MAI TE KOPU O TE WAHINE: CONSIDERING MAORI WOMEN AND POWER

Ngahuia te Awekotuku
National Centre for Maori Research Excellence, University of Auckland

Moko kauae: female Maori facial tattoo. This is the subtle power of maintaining a femininity that offends, that endures, that persists in the face of the settlers' and invaders' descendants; threatens sensibility and comfort levels; and continues to fascinate and challenge, charm and repel. Whether or not they were aware doing this, the elderly women who continued to inscribe their faces into the final decades of the past century and wear their identity and heritage with pride, were effectively confronting the colonizer and saying, we are here, and we will never ever go away. My face may make you uncomfortable, but it is my face, made by my pain. It is my pride, confronting your fear and your infatuation. And we will never go away. Maori women will not disappear. We will always walk this land, which carries the bones of our forebears and enfolds the placenta of our newborns. He mana a whenua: he mana wahine—this is who we are. This is our power; the assertion of influence and identity, the claiming of time and space. The assurance of continuity.

I WRITE THIS ARTICLE AWARE OF A PLETHORA OF BOOKS published over the past twenty-five years or so by Maori women, about Maori women. Many were prompted and supported by the 1993 centennial of women's suffrage; my favorite titles include *Mana Wahine: Women Who Show the Way*,[1] *Te Timatanga Tatou Tatou*,[2] and the mixed-authorship collectives of *Standing in the Sunshine*[3] and *Women Together*.[4] These are still pivotal reference texts. Others have also lamented a perceived corrosion of mana wahine by colonization, or they have lucidly celebrated the resilience of what remains.[5]

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Before 1993, a few dazzling arts-related publications by Maori women on their own arts heritage appeared, including *Wahine Toa* and *Karanga Karanga*[6] and small pieces in the popular and feminist press.[7] Two powerful coauthored biographies, *Guide Rangi of Rotorua* (1962) and *Amiria* (1976), are still important voices.[8] Overlooked for many decades by the academy, one significant scholarly volume was *The Old Time Maori*,[9] an authentic reflection of early Maori life through the autobiographic and ethnographic lens of Makereti Papakura, a Te Arawa woman born in the early 1870s. A further text is my compilation of Maori and feminist essays (1971–1991).[10]

Currently, the Waitangi Tribunal Claims Process is developing a rich resource of narratives that record the significance of female lines and leadership in the defense, stewardship, and development of ancestral land.[11] Since 1993, student writings by Maori women at various levels, from undergraduate essays to doctoral dissertations,[12] have discussed Maori women and Maori women's issues, forcefully challenging the misconceptions proffered by the only reference that ever came up in my student years: Heuer's execrable thesis, *Maori Women*,[13] which accompanied the maudlin pictorial works of Zambucka, Sangl, and various others,[14] constructed as weeping in dignity for another time and place. These images reinforced the mana and visuality of moko kauae, as the locus for the perception of fading female power. Such colonial predictions anticipated the extinction of an indigenous people,[15] but the moko kauae, Maori women, are still here, as Ahumai Te Paerata proclaimed to the colonial troops on the Orakau battlefield in 1864: "Ka whawhai tonu matou, ake ake ake! We will fight, and endure forever!"[16]

Such voices continue to resonate through the generations—the power of the female most noticeable, in modern times, during rituals of encounter. This power is in the first voice and first message that echoes across ceremonial space, the chant of karanga, for welcome and mourning, for greetings and remembrance.

The ritual is described by a young girl watching visitors arrive in her village:

> Then suddenly, quite suddenly, everything started to happen at once. And the ghosts began to move. While the softest, gentlest rain fell on their faces, the women's chant of karanga, of welcome, of mourning, of celebration, passed back and forth, then merged together, and the living and the dying and the dead were all as one. She sensed the weaving in the air around the tree, in the warmth rising from the ground, in the moving of the visitors, and the receiving of her own people, like they were all fitting together, fusing and fitting into each other.[17]

Known as reo karanga, or kai karanga, many women practitioners of this chant form liken the experience to a weaving of souls, a braiding together of

FIGURE 1. **Ngati Whakaue, Te Arawa reception for Harry and Meghan, 2018. The kuia and the assembled tribe await the arrival of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex at Te Papaiouru Marae, Ohinemutu, Rotorua. The front line comprises elderly women, with reo karanga (formal chanters) before them on their right. Private collection.**

spirits in preparation for the event itself, whether it is of mourning or political discussion or celebration.

Another village woman recalls a childhood memory:

> On the marae, outside in the public area things happened which always fascinated me. I was intrigued and exalted by what I saw and heard even as a young girl. What got me going was the sound of karanga, this searing intense pain-laden echo of grief and of welcome. It would resonate across the marae, across the lake, across the steaming hot pools. . . . I'd watch the old women doing it, their long black skirts billowing, their eyes moist with tears, and then the ones coming in would answer them, and their voices would volley back and forth, telling stories. Raising ghosts, sending them on. Crying for them. Healing the bereaved. And I would find myself in another world, until they had finished and there was the movement of the visitors into the house as the host reo karanga held the door; or into the embrace of

> my people, the home people. Until this exchange was over, nothing else would happen. The men were silent. When everyone was settled, and the guests were sitting down, the men got up to talk, to perform their oratory, to showcase their expertise. Again, it was an exchange of information, between host and visitor. With strident eloquence, the men took control. What was interesting is that the men are perceived as the power on the marae; yet it was and still is a power enhanced and complimented in a truly meaningful and deeply spiritual way by the opening of the ceremony by the female voice, by the women's exchange of chant that usually occurs beneath the sky, upon the wind; through sunshine or rainfall. Out in the open. I believe we don't talk about that enough.

What does it mean when a "reo karanga holds the door?" This is another pithy demonstration of female power. No visitor—male or female, young or old—can get past her until she is ready. She stands her ground; she holds the door before the visitors. Their ghosts and their intentions must wait until she determines them safe. If there is doubt, she may intone gentle phrases of love and goodwill; if the visitors push her and challenge her authority, then the reo karanga instantly reacts. With a fierce voice, she begins a ngeri (war chant) or sometimes a haka to assert the mana whenua, the primacy of the host tribe on their ground. All the male orators and the female manu tioriori of the formal singing group and the local people immediately rise to support her and to remind the visitors that they are visitors and must behave accordingly. The power, the mana, comes from the people, comes from the house, from the marae, from the land itself, but comes through the invocation of a woman, the reo karanga.

As I write this article, I am also acutely aware of another factor that has presented itself on the marae of Aotearoa in our Maori world of the twenty-first century. Is karanga only for those who are born female and Maori? Can it be done by a non-Maori woman or a trans woman? There is no generic rule that answers this question, although it is an issue that has been raised on many occasions—some are relatively modest events like at government office or school functions where a "trained" pakeha staff member will "step up" to the occasion; others are much grander and privileging the person with the best reo or language acuity and the strongest, most penetrating voice. She may be a trans woman; I recently witnessed this at a major national event.

When I was much younger, I asked about this at home, where the roles of female and male on the marae have always been rigorously observed and vehemently gendered. Men speechify, and women chant. Te Arawa is regarded as the most uncompromising tribe in such matters, but, as already discussed, there is a balance of power in the meaning of what females and what males do. The older

women replied that the karanga itself emerges from te kopu o te wahine, from deep within, from the womb itself as the site of new generations, from the primal cries of remembered childbirth, so one needs a womb to do this, but ideally a reo karanga should be past menopause. I tried to probe further, asking about childless or posthysterectomy women and trans women, as my critical Western feminism kicked into the conversation with my mother and aunties. They shut me down. Decades later, I wonder what they would think and say about what is happening now. There are no trans women chanting as reo karanga on our Te Arawa marae, but some do karanga in other tribal regions. And they wear moko kauae, potent symbol of the Maori feminine. For my people, the issue is regarded as the private hapu business of each marae, as they choose according to what they believe and who is available and qualified to undertake the task and to carry that responsibility for their people.

One important aspect of karanga, in its most sophisticated form, is the process of composition. While many reo karanga chant in a formulaic manner, with learned phrasing and appropriate references amended to suit the occasion, some engage in creative and erudite improvisation.[18] Women design small, exquisite jewels of word imagery and vital information that encompass genealogy, landscape, and specific personal stories, especially if the event is a tangihanga, or death ritual. They cast these lines of verbal beauty into the wind, sometimes to be retrieved and then applied by an astute orator in his whai korero. In this way, the complementary nature of gender relations on the marae is witnessed and appreciated.

Such lines may also become the content of original moteatea, or chant songs, the traditional vocal music of the Maori people, or phrases of karanga may be taken from these sources. In his comprehensive three-volume compilation[19] of traditional Maori songs, Ngata asserts there are four categories: (1) Popo, ara, oriori: lullabies; (2) Nga waiata tangi: laments; (3) Nga Patere, nga Kaioraora: abusive songs and songs of defiance; and (4) Nga Waiata Whaiaipo: love songs. A cursory examination reveals that more than half the composers were female, their work ranging from the muscular strength and ferocity of patere and kaioraora to the poignant lamentation of tangi and the lyrical content of lullabies, often for their daughters, and love songs. Other women, as rivals in love or as malevolent gossips, were often the focus or the content of the composition's narrative, best illustrated in the Patere, or songs of defiance. Through moteatea, the power, the delivery of information from one generation to the next, the geographic specificity of location, and the physiological details of those honored or remembered, as lovers, as enemies, as infants, as warriors, as leaders, all of this knowledge is transmitted through this influential and enduring medium. And it was a medium in which creative women excelled and asserted their enduring authority by the weaving of words, the provision of a cloak of knowledge

for those generations yet to come. This cloak is not only about information; it may also be about joy, about remembrance, about triumph and disaster, about survival, as the feathers and fiber of stories entwine with new texture and experience. Since the mid-twentieth century, the Maori world has been gifted with the resonant genius of composers like Tuini Ngawai, Ngoi Pewhairangi, Kohine Ponika, and Pimia Wehi and, in more recent years, the work of Mahinarangi Tocker, Moana Maniapoto, and Whirimako Black.[20] And many more are rising.

Creativity flows like ocean currents through the worlds of Maori and Pasifika women. Weaving, from mundane everyday objects to sublime treasures, remains a source of honor and income in many Maori and Pasifika communities. Primarily the work of women, at a basic level in ancient times, it provided clothing, household goods, and furnishings, like wall panels, mats, and basketry, but on a more exalted level, weaving also developed as a prestige art form in the design and manufacture of fine mats and exquisite garments. Artists of such creativity and skill were admired; even in recent years, the mana accrued also ensured a steady income for their families.[21] While there is some gendered practice in the domains of art making and production, for Maori women the most significant and frustrating is toi whakairo, the art of carving. This convention is discussed more thoroughly elsewhere[22] and deserves intensive rigorous inquiry. In my community, a few women carvers still work, usually at home and in privacy and often on commission, producing walking staffs, taiaha, and small containers. They do not work on houses or canoes, but they wield mallet and chisel with confidence and grace, and they are trained by their fathers, brothers, grandfathers, and husbands. Others inscribe decorative gourds, and a growing number have begun to apply their skills in ta moko, the ornamentation of skin,[23] with machines and also with chisels.

Like the art of composition, carving in wood, stone, and bone recorded the vision, sensibility, and values of the people; carving was a means by which identities and histories could be visualized, then touched and revered. Accessible. Growing up in a community rich with heritage arts, primarily for and about us but also as an income source from tourists, I considered the depiction of tupuna kuia, of female ancestors. I sought them on the walls of our carved houses, where most of the heavily embellished panels show no gender at all but pulse with an interesting energy. Some women are clearly presented with a signifier; Hinemoa, famous for her defiant midnight swim, carries gourds like floating waterwings; Te Whakaotirangi, a renowned gardener who brought kumara from Hawaiki, clutches a little kete of tiny tubers; Kurungaituku, a bird/human shape-shifter, folds her vast wings. Some men are also vividly depicted: the athletic brothers Tamatekapua and Whakaturia upright on their stilts, the explorer Ihenga with his intrepid little dog, the musician Tutanekai playing an elegant flute. It is usually assumed that the other neutral figures, many of whom

FIGURE 2. **Pou Whakarae Wahine. A female guardian sentinel figure on the palisade at Rotowhio Pa, Whakarewarewa, Rotorua, carved ca. 1970. This image is based on a much older female whakairo form. Photo by author.**

clutch various forms of weaponry, are male. It is similarly assumed that hei tiki, the small talismanic humanoid figure, is male. I questioned this and asked the same group of patient elderly women why all the neutral panels were supposed to be men, and I was directed to ask the uncles who were carvers. Again, the conversation was shut down. But I kept probing. And as I began my doctoral journey, I found them.

Women of power were remembered in wood, in pounamu jade, in stone. If they are sexed at all, many ancient hei tiki in the care of Maori families or held by local and overseas museum collections have clearly defined female genitalia. The majority of precontact hei tiki are neutral. I have yet to find a phallic hei tiki that predates the twentieth century, and I've reached the conclusion they may not exist at all, as the talismanic power of the figure itself concerns female fertility and embryonic growth. Apart from the actual event that led to her being hapu, what does an ure (penis) have to contribute to an already gestating mother? During my time at the Waikato Museum, two extraordinary carved female figures came into the collection; I set out to find more and located countless examples in institutions throughout the world. Most were acquired during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Their graphically detailed genitalia leave no doubt, many reflecting the early practice of tara whakairo, or tattooing the labia and mons veneris[24] to prepare and beautify the passage for a new human being, usually of chiefly lineage, into the human world. The carved forms include tekoteko (gable figures), poutokomanawa (sculptures at the base of center poles), house panels, feather boxes, weapons like kotaha slings, and pare, the rich horizontal panel that sits above the doorway of an ancestral house. Each tribal region developed its own style, but every carving tradition on these islands, in pre-European times, proclaimed the mana of women, the power of the female. The evidence is out there, and we, their granddaughters, need to be made aware of this reality and celebrate it. Representation of the female in the early Maori world was robust, each image reinforcing a narrative of achievement, memory, leadership, entertainment, and respect. Images of power. These narratives are at the core of whakapapa, or genealogy, as Maori society is ambilineal. For inheritance of property and power, both the mother's and the father's lines of descent hold equal value. Primogeniture I suspect arrived with the Book of Genesis; patriarchy and patrilineage were introduced after 1814 and are well considered elsewhere.[25] It certainly affected the pakeha perception of tribal power. Despite this, the colonizers could not change what was attested in wood and stone, though they did attempt to obliterate the carved record in some parts of the country. That story should be told by the descendants, as their taonga are celebrated, or resurrected and reclaimed.[26]

Women were depicted in the visual arts as a source of power and inspiration in the ancient Maori world. What happened after 1769? How were Maori

FIGURE 3. **Hei Tiki. This traditional amulet is carved in pounamu or nephrite jade. She invokes female grace and fertility, revealed by her pronounced vulval area (private collection). Photo by author.**

women seen then, if they were seen at all? In what ways did the nineteenth-century invasion of traders and whalers, speculators and missionaries, militia and immigrants impact the representation of Maori women and women of power? While conscious of the encounter experiences in other regions, especially the seaside trading centers of the far north, the east coast, and the remote south and those regions that survived the horror of raupatu, I will confine my discussion to my own people, Te Arawa, and my primary iwi, Ngati Whakaue. In our village, Ohinemutu, we enjoy a deeply textured repertoire of ancient songs composed by women, and distinctive galleries of whakairo remind us of our female forebears. By the mid-nineteenth century, more and more travelers, moneyed invalids, and tourists were visiting the region's unique volcanic landscape seeking better health or distraction. Below is an account of Ohinemutu written in 1864 by a minor English aristocrat:

> This settlement has always been famed throughout Maoriland for the beauty of the women, from the days of Hinemoa down to the present time, and during our stay we saw a few young girls with complexions like southern gypsies, just fair enough to let the warm colour show through clear olive skin, and large dark lustrous eyes, with great ever changing expression, and beautiful, snow white, regular teeth.[27]

As the new colony developed, the healing waters, silica terraces, cascading geysers, and exotic tribal culture of Rotorua attracted a burgeoning traffic of intrepid sightseers and wealthy folk with assorted medical afflictions. Entrepreneurial Maori offered modest lodgings and guiding services to the mineral springs. In Ohinemutu in 1871–1872, the first hostelry was opened by a Maori woman and her pakeha husband; within five years, hotels were established.[28] The Pink and White Terraces farther inland near Te Wairoa offered the most spectacular natural healing spa in the colonial world, and by the mid-1880s that community enjoyed a bustling commerce that involved two renowned and heroic local women, the guides Sophia and Kate.[29] All this was tragically and completely destroyed by the catastrophic eruption of the volcano Tarawera in 1886. Despite this setback, tourists still came to the region, and guiding them through the thermal landscape, sharing the natural wonders, became women's work. The survivors of Te Wairoa were offered refuge in the Whakarewarewa valley, another utterly singular realm of mineral springs, active geysers, and boiling pools; women resumed guiding.[30] By the first decade of the twentieth century, the government had acquired administrative control of the valley, but the woman guides led by Guide Sophia and her stellar protégé, the charismatic Makereti, Maggie Papakura,[31] continued to receive and guide visitors through the thermal park and around the steaming village where even the

most everyday tasks—bathing children, washing clothes, and cooking food—delighted the visitors. They were equally fascinated by cultural performance; they wanted to listen to melodious Maori songs and watch Maori dances. The old people I grew up with, many of whom were born in the 1870s and 1880s, were adamant that we, as Te Arawa, retain control. This assertion was the basis of my doctoral thesis. We showed tourists only what we wanted them to see.

As the new century dawned, all of this—the landscape, the people, their homes, their dance, and their art forms—was captured by the promotional mechanism of the carte visite, the ubiquitous pictorial postcard.[32] This is an experience we share with our Pacific kin, the display of our grandmothers, great-aunts, mothers, sisters, and aunts as a commodity to attract the attention of the visitor or as a small visual souvenir to post or take home. Many of the women, like those painted by Goldie and Lindauer,[33] wore their moko kauae with pride. Who had the power in these encounters? Who asserted agency? The photographer or the photographed? The painter or the painted? Or their descendants? Who, in the long term, gained the most benefit? Was it always and only about the Western male gaze? Were those photographed always powerless and exposed?

Does one Pacific activist researcher's damning commentary that pictorial models are complicit in their own commodification relate to Maori women? And that those women who consent must be complicit and that all the others must be victims? How valid is this assertion by a feminist outsider, that "represented on postcards, Maori women, their land and their culture are reduced by patriarchal mechanisms to the level of commercial prostitution"?[34] Both of these assumptions deny the photographed women any agency or control of their own power and contend that they were coerced or somehow manipulated. It is acknowledged that some images are awkward, offensive, and contrived, but not all of them are and certainly not most of them. Women, choosing to work in the modern industry and pictured in those images, are judged and condemned: "It is a measure of the depth of our mental oppression; we can't understand cultural degradation, because we are living it."[35] This is a deficit analysis; it is as uninformed, self-righteous, and condescending as any words from the mouth of a moralizing colonial missionary because they have the arrogance to assume the right to speak on our behalf, theorize on our experience, and deny our voice.

At this point in this article, my perspective becomes personal. Rather than unravel the tangled weave of attempted objectivity, economic survival, activist shaming and outrage, and tribal and whanau pride, I acknowledge that many of the women in my family and my village were employed as pictorial models. With dignity and pride. Over three generations, they posed for postcards, record and magazine covers, calendars, tourist posters, and promotional exhibits. They were weavers, storytellers, entertainers, and guides. Assertive and honorable,

FIGURE 4. **Makereti: Guide Maggie Papakura, 1910. Guide, visionary, entrepreneur, and Oxford University scholar, Makereti wrote the pivotal text *The Old Time Maori*. It was published eight years after her death. Private collection.**

they controlled their own lives. My grandmother, Hera Tawhai Rogers, lived a rich and remarkable eighty-five years. She was featured on a popular series of postcards and promotional publications from the late 1890s and was frequently celebrated as the "Belle of the Kainga." With Guide Maggie Papakura's renowned concert party, she traveled to Australia and then later Britain. In 1914, she played the lead role in *Hinemoa*, the first feature film produced in Aotearoa New Zealand.[36] Although there is no surviving print of this movie, the publicity poster remains, and like all her other images, it is extraordinary. She often laughed at how some of the pakeha photographers and tourists tried to persuade her and her cousins to show more leg or more chest or in one case (and she remembered only one, and all the girls chased him away!) to take all their clothes off. Nudity in the bathing pools with each other was natural, but to show all that to a pakeha for money was not proper. She was very firm about this, and so were the others in my family of women. You offered your smile, and that was enough. You did not take your clothes off. And you did it because posing for photographs gave you pleasure, the income helped the whanau, and tourists were always trying to take pictures of you anyway. In this scenario, the women being photographed were very much in control.

Until the late 1970s, women from Ohinemutu and Whakarewarewa, the villages closest to Rotorua city, earned some income modeling. Most of them also performed in the evening as cultural entertainers in resorts and hotel restaurants. Some went on to win beauty pageants while retaining other careers. Of my own generation, one worked in the health sector, one became a prominent local politician, and another succeeded as a visual artist and gallery owner.[37] My high school years were funded by beaming toothfully at the camera; I enjoyed the attention and the work. In contrast to my usual weekend jobs washing restaurant dishes or cleaning motels, modeling, which meant standing around wearing traditional Maori costume next to an ornate carving, hot spring, lush fern, or trout pool, paid exceptionally well. Usually the photographers were contracted by the Tourist and Publicity Department of the New Zealand government. Private work for commercial magazines and record covers was rare, though it paid more. In the context of my own community and the family legacy of attractive women whose images were sent around the country and the world, there was very little doubt and discomfort expressed about this type of work. Sometimes it did become absurd, as I noted cynically in the following paragraph:

> One incongruous image that has been repeated several times, and never questioned, is the cooking scene. Women bedecked in ornate regalia, kiwi feather cloaks, long piupiu and rich taniko, pensively suspend a basket of raw food into a steaming pool. No one, not even the

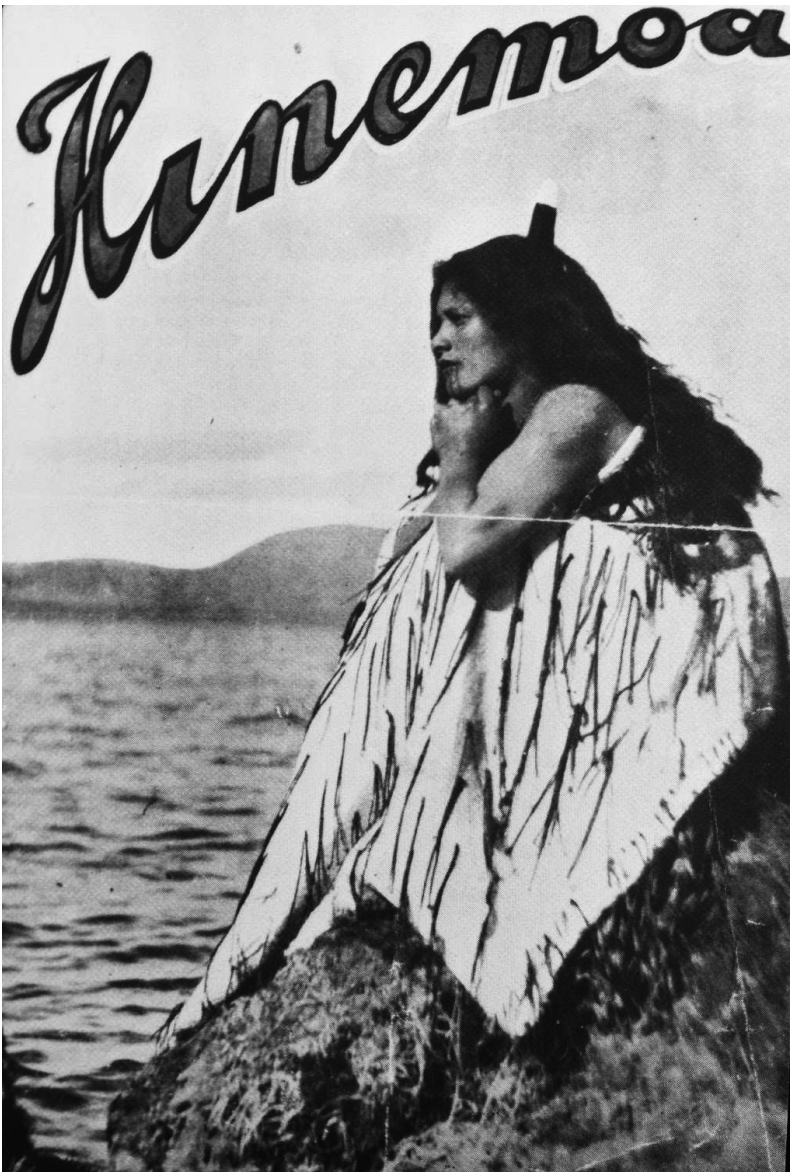

FIGURE 5. **Hera Tawhai Rogers. Promotional poster of the author's grandmother as Hinemoa in 1914. "Hinemoa" was the first full length feature film made in Aotearoa New Zealand. Private Collection.**

> models, pauses to reflect on how they are pay acting at ethnic cooking, clad in the extremely rich and splendid garb used only on exalted tribal occasions.[38]

Another even more bizarre is the constructed image of a Maori maiden leaning over a lily pond to caress a lotus while a foreign ceramic frog whispers in her ear! Behind these images are other layers of tension and possibility; not all the women of the extended family and wider community became models or were sought after by the designers of the early carte visite. Certain "looks" were preferred: long hair, good teeth, large eyes, smooth complexion, and a slim build. Whose aesthetic was this? Did having an appeal to the Western male gaze in this situation then position the models, who controlled what they did for themselves and their families, in the role of collusion? Of collaboration? Were they complicit in their own people's commodification? The women in my family would argue that they retained their mana; they retained their power; they enjoyed financial independence but remained humble about how they looked and how this offered them opportunities. In many ways, as a teenager, I just went along with what my aunts, my grandmother, and my cousins did; we all made the most of what came our way. One summer, aged sixteen, I traveled to Australia for two weeks promoting the thermal wonderland and colorful Maori culture of Rotorua. As a solo act, I sang, I danced, I talked, I smiled, I charmed—and I watched and listened and saw and learned a lot.

Ten years later, I unpacked it all in my doctorate, which involved a tourism and development internship at the East West Center, Honolulu, Hawai'i, from early 1975 until late 1980. During that time, I studied cultural tourism primarily in Hawai'i, with periodic visits to Samoa, Tonga, and Rarotonga. The local women and families I befriended, most of whom were involved in various aspects of the industry, as entertainers, art makers, and tour guides, had a similar view and comparable experience. Concerning the really spurious images of topless women on the postcard racks in Waikiki, when I felt brave enough to ask, they would inform me that the models were not local or even Polynesian but from Southeast Asia or the Philippines! And one self-assured Hawaiian grandmother offered this opinion: "In America, there will always be pornography." Her immediate family also featured prominently in promotional material; this refined elderly woman was confident that what we did was not pornographic because we set the rules and were in control.

Grandmothers carry the power of the Maori and Pasifika community. They assert a quiet control. In the closing years of the past century, for our whanau and hapu story, wahine mau kauae were aged, venerable, and respected. Although sometimes photographed, they were primarily ritualists of immense mana and majesty. Their portraiture fueled the careers of many photographers,[39] but they

were there, in the community, for us. They were reo karanga. They spoke and counseled, mai i te kopu o te wahine, from deep within. They advised, and they remembered. They were there, and as an interesting counterpoint, a few with moko kauae permitted their images to appear on postcards.

For the generation that came after me, however, there is very little work of this kind. More and more young women of this millennial generation are themselves holding the camera and directing the aesthetic, constructing their own version of mana wahine in imagery and power, and honoring the late twentieth-century vision of Maori women art makers like Merata Mita, Robin Kahukiwa, Shona Rapira Davies, June Northcroft Grant, and Lisa Reihana.[40] We are moving in an exciting direction: Maori women as active designers and architects of our own image.[41] Currently, most of the promotional material being produced in the thermal wonderland has an emphasis on families and family groups, entire performing arts companies, and commercial dance shows. Images snapped in the 1960s are still being sold and seen on postcards, on music covers, and in illustrated guidebooks, but there are few contemporary versions of this form. A casual look through a rack of souvenir postcards or glancing at an airline magazine, promotional brochure, or material online reveals an ironic new development: the millennial idealized and muscular Maori or Pasifika male body as an enchanting allure. But that is another line of discursive inquiry.

From the early nineteenth century, in the colonial environment, Maori women actively engaged in political decision making and tribal leadership fora. Entrepreneurs and female fighters like Te Riparata Kahutia of Turanga nui a Kiwa and Heeni Te Kirikaramu Pore of Te Ngae and Pukehinahina, followed by Heeni Materoa of Rongowhakaata, Meri Te Tai Mangakahia of Panguru, and the illustrious Te Puea Herangi of Waikato,[42] feature prominently in the wider discussion as national figures of achievement and impact. In 1937, the Te Ropu o te Ora—Women's Health League—was founded by Maori mothers, aunts, and grandmothers concerned for their children's health and education. Also active in the war effort, they initiated successful marae-based projects extending from Ohinemutu, where it first met, to isolated rural communities in the Eastern Bay of Plenty and the Tai Rawhiti hinterland.[43] Their increasingly radical demands were countered in 1951 by the central government setting up and funding the Maori Women's Welfare League, with a national reach and a policy-driven agenda.[44] Both organizations are still functioning today. Maori women continue to represent the people in Parliament, joined in recent years by our Pasifika sisters. And we will always honor and remember the four decades of advocacy and subtle but effective power asserted across many platforms nationally and internationally by the late Te Arikinui Dame Te Atairangikaahu, revered by the general public as "The Maori Queen."[45]

The focus of this article has been the women from the village, humble women, and the ways in which they have retained and enacted their power, reassured by their understanding of ancestors, of stories, of place. From these elements, they draw the strength to actively confront and deal with the brutal contemporary realities of systemic racism, land and resource alienation, domestic violence, and socioeconomic disparity, toxic legacies of the colonial process. They work with a clarity of purpose, and they work from home.

They will never give up; they will make a place mo nga uri whakatupu, for those yet to come, encouraged by the resonant voice of the reo karanga and inspired by the increasing visibility and impact of moko kauae, unrelenting, unstoppable. They will always be there,

Ma wai ra e kawe taku kauae ki tawhiti? Who will take my face into the future?

NOTES

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29. Te Awekotuku, *Mana Wahine Maori*, 155–63.

30. M. Mare and A. Parker, eds., *Wahiao: The people of Whakarewarewa* (Rotorua, NZ: Zamare Productions, 2017)

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35. H.-K. Trask, Lovely hula lands: Corporate tourism and the prostitution of Hawaiian culture. *Border/Lines* 23, https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/bl/article/view/24958.

36. D. Pivac et al., *New Zealand film: An illustrated history* (Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2011); D. Shepard, *Reframing women: A history of New Zealand film* (Auckland: Deborah Shepard Books, 2000).

37. Hikihiki Dixie Yates was a professional radiographer and renowned cultural performer in high demand as a promotional model; Maureen Te Rangirereiwaho Kingi Waaka (Miss New Zealand 1962) worked in the health sector and served on the Rotorua District Council for eighteen years, and June Airini Northcroft Grant (finalist Miss New Zealand 1966) is a successful businesswoman and gifted artist with paintings in national and international collections. The images of these three women continue to be reproduced.

38. Te Awekotuku, *Mana Wahine Maori*, 73–105.

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40. Merata Mita, www.nzonscreen.com; Heperi Mita, *Merata: How Mum decolonised the screen* (2018 biographic documentary film directed by Merata Mita's son); Robyn Kahukiwa, www.kuragallery.co.nz; Shona Rapira Davies, www.collections.tepapa.govt.nz; June Northcroft Grant, www.kuragallery.co.nz; Lisa Reihana, https://ocula.com/artists/lisa-reihana.

41. Nine Maori women filmmakers celebrated their success in this medium, in *Waru*, a drama that screened in 2018 and received international acclaim; see www.nzfilm.co.nz/films/waru.

42. Te Riparata Kahutia, https://teara.govt.nz/biographies/kahutia-riperata; Heeni Te Kirikaramu, https://teara.govt.nz/biographies/te-kiri-karamu-heni; Meri Te Tai Mangakahia, https://teara.govt.nz/biographies/mangakahia-meri-te-tai; Te Huinga Heni Materoa Carroll, https://teara.govt.nz/biographies/carroll-heni-materoa; M. King, *Te Puea: A biography* (Auckland: Hodder & Stoughton, 1997).

43. Te Ropu o te Ora (Women's Health League), https://nzhistory.govt.nz/women-together/te-ropu-o-te-ora-womens-health-league; Guide Rangi also comments on their activism in Dennan and Annabell, *Guide Rangi of Rotorua*.

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