

Māori History Special Issue: Editorial Note



Tēnā koutou; tēnā tātou.

Sometimes the simplest acts are also the most illuminating. In this issue the simple act of publishing essays by Māori scholars provides a showcase of the relevance and dynamism of Māori history in the twenty-first century. Together, the six essays that follow affirm the breadth of Māori historical scholarship and the depth of engagement of its scholars.

In gathering together this collection of Māori-authored contributions, the issue acknowledges 175 years since the signing of Te Tiriti, the Treaty of Waitangi. Authors and editors have grappled with problems that may not have occurred in other editions, like whether or not to provide translations of Māori words and terms. Translations are given in parentheses in the text, largely for the benefit of overseas readers, but in 2015 there is a general expectation that New Zealanders will be familiar with the meanings of common Māori words.

The challenges of Māori history do not stop at translation. Influenced by distinctly Māori approaches to the past, these essays foreground Māori history as fundamental to New Zealand's past. Whether studying mutton birding in the deep south or community development in Hokianga, nineteenth-century Māori writing or twentieth-century Māori politics, these scholars are attentive to the cultural, experiential and familial ties that bind them to and shape their work. In that context, the call for greater consideration of ethics and tikanga in Māori history ought to be unsurprising; similarly the impulse for Māori scholars to not only tell and represent Māori history in all its diversity, but also contribute to contemporary issues and developments in iwi and Māori politics.

This issue shows Māori historical scholarship to be in good hands and in good heart, but that cannot and should not be taken for granted. In recent years Māori scholars have been encouraged by Māori history fellowships and Māori history lectureships. But university history departments (or programmes or disciplinary areas) struggle to ensure a Māori history pathway through the discipline, and attracting Māori students to post-graduate study remains an ongoing challenge. Māori staff and students alike continue in the lonely role of sole Māori in their seminar, conference session or field while also trying to realign a mainstream narrative in New Zealand history that still tends to exclude and marginalize Māori.

The goals of Māori history are more far-reaching than a special edition of NZJH. In that spirit, this issue shows Māori history in progress, marking out a desire to challenge and contribute to New Zealand history in influential, innovative and even liberating ways.

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