

## Reviews (Books)

*New Zealand and the Sea: Historical Perspectives*. Edited by Frances Steel. Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 2018. 384pp. NZ price: \$59.99. ISBN: 9780947518707.

THIS MULTI-DISCIPLINARY COLLECTION seeks to unsettle the conventional view that history unfolds on land, instead reframing New Zealand's past around the ocean and its multi-faceted maritime connections. As editor Frances Steel notes, the problem is not so much that New Zealand historians have ignored the sea, but how quickly their accounts 'dry out'. After all, virtually every general history of these islands starts at sea: 'The meeting of land and sea is central in historical accounts of Polynesian seafaring and colonisation; European exploratory voyaging; sealing, whaling ... and the mass migrant passage from Britain' (pp.11–12). But these themes, largely focused on the pre-1840 period (or, in the case of mass migration, before World War I), have typically been treated as curtain-raisers to the main act. In the twentieth century, history 'turned its back to the beach', instead gazing inwards to new theatres of action centred on the land, 'the conventional setting for national history' (p.13).

The sea may not quite be the new black, but it has recently been enjoying a degree of overdue attention. In addition to this collection, 2018 saw the publication of Sarah Ell's *Ocean: Tales of Voyaging and Encounter that Defined New Zealand*, a well-illustrated large-format history aimed at a general readership, and a Sam Neill-fronted six-part TV series, *Pacific: In the Wake of Captain Cook*. The latter was a foretaste of 2019's Tuia 250 Encounters commemoration, which promises to focus further attention on New Zealand's Pacific and European voyaging traditions.

Following Steel's thoughtful introduction, *New Zealand and the Sea's* 15 chapters are organized into three parts: Horizons, Lifeways and Edges. Atholl Anderson's excellent opening chapter considers the epic voyages of Polynesian discovery that brought human settlement to these islands, probably between 1250 and 1300AD, and provides a welcome 'historicist' critique of persistent 'traditionalist' theories about Polynesian seafaring sophistication. Damon Salesa's chapter explores the 'native seaways' of Moana-nui-a-Kiwa, redefined but not erased by European colonization, and reminds us that New Zealand is part of a world it usually overlooks. 'It is a strange fact that New Zealand can be literally all at sea in the Pacific Ocean, and yet pay that ocean, and neighbours and relations within it, so little attention' (p.50). Tony Ballantyne's contribution centres New Zealand in a complex web of imperial, trans-Tasman, Pacific and Asian maritime networks. In the Lifeways section, Michael J. Stevens argues for a 'sea-turn' in Māori history, reminding us that Māori can be tangata whenua *and* tangata moana; David Haines and Jonathan West focus on the motley crews of the early-nineteenth-century Tasman world, 'who lived and worked in the spaces between the emergent Australasian colonies' (p.200); while Grace Millar's and Chris Brickell's chapters consider aspects of family life, gender and culture in the male-dominated worlds of the waterfront and shipping.

As Jonathan Scott notes in his epilogue, the book's 'coverage is uneven in space and time' (p.308), and this is perhaps most evident in Part Three, which traverses the Otago coast, steam-age cruises, interwar magazines and amateur maritime photography. Edited collections typically lack the coherence of single-author works, while offering the advantages of multiple perspectives and approaches. This

collection never feels too fragmented, though, and both introduction and epilogue do a fine job of drawing connections between its wide-ranging contributions. As Scott explains, in regard to space ‘there is predominance of local, regional and global, rather than national, accompanied by a conspicuous tendency to loiter in the south of the South Island’ (p. 308). This focus fits well with a fluid, shifting oceanic world that is indifferent to national boundaries. The book’s pronounced southern flavour is no bad thing either.

There is the odd slip. The African-American serviceman featured in Brickell’s chapter (pp.222–4) is a US Navy sailor, not a ‘Marine’ – the US Marine Corps (naval infantry) units stationed around Paekākāriki in 1942–1943 were still segregated. Scott’s reference to Polynesian landfall ‘about AD 1380’ is presumably intended to read ‘about AD 1280’ (p.312).

These are minor quibbles, however, in an impressive collection full of interest and insight. Bridget Williams Books deserves credit for a handsome production, which is enhanced by some superb illustrations – ranging from the beautiful, ethereal image of a blown glass model ship (p.8), to Gladys Cunningham’s luminous colour slide photographs – and a handful of simple, informative maps. The book’s attractive cover features artwork by Simon Kaan, while atmospheric coastal scenes grace the title page and opening double-page spreads to Parts One and Three. Part Two opens with a striking historical image of Māori men and women digging for toheroa on a Northland beach.

Of course, *New Zealand and the Sea* is far from the final word on the subject. Numerous other historical subjects (let alone those in other disciplines) could have been explored in a collection like this, but these possibilities only highlight the richness of a historical seascape that is ripe for further research.

NEILL ATKINSON

*Manatū Taonga*  
Ministry for Culture and Heritage

*Indigenous Peoples and the State: International Perspectives on the Treaty of Waitangi.* Edited by Mark Hickford and Carwyn Jones. Routledge, Abingdon, 2018. 206pp. NZ price: \$74.99. ISBN: 9780815375258.

TREATIES ARE THE TENDRILS of the international political system, the connective tissue that binds global politics. But what role do treaties perform in nominally postcolonial states, such as Canada and New Zealand, and does their meaning shift with the sediments of time? This volume, edited by Mark Hickford and Carwyn Jones, traces how different ‘interpretative communities’ (p.3) have made sense of the Treaty of Waitangi/te Tiriti o Waitangi over the past 175 years, the better to assess how treaties continue to structure relations between indigenous peoples and the state in the contemporary Pacific.

A document of unequalled significance in New Zealand’s national history and collective memory, te Tiriti looms large in contemporary discussions about what it means to be a New Zealander. At the same time, ever since the establishment of the