REVIEWS

Kawharu, Merata (ed.), *Maranga Mai! Te Reo and Marae in Crisis?* Auckland: University of Auckland Press, 2014. 258 pp., Bib., index, photos., tables NZ$45.00 (soft cover).

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In late 2014, the Treaty of Waitangi Tribunal found that Ngāpuhi, and by extension other Māori tribes, did not cede sovereignty to the British as a consequence of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. The Tribunal’s report, which is the first phase of Ngāpuhi’s wider Treaty settlement claim, is consistent with Māori, legal and scholarly arguments over many years. One of the results of this political disenfranchisement has been a crisis of identity for Ngāpuhi as individuals and collectives. This is the subject of *Maranga Mai! Te Reo and Marae in Crisis?*, edited by Merata Kawharu.

The opening chapter establishes the basic premise of the book: the conflict between traditional ways of doing and being and the realities of disenfranchisement. Ngāpuhi elder Merimeri Penfold recalls the influence of the Rātana Movement in the early 20th century which, while providing cohesion to a people Rātana described as “remnants” (p. 25), also required them to turn “away from the ways of the past”, the result of which left people “in a state of bewilderment” (p. 26). The following chapters outline the 21st century state of Māori language and *marae* in Ngāpuhi’s region of Te Tai Tokerau, using personal observation in both Māori and English language from elders and youth, as well as analysis from a survey of 500 Te Tai Tokerau youth, the ‘Te Wehi Nui a Maomao’ Project.

An underlying tenet of the book is that a strong Māori identity mitigates a “state of bewilderment”. In Chapter 3, Arapera Ngaha finds that those who attend *Kura Kaupapa* (schools where Māori is the language of instruction), and who are in close contact with their *marae* are, unsurprisingly, more likely to have strong cultural identity. However, as most Ngāpuhi have become disengaged from cultural practices on *marae* (Chapter 10) and *Kura Kaupapa* attendance is declining (Chapter 6), the problem becomes one of how to reintegrate communities, state institutions and families so that individuals do not continue to be cultural “remnants”.

It is not all bad news. Margie Hohepa’s analysis shows that schools where English is the primary language of instruction can help students’ knowledge about Māori language and tribal identity, although not to the same degree as Māori language schools. Merata Kawharu and Paratene Tane conclude that for many schools in the Tai Tokerau, *marae* are important to the learning process, with both *marae* and schools benefitting from reciprocal arrangements. While some *kaumatua* (elders) criticise schools for “institutionalising” Māori language and knowledge, others acknowledge that schools are playing an important role in supporting Māori cultural identity.
The tension between the old and the new ways extends to debates within marae communities themselves. Kaumatua Fraser Toi’s chapter shows how marae tikanga (protocol) has changed due to demographic and cultural pressures. For example, to encourage greater marae use, injunctions against mothers nursing babies inside wharenui (meeting houses) have been overturned “in contravention of tūturu tikanga” (established protocol). As pointed out in Stephen McTaggart’s analysis of Māori language census data in Chapter 9, it is women who are more likely to “kōrero Māori than males” (p. 165).

While the book does not directly deal with Ngāpuhi’s Treaty of Waitangi claim, Paul Tapsell in his chapter on the historical and contemporary development of marae, notes how the Treaty process of preferring negotiation with bigger entities over the smaller traditional groupings, has been another factor in marginalising marae and their communities.

The book offers solutions to the crisis of declining use of Māori language and marae. One way is to strengthen the economic basis of marae communities, as explained by Kevin Robinson of Te Rarawa in Chapter 5, through taking advantage of initiatives such as the growing mānuka honey export trade. Robinson stresses the importance of the internet, both to help individuals run their businesses from home and to link Te Rarawa marae to disconnected families. That the authors likewise advocate for the use of the internet to extend and strengthen cultural access is unsurprising, given that many of them had developed ‘Te Wehenui.com’, an online repository of Te Tai Tokerau language and culture as outlined in Chapter 12.

The strength of this book is in the space it gives to both academic and community voices. While the language and school data analysis should prove useful for planners, and the issues of moving culture onto an online platform are worth noting, for this reader the problems of maintaining an authentic identity within a marae context while responding to the reality of cultural, social and demographic change, was particularly insightful. While the book does not overtly attempt to theorise its findings and observations against its political background, readers will readily find plenty of examples of the “politics of indigeneity”. One quibble is that while there are a number of excellent photographs of Te Tokerau marae, these are not named. For readers unfamiliar with these marae, it would have been helpful to have a list included somewhere.

Overall, the book serves its purpose of taking the cultural identity pulse of Te Tokerau iwi as they work towards settlement of their Treaty claim. While the Waitangi Tribunal’s 2014 report vindicates Ngāpuhi’s claim that it did not give up sovereignty, the issue for the future will be how to reinvigorate a cultural identity that has been impacted by the inability to make decisions as a sovereign people. In this way, this case-study resonates with the experience of other iwi and with many Indigenous peoples globally, which is one aim of the book. As Tapsell notes (p. 80), the challenge for Ngāpuhi will be to ensure that “decisions made today especially about Treaty settlement, language and marae programmes’ will have the right sort of ‘ripple effects on the living of tomorrow.”
For Schachter, relationships form the ligaments, to use her word, of the moʻolelo (tale or history) of John Simeona and his sister Eleanor Ahuna. They are members of a generation referred to in the book title that were born in the late 1920s and 1930s and who, Schachter argues, experienced a particular process of Americanisation. Schachter claims their story is not a history of American colonialism, of which she is clearly critical, but neither is it a story of Native Hawaiian culture under United States rule. By presenting the story of Simeona and Ahuna, Schachter explores what it means to be Native Hawaiian and a citizen of the United States and investigates the relationships and entanglements between a generation who strongly identified with Native Hawaiian culture and an imperial United States that made strenuous efforts to deny their indigeneity.

Schachter has constructed an unconventional biography, but the template she draws on is Simeona’s own life-writing, a moʻolelo which he gifted her as a 64-page book: Life Story of a Native Hawaiian. To write her book, Schachter also uses interviews, kitchen table chat, and hundreds of letters that Simeona wrote to Schachter over the two decades of their association. Schachter acknowledges Jonathan Osorio’s contention that moʻolelo constitutes a form of assertive scholarship so that the moʻolelo is not dominated by “scholarly paraphernalia” (p. 13), but Schachter does provide notes on many referenced texts, archival and secondary sources. Referring to Dening (2004), she employs the concept of beach crossings throughout the volume. This porous, shifting metaphor and the digressive, anecdotal and sometimes contradictory moʻolelo underpin her depiction of the ways in which power relations influence the lives of individuals who “strenuously and steadfastly redesign that impact every day of their lives” (p. 11).

The construction of Simeona’s and Ahuna’s stories attends to the particulars of the individuals in time and place. Arranged in chronological order, the chapters follow them from their earliest years to their later lives as hānau mua (oldest living member of a family, source of wisdom). Central to each of their moʻolelo is their abiding connection to Hawaiian homesteads, in particular Keaukaha, near Hilo on the island of Hawaiʻi but there are also connections with Panaʻewa on Molokaʻi and Waimānalo on Oahu. Schachter argues that the homesteads, epitomised by Keaukaha, represent a powerful critique of American policy in Hawaiʻi and have been sites for the unanticipated revitalisation of ahupuaʻa (a land division) customs where residents maintained “a collective way of life at the margins of the colonialist-capitalist economy” (p. 30).

Prince Kūhiō’s proposal for the 1921 Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (HHCA) is one of many historical threads that run through the life narratives of Simeona and Ahuna. Following their lives as school-age children with curricula devoid of Hawaiian