

*Tangata whenua: An illustrated history*

Atholl Anderson, Judith Binney, Aroha Harris

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Reviewed by Ariana Tikao

The New Book of (Māori) Knowledge

When I was growing up we had a set of *The New Book of Knowledge* encyclopedias. I loved delving into them, often using them for school assignments, or for the pure joy of ‘knowledge seeking’. This new tome *Tangata Whenua* is like a Māori equivalent of a shelf full of those volumes.

The publisher’s website says that the book ‘charts the sweep of Māori history from ancient origins through to the twenty-first century. Through narrative and images, it offers a striking overview of the past, grounded in specific localities and histories’. I think this is a fair summary of the book’s kaupapa which tells multiple stories in various ways through illustrations, graphs, maps, diagrams, as well as the text-based narrative.

It is structured in three sections, each headed by a leading scholar. Atholl Anderson covers prehistory and some early Pākehā contact history, the late Dame Judith Binney covers the period from 1820 to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and Aroha Harris covers more recent history and contemporary culture.

Anderson’s section connects with the larger story of the migration of Pacific and Asian peoples. It focuses heavily on the archaeological record, while linking these layered stories with oral history and Māori origin stories. It is a complex and detailed record of fact and theory. As a Kāi Tahu person, I relished the inclusion of southern stories. Anderson has already published extensively on his Kāi Tahu archaeological research, including his book *The Welcome of Strangers*, but his section draws all this together and is informed by research in a number of related areas, including palaeoclimatology and palaeolinguistics. Other southern academics have also made their mark in the book, including Kāi Tahu historians Te Maire Tau (who provided valuable kōrero and some images from his own archival collection) and Michael Stevens.

Stevens writes one of the 12 double-page ‘special interest’ stories that are spread throughout the book which could stand on their own, much like a ‘Te Ara’ article. His story ‘Te Hopu Tītī ki Rakiura’ is about the history and modern culture of the tītī industry on Rakiura (Stewart Island) and other southern islands. He tells the story from an insider’s perspective, as a member of one of the southern Kāi Tahu whānau who have the right to make the yearly pilgrimage to the muttonbird islands. Some of the photographs are supplied from his personal collection, including one of his then two year-old son Kura-mātakitaki Stevens ‘learning to pluck tītī on Pikomamaku-nui Island’ in 2012 (pp. 316-317).

Stevens also gives the political framework for this continuing practice, citing the Rakiura Deed of 1864, ‘which facilitated the Crown’s purchase of Stewart Island, also preserved – in perpetuity – southern Māori rights to tītī harvesting ... The result is that the Tītī Islands remain the exclusive domain of those genealogically entitled to them’. He also mentions subsequent legislation which further secured these rights in 1909. Another of the double-page sections is written by Athol Anderson, and focuses on another southern Kāi Tahu kōrero about the Whenuahou (Codfish Island) community of Pākehā sealers and their Kāi Tahu wives and children, formed in the early 1800s (pp. 316-317).

In general, I found these shorter articles to be a welcome interlude from the denser narrative of the main text. They can be delved into, much like a magazine article. They might also be useful for a younger audience, or for people just wanting to find out about a topic, at a glance.

Chapter Five (nearing the end of the first section) titled ‘In the Foreign Gaze’ begins by saying: ‘In archaeology, tangata whenua are mere shadows conjured up around material remains, and even in the web of tradition they are caught simply by ancestral name and event. It is only in the journals and sketches of early European visitors that a contemporary record begins of people as individuals and groups’ (p. 132).

Moving on from the archaeological record, we begin to see the perspectives of Europeans, as seen in their sketches and diaries. The early recollections, however ‘surface level’ and judgemental they may seem to us now, are still vitally important as they can give insights when viewed again, by modern researchers, including from descendants of those being described in the seventeenth through to the early nineteenth centuries.

The text of the middle section ‘Te Ao Hou: The New World’ is jointly written by the late Judith Binney, Vincent O’Malley and Alan Ward. It covers the period between 1820 and 1920. It was interesting to note that in the early European accounts, women were seen as being subservient to men, but as time went on, and Europeans became more familiar with Māori society, often becoming ‘embedded’ in Māori communities, their impressions changed. ‘There was, in these accounts from the 1820s and 1830s, evidence of a more general female agency that was either new or, more likely, had simply not been apparent until Europeans and Māori spent time in each other’s company’ (p. 167). The middle section enables us to move from that earlier ‘foreign gaze’ into something more personalised and substantial in terms of the level of engagement between Māori and Pākehā. This initially was relatively beneficial for both parties, in terms of trade and the sharing of knowledge and technologies, but ultimately leads to conflict over land and resources. This section covers the period of the New Zealand Wars, as well as land alienation via ‘purchases’ which saw much of the South Island ‘sold’ for less than a penny an acre.

The third section 'Te Ao Hurihuri: The Changing World', written by Aroha Harris, must have been a difficult task, as much of this history is still happening, or is so recent that it has not been extensively written about yet academically. This section covers 1920 to the present day, including what is widely known as 'the Māori renaissance'. It is strongly pictorial, which makes it quite appealing, like Michael King's iconic book *Māori: A photographic and social history*. A mix of private and public pictorial collections are utilised throughout the volume, including, at the beginning of this section, two compelling images of a double wedding at Kōrohe pā, Taupō, in 1930, from White's Aviation Collection in the Alexander Turnbull Library. Other collections drawn upon are the photographs of Ans Westra, and those of Archives New Zealand and Te Papa Tongarewa.

This final section gives a valuable overview of more recent events that have helped shape modern Māori identity, in all of its various forms. It includes the assertion of land and Treaty rights, as well as great sporting moments, and cultural and artistic expression. It ends on an optimistic note saying (in the Postscript) that we can be guided by our past to create a positive future amongst the present global uncertainty:

'Tangata Whenua is not a simple history of Māori progress. Some things have changed, and some have stayed the same. Māori cope, survive and excel in this volatile world - but need now, as much as ever, that old sense of communal strength, whanaungatanga, and its principles of mana and rangatira. The past, as ever, speaks, recalling the deeds and drive of tupuna to the concerns of the present, and guiding the future' (pp. 488-489).

Overall, the book is produced to a high standard. Many of the photographs, particularly from the twentieth century, have not been widely published before. The captions are informative and, in conjunction with the images, offer an alternative way of reading the book for those who are pressed for time.

The maps are elegantly designed and are a real feature of the book. There are some maps though, particularly in the first section, which are reproduced at too small a size, considering the amount of detail they contain. I also noticed that Te Moana-Tāpokopoko-a-Tāwhaki (one of the names for the Tasman Sea) is placed off the east coast of the South Island in one of the maps.

With such a large book, a good index is a must. I tested the quality of the index by looking up a topic that I am familiar with: taonga puoro (traditional Māori instruments). Whereas some topics are listed in the index under their Māori language term, such as 'whakairo' (which says 'see carving'), 'taonga puoro' is not. The reader needs to dig further in the index to find any references to them. I searched under 'music', but there is not anything specifically listed under taonga puoro there. However, if you look below that, under 'musicians', there are a few page number references under 'instruments (traditional)'. By following one of these references I came to some photographs of taonga puoro, but it appears that only 'pūtātara' has its own individual reference in the index, and not others such as kōauau, and nguru. Following another of these references, I found a picture of the late Hirini Melbourne playing a double pūtōrino on page 480. The caption mentions the two other men who have largely been responsible for leading the revival of taonga puoro, namely Richard Nunns and Brian Flintoff. Unfortunately though, Brian Flintoff is incorrectly referred to in the caption and index entry as 'Barry Flintoff'.

I started out this review by writing that *Tangata Whenua* is like a shelf full of encyclopedias all in one book; this does mean it is very heavy. Resting it on a tabletop is the only practical way to read it. I wonder if it may have been better to have split the book into two or three volumes?

*Tangata Whenua* now has pride of place on our bookshelf at home. It is a fine reference volume that is packed full of substance. 'He mahi kai hoaka, he mahi kai takata – It is work that consumes people, as pounamu consumes sandstone'. This book is a treasure for us and future generations. I commend the many people who contributed to its existence.