

Land of Hope: British Colonization in New Zealand (1840-1855)

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Abstrak

Selandia Baru awalnya adalah tempat pelarian bagi narapidana Inggris di Australia dan dianggap sebagai tanah harapan untuk menyambung kehidupan. Pada akhirnya, Selandia Baru tidak hanya dihuni oleh narapidana, tetapi juga masyarakat lain yang mencari penghidupan. Kondisi ini membuat pemerintah Inggris mendirikan negara koloni di Selandia Baru pada 1840 dengan gubernur pertamanya adalah William Hudson. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap kolonisasi yang dilakukan Inggris di Selandia Baru meliputi perjanjian Waitangi dan awal pembentukan koloni, Selandia Baru menjadi *crown colony* Inggris, dan situasi Selandia Baru tahun 1852-1855. Metode dalam penelitian ini adalah metode penelitian sejarah dengan tahapan yang terdiri dari pemilihan topik, pengumpulan sumber (*heuristik*), verifikasi (kritik eksternal dan kritik internal), interpretasi (analisis dan sintesis), dan *historiografi*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa berdirinya negara koloni Inggris di Selandia Baru didorong oleh kebutuhan perluasan wilayah dan adanya persaingan dengan Prancis. Koloni Selandia Baru dibangun dengan perjanjian Waitangi yang ditandatangani oleh wakil Inggris dan kepala suku Maori. Selandia Baru resmi menjadi *crown colony* pada 1841, yang artinya bisa mengurus pemerintahan sendiri dan memiliki gubernur setara dengan negara koloni Inggris lainnya di dunia. Pada kurun waktu 1852-1855, Selandia Baru banyak didera oleh konflik perebutan tanah antara orang Eropa (*pakeha*) dan suku Maori.

Kata kunci: kolonisasi, koloni inggris, selandia baru.

Abstract

*New Zealand was initially a refuge for British convicts from Australia and was regarded as a land of hope for rebuilding their lives. Over time, however, New Zealand was inhabited not only by convicts but also by various other groups seeking economic opportunity and a new livelihood. This development prompted the British government to establish a colonial state in New Zealand in 1840, appointing William Hobson as its first governor. This study aims to examine British colonization in New Zealand, encompassing the Treaty of Waitangi and the early formation of the colony, New Zealand's transformation into a British crown colony, and the situation in New Zealand between 1852 and 1855. The research employs the historical method, which consists of several stages: topic selection, source collection (utilizing heuristics), verification (external and internal criticism), interpretation (analysis and synthesis), and historiography. The findings suggest that the need for territorial expansion and competition with France contributed to the establishment of a British colonial state in New Zealand. The colony of New Zealand was formally established through the Treaty of Waitangi, signed by British representatives and Maori chiefs. In 1841, New Zealand officially became a crown colony, meaning that it possessed a structured system of colonial governance under a governor with authority comparable to that of other British colonies worldwide. During the period 1852-1855, New Zealand experienced numerous conflicts over land disputes between European settlers (*pakeha*) and the Maori.*

Keywords: *colonization, British colony, New Zealand*

INTRODUCTION

In 1788, Britain successfully established Australia as a penal colony, beginning in

the region of New South Wales. The continuous increase in the number of convicts, coupled with severely

overcrowded prisons, prompted the British authorities to consider transporting prisoners to alternative locations (Fajariah & Suryo, 2020). New South Wales developed after overcoming various challenges and experiencing successive changes in governors. During the administration of Governor General Lachlan Macquarie in 1810, the condition of New South Wales was depicted as being in a state of severe decline. Government revenue had fallen drastically, numerous settlements were threatened by famine, public infrastructure had deteriorated significantly, and the moral condition of society was considered to be low (Nugroho, Arifin Suryo & Jazimah, 2017). The population of New South Wales, largely composed of convicts, began attempting to escape to the islands surrounding Australia, one of which was New Zealand. These escapes were motivated by a desire to live freely and to be released from punitive conditions. The fugitives entered New Zealand through the area of Kororāreka, now known as Russell, located in the Bay of Islands.

The Bay of Islands subsequently developed further, inhabited not only by former convicts but also by traders seeking fortune, shipwrecked sailors, pirates, and bandits seeking refuge (Kolit, 1974). This situation transformed the Bay of Islands into a port town serving American, British, French, and Russian whaling vessels. Over time, the Bay of

Islands became increasingly crowded; however, the absence of an organized urban structure and formal government resulted in social disorder and instability in several aspects of daily life.

An English missionary, Samuel Marsden, devoted his life to spreading Christianity in New Zealand. Initially, he was sent to serve as a chaplain to convicts in Sydney, Australia. However, observing social developments in New Zealand, Marsden aspired for its inhabitants to live according to Christian principles. He delivered his first sermon there on Christmas Day in 1814. Although his mission was far from easy, his efforts gradually yielded tangible results. Marsden also maintained extensive interactions with the Maori the Indigenous people of New Zealand particularly in matters of agriculture and the barter of agricultural produce (Meijl, 1996). He was deeply impressed by Maori intelligence, diligence, and way of life. Marsden was among those who urged the British government to assume authority over the Bay of Islands and to establish a formal administration to create a more orderly and regulated society (Kolit, 1974).

Before the arrival of escaped convicts from New South Wales in New Zealand, European presence in the region had already begun through maritime exploration. The first recorded European visitor was the Dutch navigator Abel Tasman on 13 December 1642, followed by

the British explorer James Cook on 7 October 1769. The name “New Zealand” was bestowed by Abel Tasman, derived from *Staten Landt* and later *Nieuw Zeeland*, referencing the Dutch province of Zeeland. Tasman did not pursue further exploration of the islands due to resistance from the Maori. Approximately one century later, James Cook arrived, conducted a six-month exploration, and claimed the territory for Britain. Subsequently, the French explorers Jean-François-Marie de Surville and Marion du Fresne visited in 1772. The arrival of European sailors in New Zealand was not always met with welcome; in many instances, they were attacked, as the Maori perceived the newcomers as threatening and potentially hostile.

The Maori are the Indigenous people of New Zealand, believed to have migrated to the islands approximately nine centuries before the Common Era. They refer to their homeland as *Aotearoa*. The Maori were renowned as a formidable and well-organized warrior society, possessing advanced skills in craftsmanship and material production. Following sustained contact with European communities, the Maori population declined significantly due to exposure to infectious diseases and the introduction of modern weaponry.

The majority of Maori communities resided in the northern regions of New Zealand, with smaller populations in the

south. They lived in large wooden houses with thatched roofs, often accommodating extended families of approximately 20-30 members (Sutherland, Alexander and Sutherland, 1894). Their subsistence was primarily based on agriculture, cultivating crops such as sweet potatoes (*kumara*), taro, and pumpkins. Fishing and eel harvesting supplemented their diet. Tools and household implements were crafted from wood, plant roots, and bone.

The arrival and settlement of Europeans in New Zealand increasingly marginalized Maori communities, particularly as migration flows to the islands rose steadily each year. New Zealand also offered expanding economic opportunities, marked by the establishment of agricultural enterprises in 1825. Many settlers originated from England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. In addition to the Bay of Islands, other areas that became centers of European settlement included North Cape to Whangaroa, Whangaroa, Hokianga Harbour, and several locations south of Hokianga. The largest concentration of settlers was in the Bay of Islands, where the population reached nearly 200 individuals, comprising men, women, and children.

Reports portraying New Zealand as a promising destination for settlement encouraged increasing numbers of Europeans to migrate there. Many believed that New Zealand offered

substantial prospects for wealth through the establishment of commercial enterprises. One such initiative involved an association from the United Kingdom that purchased land from Maori communities in Hokianga Harbour, a long inlet on the western coast (Sutherland, Alexander and Sutherland, 1894). Hokianga was regarded as a suitable location for settlement, despite the potential for tensions with the Maori.

Between 1825 and 1835, conditions in northern New Zealand were unstable due to frequent intertribal conflicts. Although missionaries were present, their efforts had not yet succeeded in establishing lasting social order. In 1831, a group of residents submitted a petition to William IV, requesting intervention to address the recurring unrest. In response, through the Governor-General of New South Wales, a British Resident, James Busby, was dispatched to New Zealand (Sutherland, Alexander and Sutherland, 1894). This appointment marked a significant step toward formal British colonization in New Zealand and the expansion of British influence in the region surrounding Australia.

Further impetus for colonization came with the establishment of the New Zealand Company in 1839, an enterprise designed to promote settlement and to sell land acquired from Maori communities to European immigrants in New Zealand. Under the leadership of Edward Gibbon

Wakefield, the company became a major driving force behind the rapid increase in migration to New Zealand. Against this historical background, the present study examines British colonization in New Zealand, focusing on the Treaty of Waitangi and the early formation of the colony, New Zealand's transition into a British Crown Colony, and the socio-political conditions prevailing between 1852 and 1855.

METHODS

This study employs the historical research method. According to Sugeng Priyadi in his book *Metode Penelitian Sejarah* (Priyadi, 2021), the stages of historical research consist of topic selection, source collection (heuristics), verification (external and internal criticism), interpretation (analysis and synthesis), and writing or historiography. At the topic selection stage, the researchers chose to examine British colonization in New Zealand, given that much of the existing scholarship has concentrated on British colonization in Australia. This study, therefore, seeks to address that relative gap in the historiography.

During the heuristic stage, the researchers conducted a systematic search for relevant sources, including scholarly books and journal articles. The verification stage involved evaluating these sources to determine their validity and reliability through both external and

internal criticism. In this phase, the researchers examined the content of books and articles as well as the credibility of their authors and sources of information. Interpretation constitutes the stage in which the researchers analyze and synthesize the historical facts that have been gathered. Through this analytical and synthetic process, the facts are connected and integrated to construct a coherent and meaningful historical narrative. The final stage, historiography, involves presenting the research findings in a structured written account from beginning to conclusion.

To strengthen the analysis, this study applies colonization theory, which posits that colonizers arriving in New Zealand were motivated by a desire to control new territories while confronting challenges such as differences in culture, climate, race, and resistance from Indigenous populations. Conversely, the Indigenous inhabitants the Maori experienced fear, anxiety, and a sense of threat regarding the potential loss of their land, which in turn generated resistance. The theory further explains that colonization produces various forms of interaction, including conflict, association, and even intermarriage, resulting in the emergence of new generations. The arrival of Europeans in New Zealand was driven by the pursuit of natural resources, the search for refuge,

and aspirations of a “land of hope” promising prosperity and opportunity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Treaty of Waitangi and the Early Formation of the Colony

The increasingly crowded conditions in New Zealand, coupled with French ambitions to assert control over parts of Oceania, prompted Britain to expand its authority into New Zealand. To realize this objective, Britain dispatched its first organized group of colonists to New Zealand in 1839, settling in the area now known as Wellington. Britain appointed William Hobson as the first Lieutenant-Governor of New Zealand, operating under the authority of the Governor-General of New South Wales. Hobson was an experienced naval officer, reputed for his integrity, and had previously commanded the vessel *Rattlesnake*. His name was later commemorated in Hobsons Bay, located in southern Australia.

William Hobson arrived at the Bay of Islands aboard the ship *Druid* on 29 January 1840, accompanied by officials who were to assist him in establishing a colonial administration. His party included a police sergeant, four mounted troopers from New South Wales, as well as a judge and a clerk (Press, 1941). Hobson subsequently negotiated an agreement with Maori chiefs stipulating that New Zealand would become part of the British Crown. This agreement later became

known as the Treaty of Waitangi, which was concluded between representatives of Britain and Maori leaders on 5 February 1840 at the Bay of Islands.

The Treaty of Waitangi was attended by the Governor, military officers, prominent European settlers, and Maori chiefs. The treaty consisted of three principal provisions: (1) Maori chiefs were to cede sovereignty to the British Crown; (2) the Crown would guarantee and protect Maori rights over their lands and all property, and should they choose to sell land, transactions would be conducted fairly through negotiations with representatives appointed by the Crown; and (3) the Crown would grant Maori the rights and legal protections accorded to British subjects (Buick, 1914). Through this agreement, Maori were encouraged to transfer land to the British government. In practice, however, land transactions often became commercial ventures for private investors. Land acquired from Maori was frequently resold to European settlers at significantly higher prices, transforming the process into a profitable enterprise.

Twenty-six chiefs initially accepted the Treaty of Waitangi, while six others refused, expressing concern that they might eventually be reduced to subjugation under European authority. William Hobson granted those who rejected the treaty additional time to reconsider. The following day, all chiefs present at the negotiations declared their

agreement. Within two to three months, more than 500 chiefs had signed the treaty. On 21 May 1840, Hobson proclaimed that New Zealand had officially become part of the British Empire. A temporary government office was established in Kororāreka, where administrative staff was stationed, and taxation was introduced as a source of state revenue. Hobson later received advice from the missionary Henry Williams that the area of Tāmaki or Waitematā would be suitable as the colonial capital. After conducting a personal inspection, Hobson selected Waitematā as the capital site, which subsequently developed into the city of Auckland (Barr, 1922).

The designation of Waitematā as the first capital of New Zealand was announced in *The New Zealand Advertiser and Bay of Islands Gazette* on 24 September 1840. The vessel *Anna Watson*, carrying government officials, urban planners, and other personnel, arrived at Waitematā Harbour on 15 September 1840 (Barr, 1922). Three days later, on 18 September 1840 at 1:00 p.m., an official ceremony was held during which the British flag was raised, accompanied by a twenty-one-gun salute from the *Anna Watson* and fifteen additional shots fired from the ship *Platina*. On that occasion, William Hobson and the British settlers celebrated the establishment of New Zealand's first capital with boat races offering monetary prizes.

New Zealand's incorporation into the British Empire transformed Auckland into a rapidly developing urban center. The city attracted increasing numbers of settlers, resulting in a sharp rise in land prices. Within a year, nearly 560 individuals had arrived to establish permanent residence (Sutherland, Alexander and Sutherland, 1894). The formation of a British colonial state in New Zealand intensified migration flows to the territory. Growing numbers of migrants sought to settle and establish enterprises in agriculture, pastoralism, and mining. However, resistance emerged from the Maori community, who perceived that their lands were progressively deteriorating and diminishing as a consequence of expanding European settlement.

Before the arrival of William Hobson in New Zealand, Maori communities had already engaged in extensive interaction with traders from various parts of the world, generating concerns that their land rights might be threatened by foreign interests. Because the British Crown under the Treaty of Waitangi promised legal protection, many Maori chiefs agreed to sign the treaty, although subsequent developments diverged significantly from those assurances.

Despite its formal ratification, the Treaty of Waitangi contained numerous ambiguities and instances of violation that

resulted in substantial disadvantages for Maori communities. The treaty also generated misunderstandings that contributed to conflict between Maori and European settlers. In particular, differences between the English version and the Maori-language translation of the treaty led to enduring debates due to divergent interpretations of key terms (Luetjens et al., 2019).

One of the most notable conflicts arising from these tensions was the Wairau Affray, which stemmed from a land dispute. The conflict began when Arthur Wakefield claimed that land traversed by the Wairau River formed part of the territory he had purchased. Maori leaders, however, maintained that they had sold only land located north of the river. Wakefield persuaded a local magistrate to issue arrest warrants for the chiefs Te Rauparaha and Te Rangihaeata. Maori resistance to the attempts by Wakefield and his forces to enforce these claims ultimately escalated into armed confrontation (Sutherland, Alexander and Sutherland, 1894).

The Wairau conflict resulted in significant casualties on both sides, with 22 Europeans and 4 Maori reported killed. The incident illustrates a broader pattern of Indigenous resistance to colonial expansion and disputes over land ownership. Since 1974, 6 February has been commemorated annually as Waitangi Day in New Zealand, marking the signing

of the Treaty and its enduring historical significance.

The objective of establishing a colony in New Zealand as a site for the transportation and accommodation of convicts did not always proceed smoothly or successfully. One of the principal challenges faced by the new colonial administration was the inadequacy of its facilities. Convict housing consisted of rudimentary huts constructed from fragile materials, which could be escaped relatively easily (Bowling & Pratt, 2023). Efforts to provide more adequate accommodation for convicts were undertaken in 1842. These circumstances illustrate the numerous challenges encountered by William Hobson during the establishment of the first colony. In addition to managing relations with the Maori communities, he was also confronted with significant infrastructural deficiencies.

New Zealand as a British Crown Colony

On 16 November 1840, the British Crown formally declared that New Zealand would become a separate and independent colony, no longer subordinate to New South Wales. Consequently, William Hobson was elevated from Lieutenant-Governor to Governor, holding a status equivalent to that of governors in other Australian colonies. New Zealand was thus officially constituted as a Crown Colony of Great Britain.

One year after his formal appointment as Governor, Hobson established a new capital at Auckland, relocating the seat of government from Kororāreka, which had by then been renamed Russell after Lord John Russell, the British Colonial Secretary at the time. The transfer of the administrative center to Auckland was based on strategic considerations, as its geographical position was regarded as advantageous for maritime transportation routes from multiple directions.

Auckland subsequently developed into a growing administrative and political center. At the same time, land in New Zealand became increasingly sought after, either for residential settlement or for the establishment of commercial enterprises. Tensions arose when land was acquired at disproportionately low prices, resulting in substantial losses for Maori communities. Governor Hobson found himself in a difficult position, facing disputes with multiple parties. Hobson's health deteriorated, and he died in September 1842. He was buried in Auckland. His temporary successor was Willoughby Shortland, who served until the arrival of the new Governor, Robert FitzRoy, in New Zealand.

Under the leadership of Robert FitzRoy (1843-1845), conditions in New Zealand were characterized by rapid population growth but relatively slow economic development. The European (Pakeha) population reached

approximately 12,000, distributed across settlements including Auckland, Wellington, Nelson, New Plymouth, and Whanganui. Education began to expand with the establishment of schools serving not only European settlers but also Maori communities, although their implementation remained limited. The Anglican bishop George Selwyn was sent from Britain to lead the central church in Auckland.

FitzRoy assumed office at a time when the colony faced severe financial difficulties, including the threat of bankruptcy due to depleted state funds and mounting debt, alongside persistent conflict between Maori and European settlers. Within his own administration, FitzRoy was unpopular, as he was perceived as favoring Maori interests. For instance, in the aftermath of the Wairau Affray, FitzRoy did not immediately attribute blame to Maori; instead, he sought to conduct an independent investigation.

FitzRoy was frequently criticized by segments of the colonial press in New Zealand that sought to undermine his authority. His political opponents lobbied the British government to remove him from office. In his defense, FitzRoy argued that his investigations revealed that many conflicts between Europeans and Maori stemmed primarily from European actions, including insults, deceit, and incidents involving intoxication (Paul et al., 2013).

Ultimately, FitzRoy served only three years as governor and was succeeded by George Grey.

During the administration of Robert FitzRoy, the colonial government enacted the Native Exemption Ordinance of 1844. This regulation stipulated that individuals convicted of theft could be exempted from corporal punishment provided they paid compensation amounting to four times the value of the stolen property. The ordinance applied to both Maori and non-Maori (Sutherland, Alexander, and Sutherland, 1894). It represented an attempt to accommodate Maori customary law within the framework of British legal principles.

The initial plan to centralize land sales under government control ultimately proved unworkable due to insufficient state funds. Consequently, Governor FitzRoy introduced a policy permitting direct land transactions between Maori and private purchasers. This decision, however, was not approved by the Colonial Office in Britain, leading to his recall in May 1845. Thus concluded FitzRoy's governorship in New Zealand.

FitzRoy was succeeded by George Grey, who had previously served as governor in South Australia. Grey arrived in New Zealand in November 1845, accompanied by approximately 700 troops under his command. At the time of his arrival, armed conflicts between Maori and European settlers were ongoing,

including the Battle of Ōhaeawai and the Battle of Ruapekapeka. Despite these hostilities, Grey adopted a policy aimed at restoring peace. He became known for comparatively conciliatory policies toward Maori, including payment for land acquisitions rather than unilateral seizure. Grey also promoted social and economic development by establishing schools and distributing ploughs, carts, horses, agricultural tools, and even mills to support the expansion of farming activities.

Colonial expansion subsequently extended to the Otago region in the southern part of New Zealand. Approximately 400.000 hectares of land were purchased by a Scottish company to establish a new settlement. In 1848, a group of settlers from Scotland arrived under the leadership of William Cargill. Within a year, Otago had developed into a settlement of 745 inhabitants and possessed a well-constructed jetty. The region would later experience even more rapid growth following the discovery of goldfields.

In the years that followed, increasing numbers of new settlers migrated to New Zealand, many of them young men and capital investors aspiring to achieve economic success in a new land. Agricultural enterprises and sheep and cattle pastoralism offered substantial prospects. By 1853, records indicate that approximately 31.000 Europeans resided

in New Zealand, having collectively acquired around 24.000.000 hectares of land, with sheep farming expanding rapidly (Sutherland, Alexander and Sutherland, 1894). During this period, the northern regions of New Zealand developed primarily as agricultural zones, while the southern regions became increasingly oriented toward pastoralism and livestock production. For many Europeans, New Zealand was imagined as a land of promise and opportunity, fostering aspirations to construct a new social order structured along class lines (Ancient, 2014). This vision, however, further distanced European settlers from Maori communities. From the Maori perspective, the expansion of European settlement was experienced as dispossession, as they perceived that their ancestral lands had been appropriated without legitimate consent.

The Situation in New Zealand, 1852-1855

The establishment of a British colony in New Zealand was not solely intended to accommodate transported convicts; it was also driven by broader strategic considerations related to Britain's global geopolitical positioning. Rivalry between the United Kingdom and France constituted a significant factor, prompting the urgent formalization of colonial authority in New Zealand (Royal et al., 2026).

Over time, economic interests became increasingly prominent, particularly those of land speculators seeking financial gain. These actors advocated for the establishment of self-government in New Zealand to enact legislation that would facilitate and legitimize their commercial activities.

On 30 June 1852, following sustained pressure from various quarters, the British Parliament granted the colony of New Zealand the authority to enact its own legislation, establish local legislative councils, and administer internal affairs under a system of self-government, while sovereignty formally remained under the British Crown. This constitutional arrangement was embodied in the New Zealand Constitution Act 1852.

The Act provided for the creation of six provinces, each with its own Provincial Council composed of nine elected members responsible for managing local affairs. In addition, a General Assembly was established, consisting of a Legislative Council appointed by the Governor and a House of Representatives comprising forty members elected within the colony.

George Grey was regarded by the British government as having governed New Zealand effectively during his eight-year tenure, successfully guiding the colony toward greater political stability. Grey's favorable reputation stemmed largely from his efforts to maintain

constructive relations with Maori communities through mediation and negotiation. He promoted a policy of "amalgamation," aimed at fostering cultural integration between Maori and European settlers to reduce recurring conflict (Gump, 1998).

Grey maintained that the Indigenous Maori population should adapt to European knowledge systems, religion, and technological advancements. At the same time, he devoted considerable effort to learning Maori language and culture, which enabled him to cultivate close relationships with prominent Maori leaders. Nevertheless, one significant consequence of Grey's policies was the accelerated transfer of land from Maori ownership to European settlers.

George Grey concluded his tenure as governor and departed from New Zealand in 1853. He was temporarily succeeded by Robert Henry Wynyard, pending the arrival of the new governor, Thomas Gore Browne, who assumed office in September 1855. Browne had previously served as governor of Saint Helena and possessed considerable administrative experience within the British imperial system (Storey, 2014). By this period, the European population in New Zealand had reached approximately 45,000 and continued to grow following the discovery of goldfields in the Otago region. Waves of migrants arrived seeking opportunity and fortune from gold mining activities.

Several factors contributed to the high levels of migration to New Zealand between 1839 and 1850. According to Michael Hudson (Hudson, 2001), the first was the formal establishment of New Zealand as a British colony. The second was the active promotion of land sales by the New Zealand Company, which attracted numerous prospective migrants seeking new livelihoods. Third, the New Zealand Company maintained records identifying affluent individuals who could be targeted as potential land purchasers. The company's ability to influence wealthy Britons to relocate to New Zealand represented a strategic commercial practice that had significant consequences for both economic development and demographic expansion (Shoemaker, 2019).

The substantial wave of migration generated numerous social and political tensions. From the perspective of European settlers, many felt misled by the promotional campaigns advanced by Edward Gibbon Wakefield through the New Zealand Company, which suggested that purchasing land in New Zealand would lead to rapid prosperity. In reality, economic success proved far more difficult to achieve.

From the Maori perspective, the influx of European settlers created increasing pressure on their communities, necessitating government intervention to restrain acts of aggression and disorder by

some newcomers. Disputes were further complicated by differing conceptions of land ownership. Once Maori leaders understood that land sales under British law implied permanent alienation of ownership, many refused to continue selling land to Europeans (Van Meijl, 1996), particularly fertile areas that yielded valuable agricultural produce for trade.

During the governorship of Thomas Gore Browne, the colony confronted armed conflict in the Taranaki region, later known as the First Taranaki War. The conflict originated when Maori communities in Taranaki refused to sell their land to European settlers. The growing European population intensified Maori fears of dispossession and erosion of autonomy. Consequently, Maori resistance emerged against colonial authority and land acquisition policies.

British military superiority, including the deployment of approximately 20,000 troops, ultimately forced Maori forces in Taranaki to retreat into mountainous areas. Their defeat resulted in the confiscation of approximately three million acres of Maori land by the colonial government (Kolit, 1974), marking a significant expansion of settler control and a profound transformation of land ownership patterns in New Zealand.

Land disputes between Maori communities and European settlers could not be resolved solely through warfare;

more robust legal frameworks and regulatory mechanisms were required. New Zealand represented a “land of hope” not only for European migrants but also for the Maori people, each seeking to secure their future within the evolving colonial order. From the British perspective, the Treaty of Waitangi functioned as a legal instrument to formalize British colonization of New Zealand and to secure control over its natural resources. From the Maori perspective, however, the Treaty was understood as a limited agreement of cooperation that preserved the sovereignty of each party. The divergence in interpretation between the English-language and Maori-language versions of the Treaty generated significant tensions and resistance (Wallace, 2025). Consequently, throughout the period of British colonial rule in New Zealand, Maori communities persistently struggled to assert and defend their rights.

Over time, Maori youth who had received a European-style education began to articulate resistance through constitutional and political channels. They established the Young Maori Party, advocating for the advancement of Maori interests through parliamentary engagement rather than armed confrontation. They believed that the survival and recognition of Maori identity and rights could be more effectively

pursued within the structures of representative government.

In 1887, a young politician of mixed Maori-Irish descent, James Carroll, succeeded in securing a position within the cabinet of New Zealand (Kolit, 1974). His achievement was subsequently followed by other prominent Maori leaders who attained seats in Parliament and cabinet positions. The presence of Maori representatives within these governing institutions was expected to influence legislation and executive decisions in ways that would better accommodate Maori interests and contribute to the reduction of ongoing conflicts over land and sovereignty. The struggle continued, and during the 1960s-1970s a Maori movement emerged, calling for equality and demanding that the government recognize and respect Maori rights. This period marked a significant phase of political mobilization and indigenous activism in New Zealand (Matheus Adadikam, Ani Sipa, Agusta Melani Sorabut et al., 2022). In 1975, the Waitangi Tribunal was formally established to investigate alleged breaches of the Treaty of Waitangi and to address grievances experienced by Maori communities.

CONCLUSION

British colonization expanded across multiple regions of the world, extending into the southern hemisphere. Colonial expansion was inherently tied to efforts by imperial powers to control land and

natural resources within their territories. In the case of New Zealand, Britain—through Governor William Hobson—initially proposed to purchase Maori land at fair prices, grant Maori equal citizenship status, and extend to them the same legal protections enjoyed by British subjects.

In practice, however, these aspirations were not fully realized. Administrative negligence and inadequate oversight by the British authorities undermined the implementation of these principles. Government officials frequently acquired land from Maori at low prices and subsequently resold it to European settlers at significantly higher rates. While this practice benefited certain European interests, it proved detrimental to Maori communities as a whole.

Governors-General appointed by Britain in New Zealand occasionally introduced policies that were relatively favorable toward Maori interests; nevertheless, such measures were often criticized by segments of the European settler population as biased or as undermining settler priorities. The early phase of British colonization in New Zealand, particularly between 1840 and 1855, was therefore marked by recurrent armed conflicts between Maori and Europeans. These wars were fundamentally grounded in the defense of property rights specifically, the protection of ancestral lands that constituted the

foundation of Maori identity, authority, and livelihood.

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