Tūrangawaewae, time and meaning
Two urban Māori icons

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What imbues a place with meaning, making it 'iconic'? Can labels such as 'icon' fit alongside Māori concepts of place, and if so how?

This paper considers these ideas through the lens of two Māori buildings in downtown Wellington: the architecturally designed Te Raukura, which opened in 2011 and is used as café, function centre and tourism base, and the remains of a whare (Māori house) from Te Aro pā, a site inhabited until the 1880s then rediscovered during excavations in 2005 and now visible to the public. While neither was intended as an icon, both have deep and historic significance for Wellington city's iwi (tribe). These values and meanings are not necessarily visible to other Wellington residents or to the tourists who visit both places, but visitors may also take meanings from, and attribute value to, the buildings and their surroundings.

Drawing on the researchers' 'insider' position as members of Wellington iwi, the research explores the layers of meaning that Te Raukura and the Te Aro whare are acquiring for members of the iwi, and others involved with the building and excavation, identifying three key themes: layers, visibility and footprints. The paper also considers the public expression of some manuhiri (visitor) narratives. We conclude that for iwi, both buildings represent tūrangawaewae (a place to stand). They have the potential to become in some sense 'icons', over time. The extent to which such meanings can develop alongside non-Māori ones is still to be tested.

Keywords:

Introduction

> … Gustav Eiffel, or Jorn Utzon, did not say "I'm going to design an icon." No, they designed a building or structure which was so unusual that it earned the right to be an icon. (Honey, 2015)

What imbues a place with meaning, making it 'iconic'? Who gives places their meanings? How can labels such as 'icon' fit alongside indigenous Māori concepts of place such as tūrangawaewae (a place to stand)?

We consider these questions through the lens of two apparently very different but closely related Māori buildings in downtown Wellington, New Zealand's capital city: the architecturally designed Te Raukura, which opened in 2011 as an organisational base, café, function centre and tourism base as well as housing valued waka (canoes); and the remains of a whare (Māori house) from Te Aro pā, a Māori settlement inhabited until the 1880s, rediscovered during excavations in 2005 and now open to the public. While neither building was intended as an icon, we propose that both have significance for Wellington city's iwi (tribes), and may be in the process of 'earning' iconic status.

The impetus for this paper came from, and draws on, the daily lived experience of the authors, both 'insiders' as members of Wellington's iwi manawhenua (tribes with authority/responsibility for ancestral lands or places). Mellish had a leading role in ensuring that the Te Aro site was preserved and made open to the public, as well as a major role in the development of Te Raukura – in which she now works. She was also very involved in design and funding efforts to build Te Raukura and Te Aro pā, and sees them as important for the iwi and the capital city as the physical expression of Maori culture in Wellington. Stuart edited a book that included a chapter on Te Raukura written before it opened (Love, 2010), which has led her to continue research into cities, the spirit of place (mauri) and how that shapes Māori urban wellbeing and aspirations for development. She noted that even watching the building go up was laden with meaning, and wrote at the time that it was a statement 'that iwi and hapū are part of the city' (Stuart, 2010, p.101).

The research found that the two sites have also acquired stories and layers of meaning for iwi members and for others involved with the building and excavation. We argue that while these meanings are based in the past, they are fully contemporary and will continue to develop over time. Pākehā (European New Zealanders) and manuhiri (visitors/tourists) are also developing their own stories about the buildings and their surroundings, and expressing them in forms such as blogs and tourist comment sites.

We start by introducing Māori concepts of place, particularly as applied to buildings and places where people live. We outline the story of Wellington's harbour, Te Whanganui-a-Tara, setting the context for a brief history of Te Aro pā and its 'unearthing', and the building of Te Raukura. We then discuss some of the stories and meanings that have emerged from research, highlighting three key themes and finally linking them to the concept of tūrangawaewae.

Māori values of place and the 'whare'

Māori as an indigenous people have a deep sense of place, and connections to place, both material and spiritual. Whenua (land), is also the term for the placenta, a constant reminder of our descent

from the Earth Mother (Barlow, 1991). Land, the natural world, and created objects such as buildings have their own mauri, a spiritual force described as 'the bonding element that holds the fabric of the universe together' (Royal, 2003, p.174), and which can be embodied in a community or place (Barlow, 1991). New Māori meeting houses or public buildings include a mauri stone in their foundations, literally embedding mauri into the building. Similarly, traditional rituals precede the opening of Māori public buildings, and of many ordinary whānau (family) homes (Barlow, 1991).

Because of this, Māori tribal buildings are more than material objects. What constitutes a 'Māori building' is still a matter of debate, but Brown (2005) identifies two characteristics: taking local tikanga (practices and custom) into account; and the guiding role of kaumatua (elders). In her view, when these are taken into consideration 'A unique set of design principles results ...' (2005, p.104). Brown quotes Māori architect Rewi Thompson as saying that without kawa (protocols) 'the building would have no meaning'(Brown, 2005, p.108).

Another attribute of place is tūrangawaewae, a term used to describe 'places where Māori feel connected and empowered. It can be translated, literally, as tūranga (standing place) and waewae (feet)' (Buchanan, 2011). It is used particularly to describe ancestral land, and many Māori aspire to live on, or return to, our tūrangawaewae (Mead, 2003). For the tribes of Te Whanga-nui-a-Tara (Wellington harbour), retaining any place to stand has been a singular challenge.

Tara's great harbour and Te Aro pā

Te Whanga-nui-a-Tara can be translated as 'Tara's great harbour' – linking the place to ancestral tradition, in this case the chief Tara and his people who settled the harbour around the 14th century (Love, 2012c). Over the centuries, a number of iwi settled the area, retaining stories of the harbour's origins (Waitangi Tribunal, 2003).

British settlers arrived in the north of the North Island from the early 1800s, disrupting Māori society (Ballara, 1990). The area that is now Wellington city became literally unsettled, as tribal groups came and went. By the 1830s, people from a group of allied tribes including Ngāti Mutunga, Te Atiawa, Taranaki, Ngāti Ruanui and Ngāti Tama, had come south in a series of migrations from Taranaki province and settled around the harbour (Ballara, 1990; Waitangi Tribunal, 2003).

Te Aro (a 'pā' is a settlement with fortifications) was constructed around 1824 by the Ngāti Mutunga tribe, then handed over to other iwi in 1835. Te Aro was unusual in that its residents were from several different (although connected) iwi. By 1842, its population was recorded by colonial authorities as 128 (Love, 2012b) although as residents moved around to harvest seasonal resources the population may have been higher. The pā covered around five acres (Love, 2012b), from the then shoreline including where Te Raukura now sits, inland through what is now lower Taranaki Street. A 'pā' is often thought of by non-Māori as the area within the stockades, but just as a farm is more than its farmhouse, Te Aro pā's cultivations covered 60 to 80 acres by the 1840s, including gardens, forests, and the Waitangi swamp which provided resources including harakeke (flax), an important trade item for the pā. A public open space, Waitangi Park, now occupies some of the old swampland. The boundaries of the pā would have included the shoreline and sea as sources of kaimoana (seafood). (Love, 2012a) Buildings within the pā were mostly one-story structures of wood and bundled reeds.

Figure 1: The shoreline of Te Aro Pā, 1847

Drawing: Samuel Charles Brees, engraved by Henry Melville. (Reproduced courtesy of the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, N.Z. A-109-037)

The residents of Te Aro pā were still establishing their boundaries when the New Zealand Company, a private colonisation enterprise, arrived in Wellington in 1839. The company signed a 'deed of sale' with chiefs of the Wellington harbour area, but the chiefs and people of Te Aro did not sign and continued to assert that the pā was their property (Waitangi Tribunal, 2003). Conflicts followed as surveyors started marking out sections on pā land, including iwi members removing survey pegs, and later armed confrontations (Buchanan, 2011b; Waitangi Tribunal, 2003).

From the late 1840s the history of Te Aro pā is one of successive loss: first, of gardens and resources (Waitangi Tribunal, 2003): then in the 1860s of community, as colonial Native Land Courts 'individualised' Māori land title, to break down collective ownership. Te Aro pā was surveyed into 28 allotments, which the Crown granted to particular individuals and small groups.

Figure 2: Te Aro pā 1857-58 (in the centre, surrounded by stockades, with the Waitangi swamp behind it) (Detail of photograph PAColl-D-0008; reproduced courtesy of the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, N.Z.)

The photograph in Figure 2 shows the pā and the Waitangi swamp; but also shows settler houses where the gardens had been. Continued expropriation was followed by population loss, as many of the pā's residents returned to Taranaki or moved around the harbour (Waitangi Tribunal, 2003). The population of the pā went from 186 in 1850 to only 28 in 1881 (Love, 2012b), and continued pressure meant that the last Māori landowner was recorded in 1902 (Love, 2012b). Iwi were not only moved out of Te Aro, but of all the other settlements around Wellington city, resulting in the 2013 Census data finding that in Wellington city, Māori are only about 7% of the city's population, and iwi manawhenua make up only about 7% of Wellington Māori (Ryks, Waa and Pearson, 2014). Māori are 14.9% of New Zealand's population (Statistic New Zealand, 2013) so this relative invisibility is noteworthy. Blair (2002, p. 63) describes such losses on iwi as "… a loss not only of lands, but also a loss of an effective kinship system, a system that provided the basis for their identity and hence, sense of place."

Both earthquakes and harbour reclamation meant that the original shoreline was no longer visible, and by the mid 20th century, only the name 'Taranaki Street' was a reminder of the former inhabitants.

Te Toenga o Te Aro – unearthing the whare

In November 2005, in the process of excavating foundations of a new apartment building, some of the remains of Te Aro pā were uncovered beneath lower Taranaki Street. One of the archaeologists described to us the moment when, with half a metre of gravel removed, they saw a posthole and an intact whare site started to become visible.

While and archaeological team worked on the site, the New Zealand Historic Places Trust, the developer, the Wellington City Council and the Wellington Tenths Trust (a Māori land trust then acting as the iwi manawhenua for the city) came to an agreement in which, in exchange for additional stories being added to the building, the ground floor and the whare were preserved as a 'heritage site' (Heritage New Zealand, 2008). On October 11, 2008, elders led a dawn ceremony to open Te Toenga o te Aro, the remnants of Te Aro (Buchanan, 2011a).

Figure 3: Te Toenga o Te Aro. Photograph: K Stuart

Te Raukura: Keeping the waka warm

> We are really trying to turn back the clock on history. Of course you can't do that in the sense of what's traditional, but you can in a way that's modern (Love, 2010)

As the story of Te Aro pā shows, from around 1880 until the 21st century Wellington iwi had no place on the waterfront, or indeed in the central city, to call 'our own'. The location of Te Raukura on reclaimed land, close to the shoreline of Te Aro pā and by the city's popular waterfront walk, has both practical and symbolic value.

The original Wellington City Council proposal for a building to house the carved waka (canoe) was for an aluminium Skyline garage. While the council saw the need as simply storage, the iwi followed the late tribal leader Sir Ralph Love's statement that the building must be capable of housing more than one waka, and that more was needed to 'keep the waka warm', (Love, 2010). It took nearly a decade of negotiation before the building we see now could be built (Love, 2010).

Te Raukura deliberately departs from the 20th century carved meeting house. Designed by distinguished New Zealand architect Stuart Gardyne (Harvey, 2015), it is a purposeful contemporary design (Harvey, 2015) that contrasts with its surrounding buildings: late 19th century wooden settler architecture, and 20th century concrete commercial buildings. While the architect is non-Māori, the design was developed with elders and tribal leaders (Love, 2010).

Figure 4: Te Raukura. Photograph: K Stuart

The shape of the house is based on a traditional whare design which uses the human body as the template, so that the roofline is the spine which carries the weight of the building, covered by a folded korowai or cloak, the roof of the building (Figure 4). The design also shows triangles reflecting the sails of waka hourua, sailing vessels used by the Polynesians when voyaging to Aotearoa.

As Brown points out (2005, p.106), modern multipurpose buildings have "virtually no precedent in Māori architectural history." Te Raukura is three buildings in one; a whare tapere, holding traditional rituals such as pōwhiri (welcomes), gatherings and entertainment); a whare kai (here a cafe and catering service); and the wharewaka - which remains the name often used for the building as a whole - housing several carved waka. Te Raukura's name comes from the feathers of the albatross worn by Te Atiawa and Taranaki Whānui people, the symbol of Taranaki leaders Te Whiti and Tohu (Buchanan, 2011).

The stories of Te Raukura and Toenga o te Aro

In Stuart's interviews with members of Wellington iwi on the history and future of Māori participation in Wellington's urban development, several interviewees offered both Te Raukura and Te Toenga o Te Aro as examples of how future development must be grounded in the Māori history of Wellington, often in ways that evidenced emotional connection or disconnection. It was decided to explore further the extent to which either or both places were developing meanings and values for people of the iwi manawhenua, and if so how those meanings were conceptualised or expressed.

In the process of searching the 'gray literature' we found that non-Māori (Wellington residents, tourists, and researchers) were writing, photographing and expressing online their own narratives. We looked at some of these stories, both because they show contrasts and similarities with iwi views, and because Te Raukura and Te Toenga o Te Aro were deliberately designed as places with a public face.

Grounded theory methods (Charmaz, 2006) were used to identify and organise themes from eight interviews carried out by Stuart. The interviewees were selected using 'snowball sampling' to gather a range of data, so included people with strong lifelong connections to iwi; others at an early stage of reconnecting, or people who knew they were affiliated to the iwi but had less knowledge and connection. The interviewees were kept anonymous, in accordance with the research's ethics approval. The analysis was also informed by other data sources including literature (see 'Conclusions'), and discussions at hui and conferences with iwi members, Māori landscape designers, architects and heritage experts illuminated and contextualised emerging themes.

We discuss iwi stories and understandings, then outline some themes emerging from non-Māori expressions, finally reviewing our conclusions.

Iwi stories and meanings

Iwi members' comments were characterised by the personal and emotional – feelings of connection, disconnection or isolation, pride, and sometimes a degree of shame connected to disconnection or lack of knowledge about their tribal history resulting from the effects of Wellington's colonisation. In doing so, all interviewees either explicitly or implicitly saw the past as real and important in the present. It must be noted that not all interviewees had considered the past and present links between Te Raukura and the Te Aro site, and asking about their views of both places may have prompted interviewees to make that connection.

The three underpinning themes that emerged from interviews and discussions were unearthing the layers, becoming visible, and growing the footprint. Almost all interviewees talked about layers – physical and narrative; visibility of place and people; and the idea of a Māori footprint or a place to start from in the contemporary city.

Uncovering or unearthing was a common and powerful theme, both literal when applied to Te Toenga, and metaphorically as 'layers of stories'. Interviewees talked of how little they knew about their own history, as well as how little the city values its Māori history, with official brochures starting the city's history in 1839.

Te Aro pā was seen as having many stories, of which interviewees might have only little awareness at present but to which they attached value. Themes within this included loss: "Te Aro pā shows the marginalisation of a people"; and resistance: a theme which referred to iwi pulling out survey markers in 1840. This non-violent action was seen as previewing the peaceful resistance of Taranaki people against land seizure in the 1880s, which is a significant element of pride for Taranaki descendants today (Buchanan, 2009).

Interviewees did not see Te Toenga o te Aro as 'heritage', but more as a taonga or treasure, with one saying "'Heritage' is something that's kept away from people." The personal relevance become very clear in one interview, with interviewer and interviewee talking of a common and well-known tupuna (ancestor) who lived at Te Aro pā for several years, and the interviewee commenting that "The pā is nice to have as a proof of our existence."

This quote shows that Becoming visible had some of the same attributes as Unearthing the layers, but was expressed through such ideas as 'real', 'concrete', 'public' and 'everyday'. To everyone interviewed, Te Raukura was a place where their people were becoming visible in a positive way – a contrast with the negative ways in which Māori are so often portrayed in media and statistics. Visibility was contrasted with the previous invisibility of the iwi, with loss and marginalisation. One author (Stuart) noted in 2014 that:

> Living in Wellington is a daily experience of having powerlessness made visible – through the daily invisibility of Māori; therefore the value of a building [Te Raukura] – [it] pins us to our place.

Normalisation was associated with identification and pride, especially in the context of the small number of Māori living in Wellington and the even smaller number of iwi manawhenua.

> Personally – I like that there is a visible place … that I walk past every day … that has our iwi's name on it … that is distinctive.

The visibility of Te Raukura's design was highlighted by some, in such words as "When you see it, you say 'It's so cool!'" Other people interviewed focused more on its uses – most had been there for meetings, conferences, meals or iwi events such as the launching of a waka. This day-to-day interaction, which might seem trivial to others, was far from that to interviewees.

Te Toenga o Te Aro was seen as less 'visible' in Wellington's day-to-day living. Not only is the site small, but it is inside the ground floor of a building on a street that pedestrians generally walk through to get to the city or waterfront. As discussed under the following theme, several

interviewees wanted to see the site made more visible – the 'becoming'. But it was valued as showing the lived reality of Taranaki whānui's place here and the reality of its peoples' lives.

Extending the footprint

The themes of 'reclaiming a footprint' or 'extending the footprint' were common, and referred to both Te Raukura and Te Toenga. Reclaiming a cultural footprint was an explicit aim of building Te Raukura (Love, 2010), and we were interested to know how much that had been achieved. Interviewees recognised its value as "a point of opportunity – creating a foundation", but narratives were more focused on extending the footprint, feeling strongly that more could be done to build on what is there now. Suggestions included Te Raukura being a base for electronic or other resources to help iwi members connect with their heritage and ancestry.

Several interviewees wanted to see more done (eg by the city council) to tell the stories of Te Toenga o te Aro to Wellingtonians, to counteract the lack of Māori narratives in how the city presents itself. One interviewee, considering for the first time the linkage of Te Raukura and Te Toenga, started envisioning how the two sites could be visually linked through art, and how the boundaries of the pā could be represented in Wellington streets:

> What would you [visitors] like to know about it … when you get a sense of the physical patterns of a plan. When you're standing in a site, to know how it connects …

This narrative of a new kind of cultural footprint was reflected by others:

> It's a conduit to our cultural future. It provides a financial base, but it's also a showpiece at an international level of us not running round in grass skirts.

Tauiwi (non-Māori) narratives

In tauiwi perspectives, Te Raukura and Te Toenga o te Aro were depicted as quite different in role and function. The first story of Te Raukura, almost as soon as the building was completed, was of 'the wharewaka' as an architectural object, claiming a strong visual place for itself in a highly used public space. It won a 2012 national 'Commercial Architecture' award, with the chief judge describing it as "Prickly and armour-plated" (Tyler, 2012). Its distinctive design, as well as its location, has meant that photo-sharing websites such as Flickr include hundreds of images of Te Raukura. However, few of these expressions locate the building in the city's history.

Both location and design have made the building, particularly the café, a well-used space. Typical of comments on Trip Advisor and other tourist discussion sites is "a tranquil respite on the edge of the city" (STQRY, undated). An underlying theme is relaxation, comfort, and a connection with the water (a sheltered lagoon), as shown in Figure 4. Alongside this, a common narrative is Te Raukura as a base for 'authentic' Māori experiences, with the Trust that manages it running waka (canoe) tours and Māori walking tours which include Te Toenga o Te Aro. This almost daily visibility of waka on the harbour so close to the CBD, and the increasing number of images, illustrates in another way the iwi story of 'normalising Māori in the city'.

While these stories all locate Te Raukura in the contemporary city looking to the future, by contrast the visible remains of Te Aro pā appear to be seen as a view into the past, a site of heritage. So far there has been relatively little expressed about the pā in tourists' visual or publicly written narratives. The heritage narrative also identifies some divergent views; for instance, at the time the agreement to preserve the site was made, an anonymous commentator on the 'WellUrban' blog said:

> So that the public will be able to see some rotted stumps of ponga, outlining the position of whare used at some stage pre 1880. There will no doubt be a glass panel in the floor and wow, you can look down and see mud and some ponga in a vague square. Well excuse me, but that's just not that interesting. (WellUrban, 2007).

By contrast, a heritage expert interviewed for this research commented that:

> History is not just buildings. It makes people aware that history is also about what's in the ground … not immediately visible. We should be considering it as important also.

Australian cultural heritage historian Tracy Ireland (2012, 2015), has described Te Toenga as an example of conservation in situ, a site that aims to make visitors feel 'connected to the past'. Te Toenga also featured in in Sir Tony Robinson's 2014 series of the TV programme Time Walks.

Conclusion: tūrangawaewae, time and meaning

Durie (2010) argues that there is a Pacific approach to valuing heritage, characterised by fusion of the tangible and intangible; continuity in time; and ecological harmony. Objects and places have mauri, so no creation exists separately from the external world, and indigenous heritage has "a temporal dimension that moves simultaneously in both directions" (2010, p.245). 'Authenticity', Durie says, comes not from distance but from a continuing relationship with the present, and indigenous people are not distant bystanders but active participants in shaping a 'heritage' place for the future. These themes resounded with our interview data: while Māori interviewees rarely used such terms as 'mauri', their narratives in some way reflect Durie's idea of tangible and intangible fusion, and Te Toenga o te Aro and Te Raukura were both seen as having a place in the past – even if one not yet fully understood by many iwi members – and in the future.

The narratives of iwi interviewed - unearthing the layers, becoming visible and extending the footprint – all speak of the value of tūrangawaewae. Mead (2003:272) asserts that "The global society notwithstanding and despite the stunning technology of the modern world, land will always be an important part of how we define ourselves as people." It may be argued that a people whose tūrangawaewae was so long invisible may give it a particular value, and we believe that these narratives tell a distinctive story of Wellington iwi.

One of the challenges for the future will be how these narratives and values can be kept and enhanced, as well as negotiated with the values that other Wellington residents and visitors give to place. As Love (2010, p.98) noted while Te Raukura was in construction:

> "That's [the Wellington waterfront] a space that mainstream people of Wellington feel very strongly about, it's 'their' space - so is there a sense that they are going to get

something out of the building? And we're not just looking at a Wellington audience, but at potentially tourists, particularly from overseas."

The indications from this research are that 'mainstream people' are increasingly getting something from both buildings. They are creating visual and linguistic narratives for international audiences, and have meanings for New Zealanders such as the heritage expert interviewed who described Te Toenga o Te Aro as "visible indigenous knowledge."

To the external view, Te Aro could be seen as an icon of the past, a touchstone; while Te Raukura could be seen as an icon of the future. We suggest that while, as architect and urbanist Tommy Honey commented "We can't set out to design icons, it doesn't work" (Honey, 2015), the meanings that Te Raukura and the Te Aro site have already accumulated indicate they have the potential to become icons over time. Te Aro in particular still has aspects and stories which are yet to be 'uncovered' - not only if new parts of the pā are unearthed in the future, but as more of its stories are made 'real' to the descendants of its builders and inhabitants. Both places are telling a story that has only begun.

Acknowledgements

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