

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-

sionals in control the *Journal* is, in Bruce Biggs' words 'well respected' but 'some might say, boringly academic . . .'

This is a thoughtful, well-crafted book. It opens up many areas of future research, for, as Sorrenson says, now that the 'faults and fetishes' of Percy Smith and his generation have been exposed, we can re-explore their material in the archives and realize the true value of their contribution.

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*Respectable Lives: Social Standing in Rural New Zealand.* By Elvin Hatch. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1992. 221pp. US price: \$30.00.

AS THE TITLE SUGGESTS, this book seeks to offer an account of the way in which rural New Zealanders rank one another. Since it is written by an anthropologist of a rather old-fashioned kind, it relies heavily on ethnographic methods. This, in turn, means that the magnification will be high. We are offered an account of social ranking in rural New Zealand based on detailed study of one valley in south Canterbury.

Much of what we are told is interesting. Hatch organizes his discussion around three topics: wealth, farming ability and respectability. Local folk models — that phrase will go down well among the Canterbury squatters — distinguish farms from runs. Owners of both farms and runs form a distinct social set, clearly distinguished from local working people enjoying not dissimilar incomes. Business people and professionals occupy anomalous positions. The local social system is firmly bounded: landowners in the study area (divided in three parts, and lurking under disguises as South Downs, Midhurst and Glassford) know each others' business intimately, but know nothing of farmers just over the hill, close at hand but living in a different county and sending their sheep to a different market. (But what, one wants to ask, about factors that bind rather than separate? Why, for example, do we hear nothing about that superbly effective un-leveller of playing fields, Federated Farmers?) For a rural sociologist the book's greatest interest lies in its discussion of the farm family's development cycle. There is a huge literature on this topic, centred on what has come to be called the Mann-Dickinson thesis. One might expect Hatch to use this work in either its North American or New Zealand manifestations. One will be disappointed.

Much of the book's interest comes from Hatch's comparisons with his previous study in northern California. By contrast with there, Hatch argues, New Zealand farmers rank their fellows (for they almost all *are* fellows) according to how well they farm and not, as in California, on wealth alone. While Californian schoolteachers were ranked alongside skilled farmhands, Hatch discovers to his surprise that in New Zealand they enjoy greater prestige. He ascribes the difference largely to the autonomy that teachers enjoy here, controlled not locally but centrally. Our recent glorious education reforms give us a chance to test his theory: watch New Zealand teachers zoom down the prestige slide under the benevolent tutelage of local boards of trustees.

There are problems with the book. One is scale. This is a modest monograph. It would have made an excellent article. Stretched to book length, much of it forms what music critics call passage work. Beyond that, the study largely offers historical interest today, though this should not discountenance historians. The fieldwork was done as a leave