

Diary - Ngahiwi Tomoana

30th June 2010

London, the Art Galleries and Museums

This the middle of summer and it's hotter here than it was in Morocco. Because London real is just bricks and mortar, 1000s upon 1000s were in the parks stretched out and soaking up the sun, London Beach.

Things are very expensive here!

On a previous visit here to the Privy Council on behalf of Kahungunu and Treaty Tribes, Bill Blake and I stayed at a hotel in Whitehall called the Horse Guard Inn. It was about 2 blocks from 11 Downing Street, the Privy Council, which is the next door to 10 Downing street, the PMs residence. It was \$900NZ per night, we were here for 6 days. Bill cancelled his room and slept in mine which only had a single bed so we top and tailed for 6days. Our breakfasts were included in the price so Bill gathered as much breakfast as he could, wrapped it up in serviettes and that was our lunch and tea for 6 days, hard toast, soft butter, dry bacon, soggy spuds, mushy peas and hard boiled eggs-all eaten in our tiny room. One night one of the Ngai Tahu girls living in London was homesick and asked if she could stay with us the night, she had the bed, Bill had the one chair, and I had the floor. She said she was hungry so Bill pulled the toast, jam, bacon and mushy peas out of his coat pocket to the horror of our guest who immediately took us out for steak and eggs! Bill had £50 in his pocket when we arrived, he still had £43 in his pocket when we left. Those old fullahs certainly are frugal and prudent, used to living on nothing and to making something out of nothing.

Mark Solomon was here for Ngai Tahu (lucky for he was our ATM backup), Harry for Hauraki and Dawn for Tamanuhiri. Bill Wilson (the judge in trouble) QC, and John Upton QC were our representatives. We met Lord Cooke while we were here. The day we left was the day the Chadwick Trust took the case against the Hastings District council to the Privy Council.

The Privy Council was an experience. The Lawlords were in suits but not wigged or robed, our reps were. They asked us to start and end with a karakia, can you imagine that happening here without the Prime Minister and Rodney Hide getting involved, they were well read and short with all the lawyers present, and at lunch they went across the road to the pub for a pie and a beer. Can you imagine our judges doing that in say the Occidental, Billys Bar or the Waterloo..don't think so.

Well our bags haven't followed us through from London so this machine is almost flat. My visa card got swallowed in Hong Kong, the Iwi card is maxed out, my eftpos card won't work in these ATMs, my phone charger is in my luggage, so we are here in Shanghai hanging tight till we get home. Thank goodness were on our last leg, or maybe we should have brought Bill Blake with us!

O..to be a Maori in Shanghai!

Xiexie
Zaizhen!

Art Galleries, Museums and Historic Places - wind back

I try not to make my business to visit museums and that because that auld musty smell always makes me thirsty. But as I'm on the HB Museums Trust and because we will be building our own Centre, I thought we would fill our stopover day in London with such visits. We visited the National Gallery where headphones are issued, pictures are numbered and you get commentary of the story and technical production of each one, and a background on the artist. It was an connoisseurs gourmet. I couldn't get Mere to leave so I did the unthinkable - I told her it was time for smoke! Shock horror - don't tell Owen! We visited the Portrait gallery, a collection of the biggest thieves, sex addicts, warmongers and crooks who have ever walked this earth, the kings and queens and rulers of England. We visited Westminster Abbey which is filled with dead bodies of famous people in the, floors, walls and halls, then the Tower of London which is drenched in blood, torture, terror and corruption, then Hyde Park, Hangmans corner where over 60,000 were hanged-the population of Hastings, and these form the basis for our Parliament and our justice system..huh!

One exceptional feature of these sites is the way the stories are told by the trained raconteurs and guides which ranges from the serious BBC - type, to the delirious brogues of Ireland and Scotland giving their own spins on the events and how they affected their homelands. They speak from a knowledge base that is deep and wide and I wonder why we don't do this with our own history - we tend to get o so PC when we talk about ourselves and our tipuna that we too often forget that they were colorful themselves with their own characteristics and peccadilloes.

At other times I have visited the National Museum, the British Museum, the Museum of Science and Technology, the Tate Museum, these were with Bill Blake, and more recently the Salvatore Dali Exhibition, the Modern Tate Gallery, Shakespeare's Globe on Stratford on Avon and the London Aquarium. Just writing about them makes me thirsty.

These visits have been over the last 10 or so years and about 15 kilograms ago! I think I've done my dash on this gallery hopping but have no doubts about the value of them leading toward our own cultural centre in the near future,

O to be a Maori in Museum mode!

Shanghai Sidestep

On the way home from London we do a dogs leg to Shanghai for The Maori Economic Taskforce. As stated earlier our bags do not keep up with us so we arrive in Shanghai bag less and card less. But never hopeless! The hotel we are staying at won't accept my eftpos card and we struggle to convince them the £200 cash that we give them instead is not counterfeit. No - they want £500 cash which we don't have, just to cover the mini bar and other things because the hotel is already prepaid including meals. They finally relent and we crash out!

For those of you who haven't read my previous Reports, Shanghai is a mega-city of 20,000,000+ people. It is a mega-city in explosive development mode, changing by the week, morphing during the night. The only cityscape I can compare it to is that of New York and it has a love affair with massive neon lights. It is rude and it intrudes, it's hustling and bustling, it's noisy and boysey, proud and loud, mocking and shocking, arty and tarty, unashamed! In other words it's a happening place, and that's the reason why our Minister, Pita Sharples has agreed to open the modern Maori trade route to China using the Shanghai World Expo as the launch pad. I'm the go-between for it this being my 3rd visit this year culminating in the Ministers delegation from the 5th-15th of September.

Liz Te Amo is NZ Trade and Enterprise representative in Shanghai. We discuss the itinerary of the delegation in depth given that the Minister will now visit Guizhou Province which is in the southwest of China and has a huge number, about 50, of ethnic minority groups. Our job is to compress 4 days in Shanghai down to 2 and still achieve the goal of opening Te Ara Haina, the China Road. My job is to ensure it's not just an air event, like air-guitars, but there is a residual presence here of Maori commerce once the Expo is over. The most likely presence will be in fisheries that is a shop or concept store of Maori fish products in the heart of Shanghai parading our rawe, our excellence in the fishing industry.

The only problem is, Maori companies are not convinced that they should be there especially the likes of AFL and Sealord. However I'm positive that they should and will use whatever influence I have to realize this potential. Already though we have a few smaller Iwi companies that are keen to engage in that marketplace and will do so on their own intelligence.

Liz took us to the Expo and we caught the performance of Whangara Mai Tawhiti who have just recently replaced Te Whanau Apanui kapa. Again they were crowd thrillers despite the rain and thunderclouds above. We had our hongi and hariru with the group and had a cup with Solly Blake, yes, Bill's son. He was out amongst the crowd having photo after photo with his admiring fans, eyes bulging, cheeks palpitating and tongue snaking back and forth like a lizard on steroids! There was no stopping the man, he was Tom Cruise! He and the roopu sent their love home with us so here it is you whanaunga from Ngati Konohi..Mwaah!

Later on we met with Mike Pattison, NZ Expo Chief, and Phil Gibson diplomatic Host to the Expo.

We visited NZ Central and later that evening we were hosted by Liz and others from the Expo on the famous Bund, overlooking the Huangpa River with its traffic of showboats, workboats and sailing boats all lit up to add to the splendor of the city skyline. We got back about midnight and blow me down our bags had arrived at last, just in time for us to check out again, or nearly bouts.

Well enough for now, were coming in ti land at Hong Kong

Zaizhen

Return to Sender!

Well I'm on my way home now folks after a fast and furious 2 weeks of 9 countries and heaps of kilometers. The question on some people's minds could be "who the he'll said he could swan around the world wasting Iwi money when that money would be best spent on whanau, hapu or roopu?" Or "how many movies massages and ménage a trios were paid for by the Iwi"?

So here's a rough breakdown:

1. Total cost of trip - \$29k
2. TOKM paid - \$13k

3. AFL paid - \$3.5k
4. MET - \$2.5k
5. Iwi - \$1k
6. Mere - \$9k

Most of the costs were pre-paid but a few a smaller items will still be outstanding.

And that's my final report.

On Friday I will be in Wellington and the weekend in Nelson..the problems of being a Know All! Aue, te aroha

Haumi e Hui e
Taiko e!

Ngahiwi & Mere

29 June 2010

Leaving Morocco and the IWC

The IWC petered out quietly without the sense of other meetings that something had progressed or been achieved. There was no euphoria of any breakthroughs rather disappointment around breakdowns. All delegates looked and sounded exhausted. The New Zealand team did its best but were unable to forge any new understandings. We were patient but left hanging on the sideline, bit like the All Whites really, taking on the biggest nations, neutralizing them but being sent home empty-handed except with the pride of knowing that we've taken on the world's best and have not ceded or buckled under the enormous weights that have been borne. I guess that what's makes us stronger and more resolute to ensure that we Maori are, no longer just pawns in the politics and playing fields of the world but that we have significant contributions to make given the recent successes of the Maori Party and the Maori All Blacks.

The question of whether we remain in those international fora is to me a rhetorical one "of course we should", we deserve to be there and we better stay there. In terms of the whaling conferences, there is no other medium or better vehicle that we can take our kaitiaki interests and rights over Te Aumoana o Tangaroa and these southern oceans, to this country, our neighbors ,and internationally than through the IWC, the meetings of which are run on similar protocols to the United Nations. It is a metaphor for all our fisheries activities and allows the window of the world to open on us for a brief period and vice versa.

To reiterate our position then for those who may not be au fait with it, it is:

- 1) *We are not advocating that Maori should go whaling but rather that we should be able to utilize fully every whale that gets washed on our shores, around 1000 each year*
- 2) *That these beached whales are koha from Tangaroa and that's it's against tikanga to throw koha of any sort back.*
- 3) *Our tikanga dictated in the past that we don't waste anything hence burying beached whales is mōumou and detrimental to the surrounding ecology such as pipi and Kuku beds.*
- 4) *That we utilized the entire whale for food firstly and secondly for the byproducts such as the baleen, teeth, jawbones, organs for rongoa and personal health products, oils and blubber and the vertebrae.*
- 5) *The whales were kaitiaki of us on the voyages over here so we are also kaitiaki over them hence we advocate that there should be a management regime around the sustainability of whale numbers rather than a total ban on their harvest, rahui would be more consistent.*
- 6) *The Australian litigation over Japan to the world court will not save one whale but prevent tighter control on Japanese whaling. Japan have agreed to decrease their catch from 900 minke whales to 250, and to be monitored by the IWC scientific group. This is absolutely opposed by The Aussies and others who want a total ban which means the Japanese will continue to catch around 900 whales without any restraints or recordings.*
- 7) *Whales by the millions were slaughtered by Britain, USA, Spain, Portugal, Russia, and other northern nations for anything else but food, the indigenous people hunted whales for food, that's why we support other indigenous groups as well (the Inuits of Greenland have just been given the go ahead to catch an extra 9 Bowhead whales for their Iwi).*
- 8) *TOKM is bound to ensure that tikanga and Kawa is acknowledged and maintained at international levels.*
- 9) *It is whales at this point in time but there are already signs that other species will come under the spotlight such as deep sea tuna and say hoki .*

That's not to say though that we shouldn't be vigilante and ensure we get timely science and market information so I'm pleased that Kahungunu ki Uta, Kahungunu ki Tai is up and running to ensure the best possible information is available to assess the health of our fisheries.

Getting the Karanga for our next plane..

Shokraan Morocco
Kia Ora ano London

Noho Ora Mai Ra
Ngahiwi & Mere

IWC - 24th June, last day of conference.

Due to the stalemates and impasses over the last 4 days the Conference is stuttering to a halt, 2 days behind schedule, frustration, agitation, displeasure vibrant below the painted on smiles of goodwill and neutrality.

As it turned out we were not able to present last night but we did publish a copy for the Commission. Sir Geoffrey has seen it and commented on it. It may seem that we are saying very little but although the mood is hostile here between the whalers and anti-whalers, the language is so civil and polite you would think you were at a jolly old tea party. I believe that to disrupt this 'ambience' would be detrimental to our current status amongst these huge players but I do know that the opportunity will present itself sooner or later.

Yesterday we met environmental groups from Samoa (probably Owens relations) and other Pacific groups who are totally opposed to any form of whaling so I hope we don't have to contradict them here without having 1st having discussed amongst ourselves. On the whanaunga side they saw and rode on our waka Te Matau a Maui, when it was in Samoa, Va'vau and Tonga amongst the whales. One of the New Zealand team, Mike Donoghue, also showed us some shots and video footage of our waka sailing off Tonga amongst a pod of whales and he will send them to me once he gets home. Therefore on another front across the other side of the world our waka is being discussed in the context of whaling and or whale watching.

My mind turns to the iterations of both uncle Charlie Mohi and Awhina Waaka to our board in their times-"Arts are the soul of the iwi and Te Reo is the soul of the Arts" - he said. Awhina, after all her world travels over the decades, concluded -"that there are so many

people in the world that look like us now such as the Spanish, Greeks, Italians, Jews, Arabs, Argentineans and Taiwanese, that the only distinguishing factor we have left is Te reo".

It is our reo and tikanga, our arts and our culture, that stand us out amidst the crowds. It stuck out boldly in Dubrovnic, here in Morocco by our presence and through international knowledge around our waka, and at home where the Maori All Blacks toppled the flying high English team to haka, waiata and raw ihi. We must continue to develop our reo and tikanga skills to ensure that there is a surge in the uptake of all our people in the exercise of our language. Age is no excuse anymore, there are so many avenues to learn now. Tihei Kahungunu!

I suppose the real value of the IWC at the moment are the scientific reports conducted throughout all the world's oceans and published at this Conference for example the blue whale populations are increasing at an annual rate of 8% per year in the Antarctic waters on the positive side, however 300 dead baby humpbacks were found in the warmer Pacific waters. There are unders and overs in all the research statistics and is naturally subject to challenges by interested parties but overall it is interesting often riveting information (I will make available all these papers once I get back).

For the last 4 hours I have sat in the conference listening to the polite conversations amongst the nations, while outside the frustrations are aired volubly and in cussing tones. This will probably go on all day and the opportunity to verbally summit will probably be lost in the cordiality of political salves where no nation is willing to stick it's neck too far out for fear that the IWC will self-destruct. Well lucky I'm used to these types of hui and would love to be in a position to shock or even inch things forward a bit, but we are mere appendages to the real debates which to me is more about each nations virility rather than true and focused concern for the whales.

In a response to a report on the effects of eating fish and whale meat on the health of populations the Japanese delegate stated that there are many 100 + elderly people in Japan at the moment but added that these people were brought up eating whale meat, similarly the populations of the Norwegians and the Icelandics had many 100+ year olds. He urged, tongue in cheek, that everyone should eat whale meat to live long lives, even the 'greenies' he said. This brought laughter, chortles and giggles from everyone and has been the only lighthearted moment of a pretty somber conference.

As my kaumatua Eru Smith would have said when things got hoha, hard or hilarious "O...to be a Maori..!"

Ngahiwi

Agadir

We arrived in Agadir after a 4 hour harrowing ride from Marakesh on a 1970 Mercedes taxi. The scenery was contiguous with that previously explained. Agadir itself is on the coast and has been completely rebuilt since it was torn to the ground by an earthquake in the 1960s. It bears little resemblance to Casablanca or Marakesh but looks and feels more like a small Italian or Spanish town.

Here we meet up with Peter and Hera Douglas and Glen Inwood and naturally we all hongi each other. We are then approached by others in the hotel who greet us in Arabic. They think we are Saudi Arabians because the Saudis hongi as well! Well I better suss out our whanaunga over here - might bring a few oilfields home with us wot wot?

We meet up with delegates from all over the world and I sense that things have changed little from last year. We meet Murray McCully Minister of Foreign Affairs in the foyer and together with the New Zealand delegation(6) we watch the All Whites score early against Italy. As one we jump to our feet yahoo, haka, hi- five and whoop whoop whoop it up. We didn't know that the room was full of Italians till we stopped and there was only Stoney silence through thin lips! So we done it again! Take that you sore arses!

So here we are in Agadir now ready to do battle. We meet the Inuits, Inupiat from Alaska and Greenland, the Russian tangatawhenua from Siberia, the Tuvaluans, Solomons, Tokelau, Makau people from Seattle, Jamaicans, Dominican islanders and many others. We are ready to do the deeds when we are all quietly informed that we may be excluded from the conference proper as the delegates were going "in committee" on us such was the power politics being played out in preliminary sessions to this conference. But we didn't come here to be intimidated by the occasion so we knuckle down. But true enough we are asked to leave after the opening session.

There is a lot of whanaungatanga to carry on with though so between Peter and I we meet and greet other nationalities outside the conference during the rest of the day so that we weren't just thumb twiddling. During the course of the day we were invited to appear live on Al Jazeera international television in a live interview and debate. Peter passed to me so we went live for 10 minutes or so, beamed throughout not only the Arab and Moslem worlds but everywhere. This is pretty exciting stuff for all of us here and the interviewer added at the end, off interview that he had never heard this indigenous view expressed before and asked if we'd be available for another live panel debate on Friday to which we naturally gave the eyebrow raise salute. So pretty good day after a faltering start and more to come. I don't

feel like bolting for plane and heading home for the GAME anymore, so go hard you Fullahs at home Haria Te mere me Te taiaha mo to tattoo iwi Tihei Kahungunu!

The GAME..Maori All Blacks. Versus England

This morning we rose early to find The English Pub who were screening the game. It is on at 8.30 here, Mere, Peter and I cabbid it.

Unfortunately the pre-match haka wasn't televised the game commencing with the Maori haka only. I got a text from Lawrence Yule and Danielle saying the mass haka was awesome as.

The rest was a blur of diving and soaring spirits and I felt I was on the grounds such was the clarity of the film work and my familiarity with the park. Mere and I had our All Black jerseys on of course and I will be making my presentation to the IWC in it.

Congratulations everyone - Meka, you and the team of Te Rangi, Tom, Jb, Haami, Roger, Doug and the rest, For once words fail me so I will shut up

Anaia, ka mau Te wehi, toki, kei whea Mai, tumeke Tau ke!

Address to the IWC.

We have been asked to present again at this years conference which is very unusual for non-governmental groups so Peter and I have compiled this between THE GAME and our invitation to rejoin the conference proper.

Tena tatou katoa

Mr Chairman, commissioners and distinguished guest.

Te Ohu Kaimoana wishes to thank the Kingdom of Morocco for hosting this 62nd meeting of the IWC.

We the Maori people are the most southern indigenous people of the world. We are Kaitiaki, the guardians of the southern oceans domain. We think understand those who want to take whales and we think we understand those who want to save whales, because we are both. We believe it is possible to find solutions if we are all able to approach the matter differently.

Were whales are plentiful then their harvest would not seem so abhorrent to the opponents of harvest, so the logic must flow, but this where it gets awkward-we must save whales in order to take whales.

If we want to take whales we must be prepared to save them, if we want to save them then we must be prepared to give some.

At this moment one of our ocean going waka " Te Matau a Maui" a double-hulled traditional sailing canoe is traveling amongst the humpback whales of the Pacific learning and documenting as much as we can on their behavior and lives.

Our ability in this area is limited, we didn't expect to be given such an opportunity, this voyage was designed to retrace the journeys of our ancestors not study whales. Never the less we have adopted to the opportunities and the difficulties we face. This what we all must do. We will never all agree-on that we can agree! But we can attempt to find a solution that we can live with in the meantime.

We are, and you should be, disappointed that some of the worlds best minds are unable to find a way through this issue. We all have strong views, that's what brings us all the way here. Waiting for others to change their minds to our way of thinking through whatever pressures or methods is not going to help find solutions.

In our modern world we are drawn to our origins ,our young people are exploring the Pacific using ancient methods and tools, we all need to understand the need to understand these practices in order to move forward. The traditional harvest of whales was for food sustenance, the industrial harvesting carried out by many countries until very recently focused on utilising whales for anything but food.

Now when the traditional use is discussed it is though it were primitive or simple, and those who want to maintain their heritage are less enlightened or developed. They are discouraged or prevented from practices that identify and dignify them. We mihi and empathize with the other indigenous peoples that are here and the quest for respect for their traditions.

When we travel to a community as old as Morocco we learn a little about ourselves, we learn we are different and we learn we are the same. To get here I have travelled through cities with sites we all marvel at, and they help us to understand ourselves and our origins.

This morning Moroccan time our indigenous rugby team "The Maori All Blacks", beat England 34-27, an England team fresh from their weekend conquest over Australia. Tomorrow our national soccer team take on Paraguay in South Africa having already drawn with Slovakia and Italy.

I make these points to illustrate that although we are a tiny small south Pacific nation we take our tasks seriously and earnestly. We support Sir Geoffrey Palmer and his team and trust that they too provide influence far beyond our size ,for although we make this presentation quietly ,we also make them strongly and without fear.

Tena tatou katoa.

25 June 2010

19 & 20 June Casablanca and the Marakesh Express!

Somewhere, sometime I have lost or gained a day so I'm jamming these 2 days together to catch up to myself.

Back to last night. I forgot to mention that the men were cool, aloof, sharp and handsome(like us Maori)while the women were statuesque, lithe and lithesome and open. Mere pointed out that she had never seen so many sensuous young women with so many dirty old men! The young men mostly kept their own company but reminded me of our boys just hanging out together having a good time.

After breakfast we ventured into the local medina or markets to be accosted And harassed by overzealous hawkers. I had to put on my Mean Maori Mean look and scare them off with grunts and snarls. It didn't though detract from the overall colour and theatre of the markets-hawkers touting, salesmen shouting, veiled women pouting and we were melting so we escaped the melée and walked about half an hour to Ricks Cafe, the bar made famous for the Oscar winning 1950s film Casablanca starring Bogey and Bacall. We were looking forward to that drink, but we weren't allowed in because we had shorts and jandals on! Aue!

We walked a further hour to the towering Mosque which can support 40,000 worshippers at a time- it's gigantic- however, again we weren't allowed in because we aren't Muslims. Aue ano! We sat on stonewall between the Mosque and the sea and watched the hundreds of kids swimming in a giant rock pool carved out for this purpose.

This middle-aged guy approached and started chatting me up about growing a beard and carrying a gun. He made a rifle with his hands and arms and started pointing it at me making shooting noises. Between his bad English and my worse French I was able to communicate to him to f#%¥ off before I smashed him one! The Mean Maori Mean streak scared both him and me and we scarpered in opposite directions.

We walked through the shantytown streets, witnessed a wedding ceremony amongst the lean- to's and tarps, bringing splendor and glamour with all its gold, glitter and gawkers like us to this pohara part of the city. The kids though were bright, bouncy and beautiful with ragged clothes and beaming toothy language! Finally we arrived at the train station bound for Marakesh...I hope.

No reira e Te iwi e,
He pitopito korero Mai tenei taha o Te ao mahere Bono soirée, Bon soir

Marakesh Express

We board the Marakesh Express and settle in for a 3 hour excursion- and what a trip it was, through the slum dog side of the famous city onto the ancient caravan trail linking Europe with Asia. Just out of the sprawling suburbs the country hits you by it's starkness, the low slung hills bald and barren, farms dry and dramatically alone, sheep, goats and cattle tended by watchful shepherds in this fenceless country. Donkeys, the donkeys to me stand out like silent sentinels, imposing their presence by their hidden virtues of strength, endurance, efficiency, utility and kaitiaki even given their diminutive size. Children wander naturally through this wilderness between the temporary tent towns of the shepherds. Squat and square adobe houses are the only visual breaks in these endless landscapes and huddle together in far flung communities dominated by the Mosque towers imposing their influence of history.

The train sways clicks and clatters as it swishes on not unlike the Arabic disco dancers last night, hope whaiake, turi whatia, whatu pukana, kori tinana, sensuous and suggestive. Man this place has allure- or is it just me!" Everybody's riding on the Marakesh Express, all aboard the train!"- yes Crosby Stils and Nash have a lot to answer for.

We finally arrive much too soon to a super clean, red wall- scrubbed spread out city of Marakesh, wide boulevards ,swept footpaths and very visible policemen. No smoke clouds of hashhish, no snake charmers or hustlers. But there is a subsurface rumble of energy just waiting to be explored. Allah'insh...Kia mataara

Shukaans
Hei kona!

Goats Head Soup

Marakesh is divided into the new and old cities. We visited (as we are want to do) the old part a central feature being Djemaa el Fna, a huge market square that again displays everything imaginable, every kind of merchandise, foodstall and performing arts, along with fortunetellers and snake charmers. Acrobats flipped, tumblers tumbled, trumpeters blasted, drummers hammered away, beggars pleaded, kids played, thrilled with all the goings on.

Clouds of smoke, not of the hashish kind, created a pall over a corner of the square, so we wandered over. Barbecues, boil ups and buffets floated smells and aromas adding sauce spice and mystique to the balmy night air. On closer inspection ,a sign like beacon lit up the darkness. GOATSHEADS. There right before my eyes were row upon row of freshly boiled goats heads draining free of hinu and water. Queues of young and old, male and female, locals and foreigners salivated in anticipation. Yep, I was in the line like a flash while Mere took off in the other direction. Kore!

Well then, I've eaten pork head, fisheads, tuna heads, amb heads, sheep head, chook heads, calf head, even a cows head- but this was my first opportunity to eat goats head so I was in like Flynn. The jawbones were removed then the cheeks, tongue and lips dropped into a waiting plate, these were chopped up swiftly and passed over to me. I asked for the head in its entirety but dang it! Try don't serve it like that over there. I contented myself with the offerings in my plate. Te Rewa Hoki! 2 plates later Mere dragged me off to watch the performances vibrating around the square but the taste lingers on and on and on. Watch out you goats in Mohaka, Im coming for you.

The stunning thing about activities in the square were the intergenerational participation, mum, dad, kids, grannies, mates, groups really enjoying their tikanga and kawa. 1000 s of them, 10 s of 1000 s of them, coming and going, coming and going, no alcohol, no drugs, no trouble. We walked 3kms back to our room with throngs of others going both ways. About 2 in the morning we got back and crashed. Only to be woken at 5 am to the karakia wafting above the city through loudspeakers .The staff in our hotel were on their prayer mats and for about 10 minutes joined in the massed prayer. It sure was something to see, to understand of their kawa and tikanga. It was a great experience in such a short time but one that I will never forget!

Tihei Marakesh!

Ngahiwi & Mere