

Reviews

To Live Among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania. By John Garrett. World Council of Churches and University of the South Pacific, Geneva and Suva, 1981. xii, 412pp., photographs, maps. N.Z. price: \$10 (soft cover).

The Founding of the Roman Catholic Church in Oceania, 1825-1850. By Ralph M. Wiltgen. Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1979. xxii, 610pp., photographs, maps. Australian price: \$24.50.

SCHOLARLY writing on the history of the Pacific Islands is still in that admirable stage of sturdy innocence, the monograph phase. Most of the practitioners in the field are still busily occupied collecting, arranging and presenting basic data on institutions and events, on people and places, on processes and policies. Visionary theorists, bland litterateurs and grandiose synthesizers are still few. It will probably conduce to the health of the discipline should they remain so for a good while to come. The paramountcy of empiricism is an assurance that generalizations, those approximations to Truth, will be the products of evidence-supported reasoning rather than of kite-flying imagination. The quest for the *meanings* of change, which history is ultimately about, cannot be satisfactorily carried out unless the facts of change—the answers to the who? what? when? why? where? how much?—have been established in marked variety and abundance.

Nevertheless, as the monographs multiply, there is a growing need for works of another kind as well. That is, for surveys which present comprehensive and up-to-date accounts of the state of knowledge on particular topics. John Garrett's book on the establishment of the Christian Church throughout the Pacific Islands (including New Zealand) is a triumphant example of the *genre*. Beginning with the arrival of the Spanish Jesuits in the Marianas in 1668, he traces the spread of missionary activity into the early years of the twentieth century, and rounds out the discussion with a brief account of subsequent developments. Broad as the subject is, there is no blurring. The numerous missionary groups and their operations are all presented in individualizing detail within the overall pattern of religious change, which was so profound and pervasive in Oceania in the nineteenth century. So, too, are the indigenous responses to and contributions to the process, which as recent research has made clear is not understandable merely in European terms.

Nor is *To Live Among the Stars* (the title comes from a comment by the Tongan convert and missionary Joeli Bulu) an assemblage of summaries. It is densely packed yet clearly written and crisply opinionated. It is a composition that transcends its parts and attests Garrett's virtuosity as well as the breadth of his reading. Even his bibliography is the best there is for Pacific mission history.

Another work of awesome span, although covering a much shorter period, is that of Wiltgen. Here the primary concern is with Oceania as conceived by French and Roman churchmen in the early nineteenth century—that is, as including Australia and New Zealand as well as all the Pacific Islands. In it the activities of the missionaries who worked to plant the Catholic Church in 'the fifth part of the world' are discussed in relation to the rivalries, interests, ignorance (especially of geography), follies and ideals of Vatican officials and superiors of religious orders. Unlike most recent Pacific histories this one is unashamedly—but profitably—'headquarters centred'. With such a focus it reveals patterns of logic and causality that cannot be discerned in the narrower, though more fashionable, 'island-centred' studies. It provides an integrated explanation of a set of operations that ranged from Perth to Honolulu.

A valuable contribution to the history of missions and of the religion, Wiltgen's book is also a fascinating, sobering and occasionally humorous study of bureaucracy at work. For instance, he describes a brilliant hoax in which, in 1824, a twenty-year-old Egyptian student tricked the Vatican authorities into ordaining him sub-deacon, deacon, priest and finally (in the Sistine Chapel with the Pope as celebrant) Archbishop of Memphis—all within the space of fourteen days, on the assurance that this would help re-unite the Coptic Church and Rome. This incident, which led to the hoaxer being sentenced to life imprisonment in a Papal jail, had an impact on the Pacific in 1825. It made Vatican officials refuse urgent—and well-founded—requests for speed in extending formal ecclesiastical jurisdiction to Hawaii.

Welcome for its substance, Wiltgen's book is also to be admired for the lavishness of its production and for readability combined with rare scholarship. It is based on exhaustive archival research, requiring competence in five languages.

In these books Garrett and Wiltgen have contributed to their field of interest not only by adding to knowledge, but by setting standards of professional skill that will be hard to emulate. Both books were published with the aid of generous subsidies (hence the lowish prices). It was money well spent.

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Indians in New Zealand. Studies in a sub-culture. Edited by Kapil N. Tiwari. Price Milburn for the New Zealand Indian Central Association Inc. Wellington, 1980. 244pp. N.Z. price: \$19.50.

A BOOK on Indians in New Zealand has long been overdue and this collection of papers by various writers, edited by Kapil Tiwari, makes a welcome step in filling that gap. Not many New Zealanders, and certainly few people outside New Zealand, are aware of the substantial group of Indians in this country and this introductory survey should provoke some awareness of the diversity of Indian communities there. Another aim of the book, ostensibly, was to provide some documentary history which young Indians could consult to learn of both their cultural heritage and the story of their ancestors' struggles in a foreign land. Indians have been emigrating to New Zealand, mostly direct from specific areas