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‘Vincent O’Malley, The Invasion of Waikato/Te Riri ki Tainui’

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Vincent O'Malley, *The Invasion of Waikato (Te Riri ki Tainui)* (Bridget Williams Books, 2024), 300pp, Paperback. NZ\$39.99. ISBN 978-1-9910-3390-1

The Māori Wars are a formative chapter in the histories of both Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia. It continues to dictate the dynamic of racial relationships in Aotearoa New Zealand, almost as much as Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi). Australians, too, often forget that our first overseas military engagement was the deployment of colonial troops from New South Wales to help fight the Māori in the Waikato and Taranaki. Aotearoa New Zealand, as a nation, has rightfully acknowledged the challenges of this period of history, which is one thing which Australia still refuses to acknowledge, regardless of the calls for truth-telling.

The Māori Wars are also an interesting colonial conflict within the broader Pacific, as they came after the signing of a formal treaty (Te Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi). This treaty allowed for the Māori to maintain sovereignty and control (to some degree), though the nature of this is still debated by lawyers and historians. However, concerns about the way in which Māori were interacting with white settlers led to an overreaction (in my opinion) by colonial administration. The subsequent invasion led to widespread carnage and destruction, for which Māori have never recovered. The story of the Waikato campaign also provides an unusual narrative in colonial history; in this invasion, Indigenous people were not merely the victims of ethnic cleansing by the colonial government. The resistance of the peoples of the Waikato against this invasion has become symbolic for many Indigenous peoples and inspirational in our own struggles against the colonial power structures we live under.

The Invasion of Waikato (Te Riri ki Tainui) is probably one of the most beautiful history books I have had the pleasure of reading. The photos and maps lend themselves to an amazingly deep and rich analysis of the Māori Wars and invasion of Waikato and really provide the reader with an immersive experience. The storytelling is full, detailed, and yet accessible, allowing anyone from a well-established scholar to a relative newcomer to deeply interact with the text. O'Malley's texts provide a full and thorough explanation of the events and people of the conflict, without getting bogged down in terminology and jargon. In a history book about war, this is truly a masterful achievement. You can also feel the passion from each page and can see the continuity of his research into the wider Māori Wars. This book adds to his weight of authority established across his nine previous books, making him a powerful and sage like voice on historical race relations in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Vincent O'Malley should be justifiably proud of this book and the true service he has given to this section of the wider Māori Wars, as well as the history of the Colonial Pacific.

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