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Back to the future: Using prophecy to support Māori student success in tertiary education

Introduction

Māori view time differently to Pākehā. Mahuika (2010) argues that the concept of walking backwards into the future is a common one for Māori and other Polynesian peoples. According to Roberts (2005): “It is often said that Māori are a people who “walk backwards into the future,” an aphorism that highlights the importance of seeking to understand the present and make informed decisions about the future through reference to the past” (p. 8). This paper will argue that it is critical for Māori to walk backwards into the future and that our prophecies can be used to support Māori student success in tertiary education.

Prophecy

Pākehā contact irreversibly impacted Māori (Rangiwai, 2015). Before our conversion to Christianity, we had our own Indigenous spirituality that reflected our cultural and spiritual

relationships with the environment (Rangiwai, 2015). The effect of Christianity on Māori is understood as being primarily negative. However, some research argues that there were some positive aspects too (Rangiwai, 2019b).

Before the New Zealand Wars (1845-1872), Māori political leadership was based on hereditary chieftainship (Rangiwai, 2015). The fight against Pākehā invasion and the severe loss of land resulted in a change in leadership style and function, which included the surfacing of new prophetic leaders (Winiata, 1967) in addition to traditional leaders (Rangiwai, 2015). The Māori prophets rose from the margins of mainstream Christianity and extended to followers a sense of hope, identity and community as part of a powerful response to colonialism and land loss (Stenhouse & Paterson, 2004).

The word prophet comes from the Greek *prophetes*, referring to one who speaks out or makes proclamations (Tishken, 2007). Prophets deal personally with supernatural forces (Tishken, 2007) and promote significant change within communities (Rangiwai, 2015). From their perspectives and often from their communities' perspectives, prophets receive revelation from one or multiple divinities and communicate them to their followers (Humm, 2009). Although the terms prophet and prophecy are loaded with Western and Judeo-Christian meaning, theoretically, prophets and prophecy have always been part of Indigenous cultures (Rangiwai, 2015).

Indigenous prophets, then, existed in different forms and with different functions within their respective Indigenous communities as prophetic guides, seers and spiritual mediators, who predicted the events that would impact their people (Rangiwai, 2015).

The influence of both colonisation and introduced religions on Indigenous peoples restructured the function of Indigenous prophets (Rangiwai, 2015). In a Māori context, new prophets emerged, distinct from the traditional matakite and tohunga of the pre-Christian Māori world (Rangiwai, 2015). These new types of prophets innovatively merged new with old as a means of religiopolitical resistance against colonisation (Rangiwai, 2015). The prophets created movements based on their political and spiritual visions and encouraged their followers to maintain a sense of hope in the face of adversity (Rangiwai, 2015).

Why prophecy?

I have studied Māori prophecy since 2008. In my experience, Māori Prophecy can inform a range of contexts. I have used Māori prophecy to study Māori land loss (Rangiwai, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c), hapū development and transformation (Rangiwai, 2011d, 2011e, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2012d, 2012e, 2012f, 2012g, 2013b, 2015, 2017d, 2018cc), and research methodology (Rangiwai, 2012g, 2012h, 2013a, 2015). Māori

prophecy can inform resistance (Rangiwai, 2015, 2017b) and Indigenous forms of critical theory (Rangiwai, 2015, 2017a). Māori prophecy has shaped Māori theology (Rangiwai, 2017c, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c, 2018d, 2018e, 2018l, 2018m, 2018n, 2018s, 2018t, 2018z, 2019b, 2019d, forthcoming), and Māori theological approaches to the environment (Rangiwai, 2018o, 2018p).

My understanding of Māori prophecy has informed my research approach since 2008 to now (Rangiwai, 2018h, 2018j, 2018q, 2018r, 2018v, 2018w, 2018y, 2018dd, 2020d, 2021b; Rangiwai et al., 2021). I have used my approach to investigate a wide range of issues, including Bible translation and sexuality (Rangiwai, 2018g); perceptions of race in the media (Rangiwai, 2018f); leadership (Rangiwai, 2018k, 2018v, 2018w, 2018bb); tangihanga (Rangiwai, 2018aa), embalming, cremation, and the scattering of ashes (Rangiwai, 2018i, 2020b); theatre and sexuality (Rangiwai, 2018u), and religion (Rangiwai, 2018x); sexuality, culture and religion (Rangiwai, 2020c); sexuality and festivals (Rangiwai, 2019c); publishing (Rangiwai, 2019f); and academical dress (Rangiwai, 2019a, 2019e).

Using this same approach, I have also explored COVID-19 (Enari & Rangiwai, 2021; Rangiwai, 2020a, 2020d; Rangiwai & Sciascia, 2021; Rangiwai et al., 2020b); digital teaching and learning (Rangiwai, 2020f; Rangiwai et al., 2020a, 2020b); academic supervision (Rangiwai, 2020e; Rangiwai et

al., 2019); social media and education (Rangiwai, 2020f); the history of Tama-ki-Hikurangi wharenuī (Rangiwai, 2021d); my whānau history (Rangiwai, 2021a, 2021c, 2021d); digital marketing in tertiary education (Haurua & Rangiwai, 2020); and digital innovation during COVID-19 (Enari & Rangiwai, 2021).

Based on previous work and experience, I argue that Māori prophecy can be used to support Māori student success in tertiary education.

Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuki

Te Kooti was a well-known nineteenth-century Māori prophet. In 1866 he was incarcerated on the Chatham Islands as a political prisoner with many others; here, he received spiritual revelations and devised a plan to escape with his newly acquired followers (Binney, 1997). Te Kooti's revelations became the basis for his Ringatū faith (Binney, 1997). My hapū, Patuheuheu, were followers of Te Kooti and built a wharenuī, Tama-ki-Hikurangi, for him at Te Houhi (Rangiwai, 2021d). However, through the malicious dealings of Harry Burt and the manoeuvrings of the Crown, the people of Te Houhi—Patuheuheu, Ngāti Haka, Ngāti Manawa, and Ngāti Whare—were displaced (Rangiwai, 2015). Patuheuheu moved to Waiōhau (Rangiwai, 2015). As a result of this land loss, Te Kooti uttered a prophecy called Te Umutaoroa—the slow-cooking earth oven—to give the people hope (Rangiwai, 2015).

The emergence of Te Umutaoroa – the slow cooking earth oven

Te Umutaoroa is a prophetic, utopian discourse that promised Patuheuheu the return of their lost lands and resources and, according to some narratives, the discovery or generation of other resources like diamonds, gold, oil and minerals (Binney, 2001). According to the Reverend Hieke Tupe and Robert (Boy) Biddle, Te Kooti had his vision in 1886 and named the land on which this event took place Te Umutaoroa (Binney, 2001). Tūhoe scholar Te Wharehuia Milroy corroborates the existence of Te Umutaoroa in the following way:

Te Umutaoroa was at Te Houhi; it was a place where Te Kooti visited and while he was at this place there was a lot of fog covering the area at that time. There, at that place, Te Kooti placed eight mauri: mauri atua, mauri whenua, mauri tangata, mauri whakapono, mauri whakaora i ngā iwi, mauri hōhonu, mauri arai atu i ngā pakanga, mauri whakahoki i ngā iwi. One of the statements that Te Kooti made was about Harry Burt finding only “rotting potatoes” at Te Umutaoroa; that the money he received in exchange for on-selling Te Houhi would be like “a pit of rotting potatoes”. There was another prediction: “tao noa, tao noa, tērā ka tae mai te tamaiti māna e huki”. This means that there is this umu still “operating” in its cooking state. Now whoever the tamaiti is, I don’t know, but that person must appear to make Te Kooti’s prediction

come true; someone has to come out at some time or other, to prove Te Kooti's prediction right (Rangiwai, 2015, p. 145).

Within this umu pit, it is said that Te Kooti placed eight mauri stones to be uncovered by a future leader, his child or son, to restore all that the people of Te Houhi had lost (Binney, 2001). The Reverend Hieke Tupe gave the following meanings of the mauri of Te Umutaoroa:

te mauri atua: the essence of spirituality; the belief in God

te mauri whenua: the life force of the land

te mauri tangata: the life force of the people

te mauri whakapono: the power of belief, or faith

te mauri whakaora i nga iwi: the power to heal the people

te mauri hohonu: the mauri [life force] of hidden wealth – minerals, gold, diamonds and oil (perhaps), which lie underground

te mauri arai atu i nga pakanga: the power to return war from this land to other countries

te mauri whakahoki i nga iwi: the power to return people to their land (Binney, 2001, p. 158).

The revealing of these eight stones promises the people of Te Houhi spiritual and physical renewal, regeneration, reuniting of people and land, and economic security (Binney, 2001). But, unfortunately, to this day, Te Umutaoroa remains

unfulfilled (Rangiwai, 2015). However, it is a discourse that oscillates between the past and the present and is subjected to discursive modification, which shapes the prophecy for the particular contexts in which it is used to inspire and give hope, today as it did in the nineteenth century (Rangiwai, 2015).

Te Umutaoroa model to support Māori student success in tertiary education

As previously stated, Māori prophecy, particularly Te Umutaoroa, has informed my practice as a researcher. Māori prophecy, too, has shaped my practice as a lecturer who endeavours to support Māori student success in tertiary education.

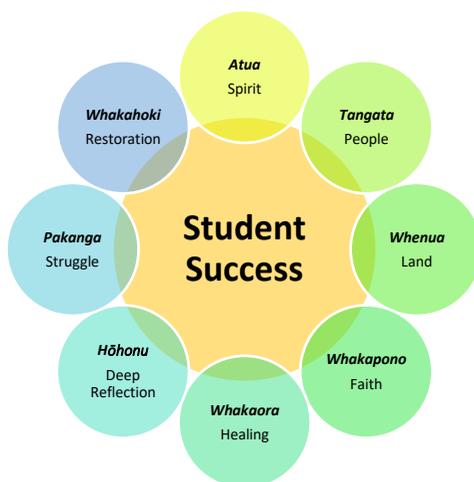


Figure 1. Te Umutaoroa model to support Māori student success in tertiary education

The following explains each part of the model and how it relates to Māori student success in tertiary education:

Atua: Spirit

In order to support Māori student success in tertiary education, the spiritual dimension must be acknowledged and negotiated through karakia (prayer) and other appropriate spiritual and cultural customs and protocols. Spirituality, of course, is an essential part of a Māori worldview (Mead, 2016).

Tangata: People

In order to support Māori student success in tertiary education, whakapapa must be acknowledged and honoured. Managing relationships and demonstrating manaakitanga is an integral part of a Māori worldview (Mead, 2016).

Whenua: Land

In order to support Māori student success in tertiary education, the absolute centrality of land and belonging must be acknowledged and honoured. Whenua is both a word for land and placenta and therefore refers to Māori connections to and emergence from Papatūānuku (Mead, 2016; Rangiwai, 2015).

Whakapono: Faith

Pono is a word that refers to honesty, integrity and faith. Therefore, in order to support Māori student success in tertiary education, trust is critical in relationships. Indeed, ensuring that relationships are maintained is a fundamental feature of a Māori worldview (Mead, 2016).

Whakaora: Healing

Whakaora is a word that refers to healing, salvation, and restoration. Thus, in order to support Māori student success in tertiary settings, education must be transformative and empowering as part of the decolonisation and healing process.

Hōhonu: Deep reflection

In order to support Māori student success in tertiary education, students must be encouraged to deeply, critically, and esoterically reflect to find transformative solutions for themselves, their whānau, hapū, iwi, and community.

Pakanga: Struggle

Pakanga is a word that refers to battle or war. So, to support Māori student success in tertiary education, students must understand that for Māori and Indigenous peoples, education is a site of struggle, turmoil, and contradiction. It is necessary to push the boundaries and to interrupt the status

quo to achieve transformation. As Smith (2012) argues, Indigenous peoples must reclaim space.

Whakahoki: Restoration

Whakahoki is a word that refers to returning and in the context of Te Kooti's prophecy, refers to restoring that which was taken away. Therefore, to support Māori student success in tertiary education, students must be encouraged to take their rightful places as Indigenous leaders in their whānau, hapū, iwi, and community by empowering them to access the knowledge, skills and qualifications to make positive and lasting transformational change.

Conclusion

For Māori the past is viewed as being 'in front', and that Māori traditions and narratives, rather than being stagnant, are active and cyclical, with the potential to be interpreted for contemporary contexts (Binney, 2001). This paper has argued that Māori prophecy can be used to support Māori student success in tertiary education. Te Kooti's Te Umutaoroa prophecy provided a framework to describe the potential of prophecy concerning supporting Māori student success in tertiary education. While this area requires further research, what is certain is that as we walk backwards into the future, just as our ancestors did, we may potentially reclaim, reconstruct, and restore

knowledge and practices reframed in futuristic ways.

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