

FOREWORD

Icy morning dew upon my bare feet and legs is my lasting memory of playing rugby on Saturday mornings in Ōpōtiki, a small Eastern Bay of Plenty town in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The wet was cold and exhilarating, and with the right skill it enabled evasion of wanton captors as they slid one way, as you went the other towards greener pastures. The feeling I remember was one of liberation, in those moments where speed, deception, dew and inertia combined to open up the space for a headlong dash to the waste-oil marked try-line. Red with cold, Māori boy feet speckled with blades of colonial green, glued with dew, made from water that wept down from the nearby Raukūmara mountain range to the west and wafted up from the Pacific Ocean to the east.

In the 1970s and 1980s, rugby was a central part of the Ōpōtiki community; a community comprised of approximately equal-parts descendants of ‘settler’ ancestors and indigenous ancestors who earlier travelled westwards across the Pacific to Aotearoa on *waka* (ocean voyaging vessels), such as the Mātaatua and Nukutere. I am not sure how it all worked, this sporting amalgam, this rural community of affluent and working class Pākehā¹ kids, and Māori kids predominantly from a rural underclass. The history of colonial dispossession was not clear to any of us, except in our corporeality. Freedom was an embodied experience on a rugby field that, earlier, had been part of a parcel of lands dispossessed by colonial injustices.

In 1865, Carl Volkner, the Anglican missionary and head of the Hiona Church (now known as St Stevens Church) in Ōpōtiki, was killed and his eyes eaten by Kereopa Te Rau and his men.² This was an act of revenge for Volkner’s conspiracy with the colonial government in its war against Hauhauism,³ Māori rebellion in general, and tribal unification. Volkner had been serving as a spy (‘the eyes’) for Governor George Grey, ‘keeping him informed on Maori activities in his parish’ (Walker, 1990, p. 131). Kereopa Te Rau had lost his family through a massacre in the Waikato region, where the British forces had set alight a church with all the townspeople inside; he blamed the multiple murders on missionary complicity with the British (Walker, 1990, p. 124). Consequently, he sought *utu* (revenge) on those Pākehā conspirators who, either inadvertently or directly, had contributed to the deaths of his *whānau* (family).

The pre-eminent Māori historian, Ranginui Walker (2007) grew up in Ōpōtiki and is a descendant of the local *iwi* (tribe), Whakatōhea. In his book *Ōpōtiki-Mai-Tawhiti: The Story of Whakatōhea's Struggle during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Walker outlines the colonial government's response to Kereopa Te Rau's insurgence who, importantly, was not from Ōpōtiki nor Whakatōhea:

In 1865 the Government invaded Ōpōtiki with an army of 500 troops to arrest Kereopa Te Rau, a Hauhau partisan of the Arawa tribe ... Whakatōhea bore the brunt of that invasion under martial law, including the looting and destruction of property, the wrongful execution of Mokomoko [a local chief] for the killing of Volkner, the confiscation of Ōpōtiki lands and the confinement of 511 Whakatōhea survivors on a native reservation of second-class land at Ōpape. (p. 10)

The wrongful confiscation included 69,200 hectares of Whakatōhea land (Walker, 1990, p. 131) that, subsequently, under the Military Settlers Scheme, was taken up by mainly military settlers who, thereafter 'became the established families, businessmen and landed gentry of Ōpōtiki' (Walker, 2007, p. 105).

One hundred and sixteen years after the invasion, it was 1981, I was 10-years-old and looked forward to evading the descendants of Mokomoko and the Ōpōtiki landed gentry alike, every Saturday morning on the green playing fields of the Ōpōtiki Reserve. It was also the year that Ōpōtiki's one-and-only All Black, Frank Shelford, was to don the Black Jersey. After weeks earlier starring for the 'Māori All Blacks'⁴ against the touring South African 'Springboks', Shelford of Whakatōhea descent was called into the starting line-up of the All Black team to replace the injured Ken Stewart in the decisive Third Test at Auckland's Eden Park. The Test has become folkloric in New Zealand history due to violent protests prior to, during and following the game, including a plane that continuously circled the park peppering the field with flour-bombs and lit flares; a flour-bomb hitting All Black prop Gary Knight nearly knocking him unconscious.

The uprising at the Third Test in Auckland was a culmination of close to two-months of nationwide protests since the Springbok Tour's inception. 'The Tour', as it came to be known, split the nation along ideological lines, bypassing racial lines with Māori and Pākehā alike both pro and anti the Tour. Although ostensibly protesting Apartheid in South Africa and the Robert Muldoon led National Government's support of the Tour, the event signalled New Zealand's postmodern moment where a decade of protest by various partisan groups congealed to resist an oppressively mono-cultural 'kiwi' ontology, centred in white-hetero-patriarchy

and most despotically constituted in the rugby clubs scattered throughout the land.

The brief historical sketch I provide here of a small New Zealand town's links to colonisation, sport and global events points to the complexity of the enigma the present collection attempts to reveal. It suggests that any analysis of indigeneity and sport must be firstly cognisant of 'local knowledges' and place, the dispossessing nature of colonialism, the role sport played in assimilating the indigenous population within the nation state, the complexity that is the indigenous athlete as both indigenous hero and dupe, the possibilities that sport holds as a spectacle of indigenous resistance and, more than anything, the relationship between sport and indigenous postcolonial corporeality.

All of the chapters in this collection will discuss power directly or otherwise, whether that be the power of sport to exclude indigenous peoples, to assimilate, to resist and/or to produce indigenous bodies. As a 10-year-old watching the Springbok Tour alongside a Māori father whose passion for rugby emulated my own (or the other way around) there was nothing more oppressive than the enormous whiteness, the intimidating white muscularity that squeezed, in hulk-like fashion, into the green jerseys of the Springboks. My father's bottom-line that 'politics should stay out of sport' in supporting the Tour contrasted my liberal and feminist Pākehā mother's stance against the Tour that, for her, signified the broader suppression of alterity in Aotearoa. My father's stance, however, was also based on the pride he took in New Zealand's race-relations in comparison to South Africa who systematically disavowed 'coloured' people the right to play rugby. Indeed, the numerous Māori who had played for the All Blacks since the 'Originals' of 1905–1906, was constantly held up as a beacon of New Zealand's 'ideal' race-relations in comparison to the 'old foe', South Africa. New Zealand's intermingling of 'races' via rugby came to signify the utopian and misleading 'bicultural nation', as outlined by legendary sports journalist, Sir Terry McLean:

That surely, was one of the romantic developments of all sport – the mingling, within so short a space, of natives and newcomers in an expedition which, while not truly representative, identified New Zealand Rugby to the world long before any other nation's game had become known outside its own shores. How different might have been the history of South Africa, one cannot help thinking, if the peoples native to that country had been permitted and encouraged, as were Maoris, to join the sport brought in by the foreign settlers. (McLean, 1982, p. 18)

My historical iteration here conveys shifting conceptions of power in relation to indigeneity and sport. Born into a different era, educated in a

Native School and subject to various disciplinary forms of racism, my father valued the inclusion of Māori in rugby as a source of pride. My mother, influenced by universal feminist discourses, in contrast, viewed the Tour as symptomatic of white male chauvinism.

Undeniably, much analysis of indigeneity and sport has conceived of power in an exclusionary manner, including Colin Tatz's (1995) influential *Obstacle Race: Aborigines in Sport*; a collection of case-studies very much in the tradition of Jackie Robinson. Through this conception of power, the indigenous athlete is framed as the heroic figure who overcomes racial barriers and obstacles, and thus is a fighter for indigenous equal-rights. This narrative reflects the production of an indigenous sport studies *contre-histoire*, that is 'the discourse of those who have no glory ...' (Foucault, 2003, p. 70):

[W]e came out of the shadows, we had no glory and we had no rights, and that is why we are beginning to tell of our history ... the misfortune of ancestors, exiles, and servitude. It will enumerate not so much victories, as the defeats to which we have to submit during our long wait for the promised lands and the fulfilment of the old promises that will of course re-establish both the rights of old and the glory that has been lost. (Foucault, 2003, pp. 70–71)

The concern here, as with Michel Foucault's attack on the glorification of national origins by modernist histories, is that the indigenous athlete becomes a proxy for modernity itself. The narrative of overcoming insurmountable odds to achieve on the colonial sportsfield, re-validates colonisation because of its investment in the cornerstones of European enlightenment. That is, dissent from oppressive traditions, human equality, meritocracy and freedom. The story of the indigenous athlete, breaking through to compete on the fields of Empire redeems the white man's burden to civilise the world.

In the 1981 Springbok Tour, the tourists included one Black player, Errol Tobias. In the backdrop of the controversy of the Tour, which included world-wide media attention due to, for instance, the boycotting of the 1976 Montreal Olympics by 25 African countries due to New Zealand's continued sporting links with South Africa, Tobias' singular inclusion as the solitary Black player can only be read as tokenism. Yet, it could be also argued that following the tempestuous insurgence of the Tour, Shelford's inclusion in the All Blacks for the Third and final Test was politically motivated. Shelford was the only visibly Māori player to be selected and, moreover, his style as an openside-loose-forward very much reflected the renegade style made famous in the 1960s by 'the Black Panther' and All Black, Waka Nathan.

All Blacks such as the great George Nepia, Steve Pokere, Waka Nathan and Frank Sheldford very much embodied a style of Māori play that often confounded the rational organisation, the ‘winning style’ that New Zealand rugby became famous for. Ex-Māori All Black, Tutekawa ‘Tu’ Wylie, outlines the dis-logic of Māori rugby:

Maori play a particular type of rugby. It’s spontaneous and exuberant. In rugby we celebrate the joy of living. So we’re prepared to take risks and to do things just for the hell of it. In our day it wasn’t whether we won or lost but the way we played the game ... I don’t know whether that’s being coached out of our players. And I don’t know whether New Zealand rugby has room now for our philosophy. (cited in Shortland, 1993, p. 47)

Wylie tells of an ‘authentic’ brand of Māori rugby that developed, which had an aesthetic that inherently resisted colonial rationalisation. Māori rugby was subversive when it performed an ‘economy of loss’, as opposed to the rational and utilitarian notions that have pervaded modern sport and, in particular, the ‘win at all costs’ tactics that evolved in New Zealand colonial rugby.

Unfortunately, in sporting analyses of indigeneity, too little attention has been paid to ‘style’ and corporeality, particularly in relation to the way colonial sport reflects Western rationalism and, therefore, how anti-rational performances (i.e. those styles more invested in the aesthetics of play, as opposed to the rationality of ‘game plans’) can serve to disrupt the civilising burden. Although postcolonial theory readily deconstructs Cartesian Dualism as a civilising factor of colonisation, seldom is any space for analyses allocated to those indigenous bodily practices that inherently undermine the rationalism of neo-colonial practices such as subversive sporting style.

This is probably the case because analyses of indigenous ‘culture’ tend to be focused on tradition, which inherently divorces what it means to be indigenous from the *present*. The poignant point here is that any critical scrutiny of indigeneity of sport must recognise the *immediacy* of the indigenous body in motion, whether that be in analysing the re-production of embodied racial stereotypes or the creation of embodied indigenous resistance. Here, C. L. R. James’ analysis of Caribbean cricket in his 1963 book, *Beyond a Boundary*, is important to reconsider. Simon Featherstone explains its importance to theorising postcolonialism and popular culture:

For [James], the body in movement was a dynamic sculpture shaped by a dialectical tension individual will and desire, and the forms and constraints of its social environment at a particular historical moment. Whilst the body has always been at the painful centre of colonial and imperial history, it was James who first articulated its capacity for expression and resistance, not through violence necessarily, but through the detailed aesthetics of the body’s response to stimuli at a particular moment in history.

The political theatre of movement occurs in various and unexpected places by no means limited to traditional definitions of 'art' or rebellion: in a batman's stroke in cricket. (2005, p. 27)

Again, there is concern with this interpretation because it disregards the culpability of the indigenous body within the system of imperial sport. The question becomes one of semantics, whether indigenous sporting style invested in an aesthetic of resistance 'refuses to privilege mind over body... [and] emphasizes contingency, locatedness, the irreducibility of difference, the passage of emotions and desire, and the worldliness of being' (Ahmed & Stacey, 2001, p. 3). Or, on the other hand, such an aesthetic becomes invisible within the broader taxonomy of sport.

Foucault might ask, 'how can the indigenous sporting body be divorced from the conditions of its production?' Foucault's method is immensely important to sport and indigeneity because of the interpretation of the body as a material site where discursive formations are 'fleshed-out', (Young, 2001, p. 399). Foucault provides a method that rejects the notion that materiality is somehow divorced from theory; that the body is somehow less relevant to history than philosophy. Sport, thus, does not merely mirror society, the athlete's body is the materialisation of discourse; it is a discursive formation, and sport is a discursive practice. The sports genealogist is thus not interested in the linear progression of sport from its origins and the ontological purity of the past through to the imagined ontological narratives of today. Rather the genealogist asks why does the indigenous athlete exist?

In 1985, the New Zealand Rugby Football Union was forced to cancel the proposed All Black tour to South Africa due to a legal injunction. In 1986, Frank Shelford joined a rebel squad of 32 (including 28 of the players named in the aborted 1985 Tour) named 'the Cavaliers' who participated in an unsanctioned tour of South Africa. The tourists included a number of other Māori players, for instance, Bill Osborne, Steve Pokere, Victor Simpson, Wayne 'Buck' Shelford (Frank's nephew), Steve McDowell, Scott Crichton and Hika Reid. How did this postcolonial cultural formation occur? How did Māori men come to bolster a tour that symbolically, at least, sanctioned Apartheid South Africa?

The burgeoning field of indigeneity and sport faces the anxiety of representation felt within postcolonial studies in general. On the one hand, the indigenous athlete is seen as critical to 'the very identities, narratives and analytical tools that had charged a long history of popular anti-colonial struggles' (Featherstone, 2005, p. 18). On the other, he/she is constructed as a symptom of colonial discourse, part of a totalising construct that serves to

essentialise indigenous peoples within the limits of their own bodies. Whakatōhea descendent Frank Shelford debuted as an All Black at a moment in New Zealand history that changed the ideological foundations of the country forever; only a mere 116 years after the most prominent moment of dispossession in his peoples' colonial history. The 'production' of indigenous sportspeople as colonial citizens, as freedom fighters is no simple story as this Foreword hopefully demonstrates, and as this collection will illustrate.

Ngā mihi
Brendan Hokowhitu

NOTES

1. Of European descent.
2. Kereopa Te Rau was one of the leaders of the Hauhau, an anti-missionary yet religious 'cult' that sought the political unification of tribes against their 'common oppressor', the colonial government (Walker, 1990, p. 130).
3. Underpinned by spiritual beliefs, the Hauhau movement was initiated in 1862 with the goal of political unification of tribes against their 'common oppressor', the colonial government (Walker, 1990, p. 130).
4. A team comprised entirely of players of Māori descent who, even to this day, continue to play international teams. The team is now referred to as 'New Zealand Māori' due to the commodification of the All Black brand, but was previously referred to as the 'Māori All Blacks'. The team has a very proud history including many famous wins over visiting international teams, such as the British Lions in 2005.

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