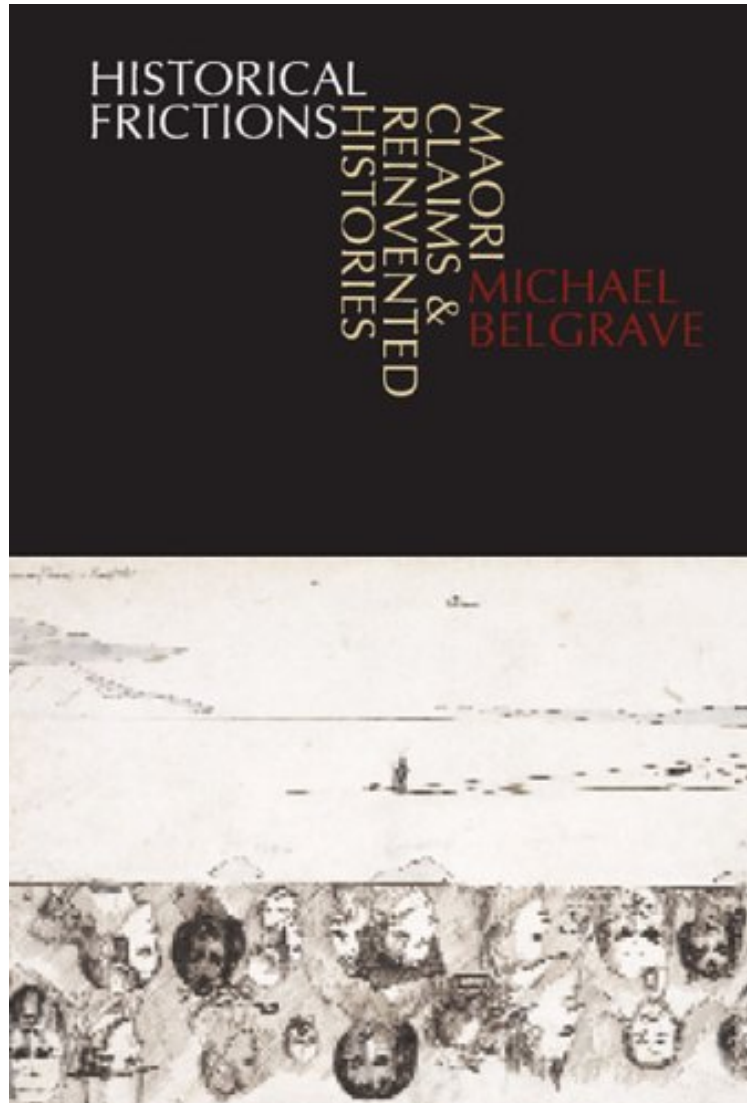


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Historical Frictions: Maori Claims and Reinvented Histories

Michael Belgrave

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Michael Belgrave : Historical Frictions: Maori Claims and Reinvented Histories before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Historical Frictions: Maori Claims and Reinvented Histories:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Essential reading for students of NZ history By Graeme Hammond Fascinating insights and thoroughly researched. A must-read for students of New Zealand history. 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. The layer cake of colonial history By Jacob Pollock Since 1985, the Waitangi Tribunal has had licence to investigate Maori claims of violations of the Treaty of Waitangi throughout

Aotearoa/New Zealand's history. The Tribunal's mandate went beyond the purely legal realm which Iwi claims had taken place in for 140 years, and entered into a new, historical setting. In the wake of political events that have shattered nearly 20 years of political consensus on the Tribunal's role in Aotearoa/New Zealand society, Tribunal Historian Michael Belgrave has produced a book which outlines the histories and intricacies of four of the major claims. Belgrave's approach in *Historical Frictions* is not simply to describe the nature of each claim, and its resolution. Rather, each of the four case studies -- Muriwhenua, Ngai Tahu, Taranaki, and Chatham Islands -- is discussed as a layered history; a history whose narrative changes over time, in response both to the needs of the Iwi making the claim, and to the legal setting in which the claim is made. It may surprise readers to discover that almost all of the claims heard so far by the Waitangi Tribunal have been tested in court at some time, even many times, over the past 150 years. Historical arguments have thus developed in response both to iwi's needs to understand their past, and to assert their rights within a Western judicial system that has been reluctant to hear them, to say the least. Change over time is thus a major theme of Belgrave's work, and indeed one of the key strengths of *Historical Frictions* is to bring to light the connections between Aotearoa/New Zealand's past and present, to demonstrate the relationship between the actions of settlers and rangatira in the nineteenth century and the politics of settlement today. The strongest part of Belgrave's book is also the densest. The first two chapters, which lay the historiographical and methodological groundwork, are a complex assessment of the role of the Tribunal in New Zealand society, and the conflicting emphases of the legal and historical discourses with which the Tribunal must contend. Of particular importance is the latter, where the so-called 'objectiveness' of Western academic history contrasts not only with Maori oral history, but also the long and involved legal, and thus adversarial, approach to 'truth'. These tensions are perhaps borne out best in Belgrave's analysis of the Treaty itself -- Belgrave finds that the Treaty is a text whose meaning is indeterminate and shifting, and whose meaning today would be barely recognisable in the context in which it was signed. This, of course, is where the Frictions come in. For Belgrave, the past in a colonial society is not a foreign country, but an object that is negotiated and renegotiated, and cultural contact is not something that happens once, and for one generation, but is ongoing, perhaps for all times. Belgrave's book will give little comfort to supporters of Don Brash's 'one law for all' arguments -- indeed, Belgrave believes that the Waitangi Tribunal is unlikely to put an end to Maori claims -- but it offers an in-depth and nuanced analysis of the Waitangi Tribunal process, as well as the histories behind the claims. Not given to simplification and reductionism, Belgrave has rendered the complexities of a history of colonisation and loss, and attempts at redress and resistance, in ways that are engaging, and perhaps offer new avenues of historical inquiry at a time when history is once again up for grabs.

The land claims presented before the Waitangi Tribunal, first established in 1975 as a permanent commission of inquiry to address claims by the Maori people, are discussed in this analysis of the role of legal courts and commissions in mediating disputes with indigenous peoples.

"[Belgrave's] richly contextualised account of 'the historical treaty' is a tour de force." *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*