

**Lady of the Woven Light, Lady of the Tide:  
Hinateiwaiwa and the Ritual Knowledges of the Whare Tangata**

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Doctoral Research Summary

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This doctoral research examines censored and marginalised ceremonial traditions related to Māori women through a mana wahine epistemological framework. Mana wahine is a Kaupapa Māori methodology that interrogates colonisation as dehumanising of Māori women. Theories of mana wahine are concerned with the way Māori women's knowledge, roles, status, and stories have been corrupted and re-defined through the Victorian interpretative lens of many of the colonial ethnographers. These representations, often steeped in ideologies of female inferiority, have been reproduced for well over a century and are drawn upon by some Māori in the quest for cultural reclamation. Through this process Māori women have inherited a textual history of derogatory narratives about our reproductive bodies, supplanting customary stories that link us to cosmologies that celebrate the whare tangata (house of humanity-womb). The consequences continue to produce political outcomes that impact on the lives and wellbeing of Māori women and their whānau.

This research seeks to overturn narratives of female inferiority in Māori society by carefully returning to examine Māori oral and recorded literatures (such as karakia, mōteatea, whakatauki, karanga, tribal, navigational, and cosmological histories and stories) related to the whare tangata. This research also gathers stories from Māori cultural practitioners, artists and healers who are continuing, evolving, and renewing whare tangata ceremonial practices and philosophies.

My research falls under the domain of the female deity Hinateiwaiwa, who sits at the head of women's ritual knowledge traditions across Polynesia. Despite her dominance in pre-colonial Māori society, very little is known of her today. My research has taken

me across the Pacific Ocean to the lands of our elders, the Hawaiians, who continue to house her chants and storied landscapes. Whilst examining Hawaiian knowledge related to Hina has deepened this research by providing an Oceanic epistemological framework, it also contextualises the work within the broader political project of decolonising the Pacific.

Reclaiming whare tangata ritual knowledge is important because it is empowering, healing and liberatory. This research will produce emancipatory customary knowledge to uplift Māori whānau and iwi and provide wider society with rich ethnographic knowledge based on evolving Māori wisdom traditions of which little is known today.