

Reviews

Cook's Sites: Revisiting History. By Mark Adams and Nicholas Thomas. University of Otago Press with the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research, ANU, Dunedin, 1999. 196 pp. NZ price: \$49.95. ISBN 1-877133-82-5.

COOK'S SITES is a collaborative work by Nicholas Thomas, an anthropologist and historian, and Mark Adams, a photographer. Thomas describes the book as an 'imaginative response to certain sites, images, narratives and histories'. The authors revisited sites where Captain Cook landed on the New Zealand coast, and re-viewed various objects that were either created or collected during Cook's voyages. These objects, such as Johann Reinhold Forster's original diary, are now held in British and European museum collections.

The primary importance of the sites visited is that they were points of initial contact between local Maori and Europeans, and therefore inaugurated the history of today's New Zealand. The sites, in effect, are used as a starting point to discuss both the history and representations of these early meetings and subsequent debates about them. Adams and Thomas aim to move from the historical constructions of Cook as either 'hero' or 'invader' to the acknowledgement of the complexity of this cross-cultural contact. Some of the issues raised by this revisiting include eighteenth-century queries about the morality of exploration, episodes of violence between cultures, and perceptions of family.

An additional motive behind the book was a desire to create a work where the photography and the text can stand separately or together, therefore avoiding the more prevalent 'photograph as illustration' or 'text as caption only' treatment. While the book is visually beautiful, I found it quite difficult to avoid treating the photographs as 'mere' illustrations. The authors' conception worked best in places where there is an overlap of text, historical narrative, eighteenth-century paintings and photography, such as in the chapter on Indian Island. Here Adams' reasons behind his photographs of Indian Island are linked with William Hodges' painting *A View in Dusky Bay, New Zealand*, and with a variety of other engravings and quotes from Forster's journals to create a discussion about the visitors' perceptions of the Maori 'family' group they met there.

Thomas makes several references to the multiple versions of historical events existing in both photographs and text, which act as 'historical conglomerates': they contain layers of history within them. It is a pity Thomas does not peel back more of the layers of some of Cook's sites. For example, he mentions how, in Dusky Sound, '[t]his engagement with a history has itself a history' (p.15) and goes on to mention briefly a photographer, Russell Duncan, who visited Dusky Sound at the turn of the nineteenth century. Duncan, however, also visited many of Cook's other landing places, including Ship Cove, which Thomas and Adams also visit. Moreover, Duncan was only one of a number of people engaged in revisiting these sites. The first recorded visit to one of Cook's landing sites 'for the sake of its historical associations' was by J.S. Polack, who visited Tolaga Bay in 1835. A yacht trip at the beginning of the twentieth century enabled Alexander Turnbull to visit Ship Cove, as part of his ongoing interest in Cook. Other scholars, beginning with Archdeacon Williams in 1888, published various pieces in the *Transactions and Proceedings of the Royal Society of New Zealand*, which described their visits to various of Cook's landing spots under such titles as 'On the Tracks of Captain Cook' and 'Foot-

tracks of Captain Cook'. Moving 50 years forward, one of the earliest tasks that the Historic Places Trust undertook, after its advent in 1954, was to mark some of these early sites.

When Thomas writes of 'historical conglomerates' he specifically cites the presence of memorials in some of the photographs as an example. Given this, more could be said with regard to the memorial at Ship Cove, rather than dismissing it as 'the absurd five-metre cement edifice erected in the 1920s' (p.106) and a 'gross monument' (p.107). While it may or may not be aesthetically pleasing, the monument itself functions as a narrative about the site, a narrative that represents the historical beliefs of the monument's creators. As a structure erected in the early part of the twentieth century, it is part of an upsurge in monument building that occurred between 1907 and 1920 in New Zealand. The cannons, which Thomas rejects as having nothing to do with Cook's visit, could alternatively be read as representing conquest, violence, and power. If one reimagines the monument with this analysis, quite a different picture emerges.

While these suggestions may not at first seem related to Thomas's questioning of first contact histories, most of the turn-of-century articles mentioned above discuss versions of the initial Maori-European contact, albeit from a contemporary viewpoint. With regard to the memorial at Ship Cove, some of the inscription is given in Maori. Does this express a form of cultural imperialism, the importance of these meetings to both Maori and Pakeha, or a reflection of a more bilingual early twentieth-century society than we realize? There are more layers of history and readings of histories involved here than are discussed in *Cook's Sites*.

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Voyages and Beaches: Pacific Encounters, 1769–1840. Edited by Alex Calder, Jonathan Lamb, and Bridget Orr. University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, 1999. 344 pp. US price: \$45.00. ISBN 0-8248-2039-8.

THIS INTERESTING COLLECTION, resulting from the ninth David Nichol Smith Memorial Seminar in 1993, aspires to emulate korero, in order to 'disclose the analogies, overlaps, and to-ings and fro-ings that entangle the Polynesian and European senses of the past'. This is a lofty aspiration, but this kind of endeavour can often motivate scholars to ask new questions of their own work. The best essays in this volume use these questions to make their own voyages and 'discoveries'. The contributions are diverse, and it is not always easy to realize connections from one essay to the next. What gives the collection a sense of unity, however, is apparent in the title: the ideas of 'voyages' and 'beaches'. In the title and in many of the essays, the debt to the insights of innovative scholars such as Marshall Sahlins and Bernard Smith is apparent. In particular, many of the contributors follow 'in the wake of [Greg] Dening'.

Most scholars of the Pacific (including New Zealand) will find something of relevance or interest here. The introduction is well crafted, and shrewdly opens the way for the essays to come. J.G.A. Pocock's essay begins the collection nicely, and there are several other pieces that are insightful and thoughtful. The strongest of these essays draw upon a wide and rich variety of sources and thought. Paul Turnbull's essay on 'Enlightenment Anthropology and the Ancestral Remains of Australian Aboriginal People' is a good example. Margaret Mutu writes eloquently about the conception of 'tuku whenua'; likewise Pat Hohepa about the interweaving of Maori and Pakeha in the milieu of Hongi Hika. Smaller fields are the focus of some interesting pieces, such as Leonard Bell on a