



# Te Aka Matua


*A Te Tai Tokerau* tradition  
concerning the Treaty of Waitangi

A Discussion by

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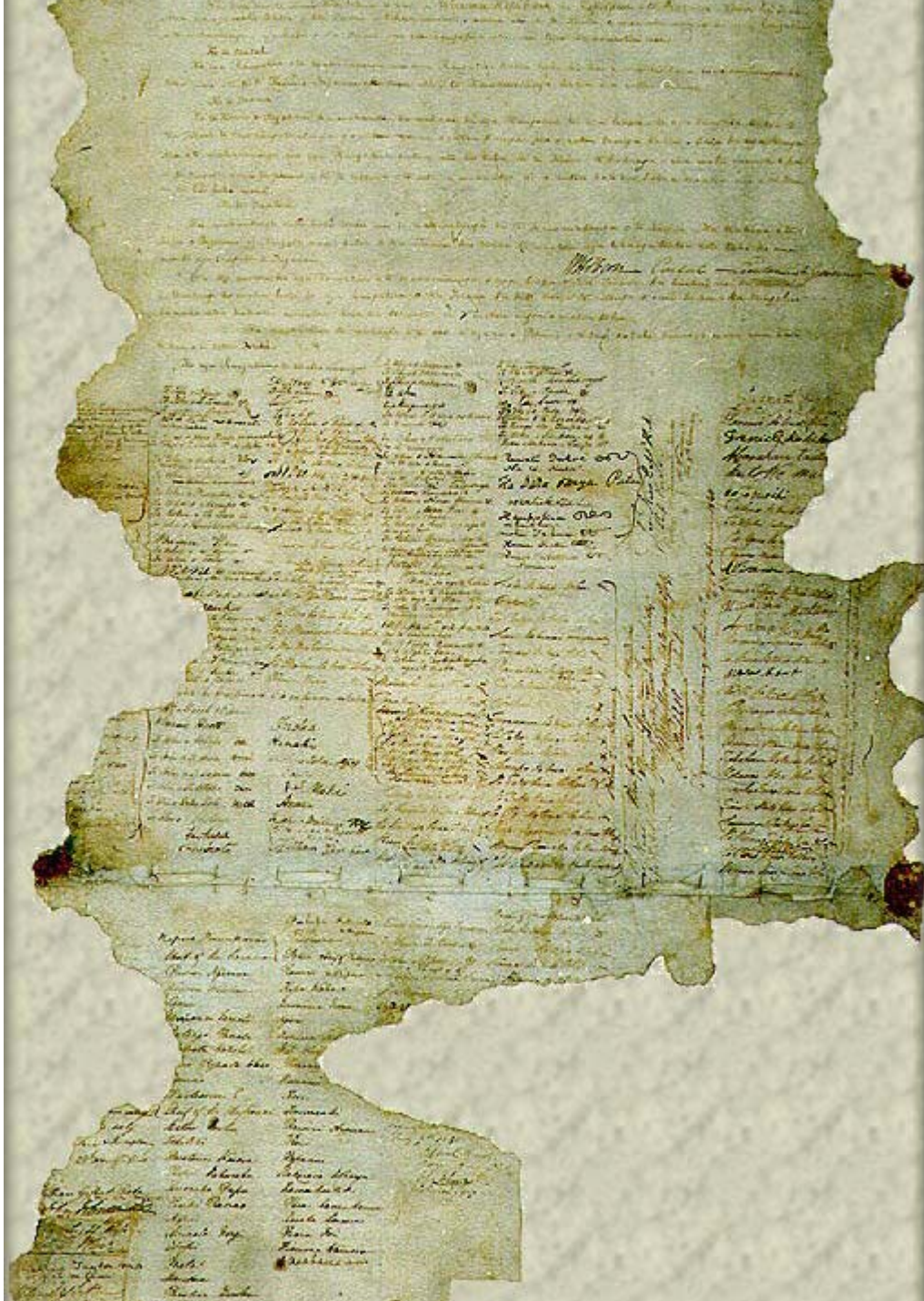


The tradition discussed in this presentation comes from the *Te Tai Tokerau* peoples of the northern region of New Zealand. It was maintained by the late Rev. Māori Marsden who passed it to Shane Jones of Ngāi Takoto. I am indebted to Shane for sharing this tradition with me. It is presented here to assist others in their exploration of the Treaty of Waitangi and the traditional Māori worldview.

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What are the key values espoused in the Treaty of Waitangi, from a Māori point of view?



Me ako ā tātou tamariki,  
he kawenata Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Ōna pūtaketake,

He manaakitanga

He whanaungatanga

He rangatiratanga

He tohungatanga

He ūkaipō

Otirā, kei tua ko te aka matua,  
tōna ingoa ko te

Kotahitanga

We must teach our children that the Treaty of Waitangi is a covenant. Its 'roots' are

Manaakitanga  
Whanaungatanga  
Rangatiratanga  
Tohungatanga  
Ūkaipō

But beyond all of these is the 'parent vine' whose name is

Kotahitanga



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# He Kawenata

- **He Kawenata Tote**, An 'Unbreakable' Covenant
- A Covenant of the same order as that between God and Moses upon the mountain



# Manaakitanga

- **Mana** = the ‘fire of the gods’, ‘being’ (do not confuse mana with power)
- **Aki** = to ascend, uplift
- **Mana+aki+tanga** = the art of uplifting mana



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# Whanaungatanga

- Whānau = birth, new life
- Whanaunga = relation by birth
- Whanaungatanga = relationships, fostering relationships



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# Rangatiratanga

- **Ranga** = weave (hence, raranga)
- **Tira** = groups of people convened for a particular purpose
- **Ranga+tira+tanga** = the art of weaving groups together into a common purpose or vision



# Tohungatanga

- **Tohu** = to 'mark', to be 'marked', to be anointed
- **Tohunga** = a person who has been 'marked', has become a repository of mana
- **Tohu+nga+tanga** = the process by which persons become endowed with mana



# Ūkaipō

- Ū = breast milk
- Kai = to consume
- Pō = the 'night', meaning darkness
- Ūkaipō = those spaces, places, experiences where one is nourished





# Te Aka Matua

## Kotahitanga



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# Kotahitanga

*We live in a world of duality...*

- night/day
- male/female
- good/evil
- tapu/noa

*and more.*



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# Kotahitanga

The goal in life is to overcome these dualities, this separateness.

Our experience of separateness - of isolation and disconnection - is the foreground to a deeper reality whose chief feature is **kotahitanga** or unity.



# Te Aka Matua

- The 'parent' vine
- This image depicts Kotahitanga as the main root growing in the earth and out of which the tree grows.
- The pūtaketake enable the tree to grow.





What is the significance of the tree?




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The Treaty of Waitangi is a tree whose  
'roots are

Rangatiratanga  
Manaakitanga  
Tohungatanga  
Whanaungatanga  
Ūkaipō  
Kotahitanga




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What is the significance of the tree in traditional Māori thinking?



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Whether directly or indirectly, the tree or *rākau* is always a reference to Tāne, the one who separates Ranginui and Papatuanuku and brings illumination into the world.


*Nā Tāne a Ranginui i toko ki runga i puta ai ngā uri ki Te Whaiao, ki Te Ao Mārama.*

*Tāne lifted and set Ranginui (the sky) above, by which all living things were able to move from the pre-dawn light (Te Whaiao) to the world of light (Te Ao Mārama).*

This is an essential and fundamental theme in traditional Māori thinking.



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Hence, the Treaty of Waitangi is like a tree. If its roots are well tendered, this tree will grow and bring illumination into the world.

If we attend to rangatiratanga, manaakitanga, tohungatanga, whanaungatanga, ūkaipō and Kotahitanga, these roots will enable the tree to grow correctly and bring *Te Ao Mārama* into being.



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Hence, the Treaty of Waitangi, if acted upon appropriately, is an instrument for *Te Ao Mārama*, for the world of illumination.




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# The 'Creation' of Te Ao Mārama

- 'Creation' traditions are not history
- They are symbols about a psychological/spiritual movement from darkness (Te Pō) to light (Te Ao), from nothingness (Te Kore) to being (Te Ao Mārama)
- The 'creation' of Te Ao Mārama is about a *transformation of consciousness*





Giving effect to the Treaty of  
Waitangi, as the instrument of Te Ao  
Mārama, involves a *transformation of  
consciousness*



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Let us seek and find

*Māramatanga*

*(understanding, enlightenment)*

in everything we do...



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