

# Dismantling Cook's legacy: Science, migration, and colonialism in Aotearoa

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## Abstracts

*I Aotearoa nei, ko te tau 2019 tērā i tohu mai kua 250 tau i te taunga mai o Kāpene James Cook, i runga i te Endeavour, i tana haerenga ki te 'rapu mātauranga pūtaiao'. Kia whakanuia ai taua kaupapa, i tuku ngā kāwanatanga, ā-motu, ā-rohe anō hoki, i te \$23 mīriona neke atu hei whāngai i ētahi anō kaupapa, ko tētahi ko te kāhui waka i haere ai ki ngā wāhi hirahira o te motu. Hākoa te hiahia o ngā kaiwhakahaere kia maumaharatia ngā 'hononga tuku iho', otirā ko ngā tūtakihanga o mua a te Māori me te Pākehā (Manatū Taonga 2018), tino kore nei te nuinga o ngā hapori Māori i hurō i te kitenga ake o te tāruatanga o te Endeavour i te paerangi. I kaha te whakahēngia o te kaupapa whakamaumahara i tōna wairua whakatarapī, ka mutu i ngā mahi kino rawa atu a Cook nōna i konei (arā, ko te kahaki, me te kōhuru i ētahi Māori; tirohia tā Ranford 2018). Ko tō Cook noho ki Aotearoa tētahi tino wānanga mō te whakakotahitanga mai o te pūtaiao, o te nuku tangata, o te whānako whenua anō hoki i tēnei motu. Mā tēnei tuhinga, ka taki ahau i te hītori o te pūtaiao me te nuku tangata i Aotearoa (mai i te taunga mai o ō ngā Māori o nāianei tūpuna tae noa ki te taunga mai o te Pākehā, ā neke atu), ka kōrero hoki he pēhea ngā kaupapa here me te pūtaiao o nāianei, ā-nuku tangata nei, i te inenga o ngā hua ki te ōhanga i tēnā o ngā tūraru e whakapaengia nei ka puta i ngā rāwaho kua whakaiwingia, me te huna tonu i ngā hanganga kaikiri whānako whenua nei i tūāpapa ai i a Niu Tīreni, ka mutu ka tohu i ētahi huarahi hou o te rangahau ā-pūtaiao i te nuku tangata ā haere ake nei.*

*In Aotearoa, 2019 marked the 250th anniversary of the arrival of Captain James Cook, aboard the Endeavour, on its voyage of 'scientific discovery'. To mark the occasion, central and local governments committed over \$23 million to fund events including a flotilla that travelled to sites of significance around the country. While organisers intended to commemorate our 'dual heritage' and in particular the early 'encounters' of Māori and European peoples (Ministry of Culture and Heritage 2018), the sight of a replica Endeavour on the horizon was not a cause for celebration for many Māori communities. Strong objections to the commemorations were raised because of the imperial intentions and violent actions of Cook while here (which included abducting*

*and murdering Māori; see Ranford 2018). Cook's presence in Aotearoa is an interesting case study of how science, migration, and colonialism have converged in this country. In this essay, I sketch a history of science and migration in Aotearoa (from the arrival of the ancestors of modern Māori through to the advent of the European and beyond), and outline how migration policy and contemporary migration science weigh economic benefits against the presumed 'risk' posed by racialised migrants while obscuring the racist settler-colonial structures New Zealand was founded on. I suggest new pathways for the scientific study of migration to move forward.*

## Science and migration

In Aotearoa, the story of science is the story of migration. The ancestors of modern Māori, through science and innovation, constructed the fastest seafaring vessels in the world (Walker 1994), the waka hourua, and through their extensive knowledge of ocean environments, of swells, of weather systems and atmospheric conditions, of marine life, and of astronomy, were able to navigate the largest ocean in the world – Te Moana nui a Kiwa – and populate every major island throughout (see Howe 2003). In doing so, our ancestors created the largest 'culture sphere' in the world, spanning 25 million square kilometres, and occupying approximately one-fifth of the Earth's surface – at a time when European ships were 'still hugging the coastlines of continents for fear of the open ocean' (Davis 2009, p. 41).

On reaching Aotearoa, our ancestors encountered an environment vastly different from the tropical islands they had formerly called home. Once again, they applied scientific rigour as they migrated throughout these islands, studied the natural environment, and adapted the culture and technologies they brought with them from tropical East Polynesia to allow them to thrive in much cooler climes (see Walker 1994). Within a relatively short time, Māori had explored the length and breadth of Aotearoa, naming and categorising new species of flora and fauna as they went, and had found uses for all the raw materials that would continue to be of value for the next five hundred years (Addis 1998).

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The story of science is the story of migration for Pākehā in Aotearoa too, as migration provided Pākehā with opportunities to develop and exchange knowledge. The first European explorer to reach these shores was the Dutchman Abel Tasman in 1642. However, the only thing that was exchanged in this encounter was blows (Belich 1996). The next invader was Captain James Cook, who arrived aboard the *Endeavour* in 1769. Although framed as a mission of ‘scientific discovery’, the presence of the *Endeavour* in our part of the world was more about empire-building than science, and is seen today as the antecedent of British colonisation. Under the direction of the Royal Society (London) and the Admiralty, the *Endeavour* had dual intentions: to observe the transit of Venus, but secretly (and more importantly) to seek out the great mythical southern continent ‘Terra Australis’ and identify resources of value, in order to claim them for the British Crown by ‘right of discovery’ (Frame & Walker 2018). In his efforts to do so, Cook routinely abducted, maimed, and murdered Indigenous people (as his journal of the *HMS Endeavour* voyage attests).

Seventy-one years after Cook reached these shores, and despite the subsequent signing of the Treaty of Waitangi with Māori, the Crown claimed sovereignty over Te Waka a Māui (the South Island) and Te Punga o Te Waka a Māui (Stewart Island) by ‘right of discovery’ (Binney *et al.* 2014). Yet Cook’s claim of discovery cannot be justified. Māori were already here, Abel Tasman arrived before Cook, and written records from the *Endeavour* show that Cook found his way to Aotearoa aided by Tahitian navigator, Tupaia (Davis 2009), who had drawn from memory a map of seventy-four islands in Te Moana nui a Kiwa (Di Piazza & Pearthree 2007).

It’s clear that, prior to Cook’s arrival, these islands had been discovered, were mapped, and were inhabited. Yet, in claiming to ‘discover’ Aotearoa, this knowledge was denied. Our ancestors were not afforded the right to know. Our independence as sovereign peoples was ignored. We were viewed as animals: able to occupy territories, but unable to own them. Through the European lens, these lands lay ‘undiscovered’.

## The Doctrine of Discovery

The European tradition of denying the sovereignty, and indeed, the humanity of Indigenous peoples elsewhere has a long history that can be traced to the Doctrine of Discovery, birthed in late medieval Europe, at the tail-end of the Crusades (religious wars sanctioned by the Roman Catholic Church to advance the religious, political, and territorial interests of the papacy; Jotischky 2004). The Doctrine consisted of official letters issued by successive Popes between 1452 and 1493 (see Grewe 2000). The Papal Bull, *Dum Diversas*, issued in 1452 by Pope Nicholas V, granted King Alfonso V of Portugal permission:

*to invade, search out, capture, vanquish, and subdue all Saracens and pagans whatsoever, and other enemies of Christ wheresoever placed, and the kingdoms, dukedoms, principalities, dominions, possessions, and all movable and immovable goods whatsoever held and possessed by them and to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery (Doctrine of Discovery, 2018).*

Like many Papal Bulls encouraging Christians to ‘take the Cross’ and join the Crusades before it, *Dum Diversas* offered spiritual rewards to those who supported King Alfonso in his campaign. Thus, in the European imagination, invasion became synonymous with righteousness, honour, and glory – an end in and of itself: a practice that existed beyond economic motive (see Jotischky 2004). As military campaigns into Islamic territories wound down, European monarchs sought to expand their territories into the ‘New World’, where the Doctrine sanctioned mercantilism and colonialism. The Middle Ages drew to a close and ‘The Age of Discovery’ – an age of unrestrained genocide – began.

## Scientific racism

While early European campaigns to eliminate, dispossess, and replace indigenous peoples in the ‘New World’ relied on a religious justification, by the time lands were claimed by ‘right of discovery’ here in Aotearoa, European colonists had a new oppressive ideology in their arsenal – ‘scientific racism’. The history of this new ‘science’, too, cannot be separated from migration. Theories dividing humankind into distinct ‘races’ had been circulating since the late 17th Century. Yet racism as we understand it today – the idea that certain groups of people, distinguishable by phenotype, are innately superior to others – were popularised by a misreading of Charles Darwin’s (1859) *On The Origin of Species*, a text based largely on observations of biodiversity made while he circumnavigated the world aboard the *HMS Beagle*.

Darwin’s theory<sup>1</sup> was misapplied to support the belief that individuals and groups accrue power and privilege because they are innately superior to others: retrospectively, it was labelled ‘Social Darwinism’ (Hodgson 2004). Through this lens, the survival of certain groups and the annihilation of others is framed as inevitable, even desirable: a scientific justification for imperialism and colonialism that was not unlike ‘manifest destiny’, the religious justification that preceded it. Through the development and application of scientific racism, migration informed ‘science’, which was then used to justify oppressive forms of migration: imperialism and colonialism.

Darwin himself was reluctant to apply his theory of natural selection to social relations (Hodgson 2004). However, the belief in human racial hierarchies is evident in his journal entries while aboard the *HMS Beagle*. While docked in Aotearoa in December 1835, Darwin’s (1845) assessment of Māori was as follows:

*Looking at the New Zealander, one naturally compares him with the Tahitian; both belonging to the same family of mankind. The comparison however tells heavily against the New Zealander. He may perhaps be superior in energy, but in every other respect his character is of a much lower order. One glance at their respective expressions, brings conviction to the mind that one is a savage, the other a civilized man.*

<sup>1</sup> [Darwin’s theory] was that certain individuals within a species had observable traits making them better suited to an environment, and therefore more likely to survive and reproduce, passing advantageous traits to their offspring; and that incremental changes over successive generations could lead to the evolution of new species.

## Crown migration policy

By the time the *HMS Beagle* arrived in Aotearoa, the flow of ideas, technologies, and capital in and out of Aotearoa was well established, and Māori had solidified their international identity through *He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tireni* (*The Declaration of Independence 1835*). *Rangatiratanga* (independence) was again affirmed by *Te Tiriti o Waitangi 1840*, which allowed for the Queen of England to exercise a limited form of governance over her subjects who had migrated here, and others yet to come. Thus the Treaty can be viewed as New Zealand's first immigration policy document (Walker 1993; see also Kukutai & Rata 2017). But the Crown immediately, grossly, and consistently violated the Treaty. Violations included assuming absolute sovereignty, stipulating who could and could not migrate here, and dictating the rights that would be afforded to migrants once they arrived.

The initial mass immigration of European colonists far exceeded Māori expectations. At the time the Treaty was signed, Māori outnumbered the semi-permanent Pākehā resident population by at least 40:1. Yet within only two decades the Pākehā population had reached parity (Pool 1991). No longer a numerical minority, and with access to an inexhaustible supply of imperial troops, the Crown abandoned diplomacy and invaded Taranaki, and full-scale war ensued.

A decisive military victory eluded the Crown (Belich 1986). In the 1870s, frustrated by the economic cost of the previous decade's wars, then-Premier Julius Vogel ramped up immigration once more. In his view, demographic swamping was 'the sole alternative to a war of extermination with the natives' (Vogel 1893; cited in Dalziel 1986). By the early 1880s, the Crown project to usurp *tino rangatiratanga* (Māori sovereignty) appeared complete, and Pākehā settlers outnumbered the Māori population (which had been halved by war and Pākehā-introduced diseases) by 10:1 (see Pool 1991). Commenting on Māori population decline, a prominent scientist of the time, Alfred Newman, expressed the white supremacist view that, 'the disappearance of the [Māori] race is scarcely subject for much regret. They are dying out in a quick, easy way, and are being supplanted by a superior race' (Newman 1882, p. 477).

By no coincidence, as the 'threat within' appeared to have been neutralised, the Crown turned its attention to keeping non-British subjects out. *The Chinese Immigrants Act 1881* was the first in a flurry of legislations passed around the turn of the 20th Century to restrict the entry of Chinese, Indian, and other racialised 'aliens', through poll taxes, limits on the number of immigrants per ship based on the vessel's weight, and English language requirements. The result was a 'White New Zealand' immigration system, designed to create a 'Britain of the South'. The irony of Pākehā anxieties over foreign invasion was not lost on legislator The Honorable Henry Scotland, who, in parliamentary debate, noted the following.

*When we first came to New Zealand did the Maoris ever impose a tax upon us? No: and I will venture to say that we have done a great deal more harm to the Maoris than the Chinese are ever likely to do to us. I think the people who come after us will be thoroughly ashamed and thoroughly*

*astonished at what their progenitors have done, for it is simply an inhuman and barbarous measure* (Scotland 1881, p. 210).

By the mid-20th Century, following the 'world wars', the Western science community could not ignore the horrors enacted in service of White supremacy (as on this occasion many of its members had found themselves on its opposite side). Social Darwinism was widely repudiated. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) was founded in 1945 to combat, 'the doctrine of the inequality of men and races' (UNESCO 2018). In 1950, UNESCO tasked a committee of scientific experts (including New Zealander Ernest Beaglehole) to issue a statement debunking scientific racism (UNESCO 1950). The statement itself was not removed from the Western imperial roots of racism, however, as the committee described their 'hope that the struggle against the misdeeds of racism will become a *crusade* to be carried out in common by all the peoples of the earth' (*emphasis added*).

Despite international efforts to eliminate racism, the 'White New Zealand' immigration policy persisted until the late 20th Century. During a period of aggressive neoliberal reform, the automatic entry rights guaranteed to predominantly White, English-speaking nations (such as Britain) were abandoned in favour of policies designed to benefit business by filling labour shortages (Bedford *et al.* 2002). By the mid-1990s, however, anti-immigration political rhetoric exacerbated widespread fears of an 'Asian invasion', and policy to limit Asian immigration closely followed (Simon-Kumar 2015).

More recently, in the early 2000s, the Crown made further, similarly motivated changes, resulting in a sharp and sustained increase in the number of migrants arriving on temporary visas (Immigration New Zealand 2016). Of particular concern is the high proportion of temporary workers whose visas are attached to their employer, exposing migrants to increased risk of labour exploitation and modern slavery. New Zealand currently has the unfortunate distinction of the highest proportion of temporary labour migrants in the labour force (5 per cent) of any state in the OECD (Carey 2019). Through this system, the Crown is able to maximally exploit migrant labour to benefit the economy, while mitigating presumed risks by forcing migrants to leave.

The primacy of risk management also features in refugee policy. In 2009, the Crown introduced the family link policy, banning refugees from the Middle East and Africa unless they already had family in New Zealand, which former refugee and community advocate Guled Mire described as a racist policy that must be stopped (Mitchell 2019).<sup>2</sup> Additionally, the Crown's most recent budget included \$25 million allocated to prevent asylum seekers accessing New Zealand via boat (Manch 2019) – a strategy that violates the intentions of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, which includes seeking asylum as a fundamental human right.

<sup>2</sup> The Crown announced an end to the family link policy on 4 October 2019.

## Contemporary migration science

Contemporary science in Aotearoa is dominated by a Western tradition that has not decoupled itself from White supremacist ideological foundations fortified by the Doctrine of Discovery and scientific racism. Thus, in scientific research produced here, the sovereignty presumed is that of the Crown, and the interests centred tend to be those of the Pākehā majority. Contemporary migration research often involves assessing the impact of immigration on the New Zealand economy. Examples of this approach include studies that assess the impacts of immigration on GDP and GDP per capita, and the benefits of temporary immigration to fill labour shortages, for example in healthcare and agriculture (see Fry & Glass 2016 for an excellent review).

Underpinning this type of research is a series of assumptions, including: the existence of a border around a territory defined as New Zealand; power to control the border resting with the New Zealand Government; borders between peoples who have a right to enter and those who do not; dividing lines between those who arrive determining rights granted (e.g. between those on temporary visas and those given permanent residency; or between those who arrive as refugees and those who arrive as asylum seekers); and immigration equating to aberrant behaviour that poses a risk to New Zealand and must be justified in terms of economic benefits to the 'host society' (in contrast to emigration, viewed as an expected freedom). These assumptions are aspects of Western border imperialism (see Walia 2013) and are contestable.

Other scientific studies of migration focus not on whether migrants should be accepted, but on how the state can 'manage' increasingly ethnically diverse populations once they are established. These studies include those focused on the 'acculturation' of migrants into New Zealand society and associated outcomes (see Ward & Mak 2016, for a review), along with those comparing the attitudes of New Zealand's ethnic groups towards immigration and each other (e.g. Leong & Ward 2011; Grbic 2010; Asia New Zealand Foundation 2014).

These avenues of scientific exploration position ethnic diversity as a 'problem' that must be managed, and the Crown as the solution (see Rata & Al-Asaad, forthcoming). They further assume that there is a mainstream New Zealand culture that migrants should be expected to be a part of (which is not the Indigenous- but the settler-colonial culture). Migrants' experience of 'acculturative stress' and associated negative outcomes are attributed to the 'acculturation strategy' migrants choose to adopt. Yet the problem in the case of unequal migrant outcomes could alternatively be framed as deriving from the monoculturalism of New Zealand institutions that have not responded to our 'super diverse' demographic reality.

Finally, and perversely, these studies may be predicated on the assumption, or draw the conclusion, that the causes of racism in New Zealand are minoritised ethnic communities themselves. However, lateral violence (or racism within and between minoritised ethnic groups) could better be understood as settler-colonial structural racism operating through communities of colour (see Saranilio 2013).

As outlined above, while the unofficial 'White New Zealand' immigration system has been overhauled, biases that

run along national and therefore racial lines are ubiquitous. This racialising approach to 'risk' management is now being automated – shifting racist decision-making from human cognition to algorithms. Immigration New Zealand now uses data on the 'harm to New Zealand' caused by migrants to predict the harm their compatriots *might* cause, or as Immigration New Zealand's compliance and investigations area manager Alistair Murray explained:

*So then we might take that demographic and load that into our harm model and say even though person 'A' is doing this, is there any likelihood that someone else that is coming through the system is going to behave in the same way and then we'll move to deport that person at the first available opportunity so they don't have a chance to do that type of harm (Bonnett 2018).*

This approach is nothing short of racial profiling, and provides a clear example of the way in which structural racism is embedded in our institutions, serving to produce and reproduce White supremacy.

## Dismantling Cook's legacy

Here in Aotearoa, the story of science is the story of migration. Science and innovation allowed for migration, and migration led to scientific innovation through contact with new territories and biodiversity, and new cultural knowledge systems, resulting in the generation of new ideas. But religion and science have also been used to justify imperialism and colonisation, and produce and reproduce White supremacy, first through the Doctrine of Discovery, and then through scientific racism.

Ideologies glorifying conquest and upholding racial hierarchies are foundational to New Zealand, and are embedded in our institutions. These racist foundations were celebrated in 2019 on the 250th anniversary of Cook's invasion of Aotearoa. The government's framing of the event as acknowledging early 'encounters' and of celebrating our 'dual heritage' (see Ministry of Culture and Heritage 2018) marginalised non-Māori communities of colour from the national narrative, and obscured colonial violence, prompting Indigenous rights activist Tina Ngata to lay a complaint at the United Nations 17th Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues (Ranford 2018). In addition, Contemporary New Zealand science and our immigration system tend to frame ethnic difference as a 'problem' or 'risk', and often reduce migrants to exploitable labour for the benefit of the national economy.

In researching this paper, I was reminded by of a short speech given by Linda Tuhiwai Smith in accepting the inaugural Te Puāwaitanga Award from the Royal Society Te Apārangi, the New Zealand equivalent of the very group responsible for funding Cook's first voyage here (Vimeo 2018).

*Like many of you in this room I'm descended from a proud people, who navigated the Pacific and used knowledge to do that. When Cook arrived what began was the systematic destruction not only of what we knew but the value of knowledge to us. And I hope in my work I've rebuilt confidence of Māori in our own knowledge. In our ability to know. To know well. To know deeply. And to know in ways that advance our future.*

In attempting to advance our future through science, we must challenge assumptions around who has the right to know, and interrogate the premises of our research questions. When researching migration, a radical shift is

required. Instead of asking, 'how does immigration impact New Zealand', as if migrants should be expected to justify their presence here, let's start asking new questions: What value do we place in freedom of movement across borders? How can we ensure our immigration system is free of national/religious/ethnic/racial discrimination? How can we end New Zealand imperialism abroad, and ensure our foreign policy (e.g. trade deals) does not displace people? In addition, instead of asking: 'How do we manage ethnic diversity?', we need to start asking: How do we dismantle monoculturalism and Pākehā supremacy? How could the nation be imagined as plural? And what constitutional arrangements would ensure full expression to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and full rights regardless of immigration status?

Settler-colonial racism, and Western border imperialism have not always existed; They are social structures created by people, requiring constant maintenance, that can also be undone by the people. Imperialism, colonialism, and White supremacism arrived in Aotearoa 250 years with the arrival of Cook. It's well past time to dismantle his legacy and begin a new era of hope and freedom in Aotearoa for all.

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