

I think that Hawaiki can be shown to be a wholly mythical land³ and that Kupe's activities can be understood in terms of comparative religions⁴. Such an approach requires an interest in Maori religion and patterns of thought. There is a vast amount of textual material available for this study, but nearly all of it requires editing or re-editing. Perhaps Simmons's book, in giving inventories of some of the main manuscript collections, will stimulate curiosity as to their contents. Although traditions such as these are not in themselves historical, they provide rich material for the historian of ideas.

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Marists and Melanesians. A History of Catholic Missions in the Solomon Islands. By Hugh Laracy. Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1976. xi, 212 pp. N.Z. price: \$15.65.

MISSION history in the Pacific has tended to be divided between polemics and piety and the middle ground has been thought to be only half respectable and dull to boot. Hugh Laracy's *Marists and Melanesians* wins the middle ground for respectability: it is well researched, balanced, critical and determinedly empiricist. It will not persuade a prejudiced reader, however, that mission history in the Pacific is an exciting and enlarging area of engagement.

Faced with telling the story of more than two hundred missionaries on more than sixty mission stations through more than a hundred years, Dr Laracy chose to be selective of the different themes that seemed to characterize the three distinct periods of Marist engagement in the Solomons – 1845-55, 1898-1942, 1945 to the present. In this way he can deal with the administrative and political problems of the missions, strategies of conversion, distinctive qualities of indigenous christianity, educational goals and tensions. It is all done very competently, if somewhat routinely, and along the way many interesting issues of mission history are picked up and examined: the ideology of sanctity and martyrdom of the Marists, intermission and intramission rivalries, social structures determinant of Melanesian response. Occasional missionaries come alive, such as Maurice Boch who thought a pipe the best protector of celibacy and Rinaldo Pavese who feared the love of the 'bourgeois life, of noise, of fame, of bluff, of sensualism' that reigned in the Americans, and we thereby know them in the marginality of their lives.

³Margaret Orbell. 'The Religious Significance of Maori Migration Traditions.' *In Perspectives on Religion: New Zealand Viewpoints 1974*, J.C. Hinchcliff, ed., University of Auckland Bindery, pp. 5-8. Also in *Journal of the Polynesian Society* LXXXIV, 3 (1975), 41-47.

⁴Margaret Orbell. 'The Maori Traditions of Kupe: a Religious Interpretation.' *In The Religious Dimension*, J.C. Hinchcliff, ed., Rep Prep, Auckland, pp. 24-27. Also in *The Artefact* II,3 (1977), Melbourne.

The trouble is that in the present state of Pacific history what is competent needs to be excellent, what is routine needs to be exploratory and gambling. If we applied the standards expected of social history in the United States, Britain and the continent and the standards expected of cross-cultural history elsewhere in the world, then we would have to say that the Pacific is an historically undeveloped area.

The empiricism that dominates most Pacific study is at the root of the problem. Research is dominated by a narrow geographical area, an institution, a period. History is what happens or what the sources let know what happens within those limitations. No problem, no theory, no methodology takes the researcher outside those confines. Missionaries as intruders carry their cultures and perceptions across the beaches with them. A social history of the Marists would have made some analytic demography of their class, of their economic status, of their education and socialization, of their spirituality, of their rituals of community. Even if one raised the Marxist issues of exploitation and hegemony only to pour scorn on them, the issues would have raised questions about the mission support systems, about the institutional church, about public image and propaganda. But more than that, the critical advantage of cross-cultural history is that the cultures in their exposure to one another lay bare their structures of law, of morality, their rationalizations in myth, their expressions in symbol and ritual. It really is not enough in a study of missionary activity and religious change to define conversion as 'turning from something to something else: you put earlier loyalties behind you,' and to cite that definition from A.D. Nock's *Conversion: the Old and New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo*, (1961), and leave unsaid all the debates on symbol systems, mythology, legitimization, social and personal trauma that surround conversion.

Marists and Melanesians will fill a gap, but it has a fear of flying that prevents it from advancing mission history in the Pacific very far.

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Peter Dillon of Vanikoro: Chevalier of the South Seas. By J.W. Davidson. Edited by O.H.K. Spate. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1975. 376 pp. N.Z. price: \$22.

J.W. DAVIDSON's last book, a study of the adventurer and explorer Peter Dillon, is a contribution to Pacific historical literature which will stimulate the interest and imagination of general reader and historians alike. Revised by Professor O.H.K. Spate after the author's death, a task which must have been far from easy, the resulting publication does justice to the memory of an outstanding figure in Pacific scholarship and affairs.

Because of the very nature of the geography of Oceania, the variety in its cultural systems and its early culture contact, much of its history must inevitably be studied in piecemeal fashion, island by island, if more than glib