

# **KAITIAKITANGA**

## **A Definitive Introduction to the Holistic World View of the Maori**

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**KAITIAKITANGA**  
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# KAITIAKITANGA

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the resource Management Act is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources (sec 3(1)). By definition '*sustainable*' management includes the protection of the community's enjoyment of those natural and physical resources. In achieving those purposes, matters of national importance are specified. One of those matters is a requirement to recognise and provide for the relationship of Maori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral lands, water, sites, wahi tapu and our taonga.

One of the major concerns for Maori is that the cultural and spiritual decisions of Maori concerning their taonga were left to the discretion of local authorities and the Planning tribunal. By the ground rules provided in Parts I and II of the Act, they are not. However, if the ground rules are misunderstood or ignored, then they are.

The intention of the Act, in its definitions and in the matters specified as being of national importance, is unambiguous. There is a mandatory obligation upon all persons exercising powers under the Act who recognise and make provision for Maori cultural values in all aspects of resource management, in the preparation and administration of Regional and District Plans. Section 7 reiterates the cultural emphasis.

The reference to '*Kaitiakitanga*' in section 7(a) is specific. It applies to traditional Maori '*guardianship*' over such resources as native forests and kaimoana.

Part II of the resource Management Act deals with the '*purpose and principles*' which provide the ground rules for everyone exercising powers under the Act, concludes with section 8 which requires that the '*principles of the Treaty*' be taken into account in the management of natural resources. this acknowledges the Crown's obligation under Article II of the treaty to preserve for Maori their culture and traditional way of life. the Act lays down the ground rules by which these obligation are to be met in the preparation and administration of plans for the management of New Zealand resources.

Section 8 provides that: *In achieving the purpose of this Act, all persons exercising functions and powers under it, in relation to managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources shall take into account the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi*'.

This provision introduces the Treaty partners into the management of our natural resources. This is an acknowledgement that there is a separately identifiable interest of one of those parties, ie, the Maori which must be taken into account, *'In achieving the purpose of this Act'* by the application of the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi in the management by the Crown, the other part, or its delegated authority (Regional and Local Bodies) of natural resources.

Despite these provisions there are concerns amongst the tribes that local authorities may misunderstand and even ignore the Maori perspective. This paper is written in order to provide a background against which the relationship of Maori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral lands, water, sites, wahi tapu and other taonga may be understood with special emphasis and focus on *'Kaitiakitanga'*.

## 2. FUNDAMENTAL KNOWLEDGE

Myth and legend are an integral part of the corpus of fundamental knowledge held by the philosophers and seers of the Maori and indeed of the Polynesian peoples of the Pacific from ancient times. Indeed, there are remarkable parallels and similarities between the extant myths and legends held by the various Polynesian groups who have been separated from each other for time spans ranging from eight hundred to two thousand five hundred years.

For instance Maui as a myth hero, Tangaroa as the God of the sea, Tane, Rangi, Papa and the stories that revolve around them have a common thread or theme running through them. The concepts which underlie the various legends also exhibit a common motif and focus. Modern man has summarily dismissed these so called myths and legends as the superstitious and quaint imaginings of primitive, pre-literate societies. That assumption could not be further from the truth.

Myth and legend in the Maori cultural context are neither fables embodying primitive faith in the supernatural, nor marvellous fireside stories of ancient times. They were deliberate constructs employed by the ancient seers and sages to encapsulate and condense into easily assimilable forms their view of the world, of ultimate reality and the relationship between the Creator, the universe and man.

Cultures pattern perceptions of reality into conceptualisations of what they perceive reality to be: of what is to be regarded as actual, probable, possible or impossible. These conceptualisations form what is termed the *'world view'* of a culture.

The World view is the central systematisation of conceptions of reality to which members of its culture assent and from which stems their value system. The world view lies at the very heart of the culture, touching, interacting with and strongly influencing every aspect of the culture.

In terms of Maori culture, the myths and legends form the central system on which their holistic view of the universe is based.

Western culture whose major focus is on the natural universe assumes that it is comprised of indestructible atoms of solid matter and conforms to strict mechanical laws in an absolutely predictable manner go on to further assume, that it can be understood and scientifically describable. It therefore applies scientific methodology to understand and describe cause and effect etc.

Other cultures start from other assumptions concerning the universe and arrive at different conclusions. Their logic may be just as good or as bad as Western cultures, and the way that they reason from assumption or hypotheses to conclusion may be very similar particularly in regard to the natural world but their basic assumptions may be very different. Other cultural assumptions may be just as valid, but focussed on a part of the data that western cultures may ignore. For instance, westerners may focus on the 'how' or 'immediate why' of events but seldom concern them with the 'ultimate why' of such occurrences.

The *'legend'* of Tane ascending to the highest heaven in a bid to obtain the *'Baskets of Knowledge'* from Io the creator demonstrate the principles outlined above.

The legend relates how Tane after he had successfully organised the revolt that led to the separation of their parents Rangi (Father Heaven) and Papa (Mother Earth) having concluded the various purification rites wended his way through the heavens until he arrived at the penultimate heaven.

He was again sanctified by Rehua the Priest God of exorcism and purification who then allowed Tane entrance into the twelfth heaven the abode of Io. There he received the three Baskets of Knowledge together with two small stones, one white and the other a predominantly red coloured stone. The former white stone was named Hukatai (Seafoam) and the latter red stone called Rehutai (Seaspray).

He descended to the seventh heaven where his brothers had completed the Whare Wananga (House of Learning or Wisdom). After the welcome, he had to undergo more purification rites to remove the intense *'tapu'* ingested from his association with the intense sacredness of Io.

Having completed the purification rites, Tane entered the Whare Wananga named Wharekura and deposited the three Baskets of Knowledge named Tuauri, Aronui, and Tua-Atea above the *'taumata'* – the seat of authority where the seers and sages sat and then deposited the stones Hukatai and Rehutai, one on either side of the rear ridge pole.

On the surface, such a story may be regarded as a fairytale, a fantasy, to tell to children by the fireside in the evening.

Nothing could be further from the truth for this legend is part of the corpus of sacred knowledge and as such was not normally related in public. Furthermore, the way in which it was couched ensured that even when related in public, its inner meaning could not be understood without the key to unravel it. And unless all the parts were known and understood it was impossible to make sense of it.

It was basic tenet of Maoridom that the inner corpus of sacred knowledge was not to be shared with the *'Tutuua'* – the common herd, lest such knowledge be abused and misused. Such sacred lore was not lightly taught and was shared only with selected candidates who after a long apprenticeship and testing were deemed fit to hold such knowledge. Such an incident occurred in my experience when the seriousness of imparting such knowledge to *'tutuua'* was brought home to me.

After the war, when I returned to the Wananga I was questioned by the elders of the Wananga about my war experiences. In the course of my sharing our experiences I mentioned the atom bomb. One of the elders who had of course heard of the atom bomb asked me to explain the difference between an atom bomb and an explosive bomb. I took the word *'hihiri'* which in Maoridom means *'pure energy'*.

Here I recalled Einsteins concept of the real world behind the natural world as being comprised of *'rhythmical patterns of pure energy'*, and said to him that this was essentially the same concept.

He then exclaimed, “Do you mean to tell me that the Pakeha scientists (tohunga Pakeha) have managed to rend the fabric (Kahu) of the universe?”

“Yes.”

“But do they know how to sew (tuitui) it back together again?”

“No!”

“That’s the trouble with sharing such *'tapu'* knowledge, Tutuua will always abuse it.”

### 3. THE WORLDS OF MAORI COSMOGONY

#### 3.1 The Lore Of The Wananga

The legend of Tane's ascent into the heavens provide the sanctions, protocols and guidelines upon which the Wananga was to be conducted, and determined the subject content to be taught. In the genealogy of creation, 'Te Whe' (sound) was always associated with Wananga. Wananga when standing alone means to discuss, debate, impart knowledge.

When associated with Te Whe, it means 'wisdom'.

Now Te Whe (sound) represented the word in embryo, or the seed word. It was the Kahu (dress) in which alone the seed word could be clothed and articulated, then thought may be conceptualised and expressed in word. Te Whe and Wananga were each indispensable to the formation and existence of the other. Ancient Maori seers and sages were well aware of the ancient conundrum which other cultures also posed when thinking about the existence of thought itself: namely. *'Is it possible to think without words?'* For the Maori the answer was in the negative. One cannot exist without the other.

Wananga as the institution of higher learning was termed '*Te Kauae Runga*' (The Upper Jaw). Other institutions of learning such as the '*Whare Maire*' concerned with occult lore and certain forms of karakia (liturgical chants) and other matters, were termed '*kauae raro*' (lower jaw).

Prior to entry into the Wananga selected and screened candidates or pupils (taura) were required to go through certain initiation and purification rites which also included dedication to a particular tutelary deity such as Tangaroa, Tane, Rongo etc in accordance with the major specialisation that he wished to pursue.

His first action when he entered into the Wananga house was to proceed to the rear ridge pole, pick up and place 'Hukatai' – the white stone (sea foam) in his mouth and symbolically swallow it, after which he replaced it. This was a reminder that all knowledge was sacred and therefore to be nurtured and treasured. Only then could they be fed with the sacred food of the baskets of knowledge.

Sessions were normally held during the slack periods of the year especially during the winter months when the activities of hunting, fishing, planting and harvesting were over and their help not required. Normally learning was a life long pursuit and even after graduation most of the members continued to attend wananga.



On approaching graduation, the students were required to undergo some searching tests. Those dedicated to Tane were for instance ordered to go to the forest without any food supplies sometimes for several weeks and were expected to fend for themselves, living off the bounty provided by Tane. It was a period of meditation and/or fasting in which they were not only expected to practice their bush craft but also to learn to commune with the spirit of their tutelary deity and return with some original knowledge. Their graduation depended upon their passing the rigorous tests and examinations imposed by the sages. If they passed the tests then they were initiated into the new grade or order of taura (masters, teachers).

When a student graduated he then returned to the rear ridge pole where he took up Rehutai, the red coloured stone and symbolically swallowed it. These symbolic ritualistic acts brought home some important truths. At the beginning when he swallowed Hukatai – the white stone, he was acknowledging that he was entering upon a search for knowledge (matauranga).

Now knowledge and wisdom are related but different in nature. Knowledge, a thing of the head, an accumulation of facts.

Wisdom is a thing of the heart. It has its own thought processes. It is there that knowledge is integrated for this is the centre of one's being.

All things, no matter how specialised must be connected to a centre. This centre is constituted of our most basic convictions – ideas that transcend the world of facts. This does not mean that they are purely subjective or relative, or even mere convention. But they must approximate reality whether in the world of sense perception or the real world behind that. Such ideas without this approximation inevitably lead to disaster.

A truly educated person is not one who knows a bit about everything, or everything about something, but one who is truly in touch with his centre. He will be in no doubt about his convictions, about his view on the meaning and purpose of life, and his own life will show a sureness of touch that stems from inner clarity. This is true wisdom.

How is the transition made from knowledge per se to wisdom? The symbolic swallowing of Rehutai is symbolic of how this state may be achieved. Hukatai (sea foam) and Rehutai (seaspray) is a metaphor taken from a canoe en passage on the sea. The sea form or wake generated by the canoe in motion symbolises the pursuit of knowledge as an accumulation of facts picked up along the way. Of itself, such facts constitute an unorganised set of ideas unrelated to his centre.

The centre is where he must create for himself an orderly system of ideas about himself and the world in order to regulate the direction of his life. If he has faced up to the ultimate questions posed by life, his own centre no longer remains in a vacuum which continues to ingest any new idea that seeps into it. The swallowing of Rehutai is the answer to the problem.

Rehutai depicts a canoe heading into the sunrise. As the sea foam is thrown up by the bow, the rays of the sun piercing the foam creates a rainbow effect as you peer through it. By meditation in the heart, the centre of one's being, illumination comes suddenly in a moment of time, and the unorganised sets of ideas suddenly get together to form an integrated whole in which the tensions and contradictions are resolved. Knowledge is transformed into wisdom.

This is essentially a spiritual experience. Illumination is from above, a revelation gift from God. When it occurs, it acts as a catalyst integrating knowledge to produce Wisdom.

### **3.2 The Basket Of Knowledge**

The three baskets of knowledge obtained by Tane were named Tua-uri, Aro-Nui, and Tua-Atea.

3.2.1. Tua-Uri literally translates as '*beyond in the world of darkness*'. There were twenty seven nights each of which spanned aeons of time. This is the '*real world*' behind the world of sense perception or the natural world.

It is the seed bed of creation where all things are gestated, evolve, and are refined to be manifested in the natural world. This is the world where the cosmic processes originated and continue to operate as a complex series of rhythmical patterns of energy to uphold sustain and replenish the energies and life of the natural world.

Four related concepts must be held in balance although they occur at different stages and are divided by other elements in the genealogical table of the birth and evolution of the various stages of the cosmic process. They are *Mauri*, *Hihiri*, *Mauri-Ora*, and *Hau-Ora*.

*Mauri* occurs in the early stages of the genealogical table. It is that force that interpenetrates all things to bind and knit them together and as the various elements diversify, *Mauri* acts as the bonding element creating unity in diversity.

*Hihiri* is pure energy, a refined form of *Mauri* and is manifested as a form of radiation or light and aura, that radiates from matter but is especially evident in living things.

*Mauri-Ora* is the life principle. As the word implies, it is that bonding force which is further refined beyond pure energy (Hihiri) to make life possible.

*Hau-Ora* is the breath or wind of the spirit which was infused into the process to birth animate life.

The genealogy of creation is quite specific and develops logically from the early stages of the root cause implanted within the cosmic space-time continuum of the void/abyss and nights in its primordial beginnings, evolving into the highly specialised and variegated objects of the natural world. When each stage in this evolutionary process reached its high or '*Omega*' point, the process took a huge leap forward to initiate a new stage and series.

To sum up, the three baskets of knowledge deal with the three world view of the Maori in which *Tua-Uri* is the real world of the complex series of rhythmical patterns of energy which operate behind this world of sense perception.

Though we cannot prove its existence by logical argument, we are compelled to assume its existence behind that of the world of sense perception. We cannot comprehend it by direct means. But in the Maori view and experience we have other faculties of a higher order than the natural senses which when properly trained can penetrate into the 'beyond'.

It is still accepted by the modern Maori that our *tohunga* who were specially trained and gifted in this field were '*matakite*', literally 'seers'; - which reminds me of the words of that seer mentioned above regarding the exploding of the atom bomb:

*'They've torn the fabric of the universe, but do they know how to repair it?'*

3.2.2 Te Aro-Nui. Literally, this translates as '*that before us*', that is, '*before our senses*'. This is the natural world around us as apprehended by the senses.

Like any other race the Maori observed the world around him and noted recurring cycles and events, their regularity, deduced cause and effect and came to the same conclusions that most people come to. That knowledge and lore became part of the corpus of general knowledge and was transmitted from one generation to another.

An example of this was my own father born in 1862 and brought up in the traditional ways of our people. As children we often went fishing both in the harbour and in the open sea with members of the tribe.

My father was always consulted. He would quickly calculate the day according to the Maori lunar calendar, the state of the tide, the direction of the wind and other phenomena. He would then advise us what reefs or grounds to fish, and the best times according to the state of the tide. He would advise against going to other grounds which were handier or more popular as a waste of time. He would give us the reasons. By the time we were young men, we had imbibed a lot of this traditional lore. Often we tested this knowledge and found it trustworthy.

Such lore was carefully stored and transmitted. But over and beyond that they used other extra sensory faculties and techniques to test their environment and new phenomena. They had techniques for testing poisonous plants and trees; those that were good for healing and for food; ways by which highly poisonous berries such as the karaka could be rendered harmless and utilised as food. Some of those techniques are still used to this day.

Genealogy as a tool for transmitting knowledge pervaded Maori culture. Every class and species of things had their own genealogy. This was a handy method for classifying different families and species of flora and fauna, of the order in which processes occurred and the order in which intricate and prolonged activities or ceremonies should be conducted etc.

According to a typical classificatory genealogy, Tane the god of the forest married several wives to produce different families of children. From one wife was born the healing trees, from another the building trees etc.

Tangaroa, the god of the sea, also married several wives from each of which the different species and genera of fish, shellfish and seaweed were born. The same technique was applied to herbs, to root crops, berries, birds, soils, rocks, and so on. Everything had its whakapapa or genealogy.

3.2.3 Te Ao Tua-Atea is the world beyond space and time. Atea is the word for space. It was usually combined with wa-(time ) to form waatea- (space-time) They saw space and time as conjoined together and relative to each other. The final series of the Tua-Atea genealogy is recited as: *'Te Hauora begat shape; shape begat form; form begat space; space begat time; and time begat Rangi and Papa (heaven and earth)'*. Thus the space-time continuum became the framework into which heaven and earth were born.

According to this concept, the universe is finite in extent and relative in time. This is in contrast to the realm of Tua-Uri the realm in which the universal processes were founded in the space-frame of the void and abyss, and set in the time-frame of the aeons of the nights.

Tua-Atea is the world beyond any space-time framework. It is infinite and eternal. This is the realm of Io, the supreme God whose attributes were expressed in the various names attributed to him, Io-taketake (first cause), Io-nui (almighty), Io-roa (eternal), Io-Uru (omnipresent), Io-matakana (omniscient), Io-mataaho (glorious one), Io-wananga (all wise) etc.

This is the eternal realm which was before Tua-Uri and towards which the universal process is tending. The worlds both of Tua-Uri and Aronui are part of the cosmic process. And if the universe is process it is more akin to life, mind and spirit which are obviously processes. Therefore the world of sense perception, the natural world around us is unlikely to be ultimate reality.

For the Maori, Tua-Atea the transcendent eternal world of the spirit is ultimate reality.

3.2.4 The World Of Symbol To the three baskets containing the knowledge of the three worlds we must add a fourth world, the world of symbol.

The world of symbol is a deliberate creation of the human mind. Man creates symbols to depict, represent, and illustrate some other perceived reality. Words, formulae, art forms, ritualistic ceremonies, legend, myth etc are created by the human mind as maps, models, prototypes and paradigms by which the mind can grasp, understand and recognise the words of sense perception, of the real world behind that.....

In every culture, there are exclusive groups who disseminate their knowledge by means of secret symbols known only to the initiates. Secret societies, professional groups and certain religious groups use secret signs, rituals, legends, etc to safeguard that knowledge from the general public. And, unless one knows and understands the keys to unlock that knowledge then the reality to which the symbols refer remain a mystery.

On the other hand, there are symbols created by and for the general public. But these symbols must approximate to the reality to which they refer before a society will accept and give assent to them.

Only then are they incorporated into the corpus of that culture's general knowledge and become part of that culture's traditions and customs.

## 4. SOME CONCLUSIONS

We have seen how the seers and sages of Maori society deliberately created their myths and legends as symbols to portray some other perceived reality. Those symbols were deliberately couched in these forms in order to facilitate several desired objectives.

### 4.1 **Legends And Myths**

Legends and myths have been used from time immemorial as a graphic means of creating word pictures and scenarios as a framework into which the basic elements of the realities perceived, may be set in summary form.

### 4.2 **The Use Of Legendary Myth And Story**

The use of legendary myth and story imprinted upon the mind, acted as pegs to which the finer details could be attached in progressive order to reconstruct the component features of that body of knowledge.

### 4.3 **Aid For Ease Of Recall**

On the one hand legend and myth provided a mechanism to aid ease of recall. On the other hand .....used as a camouflage to hide the inner meaning from the ---- such scred lore .... abuse and misuse.

### 4.4 **Sanctions**

The legend itself by virtue of its association with the pantheon of gods provided the sanctions by which Kaupapa (first principles) were authorised and out of which Tikanga – custom could flow and be validated.

## 5. GENEALOGY

Genealogy as an important symbolic mechanism has already been demonstrated above. As a cultural institution it pervaded much of Maori culture. One of its primary functions was to trace family and tribal ancestral lines. But even here, there was an element of symbolism.

Man's early ancestry traces back through its myth heroes to the gods through mother earth. This truth is also featured in the Maori carved meeting house where the ridge poles of the house, embedded in the ground and sustaining the ridging symbolises the Cosmic Tree. The ridging is perceived as representing the dome of heaven --*Te Tahuhu Nui O Te Ao* and the floor represents mother earth – *Papatuanuku*.

Thus man is perceived as a citizen of two worlds with his roots in the earth and his crown in the heavens. Man did not evolve from the primates but was born out of the seed of the god Tane, impregnated into the dawn maid *Hineahuone* who was formed and shaped out of the red clay – *Onekura* – of mother earth.

In terms of the knowledge deposited in the three baskets concerning the three worlds we have traversed in the inner world of our minds, we find another application for the use of genealogical tables. Genealogical tables of creation trace the logical sequence of the evolution of the processes that occurred in Tuauri. That same principle is applied in the world of sense perception in a multitude of ways. Thus, keeping in mind the symbolic nature of many of these genealogical tables, we have the key by which we can open the door to an area of knowledge which can reveal many of the basic concepts latent within Maori culture.

## 6. THE HOLISTIC VIEW

The seers and sages of Maoridom did not hold either to the eighteenth century view of the earlier natural scientists; nor did they accept the view held by the modern physicists that the real world behind the world of sense perception is composed solely of complex series of rhythmical patterns of energy.

### 6.1 Natural Science

Under the eighteenth century view of the natural scientists:

- The universe was composed of indestructible atoms of solid matter existing in infinite space and absolute time.
- It conforms to strict mechanical laws operating in an absolutely predictable manner.
- Since space is infinite and time is absolute, the universe is a closed system and nothing can impinge upon it from without or disturb its regularly.

The whole of reality is confined within its borders. There is therefore no room for concepts such as spirit and the higher manifestations of life.

6.1.1 Positivism Valid knowledge is obtainable only through the scientific method. No knowledge is genuine unless based upon observable fact.

6.1.2 Relativism Relativism denied all absolutes, norms, values and standards.

6.1.3 Freud All the higher manifestations of human life are but the dark stirrings of the subconscious mind resulting from the unfulfilled incest wishes of childhood, Art, religion, spirit are but phantasmagorias in the brains of men.

## 6.2 The New Physicists

The New Physicists changed the rigid framework of the earlier scientists. Paske and Marie Curie (radium) Max Planck (quantum theory) Einstein (relativity) Heise.....(uncertainty principle) and a host of others at the turn of this century introduced entirely new concepts.

- The universe is finite in extent and relative in time; and in it there is no absolute rest, size, motion, simultaneity.
- Matter can no longer be conceived as indestructible atoms of solid matter but rather as a complex series of rhythmical patterns of energy.
- Under these conditions, the atom obviously needs only a minimal space and time in which to exist (the uncertainty principle). In other words, it is '*process*'.
- If it is process rather than inert matter it is more akin to life, mind, and spirit which are obviously processes.
- If this is true, then the world of sense perception is unlikely to be ultimate reality. It follows that the universe is not a closed but an 'open' system which therefore allows for the incursion of such things as spirit.

The New Physicists then proposed a new construct for the universe by proposing the existence of a 'Real World' behind the world of sense perception.

It may not be apprehended by direct means through the senses, but may be grasped by 'speculative' means and the use of symbol eg.  $E = mc^2$  to portray events in that real world (Tua-uri).

Our Polynesian seers and sages came to similar conclusions many centuries ago with this difference,- that besides pure energy there were many other elements such as the primordial embryo and roots of all things containing mauri as the bonding forces, the primal force developing into hihiri (pure energy); and later, the impartation at the word of power and wisdom, and the infusion of the breath of the spirit;- all these were active elements in the directing and ordering of the cosmic process.

To conclude this section;

6.2.1 Open system If the universe is an 'open' system into which the spiritual dimension may impinge then it is possible that man who is also a spiritual being may discern spiritually the processes that occur in Tua-Uri and Tua-Atea.

6.2.2 Integrated Whole More importantly, the Maori world view which sees the three realms as an integrated whole, is the basis for the holistic approach of the Maori to his environment.



## 7. MOTHER EARTH AND MAN

The first woman Hineahuone was formed out of the clay of mother earth and impregnated by Tane to produce Hine Titama, the dawn maid. Tane cohabited with her to produce more children. These were the progenitors of the human race.

The Maori thought of himself as holding a special relationship to mother earth and her resources. The popular name for the earth was whenua. This is also the name for the 'afterbirth'.

Just as the foetus is nurtured in the mother's womb and after the baby's birth upon her breast, so all life forms are nurtured in the womb and upon the earth's breast. Man is an integral part therefore of the natural order and recipient of her bounty. He is her son and therefore, as every son has social obligations to fulfill towards his parents, siblings and other members of the whanau so has man an obligation to mother earth and her whanau to promote their welfare and good.

## 8. KAUPAPA AND TIKANGA

Kaupapa is derived from two words *kau* and *papa*. In this context, *kau* means to appear for the first time, to come into view, to disclose. *Papa* means ground or foundations. Hence, *kaupapa* means ground rules, first principles, general principles.

Tikanga mean method, plan, reason, custom, the right way of doing things.

*Kaupapa* and *Tikanga* are processes ...Maori when contemplating some important project, action or situation that needs to be addressed and resolved the tribe in council would debate the *kaupapa*, - the rules and principles by which they should be guided.

There is an appeal to first principles in cases of doubt, and those principles are drawn from the creation stories of *Tua-Uri*, the acts of the gods in the period of transition following the separation of *Rangi* and *Papa*, or the acts of the myth heroes such as *Maui* or *Tawhaki* and numerous others. The methods and plans they used in a similar situation are recounted and recommended. Alternative options are also examined and a course of action (*Tikanga*) is adopted.

There may be an appeal to general principles which originally derived from the ‘first principles’ tracing back to the sanctions derived from the gods and myth heroes and have now become established as custom, a traditional way of doing certain things, as being sufficient sanction for a certain course of action. In the latter case there is no need to appeal to original kaupapa but to ‘Tikanga Maori’.

Tikanga Maori translates as Maori custom. They denote those customs and traditions that have been handed down through many generations and have been accepted as a reliable and appropriate way of achieving and fulfilling certain objectives and goals. Such proven methods together with their accompanying protocols are integrated into the general cultural institutions of society and incorporated into the cultural system of standards, values, attitudes and beliefs.

## 9. KAITIAKITANGA

### 9.1 Definition

The term ‘*tiaki*’ whilst its basic meaning is ‘to guard’ has other closely related meanings depending upon the context. *Tiaki* may therefore also mean, to keep, to preserve, to conserve, to foster, to protect, to shelter, to keep watch over.

The prefix ‘*kai*’ with a verb denotes the agent of the act. A ‘*kaitiaki*’ is a guardian, keeper, preserver, conservator, foster-parent, protector. The suffix ‘*tanga*’ added to the noun means guardianship, preservation, conservation, fostering, protecting, sheltering.

‘*Kaitiakitanga*’ is defined in the Resource Management Act as guardianship and/or stewardship. Stewardship is not an appropriate definition since the original English meaning of stewardship is ‘to guard someone else’s property’, apart from having overtones of a master-servant relationship. Ownership of property in the pre-contact period was a foreign concept. The closest idea to ownership was that of the private use of a limited number of personal things such as garments, weapons, combs.

Apart from this all other use of land, waters, forests, fisheries, was a communal and/or tribal right.

All natural resources, all life was birthed from Mother earth.

Thus the resources of the earth did not belong to man but rather, man belonged to the earth. Man as well as animal, bird, fish, could harvest the bounty of mother earth’s resources but they did not own them. Man had but ‘user rights’.

## 9.2 Spiritual Guardians

The ancient ones (*tawhito*), the spiritual sons and daughters of Rangi and Papa were the '*Kaitiaki*' or guardians. Tane was the Kaitiaki of the forest; Tangaroa of the sea, Rongo of herbs and root crops, Hine Nui te Po of the portals of death and so on. Different tawhito had oversight of the various departments of nature. And whilst man could harvest those resources they were duty bound to thank and propitiate the guardians of those resources.

Thus the Maori made ritual acts of propitiation before embarking upon hunting, fishing, digging root crops, cutting down trees and other pursuits of a similar nature. When fishing, the first fish caught was set free as an offering to Tangaroa; and when felling a tree the first chips were burnt and their essence offered up to Tane. Only then could man use the substance.

When a meeting house was completed the tapu of Tane was removed to enable the people to use it freely. Kumara or fernroot was dug and the first fruits cooked and then waved as an offering before Rongo. The steam rising from the cooked food was sweet smelling savour offered to the Tawhito (ancient ones) as a thanksgiving, and the substance in the food retained for man.

From the above outline we see how first principles, ('Kaupapa') derive from the myths and legends associated with Mother Earth as the primeval Mother and from her children regarded as the ancient ones.

## 9.3 Western Values

By contrast, in Western culture, there is a disjunction between the material and spiritual, between the secular and sacred. This disconnection is linked to the capitalistic mode of production and expropriates and commodifies the land, its resources and people. All have a price in the market place. In a market driven economy prime values are thrown out the window and values that revolve around economics rank uppermost. This value overrides spiritual and human considerations and the profit motive becomes the prime value.

Maori are therefore extremely sceptical regarding the government's resource management plans, its conservation policies and sustainable management efforts. Based as they are within a society driven by market considerations, conservation and sustainable management policies must eventually fail. So long as the prime values are based on economics, then the values implicit in sustainable management plans are diametrically opposed, and the latter must eventually succumb.

## 9.4 Mother Earth

Papatuanuku was the personified name for the Earth and *Whenua*, the common name. Papatuanuku was the primordial mother figure who married Rangi and birthed the departmental gods (*Tawhito*) who were delegated to oversee the elements and natural resources – winds, storms, lightning, forests, cultivated crops, fish, etc.

*Whenua* was the term both for the natural earth and placenta. This is a constant reminder that we are of the earth and therefore earthy, and born out of the placenta and therefore human. As the human mother nourishes her child in the womb and then upon her breast after the child's birth, so does Mother Earth. Not only does she nourish humankind upon her breast but all life animals, birds, trees and plants. Man is part of this network and the other forms of life are his siblings. They share with each other the nourishment provided by Mother Earth.

Papatuanuku is a living organism with her own biological systems and functions. She provides a network of support systems for all her children who live and function in a symbiotic relationship. The different species and genera contribute to the welfare of other species and also help to sustain the biological functions of Mother Earth both in their life and death. Her children facilitate the processes of ingestion, digestion, and excretion.

The streams of water are her arteries bringing the life giving waters for her to imbibe and share with her offspring. Those same streams act as alimentary canals and help in the disposal of waste.

## 9.5 Earth's Consciousness

Man is the conscious mind of Mother Earth and plays a vital part in the regulation of her life support systems; and man's duty is to enhance and sustain those systems. The tragedy however is that when these first principles are forsaken and Mother Earth is perceived as a commodity and her natural resources seen as disposable property to be exploited, then there is no avoiding the abuse and misuse of the earth. Man becomes a pillager, despoiler and rapist of his own mother. Forests are denuded. The land, the sea and air are polluted. Her surface is scarred and the resources are depleted.

Until we relearn the lesson that man is an integral part of the natural order and that he has obligations not only to society but also to his environment, so long will he abuse the earth. To realise that he is a child of the Earth will help him in working to restore and maintain the harmony and balance which successive generations of humankind have arrogantly disrupted.

## 9.6 Tikanga Tiaki (Guardianship Customs)

Out of the perceptions and concepts derived from the first principles emerged the tikanga or customs instituted to protect and conserve the resources of Mother Earth.

In order to conserve the resources and ensure their replenishment and sustenance the Maori introduces the tikanga or custom of *Rahui*. *Rahui* was a prohibition or ban instituted to protect resources.

Within the tribal territory a certain area would be placed under *Rahui* and posted as being out of bounds to hunters, fishers, harvesters, etc. Other areas would remain open for use. This was a form of rotation farming. When the resource was considered to have regenerated itself, then the *Tapu* would be lifted and that area restored to general use. Another area might be placed under the tapu of *rahui* in order to allow it to regenerate. Thus the rotation method ensured a constant and steady source of supply.

This type of *rahui* must not be confused with another form which was applied when an *aitua*, misfortune resulting in death occurred. If a person was drowned at sea or in a harbour, that area was placed under a *rahui* because it had become contaminated by the tapu of death. After a certain period of time when those waters were deemed to have been cleansed then the *rahui* was lifted and those waters opened for use.

*Rahui* and *Tapu* were at times used interchangeably to mean the same thing namely, 'under a ban'. *Rahui* in its basic meaning is 'to encompass'. A *rahui* designated the boundaries within which the tapu as a ban was imposed. *Tapu* meaning 'sacred or set apart' denoted that a ban was in force over that area.

## 9.7 Rahui And Mauri

To aid the process of regeneration, a *mauri* stone would be placed in the area accompanied by appropriate ritual and prayer.

*Mauri Ora* is life-force. An animate and other forms of life such as plants and trees owe their continued existence and health to *mauri*. When the *mauri* is strong, fauna and flora flourish. When it is depleted and weak, those forms of life become sickly and weak.

## 9.8 Kawa

Ritual or liturgical action was termed *Kawa*. *Kawa* had to be conducted carefully and meticulously. Any break in a ritual chant or a particular action left out of the traditional ceremony was regarded as an ill omen.

Normally the decision to rahui an area was the prerogative of the tohunga, the expert in a particular field or custom. He was an expert in reading the signs that pointed to the depletion of resources in different areas of the tribal territory. He would consult with the chief (Rangatira) and/or tribal elders and a firm decision and course of actions was approved.

The tohunga would then conduct the appropriate ritual which invoked the aid of the appropriate departmental god; and then he would take a talisman stone and by his prayers concentrate the life force of the birds, fish or whatever in that stone and plant the mauri stone within the area encompassed by the rahui, or on a fishing ground, or wherever the situation warranted it.

Sign posts with the appropriate symbols would be posted around the boundaries as a warning that the area was prohibited. The rahui was then proclaimed to the people who were warned against trespass.

#### 9.8.1 The Institution Of Rahui:

The institution of Rahui was designed to prohibit the exploitation, depletion or degeneration of a resource and the pollution of the environment to the point where the pro-life processes latent within the biological and ecosystems of Papatuanuku might collapse.

So that man as the conscious mind of Papatuanuku might aid the pro-life processes of recovery and regeneration, the tohunga would conduct the appropriate ritual, focussing and concentrating the Mauri of the particular species within the area. Mauri is a form of energy and all energy is a form of radiation. From this source, the aura of the mauri would radiate outwards both to the environment and more specifically to the species for which it was intended. Thus Mauri created benevolent conditions within the environment both to harmonise the processes within the Earth's ecosystem and to aid the regeneration process.

#### 9.8.2 An Aside:

An incident comes to mind. When the toheroa cannery was built near the Ninety Mile Beach and the elders of the tribe discovered that the toheroa were to be canned and sold, they met to consult together; and their opinion was that the Mauri of the toheroa would depart from the Ninety Mile Beach and there would be no toheroa left in about fifteen to twenty years. Their predictions both about the departure and the length of time for it to occur proved to be exactly right.

To summarise, Kaitiakitanga was the word used by Maori to define conservation customs and traditions, including its purpose and means, through rahui.

Kaitiakitanga and Rangatiratanga are intimately linked. As outlined on the previous page, the Rangatira proclaimed and enforced rahui since he was the Rangatira over the tribal territory.

This concept of Rangatiratanga is demonstrated in the cutting down of the flagstaff by Hone Heke. Fitzroy had imposed excise duties and customs upon Pewhairangi harbour in the Bay of Islands. Heke demanded that Fitzroy remove them since Heke was the chief over that territory. When Fitzroy refused Heke cut down the flagstaff three times, and when Fitzroy proved to be recalcitrant Heke cut down the flagstaff a fourth time and then proceeded to overthrow the garrison and sacked Kororareka.

He contended that the Crown had a centralised authority, but he exercised local authority as guaranteed under Article Two of the Treaty of Waitangi. Heke was right. Tangatawhenua under the guarantees of Article Two have the authority to control and manage the resources within their territory. Under the institutions of rahui, tangatawhenua have the right to control the access of other people and their own tribal members to the resource and the use of that resource.

## **10. OTHER TERMS**

Under the principle of *Mauri Manaaki* derived from the Mauri of a meeting house in which the Mauri was implanted by Tane in Wharekura, (the first Whare Wananga), came the custom (*tikanga*) of *Tuku Rangatira* (noblesse oblige).

Tane planted three Mauri in wharekura: *Mauri Atua* (life force of the gods). *Mauri Tangata* (the life force of tangatawhenua) and *Mauri Manaaki* (the life force of the guests and visitors).

The word *Manaaki* means to bestow a blessing. The presence of visitors was equivalent to the bestowal of a blessing upon the hosts. On the part of the hosts, they bestowed a blessing upon the guests by giving them the best of their provisions in the *Hakari* (banquet) and hospitality provided. This was a reciprocal relationship which could be extended by the exchange of gifts.

### **10.1 Taiapure, Mataitai**

Applying this principle to the use of resources, the coastal people would set aside a portion of land for the use of inland tribes to build papakainga houses where they could reside during the fishing season and prepare dried fish for winter provisions and so on. They also set aside taiapure reserves such as a stretch of coast, a reef, a fishing ground where the inland tribes could gather shellfish (*Mataitai*) or fish on fishing grounds (*Tauranga-Ika*) and reefs (*Toka*).

## **10.2 Tuku Rangatira**

This *Manaaki* (blessing) was initiated under the custom (*Tikanga*) of *Tuku Rangatira* (noblesse oblige). A magnificent example of this Tikanga was the gifting by Ngatimaru of Kennedy Bay to Ngatiporou as a staging area to prepare themselves for trading in the Auckland markets.

## **11. CONCLUSION**

We have traversed over a wide range of interrelated topics from fundamental knowledge, through the Maori World View and the value systems derived from them, to try to understand the holistic approach to life and the application of the fundamental principles (*Kaupapa*) to life situations through Maori customs (*Tikanga*) integrated into the value systems of their culture.

We have further taken *Kaitiakitanga* as a particular cultural institution to show how those first principles may be applied through Tikanga Maori to resolve the rights of Tangatawhenua and their role in determining how environmental and conservation policies may be applied to achieve positive results.

It is hoped that the information contained herein may help the decision makers to determine how *Kaitiakitanga* may be expressed and applied to resource management.

Further, it is hoped that the paper will provide alternatives that may be studied to find how a bicultural blend may be developed in order that all may benefit from the bounty that Mother Earth has so richly bestowed upon this nation.

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