

## A Modern View of Mana<sup>1</sup>

Te Ahukaramū

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The history of the colonisation of Māori in the 19th and 20th centuries contains numerous examples of what happens when a people and individual members of a community experience a disintegration of a 'framework' for living - when older systems of authority are shattered, when the intergenerational transfer of knowledge breaks down, when pathways to fulfilment are obscured. What results are the numerous aspects of dysfunctionality which arise when an individual and their families and communities do not possess a conscious and positive 'life practice' or *whakahaere*. The transition from older certainties to modern fragmentation leaves a haphazard mixture of experience, half-impressions and unexamined assumptions.

Whilst one needs to be wary of generalisations – as exceptions can be found – one can perceive in Māori history this widespread move from an older way of being, thinking and experiencing the world into something that is unknown and vague leading to feelings of rootlessness and identity loss. Much has been written about this historical phenomenon and I would like to highlight two aspects. The first concerns the idea of *conscious movement* where there is an explicit and planned intention to move from one set of values to another, from one world view to another. For example, my 19<sup>th</sup> century pre-Christian ancestor, Hūkiki Te Ahukaramū, condoned and supported the baptism of his son, Te Roera Hūkiki, in the newly constructed christian church called Rangiātea, which stood at Ōtaki. I believe that Te Ahukaramū was motivated by a desire to release his son from historical difficulties and conflicts. The move to Christianity enabled this to take place and I suggest that this movement was conscious and planned.

The move to Christianity first took hold in the period 1800-1840 and was followed by tremendous upheaval and conflict in the 1850s onwards. Whilst the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries saw the breakdown of older iwi cultures and worldviews, Māori communities remained somewhat homogenous so that even the experience of colonisation and loss - commonly experienced – served as a source of thinking and judgment about the world. Moral and ethical frameworks organically arose within homogenous collectives such as the King Movement, the indigenous churches such as Rātana, Ringatū and the tribal communities themselves. These frameworks reinforced and reflected collectives and they offered members horizons of understanding and guidance in their experiences.

Coming into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, we see fragmentation occurring through an *unplanned drift* toward meaninglessness evidenced most particularly by the absence of a moral framework, an orientation by which to encounter the world, to engage life and to guide behaviour. It was following urbanisation, particularly, that we see this new kind of drift and fragmentation as earlier communities were progressively broken down and were replaced by nuclear families dwelling in urbanised household arrangements. Some Māori

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families coped with this transition better than others. In many situations, Māori children were and are raised with only partial moral frameworks or ways of engaging the world making them susceptible to the usual aspects of dysfunctionality – such as crime, abuse and so on – and also, we can add, to a fundamentalist approach to life. If one is raised without some kind of moral or ethical framework, it is powerfully intoxicating to discover one later in one's life – a set of ideas, values and perspectives that seems to speak directly to one's present situation, offers explanations as to why one exists in a downtrodden state, and provides, it seems, a pathway out of this state. This is an aspect, I think, of the interest by some Māori in a fundamentalist Christianity and also a *Māoritanga*<sup>2</sup> with aspects of fundamentalism attached to it.

Today, we see a great diversity of experience, worldview and values expressed in the Māori community. Whilst aspects of traditional knowledge and traditional ways of thinking do remain in certain parts of the Māori community, it is clear that there is not a uniform and consistent expression of the traditional worldview throughout this community. Nor could there be given the tremendous change – some of it good, some of it not so good – that has taken place in the past century or so. The sheer breadth and depth of this diversity brings a bewildering array of challenges where sometimes even the very identity of Māori itself is questioned.

If we use an *ethnicity* prescriptor of the Māori community, we can see numerous challenges such as:

- the need to address significant disparities in health, educational underachievement, imprisonment rates, and so on.
- the need to develop a significant economic base for Māori communities which have endured a degree of poverty and impoverishment

If we use a *cultural* prescriptor, we see other kinds of challenges such as:

- the need to develop models for identity and cohesion both within the Māori community and between the Māori community and the New Zealand community as a whole
- the need to understand the degree to which contemporary Māori identity and experience is constructed upon traditional knowledge and worldview, and how much it exists as the product of contemporary life in a western, modern usually urbanised reality?

There are many, many questions to discuss within the general move toward 'Māori development' and some of these questions go to the very heart of Māori being and identity.

This paper discusses a traditional concept called *mana*. Although there are numerous economic and socio-cultural challenges facing Māori, the paper suggests that the greatest

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<sup>2</sup> Māori culture and identity.

challenge facing ‘Māori development’ concerns the restoration and the fostering of an experience of *mana* in the lives of individual Māori and the Māori community as a whole. It is *mana* that lies at the heart of Māori, indeed human, health and wellbeing – the degree to which we feel empowered, illuminated and warm about ourselves and life around us. The paper was written by a researcher of traditional Māori knowledge and the author does not claim expertise in psychology. The purpose of the paper is to encourage discussion about this traditional concept and its potential application in society today both for the purposes of uplifting Māori culture and people, as well as its potential use in various non-Māori settings.

### **The Depth of Māori disenfranchisement in history**

I would like to begin by discussing briefly the spiritual aspects of colonisation. To be more precise, I would like to reflect upon the effect of colonisation upon the spirit of a colonised people. The purpose is not merely to recall difficult history – which at times has become tiresome - but rather to demonstrate why a call for a renewal of *mana* is relevant today. Much has been written about the economic and political disenfranchisement of Māori (and other colonised indigenous peoples around the world). However, it is my impression that the amount of literature pertaining to the spiritual and emotional harm wrought upon these communities through colonisation is not as fulsome.

The depth of Māori disenfranchisement in history can not be underestimated nor should it be trivialised. The sense of grave injustice and the comprehensive disempowerment of Māori people has been deep, continuous and profound. Pain and outrage has been expressed by Māori in history and on many occasions - through literature, warfare, legal actions, protest and much more. One of the most moving expressions I have heard, exclaiming the sense of the spiritual defilement of Māori people, reads as follows:

Kua pikitia te upoko o te iwi Māori.  
The ‘head’ of the Māori people has been overcome.<sup>3</sup>

This is an adaptation of a traditional phrase relating to a defeated person, one who has had their *mana* stripped from them and who now exists in a state of depression. The head is the most sacred part of the body and the placing of the feather headdress (another meaning for *piki*) upon the crown of the head (as in the traditional chief) elaborates, extends and confirms the sacredness and esteem associated with that person. The overcoming of the seat of a person’s sacredness is physically expressed by the removal of the headdress and having it defiled. To have this said about oneself was a calamity and catastrophe of the highest order, greater than physical death itself.

The restoration and the fostering of *mana* in the lives of Māori is perhaps the greatest challenge. And the pathways to this restoration and experience of *mana* will take many forms – for some Māori, it may not involve a high degree of involvement in Māori communities, a fostering of ‘Māori’ identity, connection with their *iwi* background and so on. Some Māori might be (and are) healed and uplifted by people of goodwill and love

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<sup>3</sup> Used by Rev. Māori Marsden of Te Tai Tokerau when discussing colonisation. Marsden papers, Auckland City Library.

and who are not Māori. But for other Māori, understanding and connecting with their Māori identity, history and background is a profoundly important (perhaps even essential) part of their pathway toward healing and an experience of mana. And yet for others, for most perhaps, the pathway will be a mixture of these experiences and elements.

In addition to the restoration of mana at an individual level, there is a wider cultural and societal healing that needs to take place. For a century and more, Māori society and culture has not enjoyed a 'position of mana' in New Zealand life and culture. For too long, Māori culture has existed in a depressed state and New Zealand has not looked upon Māori culture as a source of national pride, as a source of distinctive and valued creativity and as a place in which to articulate the highest aspirations of being human in our land. This situation needs to be turned on its head and it requires non-Māori as much as Māori. As one is not able to speak about one's own mana, Māori people and culture *needs* its non-Māori partners, its fellow New Zealanders to start speaking with warmth and esteem about Māori culture and people, where appropriate and realistic.<sup>4</sup>

Mana is a traditional concept that is variously translated as power, authority, prestige and charisma and it is central to the traditional Māori worldview. As such, it is a concept of deep interest in contemporary initiatives designed to uplift Māori in New Zealand. A significant dimension of the contemporary revitalisation of Māori culture focuses upon the question of the place and effect of mana within various cultural enterprises – tribally owned companies, for example, representative institutions, Māori education organisations and more. Additionally, proponents and advocates are also considering the potential use of mana as a response to the aforementioned problems of dysfunctionality.

### **Mana through history**

Mana is a special and non-ordinary presence or essence that can flow in the world – in persons, in places, in events. Rev. Māori Marsden provides the following explanation:

Mana means spiritual authority and power...Mana in its double aspect of authority and power may be defined as 'lawful permission delegated by the gods to their human agents and accompanied by the endowment of spiritual power to act of their behalf and in accordance with their revealed will' ...<sup>5</sup>

In traditional pre-contact society, mana was alive everywhere – in forests, in waterways, in flora and fauna and in people. There was no ultimate source of mana, no monotheism<sup>6</sup>,

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<sup>4</sup> There is much more to say here regarding non-Māori involvement in Māori development. Whereas Māori must take responsibility for the dysfunctionality that exists in our communities, equally too New Zealand needs to accept its share of responsibility for poor Māori health, education underachievement and so on, as this can be attributed to the effects of colonisation and ongoing imbalances of power and privilege that exist in our society today. From the point of view of mana, given the principle that one is not able to speak of one's own mana, the mana of Māori people and culture in New Zealand requires non-Māori to speak on its behalf. This requires knowledge and understanding.

<sup>5</sup> From *The Woven Universe: Selected Writings of Rev. Māori Marsden*, p. 4, edited by Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal. The Estate of Rev. Māori Marsden 2003

<sup>6</sup> The question concerning the presence of a monotheistic tradition in pre-contact Māori culture remains unresolved. Whilst the possibility of a monotheistic tradition in pre-contact times remains, it was during the

but rather there were many sources which were referred to as ‘atua’ or ‘gods’. Adherents were able to harness these atua, these energies and mana and cause them to flow into the world resulting in acts of extraordinary ability. These marvellous acts of power, expressions of mana, included controlling the winds and tides, cracking open rocks and stones and levitation. It included running at great speed or throwing one’s voice over distances or removing a sickness from an ailing person. This was the world of mystical and sensuous powers, the realm of the traditional *tohunga* (priest).

My ancestor Hūkiki Te Ahukaramū was an early 19<sup>th</sup> century fighting chief who was heavily involved in the Ngāti Raukawa migrations from the Waikato region to the southern reaches of the North Island. Following his agreement to assist Ngāti Toarangatira, he returned to his home in Waikato where he explained the undertaking that had he had made to Ngāti Toa. He found his people unmoved and so he set about burning down the pā (village), gardens and other areas. Some sources explain this act as the manifestation of Te Ahukaramū’s *mana atua*, his godly power.

Following the arrival of the European, a new experience and conception of mana arose primarily through the adoption of Christianity. Monotheism presented to Māori thinking the idea of an ultimate source of mana, one that can ‘trump’ all mana in the natural world. The power of this kind of mana was first demonstrated in its ability to overcome inter-tribal jealousies and conflicts. The Christian teaching of ‘turn the other cheek’ was truly revolutionary in a society that was quick to act upon insults and injuries.<sup>7</sup> During various and significant amounts of time, warfare *was* the culture of the tribes in the period from 1800-1840 and such was the level of conflict in my own iwi that at the time the following expression was often used:

He pakanga te kai.  
Warfare was our food, our sustenance.

The arrival of Christianity presented a pathway out of intractable conflicts, some of which had lasted generations. To recall the example of my own ancestors, the erection of Rangiātea Church in Ōtaki saw the widespread baptising of the children of fighting chiefs. The power of this new kind of mana was expressed through acts of compassion, an ability not to react to *whakapātaritari* (provocations) and forgiveness. This was truly revolutionary to the culture of the time.

This new kind of Christian inspired Māori culture – which retained elements of pre-contact culture that resonated with the new Christian ideas – continues today. Particularly the Māori arms of the mainstream Churches have been avenues by which this kind of culture has been upheld. Other places include the King movement and many marae.

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19<sup>th</sup> century that monotheism really took hold in Māori communities through the adoption of the Biblical Jehovah (or *Ihowa*) and the development of the *Io* tradition.

<sup>7</sup> The enmity between Te Rauparaha of Ngāti Toarangatira and Rerewaka of the South Island is a good example of words spoken which provoked a violent reaction. See *Te Rauparaha: A New Perspective* by Patricia Burns, pp.145, 146, AH and AW Reed 1980.

The arrival of Christianity saw both a fundamental overcoming of the pre-contact priests and gods and attempts also to rework elements of these within Christian frameworks. In some settings, there were real attempts to create a substantial melding of these elements but in other settings moves to stamp out and eradicate the *tohungatanga* of old were deliberate.

Today, our knowledge of the traditional pre-contact rituals and ceremonies is fragmentary at best. It is for this reason that I caution younger Māori who wish to delve into *atua Maori* in a substantial way. We need to recognise that our knowledge is incomplete and the decision to move to a Christian inspired Māori culture was made by experts who were knowledgeable in the pre-Christian tradition such as my ancestor Hūkiki Te Ahukaramū. A good example of a 19<sup>th</sup> century fighting chief creating an explicit move to Christianity is Pōtatau Te Wherowhero who late in his life became first Māori King. Concerning the transition from one *atuatanga* to another, he said:

I ngā rā o mua, i te wā i whakawhiti mai ai ō tātou tūpuna mai i Hawaiki ki Aotearoa, ko Uenuku-kai-tangata. I tēnei rā, ā, i muri ake nei, ko Ihowa-o-ngāmano, kia mau ki te ture, ki te whakapono.

In days gone, in the time when our ancestors travelled from Hawaiki to Aotearoa, it was Uenuku-the consumer of mankind. Today, and forever more, it shall be Jehovah of the multitudes. Comply with the law and adhere to the faith.

### **Tapu and Mauri**

Two related and key concepts are *tapu* and *mauri*. In discussing tapu, most authorities cluster their ideas around two concepts: restriction and sacredness. Rev. Māori Marsden tells us that ‘modern man’ can wield the mana of the gods given the fulfilment of certain conditions. It is in these ‘conditions’ that we find this sense of restriction. A vessel of mana has to be dedicated and committed to be a vessel. This is achieved through the adherence to a disciplined practice. It is also achieved through the separating out of the vessel from normal activities of the day. Te Mātorohanga of Wairarapa echoes these thoughts when asked his views on the construction of the *whare wānanga* (traditional houses of higher learning):

Na, ki te mahia te Whare-wānanga, waiho i waho o te pa-tuwatawata, kainga ranei, o nga mihinga kai ranei, o nga rakau-tahere manu, o nga tauranga waka, o nga huanui haerenga tangata ranei. Ko te take i peneitia ai, ko taua whare he whare tapu... he whare takahia e te tangata e kore e tino whai mana taua whare...<sup>8</sup>

The whare wānanga should be sited outside the palisaded pā, away from the village, food-cultivations, bird-preserves, canoe landing places and frequented pathways. This is because the whare wānanga is tapu... a house that is frequented by people will not be in the receipt of mana...

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<sup>8</sup> See *The Lore of the Whare Wananga* by S. Percy Smith, page 2. Polynesian Society 1913. My translation.

This sense of restriction, discipline and exclusivity preserves the tapu of the vessel. This tapu state is a prerequisite for the presence of mana and, hence, we see the interconnectedness of mana and tapu. The following quote from Taare Tīkao illustrates this interconnection:

The *tuahu* was an extremely tapu spot, the greatest karakia place of the Maori. No other spot near a village was so sacred. It was the most dreaded and venerated place because it was the most potent in preserving the mana of the race.<sup>9</sup>

When a vessel, such as a person or an object, comes into possession of mana, they are now *sacred* for the very reason of being in possession of mana. In totality that person or object is no longer simply that object or person but rather they have been transformed to become something else. Hence, a particular kind of *tohunga* who is said to be in the possession of a mana atua (godly power) is no longer that person but rather they are now that atua (god).

As an illustration, Captain Cook was killed in Hawai'i because it was thought that he was the god *Lono* manifesting itself. It was Cook's great misfortune to arrive at a certain bay in Hawai'i at precisely the same time as the annual fertility rights were being conducted in the name of Lono. The *kawa* (protocol) demanded that a sign of Lono appear to show that the *kawa* had succeeded in manifesting mana. Unfortunately for Cook, he was perceived to be the sign. This resulted in his being sacrificed in the final consecration of the *kawa*.<sup>10</sup>

Tapu refers to the state that an object or person is in having come into possession of a mana. In order to remain in possession of this mana, one needs to fulfil certain conditions and adhere to certain practices (*tikanga* and *kawa*). This entire process, however, is predicated upon the presence of *mauri* within the object or person itself who becomes the receptacle (*taunga*) of this mana. The presence of *mauri* within a physical object or person is necessary before a mana can come into it. In explaining the *pure* rite, Māori Marsden explains that the absence of *mauri* is 'a state abhorrent to the gods'

Popular belief held that by cooking, the *mauri* of the plant was released and thereby made common (*noa*) or neutralised, a state of things abhorrent to the gods, thus ensuring their departure.<sup>11</sup>

Hence, *mauri* is required for the presence of the gods and the absence of *mauri* ensures their departure. This process is echoed by Taare Tīkao who discusses a journey he made

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<sup>9</sup> Beattie, James Herries: *Tikao Talks: Ka Taoka o te Ao Kohatu. Treasures from the Ancient World of the Maori*. Told by Teone Taare Tikao to Herries Beattie, p.71. Penguin, Auckland 1990

<sup>10</sup> There is considerable debate concerning this interpretation of Cook's death. Whether Cook was perceived as *Lono* is debatable. All agree, however, that in the traditional Māori and Polynesian world view, *atua* can and do manifest themselves in human beings. For further reading on Cook's death and the *Makahiki* festival, see *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, Volume 97, pp.391-408, Volume 98, pp.371-423 and Volume 100, pp.229-230, 299-301.

<sup>11</sup> From *The Woven Universe: Selected Writings of Rev. Māori Marsden*, pp.7,8, edited by Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal. The Estate of Rev. Māori Marsden 2003.

with Te Maiharoa, the Ngāi Tahu tohunga, during which Te Maiharoa lifted various tapu. At one point, Te Maiharoa fell off a very large rock and hit his head. Taare explains:

For a long time we did not know if he was alive or dead, but we put cooked food on his head to take away the force of the spirit...<sup>12</sup>

To briefly summarise, mana is the term we use for energy and consciousness that comes from beyond this world, from another reality, and flows into this world. Tapu is the term we use for the sacred and restricted nature of the vessel within which the mana is resident and mauri is the term for an energy within the physical vessel which is necessary for a mana to alight in that vessel.

### **Mana today**

Today, the expression of the Christian inspired Māori culture remains. One can also detect, however, an interest in the sensual powers of the pre-contact culture particularly amongst younger Māori who seek an idealistic Māori culture, one that is untouched and unpolluted, it is thought, by Christianity. The aforementioned fundamentalism, which is of interest to some Māori today, could be seen as a return to this powerful mana in the world today. The American writer William Irwin Thompson, however, provides a cautionary note:

The materialist sees myth as superstitious gibberish from the old days before we had science and technology; the idolator takes the myth literally. The problem is both is interested in power. The materialist wants to dominate nature with his culture, and to dominate feeling with reason, for he is interested in control. The idolator is also interested in control, but he wants to dominate the psychic with his ego; he wants a genie in a bottle to grant him his every wish; he wants a world of magic powers. The materialist and the psychic mechanist are, therefore, not that far apart.<sup>13</sup>

In addition, to this tension between the pre-contact 'powerful' mana and the monotheistic mana inspired or influenced by Christianity<sup>14</sup>, we can also discuss the advent of a 'secular' kind of mana. Here the emphasis is upon features and qualities of mana in our experiences rather than the presence of 'gods' exerting their will in the world. Whilst the tenet that one is not the source of mana is still upheld, the idea that there are gods outside of the world seeking to make play in the world is having less of a hold upon our modern consciousness. Instead what we are emphasising is the idea that mana is some kind of

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<sup>12</sup> See Beattie 1990, *ibid*, p.86.

<sup>13</sup> See *The Time Falling Bodies Take to Light: Mythology, Sexuality and the Origins of Culture* by William Irwin Thompson, p.38. St Martin's Griffin, New York 1996

<sup>14</sup> One should also note the existence of the Io tradition, an indigenous monotheistic tradition. It remains a point of debate as to whether this tradition existed prior to the arrival of Christianity or not. The historical debate aside, the rise of Christianity in Māori communities in the 19th century influenced the Io tradition in numerous ways. We can also say that a Christian inspired or related Māori culture was and continues to be present in Māori communities. It has had a greater influence upon the history and nature of the culture in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries than the Io tradition.

quality, energy or consciousness in the world which can be harnessed and expressed in human activities through acts of generosity and wisdom.

It is interesting to note the rise of the use of mana in some non-Māori quarters. It is an alternative to power and may offer a way of communicating something essential without becoming involved in the meanings associated with power. One of the appealing aspects of mana, *viz a viz* power, is that it is possible to say that a person has mana but not necessarily power (power in the overt sense). Mana can be used to communicate something essential and important about a person, an activity or an organisation. Mana can be ascribed to people, things and groups which we hold with some respect and esteem. Increasingly we hear popular use of 'mana' in relation to individuals such as the captain of All Blacks rugby team (special captains particularly) or public figures and/or offices held in particular esteem, such as the Governor-General. Events and places too can be regarded as having 'mana'. The annual Anzac day commemoration, particularly those at Gallipoli, is an example of an event of mana. A place of mana, in popular consciousness, could be Katherine Mansfield's old home in Thorndon, Wellington. There are many more examples.

### **Two aspects**

In this modern view of mana, we can note two key aspects. The first relates to being and identity. The second relates to authority and the enabling of action. The presence of the first aspect, concerning being and identity, is something that was upheld significantly in traditional times. People, particularly high born people, were regarded as vessels of mana first, without having to do anything. By fact of their birth, their heritage and inheritance, they were vessels of mana. This idea lies behind the traditional Polynesian fondness for primogeniture.

However, identity in and of itself is finally not the goal for the existence of mana has to be felt in the world through action taking, through acts of generosity and wisdom. Hence, the expression of mana in ways that are harmonising of life and the community is important. It confirms the presence of mana, it demonstrates its gift to the world. And because the mana of an individual or a group is measured in the thoughts of others, a mana inspired way of acting leads to relationship and connection.

Mana is being used today to mean 'authority' of a desirable kind (not a resented authority) a concept that is applicable in a range of settings. Mana has been defined in various ways – English words used to describe mana have included power, authority, prestige and charisma. I like to use words such as non-ordinary presence, being and authority. A person of mana is someone with a sense of presence about them and an authority. There is a peace, also, a stillness in the changing world around them. People of mana usually have insight, they can see possibilities and understandings that others might not. People of mana are also harmonisers

In everyday settings, we can say that a teacher of *mana* is not one who merely imparts knowledge but somehow awakens students to deeper possibilities within themselves; a healer who is not a person who merely administers medicines but who gains insight into a

person's health difficulty and thereby finds a pathway; a leader of mana is one who has successfully harnessed their considerable skills and abilities in ways that are harmonising and empowering of their community.

Hence, mana is a term that can be used to communicate something essential and important about a person, an activity or an organisation. It is an alternative to power which has negative connotations in many settings. Mana is generally seen to be positive. Mana, today, is ascribed to people, things, groups which we hold with some respect and esteem. Generally it is a positive attribute because a key principle of mana is that one is not able to speak about one's own mana. One's own mana is measured in the regard, mind and hearts of others. As soon as one begins to speak about one's own mana, then one's mana diminishes. This is why mana fosters relationships and community, whereas power does not necessarily foster relationships. Mana can be used today as a term to communicate feelings of esteem and high regard for a person, activity or group.

### **Developing a Life Practice, a whakahaere**

*Te huanga o te tinana*  
*Te puanga o te hinengaro*  
*Te Atuatanga o te wairua*  
*The 'fruits' of the body*  
*The blossoming of the mind*  
*The divinity and nobility of the spirit<sup>15</sup>*

The traditional Māori view held that life reaches its fullness or 'peak' when *mana* flows into the world and into human beings. One might say that, from this point of view, the purpose of a life practice is to facilitate the flow of mana into the person and into the world. And the evidence for the presence of mana in a person is their creativity, their ability to bring forth new ideas, knowledge and insight to which their skills and talents are directed.

It will be apparent from my comments in this paper that I believe that children should be raised within a framework of values, experience and ideas that offers them a positive orientation to life – one that fosters an openness of mind and heart and a willingness to contribute to the world and to act in harmonising ways. It is clear that many children are not raised in this manner, for one reason or another, leading to later difficulties with identity and with life itself.

As a person proceeds through life, the individual consciously and unconsciously creates an understanding of the world for themselves. This is a set of customary and usual values and behaviours that suits that person's attitude to life and rises from their experiences. Sometimes this customary (customary in the sense that it is the custom of the individual) way of looking at things has no grounding in reality and the individual is quite unaware that they have constructed a view of life for themselves.

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<sup>15</sup> From Rev. Maori Marsden

On other occasions, individuals, for varying reasons, are *conscious* in their attempt to create a coherent life practice, a *whakahaere* for themselves - they are interested in the 'art of living' which is created with a mixture of conscious and unconscious intention. It is clear that individuals who are encouraged to reflect upon life, upon their view of life and aspects of it, and consciously try and create a considered response to life are more likely to live harmoniously and with limited conflict present in their experiences. In the Māori setting, the contemporary emphasis placed upon *tikanga* (Māori customary behaviours) is driven both by cultural restoration – a desire to be, feel and act 'Māori'- and by this deeper need to possess a framework of ideas, views and behaviours by which to approach the world.

My suggestion is that it is possible to develop a new life practice that places mana at its centre, a practice which cares for the spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual dimensions of a person. As personal mana is reflected in the goodwill and thoughts of others, community and family are important in the development of a person's own whakahaere. This requires a balancing of one's personal aspirations and goals with providing a space for other voices to be heard in one's life practice.

What might a mana inspired life practice offer people today?:

- Mana reminds people and individuals that there is more to themselves than their physical bodies, that their 'person' reaches out to connect with the world
- Mana teaches us that there is an essential goodness and reality lying deep within everyone and that this goodness can be fostered and nurtured and allowed to blossom in one's life (it can also be obscured as well)
- This essential goodness and reality comes from deep origins – from one's particular and profound commitments (mana atua), from their heritage and inheritance (mana tupuna) and from their creativity, what they are capable of bringing into the world (mana whenua)<sup>16</sup>
- Mana teaches us that one's identity resides and is founded upon this essence first, this essential identity out of which their actions might flow (in contrast to acts and skills being the definer of the person)
- Coming to knowledge and an experience of mana entails a mixture of learning and acting

## Conclusion

There is much more to mana than what I have covered in this brief paper. Many questions remain and they concern matters such as the relationship between being, identity and action in a more comprehensive way than that presented here. Other questions include:

- Does an interest in mana return us to a primitive way of being in the world?
- Does an interest in mana commit us to an outdated tribalism?

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<sup>16</sup> This model concerning the three kinds of mana is from Rev. Māori Marsden. Marsden was not keen on the term 'mana tangata' as he felt that it might suggest to some that they are the origin of mana. Hence, he was not keen on mana tāne and mana wahine. Instead, he used the phrase 'te mana o te tāne, o te wāhine...'.

I hope that I have demonstrated, briefly at least, that an interest in mana does not mean a retreat backwards but a move toward to uplift a modern version of this traditional term to help us in our understanding of our experiences and our descriptions of them. It is not my interest to advance the mana concept merely through cultural pride but rather I am motivated to advocate for this term for its usefulness. Whilst I have placed an emphasis upon mana and its potential role in 'Māori development', I hope also that I have shown how mana has become a handy concept for many outside of Māori communities. In education discussions, we have been toying with the notion of 'mana enhancing critique' which is an alternative way of encouraging criticism and critique within discourse but avoiding some of the excesses and corrosiveness which is a feature of the work of the academy. As hinted earlier, mana can also be used to describe and relate to events or symbols of identity which in themselves do not possess significant economic or political power but nonetheless are held in esteem and high regard by the community.