

operation about the turn of the century, the police raid itself, and the trial—remain valuable. It is clear too that Webster is a man of sympathy and understanding towards Rua and the Tuhoe. It is a pity that he did not write a shorter, less pretentious book.

ALAN WARD

La Trobe University

A History of Tauranga County. By Evelyn Stokes. Dunmore Press, Palmerston North, 1980. 489pp. N.Z. price: \$17.95.

THE ABOLITION of provincial government in 1876 was followed by an epidemic of new counties and boroughs in New Zealand. In recent years those local bodies have produced a rash of centennial histories. While often valuable as digests of recondite detail, collectively the usually handsome volumes display improvements in New Zealand book design more than advances in the research and composition of local regional history.

But *A History of Tauranga County* does mark an advance. Eschewing 'council history', Dr Stokes treats the county as a region and plots its colonization and development in a clear and comprehensive manner. The author is a geographer and the skills and perceptions of her profession are very evident. Though the country is her primary focus, the region is functional, not merely formal: the trains do not vanish the moment they cross the county boundary. The urban areas, frequently ignored in county histories, are placed firmly in their regional context. Dr Stokes offers plenty of facts and figures for those who like precision (say, social studies pupils) but the detail is always subordinated to the exposition of general themes. Her summary of early industrial projects (p.281) is a fine example of her capacity to draw together apparently disparate subjects. Only in the final chapters is there any unwonted impression of discursiveness, the result of incorporating some particularly lengthy quotations.

Most striking are the maps, sixty-six of them altogether. Many embody original research. Older maps (with two exceptions) have been redrawn to ensure clarity. No other New Zealand local or regional history remotely approaches the cartographic excellence of this work.

Unlike many local histories, in which undue space is given to the Heroic Age of the Founding Fathers, this book is generally well-proportioned. For example, the battle of Gate Pa is completed in three sentences (p.80); the portrait of the missionary A.N. Brown is a balanced miniature (p.48); and the contribution of G.V. Stewart, Tauranga's Wakefield, receives succinct and judicious analysis (pp.158-65). The behaviour of individuals is always carefully related to contemporary circumstances. Thus the chicanery of the government land purchase officer J.C. Young and his interpreter Abraham Warbrick is not sensationalized but shown as broadly consonant with the tendencies of the Land Court and European attitudes towards the Maoris.

For rural areas where sizable runs predominate and the total number of properties is moderate, the local historian can readily produce an account which is both comprehensive and intimate. The task is much more difficult in farming districts

which contain a plethora of small holdings. Dr Stokes goes some distance towards solving this long-standing problem, generalizing through statistics and maps and then characterizing farm life through close investigation of selected schemes and individual farms (e.g. pp.178-88, 250-5). The result is fairly satisfactory and (this side of computer work) future regional historians looking at North Island dairy farm country should follow her procedure.

Not the least of Dr Stokes's achievements is to give the Maori people something more than cursory and patronizing treatment: even the offensive italicization of Maori words has been avoided. So often local historians have used the *tangata whenua* to provide colour in the first chapter, whereafter the noble savage, having suffered a timely defeat in war, remains unobserved on the marae while the chronicler's eyes are fastened upon Main Street. Here, by contrast, there is constant reference to the bicultural nature of the community; the accommodations and antagonisms between the two races and their different attitudes to the land are brought right through to the 1970s. The first part of the book is an object lesson for European local historians dealing with Maori prehistory. Traditional accounts of Polynesian arrival and dispersal are neither accepted nor rejected in toto: their limitations are gently noted, the stories are gracefully and satisfyingly retold, and ethnological and archaeological evidence is deftly summarized (pp.36-41) to complete the picture. This book puts the Maori so thoroughly in possession of the land that the tragedy of the European expropriation during the 1860s is given a fresh resonance.

'What sort of progress has been made in New Zealand regional history?', asked W.J. Gardner recently. 'With some notable exceptions, the record is hardly one of historiographical success.' Dr Stokes's book must be added to any short list of notable exceptions. But the success of this work raises anew questions about the relationship of 'regional history' and 'social history'. Dr Stokes wastes none of her 450-odd pages of text and maps, yet recent concerns of social historians (social class and stratification, ideology and political culture, the history of the family, criminality and social control) are, if not in fact absent, then not given much emphasis. Such topics could have been included only if the author had written an appallingly, inappropriately longer work, or if the period studied had been shorter. The latter procedure would surely have meant the loss of the insights essential to this work: the manifest coherence of the region in time as well as place, particularly the persistence of early-established attitudes (European disregard of the Maori; Maori distrust of the European; European willingness to despoil the landscape) through more than a century to the extent that they continue to inform the actions of Tauranga people today. Perhaps the moral is that while 'many or most of the generalisations of social history ought to arise from and all should be tested by, regional studies',¹ 'social history' with a regional focus and 'regional history' are after all distinct modes.

P.J. GIBBONS

University of Waikato

¹ W.J. Gardner, 'New Zealand Regional History and its Place in the Schools', *New Zealand Journal of History*, XIII, 2 (October 1979), 188, 190.