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Kāpo (blind) Māori in the Ancient World

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Ngāti Kāpo o Aoteaora

Ehara te takata kotahi ano i oho ai i neherā.

There was not just one person alive in the old days.

There can be more than one version of a story and each has its own mana.

Introduction

This Kai Tahu whakatauhākī above highlights the many iwi perspectives about our histories, our creation stories and our dialects that hold their own mana. Yet some perspectives will never be fully understood nor can be told fully in a brief literature review, such as this. This paper is a literature and brief oral history review that was undertaken as part of an HRC funded two-year project entitled, *Growing up kāpo (blind) Māori: Whānau, identity, cultural well-being and health*. However, it is a growing review, because each time the research team has presentations about this project, there are more perspectives and more stories that are given to us from more Maori representing their hapu and iwi. These stories, though, will add to the whakapapa (lineage) of knowledge that we have learnt so far about kāpo Māori in te ao tawhito (the ancient Māori world).

Finding literature evidence about an oral culture is not always easy, Maori like many indigenous cultures spoke and sung their histories, their whakapapa, and their stories.

Would the information that we were seeking really be in any literature? Previous literature reviews on Maori health and disability reiterated that little is found in the literature on this topic or about ancient Maori ancestors and their lives, in regards to living with disabilities and impairments (Bevan-Brown, 1989; Higgins, Phillips, Cowan & Tikao, 2009; Nikora, Karapu, Hickey, & Te Awekotuku, 2004). So this wero (challenge) was laid at our feet and we proceeded to seek the relevant literature for this kaupapa (topic).

This literature review specifically investigates literature in book form, journals and online resources that make reference to blindness or kāpo in the ancient world of the Māori. A small group of people were approached for their whānau accounts, knowledge of karakia,

waiata and tipuna within their whānau who were visually impaired. For this review, the researcher also reviewed the literature of traditional narratives, which talk about the creation of the Māori world, often termed as Māori mythology. The term ‘mythology’ has been shunned by some Māori academics as wrongfully placing these stories into a “fairytale” type genre and as questioning the validity of the kōrero within Māoridom. For Māori, these creation stories are real and not myths. It is this meaning of the word, ‘mythology’, that is used in this paper. The creation narratives are the kōrero (spoken words) about origins that provide an account of human whakapapa (genealogy), which includes the whakapapa of all living things, animals, trees, and mountains, or, in other words, te taiao (the environment). Narratives about tipuna/ancestors, and literature written about early Māori settlement to the period of European colonisation were also explored for this review.

Through the recent disability research literature, it was forewarned that finding historical information on kāpotanga was going to be difficult (Bevan-Brown, 1989; Nikora, Karapu, Hickey, & Te Awekotuku, 2004). Using a 'snowball' literature review approach, library databases were first searched using the search term, ‘Māori’, along with the terms, ‘kāpo’, ‘blind’, ‘blindness’, ‘vision impairment’, ‘disability’, ‘illness’, ‘sickness’, ‘impairment’, and other Māori words (see below) to describe the experience of blindness. From this search, literature was obtained and key references in this literature about Māori were reviewed for relevant information. This work also took Ms. Tikao, the first author of this review, to a number of places and libraries around New Zealand, including Knox College’s Hewitson Library to review Presbyterian newsletters, missionary reports; and Canterbury University’s MacMillan Brown Library and the Otago University's Library, in which the primary researcher for this review was assisted by Māori librarians. The national Māori Librarian Collective was also approached, and they asked their peers for relevant literature and reference material about kāpo (or kāpō) and disability. As a result of this request, some citations were given by a few. However, within these responses it was highlighted again that little was written about kāpotanga. The remainder of this literature review has come from books written by historians and anthropologists¹, and from the knowledge of key Māori informants, who provided oral information.

The questions that the research team were hoping to answer were as follows:

- Did the condition of kāpo exist for Māori in earlier times?
- Was kāpotanga a common occurrence?
- How did the whānau, hapu, iwi perceive kāpo?
- Did they have specific rongoa/medicines to treat the eyes? Did they have specific aids or ways that assisted kāpo Māori to take part in the daily activities of their hapu?

In this review, the information that was found has been formatted around themes that are chronologically placed from ancient time to the mid 1800s. This whakapapa begins with

¹ Nineteenth and early twentieth century Pākehā writings of the life and ways of Māori need to be read with caution given that they are accounts about Māori from a Pākehā world view. They are accounts coloured by the underpinning views, knowledge and understandings of the writers.

the heavens, discusses creation stories, looks at early village life, and then finishes with a discussion about specific Māori, who were kāpo in the 1800s.

Definitions

In order to complete a thorough search of the literature, one of the very first tasks that was undertaken was to document the terminology that was used for blindness in te ao Māori.

Kupu/Ingoa

A search of the literature was done around the general themes of: kāpotanga, disability, impairment and birth defects, which were documented in Māori communities in early Māori times. Finding the key words or the Māori words to best describe blindness was a challenge. Iwi have dialect differences, and thus there were a number of different words to describe the same thing (i.e. mātapo and pohe). There can also be slight variations to a similar word (i.e. kāpō, kāpo).

In general, though, historians commented, and the above Māori descriptions given for blindness indicated, that Māori, who had an impairment, ‘deformity’, or a bodily difference, often received a name that specifically described their difference. (Best, 1924). Below are some of the words that came forward while researching this topic about blindness, as well as disability.

hauhaua – crippled (Beattie, 1990)
kāpo – blind (Ryan, 1990)
kāpotanga – blindness (Ryan, 1995)
kerepō – blind (Ryan, 1995)
matakerepō – blind (Ryan, 1990)
matapō – blind (Ryan, 1995)
matapōtanga – blindness (Ryan, 1995)
pohe – blind (Beattie, 1990)
pohe ka kanohe – blindness (Beattie, 1990)
pōrangī - mad, in a hurry (Ryan, 1990)
pura – blind (Beattie, 1990)
pura o te kanohe – blindness (Taylor, 1848)
tamaiti whakatoī – wayward child (Best, 1974)
toretore – inflammation of the eyes (Taylor, 1848)
wairangi – excited, wild monster, reckless (Ryan, 1990)

Ngāti Kāpo o Aotearoa Inc adopted the term, ‘kāpo’, which comes from Ngā Puhi dialect, and was brought to Ngāti Kāpo by Bill Rako. It was subsequently adapted by the kaumatua (respected elders) and kuia (respected older women) of Ngāti Kāpo after wide consultation with elders without, and with, sight, like Sir Kingi Ihaka. These kaumatua were native speakers of te reo (and not second language learners), and the word, kāpo,

was used to holistically identify the ‘state of being’ for people who are vision impaired, blind, or deaf blind. It is interesting to note, that the term, kāpo, was initially spelt without a macron, even though in some Māori dictionaries, there are two macrons for the word (one of the 'a' and one over the 'o'). Christine Cowan, the Ngāti Kāpo researcher on this research project, explained that Ngāti Kāpo's members were unaware of how the printed term would look when it was adopted, but later the first macron was added in print as Ngāti Kāpo's pronunciation of the word became consistent. Other terms that were considered by Ngāti Kāpo, which would identify the ‘state of being’ of blind people, were ‘matapo’ (black)² and ‘pohe’ (dim). Also, of importance is the fact that the meaning of ‘kāpo’ for Ngāti Kāpo is directly linked with the term, Ngāti and with the whakatauki (the proverb), ‘kā pō, kā pō, kā ao, kā awatea’ (the forward journey from darkness into the light). This whakatauki is also used in whaikōrero (men’s oratory) by most iwi. Further to this meaning, some have also indicated that the wairua (spirit) of a person may know before birth that their physical being will be kāpo but the onset of the physical impairment of blindness or vision impairment may occur some time after birth (Russell, 2007).

Ngā Rangi/Ten Heavens/Lore/Tapu

In order to understand the context in which some Māori perceived illness, impairment, or disability, some of the literature on Māori thinking about the ten heavens (also known as 12 heavens) and about atua Māori/Māori gods were relevant to this review. In some of this literature, earth, itself, carried illnesses that were not found in any other realm of the taiao (environment). Teone Taare Tikao confirmed this. He was given tohunga training as a child and carried a vast amount of knowledge about mythology and history on the South Island and was interviewed by the historian, Herries Beatties, in 1920. Tikao supported the premise of purity existing only in the heavens and illness only on earth. Tikao attributed the cold weather on earth as the main reason for illness amongst Māori. Tikao told Beatties, “There was no sickness in the heavens. . . . There was no dew, rain, snow and frost up here. These things bring sickness on the earth” (Beatties, 1990, p. 39).

The ten heavens are often discussed when talking about Māori creation stories and about stories of a particular tipuna (ancestor) and their amazing feats which were undertaken to reach the heavens (Beattie, 1994; Best, 1982; Reed & Calman, 2004). Tikao told Beattie (1994) that the heavens extend beyond the stars and are suspended one from another. It was here in the levels of heaven that atua (gods) Māori dwelled, and these atua enforced Māori lore. If lore was broken, it was the atua that delivered the reprimand. The consequences for infringement of lore or tapu are discussed below under the tāngata Māori section. Also of importance is that Māori had a spirit for each part of the body, for the eyes, the spirit was Tongameha (Orbell, 1995).

² A discussion with Mr Nekenekerangi Paul (Māori Resource Librarian, MacMillan Library, University of Canterbury) highlighted the different terms different iwi use to denote blindness. According to Paul, who grew up in Rotorua, Ngāti Pīkiao use the term matapo. Ngāti Pīkiao kaumatua consider that matapo is a gentler term that indicates that a person has lost their sight and therefore has a disability whereas kāpo means something that is inflicted upon a person, almost like a punishment.

Traditional Narratives

Then one day when my face was turned to the west I smelled food, and I smelled man, there is someone near I called. But there was no reply. Because you come from the west and are therefore a descendant of mine you will be safe, I called I will not hurt you. I will not eat you. You must be Maui. Maui the trickster. I have heard of you. (Muriranga-whenua story) (Grace & Kahukiwa's, 1984, p. 52)

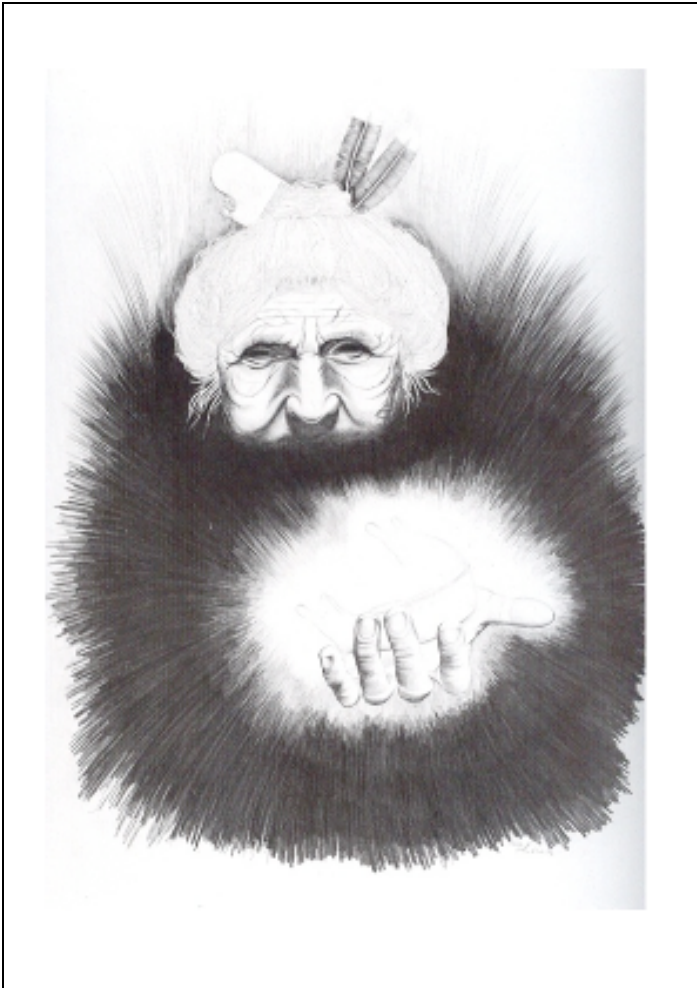
Figure 1: Robyn Kahukiwa's Painting, *Muriranga-whenua*. (Oil on hardboard 118cm x 118cm) (Note: From P. Grace and R. Kahukiwa, 1984, *Wahine Toa - Women of Māori Myth* p.53. Reprinted with permission from the artist.)



In Māori mythology kāpo atua (gods/goddesses) existed. Whilst their blindness was acknowledged in some of the readings (Reed & Calman, 2004; Best, 1982), no detail about their blindness was discussed. Questions about why these atua were blind or how they coped with their disability were not examined in any of the literature. In some mythology, though, kāpo was not a disability but a tohu (sign) of greatness. It seemed that being kāpo meant that they had wisdom, high levels of ability, and power, which were displayed in their skilled use of the senses that they did possess. For example, Maui

Tikitiki a Taranga, a well-known hero and trickster of Polynesian mythology had a wise blind grandmother, or grandfather, Murirangawhenua (Note: some readings vary in the gender of Murirangawhenua). Murirangawhenua was also known as Matakerepo (cloudy vision) (Williams, 2008). Murirangawhenua gifted her jawbone to Maui so he could create a fishhook that would be used to fish up Te Ika a Maui (North Island), and thus show his ability to his sceptical brothers. Maui used karakia (prayer) and blood from his ihu (nose) to smear on the jawbone and lure the whenua (land) to his hook. Murirangawhenua was held in high esteem for her/his knowledge and wisdom, and in te ao Māori these qualities reside in the jawbone. Hence, Maui knew that this was the tool that would make his mission successful.

Figure 2: Robyn Kahukiwa's Drawing *The Gift of Muriranga-whenua* (Pencil on paper 54 x 69 cm.). (Note: From P. Grace and R. Kahukiwa, 1984, *Wahine Toa - Women of Māori Myth*, p.55. Reprinted with permission from the artist.)

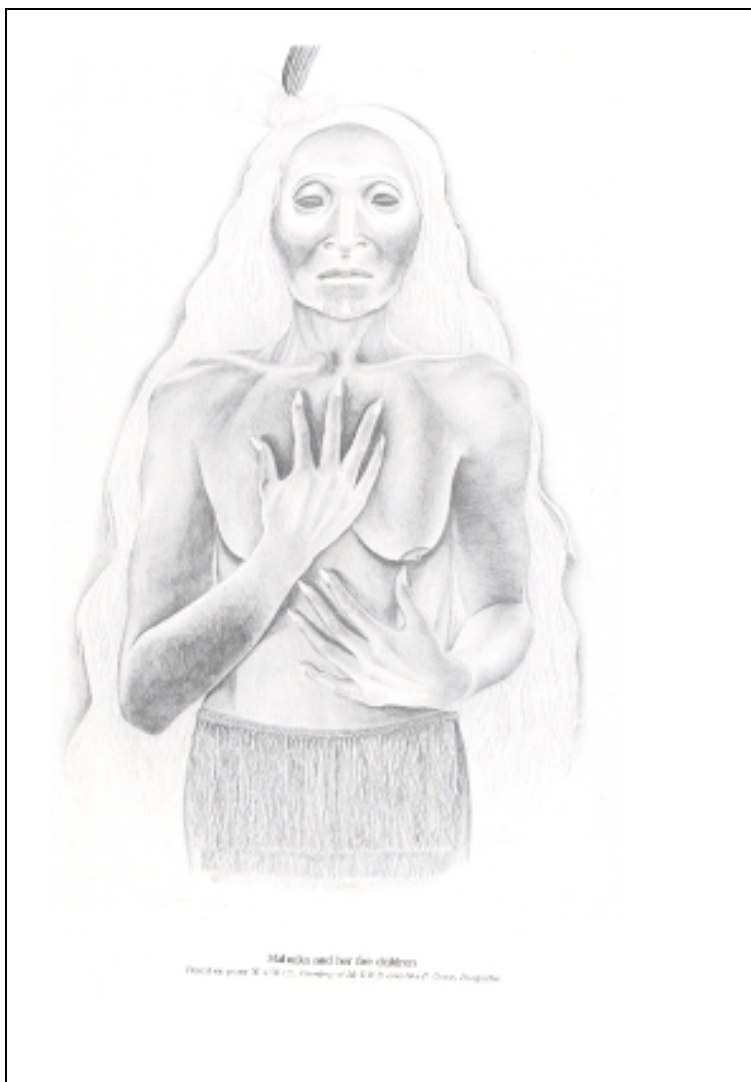


Another whanaunga (relative) of Maui, Mahuika was the Goddess and Guardian of Fire, who was depicted and described as having no eyes:

Mahuika, the goddess, rose up before him, fire burning from every pore of her body, her hair a mass of flames, her arms outstretched, and with only black holes where her eyes once were. She sniffed the air (Ministry of Education www.tki.org.nz - Māori Myths and Legends).

The story that is told is that Maui, in order to obtain the secrets of making fire, tricked Mahuika into giving Maui all of her fire children, which were contained within the fingers of her hand.

Figure 3: Robyn Kahukiwa's Drawing, *Mahuika and her fire children* (Pencil on paper 36 x 60 cm.). (Note: From P. Grace and R. Kahukiwa, 1984, *Wahine Toa - Women of Māori Myth*, p. 49. Reprinted with permission from the artist.)



After Maui had tricked Mahuika for all but one of her fingernails of fire, she became very angry. Maui ran from Mahuika and she pursued. Maui turned into a hawk so he could fly above the flames. However, his feathers were scorched and so he dived into the

waters below him only to find that the water was boiling. He called on his tipuna (ancestor), Tawhirimatea, to bring rain to drench the fires. This is what saved Maui. Mahuika, before being consumed by the torrential rain, threw her last fingernail of fire into the trees. Today, kaikomako, mahoe, totora, patete and pukatea are now seen as guardian trees of fire.

Figure 4: Robyn Kahukiwa's Drawing, *Mahuika, Konui, Koroa, Manawa, Mapere and Toiti* (Pencil on paper 30 x 51 cm.). (Note: From P. Grace and R. Kahukiwa, 1984, *Wahine Toa - Women of Māori Myth*, p. 48. Reprinted with permission from the artist)



Another relation of Maui was Tāwhaki. He needed to travel the heavens to find his father, and there he met his grandmother, Whaitiri (full name, Whaitirimātakata – Crashing Thunder), who was blind. Whaitiri after leaving her husband Kai-tangata to live with her sky parents returned to the base of the sky's ascent and waited for the arrival of her grandson, Tāwhaki. Elsdon Best (1982, p 383) wrote that when Tāwhaki encountered Whaitiri, she was “quite blind” due to her eyes being scratched out by a “multitude of small birds” that passed Whaitiri each night. Best’s description of this story told of Tāwhaki destroying the birds and consequently restoring Whaitiri’s sight.

Other versions of this myth tell how Tāwhaki performed karakia over Whaitiri and made her see again. It was Whaitiri, who knew and told Tāwhaki about which aka matua/rangi tuatangi (the main or parent vine) to climb to the heavens, and, thus, she gave Tāwhaki the correct knowledge to proceed to the heavens in search of his father (Mead & Grove, 2001). Interestingly, it appears, but cannot be confirmed with absolute certainty, that those in Māori mythology, who did not have sight and who had great powers were wahine, who assisted tane (males) to gain knowledge.

Another South Island myth that is related to blindness is that of Hina. Hina was Maui's wife. Otherwise in other parts of New Zealand, Hina was said to be Maui's sister or the daughter of Mahuika (Goddess of Fire). Hina is the personified form of the moon. Maui is said to have cured Hina of blindness but not in a physical manner but in a metaphysical one in that he restored light to the darkened moon. (Best, 1974). Hina was also called, Hinauri, which literally means dark moon, as opposed to Hina or Hina marama, which means new moon, and therefore one which is lighter, brighter, and fuller (Reed & Calman, 2004).

In contrast to these positive myths about impairment, another creation story that may help to form the context for kāpo Māori is the Kai Tahu creation story. For this section, Matiaha Tiramorehu from Moeraki was an oral informant, and spoke about the Kai Tahu creation story involving Raki (Ranginui)(Skyfather) and Papatuanuku (Earthmother). Raki had many wives, who bore many children. Papatuanuku was first partnered to Takaroa (tangaroa), the god of the sea. When Takaroa left to bury their child's pito (placenta), Papatuanuku partnered with Raki and begat Rehua, Tane and all their other children. Takaroa returned and discovered what had happened, and a fight broke out between Takaroa and Raki at the beach. Takaroa speared Raki in both buttocks. Raki did not die, but from this time onwards all of the children whom he had with Papatuanuku were weak and sickly. These children were named after their impairments:

Tānekupapaea – excoriated – skin disease/condition

Tānetūturi – deaf

Tānepēpeke – short limbed or disabled limb

Upokonui – large head, perhaps encephalopathy

Upokoroa – oblonged shaped head, another birth defect

Upokowhakāhu – undeveloped, stillborn, membrane of foetus

Tāne-i-te-waiora – translation not known although it suggests a spiritual/mental disability

Te Oi – translation not known although one of the meanings of oi is disturbed/agitated and perhaps can be understood in behavioural contexts

Raki was saddened by the reality that his later children with Papatuanuku were weak or had an impairment. He asked his previous children to kill him so that the human race, which he was creating, would be stronger. Tane (his son) asked Raki about how this could be done and Raki instructed Tane to lift him away from Papatuanuku. The myth continues that with this separation, light and wellbeing came forth. In this creation story, it appears that the union of Raki and Papatuanuku was cursed after Takaroa discovered he

had lost his wife Papatuanuku to Raki. Their tamariki bore the brunt of this kanga (curse), and were born with illness and impairments (Van Ballekom, & Harlow, 1987).

Te Ao Māori (The Māori World)

The lives of Māori in te ao tawhito (the old world, from their arrival in New Zealand to the end of the 1800s) were harsh and short. Life expectancy for both sexes was between 40-50 years. Māori were nomadic, travelling to survive. For peace and wellbeing, they set up new kainga (home/village), many of which were temporary. They moved towards the coast for kaimoana (seafood) or returned inland to grow crops (Salmond, 1995) depending on the season and the plentifulness of the resources. Best (1924) wrote that because Māori survived off the land and thus had a tough physical lifestyle, that sight and hearing were two important senses that were needed to carry out the daily task of food gathering.

Nekenekeiterangi Paul, an oral informant for this review from the MacMillan Library, described Mana Atua tamariki in these times. He stated that he had heard that children with disabilities were begat from a Māori mother and a tohunga (expert) with great knowledge. The tohunga would intentionally impregnate the wahine to give forward all of his knowledge and learning to this child. These children were known as Mana Atua. Paul explained that the reason that the tohunga passed his knowledge onto tamariki was because that by the time they reached adulthood, they had forgotten the source of their knowledge and the source was protected. Mana Atua tamariki were gifted, perceived as very different from other tamariki, and may also have had an impairment.

Jill Bevan Brown (1989) found that birth defects were viewed by some hapu as a punishment for the offence of breaking tapu by someone within the whānau, hapu or iwi, and that some Māori believed the same was true for people with an intellectual, physical, and sensory disability. Therefore, disability and impairment were “accepted with an air of fatalism” (p. 5). Mason Durie (1994) describes tapu as:

secured by the sanction of the gods and reinforced by the endowment of mana. Tapu can be applied to people, places, animals, plants, events and social relationships. . . . transgression of tapu earned rebuke, ridicule and intense mental suffering – physical consequences were also expected, epidemics, bodily wasting, or even death.”
(p. 9)

Durie wrote that tapu was essentially a safety measure in that it was intended to make Māori cautious and to warn them of imminent danger should tapu be broken. For Māori, it offered a series of practical rules to protect communities. Without spiritual awareness, the individual was considered to be without well-being and much more prone to disability or misfortune (Durie, 1985). Elsdon Best’s writings in 1941 also supported this view. According to Best sickness not only occurred as a result of a tapu infringement or

incorrect processes according to lore. It was also the sign of transgression and punishment from the gods.

Bevan-Brown (1989) stated that it could be said that traditional Māori society, whose economic level was often that of subsistence, would not be very tolerant of people with an intellectual disability who were considered dependant and who may not contribute socially or economically to the welfare of the iwi or hapu. A pakeha participant in Bevan-Brown (1989) study said that they had heard that Māori babies with an impairment were left to die at birth. However, Bevan-Brown could not find a written source to confirm this. Best (1924) wrote that people with an impairment amongst their hapu did not appear to receive a lot of sympathy from other whānau and hapu members. Perhaps, a sense of shame was present for the individual and hapu. Also, fear of further misfortune may have caused Māori to remain silent about impairments. These issues may help to explain the dearth of information around blindness during this particular period.

Tāngata

In 1884, a traveler, Mr. Kerry Nicholls, wrote that he saw an albino Māori woman and described her as having “light flaxen hair, pink eyes and white complexion” (Robley, 1998, p. 45). Makereti Papakura (1938) in her book entitled, *The Old Time Māori*, said that albino Māori were mainly seen as atua (godlike) and were highly respected. She noted that they were often blind, and the impression that is gained in the reading of the literature, was that this was an addition to their status not a subtraction. Makereti wrote that albino Māori were called turehu or urekehu, and said, “these turehu children are supposed to be born of an ordinary Māori mother and a patupaiarehe (fairy) father” (Makereti, 1938 p. 123). Patupaiarehe were described as “supernatural children of the mist...seen in the indistinct form... they are fair, and are clothed in flimsy white like the web of the pūngāwerewere/spider” (Makereti, 1938, p.123). According to Elsdon Best (1982) fairy people were fair skinned and had light brown or red hair. Patupaiarehe, heketoro, turehu, urekehu, and korakorako are some of the Māori names for these people. Korakorako (also written as korako for short) was the name associated with albino Māori and was described in Best (1982, p. 547) as people who “could not see or look into the full blaze of the sun”. He also referred to a korako as a child with light, soft straight hair and blue eyes. Queenie Hyland (1997) in her book, *Myths and Legends*, said that the korako people had white skin and pink eyes, which glowed in the dark.

Beatties (1990) in his book entitled *Tikao Talks* documented a range of causes of vision impairment and blindness. For example, he noted that Tikao witnessed blindness in the elderly, which was caused by the constant work that was done over fires. Also, of note was the fact that illnesses increased when Māori moved from high hilltop forts to lower flat land dwellings. Houses were built on swamp-like land with spongy soil. Manning (2001) stated that these were heated with fires, and were warm at night but were too moist during the day. This brought illness through poor ventilation and moist living conditions. Beatties (1994) reported that the Murihiku Māori had eye problems because they sat in smokey dwellings over long periods of time, and as a result suffered ophthalmia

or inflammation (kukura) of the eyes. When they entered their later years the kukura (inflammation) would often progress to pohe (blindness) (Beatties, 1994).

Blindness may have also been caused by injuries that were sustained during tribal combat. For example, the Waikato chief, Horomona Maruhau, lost his eyesight in a conflict with Nga Puhi. Horomona was called Maruhau initially and was referred to in literature as Horomona Maruhau or Blind Horomona. The literature also noted that he met with missionaries, converted to Christianity, and became a native teacher. In 1866, Miss Tucker made a glowing reference to Horomona in the *Southern Cross and Southern Crown* report. She described him as a “consistent Christian” with a great memory and he was well respected amongst his peers. It was also documented that Miss Tucker was impressed that Horomona could find his way alone to places within a three miles radius of his kainga/whare (home), but beyond this distance he required a guide. She also was quoted as saying that “he was all light within, that the people of the world could not discern the light he possessed” (Tucker, 1866, p. 8). In 1849, Horomona met Governor Grey and it was stated that Grey was impressed at Horomona’s attitude towards his blindness and in the writings about this occasion Miss Tucker wrote, “his blindness added a peculiar and calm dignity” (Tucker, 1866, p. 8).

Figure 5: Drawing of George French Angas (1807 – 1889), *Horomona Maruhau* (aka *Blind Solomon*). (Note: From White, 1890, *The Ancient History of the Māori His Mythology and Traditions Tainui Vol VI*, p. 81.) NB this reference came from this book off an online resource which is at this website address: nzetc.org/tm/scholarly/hy/tel-whi06Anci.html



Another chief, Hongi Hika, was documented to have had a blind wife in the 1920s. He was a well-known Ngā Puhi chief, who was related to all the principal Ngā Puhi chiefs of his day. One of two wives, Turi-ke-tuha, was also the mother of Hare Hongi and of

Harata, who later married another infamous Māori warrior, Hone Heke. One interesting fact about Turi-ke-tuha was that she accompanied Hongi Hika on all of his fighting campaigns. She advised him, and it is written that Hongi Hika followed her advice. For example, in Smith's 1901 article in the *Journal of Polynesian*, a description was given of a tribal battle, Te Ika a Ranganui, between Ngā Puhi and Ngāti Whatua in the 1820s. Prominent Ngā Puhi chiefs led the taua (war party) and Hongi Hika was cited as one of them. In one particular part of the battle, Ngā Puhi looked like they were being defeated and it was Turi-ke-tuha, who called out to inspire Ngā Puhi. It was then that the Ngā Puhi taua fought harder and drove Ngāti Whātua back. In the battle Hongi Hika and Turi-ke-tuha lost their son, Hare Hongi.

Kelly (1938) wrote that a chant was composed by an unknown Ngāti Whatua person about the battle of Te Ika a Ranganui and within this chant or kaioara, Turikatuku (aka Turi-ke-tuha) is mentioned;

Tarure ki te taha ko Turikatuku ko te wahine taki wairua
(Languishing listlessly to the side is Turikatuku
(The spirit-challenging woman.)
(p. 180)

It is interesting that Turi-ke-tuha was given this description by a composer from Ngāti Whatua, because it provides evidence that she was at Hongi's side in battles and was perceived by others as a gifted and knowledgeable woman to be feared.

The Māori population declined dramatically from the 1840s – 1890s and during this same time, Europeans began to increase in numbers and interact with Māori. In 1938, Makereti wrote:

There were few ailments before Europeans visited Aotearoa (New Zealand), but soon after Captain Cook came, the first epidemic swept over our land, and according to our traditions many thousands of men, women and children perished. It was called by the Māori Te Upoko o te rewharewha. Each vessel that visited us left an epidemic of some kind, which wiped out many children as well as grown up people. Though I could mention various epidemics, here I merely want to say that before Europeans came, there was comparatively little illness. (Makereti, 1938, p. 149)

Micheal King (1991) in his book entitled, *Māori - a photographic and social history* talked about the changes to Māori living conditions during this period of colonisation. Typhoid and dysentery were present in epidemic proportions. Fertility rates also declined because Māori women suffered from general ill health and from the affects of syphilis, gonorrhoea and tuberculosis. King commented that in parts of the Waikato in the late 1850s over one third of married Māori women were found to be barren.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there is very little in the academic literature about Māori and disability and, more specifically, Māori and kāpotanga. Information and knowledge is available in oral form, but has been rarely studied. The stories, waiata and memories that have been carried through whānau oral traditions can certainly provide enlightenment on kāpō Māori i te ao tawhito, and need to be prioritised. However, an extensive amount of time and research beyond this review is needed to gather this oral information and to search historical collections of relevant documents and writings from throughout New Zealand.

Consideration, however, has to be given, as it was done in this review, that whilst wading through the historical literature, researchers need to be aware that all of the literature from this period (before 1840) was written by non-Māori historians or missionaries who carried their own cultural bias. They would often write their own interpretation of what had been told to them by their informants, and thus placed a particular lens on their knowledge and writings. This will have an impact on how the reader sees and interprets the material. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) questioned the value of some of the research that has been compiled by early ethnographers, educational researchers and the occasional travellers' various accounts of Māori society. While this research may have been validated by academic affirmation and scientific method it does little to extend the knowledge of Māori. However, having said this, it also needs to be acknowledged that there would be no literature of this early period had it not been for those mentioned above.

In general, it appears that Māori in the ancient world, who had an impairment, were people with god-like power and god-like status. They were known for the talents that they possessed, not for what they didn't have. As time progressed this notion appeared to change. Perhaps these changes were influenced by periods of turbulence with war, food shortages and land selling. Instead of being held in high esteem as valuable members of a hapu and iwi, Māori, who became ill, were born unwell, or who had a disability, were perceived by the hapu as a tohu (sign) or an outcome of an infringement of tapu. Therefore, this may have caused the hapu or whānau of a child born with impairment to provide karakia (blessings) that could heal the shame and correct the previous hapa (mistake) or breaking of tapu. Interestingly, nothing in the literature indicated that rongoa (medicine) has been studied in detail in relation to Māori, who experience blindness.

There is a feeling, which one gets when studying Māori psyche in te ao tawhito, that if something is unexplainable then it is either perceived to be a positive tohu (sign) for the hapu or a bad omen. For example, albino Māori were seen like atua yet perhaps other impairments were perceived in a negative light. However, the explanation for this phenomenon remains elusive. With colonisation and Christianity, and with the introduction of influenza, measles and venereal diseases, the Māori view about their own belief systems, birth defects and disability appeared to change. Some Māori appeared to lose faith in their own medicines, tohunga and gods. Birth defects and impairments were now seen to bring shame to the hapu.

The researchers' hope is that as we become aware that kāpō Māori were once acknowledged by te iwi Māori in ancient times, as gifted people with talents to

share with their hapū, positive change away from negative perceptions around impairment and disability will occur. Māori on a large scale are returning to their roots; te reo revival, mahi toi (art, raranga - weaving, whakairo – carving) and mahinga kai (food gathering places and techniques), and many are recapturing past knowledge and returning to old tikanga (customs) with the intention to obtain and maintain their mauriora (wellbeing, life force). In this review we have stepped into Māori history, and these ancient stories may be the key to unlock any “mataku” that may be in the minds of some of our kāpo Māori whānau. They may be able to accept visual impairment as our ancient tipuna did: Not as impairment or as a ‘dis-ability’, but as having vision, within, of one’s true knowledge and true power.

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