

AOTEAROA

Our Whakapapa,
Our Stories

Colonial Exploration and
Migration

Colonial Exploration and Migration

The aim of this introductory booklet is to explain the social, political, and economic forces that influenced immigrants' decisions to come to New Zealand from the 1600s through to the late 1800s. What started out as a European rush to find new lands and resources transformed into a patchwork arrangement of settling by missionaries and whalers, which was then overtaken by commercial and government interests as the burgeoning colony of New Zealand grew far beyond its original form.

This booklet will discuss the following topics:

- The idea of the European Age of Discovery and how this led to Europe's search for New Zealand
- Abel Tasman's voyage to New Zealand in 1642
- Captain Cook's voyages to New Zealand in the 1700s
- Early European migrants who took advantage of spiritual and economic opportunities to establish a livelihood in New Zealand
- The colonial companies that marketed New Zealand to settlers and helped to transport them here
- The social situation in Britain that made New Zealand an appealing choice for farmers and labourers
- The waves of migrant ships that brought European settlers to New Zealand
- The 1861 Gold Rush in the South Island
- The Chinese immigrants who joined New Zealand society during the Gold Rush, and the challenges they faced
- The Government-managed immigration schemes of the 1870s that encouraged skilled labourers to emigrate to New Zealand



An idealised depiction of Christopher Columbus landing in the Americas. His discoveries made Spain rich but resulted in the enslavement or destruction of the Caribbean's indigenous peoples

Foundation: The European Age of Discovery

Before we talk about the Europeans who arrived on New Zealand's shores, we must understand why the first European explorers made the risky voyage halfway across the world to reach here.

Six hundred years ago, most Europeans believed that India and China were the most distant lands in the world, and the only hint that America existed was in old Viking sagas. Trade was easiest for countries on the Mediterranean Sea because their ships could reach ports in the Middle East that connected to the Silk Road, a rich trading route to Asia. Other countries like England (later Britain), Portugal and Spain could not reach the Silk Road as easily, so by the 1400s they had started to build Europe's first ocean-going ships. Using these ships, they attempted to find new ways to Asia to get their own share of the trade and riches. This urge only increased after the Ottoman Turks conquered much of the Middle East, blocking access to the Silk Road, and giving the explorer nations the opportunity to be the new leaders of European trade.

These early voyages of the 'Age of Discovery' had some unexpected results. Spanish ships that tried to go west to India across the Atlantic instead ran into America and found that the indigenous peoples had gold or good land, both of which were in high demand back in Europe. Portuguese ships trying to reach India found gold in Africa and spices in the islands of Indonesia. A single cargo of gold or spices was worth many times the value of the ship that carried it, so traders quickly rushed to take advantage of these new discoveries. Soon, the search for ways to Asia was replaced by the search for new islands and continents, in the belief that even more gold, land, and spices were hidden somewhere off the undiscovered corners of the map. Whoever controlled these lands would be rich and powerful.

Supporting Links

Image: *Landing of Columbus*, John Vanderlyn, 1847, Public domain, via Wikimedia

Abel Tasman

The first European explorer to reach New Zealand was the Dutch sailor Abel Tasman. Tasman had been sent to discover the legendary 'Great Southern Land' that many Europeans believed existed in the southern Pacific Ocean. In 1642 he discovered Tasmania and then New Zealand, which he named *Staten Landt* ("Land of the Dutch State Parliament"). At the top of the South Island his sailors had their first encounter with Māori, but since Māori and Europeans had never met each other before, a fight broke out and men from both parties were killed. Tasman never returned, and Dutch mapmakers decided that *Staten Landt* should be renamed *Nova Zeelandia* after the Dutch province of Zeeland.



Dutch engraving of Tasman's first, fatal encounter with Māori

Supporting Links

'Abel Tasman', URL: <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/people/abel-tasman>, (Ministry for Culture and Heritage), updated 29-Dec-2017

Image: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/6/6e/Gilsemans_1642.jpg/2560px-Gilsemans_1642.jpg Isaack Gilsemans, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Question

Why didn't the Dutch try to colonise New Zealand in the 1600s? Why did the Dutch and Māori start fighting each other?



Rumold Mercator's Planisphere map, showing a vast 'Great Southern Land' stretching from the South Pole to Indonesia

James Cook

After Abel Tasman, it took 127 years for another European captain to visit New Zealand. This explorer was the British sailor James Cook who, like Tasman, had secret orders to discover the Great Southern Land and claim it for Great Britain. Also aboard his ship, the *Endeavour*, was a Tahitian navigator named Tupaia. Tupaia joined the expedition on the strength of his traditional knowledge. He had memorised the locations of 130 Pacific islands and the wind and current patterns that enabled navigations between them. He was also able to act as a mediator between the *Endeavour* and Pacific Islanders, including Māori. Together, they mapped most of New Zealand's coastline, with only a few minor mistakes.

Cook's first encounters with Māori near modern Gisborne led to a number of Māori being killed, contrary to his instructions not to fight the inhabitants of any new lands he discovered. Despite these fatal early encounters, Cook was able to establish peaceful contact with other iwi further along the coast and would eventually return twice to visit and explore more of the islands.

Supporting Links

'James Cook', URL: <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/people/james-cook>, (Ministry for Culture and Heritage), updated 1-Mar-2019

Image: Rumold Mercator, *Atlas sive Cosmographicae Meditationes de Fabrica Mundi et Fabricati Figura*, 1595, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Question

Why would Britain want to be the first country to map all of New Zealand?

Early European Migrants

New Zealand was an attractive destination for whalers and sealers, who set up stations along the coast but rarely settled down for the long term. Missionaries had a more permanent presence as they were dedicated to converting Māori to Christianity. New Zealand was also a haven for ex-convicts and runaways, who came to New Zealand from Australia and brought with them a reputation for drunkenness and rough manners. Māori customs, living conditions and ritual cannibalism were unfamiliar to these early settlers, and the stories that they sent back painted Māori as 'warlike savages.' These tales gave our distant islands a frightening reputation back in Europe, and initially discouraged wider settlement plans. However, missionaries believed that conversion would erase what they saw as 'savage' ways and that Māori would inevitably be 'civilised' under the influence of Christianity.

Supporting Links

Jock Phillips, 'History of immigration - Early years', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/history-of-immigration/page-1> (accessed 16 December 2019)

U.K. Parliament: reports from select committees on New Zealand with minutes of evidence and appendix and indices, 1837–1840. In Irish University Press series of British parliamentary papers. Colonies: New Zealand. Vol 1. Shannon, 1968, p. 38.

Question

Why do you think that Christian missionaries wanted to convert the Māori?

The New Zealand Company

Settlement began in earnest after the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, and around 2500 settlers arrived as part of a militia sent to provide protection for the growing colony at Auckland. Edward Gibbon Wakefield set up the New Zealand Company to provide assistance for settlers and sell them land. In many cases, the land being sold had never been owned by the New Zealand Company and was still Māori land, a situation which helped to fuel some of the earliest conflicts within New Zealand. In all, some 15,500 settlers arrived via the New Zealand Company and helped to establish Wellington and Christchurch as important settler cities.

Supporting Links

Jock Phillips, 'History of immigration - British immigration and the New Zealand Company', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/history-of-immigration/page-3> (accessed 16 December 2019)

Question

How do you think the New Zealand Company's settlement plans affected settler-Māori relations?

Land and British Identity

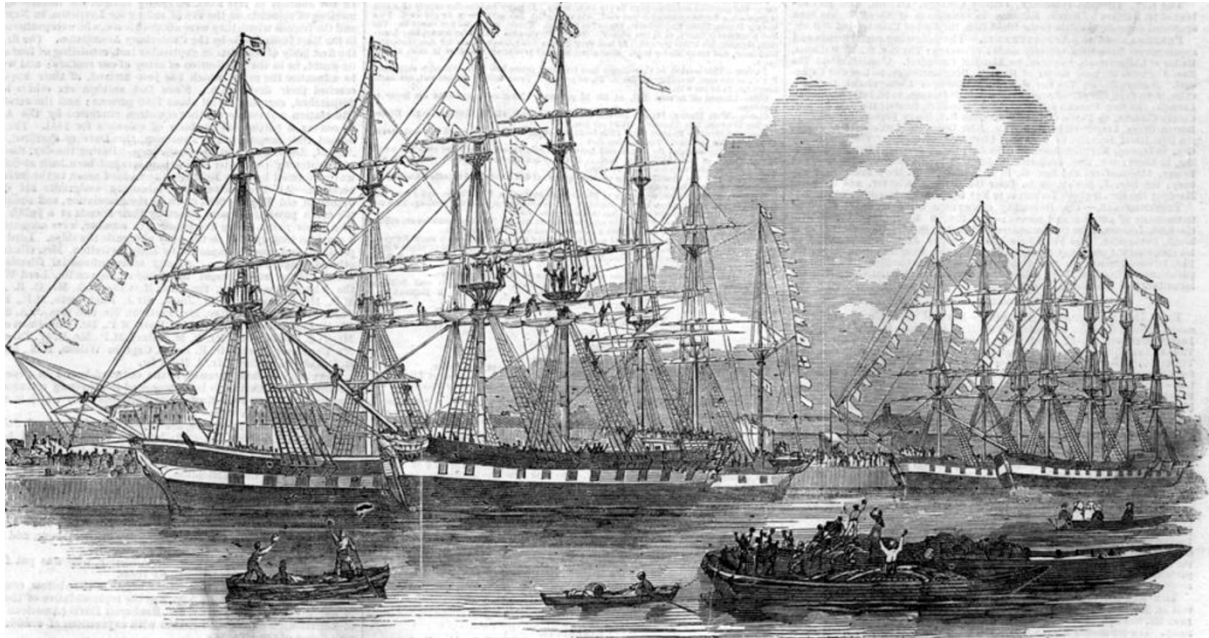
The issues of land ownership and land usage were two key factors that contributed to the outbreak of conflicts such as the Wairau Affray (1843) and the First Taranaki War (1860). British settlers were coming from a society where wealth, land ownership, and productivity were all closely linked. Indeed, many had come to New Zealand because wealthy landowners back in Britain had privatised most of the farmland. New Zealand offered the opportunity for these settlers to buy their own private land to farm, and organisations such as the New Zealand Company sold this dream of land ownership. The settlers were quickly disappointed to discover that the New Zealand Company owned less land than it had been selling, and they felt that Māori land was being wasted because it wasn't being farmed. This sparked a pattern of land grabs and illegal surveying that advanced the settlers' interests at the cost of Māori territorial rights.

Supporting Links:

Jock Phillips, 'History of immigration - British immigration and the New Zealand Company', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/history-of-immigration/page-3> (accessed 16 December 2019)

Question

How were European ideas about land use different from Māori ideas about land use?



Six ships of the Canterbury Association taking on passengers in England

Migrant Ships

Over 300 migrant ships journeyed to New Zealand between 1839 and 1860, with some of these making multiple trips. The Canterbury Association operated 20 ships in the 1850s and worked with the New Zealand Company to sell land to the colonists. Labourers such as farm workers, builders and gardeners were in high demand for establishing the initial settlements. For many this was also a chance to escape servitude in Britain and carve out a new life in a land of opportunity. So many settlers arrived in New Zealand that by 1859 the settler population equalled the Māori population (at around 60,000 each).

Supporting Links

'New Zealand Migrant Shipping (1839-1860)', Perth Dead Persons' Society, <http://members.iinet.net.au/~perthdps/shipping/mig-nz1.htm> (accessed 16 December 2019)

Image: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/de/The_Canterbury_association_ships_%27Bangalore%27%2C_%27Dominion%27%2C_%27Duke_of_Portland%27%2C_%27Lady_Nugent%27%2C_and_%27Canterbury.jpg , Illustrated London News, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Question

What happened in 1859? Why do you think this was important for colonial New Zealand?

The Gold Rush

The discovery of gold in 1861 triggered a gold rush to Otago, with 18,000 miners flooding the area to try to make their fortune. A second discovery of gold on the West Coast in 1864 extended the gold rush through to 1867. A third of the gold miners were English, and alongside them worked the first large group of Chinese to migrate to New Zealand, over 2600 men (and only four women!). Although the gold itself was quickly exhausted, many migrants settled down in the towns that had sprung up to serve the mining communities, and roads built for the miners (such as Arthur's Pass) still play a vital role in New Zealand's infrastructure today.

Supporting Links:

Jock Phillips, 'History of immigration - Miners', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/history-of-immigration/page-7> (accessed 16 December 2019)

Question

How do you think the mining towns survived after their gold had been mined?

Chinese New Zealanders

During the middle of the 1800s China was a nation struggling with poverty and famine. Many young Chinese sought to work overseas to have enough money for a proper life back home. New Zealand's growing economy made it an attractive destination, especially after the Gold Rush of the 1860s. But conditions at the mining fields were difficult, and European attitudes toward Asians and other minorities prevented their integration into colonial society. Specifically, the New Zealand government pursued the idea of a 'fairer Britain of the South Seas' – in other words, a model white European society – and created many obstacles to discourage minority immigrants from permanent settlement. By 1896 ships were restricted to carrying one Chinese immigrant per 200 tonnes of cargo, and the Chinese were also made to each pay a £100 tax created just for them. These discriminatory measures continued right through to the 1950s.

Supporting Links:

Manying Ip, 'Chinese - The first immigrants', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/chinese/page-2> (accessed 16 December 2019)

Manying Ip, 'Chinese - Later settlement', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/chinese/page-3> (accessed 16 December 2019)

Question

How did the New Zealand government use legislation as a weapon to restrict Chinese involvement in New Zealand society? How similar was this to the treatment Māori received from the legal system?



An early photograph of Wellington, near where the Beehive stands today

The New Zealand Wars and North Island settlement

The early conflicts of the New Zealand Wars led to a perception that the North Island was more dangerous for settlement than the South Island, so throughout the 1860s the South Island was seen as the most appealing destination for migrants, a view helped by its broad plains and the discovery of gold. After the invasion of the Waikato, and associated land confiscations, government-assisted settlement resumed and companies such as John Brogden and Sons (railway builders) sent employees to New Zealand in their thousands, although many of these immigrants quickly found that the work available was much less than had been promised. In the end, many left their original jobs and became farm workers, and their letters home encouraged more people to make the journey to Aotearoa.

Supporting Links:

Jock Phillips, 'History of immigration - The great migration: 1871 to 1885', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/history-of-immigration/page-8> (accessed 16 December 2019)

Image: Te Papa, Colonial Museum, Wellington, 29 September 1934, Wellington, by Leslie Adkin. Gift of G. L. Adkin family estate, 1964. Te Papa (A.005434)

Question

Why do you think the Invasion of the Waikato changed settler perceptions about their safety in the North Island?



Julius Vogel, Colonial Treasurer in 1870
and later Premier of New Zealand (1873-75)

The Immigration and Public Works Act 1870

In the early 1870s New Zealand's economy was starting to worsen so on the advice of its treasurer, Julius Vogel, the government attempted to boost the economy through the Immigration and Public Works Act. The Act helped to provide cheap passage to New Zealand but was also intended to bring in settlers to take over confiscated Māori territory and 'civilise' it into European farmland. Half of all immigrants arriving in the next decade came through on Vogel's scheme, numbering 100,000 in total. 80 percent of arrivals were under 35 years old. Over three million acres of Māori land were confiscated in Waikato-Taranaki to accelerate Pākehā settlement.

Supporting Links:

The Aotearoa History Show, Episode 8: Colonists & Courts, https://youtu.be/8_ALg7XvYvM

'British & Irish immigration, 1840-1914 - Summary', URL: <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/culture/immigration/home-away-from-home/summary>, (Ministry for Culture and Heritage), updated 8-Dec-2014

Jock Phillips, 'History of immigration - The great migration: 1871 to 1885', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/history-of-immigration/page-8> (accessed 16 December 2019)

Image: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/92/Julius_Vogel%2C_ca_1870s.jpg , Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Question

Why would the New Zealand government want to attract colonists under the age of 35?