

motives and goals, must be of central relevance to general history of New Guinea. However, the reservation that has to be made is that like all 'Annual Reports' they are already a severely edited version of other more detailed reports and as such cannot be regarded as providing anything like the full story. A closer image is provided by a number of other German official document series where the warts and wrinkles of administrative blunders are more frankly exposed. The editor, in his eagerness to instruct ignorant antipodeans, could have briefly drawn attention to the existence of these (e.g. *Allgemeine Verhältnisse* . . ., i.e. general conditions; *Militärpolitische Berichte*, i.e. the political reports made independently by German naval commanders who periodically visited the colonies, etc.). This little exercise would have set the Annual Reports in perspective, making the point that there are far richer veins of source material on German New Guinea. Indeed these have been and continue to be mined by the diligent and perceptive Australians, Firth and Hempenstall. Nevertheless, what Sack has accomplished is a worthwhile start. All praise, too, goes to Dymphna Clark who rendered the German officialese into very smooth idiomatic English, a daunting task indeed.

This professionally produced volume is furnished with a painstakingly prepared index, an extensive glossary of German and native titles and terms as well as a series of clearly drawn maps. The Draft Annual Report for 1913-14 forms the sequel to the first volume. As Sack recounts in his introduction he has produced an edited version of the material sent to Berlin from New Guinea for the last financial year just prior to the outbreak of war. For this reason that material was never collated or published by the Reich Colonial Office. A copy of the diffuse draft was located in the microfilm collection of German Colonial Archives for the Pacific now held in the National Library, Canberra.

Here again Sack merits great praise for his editorial work. He followed broadly the same guidelines as for the first volume so that we have an intelligible record of German activities for the final year of their tenure in New Guinea. It is divided into a General Report of thirty-seven pages, the reports of seven administrative districts, the reports of five different mission societies, and finally a section of special government reports and statistics on subjects such as population, head-tax and labour recruitment. Sack has indicated where he has encountered gaps in the record or when he himself left out items of lesser interest. These can be discovered by consulting the microfilm copy of the original. What has been selected and translated, though, is eminently useful and informative. The above reservations notwithstanding, the two volumes are a welcome addition to the growing body of knowledge on modern New Guinea.

JOHN A. MOSES

*University of Queensland*

*Islands and Beaches. Discourse on a Silent Land: Marquesas 1774-1880.* By Greg Denning. Melbourne University Press, 1980. 355pp. Maps and illustrations. Price: \$A26.00.

*ISLANDS AND BEACHES* is fascinating. The historian reviewer is perhaps qualified

to judge only parts of it: a literary scholar, a philosopher, even a psychologist would also find much to engage their specialist skills. There are numerous levels in this study of culture contact in the Marquesas Islands. It is, firstly, a story told with dramatic intensity of what the Islands' inhabitants were like before Europeans arrived, and of what happened to them subsequently. This is expressed in terms of a sustained metaphor of islands and beaches. These 'are less physical than cultural. They are the islands men and women make by the reality they attribute to their categories, their roles, their institutions, and the beaches they put around them with their definitions of "we" and "they"' (p.3). The protagonists are Te Enata (The Men), Te Henua (The Land), and Te Aoe (Outsiders, Strangers). Second, the author interweaves his narrative with comment on his 'ethnohistorical' methodology. We see him consciously at work, explaining not only the results of his research but how he has used its raw material to produce these results. Third, the book is a sort of zen and the art of culture contact, a heavy concoction of philosophical or more accurately pseudo-philosophical observations, particularly in the 'Reflections' that follow each chapter. In them Denning expounds on the wider implications of his detailed narrative—there are musings on the nature of history and anthropology, on models, metaphors, symbols, on time and space, on social change, on 'civilization', on gods and ghosts, on authority, on violence, on domination, on death. . . . Here we move to yet another level, that tending towards a form of autobiography. Throughout the book there is a haunting mixture of vehement opinion and quiet introspection about the 'mysteries' of human perceptions and actions. Denning, ex-Jesuit, historian, anthropologist, humanist, conveys a vivid sense of his own understandings and misunderstandings, his own struggles to come to terms with ironies, contradictions, unfathomable conditions of all men, particularly their universal violence. The underlying story of culture contact in the Marquesas becomes, in this context, irrelevant or rather non-specific. It is perhaps a parable of the author's attempts to understand his own island and beach crossings into others. The book becomes a model of his own metaphors. It is thus intensely personal. At its end one is more conscious of Denning's presence than of a tale set in distant islands. The subtitle is more literal than it at first might seem: we hear the discourse, the land is silent. 'Everybody's past is dead, Aoes's and Enata's together. Events happen only once. Actions are gone with their doing. Only the history of the past has some permanence, in the ways consciousness gets preserved in writing or in memory or in the presumptions of every social act. But for Enata even their history is dead. All the history that is left to them, like their material artefacts, binds them to those whose intrusion on their Land caused them to die. Events, actions, institutions, roles become history by being translated into words' (p.273). But they are *Denning's* words, *his* consciousness, *his* memories, *his* presumptions. History, he admits elsewhere 'is . . . only a conversation about ourselves' (p.6), 'a mirror of man' (p.3).

To read this book on any or all of these levels (and there are doubtless others) is a rewarding experience. Whether you enjoy it (as I did) or find it heavy going, whether you agree with his observations and interpretations is beside the point. Unlike most history books, which can be purloined for information and ideas and then left forgotten, this one lingers. It is less a history book in the usual sense, more a *performance* with Denning centre stage. And anyone who witnessed his address at ANZAAS in Auckland 1979 will appreciate how enthralling that can be.

But therein lies a catch! It is all too easy to respond to this book in a subjective, even emotional way. It is so clever, so well done. As with a good play, it is all too easy to suspend one's disbelief, to lose sight of the artifice, to be carried along by the acting. To subject a play scene by scene to textual analysis is both revealing and destructive. Examining Dening's book in this way, inspecting its parts in isolation, similarly weakens the whole. Yet this inspection is necessary, not to be critical for the sake of it, but to assess some of its strengths and weaknesses as—in this case—Pacific History. This is justified since Dening has long been a leading advocate of 'ethnohistory' (that 'bastard child of history and anthropology' as he calls it) which, he claims, provides for a more rigorous methodology than most historians of culture contact in the Pacific have used. Dening has been oft quoted for his view that 'empiricism . . . dominates most Pacific study. . . . Research is dominated by a narrow geographical area, an institution, a period. History is what happens or what the sources let know what happens within those limitations. No problem, no theory, no methodology takes the researcher outside those confines.' (NZJH, XII, 2 (1978), 82). OK, so has he come up with the goods? Well, partly. He has provided a more precise definition of what he is investigating. Most Pacific historians have talked vaguely about Islanders and Europeans coming into 'culture contact'. Dening rightly asks such basic questions as what is meant by culture, what is meant by contact? His own summary, which is considerably expanded throughout the book is this: 'My own sense of culture was that in its essence it is consciousness externalised. The actions, the roles, the expressed relationships, the artefacts, the regularized behaviour that constitute culture are all vehicles of meanings that are both expressed and read. To know a culture is to know a system of expressed meanings. To know cultures in contact is to know the misreadings of meanings, the transformation of meanings, the recognition of meanings.' (p.6) Dening's investigations into the life 'men held in their heads', their perceptions, their symbols, their metaphors, produce many stimulating suggestions; for example, that the Marquesan *tapu* system with all its various trappings was the 'central model of their lives. It reached in metaphor to every part' (p.5) and was 'the totality and the hegemony of their culture' (p.234); that the Marquesans were different from Europeans—savages were different from 'civilized' men—because of their 'sense of time' and that 'Civilizing them in its essence was giving them a different sense of time. . . . It removed the cyclical time of rituals in which a legendary past was re-enacted to legitimate and prolong the present. . . . Their present was not without change, but the fundamental mode of their existence was continually to re-establish their land in its metaphors. To become civilized, they needed an emptiness in their souls that left room for the future' (p.264).

These sorts of observations, and there are many more, may or may not be thought of value depending on your point of view. However, when getting down to the nuts and bolts of culture contact in the Marquesas, i.e. what happened on the beach, these perceptions sometimes seem more descriptive even perhaps decorative than explanatory. To put it bluntly, many of Dening's conclusions are not particularly original. I think it is fair to say that strip away the rhetoric, the abstractions, the *performance*, and there is no new look Pacific History. We are not qualitatively wiser about, for example, the ways in which Islanders responded to European goods and ideas and diseases, or the consequences for them. Similarly, I do not really think we are wiser about the role of beachcombers and missionaries and so on. Most of it has been said before, for different islands. Indeed

some of Dening's interpretations are extremely old (though this doesn't necessarily invalidate them). His views about, for example, technological change for the Islanders and the consequent (detrimental) changes in habits, lifestyles (e.g. pp.235-6) strongly echo sentiments expressed by Cook, Bligh, Vancouver in the late eighteenth century and R.L. Stevenson in the late nineteenth. And the history of culture contact that Dening outlines for the Marquesas is not in itself very different from what other islands witnessed, though there might have been more destructive violence amongst the Marquesans than other places, and their depopulation more dramatic. Yet these similarities and differences are not commented upon. A broader Pacific context is lacking. The Marquesas are floating metaphors in more ways than one. I by no means wish to detract from what Dening has said about the processes of culture contact, but I do not think he has produced results which will alter approaches to Pacific History in the way that authors like Davidson, Gunson, Shineberg and Corris have done. Dening may have some new perceptions but he has not set us a bold new course to follow.

Dening's personal opinions about what happened as opposed to his explanations are also worthy of some comment, and here we are moving into some of the other levels in his book. There is an inherent contradiction. On the one hand, Dening appears as the dispassionate observer, describing, analysing, as impartial as a camera's eye: 'I do not mean to invest the words Land and Men with that nostalgic dignity they nonetheless have. I mean only to underscore the theme that the changes which came with contact remade both islands and people root and branch' (p.3); '. . . the essence of culture is process. One moment is no more hybrid than the last, one response no less creative than that which was made before' (p.39);

the changes were constructive responses to a changed environment, not imports from across the beach.

The changes were at all times processual. New types of behaviour would be directed to resolve a particular problem . . . for the most part every change was a consequence of an individual choice about status or profit or self-esteem. In that sense, there was no 'fatal impact', no disappearance of culture; their fundamental reality now included Aoe, just as it had included their breadfruit tree and the dividing ridges between the valleys. (p.237)

Yet on the other hand most of the book is all about the destruction of Marquesan culture and the depopulation and dispossession of its people: 'There was change all the same: it had the taste of death' (p.197). And Dening himself becomes passionately caught up in this 'bloody and sad' and 'shocking' saga of 'cross cultural conflict'. For him it is a 'sad journey of death and decay' brought about by the European 'intruders'. The result was 'The wretched spasmodic death of the culture'. Few Pacific historians have more eloquently and with such feeling unfolded a tale of fatal impact. Was it, or wasn't it? The answer seems to be both yes and no. The conflict is never reconciled. It is acted out, a reflection perhaps of Dening's dialogue with himself. 'The past is dead, and history is a poor social reformer. It is, I think, only a sentence in a conversation about ourselves. It responds to all the sentences that have gone before about the narrowness of cultural vision and the intransigence of men, and the violence that comes from them both. It reflects the reality that in our present is all our past and in our person is all our culture. Like every sentence in a conversation it ends a part but not a whole. Nothing more.' (p.6) *Islands and Beaches* may not set trends for Pacific History. As a study of culture contact it is essentially too orthodox, and its other

dimensions as well as its style are quite inimitable. Uniquely memorable is probably the best description.

K.R. HOWE

*Massey University*

*The New Zealand Political System, Politics in a Small Society.* By Stephen I. Levine. George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1979. N.Z. price: \$8.95.

DR LEVINE'S preface announces that 'the foregoing pages' [he appears to mean 'following pages'] seek to introduce readers to the New Zealand political system. A book of this scope has not hitherto been produced. . . . Having mentioned Lipson's *The Politics of Equality* and A.D. Robinson's *Notes on New Zealand Politics* as 'influential predecessors', Dr Levine goes on to explain that they 'lack the scope of this volume, which seeks briefly to encompass the entire political system in its salient, broad features. Moreover, these earlier works, and others even more limited in scope, are from an earlier time, when politics in New Zealand was seen to be more tranquil, and the New Zealand dream more secure of achievement.' Alas poor Lipson and Robinson, and even more so Keith Jackson with his *New Zealand, Politics of Change*, Austin Mitchell with his insightfully-chosen *Government by Party* and illuminating *Politics and People in New Zealand*, or R.S. Milne with his scholarly and authoritative *Political Parties in New Zealand*; all are left as casualties by advancing scope and contemporaneity.

However, before we are tempted to set aside such earlier books or retire any reference points like K.J. Scott on the constitution or R.J. Polaschek on government administration, it would be as well to consider just what scope brings us. In nine chapters and 176 pages the author tackles forty-nine topics, all systematically headed, led off by a chapter of nine pages on the role of political scientists and their modern differentiation into schools or approaches to their discipline. Naturally, with such an all-embracing agenda for the rest of the book, there is space only to open up each question before it is time to pass on to the next. That 'contemplation and understanding' called for on the outside cover are left with scant room to develop. This text displays one way of assessing and meeting 'the needs of first-year political studies students at university'. Others may—indeed will—prefer a more selective and intensive treatment.

On the other hand, there is careful selection of the references given at the end of each chapter. They draw usefully on a fair range of overseas writings to furnish comparisons and principles. By contrast, the references to New Zealand material rely strongly on contributions and contributors to the two readers which Dr Levine has edited, thus forming for the author-editor and his readers something of a self-enclosed yet collaboratively-supported system. Those political scientists and historians who remain interested in the relationship of present structures and problems to their previous development will nevertheless detect echoes of other years and other minds outside or antecedent to the system.