Chapter 7

Ngā tikanga o te marae

Marae practices

Rawinia Higgins and John C. Moorfield

What is a *marae*? What happens on a *marae*? How are visitors welcomed? What are some of the important formal procedures that happen on a *marae*? These are questions that will be answered in this chapter.

The *marae* is the place where *hui* and most important events of a Māori kinship group take place. Welcoming and hosting visitors, weddings, birthday celebrations, political meetings, *kapa haka* practices, religious services, educational conferences and *tangihanga* are examples of events that are likely to be held on the *marae*.

The term *marae* is found in many of the islands of Polynesia. Elsewhere in the Pacific, the *marae* takes the form of stone-stepped pyramid-style structures used to perform religious rites. These steps or platforms are called *pae* or *paepae*, though in some islands this term also encompasses the altar or courtyard of the *marae*. To the Māori, the *marae* of its Pacific relations is best described as *tūāhu* (ritual sites) as opposed to a Māori view of *marae* that emphasises it as a focal point for culturally important activities. Nevertheless, Māori, like other Pacific peoples, understand the *marae* as being a space with images of *atua* and *tīpuna* (ancestors) accommodated in buildings and spaces within which leaders sit and discuss important matters of the day. As this brief comparison suggests, the *marae* is an important feature in the lives of both Māori and their *whanaunga* (relations) of the Pacific.

In contemporary Aotearoa/New Zealand, the term *marae* is used to refer to a complex that includes a *whare tipuna* (ancestral house), *wharekai* (dining hall), *wharepaku* (ablution block) and surrounding lands. Some *marae* may also have a *whare karakia* (church), sports grounds and housing for *kaumātua* and families. However, the *marae* was originally the term for the space in front of the *whare tipuna*, which is now referred to as the *marae ātea* (courtyard). The *marae ātea* is the domain of Tū-mata-uenga, the *atua* of war, and conversely the *whare tipuna* belongs to the *atua* of peace, Rongo-mā-tāne. The *tikanga* of these respective spaces is determined by the particular characteristics of these *atua*. For example, the *marae ātea* may be described as *te umu pokapoka a Tū-mata-uenga* or 'the fiery ovens of Tū-mata-uenga' (Pou Temara, personal communication, 1990) where matters of violence and war are conducted.

Traditionally all *marae* belonged to kinship groups, either a *whānau*, *hapū* or *iwi*. This remains the same today with the exception of some newer urban *mārae*. A *marae* is built on the kinship group's land. The kinship group looks after the *marae* and each person has a role to play in the smooth running of the facility. A *marae* committee

Rawinia Higgins and John C. Moorfield, 2004. "Ngā tikanga o te marae" in "Ki te Whaiao. An Introduction to Māori Culture and Society. Auckland, New Zealand: Pearson Education New Zealand

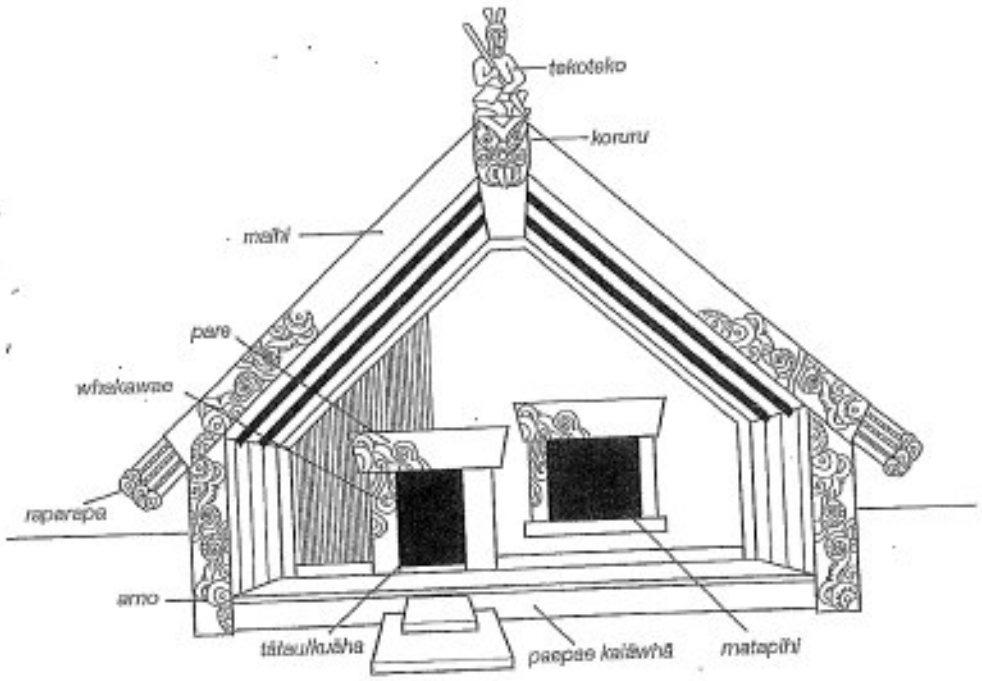
also takes the lead in the upkeep of the facility, handles the financial aspects, and takes bookings for groups wishing to use the marae.

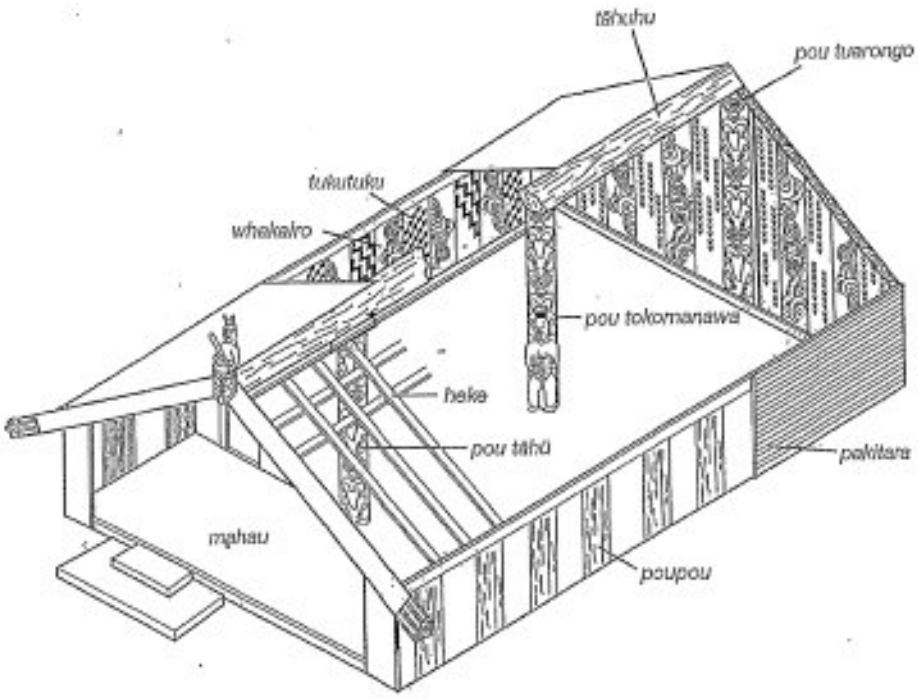
The physical elements of the modern marae

Whare tipuna

Many of the traditional *whare tipuna* are named in honour of an ancestor from that people's *hapū*, hence the name *whare tipuna*. However, some *whare tipuna* or *marae* are named in honour of an historical event, such as Te Whai-a-Te-Motu in Ruatāhuna that was named after the great pursuit around the island of the prophet Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Tūruki. Today some urban Māori name their *marae* complex, or *whare tipuna*, after symbolic meanings of unification, such as Te Herenga Waka (the mooring of the canoes) at Victoria University in Wellington. Such names do not refer to a specific ancestor so that all Māori can feel part of that *marae*.

Other names for the main house on the *marae* are *wharenui* (large house), *whare rūnanga* (council house), *wharepuni* (sleeping house), *wharehui* (meeting house), and *whare whakairo* (carved house). Apart from the naming of the house after an ancestor, the *whare tipuna* is likened to the body of the ancestor. Starting from the apex of the house is the *kāruru* (carved face) with the *maihi* (bargeboard) stretching out like welcoming arms to the *amo* (upright supporting posts at the lower end of the *maihi*). At the ends of the *maihi* are the fingers of the ancestor that are represented in the *raparapa* (ends of the bargeboards of the house). The *tāhuhu* (ridgepole) that runs the length of the inside of the house is regarded as the spine, or backbone, of the ancestor, with its





A *whare tipuna* showing the different parts of the house

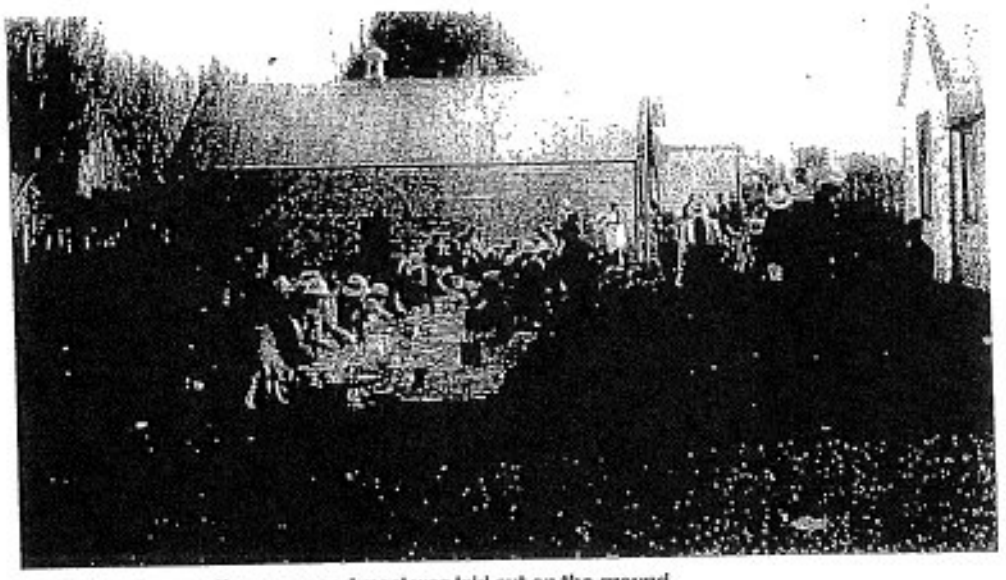
ribs in the form of *heke* (rafters) descending from the *tāhuhu* to the *poupou* (carved wall figures). The *pou tāhū* (front post), the *pou tokomanawa* (centre post) and the *pou tuarongo* (back wall post) support the *tāhuhu* and represent the connection between Rangi-nui, the Sky Father, and Papa-tūā-nuku, the Earth Mother. The inside of the house is known as the belly or bosom of the ancestor, and in some areas this is acknowledged by naming the *whare tipuna* after this fact, for example, Te Poho-o-Rāwiri (Rāwiri's belly) in Gisborne.

The interior of the house is often decorated with *kōwhaiwhai* that are found on the *heke*. *Tukutuku* is usually located on the walls between each *poupou*, and represent many symbols such as *roimata toroa* (albatross tears), *niho taniwha* (monsters' teeth), *pātiki* (flounder), or *poutama* (ascending steps), to name a few. The *poupou* are usually carved with stylised figures representing ancestors of the *whānau*, *hapū* or *iwi* of the *marae*.

The *whare tipuna* has a verandah area (*mahau*) with a door into the main part of the building on the right-hand side (looking out to the *marae*) and a window on the left side. The house is divided into two main areas, the *tara whānui* (wide side) and the *tara whāiti* (narrow side). The *tara whānui* is located to the left of the door (looking out), with the *tara whāiti* being located on the right-hand side. This unique design caters to the philosophy of *manaakitanga* (hospitality) of the *manuhiri* (visitors), as it allows the greater space to be dedicated to the comfort of the visitors. The *kokonga* (corners) at the front of the house are reserved for the *kaumātua* of each respective group.

Wharekai

Traditionally the *marae ātea* was surrounded by *whare puni* (sleeping houses) and *kāuta* (family cooking shelters). The largest house was that of the *rangatira*, which was where *manuhiri* (visitors) were usually accommodated. *Manuhiri* were fed on the *marae*, with each family providing food prepared and cooked in their *kāuta*. The meal was laid out in the open on the *marae*. Large *wharekai* (dining halls) which are now prominent on most *marae* are a modern development.



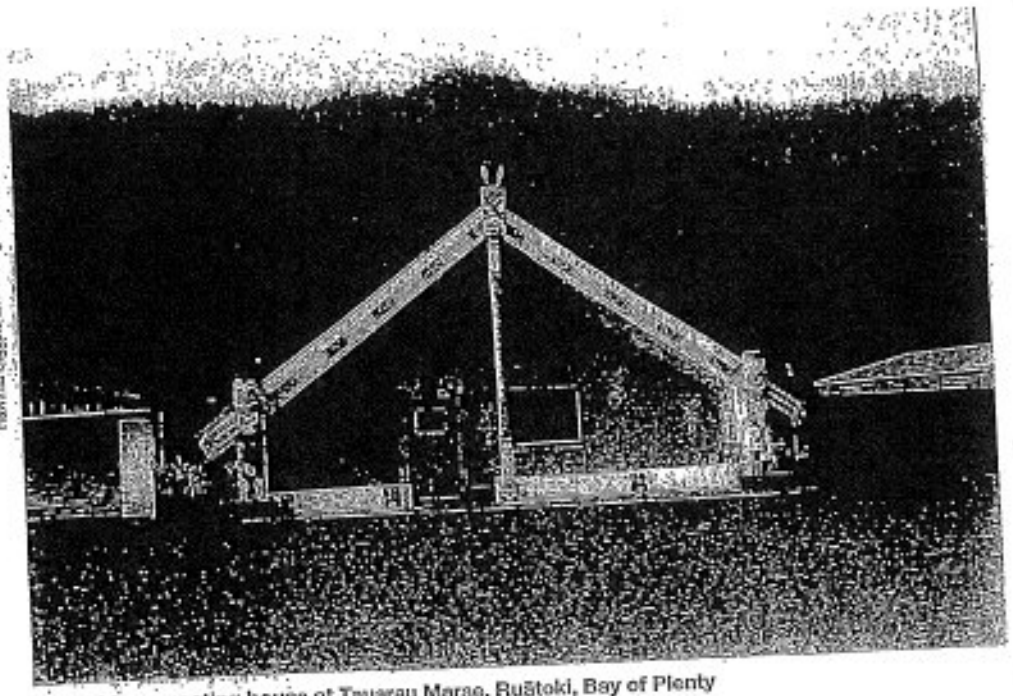
1/1 004478, ATL

In traditional *marae* the communal meal was laid out on the ground

The *wharekai* in many rural *marae* are named after a spouse, close associate, or relative of the *tipuna* who is represented by the *whare tipuna*. As with the *whare tipuna*, the *wharekai* may also be named to honour an event rather than a person. For example, the *whare tipuna* at Tauarau Marae in Ruātoki is named Rongokārae after the ancestor from whom the *hapū* of that marae acquired their name, Ngāti Rongo, and the *wharekai* is called Rangimāhanga after his wife.

In Māori terms, food serves as a means of *whakanoa*. This relationship of *noa* as the 'free from *tapu*' state means that things that are *tapu* should not be placed where food is used. Because the head is considered very *tapu*, food should not make direct contact with this area of the body, or with associated items, such as hats. Items of headwear should not be placed on tables where food is found. For the same reason, one should not sit on tables.

The *ringawera* (kitchen workers) are important people on the *marae*. There are *whakataukī* that highlight their importance, such as: *Mā muri a mua ka tika* (Only if the back is working well, will the front function). This *whakataukī* reminds people that they must ensure that they *manaaki* their *manuhiri* by providing plenty of the best *kai* (food). The proverb also stresses that without people at both the front and back of the *marae* functioning well together, the hospitality of *manuhiri* will be adversely affected; a fact which the visitors will be quick to note.



Rongokārae meeting house at Tauarau Marae, Ruātoki, Bay of Plenty

Wharemate

In some areas, notably those of the Mātaatua (Eastern Bay of Plenty) region, a structure called a *wharemate* is built for use during *tangihanga*. These buildings have replaced more temporary structures that were put up during the *tangihanga* to provide some protection from the weather for the people who sit by the *tūpāpaku* (corpse). When there is no *tangihanga* happening on the *marae* the *wharemate* doubles as the storage space for mattresses and pillows. Because *tangihanga* are the most important type of gathering on *marae* this is the subject of the next chapter.

Pōhiri

The *pōhiri*, or in western dialects *pōwhiri*, is the ritual welcome ceremony that occurs when visitors arrive at a *marae*. In pre-European times it was not always known if the *manuhiri* were coming in peace or with warlike intent. One of the purposes of this ritual of encounter was to determine this.

For most *iwi* the *pōhiri* takes place outside on the *marae ātea* although, for practical reasons, there are significant exceptions to this. Inclement weather may also mean that the *manuhiri* are taken into the *wharenui* for the main part of the *pōhiri*.

When the *manuhiri* arrive at the *marae* they may perform a *waerea* before entering. The *waerea* is a *karakia* that is performed by some *manuhiri* before entering a strange *marae*. It originates from the time when people believed in the risk of being affected by *mākutu*. *Mākutu* is the ability to inflict physical and psychological harm and even death through spiritual powers. Few *iwi* perform *waerea* now.

Whakaeke

When all the *manuhiri* are ready to be welcomed, they gather outside the gate of the *marae*. Traditionally a *wero* was performed as the *manuhiri* moved onto the *marae ātea*. The *wero* is a challenge that is delivered by the *tangata whenua* to the *manuhiri* to determine the nature of the encounter. An armed warrior (or warriors) is sent out to the *manuhiri* at the entranceway of the *marae* to perform this ritual. The execution of this process is considered important in the maintenance of the *mana* of the *tangata whenua*. The warrior places a *taki* (dart), sprig of leaves, or some other token on the ground, and displays his proficiency in the use of his weapon to encourage the leader of the *manuhiri* to pick it up. Picking up the *taki* indicates to the *tangata whenua* that their visitors' intentions are peaceful. The warrior then returns to the *tangata whenua*. In today's society this part of the process is reserved for important visitors to the *marae*, particularly for someone who has not visited the *marae* before. People who have not been formally welcomed on a particular *marae* are said to be *waewae tapu*.

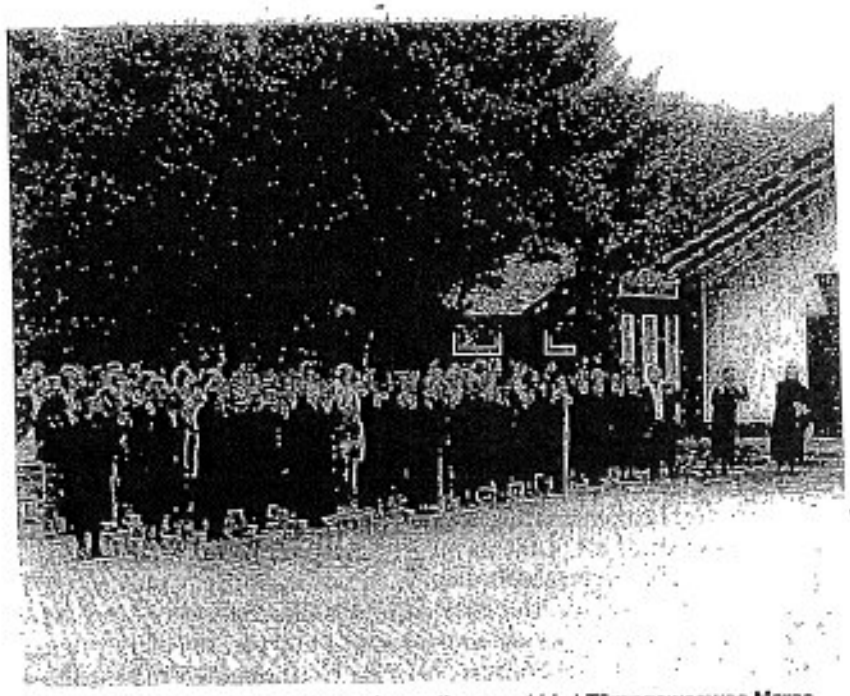
Once the male leader of the *manuhiri* has picked up the *taki* a woman will *karanga*. The *karanga* are the calls made by women, which in many instances today start the *pōhiri*. The initial *karanga* is by one or more women from the *tangata whenua*, and women from the *manuhiri* will respond with their calls as they move onto the *marae*. The *karanga* between the two groups provides the men with information about the visiting group to include in their *whaikōrero*. In many ways, the form of the *karanga* is not dissimilar to that of the *whaikōrero*, as the *karanga* makes acknowledgements to the *manuhiri*, the dead, and the object of the visit.

Rex Julian

The *whakaeke*. A group from The University of Waikato moving on to Tūrangawaewae Marae, Ngāruawāhia. Te Rita Papesch (Tainui and Ngāti Porou) is responding to the *karanga* from the *tangata whenua*. She is flanked by Miria Simpson of Ngāti Awa on her left and Ngāhuia Te Awekōtuku of Te Arawa on her right.

The *whakaeke* is the term to describe the movement of the *manuhiri* onto the *marae ātea*. The *karanga* takes place during this time. Sometimes the *tangata whenua* may perform a *haka pōhiri* to welcome the *manuhiri* during the *whakaeke*. This is the time when the *manuhiri* may choose to respond with their own *haka* (posture dance) in recognition of the *tangata whenua*. During the *haka pōhiri*, it is also common to see women using *rau* (green leaves) with their actions.

The *manuhiri* advance slowly onto the *marae* as a group and stop a little distance from the *whare nui*. At this stage the *karanga* and *haka pōhiri* will end and people will remember the dead and may *tangi* (weep). Once this is over, the *manuhiri* will move to the seating provided for them and the *whaikōrero* will begin.



Paul Jullian

A *haka pōhiri* being performed to welcome the *manuhiri* at Tūrangawaewae Marae. Leaves are used in performing the *haka pōhiri* as a symbol for the dead.

Whaikōrero

The *paepae* is a term used for both the place where the speakers of the *tangata whenua* sit and for the speakers of *pōhiri*. The usual pattern for seating during the *pōhiri* is to have the men sitting on the *paepae* with the women seated behind them.

The form of the *whaikōrero* does not differ significantly from that of the *karanga*. However, the *whaikōrero* expands on the information shared during the *karanga*. In some areas on the East Coast of the North Island women have speaking rights on the *marae*, but in the majority of the *iwi* only men are allowed to *whaikōrero*. Women are not permitted by some *iwi* to speak on the *marae* because of the association of this speaking space, the *marae ātea*, with the realm of Tū-mata-uenga. When the *pōhiri* is

taking place, the *marae* is exposed to all types of warfare, including those that pertain to *mākutu*. Women were revered in Māori society for their ability to give life and to take it away as the following *whakataukī* notes, *'He wahine, he whenua, i ngaro ai te tangata,'* (It is because of women and land that men perish). Therefore, Māori were conscious not to expose women to curses or threats that might be made on the *marae ātea*, lest these affect subsequent generations.

In most instances, *whaikōrero* will begin with a *whakaraara* (warning call) a *tau* or *tauparapara* (a form of *karakia*) before making acknowledgements to the *marae* and *whare tipuna*, the *mate* (dead) and eventually taking into account the *take* (purpose) of the *hui*. The structure of the individual *whaikōrero* is determined by the speaker. However, the process of *whaikōrero* itself is ordained by the *kawa* (protocols) of the particular *marae*. The following are explanations of the two types of *kawa*: *pāeke* and *tauutuutu*, also known as *tū atu, tū mai*.

Pāeke is the most commonly practised form of *kawa* among *iwi Māori*. *Pāeke* refers to the situation where all the speech-making is first performed by the *tangata whenua*, after which the *mauri o te kōrero* (speaking right) is passed over to the *manuhiri*, who then make their speeches. The arrangement of the people on the *marae* usually dictates the flow of the *mauri o te kōrero*. This will start from the first speaker, who is positioned closest to the *whare tipuna*, and move along in sequence to the farthest person on the *paepae*. When the *mauri o te kōrero* is passed to the other side, it first goes to the speaker for the *manuhiri* located farthest from the house, and then moves to the last speaker, who is closest to the house. Thus, the *mauri o te kōrero* is returned back to the *tangata whenua* who are symbolically represented in the *whare tipuna*.

The *tauutuutu*, or *tū atu, tū mai* system differs from the *pāeke* system in that the speakers alternate from the *tangata whenua* to the *manuhiri*. In this form of *kawa* the *tangata whenua* make the final speech, which returns the *mauri o te kōrero* to them. In instances when the speakers for the *manuhiri* outnumber those of the *tangata whenua*, the latter will wait until all of the *manuhiri* have completed their speeches before closing this part of the process with their final speaker, thus ensuring the *mauri* is returned to the *tangata whenua*. This alternating system of *whaikōrero* is used by tribes who claim descent from the people who migrated to Aotearoa on the *Tainui* and *Te Arawa* canoes, notably those of Waikato, the King Country, the Volcanic Plateau, and parts of the Bay of Plenty.

On the completion of each *whaikōrero*, a *mōteatea* (traditional chant) or *waiata* is usually performed. Often the performance of the *waiata* by the many supporters of the speaker is used to *kīnaki* (embellish) the *whaikōrero*. There are many accounts where support is not always automatic, thus ensuring that there is an element of control over what the speaker says during the *whaikōrero*. When this occurs it would be noted by all present that the speaker talked without the *mana* of the people in mind and the people have spoken with their silence. Strictly speaking, the speaker should select his own *waiata*, the words of which should support the content of his speech. However, in reality in the modern situation particular people often have the role of choosing and leading the *waiata*.

The art of *whaikōrero* is a highly developed skill. Good speakers gain *mana* for themselves and the people they represent. A skilled orator will incorporate appropriate *whakataukī*, *pepeha* and *kupu whakaari* (prophetic sayings of charismatic

leaders) and references to important geographical and historical places of the *manuhiri* and *tangata whenua*; he will use metaphor and simile; recite appropriate *whakapapa*; make reference to things appropriate to the occasion; and have the skill of keeping the attention of the audience, including by the use of humour. The *whaikōrero* will be delivered in classical language calling on the clever use of words and a depth of knowledge of language and culture. All this will be delivered in dramatic style with timing designed to give the best effect to what is being said.

The following diagram summarises the format of many *whaikōrero*.

whakaaraara

↓

tauparapara/tau

↓

mihi ki te marae and *whare tipuna*

↓

mihi mate

↓

mihi ora

↓

take

↓

mōteatea, waiata and/or *haka*

↓

conclusion

A *koha* (gift or token of appreciation) is given by the *manuhiri* to the *tangata whenua*, usually at the end of the last *whaikōrero*. In traditional Māori society this was in the form of food, especially delicacies from the local area of the *manuhiri*, and/or *taonga* (treasured items), which could range from weapons to finely woven cloaks. Food is taken directly to the kitchen and not laid on the *marae*. Today the most common form of *koha* is a sum of money. *Koha* laid formally on the *marae* is intended to defray costs of the *marae*, but *koha* given quietly to the organiser of the *hui* is intended to help cover the expenses of the *hui*. *Koha* laid formally on the *marae* is taken note of by the *tangata whenua* to ensure that when an exchange occurs between groups the *tangata whenua* can reciprocate in kind.

Hongi

Once the speeches and *waiata* have concluded and the *koha* has been collected by the *tangata whenua*, the *manuhiri* speakers lead their group to *harirū* (shake hands) and *hongi* (greeting by pressing of noses) with the speakers of the *tangata whenua*, who will have stood and lined up with the rest of their people to greet everybody in turn. The *hongi* is a gentle pressing of the noses. In some areas, like Waikato, it is a single press of the noses, but in other areas it is a short press followed by a longer one. The

eyes should be closed when the *hongi* is done. It is a more formal greeting but often hugs and kisses between women and between men and women may follow.

The *hongi* represents the passing of breath between the two people. This reflects the story of Tāne (ancestral power of the forests and birds) and the creation of Hine-ahu-one, the first woman who was made from the clay of Hawaiki. In his creation of Hine-ahu-one, Tāne brought life to her by breathing into her nose and mouth, upon which she sneezed, exclaiming, *'Tihei mauri ora'* (the sneeze of life). This phrase is used to indicate the beginning of a *whaikōrero*; therefore, this narrative of the creation of the first human is not only significant to the *hongi* but to the *whaikōrero* as well.

The *hongi* completes the formalities of the *pōhiri*. The whole process of the *pōhiri* is a gradual coming together of the *manuhiri* and the *tangata whenua*, concluding with the physical contact of the *hongi*. However, the rituals of encounter are only fully completed by the sharing of *kai*.

Kai

Once the greetings have been completed on the *marae ātea* the *manuhiri* are invited to partake in *kai*. *Kai* is important because it serves to *whakamoa* the *manuhiri* from the whole process of the *pōhiri*. However, the sharing of *kai* is also significant in the practising of *manaakitanga*. *Manaakitanga* is one of the most important concepts in relation to the *marae*. The word *marae* when used as an adjective denotes 'generosity'. The role of the *tangata whenua* is to provide all that they can for their *manuhiri*, as this reflects on the *mana* of the *tangata whenua*. There are many proverbs that express the importance of *manaaki* as well as tribal *pepeha*, which are articulated to describe the *mana* of a people in their display of *manaakitanga*.

The following diagram illustrates the main features of the ritual of encounter on the marae. Parentheses indicate that that particular part of the *pōhiri* does not always happen.

(*waerea*)
↓
(*wero*)
↓
karanga
↓
(*haka pōhiri*)
↓
tangi
↓
whaikōrero and *waiata*
↓
karirū and *hongi*
↓
kai

Karakia and mihimihi

Depending on the religion of the *tangata whenua*, they may choose to conduct *karakia* as part of their hospitality. At the end of the evening meal, a bell is struck to indicate that the *karakia* will be undertaken, usually inside the *whare tipuna*.

In accordance with the *atua* of peace, Rongo-mā-tāne, the *mihimihi* (informal speech-making) follows the evening *karakia*. This will start with the *tangata whenua* speakers, who will be seated, from the corner of the *tara whāiti*, and move around the house until it reaches the speaker in the opposite corner of the *tara whānui* of the house. The speakers during the *mihimihi* will stand against the wall to draw inspiration from the carvings, which are a representation of the ancestors of the *tangata whenua*. The *kōrero* (speech) that is delivered is less formal than that on the *marae*, and it is rare to hear *tau* or *tauparapara* being performed inside the house. It is also a forum for more informal speech-making and discussions related to the living rather than the dead, and includes humour, which facilitates connections between the respective groups.

Poroporoaki

At the end of a *hui* formal farewell speeches take place. These are called *poroporoaki*. The *manuhiri* usually begin the *poroporoaki*, followed by the *tangata whenua*. The *manuhiri* acknowledge the hospitality of the *tangata whenua* and *ringawera* who have provided the visitors with sustenance throughout the *hui*. The *poroporoaki* are sometimes done on the *marae ātea* but more commonly now they are delivered in the *whārekai* after the final meal, or *hākari* (feast).

The formal procedures of the *pōhiri* on the *marae* are adapted for welcome ceremonies in a variety of other contexts. For some *iwi*, *pōhiri* is the term used only for these procedures on a *marae*. For welcomes held elsewhere, the term used is *mihi whakatau*. The procedures of the *pōhiri* act as a template for welcome ceremonies held in other types of venues. Depending on the importance of the occasion, some elements of the *pōhiri* discussed above may be omitted. For example, it is quite common these days for interviews of Māori candidates for jobs to incorporate elements of the *pōhiri* and *poroporoaki*. The applicants and their *whānau* support will be welcomed by the person conducting the selection process, or by someone on the panel who is fluent in Māori and is appropriate for this task. In most cases the *mihi* will be returned. *Waiata* may be sung after the speakers, but time constraints may mean that in practice the *waiata* will not be performed. If the applicant and the *whānau* have not shaken hands and greeted the panel with the *hongi* on arrival, this is done after the speeches. The panel will then interview the applicant asking questions of direct relevance to performance in the advertised position. At the end of the interview, *whānau* members will be invited to speak about the applicant, giving reasons why the applicant is suitable for the position. When the interview is complete, the speaker for the applicant may formally close the meeting with a short *poroporoaki* and *karakia*.

The *marae* is the focal point for all Māori activities. However, more recently the *marae* has taken on new faces in many areas. The building of urban *marae* is the result of the rural-urban drift, which occurred after World War II. These new *marae* accommodate those who have either severed ties with their own tribal *marae* or have joined a

different community that is not linked by *whakapapa*, e.g. church groups. Some urban *marae* have been established within Pākehā organisations, such as universities, in order to provide a Māori space for students who find the surrounding institution unsympathetic to Māori cultural values and practices, or antithetical to *mātauranga Māori* (Māori knowledge). In many instances these university *marae* also serve as a learning space for students of Māori Studies.

Other urban *marae* have been built in the tribal territory of a different *iwi*. For example, Mātaatua Marae in Rotorua is a Tūhoe *marae* built on land gifted to them by the Te Arawa people. In Hamilton, there are two *marae* that are not kinship based. Hui-te-Rangiora Marae is run by the Catholic Church, while Kirikiriroa Marae is a pan-tribal *marae* for all Māori living in the city. Such pan-tribal *marae* raise important issues about what protocols are to be followed. Usually the *tikanga* of the *iwi* of the area holds sway. Yet in all these descriptions of *marae*, this distinctly Māori institution continues to rely on the local people to maintain it. For many Māori these *marae* become their life.

FURTHER READING

Salmond (1975) is the most thorough study of this topic, but the books by Harawira (1997) and Tauroa (1986) provide useful practical guides to *marae* practices. Walker (1975) and Kāretu's (1975 and 1978) essays discuss some of the issues related to modern practices on the *marae*.