

## The 'native informant' anthropologist as kaupapa Māori research

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**Abstract:** During the examination of my PhD thesis, which was on a Māori topic in the area of social anthropology, the internal examiner asked why I had not mentioned kaupapa Māori research. A major reason was that while initially I had started to incorporate it eventually it became problematic to weave it into the theoretical framework I had formed for the thesis. Sharp comments and questions from the internal examiner however, made it clear that my indigenous research approach was indeed kaupapa Māori research. This paper describes the rationale and process underlying the alignment of the thesis concept of "native informant" with kaupapa Māori research.

**Keywords:** indigenous anthropology, kaupapa Māori research, native informant

### Native informant and claim research

From 1986 to 2001 I was involved in the Ngati Kahu hapu Treaty of Waitangi claims relating to the Tauranga land confiscation.. The work entailed conducting archival and whakapapa research, interviews with kaumatua, hui (meetings) with hapu members. Additional information for the claims came from my role and work as a consultant in the area of archaeology, cultural heritage, resource management (including submissions to District Council plan changes and Environment Court hearings) and even carving the tekoteko for the new meeting house project. A whole range of activity was conducted over this period to produce what I describe as my ethnography of the Wairoa hapu claims. Included in the ethnography was my particular perspective as kin insider, with upbringing in the hapu rohe and hapu kin participation .

In 1995, I rewrote and extended the Ngati Kahu claim to include and address specific issues and claims against the Crown from the historical research that I had conducted. I also included in the claim the hapu Ngati Pango and Ngati Rangi who were neighbours and kin to Ngati Kahu and who were located on the Wairoa River,. For historical reasons their demise as operating hapu related directly to their resistance as Kingitanga supporters and Pai Marire adherents in Tauranga. Effectively, I wanted to retrieve their history of insurgency - and to include these particular rebels as 'the conscious subject of their own history' (Guha, 1988: 76, 77). These two hapu were socially inoperative as hapu by the 1920s.

I was privileged to have a key role in the hapu claim process from its very beginning, from writing up the first claim under the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975 for the Tauranga raupatu in 1986, to the Wairoa hapu hearing in 1998 and to conclusion of the hearings in 2001. This role made me an ethnographic 'insider', one raised in the claim area and active as a hapu member, but also one who was a 'native informant' anthropologist.

Anthropology has been about western intellectuals investigating the ways of life of those classified as 'others' by dominant European social theory. Anthropologists have sought to immerse themselves in the lives of the people they study to gain an "insider's" point of view and then to translate and represent these "Native points of view" to western audiences (Culhane, 1998:19). My role in working for the hapu has been beyond anthropology. It has been the role of the native informant, which emphasises the 'insider' perspective in anthropology.

By the New Zealand postcolonial period, Māori had already undergone transformation as a result of political and social domination, first by the settler colonial state with its racial amalgamation objectives (Ward, 1983), and second by the 20<sup>th</sup> century state's political and social objectives of assimilation and integration. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century the role of the informant has been reversed. Where once the Māori 'informant' served the western ethnographer, whether traveller, government official or settler, now Māori demand to be the 'informant' and also to be the ethnographer who produces the texts as an insider. Waitangi Tribunal claims, resource and heritage management, and self-determining political objectives have Māori explaining themselves from the position of 'informant'. Former colonised peoples have now reversed the pen by 'reading and critiquing traditional ethnographic representations of themselves and by conducting their own research' (Culhane, 1998:20).

Spivak informs us that the native informant is the person who feeds anthropology (Spivak, 1999:142); and in borrowing the term from ethnography (a discipline where the native informant is denied autobiography as it is understood in the west), the native informant may be seen as a blank—even though it generates a text (Spivak, 1999:6). I, in turn, appropriate her use of the term 'native informant' to describe my role in the 1990s as an 'indigenous' advocate in Aotearoa/New Zealand in Waitangi Tribunal land confiscation claims processes and hapu resource and heritage management. Rather than placing myself in the ethnographic field tradition of the 'native informant' entering into a relationship with and providing information to an 'outsider' anthropologist, in this instance, the Māori anthropologist becomes both 'native informant' and 'native anthropologist', an advocate from within and for a community.

## History of a thesis

In the Waitangi Tribunal claims process I was confronted with the particularity of historiography and the absence of any cultural or political analysis in claims reports. The first historical reports for claims described in great detail what transpired historically, but there was little in the way of analysis of the politics of those times. The writing of the Wairoa hapu Raupatu report and its general conclusions raised more issues than were answered, so that I realised the difficulty of finding answers within the confines of the claim process. As I explored and followed the specific themes anthropological questions arose regarding the relationships of mana to leadership, hapu membership, and concepts of land ownership and to the Crown's allocation of confiscated lands back to hapu and individuals. These were issues that could never be satisfactorily answered in Waitangi Tribunal hearings because of the Tribunal's minimalist approach to research and aversion to being confronted by long outstanding inter-tribal disputes. Consequently, as a claimant and a hapu ethnographer it seemed that through a PhD thesis I could examine in depth the very extensive body of work that emerged from raupatu claims, and address important issues that could not be addressed in the raupatu claim hearings (Kahotea, 2005).

The original thesis topic was on the anthropology of land tenure, a theme that seemed most relevant to my involvement in the Tauranga confiscated land claims as claimant and researcher. Land tenure is central to any land claim research where traditional land use, territoriality, and ancestral land rights are elements that have to be addressed. The research material for the thesis was largely drawn from the early land claim hearings in the Native Land Court of the nineteenth century in Tauranga and the surrounding region, and historical material that came from my Waitangi Tribunal report and hapu reports to the hearings. During the 1990s, Tauranga became a high growth area in Aotearoa/New Zealand and I became involved professionally as a consultant. This work included writing reports for district plan changes and consultancies in archaeology and heritage under the then new Resource Management Act of 1991 and the Historic Places Act of 1993.

With the research I had already conducted for the hapu raupatu claims, I soon became embroiled in the Environment Court, opposing the impact of urban development on the hapu and their

ancestral landscape. For Ngati Kahu in 1992 this required submissions of objections to the Tauranga Urban Growth Strategy which advocated extensive zone changes from rural to urban that affected many hapu communities including Ngati Kahu. This activity led to District Council hearings and eventually to the Environment Court in 1994. On my Ngapotiki side, I appealed against the decision by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust to destroy 26 archaeological sites at Papamoa in December 1994.

The raupatu research, heritage and archaeological monitoring and consulting I had undertaken, and the research and preparation of evidence for the Environment Court, was a process for me that realigned narrative tradition, informant's personal experiences and knowledge, landscape settlement pattern, territorial boundaries and whakapapa for the raupatu claims. In this sphere, when it came to Ngati Kahu claim reports which I wrote in 1996, I was able to utilise my archaeological training, rural upbringing and cultural and ancestral landscape consciousness regarding heritage relations with land. I was also able to use the historic land confiscation experiences of my two hapu, Ngati Kahu and Ngapotiki. Ngati Kahu had their land confiscated because of their role in their support to the Kingitanga and Pai Marire, whereas the lands of Ngapotiki were returned and by 2000, they were the hapu with the largest amount of land in Tauranga. Over the years I was very conscious of the differences between these two hapu; where one hapu had very little land in comparison to the other. This experience, along with my role as a hapu advocate for heritage protection has been an important aspect of my research methodology for the land claim during the 1990s. I was deliberate in my intention to use expertise for the benefit of the hapu, thereby fitting Michel Foucault's "specific" intellectual (1977). He argued for a mode of political activity based on a specific relation to local power through expertise. In this view, an intellectual's field of specialization can connect with the production of knowledge. This was an apt description of my situation with respect to the hapu claims and resource and heritage management in Tauranga.

After starting the dissertation in 2002, I soon abandoned the land tenure theme in favour of the nature of the confiscation and administrative processes that historically occurred in Tauranga. Land ownership was based on colonial government administration and allocation policies relating to confiscated lands rather than traditional or customary rights. No detailed records were made of the hearings into the allocation of the confiscated lands in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but it is clear that because of the colonial government policy in Tauranga, 'friendly' chiefs were acknowledged in their land claims above those who remained antagonistic to the government's colonial objective in Tauranga.

A critical phase in the development of the thesis was reached in beginning to apply Guha's notion of 'cultivation of loyalty' to the 'friendly chiefs' of the Tauranga material. Through application of the post-colonial theories of the Indian historical works entitled "Subaltern Studies" (Guha 1982a, 1982b, 1983, 1999; Guha & Spivak, 1988). I was beginning to make sense of the claims, the process and the reports; and more importantly, of my historical and social ethnographic material which was revealed independently of the claims and the hapu themselves. This period of history in Tauranga was a period of cultural transformation and the political subordination of hapu and iwi, both the colonised and resisters, was very relevant to the themes of post-colonial theory. I then decided to switch the focus in my thesis from land tenure to colonization, incorporating the insights of post colonial theory and in particular Guha's "Subaltern Studies" of India.

Nineteenth century colonialism, resistance, land confiscation, anthropology and insider ethnography became key ingredients in changing the mix of my dissertation. Colonial discourse or constructions of reality provided the theoretical framework, and active 'insider' participation (rather than the 'detached observer') became the research methodology. However the land claim process remained the consistent focus during these developments in the writing of the thesis. Once the topic changed, I explored the field of indigenous anthropology leading to the affirmation of Māori anthropology to create a position for my anthropology.

## Insider

I was deliberate in positioning myself as the ‘insider’, because I wanted to utilise my upbringing in the area of land confiscation, my knowledge that came with the upbringing. Taking the ‘insider’s position in anthropology was a challenge. Having gone through the Tauranga Raupatu claims, where all the claimants had Pakeha historians who were contracted to write their historical reports. They included the noted geographer Evelyn Stokes (1990) who in her many reports commissioned by the Waitangi Tribunal defined the 19<sup>th</sup> century colonisation processes, events and personalities of the Tauranga Raupatu. In 1996 Ngati Kahu received funding from the Waitangi Tribunal to write our hapu claim reports and we were the only claimant to do so. Many other claimant groups did the research but gave the material to an historian to write up or to do the key research. My strategy came from my personal research experience and position. When you do the research and writing as an ‘insider’, the knowledge remains with you and ultimately, with the hapu. It does not travel away as it does with an ‘outsider’ who leaves the area. I also valued the place and role of the insider as an advocate with specific expertise and professional experience working for the hapu as Foucault’s ‘specific intellectual’ (1977).

At the beginning of thesis writing I wanted to anchor the work with ideas that flowed from Linda Smith’s “Decolonising Ideologies”, in methodology or theory with a Māori source (Smith 1999). The prime focus of this book is on developing a research agenda for "insider" research within indigenous communities. However, initially I found the writing on kaupapa Māori research confusing and difficult to fit to my data and original ‘land tenure approach’. I understood ‘insider methodologies’ and noted Linda Smith’s comments that Kaupapa Māori research “is the development of ‘insider’ methodologies that incorporate a critique of research and ways for carrying out research for Māori, with Māori and by Māori. What did Linda Smith mean by this and how does one implement a discursive practise within the field of Māori anthropology? The challenge became to position myself within the field of anthropology (even though my pre-doctoral degrees were in the field of archaeology).

In addressing the questions arising from Smith’s work, I read extensively in social anthropology, then examined the history of anthropology in Aotearoa and traced a beginning with Sir George Grey that included Te Rangihiroa and Apirana Ngata. These latter two became important for the development of my insider’s perspective as Māori, and in providing the intellectual genealogy which connected with my carving background of the 1970s and 80s.

Malinowski, who was a key figure in positioning anthropology in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the field of scientific objectivity, stated that the goal of anthropology was to grasp the way in which “the native views their world, his relation to life, to realize his vision of the world” (Malinowski 1922:25), their understanding of reality. Since its inception as a discipline in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century where there was a move away from philosophy towards the empiricism of the physical sciences, anthropology has emphasised ‘scientific objectivity’. In general, a tenet of science has been the separation of researcher from the subject being studied (Quinlin, 2000: 128 –131).

I examined terms and fields such as indigenous or native anthropology, reflexive and autobiographical anthropology which relates to the ‘insider’ but most did not describe my unique position as kin insider to Ngati Kahu, Ngati Pango and Ngati Rangi hapu and the consequent advantages for claim research. The theoretical argument for ‘indigenous anthropology’ contrasted with the objective outsider and the insightful insider. The concept of indigenous anthropology implies a “qualitative change in the research process and results, attributable to the researcher’s affiliation with a particular nation-state, culture or ethnic group” (Fahim 1982: xiii). Anthropologists keeping to their scientific status emphasised the objective outsider.

However there is a history with indigenous people conducting insider ethnography. Boas encouraged Native Americans, such as George Hunt of the Kwakiutl to write personal

ethnographies and William Jones, a Fox Indian, graduated PhD in 1904 at Columbia under Boas. In a later period, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya and Maharaia Winiata of Aotearoa/New Zealand were indigenous scholars of British and British settler colonies who graduated in anthropology. Kenyatta in 1934, at the London School of Economics, and Winiata with a PhD in anthropology in 1954 at University of Edinburgh. Jomo Kenyatta and Maharaia Winiata were motivated by their respective colonial pasts and post-colonial present. For Kenyatta it was tribal land taken for white farmers, and for Maharaia it was 19<sup>th</sup> century land confiscation together with contemporary social and racial inequalities and inequities.

Both Kenyatta and Winiata saw that anthropology could serve a purpose for native people because of the essential role of ethnography in anthropology, and the appreciation of the native past as important to any contemporary contexts. However, Kenyatta questioned the status of the outsider in the comment that the “African is in the best position properly to discuss and disclose the psychological background of tribal custom... and he should be given the opportunity to acquire the scientific training which would enable him to do so” (Kenyatta 1953:154). Although Kenyatta and Winiata are overlooked in the world of anthropology, the actions of these two indigenous anthropologists was important in breaking new ground by undertaking ‘scientific training’ and creating a new kind of anthropology by the ‘native’ as insider. Both their ethnographies were reflective, writing from their upbringing and experience within their respective cultures.

### **Cultural genealogy**

Critical to my insider position was my cultural genealogy, a foundation for my knowledge of the hapu. My upbringing was rural in a cultural landscape of ancestors and experiences that came with a belief system of wairua (spirits) in places, on hapu lands surrounded by kin who knew the area intimately and who did not know any other area. I was raised by my grandmother’s sister Harata and when I became involved with the raupatu (confiscation) claim, the elders of Ngati Kahu and Ngati Pango related to me as the mokopuna of Harata, knowing that I was raised with her. I resided in Harata’s house up to her death with periods at my parents’ house until the age of fourteen. This gave the elders confidence in my ability to handle my role in the claim. Being raised with Harata meant I had access to a different range of people to my natural parents. For Harata, her visitors were the older people of her generation, people in their seventies and eighties, while my parent’s social network was among their own generation. The social circle of my parents became important to my ‘insider’ position because they were now the elder generation and I became identified to them as the son of my parents. The elders of Ngati Kahu who were of my parents’ generation in the 1990s saw my upbringing with Harata as giving access to a knowledge environment attained from the *tupuna* generation, as well as access to the kin links and social activities of my parents and people of their generation. The significance of active kin and social relationships is that in this day and age, where Māori are now urban and take up employment outside the region, the social relationships and dynamics have changed. Access to informants and the confidence of the hapu comes from having a local profile and being known to people as kin.

### **Māori anthropology**

In exploring indigenous anthropology, we have an important legacy in the Māori anthropology of Te Rangihiroa and Apirana Ngata. In 1906 as secretary for the Young Māori Party, it was Ngata who specified anthropology as a discipline that was central to their restorative objectives. In the draft constitution of the Young Māori Party in 1906, Ngata expressed the objectives for both anthropology and ethnology:

Since it is destructive to the self-respect of the race to break suddenly with the traditions of the past, it is one of the aims of the Party, though not the primary one,

to preserve the language, poetry, tradition and such of the customs and arts of the Māori as may be desirable and by promoting research in the Anthropology and Ethnology of the Polynesian race to contribute to science and provide a fund of material which should enrich Literature and Art of the future (Ngata MS 1906:2)

Te Rangihiroa, another Te Aute student who had gravitated to anthropology, acknowledged the role of colonial anthropology as follows:

As much of the present work has been drawn from personal observation, during my term of work as a Māori officer of Health, obtained at the bedside, in the meeting house and from conversation with men of the various tribes, the bibliography is, of necessity, small. I have to acknowledge my obligations to Elsdon Best, Lieut-Col. Gudgeon and others whose writings in the Transactions of the N.Z. Institute and the Journal of the Polynesian Society, have done much to preserve the ancient lore of the Māori (Buck, 1910).

Apirana Ngata and Te Rangihiroa were to spend the next 40 years engaging with anthropology. The adoption of ethnology and anthropology by these first Māori intellectuals was integral to their political strategy of ameliorating the neo-colonial experiences of domination. What is significant here was the role and relevance of anthropology for both Ngata and Te Rangihiroa for Māori as colonised people. The origin of anthropology was associated with Western imperial expansion into new worlds, and explanation of the peoples and cultures they encountered back to the west. Ngata and Te Rangihiroa saw anthropology as a tool for cultural recovery and for expressing and maintaining a deeply-held sense of identity and cultural being.

Te Rangihiroa and Ngata, as colonised indigenous people, did not question or challenge the link between anthropology and colonialism instead they embraced it, for they saw anthropology as a means of achieving the “preservation of Māori culture, not in museums but as a living thing” (Ramsden, 1948:89 quoting Ngata) They only questioned the methodology and purpose of the individual anthropologist; believing knowledge of language and custom was an essential prerequisite, which the trained Pakeha anthropologist often lacked. No other colonised indigenous minority engaged with and produced anthropology as early as they did.

I have an intellectual genealogical link to Māori anthropology and that is through my traditional carving background of the 1970s where I learnt under Piri Poutapu and Waka Graham who were the foundation students of the Ao Marama, the school of Māori Arts established by Apirana Ngata at Ohinemutu in 1928. Apirana had a hands-on approach and a direct influence on how the carvers researched and viewed the art.

## **New Zealand anthropology**

The post World War II growth in indigenous political strength had a significant impact on anthropology (Culhane, 1998:129). After the 1960s, anthropologists began to encounter resentment from the groups they had chosen to study, and sometimes outright distrust and suspicion, and an increased likelihood of confrontation and challenge to the validity of their findings by representatives of the group they have studied (Lewis, 1973:581). In the words of Clifford, “Scholarly outsiders now find themselves barred from access to research sites...the anthropologist broadly and sometimes stereotypically defined has become a negative alter ego in contemporary indigenous discourse, invoked as the epitome of arrogant, intrusive colonial authority” (Clifford, 2004:5).

In the Māori political climate of the 1980's, described by Walker as the Renaissance of Māori culture (Walker, 1990), which was more political than cultural, anthropologists at conferences and university venues found themselves heavily criticised by Māori speakers where “the

discipline of anthropology has failed to support Māori initiatives, that is callously scientific, or that it is colonialist” and the charge that “anthropologists illegitimately monopolise control over the expert definition of Māori culture” (Webster, 1998). The New Zealand based American anthropologist Webster refutes these criticisms by suggesting that they can all be rebutted empirically and by describing some of the charges as naïve. He then suggests that many of the criticisms are related to employment prospects, placing Māori as having better qualifications as just being Māori (Webster, 1998:168-169). In contrast, Linda Smith refers to the social movement of indigenous peoples unleashing an agenda for action. ‘The research agenda is conceptualized here as constituting a programme and set of approaches that are situated within the decolonization politics of the indigenous people’s movement’ where ‘self- determination in a research agenda becomes something more than a political goal’ (Smith, 1999:115-6). This sentiment was expressed where Māori radicals insisted that Pakeha should not write about Māori and inviting Pakeha out of Māori studies (Hanson, 1989: 894-895).

## Conclusion

In the writing and production of my thesis, the ‘native informant’ anthropological insider was a kaupapa Māori research fit. The fit was the development of my ‘insider’ methodologies which I have defined in this paper as comprising the following elements:

- Foucault’s ‘specific’ intellectual as archaeologist and heritage specialist
- Native informant anthropologist
- Kin insider
- Intellectual genealogy – Māori and indigenous anthropology
- Cultural genealogy - Ngati Kahu
- Hapu ethnographer

My position as an ethnographer of the confiscated land claim is from the subject position of being both the colonised, ‘native insider’ and anthropologist of the hapu. The ‘insider’ position comes through “whakapapa” (genealogy), upbringing (my first twenty years on remaining hapu lands), continuing periods of residence on this land, and the ongoing maintenance of social and cultural obligations within the hapu. My kin relations are through both my mother (Ngati Rangi) and my father (Ngati Kahu), with the link to the land of residence being through Ngati Kahu.

A question that can be asked of the ‘insider’ is what privilege do they have? The privilege the position of the insider brings is the native understanding of the world (Hastrup, 1996:75). As natives, depending on personal background and upbringing, we have an intimate and largely intuitive knowledge which the ethnographer who is an outsider will never achieve, and we regard ourselves as articulate in matters concerning our society (ibid:78). The privilege is not only the immediate access to the culture of the hapu, but extensive background and experience on wider Māori issues. I am privileged by my background and by my anthropological genealogy, of which there are two strands. One strand is Māori learning from Ngata and Te Rangihiroa through training as a carver in the Waikato region with the Kingitanga, and the other strand is my archaeological training. Both strands bind with the anthropological and cultural heritage fieldwork experience. This research privilege thus in membership and participation in the social and political objectives of the hapu, stands in contrast to the individual enterprise and effort of an anthropologist whose membership is in the intellectual or academic community.

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