

Parihaka – The True Story

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It is very difficult to write about Parihaka as a single event. Virtually the whole of Taranaki was bought by the New Zealand Company from the few remaining Maori after the Waikato had annihilated them in 1831. While one third were slaughtered and one third taken as slaves by the Waikato, the remainder fled south where 900 traveled to the Chatham Islands where they slaughtered the Moriori or farmed them like sheep into virtual extinction for the next seven years. (From 2000 people to 101)

After the Governor had paid Waikato for their rights to Taranaki, the Wesleyan Missionaries talked the Waikato into releasing their Taranaki slaves and led them back to their homeland now under the protection of the Treaty. When the Taranaki that had fled south saw the slaves returning to their homeland, Te Whiti wrote to the Governor asking him if they could also return. The Governor agreed on the condition they remained on the north side of the Waitara River. They broke this promise and crossed the river and fighting broke out between the despised slaves and the southern returnees, killing many innocent settlers and destroying their farms. The Governor warned that if the fighting did not stop he would abrogate the Treaty and bring in the troops. The fighting continued and the troops were brought in to enforce peace between the tribes. At the end of the wars, land was confiscated as punishment, to pay for the wars and a buffer of armed settlers placed amongst the tribes.

“The basic story is, Te Whiti alias Wiremu Kingi sold it first. Te Whero Whero endorsed it, selling his superior conqueror’s rights – to the Crown, that meant a ransom paid, accepted and the land became Crown Land”. Jean Jackson

Te Whiti then built a village on the confiscated land that had not been immediately occupied by the settlers. As the Government surveyors moved in to survey this land, Te Whiti and his follows removed the survey pegs and ploughed up the settler’s pastures. After 16 years the Governor had had enough and sent 15,000 troops to evict Te Whiti and his followers from the Government’s confiscated land. While the troops destroyed a large part of their village, the only casualty was one small boy had his foot stepped on by a horse. Te Whiti was jailed for eighteen months for sedition and when released returned to Parihaka where he rebuilt a very modern village without further trouble with the government. While Te Whiti and his followers staged a passive protest, it was government land they had built their village on, therefore the government had every right to evict them.

From, The Realms of King Tawhiao, by Dick Craig and Moriori by Michael King.

“This chief (Te Whiti) had established a flourishing pacifist community on land officially confiscated after the wars but not occupied immediately by the settlers”, The Treaty of Waitangi, by Claudia Orange, p.196

Compiled by Ross Baker, One New Zealand Foundation Inc.