Revitalizing Te Ika-a-Maui

MĀORI MIGRATION AND THE NATION

MĀUI-TIKITIKI-A-TARANGA is more than simply a ‘mythic’ hero. For many he is a prominent figure in a long family line. The whakapapa that binds Māori to our tupuna is significant to the present and future, and carries with it the ‘ultimate expression’ of who we are. Māui has been described as ‘the most important culture hero in Māori mythology’, whose exploits and archetype provide precedents that Māori respond to in the present. The status of Māui within my own tribal boundaries is clear: ‘In accordance with the traditions and tikanga of Ngati Porou, we as People of this Land have been here since the beginning of time, or more aptly in the context of Aotearoa, since Māui fished up Te Ika-a-Maui (North Island). Māui-Tikitiki-a-Taranga is attributed with fishing up the North Island, raising it out of the depths of the sea, for successive generations of Māori to populate and cultivate.’ Māui’s waka, as Ngāti Porou uphold, is Nukutaimemeha, believed to be ‘cradled’ upon our ancestral mountain Hikurangi. However, there are other stories that recognize the waka as the South Island, with Stewart Island its anchor. These variations aside, the history remains a well-rehearsed one throughout the Māori world and in other parts of Polynesia.

The details of Māui’s famous fishing expedition have been subject to close scrutiny, predominantly by Pākehā writers. The story itself has long been relegated to the realms of myth, often retold as a quirky tale of ‘pre-history’ rather than a viable account of the country’s origins. For Māori the reduction of our history to a pre-historical period inaccurately suggests that the real history of this ‘nation’ began only with the arrival of Pākehā. Such a view of ‘history’ has been criticized by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, who has condemned the privileging of ‘western knowledge’, which in turn denies ‘the validity for Māori of Māori knowledge’. Despite the unease with which some scholars consider the Māui story, Michael King has suggested that ‘the climax of Māui’s expedition is a poetic evocation of the upthrusting, down-thrusting, volcanism, glaciations and erosion which sculpted New Zealand’s modern land forms’. James Belich has noted that ‘Europeans were surprised at how well this [Māui story] accorded with the size and the shape of the three islands. Like other evidence it suggests that Māori had a good understanding of the topography of their country at an early stage.’ The significance of oral tradition as more than merely myth has been noted by a number of scholars who assert the need for researchers to consider not only their viability as historical documents but also the deeper insights they reveal about people, their cultural practices and epistemological frameworks. Nevertheless, in the writing of New Zealand as a ‘nation’, Māori perspectives and mātauranga have rarely been central to the narrative. Instead they have remained appendages, or are simply not included at all. How then could Māori accept this version of the nation and by
default this version of their own history, a history about themselves, not told by themselves, nor inclusive of their perspectives or comprehension. Indeed, what is the nation to Māori?

Speaking in 1852 of ‘The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro’, Fredrick Douglass declared the day’s celebration of ‘national greatness’ a ‘sham, fraud, and deception’. The American dream, he emphasized, was a nightmare for the African American, one in which his own people remained slaves, while American nationalists boasted of liberty, independence and equality. ‘The hypocrisy of the nation’, he wrote, ‘must be exposed’, its conscience ‘roused’. Although Douglass’s words might seem far removed from early twenty-first century Aotearoa/New Zealand, similar accusations could be made about the idea of nation and what it means to us here, today. For some of us the story of our nation parallels much of the same ‘imaginings’ that Frederick Douglass criticized and denounced. For Māori, the nation, rather than being a Frontier of Dreams, continues to be a site of oppression and marginalization, where our pasts are often relegated to peripheral sub-plots of the dominant national narrative, or, even worse, appropriated altogether beyond our recognition and grasp.

Māori scholars have been forceful in making this point. Tipene O’Regan has asserted that ‘the past belongs to all New Zealanders, but first it is ours’. Moana Jackson has implored Māori to revitalize our identities and histories by first reclaiming the truth of who we are, our histories and who we want to become. These views reflect the underlying tenets of a Kaupapa Māori approach, which in various ways seeks to not only re-centre Māori knowledge, and in the process reclaim our history, but also to ‘rouse’ a sense of consciousness amongst the scholars and peoples with whom we share a common past and present. Recently, Aroha Harris has urged Māori historians to write more of our histories, bigger and broader histories that might be added to a lonely Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou. Such histories would tell our stories of the nation, and in the process move beyond simply revisionist histories and postcolonial afterthoughts to re-centre the ‘nation’ through our forms of expression and within our worldviews. This essay aims to provoke more thought about the way histories of the nation and migration might be conceptualized and produced in Aotearoa/New Zealand. It seeks to problematize the ‘nation’ as a site of power imbalance, where Māori histories tend to be reduced to myths and pre-history as decoration to the central story. It is more a think piece than an attempt to dissolve all the problems, and pursues one potential avenue for revitalization and transformation that breathes life into one of our oldest stories, Te Ika-a-Mauī.

Beneath the many nation-building narratives that now dominate its landscape, the history of Te Ika-a-Mauī has remained dormant, subordinated within a narrative of the nation that occasionally wheels it out as a romantic tale of New Zealand’s primitive and uncivilized past. Its boundaries have been re-‘marked’, named and claimed, as it were, not only by nineteenth-century surveyors, but in the present by those who continue to subsume it within the progressive story of New Zealand. One might ask, what has happened to Te Ika-a-Mauī in the writing of the nation? Where has it gone? For Māori,
the question remains: whose ‘nation’ are we writing about, and how can we revitalize our histories, language, stories and identities within these oppressive narratives?

Revitalizing Te Ika-a-Maui is not just a matter of re-inventing it within an alternative space, as a secondary option to an already well-entrenched mainstream history. Rather, there is a need to infiltrate and subvert the existing structures and dominant narratives that have constructed the margins to begin with. Furthermore, although Te Ika-a-Maui is one possibility, it is only one in a complex array of interwoven ideas and understandings specific to mātauranga Māori, or mātauranga-a-iwi. In other words, there are many different possibilities that could be considered. Mātauranga Māori in this sense is not a static or ‘fixed’ framework, but is constantly shifting as iwi, hapū and Māori negotiate simultaneously their past, present and future identities. In this way, revitalizing Te Ika-a-Maui is perhaps more about reconfiguring the nation than it is about reclaiming it. As one Māori writer has argued, ‘if you know the place names of your district and their origins you will be able to avoid making statements about New Zealand’s past which insult the country’s first settlers or sets aside centuries of our history’. Giselle Byrnes writes that ‘names inscribed on the land by the early surveyors were deliberate and provocative statements of power; they were assertions of presence and signifiers of occupation’. Similarly, narratives of the ‘nation’ have also worked to restate these notions of power and presence, by explicitly parading the epic and romantic narrative of settlement and progress as the overarching story of New Zealand, while implicitly marginalizing, or silencing, the histories of the tangata whenua in relation to it. Those producing these ‘discursive constructions’ are not just academics interested in the forging of a paradise, or the search for a New Zealand identity, but, perhaps more worryingly, they are the architects of national policy, law makers, and those whose words and visions structure our school curriculum and thus influence the minds of future generations. Although there is a growing body of historical scholarship in Aotearoa that challenges these dominant narratives, such as the recently published Disputed Histories (2006) and Asia in the Making of New Zealand (2006), they, like Māori histories, remain on the margins, alternative sub-plots to a central theme that continues to claim our collective histories and identities. For Māori, trying to breathe life into these claimed spaces in our writing of the nation fails to illuminate a much deeper history obscured within the conventional story of New Zealand. At the interface between migration histories and writing the nation, the story of Te Ika-a-Maui has the potential to transform our understandings of the past. It offers a layer of narrative within which historical episodes such as that of urbanization might be reconfigured and re-written.

Māori had no straightforward equivalent of ‘nation’ prior to the arrival of tāuiwi, but this does not mean that Māori were unaware of their collective communities, nor does it mean that they should be excluded from defining its boundaries now. Indeed, nations, as Benedict Anderson contends, are imagined communities. However, in the New Zealand context, the nation has rarely been imagined beyond the dominant colonial model, which focuses on the narrative of becoming New Zealanders. Māori may not have had the
same understanding of ‘nation’ as Europeans, but Māori still imagined a nation in many ways. The story of Maui and other explorers laid claim to the land and situated Māori within its parameters, not simply as tribal occupants, but also as descendants of a shared ancestry. This ancestral relationship enabled connections beyond just physical or geographical borders. They shared spiritual understandings of the earth, sky, ocean, stars and other natural elements. Their politics, language and tikanga, despite some variations between iwi, allowed for interaction across tribal, hapū and familial boundaries, and facilitated exchanges both positive and negative on varying collective planes of identity. Nevertheless, the understandings of what constituted each tribal identity, and the rules which underpinned their inter-relations, did not parallel Pākehā interpretations of the ‘nation’. For Māori, the conception of themselves as sharing epistemological frameworks altered with the arrival of a group whose belief system highlighted significant differences in their own. It was the arrival of Pākehā, who seemed so peculiar in their understandings of the world, that provoked the emergence of the term Māori, denoting the ordinary and normal, in contrast to the strange and foreign newcomers. These newcomers brought with them not only firmly entrenched and established identities, but also the desire to construct a new one, a New Zealand one, at the expense of the natives. This encounter, although highly significant in the development of a Māori identity, and of course in the story of New Zealand nationalism, did not wash away the collective consciousness that existed prior to colonization. Indeed, before Pākehā, Te Ao Tawhito was the whole universe. There was a deep sense of collectivity, where shared origins, understandings, values, language and whakapapa, wove people together. Pākehā encounters changed and heightened it in new ways, but an imagined community existed prior to the arrival of Pākehā, albeit within Māori paradigms and boundaries that at once connected them as people, while simultaneously illuminating their intersected localities as iwi and hapū.  

The growth of nationalism and New Zealand identity was not an instantaneous or swift phenomenon, but meandered rather slowly through the nineteenth century. Although the Treaty of Waitangi was signed by both Māori and Pākehā, that partnership did not extend to a shared development of the ‘nation’. Indeed, up until the 1940s, the Māori, as Keith Sinclair argued, were never really at the forefront of Pakeha thinking in the construction of the nation. They were part of a ‘peripheral majority’ whose culture was appropriated to provide ‘national symbols’. Māori were a people targeted for assimilation. Sinclair wrote that although settlers ‘wanted the Maoris to feel part of the nation … . the Maoris were still peripheral to Pakeha society’, and not ‘central to Pakeha thinking about their own national identity.’ Māori involvement in World War I and World War II may have been described by some as a ‘Price of Citizenship’, but as Sinclair noted, Māori politicians ‘seem to have stopped short … of saying that Maori and Pakeha were one people’. Beyond the mid-twentieth century, attitudes towards Māori involvement and participation in the nation changed dramatically on both sides. However, for Māori, the need to remain distinctive and identifiable as the country’s indigenous peoples continued despite varied opinions about the need to assimilate into the Pākehā way of life, language and
world. Tribal identities, too, remained strong in most places, while movements such as the Kingitanga, Ratana and Mana Motuhake highlighted attempts by Māori to retain their tinorangatiratanga, and in the process resist the subsuming nature of the nation. Post-war Māori urbanization has become an accepted and ‘normalized’ chapter in the story of the developing ‘nation’. However, it is more than just a story of Māori migrating to the cities. Indeed, it is a story about power and control, one that has served to enable the underlying narrative of the ‘nation’. How could it be that Māori became ‘strangers in their own country’ as one 1960s documentary suggested? The perspective is one that seems relatively unchallenged by historians. Māori were not at ease with many of the cultural, political and social frameworks which operated in an urban setting, but were they strangers to their own whenua? Has this perception of ‘homelessness’ and dislocation been over-emphasized? Perhaps if Māori were to rewrite the ‘nation’ then urbanization might no longer be the simple story it has become. As Miranda Johnson has argued, ‘the evidence suggests that New Zealandness has continued to be imagined within a Pākehā frame of reference’. The story of Māori urbanization in the way it is usually told might well be one of the more powerful supporting features of that non-Māori structure. Damon Salesa has argued that ‘before they were immigrants, Samoans were people and they shaped and inherited many histories … . Samoa itself reaches back long before the packing of bags or the saving of fares.’ Similarly, before Māori became urban migrants, they had a long association and history with the whenua; before the ‘nation’ and New Zealandness, Aotearoa had a name, identity and story. Te Whanga-nui-a-Tara and Tamaki Makaurau were not empty and unsettled spaces to Māori. They were, for some, a turangawaeae, for others parts of Te Ika, but known sites to Māori in various ways. Likewise, Te Upoko-o-te-Ika (the head of the fish) was not a foreign or strange space, but an extension for many Māori of their ‘homeland’, mana whenua, a place traversed, named, settled and defended by their tupuna, by other iwi connections from many lines.

For iwi ‘migrants’ from beyond the Wellington area who came to Te Upoko-o-te-Ika, features of its history and landscape spoke more to their place as insiders than as strangers. What Pākehā called the Hutt River was known by many as ‘Heretaunga’, a name given in connection to the Heretaunga known within Kahungunu territory. Those urban migrants affiliated with Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Mamoe, Ngāti Ira, Ngāti Kura, Ngāti Kahungunu and other iwi, also had connections to the Wellington region, particularly Ngāti Toa, Raukawa and even Ngāti Porou. The hills to the north of Pito-one (now Petone) were known as Te Raho-o-te-Kapowai, an ancestor of Ngāti Kahungunu and Ngāti Porou. These names and histories acted ‘as survey pegs of memory’; the traditions always present and available were never lost, merely obscured by the concrete waves of colonization that washed over them in the intervening years. Māori who ‘drifted’ to Wellington knew it not only as Poneke, but also as Te Whanga-nui-a-Tara and Te Upoko-o-te-Ika. Meanwhile, local iwi such as Te Ati Awa and Ngāti Toa were able to survive by maintaining their presence in adjacent places such as Waiwhetu, Takapuwahia and Hongoeka Bay but struggled to be Māori in the city itself. Paul Potiki wrote that ‘for a long time
there was no place in the city where Māori could be simply Māori’, yet these

groups endured despite the tide of change and the increasing perception that
Māori were more a rural people.40

In this sense, urban environments were, and are still, colonial sites built
on the bones and warmth of earlier Māori histories and settlements. More
disturbing, though, is the continued historical emphasis regarding the rural and
urban divide, which overstates a disconnection between Māori and the whenua
they already knew. This sense of ‘dislocation’ and ‘strangeness’ attributed to
Māori who moved from their rural settings was, as Joan Metge described it, a
matter of ‘lifestyle’, one in which ‘the city was synonymous with a Pākehā way
of life’, where individuality and materialism became the central ingredients of
difference to the communal and whānau centered on tikanga of rural Māori.41
The emphasis on these differences, together with the many stories of isolation
and loneliness amongst urban Māori migrants, contributes to an overarching
myth about disconnectedness, not simply from the rural kainga, but also from
the traditionally known spaces to which Māori moved. Revitalizing Te Ika-a-
Maui is about revitalizing those spaces, not simply from a Māori perspective
but also within the dominant narrative of urbanization itself. The urban centres
to which Māori moved were not ‘lightly trodden’, as one commentator has
argued, nor was the Māori ‘impact on the face of the land’ as ‘negligible’ as
some have presumed.42 Indeed, the extent to which Māori have been deemed
strangers in their own land, and urban migrants in a country they had already
settled, is a chapter in the history of the ‘nation’ that must be revisited.43

Like Wellington, Auckland was also an area rich with Māori and iwi
histories. Tamaki Makaurau was one of the busiest highways in Māori history,
a cluster of sites well known prior to, and beyond, the arrival of Europeans.44
Those tribes that eventually came to rest their mana whenua there were not
isolated from other iwi groups, but rather shared strong whakapapa connections,
histories of trade and war, tradition and tikanga. Among those who continued
particularly strong associations with Tamaki Makaurau have been Waikato/
Tainui descendants, and others such as Te Arawa, Tuhoe and iwi as far away
as the East Coast have also preserved historical connections. As in other parts
of the whenua, the story of Maui was also known and recited in the Tamaki
area: ‘This land of Aotearoa was a thing fished up by Maui and this island is
te ika roa a Maui, the long fish of Maui. The custodian of the fish was Kui and
his people Ngāti Kui grew up on Maui’s fish. They dwelt here for many years
then another people migrated here from beyond the deep …. For forty-six
generations of the Māori they have been dwelling in Te Ika-a-Maui.’45 This
account, told by Wiripo Potene to George Graham, is not an uncommon one.
The history of Maui, along with other explorers and forefathers such as Kupe
and Tara, is entrenched within many tribal regions. They at once lay claim
to not only specific localities, but map and make connections to other areas
within which tribal groups were not simply known, but could be connected to
in various ways, particularly via whakapapa.

For Ngāti Porou who moved south to work in the freezing works and
shearing sheds, the whenua was also a known site in their tribal histories. Their
connection to Tahu, the younger brother of Porourangi, was, and still is, a well-
known part of the tribal whakapapa, remembered in the tribal histories of both Ngāti Porou and Ngāi Tahu. Like their Ngāti Porou whānaunga, Ngāi Tahu also know Maui. Some believe Maui explored Te Waipounamu aboard the waka Mahānui, and named many features in the landscape during his travels. Bill Dacker noted that the Ngāi Tahu people ‘moved throughout Te Waipounamu’ with an intimate and detailed knowledge of the land that was part of a ‘memory system in which religious beliefs, history, and geography were combined’. They were not isolated from other tribes, and they knew well their connections and histories. Among those to share these connections are the descendants of the Takitimu waka, whose illustrious tipuna Tamatea Arikinui is said to have ‘passed through Te Waipounamu’ on the way to where the waka now rests.

The connections between tribes is a vitally important thread in Māori and iwi histories that is too often overlooked within the national story. Perhaps more important still is the deeper issue regarding home, and the practice of ahi ka, in not only keeping the home fires burning but in so doing ‘keeping their rights to those places warm by continual use’. In Ngāti Porou, those who keep the home fires burning ‘look after the lands, the marae, our tikanga, taonga and reo’, while those who have travelled and migrated might be known as ‘Ngati Porou kei te whenua: the many Ngati Porou people who reside outside of the tribal lands, seeking to make their way in the world, in search of “ngā rakau a te Pākehā hei oranga mo to ratou tinana”’. Just as iwi retain strongly the right to maintain their own local mana whenua through ahi ka, Māori in general might look more carefully at the need to relight those fires that once illuminated our indigenous status in what are now urban centres. The reclamation of these sites within the national story means that Māori can never be strangers in their own land, but instead are travellers in their own communities. It could be argued that the customary accounts of the urbanization process have served to create borders that were not our own. As Rosalind McClean has written, the nation ‘as social or political construct inscribes many of the borders that migrants cross, but the relevance of such borders always depends on historical specificities’. For Māori this urbanization story, as it sits within the national narrative, constructs boundaries that essentially removed Māori from their own mana whenua. New Zealand historians might consider closely the absurdity of framing accounts of the Māori urban experience within a narrative that was never our own but which has been thrust upon us. The challenge for Māori scholars is to ensure that the renderings of Māori migrants’ encounters is with the urban environment embrace our deeper historical roots.

In shifting from the safety of their rural settings, Māori, as Megan Wood has noted, ‘radically disrupted the interior frontiers of the colonial nation’. This highlights the need to understand urbanization not as a single phenomenon, but as a wider array of experiences and understandings. A large number of Māori were lonely and isolated in the cities, yet they were not necessarily detached from the whenua or their own tribal mātauranga. They may not have been familiar or comfortable with the social differences and concrete urban environment but they understood in a deeper sense that the whenua and history beneath those structures were inextricably connected to their status as tangata whenua. In Auckland, Māori had long been the tangata whenua, rather
than simply the urban migrants. Ngāti Whatua, as David Simmons argued, came to prominence in the area from about 1780, yet even before this the names of Tamaki Makaurau, Maungahau and Maungakiekie were inscribed in the landscape. The isthmus itself was one of the most traversed sites in Māori history, featuring the histories of iwi as far as the East Coast, Tuhoe, Taranaki and of course Waikato and Ngāti Maniapoto. Whakapapa details the strong connections between iwi, and the familiarity with which the area was known. Māori who moved to urban centres such as Auckland were not always automatically out of touch with their communities. As Metge noted, they often ‘strove to keep in touch’ with home and carried the values of home with them wherever they went. In reflecting on the life of Letty Brown, Aroha Harris wrote that ‘no matter how alien life had been, Letty was no youngster cast adrift in a foreign land. Rather, she lived deliberately, remaining firmly centred by and committed to the values of home.’ Although Letty and others like her retained that connection with Māori and iwi values, there were many who lost, and in some cases deliberately turned away from, the language, history, customs and values. Waerete Norman recalled how the shift to Auckland resulted in the loss of reo for two of her younger brothers. At that time, she noted, ‘one of my father’s brothers upheld the then kaupapa of speaking only in English — it was a conscious decision he made so that his children would be educated and competent in the ways of the Pākehā’. This attitude was common across a range of Māori urban and even rural experiences, and varied between a complete break with the Māori world and a concentration on perceived needs such as competency in the English language.

It is important to recognize that despite the long history that Māori have with the whenua, isolation and feelings of loneliness were very real for Māori urban migrants. Hana O’Regan wrote that ‘the new generation of Māori who migrated to the cities, seeking employment and economic well being, became isolated from traditional networks and supports and found themselves thrust into a world inhospitable to Māori values and beliefs’. This ‘isolation’, as I have noted above, was in some cases deliberate and conscious, while in most instances symptomatic of urban environments and development that had renamed, claimed and effectively pushed Māori from what had become town centres into the nearby suburban and rural areas. The disconnection that Māori felt and endured was not simply a matter of location but was enhanced by deeper ideological, cultural and spiritual ‘borders’ that amplified the Pākehā setting. The old names were not gone but muffled under a cacophony of colonial sounds and images that served to overshadow the deeper histories and familiarities. This is not to say that Māori may have still viewed these places as ‘home’. Indeed, home remained, for many, the marae, the mountain, rivers and peoples of their birth and childhood. However, the turangawaewae that connected them more consciously to those areas, although not absent for Māori in the city, was not as obvious as it may have once been.

Over time, Māori adjusted to city life, and while doing so they have been able to reconnect to those elements that re-inscribe their earlier histories and connections in the urban areas. This adjustment, as Aroha Harris has stated, required ‘community development — a Māori sense of belonging and
connectedness that simultaneously drew on the cultural imperatives of the tribe and transcended tribal boundaries'. The turangawaewae that connected people back to their iwi roots could also be re-established by tribal connection to those whose mana whenua had been stifled in the city. This is not to say that iwi from beyond the urban spaces could claim the same mana whenua as local iwi, but they could, at another level, connect through whakapapa and deeper collective histories in and beyond both iwi regions. This fluid movement between identities is important to consider in this context, and highlights the fact that Māori may have been tribal migrants, but they were always Māori beyond that. Writing of the views of his mother as an urban migrant, Apirana Taylor noted that ‘mum thought of herself, firstly, as Ngāti Porou. Secondly, she thought of herself as Māori, and she probably thought of herself as a New Zealander as a poor third’. The initial isolation felt by Māori urban migrants certainly reflected a familial and tribal disconnection, yet at the same time was inextricably linked with and understood as what it meant to be Māori as well. The two identities, although interconnected, have different borders; the tribal identity was at once at home within its regional boundaries, while the Māori identity was able to extend more freely to accommodate multiple sites.

The need to rethink migration in Māori and iwi terms is vital to understanding how the urban story might be retold and reclaimed. Whether Māori were a diasporic group is a question that potentially impacts on who we think we were, and who we are now, particularly in relation to the national narrative. James Clifford wrote that ‘Diasporas are caught up with and defined against (1) the norm of nation states and (2) indigenous and especially autochthonous claims by tribal peoples’. He contended that ‘tribal cultures are not diasporas; their sense of rootedness in the land is precisely what diasporic peoples have lost’. For those who moved away from their tribal homes to settle in the city, their sense of ‘rootedness to the land’ was retained through the fact that they could identify together as Māori and not just as iwi peoples. This, as I have emphasized above, was enabled by a rich history and whakapapa shared across tribal locations. The stories of Maui, Kupe and Tara, along with deeper origin histories about Papatuanuku and Tane, reinforce within mātauranga Māori these ideas of home and place. Although sometimes regarded as fairy tales or the overactive and romantic imaginings of Māori, they are nonetheless central stories handed down through generations. The revitalization of the stories depends not on how they stand up as critical scrutiny as to their veracity, but how they might be understood beyond those confines. Clifford noted that ‘resistance to assimilation can take the form of reclaiming a nation that has been lost, elsewhere in space and time’. In this way the imaginings of the ‘nation’, from a Māori perspective, are simultaneously resistant to the colonial model and inclusive of all those things that have been brushed aside and neglected in the process, such as our ways of knowing and being, our stories, language, desires and aspirations. Thus, Māori could not conceive of themselves as migrants in the same way that other migrants in New Zealand might. Yes, we moved around the country and from rural to urban areas (and in many instances rural to rural), but we did so as indigenous peoples, as tangata whenua, and not as homeless or disconnected agents.
Although the concept is much different from the diasporic model, transnationalism too is a term that Māori might take some issue with. Because the nation itself is a problematic construction for Māori, the issue of how research on ‘transnationalism’ might add to those tensions is a major concern. This is not to say that there is no ‘nation’ or that there is no story to be told by migrants who believe they have encountered one. Rather, as I have been suggesting, the story must be re-told with more attention for the continuing colonial issues that set the backdrop for new encounters. In other words, for scholars of migration who explore and tell stories of settlement in New Zealand there is a need to contemplate the already contentious problem of the nation, particularly for indigenous peoples. Those who fail to do so run the risk of adding to the colonial legacy. There are deeper histories that are at stake within the stories they tell of movement, settlement or transnationalism. These deeper histories are not simply Māori stories; they are the stories of other marginalized groups and of Pākehā themselves, whose narratives are inextricably connected to the tangata whenua, and who cannot claim their New Zealandness without first understanding that colonialism is not behind us.

There is a common saying amongst Māori that we are always ‘putting the past before us’. More than ever we need to reconsider our histories in the present, particularly when our past has so readily been manufactured for us by others. The nation is not only about the past; importantly, it is about the present and the future. It tells us where we have come from, who we think we have been, and — even if implicitly — where we think we might be going. National histories involve narratives, and the history of New Zealand is known and entrenched within almost every layer of our society, but it does not speak to Māori aspirations, stories, dreams and visions.

This article has been alluding to notions of ‘revitalization’, liberation and reclamation that are common not only to Māori but also to other indigenous and marginalized groups who share our dreams of emancipation. One of the key thinkers in this area is Paulo Freire, whose theory of transformative praxis has been taken up and advanced by scholars around the world. Freire contends that both the oppressor and the oppressed can become liberated through what he terms a praxis of reflection and action. In this sense reflection is developed through a process of consciousness-raising, which in turn motivates action in the form of resistance to oppression. Through that reflection and action, transformation takes place. Graham Hingangaroa Smith wrote that for Māori, and particularly within a Kaupapa Māori approach, transformative praxis is more than just a linear process. It is a cyclical process, where resistance, consciousness and transformation can and often do occur simultaneously. Smith noted that transformative praxis provides a theory of activism and action which extends beyond the descriptive theories of the ‘other’ and the ‘colonized’ espoused by both Edward Said and Frantz Fanon. For Māori, transformative praxis provides a springboard from which local understandings might be developed in relation to an active rather than a passive type of post-colonialism. As Freire stated, ‘liberation is a praxis: the action of and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it’. He went on to state that ‘the pursuit of full humanity however cannot be carried out in
isolation or individualism, but only in fellowship and solidarity; therefore it cannot unfold in the antagonistic relations between the oppressors and oppressed.\textsuperscript{77} Similarly, the transformation of ‘nation’ is not a process or dream that can be realized by Māori alone. Indeed, the writing of the nation in almost every way has never been controlled by Māori, and in the foreseeable future remains firmly in the hands of Pākehā.

The need for non-Māori to become more actively engaged in this type of transformation does not seem to have been a major focus for New Zealand historians or scholars in general. Commenting on the anti-racist organizations and identity politics of the 1970s, Miranda Johnson pointed out that central to the evolving activist mindsets of the period was an underlying notion that ‘Pākehā, the colonizers, needed to enter a process of conscientizacáo, as the Brazilian critical theorist Paulo Freire suggested, through which they could be liberated from unconsciousness imperialism and enter into a new understanding. This new understanding was premised on their sympathetic understanding of the “other”, inventing the superior–inferior prejudices of racism.\textsuperscript{78} We might well ask, have these sentiments ever been a part of our ‘nation’ making and writing? Where have we come in regard to finding solutions for both Māori and Pākehā? Many Māori still remain cautious of the Pākehā agenda in researching the past and our place in it. The claim that Pākehā New Zealanders ‘who are committed to this land and its people and steeped in the knowledge of both are no less “indigenous” than Māori’ is one such statement that causes concern.\textsuperscript{79} It is even more alarming when our history as migrants is invoked to further undermine our status as the indigenous peoples here in New Zealand. ‘In the beginning’, Michael King wrote, ‘we were all immigrants…. The fact that one group has been here longer does not make its members more New Zealand than later arrivals.’\textsuperscript{80} King’s assertion at once confronts our understandings of what it means to be indigenous and challenges the identity and position of Māori as tangata whenua. Undermining Māori epistemological frameworks in this way understandably causes some aggravation, especially in light of the length of time Māori have had to wait for Pākehā to acknowledge and, only more recently, begin to respond to the needs, rights and grievances Māori legitimately hold. We cannot accept the claim that Pākehā are entitled to the same indigenous status that we are, nor can Māori sit by and accept the national myths and the attendant narratives that work to subsume and confine us. Ani Mikaere wrote that for Māori ‘to collude in the forgetting of history requires us to remain silent so that the business of Pākehā myth making and self deception can proceed unhindered’.\textsuperscript{81} The reality is that Māori can never forget, and although some Pākehā may try to forget or even distance themselves from this colonial heritage, historians should not aid that attempted amnesia by perpetuating a national narrative that promotes New Zealandness at the expense of the colonized. The revitalization of Te Ika-a-Maui, although not a new idea, is only a small step in reclaiming, resisting and revitalizing our history, not just Māori and iwi history but the history of Pākehā and others who seek to belong here.\textsuperscript{82}

Although the need to ‘close the gaps’ should be more the responsibility of Pākehā, it is important for Māori to remember that our language, culture,
histories and identities, as much as we might resist, can also only be truly revitalized and realized in their living sense alongside, and in collaboration with, Pākehā. Such a dream might seem beyond our possibilities for the moment, and certainly beyond our current writings on the nation. However, a transformation is always possible, if not inevitable.

If New Zealand is to be re-imagined, dreamt anew and transformed, then what shall we dream of? Freire, more than just focusing on the process of liberation, wrote of the need for hope not simply in the remaking of nations and identities, but of ourselves as human beings: ‘In our making and remaking of ourselves in the process of making history — as subjects and objects, persons, becoming beings of insertion in the world and not of pure adaptation to the world — we should end by having the dream, too, a mover of history. There is no change without dream, as there is no dream without hope.’83 The story of Te Ika-a-Maui, as a framework for the national narrative, has the potential to not only change our perceptions of the past, but more importantly our trajectories for the future. It allows an opportunity for historians to create narratives that liberate both the colonized and the colonizers, by recognizing and bringing to the centre those narratives that have been silenced in the colonial process. The revitalization of Te Ika-a-Maui requires a rethink of other episodes such as urbanization and the ‘New Zealand Wars’, and their place in the broader story of the nation. Most importantly, the story of Te Ika-a-Maui is one that cannot be restored by Māori themselves; it involves a conscious effort by Pākehā ‘New Zealanders’ to first understand the need for it, and then respond with hope and determination.

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NOTES

1 This essay is adapted from a paper given at the ‘Migration Histories and Writing the Nation’ Symposium/Workshop, held at the University of Waikato, 21 June 2007. I would like to thank all those who have read drafts and offered comments and suggestions: ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa.

2 Maui appears in the genealogical lines of a large array of tribal groups. Like Toi and Rauru, Maui is a prominent figure in Polynesia. Our family descend from Maui through Toikairakau, Rauru to Paikea and then on to our eponymous ancestor Porourangi.

3 Tipene O’Regan has opined that, for Māori, ‘to set aside the warm flesh of tupuna and their deeds’ is unappealing, and rather than allowing them to be subject to ‘the sterile examination tables’ of Pākehā, researchers should be aware that we (Māori) are ‘the present expression of our tupuna’. Tipene O’Regan, ‘“Who Owns the Past” Change in Māori Perceptions of the Past’, in John Wilson, ed., From the Beginning: The Archeology of the Māori, Auckland, 1987, pp.141–5.


5 This kōrero is taken from the update of our tribal website but is common in our history, whaikōrero and mōteatea. http://www.Ngātiporou.com/Mātauranga/history/default.asp


7 To describe our history as ‘pre-history’ is not only offensive but problematically rejects indigenous knowledge systems as an inferior way of knowing about the past. There are many examples, but one of the most noticeable can be found in Keith Sinclair’s A History of New Zealand, where he includes ‘The Fish of Maui’ story as a prologue only to the main narrative. Keith Sinclair, A History of New Zealand, revised ed., Auckland, 1980, pp.11–28.

8 Smith contests the idea that indigenous knowledge is simply ‘primitive’ and ‘incorrect’. She argues that the reclaiming of history by indigenous people is an ‘essential aspect of decolonisation’. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples, Dunedin, London & New York, 1999, pp.29–30, 183.


10 Belich, Making Peoples, p.40.

11 See Jan Vansina, Oral Tradition as History, London, 1985; Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson, eds, The Myths We Live by, London and New York, 1990. Both Vansina and Samuel highlight the importance of understanding oral traditions and myths as viable sources of information regarding the past. This is also noted by Belich, who argues that ‘Myth is a convenient label, though we should note that these ideas are not merely falsehoods to be debunked, nor texts to be deconstructed, but also important historical refractors and determinants’. See James Belich, ‘Myth, Race, and Identity in New Zealand’, New Zealand Journal of History (NZJH), 31, 1 (1997), p.9.

12 Despite reference to the significance of and potential for oral tradition by Belich and King, neither has produced histories that draw extensively on these sources from a Māori perspective. Thus, although the stories are there, they are usually treated as decorations to a very different narrative, rather than as the foundation.


14 The ‘progression’ story that underlines the New Zealand narrative often posits the idea of a frontier, or supposedly uncharted and unknown space, where dreams might be met and realized (predominantly by the colonizers). See Bronwyn Dalley and Gavin McLean, eds, Frontier of Dreams: The Story of New Zealand, Auckland, 2005.

15 O’Regan, p.145.


17 See Graham Hingangaroa Smith, The Development of Kaupapa Māori: Theory and Praxis, Auckland, 2002, pp.35–36. Although he notes the resistant and emancipatory nature of transformative praxis, Smith also comments on the need to ‘open up’ our minds to the theories of those who are viewed as oppressors. Consciousness-raising is an essential idea in the ‘liberation’ project, not just for the oppressed but for the oppressors themselves. See Graham Hingangaroa.

18 Aroha Harris highlighted Ranginui Walker’s Ka Whāwhai Tonu Matou: Struggle Without End as a lonely exception to many Māori histories written today. The need to write a bigger national history that tells our story from our perspective and with our voices is still unrealized. Aroha Harris, ‘Theorize This: We are what we write’, He Rau Tumu Kōrero; Māori Historian Hui, 2008, University of Waikato, 29 August 2008.

19 Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes that Kaupapa Māori ‘is about bringing to the centre and privileging indigenous values, attitudes, and practices’, p.125.


21 Mātauranga Māori is a dynamic and changing body of knowledge, and is inextricably linked to the ways in which we make sense of who we are, who we have been, and who we want to become as Māori. Historical research has the potential to illustrate this perhaps more vividly than any other discipline, yet the deeper issue of representation and ownership continues to make this a complicated and highly contentious proposition for both Māori and Pākehā scholars. For further reading on mātauranga Māori, see Rawiri Te Maire Tau, ‘Mātauranga Māori as an Epistemology’, in Andrew Sharp and Paul McHugh, eds, Histories, Power and Loss: Uses of the Past — A New Zealand Commentary, Wellington, 2001, pp.61–67. Charles Royal has written extensively on mātauranga Māori, but it may be best to begin with his views on Te Ao Mārama: Te Ahukaramū Royal, ‘Te Ao Mārama: A Research Paradigm’, He Pukenga Kōrero, 4, 1 (1998), pp.1–8.

22 Te Aue Davis, Tipene O’Regan and John Wilson, eds, Nga Tohu Pumahara; The Survey Pegs of the Past, Understanding Māori Place Names, Wellington, 1990, p.9.

23 Byrnes, Boundary Markers, p.80.


25 Concern about the place of non-Māori researchers within Māori communities has not meant that this work has ceased. Similarly, a focus on tribal histories, although understandable, does not hide the fact that Māori are still a historical subject described and defined in various broader histories. While the debate between Māori and iwi history remains a relevant one, research about Māori continues unabated. This is an issue that Māori scholars are aware of but have not yet addressed satisfactorily within historical scholarship. Charles Royal addressed this issue in a paper given at a Te Pouhere Kōrero hui in 1999, in which he problematized the idea of writing a ‘single volume’ Māori history. Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal, ‘Mātauranga and the writing of Māori History’, Te Pouhere Kōrero, Te Wananga-o-Raukawa, 19–21 March 1999 (unpublished paper), pp.1–2.

26 There are, of course, potential pre-contact equivalents such as iwi or broader confederations such as nga pumanawa o Te Arawa (the eight beating hearts of Te Arawa). But these were not nations in the sense that Pākehā understood nation. This essay notes that difference — and the anachronism of ‘nationalism’ in pre-contact times — but proposes that Māori over time have developed various concepts of nation, and were nevertheless well aware of a broader collective community beyond iwi and hapū before Pākehā and nation arrived. Indeed, whakapapa connections and a common deep mātauranga of the universe and world stands still as testament to that imagined community.


28 ‘Māori’ as a collective term for our identity may not have come into popular use until the arrival of Pākehā but our collectivity as a group was known in oral tradition across iwi boundaries; we shared a collective consciousness of our world (Te Ao Mārama), boundaries and identity as a people.


30 ibid.

31 What Ngata, and other Māori, meant by the ‘Price of Citizenship’, and how it was received, or heard, by Pākehā, is an area awaiting further analysis within Māori historical scholarship. It is difficult to imagine that Ngata’s views on the Price of Citizenship, and particularly the casualties suffered at Crete, Minqar Qaim, Takrouna and Cassino, could be simply about the right to drink

32 It is important to note that the nation, too, has become a term used by some Māori to highlight their rights and privileges as the indigenous group. Declarations by Tuhoe of their right to think of themselves as a ‘Tuhoe nation’ is one example of how this resistance to ‘New Zealandness’ remains a very real part of Māori thinking.

33 *To live in the city: 24 years on*, directed, written and edited by Arthur Everard, National Film Unit, Lower Hutt, 1991.


36 This is not to say that iwi can easily stake claims in other tribal territories, but claims of ‘homeland’ reside in the deep genealogical connections and stories that weave iwi together as tangata whenua in opposition to Pākehā.


38 These are memories not simply of tupuna but of the relationships and genealogies that bind them to future generations in various iwi and hapū. They are often shared by various groups, their status and history invoked as the common relationship significant to both the historic and contemporary identities and worlds of sometimes seemingly unrelated iwi. Angela Wanahalla, ‘Māori Women in Waka Traditions’, in Lyndon Fraser and Katie Pickles, eds, *Shifting Centres: Women and Migration in New Zealand History*, Dunedin, 2002, p.26.


41 Joan Metge, *A New Maori Migration: Rural and Urban Relations in Northern New Zealand*, Melbourne, 1964, p.3.

42 Elsdon Best, *The Land of Tara and They who Settled It: The story of the occupation of Te Whanga-nui-a-Tara (the great harbour of Tara), or Port Nicholson*, New Plymouth, 1919, p.9.

43 This is not to say that on a local level Māori were not migrants but that the characterizing of their ‘urban’ and internal migrant experiences should not be confused with a sense of dislocation at the expense of their deeper histories in Aotearoa and with each other.

44 Russell Stone notes that the ‘Tamaki isthmus was the heart of the region in Māori times and remains so today’, *R.C.J. Stone*, *From Tamaki Makaurau to Auckland*, Auckland, 2001, p.1.


47 ibid., p.17.

48 ibid., p.18.

49 ibid., p.37.

50 http://www.Ngātiporou.com/Mātauranga/history/default.asp

51 The mana whenua of these urban locations cannot simply be claimed by Māori as a whole but by the hapū and iwi that stake claim to them through their own histories. The point here is that unlike Pākehā, Māori share these histories and are aware of the importance of tribal authority and mana whenua, but in conceptualizing Aotearoa as a whole recognize ‘Māori’ as the collective indigenous grouping and in that sense as share tangata whenua status across tribal borders.

52 Rosalind McClean, “‘How we prepare them in India’: British Diasporic Imaginings and Migration to New Zealand”, *NZJH*, 37, 2 (2003), p.47.


54 ibid., p.118.

55 Simmons, pp.14–15.

56 Metge, p.247.
59 Hana O’Regan, Ko Tahu, Ko Au: Kai Tahu Tribal Identity, Christchurch, 2000, p.113.
60 A good example of this is the case of Ngāti Whakaue, who, via legislation, were moved out of the Rotorua central area to make way for colonial development. See Don Stafford, The History and Placenames of Rotorua, Auckland, 1999, p.53.
61 It is important to remember that turangawaewae is more than simply a term for local iwi and hapū but can be extended to discuss the connection that Māori have with the land as a whole. This sense of turangawaewae is one that distinguishes us from those who might imagine a sense of indigeneity in Aotearoa. This umbilical cord that connects Māori to not only rural but urban spaces is significant.
63 Tracey McIntosh has argued that Māori identities can be forced, fixed or fluid. A fluid identity reflects the ease by which Māori move between conceptions of who they are as tribal, homogenous, traditional and contemporary. See Tracey McIntosh, ‘Māori Identities: Fixed, Fluid, Forced’, in James H. Liu, Tim McCreanor, Tracey McIntosh, and Teresa Teaiwa, eds, New Zealand Identities: Departures and Destinations, Wellington, 2005, pp.38–51.
64 Taylor, pp.207–08.
65 Clifford also contends that ‘the term diaspora is a signifier, not simply of transnationalism and movement, but of political struggles to define the local, as a distinctive community, in historical contexts of displacement’. James Clifford, ‘Diasporas’, Cultural Anthropology, 9 (1994), p.307.
66 ibid., p.310.
67 This identification as Māori also arose from similar experiences of urban living, racism, land alienation and colonization, which at a deeper level could then be reinforced through a dynamic oral tradition that at its core emphasized genealogical connections to the land and each other.
68 Clifford, p.307.
70 Peter Gibbons contends that ‘historical writings dealing with cultural matters that do not take postcolonial perspectives and problematize the presence of Pākehā run the risk of being considered as parts of the colonizing process’. Peter Gibbons, ‘Cultural Colonization and National Identity’, NZJH, 36, 1 (2002), p.15.
71 When Donna Awatere provocatively stated that ‘in this country white people have no real identity of their own apart from that which exists through opposition to Māori’, she was referring to a range of issues, but essentially, from my point of view, that the Pākehā future in achieving a national identity can only be achieved alongside Māori as they become conscious of the colonial problems that are still ongoing; only then can they begin to address their own issues and histories with real depth. Donna Awatere, Maori Sovereignty, Auckland, 1984, p.11. Compare also Johnson, ‘The Land of the Wrong White Crowd’, p.150.
75 Smith argues that Freire’s work moves beyond earlier benchmarks that described the ‘condition’ of the colonized rather than offering solutions to the problem; Smith, ‘Paulo Freire’, p.36. For further reading, see Edward Said, Orientalism, London, 1978; Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, London, 1965.
76 Freire, p.79.
77 ibid., p.85.
78 Johnson, p.143.
80 ibid., p.11.

82 In 1998, for example, Tau Henare suggested that both the North and South Islands be known by their Māori names, Te Ika-a-Maui and Te Waipounamu. This was met with protestation by a number of commentators, some of whom complained of a ‘forced biculturalism’. See Mikaere, p.36.