

Katie Pickles, Catharine Coleborne, eds. *New Zealand's Empire*. Studies in Imperialism Series. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015. 288 pp. \$105.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7190-9153-7.



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New Zealand's Empire, edited by Katie Pickles and Catharine Coleborne, seeks to place New Zealand at the centre of a local world of imperialism (p. 1). This approach, designed to consider New Zealand's role as an imperial power, results in an eclectic account of the nation's history. Importantly, this volume moves the scholarship beyond the usual consideration of New Zealand as a periphery of the British world. This collection engages with the emerging disciplines which are so pertinent to this region, namely Pacific and environmental history. Its broad scope is testament to the diverse research expertise of its authors, encompassing art, heritage, and oral histories, to name but a few.

Arranged over four sections, this volume begins with a consideration of how Māori peoples responded to imperialism, both in terms of the attempts to colonize them and their role in New Zealand's later imperial ambitions. This first part, entitled 'Empire at Home,' includes chapters which examine how imperial mentalities were negotiated through such devices as newspapers, memorials to the British Crown, and ethnological research in the Pacific. Both Kenton Storey and Mark Stocker display how Māori peoples interacted with the multilayered discourses and symbols of imperialism. Storey's focus is on the colonial newspapers written for a Māori

audience which sought to present English history as a way in which to 'normalise British colonialism' (p. 18). Stocker examines Māori peoples' reception towards carved memorials of Queen Victoria, the symbolism of which became increasingly contested towards the end of the twentieth century. Conal McCarthy takes a different approach to the usual analysis of relations between the colonizer and colonized. He considers the Pacific ethnological research undertaken in the interwar years by members of The Young Māori Party. This influenced New Zealand political administration, both domestically and in relation to its Pacific dependencies. This is a rich and complex topic which McCarthy admits he has only begun to explore, and one which is indeed deserving of future attention.

Part 2, 'Imperial Mobility,' returns to topics more familiar to those used to focusing on New Zealand history as a white settlement colony and its geographical closeness to Australia. Anna Johnston usefully finds distinctions between how New Zealand and the Australian colonies were perceived in nineteenth-century travel narratives. Her findings that 'Māori participated energetically in nascent tourism markets' (p. 84) is representative of how this volume is keenly aware of including indigenous responses to empire. Coleborne contin-

ues this trans-Tasman comparison in terms of the development of New Zealand's antivagrancy laws. She highlights how the country's development as a nation-state involved restricting the mobility of ex-convict and other 'undesirables' seeking entry from or via the Australian colonies. This second section, like the first, finishes with a distinctive topic. Molly Duggins explains how New Zealand's national symbol—the fern—was used from the 1870s to represent the country as the 'Pacific's wonderland.' Through natural history, travel writing, fern albums, and international exhibitions the fern became a 'transnational motif' (p. 104).

Part 3, 'New Zealand's Pacific Empire,' considers imperialism on a number of levels—political, cultural, military, and commercial. Patricia O'Brien provides a biographical account of the military and diplomatic career of Charles Fergusson to show how his experience of colonial administration influenced his role as conduit between Britain, New Zealand, and Samoa in the 1920s. Frances Steel looks at New Zealand's commercial aspirations in the Pacific from the viewpoint of commercial shipping and raises the significance of the trans-Pacific tourist routes to New Zealand and America. Steel shows how this commercial activity opened up a 'more expansive vision of New Zealand's Pacific, stretching across to Vancouver and San Francisco' (p. 159). This reminds the reader to consider the Pacific as a vast and contested space, as evidenced by the subsequent chapters in this section. Adrian Muckle examines French diplomatic views of New Zealand's Pacific empire in the first half of the twentieth century. By interrogating the French diplomatic archive, Muckle addresses what he terms the 'blind spot' in the history of France-New Zealand relations (p. 164). In contrast to the lack of official high-level wrangling between the two countries, he finds that French governmental reports indicate that French officials monitored New Zealand's imperial activity. Judith A. Bennett's chapter looks at how the New Zealand government feared that their Pacific possessions, used as American military bases during the Second World War, would become permanent US strategic sites. Bennett's focus is on the more intimate legacies of this occupation: the attempts to prevent the transmission of VD, and attitudes towards the offspring of Pacific Islanders and American soldiers.

Part 4, 'Inside and Outside Empire,' provides additional proof of the extent of New Zealand's involvement in global concerns. Michael Dawson explains how the Commonwealth Games (as they were titled from 1978) held in New Zealand in the second half of the twentieth

century were 'occasions for delineating, and at times, refashioning, the country's national identity' (p. 209). Dawson shows how the rhetoric surrounding the events were indicative of domestic, regional, and international tensions. The 1974 Games in Christchurch were politically significant, for example, because they were held the year following the banning of the South African rugby team's tour of New Zealand. The subsequent two chapters likewise highlight New Zealand's reach in a wider world and to locales which have lacked attention. Rosemary Baird and Philippa Mein Smith argue that Australia's mining and outback regions became the farthest westward reach of New Zealand's empire. Using the reflections of New Zealanders who migrated to these regions, Baird and Mein Smith portray these frontier experiences as a form of colonization. Next, consideration is given to New Zealand's southernmost imagined border. Katie Pickles traces how, as a gateway to Antarctica, New Zealand claimed the region as an outreach. She points out that since the mid-nineteenth century, Māori travel narratives have been linked to the region, and that in more recent times it is New Zealand images, and not those of British imperialism that adorn the walls of Antarctic research bases. Giselle Byrnes, in the volume's final chapter, also addresses contemporary themes by considering the wider resonance of the New Zealand government's public apologies in the twenty-first century. Byrnes argues that acts of contrition towards groups such as Māori peoples, the people of Samoa, and the Chinese community in New Zealand are evidence of New Zealand's history as a colonial aggressor.

Byrnes's final statement, and indeed the one which concludes this volume—a little self-reflection might not be such a bad outcome' (p. 257)—proves a fitting one. This collection is useful in how it provides new themes through which to consider New Zealand's development as both a nation-state and a colonial power. Crucially, where possible, the authors ensure that both Māori and Pākehā perspectives of this evolution are considered. It serves to remind even those of us who are familiar with situating New Zealand as the 'core' and not the 'periphery' not just to look westward from New Zealand toward Tasmania, Victoria, and ultimately Britain for our comparisons, but toward other regions as well. The key strength of this book is how it ties New Zealand's imperialism with the Pacific Islands, Antarctica, and the United States. While at times the transition between topics within the sections seems somewhat incongruous, this is perhaps intentional. As Pickles and Coleborne acknowledge from the onset, the wide range of essays have

been included in order to raise questions and test the concept of New Zealand's empire (p. 2). For a non-New Zealand audience, and especially those of us who, on occasion, have had to justify our academic interest in this region, this book proves a valuable addition to the historiography and a useful device through which to engage students with the challenges of defining the concept of empire.

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