

period in history' (p.6) presumes that there is a 'normal' period against which other eras can be measured. Likewise, as slavery, and particularly perceptions of the term, are at the heart of the book, it would have been worthwhile for Petrie to survey in slightly more detail the considerable recent historiography on the British abolitionist movement, and how some of these themes might be transposed to the New Zealand experience. Also, Heke's rebellion against the Crown is conflated with a general Northern Māori feeling of being betrayed by the British (p.293). However, the conflict was more nuanced, with many more Ngāpuhi fighting for the Crown against Heke.

More generally, some portions of the book are light on theoretical context. For example, the critical role of unequal exchange in the economic relationship between New South Wales and New Zealand from the early 1820s could have been examined more closely, especially because of the effect it had on the demand for labour in some Māori communities at that time (something which Belich has touched on). Paul Baran, Andre Gunder Frank, Fernando Cardoso and Immanuel Wallerstein have all contributed to the debate over how racism and exploitation became organizing principles of colonial economies, and their perspectives could have offered some insights into the changes in the nature of Māori slavery in the colonial era. In a similar vein, the modernization processes that affected traditional and colonial economies, which have been given considerable attention in the works of Neil Smelser and Walt Rostow, could have extended the conceptual framework for some of the material in this work.

These minor issues aside, Petrie deserves praise for such a thorough study of this important aspect of Māori history. The publisher deserves recognition for this work too, particularly for the generous quantity of colour pictures. Sometimes illustrated sections of history books are treated like a rushed afterthought, but here, careful attention has been paid to the selection of images, many of which (as far as I know) have not previously been published.

One of the great achievements of *Outcasts of the Gods* is the important contribution it makes to the broader understanding of some of the social dynamics of New Zealand's precolonial and colonial periods. Through this close study of Māori slavery, many otherwise little-known aspects of the way Māori society functioned in these eras are illuminated.

PAUL MOON

Auckland University of Technology

At the Margin of Empire: John Webster and Hokianga, 1841–1900. By Jennifer Ashton. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2015. 270pp. NZ price: \$50.00. ISBN: 9781869408251.

New Zealand historians have tackled some difficult topics over the last three decades, completing incisive studies and analysis of events like The Treaty of Waitangi; the

actions of colonial politicians; the Land Wars of the 1840s and 1860s–1870s, and the academic minefield that is the topic of whenua/land loss, ownership and development in New Zealand. *At the Margin of Empire* is based on Jennifer Ashton's 2007 doctoral thesis at the University of Auckland and deftly addresses all of these topics by tracing the life of one colonial settler: John Webster, the Scottish-born Hokianga timber trader and store owner.

The Hokianga region remains a quiet, somewhat off-the-beaten-track part of New Zealand, despite local government efforts to attract tourists to the majestic Waipoua Kauri Forest and the ancient Tāne Mahuta and Te Matua Ngahere trees found there. Despite the present quietness, the area's history is a complex, multilayered one. As Ashton details in this new history, the Hokianga (or as Ngāpuhi call it, 'Te Kohanga o Te Tai Tokerau'), can claim to be regarded as the birthplace not only of northern Māori and Ngāpuhi, but of bicultural New Zealand. Key rangatira from the earliest Māori–Pākehā encounters feature in the Hokianga regional narrative and thus in the John Webster biography. Rangatira like Tāmāti Wāka Nene, Patuone, Aperahama Taonui, Raumati, Arama Karaka Pī and Mohi Tāwhai appear, as do early settlers and merchants like James Clendon, George Russell, Frederick Maning, and tangentially John Logan Campbell, who all began business operations there. But this is more than a local history and far more than a mere biography.

John Webster was eyewitness to key nineteenth-century events in Northland and New Zealand history, such as the 'Flagstaff War' battles with Hōne Heke and Kawiti at Puketutu, Te Ahuahu and Ōhaeawai in 1845, the machinations of Donald McLean's land purchasing and 'native protection' work of the 1860s and 1870s, and the overwhelming influx of new settlers (and the subsequent pressure on land purchasing) under Vogel's immigration and public works schemes of the 1870s. The Hokianga entrepreneur was also immersed in the 'dog tax war' of the 1890s. In Ashton's account, Webster emerges as the biggest cause of Māori land alienation in the region, through his trading activities. Despite developing fluency in te reo Māori, creating friendships with key local rangatira, employing and living with Māori, and marrying the 'half-caste' daughter of his erstwhile employer George Russell in 1850, John Webster developed a progressively hardened attitude to Māori. By the 1890s he could be – and is, in the book – described as prejudiced against them. This is part of the metanarrative of the biography, and Webster's attitudes are usefully summarized in the introduction: 'Webster was one of untold thousands of Britons who went out into the world as the foot soldiers of empire, determined to spread its influence across the face of the earth. His personal experience can illuminate the ways that the empire shaped individuals, but also how those individuals, and the empire itself, were in turn reshaped by their experiences at the far corners of the world' (p.8).

The book spans Webster's experiences with Aboriginal Australians, the people of Guadalcanal and his life as a businessman in the Hokianga, but the book is much more than a biography of a hitherto relatively obscure Northland trader. Because Jennifer Ashton dares to research, analyze and detail the changes in attitudes and behaviours of Pākehā settlers towards Māori over the 50 years after the Treaty of Waitangi was signed, this book is really a history of settler–Māori relationships, of Māori land loss and of shifting economic power bases and the development of prejudice, bias and even

racism in New Zealand, as told through the life of one key settler. As such, it is a tough history for twenty-first-century New Zealanders to read, despite being well written and laced with appropriately detailed potted biographies of every character. As Hazel Petrie says on the rear cover, 'This book is far more than a simple biography: it offers a different way of looking at the history of nineteenth-century New Zealand'. For me, as a Māori academic teaching Māori culture and history, I suggest that this book is New Zealand history writing at its very best, even if some of the history covered is New Zealand's population, trader and governmental behavior at its very worst. *At the Margin of Empire* joins a growing list of recent high-quality, incisive New Zealand histories, such as Alan Ward's *An Unsettled History* (1999), Ranginui Walker's *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou: Struggle Without End* (1990/2004), M.P.K. Sorrenson's *Ko te Whenua te Utu: Land is the Price* (2014), Vincent O'Malley's *Beyond the Imperial Frontier* (2014), Claudia Orange's *The Treaty of Waitangi* (1987), and Angela Middleton's *Pēwhairangi* (2014).

In her epilogue, Ashton comments '[John Webster] would probably have been disappointed with the direction this account has taken, given that it has not been a story of outright triumph and political domination' (p.206); but in the opinion of this reviewer, this book tells a story which should be read by all New Zealanders, both Māori and Pākehā, to show how our country has become what it is today. It will provide answers to those who wonder at the thinking behind Māori aggrieved by land losses, even when those sales were apparently by 'willing' sellers. It will provide grist to the mill of those who feel those land losses still. Most of all, it will help New Zealanders to understand properly who they are. Because of this, I strongly recommend it.

LLOYD CARPENTER

Lincoln University

Ko Te Whenua Te Utu / Land is the Price: Essays on Maori History, Land and Politics. By M.P.K. Sorrenson. Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2014. 338pp. NZ price: \$49.99. ISBN: 9781869408107.

This substantive volume, which collects together 13 articles and essays, reminds us of Keith Sorrenson's important contribution to writing the history of New Zealand race relations, Māori history and the history of ideas. These pieces also contain a transnational flavour because of Sorrenson's interest in African history and anthropology. They are, therefore, much more than narrow, introverted essays of little interest or relevance to the wider international audience. Little wonder that this modest but highly productive scholar has had such a major impact upon the work of many practitioners, including myself. It was a succinct but insightful comment made at a NZHA conference that set me off to look more carefully at the Liberals' supposedly benign Māori land legislation and policy. And he has influenced many others, as this careful selection makes clear.