

He Whiringa Hīnaki: A Kaupapa Māori ecomusicological framework

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Abstract The hīnaki is a weaved net that has been taught intergenerationally among my people who are the Indigenous Māori people belonging to the Whanganui River from Aotearoa, New Zealand. The hīnaki remains a significant tool in food gathering today. The hīnaki is weaved from the inner fibres of the aerial roots from the aka kiekie (vine), alongside akatea or rātā (tree with red timber), and through using karewao (supplejack) (Best 2005; Downes 1917; Haami & Tinirau 2021; Horwood & Wilson 2008; Young 1998). The hīnaki is an important symbol for Whanganui Iwi (Whanganui tribal nation), being featured as a key component of Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims) Settlement 2017, which formalised the legal personhood of the Whanganui River. These elements inform *He Whiringa Hīnaki*, which is a Kaupapa Māori ecomusicological framework to analyse waiata (songs). Kaupapa Māori methodologies draw on mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) with a metaphysical base that is distinctly by Māori and for Māori focused on using decolonial and indigenising frameworks (Eketone 2008; Pihama 2015; Smith 2017; Smith 2021). This article intends to discuss the framework which is derived from the lived experiences of Rānana Marae (communal gathering place) descendants to contribute towards future generations who wish to examine waiata within its environmental and ancestral contexts. This article outlines the locale of the research, the overall methodological approach, weaves insights and themes from descendants of Rānana Marae, presents the framework, *He Whiringa Hīnaki* and lastly, draws conclusions as well as future considerations.

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E rere kau mai te awa nui, mai te kāhui maunga ki Tangaroa. Ko au te awa, ko te awa ko au. Ngā mihi nui ki Te Awa Tupua. Ka nui te mihi e ngā tūpuna, e ngā hapū o Rānana Marae hoki. Moe mai rā e ngā pāhake o Rānana Marae. Ki te whiriwhiri ngā kākaho e kore e whati! I would like to acknowledge the Whanganui River and the ancestors who contributed to this work and who have now passed on. Only a few remain from my doctoral study now. I miss them always and I hope they live on in memory and in waiata. I would like to dedicate this article to the late Angel Haami for the gift of her voice, knowledge and the ruruku that now exists. I would like to formally acknowledge the Rānana Māori Committee for their continual support and encouragement for attaining my doctorate. I would like to thank Ngā Tāngata Tiaki o Whanganui for awarding my study with the Te Mana o Te Awa Scholarship in 2018 and in 2020 as well as Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga for the Doctoral Support Grant in 2021. I would like to acknowledge the Victoria Doctoral Scholarship for assisting this study from 2018-2021 from Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington. The literature and theorising surrounding the historical and intergenerational trauma health impacts of colonisation on Māori, Māori music and waiata has been informed by the Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC) fund, the Māori Health Emerging Researcher First Grant for the research project, *He Whiringa Māramatanga: Kaupapa Māori Music and Healing*.

Introduction

Table 1. A short pao composed by Te Rangimotuhia Kātene.

I te timatanga ko te hiahia	In the beginning was the desire
Mai i te hiahia ko te mahara	From the desire came the awareness
Mai i te mahara ko te whakaaro	From the awareness came the thought
Ka puta ko te kupu e	Then the word
(Te Rangimotuhia Kātene n.d.).	

The above excerpt is a pao (short song) composed by Te Rangimotuhia Kātene from the Whanganui River region of Aotearoa, New Zealand.¹ The Whanganui River is located on the West Coast and central areas of Te Ika-

a-Māui (the North Island). This pao denotes the power of desire, awareness, thought as well as its manifestation through words. The meanings embedded within this pao provide the process for theorising a Kaupapa Māori ecomusicological framework. This framework came from a need and desire from my hapū (sub-tribe) as well as the ecomusicology discipline (Haami 2022), but this pao also speaks to the importance of my positionality as a wahine Māori (Indigenous Māori woman) who is genealogically tied to Whanganui. Both the pao and I originate from Whanganui and the pao provides a critical opening for theorising how Kaupapa Māori methodologies and ecomusicology can work together to serve hapū.

Through collaborative doctoral study with my marae (ancestral communal gathering place), Rānana Marae and hapū, Ngāti Ruaka, I learnt that pao comes from the Whanganui River, just as we as people descend from the Whanganui River through whakapapa (genealogy; layers of connection). A pāhake (elders who keeps the home fires alight) of my hapū, Toreheikura Puketapu stated that pao was a normalised part of lifeways growing up on the marae:

Morning karakia me āna ka pao. They're saying it to themselves, and you hear them... It's all combined with the nature and the river and the people that have gone (Puketapu 2022:145).

In response, my kuia (grandmother), Angel Haami responded by stating:

I used to hear pao from every direction, not only from Te Pou o Rongo, Te Morehu, Kauika... I would go above by my grandfather, my Mum's Dad there, I go over there and his version of the pao was just... the veranda... I would be protected because he always protected me. Pao was for everything that was going around. They just protected everybody (Haami 2022:145).

My pāhake revealed that pao was a popular style among Whanganui tūpuna (Whanganui ancestors) of waiata (songs) containing tonal, rhythmic, inter-generational, and spiritual influences derived from the Whanganui River. Further, pao was a method of enforcing environmental protections over hapū and whānau (families; relations) as they went about their day. Broadly, pao as a short, often improvisational waiata form, involved various subjects that included love, gossip, instructions, and scandal while being diverse across different iwi (tribal nations) and hapū. Pao and waiata more widely are a part of a large tribal repository and acted as collective memory that was

held predominantly by wāhine Māori (Indigenous Māori women) within hapū (McRae 2017; Mikaere 2011; Smith 2019).

These whakapapa interconnections between my people, pao, the Whanganui River and I help to inform the theoretical and practical foundations for seeking a Kaupapa Māori ecomusicological framework that articulates a uniquely Indigenous Māori and Whanganui perspective about approaching waiata analysis more broadly. This article aims to explore a journey that led to formulating a Kaupapa Māori ecomusicological framework from my marae called, '*He Whiringa Hīnaki*'², which means the 'weaving of the net'. The term 'whiringa' means to weave or plait and derives from whakapapa links of the tupuna (ancestor), Hinengākau, specifically from the whakataukī (proverbial saying) 'nga muka-a-taurawhiri-a-Hinengākau.' This translates to 'the fibre of the plaited rope of Hinengākau'. Hinengākau is the daughter of Ruaka, who is the namesake of my hapū and the custodian over the upper reaches of the Whanganui River that genealogically weaves the Whanganui River and Whanganui Iwi together (Sole 2005; Waitangi Tribunal 1999; Young 1998). The term 'hīnaki' refers to a net and aims to provide conceptual and practical methods for Māori ecomusicologists in viewing and analysing their waiata from my Whanganui context of waiata. Further, this has potential learnings for Indigenous ecomusicologists who wish to view their Indigenous customary songs by drawing on an Indigenous framing.

He Whiringa Hīnaki was presented in the 47th International Council for the Traditions of Music and Dance (ICTMD) World Conference held in Legon, Ghana during July 2023. This conference space provided further learnings about non-Māori ecomusicologists working with Māori on their waiata surrounding ethical principles of positionality, relationality, collaboration, and reciprocity. While *He Whiringa Hīnaki* serves and privileges Indigenous Māori first and foremost, this framework can locate non-Māori in their journey with Māori and how they are navigating unfair colonial power dynamics within ecomusicology research. *He Whiringa Hīnaki* is not palatable for non-Māori, due to its Kaupapa Māori approach, and in doing so will present challenging issues for ecomusicology and ethnomusicology work more broadly within waiata study (Pihama 2015; Smith 2021).

These issues include pervasive forms of paternalism, racism and the decontextualisation of mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) with waiata being translated into a tonal language outside of Māori musical theories and

practices through ear to hand staff transcription and more broadly, through Western art music³ with notation (Haami, 2024a). These issues have affected how Māori are viewed and treated today with regards to the ‘legitimacy’ of mātauranga Māori (Smith, 2021), how some of our waiata have been rendered inaccessible to us as Māori but also how waiata has been analysed (Haami 2024b; Nunns 1993). Ethnomusicological waiata analysis has historically been dominated by Pākehā (European settler), located within a deficit frame or victim-blame analysis that ignores the wider structures and impacts of settler-colonialism on Māori (Haami 2024a; Haami 2024b; McLean 1996; McLean 2014; McLean & Orbell 2004). This type of racism has contributed to harmful health outcomes to Māori (Smith 2021; Tinirau et al. 2021; Reid and Robson, 2007; Reid et al. 2019). *He Whiringa Hīnaki* lets non-Māori into a Māori worldview and epistemology surrounding waiata. However, it is for the non-Māori ecomusicologist to discern and labour how they can incorporate *He Whiringa Hīnaki* into their theory, praxis, analysis and ethics, particularly when working collaboratively with Māori to support Māori in their aspirations. This article will outline the locale of the research, the overall methodological approach, weave insights and themes from descendants of Rānana Marae, present *He Whiringa Hīnaki* and lastly, draw conclusions as well as future considerations.

The Whanganui River

The Whanganui River originates from:

... the legendary activities of cultural hero Māui Tikitiki-a-Taranga and his brothers who, aboard the canoe, Tahuārangī, lifted the great fish that became the North Island of Aotearoa, New Zealand, known as Te Ika-a-Māui. Te Ika-a-Māui was made visible by the collection of mountains within its central plateau called Te Kāhui Maunga, most notably consisting of three mountains, Mount Ruapehu (Matua te Mana), Mount Tongariro (Matua te Toa), and Mount Ngauruhoe (Matua te Pononga). (Whanganui Iwi & Crown 2014:11)

According to Whanganui oral histories, the Whanganui River was given to Matua te Mana (Mount Ruapehu) from Ranginui (primordial sky ancestor) as a teardrop to ease its loneliness and thus, the Whanganui River flowed into existence (Waitangi Tribunal 1999).

A Whanganui elder, Matiu Māreikura (Waitangi Tribunal 1999) spoke extensively about the importance of these teardrops that created the Whanganui River and how the Whanganui River represents the life and death cycle for descendants by which:

Tribal karakia (prayers) and rituals, poi (action song performed with ball and string), action songs and haka (posture dance) all go back to the river, and to the mountains, and to the sea. We have been given the task to hold and preserve these things for our mokopuna (grandchildren)--not for us, but for the generations yet to come. (Māreikura cited in Waitangi Tribunal 1999:57)

Māreikura (Waitangi Tribunal 1999) illustrates how whakapapa is a way of seeing and being an ontological and epistemological anchoring process in conceptualising the musical theory of waiata as a genealogical, intergenerational, environmental, tribal, and historiographical activity of collective memory (Haami 2024b).

Tupua te Kawa

Reinforcing a Whanganui Iwi view where whakapapa is the ontological and epistemological foundation is the value system called, Tupua te Kawa, which is a key component within the design of Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims) Settlement Act 2017 that enacted the legal personhood of the Whanganui River (Cribb et al. 2022; Ngā Tāngata Tiaki o Whanganui 2023a; Te Aho 2014)⁴. Tupua te Kawa is a value system based on a whakataukī that originates from the Whanganui River and Whanganui Iwi illustrating that the river and its descendants are inextricably linked (Te Aho 2014). The shaping of Tupua te Kawa is represented below showing the origins from the Whanganui whakataukī, moving into English translations, then finally to the legal value system underpinning Te Awa Tupua (See Table 1).

Table 2. This table shows Tupua Te Kawa as written within the Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims) Settlement Act 2017, which gives the Whanganui River its legal personhood.

1 Whakataukī	2 English translation
Ko te Awa te mātāpuna o te ora E rere kau mai te Awa nui, mai te Kāhui Maunga ki Tangaroa	The river is the source of spiritual and physical sustenance. The great river flows from the mountains to the sea.
Ko au te Awa, ko te Awa ko au Ngā manga iti, ngā manga nui e hono- hono kau ana, ka tupu hei Awa Tupua	I am the river and the river is me. The small and large streams that flow into one another form one river.

3 Legal value system of Tupua te Kawa

Te Awa Tupua is a spiritual and physical entity that supports and sustains both the life and natural resources within the Whanganui River and the health and well-being of the iwi, hapū, and other communities of the river.

Te Awa Tupua is an indivisible, living whole, from the mountains to the sea, including all its physical and metaphysical elements

The iwi and hapū communities of the Whanganui region have inalienable connections with Te Awa Tupua, and therefore, have a responsibility to its health and well-being.

Te Awa Tupua is a singular entity, comprised of several elements and collaborative communities, working together

(Cribb et al. 2022; Haami 2022; Ngā Tāngata Tiaki o Whanganui 2023a; Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act 2017).

For *He Whiringa Hīnaki*, Tupua te Kawa provides the distinctly Whanganui Iwi worldview, positionality and relationality of seeing, understanding, and transmitting waiata. This position views waiata as genealogically tied to where it environmentally originates but presents waiata as tangible, deeply meaningful and a taonga tuku iho (treasures passed intergenerationally) as reflected in the reverence for the Whanganui River by Whanganui Iwi (Wai-tangi Tribunal 1999). In creating *He Whiringa Hīnaki*, Tupua te Kawa was a critical methodological approach that enabled the grounding to relate and communicate unapologetically with Rānana Marae, my hapū community as well as provide theoretical and practical research considerations for the wider Whanganui Iwi.

Kaupapa Māori theory and praxis

To reach my tribal communities and Māori beyond my ancestral region, the overarching methodological approach came from Kaupapa Māori theory and praxis. The term ‘kaupapa’ refers to a purpose, foundation, plan, strategy or philosophy and ‘Māori’ illustrates a uniquely Māori perspective of these aspects that positions us as Indigenous with a unique status and relationship to our lands (Pihama 2015). Kaupapa Māori methodologies draw on mātauranga Māori with a metaphysical base that is distinctly by and for Māori. This forms the basis for research to be predicated from Māori philosophies, paradigms, concepts, frameworks, and methods. Kaupapa Māori methodologies are centred in decolonial and indigenising approaches that is constantly being critiqued and adapted through reiterating past learnings and through new and emerging concepts (Durie 2017; Eketone 2008; Hoskins & Jones 2017; Pihama 2015; Mahuika 2015; Smith 2017; Smith 2021; Smith & Reid 2000).

In the development of Kaupapa Māori theory and praxis, Smith (1997; 2017) drew on rising Māori political consciousness in the 1970’s that sought a decolonial and conscientisation process. Smith (1997) later outlined six principles for Kaupapa Māori theory and praxis that were identified from interviews with elders, parents as well as children from the first cohort of Te Kōhanga Reo (language nests; early childhood schooling) and Kura Kaupapa Māori (full immersion language schools) during the 1980’s that helped to revive te reo Māori (the Māori language). The principles of Kaupapa Māori theory and praxis include: tino rangatiratanga (self-determination); taonga tuku iho (cultural aspirations); ako Māori (culturally preferred pedagogy); kia piki ake i ngā raruraru o te kāinga (socio-economic mediation); whānau (extended family structure); and lastly, kaupapa (collective philosophy) (Pihama et al. 2020; Smith 1997; 2000). Another Kaupapa Māori principle was later added, called āta (meaningful and respectful relationships) by Pohatu (2013) that centres Māori thought and knowledge to inform practice within relationship power dynamics. Thus, Kaupapa Māori theory and praxis has a clear cultural and political intent towards tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake (autonomy) within research (Pihama 2015). Kaupapa Māori methodologies and practices allowed for culturalist and structuralist

critique (Pihama 2015; Smith 1997) of historic ethnomusicological methods while providing the access point to allow for localised and diverse iwi as well as hapū research re-productions of knowledge to emerge such as Tupua te Kawa.

Ecomusicological methods

The study adapted an ecomusicological method called the comparative approach developed by Boyle & Waterman (2016), which aimed to bridge ethnomusicology and animal behavioural ecology for their research agenda. This study adapted their comparative approach to Tupua te Kawa and a Kaupapa Māori methodology by privileging the lived experiences of Rānana Marae descendants as it pertains to waiata. The knowledge embedded within lived experiences of Rānana Marae descendants were gathered using a format of wānanga, which further aligns with a Kaupapa Māori approach. The comparative approach aims to examine different sites where underlying ecological causes have led to musical changes over time through performance and practice (Boyle & Waterman 2016). The comparative approach within the context of the Whanganui River, Rānana Marae and waiata is outlined further below (See Table 2). This comparative table was adapted to formulate the questions being asked throughout the wānanga with descendants of Rānana Marae. This table helped to plan and query the many overlapping components of the research:

Table 3. Comparative ecomusicological approach: The Whanganui River, Rānana Marae and waiata. This outlines the comparative approach proposed by Boyle & Waterman (2016) for ecomusicology study and its adaptation to Tupua te Kawa and Kaupapa Māori methodologies to suit the research community.

Methodology	Comparative approach (Boyle & Waterman 2016)		Comparative approach for the study (He Whiringa Hīnaki)	
Site	Compare performances, genres or musical stylings within different cultural contexts of geographic sites.		Geographic sites: The Whanganui River and Rānana Marae. Cultural contexts: Wānanga Music: Waiata	
Data Collection	Control for similar characteristics in closely related genres or styles.	Deduce underlying ecological causes that have led to musical changes over time through performance and practice.	Control for study: The control for the study is not a musical style or genre, rather the site of Rānana Marae.	Ecological changes over time to music: The ecological changes of the Whanganui River through colonisation and climate change reflected through waiata.
Uses and limitations	Understand musical changes throughout history	Comprehend underlying musical ecological components influencing musical performance and practice.	Study of musical changes: Waiata changing to document the ecological changes of the Whanganui River.	Ecological components influencing music: How the ecological changes of the Whanganui River affect waiata composition, performance and learning.

Both the Whanganui River and waiata have undergone changes in different ways due to settler-colonialism. The Whanganui River has suffered drastic ecological damage due to climate change alongside land confiscation, which has created highly persistent intergenerational and historical trauma resulting in varying levels of cultural dislocation for Whanganui Iwi. Waiata as a part of Māori oral histories has experienced te reo Māori and tribal dialect-

tical language loss and revitalisation. These impacts stem from colonisation (Higgins & Rewi 2014; Ka'ai-Mahuta 2010; Mikaere 2011; Pihama & Smith, 2023; Reynolds & Smith 2014; Smith 2019; Smith 2021; Smith 2023; Waitangi Tribunal 1999; Whanganui Iwi & Crown 2014; Walker 1990; White & Rewi 2014; Young 1998).

These outcomes are drivers within parts of ecomusicology that investigate environmental issues, such as climate change and its effects on Indigenous communities through music (Diettrich 2018a; Diettrich 2018b). Through the ecomusicological comparative approach (Boyle & Waterman 2016) the research questions were influenced by the ecological changes of the Whanganui River due to colonisation as reflected through waiata but within the locale of Rānana Marae. These changes were reflected through the lived experiences of the descendants of Rānana Marae by discussing the adaptations relating to waiata composition, performance and learning over time. Additionally, these changes were articulated through descendants' observations surrounding the well-being of the Whanganui River as being tiaki (caretakers; custodians) within that particular area of the river. The descendants discussed the impacts of the Tongariro Power Scheme on the Whanganui River but also its surrounding land blocks, streams as well as being able to access customary forms of kai (food) that is produced from these environments.⁵ Other than its historiographic and healing uses, various waiata forms are known to serve as practical guidance in mapping environmental sites or for providing instructions relating to te taiao (the environment) (Burgess & Painting 2020; Haami 2024b; Smith 2019). However, the environmental degradation of the Whanganui River area and the purposeful renaming of sites through settler-colonialism has lost vital knowledge of navigating te taiao and also of wāhi tapu (sacred places) that is carried and sustained through waiata (Ka'ai-Mahuta 2010; McRae 2017; Smith 2019; Tinirau 2017). Rānana Marae was selected as the control as it stands as one of many constant reminders of resistance within the Whanganui River for hapū descendants by remaining a bastion of hapū and whānau knowledge preservation and transmission.

Rānana Marae

Rānana Marae is an ancestral place of communal gathering located on the Whanganui River. Rānana Marae is located 64km from the Whanganui township on the West Coast region of Te Ika-a-Māui of Aotearoa. Rānana Marae is ornately decorated, covered in white and a deep maroon-red ochre that colours the whakairo (carvings) depicting our tūpuna as they guide and watch over their descendants.⁶ There are two entities responsible for Rānana Marae as well as its hapū, which include the Rānana Marae Reservation Trust and the Rānana Māori Committee. The Rānana Marae Reservation Trust is the governing body of the Rānana reservations in trust. They provide guidance to the Rānana Māori Committee who oversee the management of the marae and other projects within the community, regularly meeting every month (Rānana Māori Committee 2019). I served as the Rānana Māori Committee secretary and booking officer from 2018–2023 and during this time I was encouraged by my pāhake to pursue doctoral study and my hapū not only endorsed the research but guided its topic. I was privileged to work with and for my pāhake and hapū on marae matters but also on the doctoral study examining the relationship between the Whanganui River, Rānana Marae, and waiata. Further, my hapū were aware that our pāhake and kaumātua (elders) were passing on, and it was paramount that their collective stories, experiences, and memories regarding the changes of the Whanganui River, their marae, and the waiata around these places, be documented for their future descendants. These frank discussions about life, death, and our collective memories of home as Indigenous Māori peoples became the inciting force that propelled my study. While some of my pāhake would pass on before my doctoral graduation, their memories and desires live on within *He Whiringa Hīnaki*.

The Rānana Marae descendants and participants

The Rānana Māori Committee became the ethics group that would guide the tikanga (correct and accepted practices) of the doctoral study. The Rānana Māori Committee and the wider hapū graciously became the participants who I interviewed throughout the study. The requirements for the partici-

pants of this study included those who genealogically tie to Rānana Marae through tūpuna; participants who have intermarried into the hapū of Rānana Marae; and participants who are descendants both genealogically and who have intermarried into Rānana Marae or who have a long-standing relationship with the Rānana Marae community.⁷ Further requirements included interviewing hapū participants who are considered ahi kā, which refers to a burning flame, the fires of occupation or continual ancestral land occupation. Pāhake can be considered ahi kā and refers to those who keep the marae or 'home' fires alight through whakapapa and by living on or near the marae and who maintain it daily. Ahi kā has been adapted as measurements for examining descendants' connections to Rānana Marae (Tinirau et al. 2009). Ahi kā in the form of participant recruitment asked for those who are currently or who have lived on Rānana Marae; have spent a considerable amount of time on Rānana Marae previously but may have relocated; or have an on-going and active connection with Rānana Marae through participation and contribution towards marae maintenance, hui (meetings), and events.

The Rānana Marae descendants could choose to be anonymous as well as take part in differently formatted semi-structured wānanga. Wānanga has been used within Kaupapa Māori methodologies to activate Māori practical methods of navigating knowledge sharing, positioning, and new knowledge creation (Gifford 2021; Mahuika & Mahuika 2020; Smith et al. 2019). These wānanga formats involved a focus group held at Rānana Marae, Taura Here or individual interviews. Taura Here is a type of wānanga established by descendants of the same iwi living in urban settings enabling pāhake to travel into cities to teach iwi, hapū, and marae knowledge to urban living descendants (Baker 2010). The total number of Rānana Marae participants was 16 and they all generously shared their mātauranga-a-iwi (tribal knowledge) and mātauranga-a-hapū (sub-tribal knowledge) for *He Whiringa hīnaki*.⁸

Themes from Rānana Marae descendants for He Whiringa Hīnaki

The knowledge that was given by Rānana Marae descendants through the wānanga was recorded, written into transcripts, and was then examined using thematic analysis. Three significant themes emerged from the the-

matic analysis that interconnected vividly with the structural components and sections of Te Awa Tupua. These themes were crucial in tying Te Awa Tupua, particularly the underlying principles of Tupua te Kawa as a research methodology, into articulating Rānana Marae descendants' experiences, stories, memories, and histories of waiata. These three themes became three analysis chapters that contextualised and synthesised the knowledge that was given by Rānana Marae descendants during wānanga against interdisciplinary literature (See Table 3.). The three themes as well as a summarisation of each chapter derived from the thematic analysis includes the following:

Table 4. These three chapters were weaved together using the kōrero from the descendants of Rānana Marae. Their collective knowledge and voices consolidated the creation of *He Whiringa Hinaki*.

Theme	Theme meaning and analysis
Te ōrokotī-matanga o te awa o Whanganui: Whakapapa	Waiata is socially ingrained throughout all aspects of life and is a practical application of whakapapa that provides collective healing. Waiata helps to ground the navigating of complex interpersonal and socio-political identities alongside active Catholicism within the community. Waiata is a binding expression of ontology or a trigger of memories that strongly interconnects with place and environs as pedagogical spaces and teachers for descendants.
Ko ngā tipua, kei rō wai, he tīpuna: The waters and land reflect the people	Waiata has environmental origins from the Whanganui River through te mita o Whanganui (the dialect of the Whanganui). Colonial consequences of te reo Māori normalisation have impacted on regional and iwi dialects, thus affecting the language and composition of waiata. Waiata facilitates ‘orality’ that involves learning as you are doing or performing, which activates the power of memory, and reinforces the Whanganui River, the marae and waka (canoes) as ancestral teachers of waiata. Waiata extends beyond ‘music’ and the western implications of music that confines it to solely entertainment. Waiata is a health and well-being indicator of one’s whakapapa connections to the Whanganui River and a health and well-being indicator of the Whanganui River.
Te pā auroa nā Te Awa Tupua: Succession and inherited legacy	Waiata has undergone colonial and musical violence through outdated ethnomusicological methods of staff transcription, which has reinforced harmful racist, primitivist, and essentialist understandings of Whanganui Iwi and our waiata. Waiata and waiata pedagogies reflect the omnipresent force of colonisation on Whanganui Iwi relationships to place leading to obligations of whakapapa in how Whanganui Iwi can create a healthy succession infrastructure for whakapapa through waiata. Western music theories and practices through waiata tira (choral songs) can be useful in decolonising unfair colonial power dynamics within waiata pedagogies and can create culturally appropriate spaces for performance enhancement when self-determined by Māori.

These three themes illustrate past, present, and future aspirations of our people through the lens of waiata. In adapting ecomusicology to Tupua Te Kawa and Kaupapa Māori approaches, the themes highlighted how waiata has always been environmentally derived, meaning that waiata was already

doing ecomusicological work. Ecomusicology examines “the relationships of music, culture, and nature” and is “the study of musical and sonic issues, both textual and performative, as they relate to ecology and the environment” (Allen 2011:392). While ecomusicology branches from ethnomusicology but gives prominence to the environment and musical studies (Diettrich 2018b), Māori oral histories through waiata have always interconnected relationships between music, culture and nature. This is exemplified through Māori music theories and practices exhibited through waiata in being genealogical, intergenerational, historiographical, tribal and environmental in its sonic, tonal, lyrical and contextual content (Haami 2024a; Haami 2024b). Uncovering that we as Māori were already doing a form of ecomusicological work before its western disciplinary inception and through our own mātauranga Māori informed *He Whiringa Hīnaki*.

He whiringa hīnaki: A Kaupapa Māori ecomusicological framework

Table 5. A whakataukī referring to the pā auroa built by the Whanganui Iwi.

He pā kaha kua hangaia kia toitū ahakoa ngā waipuke o te ngahuru, o te makariri me te koanga.	The broad eel weir built to withstand the autumn, winter and spring floods (Whanganui Iwi & Crown 2014:40).
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The whakataukī above refers to the pā auroa, which is a single fence eel weir unique to the Whanganui region that was built by Whanganui Iwi on the Whanganui River.⁹ The engineering feat of constructing the pā auroa is complex and must consider the Whanganui River water currents, the surrounding land shaped by the river, the migration patterns of tuna (eels), the season, the riverbed, and the Whanganui maramataka (regional lunar calendar). These factors dictate its establishment as well as appropriate fishing and conservation activities. The pā auroa were built for longevity along the Whanganui River by gathering food sources, specifically tuna, to intergenerationally care for Whanganui Iwi (Best 2005; Haami & Tinirau 2021; Waitangi Tribunal 1999). The pā auroa is connected to the hīnaki through the pōhā (funnel). The hīnaki is weaved using the aerial roots of the aka kiekie (vine *Freycinetia banksii*) as the most common and primary material along

with the akatea or rātā (tree with red timber; the Northern *Metrosideros robusta* and the Southern *Metrosideros umbellata*), and karewao (supplejack; *Ripogonum scandens*). The weaving process of the hīnaki was intergenerationally taught to certain hapū members as a device to source kai (Best 2005; Haami & Tinirau 2021; Horwood & Wilson 2008; Waitangi Tribunal 1999; Young 1998).¹⁰

Te Awa Tupua uses the pā auroa as the framework to symbolically structure the act as well as allegorically illustrate an enduring succession infrastructure for Whanganui Iwi (Ngā Tāngata Tiaki o Whanganui 2023b). Within this research context, the pā auroa aligns with the succession aspirations of Rānana Marae descendants for waiata, as reflected in their hapū and marae position as being one out of many belonging to Whanganui Iwi and the Whanganui River. This relationship is visually, theoretically and conceptually represented through the hīnaki as a critical part of the wider pā auroa. The hīnaki is a crucial device in capturing kai both from the Whanganui River and beyond and is a site of customary knowledge revitalisation as well as transmission. These symbols of interconnection from the hīnaki as a representation of marae and hapū as well as the pā auroa as a depiction of wider Whanganui Iwi, epitomises how iwi, hapū and marae can achieve tino rangatiratanga by working together. Further, when the hīnaki and pā auroa are collectively used, this optimises the chance for Whanganui Iwi to flourish (Māreikura 2009; Waitangi Tribunal 1999; Young 1998). *He Whiringa Hīnaki* draws from these representations for a Kaupapa Māori ecomusicological framework.

The pā auroa, the materials, weaving and process of making a hīnaki are critical components of *He Whiringa Hīnaki*. The title of the framework pays homage to the whakapapa links of the tupuna, Hinengākau encapsulated within the whakataukī to highlight the binding connection of the Whanganui River and Whanganui Iwi through her line (Sole 2005; Waitangi Tribunal 1999; Young 1998). *He Whiringa Hīnaki* grounds the waiata analysis within Tupua te Kawa as key genealogical and environmental foundations, which were identified as significant by Rānana Marae descendants to answer the research questions of the doctoral study (Whanganui Iwi & Crown 2014). However, *He Whiringa Hīnaki* has relevance for iwi outside of Whanganui who also use hīnaki in a multitude of theoretical and practical ways and who desire transformative waiata analysis methods, which can be accessed

by drawing on highly adaptable principles of Kaupapa Māori methodologies (Durie 2017; Pihama 2015; Smith 1997; 2017). More broadly, *He Whiringa Hīnaki* adapts ecomusicology to tease out a musical response and relationship to ongoing environmental challenges such as colonialism and climate change (Allen 2011; Allen & Dawe 2016; Diettrich 2018a; Diettrich 2018b; Steiner 2015).

In examining *He Whiringa Hīnaki*, the fashioning of the hīnaki derives from a revitalisation lens, meaning that this process may not have been accurate to the ways in which Whanganui tūpuna created hīnaki. However, the framework aligns with decolonising sentiments, realising that the notion of purity associated with accuracy is not inclusive nor accepting of current diverse Māori realities because of colonisation. These colonial impacts include the forced change on customary intergenerational knowledge transmission such as weaving as well as weaving teachers on the marae and ancestral lands being inaccessible or scarce. This process has created a decolonisation of ethnographic texts such as Best (2015) and Downes (1917) through refining their observations within our mātauranga-ā-hapū to exclude what is deemed problematic and to reclaim what is ours through tests within our hapū. *He Whiringa Hīnaki* also privileges decolonising notions of Māori identity and knowledge, moving away from knowledge reserved in antiquity being perceived as more valuable than Māori people and knowledge living today (Cooper 2017; Durie 2017; Higgins & Rewi 2014; Hokowhitu 2009; Mercier 2020). Therefore, *He Whiringa Hīnaki* is informed by past, present, and future learnings of weaving hīnaki as a continually evolving and dynamic form of knowledge, framework, and practice. The next section will discuss the intricacies of the hīnaki to provide the contextual knowledge and foundation for understanding *He Whiringa Hīnaki* such as the materials, weaving styles, and its part in wider fishing structures.

The materials of He Whiringa Hīnaki

The traditional materials used to make hīnaki include the aerial roots of the aka kiekie alongside the akatea or rātā and the karewao. The aka kiekie is the primary component that is weaved mainly on the outside of the hīnaki and partially on the inside of its two funnels. The akatea or rātā acts predominantly as the inside bracing and foundation to maintain the structural

integrity of the net. The karewao is an important preparation material used to help strip the outer layers of the aka kiekie to reveal its softer but strong fibre. This strong fibre of the aka kiekie is the primary weaving material of the hīnaki (Best 2005; Downes 1917; Haami & Tinirau 2021; Horwood & Wilson 2008; Young 1998). To prepare the aka kiekie, the fibre is soaked in water for several weeks prior to commencing the weaving called the waiwai process and the fibre can be dyed using pigments sourced from specific parts of the land only known to a few. Further preparation methods included smoking or tanning the hīnaki in an umu (oven) to strengthen the net for longevity. This process is called whakawahi and is aimed to attract the tuna alongside the bait, which is toke (glow-worms) (Best 2005; Downes 1917; Haami & Tinirau 2021).

The weave of a hīnaki begins at the larger funnel opening called the akura, kuaō or te ure. The larger funnel opening attaches to the pā auroa through the vine hinge called the toroaka and through the pōhā (Best 2005; Downes 1917; Haami & Tinirau 2021). The hīnaki weave has four techniques with two that are common style choices. The two styles include rīpeka, which is a continuous spiral around the ribs that creates crosses and the pakipaki or aurara that is a straight and an elongated style. The two other techniques that are used when weaving either the rīpeka, pakipaki or aurara weaving styles includes whatu, which is the two-ply twists following around the ribs and the whenu. The whenu are the add-ins of new aka kiekie to ensure that the hīnaki grows through the weaving.

These methods of making hīnaki come from mātauranga Māori and this knowledge base is utilised by Kaupapa Māori methodologies and practices as it uplifts and reclaims Māori worldviews, epistemologies, and ontologies, which is paramount within *He Whiringa Hīnaki* (Pihama 2015; Smith 2017; Smith 2021). Kaupapa Māori methodologies and practices provide the entry point to centring mātauranga-ā-iwi and mātauranga-a-hapū as seen through adapting Tupua te Kawa (Haami 2022). Drawing from distinct mātauranga Māori across different iwi that speaks directly to their environmental, genealogical, and tribal histories can be evoked within *He Whiringa Hīnaki* as a process to analyse their waiata against their own ancestral terrain and peoples, which will differ from Whanganui. Further, Kaupapa Māori constitutes as an overarching ethical design of *He Whiringa Hīnaki* to create a foundation that prioritises a Māori worldview.

The theoretical knowledge that guides the weaving of the hīnaki includes principles of tiakitanga, which is a Māori-centred approach for safeguarding environmental knowledge practices. Tiakitanga acts to reaffirm the centrality of environmental and ethical protections for various aspects within future ecomusicological research, being an overarching principle within *He Whiringa Hīnaki*. The principle of tiakitanga can be used as an ethical guideline that embeds responsibility, accountability, and reciprocity to the ancestral environment being studied, which necessitates Indigenous community collaboration on ecomusicological study of waiata or sounds being researched. Tiakitanga can look like acknowledging and understanding the connections between ancestral environments, its Indigenous people, and their knowledge, which infer seeking appropriate permissions, a range of on-going consultations, protections, and long-term reciprocity. These positionalities and ethics pose introspective questions for non-Māori ecomusicologists wanting to pursue the ecomusicological study of waiata and these queries will be asked when working with Māori communities due to the history of colonisation continually exploiting Aotearoa, Māori and our knowledge forms. Tiakitanga is essential in understanding and appreciating multi-layered relationships of interconnectedness within mātauranga Māori, which must be embedded within any approach when studying waiata (Haami 2024; Ka'ai-Mahuta 2010; Reid & Robson 2007; Smith 2021; Smith 2019; Waitangi Tribunal 1999; Young 1998).

He Whiringa Hīnaki proposes questions and an interrogation of the self, pulling from the reflexive and external queries that a Kaupapa Māori research agenda requires but places this within the ecomusicology context, showing what researchers must concern themselves within their research around waiata. These questions of the self and the ecomusicological work extends onto non-Māori ecomusicologists working within waiata. The table below shows *He Whiringa Hīnaki* as a broadened framework for future Kaupapa Māori ecomusicology research by asking the Kaupapa Māori ecomusicologist questions to create their study design. The first column outlines the weaving process of the hīnaki in te reo Māori. The second column translates the weaving process of hīnaki to English. The third column further consolidates the three themes, which were previously explored to include whakapapa, waiata, as well as iwi, hapū, marae or whānau that each weaving process correlates with and symbolises. These three themes are critical ele-

ments around waiata analysis based on my doctoral study but this could be changed or adapted for iwi regions beyond Whanganui. The fourth column contextualises the weaving process of the hīnaki within the three themes to necessitate research questions when conducting Kaupapa Māori ecomusicological research more broadly (see Table 4.).

For non-Māori ecomusicologists, *He Whiringa Hīnaki* will present a Kaupapa Māori approach to ecomusicology that re-frames and re-priorities tino rangatiratanga, specifically moving towards enhancing Māori well-being as a mode of transformative waiata analysis. The purpose and relevance of *He Whiringa Hīnaki* in relation to current ecomusicological work can potentially be relegated to a lack of understanding surrounding the colonial history that has violently impacted on Māori in the past, present, and future through different levels of racism (Tinirau et al. 2021; Smith et al. 2021; Smith 2021). The purpose of moving towards tino rangatiratanga in all aspects of research for Māori is described by Smith et al. stating that:

Well-being for Māori requires an understanding of the ways Māori history has been forged, and why consistent work is needed to create and maintain spaces where Māori can fully express and live their culture. These are defended spaces; colonisation follows a process of creating a lesser ‘other’ in order to justify disinheritance of Indigenous lands and cultures. While the historical belief in the ‘inferior other’ remains, racism continues to be a challenge daily. These beliefs are deep-seated and embedded in systems, including how history is retold. Māori well-being is linked to the struggle for survival of Māori lands, mountains, rivers, and Māori ‘world-being’ is linked to that of other Indigenous relations. While Māori can immerse themselves in cultural norms, Māori will always be challenged by external discourse that seeks to render Māori inferior. (Smith et al. 2021:3–4)

For non-Māori ecomusicologists, this statement articulates one out of many powerful inciting forces for Māori in developing strength-based outcomes within all research they touch while confronting the importance of understanding colonial contexts that shape both Māori and waiata today. *He Whiringa Hīnaki* provides culturally appropriate ways to conduct ecomusicology work with waiata and Māori.

Table 6. *He Whiringa Hīnaki*: The Kaupapa Māori ecomusicological framework.

Material or process	Purpose or meaning	Themes	Questions of representation, meaning, and themes for He Whiringa Hīnaki framework
Akatea or rātā	Foundational bracing	Whakapapa	The akatea or rātā represents whakapapa: How does whakapapa function within the context of iwi, hapū, marae or whānau in relation to waiata?
Aka kiekie	Primary material for weaving	Waiata	The aka kiekie represents waiata: How does waiata function in relation to the ancestral environment of iwi, hapū, marae or whānau?
Karewao	Preparation material	Iwi, hapū, marae, and/or whānau	The karewao represents returning to the marae for the wisdom of pāhake, kaumātua, and ahi kā: How can connection to iwi, hapū, marae or whānau through waiata provide reciprocity and collective enhancement?
Rīpeka and pakipaki or aurara	Weave styles	Waiata	The rīpeka, pakipaki, and aurara weaving styles represent the preferred pedagogical practices of learning waiata and sonic variations of waiata: How does the ancestral environment influence waiata pedagogies? Does proximity to ancestral environments affect waiata pedagogies? How does ancestral environments influence the sonic shaping of waiata forms?
Whatu	Weave technique	Waiata	The whatu weaving technique represents older waiata: How can older waiata continue and in what preferred social contexts and with what knowledge protections?
Whenu	Weave technique	Iwi, hapū, marae, and/or whānau	The whenu weaving technique represents the additions of contemporary waiata compositions: How can contemporary waiata continue and in what preferred social contexts and with what knowledge protections?

Table 6. *He Whiringa Hīnaki*: The Kaupapa Māori ecomusicological framework.

Material or process	Purpose or meaning	Themes	Questions of representation, meaning, and themes for He Whiringa Hīnaki framework
Waiwai	Steeping in water	Whakapapa	The waiwai process recognises the importance of returning to one's ancestral environment: How does waiata within iwi, hapū, marae or whānau initiate, build, heal, or strengthen whakapapa?
Whakawahi	Tanning, smoking or dyeing the net	Iwi, hapū, marae, and/or whānau	The whakawahi process represents the consolidation of one's connections to their ancestral environment, their marae, and their whakapapa: How can waiata incentivise descendants to return to their iwi, hapū, marae or whānau?
Pōhā	Funnel attaching the net to the eel weir	Iwi, hapū, marae, and/or whānau	The pōhā represents the overarching principle of tiakitanga: How will the ancestral environment, participants and the waiata or sounds be protected throughout this research?
Te pā auroa	Single fenced eel weir	Whakapapa	The pā auroa represents the overarching environment for Kaupapa Māori methodologies specific to iwi, hapū, marae or whānau approaches: How will this research be grounded in methodologies that centre Māori, iwi, hapū, marae or whānau worldviews, epistemologies, and ontologies?

Conclusion

This article examines the Kaupapa Māori ecomusicology framework called *He Whiringa Hīnaki* based on my doctoral study and emerges from the lived experiences of Rānana Marae descendants. *He Whiringa Hīnaki* highlighted my community's contribution towards future Māori generations who wish to examine waiata within its environmental and ancestral contexts. This article discusses the creation of the doctoral study including the ways Tupua te Kawa from the Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act 2017

was used as a localised re-production of Indigenous knowledge to approach *He Whiringa Hīnaki* alongside Kaupapa Māori theory and praxis. Ecomusicological methods fully adapted to Kaupapa Māori methodologies and practices as well as Tupua te Kawa. Rānana Marae descendants are the community that guided the ethics of the study while generously sharing their histories, stories, and memories to inform the framework. Lastly, the article looked at the materials and weaving processes of the hīnaki in conjunction with the wider structures of the pā auroa and the pōhā. Understanding these mechanisms enables a strong methodological foundation and research design for Kaupapa Māori ecomusicology inquiry when collaboratively working with Māori and their waiata. Not only does *He Whiringa Hīnaki* hold relevance for Kaupapa Māori ecomusicologists but it has relevance for Indigenous peoples working with their own communities around their customary songs. Further, *He Whiringa Hīnaki* can guide non-Māori ecomusicologists in providing ethical considerations, insights, and necessities when working with Māori and their waiata by contextualising the framework amongst the colonial history of Māori.

Glossary

Table 7. ...

Ako Māori	Culturally preferred pedagogy
Āta	Meaningful and respectful relationships
Aotearoa	New Zealand
Ahi kā	Burning flame; the fires of occupation; continual ancestral land occupation
Aka kiekie	Vine; <i>Freycinetia banksii</i>
Akatea or rātā	Tree with red timber; <i>Metrosideros robusta</i> (Northern) and <i>Metrosideros umbellata</i> (Southern)
Iwi	Tribal nation
Kai	Food
Karewao	Supplejack; <i>Ripogonum scandens</i>
Kaumātua	Elders
Kaupapa	Purpose; collective philosophy

Table 7. ...

Kia piki ake i ngā raruraru o te kāinga	Socio-economic mediation
Kōrero	Discussion; sayings
Kuia	Grandmother; elderly woman
Kura Kaupapa Māori	Full immersion language schools
He Whiringa Hīnaki	Kaupapa Māori ecomusicology framework
Hīnaki	Net
Hapū	Sub-tribe
Mana Motuhake	Autonomy
Marae	Ancestral communal gathering place; ancestral homelands
Maru	Primordial god and ancestor
Mātauranga-a-iwi	Tribal knowledge
Mātauranga-a-hapū	Sub-tribal knowledge
Mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge
Pāhake	Whanganui term for elder who keeps the home fires alight
Pā auroa	Single fence eel weir
Pao	Short songs
Pōhā	Funnel
Rānana Marae	An ancestral communal gathering place and homeland called 'Rānana'.
Ruruku	Sequence of incantations
Tāngata whenua	Original inhabitants
Taranaki	Located on the West Coast of the North Island
Taonga tuku iho	Treasures passed intergenerationally; cultural aspirations
Taura Here	Urban learning forums
Te Ika-a-Māui	The Great Fish of Māui; the North Island of New Zealand
Te Kōhanga Reo	Language nests; Early childhood schooling

Table 7. ...

Te mita o Whanganui	The dialect of Whanganui; a regional and tribal dialect of the Māori language
Te reo Māori	The Māori language
Te taiao	The environment
Tiaki	Caretakers; custodians
Tiakitanga	Guardianship and environmental principles
Tikanga	Correct and accepted practices
Tino rangatiratanga	Self-determination; sovereignty
Toke	Glow-worm
Tuna	Eels
Tūpuna	Ancestors
Umu	Oven
Wāhi tapu	Sacred places
Wahine Māori	Indigenous Māori woman
Wāhine Māori	Indigenous Māori women
Waiata	Songs
Waiata tira	Choral songs
Wānanga	tribal learning forum
Whakapapa	Genealogy; layers of connection
Whānau	Families; relations; extended family structure
Whanganui	Located on the West Coast and Central areas of the North Island
Whanganui Iwi	Whanganui tribal nation
Whanganui mara-mataka	Whanganui lunar calendar
Whanganui tūpuna	Whanganui ancestors

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Notes

1. Translations for te reo Māori (the Māori language) will be offered in the first instance of its use. After its first use, these will no longer be translated. Please refer to the glossary.
2. The Kaupapa Māori ecomusicological framework called, *He Whiringa Hīnaki* will be the only phrase delib-

erately italicised to help with readability and to emphasis that this is the primary focus of the article.

3. The term ‘western art music’ is stated deliberately here to illustrate the ubiquitous and dominant use of this music theory and practice that continues to propagate white mythologies encapsulated within the spirit of imperialism and colonisation for the Aotearoa/New Zealand context (Ewell 2023; Smith 2021). Despite shifts in the use of this term within American and European contexts (Ewell 2023), the Aotearoa/New Zealand context is situated amongst an on-going colonial context. Thus, the term ‘western art music’ requires intentional naming when discussing waiata as a persisting colonial reality that remains a site of decolonial, intellectual as well as musical struggle for Kaupapa Māori theory and praxis (Haami 2024a; Pihama 2015; Smith 1997; Smith 2021).

4. Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims) Settlement Act 2017 will also be referred to as ‘Te Awa Tupua’ interchangeably within the article to help with ease in reading.

5. The Tongariro Power Scheme drastically changed the Whanganui River physically, spiritually and ecologically. The Tongariro Power Scheme began in 1958 and became operative from 1971 and saw the diversion of Whanganui River tributaries, specifically through the Western Diversion. The Western Diversion redirects waters from Rangitikei, Whangaehu and Whanganui through lakes, canals and tunnels into the Waikato catchment. Six headwater streams of the Whanganui River are transferred through both lakes and canals to the Tokaanu Power Station then onwards into Lake Taupō. The Western Diversion takes water from the upper Whanganui River tributaries, including Whakapapa, Okupata, Tawhitikari, Taurewa and Mangatepopo to create hydroelectric renewable energy (Reynolds & Smith 2014; Waitangi Tribunal 1999). Before the Court of Appeal the 1964 Government made a ruling regarding the ownership of the Whanganui River, the Crown authorised this diversion without the consultation of Whanganui Iwi and authorised public works access to Maori lands without notice (See Waitangi Tribunal 1999:274).

6. The hapū of Rānana Marae do not allow the marae complex to be photographed and a sign residing outside the marae provides an historical overview of the marae, hapū, and explains that photographs are prohibited as it displays our tūpuna. In respecting the tikanga (correct and accepted practices) of my hapū, a photograph is not provided and rather, descriptions of Rānana Marae are given.

7. These intermarried participants are a part of the hapū associated with Rānana Marae while also belonging to different hapū within Whanganui Iwi, other tribal nations or who are Pākehā (European Settlers) that have Māori descendants within the hapū.

8. The Rānana Marae participants, their identities, the wānanga format they chose, and the date of their wānanga can be viewed here (See Haami 2022:96).

9. Photos of te pā auroa can be viewed through the Ngā Tāngata Tiaki o Whanganui website (see <https://www.ngatangatatiaki.co.nz/our-story/ruruku-whakatupua/te-pa-auroa-na-te-awa-tupua/>).

10. A photo of hīnaki can be viewed here through the Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand website (see <https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/object/108380>).

About the author

Meri Haami (she/her) descends from Te Āti Haunui-a-Pāpāurangi, Ngāti Rangi, Ngaa Rauru Kiiitahi, Ngāti Tūwharetoa and has ethnic and regional affiliations to Southeast Asia, specifically, Singapore. Meri works in a variety of Kaupapa Māori research with her communities. Meri was awarded the Health Research Council (HRC) of New Zealand Emerging Researcher First Grant for the project called, He Whiringa Māramatanga: Kaupapa Māori music and healing. Meri was awarded a Short-Term Fellowship at the Institute of Sacred Music with Yale University. Meri works as a Kairangahau for a Kaupapa Māori development and liberation organisation called, Tū Tama Wāhine o Taranaki.