



MANU AO
Academy

Seminar Series 23 March 2011



Dr Simon Lambert

Sons of Soil: A history of Māori farming through the Ahuwhenua

The Ahuwhenua Trophy is awarded annually to the Māori Farmer-of-the-Year, which was first held in 1932. The competition was initially for small-scale family farms and was an expression of government modernisation strategies for Māori and Māori land. Judged on social as well as management and productivity criteria, farmers often struggled in the face of severe challenges that included communal debt for those tribes whose members actually won and then hosted the increasingly extravagant award ceremony. This first phase of the contest struggled for entrants in the 1970s and 80s, and ended in 1990. Re-emerging in 2003, the event is now dominated by large-scale corporate agribusinesses that form the basis of the 'Māori economy', which is itself interpreted as the 'sleeping giant' of the wider New Zealand economy. This seminar explores the history of Māori farming through the Ahuwhenua awards, and offers thoughts on the current renaissance of the Māori farming sector. Future challenges to Māori environmental planning and sustainable development in the global economy will also be discussed.

Simon is of Ngāti Ruapani (ki Waikaremoana) and Tuhoe whakapapa. His research interests are varied and include smallscale innovation in farming, building and energy sectors, Māori horticulture (and in particular Māori potatoes), environmental planning and sustainable development, and Indigenous economic geography. He finished his Masters in 2001 at the University of Canterbury, after which he transferred to Lincoln University where he finished his Doctorate in 2008. After a Post-Doc at Manaaki Whenua/LandCare Research Ltd., he spent two years in the Agribusiness and Economics Research Unit on Lincoln campus and is now lecturing in Māori environmental planning and development.