

Harry Morton, *The Whale's Wake*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1982. Pp. 396, illustrations, photographs, bibliography, index. \$32.50.

The whaling sections of Harry Morton's book, *The Whale's Wake*, are fascinating and informative. From an extensive foray into primary whaling sources in New England, Britain, Australia, and New Zealand, and from correspondence with the whaling archives of many other libraries, Morton provides detailed knowledge of the varieties of whales pursued, their anatomical makeup and behavioral characteristics, the captains and men involved, the different types of vessels used, conditions on board, and the equipment and techniques employed when hunting the whale. He also analyzes the decline of British whaling in the face of intense competition from New England whaling companies and later from rapidly developed Australian colonial interests. Distance from the Pacific, diversity of aims (many British vessels combined whaling and trading activities), and the "well-intentioned but deadly" regulations that hampered the British whaling industry (p, 103) are all set forth as causes of the decline. However, the emphasis placed on intrusive regulations, many imposed in an attempt to protect the lives and well-being of British seamen, is not, I feel, fully substantiated.

The "wake" that Morton proceeds to analyze in the latter parts of the book is less well presented. It is, as I understand it, a deft metaphor for the effects of whaling activities on whale populations, participant human populations, and national economies and policies. Here, it relates exclusively to the multifarious effects of whaling in New Zealand. No comparisons are made with Samoa, Tahiti, or Hawaii, all of which were deeply involved with the whaling industry in similar periods. Morton clearly establishes the importance of British and colonial involvement in New Zealand sealing and whaling in creating and maintaining the continued British commercial and imperial interest in the area that eventually led to British annexation. But when he turns to the Maori population to assess

the interrelations between them and the whalers and whaling activities, his assurance and analysis falter. No detailed picture of traditional Maori culture and society is provided against which change in any aspect of Maori life could be properly measured. Postcontact, no close analysis of particular incidents of Maori-whaler contact is attempted. Te Rauparaha and Tuhawaiki are mentioned several times, but their tense, ambivalent relations with the whalers, their dependence upon wealthy foreigners versus their intimidation of them, are not elaborated. Morton's research into the extensive body of published literature in Maori and Pacific history relevant to culture contact is very limited in comparison with the wealth of data he examined on all aspects of whaling. An opportunity to analyze the different nature of Southern Maori, their language, culture, and contact history is ignored, although some information to develop such an analysis was available (p. 115).

Morton perpetuates the myth about good race relations in New Zealand. In the introduction he asserts: "Both the relative numbers of natives and newcomers and the enduring strength of Maori culture itself ensured a happier development of race relations than elsewhere in the English-speaking world" (p. 18), but, nowhere in the body of the work does he present evidence to substantiate his claim. In fact, later in the introduction he states: "That Maoris supplied labour and skill was important but this did not alter the industry itself in any way except because they were many and war-like, by making shore whaling in New Zealand much more subject to local interruption and interference than it was in Australia or had been in early America" (p. 19). This suggests that race relations were tense and intrusive and that the whalers were not the only transgressors, but the question is not taken up later. Rather Morton tends to rely on easy assertions: "Maoris when provoked were even more dangerous than sperm whales" (p. 115), or "A few [Maoris] remained [in tropical Polynesia] to become powerful personages because of their superior energy and drive. In a sense, although certainly Polynesians, they were Polynesian plus" (p. 168). No evidence is provided to substantiate these claims.

*The Whale's Wake* is an attractively presented book, well supplied with superb black and white illustrations and photographs. The end-of-chapter, black and white line illustrations of whales, seals, equipment, and many other related botanical and zoological specimens are illuminating and attractive--see particularly the illustration (p. 139) of the different flukes and spouts of sperm and right whales. Given this, the total absence of maps is difficult to understand. Maps of whaling grounds, whale migratory patterns, and the location of shore stations around New Zealand are

essential to a full understanding of this history. On balance, this is an informative, easily read book about Pacific whaling and its importance in bringing New Zealand into the British Empire, but its exploration of the interrelations between whaling and Maori culture lacks depth and careful interpretation.

Caroline Ralston  
Macquarie University