

Food, warfare and the impact of Atlantic capitalism in Aotearoa/New Zealand

**Dr John Fitzpatrick
School of Political and International Studies
Flinders University**

**Refereed paper presented to the
Australasian Political Studies Association Conference
University of Adelaide
29 September - 1 October 2004**

Introduction

This paper deals with the relationship between food systems and modes of warfare among Maori in the period immediately preceding and following significant European contact in the late 18th century, and the implications of this relationship for the nature and consequences of Maori resistance to European occupation in the mid 19th century 'New Zealand wars'. It argues that this food-warfare relationship underpinned an impressively state-like pattern of political and military resistance, which in turn was crucial to the *relative* success of Maori, in comparison to many other indigenous peoples, in asserting their rights as prior occupants of the land.

The paper is organized essentially as a very long-term narrative, stretching from the pre-contact *longue duree* to the decisive imposition of British imperial control in the later 19th century. This narrative is inevitably very selective, and reflects a self-conscious exploration of a specific 'problematic', in the sense of a 'rudimentary organisation of a field of phenomena which yields problems for investigation' (Abrams 1982, p xv). I emphasise problems of geopolitics and what Braudel (1983) calls 'everyday life'; and assume that - at a sufficient level of abstraction - it is reasonable to interpret both intra-Maori and Maori-European interaction in terms of a generic 'conflict model' of inter-group relations.¹ Problems which do not fit these assumptions and thematic emphases - in particular legal-institutional and cultural problems - have been largely ignored in the narrative.

To keep the length manageable, I have not attempted any general apologia for roads not taken and stories not told. However, it should be clear that the paper diverges sharply from accounts which attribute the *relative* harmony of race relations in New Zealand to either the content or the 'spirit' of the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi. Some brief comments on the distinction between the logic and periodization of my narrative and the logic and periodization of a 'Waitangi-centric' narrative are therefore offered in the conclusion.

¹ For an extended exposition of a conflict model, see Collins (1975).

In addition, the paper contains an ongoing critique of 'fatal impact' assumptions about the consequences for the Maori of unregulated European contact from the 1790s to the 1830s, of the sort which figured strongly in rationales for British annexation around the time of the Treaty of Waitangi. I try to highlight the distinction between a competitive and relatively stateless 'Atlantic capitalism' and 'the British imperial state' as leading agents of European impact on the Maori, and suggest that, in general, Maori were more than capable of dealing with the former on their own terms. Conversely, the progressively more substantial intervention of the British state flowing from the Waitangi treaty, far from protecting Maori against European exploitation, seems on balance to have had the reverse effect.

The 'pre-contact' era: from open frontiers to the first caging crisis

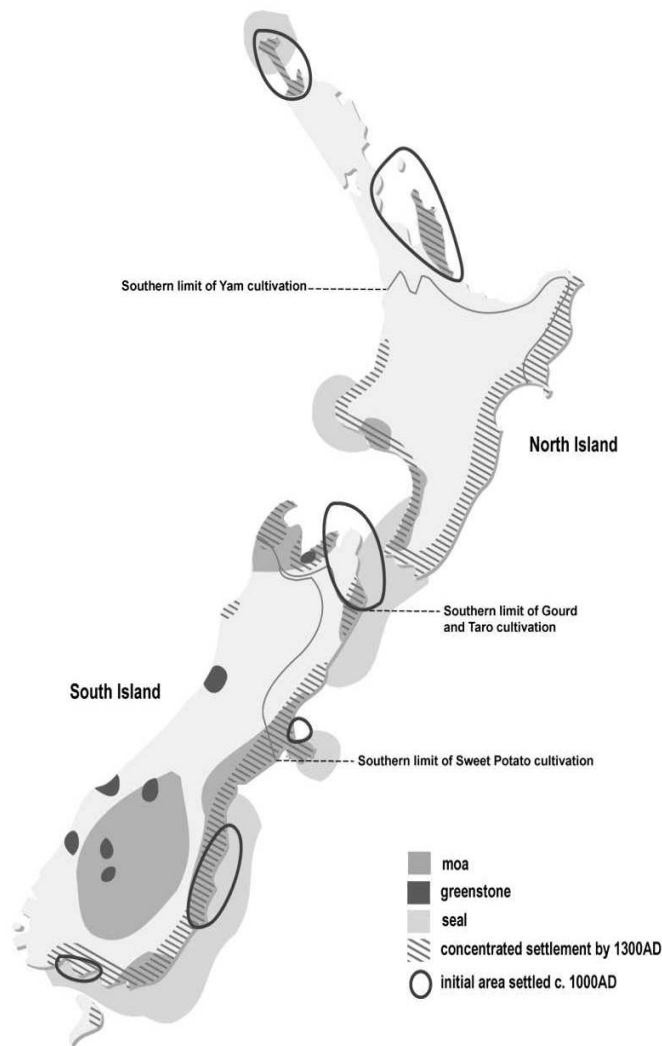
Settlement and early colonization

The ancestors of the Maori are generally thought to have first arrived in New Zealand, voyaging south and west from the region of the Society Islands in eastern Polynesia, somewhere between the 800 and 1100 AD. 'By the twelfth century...settlements were scattered around the coasts...from Northland [the far northern peninsula stretching from the Auckland region to the Bay of Islands] to South Otago' (Davidson 1981, 6). Some authors assume a single colonization, others several waves. At any rate, two important protein food sources common elsewhere in Polynesia - pigs and chickens - evidently did not make it to New Zealand or survive if they did. A type of dog and rat did, and both were eaten by Maori at the time of European contact. Other than these, the only non-human mammals were two species of native bat (Crosby, A. 1986, 220-3).

In addition to the loss of the pig and the chicken, much of the tropical and sub-tropical repertoire of cultivated plants from the Polynesian homelands was inappropriate for the New Zealand climate. Coconuts, breadfruit, sugar cane, banana and pandanus could not survive. Yams, taro and aute (paper mulberry) were marginally adaptable, but only in limited areas of the north). The most successful of the root crops was the kumara, a south American sweet potato which had somehow

John Fitzpatrick: Food, warfare and the impact of Atlantic capitalism in Aotearoa/New Zealand entered the Polynesian plant repertoire. But even it was limited to the North Island and a narrow coastal strip in the northern and eastern part of the South Island (Map 1). It could also be grown only as an annual, involving major storage requirements - 'edible tubers [being] dug before the first frosts and stored through winter for eating as required and for planting out in the spring (Davidson 1984, 35; 1981, 20-22).

Map 1: Resources and Settlement Patterns in Pre-Contact New Zealand



Source: Various sources

The great counterweight in the early centuries to these problems with introduced food resources was the ready availability of indigenous meat resources, above all moa (flightless birds of various sizes, some very large) and fur seals (some also very large). Without natural predators and with no experience of human hunters, these animals are assumed to have been relatively easily hunted by the Maori, but also particularly vulnerable to being hunted to extinction (King 2003, 62-7). As Map 1 shows, the regional distribution of these major meat resources was pretty much the obverse of the distribution of cultivable plants - the main concentrations of both being in the South Island, plus Cook Strait in the case of seals. Maori were also very skilled at catching and preserving fish, and again the greatest concentration of specialized fishing activity seems initially to have been in the South Island (Leach and Boocock 1993, 18).

Finally, in the area of non-food resources, stone was obviously of great importance to the Maori. Archaeological evidence suggests that by around 1200 AD a wide variety of stone was being exploited (and exchanged) for tool-making across most of the two main islands. However the finest and hardest stone - greenstone or *pounamu* - was concentrated above all in the barren west coast of the South Island, an area well away from most of the major food resource areas, both vegetable and animal. It was extensively used in tool and weapon production by the middle and late pre-contact period, highly valued for ornamentation and evidently functioned as a currency for exchange. Given the complementary distribution of food and stone resources in different zones across the two islands, and the skill of the Maori as seafarers (plus their evident skill in preserving foods), it seems probable that well-developed exchange networks existed in the pre-contact era (McKinnon 1998, Plate 14; King 2003, 88-9).

Extinctions, ecological caging and the pa phenomenon

James Belich makes the attractive suggestion that the 'fragmented yet water-linked environment' of Aotearoa would have presented itself to the early Polynesian settlers as a 'huge archipelago of "islands" - patches of useful land separated by patches of less useful land, and best accessed by sea'. Initially, colonization would have pushed ahead very rapidly in pursuit of 'premium islands': then the archipelago would have begun to 'thicken' with second-grade islands, as population grew and increasing numbers of premium islands were exhausted. The great watershed between 'early New Zealand pre-history and late' came with 'a crisis in the middle, centred in the fifteenth century...the progressive extinction of big game in region after region. To surmount this crisis, Maori transformed their economy, their politics, including warfare, and their social organization'. (Belich 1996, 40-1, 64-7).

The main reason for these extinctions would seem to be a basic structural dynamic observable elsewhere in Polynesia, and probably in Australia and the Americas as well: the sudden impact of human predators on animal populations long unused to

any natural predators. (Crosby, A. 1986, 275-7) The impact of introduced dogs and rats may also have been significant for smaller species and the eggs of larger species. Whatever the exact balance of causation, the transformations around this time were dramatic.

By the fourteenth century the large species of moa and elephant seals were scarce in the South Island and almost non-existent in the North. The native swan, the flightless goose, Fisch's duck, the New Zealand eagle and the native species of goshawk, coot and crow had all become extinct. By the fifteenth century, fewer birds of fewer species were being caught in most North Island communities, while all species of moa were virtually extinct in the North Island and had become rare in the South (Salmond 1991, 39).

Several critical results followed from these environmental changes. First, there was a major decline in the contribution of animal protein to Maori diets in general. Second, there was a corresponding loss of abundant sources of fat for food preservation: items like small birds preserved in their own fat remained important prestige foods and exchange items, but preparing them would have been very labour-intensive. Third, the *principal location* of viable food resources, now predominantly agricultural, was in the North Island, mainly on the coasts and in the Northland peninsula, though the remaining seal populations contracted in the other direction, to the extreme south of the south island (Davidson 1984, 34-5).

In addition to this general pattern of population contraction to a limited region, other features associated with the cultivation of the kumara further intensified the dependence of North Island populations on specific sites which would need to be defended strongly in time of war. Usable land was scarce, even in the north. The preparation of heavy clay soils for successful cultivation required the movement of vast quantities of shells and gravel for mulching purposes. Substantial underground storage pits were constructed to preserve kumara supplies through winter, and the decline in fat sources must have increased the relative importance of fermentation and pit storage for major starch foods in general (Davidson 1981, 22).

Finally, 'fishing seems to have increased in importance since mid-prehistory', with North Island sites simultaneously becoming much more prominent in the archaeological record. Since inshore fishing typically had much greater economic importance than offshore, control over valuable rivers, estuaries and areas of indented coastline may be added to the above list of crucial site-specific food resources. The great 'seine nets' used in inshore fishing could be up to two kilometres long, involving massive labour in their production and intensive large-group cooperation in their use. (Belich 1996, 70-71; Leach and Boocock 1993, 21-28).

To borrow the terminology of Michael Mann's comparative-historical study of 'the sources of social power', North Island Maori in the late pre-contact era were strongly 'caged' to particular locations and particular clusters of resources. Such ecological caging is seen by Mann as a precondition for the emergence of the state and the social stratification necessary to underpin the continuous development of state forms - something that can be successfully resisted by populations which have the opportunity to spread widely and in small groups over extensive territories providing a diverse range of resources for subsistence (Mann 1986, 39-49).

Pre-contact Maori are generally not thought to have developed state-like forms: but the sharp contraction of food resources in the three or four centuries preceding European contact does seem to have produced substantial increases in stratification and political organization at the tribal level. In particular, it led to a relatively organised warfare, fiercely fought but also significantly rule-governed, and above all to the proliferation of fortified *pa*, whose interiors were 'usually dominated' by pits for food storage. (Belich 1996, 80). 'Widespread fortification...[of] settlements and food storage areas...seems to begin in the 15th century' and, despite having some elements found elsewhere in Polynesia, it seems that the Maori *pa* 'is a local invention' (Davidson 1987, 20).

Pre-contact population and the fatal impact thesis

The question of Maori population levels on the eve of sustained European contact is an intensely contested and politicised one, which carries forward into the similarly contested and politicised terrain of debates over the 'fatal impact' of imported diseases - and intra-Maori wars with European firearms - in the early and mid-19th century. Since the first modern census in 1857 gives a Maori population of 57,000 (now generally rounded up to around 60,000 on the grounds of some undercounting), high estimates for pre-contact population logically correlate with strong fatal impact claims, while low estimates have reverse implications. (Belich 1996, 175-8). For much of the middle and later 20th century, the trend was indeed towards higher estimates (200,000 and above), reflecting a broader pattern in debates about pre-contact populations in the Americas, elsewhere in Polynesia and in Australia. More recent scholarship has moved in the reverse direction, suggesting figures much closer to the 100,000 estimate originally given by Cook (McKinnon 1998, plate 11).

The general settlement pattern across Polynesia, Patrick Kirch argues, would suggest variants on a 'logistics' growth curve, rising rapidly at first and progressively flattening out with the 'demographic transition from high growth, "density independent" to lowered-growth, "density-dependent" populations' (Kirch 2000, 309-10). There are also reasons to expect a more accentuated version of this logistics curve in the Maori case. On the one hand, the early colonizing populations probably benefited from an exceptional 'protein boom', because of the scale of big game resources available to them across the relatively vast territories of the New Zealand archipelago (Belich 1996, 34-6). On the other, populations in the post-extinctions era probably experienced exceptional food constraints, in comparison to other Polynesian populations with pigs, chickens and a broad, usable repertoire of tropical and sub-tropical edible plants.

Similar considerations apply to the related question of the impact of imported Eurasian diseases on New World populations. There has been an early tendency to generalise about the catastrophic impact of 'virgin soil epidemics' among populations with no previous experience of such diseases, followed by growing

John Fitzpatrick: Food, warfare and the impact of Atlantic capitalism in Aotearoa/New Zealand

scepticism about the immediate impact of disease and more emphasis on longer term patterns of dispossession from the land and established modes of subsistence (Brooks 2001; Kunitz 1994). Once again, there are reasons to believe that – prior to the rapid influx of Europeans after 1840 – Maori should have been less vulnerable to imported diseases than the populations of smaller Polynesian islands. As leading New Zealand demographer Ian Pool explains:

Maori population was dispersed and had a low density. European contact was mainly restricted to ports and other coastal areas... The necessary conditions for the rapid transmission of disease just did not exist in New Zealand prior to the Treaty of Waitangi... [which] set up the mechanisms for the widespread exposure of Maori to imported diseases (Pool 1991, 46).

There are two other crucial variables regarding population patterns over the first seven ‘contact’ decades – population losses from intra-Maori wars and population gains resulting from access to new food sources. Both will be discussed in the next section. However, Pool’s latest estimates for the overall trend between early contact and British annexation fall well short of fatal impact: ‘about 100,000 or even slightly below’ in 1769, to around 70-90,000 in 1840. (Pool 1991, 52). By contrast, subsequent census figures (whatever adjustments may be made for undercounting) indicate very negative consequences from sustained European settlement and Maori loss of land after 1840: 56,049 in 1857-8; 47,330 in 1874; 43,927 in 1886; and 42,113 in 1896, from which point a slow Maori demographic recovery begins (Crosby, A. 1986, 260).

Maori, Atlantic capitalism and the British imperial state

Maori and the ‘offshore frontier’ of Atlantic capitalism: 1790s to 1830s

Leaving aside the isolated visit by Abel Tasman in 1642, the era of European contact may reasonably be said to begin with two English voyages under James Cook in 1769 and 1773-4 and two contemporary French expeditions under Jean de Surville (1769) and Marion de Fresne (1772). European and American sealers and whalers began to appear in the 1790s. The newly established British colony at Sydney also started to

make an impact at this time, notably in demand for cheap raw materials like flax and timber. Anglican and Wesleyan missionaries appeared from 1809 to 1821: by the 1820s both missionary settlements and a settlement servicing the whaling fleets (stores, grog shops, brothels, etc) were established at Kororareka, in the main contact zone of the Bay of Islands in Northland. But even by 1840, when the British government annexed both islands, the more or less permanent European population over the whole of New Zealand is estimated at around 2000 (King 2003, 169). There were thus 70 years of clear 'Maori dominion' between the first major European contacts (and the first introduction of crucial new foodstuffs) and the onset of substantial European settlement, which occurred only *after* the annexation and *after* the Treaty of Waitangi.

The period of accelerating contact from the 1790s to the 1830s coincided with the revolutionary/Napoleonic wars and their immediate aftermath, the 'swing to the east' in British imperial attention following the loss of the American colonies and the decisive opening of a new theatre of international competition in the Pacific. 'In different ways', Christopher Bayly observes

the military, economic and ideological shockwaves impacted on Australia, New Zealand and the Polynesian islands. Some of the huge build-up of European and American naval power was released into the region.

Commercial rivalries during the British 'continental blockade' of Napoleon's empire intensified the search for whale oil in the southern ocean, releasing whalers and 'beachcombers' onto its shores...Here, too, the overspill of European weapons and ideologies combined to bring about internal reorientations of power (Bayly 2004, 100).

This was a period of deliberate imperial advance and 'proconsular despotism' in British policy (Bayly 1989, 5-15): but its consequences on either side of the Tasman were very different. South-eastern Australia was brought under direct British control at the outset of this process and entered the 19th century hosting the most remote of Britain's 'pro-consular despotisms', whose peripheral status relative to Britain's

Asian empire was shown in recurrent fantasies of establishing a 'second Singapore' in the far north of the continent (Blainey 1967, 82-95; Frost 1980, 185-6). However the seas around New Zealand, and the main zones of European-Maori contact on its coasts, remained an open frontier of unregulated mercantilistic competition between British, French and American shipping, with the attentions of these three 'main players' being supplemented by visits from 'Portuguese, Dutch, Canadian, German and Danish ocean whaleships' (Belich 1996, 127-39; Steven 1983, 64-105).

As well as being internationally contested, this south Pacific maritime frontier was also economically important. Most early 'Australian' export commodities – 'sandalwood, pearl shells, seal skins, whale oil and timber' – came from there. (Blainey 1967, 51-2). Whale oil, in particular, was a crucial import for industrializing and urbanizing north Atlantic economies till the mid 19th century. Whale products narrowly outranked wool in Australian exports till around 1834, and since American whalers were the dominant force in the southern whale fishery (Stackpole 1972), this only partially captures their overall importance.

Above all, the demands of Atlantic capitalism on the southwest Pacific region at this point were pre-eminently extractive and *offshore*. They opened up 'overseas' horizons to Maori which had been closed off since early settlement in New Zealand, without producing any corresponding Pakeha demand for Maori land. Maori interaction with this new frontier of Atlantic capitalism started early and developed rapidly. They 'joined whaling ships as soon as they appeared in New Zealand waters' and were already 'travelling overseas and engaging even more directly in international trade' by the 1790s.

Late eighteenth and early nineteenth century journeys to the Pacific Islands, Australia, North and South America, Asia and Europe familiarised Maori with overseas markets, products and economic systems. But such travellers rarely broke ties with kin groups in New Zealand and typically brought back presents for their relatives and chiefs to reaffirm their relationships on their return (Petrie 2002, 2).

Maori and the British imperial state

Whereas Atlantic capitalism impinged upon independent Maoridom from several directions – and through multiple competing agents – in the early contact period, the British imperial state initially presented itself through the medium of the nearest substantial colonial settlement in New South Wales. The penumbra of this original settlement developed as a scattered ‘archipelago’ of coastal enclaves around the perimeter of the Australian continent and outlying islands: Norfolk Island in 1788, Hobart in 1804, Moreton Bay in 1824, Albany in 1826; and three unsuccessful attempts in the Darwin region, Melville Island, Raffles Bay and Port Essington, in 1826, 1827 and 1838 respectively. By 1829, this process had led the British Crown finally to annex the whole continent. At this point the European population was around 56,000, overwhelmingly concentrated in the southeast, with a third of the total in Tasmania alone (Vamplew 1987, 26). Geoffrey Blainey suggests that the claim to the continent should be seen as a derivative of the British interest in the security of the scattering of ‘limpet ports’ clinging to its rim, rather than the other way around. ‘Ironically Britain claimed the whole continent simply to claim a few isolated harbours astride trade routes’ (Blainey 1966, 96).

When Australian historians discuss this early colonial ‘archipelago’, they tend to include all the ‘Australian’ outposts, however tiny and remote, and leave out the ‘New Zealand’ ones. However, the section of the archipelago which experienced most consistent interaction through to the 1830s was the cluster of littoral contact zones on either side of the Tasman ‘ditch’.¹ Indeed, on the criterion of active engagement by substantial local populations with the global economic demands of Atlantic capitalism, the Northland zone around Kororaraka must be ranked among the top three centres, behind Sydney and Hobart.

Direct contacts between North Island Maori and the colonial government in Sydney, originally mediated through the outpost of Norfolk Island, began in the later 1790s. They were mainly triggered by British interest in establishing secure regional sources of timber and flax, which at this point in the war with France remained a major

strategic concern of the British navy. Subsequently, this strategic imperative lapsed and it was not until the 1830s, when whaling and other shipping activity in New Zealand waters was reaching its peak, that the prospect of extension of British imperial control to New Zealand became a serious one. Political pressure for intervention was growing in Sydney and London: to regulate this 'anarchic' maritime frontier of Atlantic capitalism; to head off any possibility of French annexation and/or settlement; and to pre-empt the prospect of large-scale land deals being done directly between Maori chiefs and groups like Edward Wakefield's New Zealand Company - by-passing the potential claims of the British Crown.

By this stage, however, a very different imperative was shaping global imperial policy in London: the 'Colonial office's most consistent principle: parsimony, an extreme reluctance to incur new costs' (Belich 1996, 182). Thus when James Busby - appointed 'British resident' in 1832 - wanted to contest the territorial claims of a French adventurer, he resorted to orchestrating a 'Declaration of the Independence of New Zealand' by a 'Confederation of United Tribes' (King 2003, 154). But Busby's real interest was in promoting British annexation, not Maori independence, and in this cause he played the 'fatal impact' line for all it was worth. In an influential letter to the Colonial Secretary in 1837, he portrayed a race in rapid decline as a result of war deaths, disease, and 'a very general recklessness and indifference to life' - a decline 'which promises, at no very distant period, to leave the country destitute of a single aboriginal inhabitant' (cited in Crosby, A. 1986, 250).

When in 1839, the British government succumbed to the chorus of political, economic and humanitarian demands for annexation, its representative William Hobson was instructed 'to negotiate a voluntary transfer of sovereignty from the Maori to the British Crown'. (King 2003, 157). In practice, he obtained the formal assent of only some North Island chiefs to a document whose Maori text seriously misrepresented the nature of British sovereignty claims, evidently to make it more likely to secure Maori assent. Moreover, reports by French Catholic missionaries on the *oral* component of the Waitangi proceedings suggest that Maori chiefs believed that they would 'preserve their power and possessions', had 'not the slightest intention of

ceding their territory or their sovereignty' and did 'not want the governor to extend his power over the natives but only over the Europeans' (cited in Belich 1996, 196). In any event, while negotiations on the Treaty were continuing across the North Island, news that New Zealand Company settlers had proclaimed their own government at Port Nicholson convinced Hobson that he needed to short-circuit the consultation process. On 21 May 1840, he claimed the North Island on the ground of cession (by the chiefs who had signed the Treaty) and the south 'on the basis of discovery' (Owens 1981, 50-52).

The annexation of New Zealand seems to be a classic exemplar of the 'excentric' model of mid-19th century British imperialism. It involved one European agent - the British state - moving to pre-empt territorial claims from other European agents, some of whom were its own citizens. Neither strategic nor economic arguments for annexation were strong enough to be convincing in themselves at the imperial centre, and the credibility gap was filled by fatal impact arguments for humanitarian intervention to protect Maori interests, converting annexation into a 'fatal necessity' (Adams 1977). Whether knowingly or not, proponents of this argument were engaged in a self fulfilling prophecy. 'Although the country was annexed largely because of increased British migration, the prospect of annexation had in itself fostered migration'. British rule was to be 'imposed in order to rescue indigenous peoples. However, in 1840, the only threat from which New Zealand needed to be rescued was the threat of uncontrolled British migration' (Owens 1981, 53).

Potatoes, muskets and the legacies of the 'potato/musket wars'

Political geography and political economy

In addition to opening up new overseas horizons, European contact before annexation had involved transfers of resources or 'technologies' with profound consequences for Maori capacities to manipulate (and open new frontiers in) their immediate New Zealand environment. This section concentrates on the impact of new foods and weapons: the impact of new religion and literacy is ignored, as *relatively* tangential to the themes of the paper, despite its obvious wider significance.

New foods introduced with European contact included not just ‘Old World’ or Eurasian crops and livestock but also ‘New World’ crops – a secondary version of the original ‘Columbian Exchange’ transmission of the latter from the Americas to Europe (Crosby, A. 1972; 1986, 228-30). Eurasian livestock, above all sheep, were to be of enormous importance to eventual Pakeha involvement in the global economy, and the pig (which replaced a crucial Polynesian asset lost in the relocation to New Zealand) was enormously important to Maori from the outset. But as regards the transmission of plants, the most important for the Maori were the New World/Amerindian cultivars.

These included a sweet potato which was superior to the kumara; corn (not effectively introduced till the 1790s); and above all the white potato. The great significance of the white potato for the New Zealand climate lay in its combination of cool climate (and high altitude) tolerance with high calorific yield in comparison to major European staples like wheat and barley, as exemplified in Table 1.

**Table 1: Varieties of Old and New World Staples
(millions of calories per hectare)**

Chief American Crops		Chief Old World Crops	
Maize	7.3	Rice	7.3
Potatoes	7.5	Wheat	4.2
Sweet potatoes/yams	7.1	Barley	5.1
Manioc	9.9	Oats	5.5

Source: Crosby, A. 1972, 175.

The Maori almost certainly hold the record for the most rapid adoption of the potato as a food staple outside the Americas.² With their long history as skilled cultivators of root vegetables, coupled with the intense constraints encountered trying to adapt a subtropical plant repertoire the colder regions of New Zealand, they were uniquely

well placed to grasp the significance of the new Amerindian import. What took centuries in the introduction of the potato into Europe seems to have taken only decades in New Zealand. European explorers introduced it around 1770 and by 1805 'immense quantities' of potatoes were reportedly being produced by Maori in the northern Bay of Islands. By 1813, large Maori potato plantations were reported at Bluff, in the extreme south of the South Island, the major zone of surviving seal populations and of the new European seal fisheries aimed at the global market (Biggs 1990, 16).

By the latter date, potatoes and pigs were already well established, along with flax and timber, as leading items of Maori trade with Pakeha whalers and sealers. Iron and iron tools, some of which doubled as weapons, had originally been prominent on the European side, but muskets were already emerging as the dominant currency by the early 1810s. A new cycle of intra-Maori warfare (the 'Musket Wars') set off by this development had largely been completed by the early 1830s, with muskets and the new military tactics associated with their use now diffused among all the major Maori groups.

At least three levels of the relationship between the new foods and the new military dynamic seem worth distinguishing. First, and most obviously, they gave Maori leaders control over new resources which could be traded for muskets. Perhaps the most graphic demonstration of the revolutionary impact on Maori society of the coincidence of new food sources and new military technologies is contained in early reports of food/firearms 'exchange ratios'. A summary of these reported ratios is given below for the years 1814-1827, a period of maximum instability, as the new weapons had begun to transform Maori warfare but had not yet been evenly distributed over the competing tribes and regions.

**Table 2: Food/firearms exchange ratio 1810s/1820s
(cost of one musket)**

Year	Pigs	Baskets potatoes
1814-15	8	150

1818-19	25	No data
c 1820	15	200
1827	10	120

Source: McKinnon 1998, plate 28.

Second, the potato in particular provided a more concentrated and portable food source than previously available, while the 'agricultural revolution' of this period also produced for the first time 'a reliable surplus', allowing tribes to 'replace absent warriors in the home economy'. In both these ways, it made possible more sustained, long-distance military campaigns, which indeed ranged the length and breadth of the two main islands. There was even one expedition to the Chatham islands which virtually wiped out the Moriori - a group of early offshoot Maori colonists who had developed in isolation for perhaps 5-6 centuries and had missed both 'military revolutions' experienced by Maori in the main islands. Potatoes seem so central to this process, Belich comments, that "'Potato Wars'" might therefore be more accurate than "Musket Wars'" (1995, 158-9; see also Crosby, A. 1999, 373).

Third, the wars must surely have spread the cultivation of potatoes much more rapidly than would otherwise have been the case, and they were also accompanied by migrations which, Pool suggests, may have been 'more important proportionately' than any subsequent Maori migrations 'until the rapid urbanization after..World War II' (1991, 50-53). Had they not been followed so closely by British intervention and wholesale expropriation of Maori land, the middle term effect of the wars might well have been *to stimulate Maori population growth*, and certainly *to extend the area of effective Maori occupation* across the archipelago.³ It is worth noting here that recent scholarship on this aspect of the 'fatal impact' thesis displays a similar trend to arguments about disease, with estimates of deaths caused by the wars themselves now tending towards 20,000 instead of the 80,000 peddled by advocates of British intervention at the time. Indeed, Pool suggests that the major demographic impact of the wars may 'have been more in terms of internal migration than deaths' (1991, 43-44).

However, British intervention did follow almost immediately, and in this context the most obvious demographic consequence of the Musket Wars was to prepare important regional bridgeheads for subsequent European occupation. Two cases in particular are worth highlighting. First, there was severe depopulation in the Tamaki isthmus, the heart of what became the Auckland region. It had been the 'most densely settled region in [pre-contact] Aotearoa', R. C. Stone claims: but by 1840, 'although... still the epicentre of a wide region of heavy Maori settlement, the isthmus itself had few native inhabitants'. Moreover, the customary owners, severely weakened by decades of upheaval, 'were particularly anxious that [Hobson] set up the seat of government in their district ... This state of affairs is directly attributable to the musket wars' (2001, 81).

Second, the most profound relative impacts may have come from northern invasions of the thinly populated South Island. There was substantial depopulation in the northeast coastal strip which had previously constituted the limit of Polynesian horticulture; and the far southern Ngai Tahu, the nominal owners of most of the island, had also 'been badly damaged by [northern] invasions in the 1830s and numbered less than 2000 people'. Between 1844 and 1857, this group 'sold off almost their whole island in a series of shady deals... partly because they feared that, if they did not... [their northern competitors] would (Belich 1990, 82).

The lack of substantial Maori populations in the south - which provided ideal conditions for the introduction of sheep and turned out to possess most of the easily worked alluvial gold fields - became a critical part of the geopolitical and economic equation in the middle and later 19th century. It helped to counter the impact of Maori military and political resistance in the north, and swung the balance in favour of economically and politically viable European occupation at a point when this might otherwise have been a close-run thing. Christchurch and Dunedin initially outpaced Auckland in population, with Wellington a distant fourth, as 'the south quickly became, at derisory cost, an area of flourishing European development outside the sphere of effective Maori resistance' (Gardner 1980, 62).

Military strategy and 'state-making'

If considered in the light of Mann's argument about the relationship between state-formation and ecological/territorial 'caging', the Maori-European contact period reproduced in around 100 years a pattern played out over 4-6 centuries in the original Polynesian colonization of New Zealand: a period of dramatic *expansion* of resources and colonization opportunities followed by one of dramatic contraction and caging.

The greatest single instrument of caging was to be the British imperial state and army. However, a significant caging dynamic also emerged with the general diffusion of new foods and weapons towards the end of the Musket Wars: and it worth asking how far this period of *intra-Maori conflict* contributed to the effectiveness of *Maori resistance to European encroachments* a few decades later. I begin with the narrower question of military strategy, and in particular the relative balance between 'attack' and 'defence'.

At first glance, one might assume that Maori armed resistance in the post-annexation period *must* have benefited strategically from the experience of a major round of wars with European weapons immediately prior to annexation. However, the British and colonial forces which Maori faced in the 1860s were not just superior in numbers but also equipped with the results of a mid-century 'revolution' in military technology: breech-loading, repeating rifles; breech-loading and much more powerful artillery, steam-powered, armour-plated ships with qualitatively new capacities to destroy shore defences (Headrick 1981, 17-57, 83-104).⁴ If the Maori warrior ethos had been reinforced by Musket wars 'lessons' that firearms were most advantageous in attack, they would have been encouraged to face British forces on open ground, with disastrous results.

As Belich points out, British commanders in the New Zealand Wars consistently tried to provoke this outcome but were usually frustrated. Maori leaders had 'to strike

attack and open battle off their list of tactical options', concentrating instead 'on a new type of fortification' which 'the British had to attack..to achieve their objectives'. Belich calls these fortifications 'modern *pa*'. They were essentially disposable systems of earthworks - which the Maori built in quantity for specific purposes to defend key strategic positions.- combining 'anti-artillery bunkers' and complex sets of concealed firing positions reached by concealed 'communication trenches'. They were more sophisticated than trench systems produced in the American Civil War or Boer War but 'strikingly similar to the pattern on the Western Front in 1914-18' (Belich 1988, 294-8).

As noted above, however, the early Musket Wars seemed to have spectacularly demonstrated that European firearms advantaged offensive warfare. To understand how this early 'lesson' could be transformed by the end of the wars into one about the advantages of defence, it is important to refer back to the crucial relationship between warfare, social organization and food systems among pre-contact Maori. Unlike many indigenous peoples, such as Australian aboriginals, Maori, appear to have no strong food-related need for weapons capable of killing large, fast moving game at a distance. On the other hand, the environmental caging associated with their limited agricultural repertoire had placed a premium on the defence of fixed territorial positions. This pattern of food-related imperatives appears to have been reflected in a 'basic dichotomy' in pre-contact Maori weaponry, between well made and deadly weapons for hand-to-hand combat and projectile weapons which were expendable, 'relatively ineffective and crudely made'. This dichotomy, Belich suggests, 'must have curtailed guerrilla tactics' and encouraged set piece battles, at least 'when both sides thought they could win'. However, projectile weapons would have come into their own in the most important of all set piece battles in the late pre-contact era: defence of *pa*. Traditional fortified *pa* were typically on elevated sites, and the use of 'ditches, banks, terraces, palisades and fighting stages' ensured that 'storming parties would face defenders as much as ten metres above them'- with crude projectiles, including rocks, hurled by the defenders becoming lethal indeed. (1996, 163-4).

Given that neither hunting nor warfare had prioritised accuracy with long range projectiles, it is no surprise that Maori were described as poor shots by Europeans who observed their earliest dealings with firearms. Their accuracy improved once they acquired sufficient guns and powder to practise target shooting: but more important in this context, they rapidly adopted the European technique of firing muskets in co-ordinated volleys. At the beginning of the Musket Wars, when the attacking side had a monopoly of firearms and the defenders were still relying on *pa* constructed in the traditional manner, this technique would have drastically reversed the former advantage of the defence - and some of the greatest slaughters of these wars appear to have come when major *pa* were taken in this fashion (Stone 2001, 105-6).

However, firing in volleys typically favoured the defence in European warfare, and once firearms had diffused widely enough among the Maori tribes, this logic started to assert itself there as well. Construction of *pa* also began to change to accommodate the fact that fighting from elevated and highly visible platforms had become a recipe not for security but for disaster. Stockades were covered with 'bullet-proof flax matting' and 'pa builders...concentrated more on earthworks, notably constructing carefully placed rifle pits and trenches, with inter-connecting saps' (Stone 2001, 122; Belich 1996, 162).

In his early, landmark work on the New Zealand Wars, Belich was concerned to establish both the modernity of the military challenge faced by the Maori and the modernity of their military/political response to it, and seemed relatively unimpressed with the continuities between early patterns of Maori military organization and their later achievements with the 'modern *pa*'. In his more recent work, he acknowledges the later 'musket *pa*' as 'a transitional stage between the traditional *pa* that had preceded them and the modern *pa* that succeeded them from 1845' (1996, 162). I think there is a case for pushing this continuity theme back even into the pre-contact period. In a purely military sense, it is clear that the advent of firearms catapulted 19th century Maori into a radically different world. But in a broader sociological sense, a long-standing tradition of substantial, collective

'earthworks' - dictated by the demanding environment for Maori horticulture in the pre-contact period - may have contributed to Maori engineering achievements in 'trench warfare' in the period of the New Zealand Wars.

The caging theme may also cast light on broader political continuities between Maori organization in the Musket Wars and in the subsequent New Zealand Wars. The former were explained by Maori to missionaries and other Pakeha in terms of a tangle of long accumulated tribal payback grievances, and this interpretation seems influential in the still limited specialist studies of the Musket Wars today (e.g. Crosby, R. 1999). However, as noted above, the period of maximum instability, as muskets diffused throughout the main inhabited regions of the archipelago, was only around 15 years, and was concluded by the early 1830s, well before the Treaty of Waitangi and the British annexation. Beneath the 'bloody kaleidoscope' of individual conflicts, Belich suggests, it is possible to distinguish a crude regional pattern. 'At one level...they moved in three great spasms: Northland [the first main contact zone] impacting on Waikato, Waikato impacting on its neighbours, and these neighbours impacting on the rest of the country' (Belich 1995, 165).

The middle term in this sequence is the most interesting for this argument. The powerful Waikato tribes were crucial to the development of the state-like 'King Movement' in the post-annexation era and Te Wherewhero - their great war leader in the Musket Wars - became the first Maori king with the title King Potatau I. They also seem to have been the most territorially grounded of the major players in the Musket Wars. They attacked their coastal neighbours, apparently to gain regular access to trade with Pakeha shipping and weapons supplies: but were less involved in the kind of long-distance attacks which Northland tribes had made on them or which their neighbours in turn made towards the south (McKinnon 1998, plate 29). On the one hand, these attacks on neighbours are intelligible in terms of generic 'conflict model' assumptions about geopolitical and economic motives for warfare: on the other, Waikato passed up the opportunity for a major revenge attack on the original Northland aggressors at a stage when an expanded flow of weapons had shifted the inter-tribal military balance in their favour (Belich 1995, 165).

Since the Waikato basin also seems to have supported the greatest *inland* Maori settlement in the late pre-contact era, the demographic situation of the Waikato tribes, and of their neighbours further inland, should have been especially affected by the diffusion of new foodstuffs not subject to the rigid climatic and geographical constraints of pre-contact Polynesian horticulture. The tribes of this region would thus seem prime candidates for the interplay between ecological caging, inter-group pressure and state-formation postulated by Mann. This hypothesis is supported by the periodization of state-like trends among North Island Maori proposed by the anthropologist Peter Cleave. The principal areas of armed resistance to the British government and settlers, he argues, were ones which had been particularly affected by inter-tribal pressure over the preceding century. In particular, the 'ethnohistory of the King movement from the early 18th century would appear to tend consistently towards unicentric forms of power' (1983, 60-61).

Post-annexation resistance, the King Movement and the new geography of 'caging'

The erosion of independent Maoridom

'In the twenty years after 1840.. there were three New Zealands', Belich argues: 'Aotearoa, or independent Maoridom; the persisting Old New Zealand interface [between Maori and Pakeha]; and the New Zealand of mass European settlement' (1996, 192). By the later 1860s, the third New Zealand had gained the upper hand and this process accelerated dramatically over the next two decades. In 1840, however, Pakeha settlers were vastly outnumbered by a Maori population armed with, experienced in, and organized for the collective use of, European weapons. Initially, therefore, settlement grew only with the consent and even encouragement of most Maori, who had been conditioned to believe in the value of co-operative economic dealings with the Europeans. 'Maori were the midwives of the new towns, financing them by selling land cheaply, and ranking with or above the New Zealand Company as promoters of European settlement' (1996, 196).

Obviously, this initial Maori approach cannot simply be attributed to supposedly generic 'economic' incentives. First, in an intensely competitive social order, control of 'one's own' Pakeha had become a major 'currency' of tribal competition for prestige (*mana*) - just as control of large supplies of muskets had been a generation earlier (Belich 1990, 80-2; Parsonson 1980, 52-59). Second, one immediate legacy of the Musket Wars was that militarily weaker groups, like the Auckland tribes, regarded the proximity of Pakeha settlement as a form of insurance against renewed attack from stronger neighbors. Third, ownership of attractive areas of land was often disputed among various Maori groups, and weaker parties in particular might be attracted to having their claims validated and rewarded by selling within the new legal system backed by the Pakeha government.

Nonetheless, it seems ridiculous to deny that economic calculations, broadly understood, were a pervasive background element in Maori behaviour. To understand the broader context of such calculations, Belich suggests, one should recognize that behind the cheap price involved in the immediate transfer of land to establish new towns lay a 'tacit price': in the sense of Maori assumptions that they would continue to control the hinterlands to those towns, and remain the chief suppliers of food and other essential resources to them (1996, 200-203). In this regard, the pre-annexation experience of dealing with a pattern of global demand from Atlantic capitalism which focused on *extractive and offshore* industries seems crucial.

This had provided major new economic and 'technology transfer' opportunities for some Maori, without making any significant direct claims on Maori land. But it had also fed military competition among Maori: both through selective technology exchange and also by raising a limited number of geographical locations to special strategic prominence, as points from which it was possible to control a large proportion of trade with Pakeha shipping. The early development of the new towns promised a wider diffusion of economic contact zones; and though it involved a much more substantial European presence *onshore*, it was one which could still seem controllable from a Maori perspective.

This was not necessarily a naïve expectation. Leaving aside the continuing reality of Maori military power, the major global exports of New Zealand were to come from straightforwardly extractive industries virtually until the end of the 19th century. Maori were already central to one crucial onshore extractive industry – the trade in timber and forest products – and there is no obvious reason why they could not have adapted successfully, both as suppliers and as direct participants, to new onshore industries like gold mining and extensive pastoralism. The pressure for major Pakeha encroachments on Maori land in the early post-annexation decades came not from the global demands of Atlantic capitalism but from the demands of local settlers. As Belich observes, the key to the settler economy up to the late-80s/early 90s depression was the ‘progress industry’, fuelled by the massive inflow of overseas capital for economic infrastructure and outright speculation based on the promise of great things to come (2001, 17-19). The key to the progress industry, in turn, was the cheap appropriation, in very large quantities, of Maori land. If that was to be achieved under the local balance of military power prevailing in the immediate post-annexation period, the cause of settler expansion would have to be taken up by the British imperial state.

This is in practice what happened, with a ‘progressive ratcheting-up of intervention in New Zealand, from cheap to extremely expensive’. In 1840, Hobson estimated establishment costs for the colony at around £4000 and ‘his armed forces consisted of a dozen drunk police constables and a small warship’. By 1864, New Zealand was costing London £500,000 a year and the establishment of imperial troops was larger than in Britain (Belich 1996, 181-2). It was also over 25 times as large as in Australia and over 15% of the establishment in India. – which had a population at that point of around 190 million (McKinnon 1998, plate 38).. The main catalyst for this military expansion was the emergence, in the later 1850s, of organized Maori resistance to further land-selling and especially the territorial challenge of the King movement.

By the onset of the main phase of the New Zealand wars, the demographic balance was already moving decisively against the Maori, and their power position was furthered weakened by major new developments in the military technologies

available to their opponents. Even so, it 'required 18,000 British troops', with extensive artillery, an armoured gunboat to force the Waikato river, and 'careful preparation and logistical organization to defeat them' in the critical Waikato campaign against the King movement forces. 'On the extant record...this was a unique feat of resistance to nineteenth-century European expansion' (Belich 1988, 291).

The King Movement and the New Zealand Wars

The King movement was by no means the only source of Maori military resistance in the New Zealand Wars. The main phase of the wars began in Taranaki in 1860 and resumed there after the Waikato campaign of 1864-65. There were also important armed challenges – of a more or less guerilla character – by the Maori 'prophet' leaders Te Kooti and Titokowaru towards the end of the 1860s. However, the King movement warrants special emphasis in this argument, for a series of related reasons.

First, it was built on the pre-existing platform of the exceptionally large and multi-tier Waikato alliance, whose top level included three important constellations of tribes: 'Waikato proper', closest to the coast and to Auckland, and Ngati Maniapoto and Ngati Haua further inland. Second, these core tribes had not signed the Treaty of Waitangi, which 'was avoided by Te Wherowhero [the future king Potatau 1] almost as a matter beyond serious consideration' (Cleave 1983, 58). Third, though Waikato proper had rapidly developed strong economic links to the new Pakeha economy – becoming the leading suppliers of Auckland and accumulating more flour mills than any other tribal group – they were able to do this at 'arms length', without surrendering any substantial portion of their own land (Petrie 2004, 17; Belich 1996, 216). Fourth, the 'strategic position of Potatau's Waikato tribes' around a major river basin meant that 'they barred the gateway to European expansion into the center of the North Island. This meant that Potatau and not a coastal chief must be king'. (Sorrenson 1965, p 45). Fifth, the King movement represented a major supra-tribal organization which challenged the British crown's pre-emptive claims on New

Zealand land in a directly territorial manner, by delineating an *aukati* (boundary) on the lower Waikato beyond which it would oppose land sales by force if necessary. Finally, at its peak, it was also able to effectively support Maori resistance outside its own heartlands. The first Taranaki war began as a local conflict, 'but in keeping with the basic issues at stake, the main combatants were the British empire and the King Movement' (Belich 1990, 89). Only when the latter had been seriously weakened by the major British assault in the Waikato were government forces able to prevail in Taranaki.

The crucial link between military innovation and political innovation on the Maori side of the New Zealand Wars is shown very clearly in Belich's account of the Taranaki and Waikato campaigns. The Maori were outnumbered by between three and five to one, he calculates, but 'if these numbers were converted to man-hours, the discrepancy would double, for the Maori were part-time soldiers against full-time soldiers'. Sustained Maori resistance thus required a complex process of rotating 'call-ups' to allow a maximum fighting force to be deployed without completely disrupting the agricultural base of Maori society. Moreover, the distinctive defensive strategy of the 'modern pa' meant that a great deal of time and effort had to be devoted to engineering activities as well as to direct fighting. The logistical and organizational achievements of the King Movement have sometimes been underestimated, Belich observes, because it displayed few of the institutions of a European-style state.

In fact, it mobilised in war a higher proportion of its resources than most European states were capable of at the time, though its methods were much less formal, and by 1863 encompassed the majority of Maori, though practical factors meant not all could fight for it. The movement was only an anti-landselling 'league' in a secondary sense: its primary purpose in opposing land sales was to protect Maori independence...The South Island Maori who sent ammunition, the Ngapuhi who protected escaped Kingite prisoners of war, and the warriors who marched to distant Waikato to support traditional enemies – all did so, in the words of a Urewera chief, 'to show sympathy for

John Fitzpatrick: Food, warfare and the impact of Atlantic capitalism in Aotearoa/New Zealand the island in trouble'. Using the term 'nationalist' for this phenomenon may be somewhat deceptive and Eurocentric, but not using it is even more so (1990, 87-88).

The new regional geography of Maori identity

After the government victory in the Waikato campaign, most of the land in the lower and central Waikato basin was confiscated for Pakeha civilian and military settlement. The King movement forces withdrew beyond a new *aukati* which was effectively the historical dividing line between 'Waikato proper' and their upriver Maniapoto allies. The movement now became much more decisively an *inland power*, whose reduced 'heartland..still stretched from the upper Waikato to the upper Wanganui, and became known as the "King Country"'.⁵ This remained the largest Maori 'centre of resistance' after the wars and functioned like an independent state well into the 1880s, making and enforcing its own laws, conducting its own affairs, sheltering fugitives from Pakeha justice, and killing Europeans who persistently crossed its borders without permission (Belich 1990, 93-4;1988, 306).

Its state-like character is reflected in the relative detachment of its leadership arrangements from traditional tribal affiliations. Potatau's son Tawhiao had become king on the latter's death in 1860 and retained that position till 1881, despite the loss of his own tribal lands in the mid-60s Waikato campaign. Conversely, though he and his followers accepted a government invitation to return to 'reserved' land in the Waikato in 1881, the King country continued as a distinct entity, possibly down to 1890. Though the area it controlled is open to dispute, an 1884 survey 'indicates that it encompassed 7,000 square miles...Thus, in the late nineteenth century, an independent Maori state nearly two-thirds the size of Belgium existed in the middle of the North Island. Not all historians have noticed it' (Belich, 1988, 306).

Belich claims that other territorial 'centers of resistance' also functioned effectively as regional Maori states: in central Taranaki, home to the most developed Maori ideology and practice of non-violent resistance; and in the more remote and

mountainous Urewera, whose tribes had been largely isolated from European contact before 1860 and retained a large measure of practical independence up to the turn of the century. The geographical spread of these territorial centers helped to create a space for the more mobile guerilla resistance movements which dominated the closing stages of the wars; and the centers of resistance in general created space for continuing Maori autonomy in 'centres of collaboration' as well. With the departure of most imperial troops in 1866, the support of 'collaborationist' tribes became very important to government military success against the guerilla prophet leaders, and they were able to exact a considerable price in terms of their own continuing regional autonomy.



Source: Mackinnon 1998, Plate 33

Though this complex of factors, 'Maori autonomy persisted long after the wars, and perhaps the reason for this was less Pakeha benevolence than latent Maori military power, and the after effects of formidable resistance' (Belich 1988, 306). Equally important for this paper is the long-term political geography of Maori identity which these regionally specific patterns of autonomy made possible – whose implications in the central North Island are illustrated by Map 2. The large shaded area indicates a zone in which almost exclusively Maori place names persisted into the 20th century, while the penumbra of dual names shows cases in which English names originally replaced Maori but were eventually abandoned. This zone, located squarely between the two largest urban clusters in twentieth century New Zealand, was the major source of the mass migrations which, between 1930 and 1970, took Maori in large numbers back into 'an environment from which [they] had largely been absent since the 1860s – the town' (McKinnon 1998, plate 91). Since 'Polynesian horticulture...[had been] impossible in central North Island' in the pre-contact period (Davidson 1984, 35), the eventual role of this region as a major redoubt of Maori identity is among other things a tribute to the power of the new foodstuffs they had gained access to at the start of the contact period – above all the potato.

Conclusion

This paper has highlighted the exceptional achievements of a substantial section of North Island Maori in mounting state-like resistance to British power in the middle and later 19th century: specific military achievements, in defending substantial territories against professional military forces equipped with advanced military technologies and logistical techniques; and more general political achievements, in establishing supra-tribal patterns of territorial organization which persisted after military defeat in the central conflicts of the New Zealand Wars. I have also suggested that it is this exceptional resistance on the Maori side, not exceptional benevolence on the British side, which provides the most plausible explanation for a relatively better climate of race relations in New Zealand compared with other settler colonial societies.

In one sense, Maori political and military achievements in the 19th century were 'exceptionally exceptional', given the extent to which Maori had been confined by a stone age technology and a seriously inadequate food repertoire before 1769. At another level, however, I have argued that these later achievements may be directly grounded in important features of the pre-contact *longue duree*: in the general pattern of strong territorial 'caging' to particular locations and sets of resources; and in the specific long-standing tradition of substantial, collective 'earthworks' associated with pre-contact Maori horticulture.

As regards the more immediate background to the New Zealand wars, a central theme of the paper has been the length and complexity of the 'contact era' in European-Maori relations. This should not be reduced to a few decades of 'pre-history' in the early 1800s, before a decisive European takeover in 1840. Instead, it extended over more than a century, and involved a complex process of collaboration and conflict between two agricultural, militaristic, maritime, colonizing and trading peoples who valued similar resources and 'contended' for a common territorial space in remarkably similar ways.

To begin with, there were 2-3 decades following the visits of Cook and his French counterparts in which Maori were able to absorb the momentous implications of the potato without any significant follow-up European contact. Then there were over four decades of increasingly intense Maori interaction with a relatively stateless and 'offshore' version of Atlantic capitalism; and even with the establishment of a growing 'onshore' presence of both European settlement and the British imperial state after 1840, 'independent Maoridom' remained a major countervailing presence and power in the North Island until the early 1860s. Only through the wars of that decade, and through a major military intervention by the imperial state, was the balance decisively shifted in favour of open-ended settler expansion, with significant pockets of independent Maoridom persisting up to the last decades of the century.

Such an emphasis upon the distinctive resources of independent Maoridom, either in the contact era or the pre-contact *longue duree*, is incompatible with a 'Waitangi-

centric' explanation for the subsequent pattern of European-indigenous relations in New Zealand. To begin with, there is nothing distinctive to the New Zealand context about the treaty itself, at least in its English-language version. 'Treaties with indigenous peoples have been not unusual in the history of British imperial expansion. Most have been shelved or forgotten' (Orange 1987, 1). As M. P. K. Sorrenson shows, the core articles of the English text, dealing with sovereignty and the pre-emptive rights of the Crown to purchase Maori land, were 'deeply embedded in an older colonial policy, drawn from different parts of the empire' (1991, 29). The one genuinely distinctive feature of the treaty was the resort by its local framers to a 'creative reworking of the English provisions into a saleable Maori text': but this merely returns the debate to the wider questions about the importance of independent Maoridom canvassed above.

An alternative line on the special significance of the 'Waitangi moment' - emphasizing not the content but the 'spirit' of the Treaty - is exemplified in Keith Sinclair's argument that the primary cause of 'better race relations' in New Zealand was the change in 'Anglo-Saxon attitudes at the time New Zealand was annexed'. The Treaty was not crucial in itself, but it 'merits the importance traditionally attached to it' as 'an act symbolic of this new spirit in race relations', stemming from the anti-slavery movement, the Aboriginal Protection Society and the general advance of Evangelical concerns in British colonial policy. (1971, 126).

Even leaving aside the counter proposition that racism and the anti-slavery movement advanced side by side in the British political climate of this period (Bayly 1989, 7), it is clear that this line on the spirit of the treaty shifts the terrain of the master narrative even more decisively towards general trends at the British imperial core and away from the specifics of the New Zealand environment and the Maori social order. Questions about legacies from the pre-contact *longue duree* to post-contact Maori social structure become completely irrelevant, while the lengthy process of Maori engagement with Atlantic capitalism before 1840 is relevant only in regard to the 'fatal impact' narrative, which Evangelicals took the lead in promoting at the time. Organized Maori political and military resistance after annexation - from

the King movement and other sources – is marginalized in comparison to the efforts of the British government and its local agents to contain settler greed for land and implement ‘a new and better attitude to “aborigines”’ in the New Zealand colony (Sinclair 1971, 126). Indeed, the maximum ‘visibility’ for Maori as agents in such a narrative comes precisely at the Waitangi moment, when *some* North Island chiefs signed a document whose English language text entailed the surrender of their sovereignty to the British crown.

If Waitangi remains a key point of reference in contemporary New Zealand politics, the cause is to be found neither in the treaty itself nor in the application of it by British imperial authorities, but rather in Maori success in endowing the treaty with retrospective significance by military and political resistance during and after the New Zealand Wars. Only by focussing on long-term structural trends in the Maori social order can one account for the fact that British annexation eventually had to be backed up by a major professional military intervention, to deal with a relatively late burst of military resistance by a Maori population which had allegedly been on the verge of disappearing as a race.

¹ When I gave an earlier version of this paper at the Wellington Symposium of Gastronomy in 2001, I was told that New Zealanders called the Tasman sea ‘the ditch’ and Australia ‘the West Island’.

² However, they are not even mentioned in important works specifically devoted to the spread of the potato: Salaman (1985) and Zuckermann (1998).

³ The force which invaded the Chathams reportedly loaded 70 tons of seed potatoes onto the European ship they commissioned for the purpose. (Crosby, 1999, 373).

⁴ Breech loading rifles were not standard with British forces till 1865, after the Waikato campaign, Belich notes. However, because of British numerical superiority, Maori forces still confronted a problem of ‘overwhelming enemy firepower’ throughout (1988, 294).

⁵ It retained a river port at Kawhia, on ‘Waikato territory that had survived conquest’. This was ‘an old New Zealand port throughout the 1870s, like Kororareka in 1830’ (Belich ,1996,263).

References

- Abrams, P. 1982. *Historical Sociology*, Somerset: Open books.
- Adams, P. 1977. *Fatal Necessity: British Intervention in New Zealand 1830-1847*. Auckland: Auckland University Press.
- Bayly, C. A. 1989. *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830*. London: Longman.
- Bayly, C. A. 2004. *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Belich, J. 1988. *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict*. Auckland: Penguin.
- Belich J. 1990. 'The Governors and the Maori (1840-1872).' In *The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand*, ed. K. Sinclair. Auckland: Oxford University Press.
- Belich, J. 1996. *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders from Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century*. Auckland: Allen Lane.
- Belich, J. 2001. *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders from the 1880s to the year 2000*, Auckland: Allen Lane.
- Biggs, B. 1990. 'In the Beginning.' In *The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand*, ed. K. Sinclair. Auckland: Oxford University Press.
- Blainey, G., 1967. *The Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia's History*, Melbourne: Sun Books.
- Brooks, F. 2001. 'The Impact of Disease.' In *Technology, Disease and Colonial Conquests, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries: Essays Reappraising the Guns and Germs Theories*, ed. G. Raudzens. Leiden: Brill.
- Braudel, F. 1983. *The Structures of Everyday Life: The Limits of the Possible*. London: Collins.
- Cleave, P. 1983. 'Tribal and State-Like Formations in New Zealand Maori Society, 1750-1900.' *Journal of Polynesian Society* 92:51-92.
- Collins, R. 1975. *Conflict Sociology: Towards an Explanatory Science*. New York: Academic Press.
- Crosby, A. W. 1972. *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*. Westport: Greenwood Press.

- Crosby, A. W. 1986. *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crosby, R. D. 1999. *The Musket Wars: A History of Inter-Iwi Conflict 1806-45* Auckland: Reed Books.
- Davidson, Janet. 1987. 'The *Paa Maaori* Revisited.' *Journal of Polynesian Society*, 96:7-26.
- Davidson, Janet. 1984. *The Prehistory of New Zealand*. Auckland: Longman Paul.
- Davidson, Janet. 1981. 'The Polynesian Foundation.' In *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, ed. W. H. Oliver. Wellington: Oxford University Press.
- Frost, Alan. 1980. *Convicts and Empire: A Naval Question, 1776-1811*. Melbourne. Oxford University Press.
- Gardner, W. J. 1981. 'A Colonial Economy.' In *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, ed. W. H. Oliver. Wellington: Oxford University Press.
- Headrick, D. R. 1981. *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- King, M. 2003. *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, Auckland: Penguin Books.
- Kirch, Patrick. 2000. *On the Road to the Winds: An Archaeological History of the Pacific Islands Before European Contact*. Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Kunitz, S. J. 1994. *Disease and Social Diversity: The European Impact on the Health of Non-Europeans*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Leach, F. and A. Boocock. 1993. *Prehistoric Fish Catches in New Zealand*. British Archaeological Reports, S584, Oxford: Tempus Reparatum.
- Mann, M. 1986. *The Sources of Social Power, Volume 1: A History of Power from the Beginning to A. D. 1760*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McKinnon, M., ed. 1998. *New Zealand Historical Atlas*. Auckland, David Bateman.
- Orange, C. 1987. *The Treaty of Waitangi*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Owens, J. M. R. 1981. 'New Zealand before annexation.' In *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, ed. W. H. Oliver. Wellington: Oxford University Press.
- Parsonson, A. 1980. 'The Expansion of a Competitive Society : A Study in Nineteenth-Century Maori History.' *The New Zealand Journal of History*, 14 (1): 45-60.
- Petrie, H. 2002. 'Colonisation and the Involution of the Maori Economy.' Paper for Session 24, XIII World Congress of Economic History, Buenos Aires.

- Pool, I. 1991. *Te Iwi Maori: A New Zealand Population, Past, Present and Projected*. Auckland: Auckland University Press.
- Salaman, R. N. 1985. *The History and Social Influence of the Potato*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Salmond, A. 1991. *Two Worlds: First Meetings of Maori and Europeans, 1642-1772*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Sinclair, K. 1971. 'Why are Race Relations in New Zealand Better than in South Africa, South Australia or South Dakota?' *The New Zealand Journal of History* 5 (2): 121-27.
- Sorrenson, M.P. K. 1965. 'The Maori King Movement, 1858-1885.' In *Studies of a Small Democracy*, eds Robert Chapman and Keith Sinclair. Sydney: Halstead Press.
- Sorrenson, M.P. K. 1991. 'Treaties in British Colonial Policy: Precedents for Waitangi.' In *Sovereignty and Indigenous Rights: The Treaty of Waitangi in International Contexts*, ed. W. Renwick. Wellington: Victoria University Press.
- Stackpole, E. A. 1972. *Whales and Destiny: The Rivalry Between America, France, and Britain for Control of the Southern Whale Fishery, 1785-1825*. Massachusetts: Massachusetts University Press.
- Steven, M. 1983. *Trade Tactics and Territory: Britain in the Pacific 1783-1823*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.
- Stone, R. C. J. 2000. *From Tamaki-Makau-Rau to Auckland*. Auckland: Auckland University Press.
- Vamplew, W., ed. 1987. *Australians: Historical Statistics*, Sydney: Fairfax, Syme and Weldon.
- Zuckerman, L. 1998. *The Potato*, London: Pan Books.