

Oral HISTORY

in New Zealand

Oral History in New Zealand is an annual publication of the National Oral History Association of New Zealand, Te Kete Kōrero-a-Waha o Te Motu (NOHANZ).

NOHANZ also publishes a quarterly newsletter. Its editors welcome news, letters, notes on sources, articles or reviews relevant to the principles and practice of oral history.

Subscription rate (individual or group) is \$30

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Editorial

With the exception of Yang Xiangyin's article on oral history in China, all the articles in this year's journal are based on presentations given at the conference, 'Know Your Place: Locating Oral History' in Auckland in July 2003.

They include a very useful discussion of issues which need considering when recording a local history project, by keynote speaker, Linda Shopes. Linda argues that while 'place' must obviously be an important theme of local history projects, it is also useful to think about other areas that can be covered in the interviews — areas that may make the interviews of more general interest.

Mere Whaanga's article is a detailed and interesting study of how listening to oral tradition can be useful for learning more about an area and the people from a particular area, while Penny Robinson writes about how people construct their own sense of place.

In his article, Yang Xiangyin gives us an insight into the practice of oral history in China and how, as in New Zealand, it has struggled to find a place in academia (particularly in history departments).

We have introduced a new section this year — Work in Progress — to allow people to give shorter reports on their projects. We hope that this will be a regular feature.

MEGAN HUTCHING

Community Histories

LINDA SHOPES

I will begin by briefly mapping the terrain of oral history as it is practised in communities, and then consider in depth two broad concerns: how the content of community-based interviews tells us something of the ways people think about community, and the dynamics of community collaborations, or who gets to say what.

'Community History'¹ is a frustratingly vague term, applied to a plethora of projects and programmes involving, in various ways, the method of oral history. Recently, I attempted to articulate a framework for encompassing the range of community oral history work and came up with a schema that locates community projects along two axes:

- One defined by provenance, that is to say, a project's point of origin and its purpose.
- The second by what I call 'voice,' or the extent to which the narrator's or the historian/interpreter's voice dominates the final product of the interviews.²

One could identify 'types' of oral history work lying at the poles of each axis – scholarly study at one end of the provenance axis, grassroots project at the other; interview transcript at one end of the voice axis, interpretive study at the other – but

here I wish to emphasise that community oral history projects often exhibit a remarkable blurring of genres. We have, for example, a book like Milton Rogovin and Michael Frisch's *Portraits in Steel*³ – one third photographic essay of men and women displaced from their jobs when Buffalo, New York's steel industry shut down in the 1980s, one third edited interviews with these men and women about that experience, and one third scholarly assessment of the causes and consequences of what we call, perhaps euphemistically, deindustrialisation. We have the community history galleries in the Historical Society of Washington D.C.'s new City Museum, which feature rotating exhibits on individual D.C. neighbourhoods, done in collaboration with the neighbourhoods and involving a good bit of oral history. And I note Suzanne MacAulay's work with Cook Island women (tivaevae makers) in New Zealand, discussed in the 2002 NOHANZ journal, *Oral History in New Zealand*, as an academically oriented researcher's efforts to work collaboratively with a community of women.⁴

All demonstrate the way community oral history resists easy classification and suggest, too, the way community projects

open up opportunities for a public history, that is, a social or public space where scholars, institutions, and local people come together to 'do history.'

Each axis along which I have conceptualised community oral history work – the axis of provenance, and the axis of voice – also raises certain questions about content, or what is said, in the case of provenance, and about interpretive authority, or who gets to say what (at least in public), in the case of voice.

What is said?

Some years ago, in an effort to understand vernacular notions of history, I hit upon the idea of reading transcripts of a number of community-based interviews.

LINDA SHOPES works as an historian and programme administrator at the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission in the United States. She is an editor of *The Baltimore Book: New Views of Local History*, has written numerous articles on oral and public history; is co-editor, with Bruce Stave of the University of Connecticut, of Palgrave's Studies in Oral History series; and has worked with numerous oral history projects and programmes over the past quarter of a century. She is a past president of the US Oral History Association.

Because interviews are explicit conversations about the past, I thought that this exercise might help me understand something of the ways people make sense of the past and their relationship to it, and that this understanding, in turn, might help inform a more self-conscious practice of community interviewing. I read transcripts of about 75 interviews conducted in six Pennsylvania communities between 1972 and 1992. My choice of Pennsylvania interviews was purely expedient – they were easily accessible to me, and I could justify the project as part of my job. Included were interviews from the steel-making towns of Homestead and Bethlehem and the candy-making town of Hershey, the Pennsylvania German-dominated city of Lancaster, the small town of Middletown, and the city of West Chester, home to a large Quaker community. Narrators included working-class, second and third generation ethnics, small town old timers of the middling sort and what might be referred to as old-stock roots – the local leadership class in mid-sized communities, and upper middle class members of the Society of Friends.

What did I find out? The most obvious, consistent, and to me surprising finding was the extent to which ‘place’ figures in people’s memories: narrators located their stories in specific places, their stories are saturated with what is often referred to as a sense of place. In some interviews, personal and local history are collapsed and defined almost entirely in terms of specific places. A narrator in one of the Hershey interviews, for example, when asked to ‘identify three of your most memorable experiences in Hershey’, responded by linking

memories to specific places: marrying her husband at the First United Methodist Church, attending the ground breaking for the Hershey Medical Center, and attending events at the Hershey Theater.⁵ Typically, talk on any subject is interlarded with place references, often resulting in seemingly interminable catalogues of ‘what was where when’ and in painstaking efforts to identify the spatial coordinates of a specific site. Moreover, recollections of specific places often lead to a chain of human associations, again suggesting narrators’ need to place memories some place. ‘When we moved back home at the hill from the Bard farm, I was eight years old,’ one narrator began. He continued:

My mother raised turkeys. We used to carry them all the way from that hill, down cross the old covered bridge to East Middletown, and she sold them for eight cents a pound. ... We’d cut back by Sam Seiders’ farm and then we’d cut across old Ev Booser’s farm in back of where Detweilers lived to the dam. ... The Sam Demy farm later because Sam Seiders’ farm and is now Simon Grubb’s, Seiders’ grandson’s farm. Mrs. Seiders had a retarded brother. When [Sam] Hess [her father] sold to old man Bard, there was a \$2000 dowry set aside for this boy and the interest used to his keep. Sam Hess, before he died, had the stone house where Matt Seiders lived built for this boy. That was his home and the old mother’s after the father died. When the mother died and he got worse, the relatives took turns with him and Matt bought his house.⁶

Here we have information about a woman’s contribution to the family economy, the transmission of property, and the care of the disabled at the turn of the twentieth century in a rural community all embedded in a

chain of associations about a specific property.

While it can be argued that the place consciousness in these interviews may simply be the artefact of their creation as local history projects – local history is de facto about some place – the one does not necessarily follow from the other. Local history does not necessarily have to be defined by locale. It could alternatively be equated with a set of social relationships, with narrators cataloguing social groups instead of places, or as a series of public events. More to the point, the nearly automatic equation of local history with locale suggests how deeply place matters in individual consciousness and that a sense of community often includes a shared set of spatial referents. This observation opens up interesting possibilities for a self-consciously place based community oral history: what places define a community, or how the same place is viewed differently by different groups within the community.

The second theme that emerged with particular sharpness in the Pennsylvania interviews I surveyed is the importance of ‘hard work’ in shaping a person’s life and identity. This is, perhaps, not surprising, given the dominance of heavy industry in the state’s history and hence the dominance of blue collar workers in the universe of narrators I surveyed. ‘Our people ... they’re the ones who built the steel mills to what they are today!’, the union activist Adam Janowski stated proudly and emphatically in a 1976 interview in Homestead. ‘They took everything in stride, I’ll tell you,’ he continued. ‘I seen them myself. I was a young man and I seen how hard those fellows used to work.’ This observation is

repeated in one way or another in interview after interview, and narrators' consciousness of 'our people,' to use Janowski's words, as hard-working undoubtedly reflects the material conditions of their lives.⁷

But the story gets more complicated. Most of the interviews are utterly silent on issues of race, itself evidence of the way community has been conceived. Here Janowski is unusual, for he revealed an explicitly racial dimension to his understanding of 'our people,' whom he defined this way:

After the [1919 steel] strike, they wanted to lay [black strikebreakers] all off. At least they laid off ninety percent because the men was experienced in their jobs and the foremen could call the white man a goddamn hunky and tell him to get that goddamn thing moving! But they couldn't say that to a black man. He would pick up a bar and hit him over the head, you know? Our people took that all the time. They're the ones who built the steel mills.⁸

Perhaps still bitter about black strikebreakers more than a half century later, undoubtedly mindful of the way 'his people' indeed 'took that all the time,' perhaps reading the black militancy of the 1970s back a half century, Janowski completely misreads the history of black labourers in the steel mill and in so doing, suggests how white workers' sense of themselves as 'hardworking' is deeply racialised.

In another, this time from the Lancaster collection, a racial theme quite unexpectedly ruptures the flow of talk. The narrator, a white person and lifelong resident of the town, where he owns a small business started by his father, is recounting

his mental map of the community at an indeterminate time in the past. He begins with topography and physical features and then moves into social geography and observations about ethnicity:

Interviewer: You just talked about neighborhoods. Were there a lot of ethnic neighborhoods?

Narrator: Yes ...

Interviewer: Was there an Irish enclave?

Narrator: Yeah, let me put it this way. St. Catherine's Church was out, which is now out on East Lincoln Street, way out ... they had all the Italian people. The oldest Catholic Church was St. Mary's down on Green Street ... that was the oldest Catholic Church in the city and the county. St. Mary's ... they were all Irish, in the beginning they were all Irish.

Interviewer: Was there ever an oriental population?

Narrator: No

Interviewer: Mostly European?

To which the narrator responds: *'Yes. This is what happened in the city today. We never had anything, problems that they have today. I don't know why people are down on Puerto Ricans, but they are in this city.'*⁹

Clearly, the narrator, like many, is troubled by contemporary ethnic relations and, also like many, recalls a past when social life seemed less stressful. That is on his mind; it comes out without anyone asking. But the interviewer's next question is a complete non sequitur. She asks, 'How about the fire brigades?', to which the narrator obligingly responds with appropriate information.

The general silence about race in these interviews, the avoidance of the necessarily difficult discussion about why 'people are down on Puerto Ricans in this city', point to troubling assumptions about 'community' embed-

ded in many community-based interviews. A prime assumption is the equation of 'community' with 'commonality' - that somehow coexistence in the same 'place' results in similar and self-contained experiences. Many community history projects are organised around this assumption, as if a community's history can be defined by a set of more-or-less biographical narratives of people who live in the same place. Yet this formulation erases difference within a community: it fails to take into account the fact that different racial and ethnic groups have had very different experiences, or that women and men, or members of different generations within the same ethnic/racial group have lived life very differently, even though they all live in the same place. Nor does it take into account the role of outsiders, whose actions nonetheless effect the community in significant ways.

This tendency to assume an undifferentiated social experience in many community oral history projects is linked to a deeper structure in the stories we tell ourselves about the past, that is the assumption of comity, or perhaps more accurately, a fear or denial, of lack of comity in our communities. While a couple of interviewers did enquire about, and some narrators did bring up unbidden certain difficult topics, topics that involve some inner or social tension, in general, discussion of such subjects is side-stepped - in fire brigade manner - or at best muted. Sometimes the cause is ignorance, not knowing even to ask more probing questions; sometimes politeness, wanting to 'make nice' when a difficult subject is opened up. And sometimes, I suspect, the cause is

the interviewer's own discomfort with a difficult topic. This is my hunch about the fire brigade question – the interviewer was caught off guard by the narrator's comment about Anglo-Latino relations and lacked the poise to follow up appropriately. Whatever the cause, the result is a collusion between interviewer and narrator in the creation of a deeply sanguine view of local history.

The poet Kathleen Norris calls this 'the local history mentality' in her provocatively titled essay, 'Can You Tell the Truth in a Small Town?' published in her collection of essays, *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*.¹⁰ It is a question that suggests the boosterism, the denial, that is so deeply a part of many community history narratives. The local history mentality creates a progressive narrative, 'obsessively harmonious' as Norris phrases it, and often sentimental, insofar as its frequent trope of 'we survived,' 'we overcame' leads to a romantic celebration of ethnic roots, community pride, and family survival. Certainly in the United States the local history mentality can be linked to notions of patriotism and civic pride nurtured, might one say manipulated, by institutions of culture. Norris identifies an ambivalence about change, a rage at failure – and the unacceptability of these emotions – as underlying family and community efforts at mythologising the past, and suggests the profound sense of alienation spanning several generations that these genteel and denying histories can engender.

Let me offer three brief suggestions for avoiding some of the collusions, silences and mythologies that creep into community oral history interviews and projects. Firstly, I

propose conceptualising a community history project around a historical problem or issue rather than a series of life history interviews. A community is formed around the intersections of individual lives, a shared sense of we-ness along one or more dimensions of identity: what are the points of connection? Of tension? Of alienation? What historical problem defines the community, and how can this problem be explored through a series of specific questions about the lived experience of individual narrators? Consider the community of Second World War veterans. Beyond a discussion of training and battles, of losses and return, what can we ask these men and women that connects their individual experiences to broader questions about the way the war did – or did not – form a generation? Or about how the war experience is linked to the formation of cultural and political views, about sacrifice, patriotism, duty? How did later experience change or complicate these views?

A second suggestion is to define the universe of narrators broadly, and always ask, 'whom am I missing?' We tend to interview community insiders and people with long term relationships with a community, but what about newcomers, or people who have left the community, who found it unsatisfactory in some way? What about people external to the community whose actions nonetheless impinge upon it – businesspeople, civic leaders, bankers, teachers. Including a range of narrators simultaneously deepens the inquiry and extends it outward, helping us understand both the complexity of the community under study in its own right and also its relationship to a

broader historical process.

Thirdly, I would suggest consciously and deliberately approaching a community history project in a spirit of critical inquiry. In part this means organising the project around a set of historical questions that need to be addressed by working with community collaborators or the project team to articulate more consciously the vague and nagging concerns about change and loss that often motivate these projects. It means discussions, in advance of any interviews, about why memories of specific events, or people, or places, in a community's past are significant – what they point to, why they are important to remember.

Critical inquiry also means defining an individual interview as a mutual exploration of the problem at hand; it means historicising the conversation and asking the hard and uncomfortable questions. Ask people about their perceived choices in a given situation and why a given choice was made: "You know, these days women are tending to marry at an older age. Why do you think women like yourself married younger?" Ask people about perceived social differences in a community: who did you think was 'above' you in town, who did you consider 'below' you? Pin narrators down on generalisations: 'People are down on Puerto Ricans in this city,' our narrator quoted above observed. "What do you mean by this? Who is down on Puerto Ricans? Why do you think this is?" Often interviews veer into comments around a perceived decline in the quality of civic and family life: ask them what, specifically, disturbs them, and how they account for the changes they have seen. One of

my favorite questions when the discussion takes this turn is, "How do you explain that?" Responses often yield rich and thoughtful reflections lying underneath clichéd complaints. These sorts of questions may not be easy to ask or to answer, but the result may well be a more nuanced and humane understanding of the way individuals live in history.

Who gets to say what?

Not all oral history is governed by the parochialism of what I, following Norris, have been calling the local history mentality. In what I hope is not too precarious a conceptual leap, I would like to turn now to a different tradition in community work, one I would call broadly political, or activist, and link it to the second axis along which I have aligned community oral history projects, that of voice, and the related question of interpretive authority, or 'who gets to say what.'

Underlying what I am calling 'activist' oral history is an awareness of the inequalities of power among people and a desire to bring to public consciousness a history of activism, protest, and contests over power, to present positive and respectful views of those with little power, who are often understood in superficial and stereotypical ways, and to use history as a means of education and change. Although there are certainly cultural antecedents to this sort of oral history in the work of documentarians and reformers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was in the context of the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s that activist oral history found its fullest expression. The freedom schools of the civil rights movement and the consciousness

raising groups of the women's movement helped to create a cultural form that was both grounded in personal stories and sought to link those stories to broader relations of power. The oral history work done in the past two decades related to issues of identity also falls appropriately within this tradition, insofar as it seeks to make visible, in affirmative ways, that which has been hidden, or ignored, or despised.

Community oral history done in this activist tradition also opens the possibility of redistributing intellectual authority and of subverting cultural power as project participants – interviewer/interviewee/community organiser/scholar-consultant – work together to create new narratives of the past and make those narratives public in accessible forms. Here then is the link to the issue of voice: activist oral history generally seeks to operate in a cooperative or, what some term, collaborative manner, as oral historians, often themselves with one foot in the community being documented, work together with community members in planning, developing, and executing the project.

You are perhaps familiar with the notion of 'shared authority', the phrase coined by Michael Frisch as the title of a collection of his essays: *A Shared Authority: Essays in the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History*.¹¹ It is a concept that in a more restricted sense refers to the dynamic of an oral history interview, in which the questions of the interviewer elicit certain responses from the narrator, which in turn shape the interviewer's subsequent questions, and on and on. The phrase captures the mutuality of this process, the way interviewer and

narrator 'share', or work towards, a common understanding of what it is important to talk about, of what the significance or meaning is of the events under discussion. In a more expanded sense, however, 'shared authority' refers to the socially and intellectually democratic process of collaboration. That is the sense in which the term was used to frame a group of articles on collaborative oral history work in the current issue of the *Oral History Review*, the journal of the United States Oral History Association.¹² I had the privilege of commenting on those articles, and while I do not want to rehearse those comments here, I would like to expand on a couple of them.

The key issue is that of interpretive authority: What stories get told in a community collaboration? And who gets to decide this? A few years ago I raised this question at an oral history meeting, using as an example an exhibit about Italians in the Western United States. Folklorists affiliated with the Folklife Center at the Library of Congress had done fieldwork in a number of Italian-American communities, and these communities then had cooperated with the Library of Congress in mounting the exhibit. I questioned the presentation of the Italian family in the exhibit, which was depicted as uniformly warm, generous and vibrant, and dedicated to enacting rituals of solidarity, generally involving large amounts of traditional homemade food. What about generational conflicts, or gender tensions?, I asked. Later in the programme a Latina from Washington, D.C., involved in a community documentation project with the nation's Smithsonian Institution, vigorously defended

the Library of Congress's exhibit. Why, she asked, should we ask a community to air its dirty laundry in public, especially when at least some elements of the public are all too willing to use what is presented to reinforce stereotypes?²¹³

Why indeed? Wendy Rickard, a British oral historian whose article about a collaborative oral history project with sex workers appears in the current issue of the *Review*, angles into precisely these questions. She first observes something I, too, have noticed in interviewing those with less social power than I - that the peculiar dynamics of an interview, its intimacy, and the fact that we interviewers want something from narrators, can allow for a rough social equality within the highly framed encounter of an interview. The bigger challenge lies in making something of the interviews, in presenting them in some public format. On the one hand, as Rickard notes, it is all too easy to cut and paste quotes from interviews into our own analytic categories, thus making narrators stand ins for ourselves. On the other, a commitment to rendering a narrator's or a community's perspective, to surrender our own interpretive authority, can silence the historian's desire to generalise, critique, theorise.¹⁴

Some years ago Jeremy Brecher, reviewing a book in which interviews with male blue collar workers were used as evidence of their often crude and exclusionary sexism, asked a good question: 'What is the nature of our implied contract with our informants, and what limits should that contract place on the way we present them?'¹⁵ The same question can be asked of community collaborations. What do we do when we come up against a

community's blind spots, its sexism or racism, its often unconscious exclusionary practices, its everyday behaviours that have profound consequences we can understand only as negative? We can reflect on these dilemmas after the fact, but what do we do when we have to do that exhibition, publish that book, develop that community drama?

One way out of this dilemma is to take 'sharing authority' seriously, to recognise that while both parties may need to cede some interpretive authority, neither party need relinquish it altogether. This may mean the lengthy process of working toward a resolution of differences, an approach taken by some of the authors included in the *Oral History Review* essays noted above. It may mean allowing for differences, even disagreements, to come out in the published work or other product, in a sort of layering of interpretations. Sometimes it can mean saying different things in different components of the project - a book, for example, can often include more nuanced views than an exhibit - or different parties saying different things to different audiences. Yet such resolution may not always be possible. There is, I believe, an inherent tension in sharing authority. Sometimes 'we' do need to mute our voices out of respect for narrators, as perhaps folklorists working on the Italian Americans in the West exhibit did, sometimes narrators do not get to have the last word. Yet compromise, I find, can be disquieting, and resolution perhaps not always desirable.

Which gets me to my final point: while collaboration certainly is a responsible, challenging, deeply humane - and in

some cases perhaps necessary - approach to community projects, it may well not be appropriate in some situations. As oral historians, operating within an activist tradition, we tend towards interviewing people with whom we are in broad sympathy - hence our valuing of sharing authority. But we need to think carefully about how deep that sympathy is. We need to think in advance about areas of experience to which it may not extend, and how we wish to handle that. We need to think carefully when, and with whom, we wish to share intellectual control over our work and when, and with whom, we do not. We need to be clear where and how we want to differ with narrators when there is no room for a shared perspective. This last can be especially difficult because, at a basic level, the interview dynamic is deeply collaborative, making distancing ourselves from views we have elicited in a moment of intimacy and trust ethically complicated. I would thus counsel collaborative work only when all parties share a general intellectual orientation to the subject at hand and similar broad social goals *and* have considered in advance what areas of potential difference may be and how they will be handled. In other words, we need to think long and hard before entering into a community collaboration.

Endnotes

¹ This article is based on a presentation given at the oral history conference in Auckland, 19-20 July 2003

² For a fuller discussion of this schema, see Linda Shopes, 'Oral History and the Study of Communities: Problems, Paradoxes, and Possibilities', *Journal of American History* 89-2 (September 2002): 588-598.

³ *Portraits in Steel*, photographs by Milton Rogovin, interviews by Michael Frisch, New York, 1993.

⁴ Suzanne P. Macaulay, 'Finding Local Coordinates in a World of Difference', *Oral History in New Zealand* 14 (2002): pp.1-10.

⁵ Betty H. Baum, interviewed by Monica Spiess, May 1, 1991, Hershey Community Archives Oral History Program, transcript, pp. 26-27.

⁶ Clayton Heisey, interviewed by Mrs. Herbert Schaeffer, February 1, 1972, Middletown, Pennsylvania Oral History Project, transcript, p. 6.

⁷ Adam Janowski, interviewed by James R. Barrett, June 14, 1976, Homestead, Pennsylvania Oral History Program, transcript, p. 12.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Clarence Kunzler, interviewed by David Vaughn, April 22, 1992, Operation Remember: Lancaster County Library [Oral History Project], transcript, p. 13.

¹⁰ Kathleen Norris, *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*, New York, 1993, see especially pp. 81-88.

¹¹ Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History*, New York, 1990.

¹² 'Special Feature: Shared Authority', in *Oral History Review* 30:1 (Winter/Spring 2003), pp. 23-113; includes articles by Daniel Kerr, Wendy Rickard, Alicia J. Rouverol, and Lorraine Sitzia.

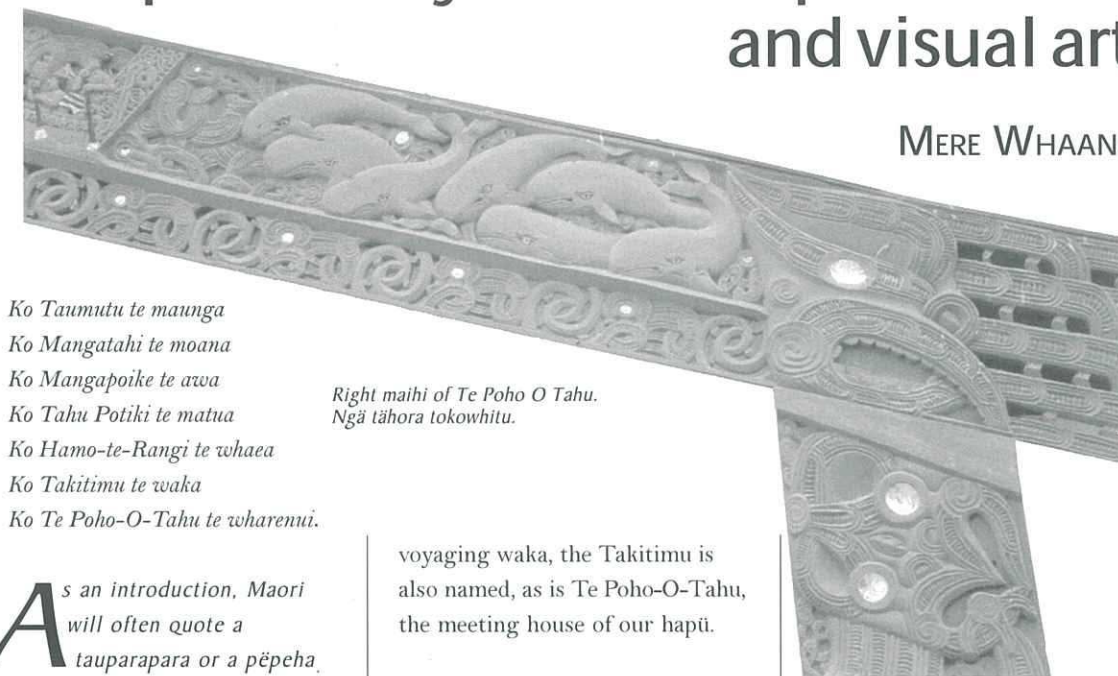
¹³ For an extended commentary, see Linda Shopes, review of 'Old Ties, New Attachments', *Journal of American History* 82:3 (December 1995), pp. 1162-1166.

¹⁴ Wendy Rickard, 'Collaborating with Sex Workers in Oral History', *Oral History Review* 30:1 (Winter/Spring 2003), pp. 47-59.

¹⁵ Jeremy Brecher, review of *Brothers: Male Dominance and Technological Change* by Cynthia Cockburn, *International Journal of Oral History*, 5:3 (November 1984), pp. 194-197; quote from p. 196.

Telling our stories: hapū identity in waiata, pakiwaitara and visual arts

MERE WHAANGA



*Ko Taumutu te maunga
Ko Mangatahi te moana
Ko Mangapoike te arua
Ko Tahu Potiki te matua
Ko Hamo-te-Rangi te whaea
Ko Takitimu te waka
Ko Te Poho-O-Tahu te whareniui.*

*Right maihi of Te Poho O Tahu.
Ngā tāhōra tokowhitu.*

As an introduction, Maori will often quote a *tauparapara* or a *pēpeha*, that names the *maunga*, *awa*, *waka*, *iwi* and *hapū* with which they primarily associate. Behind this encapsulation of identity are extensive *whakapapa* that include cosmological beliefs, as well as ancestral links and the histories of exploration, land claim, occupation and rights to cultivations, fishing grounds, and forest resources.

We tell our important stories in many art forms – in *mōteatea* or *waiata* of various types, through the carving and *tukutuku* that adorn the *whareniui* which in its entirety is a declaration of identity, and through writing and contemporary art.

The *tauparapara* above names the mountain, lake, and river of the ancestral land where I spent most of my childhood. The block is known as *Paparatu Station* and is part of the *Te Whakaari Incorporation* in which the descendants of *Tahu Potiki* and *Hamo-te-Rangi* are major shareholders. Our ancestral

voyaging *waka*, the *Takitimu* is also named, as is *Te Poho-O-Tahu*, the meeting house of our *hapū*.

*Tangi amio toroa tai-kakapu uta
Ngā Tukemata o Kahungunu
Whakamaumaharatanga
Ngai Tahu Potiki Matawhaiti
Hikunui Iwitea Korito Onepoto
Tahutoria Takitaki Tuhara
Ngā tāhōra mauri o te waka
Takitimu
Te Repo o te Waiatai e
Te whakaruru hau o ngā tāhōra
tokowhitu nei
Te kainga tūturu o te waka tapu a
Matawhaiti
TE TOKI A TAPIRI e...*

This *waiata* was composed by my father, *Te Hore Epanaia Whaanga*, in the mid-1980s. Concerned that the stories and history associated with *Iwitea Marae* were known by very few, he conducted a number of *wānanga* for the descendants of *Tahu Potiki* and *Matawhaiti*. To accompany the *kōrero* that he passed on to the *hapū*, he composed a number of *waiata* and *tauparapara*. These are essentially synopses of the stories that are important to *Ngai Tahu*

Matawhaiti and the people who affiliate to *Iwitea Marae*. Each word or phrase has significance, and in learning such a *waiata*, it is important that the story behind every name is learnt before the *waiata* is sung. Much can be learned of the history of *Ngai Tahu Matawhaiti* by knowing the stories behind each of the eleven lines of this *waiata*.

Tangi amio toroa tai-kakapu uta
A *tangi amio* is a song that

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rooms or circles about. It will name geographical features such as hills, rocks, rivers or significant places that are often boundary markers or indicators of the extent of the tribal group's mana whenua or authority over land and resource areas. There are instances of this type of waiata being sung at Maori Land Court meetings to help prove a claim to a block of land.

This waiata names significant places around Iwitea and the first line also refers to the waves curling upon the beach which is the eastern boundary of the hapū land. Along Korito Beach are several wāhi tapu of our people – old urupā, the twelve tōtara tapu that were central to the vision of the prophet Te Matenga Tamati and other evidence of ancestral occupation.

Ngā Tukemata o Kahungunu

Kahungunu was the son of Tamatea Ure-haea and great-grandson of Tamatea Arikiniui, commander of the Takitimu canoe. He was the eponymous ancestor of Ngāti Kahungunu – a tall, handsome man who had many wives in his journeying southwards from his birthplace of Kaitaia. Rongomaiwahine of Nukutaurua was the eighth, and it was at her home at Mahia that Kahungunu settled down and lived into old age. Ngāti Kahungunu are the descendants of Kahungunu and Rongomaiwahine.

One of their descendants, Kotore, lived at Omaruhakeke pā, situated near Marumaru in the Wairoa district. It was at the time of the death of Kotore (and his two sons Umurau and Tamahikawai) at the hands of Apanui, ancestor of Te Whanau-a-Apanui, that the expression “Nga tukemata-nui o Kahungunu”

came into being. Kotore had been wounded and was about to be killed. He looked up at Apanui and said:

“Ehoa, ko te weriweri ai ka takoto ai au ki roto ki to puku” (Friend, what an ugly man like you, for me to lie in your stomach). Apanui asked where there was a better-looking man and Kotore, looking towards his two sons, replied “Ara, kia pera me nga tukemata-nui o Kahungunu e arahina mai ra” (There, be like the broad handsome face of Kahungunu being led towards us).¹

Hence in later generations the name ‘Nga Tukemata-nui o Kahungunu’ was applied to all the descendants of Kahungunu.

*Whakamaumaharatanga
Ngai Tahu Potiki Matawhaiti*

In these two lines we are

exhorted to remember our hapū identity, more usually referred to as Ngai Tahu Matawhaiti. Our tradition is that Tamatea Arikiniui handed command of the waka Takitimu to Tahu Potiki at Maunganui near Tauranga. Tahu Potiki was the younger brother of Porourangi, eponymous ancestor of Ngati Porou. Tahu was travelling to the South when he heard that his brother had died. He returned and took Porourangi's widow, Hamo Te Rangi, for his wife. Their descendants in the Wairoa area became Ngai Tahu. Tahu Potiki and Hamo Te Rangi are also the ancestors of Kai Tahu of the South Island.

Matawhaiti was a descendant of Tahu Potiki, but of sufficient



Doorway of Te Poho O Tahu. The central figure is Hamo Te Rangi. The figures either side are Tahu Potiki (left side) and Porourangi (right side).

prominence that his descendants became the hapū Ngati Matawhaiti. The contours of his pā are still to be seen near the Iwitea Road junction with the main highway to Gisborne. Ngai Tahu and Ngāti Matawhaiti intermarried and eventually

The whales are also named as tāhora mauri (guardian or talismanic whales) for the waka Takitimu, the ancestral voyaging canoe of Ngai Tahu Matawhaiti and Ngāti Kahungunu. The Takitimu was a sacred canoe because atua, among them

Tapiri was a notable ancestor of Ngati Matawhaiti, and of Te Waaka Tarakau, the leader who oversaw the building of Te Toki a Tapiri.

One thousand men worked in relays to move the giant tōtara to Tura-moe, the place where it would be fashioned into a waka, a



Right maihi of Te Poho O Tahu. Representation of Te Toki a Tapiri.

became indistinguishable from one another, hence the hapū name Ngai Tahu Matawhaiti.

*Hikunui Iwitea Korito Onepoto
Tahutoria Takitaki Tuhara
Ngā tāhora mauri o te waka
Takitimu
Te Repo o te Waiataie
Te whakaruruhau o ngā tāhora
tokowhitu nei*

Named here are the seven whales whose guardian was a tohunga who lived between the Whakaki Lagoon and the hill named Tahutoria. The whales slept in the Waiatai Valley (Te Repo o te Waiatai) and were meant to be out at sea each day before dawn. When one day the baby Hikunui slept in, the tohunga became very angry and cursed and turned all seven whales into hills – the sacred maunga of the hapū. This ancient legend was published as the children's book *The Legend of the Seven Whales of Ngai Tahu Matawhaiti/Te Pakiwaitara o ngā Tāhora Tokowhitu a Ngai Tahu Matawhaiti* in 1988. It has since been reprinted several times.

Kahukura, were brought to Aotearoa aboard this waka. Ruawharo, the senior tohunga of the Takitimu, alighted at Mahia. He deposited sand there that he had carried from Hawaiki and is said also to have established the mauri of the whales there, as well as setting up extremely important whare wānanga on Waikawa (Portland Island) and on the Mahia Peninsula.

*Te kainga tūturu o te waka tapu a
Matawhaiti*

TE TOKI A TAPIRI e...

The Waiatai Valley and the traditional lands of Ngai Tahu Matawhaiti are the original home of the sacred canoe Te Toki a Tapiri. This war canoe, now residing in the Auckland War Memorial Museum, was crafted by Ngāti Matawhaiti. Hewn from one tōtara log, it is about eighty-two feet (25m) long and six feet wide. It is capable of carrying 100 warriors.

The name of the waka has been translated by a number of early writers as 'The Axe of Tapiri'.²

distance of several miles.³ Tura-moe was a fortified pā on the Hereheretau block at Whakaki, where many fine waka taua were built.

Te Toki a Tapiri, at this stage without the whakairo that now adorn it, was given to Te Waaka Perohuka of Ngāti Rongowhakaata as a gesture of thanks for his help in battle.⁴ Rongowhakaata gave in return a famous cloak named Karamaene.

Te Toki a Tapiri was then carved by Rongowhakaata at Te Angaparera on the banks of the Waipaoa River, nearly opposite Orakaiaapu pā. It is thought that Raharuhi Rukupo was one of the carvers who worked on Te Toki a Tapiri. Rukupo is best known for the carving of Te Hau ki Turanga meeting house which stood at Orakaiaapu pā. This wharentui, the oldest surviving meeting house, now resides in Te Papa Tongarewa in Wellington

Around 1853 Te Waaka Perohuka presented Te Toki a Tapiri to Tamati Waka Nene and his brother, Patuone, of Nga Puhi.

They sent to Perohuka a piebald stallion called Taika (Tiger), and he in turn gave Taika to Te Waaka Tarakau of Ngati Matawhaiti. It is uncertain whether the waka was given first or in exchange for the horse.⁵ It is likely that Taika was the first horse ever seen in the Wairoa district. The presentation of Te Toki a Tapiri to Nga Puhī was to mark a new peaceful relationship with them, Rongowhakaata and Ngāti Matawhaiti both having suffered in the Nga Puhī raids of the 1820s. In their raids, Nga Puhī had taken prisoner four sisters who had lived at Tukemokihi, part of the ancestral lands of Ngai Tahu Matawhaiti. They were related to both Te Waaka Tarakau, who oversaw the building of the war canoe, and Waaka Perohuka of Rongowhakaata, who had carved Te Toki a Tapiri. The sisters were renowned for their singing and were well treated by Nga Puhī. It has been suggested that their release was secured by the presentation of Te Toki a Tapiri to Nga Puhī.

Te Toki a Tapiri sailed upon the Waitemata Harbour for a number of years, then Hone Hopiha Te Ketetani (William Hobbs) of Ngati Maniapoto negotiated the sale of Te Toki a Tapiri to Kaihau and Te Katipa of Ngati Te Ata, at Waiuku. Ngati Te Ata paid £400 for the waka. Nene and

Patuone gave the entire £400 to Hopiha. Te Toki a Tapiri was then portaged across to the Manukau Harbour:

When war broke out in the Waikato, all the canoes on the Manukau were seized by government forces, among them Te Toki a Tapiri. Te Toki a Tapiri was later taken to Onehunga where it lay on the beach for several years. It was seriously damaged when a midshipman belonging to HMS *Harrier* attempted to blow up the waka.

The bitter war in the Waikato ended on 27 May 1865. The government attempted to return Te Toki a Tapiri to Ngati Te Ata in 1876, but they refused to take it as it was so damaged as to be useless to them. Hori Tauroa of Waiuku petitioned the government for compensation, but was refused. The Compensation Court however upheld the Ngati Te Ata claim, and they were awarded £600.⁶ Hori Tauroa wrote again in 1882, stating that 'a sum of £200 was paid to the children of Kaihau for the canoe *Tokiatapiri*, whilst he had got nothing.'⁷ The reply from the chairman of the Native Affairs Committee was that the Government had 'fairly met all just claims in regard to this canoe, and the matter ought not to be reopened'.⁸

In 1869 Te Toki a Tapiri was portaged across the isthmus and repaired sufficiently to take part in

of the visit of the Duke of Edinburgh. Upon his return to England, the Duke took with him the tauihu of the waka. Te Toki a Tapiri was then given into the care of Paora Tuhaere of Ngati Whatua O Orakei for more than a decade. Finally it was presented by the Government to the Auckland Museum in 1885.

Conclusion

This tangi amio then covers many of the identifying characteristics of the hapū Ngai Tahu Matawhaiti – land marks and boundaries, iwi affiliation, prominent ancestors and important whakapapa, taonga and the accompanying history that includes conflict with both Māori and Pākehā. It is an example of how oral history was preserved, remembered and handed on to new generations – a taonga tuku iho.

Endnotes

¹ J. H. Mitchell, *Takitimu*, Wellington, 1972, p.118.

² Auckland War Memorial Museum Ethnology records, 2002. *Te Toki a Tapiri*.

³ See T. Lambert, *The Story of Old Wairoa and the East Coast*, Christchurch, 1977, p. 205.

⁴ Rongowhakaata Halbert, *Horouta*, Auckland, 1999, p. 90.

⁵ Lambert, p. 206.

⁶ Ethnology file No. 150. Auckland War Memorial Museum.

⁷ *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1882, vol. II. 1-2.

⁸ *Ibid.*

Whose Place? Mine, yours or ours?

Creating photo-conversations based around participant-generated images and combining the information gained with oral histories to develop insights into lived experience

PENNY ROBINSON

I have lived in Wanganui for over 25 years, but for a long time felt that I did not 'belong', and that I had two 'homes', or, to phrase it differently, two physical, spiritual and emotional 'places' to which I belonged or might belong: my childhood home on a farm in Northland, and my 'temporary' home in Wanganui.

When I began doctoral research in social anthropology, working with a total of sixteen women, I was trying to find not only 'my place' in Wanganui and 'in the world',¹ but also to discover how other women determined and perceived their 'place' in Wanganui. Although I conceived 'place' as physical, and began the research with that premise, the research participants demonstrated that their concepts were many and varied. This was revealed through processes including video-taped personal narratives, focused conversations about 'place', participant observation (including videotaped and still images of people and events), photo-elicitation² using images of Wanganui both historic and recent but very public, again on videotape, and finally, participant-generated current images and photo-conversations.

I became interested in oral history as a research methodology,

and as a means of recording personal narratives following increased international, national and local interest in oral histories. NOHANZ had been in existence for well over a decade, raising the profile of oral history and its use in Aotearoa New Zealand. In addition, my own local community had become 'aware of the value of oral history' with the Whanganui Regional Museum developing its own oral history archive as noted by Michelle Horwood.³ My enthusiasm was rekindled following a 1998 radio interview with New Zealand oral historian Basil Avery who stated, 'Everybody's remarkable, really!'⁴ In doing so, Avery affirmed my perspective on people, developed during 25 years working as a photojournalist and, latterly, teaching, managing my own business, being actively involved in academic study as a social and visual anthropologist, and in community research. An earlier research project enabled me to develop my oral history recording skills and, as a result of that experience and a desire to come closer, if possible, to the essence of a person, I elected, with participant agreement, to record the interviews on video camera. While most participants were initially aware of the camera's presence they became increasingly

relaxed, and in some instances, unaware of the videotaping, as they talked about their lives. They made remarks like, 'I forgot that thing was still on,' and 'Oh, the camera's still running, isn't it?' In many respects, because it was a silent recording medium, participants reacted to it as if it were less intrusive than the single lens reflex camera I use for recording still images.⁵ This was despite the camera being placed on a tripod at a distance from us both.⁶

As I noted above, the final stage of the 2000-2001 research involved interviewing the participants using photographs they had agreed to take over a period of two months (and again recording the interviews on video-camera) to highlight important places, events, and aspects of their lives. In one respect, asking them to include a range of images may have clouded the emphasis I had initially given to place, however, the evolving research indicated that to continue to do so would limit the understanding that could

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be derived from this wider request. It also demonstrated that concepts of place vary, and that unless a researcher is very specific about what is meant by place, many concepts arise, extending the range of what is revealed. This approach was valuable in revealing the participants' social, political and spatial concepts of place within very elastic boundaries, providing what Dolores Hayden refers to as the 'overload of possible meanings for the researcher'.⁷ She argues that 'Place' is one of the trickiest words in the English language...[carrying] the resonance of homestead, location and open space in the city as well as position in a social hierarchy'.⁸ It is also pertinent to note, as she does in citing geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, that different disciplines have different concepts of place, some physical, some pertaining to atmosphere, some pertaining to ownership, others to a 'sense of belonging'.⁹ Tuan argues that senses of places involve both biological response and cultural creation.¹⁰ He essentially argues that what is merely 'space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value' and that the more time we spend in a place the more familiar it becomes.¹¹ In doing so, it can be argued that we may develop a sense of belonging in or to that place.¹² However, there are other factors involved, including similarities of experience, history and possibly identity - not a topic I propose to discuss in any detail here, but which became apparent through my research.

Returning to the image making process, I had found that using historic images and recent images of public places was not adding much to my understanding of the

participants' lived experience, nor of how the participants defined, developed or maintained a sense of belonging, identity or connection to place. As a result, I decided that there might be another way of clarifying and explicating what that was. I sensed the presence of more than was being revealed within the participants' lives and perceptions. Their personal narratives told much of the story, reflecting on the past, but I was curious about the present, and how the past might impact upon their daily, lived experience. I concluded that it was time for experiment and that adopting a different approach might enable me to perceive their experiences more clearly, and to compare and contrast those experiences with my own. The participants were all, like me, Pakeha¹³ New Zealanders of British, European or South African origins. Their ages ranged from 39 to 87 years old; some had been married and were widowed or divorced. Some were still married, others had never been married. Some had children, others had no children. Most had some form of tertiary education or training, shared similar socio-economic backgrounds to my own.

Several had been educated in church schools; others had regularly attended church as children and young people. Some still attended church regularly. Their interests and activities covered a wide range, managed within physical and economic constraints. What was perhaps most relevant was that three-quarters of the participants (12 of 16) were, like me, incomers to Wanganui. I had not intended, originally, to conduct research on such a group, but rather on people who had been born and raised in

Wanganui. However, in their recorded conversations, several had remarked on how difficult it had been to develop friendships in Wanganui and how mostly, the friendships made and maintained were with other incomers. In that respect they were also "like me". Others, who had been born and raised in Wanganui, were also 'like me'¹⁴ in that their ethnic, socio-economic and educational backgrounds were similar, and they had experienced life in one 'place', just as I had experienced the first 25 or so years of my own life firmly attached to one place. Despite, or perhaps because of, these similarities I was still struggling to grasp clearly how they conceptualized their 'place', this 'place', what that 'place' was and their concepts of belonging or not, to Wanganui, to Aotearoa New Zealand and the world. I was still trying to determine what they rated as important in their lives, to develop a more rounded or holistic picture, rather than what I had thought might be revealing. And that is where the value of inviting the participants to take their own photographs was valuable.

In doing so, I followed a colleague's recommendation. Others have followed a similar path.¹⁵ While many have carefully planned the projects in association with the participants, as McIntyre did in her study of women in an area of Belfast in Northern Ireland, I adopted a fluid approach and simply invited women to participate, provided each available participant¹⁶ with a disposable camera and asked them to photograph, over a period of two months, places, people, and events of importance to them. Because the participants live in what might be referred to as a

'camera' culture, all were familiar with using a camera, and required very little, if any, instruction, in how to use the 27-shot, colour film, disposable cameras with flash. From early December 2000 to late January 2001 the participants photographed aspects of their lives. The final images included birthday parties, Christmas celebrations, visits with relatives and friends, trips to other centres both within and beyond New Zealand. Some participants photographed their gardens, their workspaces and places, at home and/or in the community. All but one included people in the images but in that situation the images were mnemonics pertaining to significant people or life events. In at least two instances, the participants involved their families extensively making the camera available for anyone to take photographs. In those instances, participants often appeared in the images, standing tall and strong, and a focus for their families. In other selections, participants photographed aspects of life themselves, as well as including themselves in the images. The range of images is similar to the images one might expect to find in family photograph albums – family, friends, pets, visits to other places and the like.¹⁷ However, they also included some less usual images, a young man asleep on the sofa on Christmas Day, a family working together to erect a swimming pool, close-ups of garden borders, garden tools and produce, people reading, cooking, teaching others to do so, judging competitions, and viewing personal inscriptions in the landscape. In one instance, a participant photographed her bible, the King James version, a possession so personal I would

either have felt reluctant to photograph or not even have recognized as so highly esteemed in that person's life despite her identifying herself as 'a child of God'.¹⁸

Each participant and I reviewed the images they had made, and contrasted those with the images I made as a participant observer. The images were thoughtful, reflective of a range of concepts of place—spiritual, emotional/relational and physical. I gave each participant a copy of all the images and, in one instance, destroyed an image at a participant's request. To simplify this process I ordered duplicate prints at the time of processing. Sometimes participants appeared overwhelmed and offered to pay for the processing, but ultimately they accepted the images gladly. For me, it was an appropriate exchange and a gift, a way of thanking them for their involvement.¹⁹ In addition, all participants received copies of their videotaped interviews as well copies of the transcripts.²⁰ Each one checked their transcripts, making minor amendments, or correcting spelling but was generally satisfied that what they had told me accurately reflected their thoughts at the time. Some families asked for extra copies of the videotapes and others are now exploring their contents again, to ensure they have knowledge of older family members for posterity. Although original videotapes and transcripts are still in my possession most participants have now agreed that the material generated should be archived in a suitable facility.

Remembering that this is a work-in-progress, I am endeavouring to find ways of providing a context for the images and

interweaving those with the text. In a previous project, which resulted in the publication of a family 'book' I interwove participants' comments with textual and photographic material. In this current project I am proposing to include the participants' comments about their images, and my own about the images I made. While this is clearly secondary level engagement with the text and images, it demonstrates clearly what images were created, contextualises them, is an attempt to demonstrate the visual/verbal nature of our encounters, and provides, en masse, a visual realization of the concepts of place the participants hold. These range from physical to emotional, to relational and spiritual. They also demonstrate intergenerational contacts, the variety of different 'places' and 'spaces' the participants occupy, and the very complexity of defining 'place' as a concept, the multiple, fluid, changing nature of 'place'. Ultimately, they provide a satisfying demonstration of extensive participant involvement, empowerment, validation of women's lives, a means of providing a voice and eyes for participants and researchers, enabling others to 'see' and 'hear' more clearly how ordinary, remarkable people create daily life, connections, and a sense of belonging. That they all 'belong', that they all have a 'place' somewhere, became clear as the research evolved. The places and spaces they referred to and regarded as important were reflected in the oral histories/ personal narratives/ life stories gathered, were multiple, flexible, fluid, and determined according to a range of social and cultural mores, changing attitudes, and

statuses – including age – and self concept.

The process has additional benefits, many of them intangible, but which benefit participants, the researcher and our extended communities. They include the creation of a 'place' or 'time' for reflection on the part of all involved, validation of a person's life, an opportunity to extend one participant's research to a wider group, for instance their extended community of family and friends. The outcomes are far-reaching. The use of photo-conversations triggered what Parekawhia McLean has described as a 'marvellous web of interests that connect people together'.²¹ The benefits I perceive as arising included:

- A record of participants' lives as they and their communities (family or otherwise as they chose) perceived them
 - The ability to combine these with personal narratives/life stories/oral histories to provide visual as well as textual references to their lives
 - Addition to family archives when participants or their families kept copies of the video-taped interviews and associated images
 - Addition to archives of self-generated snapshots of life in addition to researcher generated perspectives
 - Participant and personal affirmation
 - Instances of extended family collaboration
 - An increase in inter- and intra-familial interaction
 - Examples of collaboration within the researched community
 - Participant-generated photo-conversations.
- The experience has, thus far,

enriched my life in ways I could not have perceived when I began the project. For me, it highlights the importance of being flexible throughout the research process, of operating in an encouraging environment, of being aware of participant preferences and of the needs not only of the participant but their relatives. It also highlights how much pleasure people derive from self-generated participatory research, the value of seeking information through open but diverse means, and the array of connections and results, that can develop in an encouraging and supportive environment. As a concept, place, for me, has been considerably extended by my involvement in this research. At the same time, it has, for the participants, enabled them to share aspects of their lives and to provide an emphasis that I might not have recognized as having the value the participants attributed and revealed.

Endnotes

¹ Michael Jackson, *At Home in the World* Durham and London, 1995

² A method described in detail by Vincent Caldarola relating to photographing processes to learn more about them by then asking those involved to discuss the event and add oral descriptions to the visual. Vincent Caldarola, 'A Photographic Research Method in Anthropology Studies' in *Visual Communications* 1985, vol vi, 11, pp 33-53.

³ Michelle Horwood, 'Oral History and the Whanganui Regional Museum Experience', NOHANZ annual conference, 1995. Non-academics were also increasingly aware that if they did not act fast enough stories died with society's elders.

⁴ Basil Avery, 'Everybody's Remarkable, Really: Oral History in the Making'. In *Touch with New Zealand*, Radio New Zealand, April 1998

⁵ The SLR makes an audible click as the photographs are made. In her work

with a silent order of nuns in the United Kingdom, New Zealand photographer Anne Noble purchased a camera with silent operation to enable her to work less obtrusively.

⁶ I deemed it appropriate to include myself in the recording process, and, after some experimentation, I sat beside the participant on a couch or separate chair, or else on the floor. The video camera was opposite us both. This enabled us to discuss the photographs, reveal them to the camera, and maintain our conversation. In instances where there may have been a power differential, it assisted in reducing it and enabled me to feel I was demonstrating a degree of respect for age. Sometimes we both sat on the floor.

⁷ Dolores Hayden *The Power of Place, Urban Landscapes as Public History*, Cambridge, Mass, 1995, p. 18

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 15

⁹ *Ibid*, p.16

¹⁰ *Ibid*, cited p.16

¹¹ Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, London, 1977, p.6

¹² *Ibid*, p.186

¹³ There is considerable debate about what white immigrant settlers to New Zealand should call themselves, and how others should refer to them. I use the term 'Pakeha' to indicate people of European ancestry, usually white and generally born in New Zealand. Our backgrounds and experiences are similar to the 2000 New Zealand women Julie Park and others discuss in their definitive text, *Ladies A Plate*, 1991; the 100 women described by Rosemary Barrington & Alison Gray, *The Smith Women*, 1981, and ongoing contact with men like those Alison Gray describes in *The Jones Men*, 1983.

¹⁴ Many anthropologists study cultures and lands other than their own, although it is becoming increasingly common for them to study within their own homeland and culture, while oral historians, it seems, regularly work within their own communities. Those anthropologists who do study within their own communities are often those regarded as originating from the so-called 'Third World' who have gained qualifications elsewhere and return to their homeland. My own experience is therefore somewhat different in that I chose to study women of similar ethnicity, socio-economic and

educational backgrounds, thus reducing the power differential somewhat.

¹⁵ More recently Alice McIntyre writes of her involvement in a project in Northern Ireland where the writer and residents planned a photographic account of their lives in Belfast. The project explored how a group of working-class women 'experience the place(s) in which they live.' She too discovered that place as experienced by those women was pertained to 'multiple place-relationships... mediated by the sociopolitical history of the North of Ireland, as well as by the gendered, classed and religious-mediated contexts in which women live.' Alice McIntyre, 'Through the Eyes of Women: photovoice and participatory research as tools for reimagining place', *Gender, Place and Culture*, vol 10, no 1, pp 47-66

¹⁶ Of the original sixteen, ten eventually accepted cameras while another provided access to her own extensive collection of photographs of places, people and events.

¹⁷ Richard Chalfen, *Snapshot: Versions of Life*. Bowling Green, Ohio, 1987

¹⁸ Ruth Jane, interview, 14 July 2000, p. 16

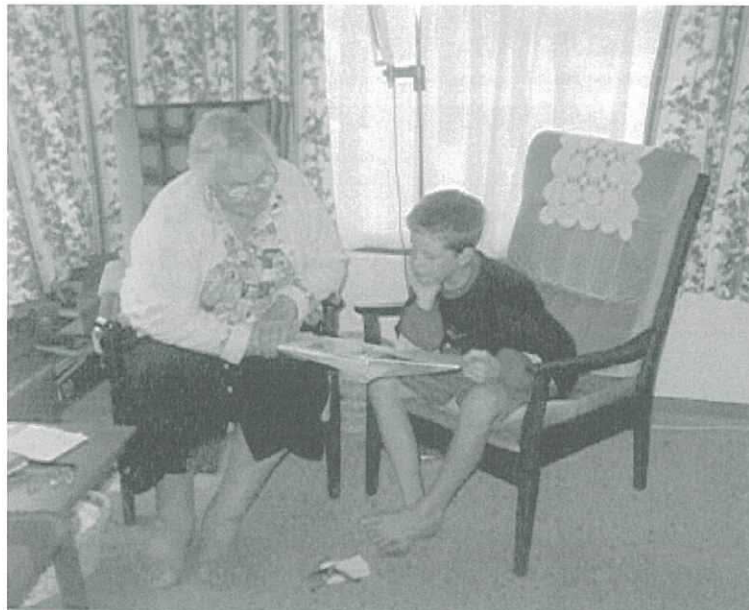
¹⁹ This is a tangible contribution I felt I could make, and one that other anthropologists make frequently as the cost of photographic processing has reduced. It can still be expensive. Rudge refers to similar exchanges and expense incurred during her research in an Indian village in Amanda J. Rudge, 'Do You Want To Listen Or Not?', Ph.D dissertation, Palmerston North: Massey University, 1996.

²⁰ The videotapes and disposable cameras were funded by a Massey University graduate student research grant.

²¹ McLean refers to the connections with reference to iwi, but they seem to apply within the networks I encountered also. Parekawhia McLean 'Oral History and Iwi Development: a personal viewpoint', *Oral History in New Zealand*, vol 8/9 (1996/7), pp. 21-24



A boy's bedroom. This photo provides an intimate glimpse of a personal space, an image only those who live in the household are likely to have the opportunity to catch. (Photo courtesy Yvonne O'Connor)



Ruth Gedye shares a book with a great-grandson. Taken by a family member, the image demonstrates Ruth's belief in the importance of transmitting knowledge to younger generations. (Photo courtesy Ruth Gedye)



In a series about work, such an image might occur. This image demonstrates how inviting participants to manage the photo process extends the research environment, and also the diversity in people's employment. Yvonne (pictured) works from an office, co-ordinating events. Here she creates a planter for use in a flower festival she was co-ordinating. (Photo courtesy Yvonne O'Connor)

Oral History in Contemporary China: Development and Challenges

YANG XIANGYIN

Over the past several thousand years, while preserving continuous written records, China has also a long history in the collection of oral history. However, as American oral historian, Bruce Stave, who came to China as a Fulbright Professor at Peking University in August 1984, noted, 'it is not easy to investigate the status of Chinese oral history. It seems like the architecture of Beijing City, ...hidden behind the back of ramparts... . There is not an organized oral history society in China, unlike other western countries.' Stave described this situation as the 'Chinese puzzle'.¹

By reviewing articles in English on oral history in China, I found that they did not accurately reflect the real development, efforts and challenges of oral history in China. In order to remedy this, I will give a comprehensive overview of oral history in China since the founding of the People's Republic of China.

American Heritage: Taiwan Oral History

In a sense, the advent of oral history in Taiwan was the outcome of the impact of Columbia University Oral History Research Office founded by Allan Nevins in 1948. In 1958 the 'Chinese Oral History Project' of

Columbia University, overseen by Professor Franklin L. Ho and Martin C. Wilbur within the university's East Asian Institute, was established to record the oral recollections of prominent Chinese leaders of the Republican era, 1911-49. In the ensuing decades, sixteen outstanding figures have been interviewed, including Hu Shi (1891-1962), a scholar of international stature, Gu Weijun (1888-1962), diplomat and Vice-President of the International Court of Justice at the Hague, and Li Zongren, acting president of the Chinese Republic at the time of the Communist takeover in 1949.²

Under its director, Professor Lu Shiqiang, the Institute of Modern History (IMH) established the Oral History Group in 1984 to continue their oral history enterprise and published their oral collections entitled 'Oral History Series'. Eighty two publications were issued between 1982 and 2003.

At first, the oral history interviewees were mostly 'great men'. *Oral History Interview Principles of IMH* indicates that 'the aim of the oral history interview is to record the memoirs of significant persons who mostly come from political, military, diplomat, economic, education, cultural, and academic circles in

Taiwan life.' IMH conceived of oral history as a way to record the otherwise unwritten recollections of prominent persons for future historians, for research, and as a resource for writing biography.

The growth of the 'new social history' raised fundamental questions about the ways in which historians had looked at the past. Moreover, the radical politics of the 1960s emphasized the urgency of building a new history, a history from the bottom up, of members of the working class, of ethnic and racial minorities, of women. Oral history was a way to describe and empower the nonliterate and the historically disenfranchised. Against this background, IMH extended their focus to include members of the working class, of ethnic and racial minorities, and women. IMH put much emphasis on recording women's oral history: they have published six publications since 1992.

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Another influence from the United States was the attitude to the transcript and tape. When reading the oral history books published by IMH, we find that these books are a kind of memoir - the interviewer is removed from the book. This practice originated at the Columbia University Oral History Research Office whose founder Allan Nevins insisted that 'the interviewer was a neutral, objective collector of other people's reminiscences. This concept was carried to such extremes that the questions were eliminated entirely in the Columbia's early transcripts. The interviewee's responses were rendered as an uninterrupted narrative.'³ Other oral historians rejected this practice and claimed that the interviewer was not neutral and objective, and that such a transcript must destroy the integrity and real intention of oral history because it could not reflect the impact of the interviewer on the interviewee.

Oral History in China, 1949-1980

Before the introduction of the western concept of oral history, oral history in the Chinese Mainland was being carried out under the term, 'Diao Cha' (investigation, fieldwork).

The tradition of 'Diao Cha' can be traced back to ancient times. However, as a scientific research method to study Chinese society, it began in the 1920s. In 1926, there were two famous research organizations in Chinese academia: the Social Investigation Unit at the Chinese Education and Culture Foundation, and the Social Group, Institute of Social Sciences at National Academy. They carried out a series of social investigations on Chinese villages

and published many case studies in the following decades.⁴

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Diao Cha continued as a popular research method. In a sense, this continuation is the outcome of an appeal from the Chinese Communist Party which stressed the importance of working and practicing in the grass roots society. The first large-scale investigation was a survey of Chinese minority nationalities organized by some folklorists and ethnologists in 1950s and 60s.⁵

The late 1950s and early 1960s saw another significant enterprise - interviews to record witnesses and participants in historical events. This resulted in the Collection of Literary and Historical Materials sponsored by the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), a patriotic united front which brought together numerous democratic factions and people from all walks of life to participate in the political process. In 1959, former premier Zhou Enlai emphasized the need to preserve historical materials on modern Chinese history. In his vision, China had undergone a period of profound changes since the turn of the century, and it was a duty to preserve all available sources, including oral recollections.⁶

Zhou's suggestion led to the establishment of Research Committee for Literary and Historical Materials (RCLHM) under the CPPCC in Beijing, with branches across the country, and to an ongoing campaign, at both central and local levels, to gather written and oral testimonies of those who were witnesses of, and participants in, historical events in the pre-1949 period. This project

covers a broad range of topics, including military, political, diplomatic, economic, cultural, social and overseas Chinese events of those days. The committee required that all material offered by contributing writers had to be based upon their own personal experience.⁷ The first fruit of this enterprise was the first volume of *Literature and History Materials Series* published in January 1960.

As an official data collection project, this enterprise continues to the present. Those published before 1990 mostly dealt with the period prior to the founding of the PRC, so the RCLHM suggested that the focus of collection and publication should turn to the post-1949 era. The committee proposed that, although it was important to continue preserving materials relating to those events of the pre-1949 period, there were other areas worthy of being recorded. The first efforts were published in 1994: a new *Literature and Historical Materials Series* entitled 'Post-Revolution Historical Materials'.

Currently, RCLHM has published about 150 volumes, excluding those published by local committees. In addition, in order to promote nationwide cooperation, RCLHM coordinates goals and work schedules of local branches across the country and initiates cooperative research on some specific topics. This effort has produced many topical publications about the Revolution of 1911, the Ten Year War (1927-1937), the Anti-Japanese War, the Chinese Civil War, and so on.⁸

Many Chinese oral historians (including myself) claimed that these projects were significant, although many colleagues insist that these projects are not oral history. I think this debate

originates from disagreement on the definition of oral history. Most American oral historians emphasized the importance of 'tape-recorded interviews.' Former director of the Columbia University Oral History Research Office, Louis Starr, said that, 'oral history is primary source material obtained by recording the spoken words—generally by means of planned, tape-recorded interviews—of persons deemed to harbor hitherto unavailable information worth preserving.'⁹ This concept can also be found in the Donald A. Ritchie's definition of oral history: 'oral history collects spoken memories and personal commentaries of historical significance through the recorded interviews.'¹⁰ This emphasis on 'tape-recorded interviews' does not reflect the situation of oral history practices outside of United States. For example, in China, practitioners took notes during the interview. As Luke noted, 'if we define oral history as simply a deliberate effort to collect and use oral information for the purpose of historical reconstruction, an examination of Chinese historiography opens a rich landscape to view. Other criteria, such as equipment and interview techniques, can seem secondary to the value of breaking out of the straitjacket of our own experience to adopt a truly cross-cultural perspective.'¹¹

New Developments, 1981-

The first texts to use the term 'oral history' were two articles written by M. Hieder and J. Fox published in *Social Sciences Abroad* in 1981. With these, oral history in a western context was first imported into Chinese academia, although it did not gain full

attention from Chinese colleagues immediately. In 1981, historian Hou Chengde did not use the term 'oral history' in his review essay on the history of American oral history which is considered the first writing on oral history in Chinese Mainland. On the contrary, he borrowed the term 'oral source' (Kou Bei Shi Liao).¹² There were only ten articles about oral history published throughout the 1980s and the early 1990s, and these mostly concerned general introductions to recording or were translated ones, lacking the exploration of oral history theory and methodology. In the following several years, however, Chinese oral historians began to use the term 'oral history' and discussed oral history from around the world, especially America, Britain and Japan.

Oral history in China has seen an explosive growth in the decade since the 1993. There are more scholars giving attention to oral history, including historians, anthropologists, archivists and folklorists. However, it is to be regretted that there is still no one oral history work on theory and method by Chinese oral historians, only several translations from other countries. My forthcoming book, *Conversation with History: The Theory and Practice of Oral History*, will attempt to remedy this deficit.

In 1989 *Oral History* by IMH appeared in Taiwan, and in 2003 *Oral History* was issued by the Chinese Social Sciences Press in Beijing. For many years, oral history in China and those interested in it had no printed forum for discussion or exchange of experiences and lessons, therefore they had to use the journals of general history and other neighboring disciplines like

sociology, archives or folklore. The founding of these two oral history journals was an important event in the history of oral history in China. However, they differ from oral history journals from United States and Britain. The latter mostly deal with the theory and methodology of oral history, but the former mostly publish oral history interviews and offer some space for discussion on the practice.

During this new stage more and more books using oral histories have been published, and more and more writers and historians are publishing from their interviews. Three publishers have initiated oral history series. The first is that of Peking University Press in Beijing under the editorial direction of Wen Rumin, entitled 'Oral Biography Series.' This project, begun in 1999, aims to preserve valuable primary sources by recording oral history with prominent persons. To date, ten books have been published or prepared for publication, and the aim is to produce several a year—some indication of the availability of material and the existence of a market. The subjects of this series include famous Chinese diplomats, artists, journalists, scholars and writers in the twentieth century.

The second series, entitled 'Voices of Senior Citizens in the Twentieth Century', was begun by Liaoning Education Press in Shenyang in 2002. Ten books have been published to date, all of which include excerpts of oral history interviews with famous Chinese scholars including Ji Xianlin, Ren Jiyu, Yan Jici and Zhang Dainian. This series has been praised by general readers and academia, and has become a valuable source for studying the history of culture, technology and

science of China in the twentieth century.

The third series is that of Chinese Social Sciences Press in Beijing under the editorial direction of Professor Wang Junyi and Zhang Shuxiang, the 'Oral Autobiography Series.' More than ten books have been published or prepared for publication.

Apart from these series, many other publishers have issued books which use oral history. Two have been very successful in the western world: Zhang Xinxin and Sang Ye's *Chinese Lives: An Oral History of Contemporary China* and Feng Jikai's *Ten Years of Madness: Oral Histories of China's Cultural Revolution*.¹³

There are also on-going, important oral history projects which have a clear consciousness of 'oral history' within their operations. The interviewees of the three oral history series mentioned above are all significant figures, a practice which obviously ignores the character of oral history as a means of learning about ordinary people and other topics ignored by traditional historical study. To a certain extent, the 'Twentieth Century Chinese Women Oral History Project,' designed and managed by Professor Li Xiaojiang, director of the Centre of Gender Studies at Dalian University, remedies this deficit because it concentrates on women who are disadvantaged and at the margins of power, especially the women of Chinese minorities.

The purpose of this project is to capture on tape women's experiences in their own words and show how national and other ideologies influenced them. Geographically, this project covers over 20 provinces, cities

and minorities' regions across the country, attracting 1,000 participants. There are over 600 interviews in the form of transcript, with tapes and other documents and artifacts, preserved in the Women's Oral History Archives at Dalian University.¹⁴ In order to communicate and summarize the ideas and lessons and adjust the project, two national symposiums were held in 1992 and in 1994, and one international conference on women's oral history.¹⁵ While this project undoubtedly was a great success, measured by the collection of primary sources, it did not explore questions of women's experiences and national ideology, women's memory, women's style of communication and language, the construction of female identity, the element of class, sex, gender and ethnicity in the interviews, and so on.

In more recent years, the study of rural social history in China has flourished. A new generation of sociologists has set out to reconstruct the details of how ordinary Chinese peasants once lived. Professor Sun Liping of Sociology Department at Tsinghua University in Beijing organized the project 'Collections and Studies of Oral Sources on Chinese Rural Social Change in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century' which is the most extensive rural oral history in China.

The purpose of this project is to understand the great changes in the lives of the Chinese ordinary peasants who experienced the revolution, based upon information on their feelings, memories, viewpoints and understandings contained in the interviews. Geographically it covers northern China, southwest

China, south China and central China across the country. One village in each of these regions is chosen as an investigation site. They have preserved a great deal of material on the life and feelings of several hundred older peasants, local leaders and urban citizens who had worked in those villages. This project has collected over 700 hours of recordings and published over a million Chinese characters. It will take 30 years to complete it and will result in a multivolume academic work entitled *The Social Lives of Chinese Peasants in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century*.¹⁶

The potential impact of oral history is equally powerful if we turn from rural to urban history where the Shanghai Oral History Project is a significant exploration of Shanghai City using oral history.¹⁷

Last but not least, there is growing communication between China and other countries. The initial phase was characterized by translations of work by foreign authors, and exporting information based upon the publication of articles written by Chinese oral historians. The leading Chinese oral historian, Professor Yang Liwen, who has published articles on Chinese oral history since 1987, has made a significant contribution to promoting the spread of Chinese oral history to the world.¹⁸ International conferences have also brought Chinese oral historians into contact with people beyond the borders of the China and drawn foreign oral historians to China.

Some Pedagogical Practices

Oral history has found increasing acceptance as a teaching technique. Educators have used it at every level—elementary, second

ary, college, and university—and in continuing and community education programs, including workshops for senior citizens. Oral history education is flourishing in China.¹⁹ More and more education units—mainly in history departments—are beginning to understand the important role of oral history as a teaching technique, or to use oral history in lectures and assignments.

According to my survey conducted between September 2002 and September 2003 by visiting the homepage of institutions and e-mail inquiries, oral history education in China takes place in many different contexts, both as individual and as a group undertaking: in grade schools, colleges and universities, in academic organizations and local culture centres, museums and community centres.

Of the 39 responses, 32 were from colleges and universities, while 1 was from an elementary school, 1 was from a high school, 1 was from a museum, and 4 were from others. Of those 32 college and university level courses, 17 were in history departments, although oral history also appeared in a medical school, education department, women's studies programme, religious studies department, library and information school, and Asia studies department. Most are part of larger courses on historiography, research methodology or humanities methodology.

The survey shows that history courses, for example, will focus more on the theory of oral history in the context of the historiography, whereas in other disciplines oral history courses may concentrate on the techniques of oral history interviews

(journalism), on oral history as a tool for empowering (women studies), on text analysis of oral history (education and linguistics), or on the acquisition, preservation, and cataloguing of oral history sources (library and archives).

The event that best reflects the importance of oral history in the classroom in China is that the secondary school history textbook began to introduce the concept of oral history, emphasize its importance, and encourage students to use oral history in their research. This new version of the history textbook was published in 2001 and has been used in secondary schools across the country since 2003.

Some Methodological and Theoretical Reflections

Most of the methodological and theoretical reflections of oral history concentrated on the question of oral history as evidence. This is because oral history in China was seen as a technique for generating new information, not as a technique for reflecting upon that information so as to cultivate new insights into understanding history.

The orientation of oral history practice in China, to some extent, stunted the exploration of sophisticated methodological and theoretical questions, however, in more recent years, a new generation of oral historians has been studying the relation between language, memory and the construction of identity.²⁰ Some work is also being done on the interaction of interviewer and interviewee during the interview and on relations between the individual and social (collective) memory.²¹

Conclusion: New Hurdles and Perspective

There are many challenges in the development of oral history in China. The first is the marginal status of oral history within the historical profession. This situation partly originates from the prejudice of the Chinese historical profession which depends upon documents, and distrusts eyewitness accounts such as oral history. They accuse oral history as being too subjective and less reliable because it is subject to change over time.

Of course, time will overcome this prejudice but as oral historians, we should make great efforts to show the strength of oral history as historical evidence, and as a tool of gathering new information, or as a discipline within the historical profession. Now more and more historians recognize that history not only shows us 'how things really were' or tells us 'what people did', but also tells us 'what they wanted to do', 'what they believed they were doing', or 'what they think they did.' Oral history is the appropriate technique for realizing this enterprise. As oral historian Michael Frisch asserted in his *A Shared Authority*, oral history can be 'a powerful tool for discovering, exploring, and evaluating the nature of the process of historical memory—how people make sense of their past, how they connect individual experience and its social context, how the past becomes part of the present, and how people use it to interpret their lives and the world around them.'²²

Another hurdle of oral history is that there is no national organization for oral history in China. This situation blocks the development of oral history in

China and fails to offer enough spaces and chances to exchange ideas among the practitioners. The establishment of a Chinese oral history association has become most urgent to those who commit themselves to Chinese oral history.

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Work in progress

'Piercing Memories; remembering the past to protect the future'

A project designed and run in the Immunisation Advisory Centre, (IMAC) at the University of Auckland. It is funded by the Ministry of Health. The broad aim is to improve the rate of immunisation in New Zealand. The specific aim is to record personal experiences of vaccine preventable diseases. Teaching resources are being developed to demonstrate the wide ranging effects of these diseases and ultimately the tapes will be stored in the Alexander Turnbull Library's Oral History Centre.

The diseases of interest are measles, mumps, rubella, whooping cough, hepatitis B, polio, diphtheria, tetanus, influenza, tuberculosis, *Haemophilus influenzae* type b infection, (Hib), chicken pox and pneumococcal disease.

In the early twenty-first century, not many parents, doctors or nurses have seen a child ill with diphtheria or born with congenital rubella and may have limited appreciation of the severity of many vaccine preventable diseases and their cruel long term effects. As our old people die, the devastating epidemics of the early twentieth century are fast disappearing from the national memory. 'Piercing Memories' is an oral history project, not only to record memories of the elderly, but also younger people's experiences of more recent illness. Additionally, the project is medical and social research and educational tool development.

Approval was gained from the University of Auckland's Human Subjects' Ethics Committee in June 2000. Participants sign their informed consent, also available in te reo Maori, and the oral history recording agreement form.

Initial recruitment was by snowballing and word of mouth. Subsequently we have approached, directly or through a third person, people known to have a specific disease experience. Recruitment and interviewing have been constrained by time, geography and funds but over the last three years we have recorded experiences of each disease, 180 stories altogether; 106 taped, 21 videoed, fifteen telephoned and 38 written. Three elderly Niueans were interviewed by a professional Niuean interviewer in Niuean.

Audiotaped interviews are central to the project; these are informal but semi-structured and usually last about an hour. Some key interviews are videoed and some people send written accounts. Old letters, newspaper cuttings, photographs and other material add flavour. All interviews are fully transcribed.

Stories have been recorded throughout New Zealand from a wide cross section of ages, ethnic groups and occupations. The overwhelming impression is of the sense of loss that pervades these experiences and the ongoing effects on families. Losses can be profound and encompass not only the personal grief of death or devastating physical damage, but also the loss of opportunities and the expectation of a normal life. Stories of the epidemics depict social, financial, economic and educational losses. Doctors and nurses have wept as they recalled from decades ago, but also as recently as last

year, their sense of helplessness as children were brought in desperately ill, only to die of diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio, measles or meningitis.

Many people have spoken of the stigma, fear and prejudice associated with diphtheria, influenza, polio epidemics and tuberculosis. One woman recalled neighbours crossing the road to avoid walking past her home when she had diphtheria as a child.

The transcribed interviews are now being edited and developed into short audio stories and videos to use as educational resources. Colleagues in IMAC, and particularly members of the 'Piercing Memories' Maori Advisory Group, have offered wise and valued counsel in the consideration of ethical and cultural issues. Professional film making and editing assistance during this development phase is indispensable.

Several of the audiotaped stories and videos have been piloted in group training sessions and are now available as teaching resources. These stories demonstrate personal reality of vaccine preventable disease to undergraduates in medicine, nursing and midwifery, GPs, parents' groups, immunisation advisors, public health nurses and practice nurses. Evaluations are requested whenever 'Piercing Memories' stories are used and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. The Ministry of Education has expressed interest in developing the resources for school curricula.

Protecting New Zealand children from vaccine preventable diseases remains a matter of parental choice. Hearing these stories may help parents make more informed decisions. One woman, wheelchair bound after

being struck with polio as a young married woman over fifty years ago, spoke for many who expressed regret that immunisation was not available for them or their children: "Choice!" she said, "Would I have chosen to live my life like this?"

Elaine Ellis-Pegler

'Piercing Memories' project manager

Oral history in a theatre biography

The theatre is the most social of the arts. Poetry and fiction are addressed to the solitary reader; opera, ballet and music are less well adapted to presenting their audiences with images of their own society. Only the theatre can reflect a writer's understanding of how people live together back to a representative gathering of those same people. John Thomson¹

A play script is 'hard copy', but it requires performance to bring it alive. Live theatre is powerful, it can be a force for personal and social change, but it is ephemeral. Through oral history, some of the magic of theatre is recovered as people recall experiences that had an indelible effect on them. Furthermore, oral history catches what the audience never knew, what happened behind the scenes, the life of a theatre and lives changed through working in theatre. As theatre is highly sensitive to influences, the initiate of one generation is the mentor of the next and a seed sown quietly in the dark can have far-reaching effects.

I started tracing these paths and influences when I carried out an

Endnote

¹ *New Zealand Drama 1930-1980, an illustrated history*, p. 6

oral history project of the New Zealand Drama School, Toi Whakaari to mark the school's twenty fifth anniversary in 1995. I interviewed past and present directors, staff and students, then I started on my present work, a biography about the school's founder, Nola Millar (1913-1974).

The Friends of Toi Whakaari had had the foresight back in 1989 to start an archive for a biography of Nola Millar. The puzzle was that this great mentor, regarded by many as the 'Mother of New Zealand theatre', operated so quietly that she was like the wind, invisible. As ephemeral as her theatre, she was nevertheless a force and still very much alive in today's theatre, and in the memory of those who knew her. People recalled her with both affection and awe, spoke of her magic and called her an alchemist. They still hear her and feel her presence. One of our best known actors told me he prayed to her before going on stage every opening night. This was level of acknowledgment shared in an interview (not to be found in other public records), and yet even Nola's most devoted followers knew little about her. Through oral history, I had become fascinated by this enigmatic woman whom I never met.

As Nola's contemporaries were in their eighties and nineties it was with a sense of urgency that I set out to identify and find the important contacts. I discovered that while few people knew her well, her friends were legion and everyone had something to offer. She produced *hundreds* of plays over more than 40 years, not only in Wellington where she was the leading light in Unity Theatre and ran her own New Theatre, but also with amateur theatre groups all over the country. Furthermore she *did* have a life outside theatre, another career, other interests, a family, a childhood. Her personal background was something of a mystery.

The gaps were tantalizing. Clue by clue (and with some extraordinary good luck) I found people with answers – and more questions arose! Personal recollections were recovered with reference to scrap-books, photograph albums, letters and other personal items, gifts from Nola treasured these many years. These, like the anecdotes, were sometimes simple and quite ordinary, but they convey a feeling for the person and the times that is as valuable in a biography as the more dramatic revelations.

Nola herself provided questions and answers as people recalled *how* she worked especially in the later interviews. How did she get to the heart of a play? How did her actors get to the heart of their characters? This leads to the heart of the biographer's quest, but while the actor has a script to bring to life, the biographer conveys a life through the reverse process, distilling the spoken word with its telling range of tones and visual signals, into black-and-white print on paper.

Oral history is of course only one source of material, but it has been my most vital source, and with over 180 interviews, a comprehensive source. The difficulty has been the time involved – recording being the least of it. The rewards and the costs are understood in oral history circles but bewildering to others. I am grateful for the support I have received, including an oral history grant in 2002 from the Ministry for Culture and Heritage History Group which enabled me to complete my interviews.

Sarah Gaitanos

Reviews

Anna Rogers, *While You're Away: New Zealand nurses at war 1899 – 1948*. Auckland University Press, 2003, paperback

Reviewed by Lyn Taylor, Ministry for Culture & Heritage

In the introduction to her book Anna Rogers states that "... it was time to tell the story of the New Zealand women who nursed overseas and to hear more of their experiences [as military nurses] in their own words...". She relates the stories in a book of meticulous detail that remains engaging and readable.

The book tells of those who battled red tape, sexism and prejudice to establish the New Zealand Army Nursing Service. Its final acceptance by the authorities is drawn here as a tribute to Hester Maclean, who, amongst other professional achievements, became Matron-in-Chief of the NZANS and founded the nursing journal *Kai Tiaki*.

The early chapters deal with the women who nursed in the South African war and World War I. The Spanish Civil War and World War II are then covered in thematic chapters describing nursing in the desert, Greece, Crete, Italy, the Pacific and Japan, on hospital ships, in other services

(for example, in British services); and the role of voluntary aides.

The experiences of nurses throughout World War I are supported in *While You're Away* by a wealth of material from private letters and diaries penned on active service, and from publications, official records and articles from *Kai Tiaki*. These personal records – perhaps because so many were scribbled in haste and exhaustion, under trying conditions – have an immediacy that draws vivid and often moving pictures of the women's working conditions and fears, as well as achievements and joys.

The World War I stories also introduce themes of common hardships endured by the nurses through all their wars: extremes of heat and cold, mud and dust, disease, seasickness and injury, hasty packing and departures, relentlessly long working shifts, fleas, flies, mosquitoes – and grief.

One of the most poignant stories is that of the sinking of the *Maquette* in 1915, which took the lives of ten New Zealand nurses travelling on it. This chapter includes extracts from an oral history recorded by a survivor some 60 years later.

The narratives of those who nursed in World War II are of course able to incorporate material from many more oral

histories. This addition brings in recollections in which the women analyse the outstanding memories of those times: the geographic isolation, the quiet civilian lives at home suddenly polarised, the stoic acceptance of wartime life, work and horrors; reflections on how they just got on with it.

The oral histories here describe nursing the wounded in confined spaces in hospital ships, drenched in sweat, the terror of being strafed on retreat from Greece, the never-ending sluicing, scrubbing and polishing done by voluntary aides and nurses in all the hospitals. But they also record the humour, the pleasure and rewards of their work. Many speak of bringing simple comforts to injured servicemen: clean sheets or the delight of hearing New Zealand accents.

And then they had to come home and put the tea on Anna Rogers describes in the epilogue how for many nurses, as for service men, post-war life at home was disorientating and anticlimactic.

At the personal level, this book provides a comprehensive record of the nurses' wars – from the excitement of overseas travel, to pride and patriotism, to the strong sense of professionalism, comradeship and lasting friendships, and their sheer guts.

The book will be an invaluable addition to histories of military nursing, integrating as it does the perspectives of military archives and records, *Kai Tiaki*, existing publications, personal writings and of course the oral histories recorded by the author and in other oral history projects. It demonstrates the significance of *Kai Tiaki* in supporting nurses serving overseas with news from home and other colleagues, and in its standing as a record of New

Zealand nursing since 1915.

While You're Away contains some wonderful photographs of the nurses at work and leisure. It is also interspersed with vignettes containing profiles, songs and poems of the times: they have the effect of colouring the stories and the text. Without a thorough knowledge of the chronology and campaigns of the wars, I found some of the contexts of the nurses' stories puzzling. But it doesn't detract from them, and for

most, the book will provide a fascinating read and some memorable images of the wartime work and lives of New Zealand nurses.

It's a credit to Anna Rogers that the enormous contributions these women made have been drawn together because, despite the horrors, they're experiences none of the nurses would want forgotten.

Damian Skinner, *Don Binney: Nga Manu/Nga Motu – Birds/ Islands*. Auckland University Press, 2003, paperback

Reviewed by Megan Hutching,
Ministry for Culture & Heritage

This fine-looking book contains an introductory essay about Don Binney's work, an interview with Binney by Damian Skinner, 75 plates covering the four decades of the artist's work, a chronology and a select bibliography.

I am no art historian, so I will concentrate on the interview. Skinner has retained the questions that he asked to remind us that this is an interview, but has edited the spoken word heavily. The skill of this exercise, I think, is to make the standard written English sounds as though it is spoken—to preserve the orality of the

original—and I think Skinner has succeeded admirably here. The language is grammatical and usually in complete sentences, but now and then we get examples such as this, where in answer to a question about ideas of national identity in the 1960s, Binney replies, 'Hey wait! There's the bright strong clear New Zealand light again, you see.' (p. 25), and we immediately know that this is taken from something originally spoken.

It seems that Skinner's job was probably made easier by Binney's awareness that he was being interviewed for a publication although this is not clear, as nowhere in the book does Skinner tell us when or where the interview (or interviews?) was recorded, what the process of recording was or where the interview has been archived. This would be helpful information.

The interview adds much to the book, however. It lets us 'hear' Don Binney talk about his art in answer to thoughtful questions which often follow up the information that was given in previous answers. The interview form allows the reader to gain some insight into the artist's personality and helps us understand the man and his work. The works are also beautifully reproduced. Skinner and Auckland University Press must be congratulated on this lovely book.

NOHANZ ORIGINS

The National Oral History Association of New Zealand

Te Kete Kōrero-a-Waha o Te Motu (NOHANZ)

was established as result of the first national oral history seminar organised in April 1986 by the Centre for Continuing Education of the Victoria University of Wellington and the New Zealand Oral History Archive, a professional organisation then based in the National Library that worked on major oral history projects.

Objectives

- To promote the practice and methods of oral history.
- To promote standards in oral history interviewing techniques, and in recording and preservation methods.
- To act as a resource of information and to advise on practical and technical problems involved in making oral history recordings.
- To act as a coordinator of oral history activities throughout New Zealand.
- To produce an annual oral history journal and regular newsletters.
- To promote regular oral history meetings, talks, seminars, workshops and demonstrations.
- To encourage the establishment of NOHANZ branches throughout New Zealand.
- To compile a directory of oral history holdings to improve access to collections held in libraries archives and museums.

Code of ethical and technical practice

This Code exists to promote ethical, professional and technical standards in the collection, preservation and use of sound and video oral history material.

Archives, sponsors and organisers of oral history projects have the following responsibilities:

- to inform interviewers and people interviewed of the importance of this Code for the successful creation and use of oral history material;
- to select interviewers on the basis of professional competence and interviewing skill, endeavouring to assign appropriate interviewers to people interviewed;
- to see that records of the creation and processing of each interview are kept;
- to ensure that each interview is properly indexed and catalogued;
- to ensure that preservation conditions for recordings and accompanying material are of the highest possible standard;
- to ensure that placement of and access to recordings and accompanying material comply with a signed or recorded agreement with the person interviewed;
- to ensure that people interviewed are informed of issues such as copyright, ownership, privacy legislation, and how the interview and accompanying material may be used;
- to make the existence of available interviews known through public information channels;
- to guard against possible social injury to, or exploitation of people interviewed.

Interviewers have the following responsibilities:

- to inform the person interviewed of the purposes and procedures of oral history in general and of the particular project in which they are involved;
- to inform the person interviewed of issues such as copyright, ownership, privacy legislation, and how the material and accompanying material may be used;
- to develop sufficient skills and knowledge in interviewing and equipment operation, e.g. through reading and training, to ensure a result of the highest possible standard;
- to use equipment that will produce recordings of the highest possible standard;
- to encourage informative dialogue based on thorough research;
- to conduct interviews with integrity;
- to conduct interviews with an awareness of cultural or individual sensibilities;
- to treat every interview as a confidential conversation, the contents of which are available only as determined by written or recorded agreement with the person interviewed;
- to place each recording and all accompanying material in an archive to be available for research, subject to any conditions placed on it by the person interviewed;
- to inform the person interviewed of where the material will be held;
- to respect all agreements made with the person interviewed.

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