although the present approach may be seen to be self-indulgent, the fact remains that to create a continuous line of narrative stretching from the ancestors some 400 years ago down to today has been highly exciting, extremely relevant and an immensely empowering exercise. For the author, it has helped ground myself firmly in place and time. It connects me to my past and to my present. Such outcomes certainly confirm identity and a deep sense of 'being'. The study and whakapapa is also of great relevance to my own whānau, to my hapū of Ngāti Hinemanu, and to my community of Ōmāhu. Thus, as a researcher who is also an 'insider' (Kahotea, 2006; Smith, 1999) I have been privileged to study and utilise the whakapapa technique to investigate aspects of deep traditional knowledge and to use it as a framework for further understanding.

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Joseph Te Rito (Rongomaiwahine, Ngāti Kahungunu) is a former Dean of the Faculty of Māori Studies at the Eastern Institute of Technology (EIT) Hawke's Bay. Dr Te Rito is currently Chair of Radio Kahungunu, Chair of the Ōmāhu Māori Committee of Ōmāhu Marae and is also Programme Leader for the Knowledge Exchange Programme of Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga (Centre of Research Excellence) based at The University of Auckland.

E-mail: j.terito@auckland.ac.nz