

BIAS BEGINS EARLY

- a project exploring some origins of Euro-centric attitudes in Pakeha people.

Captain Cook Discovers New Zealand

We are deeply influenced by our early schooling. The materials available to our teachers, and the way ideas are presented can introduce bias and shape attitudes. The Journals examined in this project have influenced many children, and although some newer materials are available, they are still used in schools. Adults of different generations who read the project may recognise familiar patterns.



ISSUES IN EDUCATION - number 1

Programme On Racism

NCC Box 9573, Auckland.

The NCC Programme on Racism uses the "Contract system" as its basic model for education about racism. In this model the community or parish group is asked to study the impact of racism in their own local area. This is usually done in a series of assignments. Sub-groups within the total group agree on research assignments. It is the data and insights which emerge from those assignments which provide the material for detailed learning sessions on racism in the community.

This publication "Bias begins early" is actually the content of one of the assignments undertaken by students from the Diploma of Applied Social Studies Course at the Auckland Secondary Teachers Training College. The group did a "racism awareness" course during the second half of 1983.

Whenever it is appropriate, and funds are available, the NCC Programme on Racism, publishes the results of these local assignments as a contribution to the building up of community knowledge on the facts, figures and individual stories of how racism operates.

For further information on the "Contract system" or for a list of resource material available write to : NCC Programme on Racism
P.O.Box 4573,
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Mitzi Nairn
Resources

Bob Scott
Secretary of the Programme

In an interview with Sharon Crosbie (TV1, 1982) the Rev. Hone Kaa defined racism as "an imposition by one culture over another to the point where it believes it is superior and anything else is inferior. With that kind of imposition, a minority culture disappears."

As part of our work as students enrolled in the Diploma of Applied Social Studies Course at the Auckland Secondary Teachers Training College, we have undertaken a racism analysis of the series on Captain Cook in the School Journals printed and published by the School Publications Board in 1969. While recognising that this is only one of the resources used by teachers to prepare lessons on this subject, we are concerned that this series is still used and has been sanctioned by the Education Department. We are particularly concerned as this series seems to be the first introduction for young children to an interpretation of Europeans coming to this country.

Having read these journal articles we have identified many racist implications in a series of assumptions illustrated in the following pages.

ASSUMPTION 1

That the white nation and white culture are superior, and that Maori people were "uncivilised" and "primitive" and therefore inferior.

EXAMPLE A

Part 2, No. 4, page 2.

In the early days following Captain Cook's discovery of New Zealand, the coastline was the most important and best-known part of the country. It was not until men started to look at New Zealand as a place to live in that they started to find out very much about it, or to become very interested in what the inland parts were like. Since then, the importance of the inland places has grown, and the whole way of life in New Zealand has changed.

COMMENT

Reference to Captain Cook's "discovery of New Zealand" totally discounts the fact that Aotearoa existed as a populated country before Cook's so-called "discovery".

The second sentence states that it "was not until men started to look at New Zealand as a place to live in that they started to find out very much about it". This also totally discounts Maori people's occupation and ownership of Aotearoa, and discounts their knowledge of their country.

We believe this presents a racist view of history.

EXAMPLE B

Part 4, No. 2, page 3.
Lord Merton's instructions
on how to treat native
peoples.

If, for some reason, the natives had to be convinced that the Europeans were more powerful than they were, it was better to show this by shooting a bird or an animal, rather than a man.

COMMENT

Inherent in this statement is an attitude of automatic superiority which must indoctrinate children that it is the natural order of things for Europeans to have power over "natives". This attitude of cultural domination is racist.

EXAMPLE C

Part 2, No. 3, page 5. There was a lot of ironsand along the coast, but nobody had learned to make iron weapons or tools. Nor had they thought of making bows and arrows. Their weapons were mainly spears, darts and clubs of different sizes.

COMMENT

This paragraph is patronising and belittling and carries a message that "even little children can make bows and arrows". Maori weaponry was exceptionally well crafted, intricate in design and decoration, and extremely efficient in the well-trained hands of Maori people.

EXAMPLE D

Part 2, No. 1, page 10. "In most of their dances they appear like Mad men, jumping and stamping with their feet," Cook wrote.

Their songs were harmonious enough—but sounded rather dull to Europeans because they were mainly chants using only a few notes of the scale.

COMMENT

This paragraph also belittles aspects of the Maori culture in the way it is described. The use of the emotive "Mad men" could well be the source of hurtful and destructive playground jibes.

There are numerous other examples in these journal articles where aspects of Maori life are denigrated. For example, the use of the word "myths" (Part 3, No. 3, page 2) reduces oral ancestry to bedtime story level.

Cook's men went ashore to "gather" such plants as "wild celery" (Part 1, No. 3, page 2). "One of the things Cook most liked about Mercury Bay was that he was able to get a large supply of fresh rock oysters from the river which ran into the bay" (Part 2, No. 3, page 5). Aotearoa was owned and occupied by Maori people - "gather" and "get" are mild terms to use when "steal" would perhaps be more truthful.

Use of the term "discovered" in relation to Cook's first visit to Aotearoa riddles these journal articles and is not only an incorrect term, but is racist in its implications.

ASSUMPTION 2

That the Maori people were the "aggressors" and that the Europeans were the "peacemakers".

EXAMPLE A

Part 1, No. 1, page 6.

Captain Cook tried to land and trade with the Maoris who gathered on the beaches, or came around the *Endeavour* in their canoes. But they looked fierce and warlike, and Cook was so disappointed that he named the place Poverty Bay.

COMMENT

This gives the impression that Cook came as a friend and was rejected by the Maori people. Is it surprising that the Maori people should be suspicious of strangers in their waters? Given what followed, they were obviously intelligent people who sensed the dangers the Europeans brought with them.

EXAMPLE B

Part 2, No. 1, page 7.

Cook found it hard to make friends with the Maoris at that place.

COMMENT

The paragraph preceding this describes the killing of a Maori. Is it surprising that Cook had difficulty?

EXAMPLE C

Part 2, No. 1, page 10.

"Their large canoes are I believe built wholly for war and will carry from 40 to 80 or 100 men with their arms," he wrote in his journal.

COMMENT

Cook's comments are recorded but there is no evidence of a counter view. Maori canoes were not built or used just for war. This reinforces the idea that the Maori people were aggressive.

EXAMPLE D

Part 4, No. 2, pages 6,7.

As he approached the shore, he remembered Tasman's story of the hostile reception he had been given by the warlike inhabitants.

At first, Cook failed to make friends with the Maoris, in spite of the help of Tupaia, whom they could understand. On the *Endeavour* they were treated with "all imaginable kindness" and soon became happy and cheerful.

COMMENT

Although in this journal a more detailed account is given of Cook's treatment of the Maori people - he killed six of them - and it does comment that the Maori people were "justly trying to repel intruders", it still gives the overall impression that it was Cook who was having the most difficulties and that it was the Maori people's reaction that created the problems. There can be no question that Cook came looking for land for the British Empire, he and his people were the aggressors. The interpretation of history as it appears in these journals reinforces the myth that the Maori people surrendered their sovereignty. This is untrue - it was taken by force by Europeans. We were the aggressors.

EXAMPLE E

Part 4, No. 2, page 7.

The Maoris were beginning to respect the power of the musket and the four-pound cannon;

Comment

Who was warlike?

ASSUMPTION 3

That Captain Cook's view of the early Maori people is more valid than the history passed down by generations of Maori people.

EXAMPLE A

Part 3, No. 3, page 11.

We cannot praise too highly Captain Cook's descriptions of the Maori race. They give a picture that is not only clear and fascinating, but also of great value to people who are interested in studying Maori life. We should remember that there are many details of Maori life that would have been lost if Cook had not described them.

COMMENT

Cook saw things from a Pakeha perspective. Is that why we value his recordings so much? Surely the history as passed down from generation to generation of Maori people gives us a true picture of that time from their own perspective. Perhaps that is one of the reasons why Pakeha people have tried so hard to kill the oral tradition of the Maori people. Also, how much of Maori life and culture has been destroyed or stunted because of Pakeha interference.

ASSUMPTION 4

That Maori people were not interested in any form of religion (This suggests the need for missionary influence), that they were "heathens".

EXAMPLE A

Part 2, No. 1, page 11.

Cook did not seem to think the Maoris were troubled very much about religion. It seemed to him that though they had many gods, the greatest of them was called "Tawney". This was not a bad guess for a man who had not heard Maori sounds before. The god's name was Tane.

COMMENT

No alternative view is given. The very deep spirituality of the Maori people doesn't get a mention!

EXAMPLE B

Part 3, No. 3, page 2.

The Maoris of Cook's time were different from their Polynesian ancestors. They had kept much of their language and a few of the myths of their ancestors, but

COMMENT

Many of these so-called "myths" were the Maori people's spiritual beliefs.

ASSUMPTION 5

That the Maori people were "uncivilised" and "primitive" (belittling their culture).

EXAMPLE A

Part 2, No. 1, page 10.

“In most of their dances they appear like Mad men, jumping and stamping with their feet,” Cook wrote.

Their songs were harmonious enough—but sounded rather dull to Europeans because they were mainly chants using only a few notes of the scale.

COMMENT

Cook's comments were from his perspective as a Pakeha. Why doesn't this article give an alternative perspective?

EXAMPLE B

Part 2, No. 1, page 10.

When a member of a Maori family died, to show their grief, loved ones and relatives would cut and slash themselves around the arms and shoulders with sharp rocks.

COMMENT

Used as it is, this sentence suggests an element of "inappropriate" behaviour. Why aren't there any reasons given for this form of grieving behaviour? Maori people have much better ways of expressing grief than Pakeha people. Why is there no mention of this?

EXAMPLE C

Part 2, No. 3, page 5.

Most of the Maoris were tattooed, and wore the usual flax clothing, also using skins and feathers, for decoration.

COMMENT

This description appears to belittle the clothing of the Maori people. What of the importance of skins and feathers?

EXAMPLE D

Part 4, No. 2, page 11.

As you read in the last article, the strain of three long voyages and the continued thieving of the natives sometimes caused him to lose control of himself and act harshly towards them.

COMMENT

This suggests that the Maori people (and other Pacific Island races) were inherently "bad", whilst Captain Cook's image remains untarnished.

ASSUMPTION 6

That place names already given by Maori people were irrelevant and that the so-called discoverers should claim them as their own.

EXAMPLE A

Part 1, No. 1, page 6.

Because Nicholas Young was the first to have seen it, the headland was called Young Nick's Head.

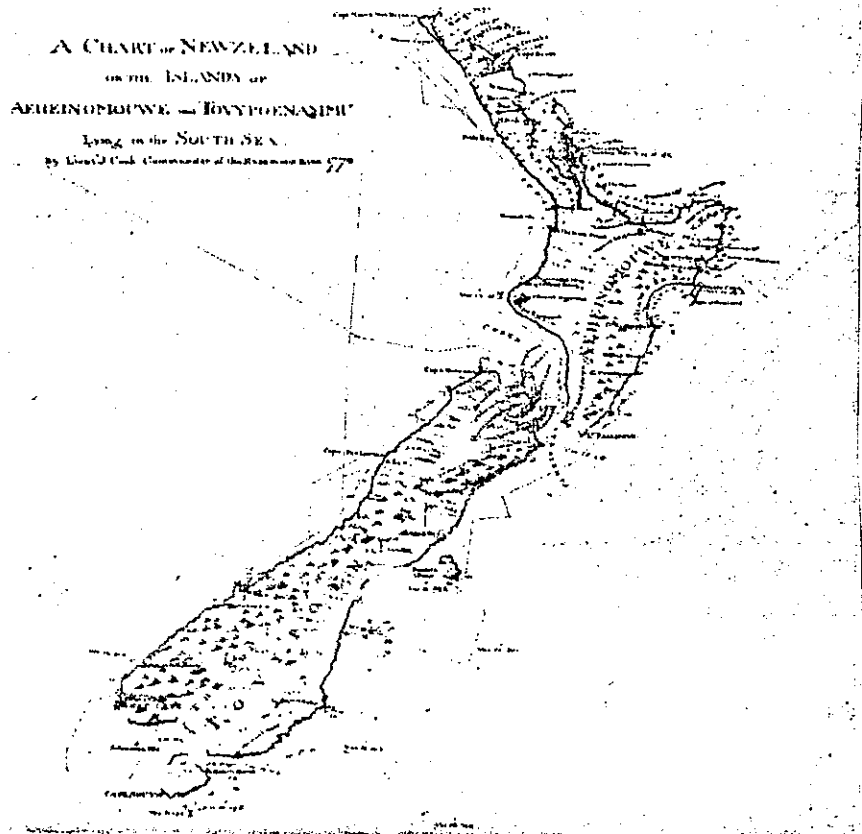
Captain Cook tried to land and trade with the Maoris who gathered on the beaches, or came around the *Endeavour* in their canoes. But they looked fierce and warlike, and Cook was so disappointed that he named the place Poverty Bay.

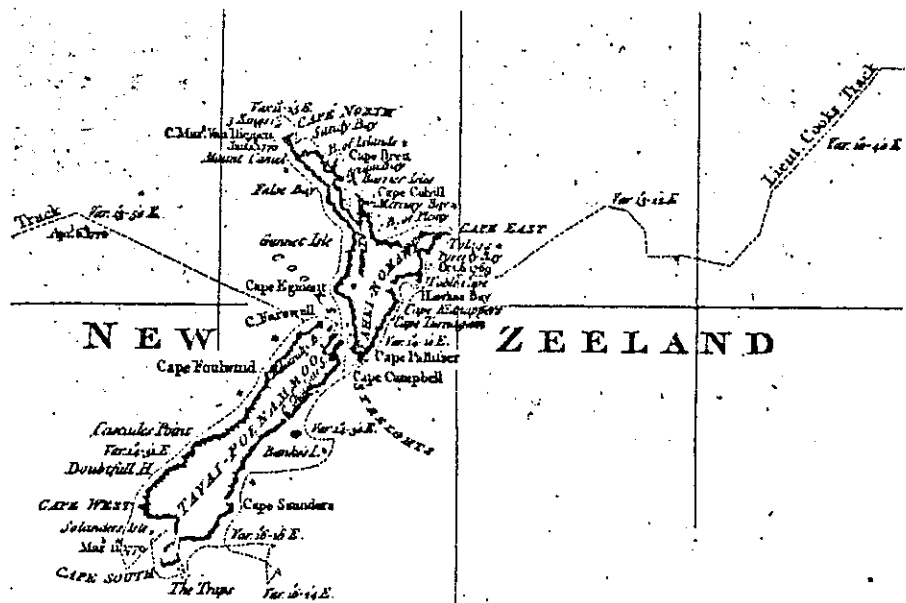
COMMENT

Most of the names Cook put to places in Aotearoa still remain today as the colonials just adopted them without even bothering to find out the Maori names for these places. Poverty Bay was so named because Cook was unable to get things he wanted, like fresh water and vegetables, and yet we still have that name today upholding a complete lie.

EXAMPLE B

Part 1, No. 1, page 2





Cook's Map of New Zealand

In Cook's maps of Aotearoa the two main islands have been labeled with the names Tavai-Poenammoo and Ahei-Nomawe.

COMMENT

Why did he go to all that trouble to find these names and not others? Aotearoa should have been the name on the map and not New Zealand. We think it is important that we learn the name that the indigenous people gave to the land.

ASSUMPTION 7

That the Maori people benefitted from the arrival of the Pakeha.

EXAMPLE A

Part 2, No. 3, page 6.

In the past 200 years, the Maoris of New Zealand have become a very different people, since Europeans settled in their country. They may be farmers, builders, drivers, lawyers, doctors, soldiers, teachers—in fact, in almost any job you can think of.

COMMENT

Many of these jobs were already being done by Maori people before Europeans came. Did the Maori become different people or were they forced to adapt to the European way of life for survival?

EXAMPLE B

Part 4, No. 3, page 2.

In the eighteenth century, people began to examine the world around them in a new way. Naturalists collected plants and animals. As new lands were explored, thousands of animals and plants were discovered,

COMMENT

These statements give no recognition to the discoveries and naming of plants made by the non-European peoples of the world. We know that people in the Polynesian islands and Aotearoa developed and used a great deal of plant remedies for medication. A cure for scurvy was given to Jacques Cartier in 1535 by a "native".

ASSUMPTION 8

That Captain Cook was a hero.

EXAMPLE A

Part 4, No. 1, page 10.

Cook was a man of strong feelings, but he usually controlled his temper, and he always tried to avoid brutality and bloodshed.

COMMENT

Cook's violent and aggressive behaviour is often justified by himself and the people that write about it by reinforcing the stress he must have been under and the dangerous situations he was in. Also they blame the "native" people for their "bad" behaviour as a provocation.

We recognise that Cook did some important things in his life but feel that his mistakes should be addressed instead of condoned.

EXAMPLE B

Part 3, No. 3, page 5,6.

The warlike Maoris soon made it plain that they hated strangers trying to enter their territory without their permission. After Captain Cook and his scientists had moved a little way up the beach, a group of warriors tried to seize Cook's boat. They retreated only after one of them had been shot. The next day, Captain Cook tried again. This time Tupaia spoke to them. The Maoris understood him, but they were just as fierce as before. Again the guns were fired, and the Maoris retreated with their wounded.

Captain Cook was made sad by these incidents; so he took the *Endeavour* along the coast to look for friendlier people. At first he was not successful, for when he came across two canoes he tried to turn them away from the shore. He wanted to persuade the Maoris to come on board the *Endeavour*. One of the canoes escaped, but they managed to block the other one. But, instead of diving overboard and swimming to safety, the Maoris gave fight. It was a sorry business: four Maoris were killed and three were captured.

A few days later there was another fight with some Maori canoes, which gave the name to Cape Kidnappers.

• • • • Captain Cook was extremely sorry about these incidents, and he kept trying to make friends with the Maoris.

COMMENT

Cook blundered in with no thought for the people or the customs he was abusing. He murdered people and then said how sorry he was.

ASSUMPTION 9

That Maori art is part of our "heritage" - Maori people however are best assimilated into our system and seen as Europeanised.

EXAMPLE A

Part 2, No. 3, page 8.



Carved Maori houses were much admired by Cook. Above is one of the oldest on the East Coast, being visited by members of the National Historic Places Trust. This meeting house, at Manutuke, was built about 1883.

COMMENT

We display the "art" and carvings of the Maori only giving worth to their aesthetic value. We do not attempt to learn their meaning and value from the Maori. Instead we teach them to be European. We have turned a valuable aspect of Maoritanga into a mere art form.

THE LANGUAGE USED

The Maori language has no 's' sound. It should not be put on the end of Maori words.

It is important to have Maori names for different objects, places or people, e.g. house - whare, sea - moana, canoe waka, woman - wahine.

While Maori is a label put on all tangatawhenua of Aotearoa, it is important to remember that there are many different tribes all with separate identities. We need also to remember that Pakeha people wrote down the Maori language. Before the European it was a spoken language, a religion and a way of life.

CONCLUSIONS

We believe that the Department of Education should withdraw this series from circulation and undertake a review of all their publications with a view to eradicating racist literature for young people. We have written to the Director General of Education accordingly.

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