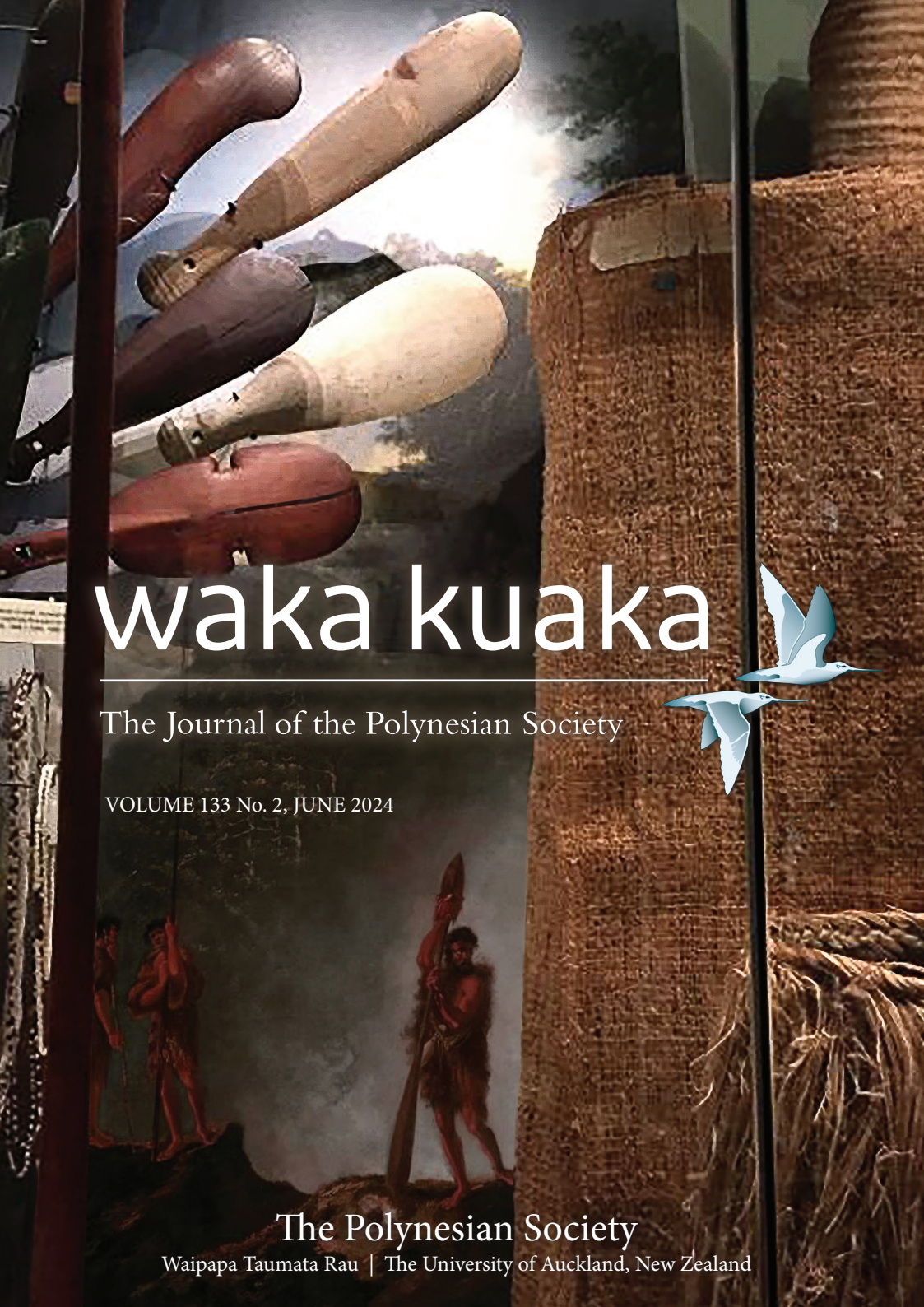




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Waipapa Taumata Rau | The University of Auckland, New Zealand

focus of archaeology in this region—that of origins and migrations—this volume does cover a wide range of analytical techniques, information sources, artefact types, geographic regions and chronological span.

This well-selected array of essays has certainly fuelled my interest, and I think this book would be of interest to Pacific researchers in many disciplines. It also emphasises the significance of archaeological collections in museums and other institutions and the varied nature of the information they carry; as such it would also be of interest to museum professionals.

Notes

1. For a full list of participating institutions and authors please see the exhibition website: www.uncoveringpacificpasts.org
2. Emeritus Professor Matthew Spriggs is a retired professor of archaeology from The Australian National University, still active in research. Dr Tristen Jones is a lecturer in the Master of Museum and Heritage Studies programme at the University of Sydney, Australia. Dr Hilary Howes is an ARC DECRA fellow based at The Australian National University.
3. The book and many images may be downloaded for free from ANU Press: <https://press.anu.edu.au/publications/series/pacific/uncovering-pacific-pasts>

<https://doi.org/10.15286/jps.133.2.251-253>

SISSONS, Jeffrey: *The Forgotten Prophet: Tāmāti Te Ito and His Kaingārara Movement*. Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2023. 204 pp., ack., ed. note, foreword, illus., index, notes. NZ \$49.99 (softcover), EPUB, PDF.

ROWAN LIGHT

Tāmaki Paenga Hira | Auckland War Memorial Museum
Waipapa Taumata Rau | The University of Auckland

Jeffrey Sissons's *The Forgotten Prophet* is a quiet, sturdy kind of history which deserves careful reading. The book's titular prophet is Tāmāti Te Ito Ngāmoke, born in 1829 of Ngāti Ruanui and Te Āti Awa descent. Te Ito's early life was entwined with the seismic histories of Taranaki hapū (smaller descent groups) who, forced out of their rohe (district) in the 1820s, returned with the Wesleyan Gospel after 1840 to struggle with newly introduced diseases and feuds with other Māori groups in the face of demands for land by settlers and the colonial government. Taranaki was a "spiritually dangerous landscape" (p. 17)—one that was not only "being slashed by survey lines that brought social division" but scattered with the bones and bloodstains of those killed during tribal conflicts a decade earlier.

In this context, Te Ito emerged as a young tohunga (expert), improvising an established custom of expelling ngārara (atua—ancestor deities—embodied

as lizards) from wāhi tapu (sacred sites). By the early 1850s, Te Ito—with a band of 30 mounted followers—was traversing Taranaki sites, overseeing the destruction of mauri (sacred) stones and the burial of Bibles to mark a new dominion over the land. Sometime in late 1855 or early 1856, he announced his ascension as poropiti (prophet) by destroying the taumata atua (resting place) of Maru, one of the supreme Taranaki atua (when Riwia Tītōkōwaru embarked on his hugely successful campaign against colonial forces in 1868, he did so invoking Maru—such was this atua’s power).

As poropiti, Te Ito’s project was pan-tribal: his mission was to make Taranaki whenua (land) safe from conflict and disease, by releasing the tapu (sacred) restrictions laid down by atua and which, when contravened, brought death. This new divine order expelled atua in much the same way as Taranaki Māori had been driven out a generation earlier and, in turn, now faced immense pressures from colonial settlement. A series of large bonfires were organised in 1857 and 1858 into which materials such as taonga (treasured objects) and clothing, as well as ngārara, taken from wāhi tapu were thrown and destroyed. These Kaingārara fires spread to Whanganui in 1862, and to the lower South Island in the mid-1860s under the leadership of Hīpa Te Maiharoa.

Sissons interweaves Te Ito’s life with the wider implications of the Kaingārara movement’s cleansing fires. At a time when rangatira (chiefly individuals) throughout Taranaki were seeking to circumscribe settlers through new laws and boundaries, Te Ito offered an ontological justification: acts of material and ecological destruction, symbolically enhanced by the timing with Matariki, the Māori New Year, provided the possibility of new cosmological trajectories. Hopes of political unification were set against a dizzying panorama of change: Te Ito himself had travelled with other Taranaki Māori to the goldfields of Victoria, encountering ethnicities and spiritualities from around the world. Kaingārara offered Taiporohēnuitanga, a west coast identity, slowing the tide of European settlement.

Previously, Sissons has written about the “Polynesian iconoclasm” (Sissons 2014), a process through which chiefly authorities across the Pacific recreated their political power through the destruction of ancestral shrines and figures. In *The Forgotten Prophet*, he shows that similar forces were at play in Taranaki, with Te Ito mediating social conflicts. This is exemplified in the careful contextual translation of correspondence by Te Ito, held at the Alexander Turnbull Library and now digitised for public use, which Sissons uses—with aroha (compassion)—to provide a portrait of the prophet, his personality and his theology. “Great is my love for you all in the midst of perplexity”, Te Ito wrote to would-be land salesman Te Waitere Kātātore in a scolding 1857 letter. “Your confusion has been great in these days. ... [T]he map of the land is destroyed and the correct way of acting for you and I has become lost” (p. 63).

Te Ito, as recovered by Sissons, is a potent example of Māori engagement with Christianity in the vein of Hirini Kaa.¹ Taranaki in the 1850s was an “in-between world” where Kaingārara had begun to “reconfigure their relationships with atua, tapu and missionary teachings” (p. 79). Sissons is attentive to the ways colonial sources have misconstrued the deeply relational system of tapu, instead noting how states of tapu/noa (sacred/profane) were “produced, controlled and negotiated” (p. 80) rather than simply imposed by a divine authority. He also shows how the tikanga hou (new practices) offered by the Kaingārara movement were part of the cacophony of Christianities at play in the nineteenth century (Kaingārara beliefs included three levels of deities, in which the Catholic God ranked second). European missionaries who found themselves marginalised by the new prophet quickly condemned the iconoclasm as a trick of the devil. Above all, Sissons reinstalls Te Ito among the many striking poropiti of nineteenth-century Aotearoa New Zealand, not least Pai Mārire² visionary Te Ua Haumēne, who was Te Ito’s friend and, later, his rival. In a striking contest of mana (spiritual authority), Te Ua recast Te Ito as a pōrewarewa (seer), a term that has taken on a derogative meaning and seems to have diminished Te Ito’s place in subsequent histories (in fact, Sissons implies that Te Ito provided the foundation for Parihaka with an earlier settlement).

More immediately, *The Forgotten Prophet* returns us to the Taranaki raupatu (conquest) that, from 1841 to 1881, encompassed something far more world-ending, as shown by iwi (tribe) historians Danny Keenan and Rachel Buchanan. Crucially, Te Ito was not marginal to these events—Hapurona’s defenders at Te Kōhia pā (defensive fortification site), the site of a British Army attack in 1860, were almost certainly Kaingārara affiliates, and reprisals on settler homesteads, consumed by avenging flames, take on new significance in light of the whakanoa (tapu-removing) bonfires (Te Ito’s own pā at Te Puata was sacked by colonial forces).

If public histories are to make room for Māori collective memories of war and its aftermath, we need to pay attention to the dialogue of customary and Christian symbols, acts and vocabularies that were part of iwi responses to colonial conflict. Sissons reestablishes the “religious and prophetic dimension of a land-holding movement” (p. 65) which historians such as James Belich only tentatively linked to Kaingārara and which subsequent narratives had framed, narrowly, as a “land league”. The activities of Te Ito before 1863—that seminal year of despair for many iwi Māori—recasts the New Zealand Wars as a series of cosmological battles, as much as military campaigns—battles between atua and the Christian God, and different sources of Christian authority, and against a government that increasingly appeared as anti-Christ.

Although Te Ito died sometime in 1907, it was the government invasion of Parihaka in 1881 that hurled Taranaki’s first prophet into obscurity. Through

Sissons's deft writing, this tupuna (ancestor) now steps back into the daylight of history, to remind New Zealanders—tangata whenua (Indigenous people) and tangata tiriti (people of the treaty, non-Māori)—that “[t]he way forward was back, the future lay in the past” (Williams 2015: 38), to borrow Melissa Williams's phrasing. At a time when the mana of Taranaki Maunga has been fully restored, Te Ito might give a new direction, just as he did in the 1850s and 1860s, to our own contemporary cultural, political and religious “in-betweens”.

Notes

1. Theologian and historian Dr Hirini Kaa (Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Kahungunu and Rongowhakaata) is author of *Te Hāhi Mihinare | The Māori Anglican Church* (Bridget Williams Books, 2020).
2. Pai Mārire was the first independent Māori Christian movement and was based on the revelations of Te Ua Haumēne.

Glossary

The terms in this glossary are New Zealand Māori.

aroa	compassion
atua	ancestor deity
hapū	smaller descent group
iwi	tribe
mana	spiritual authority
mauri stone	sacred stone
ngārara	atua embodied as a lizard
noa	profane
pā	defensive fortification site
pōrewarewa	seer
poropiti	prophet
rangatira	chiefly individuals
raupatu	conquest
rohe	district
tangata whenua	Indigenous people
tangata tiriti	people of the treaty, non-Māori
taonga	treasured objects
tapu	sacred
taumata atua	resting place
tikanga hou	new practices
tohunga	expert
tupuna	ancestor
wāhi tapu	sacred site
whakanoa	removal of tapu
whenua	land

References Cited

- Sissons, Jeffrey, 2014. *The Polynesian Iconoclasm: Religious Revolution and the Seasonality of Power*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Williams, Melissa Matutina, 2015. *Panguru and the City | Kāinga Tahi, Kāinga Rua: An Urban Migration History*. Wellington: Bridget Williams Books.
<https://doi.org/10.7810/9781927247921>

<https://doi.org/10.15286/jps.133.2.253-257>

RISEBOROUGH, Hazel: *Days of Darkness: Taranaki, 1878–1884*. 3rd edition. Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2023. 300 pp., bib., index, notes. NZ\$49.99 (softcover).

AMY STEWART

Tāmaki Paenga Hira | Auckland War Memorial Museum

Hazel Riseborough's *Days of Darkness: Taranaki, 1878–1884* is an incisive, meticulously researched account of the build-up to and aftermath of the invasion of Parihaka, in Aotearoa New Zealand, in 1881. Most importantly, at 234 core pages it is a well-edited and highly readable account, punctuated by the author's shrewd summaries and, occasionally, her acerbic commentary. Recounting the suppression of official documents, for example, Riseborough remarks that "[t]he ministers' memories a year or two later were as convenient as their consciences at the time" (p. 166).

Riseborough was a wool classer and agricultural researcher as well as a historian and lecturer. The text is based on her PhD thesis, completed in 1987 and originally titled "Policies and Prophets: Aspects of Government Native Policy in Taranaki, 1878–1884". In his obituary for her published by *Stuff*, fellow historian Danny Keenan (Ngāti Te Whiti, Te Āti Awa) noted that Riseborough chose her topic after attending the 1981 centenary of the Parihaka invasion. Incensed by the loose facts cited by Pākehā (New Zealand European) speakers and frustrated by the one-dimensional version of events, her remedy was to produce a text with the documentary thoroughness of pre-trial legal discovery. To create a text dense with quotations but not made heavy by them, Riseborough sorts these receipts—taken from legislation, parliamentary debates, telegrams, Crown correspondence and newspapers—and arranges them into a timeline that is not just comprehensible but dramatic too. The episode describing the passage of the government's infamous proclamation-ultimatum hours before then-governor Arthur Hamilton Gordon's return from Fiji has all the pace and tension of a TV drama (pp. 160–80).