But most of all in this chapter I appreciated Nanau’s ‘tok tok but no do do’ syndrome—the state where outcomes are all the same – the ‘tok tok but no do do’ where the word research is bandied about but those who could assist with that research are unconcerned with tangible inputs to boost research. I am sure that such a syndrome resonates widely!

The book ends with “Without sharing we will be like leaves blown with the wind”, a lyrical overview by geographer Eric Waddell, now retired in Canada. His paper is an excellent way to wrap up such a valuable book and a wonderful tribute to Murray Chapman whom he had known for decades.

Waddell looks at ways of defining Oceania, and very importantly reminds us (p. 323) that “what is learned in seminars, related in theses, is, further down the line, then enacted in parliaments, boardrooms and classrooms”. And there is the crux—all Pacific scholarship and research is valuable, not simply for its own sake, but for what it represents and what influence it may have.

Pacific research can be in film, poetry, medicine or economics. It can be provocative, challenging, “improper” and it can be discipline based or not. Pacific research can have influences on the global stage, and influences on peoples’ lives—not only of our colleagues and politicians, but also on our families, wherever they are.

Tanggio tumas Professor Judith Bennett for bringing together a very fine collection of writing from across Oceania and beyond. This book, carefully read, or dipped into over time, has the power to change lives and to rethink our attitudes, not only to journeys and sojourns, but for what they mean for Pacific scholarship, learning and understanding.

References


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In the summer of 1998, Agreasearch applied to the Environmental Risk Management Authority (ERMA) for consent for a genetic modification project. Human genetic material was to be inserted into cattle with the hope that the protein would appear in their milk and assist in research into multiple sclerosis. The Institute stood on ancestral lands of the Ngāti Wairere hapū ‘subtribe’ who opposed the application on the grounds that genetic modification involving different species was contrary to their tikanga ‘custom’, specifically it was an interference in the whakapapa ‘genealogy’ and mauri ‘life force’ of both species involved. ERMA approved the project noting it doubted whether on a population basis, interference in Ngāti Wairere beliefs could
have the widespread effects and harm claimed. The problem ERMA said was that Ngāti Wairere were advancing an outmoded notion of tradition formed well before modern research on genetic modification.

Cases such as these are commonly heard by the New Zealand common law courts. In recent years the courts have been asked to determine what is an *iwi* ‘tribe’ for the purposes of the Sealord Fisheries settlement; whether building a prison might disturb a *taniwha* ‘supernatural water creature’ lurking beneath the surface; and whether depositing sludge that could contain body tissue offended *tikanga* or is in fact consistent with it. These cases land before the courts owing to the many statutory directions made in legislation to take Māori custom and values into account. For example, before a local authority can grant a resource consent it must first “recognise and provide for... the relationship of Māori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral lands, water, sites, waahi tapu, and other taonga” (Section 6(e) RMA 1991).

Custom law is not limited to the courts. It has played a fundamental role in the Māori renaissance since the 1960s and 1970s. Māori activists placed great emphasis on distinctive *Māoritanga* (Māoriness) and *iwi-tanga* (*iwi* identity) and a desire for Māori sovereignty. And reforms followed. Most significantly, Treaty settlements were made with *iwi* which contain not only commercial but cultural redress. Efforts have been made by the Law Commission to weave custom into reforms relating to succession, women’s access to justice and *iwi* governance. Custom plays a central role in Māori Land Court deliberations. The tension between custom and human rights and conservation laws are regularly debated in the news media.

With the increasing prevalence of custom, a fundamental question arises about its contemporary application as exemplified by the ERMA decision. Questions arise as to its authenticity and true content—rendered complicated by the political and legal context in which the questions typically arise. Occasionally, litigation over custom seems to be a proxy battle for the exercise of greater political control over use of the resources. The claim to customary title to the foreshore, for example, was motivated by Ngāti Apa’s struggle to enter the aquaculture industry in the Marlborough Sounds. There is now a large body of work in political and culture theory about the strategic use of tradition and custom in advancing claims of peoples. And this includes some powerful critiques of indigenous rights’ movements and what is said to be their over-reliance on custom in claims-making. By emphasising custom, they argue, Indigenous Peoples are giving up on more transformational economic and political reforms (see Karen Engle, 2010, on indigenous development).

*Te Mātāpunenga* does not attempt to directly answer these questions. Rather, the book is aimed at excavating customary concepts and explaining their content and meaning as rendered by a variety of sources, most of which are historical. However in doing so, the project will go a long way towards addressing the issues of proof, authenticity and essentialism because of its careful selection of authoritative and insightful sources. *Te Mātāpunenga* does this with much elegance and intelligence. Balancing this book in your hands—its 551 pages—one feels the weight of the many clever minds that went into its creation. The authors are highly respected experts in this field and the project has its genesis in the work of Te Matahauriki Institute which was supported by the likes of Dame Joan Metge, Sir Edward Durie and Judge Mick Brown.
The book is comprised of “Entries” in alphabetical order—121 in total, ranging from *Ahi ka* ‘continuous occupation of, and right to land’ to *Whiu* ‘to punish’. Each entry contains a brief explanation of the concept. This is followed by an “Entry Guide”, which contains a more detailed description of the term and its historical and contemporary use supported by “References”—the latter references contain transcriptions of the original sources that use the concept. Some of the entries—e.g., *Hakari* ‘feast’—run into several pages, peppered with illustrations. Others such as *Tupapaku* ‘body of a dead person or the seriously ill’ fill one page. The “References” contain the high grade ore, having been carefully selected from a wide range of historical and contemporary sources including Māori periodicals, the journals of *rangatira* and of colonial and imperial officials, *whakatauki* ‘proverbs’, and academic scholarship.

The long-term ambition of the authors is to foster the creation of a bi-cultural jurisprudence that draws on both Māori and Pakehā value systems. If there is to be any serious consideration of custom law’s application today, then the starting point has to be this very process of sifting through the historical and contemporary record for good evidence of how it has been used in fact. *Te Mātāpunenga* is the only scholarly attempt at that and so it is unique and much needed. Now, one cannot help but wonder about the next step in the ongoing project—custom’s contemporary use and application and the development of a truly bi-cultural jurisprudence in New Zealand’s legal system.

References


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In *Abundance and Resilience*… Field and Graves reveal the archaeology of Nu‘alolo Kai, an important site on the northwest coast of Kaua‘i in the Hawaiian Islands. The archaeological importance of Nu‘alolo Kai derives from the site’s relative isolation, well-preserved features, and its abundant and diverse artefacts. The data and analyses in this book contribute new knowledge of Hawaiian life and cultural change over a continuous sequence, beginning with the first occupations at approximately AD 1300 until the end of permanent habitation in the early 1900s. Until recently, much of this knowledge was trapped in the store rooms of the Bishop Museum in Honolulu, as the vast majority of the archaeological collections, those from 132 m² of excavation in the 1950s–1960s, were largely unanalysed and unreported (the results of a 4 m² excavation in 1990 have been published). The work in the book is based on a sample of over half of the approximately 18,000 items recovered from Nu‘alolo Kai.