

Death Down Under

Death Down Under:

Twenty-first Century Dying, Death, Disposal and Memorialisation in the Antipodes

Edited by

Ruth McManus, Jon Cornwall
and Sally Raudon

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DEDICATION

We dedicate this collection to those who were maimed and killed in the Canterbury earthquakes of 2011, those affected by the Christchurch terror attack of March 2019, and to our dear colleagues and friends Dr Cyril Schäfer and Dr Vincent Malcolm-Buchanan. Finally, to dear Caitlin, who left us far too soon.

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Ruth McManus, Jon Cornwall, and Sally Raudon

November 2019

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

RUTH McMANUS

Introduction

Death Down Under is a collection of original research on significant issues associated with dying, death, disposal, bereavement and memorialisation in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand¹.

Whakapapa of Collection

Where did *Death Down Under* come from? There was a symposium on organ donation held at Victoria University of Wellington's main campus in 2010, and during the event Ruth McManus and a couple of other attendees, Cyril Schäfer and Sheila Harper, ducked out for some fresh air and a coffee. They talked about how it would be great to hold a conference to bring together a range of death studies scholars working in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia to showcase research and practice across the arts, sciences, professional and practitioner domains. At the time, Professor Glennys Howarth was a recent professorial appointment at the University of Sydney. They met up with Glennys at the end of her symposium session and floated the idea—jokingly almost—of a conference. She took up the challenge and the four of them became the organising committee for *Death Down Under*. Two conferences were held, the first at the University of Sydney (Australia) in June 2011, and the second at the University of Otago (Dunedin, Aotearoa New Zealand) in June 2012. These conferences brought together academics and practitioners working on a wide range of projects related to death, dying,

¹ Aotearoa New Zealand is used throughout as a means to acknowledge and honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi as the founding document of Aotearoa New Zealand. Variations on this use are based on formal names of organisations and institutions.

bereavement and memorialisation. While attendance was dominated by Aotearoa New Zealanders and Australians, participants came from as far as Singapore, Japan, the US and the UK. During these conferences, attendees were asked what they wanted to see emerging from these gatherings. There was a strong desire to continue and to formalise and crystallise these fledgling networks across disciplines and domains. Subsequently, a Death Down Under Facebook community has been set up and is monitored by Australian based members. In Aotearoa New Zealand, Cyril Schäfer and Ruth McManus went through the formal legal process to set up the Society for Death Studies, which aims to “promote research and understanding across all areas of death studies with particular reference to Aotearoa New Zealand academic, professional, artistic and practitioner communities” (McManus, 2013). Sally Raudon was the inaugural secretary and Jon Cornwall became a member of the first executive.

We were well under way with preparations for Death Down Under 3, to be held at the University of Canterbury (Christchurch, Aotearoa New Zealand) in December 2015, when Cyril died unexpectedly on 26 June, 2015. Given that Cyril was the Society for Death Studies’ treasurer, a lengthy formal process of transferring responsibility and finances faced the committee. It was decided to cancel the proposed conference, and in its place bring together as much of the work from the previous conferences as we could.

You will find the result of this labour in the following chapters. Our aim with this collection was to capture the flavour of the diversity in topics and approaches, and the overall collegiality, that had marked our Death Down Under conferences. As editors it has been a humbling pleasure to bring the contributions together. When we put out the call for papers, we directed authors to encourage our audience to read beyond what was familiar to them, as this was a key feature of Death Down Under conferences. As we had done in the conferences, we have mixed up topics and professional and academic approaches to encourage delegates, and now readers, to engage with ideas and experiences to which they would not usually be exposed. Adding to that impetus, as we have reviewed each chapter we have encouraged each contributor to push themselves beyond expected and commonplace assumptions.

This collection does not start with the assumption that death, dying, bereavement and memorialisation are somehow hidden, denied, or done badly as standard practice, and we suggest such frameworks need to be questioned. While facing death is deeply challenging and our responses

and practices are always under negotiation and can never be “perfect”, we ask readers to take the time to consider this collection as an interrogation of an easily rolled out blanket assumption that “death is sequestered”. We ask readers to recognise that as death is one of the most challenging aspects of our existence it demands inventive and meaningful responses by us, the living. This collection demonstrates the commitment to improving the conditions of the dying and dead but also to documenting the varied, creative ways that we, the living, respond. As we would expect, many of the contributors document inequalities in death, reflecting those inequalities we see in life. As such, the underpinning themes running through this collection showcase the variety of work that is being produced in this field. It seeks to challenge the assumed notion, that death is hidden away. Collectively, the chapters each offer indications of new theoretical developments in the field, and because of this our Pacific experiences and location offer a unique vantage point for death scholars elsewhere.

As is often the case, books and collections become memorials. Any book on death by definition embodies loss in some shape or form. When we first embarked on the idea of *Death Down Under* as a concept, and talked excitedly about a possible conference, little did we suspect that this work would so deeply come to carry loss. As editors and authors, we have responded to Cyril’s death. More recently we have faced serious illnesses in our own loved ones and the subsequent death of a cherished daughter, the departure of one editor to fresh adventures in the northern hemisphere, and the death of one of our contributors a few short weeks before the manuscript’s final submission. These visceral reminders of what this book is about caused delays and we are grateful to our contributors and publisher for their patience.

The underpinning themes and narratives in this collection make a significant contribution to death studies debates and conversations in that we offer examples of post-colonial, multi-cultural practices that span professional and every-day points of intersection. Death studies is a challenging and complex area to work in and write about, nevertheless each contributor shows specific ways in which existing and often taken for granted, yet unfounded, assumptions about contemporary death practices can be unpicked, nuanced and challenged. This reflexive, critical approach underscores particular ways in which specific chapters contribute to, for example, debates about grief and loss as an ongoing though shifted relationship with the dead, as well as debates about how respect is constituted in complex ethical spaces such as bio-archaeological digs,

autopsy rooms and organ transplant scenarios. Signifiers of memorialisation are examined in terms of their links to lamentation in roadside crash markers and are shown as a significant strategy of denoting Māori social and economic mobility over decades within Māori burial sites (urupu). Also, the use of numerous modes of memorial marking, from familiar headstones to the increasingly popular Pacific memorial tattoos, indicate the various ways that inscriptions on stone, signposts, or skin denote ongoing linkages between the living and the dead, guiding us back to consider why after-death contact, as a mode of continuing bonds with the dead, is met with significant stigma.

The order of the chapters is deliberately counter-intuitive. You could say that the chapters appear “in reverse order”—instead of using the usual starting point, from the individual who may be facing death, and then proceeding through dying, grief, bereavement, disposal and memorialisation, we launch into the collection through a deep-time reflection on the question of meaning. In chapter two Gilmore and Halcrow start us off by examining variations in attitudes and practices of the international bio-archaeological community (Aotearoa New Zealand and England) to understand which beliefs and ideas influence practitioners’ interpretation of the archaeological dead. They claim that Aotearoa New Zealand has a unique socio-cultural attitude to death and the archaeological dead that is shaped by an awareness and understanding of biculturalism (tapu, tikanga and the value of tūpuna) and underpinned by public policy. This generates a community awareness and involvement in archaeology not seen in the English setting, which in turn suggests a lack of socio-cultural awareness in some northern European bioarchaeological approaches to the dead. Therefore, from the first substantive chapter, we offer an account that challenges the notion that examining the long dead is somehow unmarked by contemporary social contexts.

The influence of specific social contours on how we understand death is carried through chapter three by Spray who examines how the ways in which we talk about the dead socially situates us and reveals the unequal contours of society. Spray does this by examining how children discuss death in everyday ways. She argues that death is already central to children’s cultural systems and she shows how death structures their everyday meaning and practices, which are enacted through play. She poses the question, “What meanings do children construct from death in the everyday?” Through an ethnographic study of children’s experiences of health and illness, with particular focus on rheumatic fever, she argues

that children's understandings of death are shaped by their experiences of life, and so children's death talk can also function as a window for understanding childhood as structurally vulnerable. Spray's discussion of how children talk about death as a concept positions us between the long slow shifts associated with the deep-time of the archaeological dead, and short sharp decade-marking shifts in current memorial practices. Malcolm-Buchanan's chapter four focuses on urupā memorialisation to shed insight on the complexities of cultural interweaving and divergences in contemporary death rituals. The socio-cultural dynamism of memorialisation is apparent in that "while Māori and Pākehā both deal with death and memorialisation in recognisably similar ways, we do so differently". Significant paradoxes become apparent from that interweaving, which include placing images of the dead on headstones—a culturally tapu practice where the living and dead keep themselves separate. In addition, there is the paradox of using expensive headstones while the families remain, in some instances, encapsulated as an "underclass". In a similar vein, in chapter five, Te Awekotuku and Nikora examine memorial tattooing from a Māori perspective as an embodied cultural practice and note the revitalization of moko (traditional Māori facial tattoo) as driven by its associations with mourning and commemoration. In their discussions of the different ways in which Māori may mark their body in response to death, Te Awekotuku and Nikora highlight that Māori actually talking about death to potentially non-Māori audiences is a significant cultural shift in the protocols associated with death for Māori. In the act of making the discussion available in this chapter Te Awekotuku and Nikora are creating a new social space for inter-cultural discussions of culturally specific death practices.

Chapters four and five are a reminder to not over-simplify interpretations of unfamiliar death rituals. Paradoxes often indicate intense and creative negotiations of meanings and practices in dynamic social landscapes. This thread is picked up in a different way in chapter six, on spontaneous road crash shrines in Australia. Smith explains that the notion of "lament"—a blend of words, tears and melody—can be applied to the folk material cultural practice of spontaneous roadside crash shrines and their longer-term memorials. Roadside memorials directly address the circumstances of the memorialised death, yet they are also an ongoing acknowledgement; a space to make comment and an opportunity for shared ritual (such as an annual commemoration). He argues that regarding the practice of spontaneous shrines as laments may help us to better understand the complexity of contemporary mourning; using the framework of lament

helps explain not only the presence of roadside memorials but also their form.

While memorialisation is a relatively uncontested social practice, Knight moves the focus of discussion from memorialisation of the dead by the living to contact between the dead and the living, in an examination of after-death contact. Chapter seven examines continuing bonds between the living and the dead through a study of after-death contact where people recount experiences of being contacted by departed loved-ones. Knight's self-imposed task is to simultaneously acknowledge and challenge the stigmatization associated with after-death contact. Through documenting accounts of after-death contact, Knight seeks to normalise this phenomenon, and in doing so support the bereaved and the deceased in being heard. Knight's work draws attention to the ways that some death practices, such as memorialisation, are regarded as legitimate, normal and expected, while others are not. Noting that social and cultural change and negotiation underpins many of these chapters, Knight's work brings to the fore the contemporary boundaries of what is seen as legitimate. It also brings to mind how inspecting, interrogating and questioning these boundaries can lead to significant social change. Not too many years ago, stillborn children were not granted full burial rites or rights and this practice left much disenfranchised grief in its wake. We may be seeing an indicator of change in Knight's account of after-death contact that may challenge conventional narratives within society. Explanations for social change are raised by McLean in chapter eight, where we are asked to consider and question taken-for-granted narratives about the social shift from burial to cremation. Set in nineteenth century Brisbane, Australia, McLean tells a story of burial "in unseemly haste" that when unravelled, reveals how the local population of the time adapted colonial cultural expectations about burial to the colonial Australian environment. The tale also challenges conventional wisdom about why cremation became so popular in the early twentieth century.

In chapter nine, Horsley re-centres our focus from historically distant to present day body disposal practices, and from the deceased as "subject" of ceremonial ritual to an "object" in a workplace, by examining the meaning of respect in autopsy spaces. Horsley argues for a more complex and nuanced reading of respect by showing how "respecting the dead" is done in different ways in ritual and professional contexts. Respect is individually enacted but built from collectively organised views, values and ideas that differ across social locations and through time. Horsley indicates that the dead have an ongoing relationship with professions,

staff, family and culture, which is achieved by way of enacting respect in the autopsy room. In death studies it is common to hear about continuing bonds between the bereaved and the dead, and what Horsley's examination does is to broaden this idea of continuing bonds beyond the emotional relationships of the bereaved. Horsley's attention to professional propriety is reflected in chapter ten where Shaw problematises professional narratives on the shortfall of organ donors through and examination of how concerns about informed consent in DCD (organ donations after circulatory death) feed into broader debate on hastening death in end-of-life care. The interlocking relationship between ethics and the contested boundaries of life and death that have opened up through technical advances are given a different treatment in Cornwall and Callahan's analysis of Google image searches related to body donation. While chapter eleven speaks to contemporary cultural spaces of the digital interface between body donation programmes and prospective donors, and is therefore concerned with body disposal and issues centreing on the dynamic social relationship between body donors, body donor programmes, and society, the next three chapters each examine informal aspects of care for those at end of life.

In chapter twelve, Horsfall et al. examine what and who are the care-networks for those who choose to die at home in Australia, as a means to critique the trope that end-of-life care is a "burden" and render it as a "complex caring experience". This chapter aims to open up discussion in the palliative care field by broadening its scope from solely medical events to social events where anxiety, burden and fear can only be addressed by a whole community approach. By focusing on what is working well in the interstices of formal and informal end-of-life care they propose the concept of "ecologies of care" to better describe the care-networks of those who choose to die at home in Australia. Horsfall's challenge to the deficit models that tend to define end-of-life discussions is extended further in chapter thirteen by Moeke-Maxwell and Nikora's strengths-based approach to Māori end-of-life preparations. They identify what supports the best conditions for Māori whānau to support the transition of their dying kaumatua's wairau (spirit). In doing so they offer a nuanced view of informal Māori end-of-life care that challenges deficit-based and problem-orientated approaches of more mainstream Māori wellbeing discussions.

Hill and Coombs, in chapter fourteen, then take the discussion of end-of-life care into the provision of acute care hospitals to argue that while there is a high demand for end-of-life care in hospitals, it is not necessarily

matched with the development of quality services to meet patients' end-of-life needs. As they explore how organisational structure and clinical processes may impact on the recognition of impending death in acute care contexts, they enlighten us to the ways in which professional ideologies can enable or inhibit the provision of patient and family-centred care at end-of-life. This chapter explores the uncertainty in end-of-life decision-making associated with hospital functions and clinical environments, contrasting beliefs and ideologies across health care disciplines.

Up to this point, death has been—or is—impending, however in our final substantive chapter, fifteen, Tassell-Matamua discusses how near-death experiences can help us towards a “good” death, suggesting near-death stories have the potential to transform the dying process by optimising psychological outcomes associated with these experiences. Talking about near-death experiences and the effects they have on those who have had them, Tassell-Matamua frames death as a meaningful, purposeful and growth-orientated experience that can help re-orient dominant death tropes away from denying the dying process and towards accepting it as important and life-affirmative.

Conclusion

We ask readers to be receptive to our call to examine, revisit and share the chapters we have organized, and to be open to those practices and research approaches which may be unfamiliar to them. The collection is not pedalling a particular approach or viewpoint beyond questioning commonly received wisdom about dying, death, grief and memorialisation, and our hope is that this expands or challenges the intellectual horizons of its readers. Such a great amount of thought and energy has gone into these contributions, and we hope that our original intention to build momentum and collegial collaboration across death scholars is recognised in the production of this work.

CHAPTER TWO

MELDING THE PAST AND THE PRESENT: USING BIOARCHAEOLOGY TO UNDERSTAND DEATH IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

HELEN F. GILMORE AND SIÂN E. HALCROW

Introduction

We are all going to die, but we're still not very good at thinking or coping with death or facing it or acknowledging it.... I think certainly anything that can help us *normalise* death and get a little bit more comfortable *with* it is a good thing, and so, yes, archaeology has a tiny little role to play in that, of tracking changing social attitudes towards death in terms of treatment of the dead and cultural and social context and all of that.
(Jenny, Aotearoa New Zealand archaeologist).

Anthropological and sociological studies of death and dying in contemporary society have become increasingly popular in the social sciences in Australasia. Bioarchaeology, the study of human remains from archaeological sites, is a field which can make worthwhile contributions to death studies owing to its unique way of interacting with the dead and telling their stories. Indeed, bioarchaeology “not only offers a comparative and deep-time perspective on recent and present-day mortuary practice [but] provides a substantial new avenue for investigating mortality’s present-day materialities” (Williams 2011, 94). This chapter argues that the bioarchaeological perspective provides a unique source of information on historic patterns of health and healthcare, causes of past deaths, post-mortem care and curation, varieties of burial and disposal rites and methods of memorialisation of the dead, which can contribute to the exploration and understanding of current aspects of mortality.

Many bioarchaeological research themes intersect with approaches and themes represented in the field of contemporary death studies. One intersection is where differing social settings and cultural values shape the

approaches and attitudes to engagement with death and the dead. We demonstrate the particularities of this intersection through a discussion of the protocols of academic culture and practice in Aotearoa New Zealand, where archaeological human remains are predominantly Māori. We draw on ethnographic data from interviews conducted in the archaeological communities of Aotearoa New Zealand and England in 2013 and 2014, in which we investigated the differences in attitudes and practices of bioarchaeology in these locations. This study approached the discipline of bioarchaeology from a social anthropological perspective in order to understand the cultural beliefs and ideas about death which influence and interest the practitioners themselves. Our participants shared their personal narratives of bioarchaeological engagement with death and dying, and throughout this chapter we include a selection of comments and experiences reflective of majority views where relevant to this discussion. All names in these have been changed to preserve participant anonymity.

We begin by defining the discipline of bioarchaeology and outlining its various roles and research activities, the ways in which the physical and social identities of the dead can be reconstructed, and the contributions these can make to both academic death studies and public discourses about death. In addition, we introduce the main principles and policies that underpin and guide working with Māori communities and archaeological remains, and how these affect bioarchaeological activities in Aotearoa New Zealand. Finally, we consider how the intermingling of Māori and Pākehā cultural traditions are reflected in contemporary attitudes to death and funeral practices in Aotearoa New Zealand and how bioarchaeological knowledge of treatment of the dead in the past can inform and shape present rituals, and contribute to an understanding of their cultural foundations.

Bioarchaeology and Mortuary Archaeology

Bioarchaeology (frequently referred to in Europe as osteoarchaeology) is a specialist field within the anthropological sub-fields of archaeology and biological anthropology, and broadly encompasses “the study of skeletal [human] remains from archaeological sites” (Roberts 2009, 6). Bioarchaeologists are intimately involved with examining and recording the deaths of people in past populations and interpreting their stories. Practitioners often become enormously involved with their subject, often emotionally as well as scientifically, and all participants spoke of their “fascination” and “passion” for the work that they do with archaic human

bones and skeletons. They “read” human skeletal remains to estimate the sex and age at death of an individual, and draw informed conclusions about likely health issues and diseases, indications of diet, lifestyle, mobility, trauma and occupational activities visible on the bones (Buikstra 1977, 67; Larsen 2015). Such information can be utilised to deduce historic patterns of health and healthcare, mortality rates and causes, pre and post-mortem care of the body, varieties of burial and disposal rites and methods of memorialisation of the dead in past societies, all of which may be compared with those of the present.

Health and Disease

Palaeopathology, one of the main specialisations within bioarchaeology, involves recording and analysing evidence of illness or physical trauma from the remains. Palaeopathological evidence is also useful for identifying factors contributing to disease, such as diet, living conditions, working conditions, and care and treatment, which can relate to and sometimes explain present-day health concerns (Roberts 2009, 153). For example, analysis of the skeletal remains from Wairau Bar, one of the earliest Māori settlement sites in Aotearoa New Zealand, showed that many individuals suffered from gout, a disease which has also been reported to have affected other prehistoric Polynesian populations and continues to show a high incidence of susceptibility among Māori and Pacific Islanders today (Buckley et al. 2010, 10–11). Newer methods, such as ancient DNA analysis of pathogens found in bones, are now allowing us to explore what pathogens people were exposed to in the past and the evolution of these diseases.

In addition to determining patterns of health and disease in past individuals and populations, palaeopathologists interpret levels of end-of-life care for those who were dying in the past. A recent emerging research theme is the “bioarchaeology of care” (Tilley 2012; 2015), which seeks to identify evidence of the social responsibilities of past care-giving from individual skeletal remains. Making use of a four-stage index model which starts with the description and measurement of the skeletal elements, differential diagnosis from observable abnormalities, identifying the likely impact of the disease on the individual and the nature of care that would have been necessary for survival, it attempts to shed light on the societal values and practices of caring for the ill and incapacitated in the past, which might also provide a relevant perspective for contemporary communities and circumstances (Tilley 2012; Ouellette 2014, 17).

Burial and Disposal Rites

What interests me is burial practice and *how* people are buried, and trying to figure out what they were doing and why.
(William, Aotearoa New Zealand archaeologist).

Bioarchaeologists may employ archaeoethanatology to analyse burials (e.g. Willis and Tayles 2009; Valentin et al. 2010) by taking detailed observations of the spatial positioning of the various skeletal elements in the grave and identifying the sequences of joint disarticulation to uncover aspects of past funerary practices and burial treatments. This can give insights into how the dead were regarded in life and how their families and communities may have interacted with them post-mortem. For example, archaeoethanatomical methods employed in the 2004–2005 excavations of a 3,000 year old cemetery of the proto-Polynesian Lapita culture at Teouma, Vanuatu, revealed a marked diversity of body treatments and burial practices including container burials, post-burial skeletal manipulation and organised re-deposition of the cranial elements within the graves. The variations in these forms of body and burial treatment suggests that there were certain social obligations connected to burial ritual, which may have varied according to the circumstances of death or the social position of the deceased (Valentin et al. 2010, 229–232).

Mortuary or funerary archaeology is more particularly concerned with the excavation of burials, and the interpretation of the social rituals of death from the archaeological context and positioning of the remains. This includes spatial analysis of the cemetery, methods of deposition of remains, evidence of burial containers and material objects, indications of ritual practices, and the post-mortem treatment of the body, supported by evidence from other archaeological retrievals and analyses of the wider site or settlement. Mortuary archaeologists contribute to reconstructing how an individual's death has been treated and commemorated by family and community, and also if and how such rituals and materials may have changed to reflect changing social organisation or values over time.

The Biocultural Approach

The human body has a social as well as a biological construction, and bioarchaeologists are increasingly recognising and drawing on the significant body of social science literature concerning social constructions of death and the body (e.g. Sofaer 2006; Gowland and Thompson 2013) in order to construct a social bioarchaeology (e.g. Agarwal and Glencross

2011). This involves incorporating human osteology with other associated specialties in order to address the “biocultural dimensions” of archaeology, which include studies of social organisation through burial and funerary ritual and aspects of social identity (Sofaer 2006; Gowland and Thompson 2013). As Halcrow and Tayles (2010, 124) have argued, social and biological approaches to the interpretation of skeletal remains need not be “mutually exclusive”. This biocultural approach taken by bioarchaeologists marries the biological realities of the life and death of the body with the social and cultural interpretations of the person.

Bioarchaeological analysis is one of the ways in which biological and social stories of the historic and prehistoric dead can be told. Discovery and excavation of early burials is often, in the absence of records, the only recognition given in our time that the lives and deaths of these individuals occurred. By reconstructing both their biological and social identities bioarchaeologists offer a commemoration of their lives to history and to their descendants.

Bioarchaeology and Death in Aotearoa New Zealand

A frequent theme in thanatological literature contrasts death customs and attitudes of traditional and indigenous societies with modernity, specifically contemporary Western societies (e.g. Aries 1974; Kellehear 1984; Shilling 1993; Lee 2008; Sayer 2010). However, as Greg, an English thanatologist, has commented in our ethnographic study, this dichotomised manner of viewing traditional customs of death in the past and contrasting them with widely understood modern practices has often failed to engage with the multitude of variations in the way death and dying is managed within contemporary societies world-wide, predicated on religious, ideological and ontological beliefs (Gilmore, Schäfer, and Halcrow 2013, 333).

In Aotearoa New Zealand, both academic and practical considerations of death and dying must acknowledge the culturally-grounded variations in how the dead are cared for and handled, farewelled and memorialised, and include awareness of not only Pākehā but particularly Māori cultural perceptions and protocols surrounding dying and death. Bioarchaeological involvement with Māori dead and death protocol is often more direct and hands-on than in other areas of death studies in Aotearoa New Zealand and can therefore contribute valuable insight to contemporary discussions. It provides this through the perspective it can offer on how death and dying was handled in Māori/Polynesian societies of the past, and by emphasising

how the nature of these values and protocols influence present-day tangihanga (traditional Māori funeral rites) practices in Aotearoa New Zealand. Often the (generally Pākehā) bioarchaeologists, who have been involved in the recovery and analysis of kōiwi tangata (human remains), help to facilitate and take an active part in the rituals for their repatriation and re-interment. Their endorsement and participation in these ceremonies allows them valuable insights into the protocols of caring for the dead in Māori culture, which enables them to approach the handling of kōiwi tangata in an appropriately sensitive manner and, in turn, contributes to an increased willingness on the part of iwi (tribes) to work in partnership with them.

Tapu, Tikanga and Tūpuna

Bioarchaeological practice in Aotearoa New Zealand requires an understanding of, and active cooperation with, three key Māori concepts when dealing with indigenous remains—tapu, the observance of tikanga, and the connection Māori have with the tūpuna (ancestors). Tapu is a complex concept which is intrinsic to the Māori cultural worldview placing people, objects, places and activities under the protection of the atua (gods, spirits) and, therefore, sacred, or apart from the ordinary (Sachdev 1989, 962–964). It has particular relevance to Māori death and burial rituals (Gilmore, Schäfer, and Halcrow 2013, 335). For Māori, the tapu of the dead is very powerful and continues to have applicability today, whether this is as sacrosanct or dangerous (Rika-Heke 2010, 200–201). As Rob (Māori anthropologist) notes, “anything tapu you don’t muck around with”. An awareness of the importance and nature of tapu is essential to bioarchaeological approaches to human remains in Aotearoa New Zealand. Interaction with archaeological kōiwi and their living descendants must be approached with cultural sensitivity, as many Māori are uncomfortable with the concept of disturbing or touching the dead and analysing their physical remains (Rika-Heke 2010, 202). A typical example of this reaction was expressed by one of our Māori participants:

I think that if they’re buried there they’re meant to be buried and not, you know, to be played with.... When you’ve put them to rest, they rest—just let them rest... I mean, we don’t need to dig them up! That’s how I feel.
(Patrick, iwi archaeological monitor).

Acknowledging and appropriately observing tikanga is an essential aspect enveloping the protocols and guidelines of any archaeological dealings with kōiwi (HNZPT 2014, 24; Gillies and O’Regan 1994; Tayles and

Halcrow 2011; Phillips 2011) and is unique to Aotearoa New Zealand practice. Although legislation governs the excavation of any burial or recovery of human remains in both England and Aotearoa New Zealand (White 2011, 482–9; Tayles and Halcrow 2011, 650–51), the required consideration of Māori cultural protocols in Aotearoa New Zealand *must* be in accordance with the Treaty of Waitangi, a treaty first signed on 6 February 1840 by representatives of the British Crown and various Māori chiefs, often considered to be Aotearoa New Zealand’s founding document. The Treaty principles of “partnership, participation and protection” (Royal Commission on Social Policy 1988, III, 103) has produced a distinctive set of methods for bioarchaeological practice in Aotearoa New Zealand. The process when remains are discovered on a development site in Aotearoa New Zealand is described by Jenny, an archaeologist:

The first thing you do is just confirm are they human. And then the second thing I would do would be to phone the iwi before I phone anybody else, and generally if I’m working on a development site my iwi monitor is with me, but if they’re not I would phone them before I’d phone *anybody* else. And then there’s a whole series of people that we’re [legally] required to inform, so the project manager or site supervisor—whoever the person might be of the project you’re working on—Heritage New Zealand, the Police, and occasionally Ministry of Health—if you think there may be any health concerns, I’ve never personally had to do that. (Jenny, Aotearoa New Zealand archaeologist).

Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga is the Crown entity responsible for identifying and protecting all sites and cultural materials that comprise Aotearoa New Zealand’s historic and cultural heritage, and for issuing authority for any archaeological work to be carried out. The holder of an authority is legally accountable for abiding by its stated conditions. These will inevitably include the requirement to consult and engage with the relevant Māori community in a culturally appropriate manner in the first instance when remains are discovered or are likely to be discovered.

Consultation

Consultation with tangata whenua (Māori community) is an essential part of the burial excavation processes in Aotearoa New Zealand. Iwi are invited to actively engage in all stages of the process of recovery, curation, any analysis agreed upon, and decisions concerning the respectful and appropriate restoration of the remains to their original or alternative resting place (HNZPT 2014, 19).

And, of course, it's really important. I mean, these days I wouldn't imagine a project *without* consultation. The purpose of it? I guess usually it's to determine, first of all, what's to be done with the kōiwi, what are iwi in support of, what are they happy to do, what would they prefer. Usually the consultation involves the question of *can* they stay there? Do they have to be reburied? What's the project going to do? What are the options?

(Laura, Aotearoa New Zealand bioarchaeologist).

Where consultation with and involvement of iwi is a fundamental requirement for Aotearoa New Zealand bioarchaeologists, we observed that our English counterparts did not seem to regard local consultation as an essential aspect of their work. Although some archaeologists and bioarchaeologists in England recognised the potential benefits of involving community in their work, consultation is not a required protocol. In England an archaeological licence for burial excavation is obtained from the Secretary of State (unless it involves consecrated Church land, in which case approval must be obtained from the Church of England), and for remains over 100 years old consent from the descendants is “usually dispensed with” and the landowner's consent is all that is required (APABE 2017, 12). Unlike Aotearoa New Zealand, England has no distinct indigenous population and culture to be considered. Many commented that prehistoric remains in Britain are so old that anybody (including themselves) could be a potential descendant.

By contrast, in Aotearoa New Zealand, iwi assume control of any decisions to be made in the field regarding exhumation and re-interment, and are represented on site by an iwi monitor to ensure that correct tikanga is observed, such as abstaining from consumption of food or tobacco near the site, using appropriate containers and rinsing hands with water for the purpose of whakanoa (making noa, or ordinary; not tapu) as the kōiwi are tapu (HNZPT 2014, 15). Given the powerful spiritual nature of a site which may contain kōiwi, the monitor's role is also to say the appropriate karakia (incantations) to ward off any danger and ensure the safety and protection of those working on the site. “My karakia briefly translates to—make everybody safe that's on that site” (George, iwi monitor).

Curation

The tikanga of handling and temporarily curating kōiwi in Aotearoa New Zealand also involves specific requirements for culturally appropriate storage to maintain dignity and respect, as well as practical security for the remains. Curated remains should rest in a wāhi tapu (sacred place),

dedicated for the purpose (HNZPT 2014, 24). Wāhi tapu essentially function as temporary burial spaces rather than functional storage, within which kōiwi and their grave goods are kept separate and safe. For example, kōiwi awaiting repatriation at Te Papa Tongarewa (the National Museum of Aotearoa New Zealand) “... are not held in the same collection stores as our collections, because they’re not collection items. They’re held in a separate storage, which is the wāhi tapu. And that’s its sole purpose—it’s for nothing else but for the ancestors and funerary taonga” (Keri, museum matauranga Māori curator).

Bioarchaeological Analysis of Kōiwi

The discussions and negotiations that follow the discovery of kōiwi highlight the importance of the consultation process in combining both scientific inquiry and cultural understanding, and ultimately provide a productive cross-cultural engagement with the wider discourse of death, dying and funerary protocols in Aotearoa New Zealand. Much of this will centre on the third key concept with which bioarchaeologists must engage when dealing with kōiwi, the sense of connection that Māori have with their tūpuna (ancestors).

Once remains have been identified as kōiwi, local runanga (Māori councils) are generally offered the option of a bioarchaeological examination (Tayles, Buckley, and Littleton 2014, 20). Some iwi prefer almost immediate reburial without any further handling. However, it is increasingly common for communities to allow further investigation of kōiwi, recognising that “...scholarly investigation... can further an understanding of the lives of our tūpuna” (Gillies and O’Regan 1994, 30).

The conversation went to and fro, the pros and cons and then [H], he said, “Oh, I think they should go...” then [M] stood up, and she’s got great mana [prestige] round there, and she says, “Well, I think these people have actually come to *teach* us, and we should learn from them what we can before we reinter them.”

(Gary, Aotearoa New Zealand archaeologist).

One example of cooperative research is the bioarchaeological research conducted by the University of Otago (Dunedin, Aotearoa New Zealand) on the kōiwi from the thirteenth-century Wairau Bar site in partnership with the Rangitane iwi. After having been held in the Canterbury Museum for decades, these remains were finally repatriated. However, research was permitted prior to their reburial in 2009, which has contributed much to

our present understanding of the lives of Aotearoa New Zealand's earliest people (Buckley et al. 2010; Knapp et al. 2012; Ruckstuhl et al. 2016).

Levels of analysis range from a rudimentary “on the spot”, non-destructive assessment of age-at-death, sex and observable pathologies, through to extended analyses employing X-rays and dental examinations, to minor destructive procedures taking small bone or dental samples for chemical analyses which provide information on DNA, specimen dating, diet and migration, all of which can contribute to the picture of an individual's diet, state of health, living and working conditions (Tayles, Buckley, and Littleton 2014, 20–21). However, the consultation process, while ultimately a positive exercise in “partnership” and “participation” (Royal Commission on Social Policy 1988, III, 103), can produce its own tensions and stresses as agreed procedures are negotiated.

There are *always* complications. I mean, there always *is*, you know, because these are groups that are formed out of whole different groups of people with very different ideas about what they want, and very different ideas about what scientists are doing, and might want.... In the course of a project people *may* want you to work on them at the beginning, and they may want you to withdraw halfway through. And that *rarely* has anything to do with you. It actually has quite a lot to do with what's happening for them.

(Ruth, Aotearoa New Zealand bioarchaeologist).

Care of the Ancestors

Māori have an intensely personal and ongoing relationship with their dead.

One thing I always strike when I am excavating kōiwi and I have an iwi person with me is the immediate and very personal relationship that the Māori person will have with the kōiwi. It is like this person is their grandmother and they immediately feel this responsibility, this affinity to them, this need to take care of them and assure they're reinterred in a right place and with love and care and people round them.

(Jenny, Aotearoa New Zealand archaeologist).

Therefore, regardless of any agreement reached with iwi for conducting bioarchaeological examinations of kōiwi, it is both accepted and expected that they will be cared for by iwi and reburied as soon as is practical. Internationally, displays of archaeological skeletons or mummified remains in museum halls and public exhibitions have attracted academic debate regarding the ethical and cultural issues involved in displaying or graphically portraying the dead (e.g. Jones and Harris 1998; Scarre 2003;