

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.

Sissons is surprised into his discoveries by the cultural differences of those he observes. I suppose that I am inclined to say that what is true of the history of Te Waimana is true of the history of Auckland or of 'New Zealand' or of the 'French Revolution'. History-making is a complex dialectic process. Sissons, the anthropologist, will not scandalize the historian with his ideas of history-making. The Maori are different, the historians will say. Not in this respect, I say. Until Pakeha histories discover some of Sissons' fresh simplicity, they will remain as dull as ever.

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Manifest Duty, The Polynesian Society over 100 years. By M.P.K. Sorrenson. Polynesian Society, Auckland, 1992. 160pp. NZ price: \$39.50.

DESPITE ITS DEPRESSING TITLE, this is a lively and significant book. It is lively because it is well written and because it tells the story of a group of overworked enthusiasts who worked together and clashed and squabbled in a thoroughly human way. It is significant because the Polynesian Society became 'a magnificent repository of knowledge which would have been lost forever without their efforts.' In its hundred years existence their *Journal* has treated in depth virtually every major issue to do with the Polynesian peoples.

The Society began at an inaugural meeting convened by S. Percy Smith at the Colonial Museum, Wellington on 8 January 1892. Only ten people attended but they included men like Elsdon Best, W.E. Gudgeon and Edward Tregear. Later in the book Sorrenson has a tantalizing aside: he calls these Founding Fathers 'veterans of the New Zealand wars'. One is left to wonder: were they far-sighted New Zealanders preserving their cultural heritage, or cultural imperialists ghoulishly gathering at the graveyard of the Noble Savage? One of the themes of the book is the extent of Polynesian participation in the Society. Sorrenson tells us there was more Maori input into the *Journal* during the early years of Percy Smith's editorship 'than at any other comparable period of its history.' He describes the notable contribution of many leading Maori scholars, such as Buck and Ngata, but in the penultimate paragraph of the book he states that the increasing number of Maori and Pacific Islanders who have enrolled in New Zealand and Pacific universities in recent years have not yet provided much copy for the *Journal*.

After paying tribute to the work of European and Asian scholars he concludes that 'in the final reckoning, the Polynesian Society needs to become a Polynesians' Society. If they regain ownership of their past, the future is theirs.' One would like more explanation of this statement; it sounds more extreme than perhaps intended. Probably it is not necessary to comment that cultures are not owned, and that all cultures advance by borrowing.

There are two other areas of tension in the Society's history. One, which is hard to take seriously, has been whether Wellington or Auckland should run the Society, a battle waged in deadly earnest by those involved. More important has been the conflict between amateur and professional.

It is difficult to draw the line between the two. The amateur tends to become enamoured of pet theories; the professional is often tedious, but neither has the monopoly of such attributes. Over the years the amateurs have done much of the organizing and have sparked most of the major controversies in Polynesian studies. Today, with the profes-