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Island Stories

The Writing of New Zealand History 1920-1940

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in History, The University of Auckland, February 1997
Abstract

This is a study of the writing of New Zealand history between 1920 and 1940. Its principal themes are differing practices of history and the ways in which these practices intersected with the problems of what Peter Gibbons has called ‘cultural colonisation’. Those problems concern the construction of ‘New Zealand’ on Pakeha terms in ways that range from the appropriation of Maori culture to conflations of ‘New Zealand’ with ‘Pakeha’.

The first chapter examines general and theoretical problems. Each of the five following chapters discusses a different historian, community of historians, or historiographical project. Chapter two discusses the work of local historians. Chapter three deals with the work of James Cowan, who argued that conflict and compact between Maori and Pakeha lay at the heart of New Zealand history. The thesis then moves on to the work of a group of Wellington historians whose endeavours to collect source material were replicated in their texts. Two of the most significant works produced in this milieu, G. H. Scholefield’s *A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* and T. Lindsay Buick’s *The Treaty of Waitangi*, are discussed at some length. Chapter five concerns the writing of New Zealand history in universities, in particular the genre of the general history and the treatment of New Zealand history as it related to British colonial policy. Finally, the thesis discusses the popular histories written for the New Zealand Centennial in 1940. These ‘Centennial surveys’ combined elements of academic and local histories. They illustrate the increasing cultural authority of academics and graduates in historiographical circles and in state-sponsored cultural work. They also show that this development was resisted by other historians. The final chapter takes stock of the changes associated with the growth of academic history, and examines their effect on the problems of ‘cultural colonisation’.
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Bibliography
One of the aims of this thesis is to show how writing history is not simply an individual activity. In this respect this thesis is no different from the works it studies. A lot of people have contributed to it. My primary debts are to Deborah Montgomerie and Raewyn Dalziel. They have been exemplary supervisors, diligent, provocative, and complementary.

Jock Phillips, David Colquhoun and Rachel Barrowman have shared their unpublished work with me and made helpful comments on various chapters. Tim Beaglehole lent me some of his father’s papers and commented on a draft of chapter five. Peter Gibbons and Malcolm MacKinnon have given me information from their own research. I have benefited much from discussions with Mary Paul and Alex Calder.

I would also like to thank the History Department of the University of Auckland, for tutoring work that has supported me and greatly improved my knowledge of the nineteenth-century history that my subjects were writing about. In the department, Judith Bassett, Barbara Batt, Caroline Daley, Diana Holmes, Hugh Laracy, Barry Reay, Philip Rousseau and Nisha Saheed have all helped me with my thesis. I am grateful to the Historical Branch of the Department of Internal Affairs for a research apprenticeship that enabled me to do more archival research than would otherwise have been possible, and for the people I met there. I also want to thank the staff of the Alexander Turnbull Library, Manuscripts and Archives Section; the staff of the University of Auckland Library, especially the Interloans and New Zealand and Pacific Departments; and Kathleen Coleridge of the J. C. Beaglehole Room at the Victoria University of Wellington Library.

Finally, I want to thank my friends, family and flatmates. They have helped me with proofreading, given me a place to stay in Wellington, talked about history with me, and looked after me in a lot of other ways. I wish to thank especially Lisa Bailey, Christine Berry, David Bowden, Vivien Fergusson, Raewyn Glynn, Sarah Graham, Anne Hilliard, Maxine Iversen, Susan McClennan, Matthew Melvin, Matthew Russell, Damon Salesa and Grace Smit.
## List of Abbreviations

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APL</td>
<td>Auckland Public Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>ATL</td>
<td>Alexander Turnbull Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>IA1</td>
<td>Department of Internal Affairs files, series one</td>
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<td>NA</td>
<td>National Archives, Wellington</td>
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<td>University of Auckland Library</td>
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<td>VUW</td>
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