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Abstract
In this paper – drawing from a range of food blogs and social media pages – I consider both the ways in which Māori writers discuss some of the barriers and cultural conflicts experienced within the realm of vegan ethics, as well as their perspectives on various facets of Te Ao Māori (the Māori world) such as kaitiakitanga (guardianship), hauora (holistic health and wellbeing), and rangatiratanga (sovereignty) which have influenced their attitudes and approaches towards veganism and plant-based diets. I argue that these diverse perspectives provide a valuable means of analysing and critiquing both the dominant ethics and attitudes which perpetuate the exploitation of non-human animals in contemporary Western society, as well as the barriers and challenges that exist within the mainstream vegan movement.

Keywords
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> When veganism is constructed as white, Aboriginal people who eschew the use of animal products are depicted as sacrificing our cultural authenticity. This presents a challenge for those of us who view our veganism as ethically, spiritually and culturally compatible with our indigeneity.
>
> Margaret Robinson

He aha te kai a te rangatira? He kōrero, he kōrero, he kōrero. [1]

What is the food of a leader? It is discussion, it is dialogue, it is conversation.

Green paddocks line the dusty gravel road up to Taiao Marae in the settlement of Pawarenga, Te Tai Tokerau (Northland).[2] The complex sits at the quiet edge of the Whangape Harbour, near the place where the Rotokakahi and Awaroa rivers meet the sea. The maunga (mountain) for which Taiao is named, Taiao Makora, rises up behind it, while the urupa, the resting place of our tūpuna (ancestors), also lies in the background. This is the meeting place of the hapū I belong to, Te Uri o Tai.[3] This is where we come together to farewell our dead, where we congregate to celebrate, where we hold hui (meetings) and educational forums. And whilst each hapū has its own processes, and each group of the people who care for and maintain the marae has its own customs and practices, one thing is common in marae throughout Aotearoa, New Zealand: a vital setting for discussing, remembering, and celebrating, is the wharekai – the dining hall.[4]

Much of what I have learned about Te Ao Māori (the Māori world)[5] and experienced in my whānau (family), is centred around the gathering, preparation, and sharing of kai (food). A vital concept in Te Ao Māori is the principal of manaakitanga – which is roughly translated as the value of reciprocal hospitality: this encompasses care, support, and regard for the wellbeing of others and is often enacted in the provision and sharing of kai, often in the form of a hākari or ritual feast (Mead 360).[6] In ensuring manuhiri (visitors) have an abundance of food, much of which has been sourced locally, sustenance is provided for the body, mind, and spirit. Sharing

kai also affords whānau, hapū, iwi, manuhiri and communities the chance to build and maintain relationships; kai and kōrero (food and discussion) go hand in hand. This is but one of the many reasons why the careful and thoughful provision of food is an important and significant aspect of Te Ao Māori.[7]

For me, our marae is not only the site that both represents and reinforces our genealogical bonds to each other and the whenua (land) on which we gather, it is also an intersection. This is the place where the customary meets the colonial: the gathering of kaimoana (food from the sea) and foraging for plants and maintaining māra (gardens) as our ancestors did meets colonial influences embedded in the the farming of introduced species; those green paddocks on either side of the road contain cattle, sheep, pigs, chickens and horses. It is the meeting of people connected by whakapapa (genealogy),[8] who each bring with them their own ideas about kai: those who live in the area, who tend to the ahi kā to keep the home fires burning and maintain the practices of our ancestors, and those who live elsewhere, in urban areas, in other parts of Aotearoa and further afield.[9] This is also the place where my views about veganism and plant-based kai and ethics intersect with those customary food-related practices and the animal-derived kai that features on the marae menu.

As a wahine Māori (Māori woman) with whakapapa connections to Te Rarawa and Te Aupōuri iwi; as a Pākehā with Irish, Scottish, and English ancestry; and as a postgraduate student with interests in Māori and Indigenous literatures and critical animal studies, I was inspired to consider more deeply how the different facets of my identity, experience, and academic research related to, were informed by, and conflicted with each other. I wanted to find if there was a place for veganism within my Māoritanga (my understandings and experiences of Māori culture and ways of life) or a place for my Māoritanga within veganism. So I began, as is demonstrative of my generation perhaps, with a Google search:

'Māori vegan'

and what I found was surprising, challenging, informative, and inspiring. Against a backdrop of reality television cooking shows which saturate prime time television, food blogs promoting an array of different diets and ideas regarding health and nutrition, and culinary-related blogs,

websites and social media accounts sharing everything from café and restaurant fare to home-grown produce to meal plans and product-reviews, Māori authors have utilised online spaces to discuss and promote their personal food ethics. In these spaces, kōrero is generated, whakaaro (thoughts and ideas) are shared, tautoko (support) is provided, recipes are exchanged, and the influences that Māori values, concepts, narratives, and experiences have on approaches to kai are discussed in various ways. This article is an exploration of some online material by Māori authors and how these writers engage with various principles and concepts in the formulation of their own food ethics, and in particular, the ways in which some of these writers draw on the values of kaitiakitanga (guardianship, stewardship, and caretaking), hauora (holistic health and wellbeing) and rangatiratanga (self determination. sovereignty, and leadership) to support their veganism, plant-based lifestyles, 'harm-free' approaches to kai and consumerism, and 'kaimangatanga'.[10]

Indigenous Vegan? Barriers and Challenges

The point at which Māori practices, worldviews, and values intersect with vegan ethics, might, at a cursory glance, appear to be a site of conflict – a problematic meeting of two vastly different worlds: one in which the provision and consumption of food derived from various animal species is significant, and another, in which such practices are avoided and often vehemently opposed. This perceived incompatibility between Te Ao Māori or (more broadly) indigeneity and veganism is due, in part, to the often narrow scope of vegan praxis as well as various constructions of cultural authenticity and Indigenous validity. These factors have created a number of significant barriers to the acceptance and promotion of Indigenous veganisms: these include notions of cultural failure, ideas about and attitudes towards class and privilege, the inaccessibility of various plant-based food items, the exclusivity of vegan-centred spaces (both physical and virtual), and the existence of Indigenous practices and narratives which involve or depict the death and use of numerous animal species (Robinson 189-194).[11]

The perception that an Indigenous person's choice to adopt a vegan diet might be a 'cultural failure' or an act of cultural treason, stems from the common association of veganism

with 'whiteness' – a point articulated in the statement by Mi'kmaq scholar Margaret Robinson which introduced this article. A primary reason for this association is that mainstream vegan activism and vegan-related publications rarely include or refer to 'differing socio-historically *racialized* epistemologies amongst the white middle class status quo and the collectivity of other racial groups' including Indigenous peoples (Harper 13, original emphasis). In other words, dominant or mainstream vegan rhetoric assumes a 'universalized experience' of power, autonomy, and social space and therefore systems of 'interlocking oppressions' including racism are often ignored (Harper 8, 22). 'The refusal of the vegan majority to acknowledge how these oppressions work and how they affect other communities', writes Julia Feliz Brueck, 'continues to sustain nonhuman oppression and in turn, inaccessibilty of the vegan movement itself' (11). It is due to these omissions and refusals that Indigenous people may feel excluded from or unwelcome at the vegan table. In terms of Māori in particular, this connection between veganism and whiteness presents a significant challenge; for many, cultural practices relating to food are some of the primary ways in which we engage with our Māoritanga. Due to the continuing ramifications of colonisation which include the loss of interests in land and resources and the consequential negative impacts on customary practices, as well as the suppression of te reo Māori (the Māori language),[12] for a large proportion of the Māori population, practices relating to food are key ways in which we can assert ourselves as Māori; kai-related customs provide an avenue for us to foster our relationships with each other and the environment, and aid in the dissemination of mātauranga Māori.[13] If these relationships are then problematized by the imposition of Western-centric vegan ethics which fail to acknowledge the consequences of colonisation and do not make room for Māori experiences, perspectives, values, and knowledges, then there may very well be both personal feelings of cultural denial or ineptitude as well as suggestions of cultural failure directed at those who choose not to consume animals.

In addition, veganism is often construed as a result of class privilege: as Robinson writes, some claim that a vegan diet is 'an indulgence since the poor (among whom Aboriginal people are disproportionately represented) must eat whatever is available, and cannot afford to be so picky' (190). However, Robinson also notes that arguments of this kind might assume that highly processed, boutique, or specialty products make up a large proportion of a vegan diet.

Whilst this may be true for some, it is by no means applicable across the broad vegan population. This position also omits the significant environmental costs of meat production and consumption, particularly with regards to Western industralized animal agriculture.[14] The ways in which human and non-human animal welfare are related or entangled in this industrialized system are also sidelined in arguments of this kind.[15] It must be noted, however, that the limited access to and the non-affordability of foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables as well as issues concerning land ownership and the barriers to cultivating household and communal gardens or accessing traditional crops are ongoing challenges (amongst others) that many Indigenous people face. Veganism might indeed have come to be viewed as an exclusive or privileged choice for these structural reasons.

Difficulties also arise when attempts are made to construct veganism as an ethic that aligns with Indigenous customary practices and traditional narratives (Robinson 191). In Te Ao Māori, there are numerous references to various animal species – including different manu (birds), ika (fish), mātaitai (shellfish and other foods obtained from the sea) as precious sources of food and resources within pūrākau and other narrative forms;[16]and the means by which humans came to be able to utilise these species for kai and materials, are described in our origin narratives – our whakapapa.[17] The continued collection and management of many of these food sources is seen as one means by which kaitiakitanga (guardianship and care) of lands and natural resources is asserted and maintained. In addition, taonga (treasured objects) created from animal materials such as kahu puhuruhuru (feather cloaks), and tools and body adornments created from animal bone carry with them narratives, histories, and knowledges which have often been passed down through generations. Veganism might therefore appear to be incompatible with these narratives and practices. However, embedded within these pūrākau are 'epistemological constructs, cultural codes, and worldviews that are fundamental to our identity as Māori' (Lee 1). These narratives contain whakapapa or layers of genealogical information, which explain how all things in the world are related – animate, inanimate, human, and non-human. In this way, whilst customary knowledge and practices do refer to and involve the death and use of other animals, these knowledges and practices are also imbued with reminders of the ways in which we are related to one another: whakapapa mitigates the reduction of these narratives to

simplistic exemplars of meat consumption and animal exploitation. In light of our whakapapa, our connectedness, there is scope for conceptualising our relationships with other animals, the environments in which we share, and the wider world in nuanced and complex ways. As Robinson writes with regards to the legends of the Mi'kmaq peoples, when animals are depicted as 'siblings to humanity' this offers 'an alternative to the colonial stewardship/domination model of human-animal relations' (189); a similar statement can be made with regards to Māori conceptualizations of human-animal relations. In this way, Māori narratives and knowledges and the practices associated with them, can problematise Western hierarchical notions of the dominant human subject over the passive animal object through their acknowledgement of our genealogical connections. Kaimangatanga is but one example of an ethical framework that might result from this worldview.[18]

Finally, the perception of veganism as an extreme departure or 'alien' diet which seeks to subsume or eradicate unique and celebrated food cultures is also a significant barrier to the acceptance and promotion of Indigenous veganisms. Again, Robinson provides a valid rebuttal to challenges of this kind with her reminder that 'the eating habits of Aboriginal people have already been colonized' (170) – the negative consequences of which have been well documented. In Aotearoa, for example, as a result of the colonial agenda, land dispossession and diminished access to mahinga kai sites (food-gathering and cultivation areas) and nutritious, 'culturally appropriate,' and sustainably produced kai has had adverse health outcomes for many Māori (Shirley 58). Land dispossession and European influences caused significant changes in the diets of many Māori, and a clear link between land dispossession and health-related death rates has been identified (Durie, 1998). Later, the introduction and proliferation of European methods of intensive farming of introduced species such as pigs, sheep, and cattle were also partly responsible for the drastic reduction in employment opportunities for tangata whenua and were catalysts for the movement of many from their iwi, hapū and whānau lands into cities (Waitangi Tribunal, 2004). Urban living also prompted further changes in diets and a 'new reliance' on fast food outlets and supermarkets have created further issues for Māori health (Shirley 59).

Numerous Māori-led community, iwi, hapū, whānau, and marae-based initiatives, social networks, culinary enterprises, and research projects in various educational institutions are already underway in Aotearoa which aim to continue and revitalise food-related practices, gather and share knowledge regarding the sustainable use of endemic plant and animal species, promote home and/or community grown produce, and incorporate healthy food options in homes, marae, communities, schools and other organisations around the country.[19] These initiatives cover rural, urban, community, public and domestic spaces. Despite the variety of kaupapa espoused by these initiaves and movements, some common threads are identifiable: namely, the celebration of distinctly Māori ways of knowing, understanding and relating to the world. Concepts already mentioned such as manaakitanga (reciprocal hospitality), kaitiakitanga (environmental stewardship), and whakapapa (genealogical knowledge and kinship), as well as hauora (holistic health and wellbeing) and tino rangatiratanga (self determination and absolute sovereignty) form the foundations for the promotion of holistically healthy, environmentally sustainable, and in many ways, decolonial diets.[20]

It is within this wider movement, that 'kaimangatanga' or 'veganism', and other plant-based lifestyles and ethics, have been described, discussed, and promoted in different ways.[21] Tūrangawaewae Marae in Ngāruawāhia, for example, recently opted to include vegan options for visitors in order to help 'shift the eating habits of Māori' ('Scrambled Tofu Burritos', 2018); and in the same year, Waimirirangi Koopu-Stone (Ngātiwai, Tainui, Te Whānau-ā-Apanui, Te Arawa) and Tamoko-O-Te-Rangi Ormsby (Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāi Te Rangi) launched the 'Pipiri ki a Papatūānuku'(June for the Earth) initiative to encourage people to consume more 'earth-consciously' by reducing plastic use, reycling and reusing items, and adopting dairy-free, meat-free, and 'tūkino-free' ('harm' free, non-industrial and non-intensive) kai options.[22] Further examples of these kinds of whakaaro (ideas) and kōrero (dialogue and discussion) can be found in the online arena on websites, blogs, and social media.[23]

Being Māori and vegan: the role of Māori values in vegan ethics

That there is a dissonance between Te Ao Māori and veganism, or perhaps more accurately, a *perceived* dissonance between Te Ao Māori and veganism, is addressed by the majority of the authors in their respective online media: many of their statements in this regard align with the barriers to indigenous veganisms mentioned previously. Whilst these authors acknowledge the ways in which veganism contrasts with customary practices, they also explain that Māori values and principles nevertheless help to form the foundation for their vegan ethics.

Jon Pawson (Ngāti Porou), for example, in his podcast regarding veganism and ethnicity, notes that one factor which makes it seem difficult to reconcile his veganism with his 'taha Māori' or 'Māori side', is that many of the 'traditional foodstuffs' of his ancestors were derived from animals. He refers to kererū (wood pigeon), tītī (muttonbird) and kaimoana (food from the sea), as well as artforms such as whakairo (carving) in whale bone, or in more recent times, cattle bone. These traditions, however, do not prevent him from drawing on the numerous 'ways of relating to the world' passed down from his ancestors to inform his vegan ethics.

Te Rata Hikairo (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Maru, Ngāti Whātua, Ngāti Tai), founder of Corned Buffet – a vegan and vegetarian-themed Facebook page aimed at Māori and Polynesian audiences, makes a similar acknowledgement of 'traditional' practices. In his blog entry 'Māori and Vegan' (an interview-style post with journalist Amy Whiting) he states: 'there is no denying that birds and fish are an integral part of the traditional Māori diet' though, like Pawson, he does not entertain the notion that his Māoritanga and veganism are therefore incompatible, and he mentions the prominence of plant foods in the diets of his ancestors also. When asked how he would respond to the suggestion that one cannot be a vegan and Māori, he states: 'I'd completely disagree and say "actually if one wants to preserve our culture, our resources, our whenua (land), our atua, our fish, our birds, our hauora (health) and our whānau (family) as Māori our only option is to be vegan"'; 'we can take guidance from our culture', he contends, before describing how specific principles within Te Ao Māori (such as kaitiakitanga) inform his own vegan ethics. He also notes that his whānau, whom he lives with and cooks for often, is

supportive of his lifestyle; he writes: 'my whānau appreciate that I eat a plant-based diet […] and enjoy eating plant-based food with me.'

Other authors simply note that identifying as Māori and vegan might seem a deviation from the cultural 'norm'. April-Tui Buckley in an essay published on vegan website *Ecorazzi*, acknowledges that crediting her Māori culture and childhood upbringing on a farm for her current vegan views might seem a 'very weird' thing to do after stating earlier on that 'by no means is the Māori culture vegan.' However, in a similar vein to the other authors, Buckley does not regard this apparent conflict as reason enough to consider her Māoritanga and veganism as separate facets of her identity. 'My culture also played its role in how I live as a vegan today,' she writes; 'Māori culture is steeped in respect for the land the sea, the plants the people alive or dead. I believe I took lessons […] from my people and extended it to include animals.'

Raniera Rewiri (Te Whakatōhea, Te Arawa, Tūhoe, Ngāpuhi) author of vegan guide book *Tupuānuku* and known to a large following on social media as The Plant-based Māori, also mentions the apparent dissonance between being Māori and being vegan. During an interview on his vegan market stalls and aspirations to open a vegan cafe in Whakatane, Rewiri states that his being a male Māori vegan is a 'shock to a lot of people'; he explains that he chose the name 'Tupuānuku' for his publication and small business enterprise as a means by which people could connect to his plant-based kaupapa, and so that other Māori might feel 'accepted into this lifestyle'; 'Tupuānuku' is one of the nine stars in the Matariki constellation, the rising of which occurs during the middle of the European calendar, and signifies the beginning of a new year in Te Ao Māori; this star relate specifically to kai that is grown in the ground.

Rewiri also utilises te reo Māori throughout *Tupuānuku;* the mihi (acknowledgements) and chapter headings are provided in English and Māori and a glossary of Māori terms including 'whakapapa', whānau', and 'hauora' is also included. These examples demonstrate that Te Ao Māori need not be considered as a direct contrast to veganism: rather various aspects can be drawn upon to inform one's vegan ethics. Various threads can also be woven in to form the fabric of a distinct 'Māori veganism' or kaimangatanga, and these threads allow others with

Māori whakapapa to relate to and understand why others have adopted those ethical frameworks.

One such thread is the principle of kaitiakitanga, which involves care and guardianship; this is one of the central pou or pillars of Te Ao Māori. Sir Pita Sharples, former Minister of Māori Affairs, describes kaitiakitanga as 'a value promoted by our tipuna to maintain the delicate balance between tangata whenua and the natural environment': this stems from the need to 'protect the mauri or the physical life force of everything in the natural environment' (vii-x). This concept and value is prominent in the online material surveyed, and is both explicitly and implicitly referred to. The authors make compelling cases for its importance and application with regards to their own vegan ethics and in particular, the ways in which kaitkiakitanga relates to two primary concerns within mainstream veganism: the exploitation of animals, and the detrimental effects of industrialised agriculture on the environment.

Te Rata Hikairo describes kaitiakitanga as a driving force behind his veganism and he extends the notion of guardianship to the absolute protection of all creatures from harm and death. He writes: 'our culture denotes human kind as kaitiaki or sacred guardians of the earth, forests, seas, rivers […] how can one be the guardian of fish and birds', he asks, 'and slaughter them to eat?' He goes on to say that 'being vegan means that all those precious animals who our atua charge us with looking after and caring for properly might just also get a chance to survive and even thrive' and he argues against their slaughter and consumption. Hikairo also explains how kaitiakitanga prompts him to consider the welfare of Papatūānuku, the earth mother, and his own environmental impact when making choices regarding kai and he draws upon the concept and practice of 'rāhui'or prohibition as a way of refraining from the consumption of animals. 'Conservation rāhui' are a particular type of rāhui used to protect products of the land and water including berries, birds, fish, cultivated crops, fern root, flax and places where red ochre was obtained (Mead 197).[24] Hikairo suggests applying this concept to assist in the conservation of bird and fish species that are under threat due to environmental degradation. 'It makes sense in modern times,' he writes, 'to have a permanent rāhui on the collection and

eating of birds and fish in our traditional diet due to modern pollution […] such [a] rāhui would be in line with our role as kaitiaki.'

Jon Pawson also discusses rāhui. He notes that whilst his ancestors consumed flesh, 'they also understood the idea of sustanability' and that concepts such as rāhui were placed on areas of the taiao (environment) for spiritual and material reasons. Given this customary practice, Pawson contends that if his ancestors were faced with the environmental and ecological issues at stake in Aotearoa currently, 'for the continued survival of their people, of Papatūānuku the mother earth and the creatures of the world' they would have 'placed a rāhui on the consumption of ngā kararehe, ngā tini a Tangaroa, ngā manu, ngā aitanga pēpeke; that is, animals, sea life, birds, and insect life.' He then explains that he has placed a rāhui over animal consumption in his own life, and that this is a rejection both of the environmental status quo and of 'imperialist, Western dietary habits'.

April-Tui Buckley, whilst not using the term 'kaitiakitanga' specifically, explains the importance of environmental guardianship and acting for the benefit of those that inherit the land. 'In our culture we are considered caretakers of the land, we govern it and care for it for future generations,' she writes. She states that 'respect for the land' was 'central' to her upbringing and that these values contribute to how she lives as a vegan today. Similarly, Raniera Rewiri explains that when it comes to kai, there are more things at play than 'just nutrients and taste;' rather, a 'connection to the environment' and whakapapa are vital. He also mentions that learning the extent to which intensive animal agriculture has impacted on the environment was a catalyst in his decision to 'refuse to support or contribute to the meat and dairy industries that have such a negative, global impact on many levels' (*Tupuānuku* 6).

The concept of hauora, or holistic health and wellbeing, is also acknowledged as a guiding influence on attitudes towards dietary choices. Rewiri explains that a number of Indigenous cultures have a holistic approach to health which considers food as 'more than merely a fuel for physical sustenance' (*Tupuānuku* 9). He notes: 'traditional methods of food harvesting, preparation and consumption can often serve physical, spiritual, emotional and social purposes for an individual and community' (*Tupuānuku* 9). During the interview on Tumeke F.M., Rewiri

explains this holistic wellbeing in terms of the branches of hauora in Te Ao Māori: 'it's emotional, it's physical, it's spirtual, and as Māori, that's something that we believe in eh? Te taha wairua, te taha tīnana, te taha hinengaro. It's bigger than just kai.' For Rewiri, the adoption of a plant-based diet contributed to his hauora in all of these areas and he explains in detail in *Tupuānuku*, the ways in which veganism has done this:

> I feel that my health is thriving, my state of mind and consciousness has elevated, my strength in the gym remains consistent, my energy levels are high, my sleep has improved and my overall state of being is enhanced. I have cultivated more compassion for all living species and I have a much deeper connection with the environment. These types of benefits have allowed me to grow, develop myself as a person, utilise my strengths and see life through a broader perspective… (6)

Hikairo takes a similar viewpont. When asked what his favorite aspect of veganism is, he replies: '[The] food is tasty and fulfilling and nourishing – not just for my tīnana (body) but for my wairua [spirit] too.'

Interestingly, Hikairo links this notion of physical and spiritual health and wellbeing to the concept of rangatiratanga. Defined by Hirini Moko Mead as sovereignty, chieftainship, leadership, self-determination, and self-management in political terms, and as qualities of leadership and chieftainship over a social group in individual terms (366), rangatiratanga encompasses control over one's individual decision-making as well as the provision of leadership at whānau, hapū, and iwi level. Hikairo draws upon this concept and suggests: 'if we believe in our rangatiratanga over our health […] our only option as Māori is to be vegan.' He also asserts that moving to a plant-based diet is a decolonial act, and he contends that in order to be free from colonial oppression which has included the infiltration of diets that have lead to poor health for many Māori, a vegan diet should be adopted.

Pawson follows a similar trajectory, though he uses the term 'tino rangatiratanga' or *absolute* sovereignty, autonomy, and self-determination, with regards to his views of veganism. He explains: 'I definitely take it [veganism] as an act of decolonization. A way of exerting my tino rangatiratanga, my sovereignty over my own life and taking control of at least one part of

it.' In this way, tino rangatiratanga allows for a vegan ethic that addresses the consequences of colonisation for Māori, while decolonizing the mind of the dominant anthropocentric, hierarchical, and exploitative ideology that underpins the Western conceptualization of 'the animal as object'. As Pawson explains:

> Veganism […] forced me to see that I'd been colonized by the animal agriculture industries, the meat and dairy giants, to see the world in a particular way. […] It forced me to see that at least one part of the prevailing cultural norm is a lie, and if one part is false, there may be other parts which are also. In many ways decolonization is a mental act, an alteration of the lens with which you view the world.

He kōrero, he kōrero, he kōrero

To adopt a form of veganism – a plant-based lifestyle and ethics – that acknowledges, is based upon, and celebrates Te Ao Māori, is a break from the dominant and from the status quo and but also an act of decolonialism. It is a way to reclaim sovereignty and exercise individual choice. And finally, it is a means by which collective power and community may be built; this is evident in the existence of online forums and comment threads on Māori-based vegan and plant-based social media accounts.[25]

Discussions regarding the intersections of vegan ethics, Indigeneity and Māoritanga and ideas about plant-based kai, and kaimangatanga are already occurring within Māori families and communities and the outcomes and possiblities that arise from this kōrero are potent and unique. There are karakia or prayers that refer to the sustenance provided by plant-based kai, and waiata (songs) which are based upon the care and protection of animal species and the environment. There are also resources and recipes for 'veganizing' traditional foods such as hangi (food cooked in the earth), and boil-up (a popular meat-based dish which usually includes plants such as pūha [sowthistle], potatoes, and watercress). More generally (that is, in spaces, forums, and initiatives which are not necessarily vegan but which promote customary kai-related practices), there are resources for the utilization of the Māori lunar calendar for gardening,[26] kaupapa Māori approaches to soil health,[27] and others which provide information on endemic

plant species our ancestors used not only for kai, but for rongoā or healing properties, as well information about the whakapapa or origins of foods and why certain foods may be harmful or helpful to Māori.[28] It is vital, though, in this context, that any kōrero regarding veganism, plant-based kai or 'kaimangatanga' and any challenges or conflicts that arise with regards to customary and contemporary practices involving nonhuman animals, must be conducted by and within Māori communities. Otherwise, the imposition of a vegan ethics without the knowledge, understanding, or respect Māori experiences, narratives, concepts, and knowledges, can only repeat the role of yet another colonial project.

Knowledge and experience from tangata whenua[29] regarding plant-based kai ethics, food sovereignty, and decolonial diets based on Māori principles such as kaitiakitanga, hauora, manaakitanga, whakapapa, and tino rangatiratanga (amongst others) can provide new and culturally-informed perspectives on issues crucial to human-animal and environmental concerns: intensive animal agricultural practices and the rationales for these, the shortcomings of Western veganism and the barriers and challenges to veganism faced by certain groups, as well as discussions about alternative plant-proteins and the many existing and developing issues regarding genetic modification and lab-grown meat and so on.

Harper notes that veganism should not be understood as one overarching phenomenon: rather it is 'composed of many diffferent subcultures and philosophies throughout the world, ranging from punk strict vegans for animal rights, to people who are dietary vegans for personal health reasons, to people who practice veganism for religious and spiritual reasons' (5). To this I would add that there are Indigenous veganisms too, and that kaimangatanga is but one iteration of these, with its own variations or branches. Some might even choose to refrain from using the 'vegan' label entirely:[30] this is my reason for refraining from presenting 'veganism' and 'kaimangatanga' as simple equivalents. Whilst some may see the word, 'kaimangatanga', for example, as a translation of the word 'veganism' or 'vegetarianism', others, including myself, assert that kaimangatanga stands on its own as a decolonial food ethic. Whilst there will indeed be similarities between veganism and kaimangatanga, it is my view that the latter term can accommodate a more nuanced approach towards kai-related practices and the creation and

preservation of taonga, and one that can adapt and change where needed. That some of us may choose to name this way of being and relating to the world in our own language makes it, for me, a powerfully decolonial act: an act of tino rangatiratanga. This also helps us to kōrero with others in our own whānau, hapū, iwi, and in our own homes, communities, and wharekai, and to continue forging our own responses to the exploitation of animals and the environment, and the ramifications of intensive animal agriculture in Aotearoa and beyond.

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Winner of the 2017 Denise Russell Postgraduate Prize for Animal Ethics.

Notes

[1] A whakataukī (proverb or significant saying). For one iteration and explanation of this whakataukī see https://blogs.canterbury.ac.nz/insiders/2016/07/08/nate-explains-a-famous-whakatauki-proverb/

[2] The marae complex is an integral part of Māori culture and is the site of ceremonial events such as tangihanga (funeral proceedings) and social events (Mead 2003, 95-117).

[3] The hapū unit is made up of whānau (family) groups, connected by 'strong kinship ties'. Hapū can also mean pregnant – this metaphor 'conveys the idea of growth, indicating that a hapū is capable of containing many whānau' (Mead 2003, 214-215).

[4] 'Whare' is often translated as 'building' or 'house', whilst 'kai' in this context refers to food.

[5] I acknowledge here that the terms 'Te Ao Māori' and 'Māori' may suggest homogeneity but it is not my intention to obscure the specificities of iwi, hapū, and whānau knowledges, histories, and experiences. I use the terms in recognition of the common origins and similarities present in oral traditions between different iwi and hapū; it has also been necessary at times to use an 'umbrella' term to encompass the many Māori without iwi affiliations (the reasons for which are primarily related to the effects of colonisation).

[6] It is important to note that translations provided in this chapter are approximations which do not fully explain or describe these concepts and the knowledges and worldviews associated with them. Also, whilst I make some generalisations, I reiterate that there are unique whanau-, hapū- and iwi-specific customs, concepts, and narratives which cannot be discussed in detail here.

[7] Cooked food also negates tapu – which is an energy or 'life force' that is to be respected and approached carefully. An example given by Hirini Moko Mead is the use of cooked kumara to reduce the level of tapu of a new meeting house (2003, 49).

[8] Whilst whakapapa is often translated as 'genealogy', it encompasses much more than this. It can be both a noun used to refer to relationships and origin narratives as well as verb meaning

'to place in layers'. For a detailed analysis of the concept of whakapapa see Mere Roberts et al. 'Whakapapa as a Maori Mental Construct: Some Implications for the Debate over Genetic Modification of Organisms.' *The Contemporary Pacific*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2004, pp. 1-28.

[9] I use 'Ahi kā' here with reference to the 'burning fires' of continued inhabitation and the continued guardianship of ancestral lands.

[10] 'Kaimanga' is the word given for 'vegetarian' in *Te Aka – The Māori-English, English-Māori Dictionary and Index*. 'Kai' can mean food or 'to eat', and 'manga' can be green, leafy vegetables, and also a branch of a tree, river, or creek. There are currently no entries for 'vegan' or 'veganism' specifically. Other terms used in relation to plant-based diets are the transliteration 'kaitipu' ('tipu' can refer to seed, plant, and growth) 'whekana' (a transliteration), and 'kaiota' meaning herbivore (See McKibbon 'But What About Boil Up? How Māori are Embracing Veganism' https://thespinoff.co.nz/atea/16-11-2018/but-what-about-boil-up-how-maori-are-embracing-veganism/).

[11] Similar barriers and challenges are also discussed by vegan women of colour in Dr Amie Breeze's Harper's anthology, *Sistah Vegan: Black Female Vegans Speak on Food, Identity, Health, and Society* (Lantern Books, 2010). *Veganism in an Oppressive World: A Vegans of Color Community Project* (Sanctuary Publishers, 2017) edited by Julia Feliz Brueck also features similar issues.

[12] For an expanded summary and commentary on these issues and the ongoing effects of colonization in Aotearoa see Margaret Mutu. 'Māori Issues', *The Contemporary Pacific,* vol. 27, no. 1, 2015, pp. 273-281.

[13] 'Mātauranga Māori' is a complex and multi-faceted concept, which 'provides a distinct Māori epistemology and way of knowing and draws upon a range of both verbal and non-verbal forms for its expression' (Leonie Pihama, 'Kaupapa Māori Theory: Transforming Theory in Aotearoa', *Kaupapa Rangahau: A Reader,* 2015, pp5-15: 8). Elements of mātauranga Māori include (but are not limited to): the Māori worldview; Māori ideology; Māori perspective; the Māori style of thought; Māori tradition and history; Māori scholarship (Robert Wiri, *The Prophecies of the Great*

Canyon of Toi: A History of Te Whāiti-nui-a-Toi in the western Urewera Mountains of New Zealand, 2011, University of Auckland, PhD dissertation, p25.)

[14] For example, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations notes that the expanding livestock sector is exerting compounding pressure on natural resources: 'grazing land is threatened by degradation; deforestation is occurring to grow animal feed, water resources are becoming scarce; air, soil and water pollution are increasing; and locally adapted animal genetic resources are being lost'. See 'Livestock and Environment' *Animal Production and Health* – Agriculture and Consumer Protection Department, Food and Agriculture Organization, U.N. http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/themes/en/Environment.html

[15] The ways in which the slaughterhouse, for example, may be viewed in Foucauldian terms, as 'a site of disciplinary power (and domination) where a multitude of bodies' [human and non-human] are rendered docile' are discussed by Stephen Thierman in 'Apparatuses of Animality: Foucault Goes to a Slaughterhouse', *Foucault Studies,* vol. 9, 2010, pp. 89-110. The adverse effects of industrialized animal agriculture on the environment are also examples of the entanglement of human and non-human animal concerns; see note 12.

[16] It is important to note that there are many narrative forms in Te Ao Māori – I use pūrākau here as just one example. Others include whaikōrero (formal speeches), whakataukī, (proverbs or sayings of significance), and waiata (songs – of which there are many different forms for different purposes), as well as narratives contained in whakairo (carving) and raranga (weaving) and other forms.

[17] According to a version of this narrative recounted by Ranginui Walker, for example, the atua (spiritual energy, deity) of wind and weather, Tāwhirimātea, attacks Tūmatauenga (the atua of people and of war) for supporting the separation of their parents, Ranginui (the sky father) and Papatūānuku (the earth mother). Tūmatauenga is able to subdue him, no thanks to the other atua, who retreat into their respective domains. Angry at their desertion, Tūmatauenga punishes each of them in turn: first, he ensnares the manu (birds) of the forest of Tāne; then he creates

nets to catch the tamariki of Tangaroa found in the oceans, rivers, and lakes; after this, he fashions tools and baskets from Tāne's plants and trees to dig up the descendants of Haumiatiketike (the atua of wild food) and Rongomatāne (the atua of cultivated food). In his final act of revenge, Tūmatauenga consumes the tamariki (children) of his siblings (fish, crops, birds and so on). This 'subordination' of the descendents of the atua, thus 'transformed them from the sacred estate of gods to the profane level of artifacts and food' (17) and paved the way for humans to consume these species, albeit in accordance with kawa and tikanga (the correct methods and procedures) *Ngā Pepa a Ranginui: The Walker Papers,* Auckland: Penguin Books, 1996, p7.

[18] I use 'kaupapa' here to mean theme, purpose, or platform.

[19] See, for example, Kākano Café and Cookery School (http://kakanocafe.co.nz/), the Ahikā Kai initiative run by Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu (http://ngaitahu.iwi.nz/runanga/ahika-kai/), Whakapapa Fridays – a website with the aim of 'reviving indigenous Māori knowledge to optimise health and wellbeing' (https://www.whakapapafridays.co.nz/) and Te Tiaki Mahinga Kai – a research collective working towards sustainable environmental management through the application of kaitiakitanga (Māori environmental stewardship) (http://www.mahingakai.org.nz/).

[20] Please see note 7 regarding translations of te reo Māori.

[21] This is not to say that kaimangatanga or plant-based diets among Māori are necessarily recent developments. The oral histories of Ngāti Awa, for example, tell of an ancestor Toi-kai-rākau the wood-eater or 'vegetarian'. (See Ngāti Awa Claims Settlement Act 2005 Schedule 4, Statutory acknowledgement for Koohi Point (Kohi Point), Section 40).

[22] See http://www.papatuanuku.org/. See also Koopu-Stone's comments in Philip McKibbin's 'But What About Boil Up? How Māori are Embracing Veganism' https://thespinoff.co.nz/atea/16-11-2018/but-what-about-boil-up-how-maori-are-embracing-veganism/

[23] Due to its location in the public sphere and the ease by which it is accessed and disseminated, online material was the focus for this analysis. This material is limited in that it privileges the perspectives of those with access to the internet (and associated facilities) and those who write in English; my knowledge of te reo Māori is not yet sufficient for me to engage with material given in te reo Māori. The importance of conducting discussions kanohi ki te kanohi (face to face) in Te Ao Māori must be made clear, and it is for this reason that I suggest this material is merely an entry point in the consideration of Māori perspectives on kaimangatanga, veganism, and plant-based kai.

[24] Mead also notes in recent times 'the rituals that restore to tired and misused earth their vitality and essence have rarely if ever been performed' (197).

[25] For example 'The Plant-Based Māori' and 'The Māori Vegan' on both Facebook and Instagram.

[26] See *Taonga Gardens* www.taongagardens.org.nz/maori-garden-calendar.html

[27] See Jessica Hutchings, Jo Smith and Garth Harmsworth 'Elevating the Mana of Soil Through the Hua Parakore Framework' MAI Journal, vol. 7, no.1, 2018, pp 92-102.

[28] See Te Miri Rangi *Whakapapa Fridays: Reviving Indigenous Māori Knowledge to Optimise Health and Wellbeing* (www.whakapapafridays.co.nz).

[29] 'People of the land' – Indigenous people (I refer here to Māori specifically). 'Whenua' also refers to placenta; thus 'people born of the whenua, i.e. of the placenta and of the land where the people's ancestors have lived and where their placenta are buried' (see *Te Aka Māori-English, English-Māori Dictionary and Index*: https://maoridictionary.co.nz/).

[30] Waimirirangi Koopu-Stone, for example, explains that she avoids terms like 'vegan' and 'vegetarian'. She regards these as Western labels that have been created to make categorisation easier. '"As Māori, our ways of living are informed by ancient knowledge and stories, Māori gods and goddesses, rationale, spiritual prompting, and guidance," she says. For many indigenous peoples, labels are "an eyesore"' (See McKibbon 'But What About Boil Up? How Māori are Embracing Veganism' https://thespinoff.co.nz/atea/16-11-2018/but-what-about-boil-up-how-maori-are-embracing-veganism).

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