

each of these Part II chapters may have been a publisher's nightmare but both James Ng and George Griffiths are to be congratulated on their decision to produce such a detailed sub-text for the benefit of other researchers. The consistent captioning and dating of all photographs in the text is another indication of the close attention to detail which is a hallmark of this production.

Windows on a Chinese Past is the product of some twenty-five years of sustained research, a commitment which James Ng (and his wife, Eva) have upheld despite demanding professional and personal involvement within a number of organizations in the Otago community. The quality of the research, the generosity of referencing, the interweaving of personal experience and historical narrative: work of this calibre and kind is a salutary reminder to professionals in the field that too great a cost-accountant emphasis on a rigorous observance of time, budget and word restraints may diminish rather than enrich the volume of published literature on New Zealand's past. James Ng's long-term dedication represents an important tradition in our historical literature: the contribution of the committed scholar who aims to give, not a skeleton for others to clothe but a well-covered and fully-formed body, lacking only minor embellishments if it lacks anything at all. Commitment and completion do not always coincide. J.C. Beaglehole's publications on James Cook made accessible the observations and achievements of a master mariner: Graham Bagnall's 'Tongariro' manuscript languishes unpublished for lack of the relatively meagre funding that would allow editing and referencing to be finished. We need our concise and tightly-argued 180-page perspectives on our past — but we must also value the breadth of vision that a wider window can provide.

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Punishment in a Perfect Society. The New Zealand Penal System 1840-1939. By John Pratt. Victoria University Press, Wellington, 1992. 288 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 0-86473-239-2.

AT LAST we have a published account of the New Zealand penal system during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries which is informed by current thinking on the history of punishment in Europe and North America. John Pratt applies the insights of Michel Foucault as modified by Pieter Spierenburg and David Garland. Such insights are not simply transposed: the impact of colonization on Maori processes of punishment has to be reckoned with, as well as the ways in which the Pakeha system deviated in reality from the models brought from Britain. Potentially, this is an important book.

John Pratt sees two separate histories of punishment as constituting the foundations of the modern New Zealand penal system. One history is that of the Maori 'way' of punishment which was 'formally silenced' by the imposition of the British system during the nineteenth century. (How this 'history of silence' constitutes a 'foundation' for the modern system is unclear — except as a possible 'site of opposition to [Pakeha] power'.) The elements of the Maori 'way' are described and implicitly compared favourably to the European model. Drawing selectively on contemporary observations, the account of the gradual supersession of Maori institutions and practices emphasizes the aims of the colonizers. It lacks the subtlety and wider context of Alan Ward's larger study. It does not consider how the Maori system itself altered to meet new sources of dispute and disorder,

induced by European trade and ideas. Though 'formally silenced', the Maori 'way' continued informally in their rural communities (as Pratt recognizes). However the potential of this insight is not explored, perhaps because Pratt seems to see Pakeha penology as increasingly shaping Maori conceptualization of punishment.

Three phases are discussed in the other, Pakeha, history of punishment to the early twentieth century: the period up to the 1870s where colonial practice diverged from British penology for 'pragmatic and utilitarian' reasons (especially in the use of prison labour on public works); the 'classical' phase to the turn of the century when there was a sustained attempt to apply the contemporary British model; and then the advent of the 'new penology'. Readers acquainted with unpublished thesis research will find a fair bit that is familiar. Pratt's contribution is to provide a much needed overview: placing the broad developments within the context of an ongoing 'penological discourse', showing the emergence of a 'penal complex' common to other Western societies, and identifying significant variations in the New Zealand pattern of punishment from that of England and Wales. The Pakeha history of punishment is seen as one of 'monumental failure' in meeting the prescribed aims of penal policy. Yet the system maintains itself by reproducing criminals. Moreover prisons are convenient: offenders can be punished 'out of sight and out of mind'. The institutions become deeply etched into popular psychology as the ultimate penalty: there seems to be no alternative.

This much is valuable, but the account has weaknesses. The focus is more on the evolving penological discourse than on the actual prison regimes which seem to change little in essence. Similarly, a 'new framework' for punishment (in which the role of judges is theoretically reduced) is seen to be well established by 1910 — yet the significance of broad continuities in judges' sentencing behaviour is not really discussed. At various points there is a lack of a sure grasp in setting a wider local context for the penological discourse, particularly regarding the nature of 'Liberalism' from the 1890s, the pervasiveness of eugenic thought amongst politicians and prison administrators in 1910, and the role of women's organizations in pressing for penal reform. Indeed there is a general 'silence' regarding women in the penal system. In tracing apparent shifts in opinion, Pratt seems sometimes to pluck evidence out of context. Thus, for example, the evidence for 'important changes of opinion' by the early 1870s is not clear-cut. The evidence cited suggests different strands of opinion from at least the 1850s, with judges on one side and some politicians and prison administrators on the other — before the abolition of the provinces and the advent of Arthur Hume.

More broadly, the ending of the account in the 1920s and 1930s implies that what follows is merely a variation on an established theme. Yet the emphasis on the 'failure' of the system is reflective of the disillusionment of the 1970s and 1980s in the context of growing crime rates (and further penal experiments) very different from the period before the 1930s. Irrelevance in the production of order rather than failure seems to be the salient characteristic of the penal system as described by Pratt.

The author has not been well served by his editor. Errors in the text have escaped detection — such as 'Peter' (Richard) Taylor, and 'William' (Arthur) Hume. There are inconsistencies and errors in citation.

To end negatively would be inappropriate. Altogether this is an ambitious and stimulating book. It should provoke further research. I will be recommending it to my students.

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