

Zealand's social, political, and constitutional evolution.

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FROM ECONOMIC considerations alone—the magnitude of the task of writing and publication—*The Oxford History of New Zealand* is intended to be a seminal work, a landmark in the historical interpretation of New Zealand life. In respect of race relations—the history of interaction between the Polynesian Maoris and European settlers and their descendants—how do the scholars of the early 1980s conceive their task and make their interpretation?

The editor, Professor W.H. Oliver, has written only a three-page Introduction, eschewing the possibility of imposing a 'single personal vision' of the New Zealand past in favour of a 'work of several hands'. He has integrated, very successfully, a range of thematic chapters within a broad chronological framework. Maori history and race relations are the explicit concern of five out of sixteen chapters, and receive considerable discussion in many of the others. Professor Oliver notes that the 'deeper interest in Maori history indicates the current resurgence of Maoris in New Zealand life'.

Chapter I, by Janet Davidson, entitled 'The Polynesian Foundation', makes accessible in a finely written account, much of the product of the recent flowering of Pacific archaeology, linguistics and prehistory. Although it skirts the contentious issue of the size of the pre-European Maori population, this is certainly the best short account of traditional Maori material and social culture available. For example, there are fascinating new insights into characteristic health problems of the traditional Maori, as gleaned from their skeletal remains. If Janet Davidson is unable to probe far into questions about the quality of pre-contact Maori life, the extent of calm and contentment or fear and insecurity, of cultural richness or intellectual narrowness and parochialism of thought, this is only because of inherent limitations in the discipline of prehistory as it has so far developed along scientific lines.

J.M.R. Owens's chapter on New Zealand before the British annexation also reflects meticulous scholarship and careful drawing together of recent scholarship, much of it revising the long-accepted picture (derived from tendentious accounts by missionaries and officials) of growing anarchy on the New Zealand frontier which had to be obviated by the intervention of British authority. Owens's revisions, including his challenge to the generally accepted account of massive depopulation of the Maori due to disease, has much to commend it. But he goes too far in muting or minimizing the evidence of pre-annexation racial antagonism and violence. One can believe in the development of mutual interdependence of Maori and Pakeha, but to suggest that 'a spirit of tolerance and respect generally prevailed' gives too positive an interpretation to what was largely a grudging and temporary acceptance of a balance of physical power in a situation fundamentally rotten with racial prejudice and latent conflict of interest. Herein lay a fundamental instability.

Owens even goes so far as to suggest that the 'good old times' depicted in Frederick Maning's *Old New Zealand* continued for generations in remote parts

of New Zealand. One can only assume that Owens has either not read Maning's private letters, vitriolic with contempt and hatred for the Maori, or grown up in remote New Zealand where, even in the 1950's, mutual unease (or worse), separation of private lives and informal segregation in public places were widespread, along with legal equality, formal integration, racial intermarriage and some symbiosis.

However, Owens's interpretation is in keeping with theses advanced in respect of other parts of the former British Empire, to the effect that the advent of the state produced much worse oppression than that which it purported to assuage. Certainly in New Zealand, as M.P.K. Sorrenson shows in his chapter 'Maori and Pakeha' the state, introduced in order to regulate relations between the races, became perverted by men like George Grey to serve their own ambitions and the land needs of the settlers. It also embodied an implacable paternalism which proved incapable of recognizing and fostering Maori cultural strengths, potentially valuable in a genuinely bi-racial society, and introduced a stifling uniformity in New Zealand life.

Yet, while the challenge to statism, in the name of true liberty, deserves every respect, it should not be taken too far. It is certain that, without British Government intervention in New Zealand, a bloody warring frontier would have emerged there as in every other temperate land where the tides of nineteenth-century European migration flowed. As the history of decolonization also shows, blood or culture is indeed thicker than water, and racial prejudice and antagonism are ineluctable. If any New Zealand historian should doubt it, let him live in any independent black-majority society, even the most strongly committed to tenets of tolerance and multi-racialism. In a populace of increasing size, complexity and mobility, a central government, erected on propositions of a universal kind, is necessary to prevent racial antagonisms from causing all kinds of petty despotism and local massacre. Modern communism has had some success in this regard in places like Yugoslavia; Western liberal pluralism (on the basis of ethical and legal systems largely developed in England) has had some notable success as in parts of the modern United States or Australia.

Notwithstanding then the appalling treatment of indigenous peoples, which has everywhere marked successful mass immigration, New Zealand intellectuals may well serve their country best, including its Maori inhabitants, not only in pointing out the failures and hypocrisies of the liberal tradition in New Zealand but also in acknowledging its strengths. Owens, Sorrenson (and later Michael King in the chapter 'Between Two Worlds' which comprehensively covers twentieth-century Maori history) are generally more explicit about the former. It is a reflection of all our modern self-doubts as well as our more honest self-scrutiny.

The other important theme of modern scholarship which these writers reflect is the discovery of culture as a social determinant. The afore-mentioned writers have the task of writing connected narrative history as well, and they do this with consummate ease and skill. Ann Parsonson in 'The Pursuit of Mana', has a thematic chapter, in which she is able to indulge her specialist interests, explicating Maori society as it engages the new influences of the nineteenth century. Her work is brilliant. Factually solid, very detailed and profound, it draws upon both historical and anthropological writing and, through her sensitivity to the meanings of words and actions, carries us much further into Maori value and meaning systems than most straight anthropology. Her essential theme which provides the chapter heading, is rich in explanatory power and provides among

other things, the most comprehensive and convincing explanation yet written of Maori willingness to sell land, as well as resistance to land selling.

All of these writings serve to explain why the ideal propounded by Governor Hobson at the foundation of the colony, 'We are now one people', has given ground to the concept of 'two peoples, one nation'. But that also is too simplistic. In a comprehensive chapter on 'The Social Pattern' Graeme Dunstall includes succinct pages on the racial question, showing that the concept of a united Maori nation is a myth, that ancient local and tribal orientations persist and are overlaid with complex new divisions which reflect the integration of many Maori with one or other of the facets of a complex modern commercial-industrial society. The current striving for recognition of the vitality and worth of the New Zealand Polynesian heritage is long overdue but racial separatism is clearly inappropriate and it is still the western liberal tradition, belatedly flowering and properly modifying the New Zealand tendency to create monolithic institutions, that will provide the best basis for racial tolerance and cultural pluralism.

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A History of Dentistry in New Zealand. By T.W.H. Brooking. New Zealand Dental Association, Dunedin, 1980. 286pp., illus. N.Z. price: \$20.

THIS HISTORY, commissioned by the New Zealand Dental Association, celebrates the rise of one of the country's most successful occupational groups. In less than a century New Zealand dentistry was transformed from a trade practised by almost anyone with 'strong wrists', to a fully university trained, specialized and self-disciplining profession. As a result *professionalization* proves a comfortable 'organizing theme' for both Brooking and his dentists. Ethical dentists were almost completely successful in raising the status and income of dentists as well as improving the standard of dental care.

Brooking divides this process into four periods. The first, a sub-professional stage, was marked by low levels of skill, a complete lack of state control, an absence of dental organizations and almost a single method of treatment, painful extraction. With the passing of the 1880 Dental Act and the introduction of registration, dentistry became semi-professional. Dentists gained new scientific skills and status through technological improvements such as the foot-powered drill, adjustable chair, and the use of anaesthetics. They also began to organize themselves, first locally, and then with the formation of the New Zealand Dental Association in 1905. As a result of these changes ethical dentists asserted their superiority over their artisan competition. The opening of the Dental School at Otago University in 1908 allowed the transition to full professional status, completed with the creation of the Dental Council in 1937. However, this third period was also a time of delayed development. Dental mechanics successfully countered the efforts of the Dental Association to use the B.D.S. as the bench-mark for entry. In 1910, 1911, 1922 and 1926 legislation passed on behalf of mechanics