

hundred or more year old stone quarries, at pa after pa after pa (but all different), at the famous Wairau Bar moa-hunter site, at gum-digging trenches and at goldfield tailings.

This is a book of images and even the most text-oriented scholar will concede here the greater power of images, compared to words, be they spoken or written, to suggest, to evoke and to move. A record of so much human experience, beneath the sky, beneath our feet, before our eyes.

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Tides of History: The Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century. Edited by K.R. Howe, Robert C. Kiste and Brij V. Lal. Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1994, xviii, 475 pp. NZ price: \$49.95. ISBN 1-86373-541-0.

FOR SUCH A LARGE geographic and academic area, the Pacific has seen extremely few general histories. If one stops to think awhile it ceases to be surprising. The Pacific holds much of the world's human diversity, and has long been the humanities' laboratory. No matter where you step, you can be sure you are stepping on an academic's toes. Consequently the few general histories of the Pacific have all found themselves slow-moving targets, principally for neglecting the critics' pet subjects but, more meaningfully, for not getting it 'right'. It is into such waters *Tides of History* sails. In a sensible break with the past the captains have not sailed alone, but have brought on board 16 of the most able sailors they could find. It makes for an impressive crew that manages to resist the most common of general history sins, that of being perfunctory.

The book is in three sections, 'Colonisation', 'Towards decolonisation', and 'Uncertain times'. In the first section Robert Kiste gets lumped with the challenging task of writing on 'Pre-colonial times' and does an admirable job. The other authors in the section perform precisely and set a high level of competence, which continues throughout the book. This section provides a useful overview which manages to get around the immensity of the subject to provide a lucid look at European expansion and 'rule'. This is performed in a manner echoing the movement, recognized in the preface, 'back towards the concept of the [Pacific] islands as someone else's periphery ... [as historians] are less able to accept the islands as unique centres in themselves'.

'Towards decolonisation' hedges deliberately, as the title of the section suggests. The section hinges, much as decolonization itself did, on World War II, seen in this instance in Hugh Laracy's chapter. This chapter leads on to those regarding the movement 'Towards decolonisation', chapters which are organized around the metropolitan power, and are always well-informed, if on occasion a little dry.

The final section, 'Uncertain times', is easily the most original and is really the first example of the 'more multi- and inter-disciplinary approach' to which the preface refers. Vilsoni Hereniko's chapter on the 'Representations of cultural identities' shows some deft touches, and consolidates a large portion of the relevant scholarship in an inventive way, particularly in his analogy of 'tahraro'. He also offers an indigenous rationale for viewing island history in the divisions of before, during and after colonialism. I was pleasantly surprised by the liveliness of Peter Larmour's piece on 'Political institutions' and a little distressed that 'Social change' was allocated just to Penelope Schoeffel's chapter, in which we find the only real discussion of gender. Another difficult task falls

to Brij Lal, who displays considerable acumen, scholarship and humanity in detailing 'the passage out' in a reflective consideration of the problems that have bedevilled and bedevil.

Tides of History is clearly a handsome flagship of considerable tonnage, but like all flagships relies on support. I do not wish to fire the first salvos, but it is apparent where they will be aimed. The crew carries only two women, and only one indigene (and Lal, a Fijian-Indian). Has the make-up of those who study the Pacific changed so little? The absence of more Pacific Island scholars is mystifying. The book is presumably intended for undergraduates, so why is there no bibliography? The guidance the footnotes provide is too uneven, and a select bibliography or bibliographic essay would have been extremely useful. The book also fails to use photographs as thoughtfully as it might have.

Yet the major fault I find with *Tides of History* is shown by the lack of coverage of the vital 'battles' that have been fought in the academic Pacific, notably insider/outsider (that is, 'academic ownership'), Mead/Freeman and Sahlins/Obeyesekere. Historiographical, academic, and anthropological issues such as these should have been dealt with, rather than ignored or relegated to footnotes. There is no introduction and the preface we are given is tantalising but lamentably short. Lal's final chapter would have served nicely, perhaps better, as an introduction. I can find the unwillingness to take charge understandable, but not so easily excusable, as the editors have often shown their courage with such matters in the past, and firmer guidance would have made for more cohesion, and made points of difference seem such, rather than appearing (or not appearing) as clutter. It is this occasional want of direction which leads to most of the vagaries and contradictions, which nonetheless are commendably few.

Tides of History is a good book. The captains picked 'one of innumerable ways' to sail around the Pacific, and they picked one which was informed, quick, and caught most of the prevailing winds. The ship itself is beautiful, sturdy-looking and contains considerable craftsmanship. An obvious partner to K.R. Howe's *Where the Waves Fall*, it will reach the required shores. Its errors will be fixed in its likely reprinting, its shortcomings perhaps not so easily. I imagine, however, that we should get used to seeing it, as it will be on the water for some time.

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Through Irish Eyes: Australian and New Zealand Images of the Irish 1788-1948. By Patrick O'Farrell. Aurora Books, Ringwood, Victoria, 1994. 132 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 1-86355-042-9.

WITH THIS BOOK and its predecessor, *Vanished Kingdoms: Irish in Australia and New Zealand*, Professor O'Farrell has in a sense come home, but only to visit. After a distinguished career as the doyen of Irish Australian historians, his two most recent books have seen a decisive shift of emphasis and the first consideration of the Irish in New Zealand as part of an Australasian Irish entity. The masterly analysis and detailed research of *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History* (1985) and *The Irish in Australia* (1986) are now supplemented by soulful meditations on the passing of the culture of Irish Australasia. Like 1990's *Vanished Kingdoms* this book combines the author's deeply personal family connection with his subject and fragments of a lifetime's search for its talismans. Both works are beautifully produced and presented, exquisitely written, and richly studded with pearls of wisdom from 30 years of considered reflection.

The logic of the New Zealand dimension to *Vanished Kingdoms* is quite clear, based