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HE MARAMARA MŌ TE AHI:

EXPLORING THE POSSIBILITIES FOR TREATY PARTNERSHIPS

A thesis presented in
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
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ABSTRACT

The thesis takes as its starting point, the aspiration of Māori to be self-determining and to have this authority recognised and engaged in Treaty partnerships with the Crown in its own evolving terms. This prospect is examined in relation to the tertiary education environment, with a particular focus on the possibilities that kaupapa Māori spaces and structures presently being developed at various universities offer to advancing just forms of Treaty partnership. Its methodological journey to posit how Treaty partnerships might be conceived of and made possible draws on concepts from kaupapa Māori theory, supported by deconstructive insights as both seek to question and transform totalising colonial bicultural identities and discourses of sovereignty. Current political and legal bicultural arrangements are examined and critiqued as inadequate vehicles through which partnership might be advanced as they do not sufficiently question the sovereign position of the state. Significantly, this failure allows a reconsideration of the very meaning of partnership, bringing forth the possibility of recognition being given to both authoritative partners to Te Tiriti o Waitangi/The Treaty of Waitangi, Māori and the Crown. Through the lines of critical questioning, consideration is given to the structural arrangements, relational resources and ethical principles that might rejuvenate the notion of partnership. Central to the thesis is the notion that Treaty partnerships become possible by and through each partner recognising and engaging with the limits of their own authority to determine the nature and terms of partnership.

He Mihi

"Ka rere ana te wai o te awa
ki roto i te moana, ka ngaro"

The fresh river waters that run into the ocean become lost in its vastness

Te Aramau Lake

This whakataukī provides a rich metaphorical reservoir through which to consider Māori identity in relation to the bicultural or global identities that neo-liberal discourses seek to prescribe. Perhaps the most immediate interpretation is that of a warning, that to accept the identities offered by and through neo-liberal discourses is to become disconnected and lost. The implicit reminder for Māori, through this whakataukī, is that identity remains in relation to the environment from which we originate – an identity that continues through a perpetual returning. Relationships with cultural Others do not then presume the transcendence of a Māori identity. Indeed, rivers sustain and are sustained by a network of whakapapa relationships between ngā atua, whenua and tangata whenua, a network that provides them with an eco-system which is both separate to and connected with the ocean. Thus a relationship with the ocean does not, and cannot, define the totality of a river as the ocean is not the only source of water supply nor is it the only destination of a river. Instead, tidal movements set up a symbiotic relationship wherein the identity of each remains. Narrated in and through such metaphorical whakataukī, traditional sources of Māori knowledge understand identity as both enduring and open, where whakapapa connections between the spiritual realms, people and the environment, always-already defy explanation in and through rationalistic Western-derived discourses.

Colonisation has seen a massive and unabated attack on Māori forms of identity. While the genocidal practices and fantasies of the nineteenth century are imagined as residing in the far recesses of the historical past, forgotten through celebrating the 'birth of a

nation', transcended through the Crown apologies that accompany Treaty settlements to hapū and iwi, they are not as distant as popular bicultural discourses would have us believe. The call for Māori to be included through participation in the nation's mainstream, to imagine ourselves as first and foremost citizens of a sovereign New Zealand nation-state, as market-oriented entrepreneurs, most surely continues our genocide as much as mounted British soldiers and metal bullets. More recent claims that the Crown does in fact recognise and respect a Māori identity as tangata whenua and kaitiaki and can co-inhabit such an identity does not signal some 'progressive' post-colonial moment. Instead, it reveals an intensification of colonial desires to re-shape the very sources of our identity to the rational authority of governmental control – a re-scripting that again denies to Māori an identity in and through our own relational terms.

A Treaty-based partnership between Māori and the Crown, however, necessarily implies the continued existence of the two parties to the agreement. Thus the aspirations of Māori to be self-determining, to be authoritative partners with government in shaping the directions of Aotearoa/New Zealand and the nature of our on-going relationship, crucially revolve around the foregrounding of a Māori identity. Indeed, it forms the very basis of such claims. As such, the issue of identity is a key strand running through the discussions of the thesis chapters, and accounts for its central positioning in this mihi through which the thesis begins.

I would imagine that for many students embarking on lengthy projects such as doctoral study, the topic of choice would need to resonate at a deeply personal level in order to generate the energy and commitment to see it through to the end. My own identity as both Māori and Pākehā and the questions it has raised around cross-cultural relationships have profoundly shaped my life, and in turn, this thesis. Both of my families, Pākehā and Māori, through their respectful consideration of the other, each allow the other to be powerfully present for me. It is this which prevails through the myriad of tensions that continue to arise. While Māori and Pākehā are certainly not the same 'under the skin', that culture is a mere 'surface' penetrated and transcended through shared norms as liberals might believe, there can be enduring relational arrangements built through a deep and embodied sense of respect for difference and the importance for such difference to prevail un-reconciled to the terms of the other.

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Four posts have supported and sustained the construction of my thesis. These posts connect this work to the whenua of Aotearoa, the body of Papatūānuku, the place where I was formed, so firstly I acknowledge her awesome life-giving presence. Not only do rivers provide an understanding of Māori identity, they are also the network of veins that nourish the body of Papatūānuku and her descendants. I thus also acknowledge the life-sustaining force of the river that locates my identity, ko Mōkau te awa.

While it might be tempting to simply name these posts separately – emotional, intellectual, material, and spiritual – the contributions that have come from the four posts are not so starkly marked out. Indeed, the generosity, the wisdom, the support of many of the people associated with each post traverses such tidy definitions.

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