

motivated student in isolation. It is carefully and gracefully done and adds a warmth which the middle chapters lack. The book is carefully documented throughout and illustrated with photographs of historical and human interest.

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From Hongi Hika to Hone Heke, A quarter century of upheaval. By Ormond Wilson. John McIndoe, Dunedin, 1985. 330 pp., illus. N.Z. price: \$39.40.

THIS BOOK covers much the same ground as Harrison Wright's *New Zealand 1769-1840: Early Years of Western Contact*. It is hard not to believe it had its origin as an attempt to correct some of the inadequacies of that clever but hastily constructed book. However, Wilson tells us his research began with his interest in the 19th century leader and prophet, Te Kooti, which led him back to one of the earlier prophets, Papahurihia, which in turn led to a wide-ranging study of the time and region in which Papahurihia lived. We are told that an earlier and longer draft was rejected by university publishers and this book is a revised and shortened version.

It is a somewhat baffling book to review for an academic journal but the story of how it was written explains some of its features. Certainly it is a highly individual book and much of this is explained by the life history of the author. A New Zealander educated at Oxford, he has been farmer, member of parliament, broadcaster, writer and chairman of many important public bodies such as the New Zealand Historic Places Trust. His face is a familiar one around the Turnbull Library and, as the book indicates, documentary historical research has been one of the delights and consolations of his busy life. Kenneth Quinn's portrait of Wilson on the back inside cover shows a face somewhat shaggy and weather-worn, shrewdly calculating and wary, amiable but challengingly cynical; a man acquainted with power and human struggle but in the end, a detached 'observer' (to use a word he chose in the title of his recent autobiography).

All of which helps to explain the rare qualities and delights of this book and also its idiosyncracies. He writes very well but as a cultivated man moving among the people he describes, recording their foibles and weaknesses with detached amusement. This kind of commentary on men and events is often enlightening, often amusing and always worth reading with care, for the throwaway comments and exploration of side issues are the best part of the book. Wilson has not been brainwashed by the Ph.D. treadmill or spent a lifetime trying to communicate with students, and the book has no central theme or thesis. He has written for enjoyment, exploring whatever interests him.

Basically the book is about the Maori people in Northland during the period from Cook to the 1840s. But as with Harrison Wright, there is no clear regional focus and the book, for example, wanders off into some quite interesting explorations of the careers of Te Waharoa and Te Rauparaha in other parts of the country. Although most of the time Wilson is meticulous in basing his writing on contemporary documentary sources, he sometimes strays into quoting the findings of writers like Elsdon Best, Percy Smith, Sir Peter Buck and J. Prytz Johansen. This is strange, for

their work often has to do with other areas or periods; and strange also, because their work is often based on Maori oral traditions which Wilson decries at many points in his book.

As a Pakeha writing about Maori topics he is often in rather deep water, showing a surprising lack of caution in these days when militant Maori reviewers lie in wait for the unguarded Pakeha 'expert'. It is not that there is any lack of sympathy or respect for the Maori in this book; indeed due credit is given for many Maori achievements and innovations; but still, the judgements and the selection of evidence are made from the outside. Wilson's problem is compounded by the nature of the evidence he uses — the writings of the first Europeans in New Zealand, reacting sometimes with shock and horror to an unfamiliar culture. He is not alone in finding this a difficulty.

Nonetheless, with his passion for worrying away at any problem encountered, he tackles some controversial subjects: the reasons for Maori warfare and whether Maori warriors were brave or not; whether homosexuality was present before European influence; abortion and infanticide, especially in relation to the children born of Maori mothers and Pakeha fathers; cruelty towards children and slaves; Maori eagerness to sell their land to Europeans in the 1830s and 1840s. Nobody could say of Wilson, as he himself says of Marsden and Shortland, that they were 'adept at ignoring the unseemly facts of life'. The candour of the detached patrician pervades this book. The crimes, follies and vices of Europeans get equal attention. For example, he blames most of the conflicts which occurred on the ignorance and ill manners of lower class Europeans and he condemns the arrogance of many missionaries. It is perhaps therefore a merit that in such a book neither Maori nor European is given a glossy treatment.

It is a pity that in revising this book he did not make more use of relevant university theses related to his topic. He cites only two theses (by Lila Hamilton and R. P. Wigglesworth). It might have been a very different book if he had made full use of the theses by Kathleen Shawcross, Dorothy Ulrich, Angela Ballara, or Wigglesworth's doctoral thesis, to name only a few. The same unawareness of relevant university research characterized another recent significant work on a similar topic, Jack Lee's '*I have named it the Bay of Islands . . .*'. University history departments need to give serious thought to why there is this barrier between their own research and that of gifted non-university writers like Wilson and Lee, for each group has much to offer the other.

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Early New Zealand Botanical Art. By F. Bruce Sampson. Reed Methuen, Auckland, 1985. 142 pp. illus. N.Z. price: \$39.95.

ALMOST 150 YEARS are covered in this presentation of New Zealand botanical illustration, from the time of Cook's first Pacific voyage in 1769 to the publication of Thomas Cheeseman's *Illustrations of the New Zealand Flora* in 1914. The selection is limited to early artists whose works have appeared in published form. Dr Sampson, Reader in Botany at Victoria University, has brought a botanist's eye to the