

BOOK REVIEWS

The meeting place: Māori and Pākehā encounters, 1642–1840. O'Malley, Vincent. (2012). Auckland, New Zealand: Auckland University Press. 284 pp. ISBN: 9781869405946.

Recently, a colleague suggested I visit a Māori Catholic Church community. “It’s interesting,” he said. “Take a look at the buildings. The Catholics didn’t colonise the Māori, the Māori colonised the Catholics.” I knew exactly what he meant—the prevalence of Māori versions of particular religions is strongly evident on marae, and well documented in academia. But I also happened to be reading Vincent O’Malley’s *The Meeting Place: Māori and Pākehā Encounters, 1642–1840* for this review, so the comment seemed particularly apt.

One of the most compelling fields of historical research and literary production in recent years has focused on the early contact period between indigenous peoples and settlers. There was a historical moment when history’s “winners” and “losers”, to use an outdated turn of phrase, had not yet been determined, when anything could have happened. To return to that time now and investigate it afresh presents us with the opportunity to review long-held assumptions about cultural domination and colonisation. Was it simply a matter of one cultural group dominating the other with supposedly superior technologies and moral systems, or was it much more nuanced than that? O’Malley’s investigation of early encounters between Māori and Pākehā offers a detailed and astute analysis of the evidence, which overwhelmingly supports the latter position.

In 10 chapters, O’Malley traces Māori–Pākehā relations from first contact through to the mid-19th century, covering everything from the tragic consequences of early cultural misinterpretations to the various influences of missionaries, trade and sex. The trade in food, iron and muskets is prominent early on as a key factor in the formation of mutually beneficial relationships. Missionaries prove themselves surprisingly ineffective for the first several decades of contact. And Māori women are shown to have had much more personal agency with regard to their relationships with Pākehā men on the ships than is often assumed. In a way, many of these points won’t be surprising to Māori readers, or to those who have studied early contact New Zealand history. But where O’Malley offers something new is in bringing these separate moments together to form a conclusive picture of what he terms “the middle ground”.

The middle ground refers to the early contact period when Pākehā were dependent on Māori for survival and Māori perceived Pākehā as useful to have around. This resulted in accommodations from both sides, and “in the process both parties sought to appeal to what they thought were the cultural practices of the other” (p. 9). Inevitably both groups “entered a uniquely hybrid world, a world that was neither wholly Māori nor Pākehā. Together

both parties occupied a liminal zone in which fresh meanings and new understandings were possible” (p. 9). This middle ground of cross-cultural accommodation “was a seed which might have taken firmer root in this country’s collective psyche had it not eventually given way to Pākehā hegemony and blinkered monoculturalism from the 1860s onwards” (p. 10).

Some of the most fascinating stories in the book stem from very early moments of cultural collision and misinterpretation; for example, the story of one sailor who thought he had struck a bargain to obtain a female lover, only to be offered three young men in a row. European commentators considered this a sign of the debauchery of Māori culture, but O’Malley turns the assumption around: what were Māori supposed to presume, given that none of the ships arriving in the early days carried any women? These moments reveal how what we know of history is informed by those who tell it, and illustrate the limits and bias of the European point of view from which most accounts of early contact are taken.

Perhaps Māori are already familiar with many of these ideas, but perhaps Māori are not O’Malley’s target audience, or only partly so. There is a sense in some places that this is a text very much centred in a conversation with other historians who may or may not agree with all that is written here. “Of all of the issues traversed in this work,” he states in Chapter 7, “none has attracted more debate amongst historians than the nature of Māori ‘conversion’ to Christianity” (p. 162).

The Meeting Place is an important, thorough, well-reasoned text that I will refer to often. It would be an excellent text for any history student new to the subjects it explores, particularly where it is important to remove cultural blinkers and any assumptions about what early contact in Aotearoa actually looked like.

But it is a book written from a certain cultural point of view and disciplinary position, and is therefore dependent on written sources. In his introduction, O’Malley clearly states the limits of the sources available to him, and admits they cannot reveal the Māori point of view at the time, or even a complete European one. In view of this, the book does an excellent job of revealing something of what these alternate points of view might have been. However, it is evident that what remains to be gathered now is the oral history and hidden Māori writings on the era. Those stories will exist, in whakapapa books, family archives and kaumātua memories of ngā kōrero tuku iho. A companion volume by a Māori historian would be a handsome thing to see. However, perhaps the last words should go to O’Malley, who in his final analysis points out that “Aotearoa/New Zealand did not have to be solely Māori nor Pākehā but could accommodate both cultures and still find ways to meet in between” (p. 227).

Glossary

Aotearoa	New Zealand
kaumātua	elders
marae	traditional meeting grounds
ngā kōrero tuku iho	history; stories of the past
Pākehā	European
whakapapa	genealogy

Review author

Tina Makereti, Te Āti Awa, Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Maniapoto, Pākehā and Moriori. Course convener, Māori & Pasifika Creative Writing, Victoria University of Wellington, and Curator Māori, Museums Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand.

Maranga mai! Te reo and marae in crisis? Kawharu, Merata (Ed.). (2014). Auckland, New Zealand: Auckland University Press. 280 pp. ISBN: 978-1-86940-805-3.

Maranga Mai! Te Reo and Marae in Crisis is an important and timely book. Many of the contributors are already well known in Māori circles and need little introduction. Te Tai Tokerau is the focus of the book, with most contributors being from or having close associations with the region. The book includes 10 chapters in English and two in Māori (with English translations) by renowned expert speakers of Māori, the late Merimeri Penfold and Hone Sadler. This inclusion is important because it provides Māori speakers with access to not just spoken Māori, but also high quality written Māori, supporting the survival of Māori as a living language.

The book discusses the decline in the use of te reo Māori and the place of marae. Those of us from other tribal regions will readily identify with these issues and it is difficult not to reflect on our own iwi and our efforts (or lack of) in these areas. Chapters by senior authors such as Penfold, Sadler and Toi highlight how dramatic and far reaching changes have been within their own lifetimes, especially movement to outside areas and loss of people resources. Other contributors—Tapsell, Ngaha, Hohepa, and co-authors Kawharu and Tane— provide wider overviews of issues concerning marae and Māori language with suggestions on immediate actions. Toki and Aikman-Dodd provide insightful rangatahi contributions about their own involvement in Māori culture and Māori language. The book centre contains a wonderful collection of photographs from a wide range of Te Tai Tokerau marae.

Merimeri Penfold's opening chapter describes the changes seen in her own lifetime and argues for a focus on Māori language in the home. She suggests that:

Mehemea ka ora te reo Māori, ko te kawenga, kei mua i te aroaro o ngā kaumātua me ngā whānau. (p. 11)

If te reo is to have a future, the responsibility to provide the environment for Māori to thrive in lies squarely at the foot of elders and families. (Translation, p. 22)

Paul Tapsell's chapter describes the change in marae usage beginning from earlier periods, to current times, including the innovative Māori maps project. It concludes by discussing what marae might look like in the future. Hone Sadler's rather brief chapter looks at the current state of marae and loss of marae speakers. His recently released book, *Ko tautoro, te pito o tōku ao: A Ngāpuhi narrative* (Sadler, 2014), which I haven't yet read, will certainly have much more to say on this topic.

Apera Ngaha's chapter discusses an important survey (as part of Te Wehi Nui a Mamao project) on links between Māori language and identity. It is expected that there would be high correlations between language and identity, but there seems to be little evidence of this. Although claiming to use both quantitative and qualitative analyses, there is very little in the chapter beyond descriptive frequency counts; more detailed analyses may yet reveal important findings. Kevin Robinson describes dramatic changes that occurred in one community in the Northern Hokianga and rightly suspects that such changes are widespread in other communities. Margie Hohepa's chapter is a wide sweep of Māori schooling in Te Tai Tokerau located in relevant theoretical frameworks such as Fishman's *Reversing Language Shift* (1991). Her chapter also draws on Te Wehi Nui a Mamao project data to provide insights on the influences of Māori-medium schooling on identity and knowledge of Māori language and marae. She concludes by pointing out that English-medium schooling also has an important role to play in fostering identity and marae knowledge. Fraser Toi's chapter is similar to Hone Sadler's in that it focuses on

changes that have happened to marae over time and is one of the shorter chapters.

Stephen McTaggart's chapter examines Māori language and demography in Te Tai Tokerau focusing on data from New Zealand national censuses until 2006; presumably 2013 census data were not available at the time of writing. Addition of those data is unlikely to have affected the trends sketched in the chapter, which describes a slight decline in Māori language reported knowledge, with differences in districts, age groups and gender. He concludes that there is evidence of positive signs of Māori language usage amongst those who have been involved in Māori-medium programmes.

Kiri Toki's chapter provides an important rangatahi perspective on the recent Māori renaissance. Kawharu and Tane explore issues around leadership and marae and the potential of digital technology as a means of both collecting data on young people and providing an additional means of being connected. It discusses the advantages and pitfalls of using digital media as means of disseminating Māori information. Aikman-Dodd's chapter is an exploration of identity as a personal journey, which many who have lived in various places in Aotearoa will readily relate to. In the final chapter, Michael Hennessy discusses oral history and the recording of knowledge in modern times with film and other media. He also discusses modern intellectual property rights, a key issue of concern to many Māori.

Each chapter can be read individually, but when reading from start to finish, the coherent message that emerges is that there is evidence that the future can be optimistic, but more research is required. The primary target of the book is a New Zealand audience. The book assumes readers are familiar with Māori terms. However, it will also be of interest to other indigenous groups around the world facing cultural

and language loss. Fortunately, Auckland University Press has released electronic versions (e-books) making the book readily accessible throughout the world. Auckland University Press should be commended for not delaying an e-book release, which seems to be current practice with many publishers in New Zealand. I enjoyed this book but felt that several chapters were too brief and I wanted more details. This book deserves to be widely read and I highly recommend it.

E mihi atu ana au ki ngā ētita, ki ngā kaituhi, ki te hunga nāna nei tēnei pukapuka whakahirahira i whakahua. Kia ora rā koutou katoa.

References

- Fishman, J. (1991). *Reversing language shift*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
 Sadler, H. (2014). *Ko tautoro, te pito o tōku ao: A Ngāpuhi narrative*. Auckland, New Zealand: Auckland University Press.

Glossary

Aotearoa	New Zealand
iwi	tribe
marae	traditional meeting grounds
rangatahi	youth
te reo Māori	the Māori language
Te Tai Tokerau	Northland

Review author

Peter J. Keegan (Waikato–Maniapoto, Ngāti Porou), Senior Lecturer, Te Puna Wānanga, Faculty of Education and Social Work, University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand. Email: p.keegan@auckland.ac.nz