

of a motorway) of the former burial ground known as the Bolton Street cemetery.

Broader perspectives are taken by three other essays — thematically, temporally and geographically. Implicitly they present (but do not explore) the ambiguity of Wellington as a concept, the varied mental boundaries of contemporaries: a town, a conurbation, a region, a province. (More than 70 illustrations are scattered through the chapters, but there is no discussion of the representations of the town or of its hinterland.) Wellington's landed and mercantile élite, whose lifestyle in the late nineteenth century is examined by Roberta Nicholls, sought status and had influence in both town and countryside. Fruitfully employing the concept of an urban frontier, David Hamer views the founding of Wellington (the town) in terms of its role in the colonization and settlement of Wellington (the region).

The ambiguity is most apparent in the essay by Miles Fairburn and Stephen Haslett who put the question: did Wellington province from the 1850s to 1930 have a distinctive social pattern? Claiming the lack of any 'ready-made set of criteria' provided by other New Zealand historians, Fairburn and Haslett apply the statistical 'tests' of their controversial model of 'atomisation'. They conclude that there is 'little evidence that atomisation had a history in Wellington which diverged fundamentally from the typical New Zealand-wide experience'. To that extent, then, the notion that regional differences were fundamental (of 'structure' rather than 'degree') is 'an untenable historiographical convention'. The problem is that their data for violence and drunkenness (which is central to their analysis) reflects the situation in the town (or two main towns by the 1860s) rather than the region. In terms of Pakeha disorder at least, Hamer's urban frontier seems a more fruitful focus for analysis than Fairburn's and Haslett's more arbitrarily defined rural province.

Possible links — or historiographical tensions — amongst the essays are not effectively drawn by the editors' introduction. The rhetorical questions raised by the dustjacket's fly-leaf provide a better focus. The opportunity is not taken to provide (albeit speculatively) an overview of the city's development and to point the way to future research. For the gaps are readily apparent (leaving aside the twentieth century), such as: economic life and local politics; town planning and government; patterns of housing and health. The larger issue of the fragmentation of historiography needs also to be faced. Is the city biography, like the national history, dead?

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The Making of Russell McVeagh: The first 125 years of the practice of Russell McVeagh McKenzie Bartleet & Co. 1863-1988. By R.C.J. Stone, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 1991. 372pp. Price: \$59.95.

RUSSELL STONE has written a notable group biography of Auckland businessmen in the 1880s, a two-volume biography of Sir John Logan Campbell, and now he has completed not the history but a life and times biography of Auckland's best known law firm. The book is a handsome production from its marbled cover to its copious appendices and is Stone's best so far. He assures us in his introduction that the partners of Russell McVeagh did not demand a celebratory history. Nor does he provide one; instead he uses the splendid opportunity provided by the commission to write a fine account of the

development of the firm and also to pursue his own long love affair with the city of Auckland. The fortunes of Russell McVeagh are interwoven with the strong subplot — the economic history of Auckland.

Stone provides a deftly concise account of the interrelationship between lawyers and the Auckland economy — and a salutary reminder of the many fluctuations of that economy from the 'unprepossessing raw, crude little community' where J.B. Russell began practising in 1863 to the Auckland of tower cranes setting the scene for the commercial property bust in the late 1980s. Lawyers' roles as the facilitators of expansion and the mitigators of disasters are traced within the context of Auckland's development. Russell McVeagh, its founders and renovators, are enhanced by this filling out of the context in which the firm grew and developed.

The biographical detail provided for John Benjamin Russell, the founder of the firm, and his son Edward is especially interesting and this type of detail is sustained, where it is relevant, for the Campbell brothers and Robert McVeagh, for example. Although Stone has been fortunate in having access to an enormous amount of information in the firm's records and from clearheaded ex-partners and their families, he has drawn heavily on his own encyclopaedic knowledge of early Auckland to check his sources and flesh out bare bones. Stone has developed a sureness of touch in tracing the social, financial, geographical and legal networks of nineteenth-century Auckland which is seldom seen in New Zealand historical writing. The early chapters of David Marr's new biography of Patrick White come to mind as a parallel. There is some very shrewd political writing too. The Hamer-Macky collision and the long tug-of-war between the autocratic, but outnumbered, 'Polly' Macky and his younger partners over the firm's direction in the 1960s is as interesting as a novel.

This book tells us more than the history of one law firm; Stone uses the opportunity to trace changes in the profession and the calls made upon lawyers by the changing community they service. Lawyers themselves are often unconscious of the context in which they operate and chapters six and twelve, which discuss the changing character and work of the legal profession, are therefore particularly interesting. Stone looks at the profession as an economic and political organism, within which he manoeuvres the stories of two law practices, one large and one small, one old and one new which merged in 1969 to form the modern Russell McVeagh. The general chapters which deal with the wider context are not a distraction, but a vital part of the structure of the book, and balance the more detailed narrative of the growth and metamorphosis of the firm.

Stone's original intention was to end the story soon after the merger, avoiding the pitfalls of confidentiality and personality which 'contemporary history' of a firm such as this would create. Instead he decided that the history should include the 1980s because of the extraordinary change that occurred in that decade to Russell McVeagh and to Auckland. Moreover it is clear that the merger, bold and dramatic move though it was, did not make the new firm. Russell McVeagh's culture was slowly and with effort created anew after the merger. The book therefore increased by a third and in particular chapter sixteen 'The national economy, and business and law in Auckland, 1970-90', which may well be the most interesting in the book. A criticism of contemporary history is that it cannot be reflective nor objective; so much has already been written about the 1980s, however, that Stone has plenty of foundation for his conclusions.

Rather unfortunately, of the colour illustrations which enliven the book the two which add something to the text (the handsome Siddell on the cover and the view of Queen Street in 1889) are the ones which are not in the firm's forbiddingly abstract art collection.

This is a handsome, reflective, sometimes trenchant biography with a general historical importance well beyond the partners and clients of its subject. Russell

McVeagh, in commissioning this book, have made a substantial contribution to the history of Auckland.

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Te Waimana: The Spring of Mana. By Jeffrey Sissons. University of Otago Press, 1992. xiv, 305pp. NZ price: \$39.95.

TE WAIMANA: Spring of Mana is a simple — not simplistic — book about the very complex processes of history-making. Jeffrey Sissons makes a discovery that the dialectics of history multiply the more one tries to unravel what history-making is. It is the dialectics that make history-making a living, cultural thing — between past and present, between the written-down and oral, between colonized and colonist, between self and other, between local and regional, between the history-maker and history-made, between the history-making observer and the history-making informant. This dialectical soup is always on the boil, and there is no stopping it without destroying it. It is like staining a living cell to discover its structures. All you have is the structure of a dead cell. Stop the history-making to see what is happening, and all you have is a dead past.

So Jeffrey Sissons decides to do something different. He will describe history-making as a living thing. It is dead, if he, the historian, is not in it. It is dead, if he, the historian, does not catch its ongoing nature in the changing relations between himself and those he is observing texting the past in their stories. But it cannot be a stream of consciousness. He has to communicate this living thing to us, the readers. There is not much point, after all, in being the only person in the world who sees the way it is. So he has to stop it, deaden it a little. Maybe there will be a time when we have the Great Replay in the Sky, but, as Henry Kissinger said to Richard Nixon when he planned to make history by tape recording everything in the oval office: 'Eight years of tapes requires eight years to listen to'. You have to transform things a little.

So Sissons transforms this living thing by putting boundaries around parts of it. He calls them domains in which history is being made. They are four. The domain of iwi (nation) and hapu (descent groups); the domain of whanau (extended family) relations; the domain of the Messiah — of Rua Kenana's ascent of Maungapohatu; the domain of Reminiscence — of personal memories nourished by collective memories.

Sissons enters these domains in a patterned way, catching them as they have been texted on paper in archives of different sorts or in oral collections, becoming the novice learner of them from the chief experts, teasing out the multiple meaning every word has, testing the occasions in which they are given, noting how they change with changing relations.

He gives, early in his book, the model which he was avoiding — Elsdon Best's collection of the 'oral history' of Te Waimana. Sissons is too good at history-making to berate Best for having done what he could not have done otherwise. After all Sissons himself is only able to do what he does and to know what he knows because Best did it one way, and Sissons knows he now must do it in some other way. History-making — of whatever sort — is a living thing. Sometime down the years the students of Sissons' students will be laughing at his naïveté. They are laughing at mine already.