

# **Poia mai taku poi**

## **Unearthing the knowledge of the past**

A critical review of written literature on the *poi* in New Zealand and the Pacific

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### **Abstract**

The primary objective of this thesis is to review literature written about *poi* in order to construct an historical overview of *poi* from pre-contact Māori society until the 1920s. The mythological and Polynesian origins of *poi*, traditional and contemporary materials and methods used to make *poi*, early travellers, explorers, and settlers accounts of *poi* and two case studies on the use of *poi* in the Taranaki and Te Arawa areas will be included in this thesis. The information will be used to show the changes in *poi* that have occurred since Māori and European arrival to New Zealand until the 1920s.

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## Preface

This thesis has arisen from my passion for Māori performing arts. Upon completing my fourth year honours dissertation on analysing the reasons for, and content of, certain compositions I realised how little historical literature there is written on Māori performing arts. *Haka* and *waiata* have been in the forefront of Māori culture for a very long time and their antiquity is validated in recollections of their use in Hawaiki and in the early settlement period of New Zealand. Of all the areas within Māori performing arts *poi* has had the least historical research done about it. There are many commonly accepted, orally disseminated truths about *poi* but there is very little written about *poi* to go hand in hand with these truths. This shows that the gap between the oral and written literature on *poi* is very wide. This study will concentrate only on written literature, focusing on a time period from pre-contact Māori society until the 1920s, and is primarily concerned with “unearthing the knowledge of the past,” piecing together what has been written on *poi* to provide a resource to go alongside the oral literature available.

The orthographic conventions used in this thesis follow those set by Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, The Māori Language Commission. The spellings of Māori words follow those in Williams’ *Dictionary of Maori Language*. Where applicable, vowel lengths will be marked using macrons, except in the case of quotations which be written as they appear in the original source. Many Polynesian ethnographies do not indicate correct orthographic spellings of Polynesian words, regularly omitting

macrons and glottal stops. Where the correct form is not known these words will be cited as they appear in the ethnographies I have consulted. A map of North Island tribes showing the location of those mentioned in this thesis can be found at the end of Chapter six.

Because this thesis is written in English, italics will be used for all non-English words, except those that occur in direct quotes and proper nouns. Translations of these words will be given when they first appear and a glossary of all commonly used non-English words can be found at the end of the thesis. In Māori, the form of a word is not altered to show number and tense. These elements of meaning are carried by separate words and this rule holds for Māori words found in English texts, for example *poi* rather than *pois*. This convention has also been followed in this thesis, except where they are pluralised in quotations. Also, for the purposes of this study the terms ‘Pākehā’ and ‘European’ will be used as synonyms for each other.

This thesis would never have been completed without the help and support of many people. Firstly my supervisor, Dr Reilly, who has been extremely supportive and so incredibly helpful; words can never express how much you have helped develop my ability to look at things from a different angle. My advisors, Nathan Matthews and Poia Rewi, thank you for reading what I have written and providing extremely helpful comments and advice. I would also like to acknowledge everyone in Te Tumu for your kind words of support; in particular, Professor Ka’ai, for providing

me with the opportunities to complete this work, and to Tania Smith for help in the final stages of formatting.

A thesis like this that focuses on written literature means a lot of time at the library and I have to make a special mention of thanks to the staff at the Hocken Library who were forever retrieving resources for me, photocopying, and helping me in many other ways – and they always did so with a smile on their face.

I hope that this thesis will encourage others to engage in historical research to validate or invalidate what has been written, and unearth other secrets of Māori performing arts that have been hidden. This thesis is for everyone who has an interest in Māori performing arts. My interest has grown into a passion and it is with this in mind that I present you with “Poia mai taku poi: Unearthing the knowledge of the past.”

Tēnā koutou katoa.

## Introduction

Māori performing arts has always been a passion of mine since first being introduced to this area over twenty years ago. Whilst watching the Te Puka a Maui (Otago and Southland) Regional Competitions I remember my younger sister and I sitting there, on the edge of our seats, mesmerised by the *poi* of the women from Te Rongopai Māori Cultural Group. It amazed me that such contortions of a ball on the end of a string were possible. My own involvement in these competitions first came when I was eleven years old performing in my school's *kapahaka* group, Te Manawanui, tutored by Te Haere Stirling. Single short and double short *poi* were Te Haere's specified *poi*. A new performer never realises how weak their non-writing hand is until they are required to use it to perform *poi*! From those early years my younger sister and I used to play around with *poi* at home, copying the groups on television and making up our own moves and actions to songs we knew; strengthening our left hand *poi* abilities to a point where we became proficient in all areas of *poi*, including the difficult four long *poi*.

As a consequence of my involvement in *kapahaka* I eagerly sought any information I could about Māori performing arts. Literature concerning *waiata*, *haka*, *mōteatea* and Māori games is numerous, but the dilemma I faced, however, is that the same cannot be said for *poi*. *Poi*, in its dance form, is identifiable around the world as a performance item that is uniquely Māori. It is also one of the few items of Māori performance that has extended around the world and is used as a form of



entertainment by many non-Māori people. The question I pose then is, why has there been only a limited amount of information about *poi* published?

The aim of this thesis is to provide a critical review of historical literature written about the *poi* in New Zealand and the Pacific up until the 1920s. It is necessary to emphasise here that this thesis is not intended to look at the performance aspects and the spiritual characteristics of *poi* in its contemporary use. Information on *poi* written by early observers is scattered through a wide variety of literature, much of which is not easily accessible by the public. This thesis aims to provide access to extracts of their work that focus on *poi* in order to rediscover traditional *poi* and provide a fuller picture of its origin, materials and uses. It will also look at how *poi* evolved after European contact and its different uses around the turn of the twentieth century.

*Poi* is the name of both the dance and the instrument used. The *poi* itself is a performance tool consisting of some type of material fashioned into a ball like object, to which a short or long cord is attached. The *poi* dance is when the performer executes movements with the *poi* ball, usually with some type of musical accompaniment. This perfunctory explanation of *poi*, however, does not entirely do it justice. When *poi* is used in contemporary performance it is, in my opinion, an area of performance unrivalled within Māori performing arts; nothing else comes close. Like *waiata*, *haka*, and *waiata-ā-ringa* where hand actions are used to help transmit the message of the item, the *poi* ball is used in much the same

e way. The accurate execution of the *poi* itself, however, is far more difficult to achieve than hand actions. Traditional *poi*, however, was quite different and aspects of traditional *poi* have been overlooked in the process of establishing the contemporary *poi* dance as original and unique. This thesis will “unearth the knowledge of the past” and bring traditional *poi* back into the memories of the current Māori population.

European explorers first discovered New Zealand in 1642. But it was 173 years before the first recording of *poi* took place in 1815, and then another 185 years before a book focusing exclusively on *poi* was written. This is a total of 358 years from European contact until the year 2000 when Ngāmoni Huata, an exponent of *poi*, published her book *The Rhythm and Life of Poi*. That is not to say that this is the only publication that discusses *poi*; merely that it is the only piece of literature that deals exclusively with *poi*.

Huata’s book, *The Rhythm and Life of Poi*, is separated into three parts: the spiritual heritage of *poi*, preparing *poi* and *poi* in performance. These labels however do not adequately explain the information contained within each section. The first part includes information regarding the myths and legends of *poi*, divinities, ceremonial *poi*, the universal picture of *poi* and early observations of *poi*. Part two includes *haka poi*, the making of *raupō poi*, the shape, size, cord length, materials, design and decoration of *poi*. Part three includes choreography and music, general rules for learners using *poi*, the purposes and disciplines of *poi*, the

harmonising of the body and spirit in performance and the future of *haka poi*. By her own admission Huata wrote *The Rhythm and Life of the Poi* based on her own observations of *poi* and the sharing of information with past and present performers of *poi*. As a consequence of this way of preparing her publication, *The Rhythm and Life of Poi* is a project “that comes from the heart of a seasoned performer” (Papesch, 2000:11), and not from an academic perspective. Huata deals largely with the holistic aspect of *poi* in performances in the present day context. She does not discuss extensively the issues presented in this thesis.

Dr Mervyn McLean, one of New Zealand’s leading ethnomusicologists, has published a variety of articles and books on Māori and Pacific performing arts. His doctoral thesis entitled *Maori Chant*, which he completed in 1965, discusses the musical notation of *poi* chants used in Taranaki. He also provides information on different styles of *poi* that developed in the area and some reasons as to why the popularity of these styles diminished. Another of his works that provides more detailed information on *poi* is *Maori Music*, published in 1996. This publication is extremely informative on the musical scale of Māori music as well as providing a general overview of most types of Māori performance. His discussion of *poi* is located in a chapter entitled ‘Sung Song and Dance Styles’. He provides an historical analysis of early European observations of *poi*, but his primary focus remains the use of *poi* in the Taranaki area. He provides detailed information on the musical notation of several Taranaki *poi* chants and the decline of *poi* in Taranaki,

but he fails to locate *poi* within the religious and political sphere that it was primarily utilised for, which this thesis will do.

Ngahuia Te Awekotuku's (1981) doctoral thesis, entitled *The sociocultural impact of tourism on the Te Arawa people of Rotorua*, provides an insightful description of the use of *poi* in the Waiariki district. At the time of her thesis writing she claims that little serious study had been undertaken in the area of Māori dance. The aim of her thesis was only to research Māori performing arts as it is found in the Te Arawa area and the effects tourism has had on their performance style. She suggests that because *poi* was viewed as an item for tourist entertainment it led to an unnatural modification of *poi* purely for the tourist's pleasure and that this change is not representative of Te Arawa performance culture. This thesis will show that what Te Awekotuku has called "unnatural modifications" were actually changes based on traditional aspects of Māori performing arts and the widespread acceptance of their developed *poi* styles has become representative of Māori performance culture around the world; in effect globalising *poi*.

Barry Mitcalfe's (1974) *Maori Poetry: The Singing World* provides a brief historical overview of the observations of *poi*, or a lack thereof, by early explorers. He provides some suggestions as to the absence of *poi* references from the journals of these notable explorers, such as Cook, de Surville, Wakefield, Earl and Cruise for example; namely, that these people may have viewed it as a game not worthy of recording. He also discusses the expansion of *poi* in the Rotorua area as an item of

visitor entertainment and in the Taranaki district, and its use as a religious item. But again, Mitcalfe does not elaborate on these areas. This thesis intends to explore these issues in much greater detail.

Alan Armstrong (1964) made some suggestions regarding the introduction and development of certain styles of *poi*, in particular the short and long *poi*, in his book *Maori Games and Hakas: Instructions, Words and Actions*. He provides a sample of several well-known *poi* songs, with English translations and musical scales, and drawings illustrating the execution of various *poi* figures using double long *poi*, single short *poi* and double short *poi* used in *poi waka* (*poi* in which the choreography and actions depict the rowing of a canoe). For practical reasons, he provides only a brief description of *poi*, the materials used and aspects of a *poi* dance the performer needs to know. He was unable to elaborate more on these topics.

A number of questions previously given an insufficient answer in the above literature on *poi* will be addressed in this thesis. Where did *poi* originate? What were the traditional materials and techniques used to make *poi*? What are the mythological associations of *poi*? What did early European writers write about *poi* and its uses? How was this reflected in the Māori use of *poi* in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries?

Chapter one of this thesis will outline the genealogy of *poi* tracing its genesis from the separation of Rangi and Papa, Tāne-māhuta's quest for the *ira tangata* (human essence), and myths located in Hawaiki, the traditional homeland of the Māori. This will serve to locate *poi* within a mythological framework, establishing the significance of *poi* and its descent from the Gods. The subsequent use of *poi* in Māori traditions will be examined, as will the inclusion of other forms of performing arts, to determine the significance of *poi* in traditional Māori society.

Recent literature has failed to locate the origins of *poi* in the Pacific. Many have acknowledged that it is unique to New Zealand, but as this study will show, this is only in its current form as an item of performance and a dance accompaniment. Chapter two will examine the relationship between *poi* and games of a similar nature played in countries located within the Polynesian triangle.

The materials and methods employed to make *poi* is an area that is usually glossed over by those who write on *poi*. Chapter three is an examination of the materials and techniques used to make *poi* prior to European arrival. It also details the change in materials employed after European arrival and the change in production methods that eventuated.

Chapter four includes an analysis of early written accounts of *poi* to determine the changing values non-Māori placed on *poi*. A critical examination of each piece of early literature will be undertaken in order to determine how *poi* was viewed, its

uses, and the importance early writers placed on it. This chapter will also help show the development of *poi* and the changing values associated with *poi*.

Chapters five and six will comprise case studies of two tribal areas within New Zealand, Taranaki and Te Arawa, known for their prolific use of *poi*. The Aotearoa Traditional Māori Performing Arts Festival Society has regarded Taranaki as the exponents of *poi* in its traditional form and this has been exemplified by their success in retaining certain characteristics that define traditional *poi*. However, this chapter is not a study of their style but rather of their use of *poi* in a time of political turmoil in the nineteenth century as a spiritual and political tool. Te Arawa has been chosen as the second area to provide a contrast to Taranaki's use of *poi*. Te Arawa's employment of *poi* as an item of amusement, using light-hearted songs with social messages in the entertainment of visitors and tourists during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, followed on from Taranaki's much more somber and political use. This chapter will look at specific innovations that occurred in the Te Arawa area and who was involved. In both chapters *poi* will be located within a larger social and political context in order to understand why its use was prevalent in these areas.

The majority of sources used in this thesis are in the form of written literature. Primary sources include accounts by early explorers, missionaries and early travellers and settlers, as well as the Māori newspapers. Secondary sources include various ethnographies, theses and other books of an analytical nature. No formal

oral interviews have been conducted because the aim of this thesis is to provide a historical review of literature written about *poi*, to unpack what has been written, and to provide more detailed answers to those questions discussed before such as the origins, materials, techniques, mythological associations, European views and Māori usages of *poi*.

In terms of constructing the history of *poi* Mitcalfe claims, “the further one moves from the pre-European Maori, the clearer the picture seems to be. But in fact, the picture is obscured” (Mitcalf, 1974:180). The more I have delved into the history of the *poi*, the more I have realised that there is much about the *poi* that remains unknown. This thesis will serve to shed some light on facts about the *poi* unknown until now. It will also show that *poi* can no longer only be viewed as a ball on the end of a string, used in dance to the accompaniment of a song, but that it served a variety of functions and took various forms before being transferred to this area of the Māori culture.



## Chapter One

# Mythology and Tradition

The Māori people carried with them from Hawaiki, the mythical homeland of the Māori people, a mythology that explained how the world and all its intricacies were created and the cultural guidelines to be followed in order for balance within the spiritual and human realms to remain. From a state of chaos into a period of enlightenment and finally to a world of knowledge the Māori looked upon these myths as the genesis of life. Upon their arrival in New Zealand a new set of traditions emerged as tales of migration, settlement and establishment of authority on this new land developed. The use of performance and games in these myths and traditions did more than relieve boredom and pass the time; they served a functional purpose. They were used to attract members of the opposite sex, to distract enemies from recognising their impending death, to trick people and to inform one another of future dangers. For these reasons the incidence of Māori performing arts, especially *haka* and *waiata*, in myths and traditions is prolific. There is rarely any explicit mention of *poi* in Māori myths and traditions, although *poi*-like actions are implied in some places. This chapter will detail the Māori mythological origins of *poi*, its place in the *whare tāpere* (house of entertainment), and its inclusion in certain myths, which will serve to locate *poi* in a mythological context. The use of *poi* in Māori traditions will also be examined, showing its development in New Zealand.

Māori mythology consists of sets of stories located mainly in the Hawaiki era and before. They deal with the creation of the world, gods and the origins of humanity. Prior to European arrival and the introduction of other religious systems, these myths were self-validating in that a direct descent from these legendary heroes and gods, who were often endowed with supernatural powers to overcome supra-normal events, could be established (Walker, 1992:170). These myths contained certain messages that instructed and guided the people. According to Walker:

One way of looking at mythology is to read it as the mirror-image of a culture. Myths reflect the philosophy, ideals and norms of the people who adhere to them as legitimating charters. Sometimes a myth is the outward projection of an ideal against which human performance can be measured and perfected. Alternatively, a myth might provide a reflection of current social practice, in which case it has an instructional and validating function. (Walker, 1992:170-171)

Māori mythology can be seen as an organised sequence of births: the creation of the world (cosmogony), the creation of the gods (theogony), and the creation of human beings (anthropogeny) (Buck, 1950:433). Cosmogony explains the creation of natural phenomena by applying proper names to these features and arranging their emergence in a genealogical table, much the same as for a human. In the Māori view this cosmological sequence occurred in three stages, beginning with Te Kore, a period in time where nothing existed and the world was void, Te Kore-tē-whiwhia, the void in which nothing could be obtained, and Te Kore-tē-rawea, the void in which nothing could be done. These are only some of the terms employed to emphasise the nothingness of this period signaling the process towards Te Pō. Te Pō, a period of darkness, was also given qualifying terms to show the length and intense darkness of this time. Te Pō nui (the big night), Te Pō-roa (the long night), and Te Pō-tē-kitea (the night in which nothing can be seen), are only three of the

gradations that occurred in the build up to the creation of the world (Buck, 1950:434). According to Walker (1990:12), “Te Kore and Te Po also signify the emptiness and darkness of the mind. Because there was no light, there was no knowledge.” However, within Te Kore and Te Pō there existed a state of potentiality and this was actualised in the development of Rangi-nui (Sky Father) and Papa-tū-ā-nuku (Earth Mother).

The birth of Rangi-nui (Rangi) and Papa-tū-ā-nuku’s (Papa) children signalled the beginning of the theological stage of creation; the birth of various gods. Rangi and Papa’s children were born into a state of darkness, enclosed within their tight embrace. The many children of Rangi and Papa are all male gods and each are powerful masters within their own realms, representing the *ira atua* or the supernatural phase of life (Best, 1924:75). They became dissatisfied with their unpleasant living conditions, such as dampness and cold and, after learning that beyond Rangi there was a world of light, their desire to live in this light grew (Best, 1924:83). Discussions were held amongst the children on whether to slay their parents or push them apart. Eventually a decision was made to separate Rangi and Papa, with all in approval except for Tāwhiri-mātea (God of wind). Rongo-mā-tāne (God of cultivated food), Tangaroa (God of the sea), Haumia-tiketike (God of uncultivated food), and Tū-matauenga (God of war) all tried to separate their parents but without success. Tāne-māhuta (God of the forest), with his head firmly planted on his mother, used his feet to push Rangi away and the two were

eventually wrenched apart (Grey, 1956:3). The third and final stage in the creation of the world, Te Ao mārama (the world of light), was thus brought to fruition.

Following the separation a period of change occurred as the Gods worked out how to deal with their new living situations. Tāwhiri-mātea made this settlement all the more difficult by taking revenge on his brothers for separating their parents. He attacked Tāne-māhuta, sending hurricane winds through his domain uprooting and destroying many of the trees and creatures that dwelt there. Tangaroa and his children were chased through the sea as storms thrashed the oceans and muddied the waters. Rongo-mā-tāne and Haumia-tiketike were fortunately rescued from their brother's wrath and hidden within Papa's folds. Tāwhiri-mātea then exerted all his force to attack Tū-matauenga, who stood defiantly against his brother's assault, until Tāwhiri-mātea's anger subsided and he left his brother in peace. Tū-matauenga, angered by his other brother's cowardice, by not standing up to Tāwhiri-mātea, took revenge on them by finding ways to capture and use their children for food (Grey, 1956:5-9). When peace had settled over the earth, the Gods became eager to find the female essence necessary to create a human, in turn producing a "non-supernatural race of descendants to inhabit the world" (Best, 1924:72). This signaled the beginning of the anthropogeny period of creation. Tāne began the task of finding the appropriate female element remembering that, firstly, the female essence needed to be an earth born presence; procreation within the heavenly realms was not possible. Secondly, that the female essence needed to be a non-supernatural element (Best, 1924:73). This mission caused Tāne to procreate

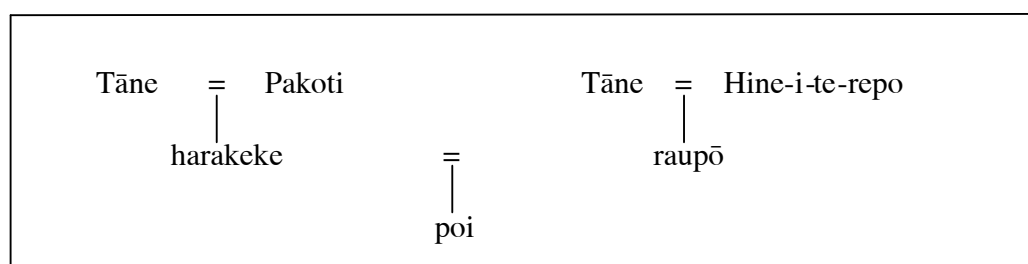
with various female spirits he came in contact with on his journey. He mated with Hine-waioriki, which produced the *kahika* (*Podocarpus dacrydioides*) and *matai* (*Podocarpus spicatus*) trees. He mated with Mumuhanga, which produced the *totara* (*Podocarpus totara*), and with Mangonui, which produced the *tawa* (*Beilschmiedia tawa*) and (*w*)*hinau* (*Elaeocarpus dentatus*) trees (used in the dying of flax). He mated with Punga and produced insects and vermin, while Parauri gave birth to the *tui* (bird) and Haere-awaawa brought forth the *weka* (bird) (Best, 1924:73).

The unions and the offspring listed above are only a small sample of the unions that occurred and the children that were born of these couplings. Needless to say, none of these relationships produced a suitable offspring to begin the human race. The Gods decided that the creation of a female element was essential to their cause. A female form was moulded out of red clay at Kurawaka and many of the Gods involved in this mission made, supplied or fetched the body parts that were required (Buck, 1950:450-451). Tāne was given the task of vivifying the form they had created by breathing into its nostrils, enabling the form to draw its first breath and come to life. The figure they created was called Hine-ahu-one (Earth-formed-maid) and she eventually procreated with Tāne, giving birth to Hine-tītama (Dawn-maid), thus creating the race of humanity.

Upon the advice of Papa, Tāne was sent to procreate with the goddess Pakoti whose personification was in the form of a superior type of flax. Their union produced *harakeke* (flax) (Shortland, 1998:21). According to Huata (2000), Tāne also

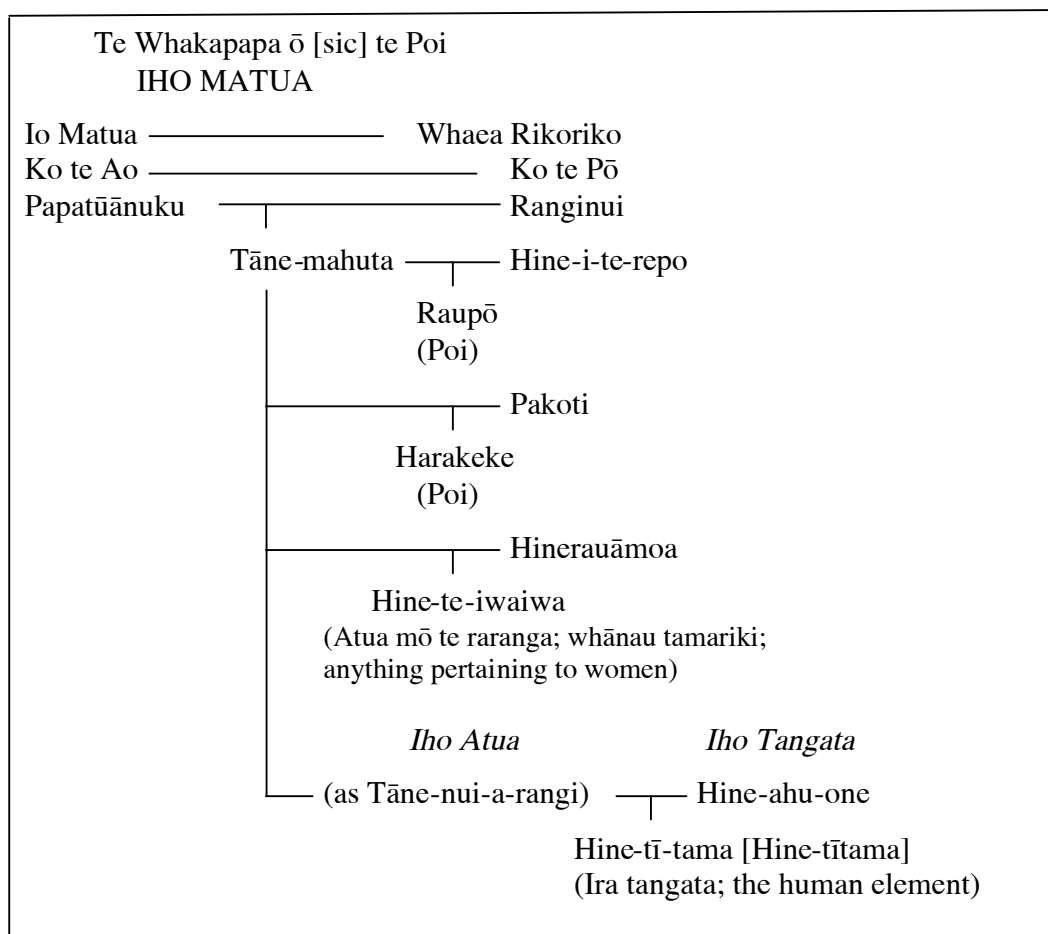
procreated with Hine-i-te-repo, the swamp maiden, and together they produced *raupō* (bulrush) (Huata, 2000:23). One of the traditional, though not exclusive, uses of *raupō* and *harakeke* was in the making of *poi*. Thus a genealogical chart of the traditional materials used to make *poi* can be depicted in the following way:

**Figure 1: Te whakapapa o te poi 1**



Knowing the creation of the resources that are employed in making *poi* is critical in understanding the significance of *poi* within Māori society. The *whakapapa* above shows the distinguished line of descent of *raupō* and *harakeke* from the Gods. In a further extension of the *whakapapa* given above Huata (2000) also adds in Hine-tītama, the offspring of the union of Tāne and Hine-ahu-one, to emphasise the human essence connected with *poi*. Hine-te-iwaiwa, a product of the union of Tāne and Hine-rauāmoa (the goddess of anything pertaining to women such as childbirth and weaving), is also introduced into the *whakapapa* to reinforce the link of *poi* to women (Huata, 2000:23). Thus an extended genealogical chart can be presented in the following way (from Huata, 2000:24):

Figure 2: Te whakapapa o te poi 2



The exact process of how, when, by whom and in what context *harakeke* and *raupō* were first used to fashion *poi* is unknown. However, in 1920 James Herries Beattie (1994), a notable collector and publisher of pioneer history and the historical traditions and ethnology of South Island Māori, spearheaded an ethnological project on the Māori of the South Island recording their traditional lifestyles, material culture and settlement patterns. One of Beattie's informants from the Murihiku area states:

The game [*poi*] was not known in Hawaiki but started at Opunake in Taranaki. A girl named Pari lived at the Tahī-marae pa near Parihaka and as she was getting raupo in a swamp she worked some of it into balls for amusement and when she heard the other girls singing she would juggle these balls about in time to the music. The word poi once meant singing and this new game was called poi because it went with singing. Pari's father heard of her new accomplishment and got her to do it before him. Then at a big gathering of people he commanded her to show this entertainment and she, all shy and nervous, did so and it "caught on" and gradually made its way all over New Zealand. This was the story told her by [the] Taranaki people but whether it was correct the narrator had no idea (Beattie, 1994:81).

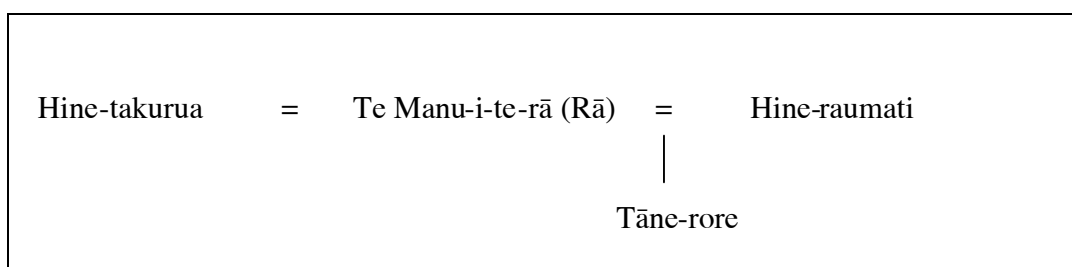
This informant is obviously talking about a juggling type of *poi* (see Chapter two). Despite describing this alternative form of *poi*, this story clearly understood that Opunake was the place where *raupō* and *harakeke* were first utilised to make the *poi* balls. Not surprisingly perhaps, the story was first related by Taranaki people. They clearly believe themselves to be the source of *poi*.

Although the exact origin of how *poi* in its current form came to be is at the present unknown, other mythological aspects relating to the manufacture and function of *poi* are. In terms of the making of *poi*, some of the processes used included the *tāniko* style of weaving flax, plaiting flax for the cord and the stripping of *raupō*. All these activities belong in the *whare pora*, the metaphorical name for the house used to teach the art of weaving in its various forms (Best, 1898:627). The *whare pora* comes under the tutelage of Hine-rauāmoa, the first to understand the art of weaving and to manufacture clothing in this form. As can be seen in Figure 2, she was a wife of Tāne. The utilisation of flax was a technological advance, in terms of clothing, that began in New Zealand. Flax was not used elsewhere in Polynesia, neither was the *tāniko* style of weaving, and hence the use of this plant in plaiting and *tāniko* weaving for *poi* may also have been unknown in Hawaiki.



One of the functions of *poi* is in the area of dance. According to Māori mythology, the origin of dance stems from Rā, the sun god, and his wife Hine-raumati (the summer maid). The two seasons Summer and Winter were personified in the forms of Hine-takurua (the winter maid) and Hine-raumati, and they were both wives of Rā (Best, 1899:98). From his union with Hine-raumati a son called Tāne-rore was born. This is further supported by the Tūhoe version of the origins of dance with Rā being named Te Manu-i-te-rā. These relationships are depicted in the following genealogical chart (adapted from Best (1972:787)):

**Figure 3: Te whakapapa o Tāne-rore**



Tāne-rore is personified in the heat rays seen on hot summer days and at these times Tāne-rore is said to be doing his dance, *te haka a Tāne-rore* (the dance of Tāne-rore), for his mother. *Te haka a Raumati*, the dance of Raumati (Hine-raumati), is another alternative often found and both are euphemisms used to signal that summer has returned (Best, 1925:50). In the execution of all types of Māori performing arts Tāne-rore is represented through the slight quivering of the hand called *wiri*. In *poi* the quivering of the hand is still prominent in the motions required to twirl the *poi*. It is possible that certain movements of the *poi* can

represent the shimmering heat rays, and that the twirls of the *poi* are also similar to the *wiri*.

The quintessential myth in terms of games and performing arts is that of Kae and Tinirau. In Māori mythology Tinirau, a chief from Motu-tapu, invited Kae, a priest from a neighbouring island, to perform the naming rites of his son, Tuhuruhuru. After the ceremony had been performed and the festivities were finished Kae asked to borrow Tinirau's pet whale, Tutunui, in order to return home. Tinirau did so on the proviso that when Kae felt Tutunui shake he was to get off immediately to prevent Tutunui from being stranded in the shallow water. Kae agreed to these terms and set off for home on the back of Tutunui. When Kae felt Tutunui shake, he did not get off as he had previously agreed. Tutunui became confused and kept heading for shore. Once Tutunui became stranded Kae and his people rushed to kill and cook him. Tinirau, however, was waiting anxiously for his beloved pet to return home and when he smelled the scent of Tutunui being cooked he knew at once what had happened (Grey, 1956:69-72).

Tinirau gathered together a troupe of women so as not to exhibit their hostile intentions to capture Kae and return him to Tinirau. The group was led by Hine-raukatauri and Hine-raukatamea, some say these women were his sisters, others his daughters (Pomare and Cowan, 1987:70), and included Itiiti, Rekareka, Rawea, Kurahau, Poruhiruhi, Poroherohe, Whakaarorangi, Ruhi-i-te-rangi and Hine-te-iwaiwa (Reedy, 1993:207). Grey (1956:72) also includes Rua-hau-a-Tangaroa, Best

(1925:2) Hine-awhi-rangi, Kāretū (1993:15) Hine-te-otaota, and Matthews (1999:5) Hine-tī-katakata and Hine-mārekareka. These women were all personified aspects of Māori performing arts; for example, Hine-tī-katakata is associated with laughter and music, Hine-mārekareka with the slapping of the body in *haka* and *waiata*, and Hine-raukatauri is the guardian of musical instruments (Matthews, 1999:5). Unfortunately those who recorded this myth did not note what aspects of the arts are specifically designated to each of the remaining women and not all the names of the women included in the troupe have been preserved.

The women were told they would recognise Kae by his broken teeth. They arrived at Kae's village where one account suggests that Tutunui's bones rattled to greet them (Andersen, 1907:418). They performed all the dances, games and songs they knew but the person they suspected was Kae would not show his teeth. They used all their abilities to make Kae laugh finally succeeding with an erotic *haka*, whereby they were able to see his crooked teeth. By means of an incantation Kae was rendered unconscious and carried back to Tinirau's village where the latter exacted revenge on the person who killed his beloved pet whale, Tutunui (Grey, 1956:72-76). Charles Royal (1998) includes a portion of a *waiata* composed by a man named Te Kōhurehure in a manuscript written by Te Rangihaeata and Mātene Te Whiwhi which summarises the above myth:

E kimi ana i a Kae he tangata  
tohitohi  
Kia tupu nunui ai tama ki  
tana kiwai  
Ka ra Tutunui  
Ki tikina ki runga  
Ki a Raukatauri

I seek out Kae, the man who baptises  
children  
So that they may grow strong in the  
appropriate manner  
Tutunui was killed  
Hence a group was sent for including  
Raukatauri

Ki a Raukatamea	Raukatamea
Ki a Itiiti, ki a Rekareka	Itiiti, Rekareka
Ki a Ruatamahine	Ruatamāhine
Ki a Te Whakapitaumanawa	Te Whakapitaumanawa
Nana i ako mai te rauhanga	It was they who beguiled the people
Ka rotua ka moe	They were bewitched and fell asleep
Ka whakakokopaia	They were then gathered up
Ki te takapau wharanui	into the mats
Oho rawa ake ko te Motutapu na Tinirau	and the sacred island of Tinirau awakened.
Te hemo noa ngā pohehe	Lest the mistakes
O onomata	of long ago be forgotten
Ka utaina ki te waka	He was taken aboard the waka
Ka mate ra Tuhuruhuru	and Tūhuruhuru was killed
(Royal, 1998:107)	

It is interesting to note that two more women who formed part of Tinirau's troupe are mentioned: Ruatamāhine and Te Whakapitaumanawa.

The most important feature of this myth, in relation to this thesis, is that it mentions a variety of musical instruments, games, amusements, songs and dances. The troupe of women sent to retrieve Kae used a variety of these items to entertain the people at the villages they visited. The amount of detail included about these activities varies from one narrator to another. Grey states:

Ka whakakitea nga mahi a Rau-kata-uri i reira, te waiata, te putorino, te koauau, te tokere, te ti ringaringa, te ti rakau, te pakuru, te papaki, te porotiti: mutu katoa enei mea kaore hoki a Kae i kata. Ka whakaaro ratou, "Me aha ra, kia kata ai a Kae?" Ka rapua e ratou he tikanga hei mamingatanga ma ratou i a Kae, a ka kitea. Na katahi ka haka e ratou, koia tenei ta ratou haka,

"Ako au ki te kowhiti,  
Kaore te kowhiti  
Ako au ki te whewhera,  
Kaore te whewhera  
E kowhiti Nuku,  
E kowhiti Rangi,  
E kowhiti werewere.  
Puapua e!  
Hanahana e!  
Tinaku ai."

Mutu kau ana ta ratou haka, tino katanga o Kae i kata ai, na katahi ia ka mohiotia e ratou, ka kitea hoki nga kikokiko o Tutunui e mau ana i nga niho – he niho tapiki hoki tona niho. Ko ta maua nei whakatauki tenei e mau nei, ka rongo te tangata ki te kupu a tetahi tangata, ka pai, ka kata, kei reira tetahi ka mea atu, "Ka kata Kae."  
(Grey, 1971:30)

Rau-kata-uri exhibited all her amusing tricks and games; she made them sing and play upon the flute, and upon the *putorino*, and beat time with castanets of bone and wood whilst they sang; and they played at *mora*, and the kind of *ti* in which many motions are made with the fingers and hands, and the kind of *ti* in which, whilst the players sing, they rapidly throw short sticks to one another, keeping time to the tune which they are singing; and she played upon an instrument like a jew's-harp for them, and made puppets dance, and made them all sing whilst they played with large whizzgigs; and after they had done all these things, the man they thought was Kae had never even once laughed.

Then the party who had come from Tinirau's all began to consult together, and to say, 'What can we do to make that fellow laugh?' and for a long time they thought of some plan by which they might take Kae in, and make him laugh; at last they thought of one, which was, that they should all sing a droll comic song; so suddenly they all began to sing together, at the same time making curious faces, and shaking their hands and arms in time to the tune.

When they had ended their song, the old magician could not help laughing out quite heartily, and those who were watching him closely at once recognized him, for there they saw pieces of the flesh of Tutunui still sticking between his teeth, and his teeth were uneven and all overlapped one another. (Grey, 1956:73)

The Māori version that Grey provides includes the words of the *haka* the women used to make Kae laugh, whereas the English version does not. The words are similar to those provided by Best, which will be discussed further on.

Taylor does not provide as much information about the musical instruments and games used as Grey does. However Taylor does provide details about the *haka*. He claims that when the women entered Kae's house,

they found that *tutau*, or singing in turns, *he whae* (cat's cradles), *he haka* (singing with gestures), and *he waiata* (songs), were the amusements of the evening. But Kae did not laugh. They inquired, What is the *haka* that will make him laugh? They at last found the *pua pua*, the *waitoremi*, the *anaana*. They sung the *waitoremi* he laughed. They saw the hollow space, Kae had lost his front tooth; this was sufficient, they gave over. (Taylor, 1974:113)

Pomare and Cowan provide details of a game not previously mentioned. They state:

The women played game after game taught by the two chieftainesses [Hine-raukatauri and Hine-raukatamea] – the games of *whai*, cunningly worked with strings – the *pakuru*, a thin resonant stick held between the teeth and tapped with another stick – *titi-torea* (*titi-to-ure*), played with sticks thrown from one to the other, and all sorts of dances. One account (the Arawa version) says that the most amusing game of all was the *whai-mouti*, in which two figures bow and approach their forms one to the other, a game dexterously worked with string. But it really

was the dances, the voluptuous dances, that most captured Kae's fancy. Raukatauri and her party excelled themselves in one of these vigorous *haka* or seductive *kanikani*, and the pleased chief laughed outright with delight. (Pomare and Cowan, 1987:70)

Mohi Ruatapu and Henare Potae located this myth in New Zealand and placed Kae's home at Reporua. A name change also occurs with Kae being called Ngae. They state that when Tinirau's women reached Ngae's home they engaged in a variety of games.

Ka noho ratou i reira, ka tā pōtaka, ka miri porotiti, ka kū, ka whai. He tini ngā mahi a Rau-kata-uri hei whakaware mo Ngae.  
Na, ka pō, ka haere rātou ki roto ki te whare, ka hui te tāngata ki te mātakitaki ki te manuhiri. Ko tētahi tarawāhi i te manuhiri. Ka noho, ka mātakitaki te tāngata whenua ki te (ki te) manuhiri, ka noho a Ngae ki te pou toko-manawa o te whare.  
Ka mahi te manuhiri i tāna mahi, i te haka, ka perepere ki runga te whare ...  
Tēnei tētahi mahi a rātou, he kokomo i (i) te ahi ki roto ki te waha, ka kihi ai. Rite katoa rātou ki te kihi, mārama ana te ahi i roto i ō rātou niho, i ō rātou korokoro.  
Tēnei anō tā rātou mahi, he pōtēteke, pare ai ngā waewae ki runga ko te mähuna ki raro. Ka tīmata i tā rātou mahi ... Kāore a Ngae i kata ... Ka tuwhera ō rātou tara, kātahi anō a Ngae ka kata, ka kitea te niho whati o Ngae. (Reedy, 1993:101-2)

They whipped tops, twisted discs [*pūrerehua*], played *kū* [hand game] and played string games. Many, many were the things Rau-kata-uri did to deceive Ngae. Now when the night came, they went into a house and the people gathered to gaze at their visitors. One side of the house was for them, the local people, and the other side was for the visitors. They sat there, and the local people gazed at the visitors. Ngae sat by the central pillar of the house.  
The visitors performed, dancing a haka and throwing darts over the house...  
And this is another thing they did: they thrust fire into their mouths, then blew it out. They all blew together, with fire shining inside their teeth and their throats.  
And this is another thing they did, a *pōtēteke* [an indecent dance], they put their legs up and their heads down... But Ngae didn't laugh... When their vulvas opened, then at last Ngae laughed. And Ngae's broken tooth was seen. (Reedy, 1993:207-208)

Ruatapu mentions 'fire-breathing', an interesting addition to the list of entertainments Hine-raukatauri used to expose Kae. Other authorities on Māori culture have not mentioned 'fire-breathing' as an item of amusement and its mention here is worthy of note since it may have survived the trip from Polynesia, though known only on the East Coast of New Zealand in pre-European times when it was subsequently abandoned. This may be similar to other feats involving fire

elsewhere in the Pacific, for example, fire-walking. This activity was, and to an extent still is, practised in Fiji, Tahiti, Rarotonga, and elders of the Urewera tribe could recall their ancestors doing the ceremony, though it was no longer done (Henry, 1971:214-217).

Beattie's informant from the Otago Heads claims that only three women went in search of Kae and upon arriving at his village,

they played and sang at each house in the pa except Kae's as it happened, and Kae invited them to come to his house at night and they went. They sang hakas and played pois and danced posture dances throwing their waewae (legs) up in a grotesque manner that made everyone laugh but Kae, whose bed was at the poutokomanawa. Then in one dance one of the women advanced almost on to the top of Kae and lifted up her kakahu (garment) in such a suggestive manner that he could see the kumu and Kae laughed and they saw the missing tooth's gap and knew it was their man. (Beattie, 1994:562)

Beattie's informant is the only person to mention that *poi* was one of the items of amusement Tinirau's women performed. However, the informant says that they 'played pois' suggesting that it was the juggling type of *poi* that the women entertained them with, rather than the dance type of *poi* (see Chapter two for further discussion on juggling *poi*).

While the games and amusements used varied between authors, they are all unanimous in writing that the use of an erotic *haka* exposed Kae. Grey (1956:73), Pomare and Cowan (1987:70), Beattie (1994:562), Best (1925:50), and Ruatapu (Reedy, 1993:208), used the terms *haka*, *kanikani*, or dance to describe the type of performance the women used. Best provides the following words to the *haka*:

E ako au ki te haka  
E ako au ki te ringaringa  
E ako au ki te whewhera

E! Kaore au te whewhera  
 E ako au ki te kowhiti  
 E! Kaore te kowhiti  
 E kowhiti nuku, e kowhiti rangi  
 E kowhiti puapua, e kowhiti werewere  
 E hanahana a tinaku ...e!

(Best, 1925:50)

*Puapua*, *waitoremi* and *anaana* are terms that Andersen (1907:419) and Taylor (1974:113) used to describe the specific types of *haka* employed. These types of *haka* are no longer performed. The terms *puapua*, *waitoremi* and *anaana* seem to denote actions used in the erotic type of *haka* performed by these women, rather than the name of the type of *haka*. Ruatapu provides the term *pōtēteke*, “an indecent dance, in which the naked performers executed grotesque movements” (Williams, 1971:296). He also provides the following words to the *pōtēteke* the women used:

He pōtēteke, tēteke, mā tāua e kawē ki hea?  
 E kawē ki te rua i te konokono-  
 E kono, e konokono ki tua ki wai  
 Ka tatū whakarere tō tapa, tū ana i raro,  
 Ka mate au i te haunga i a Pō-ruhiruhi  
 Te haunga i a Pō-roherohe.  
 Ruhiruhi, haramai roto,  
 Ruhiruhi haramai ki roto ē!  
 Ruhiruhi haramai ki roto ē!  
 Tēnei te hope ka tīhake, ka tīhake, huna te pananahu  
 Koi tiki mai i whakakoikoi aku tapa-  
 Koikoi, koikoi, pakoko tai auē  
 Ki kuku te haere, tāroiroi te haere, ki Kawa rāia,  
 Te whai kai mai māhau!

Ako au ki te kōhiti, kāore te kōhiti,  
 [A]ko au ki te whewhera ē, kōhiti-nuku ā, kōhiti-rangi ē,  
 Kōhiti werewere, puapua, hanahana, e tinaku ai ē.  
 Ēi, kai taku hika e kopi nei, huare!

(Reedy, 1993:102)

If the words *puapua*, *waitoremi* and *anaana* are the names of specific actions then it is likely that they were actions used in the *pōtēteke*. An interesting point to note in the *pōtēteke* supplied by Ruatapu is that two of the women who are said to have



been part of the troupe, Pō-ruhiruhi and Pō-roherohe, are referred to as Tinirau's daughters (Reedy, 1993:207).

Apart from Beattie early writers did not specifically write that the troupe of women used *poi*, as it is known today, as one of the items to entertain Kae and his village. This could mean two things: *poi* was included under the generic term of *haka*, or *poi*, as it is used today, did not exist in Hawaiki and therefore was not mentioned in the myths. The term *haka* was traditionally used to encompass many types of Māori performance, primarily dance, which included a range of *haka* from those used in war or confrontational situations, to *haka* used in welcoming ceremonies, to *haka* used during periods of mourning. *Poi* has also often been classified as a dance and Best (1925:54) insists that *poi* should actually be called *haka poi*. The writers do not list the types of performances they have included under the heading of *haka*. It would seem that they used the term *haka* as a generic one for all dance and if this were the case *poi* is likely to have been included under this heading, not requiring a special note. The other alternative, that *poi* in its current form did not exist in Hawaiki, is also a strong possibility since otherwise this particular performing art would surely have been mentioned. Beattie's informant is the only one to explicitly mention *poi* as one of the activities used to expose Kae. This highlights the fact that the South Island Māori clearly remembered *poi* in a more ancient form, as juggling (see Chapter two), which they clearly recall as a game and not as a form of *haka*. This accounts for its separate mention and its inclusion in myths from Hawaiki validates its antiquity. This ancient form of *poi* was not remembered by North

Island tribes and so is not recalled in this form in their versions of the Kae and Tinirau myth.

*Poi*, as both a dance and a game, is seen as an item that belongs in the *whare tāpere* (house of entertainment). The *whare tāpere* is the generic term for all kinds of houses of entertainment and amusement (Royal, 1998:164). It was a place where the people gathered to engage in leisure activities. A house was not built specifically for this activity, nor was one set aside, but the term was applied to any house or area where and when the activities were taking place (Best, 1925:6). Outside of these times the house would serve other purposes. A number of variants of the *whare tāpere* exist and Charles Royal (1998) provides the following names and explanations for these different houses:

<i>whare mātoro</i>	primarily for young people, the interplay of the sexes through entertaining
<i>whare karioi</i>	traveling <i>whare tāpere</i> , Tinirau's group of women
<i>whare haka</i>	<i>whare tāpere</i> devoted to dance
<i>whare ngahau</i>	<i>whare tāpere</i> devoted to amusement
<i>whare tākaro</i>	
<i>whare rēhia</i>	similar to the <i>whare ngahau</i> , <i>Rehia</i> is also the deity under whom all entertainments and amusements are said to be conducted
<i>whare pakimaero</i>	Taranaki, storytelling ( <i>pakimaero</i> – stories of a fictitious type)
<i>whare rōpā</i>	similar to the <i>whare mātoro</i> ( <i>rōpā</i> – make amorous advances to)

(Royal, 1998:164)

Houses such as these are commonplace throughout Polynesia and the continuing existence of the Māori version of this house to this day shows how important this institution remains. Similar terms for this type of leisure area occur throughout Polynesia. For example, the term *‘are tapere* in Mangareva was a house in which

people could gather to discuss matters of importance and it was also a place where speeches, songs, dances and festivals took place (Buck, 1938:231), while *‘are karioi* in the Cook Islands was an entertainment hall devoted to dance and games (Buse & Taringa, 1995:73).

The *whare tāpere* falls under the patronage of Hine-raukatauri, as does *poi*. Hine-raukatauri has been mentioned previously in this chapter (see page 19) as being instrumental in ensuring the capture of Kae. The troupe of women performed and played many of the games and dances that fall under her patronage. Hine-raukatauri is often personified as various things found in the forest. The incessant singing of the *tarakihi* (cicada) is often described as Hine-raukatauri singing and her form is personified in the cocoon of the bag moth, which is also represented in the *pūtōrino* (a type of flute) (Orbell, 1995:152). Hine-raukatauri is often mentioned with her sister, Hine-raukatamea, as both being the patrons of the *whare tāpere*. Their likeness is represented by the hanging spleenwort (*asplenium flaccidum*), which is a species of fern found drooping on various trees of the forest. *Ngā makawe a Raukatauri rāua ko Hine-raukatamea* is the common Māori name for this plant, which likens the hanging of this fern to the hair of these two goddesses (Pomare & Cowan, 1987:69).

Hine-raukatauri and Hine-raukatamea are of the Hawaiki era and the origin of all games and dances is attributed to them. Their traditions were brought to New Zealand and they have thus been established in Māori mythology as two important

personages in the arts of pleasure. Their feats have been known for over a thousand years and their fame is as well recognised in other parts of Polynesia. In other areas of New Zealand the origins of amusements can be attributed to other deities. In the Tūhoe area, for example, Takataka-putea and Marere-o-Tonga are said to be “the originators of games and amusements such as dancing, playing musical instruments, string games and storytelling” (Orbell, 1995:106). Takataka-putea is the name of one of the nights of the moon in its last stages of waning (Best, 1901:36). Marere-o-Tonga also belongs in the night sky and is the Māori name for the star, Achernar (Moorfield, 1996:177). White also records a Ngāti Kahungunu version of these two deities. They are referred to by Whena in response to Uenuku (both chiefs on Hawaiki) when the latter asked where his children were:

Ka kiia mai a Whena “Kei tawahi tonu e taka ana i te henga: kei te rehia, e teka ana, e ku ana, e whai ana, kei te hara-koa i nga mahi a o ratou tipuna (tupuna) a Takataka-putea a More-o-tonga, kei te kare potaka.” (White, 1997:7 (Māori text))

Whena replied, “They are on the other shore, cooking food for the people who are at work, and in the intervals they are playing at games of jumping, throwing the niti (teka), spinning tops, dumb motions, and hide and seek [a game like hunt-the-slipper], and they are amusing themselves with puzzles and the other games of their progenitors Taka-taka-putea (rolling about in a bag) and More-o-tonga (the tap-root of the south)”. (White, 1997:6 (English text))

The account provided by White from the Ngāti Kahungunu tribal area supports that written by Best.

Royal (1998) states that there are six parts of the *whare tāpere*: *ngā haka* (dance), *ngā taonga pūoro* (musical instruments), *ngā waiata* (songs), *ngā tākarō* (games and amusements), *ngā momo kōrero* (storytelling) and *ngā taonga o wharawhara*

(personal adornments, makeups, clothing and like) (Royal, 1998:101). These can be summarised in the following model (from Royal, 1998:101):

**Figure 4: Artistic forms of the whare tāpere**

		NGĀ HAKA
	T E	NGĀ TAONGA PÜORO
	W	
	H A	NGĀ WAIATA
	R E	
	T A	NGĀ TĀKARO
	P E	NGĀ MOMO KÖRERO
	R E	
		NGĀ TAONGA O WHARAWHARA

According to Royal, *poi* is included under the section of *ngā haka*, which serves to strengthen the theory that *poi* is defined as *haka* rather than being separated out. This ultimately means that *poi* falls under the patronage of Hine-raukatauri and Hine-raukatamea. *Poi* is also a unique feature of Māori amusement in terms of ball games. For these reasons one would expect *poi* to be an important feature in Māori

mythology, however this is not so. It is likely *poi* came under the category of *haka* in the Kae and Tinirau story, although it is not specifically stated. This may be the case for all mythological stories that involve women, men, feasts and *haka*. Alternatively, Beattie's informant hints that *poi* existed in Hawaiki in a different form, as a game of juggling, suggesting that *poi* as a form of *haka* did not develop until the Māori arrival in New Zealand. This possibility is supported by its non-inclusion in North Island accounts, where the game seems to have been forgotten. If this were the case then the appropriate category for *poi*, in its juggling form, within the *whare tāpere* would have been *ngā tākaro*. According to Royal (1998:167), the term *ngā tākaro* is used to denote smaller games and amusements such as *tī rākau* (stick game), *whai* (cat's cradle) and *niti* (dart throwing). *Poi* in its juggling form would have easily slotted into this category. Hine-raukatauri would still have been the patronage of *poi* and the fact that she is not mentioned playing *poi* in the Kae and Tinirau myth in North Island accounts suggests that a juggling style of *poi* may have been discontinued soon after the Māori arrival to New Zealand.

References to *poi* appear in a number of Māori traditions. What is tradition, and how does it differ from myth on the one hand, and legends on the other? According to Walker,

Maori traditions begin with the migratory period from the Hawaiki homeland in the fourteenth century. Unlike myths, the heroes in the traditions are human ancestors with whom direct genealogical links can be demonstrated. Although the stories recounted in the traditions were not recorded in writing, the owners treat them as historic events. (Walker, 1992:180)

By contrast, the term ‘legends’ tends to lead one to think that they are popular stories that have been grossly exaggerated so that the credibility of their truth is questioned whereas traditions are treated as history. The characters in traditions retain a certain amount of mystery since their feats seem exaggerated, but they are nevertheless real people. They lived a life, faced moral dilemmas and found themselves in predicaments not too dissimilar to those who use the traditions for inspiration in their own lives, but they also exhibited personality traits and powers associated with the heroes of mythology (Walker, 1992:180). For the reasons stated above the term ‘tradition’ will be used here instead of ‘legend’. The traditions used in this section of the thesis are all based in New Zealand, thus locating the origins of *poi* in New Zealand.

Performing arts played an important part in Māori traditions and, through the use of items such as *haka* and *waiata*, provided a way for the characters to interact with their ancestors. *Haka* plays an important part in Māori myths and traditions and both men and women are executioners of this type of performance. Te Rangi-tū-mai, from Oue *pā* at Te Waimana used *haka* to work his way to the edge of a cliff in order to jump into the Tauranga River and avoid being killed by his captors, in order that one day he might exact revenge on them for killing his father, Tama-ruarangi (Best, 1972:71-73). After Wairangi struck his wife, Parewhete, in anger over her adulterous behaviour she fled to Te Aea *pā*, near Matamata, the home of her lover, Tūpeteka. Wairangi set out to follow her and, upon arriving at Te Aea, Parewhete informed Wairangi of their intentions to kill him. Wairangi used his

*haka* abilities to entrance the people of Te Aea, while his own men prepared themselves to attack (Jones, 1995:144-149). While many of the traditions found fail to mention explicitly the inclusion of *poi* the following examples imply that *poi* may have been a feature.

Traditions involving women performing *haka* are not as numerous as those that involve men, but they are just as vital. One particularly picturesque description involved Te Kahu-rere-moa, whose father desired her to be married to Taka-kopiri in order for his family to take possession of Ao-tea, Great Barrier Island. She resisted her father's desire and after he scolded her for taking a gift from Taka-kopiri's people, when she had no intention of becoming his wife, Te Kahu-rere-moa decided to make her way to Taka-kopiri and offer herself as a way of easing the shame she felt (Grey, 1956:202-203). One of the places she stopped at on the way was Kati-kati. It was here during the evening's festivities, after the hosts had danced, that they solicited Te Kahu-rere-moa to dance:

Ko te haka a te iwi nei e whakataritari ana i a Te Kahu-rere-moa kia whakatika ki runga ki te haka hei matakitaki ma ratou, kia kitea te ahua paitanga ki te haka.

I reira ka mea te wahine nei. "Koia kei a koe, ka hei tau."

Tino whakatikanga o te wahine nei ki runga ki te haka, i te toronga kautanga o nga ringa inamata e whakatangihia ana ki te ngongoro; ko nga ringa me te mea ka marere, ko nga koikara piri ana i tua i te angamamate o te kapu o te ringa; koia ano me te mea e komurua ana te tamahine a Paka, ta te Aitanga-a-Tiki pai, ta te kotahi a Tu-tawake pai, ara ona whakatauki o te rangatira, "He riri ano ta te tawa uho, he riri ano ta te tawa para;" ara o te rangatira ona whakatauki, tu atu ki te haka, he haka ano ta te rangatira, he haka ano ta te ware, he porahu noa iho nga ringa. Haka tonu a ka mutu, ka rere taua iwi ra ki a Te Kahu-rere-moa. (Grey, 1928:122)

After they had all danced, they continued soliciting Te Kahu-rere-moa to stand up and dance also, whilst they sat looking on to see how gracefully and beautifully she moved. Upon which she coyly said: 'Ah, yes, that's all very well; do you want me to dance indeed?' At last, however, the young girl sprang up, and she had hardly



stretched forth her lovely arms in the attitude of the dance before the people all cried out with surprise and pleasure at her beauty and grace; her arms moved with an easy and rapid action like that of swimming; her nimble lissome fingers were reverted till their tips seemed to touch the backs of the palms of her hands; and all her motions were so light, that she appeared to float in the air; then might be seen, indeed, the difference between the dancing of a nobly-born girl and a slave; the latter being too often a mere throwing about of the body and of the arms. Thus she danced before them; and when she had finished, all the young men in the place were quite charmed with her, and could think of nothing but of Te Kahu-rere-moa. (Grey, 1956:206)

The connotations surrounding the term *haka* today scarcely apply to the description above. It is obvious that Te Kahu-rere-moa executed a type of *haka* different to the *haka* known today. The rapid swimming motion described in Grey suggests the description of traditional *poi* which focused on swinging long *poi* as an extension of one's body (see Chapter four). Moving the arm or arms in a circular motion forward, to propel the *poi* the same way, is similar to the freestyle swimming stroke. Likewise if the *poi* were swung backwards then the arm motions would be similar to backstroke. If the *poi* were swung across the body, so the arms crossed then uncrossed and the *poi* struck the back of the performer, then this would resemble the breaststroke. In all these *poi* movements the arms would be required to move at a quick pace in order to keep the *poi* moving in a fluid motion. While there is no explicit mention of *poi* in the above description there is nothing to suggest that she was not performing *poi*, or was at least a *poi* performer, given the similarities between Grey's description of her actions and some of those required to execute long *poi*.

Grey also provides a detailed account of Puhihuia, the daughter of a chief from Maunga-whau (Mount Eden), who used *haka* to entertain visitors from Awhitu

(Grey, 1956:232-239). The suggested existence of *poi* in this tradition is also exhibited in Puhihuia's *haka* abilities.

Na katahi ra ka takahia; na e takahia ana, e whakaaro ana a Te Puhi-huia, te kotiro a te rangatira o taua pa ra, ki te wa hei patunga mona ki mua pukana ai; no te mea hoki e kore ia e pai kia rere kau ki mua o te aro-a-kapa o te haka; engari ano kia rite te takahi, te papaki, me te horu a te tangata; ko reira ia pai ai te rere ki mua ngangai; ka takahi te iwi ra, te mea noa ano ka haratau marire ki te whakaaro o te wahine ra. Te tino putanga ki mua o nga kapa o te haka, katahi ra ka pehia ki tetahi taha, ki tetahi taha, ae ta tuawahine pai, whakamau noa atu ki nga kanohi o ia wahine; anana, me te Maure ka puta ake i te pae! Na reira ano te manuhiri ra mate noa ake te ngakau ki te pai o ia wahine. Koia hoki ko Te Ponga, ko te rangatira o taua teretere nei, kua whakawairangi noa ake te ngakau ki te pai o ia wahine. (Grey, 1971:140-141)

Then, just as they were all beating time together, Puhi-huia perceived the proper moment had come, and forth she sprang before the assembled dancers; first she bends her head with many gestures towards the people upon the one side, and then towards those upon the other, as she performed her part beautifully, her full orbed eyes seemed clear and brilliant as the full moon rising in the horizon, and whilst the strangers looked at the young girl, they were all quite overpowered with her beauty; and Te Ponga, their young chief, felt his heart grow wild with emotion, when he saw so much loveliness before him. In the meanwhile the people of the village went on dancing, until all the evolutions of the dance were duly completed. (Grey, 1956:234)

Grey does not specifically mention *poi* as one of the dances performed by Puhihuia, however, one could speculate that *poi* was one of the dances performed by Puhihuia. Izett provides a similar description of Puhihuia's dancing abilities:

Puhi-huia awaited the moment when the beating of time with the hands and feet and the deep tones of the voices of the men were all in exact unison, then forth she bounded before the throng a fairy vision of grace and beauty. First, with many appropriate gestures, she bent her charming head to the people on one side; then away she lightly sped, a thing of loveliness and life. Radiant in youth and beauty, she danced as one inspired with the poetry and the sensuality of motion. The glory of her full-orbed eyes – clear and brilliant as the moon rising from beyond the line of the ocean – Puhi-huia casts upon the dazzled strangers. It fell upon Te Ponga, and he was swept away in a whirlwind of passion like a straw in a tornado. His heart surged with emotion; never had he dreamed of such loveliness, of such grace. He followed every movement of the young girl with his whole soul enraptured, and when the dancing of the lovely girl ceased Maunga-whau seemed to be swinging all round him. (Izett, 1904:407-408)

Neither Grey nor Izett provide an indication of the *haka* Puhihuia danced, the actions, arm movements and so on. However they do both say that she bends her head to the side, which is also an aspect of *poi* dance as shown in Figure 12. Izett makes assumptions based on his understanding of the situation. He claims that “it is possible she [Puhihuia] remained in sweet unconsciousness of her own translucent loveliness, but she must have known that in gracefulness she excelled all others in the dance” (Izett, 1904:407), an attribute of her performing abilities that is also described by Andersen (1907). Andersen has included *poi* in his retelling of the love story of Te Ponga and Puhihuia. He lists *haka*, *kanikani* (dance), *tītītouretua*, spinning tops, *pīrori* (toy hoop), wrestling, kites, *pūrerehua* (bull roarer), and *poi* as some of the amusements the young people engaged in.

Besides those dance in which young men and young women joined, there were others in which the young women only took part. Standing in rows, or seated upon the ground, they sang a song, sometimes gracefully swaying their bodies this way and that, whilst at the same time they swung a light *poi*, a ball made from dried blades of *raupo*, suspended by a twisted cord of flax fibre. A special song, with its appropriate dance and motions of the *poi*, would be composed for celebrated occasions; and the maidens of Maunga-whau were not reluctant to display their skill in the composing of songs and *poi* dances, or their performance when composed. They had therefore prepared more than one on this occasion, and be sure that PUHI-HUIA was one of the ablest performers. Pleasant it was to behold the company of fine-looking young women, gracefully swaying, and gently beating the *poi* balls here and there on their limbs and bodies, in perfect time to the softly murmured song. One song would welcome the visitors, another would compliment the young women on their attractive appearance, another would coyly allude to the irresistible charms of the young men; nor was PONGA the only youth whose heart fluttered as if in the very hands of the smiling maidens. (Andersen, 1907:367)

Andersen tells us in the above extract that *poi* helped exhibit the women’s beauty and that Puhihuia was amongst the more accomplished dancers. His retelling of this story describes the performance lasting over several days and that *poi* was a part of the activities used to entertain Te Ponga and his people. Grey and Izett are not specific in their detail about what *haka* Puhihuia used that caused Te Ponga to fall

in love with her. By contrast Andersen is sure that *poi* was one of them. It is interesting that Andersen includes these details in his retelling of this tradition, when Grey does not. Andersen claims that Te Ponga's people stayed until all the games of those days had been played. The delay caused by playing these games ensured Puhihuia fell in love with Te Ponga.

This chapter has detailed the mythical origins of *poi*. In terms of materials these were created during Tane's quest for the *ira tangata*, the human essence. His procreation with Pakoti and Hine-i-te-repo produced what is commonly known as flax (*harakeke*) and bulrush (*raupō*). The process by which these materials were first utilised to produce *poi* is said to have started at Opunake in Taranaki, where a young girl fashioned balls out of *raupō* and began juggling them whilst singing. Where and when flax was first utilised to provide a cord is unknown. The union of Rā and Hine-raumati, and the birth of their son, Tāne-rore, represent the mythical origin of dance. *Kua tū te haka a Tāne-rore*, the dancing of Tāne-rore has commenced (Best, 1972:787), is a euphemism often used to indicate that summer has arrived. Tāne-rore is personified in the shimmering heat rays, which is in turn represented by the quivering of the hands in performance. Specific *poi* movements, the *poi* twirls and the rapidity in which the hand is required to move in order to swing the *poi* could be representative of Tāne-rore dancing in *poi*.

The Kae and Tinirau myth is one of the few myths set in Hawaiki where one would expect there to be a mention of *poi*. However Grey, Pomare and Cowan, Best,

Taylor, Ruatapu and Andersen do not mention *poi* in any of their sources. Beattie is the only one to do so but in a way that is not indicative of what kind of *poi* is being referred to. He is told that the women ‘played pois’ implying that they played a juggling type of *poi*. The *whare tāpere*, an institution that survived the migration to New Zealand, is important in locating *poi* within a recognised mythological framework. The *whare tāpere* comes under the patronage of Hine-raukatauri, and often Hine-raukatamea. Charles Royal has located *poi* within the *whare tāpere* and under the section *ngā haka*. In terms of the Kae and Tinirau myth, Hine-raukatauri led a group of women to perform and entertain the villages with all the amusements located within the *whare tāpere*. For this reason one would expect *poi* to have been mentioned within the retelling of myths about Kae, Tinirau, Hine-raukatauri, the *whare tāpere* and other myths located in Hawaiki. The fact that it is not leads one to question whether *poi*, in its current form, was known in Hawaiki.

In terms of Māori traditions it seems likely that *poi* was referred to under the broader heading of *haka*. The term *haka* today has had severe limitations placed on it due to uninformed public perceptions of what constitutes *haka*. Competitions have dictated the conventions of *haka*, which previously were freer, and it has become a male orientated performance piece (Matthews, 2004) The traditions included in this chapter, that of Te Kahureremoa and Puhihuia, indicate that women dancing was an appealing form of night-time entertainment. Andersen is the only one to specifically mention that *poi* was one of the *haka* Puhihuia used that caused Te Ponga to fall in love with her, though it was not the only one used. It is more

than likely that the *poi* dances occurred as a part of the night time entertainment, although sources do not say so explicitly. Te Kahureremoa and Puhihuia were both women of rank and it can be assumed that their performances included *poi*, especially with details of their arm and head movements being similar to those used in *poi* performance, and were not strictly limited to the idea of *haka* prevalent in today's society.

The myths and traditions presented in this chapter represent only a small sample of the information about *poi* that was potentially known prior to European arrival. The origin of games, dance and amusements is only briefly mentioned in sources that deal with the entire mythology of the Māori people. As a consequence, the suppression of vital information occurred, especially information concerning *poi*, with the result that the information will never be recovered. The traditions of the Māori people are infinite and their use of *haka* numerous, especially in war or situations of confrontation and in welcoming ceremonies. *Haka* done as a leisure activity seemed to occur largely at night-time with the intention of displaying one's physique being a primary goal. In these circumstances the attraction of the opposite sex was the desired outcome. We can be fairly certain that the *haka* done during those evenings would have included *poi*, but why authors have not explicitly said so is puzzling.

## Chapter Two

### The Pacific Origins of Poi

New Zealand is located geographically at the lowest apex of the boundaries that form what is commonly known as the Polynesian Triangle. The countries situated within this triangle are closely related to each other, sharing many linguistic and cultural characteristics. One of New Zealand's most renowned anthropologists, Sir Peter Buck, who was an authoritative figure spearheading the research into the material culture of the Māori, states that "the women's *poi* dance, however, used an accessory in the form of the *poi* ball which is unique for Polynesia" (Buck, 1950:243). This is a common view of *poi* and this chapter aims to challenge this misconception by showing that *poi* is a New Zealand development of a pastime that ultimately began in Polynesia and was transported to New Zealand. Buck claims that *poi* was a pastime of the Māori people developed locally, and while there are local developments of Māori culture distinctive from Polynesia, *poi* will be proven not to be one of these. This chapter will look at games and dances from islands in both Western and Eastern Polynesia, with forms and functions similar to that of *poi*, to show a progression to the Māori form of *poi* as it is known today.

Linguistic evidence has suggested that the settlement of the Polynesian triangle began around 3500 years ago (Benton, 1991:4). The first group of islands likely to be settled within the triangle were the Tongan islands, with archaeological evidence suggesting that this happened around or before 1300BC (Bellwood, 1987:28).

Given the close proximity of Samoa to Tonga and the scattering of islands found there, it would seem likely that from there the Polynesian settlers spread north to Samoa, then to Tokelau and even East Uvea and East Futuna. From there both archaeological and linguistic evidence suggest that the Marquesas Islands, Society Islands and Easter Island were settled before 500AD with the rest of the Pacific being discovered somewhere between 500AD and 1000AD with most of the movement coming from the Society Islands. The relatively short time period between the various settlement phases of Eastern Polynesia has ensured that the language and culture of these islands are extremely close.

Western and Eastern Polynesia differ greatly in some areas but are remarkably similar in others. One of the areas where they differ is in language. For example, languages within Polynesia as a whole come from what is known as the Austronesian family (Benton, 1991:1). Languages within Western and Eastern Polynesia are related because of this but at a greater distance than those within their own geographical areas. For example, someone from Rarotonga would have little trouble communicating with someone from Tahiti or New Zealand but would have great difficulty communicating with someone from Tonga or Samoa, and vice versa. This linguistic relationship is important when investigating the origins of *poi*, especially in Eastern Polynesia.

While there are marked differences between Eastern and Western Polynesia there are some similarities and one of those areas is in games, sports and amusements.



*Whai*, commonly known as cats cradle, which involves the manipulation of a loop of string into various shapes representing aspects of daily life, is an almost pan-Polynesian game. So too is *teka*, dart tossing, where the purpose is to throw the dart the furthest or aim it at a specific object. *Poi* has rarely been linked to the Pacific as a Polynesian game. This chapter will show that, in its earliest forms, *poi* is also a pan-Polynesian game.

There seems to be three phases of investigative writings on the Pacific. Firstly, there were the writings and journals of early explorers. The majority of these early explorers lacked linguistic competence and while some voyagers refrained from interacting with the indigenous people, others were limited by time constraints. They observed only moments of Polynesian life and recorded situations that may have been a one-time occurrence. They showed only facets of Māori and Polynesian life and generalised possibilities about that life and the disposition of the inhabitants as being fierce and unpleasing: characteristics of the people that were exhibited in confrontational first contacts (Thomas, 1989:78).

The second phase of investigative writings on the Pacific comprises those of various missionaries. It would seem that their very purpose in frequenting the islands was to convert what they saw as an uncivilised people to Christianity. In their attempts to capture the barbarism and savageness of the Polynesians they wrote in a manner that has been described as unsystematic and deeply prejudiced (Thomas, 1989:69). They were interventionists in terms of eradicating the

traditional customs of the Polynesians and methodically included and excluded material for their publications. Their writings on Polynesian games, and the adults' delights in playing these games, confirmed their suspicions about the childlike minds of the Polynesians who found their delight and enthusiasm in apparently simple games. However, not all missionary work should be discredited because of the aspects discussed above. Fragments of their work are vital and should be used in conjunction with other published works. It is by this process that a review of written literature concerning *poi*-like games in Polynesia will be critiqued.

The archaeologists, linguists and anthropologists who used recognised and methodical procedures in order to record and document Polynesian life represent the third phase of writing on the Pacific. This kind of fieldwork was not conducted until the beginning of the twentieth century, when most Polynesian islands had already undergone a significant transformation due to foreign technology and ideas. Within this time frame there are also generations of professional archaeologists, linguists and anthropologists who built upon and often debated each other's work. Again their research did not focus heavily on Polynesian games, sports and amusements and many relied on previously published literature to provide the main basis for those areas in their own publications. Also by the time these professionals had begun researching a lot of the games, sports and amusements had fallen into disuse and only those that were still played by children and the introduced games remained. Elderly people still remembered many games from their childhood but they were not known amongst the younger generations.

It would seem that various writers in recording their ethnographies of the different islands were not overly interested in the structure and play of the various games, sports and amusements and they were viewed as being unimportant in the broader aims of their ethnographies. A lot of the literature available on this important aspect of Polynesian life is minimal at best. No literature is available that has collected games, sports and amusements of the various islands into one source in a manner that is akin to Elsdon Best's *Games and Pastimes of the Maori*. A complete study of Polynesian games, sports and amusements has yet to be done.

European contact with New Zealand first began in 1642 with a fleeting visit, lasting less than a month, from the Dutch explorer, Abel Tasman. Tasman never ventured on land, though he sent his men ashore, and his observation of the Māori people was from a distance. What he never factored into his remarks was that this was the first time the early inhabitants of New Zealand had seen fair skinned people such as themselves and the technology and materials that they possessed. This made for unavoidable confrontation as Tasman and his men neither had the necessary skills required to interact with these people nor the time and patience to do so. Over one hundred years later Captain James Cook made contact with the inhabitants of New Zealand. At first he was met with resistance but, unlike Tasman and with the help of a Tahitian interpreter, Tupaia, he eventually established amicable relationships with the Māori people (Beaglehole, 1939:43-48). Cook made two subsequent trips

to New Zealand with each interaction building upon the relationships previously established.

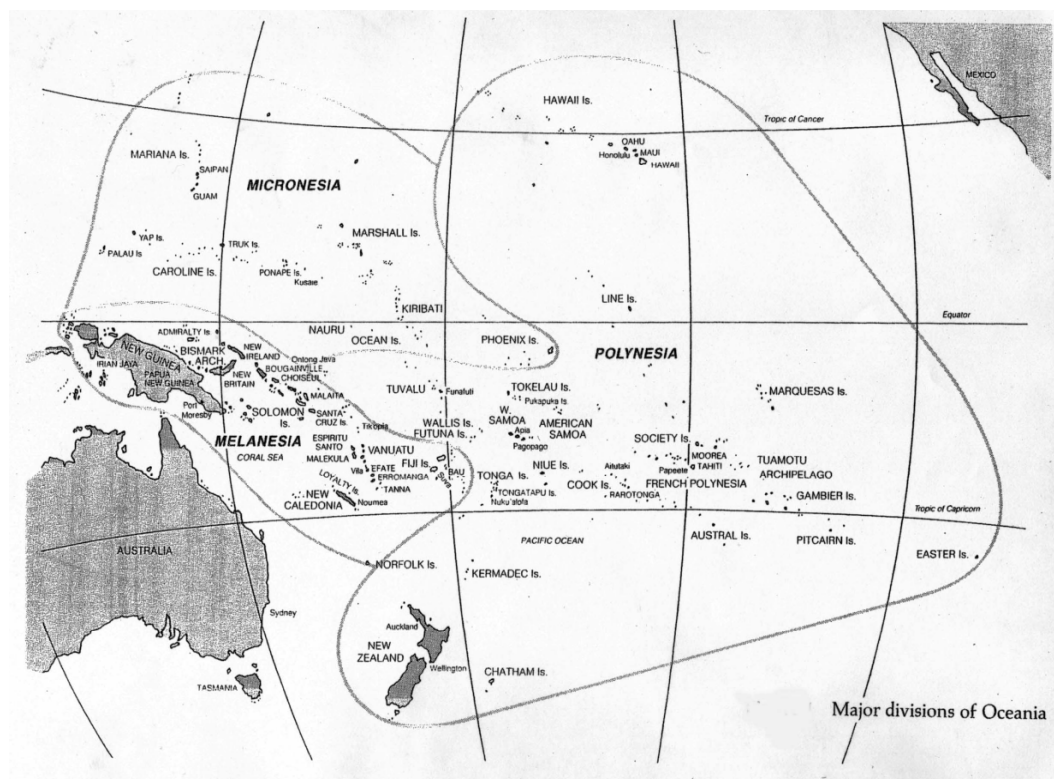
The culture that Cook, his crew and subsequent voyagers encountered on their first visit was one whose very beginnings stemmed from the tropical Pacific. It had adjusted and evolved due to a change in environment, climate and new resources the earliest inhabitants of New Zealand encountered on their arrival nearly one thousand years ago. In terms of *poi*, what they saw was a game that had been transported from Polynesia. It was a pastime that they had most likely encountered in its earliest forms elsewhere in the Pacific but had had to evolve and change upon the Māori arrival to New Zealand. A change of resources and an increased complexity in production is likely to have caused *poi* to have become a more valued and treasured item than the early explorers had possibly thought.

Various writers on New Zealand history and, in particular, Māori social life and customs have recorded their own observations of *poi*. Many of these observations were based on what they saw, or what they thought they saw, and very rarely is there any in-depth analysis made of *poi* in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. As stated previously Buck claims the *poi* to be a pastime developed in New Zealand and its use in the women's *poi* dance as an accessory unique for Polynesia. Exactly what aspect of *poi* Buck is labelling as unique is unclear. If it is that dance accessories are unique to New Zealand, this is surely incorrect. Dance accompaniments were a common feature throughout Polynesia. Buck himself

describes Hawaiian gourd rattles as a musical instrument and also includes a sketch of them decorated with feathers being used as accessories to dances by male dancers (Buck, 1957:413). Also included in this book are stone castanets (Buck, 1957:410) similar to *tōkere* used in Māori society. The use of castanets are more than just simple musical instruments or dance accessories and, according to Richard Nunns, *tōkere* have the ability to invoke almost forgotten memories of traditional ways, painful pasts and joyful events in the simple clicking of the two sides together (Nunns, 2002). So it is obvious from these examples that dance accessories being unique to New Zealand is not a correct interpretation of Buck's quote.

This leads to another interpretation that the *poi* ball itself is unique to New Zealand. It is an undeniable fact that a vast amount of Māori culture, both material and non-material, is either the same as that found in various islands of Polynesia or is very similar. The differences can be said to be an adaptation of Polynesian culture, which had to undergo significant change when Māori had to adapt to this colder climate and adjust to their new surroundings and new materials. This part of the chapter will show that the origins of *poi* actually stem from Polynesia and that present day *poi* in New Zealand is a development of games found in Polynesia.

Figure 5: Map of Polynesia



Source: Based on Benton, 1991:5

European contact with Tonga began in 1616, with a number of people visiting around 1770. William Mariner, who was the only one to survive a massacre aboard his ship in 1806, became the adopted son at the age of fifteen of King Finau 'Ulukalala II. Mariner lived amongst the privileged of Tongan society for four years before his eventual return to England. He describes various games and pastimes of Tonga, one of which includes a game called *hico*.

Hico, throwing up balls, five in number, discharging them from the left hand, catching them in the right, and transferring them to the left again, and so on in constant succession, keeping always four balls in the air at once. This is usually practised by women: they recite verses at the same time, each jaculation from the right to the left hand being coincident with the cadence of the verse: for every verse that she finishes without missing she counts one. Sometimes seven or eight play alternatively. (Mariner, 1817:344)

Mariner's work has been regarded as among the best and most accurately written observations of early Tongan life (Thomas, 1989:74). Modern Tongan spelling conventions replace the 'c' in *hico* with a 'k', *hiko* (Churchward, 1959:223). Ethnomusicologist, Richard Moyle, discusses *hiko* more extensively. Whilst Moyle concentrates on the musical notation of various traditional songs and musical instruments, he does provide valuable insight into the various games of Tonga, how and why they were played, and their uses in traditional and contemporary Tongan society. Moyle's description of *hiko* is very similar to that of Mariner's, where the aim of the game is to complete a text without dropping any of the stones or small fruits being juggled. Each time the rhyme is completed marks one *ulu* (game). Players agree before the game how many *ulu* there are to be and those that match that number win the game (Collocott, 1928:100). Moyle states that it is typically a girl's pastime (Moyle, 1987:209), whereas Mariner has claimed that it is a game usually played by women.

Moyle provides various texts and translations of chants and songs that were and are still used by those who participate in *hiko*. One area of criticism in Moyle's work is his dividing of the various texts into three categories: enumeration, strings of words with no apparent flow of information, and narrative texts. His belief is that some of the juggling texts seem irrelevant and at the time he recorded these texts had no deeper meaning for the Tongan people who played this game. He seems almost doubtful that these texts may have had a more significant meaning in traditional Tongan society, which has been forgotten or is only known to a few people.

An interesting piece of information to note is that one of the Māori meanings of *hiko* in its repeated form *hikohiko* is to “recite genealogy, indicating principal names on line and omitting others” (Williams, 1992:50). This definition perhaps supports the view that *poi* in traditional Māori society was used conjointly with *pātere*. A *pātere* is a type of *haka* usually composed by women designed to vent anger and frustration over malicious rumours being spread about the composer with the emphasis being on restoring the self-respect and dignity of the composer (McLean, 1996:41). The composer would send her *poi* on an imaginary journey around places of importance and include details of her *whakapapa* (genealogy) mentioning principal names in order to prove the rumours false. Some of the texts provided by Moyle include a recitation of names and events not too dissimilar to the content of *pātere*, suggesting a close relationship between *poi* and *hiko*.

*Hiko* is also an important feature in Tongan myths and legends. For example, the heroic deeds of Tinirau are not only important in the development of Māori performing arts but he is also a prominent figure in Tongan and Samoan history. According to Tongan mythology Sinilau (Tinirau) was a Samoan chief who had heard of the famed beauty of a Tongan woman called Hina. Sinilau, desperate to see this lady, traveled to Tonga where she lived surrounded by eight fences, many fires and one hundred guards. Sinilau scaled the fences and extinguished all the fires so he could hide in the cover of darkness as one of the guards. Sinilau entered Hina’s room where she repeatedly treated him in a manner unbecoming for a chief of



his status. Sinilau, disgusted at her behaviour, returned to Samoa. Hina followed in pursuit trying to apologise because she was unaware of who Sinilau was in the darkness of her room. Upon arriving in Samoa Hina was found by Sinilau's mother who hid Hina in the house where Sinilau's father had died. There she encouraged Hina to juggle oranges, which would make a noise and cause Sinilau to investigate who was making the noise in the sacred house of his dead father. Sinilau entered his father's house and discovered Hina, whom he eventually married (Gifford, 1924:187-190). It is also noted that orange juggling was a pastime of the virgin daughters of chiefs, which is supported by Hina, a chief's daughter, using juggling in the story above. Early comments on *poi* often refer to the *poi* ball being the size of a large orange which may be the result of early writers observing oranges employed as balls elsewhere. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this myth is that juggling was used by Hina, as it was Beattie's version of the Kae and Tinirau myth, thus providing further evidence to the *poi* in Beattie's version being a type of juggling.

Of the various games practised in Tonga, Moyle notes that only *hiko* has a direct link to the supernatural and falls under the special patronage of Fehulini. Fehulini, which means to move about (Collocott, 1928:100), is a Tongan deity that always appears in the human form of the opposite sex to those who see her or him and it is believed that those who become fond of his or her affections will die (Gifford, 1929:292). When Fehulini appears in female form she and other women deities often use juggling in order to look like Tongan women to lure unsuspecting men to

their death. It is also considered *tapu* (sacred) to play *hiko* at night and any disrespect of the *tapu* associated with *hiko* would enrage Fehulini who would come and take the eyes of those who offended her and use them to play *hiko* with (Collocott, 1928:100). While no such *tapu* is known to exist for *poi*, this shows the importance of games in Tonga, and perhaps shows an aspect of *poi* that may have once existed but is now forgotten.

Another game in Tonga that involves the use of a ball being swung up and down is in a game called *hapo*. A succinct description is given below:

It consisted of a wooden rod some four feet long, at one end of which was fastened a strip of tortoiseshell whose ends had been bent to form a semicircular opening. At the opposite end of the stick a string was extended and attached to a small, round gourd. The length of the cord was just sufficient to allow the gourd to be tossed into the air and dropped through the tortoiseshell opening at the opposite end of the rod. (Ferdon, 1987:173-174)

The movements of the wrist required to manipulate the flight path of the ball to fall through the hoop is similar to that required to control the swinging of the *poi*. Fundamentally the purpose of *hapo* is quite distinct from *poi* but mechanically the movements would not be so. Ferdon also mentions that there was another amusement

that consisted of nothing more than a two-foot length of cord to each end of which was fastened a hard round seed that he estimated to be about the size of a musketball. The string appears to have been grasped at its midpoint, for Anderson<sup>1</sup> explained that the trick was to whirl the seeds around rapidly without letting them strike each other. (Ferdon, 1987:174).

Ferdon makes an interesting point that although this amusement is quite primitive in its Tongan use in 1777 in comparison to the Māori use of *poi* it is still significant

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<sup>1</sup> William Anderson, a surgeon on Captain Cook's third voyage.

in terms of determining the origins of *poi* in the Pacific. Ferdon refutes Buck's claim that the use of *poi* in New Zealand is unique for Polynesia, arguing that the mechanics of the game described by Anderson (above) conforms to those of *poi* (Ferdon, 1987:174). Ferdon (1987:174) further claims that the *poi* may have been "introduced to New Zealand from Tonga in historic, if not prehistoric, times, perhaps via a European vessel." While there is no doubt about the possibility of *poi* originating from Polynesia, and perhaps even Tonga, it is highly unlikely that *poi* was introduced by European vessels as Ferdon suggests.

Whilst *hiko* and *hapo* may not seem anything like *poi*, the similarities in terms of the basic movements and motions of tossing or throwing small round objects into the air in a circular motion, some attached to a piece of string, can be compared to the mechanics of the *poi*. Similarities are further suggested by looking at the various meanings of the term *poi* in Williams' *Dictionary of Maori Language*: "Ball, lump, swing, twirl, toss up and down, make into a ball" (Williams, 1971:288). These different meanings seem to suggest actions similar to those of both *hiko* and *hapo*.

Juggling is also a pastime in Uvea or Wallis Island, which is situated slightly north-west of Tonga.

Juggling (*hapo*) is an amusement for young girls. It is done nowadays with oranges, especially the bitter *moli uku*. The motions are made in time to a little song. Juggling contests are sometimes held among the girls, some of whom are said to be able to keep 4, 5, or 6 oranges in the air at a time. (Burrows, 1937:154)

It is interesting to note that the term *hapo* in Uvea and in Tonga have different meanings but they both still refer to a game that involves the tossing of a ball into the air. While Burrows states that at the time of his writing the game was played using oranges, there is no indication of what was used prior to the introduction of this fruit.

Dr Augustin Krāmer (1994), in his two volume collection about Samoa, discusses many aspects of Samoan culture including games and sports. Three ball games are mentioned by Krāmer, one of which is a game played with wild oranges that he calls *fuaga*. *Fuaga* consists of the oranges being juggled or thrown into the air. Krāmer refers to the writings of John Stair (1983) who calls this game *O Fuanga* which “consisted in throwing up a number of oranges into the air, six, seven, eight, and the object was to keep the whole number in motion at once, as the Chinese jugglers do their balls” (Stair, 1983:138). Other known names for the game are *tuac-fua* (Wilkes, n.d:110), *tia’ifua* (Krāmer, 1994:382), and *tifaga* (Pratt, 1960:329). According to Wilkes *tuafua* is

played by five or six persons. It resembles the sport of the Chinese jugglers with iron balls. The first player sometimes takes as many as eight oranges, throwing them successively into the air, and endeavours to keep the whole in motion at once. They are very dexterous at this: if they miss three times the game is lost. (Wilkes, n.d:110)

According to Moyle two other terms have also been recorded: *tuai fua* and *aupulaga*. Both of these terms and *tuac-fua* provided by Wilkes are unknown today and the game is commonly called *fuaga* (Moyle, 1988:105). *Fuaga* appears to be similar to *hiko* (Tonga) and *hapo* (Uvea), which begins to show the spread of juggling in Western Polynesia.

*Fuaga* is the only ball game discussed by Moyle that is similar to those described in Krāmer's book. *Fuaga* or ' *aufua* derives from the verb *fua* which means to measure (Moyle, 1988:105), and is principally a girl's game played in groups whilst sitting or standing. The aim of the game is to see who can juggle oranges or stones the longest. The measurement of progress is based on a points system derived from reciting or singing verses. Based on this description *fuaga* is similar to *hiko* as played in Tonga. Various examples of juggling texts are cited by Moyle which cover a range of topics from simple children's counting chants to more complicated retellings of Samoan myths and aspects of Samoan life. Again Moyle seems sceptical that these texts are anything other than the children's interpretation of life in Samoa. He also believes that there are often illogical connections between the lines, and that in some texts the words are simply chosen for their rhyme and syllable count (Moyle, 1988:109).

Krāmer also provides the name, *te'auga*, for another ball game which he describes as being a game where balls are juggled (similar to *fuaga*) and thrown across the back of the juggler to other participants in the game (Krāmer, 1994:382). Krāmer again provides further reference to both Pratt (1960:326), *te'aga* (a game of balls), and Stair (1983:138) who writes "*O le Teaunga* was also played with a number of oranges, but in this game they were thrown up backwards." Stair does not say that they were thrown to other players but it can be assumed they were.

Wilkes includes a game called *tuimuri*, recorded by Krāmer as *tuimuli*, and provides this description:

Tui-muri affords the natives much amusement. Any number of persons may play at it. They seat themselves in a circle, and divide into two parties. An orange is suspended from above, about two feet from the ground and each person is supplied with a small sharp-pointed stick. The orange is swung round, and as it passes each one endeavours to pierce it, some with great eagerness, others quite calmly, and others again with a wary coolness, all of which affords much amusement to the bystanders. The party wins who first succeeds in fairly hitting the oranges fifty times.

It is played for mats, trinkets, &c., but more generally for a baked pig, which is eaten when the play is over. (Wilkes, n.d:110)

The basic principles of this game, that is a round object being suspended on a string being swung around, is so similar to *poi* that it is difficult to ignore its possible relationship with *poi*. Interestingly enough, further west of Samoa, in Fiji, there is a game called *veivasa ni moli*. *Veivasa ni moli* is “a game which consists of suspending a moli (orange, lemon &c) by a string and trying to pierce it with the vasa, (a pointed stick) while it is swinging about” (Williams, 1983:163). Its appearance in Fiji and Samoa suggests the possibility that something similar may have existed in Tonga, despite the absence of any written record; perhaps it fell into disuse prior to European arrival. The mechanics of the games, however, were transported to other islands in Polynesia.

A lot of the ball games discussed already and found in Western Polynesia can also be found in Central Polynesia. In the northern Cook Islands, for example, on the island of Pukapuka, the first, and most probably only, description of a game called *poi* in Polynesia is recorded (Beaglehole, 1938:358). However, this *poi* game is a children’s guessing game and the following description is provided:

Poi, another guessing game. Two or more teams sit outside. A player (A) from one team stands up and looks in front of him. A player (B) from the other team comes up behind him and facing the same way as A, places his hand over A's eyes, and then lightly and quickly touches the back of one of A's legs. A has to guess which one of his legs has been touched. If he guesses correctly then the two teams change places. If not, then the first team continues to guess. (Beaglehole, 1938:358)

The game of *poi*, as it is known to the Pukapukans, is extremely different to that of the Māori version of *poi*, which may suggest that it is actually a different word and the recorder may have misspelled it.

The Pukapukan version of juggling is called *tilitili koua* (Beaglehole, 1938:361). *Tilitili koua* is a game played by both children and adults in which immature coconuts (*koua*) are juggled in time to a chant. In competitions the aim of the game was to juggle continuously until the end of the chant. Unlike Tonga and Samoa three *koua* were usually used with experts being able to juggle four (Beaglehole, 1938:361). This dramatic difference in number is probably due to the size and shape of the objects being used. According to Pukapukan tradition, some of the Pukapukan games were brought from the underworld to Pukapuka by two seers, Wotoa and Te Yoa. There Wotoa and Te Yoa observed and studied various amusements the gods were playing and introduced them to Pukapuka (Beaglehole, 1938:357). It is not known exactly what games were introduced from the underworld but *tilitili koua* could possibly have originated from there as the location of a coconut tree, one level above where Wotoa and Te Yoa watched the gods play, could have provided the required *koua*.

In the southern Cook Islands ball tossing or juggling is known by a different name, *pe'i* and *pe'ipe'i* (Buck, 1944:250). Here the 'balls' used are either the fruit of the candlenut tree (*Aleurites moluccana*), the seeds of the *tamanu* tree (*Calophyllum mophyllum*), and more commonly oranges; quite different from their northern relatives. These balls were tossed vertically and transferred from one hand to another in an anti-clockwise direction, while being accompanied with chanted verses. To use seven or eight balls was to be considered an expert, while juggling four balls was considered easy. The aim of the game was to see who could keep a number of balls going for a good length of time (Buck, 1944:250). There is no indication as to whether the chants were used as a points system as they were in Tonga and Samoa.

Juggling also features in Manganian mythology in the legends of Ngaru, a god of similar fame to Māui. These legends retell the story of how Ngaru brought the art of juggling to the human world. In 'Avaiki, the other world, lived a fierce *ta'ae* (a spirit power considered highly aggressive and monstrous) called Miru. Miru was extremely envious of Ngaru's fame and plotted a way to lure him into her domain and kill him. Miru sent two of her *tapairu* ("she-demon")<sup>2</sup> daughters, Kumutonga-i-te-po and Karaia-i-te-ata, to the upper world to entice Ngaru to go to 'Avaiki. Upon reaching Ngaru's home, where he was pretending to be asleep, they were interrogated by Moko, Ngaru's grandfather, as to why they were there. The daughters told Moko that they were to escort Ngaru back to 'Avaiki to be united

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<sup>2</sup> *Tapairu* is a category of Manganian spirit being, usually female and often physically attractive who visited Mangania from 'Avaiki. They would either marry men or lure them back to the other world (Michael Reilly, 2004).



with him because their beauty was such that no human woman could be compared with them. Moko was suspicious of the two ladies and sent his servants, the little lizards, to 'Avaiki where they saw a house full of *kava* (*Piper methysticum*) which was used by Miru to stupify her victims so she could eat them.

The little lizards returned to Moko and reported what they had seen. He at once relayed the message to Ngaru, and warned him to be careful lest he die at the hands of Miru. Ngaru and Miru's daughters left in the evening to head back to 'Avaiki. Kumutonga-i-te-po and Karaia-i-te-ata wrapped Ngaru in the finest *tapa*, secured him with cords and then tied him to a pole. Along the way Ngaru prayed to be let free. Kumutonga-i-te-po and Karaia-i-te-ata responded with the details of his impending death. When they reached a grove of shady chestnut trees they unwrapped Ngaru and gave him some *kava* to chew on. *Kava* usually puts the person into a stupor but in this instance Ngaru chewed it all and remained awake and alert and waited to be taken to Miru, who was preparing her fire and oven to cook him in.

Upon reaching Miru, Ngaru asked what she intended to do with the fire, to which she replied "to cook you". Ngaru replied to this statement by saying that his grandfather never prepared an oven to cook her daughters in but was a perfect host. As Ngaru was saying this the heavens turned an intense black and as Ngaru walked to the edge of the fire and placed his foot on the hot stones the clouds poured rain down and extinguished the oven's fire. The floodwaters swept Miru and her

younger daughters away while Kumutonga-i-te-po and Karaia-i-te-ata clung to Ngaru, having grabbed hold of a *nono* tree, thus escaping the same fate that had befallen their mother and other sisters. Kumutonga-i-te-po and Karaia-i-te-ata taught Ngaru the art of juggling in return for him saving their lives (Gill, 1876:228-232).

Juggling also appears in Ngaru's defeat of Amai-te-rangi, the "sky demon" who liked to eat human flesh. Amai-te-rangi used to send down a basket from the sky, where he lived and the people would get in it. He would pull it back up and eat them. One time Moko's lizards jumped in and saw beautiful women engaged in juggling. Ngaru jumped in the basket, and when it was pulled back up he jerked the basket back to earth. Ngaru repeated this until Amai-te-rangi was exhausted. The lizards jumped all over Amai-te-rangi and tickled him until he dropped his chisel and mallet. Ngaru killed Amai-te-rangi and then competed in a juggling competition against Ina (beloved wife of the moon) and Matonga, two of Amai-te-rangi's women, in which he was the victor (Gill, 1876:234-236). A portion of the following ball thrower's song used at a celebratory festival around 1790 is shown below. It retells the story of Ngaru and his defeat of the various *tapairu*:

Call for the dance to lead off		
Pei ikiiki tei to rima, e rua toe		Keep the balls all going; two are left
Tei Iva e; a tai ra koē		In all spirit-land thou hast no equal
	Solo	
Taipo ē!		Go on!
	Chorus	
Pei aea nga Tapairu no Avaiki;		Here are fairy players from netherland,
No nunga paa i te rangi ē!		As well as natives of the sky.
	Solo	
Ae ē!		Aye !

	Chorus	
Pei aea i te pei itu, i te pei varu, e Ina, e		Ina alone keeps seven yea, eight balls in motion
Ka rē koia o Matonga-iti kau rērē		Little Matonga is beaten, utterly beaten
	Solo	
Ka re oki, e Matonga, i te pei –		Ah! Matonga thou art beaten –
Ka tupa o to rima; a tai ō!		At the outset a ball has fallen to the ground (Gill, 1876:244)

The continuation of juggling into Central Polynesia clearly demonstrates shared cultural elements between Western and Central Polynesia.

In Tahiti the term *pei* is provided as “the name of an amusement in which stones or limes are thrown and caught” (Davies, 1851:194). Notable ethnographers of Tahitian cultures, including Oliver Douglas, William Ellis and Te Uira Henry, do not discuss the Tahitian game of *pei*. However, Ellis and Henry both describe a game called *timo*, *timotimo* or *timora’a*, stone-hitting, where the participants, adults and children of both sex, hold a small pebble in one hand. With the other hand they throw another stone up and on its way down attempt to knock the stationary stone out of the hand to the ground (Henry, 1971:279). Henry also makes note of the connection *timora’a* has to a mythical Tahitian hero called Hiro. While not much is written on the Tahitian game of *pei* it can be assumed that, from the description given by Davies above, it is similar to *pei* in the Southern Cook Islands.

In Tuamotu an informant named Paea tells of various games, sports and amusements (*makeva*) that he knew of in his youth (about 1895-1910) (Emory, 1975:233). One of the games Paea describes is juggling, which he terms *pei*. *Pei* in Tuamotu uses balls made of either pandanus leaf (permanent) or strips of plaited

coconut leaf which form the *popo*. *Popo*, meaning ball in Tuamotu, has similar meanings throughout central Polynesia.

In juggling, two to seven balls may be used but usually four, five, or six. A juggler is considered an expert if he can handle five or six. One ball is held in the left hand the others, up to four, are held in the right. With five or six, those that cannot be held in the hand are placed in the lap. The right hand tosses all the balls in it, then the left hand passes its ball to the right, catches the first ball tossed up by right hand and passes it quickly to the right hand, then being ready to catch the next ball, establishing a counterclockwise rotation. Some experts can reverse and make the difficult clock wise rotation.

With each tossing of a ball from the left to the right hand, a word of a chant is pronounced. A typical chant from Vahitahi goes:

E au rai aku pei  
Ara tahi, ara piti, ara toru (etc., until)  
Ara iva, ara tinitini, manomano  
Koua rere taku pei mai te rani e topa oh oh (Emory, 1975:233)

The game of *pei* is often also classified as a dance and Edwin Burrows provides an example of a chant used that he calls either a *haka* (dance) or a *pei* (Burrows, 1933:37). This is extremely interesting as early observers of New Zealand *poi* have provided the term *haka poi* for a *poi* dance (Best, 1925:54).

*Pei* is also a feature in Tuamotuan mythology. In Tuamotu, there were two whale brothers, Tutunui and Togamaututu, the sons of Tinirau and Puturua. According to this story, Kae hearing of these two whales, visited Tinirau and after staying for a while asked to travel home on them. Tutunui carried Kae home and was in turn slaughtered and eaten by Kae's people. Togamaututu, who was waiting out in the deeper water for his brother, returned to Tinirau with news of Tutunui's murder. Ruatamahine, Ruatohu and Ruatogaegae, Tutunui and Togamaututu's sisters, set forth to take revenge on their brother's murderer. The three sisters played a variety of games against Kae's women under the supervision of Ruatamahine. During a game of *ake* (field hockey) Ruatamahine struck Kae with a ball knocking him

unconscious. They then proceeded to take him to Tinirau where they cut him into pieces. One of the games they played was juggling in which Ruatamahine and her sisters were the victors. An interesting point to note is that Ruatohu is also known as Katouri (compare with Raukatauri) and Ruatogaegae is also known as Katomea (compare with Raukatamea) (Longstaff, 1996). The names of these two women and that of Ruatamahine bear striking similarities to those of women in the Māori version, which highlights another connection between Māori and Polynesian mythology, and the inclusion of games and amusements used in the Kae and Tinirau myth. This might also suggest that Beattie's juggling *poi* is a recollection of this wider Polynesian tradition, which implies that *poi* was a game or dance used by these women, but was subsumed under *haka* in other areas.

A ball tossing game called *pei* or *kita'irama* is also recorded in Mangareva (Buck, 1938:185). The term *kita'irama* derives from two words *kita'i* (to keep a number of balls in the air at once, to throw high) and *rama* (green fruit of the candlenut which formed the balls). An interesting piece of information to note is that the fruit of the candlenut tree was often used as a source of light. While the fruit itself is not found in New Zealand the term *rama* continues to mean a torch or any artificial source of light in the Māori language (Williams, 1971:322). *Pei* on the other hand is consistent with the name of the game found in Tahiti and the Cook Islands.

Two terms provided, *pe'i* and *pei*, have often been confused with each other because various early dictionaries have failed to recognise the glottal stop

difference between the two words. *Pe'i* is the dance accompaniment of songs and *pei* is the action (Buck, 1938:185), presumably of throwing balls in the air although this is not stated. This is not too dissimilar to the term *poi*, which is often given the definition of being either the dance or the ball accompaniment. In a dictionary of the Mangareva language the glottal stop is not recorded but two definitions are provided: “1. a native dance, to dance with an accompaniment of singing, 2. to throw up little balls into the air with hands” (Tregear, 1899:69). It would seem that the glottal stop disappeared, the two vowels formed a diphthong and two meanings have been fused together under the one spelling, much the same as the word *poi* has come to have various distinctive meanings associated with it.

*Pei*, in Mangareva, was very popular among the women only and often played at festivals and competitions, the winner of which would receive a reward or prize. The winner was determined by who could keep the same number of balls going the longest and to see who could keep the most balls going in time with a chanted song accompaniment. As soon as a player dropped a ball then that player would retire until there was only one person left (Buck, 1938:185). It would seem that *pei* was a favourite of chiefs who would command exhibitions and reward the winner most kindly. *Pei* was associated with the prenatal ceremonies of a princess (Buck, 1938:107), and at ceremonies associated with death as part of the entertainment of the visitors (Buck, 1938:186), all of which shows the importance of the game within Mangareva. There was also a space within the village devoted to playing *pei*,

which is not entirely different to the performance stage and area designated for Māori performing arts.

Juggling in the Marquesas Islands was also a prominent game. *Pei* “was a mother’s game invented to teach children their genealogies and give the mothers a chance to boast of the number of their offspring” (Handy, 1923:302). It would seem from the description of the game that it was not so competitive as was the case in other islands, but more good-humoured. The mothers would use either two candlenuts or two balls made of *fau* leaves (*Hibiscus tiliaceus*) bound with *pandanus* (*Pandanus odoratus/latifolius*) strips and sing a chant in time to the tossing of the balls. This chant consisted of reciting the children’s genealogy and mentioning important names of that child’s *whakapapa* (Handy, 1923:302). An example of part of a common chant follows (see Appendix for the full chant):

15	Ui mai na tupuna “N’ai tenei pei?” “Na matou” “N’ai ‘otou?” “Na Peke”	15	The grandparents ask “Whose pei is this?” “Ours” “Whose are you?” “Peke’s” (fathers name)
20	“Na Peke?” “Na Moho” “Na Moho?” “Na Tutu” “Na Tutu?”	20	“Peke’s?” “Moho’s” (fathers, fathers name) “Moho’s?” “Tutu’s” (great-grandfathers name) “Tutu’s?”

(Handy, 1923:302)

The above extract shows the recitation of the father’s line of descent, an important feature of Polynesian genealogy. Interestingly enough the above chant is also similar to an *oriori*, a lullaby type song “confined to the children of chiefs and the nobility and used to educate them in matters appropriate to their descent” (McLean, 1996:143), which one could presume would have included lineage. *Oriori* have also

been said to have been a traditional song accompaniment of the *poi* (Mitalfe, 1974:182). Best also provides an example of an *oriori* used as a *poi* song composed by Hine-i-turama who sang the lullaby to her child (Best, 1901:42). Comparisons to *pātere* can also be made since such performances included the recitation of the composer's *whakapapa*. While the functions of *pātere* and *oriori* are different from the function of chants used with *pei* the similarities, in terms of inclusion of genealogical information, is too important to ignore. Genealogical chants are also included in Moyle's research on Samoa (1987) but not under the section of juggling. The following example is similar to the above extract and can be found under the subject area of leisure time activities (see Appendix for the full chant):

1	'O ai lou tama?	1	Who is your father?
	'O Pepe		Pepe
	Pepe ai?		Pepe who?
	Pepe Tū		Pepe Tū
5	Tū ai?	5	Tū who?
	Tū Sae		Tū Sae
	Sae ā?		Sae who?
	Sae Tini		Sae Tini
	Tini ā?		Tini who?
10	Tini Toloa	10	Tini Toloa

(Moyle, 1987:133-134)

This type of mock genealogical chant, which moves from the present to the past, helped the children remember their genealogy. It was especially helpful for those children who had significant responsibilities as the future head of the family who would be required to recite their genealogy on certain formal occasions. As in the Marquesas Islands where the mothers would recite the father's line of descent so too would Samoan children. While Moyle states that the example above stands apart from the so called game songs because it has no specific name, no set sequence of movements, no competitive element and may be played by only one



person (Moyle, 1987:133), assumptions can certainly be made that it may have once been used in juggling as it was in the Marquesas Islands. *Pātere* would sometimes recite lines of descent in order to show the chiefly lineage of the composer, similar to the genealogical chants in Samoa and the Marquesas Islands.

*Pohutu*, another ball game that employs the balls used in *pei*, is also played in the Marquesas Islands. Attached to the ball is a chord that the player holds in order to bat the ball around with the free hand (Linton, 1923:388). A full description of the game is as follows:

*Pohutu* consisted of a bundle of *fau* leaves rolled up and bound with pandanus strips, the whole forming a ball about two inches in diameter. One of the pandanus strips was left projecting for some inches to form a handle. The game was played by a single child who held the pandanus strip in one hand and batted the ball with the other, or by two children, one of whom held the strip while the other struck the ball. *Pohutu* were also used in the *pei* game in which genealogies were repeated. The *pei* game, as described by Handy suggests a close resemblance between the *pohutu* and the well known *poi* balls used by the Maori. (Linton, 1923:388)

An interesting point to note is that Linton in 1923 makes the connection between *pohutu*, *pei* and *poi* whereas Buck in 1950 does not. Buck, however, is not alone in not connecting *poi* with the Pacific as other early writers on *poi* also fail to do so (see Chapter Four). Linton's observation is significant in that he associates *poi* with *pei*, which in the Marquesas Islands is juggling. This suggests that in his mind, the Māori *poi* had a close relationship with juggling in the wider Polynesian area.

Ethnographies of Easter Island provide no descriptions of games similar to those found elsewhere in Polynesia. This may be due to the scarcity of trees on Easter Island, especially fruit bearing trees such as the candlenut (Métreaux, 1940:16). The nuts, fruits and leaves of various trees and plants, used elsewhere in Polynesia

to make balls for games, may not have been found on Easter Island, and so they were unable to continue on with the ball games tradition.

In Hawai'i, juggling was also a common pastime but only as a child's game. It is accompanied by a little jingle or chant and is a favourite among the children and young people (Emory, 1965:157). The balls juggled are known as *lau hala* (Williams, 1997:155). However, the game of juggling does not seem as important in Hawai'i as it does elsewhere in Polynesia. It would seem that it is only perceived as a child's game that does not incorporate the competitive nature found in the countries discussed previously and so very little is written about the game. The Hawaiian name is also not given by either Emory or Williams.

Buck, in his work on Hawaiian games and recreation, does not include anything about juggling which seems so prolific in Polynesia. He does, however, provide a description of the ring and ball game, which seems similar to the Tongan game of *hapo*. Buck includes photographs of two specimens stored in the Honolulu based Bishop Museum and provides the following explanation:

The material used in one game consists of a handle with an open loop at one end and an oval ball of white tapa attached to the handle by a length of cord. The game was to toss the ball upward within the limits of the length of string and catch it in the loop as it descended. This was repeated, and probably the objective was to see who could keep it going longest without missing the loop. The [Bishop] Museum contains two sets, but the Hawaiian name of the game is not recorded. (Buck, 1957:375-376)

Buck was unable to provide a name for this game in 1957, which is quite strange as the game seemed to be well recognised and known amongst the Hawaiian people.

However, the name of the game is provided in a Hawaiian dictionary as *pala'ie* (Pukui and Elbert, 1986:514).

A variation of the game is drawn by James Edge-Partington (Edge-Partington, 1898:35). Instead of a ball made of white *tapa*, as described above, the ball in his drawing is actually a small gourd musical instrument ornamented with feathers, similar to the ball used in *hapo* in Tonga, and which he surmises to be a *ipu hokiokio* or a 'lovers whistle'. The ball part of the item is extremely similar to the *poi āwhiowhio* that belongs to the Māori musical instrument family. A comparison can be made between the *ipu hokiokio* and *poi* in that, like *ipu hokiokio*, *poi* were also used as a love letter in attracting the opposite sex (see Chapter four). The *poi āwhiowhio* is made from a small gourd with up to four small holes made in the body of it. A string is passed through the centre and this is used to swing the gourd around. The air passes over the holes and the sounds made often resemble the *kererū* (wood pigeon), *mātātā* (fernbird), or *riroriro* (grey warbler). The *poi āwhiowhio* was used in the rituals associated with the opening of the bird catching season (Melbourne, 1993:33). The fact that the term *poi* is used in the name of this instrument is also significant in that it shows the term *poi* can also be applied to a musical instrument. In this case, *poi* can be used to denote things other than a ball on the end of a string.

New Zealand's early written accounts of juggling are limited to a report from Ernst Dieffenbach (1843). He writes "they have a game with four balls, exactly like that

of the Indian jugglers, and they accompany it with a song” (Dieffenbach, 1843:56). Although this description is very brief and the name of the game is not recorded it falls into line with the other records of Polynesian juggling discussed thus far. Dieffenbach makes a reference to the game being exactly like that of the Indian jugglers. Other notable researchers who worked extensively in recording Māori ethnographies did not observe what Dieffenbach had observed; it is highly likely that if they had there would be some record of these observations.

It was not until 1920 that Beattie’s (1994) ethnological project on the Māori of the South Island validated Dieffenbach’s observations. The project revealed that in various areas, namely Murihiku, Canterbury, Nelson and Westland, *poi* was remarkably similar to the juggling style of Polynesia and quite distinctive from the North Island *poi*. In Canterbury Beattie records a Tuahiwi informant who states that “Poi was throwing up and catching pebbles in various orders” (Beatties, 1994:254). In Murihiku again, two balls without strings were sometimes tossed up and caught. In fact, according to one Murihiku informant, the game was unknown in Hawaiki. She claims that *poi*, in its juggling form, started at Opunake in Taranaki (see Chapter one) but as this study has shown juggling was a pan-Polynesian form of amusement, suggesting that it did not originate in Taranaki. Another alternative form of *poi* involved the players kneeling, sitting or standing facing each other with the balls being thrown back and forth to each other. This is similar to what is recorded in Nelson where *poi* was likened to boxing (Beattie, 1994:484). The balls

were attached to quite a long string, with the players again sitting or standing and facing each other, while the balls were thrown back and forth.

The fact that juggling occurred only in the South Island could provide another connection between South Island *poi* and its origins in Eastern Polynesia. Contemporary linguists have discovered that dialects from the East Coast of the North Island and the South Island are extremely close to the languages of the southern Cook Islands (Evans, 1998:25). This could be due to the migration of Māori from the East Coast to the South Island prior to European arrival. However, linguists have also discovered that the South Island dialect has features that suggest close contact with the Marquesas Islands (Harlow, 1979:135). This linguistic link to both the Cook Islands and the Marquesas Islands receives support from the similarity of the South Island version of *poi* to games played in both these places. As stated previously, in Murihiku *poi* was a game that involved the tossing up of two balls without strings. In the Marquesas *pei* is a game that also involves the tossing up of two balls. A correlation between the two places can thus be made, as they are the only two places that record the use of two balls when juggling.

The assumption, as inferred by Buck (1950), that the *poi* ball itself is unique to New Zealand is incorrect. As has been discovered thus far the *poi* ball originates from Polynesia in a simpler form than what we know it to be today. In Eastern Polynesia the term *pei* and various forms of the word (*peipei*, *pe'i*) are often associated with throwing or juggling ball-like objects in the air. An alternative

meaning of *poi* also means to throw or toss something. *Pei* is also used as the name of the ball itself and again *poi* is also used for the term ‘ball’.

The term *pei* itself suggests a strong linguistic link between Eastern Polynesia and New Zealand. There is well-documented research of movement from ‘ei’ to ‘ai’ evidenced in dialectal variations, for example *kei* and *kai*, *hei* and *hai*. It is, therefore, not beyond the bounds of possibility that there was a further movement from ‘ai’ to ‘oi’ given the movement from ‘a’ to ‘o’ documented in Tregear (1891:xiv). In almost all of Eastern Polynesia *poi* is a term for a type of dish where food such as *taro* and breadfruit are mixed with water and mashed into a pulp. *Pei* is used as the name of the game, the name of the balls used in juggling, a dance accompaniment, or the action of throwing things up into the air. In New Zealand the food dish *poi* was not a part of the staple diet of the Māori people hence this meaning became obsolete. The term remained, however, and some of the meanings that are associated with *poi* now may be reminiscent of the tossing actions employed in making the food *poi*. The fact that the two terms, *pei* and *poi* and their various, yet similar, meanings in New Zealand and Eastern Polynesia, have undergone such linguistic change strongly suggests that the *poi* ball is not unique to New Zealand as has been commonly thought. In Western Polynesia, the same type of juggling occurred with the names *hiko*, *hapo* and *fuaga* being the terms used in Tonga, Uvea and Samoa respectively. The word *hiko* is used in Māori and means to recite genealogies, largely principal names in lines of descent. This is an aspect of *pātere*, the recitation of principal names in order to dispel certain derogatory

rumours, and *oriori*, lullabies informing high-born children of their genealogy, which are commonly accepted as traditional accompaniments to *poi*.

A ball attached to a string and then swung around as a game is not unique to New Zealand. The ‘cup and ball’ game popular in Tonga (*hapo*) and Hawaii (*pala’ie*) are similar to the motions of *poi*. While the object of this game may be different to *poi*, ensuring a ball passes through a loop, the manual dexterity required of the wrist in order to manipulate the flight path of the ball attached to a string is similar to the actions needed to execute the *poi*. *Veivasa ni moli* in Fiji and *tuimuli* in Samoa may be quite different from *poi* in terms of the aim of the game, but again the fact that a ball like object is swung on a string is difficult to ignore. The Marquesan game of *pohutu*, a ball attached to a handle batted about, was compared with *poi* in 1923, but this intriguing comparison was never elaborated on or followed up by subsequent writers.

The correct interpretation of Buck’s quote is that New Zealand *poi*, in its current use as a dance accompaniment in the performing arts arena, is the feature of *poi* that is unique in Polynesia. *Pei* in Eastern Polynesia has not developed into a dance accompaniment. It has stayed in the area of games, sports and amusement those early explorers and subsequent missionaries categorised it as being. Once put into this category it was never given the opportunity to develop into something more. *Poi* in New Zealand was also seen as merely a game by early explorers, but the development of *poi* away from being a game and its inclusion in the area of

performing arts began prior to European arrival, though this transition is rarely acknowledged as having taken place then.

This chapter has looked at the origins of *poi* in relation to Sir Peter Buck's claim that the *poi* ball as an accessory to dance is unique for Polynesia. Three different interpretations can be taken from this quote: dance accompaniments are unique to New Zealand, the *poi* ball is unique to New Zealand, *poi* as a dance accompaniment is unique to New Zealand. As has been discovered dance accompaniments and the *poi* ball itself are not unique to New Zealand. *Pei*, *hiko*, *hapo*, *fuaga*, *tuimuli*, *veivasa ni moli*, *pohutu* and *pala'ie* can be seen as the progenitors of *poi* and a progression of the game can be traced from Western to Eastern Polynesia, with a similar form being found in the South Island, culminating in the current use of *poi* in New Zealand. *Poi* and its connection to the Pacific has always been overlooked. There has been no research done, prior to this, to establish the link between *poi* in New Zealand and its earlier forms in Polynesia. Some have hinted that a relationship between them may exist and this chapter has proven that such a connection can indeed be made.



## Chapter Three

### Materials and Methods

The predecessors of New Zealand *poi* in the Pacific were the nuts and fruits as they were found in their natural state on trees. Manufacturing of the balls is known to have occurred only in the Marquesas Islands. In New Zealand, the nuts and fruits native to the Pacific were not available so alternative materials had to be found. Early writers who described *poi* often remarked on the materials used to make *poi*, with most accounts stating that the ball part of the *poi* was made from *raupō* (*typha orientalis*, *typha angustifolia*), also known as bulrush, and the chord was made from *harakeke* (*Phormium tenax*), commonly known as New Zealand flax. These materials remained constant until European settlement when the introduction of new materials occurred that made the production of *poi* easier, more time efficient and increased the longevity of the *poi*. The materials currently used have changed extensively from *raupō* and *harakeke* although the techniques employed are largely the same with some minor variations. This chapter will look at the traditional materials and techniques used in making the pre-European styles of *poi*. This chapter will also investigate the change in materials used and the change of techniques required as a result of the new materials employed to make *poi*.

Of all the traditional games of the Māori, very few demanded as much time and effort to manufacture the items used in the game as that required to create *poi*, especially the ornamented, woven *poi*. Many games needed no instruments such as

running, jumping, swimming, diving, boxing, wrestling, hand games, riddles, word play and story telling (Buck, 1950:238-244). Of those games that did use material artifacts, many were items taken from nature and used as they were found. Stalks of plants were employed for spear and dart throwing games, pieces of wood were used for playing *tī rākau* and even-sized pebbles were used for *koruru* (jackstones). *Potaka* (spinning tops), *potaka takiri* (humming tops), *pou turu* (stilts) and *karetao* (jumping jack) are among the very few that can rival *poi* in the time required to make them, but none can claim to be as intricate as the ornamented *poi*.

In terms of dance accompaniments in New Zealand *poi* is unique. While the original use of *poi* may not have been for this purpose, it was, soon after European arrival, the only item to be made specifically for a dance. Other items used in *haka*, which include *taiaha* (long handled spear-type weapon), *tewhatewha* (long wooden weapon with a flat section at one end), *koikoi* (long handled spear with points at both ends), *patu* and *mere* (short handled clubs), were not specifically made for performing arts. Their purpose lay in the art of warfare and they were often used only with the true war *haka* (*peruperu*, *tutu ngārahu* and *whakatū waewae*) done before the engagement of battle.

Many of the early accounts regarding *poi* are largely concerned with describing how the *poi* is used, what it is used for and what it looks like. Not until 1901 does Augustus Hamilton provide any substantial information on the materials used to

make *poi* and the differences between the ornamented and unornamented *poi*. He writes:

it is played with a small ball or bunch, about three inches long, usually made of the leaves of *raupo* (*Typha*) enclosing some of the *hune*, or down, from the flowering stalk of the plant, and is swung by a short cord. More elaborate ones are sometimes made of the same light material, but covered with an ornamented net-work in various colours and patterns, made from a fine cord of native flax (*phormium*). ... In former times *poi* balls were ornamented with white dog's hair. (Hamilton, 1972:372-373)

Hamilton discusses the *poi* and includes information about the inner materials of the *poi* ball (*hune*, down), the outer materials of the *poi* ball (*raupō* leaves or a net-work of flax), and the ornamentation of the *poi* (white dog's hair). He mentions that it is swung by a short cord but does not say what that cord is made from.

Best's early writing also mentions that the *poi* ball was made from *raupō* leaves and he also fails to describe what the attached cord is made of. Best writes:

Each performer has a small, light ball made of leaves of the *raupo* tightly rolled, and having a string attached to it. In times past these *poi* balls were ornamented by attaching the long hair from the tail of the Maori dog, now extinct. (Best, 1901:42)

Best says that 'these *poi* balls', which one would presume to mean the previously mentioned *raupō poi* balls, were ornamented with the hair from the tail of the Māori dog. This is indeed incorrect, and Best's later work will help to prove that only the *poi* balls made from netted flax were ornamented with the dogs hair. Lysnar (1915) is the first to state that the strings were made of flax and it is from this point on in time that the main traditional materials concerning *poi* are revealed.

When the first Polynesians arrived on New Zealand shores they encountered an environment vastly different to the one they were accustomed to. Natural resources

were in abundance and these new resources needed to be studied, observed and experimented with before their uses could be fully utilised. Because of the much colder climate, especially in winter in the southern parts of the country, shelter and warmth became a priority. Traditional Polynesian materials used in housing such as palm and coconut leaves were unavailable in New Zealand. New materials, and consequently new methods, for house building had to be discovered and in doing so they soon discovered that *raupō* was among the best materials available for this purpose.

*Raupō* is found throughout New Zealand, the Kermadec Islands, Australia, New Guinea, the Norfolk Islands and the Philippines (Johnson and Brooke, 1989:90), and is a distinctive wetland plant that grows in abundance primarily on the edges of lakes, swamps and streams. *Raupō* is a monocotyledon, which is a type of flowering plant that has “a single seed leaf; usually soft-stemmed, with parallel veins, and flower parts in threes” (Johnson and Brooke, 1989:42). As a sub-classification of the monocotyledon family, *raupō* is classified as *Typhaceae* which consists of tall aquatic herbs “with thick, spongy leaves and numerous flowers crowded in a terminal spike” (Johnson and Brooke, 1989:88). The feathery seeds at the top of the plant are called *hune* and the pappus of seeds or pollen is called *tāhune*, *tāhuna* or *tāhunga*. The stem of the seed head is called the *kōrito*, the leaves are *rau* and the rhizome roots are called *akakōareare*, *kōareare*, *kōreirei*, *kouka* or *pūaka* (Huata, 2000:108).

The uses of *raupō* were numerous: the pollen from the flower spikes was collected and made into porridge called *rerepe*, or mixed with water and baked into cakes called *pungapunga*, the *kōareare* (roots) were eaten and the leaves used as bandaging (Riley, 1994:412-415). *Raupō* was an important building material, being used to thatch the roof and the walls with bundles of long stalks. In making *poi*, the *raupō* was pulled up and the roots and leaves were cut off leaving only the stalk. The stalk consists of up to eight layers, which are stripped off to reveal the core or the pith of the stalk. The pith (*hune*) is a soft downy section ideal for forming the inner part of the ball. It is also used for stuffing in items such as pillows and duvets (Huata, 2000:90). The pith and the unwanted parts of the *raupō* leaves and flax blades are moulded into a ball. One end of the flax handle is formed into a big knot and inserted into the centre of the pith. Dampened *raupō* strips are bound around the pith so that the ends of each strip come together at the handle. The strips are tied with a piece of flax and the excess pieces are trimmed off (Huata, 2000:96-97).

Like shelter, warmth was also a priority in adjusting to the harsh New Zealand winters. It can be assumed that clothing worn during the day in the Pacific was based on what was required and it is likely to have been minimal due to the tropical climate associated with the Pacific (Pendergrast, 1987:6). This was undoubtedly the type of clothing the first inhabitants of New Zealand were wearing. Their main source for making clothes was the *tapa* cloth derived from the bark of various trees such as the mulberry (*Broussonetia papyrifera*) and breadfruit (*Artocarpus*) trees.

These species of trees were not found upon arrival in New Zealand and the clippings that were transported from Polynesia did not flourish in New Zealand's colder climate. This meant that alternative materials for making clothes, baskets and such had to be found and technological changes had to be made in the manufacturing of these items with the new materials. New Zealand flax or *harakeke* was in abundant supply and it was this plant that the early New Zealanders eventually mastered for its textile uses (Mead, 1969:41).

Whilst the English name for *Phormium tenax* is 'flax', it is not actually of the flax family. Early European explorers compared the silkiness of the *harakeke* fibre with the fibres of flax plants they knew and applied the name flax to these plants. There is, however, no botanical relationship between the two (Pendergrast, 1987:11) and New Zealand flax, instead, belongs to the lily family (Puketapu-Hetet, 2000:9). New Zealand flax is also a monocotyledon and is sub-classified as an *Agavaceae*, a grouping which consists of "robust plants with stout rootstock or trunk, and tufts of narrow, simple, thick, fibrous leaves. Mostly tropical or subtropical, especially in arid places" (Johnson and Brooke, 1989:86). Flax is an extremely diverse plant and can be found growing in swamps, sides of rivers and lakes and in open country. The botanical term *tenax* meaning 'tough' accurately describes the durability and personality of the plant (Johnson and Brooke, 1989:86).

Botanists recognise only two species of New Zealand flax, *Phormium tenax* and *Phormium cookianum* (Pendergrast, 1987:11). Māori recognise that of these two

species there are many different varieties each with their own name and each with a distinctive appearance, quality and usefulness. *Harakeke* is the term that encompasses the whole flax family and a comprehensive list of over fifty varieties of flax known by the Māori people in 1871 is given by Mead (1969:149-151). Neither early or recent writers of *poi* recorded the type of flax used in the preparation of *poi kokau* and *poi awe* (see pages 83 and 91) and so for the purpose of this study the generic terms *harakeke* or flax will be used, rather than a name of the species or variety.

*Harakeke* consists of the *rito* or centre shoot. From the *rito* the leaves spread out in a fan-like pattern. The *rito* is often described as being the baby of the plant and the two leaves on either side of it are called *awhi rito*, or are commonly referred to as the parents of the *rito*. In order to ensure the continued growth of the plant these three leaves are not touched when gathering flax (Puketapu-Hetet, 2000:3). Also when cutting the flax leaves it is imperative that the outer leaves are cut on a slant downwards away from the centre of the plant as low as possible. This ensures that the rain does not run on an angle towards the root and drown the flax. Any unused parts of the flax are returned to the plant where they will decompose and become a type of mulch providing nutrients for the plant (Proffit, 2003). The scape or the flower stalk is called the *korari* (Johnson and Brooke, 1989:86).

Like *raupō*, the uses of *harakeke* were numerous. Nectar could be obtained from the flowers, the roots used for medicinal purposes and the leaves as bandages (Huata,

2000:108). When grown in abundance in one area they act as a windbreak. The *korari*, once dry, can be bundled together and act as a flotation device, as a toy boat or used to teach *taiaha*. Strips of leaves can be used for binding and the *take*, or the hard base of a leaf, can be split and used as a child's clacker (Puketapu-Hetet, 2000:11). A primary use of *harakeke* was in the manufacture of mats, baskets or containers, clothing and nets (Mead, 1968:17).

The leaves of the flax are similar in appearance to those of the coconut tree and the pandanus plant that can be found throughout the Pacific. These two plants were employed in the Pacific for making various types of storage baskets, traps and carry baskets and it is highly likely that this is what flax would have been first utilised for. It will never be known when the early inhabitants first discovered the qualities of *harakeke*, but it can be assumed that the strength and the length of the leaves soon became an item of interest. Its properties for *raranga* (plaiting) were likely to have been discovered first because the plaiting type of weaving was a craft that early women settlers would have been familiar with. The skills they developed in the Pacific working with coconut and pandanus leaves would have been easily transferred to working with flax in New Zealand.

As *harakeke* was primarily used for making baskets and clothes, how and when it became involved in the production of *poi* is unknown. In making unornamented *poi*, *harakeke* was chiefly employed in making the handle. What type of flax was used to make the handle, the processes employed to prepare the flax, and the



methods used in plaiting the handle, were not recorded by early observers of Māori culture. It has, however, been written that the handle was a plaited cord. It can thus be assumed that the handle was made from the flax fibres as this was the main fibre used in cord and rope making. After the flax has been cut the back rib and sides of the blade are removed and the remaining flax is split into four strips. A slight cut is made across the dull side of the strips. If the cut is too deep the fibres will be severed, too shallow and the fibres will fail to separate (Te Kanawa, 1992:11). The strips are then turned over, and placing the edge of a mussel shell against the cut, the shell is gently run down the length of the strip. This action is called *hāro* and during this process the fibres will separate from the green part of the strip. The fibres obtained from the flax are called *muka*. It is the *muka* that is used in forming the handle of the *poi*. The *muka* of one strip is separated into two parts and in a process called *miro* (twining), the *muka* is rolled together.

Hold strands half way along with the left hand. Keep the 2 strands apart with the left thumb. With the fingertips of the right hand, place one end about a handspan above the bare right knee, the strands about 60mm apart. Press firmly and roll strands towards the knee. Lighten the touch just before reaching the knee. The strands should now be together; at this stage the *miro* will have rolled halfway between the wrist and elbow of the right arm. Roll backwards along the thigh. By the time the hand reaches the starting position, a two-ply cord should be formed. When one end is done turn it around and do to the other end. (Te Kanawa, 1992:13-14)

Early accounts of *poi* suggest the handle of the *poi* was plaited, however, these accounts fail to mention what type of plait was used. Erenora Puketapu-Hetet provides eight different types of plaiting techniques (*whiri*) traditionally employed by the Māori. The most likely type of plait used would have been a round four-strand plait that Puketapu-Hetet calls *whiri tuapuku* (Puketapu-Hetet, 2000:43). This is the type of plait commonly found in historical pictures of *poi*. Huata

provides pictorial and written instructions on how to make the handle of the *raupō poi*, however, she does not show the chord being plaited in any way. Her processing of the flax for the handle ends after the twining process and it is the *muka* in its *miro* form that forms the handle (Huata, 2000:91-95). Puketapu-Hetet states that *poi* handles are usually plaited (Puketapu-Hetet, 2000:42). It is, therefore, likely that the *poi* handle was either plaited or not, the last decision being a matter of tribal variation. This is an aspect of *poi* that has not been previously discussed by other writers of *poi*.

In pre-contact Māori society, *raupō* and *harakeke* were the main materials used in the making of *poi*. This type of unornamented *poi* was called a *poi kokau* (Best, 1925:56). Those that used a longer string and were ornamented were called *tāniko poi* (Huata, 2000: 98). The base materials of the *poi kokau* (*raupō* and *harakeke*) were the same as for *tāniko poi*. The cord was made in the same way as the cord for the *poi kokau*, with the *muka* fibres being separated from the *harakeke* and then twisted in the *miro* fashion in order to form the handle. However, rather than having a *raupō* outer on the ball part of the *poi* the covering was made of flax by a process of weaving or netting. Best (1925:55) calls this process *tā* and distinguishes it from another type of weaving closely related called *whatu*. This process is commonly called the *tāniko* technique.

According to Williams' *Dictionary of the Maori Language*, *tāniko* means an ornamental border of a mat (Williams, 1971:377). Mead also provides the

following explanation for *tāniko* as a noun; it is the “geometrical patterns in coloured wefts, which are used as ornamentation for some cloaks”, and he also provides an explanation of it as a verb being “the process of constructing such patterns” (Mead, 1969:73). *Tāniko* is the word most commonly used today to mean both the patterns and the process and this term will be used when discussing *tāniko poi* but distinctions will be made where necessary between the two interpretations.

*Tāniko* was considered unsuitable for wearing next to the skin because of the stiffness of the fabric produced, therefore *tāniko* was primarily made as ornamental borders for the edges of cloaks (Mead, 1999:19). These borders usually occurred on the sides and the bottom of superior cloaks only. While the purpose of this study is to describe the materials used and the techniques employed in making the different types of *poi*, to accurately describe the techniques associated with *tāniko* would require a lengthy discussion inappropriate to this study. A brief description of *tāniko* techniques employed in the past will follow:

When the weaver holds a piece of work during manufacture, the warp threads (whenu) hang downward, and the weft (aho) run transversely from left to right, the warps are arranged along the first weft row, called aho tapu (sacred weft), by a technique of interlocking with a two pair weft. Each warp element is secured during this casting-on stage at two places; first near the middle after which the top end is folded down, and again near the fold ... When the desired length is reached and the last fold is secured, the foundation weft is tied.

The preparation of each row of weft elements depended on the number of colours in the design to be worked. A two-colour pattern required a weft having two colours and a three-colour pattern required a weft of three colours. In addition an extra passive thread may be added to each weft line. The passive thread runs along behind the warp threads and is used for tightening the weft row as required and especially at the conclusion of the row. The active threads are twisted around each warp element in accordance with the principle that one rotation of the wrist when a two-colour weft is being worked changes the colour, and two rotations brings forward the same colour. No matter how many elements make up each weft row there can only be one of these showing on the front of the warp, and that one is the colour-carrying element. The others are kept out of sight behind the warp. Technically speaking, a piece of *tāniko* work consists of hundreds of half and full twists around the warps.

Generally, since the left hand of the weaver holds the warp in position and the right hand manipulates the weft elements of each row, this process can be translated in terms of action as a series of single and double rotations of the right hand and wrist. (Mead, 1999:17-18)

A full description, including step-by-step instructions and accompanying drawings of how to do *tāniko*, is provided by Hirini Moko Mead in his book *Te Whatu Tāniko, Tāniko Weaving: Technique and Tradition*. The above extract is sufficient for the purpose of this study. Once the pattern had been made the finished *tāniko* was wrapped around the *raupō* that was often used as stuffing. The two sides were sewn together, the chord attached to the top and, depending on the preference of the *poi* maker, the bottom fibres were also either sewn in or tied off at the bottom leaving them to add extra ornamentation to the *poi* (see Figure 6).

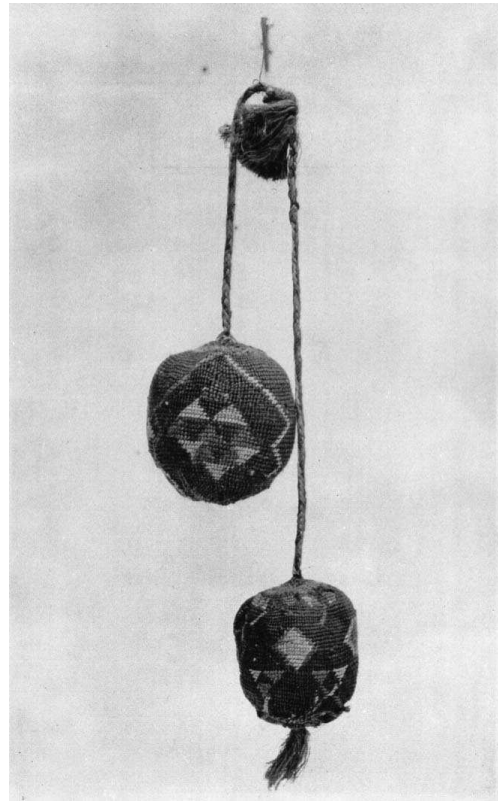
While it is unknown what type of flax was used to make *tāniko poi*, it is known what type of flax was used to make the *tāniko* that adorned the superior cloaks. *Atiraukawa* was highly regarded on the East Coast, Taranaki and Opunake, *oue* in Taranaki, Hawke's Bay, Waikato, and the East Coast, *kōhunga* in the Waikato-Maniapoto area and *tīhore* in the Raglan and Taranaki area (Mead, 1999:21). It can thus be assumed that the flax used for making *tāniko* cloak borders was the same as for making *tāniko poi*.

According to Mead (1999), there are two style traditions in *tāniko* weaving: the Pre-classic and Classical styles, and he defines style tradition as “a style which, though constantly changing through time and space, nevertheless retains its basic characteristics” (Mead, 1999:71). The Pre-classic style, which ends around 1770,

used only two colours (black or dark brown and white) to make motifs of single oblique lines. The Classic style, which ends about 1820, used the coloured strands of red, black, white and yellow, to form masses of geometric shapes, with black forming a large part of the background. (Mead, 1999:59-63). Shapes such as triangles and diamonds appear to be a defining characteristic of *tāniko* in the Classic style tradition. No *tāniko poi* specimens have been described from the Pre-classic style period so it can be assumed that *tāniko poi* is a product of the classic style, incorporating largely diamonds and triangles into the design.

Mead uses a classification system in order to categorise *tāniko* patterns. Class one contains the *aramoana* (plain chevron) and *tukemata* (serrated chevron) patterns. Class two is the *aronui* or *aonui* pattern in which the dominant shape is the triangle. *Pātikitiki* patterns in which the dominant motif is the single diamond are the third class. Class four is the *waharua* or *whakarua kōpito* where two or more diamond motifs are placed one above the other. Class five consists of patterns based on horizontal and vertical lines, class six comprises patterns based on the scroll, and class seven includes patterns based on representational, non-traditional motifs such as crosses, trees, birds and so on (Mead, 1999:75-76). As can be seen in Figure 6 class two and class three patterns are the dominant features of these *tāniko poi* designs.

Figure 6: Tāniko poi



*Photo courtesy of the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand*

Colours used in the making of *tāniko poi* are the traditional ones of red, black, white and yellow. The flax was coloured using bark from a variety of trees. Red was achieved using the bark of *tānekaha*, yellow through the roots of a coprosma tree (*karamu* or *kanono*), and black by steeping the flax in mud after being soaked in a mordant of either *makomako* (*Aristotelia serrata*), *whīnau* (*Elacocarpus dentatus*) or *tutu* (*Coriara arborea*) (Mead, 1999:27). Leaving the flax to dry naturally created the white colour. The four colours allowed a variety of different patterns to be incorporated into a multitude of designs. Specimens at the Photographic Library in the New Zealand Museum Te Papa Tongarewa show

mainly black, white and yellow fibres being used to create triangle and diamond shape designs ("Poi" B.024911, "Poi awe (poi ball)" B.018739).

*Tāniko poi* and their designs provided visual effects during a performance and helped to communicate with the gods. These effects were best displayed through the slow swinging of the *tāniko poi* usually attached to a long string. *Poi* use today tends to be a rhythmic co-ordination of beats and fast twirling. This combination of beats and twirling does not allow for any visual effects attached to *poi* to be seen, and Huata believes that because of this “the whole rationale for the making of that type of poi [*tāniko poi*] can remain in the past” (Huata, 2000:118).

While making and supplying *tāniko* for use in ornamental edges of cloaks has continued to this day, there has not been a continual demand for other *tāniko* items such as *poi*. A demand for *tāniko* to make items such as bags, belts, wallets, earrings, and guitar straps for example has been far more popular. New materials such as silk, wool and twine have made it easier for those practitioners of *tāniko* to adopt their techniques to suit society’s wants, but very few of these practitioners have used these materials to reproduce *tāniko poi*.

Best (1925) provides another example of how diamond-shaped designs were created on *tāniko poi*. His explanation below details how the diamonds were created after the *tāniko poi* was already made.

It is a netted fabric, the twine used being apparently that of the *Phormium* plant. The cord attached is a short one of fifteen inches, having a big knot at the end to prevent it slipping from the hand. The ornamentation of the ball consists of six diamond

shaped figures, placed equi-distant, made and secured in the following manner: The bag having being made, and tightly stuffed with some soft substance, it was then closed and fastened so as to form practically a perfect sphere. Taking the point of attachment of the cord as the top of the ball, a piece of twine has been tied tightly, in a horizontal position, round the middle of the ball. Two others have been tied round it in a vertical position, crossing each other at right angles at the top and bottom of the sphere. Thus the points of intersection are six in number, and each such point is the centre of one of the lozenge shaped ornamental patterns, such patterns being worked on the crossed containing strings in much the same manner that a *patu ngaro* or fly killer is made. In forming each lozenge, the first act was to make a small laced (*nati*) design in diamond form, by working narrow strips of a fibrous leaf on the crossed strings as a frame or base, these strips being three deep on either side of the central point. The strips are about one-eighth of an inch in width, and are the epidermis of the midrib of *Cordyline indivisa*, or of some other leaf that has been dyed red. Surrounding this design are three rows of rolled twine (*takerekere*), of dressed fibre, and dyed black. Outside there are three strips of white undressed leaf, probably *Freycinetia Banksii*, though possibly *Phormium*. The spaces between the apices of the different designs are about three quarters of an inch. These lozenge shaped designs in red, black and white render the ball quite an attractive object. In addition to these, small tufts of the long hair from the tail or rump of the native dog have been attached to the encircling strings at intervals. One of these is attached at each space between the apices of the lozenge designs, at and above the middle of the ball, but none below the middle, while two have been placed in the centre of the uppermost lozenge, where the twirling cord is attached. (Best, 1925:57)

As can be seen in the above extract, designs can also be incorporated onto *poi* after the *poi* ball has already been made and stuffed. The incorporation of a design using this method is only described by Best. No other authority on *poi* has described this decorative method, even though Best has provided photographic evidence of specimens found in various museums throughout the world (see Figure 7). There are six points of intersection, where six diamonds are created, when the three pieces of string are wound around the ball: one where the handle is attached, four around the ball and one on the bottom (when the *poi* is held up by the string).



**Figure 7: Poi awe**



*Photo courtesy of the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand*

There are various specimens of this type of design, some photographed, others hand drawn as in the case of J J Merrett's sketch of "Maori Game of Poi" (see Figure 8). Although he may have eroticised the women in his sketch his details of the *poi* balls are quite remarkable for an early artist. He illustrates one side of the *poi* that distinctly shows five diamonds. This clearly indicates that the ornamental method described by Best is a traditional method that has not survived, nor has it been recognised by later writers.

Huata (2000:32) states that a diamond shape on the bottom of *poi* is called '*te karu ō te atua*' (the eye of god) and the function of the diamond was to interact with the

gods. Huata, however, provides photographic evidence of there being only one diamond on the *poi* itself so it is likely that the term ‘*te karu ō te atua*’ does not apply to the *poi* design described by Best above. ‘*Te karu ō te atua*’ is not mentioned by any other authority and it may be that the term is used only when there is one diamond and not for the design described by Best. It may also be that it was a term used only within the Rotorua district.

Various photos of *poi* in the Rotorua Museum show the *poi* ball fringed with flax. A photo of a Rotorua guide, Guide Emma, shows her holding one of these types of *poi*. It looks as if a mane of flax fibres completely surrounds the *poi* ball. No other authority mentions this type of adornment but it is still a feature of modern-day long *poi* performances by groups from the Te Arawa tribal area. A photo of one of these types of decorated *poi*, held by Guide Rangi, bears a strong resemblance to the Hawaiian gourd rattles (see page 46).

*Tāniko poi* were often adorned with the hair (*awe*) of the native dog (*kurī*) and when so decorated the *poi* was called a *poi awe*. The native dog was seen by the earliest explorers and their various descriptions were summarised by Colenso in the following extract:

It appears, therefore, from the united testimony of the first visitors to this country that the ancient New Zealand dog was much like those of Tahiti and other South Sea isles – that it was merely a domestic animal, small in size, with pointed nose, prick ears, and very little eyes; that it was dull, stupid, and ugly; that it was of various colours, white, black, brown, and parti-coloured, with lank long hair, and a short bushy tail; that it was fed on fish and refuse offal, and that it was quiet, lazy, and sullen, had little or no scent, and had no proper bark. (Colenso, 1877:146)

Colenso tends to be dismissive of the native dog in this description and takes only the negative aspects of the descriptions provided by his various sources. It is obvious that these sources compared their own (English) dogs to the *kurī*, which is therefore judged poorly. In spite of this negative portrayal, the native dog was a highly prized animal to the Māori. The owner would avenge the theft or killing of the dogs, and their deaths would be lamented in songs and speech. It has even been said that the stealing, killing and eating of a dog was one of the reasons the Māori left Hawaiki (Beattie, 1919:55). The dogs were often fed the scraps off their master's plates and the white-haired dogs even slept in the house on clean mats so as to preserve their whiteness (Colenso, 1877:150).

It is believed that the native dog was a direct descendant of Irawaru, who was the brother-in-law of Māui. According to Māori mythology, Māui and Irawaru set out one day on a fishing expedition. As the day wore on, Irawaru had caught many fish while Māui had caught none. Māui became irritated that Irawaru was catching all the fish. Irawaru had just snared another fish and had begun pulling it in when his line became entangled with Māui's. Māui instantly thought that he had caught a fish and started pulling his line in. Both men thought that the fish was theirs and warned the other to let go. Irawaru eventually slackened his line and allowed Māui to pull up his line. Māui found that Irawaru was right and that the fish was on his brother-in-law's hook. Māui took the fish off the hook and the two returned to shore. As they were getting ready to haul the canoe ashore Māui told Irawaru to lift it up on his back. Irawaru did this and as soon as he got under it Māui jumped on it

and caused the whole weight of the canoe to come down upon Irawaru, crushing him. On the verge of death, Māui trampled on Irawaru's back to lengthen the spine and eventually make a tail. He used his powers and transformed Irawaru into a dog (Grey, 1956:39-40). From these beginnings, and the relationship that humans have with dogs, it is understandable why dogs were seen as a highly prized animal and were often treated in a way not too dissimilar to humans.

The bushy tail of the native dog was not only used to ornament *tāniko poi* but also *taiaha* (Colenso, 1877:135). The flesh was a delicacy amongst the people and was also used in certain *tapu* rituals associated with the *tohunga* (priest) (Colenso, 1877:150). The skin of the dog was used as a distinctive material in the manufacturing of cloaks. At the time of European contact one of the most prized types of cloaks was the *kahu kurī*, or dog cloak. Only men of the highest rank wore the *kahu kurī* and they themselves sewed the dog-skin strips onto the cloak, although the women were employed to do the base weaving (Pendergrast, 1987:92).

The dogs that were brought to New Zealand by the early Europeans quickly bred with the native dogs and produced a mongrel mixed breed. It was soon after European arrival that the native dog became extinct. The new mixed breeds became so common that the previous rarity of the native dog was dissolved and *kahu kurī* were no longer made. Whether *poi awe* suffered the same fate is unknown, but it could possibly have done so. That, coupled with the complexity of making *tāniko poi*, the need for *poi* to be made quickly due to an increase in tourism, and a

discontinuation of *tāniko poi* uses, for example when the abandonment of the traditional Māori gods in favour of Christianity occurred the need for *tāniko poi* to communicate with the gods was also abandoned, may have contributed to the diminishing need for *tāniko poi*.

*Poi piu* is another type of *poi* made entirely out of flax and its design closely resembles that of a *piupiu* (skirt of rolled flax), which is probably the reason why Huata has labeled it as such although it has been called by others an *ipu kōrero*. The technique used to make *poi piu* incorporates some of the processes used to prepare the flax fibres for *tāniko*. Around fourteen blades of flax are taken after they have been cut, stripped and separated. Rather than extracting the *muka* from the whole blade only half the blade's *muka* is extracted and the other half left whole. The *muka* is then twined together and knotted at the top and at the end closest to the blades. The flax blades are then dipped into hot water for a few minutes. This process removes the chlorophyll from the flax and ensures that the flax curls up and turns white (Huata, 2000:99-100). *Poi piu* are different from the other types of *poi* looked at so far because there is no 'ball'. While Huata provides a step-by-step description of how to make *poi piu* she does not state whether they were a traditional item or not. She does not provide any information on when they were used, why they were used, or how they were used in comparison to the ball type of *poi*. Nunns (2003) believes that they are a traditional item of the Māori. He believes that the alternate name of *ipu kōrero*, or storyteller, is the correct name for this type of *poi* and says that they may have been hit against different parts of the body as a

mnemonic system helping the storyteller tell their story. In this way it is similar to the *whakapapa* sticks with knobs on them that helped people remember their *whakapapa* (genealogy), and to the whisks used as memory markers in Samoa (Nunns, 2003).

Aside from *raupō* and *harakeke*, other native materials have also been sourced for *poi* making. Ribbonwood or lacebark (*Hoheria populnea*) “was an alternate material to *raupō* to make *poi* balls, before the *poi* made of plastic material took over” (Riley, 1994:148). This was evident particularly in the South Island. Ribbonwood also had other main uses and in Murihiku and Nelson it was used for the following purposes:

Kakahu-houi is a mat made of ribbonwood bark (*kiri hou*). This bark can be scraped, dried and beaten into a kind of material suitable for making mats (*kakahu*), baskets (*kete*), *poi* balls, fillets (*kopare*), belts (*tatua*), *piupiu* for haka dancing, and, in recent years, smoking caps. (Beattie, 1994:47)

The ribbonwood (*whauhi* in Nelson) was also used for clothing. *Kakahu-whauhi* were light for hot weather wear, but as the material was more fragile than any other enumerated, great care had to be taken of such mats to preserve them for a reasonable time. The *whauhi* was also used for lining *pokeka* made of *koka*, and to make *kopare* or head-bands. It is now used to make *poi* balls and ornamental nick-nacks. (Beattie, 1994:476)

Ribbonwood trees have a bark that yields a strong fibre that closely resembles flax, which makes it an extremely useful alternative. The fibre was utilised in much the same way as flax and was used to make a variety of items listed above as well as cordage. Beattie specifically states that it was used to make *poi* balls. Whether the inner or the outer part of the ball was made from the ribbonwood fibres is not recorded. No mention is made of the cord, the type of plait and the materials it was

made from. *Poi* in the Nelson area had strings attached and so it could be speculated that the cord was also made of ribbonwood.

Best supplies information given to him by Tuta Nihoniho of Ngāti Porou concerning other materials used in the production of *poi*. He writes:

the same contributor stated that the balls were occasionally made from a light wood, either *houama* (*Entelea arborescens*), or *mako* (*Aristotelia racemosa*). No other authority mentions wooden balls, and probably they were rarely employed. The modern ball, as used to-day, is a paltry affair, merely a few dry bulrush leaves folded up, and having a string attached to it. (Best, 1925:57)

It is interesting to note that Best does not deny the fact that wooden balls were used and suggests that they may have been rarely used. It is highly likely that wooden balls were peculiar to Nihoniho's tribe and may have been employed in an ancient form of *poi* reminiscent of the nuts and oranges used in the Pacific and the early version of *poi* employed in the South Island.

The introduction of European items opened up a wealth of materials *poi* could potentially be made of. Textiles such as muslin and calico enabled *poi* to be made quicker, with a functional purpose exactly the same as that of *poi awe* and *poi kokau* but more durable and longer lasting. Various later writers explain how these materials were incorporated into making modern *poi*.

It is necessary to make a poi that will endure long, hard, and regular use. The suggested poi is *not* the poi made and used in ceremonial dances. It is made solely for practice work. It must be reasonably light.

*Materials and tools required:* A piece of string 14in. long, a quarter sheet of newspaper, an 8in. square of cotton material, a sharp pair of scissors, and a needle and thread.

*Method:* To make the handle of the poi: Take the 14 in. piece of string and knot one end about six times. To make the poi: Tear the quarter sheet of newspaper in half. Place the two pieces together and crumple by holding them in the centre. Tie the unknotted end of the string handle around the crumpled centre of the newspaper and *lightly* form a ball from the newspaper with the poi string hanging free. Cover

the newspaper ball with the square of cotton material and bunch the edges of the material firmly around the string. This bunch forms the top of the *poi*. Stitch firmly right around the top. Cut away the uneven pieces of material left after stitching. (Tovey, 1961: 32)

The materials provided by Tovey include string, newspaper, cotton material and thread.

For practical purposes it is best to make a *poi* which will stand considerable use. The usual method is to roll paper into a ball about four inches in diameter and cover this with unbleached calico or muslin. Tie or stitch the material firmly around the collar and attach the string. The string should be thick fishing cord, or string of a similar thickness, with a reasonably sized knot at the far end to facilitate holding. The string for the short *poi* is about nine inches long and that of the long *poi*, the length of the user's arm. (Armstrong, 1964:83)

The materials provided by Armstrong include thick fishing line or string of a similar thickness for the handle, and paper rolled into a ball covered with unbleached calico or muslin. It is interesting to note that both Armstrong and Tovey say that it is essential to make a *poi* that will endure considerable use. It seems as if they are suggesting that *raupō* and flax were materials that could not stand such use. This may mean that *poi* were constantly made in order to provide decent *poi* for performances.

Cornhusks were another material used to make *poi*. Huata (2000) provides the following description of how to make cornhusk *poi*.

The stalk at the bottom of the corn plant was snapped off. A stubbed fragment remained.  
The stump faced the inner core of the *poi*.  
Its outward appearance left an indented design.  
Compressed corn silk was slotted inside.  
A plaited flax handle was used for the cord; it was knotted at both ends.  
The handle was then inserted into the corn silk.  
The corn husk was draped over the corn silk to form the outer frame.  
Thin strips of flax secured everything and bound the ball together. (Huata, 2000:120-121)



The cornhusks were only available during April and so their use as a *poi* material was fairly limited. *Raupō* was equally limited, being only available in the summer months, but their abundance in a variety of areas ensured there was plenty in supply and accessibility for all.

Huata (2000) also mentions other materials used by herself and by people she knows. These materials include dried moss, newspaper, Apple and Pear Board fruit paper, toilet and tissue paper, foam and duvet inners for the inner part of the ball, dried pigs bladder, nylon stockings, plastic and tulle for the outer covering, and string or wool for the cord and tassels (Huata, 2000:121-127). The list of materials above has shown a natural progression from one material to another until the most commonly used materials today of foam rubber, plastic, tulle, coral, cotton and wool (Huata, 2000:103).

The materials listed above required a minor change in the production of *poi*. A square cubed piece of foam rubber is cut and trimmed into the shape of a ball. A small hole is also cut into the centre of the foam rubber of the ball into which one end of the cord, knotted, is inserted. A square piece of tulle is wrapped around the foam and tied off with cotton. A square piece of clear plastic is then wrapped over the tulle and also tied off with cotton at the base of the cord. Where the plastic has been tied with cotton it is then covered with sellotape and the excess pieces of plastic and tulle are trimmed off (Huata, 2000:103-104).

A feature of modern *poi* is a pompom or tassel connected at the free end of the cord. Traditionally a large knot would have sufficed. Wool is wrapped around the maker's hand thirty times and cut in half. There are several ways the tassels can be attached to the cord depending on the maker. If the cord is to be made using four-plaited wool the tassels can be placed in the middle of the wool before the plait is done. They are then tied up and the cord can then be subsequently plaited. If the cord is bought from the shop already made, or if the cord has already been made using the four-plait style some of it is unraveled and tied around the middle of the tassel. The ends of the tassels are then brought up over the knot of the cord and tied with a piece of wool. The disadvantage with the first method is that the tassels cannot be replaced if they become tattered as they can be in the second method. Already made cord from a shop does not permit the first method to be employed. Cord already made is the preferred material for *poi* today because it is less time consuming and more durable than wool and so consequently the second method is more preferable.

A modern way to make *tāniko poi* whilst producing a multi-coloured effect is to divide the ball into eight segments. A damp piece of paper is smoothed over the ball and cut to fit one of the segments, thus producing the basic pattern of each segment. Once the required number of warp and weft threads is calculated, the ball is secured between four nails with two additional anchor nails diametrically opposite. On one of these two nails the warp threads are tied, and the weft thread is threaded through with a bodkin until the segment is completed. The eight segments

are sewn together and packed with wood straw but before each segment is removed from the ball the desired *tāniko* design is embroidered on to it. Creating separate segments allows practitioners of *tāniko* to incorporate a variety of colours (Pownall, 1976:124-125). This is a new method of making *tāniko poi* that allows those not familiar with traditional *tāniko* techniques an opportunity to experiment. This is a classic example of how the term '*tāniko*' refers to the pattern and not the traditional weaving technique. It is also a *poi* making technique unheard of, and most likely, unseen nowadays and is not discussed by contemporary *poi* makers and other writers on the *poi*. By contrast, traditional *tāniko poi* were not created in segments and the *tāniko* pattern was not embroidered on after the *tāniko* was made. The *poi* was made as a whole and the designs were incorporated in the production of the *tāniko*.

In an effort to be distinctive in competition some groups have taken *poi* materials further. Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato used velcro at the 1998 Aotearoa Traditional Māori Performing Arts Festival to attach one *poi* head to another in order to dangle both *poi* by the one cord (Rewi, 2004). Similarly Tūhourangi Ngāti Wāhiao also used velcro at the same festival to depict the oars of a canoe (Huata, 2000:128). This shows another use of non-traditional materials to produce a new style of *poi*.

Much of the prehistory at present associated with the manufacture of *poi* can only be speculation because the archival evidence of pre-European *poi* making in New

Zealand is so sparse. It seems unlikely that, given the preoccupation of everyday life, much time would have been given to producing *poi*. A *poi* made properly would have lasted a long time and lessened the need for finding time to make *poi*. Special trips for gathering *poi* materials may have only started to occur when *poi* started to be used by the two prophets Te Whiti-o-Rongomai and Tohu Kākahi in their religious sermons and later on as a valuable tourism item in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see Chapters five and six). It may also be that when a constant demand for *poi* all year round evolved, and as *raupō* was only obtainable during the summer months and the new innovations in *poi*, such as hitting, became popular, new materials had to be discovered that were readily available and durable.

This chapter has looked at the materials and methods used to make traditional and contemporary *poi* as far as these can be ascertained from written sources. *Poi* made from *raupō* with a flax handle were the main materials used to make the unornamented *poi kokau*. Written accounts have not specified why *raupō* was the preferred plant used in the construction of this type of *poi*. Perhaps it was because *raupō* could be found in abundance throughout New Zealand. It may also be because it was durable and when dried it was easily compacted to form a ball. Perhaps they were merely formed from the leftovers of *raupō* used for other purposes to avoid wastage of materials.

*Tāniko poi* were the ornamented *poi* used for more ceremonial occasions where the object was to provide visual effects on stage. In some cases, a diamond motif on the bottom of the *poi* was traditionally used to interact with the gods, although specific details on how this was done is unknown. The base materials of *raupō* and flax stayed the same but the *tāniko* technique became an important decorative feature of this type of *poi*. The *tāniko* style of *poi* seems to have disappeared once other time saving and more durable materials became available. Often attached to *tāniko poi* were tufts of dogs hair called *awe*, which when attached changed the name of the *tāniko poi* to *poi awe*. Modern *tāniko poi* included the sewing together of eight segments with the *tāniko* pattern embroidered onto the segments. *Poi piu* or *ipu kōrero* involve only the use of flax and the function of this type of *poi* is likely to have been as a memory marker with hits of the body corresponding with different parts of the story. This is not so different to other areas of performing arts where specific actions, which often includes the hitting of the body, are reflective of the words of the chant or song. Other materials included ribbonwood, used in much the same way as *raupō* in the production of *poi*, and balls of light wood. Other decorative effects are the six diamonds created after the *tāniko poi* has been made and a mane of flax fibres around the ball.

After European arrival *poi* went through a process of change. Introduced materials involved in this process included newspaper, Apple and Pear Board fruit paper, toilet and tissue paper, foam, duvet inners, dacron and paper towels for the inner part of the ball, corn husks, dried pigs bladder, muslin, calico, nylon stockings,

plastic and tulle for the outer cover, and string and wool for the cord. Other items utilised in the manufacturing of *poi* over time were cotton, fishing line, sellotape, scissors, mussel shells, and ready-made cord. The materials most commonly used today are very different from *raupō* and *harakeke*, they include: foam rubber, plastic, tulle, coral, cotton and wool and are materials that are utilised for their durability and time-saving attributes.

As with any aspect of a culture that is susceptible to change, the introduction of new materials has required a change in manufacturing techniques. *Raupō poi* were made by simply wrapping the off cuts of *raupō* and flax in *raupō* leaves so as to impart a ball form and inserting a flax handle into the middle. *Tāniko poi* were made in much the same way except that the outer covering was made from a material formed by a twisting and knotting form of weaving known as *tāniko*. With a change in materials the manufacturing process has altered only slightly. Modern *tāniko* techniques have included the sewing together of eight segments with the design embroidered on top of these segments. The method of preparing the inner has stayed the same; that is shaping a soft material into a ball form. Preparing the outer covering and attaching it is a lot more difficult than wrapping strips of *raupō* leaves around the inner. Modern day cord does not require the *hāro* or *miro* process to be performed. There is also an added feature of a tassel that is not a feature of traditional *poi*. However, the basic objective of shaping some type of inner material into a ball, wrapping it in a cover of some sort and attaching a cord to it is the same. *Poi kokau*, *tāniko poi* and *poi awe* withstood European dominance for a rather long

time until the demands of constant performance, time pressures, and the loss of knowledge of how to make these types of *poi* forced a shift from the traditional materials and techniques to those used today.

## Chapter Four

### Early Accounts

Detailed accounts of *poi* before 1900 are extremely rare. Those few that are available are minimal at best “and it would now be difficult to describe the purely Maori forms, so much has the exercise been influenced by the European invasion” (Best, 1925:54). Each account describes a different aspect of *poi*, which makes it difficult to know exactly what is factual about *poi* and what is not. Whether *poi* was a game or a dance, whether it was performed standing or sitting, whether vocal accompaniments were in the form of singing or chanting, and whether the participants were male or female are all key issues about *poi* included in a variety of accounts since 1815. This makes it extremely difficult for those wanting to know about *poi* to separate the facts from the speculation. This chapter will collect together the various pieces of information regarding *poi* from early writers of Māori culture from the first point of contact until 1925. This date has been chosen because it was in 1925 that Elsdon Best published his book *Games and Pastimes of the Maori*, which contains the largest amount of information collected on *poi* by a single writer of this era. This work remains the key reference work for subsequent generations and while Best has included accounts from some of the writers included in this chapter there are many accounts that he missed. This chapter will analyse what they have written in order to show how the writers have discussed the key issues listed above.



Three phases of investigative writings about New Zealand and its earliest inhabitants have taken place. Firstly, there were the journals and writings of early explorers, which included people such as Captain James Cook, Sir Joseph Banks, Dr Daniel Solander, Sydney Parkinson and Dumont D'Urville. These early explorers were a mixture of people with differing abilities and interests. They were surgeons, botanists, artists, historians and navigators and their aim was to discover new countries and record as much data as possible about these countries in the short time available to them (Beaglehole, 1961:clxvii-clxx). Their journals provide detailed accounts of their experiences in a new country and intimate insights about their particular views on a variety of subjects.

The second phase of writings comprises the works of the missionaries. Samuel Marsden, Richard Taylor and William Colenso are amongst the more prominent and influential missionaries to have visited or served in New Zealand. The Church Missionary Society sent these men from a place of relative comfort and security to a place of uncertainty. Their belief was that they were “to bring the light of Christianity to the darkness of the New Zealander’s heathen heart” (Easdale, 1991:11). Like missionaries before them who had ventured into the Pacific they were in New Zealand for long periods of time and many of them became proficient in the language. They were instructed to write a daily journal which was then sent back to England. Many of these journals were published and the contents of the journals varied in detail and expression. What they wrote was an eclectic mix of observations about Māori society at the time they were serving in New Zealand.

The third phase of writings in New Zealand comprises work by scholars who studied Māori society, and published their researches into the traditions and customs of Māori culture. These scholars included anthropologists, archaeologists, biologists, zoologists, ethnologists and ethnographers. These groups of people often believed that their studies would preserve Māori society and customs, which was being transformed by colonisation.

The most prominent of the early explorers was Captain Cook who first re-discovered New Zealand in October of 1769. Having travelled extensively through the Pacific, Cook was already well acquainted with the Polynesian people. He had noted various games and dances that he saw on other islands and did the same in New Zealand. He made the following observation towards the end of his trip in 1770:

Diversions and musical instruments they have but few, the latter consists of two or three sorts of Trumpets and a small Pipe or Whistle, and the former in Singing and Dancing, their songs are harmonious enough but very doleful to a European Ear. In most of their dances they appear like mad men, jumping and stamping with their feet, making strange contortions with every part of the body and a hideous noise at the same time, and if they happen to be in their Canoes they flourish with great Agility their Paddles and Pattoo Pattoo's various ways in the doing of which if there are ever so many boats and People they all keep time and motion together to a surprising degree. (Beaglehole, 1968:285)

Cook's descriptions of the diversions and musical instruments of the Māori throughout his journals make no mention of *poi* and for such an unusual game or dance it is difficult to ascertain why. Several other members of Cook's crew also wrote journals and they, and subsequent explorers, also fail to mention *poi*.

Although New Zealand was first re-discovered in 1642 it was not until 1815 that *poi* was first recorded in the journal of an early traveller. This observation of *poi* was made by John Nicholas who took part in a two-year voyage around New Zealand in the years 1814 and 1815 alongside Reverend Samuel Marsden. Nicholas kept a daily journal of his travels and it is in this that the first reference and description of *poi* occurs.

They made Mr. Marsden a present of a ball called a *poē*, with which the ladies amuse themselves by throwing it backwards and forward; it is somewhat larger than a cricket-ball, having a long string appended to it, which they seize with the fore-finger while the ball is in motion and are very dexterous in this practice. However puerile this amusement may seem, it is not more so than many that we find very common among the grown people in England. (Nicholas, 1971.v1:317-318)

Both McLean (1996) and Mitcalfe (1974) mention this reference but neither makes mention of the last line. If the opinion of early explorers at the time was that *poi* was a ‘puerile amusement’ then it is understandable why recorded observations of *poi* are few and far between. They obviously thought that *poi* was not a significant feature of Māori society and therefore not worth commenting on. Nicholas does, however, mention that a long string was used indicating that traditional *poi* was long stringed. Nicholas then makes mention of his request for *poi* to be made for him. He writes:

I set one of the natives to work to make me six *poes* or balls, such as I have described in a former part of this narrative; and the person I selected, who was one of the most ingenious of their rude artisans, promised to complete them without delay, and seemed quite overjoyed with the order. (Nicholas, 1971.v2:150)

It would seem from this entry in Nicholas’ journal that making *poi* was not a sacred task as he was able to order them without any difficulty. The person making them also had no problem in providing them for a man so no inferences can be drawn from either of Nicholas’ entries about *poi* being strictly the domain of either sex.

The next comment made by an early observer, as cited by Leys (1890), is a report made by Edmund Halswell who was appointed Protector of Aborigines and Commissioner for the Management of the Native Reserves at Wellington by the New Zealand Company in 1840. He writes in a report to the Secretary of the New Zealand Company:

These are their principal manufactures: they make, however, baskets in colours, and toys of various sorts, such as balls very neatly made of black and white plait, which are swung by a cord in a peculiar manner, whilst the performers, many in number, sing in excellent time. Most of the women excel in this, and the exact time, the regular motion, and precise attitude which is observed by all the performers, are peculiarly striking. (Leys, 1890:592)

Halswell tells us that the *poi* was accompanied with singing, the first to do so. It is highly likely that this report on *poi* was written as an addition as Halswell first talks about the diminishing occupations of traditional Māori society in 1848. Māori had discovered that selling their labour was more profitable than dressing flax and as a consequence the need to procure flax for sale decreased. It also lessened the need for flax to make other traditional articles such as cloaks<sup>3</sup> and clothing as European textiles were readily available and easily affordable (Leys, 1890:592). However, Halswell writes that making baskets and toys was still a continuing labour and gives *poi* as an example of a toy that was made. Had Halswell written about *poi* within the context of other games or performances he may have supplied more information. Halswell notes that women excelled in the execution of *poi*. He also calls the participants ‘performers’, and this word tends to lead one to think that *poi* is more than just a toy. ‘Performers’ do not play a game, they perform a dance or a

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<sup>3</sup> The term ‘mat’ was the term commonly used by early European explorers when referring to the ‘cloak’ of the Māori. In this study ‘cloak’ will be used to avoid confusion between the two.

concert, they do not perform a game or toy such as *poi*. Halswell seems to have believed that using *poi* with a singing accompaniment was more than just a game. That comment from such an early period of New Zealand history is particularly significant.

Dieffenbach, whose visit to New Zealand lasted a little over two years, was a naturalist and the first trained scientist to work in New Zealand. He describes the *poi* as a game and refers to it immediately following the passage cited in Chapter Two. He writes:

they have a game with four balls, exactly like that of the Indian jugglers, and they accompany it with a song. Another game is with one ball (*poi*) suspended from a string. (Dieffenbach, 1974:56-57)

This one line description of *poi* is all that is provided by Dieffenbach and it would seem that he does not regard *poi* as anything significant. Dieffenbach has been credited with publishing a book that “broke new ground in joining a meticulous account of the life and physical character of the new country with penetrating and humane observations about the plight of the Maori before the rising tide of European settlement” (McLean, 1990:108). The key word in this description is meticulous but in the area of performing arts he was not so. This one line description of *poi*, included in his one and half page description of dance, games and musical instruments does little to support the notion that Dieffenbach’s work is meticulous in all areas of traditional Māori society.

A description of the *poi* then appears in an album presented to Eliza Hobson, the wife of Governor Hobson, on her return to England in 1843 after her husband’s

death. In this album a large piece of work entitled *Commentary on the Poi* is included and although it is unsigned it is believed to be the work of Edward Shortland who travelled with Governor Hobson and other officials to various Māori settlements in the North Island (Locke, 1989:119). He kept a journal of his travels and in them recorded songs and took notes on Māori life and customs, the majority of which was published later on, with the exception of this commentary. This piece of work is also believed to be the most written about *poi* by an early writer.

The Poi a favourite plaything of the New Zealanders bears a conspicuous place in the history of these people. As seen in the accompanying drawing, it is simply an ornamental ball with a long string and is struck alternatively with either hand the string being so managed as to cause the ball to describe a variety of figures. Simple as this may appear, to use it properly requires much manual dexterity only to be acquired by long practice.

The poi is the love letter of the Maori. A young chief becomes enamoured of some beautiful Maiden doubtful if he has found favours in her eyes he secretly makes a Poi, which he ornaments after the most approved fashion, some trusty slave conveys this to the young lady taking care to name from whom it comes and that none witness its presentation. If favourable to the suit of her lover she plays with it on all favourable occasions. He sees it in her hands and overjoyed takes the first opportunity of assembling his friends and carrying her off, should he be disagreeable to the fair object of his affections she throws away the poi.

In war the Poi is sent from Chief to Chief as a symbol of gathering. When Tuiua(?) proposed to attack Maketu he sent for Tai Pari (his friend) chief of Maunga Nui an ornamented Poi as an earnest of his intention and as a signal to Tai Pari to gather his people for war. This is only one instance of a general custom. I have seen the Poi sent on this occasion and so strictly tapued (or rendered sacred) was it, that none but Tai Pari would touch it. (Locke, 1989:52)

The author of this piece continues with the long *poi* theme whilst providing deeper insights into other uses of *poi*. He states that it was also used as a love letter by a young man in order to win the affections of an unwilling young lady. *Ātahu*, or love charms, were *karakia* (prayer, charm) said over a chosen medium in order to bring the desired woman under a spell (Buck, 1950:364). The mediums could be an object that the desired person had already come in contact with, an object that the desired person was likely to come in contact with, or in some instances a bird was

used (Buck, 1950:364). The desired lady would know instinctively who sent the *ātahu* and as a result of the spell would cease resisting and become infatuated with the man. For these reasons *poi* would have been an ideal love charm. The description provided above, indicating the use of *poi* as a love letter, is a significant insight into the extremely important use of *poi* in traditional Māori society.

The author also states that the *poi* was sent from village to village as a way of recruiting people to engage in war. The *poi* method of recruiting assistance is known as *tiwha*. *Tiwha* could either be material tokens, in which case those being appealed to for assistance instinctively knew who was needing their help, or the request could be made in a verbal form through singing a song which contained subtle hints informing them of their need for help (Best, 2001:153). This use of *poi* is also noted by Richard Taylor, a missionary appointed in the Wanganui area, who writes:

*he poi* – this is a game played with an ornamented ball, causing it to revolve by a small string attached, and singing at the same time. This ball is often sent to pa, and played as an invitation to join a war expedition. (Taylor, 1974:174)

However, Best writes that “it is doubtful if the manipulation of the *poi* ever constituted a request for armed assistance. Such a request might be conveyed, merely hinted at, in the words of the song accompanying the game” (Best, 1925:55). This contradicts what he writes about *tiwha* being tokens sent out. If the latter is the case then the token could have been a *poi*. In fact the *poi* could have been used as both a token and a part of a verbal request for different occasions and for different reasons. The author of *Commentary on the Poi* (Locke, 1989:52) also includes an example where *poi* was used as a token, which provides strong support

against Best's comments. This is again an interesting insight into the multiple uses of *poi* in traditional Māori society.

As previously stated it is not known for certain if Shortland is the actual author of this commentary; it is only assumed that he is because of his close friendship with Governor Hobson. If Shortland wrote the description of *poi* for Eliza Hobson, then he gave very different information a decade or so later:

Young women are very expert at a game called *pohi*, in which an ornamented ball fastened to a string three or four feet long is used. The string is held by one hand, while the ball is struck with the other repeatedly in different directions, but always in time with the measure of a song chanted at the same moment. When several seated together on the ground are thus diverting themselves, the graceful attitudes of their bodies present to the eye a group well adapted for the pencil of the artist. (Shortland, 1980:160)

Shortland here mentions *poi* as being a game and not as either an *ātahu* or a *tiwha* which leads one to think that he may be giving further material not covered in the Hobson work. If this is so then it is unusual that he fails to mention these two uses and that he changed the spelling from *poi* to *pohi*. It seems a strong possibility that Shortland may not, after all, be the author of the commentary found in the album for Eliza Hobson.

Sir George Grey (1853) provides two examples of *rangi poi* in a collection of *mōteatea* (lament) and *hikirara* (light song) from around New Zealand. He does not provide much information, if any, about the composer or the background of many of the *mōteatea* and *hikirara* he collected. The first *rangi poi* in Grey's collection is believed to have been sung by Te Rauparaha to the Governor in Auckland prior to Te Rauparaha's release, intending to signify that jealousy need not exist regarding



his influence over the native tribes (see Appendix for words) (Grey, 1853:29). There is no explanation for the purpose of the second *rangi poi*, however, the beginning and the content of this *rangi poi* (see Appendix for words) is similar to that of Erenora Taratoa's famous *pātere* composition *Poia atu taku poi*, which is often associated with *poi* dances. *Pātere* are almost always composed by women and a common feature of the beginning of *pātere* composition is the sending of the composer's *poi* on an imaginary journey around places in New Zealand significant to the composer; for example, see lines 1-2: *Poi-Poi, Poi atu taku poi ki turangawhakaupu*. Another intention of *pātere* is to dispel and reply to false rumours made about the composer, which often include derogatory retorts. An example is found in lines 13-17: *Tenei koa nga iwi o Te rangiweherua, Ka pau te whakarato ki nga moana e rua, Ki kukuriki ra, ki Oue ra, Kia kai mai te tamure*. This composer uses these two features of *pātere* and in doing so Grey has termed it a *rangi poi* which reinforces the idea that *pātere* were common accompaniments of *poi* in traditional Māori society.

Arthur Thomson, a military surgeon and scientist, provides quite a detailed description of *poi*.

Poi is a game played with variegated balls, about the size of large oranges, to which strings are attached. The string is held in one hand and the ball is struck with the other. The hand holding the string is often changed, the string is shortened and lengthened, and the ball is struck from under the arms, and in a variety of ways. Poi is played in a sitting posture, and players sing songs applicable to the time. Much practice is requisite to play the poi ball properly, and when well played, with a handsome ball, and a good song the effect is beautiful. (Thomson, 1859:196)

Noteworthy in Thomson's account is that he states *poi* was done in a sitting position. This is also mentioned in Shortland (1980) and it is likely that they both

referred to a sketch done by Joseph Merrett in 1843 which is also included in the album given to Eliza Hobson. This sketch shows four young women, two of whom are in a seated position. One of the women sitting is playing with a long *poi* (see Figure 8). Best seems sceptical that *poi* was done seated. He writes, “ Though this ball game might be practised to some extent in a sitting position, as of an evening, yet more important exhibitions were certainly given standing in ranks” (Best, 1925:55). When looking at the origins of *poi* in the Pacific, in Mangareva for example, juggling exhibitions were often commanded by chiefs and these juggling exhibitions were done in a seated position (Buck, 1938:185). As *poi* is likely to have originated in Polynesia this aspect of the game was also probably brought to New Zealand and so it is highly unlikely that these early observations of *poi* by Thomson and Shortland were incorrect as proposed by Best.

In his remarks on *poi* Thomson also states that it is a game but he emphasises the amount of time required to become an expert at *poi* in order to ‘play’ it well. It is almost as if he wants to say it is something more than a game but he dare not go against the popular opinion of the time and say so in such a public way. He is also the first to say that the participants sing songs to accompany the *poi*. Shortland and Taylor both say that it was a chant or a chanted type of song that accompanied the *poi*. The most powerful vehicle involved in converting Māori to Christianity was music. The influence of missionary hymnody had been established for some time since the early 1800s (Thomson, 1991:13). It is likely that by 1859, or even earlier, in some areas, traditional *poi* song accompaniments had been replaced by the

European style of singing. Thomson also mentions that the *poi* cord was shortened and lengthened and the *poi* was moved from one hand to another. This indicates a transitional period from long *poi* to short *poi*.

Figure 8: Game of poi by J. J. Merret



Photo courtesy of the Hocken Library, Dunedin New Zealand

Lieutenant-Colonel St John arrived in 1830 at the mouth of the Waikato River. He was an amanuensis for another trader and wrote the following about *poi*:

One pretty haka they have, in which each performer holds a ball with a short piece of string attached, and the different motions given to it with great rapidity and in perfect time form a pleasing accompaniment to the monotonous dreary sing-song recital. At times the voice seems to proceed from the heel, it is so deep. (St John, 1873:172)

St John is the first to state that *poi* is a type of *haka*, although he translates *haka* to mean ‘chorus’ (St John, 1873:171). Despite this anomaly, the fact that he uses the term *haka* shows he places more emphasis on the performance aspect of *poi* than its entertaining properties. St John is not specific about the gender of the performers. Immediately prior to this excerpt, he describes a *haka* he observed and the presentation of the *haka* given by the participants, which he explicitly states are male. This may suggest that at least some of the *poi* performers were male assuming that if the performers had only been female he would have said so. St John indicates that the pitch was extremely low; again indicative of male performers. He is also the first to specify that the cord to the *poi* was short showing that by 1873 short *poi* had become a dominant feature of *poi* performances.

Alfred Burton, known widely for his photographic skills, wrote in his journal whilst on a photographic tour of the King Country:

The Maori game of *poi* (ball) has been brought before the public lately in connection with some utterances of the great Maori prophet Te Whiti, and here for the first time we saw the girls playing *poi*. The ball is is [sic] made of raupo, moderately soft, and is attached to a string. It is rather a “fetching” thing to see a pretty Maori lass – an adept in *poi* – throw the ball about in all directions now striking her hands, now her bosom; now jerking it over one shoulder, now over the other, then upon her lap, and all to the sound of music; same music being beaten out of a tin baking dish. (Burton, 1885:22)

Burton is one of the few early writers to mention Te Whiti and the public attention *poi* was receiving because of its use by the Parihaka prophet, although he does not specifically mention that the women he describes using *poi* were followers of Te Whiti. He mentions the striking of the *poi* with the free hand, as other writers do, but he also says that the *poi* was struck against other parts of body, including the shoulders, bosom and the lap. Whether the women were sitting or standing is

unknown but the inclusion of striking the lap may suggest that, at least on some occasions, they may have been sitting.

William Colenso, a missionary whose interest in natural history provided the incentive to travel around the forest and bush areas of New Zealand, provides the following information:

The chiefs sang suitable songs to their pretty paper kites while flying them, and the young women did the same to their light stuffed and ornamented hand-ball while engaged at their pleasing and dexterous game of *poi* (Colenso, 1880:59)

The important piece of information to notice is that *poi* was accompanied by singing, as were other ‘games’ popular at the time. Colenso was proficient in the Māori language and was held in quite high esteem by the Māori people whom he provided with translated scriptures of the Bible. He was therefore in a privileged position to acquire a mass amount of information regarding Māori society. The fact that he writes so little about games, dances and pastimes shows his priorities lay elsewhere.

Augustus Hamilton was an ethnologist, biologist and director of the Colonial (Dominion) Museum who placed a particular emphasis on the preservation of Māori material. He is the first to note the evolution of *poi* from being merely a game to something more performance-based.

One of the favourite games of the Maori in both ancient and modern times is the game of *poi*. It might almost be classed as a dance and action song, and just at the present time is excessively popular at Parihaka, Rotorua, and other places. It is played with a small ball or bunch, about three inches long, usually made of the leaves of *raupo* (*Typha*) enclosing some of the *hune*, or down, from the flowering stalk of the plant, and is swung by a short cord. More elaborate ones are sometimes made of the same light material, but covered with an ornamented net-work in

various colours and patterns, made from a fine cord of native flax (*phormium*). ... In former times *poi* balls were ornamented with white dog's hair.

The *poi* dance is exceedingly popular at the present time wherever a number of Maoris are assembled together. The movements of the arms and bodies of the girls (who are usually the performers) is very graceful and pleasing. Some of the songs are very long, and very old. (Hamilton, 1972:372-373)

Hamilton, who wrote this in 1901, is the first to mention the current popularity of *poi* in Rotorua and confirms Burton's observations concerning Parihaka. Hamilton is also the first to discuss in any detail the materials used to make different types of *poi*. This shows his interest in the artistic characteristics of Māori artifacts. Hamilton also makes mention of the fact that *poi* might almost be classed as a dance and as an action song. This suggests that the status of *poi* by 1900, if not before, had become more than just a game. Non-Māori were beginning to view *poi* as a dance and more than just a simple plaything or amusement. Hamilton also hints that on some occasions performers of *poi* may have been male, which is interesting as not all sources are so clear on this point.

Best also believed that the *poi* was closely aligned to *haka* (posture dance) and should be more correctly termed a *haka poi* (poi dance). He provides this and much more information:

The *poi* may be said to be allied to the *haka*, and is so styled by the natives. The *poi* dance (so termed) is performed by females. Each performer has a small, light ball made of leaves of the raupo tightly rolled, and having a string attached to it. In times past these *poi* balls were ornamented by attaching the long hair from the tail of the Maori dog, now extinct. The players hold the string, and, timing each movement to the *poi* song (*rangi poi*), twirl the light balls in many directions – now in front of the body, now over the right shoulder, then the left, &c. The players stand in ranks while performing. ... This game has been revived of late years, and was one of the attractions of the Maori meeting at Rotorua at the time of the visit of our Royal guests in June 1901. (Best, 1901:42)

Best says that *poi* songs were sung or chanted during the game and uses the same term employed by Grey (1853), *rangi poi* (*poi* song). Best claims that the game has gone through a period of revival, which indicates that at least twenty years prior to this publication, if not earlier, *poi* had fallen into disuse. This period appears to have occurred during the land wars and periods of confiscation, but *poi* was revived in particular areas, notably Parihaka and Rotorua, as also suggested by Hamilton.

John MacMillan Brown, a Canterbury University professor of Classics, English, History and Political Economy, claims that before *poi* became a child's game it was once a religious rite.

And the rhythmic grace of the poi dance, which is so little of a dance in our sense of the word that it can be performed sitting, must come down from the immemorial, doubtless, like so many games of the young, the imitation of some long-discarded religious rite. (Brown, 1907:206)

Brown's work was strongly criticised by Ngata and Buck and his contribution to the anthropological discussions of New Zealand and the Pacific has been generally considered to have a limited ethnographic value (Hankin, 1993:59). Despite this scepticism Brown had some grounds for this speculative association. He pointed to other so-called games that formed part of religious rites. For example, the bull-roarer (which can hardly be described as a game) was used to drive off spirits from a deceased chief. Tops were used to provide a chorus for warriors to lament the deaths of their friends who had fallen in battle, while kites were used for sending messages or as omen indicators (Brown, 1907:206). These were all examples of games that had spiritual or religious connections. However, in the case of *poi* Brown fails to suggest that this association is grounded in ethnographic fact,

confirming criticism of Brown at least on this point. Religious associations of *poi* are also mentioned in later works, particularly by Huata (2000:32), who claims that one of the *poi* patterns, ‘*te karu ō te atua*’ provided opportunities for interacting with gods, and that this pattern supports the Taranaki use of *poi* for these purposes in pre-contact Māori society.

James Cowan (1910) had intimate connections with the tribes on the West Coast of the North Island and, in particular, with the tribes who supported the two prophets, Te Whiti-o-Rongomai and Tohu Kākahi. Cowan reported that:

there was no lack of amusement in the *kainga* Maori, either by day or by night. Of the olden games and amusements that have survived to this day, the *poi* and *haka* posture dances, with their amusing and often Rabelaisian songs are the most popular. The “dancers” do not really dance, but stand in rows and twirl the light *poi*-balls (made of dry *raupo*-leaves) over their heads, from side to side, beating them at intervals on their heads, breasts, shoulders, and even their feet, all in perfect time to the rhythm of the song or musical accompaniment. The *poi* is often an action song – some represent the work of planting food, some the action of paddling a canoe, some imitate the fluttering of the wild birds. (Cowan, 1910:149)

Cowan again makes reference to the *poi* having exceeded the status of game and nearly surpassing the category of dance much like Hamilton (1972). They both describe it as more of an action song and the examples provided above are reminiscent of topics used in modern compositions. He uses the word ‘Rabelaisian’ suggesting that the songs had a rather ‘earthy’ or ‘sexual’ tone to them, indicative of the topics he provides. One other interesting point to notice is that Cowan is the first to describe the action of paddling a canoe, which suggests the popular use of *poi waka*, a favourite *poi* choreography of the time.



In a later work Cowan remarks on the musical instrument accompaniments of the *poi*, and the tribal areas of particular importance associated with the *poi*:

The *poi* is as charming to eye and ear as ever it was, though the *rangi* or airs have been modernized and the Hawaiian ukulele has become the favourite instrument of musical accompaniment. The action song, as it should be called rather than dance, is infinite in its variety ... many are a series of lissome beautifully-timed swinging of the “tiny ball on end of string” to the sound of melodious and plaintive love songs. Some are rather mournful *waiatas*, chants of affection and longing; again there are ditties gay and sometimes Rabelaisian of words. The poetry of the *poi* is quite a branch of Maori folk-lore – mostly unwritten – in itself. The Arawa have a special facility in the composition of little lilting poems for this greatly favoured amusement; Ngati-Porou and Ngati-Kahungunu, too, have their resourceful poets, and they have skill in adapting *pakeha* tunes to the needs of the dance. (Cowan, 1930:199)

The mention of a Hawaiian ukulele as a musical aid is extremely interesting. Drum and fife (type of flute) bands were used as musical instruments, particularly in the Taranaki area. Cowan’s remark on *poi* accompaniments shows a move away from instruments that required a number of people to play them, towards stringed instruments that only required one or two. It would have then been a natural progression from the ukulele to the guitar commonly used today. What is particularly interesting about the above extract is the naming of specific tribes known at the time for their *poi* composition skills. The mention of ‘Arawa’ (Te Arawa) is particularly worthy of note because of the involvement in tourism of the tribes belonging to Te Arawa, particularly in Rotorua and Whakarewarewa. Mention is also made of Ngāti Porou and Ngāti Kahungunu and their poetical and musical abilities in adopting European tunes for *poi* compositions, and this is most probably due to prolific composers of the time such as Sir Apirana Ngata, Tuini Ngawai and Paraire Tomoana, for example, who are renowned for popularising this aspect of Māori performing arts. Cowan (1910) mentions the various actions depicted by the *poi*. In 1930 he places more attention on the type of songs used, the

first to do so. He mentions that they are mournful chants, plaintive love songs, gay ditties and satirical songs. In this way *poi* songs are similar to *waiata* (songs) and the classification of both *waiata* and *poi* are based on content rather than on the style.

Frances Lysnar paints a rather picturesque image of *poi*. She does not provide much insight into the attributes of *poi*, but gives an interesting word picture of *poi* performers in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In the olden days one of the principal sources of amusement in almost every village was the “Poi” game, or dance, which was, and still is, an intricate and bewildering exhibition of a remarkably picturesque and delicate example of the poetry of motion. A happy, smiling group of dancing Poi girls move gracefully into the opening of the village, dressed in their loose crimson and various-coloured short skirts and jackets of gorgeously flowered prints, their brows bound about with red handkerchiefs, which hold in place the black and white feathers of the rare “Huia” bird, their cheeks daubed with red ochre paint, and greenstone and sharks’ teeth pendants hang from their ears.

Barefooted, and with heads held high, they place their hands on their hips, at the same time holding their poi-balls, which are attached to tiny flax strings. These poi-balls being made of rapu [sic], are very light, and are quickly spun in the fingers in accompaniment to every movement of the body. An old tattooed, white-haired Māori woman comes forward and leads the chant for the dance. As the dancers give themselves up to the rhythm of the music, their dark eyes flash, and their long black hair floats in the air. Their bodies sway from side to side, and quiver and jerk in strange contortions, while every movement they sing in rhythmic time to the chant of the old Maori woman. (Lysnar, 1915:249)

Here we see how the European categories of game and dance cannot quite contain the *poi* and its performance. Lysnar describes the dress of the *poi* women and their decorative accessories: their crimson and various-coloured skirts and jackets of flowered prints, red handkerchiefs tied around their head to hold in place the *huia* feathers, and the greenstone and sharks’ teeth pendants hanging from their ears. The pictures provided in Lysnar’s book of women doing the *poi* are not representative of this description. It is obvious that Lysnar is providing a

description of another organised, formal performance, misleading the reader in what to expect women typically to be wearing during a *poi* performance.

Herries Beattie describes South Island *poi* based on accounts he recorded from local Māori in 1920. He is the first to do this and he also states what areas of the South Island his informants are from. The most interesting aspect of Beattie's work is that he provides valuable insight into the differences in *poi* between the North and South Islands, and the slight regional variations of *poi* between different parts of the South Island. In Murihiku, the southern part of the South Island, Beattie gathers the following information:

The old time Southern poi, the collector was assured, differed from the Northern one in several aspects but principally in that a long string was used as against the short string of the Northern poi ball. The participants would stand in two rows and throw balls across each other, the long strings allowing this. It is said that an ancient form of poi was without strings at all, the balls being thrown, and caught and returned, the players singing meantime, but later long strings came into favour and these in turn were superseded fairly recently by the short strings. The long string (taura) form of poi was also played sitting, the player throwing the ball upward and forward. The short taura (string) was also used long ago but it was only recently it ousted the other altogether. One or two of the old people remember the long string poi and also the standing poi and they say the poi waiata (songs) were the same for all varieties – a good waiata was suitable for only the standing or sitting poi. (Beattie, 1994:80-81)

The similarities and differences between *poi* in Murihiku and *poi* in the North Island are remarkable. The two are similar in terms of there being a string attached, with this being a modern aspect of *poi* in the South and a traditional aspect of *poi* in the North. In the North long strings had been superseded by short strings and, according to Beattie's informant, this was an aspect of *poi* development that also occurred in the South. The players would also sing or chant a song, it was indulged in by both male and female participants, and the *poi* could be done in both a standing and sitting position. However the differences are significant. According to

Beattie's informant, ancient *poi* were simply balls, with no strings attached, thrown up in the air and caught with alternate hands making it remarkably similar to those practices described for other Pacific Islands (see Chapter two). It is highly likely that this form of *poi* was practised throughout the South Island and this is most probably what Dieffenbach (1974) witnessed on his travels to the northern area of the island in 1841. While this is an aspect of Murihiku *poi* that has been abandoned, it is likely that the feature of throwing the ball up was still employed when the long string was used. This would have allowed the freedom of the ancient *poi* but also the ability to manipulate the flight path of the ball if required. Another difference is that when the long string was employed the participants would line up in two rows and throw the balls across to each other, suggesting a closer link to the juggling tradition than as entertainment facing an audience on stage. It is unclear exactly how this was executed but it certainly raises an interesting aspect of *poi*. What it may in fact closely resemble is the game *tī rākau*. There are various ways in which *tī rākau* is played, but generally people sit opposite each other and throw a stick or sticks back and forth, which is remarkably similar to how Murihiku *poi* was played. The only difference being in the objects thrown. The term *poi rākau* is given as a Ngāti Porou version of the game (Best, 1925:14) which is played slightly differently.

The players stood in a circle, except for one, who remained in the centre of the circle. Each person in the circle had a light stick some three feet long. Watched by an umpire who ensured fair throwing, the players threw their rods at the centre player, who had to catch them and throw them back to their owner. If he missed, the person who had thrown the stick took his place. All this was done in time to a song but, as can be appreciated, practice at this made the catching of a spear in battle much easier. (Armstrong, 1964:45)

While Best says that the term *poi rākau* was an alternative name for *tī rākau*, *poi rākau* was actually played in a way closely resembling *veivasa ni moli* (Fiji) and *tuimuli* (Samoa).

In Canterbury Beattie collected a similar account:

The principal informant said that in the old days poi was played with long strings and usually standing except in those depicting boat rowing (*waka-poi*) and kindred things, these latter being done while sitting. Te Whiti and Tohu brought in the latest style – that now generally used – when the old poi had almost fallen into disuse. This was at Parihaka about the year 1890 and it was at first associated with some religious idea they had. (Beattie, 1994:260)

It is interesting that the informant remembers both the use of long strings and the introduction of the presumably short style introduced by two Parihaka prophets, Te Whiti-o-Rongomai and Tohu Kākahi. As Beattie collected his information from informants who were all born in the mid-1800s it could be that these informants had some contact with either the Taranaki prisoners, or with the two Parihaka prophets themselves, who were sent down to the South Island after the Government raid on Parihaka in 1881. From this contact it could also be that the Taranaki people were in some way responsible for the conversion from long stringed *poi* to short stringed *poi* in the South Island.

The following account was related from the Nelson area:

The present style of poi was modern. The old kind was played with a poi ball on a long string. It was something like boxing. The players would sit or stand facing each other and while others sat or stood by singing they threw the balls from one another to see who would hit the most. The old method was only done to singing but now the new kind of poi can be performed to the music of any instrument. (Beattie, 1994:484)

This description of *poi* in the northern area of the South Island is similar to descriptions found in Murihiku and Canterbury, however, the comparison of *poi*

with boxing is a new concept. This could again be a variation of the juggling of the ancient *poi* as remembered by other South Island Māori informants. It could also be a more detailed explanation of the description given by the informant in Murihiku where the participants would line up in two rows and throw the balls across to each other. Beattie's informant is drawing an analogy to the face to face combat of boxing where two persons would also attempt to score hits against each other in an effort to describe the style of their ancient *poi*. This informant also explains in more detail the singing accompaniment of *poi* changing to a musical instrument of any kind; a similar change to that observed earlier for North Island *poi*.

Probably the most concise early description of *poi* by a Māori person is given by one of New Zealand's most well-known Māori scholars, Sir Apirana Ngata.

The old Maoris say that the *poi* dances of their time were even more effective, the strings used with the *poi* balls being far longer, some six feet, and extending the picturesque gossamer effect of the twirling balls, the dancers being necessarily in extended order, and the display more imposing. The old dance was slower and allowed more time for the display of grace and the elaboration of gesture. The ostensible object of the *poi* from the first was to give graceful welcome to the stranger (*manuhiri*), visiting tribes, *tino rangatiras* and other persons of distinction. But gradually there grew up another object, which was to attract the fighting men from other tribes and invariably the best-chosen dancers and the best-ordered *poi* kept the rank of the *tauas* up to their full strength. To-day, of course, these *pois* are no more that what they were originally intended to be, the women's portion of the ceremonial welcome of a hospitable, artistic and punctilious people. (Ngata and Heke, 1908:15)

Best (1925) has stated that it was highly unlikely that *poi* was used in times of war.

Ngata states that it was used to attract fighting men from other tribes to join in the fight of another tribe, which supports what is observed in Mrs Hobson's album (Locke, 1989). Ngata also adds a new dimension to the use of *poi* and that is the inclusion of *poi* in *pōwhiri* (welcoming ceremonies). In some tribal areas of New

Zealand a major part of a *pōwhiri* is a *haka* of welcome termed a *haka pōwhiri*. McLean supposes that *poi* could have been used as a part of the *haka pōwhiri* and thus Best's labeling of *poi* as a *haka poi* is correct (McLean, 1996:129). The term *poi pōwhiri* for a *haka pōwhiri* that uses *poi* is also included (McLean, 1996:84). The adding of a qualifying term to *poi* to indicate the use of the song or nature of the text is a feature of Māori performing arts. For example, the term *waiata*, a song or to sing, is also combined with other terms such as *tangi* (cry) and *aroa* (love) to indicate the specific song. *Waiata tangi* therefore becomes known as a lament and a *waiata aroa* is thus known as a love song.

Ngata wrote his description of *poi* for the 1901 royal tour of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York to Rotorua and it was during this tour that *poi* was particularly used for this welcoming and entertaining purpose. The use of *poi* on ceremonial occasions, for example as a *tiwha* and an *ātahu*, was a function of pre-European Māori society, therefore, it seems likely that it would have naturally extended into other ceremonial activities, including *pōwhiri*. Although retaining some of its ceremonial characteristics outside of these uses *poi*, as an item of entertainment, was likely to be a relatively new function of *poi* designed for the tourism industry, as other writers in this period and much later observed. This shows the evolution of *poi* and its constantly changing role within Māori society. Ngata also reinforces the comments of earlier writers who write that early *poi* used a long cord. He comments that the traditional *poi* was a lot slower and the balls

were twirled indicating that the hitting of the ball part of the *poi* did not occur until later.

In 1925 Elsdon Best's *Games and Pastimes of the Maori* was first published. This book contains the most amount of information written about *poi* by an early writer, which has only recently been surpassed by Huata (2000). Best has incorporated early accounts included in this chapter (Nicholas, Taylor, Halswell, Davis and Thomson), and information provided by a Ngāti Porou informant, Tuta Nihoniho. However, he has not included any information pertaining to the popularity of *poi* in Rotorua and Taranaki, the materials used making *poi* in the twentieth century, South Island *poi* and the links to the Pacific that other sources prior to *Games and Pastimes of the Maori* had included. It seems that his work was intended to reconstruct the pre-European style of *poi* whilst failing to acknowledge changes in *poi* in the period from contact until 1925.

The *poi* was performed by females, but sometimes youths took part in it. It was a common pastime among the people at all times, and was practised at intertribal social gatherings. Contests were sometimes held between different hamlets, when a party of *poi* performers from a village would visit another in order to play against a local team. Such visits also took place in connection with the *haka*, and other amusements calling for skill on the part of the performers. (Best, 1925:56)

Best states that the *poi* was a common pastime practised among the Māori people at all times and at intertribal gatherings, probably as part of the *haka pōwhiri* or as part of the evening's entertainment. *Poi* contests were often held between *pā* and this competitive element is also a feature of Polynesian juggling (see Chapter two).

This ball exercise was performed standing. The *rangi poi*, or time songs, were sometimes specially composed to be used as *tiwha* (songs sung to the people or chiefs of another hamlet, or clan, and which contain a hinted proposal for joint



action, as in regard to war). In such cases as when the performance was employed as a medium for political or kindred purposes, the success or failure of such purposes was thought to be foreshadowed in the manner of performance; if well delivered, it predicted success for the project; if badly rendered, then failure would ensue. *Mehemea ka ata tu te poi, a he ra kei tua; ka he te poi, he aitua*. If the *poi* be well rendered, the sun shines ahead; but if badly performed, then trouble looms before. (Best, 1925:56)

Best, like Grey (1853), uses the term *rangi poi* to mean time songs. Best refers to the composition of these songs as a *tiwha*. Whilst Best claims that the *poi* would not have been used by itself as a token type of *tiwha*, in contrast to Taylor (1855) and Shortland (1880), it was, in his opinion, certainly used as part of a song type of *tiwha*. The execution of the song type of *tiwha* assisted in determining the outcome of war. A good performance would predict success, and a bad performance would indicate a bad outcome. This is similar to the execution of the *tūtūngārahu* (*ngārahu*, *tū ngārahu*, *whakarewarewa*), a type of *haka* performed prior to warriors going into battle. The *tūtūngārahu* is one of the true war *haka* in traditional Māori society. The warriors would be armed and the significant feature of this type of *haka* was a side-to-side jump. It was performed in front of the elders of the village and the experienced warriors who would judge from the performance whether the warriors were conditioned and ready for battle (Kāretu, 1993:39). Success would be assured if the execution of the *tūtūngārahu* was flawless, and likewise an imperfect execution (unsynchronised jumping and actions) would indicate disaster (Best, 2001:178), similar to the performance of a *tiwha*.

Best is adamant that the *poi* should really be called a *haka poi* (*poi* dance) and he has included it in the same section as his discussion on *haka*. Both these descriptions occur in a chapter entitled ‘Games Requiring Manual Dexterity or

Agility’, which is a strange heading for a section that includes lengthy discussion of what he calls a ‘dance’. Best used European categories in order to classify Māori knowledge into systems Pākehā could understand. This ultimately led to the distortion of the indigenous knowledge. Best insisted on calling *poi* a dance but then by labelling it as a ‘game of manual dexterity and agility’ distorted the earlier category. He suggests that it was once a ceremonial performance but he believes that there can be no truth in this and that its only use was as an amusement or an exhibition of dexterity, thus invalidating the indigenous knowledge he received from his informant. He writes:

it has been suggested that the *haka poi* was originally a ceremonial performance, and one theory even connects it with phallic worship, but it is difficult to see where any proof lies. Nothing is known concerning it to show that it was ever viewed as anything more than an amusement and exhibition of dexterity on the part of the performers. (Best, 1925:58)

Best suggests above that *haka poi* was once connected with phallic worship, unfortunately, he does not provide the source of this theory, and this is a difficulty with Best’s work. He claims that nothing is known and no proof exists to support this theory, but the fact that the theory is in existence clearly suggests that *poi* may have been associated with phallic worship. Huata (2000:32-33) believes that the phallic worship theory could have been a possibility and provides a photograph of how two *poi* could be representative of the penis, which is in turn a symbolic representation of Tāne-mahuta (God of the forests). Alternatively by flipping the two *poi* around they can also represent the female ovaries and fallopian tubes (Huata, 2000:32-33). There is also a suggestion that the *poi* is representative of the placenta and umbilical cord (Johnston, 2003).

Best notices the absence of illustrations depicting *haka poi* and does not include pictures of their use in performance. He says that, “many photographs of this pastime have been taken, and at least some should be available, but they are not” (Best, 1925:58). With the use of *poi* by Te Whiti and Tohu, established in the 1870s, and the excessive popularity of *poi* performances in Rotorua, which by 1925 was firmly established as a commercial form of tourism, it could be assumed that occurrences of *poi* would have been well documented by professional and government artists and photographers at the time. Best includes four photos of *tāniko poi* from various sources and two sketches; one of two *raupō poi* and one of a *tāniko poi*. He also includes photos of *haka* performances and people playing various games. It would seem likely that Best’s position would have enabled him to have had access to drawings and photos of *poi* performances and to use them in his publications. Publications prior to this one, such as Loughnan (1902), Cowan (1910) and Lysnar (1915), had managed to secure photos of *poi* performances and include them, yet Best was not so successful. The lack of similar photos in Best’s work may suggest that he was less interested in recording and describing *poi* performances of the contemporary period.

This chapter has looked at a variety of early sources that have provided varying amounts of detail concerning *poi*. In trying to determine the truth of these sources, a number of issues concerning the development of *poi* in New Zealand are presented. The issue of whether *poi* was originally a game or a dance is a particularly

interesting one. Nicholas calls it a “puerile amusement”, Dieffenbach labels it a “game”, Locke refers to a “favourite plaything”, and Colenso describes it as a “pleasing dexterous game”. All the early writers state that it is a game and some mention that much manual dexterity and practice is required in order to play it properly. This seems to be the opinion of the early writers from point of contact until the late nineteenth century.

*Poi* began the transition away from its use as a game to something more important prior to European arrival as evidenced by its use as a *tīwha* and an *ātahu*. This transition has very rarely been acknowledged as occurring at that time and its transition from game to something more ceremonial was documented as having taken place after European arrival. Halswell, using the term ‘performer’, is the first to propose that *poi* might be something more than a game. Hamilton explicitly suggests that it should be more appropriately classified as a dance or an action song; a classification also agreed on by other early twentieth century writers. St John calls it a “pretty haka” and this term is also picked up by Best in the early period of his writing where he aligns *poi* with *haka*. It is from this period onwards that *poi* is regarded as a dance by non-Māori writers. It is likely that around this time (the late nineteenth century) *poi* was being used in a wider variety of ceremonial roles, such as *pōwhiri*, as evidenced in Ngata’s description and this coincides with its rising popularity in the Taranaki and Rotorua areas.

Another area of interest raised in this chapter is the progression from chanting to the use of singing accompaniments. It is inevitable that when two incompatible music systems come into contact with one another the host system will either reject the other, or the two systems will co-exist, or that the host system will abandon, or use to a lesser degree, its native system in favour of the other (McLean, 1996:275). In New Zealand all three phases have occurred. Rejection of missionary hymns in the beginning signaled the first stage. Eventually Māori took a liking to this new music system and became bi-musical in both the traditional Māori and European systems until eventually the European system surpassed the Māori system when Māori were proficient enough in it to practise it on equal terms with the Europeans (McLean, 1996:275). This shift has led to an abandonment of certain types of traditional Māori song styles and to a diminished repertoire. More recently, a growing awareness of the value of the indigenous music system has led to a revival of abandoned items, although the original style will never be able to be replicated exactly (McLean, 1996:275).

In terms of *poi*, whether Māori initially rejected the European music system is not known. The earliest writers who commented about singing accompanying the *poi* were not specific about the type of song, chant or singing style. Mitcalfe tells us “there is no way of knowing whether pre-European *pātere* and *popo* [*oriori*] were sung to a *poi* accompaniment but it is probable they were” (Mitcalfe, 1974:182). If we are to believe this then we know that the style of traditional *poi* song accompaniments, *pātere* and *oriori* (*pōpō*), were able to co-exist with the European

music system for a while. ‘Non-central’ aspects of European music encroached on the traditional form of *poi* accompaniments, which were almost completely abandoned for the European style of singing, although the original styles are still remembered and practised on occasions. This transitional phase is likely to have happened as early as the late nineteenth century (McLean, 1996:309).

Whether *poi* was traditionally executed standing or sitting is an aspect that is difficult to prove. If *poi* originated from the Pacific, as this study suggests, then the early form of *poi* (*pei*) clearly demonstrates that sitting was the original position for this type of amusement. This interpretation is reinforced by the use of this position by South Island Māori. Beattie’s informants from all around the South Island can clearly remember that their version of *poi* was done sitting. Shortland and Thomson both state explicitly that *poi* was done in a seated position and these men, both scholars in their own right, would not fabricate such a statement without there being some truth to it. McLean (1996:129) states, “those performed with very long strings could have been performed in no other way.” For certain moves this may be true but it is certainly not so of all long *poi* movements. It may well be that in the recent past, as *poi* took a more ceremonial role, such as a *tiwha*, *ātahu* or in a *haka pōwhiri*, that the more likely position for the execution of *poi* would have been in a standing position but that is not to say that it is true for the ancient use of *poi*.

Perhaps the most confusing aspect of *poi* is the gender of those who used *poi*. There seems to be divided opinions over who exactly used *poi*, however, many of the

sources point to it being exclusively performed by women. Nicholas, Halswell, Shortland and Colenso all claim that it is played by the women; in particular, the younger women, and that it was their favourite pastime, game, amusement or dance. Brown introduces the idea of it once being connected with religion and that it was also only connected with men. Best (1925:54) states that while it is “now viewed as being essentially an amusement for girls and women ... there is some evidence to show that, in former times, young men took part in it, at least in some tribes.” While Best states that there is some evidence he provides no references or examples, which makes it particularly difficult to ascertain amongst which tribes this aspect of *poi* was a feature. However some authors seem to echo Best, in particular Hamilton and Locke, and it is a theory particularly prevalent in Māori society that men used the *poi* to strengthen and make their wrists more supple for using *patu* (short-handled clubs) in war. Children as participants also feature as one of the prospective users of *poi* in traditional Māori society. From this study there can be no certainties, only assumptions. Nicholas has said that he ordered *poi* to be made for him and the lady obliged willingly which is significant in terms of assuming that *poi* was a pastime of both sexes. There is no progression of users, but there is a progression of uses. Overall the evidence points to *poi* being utilised by men, women and children and this aspect of *poi* continues to be practised today.

Another significant theme that is present throughout the written accounts included in this chapter is the development of the style of *poi* used, that is a progression from long stringed *poi* to short stringed *poi*. Nicholas, Locke, Shortland and Thomson all

say that the *poi* was attached to a long cord, probably some three to four feet in length. This is also supported by Ngata who claims that the cords were even longer. Thomson goes further to provide evidence that, in the mid nineteenth century, long *poi* was being shortened and then lengthened again during performances. It is evident that sometime soon after this long *poi* was finally superseded by short *poi*.

The fact that we can only make assumptions about one of the most distinctive pastimes of the Māori people highlights the fact that information about *poi* in early European contact Māori society was rarely recorded. Assumptions, again, can only be made about why it was not recorded. The Europeans who inevitably wrote most of the information about early Māori society may have been arriving from Europe and imposing their own cultural values, attitudes and beliefs. Many of the recorders were from a middle to upper class society, which rarely acknowledged women and children in their own country. As *poi* was seen as a women or child's amusement or game then their cultural attitudes about the value of women, children and games were no doubt transposed to Māori society. Māori women "became passive characters, objects of imagination, either there for the gratification of the traveller and the reader – or not there at all. The imagination of male writers, or lack thereof, represented Māori women as characters they were familiar with" (Mosley, 2003:3), and so the observations were largely on the extreme differences between the two groups.



The first voyagers to the country had spent weeks, maybe months, at sea and were interested in securing amicable trade negotiations with the early inhabitants of New Zealand (Beaglehole, 1939:48-49). Food, water and collecting interesting artifacts are likely to have appealed more to these voyagers than did games and amusements. *Poi* would not have been an important trade commodity to either party. Sometimes their initial encounters were highly confrontational and they wrote what they were feeling at the time and what they perceived to be the character of the Māori people, not daring to get any closer. Of course a peaceful art such as *poi* would not be evidenced in conflictual first contacts, and perhaps thereafter male leaders managed relations with the voyagers since they were dealing with boatloads of men. The reluctance on both sides to have close contact with one another, beyond trade, meant the voyagers may have never seen games and amusements, which would have included *poi*.

The later missionaries, travellers and eventual settlers of New Zealand did have the opportunity to interact with Māori on a more personal level and should have been able to witness Māori social customs including games and amusements. Dieffenbach, Taylor, Shortland, Grey, Thomson and Colenso were amongst the privileged few who were able to interact with the Māori in this way but whose research interests lay elsewhere. What they wrote barely scratched the surface of the intricate secrets of *poi* that existed. Many of these men wrote of the extreme importance of *poi* and the large amount of practice and dexterity required to use it properly, yet none have written more than a few sentences on it. This aspect of their

work, in most cases, is applicable to their descriptions of other Māori games, amusements and pastimes. It may be that information about *poi*, seen as a female art, could not be collected by men. In Pacific societies, gender and status influenced the collector's ability to interact with the local people, and as the majority of the collectors were male they may not have been given the opportunity to engage in conversation with the women about *poi*. Hence their recordings are based merely on observations. Interestingly enough, few women wrote anything in the period between contact and the early twentieth century, Lady Martin and Lady Barker being the main exceptions. Neither of these women make any observations on the pastimes of Māori women, the former tending to concentrate on comical anecdotes about 'her boys' and the latter relating amusing stories of colonial life (Mosley, 2004). There is only one written description provided by a woman in this chapter and had more women been involved in this type of investigation the results might have been quite different.

The few extracts available and collected in this study have provided valuable insight into the differing opinions regarding *poi*. Reading each item individually does not provide a complete view of *poi* and this is understandable given the changing nature of Māori society and *poi*. It is difficult to say exactly what form *poi* took in traditional Māori society but what the early writers have provided is a snapshot of *poi* as it was observed at various times from the early nineteenth century onwards.

## Chapter Five

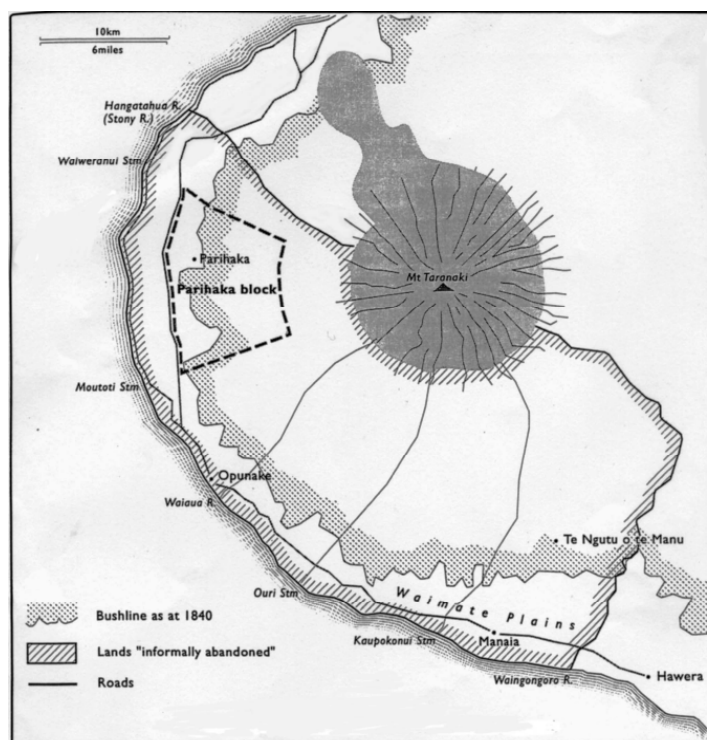
### Taranaki

*Ko tā te rino e tukituki ai, mā te rino anō e hanga.*  
What iron has broken, iron will build (Te Whiti-o-Rongomai).

The inclusion of the *poi* in the religious teachings of two nineteenth century prophets, Te Whiti-o-Rongomai (Te Whiti) and Tohu Kākahi, was a significant one in the history of the *poi*. The establishment of Parihaka, nestled in the foothills of Mount Taranaki, as the centre of the prophet's passive resistance movement was a strategic decision, being situated in central Taranaki, between the Stony River in the North and the Waingongoro River in the South. Outside of these boundaries warfare was rife and European settlement a certainty. The adoption of *poi* was a sign of peace and a symbol of change in response to the dissatisfaction Māori were feeling against the land hungry Colonial Government and early settlers. Te Whiti and Tohu used *poi* to help disseminate their religious sermons and prophecies and their followers developed a distinct style of *poi*, based on a mix of traditional practices and biblical scriptures. When it became fashionable to mix European tunes with Māori lyrics Te Whiti and Tohu continued with the traditional chanted style establishing the Taranaki people as exponents of *poi* in its traditional form. This chapter will firstly provide a political context within which Te Whiti and Tohu developed their religious doctrines and encouraged a life of peace and prosperity at Parihaka. It will then discuss how they used *poi* in their religious teachings and the styles of *poi* used. This will show a period of time where traditional forms and

styles were still being adhered to, despite the changing styles of Māori performing arts in other parts of the country.

**Figure 9: The confiscation abandonment**



Source: Adapted from Waitangi Tribunal Report, 1996:203

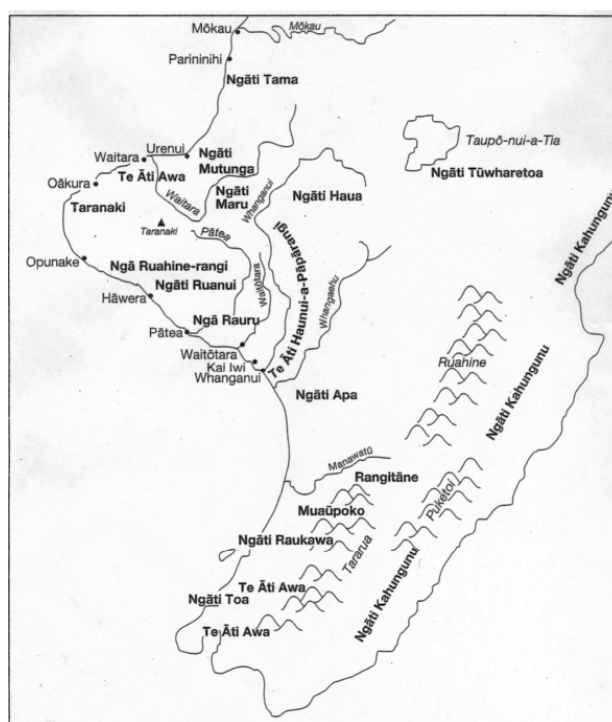
As with the Māori migration to New Zealand, land was also a cause of European immigration. Where Māori migration was due to over-population in their former homelands, European immigration was due to the settler's dream for a better life. The only problem was that Māori had established ownership rights over the land through right of discovery, whereas Pākehā settlers could not establish any. Traditional Māori land tenure was based on communal ownership meaning that land could not be sold without the approval of all members of the *hapū* (Buck, 1950:382-383). In some places Māori willingly sold land to the newcomers, but in

other instances individual Māori took it upon themselves to sell land on behalf of their *hapū*, sometimes keeping the proceeds from the sale for their own personal gain. This is how the land problems in Taranaki began. Land in the Taranaki area was fertile and settlers saw its potential for financial wealth. The Colonial Government was under immense pressure from settlers to obtain land in this area from the Māori, which they only partially succeeded in doing. In 1854 the principal chiefs of Taranaki had formed a kind of land league where no land was to be sold to the Pākehā without the direct consent of the council (*Hawera Star*, 1930:7).

In 1860 the tension between Māori and Pākehā erupted as the first phase of the New Zealand wars in Taranaki began. While the details leading up to this period of war are numerous it is sufficient to recount only those which helped instigate the conflict. Dealings with Māori over land had always been complex but when the governor at the time, Thomas Gore Browne, authorised the purchase of a fertile block of land at Waitara the relationship between the two parties broke down completely. Wiremu Kingi Te Rangitake, the principal chief of Te Āti Awa whose *iwi* collectively owned the land at Waitara, did not agree to the selling of the land, still adhering to the principles of the 'land league'. Browne had purchased the Waitara block from a single man named Teira who claimed that Kingi had no right to the land (Hadfield, 1860:1). The Government knew Kingi widely as the chief of Te Āti Awa and a loyalist to the Crown. It can be assumed that Browne was aware of the Māori system of communal land ownership, that one individual could not sell the land because this was at the centre of many of the land problems in New

Zealand at that time. The Government had also previously decided that where there was dispute over land ownership amongst Māori then no land could be negotiated for without a formal investigation first being undertaken (Hadfield, 1860:1). Rather than wait for evidence to prove or disprove Teira's claims, and despite Kingi's protestations against the sale, Browne continued with the transaction. The Government sent in surveyors but they were forcibly removed from the area and declared as trespassers on Te Āti Awa land. On 17 March 1860, in an effort to once again enforce the sale, troops were sent to Waitara where shots were fired, thus beginning New Zealand's ten year land war (Belich, 1986:82).

**Figure 10: Map of West Coast tribes**



*Source: Moorfield, 2001:89*

Māori resistance to land confiscation was just as strong as the Government's will to obtain it, if not even stronger. The number of attacks and battles on both sides were

numerous and would be inappropriate to recall in this thesis on *poi*. A brief outline of significant events and people involved in the war will follow to show the progression towards Te Whiti's and Tohu's establishment of Parihaka. Following the invasion of Waitara it was evident that Te Āti Awa were not going to give up their land without a struggle. In early 1861 the Government called a truce to investigate the legality of their claim to Waitara, which in May 1863 ended with the Government renouncing all claims to the land (Scott, 1975:14-17). In a turn of events the Government then executed a plan that allowed them to confiscate the land at Waitara legally. Basically the land had been unlawfully taken and the Māori people, whose land was in contention, resisted. Their resistance was then seen as rebellion and under the New Zealand Settlements Act 1863:

Whenever the Governor in Council shall be satisfied that any Native Tribe or Section of a Tribe or any considerable number thereof has since the first day of January 1863 been engaged in rebellion against her Majesty's authority it shall be lawful for the Governor in Council to declare that the District within which any land being the property or in the possession of such Tribe or Section or considerable number thereof shall be situate shall be a District within the provisions of this Act and the boundaries of such District in like manner to define and vary as he shall think fit. (Waitangi Tribunal, 1996:352)

These supposed acts of rebellion were occurring in Taranaki as well as Waikato and the Bay of Plenty and by 1864 large amounts of land in these areas were confiscated. Local Māori recognised (but did not accept) the reality of the confiscation and the Government sent in surveyors to divide the land. Māori resistance to the surveying of the land subsided temporarily but as the Government became greedier and began to mark out and occupy more and more land, Māori opposition flared again (Belich, 1986:204). At the heart of the renewed resistance

was Te Ua Haumenemene and his Pai Mārire/Hauhau<sup>4</sup> religious followers. Te Ua was a convert of Christianity and a man of peace. He was influenced by the Archangels Gabriel and Michael to find solutions to the difficulties plaguing Māori and revealed Pai Mārire as a new religion to replace that of the missionaries (Sinclair, 2002:22). Pai Mārire drew heavily on the Old Testament mixing it with elements of Māori culture, a trait of many mid-nineteenth century prophets, with parallels being drawn between Māori and the lost tribe of Israel (Elmore, 1989:194). Converts to the new religion occurred throughout the North Island particularly in Waikato, the East Coast, and the Bay of Plenty, where emissaries were sent to recruit new followers. Despite being men of peaceful intentions, where they felt they were wronged, or were attacked, they would react accordingly and fight back. Their first major military confrontation took place at Sentry Hill on 30 April 1864 (Gadd, 1966:447).

The Māori prophets became popular during the 1860s. They “combined the motivation of dissatisfaction and injustice with religious backing and fervour” (Elmore, 1989:173). As a consequence of the onslaught of European migration mass changes were happening to Māori society. Diseases had decimated whole communities, alcohol had infected the minds of many, and new technologies and industries were quickly replacing those of the old world. In an attempt to stabilise the changes occurring and steer them towards the betterment of the Māori race

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<sup>4</sup> ‘Pai Mārire’ was a phrase repeated in prayer meaning ‘Good and Peaceful’ indicating the spiritual side of the movement. The term ‘Hauhau’ was applied to the political side of the religion. Elmore (1989:197) suggests that Pai Mārire and Hauhau are two concentric movements, with the Hauhau side developing in resistance to European settlement.



people looked towards leaders within Māoridom, in particular prophets (Lyons, 2003:555). From Waikato there was Tāwhiao (the second Māori King<sup>5</sup>), from Rongowhakaata there was Te Kooti, and from Taranaki there was Te Ua Haumenemene and Titiokowaru. There were others of course but the two most influential prophets that this study is concerned with are Te Whiti-o-Rongomai and Tohu Kākahi, founders of the Parihaka movement in Taranaki.

Māori had become disillusioned with the strength of Pākehā indifference for the teachings of the Bible. They had seen that “the soldiers had fought on Sundays, they had burnt prayer books and Bibles in the houses and even churches had been destroyed” (Scott, 1975:14). In fact at the start of the wars the mission teacher at Warea, the Lutheran Johann Riemenschneider who had taught Te Whiti the scriptures, abandoned his people at the first sign of trouble and provided the British troops with detailed descriptions of their defences inland of Warea (Scott, 1975:15). Such obvious disregard towards the Christian teachings of the church that the Pākehā professed to be devout followers of helps explain why the Māori people eagerly turned to Māori prophets for salvation.

Arising from the ashes of war, Parihaka evolved as a symbol of hope in a time of intense turmoil and pain. A community at Parihaka had already existed prior to it being the base of Te Whiti’s and Tohu’s operations. It is said that the village was

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<sup>5</sup> In 1858 the Māori King Movement was established in an effort to stem the rapidly increasing sale of Māori land and to maintain order within Māori society. Pōtatau Te Wherowhero (Waikato) was chosen to act as a repository of Māori *mana* (authority) over land. The Movement was one of the first attempts at unifying the Māori people while still encouraging traditional *iwi* identities. Pōtatau died in 1860 and was succeeded by his son, Tāwhiao (Paterson, 2004:165).

originally called Repanga and the eventual name change to 'Parihaka' is symbolic of the sufferings its earlier inhabitants experienced (Keenan, 1993:530). Parihaka seems to have been one of the villages Te Whiti and Tohu lived in during their youth. They returned there in 1865 after British troops sacked the village of Warea, where Te Whiti and Tohu lived prior to the outbreak of war (Waitangi Tribunal, 1996:212). The year of their return to Parihaka is somewhat tentative. Gadd (1966) provides the year 1866 and Cowan (1934) gives the year 1868. Irrespective of the actual year the estimates provided show that the land wars occurring in Taranaki had not yet finished when Te Whiti and Tohu took up permanent residence at Parihaka.

Te Whiti is thought to have been born in 1832 during a time that saw his tribe, Te Āti Awa, besieged by the invading Waikato warriors. Te Whiti was identified early in his life as a potential authority on spiritual matters. By the time he was introduced to the Bible, he had already received a large amount of traditional knowledge by his elders. This knowledge, combined with his enthusiasm for the Christian doctrines, elevated his status as a prophet and teacher (Keenan, 1993:530-531). Tohu Kākahi, who was born in 1828 and a descendant of the Taranaki and Te Āti Awa tribes, was related to Te Whiti as a cousin of Hone Kākahi, Te Whiti's father. Tohu was, therefore, a generation senior to Te Whiti (Smith, 1993:541). He was also entrenched in Māori customs and the teachings of the Bible. Europeans often saw Tohu as playing a subservient role to Te Whiti, despite protestations from the two that they were equal peers (Riseborough, 1989:35). While Te Whiti was the

one more oratorically gifted and often the spokesperson for the two, Tohu's prophecies were just as profound as Te Whiti's and his strength of leadership was characterised by his ability to lead their people during their political campaigns. This relationship was understood as resembling the role of Aaron who often spoke for Moses in the Bible (Smith, 1993:541). The lack of attention paid to Tohu may also have been based on their appearances. Where Te Whiti was un-Polynesian in appearance, Tohu was the opposite, and this seems to have drawn European observers to comment more on the person whose physical resemblance was closer to their own race (Riseborough, 1989:228).

Te Whiti and Tohu played active leadership roles during the war period of the 1860s, and in the *melées* that occurred earlier. They were ardent followers of Te Ua Haumenemene's Pai Mārire religion and were involved in the Pai Mārire attack on Sentry Hill in 1864, although they did not take up arms (Cowan, 1934:18). Te Whiti soon saw the pitfalls of Pai Mārire and, after five years of fighting, knew that they had two choices: "submit with its degrading consequences, or sacrifice in hopeless armed resistance" (Scott, 1954:27). He saw that continued warfare against the Imperial troops would only end in disaster for the Māori people. Te Whiti and Tohu returned to Parihaka where they devised a new philosophy relying heavily, like Pai Mārire, on the Old Testament but with a new vision of passive resistance at all time and a condemnation of armed aggression.

Te Whiti and Tohu attracted people from all over New Zealand and it soon became evident that Māori who had no tribal connections to the land in Taranaki were choosing to go to Parihaka and willingly become involved in the prophet's political campaigns. This showed that Te Whiti's teachings, and not land issues, were the cause of this widespread attraction to Parihaka, prompting a sense of Māori nationalism and inter-tribal unity (Bryant, 1978:15-16). Parihaka was part of the land originally confiscated in 1863. Under the New Zealand Settlements Act Māori were guaranteed reserves within the confiscated land but these promises were never fulfilled. After Imperial troops withdrew from the area in 1870 Te Whiti, Tohu and their people lived at Parihaka in peace for about nine years. This peace was soon disrupted when,

in 1878 ... nine years after the war, the Government brought this situation to an end. It began the survey of the central Taranaki district, with a view to enforcing European settlement there. The purpose, in our view, no matter how it may have been disguised, was no more than to repay the war and settlement loans by the sale of land, without the need to pay Maori one further pound. (Waitangi Tribunal, 1996:201)

The first of these surveys occurred on the Waimate Plains, the home land of Titokowaru. In 1878 Te Whiti and Titokowaru met with the Native Minister, John Sheehan, the outcome of which ensured that "large reserves would be set aside for Titokowaru's people, that their burial places, cultivation and fishing grounds would be respected and that grants would be made to cover costs in fencing the reserves and other improvements" (Scott, 1975:51). In 1879, with the surveys nearly complete, there were no signs of reserve allocations for Titokowaru's people. In a meeting at Parihaka in March of that year which Sheehan attended, Te Whiti addressed the broken promises of reserve allocations. In an attempt to divert the

attention from Te Whiti's concerns over the reserves and to try and justify their exclusion in the survey plans, Sheehan replied with a barrage of insults regarding Te Whiti's sheltering of a man named Hiroki who had shot and killed the cook of a surveying party working in Waverley six months earlier. At the conclusion of the meeting Sheehan ordered the immediate advertisement for the sale of 16,000 acres on the Waimate Plains. Tohu, however, had already ordered his men to see to the eviction of the surveyors from the area, thus successfully postponing the sale of the land (Scott, 1975:52).

On 25<sup>th</sup> May 1879 the first of Te Whiti's and Tohu's ploughing campaigns took place. The ploughing took place on all land in Taranaki: confiscated and un-confiscated, settled and un-settled, no land was exempted from this political campaign (Baker, 1993:4). The campaign was a symbolic gesture intended to represent the ploughing of the belly of the government and was not aimed at the settlers or the land itself. This symbolism was misunderstood by the government and by the settlers whose land was being ploughed. Settler and Government indignation at the ploughing campaigns erupted and within four months two hundred ploughmen had been arrested with many of them being sent to jails in the South Island (Scott, 1975:59). In 1879 John Bryce, a stalwart of the land wars bent on destroying Parihaka, succeeded John Sheehan as Native Minister. In early 1880 he ordered the advance of the armed constabulary onto the Waimate Plains. Conflict was avoided at all times, in fact the troops were even provided with cartloads of food as a sign of hospitality. These non-violent and hospitable acts

should have been proof of Te Whiti's desire for peace. Signs of trouble occurred only when the troops pulled down fences protecting crops (Scott, 1975:74). The re-erection of these, and other fences, halted Bryce's plans to build a road to Parihaka. Like the ploughmen, the fencers were also arrested and the Government pushed through the West Coast Settlement Act. The Act legitimised the arrests of any Māori in Taranaki if they were caught building anything or in any way hindering the surveying of property. They could be arrested without a warrant and jailed for two years hard labour (Scott, 1975:78). These political campaigns were extremely successful and soon the jails were overflowing with Māori prisoners, costing the Government £5,600 a month (Scott, 1975:81). A royal commission was soon established to deal with the Taranaki grievances. The commission acknowledged that:

the numerous promises of reserves had never been fulfilled. It observed that broken promises, unfulfilled Compensation Court decisions, and fraud had justified Maori protests. It recommended that there be no further surveys and sales without the prior delineation of expansive Maori reserves and added that 'filling our gaols with prisoners, not for crimes but for political offences in which there is no sign of criminal intent' had done nothing to advance the peace. (Waitangi Tribunal, 1996:202)

After the report was written the prisoners were released from jail in stages and by June 1881 they had all returned to Parihaka. The commission's recommendations should have put a halt to the actions of the Government in their quest for the land, but as history has shown it did not.

Bryce's resolve to invade and destroy Parihaka never faltered but, without Government backing, he became frustrated and resigned from his post as Native Minister in 1881. Talks between Te Whiti, Tohu and members of the Government

repeatedly broke down in the following two years. Those at Parihaka continued to live, work and defend their land passively as if the soldiers and surveyors did not exist: repairing what the soldiers broke and demolishing what they erected. In October 1881 Bryce was reinstated as Native Minister and immediately recruited troops from around the country to invade Parihaka (Scott, 1975:100). On the 5<sup>th</sup> November 1881 the people of Parihaka found themselves surrounded by nearly 1600 armed constabulary and other military units ready for war to break out as they arrested and led the people away from Parihaka. The number of men Bryce recruited for this invasion is testament to his fears that within Parihaka lived Māori warriors notable for their achievements in the wars of the 1860s. He claimed “great care was taken to prevent surprise, as it was not by any means known at that moment whether the Maoris intended fighting or otherwise; nor was the fact ascertained until the stronghold was actually in our possession” (McDonnell, 1887:314). The amount of men present, however, was excessive as the events leading up to the invasion signaled that there would have been no clash of arms. Te Whiti had always claimed Parihaka to be a village of peace and passivity and this was well known to all. The military presence was a threatening tactic in an effort for Bryce to gain control and power except that, even after they were arrested, Te Whiti and Tohu still had control having instilled a deep sense of faith in their people.

Te Whiti and Tohu kept their people calm and sent the young women and children of the village out to meet the troops. The troops marched straight for the children

who never faltered and continued with their singing and playing, undisturbed by the men heading their way. In due course a path was cleared and the troops managed to march into the village, in the middle of which sat Te Whiti and Tohu and 2500 people (Scott, 1975:114). Te Whiti, Tohu and a number of their followers were eventually arrested and, without trial, the two prophets were sent to the South Island for a little over two years. Their stay at Addington gaol in Christchurch was a dignified imprisonment and they were afforded benefits other prisoners were not. The pair, along with their warders, travelled around the South Island visiting places such as Timaru, Oamaru, Dunedin, Invercargill, Bluff and Queenstown. Taken aback by the many splendours of European invention, Te Whiti became enamoured with the trappings and ease of Pākehā life, while Tohu was not so keen. Despite this fascination it did not detract from Te Whiti's constant requests for a trial, which never eventuated. The two prophets were finally permitted to return back to Parihaka in March 1883 (Scott, 1975:143).

After their return they resumed their teachings and political agendas but the incarceration of the two prophets caused much of the mystical powers that attracted people to Parihaka to dissipate. By the 1890s Parihaka had become a model town incorporating aspects of Pākehā life including a bakehouse, butchers, a bank and electric lights amongst other things. Tohu believed this to be against the tenets of Māori belief, as did many of their followers and in 1891 Te Whiti and Tohu split, with the latter taking a large group of followers with him but still remaining at Parihaka (Smith, 1990:126-127). Tohu and the more conservative of the people



settled on one side of the village, Te Whiti and his people on the modern, Europeanised side. Tohu and Te Whiti continued to live separately until their deaths in 1907 (Keenan, 1993:532).

From a European point of view Te Whiti and Tohu's theology did not constitute a proper religion and as of yet "the academic world has not discovered any written gospel of Te Whiti" (Matangi, 1971:7). Their religious system was not consistent with those of European churches: there was no observance of the Sabbath, for them this occurred on the 17<sup>th</sup> of each month, and there were no rites practised, such as baptism and Holy Communion (Buck, 1898:7). This is backed up by Te Whiti's refusal to accept prayer as a practice at Parihaka and he is quoted as saying that "prayer is useless and resultless and no man was ever benefitted or healed by prayer ... We are all in the same hole and the rain wets the praying and the prayerless alike" (Hammond as cited in Elsmore, 1989:245). However the Bible heavily influenced both Te Whiti and Tohu as a spiritual guide and for a long time this was the only form of literature available in the village. It was not only Europeans who criticised the religious system, but some Māori were also suspicious of the intentions of Te Whiti and Tohu. A young and very judgemental Peter Buck commented:

Te Whiti has the Bible at his fingers' ends. He quotes freely from the Bible and carefully explains the meaning of certain portions of Scripture to the people, who listen with great interest. To hear him speak one would think that he is a man whose chief aim and study in life is the welfare of the Maori people. But one must remember that drunkenness, gambling and immorality are allowed to go on in Parihaka unchecked. The older people know the Bible, but the knowledge has not the slightest influence on their lives. They can chant psalm after psalm from memory, and yet they indulge in lust. In fact the Taranaki Maoris treat religion as an abstraction or a science to be studied, but whose teachings are by no means to be practised. (Buck, 1898:11)

Buck gave this address several years after Te Whiti and Tohu had been released from gaol. It also occurred after Te Whiti and Tohu split, and Buck only presented Te Whiti's side of Parihaka. Had he described Tohu's religious followings and their daily observances his report may well have been vastly different.

Meetings of Te Whiti were held on the 17<sup>th</sup> of each month, remembering the day war broke out in 1860. While Tohu was alive meetings were held on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of each month. After his death, however, the frequency of these meetings declined until only one was held on the 7<sup>th</sup> November, which celebrated both Tohu and the invasion of Parihaka (McLean, 1965:29-30). People from all over New Zealand would attend the monthly meetings, bringing in vast quantities of food and money to help feed the hundreds of people that flocked to Parihaka (*Te Pīpiwharauoa*, 1899:3). The structure of the meetings comprised three components. The first was a feast held in the morning from nine until around ten o'clock (Lyons, 2003:65). This heightened the people's anticipation for the speeches from the prophets that followed. These were the second major event of the day.

Te Whiti was a brilliant orator, delighting in Scriptural phrases and in metaphor in the best classical Maori tradition. He might discuss the crises his people faced in their relations with the Pakeha, or he might exhort them to lead more upright lives. Changes of heart were known to occur through listening to his 'sermons'. And the people loved to hear the prophets foretell the future from the Biblical text. As with the Old Testament prophets he loved, Te Whiti's greatest foresights were primarily insights into the heart of man. (Gadd, 1966:453)

The third component of the day was the *poi* dances described as "perhaps the supreme example of Te Whiti's religious genius in the sphere of worship" (Gadd, 1966:453). In the absence of written literature, traditional forms of oral literature, *waiata*, *haka* and *poi*, were abundant. Literature regarding the use of *poi* in the

religious observances of Te Whiti and Tohu is sparse and the knowledge of these ceremonies that is publicly available is primarily concerned with the prophet's use of biblical scriptures and the topics he preached. It has even been suggested that the only form of "ritual was in the chanting of compositions founded in great part on injustice. The chanting was accompanied by the *poi* dance and by the *haka*, these being the features of Maori life that were elevated into symbolic significance" (Ngata and Sutherland, 1940:362). The following will now concentrate on reviewing the literature on *poi* that is available.

*Poi* was one of three symbols that underpinned Te Whiti and Tohu's religious teachings; the other two being the *raukura*, an emblem of white feathers, and the Bible.

The *raukura* signified glory to God on high, peace on earth and goodwill to all mankind. The *poi* stood for peace and hospitality, and the Bible represented the word of God. The last two figured largely within the rites of the movement to form an adaptive style of worship which combined traditional means of expression with the source of Christian dogma. (Lyons, 2003:65).

After Te Whiti and Tohu split, Tohu's followers forsook the wearing of the *raukura* and became known as *pore* (dehorned) (Smith, 1993:542), but the two continued with the use of *poi* as a symbol of peace and hospitality. The accompanying *poi* songs formed a large body of the oral literature in the village, where the only form of written literature available was Te Whiti's Bible. The use of *poi* was a particularly insightful move by Te Whiti to develop an area of Māori culture that all were familiar with, that was seen as a non-threatening performance piece, and to develop it into one of the most distinctive features of his movement. Combining

traditional *poi* with the scriptures gave the Māori people something they could relate to and learn from.

The mention of *poi* by early writers is virtually non-existent. In fact mention of Te Whiti's religious observances and teachings is also scarce with people regarding his sermons as fanatical. Te Whiti provides his own proof of this by making an example of a newspaper reporter at the time of the ploughing campaigns. He comments:

When I speak of the land, the survey, the ploughman, and such small matters, the pencils of the reporters fly with the speed of the wind, but when I speak of the words of the spirit, they say this is the dream of a madman! They are so greedy for gain that nothing seems to concern them except it be in some way connected with accumulation of wealth. (Scott, 1975:57)

With attitudes like those of the newspaper reporters prevalent at the time, it is understandable why the religious side of Parihaka was often overlooked. In fact *poi* performances were virtually not discussed until James Cowan's visit there in 1904 and the release of his subsequent descriptions. Authorities on Taranaki and Parihaka history such as Dick Scott, Hazel Riseborough and James Belich fail to mention in any significant detail Te Whiti's and Tohu's use of *poi*, as does Karen Sinclair and Bronwyn Elsmore whose research focuses on prophet movements. Scott (1954) attempts to write on this area in *The Parihaka Story* but his description is taken from Cowan as was Daniel Lyons' and Bernard Gadd's analyses on Te Whiti. Mervyn McLean has followed on from Cowan and been instrumental in securing information on the types of *poi* done and their attributes. The following will draw together Cowan's and McLean's descriptions to provide an overall picture of Parihaka *poi*.

Cowan reworked his observations of the *poi* performances for various articles and books, but they were largely the same throughout. One of the most descriptive is as follows:

That evening Te Whiti invited me to his meeting-hall, to see his poi parties rehearse their dances for the coming monthly festival of the faithful, the 18th, the anniversary of the never-forgotten Waitara war, in 1860. The poi dance was more than a mere amusement in Parihaka. It was a semi-religious ceremony; the ancient songs centuries old were chanted, and Te Whiti's speeches were recorded in a kind of musical Hansard and given forth in high rhythmic song to the multitude at those periodical gatherings. It was a memorable evening in that dance-hall, where I was the only pakeha.

"Sit with me here," said the prophet, "and tell me what you think of my poi girls." Many of the people, men and women, seeing their leaders bring a guest on to the dais, spread with many soft mats, came up to "hongi" with me, in polite salutation, and I pressed many noses of the Taranaki aristocrat that evening.

Those were memorable poi song and dance acts, altogether different from any others I had seen. They were very wild and high, unrestrained in voice and action. The tossing white plumes with which every one of the dancers, about thirty-five of them, had decked her flowing black hair, the bright glittering eyes, the old Polynesian hula-like vigour of the women's movements in perfect time to the songs, gave the poi-swinging a touch exciting to the senses. But it was the high ceremonious chanting that was the most thrilling part of it. The songs were ritual, historical, sacred. Te Whiti explained their significance, one after the other. I think we were there for more than two hours, watching and listening and admiring. The old man was exceedingly proud of his poi women and girls, and they seemed to put forth their best efforts for his critical eyes. (Cowan, 1934:18)

Cowan's comments on the *poi* performances of the women is a rarity amongst early writers on Parihaka. Cowan's visit took place long after the invasion of Parihaka and it is reasonable to assume that a lot of ill feeling Pākehā felt towards Te Whiti and Tohu had died down. He provides some interesting insights into aspects of Parihaka *poi*. Frustratingly however, although Cowan watched the *poi* rehearsal for more than two hours, he does not elaborate on the significance of the different *poi* chants as told to him by Te Whiti. Nor does he provide information on the *poi* styles, actions and choreography. It may be that out of respect for Te Whiti he did not wish to comment further and he may have felt that the information would not be

appreciated or understood by the public. Te Whiti may also have banned him from going into any detail of the *poi* performances, which is likely given Te Whiti's distrust of the written word. Alternatively publishing constraints may have been imposed on Cowan by the journals he wrote in.

Cowan does note that the style of the *poi* chant is different from what he has seen elsewhere: very wild and high, unrestrained in voice and action. This observation is particularly helpful in that it shows that even as late as 1904 Te Whiti was disinclined to move away from traditional styles of performance and adopt western influences prevalent in *poi* performances in other areas of New Zealand. After Te Whiti and Tohu split both prophets continued to use *poi* in their sermons. As they were both still based at Parihaka, they each had their own *marae* there. Te Whiti's followers were based from Parihaka northwards, covering up to Urenui, and Tohu's followers were based from Parihaka southwards, extending as far as Wanganui (McLean, 1965:28). According to McLean, whose fieldwork for his doctoral thesis included collecting information pertaining to the Taranaki style of *poi* and recording their chants, those that followed Tohu placed a restriction on access to their songs severely limiting the public knowledge available on the Tohu style of *poi*. Aspects that have, however, been publicised include the fact that some of the songs were led by men, especially in the Wanganui area (McLean, 1996:137). This is a feature also shared by the Ngāi Te Rangi tribe, of the Tauranga Moana area, whose performance in Rotorua, at the 1901 Royal Tour of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York, was also led by men (Loughnan, 1902:94). *Poi* belonging to

the Ngā Ruahinerangi tribe, near Hāwera, were performed to the same tune, mostly composed prior to 1900 and were based on the scriptures (McLean, 1996:138). *Poi* belonging to the Ngāti Ruanui tribe, near Pātea, consisted of a mixture of *poi* chants based on scriptural text while others were adaptations of earlier *poi* (McLean, 1996:138).

The Te Whiti *poi* can be split into two distinctive styles termed the Ngāti Mutunga *poi* and the Te Āti Awa *poi*. The Ngāti Mutunga style of *poi* is said to be the older of the two. It involved a single short *poi* and was chanted in a *pātere* style and hence was very quick and extremely difficult to perform. It was also the first of the two styles to be forgotten (McLean, 1965:42-43). According to McLean:

there were two composers of Ngaati Mutunga poi: Ngaropi who was a daughter-in-law of the prophet Te Whiti-o-Rongomai, and Rangitutahi who was an aunt of the singer (McLean's informant). The verses were sung by alternate pairs of soloists until the end of the poi when the whole poi team joined in the chorus. The soloists did not take part in the dance and, except for the chorus, the dancers did not sing. This provides an explanation for the early demise of Ngaati Mutunga poi as the singers would probably have known thoroughly only the particular portions of each poi for which they were responsible. (McLean, 1996:140)

The loss of the Ngāti Mutunga style of *poi* was predicted by Raumati, a *tohunga* of the area, the stepson of Rangitutahi and husband of one of McLean's informants. He predicted that the loss of the Ngāti Mutunga *poi* would be in direct correlation to the forgetting of the lessons preached by Te Whiti (McLean, 1965:33). A significant feature of Ngāti Mutunga *poi* is that two soloists sang the verses with the group joining in the chorus, which is an aspect of *poi* performance not mentioned before and is likely to be distinctive to the Ngāti Mutunga people. This is similar to *haka* performances, where a leader says particular phrases throughout

the *haka*, which may have been the inspiration behind the development of this aspect of Ngāti Mutunga *poi*.

In contrast, the Te Āti Awa style of *poi* was a direct development of the introduced drum and fife bands to Waitara. While it is generally acknowledged that “the Prophet of the Mountain [Te Whiti] did not look with favour on accordions and mouth-organs and other *pakeha* innovations” (Cowan, 1910:150), he did permit the band. The drum and fife were the preferred choice of instruments for their abilities to replicate the traditional Māori music sound (Buck, 1950:269). These bands were formed sometime in the 1890s but Te Whiti permitted them only to accompany the *poi* teams inside the meeting house and never on the *marae*, although they were often used to welcome visitors to the village. It was not until the death of Te Whiti that they formally accompanied the *poi* groups on ceremonial occasions (McLean, 1965:40). When it was discovered that the bands could not play the traditional *pātere* type of *poi* accompaniment associated with the Ngāti Mutunga style, the Te Āti Awa style of *poi* was devised specifically so that the band could accompany them. The Te Āti Awa *poi* is distinctive from the Ngāti Mutunga *poi* not only because it is accompanied by a band but also because it uses double short *poi* and was sung by everyone at the same time (McLean, 1965:42-43). It would seem that Te Āti Awa was the first to devise the double *poi* as literature written around the same time as the Te Āti Awa style was developing fail to mention the use of double *poi*. Also, as it was sung by the whole group it made it easier for people to learn and hence could be passed down from generation to generation more easily.



Cowan also provides details on some of the topics Te Whiti used *poi* to promote. Many of the topics of the *poi* chants were based on selections taken largely from the Old Testament. According to Cowan, other chants depicted:

the coming of the Taranaki people's ancestors from Hawaiki in the traditional canoes, they described the grievances of the Maori under *pakeha* rule, the tragedy of war, the confiscation of the land, and they embodied some of the figurative utterances and cryptic sayings in which Te Whiti delighted. (Cowan, 1930:200-201)

The chants “were a blend of realism, idealism and egoism, underlaid with practical common sense and prudence” (Mitalfe, 1970:9), and contained a degree of political power. Te Whiti was an important political figure during his lifetime. He kept up to date with both national and international political events through various newspapers such as the *Taranaki* and *Auckland Daily News* and the *Auckland Weekly News*, which he had translated for him into Māori (Buck, 1898:10). As he had such a deep understanding of human behaviour he predicted the outcome of these political events and led his people to believe that governments around the world were against the native people of those overseas countries and so too the government in New Zealand was against them (Buck, 1898:10). Many of his sermons formed the basis of the *poi* chants, which is likely to have included these political issues, and so it can be said that *poi* was a tool for the dissemination of his political agenda.

As in other instances where *poi* was qualified based on its use, for example *poi pōwhiri*, *poi* was also qualified in Taranaki to indicate its purpose. *Poi* used for keeping the beat in the chanting of *whakapapa* and *karakia* are termed *poi poi*

*whakapapa* and *poi manu* respectively, and chants based on the scriptures are called *poi karaipiture* (Hohaia et al, 2001:50). McLean also provides examples of *poi karakia*, an adaptation of the *karakia* (prayer) for the birth ritual, *poi kawa*, *poi* to open a meeting house, and *poi matakite*, prophetic *poi* (McLean, 1996:138). Specific occasions where *poi* was used included the return of the ploughman prisoners (see Figure 11) and at *tangihanga* (funeral). According to Cowan:

It was fitting that the old prophet of the Mountain, when he was laid in his grave yonder, beside his home – that was three years after my visit – should be farewelled with the ancient of the Aotea canoe and the invocations of the ancient days, to the tapping sound of many poi balls. To the Maori fancy the leader's spirit still lingered, with a smile on the spirit lips, to hear once more the music of his beloved “rangi poi.” (Cowan, 1934:18)

**Figure 11: The return of the ploughmen prisoners to Parihaka**



*Photo courtesy of the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand*

*Poi*, as a symbol of peace and hospitality, became one of the most recognisable aspects of the Te Whiti and Tohu era. As an essential aspect of any ceremony held at Parihaka, all the women were expected to participate in the *poi* groups and

dances (Mitcalfe, 1974:181). The teams were drilled constantly and the women were rigorously disciplined if they were out of tune. One mistake in the recitation of the *poi* chants, especially in a ceremonial event, could prove to be a bad omen and so perfection was the ultimate desire. This is also an aspect of other types of Māori performing arts where an imperfect execution was an omen of forthcoming disaster. This type of drilling and discipline was extremely effective as the women would gather at the celebrations, held perhaps only once a year, and “perform the long *poi* as if they had practiced [sic] it every day” (Mitcalfe, 1974:181). From this we can deduce that long *poi* was also a feature of Te Whiti and Tohu *poi*.

**Figure 12: Poi women from Parihaka**



*Photo courtesy of the Hocken Library, Dunedin, New Zealand*

In order for the chants to survive they depended on the community of Parihaka to remain actively involved and faithful to Te Whiti and Tohu's religion in the first instance, and then later on they depended upon the meetings held regularly for a time after their death (McLean, 1965:32). With the demise of these meetings and the movement of the community of Parihaka to more economically viable areas, outlets for *poi* decreased. As fewer and fewer people attended the meetings and celebrations the performances of *poi* ceased to be a priority.

This chapter has provided an overview of the land wars of the 1860s that saw almost all the land in Taranaki confiscated, albeit unlawfully, starting with the enforced illegal purchase of the Waitara block. A truce was called until an investigation into the purchase was carried out. The truce was broken and with it arose a new threat to settler occupation in the form of the Pai Mārire/Hauhau religious movement. Te Whiti and Tohu were ardent followers of Pai Mārire, supporting the more peaceful side of the religion. The Hauhau side, however, detracted attention from the peaceful intentions of the religion. Te Whiti and Tohu saw that there needed to be a change in philosophy if the Māori people were to survive. Thus, the establishment of their passive resistance movement located at Parihaka begun.

As part of their religious philosophies Te Whiti and Tohu used *poi* as a spiritual messenger in order to direct their followers' attention to more peaceful ways of living despite the rising tide of government control. Many sources mention that Te

Whiti and Tohu used *poi* as a religious tool, yet very few provide any in depth analysis of its specific use. James Cowan's various publications regarding his visit to Parihaka in 1904 seems to be the first detailed description of the use of *poi* by an early writer. These publications are also referred to constantly by later sources. Mervyn McLean's doctoral research saw him investigate the styles of Parihaka *poi*. Although McLean's information is not quite as descriptive as Cowan's, the detail is extremely valuable. He seems to have been the first person to retrieve the amount and type of information that he did.

It seems that the women followers of Te Whiti and Tohu, all of whom were required to participate, performed *poi* chants after the prophet's sermons at their monthly meetings. However, *poi* seems to have not only been limited to this time. *Poi* was also used at any ceremonial function such as the welcoming and farewelling of visitors, hosting of important meetings and when the ploughmen who had been imprisoned returned. Topics of the *poi* chants included historical accounts, religious sermons, tribal grievances and political speeches as provided by Te Whiti. The sacred information contained in the chants was disseminated through a medium all could trust and which was open to all who chose to believe in Te Whiti and Tohu, making *poi* an extremely effective religious and political messenger.

It seems from the available literature that Te Whiti and Tohu were reluctant to incorporate European melodies in their *poi* performances, preferring to utilise the

traditional style of chanting. They were, however, the innovators of *poi* styles and choreography that continue to be features of *poi* performances today. After the two prophets split, they each continued to use *poi* in their sermons developing their chosen styles; for example, groups under Tohu's control used the men to lead their *poi* performances, soloists led the *poi* in the Ngāti Mutunga *poi*, and Te Āti Awa used double *poi*. Te Whiti and Tohu frequently employed the various types of *poi*, such as *poi* *poi* *whakapapa*, *poi* *manu*, *poi* *karaipiture*, *poi* *kawa*, *poi* *karakia* and *poi* *matakite*, during their time at Parihaka. The tradition was carried on by their followers for a while after their deaths. When the opportunities for the performance of these types of *poi* ceased to exist, so too did the *poi*.

## Chapter Six

### Te Arawa

Tourism in the Te Arawa district ultimately began because of the region's unique natural attractions created by the presence of thermal activity such as the famed Pink (Ō-tū-kapua-rangi) and White (Te Tarata) Terraces, the numerous geysers, and hot water and mud pools. These features, distinctive to the Te Arawa area, quickly became a curiosity for many visitors and Pākehā visitors began frequenting the area as far back as the 1840s. The Te Arawa people themselves, displaying the utmost in Māori kindness and charity, graciously welcomed people into the district, and guided them through the area thereby promoting the more hospitable characteristics of the Māori people, despite the animosity that was being felt towards Europeans in other parts of the country. As part of the development of the tourism industry before 1900 *haka* performances became a form of visitor entertainment, but they were intermittent and largely unorganised. In the early 1900s some of the guides organised concert groups and they travelled extensively throughout New Zealand and the world. *Poi* was often included as one of the performance items and this development was largely responsible for promoting the wide spread use of *poi* as an entertainment item. This chapter will look at the development of the tourist industry in the Te Arawa area in order to locate a time when the use of *poi* became prolific. It will also examine the development of the guiding industry and the use of concert parties in popularising the entertainment aspect of *poi* as well as looking at some of the *poi* innovations that occurred.

Māori tradition has it that the Te Arawa canoe brought to the shores of New Zealand Ngatoroirangi, a powerful *tohunga* (priest) of Hawaiki. When the canoe landed at Maketu, Ngatoroirangi headed inland to explore and define the boundaries of the Te Arawa people (Stafford, 1967:21). Upon arriving in the central region of the North Island, Ngatoroirangi and his companion, Ngauruhoe, began to ascend Tongariro mountain. While climbing Tongariro, Ngauruhoe complained of the bitter cold. Ngatoroirangi called to his sisters, Pupu and Hoata, who were still in Hawaiki, to bring forth some fire to warm Ngauruhoe. Pupu and Hoata heard their brother's request and set forth for New Zealand in a canoe made of pumice (Langridge and Edgcumbe, 1875:11). They landed at Whakaari, White Island, where they built a fire. Ngatoroirangi and Ngauruhoe were not there so they continued on to the North Island. They dived into the water and proceeded to make their way inland to Tongariro. At various places on the way they came up for air and where they did so they left hot springs in their wake (Langridge and Edgcumbe, 1875:11). One version says that the sisters swam under the sea and then under the land and where they surfaced, in order to see where they going, left a part of their fire (Stafford, 1967:22). When they reached Tongariro they found Ngauruhoe had frozen to death but Ngatoroirangi was still alive, so they quickly lit a fire and revived him. After Pupu and Hoata had finished they returned to Hawaiki but the legacy of their fires on Tongariro and Whakaari and the numerous thermal springs, which signal where they surfaced, still remain.



Fortunate in procuring this area through Ngatoroirangi's initial occupancy, the Te Arawa people were blessed with a wealth of unique natural features, some of which have already been mentioned. These, along with numerous steam vents, provided alternative sources for curing ailments, bathing, cooking and food. But with it went the many dangers of unpredictable eruptions of geysers, unstable grounds that randomly exposed vents of steam and pools of hot liquids, and the production of steam so thick that dangers were often not seen until it was too late. The people inhabited the area for hundreds of years and grew up as part of the landscape knowing the dangers and tendencies of the geothermal region; knowledge that would serve them well when the advent of European visitors took place.

The initial discovery by Europeans of the Te Arawa district was concerned purely with its resources. In 1830 Philip (Hans) Tapsell, a Danish sailor, was amongst the very first Europeans to visit and eventually settle in the Bay of Plenty. He was a trader who encouraged the Māori people to gather and dress large quantities of flax. They were then able to trade for muskets, gun powder and other European goods. It wasn't until the following year that the first missionaries, Archdeacon Henry Williams and Thomas Chapman, visited, with Chapman settling in the area permanently in 1835 (Stafford, 1986:24). As there was no direct road inland to Rotorua early in the colonising period very few Europeans made the journey and the area was left largely to its own devices for a long while. Those that did make the journey "either had to hire guides and bearers and travel safari-style ... or they could go by horseback travelling as light as possible with the minimum of

attendants ... this inevitably meant that they had to depend upon the hospitality of the Maoris” (Reggett, 1972:24). For a long time they relied on the Māori people’s generosity for accommodation, food, guiding services and the carrying of their luggage.

The 1860s saw a serious disruption in the tourist trade due to the Māori land wars. The battles going on in other areas of the country moved into the Te Arawa area, although their involvement was largely against other tribes. The details of the battles and the politics that surrounded these war years are numerous and beyond the scope of this thesis. A general overview is presented here in order to determine the impact these battles had on the tourism industry. The selling of the Waitara land block inaugurated the first phase of the Taranaki wars. The Māori King Movement had by this stage been active for two years, and members of the movement were reluctant to become involved in the Taranaki struggle for their land. The death of Potatau (the first Māori King) in 1859 had caused some confusion within Waikato and sections of the movement went to Taranaki anyway (Stafford, 1967:354-56). Waikato’s involvement in the Taranaki war provided the incentive the Government needed to invade and punish Waikato for their disobedience to the Crown, which ended in the confiscation of Waikato land in 1864 (Kelly, 1949:441). During 1863 supporters of the King Movement from the tribes of the East Coast devised a plan to assemble in the Bay of Plenty and from there march through Te Arawa land to assist the Waikato people. The Te Arawa people, whose loyalties were firmly with the Government, “made it known that they would under no circumstances

countenance the movement of any armed party through their district” (Stafford, 1967:368). In 1864, however, the East Coast tribes gathered in Matata, numbering between seven and eight hundred people. Te Arawa had already issued their non-intrusion policy, and although they expected not to have to enforce it, in March 1864 they were forced to do so (Stafford, 1967:372). By the end of 1864 the momentum of the King Movement had died down somewhat and was being replaced by Te Ua Haumenemene’s Pai Mārire/Hauhau religion. That coupled with the attempt to recapture Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Tūruki<sup>6</sup> after his escape from the Chatham Islands in 1868 diverted a lot of people’s attention from wanting to visit the Te Arawa area.

During this time of war the whole country was unsettled. Many overseas visitors were dissuaded from coming to New Zealand, let alone making the journey to the central North Island where the situation was just as tense. The central North Island, largely the Taupō and Te Arawa regions, was virtually abandoned by its European population, despite the majority of the *hapū* in the two regions being fiercely loyal to the Queen, though surrounded by supporters of the Māori King Movement (Beale, 1971:31). There was still a significant presence of Europeans serving a military purpose, and in an effort to ease the feeling of abandonment the Governor at the time, Sir George Grey, sent a small party of military officials amongst the

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<sup>6</sup> Te Kooti (Rongowhakaata) was an avid opponent of European settlement. He became involved in the East Coast wars of the 1860s and was sent, without trial, to the Chatham Islands. After his escape from the Chatham Islands, his forces attacked various settlements injuring, killing, and capturing many of his old enemies; both Māori and Pākehā alike. He avoided capture by the Government and in 1875 began formulating the structure of the Ringatū religious movement. Committed to peace he was finally pardoned by the Government in 1883 (Stenhouse and Paterson, 2004:176).

Māori people carrying his personal letters of thanks to the principal chiefs of the area (Beale, 1971:31). As loyal supporters of the Queen, Te Arawa were provided with support from British troops and ammunition supplies and fought for the Queen until the early 1870s.

In the 1870s, soon after the land wars had finished, a period of immense change in terms of the development of tourism occurred in the Te Arawa district. The reputation of the terraces had by this time become firmly established throughout the world, with news of the beauty of the Te Arawa area having been spread largely by word of mouth. In fact the military personnel situated there in the 1860s had continued the promotion of the terraces (Reggett, 1972:157). Many great literary figures and painters visited, wanting to record a piece of New Zealand's history. Organised commercial ventures, which would provide a constant source of revenue, developed in the district. Accommodation facilities became important in attracting and retaining visitors in the area for a substantial amount of time, and various supply stores were opened around the district. As mentioned earlier, prior to the 1870s roads were virtually non-existent making it difficult for visitors to journey to the Rotorua area. Accessibility only improved when new roads were built and old tracks improved. In fact it was not until a road between Cambridge and Rotorua was opened in 1894 that access to the area really opened up and a new era of development in the history of the region began (Stafford, 1967:505).

In the late 1870s the number of tourists visiting was well into the thousands and the Government became seriously interested in securing the area as a potential source of income. The Thermal Springs Act of 1881 gave the Government the power to issue proclamations defining thermal springs districts in New Zealand. The Act also allowed for the settlement of the thermal areas and made it illegal for anyone except the Crown to obtain any interest or estate on the land in the Rotorua area (Stafford, 1967:524). Under this Act the Rotorua township was established, despite opposition from those with commercial interests in Ōhinemutu which had, by then, become the centre of the rapidly expanding tourism industry.

In 1886 the eruption of Mount Tarawera saw the devastating destruction of the Pink and White Terraces, the death of all the people at Rotomahana and the villages of Te Arika and Moura, and the loss of many who resided at Te Wairoa. In total 153 people lost their lives (Reggett, 1972:58). Offers of food, shelter, clothing, money and land came flooding in from around the country and the Tuhourangi people of Te Wairoa took up residence on the section of Ngāti Wāhiao land at Whakarewarewa.



The Department was the first of its kind in the world and recognised the growing importance of potential earnings from tourism and the need to establish a network of tourism facilities. This included developing existing and establishing new facilities and access, managing publicly owned assets, the promotion of New Zealand overseas and the provision of a booking service and itinerary planner for visitors. (Tourism New Zealand, 2001)

The Department was responsible for sustaining the tourism industry and developing New Zealand's tourism capabilities.

As guardians of the land and having established occupation rights under customary Māori land tenure the Te Arawa people were the only people to have full access rights to the area. A fixed charge for the privilege of accessing the area and utilising the services of the people was set (Waaka, 1982:38). Thorpe Talbot, a traveller to the area in 1882, provides us with an indication of the cost for the various activities in which Maori labour was required during that year. In Whakarewarewa, one could procure the guiding services of one of the women for one shilling. In Wairoa the price was also one shilling. A trip to Te Tarata (White Terrace) would cost two pounds per person, with each extra person costing five shillings. Being taken to Ō-tū-kapua-rangi (Pink Terrace) would cost another 10 shillings per person. Permission to actually see the terraces was two shillings sixpence (Talbot, 1882:4). It would seem that by 1882 the Māori people of the Wairoa village readily understood the tourism trade offering group deals that would decrease the cost per person the more people there were. Spencer (1885) provides the following table of costs, approved by the Native Minister, which shows how this was achieved:

	Boat & Crew			Creek canoe & paddlers			Total		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
For 1 person	2	10	0	0	12	6	3	2	6
For 2 people	3	0	0	0	15	0	3	15	0
For 3 people	3	10	0	0	17	6	4	7	6
For 4 people	4	0	0	1	0	0	5	0	0
For 5 people	4	10	0	1	2	6	5	12	6
For 6 people	5	0	0	1	5	0	6	5	0
For 7 people	5	10	0	1	7	6	6	17	6
For 8 people	6	0	0	1	10	0	7	10	0
For 9 people	6	10	0	1	12	6	8	2	6

(Spencer, 1885:21)

Some people were indignant that Māori were charging for viewing privileges (Willis, 1888:20), but as Talbot stated, “this land belongs to the Wairoa natives, and they have learnt from the pakeha to charge for admission to their show – small blame to them!” (Talbot, 1882:5).

In the beginning, guiding as an occupation was totally reliant on the choice of the tourists. People were not obliged to procure the services of a guide, but the many dangers of the area ensured that guides were viewed as necessities and they were in constant demand (Waaka, 1982:80). Guides in the 1860s and 1870s seemed to be a mixture of men and women, Māori and non-Māori; the choice of guide depending on the preference of the tourist. In fact some guide books even suggested that “an intelligent white man, rather than a Maori, who can scarcely make himself or herself understood, is much to be desired, and his services are worth substantial remuneration” (Harris, 1878:61), although other guide books express the same sentiment towards the Māori guides. Men seemed to be the common choice as guides and this may have been because the main female guides at that time, for example Guides Sophia and Kate, were situated in Te Wairoa and not in



Whakarewarewa or Ōhinemutu, which were the first stops for tourists on their visit to the area. Visitors would obtain the services of a guide, usually with the help of the proprietors whose accommodation house they were staying at in these places, and then travel on to Te Wairoa. As a rule Guide Sophia and Guide Kate usually only attended if tourists did not already have a guide (Harris, 1878:61). However, “since the 1890s onwards the profession of guiding at Whakarewarewa has been almost exclusively in female hands” (Rotorua Museum, n.d).

One of the earliest guides, who has been hailed as the “founding mother of guiding at Whakarewarewa” (Waaka, 1982:88), was Sophia Hinerangi. Sophia was born in the Bay of Islands sometime between 1830 and 1834. She was not of Te Arawa descent but her second husband was and they moved to Te Wairoa after their marriage (Curnow, 1993:216). At Te Wairoa she, along with Kate Middlemass, became the principal tourist guides of the Pink and White Terraces. Securing the services of either of these women was a must, but also near on impossible due to the high demand for their guiding services. A description of these two women in 1884 is as follows:

There are two well-known guides, Sophia and Kate, both thoroughly reliable, careful women. Kate carries one recommendation on her breast, for she wears the Humane Society's Medal for having saved life in Tarawera Lake. She is a familiar figure at the Wairoa Hotel, as she rustles about in her black silk made in the extreme of fashion, a little jaunty hat perked on her head which, on the least approach to courtesy, she doffs with the air of a 16<sup>th</sup>-century gallant. Kate is an exceedingly robust specimen of the Maori woman, shrill-tongued, and able to protect any party to whom she acts as cicerone [tourist guide]. Sophia is a woman of quite another mould. You see at once that Sophia is not an Arawa. She has the soft eyes and gentle manner of the northern Ngapuhi tribe, to which, as she will tell you, she belongs. Among her early recollections are the disturbances at Kororareka when Hone Heke burned down the English settlement in the Bay of Islands. Having married an Arawa, she has thrown in her lot with her husband's tribe, in hopes, however, when she dies, to be gathered to her fathers in the far north. One recommendation which Sophia has as a guide, in addition to her pleasant and gentle manner, is the command

she has of English. She speaks the language fluently, though with an unusual number of ellipses, and her accent and pronunciation might be envied by many an Englishwoman. Too much must not be left, however to the guides. They take you to the terraces and to the various geysers and steam holes, but are apt to omit certain points of interest unless specifically asked about them. They omit to point out some of the more remarkable features even of the terraces, and as the time for staying at each terrace is comparatively short, some visitors actually leave without seeing the most magnificent of the buttresses. It is well to know beforehand what is worth seeing, and to ask the guide to point out any places of interest omitted. (Wilson et al, 1884:276-277)

It is interesting that Wilson comments on the fact that he could tell from Sophia's features that she was not of the Te Arawa tribe. Despite the obliteration of the terraces her fame was still prominent and her guiding services and assistance was still highly sought after. In 1891 a group of visitors wanting to view a *haka* performance called upon Sophia to help arrange it. The following extract provides another description of Sophia's physical appearance and mesmerising qualities:

On the verandah of the hotel we met the half-caste guide, Sophia, so well known to all who visited the old terraces. She is still as bright and intelligent as ever; but an accident has lamed her and she has retired from guiding. Russell, who knew her well on his previous trip through the district was delighted to find that, in spite of the lapse of years, she still remembered him. He was inclined at first to be sceptical about her powers of memory; but she put the question beyond all doubt by reminding him of some little presents he and his friends had sent to her, when they got to Auckland, in recognition of her kindness to them. Of all the natives we met she seemed by far the most intelligent; not only has she a sense of humour and excellent powers of conversation, but she has the manners of an educated Englishwoman. Except in complexion she is quite unlike the race to which she belongs on the mother's side; her features, on the contrary, are distinctly those of an American Indian. (Alpers, 1891:74)

Like Wilson, Alpers was particularly taken by Sophia's physical appearance comparing them to those of a Native Americans rather than a Māori. Both Wilson and Alpers remark that she had an excellent command of the English language. However, one traveller in 1878 claimed, "she is intelligent and speaks English fairly, but at the same times is scarcely up to the calibre of a competent European" (Harris, 1878:64). Of course this is six years prior to Wilson and thirteen years before Alper's visit and it is highly likely that her proficiency in English in 1878

was poor. With the ever-increasing stream of English speaking travellers her language abilities undoubtedly improved.

While many of the visitors yearned for Sophia to lead them round the district, Kate was just as efficient. A group visiting Te Wairoa in 1882 had chosen Kate as their guide, who they admitted did a good job, but regretted their hasty decision once they saw Sophia:

The next day's arrangements had now to be completed. We dined first, and were then called on to choose our guide, a crowd outside the inn door waiting to learn which it was to be – Kate or Sophia. Neither of them had as yet presented herself. But Sophia had been with the party whom we had seen in the boat. It seemed to be Kate's turn. Kate would save our lives if they needed saving, and besides we learnt that she was stone-deaf. She would show us all that was to be seen, and we should escape conversation, so we determined on Kate. A loud howl rose from the mob, it seemed as of satisfaction. 'Kate! Kate!' a hundred voices cried, and presently there appeared a big, half-caste, bony woman of forty, with a form like an Amazon's, features like a prize-fighter's, and an arm that would fell an ox. She had a blue petticoat on, a brown jacket, and a red handkerchief about her hair. Deaf she might be, but her war-whoop might be heard for a mile. I inquired whether this virago (for such she appeared) had a husband. I was told that she had had eight husbands, and on my asking what had become of them, I got for answer that they had died away somehow. Poor Kate! I don't know that she had ever had so much as one. There were lying tongues at Wairoa as well as in other places. She was a little elated, I believe, when we first saw her. She was quiet and womanly enough next day. Her strength she had done good service with, and she herself was probably better, and not worse, than many of her neighbours. But I was a little alarmed and, regretted that I had been so precipitate, especially after I saw Sophia. Sir George's old chief called on us in the evening, and Sophia was invited in as interpreter. The chief was in plain European clothes, but had an air of dignity. He had given orders, he said, that we should be well attended to. He was sorry he could not himself go with us to the Terraces, but we should want nothing. Sophia was as pretty as her picture represented her – slight, graceful, delicate, with a quiet, interesting manner. We were committed, however, and could not change, and our Kate, after all, did very well for us. (Froude, 1892:243)

Guides were expected to ensure the safe passage of their charges at all times on their trip. To Froude and his party Kate's notable reputation for saving people coupled with her inability to engage in conversation made her the ideal guide. At the same time in Whakarewarewa Guide Susan and the twin guides Georgina and Eileen were making names for themselves. Talbot claims:

Visitors should obtain a guide, as otherwise many unique places buried in the tall ti-tree off the beaten tracks would be missed; besides which it is exceedingly dangerous to go fossicking about without a guide. As each geyser has some legend attached to it, visitors should secure a guide who is well versed in Maori lore. This renders the visit doubly interesting. The twin guides Georgina and Eileen and Guide Susan are famous in this respect. Tourists would do well to see that they secure guides that are competent for their work, and not take the first one that accosts them. (Talbot, 1882:113)

After the eruption of Mount Tarawera in 1886, Sophia and the large majority of the Tuhourangi people moved to Whakarewarewa and it was there that Sophia further developed the guiding profession.

Sophia, Kate, Susan, Georgina and Eileen were among the pioneers of the guiding industry which has become legendary throughout the world. Two other guides of particular note for the time period of this chapter are Maggie and Bella Thom (Guides Maggie and Bella Papakura).

**Figure 14: Guide Bella Papakura**



*Photo courtesy of Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand*

While there were other guides working at this time, none of them became as famous as these two women. Bella was the elder of the two Thom sisters, Thom being their original surname, and was a naturally talented singer and performer (Dennan, 1968:48). She lived her whole life in Whakarewarewa and was well known for her leadership skills in the concert parties established by Maggie. As the senior guide at Whakarewarewa Bella would walk slowly behind the apprentice guides correcting them as they went (Kōkiri Paetae, 2002:4). Bubbles Mihinui, who was influenced by the quiet teachings of Bella, remarks:

Bella was in the background all the time, working and teaching in her own quiet way. I feel of all the guides, Bella had the most influence, She was our mentor as well as our kuia ... Bella and her generation of guides had a caring attitude. She hated the word 'tourist' because it has cheapening connotations. She said, 'Think of it in Maori terms, any stranger to our place is manuhiri – a visitor. Treat them all like that and people will respond.' Maori, whether we know it or not, communicate well with body language. That's what Bella used to get her point across. Every single one of her visitors were able to relate to her without any words at all. (Mihinui & Parekowhai, 1991:489-490)

The name by which the two sisters are known, Papakura, came from the name of a geyser at Whakarewarewa. Guide Rangi provides the explanation of how this name came to be chosen:

One day a tourist asked Maggie if she had a Maori Christian name. Maggie said it was Makereti, the Maori equivalent of Margaret. The tourist then asked what her surname was in Maori. Maggie figured that the tourist must be satisfied at all costs. She glanced round for inspiration and saw the geyser Papakura bubbling away nearby. 'My surname is Papakura,' she replied straight-faced. The tourists took it in, but Maggie's friends erupted in gales of laughter when they heard her recount the story. Maggie Papakura she remained from that day onward. The name spread also to her sister Bella, and her brother Dick, who also became a famous guide, Rugby footballer and band leader. (Dennan, 1968:49)

According to Dennan, "no single family ever did more for Whakarewarewa than the 'Papakuras' – Maggie, Bella and Dick Thom" (Dennan, 1968:47). Maggie was of Ngāti Wāhiao, Tuhourangi and English descent (through her father). Her mother

was a high born Te Arawa chieftainess, so she was taught the genealogies, history and custom of her mother's people, but under her father's direction she also experienced and excelled in a formal education system (Northcroft-Grant, 1996:379). Her privileged birth ensured a lifetime of achievements and leadership beyond the scope of this thesis. Needless to say she was one of the most well-informed and charismatic guides of her time and was influential in the development of early concert and travelling parties; an aspect of her life that will be discussed further on. Maggie died in England in 1930, two weeks before her Bachelor of Science thesis was scheduled for examination, which was published posthumously as *The Old Time Maori* (Te Awēkotuku, 1991b:493).

**Figure 15: Guide Maggie Papakura**



*Photo courtesy of Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand*

In 1910 the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts implemented a new by-law in which everyone acting as guides had to be licensed. The new licensing scheme had several requirements:

1. Dress – To be clean and smart. Suggested dress being red handkerchief on head, tussore blouse, red skirt, also the necessary badge of office. Piu piu to be worn on all special occasions.
2. The Guide is to fully describe the various sights to the tourist, see that the tourist does not go into dangerous places, and also that he or she does not interfere with the terrace formation, sulphur, &c., in the Reserve.
3. The Guide is to ask and encourage every party to go into the Maori section of the Reserve, but should they not desire to do so, the Guide must not force the issue.
4. Guides to accept Government coupons.
5. Guides to be in permanent attendance at Whakarewarewa for guiding duties. NOTE. – This does not mean that the Guide is debarred from going away for a holiday, or for other reasons, but in all cases this office should be notified, and if the Guide is away for any lengthy period the license to be cancelled.
6. Guides must be able to speak reasonably good English.
7. Guides, while in the Reserve, to be under the control of the Government Caretaker-in-charge, and to carry out any instructions he may issue.
8. Guides at all times to conduct themselves as respectable members of the Maori race, and to take full interest in their work, and to see that their parties are shown everything worth seeing, and that they enjoy their trip.
9. Tourists who do not ask for any particular Guide to be allotted as evenly and fairly as possible among the Guides waiting. No rushing of buses or cars to take place.
10. Each Guide must conduct her own party of not more than six persons – excepting in the case of special parties booked ahead, or in the case of more than six people wanting to keep together (in this case the Guide must take an assistant Guide with her)
11. Should reliable information be supplied to the Department that any Guide not complying in full with the above conditions, the Department reserves the right to immediately cancel the license to guide in the Government Reserve.

(Te Awekotuku, 1981:362)

These regulations suggest that the natural generosity and *manaakitanga* of the Māori people were being over shadowed by the implementation of by-laws making the guides accountable to a set of rules regulated by the Colonial Government. However, according to Te Awekotuku, the profession itself was in fact organised

by Guides Maggie and Bella, the people of Tuhourangi, and Mita Taupopoki, the residing chief of Ngāti Wāhiao at the time (Te Awēkotuku, 1981:253). It would seem likely that consultation between the two groups, the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts, and the Ngāti Wāhiao people, took place in order to provide an outcome that was agreeable to all. Prior to this scheme there were a number of guides who operated at a sub-standard level but were still charging outrageous prices (Stafford, 1988:52). How this new policy impacted on the guides is unknown but some seemed to be in its favour. Guide Rangi stated:

At that time the reputation of some of the guides was not high. Some didn't care much about their appearance, or were unpunctual. Others turned up only when they wanted some money. The Tourist Department was anxious to raise the standard of guiding (Deenan, 1968:74)

The guides under this new system had relatively successful careers. Many of them already adhered to their own strict codes of conduct, evident in the reports of many early travellers, but the by-laws provided regulations for those who did not.

In 1965 the administration of the guides was handed over to the Māori Arts and Crafts Institute (formerly the Rotorua Māori Arts and Crafts Institute). The Institute was established to encourage and promote the continued use of all types of Māori arts and crafts. As the Institute was to be funded by the flow of tourists through the Whakarewarewa Reserve this would have interfered severely with the income of the guides and so it was a natural progression for the guides to come under the control of the Institute. Guides continued to work as normal: working their own hours, and receiving a percentage of the fees per tourist guided. This system was



abandoned as permanent staff were employed in 1977. This finally enabled a full time regular guiding service to be formed (Waaka, 1982:103).

Other famous guides of note include Guides Rangi, Edie, Miriama, Kiddo, Googoo, Bim, Homai, Emily and Bubbles, the names included representing only a small group of women whom the Rotorua Museum have affectionately called *He Tira Kahurangi: A Group of Precious Women* (Rotorua Museum, n.d). According to Bubbles Mihinui:

Guiding wasn't a job, it was a vocation. We weren't there to tell visitors the geysers were so many degrees centigrade. None of us knew that anyway. We were there to talk about them from our perspective. What the geyser meant to us, and how our ordinary and not so ordinary lives depended on it. (Mihinui & Parekowhai, 1991:491)

Their role extended beyond hosting and guiding visitors. They were among the most inventive in terms of popularising aspects of Māori culture, in particular, Māori performing arts.

By 1902, tourists were spending more and more time in the Te Arawa area and additional forms of entertainment and amusement were needed; other than visiting the sights of the area. Thomas Donne, Superintendent of the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts, suggested a golf course, a Māori war canoe, a tea kiosk in the Government gardens and even a model Māori *pa* be established (AJHR, 1902:14-15). However, Māori had long since assessed the need for further forms of entertainment which would ultimately provide them a financial return. As early as 1880 Māori had provided *haka* performances for tourists. One traveller in 1884 wrote of a *haka* performance he witnessed:

The staple amusement for visitors to Wairoa is the *haka* dance, performed by the natives of the village for a certain remuneration. It is very open to question whether the *haka*, even in its ordinary form, is a thing to be encouraged amongst the natives. If it could only be disassociated from the beer-drinking which, almost invariably, more or less accompanies it, it would do little harm either to the visitor who looks on, or to the native who takes part in it, whilst it is undoubtedly a most curious and interesting sight to the European who sees it for the first time. There is, however, an extraordinary form of the dance which the natives are not unwilling to perform for a more substantial remuneration, but which, to judge from certain hints dropped to its character, must be of a very gross and demoralising nature...

Presently, the dancers, thirty men and thirty women, troop in and arrange themselves in two rows along the vacant side of the building – the women in front, the men behind. They seem to be arranged pretty much in order of merit – the best dancers being towards the top of the whare, so that their virtues are brought well under the eyes of the visitors ...

The M. C. straightens himself up – all eyes look to him: he raises a low whining chant in monotone: bodies and limbs and facial muscles begin to move in a series of rhythmical contortions. Ever and anon the chant of the leader swells into a hoarse and guttural chorus, ending in a series of indescribable sounds, which seem to come from far down in the throat, half sighs, half grunts. Gradually the motions quicken. The bodies of the dancers turned now to this side now to that, but always in a state of intense agitation, seem to be animated by one spirit, so perfectly simultaneous are their gestures. The arms, moving in rhythmic motion to the chant, go through a variety of pantomimes. At one time they move in a succession of clawing or clutching motions, as if something were being violently drawn towards the body; at another they move as if working a pair of oars; now the arms work as if holding the reins of a galloping horse, and again they are rigid as a bar of iron – only the fingers quivering so rapidly that their outline becomes blurred. As the dancers warm to their work the gestures become more violent till at last *Fitte the First* is ended, and the ladies sink upon their knees to indulge in an interview of gossip and refreshment.

When all have had a little rest and refreshment, the dance is resumed in much the same style as before, except that this time the men are in front and the women behind: and so ends *Fitte the Second*, for another interval of relaxation and refreshment.

The third and last dance begins. New attitudes and gestures are resorted to; now they are standing, now on their knees, now bent to this side, now to that; their voices become louder, harsher and full of a fierce glee; their heads wag violently; their tongues loll from their mouths; nothing of the eye but the white is visible; and the whole face has a look truly diabolical. (Wilson et al, 1884:269-273)

The first and third *haka* involves the women in the front and the men behind and the reverse happens for the second *haka*. Interestingly enough, the writer does not write as complete a description for the second performance as he did for the first and third. The above descriptions do not mention *poi* and it is highly likely that had they been a part of the entertainment that night the author of this piece would have

included them given his fascination with the women and the meticulous details provided of their performances. Intriguingly, the writer does mention that some of the actions depicted included the rowing of oars, which may have been the inspiration behind the development of *poi waka*.

Another visitor to the area a few years later in 1891 remarks:

The forty men and women placed themselves in two rows, waiting for their leader to begin ... He beat time with a bone mere; first he intoned a weird monotonous chant; this was taken up by the band, and then at a sign from him the first movement began. They kept time with precision which could only be the result of incessant practice since earliest childhood. They rolled their heads, moved their hands backwards, and forwards with a quivering motion in front of them, smote their breast and protruded their tongues, gasping and gurgling in a frenzy of excitement and all with a perfect rhythm and simultaneousness of sound and action that was simply wonderful. The women looked like inspired Sibyls, the men like infuriated demons. In the flickering light of the candles it reminded one of the dance of the witches which Tam O'Shanter saw through the windows of Alloway kirk. The resemblance extended in some cases even to the "cutty sark," for as the excitement grew, the more enthusiastic began to throw off some of their garments, and reminded us that we would have to retire. Before this stage of the dance was reached, however, Stevens [one of the visitors], ambitious to exhibit his grace and nimbleness, threw off his coat, and joining the gay throng attempted to imitate the wild gestures of the dance. The Maoris were delighted and clapped their hands in high glee and shouted "Kapai pakeha." What delighted them most, however, was when, at a signal from the leader, in the middle of a wild outburst they suddenly stopped dead, and left Stevens yelling and gesticulating solus. They were as pleased as a lot of children, and laughed loud and long at the success of their trick. (Alpers, 1891:75-76)

Guide Sophia aided the tourists in arranging the above *haka* performance. *Poi* is not specifically mentioned in this extract but it shows that the popularity of *haka* performances had increased. An interesting aspect of the above extract is the mention of audience involvement in the performance. This is one of the few comments that mention such involvement and is an aspect of tourist concerts that is still widespread today.

Talbot, provides a woman's view on *haka* performances at Wairoa, although she did not actually witness one as such:

It is in this temple [the Wairoa *whare nui*] that the natives perform the *haka* for visitors who are willing to pay for that exhibition. We did not see it, but we had heard quite enough about it to feel justified in saying that it is every white man's duty to suppress rather than encourage it. Excited by rum and *pakeha* approval, the dancers often bring this *haka* to a pitch of indescribable indecency, and the result of it is often a filthy, drunken orgy of several days duration.

Mr. W. P. Snow, an American gentleman, who has just recently concluded a year's pleasure-sojourn in the Lakes District, and who has been most untiring in his efforts to promote temperance and general well-being among the Maoris, told us that more evil was wrought among those at Wairoa by the unjudicious encouragement of the *haka* than by any other means almost. There *are* innocent *hakas*, the performance of which would harm nobody; but at Wairoa these innocent ones are more frequently exceeded than not, and the result is often unlimited drunkenness and immorality. (Talbot, 1882:43)

At Whakarewarewa Talbot finally witnessed one of the more innocent types of *haka*.

Before permitting the visitors to commence operations on the *kai*, the Whakarewarewa hosts performed a *haka* of jubilee. And a most interesting dance it was to us. Some twenty men formed into one line, some twenty women into another; the young man in white flourished as an M.C., with a whalebone *mere* as baton. The dancers kept perfect time. The whole forty acted as one. The precision of action was wonderful. One figure of the dance consisted of a measured beat of the feet, a queer, quivering motion of the hands, and a low chanting, interrupted at given intervals with a long gasping sigh. All this done with perfect simultaneousness made the exhibition singularly interesting, though there is nothing of beauty or grace about it. This dance, be it known, is very different from the *haka* that is sometimes witnessed when the Maori's blood is heated by rum and encouragement to proper orgie-pitch. That kind of *haka* we did not see, but we heard enough about it to believe that it is "hardly the kind of thing a girl would like to take her mother to." (Talbot, 1882:16-17)

Talbot calls both types of performances *haka*, which is a common practice amongst early observers and recorders of Māori performances, despite the obvious differences between the two. Unfortunately these descriptions are of limited help to later researchers of Māori performing arts in identifying the actual type of *haka* that was performed.

Children also played a significant role in tourist entertainment in order to gain a financial return. One of the main activities of the children was ‘penny diving’, termed *ruku kapa*, in the Puarenga Stream at Whakarewarewa. Tourists would throw in coins for the children to dive for and watch amused at the scramble that would ensue. In the early 1900s, those too young to be penny-divers would draw the tourists attentions by performing what has become known as the ‘penny *haka*’ (Waaka, 1982:106).

The ancient haka, that strange combination of chant and recitative, pantomime and dance is still much practised among them. The children are adepts in the performance almost as soon as they can toddle. Give them a copper, and three or four of the laughing little rogues will stand up in a row and go through its fantastic gestures and its guttural cries. (Alpers, 1891:75)

Not only did the children receive a financial reward for performing their mock types of *haka*, but they also assisted in securing the visitor’s desires to witness the adult performances.

An explicit mention of *poi* is absent in all of the extracts provided above on *haka* performances. By the 1890s Māori performing arts as a source of revenue had been an item of attraction, particularly during the evening, for around thirty years, yet throughout there was no mention of *poi*. Te Awekotuku puts forward her interpretation of this situation:

It is extremely puzzling that the poi had yet to be presented as tourist entertainment in Ohinemutu and Te Wairoa and later Whakarewarewa. This is assuming that if it were, the writers of the period would most certainly have recorded it. This unusual dance form is, however, not mentioned in any of the sources I have examined, and if it were mentioned by even one, for its very uniqueness and oddity, it would thus be recorded in many others. Possibly Te Arawa may not have sustained an active poi tradition like the people of Whanganui and Taranaki; perhaps the dancers judged it unsuitable for tourist consumption. (Te Awekotuku, 1981:162)

As pointed out by Te Awēkotuku the lack of recorded *poi* observances indicates that *poi*, as a form of night-time entertainment, probably did not exist at this time. It may have simply been included under the title of *haka*, but as Te Awēkotuku suggests, if *poi* had been a part of tourist performances, then such uses would have been mentioned in the tourist guide books given their otherwise meticulous descriptions of early *haka* performances in the Te Arawa area, particularly those of women *haka* performances (see page 188).

The Waiariki district was a highly desirable tourist location and over the years Te Arawa have played host to many important dignitaries, such as political leaders and members of England's Royal family. The Duke of Edinburgh was the first royal to visit in 1870 (Stafford, 1986:78), followed thirty years later by the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York (Stafford, 1988:13). These two visits ultimately sealed the area's reputation for being a tourist attraction worthy of royalty. It was the second tour by royalty to the district that seems to have confirmed the popularity of *poi* as an entertainment item. The Duke and Duchess visited Rotorua for three days in 1901, from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> of June. The visit called for all tribes from around New Zealand to participate in one of the most spectacular events to be held. This is a classic example of the way other tribes organised themselves to perform at one-off events but afterwards returned to their normal lives away from the performing spotlight. Te Arawa, on the other hand, were performing a function that was a constant way of life and after the tour continued entertaining other groups of tourists.

The Duke and Duchess were given a tour of Ōhinemutu and Whakarewarewa, where they watched various geysers play and the children diving for pennies. They were treated to *haka*, *poi* and singing for over an hour before they returned to Rotorua where on the way they were treated to an impromptu performance given by some of the tribes assembled at the Arawa Racecourse. On the 15<sup>th</sup> June, the last day of the visit, the Royal Tour culminated in a performance given by tribes from all over New Zealand. The Duke and Duchess were treated to a full display of Māori performing arts at its best. One of the main attractions of the day were the *poi* displays, given by Ngāti Raukawa (Otaki), Te Arawa, Ngāi Te Rangi (Tauranga) and Ngāti Porou (East Coast, North Island). Of these groups Ngāti Raukawa and Ngāi Te Rangi gave the standout performances in both the impromptu concert the day before and the organised one on the day. A description of the Ngāi Te Rangi performance is given below:

The Ngaiterangi women advanced in two ranks, their two leaders, one at each end, both men, slightly ahead, to dance the *poi*. The right leader opened with a chant, and ere he paused to take breath the left leader caught the measure, and so the song alternated from right to left and back again. Between them the ranks in perfect time, quickening as the measure hurried on, accompanied the song with the *poi* – the *poi* of which the Maoris sing

How my heart longs for the poi-leaf  
How beautiful a flower it is to grace  
Thy breast; my love

The poi-balls twirled; the hands twirling them moved up and down sideways, backwards, and forwards, hovering now over the shoulders, now over and across the knees, the flying balls appearing to surround with a network of gossamer the bodies of the dancers as they swayed from side to side, lifting alternate feet and throwing them across gently in front with a lilting motion, giving the effect partially of a waltz step. The women were handsome and shapely; they waved with grace; they sang soft words of welcome with musical voice in exact accord of time, in a strangely attractive monotone; they did it with flashing teeth and smiling lips, and beaming great eyes, as they kept their *pois* twirling and waving with daintiest play of arm and wrist, and rhythmic swaying of bodies from side to side.

At length came the end, like the finale of some admired composition the approach of which gives the absorbed listener a pang of regret. As the *pois* flashed overhead the command rang out suddenly. The poetry and the movement ceased at once, the flashing colours were still, the infinite variety of the faces gave place to a settled gravity, and in the same instant each poi-ball came down over the right breast of its owner, and was caught firmly in her left hand. Then the shining ranks bowed once to the knee; a long, steady courteous salute. Having bowed they filed off with dainty precision, disclosing the massed *matuas* in the second line; and as they went, thunders of applause went with them from enthusiastic Royalty and all the assembled shouting people, Pakeha and Maori. (Loughnan, 1902:94-96)

The most interesting aspect of the Ngāi Te Rangi *poi* dance is that it is led by two men, and the chant alternated between the two. This detail is similar to the information provided about the leaders of the *poi* chants of Tohu, especially in the Whanganui area. During the Waikato land wars of the early 1860s, some of the Tauranga tribes, including Ngāi Te Rangi, sent reinforcements to support the Māori King Movement. In the latter part of 1864 Te Ua Haumenemene's Pai Mārire/Hauhau religion was carried through the central North Island and Ngāi Te Rangi became eager converts (Stokes, 1997:59). It is more than likely that this influenced Ngāi Te Rangi to help those fighting in Taranaki. At that time they would have come into contact with Te Whiti and Tohu. As Te Ua was closely connected to Te Whiti and Tohu it is possible that when the former died in 1866 those who followed his Pai Mārire religion were naturally drawn to Te Whiti and Tohu, who were in many respect his successors. It is therefore quite likely that Ngāi Te Rangi were amongst the many who were drawn to Parihaka, and who became involved in the various religious activities of Te Whiti and Tohu, including *poi*. Loughnan, writing about Ngāi Te Rangi's performance before royalty claimed that the way the leaders led the dance, alternating in their singing, was a unique feature of all the *poi* presented during the two day celebrations (Loughnan, 1902:131). However, this is also the same pattern as the Ngāti Mutunga style of Te Whiti,



although the leaders there were female. This further supports the suggestion that Ngāi Te Rangi were either followers of the two prophets before they split, or had at least observed their *poi* styles, and that they simply combined aspects of their different *poi* techniques together.

This is the first written account of *poi* to mention movements of other parts of the body including the swaying of the body and the lifting of the feet. The foot movement is not the traditional style of *takahi*, the stamping of the right foot only, but is a lifting of both feet causing the body to sway from side to side. This seems to be a development of *poi* performance and may provide further insight into the foot movement of the followers of Te Whiti and Tohu if the Ngāi Te Rangi people used them as inspiration for their *poi* style and techniques.

Loughnan also provides a description of the Ngāti Raukawa *poi* dance that he describes as beautiful and graceful and superior to that of Ngāi Te Rangi (Loughnan, 1902:131).

The girls of the Ngatiraukawa, in the red and white cloaks, came lightly tripping into line, with three little maids in front to do the marshalling and the leading. And these they did right well, with little voices firmly raised in command – they were high-born, and command came natural to them – and the *poi* was picturesque, graceful, and beautiful as that of the Ngaiterangi, but much more intricate and bewildering. Another difference was in the musical accompaniment, for these added to the fiddles a jew's-harp, and with it a special twang which made itself useful in marking the measure. But in all these *poi* dances the music was, in truth, a secondary consideration, useful as a timekeeper, but almost at a discount on the score of melody, and of no account at all in the matter of harmony. The music provided by the Ngatiraukawa – fiddle, flute, and jew's-harp – was faster than that of the Ngaiterangi. It opened with a quick schottische [a round dance of German origin, resembling a slow polka] measure, that caused the poi-balls to beat and spin and twirl with amazing rapidity. Every now and then the ranks, which stood slightly extended, two deep, white alternated with scarlet; as they formed fours, the white and the scarlet were grouped in sections apart; and on returning to line the two colours came together again with beautiful effect.

Presently the small orchestra glided into the soft strains of the waltz. Was there ever a stranger dance set to music than this? Before the second bar was reached there was a change in the ranks, which were now in quincunx [an arrangement of five objects in a square, with four at the corners and one in the centre] formation, the white in front, the scarlet in the rear showing between. The rhythm changed, and the motion was subdued to a slow, gliding swing, the faces of the dancers half-turned to the right. In their hands the women now grasped two *pois*, one in each hand, and with these they bewitched all who gazed upon them. One whirled in a half-circle from shoulder to head, while the other sank from head to breast, to linger a brief moment ere both flashed outwards and circled to meet at the knee; with bodies swayed forwards the dancers stepped down lightly and brought the *pois* up, slowly playing round each other until level with the chest; then with a half turn the right *poi* glanced outwards and touched the next dancer lightly on the shoulder, while the left *poi* twirled at an angle to the left of the head. And ever the white and scarlet changed places, or drew up no command other than the unwearied strains of the small band of Māori musicians. For twenty minutes the *pois* flashed before the eyes of Royalty, who surely had not seen their like before, and never will see again, except in these Islands in the years to come, if ever the *kotuku* and his mate repeat their flight. Who knows what the future has in store? (Loughnan, 1902:97-98)

A number of noticeable aspects of *poi* arise in this description. The first of these is the musical accompaniments to the dance in the form of fiddles, flutes and jew's-harps. This shows the continued popularity of these types of musical accompaniments to *poi* in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It also lends further evidence to the use of these instruments in the emergence of the Te Āti Awa style of *poi*. Using these types of instruments set the *poi* to a beat and time faster than was usual; an aspect of *poi* performances that has continued to this day.

The second noticeable aspect is the use of two *poi*, which again is another feature of the Te Āti Awa style of *poi*. Given the close proximity of the Otaki section of Ngāti Raukawa to Taranaki, a large number of these people may have become followers of Te Whiti (many followers came from elsewhere in New Zealand) and learnt the style from him, or at least became familiar with practitioners of that style. Scott (1975:153) mentions that after Te Whiti's second release from prison in 1887 (after he was arrested for restarting his political ploughing campaigns) he made a

leisurely trip back from Wellington visiting Waikanae and Ōtaki, amongst other “sympathetic Maori settlements along the coast.” While Scott is not specific as to the extent of their “sympathy” it can be assumed that these Māori communities were involved with Parihaka at various times. Ngāti Raukawa’s use of two *poi* shows the rapidity with which *poi* styles spread, as the use of two *poi* became a prominent feature of *poi waka*. The use of coloured dress in the choreography of the dance was a new feature of the *poi* dance. The use of red and white and the interchanging formations of the performers who wore the two different colours added a quality to the dance not seen before this time.

The Te Arawa group of *poi* women led by Kiri Matao, an acclaimed Te Arawa singer, were not given such detailed commentaries about their performances:

They were met on the road by the young women of the Arawa, fifty strong, moving down to the front by twos, the tall figure of Kiri Matao on their flank in the attitude of command. In white, with blue sashes, rustling *piupius* dashed with black, and white feathers, they walked handsomely down, and, obeying the preemptory calls of their leader, went through their *poi* with similar grace and beauty of movement, and in perfection of chanted welcome and loyal acclaim. (Loughnan, 1902:131)

This comment seems appreciative but very short compared to those for Ngāi Te Rangi and Ngāti Raukawa. Te Arawa’s *poi* performance described in the above extract was the impromptu one done in Whakarewarewa the day before the main performance, which may explain why the description is so brief. Strangely enough there was no description of their performance on the main day. There was also only a one-line account of the Ngāti Porou *poi* performance done on that day. It would seem that the author providing the description of the celebration either had no interest in the *poi* performances of Te Arawa and Ngāti Porou, or had witnessed

their execution many times and found them uninteresting compared to those of Ngāti Raukawa and Ngāi Te Rangi.

The establishment of organised Māori concert parties was the next step in the developing Rotorua tourist industry. Māori entertainment concert parties outside of the Waiariki district were established as early as 1862 undertaking tours to Australia, England and America (McLean, 1996:322). Within the Waiariki district *haka* performances were used to entertain visitors but more organised entertaining groups did not form until the turn of the century, after the 1901 Royal Tour, indicating that this was the time period when *poi* became a prolific item of entertainment.

Entertaining tourists were fast becoming yet another of Whakarewarewa's tourist enterprises. This type of entertainment grew out of the cultural shows performed for tourists at Tarawera during the 1860s. Traditional *haka* and *waiata* were modified to provide light-hearted and humorous entertainment. The Guides organised their own concert parties and being in continual contact with tourists, they were able to recruit audiences for their groups night-time performances. (Waaka, 1982:91-92)

It can thus be concluded that the development of *poi* as an item of entertainment is in direct correlation to the development of Māori concert parties, particularly within the Waiariki district. Mitcalfe (1974:180) also claims that “from Rotorua *poi* spread as a popular and staged form of entertainment,” and he provides a list of public events printed in various newspapers around the country that occurred between 1902 and 1903 which included Māori performances. While the list is intended to show the frequency of important occasions where the Māori performing arts played a part, it also shows the frequency of *poi* performances around the country:

There were *waiata poi* at the Ngaruawahia Regatta in 1902 (*Auckland Weekly News*, March 27, 1902), *poi* dancing for the opening of a new hall at Rapaki (*Canterbury Times*, p. 38, Jan. 8, 1902), ... *poi* and a Maori brass band at Rotorua

(‘Canterbury Times’, May 2, 1902) and a Maori fete at Government House in aid of Queen Victoria School for Girls at which adult groups from Otaki and Wairarapa performed *poi* and *haka* (*Canterbury Times*, p. 34, October 22, 1902) ... and preparation for a tour of Europe by *poi* dancers, with *haka* and brass band performers from Ohinemutu ([Auckland Weekly News], April 9, 1903). Short *poi*, *haka* and Maori brass bands are in evidence at many places, from Rotorua to Motiti, Tangiteroria and Kaipara (*Auckland Weekly News*, March 3, March 26, July 16, 1903 and April 7, 1904). There was a national gathering on March 15, 1904 for the opening of the New Zealand Maori Council’s Conference, at which *powhiri* (greeting songs) *haka* and *poi* were performed. (Mitalfe, 1974:192)

The number of *poi* performances that Mitalfe includes in this list shows the rapid growth in the nationwide popularity of modern *poi*. The rapidity with which it spread suggests that people knew about *poi*, or performed it already but not as a ‘formal’ entertainment piece. It demonstrates that before 1900 *poi*, as an item of entertainment, was largely unheard of and that not until its use in the 1901 Royal Tour to Rotorua did *poi* spread as a popular form of entertainment. If the tourism capabilities of Rotorua had not been developed as successfully as they had then Royal Tours would never have happened and it may have taken longer for *poi* to develop as it has, if it developed in this way at all.

Very little has been written on the Māori concert parties of the early 1900s. It is known that the performances were required on a variety of occasions that included money-raising campaigns, openings of buildings, exhibitions, and royal tours, but the most usual type of performance was in the form of concerts for tourists. Maggie, Bella and Dick Papakura organised one of Whakarewarewa’s first, and most famous, concert parties that performed at the Christchurch International Exhibition in 1905, traveled to Australia in 1911 and then moved on to London for the celebrations of the coronation of King George V and Queen Mary (Stafford, 1988:54). The repertoire of the group included *haka*, Māori love songs, war cries,

part-singing in English, and *poi* dances, especially the *poi waka*. According to McLean, “a feature of their other *poi* dances, different from later practice, was for the leader to call out the changes ‘as in physical exercises’” (McLean, 1996:324), indicating that by 1911 they had successfully mastered the use of *poi* and had experimented with it enough to develop new and pleasing forms of entertainment. Guide Eileen organised the ‘Hinemoa Concert Party’, one of Rotorua’s earliest concert parties that also toured Australia during the early 1900s (Waaka, 1982:95).

While Te Arawa may not have been known for their execution of the traditional style of *poi* they did develop into exponents of *poi* in its modern form. One of the most ingenious developments of *poi*, which is acknowledged as originating from the Te Arawa area, is the famed *poi waka*, canoe *poi*. Performers of this type of *poi* sit on the floor and, using their *poi*, imitate the paddling of a canoe, whilst singing words to a similar topic. Unlike other *poi* styles it is relatively easy to pinpoint the time period when the *poi waka* was developed. The *poi waka* was not performed at the 1901 Royal tour because, assuming that it had been, a succinct description of it would have been provided in Loughnan’s *Royalty in New Zealand*, which it is not. It is, however, discussed in Maggie Papakura’s *Guide to the Hot Lakes district* printed in 1905 so we can assume that it was invented sometime between 1901 and 1905. Guide Bella’s group also used *poi waka* as a feature performance item for the 1906-7 Christchurch Exhibition; more significantly Guide Maggie claimed that Bella was responsible for inventing the *poi waka* (Makereti, 1905:24).

*Poi waka* is not a traditional form of *poi*, in terms of it being present in New Zealand prior to European arrival, but aspects of it do seem to be developments of particular features of traditional *poi*. For example, *poi waka* seems to be reminiscent of the seated style of *poi* recorded in the early accounts on *poi*. It may also be similar to the paddling actions used in early *haka* performances mentioned previously in this chapter. It seems to have been a style designed purely to satisfy a tourist market. *Poi waka* did, however, spread quickly around the country and became a performance item for other tribes. Ngāi Tūhoe used the *poi waka* at the visit of Lord Ranfurly to Ruātoki in March 1904 (*Te Pipiwharauoa*, 1904:4) and it was one of the main attractions of the visit. Te Puea used *poi waka* performances for her group, Te Pou o Mangatawhiri Concert Party, in the 1920s and 1930s to raise funds for the building of Tūrangawaewae Marae, *waka*, hostels and other projects (King, 1984:40-49). If Maggie and Bella's concert group had not invented and performed this style of *poi* then it would probably never have been developed and disseminated amongst the Māori people.

Bella has also been credited as the composer of the famed Whakarewarewa *poi*, 'Pakete Whero' (see Appendix for the words). According to Bubbles Mihinui:

There used to be a special song sung by the Whaka (Whakarewarewa) guides that was called 'Pakete whero mau mai i a koe' [The red kerchief that you wear]. Bella composed a poi to this song for the 1934 Waitangi Day celebrations. For a long time only the guides at Whaka could perform it, because 'Pakete whero' has got an off-beat. This is because Bella likened her poi to the hoof beats of galloping horses – she loved the races. So Bella's poi became the recognised signature of the Whaka guides. (Mihinui & Parekowhai, 1991:490)

This *poi* blends aspects of Māori composition with European techniques. The combination of innuendos hinting of a secret love, so often a part of *waiata*, and the

fast paced *poi* actions based on galloping horses, is a typical example of the modernisation of *poi* in the Te Arawa area unseen prior to this period. Bella is said to have composed this song in honour of a man from Ruatāhuna that she was secretly having an affair with. The wearing of the red scarves by both of them signalled to each other their secret love (Huata, 2000:75-76). While Mihinui states that Bella composed a *poi* to this song, which indicates the music was around prior to the actions being created, Huata provides evidence of a concert programme of the 1910 tour to Australia and England, most likely for Maggie Papakura's concert party, that includes 'Pakete whero' as a performance item. It seems likely therefore that 'Pakete whero' was a performance item in 1910, and this is backed up by the fact that whilst Maggie was in charge of the overall group, Bella was in charge of the performing group (Dennan, 1968:51), and was probably the composer and choreographer of many of their items.

Another significant chapter in the history of the *poi* was Alfred Hill's composition of the world famous song 'Waiata Poi' (see Appendix for the words). Hill, New Zealand's first fully professional composer, became extremely close friends with Bella and Maggie Papakura (Thomson, 1991:217), and it may even be that Maggie and Bella were the inspirations behind the composition. Hill, who had a passion for setting Māori musical themes to European harmonies, composed the famous 'Waiata Poi', the creation of which has been credited with introducing "countless overseas audiences to Māori music for the first time" (Thomson, 1991:218). 'Waiata Poi' became an essential item in the repertoire of the various concert



parties following its composition in 1904 and was often a popular choice for soloists (Thomson, 1993:214), particularly in concert parties from Te Arawa.

The invention of the *poi waka*, the composition of ‘Pakete Whero’, and the success of ‘Waiata Poi’ happened in such a short space of time that one wonders why the *poi* took so long to develop into a sustainable form of entertainment in such a desired tourist destination? The answer to this question will probably never be fully known and only some surmises can be put forward. For example, Te Whiti and Tohu’s religious use of *poi* in Taranaki may have dissuaded other tribes from using it as an item of entertainment for Pākehā who were opposed to the actions of the Taranaki prophets. If at least some Ngāi Te Rangi and Ngāti Raukawa were followers of Te Whiti and Tohu, as indicated by their styles of *poi*, then their use of *poi* as a means of entertaining the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York may have given the go ahead for other tribes to do the same. On the other hand, it may be that Te Arawa had thought of it only as an item for their own amusement and not fit for tourist consumption.

Entertaining for a personal financial return had been a practice in Te Arawa since the 1870s, but elsewhere in the country this was a foreign concept. Although performing on special public occasions had been occurring since the early 1900s, it was not until the 1920s that Māori concert groups formed with the idea of raising funds for tribal initiatives (King, 2003:121). For example, Te Puea and her concert group, Te Pou o Mangatawhiri, used travelling concert groups purely as a

fundraising effort to establish Tūrangawaewae *marae*. Their repertoire included *haka*, *poi*, Hawaiian *hula* dancers and string band performances (King, 2003:120). Apirana Ngata, in a letter to Sir Peter Buck, claims that by 1929 Te Puea and her people could do *poi* “more pleasingly than the loud-voiced, tourist-hardened Arawa maidens” (Sorrenson, 1986:166), indicating that the latter had been doing it for a long while. On the contrary Rangitīaria Dennon, more commonly known as Guide Rangi, believed that at the beginning of Ngaruawahia’s annual regatta “Rotorua was almost the last stronghold of the poi dancer. In the rest of the country the poi were almost a forgotten art” (Dennon, 1968:50). This may have been true just after the turn of the century, and while it is certainly true that Te Arawa were responsible for promoting the concert party use of *poi* as an entertainment item, by 1929 they did not have the monopoly over *poi* performances. They were innovators of modern *poi*, as their placing of first in this category, with the *poi* ‘Pakete whero’ at the Waitangi celebrations in 1934, demonstrates (Sorrenson, 1986:135). The winners of the *poi* Māori were Taranaki and performances of *poi* by other groups including Te Puea’s Waikato group clearly indicates that Rotorua did not have the total domination over *poi* performances they thought they had.

This chapter has looked at the growth of the tourist industry within the Rotorua district, in particular, the advancement of the guiding profession. The rise of tourism and guiding in this area led to the widespread use of *poi* as an item of entertainment. As the fame of the district’s thermal wonders grew, so too did the desires of visitors who wanted to make the journey and see the unrivalled

geothermal spectacles for themselves. Almost overnight the Te Arawa people inherited a lucrative business over which they had complete control. They provided all the facilities and services visitors required and in return were given a financial reward. The Government, seeing the income earning potential of the area, introduced an Act that entitled them to gain control over all of the country's thermal springs. They established spa and bathhouses utilising the curative and healing properties of the mineral waters to entice visitors and for which they received the income.

While the Government did maintain a type of control over the tourism industry there were still some services that they could not offer as an alternative to those offered by Māori. One of those services was guiding. Guides were essential for the safety of the tourist and, although many non-Māori people were also engaged in this profession, Māori guides could provide an historical explanation of the creation of certain features, of events that happened and battles that took place in various places that non-Māori could not. Another of the services was entertainment. Within the Te Arawa district Māori performing arts as a source of revenue had been an innovation in the tourist industry since the 1860s. These performances were largely of *haka*, with none of the tourist accounts indicating that *poi* was ever used. Some visitors saw the performances as an excuse for the performers to get drunk afterwards with their earnings and urged that it should be discouraged, but others marvelled at the synchronisation of the performers. This discouragement of *haka* performances could have passed on to other areas of Māori performing arts,

including *poi*. While *poi* may not have played a major role in the performance repertoire of concert parties at that time, it is more than likely it was still a part of the performance repertoire of the Te Arawa people for their own amusement, either as a dance or a game. It was not until the 1901 Royal Tour of New Zealand by the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York that the first mass exhibition of *poi* and the different *poi* styles were displayed in a public forum. The Ngāti Raukawa and Ngāi Te Rangi tribes were the stand out performances of the day but there were others who also performed from around the country that did not receive such acclaim at the time.

It seems highly likely that the different *poi* styles displayed triggered ideas in some of the Guides to create new and distinctive *poi* styles aimed solely at the tourists. What this also led to was the establishment of organised concert parties that practised and performed regularly, rather than the largely unorganised *haka* performances prior to 1900. Guide Bella's *poi* abilities were unheard of prior to this period. Her invention of the *poi waka*, her composition of 'Pakete Whero' and its intricacies, and her abilities as a concert group leader and tutor developed just after the 1901 Royal Tour. The Te Arawa people developed their own *poi* style, based on a mix of traditional conventions and modern practices, taking *poi* to new levels of performance.



## Conclusion

In Western Polynesia games and amusements that have the same mechanical motions as that required to execute *poi* existed in the form of *hiko* (Tonga), *hapo* (Tonga), *fuaga* (Samoa), *te'auga*, *te'aga*, *teaunga* (Samoa), *tilitili koua* (Pukapuka), *hapo* (Uvea) *tuimuri*, *tuimuli* (Samoa), and *veivasa ni moli* (Fiji). The last two games are particularly interesting in that a ball type object is attached to a string and swung around. Eastern Polynesia sees a continuation of the juggling tradition in Mangaia (*pe'i*, *pe'ipe'i*), Tahiti (*pei*), Tuamotu (*pei*), Mangareva (*pei*, *kita'irama*), the Marquesas Islands (*pei*) and Hawai'i. The similarity between the terms employed in these islands provides a strong linguistic link to *poi*. In the Marquesas Islands another game, *pohutu*, is so remarkably similar to *poi* that it is difficult to understand why so many scholars have overlooked it. Linton (1923:388) makes a connection (as does Ferdon (1987:174) when discussing the resemblance of a Tongan game similar to *poi*) but these comments have either been ignored or unnoticed by others.

To judge from most scholarly writing, until recently the juggling tradition found in both Western and Eastern Polynesia did not appear to survive the ancestral *waka* voyage to Aotearoa and Te Waipounamu. In fact, upon further investigation juggling references can be found, suggesting that the game survived, at least in parts of the country, especially in the South Island. Linguists suggest that the South Island dialect of the Māori language is linked closely to that of the Marquesas

Islands. Aspects of the Polynesian games *pei* and *pohutu* are recognisable in the South Island version of *poi*; namely, the making of the ball (as in *pohutu*) using either *harakeke* or ribbonwood, which were in turn used in juggling (*pei*), then later attached to a cord (*pohutu*). In other parts of Polynesia the materials used in the games and amusements relied on nuts and fruits as they were found in their natural state; very little modification was needed. Only in the Marquesas Islands was a ball created specifically for a game. In New Zealand the fruits and nuts were not available. This lack of available materials appears to have contributed to the decline of the juggling game but may also have led to the development of the *poi* ball.

The exact course of development of the *poi* during the Māori settlement of Aotearoa and Te Waipounamu and European contact will never be known; but some educated guesses can be made. Assuming that the original form of *poi* was designed for juggling it is likely that the first innovation was to attach a cord to the *poi* ball. At around this time the ball may have undergone a name change from *pei* to *poi*. The name change may partially be attributed to the physical movements required to make food *poi* found elsewhere in Polynesia but not continued in New Zealand. Possibly during this time period the materials and techniques associated with *poi* ball making were also developed and perfected, with *poi* beginning to take on various ceremonial roles, such as an *ātahu*, a *tiwha*, in *pōwhiri* and as a formal part of night-time entertainment.

Early European comments on *poi* tend to dismiss it as a “puerile” amusement. Very rarely do they extend beyond this perception of *poi* until the late nineteenth century, when the use of *poi* was particularly prevalent in the Taranaki area. Early written records of *poi* are extremely scanty, and give very little detail about *poi*. However, the small amount of information contained in these various records is crucial in revealing the hidden knowledge of the *poi*. There seems to be a progression from sitting to standing in the execution of *poi*, which seems to be reminiscent of how juggling was executed in Polynesia. Sitting then makes a return in the famous *poi waka* choreography of the early twentieth century. The style of *poi* song accompaniments is also a movement from chanting to singing. The commonly accepted form of *poi* chants were those called *pātere* and *oriori*. While vastly different in purpose and content a similarity between the two is the recitation of genealogies. Genealogical chants were also a feature of juggling, particularly in Samoa and the Marquesas. There is also an evolution from long *poi* to short *poi*, which shows a changing emphasis from swinging *poi* to hitting *poi*. Long *poi* swinging could also be said to have resembled the flight pattern of juggling but with more control.

Not until the late nineteenth century did the social status of *poi* become elevated even further. *Poi* owed its changing status to the efforts of the two Parihaka prophets, Te Whiti-o-Rongomai and Tohu Kākahi, whose ingenuity in using *poi* as a disseminator of their religious teachings catapulted *poi* into the public eye. At a time when the social and cultural survival of the Māori people was under threat



from complete assimilation and extermination under British rule, Te Whiti and Tohu provided a sanctuary where Māori were once again responsible for their own lives. *Poi* was an avenue that symbolised an assertion of their strength politically and spiritually. By doing so Te Whiti and Tohu are responsible for some of the *poi* innovations witnessed today, such as double *poi* and the alternating leadership of choruses, while still remaining true to the tenets of their teachings and their traditional values. While Parihaka was heading into a state of decline around the turn of the twentieth century Te Arawa, another powerful force in the development of the *poi*, was slowly building their performance capabilities designed specifically for tourist satisfaction. Paid *haka* performances had been a part of Te Arawa's tourism profile from the 1860s, and included both male and female performers, but it was not a major feature until the early twentieth century. The 1901 Royal Tour to Rotorua (amongst other places) seems to have been the first time *poi* was exhibited on a mass scale and on such a formal, public occasion. It is from this point in time that the female guides, such as Bella and Maggie Papakura, turned to organising concert performance parties to earn an income. Bella quickly honed her *poi* skills, and in doing so created styles that quickly became widespread. *Poi waka*, and in effect *poi* itself, became a nationwide phenomenon within a few years. The complexity of creating beats to offset the accompanying song showed the creativity needed to continually develop *poi* for an ever-expanding tourism market.

*Poi* had always been a part of Māori life but was not a central element until the late nineteenth century when its popularity accelerated in a colonial setting as a symbol

of Māori striving for autonomy, in Taranaki, and partnership, in Te Arawa. The Parihaka movement arose as a form of resistance to European colonisation and although *poi* was a part of Te Whiti and Tohu's religious teachings, it was essentially political in nature; symbolic of their struggle for independence. Tourism in the Te Arawa area was a mechanism to draw people into the world of the Māori. Using a commercial venture introduced by Pākehā they quickly devised a way of extracting money from the visitors, which was in turn used to advance the Te Arawa people. When the Government took ownership of tourist facilities and services in the hot springs district they could not take control of the entertaining services offered by the Te Arawa people. Clearly, tourists making the trip from overseas were interested in witnessing a piece of Māori culture and in this way cultural identity and a Māori sense of independence was maintained and enhanced. The Guides were the key to accessing performances of *haka* and *poi*, they were among the pioneers of developing *poi* and in this way they helped retain the *mana* of the Māori people.

Contemporary *poi* has developed into one of the most distinctive attributes of Māori culture today, but its present status only arose from the late nineteenth century when its popularity first took off. Before then it had taken a period of eight hundred years or so for *poi* to become attached to a string. Yet within one hundred years the string had been shortened, the song accompaniment had changed, Te Whiti and Tohu had used it as a medium for religious and political messages, and Te Arawa developed it as an extremely successful means of gaining a financial

return. *Poi* has grown beyond all recognition and developed far from its original form as a juggling game, where it can still be seen in Polynesia. It is, in fact, still growing and has now become an international item of entertainment used by both Māori and non-Māori alike. It has become a cultural icon, symbolic of the peaceful and hospitable characteristics of the Māori people, un-representative of its political and religious use in the nineteenth century. Websites can be found dedicated to *poi*, with all acknowledging its genesis from the Māori people. Fire *poi*, fabric tailed *poi*, fluffy *poi* with chain cords, and *poi* balls made from high impact resistant plastic with LED lights to create a stunning visual effect, are some of the innovations in *poi* that have occurred. In this way the opening lines of Erenora Taratoa's famous *pātere* "*Poia atu taku poi, wania atu taku poi* - Swing afar my *poi*, skim onward my *poi*" still rings true.

## APPENDIX

## Marquesas Islands

1	Muamua Teiki Teiki, Ani Ani, Hotu, Hotu, Poha	1	Teiki first-born Teiki then Ani (second born) Ani then Hotu (third born) Hotu then Poha (fourth born)
5	Uapao Tātou mei oto To tatou kui Kui aha? Kui haatepeiu	5	Complete We are from inside Our mother What mother? Mother a chiefess
10	Motua aha? Motua hakaiki E vii, e vii Ta tatou pei I tai o Ahuau	10	What father? Father a chief Roll, roll Your pei (balls) To the sea Ahuahu (name of the sea by Atu Ona, Hiva Oa)
15	Ui mai na tupuna “N’ai tenei pei?” “Na matou” “N’ai ‘otou?” “Na Peke”	15	The grandparents ask “Whose pei is this?” “Ours” “Whose are you?” “Peke’s” (fathers name)
20	“Na Peke?” “Na Moho” “Na Moho?” “Na Tutu” “Na Tutu?”	20	“Peke’s?” “Moho’s” (fathers, fathers name) “Moho’s?” “Tutu’s” (great-grandfathers name) “Tutu’s?”
25	Haato ii Haa to aa Tu ai tua Tu ai feani Feani tiiti	25	Apparently meaningless refrain Apparently meaningless refrain Apparently meaningless refrain Apparently meaningless refrain Apparently meaningless refrain
30	Feani taafa Ui mai na veihine me iunga Uoa, Oupoto Ou to Katekahi atu tua  Ua vo tuu pei e Ua vo tuu?	30	Apparently meaningless refrain The women on high ask Uoa, Oupoto Katekahi (names of three ancestresses far back) ? ?

## Samoa

1	'O ai lou tama?	1	Who is your father?
	'O Pepe		Pepe
	Pepe ai?		Pepe who?
	Pepe Tū		Pepe Tū
5	Tū ai?	5	Tū who?
	Tū Sae		Tū Sae
	Sae ā?		Sae who?
	Sae Tini		Sae Tini
	Tini ā?		Tini who?
10	Tini Toloa	10	Tini Toloa
	Toloa ā?		Toloa who?
	Toloa Ipu		Toloa Ipu
	Ipu ā?		Ipu who?
	Ipu Nē		Ipu Nē
15	Nē ā?	15	Nē who?
	Nē Pusi		Nē Pusi
	Pusi ā?		Pusi who?
	Pusi 'Umi		Pusi 'Umi
	'Umi ā?		'Umi who?
20	'Umi Gafagafa	20	'Umi Gafagafa
	E pei 'o le pute i le 'aupā		Like the navel in the wall
	Ou te lē fia alu i se va'a tilafā		I don't want to go on a four-masted boat
	Ou te fia alu i se va'a tilalima		I want to go on a five-masted boat
	E 'aumai ai sāmāni e lima		[The type] that brings [five] kinds of salmon
25	Fai ai le 'aiga o Pita	25	To make up Pita's meal
	'Ae mitimiti le paipa a Fiva.		While Fiva sucks on his pipe

**He rangi poi**

- 1     Poi-Poi  
     Poi atu taku poi ki Turangawhakapu  
     Hei a 'Karewa e tangi taukiri mai nei  
     Ra whea i roto i te whare mate ki tana makau,
- 5     Me tangi, me aha e hine,  
     Te inati o 'Tu  
     Te inati o 'Maniapoto  
     Ka puta au  
     Ka ora au
- 10    Ki te whaiao  
     Ki te ao marama  
     Ka kitea te pae ki Tuhua  
     Tenei koa nga iwi o Te Rangiweherua  
     Ka pau te whakarato ki nga moana e rua
- 15    Ki kukuriki ra  
     Ki Oue ra  
     Kia kai mai te tamure  
     Tukau te whare i a Turi ngenge  
     Po-awhitu-ka reka

# **Pāketē Whero**

1	Pāketē whero Mau mai i a koe Māku e here Ka tino pai rawa e	The red scarf Worn by you If I tie it It will look so much nicer
5	(W)Hoatu koe Kei mua Hinemoa tīriti Ko au kei muri Kei mātauria	You go in front Along Hinemoa Street I'll stay behind Lest people start talking
10	He rau koikoi Tō whārikiriki He rau toromiro Tō pēra o runga e	There are fern leaves For your sleeping mat And toromiro shrubs On top of your pillow
15	Tō pikitanga Taumata te Rāiti Tō heketanga Ko Tarapounamu e	Where you climb Is Tauamata te Rāiti Where you descend Is Tarapounamu
By Ihapera Te Hoari Thom (Guide Bella, Bella Te Hoari Papakura)		



# Waiata Poi

- 1 Mara, Maori maiden brown  
Famed for poi play  
Far on winds her name is blown  
Dusky lithesome fay
- 5 Kia rite, kia rite  
Poi porotiti tapara patua  
Hei ha hei! Hei ha!  
Hei ha hei! Hei ha!
- 10 Watch her supple wrist  
And the poi twirl and twist  
Hear the gentle tapping  
'Gainst the raupō wrapping  
Of this fascinating thing  
Tiny ball on end of string
- 15 Hei, hei hei ha!
- Mark the sound her piu-piu makes  
As her body moves  
That it is enchanted flax  
Such sweet music proves
- 20 Kia rite, kia rite  
Poi porotiti tapara patua  
Hei ha hei! Hei ha!  
Hei ha hei! Hei ha!

By Alfred Hill

## Glossary

The following abbreviations will be used to denote which language group particular words belong to. The words that do not have one of the abbreviations attached belong to the New Zealand Māori language group.

CIM.	Cook Islands Māori
Fi.	Fiji
Ha.	Hawai'i
Man.	Mangaia
Mar.	Marquesas
Mng.	Mangareva
Puk.	Pukapuka
Sa.	Samoa
Ta.	Tahiti
To.	Tonga
Tua.	Tuamotu
Uv.	Uvea

<i>anaana</i>	actions used in a particular type of sexual <i>haka</i> ; sexual type of <i>haka</i>
<i>ātahu</i>	a prayer said over a chosen medium intended to win the objects of one's affection
<i>awe</i>	hair of the native dog
<i>fuaga, fuanga</i> (Sa.)	a type of juggling game
<i>haka</i>	posture dances of various types
<i>haka poi</i>	<i>poi</i> dance
<i>haka pōwhiri</i>	type of <i>haka</i> done during the rituals of encounter
<i>hikirara</i>	a light song
<i>hapo</i> (To.)	a game similar to the English cup and ball game where a ball like object is attached to a string and manipulated to fall through a hoop to which the string is attached
<i>hapo</i> (Uv.)	a type of juggling game
<i>hapū</i>	sub-tribe
<i>harakeke</i>	flax
<i>hāro</i>	scraping process used when preparing flax
<i>hiko</i> (To.)	a juggling game
<i>huia</i>	a native bird of New Zealand, now extinct
<i>hula</i> (Ha.)	a native Hawaiian type of dance
<i>hunc</i>	pappus of seeds of the <i>raupō</i> plant
<i>ipu hokiokio</i> (Ha.)	a small gourd with a hole in the side which whistles when twirled on the end of a string
<i>iwi</i>	tribe
<i>kahu kurī</i>	cloak made of dog skins

<i>kanikani</i>	dance
<i>kapa haka</i>	performance group
<i>karakia</i>	ritual chant, prayer
<i>kava</i> (Man.)	an intoxicating drink made from the root of the <i>Piper methysticum</i>
<i>kōrari</i>	scape or flower stem of the flax plant
<i>koua</i> (Puk.)	immature coconut
<i>kurī</i>	dog
<i>manaaki</i>	care for; show hospitality, empathy
<i>marae</i>	space in front of a meeting house, the <i>marae</i> and the buildings around it
<i>mere</i>	short handled club
<i>miro</i>	fine flax thread used in <i>tāniko</i> weaving; process of turning flax fibres into a single thread
<i>mōteatea</i>	traditional Māori chant, lament
<i>muka</i>	prepared flax fibres
<i>oriori</i>	traditional Māori lullaby including <i>whakapapa</i> and historical information
<i>pā</i>	fortified village
<i>pala'ie</i> (Ha.)	a game similar to the English cup and ball game where a ball like object is attached to a string and manipulated to fall through a hoop to which the string is attached
<i>pātere</i>	a type of <i>haka</i> aimed at dispelling malicious rumours
<i>pe'i, pe'ipe'i</i> (CIM)	a type of juggling game
<i>pei</i> (Mar.)	a type of juggling game
<i>pei</i> (Mng.)	a type of juggling game
<i>pei</i> (Ta.)	a type of juggling game
<i>pei</i> (Tua.)	a type of juggling game
<i>piupiu</i>	traditional Māori form of dress made of dried flax blades
<i>pohutu</i> (Mar.)	a game where a ball made of <i>fau</i> leaves is swung from a cord made of the same material
<i>poi awe</i>	<i>poi</i> that has the hair of the native dog attached
<i>poi āwhiowhio</i>	a small gourd with a hole in the side which whistles when twirled on the end of a string
<i>poi karakia</i>	<i>poi</i> used in the rituals associated with birth
<i>poi kawa</i>	<i>poi</i> used to open a meeting house
<i>poi kokau</i>	unornamented type of <i>poi</i>
<i>poi manu</i>	<i>poi</i> used in the chanting of <i>karakia</i>
<i>poi matakite</i>	<i>poi</i> used to chants of a prophetic nature
<i>poi piu</i>	<i>poi</i> made of blades of flax dried in a fashion similar to <i>piupiu</i>
<i>poi pōwhiri</i>	<i>poi</i> used in the rituals of encounter
<i>poi waka</i>	<i>poi</i> in which the actions depict the rowing of a canoe
<i>poipoi whakapapa</i>	<i>poi</i> used in the chanting of <i>whakapapa</i>
<i>pōpō</i>	traditional Māori lullaby including <i>whakapapa</i> and historical information

<i>popo</i> (Tua.)	ball made of pandanus or coconut leaves used in <i>pei</i>
<i>pōtēteke</i>	sexual type of <i>haka</i>
<i>pōwhiri</i>	rituals of encounter, welcoming ceremony
<i>puapua</i>	actions used in a particular type of sexual <i>haka</i> ; sexual type of <i>haka</i>
<i>rama</i>	artificial light source
<i>rama</i> (Mng.)	green fruit of the candlenut tree
<i>raranga</i>	plaiting type of weaving
<i>raukura</i>	white feathers that are used to adorn the head; religious symbol used by Te Whiti-o-Rongomai
<i>raupō</i>	bulrush
<i>raupō poi</i>	<i>poi</i> made from <i>raupō</i>
<i>rīto</i>	centre shoot of the flax plant
<i>taiaha</i>	close quarters combat long weapon
<i>tāniko</i>	twisting and knotting form of weaving; pattern made from the <i>tāniko</i> weaving technique
<i>tāniko poi</i>	<i>poi</i> made from the <i>tāniko</i> style of weaving
<i>tapa</i>	durable material found throughout Polynesia made from the bark of trees such as the mulberry and breadfruit trees
<i>tapairu</i> (Man.)	a category of Manganian spirit being
<i>tapu</i>	under the influence of the god's protection, sacred, prohibited, restricted
<i>tilitili koua</i> (Puk.)	a juggling game using <i>koua</i>
<i>tiwha</i>	an object or song used to recruit assistance in times of war
<i>tohunga</i>	priest, skilled person; expert
<i>tōkere</i>	castanet-type percussive instrument
<i>tuimuri, tuimuli</i> (Sa.)	a game where spears are used to stab a ball like object while it is being swung round
<i>veivasa ni moli</i> (Fi.)	a game where spears are used to stab a ball like object while it is being swung round
<i>waiata</i>	song
<i>waitoremi</i>	actions used in a particular type of sexual <i>haka</i> ; sexual type of <i>haka</i>
<i>whai</i>	cat's cradle, game where a loop of string is manipulated to create various shapes and images representative of aspects of everyday life
<i>whakapapa</i>	genealogical table
<i>whare pora</i>	house of weaving
<i>whare tāpere</i>	house of entertainment
<i>wiri</i>	slight quivering of the hand in performance used to portray Tāne-rore (the originator of Māori dance)

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