

*The Quest for Origins: Who First Discovered and Settled New Zealand and the Pacific Islands?* By K.R. Howe. Penguin Books, Auckland, 2003. 235 pp. NZ price: \$31.95. ISBN 0-14-301857-4.

I WAS PLEASED to see this book on retail shelves and looked forward to reading it. It has good timing, appearing as it does while public interest is high and teachers are looking out for a textbook, substantial international research is under way and debates on the issues it traverses rage in the pages of eminent journals, in lectures, in korero of diverse forms, on marae, around dining tables, at parties, in seminars and at conferences in various parts of the world.

The book consists of eight chapters. These summarize ideas on the abiding issues of 'who first discovered and settled New Zealand and the Pacific Islands'. After chapter 1 sets the stage with a description of 'the context of enquiry', developments in the periods 1760–1860 and 1860–1940 are discussed in chapters 2 and 3. Chapters 4 and 5 examine the issues of when, where from and how Remote Oceania was first discovered and settled. Chapters 6 and 7 review theories of origin which differ from the eastward exploration from Southeast Asia. Heyerdahl's famous Kon Tiki expedition features in the first of these while the second is largely given over to 'New Age' thought of various kinds. The last chapter attempts a summary of the creation of New Zealand prehistory. It is an account of various attitudes, discoveries and personalities which have been influential and a summary of the current state of knowledge, at least as Kerry Howe understood things at the time of writing this book.

Sadly I must report that the book did not match my high expectations. Our Review Editor suggests reviewers should consider how the book under consideration compares with other existing relevant works. In doing so I have come to the realization that Howe's book is very distinctive indeed, though it has the feel and sense of a work from a familiar genre. Let me identify three influential differences. First, his book is dissimilar from books and articles being written by contemporary archaeologists. This is because it assumes a very novel definition of archaeology: we are told that archaeology 'in the modern sense [is] systematic digging for and sequencing of artefacts' (p.71). That is not true. Furthermore we read that 'only a narrow slice of modern Pacific archaeology is relevant' to the quest for origins and migration routes and that even this skinny claim to use value is 'due to the fact that archaeology can perform at least two fundamental tasks. It can date human presence using sophisticated techniques . . . Second, recovered archaeological materials, again when studied in a comparative context, can reveal much about whether they were transported from some other location and/or can reveal technological adaptation over time and space' (p.73).

It is regrettable that Howe did not choose to find out much at all about archaeology before writing quite a lot about it. Paradoxically, he cites a major recent work which outlines a Pacific view on the purposes and content of holistic archaeology (Pat Kirch and Roger Green, *Hawaiki, Ancestral Polynesia. An essay in historical anthropology*, 2001) but apparently was uninfluenced by it.

The second regrettable feature of this book permeates the intellectual history chapters, principally chapters 2 and 3. Various scholars from the seventeenth century on are mentioned and evaluated insofar as their work contributed to the development of perspectives on Pacific peoples and their origins. Those synopses are too often glib and unempathetic. To cite a few of them, J.R. Forster is described as a 'grumpy Linnean scholar' (he was much more than that), the 'evangelical missionaries' are parodied as their published and diary accounts of Pacific peoples are selectively quoted. There is a sense of surprise in the following statement: 'Some of the more astute missionaries displayed a complex and contradictory attitude to aspects of island cultures. On the one hand they came to destroy totally abhorrent customs and superstitions, yet on the other they were

intrigued by aspects of them, especially since indigenous traditions might contain hidden reference to Noah' (p.39). Life as lived by nineteenth-century Pacific missionaries was just not that simple.

The third difficult feature of this book comes in the form in which the intellectual history chapters are themselves constructed. The representations offered of individual scholars and other figures are too often made taut by the selective rendering of text and the somewhat clichéd treatment of their positions on issues of their times. There are two other features of this form of construction which permit us to lust after its end. First, there is little or at best inadequate explanation given of context for some of the big ideas under discussion. For example, Aryanism is traced only as far back as Max Muller (p.43); Haddon's expedition to the Torres Strait is described as having 'conducted a series of psychological tests' (p.50); Franz Boas is described as one who 'championed the cause of cultural determinism' (p.51); fieldwork anthropology moved from the Pacific to Africa from the 1930s 'since fieldwork was cheaper there' (p.53). As the references given in support of them make clear, these assertions share, with many others throughout the book, the characteristic of being a wee bit true in the sense that each conveys just a little bit of the truth. It should also be pointed out that the intellectual history parts of the book are written as a progressivist tract and so we plough through the mistaken views and obvious prejudices of past figures then arrive at the sophisticated methods and brilliant insights of those working at present. Without any sense of paradox, 'arrogance of presentism', to quote George Stocking, is used as the framework on which 'evangelical missionaries' and 'new age thinkers' are criticized for being unjustifiably confident of the superiority of their ideas. If we are to have more moralized revisionism dressed up as history in this part of the world, could it at least be more reflexive and better-considered than this?

I should now consider the book's treatment of the current state of knowledge. First, it is not current. Second, a lot of relevant knowledge is not mentioned. Third, there is the assertion that the question of origins is 'finally answered' (p.88) 'yet there is much detail which remains a mystery' (p.89). The first two assessments speak for themselves and are well-attested by what is in and absent from the book's bibliography. The last warrants comment. This sort of thing has happened in Pacific scholarship many times before; an authority with credentials in one field declaring that everything of real consequence in another area of research is known already. The question then is known to whom?: the answer is 'known' to the authority figure in question and no one else. In the present instance, that principle applies as Pacific archaeologists, biological anthropologists, linguists, palaeoenvironmentalists and paleogeneticists, iwi and Pasifika scholars appear not to agree with Howe's assessment.

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*The Waitangi Tribunal and New Zealand History.* By Giselle Byrnes. Oxford University Press, Auckland, 2004. 222 pp. NZ price: \$65.00. ISBN 0-1955-8434-1; *Bullshit, Backlash and Bleeding Hearts.* By David Slack. Penguin Books, Auckland, 2004. 199 pp. NZ price: \$28.00. ISBN 0-1430-195-2; *The Treaty: Every New Zealander's Guide to the Treaty of Waitangi.* By Marcia Stenson. Random House New Zealand, Auckland, 2004. 156 pp. NZ price: \$29.95. ISBN 1-86941-631-7.

PUBLISHED WORKS ON THE TREATY OF WAITANGI and Maori-Pakeha relations in New Zealand have increased significantly since Claudia Orange's weighty *Treaty of Waitangi* first appeared in 1987. *Waitangi*, edited by Hugh Kawharu, published two years later, was another important entry into what seemed to be a new field of historical