

*The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Maori Myth and Legend*. By Margaret Orbell. Canterbury University Press, Christchurch, 1995. 304pp. NZ price: \$69.95. ISBN 0-908812-45-0.

IN 1976 David Simmons published *The Great New Zealand Myth*. It remains the only successful pan-tribal study of Māori traditions. Simmons' use of primary material and his comparison of whakapapa are stunning. The book is an encyclopaedia of Māori canoe traditions by default and sets the standard for other scholars to follow. Unfortunately Margaret Orbell's *The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Maori Myth and Legend* is not a worthy successor. In part this is due to the fact that there has been no concerted effort by Māori and Pakeha scholars to collect, publish or analyse Māori oral traditions. This being the case, any book claiming to be an encyclopedia of Māori myth and legend will lack depth due to the limited sources the author can draw upon. An appropriate and consistent method for the study of Māori oral traditions is required to overcome this problem, yet it is still the case that tribal matters are researched and written about without any relationship with iwi. This is not a wise strategy. Māori etiquette means that iwi must be considered when the mana and tapu of their tipuna are under examination. Orbell has not done this here, and the book is the weaker for it.

There are other problems with Orbell's approach. On more than one occasion she cites herself as the only reference for a subject or person (Hawaiki, Pahiko, kehua, Taikahu). She is also heavily reliant on early Pakeha scholars. These early observers provide a largely Pakeha view of the subjects she examines. This is evident with Orbell's discussion of tapu and noa. Once again women are deemed noa. Orbell's reason is that women belong to the earth and men belong with the sky. This explanation is inadequate. Orbell's sources were not expert at lifting and laying tapu. If these people could not lay or lift tapu, why bother referencing their opinions? One's state of tapu is not a matter of gender. All Māori are tapu and noa. The degree of tapu is relative to whakapapa. Therefore all women are noa and tapu, hence the phrase, 'kia pa atu te tapu e putikitia nei e te kapunipuini wairua o Hine Titama'.<sup>1</sup> In this phrase the tapu passes to the ancestral gathering place of Hine Titama. Thus women, the living faces of Hine Titama, have the ability to make tapu noa, yet are also tapu because of their ability to do so. There is also the Ngāi Tahu saying of Hine Matoro of the East Coast where she is considered the 'ariki tapu i Ngāi Tahu'. Other iwi will have similar traditions. It is meaningless to make generic statements on tapu from the basis of gender alone. It is also offensive to Māori women.

At times there is no obvious boundary between what Orbell's references say and what she believes. This is evident with her reference to Tama and his 'greenstone wives'. Orbell tell us that it is from Tama's pursuit of his wives that the various forms of pounamu take their names. Orbell extends the tradition and tells how Tama ran through the West Coast seeking his wives and leaving pieces of his cloak along the way which are now represented as tussock, flax and other plants that hinder travellers. The problem with this story is that her source, Herries Beattie, does not give that tradition. Beattie refers only to the tradition of Tama leaving behind vegetation that was troublesome to travellers. The tradition of pounamu is not mentioned. Beattie was obviously referring to the well-known tradition of Tama Rukutia. The tradition of the greenstone wives is part of the Tama Ahua and Tamatea Pokaiwhenua traditions which she refers to later in the book. However, those sections of Tama Ahua and Tamatea Pokaiwhenua do not give the pounamu traditions. Orbell's Tama is a construct that is not supported by any tribal tradition. Percy Smith's kehua still lingers 20 years after Simmons taught us not to construct pan-tribal traditions from variant sources.

1 Pers. comm. Pou Tu Te Rangi Stirling, 1987; P.T. Stirling MSS, private collection.

Orbell is simply lazy when she claims that Tahu Potiki is the younger brother of Porourangi. What other view could Orbell have when she considers only one source? It is true that Ngāi Porou see Tahu Potiki as the younger brother. The writer does not question that particular whakapapa. However there are other East Coast whakapapa that differ from the 'standard' Ngāi Tahu and Ngāi Porou versions. The view of these tribes are not considered. Why not?

At times Orbell takes a global view of traditions and at other times, for no consistent reason, selectively takes the view of a single tribe. This lack of a consistent method applies throughout the book and I suspect it will be another decade before historians have established a consistent method for examining oral traditions.

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*'By His Own Merits': Sir John Hall — Pioneer, Pastoralist & Premier.* By Jean Garner. Dryden Press, Christchurch, 1995. 362pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 0-473-03543-X.

JOHN HALL was born in Hull in 1824 and exemplified throughout his long life many of the archetypal Yorkshire virtues and shortcomings: he was hard-working, often dour, unwilling to reveal deeper feelings yet driven by strong emotions and, above all, the determination to succeed. This he certainly did. For 40 years he was at or near the centre of New Zealand politics and Canterbury's public affairs, having built his distinguished public career on soundly organized business interests and a thriving pastoral estate. He survived the economic storms which sent so many of his contemporaries into bankruptcy, and he died in 1907 one of the most successful of all pioneer pastoralists, leaving an estate and a family which still holds a secure place in Canterbury life.

A biography of Hall has been long overdue, as an understanding of Hall is essential to understand two of the most important events of the 1880s and 1890s — Parihaka and the gaining of votes for women. He was the Prime Minister in 1882 who had to deal with Te Whiti's formidable resistance to the Taranaki surveys. It was not Hall's fault that his own and Rolleston's moderation was defeated by those uncompromisingly hard men, Bryce and Atkinson, and Garner is good on this, bringing a much-needed balance back into the continuing debate on Parihaka. She is also excellent on Hall's place in the campaigns for women's franchise. Her soundly researched and common-sense account must stand as a definitive summary of that triumphant story.

Other aspects of this biography, however, are less happy and the reasons are perhaps to be found in the genesis of the book in a doctoral thesis and its publication as, in part, a family celebration of an honoured ancestor. Academic theory often acts to the detriment of such a complex practical exercise as a biography; understandable family pride or misplaced defensive attitudes invariably act as distorting prisms for the historian. In this case the double impact is unfortunate because this book is skilfully and conscientiously researched and honestly written — powerful virtues with a subject for whom such a daunting mass of biographical material exists. John and Rose Hall kept every ledger, every bill, and every letter except some of their most intimate. They were indefatigable gleaners. Canterbury University has 99 bound volumes of speeches, reported debates, general articles, and contemporary obituaries — except, significantly, of Edward Stafford whom Hall always disliked, in spite of having formed with him between 1866 and 1869