

BYRON RANGIWAI

# Kākahu and gown:<sup>1</sup> The incorporation of kākahu into academical dress in Aotearoa New Zealand with an example of a kākahu worn at a City University of New York graduation ceremony in 2006 - an interview with Sarah Smith

“At graduation ceremonies Māori students often wear the korowai over the academic gown. These korowai may be ancestral heirlooms or made especially for graduation, incorporating traditional and contemporary features. While gowns signify students’ production of ‘legitimate texts’ (theses), korowai symbolise their genealogical, spiritual and other cultural connections”

(Middleton & McKinley, 2010, p. 229)

## **Introduction**

Evolved from ancient clothing, kākahu or traditional/contemporary Māori garments made from natural or synthetic fibres, or a combination of both, are to Māori, a symbol of honour and prestige. Within the context of academical dress, kākahu may represent to the wearer, ancestry, achievement, and educational success. While the history of academical dress in Aotearoa New Zealand clearly begins, as Noel Cox’s book *Academical dress in New Zealand* identifies, with the establishment of universities in the nineteenth century, the point at which kākahu were incorporated into academical dress is less clear. The author’s suspicion, based on increased Māori political activism from the 1970s, the explosive growth of Māori-driven educational

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<sup>1</sup> “Kākahu and gown” was inspired, in part, by the title of Middleton and McKinley’s (2010) article “The gown and the korowai”.

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initiatives in the 1980s, and some newspaper articles commenting on Māori and graduation/academic dress in the 1990s, is that kākahu were incorporated into academic dress in the late 1980s and 1990s. This article will discuss the incorporation of kākahu into academic dress in Aotearoa New Zealand. This article will also include an example of a kākahu worn at a City University of New York graduation ceremony in 2006.

### **Academical dress in Europe**

“The evolution of academical costume is complicated by the secular and ecclesiastical contacts which characterized the universities at the time of their earliest development”  
(Hargreaves-Mawdsley, 1963, p. 4)

The history of academical dress comes out of the history of European education where “[s]eparated from the education of the classical world by a profound religious and ethical divide, education in early mediaeval Europe was intimately associated with the Church” (Cox, 2001, p. 15 ). Following the misery of the Dark Ages, places of higher learning emerged in some major European cities, many of which developed from monastic and cathedral schools; these places eventually became the proto-universities within which the sombrely-clad scholar-clerics would exist for centuries (Cox, 2001; Franklyn, 1970; Hargreaves-Mawdsley, 1963; Shaw, 1966).

### **Image 1: From the 14<sup>th</sup> Century - Right: Citizen; Middle: Doctor of Medicine; Abbot**



(Franklyn, 1970, p. 132)

Their dress, as with other clerical garb, had its origins in lay fashion; in time, however, the robe and hood came to distinguish scholars, both layman and cleric - modern academic dress was to evolve out of this context (Cox, 2001; Franklyn, 1970; Hargreaves-Mawdsley, 1963; Shaw, 1966). Despite the political and religious turmoil in continental Europe from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries resulting in the rejection of academic dress, the United Kingdom maintained academic attire in their universities as "...emblems of political orthodoxy" (Cox, 2001, p. 15).

**Image 2: Evolution of academical dress**



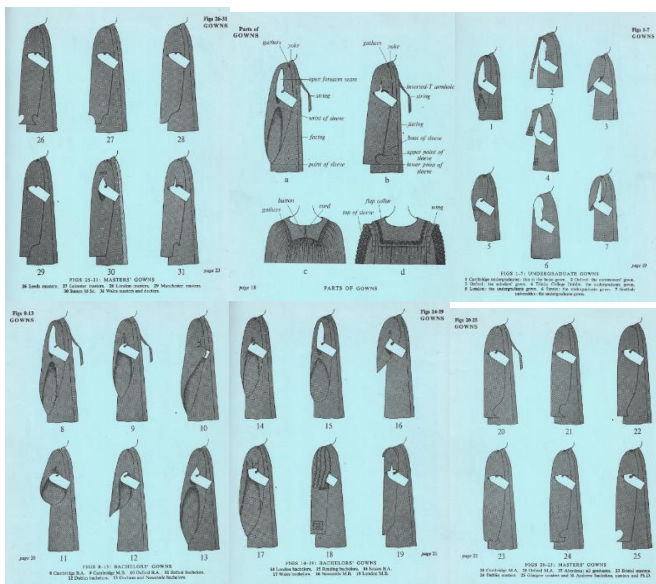
(Kerr, 2008, p. 110)

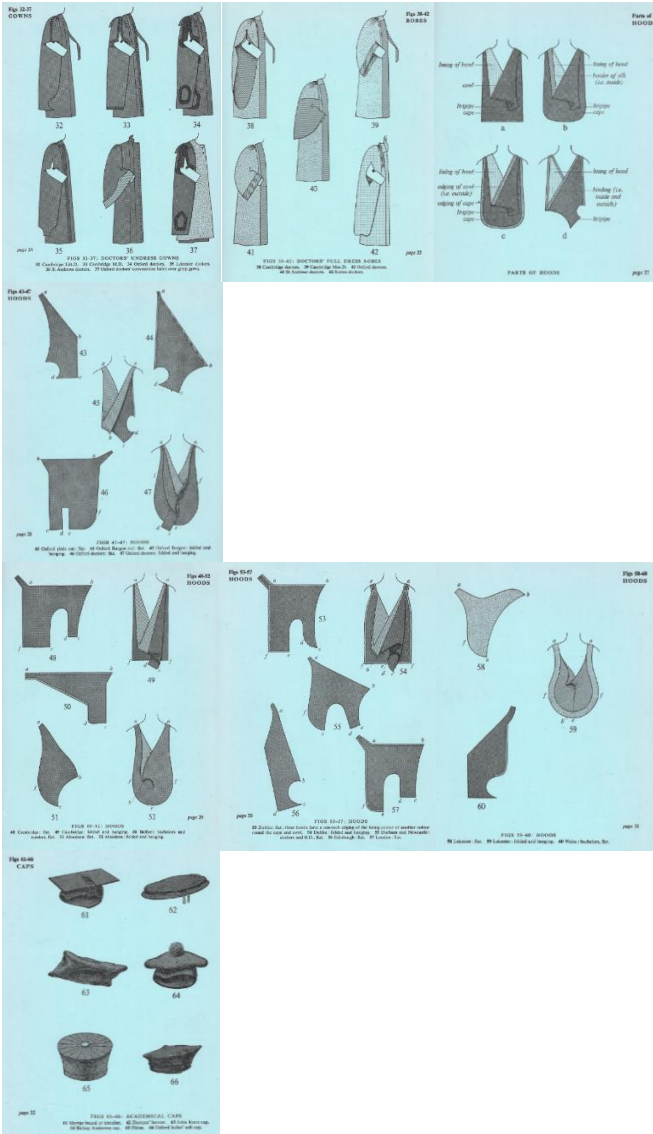
According to Dutton (1983):

Academic dress has a very long history, almost as long as that of the universities themselves. Yet it is interesting to observe that, however much universities may evolve and develop, the wearing of a distinctive form of dress on ceremonial occasions shows few signs of becoming obsolete. No matter how self-consciously modern a university may be in the design and content of its courses, one of the first things it does when it receives its charter is to adopt a set of robes of its own, which are distinctive and peculiar to it. Indeed, the colleges of advanced education established in the last twenty years or so, however fiercely they have sought to maintain

their distinctly non-university nature and role, have frequently made a point of establishing a tradition of scholars' and graduates' gowns modelled on those used in universities (Dutton, p. 4).

**Image 3: Gowns, hoods, and caps from some English universities**





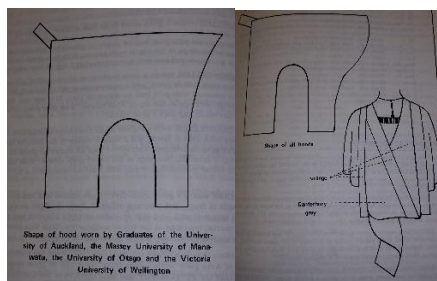
(Shaw, 1966, pp. 18-32)

### **Academical dress in Aotearoa New Zealand**

With the colonial expansion of the British Empire, academical dress was exported to Aotearoa New Zealand in the nineteenth century, modelled on that of the University of Cambridge; indeed, Cambridge-style academical dress remains the standard in Aotearoa New Zealand (Cox, 2001). However, there are a number of differences that distinguish Aotearoa New Zealand's academical dress from Cambridge: doctoral gowns are patterned after that of the Cambridge MA - instead of true doctoral gowns - with the addition of coloured facings; while Māori graduates may wear a korowai [or kākahu] over the gown (Cox, 2001).

The oldest university in Aotearoa New Zealand is the University of Otago, founded in 1869 by the Otago Provincial Council (Cox, 2001; University of Otago, n.d.). Parliament passed legislation (New Zealand University Act 1870) to establish the University of New Zealand and incorporated Otago as one of a number of degree-granting colleges until the further legislation (Universities Act 1961) dissolved the federal institution and individual universities were established.

### **Image 4: L-R: Hood shape for University of Auckland, Massey University, University of Otago, and the Victoria University of Wellington; and hood shape for degrees at University of Canterbury**



(Smith & Sheard, 1970, p. 463)

**Image 5: L-R: Chancellor, Pro Chancellor, and Vice-Chancellor, University of Auckland; Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor, University of Canterbury; Chancellor, University of Otago**



(Smith & Sheard, 1970, pp. 454-457, 460-461, 464)

### **Kākahu**

The word kākahu refers to garment, clothes, cloak, apparel, clothing, and costume (Moorfield, 2011). Te Kanawa (2006) states: “Kakahu is the generic name for cloaks or clothing. For me, a korowai is a cloak that has a border along the bottom and the kaupapa (body of the cloak) is decorated with feathers and/or hukahuka (tassels)” (p. 12). Kākahu, sometimes also referred to as korowai (the arguments around the various regional, traditional and contemporary semantics surrounding this/these terms is beyond the scope of this article), are also known as cloaks.

**Image 6: L-R: “A native of New Zealand. 1850” by Philip Doyne Vigors; Tūhoe women wearing kākahu outside Te Whai-a-te-Motu wharenui, Mātaatua, Ruatāhuna; and Tūhoe men wearing kākahu in Rūātoki during the visit of Lord Ranfurly, March 1904**



(Vigors, 1850, Alexander Turnbull Library, A-357-027; Alexander Turnbull Library, c. 1910s, PA1-o-042-14-2; Ross, 1904, Alexander Turnbull Library, PA1-q-634-41)

Indeed, “[h]istorically, both men and women of considerable status, traditionally wore these cloaks on ceremonial occasions” (Te Kanawa, 2006, p. 12). As in ancient times, kākahu are worn at auspicious events.



**Image 7: Korowai by the late Dame Rangimarie Hetet<sup>2</sup>**



(University of Waikato, n.d., n.p.)

Te Kanawa (2006) contends: “...korowai [or kākahu] are often worn for special occasions such as graduation ceremonies, weddings, or birthday celebrations and for visiting dignitaries at powhiri (welcoming ceremonies) (Te Kanawa, 2006, p. 12).

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<sup>2</sup> This korowai was commissioned from Dame Rangimarie Hetet, honorary Doctor of the University of Waikato, and her daughter, Mrs Diggeress Rangituatahi Te Kanawa to mark the 25th year of the foundation of the University of Waikato in 1989. The cloak is decorated with feathers from the weka, kereru and pheasant, and with karure (tassels) of twined three-ply fibre. There are two rows of mawhitiwhiti (cross-stitch) above and below the taniko border. Traditional dyes were used for the taniko. Black was created from the hinau bark and mud, yellow from the raureka bark and tan from tanekaha bark and hot ashes. The fibre used is from flax known as kohunga and taeore (University of Waikato, n.d., n.p).

**Image 8: The Duchess of Cornwall, the Prince of Wales, and Te Ariki Tamaroa, wearing kākahu, in this case, kahukiwi**



(Radio New Zealand, 2015, n.p.)

**E tipu, e rea, mō ngā rā tōu ao: Sir Āpirana Ngata**

Sir Āpirana Ngata was “...one of the most illustrious New Zealanders of the twentieth century” (Walker, 2001, p. 11). Ngata spent his life pursuing Māori development as a politician and as a prominent leader in the Māori world. Walker (2001) states that Ngata was “...a man of such extraordinary gifts of intelligence, energy and foresight that among his own Ngāti Porou people he was esteemed as a god among men” (p. 11).

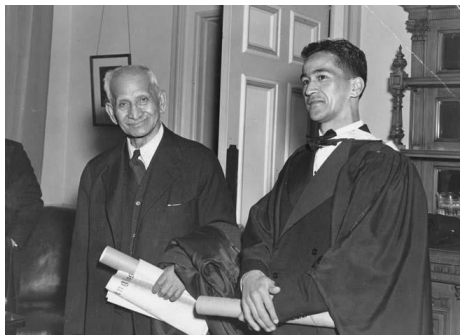
**Image 9: Āpirana Turupa Ngata**



(Alexander Turnbull Library, n.d.,PUBL-0091-1899-001)

Ngata attended Canterbury College where he studied law and the arts, fulfilling the requirements for a BA in political science in 1893 (an MA was added later) and he completed his LLB in 1896; he was the first Māori person to complete a degree at a New Zealand university (Sorrenson, 1996). Ngata set a path for Māori to follow concerning tertiary education and leadership.

**Image 10: Ngata and his son Henare, 1948**



(Boyer, 1948, n.d., Alexander Turnbull Library, PAColl-6388-14)

*In May 1948 Sir Apirana Ngata BA, MA, LLB, received an honorary Doctorate of Literature from Victoria College at the same ceremony at which his son Henare graduated with a Bachelor of Arts.*

Originating in an autograph book in 1949, Sir Āpirana Ngata's celebrated ōhāki or parting speech encourages Māori to understand introduced Pākehā knowledge and technologies, while maintaining the knowledge and traditions of their ancestors as a two-pronged approach for Māori progression (Rangiwai, 2018). He states:

E tipu, e rea, mō ngā rā tōu ao;  
 Ko tō ringa ki ngā rākau a te Pākehā hei ara  
 mō te tinana;  
 Ko tō ngākau ki ngā taonga a ō tīpuna Māori  
 hei tikitiki mō tō māhuna,  
 ā ko tō wairua ki tō Atua nāna nei ngā mea  
 katoa (Panapa, n.d., p. 33, emphasis added).

Anglican Bishop, W. N. Panapa, gave the following translation:

Grow up oh tender plant  
 To fulfil the needs of your generation;  
 Your hand clasping the weapons of the  
 pakeha  
 As a means for your physical progress,  
 Your heart centred on the treasures  
 Of your Maori ancestors  
 As a plume upon your head,  
 Your soul given to God  
 The author of all things (Panapa, n.d., p. 33,  
 emphasis added).

With these words, Ngata offers positive change for Māori going forward through the advantageous amalgamation of two different knowledge systems: ngā rākau a te Pākehā - Western knowledge; and ngā taonga a ō tīpuna Māori - Māori knowledge (Rangiwai, 2018). Ngata's words suggest that there are significant benefits, for Māori, of both systems of knowledge. Applying Ngata's words to the subject of the incorporation of kākahu into academical dress reveals that mixing symbolic clothing – kākahu and academical dress –

appears to be a natural progression as well as an expression of cultural pride.

**The incorporation of kākahu into academical dress**

Finding substantial evidence of when kākahu were first incorporated by Māori into academical dress has been nearly impossible. University administrators seemed to have little if any knowledge around this topic. However, Sue Hirst had the following to say: “Victoria University of Wellington first started incorporating Māori ceremony into graduation in 1987 and the marae-based graduation ceremony dates back to 1992” (personal communication, December 14, 2018).<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Professor Mason Durie states that Massey University had celebrated Māori achievement in special ceremonies since 1988 (Massey University, 2008) which would suggest that kākahu were being worn at these events and were probably incorporated into academical dress. The evidence above supports my assumption that the incorporation of kākahu into academical dress began in the late 1980s and 1990s.

**Image 11: Students wearing kākahu with academical dress at Massey University which has, according to Professor Mason Durie, celebrated Māori academic achievement in special ceremonies since 1988 (Massey University, 2008)**



(Massey University, 2008, n.p.)

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<sup>3</sup> Sue Hirst is Special Collections Librarian in the J. C. Beaglehole Room, Victoria University of Wellington Library.

**Image 12: Massey University Māori graduands at the pōwhiri for the ceremony to honour Māori graduands at Te Kuratini Marae, Wellington campus**



(Massey University, 2009, n.p.)

**Image 13: University of Otago graduation ceremony with graduand wearing kākahu in 1998**



(MS-4225/290, Hocken Library, University of Otago)

Image 14

## Maori cloak for graduation

By Fleur Howe

A historic cloak once owned by a Maori family in Dunedin made a brief reappearance on Saturday on the back of an Otago Polytechnic graduate.

Dean Fraser's Scottish name belies his heritage as a member of the South Island tribe, Kai Tahu. The 21-year-old Dunedin man had his family cloak sent from an uncle in Wellington so he could wear it when he received his certificate in Te Ao Maori at the polytechnic graduation yesterday.

The woven cloak had belonged to his great-grandmother, an Ellison, and had been in the family for some time before she got it, Mr Fraser said.

"It's like a taonga [treasure]. I'm the oldest grandson and the first one in the family to graduate.

"It [the cloak] symbolises me being Maori and being different from everybody else. It signifies being Maori and that we can also strive for achievement in pakeha institutions of academia."

There was a time when Mr Fraser had thought he would never graduate, having left school at the age of 14.

But after several years working as a labourer, he decided it was time to get an education, he said.



Dean Fraser wears his family cloak proudly.

(Otago Daily Times, 1996, p. 5)

Kākahu are now a normal and celebrated part of graduation ceremonies around Aotearoa New Zealand. Indeed as one University of Canterbury spokesperson said, the wearing of kākahu/korowai and other traditional wear along with academical dress has become the accepted norm in more recent years (cited in Walters, 2016). Most university websites contained instructions around how to incorporate kākahu (or korowai), and other types of cultural dress, into academical dress. The University of Waikato, however, did not seem to have any reference to the incorporation of kākahu into academical dress on their website.

**Auckland University of Technology:**

“You can wear culturally appropriate adornment, like korowai or garlands, over your gown” (Auckland University of Technology, n.d., n.p.)

**The University of Auckland:**

“You may choose to wear clothing or garments of honour from your culture or home country such as a sari, korowai or ta'ovala as well. This is a welcome enrichment to the colour of the graduation ceremonies” (University of Auckland, n.d., n.p.).

**The University of Canterbury:**

“Māori graduands are encouraged to wear their family korowai over their gown at their graduation. The hood must be worn on top of the korowai” (University of Canterbury, n.d., n.p.).

**Lincoln University:**

“Embellishing with garments of honour from your cultural tradition, such as a tribal or family korowai, ta'ovala or corsage is perfectly acceptable. The korowai is worn over the gown and beneath the academic hood” (Lincoln University, n.d., n.p.).

**Massey University:**

“Maori korowai or other national dress may be worn with academic regalia” (Massey University, 2019, n. p.)

The image below shows the preferred way of wearing kākahu Māori with academical dress. Massey University (n.d.) states: “If you are wearing a korowai, it should be worn over the gown and under the hood...” (n.p.).



**Image 15**



(Massey University, n.d., n.p.)

**University of Otago:**

“Korowai and equivalent ceremonial garments of other cultures may be worn with academic regalia” (University of Otago, n.d., n.p.).

**Image 16: Māori medical graduands, University of Otago**



*Note: The incorrect position of the hoods, off the shoulder, is probably a result of being encouraged to display the hoods for the photograph.*

(University of Otago, 2016, n.p.)

## Image 17



(Otago Daily Times, 2011, p. 5)

## An example of a kākahu worn at a City University of New York graduation ceremony in 2006: An interview with Sarah Smith

### Feather in Her Cap

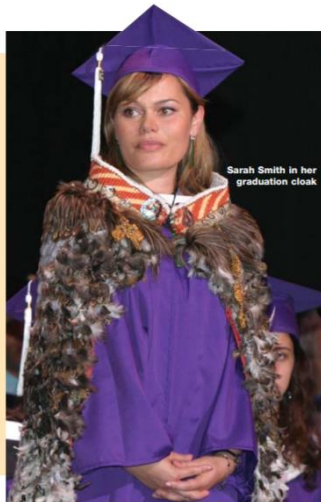
**A** determined Sarah Smith had to ruffle a few feathers to wear the graduation gown she wanted at Hunter College's June commencement ceremony.

Sarah, 32 - who is a Maori, a member of a tribe in New Zealand - was one of more than 2,000 Hunter students who received their degrees at Radio City Music Hall. She earned honors in her double major of political science and women's studies.

But the tough part was getting an honorary ceremonial cloak made with exotic bird feathers - handcrafted by members of her Ngati Kuri tribe and sent nearly 9,000 miles from her homeland - into Radio City for the big day. Less than a week before commencement, the gray, orange, and blue cloak was seized from her parents at Kennedy Airport by U.S. Customs officials, who claimed the feathers came from endangered bird species. They refused to allow it into the country.

"I was devastated," said Sarah, who had been eagerly looking forward to wearing the cloak, along with her traditional purple cap and gown, to commemorate becoming the first Maori to ever graduate from a college in the CUNY system.

The cloak - described as a "cultural treasure" - was lovingly handcrafted by members of Sarah's tribe out of wool, silk, shells and



Sarah Smith in her graduation cloak

(Hunter College of the City University of New York, 2006, p. 1).

### When was the kākahu made and how long did it take?

It took about six months to make; my aunty started making it in 2005, so that it would be ready for my graduation in June, 2006 (S. Smith, personal communication, 2019, January 8).

### Besides the kiwi, kuaka, and kererū feathers mentioned in the NY Times article, what other materials is the kākahu made from?

The kākahu has been woven from 100% wool fibre. It contains some ostrich feathers to depict the white kokota sands up north; pāua shell; three woven kete made from pīngao and spray painted gold, along with gold-coloured metal charms to represent the “bling” of NYC. The internal side of the cloak is a red satin; red used because it is a vibrant and strong colour (S. Smith, personal communication, 2019, January 8).

**Who granted permission for you to wear the kākahu; what was the process like and how long did it take?**

It was initiated by my mum, Nettie Smith (nee Norman) who asked my Pākeha father to help; so he took it upon himself to speak to our Ngāti Kuri elders, Ministers, Department of Conservation, and various other authorities to acquire the feathers, have it made, and brought to the US. He had to do a mihi in front of a panel of elders and Department of Conservation representatives in Whangārei. Dad was terrified and trembling when he had to make the case to the panel for the feathers. He felt inadequate, as a Pākeha, and he was emotional, but managed to hold it together. He made the case that it was incumbent that Ngāti Kuri, our whanau, in recognition of my journey, bestow the korowai upon me for the occasion. He was in regular email contact with the person who was trying to locate the kuaka feathers which were extremely hard to come by - Phil Battley - and for several months they were both unsure if acquiring a kuaka would be possible given they had to die of natural causes. Then unexpectedly my dad received a message from Phil that there was one kuaka that had died overnight and was being saved for my korowai - it had flown into a power line which was ironic as dad worked for years for AEPB/Mercury Energy. The kuaka has strong significance to us as Ngati Kuri as it does to my journey given they are migratory and return home every December - his wish for me one day (S. Smith, personal communication, 2019, January 8).

**How did it feel to be on stage with the kākahu and be asked to display it to the crowd?**

It felt only right to wear it on stage, especially after the korowai was taken from my parents when they arrived at JFK and stored in a plane hangar warehouse for four painstaking nights. We couldn't sleep and fretted the entire time, constantly on the phone speaking to elders, government officials, family, friends, lawyers, politically connected

influencers, and anyone we could think of. It took all of that and a miracle to get it back and to get it the day before my graduation; so to wear it on stage felt like we all - whanau/whanaunga/elders up north - had conquered and overcome the bureaucracy and colonisation that has always tried to trample on our tikanga. And it was achieved quite simply by insisting that it was our tikanga that must prevail - we repeatedly explained that it was a cultural treasure, impossible to assign it a monetary value. We were incensed at the question that we might want to sell it on the black market. We had the backing and support of more than 50 elders from Te Hiku o te Ika requesting its release for me. It was a moment I will never forget to wear it that day. I felt like I was floating (S. Smith, personal communication, 2019, January 8).

When I was asked to stand up and turn around while on stage when they were talking about my degree, I did feel a little uncomfortable showcasing it. To me, I was wearing gifts from my ancestors as if they were an invisible cloak around me, so I didn't want to parade them around! On my entrance to the stage we had to walk single file up the aisle while thousands of other graduates were standing at their seats; one young man reached his hand out to touch the korowai which completely unnerved me. I remember asking him not to touch it. From that point on I was on alert and no-one else touched it, although some asked if they could (S. Smith, personal communication, 2019, January 8).

### **How did you fellow graduates/staff/academics react to the kākahu?**

Everyone was very gracious and it made me a little sad that out of the thousands of graduates that there were probably First Nations students or other Pacific Island students graduating that weren't getting the same "love". I was introduced to some of the VIPs on stage and I remember seeing a professor there whom I had had a run in with a year prior over our views on indigenous peoples' rights in Peru - she was courteous but there was no love lost (S. Smith, personal communication, 2019, January 8).

### **What thoughts went through your head as you "rocked" the kākahu on and off the stage for graduation?**

I was so happy for my parents, my aunty Janey who wove it, and grateful for all of our whanaunga back home who had been praying for days, sharing their knowledge and time to get

it back in our own hands. I really was on a high thinking about our tūpuna and our beloved kuaka (S. Smith, personal communication, 2019, January 8).

**What is the tikanga (that you are able to share) surrounding the kākahu?**

One is that we have to be tūturu and unwavering to our tikanga and traditions. While this korowai is not traditional in all of its materials, it is truly traditional in our whakapapa. The symbolic representations surrounding the kuaka which flies in “v” formation toward the sun; with the woven neckline with the colors of yellow and orange/red to represent the sun at the top; the kuaka feathers on the back of the cloak in a “v” formation pointing upwards; the kiwi feathers on the shoulders to represent all of my ancestors from Aotearoa; the kererū on the left and right side panels woven so they are standing upright to represent the choppy seas that the kuaka and I have flown over; and the glistening pāua shells scattered to represent the blue reflection of the water; and white representing the sand dunes of Te Kokota and home - Te Hapua (S. Smith, personal communication, 2019, January 8).

**Who blessed the korowai and how? (were you present when it was blessed?)**

My Uncle George Moon (married to my mum's sister Elsie) blessed it under the Rātana faith. I was not there but received photos and a video of my whanau there with him at Aunty Janey's house in Henderson (S. Smith, personal communication, 2019, January 8).

## Graduation at Radio City Hall continued from page 1

feathers from three different birds – the kiwi, the kuaka and New Zealand pigeons. It symbolically represented the tribe's history and their pride in her achievements far from home.

"You have to show you are a worthy recipient," she explained. "I am humbled that my tribe recognizes what I'm doing here." Fortunately, thanks to efforts by Senator Chuck Schumer – one of the speakers at the commencement – and others, Sarah got the cloak back in time to wear it on stage for graduation.

Hunter College President Jennifer J. Raab told the audience the remarkable story of the cloak – and it became big news in the media, including *The New York Times* (right).

That was just one of the memorable moments at this graduation which featured a commencement speech by *Newsweek's* Fareed Zakaria, also a regular contributor for *ABC News* and *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart.

Zakaria talked about the rapid changes in the world the graduates were headed out into – and all the new opportunities and challenges that offered. "You are now competing with everyone all over the world – not just simply your city or neighborhood anymore," he said. "The world is changing very rapidly, and it will continue to change."

But he added that America continued to have significant advantages, describing the U.S. as "an old country that still has the drive and energy of being a young nation....because of its immigrants. Decency, courage, hard work, loyalty will always remain the same," Zakaria said. "That is what they will build statues for tomorrow as they did in the past."

Others speakers included Schumer; longtime feminist leader Gloria Steinem; and City Council Speaker Christine Quinn.

Schumer reminisced about his own college graduation. He told how he gave up a scholarship that would have allowed him to travel around the world for free. Instead, he stayed home to be with a girl who promptly dumped him.

"I had no scholarship, no trip around the world and no girl," he laughed. But he said he picked himself up, decided to enter politics and won election to the New York State Assembly at the age of 23. Schumer urged the graduates to follow their dreams just like he did. "Go for it!" he said.

Quinn, the first woman as well as the first openly gay person to hold the top City Council post, received a President's Medal, along with Zakaria. "Break through glass ceilings and make history," she urged the graduates.

Steinem was awarded an honorary degree by President Raab, who told the women in the audience: "Because of her, you can become the men you were supposed to marry." Steinem recalled the late Bella Abzug going to Hunter and said: "I hope you will have the impact on the world she did."

## The New York Times

Friday, June 02, 2006

The Metro Section



A Cloak of Many Colours and a Challenge Ahead. Sarah L. Smith, a graduate from Hunter College, is handed her cloak by her father, Joseph J. Smith, at her Hunter College graduation from the City University of New York. The cloak is made by her father, a member of the Māori tribe, and contains symbols of their history and their achievements. There was just one problem: it was not in time for her graduation. (Page 8)

### She and Her Graduation robe Had to Come a Long Way

By JAMES BARON

It was not the small green robe of a college commencement ceremony. Sarah L. Smith graduated from Hunter College yesterday wearing a handmade cloak of feathers and shells that had traveled more than 4,000 miles but almost couldn't get past inspection at Kennedy International Airport.

Ms. Smith, 22, is a Maori, a New Zealander whose Ngati Kaiti tribe made the cloak to celebrate her achievements. She, she said, is the first Maori to graduate from a college in the City University system. "You have to show you are a worthy recipient," she said, after explaining that her family had submitted a request to tribal officials to have the cloak made.

That was months ago, before 500 people had collected the materials to make it and before her parents had brought it from New Zealand to New York.

So there she was yesterday at Radio City Music Hall, where she held her graduation ceremony, in a dressing room used at Christmas time by the Rockettes. This being commencement season, it was filled with about-to-be graduates in Hunter College gowns.

Ms. Smith had one of these, but she didn't have the cloak.

She tried it out in a carrying case and pulled it over the robe, explaining that the tribe had sought permission from the New Zealand government to obtain the feathers of three species. Each figure in the story she told the cloak tells.

There are feathers from the kiwi in symbolic stability, she said – their feet are planted firmly on the ground because they do not fly. There are also feathers from the kuaka, also known as the bar-headed goose, a migratory bird that goes from the Southern Hemisphere to the Northern. It, she has already said. Then the cloak returns to the South, as, she intends to.

And there are feathers from the native New Zealand pigeon.

When the clothing makers left the dressing room and filed into the main hall, Ms. Smith's assistant said:

was on the main stage, the better to let the audience see the cloak. The president of Hunter, Jennifer J. Raab, even had her stand up and turn around.

"The cloak was boxed before it left New Zealand, but that did not ward off what Ms. Smith diplomatically called 'the consultation with customs.' When her parents, Graham and Marie, arrived at Kennedy last Friday, they told customs officials about the cloak and handed over a stack of documents, including a notarized affidavit.

Hunter officials said that when Ms. Smith called the Fish and Wildlife

A cloak of feathers, some so special that they had a hard time getting in the country.

Service last month, she was assured that the cloak could be brought into the country. The inspectors at Kennedy, however, refused to release it. It turned out that the kiwi is an endangered species and the kuaka is covered by an international treaty.

It took calls from the likes of Senator Charles E. Schumer to get the cloak to graduation. Ms. Raab told the crowd:

Ms. Smith enrolled at Hunter after visiting New York and teaching dance a friend who was dancing with a Maori group represented by a Hunter graduate, Beth Pruitt. Ms. Pruitt, a dancer and a brother of graduation from Hunter, said in 2002, after Beth Pruitt's 10th reunion, Ms. Smith decided to enroll – at well, you know where.

Yesterday her mother, who had never visited New York before, traveled from Hunter and the excitement of her daughter's graduation, so far from home.

"I didn't expect anything like this," Ms. Smith said. "This is just magic. I never thought it would end up like this."

(Hunter College of the City University of New York, 2006, p. 5)

## Conclusion

This article has discussed the incorporation of kākahu into academical dress in Aotearoa New Zealand. Although it is difficult to determine, at this point, the precise date that kākahu were first incorporated into academical dress in Aotearoa New Zealand, it seems highly plausible that this occurred in the late 1980s and 1990s, following periods of increased Māori political participation and resistance. While

Sir Āpirana Ngata, as the very first Māori person to earn a degree in a New Zealand university, set a path for Māori to follow with regard to higher education, the many thousands of Māori who have gone on to achieve academically each lay down a stone on the pathway of Māori educational achievement. Sarah Smith's story highlights the international side of Māori education and success, and the kākahu that was made specifically for her graduation is a symbol of her whakapapa from Aotearoa New Zealand, and her life in New York City where she continues to reside. The incorporation of kākahu into academical dress is a symbol of Māori academic achievement that is now an accepted part of academical dress in Aotearoa New Zealand.

“While the korowai is symbolic of the lived, the gown represents the practical mastery of the conceived. For some, the layering of gown and cloak signified a fused identification as ‘Māori academic’. For others, the layering of the cloaks expressed dual identifications – as Māori and as academic. ...Students who succeed in weaving it all together draw power from the critical edge, shouting loudly back to the academy from its interstices, critiquing and challenging, creating dynamic and revolutionary works” (Middleton & McKinley, 2010, p. 242)

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