

Reviews

From the Beginning. The Archaeology of the Maori. Edited by J. Wilson. Penguin Books, in association with the New Zealand Historic Places Trust, Auckland, 1987. 175pp. NZ price: \$32.50 paperback.

ATHOLL ANDERSON was 'goaded by accusations that archaeologists were failing to let the public know in clear and simple terms what they were up to and what they had found out. . . .' Chairman of the Historic Places Trust Archaeology Committee, Dr Anderson accepted the challenge. He organized nine different authors to contribute sections of the book, writing one himself, and acted as editorial consultant.

Does the book succeed in its aim? It is superbly illustrated by Chris Gaskin and comprehensively covers the stuff of the archaeology of the Maori. Well-edited, it is a more coherent and consistently readable book than many multi-author volumes, while archaeologists' jargon is absent. What has been found out is clearly put, but questionable views of what happened in New Zealand before the arrival of Europeans are not refuted: one fears that some readers may happily fuse new knowledge learned here with '1350 and all that'. Chapters in the book cover origins, development, impact on the natural world, physical form, stone- and timber-shaping skills, subsistence, housing, warfare, and decorative arts. The interest the general public has in voyaging, discovery and settlement, however, is barely addressed and this is the book's main failing. The volume may serve as an introduction for an interested general reader or as a text for part of a broader-ranging course in New Zealand history.

I read it over the same weekend as Robert Bakker's superb *The Dinosaur Heresies* (Longman, 1987). As a piece of science popularization *From the Beginning* pales in comparison. Bakker's book is alive with famous finds, sites, museum displays, history, controversy, and personalities. The narration of personal discovery — and archaeology has many examples — is a great way of publicizing science.

In Wilson's book there is no hint of controversy, nor, with one exception, of the passion of archaeologists for their subject. New Zealand archaeology is lacking in neither, and the book misses an opportunity to let people know what New Zealand archaeologists are 'up to'. An account from the trenches still remains to be written, but it would perhaps need one author rather than many. In short, the book's text is dry in comparison with Bakker's.

The exception noted above is the contribution by Tipene O'Regan, who is quite unreserved in stating his personal reaction to Pakeha scholarship. Based on knowledge of the approach of both cultures to history, his chapter, 'Who Owns the Past', is challenging to archaeologists and to the public at large. Inclusion of such a contribution would have been inconceivable even a decade ago, as would a book where the word

'prehistory' is expunged (a now common concession to Maori sensitivity) and, for that matter, a book where all the substantive contributions are by New Zealand-trained scholars.

O'Regan argues that only people living Maori culture can appreciate all dimensions of Maori history. One illustration he uses is less than convincing. The identity he feels in travelling in the Pacific and finding Maori echoes in artefacts, names, language, and behaviour is not unique to Maori. With knowledge, that experience is real and available to Pakeha, and Dr Wilson's book will help more New Zealanders to achieve at least this degree of biculturalism and identification with their country.

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Extracts from the journals of the ships Recherche, Espérance and Coquille 1793 and 1824. Early eyewitness accounts of Maori life: 3 and 4. Translated and transcribed by Isabel Ollivier. Alexander Turnbull Library Endowment Trust, with Indosuez New Zealand Limited, Wellington, 1986. 219pp. NZ price: \$44.

THIS VOLUME brings together journals from two separate French voyages to the Pacific, one well known to historians, the other obscure. The visit of the *Coquille* to the Bay of Islands in 1824 under Louis Isidore Duperrey has been well documented in print, most recently by Andrew Sharp (*Duperrey's Visit to NZ in 1824*, Wellington, 1971). Not surprisingly, Bruni d'Entrecasteaux's fleeting visit in the ships *Recherche* and *Espérance* in 1793 has had less attention. The two visits were quite different in nature. The *Coquille* stayed for two weeks; the *Recherche's* encounter with the Maori lasted no more than an hour. Passing the west coast of Cape Maria van Diemen, d'Entrecasteaux made no attempt to land or make contact with the local people. When several canoes of Maori approached he allowed them to come alongside, but did not let the Maori board the ship, remarking 'the natives of these islands have been visited so often, their customs and their manners are so well known and described, that there would be nothing to be gained from seeing them at close quarters'. His lack of interest in the local inhabitants is a reminder that ethnography was by no means the prime objective of these voyages. D'Entrecasteaux was concerned simply to carry out his orders, which were to explore the Cape and check its position. The fierce reputation of the Maori may also have put the French off, though if so their fears were quickly allayed. One officer, Raoul, commented that the 'good and gentle manner towards us [of the Maori] soon effaced all notions of the savage, leaving us with practical men'.

The practical men learned quickly. By the time of the *Coquille's* visit 31 years later, ship visits had become a primary source of wealth for the Bay of Islands Maori, exploited with enthusiasm and a clear sense of purpose. Maori confidence in their ability to control their interaction with the Europeans is a striking feature of these reports. Jacquinet, ensign on the *Coquille*, noted that the Protestant missionaries in the Bay 'do not seem to lead a very happy life and are forced to keep a constant eye on the natives who go into their house with the sole hope of stealing something'. Where the *Recherche* had found the Maori remarkably honest in trade, the crew of the *Coquille* complained of Maori stealing, lying, and untrustworthiness. The diffidence of the traders with the *Recherche* had given way to impatience to acquire the goods, especially the muskets, of European commerce.

The coin of such trade was very often sex. The journals from the *Coquille* provide one of the most vivid descriptions on record of the great industry of Maori prostitution.