Tongans to be exclusive rather than inclusive, as I have shown in my own work on overseas-born youth. This seems such a counter-intuitive attitude for such a small population and shows, as Besnier does so well, that generalising about Tongans is increasingly problematic.

This is the first detailed discussion of contemporary Tonga to focus so explicitly on the concept of modernity, and reading the book one wonders why it has taken so long. As Besnier points out, in Tongan social life “tradition and modernity do not simply coexist, and one is certainly not being obliterated by the other, but they are deeply entangled with one another” (p. 177). This is a masterful exposition of those entanglements, and will by no means appeal only to scholars of Tonga as it has much to say that will be of interest to all academics interested in modernity, especially as it shapes and is shaped by other societies “on the edge of the global”.


PHILLIPA PEHI

*Te Whare Wananga o Awanuiārangi*

Upon reflection, I think I have been captured by the “essence” of this book as much as the content. The idea for this book was developed from two international colloquia aimed at investigating what the still evolving discipline of Transcultural Indigenous Studies is currently, and perhaps what it might still aspire to become. The editors have done a very good job in drawing together such diverse topics and academic areas to identify two coherent themes of identity and resistance that weave these chapters together. Many of the authors, although not all, agreeing in principle with these joining threads manage to incorporate the themes in their chapters and write in ways that are strikingly academic, but are also sometimes poignantly personal (for example, Alice Te Punga Somerville’s comments on “identification” versus “identity” [pp. 40-41]).

Every chapter within these covers is a mine of information, thought-provoking and thoughtful, and in some cases just simply brilliant. Most of the authors locate themselves somewhere within the context of their topic and this ability therefore lends an authenticity and gives a special truthfulness to what is being said. In covering a number of indigenous peoples, this book is a useful reference text for any scholar interested in the indigenous “reality” as it is situated locally, but also as a global phenomenon. These chapters tell stories that are unique to certain cultures (for example, the Native American Cree or Arapaha in Chapter 4 on understanding the Cree language), and therefore relate specifics that are unique to these people. Some direct comparisons are made between cultures (e.g., Janine Hayward compares the different political representations for Māori and Canadian First Nations in their respective countries). When read together, these chapters together tell a universal indigenous story, highlighting many of the struggles, triumphs and commonalities that all indigenous peoples share.
For myself as an indigenous person in the first instance, and as an emerging indigenous scholar in the second, I have found many of the writings in this book to be deeply inspiring and moving, and can see the many spaces these authors have created within academic discourse across multiple disciplines for indigenous students and scholars to populate. This is not a common experience for indigenous students within academia, as experience has shown often that academic discourses are dominated by non-indigenous epistemology.

This book contributes to the naming of current indigenous reality with regards to identity. For example, Poia Rewi’s chapter, “Culture: Compromise or perish!”, uses terms that until now I have only heard in discussions with peers and friends, and therefore brings these colloquial descriptions of contemporary identity—“plastic Māori”, “born again Māori” and “Māori tūturu” (p. 72)—into the academic domain. There are pure gems hidden within each chapter such as Jim Williams’ description of the outsider’s inability to grasp cultural nuances and themes that then result in misinterpretation and misunderstanding of the culture under scrutiny “monocultural myopia”. The book also ends on a strong note with Brendan Hokowhitu’s essay, “A genealogy of indigenous resistance”, and a challenge: “Indigenous peoples should remain mindful of their own choices and responsibilities they possessed yesterday and possess today and tomorrow; Indigenous people need to be reminded of our capacity to choose” (p. 225). Hokowhitu calls for a shift in thinking that transcends the repetitive defining of indigenous self and resistance in relation to the oppressor, and rather recalls to our minds the power of choice that we have never lost to determine our actions and therefore influence the quality of our own lives.

The importance of this book for validating my own academic and educational journey is immense, but perhaps more elucidating is the light shed upon my own life. Hana O’Regan frankly shares her own story of language acquisition, “Resisting language death—A personal exploration”, which gives me renewed vigour to pursue my own reclamation of my cultural heritage, not least of all for my daughter. Hana has written eloquently:

…I made a pledge to myself and my two beautiful newborn babies… that I would raise them in Māori and that their Māori language would not be something that they had to fight for and struggle to learn. I did not want my children to have to deal with the kinds of identity conflicts and struggles that I myself have had to confront. I was determined that for them it would be a normal part of who they were, it would be natural and it would be theirs. (p. 97)

This heartfelt statement speaks volumes about the nature of identity and its relationship to a culture’s language, what it means in a real sense and the importance of that identity to indigenous peoples.

This book offers comfort in the knowledge that indigenous peoples of the planet are sharing a common struggle and that we can draw on our differences as much as our similarities to retain our ability to define, identify and evolve as we chose. There is a deeper comfort in knowing that the bounds of academia have been infiltrated by the quality of scholarship that each of these authors displays in their own field
for the furthering of the discipline of Transcultural Indigenous Studies, while still retaining an ability (at least in my mind) to relate and communicate to the hearts and minds of their readers.


RAPATA WIRI

Te Whare Wananga o Awanuiārangi

Whaikōrero—The Māori World of Māori Oratory by Poia Rewi is the first comprehensive book on Māori oratory to be published. Whaikōrero is an important element of mātauranga Māori ‘Māori knowledge’ and is one of the dynamic ways in which mātauranga Māori is still practised and reproduced in the 21st century and articulated on marae throughout New Zealand. Māori orators are revered in Māori society and are likened to maunga kōrero ‘speaking mountains’ and as manu kōrero ‘talking birds’. In this book, Rewi captures the essence of the art of whaikōrero and provides an easy to read, step by step guide to whaikōrero from a pan-tribal Māori perspective.

The book provides an important and valuable contribution to our understanding of whaikōrero. The structure of the book is very practical and provides clear, concise explanations and interpretations of fundamental aspects of Māori knowledge, customs and beliefs. The book starts with the questions of what, how and why? Then it delves into the symbolism, content and structure of whaikōrero. The book begins with a chapter entitled “What is whaikōrero?” Rewi examines the origins of whaikōrero and then gives a precise definition of the functional essence of whaikōrero. Rewi then turns to discuss the innate meaning of the term “whaikōrero” through the content and themes of whaikōrero. The chapter is interesting and provides some insightful comments by renowned Māori orators which Rewi balances well with academic definitions of whaikōrero. Chapter Three discusses “How to learn whaikōrero” and explains how whaikōrero was taught in pre-European times, and how it is taught now in contemporary times. This chapter also provides an interesting discussion of the transfer of Māori knowledge. Chapter Four looks at the rituals of encounter and protocols around whaikōrero and the symbolism of the marae, the courtyard where whaikōrero are performed. Rewi concludes with a discussion about formal and informal whaikōrero, and the conduct, identity and connectedness between hosts and visitors. This chapter includes a discussion on the role whaikōrero plays in bringing these two groups together.

Chapter Five turns to the topic of “Who can perform whaikōrero?” The discussion begins with the role of whakapapa or lineage in whaikōrero and then turns to the controversial topic of whether women are allowed to perform whaikōrero on the marae. Rewi has handled this topic well by drawing upon interviews with 34 different elders about their views on women and whaikōrero. He talks about the ways in which Pākehā have condemned Māori oratory for being sexist, but emphasises how men and women have different roles on the marae. Chapter Six analyses the skills that are needed for the performance of whaikōrero: a sound knowledge of the language, the