

A Concise History of NEW ZEALAND

Philippa Mein Smith

SECOND EDITION



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A Concise History of NEW ZEALAND

Philippa Mein Smith

SECOND EDITION



A CONCISE HISTORY OF NEW ZEALAND

Second Edition

New Zealand was the last major landmass, other than Antarctica, to be settled by humans. The story of this rugged and dynamic land is beautifully narrated, from its origins in Gondwana some 80 million years ago, to the twenty-first century. Philippa Mein Smith highlights the effects of the country's smallness and isolation, from its late settlement by Polynesian voyagers and colonisation by Europeans – and the exchanges that made these people Maori and Pakeha – to the dramatic

struggles over land and recent efforts to manage global forces.

A Concise History of New Zealand places New Zealand in its global and regional context, linked to Britain, immersed in the Pacific and part of Australasia. It unravels key moments – the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, the Anzac landing at Gallipoli, the sinking of the *Rainbow Warrior* – showing their role as nation-building myths and connecting them with the less dramatic forces, economic and social, that have shaped contemporary New Zealand.

philippa mein smith is Professor of History at the University of Canterbury. She is the author of *Maternity in Dispute: New Zealand 1920–1939* (1986), *Mothers and King Baby: Infant Survival and Welfare in an Imperial World: Australia 1880–1950* (1997) and co-author of *A History of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific* (2000) and *Remaking the Tasman World* (2008).

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In memory of my mother Barbara Ann Staff

whose stories and library

contributed to this book

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This second edition was framed by earthquakes. I commenced the revisions, shakily, in September 2010, but was propelled to the finishing line by the earthquake of 22 February 2011 which, ironically, allowed the time to write by obliging me to work from home while teaching online supplemented by meetings in a tent with students. This edition is shaped by being denied access to the usual

Acknowledgements

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Philippa Mein Smith

April 2011

P R E F A C E

It is a pleasure to introduce this history to readers who may know little about New Zealand other than that it is located in the Southern Hemisphere, somewhere near Australia. Often people are surprised to find how far New Zealand is from Australia. They may know the country from film, sometimes from art, music or novels, or sport, or business that takes them there; or travel. Some are familiar with national brands, such as Anchor butter and the All Blacks.

Local readers have their own expectations of how the country's

history is, or ought to be, written. The basic narrative that they

require is of equal relevance to the visitor. I wrote this concise history for my students, so that I could comprehend the story of New Zealand, and explain its significance to them; I also kept in mind friends overseas, and people I have met while travelling. The revisions and updates for the second edition continue this pattern. Emphases reflect my understanding and interests; but they also indicate where gaps exist in existing histories of New Zealand. Certain themes, such as literature, are already expertly covered elsewhere. This is not an alternative history, but a broadening of the histories that have already been written.

Neither is this an isolated history; the aim is to place New Zealand history in global and Pacific context. This requires a comparative element, especially concerning parallels with Australia. Globalisation is a core theme of this book: first driven by the British Empire, then by the United States, and now by China. One objective is to explore the persistent tension in New Zealand's short history

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between domestic politics and global and regional pressures and to examine the importance of the effects of smallness and remoteness.

Health and social issues are central to this country's past (and present) international reputation, and continue to inform beliefs about national identity. Demographic contours are often ignored; here population and defence issues are treated together, alongside

economic problems that have consistently beleaguered a country

dependent on exports. Maori–European interactions are pivotal in all histories, but their internal dynamics, prominent at home, need to be balanced by regard for global shifts and foreign affairs.

My approach is to highlight themes that explain what has happened. I try to unravel the way in which key moments and episodes in New Zealand history contribute to the country's national myths. Such events include the Treaty of Waitangi signing, the Anzac landing at Gallipoli, and the sinking of the *Rainbow Warrior*. But there is more to history than war – sex (women and children, fertility) and money (economic history) drive societies. There is more to myth-making than war. Migrants know little of Anzac legends, but often come here because of myths about New Zealand as a good place to bring up children, as an Arcadia and a social laboratory. Since these are frequently the stuff of marketing exercises, it is often these New Zealand myths that people overseas first encounter. They therefore beg to be explained, or at least investigated.

1

Waka across a watery world

How and when did New Zealand begin? Geologically the archipelago dates back 80 million years when it separated from Gondwana. Other than Antarctica, New Zealand was the last major landmass settled by humans. The first settlers, ancestors of the indigenous people, the Maori, are now thought to have arrived in the thirteenth century, whereas people inhabited the

rest of the Pacific Rim from 12,000 to an estimated 60,000 years

ago. Europeans arrived very late indeed, with planned settlements only from 1840. The two waves of people from Polynesia and Europe in a flash of time transformed the land and remade the landscapes. These simple facts of place and time explain why the environment is so much associated with the nation's culture and identity.

t i m e b e f o r e h u m a n s

Geographically, New Zealand is an archipelago of many islands, from Raoul in the Kermadec group to Campbell Island, although the three main islands account for almost 99 per cent of the land area of 270,000 square km. Its comparable size to the British Isles is important in a once dominant version of the country's history. Ancestral New Zealand, so scientists tell us, was once part of the great southern continent of Gondwana, its rocks forming a mountainous area stretching along Gondwana's eastern margin,

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