

## REVIEWS

combination of both? Was the devastation the result of the fatal impact of European culture or a self-inflicted destruction?

As a chronologically ordered compilation of re-edited sections from other works, *The Musket Wars* makes a contribution to a history about which little is written. It will be an enthralling read for those with casual interest and a useful first base for those beginning scholarly research of their own.

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*Pakeha Maori: The Extraordinary Story of the Europeans who lived as Maori in Early New Zealand.* By Trevor Bentley. Penguin Books, Auckland, 1999. 270 pp. NZ price: \$34.95. ISBN 0-14-028540-7.

'MAORI AND EUROPEANS fell in love with each other, and also had wars with each other. That's the basis of our history.' So said Robin Scholes, executive producer of *Greenstone*, a melodramatic version of early colonial history which appeared on New Zealand's television screens in 1999.<sup>1</sup> *Greenstone* is just one of a series of works that have portrayed the dramatic possibilities of early New Zealand history and what happened when single, non-Maori males began to arrive on the shores of Aotearoa and have contact with Maori society. The fictional account that *Greenstone* was could easily have been taken from many true-life stories on that frontier, but few of these true-life stories are well known.

Trevor Bentley's *Pakeha Maori* is an attempt to redress the absence of such characters from New Zealand's historiography, as well as to recount some jolly good yarns. Bentley's work purports to be a factual 'first-ever book devoted solely' to *Pakeha Maori*, the label for those non-Maori who lived with Maori when Maori controlled the frontier. Not all in fact were Pakeha, though it is Pakeha who are the focus of Bentley's work. Bentley's designs are ambitious, and he has good secondary sources of which to make use. Unfortunately he has used few unpublished sources, meaning his account offers little that is not accessible in other published works.

Bentley's aim is to resurrect these little-known people from a reputation as unsavoury and troublesome characters and to elevate them in the popular consciousness as key mediators of Pakeha-Maori contact. His strategy is to assign ten 'roles' to the Pakeha Maori. These are mokai (pet), convict, taurekareka (slave), toa (warrior), tohunga (priest or healer), renegade, trader, rangatira (chief), wahine (woman), and whaler. This overly complicated categorization — the differences between some of these roles are semantic only — means an otherwise worthwhile attempt to illustrate some of these elusive characters gets lost. Bentley ends up having to discuss many of his chosen Pakeha Maori in more than one role. Many of Bentley's chosen individuals merely seem to have multiple personalities and, frustratingly, remain just as elusive as ever. For example, Jacky Marmon plays at least seven of the ten roles. He even features in the 'wahine' role for his various marriages. I would prefer to have received all this information in one comprehensive section on Marmon. Biography, however, was clearly not Bentley's main intention, though had it been adopted as the narrative form, a more coherent and readable text may have resulted.

This disjointed structure readily lends itself to internal contradictions. What is said in one part of the book, or even within one section dealing with a particular role, is contradicted elsewhere. One example of this is Bentley's assertion that Maori picked up on Pakeha class structures and chose gentlemen Pakeha Maori over lower-class individuals. But he then provides plenty of examples throughout the book where this

was simply not the case, and where convicts and taurekareka Pakeha Maori were highly valued if they had any skills.

A further problem is that Bentley engages in some overly simplistic generalizations, while failing to define many of the concepts he is using. At one point, for example, he matter-of-factly states that after 1840 few 'half-castes' lived as Maori, but this statement (which is completely unreferenced) is not factual. Any look at nineteenth-century census statistics, let alone the whakapapa of many Maori families today, would have told him this much. Had Bentley deconstructed such controversial terms as 'half-caste', 'Negro', 'Lascar', 'cannibal' or 'living as Maori', his claim may have been more convincing. Instead, he uses these terms very loosely. While these terms were used in the nineteenth century, to repeat them without offering any explanation of their historical context is unhelpful and only adds to stereotypes that should be thoroughly questioned.

Bentley does include some discussion of the role of Pakeha Maori women on the colonial frontier, but has little new to add. By limiting his discussion of women — both Maori and the few Pakeha Maori women — to the 'wahine' role, and so defining women as 'other', he has missed what is surely a most pertinent point. Large numbers of non-Maori single men arrived in Aotearoa, and Maori society by and large accommodated these men. The medium for this contact was Maori women. They acted as the mediators between non-Maori men and Maori society. Maori women advised their non-Maori partners on protocol and prevented them from making unforgivable mistakes in a Maori world. In turn, Maori women and Maori society in general valued these men not so much for their ability to 'fit in', as Bentley asserts, but because they offered new and different skills that Maori could use to their own advantage. To say in his introduction then, that these men were foreigners who became part of the tribe and were treated by Maori as Maori, is to miss the very worth of these men to Maori. It was their usefulness, not their class or their 'role', that determined the extent of their welcome.

The value of this book comes from the fact that it is an accessible single-volume account of men (and a few women) who encountered Maori society on the early colonial frontier. It will serve to introduce more of this intriguing period of New Zealand history to a general readership. It is also generously illustrated. However, Bentley's structure gets in the way of some ripping good yarns.

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1 Quoted by Margo White in 'Soapstone: New Zealand drama series *Greenstone* refuses to let historical fact ruin a good romantic saga', *New Zealand Listener*, 29 May 1999, p. 19.

*Maori Health and Government Policy 1840–1940*. By Derek A. Dow. Victoria University Press in association with the Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington, 1999. 280 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 0-86473-366-6.

*May The People Live: A History of Maori Health Development 1900–1920*. By Raeburn Lange. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1999. 359 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 1-86940-214-6.

BOTH OF THESE BOOKS fill a major gap. Derek Dow, an historian specializing in health and medicine, pursues a focus on official public health policies for Maori, which were piecemeal and regional rather than national in practice. Raeburn Lange, with a background in Pacific history, takes a social history approach to Maori health.