

Reviews

Two Worlds. First Meetings between Maori and Europeans 1642-1772. By Anne Salmond. Viking, Auckland, 1991. 477pp. NZ price: \$69.95.

OVER THE past two decades Pacific anthropologists and historians have become increasingly aware that the skills, methodologies and sensitivities of both disciplines are needed if the cultures and histories of Pacific people from the time of contact with the West are to be more fully and fairly understood. Marshall Sahlins and Greg Dening have conjured with labels, 'ethnohistory', 'structuralist history', and 'historical anthropology', and in their works have revealed the insights such a combined approach can make possible. Professor Anne Salmond's *Two Worlds. First Meetings between Maori and Europeans 1642-1772* is a recent and distinguished contribution to this field of endeavour.

In her conclusion entitled 'Anthropology and History' (p.432) Salmond writes of an ahistorical social anthropology and an acultural history, the limitations of which have dogged our understanding and appreciation of the early contact period in New Zealand. This assessment of the nature of Maori anthropology and history is true of contact and inter-cultural history and anthropology not only in New Zealand, but also throughout the Pacific. In New Zealand as elsewhere in the Pacific, historians have focused upon great personages and events, largely ignoring the underlying cultural structure and context, while anthropologists have concentrated on present social structures seemingly oblivious to the impact of contact and decades of colonialism. Since 1975 work by both anthropologists and historians had started to question some of the orthodox interpretations of the nature of traditional Maori society (*sic*) and the history of contact, but Salmond's *Two Worlds* is the first major full-length study to use both anthropological and historical techniques, and to expose a number of entrenched myths.

Trained as an anthropologist and brought up on the orthodoxy of a single homogeneous, traditional Maori culture and precontact past, Salmond was pleased with the discovery that confirmed her own experience of contemporary Maori life, that Tasman, Cook, Surville and du Fresne met with different Maori cultures and societies. Both within New Zealand and beyond, scholars have tended to see the Maori as a homogeneous group of people who confronted the Europeans, another set of homogeneous people. Using her anthropological skills Salmond has made brilliantly clear just how different the Maori were that were visited by the early European explorers. The differences in their social structure and material culture are meticulously portrayed from both the Eurocentric historical record and from Maori oral tradition. On the European side Salmond has been equally thorough in her use of primary materials from Holland, France and England. The data base of this book is most impressive, as is the meticulous care with which Salmond has used and referenced this material. Any historian of early contact New Zealand will realize that to understand processes of culture contact and change it is essential to be familiar with a close-grained representation of traditional Maori cultural patterns.

Salmond has made available to all a clear picture of the Maori worlds which were contacted between 1642 and 1772, and scotched for ever the myth that the Maori were a culturally or socially homogeneous people at the time of contact.

As an historian I felt there were times when Salmond was not as critical and probing of the written sources as she was of the cultural data available to her. For example Te Taniwha's recorded memories of Cook's presence in Whitianga harbour (pp.87-8) is a superb document to be able to cite extensively, but she does not interrogate its authenticity. From the work of Simmons and Sorrenson we know how carefully Maori traditions and memories recorded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have to be analysed. How scrupulously did the collector/recorder, John White, transcribe the memory? Did he hear it directly from Te Taniwha? What later events may have influenced Te Taniwha's account? The questions are endless and many of the answers may be unattainable, but the reader needs to be assured that the questions at least have been confronted. While there were times when certain sources could have been more rigorously investigated, this criticism does not effect my judgement that this book is a very significant and welcome addition to our growing understanding of the complexities of the contact experience in New Zealand.

Faced with conflicting evidence about the sexual availability of Maori women to the visitors Salmond suggests that captive women may have been freely available (p.176). She does not however consider the question whether the taking of Maori women captives increased after contact with the rapid acquisition of firearms, the presumed increase in warfare and the knowledge that Europeans paid well for the sexual favours of Maori women, captive or otherwise. But I ask too much and my own interests intrude. Maori women are clearly visible throughout *Two Worlds*, from Salmond's sensitive reconstruction of precontact Maori worlds to the ambiguous and at times seemingly contradictory perceptions the foreign visitors recorded. Salmond discusses these possible contradictions knowledgeably and openly, and certainly establishes that many Maori women enjoyed status and respect in early contact Maori societies.

Two Worlds is lucidly and beautifully written in a style that is accessible to the general public as well as the specialists. Much thought and care have gone into the maps and illustrations that accompany and more importantly explicate the text. It is a beautiful book to handle. Salmond's *Hui* and her biographies of Eruera and Amiria Stirling have all become classics in the anthropological literature. I believe *Two Worlds* will also become a classic, and in both the anthropological and the historical literature of New Zealand and in the wider Pacific. This is a rare accomplishment and one to be greatly welcomed.

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The Book of New Zealand Women: Ko Kui Ma Te Kaupapa. Edited by Charlotte Macdonald, Merimeri Penfold and Bridget Williams. Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, 1991. 772pp. NZ price: \$45.00.

OVER 130 YEARS ago, the English novelist George Eliot wrote that 'The happiest women, like the happiest nations, have no history'; now the authors of this recent publication have