

Tūrangawaewae: A place to stand. A Discourse of Cultural Awareness or Hope

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Abstract: Through the discursive project of tūrangawaewae (a place where one has the right to stand and be heard), the writer critiques some of the trials, errors, differences of opinion and possibilities in developing and advancing the place of te tangata whenua (the indigenous people of the land) knowledges while taking care of taonga (prized natural resources) within contested boundaries and spaces. In so doing, Patuharakeke Te Iwi Trust Board's (Inc.) concurrent responsibilities of governance and management will be clarified by bringing forth ancient and complex narratives. Throughout the paper, a Māori cultural discourse of collectivity and the Western scientific discourse that individualises or separates people, heaven and the earth, will be compared and contrasted..

Before going any further though, the reader is advised of the writer's personal and political interest in writing about governance and management as interrelated responsibilities. In truth, the writer's critique is grounded in the knowledge that she is made in the likeness/whakapapa (genealogy) of Patuharakeke hapū (sub tribe) and their tūrangawaewae. More to the point, the writer is an elected trustee and the secretary of the board; thus, a discourse of cultural awareness or hope for a marae organisation to govern and manage the tūrangawaewae is a concurrent and political action.

Keywords:

ahi kā: those who have the right to occupy the land;
tangata whenua: people of the land/marae/meeting ground;
te rohe: the area of control and authority;
tūrangawaewae: where one has the right to stand and be heard;
whakapapa: made in the likeness of the ancestors and their place.

Conceptualisation

On March 7, 2007, the Environmental Plan prepared by Patuharakeke Te Iwi Trust Board Incorporated (hereafter referred to as the Board) that takes into account the languages and cultures of te tangata whenua/the colonised Indigenous people of Aotearoa (New Zealand), was submitted to the local Government agent; namely the Whangarei District Council. The plan is a requirement under the Resource Management Act (1991). In the Board's plan, a brief history of the relationship between Patuharakeke hapū and their tūrangawaewae is depicted and, more recently, the relationship between the Board and Whangarei District Council, the Board and the Act. The intention, here, is to ground a discourse of cultural awareness or hope for concurrent governance and management by a marae (tribal meeting grounds) organisation on the plan. At the same time the imperial ideologies and colonial relations produced and reproduced in the Act will be challenged.

George Dei, a Professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, is worth referring to in this context. He says:

The fact that different bodies of knowledge continually influence each other shows the dynamism of all knowledge systems. The 'Indigenous' is never lost. The interplay of different knowledges is perhaps one of many reasons why Indigenous knowledges must be taught in the academy. The goal of integrating (i.e. centering) Indigenous knowledges in the academy is to affirm this collaborative dimension of knowledge and, at the same

time, to address the emerging call for academic knowledge to speak to the diversity of histories, events, experiences and ideas that have shaped human growth and development (Dei, 2000, p. 113).

In Dei's critique of different knowledges in the academy, he has promoted, consciously or not, an Indigenous intention for governance and management by a marae organisation. He draws attention to a discourse of cultural awareness or hope for administration grounded on the diversity of histories, events, experiences and ideas that have shaped people and development over generations. The idea of cultural awareness in administration is a radical change from the scientific discourse found in the governance and management literature. This notion that puts cultures into administration draws attention to the fact that whenever tangata whenua gather together, we engage in a form of communication that strengthens shared ways of thinking and acting in the world. Rituals, symbols and metaphors are produced and reproduced to enable people bound together by whakapapa, tūrangawaewae and an organisational space to interact and share our common experiences of discrimination, dispossession and hope for change for the better.

Tūrangawaewae

The Board represents Patuharakeke hapū/sub-tribe, tangata whenua o te rohe o Patuharakeke (the indigenous people of Patuharakeke lands) in matters related to the Resource Management Act (1991). Te rohe/area of authority or control (by the Board) is located on the south side of Whangarei Te Rerenga Parāoa/Whangarei Harbour. The land stretches on the seaward side, including the foreshore and the seabed, from a point at the north of Mangawhai Heads to the entrance of the Mangapai River just south of the provincial city of Whangarei.

In recent times, the Board's relationship with the Whangarei District Council has had plenty of error to go with the trials. There are two ways of apprehending the history leading to the production of the plan: either the document is brave, far-sighted and diplomatic, or it is a desperate 'fig-leaf' rearrangement between the Board and the council with yawning gaps in cultural and environmental understandings. Of course, the plan is both. The Board has been forced to encounter a brave, far-sighted and diplomatic relationship with the council under the Resource Management Act because the Act is about land – tūrangawaewae. And the Board can no more separate our tūrangawaewae from the Act than we can call the council the government or vice versa, which is why the history culminating in the plan is riddled with those convoluted environmental regulations. The cultural idea is that tūrangawaewae means home, the place Patuharakeke Hapū calls home, and there is only one! What this means, is that tūrangawaewae should be recognisable, especially to those of us who share the land.

In the history of the hapū, te rohe o Patuharakeke is the place of ancestral occupation and ancient battlegrounds. For example at Te Poupouwhenua/Marsden Point and Ruakaka Districts, the long sandy beaches conceal a hotbed of death and intrigue, whose darker history has been concealed from the prevailing New Zealand Pākehā/European society for nearly two centuries. Unlike the experience and day-to-day lives of Patuharakeke hapū, most notably the ahi kā/those who occupy the land, the prevailing society ignores the context of the extreme discrimination faced by the people of Patuharakeke and their many experiences of dispossession by more powerful groups over history. Even the most cursory consideration of this history of discrimination and dispossession against Patuharakeke hapū demonstrates the depth and breadth to which they are denied the rights enjoyed by other groups constituting the national population. That this remains a contemporary issue is demonstrated by continuing attempts to dispossess them of their land and resources by corporate and moneyed elites, and by the severe and widespread pressures from the Resource Management Act (RMA) for cultural assimilation.

A Brief Critique of Imperial Ideologies & Colonial Relations

The rapid economic development at Te Poupouwhenua, over more than a decade, has exposed the Resource Management Act as no more than a ruse to cover an intended 'land grab' resulting in large scale resource extraction of sand and metal, for instance, that has seldom benefited Patuharakeke hapū. As another example of this history, the focus in the RMA is rarely on the ongoing processes of dispossession, disempowerment and systematic inequality. Far too often the consultation proceedings between the Board and the council are dominated by debates on whether Patuharakeke hapū are adequately similar to, and at the same time adequately different from the dominant New Zealand Pākehā/European society, to justify their claims for redress. Thus, the Board, as the business face of the hapū, has to demonstrate that Patuharakeke was at a certain level of social organisation – tribal society – at the time of colonial and imperial expansion, in order to demonstrate that they had notions of property that were similar enough to the prevailing society to mean the hapū might be considered to have some form of land rights. At the same time, they have to display naivety by maintaining a tradition of uncontaminated change.

Despite many attempts by Whangarei District Council to dismiss Patuharakeke hapū in favour of hapū around Whangarei Harbour, the issue of tangata whenua will not go away. This is because the problem is not tangata whenua and how to define them. Rather the issue is the existence of a particular system of empire, currently involving the expansion of predatory corporations and moneyed elites whose wealth is built on the exploitation and impoverishment of the social and environmental support systems on which all people depend. The recognition of the rights of tangata whenua within the legal and moral systems that are used to justify and give legitimacy to this process of expansion does not work! This is not because there is something illegitimate about the terminology tangata whenua, but because there is something profoundly illegitimate about systems that cannot acknowledge any values that threaten either the power relations sustained by the increasing unfairness of the global market and the dominant New Zealand European/Pākehā society's belief that all cultural communities must come to resemble their own.

The Environmental Plan, Disempowerment, Empowerment & Hope

For Whangarei District Council to support the Board in their attempt to identify and disentangle processes of dispossession and domination by way of the Environmental Plan is to restore some measure of trust and fairness, rather than cynicism and superiority, to the historical endeavour. But to support such marginalised and dispossessed people effectively and appropriately the council must focus attention on the processes of empowerment, in addition, to those of disempowerment. Thus the intent of the Environmental Plan is to begin the process of empowerment or ending dispossession and domination by way of a knowledge-sharing relationship between the Board and Whangarei District Council. The knowledge part of the relationship includes the impact of the prevailing New Zealand Pākehā/ European people's cultural beliefs and technology upon the intellectual, spiritual, religious, political and economic environment of Patuharakeke hapū. The term "knowledge-sharing" is preferred to the expression "information-sharing" since it is the obligation of the Board and the council not to simply share cosmetic information in pamphlets, brochures, slogans, communiqués, emails and power point presentations, but, to share beliefs which inform the way knowledge and information are produced and disseminated.

The sense of hope and optimism connected to the task of mutual illumination is a characteristic of the Board and Patuharakeke hapū which is often criticised by other hapū and non-Māori because it is seen as being overly idealistic. The history, however, of the individualisation and alienation of land over hundreds of years of imperial influence is that the physical connection between people, place, languages, aspirations and practices have been systematically ripped apart. Consider for a moment the history of individualisation and

separation of Patuharakeke and Māori at large from their place or lands expressed in the following few legal Acts:

- The Land Claim Ordinance (1841) that states that ‘unoccupied’ or ‘unused lands owned by Māori are the property of the government;
- The Native Lands Act (1862) that established the Land Court to individualise land titles;
- The Native Reserve Act (1864) that put all remaining land reserved for Māori use under settler control;
- The Native Schools Act and amendments (1858, 1867 & 1871) which intended to educate Māori children in the language and culture of the Pākehā. In consequence, generations of Māori children have been and continue to be alienated from Māori language and culture.
- The Māori Affairs Act (1953) which declared ‘unoccupied’ land owned by Māori ‘waste land’ and the land was taken by the government;
- The Town and Country Planning Act (1953) that prevented Māori people from building on our own land. The effect of which was significant numbers of Māori women, men and children were forced to migrate to the towns and cities. Thus, Māori were separated from our hapū and our rohe (boundaries).
- The Māori Affairs Act (1967) that permitted the Māori Trustee to request individuals to sell their land interest to the government. The intent of the Act is to individualise land titles. The effect is the commodification of land for sale to a private purchaser. Again the effect for Māori people is our separation from our hapū and our rohe.
- The last example of the ‘rule by law’ is the Māori Fisheries Act (1990) which reduced Māori rights (Treaty of Waitangi, Article 2) from ‘full and exclusive possession of Lands and Estates, Forest, Fisheries’ to a miserable 10%.

At the heart of this history is the tension between the belief systems of Patuharakeke hapū and the owners of capital who seek to develop and are developing exclusive residential estates, marinas and heavy industry within the district of Patuharakeke hapū. The tension stems from a belief held by the hapū (and other Indigenous colonised peoples) that the earth is a living entity; Papatūānuku (Mother Earth). From this belief the values and practices, social organisations and relationships of Patuharakeke hapū, for instance, are produced, which place their views on the physical environment and developing the resources in direct opposition to those of the owners of capital and the council.

In 2007, the Board continues to have to defend the tūrangawaewae; to accentuate the cultural beliefs, traditions and practices of the hapū connecting them to each other, to the seabed, the foreshore, the harbour and its estuaries, the ocean, the hills and the mountain, the forest, the sky and heavens. This project of promoting and affirming their knowledge and histories includes survival from the effects of enduring battle with the council, the owners of capital, from the havoc of foreign viral and bacterial diseases upon their people, from their disconnection from te rohe o Patuharakeke, from the oppressions of living under unjust administrations; survival as a pristine human ordeal and as people whose Māori language and culture is in a process of evanescence and, paradoxically, revitalisation.

In related terms, the historical oppressions include the massive land grabs by settlers such as James Busby and Thomas Henry, the shifts in knowledge in school curricula to Pākehā or Western science or knowledge, the loss of cultural knowledge, the mass cutting of forests, the destruction of the shoreline and the seabed, the invasion into the fishing territory, the takeover of the landmarks and mountains, the relocation of tangata whenua from our ancestral lands to the cities and towns, and new food provisions. In present-day society, the various oppressive formations include poverty, the subjugation of women and suppression of te tangata whenua on the basis of cultural difference (Jenkins, & Martin, 1999).

For the Board, the production of the Environmental Plan is both a continuation of the struggle that began 500 years ago with the departure of Christopher Columbus from Europe (Smith, 1999, p. 20) and the promotion and affirmation of their knowledges and practices. Thus, the plan has been produced on the belief that now more than ever before in the last 200 years Patuharakeke hapū are better able to develop and advance a productive presence in their area of control and authority in relationship with the council.

Change for the Better

Cultural awareness or hope can be part of bringing about change for the better, but such change requires detailed and hard work, integrity, generosity, kindness, commitment, education, and the practice of leadership. Further, change requires dedication to political action and a way of thinking that both believes in gods and ancestors and critically reflects on contemporary issues, events and relations. The Board's plan scratches the surface of the impact of the prevailing market place culture upon Patuharakeke hapū and their tūrangawaewae. The fact that observable phenomenon is mixed with supernatural ones is pivotal for Patuharakeke and serves to affirm their view of the world. Visions play an important part in the plan since they challenge fundamental principles of the prevailing culture. Visions are a challenge to the assumption that people can understand the human-world relationship only by experiments in the laboratory and not in a more mystical phenomenological way.

It is appropriate for the Board to step from the shadows to affirm and legitimate different ways of knowing that are more empowering, more meaningful, more fun, and more rigorous in the kind of ways that engender community, extend culture and strengthen commitment to the protection of people and the environment. The production of knowledge by the Board is no longer a novelty, the production of knowledge is a fact, and the time and space has come to expose its suppression and non-reflection in wider society that emphasises less government and more private enterprise. Patuharakeke hapū has a rich history that overlooks a wider view than the market place culture. Consider for example gender, occupation, class, spiritual signs, political context and the environment. Timing, spacing, interest, requirement, ancestors, god and gods all play their role in what, why and how the people think and act in relationship with other people, heaven and the earth. The spirit and knowing of Patuharakeke are not represented by a set of dogmatic principles. The spirit of Patuharakeke is, rather, a way of planning the organic and cultural reunion of experience, and hence knowledge, and should not be expected to conform to a narrow monetary structure. Patuharakeke was and continues to be, a hapū with specific moral and spiritual priorities that are not found in the market model that dominates council's policy.

Te rohe o Patuharakeke is the tūrangawaewae, in which the languages, cultures, values, aspirations and convictions of the hapū thrive. The area of control and authority is the place on which all of their knowledge is produced and re-produced. Tūrangawaewae does entail not a separation of people, heaven and earth. The land is not a separate entity to be observed for excavation, fragmentation, exploitation and profit but remains deeply embedded in the relationship between objects and subjects, the individual and the collective, people, heaven and the earth. In this tūrangawaewae, te rohe o Patuharakeke is where the people live and die over generations.

Through the plan a discourse of cultural awareness or hope for governance and management by a marae organisation that is concurrent, as well as a challenge to the imperial ideologies and colonial relations has been produced and reproduced. The discussion about how ideas and practices in the market place culture impact on Patuharakeke and their rohe are vital to developing and advancing the empowering relationship between the council and the Board. The plan is not a discussion of anti-Pākehā, anti-science, or anti-intellectualism, or anti-money, or anti-technology, or anti-economic development or pro-culture, or pro-mysticism; rather, the document is an expression of diversities of truths that should be just as possible in

the world. The plan offers the council and the Board another way in which to understand each others' ways of knowing and being in the world. The plan is important. The document is timely. The knowledge is produced in the spirit of cultural awareness or hope.

The mutual sharing of experiences and knowledge can encourage the council and the Board to cooperate with each other and to safeguard each other. The Resource Management Act, the Board's practices and the advancement of the partnership can provide a more enduring plan for the activities of council and the business developers in the tūrangawaewae o Patuharakeke hapū (where the sub tribe of Patuharakeke have the right to stand and be heard). The existence of one community can be acclaimed by another. The cultural knowledge that Patuharakeke can draw on from each other could provide alternative ways to council to plan how to develop and advance the sanctity and beauty of the overall environment, now and in the future.

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