



Book Review

Te Mahi Oneone Hua Parakore: A Māori Soil Sovereignty and Wellbeing Handbook

Edited by Jessica Hutchings and Jo Smith

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Te Mahi Oneone Hua Parakore: A Māori Soil Sovereignty and Wellbeing Handbook provides an in-depth look at the role of soil in Māori health and well-being. Hua Parakore is a nature-based Kaupapa Māori (indigenous) system and framework for growing organic kai (food). The book is divided into two sections. Part one investigates various components of the framework used to understand Hua Parakore, while part two consists of examples of the connection between Māori and oneone (soil). The aim of the book is not to present soil as the economic resource it is often viewed as, but rather as an integral part of the indigenous realities of Aotearoa New Zealand. This is done by demonstrating how its mana (supernatural force) can be elevated by understanding the links between soil, whakapapa (genealogy), tūpuna (ancestry), rangatiratanga (sovereignty), and hauora (well-being).

Part one consists of four chapters, which address the topics of developing an understanding of soil health and well-being, the role of soil in human health, and the depth of Māori soil knowledge. The first chapter, written by the editors, describes the six interconnected core values of Hua Parakore. The chapter then explores how these values are incorporated into discussions around soil health and well-being, through the health of the wider environment. The framework acknowledges that different landscapes have different requirements, and the values of Hua Parakore can be used to identify suitable management practices and strategies for enhancing soil health and well-being. The values of the Hua Parakore framework provide a starting point for land management decisions that integrate the needs of the wider environment, including the relationship between people and soil.

Chapter two, by senior Māori environmental scientist Garth Harmsworth, looks at how the health and well-being of Māori is driven by connections to the soil. These connections include whakapapa, ancestral stories and legends, and turangawaewae (sense of place), which are important aspects of identity. The chapter also discusses the link between Māori well-being and the environment by using four hauora frameworks, each encompassing various physical, mental, spiritual, environmental, and cultural aspects as drivers of health and well-being. There is emphasis throughout the chapter on considering humans as part of the environment, not separate from it.

Chapter three, written by Kaupapa Māori researcher and Hua Parakore farmer, Jessica Hutchings, demonstrates the importance of advocating for the rights of ancestral soils to honour the relationship between Māori and soil, and to re-establish the links between soil and health to improve all dimensions of well-being. The chapter begins with a discussion of the importance of soil in the connections between people,

culture, and the environment through the introduction of concepts including tikanga (customs) and kaitiakitanga (guardianship). Using the Hua Parakore framework, Hutchings then presents ways that food production and soil management can be returned to natural processes and practices to improve soil and human health and well-being.

The final chapter in part one is provided by Nick Roskrige, a horticulturalist, ethnobotanist, and an expert in Māori resource and environmental management. This chapter continues to define the links between Māori and soil through whakapapa, horticulture, and the practices involved in the naming and classification of soil by Māori. A list of 60 names given to different soils by Māori describing their properties and identifying their features or uses, demonstrates extensive knowledge of the functions and limitations of soils across the New Zealand landscape. A seemingly obvious, but often forgotten point raised by Roskrige is that soils were, and are, relied upon for survival, and if the mauri (life force) of the soil is degraded, the health of those reliant on it is also affected.

Part two comprises nine examples of the relationship between tāngata and whenua, people and the land, obtained through kōrero (interviews). These kōrero were conducted by various Māori researchers with individuals and groups who are described as soil heroes. A range of interviewers and interviewees were used to produce chapters which highlight the importance of the connections between people and soil in a variety of situations. These kōrero include advocating to return the soil to a natural, organic state that is representative of Papatūānuku (earth mother), the processes of building a rammed earth house, school involvement in food production and regenerative planting, the role of soil in homeopathy, and the importance of soil in healthy food production. The individual and community benefits arising from connecting with and improving the mauri of soil is a recurring theme throughout part two of the book.

Of the chapters in part two, I found chapter seven the most interesting because of the way in which the schools connection with the soil resource benefits the wider school community. In this chapter Yvonne Taura, a kairangahau (Māori researcher) and science communicator has kōrero with Hōhepa Hei, a kaiako (teacher) at Te Wharekura a Maniapoto in Te Kūiti. Hōhepa describes an initiative developed by the wharekura (indigenous Māori secondary school) to enhance the learning of the tauira (students) and grow their understanding of kaitiakitanga, strengthen their connections to the whenua and soil, and learn practical skills to enable them to support their whānau (families). The programme includes the building, use and understanding of pātaka kai (traditional food storage), establishment of a māra kai (vegetable garden), and running a native nursery. These project-based learning opportunities have been developed into the school's curriculum, with tauira able to gain NCEA science credits. The establishment of the māra kai in response to the needs of the community, provides an opportunity for the tauira to grow kai to take home to their whānau, while learning about harvesting tikanga (protocols), how to care for and develop the soil into healthy and productive growing beds, and grow connections with their community through working bees and distributing kai. The aim of these projects is to do more than just grow food and plants, it is to develop a greater understanding of kaitiakitanga, traditional skills, and to enhance community health and well-being through good kai and community connection.

This book was easy to read with detailed chapters that were broken into smaller sections. The book incorporates a large amount of Te Reo Māori, with ample translation so that even those with little to no knowledge of the Māori language would be able to read and understand the book. Key concepts are supported by diagrams, enabling readers to visualise the various links and interconnections that are common themes throughout the book, and photographs enable greater connection to the stories being told. As a soil scientist, this book demonstrated to me the often-overlooked, in-depth knowledge of soil and soil management that Māori have. This book also provides an understanding of the need for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research to progress soil science, as it clearly demonstrates that soil is not only important

for food production but is also central to social connections, health and well-being. Everyone from home and community gardeners, people interested in sustainability, Hua Parakore and mahika kai, to scientists would benefit from reading this book. The ways in which people are connected to the soil and how these connections can be enhanced are set out in a variety of different ways, so there is something everyone can take away from this and apply or consider when carrying out their own mahi (work) related to food production or environmental protection.

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