

Waka Wairua
Imagining an Other way of knowing our Pacific

Paul Tapsell
University of Otago

Empires and cultures of the Pacific
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This keynote builds off last year's NZSA presentations by Robert Hannah *Polynesian Astronomy and Navigation* and Paul Tapsell: *Polynesian Expansion: a re-examination*. Seemingly disconnected evidence continues to mount from various academic disciplines, suggesting the Eastern Polynesian expansion was more deliberate and far reaching than the current archaeological reductionist hypothesis being proposed by Athol Anderson (*Tangata whenua: an illustrated history*. BWB. Wellington. 2014). He asserts Eastern Polynesian sailing technology (double sprit sail) was technologically incapable of sailing against the wind until the late 17th century when the Indonesian influence of the lateen sail was introduced to Eastern Polynesians. In my presentation I will systematically unpack (re)emerging knowledge, supporting East Polynesians' long held understanding that their ancestors once carried a sophisticated understanding of navigation and multiple-voyaging technology (Tapsell – Rauru und die Entstehung der Ngā Whare Wānanga o Te Arawa. In *House of Rauru – Masterpiece of the Māori*. W. Köpke & B. Schmelz (Eds.). Hamburg. Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg. pp. 90-117). Disciplines like archaeology, linguistics, genetics, geology, astronomy, history (first contact archives), anthropology (ethnographic and genealogically-ordered narratives) and oceanic surveying & hydrography are all grappling with unexplainable human settlement/oceanic patterns of evidence, pre 1500AD that until now were generally dismissed as anomalies. However, if these apparently disparate pieces of evidence are reassembled around the

proposition that Eastern Polynesian ancestors were capable, systematic explorers, who expanded and established trade routes throughout the whole Pacific from 1100AD onward, what new picture emerges? Does this evidence suggest a need to reimagine Pacific exploration and expansion beyond a climactically attributed downwind-only one-way voyaging hypothesis? And if the evidence collectively indicates an advanced interconnected oceanic culture, how, when and why did it collapse? One thing is for certain by the time Europeans entered the Pacific (late 1600s) East Polynesia had become a remote and isolated oceanic collection of island populations. By using slides and an AV presentation I will share my past decade of *predigenous* research and how each appearance of new knowledge over various disciplines has begun shifting analytical thinking back to a more expansive possibility of an *Other* way of knowing our Pacific.

Biography

Paul Tapsell is chair of Māori Studies at the University of Otago. Of Te Arawa and Ngāti Raukawa descent, he has a background in museums and cultural heritage. Paul graduated from the University of Oxford in 1998 with a D.Phil in Museum Ethnography, and has worked as curator of the Rotorua Museum and as Director (Māori) at the Auckland Museum. In the mid-1990s, he was instrumental in the return of Pukaki, a nationally iconic and important taonga (treasure) to his tribe, to Rotorua from the Auckland Museum. Paul's research passions include Pacific-based and marae heritage, customary and entrepreneurial leadership and the potential intersections with today's generation of indigenous youth. He is involved in tribal and national organisations. Paul has published widely on Māori and indigenous topics and has spearheaded the Māori Maps project.