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After having witnessed my first *powhiri* (traditional Maori welcoming ceremony) I was anxious to see Koro work with the young boys he invited to be a part of his “sacred school of learning.” Koro stood before the boys and their fathers, pride for his tribe in his eyes, telling them that it would be a “sacred school of learning” where they would be “taught in the old ways and in all the qualities of a chief” and tested for their strength, courage, intelligence, and leadership.

On the *marae* (community meeting space) Koro began instruction on the *taiaha*, an ancient fighting stick. One could easily see from Koro’s facial expressions and the tone of his voice that the *taiaha* was to be taken seriously and had deep roots in the culture of the Maori people. The boys were to show the *taiaha* “respect.” Koro called on one of the young boys, Hemi, to come forward. Koro approached Hemi with the *taiaha*, engaging him in a fight / battle. Initially, Hemi uncertain of what he is to do has his *taiaha* knocked out of his hand. Hemi is demanded to pick up his *taiaha* and then begins interacting with Koro. After being kicked in the butt by Koro, Hemi is angered and hits Koro square on the back with his *taiaha*. I was astonished at what appeared to be such disrespect for the tribe’s chief. I had not been in Wharanga long, but it was clear that Koro, chief of the village, was a man of status and was to be respected in speech and action. I half expected that Koro would react very harshly to Hemi, but he did not. The smirk on Koro’s face almost said that he was proud of Hemi, perhaps pleased to see that he was a brave young boy. Koro encouraged Hemi to use his anger, but to control it.

On another occasion when I was invited to watch Koro work with the boys Hemi’s father was present for the first time. Hemi introduced his father to Koro and then the two rubbed noses, *hariru*. It was a strange exchange. I had witnessed the exchange of a *hariru* before, but what was strange was Koro’s posture—he leaned in from afar. It is my belief that Koro did not have much respect for Hemi’s absent father. He looked at him with disgust, condemning his lack of fathering. Hemi however, seemed honored that his father was present. As Hemi chanted for the boys, their fathers, and Koro (and his ancestors too!) he kept looking towards his father. Like so many children whose parents seem to be out of the picture so often, he was looking for love and acceptance. Upon completion of his performance Hemi was elated that his father was applauding his efforts—it was just the reaction Hemi was looking for and deeply in need of.

Each time I watched Koro work with the young boys two things were very clear to me—Koro was looking for the young boy that would someday be his replacement and he wanted to make sure that young boy he would choose knew the “old ways.” As odd as it may sound, each time I watch Koro work with the young boys I felt as though I was back in America watching an episode of the reality show, *The Apprentice*—a group of young hopefuls working under the direction and teaching of someone with vast knowledge, all working hard to become the chosen one.