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GETTING TO KNOW YOUR FOOD:
THE INSIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS THINKING IN FOOD PROVENANCE

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Whakapapa mai Te Po. ara i te timatanga mai o te ā Maori ana korero.

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Abstract:

Western consumers are increasingly demanding to know the provenance of their food. In New Zealand, Māori tribal enterprises are engaged in the food producing sectors of farming and fisheries and, like other businesses seeking to remain competitive in global markets, are responding to the demand for provenance through developing systems for communicating the origin of foods to consumers. However, Māori are doing this in their own way, in a manner that authentically reflects their own understanding of place and expresses an indigenous animist perspective. It is argued that an animist approach to provenancing provides an authentic means of connecting Western consumers to nature in circumstances where they have become psychologically and physically abstracted. Animism provides a relational way of understanding the world, through which food products emerge as animated representations of reciprocal place-based relationships. It is considered that this indigenous approach can provide 'an antidote' to the alienating effects of modernity, where food products are experienced as inert compositions of elements that can be replicated and produced anywhere via industrial processes. Furthermore, it can provide a touchstone for differentiating between authentic provenance and the cynical use of provenance marketing that exploits the needs of alienated individuals for connection to place. A case study of indigenous provenance, *Ahikā Kai*, is offered to explain and illustrate the theoretical perspectives provided.

Introduction

There is increasing interest in food provenance amongst Western consumers. Many reasons drive this demand. In a practical way, provenancing is a mechanism for assuring regulatory bodies and consumers that the food we purchase is safe, and in the case of premium products, that it is of authentic origin. However, on another level, the growth in demand for food provenance is explained as a response to modernity. Through connecting consumers to place, provenancing addresses an anxiety experienced by many Western consumers to the growing physical and psychological abstraction from nature and each other and the resulting ethical and environmental crises that this abstraction has facilitated (Taylor, 1991; Campbell, 2009) Further, it is a mechanism for revealing to those consumers the relationships underlying the formation of commodities that are usually obscured, in what Marx would refer to as commodity fetishism (Marx, 1990; Hornborg, 2014). In short, provenance is means of revealing and restoring relationships with the wider world for those alienated by modernity as it helps turn 'food from nowhere' into 'food from somewhere' (McMichael, 2005; McMichael, 2009).

Our focus on provenance can be seen as related to Food Regime Theory and the Food Sovereignty Movement; provenance is, after all, an outcome of the dialectical tension between the globalized food industry and an increasing demand for localization, sustainable production, and ethical operation (Friedmann and McMichael, 1989; Le Heron, 2002; Campbell, 2009; McMichael, 2009). However, from an indigenous perspective, we consider it unlikely that attempts at food provenancing will address Western anxiety and alienation. We explain that without countering the modernist constructs that underpin Western thought, provenancing is likely to remain a marketing tool that abstracts rather than connects. We suggest that an animist approach could provide an alternative means of provenancing food. Animism counters the experience of abstraction by bringing with it a relational understanding of the world and, as such, provides a platform for building connections, enhancing meaning, and ensuring authenticity. To illustrate how such an approach works we provide a case study of *Ahikā Kai*, an indigenous Māori provenancing initiative in New Zealand.

To begin, we explore the notion of animism. Our choice of describing animism as an indigenous construct is controversial from an indigenous scholar's perspective. Animism is typically associated with antiquated anthropological studies of indigenous peoples, which represent the prejudicial personal and cultural projections of the researcher, rather than an accurate representation of the indigenous culture in question. However, a more sophisticated understanding of animism has recently developed that offers what we consider a close representation of an indigenous

understanding of the world. The Māori worldview is explored to demonstrate how this view manifests culturally.

Then we outline how the modernist worldview conflicts with aims of food provenancing. We explain that food marketers are using provenance to sell 'representations' of people and place, as opposed to an animist approach that seeks to connect consumers into human and nonhuman networks of personal relationships. Put simply, it is a case of image versus substance. In the final sections, we outline how animism can capture and support authentic provenance. A case study, *Ahikā Kai*, is then offered to illustrate indigenous provenancing in practice. The discussion section connects the ways we believe animism can empower provenance and how in turn provenance can re-empower the animist worldview as well as examining how the use of animist provenance marketing can help invigorate ethical and environmental considerations, the hybrid nature of food and the internet's unique ability to facilitate animist connections in the contemporary world. Finally, the concluding remarks consider the metaphysical, scholarly and practical implications of the paper.

Animism

To define animism is to enter an ongoing ontological battle about the nature of reality, the victor of which has, thus far, conquered the earth and the many peoples who live upon it. This victor – modernism – has ensured its dominance by defining, and therefore limiting, animism in a biased and erroneous manner, reducing its complexities and nuances to a simplistic, naïve, and *a priori* incorrect premise.

The traditional definition of animism is that it is a primitive belief system where both human and nonhuman entities possess a soul (Bird-David, 1999). Tylor was the first to use the term in this way in his 1871 book, *Primitive Culture,* describing it as "the general doctrine of souls and other spiritual beings in general" based on the "idea of pervading life and will in nature" (p. 260). This self-confirmed scientific rationalist, whose analysis was based largely on observing Western neo-spiritualism rather than ethnographic work, argued that the ""savages" were doubly mistaken, believing in their own "ghost-souls" but like children attributing the same to things around them" (Bird-David, 2002, p. 78). For Tylor, the assumption nonhuman entities have humanlike 'souls' was a primitive mistake and this belief has tainted research into animism ever since (Bird-David, 1999).

It has been argued that the traditional definitions provide a greater understanding of the Western worldview than they do of animism; that rather than the animists projecting their 'self' onto nonhuman entities, it is Westerners who are ironically projecting their own understanding of 'self' onto those they are trying to label (Bird-David, 1999; Willerslev, 2007). The traditional definition

is, at best, a misrepresentation, and its implicit assumption that the animists are mistaken has resulted in much of the focus on animism directed towards explaining 'why' they made this mistake rather than 'what' they actually believe.

Bird-David (1999) and Willerslev (2007) provide comprehensive histories of the attempts to explain this 'mistake', showing how Durkheim and Levi-Strauss portrayed animism as a symbolic representation – an analogy of societal relationships projected onto the natural world. Others have explained that this projection is a neurological figment hardwired as a survival mechanism (Guthrie, 2002). While the debate surrounding animism became more sophisticated over time, moving from the conviction that animists were 'mistaken' to arguments that the worldview is projection of culture onto nature as useful fabrication, underlying the mainstream view was the belief that "animism is essentially an erroneous mental operation" (Willerslev, 2007, p. 17). The reason for this ongoing sophistry is simple: animism does not fit within the modernist worldview. Modernism is premised on a dichotomy between humans and nonhuman entities as "subject and object, person and thing, mind and body, intentionality and instinct and, above all, culture and nature" (Willerslev, 2007, p. 13). There is no room for the nature to have agency, to play a role as an active subject in the modernist worldview, as it is seen as inert and passive. Modernism's abstractive qualities have enabled humans to think and act in ways they never did before, the "global machine has required the iterative 'disembedding' of people from land, and of land from 'nature' in service to the exchange of 'fictitious commodities', namely land, money and labour" (Sullivan, 2010, p. 112). But while modernism has been one of the keys to the contemporary world's material success, it has also meant that humanity's relationships with the wider world have been compromised. We need these relationships now more than ever.

Animists view nonhuman entities (which can range from mouse to mountain) as active subjects in their world rather than passive objects and, as a consequence, they see humans as a part of reality, not apart from it, embedded in a network of ever-changing relationships with these other nonhuman entities (Sullivan, 2013). Ingold (2006, p. 10) writes: "Animacy... is not a property of persons imaginatively projected onto the things with which they perceive themselves to be surrounded. Rather... it is the dynamic, transformative potential of the entire field of relations within which beings of all kinds, more or less person-like or thing-like, continually and reciprocally bring one another into existence".

To clarify, the animist does not believe that all nonhuman entities are the same as humans but is founded on a more sophisticated, if inherently obvious, premise: *that the relationships humans have with the nonhuman entities are reciprocal and contextual rather than unidirectional and abstract, and that as these relationships progress each entity shapes the other in meaningful ways.* Animists do not believe that every

animal or natural phenomena has personhood – the opposite is true, only those with which they have a relationship with have personhood (Willerslev, 2007). "If the object of modernist epistemology is a totalizing scheme of separated essences, approached ideally from a separated viewpoint, the object of this animist knowledge is understanding relatedness from a related point of view... Against "I think therefore I am" stands "I relate therefore I am" and "I know as I relate" (Bird-David as cited in Garuba, 2012).

Animism is not "a formally abstracted and articulated philosophy", rather it is a "pragmatic and down-to-earth" practice restricted to "specific contexts of activity and experiences" (Willerslev, 2007, pp. 8-9). Willerslev (2007) explains that often these relationships evolved during the process of sourcing food; not always, but frequently, the most important connections the animist has is with the food they eat because it is so central to their life. Animism is most often found amongst hunter-gatherers because of the "'complex, intimate, reciprocal, personal and crucially ambivalent' nature of relationships" between them and their prey (Harvey, 2005, p. 116). Not only do these bonds develop because of the ongoing relationship between hunter and hunted, but it becomes one of mutual interdependence brought about by the awareness of reliance (Harvey, 2005). In animist societies, "one almost always finds institutions with rules that serve to limit short-term self-interest and promote long-term group interest... [and] for most of human history and cultural circumstances the separating culture/nature assumptions... seem to have been understood and refused as negative in their effects" (Sullivan, 2013, p. 55). Animism and provenance are, then, a natural fit and the awareness of interdependence that animism provides can generate controlling mechanisms to regulate and limit the potentially negative impacts of sourcing food.

Animism is not some atavistic relic or historic aberration, humans are innate animists and virtually every culture has at some point been animist (Degler, 1991). Animism is a universal worldview, not because it provides an evolutionary advantage through symbolic overlay, but because *it is a legitimate way of understanding reality* (Bai, 2009; Bird-David, 1999). Rather than animism being a false yet functional projection, Hornborg (1999, p. S81) believes that "human sociability was engendered by cognitive skills that were ecologically biased". Animism is not an outcome of our cognitive ability for relationships but rather our cognitive ability for relationships comes from the inherent truth of the animist worldview. Latour (1993) even believes that modernism is an illusion, that not only are many objects actually subject-object hybrids but that modernist humans are actually 'practicing animists' so that a farmer who sends cattle to the abattoir but loves his dog is both a situational modernist and an innate animist. For Latour, the divide between nature and culture is never maintained in reality – he explains that the "smallest AIDS virus takes you from sex to the unconscious, then to Africa, tissue cultures, DNA and San Francisco" before concluding

that the world is "*simultaneously real, like nature, narrated, like discourse, and collective, like society*" (1993, p. 2, 6). We are, as Bai believes, "'hard-wired' for the capacity for participatory consciousness", animism is innate and inescapable (2009, p. 146).

A clear example of animism in practice is the Māori worldview. At its core the Māori experience of the world, like that of other indigenous peoples, is one of connectivity and, in particular, the experience of environment as a community of interconnected living personas, only some of whom are human. This understanding is described well by Spiller et al. (2010, p. 155), who point out that: "Indigenous perspectives offer important insights into a multi-dimensional 'woven universe' … which has not broken tradition with the 'living web of the world' and kinship with all of creation."

Within Māori culture, animism is given its own unique expression. This experience is outlined by Wolfgramm (2007, p. 80):

"Māori continue to see themselves as agents in an evolving cosmological community, and use whakapapa [genealogies] to actively interpret relationships in order to bring the sacred to the centre of being. This is a relational view of the world, where we are called into being through our relationships, through the interaction with kin, genealogies, and events. Rocks, rivers, birds, plants, mountains, animals and oceans, all possess a genealogy, and the divine genealogical order of whakapapa extends through aeons to a common genealogical origin which is Io, the Creator of the Cosmos."

Key terms for understanding this worldview include *whakapapa, tīpuna,* and *mauri*. *Whakapapa* refers to the idea that everything is connected genealogically. From a Māori perspective all living things are related to each other as a family: in essence, we all share the same family tree (Roberts et al., 2004). This animist perspective closely aligns with discoveries within the field of biology that reinforce the relational qualities of all life, such as genetic mapping, which shows that all living things are related (Roberts et al., 2004). However, Māori also contend that some proximate elements that might be considered inanimate, such as land, or water, are persons in the family tree, and are important aspects of *whakapapa*, because they have played a role in shaping them. For Māori, their *whakapapa* are all those persons, be they human, animal, or geographical, that have contributed in their life.

To explain this perspective, it is necessary to understand the Māori concept of ancestor, *tīpuna*. *Tīpuna* refers to 'a life form, from which other life forms are created,' which includes not only humans but 'a forebear by way of a connected relationship.' For example, Māori traditionally consider the elements, such as the earth, to be *tīpuna*, or ancestors, because such elements are causative to the existence of living things and may therefore be understood as 'forebears.' The Māori understanding of ancestry is therefore much broader than the concept conveyed in English, which only accommodates a direct biological connection via the transmission of human genetic

material across generations. Instead, the term *tīpuna* encapsulates not only the notion of all biological genetic inheritance (including human and non-human), but also non-human elements (e.g. rivers) that have supported the existence of ancestors, and in turn the emergence of current generations. The entire genealogy, or *whakapapa*, consequently encapsulates all contributive living and non-living beings, and determines that each has a place in the cosmic family tree. Furthermore, through situating each being as kin, the notion of *whakapapa* extends personhood beyond humans to encapsulate the entire family tree. However, this does not presume that all persons are human-persons, but instead acknowledges that there are differences between branches of the family.

In addition to *whakapapa,* another key concept for understanding animism from a Māori perspective is the notion of *mauri*. All beings within the cosmic family, or *whakapapa*, are understood to be animated by what is termed *mauri*, which can be translated to mean 'life essence' (Morgan, 2006). *Mauri* is a vitality that is emanated through a being (e.g. a human person) as they continually grow and unfold over time (Morgan, 2006). In essence, it refers to the life, health, and vitality of a particular entity, whether a person or a river. For example, the *mauri* of a river is considered to decline if it is polluted, given that its life-supporting capacity and vibrancy is reduced. Similarly the *mauri* of a person will decline through exposure to harmful substances that reduce health and vitality.

The *mauri* emanating from different beings is also understood as interdependent (Morgan, 2006). For example, human land management practices that enable a river to maintain and enhance its *mauri* would result in the river generating potable water, food, and other resources. The provision of these resources will in turn support the *mauri* of people through providing quality food and water to support life. Through this positive interdependent relationship the *mauri* of both the river and people is enhanced. This understanding and experience of interdependency leads to the blurring of boundaries of self. For example, it is not unusual for Māori to say that 'I am the river and the river is me.' This is because the self is experienced as being a phenomenon dependent upon the river for its existence through the mutual enhancement of *mauri*. In addition, the underlying notion and experience of interdependency highlights that environmental harm leads to human harm and vice versa. Consequently, Māori environmental ethics are centered on relationships that grow and build *mauri*.

In sum, Māori cosmology interprets the universe as an interdependent and interconnected family of human and non-human persons emanating *mauri* through a genealogical process of unfolding. This is a fundamentally animist view as all beings are considered persons, albeit different branches of the family, that are fundamentally animated by *mauri*. This cosmology not only enables an individual to interpret and understand their particular 'location' within the cosmic family, it also

enables an individual to understand the relationships and interdependencies that give rise to their self.

Provenance and Marketing

While provenance is often "conflated with place [it] has a much wider meaning": it has a "spatial dimension (its place of origin), a social dimension (its methods of production and distribution), and a cultural dimension (its perceived qualities and reputation)" (Morgan et al. 2008, p. 4). Provenance, then, is concerned with almost every aspect of the food's history, but this only becomes useful when the consumer is informed of the provenance. All food has a provenance, the utility of provenance comes when the consumer is made aware of a correspondence between their values and the food's provenance as mediated by marketing (Coles, 2013). Thus, the following discussion will largely focus on food provenance marketing, though there will be ongoing reference to provenance proper as well.

Food provenancing is aimed at informing the consumer of the product's spatial, social, and cultural parameters while contemporary approaches to marketing are often intent on obscuring provenance, of severing the genuine spatial, social, and cultural connections and creating false ones in their stead (Brand, 2010; Cook and Crang; Goodman et al. 2014; Johnston and Szabo, 2011). The danger is that rather than providing consumers with legitimate information, food provenance marketing generates another means of creating a false relationship with the consumer. Food writer Jay Rayner (2014) points out that provenance has been seized upon as a marketing 'buzzword', with many producers manufacturing a false sense of provenance rather than informing the consumer of the food's true provenance. A similar issue is noted by Goodman et al. (2014, p. 5) when they warn of the dangers of large-scale retailers commoditizing ethical values promoted by alternative food and fair trade movements, explaining that these "encounters reveal that the interface between "alternative" and "conventional" is becoming highly permeable".

It is problematic even for producers who are making genuine attempts at communicating provenance. Sorman-Nilsson (2013) writes, "the French wine industry, as a whole has been slow to respond to consumer appetites for information. Focus has been on telling a story in the analogue world on their bottles, labels, and images of chateaus, and less on helping the consumer make sense of the context of the bottle [on] the shelf. The branding messages get lost in the level of abstraction, at which the message is pitched". What Sorman-Nilsson is saying is that provenance marketing often fails because it ignores the full scope of the relationships involved, instead focusing on representations of what they think the commodity should mean to consumers rather than allowing the consumers to develop their own meaning in a relational dialogue with the producer.

However, the problem lies even deeper than intent: *the major issue for food provenancing is that there is a fundamental clash between its aims and the modernist worldview*. Despite a growing desire by many different factions to know where our food comes from, who it was produced by, and the many ethical and environmental considerations involved in the production and distribution, the dominance of the modernist worldview means that provenance remains a highly contested domain (Food First, 2005; Morgan et al. 2008; Goodman et al. 2014).

One of consequences of capitalism's domination of the food sector has been the physical abstraction of the consumer from their food, a process that began during Friedmann and McMichael's First Regime (1989). But not only has there been a dramatic loss of physical proximity; modernism's psychological distancing has empowered the global food industry to market 'food from nowhere' to the masses by disrupting "the interaction between human beings and nature", a development of the Second Regime (Friedmann and McMichael, 1989; Campbell, 2009, p. 312). It was during this period that food was inscribed with the "technologically optimistic tropes of high modernity" whilst simultaneously having its connection to reality obscured (Campbell, 2015, p. 200). Just as the global food behemoths sought to 'outflank' nature through appropriationism and substitutionism, their marketing erased the food's connection to reality and replaced it with 'spin', even in provenance-focused domains like organics (Goodman et al. 1987; Guthman, 1998).

Fundamentally, this analysis suggests that provenance cannot be 'made sense of' from a modernist perspective. At its core, modernism turns nature into an object that is inert – it is simply matter without agency. To a modernist, matter doesn't matter beyond its scientifically delineated composition. Food from a place is really just a collection of constituent trace elements that science and industry could potentially replicate somewhere else. Provenance is fundamentally irrational from a modernist perspective. This is why provenance marketing of food is so cynical for those with a modernist disposition. They don't believe the provenance of food actually matters; however, they know that provenance sells.

The reason it sells, we contend, is because of humanity's innate animism. Marketers often use animism, or rather the anthropomorphizing tendency that we believe is an aspect of animism, to imbue commodities and brands with 'human' traits that increase their appeal to consumers (Hornborg, 2014; Avis, 2014). While the most obvious forms of this type of marketing involve the use of mascots it is a far more wide-reaching phenomenon. As Fournier explains in her seminal article, "Consumers and their brands", marketers humanize commodities and brands in a wide number of ways, from the "transference of human qualities of emotionality, thought and volition" via mascots through to possessing the brand with "the spirit of a past or present other" through

celebrity endorsement, but she explains they "need not engage these blatant strategies to qualify as [being an] active relationship partner" (1998, p. 345). Rather, all that is required is "the everyday execution of marketing plans and tactics [that] can be construed as behaviors performed by the brand acting in its relational role" (1998, p. 345). Fournier explains that people's innate anthropomorphic tendencies mean they will naturally relate to the brand in a humanized manner as long as the marketing reinforces this relationship. This form of marketing seeks to create false relationships by manipulating people's natural tendency to humanize nonhuman entities, or, as we argue, to relate to them in an animist fashion. This approach is evident in Fournier's statement that a "brand may enjoy selected animistic properties, but it is not a vital entity. In fact, the brand has no objective existence at all: it is simply a collection of perceptions held in the mind of the consumer. The brand cannot act or think or feel – except through the activities of the manager that administers it" (1998, p. 345). The brand is a fiction, made to seem like it can act, think, and feel by the activities of marketer. There is, then, a fundamental disjuncture between food provenance and the actions of modernist marketing and its cynical manipulation of our innate animist nature to generate false relationships. We ask, rather than using animism in a disingenuous and false manner, why not use it in an authentic way?

From the animist perspective nature is not inert, nor is it without agency. Matter is animated. The relationships humans have with nonhuman entities are reciprocal and contextual rather than unidirectional and abstract. Each entity shapes the other in meaningful ways. It is for this reason food from one place cannot be substituted with food from another place. Food is the product of a nexus of relationships from a place, and as such will be imbued, from a Māori perspective, with unique *mauri* that comes from its specific *whakapapa*. The understanding that animism brings can empower provenance and its marketing in a number of vital and interconnected ways and in the following case study we will show how animist provenance can work in practice.

Ahikā Kai

There are still Māori, the *Ahikā*, who remain in close relationships with their nonhuman family members. These relationships are fundamentally maintained through actively engaging with, and utilizing local resources. *Ahikā* translates as 'home fires' but has taken on greater meaning in the postcolonial era as Māori have become physically distanced from their land and the challenge to retain 'home fires' has grown. One Māori tribe, Ngāi Tahu, developed an online project called *Ahikā Kai* that is designed to connect *Ahikā* food producers with consumers.[1] *Ahikā Kai* literally means 'food from the home fires' but the deeper translation is one that encapsulates those

[1] The site address is www. ahikakai.co.nz

interdependent relationships that are integral to the animist worldview: it is food from those who still live with the awareness of their deep relationship to place.

Ahikā Kai's purpose is to provide an online platform where "[c]onsumers purchasing products can trace their product..., identify where their food has come from, and learn about the producer and their practices." The home page explains that it supplies "food that has been locally and sustainably harvested and produced according to the values and customs of the Ngāi Tahu people - an indigenous people located in the South Island of New Zealand (Te Waipounamu)". This helps to informs consumers of the identity and location of the producer. It goes on to tell the consumer that "food production is at the heart of Ngāi Tahu culture and identity. It is the cornerstone of Ngāi Tahu spiritual, cultural, social, and economic well-being; and a symbol of Ngāi Tahu's continuing relationship with the traditions and history that place us on our land and our waters, and ties Ngāi Tahu together as an indigenous people." The *Ahikā Kai* website provides a forum where consumers can come to know and connect with the producers and can gain an understanding of the provenance of the food, in all three dimensions, as well as the relationship between the producer and the food.

The foundational principles of the *Ahikā Kai* project encapsulate the animist worldview and are laid out on the website. The five key principles are *hauora* (health), *kaitiakitanga* (sustainable management), *whanaungatanga* (fairness), *kaikōkiritanga* (care) and *tikanga* (cultural ecological wisdom). Through these principles the animist focus is clear:

- *Hauora* emphasizes the need to sustain and enhance the health of animals, plants, soil, planet and humans "as one and indivisible", it is "about the wholeness, integrity, *wairua* (spirit) and *mauri*... of living systems and the relationships Ngāi Tahu have with them";
- *Kaitiakitanga* "is based on a holistic... view of living ecological systems";
- *Whanaungatanga* is "characterized by equity, respect, social justice and stewardship of the shared world; both among people and in their relations to other living beings";
- *Kaikōkiritanga* ensures that "ecosystems will be managed in a proactive and precautionary manner to protect the *whakapapa* (geneaology), *wairua* (spirit) and *mauri* (life essence) of the Ahikā Kai resources and the environment that sustains them";
- *Tikanga* brings these all together as a comprehensive cultural ecological philosophy.

These principles have been derived from traditional Māori values and form the core of the project. No producer will be accepted unless they embody them and there is an accreditation system in place to assure that producers "abide by best-practice". The accreditation system, in the spirit of

creating reciprocal relations, "involves producers in the process of continually evolving, refining, and adopting best-practice through co-learning".

Another key animist component is the ability to connect with and learn more about the suppliers and the food. There are three main suppliers, Putauhinu Tītī, Moko Tuna and Te Rūnanga O Wairewa Putahi Farm which sell, respectively, *tītī* (mutton bird), *tuna* (eel) and lamb. From the supplier page the consumer is able to make contact with all the different suppliers, ensuring that they are able to make the connections that are so vital to the animist worldview. Each page also contains information about the 'commodity' and its *whakapapa.* On the *tītī* page, after a more standard product definition of the bird itself, it is explained that:

"For centuries Rakiura (Stewart Island) Māori have travelled to the islands for tītī. The tītī and the islands themselves are of deep importance to Putauhinu Tītī, who have an ancestral right to harvest the birds. Only those who can prove their whakapapa with the islands can go muttonbirding. The relationship between Māori, the tītī and the islands is of fundamental importance: the Rakiura Māori are the kaitiaki (guardians) of the islands, the tītī and the islands are a source of mauri (life force) and are seen as tīpuna (ancestors) because they are able replenish the wairua (spirit). The connection goes beyond the economic, the bond is one of essence and forms a central aspect of Rakiura Māori identity. When you buy from Putauhinu Tītī the mauri becomes yours."

As well as having biographical and commodity information on their page, each supplier has a video where they talk about their connection to the land and to their relationship with their product. In the Putauhinu Tītī video three generations of family explain their connection to the Tītī Islands and to the ritual of harvesting the birds. The video opens with *kaumātua* (elder) Jane Davis explaining that "it's a way of life, it's our culture" before outlining that her mother had taught her not just the physical aspects of the ritual but also the emotional and relational components. Through this, she then explains, you become "tuned into the island... it's in your blood", her grandson Kayne Davis adds that the island is "a part of you" and her son Tane Davis explains that "it's a part of a family way of life". Later on in the video Kayne says that "it's a way of life for me... this is what keeps me connected with my Māoritanga [Māori culture] and it's something that you live, you don't necessarily pick it up out of a text book, you live it."

The website also allows consumers to trace their food. This builds on the information the consumer has already received about Ngāi Tahu's connection to Te Waipounamu. Each commodity comes with a product code that can be entered on the website and the origin of the product will be displayed. Once they have made a purchase, "Buyers can then go online to track their purchase back to its origin and read about the people involved in its production, providing a unique, transparent supply chain and establishing a strong connection between suppliers and

customers." This feature is not just for the consumer – ongoing awareness of the food's provenance is critical to Ngāi Tahu as well. As one of the founders of *Ahikā Kai,* Jymal Morgan, explains, "traceability and verification are the main issue for us. The cultural authenticity of both provides a link to the people". Chairperson of Wairewa Rūnanga, Robin Wybrow further emphasizes this in the Rūnanga description: "Mahinga kai (food resources) are at the heart of Ngāi Tahu culture and identity. It is the cornerstone of our spiritual, cultural, social, and economic well-being, and a symbol of our continuing relationship with the traditions and history that place us on our land and tie us together as Ngāi Tahu."

The final animist aspect is the use of a blog and Twitter account. While they allow the provision of extra biographical information on the wider *whakapapa* of the producers, critically, both platforms provide a two-way means of communicating with the consumer through comments and Tweets, respectively. The *Ahikā Kai* blog has posts that provide extra information about traditional Māori foods and their meaning Māori, which helps to connect the consumer with the producer. The consumer can leave comments on the blog, allowing them to make connections with the *Ahikā Kai* community. The Twitter account, as well as providing a forum where links to relevant sources of information can be posted, allows for even greater communication between producers and consumers because it facilitates quick and easy two-way discourse. It is on the Twitter account that *Ahikā Kai* can make meaningful connections with consumers and potential consumers, creating ongoing relationships.

Discussion

Ahikā Kai inevitably became an experiment in animist provenancing and marketing because of the need to incorporate fundamental Māori values. As such, there are a number of useful insights that can be gained from this project that span from the pragmatic to the philosophic, ranging from 'beefing' up provenance's integrity to the ability for animism to educate on ethical and environmental concerns, from the capacity for the website to act as an educational and praxial tool for the animist worldview to the importance of hybrid commodities.

Animism gives provenance integrity

One major insight is that animism is able to give food provenancing greater integrity. Without an animist grounding there is a risk that provenance becomes yet another marketing 'gimmick' that generates false realities through commodity fetishism and anthropomorphism rather than offering consumers a genuine understanding of their food's spatial, social, and cultural origins.

With *Ahikā Kai,* the provenance of the food is real because the project creates a genuine relationship between producer, consumer, and the commodity. By emphasizing Māori animist values, by informing the consumer of the connection the producer has to the commodity, and by

ensuring that the consumer is able to comprehensively trace the origin of the product they are able to gain a thorough understanding of the provenance. The interconnected nature of *whakapapa*, *tīpuna,* and *mauri* provides provenance across the three dimensions by connecting the origin of the food with how it is sourced, distributed and understood. The spatial dimension is imbued with elements of the social and cultural, and in turn the social and cultural are nothing without knowledge of the spatial dimension. This gives provenance marketing a greater integrity as these dimensions can no longer be segregated and each is mutually reinforcing.

This can be seen in the *tītī* description and video, both of which emphasize the connections between the end product, its place of origin and the people involved in its production. For the Rakiura Māori, the island is a part of them, it is in their blood, and it provides them with their physical sustenance and emotional essence to the degree that they see the island and birds as relatives. For the consumer, the provenance of the food becomes as much about their nascent connection to Rakiura Māori as it does with the *tītī* itself, as the product's origins are inescapably connected to the Rakiura Māori. The *mauri* of the product encapsulates the specific *whakapapa* of its origins. The emphasis of these animist relationships helps to inform the consumer of the provenance of the commodity, they are told not just where it comes from but who it comes from and how they relate to the source of the food – the spatial, social, and cultural are inseparable components, each reliant on the other for a meaningful expression of provenance.

The tracing feature of the website delivers the physical location and without this aspect the integrity would be questionable. This is not just because the physical origin is critical for providing the consumer with the provenance of the food but also because Māori want the consumer to know where the food has come from because it matters to them, socially and culturally, because this is essential to their *mauri*. In other words, there are mutually reinforcing forces at work, the consumer wants to know the provenance and the producer wants them to know it because of their animist beliefs. The animist beliefs ensure that the desire to know the provenance does not simply come from the consumer but rather is from both parties: in other words, it is an outcome of their relationship.

Environmental and ethical awareness through animism

Communicating the animist worldview through provenance marketing can also enhance greater environmental and ethical awareness by emphasizing the agency of nature and the mutual interdependence that the reciprocal interactions generate. This is not conjecture, worldview has been shown to influence ethical and environmental attitudes and animist societies have proven ethical and environmental credentials which have flowed from their worldview (Pretty, 2013; Sullivan, 2013). Academics have been considering the source of nature's agency, animism offers

this by removing the artificial division between culture and nature and affirming that it is our very relationships with nature that gives it the subjectivity from which its agency flows (FitzSimmons and Goodman, 1997).

The ability for animist provenance to increase environmental and ethical awareness through emphasis of interdependence can be seen in *Ahikā Kai's* principles. The values of *hauora, kaitiakitanga, whanaungatanga* and *kaikōkiritanga* all embody this, the first with its stress on the indivisible health of the entire ecosystem, the second with its focus on a 'holistic view of living ecosystems', the third with its promotion of 'equity, respect, social justice and stewardship of the shared world' and the fourth with its emphasis on the need to protect the *mauri, whakapapa* and *wairua* of the resources because of their ability to sustain life. The *Ahikā Kai* principles in their entirety, the *tikanga*, outlines an alternative way for consumers to view their relationship with the world in a more ethical and environmentally responsible manner.

This can also be seen in the *tītī* product description. The island and *tītī's* role in sustaining *mauri* is explained and it is shown how the reliance, and the emotional connections it creates, generate a sense of protectiveness and guardianship in Rakiura Māori to the extent that they do not just view these as resources but as family. The deeper implication is that Rakiura Māori do not simply have an instrumental view of the island and *tītī* but an emotional connection with them, they care as much about what Rakiura Māori do to them as they care what they can do for Rakiura Māori. Animist provenance can emphasize the mutual interdependence humanity has with its environment by highlighting the reciprocal relationship between human persons and nonhuman persons and we believe that this emphasis will generate greater ethical and environmental awareness in consumers.

Makes consumers care more about provenance and animism

By providing an interconnected understanding of the history of the product and by actively involving the consumer in this knowledge, animist provenance engages the consumer. As Pretty (2013) argues, for people to become actively interested in something, they need to interact with it so that they can develop a relationship with it. Animism can boost interest in provenance and help resolve the alienation and abstraction of modernism through consumer involvement. Conversely, it also serves as a platform for the animist worldview as using it to convey the provenance of food helps to educate consumers about animism. By restoring the agency of nature, making it a subject that they interact with and care about, provenance and the animist worldview become entwined.

The animist nature of the *Ahikā Kai* website will help encourage greater consumer interest in provenance as it personalizes provenance through the delineation and development of relationships. As they discover the provenance of their food, consumers learn about the producers

– their names, their location and their connection to their nonhuman *whakapapa* – and the consumers are then brought into this continually unfolding relational nexus through both awareness of these connections and their participation in them. They come to know the entities, human and nonhuman, involved in the production of the food and are able to communicate with them, and we believe this understanding and interaction will make them care more about provenance. In turn, through the mechanism of provenance, the website exposes the consumer to the animist worldview and actually encourages them to develop animist connections with the producers, land, and food themselves. As well as informing the consumer of the animist worldview through explanation, the site promotes active engagement, delivering firsthand experience of animism through developing relationships; it is animism via praxis, and this, we believe will make consumers care more about the animist worldview.

Illustrates the power of the internet as an animist tool

This animism by praxis is facilitated by the internet – without it, *Ahikā Kai* would be difficult if not impossible to run and it would not have the experiential animist quality that it currently does. The internet offers one of the most commanding ways of collapsing the physical and psychological distance of the modern era, serving as a tool for animist food provenance marketing and for the promotion of animism itself.

The utility of the internet is clear across the project. There is the ability to post video, so that the producers can talk directly to the consumers. Consumers can also contact the producers via email, or they can interact through a range of social media tools. Then there is the food tracing function, where the consumer can type in the code and find out exactly where their food has come from. The internet has not just powered the functionality of the *Ahikā Kai* system but it has also empowered the animist worldview that underlies the system by reconnecting increasingly fragmented individuals around the world.

Relies on the importance of hybrid commodities

This form of provenance marketing cannot be used by all food producers though, it relies on the hybrid nature of the 'commodity'. For Fournier and other modernists there is a natural barrier between the brand and the manager who administers it, but this barrier does not exist in animist marketing, as long as the producer has a genuine relationship with the 'commodity' being marketed. In fact, this connection is vital when the aim is to connect the producer, the commodity, and the consumer in a meaningful and contextual manner. In this way the commodity acts as a hybrid-bridge. It transfers the *mauri* and encapsulates the relationships of production for the consumer by symbolizing the nexus of connections involved in its production. Scholars have been searching for a means of understanding food's hybridity (Murdoch et al. 2000), and, by revealing

the subjecthood of nonhuman entities, showing how *mauri* can embody the relationships of production and communicate hybridity, animism provides this comprehension.

The hybrid nature of the commodity can be seen in the product description for the *tītī,* where it is explained that the commodity itself is related to the producer, that the *tītī* are *tīpuna*. Here the commodity becomes hybrid, both ancestor-subject and commodity-object. It then become a hybrid-bridge when the consumer is told that when they buy the commodity the "*mauri* becomes yours." The hybridity comes from the *tītī's* innate subjecthood, which is emphasized by its ancestral relationship to the producer, while the bridging flows from the transference of *mauri,* which helps to connect the consumer to the relational nexus.

More than the sum of its parts

To forestall an obvious argument, detractors may suggest that many of these factors are not original, which is undeniable. However, the difference is that underlying the project is a genuine connection to nature and the desire to build authentic relationships between producer and their wider *whakapapa.* In other words, the difference is not in outcome but intent, it is not in presentation but in substance. The difference, then, is that taken together these animist marketing efforts help connect consumers with an existing animist culture, one that has a legitimate connection to the nonhuman family they live amongst. For the purpose of food provenance, the consumer not only gains an understanding of exactly where their food has come from but who has supplied it and what their relationship is with the food itself and the surrounding land.

Concluding Remarks

The creation of *Ahikā Kai* and the resultant understanding of how an indigenous approach can inform food provenance has offered a number of insights. At a metaphysical level, this paper has helped challenge the modernist worldview by exploring the fundamental disjuncture between modernism and animism – a way of being in the world that we argue is innate to being human. While the conflict between cognitive orientations is illustrated here by the clash between the aims of global food industry and the demands and desires of consumers, it goes far wider and deeper than food provenance. However, we believe that provenance can serve as an important pedagogical exemplar because for an increasing number of people knowing the who, where and what of their food is of growing importance, meaning provenance may serve as a method of recalibrating the way we relate to the wider world.

For the academe, we believe that an indigenous approach, encapsulated by an animist worldview, addresses several issues in food politics, including the hybridity of food and nature's agency. We demonstrate how food can have a hybrid nature as both subject and object, through both its own inherent subjectivity and from its ability to act as an infused symbol of the relational network of

its production once it has been turned into an object. This approach suggests that complex theoretical abstractions are not required to understand nature's agency, but rather the simple realization that we are enmeshed in a reciprocal nexus of mutually-shaping interactions as part of nature itself. If these answers seem easy, it is because animism is a fundamentally accurate means of viewing reality and past complexities have been due to modernism's obscurant influence. From a modernist perspective, food will always be collection of constituent trace elements that science and industry could potentially replicate somewhere else. Provenance is fundamentally irrelevant to modernism. By lifting the level of analysis to embrace an indigenous approach, provenance makes sense. It enables questioning of the very worldview upon which most theorizing and research is done, we believe that many more answers can be found through this approach.

In a practical way, the *Ahikā Kai* project demonstrates how food producers can market their food by creating genuine connections between consumers, the product and the producer. Any food producer that embraces a symbiotic and synergistic relationship to place would be in a position to genuinely communicate provenance. We consider that many small-scale producers, be they farmers, hunters, or fishers, embrace this type of relationship with place, and that this relationship can be communicated, and more importantly, extended, to the consumer. Humans are innate animists and it is those who are most close to their local environments who are likely to exhibit such animist outlooks and tendencies. Using marketing methods to communicate these obvious affinities is likely to assist small-scale producers in gaining premiums for their products, but in a way that is commensurate with their worldview. We see this as being an important finding, given that it offers indigenous people a competitive advantage in global markets that not only maintains indigenous culture and practice, but may also support economic and social development (Barr and Reid, 2014).

Lastly, somewhat bridging these three levels, we consider that an animist approach to provenance is also likely to generate ethical and environmental awareness amongst consumers through making explicit the interconnected nature of human and nonhuman relations. That by getting to know our food we may get to know the reciprocal and symbiotic nature of our world, and in turn the interdependence between human and nonhuman people – in essence the heart of sustainability – and that this may better inform the way we perceive, think and interact with the wider world.

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