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REVIEWS

TAPSELL, Paul: *Kāinga: People, Land, Belonging*. Wellington: BWB Texts, 2021. 160 pp., afterword, bio, notes. NZ\$14.99/4.99 (softcover/e-book).

POUNAMU JADE WILLIAM EMERY AIKMAN

Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Wairere, Ngāti Apakura, Ngāti Awa, Ngāi Te Rangī, Ngāti Tarāwhai, Te Arawa, Ngāti Uenukukōpako
Harvard University

With elegant prose, and inflected with ancestrally ordained urgency, Paul Tapsell's *Kāinga: People, Land, Belonging* (2021) is a tour de force of reckoning: how, as Indigenous peoples, do we reconcile an epoch of colonially fuelled ecological collapse? Told through his own experiences as an uri (descendant)¹ of the dynasties of Te Arawa and Tainui, Tapsell confronts this deeply troubling, existentially pressing concern throughout the pages of *Kāinga*. As global environmental destruction consistently lays bare the fractured foundations of a world built on consumption in excess, Tapsell recounts a compelling narrative of loss, injustice and resource (mis)management, in New Zealand's settler colonial context. As a microcosm of the world's unrepentant acceleration toward climate disaster, he asks the critical question, "[W]ill humanity still be part of Earth's future after her inevitable reset?" (p. 9). What unfolds in *Kāinga* is not so much a response to this query as an impassioned plea to change course before transgressing the event horizon, the proverbial point of no return.

At its heart, *Kāinga* explores the integral relationship between tangata (people) and whenua (place, land, placenta) within the Māori cosmos, and how this fusion remains interrupted by colonisation and extractive, exploitative capitalism. Drawing from the experiences of his upbringing, and indeed the world of his tūpuna (ancestors), Tapsell details how the ancestors of Māori existed in a "genealogically interconnected world of environmental accountability" (p. 7). Here, tangata were nurtured by their local environments, and, in turn, acted as kaitiaki (guardians) over their whenua. The dual meaning encoded in whenua, both as land and placenta—a phenomenon shared across Oceania (Jolly 2007: 515; see Kahn 2000: 10)—amplifies this primordial, necessarily symbiotic relationship between tangata and whenua (Walker 1990: 70; see also Aikman 2015: 76). The common Māori term tangata whenua (people of the land) is thus far more than a demonym for Māori, denoting the Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand, but an ontologically profound eponym grounded in place and

invoked through obligation and responsibility. In times past, this matrix, this interface between people and place, was materialised through the institution of *kāinga* (known also as *marae*, *papa-kāinga*, or *pā*): village communities bound together through *whakapapa* (a universe genealogically ordered through kinship and descent), exercising *mana* (ancestral authority) over their *whenua* in maintaining balance—ecologically, socially and politically (Tapsell 2021: 7). Tapsell opens in the introduction (pp. 7–10) by exploring *kāinga* in this way, before comparing it to the cumulative climate disasters of humankind’s creation, which continue to threaten our planetary existence. Across the opening section, “He Tohu” (pp. 11–24), he reflects on his own upbringing, a life framed by *kāinga* relationships, both to *whenua* and *tangata*. Whether on adventures exploring the breadth of his ancestral landscapes of home or listening to stories and epics of aeons past by his elders, we see through Tapsell’s eyes a life defined by *kāinga*, in place as in people.

Central to *kāinga* was the ritual passage of *taonga* (ancestral treasures imbued with generational responsibility) at crisis points such as death, of the human or ecological kind. As vessels of ancestral knowledge, reciprocity and obligation, *taonga* may be ritually performed as brokers of peace or bequeathed to the next generation of kin, as enduring symbols of accountability over the sustainable management of *whenua* and her resources (pp. 49–50). Thus, so Tapsell distils in formulaic expression, “*kāinga* = *tangata* + *whenua* + *taonga*” (pp. 51, 49–51). Today, 780 *kāinga* remain across Aotearoa, the “genealogical embodiment” of this matrix (p. 8). It is this elemental formula of life, shaped by a storehouse of knowledge accumulated over millennia of voyaging across Oceania’s expanse (p. 48), that was destructively ruptured through the epoch of colonisation, in Aotearoa and beyond. The usurpation of the principal economic and spiritual base—*whenua*—in the latter nineteenth century was central to this, and defines Māori existence today inasmuch as it does for Tapsell’s Te Arawa kin and recent *tūpuna*. Once-prosperous *kāinga*, who had flourished in the early contact period with British and Europeans from the 1830s, were eventually overcome by a colonial tsunami. Through the rapidly increasing settler population and related demands for land (pp. 78–79; see also Petrie 2006); British military aggression in the 1860s, and subsequent indiscriminate confiscation of land; imposition of foreign land tenure systems (Tapsell 2021: 58–86); and sacrifice upon foreign battlefields through two world wars (pp. 16–17), the tripartite ancestral blueprint of *kāinga* was thrown askew. More on this shortly.

In “Māori: Being Normal” (chapter 2), Tapsell then turns to his departure from *kāinga*, and from Aotearoa more broadly, to explore the opportunities beckoning across the world’s continents (p. 26). Upon his return in the 1980s, he is confronted by tectonic shifts in ecological and political environments.

With biculturalism emerging as a political ideology espousing ostensible racial equality between Māori and Pākehā (New Zealanders of British European descent) (an oxymoron in name and conceptualisation) and his kāinga and whenua facing environmental disasters through pollution and damage to resource bases, home had become an unfamiliar landscape. And so, in “Takarangi: Out of Balance” (chapter 3), Tapsell emphasises the need to maintain balance in local ecological settings, lest kin communities suffer the fallout of environmental catastrophe (pp. 42–57). In this, he explores in depth the concept of mauri (p. 44), an energy system of the universe that must be kept in balance “between Ranginui (space or cosmos) and Papa (mass or Earth)[,] [the outcome of which] is our biosphere, the thin blue-green envelope ... called whenua” (p. 44). Maintaining this delicate balance at ecological, social and political levels was the central, hallowed responsibility of kāinga and their associated rangatira (ennobled chieftains) in preserving whenua for generational perpetuity.

In chapters 4, 5 and 6, Tapsell unpacks the impacts of colonisation, assimilation and land alienation for his kin communities (pp. 58–117). With the majority of whenua dispossessed by the twentieth century, kāinga unravelled as spaces of mana and authority, with kin later leaving the comparative poverty of the homelands towards prospects of better living in distant cities (see p. 89), or further afield to Australia. Individualised title to land, a concept incompatible with traditional communal modes of land tenure, wrought singular havoc in fragmenting the already shattered remains of Māori landholdings (pp. 109–17). Although wages brought a measure of wealth to urban kin, as well as intermittent remittances to kāinga communities, the typical reliance on industry-based wage labour meant that when times were good, they were great, but when they were bad, “Māori were first to lose their jobs” (p. 92). Here, again, kāinga receded into the margins of social, political and economic life.

Telling the story of colonial history through the lens of kāinga is a core strength of Tapsell’s work, exemplifying how histories can be told from an uncompromising Indigenous perspective. But it is his engaging, reflexive tone that will engross both Māori and Pākehā readership alike, for *Kāinga* is not a polemic diatribe intent on ruinous blame. Rather, it traces the journey of encounter between Māori—which, of course, includes Tapsell’s Te Arawa ancestors—and the settler state, characterised initially by mutual prosperity, negotiation and innovation, before the settler voice came to dominate the political and economic conversations in Aotearoa New Zealand. In this colonial context, however, he emphasises the inventive and determined responses by kin in rising to the challenges facing kāinga and whenua, and so both tūpuna and uri alike take flight across *Kāinga*’s pages as resolute, agentive beings, fully cognisant of their colonially ensconced realities.

Yet the present-day suffering of Māori—framed as “Māori are failures because of inherent deficiency”, and repeated in the closed echo chamber of national airwaves—is unequivocally tied to the original displacement, erasure and destruction of kāinga, both as places to live and as modalities of existence (p. 98). But for the Crown, the severing of tangata from whenua in this manner remains the paragon of colonial success, transplanting an ideology of aggressive, profit-driven exploitation, with no cause for obligation, reciprocity or sustainability (see p. 100). By first detailing the equilibrium Māori (or rather, kāinga) achieved through tangata + whenua + taonga in early chapters of the book, the aggregate loss objectively experienced by Māori from the 1860s, as kāinga vanished into twilight, becomes painfully apparent. This feeling is amplified as Tapsell continues describing the fallout, both physical and epistemic, endured by Māori, where loss of knowledge and memories of place, responsibility and kaitiakitanga (guardianship) were swept aside by the bricks and mortar of colonisation’s outward expanse (see p. 86).

Of particular interest for many younger, urban Māori will be how Tapsell unpacks the history and politics of “Iwification” (chapter 7), or the rise of Iwi-with-a-capital-I (large natural grouping of multiple hapū; Indigenous Māori nation), in place of hapū (clans, collections of related kāinga) and kāinga. Historically, iwi were large, temporary groupings of related hapū that only came together to avert crises (p. 122), but their numerical consolidation was a convenient frame for the Crown to both know and engage with “Māori” as a people (p. 123). Iwi, as a frame of reference, only gained prominence in the 1990s, with corporate Iwi entities becoming the “go to” for negotiation and dealing with the Crown, particularly in redressing breaches of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Te Tiriti). This is confounding for Tapsell, because he, like his senior kin, grew up in a hapū- and kāinga-framed world, where “terms like Iwi and Indigenous were still unknown to my elders [in the 1990s]” (p. 123). His is an increasingly unique experience, given the number of Māori with little connection to “home”, but is needed to help bridge the widening chasm between disconnected kin and their whenua. Thus, for the myriad of disenfranchised and dislocated urban Māori, Iwi identification is, more and more, a stirring source of pride and an emblem of ancestral belonging.

The rise of Iwi is not in name alone: in the Crown’s attempt to remedy its inherent wrongs under Te Tiriti, Post-Settlement Governance Entities (PSGEs) have arisen as legal bodies representing Iwi, under whom settlement benefits are administered and distributed to subscribed Iwi descendant bases. In this, the mana of kāinga has evaporated, “effectively [stripping] tino rangatiratanga—sovereign authority of the rangatira and hapū over their whenua, kāinga, and taonga” (p. 126). Kāinga leadership has become

buried beneath boardroom tables (p. 131), and while this has allowed kin to prosper through opportunities such as education scholarships, it has erased the original ancestral obligation and responsibility tethered within the kāinga equation of tangata + whenua + taonga.

And so we arrive at our crisis point, a state of profound ecological disequilibrium, produced by and through the exaltation of profit and exploitation of land-as-land, not land-as-whenua. The solution, Tapsell insists, lies in reconnecting tangata to whenua, through the resurgence and reempowerment of kāinga, as brokers of sustainable resource management and kin accountability to place. Here, the mana, or local kin responsibility for ecological and social equilibrium, would return from boardroom chambers to local kāinga communities (p. 139). In this, Tapsell echoes the calls for constitutional transformation in Aotearoa, as detailed in the landmark reports *He Whakaaro Here Whakaumu mō Aotearoa: The Report of Matike Mai Aotearoa* (Independent Working Group on Constitutional Transformation 2018) and *He Puapua: Report of the Working Group on a Plan to Realise the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Aotearoa/New Zealand* (Charters *et al.* 2019). Such a tectonic shift in New Zealand's constitutional arrangements would embody the original vision rangatira assented to in Te Tiriti, in 1840. This would see Māori governance of things Māori (rangatiratanga), Crown governance of its own affairs (kāwanatanga) and a joint sphere to deliberate upon matters of mutual concern (Charters *et al.* 2019: vi). *Matike Mai's* observation, resonant with Tapsell's, is here fitting:

[A] full and final “settling” of colonisation should mean more than a cash payment and even an apology. It requires a transformative shift in thinking to properly establish the constitutional relationship that Te Tiriti intended by restoring the authority that was once exercised through mana and rangatiratanga. (Independent Working Group on Constitutional Transformation 2018: 29)

This would enshrine the right of hapū to exercise their unqualified, absolute autonomy, sovereignty and self-determination (Tapsell 2021: 140–41), especially in matters of resource management and sustainability. Here, Tapsell explains, the ritual funerary farewell of tangihanga would be “re-elevated”, as the transcendent transference of responsibility and accountability, from the deceased to the living, through the instrument of taonga (p. 142). In so doing, “the dead [are released] for their journey to the next world” (p. 142), their earthly obligations now passed on to the next generation of kin. And so, the ancestral architecture of tangata + whenua + taonga would endure, and at last, we would be on equal footing, as our rangatira had envisioned over 180 years ago.

But as compelling as Tapsell's meditations are, are kāinga really ready for such transformation, for such responsibility, given their present impoverished state, and the mass dislocation of tangata from whenua? Does the requisite economic, political and generational will exist, given how restrictive the shackles of colonialism are? Although history inevitably invokes responses of pessimism, the languishing of Māori below the poverty line (see p. 141), the human-induced damage to local and global environments, and the terrifying prospect of nuclear war amidst the uneasy triangle of Russia, NATO and Ukraine (Bokat-Lindell 2022; Falk 2022) beseech us to respond as our tūpuna before us: in radical, innovative and outside-the-box ways. "Perhaps I am dreaming", Tapsell writes, "[b]ut if we don't step outside our current reality and view things from a new perspective, then we will never find solutions" (p. 147). *Kāinga* is outstanding in its substance, prose and invocation. As a text, it will be a welcome read for Māori, young and old, Indigenous students worldwide wanting to learn of Aotearoa's colonial history from a tribal perspective, and Pākehā still coming to terms with their roles and responsibilities upon unceded whenua. Well after putting the book down, Tapsell's entreating plea resonates with ancestral urgency: "Dare we elevate kāinga as a way of achieving regionalised ecological accountability, and in the process can we bring humanity back into balance with the universe?" (p. 10).

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NOTE

1. An exception has been made in this book review for the author to alter the journal regulations on the glossing of non-English words in order to honour the content and spirit of the words. Style guidelines are currently under review at *Waka Kuaka*.

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LEE, Georgia and Paul Horley: *The Rock Art of Rapa Nui*. Rapa Nui: Rapanui Press, 2018. 313 pp., illus., US\$25.00 (hardcover).

RAFAŁ WIECZOREK

University of Warsaw

Rock art is an important archaeological research area all over the world. No different is the Pacific region, and Polynesia in particular, where rock art is studied in many areas. Of all the Polynesian islands Rapa Nui (Easter Island) possesses the richest and most diverse set of rock art. With *The Rock Art of Rapa Nui*, Georgia Lee and Paul Horley aim to comprehensively document all the rock art present on Rapa Nui.

This book, although published in 2018, has only been generally available since late 2020. Amid covid pandemic restrictions its availability outside Chile, where it was printed, was very limited, but it is now finally reaching more and more researchers. It is the third monograph on the rock art of Rapa Nui, after the pioneering work of Henri Lavachery (1939) and the seminal study of Georgia Lee (1992), the latter having been, until now, the benchmark reference work for anyone interested in Rapanui iconography. From now, however, all publications should be referring to this new work by Lee and Horley.

In its preface, the book states that it is merely a second edition of Georgia Lee’s 1992 book *Rock Art of Easter Island: Symbols of Power, Prayers to the Gods*. The actual product, however, delivers much more than this. Although the general outline of the 1992 book has been preserved, with the same