

*Ratu Sukuna: Soldier, Statesman, Man of two worlds.* By Deryck Scarr. Macmillan, London, 1980. 220 pp. Fiji price \$10.00.

*Fiji: The Three-Legged Stool. Selected Writings of Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna.* Edited by Deryck Scarr. Macmillan, London, 1983. 528 pp. Fiji price: \$15.00.

RATU SUKUNA's life spanned most of the period of British rule in Fiji. Born in 1888, fourteen years after annexation, he died in 1958, twelve years before independence. In that time he became the *primus inter pares* of the Fijian cadre in the British administration; a shining light of the indirect rule system. The son of a prominent chief of one of the three traditional ruling houses, Sukuna was educated at Wanganui Collegiate in New Zealand, at Wadham College, Oxford, and the Middle Temple, London. He rose from a fifth-class clerk in the Colonial Secretary's Office in 1907 to become Secretary and later Chairman of the Native Lands Commission; District and later Provincial Commissioner at Lau; Native Member and later Speaker of the Legislative Council. He was a trusted adviser and confidant of a succession of British governors, and was frequently Fijian spokesman at important ceremonies abroad.

As a 'man of two worlds', Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna bears comparison with his distinguished Maori contemporaries, Sir Apirana Ngata, Sir Maui Pomare, and Sir Peter Buck. Admittedly he went to Wanganui Collegiate, a private Anglican school which then had no Maori pupils, whereas they went to Te Aute, an Anglican school for Maori boys; and he went on to Oxford, thanks to an indulgent British administration, whereas Ngata and Buck graduated from New Zealand universities. Like Ngata, Sukuna was eventually to qualify in the Arts and Law: both men were to use their legal expertise to safeguard and further develop the landed resources of their people. Like Buck, Sukuna had a brief but glorious war, though Sukuna, thanks to the British 'colour line', had to fight with the French Foreign Legion, whereas Buck (and Sukuna's brother who was recruited from New Zealand) fought with the Maori Pioneer Battalion.

The comparisons, and sometimes subtle contrasts, with the eminent Maoris could be continued, but this could also be misleading. For it must be remembered that Sukuna's situation in Fiji was in many respects different from that of the Maoris. New Zealand was firmly controlled by European colonists who far outnumbered the indigenous Maoris, but in Fiji European colonists were a distinct minority, influential at times but not likely ever to get control. Their position resembled that of the European settlers in Kenya. In Fiji, as in Kenya, it was not so much the Europeans as another immigrant community, the Indians, originally brought in as indentured labourers, who were seen as the main threat to the indigenous population. In Kenya, a vigorous controversy in the 1920s over elected Indian representation in the Legislative Council (which, on a per capita basis, would have given them more seats than the Europeans) was only resolved when the British rediscovered their obligations to Africans and announced the 'paramountcy' of African interests. Something like that also occurred in Fiji at much the same time, with the fulsome backing of Sukuna. In Fiji the guarantees made to the chiefs at cession and their continued involvement in administration under the indirect rule system, were a necessary bulwark against, not European, but Indian domination. By the 1930s any elective, democratic franchise was, as Sukuna recognised, bound to reflect the demographic fact that the Indians outnumbered Fijians. As on the political, so on the economic front, Sukuna feared modernization, lest the Fijians lose their patrimony to the com-

mercially aggressive Indians who had already leased considerable areas of Fijian land and were demanding more. In all this it was the British who were Sukuna's natural allies. He was in no hurry for independence.

Nevertheless, as Sukuna's life ended, Fiji was heading towards independence. Had he lived to see it he may not have been disappointed. For Fiji was led into independence, under a constitution that ensured Fijian control, by Ratu Kamisese Mara, Sukuna's New Zealand- and Oxford-educated nephew. It was Ratu Mara who chaired the biography committee which invited Deryck Scarr to write Sukuna's life and edit his papers. They have been well served. Scarr has displayed a sure understanding of the intricacies of Fijian history and custom, and a balanced judgment. Though clearly a warm admirer of Sukuna, he has resisted the temptation to produce mere hagiography. However, he is at times unnecessarily reticent. For instance, he fails to tell us that Sukuna got a second at Oxford. Not that Sukuna himself was ashamed of it — he does in fact refer to it in a speech to the Legislative Council in 1935. He had sat his exams after two terms, having resumed his degree after the interruption of war service. We have only to read some of Sukuna's reports in the *Selected Writings* to recognize the quality of his mind and the elegance of his prose. Once more the comparison with Ngata springs to mind, for he and Sukuna could write the King's English as well as any of their European contemporaries.

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*New Zealand: A Handbook of Historical Statistics.* By G. T. Bloomfield. G. K. Hall & Co., Boston, 1984. U.S. price: \$68.00.

STUDENTS of New Zealand history are always grateful for those publications which consolidate statistical series that would otherwise remain scattered through publications of the Registrar-General, the reports of government departments, year-books, census reports, and so on. For years I have cherished (to name some instances) *The Statistics of New Zealand for the Crown Colony Period 1840-52*, Auckland University College, 1954; B. L. Evans's *Agricultural and Pastoral Statistics of New Zealand 1861-1954*, Wellington, 1956; and the broadsheet 'Statistical Summary of the Colony of New Zealand from 1853 to 1900' attached to the back of the early twentieth-century New Zealand Official Year Books. But there has never been any comprehensive summary in one publication of New Zealand statistics covering a wide range of topics and time.

Now the gap has been filled by G. T. Bloomfield's *Handbook*. There are very few gaps in the topics covered; although treatment of those two great contemporary drains upon public finances — education and public health — has somewhat summary coverage. Before each section of statistical tables there is a sound introduction with exemplary footnoting which provides guidance for further reading.

Admittedly, there are imprecisions; and rather too many 'literals'. For instance, Shortland was not renamed Thames between the 1871 and 1874 censuses (p.35): Thames was the name given at that time to the *merger* of Shortland with