

On Witi Ihimaera's Novel *The Rope of Man* as The
Circle of Witi Ihimaera's 30 Years

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Introduction

Witi Ihimaera is a descendant of the indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand Maori. His novel *The Rope of Man* was a new version of *Tangi* (1973). And its sequel *The Return* (2005) was written thirty-two years later.¹ With this publication, Ihimaera's 30th Anniversary Collection "comes full circle".² In this thesis, it will be investigated what messages he left conveyed in the anniversary novel. And, the purpose of this thesis is to propose a pliable identity of a multicultural New Zealand's society, through the novel.

In the first chapter, the summary of the novel and the author will be made in this thesis.

In the second chapter, by comparing *Tangi* (1973) and *The Rope of Man*, it will be discussed in the point of his rewriting. Referring to Patrick Evans and Hitoshi Kaneyama, it will be cleared what Ihimaera tries to express in this novel.

In the third chapter, the relation of a word and the concept is to be considered. The word is spiral, and the concept is te taura tangata. Ihimaera describes that in this fiction he weaves an identity of multicultural society in New Zealand.

In the fourth chapter, referring to Ihimaera's thought in this novel, the discussion about a cultural diversity will be explained.

¹ Ihimaera 2006 p.7

² Ihimaera 2006 p.7

Chapter 1 The story

1-1 Witi Ihimaera, the Author

In 1972, when Witi Ihimaera's first book of short stories; *Pounamu Pounamu* (1972) was published, the Maori literature was appreciated for the first time. A Maori protagonist appears and the story develops in Maori community. Before that, the previous Maori writings were represented in *Te Ao Hou* (1952-75) edited by the Maori Affairs Department. Ihimaera became an author acting in the forefront and was called the pioneer among Maori writers. His early fictions were *Pounamu Pounamu*, *Tangi* and *Whanau* (1973). He published other short-stories book *The New Net Goes Fishing* in 1977. But he thought his work accompanied the cumulative effect and responsibility, and decided to stop writing for ten years.³ In the decade, as a diplomat, he stayed in the United States of America and edited other Maori writer's works. After, in 1986, Ihimaera came back with the publication of a new novel *The Matriarch*. He expressed his political and radical descriptions about the Land War between Maori and Pakeha in it. The style of this novel was different from that of his early works. While the novel won the Wattie Book of the Year Award, it was criticized. For example, C.K. Stead, a critique, said in his essay, 'Old Wounds and Ancient Evils', (1988) that "My own view is that the kind of picking over old wounds and ancient evils that this novel represents is not the way to go about freeing the mind. The past doesn't have to be forgotten; but its rights and wrongs belong to those who lived them, not to us."⁴ He showed his disgust for Ihimaera's speculation upon the Land War. On the other hand, Ihimaera received the criticism from Maori. A Maori critique Atareta Pounanga pointed out in her essay that

³ Williams 1991 p.282

⁴ Stead 1988 p.337

Ihimaera tended to draw the images of female as the violent, cruel and cold woman in *The Matriarch*.⁵ After that, his style became more and more various. He published the three books, which were *The Whale Rider* (1987), *Bulibasha: King of the Gipsis* (1994) and *Night in the Gardens of Spain* (1995). In *The Whale Rider*, Ihimaera mentioned Maori patriarchy. *Bulibasha: King of the Gypsies* set the background in Waituhi. *Night in the Gardens of Spain* treated about gay.

In an interview with Mark Williams, he told that “he always states from the focus, the kaupapa, as Maori. And as long as the central kaupapa (focus) is there, which is always to interpret and reinterpret the concerns of the iwi (ancestor) from the viewpoint of past, as long as that is there, that’s what’s important”.⁶ *The Uncle’s Story* was published in 2000, which was another story about gay.

1-2 Summary of *Tangi* (1973)

Tangi was published as Ihimaera’s first novel. An emeritus professor of Yamagata University Hitoshi Kaneyama indicates that the sequences of this novel are not chronological.⁷ When the protagonist Tama Mahana is working in Wellington as a journalist, he hears his father Rongo’s death from his sister Ripeka. For Tama and the Mahana family, Rongo is an important person. They lose him who has supported the family mentally. However Tama tries to comfort their sadness, he laments the death of his father too. He can’t accept the death. “—No... A telephone call from home, and two words have destroyed the calm of my world: Dad’s dead.”⁸ To perform his father’s *Tangi*

⁵ Pounanga 1986 p.27

⁶ Williams 1991 p.283

⁷ Kaneyama 2009 p.16

⁸ Ihimaera 1992 p.14

(funeral), he comes back to home town Waituhi. "Waituhi... It is the place of the heart. A Maori village a few miles from Gisbone."⁹ When Tama was child, the center of the world was his father. Through the funeral, the protagonist shares his sadness with his family. The world that his father has been ends, and new world starts. "My life is in Waituhi. To Waituhi, I shall return."¹⁰ Tama decides to come back to Waituhi and takes over as the head of the Mahana family.

1-3 Summary of the novel *The Rope of Man*

The Rope of Man consists of two stories; the renewed *Tangi* (2005) and *The Return* (2005) written thirty-two years later. The former is a story in which the Maori protagonist Tama Mahana goes home Waituhi to participate to his father's funeral, when the traditional tangi (funeral) is held with his mother, brother, sisters and his kinship, and Tama reminds us of his memory of his family and his family by the description which appears as a part of the present and the past alternately and by the plural narrators. For Tama, his mother, his sisters and brother, his father Rongo has been a pillar of his the Mahana family. In the latter, Tama goes back to Waituhi again and to solve the family problem. In the story, Tama changed his name to Tom, and he was called by his sister Ripeka to come home, when he was working as a global TV anchorman all over the world.¹¹ Then, the Mahana family faced the various problems concealed in the past. This story was told by the plural narrators in the same way as the former story. In this novel Ihimaera expresses an image of Maori history, which is called

⁹ Ihimaera 1992 p.114

¹⁰ Ihimaera 1992 p.203

¹¹ Ihimaera 2006 pp.172-173

Te Taura Tangata, the metaphor of the rope of man, which is elaborated on a lot of pages. And it is a history with its beginnings in Maori epistemologies.¹² It's a Maori unique notion and expresses an identity of community and Maori elder; John Rangihau suggests this notion to Tama in this novel.¹³ Ihimaera adopts this and develops it in this novel. In *Tangi*, another narrator explains te taura tangata, and it unfolds its virtue in *The Return*.

Chapter 2 Issues of rewriting

2-1 Ihimaera's art of rewriting

In the following quoted, Ihimaera talked about rewriting his short stories *Pounamu Pounamu* (1972)¹⁴

Although the stories in this 30th Anniversary edition of *Pounamu Pounamu* are the same as in the original edition published, they are also different. I have added what I have seen as the light has glanced off, reflected through and highlighted other roimata¹⁵ in the depths of the greenstone. I've rewritten the stories, to show that not only is pounamu a living stone but stories also live, change and enriched by the dynamic of changing times.¹⁶

¹² Battista 2006 p.117

¹³ Ihimaera 2006 p.191

¹⁴ Ihimaera, 2003 pp.5-6

¹⁵ *Tears* (Williams, H.W 1992 p.345)

¹⁶ Ihimaera, 2003 pp.5-6

Ihimaera explained that the new versions may not be more aesthetic but more political,¹⁷ while he mentioned his way of rewriting at an interview with Tim Watkin as follows.

This is why I have been rewriting my first three books: to engage the reality of Maori memory and experience. To achieve for them the escape velocity from the *force majeure* of the Pakeha¹⁸ political and bicultural contexts that shaped them.¹⁹

Whanau II was rewritten by Ihimaera from *Whanau* published in 1973. Ihimaera has rewritten *Whanau II* according to the following as seen above. We will examine that Ihimaera rewrite his novel *Tangi* to achieve the escape velocity from the force major of the Pakeha political and bicultural contexts.

2-2 Pakeha-Style Biculturalism and Maori writing by Patrick Evans

When he rewrote his works, Ihimaera transcribed his former works and replaced with the new words and sentences. The change was so complex that it was impossible to compare the previous novels with the rewritten ones, although frameworks were not changed. Patrick Evans indicated that the process of rewriting former works was the way for Ihimaera to regain what Ihimaera said “tino rangatiratanga”.²⁰ Evans found a kind of being aesthetics which he called “performed indigeneity” in early Maori writers

¹⁷ Watkin, 2004 p.23

¹⁸ *A person of predominantly European descent* (Williams H.W 1992, p. 252)

¹⁹ Ihimaera, 2004 p.23

²⁰ Evans, 2006 p.11 *very* (Williams H.W 1992,p.420) *Evidence of breeding and greatness* (ibid, p.323)

works, and it was their dilemma that what they described the Maori world was removed from the reality.²¹ He pointed out the dilemma in *Te Ao Hou* was issued from 1952 to 1975, to which Hone Tuwhare and Patricia Grace contributed their works.²² Their works described the imagined world against the background of an imagined world, in which urban Pakeha were compared with nostalgic and rural Maori.²³ Evans stated that Maori writers contrived to overcome the dilemma in linguistic perspective, which used the words either translated from Maori into English, or spelt in phonetically alphabet. He concluded his analysis as follows: Maori writers who smuggled the message and used the difficult metaphor of Maori language will go somewhere else, where it is difficult for Pakeha to comprehend the full meaning of the story.

Where Maori art will go under these winds we would all like, naturally, to know; but if he has picked the right breeze, it might well be to a place which Pakeha will have difficulty finding, even if the directions are written in the language that they speak.²⁴

As seen above, Evans showed what course the Maori literature will take in the future. Ihimaera admitted he developed his early fictions in small Maori community; the world in which Pakeha doesn't exist.²⁵ In 2005 Ihimaera published *The Rope of Man*. We would discuss whether Ihimaera succeed the conflict to overcome the dichotomy.

²¹ Evans, 2006 p.19

²² *ibid*, p.16

²³ *ibid*, p.19

²⁴ *ibid* pp.30-31

²⁵ Beston, 1976 pp.118-119

2-3 Comparing *Tangi* with *The Rope of Man*

The following are quoted from an equal point of two novels.

A green station wagon pulls to a halt, and a schoolboy opens the back to get his father's suitcase.²⁶

A green stationwagon pulls to a halt, and a father opens the back to get his son's suitcase.²⁷

The former expresses the voyage of the main character's father in this novel from the earth; the latter describes the protagonist Tama's journey from his father. These quotations are impressive sentences for each novel. In *Tangi* (1973), Tama goes back to his home town Gisbone to participate to his father's Tangi (funeral), and performs the ritual as the eldest son. Kaneyama indicates that the protagonist finally decides to get back home to take care of the Mahana family after the funeral.²⁸ But in *The Rope of Man*, Tama leaves his family after the funeral. And he doesn't get back Waituhi during about 30 years. As a journalist, he works around the world. In the sequel, he doesn't live in New Zealand. The protagonist Tama achieves to maturity as a Maori in the world and changes his name Tom. As Tom, once again he comes home to save the problem of his mother and brother and sisters. Tom isn't a member of small community of Waituhi, but a Maori in the world. Setting Waituhi in the center as an anchor, he makes his journey

²⁶ Ihimaera, 1994 p.1

²⁷ Ihimaera, 2006 p.12

²⁸ Kaneyama, 2009 p.16

through the world. In this way, the changes of the sequel as seen above express the maturity of the protagonist clearly in *The Rope of Man*.

Compared with *Tangi*, more Pakeha appear around the main character Tama in *The Rope of Man*, as his boss, colleagues, classmates, friend and his partner. In addition, the mixed-blood of Maori and Pakeha appears in this novel; one is Tama's daughters and the other is Eric who is a half-brother of Tama, born as a result of rape. In *Tangi*, the mixed-blood of Maori and Pakeha didn't present. Other distraction between *Tangi* and *The Rope of Man* can be picked up as the following. In *The Rope of Man*, Ihimaera refers to Maori patrimony and Land War between Maori and Pakeha. Ihimaera enters his other fiction's character in *The Rope of Man*. In this novel, especially in the seventh chapter, Ihimaera writes and piles Maori mythology onto Tama's memory and his recollection in which his father is alive. In the same chapter, Ihimaera explains about "the rope of man".²⁹ In *The Rope of Man*, Ihimaera documents the scene of Tangi in detail.

And Earth reaches for Sky and Sky bends to Earth. One last *fierce* clasp in rain and wind and wind and rain. One last embrace of *rage and fury and helpless grief*.³⁰

Earth reaches for Sky and Sky bends to Earth. One last *passionate* clasp in rain and wind and wind and rain. One last embrace of *joy and love and thankfulness*.³¹

As seen above, the following is the scene in which Tangi comes to the end and Tama's

²⁹ Ihimaera, 2006 p.30

³⁰ Ihimaera, 1994 p.190

³¹ Ihimaera, 2006 p.156

mother embrace his father. In Maori mythology, the Sky is Ranginui; the god of Father and the Earth is Papatuanuku; the god of Mother. Ihimaera makes two gods overlap with his parent. About this scene, John Battista mentions in his essay as follows.

Through marginal changes to the revised text in *the rope of man* the word 'fierce' becomes 'passionate' and 'One last fierce clasp in rain and wind and wind and rain' is replaced by 'One last embrace of joy and love and thankfulness.'³²

As Battista indicates, 'fierce' becomes 'passionate', but he should compare 'One last embrace of *rage and fury and helpless grief*' with 'One last embrace of *joy and love and thankfulness*'. Battista refers to these descriptions of the embrace, as Ihimaera insists 'a hope for healing the sentimental underlay in the revision is unequivocally absent in the original.'³³ The crucial difference between *Tangi* and *The Rope of Man* is to have a sequel story *The Return* (2005) which was written thirty years later. By Ihimaera's rewriting, the growth of the main characters that lost his father is impressed, more than the death.

In *The Rope of Man*, Ihimaera makes mention of the racial discrimination and Land War between Pakeha and Maori in nineteenth century. Moreover, in *The Return* Ihimaera suggests an identity of community in order to try to solve these problems. In the same story, he uses the words "our Pakeha ancestors" and "our Maori ancestors" to express Kiwi that means New Zealander.³⁴ So, it can be explained that Ihimaera didn't describe the 'Maoriness' in the Pakeha style biculturalism that Patrick Evans suggests

³² Battista, 2006 p.118

³³ *ibid*, p.118

³⁴ Ihimaera 2006 p.188

in *The Rope of Man*,³⁵ but the reality of the intermingling of Pakeha and Maori.

Chapter 3 Te taura tangata and spiral

3-1 the spiral

Through *The Rope of Man*, we can find a lot of expressions in words and images which either represent or mean “spiral”, in English as well as in Maori language.

At the same time as the spiral is going forward, it is returning.³⁶

The word, “spiral” is important. This novel has also other words that remind us of the same meaning as the spiral: for example, “double helix” and “whirlpool”. The spiral is “the plane curve that in general unwinds around a point while moving ever further from the point”³⁷. It twists like a conch shell, whirl and screw³⁸. The Maori carvings have the spiral pattern as the abstract design. “In surface decorations, spirals are an important element in relief carving. Maori spirals are almost always double, though single spirals are occasionally seen carved on stone objects.”³⁹ The following passage described a scene that the protagonist Tama and his mother confided the family’s secret to his brother and sisters.

Absent-mindedly, I began to doodle with my pencil. When I was finished, I was surprised to see that I had inscribed a spiral, in the shape of a double helix. “Te

³⁵ Evans, 2006 p.16

³⁶ Ihimaera 2006, p.7

³⁷ McHenry, Robert (Ed) 1993 *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* vo.11 p.102

³⁸ Shimonaka, Naoto (Ed) 2005 *Heibonsha’s World Encyclopedia* 29 p.362

³⁹ *The spiral in Maori art* http://www.maori.info/maori_art.htm accessed 11 December 2009

torino⁴⁰ haere⁴¹ whakamua⁴² whakamuri⁴³,' I mused. 'At the same time as the spiral is going out, it is returning. At the same time as it is going back, it is going forward.'⁴⁴

The family's secret was that his mother was raped by the red-haired man so that she got pregnant. Moreover, in order to heal Eric's mental disorder, his family asks Tama's mother to help Eric. Tama, his mother, brother and sisters discussed whether they should accept him in as a member of the family's and confronted the danger of the family destruction by the cause of whether they take him, or not. In that situation, Tama described the image of the spiral which he imagines as the sense of time. "At the same time as the spiral is going out, it is returning. At the same time as it is going, it is going forward."⁴⁵ Further more, Tama expressed the image of spiral of Maori community and family.

For the most people who called the valley their turangawaewae⁴⁶, this was the centre of their world. This was the place of their marae⁴⁷, their sacred mountain, their river, their ancestor.⁴⁸

For Tama, the center of spiral was that of the world, Waituhi and his ancestors. His

⁴⁰ *Twisted, spiral* (Williams H.W. 1992, p.438)

⁴¹ *Come, go, depart* (ibid, p.30)

⁴² whaka means *Towards* (ibid, p.485) mua means *the front, the fore part* (ibid, p.213)

⁴³ muri means *the rear* (ibid, p.214)

⁴⁴ Ihimaera 2006, p.252

⁴⁵ ibid p.252

⁴⁶ turanga means *circumstance, time of standing*(Williams H.W 1992 p.443) waewae means *leg, foot*(ibid, p.472)

⁴⁷ *Enclosed space in front of a house, courtyard, village common*(ibid,p.180)

⁴⁸ Ihimaera 2006, p.252

father told him wherever Tama went, he could get back to Waituhi. Kaneyama wrote that the world was Waituhi which was “the ancestral home” in his essay.⁴⁹ And Ihimaera used the image of the spiral to explain the identity that Maori community become immortal. Moreover, Tama adopted te taura tangata as an identity of the multicultural society.

3-2 te taura tangata and spiral

The main character Tama and the author Ihimaera shared Maori mythology. It is important for Maori. Maori mythologies brought the value and significance to the Maori habits and customs. Te taura tangata is the historic perspective, which Tama and Ihimaera have in common. In *The Rope of Man*, a Maori elder John Rangihau proposed te taura tangata to Tama. At the interview with Mark Williams, Ihimaera told as follows.

For instance, there are two types of concepts about what is Maori history or what isn't or what is Maori literature what isn't Maori literature. One of those concepts is that Maori literature or history or geography are very restrictive categories. John Rangihau, however, had this vision of Maori history being what he called Te Taura Tangata—the rope of man.⁵⁰

And Ihimaera referred to te taura tangata in the story.

⁴⁹ Kaneyama 2009 p.13

⁵⁰ Williams 1991, p.284

The great of Rope of Man, Te Taura Tangata, stretches from the beginning of the universe to the universe's end. The rope comes roaring from out of Te Kore, the Void, through Te Po, the Night, and the first time we see it is when light flashes on it at the First Dawning. As it comes, the gods of the Maori weave their kaleidoscopic power into it. When they create man and woman, the rope sparkles and gleams with breathless excitement.

Ever-changing, the rope is a magnificent icon spiralling from one aeon to the next, charting the history of humankind. At the beginning of life, it was strong, tightly bound by Maori strands. Some Maori believe that with the coming of the Pakeha it become frayed, and almost snapped during the Land Wars. Perhaps there were only a few strands holding it together. But the songs of the people can still be sung through one or two strands as they are through many.⁵¹

Te taura tangata is described as a thick rope by Ihimaera. Essentially, the rope is composed of some strands that are made up of several threads. Ihimaera applied the images of “the strands” to the Maori community while “the threads” were applied to individuals of Maori. Then, he depicted the whole rope as a figure of Maori community. According to the author, “the rope is a magnificent icon, spiraling from one eon to the next, charting the history of humankind”. He relates spiral to the rope of man in this novel. At this point, the rope contains a structure of spiral. Because it has the principle of the spiral, which twisted double or triple, the rope can gain its strength and stability⁵². As thin threads (i.e., individuals) are twisted into strands (i.e., community) and the strands are twisted into the rope, its structure adopts the nature of spiral and

⁵¹ Ihimaera 2006, p.30

⁵² Shimonaka, Naoto (Ed)2005 *Heibonsha's World Encyclopedia* 29 p.362

increase the strength and stability⁵³. Moreover, the rope gets its plasticity. It isn't stiff, but pliable. In order to increase the strength, it must be pliable and it must not be stiff. To be stiff is fraught with the danger to be fragile. The strength, the stability and the plasticity of the rope is important for te taura tangata to exist longer, and the destruction of te taura tangata has the same meaning as the destruction of Maori community. Here, we have seen that te taura tangata is a specific idea of Maori community's permanence.

Witi Ihimaera developed te taura tangata into an image of New Zealand as a multicultural society in this novel.

3-3 traveling te taura tangata

The following is quoted from *The Rope of Man*. By the author, it was described what the "taura tangata" is after the Land War was fought between Pakeha and Maori in 1840s and 1860s.

When we see the rope again, after the wars, it is a different rope. It is different because the Pakeha became added to it, the strands of Pakeha culture entwining with ours, adding different textures colours. It's also fiercely twisted and soldered together by many different histories, as Maori and Pakeha began not only to live together but to fall in love, marry and have children with each other. Some people think that diminished our strength. Others think it strengthened us.⁵⁴

⁵³ *ibid*, p.362

⁵⁴ Ihimaera 2006, p.30

Here, Ihimaera explained that before Pakeha colonized in New Zealand, te taura tangata had been composed of the strands of Maori only. After the immigration of Pakeha, especially during the Land War, the rope was frayed. But the rope has been alive and different. The rope has taken the element of Pakeha. About that situation, Ihimaera expressed that some Maori think the rope diminished its strength, and other think it increased its strength strengthened them.⁵⁵ In either case, the rope has changed. Ihimaera and some Maori recognize the change of the rope. In *The Rope of Man*, Ihimaera described the change, when Eric faced the Mahana family.

This time as he swam towards the river, the rope recognised him. A strand of the rope, like a plants tendril, reached out to wrap itself around him and caught him as he fell.⁵⁶

Eric is a half-brother of Tama, born as a result of rape by the red-haired man. After giving birth to him, Tama's mother sent him out to nurse. It is a secret between Tama and his mother. At first, Tama, his mother, brother and sisters can't accept Eric. But he was accepted and recognized as a member of Maori. On the other hand, Eric belongs to his Pakeha family - in - law. While he was in Rongopai and looking over the landscape around him, he met the Mahana family, and he understood that Maori blood was running in his body; he found he became part of the whanau⁵⁷. For them, there was a struggle whether to accept Eric. But after all, they could recognize and accept him. The Mahana family and Eric could make a choice to accept. In that way, Eric became an

⁵⁵ Ihimaera 2006, p.30

⁵⁶ Ihimaera 2006, p.313

⁵⁷ *Family* (Williams H.W. 1992, p.487)

element of te taura tangata. Moreover, te taura tangata added new threads and strands in itself and it could change flexibly.

But, it can not be said that each of the constituent elements of te taura tangata is advantageous to Maori people. In the story, Ihimaera described te taura tangata as follows.

The rope continues its *journey*, spinning, singing, weaving, sparkling, chanting its way through time. It charts the changing nature of human odyssey. All our successes and as a people are woven into it, all our lapses from divinity and our triumphs over our inhumanity.⁵⁸ (Italic is mine.)

As seen above, “journey” is a metaphor: which suggests that te taura tangata has been changing: it mixes up Maori and Pakeha as strands of the rope but the result of a failure at one time and a success at the other. Apology and reconciliation are necessary to twist and bond Tama, his whanau and Eric. Thus, there was the apology and reconciliation between Maori and Pakeha after the Land War. In Northland, during the mid 1840s, Maori fought Pakeha for the discrepancy in interpretation of the Treaty of Waitangi, and in the other parts of the country during the 1860s.⁵⁹ It was the biggest war fought ever in New Zealand. As the result of this war, Maori lost their land. The land was important for Maori. The conflict over the land caused the crucial crack between Maori and Pakeha. After that, the sign of the restoration of reliable relationship between them was found in 1975—one hundred and fifty years after the treaty was signed and

⁵⁸ Ihimaera 2006, p30

⁵⁹ <http://www.newzealand.com/travel/about-nz/history/history-colonisation.cfm>
accessed 15 December 2009

concluded. In this year, the government of New Zealand signed the Treaty of Waitangi Act (and it was revised in 1985). In addition, the government established the Waitangi tribunal in 1975. The followings are quoted to explain the Waitangi tribunal.

The Tribunal is a permanent commission of inquiry charged with making recommendations on claims brought by Maori relating to actions or omissions of the Crown, which breach the promises made in the Treaty of Waitangi.

The role of the Tribunal, set out in section 5 of the Treaty of Waitangi Act, includes inquiring into and making recommendations upon any claim properly submitted to the Tribunal, examining and reporting on any proposed legislation referred to the Tribunal by the House of Representatives or a Minister of the Crown, and making recommendations or determinations in respect of certain Crown forest land, railways land, State-owned enterprise land, and land transferred to educational institutions.⁶⁰

Thus, as the result of the restoration of reliable relationship, Pakeha was added as a constituent element of te taura tangata that had been woven Maori only. In *The Rope of Man*, te taura tangata was described as an identity of New Zealand as a multicultural society by Ihimaera. In the story, Maori, Pakeha, the mixed-blood of them and other immigrants appeared as characters. In *The Return*, when Tom was welcomed by John Campbell and Carol Hirschfeld who were other television company stuffs and the pupils of Tom's school, the protagonist was surprised as follows.

⁶⁰ <http://www.waitangi-tribunal.govt.nz/about/intro.asp> accessed 11 December 2009

The curly-haired blond boy called to his classmates, 'Hey, guys, it's Tom Mahana, one of the old boys of our school.' Spontaneously, he gave the command, 'Kia mau⁶¹.'

Kia mau? From a blond South African boy?

Next minute, the crowd cleared a space as the boys shucked off their blazers, threw their ten-gallon hats into the air, unbuttoned their shirt, rolled up their sleeves and hunkered down into a raucous, ringing, impromptu haka⁶² ⁶³.

In the story, the characters were constituent of New Zealand. In other words, they were the strands and threads of te taura tangata. In an interview with Mark Williams, Ihimaera talked that for Maori people the past wasn't something behind them.⁶⁴ Adopting te taura tangata, Ihimaera tried to interlock the past, the present and the future of New Zealand as a multicultural society. Thus, he made te taura tangata unfold its brilliant virtue in *The Rope of Man*.

At the end of *The Return*, Ihimaera asked the question as follows. 'What can Maori bring to the world?'⁶⁵ And here he answered that te taura tangata as an example of the success of the multicultural society in *The Rope of Man*. He explained this novel was composed of the various people; the threads and strands of te taura tangata.⁶⁶

⁶¹ *stay*(Williams H.W 1992, p.196)

⁶² *dance* (ibid, p.31)

⁶³ Ihimaera 2006 p.190

⁶⁴ Williams 1991 p.283

⁶⁵ Ihimaera 2006 p.324

⁶⁶ ibid p.325

Chapter 4 The journey

4-1 the journey to “something else”

In his lecture in Japan in 2006, Ihimaera talked about te taura tangata of New Zealand and the literature as follows.

Today, te taura tangata, the Maori rope of man, is truly a rope entwined with both Maori and Pakeha histories – but it is still so youthful, has not reached its maturity, and still has many issues to resolve. In my opinion there are two main ones: the first is that the joint entanglement of Maori and Pakeha as we work out a common history is still problematic and symptomatic of the bipolar nature of our society. The second is that some of the new strands joining te taura tangata still have to reinforce themselves before our literature will begin to transcend its roots and, in the blending, become “something else.”⁶⁷

To become “something else” is to be different from the previous. In other words, to become “something else” is to gain an identity as a member of multicultural society. As we have discussed, it can be said that te taura tangata which has its flexibility, strength and stability of the rope is a model of new identity as a multicultural society from the previous one. Because the identity is protean, not to be fixed and unified, it has ambiguousness. In the lecture, Ihimaera expressed New Zealand and the literature was in the course of their journey to become “something else”. In this way, te taura tangata was immature. In other words, adding the new texture, te taura tangata is the

⁶⁷ HP: *New Zealand Literature: Writing From the Edge of the Universe* 2006

ever-changing process and journey of the weaving the identity as multicultural society.

4-2 Ihimaera's journey

The followings are quoted from *The Rope of Man*.

I was always aware of the whakapaka, the genealogy, the line of ancestors whom I was descended. For me they were not in the past. The past was always in front of us, a long line of ancestors to whom I was accountable and with whom I had an implicit contract.⁶⁸

Ihimaera explained that for the protagonist Tama, the ancestors were not behind him but in front of him. In his book, the cultural anthropologist Yusuke Maki indicated that whether the mythological past can be revived to present or not is important for the life of the community.⁶⁹ According to Maki, “the existing past” is the standard of the life and death of a community. In *The Rope of man*, for example, Waituhi, the meeting house was called Rongopai, the carvings, the songs, the rituals and myth can be applied to “the existing past”. Hitoshi Kaneyama indicated that Waituhi was a metaphor of “the existing past” in *Tangi*, and the concept of time in this novel was not so much evolutionary as reversible or regressive.⁷⁰In the same way, Ihimaera writes the concept vividly in *The Rope of Man*. Here, we will attempt to construe about matters of concerning the time in this novel. In the novel, we can find many descriptions of the

⁶⁸ Ihimaera, 2006 pp.79-80

⁶⁹ Maki, 1996 p.23

⁷⁰ Kaneyama, 2009 pp.13-16

concept of time. The following are the words that are spoken by the protagonist, after he listens to unique Maori songs of the funeral.

No, the past is never behind us. It is always us.⁷¹

In a rectilinear sensation of time, the past is behind us. For Tama, the ancestors are not only in bygone ages but can be in front of him. In the case, it is important that his circumstance is full of “the existing past” that reminds him Maori myths and customs. One of the example of “the existing past”, Maori oral culture is useful for it. In this novel, the protagonist is taught the mythologies and customs by his father. After his death, Tama assumes the role of it. Waituhi is the most one of things that reminds him. The following are the sentences of the author’s description of Waituhi.

Waituhi is family. The whanau is my home. The love and affection they hold for each other are the ridgepoles of my heart. The sharing and enjoying of each other are the rafters. Within those walls and roof, my heart is shared with my whanau, so closely intertwined, that I burst with pride that I am a son of iwi.

Taku⁷² manawa⁷³, o ratou⁷⁴ manawa. My heart is also their heart. Their heart is mine. I am their father, son and friend. They, too, are my brother, fathers, sons, and friends.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Ihimaera 2006, p.144

⁷² *my* (Williams, 1992 p.374)

⁷³ *heart* (ibid, p.174)

⁷⁴ *them* (ibid, p.328)

⁷⁵ Ihimaera, 2006 p.106

A historian E.H. Carr expressed that histories were the dialogue between the past and present.⁷⁶ As seen in the second chapter, by rewriting his former works Ihimaera attempted the dialogue between the present and Maori mythology, including their traditions and the history of New Zealand. As the result, *The Return* was born. And the protagonist Tom could weave the identity in a multicultural society. When Tom was asked the global national problem from his TV colleague Bob Blakeney, he answered as follows.

‘All Maori and all New Zealanders jointly bring an example of what can be achieved in terms of excellence, equity and justice to all mankind. In our own country we are showing that it is possible to resolve issues of blood, race, ancestry and identity. Internationally, we bring a certain grit, determination, moral compass and integrity to the world’s future.’⁷⁷

Offering us the successful example of New Zealand as a multicultural society, Ihimaera proposed te taura tangata as one. In the twenty- first century, it can be said that a lot of people can move around the world. And in the same way, their cultures move around. As the inhabitant of the earth, we can’t be unconcerned with it. To avoid the case in which the contact between some culture and the other leads to conflict, an identity of a multicultural society is necessary for us. In this century, we should recognize the necessity of the identity as a member of the multicultural society. Then, we can overcome the conflict. He gave a speech on 2 November 2005 as follows.

⁷⁶ Carr, 1992 p.40

⁷⁷ Ihimaera, 2006 p.322

Although the joint entanglement of all us in the making of New Zealand history continues to be problematic, we must never forget that we have an obligation to our past to carry on those dreams not just for ourselves or the Pacific or Pacific Rim - but for the planet itself. It's not over.⁷⁸

In order to overcome that, Ihimaera proposes *te taura tangata* as an identity of multicultural society.

4-3 One step further

Ihimaera refers to the future in *The Rope of Man* as follows.

The wise people I am descended from have asked the same question but in a different way: "What is the most important treasure in the world?" Ladies and gentlemen, the answer is children. They are our future.⁷⁹

These sentences are in the scene that Tom speaks to the world, as an anchorman of TV program *Spaceship Earth*. Because Maori doesn't have their letters, they pass down their culture by oral means. In other words, it can be said that Maori pass down their culture through their children. Children are the treasure for Maori, in order to support their permanence of community. In *The Return*, Tom appeals to us his idea as follows.

'One child is everybody's child,' I said. 'Everybody child in the world is our child. It's

⁷⁸ Witi Ihimaera's *New Zealand Dreams*

⁷⁹ Ihimaera 2006, p.308

too easy to give up, to despair, to say it's too hard. We've got to have more courage, more determination, try harder. The questions are very simple. What will we leave our children when we are gone? Will we leave them enough food? Enough water? Enough energy resources to keep them warm? How safe will their world be? Will we have left them a future which, if not free of wars, contains at least the hope that someday there will be peace on the planet? ⁸⁰

It can be said that Ihimaera thinks not only New Zealander but we care about our future; our children.

⁸⁰ Ihimaera 2006, p.309

Conclusion

In the interview with Tim Watkin, Ihimaera explained how the scope of the Literature of his journey was expanded.⁸¹ In a sense, to rewrite a previous work is a kind of dialogue between the author and his inner world, by which Ihimaera can produce *The Rope of Man*. It can be said that his rewriting is the dialogue between him and the previous work. And he practices the process of the weaving te taura tangata as a Maori author.

However Ihimaera continues his journey, he has a paradox. It is that he uses the words “come full circle” to ends his anniversary collection with the publication of *The Rope of Man*.⁸² According to him, te taura tangata advances from the past to the future with spinning, weaving and singing, as spiral. And it isn’t a circular trip. His journey isn’t over. In this thesis, we can indicate the suitable expression in spite of “come full circle” as follows.

With the publication of *The Rope of Man*, his journey “begins the first step into the future, the first step from the past”, unrolling as spiral⁸³

This novel is not the final destination, but the departure point. In this way, weaving the success and failure, he continues his journey.

⁸¹ Watkin, 2004 pp.19-23

⁸² Ihimaera, 2006 p.7

⁸³ Ihimaera, 2006 p.12

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Appendix

Chronology⁸⁴

1944 Witi Ihimaera was born in Gisbone.

1963-1966

He attended Auckland University, but without completing the degree, he began working as a cadet journalist with Gisbone Herald.

1968 He moved to the Post Office in Wellington.

1969 He enrolled part-time at Victoria University.

1971 He completed Bachelor of Arts.

1972 He published the first book of short stories *Pounamu Pounamu* from Heineman which awarded third prize in the Wattie Book of the Year Awards.

1973-1989

He began working as a writer in Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

1973 He published a novel *Tangi* which received first prize in the Wattie Award.

1974 *Whanau* was published.

1977 He published the story *The New Net Goes Fishing* and decided his writing.

1982 He edited the anthology *Into the World of Light*.

1986 He came back with the publication *The Matriarch* which received the Wattie Book of the Year Award.

1987 *The Whale Rider* was published by Reed.

1989 Ihimaera published *Dear Miss Mansfield*.

⁸⁴ Robinson, Roger Wattie, Nelson (Ed)1998 *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Literature* <http://www.bookcouncil.org.nz/writers/ihimaerawiti.html>
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<http://www.stuff.co.nz/sunday-star-times/features/2972881/I-write-for-the-New-Zealand-I-wish-it-to-be>

- 1994 He published *Bulibasha: King of the Gypsies*.
- 1995 He published *Kingfisher Come Home*.
- 1996 He published *Night in the Gardens of Spain*.
- 2000 He edited *Where's Waari?*
- 2000 He published *The Uncle's Story*.
- 2002 He edited *Te Ata: Maori Art of the East Coast*.
- 2003 His 30th anniversary collection, he published new edition *Pounamu Pounamu*.
- 2003 He published international edition *The Whale Rider*.
- 2003 He published *Ihimaera: His Best Stories*.
- 2004 *Whanau II* was published by Reed.
- 2005 He published *The Rope of Man*.
- 2008 *Ask at the Posts of the House* was published by Raupo Publishing Ltd.
- 2009 He published *The Trowenna Sea*