

*Te Hau Kāinga: The Māori Home Front During The Second World War.*

By Angela Wanhalla, Sarah Christie, Lachy Paterson, Ross Webb and Erica Newman.

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Situated far from the intensive fighting that consumed the European Theatre and later the Pacific Theatre, the focus of New Zealand's contribution to the Second World War is often chronicled by historians through the lens of military units serving on battlefields overseas. While these units and their personnel have rightfully received ample scholastic and popular historical attention for their accomplishments, far less attention is paid to those who remained in New Zealand during the Second World War on the home front, particularly towards Māori. The legendary actions of the 28th (Māori) Battalion occupy an almost singular position of prestige in popular memory of the Second World War, immortalised in photographs of haka in North Africa and recalled tales of exceptional bravery and courage in the Italian Campaign. Neglected in popular memory is the enormous Māori contribution on the home front, responsible not only for contributing to the New Zealand's 'total war' through essential industries but home defence through service in the Home Guard, women's auxiliary services, and the totally overshadowed contribution of the 2nd Māori Battalion towards the war effort.

Angela Wanhalla, Sarah Christie, Lachy Paterson, Ross Webb and Erica Newman offer an essential contribution to understanding the home front experience through *Te Hau Kāinga: Māori Home Front During The Second World War*, collectively illuminating the experiences of Māori who remained on the home front working towards the success of the Allied war effort. Examining urban and country areas within New Zealand, the authors seek to understand the impact of the Second World War on Māori through communities, civilians, and families, weaving together these experiences and their negotiation with the state during the war. Unique amongst these experiences are those of Māori serving in the Home Guard and women's auxiliary services, who until *Te Hau Kāinga* received scant scholastic attention. Making up nearly 10 per cent of the wartime membership of the Home Guard, the authors succinctly illuminate the efforts to establish all-Māori units amidst the appointment of Pākehā officers and the later development of dedicated training schools for Māori home guardsmen. The political debates over Māori Home Guard involvement, such as Sir Apirana Ngata's advocacy for independent leadership, are also used well to demonstrate national context. This succeeds in demonstrating their wider contribution to the Home Guard, yet the authors candidly acknowledge the difficulty in assessing the legacy of Māori involvement in the Home Guard, especially given the contesting dynamics of greater desire for autonomy on the home front and tension between tribal and military leadership about its wartime operation.

The difficulty in assessing the wartime legacy of Māori uniformed non-combatants is particularly visible within the authors later discussion of the women's auxiliary services. Specifically, Māori women serving within the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF), Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC), and Women's Royal New Zealand Naval Service (WRNZNS), who collectively made up around 300 personnel during the Second World War. This figure is one the authors note is not exact due to the limited information concerning these women, especially their incorporation in wartime 'recruitment policies and training'. Contrasting with the wider nature of women's wartime employment, the authors observe the small number of Māori women was due to their employment in essential industries and as a result faced considerable obstacles in obtaining their releases to join the women's auxiliaries.

The authors place a notable focus on Māori women within the WAAF, examining the experiences of the women who served with the auxiliary with ample anecdotal commentary alongside visualising their wartime lives through photographs of relaxation and recreation. Demonstrating a recurring theme of individuality throughout the book, these micro historical snapshots of wartime experiences thus enable ‘total war’ to be examined on a smaller scale, from those in uniform to industrial manpower work or even down to the smallest of farms. While they note that the evidence provided through enlistment forms demonstrates Māori women sought to work in culinary roles, where ‘an opportunity to access training and rise through the ranks’ existed, pioneering roles such as those undertaken by WAAC radar operator Ngaire Subritzky, 9th Heavy Regiment, New Zealand Artillery, alongside WRNZNS working in similarly technically demanding roles, offers an opportunity for future research into the diversity of uniformed women’s wartime roles undertaken within New Zealand (p. 31).

The incredible width and depth of Māori home front experiences is visible throughout the book, illuminating an understudied aspect of the Second World War through interchanging national, regional, and individual perspectives of the lives of those who endured the war. Slotted between these narratives are brief case studies by various authors: highlighting contemporary connections to wartime events, highlighting individual people and places, while placing them within a position to complement the narrative theme of the chapter. Considering the enormity of the home front and the many historical factors competing for the attention of scholars and readers alike, crafting a concise history is fraught with challenges. *Te Hau Kāinga* provides an exceptionally accessible yet scholastically thorough examination of the Māori contribution to the home front, equally capable of adaptation into educational settings as part of the historical curriculum and captivating a wider public historical interest.