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"Appraising Soil Fertility in Early Colonial New Zealand: The 'Biometric Fallacy' and Beyond"

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doi:10.3197/096734003129342890. During the late eighteenth century explorers applied a biometric model, where soil fertility was correlated with tree height, throughout the world. This model was a natural extrapolation from the 'humus theory' of soil fertility. Accordingly, when dense forest cover was found over large areas of New Zealand this created an inaccurate perception that its soils were very rich. This was exploited to the full by the New Zealand Company, the main agency involved in promoting the organised settlement of New Zealand. During the 1840s, the biometric approach to soil fertility appraisal was found to be a false one, and was replaced by a developing ecological one, which relied on specific plant indicators of soil fertility. All rights reserved. © 2003 The White Horse Press

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