

The Ngai Tahu Deeds. A Window on New Zealand History. By Harry C. Evison. Canterbury University Press, Christchurch, 2006. 312 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 1-877257-39-7.

THIS ATTRACTIVE BOOK provides excellent, detailed colour illustrations of the key documents on which Crown title for more than half of the area of New Zealand rests. The Ngai Tahu deeds, signed between 1844 and 1864, have been the basis for the Crown's claim to have extinguished Ngai Tahu rights from Stewart Island in the south to near Blenheim in the north. The deeds, deed maps and receipts are complex documents containing a deceptively large amount of detail in both Maori and English. Publishing these documents provides a resource that would have made the work of the Waitangi Tribunal in the late 1980s considerably easier. The Tribunal was often forced to rely on poor copies and transcriptions, and as Evison rightly points out this led to numerous errors of detail. Evison has carefully reviewed the material on the deeds, the Maori texts, English translations, annotations and perhaps more significantly the lists of signatures, tohu and names without marks or signatures. Had the book stopped there it would have been a valuable addition to our understanding of these transactions. However, in what is a substantial book, Evison also provides a general, Ngai Tahu and South Island centered commentary on the process of colonization, relying on the deeds as evidence for Crown and Pakeha duplicity, the primary explanation for Ngai Tahu dispossession. The result is confused and confusing.

Evison criticizes some northern historians for their championing of Governor Grey and the Anglican Church for its close alliance with Ngati Toa in a defence of Ngai Tahu from northern incursions. While he does not reduce Ngai Tahu to noble savages, victims of some form of fatal impact — he sees pre-treaty Maori society as significantly flawed by its violence — he is still a determined advocate for their view of the world as he sees it. Evison's argument, to the extent that it is clear, is that Crown purchase officers made up lists of names which grossly overstated the level of consent provided for the purchases. Lawyers may well want to make an argument that these deeds did not in legal terms convey sufficient consent to allow the Crown to claim that Maori rights were extinguished. Yet these transactions were oral transactions where agreements were made at different times between governors and land purchase officers and Ngai Tahu in various hapu configurations. The collective nature of these agreements, whatever they were, is not addressed in Evison's narrative. The differences between Maori understandings of events and European understandings of events is not explained culturally and certainly not in the specific context of the time when the deeds were signed. Uncertainty about events and contradictions in the evidence are explained away as the duplicitous actions of Crown officials who, Evison suggests, act in the way that bureaucrats always act, defending their positions, attempting to achieve their objectives and papering over the cracks when these occur.

Unfortunately, Evison's advocacy, despite the overwhelming detail provided, leaves him unable to evaluate the evidence before him in a way that addresses the significant historiographical debates which have emerged around these transactions. He fails to discriminate between different forms of evidence and chooses contemporary and later sources, primarily, it would seem, for their ability to support his general thesis. In developing chronological narratives, he relies heavily and uncritically on the oral transcripts created of Maori and Pakeha evidence before the Smith Nairn Commission in 1879 and 1880, over 30 years after the most controversial of the purchases. This evidence is valuable, but must be placed in its context, considered for its internal contradictions and compared with very different Maori statements on the same events made at the time of the purchases and in the intervening decades. Without carefully considering why some sources might be more reliable than others in retelling the contentious events of the 1840s and 1850s land sales, Evison becomes the victim of his own arguments.

Evison's discussion of the deeds, maps and receipts surrounding the 1848 Kemp purchase fails even to acknowledge the existence of the complex and extensive historiographical debate that emerged before the Waitangi Tribunal (in which he was a participant) and which clearly influenced the Waitangi Tribunal's findings. Donald Loveridge provided a highly detailed and convincing argument about different interpretations of the northern boundary in this purchase. Evison obviously remains unconvinced, yet Loveridge's evidence is not mentioned and the only reference to his argument is to another researcher (wrongly attributed as a Waitangi Tribunal researcher) who appeared in the Ngai Tahu claim on behalf of the Crown on very different issues.

For the 1848 Kemp purchase, Evison simply assumes that the purchase was only of the Canterbury plains and that Ngai Tahu did not sell the 'hole in the middle', the area between the Canterbury foothills and the main divide, the eastern boundary of the Arahura purchase in 1860. However, he again ignores the extensive evidence challenging his position and makes no attempt to substantiate his argument other than to suggest that straight line boundaries across the island made no sense to Maori at the time of the purchases. In doing so, he ignores two major contemporary Maori sources that together recite these very boundaries. All these issues were well canvassed before the Tribunal, and while the Tribunal report can and should be challenged, the arguments it used and the evidence it relied upon must at least be acknowledged. This book does not do this and will leave the reader no wiser as to what occurred on the ground in these complex and important exchanges on the New Zealand colony's southern frontier between 1844 and 1864.

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Past Judgement. Social Policy in New Zealand History. Edited by Bronwyn Dalley and Margaret Tennant. University of Otago Press, Dunedin, 2004, 282 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 1-877276-57-X.

IN RECENT YEARS, there has been a tendency for publishers to move away from edited collections, yet *Past Judgement* is a good example of why the genre works well. The editors have brought together a collection of 13 essays and one interview concerning the broad topic of social welfare history in New Zealand written by both university academics and freelance historians. Over the past 20 years research and writing on the history of social policy in New Zealand has expanded and this edited collection provides the opportunity to further extend the debates, and especially to move beyond merely 'judging the past', but also attempt to 'understand it' (p.7). The aim is to incorporate history into contemporary social policy, for history to inform current debates in a meaningful way in order to highlight the 'interaction between history and policy' (p.21). Secondly, rather than concentrating on the macro level, the book deliberately focuses inwardly, dealing with indigenous issues and social policy influences pertaining specifically to the New Zealand context.

It is impossible to discuss each of the topics and chapters from the book, suffice to say that there are some excellent overview essays (such as co-editor Margaret Tennant's introductory chapter on history and social policy and Michael Belgrave's essay on evolving social policy in New Zealand history) as well as on specific topics such as that on religion and social policy by Peter Lineham, mental health policy by Warwick Brunton, old age pensions by Gaynor Whyte, and that iconic New Zealand institution the Plunket Society by Linda Bryder. The essays also bring out the diversity of social welfare protagonists and consumers, especially the gendered notions of welfare and the roles