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**Problematics of applying indigenous oral history to politico-racial reconciliation in Aotearoa/  
New Zealand**

New Zealand is a country of four million people some 2000 kilometres east of Australia. It is internationally renowned for a number of things that reflect national mythology, such as landscape, flora and fauna, sporting prowess and - especially important for today's paper - race relations. The relations between Maori, the first arrivals a thousand years ago, and pakeha (non-Maori, mostly of British origin), has been lauded as being based on reciprocal tolerance, enlightened policies and mutual agreements – ‘the best race relations in the world’. National myths, of course, seldom stand up fully to reality. Sizeable parts of the landscape have been stripped of forest, many indigenous species are under threat of extinction, the All Blacks did not reach the finals in the 2003 Rugby World Cup, and race relations, past and present, have been loaded with cultural misunderstandings and located within a conflictual rather than a consensual paradigm.

This paper will outline how two separate historico-cultural worldviews, Maori and pakeha, have interrelated in a key recent political process – the addressing of indigenous claims relating to dispossession and marginalisation by colonisation.<sup>1</sup> Such reconciliations are part of a global trend in former settler colonies whose governments perceive that discontented minorities are counterproductive to social progress. Reparational negotiations between the New Zealand Crown and tribes have, by international standards, been successful in their timelines and outcomes. Nevertheless they have presented many practical and conceptual difficulties, resulting in part from profound differences in worldview and, relatedly, historical methodology. On the other hand, the interaction between the two perspectives has enhanced the value and possibly durability of the reparations agreements. The paper analyses the role of oral history in these processes, and concludes that a consequence of the reconciliation project, an effort being made in various quarters to reconcile these two methodologies, presents cutting edge opportunities for scholarship.

In 1975 the New Zealand Crown, under pressure from a resurgent Maoridom, established the advisory Waitangi Tribunal to hear claims of state breaches of its obligations under the founding document of the nation, the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi. In 1985, the Tribunal's powers were widened to allow it to hear claims dating back to the time of the Treaty, and it subsequently gained enormous significance for Maori.<sup>2</sup> From 1989 the Crown also offered ‘direct negotiations’ with claimant groups. By now the past relationship between tribes and state had become the subject of intensive research. This was informed by the ‘Maori Renaissance’ of the 1970s-80s, which had influenced (and been influenced by) a revisionist historiography that also reflected the fact that New Zealand

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<sup>1</sup> Portions of this paper which are unsourced reflect authorial experience in New Zealand's reparations processes.

society was becoming increasingly bicultural.<sup>3</sup> Both the Maori Renaissance and production of a New Zealand history which eschewed monoculturalism and rediscovered ‘Maoriness’ were influenced by Maori oral tradition.

Scholarly ‘rediscovery’ of the Maori presence, and the reassertion of Maori rights, occurred in the context of international decolonisation and postcolonial indigenous struggles. The influence of minority campaigns in the United States, for example, provided both empowerment and tactics to young Maori radicals and their pakeha comrades.<sup>4</sup> In the final analysis, as with such circumstances globally, the Treaty-based reconciliation process was a political one. Maori had been promised *rangatiratanga* (roughly, autonomy) in the second article of the Treaty, and this had been breached in many ways. Seeking reparations was part of a struggle for a politico-cultural outcome of securing Crown recognition for exercise of *rangatiratanga*. The politicians would make the final decision on reparations and their nature and value, and on whether *rangatiratanga* should be recognised. Among the contestable elements embedded in the political processes were those of historical methodology and findings.

Neither the Maori Renaissance nor historical revisionism were explicitly based on Maori oral accounts, except insofar as the autonomist aspirations of Maori had been passed down orally through the generations. There were some notable exceptions, but oral testimony was generally used as a minor source to add some ‘flavour’ and colour to the results of investigation into written sources: stories of eponymous ancestors, for example, or of intertribal battles, or of ancestral *waka*/canoe arrivals from the homeland of ‘Hawaiiki’.<sup>5</sup> When revisionist historiography began feeding into the vast amount of historical output generated by the Treaty claims processes, a similar result occurred: production of written-source scholarship, with some additional ‘stories’ from the tribal elders added in. While the Tribunal’s pioneering role in admitting Maori processes and evidence into its proceedings should not be minimised,<sup>6</sup> the result was little more than a formal acceptance of the legitimacy of the oral tradition. Moreover, this was often ghettoised from ‘serious’ research narratives, findings, analyses, judgements and conclusions.

Not only was oral testimony downgraded per se, there was also little attempt to add critical and contextual value by interrogating it or interrelating it to the sources and norms of western scholarship. The institutions provided by the Crown for the examination of the history of Crown-Maori relations were geared to finding out exactly how the Crown’s actions had impacted upon

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<sup>2</sup> Orange, Claudia J, *The Treaty of Waitangi*, Wellington, 1987; Ward, Alan, *An Unsettled History*, Wellington, 1999.

<sup>3</sup> Veracini, Lorenzo, *Negotiating A Bicultural Past: An Historiographical ‘Revolution’ in 1980s Aotearoa/New Zealand*, Wellington, 2001; Hill, Richard S., and Bönisch-Brednich, Brigitte, ‘From Monoculturalism to Biculturalism in Twentieth-Century New Zealand/Aotearoa’, *Cultures of the Commonwealth*, no 8 (Spring 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Walker, Ranginui J, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou: Struggle Without End*, Auckland, 1990.

<sup>5</sup> McGibbon, Ian and Schrader, Ben, ‘Writing it Down: The Historian and Oral History’, *Oral History in New Zealand [OHNZ]*, vol 6, 1994.

Maori, and most oral presentation did not address this except in the broadest of terms. In terms of seeking grounds for compensation for proven and specified breaches of the Treaty, the 'reliable' material was to be found in written, especially official, records. Potentially, huge resources were at stake, as the first settlements in the early-mid 1990s (totalling over half a billion dollars) made clear. But Maori historical presentations that were traditionally genealogical, and which did not produce any 'hard' evidence of Crown breaches of the Treaty, were by definition discounted for not fitting the Crown-set parameters of the exercise.

Maori discontented with this state of affairs were joined by an increasing number of pakeha scholars who recognised the potential of non-written sources. This led eventually to the Tribunal and Crown appreciating that, since Maori-generated history was essentially oral-based, attempts needed to be made to integrally (rather than ornamentally) take it into account in the research findings. The problem remained, however, that the Waitangi Tribunal and Crown negotiators, and their staff, were engaged in seeking conclusions that could be 'proved' by reference to objective 'evidence'. In reparations processes, as in scholarship itself, there was a great deal of what had typified the historical interaction of the two peoples of New Zealand (and of other colonised peoples and their colonisers) - 'talking past each other'.<sup>7</sup>

The situation was complicated for historians by the fact that lawyers were prominent in controlling both hearings and negotiations processes, even though the claims were usually about 'moral' breaches rather than legalities (of, say, Crown expropriation of land and autonomy in the nineteenth century). Legal personnel evinced great scepticism at even standard historical evaluation techniques, demanding (managerially, and in cross examination) 'proof' from a document or documents as to any analysis or conclusions. Maori scholarship was even more suspect, with its insistence on the validity of oral tradition. Ministers of the Crown, their eyes on 'public opinion', were, if anything, yet more sceptical. As the Chief Historian for the Crown on the pioneering Treaty negotiations in the early-mid 1990s, one of the authors of this paper appeared before Cabinet Committees to defend proposed settlements. The questions were invariably of the nature of: 'how do we know this really happened?', or 'where are the [archival] documents'? Most ministers, like most of the lawyers and officials, were not interested in reading the western-methodologised historical reports on which the reparations propositions were based. They were even less concerned with addressing any representation of tribal oral tradition. Listening to tribal traditions could be left to the appropriate ministers at the formal signing ceremonies.

In an abstract sense, tribal presentations fitted the Crown's and Tribunal's departure from the traditional historical norms of curiosity-driven scholarship; both they and claims resolution

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<sup>6</sup> Rigby, Barry, 'The 2000 Waitangi Tribunal Oral History', New Zealand Historical Association, 29 Nov 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Metge, Joan, and Kinloch, Patricia, *Talking Past Each Other*, Wellington, c1978.

processes were instrumentalist, geared to ‘applied history’. On the other hand, the tribes tended to produce historical accounts of matters of importance to themselves, rather than outputs useful for compiling a reparations case that would convince sceptical politicians. In addressing different questions to those the Crown focussed on, Maori were in effect expressing their autonomist aspirations vis a vis the state. Frequently, their accounts were not designed to provide evidence of Crown-Maori relations or the degree to which the claimants had been wronged, but instead to ‘establish meaning for events, and to give a validation for the family’s and the group’s particular claims to mana [status] and knowledge’, through, for example, ‘histories of customary occupation’ of areas or of victories in tribal battles.<sup>8</sup> As with oral accounts elsewhere, the informants provided a base for an understanding of their own worldview of ‘human experiences and social conditions’.<sup>9</sup> While their traditional narratives did have a claiming purpose, then, it was one differing from that which the system was designed to address. As a Maori historian affirms, ‘issues of manawhenua [status on the land] were important to Maori where the establishing of histories of customary occupation was concerned. These histories were preserved over time to enhance the mana of the tribes ... as experienced in the landscape, and as recorded in the wahi tapu [sacred places] found across that landscape.’<sup>10</sup> Tribes preserved their knowledge in different ways, by handing it down in traditional learning schools, through teachings by *tohunga*/experts and elders, or by means of *whanau*/extended family recitation.<sup>11</sup> Whatever these differences, however, all Maori scholars seem to agree on the centrality of tribal *whakapapa*, or genealogy, to Maori oral history and tradition.<sup>12</sup> This remained the thrust of their oral submissions, whatever the Crown wanted.

This is not to argue that Maori history is inflexible. On the contrary, ‘stories handed down’ were ever changing to meet the requirements of the times and occasions.<sup>13</sup> For Maori, ‘all important components of a tribal past, like waka traditions for example, are readily acknowledged ... as perfectly valid history that is constantly maintained within vigorous oral forms’.<sup>14</sup> In short, tribal histories (including such accounts as myths and legends) were to be legitimately utilised in any way necessary in the cause of a given collectivity’s *rangatiratanga*. Tribal research outputs, then were essentially ‘a reflection of the dynamic and ever changing social structures known as whanau, hapu

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<sup>8</sup> Binney, Judith, ‘Maori oral narratives, Pakeha written texts: two forms of telling history’, *New Zealand Journal of History [NZJH]*, Apr 1987, 21(1), pp 21, 27.

<sup>9</sup> Hareven, Tamara, ‘The Search for Generational Memory’, in Danaway, D K and Baum, W K (eds), *Oral History: an Interdisciplinary Anthology*, 2nd ed, California, 1996, p 248.

<sup>10</sup> Keenan, Danny, ‘Ma Pango Ma Whero Ka Oti: Unities and Fragments in Maori History’, in Dalley, Bronwyn and Labrum, Bronwyn (eds), *Fragments: New Zealand Social and Cultural History*, Auckland, 2000, p 50.

<sup>11</sup> Carter, Mita, ‘The preservation of the Maori oral tradition’, *OHNZ*, 1990/1991, vol 3, p 5.

<sup>12</sup> Tau, Rawiri Te Maire, *Nga Pikituroa o Ngai Tahu: The Oral Traditions of Ngai Tahu*, Dunedin, 2003, pp 33-44.

<sup>13</sup> Tau, Rawiri Te Maire ‘The Transformation of Oral Traditions into History’, New Zealand Historical Association, 28 Nov 2003.

<sup>14</sup> Keenan, Danny, ‘The past from the paepae: uses of the past in Māori oral history’, *OHNZ*, 2000/2001, vol 12/13, pp 33, 37.

[subtribe] and iwi [tribe].’ Such dynamism revolves around the collectivity’s ongoing search for ways of adapting to the changing world, and attempting to preserve and enhance distinctive politico-cultural interests within it – particularly, to progress its autonomist aspirations. A tribal researcher, typically, affirms that ‘one of my goals was to ensure that the research would be a living working document’, able to be used by the *iwi*.<sup>15</sup> For another, oral histories are not undertaken ‘for their own sake, but because they identify issues, ideas and concepts of value for the future. It is a challenge for Maori people to create practical and realistic policy directions from tribal traditions and histories [which] can assist in finding solutions for contemporary issues.’<sup>16</sup>

Tribal researchers, those who bring or interpret oral traditions to broader audiences, attempt to ‘enable our own hapu and iwi to benefit from the education and training we have received.’<sup>17</sup> Maori historians have thus made many presentations and submissions to reparations authorities. When the Crown and the Tribunal did begin trying to take such research presentations into account, new difficulties quickly emerged. On the surface, the instrumentalist underpinning of Maori oral history might have led to legally- and politically-driven Crown/Tribunal approval, in contrast to their discomfort at the western historians’ ‘curiosity-driven’ motivations which were alien to official, political and legal perspectives. But its *rangatiratanga*-based origins were such that it was not immediately apparent how Maori history’s directive nature could assist the reparations processes. Maori historians generally believed, for example, that ‘there is not really any such thing as Maori history, but tribal history’, which aimed to pursue collective interests through dissemination of ‘customary Maori knowledge.’<sup>18</sup> This (and subtribal foci which reflect a general scholarly understanding that *hapu* were the ‘building blocks’ of *iwi* management and development<sup>19</sup>) was generally only peripherally relevant to the resolution processes – or had ‘relevant’ matters inserted in ways which were rejected as contrived or ‘unscholarly’. Nor were Maori scholars who called for ‘a Maori counter-narrative’ to the pakeha meta-narrative, one which focussed on the ‘shared histories’ of the Maori people, embraced by official New Zealand.<sup>20</sup> The problem lay with the Maori paradigm that gave legitimacy for the past to be utilised in whatever way was deemed necessary to explain the events of the present, and to be used in advocacy for the aspirations of the future. Oral history’s ‘verifying details, its participants, and even its central mythic cell (its symbolic intent, sometimes expressed through parable) may have been altered’ in

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<sup>15</sup> Walsh-Tapiata, Wheturangi, ‘Rangahau mo te Iwi - ngā pikinga me ngā hekenga’, *OHNZ*, 2000/2001, 12/13, pp 29-32.

<sup>16</sup> McLean, Parekawhia, ‘Oral history and iwi development: a personal viewpoint’, *OHNZ*, 1996/1997, 8/9, pp 21-24.

<sup>17</sup> Selby, Rachel, ‘Partnership and protection of participants: collecting and using Maori oral histories’, *OHNZ*, 1999, vol 11, p 8.

<sup>18</sup> Pere, Joe, ‘Oral Tradition and Tribal History’, *OHNZ*, 1991, vol 3, p 1; Keenan, ‘Ma Pango’, p 51.

<sup>19</sup> Royal, Te Ahukaramu Charles, ‘Oral History and hapu development’, *OHNZ*, 1993, vol 5, p 4.

<sup>20</sup> Keenan, Danny, ‘Predicting the Past: Some Directions in Recent Maori Historiography’, *Te Pouhere Korero Journal*, 1/1, March 1999, p 31.

such circumstances.<sup>21</sup> The Crown's advisers tended to sense special pleading, even fraud, when Maori oral testimony reflected neither curiosity-driven history nor the Crown requirements for reparations through uncovering 'verifiable facts'. Maori presentation was both too overtly instrumental and too focussed on 'non-proven' matters relating to non-wanted aspects of history. The 'stories' of elders ('*kaumatua* evidence') which dominated the Maori presentations were regarded, at best, as 'past experiences presented from the perspectives of the present', without any general understanding that presentism is endemically problematic in all historiography.<sup>22</sup>

But Maori were increasingly insistent on presenting their history in their own, empowered ways, part of a broader indigenous scholarly enterprise that focussed on positive outcomes for their people. As one Maori scholar has put it, 'increasingly throughout the 1990s, research undertaken in education, anthropology, sociology, cultural studies and Maori studies was explicitly intended to record and support Maori self-determination.'<sup>23</sup> A recounting of old traditions was being supplemented by efforts to 'decolonise' research techniques through overturning old paradigms.<sup>24</sup> Or, at very least, claimant groups began, in tune with their flexible approach, to incorporate into their research presentations documented matters of interest to the Crown.

But Maori continued to focus on their traditional historical methodology, inducing ongoing Crown unease about the reliability of oral information - both oral history in the sense of generational transmission of tradition,<sup>25</sup> and that which presented individuals' memories of their own life and times.<sup>26</sup> With regard to the latter, there was particular concern at the effects of 'memory loss'. Memories of the same events can differ wildly, of course, even among families, with gender differences adding to the many layers of difficulty. Retrieval can be high, if appropriate cues are given in a situation of interviewer persistence, but there are many impediments, including matters of cultural reticence vis a vis people of status in the tribe. There are also conceptual, metaphorical and methodological difficulties.<sup>27</sup> When, for example, Crown advisers discovered that a moving testimony by a *kuia*/female elder regarding a massacre by Crown forces had not been eyewitnessed at all, but embodied a tribal memory relayed in the first person, they suspected deliberate deception – although the massacre is confirmed in written primary sources.

Overarching all such difficulties were the Tribunal's and Crown's imperatives to 'uncover the facts'. Some tribal memories were seen as 'unreliable' as they originated from pioneering anthropologists in the first place. In the Treaty claims processes, for example, claimants have

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<sup>21</sup> Binney, pp 16, 25.

<sup>22</sup> Hareven, p 247.

<sup>23</sup> Rata, Elizabeth, 'An Overview of Neotribal Capitalism', *Ethnologies Comparées*, No. 6, Printemps 2003, p 9.

<sup>24</sup> Smith, Linda Tuhiwai, *Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Dunedin, 1999.

<sup>25</sup> Piripi Walker, in 'Locating memory', *OHNZ*, 1993, vol 5, p 27; Tau, *Nga Pikituroa*; Tau, 'Transformation'.

<sup>26</sup> Laurie, Alison J, 'Manufacturing Silences: Not every recorded interview is an oral history', *OHNZ*, 2000/01.

<sup>27</sup> See Caroline Daley, John McDowell and Alwyn Owen in 'Locating memory', *OHNZ*, 1993, vol 5, pp 23-25.

referred to a mythical pre-Maori people in the country before the arrival of their *waka*/canoes from the Pacific, a colonising-justification myth invented by pioneering ethnographers that has long since been discredited by pakeha scholarship.<sup>28</sup> There are cases where tribal historians have innocently provided almost word-perfect recitations of passages from ethnographical books which have been orally transmitted to them as ‘the tribal view’. The unsuitability of orality as a medium for providing reliable ‘small facts’ – years, interracial events, specific encounters - has led to a discounting of tribal perspectives on ‘large facts’ - such as an iwi’s feelings, through time, about its treatment by the Crown. The latter’s historical advisers, with little awareness that their own perspectives are to a greater or lesser degree presentist, remain suspicious of a history that alters according to circumstances; the politicians and the lawyers dismiss, even more openly, a presentism which engages with *rangatiratanga* concerns that do not suit their own agenda. Maori have therefore felt denigrated within the very official processes provided for pursuit of compensation for historical injustices perpetrated against them.

Cultural differences exacerbate misunderstandings, and Maori lack trust in the integrity of the system to respect their wishes over public use of information, an attitude exacerbated by pakeha behaviour perceived to be culturally inappropriate.<sup>29</sup> One of the authors of this paper has been told tribal secrets that were not able to be used in the Treaty negotiations processes, even though revealing them would have assisted settlements and so advantaged the claimants. If the Crown knew the location of a sacred spring, for example, this might assist in identifying tribal *manawhenua* for an area. But the location would be thereby eventually entered into the official record, and under the Official Information Act other people – Maori or pakeha – might assess it and then violate the sanctity of the site. A Maori researcher notes, typically, that it was ‘incumbent upon me as the researcher to ensure the protection of the stories’. Conversely, when venturing into tribal knowledge pakeha scholars have restrictions placed upon them with which they are often uncomfortable. If ‘academic’ researchers want to have contact with Maori informants they are instructed to learn ‘listening with the heart’, ‘gracefully accepting refusals to impart information’, and ‘not challenging its veracity’. They are told that they need to accept that ‘indigenous history has invariably a spiritual dimension, is holistic rather than dissected into discrete fields, and that its truth is not necessarily literal and lies deeper than historical accuracy.’<sup>30</sup> In short, western

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<sup>28</sup> Reilly, Michael, ‘An Ambiguous Past: Representing Maori History’, *NZJH*, 1995, 29(1), pp 19-39.

<sup>29</sup> Tuteao, Verna, Heperi, Ian, Simon, Judith and Matthews, Kay Morris, ‘Gathering oral histories as a bicultural project: research on the Native Schools system’, *OHNZ*, 1996/1997, 8/9, pp 39-40.

<sup>30</sup> Selby, p 8; Shukul, Anna, “‘Its all About Respect’: The Etiquette of Recording Indigenous Oral History”, *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, no 20, p 18.

intellectual property rights and scholarly methods are often at variance with Maori notions of collective heritage and scholarly procedures.<sup>31</sup>

Such matters go to the heart of the much contested function and practice of the discipline of history. Whatever the inroads that historical relativism and postmodernism have made into New Zealand academia, the Crown has been immune. Its scholarly advisors have taken a traditional approach – the ultimate ‘truth’ was being sought, and to ascertain it, written evidence contained in ‘definitive’ documents needed to be produced. This was partly due to western norms of scholarly conduct, and partly the result of staid legalism. But document-based truth-seeking also reflected the fact that providing compensation was, at the end of the day, a political process. There were many sectors of the pakeha public who were untouched by revisionist history and/or were sceptical of the validity of claims. The fact that New Zealand was increasingly bicultural in day to day living provided a base for general pakeha support for the justice of ‘righting past wrongs’, then, but only so long as these were seen to rest on rigorous historical assessment and legal signoff. In this enterprise, open Maori instrumentalism and closed Maori knowledge could impede public, therefore political, acceptance of the case for reparations. Over and above this, pakeha knowledge paradigms were not amenable to ‘oral tradition’ histories whose thrust remained establishing the *mana* of *whakapapa* groupings, which did not contextualise, and which did not employ western modes of analysis. Maori history’s focus on connecting individuals with their collective genealogies, and collectivities with places, was not something that the Crown could make much actual *use* of in public as well as in the hearings and negotiations processes. Ringatu Church adherents, for example, see history as ‘conceived as an extension of mythology’.<sup>32</sup>

Yet reparations needed to be pegged to a ‘proven’ degree of culpability by the Crown in its past breaches of the Treaty, to help smooth the path for Maori to move from ‘grievance to development mode’.<sup>33</sup> There are very practical consequences, then, if conceptual difficulties relating to the ‘two remembered histories in New Zealand since 1840’ can be resolved – the history ‘of the colonizers and that of the colonized’, whose methods, ‘visions and goals were often different’.<sup>34</sup> In one respect the Crown has come, increasingly, to appreciate Maori oral testimony. Stories of heroic deeds by eponymous ancestors, or creation or ‘arrival’ stories, have been of significance for assisting it to ascertain which groupings of people to deal with on such matters as handing land back to tribes. Even here, however, major difficulties occur which relate to the nature and purpose of history as perceived by Maori. The claimant collective, describing the past from its

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<sup>31</sup> Coleman, Mereana, ‘Information as a commodity and intellectual property rights of Maori society’, *Historical Review*, May 2002, 50(1), pp 47-51.

<sup>32</sup> For indigenous politics/oral history, see Robert Perks’ and Alistair Thomson’s article ‘Advocacy and Empowerment: Introduction’, in their *The Oral History Reader*, London and New York, 1998, p 184; Binney, p 20.

<sup>33</sup> Graham, Douglas, *Trick or Treaty?*, Wellington, 1997, p 58.



own perspective and to suit its current goals, might well present a different version from that of another collectivity with an overlapping claim or jurisdictional area. Pakeha officials and historians do not have the luxury of scholars able to present competing stories as if they were unproblematic,<sup>35</sup> for the Crown needs the ‘finality’ and ‘definitiveness’ that its lawyers and ‘the public’ demand. When unable to use a tribal oral history because of contesting versions, its historical advisers have no choice but to fall back on conventional historiographical methods – testing stories against the written record, preferably records generated close to the time under examination.

Despite all these difficulties, the reparations process continues, and by international standards it is highly successful. As a result, many scholars, oral and otherwise, Maori and pakeha, together with officials and members of the general public, have focussed their minds on issues relating to the purpose and methods of historical research. During the resurgence in Maori history production, a Maori historians’ association, Te Pouhere Korero, was formed. It argued, together with some pakeha historians, that indigenous historical methodology and worldview (*tikanga* and *matauranga Maori*) should have equal status with western-based historical outputs. Postmodern influences in scholarship, and a widespread interest among oral historians in recording Maori ‘life stories’, helped gain widespread acceptance for this. Terminology relating to ‘storytelling’ often replaced that of ‘analysis and judgement’, so much so that in the early 1990s the government’s Historical Branch gained an extra name - Te Puna Korero Tuku Iho – that meant ‘the source of stories handed down’. Now, even some Maori scholars are resiling from a position of parity of validity.<sup>36</sup>

Instead, and partly prompted by the Treaty resolution processes, a number of scholars have been anxious to find ways of combining western and indigenous methodologies – especially of integrating written source-based history with that centring on oral tradition. A Maori scholar tells, for example, of how his *hapu*’s oral traditions ‘can be elicited from our present-day elders. And when co-ordinated with the written record, the rich tapestry of our unique Ngati Kikopiri culture does unfold.’<sup>37</sup> Most such efforts, however, primarily reflected western-based scholarship, with aspects of oral evidence ‘taken into account’. Some tackled the highly problematic task of melding scholarships emanating from two separate worldviews. On the most basic level, if *whakapapa* ‘is the backbone of all Maori history’, as New Zealand scholars tend to agree, and narratives are both

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<sup>34</sup> Binney, p 16.

<sup>35</sup> See eg Young, David, *Woven By Water*, Wellington, 1998.

<sup>36</sup> Tau, ‘Transformation’.

<sup>37</sup> Royal, p 6.

contested within Maoridom and ever changing, incorporating ‘an oral tradition into a written text which purports to deal with the same events’ is exceedingly challenging.<sup>38</sup>

Attempts at such revisioning need to grapple, in particular, with fundamental differences in purpose. Take, for example, a display in Wellington’s postmodernist, biculturalist Te Papa Tongarewa, the National Museum of New Zealand. In the main Maori gallery a small pictorial display on the Chatham Islands was established to provide information on the islands’ indigenous Moriori people. In the eyes of some academic historians, it blatantly sanitised the fate of the Moriori at the hands of mainland based tribes. When they publicly protested, the Wellington tribes, who exercise stewardship over the gallery, noted that they had prepared the display in conjunction with the people now identifying as Moriori. Both tribal groupings declared that they would present their history as they wished, that their purpose was reconciliatory, that their common enemy was the Crown – which had taken land and *rangatiratanga* off them both, and which is now due to conclude reparations negotiations. The display remained untouched, and many pakeha scholars remained unsatisfied with it – while generally approving the Waitangi Tribunal’s report on the Chathams.<sup>39</sup>

Despite such difficulties, a number of scholars, Maori and pakeha, continue attempts to present a history that reflects a combination of western and indigenous perspectives. The Tribunal has been the umbrella for useful pioneering in this field (although scholars often disagree with aspects of its findings – their ‘presentism’, for example). Reports generated by its processes, however, still tend to produce ‘separate versions’ than any merged, shared or innovative historical vision. There are, increasingly, other initiatives to fill the lacunae: a Maori/pakeha research team, for example, has initiated a joint venture research project that aims to avoid past pitfalls whereby ‘western structures, institutions and practices have either submerged or replaced Maori ways of being and doing.’ The team aims to put into practice ‘the partnership ideals embodied in the Treaty of Waitangi’ and is attempting to develop a methodology that, inter alia, melds western and indigenous modes of scholarship and worldview. Such endeavours often take on board the findings of international scholarship, but essentially constitute a development which has arisen from the interactions between the scholars and people of an antipodean country attempting to redress the injustices of the past in order to improve the future. Such explorations are of necessity tentative. But if the various parties can come to more fully understand that all ‘history is the shaping of the past by those living in the present’, and that ‘all histories derive from a particular time, a particular place, and a particular cultural heritage’,<sup>40</sup> reconciliatory progress will be enhanced. Already, New

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<sup>38</sup> Munz, Peter, ‘The Purity of Historical Method: Some Sceptical Reflections on the Current Enthusiasm for the History of Non-European Societies’, *NZJH*, Apr 1971, 5(1), pp 1-17; Binney, p 21.

<sup>39</sup> Waitangi Tribunal, *Rekohu*, Wai 64, Wellington, 2001.

<sup>40</sup> Binney, p 16.

Zealand's indigenous reparations procedures, although relatively new, are globally significant on social justice grounds; the pioneering of new ways of undertaking oral history research and utilising its results may prove to be a beneficial scholarly spinoff.