

Reviews (Books)

Encircled Lands: Te Urewera, 1820–1921. By Judith Binney. Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 2009. 670pp. NZ price: \$89.99. ISBN 978-1-877242-44-1.

JUDITH BINNEY'S MONUMENTAL WORK, *Encircled Lands*, has been justly acclaimed. This extraordinary, formidable feat of scholarship recounts a century of unjust dealings by the Crown in Te Rohe Pōtae, the 'encircled lands' of the book's title, during which the Tūhoe inhabitants of that district were disempowered and devastated.

In *Encircled Lands*, Judith Binney brings together archival brilliance with insight into Tūhoe's dilemmas and aspirations to construct a narrative of broken promises and betrayal by agents of the Crown, as the people of Te Urewera struggled for survival. The colonial and neo-colonial processes by which these communities were stripped of their autonomy and brought under state control are relentlessly documented, using oral history, documents and case studies to trace the cumulative effects of military invasion, forced land loss, the manipulation of internal disagreements, and the passage of retrospective legislation to cast a veil of respectability over illegal actions by the Crown.

Throughout the book, the impact of these strategies on Tūhoe and their leaders is traced, land block by land block, meeting after meeting, letter by letter. While at times, the level of detail makes the text difficult to read, it lends authority to Binney's overall argument — that although the people of Te Urewera were promised a degree of political independence by the Crown, and this was recognized *de facto* and then briefly in law (in the Urewera District Native Reserve Act, 1896), they were progressively deprived of their autonomy, along with most of their land and property. The outcomes — poverty, depopulation, disillusionment, mistrust and internal dissension — are vividly depicted. Very few readers will remain unmoved by Binney's account of the sufferings engendered in Te Rohe Pōtae by the colonial will to power.

Perhaps the most beautifully written and disturbing passages in the book are those that demonstrate these processes have not ended. In the first chapter, for example, Binney describes the 2005 Waitangi Tribunal hearings in Te Urewera, and juxtaposes this with an account of the police raid on 'terrorists' at Ruātoki in 2007. While for Tūhoe this aroused painful memories of the 1916 police raid on Maungapohatu (described in Binney's earlier book *Mihaia*, the subject of a formal apology to Tūhoe by the Police Commissioner in 2001, and rehearsed again in front of the Waitangi Tribunal), these parallels were evidently lost on the authorities. Just two years after the Tribunal hearings, a similar kind of hysteria led to the police raid on Ruātoki. It is evident that the ability to gloss over past injustices, a potent tool in colonial oppression, has lost none of its power to disrupt and disturb the lives of indigenous people.

Perhaps it is as well that *Encircled Lands* was published before the latest fit of official amnesia, when a promise made to Tūhoe negotiators that lands illegitimately taken by the Crown, now the Urewera National Park, would be restored to their guardianship, was disowned by the government. Once again, populist politics and fear of a majority backlash led to the abandonment of any pretence of justice, just as a century earlier the Urewera District Native Reserve, the legally sanctioned body that had given some measure of self-determination to its inhabitants, was dismantled.

Given its depth of detail, the scope of *Encircled Lands* is remarkable. Without Binney's long research collaboration with Tūhoe, this would scarcely have been possible. Beginning with an account of their ancestral lands, kin groups and leaders at the time of effective contact with Europeans, the introduction of Christianity to Te Urewera is described, along with the limited role of Tūhoe warriors in the Land Wars and the advent of Pai Marire.

This led to the confiscation of blocks of land, which as Binney observes were taken almost indiscriminately from 'loyalists' as well as 'rebels' to pay for the costs of the war (p.100). Tūhoe resistance to these confiscations and the arrival of the warrior prophet Te Kooti Rikirangi were followed by further punitive measures, including successive invasions by government and allied Māori troops, the destruction of crops and villages, and the incarceration of those who surrendered in camps, where they almost starved. Eventually the government promised that as long as Te Kooti was surrendered, the autonomy of Te Urewera would be restored. After Te Kooti vanished from their district, Tūhoe made peace with the Crown.

When a self-governing council, Te Whitu Tekau, was established in Te Rohe Pōtae in 1872, its leaders tried to resist the building of roads, land leases and sales, and the introduction of the Native Land Court. Despite this, more land was taken, and Tūhoe were driven into the Land Court to defend their titles to what remained. As government agents tried to buy or lease lands on the borders of Te Rohe Pōtae, the idea of a separate Urewera district was canvassed, although the Native Minister insisted that the region would first need to be surveyed and the boundaries between the tribes adjusted. At that time it was thought that there might be mineral wealth in Te Urewera, and the government was determined to control any mining licences. Alcohol and cash were used to drive wedges between different factions in the kin groups, and individuals with land rights in the same areas (which were collectively owned) were set at loggerheads. In a devastating analysis, Binney describes a series of corrupt transactions in which settlers and Crown agents colluded to defraud Tūhoe owners, despite their efforts to hold on to their land. When government surveyors were sent into Te Rohe Pōtae, the surveyors were sent back and their equipment confiscated.

In 1896, when in an effort to defuse mounting hostilities the Urewera District Native Reserve was legally established, allowing Tūhoe a limited measure of self-government, the Crown reserved to itself the right to purchase Tūhoe land. Further land losses were followed by famines and epidemics. In their desperation, people flocked to the prophet Rua Kenana. (As an aside, when Rua visited Wellington to offer land for sale to the government in order to finance various projects, he, his favourite wife Te Akakura and members of his council were captured in portraits by my great-grandfather, the photographer James McDonald). Major land sales ensued, but when the police raided Rua's community at Maungapohatu in 1916, he was arrested and his son was shot. After the Urewera District Native Reserve was dismantled six years later, Tūhoe lost most of their remaining lands.

Throughout this harrowing story, there are traces of its origins in reports for the Waitangi Tribunal. In front of the Tribunal, lawyers for the iwi and hapu claimants fight it out with the Crown, and witnesses are deployed in their legal confrontations. While Binney's reports, commissioned by the Waitangi Tribunal, were intended to be 'neutral' historical accounts, in the face of aggressive cross-questioning before the Tribunal, witnesses are almost insensibly drawn to 'take sides' for or against the iwi, or the Crown.

Unlike many Waitangi Tribunal reports, *Encircled Lands* avoids the trap of a 'bi-cultural' history in which events in the past are retrospectively racialized. The participation of Te Arawa, Ngāti Porou and other Māori troops in military attacks on Tūhoe during the Land Wars is graphically described; as is the involvement of Māori politicians such as James Carroll and Apirana Ngata in undermining the Urewera District Native Reserve and purchasing Tūhoe lands for the Crown. In her analysis of Carroll and Ngata, however, whom Binney describes as 'economic modernizers,' (p.7), she suggests that as members of families recently involved in military conflicts with Tūhoe, they were antipathetic to Tūhoe aspirations. Yet by Binney's own account, Rua Kenana and a number of other Tūhoe of his generation were also 'economic modernizers' who were driven by contests for mana (although in their case, these dissensions were internal to Te Rohe Pōtae), and participated in the wholesale loss of Tūhoe lands. Despite these parallels, Binney shows much more sympathy towards these leaders, given the predicaments they faced, than she does to Ngata

and Carroll as Māori ministers of the Crown.

There are other traces of the book's origin in the Waitangi hearings. There were times when I yearned to hear more about events, beliefs and practices in Te Urewera that had nothing to do with New Zealand governments and their agendas. But that is not the purpose of *Encircled Lands*. This is a brilliant, compelling tale about the loss of autonomy, land, lives and wealth in Te Rohe Pōtae at the hands of the Crown, and in the face of all of that, the stubborn, proud survival of Tūhoe as a people. It is impeccably researched, beautifully illustrated and designed, and recounted with overwhelming authority.

Underlying this book is Judith Binney's understanding, gained over many years, of the *hau* of the gift. When a gift is given, the *hau* (breath of life) of the donor and that of the recipient are entangled. It is this bond that impels the return of the gift. Over years of working with Tūhoe, documenting the lives of their prophetic leaders, Judith Binney has won their trust; and *Encircled Lands* is a magnificent return *koha* (offering) — an eloquent denunciation of the injustices that they have suffered over a century, and a plea that at last, they should be justly treated. In their turn, Tūhoe gave her a Māori name, Tomoirangi o te Aroha (a little cloud of rain from heaven), and took her under their mantle. In its way, the story behind this book is as intriguing as any of those recounted in its pages. As Eruera Stirling, a Māori elder, once remarked:

Knowledge is a blessing on your mind, it makes everything clear and guides you to do things in the right way... and not a word will be thrown at you by the people. It is the man [or woman] who goes with his spirit and his mind and his heart believing in all these things who will climb to the high summits of leadership.¹

Judith Binney's book illustrates the accuracy of these observations, and the illuminating power of knowledge.

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NOTE

¹ Eruera Stirling as told to Anne Salmond, *Eruera: The Teachings of a Maori Elder*, Auckland, 1985, p.247.

The Cartwright Papers: Essays on the Cervical Cancer Inquiry of 1987–88. Edited by Joanna Manning. Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 2009. 224pp. NZ price: \$39.99. ISBN 978–1–877242–45–8.

IN 1987 AND 1988 JUDGE SILVIA CARTWRIGHT conducted an inquiry into what has become known as the 'Unfortunate Experiment at National Women's Hospital'. In her report, justly famous, she found that Associate Professor Herbert Green had conducted research on women with *carcinoma in situ* (CIS) and that the research was unethical, in that it involved withholding conventional treatment in order to study the natural history of the disease. Judge Cartwright recommended some radical changes in the health system to ensure that such conduct could not happen again. The recommendations were swiftly implemented: a system of patient advocates; the appointment of a Health and Disability Commissioner; a code of patient rights; improvements in the constitution and performance of ethics committees; better teaching of ethics in the medical schools; and a national cervical screening programme. Some of those improvements would probably have happened anyway, but not as quickly or effectively. The inquiry resulted in a sea change in doctor–