

Reviews (Books)

Māori and the State: Crown–Māori Relations in New Zealand/Aotearoa, 1950–2000. By Richard S. Hill. Victoria University Press, Wellington, 2009. 364pp. NZ price: \$60.00. ISBN 978-0-86473-611-6.

MAORI AND THE STATE PROVIDES WELCOME TREATMENT of a period that has received much less attention in published works than earlier periods of Crown–Māori interaction, particularly the nineteenth century. Richard Hill’s participation in some of the events described, as a Crown official in the Office of Treaty Settlements (formerly the Treaty of Waitangi Policy Unit) from 1989 to 1998, lends the latter part of the book added authenticity. Given the potential breadth of the topic his focus is on the Crown–Māori relationship ‘at an organisational level’, and in this his coverage is comprehensive.

The book is the successor to Hill’s 2004 *State Authority, Indigenous Autonomy: Crown–Māori Relations in New Zealand/Aotearoa, 1900–1950*. As with the earlier volume, *Māori and the State* portrays a ‘continuing quest’ by Māori to achieve their goal of autonomy or rangatiratanga in the face of ongoing Crown resistance. While he stresses this continuity, Hill signals immediately that there are two crucial differences from the first half-century: first, Māori urbanized in massive numbers after World War Two, and, secondly, the ‘Māori renaissance’ from 1970 forced the Crown to retreat from its assimilationist agenda.

Hill thus begins by relating the workings, in the increasingly urbanized environment, of the tribal committees set up under the Māori Social and Economic Advancement Act 1945. Perhaps surprisingly, these were retained by the new National government from 1949 despite them offering Māori a measure of autonomy. Hill explains this as stemming from the government’s belief that it could co-opt Māori endeavours for its own aims. Thus begins the recurrent theme of the book, that ‘the state sought to appropriate organisational expressions of autonomy for its own purposes’ but that Māori, ever adaptive, ‘attempted to reappropriate the state’s appropriations’ in order to achieve some degree of rangatiratanga. Hill sees the same pattern occurring under the Māori Welfare Act of 1962, which replaced the 1945 legislation and established the New Zealand Māori Council, as well as later measures such as devolution to iwi in the 1980s and the contracting out of services in the 1990s.

The starting point for the book, though, is the government’s desire for Māori to become Europeanized as quickly as possible. Perhaps the zenith of assimilationism was reached with the Hunn Report of 1960, which set the tone for the following decade and led, along with the Pritchard–Waetford Report of 1965, to such initiatives as the hugely unpopular ‘land grab’ of the Māori Affairs Amendment Act of 1967. Hill identifies the passage of this legislation as a ‘turning point in the Māori struggle for rangatiratanga’, with land rights becoming the ‘iconic rallying point’. The half-century he covers is thus shown to be a story of two halves, with assimilation clearly dropped as government policy by 1975. This transition is perhaps exemplified by changes in the Department of Māori Affairs, which shifted from an agent of assimilation under Hunn to the promoter of ‘Tū Tangata’ under Kara Puketapu in 1978.

Hill cannot hide his dislike for the economic reforms of the ‘extreme right-wing’ Labour government of 1984–1990, which ‘sought to appropriate rangatiratanga to a market-driven environment’ through its policy of devolution. But he acknowledges that the initiatives of the Runanga Iwi Act 1989 were the closest Māori ever got in the twentieth century ‘to institutions embodying some form of partnership with the Crown’. He also commends the fourth Labour government’s legacy of consultation, awareness of ‘Treaty principles’, and Treaty settlements themselves, which he regards as having been the notable exception to the

Crown's 'glacial' pace in recognizing rangatiratanga.

Despite these advances, Hill concludes that by 2000 there remained little prospect of Māori exercising rangatiratanga other than by 'arrangements acknowledging the Crown's supreme and interventionist authority'. Short of 'armed overthrow of the state', that would be how it would stay. To that extent, he believes, little has changed since 1950, or even indeed since 1900. But in this Hill does not contemplate that Māori, through ongoing demographic changes, may yet one day themselves appropriate the state. We have already seen the Crown take on a much more Māori complexion in recent years, and there is reason to suggest this change will amplify in coming decades.

Yet Hill often tends to depict the struggle between Māori and the Crown in terms that could apply to the nineteenth century. His point is of course that the quest for rangatiratanga is unbroken, but one wonders whether we may already be at the point where not every example of Māori 'collaboration' with the state has to involve some element of 'appropriation'. So while he warns that the Māori Party's governing arrangement with National is inherently difficult given the state's history of appropriating Māori initiatives and structures, one might consider it, alternatively, as evidence of the normalization of Māori participation *as* the state. The notion of an ongoing struggle between opposing forces in a binary Crown–Māori relationship may conceivably no longer apply in another 50 years.

Hill shies away from defining 'autonomy' with precision, explaining that Māori autonomist goals are placed on a 'conceptual continuum' from full control of New Zealand to some limited powers devolved from the state, and that they will differ depending on circumstances. But because of this imprecision it is difficult at times to know exactly what kind of quest he believes Māori are on. He writes that 'most historical Māori assertions of rangatiratanga have accepted the overarching sovereignty of the Crown', yet elsewhere uses Jane Kelsey's description of the Māori struggle in the 1980s for 'complete authority over themselves and the country's key resources of land, fisheries, waterways and minerals'. Hill acknowledges the impracticalities in contemporary New Zealand of Māori 'sovereignist' ambitions, but he does not dismiss them, and ultimately one wonders how exactly he thinks the state should acknowledge rangatiratanga in the twenty-first century.

As in previous works, Hill uses one composite endnote for several paragraphs or even pages of text, mainly to reference the source of quotations. This technique allows him to assert along the way that 'Many Māori leaders feared . . .' or 'A number of Māori and other commentators argued . . .' without explaining who these people are. While the reader has little reason to doubt him, occasionally this practice comes unstuck. For example, at one point Hill refers to the general confidence of 'Māori leaders' in their organizations during the period of devolution. His source for this, however, is a speech by Tariana Turia in 2003, which seems on its own to be an insufficient reference. Moreover, Turia's speech was delivered as a minister of the Crown, which perhaps symbolizes the broader difficulty in depicting such a Crown–Māori duality.

On the basis of his earlier work, Richard Hill rightly deserves to be regarded as an authority on Crown–Māori relations under the Treaty. The publication of *Māori and the State* confirms this status. Given this expertise one would have liked him, on occasion, to express his own view on some of the matters he covers. Does he agree with the criticism he quotes that the Tribunal in its *Mangonui Sewerage Report* in 1988 had become just another vehicle to deny rangatiratanga? Does he himself believe the Crown's sovereignty today is divisible, and if so how? That he leaves many of these questions up to the reader is at times disappointing, but does not distract from the overall contribution of this book.

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