

‘Tame Kākā’ Still? Māori Members and the Use of Māori Language in the New Zealand Houses of Representatives

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1 Introduction

As the 21st century advances, the Māori language (te reo Māori) has remained the primary language of the marae ātea, the bounded space usually positioned in front of the meeting house of a marae complex (Te Puni Kōkiri 2008: 31). Important language components of the rituals of encounter carried out on the marae ātea are also used for similar ritualistic purposes in the Parliamentary debating chamber. These shared language components have been able to survive, in Parliament, throughout 142 years of Māori representation. In fact it appears that the language used in both types of spaces has enabled the formation of an important linguistic and performative framework that has fostered the survival of Māori collective memory as well as Māori political participation.

Parliamentary records show that since 1980, and particularly since 1997, Māori Members of Parliament have greatly increased their use of te reo Māori in the debating chamber.² In 2010, with five Māori Members who use Māori reasonably frequently on the floor of Parliament, Māori may now arguably be considered an ordinary language of the House.³ This increase in profile has been due to important social and political

changes in the community and within Parliament itself, but also due to the persistence of earlier Māori Members in using the floor of Parliament as an important performative space with kindred functions to the marae ātea. Without the preservation of ritual language and the sheer persistence of generations of Māori speakers in the House in maintaining those ritual usages, the current burgeoning of the Māori language in all its forms on the floor of Parliament may not have been possible.

This article will provide some background explanation of how the Māori language has managed to survive in Parliament, particularly within the debating chamber. Following sections will identify how Māori-speaking Members of Parliament have used the language of the marae ātea and its rituals in order to re-vision and recreate, within the debating chamber, a new type of marae ātea that transcends the physical markers of a Westminster-style parliament. This marae ātea is also witness to the Māori language being used in two quite distinct ways: in a formal, ritualistic sense, and in a less formal, arguably more politically 'substantive' way. Both such uses of language within this performative space can be regarded as enacting a type of political theatre whereby Māori Members seek to pursue political aims for themselves, their parties and their constituencies. Te reo Māori has also been used to create a 'theatre of memory' whereby those same Members, using te reo Māori in that space, (re)connect with one another and reinforce connection with those who have passed on.

2 (A Language in the) Background

From the beginning of guaranteed Māori representation, with the establishment of dedicated Māori parliamentary seats in New Zealand in 1868, misgivings surfaced even among the Māori Members of Parliament themselves about their ability to have their voices heard and understood in this new, alien environment.⁴ Interpreters were regularly used, from the introduction of the first Māori Members in 1868 until the 1880s, both to interpret Māori Members' speeches for the benefit of their English speaking colleagues, and to interpret the

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proceedings of the House to the Māori Members. Such Members were almost entirely dependent on the interpreters to be able to play any active role in proceedings.

Muted voices

Dissatisfaction at the limited role the Māori members were able to play was voiced early on. Frederick Nene Russell, the Member for Northern Māori and one of the first four Māori Members, recalled Abraham Taonui, a chief of the Hokianga, asking:⁵

‘What are these four to do among so many Pakehas; where will their voices be as compared with the Pakeha voices? How are they to understand anything the Pakehas say, or the Pakehas anything the Maoris say? Is each man to have his interpreter by his side; if not are they to listen to the Pakeha talk without understanding a word that is spoken? Speak without being understood? Give the Aye when asked to do so without knowing what they Aye to; and by-and-by, when some new Act bearing upon the Maoris is brought into operation, be told, oh, you assisted in passing it! It will not do.’ (Russell 1868: 493)

Certainly, Māori Members began to be referred to as *mōkai kākā* — tame parrots — a bitter observation first attributed to Takamoana Karaitiana (Eastern Māori) in late 1875 (as reported in the newspaper *Te Wānanga* 15 January 1876).⁶ Nearly thirty years on, Wi Pere (Eastern Māori) repeated and explained the term to the House during a heated debate where calls had been made for the abolition of the guaranteed Māori seats. In his view the voice of the tame *kākā* served the purpose of its master:⁷

Ko matou ko nga mema Maori toko-wha o te Whare nei e rite ana ki te mokai kaka. Maku e whakamarama atu. Ka haere te tangata Maori i mua ki te patu kaka, ka haria e ia he mokai kaka ka whakanoho ki tetahi wahi pai; ko te tangata ka huna i a ia, ka werowero i te mokai kaka kia tangi. kia nganga te waha, ka rere mai nga kaka puihi ki te taha, heoi ka patua e te tangata ra. Ko te mokai e noho ra kei te kaka kei te pai tana noho, a kei te kuare noa iho ki te take i whakanohoa ai ia ki reira, ara, hei poa ia mo tona iwi kia mate ai. He pera hoki te

ahua o matou o nga mema Maori o te Whare nei me taua mokai kaka
... (Pere 1902: 64).

Until at least the 1880s the majority of the Māori Members understood little or no English. Some reflections of early Māori Members such as the Member for Western Māori, Te Rangi Paetahi Mete Kingi, confirm their linguistic, cultural and political exclusion.⁸ His words were translated:

I have been here for four weeks in the House and have said nothing. ... Although, perhaps, we may not understand all the matters which you discuss, still, my opinion is that we may be allowed to say a few words on Maori matters. We are not familiar with your language, and therefore cannot follow all the points which are adduced in respect of the laws. It is through our not having any knowledge of your language that we have been silent during the time the Assembly has been sitting (Mete Kingi 1870: 513).

By the turn of the 20th century most of the Māori Members were bilingual and many were skilled orators in both Māori and English. However, even until the mid 1930s, there were still a few who were not fluent in English such as Kaihau (1899-1908) and Taite Te Tomo (1930-1935). Despite the presence of such Members, interpretation services were, by this time, not always available; the last full-time interpreter ceased working in the House in 1920 (Smith 2009). By 1913 an interpreter was only present when requested, and Māori Members were expected to speak English on substantive matters in order to avoid inconveniencing the House:

If it became the practice for the Members of the Native race when speaking upon all questions to speak occasionally in the European language and sometimes in the Maori language, it would be necessary to have an interpreter constantly in the House, otherwise, if the Native member elected to speak in the Maori language and the interpreter was absent, it would lead to a great waste of time. ... [T]he position would be very difficult, because the whole House would be delayed and the debate interrupted (Fisher 1913: 365).

That pressure for Māori Members to use English only intensified

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over the next century, in accordance with the massive shift that almost obliterated the Māori language by the 1980s as a language of everyday communication. This shift occurred due to the almost lethal combination of Crown policy and the ‘pronounced ambivalence’ towards, even rejection of, te reo Māori within Māori communities from before the 1940s until the 1980s, a period that saw English as the key to economic prosperity (Te Puni Kōkiri 2008: 4).

Moving to the foreground

Despite this history, Māori now appears to be firmly established as an ordinary language of Parliament. Primary evidence for this change is found in the recorded usage of te reo Māori in Hansard. As will be explored in Part 3, Hansard is a barometer of changing perceptions of Māori as a parliamentary language.

From 1907 until 1985, over 78 years, Hansard recorded just thirty-six occurrences where Māori was used in the debating chamber, although it was certainly used on more occasions. By comparison, between 1986 and 2009 Hansard recorded at least 194 uses of Māori. Over this period Māori became a language more often used, and more often worth recording, than was the case during the previous century^{9,10}

Hansard evidence strongly suggests that the language survived in the House during the leanest years between 1913 and 1980.¹¹ Despite the pressure to relinquish te reo Māori during this time, Māori Members did not abandon it and chose to use it, albeit occasionally, on the floor of Parliament, even though they were fluent in English. The use, by those Māori Members, of the floor of Parliament as a space akin to or even equal to a marae ātea, provides the key to understanding why te reo Māori persisted in that environment.

In essence, two types of Māori language are easily identifiable in the Parliamentary record. One type was everyday substantive Māori language, which would be used to express points of view and voice political issues. Between 1913 and 1980 it almost entirely disappeared (with some rare exceptions).¹² The second type was poetic, ritualistic, formal Māori. While it survived, it was not always recorded. Evidence

suggests that it survived in part because little attention was paid to it by Pākehā Members. More importantly, however, it survived because Māori Members understood the debating chamber of Parliament as a performative space; a space within which their own speech acts and bodily actions create and recreate Māori history and Māori modes of thought. Māori Members appear to have understood the floor of Parliament as akin to the Māori performative space par excellence, the marae ātea.

The Māori Members have used widely recognised shared language components of Māori ritual to carry out specific and important functions on the floor of Parliament that meet cultural obligations and reaffirm and create collective identity in a formal and ritualistic way. These shared language components are the same components often heard on the marae ātea, such as mihi (formal greetings), poroporoaki (farewell to the dead), tauparapara (chants), the garnishing of speeches with apt metaphor and analogy, and the expression of Māori understandings by the use of whakatauaiki (attributed ancestral sayings).

As stated by Fischer-Lichte, performative space is determined largely by what occurs within it, as well as by what shapes or occupies it (2008: 114):

... [S]patiality is not a given but constantly brought forth anew. Unlike architectural-geometric space, performative space does not represent an artifact for which one or more creators are responsible. By nature, the performative space pertains to events rather than works of art. The performative space always also creates an atmospheric space. ... Spatiality results not just from the specific spatial uses of the actors and spectators but also from the particular atmospheres these spaces exude.

On this understanding of performative space, the intentional use of the Māori language by Māori Members could enable the transcendence of the physical appearance of the floor of Parliament with the creation of another type of performative space; a type of marae ātea. This new space has a different purpose and a different set of rituals that can bind those present into a new type of performance.

3 Marae Ātea

The marae complex in its simplest form includes the whare rūnanga (meeting house), the marae ātea (the open courtyard space in front of the whare rūnanga) and the dining hall and other ancillary buildings such as ablution blocks (Salmond 1975: 78-9). Marae ātea are physically identifiable by their location in front of the meeting house, but are further defined by the placement of people enacting rituals such as the pōwhiri (formal welcome) on the marae ātea.

A place for politics and memory

The marae ātea in its current form has developed since the latter half of the 19th century to provide a space for the enactment and re-enactment of the rituals of Māori collective identity. It forms part of the marae complex described by Neich (1998) as emergent in the 1870s, the ‘focus of local group pride and prestige’, and at the centre of discussions about Māori collective identity and self-expression ever since.

As Moses Finlay (1975) noted, tradition among the living ‘does not exist apart from a connection with a practice or belief. ... [like individual memory] it is controlled by relevance’ (Finlay 1975: 27). The tradition, as embodied in the marae complex and on the marae ātea, must be relevant to the goals, including political aspirations, of that community. Indeed the marae ātea will often be the political focal point for its community.

It is the task of a chief to listen to the grievances of the people, letting all who have the right to stand on the marae have their say, then finding the points of agreement which will become the opinion of the tribe. When visitors come with a ‘take’ or cause to be discussed then that is heard on the marae and its justness either accepted or refuted (Simmons 1997: 9).

One famous account of an exchange on the marae ātea might be useful in further explaining its importance.

A performance remembered

In his 2001 biography of renowned leader, politician and scholar Sir Apirana Ngata, Professor Ranginui Walker describes Sir Apirana's final performance on the marae ātea before his death in 1950. The passage is worth quoting at some length:

Despite his increasing frailty, Ngata's mind was as sharp and focused as it ever was. He gave one last masterful performance on the marae in response to [former Prime Minister] Peter Fraser's speech on the Government's Māori policy. As Ngata got to his feet, he took off his coat and prefaced his speech with the remark 'He pakanga tēnei!' (This is a battle), indicating to the assembly of people and their chiefs that he was going to raise the dust of contention on the marae with the Prime Minister. The marae ātea, being the Māori equivalent of the bear-pit of Parliament, was the place to speak openly without fear or favour. ... Canon John Tamahori, who witnessed Ngata's performance, related what he witnessed that day:

'The people responded to him with a huge clapping, urging him on to do battle with Peter Fraser. There I saw him in full flight. He had command of the whole marae and mastery of his subject. ...'

It was the last hurrah of Ngata the statesman and veteran politician. Fraser who recognised the theatrical performance for what it was, was equal to the occasion. He walked across the marae, put his arm around Ngata and said 'Api, come down to Wellington and we can sort this thing out' (Walker 2001: 389).

This passage reveals and implies a number of interesting points about the physical nature and function of the marae ātea. The scene described takes place on the ritually defined space of the marae ātea. The visitors to the marae will be located on one side, the home people on the other. They face each other across the space of the courtyard. These witnesses (the assembly) will have been craning to see and hear the exchange in its entirety, eager to pass on their recollections to others, and into legend, as Canon Tamahori did. Appropriate protocols of welcome, unmentioned in the passage, will have already occurred, such as the karanga (call of welcome) carried out by the kuia (elder

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women) of the marae, perhaps a wero (challenge), and other whaikōrero (oratory). These events will have afforded this particular exchange a context of appropriate solemnity and legitimacy, ensuring due respects were paid to the living and the dead and to the relationships between those present.

Ngata himself is the central actor in this part of the proceedings. His actions in taking off his coat and making his declaration of war ('He pakanga tēnei!') prior to commencing his whaikōrero are also testament to the fact that this exchange was created to be seen and remembered by the audience. The exchange between the two adversaries, Ngata and Fraser, is performed for the benefit and inclusion of the audience. Indeed, the fact that the assembly 'responded to [Ngata] with a huge clapping, urging him on to do battle' suggests that transitivity occurs here; the audience do not merely receive emotions, ideas and morality from the actors, they contribute their own to the actors (Boal 1998: 19-20). Indeed the actions of the audience appear to have precipitated Fraser's own extraordinary actions of physically crossing the marae, placing his arm around Ngata and verbally offering a way to achieve some political compromise.

What Walker describes was a political production, aimed at achieving national and local political ends according to the agenda of both participants, a kind of theatre as a way of stimulating political change (Boal 1998: 20). By his actions and words Ngata sought to influence Fraser to bring about change in the management of Māori welfare provisions. In turn, by his words and actions, Fraser sought to defray and defer the political conflict of that instant.

This exchange was also cultural, in that it took place in a ritual context that created reinforcement of genealogical ties and kept alive tribal and hapū (descent group) memory. The marae ātea as a space for the enactment of a kind of political theatre is, at the same time, a space for the enactment of a theatre of memory, as will be explored further in the next section.

Marae as theatre, theatre as marae

With the development and growth of the marae ātea as a space whereby collective memory is ritually enacted, it is unsurprising that the marae ātea has also been explored as an intercultural theatrical space. The rituals primarily used on the marae ātea have also been incorporated in the growth and development of a distinct Māori theatre ever since the release of Harry Dansey's *Te Raukura* in 1972, which was 'devised with marae modes of speech in mind' (Sharrad in Heremiko and Wilson 1999: 331). Theatrical exploration of marae ātea space was seen clearly in Mervyn Thompson's 1980 play *Songs to the Judges*. This piece, originally conceived for performance in metropolitan spaces (McNaughton 2001: 24), was first performed in 1998 on a marae ātea in the settlement of Parihaka, a place of deep historical and spiritual significance since the invasion of the Taranaki village by Crown forces in 1881. Māori performative space completely changed the production.

... [A]n apparently unchanging text (the play) generates new meanings as it is moved from the context of the city to that of the marae. Most obviously, the marae context does not produce a binary segregation of stage from auditorium, performer from spectator, and the play will be only one of several elements of performance in the marae experience. It would be very wrong at the end of the play simply to applaud and go home: everyone must stay for a final blessing by an elder, to greet the cast, and to drink tea. In this, a shift of authority and power has also occurred. In the city theatre the director and actors presided over the occasion, managing it on their own terms. On the marae, they perform within someone else's contextual protocols; they perform to the authority and approval of the host marae (McNaughton 2001: 29).

The notion of the marae ātea as a source of portable ritual elements that could be used as a type of theatre for healing the wounds of colonisation and alienation is at work in 'Theatre Marae', created by Jim Moriarty and Rangimoana Taylor in 1989. Theatre Marae performances, as performed by the charitable trust *Te Rākau Hua o te Wao Tapu*, might take place in a prison, school gymnasium or more traditional theatre space, but in this type of theatre the European

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concept of theatre must defer to Māori rituals of encounter such as karanga, haka and waiata as experienced on the marae ātea (Kouka 1999: 69 in Johnstone 2007: 31). These elements are used to focus the actors and provide for a level of audience participation. In Taylor's view, Theatre Marae is different to what might be called 'marae theatre'. The former, in his view, creates an 'illusion' of the marae ātea, while the latter would enable theatrical forms of the marae to entirely over-ride Western theatrical forms (Taylor 1989 in Balme 1999: 64). Such a colonisation would achieve a complete theatrical Māori authority over Māori destinies (rangatiratanga), which the Māori protest movement and cultural revivification of the past forty years have also sought in New Zealand society more broadly.¹³

A further key to unlocking and using the performative potential of the marae ātea should be considered also, that is, the Māori language itself.

The language

The Māori language is the primary language of the marae ātea. The formal and ritualised nature of many of the language-based activities held on the marae is directly linked to this ongoing status.¹⁴

A social constructionist framework enables us to see that a community of practice constructs their group membership through language use. Schurr et al (2007) cite Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's definition of a community of practice:

An aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavour. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations — in short, practices — emerge in the course of this mutual endeavour (715).

In the context of marae ātea, such a community of practice is convened in a particular space at a particular time for the enactment of specific rituals of encounter. The practices are performed for members of that community of practice as well as for outsiders to witness and engage with. In short, the repeated and therefore ritual use of the Māori language on the special performative space of the marae ātea

creates linguistic and cultural acts of memory. Indeed, in combination, these acts and this space create a kind of theatre of memory that invites participation.

Shared components of language

Not every use of Māori language creates an act of memory. On the marae ātea the formality of certain usages of the language is critically important. For a Māori gathering to be identified culturally as a Māori event, some level of formality will often be required and that formality will be expressed by particular usages of te reo Māori (Schurr et al 2007: 720). The language will deliver ‘shared components’, likely to be understood by all present, such as karanga (call of welcome) mihi (formal greetings) and karakia (prayer) in opening, and perhaps the use of waiata (song) to mark the transition from formal to less formal parts of the proceedings.

Other shared components that contribute to the rituals of encounter on the marae ātea in hui (formal gatherings) include whaikōrero (oratory), tauparapara (chants), greetings to the living and dead, and other elements. The use of these and other ‘ritual units’ of language such as the pōwhiri on the marae ātea are described by Salmond (1975: 115-78).

The use of metaphors is also very common in formal Māori language discourse including whaikōrero (Karetu 2004). Whakatauāki (widely known and attributed ancestral sayings), kupu whakarite (compelling metaphors), kupu whakaari (prophetic sayings) and kiwaha (well known idiom) also provide short well-known sayings or utterances that have a particular frisson for a Māori audience and will remind them of a shared history or shared Māori way of viewing the world (Milroy 1996).

That these shared components are employed in the Parliamentary context suggests an understanding by Māori Members of the floor of the Parliament as a performative space that demands the same sort of formality as the marae ātea. On occasion at least, and more often in recent times, the debating chamber has provided the space for the enactment of Māori political theatre as well as Māori theatre of memory.

4 Māori Language in Parliament

After 1906 and even until the 1980s Māori language speeches were not often directly recorded in Hansard; instead, the translations of longer speeches only were often included. Shorter speeches and sayings in Māori were sometimes recorded directly in Hansard but it appears that many instances of Māori language were simply not recorded. In fact, language that was considered ‘ceremonial’ was often disregarded entirely. Only after the General Election of 1996 saw a new influx of Māori Members was the use of Māori language recorded consistently and thoroughly.

Extant evidence is strong enough to show however that the shared language components used on the marae ātea have also been repeated in the debating chamber. Almost all ritual language elements used on the marae ātea — such as tauparapara,¹⁵ whakatauāki,¹⁶ karakia,¹⁷ and karanga¹⁸ — have been performed on the floor of Parliament, with by far the most common element performed being mihi, or formal greetings, including greetings for the living and dead.¹⁹

Two comments from one day of debate in 1985 illustrate for our purposes how little official notice was taken of what is often merely termed ‘ceremonial’ language, despite the importance of such language to Māori Members. These excerpts also confirm that two types of Māori can be identified, the ‘ceremonial’ and the substantive or work-a-day language. The debate concerned the establishment of Standing Order 151 in 1985 that finally allowed any Member to speak either English or Māori in the debating chamber. During this debate concerns were expressed that the Māori Members, by speaking more Māori, would use up more resources by way of translation and interpretation. The necessary implication was that the problem was the costliness of interpreting and translating everyday Māori language. George Gair refers to the reasonably common use of ‘ceremonial’ Māori which, in his experience, is not commonly translated, while Dr Gregory (Northern Māori) seeks to allay fears of expense by maintaining that Māori Members are more likely to speak ceremonial Māori than substantive Māori:

As Māori members of the House would certainly appreciate — and I should like to think, many other members of the House — it is the ceremonial aspect of speaking Māori that is important, rather than the content of the speech ... (Gregory 1985: 5899).

I have been in the House 19 years and have heard Māori spoken on many occasions, and it has never caused a problem, nor has the privilege been abused. However there would inevitably be an opportunity for potential misunderstanding if Māori were used extensively beyond a ceremonial nature (Gair 1985: 5899).

There are several examples of debates about the use of Māori in Hansard. The over-riding concern appears to be the difficulties incurred for Parliamentary process when Māori Members chose to use Māori for more than 'ceremonial' use. Those debates and the above excerpts suggest two things: firstly, that ceremonial language was heard reasonably commonly in the debating chamber even though it was not often recorded. Secondly, Māori Members viewed such usage as important, regardless of whether the material was transcribed for the record.

Material from 1951 and 1997 can serve to exemplify how ritualised, formal Māori language, far from comprising mere ceremonial frills to the real business of Parliament, was an important tool to enable Māori Members to create and maintain a community of practice and enact a theatre of memory, and even political theatre, that passed beneath the notice of most in the House.

Before examining those exchanges it is important to note that in 1913 Apirana Ngata deliberately chose to speak Māori in Committee and then again in the debating chamber without an interpreter being present on either occasion. His words were not recorded.²⁰

The debate and subsequent Speaker's Ruling arguably had a profound impact upon the use of Māori on the floor of Parliament for the next seventy years. In the absence of any definitive precedent rulings, the Speaker (1913) opined that if a member was capable of speaking English, then he should do so. He went on to rule that Native Members could not address the House in Māori without being

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interpreted.²¹

From this ruling until the 1940s there was very little recorded Māori in Hansard although it certainly was used, at the very least when Te Tomo (Western Māori) arrived in the House in 1931.²² The more formal requirement of having an interpreter present in order to be able to speak at any length is likely to have rendered the choice to use everyday Māori inconvenient for those Māori Members with enough English fluency to avoid the need to do so. That Māori survived in its ritual and formal usages can be seen from the exchange we will examine from 1951.

1951

On the death of Sir Peter Fraser in June 1951, Paikea (Northern Māori) delivered a short *poroporoaki* (farewell):²³

Kua hoki a ia ki Tawhitinui, ki Tawhitipamamao, ki te Honoiwairua.
Kua mauna a ia i runga i te waka o tenei tangata kaha o Aitua. He
mea waihanga i roto i ngā pouritanga maha o tēnei ao. Kua whiti a
ia i ngā moana tuauriuri ki te po. He tokotoko taokotahi he tūranga,
he tokotoko rānei ka ngaro te kai, ka mate te tangata. Haere, haere,
haere (Paikea 1951: 41).

These familiar phrases have been heard many, many times on the *marae ātea* on similar occasions when farewelling the dead. For hearers this repetition pays appropriate respect to a person of mana, of high standing. The delivery of this *poroporoaki* on the floor of Parliament is an act of memory; not merely to remember the person referred to, but also to recall all those who have gone before. In addition, such usage identifies the speaker as a practising member of a long surviving oral tradition that relies on constant repetition for that survival. As stated by Whelan (2008), memory exists:

...not merely as a form of knowledge, but as an action ('exercising our memories'). There is a responsibility to remember, because of the inescapable linkage between past and future. Memory captured in art offers a necessary stay against the annihilating force of time and its erosion of traces. It is also the fundamentally human capacity, which,

as Hannah Arendt has reminded us in *The Human Condition*, enables a continuation of action in the face of death.

Such ritual usages appear to have always been interpreted, usually by the Members themselves, as required by the 1913 ruling. Only months before Ngata had also died, with poroporoaki to his memory from both Houses also recorded in Hansard (Tirikatene 1950; Paikea 1950; Marumaru 1950). Substantive use of Māori, however, was not so acceptable, but appears also to have been used in previous years among Māori Members who were perfectly fluent in English, although little evidence of this remains in the record. In that year, 1951, the Prime Minister Sid Holland also disapproved of the growth of such practice:

I have heard Mr Taite Te Tomo and I have heard other Maoris speaking the Māori language here. It has become a custom which I frankly regret because I think it is wrong. ... I cannot see the point in the Honourable member for Southern Maori District wanting to speak to me in the Maori language. I would not understand a single word of what he would say and he would interpret his remarks back to me; why not say it in English in the first place? (1951: 1195)

Mere months after Paikea's mihi, furious debate was sparked after Eruera Tirikatene (Southern Māori) requested to use Māori regarding the Māori Social and Economic Advancement Amendment Bill.

The Hon Mr TIRIKATENE — Sir, I crave the indulgence of this House to make some references in the Maori language to this measure as I make my contribution to the debate.

The Right Honourable Mr HOLLAND — There is nobody here who understands Maori.

The Hon Mr TIRIKATENE — If permission is granted for me to speak in Maori. I will later translate to the House what I said. I think there are one or two points that I should make in the Maori language and I will not divert from them while I am speaking in Maori.

Mr SPEAKER — Will the honourable member please resume his seat. I do not think he should address the House in Maori. It is laid down clearly that any member who can address this House in the English

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language should do so (1951: 1193).

The Speaker initially denied the request, deciding on a stricter application of the 1913 ruling to counter the custom that had grown up over the previous years (1951: 1193). Nor did the Speaker accept that Māori Members should be able to consider their Māori speaking colleagues or the Māori audience for the broadcasts of Parliament on the radio. The only audience to be borne in mind was an English speaking one, as supported by Ronald Algie, Minister of Education:

Over and over again the Māori members I have listened to have addressed their own constituents in the second person. The word 'tena koutou' is used over and over again and that is the equivalent of our English form of address. As a pronoun it would be translated as 'you' in the plural. If a Māori member gets the permission of the House to speak Māori so that Māoris may understand what is going on, he is still not entitled in the exercise of that privilege to say 'My people of Kaitangata I want you to know so and so.' And that is what he does say (Algie 1951: 1198).

This excerpt again confirms that the use of the Māori language in the debating chamber was certainly more common than the Hansard record would suggest. It also confirms that Māori members were using this performative space to perform directly to a Māori audience outside the chamber as well as to their Māori and Pākehā peers within the chamber.

Eventually the Speaker granted Tirikatene permission to use substantive Māori and he did while speaking about the new definition of the term 'marae' in the Bill. Although he denies having an audience beyond the chamber in mind, 'I did not have in mind that the proceedings would be broadcast', the subject matter leads to an inescapable conclusion that he does indeed direct his remarks in English and Māori to an unseen but no less important Māori audience.²⁴ It is only Māori constituents less fluent in English who are likely to require an explanation that the legislative definition of the term 'marae' would now depart from traditional understandings.

Immediately after Tirikatene's explanation and succeeding remarks,

Paikea (Northern Māori) concluded his own speech about the same legislation with the following (which he does not ask permission to say):

In conclusion I say to my Maori people, maranga ra, whitikingia o koutou hope. Hapaingia a koutou patu! Kua timata te pakanga, which translated means, 'Arise, gird your loins, grasp your patu; a battle has begun'.

Thus despite the requirements that Members use an interpreter, only use English if they can express themselves in English, and not speak to external audiences, Paikea ignores the Speaker's Ruling entirely. Furthermore he takes his cue from Tirikatene, suggesting transitivity between the two in the creation of their individual performances. Both deliver words in Māori that are clearly intended for an audience outside the House. Paikea's challenge to his people to take up the patu is, despite its ritual form, in fact a direct call to participation in the events and processes that impact on their lives, as framed by this piece of legislation. This is a challenge that is also heard on the marae ātea, indeed not dis-similar to the challenge issued by Ngata himself as recounted above ('he pakanga tēnei!').

1997

In 1997, Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu Bill was put before the House for its Third Reading. This occasion was an important and dramatic one, marking an important step in the settlement of Ngāi Tahu's Treaty of Waitangi claims by the creation of a special legal entity. A host of Ngāi Tahu dignitaries were present in the public gallery. The Speaker, Peter Tapsell, the first Māori Speaker of the House, opened the session:²⁵

Nō reira e ngā manuhiri tuarangi, ehara tēnei i te whaikōrero engari he mihi poto rawa atu e tū ana tēnei i raro i te tikanga Pākehā. Engari ki a koe Tā Tipene, arā, me ngā rangatira, e ngā whaea, e ngā rangatahi, Ngāi Tahu tonu, tēnā rā koutou kua eke mai nei ki tēnei o ō tātau marae te Whare Paremata. E mōhio ana mātau katoa o te taumaha ki runga i a koutou mai i te timatanaga o tēnei Pire, a tae noa ki nāiane. Nō reira, ko tēnei te mihi, te aroha rawa atu ki a koutou i runga i te ahuatanga o tēnei rā tino mīharo. Tēnā rā koutou, arā, me

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ngā mate kei runga i a koutou. Tēnei wā ka tū hono ngā mea katoa me ki, haere koutou, haere koutou, haere koutou. Nō reira, tēnā anō hoki koutou katoa (1996: 11943).

Tapsell welcomed the audience in the gallery to ‘our marae of Parliament’ and named what he is doing here as a mihi, an acknowledgment and reaffirmation of the living (those present), and also a mihi reaffirming our memories of and ties to those who have passed on. Tapsell was under no obligation by virtue of the processes of Parliament to make this statement, but he clearly felt under a cultural obligation to make it due to the nature of the occasion and because of the visitors present.

In fact nine Members, four of them Pākehā, also delivered mihi in Māori, further enhancing the mana of the occasion and those who attended it. Waiata and haka resounded throughout the Chamber and Prime Minister Jim Bolger, in greeting the Ngāi Tahu members present, observed good-humouredly that by doing so he was ‘in clear breach of parliamentary procedures and practice’ (1996: 11947).

The audience thereby impacted upon the framing of the event itself, again positing transitivity between those ‘watching’ and those ‘conducting’ proceedings. Audience participation legitimised the Third Reading in a Māori way. Undoubtedly, the ritualised use of the Māori language, and the treatment of the floor of Parliament as a space akin in function to the marae ātea, here served a very important role in the final enactment of the Bill. It had a political end and was also a reaffirmation of Māori genealogy and history.

5 Conclusion

The long-term implications of Māori language usage in Parliament for Māori political aspirations are yet to be analysed. Nevertheless, substantive use of te reo Māori in Parliament may well only be possible today because of the longstanding, if under-appreciated, use of the language within a performative framework based on the ritual forms and functions of the marae ātea. Since 1868 Māori Members have

discharged an ongoing obligation to keep the fires of the language alive in the same way it is kept alive on hundreds of marae ātea throughout New Zealand.

When choosing to speak shared language components of the marae ātea, even if only occasionally, such Members create anew the debating chamber as a Māori performative space. This repeated use of language and space also maintains a community of practice. This community, convened in the space of the debating chamber, creates acts of memory and recreates ritual encounters with a Māori past, thereby retaining that past as an essential element of the Māori present. In doing so, such language acts have also better enabled the use of te reo Māori as a language of political theatre. Certainly such language use and dynamics create a broader space in the debating chamber of the New Zealand Parliament for Māori political representation and Māori audience participation to take place than could have been possible without them. Mere tame kākā could not, it might be said, have achieved such clarity of voice.

Notes

- 1 I gratefully acknowledge the invaluable research assistance of Phoebe Monk in the completion of this article. Her able assistance was funded by a summer research scholarship from the Tertiary Education Commission, and by the Legal Māori Project, a three-year research project funded by the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology to create a corpus of legal Māori texts, a lexicon of legal Māori vocabulary and a dictionary of such terminology.
- 2 Some of the increase can also be explained by the advent of Māori MPs from 1996, which saw more Māori MPs in the House, and by the creation of the Māori Party, which took seats in 2005. Of importance also was the passage of the Māori Language Act 1987 which bestowed 'official language' status on the Māori language and created a limited statutory right to use Maori in legal proceedings. This Act did not however determine use of Māori in Parliament, nor did it give guidance on the meaning of 'official language' status.

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- 3 As at 30 April 2010, Mita Ririnui, Pita Sharples, Parekura Horomia, Hone Harawira and Shane Jones.
- 4 Guaranteed Māori representation commenced after the passage of the Māori Representation Act 1867 which provided for the establishment of four seats reserved for Māori Members. Today the number of seats (currently seven) is determined by the amount of voters on the Māori Electoral Roll.
- 5 For useful discussion on the presence and use of the Māori language in Government and Parliament see Phil Parkinson (2001a; 2001b).
- 6 Prior to 1907, Māori Members' speeches were, prior to 1881 only reported in Māori language newspapers. Between 1881 and 1906 the speeches of the Māori Members were collated and disseminated in Māori in volumes of collated speeches called *Ngā Kōrero Paremete*. These accounts usually comprise reports, not transcripts of the speeches, and were Māori translations of the English translations of the original Māori language speeches ('back translations').
- 7 We, the four Māori Members of this House are akin to the tame parrot. Let me explain. Before hunting parrots the Māori takes a tame parrot, and settles it in a good place. He hides it, he then provokes the tame parrot to make it cry out, and make a fuss, in order that the wild parrots fly to it, then those parrots would be killed by the hunter. The tame parrot sits there happily, completely oblivious to the reason it was set there in the first place, a decoy used to kill its own kind. That's how it is with us Māori Members of this House and those tame parrots, that's the reason we were brought here, to lead our people to destruction. Thus from this day, according to the vantage point of the Pākehā Members, the wild parrots have all disappeared, and it is now time to kill off the four tame parrots of this House also, as there is nothing left for them to do (Author's translation).
- 8 For useful discussion on the presence and use of the Māori language in Government and Parliament see Phil Parkinson (2001a, 2001b).
- 9 In 1997 a Speaker's Ruling confirmed that Members may speak either Māori or English as of right NZPD 562: 3192. Standing Order 104 (and previously Standing Order 150) has been in operation since 1985.

- 10 From December 2009 simultaneous interpretation has been used when any Member chooses to speak te reo Māori. See <http://www.3news.co.nz/Costly-upgrade-to-aid-Maori-translation-in-Parliament/tabid/419/articleID/139431/Default.aspx> Accessed 25 April 2010
- 11 The research upon which this statement was made is that collated for Phoebe Monk's unpublished report 'Use of te reo Māori in Parliament' completed during the completion of her a summer research scholarship 2009-2010.
- 12 In 1980 Koro Wetere (Western Māori) began to be recorded using Māori in substantive debates, and with Gregory (Northern Māori from 1981) began to increase the amount of Māori in the Parliamentary record.
- 13 Other playwrights such as John Broughton, Jim Moriarty, Briar Grace-Smith, Riwia Brown and others have recognised and experimented with the performative potential of the marae ātea and its rituals.
- 14 The Survey of the Health of the Māori Language found that 54% of people attending activities at the marae spoke Māori for half or more of the time (Te Puni Kōkiri 2008: 31).
- 15 Tauparapara: see for example Tapsell 1982 (4 May) NZPD 443: 772, Tirakatene-Sullivan 1986 (29 April) NZPD 470: 1466.
- 16 Whakatauāki: see for example Paikea 1939 (21 July) NZPD 254: 688, Rata 1969 (25 July) NZPD 361: 1717.
- 17 Karakia, see for example Gregory 1980 (30 July) NZPD 431: 2192.
- 18 Karanga, see for example Kōpu 1997 (27 February) NZPD 558: 428, Te Heuheu 1997 (25 February) NZPD 558: 320.
- 19 Many examples of mihi to the dead, or poroporoaki, can be found throughout Hansard. Some of the finest examples appear while Māori Members are paying tribute to those who have died, such as the occasion of Sir Apirana Ngata's death in 1950 (NZPD (LC) 290: 1024), Sir Peter Fraser's sudden death in 1951 (NZPD 294: 40-41) and during World War Two.
- 20 As Ngata later said, he used the language expressly to provoke a Speaker's Ruling in order that the status of the language be settled, to make up for the absence of a standing order.

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- 21 'I rule that it is not in order for a representative of the Native race to address the House in Māori without being interpreted; at the same time, if he wishes to address the House in Māori he may obtain the services of an interpreter' (Speaker 1913: 368).
- 22 A native speaker of Māori who described himself as unable to speak English (Te Tomo 1931 NZPD 299: 274). His speeches in Hansard are translations.
- 23 'The translation is that he has gone to the Great Beyond. The Canoe of Fate, fashioned out of the Tree of Sorrow, has visited our friend and borne him away to those mysterious waters of the night. With the weapons of man we have equal opportunities but with the weapons of God, food disappears and man passes on his journey along the firmly trodden footpath of his ancestor into Spirit Land. Farewell, farewell, farewell!' (Paieka 1951: 41).
- 24 'The interpretation of the word [marae] now covers a church, meeting house, hall, dining hall, kitchen or other buildings other than a private dwellinghouse, used as a meeting place for Māoris ... I felt I should explain in Māori the new meaning which is new being given to the word. I thank the House for the privilege that has been granted me of speaking in Māori. Ko te ingoa marae i roto i tēnei ture kua whakawhānuitia kia uru mai ngā whare karakia, whare whakamoemiti, ki ngā whare puni, whare hui, whare ngāhau, whare kai, kitini, kauta, whare whakakai ... that is what comprises a marae under this Bill. Wāhi whenua e piri tata ana a e tū nei nga whare kua whakaingoatia nei. Engari ko ngā whare nohana o ngā whānau kua whakawateatia ki waho o tēnei ture. Those were the words which I thought should be recorded in Hansard. Those who are listening will know what is meant by the word "marae" when it is used of for the purpose of this measure' (Tirikatene 1951: 1199).
- 25 [Subsequent and authorised translation: Therefore visitors from afar this is not a formal speech in the sense that you and I know but rather a short acknowledgment. I stand before you under European protocol. Nevertheless, to you Sir Tipene, indeed to the dignitaries, to the womenfolk, to the young folk, and those of Ngai Tahu, greetings indeed to you who have arrived here at this marae of ours, Parliament. We are mindful of the pressures borne by you from the outset of this Bill to the present day. Therefore it is with great pleasure and fondness that I extend this greeting to you under the circumstance of this wonderful day. My greetings to you and indeed to your dead. At this moment everything

comes together and is united. Let me say in tribute to them, the departed: farewell, depart, journey on. Therefore, greetings also to you all.] (Speaker/Tapsell 1996: 11943)

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