SOLDIERS, SCOUTS & SPIES

Edwin Harris, *Volunteer Rifles going on duty, New Plymouth, 1860.*
Puke Ariki, A65.892

Cliff Simons

SOLDIERS, SCOUTS & SPIES

A MILITARY HISTORY OF THE NEW ZEALAND WARS 1845–1864

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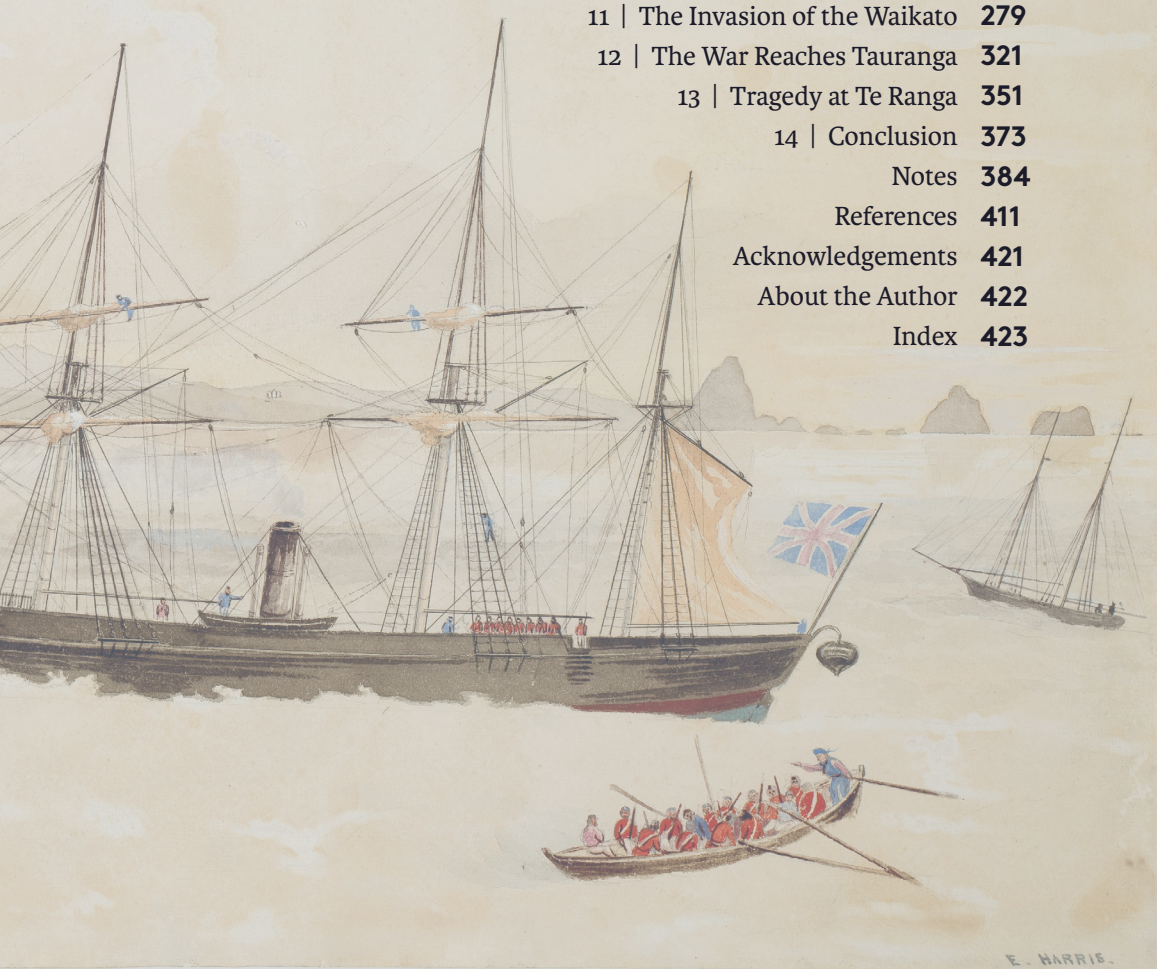
CONTENTS



A warrior at Pukehinahina–Gate Pā. He carries a shotgun (tūpara), a hatchet/tomahawk (pātītī) and a cartridge case. Ink drawing by Lieutenant Robley, 68th Regiment.
Alexander Turnbull Library, E-023-010

Previous pages: Marines disembarking the *Victoria* at New Plymouth. Watercolour by Edwin Harris, 1860.
Puke Ariki, A65.882

1

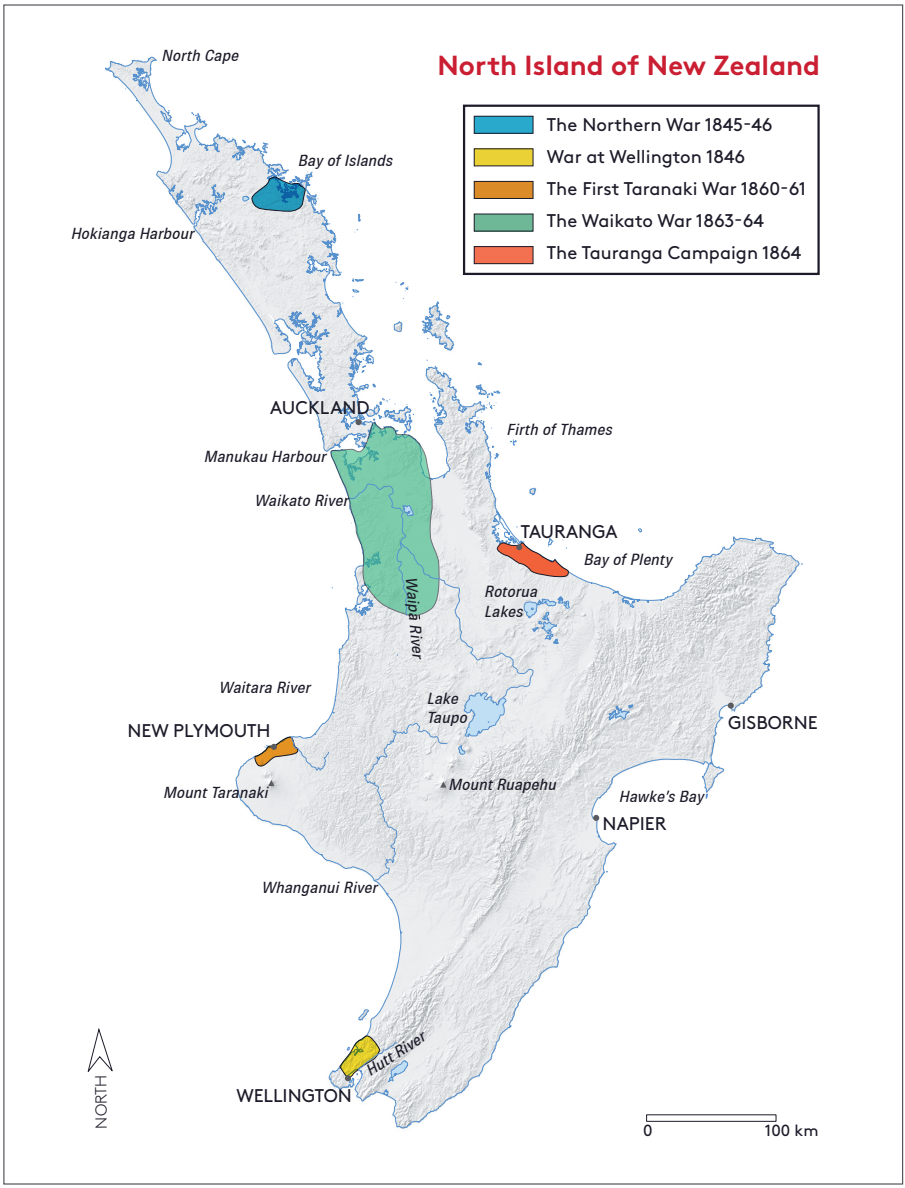
THE NEW ZEALAND WARS

MEREMERE
TE ĀREI TAURANGA
RUAPEKAPEKA
MĀHOETAHI
RANGI-
RIRI
KORORAREKA
WAIKATO
ŌRĀKAU
TE RANGA GATE PĀ
ŌHAEAWAI
BOULCOTT'S FARM

Many of us have been brought up on a kind of history which sees the human drama throughout the ages as a straight conflict between right and wrong. Sooner or later, however, we may find ourselves awakened to the fact that in a given war there have been virtuous and reasonable men earnestly fighting on both sides. Historians ultimately move to a higher altitude and produce a picture which has greater depth because it does justice to what was thought and felt by the better men on both sides.
— Sir Herbert Butterfield[1]

The New Zealand Wars were a series of small campaigns fought between Britain, its colonists and the nascent government of New Zealand, and some of the Māori inhabitants. They spanned a period of nearly thirty years between 1845 and the early 1870s, although some historians consider that they continued through to Parihaka in 1881 and even to the arrest of Rua Kēnana at Maungapōhatu in 1916. The wars have had a dramatic effect on the governance, land ownership and development of the nation through to the present day. They have cast an immense shadow across the nation's history, they are the origin of many of the issues that have caused ongoing friction between Māori and the Crown, and they continue to fuel anger and disaffection among various interest groups today.

The first of the wars flared up a mere five years after the two races had appeared to have made an encouraging start towards building a nation together. In simplified terms, the Treaty of Waitangi (Te Tiriti o Waitangi), signed on 6 February 1840, promised a partnership between the two peoples, and as the various chiefs signed the document, Queen Victoria's representative, Captain Hobson R.N., who was soon to become the first governor of New Zealand, is said to have uttered the words he had no doubt just learned: 'He iwi kotahi tātou'; we are now (all) one people.[2]



Map of the North Island showing the five major areas of conflict of the New Zealand Wars, 1845–64

But problems developed almost immediately as settlers from Great Britain arrived to begin their new lives in a distant land. The New Zealand Company purchased large tracts of land and brought many early settlers to New Zealand to establish settlements at Whanganui, Wellington, Nelson and Dunedin (and was also involved in the Christchurch and New Plymouth settlements). But the settlers' title to land and the validity of the Company's purchases were disputed by a government commission and by Māori who had their own perspective about what had been 'sold', and in some cases the government pared them back substantially. The continuing role and influence of the Company; the often overlooked authority and rights of Māori chiefs in the new colony; the inherent friction between the two races regarding the concepts of kawanatanga (governorship) and tino rangatiratanga[3] (highest chieftainship), which were, and still are in some ways, irresolvable; the practical realities of how British law would be applied and how it would intersect with Māori custom and lore; and the ability of a new governor to rule fairly and justly and what the parameters and scope of that rule would be, were all tested in those early years.

Armed conflict on a minor scale occurred in several places, and by 1845 any optimistic feelings were shattered as underlying concerns about chiefly authority and the loss of trade and income after the capital moved to Auckland provoked disillusioned factions of the Ngāpuhi iwi into challenging the new British authority by force of arms. And so erupted the Northern War of 1845–46, which was fought in the Bay of Islands (Te Tai Tokerau). As soon as hostilities in the Bay of Islands ceased in early 1846 they ignited in the Wellington (Te Whanganui a Tara) region and then spread to Whanganui.

A decade and a half later, the wars of the 1860s began when the Māori and Pākehā populations were more or less equal in size. The rapid influx of mostly British settlers eager to begin new lives in this fledgling colony had created an insatiable demand for land, and the incompatible Pākehā and Māori attitudes to the ownership or rights to land again brought the two peoples into conflict. There was a growing realisation among Māori that the independent authority of their chiefs, and the economic and social survival of their people, lay in their ability to retain their land, and they developed pan-tribal methods to resist further losses of it. And so again wars were fought over the issues that have remained a constant in the relationship between Māori and the Crown: land and sovereignty.

Although New Zealand was a small colony at the extreme edge of the British Empire, as far away from the United Kingdom as it was possible to be, a significant British military force was assembled in each of the conflicts. The government used British imperial soldiers and sailors supported by local volunteers, militias and Māori allies in wars in the Bay of Islands (1845–46), Wellington (1846), Taranaki (1860–61), Waikato (1863–64) and Tauranga (1864). These are the conflicts examined in this book. The British imperial regiments and the Royal Navy continued to campaign but by the end of 1866 most had left. The last to depart New Zealand shores was the 18th (Royal Irish) Regiment of Foot in 1870.

New Zealand embarked on a self-reliant defence policy in 1867 and it was the Armed Constabulary, the country's first national army, that, along with Māori allies, fought guerrilla-style campaigns against the Hauhau (Pai Mārire) movement, a religion which sprang up in 1864 against the confiscation of Māori land, and the charismatic leaders Tītokowaru and Te Kooti between 1865 and 1872. Once the tribes had been defeated, or at least subdued, the government confiscated vast tracts of land and began the process of settling new immigrant farmers onto it. The New Zealand landscape still tells the story of these conflicts. Many of the sites have been ploughed and grazed into oblivion but there are remnants of pā and redoubts, trenches and blockhouses, and graveyards and memorials that dot the countryside that speak of the nation's painful past.

The British Army and Royal Navy were among the best in the world at the time and were large, modern, well-organised, professional forces of the European model. By contrast, the Māori warriors who opposed them were part-time fighters of a still largely subsistence society. The conflict between these two groups took on a range of guises, at times bloody and intense and at times interludes of armed vigilance. The battles ranged from set-piece assaults against well-constructed fortifications to insurgent campaigns in dense and trackless bush.

A major military and technological power, Britain was able to draw upon the latest developments in many areas of artillery, telegraph, small arms and naval craft. Britain also had, what must have seemed to Māori, an endless supply of men and equipment and an ability to campaign in any season of the year, with logistics an important aspect of each operation.

The Māori forces, on the other hand, developed coalitions and used innovative tactical responses based primarily on their developments in the design of pā. They were constrained by the fact that, unlike the professional full-time soldiers

they faced, they also had to plant and harvest, hunt and fish. Consequently, maintaining enough men in the field was a continual concern, and so too was the ongoing problem of a lack of war supplies. These disadvantages were offset to a large extent by the fact they were fighting in their own environment, whereas the British nearly always suffered from poor military intelligence and understanding about what was, initially at least, an alien and challenging land.

Our understanding of the wars has changed significantly over the last 170 years and this is reflected in the differences in the accounts and histories produced over time. The earliest writings on the New Zealand Wars were reminiscences and first-hand accounts from Pākehā who were involved in the conflicts or who witnessed them. They tended to be narrative in style, often with an agenda, and they were sometimes published to justify the writer's own actions. Notable works from this period include: missionary accounts by Archdeacon Henry Williams[4] and Reverend Robert Burrows;[5] soldiers' or sailors' accounts from men such as Major General Sir J. E. Alexander,[6] who fought in the First Taranaki War; Lieutenant Colonel Robert Carey,[7] who arrived in 1860 and played a key role in the First Taranaki and Waikato wars; Major Cyprian Bridge,[8] who fought in the Northern War, and Lieutenant H. F. McKillop R.N.,[9] who left an account of derring-do, especially in the Wellington War of 1846, and by officials such as John Gorst[10] and John Featon[11] who both served in key government appointments in the Waikato just before that war started.

Thomas Gudgeon, a lieutenant and quartermaster, produced two books after the wars had finished, one of which was the extraordinarily titled *The Defenders of New Zealand* (1886),[12] which was actually about the deeds of men who had come to New Zealand to fight the Māori. His work reflected the settler attitudes of the post-war period: massive European immigration, hope, optimism, and a belief in a brave new future carved out of the bush and wrested from the natives of the land in the name of progress and civilisation.

Historian Erik Olssen[13] has suggested that two parallel paradigms developed in late nineteenth and early twentieth century New Zealand history; constant and often complementary themes that have characterised the nation's perception of itself. The first paradigm held that colonisation was inevitable and Māori

were blessed to be colonised by the British.[14] In this model, the settlers developed a nation that became more English than the English; a newer and better version of the old country, retaining the values and qualities of English culture and government institutions but avoiding many of England's problems, partly because it had been settled by selected stock.

The second paradigm was probably first enunciated by William Pember Reeves, a newspaper editor, Cabinet minister and eventually the high commissioner to London. His book *The Long White Cloud* (1898)[15] was a short history of settlement in New Zealand in which he argued:

> *[the settlers] absorbed certain elements from 'the more English than the English' but stressed the importance of Maori, the frontier, the wars of the 1860s and the gold rushes in emancipating the country's British colonists from the Old World traditions so as to create an adventuresome democratic society which, in pioneering bold new reforms, had become the world's social laboratory.*[16]

The first comprehensive history of the New Zealand Wars came in 1922 with the publication of James Cowan's government-funded, two-volume *The New Zealand Wars and the Pioneering Period*,[17] a work that fell primarily within Olssen's second paradigm. Cowan, who was a journalist, had grown up on a farm in rural Waikato close to the site of the famous Battle of Ōrākau near Kihikihi, where a pā had been besieged by British troops in March 1864, and where, tragically, up to 160 Māori were killed when they tried to flee to safety. He was in tune with the land and bush and had grown up alongside Māori. Veterans of the wars of the 1860s were very old men by 1922 and the features of many of the battlefields were still recognisable. Cowan visited the battlefields and spoke to the veterans of both sides, and then wrote about the battles in great detail; an account so readable and thorough, it was said to have 'dominated the study of the New Zealand Wars for more than half a century'.[18]

Cowan saw the wars as a heroic period in New Zealand's history, a romantic time that has since passed forever. The government and the British military invariably acted from virtuous motives and the Māori were noble warriors of a type long gone. His work was a chronicle told in adventurous terms, with the unspoken underpinning view that the problems of the past had all been forgotten and forgiven, and that New Zealand had become a socially harmonious

society as a result of a pioneering spirit and sense of endeavour. Tales of chivalry in battle helped wash the slate clean. Despite providing much detail about the course of the battles and the composition of the sides, which is still seen as being of enormous value, Cowan's work contained little analysis of the underlying reasons for the wars.

A change of thinking was represented in the next seminal work: Keith Sinclair's *The Origins of the Maori Wars* (1957).[19] Rather than extolling New Zealand's English heritage, Sinclair saw that the conflict and values underpinning the colonisation period had bequeathed the nation an inheritance of difficulties in race relations. As Olssen explained: 'Waitara became synonymous with the "Maori Wars", and settler greed for land was presented as the main cause of those wars'.[20] This new 'why' history was a departure from Cowan's 'how' history,[21] and following Sinclair, a new generation began to see New Zealand as an adolescent South Pacific nation, worth studying in its own right. They started to untangle the complex reasons for the wars.

This different lens challenged the notion that New Zealand was the model of successful racial amalgamation, and the pivotal role the wars played in that process began to be reassessed. Edgar Holt's *The Strangest War* (1962),[22] B. J. Dalton's *War and Politics in New Zealand, 1855–1870* (1967),[23] Ian Wards' *The Shadow of the Land* (1968)[24] and Tom Gibson's *The Maori Wars* (1974)[25] all started to chip away at the interpretations and myths developed over the previous century. Alan Ward's *A Show of Justice* (1974),[26] for example, illuminated the ways the judicial system had been biased and used to disadvantage Māori.

Research and writing about the early contact and colonial periods blossomed in the 1980s, and there was considerable research in the broad areas relating to the New Zealand Wars. Claudia Orange's *The Treaty of Waitangi* (1987),[27] Jack Lee's *The Bay of Islands* (1983) and *Hokianga* (1987),[28] Anne Salmond's *Two Worlds* (1991), *Between Worlds* (1997) and *The Trial of the Cannibal Dog* (2004),[29] and Angela Ballara's *Taua* (2003)[30] were just some of the books that widened and deepened the understanding of the early contact and colonial periods.

However, it was historian James Belich's *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict* (1986)[31] that had the most profound effect on the study of the wars themselves. Belich's revisionist assessment had the goal of erasing the apparent myths of 150 years and proposing a new understanding of the period.

Belich argued that Māori had developed a strategic approach to the fighting

and had been considerably closer to winning than previously acknowledged. The development of innovative pā and the creation of a pan-Māori type of command were central planks in his argument. For the first time, Māori were presented as the strategic and intellectual equals of the British. The book was soon accepted as the new orthodoxy and acclaimed as a brilliant demolition of the traditionally understood version. It influenced a generation and is still a key reference point for any analysis of the wars.

The interest in the early contact and colonial periods has continued to grow, and coupled with what is sometimes called 'the Māori Renaissance' it has led to an enormous range of works in the general subject area, as writers have examined the complexities and uniqueness of modern New Zealand with reference to its past. Belich widened his focus to the broader colonisation process with *Making Peoples: A history of the New Zealanders from Polynesian settlement to the end of the nineteenth century* (1996).[32] Paul Moon's many books span the colonial period including *Hone Heke: Nga Puhi warrior* (2001)[33] and *Fatal Frontiers: A new history of New Zealand in the decade before the Treaty* (2006),[34] while Edmund Bohan has highlighted the complexities and factionalism within the various governments during the Taranaki and Waikato wars in *Climates of War* (2005).[35] Bohan showed that the Waikato War in particular was seen at the time by many — and certainly in the southern provinces which were even toying with the idea of secession from the colony — as a problem caused by Auckland avarice. Vincent O'Malley's *The Great War for New Zealand: Waikato 1800–2000* (2016)[36] has expanded on this theme with a thorough analysis of events before and after that particular war, and has shown that the New Zealand Wars remain an overlooked and little understood aspect of New Zealand history.

Jeff Hopkins-Weise's *Blood Brothers: The Anzac genesis* (2009)[37] and Frank Glen's *Australians at War in New Zealand* (2011)[38] illustrate there was a much greater involvement in the New Zealand Wars by the Australian colonies than has previously been understood, and that many 'Australian' citizens felt duty bound to come to the aid of their fellow colonists. Ron Crosby's *Kūpapa* (2015)[39] is a thorough examination of a significant aspect of the wars: why certain iwi or hapū aligned themselves to the Crown and fought against other Māori.

All of the early works are by Pākehā authors but increasingly and importantly a Māori view has begun to emerge. Danny Keenan's *Wars Without End* (2009)[40] presented a Māori perspective, emphasising the socio-political aspects of the

New Zealand Wars and identifying land as the enduring unresolved factor in the continuation of the Māori struggle. The long process of preparing and presenting claims to the Waitangi Tribunal by various iwi has also been an invaluable process to synthesise oral histories with more widely known official documents and other accounts to produce a deeper and more accurate interpretation of the period.

Alongside this has been an explosion of academic and populist writing and opinion about the effect of the wars within the greater national debate about the role and relevance of the Treaty of Waitangi in present-day New Zealand. This has produced a reaction as well, and some historians suggest that the Tribunal's history is a 'noble but ultimately flawed experiment', dominated by presentism (the concern to interpret history according to present-day understandings and agendas) and counter-factualism (the creation of alternative and mythologised histories resting on idealised and implausible narratives).[41]

As a result of the growing interest in the subject and increased calls to commemorate the New Zealand Wars with a public day of remembrance, the government announced in August 2016 that it had approved the idea and iwi leaders had jointly selected 28 October as the date. It has subsequently been commemorated in 2017 and 2018 but has received almost no recognition by the general public so far. The concept has merit and it perhaps represents a growing maturity of the nation, but as Ron Crosby points out, the difficult truth for many who called for the remembrance is that the Crown had Māori allies (often now disdainfully referred to as kūpapa) in all of the wars and may not, in fact, have been able to win without them. People will have to confront the reality that the wars were not a simple case of Māori versus Pākehā. The nation will have to deal with the consequences of increased knowledge about the wars and the land confiscations that followed them, and then attempt to make the transition from remembrance into actual reconciliation.

In *Romeo and Juliet,* the question is posed: 'What's in a name?'; the implication being there isn't much: 'That which we call a rose/By any other name would smell as sweet.' This may be the case for New Zealand's colonial wars, too. A name doesn't change what happened, but we certainly have had trouble, as a nation, deciding on that name. It is common to hear activists, politicians and others using the terms 'Māori Wars' and 'Māori Land Wars' interchangeably, and these have become the most usual titles. However, they reflect a misunderstanding of

causes of the wars and they imply blame by using the name of only one of the sides involved. They miss the crucial point that the wars were not just about land but also about sovereignty.

Britain had a tendency to name its colonial conflicts after the geographical location or name of the indigenous people it fought against: the Zulu Wars, the Ashanti Wars, and the Mahdist War are examples. The prefix 'Anglo' has often since been added, for example, the Anglo–Zulu Wars. In New Zealand, 'Anglo–Māori Wars' was short-lived and felt clumsy, and attempts to label them as 'New Zealand's Civil Wars' also gained little traction. The New Zealand Wars, the term mostly preferred by historians, suggests they were New Zealand's own internal wars and they belong to us.

The urge to study the wars themselves, and the details about how they were fought, rather than their political origins or their social and political consequences, may seem odd to some people. The study of the 'nuts and bolts' of war is sometimes considered to be just the realm of military buffs and retired soldiers, but as James Belich reminds us, 'War is part of history as a whole, interwoven with the politics and economics, society and culture, to form a single fabric.'[42] This reflects the Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz's famous assertion that war is the continuation of politics by another means.

Attitudes in New Zealand have possibly changed in the three decades since Belich felt the need to justify writing about warfare, and although war is inherently horrible, we know it fundamentally changes society, perhaps more so than any other aspect of human activity. This is arguably the case in New Zealand's history. There has been tremendous interest in recent World War I centenary commemorations and the ways this war affected us, and a smaller but growing interest in the New Zealand Wars because of the recent commemorations of some of the major New Zealand Wars' battles and campaigns 150 years ago, for the same reason.

Despite academic activity on the period and a growing public interest, few works have studied the wars from the perspective of military history.[43] The subtitle of this book, *A military history of the New Zealand Wars*, may seem unnecessarily self-explanatory, but a focus on how the wars were won and

The 150th anniversary commemoration of the Battle of Pukehinahina–Gate Pā. Top: Massed haka by Tauranga Moana iwi. Above: New Zealand Defence Force personnel recreating the march of the British troops up to the battle site. Photographs courtesy of Pukehinahina Charitable Trust.

Carvings on the Pukehinahina–Gate Pā battle site and the plaque unveiled at the centennial of the battle in 1964.

lost, what was actually done and what was militarily possible or not presents a fresh perspective and increases our understanding. War is an extraordinarily complicated enterprise and it requires careful study to understand how it happened in particular circumstances, and why one side won and the other lost. A writer with an understanding of warfare and how it works has truly something to offer.

In giving countless talks and lectures and conducting battlefield tours for over thirty years, my experience tells me there is widespread ignorance and misunderstanding about the wars. One of the statements that finally pushed me into writing this book was hearing a well-known Pākehā host on national radio vehemently declare that 'Māori never lost a battle' during the wars. In fact, the opposite is true. Māori were defeated in many battles, which led to the confiscation and alienation of much of their land.

The type of fighting that occurred during the wars falls into two broad periods. The campaigns from 1845 to 1864 were characterised by battles between imperial British units (supported by local volunteers, militias and Māori allies) and various Māori groups and coalitions, and were relatively conventional in terms of colonial warfare. They were the major campaigns of this period; the overwhelming characteristic being British attacks on Māori defensive fortifications. The battles and campaigns from the end of 1864 still involved imperial troops for several more years, but they became progressively more irregular and insurgent in nature as the decade unfolded.

This book focuses on the first period up until 1864, and specifically on the complex and often-overlooked aspect of warfare: military intelligence. It was inspired by several fundamental questions: What happened in New Zealand when two completely different cultures met on the battlefield? What did each side know about the other's reasons for fighting and their intentions? How did they learn about each other — their weapons, tactics, how they fought and their strength in numbers? How did they know where the other was: did they have maps, informants or allies? And, in general, how did these factors affect who eventually won and who lost?

The study of the New Zealand Wars over the past 175 years has almost completely failed to recognise the role of military intelligence, both British and Māori. The story of Thomas McDonnell and Gustavus von Tempsky's mission to Paparata and the role of the Forest Rangers is well known, and Kerry Howe's

MA thesis 'Missionaries, Maoris and Civilisation on the Upper Waikato 1833–63' (1970)[44] highlighted Reverend John Morgan's role as a spy at Ōtāwhao. Other than this, there is little written about the use of military intelligence and the effects it may or may not have had in the outcome of the various battles and campaigns.

The results of individual battles and campaigns in the New Zealand Wars have often been explained in terms of tactics, weight of numbers, firepower, logistics, courage, chance, and even the brilliance or stupidity of individual commanders; but military intelligence — the knowledge of the enemy, their strengths, weaknesses and plans, or the physical and political environment — is almost never discussed as a decisive factor.

In the introduction to his monumental study on military intelligence in the American Civil War, *The Secret War for the Union* (1996), Edwin Fishel noted a similar pattern:

> *But intelligence — the business of acquiring that knowledge — has not been a favourite subject for those who study the Civil War. They find explanations of victory and defeat in the skill of commanders, the fighting qualities of troops, and resources in men and material. This book adds intelligence to those factors; it is the first one to examine at length the effect that information about the enemy had on those marches and battles. In every case this 'intelligence explanation' changes, sometimes radically, the known history of a campaign.*[45]

The reasons why intelligence has seldom been considered in nineteenth-century colonial warfare such as the New Zealand Wars may be twofold. First, it was not a concept clearly identified as a specific military category or discipline at the time. 'Intelligence' was often used in correspondence and official reports but it simply meant information. But as with the American Civil War, the 'intelligence explanation' in the New Zealand Wars does provide a different and instructive lens through which we can view the conflict and strengthen our understanding of the campaigns and the individual battles.

The military commander needs to know about those things over which there is no control: the enemy, the weather and the terrain. Sun Tzu, the Chinese ruler and military strategist who lived over 2,500 years ago explained this military truth:

> *Know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be defeated. When you are ignorant of the enemy but know yourself, your chances of winning or losing are equal. If ignorant both of the enemy and yourself, you are sure to be defeated in every battle.*[46]

The acquisition of information about the enemy forms the basis of military intelligence. However, intelligence is more than knowing about the enemy's numbers, strengths or dispositions. It is the collation of raw data into a clear and coherent picture. In the present day this involves the collection of information, its careful and systematic analysis, and, finally, the production and dissemination of an overall picture of the enemy and their strengths, weaknesses and possible intentions. Practitioners in the nineteenth century were not trained to this level of sophistication and their processes were rudimentary.

Intelligence is generally divided into three main types that conform to the accepted levels of military endeavour: strategic, operational and tactical. It can be difficult to say precisely where one type ends and the other begins, but we understand that there is a difference in scale. Strategic intelligence relates to the long-term assessment of a nation's capabilities and intentions at a national or international level in respect to political goals, industrial capacity, military developments, national infrastructure, demographics and a wide range of other factors. Operational intelligence focuses on the battlefield or a theatre of war, and includes the terrain and local population, as well as the enemy's dispositions, logistics, intentions and morale. Tactical intelligence gives a more immediate picture of the enemy's plans and dispositions. Although military intelligence in the nineteenth century was not categorised as such, these three levels of military activity did exist intuitively: nations took a long-term strategic view of each other and commanders did plan their campaigns at operational and tactical levels.

While opponents seek information on each other, it is the goal of counter-intelligence to deny or corrupt that information, primarily achieved by making it difficult for the enemy to obtain information or by releasing false material in order to mislead.

Fishel identified nine different modes of intelligence that were significant in the American Civil War: espionage; the interrogation of deserters, prisoners

and refugees; scouting by individuals and small parties; reconnaissance by cavalry en masse; visual intelligence from balloons; interception of flag messages; serendipity resulting from massive intelligence effort; home advantage; and the role and involvement of the commander.[47] The list includes some of the practical modes of intelligence-gathering available with the technology of the time, and some elements that are timeless.

The challenge of this study has been to develop a coherent understanding of intelligence activities in the New Zealand Wars from the written information that remains in existence today. The intelligence activity has not left a large footprint because, by its very nature, it was secretive and scarce. Some of it would have been gained and transmitted through observation and conversation; if it was committed to writing at all, it would probably have been on hastily written scraps of paper. Primary documents have been scoured for snippets of information; for example, a report from an official, which includes a comment about 'the state of the natives' in his region; the observations of a missionary who remarks on the outcome of hui in his parish area; or a line in a soldier's diary noting that British troops were being constantly watched in a particular location.

We have to accept that the full extent of intelligence activities will never be known, but even so, when documents are searched with the specific goal of looking for references to spies, informers, guides, reconnaissance activities and maps, they reveal clues that can be followed up and fitted together.

Information comes from a variety of sources: the reports of military officers, officials and missionaries in the regions; correspondence between military commanders, government officers, politicians and missionaries; letters from Māori chiefs; and journals, diaries and reminiscences. Newspapers are another source although the reliability of stories 'from our correspondent' is sometimes questionable. Māori intelligence activities are tricky to assess because there is almost no written record and the oral record is usually not specific or detailed enough, even if there is access to it. As a consequence, it is not possible to draw such a clear picture of Māori activities as British ones, but again, it is possible to make general observations, and in some cases to be quite specific about activities that took place.

This book attempts to examine the wars from the perspective of a military history, with the particular goal of analysing the ways that military intelligence was used and the influence it had on the final outcomes.

2

THE MĀORI AND BRITISH FORCES

GATE PĀ

ŌTAKA PĀ

MĀTAI-TAUA ŌRĀKAU

PĀUATAHANUI

ŌHAEAWAI

RUAPEKAPEKA

NGĀMOTU

PUKEHINAHINA

Native states were hard-pressed to resist European encroachment . . . In most cases, indigenous forces simply incorporated modern weapons into familiar tactical systems, rather than evolve methods that allowed them to be used to advantage. Many of these armies were designed for raiding rather than for total war, a concept in itself alien to most indigenous societies. The prospect of fighting a series of bloody battles against a relentless European invader caused empires to shatter, subject groups to rebel, and isolated villages or tribes to make their own peace with the invader.
— Professor Douglas Porch, United States Naval War College [1]

The Māori and British forces who confronted each other during the New Zealand Wars could hardly have been more different. The British Army and the Royal Navy were made up of full-time soldiers and sailors, along with the equipment and systems of one of the great military, economic and technological powers of the time. The various Māori forces who opposed them were small tribal groups using basic equipment but who were used to fighting in their own inter-tribal physical, social and political environment.

The 1800s was the century of the Industrial Revolution and Britain was its birthplace. This period of great technological innovation changed virtually all aspects of life, and had an impact on both the Māori and British methods of warfare.[2] Māori moved from traditional ways of fighting that had remained much the same for centuries to new techniques as they adopted certain Western weapons and confronted an enemy vastly different and more powerful than their traditional foes.

At the time of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, in the early Victorian period, the British military was essentially the same as it had been a generation earlier. However, the next two decades saw a number of innovations, including rifled muskets and artillery and steam-powered ships, which drastically changed the way campaigns were conducted. The American Civil War (1861–65) is often described as the first war of the industrial or machine age, and yet down at the bottom of the globe, far away from America and Europe, the British military fought the central campaigns of the New Zealand Wars at the same time (1860–64) with much of the same state-of-the-art technology, even though the scale of the warfare and the casualty rates were significantly different.

The introduction of muskets had a revolutionary effect on Māori warfare, and the Musket Wars of the 1820s and early 1830s honed Māori skills and tactics in this new technology. Māori were enthusiastic adopters of new ideas and equipment in all fields of endeavour, and warfare was a major area of innovation. The Musket Wars could more accurately be called 'the gunpowder wars' because as well as muskets (pū), Māori enthusiastically embraced artillery (pū repo; great guns) and used them more widely than has been commonly thought. Historian Trevor Bentley has catalogued 165 pū repo, which are 'but a portion of the total acquired by Māori'.[3]

It is instructive to contrast Māori attitudes to the adoption of gunpowder weapons to those of two different tribal societies of the same time period, the Zulus and the Australian Aboriginals. Zulus rejected the musket as a 'coward's weapon' and Zulu warriors didn't attempt to acquire them as their personal weapon in the way Māori did. The Zulus had had at least 40 years of contact with the Boers and then the British leading up to the war with them in 1879, but unlike Māori, they rejected gunpowder weapons and failed to adjust their tactics to fight against their new enemy. As John Laband says: 'The Zulu army fought the way it thought . . . in an honour society such as that of the Zulu, with deeply ingrained ideological expectations of what was appropriate conduct for a fighting-man; gun culture was unable to take deep root to be effective against invasion by the determined forces of imperialism.'[4]

Their warrior ethos demanded that the enemy must be killed in close-quarter, hand-to-hand combat with a thrust up through the ribs, and the Zulus should be covered in the blood and gore of the men they had slain. This is why, even though they had suffered devastating defeats by Europeans using overwhelming

firepower from muskets a generation earlier, and could have acquired them in large numbers as Māori did, Zulus still chose to fight with cow-hide shields and short thrusting spears, specifically the *iklwa*, a slender assegai with a metal blade, as late as the Anglo–Zulu War of 1879.[5]

Although the Zulu army destroyed a large British force at the battle of Isandlwana on 22 January 1879 through mobility and sheer weight of numbers, mass-wave attacks against British soldiers equipped with rapid-firing Martini-Henry rifles and light artillery were destined to eventually fail. The subsequent battle of Rorke's Drift on 22–23 January illustrates this point. The battle raged for over ten hours, and during that time 150 British and colonial soldiers and a few civilians held off up to 4000 Zulu warriors, who eventually withdrew having suffered enormous casualties in wave after wave of frontal attacks. It is estimated that 600 Zulus were killed in comparison to only 17 British soldiers.

Australian Aboriginals faced similar issues in their frontier wars against groups of armed settlers and police in the Australian colonies from the 1780s to 1830s, but 'they did not change their warfare because it was a ritualised activity, because they did not have the economic base to allow sustained warfare, and the non-hierarchical nature of Aboriginal societies meant that change could not be imposed from above'.[6]

Although Aboriginals modified their weapons in some ways, including adopting tomahawks and steel-tipping their spears, these were only minor adaptations and they made no change to their traditional modes of fighting.[7] Unlike Māori, neither the Zulu nor the Aboriginal warriors underwent a technological revolution in weaponry that led to an equivalent revolution in tactics.

Māori society appears to have been more disposed to adopting new technology and ideas and then developing ways to use them. Neither were muskets considered tapu (sacred); they could be used by all and there were no sacrosanct rules that dictated how they should be handled.

By the end of the Musket Wars period, most Māori men, and many women too, were battle-experienced and armed with muskets. The new weapon had been quickly incorporated into various modes of warfare, most importantly the pā. When designing pre-musket pā, Māori engineers sought to maximise the

A representation of a typical pre-musket pā built on elevated ground with terraces, palisades, fighting platforms and traditional hand-held weapons.
Alarm in the Pa, James Ingram McDonald, 1906.
Alexander Turnbull Library, NON-ATL-0007

advantages of height or natural barriers. This usually involved the fortification of an elevated site or one protected by cliffs, swamps or river banks. The tiered earthworks and stockades had platforms or stages built into them so defenders standing on them could observe their enemy and throw objects down, or use long sharpened spears to thrust at them through the palisades or entrances.

Because Māori had no real projectile weapons, a warrior could stand fully exposed on these fortifications without fear of injury from an enemy who might be only metres away. Without siege weapons the attackers relied on a number of strategies to defeat the pā, including starving the defenders out, setting fire to structures inside the pā by casting burning objects in, fouling the water supply, setting fire to the palisades (often after digging a ditch up to them), pulling down part of the palisades, mass-wave attacks to surge over the palisades, or by negotiating or getting into the pā by means of subterfuge or ruse. Tribal histories are filled with stories about clever ploys used to defeat their enemies.

It is common to hear the claim that Māori invented modern trench warfare and that their innovations became the forerunner of the trenches on the Western Front during World War I. James Belich is often cited in this respect. In *The New Zealand Wars*, published in 1986, he observed that the Māori fortification 'at Gate Pa would have done very well indeed as a tiny section of the Ypres Salient'; and that 'Maoris [sic] were the first to develop this system of war'.[8] This has led to the belief in some circles that places like Ruapekapeka and Pukehinahina–Gate Pā were actually a blueprint for these same trenches; it has become a frequently recounted New Zealand myth.[9]

Even though the scale of the Māori fortifications of the mid 1800s was so different from the World War I trenches on the 400-mile Western Front that comparison seems almost meaningless, it is enlightening to test the claim and ask: How did Māori develop modern pā warfare, where did the ideas for the innovations come from and were these innovations a direct prototype of World War I trenches?

The adoption of gunpowder weapons did lead to a revolution in pā location and design. Because the defenders were vulnerable to musket fire, pā locations moved from high prominences and terraces to low ground that afforded better protection. Against an enemy armed with muskets and possibly cannon, height became dangerous and men on a platform or a terrace could be easily picked off by an attacker with a musket up to 70 metres away. The defenders of the new

pā concealed and protected themselves in trenches behind two or even three rows of stout palisades. From there they fired from positions offering as much protection as possible while concentrating their own fire on a target such as an advancing group of enemy.

The defenders stood in trenches or on firing steps cut into the trench sides and poked their muskets through loopholes cut into the palisades at ground level. Flax matting placed on the front of the palisades obscured the attacker's view of the inside of the pā and absorbed musket balls that might have passed through gaps between the logs. Bastions were built into the corners to allow the defenders to fire along the front of the palisades, to clear out attackers who were attempting to scale the walls or to tunnel under them to plant explosives. If they were available, small ships' cannons were strategically placed to protect entrances or to fire from the bastions. The defenders living inside the pā needed protection from the elements as well as musket balls, enemy snipers and even cannon-fire, so covered shelters were built and some pā even featured underground hiding places. All of these innovations were in development during the Musket Wars and well before Māori faced British soldiers and sailors in battle.

Where did these ideas come from? First, we must acknowledge it is a primal and instinctive reaction to take cover and 'go to ground' when under fire, and this is what Māori did. They already had centuries of expertise in selecting and modifying the terrain to construct earthworks and felling logs to build palisades. All that was really required was design modifications to cater for the new threat from men with muskets and cannon. The dangers of elevation quickly led to ground-level fortifications, firing pits and connecting trenches and, eventually, overhead cover. European axes and shovels allowed a workforce of hundreds of men and women to build these new fortifications much more quickly than they had using traditional digging sticks (kō) and stone axes (toki titaha).

The Ngāpuhi chief Te Ruki Kawiti's great hill pā at Ruapekapeka in the Bay of Islands, which was constructed in late 1845 during the Northern War, is clearly a development and refinement of features used in two pā at Puketutu and Ōhaeawai built earlier in 1845.[10]

Pukehinahina–Gate Pā was constructed two decades later, in Tauranga in 1864, and is often regarded as the ultimate expression of this style of fortification. The virtually subterranean fort combined an excellent use of terrain and design features to allow its defenders to survive a day of heavy bombardment and

Ōhaeawai pā, built in 1845, viewed from the forward British position. It had double palisades, a flax curtain — both to obscure the view into the pā and to reduce damage from musket balls — loopholes at ground level and bastions that allow the defenders to fire along the front of the palisades. Watercolour by Major Cyprian Bridge.
Alexander Turnbull Library, A-079-005

then face a powerful infantry assault. It was an earthen pā but it may have been unfinished at the time it was attacked, with some type of palisade yet to be added.[11]

Pāterangi in the Waikato was built in the summer of 1863–64 and was a different expression of the new pā design. It fortified a hilltop, but also a series of inter-linked positions across a ridgeline, in order to accommodate a much larger garrison and was, in effect, a defended barrier.

It is interesting to note how quickly new ideas spread. Ngāti Toa chief Te Rangihaeata's pā Mātai-taua, at Pāuatahanui in the Wellington region, was built in mid 1846 and showed many of the innovations Kawiti had used at Ruapekapeka just months beforehand but over 800 kilometres away in the Bay of Islands. There are reports that runners carried information about the new designs throughout the island. Rev. Richard Taylor, a missionary in the Wellington and Whanganui areas, noted:

> *When Ohaiawai was attacked, and so many of our brave countrymen fell, long before the news reached the settler in the south, I saw in the interior several neatly-constructed models of the pa and its defences, made with fern-stalks, to show the way they had gained the victory; these had been made by messengers sent from the north, to publish their success to those in the south.*[12]

Did all these developments in pā design stem purely from Māori imagination and experience or were there outside influences? In Wellington, the newly arrived European settlers and the British soldiers began fortifying the settlement from 1843 after the murders at Wairau. Did Te Rangihaeata or his people learn anything from studying those fortifications and incorporate them into Mātai-taua?

And did soldiers, sailors, traders and Pākehā-Māori (early European settlers living within Māori communities) who had been visiting and dwelling in various parts of New Zealand in increasing numbers from the 1820s impart any knowledge about the design of fortifications? They had helped Māori learn to use muskets and cannon so it is possible they also shared ideas about the design of fortifications. Pākehā-Māori fought with their Māori comrades in battles such as at Ōtaka pā on Ngāmotu Beach in present-day New Plymouth in early 1832 when a Te Ātiawa force withstood a three-week siege by invading Waikato taua (war parties) who retreated after about 400 were killed. The Pākehā traders incorporated the three cannons they owned into the defences of the pā and