

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

generalities are to emerge. Perhaps the most exciting aspect of this study of Peter Dillon lies in the integrated view it offers of a region and a period, for implicated in Dillon's life and experiences are themes and problems which cut across island barriers, and form the dominant historical questions of early nineteenth-century culture contact.

Peter Dillon first appeared in the Pacific in 1808, engaged in a search for sandalwood in Fiji. From that time until he finally left the Pacific area thirty years later, Dillon participated across a broad spectrum of Pacific concerns. At first a sailor, and then a beachcomber, he rose through a combination of courage, energy and a considerable skill in seamanship to the captaincy of ships engaged in the Pacific trade. No mere merchant, but a man who saw himself as following in the footsteps of the great explorers, Dillon succeeded in 1828 in solving one of the great mysteries of the Pacific, the disappearance of La Perouse's expedition forty years earlier, which he discovered had been wrecked on the island of Vanikoro, in the Solomon Islands. For this enterprise he was made a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour by Charles X, although he did not ever feel that he was accorded the full public recognition this feat deserved.

During his last ten years, as European penetration of the Pacific intensified, Dillon dabbled in colonization schemes, in plans to establish French missionary priests, and in the appointment of European consuls. Through all the incidents of this full life, one learns of the pursuits of trading in sandalwood and *bêche-de-mer*; one encounters such notable personalities as Hongi Hika of New Zealand, the Tu'i Kanokupolu of Tonga, Samuel Marsden and Robert Knopwood, and one learns of the processes of establishing maps, tides, currents and climatic conditions. It would certainly not be said that Peter Dillon was an exceptional man of history in the sense that his life represents great achievement or that his activities were significantly influential in the area. He was, rather, typical of a class of European adventurer. The usefulness of this biography lies in its demonstration that stimulating history can be written around the lives of somewhat ordinary mortals if it is done in such a way that it illuminates a segment of human experience, in this case experience typical of this critical period of European expansion. In fact one could say that Professor Davidson, having chosen a relatively humble figure for a biography and made such interesting historical material of him, need not have adopted his somewhat defensive attitude towards Dillon's many weaknesses and failures, as though to explain away the warts on the face of a great man. The occasional cruelty of his temper, his injudicious treatment of the Methodist missionaries at Tonga, his surreptitious encouragement of French interests, his delusions of grandeur, could have been posed without justification or apology.

The book however, suffers from certain weaknesses which flow from this choice of a relatively obscure character as the subject of a biography. Dillon himself wrote an account of his voyage in search of La Perouse, but apart from that single work, material relating to Dillon is scattered and fragmentary. In places the narrative is patchy and uneven. More importantly, the reader of a biography hopes for insight into the subject's deeper motivations and feelings, but in Dillon's case, the private journals or letters that might have offered this understanding were non-existent, and the evidence often raises more questions than it answers. This handicap is particularly frustrating

in the area perhaps most fascinating for students of Pacific history, namely Dillon's perception of and attitude to the Pacific peoples he encountered. Ethnographic detail collected by him relating in particular to the Polynesian outlier, Tikopia, and to Vanikoro and the New Hebrides in the Melanesian group, is valuable source material for anthropologists. Dillon's conception at a deeper level of these societies goes unexplored; a different theoretical approach may have elicited a more meaningful analysis from the material.

But what Professor Davidson, with meticulous care for detail, has painstakingly recovered of Peter Dillon's experiences is impressive indeed. Using a wide variety of sources, he has presented Dillon's story against the varied and complex background of the contemporary Pacific environment, which establishes a thick texture of time, place and environment. It is a work of high quality, and certainly one of the most important works of Pacific scholarship of the decade.

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Red Papers in New Zealand. Ed. David Bedgood. Marxist Publishing Group, Auckland, series one, 1976, n.p.; series two, 1977. 80 pp. N.Z. price: \$1.50.

THE FIRST series of *Red Papers* includes extracts from already published material together with some original contributions. 'The purpose... is to bring together Marxist papers representing the post-war developments in the analysis of New Zealand capitalism.' The approach of the contributors varies considerably from the eclectic radicalism of Pat Hickey's 'Red Fed' memoirs, or Bruce Jesson's republicanism to the consistent Marxism of Willis Airey. Topics range from David Bedgood's introductory analysis, 'State Capitalism in New Zealand', to studies of New Zealand class structure and Wayne Robinson's 'Imperialism and New Zealand's neo-colonial future'.

The second series consists of articles written within the last two years. Beginning with an article by John Macrae, 'The Internationalisation of Capital and New Zealand', it evinces a much stronger theoretical basis. The element of eclectic radicalism persists in Bruce Jesson's 'British Imperialism and the Crown in Early New Zealand' and 'The Family Affair (Part III): The Fletcher Empire'. But otherwise the essays are firmly within the Marxist tradition.

One of the main virtues of the two series is that they provide the initial foundation for an alternative interpretation to the liberal welfarist orthodoxy that has dominated academic writing on New Zealand history. They challenge the view that history is made by great men or that it 'is about life as seen by the legislatures arranged in chronological order.' They emphasize broad structures, class interests and the internal logic of capitalist accumulation rather than personal motives and individual rivalries. Thus Jesson (series two) questions Sinclair's emphasis upon the 'squabbles' between governors and settlers in the early days of the colony, commenting: 'The Governor wasn't in