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# Walking backwards into the future: Prophecy as an approach for embedding Indigenous values in tertiary education

## **Introduction**

Indigenous peoples understand time differently to Pākehā (Rangiwai, 2021a). Mahuika (2010) maintains that the notion of walking backwards into the future is a common one for Māori and other people of the Pacific. Roberts (2005) opines, “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).

Kame‘eleihiwa (1992) and Trask (2000) opine that Hawaiians perceive the past as the time ahead and the future as the time behind. According to Kame‘eleihiwa (1992), “[the] Hawaiian stands firmly in the present, with his back to the future, and his eyes fixed upon the past, seeking historical answers for present-day dilemmas” (pp. 22-23).

Hau'ofa (2000) states that the past is considered the time in front for the peoples of the Pacific. Poignantly Māhina (2008) states that the past must “be placed in front of people as guidance in the present, and because the future has yet to happen, it must be placed to the back of or behind people in the present, where both past and future are symmetrically negotiated in the process” (p. 2).

With Māori and Pacific views of time in mind, this paper will argue that prophecy—predicting the future—may be used as an approach for embedding Indigenous values in tertiary education. This paper will use the example of Te Umutaoroa—a prophecy gifted by the nineteenth-century prophet Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Tūruki to Patuheuheu hapū in 1886—to demonstrate how prophecy can be used to embed Indigenous values in tertiary education. Indeed, because we walk backwards into the future (Hau'ofa, 2000; Kame'eleihiwa, 1992; Māhina, 2008; Mahuika, 2010; Roberts, 2005; Trask, 2000), prophecy is the means through which we can conceptualise, theorise, visualise, and prepare for the future (Rangiwai, 2015).

## **Prophecy**

Pākehā contact irrevocably impacted Māori (Rangiwai, 2015). Before our conversion to Christianity, we had our own Indigenous spirituality that mirrored our cultural and spiritual relationships with the environment (Rangiwai,

2015). The consequences of Christianity on Māori are understood as being mainly negative. However, there are claims that engagement with Christianity resulted in some positive outcomes (Rangiwai, 2019b).

Before the New Zealand Wars (1845-1872), Māori political leadership was based on inherited authority (Rangiwai, 2015). However, the effects of Pākehā invasion and severe land loss changed Māori leadership style and function, which involved the appearance of new prophetic leaders (Winiata, 1967) in addition to traditional leaders (Rangiwai, 2015). The Māori prophets emerged from the periphery of mainstream Christianity and offered followers hope, identity and community, as part of an awe-inspiring response to colonisation and land loss (Rangiwai, 2015; Stenhouse & Paterson, 2004).

The word prophet comes from the Greek *prophētēs* (προφήτης), referring to one who speaks out or makes proclamations (Tishken, 2007). Prophets deal personally with supernatural forces (Tishken, 2007) and promote significant transformation within communities (Rangiwai, 2015). Prophets receive revelation from one or multiple divinities and communicate these to their followers (Humm, 2009).

While the terms prophet and prophecy are encumbered with Western and Judeo-Christian meaning, hypothetically, prophets and prophecy have always been part of Indigenous spirituality

(Rangiwai, 2015). Indigenous prophets, therefore, endured in different forms and with different functions within their own Indigenous communities as prophetic guides, seers and spiritual mediators, who foresaw the events that would influence their people (Rangiwai, 2015).

The effect of both colonisation and introduced religions on Indigenous peoples rearranged the role of Indigenous prophets (Rangiwai, 2015). In a Māori context, new prophets arose, distinct from the traditional matakite and tohunga of the pre-Christian Māori world (Rangiwai, 2015). These new types of prophets inventively amalgamated new with old to resist colonisation (Rangiwai, 2015). The prophets created movements based on their political and spiritual revelations and encouraged their followers to maintain a sense of hope in the face of profound hardship (Rangiwai, 2015).

### **Why prophecy?**

I have studied Māori prophecy since 2008. From my perspective, 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 from 2008 to now (Rangiwai, 2018h, 2018j, 2018q, 2018r, 2018v, 2018w, 2018y, 2018dd, 2020d, 2021b; Rangiwai et al., 2021). I have used this approach to investigate a vast array 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).

With 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 whareniui (Rangiwai, 2021e); my whānau history (Rangiwai, 2021b, 2021d, 2021e); digital marketing in tertiary education (Haurua & Rangiwai, 2020); and digital innovation during COVID-19 (Enari & Rangiwai, 2021).

### **Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuki**

Te Kooti was a well-known nineteenth-century Māori prophet. In 1866 he was imprisoned on the Chatham Islands as a political prisoner with many others; here, he received religious revelations and conceived a plan to escape with his recently acquired followers (Binney, 1997). Te Kooti's revelations became the foundation for his Ringatū faith (Binney, 1997). My hapū, Patuheuheu, were followers of Te Kooti and built a whareniui, Tama-ki-Hikurangi, for him at Te Houhi (Rangiwai, 2021d). However, through the malevolent dealings of a Pākehā named Harry Burt, combined with the sinister manoeuvrings of the Crown, the people of Te Houhi—Patuheuheu, Ngāti Haka, Ngāti Manawa, and Ngāti Whare—were evicted at gunpoint (Rangiwai, 2015). Patuheuheu moved to Waiōhau (Rangiwai, 2015). As a result of this land loss, Te Kooti articulated 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 (Binney, 2001). According to some narratives, this also includes discovering or generating other resources like diamonds, gold, oil, and minerals (Binney, 2001). The Reverend Hieke Tupe and Robert (Boy) Biddle claimed that 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). To this day, though, Te Umutaoroa remains unfulfilled



(Rangiwai, 2015). However, it is a narrative moulded for the various contexts within which it inspires and gives hope today as it did in the nineteenth century (Rangiwai, 2015).

### **Te Umutaoroa model to embed Indigenous values in tertiary education**

As previously stated, walking backwards into the future is a Māori and Pacific approach to understanding time that acknowledges the past, engages with the present and forecasts the future. Conceptually, then, the notion of prophecy aligns with this understanding of time. Prophecy can be used to inform a range of diverse contexts, including, of course, tertiary education. This paper will use Te Kooti's Te Umutaoroa prophecy as an approach through which to demonstrate the embedding of Indigenous values in a tertiary education context. The following image is a model that incorporates the eight mauri featured in Te Kooti's prophecy. Indeed, this particular prophecy has a history of being re-interpreted in new and innovative ways (Binney, 2001; Rangiwai, 2021a).



*Figure 1. Te Umutaoroa model to embed Indigenous values in tertiary education*

The following explains each part of the model and how it relates to embedding Indigenous values in tertiary education:

#### *Atua: Spirit*

In order to embed Indigenous values 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 embed Indigenous values 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 embed Indigenous values 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 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 embed Indigenous values 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 embed Indigenous values in tertiary settings, education must be transformative and empowering as part of the decolonisation and healing process.

*Hōhonu: Deep reflection*

In order to embed Indigenous values 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 embed Indigenous values 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 embed Indigenous values in tertiary education, students must be encouraged to take their rightful places as Indigenous leaders in their whānau, hapū, iwi, and community. This can be achieved by empowering them to access knowledge and 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; Rangiwai, 2015). This paper has argued that Māori prophecy can be used as an approach to embed Indigenous values in tertiary education and Te Kooti’s Te Umutaoroa prophecy provided a framework through which to realise the potential of prophecy in this regard. 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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