OCEANIC DIPLOMACY

Reasserting Indigenous pathways through the contemporary Pacific

Salā George Carter • Gregory Fry • Gordon Leua Nanau

EDITORS

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Mā whero, mā pango ka oti te mahi:

The role of indigenous diplomacies in the success of the 1997 Burnham peace talks

JAYDEN EVETT

The decade-long Bougainville Civil War in Papua New Guinea (PNG) was the costliest conflict in the Pacific since the end of World War II (Momis, 2006). What began as violent protests over the negative impacts of mining in central Bougainville soon became a complex and protracted war (Boege, 2018; Regan, 1998). The ethno-nationalist Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) waged an insurgency against Port Moresby while simultaneously fighting a civil war with the PNG-sympathetic Bougainville Resistance Forces (BRF). At a local level, distinctions between factions quickly became blurred, and the war was used to pursue pre-existing blood feuds and disputes.

The conflict took a devastating toll on what was then PNG's wealthiest, most orderly province (May, 2004). A seven-year blockade deprived Bougainvilleans of food and pharmaceuticals (Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade [JSCFADT]; 1999). Over 50% of a population of 160,000 were displaced; those who remained in situ were subject to extrajudicial killing, weaponised rape and enforced disappearance (Amnesty International, 1997; Braithwaite, et al., 2010). An estimated 10,000 to 5,000 people died during the war – 1,000 to 2,000 from combat and the remainder from disease or starvation as a result of the blockade (Braithwaite et al., 2010; JSCFADT, 1999).

Multiple attempts were made to resolve the conflict over its duration, but these continually failed to hold. The Burnham talks were two peace negotiations convened by New Zealand foreign minister Don McKinnon at Burnham Military Camp outside Christchurch, Aotearoa New Zealand. Burnham I was held from 5 to 8 July 1997. It included more than 100 participants from the BRA and BRF, as well as traditional, civil society and women leaders (Lees et al., 2015). It produced the Burnham Declaration, a unified, agreed platform from which Bougainvilleans would negotiate peace with Port Moresby. Burnham II was held from 1 to 10 October 1997. It included a reduced Bougainvillean delegation, plus PNG military and political representatives, and a high-level Solomon Islands delegation (Corry, 2002). This produced the Burnham Truce, a breakthrough agreement between the PNG government and the BRA and BRF. The success of the Burnham talks was not simply reflected in the agreements signed at the talks' conclusion, but also in that they held thereafter. Bougainvillean negotiators did not deviate from the declaration's agreed platform at Burnham II, and the truce held through to the signing of the Arawa Agreement ceasefire on 30 April 1998 – the longest formal break in conflict up to that point.

At the heart of the Burnham talks lies a puzzle: how did they produce enduring agreements where earlier attempts had been unable to do so? The most common answer, that the conflict was 'ripe' for resolution, ignores that 'ripeness' had arguably been reached several years earlier.

Some answers make passing mention of indigenous cultural practices as a factor (e.g. Hayes, 2005; Miriori, 2002), though often without substantive investigation. This leaves open some big questions: Were these practices simply cultural window-dressing for political talks? Or should they be seen as an essential factor in the success of the Burnham talks, in creating a circuit breaker in the failed peace process?

What complicates this puzzle is that any success of these cultural practices would challenge conventional negotiation methods and the conflict logic they are built upon.

This chapter explores how and why indigenous cultural practices contributed to the success of the 1997 Burnham talks. I analyse two key diplomatic practices to identify their impact: Melanesian *trautim*[1] and Māori *pōwhiri*. In each case, I explore how the indigeneity of the process imbued its diplomatic function with capacities that contributed to the talks' success where conventional diplomacy could not. Out of this develops an argument that these cultural practices were integral to the talks' success.

Framing these cultural aspects of the Burnham talks as 'indigenous diplomacy' helps us to look beyond seeing a cultural practice as simply a performance, in order to consider the socialised assumptions and recognisable principles in which such cultural practices are embedded. I argue that it is this indigenous diplomatic culture that facilitated a successful interaction between conflicting groups by imbuing the talks with the necessary gravitas and legitimacy for the participants to experience a sense of closure.

Trautim as an indigenous diplomatic practice

The primary indigenous diplomatic method used at Burnham was trautim – a contemporary pan-Bougainvillean practice where parties sit

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1   Literally 'to vomit something' in Tok Pisin, from *traut* (to vomit, throw out).

together and emotionally vent in extended sessions (Tapi, 2002; Wallis, 2012, 2014). It is similar to prototypical Melanesian conflict resolution practices, where aggrieved parties meet in semi-private negotiations, attended by only those directly involved and nominated facilitators (Boege, 2020; Boege & Garasu, 2011). This negotiation phase is incredibly long, as considerable time is spent working out an agreed account of a conflict's causes and events by consensus (Boege & Garasu, 2011).

Diplomacy is a process for mediating estrangement – managing interactions between groups and the 'otherness' that affects their relationship (Der Derian, 1987; Sharp, 2009). As a diplomatic practice, trautim seeks to settle issues that have an alienating and disaffecting impact on intergroup relations. This function is evident around three key features: mediation, information sharing and consensus building.

First, trautim mediators bridge the cleavage between groups and facilitate their reconciliation. High-context cultures, such as those of the Pacific, prefer to reconcile conflicts indirectly, with mediators playing a vital role (Augsburger, 1992). The mediators undertake shuttle diplomacy before trautim begins, going between parties to organise conditions under which both are willing to begin to reconcile (Boege, 2020; Tanis, 2002). Unlike in conventional diplomacy with its preference for impartiality, Melanesian mediators are close to the groups while not too close to the conflict, which enables them to employ their own connections to the conflicted groups to help facilitate resolution (Boege & Garasu, 2011).

Next, trautim has strong information-sharing features to ensure that relationships are restored holistically. All negotiation relies on information sharing to help inform an appropriate solution. This is often strategised in conventional diplomacy, where parties selectively provide details to influence an outcome (Odell & Tingley, 2013). Trautim instead favours honest and total disclosure through uninterrupted emotional purging. Though extreme, this method restores intergroup

relations by creating a group understanding of why parties acted as they did. The uninhibited expression by each party gives interlocutors a visceral experience of their grievances, concerns and opinions, which creates the shared understanding needed to rebuild relationships (T. T. Kabutaulaka, personal communication, May 14, 2020).

Finally, trautim's consensus-built outcomes focuses on relationship reconciliation rather than punitive action. Watson-Gegeo and White (1990) explain Melanesian reconciliation as the act of untangling a fishing net. Consensus ensures all parties working to untangle the net agree on how to do so, thus mitigating the risk of straining any one part and tearing lines in the process. In Melanesia, consensus is of such cultural importance that Narokobi (1980) argues it is the only way conflict can be settled in the region. Healing relationships requires trautim to be restorative not punitive. Punishment damages instead of restores communal relationships in high-context cultures, so building consensus ensures no one party is put out in reaching settlement (Boege & Garasu, 2011). The Melanesian sociocultural context also does not allow for non-consensual resolution. Minimal social hierarchy means participants, including big-men and traditional leaders, have little capacity to forcibly sanction others (Boege, 2006). By giving parties a de facto veto, trautim lets them cooperate without fear of their interests being threatened. The absence of threatened interests in consensus-built outcomes creates more durable agreements (Burgess & Spangler, 2003; Donais, 2012; Odell & Tingley, 2013).

The impact of trautim on the Burnham talks

With an established understanding of trautim and it functions as an indigenous diplomatic practice, we can now focus on its impact at the Burnham talks. Trautim at Burnham prioritised personal reconciliation between participants before negotiating the issues of the conflict. Relationship building was the core aim of both Burnham talks. This prioritisation was a considerable change from earlier talks, which

attempted to reconcile parties after agreements had been negotiated. In planning the talks, it was realised that the war had carved substantial divisions among Bougainvilleans, and these needed to be reconciled before discussing the conflict itself (JSCFADT, 1999; Miriori, 2002; Regan, 1998). Significant efforts were made to provide multiple opportunities for participants to reconcile. Excursions to sheep stations and shopping malls, and an open bar for lubricated interactions, all served to provide non-threatening environments in which to reconnect (Hayes, 2005; Henderson, 2007). These were all secondary to trautim.

At the talks, trautim fostered relationship building through venting, the ritual purging of opinions, experiences and emotions (Wallis, 2012). From a Western understanding, this may seem counterintuitive to reconciliation, even undiplomatic. Yet it helps parties recognise the extent of the impact of wrongdoing and admit guilt, as well as understand what motivated the wrongdoing and forgive (Boege & Garasu, 2011). At several points during the talks, smaller break-out trautim sessions were convened to discuss particularly tricky experiences, all with the same aim of reconciling participants (Lees et al., 2015). This continuous cycle of 'purge-guilt-forgive' throughout trautim sessions helped to incrementally heal these relationships and slowly bridge divisions.

By engaging emotion head-on, trautim also neutralised the destructive impact that emotions can have on conflict negotiations. For the venting participant, this helped 'empty' them emotionally, allowing them to engage with other participants unmotivated by anger or grief (Boege & Garasu, 2011; Lees et al., 2015). Saovana-Spriggs (2007) explains that through the emotional outpouring of others, participants at Burnham developed an empathetic understanding of the position from which each person was negotiating. Addressing interpersonal issues proved important, given the 'high degree of familiarity [among participants of] one another's wartime exploits and individual responsibility for atrocities' (Corry, 2002, p. 113). The flexible speaking opportunities and session lengths that trautim allowed gave participants the culturally

required time to rebuild these relationships before addressing political issues (Boege, 2006; Campbell, 2009).

As an indigenous diplomatic practice, trautim helped reprioritise the functional aims of the talks in accordance with Melanesian *kastom*. Much of this comes down to reconnecting that is separated in traditional Western conflict resolution. Conventional negotiation, rooted in low-context individualist cultures, favours 'separating people from the problem' (Fisher & Ury, 1981). As an indigenous diplomatic practice, trautim reframes these as inherently intertwined, a tangled network of relationships in need of repair rather than as abstract issues (Brigg & Bleiker, 2011; Watson-Gegeo & White, 1990). It also restores emotional expression as a vehicle for negotiation, neutralising destructive impulses[2] and incrementally building a common understanding from which to work (Boege & Garasu, 2011).

Next, trautim empowered women to use their new-found social agency to act as mediators, inducing cooperation and securing commitment from participants at Burnham I. In Bougainville, big-men traditionally mediate the negotiation phase of reconciliations (Knauft, 1990); women are usually excluded from this to shield them as landholders from conflict and limit the chances their emotions may impede negotiations (Tanis, 2002). Women instead provided checks and balances over social interactions. During the war many big-men broke free of their customary accountability to women; encouraged by the increase of their authority in the absence of state structures (JSCFADT,1999; Lees et al., 2015). But this amplification was misinterpreted. The authority of big-men is hyper-localised; attempts to secure buy-in from groups they 'led' but over which they held limited authority constantly failed (Regan, 2008). This was further hindered by the exclusively 'top-brass', non-*kastom* processes

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2   It is worth noting that psychology literature rejects catharsis (per Breuer and Freud 1895) through venting as a social myth (Bushman, 2002; Parlamis, 2010, 2012). However, as studies have so far not tested beyond Western cultures, their value to our understanding of trautim and other non-Western processes is dubious.

through which earlier agreements arose (Boege & Garasu, 2011). By 1997, many key big-men had abandoned their roles as traditional mediators to pursue conventionally Western-style negotiations. Women stepped into this vacuum with impressive impact, using their role as landholders and the social reverence for them as mothers and wives to create new agency. Though the chaos of war dismantled one part of female agency, it created the conditions to forge another.

Trautim provided women the opportunity to employ this agency, with the customary mediatory role enhancing their ability to bridge the cleavages of war. This capacity to work across divides was clear from their arrival at Burnham, where women embraced and greeted one another so warmly that New Zealand Defence Force personnel mistook them as their own faction (Havini, 2004). Women quickly took up the mediating mantle, shuttling between the BRA and BRF factions and acting as intermediaries during the initial days of Burnham I (Lees et al., 2015). It was during trautim sessions that the ability of women to foster cooperation was cemented. They employed their social role as mothers to de-escalate aggression between participants as they purged (Lees et al. 2015; Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018b).

At Burnham and subsequent peace talks, these matrilineal obligations served as a 'weapon for peace' to coerce stubborn participants into cooperation (Saovana-Spriggs, 2007, p. 73). Trautim allowed them to use their negotiation skills developed in grassroots peace efforts, with the bravery shown in many of these efforts enhancing their moral authority to mediate (Lees et al., 2015).

The impact of using Melanesian indigenous diplomacy at Burnham reinforces Bagshaw's (2009) claim that the culture that bore the conflict should be the culture used to resolve it. Indeed, Mac Ginty (2008) attributes this realisation to the revitalised interest in indigenous forms of conflict resolution in academia and practice alike. Where conventional methods had struggled to achieve durable results, to use

them again and expect different outcomes would have been to flog the proverbial dead horse. Trautim provided the talks with a method that was designed specifically to respond to the cultural principles and expectations of conflict settlement in Melanesia. As a practice of relationship management, its focus on resolving issues through the reconciliation of people proved what was needed to make substantive, sustainable progress in bringing about peace. Only through indigenous diplomacy was this realignment possible. Despite sharing features with elements of other negotiation practices, this local practice was able to deliver what an equivalent conventional process could not.

Pōwhiri: Māori indigenous diplomacy at Burnham

The other indigenous diplomatic practice featured at Burnham was pōwhiri, a Māori ceremony of encounter by which participants reported being incredibly affected.

The process of pōwhiri

Pōwhiri is a traditional Māori ceremony of encounter in which one group (*hunga kāinga*) welcomes *manuhiri* (guests) into their space. Its historical role was to ascertain the purpose of a visit and, if peaceful, welcome visitors appropriately (Keane, 2013). The pōwhiri process is underpinned by the concepts of *tapu* and *noa*, which govern much of *tikanga* – the correct way of doing things within Māori culture. Tapu is a state of sacredness that connects something to an atua (supernatural being). Things that are tapu must be dealt with according to tikanga; not doing so carries significant social repercussions (Moorfield, 2011, s.v. 'tapu'). Noa is the opposite of tapu, a state of normality free from restrictions (Moorfield, 2011, s.v. 'noa'). For pōwhiri, the encounter and its practices are tapu and must be carried out in a particular tikanga-prescribed way to not violate its sacredness. In doing this, noa can be restored so the groups may undertake what they have met to do (Matenga-Kohu & Roberts, 2006, p. 7).

The ceremony can occur anywhere, but always in a space belonging to the welcoming party. It traditionally occurred on a *marae* – a collection of buildings around a courtyard, forming a forum for social life (Keane, 2013). The weather, level of formality and number of visitors determines the size and structure of pōwhiri, which can range from intimate to comprehensive (Tauroa & Tauroa, 1986).

We can break pōwhiri down into five stages: *karanga, whaikōrero* and *waiata*, *koha*, *harirū/hongi*, and *hākari* (Duncan & Rewi, 2018; Keane, 2013). To start, visitors gather at the threshold of the space to which they are being welcomed. The first phase – karanga (ceremonial call) – brings them across that threshold and establishes tapu over the encounter. *Kaikaranga* (female callers) conduct call-and-response oratory that identifies the visitors, establishes the purpose of their visit and acknowledges ancestors (Matenga-Kohu & Roberts, 2006, pp. 17–18). The threshold cannot be crossed until the host kaikaranga calls the visitors across, as it breaches tikanga and risks violating tapu (Rauawaawa Kaumatua Charitable Trust, 2018). Visitors assemble opposite the hosts with space between them, resembling the traditional layout of pōwhiri on a marae.

The second element involves whaikōrero (formal speeches) and waiata (songs). After an opening karakia (ritual chant), *kaikōrero* (orators) from each group deliver eloquent, artistic speeches in Māori. These speeches typically acknowledge the earth, forebears, the living and the purpose of the meeting, and honour the other group (Moorfield, 2011, s.v. 'whaikōrero'). Speaking order is determined by the protocol of an area's *iwi* (tribe) but always begins and ends with the hosts (Matenga-Kohu & Roberts, 2006, pp. 26–27). Songs are sung after each speech to demonstrate that the group supports its message. Only men typically speak from the *paepae* (orators' bench) across the courtyard. While some iwi allow women to speak from the paepae, it is more common for them to speak from the verandah of the *wharenui* (meeting house) (Matenga-Kohu & Roberts, 2006, p. 29; Taonui, 2020).

Koha – the third stage – occurs during the last speech from the visitors. The kaikōrero places a gift, often money in an envelope, on the ground between the two groups. It is a practical measure to support the cost of accommodating the visitors and is proportionate to the length of their meetings, which can last from hours to days (Rauawaawa Kaumatua Charitable Trust, 2018). The host's kaikaranga will acknowledges this with a call of thanks (Duncan & Rewi, 2018). This is followed by the fourth stage, harirū (handshaking) and hongi (nose-pressing), where visitors are invited forward to physically greet the hosts. Each visitor shakes hands and hongi with each host, sharing *ha* (the breath of life) in a symbolic act of interconnectedness (Duncan & Rewi, 2018; University of Otago, 2019).

The pōwhiri process concludes with the final phase, hākari – the sharing of food. A karanga will call visitors and hosts into the *wharekai* (dining hall) where food is served relative to the time of day and gathering size. The quality and quantity of food served is considered a reflection of the host's *manaakitanga* (hospitality) and acceptance of their visitors (Duncan & Rewi, 2018; Rauawaawa Kaumatua Charitable Trust, 2018). Food in Māori culture is considered noa and its consumption by both parties is *whakanoa*, an act of lifting tapu from participants (Matenga-Kohu & Roberts, 2006). Following this, the pōwhiri process is complete and participants may undertake what they came to do.

There are additional elements that may also occur during pōwhiri. Tradition has evolved so that full pōwhiri, with these additional elements, often occur only for special occasions or high-profile visitors. This is evidence of the adaptation of pōwhiri to become a modern diplomatic practice.

Pōwhiri as indigenous diplomatic practice

The first way in which pōwhiri can be understood as diplomatic practice is as a function of protocol, what Jönsson and Aggestam (2009, p. 83) describe as a 'body of customs governing the procedure and choreography of diplomatic intercourse'.

Pōwhiri provided a standardised custom for the interaction between iwi pre-colonisation. Though the consolidated Māori identity we know today did not emerge until after European contact, many cultural elements were shared across iwi (Irwin, 2017). This includes pōwhiri. A Church Missionary Society account (cited in Keane, 2013) from 22 years after colonisation details pōwhiri as a near identical process to today. This suggests standardisation of pōwhiri is not a result of Western contact and remains a largely unchanged process. Recognisable processes shared across groups to convey meaning and facilitate interaction is a core feature of diplomatic culture (McConnell & Dittmer, 2016). It provides a choreographed process with clear duties and behaviours for both visitors and hosts, underpinned by tikanga to determine pōwhiri as the correct process for encountering others.

The expectations and obligations that define pōwhiri are like modern diplomatic protocol and its requirements of sending and receiving states. It is clear that pōwhiri sat at the centre of an inter-national diplomatic culture before colonisation, setting the standard for interactions between iwi. This is firm evidence of its function as protocol within an indigenous diplomatic system. Though the system it serves has been superimposed by Western state diplomacy, pōwhiri has re-emerged within the culture of this new system.

Pōwhiri are an intrinsic feature of Aotearoa New Zealand's institutional diplomatic culture. There is no clear point at which pōwhiri began to be incorporated into state protocol, although it has been used when receiving members of the British royal family since the start of the 20th century (see Pathé News, 1954; New Zealand National Film Unit, 1952). Its use in state diplomacy traces to the 1980s, when New Zealand began to reframe itself as a Pacific country (Teaiwa, 2012, p. 254). As a result, aspects of Māoritanga, including pōwhiri, featured more regularly in New Zealand diplomacy. This was in full swing by the time of the talks at Burnham in 1997. Nowadays, pōwhiri form an integral element of credential ceremonies for new heads of mission and are

always the first formal activity for visiting heads of state and government (Government House, 2019; New Zealand Government, 2019). Māori from government organisations or a local iwi always lead these pōwhiri, ensuring they remain genuine and authentic practices.

As pōwhiri have become institutionalised as state protocol, additional stages usually left out of everyday encounters have remained integral. Pōwhiri used at *tangihanga* (funerals) or *hui* (meetings) tend to be modest. Elements often excluded from the everyday model – haka pōwhiri (ceremonial welcome dance) and *wero* (challenge of intentions) – remain a core part of diplomatic pōwhiri. They have adapted from their original functions to now act as signs of respect for the *mana* (prestige, authority) of the visitor (Matenga-Kohu & Roberts, 2006). Taking wero as an example, its original purpose was to assess visitors' intentions, trying to coax out impure motives by provocation. Armed warriors would meet the visitors afar, perform *pīkarikari* – dramatic, intimidating movements – and lay down a *taki* (offering, often a dart, feather or branch). Collecting the dart was a sign of peaceful intentions; refusing it a sign of hostility and a refusal to engage on the hosts' terms (Duncan & Rewi, 2018). In modern protocol, wero is reserved for important occasions, performed ceremonially at events of significance or for visiting dignitaries. Alongside these, pōwhiri are infused with Western elements that complement the respect being afforded the visitor. These include guards of honour, anthems and salutes (Government House, 2019).

With these changes, pōwhiri's authenticity and indigeneity may be questioned. Change here is a natural result of two different diplomatic cultures adapting to find commonality (McConnell & Dittmer, 2016). For Māoritanga more specifically, Duncan and Rewi (2018) dismiss the misconception that tikanga and ritual are static and insist it can – and must – change. While disagreement over this exists within Māori society (e.g. Cameron, 2014), traditions such as pōwhiri are largely regarded as living, and therefore adaptable. It is because of these changes, rather than despite them, that it remains distinctly indigenous.

The other way in which pōwhiri can be understood as a diplomatic practice is as a method of conflict reconciliation. Its reconciliation function only appears recently in scholarship (i.e. Blätter & Schubert-McArthur, 2016), but it has long served this purpose. Many Pacific customs that facilitate intergroup engagement, such as pōwhiri, feature conciliatory elements. This reflects the reality of communities coexisting on small islands where avoiding others was impractical and would affect the operation of profoundly interdependent societies. Instead, groups reconcile to restore social order as part of a continual, cyclical conflict management process (Dinnen, 2010). The key to understanding pōwhiri as a method of conflict settlement is its function as a social equaliser. Two of its elements best represent this.

First, the structure of karanga and whaikōrero create a defined, neutral space in which parties can identify and speak to grievances between them. During karanga, the visitors' kaikaranga uses their call to – among other things – inform the hosts of the kaupapa (issue, topic) behind their visit. The host will acknowledge this kaupapa as part of their call and response, and in doing so, bring the visitors into their space (Rauawaawa Kaumatua Charitable Trust, 2018). This process from the start informs both groups of the visitors' motivation and the host's acceptance of it, creating a spiritual commitment to the kaupapa between the groups (Duncan & Rewi, 2018). The open identification of grievances is important for productive conflict negotiation; it sets clear expectations of what will be addressed and agrees to approach it peacefully (Robinson & Robinson, 2005). Karanga is an act of transparency and open-mindedness, which are of high value when negotiating for a sustainable, enduring settlement (Bradley White [NewZcam], 2019). Having established tapu over the encounter, the whaikōrero that follows offers speakers from each side a defined space governed by tikanga in which to explore issues.

Next, many features of pōwhiri act to equalise the relationship between the individuals within the parties. It occurs by treating every person with respect, breaking barriers to interaction, and obliging all parties

to physically connect with one another. During whaikōrero, *kaumatua* (elders) may speak directly to the ancestry or characteristics of the other group. In doing this, the kaumatua use their own mana, earnt from their age and community standing, to augment the mana of the other party as a sign of great respect (Rauawaawa Kaumatua Charitable Trust, 2018). Hongi and hāriru are also deep expressions of respect. This comes from sharing ha, the breath of life, which connects people together. As it is the first time each group physically connects, hongi breaks down any physical barriers to interaction. Where pōwhiri acts as a method of conflict reconciliation, hākari is the demonstration of its results. Food is a universal equaliser among people; as one does not eat with one's enemies. Eating together psychologically lifts the barriers between people and allows them to interact freely (Essien, 2020, p. 144).

The impact of pōwhiri on the Burnham talks

Pōwhiri impressed upon Burnham talks participants that these would be different from the outset, and it confronted their intentions and willingness to invest in the process. Just as war-weariness had set in among Bougainvilleans, so too had distrust and apathy among the negotiating parties after multiple failed talks pre-1997 (Lees et al., 2015, p. 6). This negotiation fatigue presented a risk. Participants might divest from or spoil the talks if they felt they were falling into the pattern of earlier negotiations. Considerable efforts were made to avoid this, including hosting the talks in an unseasonably cold, isolated location (Tapi, 2002, p. 26). Pōwhiri, however, offered Wellington a convenient vehicle to make clear the talks' difference. Beyond meeting tikanga and diplomatic protocol requirements, pōwhiri let participants physically experience the difference of these negotiations from the start. This was Wellington's intention. Miriori (2002, pp. 10–11) highlights that officials took directions from Bougainvilleans on the program during planning for Burnham I, but insisted pōwhiri be included. Corry (2002, p. 107) confirms this.

Pōwhiri provided such a clear point of difference due to its design as an intentionally confronting experience. Elements of pōwhiri such as wero are deliberately antagonistic and were originally performed to expose visitors' ulterior motives (Duncan & Rewi, 2018; Matenga-Kohu & Roberts, 2006, p. 16). Though wero no longer serves this purpose, it remains an uneasy experience for visitors and can catch off-guard those encountering it for the first time. Because of this, the Burnham talks participants – many of whom were aggrieved by the actions of others present – unwittingly connected with one another through hongi and hāriru. Several accounts confirm that it was unconscious (Hayes, 2005; Tapi, 2002). Hayes recounts that Robert Igara – the PNG delegation head – was taken aback when realising he had pressed noses with people who had fought against his government for seven years. Anecdotal accounts suggest this had a lasting impact on Igara, who carried the taki with him and spoke of the healing power of pōwhiri while on the Bougainville Referendum Commission, 22 years later.

The impact of the pōwhiri on the talks is described as 'walking both sides through the glass walls that separated them' (Hayes, 2005, p. 148). I contend that only pōwhiri, as an indigenous diplomatic practice, could have delivered this. Its confrontational nature breaks down barriers and allows all to genuinely unify under a common peaceful resolve. This was made clear to participants at Burnham I, who were told that to pick up the taki was to signal they had come to Burnham to pursue peace (Lees et al., 2015, p. 9).

Pōwhiri also evoked a common cultural heritage shared by Māori and Pasifika and impressed on participants New Zealand's credentials as a Pacific-minded facilitator. It demonstrated New Zealand's connection to the Pacific, including with Melanesian kastom, through *Māoritanga* (Māori culture). Māori are a Pasifika people. Their forebears arrived in New Zealand from East Polynesia during the 14th century CE in the last of the Austronesian migrations (Walter et al., 2017). These migrations resulted in a shared sociocultural context between many Pacific cultures.

From this shared context, Pasifika customs or practices from one culture can appear familiar to people accustomed with another such culture. The warm connection between kastom and Māoritanga has already been noted.

Furthermore, it impressed upon participants New Zealand's credibility as a Pacific-minded negotiator. Australian attempts to facilitate peace had faltered and bred distrust of Canberra among Bougainvilleans (Regan, 2008). Beyond the appeal of 'not being Australia', Wellington wanted to shake up its reputation as a settler state in favour being recognised as a responsive, culturally Pacific nation. Diplomatic cables (cited in Baird, 2008) detail officials' intentions that the negotiations support this by being run 'the Pacific way'. Understanding this, it is clear how pōwhiri – as an indigenous diplomatic practice of Pacific heritage – reinforced New Zealand's desired identity. Goldsmith (2017) interprets this as almost disingenuous, employing Māoritanga in a trans-Tasman game of one-upmanship in the Pacific region.

I reject this cynicism: no accounts of the talks from any side share Goldsmith's concern. Lees (2015, p. 9) states that the 'government acknowledgement of indigenous custom impressed Bougainvilleans with the genuineness of this approach to negotiations'. Ngāi Tahu iwi kaumatua supported pōwhiri at both talks. It is unlikely the talks would have enjoyed Māori involvement or been perceived as genuine were this insincere politicking. The intentions were genuine, just as were Hayes's (2005) use of Māoritanga to reinforce his Pacific credentials when high commissioner in PNG. This authenticity resulted in an impressive impact.

As pōwhiri require active participation by all visitors and hosts, it is inclusive and allows everyone to experience the process personally. Māoritanga is based around collective responsibility, much like Melanesian kastom, and therefore processes of conciliation such as pōwhiri require inclusive participation (Ministry of Justice, 2001). The

impact of pōwhiri at Burnham came from delegates experiencing this shared cultural context. It impressed upon all of them from the start that their hosts could understand and empathise with their customs due to having similar practices themselves. Corry captures this neatly, saying:

> On an island where cultist rumours raged about the agenda of foreign powers (including New Zealand), the link of cultural familiarity and the status accorded to indigenous New Zealanders was clearly striking for the Bougainvillean factions and … for the representative of the central government in Port Moresby. (2002, p. 115)

This is something that only the use of indigenous diplomacy could have produced. Reitzig (2010, cited in Harding 2016, p. 132) confirms that the 1997 negotiations did better than those facilitated by Australia because pōwhiri demonstrated that New Zealand understood 'our Melanesian ways'. Conventional techniques are rarely designed to be inclusive of large numbers of negotiators. Those that are only engage the majority passively. None could provide the cultural connection that pōwhiri can.

Finally, pōwhiri demonstrated post-conflict biculturalism. A contributing factor to the Bougainville conflict was the long shadow cast by the artificial ethnic divide created during Anglo-Australian colonisation. While such cleavages were not unusual in PNG, Regan (1998) observes the divide lasted longer and was more intense in Bougainville. A Bougainvillean identity emerged in the 1950s, distinct from imported Papuan labourers. The resulting ethnonationalist identity posed that 'black skin' Bougainvilleans could run their own affairs better than 'red skin' Papuans in Port Moresby (Adamo, 2018; Nash & Ogan, 1990). The war amplified this division to a point where the peaceful return of Bougainville to within the fold of PNG seemed unlikely. However, the display of respectful biculturalism in a post-conflict society through pōwhiri opened participants' eyes to the possibility of such a return.

Pōwhiri demonstrated the realistic possibility of bicultural coexistence after protracted conflict. Māori fought outright war against the colonial government for almost three decades, before developing the model of passive resistance that defines their modern relationship (Macduff, 2010). The resulting coexistence after this prolonged conflict captured participants' imaginations. It appears this was an unintended side effect of Wellington trying to assert its Pacific credentials. That both Māori and Pākehā (New Zealanders of European descent) personnel and officials performed pōwhiri together left a considerable impression (Kaouna, 2001, p.94). Settlers participating in an authentic indigenous diplomatic process, led by indigenous people, is a poignant display of the intercultural respect. It also denies the claims of those who view such indigenous practices as being appropriated by Western practitioners as a form of disingenuous self-validation (Mac Ginty, 2008). This projected an image of New Zealand's post-conflict society that proved lasting (Baird, 2008, pp. 72–73). Due to pōwhiri occurring at the start of the talks, this bicultural image was bought to the fore. It increased participants' awareness of the large number of Māori personnel at the camp. Officials were aware of this and used the awareness and disproportionate number of Māori personnel to buttress the image it created for delegates (Corry, 2002, p. 107). This heightened awareness also meant the later 'study tour' of a marae and discussions of the Māori colonial experience by kaumatua had a heightened impact on participants. Tapi (2002, p. 26) explains that the Māori 'anti-colonial struggle' inspired them and 'bought hope for unity and reconciliation among Bougainvilleans'. Hayes (in Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2018a) notes this is also because Bougainvilleans engage differently with Māori than they do with Pākehā, reinforcing the value of indigenous involvement in the negotiation process.

Displays of biculturalism in day-to-day New Zealand society might not be as obvious as those at Burnham. Yet the blatancy that pōwhiri allows – as an indigenous diplomatic practice – makes possible the comprehension

of New Zealand's bicultural model by an outsider. Western visitors may not fully comprehend the importance of this or may reject it and classify it as European 'cultural annihilation' (see Krarup, 2013). But the impact it had at Burnham was unique to the audience and their circumstances. For many participants, pōwhiri was their first encounter of New Zealanders and Māori outside of PNG. It was a visual demonstration of the post-conflict progress. Its impact was poignant:

The Māori culture which the delegates witnessed in the camp and beyond, and New Zealand's bicultural nature, appeared to have a near-transcendent effect. The central place of a 'Pacific' culture in a nation they essentially perceived as European was a striking revelation for the delegates. It appeared to symbolise powerfully a capacity for cultural empathy that they had not expected. It indicated that New Zealand was prepared to treat them with dignity and respect; and at a more fundamental level it reminded them of home. The extent to which this positively informed Bougainvillean attitudes towards New Zealand's role in the peace process was significant. (Corry, 2002, p. 108)

Though it may not have been the intention for its inclusion in the program of the Burnham talks, the use of this indigenous diplomatic practice had considerable impact on participants. Beyond satisfying diplomatic protocol and welcoming visitors to Ngāi Tahu *whenua* (land), pōwhiri broke down decade-long barriers between delegates and forced them to connect genuinely. Its inclusivity saw all participants commit to the negotiations and helped them take their first step towards peace, together. Leading with pōwhiri set more than just the tone for what happened at Burnham. The meaningful use of indigenous diplomacy shaped relations between New Zealanders and Bougainvilleans into the truce-keeping and peacekeeping missions and beyond (Kaouna, 2001; Semoso, 2001). The impact of this one indigenous practice offers a glimpse into how influential settler-state diplomacies could be if rooted in and built around their indigenous peoples. Ihimaera's (1985) vision of foreign policy in which the history of indigenous peoples is valued for its international relevance may be possible yet.

Conclusion

Turning back to the wider debate on the success of the Burnham talks, this chapter demonstrates that indigenous cultural practices were an integral part of the success of these negotiations. More than window-dressing, their use directly contributed to the endurance of both agreements, the feature to which success is attached when discussing Burnham. The conflict being 'ripe' for resolution receives much of the credit for this. I do not seek to dispute this – conflict ripeness was a necessary if not essential factor in the talks' success. What I dispute is that ripeness alone was sufficient in achieving this. My findings support a broader view of the talks' success, recognising these cultural practices as a necessary component that complements ripeness theory. They cast doubt on whether complex conflict can be settled in a sustainable and durable way without culturally relevant practices, irrespective of its ripeness. Yet when given substantive attention, indigenous diplomacy provides a powerful explanation alongside the ripeness theory of the Burnham talks' success.

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