

BYRON RANGIWAI

Wānanga habits:¹ The Academical dress of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa – notes and images

Introduction

This article contains notes and images of the academical dress of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa which is unique in Aotearoa New Zealand, and the world, in that it is embellished with a bold Māori design. This article will briefly explain the origins of academical dress and describe the academical dress of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa.

Image 1: Te Wānanga o Aotearoa ki Whirikoka Graduation 2017



(Te Wānanga o Aotearoa Facebook Page, 2017b, n.p.)

¹ The title for this article was inspired by Drakeman's (2009) article "Peculiar habits: Academic costumes at Princeton University".

Academical dress in Europe and Aotearoa New Zealand

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 14th 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)

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.

Sir Āpirana Ngata: First Māori to wear academical dress

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 3: 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). The image above, therefore, is the first image of a Māori person in academical dress. Ngata set a path for Māori to follow concerning tertiary education and leadership.

Te Wānanga o Aotearoa

The origin of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa is inextricably linked to the Otāwhao Marae project, based at Te Awamutu College, led by Rongo Wetere, a member of the college’s Board of Governors, and Boy Mangu, the only Māori teacher at the school, in 1983 (Tyler, Bradford, Cullen, Henskens, 2005). Wetere believed that the education system was failing Māori youth and that it had been “...largely unresponsive to the needs of the indigenous people...” (Tyler, et al., 2005, p. 4).

His vision was to “...provide educational equity for the people that have been deprived of opportunities” (Tyler et al., 2005, p. 4).

Approval was granted for the building of the marae, but funding would have to be procured from the Labour Department under the Work Skills and Training Scheme; Internal Affairs grants; and through fundraising and cash donations (Tyler, et al., 2005). The Otāwhao Marae project took two years to complete; it involved the specialised work of over 45 people, including some of Māoridoms most established tohunga, such as Pakariki Harrison, Diggeress Te Kanawa, and Dame Rangimarie Hetet (Tyler, et al., 2005). The marae was opened on 26 April 1985, and more than 2,000 people from across Aotearoa New Zealand attended (Tyler, et al., 2005). Today, Otawhao Marae continues to stand as a place of significance in Te Awamutu.

This project was the seed from which Te Wānanga o Aotearoa would emerge. It remains the birthplace of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa (Tyler, et al., 2005, p. 13).

Image 4: Wharenui at Otāwhao Marae



(Te Awamutu College, 2019, n.p.)

According to Te Wānanga o Aotearoa (2019a):

Established in 1984, Te Wānanga o Aotearoa will provide holistic education opportunities of the highest quality for Māori, peoples of Aotearoa and the world.

Te Wānanga o Aotearoa is one of New Zealand's largest tertiary education providers. We offer a comprehensive range of certificate to degree level qualifications to New Zealanders of all ages and walks of life.

Operating from over 80 location throughout the country, we provide a unique learning environment. We aim to overcome barriers to learning and to meet the needs of all within the communities we serve.

Guided by Māori principles and values, we take great pride in this nurturing and inclusive learning environment, as well as the depth and diversity of our courses in small business, computing, social work, teaching, Māori arts and te reo Māori.

Te Wānanga o Aotearoa has provided a fresh and vibrant alternative within the New Zealand tertiary education sector for 30 years, enhancing the skills and employment opportunities of more than 300,000 graduates (n.p.).

Academical dress at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa

The academical dress of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa is a blend of traditional English academical; dress and Māori design. Gowns for certificates, diplomas, and degrees are navy blue and feature wide panels, embellished with a bold Māori design. To my knowledge, Te Wānanga o Aotearoa is the only institution to use navy blue gowns (the other institutions, in line with Cambridge tradition, mostly use black gowns), and to include such a prominent and bold Māori design in its academical dress. Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology, formerly the Waiariki Institute of Technology, incorporated a skinny white strip with a black Māori design, which lined the edge of their hoods. While the doctoral academical dress at Te Whare Wānanga o Awaiārangi - a black Cambridge doctor's gown with red-lined sleeves and broad red satin panels - features an embossed niho taniwha motif.

Image 5: Dr Kura Paul-Burke in doctoral academical dress for Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi



(Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi, n.d., n.p; Kākahu made by Ann Mokomoko, K. Paul-Burke, personal communication, 2019, January 29)

The Māori design featured in the academical dress of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa is accented with bronze, silver, and gold, to represent the certificate, diploma, and degree levels within the institution.

Image 6: Certificate gowns with bronze-accented panels



(Tyler, Bradford, Cullen & Henskes, 2005, p. 55).

Image 7: Diploma gowns with silver-accented panels (erroneously being worn by students graduating with certificates)



(Gisborne Herald, 2017)

As these students are graduating with certificates, the colour of the panels should be accented with bronze. However, the panels pictured here are accented with silver (diploma), probably as a result of a lack of gowns featuring bronze accented panels. The wānanga owns surplus gowns with silver accented panels, and so sometimes these are used instead for graduations where there are large numbers of students graduating with certificates.

Image 8: Degree gown (with hood and trencher) with gold-accented panels



(Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, 2019c, n.p.)

An example of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa academical dress for degrees with gold accented panels

The academical dress for Te Wānanga o Aotearoa's Master of Applied Indigenous Knowledge degree is a black Cambridge master's gown with pounamu-green panels featuring the same Māori design as the other gowns.

Image 9: Aunty Tina Karaitiana, TWoA Tainui 2017 Graduations (Ceremony 3)



(Te Wānanga o Aotearoa Facebook Page, 2017a, n.p.)

Image 10: Nanny Mate Tihema, TWoA Tainui 2017 Graduations (Ceremony 3)



(Te Wānanga o Aotearoa Facebook Page, 2017c, n.p.)

Image 11: Nanny Maudy Tupe, TWoA Tainui 2017 Graduations (Ceremony 3)



(Te Wānanga o Aotearoa Facebook Page, 2017d, n.p.)

Image 12: Nanny Rita Tupe, TWoA Tainui 2017 Graduations (Ceremony 3)



(Te Wānanga o Aotearoa Facebook Page, 2017e, n.p.)

Image 13: Te Wānanga o Aotearoa Council gown, a red Oxford doctor's gown with gold edges; Māori design on panels and sleeves accented in gold, red, and blue



(*Étude Classique*, n.d.[b], n.p.)

Image 14: Graduation images



(Tyler, Bradford, Cullen & Henskes, 2005, p. 57).

Conclusion

This article has explained the origins of academical dress and described the academical dress of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa. Te Wānanga o Aotearoa's inclusion of such a bold Māori design into their academical dress is, in my view, symbolic of the institution's determination to make education more accessible to Māori. The incorporation of the design too, indicates that the education that is provided, and the qualifications that are conferred, come from a unique Māori space; one that is dynamic and inclusive. Te Wānanga o Aotearoa's desire to inspire whānau transformation through education, seems to be expressed physically in the merging of Māori design and academical dress.

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