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Colonial Discourses: Niupepa Maori, 1855-1863 by Lachy Paterson

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### *Book Reviews*

The editor Barbara Ann Hocking takes us back to Russel's understanding of constitutions as being based on the nature of the political community. If the nature of the political community has a central role in an approach to self-determination guaranteed by a constitution, it is important to critically assess that nature. This insight is not followed up in the book, however. For example, most contributors to the volume do not pay attention to issues of unequal power relations and racial discrimination within indigenous communities and the related need for securing rights in legal foundations, despite the fact that power and race are major concerns in such communities.

What is missing is a sustained discussion of the nature of political society; likewise, little attention is paid to the changing nature of indigenous communities, their social, economic and political linkages with the state, with national elites, with the middle class, and so on. The suggested clash of cultures (p. 278) that underlies many of the analyses in this book may be more fruitfully recast as changes in frictions between the indigenous community and the state. The analyses would then focus on the nature of indigenous community in relation to the legal traditions of the state. With respect to the latter the most crucial issue to look into is the extent to which the state can and wants to allow legal pluralism.

Despite this flaw, this is a useful and up-to-date text on the issue of self-determination in a number of countries both with common law and civil law traditions. The juxtaposition of countries allows for good discussions and new research about the differences in access to justice for indigenous people in various political communities.

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Jaap Timmer

**COLONIAL DISCOURSES: Niupepa Maori, 1855-1863.** *By Lachy Paterson.* Dunedin, NZ : University of Otago Press (exclusively distributed by International Specialized Book Services, Portland, OR), 2006. 250 pp. (B&W Photos.) US\$39.95, paper. ISBN 1-877372-26-9.

The mid-nineteenth century was a period of turmoil in New Zealand history. Growing numbers of European settlers were arriving in the country at a time when Maori receptivity for Western immigration was decreasing. In the beginning of colonization around 1800, the indigenous Maori population of New Zealand still showed great interest in many dimensions of the European way of life. They were fascinated by the steel tools, muskets, pigs and potatoes that the first European visitors were able to offer in exchange for food and fresh water. Later, massive numbers of Maori converted to Christianity and adopted literacy as part of their quest for the knowledge behind European authority. Maori were also drawn into commercial

agriculture and coastal trade, which transformed not only the economic organization of many tribes but also their socio-political structure.

In the 1850s the political situation in New Zealand became unstable. The Crown attempted to gain the sovereignty which it had reserved for itself through the Treaty of Waitangi that was signed in 1840, but Maori continued to exercise their tribal autonomy. Most Maori became even reluctant to engage into land deals with the European government since they realized that they had a different understanding of property rights. In the new circumstances, land had come to represent not only spiritual connections, but also political and economic power.

For that reason, too, Maori tribes united into a monarchy and elected one chief to become king and stand above all other chiefs. The main aim of the Maori King Movement and its first head was to stop the sale of land, in spite of government pressure for more land in order to cater to the increasing numbers of settlers arriving in the country. The tension brought about by this opposition ultimately degenerated into a series of pitched battles in the mid-1860s.

During the years leading up to the wars, both parties in the struggle for control at the colonial frontier of the British empire published newspapers in the Maori language, some partly bilingual. The newspapers published in the mid-nineteenth century contained mainly propaganda, either to advocate Maori resistance against European policies or to support government strategies of colonization.

This book analyzes the newspapers that were published between 1855 and 1863, and is based on the author's doctoral dissertation in Maori history at the University of Otago in New Zealand. Paterson demonstrates how nine newspapers provided a platform for propaganda and also how they were used as a forum by Maori and Europeans to debate contemporary politics. The government and some churches used the publication of newspapers in the Maori language to advertise European values and Christianity as well as to discourage traditional Maori practices. The newspapers were published in the Maori language, or bilingually, to promote the sale of land, colonial legislation and the virtues of a European lifestyle in order to facilitate the assimilation of Maori into European settler society.

Maori also used the power of the press and the benefits of newspapers to spread their own messages. Thus, the newspaper of the Maori King Movement, called *Te Hokioi o Niu Tirenī*, was used to influence tribal thinking and to promote the movement that aimed to achieve pan-tribal unity in order to counter European influences. At the same time, Maori also contributed to political debates by writing letters to newspaper editors. The viewpoints thus expressed varied, with some writers opposing editorial opinions and others supporting them. Finally, Maori saw an opportunity to allow a wider audience to hear what had been said at inter-tribal gatherings,

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so ceremonial speeches that were held and new chants that were composed at significant events were also published.

In this book the analysis of the newspapers is presented as a significant record of ethnic relations between Maori and Europeans at a crucial period in the colonial history of New Zealand. It remains unclear, however, whether the newspapers provide new insights into New Zealand history. This is partly due to the methodology used by the author, who did not apply a content analysis or a systematic analysis of the discourses expressed in the newspapers. Instead he presents an impressionist interpretation of the newspapers that highlights a number of themes on the basis of which a turbulent period in New Zealand history is illustrated. The lack of new insights into New Zealand history is somewhat camouflaged by repeated criticisms of other New Zealand historians, which are often not substantiated with references that can be checked. The entire style of the book is also focused more on telling rather than showing the political rivalry between Maori and Europeans. Finally, this book is also theoretically rather weak since, in spite of its suggestive title, it does not contain a single reference to the topical, international debate about colonialism and its divergent discourses. As such, it is to be situated within the exclusively empiricist tradition of historical research in New Zealand. For the same reason, its interest for a wider audience is also limited.

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**REVERSE ANTHROPOLOGY: Indigenous Analysis of Social and Environmental Relations in New Guinea.** *By Stuart Kirsch. Stanford (CA): Stanford University Press, 2006. xv, 272 pp. (Figures.) US\$21.95, paper. ISBN 0-8047-5342-3.*

The book's cover photo of an arrestingly dull scenario—crusted creek, washed-out sun and single palm standing lonely watch over dying river—compels readers to both contemplation and action. Built upon triangulated ethnographic data, informed by long-term fieldwork conducted in Papua New Guinea's Western Province, written with grace, style and force, and just as do his Yonggom/Muyu interlocutors, *Reverse Anthropology* theorizes what is wrong with the unrequited reciprocity that enables large-scale resource extraction projects to devastate the environment. Graduate seminars and upper-division theory or area studies courses could use this fine new ethnography to unravel the difficulties, subtleties and provocations of sincerely engaging indigenous modes of analysis of social and environmental change. Each briefly titled chapter (e.g., "Unrequited reciprocity," "Mythical encounters," and "Divining violence") is read easily in a single sitting. Yonggom felt that the owners of the Ok Tedi gold and copper mine should