

Kororareka & Other Essays. By Ormond Wilson. John McIndoe Ltd, Dunedin, 1990. 139 pp. NZ price: \$24.95.

ORMOND WILSON'S *Kororareka & Other Essays* — his last work before his death in 1988 — promises, according to his publishers, to fulfil what would appear a growing need amidst so much research concentrating on 1840 and beyond: a reassessment of the period before Waitangi and of the relations established between Maori and European. The principal aim of the work is an elucidation of the 'contact and conflict' between Maori and seamen, Maori and missionary, Maori and British authority and Maori and foreigners abroad.

Certainly all the necessary elements are present in Wilson's final work: whalers, trade, Maori agriculture, wars, chiefs, settlers, missionaries, Christianity, disease, Busby, and, finally, Heke and the flagstaff. Yet the book, divided into seven somewhat inappropriately named chapters, lacks any thematic continuity, structure or organization of material, and is stacked full of anecdotal stories which are rendered meaningless by the primary absence of any questioning or analysis. Wilson's repetitive rendering of those elements deprives them of their significance both in the period and to the subsequent history of the North. Though it may be of interest to learn that pork was first mentioned in a European account in 1811; that by 1814 the turnip had been introduced; and that Savage's 'account of Te Puna in 1805 is no less remarkable for its omissions than for his description of potato growing' (p. 16 — 'Early European Contacts'), none of what would seemingly constitute the 'important' questions with regard to our early race relations are brought forward for discussion. Though very occasionally in some of the summaries presented of the works of Nicholas, Earle and other visitors to the Bay, there are glimpses of European perception of the Maori, one looks in vain for the perception and understanding of their Nga Puhī protectors, of their objectives and the relations established with 'their Pakeha'. The final conflict — the 'War in the North' — also gets little analysis, since Wilson's summary concentrates principally on the 'debate' as to exactly how many times Heke chopped down the flagstaff.

As a collation and relation of dates, personalities and general happenings at the Bay, *Kororareka & Other Essays* does provide another excellent work of reference, particularly with regard to the usually unmentioned non-missionary population established at the Bay before 1840. Wilson's extensive research and careful cross-referencing ensures the reliability of the facts thus presented, while the guide to relevant resources is also of value. Contrary to the promises of the publishers, however, readers looking to the work for an analysis of our early race relations will be sadly disappointed.

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