

Colonising Myths Maori Realities

BOOK REVIEWS

1. Waikato Times, 29/10/2011
2. ONZF, 14/11/2011

Colonising Myths Maori Realities

by Ani Mikaere (Huia, ISBN: 9781869694531).

Waikato Times Review. 29/10/2011. The author, a tutor of Maori law and philosophy, has brought together a collection of papers showing the impact of what she calls Pakeha law on Maori legal thought and practices. It would be easy to dismiss this work as the rhetoric of yet another Maori academic beating the drum of Maori suppression by a colonising nation. That would, however, be an injustice. Although the rhythm of unresolved grievance and an undertone of feminism permeate the work, there are a number of issues she addresses that few others have treated with equal frankness. Most non-Maori people with an interest in the subject will find some of the issues addressed uncomfortable. They nonetheless should be addressed.

In the early days of colonisation, Maori were treated in a manner unacceptable in any nation today and some of the effects of that era are still obvious. The book is challenging and some readers will find at least some of the assumptions about modern Pakeha attitudes to things Maori untrue and even offensive. Of particular provocation is the assumption that Pakeha born in New Zealand carry an inherited guilt as the product of an invading culture and are therefore insecure in their claimed indigeneity (sic). Some will find that laughable, but this is an important debate and the author presents a legitimate opinion from one end of the academic spectrum. The work makes a valuable contribution for that alone. The End

ONZF Review 14/11/2011.

Colonising Realities and Maori Myths

Ani, I have no “inherent guilt” and my people did not “invade” this land!

It's a pity Ani Mikaere had not read the letter from the 13 northern chiefs in 1831 inviting the King to be their protector and guardian or the chief's speeches on the 5th February 1840 or the chief's speeches at the Kohimarama Conference 20 years later before she put pen to paper. She may then have respected and honoured her ancestors that asked for, understood and appreciated colonization, the Tiriti o Waitangi and the English law it brought to a country “abound with accounts of tribal wars over the land and its resources”. By 1840 an estimated 60,000 Maori had been slaughtered, taken as slaves or eaten. Taranaki, Auckland and most of the South Island had been deserted and Maori were on the brink of becoming extinct. We would have thought with her feminist views, Ani would have been in favour of English law – one law irrespective of race, colour, gender or creed.

It's also a pity she did not speak to Dr Ranginui Walker before referring to Maori as “tangata whenua”. *“The traditions are quite clear: wherever crew disembarked there were already tangata whenua (prior inhabitants). The canoe ancestors of the 14th century merged with these tangata whenua tribes. Fr Reference. Book of Events, page 18 by Dr Ranginui Walker.* *om this time on the traditions abound with accounts of tribal wars over the land and its resources”.* New Zealand Book of Events, page 18 by Dr Ranginui Walker.

The Tiriti o Waitangi refers to Maori as “tangata Maori” not “tangata whenua” – an earlier race of people, which Maori traditions are quite clear: were fair skinned with light or red hair. When the Pakeha disembarked they merged with the

“tangata Maori”, which traditionally should have been called, “tangata Pakeha”, who helped enforce the English laws the 13 northern chiefs had asked for in 1831.

“If you think these things are wrong, then blame your ancestors who gave away their rights when they were strong”,
The Treaty of Waitangi – An Explanation, by Sir Apirana Ngata,
Minister of Native Affairs, 1922.

So Ani, we “Pakeha” should have no “inherent guilt” and our ancestors did not “invade” your country. We are extremely proud of our ancestors that were invited to be your ancestor’s guardian and protector that stopped a race of cannibals from becoming extinct and their country forcibly stolen by the French.

Proud “Pakeha” New Zealanders.