

in recent years. Richard Boast (2013, 2015), for example, in his recent legal-historical study of the operation of the Native Land Court takes great care to separate the practices of judges and the mechanics of the practical operation of the court from its effects on Māori communities. Boast does not dispute the devastating impact that the court had on many Māori communities but cautions against allowing the outcome to obscure the reality of the court's processes and its development of a complex body of law. O'Malley notes the value of understanding the way in which the court operated, but also considers that this cannot be viewed in isolation from the broader context:

Neo-revisionist accounts of the Native Land Court have raised some valid points. Not all judges were unsympathetic towards Māori aspirations and ignorant of their language and customs. Yet many were, and we are still some way off from establishing a new orthodoxy based on a more positive overall assessment of the court. (pp. 196–197)

To some extent, Boast and O'Malley come to their understandings of the Native Land Court in the context of their involvement in the treaty claims process. Both respond to the histories produced through the Waitangi Tribunal process but O'Malley does so more to tease out the implications of those histories rather than to directly challenge them. The historical interpretation of the Native Land Court looks set to continue to be a subject of debate amongst New Zealand historians for some time, yet it is interesting to note the role that the Waitangi

Tribunal process has played in shifting the ground of that debate and in providing an inescapable backdrop to the discussion.

The essays that address the Native Land Court illustrate the thoughtful and insightful character of O'Malley's essays in this collection. Overall, the essays demonstrate a willingness to think differently about key events in New Zealand's colonial history. There appears to be an openness to historical reinterpretation based on developing understandings of context rather than a contrarian drive to be revisionist. This collection might therefore best be seen as opening up a space for further conversations about New Zealand history and identity. There is much in this collection that would sustain such conversations and anyone with an interest in our history will be rewarded for engaging with the ideas that underpin the essays in this collection.

## References

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## Review author

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*Te Whiti o Rongomai and the resistance of Parihaka*. Keenan, Danny. (2015). Wellington, New Zealand: Huia. 276 pp. ISBN 978-1-77550-195-4. Book review DOI: 10.20507/MAIJournal.2016.5.1.8

For numerous New Zealanders, the story of Te Whiti o Rongomai and Parihaka remains a

complete mystery. Like other aspects of New Zealand history surrounding the Land Wars of

the nineteenth century, there continues to be no compulsion within the education system for schools to include this in the social studies or history curricula. Although I was born and educated in Taranaki, am of Te Atiawa and Ngāti Te Whiti descent, and have strong familial links to Parihaka and shares in Parihaka land, my own knowledge of its significance did not materialise until I was student at the University of Auckland in the 1980s.

That more New Zealanders are probably aware of Mahatma Gandhi's commitment to peaceful civil disobedience in India in the early 20th century is grating, when Te Whiti, Tohu Kakahi and their followers were using the same tactics in Taranaki more than 50 years earlier. For many, their consciousness of Parihaka was raised by Dick Scott in *Ask That Mountain* (1975), which is a revised and enlarged version of his earlier work, *The Parihaka Story* (1954). The events at Parihaka from 1878 to 1884 were also written about by Hazel Riseborough in *Days of Darkness* (1989), a more scholarly account than Scott's, which was more accessible to general readers.

This latest contribution by Danny Keenan focuses primarily on Te Whiti, but as his life is inextricably entwined with the wider events at Parihaka, it also adds further to our contextual knowledge concerning them. It also provides readers with an increased understanding of the relationship between Te Whiti and his fellow prophet, Tohu Kakahi. The contribution of Titokowaru to the Parihaka community is also considered. Although primarily known as a military leader, Titokowaru had at various stages of his life veered between war and pacifism, having been a follower of the Pai Marire religion, and leader of the Māori forces in the South Taranaki military campaigns during the 1860s wars.

Using a comprehensive range of primary and secondary materials to piece together the story, Keenan also had the advantage of having strong personal links to Parihaka, which gave him the opportunity to interview and be informed by

late 20th and 21st century kaumātua and leaders from within the community. One of his key informants was the respected Ngāti Te Whiti kaumātua Rangikotuku Rukuwai, who is the great-grandson of Te Whiti o Rongomai, was brought up at Parihaka and was mentored by Rangikotuku Kakahi, the son of Tohu Kakahi. As such, Rangikotuku Rukuwai was able to provide valuable insights into the development, destruction and subsequent revitalisation of Parihaka and the roles played by the different individuals involved.

The early chapters of the book focus on the birth of Te Whiti and include an explanation of his pedigree and descent from Te Whiti Tuatahi, the eponymous ancestor of Ngāti Te Whiti. These chapters also provide an overview of the "state" of Taranaki in the early to mid-19th century, which had been ravaged by war-parties from Waikato and subsequently abandoned by Taranaki tribes, who when they returned found that vast tracts of their land had been sold to the New Zealand Company. The disputes over the land at Waitara, the wars that broke out, and the consequential land confiscations form the backdrop for the next phase of the book. In these chapters, Keenan traces the involvement of Te Whiti and Tohu with the missionary J. F. Riemenschneider and their dalliance with the Pai Marire religion and its prophet, Te Ua Haumene, who had originally embraced the doctrine of peaceful rebellion before resorting to the use of arms.

Keenan reveals that the failure of Te Ua, and his abandonment of his peaceful intentions, was one of the motivations for Te Whiti and Tohu to move their community to Parihaka and to disassociate themselves from the Pai Marire religion. The move to Parihaka provided an environment in which the prophets could contemplate "Maori theologies of peace, cultural authenticity and communal salvation in pursuit of a 'spiritual afterlife'" (p. 77). It is from this point that Parihaka's reputation as place of peace gathered momentum, further enhanced by the willingness to accept new community

members, including followers of Titokowaru on the condition that they commit no more armed resistance. Throughout these chapters, Keenan contextualises the peaceful yet determined protests against surveyors within a strongly charged environment, where there remained a strong sense of distrust of the Parihaka community and its prophets.

The invasion and occupation of Parihaka on 5 November 1881 by Bryce and the Armed Constabulary is not outlined until Chapter 11 (of 13). Included in this chapter are the perspectives of a soldier, Thomas Gudgeon (1887), who was part of the invading force, newspaper reporters who observed the action, and the stories of those who were invaded. In the final chapters, Keenan outlines the aftermath of the invasion, and the subsequent arrest and detention of Te Whiti and Tohu, without trial—justified by the government because their release would “endanger the peace of the colony” (p. 195). The final chapter focuses on the period after the death of both prophets in 1907. Unfortunately, by this stage Te Whiti and Tohu had fallen out; I had hoped that the reason for this would be revealed in this work, but it was not and perhaps it never will be. Apart from this minor disappointment, this biography is a compelling read and is highly recommended.

## Glossary

kaumātua      elder

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- Riseborough, H. (1989). *Days of darkness: Taranaki 1878–1884*. Wellington, New Zealand: Allen & Unwin.
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