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**Jacinta Ruru and Linda Waimarie Nikora (Editors), *Ngā Kete Mātauranga: Māori Scholars at the Research Interface***

**Carwyn Jones**

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Jacinta Ruru and Linda Waimarie Nikora (Editors), *Ngā Kete Mātauranga: Māori Scholars at the Research Interface* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2021), 304pp. NZ\$60. ISBN: 978-1-9885-9255-8.

*Ngā Kete Mātauranga: Māori Scholars at the Research Interface* is a powerful collection of the accounts of twenty-four Māori researchers, each addressing his or her experiences of working in the research sector. The collection is edited by Jacinta Ruru and Linda Waimarie Nikora, the co-directors of Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga/New Zealand's Māori Centre of Research Excellence. Contributors come from a wide range of disciplines, covering anthropology, economics, geology, history, physics, political science, and zoology, amongst others. Having these accounts collected together is revealing. It demonstrates the breadth of Māori scholarship and research excellence. The contributors all speak of a love for their work and their discipline. They are highly-trained and successful within their particular field of expertise and they all, in their different ways, are engaging with mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) in their work. And yet, the contributions that these scholars make, the value they bring to their disciplines, is not always well-recognised.

Mātauranga Māori can be understood as Māori knowledge. The concept of mātauranga 'encompasses not only *what* is known but also *how* it is known – that is, the way of perceiving and understanding the world, and the values or systems of thought that underpin those perceptions. 'Mātauranga Māori' therefore refers not only to Māori knowledge, but also to the Māori way of knowing.' The title of the collection, 'Ngā Kete Mātauranga', refers to the baskets of knowledge a crucial framework for the collection which Jacinta Ruru further describes this important framing for the collection:

'Te Kete Aronui lives with each of us today, enabling our mātauranga of the world around us. We bring mātauranga with us, into our research, because we know that many solutions for transformative social change lie within the knowledge systems and practices of our ancestors, and because mātauranga provides us with a means to study the universe from a Māori worldview. By valuing mātauranga Māori, and te reo Māori [Māori language] and ngā tikanga Māori [Māori practices and protocols], Māori researchers use dual knowledge systems (Indigenous and discrete Western disciplinary knowledge) to fill their kete (basket), and offer these kete to us all so that we can better know and understand how to make our place better for generations to come.'

Mātauranga Māori is relevant to all fields of research, as demonstrated by the range of disciplines from which the contributors are drawn. Importantly, this collection also makes it clear that mātauranga Māori is not something that sits frozen in the past. Rather, Māori knowledge and knowledge systems are relevant and applicable to current research questions in all disciplines. Additionally, contributors to the collection are all involved in the production of new knowledge, new mātauranga Māori.

Many of the contributors write of their experiences in research and academia as a journey. That journey often involves some separation from their discipline, or at least needing to create new space within that discipline in order to find one's place. Geographer Naomi Simmonds begins with a point of departure 'I left geography in a similar way one might leave a relationship that was comfortable but not satisfying.'

Yet, these researchers remain deeply committed to and passionate about their research. Simmonds concludes her contribution with the following lines:

‘In some ways my success in geography has led to my departure from the discipline, as I have been able to ask the critical questions and to challenge the colonial origins and ongoing colonial and patriarchal permeations that exist within the walls and theories of geography departments around the world. I have pursued pathways that have criticised the discipline and led me to a ‘new’ but ancient set of geographical knowledge that is always inherently about relationships to place, politics and power. These are the geographies that are grounded within the lands and waters of my ancestors; the geographies of my home, which are both critical and hopeful, decolonising and transformative. These are the geographies I love and want to know more of.’

The resilience and determination that underpins all the accounts in this collection is both hopeful and inspiring.

It should also be noted that this is a strikingly beautiful book. It includes stunning photographs of all the researchers who have contributed to the collection, taken in locations of some meaning and significance to the researcher. Often these photographs are taken in the researcher’s home and with family members – parents, children, and siblings all feature. This reinforces that these accounts are deeply personal stories of the researcher’s engagement with research and the importance of connectedness and relationships within Māori knowledge systems. Tahu Kukutai, writing of photographs of her ancestors, notes ‘They remind me of the relationality of knowledge and the breadth of our connections, as Māori. On the many nights when I am up late working and the rest of the whānau [family] are sleeping, they remind me that there is purpose and a reason for what I do, and to whom I am accountable.’ In their concluding comments, the editors identify themes that recur throughout the accounts of these twenty-four Māori scholars. One theme is that ‘We are often lonely in academia’, reflecting the very small number of Māori academics in most university departments. One of the most important aspects of this collection is that it shows that Māori researchers are not alone in their experiences. Across disciplines and institutions, Māori researchers are encountering similar kinds of challenges while making similarly valuable contributions to their fields. There is a real strength in bringing these experiences together. At the same time, these collected experiences lay down a challenge for institutions and disciplines to decolonise, to recognise and make space for Māori knowledge and Māori researchers – to be better.

*Carwyn Jones, Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington*