

Lifting the cloak of silence: redramatising clothing as material culture, through an object analysis of Te Aia's cloak

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ABSTRACT: Many museum collections contain historical items that have little remaining to link them to their original context. The nineteenth-century blue wool cloak of Te Aia Matai'apo from the Cook Islands is one such item. This article investigates methods of analysis to produce other means of articulation for such cases when a purely historical one is limiting. Close study of the cut and construction of the garment opens entry to the minds of the makers. Examination of manufacturing techniques of the cloak opens possibilities for new narratives of display, where previously only the provenance details had been utilised. This article also explores the performance quality of garments, which from within a Polynesian context lends them a specific significance. Both a direct study of the cloak's construction and its position within a wider context of performance of Polynesian material culture are offered as strategies that can be applied to similar items that lack historical context.

KEYWORDS: Rarotonga, Cook Islands, Te Aia's cloak, intangible heritage, garment manufacture, wrapping ceremonies, ceremonial garments, exhibition display.

Introduction

The casual sighting of an unusual garment laid flat in a glass cabinet while strolling through the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa) was the beginning of a contrasting journey of revelation and concealment. The cloak's colour, shape and texture caught my attention first. It is semicircular, made of a fine blue woven material, so fine I thought at first it was silk. It is, in fact, fine cashmere wool, with broad plant-fibre fringes that run in four bands, creating a striped effect. It is very striking in the textural contrasts between fine wool and the fibre fringes, as can be seen in Fig. 1.

The design and materials used filled me with questions about the makers and their purpose. Where did the design ideas come from? Was the cloak unique, or part of a series? How did the makers get hold of a bolt of fine blue wool? Who wore it, where and how? From my own experience, I

know it is difficult to put two materials with such different structural properties together in one garment. I wanted to know how the makers had accomplished that task. An eager reading of the garment's display label brought disappointment. The specific context in which this object was made and worn is lost, so there is now little of its story to tell. The exhibition label (in *Tangata o le Moana*, Te Papa) simply reads 'This magnificent cloak was gifted from Rarotongan Chief Te Aia Mataiapo to the New Zealand Government when he visited in 1872. A symbol of his gratitude for the hospitality he received.' I felt dissatisfied with these few facts, and my questions continued to hover. However, as I looked I began to wonder if traces of a story remained, stitched into the actual garment itself.

This article seeks to put forward a strategy for analysis that consults the manufacturing techniques of individual garments, while also considering their performance life as a



Fig. 1 Te Aia's cloak from Rarotonga, Cook Islands, nineteenth century (c. 1870), woollen cloth and fibre. Presented to the New Zealand Government by chief Te Aia Mata'apo on his visit to Auckland in 1872. Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Pacific collection (photo: Alan Marchant; Te Papa MA 1011596).

means of storytelling. There is a particular relevance of this approach to the apparel of Pacific Islanders because of the cultural significance of intangible heritage to these peoples, who utilise oral means for recording history. It is important to note that I have not touched or even viewed the cloak without a glass barrier. This study has been made from photographs, a conservation treatment document, and my observations of the cloak within its case, without any detailed examination of it.

Pacific Islands peoples have a heritage that continues to develop new styles and means of expression in a distinctively Polynesian way. While the post-colonial culture of Pacific Islanders is different to that of the colonisers, they have incorporated colonial influences into their own systems and ways of life. (Thomas 1991). Te Papa, New Zealand's national museum, boasts a rich array of ancient and contemporary Pacific Islands items in its collections. However, many of its older items were acquired during an era when the oral traditions that accompanied them were little valued

by the new European owners. This knowledge 'may have been deliberately suppressed by policies of assimilation, or lost as a result of dislocation from familiar landscapes' (Peers & Brown 2003: 5). The cloak of Te Aia Mata'apo is one such object.

The challenge for Te Papa, and for other modern museums, is how to exhibit these items to convey a sense of their significance when the direct link to the original use and purpose is lost. Increasing digitisation of collections and access to representations of objects provides museums with alternative ways of presenting these treasures. This also enables communication with audiences who are now far removed from the original items. There is always a risk that comes with such a process – the danger of simplification and generalisation – but this cost must be balanced against the loss of forgetting. Te Aia's cloak connects us to past practices that have now evolved into new forms in twenty-first-century Polynesia. In this article, I show how this cloak has a specific story of garment construction. I argue that

the techniques employed in its manufacture can still be discerned, and that these give clues to the thinking of those who made it. It is a story worth telling, yet the fragility of the garment severely constrains methods of articulation, so a new approach is necessary. My scrutiny of this nineteenth-century cloak has highlighted storytelling possibilities that have not been fully realised by Te Papa.

Cloaks and wrapping

To understand the significance of Te Aia's cloak, a brief survey of Polynesian clothing traditions provides a helpful starting point. By the early nineteenth century, when Europeans were exploring the Pacific, there was already an established textile and garment tradition in the Cook Islands. This tradition is detailed by Kuchler (2003) and Rongokea (2001), who suggest that the resulting artefacts (garments, textiles and quilts) took new shapes and forms as introduced European clothing and materials became increasingly available to the Cook Islanders. While these exotic raw materials and resources produced a new 'look' for Cook Islands clothing and textiles, they did not alter the intentions and meanings of the production process and the use of the completed items.

There is nothing particularly unusual in the hybrid outcomes of the cultural collision between Europeans and Pacific Islanders in the nineteenth century. There occurred the usual absorption and incorporation of ideas and possessions on both sides, alongside gross misunderstandings and flawed interpretations of cultural practices. There was an exchange and ongoing re-exchanging of 'entangled objects', as the histories of these peoples became shared but not necessarily linked (Thomas 1991). This process is exemplified with Te Aia's cloak, which contains raw materials sourced from both cultures and incorporates sewing construction methods of the two clothing traditions.

While the works of Thomas (1991, 1997), Gell (1993) and Kuchler (2003) have increased our understanding of the complex mechanisms in operation with the creation, wearing and gifting of garments in the Pacific Islands, they still leave Te Aia's cloak alarmingly mute. In New Zealand and the Pacific, there are many historical artefacts of note, including garments that are orphaned from their whakapapa (origins and ancestral lines). In describing the second largest collection of Māori clothing held in a regional museum, the Hawke's Bay Art Gallery and Museum, Butts (2007: 71) cites 94 cloaks and rain capes, of which 'only 16 have a

provenance beyond the name of a donor'. It is an all too common scenario that rare objects of material culture have hidden, and therefore untold, stories. Compounding the limitations of this loss is the quantity of artefacts. The textile record held in European collections of their garments, fabric samples and other cloth articles is far greater by volume than what is held in the Pacific of Pacific articles. This scarcity increases the significance of Polynesian cloth objects that are preserved in museum collections. How can stories of these cloth artefacts be articulated when the historical information about them is so scant? In fact, techniques of manufacture endure and can still be read with accuracy from these garments, and their intrinsic physical properties can provide insights when other information is lacking. For example, close analysis at the construction level can provide a window into the development of clothing techniques at the time of manufacture of a garment.

Despite the insights that can be gained from an analysis of garment manufacture, this is missing from the display of Te Aia's cloak, as is the performance aspect of the garment. Thus, this article will also touch on the performance of clothing in museum storytelling. Garments are made to be worn: they have an experiential dimension to them, as their life on the human body alters their appearance and physical constitution. These factors all contribute to our perceptions of clothing, as 'the way clothing is worn – shifting the angle of a hat, adding a bow, taking a garment out of its conventional context – is crucial to its interpretation and meaning' (Labrum 2007: 11). Furthermore, in Polynesian culture garments may take on a deeper significance as the representation or embodiment of an object or idea. From the perspective of garment analysis, Te Aia's cloak needs to be returned to the human form to halt its transition to the category of artefact, where the relationship with the human body is lost. This, alongside a recognition of the performance traditions of Pacific Islands peoples, is crucial to expressing the value and significance of this unusual garment.

While the type of cultural exchange between nineteenth-century Europeans and Cook Islanders was common in global terms, it is worth a closer look at the particular instances that made this interaction unique. A means of unravelling this exchange is to look at clothing traditions of both cultures, and to examine the changes to the Polynesian garment tradition that resulted from European exposure. Within the two clothing traditions are points of similarity and difference. Some of the first Europeans to have prolonged contact with Cook Islanders arrived with the London

Missionary Society from 1820 onwards. These missionaries were greatly encouraged when islanders began wearing European-style clothing, interpreting this as external evidence of conversion to Christianity (Kuchler & Were 2005a: 84). This proved to be a somewhat overenthusiastic reading of this process, or at least oversimplistic. Cook Islands society had established, sophisticated systems of garment-making, wearing and giving, such that the wearing of clothing and cloth had a deeper significance and role than a simple conformity to Victorian modesty. The adoption of new fabrics and styles of clothes brought greater variety to this already functioning tradition.

All cultures have recognised forms of ceremonial dress, which are used to distinguish occasions and people of importance. There was a connection between early European explorers, who denoted ranks of leadership through more elaborate dress for ships' captains than deckhands, and the Polynesians chiefs, who did likewise. As Tcherkezoff (2003: 56) points out, 'By coincidence covering the body in layers of cloth was a common sign of status'. But while rolled-up shirt sleeves denoted an abasement through the station of manual labour for the Europeans, a more complex process than mere categorisation and social restraint was operating among the local people. Coverings are used in the Cook Islands and east Polynesia as a means of harnessing and releasing spiritual essence, where 'the importance [lies] in preconceptions – the attribution of life-giving qualities to fibre and fabric, which they view as vehicles of spiritual power' (Kuchler & Were 2005a: 84).

Before European contact, Cook Islands textiles were manufactured solely from native plant fibres. These bark cloths were – and still are – made through a laborious process of stripping the fibres, then washing, beating and burying them to break down the outer cellulose layers, a matting/felting treatment that enables new bonds to form between the fibres. Completed fabrics were then used as wrappings to cover and contain spiritual essence, and were also presented ceremonially at community events. These practices continue in contemporary Polynesian communities, albeit in modified forms.

New fabrics and garments introduced to the Cook Islands by Europeans in the nineteenth century were not simply incorporated into indigenous society in their original state. For example, clothing brought from England by Victorian missionaries was often unpicked and unravelled, and then restitched and worked into new forms. Using the European garments and fabrics as a raw resource in an already

established Polynesian manufacturing process resulted in a product that sat somewhere between customary Pacific Islands items and comparable European ones. Out of this process came 'complex layered quilts [tīvaevae] resembling the layered bark cloth, bedspreads and funerary cloaks indigenous to the region' (Kuchler & Were 2005b: 26).

This quilt-making and quilt-giving continues today among Cook Islanders, even those who now no longer live in the islands. As Rongokea (2001: 10) points out, 'Both the patterns that have developed and the method by which tivaevae are put together are distinctly Cook Islands'. The current practice of quilting reveals that the spiritual understanding of fabric use is still acknowledged, as some makers refuse to 'use designs of peacocks, mermaids or other marine life as it may bring bad luck' (Rongokea 2001: 12). These vibrant quilts, with their bold, naturalistic designs, are presented at weddings, baptisms, births and hair-cutting ceremonies, where they are used as wall-hangings and as drapings for tables and chairs of honour, or are worn as cloaks. At funerals, quilts are used as casket wrappings. All of these customs link directly to traditional Cook Islands practices, but use new materials, colours and forms.

Having established a historical context for Te Aia's cloak, this article turns to an analysis of exhibition techniques employed by Te Papa, which demonstrate the constraints and limitations contemporary museums must overcome when exhibiting ancient garments. First, however, another look at the garment itself is essential (Fig. 1). This semi-circular cloak is made of fine blue cashmere wool, with four evenly spaced, circular bands of hibiscus-fibre trim. The cloak is fully lined, and at 1.2 m from neck to hem down the centre back is close to floor length on an adult male. The hibiscus bands are edged with a bright red cotton tape, and the neck edge is finished with a red wool binding. To any viewer, this garment is pleasing in its design aesthetic, while also being magnificent in its scale and in the craftsmanship displayed with the braiding of the plant fibres.

Displaying the cloak – exhibition history

The known story of Te Aia's cloak begins in the early 1990s, when it was 'discovered' in the collection in New Zealand's National Museum at the Buckle Street building. The garment was labelled with the scant details that it had been 'presented to the Government by Chief Te Aia Mata'iaipo in



Fig. 2 Display of Te Aia's cloak in the *Tangata o le Moana* exhibition, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, opened in 2008. (photo: Norman Heke).

1872 on his visit to New Zealand' (Davidson 1993: 31). With this finding, a thorough analysis of the garment was undertaken to assess its condition. It was described as being in poor condition, soiled throughout, with many holes resulting from insect attack, weakened areas of fabric due to fading, and distortion to the weave. The fibre fringes were assessed as dry and twisted. Following this, an extensive conservation process was completed, which included the application of strict display constraints. The result of the conservation work was very successful, and has enabled the display life of this object to begin (Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa 1993).

On completion of the cloak's conservation treatment, the first opportunity for public display was eagerly seized by Te Papa staff, who included the garment in an exhibition titled *Traditional Arts of Pacific Island Women*. This was the Pacific contribution to the museum's 1993 *Women's Suffrage Exhibition*, which marked the centenary of the passing of legislation giving women the right to vote in New Zealand. Te Aia's cloak was photographed and used as a cover image for the exhibition catalogue of the Pacific section. Following this physical display, Te Papa has utilised digital representational methods to display the cloak virtually, including a dedicated entry in the museum's *Collections online* database (Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa 2004b). A

photographic image of Te Aia's cloak continues to be used as the header image for the Pacific Cultures section, and a permanent print record has arisen from its inclusion in *Icōns ngā taonga from the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa*, a large-format, illustrated book published by the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (2004a), and the accompanying pocket book *Icōns from Te Papa: Pacific* (Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa 2006), whose cover the cloak graces.

In 2008, Te Papa opened its current Pacific exhibition, *Tangata o le Moana*. Te Aia's cloak has been given a prominent space in this exhibition, within a glass case and supported almost flat, with dimmed lighting on a short timer to reduce damage (Fig.2). The cloak is part of a narrative about 'arrivals', which describes some of the earliest visitors to New Zealand from the Pacific Islands. One of these was the priest Tupaia from the Society Islands, who travelled with Captain Cook in 1769, providing valuable interpretation services for the Europeans. There is little record of Tupaia, beyond a few brief mentions in Joseph Bank's writings and a native New Zealand mistletoe that bears his name. Other names of the first Pacific Islanders to visit New Zealand cover the wall beside Te Aia's cloak, along with their arrival dates and places. These are accompanied by three sculptural artworks that were commissioned

expressly for the exhibition to pay homage to these first migrants, about whom so little is recorded.

The display label for Te Aia's cloak details an ongoing exchange with the Cook Islands people through the gifting of a *tivaeae* and *moenga* (sleeping mat) by Viriama Teura, a descendent of Te Aia Mata'iapo. On her visit to New Zealand in 1993, Viriama saw the cloak on display and was moved to gift these objects. Her motive was to nurture the relationship that had been established by her ancestor Chief Te Aia. The juxtaposition of this cloak with the contemporary sculptures and documentation of the subsequently gifted quilt and sleeping mat suggests a continuing relationship between New Zealand and Pacific Islands peoples. So, while the cloak itself has little accompanying information, it is included in a wider context of ongoing exchange between these nations. From this short display history, it can be seen that Te Papa is attempting to make this rare and unique item accessible to the public. Despite this, however, the display is somewhat lifeless and two-dimensional. Are there alternatives for presenting such fragile but remarkable items? Possibilities include detailed object analysis, and the presentation of associated cultural components that accompany such garments and the techniques used to make them to convey the 'performance' of the cloak.

Regarding the cloak and its current exhibition display, the first key observation is that because of its fragility it is displayed flat and encased in a controlled environment within an opaque, custom-made box (Fig. 2). It has been displayed using a historical narrative, but as most of the known history of the garment is lost, this method of presentation becomes severely limiting. In the current display in *Tangata o le Moana* there is only one vantage point, provided by a large (approximately 2.6 x 1.1 m) glass window, which gives a view from hem line to neck up the centre back of the length of the garment. This produces an unnatural view, which could never be achieved when the cloak is worn. Its relationship to the human body is not evident, which is the primary concern of any garment. The cloak is spread flat to display its 2.2 m width and 1.4 m length, so the magnitude of its size is well demonstrated, but still with a degree of ambiguity. When looking at it this way it is difficult to tell if the garment is a semicircle, and is therefore laid open, or if it is circular and folded in half along the shoulder line. It is, in fact, difficult to discern the shoulder line, and therefore the centre front, and consequently how the cloak would hang when worn. Interpretation of this object as an item of clothing that can be worn is not aided by the method of display.

Thus the garment makes a transition from apparel to artefact, and like many displayed objects is removed from its original purpose such that it takes on another life within the museum (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998).

Wearing the cloak – out of the cabinet and onto the body

Having spent considerable time scrutinising Te Aia's cloak within its cabinet and being unable to visualise it on the human form, I decided to make a scaled-down sample to open the possibility of a more three-dimensional study (Figs 3 and 4). As my work progressed, it became apparent that this now silent garment has a story of manufacturing techniques that gives voice to some of the thinking of its creators.

The cloak sits at a junction point where Victorian European tailoring and Polynesian traditions of fibre-braiding meet. This is evident in the unexpected mixture of techniques employed. While the garment was made sometime around 1870, it does not consistently demonstrate principles of Victorian European tailoring. The cloak is made from a woven wool fabric and has been cut with the grain of the cloth. This is a completely different process to the cutting of a grainless textile such as a bonded bark cloth, which can be cut in any direction because of the inherent strength of the fabric's construction. The cloak therefore shows a development of textile understanding by the Cook Islanders following the introduction of woven fabrics by Europeans. Had Te Aia's cloak been cut as if it were a grainless bark cloth, ignoring the techniques required for cutting woven fabrics, a very different garment would have emerged, lacking in structural stability and likely to distort when worn. These cutting decisions show some understanding of European fabrics, but this thinking does not continue through the manufacturing process, as will be demonstrated.

Placement of seams

Although the cloak is made from a Victorian European tailoring fabric, it deviates from the Victorian European tailoring tradition in the way it has been cut. By 1870, Europeans were master tailors, sculpting wool to the human form using shaped panels, padded supports and steam to set the wool fibres in position. As I wrapped my sample of the cloak around a dress form, it became obvious that the seam lines did not follow the human body. When laid flat, the



Fig. 3 Scaled mock-up of Te Aia's cloak, draped on a dress form. Front view (photo: Norman Heke).



Fig. 4 Scaled mock-up of Te Aia's cloak, draped on a dress form. Back view (photo: Norman Heke).

panel seams of the cloak make sense (Fig. 5), and there is a visual coherence in the way the garment has been cut into quarters. However, once the cloak is on the body, the side panels make an unexpected bend and end up running horizontally across the front of the cloak (Fig. 6). A Victorian European approach would be to take the side seam down the shoulder line that drops down the centre of the arm. This would give a fan effect when the garment is laid flat, and vertical seam lines when the garment is worn.

Application of lining

Consistent with a garment of quality, the cloak is fully lined, but again, the technique used to apply the lining does not follow European tailoring methods. Traditionally, lining has three main purposes: it is used to protect raw seam edges against deterioration from abrasion; it gives the garment a slip effect when worn, so that it moves with the wearer; and it conceals construction stitching. The lining of this cloak protects raw seam edges and provides a slip effect, but it does not conceal all construction work. The cloak has been lined

before the fibre fringes have been applied to the right side of the garment. As a result, irregular running and tacking stitches can be seen on the inside of the cloak, in concave lines following the circular bands formed by the fringes. A conventional tailoring approach would be to attach the fringe first and then line the garment, thus concealing the stitches used to hold the fringe in place.

Facing placement

Similarly, an unexpected approach has been used with the positioning of the centre front facings. In this case, they are visible as irregular pieces patched together along the centre front of the cloak. In tailoring, facings are used on garment edges to give extra support, keeping them flat and stopping edges from rolling and curling. Facings are structural and always sit on the wrong side of the garment, against the body. The facings on Te Aia's cloak have been applied to the right side, so that once the garment is wrapped around the body they sit on the critical focal point of the upper chest, as indicated by the broken line in Fig. 6. These construction

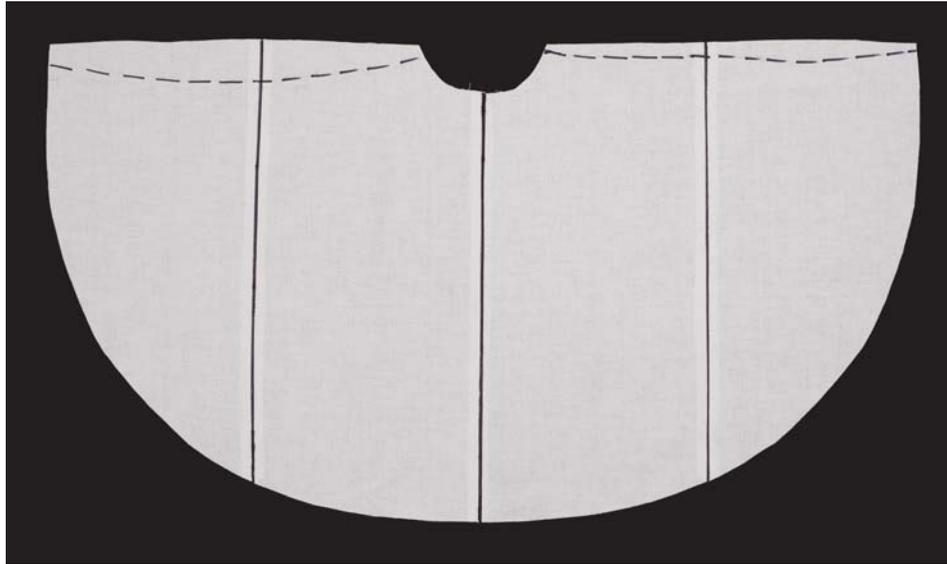


Fig. 5 Scaled calico mock-up of Te Aia's cloak, laid flat to display seam and facing placement (photo: Norman Heke).



Fig. 6 Scaled calico mock-up of Te Aia's cloak draped on dress form. Front view (photo: Norman Heke).



Fig. 7 Scaled calico mock-up of Te Aia's cloak draped on dress form. Side view (photo: Norman Heke).

decisions are puzzling when viewed through a European tailoring tradition, and show that the craftspeople who made this garment were incorporating or even inventing new techniques as part of their process.

While the construction and cutting of the blue wool shows inexperience, the braiding of the plant fibre is masterful. The fringes are thick, tight and even, and have an intricate, folded saw-tooth edge.

The analysis of Te Aia's cloak has shown that from a design perspective it displays a strong aesthetic of colour, texture and form. The contrast of the fine-quality blue wool with the thick, stiff straw-coloured fibre is appealing and exciting to the eye. The curved lines are pleasing to look at, and the red tape gives visual clarity to the striping effect of the fringes. By contrast, however, the construction reveals an experimental and elementary handling of materials, and tells a story of makers who had much greater expertise in braiding plant fibre than in tailoring wool.

A display of the processes of folding and binding that are required to make the cloak's fringing would enhance the appreciation of this rare garment. Te Papa is experimenting with these concepts elsewhere in the *Tangata o le Moana* exhibition, where small touch samples (15 x 15 cm) of woven flax sails and spun-fibre ropes sit alongside a display of traditional sea vessels. These samples have already been rubbed raw by numerous fingers in just the first year of this long-term exhibition. A similar tactile demonstration, or step-by-step imaging of the process of braiding, would likewise be well received by viewers of Te Aia's cloak.

Performing the cloak

There is yet another dimension occupied by Te Aia's cloak that is worth considering for museum display. All garments have an associated performance aspect: they are made for wearing, and once worn are moulded and reshaped as we make them our own. Ceremonial garments have an extra resonance, as they become associated with specific significant events, while Polynesian textiles and garments possess a higher level still of spiritual significance when they are used as mechanisms for containing and releasing tapu (spiritual essence) through wrapping and gifting ceremonies. Among Pacific Islanders, objects and artefacts are cloaked in oratory and are performed during storytelling sessions (Hooper-Greenhill 2000: 52). Stories are told and retold at community events to continue the knowledge exchange between

generations and to preserve the history of the people, and artefacts and garments are used as emblems to represent these stories. Recognition of the importance of such intangible heritage to indigenous cultures is becoming widely understood through the global museum community, to the extent that it has been noted that 'The emphasis put on the documentation and preservation of intangible cultural heritage places Pacific museums at the leading edge of current international museological trends' (Stanley 2007: 231).

A consideration of museum display methods for intangible heritage necessarily draws together these elements of the performance of objects. An interest in exhibiting intangible heritage was demonstrated by Te Papa with *Culture Moves! Dance costumes of the Pacific* in 2005. With this exhibition, the objectives identified were 'to explore the aesthetic qualities of the dance costumes of the Pacific and to capture its close connection to music and dance' (Mahina-Tuai 2006: 19). A decision to exhibit only complete dance costumes excluded historical garments, as the museum's Pacific collection has no complete examples of these (Mahina-Tuai 2006: 19). This highlights yet another difficulty of displaying historical garments, as they are frequently separated from the rest of the ensemble with which they were originally worn, and so are decontextualised even further. In the *Culture Moves!* exhibition, it was decided to animate the dance costumes on dress forms and to accompany them with images of the costumes being worn. Each cabinet contained three models, along with a poster-sized photograph of one of the specific outfits on display being worn during a performance. Three separate audio-visual units were located in the exhibition space, also showing performances of the costumes (or ones very like them) on display. The goal was to produce a dynamic display that captured the essence of performance as articulated by the exhibition title. In reviewing this exhibition, Mahina-Tuai (2006), curator of Te Papa's Pacific collection, explained how it drew attention to the lack of intangible heritage in the Pacific collection. The immaterial culture that was gathered for this exhibition was the first to be added to the collection. Mahina-Tuai (2006: 22) goes on to suggest that work needs to be done to resolve logistical issues for intangible expressions, 'and most importantly to validate its inclusion within Te Papa's Collection Development Policy'. This analysis supports the argument that the intangible heritage of Pacific cultures is integral to the tangible, and indeed that they are even 'mutually interdependent' (Mahina-Tuai 2006: 22). Consequently, the remarkable

ancient garments in museum Pacific collections, such as Te Aia's cloak at Te Papa, require consideration of their associated intangible heritage to achieve fuller and richer displays.

Conclusions

Having drawn attention to the large number of indigenous garments within New Zealand collections that lack a detailed provenance, and the limitations faced by museums in exhibiting these fragile items to enable a reading of them by their audience, I have sought to explore other methods of analysis and display currently available. A solely historical approach is severely restricting when much of the history is lost. What Labrum (2007: 2) calls 'a more adventurous range of interdisciplinary approaches to clothing' seems a necessary strategy to satisfy the current trend for telling the stories of these story-lost garments. Textile and garment analysis enables the garment to be returned to the body and its original intention as an item of clothing, rather than as a preserved relic. Manufacturing techniques reveal the maker's thinking, and position the garment within a developing garment tradition. While wrapping some of the actual garments around dress forms is no longer possible because of their fragility, digital representations and scale models can be created to show the relationship of the garment to the human form, and to reveal the techniques of construction. Museums of the Pacific region are well positioned for experimentation with the display of intangible heritage alongside artefacts, as Polynesian cultures have such a strong link of performance tradition to their material culture. Raising garments to a performance position could lift off the cloak that has silenced them for so long.

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