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Stella Lange

Tēnā koutou katoa Ko tangata Tiriti
Ko whakaparanga mai Tiamana Ingarangi
I whānau ahu i roto i te London,
A i whakaaroahia ki Aotearoa hou Zealand.
Nō Ōtepoti
Ko kaipūtaiao
He kakōrero Te Kura Matatini ki Otago| Otago Polytechnic
Ko Stella Lange.

This article sets out to document my ongoing journey to become an informed treaty partner and tertiary educator, with a better understanding of Māori approaches to design that helps me to support all my students.[1] I did not know what I needed to know, but knew I needed to do 'something.' In this project, I explored whakapapa to inform and guide a creative textile project. In that praxis I developed a deeper understanding of how ākonga could be supported to adopt a kaupapa Māori approach in creative design projects. This project also reinforced the need for te reo to be normalised in tertiary education contexts; language is an important tool in decolonisation.

Increasingly, over the past decade, as a kaiako educator in design, including postgraduate design, I have found my Māori undergraduate and post graduate students want to approach creative practice from a kaupapa Māori perspective. I have wholeheartedly supported them and welcomed this ākonga-led embrace of indigenous mahi and kaupapa. But as tangata Tiriti, someone who is not Indigenous to New Zealand, I felt ill-prepared to fully support and guide them, despite many years of professional development to build bicultural competence and understanding.

Over decades I participated in a variety of Treaty of Waitangi courses and various seminars and sessions on bicultural New Zealand, all with the intention of being a good treaty partner. Institutionally, Te Kura Matatini ki Otago (Otago Polytechnic) provides support for both ākonga and kaiako. Te Punaka Ōwheo support ākonga, providing a Māori Student Support Centre. Kaiako can access the Māori Development and Kaitohutohu Office, something I had done frequently, guiding ākonga through a consultation process to ensure that their research was respectful and mindful in bicultural Aotearoa.

In 2020, I attended a wānanga led by Olly Ohlson that explored a Māori world view, Io and Te Kore. I began to recognise the gap between my own understanding and framing of the world around me and Olly's as Māori. I glimpsed and also understood that the earth, comprised of layers of geology and sedimentary rocks, was at the same time layered with Māori tupuna, buried ancestors. Olly explained that whare (buildings) represent lineage and whānau in metaphorical and literal ways that no one before had told me. I began to understand at an embodied level the concept of 'world view,' something that had until then had been a mere academic framework.

I installed the *Aki* app on my phone and tried every day to become more familiar with te reo Māori. I navigated a mihi, trying to shoehorn my personal story of a New Zealander, born while my parents were travelling abroad and with an early nomadic family life in New Zealand, into the traditional format needing a mountain and a river. These were the things that I, as tangata Tiriti was encouraged to do – but none of it informed how I could better support my Māori ākonga with their creative practice. I recalled *Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development*,[2] which positions learning as something that can only happen when one has the right foundation to step from. I understood that where I stood was far from where I wanted and needed to be, and I searched for a path to bring me closer, so I could step to where I wanted to be.

I have worked with several postgraduate ākonga keen to use a kaupapa Māori approach in their design research and projects. Like many of our Māori ākonga, they expressed a disconnect from their Māori heritage and were exploring and learning more about their whakapapa through their creative projects. I wanted to support them, but I didn't understand how to.

I approached the problem as I had been taught to approach research problems. I read as much as I could and tried to relate what I read to what I was doing. I read, and watched, Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonising Methodologies* and understood the awkward space in which indigenous people and research historically have come together.[3] I read Hirini Moko Mead's *Tikanga Māori*, reading and rereading the chapters on creative practice.[4] I was seeking understanding of how my ākonga could use a kaupapa approach for their creative research projects.

My early understanding of a kaupapa Māori approach was fuzzy. My PhD research had looked to published literature to explore notions of scientific reproducibility, accuracy and validity, and to understand the context and materials I was working with. Published literature in this case did not help me understand how to support ākonga adopt a kaupapa Māori approach to their creative projects.

Felicity Ware, Mary Breheny and Margaret Forster, in their 2018 article on what they call "Kaupapa kōrero," are clear that "kaupapa is a base or foundation for understanding knowledge and action."[5] Definitions of kaupapa tend to assume understanding of a culture that I did not have: "Māori approach, Māori topic, Māori customary practice, Māori institution, Māori agenda, Māori principles, Māori ideology – a philosophical doctrine, incorporating the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of Māori society."[6]

I belatedly recognised what sociologist Martin Tolich has identified: I had implicitly learned that as Pākehā it is not my role or place to investigate Māori creative or research practices.[7] While I can't remember directly being told not to engage with Māori art and design, every encounter was tinged with an expectation that I would need to do significant learning and research to even begin, but there was no overt guidance as to what that research might be. As a kaiako, I was expected to teach first and second year courses that required students to consider what bicultural practice looked like in creative Aotearoa New Zealand. I introduced readings by Julie Paama-Pengelly and directed students towards IPONZ resources on meaning in Māori design.[8] I also included as a reading Joe Citizen's article (in a 2020 issue of this journal) on Pākehā paralysis and his warning that working in bicultural spaces requires care.[9] All of this set up the same implicit message: Māori things are things Pākehā don't understand.

Tolich sets out a history of separation between Pākehā and Māori research practices, where Pākehā are implicitly taught not to engage.[10] I admit, when students who identified as Māori introduced Māori concepts, ideas and forms, I was excited for them but knew I didn't know enough to guide them, so I encouraged warmly and stepped back. I took care not to comment on, select, highlight, discuss or otherwise refer to Māori design practice, because who was I as Pākehā to take on that role of commenting on Māori work.[11] As a result, ākonga were left to discuss and evaluate what they found on their own. This could not continue. So, in 2024, I stepped away from my day-to-day mahi to become once again an ākonga, in Toi Maruata – Certificate in Māori and Indigenous Art. The course comprised weekly classes from 6 to 9 p.m., and weekend noho – extended stays at local marae. Nēpia Mahuika and Rangimārie Mahuika explain that wānanga are research spaces and research methodologies, and this proved true for me; the wānanga was a rich research space.[12]

Classes began and ended with karakia, and waiata, practices I knew of but that until that point were not part of my own teaching. As a class we ate a meal together, bringing kai to share. In groups we worked on a collaborative creative work, as well as being expected to discuss our developing individual creative works. Each week we were introduced to a whakataukī and elements of kōwhaiwhai. Our kaiako asked us what waiata we wanted to sing or what karakia we wanted to use; they assumed we knew many waiata and karakia, and when we hesitated or repeated last week's choice they suggested new options. We discussed kawa and tikanga, and what good practice looked like in terms of Māori creative practice. Rangahau (research) was expected.

There were three aromatawai (assessments) and we were expected to show a basic understanding of kawa and tikanga as we completed these. It was in these aromatawai that I at first struggled and then developed the confidence to set aside my reservations about how I, as Pākehā, could engage in toi Māori. In these aromatawai I was challenged to consider whakapapa.

Like many people descended from settlers to Aotearoa, I had some idea of my family origins and histories, but little specific detail. My heritage was something I had to research, not something I knew intuitively. Individuality had always been presented to me as of greater importance than my 'pedigree,' perhaps because my pedigree was working class.

A photo of my father's family gathered to celebrate Christmas in 1957 took on special significance (Figure 1). My father was one of the young men at the back of the group of 22 people. As children we had been told he was one of a family with 12 or 14 children. Following his death, we learned he was one of maybe 18, maybe more. It was a large extended family comprising children born in and out of wedlock, marriage, death and several remarriages. My mother's family was just as complex: meetings and marriages on ships, children left behind and never sent for, orphanages, out of wedlock children and long-lost siblings reunited in their seventies. My birth in England to New Zealand parents added a layer of complexity, as did an adopted brother and fostered siblings. Whakapapa as an expression of lineage for me was not straightforward. I wondered how my family history could be reduced to waka, mountain, river and naming my tūpuna?

Figure 1. Lange Family 1957, Matamata, Aotearoa New Zealand.

At one noho, I was introduced to the whakapapa of kōhatu (stone) as preparation to work with stone carving, then later to the whakapapa of light and of creation, of plants, trees, birds and sea animals. My understanding of whakapapa expanded from specifics of genealogy or personal heritage to something more universal, where everything is connected. What had been a limiting concept, in the context of my own messy heritage, become a tool to position what I knew and what I was doing in a much expanded framework. Linda Tuhiwai Smith calls this relationality, explaining that everyone is connected to everything, animate or inanimate, through lines of descent and interconnectedness.[13] This concept of interconnectedness has long been written about and yet it was new to me and, as described here by Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal, made perfect sense:

> More than just a genealogical descent of all things from atua (deities) to present, whakapapa framework also predicts future outcomes. In addition to describing a full range of co-generational and inter-generational relationships, this framework can also be used as a tool for scientific enquiry to examine the nature, origins, interrelatedness and future predictions of events and experiences. Whakapapa allows people to locate themselves in the work both figuratively and in relation to their ancestors and future descendants.[14]

This quote was the prompt to consider the whakapapa of my own textile practice, weaving. Indigenous Diné weavers, Lynda Teller Pete and Barbara Teller Ornelas, reminded me that a weaver does not work in isolation.[15] Without the tools, the fibre and the materials to dye the yarn, and without harvesting in a way that protects future growth, nothing can be woven. Teller Pete explains that to sit at a loom and weave is a prayer for rain, because everything on the loom, and therefore the loom itself, as well as the weaver, requires rain to grow before it can be used.[16] What resonated with me was this positioning of weaving as a non-timebound collaborative work, recognising the weaver, as well as all those who made the weaving tools and those who harvest the fibres and care for the land. This was a whakapapa framework I could draw on.

Historian Nēpia Mahuika refers to Apirana Ngata's description of whakapapa as "the process of layering one thing upon another," concluding that "everything has a whakapapa … every word, thought, object, mineral, place and person."[17] I began to document the whakapapa of my own weaving practice, of the materials (cotton, and dyes) and the people who had taught me weaving in person (Nynka Piebenga, Christine Keller), those who had taught me through their writings (Peggy Osterkamp, Anne Dixon, Marguerite Porter Davidson) or who encouraged my steps into weaving (Suzanne Muir, Margery Blackman, Pam McKinlay, Jill Milne, Pamela Treanor). Responding to Lynda Teller Pete and Barbara Teller I explicitly identified, and in doing so thanked, those who made my weaving equipment (Fred Farhm, Jim Wilson, Bluster Bay, Bob Gilmore, Mr Loman of Hamilton, Schact, Ashford) and provided the materials I used to learn and to weave with (Ashfords, Maurice Brassard, Vienne, Thread Collective Australia, Nannes Notions New Zealand). My list of those who contributed extends to digital spaces, Ravelry, Handwoven.net and Jane Stafford's Weaving School. Reaching back into history I looked for atua I need to thank and identified Hine-te-iwaiwa (weaving) and Hine Rēhia (weaving knowledge) as well as the old German deities Frau Holda (weaving) and Frau Perchta (spinning). I include Martin Luther amongst those I thank, for my whānau were protestants and it was that, perhaps, that lead them here to Aotearoa New Zealand.

This approach to whakapapa situates my own practice in a wider community. Without this community, their making, their sharing of knowledge and providing materials, my practice could not be. What had seemed solitary explorations, sitting at my loom and making cloth, became instead a much richer and connected practice shared across time and location and communities, a non-timebound practice.

With this new-to-me understanding of whakapapa, acknowledging the importance of recognising and naming the origin and interconnectedness of everything, I looked to a more generalised familial whakapapa, finding settlers from Germany, Scotland and Yorkshire, England. All these places had traditions of loom weaving. I adopted the language of my family six generations back and chose Weberi ('weaving,' in German) as a name for my practice. Without a marae, or taonga handed down, my research is somewhat disconnected. This is tātai hikohiko, a whakapapa approach to indicate a line of descent using a few key ancestors rather than a complete linage.[18]

Royal recognises this as a methodology, whakapapa providing the impetus to identify the antecedents or parents of a phenomenon.[19] My waka are the Skiold (1844), Routarua (1911) and Ruahine (1911). I learned that my Lange tūpuna came here under the protection of a sponsor, Count Kuno Rantzau, who provided the passage and equipment that they, as indentured serfs, could not afford. I recognised my ancestors were workers; all used their hands to farm, or work for a living. My work was informed. My whakapapa project focused on celebrating ancestral traditions of work, of manual and skill labour done with hands – making, growing, mending, driving, cooking, sewing. My current practice is very much hand-work, hand-weaving and sewing.

Online repositories, especially Ralph Griswold's Handweaving.net, provided access to weaving texts of German origin. In that digital te whare pora (house of weaving) I saw patterns that my tūpuna might have seen or used and began to look for something to weave that could reference this knowledge and history, whakapapa embodied.

A pattern from 1815 (#80275)[20] looked promising, but with floats over 17 threads wouldn't work for my handwoven domestic textiles, where those floats would be loops that would catch as the cloth was used. I looked for a variation of that patterning and found it in G.H. Oelsner's 1915 Handbook of Weaves (Figure 2) (#44273).[21]

This draft used two colours. When woven, it looks like two tapes crossed over and under to form cloth, and in the spaces between these tapes are small clusters of whetū (stars). Mick Pendergrast identifies this pattern of two over two as tumu.[22] I mapped the draft for the cloth digitally in iWeaveit software developed by Sally Breckenridge. My confidence grew as I deliberately acknowledged all those whose mahi I was drawing on in the creation of this work.

The warp was made using a vintage warping mill, which carries the name CA Landis and was gifted to me by Morag McKenzie. I wove the cloth using an eight shaft, countermarch loom made by Fred and Pam Fram, with shuttles from Shacht. I cut the cloth using my mother Carol June Stanley's dressmaking scissors and stitched with a vintage Singer 201 from 1952, bought new as a wedding present for Olive Annetta Waring and housed in a cabinet made by her new husband, subsequently sold to me by their son.

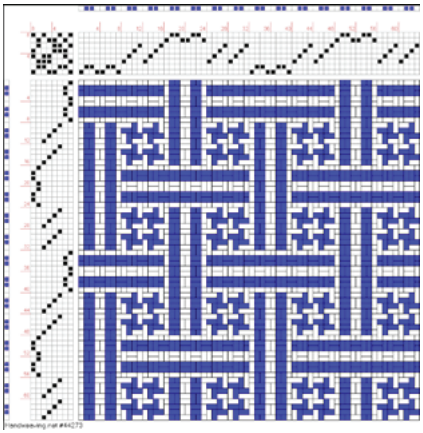

Figure 2. G.H. Oelsner, *A Handbook of Weaves*, 1915, #44273.

Figure 3. Weaving on Fred's Shed Loom, made by Fred and Pam Frahm.

Figure 4. Sewn using Singer 201, 1952, a wedding present for Olive Annetta Waring.

One face of my woven cloth represents intertwined knowledges, practices and families, and was filled with whetū to mark all who had contributed (directly or indirectly) knowledge, materials and support for the project. Māori, like many cultures, view whetū as people who are no longer living with us on earth.

The second face of the woven cloth has come to represent to me all the hands and work that led to this cloth. I realised that the reverse pattern looked like the three-fingered hand often used in whakairo (carving). Designer Johnson Witehira discusses how the significance of three – three-fingered hands, three baskets of knowledge – is much debated, with no real definitive answer.[23] A H McLintock had earlier speculated on the prevalence of the three-fingered hand motif in carvings of Māori and other Pacific cultures, while noting that there are nonetheless many examples with four and five fingers.[24] My kaiako, Marewa, stressed the importance of the artist choosing their symbols, and in this work I choose to see the reverse as embodying multiple three-fingered hands, all representing the multiple makers whose contributions enabled my practice.

As ākonga working with a creative project, I explored the whakapapa of my own practice. What had until this time been a theoretical or distant concept became an informative and guiding framework for my creative project. The importance of acknowledging all those who shared their knowledge and provided tools so that I could develop this work sits seemingly in opposition to western approaches that emphasise individual creativity and uniqueness.

I now have more confidence to support ākonga who wish to explore kaupapa Māori in their study and can ask them to begin with a focus on the broader and important whakapapa of their project. In acknowledging the origins of their materials and their knowledge, ākonga can articulate a whakapapa for their creative work orally, through writing or when presenting. I understand that there is far more complexity to kaupapa Māori approaches than whakapapa alone, something I hope to address in future study.

I am, as I had hoped when I began, several steps nearer to being confident to support Māori students who want to explore a kaupapa Māori approach in their design work. For me, this is a beginning of a deliberate foray towards decolonising my own teaching practice for creative projects. My tangata whenua kaiako has suggested my role is to make, in anticipation of a time when use of te reo and Māori approaches to creative practice are normalised. Now is a time to rebalance my own biased education and learn more about the reo and toi practices of the place in which I live.

Ākonga:	learner
Aromatawai:	assessment
Io:	supreme being
Kaiako:	teacher, instructor
Kaitohutohu:	advisor, instructor
Karakia:	a chant or prayer
Kaupapa:	agenda, plan, purpose
Kōhatu:	stone, rock
Korowai:	cloak
Kōwhaiwhai:	painted designs
Mahi:	work, make, practise
Maruata:	daybreak, dawn
Mihi:	to greet, acknowledge
Noho:	to live, settle, stay
Pākehā:	Non-Polynesian New Zealander
Rangahau:	to seek, research, investigate
Tangata Tiriti:	People of the treaty, non-Māori who live in New Zealand
Tātai hikohiko:	an abbreviated line of decent
Te Ao Mārama:	the world of light, of humans
Te Kore:	the realm of potential being, the Void
Te Reo Māori:	Māori language
Te whare pora:	house of weaving
Tūpuna:	ancestors
Toi:	art, knowledge
Waiata:	to sing, chant
Wānanga:	to meet, seminar, conference, school
Whakapapa:	to give history
Whakataukī:	to utter a proverb, significant saying
Whetū:	star, cluster of stars

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1 Special thanks to my kaiako Marewa Severne and to Scott Klenner, as well as Professor Margo Barton, who supported my study by approving my Research Study Leave. Note: In this article I use te reo Māori where it is important to identify Māori knowledge, practices or concepts. Te reo Māori is an official language of Aotearoa New Zealand and to sub it out would suggest otherwise. In recognition that te reo Māori is not as widely spoken as English, endnotes and glossary provide translations for those who need them.

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