

Reviews

State Authority, Indigenous Autonomy: Crown–Maori Relations in New Zealand/Aotearoa 1900–1950. By Richard Hill. Victoria University Press, Wellington, 2004. 317 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 0-86473-477-8.

RICHARD HILL ESTABLISHED HIMSELF as one of New Zealand's most rigorous historians with his multi-volume study of the history of policing in New Zealand. These were complex and challenging works to read, much less to absorb; issues surrounding a state with coercive tendencies interacting with Maori and new settlers were argued in enormous detail. This study is not as long, but features the same impressive depth of enquiry.

This book focuses upon the Maori search for political autonomy in the early half of the twentieth century. Hill commences with a short chapter which reminds us that the Maori search for some vestige of independence began much earlier, during the nineteenth century. Thereafter, as he moves through his twentieth-century narrative, he consistently draws very apt continuities between both centuries. This is one of the strengths of Richard Hill's work at large, and this book in particular; as an established scholar of the Treaty of Waitangi, Hill demonstrates a sure grasp of the important interconnections between the centuries, especially where Maori engagement with the state is concerned.

Hill commences his twentieth-century narrative with an analysis of the early years dominated by Liberal government policy which was, as he argues, essentially antipathetic to Maori interests. The Maori councils of 1900 were indirectly an attempt to subvert the Kotahitanga Parliament, which was never supported by James Carroll and his Te Aute protégés. In a sense, the councils were doomed to eventual abolition, despite the fact that men of the stature of Hone Heke Ngapua were won on board, albeit reluctantly. But that is not the full story, writes Hill, because 'a degree of autonomy had been carved out considerably beyond that which the Crown had intended, and (had) even . . . secured a degree of clandestine protection' (p.64).

But the vexed issue of the land remained. Hill devotes a solid chapter to grounding the aspiration of Maori for autonomy into a landscape under constant threat. Maori land councils, land boards and even the Stout–Ngata enquiries, despite their pretensions to the contrary, could not arrest the threat of near total land loss. In the early twentieth century, says Hill, the alienation of most tribal lands 'seemed irreversible' (p.86). But, where the future of Maori as tangata whenua was concerned, he argues, land was, in the final analysis, 'subordinate to people'. Nothing short of genocide could prevent Maori from remaining indigenous, even though they be landless (p.86); the subsequent Maori drive for political and cultural autonomy partly grew from the fact of substantial land losses. I wondered if Maori at large would agree with Hill on this point. Most Maori claim themselves to be anchored into known historic landscapes, despite the circumstances of loss. It is those landscapes which provide impetus for political action. I do think that 'sovereignty' is too ephemeral for Maori, unless grounded into a known landscape. However, it is true, Maori opinion is divided; there is a Maori historiography on this point.

From this point on, Hill describes in detail the ways in which Maori 'diversified' their search for autonomy. Political movements arose or were reinvigorated (like the Kingitanga) as land consolidations and developments tried to keep pace as a solution (a panacea?) alongside declining Maori economic fortunes. In then end, though, 'there was no political will to reverse the Crown's fundamental negativity' towards such schemes, which were increasingly controlled from a 'politico-bureaucratic centre' (p.127).

Thereafter, the Crown found it necessary to deal with tribal or pan-tribal confederations, like Te Arawa and Tuwharetoa, as historic issues were settled. The rise of the Ratana movement took the Crown a little by surprise, especially as its political pretensions and its preference for a socially sensitive political base, became known. This saw Ratana gravitate towards the Labour Party, then on the rise. As a consequence, as a conservative reaction, 'Ngataism' prevailed as the basis of Maori public policy. Hill describes 'Ngataism' as 'the conscious adjustment of Maori society in all its elements to the changed conditions and standards of life' (p.146). Until Ratana candidates were able to win office, the Maori search for autonomy would largely rest upon tribal initiatives, rather than the later Ratana-influenced 'supra-tribal' initiative.

The advent of war in 1939 brought about a major 'pendulum swing' in the Crown's engagement with Maori aspirations for autonomy. The creation of the Maori War Effort Organisation was brought about for functional purposes; to increase Maori recruitment rates and to enlarge Maori support for industry at home and the boys overseas. Parire Paikea MP, however, harboured the hope, shared by his Ratana colleagues, that the organization could provide the template for a post-war network of autonomous tribal authorities. The 1946 Maori Economic Social and Advancement Act put an end to this aspiration, instigating an era of increased control from the Maori Affairs Department centre.

In the end, says Hill, Maori were adaptive and resilient 'in the face of great odds'. Maori continued their 'enduring quest' for autonomy, started in the nineteenth century, against a state which possessed an 'overwhelming power' which would always be used to pursue its own agenda. This is a sobering conclusion, to be sure. Hill castigates historians who continue to ignore this hegemonic facet of the longstanding Maori-Crown relationship. His description of this process, beginning in the nineteenth century and reaching (for now, until a new book is completed) the 1950s is told with both sophistication and elegance; and New Zealand's historiography of Crown-Maori relations is much the stronger for this scholarship.

DANNY KEENAN

Victoria University of Wellington

Historical Frictions: Maori Claims and Reinvented Histories. By Michael Belgrave. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2005. 388 pp. NZ price: \$49.99. ISBN 1-86940-320-7.

THE WAITANGI TRIBUNAL'S PROCESS OF ENQUIRY AND REPORTING is slowly generating a literature of its own, written mostly by participant observers and including contributions by Tribunal members, lawyers and historians. Michael Belgrave's outstanding book is the most sophisticated and extended meditation on the Waitangi Tribunal process to date. The author is particularly well-placed to embark on such a project. Having been an early appointment to the Tribunal's research staff in 1987 (he went to Wellington, he says, 'reluctantly', believing that 'land deeds and court decisions appeared a dull window into New Zealand's past', but found that he 'could not have been more wrong' [p.vii]) he continues to be actively engaged with the Tribunal process as the leader of a prominent research team which has presented high-quality historical research to the Tribunal in a number of important recent enquiries.

Belgrave wrote this book as a consequence of his Tribunal experience, and seeks to grapple with some of the deeper historical questions that the Tribunal process sometimes side-steps, glosses over or resolves by considering them — as it has to — within the framework of its jurisdiction as a legal body. The author is in no doubt as to the