

relations as a history of a move towards national independence he argues that the colony and nation's external policies and alliances were largely driven by factors beyond the control of the nation's policymakers. Rather, policy followed changing patterns of trade and shifting centres of power in Europe, the Americas and Asia.

I found it difficult to review a book of this length, which contained so many chapters on such a diverse range of topics. I regret that I have not had space to comment on every chapter in the collection because there is not a single deficient chapter. This is a very strong set of essays and in my judgement this fine collection constitutes a major contribution not only to New Zealand history but also to the history of settler societies. It challenges those of us who write Australian, South African, Canadian, British and even (colonial) North American history, to rethink our approaches and our subject matter. It succeeds in its ambition to destabilize and to complicate general history writing, and especially the general history writing of New Zealand. I appreciated the argumentative and revisionist qualities of the essays. However, I also think that while it is the role of the historian to be critical, there is also a value in acknowledging the works that have influenced the field in the past; there is a value in generosity. In this volume the works of Keith Sinclair and James Belich are often used as yardsticks by which the authors can measure the — if I may use this term — exceptional nature of their own findings. Indeed, in some essays I detected a determination to sweep away past historiography. But I also think it is worth remembering that Sinclair and Belich as well as many other historians who wrote within earlier historiographical traditions have made enormous contributions to New Zealand historiography, contributions that needed greater acknowledgement. Perhaps in 20 years or so the contributors to the next *New Oxford History of New Zealand* will be less concerned with sweeping away the works of their predecessors than with integrating older understandings into newer interpretations.

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NOTE

1 Philip Buckner, ed., *Canada and the British Empire*, Oxford University Press, 2008; Deryck M. Schreuder and Stuart Ward, eds, *Australia's Empire*, Oxford University Press, 2008.

The Best Man Who Ever Served the Crown? A Life of Donald McLean. By Ray Fargher. Victoria University Press, Wellington, 2007. 407pp. NZ price: \$50.00. ISBN 978-0-86473-560-7.

DONALD MCLEAN IS A KEY FIGURE in New Zealand history. As land purchase agent, as an author of confiscation on the East Coast and as Native Minister, he was instrumental in the transfer of millions of acres of Maori land to the Crown. His actions have been investigated by numerous research reports and Waitangi Tribunal reports in the Treaty claims process. Inevitably, McLean emerges from that discourse as one-dimensional, with the focus each time on his actions in isolation in a single district or time period. Now, at last, there is a major biography of this complex man, which evaluates his actions in a way that makes him fully rounded and easier to understand. The dialogue between moral and religious convictions on the one hand and a state official's actions on the other is Ray Fargher's main theme and one that resonates today as it did in the nineteenth century.

Fargher has carried out exhaustive research into the voluminous papers of a man who kept everything, even his laundry lists. The biography is primarily a study of McLean's dealings with Maori, especially over land. There are glimpses into his family life, his marriage and the chaotic financing of his pastoral runs. We get an insight into how private

credit helped drive the nineteenth-century settler economy. (McLean did not finally pay off his creditors until shortly before he died, when he sold one of his estates.) In part, the 'private' McLean becomes invisible because in 1853 he stopped recording personal thoughts in his diary after the death of his wife, which hit him very hard. Nonetheless, even some of the more public aspects of his life, such as his role as provincial superintendent, are only a backdrop in this biography to his work with Maori. It is difficult to quarrel with Fargher's focus. McLean's actions in respect of Maori affairs and the acquisition of Maori land are a fascinating — and critical — aspect of New Zealand history.

In a recent report for the Waitangi Tribunal, Angela Ballara argued that in the nineteenth century 'the publicly acknowledged standards of official behaviour in land purchasing and the conduct of Maori affairs, were much "higher" than is sometimes acknowledged by historians'.¹ This was because 'many of these publicly promulgated standards were in accord with the Treaty of Waitangi, and with Lord Normanby's instructions of 1839 to Lieutenant Governor Hobson out of which the terms of the Treaty were constructed'.² Based on this argument, Dr Ballara posed a conundrum for historians and for the Waitangi Tribunal: 'The problem was not that nineteenth-century standards of official behaviour were not based on the Treaty, but that these acknowledged Treaty-based standards were often knowingly breached or ignored by Crown officials.'³ The first half of Ray Fargher's book reads as an exploration of this conundrum. From McLean's letters and diaries, Fargher shows how McLean saw the Treaty in the 1840s and 1850s, how he expressed the Treaty standards in the language of the day, and how he conducted his purchases apparently oblivious to the contradiction between his words and his actions.

Fargher argues that McLean came from a mould of officials and politicians made most famous by British Prime Minister W.E. Gladstone. McLean, of course, was a Scottish highlander, not an Evangelical Englishman, but the Gladstone 'type' was a protestant who believed it was the role of government and its servants to do the work of God, while also living a sober, industrious and devout personal life. Yet McLean strikes Fargher as often 'hypocritical', and sometimes downright dishonest. Fargher questions how McLean could have genuinely believed that his actions were protective of Maori interests, and designed to bring about their long-term prosperity, when they so obviously were not. 'If this was indeed his intention', writes Fargher, 'he failed to consider how far his acquisition of their land would deprive them [Maori] of the very asset that would make them wealthy' (p.137).

Fargher demonstrates McLean's abandonment of Treaty standards in his purchasing of the 1850s, while still espousing them in his private and public writings. McLean stopped holding large public gatherings to obtain genuine prior consent from all interested parties. Instead, he initiated deals with one or two chiefs (often in secret) and then set about wearing down resistance from communities of owners over a number of years, deliberately putting them in a position in which they had no real choice. In advancing this thesis, Fargher tends to overlook problems with the 1840s transactions. The 1848 Wanganui purchase — which he admires — has been criticized by other historians.

In many respects, however, Fargher's interpretation of McLean is no different from Ballara's, or Alan Ward's entry in the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*. Fargher does part company with Ward on the important question of the Waitara purchase and the Taranaki War. He sees McLean as largely blameless on both counts, and argues that Governor Gore Browne, not McLean, drove policy and made the key decisions. In doing so, Fargher disagrees with his own influential master's thesis on McLean, written just after the Second World War, when (he says) he was disenchanted with the British officer class as represented by men like Gore Browne. Fargher provides evidence for his revised interpretation, including that there were no meetings between McLean and Gore Browne for many months in 1859, and that the governor issued instructions directly to land agent Robert Parris in Taranaki at crucial moments. I am not convinced yet but it certainly bears further investigation.

Readers will find many fascinating strands to pursue in Fargher's account of McLean. There is, for example, the question of whether McLean's private land dealings in Hawke's Bay were improper or even illegal, a point on which Fargher hesitates to reach a view. For me, one of the most interesting parts of the book is McLean's policies in respect of Maori autonomy. If McLean had passed his 1872 Native Councils Bill instead of his 1873 Native Land Act, he would be remembered very differently in New Zealand history. Fargher's analysis of this point asks more questions than it answers. He does not explain why the Cabinet endorsed McLean's proposals for Maori district-based self-government, yet failed to push the Native Councils Bills through Parliament in 1872 and again in 1873. Also, Fargher traces McLean's long-held view that Maori should have a say in central government through a council of chiefs or (second best) fairer representation in the settler Parliament, without exploring what he did about it as Native Minister. McLean's final speech in the House, we are told, is in support of a Bill to increase Maori representation. Fargher overlooks some of the ways in which McLean succeeded in providing for Maori representation in decision-making. His 1873 Native Reserves Act, for example, was the first official provision for Maori to be represented in the control of their own reserves. The full range of McLean's measures in respect of Maori autonomy, and the reasons for their defeat or failure, need a fuller exploration.

It is not possible, of course, even in a lengthy biography like this one, to cover all of McLean's actions and policies, or every tribe's issues with McLean's actions. Tuhoe, for example, believe that they made a peace compact with McLean in 1871 which became a major part of their history, and which was eventually given effect when Premier Richard Seddon passed the Urewera District Native Reserve Act in the 1890s. This part of their (and McLean's) history is not mentioned in the biography. McLean casts a long shadow in most tribal districts. There are still issues to explore about his life and work. This does not, however, detract from the fact that Ray Fargher has written an excellent biography, which provides a well-researched and fascinating portrait of McLean, and which is a pleasure to read. This book will make a significant contribution to New Zealand history for many years to come.

GRANT PHILLIPSON

Waitangi Tribunal

NOTES

1 Angela Ballara, 'Tribal Landscape Overview, c.1800–1900 in the Taupo, Rotorua, Kaingaroa and National Park Inquiry Districts', report commissioned by CFRT, 2004 (Wai 1200, doc A65), p.640.

2 *ibid.*, pp.640–61.

3 *ibid.*, p.641.

The Dragon and the Taniwha: Māori and Chinese in New Zealand. Edited by Manying Ip. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2009. 374pp. NZ price: \$49.99. ISBN 978-1-86940-436-9.

THE DRAGON AND THE TANIWHA: Māori and Chinese in New Zealand, like the jacket design, has a deft bicultural twist. However, it is the subject matter about Chinese–Māori interaction in New Zealand that makes it a significant publication. This new collection is important not just for uncovering new perspectives on a fascinating subject, but also for offering new ways of understanding increasingly complex constructions of national identity in an antipodean setting. Underlying the book is the central argument that a closer reading of Chinese–Māori relations or indeed Chinese–Māori–Pakeha triangulated