Post-Colonialism and the Reinterpretation of New Zealand's Colonial Narrative: The Wairua Massacre *

Andrew Piper

ABSTRACT: Post-colonialism has provided the means by which contemporary historians can challenge the previously held notions of national history and folklore. Using the specific example of the Wairua Affray, an early violent confrontation between settlers and Maori in New Zealand, this paper demonstrates how post-colonialism enriches and provides a more accurate, balanced and nuanced comprehension of past events. The creation of a new collective understanding of the past contributes to improving race relations between different peoples and the lands they inhabit.

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War is always horrible even when it is an absolute necessity, it is much more so when the necessity is more than doubtful, and more so still when positively unjust … This is not the place in which to discuss the justice of our war in New Zealand against the Maories [sic], the noblest savages in the world. But it was a war disastrous to us in many respects, although we shouted victory with great gusto—disastrous as our Afghan Wars, Abyssinian War, and Zulu War. For conquest is not always success, and many a victory in arms has been merely the brutal oppression of the strong against the weak and, therefore, morally, a miserable and pitiful failure … Edwin Hodder, c. 1880.[1]

Introduction

Few cultural forces have influenced the modern world more than the processes of colonialism and post-colonialism. Over three-quarters of world's current population have had their lives shaped in someway by

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1 Edwin Hodder, *Heroes of Britain in Peace and War* (London: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Company, n.d. [c. 1880]), p. 169, quoted in Matthew Wright, *Two Peoples, One Land: The New Zealand Wars* (Auckland: Reed Publishing, 2006), pp. 8-9.

colonialism and its consequences.[2] This is due to the vastness and longevity of European control of much of the globe. European nations held sway over more than eighty-five per cent of the world by the commencement of the First World War, though this vast European empire rapidly disintegrated after 1945. It is, therefore, little wonder that the forces of colonialism and post-colonialism should be of interest to historians and affect how they interpret and re-interpret the past.

The term post-colonialism refers to a relatively new area of study and its associated body of theory. It explores responses towards, and the direct effects of, the aftermath of (principally) European cultural, intellectual and physical colonisation of much of the world by the close of the nineteenth century. Post-colonialism is generally perceived as having its formative years in the third-quarter of the twentieth century as the process of de-colonisation gained pace and previously colonised peoples began to express their own interpretation of the colonial experience. This in turn challenged western academics, intellectuals and writers to confront their understanding of colonialism. While now generally regarded as an overused cliché, in this circumstance it is not unreasonable to state that emergent post-colonialism represent a major 'paradigm shift'. This paper will analyse the effect that this paradigm shift has had on the historical interpretation of the Wairua Affray, a violent incident between Maori and European settlers, generally regarded as a significant antecedent to the New Zealand Wars (formerly referred to as the Maori Wars).

Post-colonialism in history is inextricably concerned with issues of representation. Coupled with this there has been a broadening of conventional historical, political and economic understandings of 'colonialism', the ideological underpinnings justifying the invasion, occupation and exploitation of foreign lands by superior military might. While the quotation from Hodder (above) is indicative that at least some nineteenth century writers held sensibilities in keeping with post-colonialism such commentators are atypical. The national histories of settler societies, their folklore and myths were, prior to the third quarter of the nineteenth century, fashioned in a forge of imperialism and Whiggism. Whereas only sixty to seventy years ago colonialism was commonly regarded in the West as a legitimate and positive civilising force that had advanced the well-being of colonised peoples, post-colonialism has exposed and highlighted the violence inherent in colonial occupation, the resistance of indigenous peoples to colonial advance, the impact upon all facets of traditional society, the exploitation of both indigenous peoples and the resources of their lands, the true economic motivations of the colonisers and the ruthless subjugation at the core of

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2 Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures,* 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 1.

the colonial process. Post-colonialism can be viewed as a form of post-imperialism within the temporal framework of the past seventy or so years. In the main taking a post-colonial stance has been used to indicate that a writer has taken a standpoint critical of imperialism and Euro-centrism.

Different colonised lands have experienced differing post-colonial histories. Since the Second World War many colonised peoples have regained their political independence (some, such as India, even their economic independence), while others, notably settler societies, such as the United States of America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, still exhibit inequities in the position occupied by indigenous peoples in their societies. However, post-colonialism has meant that these indigenous peoples are no longer invisible or silent; few current histories any longer present a Whig perspective of colonialism. Post-colonialism has nurtured a rewriting of colonial histories that often debunks the myths and folklore that have arisen in the public consciousness of important historical events.

Colonial Conflict in New Zealand

European colonisation of lands already inhabited resulted in violent confrontations and in this the British settlement of New Zealand does not differ. Between 1840s and 1870s there were a series of conflicts that took place between the British and Maori tribes of the North Island of New Zealand.[3] As with frontier violence between settlers and indigenous peoples in other colonised lands, there has been a significant revision of the history of hostilities between settlers, (or to use the Maori word and generally accepted term in New Zealand *Pakeha*, meaning foreigner), and the indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand, the Maori.

New Zealand's colonial conflicts represent a momentous epoch in its history that have had, and continue to have, significant ramifications, especially for race relations. Unlike frontier violence in Australia which is, with a few notable exceptions, exemplified by localised skirmishes and raiding, the New Zealand confrontation corresponds better with our traditional understanding of the scale of hostilities normally associated with a war as opposed to limited insurrection. It is more accurate to consider the New Zealand conflicts as a civil war, on a par, in terms of their magnitude, with the American Civil War and the English Civil War. James Belich, one of the leading New Zealand Wars revisionist historians has written:

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3 One historian of the New Zealand Wars, Matthew Wright, recently made the perceptive observation that 'Maori were still fighting [albeit with a different strategy] for what they had lost into the twenty-first century, and in this sense the New Zealand Wars were indeed wars without end.' (Wright, *Two Peoples, One Land*, p. 254.)

> In proportion to New Zealand's population at the time, they were large in scale—some 18,000 British troops were mobilized for the biggest campaign. These forces opposed a people who, for most of the war period, did not number more than 60,000 men, women, and children: 18,000 troops were to Maori manpower what fifty million were to contemporary Indian manpower. The Maori resistance against such odds was remarkable, and its story is worth telling in itself.[4]

Likewise, Matthew Wright has noted that: 'At the height of the fighting in 1863-64 the British required over 10,000 regulars, plus local volunteer and militia forces, to tackle Maori forces that at most amounted to no more than 3000-4000 combatants.'[5] It has been argued that: 'There was no thin red line in New Zealand, and British numerical superiority was often very great.'[6] The sheer numerical imbalance was further compounded because Maori society never had a permanent warrior class. Their 'military force was a vital part of the labour force; economically it could not be spared for more than a few weeks' and thus Maori capacity to mount a sustained war was severely compromised.[7] Essentially Maori warriors represented a part-time force taking on professional full-time troops.

However, this story was not always perceived in these terms. Post-colonialism created the environment under which Belich and others have been able to reconsider the narrative from a perspective other than that of a grand imperial story of nation building necessitating the suppression of all resistance. Post-colonialism has also opened a space whereby the Maori story of the hostilities challenges the imperial version. The imperial vision glorified and exaggerated British military prowess, downplayed Maori strategic thinking and falsified the historic record. This is evident in how violent encounters between Maori and *Pakeha* have been interpreted. This paper will now examine how one such confrontation, the so-called 'Wairua Massacre' was recorded by 'colonial' historians and subsequently by 'post-colonial' historians.

The Wairua Affray

Strictly speaking the Wairua Massacre or Wairua Affray, as it is nowadays referred to, preceded the commencement of the New Zealand Wars by some two years. It refers to the first violent encounter between Maori and *Pakeha* following the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi that was meant to ensure a lasting peace between the two races. Most

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4 James Belich, *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 15.
5 Wright, Two Peoples, One Land, p. 253.
6 Belich The New Zealand Wars, p. 22.
7 *Ibid.*

historians, both past and present, agree that this incident, in which twenty-two Europeans and four Maori were killed, had a seminal role in fomenting the subsequent first New Zealand War known as Heke's War or the Northern War of 1845-46.[8]

The Wairua Affray took place on 17 June 1843. The essentials of the narrative are not contested between traditionalists and revisionist historians. On 17 June 1843 a party of fifty armed settlers lead by Arthur Wakefield (the foremost local representative of the New Zealand Company which was establishing settlements at opposite ends of Cook Strait at Nelson and Wellington, and a younger brother of Edward Gibbon Wakefield, the 'founder' of Adelaide) and the Police Magistrate Henry Thompson set out from Nelson to enforce a disputed land claim over the Wairua valley and to arrest the great Ngati Toa chiefs Te Rauparaha and his nephew Te Rangihaeata for destroying a surveyors hut and hindering the surveying of the valley. At this time the only empire in New Zealand was a Maori empire covering much of the central region of the country, and it was firmly under the authority of Te Rauparaha. When the European party encountered the chiefs with a similar sized party of armed warriors (as well as women and children) debate raged between the two groups. Te Rauparaha wanted the dispute to be adjudicated by the government commissioner appointed to investigate contested land sales, William Spain. Thompson and Wakefield were not dissuaded and maintained their intent to arrest the chiefs. In this impassioned atmosphere a shot was fired triggering a melee in which Maori routed the Europeans. Eight Europeans, including Thompson and Wakefield were taken prisoner, while the other surviving members of the European party fled in fear of their lives. The captives were subsequently executed on the orders of Te Rangihaeata, some including Thompson and Wakefield by his own hand, using both musket and the traditional greenstone war club, the mere. The reason for the executions was that Te Rangihaeata had become enraged upon discovering that his wife, Te Rongo, a daughter of Te Rauparaha, had been killed in the melee. The imperial government took no subsequent action, in part because they believed that Te Rauparaha and Te Rangihaeta were in the right, that settler claims to the land were fraudulent, but also for practical reasons—they lacked the military means to do so. In the eyes of colonists the imperial government had appeased the Maori and their actions over this affair only demonstrate how ineffectual imperial power was at this time. Colonists became resentful and Maori were emboldened throughout the North Island.

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8 The first of the New Zealand Wars took place in and about the Bay of Islands in what is today the province of Northland between March 1845 and January 1846. The war was instigated by a series of provocative acts by a Nga Puhi chieftain Hone Wiremu Heke Pokai, more commonly referred to as Hone or John Heke.

The substantive difference between colonial and postcolonial accounts of this incident is in the emphasis given to different facets of the narrative as well as what is said and what is not said. Arthur P. Douglas' *The Dominion of New Zealand* was published in 1909 as part of a series designed to, amongst other things, 'quicken the interest of Englishmen in the extension and maintenance of the Empire'.[9] In Douglas' account the 'natives fired upon the settlers who, surprised by the attack, could not be induced to stand their ground notwithstanding the entreaties of their leader.' Thus the Maori opened fire on the *Pakeha* without warning. This account also has Wakefield along with eight compatriots surrendering to Te Rauparaha only to be 'butchered' by Te Rangihaeata because he had 'another feud to settle with the English'.[10] No mention is made that his wife, a paramount chieftain's daughter, had just been shot dead and under the Maori custom of *utu* such an act was demanded. The imperial government's subsequent actions in not pursuing Te Rauparaha and Te Rangihaeata were roundly criticised with much blame for the lack of action placed at the feet of the Acting-Governor Lieutenant Willoughby Shortland for whom it was suggested 'had not the qualities necessary for his position'.

A Short History of New Zealand, originally published in 1925 went through several revisions over the years. The 1954 seventh edition had, according to its preface, undergone complete revision.[11] Nevertheless this work adhered to earlier depictions of the Wairua Affray as massacre, although it did not use this term. It states that '[t]here was a fight and 22 Europeans were killed, most of them after they had been made prisoner.'[12] The truth is that only eight, just over a third of the Europeans killed, were executed after surrendering. No mention is made as why these executions took place. Although Shortland's replacement, Governor FitzRoy, is quoted from the account he sent back to Britain in which he stated that it was his painful duty, to report 'that his fellow-countrymen "needlessly violated the rules of the law of England, the maxims of prudence, and the principles of justice".'[13]

A.H. Reed's 1945, *The Story of New Zealand*, was an influential volume that went through multiple editions, but the text remained essentially unchanged. The 1960 tenth edition was virtually identical to the original in its narrative of the New Zealand Wars. Twenty-four thousand copies of this edition were sold, but it was a 1948 special edition, specifically published for use in schools which many New

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9 Arthur P. Douglas, *The Dominion of New Zealand* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1909), forepiece.
10 *Ibid.,* p. 40.
11 J.B. Condliffe and W.T. Airey, *A Short History of New Zealand*, 7th edn (Christchurch: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1954).
12 *Ibid.,* p. 67.
13 *Ibid.,* p. 68.

Zealanders educated in the 1950s and 1960s would recollect and from which they gained their understanding of the New Zealand Wars. In Reed's account the Maori party was made up of 'eighty or ninety armed followers, besides some women and children', while the 'Europeans numbered about fifty, of whom only some thirty were armed, and most of these knew nothing about musketry.'[14] Thus according to Reed experienced Maori warriors vastly outnumbered their amateur *Pakeha* counterparts, when in fact the numbers of both men and muskets were fairly evenly distributed between the two sides. It was, in numerical terms at least, a fair fight.

Reed admits that on balance it was probable that the accidental shot which initiated the melee was discharged 'by one of the inexperienced *Pakehas*' for 'certainly Captain Wakefield had not given an order to fire and had strictly warned his men not to do so unless he gave the word.'[15] How Reed knew this to be so is not stated but 'reading against the grain' it is clear that Wakefield went to arrest the Maori chiefs in full anticipation of a gunfight. In Reed's account Wakefield and some of his men surrendered under a white flag. At first they were well treated until Te Rangihaeata heard that 'one of his wives or women slaves had been killed' at which point he delivered a 'passionate speech, [and] with his own hands killed all the defenceless captives'.[16] It is worth noting that the true status of the women killed is not given. Nor is any mention made of Maori who were slain that day, but the Europeans killed are described as 'peaceable, well-meaning colonists' whose lives were 'needlessly sacrificed'.[17] Further, Reed states that the last thing that Wakefield and Thompson 'wanted or expected was the injury or death of a fellow-being.'[18] If this was so, then why did these two men take such a large party of inexperienced armed men with them? Why did they not await the arrival of the government appointed independent mediator Commissioner William Spain as Te Rauparaha had advocated?

Reed's version appears to draw heavily on an earlier account by A.W. Shrimpton, although a little more detail is given.[19] One point of difference between these accounts is the status of women killed who triggered Te Rangihaeata murderous rage. In this account she is described one of his 'inferior wives'.[20] Just how anyone could consider the daughter of New Zealand's them most powerful chief an inferior wife

14 A.H. Reed, *The Story of New Zealand*, 2nd edn (Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1946), p. 227.
15 *Ibid.*
16 *Ibid.,* p. 228.
17 *Ibid.*
18 *Ibid.*, p. 229.
19 A.W. Shrimpton, 'The Crown Colony Period (1840-1853)', in *Maori and Pakeha: A History of New Zealand,* ed. by A.W. Shrimpton and Alan E. Mulgan, (Auckland: Whitcombe and Tombs, c.1921), pp. 129-133.
20 *Ibid.,* p. 130.

staggers imagination. Nevertheless Shrimpton does admit that the European action was nothing more than a 'thinly-veiled attempt to obtain forcible possession of land under the cloak of lawful authority.'[21] Blame for the incident is squarely laid on European incompetence and greed, but he is also highly critical of the imperial response to this incident which he argues was interpreted as 'weakness' and only 'increase[d] the growing contempt for the white man.'[22]

In 1950, as postcolonial perspectives began to have some limited impact Harold Miller in his work New Zealand clearly paints Wakefield's claims to the Wairua as dubious.[23] There is even more detail in the narrative than previous versions and the incompetency of the Europeans is emphasised. The number of European dead increased by one in this version and Te Rongo is merely referred to as the 'wife of one of the chiefs'.[24] However, Miller goes into considerably more depth about the repercussions of the incident, such as the role it played in the suspension of emigration to New Zealand for some five years. However, in a subsequent book published in 1966, entitled *Race Conflict in New Zealand 1814-1865*, Miller is virtually silent on the Wairua Affray, which he says only involved 'Maori minorities' and that:

> although the troubles at Cook Strait and the Bay of Islands were alarming, the great mass of the chiefs was sufficiently influenced by the new religion or by their exacting new economic interests to remain quiet, and many took arms against the trouble-makers.'[25]

According to Miller, relationships between Maori and *Pakeha* could be described as 'cheerful co-operation'.[26] This interpretation stretches the reality into the realm of fantasy. In their time Te Ruaparaha and Hone Heke were not Maori minorities, but rather two of the most powerful Maori leaders in New Zealand, and between them they commanded many thousands of Maori. In the case of Heke, this so-called minnow was able to effectively defeat an imperial British army. As for the backing given to these rebel leaders it is true that they were not supported by all Maori but it would be very wrong to gleam from this that there was a majority of Maori who opposed their actions, just as it is a flight of fancy to describe Maori-*Pakeha* relations as cheerful co-operation. Without doubt there was considerable co-operation between the races, but it was not all 'plain sailing'. Conflict and resistance were important facets of inter-racial

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21 *Ibid.*
22 *Ibid.,* p. 132.
23 Harold Miller, *New Zealand*, (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1950), p. 30.
24 *Ibid.,* p. 31.
25 *Ibid.,* p. xv.
26 *Ibid.,*

relations during the 1840s as even a superficial examination of the historical record overwhelmingly demonstrates.

By the 1960s post-colonialism can clearly be seen as having some influence on how the narrative of the Wairua Affray was being told. This is evident in the version told by Edgar Holt as context to his 1962 history of the later New Zealand Wars.[27] This is a subtler, nuanced history that provides much more detail as to how and why events unfolded. It is also far more scathing in its criticism of European actions though it does suffer from a problem that all the other narratives thus far have in common. There is simply no referencing as to where the particulars of the story originate. The reader is simply not provided with the details of the sources consulted by the author.

In Holt's account the reader is told that two magistrates, Thompson and Wakefield, signed the warrant for arresting Te Rauparaha and Te Rangihaeata. The latter magistrate was hardly acting without bias, given his standing in the land company responsible for the colony at Nelson and for securing more land in the region for new settlers.[28] Holt outlines how the Maori chiefs calmly but emphatically requested that the settlers leave and await Commissioner Spain's adjudication. This is contrasted with the extreme provocation of Thompson's actions, including ordering his men to fix bayonets and attempt to take the chiefs by force and handcuff them like slaves. Such a provocative act could only have resulted in violence, and this is what took place. However, in this account the accidental shot which finally forced the melee, is fired by a European and it is this shot which hit and killed Te Ronga. The Maori response in this narrative is interpreted as entirely retaliatory. Even the rationale for the killing of prisoners is placed within its Maori cultural context of utu, although the adjectives used make it clear that this was the response of a savage, and thus the ruthless killing of prisoners 'gave the Wairua the justifiable title of 'massacre'.'[29] While this account has some post-colonial features, particularly in terms of the inclusiveness of elements that give a more balanced perspective of what actually took place on 17 June 1843, Holt's conclusions are still very much framed in a colonial mindset. This is well exemplified in his interpretation of events following the Affray. Holt states that: 'The aftermath of this affair gave further proof of the fair-mindedness with which the British authorities, both at home and in New Zealand, treated the Maoris.'[30]

One of the first true post-colonial interpretations of the New Zealand Wars is James Belich's 1986 landmark publication *The New Zealand*

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27 Edgar Holt, *The Strangest War: The Story of the Maori Wars 1860-1872* (London: Putnam and Company, 1962), pp. 68-74.
28 *Ibid.,* p. 70.
29 *Ibid.,* p. 71.
30 *Ibid.,*

Wars. While this work focuses on the conflicts post-Wairau, this confrontation is noted. It is worth quoting Belich at length on this subject. He states that:

> These tensions [between British and Maori over sovereignty], together with careless land purchasing by New Zealand Company agents, led to the first violent clash to take place after 1840: the Wairau Affray. On 17 June 1843, the local magistrate and fifty armed settlers set out from Nelson to enforce a claim to land at Wairau which they believed they had purchased. The Ngati Toa chiefs Te Rauparaha and Te Rangihaeata, great generals of the Musket Wars [increased Maori tribal warfare taking place principally between 1818 and 1833], believed that their people owned the land, and had not been paid for it. Similar disputes had previously been settled by compromise or set aside for subsequent adjudication, and in this case Te Rauparaha, a strong advocate of interaction with Europeans, was willing to negotiate. But the settlers attempted to arrest him—to apply British law to a Maori chief. Firing broke out, and the settlers were routed by an equal number of Maoris. The Maoris lost four killed, and the British lost twenty-two, including some slain after capture. The British took no action over this incident, mainly because they lacked the military resources, and large-scale conflict was thus avoided until the Northern War broke out in 1845.[31]

He further states that:

> In 1843, a posse of armed settlers set out to teach Te Rauparaha that he was subject to British sovereignty in fact. At Wairau, it was routed. As historians have observed, this was the first and last settler commando ever mounted in New Zealand and this fact itself was significant for race relations. With all due respect to British humanitarianism, one reason why New Zealand settlers did not treat the Maori as their Australian counterparts did the Aborigines was that, when they did, they got killed.[32]

It is worth noting where this brief summary of the Affray differs from earlier accounts. The differences are not so much in substance (although much of the detail of earlier accounts are absent) as in emphasis. In Belich's version the basis for this tragedy is squarely with the *Pakeha* ('careless land purchasing'). The Maori chief Te Rauparaha is willing to negotiate but the *Pakeha* are not. While Te Rauparaha is not anti-settler he does not accept subjugation to the British crown. This issue of sovereignty in the conflict is a point that Belich emphasises. It is the sub-text to the melee and it was a matter clearly understood by the major players. The fight was equitable in terms of the numbers of combatants on both sides, and the killing of prisoners is noted. Belich though unambiguously signifies the Maori as the clear winner of the engagement. Where he differs from many earlier interpretations is in his explanation as to why the British did not pursue the incident and what its ramifications were in terms of any on-going settler commando groups.

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31 Belich, *The New Zealand Wars,* p. 21.
32 *Ibid.,* p. 304.

Belich, while noting humanitarian impulses in the British settler community, focuses on the superiority of then existing Maori military strength instead of how British authorities perceived the rights and wrongs of the issue in explaining why there was no subsequent imperial or colonial action. New Zealand settlers subsequently did not form vigilante groups and did not take the law into their own hands. The Maori had proven they had superior martial abilities to those possessed by settlers and this had long-term consequences. Belich viewed this incident in a much wider context in terms of New Zealand's on-going racial relations.

*Revisionist History of Maori/*Pakeha *Hostilities*

In New Zealand there has never been a denial of the hostilities and wars that were fought between the *Pakeha* and the Maori, as has been the case in Australia in respect to frontier violence between settlers and Aborigines, the so-called 'great Australian Silence'. However, the traditional pioneer legend of New Zealand plays down the significance of nineteenth-century conflict and Maori success in it. This traditional legend has also sought to foster a fabrication that in the aftermath of the New Zealand Wars Maori and *Pakeha* 'kissed and made up', leading to a harmonious society, relatively free of interracial troubles and race relations the envy of other settler societies. The rise in Maori activism from the 1970s onwards in conjunction with revisionist post-colonial history has shattered this illusion in New Zealand. The new history has, as one historian has put it, 'successfully demolished many of the race-relations myths of mid-twentieth century' New Zealand.[33]

The revisionist post-colonial interpretation of inter-racial colonial violence is important beyond an attempt to ensure the historical record more accurately reflects what took place some 170 years ago. The significance for contemporary New Zealand is that the revised history is an intimate component of the activities of New Zealand's Waitangi Tribunal. Established in 1975, this quasi-judicial government instrumentality has been tasked with investigating Maori claims of breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi. The Treaty, signed in early 1840 by over 500 Maori Chiefs and the British Crown, is the basis upon which Britain claimed sovereignty over New Zealand. The Treaty included clauses guaranteeing Maori certain rights in respect of their lands and the resources associated with them, as well as the rights and privileges of British subjects and the protection of the Crown. Arguably the rights that the Treaty bestowed upon Maori were violated. It has been the Tribunal's responsibility to negotiate settlements as part of the process of redressing past wrongs between Maori and *Pakeha*. It has, over four decades,

33 Wright, *Two Peoples, One Land*, p. 10.

overseen the re-writing of Maori-*Pakeha* history and it has played a pivotal role in establishing new relations in terms of the control of land and resources as it seeks a new settlement to the old, and previously little acknowledged, problems steaming from inter-racial conflicts dating from the early 1840s. The activities of the Tribunal are confronting for many *Pakeha* New Zealanders today. The re-writing of the contested history of the past, in a post-colonial context, has caused and continues to cause great angst in New Zealand, just as process of reconciliation has in Australia. On a positive note the activities of the Tribunal have gone beyond just a re-writing of history. They have also sought a course by which New Zealanders, both Maori and *Pakeha*, can chart a means to redress past wrongs and better live together, thus endeavouring to enhance harmony in race relations.

Concluding Remarks

Post-colonialism has achieved not just an emancipation of the colonised but also a liberation of the colonisers to write histories that are more comprehensive and representative of the views and ideologies of all participants, and imbue the story of western colonial enterprise with greater texture. No longer can history represent and interpret the past merely from the perspective of the ideologies of the dominant power. Western historians have a role challenging and re-evaluating earlier subjective and one-sided historical discourses. Post-colonialism has changed the way we understand and study the past, as well as the way we view others. At the centre of many post-colonial histories is the story of how those previously considered to have been powerless fought and resisted the imposition of European hegemony. Post-colonial history questions the familiar, traditional and previously dominant discourse of the rise of western power, the role of colonialism in the development of nation-states and global concepts of progress, and how these notions have been framed and conditioned by earlier western scholarship.

Post-colonial histories are revisionist histories which interrogate and reject previously held notions of European imperialism and colonialism as having a relative benign impact on colonised peoples or, if there were any initial negative effects, that these were soon counterbalanced and superseded by the benefits that European cultural traditions, institutions and technology brought to the lives of indigenous peoples. While colonial narratives have a tendency to emphasise modernisation, the building of the nation-state and economic advancement, post-colonial narratives challenge this linear model of progress. Instead, they highlight the deleterious repercussions on the culture of indigenous peoples, their physical being, native ecological systems and the broader environment, as well as the resistance of indigenous peoples to the encroachment of western hegemonic structures. Thus, post-colonial histories often focus

on the colonial experiences of indigenous peoples, presenting their perspectives and with this a more balanced and accurate account of colonialism. Post-colonial historians are interested in de-constructing the grand discourses of imperial and national histories that reflect an Enlightenment vision of a progressive history. Rather, they are concerned with re-constructing a new narrative which is inclusive of the complex heterogeneity of the relationships which existed, and exist, between different peoples and the lands they inhabit. They strive to 'reveal or point to suppressed, defeated, or negated histories and stories', such as the accuracy of the Wairua Affray narrative.[34]

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[34] Prasentjit Duara, 'Postcolonial History', in *A Companion to Western Historical Thought*, ed. by Lloyd Kramer and Sarah Maza (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), p. 417.