

second voyage, was an early exponent of this with his application of Montesquieu's climatic determinism to explain the character of indigenous Pacific islands societies. Later ethnographic theorists were also influenced by environmental determinism. One outcome of these notions was a tendency to construct a racial/social hierarchy, with the islanders being classified as subject to limitations that did not affect the Europeans. Indeed they were deemed to be destined to die out, a belief that was merely clarified by Darwinism and by measurable population decline from the late nineteenth century. Yet that belief was not indelible. As the twentieth century advanced, submission to nature gave way to faith in the redemptive power and destiny of culture, especially European imperial culture. Under its aegis Margaret Mead went to Samoa in the 1920s, and seemingly affirmed the potency of culture/nurture in the grand scheme of things. Further, in the 1930s the problem of depopulation seemed to be solved, thanks to wise and benevolent policies of colonial governments. If culture could do that, might it not also be able to build orderly, prosperous inclusive democracies in the Pacific? Roll on, decolonization! Not unexpectedly subsequent political troubles in Fiji, Papua New Guinea and the Solomons came as surprises in many quarters.

In his third chapter Howe discusses how thinking about history and the writing of it are prone to being influenced by culture, that is, by the fashions, enthusiasms and agenda of those who concern themselves with it. Thus, imperial history, that being written up to the 1950s, focused rather narrowly on European activities. It dealt with the islanders, especially the Polynesians, principally as clients, but ones worthy of being supplied with origin and migration myths relating them distantly to the Europeans. The subsequent post-imperial history has brought the islanders and their activities nearer to the centre of interest. However, this extends not only to identifying 'indigenous agency' but also, in certain quarters, to cultivating an image of victimhood. Correcting one imbalance does not confer immunity from other distortions. For example, in New Zealand and Hawaii, history has been deployed with varying degrees of sophistication by the acolytes of angst to complement the politics and rhetoric of indigenous grievance. This is reflected in the revival of the depopulation issue. Terms like 'holocaust' and 'genocide' have, like evidential steroids, been imported in an effort to enhance criticisms of the colonial order. And supporters of Hawaiian sovereignty, blaming European contact for causing an enormous population decline, argue for a base figure of up to 800,000, as opposed to the more orthodox estimate of 250,000–300,000. In which figure is the head speaking?

Kerry Howe has long chided Pacific historians, an assiduous lot, for 'monographic myopia'. By setting their studies within larger contexts, he urges their increases of learning might better contribute to understanding. In this book he leads by example.

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Pacific Forest: A History of Resource Control and Conflict in Solomon Islands, c. 1800–1997. By Judith A. Bennett. The White Horse Press, Cambridge. Brill, Leiden, 2000. 528 pp. UK price: £75.00. ISBN 1-874267-43-X/90-04-11960-4.

AT ONE LEVEL, *Pacific Forest* is what it claims to be — an exploration of the forests of the Solomon Islands from prehistoric times. But it is also more than that, presenting a major case study of forestry in colonial and post-colonial times, and making a significant contribution to the environmental history of the Pacific Islands. In many ways, too, it is a metaphor for countless forests and forest-dwelling peoples in Asia and

tropical Melanesia (and in other areas where tropical forests are being logged unsustainably), most of which will not have their histories written. Even to describe this book as a history would be limiting, because the author ranges across diverse evidence, touching many disciplines and subjects, as she also explores those factors from areas like geology, biology and human settlement to imperial policy that contribute to a broader understanding.

Bennett is not sentimental about the forest as she examines the nature and consequences of shifting cultivation and prehistoric times, and more recently, as she notes that human settlement is 'an ecological factor' in the composition and distribution of the forest and wryly observes that 'the forest was once pristine, certainly, but only as long as human beings kept out of it' (p.31).

For many European settlers, and the companies that sent them, the forest was more of an obstruction than a resource — an impediment to the domestication of the landscape for the development of plantation agriculture. Even though some commercial forestry was established in the Solomon Islands by the time of World War I, logging had a chequered history with an ambivalent government, difficult terrain, expensive transport and uncertain markets — and management that was often incompetent at best, and disease-prone or crazy at worst.

Despite some more commercial ventures during World War II, the colonial government struggled to develop consistent policies and to find qualified and competent staff. Over most of the colonial period, it had neither the capacity nor the willingness to exercise effective control and, while there was an official commitment to the development of a forest estate to provide sustainable yields and employment in the future, a lack of will and conflicting commercial pressures limited the achievement.

It was partly in response to regional political pressures within the country, and the shortage of aid funds from without, that led to the creation of mechanisms that encouraged the exploitation of forests in the first decade beyond independence. By the mid-1990s, forestry was producing half of Solomon Islands' foreign exchange, and was the source of both political instability and personal wealth as politicians found irresistible the blandishments of foreign logging companies on one side, and pressures for development and profits from their local constituents on the other. No discussion of civil order or failures of governance in the Solomons in the past decade can be complete without discussion of the impact of logging.

For this latter period, as for earlier colonial times, Bennett identifies key figures, looks at investment schemes and the performance of companies. The economics of the industry are explored over time. The evidence is clearly presented, the arguments mounted, the conclusions drawn. *Pacific Forest* is a significant contribution to the history of Solomon Islands, and is of wider significance. The author is to be congratulated on her persistence in ensuring that the book was published as written and not cut or watered down.

For some readers, some parts of the book may carry more detail than they require but it is important that *Pacific Forest* becomes and remains a resource for other researchers; it is unlikely that either government or commercial records will survive to allow a retrospective analysis of the past century, and especially of the last decade, of Solomon Islands' forestry and environmental history. The publishers, too, deserve credit for their courage in publishing a book that, to some, may seem localized and specialized. *Pacific Forest* is not that, or, rather, it is that and more, because it engages themes and trends that are of fundamental importance to emerging economies in developing countries. *Pacific Forest* might also be seen as a cautionary tale for those nations that still have tropical forests but are not yet committed to their unsustainable exploitation. This is the sort of book that should

inform the formulation of public policy in the Pacific Islands countries; it may struggle to do so with a United Kingdom price of £75.00 which could mean a New Zealand retail price of \$350.00.

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OTHER WORKS RECEIVED

Inclusion in this list does not preclude a subsequent review.

HAKARIA, JOSEPH, et al. *Legends of the Land: Living Stories of Aotearoa as told by Ten Tribal Elders*. Photographs by Ralph Talmont. Reed Books, Auckland, 2000. 142 pp. NZ price: \$59.95. ISBN 0-7900-0748-7.

HEMMING, CHRISTINE A. *The Art of French Voyages to New Zealand 1769–1846*. Heritage Press, Auckland, 2000. 91 pp. NZ price: \$34.95. ISBN 0-908708-50-5.

HOGAN, DENIS AND BRYCE WILLIAMSON, eds. *New Zealand is Different: Chemical Milestones in New Zealand History*. Clerestory Press, Christchurch, 1999. 308 pp. NZ price: \$50.00. ISBN 0-9583706-7-2.

KEMPTHORNE, RENATUS. *Maori Christianity in Te Waipounamu: A History*. Te Hui Amorangi o te Waipounamu, Otautahi [Christchurch], 2000. 294 pp. NZ price: \$25.00. ISBN 0-473-06796-X (available from the publisher, 290 Ferry Road, Christchurch).

KENNEDY, JULIE. *Katherine Mansfield in Picton*. Cape Catley, Auckland, 2000. 90 pp. NZ price: \$29.95. ISBN 0-908561-73-3.

KIDD, ROSALIND. *Black Lives, Government Lies*. UNSW Press, Sydney, 2000. 64 pp. Aus. price: \$12.95. ISBN 0-86840-787-9.

KING, MICHAEL. *Tread Softly for You Tread on my Life: New and Collected Writings*. Cape Catley, Auckland, 2001. 186 pp. NZ price: \$34.95. ISBN 0-908561-88-1.

REID, NICHOLAS EVAN. *The Bishop's Paper: A History of the Catholic Press of the Diocese of Auckland*. Catholic Publications Centre, Orewa, 2000. 203 pp. NZ price: \$22.00. ISBN 0-473-07218-1.

SHEPHERD, WINSOME. *Wellington's Heritage: Plants, Gardens and Landscape*. Te Papa Press, Wellington, 2000. 256 pp. NZ price: \$49.95. ISBN 0-909010-73-0.

TAPSELL, ENID. *Historic Maketu: Hui Hui Mai!* Reed Books, Auckland, 2000. 77 pp. NZ price: \$19.95. ISBN 0-7900-0763-0.

TUUROA, TAIMOANA. *Te Takoto o te Whenua o Hauraki: Hauraki Landmarks*, ed. Te Ahukaramu Charles Royal. Reed Books, Auckland, 2000. 270 pp. NZ price: \$80.00. ISBN 0-7900-0729-0.