

**The Origins of Cook Island Migration
to New Zealand, 1920-1950**

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Abstract

It is a little known fact that New Zealand was both a British colony and imperial power in the Pacific during the twentieth century. From 1901 to 1965, under the pretext of a civilising mission, New Zealand exercised moral responsibility for the Cook Islands. Beneficent overtones concealed the colony's quest for territory and power, and political rhetoric continues to ignore the deficiencies and injustices of their former rule. As patriotic British subjects, and nominal citizens of New Zealand, the Cook Islanders looked to their colonial rulers for a pathway into the modern world. Contact with administrators, teachers, traders and missionaries instilled a sense of kinship, and mass movement to New Zealand in the post-war era is a recognised consequence of these historic ties. This migration is generally regarded as an immediate response to employment opportunities at that time.

This thesis explores the social realities of New Zealand's colonial relationship with the Cook Islands. It draws primarily on the records of the Island Territories Department to address issues of citizenship and status in relation to the Cook Islands' people. Efforts to control population movement and monitor Cook Islanders in New Zealand bring the powers of New Zealand officials under scrutiny. This approach uncovers the nature of New Zealand rule, and exposes the political and socioeconomic forces that fostered Island discontent.

Focusing on the dissemination of knowledge, this history traces the Islanders evolving awareness of the wider world from the time of European contact. The writings of early commentators, newspaper accounts of social exchanges, and the stories of early migrant women reveal the range of interactions influencing new patterns of movement and early permanent migration. Political, familial and cultural associations between New Zealand and Cook Island Māori are highlighted as influential in promoting a sense of belonging to Aotearoa New Zealand, and encouraging and facilitating movement to and from the Islands.

This thesis demonstrates the potentially liberating effect of war on the Cook Islands psyche. World War One soldiers returned to the Islands with heightened social and political aspirations, but were forced to resubmit to white hegemony. During World War Two, young Island women recruited for domestic service in New Zealand unwittingly challenged colonial power relationships by choosing permanent residence. Their newly-acquired status confirmed the reality that Cook Islanders could only attain

the full rights and privileges of New Zealand citizenship by making a new home in the metropole.

This thesis contributes to the history of female immigrants (migrants) and their settlement in New Zealand, and reveals single women as the original promoters of chain migration from the Cook Islands in the twentieth century. It uncovers a sound knowledge base informing Cook Islanders of potential lifestyle opportunities in New Zealand, one formed well before 1950. It thereby confirms that post-war migration to the metropole was a more measured and premeditated response than previously thought.

Acknowledgments

I was introduced to this topic through a Summer Scholarship project investigating the experiences of young Cook Island women arriving in New Zealand during World War Two. As this thesis evolved from that study, I firstly wish to thank the Summer Scholarships Scheme, Division of Humanities, University of Otago, for the opportunity and funding to undertake the original research and writing. I am grateful to Neil Robertson, Knowledge Services Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Wellington, for arranging access to the restricted files of the Island Territories Department. I appreciated the assistance given by the staff of Archives New Zealand, Wellington Office, and the Alexander Turnbull Library. I also wish to thank the helpful staff at the Hocken Collections and Central Library of the University of Otago.

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Grace also arranged for me to meet with Rangi Glennon, who arrived from the Cook Islands in 1947. As she shared her experiences, I came to realise how the young Cook Island women formed a very close-knit and supportive group. Rangi's early experiences were very positive, and after many hours in the archives embroiled in the troubles of the Cook Islands Department, learning how much she enjoyed that time came as a welcome relief. Our conversation added some much-needed balance.

I have greatly appreciated the support and encouragement of my supervisors, Professor Judith Bennett and Dr Angela Wanhalla, whose guidance and insight has challenged, clarified, and sustained my research journey. I acknowledge the supportive backdrop of the wider community of the History and Art History Department of the University of Otago, and the postgraduate support networks and activities that foster an atmosphere conducive to achievement.

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List of Abbreviations

AJHR	<i>Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives</i>
AS	<i>Auckland Star</i>
CID	Cook Islands Department
CIPA	Cook Island Progressive Association
DIT	Department of Island Territories
DNZB	<i>Dictionary of New Zealand Biography</i>
DOM	<i>Dominion</i>
EP	<i>Evening Post</i>
LMS	London Missionary Society
NZEF	New Zealand Expeditionary Force
NZH	<i>New Zealand Herald</i>
ODT	<i>Otago Daily Times</i>
PIM	<i>Pacific Islands Monthly</i>
PM	Prime Minister
RC	Resident Commissioner
RSA	New Zealand Returned Soldiers' Association
TB	Tuberculosis
YWCA	Young Men's Christian Association
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

Glossary

<i>Aroha</i>	Love
<i>Ariki</i>	Tribal leader or chief
<i>Hui</i>	Gathering
<i>Mana</i>	Prestige, authority, or charisma
<i>Māoritanga</i>	Māori culture, practices and beliefs
<i>Mata'iaho</i>	A chiefly title
<i>Pakeha</i>	Europeans
<i>Papa'a</i>	Europeans
<i>Rangatira</i>	Hereditary title held by members of an ariki or mata'iaho family
<i>Taihoa</i>	Go slow
<i>Tauranga</i>	A landing place
<i>Tuakana</i>	Elder sibling or cousin
<i>Waka</i>	Canoe or ship
<i>Whakapapa</i>	Genealogy, lineage and descent

Maps

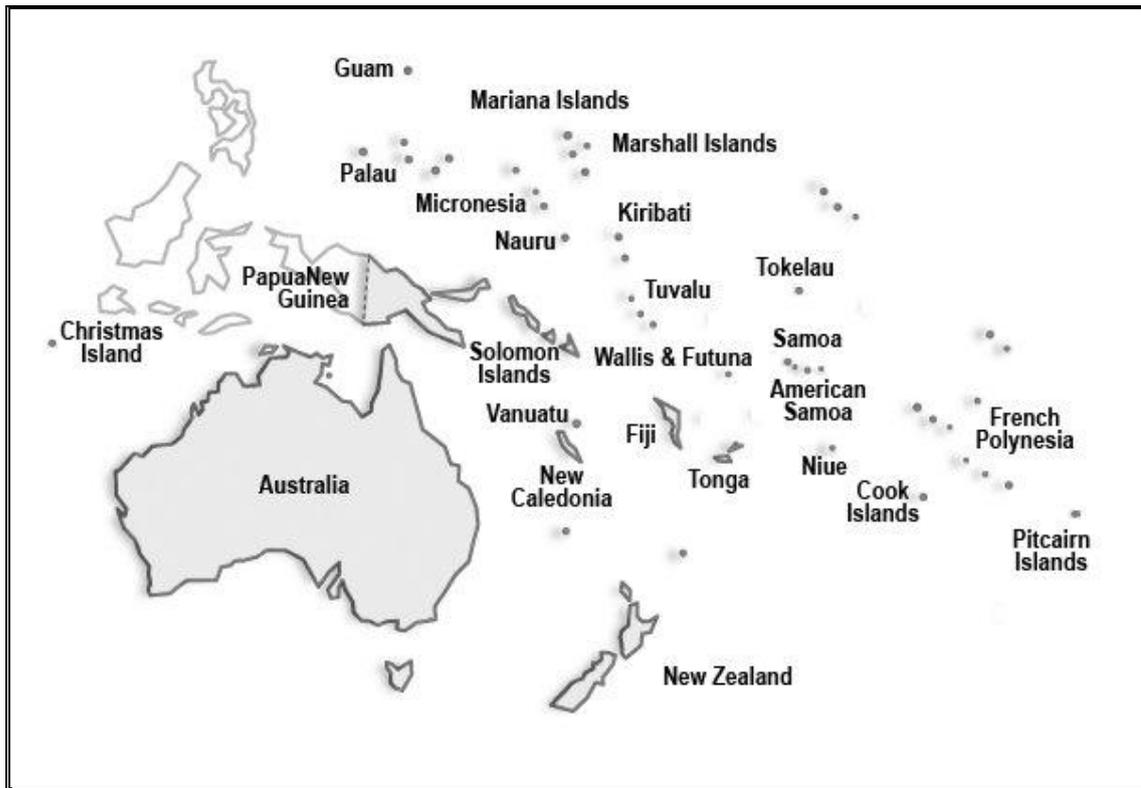


Figure 1: Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific.¹

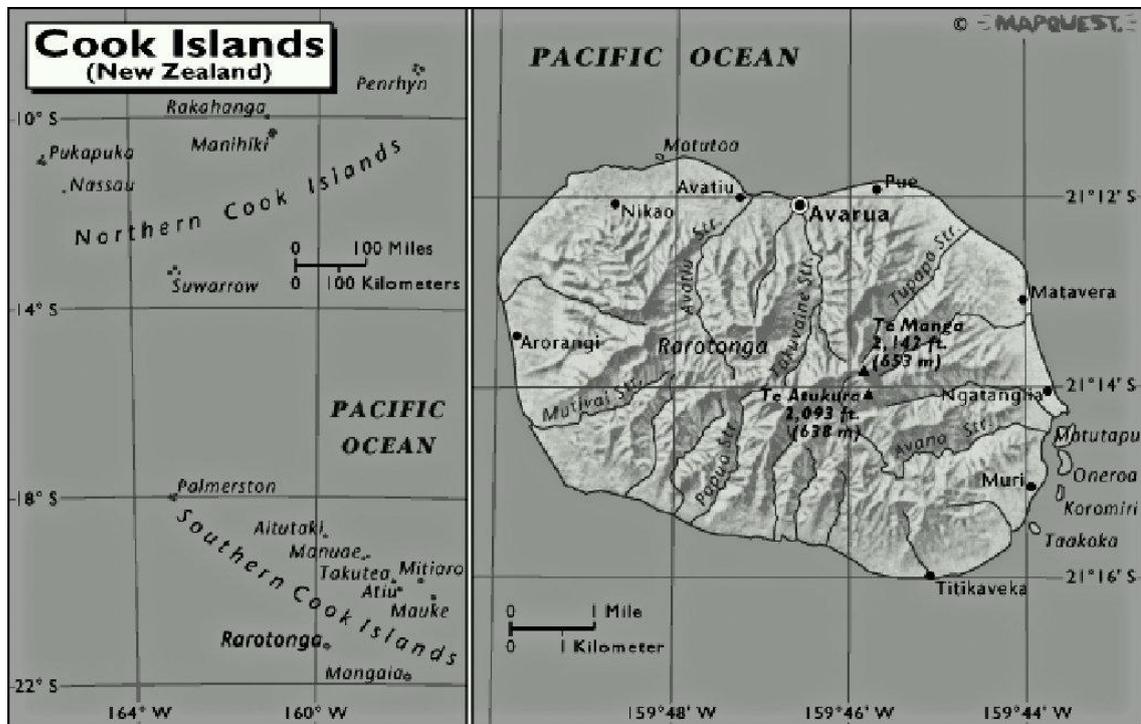


Figure 2: The Cook Islands²

¹ http://www.wannasurf.com/spot/Australia_Pacific/

² http://go.hrw.com/atlas/norm_htm/cookis.htm

Introduction

New lands and new beginning

Since the 1950s, New Zealand has been the favoured destination of Cook Islanders seeking employment and education, and by 2011, almost twice as many lived in New Zealand as remained at home.¹ This thesis addresses migration as a consequence of historical connections emerging from New Zealand's colonial administration of the Islands from 1901 until 1965. In tracing the origins of Cook Island migration to New Zealand, with a particular focus on the years 1920-1950, I offer some new perspectives on this significant migration story. With the Cook Islands firmly positioned as a colony of New Zealand, I follow some unexplored lines of enquiry to shed new light on the private and social realities of New Zealand's colonial relationship with the Cook Islands. By providing an overview of the socioeconomic conditions which existed as a precursor to migration, I introduce the early driving forces that encouraged or facilitated movement to New Zealand. In doing so, I highlight policies and persons previously overlooked in the historiography of the Cook Islands.

Rights of citizenship and the status of the Cook Islands people under New Zealand rule are a major focus of this thesis. The considerable influence of two World Wars serves to highlight these issues. I investigate wartime events that questioned and undermined colonial hierarchies in the Islands. As patriotic British subjects, Cook Island men willingly defended the Empire on distant battlefields during World War One.² Island "girls" were recruited for domestic service in the homes of wealthy *papa'a* (Europeans) in New Zealand during World War Two, and the occupation of Aitutaki and Penrhyn by United States forces in 1942 impacted directly on the daily lives of many Cook Islanders.³ World events increasingly challenged the conditions and meaning of bonds with the metropole, nevertheless, I prove that New Zealand politicians and civil servants charged with Island governance continued to perceive the people as subjects rather than citizens, until Crown Law rulings on the issue were finally acknowledged.

¹ Kalissa Alexeyeff, "Travelling Parties: Cook Islanders' Transnational Movement", *Migration and Transnationalism: Pacific Perspectives*, ed. Helen Lee and Steven Tupai Francis (Canberra: Australia National University E-Press, 2009), 91, accessed September 8, 2014. <http://books.google.co.nz/books?id=uWTz7LqyPYoC>. Over 50,000 Cook Islanders reside in New Zealand and over 15,000 now live in Australia. In 2011, the population of the Cook Islands was 17, 791, therefore approximately 73 per cent of Cook Islanders lived elsewhere.

² "Message of Loyalty", *Evening Post* (hereinafter *EP*), 30 May 1940; "Cook Islands: Patriotic Contributions", *EP*, 30 July 1940.

³ Young Island women were always referred to as "girls" in this context, regardless of age.

The Islanders' experiences during World War Two contributed to divergent forces challenging New Zealand's relationship with its Pacific neighbours. Young Island women were at the centre of change and their stories are a major feature of this study. Historians have failed to embrace the vast topic of Pacific Islander migration to New Zealand; this is largely the domain of anthropologists, geographers and sociologists, whose body of work now informs on contemporary events in a structural sense.⁴ This omission leaves many Pacific voices unheard and women in particular are "distinctly absent" from the record.⁵

This thesis contributes to the history of female immigrants (migrants) and their settlement in New Zealand, and in addition, reveals single women as the original promoters of chain migration from the Cook Islands in the twentieth century. Furthermore, I show how their choice to remain on New Zealand soil unwittingly challenged colonial power relationships, and ultimately forced a reappraisal of the Dominion's statutory and moral obligations toward its Island Territories. In this way, the thesis takes up Damon Salesa's challenge to historians to pay much more attention to the region and its affairs, so as to bring to light the "substantial part of New Zealand colonialism" in the Pacific so often "absent from the histories of New Zealand colonialism".⁶

New Zealand's Imperialism in the South Seas

This history of mobility between the Cook Islands and New Zealand exists in the shadows of New Zealand's imperial role in the Pacific. For sixty-four years, New Zealand was both a British colony and an imperial power. The Cook Islands were subject to a rule some might prefer to leave in those past shadows. For better or for worse, however, New Zealand's burgeoning influence in the Pacific was intrinsic to its developing sense of independent nationhood and identity.⁷ As the focus of this colonial gaze fell upon the Cook Islands, the lives of the people there were irrevocably changed. They in turn directed their gaze to a world apart from their Islands.

⁴ As the peoples of the Cook Islands, Samoa, Niue, Tonga and Tokelau became a noticeable entity in New Zealand cities, the term "Pacific Islanders" emerged as a generic description. This tended to meld the groups into one entity, effectively removing the distinctive identity of each.

⁵ Sean Mallon, "Little Known Lives: Pacific Islanders in Nineteenth Century New Zealand," in *Tangata O Le Moana: New Zealand and the People of the Pacific*, ed. Sean Mallon, Kolokesa Māhina Tuai, and Damon Salesa (Wellington, N.Z.: Te Papa Press, 2012), 94.

⁶ Damon Salesa, "New Zealand's Pacific," in *The New Oxford History of New Zealand*, ed. Giselle Byrnes (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2009), 149, 151.

⁷ Angus Ross, *New Zealand's Foreign Policy: Towards an Independent Foreign Policy*, Essays on the Development of New Zealand's Foreign Policy: The Macmillan Brown Lectures, 1977 (Christchurch, N.Z.: University of Canterbury, 1977), 1.

From its very beginnings, the British colony of New Zealand was viewed as the “Britain of the South”. As the proposed “stock-farm, granary, dairy-farm, brewery, and orchard of the South Pacific”, the country’s destiny appeared predetermined.⁸ European settlers shared the interests of the “mother-country” and assiduously preserved notions of “Britishness” and Empire.⁹ Encouraged by nineteenth century leaders such as George Grey, Julius Vogel and Richard Seddon, the future of the colony was interwoven with aspirations to become the imperial centre of the Pacific.

In 1888, Britain declared a protectorate over the Cook Islands and New Zealand began to cultivate her interests in the region.¹⁰ Colonial ambition was rewarded in 1901, when New Zealand annexed the Cook Islands and Niue.¹¹ Premier Richard Seddon lauded these possessions as a welcome counterbalance to the newly federated Australia, and anticipated “the bringing together of the Pacific islands into closer touch with the colony”.¹² These fine words promised much, but in reality the interests of the Cook Islands’ people were barely heeded. Few New Zealanders would develop an awareness of their Pacific neighbours for another fifty years.¹³

New Zealand’s sphere of influence increased when it was formally allocated the mandate of Western Samoa by the League of Nations in 1920. In 1925, the Dominion assumed responsibility for the Tokelau Islands; this tangible influence in the region signified New Zealand’s emergence as a political entity on the world stage.¹⁴ Set on a firm path toward self-determination, the mother country’s apron strings were gradually loosening.¹⁵ The resulting sense of empowerment was commensurate with an emerging

⁸ Charles Hursthouse, *New Zealand: or, Zealandia, the Britain of the South*, Vol. 2, (London: Edward Stanford, 1861), 182, accessed September 8, 2014, <http://books.google.co.nz>.

⁹ “The Prince of Wales”, *Otago Daily Times* (hereinafter *ODT*), 17 May 1920.

¹⁰ Angus Ross, *New Zealand Aspirations in the Pacific in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 4-9; Roderic Alley, “New Zealand and the South Pacific,” in *New Zealand and the Pacific*, ed. Roderic Alley (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1984), 136.

¹¹ *Ibid*; “Empire Building in the Pacific”, *ODT*, 29 November 1900. Niueans believed they were to be federated with Britain and wished to remain separate from the Cook Islands. The people refused to obey the civil laws until the error of their annexation was rectified. From 1903, Niue was governed under a separate administration.

¹² Alley, 136; “Evening Sitting”, *Hawke’s Bay Herald*, 29 September 1900; “Greater New Zealand”, *EP*, 17 December 1900.

¹³ Alley, 136; Nancy M. Taylor, *The New Zealand People at War: The Home Front*, Vol. 2, Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War 1939-1945 (Wellington, N.Z.: Historical Publications Branch, Dept. of Internal Affairs: Government Printer, 1986), 710.

¹⁴ Alley, 136.

¹⁵ Ross, *New Zealand’s Foreign Policy*, 1.

social realism; the Great War, economic depression and isolation now affirmed the need for a more distinctive and independent New Zealand identity.¹⁶

New Zealand's first Labour Government came to power in 1935, amid promises to work toward autonomy as "a self-governing nation within the British Commonwealth".¹⁷ The incumbent leaders promoted a more expansive world-view through international co-operation, "as represented by the League of Nations and the International Labour Office".¹⁸ With another war on the horizon, ambitious thoughts were set aside, and absolute allegiance pledged to Britain for the duration of hostilities.¹⁹

The Cook Islands

During this period of New Zealand's imperial expansion it is likely most New Zealanders had little knowledge of the Cook Islands. Situated in the South Pacific Ocean, the group is located to the north east of New Zealand. Lying between French Polynesia and Fiji, in latitudes between nine and twenty-two degrees south of the equator, all enjoy a tropical oceanic climate with two seasons. With a total land area of 240 square kilometres, today the fifteen islands are represented on the national flag by a circle of stars of equal distance and size. Geographically, however, the islands are spread over two million square kilometres of ocean and the most widely-separated islands are some 1,470 kilometres apart.²⁰

The Islands fall naturally into two regions and the country is broadly divided into Southern and Northern Groups.²¹ The Northern Group consists of Pukapuka, Suvarrow, Nassau, Rakahanga, Manihiki, and Tongareva (also known as Penrhyn). All but the small sandy key of Nassau are low-lying coral atolls with large lagoons and sparse vegetation of coconut and pandanus. The Southern Group comprises about 90 per cent of the total land area, and includes Rarotonga, Aitutaki, Atiu, Mangaia, Mauke and Mitiaro. These islands are mainly of high volcanic formation, with fertile soils supporting lush tropical vegetation. Manuae and Palmerston are small atolls, while Takutea is an uninhabited

¹⁶ Carol Mutch, "The Sugarbag Years: Politics and Education Intersect in New Zealand", in *Education & the Great Depression: Lessons from a Global History*, ed. E.T. Ewing and D. Hicks (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 167.

¹⁷ Ross, *New Zealand's Foreign Policy*, 5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

²⁰ Debbie Futter-Puati, "Maki Maro: Tuberculosis in the Cook Islands: A Social History, 1896-1975" (MA Thesis, University of Auckland, 2010), 2.

²¹ Richard Gilson, *The Cook Islands, 1820-1950*, edited by R. G. Crocombe (Wellington, N.Z.: Victoria University Press in association with the Institute of Pacific Studies of the University of the South Pacific, 1980), 2-3.

sandy key now designated as a wildlife sanctuary.²² With an area of 6,719 hectares, Rarotonga is the largest island of the group, and the principal town of Avarua serves as the main centre and capital of the country.²³

The settlement of these islands began some two thousand years ago, and the indigenous people are Cook Island Maori, Polynesians closely related to the populations of Tahiti and nearby islands.²⁴ They also share a close relationship with New Zealand Māori, and according to oral history, Rarotonga served as a starting point for Māori migration to New Zealand.²⁵ Shared experience and traditions reopened these passages across the ocean in the nineteenth and twentieth century, and from 1901, Cook Islanders too became British subjects. During the 1920s and 1930s, a few migrants “tried their luck” at seasonal work in New Zealand, and visiting cultural groups and scholars experienced something of life there.²⁶ Occasionally, migrants married into Pakeha and Māori families and were absorbed by their communities. In the late 1930s, the majority of migrants were young women in their twenties who had been promised employment as domestic servants.²⁷ In some respects, this movement may be interpreted as a response to poor job prospects in the Islands. New Zealand rule had not conveyed the islands into the modern world, a failure that has undoubtedly influenced the contemporary relationship between these nations, and evokes arguments that lie well beyond the scope of this study.²⁸

To uncover the history of these migrants, this thesis relies heavily on primary sources, principally the records of the Island Territories Department held by Archives New Zealand, Wellington. According to Antoinette Burton, records such as these “served as technologies of imperial power ... and hegemony” and this colonial archive clearly

²² Ibid.; Brij V. Lal and Kate Fortune, *The Pacific Islands: An Encyclopedia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 381.

²³ Lal and Fortune, 93, 562.

²⁴ Ibid.; Futter-Puati, 3. As “Māori” is used by both New Zealand and Cook Island communities, I follow the example of Alice Te Punga Somerville, in *Once Were Pacific: Māori Connections to Oceania*, 2012), to differentiate between the two groups. Where it includes macrons, “Māori” should be understood as New Zealand Māori. Cook Island Maori are generally defined as such, but the macron is omitted in this case. Macrons do not appear in quotes where they were absent in the original source, and when referring to specific groups, this is not included if not in use at that time.

²⁵ Futter-Puati, 3. The people of Pukapuka, the most north-west island, are more closely related to Samoa.

²⁶ “Rarotongans in New Zealand”, *Pacific Islands Monthly* (hereinafter *PIM*), August 1938, 63; “Rarotongan Native Troupe”, *Auckland Star* (hereinafter *AS*), 6 February 1890; “Rarotongan Party”, *EP*, 10 January 1934.

²⁷ “Rarotongans in New Zealand.”; “Cook Islanders: Warning against New Zealand Attraction,” *PIM*, December 1942, 27.

²⁸ Dick Scott, *Years of the Pooh-Bah: A Cook Islands History* (Rarotonga; Auckland, N.Z.: CITC; Hodder and Stoughton, 1991); R. A. K. Mason, *Frontier Forsaken: An Outline History of the Cook Islands* (Auckland N.Z.: Challenge Journal, 1947). This is the general view of both these publications. *Years of the Pooh Bah* was written at the request of the *Cook Islands Trading Company* to celebrate their 100 years on the island of Rarotonga.

manifests the power relationship between New Zealand and the Cook Islands.²⁹ While Cook Island administrators denied an active role in the “Cook Island Domestics” scheme, official efforts to manage the lives of Island women in New Zealand attest to the level of involvement. Between 1941 and 1946, this merited four somewhat disorganised files comprised primarily of correspondence.³⁰ These provide details of employers and employment, recruitment and travel arrangements, problems and concerns. The scheme itself operated for only sixteen months, but the consequences endured and preoccupied the Island Territories Department until long after the war.

These files indicate the gendered nature of official concerns and highlight the limitations of the archive. A number of young Cook Island men were also recruited for work during wartime, but their subsequent movements and actions caused little concern. By their very nature, such “presences and absences” within the archive are problematic.³¹ Official anxieties centred on the behaviour of young, unsupervised, single women; attempts to repatriate independent females reflect general perceptions of moral danger during wartime. While an invaluable resource, Government archives fail to record the more positive aspects or successes of the scheme. To a degree, the restricted nature of the archive and conditions of use also limit this source. Their exclusive use would potentially dehumanise the migration process by insisting on the portrayal of nameless, voiceless subjects. Given that many of these women stayed on in New Zealand, these restrictions are accepted as a means of protecting their privacy; on a more cynical note, these safeguarded the government against any further embarrassment or possible legal action.

Later welfare files maintained by the Island Territories Department reveal the concerns expressed by Government agencies, churches and women’s organisations for the well-being of Cook Islanders in New Zealand. These also introduce the more culturally sensitive accounts of the Rev. Robert Challis, whose writings partially redress the balance. Challis served with the London Missionary Society (LMS) in the Cook Islands for thirteen years before assuming an official welfare role among Pacific Islanders in New Zealand. He played a pivotal role in diffusing cultural tensions, and in addition to official reports, wrote extensively of the Islanders’ transition to New Zealand society. In his intermediary capacity, Challis fostered an understanding of difference

²⁹ Antoinette M. Burton, introduction to *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005), 6-7.

³⁰ These files are located at Archives New Zealand National Office, Wellington. They reflect the economy measures taken during wartime, when every scrap of paper was utilised.

³¹ Burton, 19.

and elicited a sympathetic response from his audience. He related the adverse affects on new migrants, problems such as separation anxiety and homesickness. In the case of young women, he portrayed hapless victims of change, cast out upon unknown waters and devoid of independent choices. Although Challis was overtly benevolent in his outlook, his sympathetic perspective and more personalised accounts, are invaluable to this study.

Damon Salesa has claimed that the historiography of the Pacific has cast Islanders as bystanders in their own stories.³² This is confirmed by the scarcity of published sources which offer first-hand accounts of migration experiences. From the 1950s, the visible flow of Cook Islanders to New Zealand was a major feature of post-war prosperity. This population movement has attracted the attention of scholars within the social sciences, and a number of works investigate the social, demographic and economic outcomes of this migration trend, predominantly from the viewpoint of the receiving nation. These works are of some benefit to this study, but the mere trickle of early migrants prior to World War Two seldom ever rate a mention in published sources.

In 1961, in *The Migration of Cook Islanders to New Zealand* and *Cook Islanders in Auckland*, Antony Hooper presents an ethnographic analysis of recent Cook Island migrant settlement in New Zealand.³³ He examines residential distribution and cultural patterns and practices retained by larger groups in the New Zealand setting; this work highlights the social deficiencies endured by earlier arrivals. The statistical sources used by geographer, Peter Curson, reiterate similar themes in *Polynesians and Residence in New Zealand*, published in 1971.³⁴ While population distribution and settlement patterns are of little relevance, Curson's findings on racial tensions and projections of group identity among Polynesian peoples living in New Zealand can benefit this study. These, and other works in a similar vein, sometimes neglect the wider motivational forces behind Pacific migration.

³² Salesa, "New Zealand's Pacific," 166.

³³ Anthony Hooper, "The Migration of Cook Islanders to New Zealand", *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 70, no. 1 (1961): 11-17.

³⁴ Peter H. Curson, "Polynesians and Residence in Auckland", *New Zealand Geographer* 26, no. 2 (1970): 162-173.

The most extensive and factual history of the Cook Islands is that of Richard Gilson in *The Cook Islands, 1820-1950*.³⁵ Gilson does not conceal problems of underdevelopment, or the foibles and limitations of officials, but he clearly intended this as a political and administrative history, rather than a social one. As befits the era of his writing (1949-1952), he is frugal with opinion and offers no real critique of colonialism.³⁶ There is also a deficiency of information for the period under study. In *New Zealand Aspirations in the Pacific in the Nineteenth Century*, published in 1964, Angus Ross reliably clarifies New Zealand's earlier policy decisions in the Pacific.³⁷ Five years later, several contributors to the edited volume, *New Zealand's Record in the Pacific Islands in the 20th Century*, edited by Ross, offer political perspectives of the later period.³⁸ More radical interpretations of Island history can be found in R.A.K. Mason's *Frontier Forgotten* (1947) and Dick Scott's *Years of the Pooh-Bah: A Cook Islands History* (1991); both writers claim historians have shown no interest in the region and seek to redress the balance.³⁹ These works are not aimed at a scholarly audience and the writers are harsh in their criticism of New Zealand's ineffectual and racist rule of the Islands. The latter is more useful, however, as it informs of ordinary characters of interest to this study, for whom it would otherwise be difficult to obtain information.

From 1930, the *Pacific Islands Monthly* (PIM) took an active, if condescending, interest in the movements of Pacific Islanders. Few indigenous Cook Islanders would have read it during the interwar years, but the magazine served as a vital avenue for the interests of the settler community, and reflected growing regionalism.⁴⁰ New Zealand and Australian newspapers also reported interactions and events connecting the Cook Islands with the outside world during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. These provide accounts of travellers to and from the Islands generally unavailable from other sources, and are useful in transmitting Islander responses and New Zealand public opinion.

³⁵ Gilson died in 1963 before completing this history. The manuscript was later prepared for publication by Ron Crocombe. Some reviewers have credited Gilson as both historian and ethnographer for this work, but according to Doug Munro, Gilson spent only one month in the Cook Islands (*The Ivory Tower and Beyond: Participant Historians of the Pacific* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009, 128-129).

³⁶ Gilson, *The Cook Islands, 1820-1950*.

³⁷ Ross, *New Zealand Aspirations in the Pacific in the Nineteenth Century*.

³⁸ Angus Ross, ed., *New Zealand's Record in the Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century* (Auckland: Longman Paul for the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, 1969).

³⁹ Mason, *Frontier Forsaken*; Scott, *Years of the Pooh-Bah*.

⁴⁰ Alley, 157.

In *Na To Hoa Aroha, From Your Dear Friend*, edited by M.P.K. Sorrenson, the letters of Sir Peter Buck and Sir Apirana Ngata deliver an insider's perspective of Cook Island prospects between 1925 and 1950.⁴¹ Candidly conveying their opinions, Buck and Ngata discuss the inevitability of Islander migration to New Zealand, viewing this as a viable path for young people seeking education, employment and a modern lifestyle. Apart from Challis, few publications mention young women leaving in the 1930s and 40s; those that do tend to portray hapless victims or inconsequential players on a larger, male dominated stage. In *Every Girl: A Social History of Women and the YWCA in Auckland 1885-1895*, Sandra Coney briefly outlines welfare concerns relating to Cook Island women in domestic service and efforts made on their behalf.⁴² In *Years of the Pooh-Bah: A Cook Islands History*, Auckland journalist, Dick Scott, provides a light-hearted account of the domestic scheme and glosses over the pioneering nature of their wartime presence.⁴³

Kolokesa Māhina-Tuai goes some way to addressing this deficit in her essay, "A Land of Milk and Honey?" published in the edited collection, *Tangata O Le Moana* in 2012. She provides a short profile of Caroline Marsters Hutton, who arrived in New Zealand for prearranged employment in 1942. Written with reference to the Pacific collections at New Zealand's national museum, Te Papa Tongareva, *Tangata O Le Moana* moves away from the political, economic and demographic factors that preoccupied earlier historians. Focusing on New Zealand's connection to the people of the Pacific, *Tangata O Le Moana* encompasses the broader spectrum of migration to New Zealand from a Pacific Island perspective. These essays provide a valuable background to this study.⁴⁴

In 2001, the young domestics who founded the Island community in New Zealand were recognised in *Cook Islands Women Pioneers: Early Experiences in Aotearoa-New Zealand = Vainetini Kuki Airani*, compiled by Teupoko Morgan.⁴⁵ This publication arose from Suffrage Year celebrations in 1993, when a conference was held to enhance the identity of Cook Island families in New Zealand. Organised by Au Vaine Kuki Airani O

⁴¹ M.P.K. Sorrenson, *Na to Hoa Aroha = from Your Dear Friend: The Correspondence between Sir Apirana Ngata and Sir Peter Buck, 1925-50*, Vols. 1 & 3 (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1986).

⁴² Sandra Coney, *Every Girl: A Social History of Women and the YWCA in Auckland 1885-1985* (Auckland N.Z.: Auckland YWCA, 1986).

⁴³ Scott, *Years of the Pooh-Bah*.

⁴⁴ Sean Mallon, Kolokesa Māhina Tuai and Damon Salesa, eds., *Tangata O Le Moana: New Zealand and the People of the Pacific* (Wellington, N.Z.: Te Papa Press, 2012).

⁴⁵ Teupoko I Morgan, *Cook Islands Women Pioneers: Early Experiences in Aotearoa-New Zealand = Vainetini Kuki Airani* (Tokoroa, N.Z.: Anau Ako Pasifika, 2001).

Aotearoa (Cook Islands Women in New Zealand), the young women who paved the way for friends and family to follow them to New Zealand were central to the celebrations. They were welcomed as special guests and a number later shared their stories for publication. These, along with an unpublished interview and recollections, and a conversation in 2012 with Rangi Glennon, an early migrant, help to furnish the women's presence in this history.⁴⁶

My study of Cook Island women in domestic service adds to a small but rich set of scholarship about domestic servants in New Zealand history. The background of domestic service and women's experiences are readily sourced from the writings of New Zealand historians. Charlotte Macdonald's "Strangers at the Hearth", discusses the social aspects of domestic service for both Māori and Pakeha. In "Empire Settlement and Single British Women as New Zealand Domestic Servants during the 1920s", Katie Pickles focuses on European women brought to New Zealand under various domestic schemes.⁴⁷ The experiences of Māori women negotiating change during wartime can be found in *A Silent Migration, Ngāti Pōneke Young Māori Club, Stories in Urban Migration*, by Agnes Broughton, Patricia Grace, Irihapeti Ramsden and Jonathan Dennis.⁴⁸ This provides a valuable backdrop to wartime events, and offers some comparative perspectives of Cook Island women's wartime experiences in New Zealand.

Thesis Structure

Inevitably, this study must discuss the shifting sands on which New Zealand built its colonial rule of the Cook Islands, as a prerequisite to understanding the power relationships in place. Those who discharged responsibility for the Islands' administration, both Pakeka and New Zealand Māori, come under the spotlight in chapter one. I examine the motives and intentions of officials and ask to what extent they assisted to usher the Cook Islands people into the modern world. The absolute authority vested in the Resident Commissioner gives rise to questions over government intentions for the future status of Island peoples as citizens of New Zealand, a recurrent

⁴⁶ The recollections are those of Caroline Marsters Hutton, who left Rarotonga on the *Maui Pomare* on 13 June 1942. In 1996, she was also interviewed by Tuakana Carlson, who intended to write a history of the Pacific Islands Congregational Church in Wellington. Both of these unpublished documents are in the possession of Caroline's daughter, Grace Hutton, who provided copies for this project.

⁴⁷ Charlotte Macdonald, "Strangers at the Hearth: The Eclipse of Domestic Service in New Zealand Homes c. 1830s-1940s," in *At Home in New Zealand: History, Houses, People*, ed. Barbara Brookes, 41-56 (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2000); Katie Pickles, "Empire Settlement and Single British Women as New Zealand Domestic Servants During the 1920s," *New Zealand Journal of History*, 35, no. 1 (2001), 22-44.

⁴⁸ Agnes Broughton and Patricia Grace, *The Silent Migration: Ngati Pōneke Young Maōri Club 1937-1948: Stories of Urban Migration* (Wellington, N.Z.: Huia Publishers, 2001).

line of enquiry throughout this thesis. In this chapter, I disclose some unofficial and less-well-known practices which impeded or restricted the movement of Cook Islanders, particularly those wishing to travel to New Zealand.

This chapter also focuses on how knowledge of the outside world was disseminated to the Cook Islands' people. I examine the influence of officials and foreigners, and the impact of those Islanders who returned from voyages across the ocean. I ask whether emerging disparities heightened a sense of deprivation and encouraged further migration. I also draw attention to significant, yet previously unexplored allegiances between New Zealand Māori and Cook Island Maori, and show how cultural and political exchanges from the 1860s permitted an increasing number of Cook Islanders to gain firsthand experience of life in New Zealand. Māori leaders, such as Maui Pomare, Peter Buck and Apirana Ngata played a role in broadening the outlook of Island leaders. I ask whether their involvement in Island affairs heightened desires for a higher standard of living at home, or acted more as a magnet, drawing those who aspired to modernity in the direction of New Zealand. I also touch on the effects of intermarriage in cementing relationships between Cook Island and New Zealand Māori. As trade and cultural exchanges joined high-ranking Polynesian families, blood bonds inevitably increased communication and the exchange of ideas. The marriage of Takau (Margaret) Tinirau, daughter of a Rarotongan *ariki*, to Eruera (Edward) Te Whiti o Rongomai Love, is discussed in the chapter.

Chapter two examines New Zealand's record as a colonial power in issues of citizenship, a malleable and contested status across the globe in the first half of the twentieth century. At a time when New Zealand struggled to define itself as a nation space, I disclose the prevailing imperialist attitudes that impacted on Cook Island migration. Consistently defaulting to the British model, successive New Zealand governments certainly never promoted the movement of Cook Islanders to New Zealand; indeed, I reveal further instances of unofficial understandings which quietly allowed restrictive procedures. The Cook Island men who joined the New Zealand Expeditionary Force (NZEF) during World War One serve to highlight my argument. These soldiers were extolled for their patriotism, but I look beneath this superficial praise to reveal an imagined border, rigidly policed by the resident commissioner, but conveniently forgotten during a time of need. I evaluate the men's transition to soldiers of Empire and the formative influence of the wartime experience. I show how an expanded world-view stimulated higher aspirations, knowledge which translated into

political agitation on their return, and prompted the rapid reinstatement of border control. Although white hegemony prevailed in this instance, I ask how the events of World War One introduced new concepts of personal improvement, creating needs and desires which could only be met apart from the Islands.

In 1901, when Cook Islanders became British subjects, no tangible barriers prevented them from taking up work in New Zealand. With little apparent demand for their labour, few availed themselves of the opportunity.⁴⁹ In reality, covert exit procedures safeguarded against any outflow, and migration to New Zealand was not an issue for Island administrators in the interwar period. This changed during World War Two, when the Cook Islands Department (CID), a division of External Affairs, was requested to select suitable Island “girls” for domestic service in private New Zealand homes.⁵⁰ This hastily initiated, quasi-Government scheme aimed to supply housemaids to a select group of high-ranking civil servants, and this undertaking is the subject of chapter three. Official participation was anything but transparent. Records do not divulge the origins of this directive, but some involvement by Carl Berendsen, secretary of the Department of External Affairs, might be assumed. Berendsen was known to favour Pacific Island servants, and was one of the first to receive a Cook Island domestic.⁵¹ It is possible he exerted his considerable influence to bring this about.

Chapter three focuses on the political climate under which the scheme operated. As problems eventuated, I evaluate official efforts to rein in the young Cook Island women. I ask whether these controlling actions were taken out of genuine concern for the well-being of minors under the authority of the CID, or whether these responses might be interpreted as an extension of established colonial hierarchies. Prime Minister Peter Fraser, the incumbent Minister of Island Territories, played a key role. Did his actions support or contradict long-held opinions regarding his sympathy for Pacific Island peoples?

⁴⁹ Hooper, 12.

⁵⁰ IT121/1/6, Part 3: Natives-Cook Island Girls for Domestic Service in New Zealand, Island Territories Department, Wellington [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwantanga, National Office, Wellington], Resident Commissioner (hereinafter RC) to Cook Islands Dept.(hereinafter CID), 4 December 1943. The Department of External Affairs was responsible for the administration of the Cook Islands from 1919 until 1943, at which time the New Zealand Government created the Department of Island Territories. Prior to 1919, the Department of Justice had oversight. The Cook Islands Department, as referred to throughout, was a division within these departments.

⁵¹ Carl Berendsen, *Undiplomatic Dialogue: Letters between Carl Berendsen and Alister McIntosh, 1943-52*, ed. I. C. McGibbon (Auckland NZ: Auckland University Press, 1993), 16, 33. When Berendsen took up a diplomatic post in Canberra in 1943, he wished to arrange the employment of three Pacific Island servants, preferably from the Cook Islands or Samoa, through William Tailby, Secretary of the Cook Islands Department in Wellington. Both Berendsen and his wife were greatly distressed by their lack of live-in home help and considered this absolutely essential to their position and lifestyle.

Chapter four focuses primarily on the lives of the young women who left the Cook Islands during World War Two. Within the constraints of available records, I reconstruct their passage into New Zealand society. I appraise the vastly different attitudes of private employers and their effect on the adjustment process. I ask whether the Islanders' assimilation experience differed from other migrant workers recruited for this role. Neither Government archives nor welfare sources, such as those of Rev. Challis, allowed for any agency on the part of young women; this chapter is therefore overlaid with their voices and aims to provide a counterbalance.

Social networks and support mechanisms are vitally important within any new migrant group. In this chapter, I show young Island women coping with this challenge in the absence of their elders. Country employers claimed the young domestics were better off in a rural environment, but I show these isolated areas as problematic spaces for these young migrants. I negotiate claims regarding the particular vulnerability of these new arrivals, especially given the moral dangers of wartime cities. I ask how their responses differed from other young women in the same environment. Some answers are provided by their shared experience with Māori undergoing similar urbanisation during this time.

This chapter also examines the broader consequences of World War Two and the Cook Islanders' experience of the Pacific War. Although men were excluded from overseas service, the US military occupation of Aitutaki and Penrhyn provided profitable opportunities closer to home. Some contributed to the war effort by mining phosphate in French Polynesia for the French Oceanic Phosphate Company on Makatea, and they too earned enough money to consider opportunities further afield. I highlight the transformative nature of these wartime engagements, both socially and politically, and their potential influence on migration to New Zealand.

This thesis would not be complete without some overview of the contemporary relationship between New Zealand and the Cook Islands. Grouped together by history, these small and scattered islands were never fused by one sense of community.⁵² Nevertheless, in 1964, the Cook Islands chose to become a non-self governing territory in free association with New Zealand, the first such entity recognised as an associated

⁵² "The History of New Zealand's Pacific Connection," Section 2.6, Independence and Self-government, Pacific Peoples Constitution Report, Ministry of Justice, 2000, accessed September 14, 2014, <http://www.justice.govt.nz/publications/publications-archived/2000/pacific-peoples-constitution-report-september-2000/the-history-of-new-zealands-pacific-connection#2.5>.

state.⁵³ The New Zealand government hoped Cook Islanders would now feel like New Zealanders of choice, not merely citizens by force of circumstance.⁵⁴ Today (2014), the Islands have greater autonomy, but official New Zealand sources continue to describe this association as “special”.⁵⁵ While the situation is unique, this language implies an atypical historical relationship in a favourable sense. Continuing political rhetoric in this vein fails to acknowledge any responsibility for New Zealand’s inauspicious record as a colonial power in the Islands. In reality, by 1964, almost 25 per cent of Cook Islanders had already realised the benefits of citizenship by choosing to live in New Zealand.⁵⁶ This history of social, rather than political connectedness, traces the origins of this significant population movement.

⁵³ Lindsay Watt, “Decolonisation Chapter VII,” in *New Zealand as an International Citizen: Fifty Years of United Nations Membership*, ed. M. Templeton (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Wellington, 1995), 117.

⁵⁴ “The History of New Zealand’s Pacific Connection”.

⁵⁵ “Cook Islands,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, last modified May 8, 2014, <http://www.mfat.govt.nz/Countries/Pacific/Cook-Islands.php>.

⁵⁶ Peter H. Curson, “The Cook Islanders,” in *Immigrants in New Zealand*, ed. Keith Westhead Thomson and Andrew D. Trlin (Palmerston North: Massey University, 1970), 174; “Population”, The New Zealand Official Year-Book, 1961, accessed September 1, 2014, http://www3.stats.govt.nz/New_Zealand_Official_Yearbooks/1961/NZOYB_%201961.html#idchapter_1_6422. This is a conservative estimate based on figures for 1961, when both groups were enumerated. At that time, 24.8 per cent of Cook Islanders lived in New Zealand, but by 1965, the number had almost doubled.

Chapter One

Knowledge, Allegiance and Power: Incorporating the Cook Islands

We ask for your goodness,
We ask for your love,
We ask thee, for this child —
The last born child of Queen Victoria.
~ From a Rarotongan Chant of Welcome

New Zealand is described today as “a South Pacific nation with strong cultural, economic and political ties with other Pacific states and territories”. The nation is “relatively large and powerful” within this region, yet remains an economic and political “minnow” in the wider world.¹ This important position within the Pacific is reflected in the fact that 7 per cent of the country’s non-Māori citizens claim Pacific Island origins. Over the course of the twentieth century, cultural allegiances have increasingly identified more closely with South Pacific nations, and the former colony has assumed its geographical, rather than imperial space in the world.² Of all the settler societies that have accepted Polynesian immigrants, New Zealand’s percentage per capita is the highest and Aotearoa New Zealand is no longer the “Britain of the South Seas”. Accepting this reinterpretation allows New Zealanders to recognise, and perhaps appreciate, “the centrality of the Pacific in shaping post-war domestic New Zealand”.³

Over 20 per cent of Pacific Islanders who live permanently in New Zealand in 2014 identify as Cook Islander, some 58,000 in total. Approximately 13,000 remain in the islands. This significant movement was influenced by the “special” relationship which developed between these countries over the past 150 years.⁴ From 1901, Cook Islanders were effectively New Zealand citizens and held rights of residence, but over forty years elapsed before this status was fully understood or recognised. Only in the post-war era was movement to New Zealand facilitated or encouraged, to meet the

¹ Jon Fraenkel, “Pacific Islands and New Zealand,” *Te Ara—the Encyclopedia of New Zealand* (2012), last modified July 13, 2012, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/pacific-islands-and-new-zealand/page-1>.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.; Damon Salesa, “New Zealand’s Pacific,” in *The New Oxford History of New Zealand*, ed. Giselle Byrnes (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2009), 166.

⁴ “Cook Islands,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, last modified May 8, 2014, <http://www.mfat.govt.nz/Countries/Pacific/Cook-Islands.php>.

labour demands within prospering manufacturing and agricultural sectors.⁵ Peaking in the 1980s, this migration flow is generally regarded as an immediate response to opportunities presented at that time. However, I would argue this was a more measured and premeditated movement than previously thought, a sequel to past events rather than a new consciousness.

From the time of earliest contact, Europeans have noted the movement of Cook Island people beyond their shores. These supposedly insignificant departures have seldom attracted the attention of historians. Paying attention to these movements reveals a gradually evolving awareness of the wider world. That knowledge was assembled and disseminated in numerous ways. Island travellers returned from foreign climes bringing tales of consumer societies and new ideas from the “white man’s world”.⁶ Others inevitably crossed paths with those who visited or settled in their islands. I examine how these interactions influenced new patterns of movement and early permanent migration.

This chapter offers a broad overview of interactions between the Cook Islands and the outside world, as an important viewing platform from which to observe and consider the events that followed. I examine New Zealand’s aspirations and influence in the region, drawing attention to its autocratic and paternalistic rule between 1901 and 1965. Colonialism influenced the Cook Islanders’ movements, but I go beyond the European and indigenous interactions that dominate the historiography of the islands, to illuminate little-known associations between New Zealand Māori and Cook Island Maori. I disclose two distinctive sets of attitudes. While Europeans spoke of produce, profit and political power, Māori quietly established enduring cultural and familial links.⁷ I show how these allegiances altered the world view of the Cook Islanders and mediated their passage to modernity.⁸ In examining the role of the Māori Ministers charged with Island affairs, I ask whether these men proffered New Zealand as a destination of choice for intending migrants. In doing so, I look beneath the facade of pomp and protocol, to evaluate their entanglement in New Zealand’s imperial project.

⁵ Daiya K Stasiulis, and Nira Yuval-Davis, *Unsettling Settler Societies: Articulations of Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Class* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE Publications, 1995), 47.

⁶ Richard Gilson, *The Cook Islands, 1820-1950*, edited by R. G. Crocombe (Wellington, N.Z.: Victoria University Press in association with the Institute of Pacific Studies of the University of the South Pacific, 1980), 45.

⁷ "Cook Islands," Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

⁸ W. S. Lowe and W. T. G. Airey, "New Zealand Dependencies and the Development of Autonomy," *Pacific Affairs* 18, no. 3 (1945): 252.

European Arrivals

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Spanish explorers established the “presence” of the Cook Islands.⁹ British navigator, Captain James Cook, mapped and explored the southern group in the 1770s, and named them the Hervey Islands. Rarotonga eluded him, but some fifty years later, the entire group was renamed in his honour by Russian Admiral, Adam Johann von Krusenstern.¹⁰ In 1821, John Williams of the LMS landed Tahitian missionaries on Aitutaki and dispatched converts from the Society Islands to various southern islands. Williams made the first official European landing on Rarotonga in 1823.¹¹ The conversion rate in the Cook group surpassed that of any other in Polynesia, and the spiritual ground was well prepared for the arrival of the first resident European missionaries in 1827.¹²

For over sixty years, the LMS was influential in defining both religious and national loyalties throughout the group. This was evident in 1843, when the French staged an armed takeover of Tahiti and the Society Islands.¹³ Fearing “the horrors of Papism and alleged atrocities of the French Navy”, the Cook Islands’ *ariki* (chiefs) requested British protection through LMS headquarters in London.¹⁴ Colonial authorities had little interest in the South Seas and the LMS remained the dominant European influence.¹⁵ The mission leaders actively safeguarded their “infant peoples” from the “evil influence of non-Christian whites” and discouraged settlement by outsiders.¹⁶ They warned the *ariki* of the dangers posed by incoming traders, planters and beachcombers, persuading them to forbid marriage between indigenous women and foreigners, and to prohibit the sale of land.¹⁷ Until the 1860s, this peaceful enclave remained morally sheltered from the perceived ill-effects of commercial enterprises developing in Tahiti, Samoa, and Tonga, however, not all foreign interests could be repelled.¹⁸ Neither did all

⁹ The Spanish explorer, Álvaro de Mendaña de Neira, sighted Pukapuka in the Northern Group in 1595. Eleven years later, Portuguese-Spaniard, Pedro Fernández de Quirós, claimed the first European landing on Rakahanga.

¹⁰ Alphons M.J. Kloosterman, *Discoverers of the Cook Islands and the Names They Gave*, 2nd ed. (Rarotonga: Cook Islands Library and Museum, 1976), 55, accessed September 14, 2014, <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-KloDisc.html>.

¹¹ Gilson, 4; *Visitor: or Monthly Instructor* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1844), 158, accessed September 1, 2014, <https://archive.org/details/visitorormonthl05britgoog>. Williams fruitfully served the LMS in Tahiti before venturing further abroad.

¹² Gilson, 4, 20.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 5, 41.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1, 41.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1, 13; R. G. Crocombe, *Land Tenure in the Cook Islands* (Melbourne Vic.: Oxford University Press, 1964), 145.

Island leaders bow to mission pressure. Some high-ranking *ariki* found it to their advantage “to give patronage to a selected few Europeans who would co-operate with them”.¹⁹

From the 1850s, as more ships visited the Islands, the LMS struggled to exclude unsavoury visitors. During the nineteenth century, up to 700 vessels ranged the rich whaling grounds of the Pacific; most sailed from New England ports with a “mixed bag” of crew “comprised not only of New Englanders, but also American Indians, runaway slaves, renegade British sailors, other Europeans of diverse nationalities and backgrounds and Pacific Islanders, mainly Hawaiians”.²⁰ Voyages lasted up to three years and whalers cast anchor at various islands to replenish supplies of food and water. After many arduous months at sea, the men sought relaxation and entertainment in the form of alcohol and obliging women.²¹ The Cook Islands were spared the lurid reputation of whaling ports in Hawai’i and Tahiti, but the strengthening Christian influence in Eastern Polynesia encouraged a number of seafarers to seek refuge further afield.²²

Ships deserters, castaways and aspiring traders were gradually absorbed into Cook Island communities.²³ From the 1850s, upwards of eighty merchant and whaling vessels might call at Rarotonga in any one year. Both here and in Aitutaki, Islanders bartered local goods for foreign novelties.²⁴ By 1881, seventy newcomers were living on Rarotonga; most were of European origin, but several Chinese merchants and African-Americans were among the number.²⁵ Some set up as small-scale traders, while others sought long-term settlement and plantation ownership. Prior to 1891, land use was negotiated with the *ariki* on an informal leasehold basis.²⁶

The tropical climate and leisurely lifestyle appealed to outsiders, but in reality, Island life was not always idyllic. Storms and drought were commonplace, and the people were often at the mercy of nature. Foreigners introduced diseases which

¹⁹ Crocombe, *Land Tenure*, 146; Gilson, 36.

²⁰ Robert C. Kiste, “Pre-Colonial Times,” in *Tides of History: The Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century*, ed. K.R. Howe, Robert C. Kiste and Brij V. Lal (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 20.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*; Norma McArthur, *Island Populations of the Pacific* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1967), 235.

²³ Ian C. Campbell, *A History of the Pacific Islands* (Christchurch, N.Z.: University of Canterbury Press, 1992), 66; Gilson, 40. This presence is reflected in the high number of mixed-race marriages in existence by the end of the century.

²⁴ *Ibid.*; Ernest Beaglehole, *Social Change in the South Pacific: Rarotonga and Aitutaki* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1957), 69; Kloosterman, 48.

²⁵ Campbell, 66; Gilson, 40.

²⁶ Crocombe, *Land Tenure*, 73.

decimated the people, and over seventy years, the population of Rarotonga declined by almost 70 per cent due to epidemics of measles, dysentery, influenza and other contagions.²⁷ Outward migration also contributed to population loss. In the time-honoured tradition of Polynesian seamen, the more adventurous voyaged abroad. Island men willingly joined European expeditions of discovery and visited foreign lands on trade and whaling vessels.²⁸ During the nineteenth century, many unattached males from the outer islands made their way to Rarotonga, where the majority of overseas vessels called. Most had rejected the repressive influence of the church and were eager for adventure and new experiences.²⁹ As many as 95 per cent failed to return, losses which seriously impacted on smaller, self-sufficient communities.³⁰ In the 1830s, the *ariki* introduced laws to prohibit further movement, but during the 1840s, this outward flow continued, with at least one hundred departing Rarotonga each year.³¹ When whaling declined in the 1850s, young men travelled to Tahiti, Samoa and California in search of employment.³² In Tahiti, they were hired by Europeans as domestic servants; most returned with different habits and new vices which "polluted others".³³

By the early 1860s, life was changing for those left behind. A growing demand for local produce attracted more ships to the region, and trade was equated with tangible profits and material gain.³⁴ Island men were recruited to mine guano on nearby islands, and this reinforced the experiences of those who returned from whaling expeditions in regard to paid labour and cash.³⁵ Business acumen flourished, and as Islanders began to acquire the trappings of the modern world, the LMS was forced to concede that "the

²⁷ McArthur, 165-180.

²⁸ Gilson, 36; Grant McCall and John Connell, "Pacific Islander Migration: Context and Prospects," in *A World Perspective on Pacific Islander Migration: Australia, New Zealand and the USA*, ed. Grant McCall and John Connell (Kensington, N.S.W.: Centre for South Pacific Studies, University of New South Wales in association with the Bureau of Immigration Research, 1993), 2. Captain James Cook took Polynesian male assistants and/or guests on his various voyages.

²⁹ Beaglehole, *Social Change in the South Pacific*, 71.

³⁰ Anthony Hooper, "The Migration of Cook Islanders to New Zealand," *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 70, no. 1 (1961): 11. No accurate statistics of outward movement were ever compiled, but according to Hooper, some eighty-five Rarotongans left the island in 1833, and only twenty-nine returned. LMS missionary, Charles Pitman noted only one in twenty returning. By 1863, it was estimated over 200 Rarotongans had left for the Society Islands and Tahiti.

³¹ Crocombe, *Land Tenure*, 69-70. According to Beaglehole, the *ariki* sought an agreement from the ships' captains to return the young men. This request was usually ignored and men were put ashore in distant ports such as Honolulu and Sydney.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Beaglehole, *Social Change in the South Pacific*, 74.

³⁴ Gilson, 37, 45, 47.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 42-43. The Starbuck Island scheme was initiated by the Auckland firm of Coombes and Daldy, the first of several over the following decades. The phosphate trade was increasingly important to New Zealand agriculture.

white man and his commerce had come to stay.³⁶ This nascent consumerism coincided with New Zealand's burgeoning trade aspirations; Governor Grey, a staunch advocate of a British Pacific Ocean, encouraged business interests in the South Seas.³⁷ The French in Tahiti were active competitors, but by 1882, New Zealand commanded about 80 per cent of Island trade, with at least ten vessels continuously engaged between the port of Auckland and the Cook Islands.³⁸

An Island newspaper correspondent proudly reported these developments and paid a seldom-heard tribute to the true originators of this traffic.³⁹ This explains the Cook Islanders' predisposition toward commercial ventures associated with New Zealand.

Our last regretful occurrence has been the death of Kainuku ... this occurred last week, and has been the regret of nearly all of our New Zealand residents, as it was through his influence, in conjunction with Paul Tuhaere, of Orakei, that New Zealand trade was introduced into this group by one of the pioneer vessels (the *Victoria*), owned by Tuhaere, who at the same period visited Rarotonga.⁴⁰

This trading initiative was reported in the *Maori Messenger* at the time, but European interests paid little heed to these entrepreneurial ventures. Tuhaere, the leader of Ngati Whatua, aimed to equip Māori with the means to compete in the Pakeha world (Figure 3). Using the proceeds of land sales, he purchased the schooner *Victoria* in 1863, with the intention of establishing trade in the South Seas.⁴¹ He believed tropical crops grown in the islands would be suitable for export to Auckland, and along with twenty of his people, set sail on a goodwill mission.⁴² In Rarotonga, he reportedly "renewed" an acquaintance with Kainuku Tamako, one of the five principal *ariki*. Welcomed as a chief and honoured with an *ariki* title, Tuhaere was also allocated land

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Alexander Mackay, "Copy of a Despatch from Governor Sir George Grey to Earl Grey," in *A Compendium of Official Documents Relative to Native Affairs in the South Island*, Vol. 2 (Nelson: Luckie and Collins, 1872), accessed September 8, 2014, <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Mac02Comp.html>.

³⁸ Gilson, 43-44; "The New Zealand and Daily Southern Cross," *New Zealand Herald* (hereinafter *NZH*), 11 February 1882.

³⁹ "The New Zealand Herald and Daily Southern Cross", *NZH*, 11 February 1882.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Judith Binney, *Stories without End: Essays 1975-2010* (Wellington, N.Z.: Bridget Williams Books, 2010), 324. Orakei Pa is situated in present day Auckland City.

⁴² Ibid.; "The Daily Southern Cross," *Daily Southern Cross*, 22 May 1863.

for growing crops.⁴³ The *Victoria* returned to Auckland with a cargo of fruit and arrowroot, along with some additional passengers. Several young voyagers “chose wives from among the maids of the islands”, and Kainuku, their generous host, also travelled to New Zealand for a visit.⁴⁴ Over the following years, Ngati Whatua and Cook Island Maori maintained and reinforced these ties, through intermarriage and reciprocal visits which often lasted for several months.⁴⁵



Figure 3: Paora Tuhaere. Ref: 1/2-073329-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22898811>.

⁴³ Steven Oliver, “Tuhaere, Paora,” *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* (hereinafter *DNZB*), Te Ara—the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, last modified October 30, 2012, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/1t109/tuhaere-paora>; Hazel Petrie, “Colonisation and the Involvement of the Maori Economy,” in *XIII World Congress of Economic History* (Buenos Aires 2002), 5, accessed September 1, 2014, <http://news.tangatawhenua.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/24Petrie75.pdf>. Tuhaere converted to Christianity at an early age and sought reasoned representation for Māori. He practised allegiance to the Crown and friendship to the government rather than use force to achieve greater Māori control of Māori affairs. The *Victoria* cost £1,400.

⁴⁴ J. L. Kelly, *The South Sea Islands: Possibilities of Trade with New Zealand* (Auckland, N.Z.: H. Brett, 1885), 52; “Rarotonga,” *NZH*, 9 February 1882.

⁴⁵ Oliver; “Telegraphic,” *Wanganui Chronicle*, 11 January 1879; “A Rarotongan Chief,” *AS*, 18 April 1904; “From Rarotonga,” *AS*, 27 January 1934; “Imports,” *AS*, 27 October 1879. Kainuku Vaikai, a descendant of Kainuku, entered into an arranged marriage with Piupiu, the daughter of Te Wherowhero Tawhiao of Ngati Mahuta and the third child of the second Māori King. Piupiu was a leader within the Ratana movement. Vaikai lived in the Waikato for a number of years.

Meanwhile, the New Zealand Government capitalised on the Cook Islands' vulnerability and their strengthening alliances. In 1865, there were renewed rumours of a French invasion, and the *ariki* and mission advisers hastily requested New Zealand assistance. Governor Grey willingly petitioned the Colonial Office on their behalf, seeking British protection over the group, but with few English interests in the region, no action was forthcoming.⁴⁶ The Islands enjoyed a time of peace and relative prosperity during the 1870s. As trade with New Zealand flourished, the Cook Islands displaced Tahiti as the colony's favoured commercial partner in the Pacific.⁴⁷ Under New Zealand's Vogel government, politicians anxiously protected these interests and forged ahead with ambitious plans for further investment.⁴⁸ In 1874, Auckland merchant and Island trader, Handley Sterndale, was commissioned to report on the potential of the region. He provided glowing accounts of industrious and civilized Cook Islanders, whose sound missionary teaching had imbued a "very sensible and rational desire to become part of the British Empire". This outlook was reinforced by "many" Islanders who shipped on board colonial vessels to Auckland, Sydney and "even the Australian goldmines".⁴⁹ "Frequent communication" meant Rarotongans now considered Auckland "the centre of the civilization", and recent interactions between Māori had cemented this relationship.⁵⁰

From the 1870s, Island commerce prospered under the leadership of Makea Takau, a woman of high rank and powerful personality who earned paramount *ariki* status in Rarotonga.⁵¹ She negotiated good prices and controlled exports, while uniting tribal leaders in economic endeavour.⁵² Makea was highly regarded by the LMS and colonial authorities, and was widely known as the "Queen of Rarotonga".⁵³ She was greatly impressed by the expansive realm of Queen Victoria, the mighty British Empire

⁴⁶ Gilson, 43; Angus Ross, *New Zealand Aspirations in the Pacific in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 234.

⁴⁷ Gilson, 43-44. Auckland schooners returned with cotton, coffee, vanilla, arrowroot, oranges and pineapples. Cotton was in great demand due to the American Civil War.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*; Ross, *New Zealand Aspirations*, 234-235.

⁴⁹ H. B. Sterndale, "Memoranda on some of the South Sea Islands, Confederation and Annexation", *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives* (hereinafter *AJHR*), 1884, Session I, A-04, 19-20. In 1867, Handley Sterndale had surveyed Suwarrow for the Pacific Trading Company and returned in 1874 as agent for Messrs. Henderson and Macfarlane. Akin to propaganda, his report actively supported a pro-British outlook and strenuously encouraged New Zealand investment in the Pacific.

⁵⁰ Sterndale, *ibid*; Gilson, 47-48.

⁵¹ Gilson, 51.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 48-49, 51. New ideas and opportunities induced a growing sense of independence and inevitably weakened the power of the LMS in the Islands.

⁵³ *Ibid.*; Changes to Succession to Makea Nui Tribal Title?, *The Cook Islands Herald Online Edition*, 22 April 2009. Makea acceded to the Makea Nui title in 1871. Under her leadership, Europeans came to recognize this as the premier title in Rarotonga, and by extension, the whole of the Cook Islands.

ruled by one woman.⁵⁴ Representatives of the Crown impressed Makea.⁵⁵ When *H.M.S. Turquoise* visited Rarotonga in 1880, Captain Medlycott ordered a twenty-one gun salute in recognition of the “native flag”. This elicited a grateful response, with “boatloads of presents ... mats, pigs, provisions, &c.” sent out to the ship.⁵⁶ A band was sent ashore to play at Makea’s palace and she declared a public holiday. A French man-of-war visited Rarotonga the following year and left a much less-favourable impression. The Captain announced an impending French takeover in the Society Islands and the *ariki* immediately sought British support through the New Zealand Governor.⁵⁷ Their petition was reinforced by the fifteen resident European traders and merchants, and the Foreign Office was finally persuaded to appoint a British Consul to Rarotonga.⁵⁸

Islanders believed indigenous authority would be maintained and endorsed by Britain, but in reality, the affairs of a small and distant group of Pacific islands meant little to the colonial office. The Consul merely safeguarded New Zealand’s growing commercial interests in the region.⁵⁹ Queen Makea sought a “much closer bond of union” with New Zealand; anxious to cultivate trade, she wanted to ensure the Islands were supplied with desirable new commodities.⁶⁰ In September 1885, at the invitation of the New Zealand Government, Queen Makea and a Cook Island delegation sailed for Auckland to discuss future commerce. No organised welcome awaited, and their arrival caused a great deal of confusion. Officials claimed no prior knowledge of the impending visit, and the city’s Mayor quickly came to the rescue, arranging accommodation and organising an extensive itinerary.⁶¹ Over several weeks, the party visited trading companies, banks, retailers, museums and a myriad of local attractions. They attended

⁵⁴ In 1882, four of the five *ariki* of Rarotonga were women. According to Gilson, they were remembered as teetotallers of Christian character.

⁵⁵ Gilson, 50-51.

⁵⁶ "Rarotonga," *NZH*, 10 December 1880.

⁵⁷ "The Native Difficulty," *Star*, 3 November 1881.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* This appointment was made in 1888.

⁵⁹ Gilson, 49-50.

⁶⁰ Ross, *New Zealand Aspirations*. According to Gilson, the influence of European material culture “induced a tendency to imitate and embrace European models of behaviour and materialism”. In 1885, Sterndale reported Island leaders suggested “a rather novel branch of trade”. With large numbers of young men leaving as sailors and never returning, the Islands’ female population was becoming “rather redundant”. Some believed a “matrimonial market” would ease this imbalance, and Queen Makea intended to take several “maids of honour” with her when she visited New Zealand, as “samples of the feminine stock of Rarotonga”.

⁶¹ "Rarotonga: Trade and Annexation Matters," *AS*, 29 September 1885; "Distinguished Visitors at Auckland," *Marlborough Express*, 12 October 1885. A newspaper article in the *Auckland Star*, 5 August 1885, reported Makea had received a written invitation from Premier Robert Stout and had signalled her intention to accept. A number of newspapers reported the intended visit, but none appeared aware of the exact dates.

services of worship and were entertained at concerts and a circus.⁶² Auckland merchants, eager to benefit from the Islands' surplus buying power, anticipated "economic results of an important kind" would result; surely the sight of their goods in the Islands would increase the demand for New Zealand merchandise.⁶³

Meanwhile, Makea awaited an audience with Government representatives.⁶⁴ She declined an official invitation to travel south, as several of her party were already "prostrate with feverish colds".⁶⁵ The group were happily reunited with old friends when Paora Tuhaere and a group of "followers" visited their city hotel. They later attended a gathering at Orakei Pa.⁶⁶ The Government provided free passes on the railways, enabling the visitors to travel to King Tawhiao's settlement at Whatihoe in the Waikato.⁶⁷ Local newspapers followed these activities with interest, and Tepou o te Rangi, the holder of Rarotonga's Vakatini *ariki* title, furnished some first-hand impressions of life outside of the islands. The entire party were astonished and delighted by all they had witnessed, the "beautiful and wonderful" city, the multitude of houses, people and shops, "with their seemingly exhaustless stores of provisions".⁶⁸ They had "much to tell their fellow countrymen" when they returned, and the young people were particularly eager to visit again.⁶⁹

Eighteen days after their arrival, Government representatives finally arrived in Auckland to pay their respects to Queen Makea. Native Minister, John Ballance, came bearing gifts of woollen mats, rugs and blankets; these useful items arrived almost too late as the party were due to depart four days later.⁷⁰ Ballance was deferential in his dealings with Makea, treating her "as if she was the head of a foreign government", but his true motives were thinly disguised.⁷¹ He touched on the possibility of a New Zealand Residency in Rarotonga, a "quasi-protectorate" to avert interference by foreign powers.⁷²

⁶² "The Queen of Rarotonga," *AS*, 13 October 1885 and 14 October 1885; "The Rarotongan Visitors," *Star*, 28 October 1885.

⁶³ "The Rarotongan Embassy," *Te Aroha News*, 7 November 1885.

⁶⁴ "Distinguished Visitors at Auckland"; "The Queen of Rarotonga," *AS*, 13 October 1885; "The Queen of Rarotonga," *AS*, 14 October 1885; "Telegraphic," *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 28 October 1885.

⁶⁵ "The Rarotongan Visitors," *Star*, 28 October 1885.

⁶⁶ "The New Zealand and Daily Southern Cross," *NZH*, 15 October 1885.

⁶⁷ "The Queen of Rarotonga," *AS*, 13 October 1885; "The Queen of Rarotonga in Waikato," *Waikato Times*, 20 October 1885; "Distinguished Visitors," *Press*, 12 October 1885. Tuhaere was unwell and did not travel with the group. His wife accompanied the visitors and she later visited the islands.

⁶⁸ "The Queen of Rarotonga," *AS*, 12 October 1885. Under the future British Protectorate, Tepou was appointed Judge of the High Court. He visited New Zealand again four years later.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*; *Te Aroha News*, 7 November 1885.

⁷⁰ "The Rarotonga Embassy," *Marlborough Express*, 28 October 1885.

⁷¹ Gilson, 50.

⁷² *Ibid.*; "The Rarotonga Embassy," *Star*, 31 October 1885; "The Colonist," *Colonist*, 7 November 1885.

Sir George Grey himself made a belated visit to extend the hand of friendship, and pledged support from New Zealand should the need ever arise.⁷³

These dutiful ministrations were soon rewarded. In 1886, Makea requested the New Zealand government intercede with imperial authorities for protection over the Islands; the Government took the initiative, and offered to pay the salary of a vice-consul in Rarotonga, if the appointee was a New Zealander. This person might also oversee New Zealand's trade interests in the region.⁷⁴ The Colonial Office deferred for another three years, by which time, the unscrupulous behaviour of some non-Polynesian residents was causing concern.⁷⁵ Makea reminded the colonial office that her people shared a close relationship with New Zealand Māori; many were educated and civilised by English missionaries and already considered themselves British subjects.⁷⁶

The New Zealand press speculated over the fate of this "valuable group of Islands", where a "highly interesting and intelligent race of people ... awaited the opportunity for Great Britain to make them her own".⁷⁷ They welcomed news of a British protectorate over the southern Cook Islands in September 1888. Some idealistically claimed this as a reflection of New Zealand's growing influence over the "Home Government".⁷⁸ Incumbent Premier, Robert Stout, applauded the tenacity of politicians who followed through on the wise suggestions made to Queen Makea during her visit. This now gave reason to hope these islands "would ultimately be placed under the direct control of New Zealand".⁷⁹

The Auckland public were a little intrigued by these burgeoning Pacific connections. In 1889, a large troupe of dancers, singers, cricketers and "canoemen" arrived to participate in Jubilee Celebrations.⁸⁰ Led by Tepou o te Rangi, their appearances at regattas and concerts were well-received and earned an appreciative Māori following.⁸¹ Island dancers performing at Orakei Pa were greeted with "excited open-mouthed astonishment".⁸² Free railway passes again allowed for travel to the

⁷³"The Rarotonga Embassy," *Star*, 31 October 1885.

⁷⁴Ross, *New Zealand Aspirations*, 235-239.

⁷⁵Ibid.; Gilson, 63.

⁷⁶Ross, *New Zealand Aspirations*, 239; "Island News," *AS*, 10 July 1888.

⁷⁷"A Protectorate," *Wanganui Herald*, 4 October 1888.

⁷⁸Gilson, 60; "Annexation of South Sea Islands," *Marlborough Express*, 3 October 1888.

⁷⁹"The Latest Annexation," *Daily Telegraph*, 8 October 1888; "The New Protectorate."

⁸⁰"Jubilee Celebrations," *NZH*, 11 December 1889.

⁸¹"Rarotongans," *AS*, 12 February 1890; "Rowing Regatta," *AS*, 8 February 1890; "Untitled," *NZH*, 24 February 1890; "Untitled," *AS*, 15 November 1889; "The Rarotongan Native Troupe," *NZH*, 11 January 1890. Newspapers accounts vary as to the numbers of performers and range from twenty-six to forty. Some sources suggest Tepou also travelled for business and to seek medical advice.

⁸²"The Rarotongan Native Troupe", *NZH*, 11 January 1890.

Waikato and other places of interest, but there was great sadness when several of the visitors became ill and one died.⁸³ There was some financial embarrassment when the proceeds from performances proved insufficient to pay the return fares.⁸⁴ Given their interests were so “closely bound up” with the Islands, the people of Auckland were encouraged to support a farewell benefit concert, so their guests might depart with good memories of time spent in the city.⁸⁵ From that time, a number of indigenous Island ventures became actively engaged in trade with Auckland. Eighty Rarotongan men collaboratively built the schooner *Takitumu*, which made her maiden voyage in 1894 with a cargo of fruit.⁸⁶ These enterprises allowed even greater numbers to venture abroad.⁸⁷

Hopes for New Zealand dominance in the South Seas were bolstered in 1890, when Frederick Moss, a New Zealand politician, was approved as Resident Agent in Rarotonga. Experienced in Pacific affairs, Moss appeared well-suited to the colony’s first direct role in Island governance.⁸⁸ Initially, his tact and judgment were widely praised. He assisted the *ariki* to form a central government, a “rickety proto democracy” that weakened the authority of the mission, but in time, his popularity waned. Moss “failed to commend himself to most members of the community”, and within six years, Island affairs seemed “pretty well on the boil”, with three disparate factions petitioned for his recall.⁸⁹ Moss was replaced in 1898 by Major Walter Gudgeon, a veteran of the New Zealand Wars.⁹⁰ It was “an open secret” that Gudgeon was selected with New Zealand’s political goals in mind, “namely the annexation of the Cook and Northern Islands to the British Empire”.⁹¹

⁸³ Rarotongan Thanks to Aucklanders, *NZH*, 3 March 1890; “Rarotongan Native Troupe,” *AS*, 6 February 1890.

⁸⁴ “Rarotongan Native Troupe,” *AS*, 6 February 1890.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ “A Rarotongan Schooner,” *Press*, 18 May 1894. This name had great significance. In ancient times, the *Tākitumu* was an important waka with whakapapa throughout the Pacific, particularly with Samoa, the Cook Islands and Aotearoa New Zealand. According to several Māori traditions, this was one of the great migration ships bringing Polynesian migrants from Hawaiki to Aotearoa.

⁸⁷ “From Rarotonga,” *AS*, 27 January 1934.

⁸⁸ Gilson, 243-244.

⁸⁹ Gilson, 63-64, 87; John Garrett, *Footsteps in the Sea: Christianity in Oceania to World War II* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, in association with World Council of Churches, 1992), 252; “Fretful Porcupine,” *Observer*, 6 November 1897.

⁹⁰ Gilson, 86.

⁹¹ Gilson, 89; “Lieutenant-Colonel W. E. Gudgeon,” *AS*, 25 September 1908.



Figure 4: The King and Queen of Rarotonga, with Mrs Seddon and Premier Richard Seddon, in the palace grounds, Rarotonga, during Seddon's visit to the Pacific Islands. Sears, Frederick W, fl 1890s-1900s: Photographs taken during Premier Seddon's visit to Rarotonga. Ref: PAColl-7599-1. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22551977>.

New Zealand statesmen wasted little time in flaunting a benevolent presence in the South Seas. When Governor Lord Ranfurly visited the following year, he firmly dismissed rumours of annexation, as malicious attempts “to create mistrust and ill-feeling”.⁹² In 1900, Premier Richard Seddon embarked on a timely health trip to the South Seas (Figure 4). The press contemplated a voyage “fraught with great possibilities”, perhaps heralding “the first steps in the establishment of a great South Pacific Islands federation”.⁹³ Such acquisitions would surely provide a welcome offset to the newly-federated Australia, “or at any rate to an Australian federation which would seek to bring the Pacific Islands in with it”.⁹⁴

The colonial office in London were somewhat guarded in their response to New Zealand’s growing ambitions in the Pacific. They were not entirely satisfied with the colony’s record in dealing with Māori land issues, and agreed to the appropriation of Cook Islands only under certain conditions, namely, land must remain in the possession of the indigenous peoples and Cook Islanders were to automatically become citizens of

⁹² Ross, *New Zealand Aspirations*, 261; “The Governor's Visit to Rarotonga,” *Marlborough Express*, 3 May 1899.

⁹³ “A South Sea Islands Federation,” *Thames Star*, 23 May 1900.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* The six separate British self-governing colonies of Australia federated in 1901.

New Zealand.⁹⁵ Under these terms, New Zealand officially annexed the Islands in June 1901. This “friendly capture” was lauded as a master stroke by Seddon, but a disillusioned Moss was a little more circumspect.⁹⁶ He accused the Premier of taking a “very misty view” of this victory; did he realise these islands were now an integral part of New Zealand? Their inhabitants had become “our fellow colonists”, in the same way as those living at Great Barrier or any other New Zealand island⁹⁷ He anticipated New Zealand would soon be forced “to deal with a series of new self-sought and far-reaching difficulties”, problems demanding “the most earnest consideration”.⁹⁸ In chapter two, I show how Moss’s prophecy came to pass forty years later, as Island difficulties reached as far as the distant shores of Aotearoa New Zealand.⁹⁹

New Zealand rule

Undoubtedly, New Zealand’s resolve to take these Islands within her boundaries “set the pattern for future progress”.¹⁰⁰ Ernest Beaglehole believed the Islanders might otherwise have taken the “road to independence” much earlier.¹⁰¹ While Seddon considered the people practically capable of maintaining self-government, the attitude and actions of his chosen administrator appear at odds with this sentiment.¹⁰² Gudgeon admitted neither respect for the “native character ... nor hope for his future”, and denounced the *ariki* as incapable of developing their assets and ruling themselves.¹⁰³ He believed the “rapid decay of the aborigines” would inevitably bring the Islands into European hands and advocated foreign settlement. His methods were coercive and oppressive, as he manipulated existing rivalries and generating new ones to

⁹⁵ Ron Crocombe, Makiuti Tongia and Tepoave Araitia, “A Snapshot: Absentee Landowners in the Cook Islands: Consequences of Change to Tradition, in *Making Land Work, Volume Two, Case Studies* (2008), Australian Agency for International Development, 157, accessed September 1, 2014, http://aid.dfat.gov.au/Publications/Documents/MLW_VolumeTwo_Bookmarked.pdf.

⁹⁶ Ross, *New Zealand’s Aspirations*, 270; “New Zealand’s ‘Foreign’ Possessions,” *New Zealand Tablet*, 2 October 1902.

⁹⁷ “Our New Tropical Fellow Colonists,” *AS*, 6 September 1901.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ M101/12 Part 1: Cook Islands Administration Policy: Changes of Policy Arising from Ministerial Visits, Ministry of Island Territories, Wellington, [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwantanga, National Office, Wellington], DIT to Secretary, Public Service Commission, 28 September, 1953.

¹⁰¹ Ernest Beaglehole, “Social and Political Changes in the Cook Islands,” *Pacific Affairs* 21, no. 4 (1948): 397.

¹⁰² Gilson, 1, 118-125; Roger C. Thompson, “Britain, Germany, Australia and New Zealand in Polynesia,” in *Tides of History: The Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century*, ed. K.R. Howe, Robert C. Kiste and Brij V. Lal (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1994), 73.

¹⁰³ Gilson, 1, 125; “The Cook Islands,” *Marlborough Express*, 2 February 1909.

advantage.¹⁰⁴ This approach embarrassed the New Zealand Government, but little was done to curb this escalating autocracy.

Queen Makea protested at the leaders' loss of power, but soon discovered her "actual authority... was not commensurate with her ceremonial functions", particularly in regard to Europeans.¹⁰⁵ By 1908, Gudgeon had usurped the *ariki* and diminished the powers of the LMS; control now rested almost entirely with himself and the Government minister in charge of the islands.¹⁰⁶ According to Jeffrey Sissons, his appointment was not only unfortunate for the *ariki*, but also for the future of Cook Island democracy. Gudgeon's legacy would affectively deny the population a significant voice in government for the next fifty years.¹⁰⁷

Commercial enterprise took centre stage in the colonial project and little consideration was given to the welfare needs of the new "fellow-colonists".¹⁰⁸ Uncomfortable change was regarded as an inevitable part of the Islanders' rite of passage into the modern world.¹⁰⁹ According to LMS missionary, the Rev. John Hutchin, the Cook Islanders had a great desire for knowledge, but the New Zealand government considered it unwise to provide higher education, as "the boys would all then come to New Zealand".¹¹⁰ Hutchin believed this was unlikely; the colony was far too cold to attract Island residents, and besides, "they would have to work hard for their living". He could not imagine "the easy-going islander, who finds living an easy matter under present conditions, exchanging such a state for the harder life in New Zealand".¹¹¹

It is difficult to gauge the extent of Islander discontent during this period, but in late 1908, problems arose on Manihiki and Rakahanga. "Several malcontents" staged a "revolution" and tore down the British flag.¹¹² Refusing to recognise the New Zealand-appointed Island Council, they installed their own Governor and disrupted European trade.¹¹³ News of this uprising may have influenced Premier Sir Joseph Ward, as he distributed cabinet portfolios in the new Liberal government. From January 1909, the

¹⁰⁴ Wilson, 49; R.G. Crocombe, "Land Policies in the Dependencies," in *New Zealand's Record in the Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Angus Ross (Auckland, N.Z: Longman Paul for the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, 1969), 13-14.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 123; Garrett, 254.

¹⁰⁷ Jeffrey Sissons, *Nation and Destination: Creating Cook Islands Identity* (Suva, Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies; University of the South Pacific Centre in the Cook Islands, 1999), 13.

¹⁰⁸ This is the general opinion of commentators such as Dick Scott and R.A.K. Mason.

¹⁰⁹ Gilson, 26.

¹¹⁰ "The South Sea Islands," *AS*, 23 April 1907.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² "Revolution at Cook Islands," *Ashburton Guardian*, 20 November 1908.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*; "Trouble at Cook Islands," *Poverty Bay Herald*, 31 August 1908. Due to distance and difficulties of communication, news of such events was painfully slow to reach New Zealand.

Cook Islands were placed in the hands of Native Affairs Minister, Sir James Carroll (1857–1926).¹¹⁴ With vast experience in Māori affairs, Carroll was deemed the best fitted to the task, and very familiar with any “native questions that will crop up.”¹¹⁵

Carroll’s background supported Ward’s confidence. Of Ngati Kahungunu and Irish descent, and raised in a bi-cultural environment, Carroll garnered a wide range of life experiences before securing a position with the Native Department as an interpreter. He considered Māori eminently capable of thriving in European society, and believed collaboration with Pakeha would restore their *mana*.¹¹⁶ Elected to Parliament in 1893, Carroll was the first Māori to hold a ministerial position. He inspired young Māori toward success in the European world, harnessing the diverse talents of promising Te Aute College graduates such as Maui Pomare, Peter Buck (Te Rangi Hiroa), Apirana Ngata and Edward Ellison. As members of the Young Māori Party, he guided them toward roles of benefit to Māori.¹¹⁷ These men are of particular interest to this study, for in some capacity, all were influential in the developing the relationship between the Cook Islands and New Zealand prior to 1940.¹¹⁸

Journalists speculated that Carroll would soon “want to go voyaging to the Happy Isles to see his new subjects”, but the new Minister for the Cook Islands had no such intention.¹¹⁹ He showed little sympathy for his Maori cousins on Manihiki and Rakahanga when he granted Gudgeon a free rein to deal with the dissenters; he even sent a warship to act as a “moral force”.¹²⁰ Retribution was swift and the rebels were soon imprisoned.¹²¹ Gudgeon’s triumph was short-lived, as two months later Premier Ward retired him from office, ostensibly due to old age. The Minister’s office was less than generous, refusing to pay household removal costs and awarding the minimum

¹¹⁴ “Distribution of Portfolios,” *Fielding Star*, 7 January 1909.

¹¹⁵ “The Reconstructed Cabinet,” *Grey River Argus*, 7 January 1909.

¹¹⁶ Alan Ward, “Carroll, James,” *DNZB*, Te Ara—the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, last modified June 6, 2013, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2c10/carroll-james>.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*; Garrett, 254. Boys boarded at Te Aute for ten months of the year. Discipline was strong and pupils were given a sound academic grounding in preparation for matriculation to university and the professions.

¹¹⁸ Jock McEwan, “The Place of Sir Apirana Ngata in Maori Acculturation”, *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 59, no. 4 (1950): 288. This appeared in a special memorial issue paying tribute to Sir Apirana Ngata. The mainstream approach adopted by the Young Māori Party favoured the acquisition of British ways and encouraged technical proficiency.

¹¹⁹ “Distribution of Portfolios”.

¹²⁰ “Statement by Mr Carroll.” *Marlborough Express*, 5 March 1909.

¹²¹ Donald Akenson, *An Irish History of Civilization* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 451; Dick Scott, *Years of the Pooh-Bah: A Cook Islands History* (Rarotonga; Auckland, N.Z.: CITC; Hodder and Stoughton, 1991), 110.

retirement salary.¹²² Carroll also allegedly denied Gudgeon a coronation medal, an honour otherwise expected to reward such extensive service to the New Zealand Government. These disentitlements may reflect official disapproval of the imperious and discriminatory practices of Walter Gudgeon.¹²³

In 1911, Carroll received a knighthood for services to Māori, but some commentators have questioned whether this honour was merited. Carroll favoured the gradual assimilation of Māori and introduced a *taihoa* (go slow) policy, to counter the trauma of rapid colonisation and slow the sale of Māori land in New Zealand.¹²⁴ Some Māori leaders believed Carroll conceded too much to non-Māori interests, but Europeans criticised his pro-Māori policy.¹²⁵ Irish historian, Donald Akenson, casts doubt on Carroll's dedication to Māori, citing his anti-Māori stance during the New Zealand wars and vehement support of the Tohunga Suppression Act of 1907.¹²⁶ According to Dick Scott, Carroll identified too closely with the Pakeha establishment to show a "reforming appetite for Cook Islands affairs".¹²⁷ Europeans were equally unhappy when Carroll extended the *taihoa* policy to his new Island charges and continued the policy of indigenous land ownership.¹²⁸ He was accused of neglecting these "generous, kindly and warm-hearted" people, who now suffered "under the nose of a native of their own race".¹²⁹

The most common thread of dissatisfaction was Carroll's failure to visit the Islands, although he did send others in his place.¹³⁰ The overtly paternalistic attitude within his department is manifested in the tone of Mr. F. Waldegrave, Under-Secretary of Justice and Secretary of the Cook Islands Department, who visited Rarotonga in 1911. In an address verging on messianic, he reassured the assembled leaders.

¹²² Akenson, 451; "Colonel Gudgeon," *AS*, 2 December 1909; "Departmental Reorganisation," *AS*, 12 May 1909. Gudgeon was 68 years old. He received only three months salary and officially appealed this decision.

¹²³ Scott, 111; Akenson, *ibid.*

¹²⁴ Ward.

¹²⁵ Thompson, 80.

¹²⁶ Akenson, 453.

¹²⁷ Scott, 114-115.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ "Disquieting Disclosures," *Dominion* (hereinafter *DOM*), 15 October 1910; Garrett, 254. Earlier enactments delimited the areas of land needed by Cook Island Maori, with a view to making the remainder available for foreign settlement. The Cook Islands Amendment Act, 1915, acknowledged land as the essential basis of Maori life and brought a change in emphasis. Having the land recognised as the primary source of subsistence allowed indigenous retention and the ongoing observance of custom. According to R.G. Crocombe, these modifications were due in part to the New Zealand Māori ministers in charge of the Islands, who were themselves struggling to preserve their lands for the benefit of the Māori people.

¹³⁰ Scott, 114-115; Thompson, 80; "Unhappy Islands," *DOM*, 16 August 1911; "Movements of Ministers," *Press*, 6 December 1910; "Native Trouble at Cook Islands," *Colonist*, 5 March 1909.

You may think your voice does not carry over the sea to New Zealand. That is not the case. The Government of New Zealand is your parent, and the parent hears the voice of the child, no matter how far off he may be. Therefore, do not be afraid to lift up your voice and tell the New Zealand Government what is in your hearts.¹³¹

Such assumptions of godlike superiority might be expected from European colonisers, but more disturbingly, the presence and attitude of New Zealand Māori within the official party implies their use as agents of subjugation.¹³² Lachlan Paterson believes such inclusions were “designed to align with the imperial ideology of a racial fraternity, and to reify colonial rule”.¹³³ Heuheu Tukino, Paramount Chief of Tuwharetoa, accompanied Waldegrave to the Cook Islands in 1911, and his words of address might suggest some complicity in this colonising project.

I am a Maori like yourselves ... you were the first ones to come into contact with Europeans and we were the last ... this is only the beginning of things ... formerly we were in darkness the same as you but after fifty years experience we are enlightened.¹³⁴

Not only does the implication of brotherhood normalise and endorse the power relationships in place, the scriptural overtones imply a path to salvation when surrendering to this higher power. On the basis of similar experiences at the hands of Europeans, and the supposedly advanced state of Māori in relation to the Cook Islanders, Te Heuheu clearly felt entitled to assume the role of mentor and advisor.

Paterson views encounters such as these as opportunities for indigenous peoples to reflect on “their own place within the colonial societies” that Europeans constructed around them.¹³⁵ With an evident sense of inferiority, Island leaders responded to Te Heuheu with childlike submission, openly lamenting their lack of knowledge and understanding of the law. Vaikai Moate, a *Mataiapo* of Takitumu, was grateful to know “that one of our own race can advise us like this”, because, “we are ignorant ... we are children”.¹³⁶ Teura, a *Rangatira* from Avatiu, referred to New Zealand as a parent, whose

¹³¹ Cook and Other Islands, *AJHR*, 1911 Session I, A-03, 3.

¹³² Te Heuheu later became a member of the New Zealand Legislative Council.

¹³³ Lachlan Paterson, “The Similarity of Hue Constituted No Special Bond of Intimacy between Them’: Close Encounters of the Indigenous Kind,” *Journal of New Zealand Studies*, no. 14 (2013): 20.

¹³⁴ Cook and Other Islands, *AJHR*, 1911 Session I, A-03, 3.

¹³⁵ Paterson, *ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

people possessed greater knowledge and wisdom. He implored the government to “lead our children in the paths of learning and knowledge – do not leave us to become as a lot of fools”.¹³⁷

The “parent” listened to the candid appeals of the “children”, but failed to heed their voice. Over the following years, there was little growth in social commitment toward the Cook Islands, especially in education and health. Allegations of neglect reached the media.¹³⁸ In 1909, when the son of a New Zealand MP died on Mangaia, this was directly attributed to the absence of medical services.¹³⁹ New Zealand regarded the Islands purely as a revenue-producing asset, and this was noted by a wider audience. An American academic, George Gates, warned this attitude was courting disaster, and advised those responsible to make a “paradise of the Cook Islands”, to set an example to the colonising nations of the world.¹⁴⁰ Gates believed that, “if there was any place in the Dominion where men of the highest character should be appointed”, it was the Cook Islands.¹⁴¹ Nevertheless, several factors may be presented in defence of Carroll in his Island role. As an exceedingly busy politician, his strenuous portfolio included several terms as Acting Prime Minister. Any future visions for the Islands were hindered by government unwillingness to assume financial or moral responsibility for “those Pacific dots known as the Cook Islands”.¹⁴² When Carroll was replaced in 1912, Island affairs seemed set to improve under the more proactive leadership of Dr. Maui Pomare.

Of Ngati Mutunga and Ngati Toa descent, Pomare had first-hand experience of Island life. Graduating as the first Māori medical practitioner in 1899, within two years he had taken on the “immense task” of “Chief Medical Officer to the Natives of New Zealand”, a role requiring incessant travel throughout the country.¹⁴³ Pomare was

¹³⁷ Ibid., 4

¹³⁸ “Unhappy Islands,” *DOM*, 16 August 1911; “The Cook Islands Trouble,” *DOM*, 25 August 1911.

¹³⁹ Scott, 114-115;

¹⁴⁰ “Untitled,” *Poverty Bay Herald*, 25 March 1909. George Gates was an American academic who visited New Zealand in 1909. According to Robert Cady Gates, author of *Records of the Gates Families of America from the Colonial Period to 1860-Third Edition: 2000*, George Gates was a former Pastor of the Congregational Church and President of Pomona College, Claremont, California until 1909. He later accepted the presidency of Fiske University at Nashville, Tennessee.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ward, “Carroll, James”; S.D. Wilson, “The Record in the Cook Islands and Niue 1901- 45,” in *New Zealand's Record in the Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Angus Ross (Auckland, N.Z.: Longman Paul for the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, 1969), 46; “Words and Work,” *AS*, 26 August 1911.

¹⁴³ Ibid.; Raeburn Lange, *May the People Live: A History of Maori Health Development 1900-1920* (Auckland, N.Z.: Auckland University Press, 1999), 147.

perceived as loyal to the Crown and favoured intermarriage and acculturation.¹⁴⁴ During the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall's tour of New Zealand in 1901, Carroll staged a large-scale *hui* at Rotorua, to showcase Māori as "the mirror of civilization".¹⁴⁵ In his role as health and hygiene officer, Pomare met some specially invited guests, Cook Island leaders Pa Ariki of Rarotonga and "King John" of Mangaia. As "kinsmen from over the sea", they received a fitting Māori welcome.¹⁴⁶ Pomare renewed this acquaintance five years later, while carrying out a survey of disease and sanitary conditions in the Islands.¹⁴⁷ He reported a healthy and contented people, with fewer health problems than anticipated.¹⁴⁸ The Islands were "a veritable goldmine", promising great profits "both to the colony and the islands".¹⁴⁹ Any tensions simmering under the Gudgeon regime apparently eluded him; Pomare considered him "the right man in the right place ... the natives love him like a father".¹⁵⁰

In 1912, Pomare's optimism was put to the test. Unlike his predecessor, the new Minister was a regular visitor to the Islands. He energetically tackled problems of underdevelopment, but his plans were constantly thwarted by insufficient funding. In emphasising New Zealand's moral responsibility, Pomare advocated social and economic policies tailored to the people needs.¹⁵¹ He prioritised health and education and insisted the children learn English in school.¹⁵² When forced to defend his goals, he argued that Islanders were gravely disadvantaged by an inadequate knowledge of English, both in everyday dealings, and on visits to New Zealand and other parts of the Pacific.¹⁵³ At the same time, he strongly advocated improvements to agriculture and shipping, to enable growers to compete in the New Zealand market.

¹⁴⁴ Graham Butterworth, "Pomare, Maui Wiremu Piti Naera," *DNZB*, Te Ara-the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, last modified October 30, 2012, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/3p30/pomare-maui-wiremu-piti-naera>. Pomare graduated MD in 1899 from the American Medical Missionary College at Chicago.

¹⁴⁵ "The Maori Gave his Best: Visit of T.R.H. the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York," *Te Ao Hou = The New World*, No. 6, 1953, 20, accessed September 8, 2014, <http://teahou.natlib.govt.nz/journals/teahou/issue/Mao06TeA/c16.html>. Carroll intended to demonstrate Māori loyalty to the monarchy and provide evidence of the new way of life adopted by his people. This event attracted nearly 3,500 Māori from all parts of New Zealand. This was an abridged version of an account written by J. A. Loughnan in *Royalty in New Zealand, 1901*, however, *Te Ao Hou* claims it was written by Sir Apirana Ngata.

¹⁴⁶ "The Royal Visit," *Otago Witness*, 12 June 1901.

¹⁴⁷ Tiaki Hikawera Mitira, *Takitimu* (Wellington, N.Z.: Reed Publishing, 1972), 217, accessed September 8, 2014, <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-MitTaki-t1-body-d3-d4.html>.

¹⁴⁸ "Cook Islands Diseases," *AS*, 5 July 1906. Concerns had been raised about the prevalence of leprosy in the Islands. Pomare was later appointed Minister of Health in New Zealand.

¹⁴⁹ "Cook Islands Diseases"; "The Cook Islands," *AS*, 11 July 1906.

¹⁵⁰ "The Cook Islands: Some Notes by Dr. Pomare," *AS*, 19 September 1906.

¹⁵¹ Butterworth.

¹⁵² Wilson, 46.

¹⁵³ Gilson, 175; Butterworth.

Pomare formed a close friendship with Makea Nui Tinirau, a grand nephew of Queen Makea, who acceded to the title in 1921. Tinirau was an impressive man “of striking appearance and unusual ability”, and a supremely popular choice.¹⁵⁴ Over 2000 people celebrated his coronation at Rarotonga and engaged in five days of festivities and feasting.¹⁵⁵ Tinirau was regarded as forthright and generous, perpetuating the Makea tradition of loyalty to the British Government and cooperation with the New Zealand administration. He offered hospitality to distinguished visitors and organised elaborate entertainments when warships visited.¹⁵⁶ He developed an affable relationship with Resident Commissioner, Hugh Ayson, and in 1927, Tinirau was part of a small Island delegation invited to Auckland during the Royal Tour, where the party were presented to the Prince of Wales.¹⁵⁷

As a senior and influential *ariki*, Tinirau was considered to have “the welfare of his people at heart”.¹⁵⁸ He also served on the Rarotongan Island Council and was Chairman of Directors for the Rarotongan Fruit Company.¹⁵⁹ His daughters, Takau and Teremoana, were educated at Hukarere Maori Girls’ College in Hawkes Bay. Tinirau hoped their English proficiency would assist in his dealings with the Island Council and Government officials, and thereby benefit their people.¹⁶⁰ While in New Zealand, Takau was entrusted to the ward ship of Sir Maui and Lady Pomare, but as it transpired, she lived her adult life between Rarotonga and New Zealand.¹⁶¹ Her influence on Cook Island migrants is discussed in the following chapters.¹⁶²

Under the charismatic influence of Maui Pomare, Cook Island associations were generally marked by harmony and mutual goodwill. Indigenous Islanders were evidently pleased by the relative progress made, but European trading interests were less complimentary. Pomare was accused of neglecting “the most backward part of the Pacific”, and failing “to make the islands the valuable adjunct to the Dominion they

¹⁵⁴ “Death of Makea Tinirau,” *PIM*, February 25, 1939, 7.

¹⁵⁵ “Makea Tinirau Ariki,” *AS*, 24 September 1921.

¹⁵⁶ “Island Loyalty,” *AS*, 24 February 1927; “Biographical Notes,” *AS*, 3 June 1933; “Island Chief,” *AS*, 21 March 1938.

¹⁵⁷ “Honoured by European and Maori,” *PIM*, March 15, 1939, 46; “Chief from Rarotonga,” *AS*, 16 December 1931; “The Royal Tour,” *AS*, 14 February 1927; “Island Loyalty,” *AS*, 24 February 1927.

¹⁵⁸ “Death of Makea Tinirau”.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ “Hutt Valley News,” *AS*, 18 August 1938; “The Social Round,” *AS*, 10 January 1934.

¹⁶¹ “Rarotonga’s Queen,” *AS*, 10 July 1940.

¹⁶² Susan Love De Miguel, “Love, Eruera Te Whiti O Rongomai,” *DNZB*, Te Ara-the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, last modified October 30, 2012, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/5117/love-eruera-te-whiti-o-rongomai>.

should be”.¹⁶³ Responding to Parliament, he affectively summed up the problems faced. While the New Zealand market for Cook Island goods was increasing, he politely reminded the government of its own limited intentions in helping the Islands become self-supporting; “[t]he policy of Government”, he said, was “to cut their coat according to their cloth” and “nothing could be done without money”.¹⁶⁴

Pomare’s actions during World War One cast some doubts on his altruistic motives. He is accused by military historian, Timothy Winegard, of capitalising on the isolation-induced “ignorance” of the Cook Islanders for his own political ends.¹⁶⁵ Having lost face through his failed efforts to reconstitute a Māori Contingent, he looked to the Islands “as a source of ‘nominal Maori’ manpower”.¹⁶⁶ Circumventing official policy, he instructed the resident commissioner to ignore the age and height restrictions imposed on volunteers for the NZEF.¹⁶⁷ Almost 500 men from a population of less than 9000 answered the call to Empire.¹⁶⁸ When the first Cook Island Maori Contingent arrived in Wellington in September 1915, Pomare triumphantly marched them into Parliament, as a demonstration of Māori patriotism.¹⁶⁹ The “Rarotongan Contingents” are the subject of chapter two.

Although held in high regard, in many respects, Pomare perpetuated the limiting policies of his predecessors. He opposed self-government on the grounds the people were unprepared for this responsibility, yet he made little effort to develop local leadership.¹⁷⁰ He eschewed higher education, the very means of empowerment desired and requested by his charges. Under his tenure, schools remained “rudimentary and practical”, with an emphasis on agriculture and horticulture. Pomare believed these adequately equipped the children “for the life they might be expected to live in their adult years”.¹⁷¹ He introduced a small number of scholarships for boys to attend Māori secondary schools in New Zealand, on condition they return to teach in the Islands, as

¹⁶³ "Cook Islands," *AS*, 15 January 1929.

¹⁶⁴ "Cook Islands," *Hawera & Normanby Star*, 19 August 1920; "Cook Islands Report," *ODT*, 19 August 1920.

¹⁶⁵ Timothy Winegard, *Indigenous Peoples of the British Dominions and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 109.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ Kolokesa Māhina -Tuai, "FIA (Forgotten in Action): Pacific Islanders in the New Zealand Armed Forces," in *Tangata O Le Moana: New Zealand and the People of the Pacific*, ed. Sean Mallon, Kolokesa Māhina Tuai, and Damon Salesa (Wellington, N.Z.: Te Papa Press, 2012), 141, 146.

¹⁶⁹ Winegard, 109; "Islands Recruits," *ODT*, 9 October 1915.

¹⁷⁰ Butterworth; Gilson, 126.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*; "Fitting Them for Life," *AS*, 4 October 1922.

this was more cost effective than hiring “high salaried European teachers”.¹⁷² Several boys were apprenticed to relevant trades in Wellington, under bond to return on completion, and three high school graduates received specialist wireless training before returning to operate the Islands new stations.¹⁷³ Three scholarships were later awarded for girls to attend Hukarere. The experiences of young Islanders in New Zealand served to highlight the relative simplicity of Island life.¹⁷⁴

In 1928, Pomare was forced to retire from politics due to ill health. He received many tokens of appreciation from the Cook Islands people, for “many acts of consideration” that advanced their welfare and happiness.¹⁷⁵ Islanders were saddened to learn of his passing in Los Angeles in 1930, and when his ashes were returned to New Zealand in the care of Lady Pomare, the ship stopped over in Rarotonga.¹⁷⁶ The casket was taken to the palace of Makea Nui Tinirau, where “a large gathering of the native and European population” paid their respects at a funeral service.¹⁷⁷ Several official condolence messages were received by radio from New Zealand and read at the ceremony; these formally recognised the Cook Islanders’ admiration and respect for Pomare.¹⁷⁸

Sir Peter Buck, or Te Rangi Hiroa, was another of the Young Māori Party to secure valuable links with the Cook Islands. Graduating from Otago University in 1904, Buck embarked on a distinguished career in medicine, politics and anthropology.¹⁷⁹ Placing equal value on his Ngati Mutanga and Irish ancestry, he directed his energies toward improving the lives of the Polynesian people. By 1906, he was Deputy Māori Medical Officer to Maui Pomare. When the New Zealand International Exhibition opened later that year in Christchurch, he was responsible for the health and hygiene requirements of

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ “Wireless in Islands,” *NZH*, 20 November 1923; “Our Pacific Isles,” *AS*, 6 October 1919; “A New World,” *Northern Advocate*, 23 February 1921.

¹⁷⁴ “Wireless in Islands,” *AS*, 12 January 1924; “Cook Islands,” *AS*, 12 January 1924.

¹⁷⁵ Butterworth; “Sir Maui Pomare,” *AS*, 26 October 1929; “Cook Islands,” *AS*, 15 January 1929; “A Long Record,” *AS*, 11 August 1925; “Silver Loving Cup,” *AS*, 11 August 1925.

¹⁷⁶ “The Two Pomares,” *AS*, 3 September 1934.

¹⁷⁷ “Funeral Service,” *AS*, 25 August 1930. In 1928, a new Government vessel was named in Pomare’s honour. During the 1930s and 40s, the *Maui Pomare* was the main trade and tourist link between New Zealand and its South Pacific territories.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. Pomare was appointed Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George (CMG) in the 1920 New Year Honours and Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire (KBE) in the 1922 Birthday Honours.

¹⁷⁹ Buck was reputedly the University of Otago’s first Māori graduate.

Māori and Pacific Island participants.¹⁸⁰ Buck soon became acquainted with the Cook Island contingent to the exhibition.



Figure 5: "The Village". The Cook Islanders at the Exhibition, 1906. Canterbury Times, 28 Nov. 1906, p.37. Image from Christchurch City Libraries. File reference: CCL-PhotoCD20-IMG0003.

Twenty-three performers and craftspeople, led by Chief Makea Daniela, received a warm traditional welcome to the exhibition as the *tuakana*, or elder siblings, of New Zealand Māori (Figure 5).¹⁸¹ The climate was less kind, however, and the cold temperatures "tried them pretty severely".¹⁸² The party remained indoors for several weeks until acclimatised, and then took an active part in the Pacific Island entertainments.¹⁸³ Unfortunately, influenza and bronchitis were rife in the village and illness soon took its toll. After less than three months residence, the Cook Islanders were forced to make an early departure.¹⁸⁴ Acting as interpreter at a farewell gathering in their honour, Buck conveyed their gratitude for the many kindnesses received during their stay. The Islanders issued "hearty invitations" for Māori to visit their islands.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁰ M. P. K. Sorrenson, "Buck, Peter Henry," *DNZB*, Te Ara-the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, last modified October 30, 2012, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3b54/buck-peter-henry>.

¹⁸¹ "Natives at the Exhibition," *Press*, 15 April 1907.

¹⁸² "The Cook Island Natives," *Press*, 2 November 1906; "Interview with the Mayor of Auckland," *NZH*, 1 November 1906. Some newspaper accounts suggest twenty-six Cook Islanders attended.

¹⁸³ Lange, 148.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*; "Notes from Rarotonga," *Otago Witness*, 2 January 1907; "The Exhibition," *Northern Advocate*, 16 November 1906. Buck himself fell victim to illness.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*; "Their Farewell Performance," *Press*, 11 January 1907; "The Maori Pa," *Star*, 15 April 1907.

Tanetoru, an *ariki* from Mangaia, promised to reserve two acres as a *tauranga*, or landing space, in preparation for the arrival of his cousins.¹⁸⁶

The Island visitors immediately travelled north to Auckland, via the warmer climes of Wanganui and Otaki. The party was welcomed and hosted by Māori in all the districts they passed through.¹⁸⁷ Two years later, the Rarotongans had an opportunity to reciprocate. When the *Manapouri* landed a forty-strong party of Māori performers, en route to New York, there were unmistakable signs of pleasure.¹⁸⁸ The surprise visitors were made royally welcome by Queen Makea and their Island “cousins”, and “much interesting history was recalled on either side”.¹⁸⁹ A number of Rarotongans travelled as far as Tahiti on the *Manapouri*, to attend a festival, and witnesses described a merry time on board, with “hakas and pois galore”, and “hula-hulas and himines [hymns] ... they were brothers all”.¹⁹⁰

Buck developed a strong personal interest in Māori and Pacific material culture and was soon recognised as an authority in this field. Carroll had other plans for his protégé, and in 1909, Buck was elected to Parliament.¹⁹¹ During the recess, he served as Assistant Medical Officer in Rarotonga, and unexpectedly found himself in charge. He made an “excellent showing” in the position and became very popular with “several of the leading natives”.¹⁹² On his return, journalists sought his opinion of this little known dependency; after all, New Zealanders had learned little about these Islands since an “outburst of Imperial enthusiasm” joined them ten years earlier. As yet, few regarded them as an integral part of the dominion.¹⁹³ Buck responded positively, telling of untapped resources and indigenous people much better off than their New Zealand cousins. He reminded Parliament, however, of their obligations toward the Cook Island people. New Zealand had chosen to possess these Islands, and at the very least, improvements to health and shipping were desperately needed.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁶ “The Maori Pa”. The presence of a number of Mangaiaans at Orakei Pa in later years suggests this offer was accepted.

¹⁸⁷ “The Exhibition,” *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 5 January 1907.

¹⁸⁸ “Maoris on Tour,” *NZH*, 6 August 1909; “A Maori Troupe,” *AS*, 7 July 1909.

¹⁸⁹ The troupe originated from the Arawa tribe of Rotorua. They were contracted by US entrepreneurs Schubert and Anderson, to perform poi dances, haka, and warlike acts at the New York Hippodrome for a period of nine months.

¹⁹⁰ “Maoris on Tour,” *NZH*, 6 August 1909.

¹⁹¹ Sorrenson, “Buck, Peter Henry”.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*; “Personal,” *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 14 May 1910; “The Cook Islands Report,” *DOM*, 25 August 1911; “Disquieting Disclosures,” *DOM*, 15 October 1910. Buck was in regular communication with Queen Makea until her death the following year.

¹⁹³ “The Cook Islands,” *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 9 July 1910.

¹⁹⁴ “The Budget,” *AS*, 5 August 1910.

In 1926, Buck was appointed Director of the Māori Hygiene Division of the Department of Health and seemed destined for a successful career in health administration.¹⁹⁵ At this point, he chose to follow his passion for anthropology. He embarked on a long and eminent career which further widened his associations with the Polynesian race.¹⁹⁶ His replacement in the Hygiene Division was Dr Edward Pohau Ellison, former acting Chief Medical Officer in Rarotonga. Two years later, another of Buck's friends was drawn into Cook Island affairs.¹⁹⁷

In 1928, Apirana Ngata replaced Pomare as Minister of Native Affairs. Of Ngāti Porou and Scottish origins, Ngata's early years were steeped in *Māoritanga*.¹⁹⁸ He developed an immense pride in his language and culture, while at the same time his mentors encouraged allegiance to Crown and Empire.¹⁹⁹ Ngata graduated BA in Political Science and Laws at Canterbury College in 1893, and built a solid reputation as a scholar, politician, and land reformer. As an ambassador for Māori, he aimed to restore Māori consciousness and self-confidence, leading by example and inspiring the young to find their place in the Pakeha world.²⁰⁰ When he assumed ministerial responsibility for the Cook Islands, he benefited greatly from Buck's knowledge of Pacific matters.²⁰¹

Fearing these additional responsibilities would detract from his goals for Māori, Ngata was initially reluctant to be "drawn into the affairs of another section of the Polynesian race".²⁰² He reneged on his first scheduled visit to the Islands in 1930; in his place, he sent a representative party of Māori chiefs and several younger members of his family.²⁰³ This goodwill mission extended "the hand of friendship to their Rarotongan cousins" and elicited a very warm welcome.²⁰⁴ When Tinirau visited New Zealand the following year, he expressed his disappointment directly to Ngata over the postponed visit. By way of compensation, Ngata introduced Tinirau to the Prime Minister and invited him to join an official tour of Māori land-development schemes in the North

¹⁹⁵ Sorrenson, "Buck, Peter Henry".

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. Buck received a knighthood in 1946.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.; "Cook Islands," *AS*, 17 August 1927.

¹⁹⁸ Ngata's maternal grandfather was Scottish.

¹⁹⁹ M. P. K. Sorrenson, "Ngata, Apirana Turupa," *DNZB*, Te Ara-the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, last modified December 4, 2013, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/3n5/ngata-apirana-turupa>.

²⁰⁰ Sorrenson, *DNZB*. Ngata was the first Māori to gain a degree from a New Zealand university and would later complete a Masters Degree. Ngata received a knighthood in 1927.

²⁰¹ M.P.K. Sorrenson, ed., introduction to *Na to Hoa Aroha = from Your Dear Friend : The Correspondence between Sir Apirana Ngata and Sir Peter Buck, 1925-29*, Vol. 1 (Auckland, N.Z.: Auckland University Press, 1986), 9; McEwan, 290.

²⁰² Sorrenson, *ibid*.

²⁰³ Ngata to Buck, 17 December, 1928, in *Na to Hoa*, Vol. 1, 159; Maori Schools, *AS*, 11 November 1927; Ranginui Walker, *He Tipua: The Life and Times of Sir Apirana Ngata* (Auckland, N.Z.: Viking, 2001), 254.

²⁰⁴ "Ngata Family," *AS*, 1 November 1934.

Island.²⁰⁵ The inspection party included the Governor-General, Lord Bledisloe and Lady Bledisloe, and all were “royally entertained” wherever they went.²⁰⁶ When Ngata and his wife Lena first visited Rarotonga in 1932, any notions of formality were soon dispelled. Surrounded by faces that seemed both “familiar and friendly”, they quickly took the people into their hearts, “as near relatives and equals”.²⁰⁷ Resident Commissioner, Hugh Ayson, claimed he had never witnessed such a warm and cordial welcome.²⁰⁸ From that time, Ngata resolved to take a wider view of the Māori race and to willingly become an advocate for his “relatives across the sea”.²⁰⁹

In the course of their correspondence, Buck and Ngata shared their views on the future prospects of the Cook Islands’ people. They saw many similarities between the Māori path to modernity and theirs; prolonged contact with missionaries, traders and government officials had irrevocably altered the standard of living, and the simpler, more customary patterns of life were increasingly difficult to pursue. Ngata believed the growing taste for *papa’a* ways must be satisfied and New Zealand should therefore assume the same “wardship” they exercised over Māori.²¹⁰ A desire for new commodities placed greater importance on cash, but few Islanders would ever find paid employment; their desire for closer connections with New Zealand was therefore understandable.²¹¹ Both Buck and Ngata were fully aware of the advantages this might bring.²¹² Ngata was convinced the futures of young Cook Islanders lay in New Zealand, not only for expansion in trade, but in education, social and moral life. “The Rarotongan”, he said, “must be got to realise that if he is crowded out of his beloved islands he can come and make a home here”.²¹³ There was considerable and mutual value in further “social and mental contacts” between both branches of the Māori race, and ideally, Island children should have the opportunity to attend Māori schools in New Zealand.²¹⁴

At a cultural and ceremonial level, Ngata was successful in achieving these goals. When New Zealand first commemorated the Treaty of Waitangi in 1934, he ensured

²⁰⁵ Walker, *ibid.*

²⁰⁶ Ngata to Buck, 17 September, 1932, in *Na to Hoa Aroha = from Your Dear Friend : The Correspondence between Sir Apirana Ngata and Sir Peter Buck, 1932-50*, Vol. 3 (Auckland, N.Z.: Auckland University Press, 1986), 24; “A Maori Welcome,” *AS*, 18 December 1931.

²⁰⁷ Ngata to Buck, 17 September, 1932, *Na to Hoa*, Vol. 3, 26-27.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

²¹⁰ Ngata to Buck, 22 March 1933, *Na to Hoa*, Vol. 3, 72.

²¹¹ Ngata to Buck, 17 September, 1932, *Na to Hoa*, Vol. 3, 29.

²¹² Buck to Ngata, 23 January, 1933, *Na to Hoa*, Vol. 3, 50, and Buck to Ngata, 22 March 1933, Vol. 3, 72.

²¹³ Ngata to Buck, 17 September 1932, *Na to Hoa*, Vol. 3, 29, and Buck to Ngata, 22 March 1933, Vol. 3, 72.

²¹⁴ Buck to Ngata, 12 May 1933, *Na to Hoa*, Vol. 3, 77, and Ngata to Buck, 22 March 1933, 72, Vol. 3.

Cook Island leaders could attend the celebrations as guests of government.²¹⁵ At a welcome in Wellington, Prime Minister Forbes reiterated their special place within the Dominion.²¹⁶ In reply, Tinirau conveyed his people's pleasure at being "part of the great British Empire" and praised New Zealand's governance.²¹⁷ Walter Nash MP was delighted that Waitangi celebrations would reflect "the fine feeling of brotherhood which had been preserved between the people of the Pacific".²¹⁸

A hectic round of social events was held in the visitors' honour, beginning with garden parties at the homes of Lady Pomare and Judge Ayson's family at Lower Hutt.²¹⁹ A party of Island performers, led by Tinirau's daughter, "Princess Tere Tinirau", entertained their hosts throughout the tour.²²⁰ En route to Waitangi, the Islanders paid their respects to the ashes of Maui Pomare at Waitara. At Tokomaru Bay, they were reunited with Chief Wiremu Potae, who had travelled to Rarotonga with Ngata's delegation three years earlier. Ngati Porou had planned the opening of a new meeting house to coincide with this visit and named it *Ki Hono te Rarotonga*.²²¹ The East Coast tribes also provided a hearty welcome and the party were guests of King Koroki in the Waikato.²²² At Ngaruawahia, Princess Te Puea Herangi received the travellers and a reciprocal visit was planned.²²³ Throughout these travels, past and present links were recalled and celebrated, through numerous instances "where Rarotongans of rank had married into Māori noble families".²²⁴

Records give some indication of the levels of intermarriage between New Zealand and Cook Island Maori from the 1860s. According to a census of the Māori population in 1891, "five Rarotongan Natives, two males and three females", were living at Orakei Pa. A local newspaper noted aspects of these connections over several generations.²²⁵ By 1932, a high proportion of the eighty residents at Orakei declared "a mixture of Rarotongan blood", and only twenty claimed Māori or Māori-Pakeha ancestry. This was

²¹⁵ Walker, 269; "Cook Islanders for New Zealand," *PIM*, December 1933, 43. The site where the treaty was signed, including Busby's residence and 1000 acres of land, had recently been gifted to the nation.

²¹⁶ "Rarotongan Party," *AS*, 10 January 1934.

²¹⁷ "Visiting Rarotongans," *AS*, 11 January 1934

²¹⁸ "Notable Visitors," *Hutt News*, 17 January 1934; "King George Theatre," *Hutt News*, 10 January 1934.

²¹⁹ "Cook Islands Arikis," *AS*, 6 January 1934.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ "Pacific Cousins," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 Jul 2014. This title translates to "that which binds us to Rarotonga".

²²² "Maori Mecca," *AS*, 29 December 1933.

²²³ *Ibid.*, "Waitangi," *AS*, 29 December 1933; "Rarotongans and Maoris: Very Cordial Relationship," *PIM*, August 24, 1934, 9.

²²⁴ "Rarotongans and Maoris," *ibid.*

²²⁵ Census of the Maori Population (Papers Relating To), *AJHR*, 1891 Session II, G-02; "Untitled," *AS*, 2 August 1898; "Natives and Post Mortem," *AS*, 5 August, 1905; "Maori Chief's Death," *AS*, 1 September, 1945;

attributed “to immigration from Mangaia in past years”.²²⁶ Cook Islanders reportedly “came and went” from the village, and Māori who returned the visits often remained with their kinsfolk in Mangaia.²²⁷ The descendants of Kainuku Vaikai, who travelled to Auckland with Paora Tuhaere on the *Victoria* in the 1860s, maintained close links with the Waikato people. Kainuku entered into an arranged marriage with Piupiu Te Wherowhero, the grand-daughter of Te Wherowhero Tawhiao of Whatiwhatihoe, and lived in the Waikato for a number of years.²²⁸



Figure 6: New Zealand Department of Justice; Crown Studios (Wellington). Ref: PAColl-5008. Photograph of a group of Rarotongan politicians, chiefs and their wives visiting New Zealand with their Maori hosts in 1934.

Back row: Tia Tekau, Iotua, H R H Balneavis, Faaruru, Tere Taivananga, Tikitau Kohau, Tupu Mataio, W P Browne, H Love. Second row: Vakatini Ariki, Nui Taivananga, S J Smith, Mrs C T Cowan, Tiori Vakatini, Poko Kelly, C T Cowan, George Karika, Tere Tinirau, Ana Pomare, Mrs T Love, Mrs H Love, Mrs W P Browne. Third row: Vakatini Vaine, Tinemana Vaine, Tinomana Ariki, Lady Pomare, Karika Ariki, Sir Apirana Ngata, Makea Vaine, Makea Nui Ariki, Lady Ngata (Lady Horiana Te Atahaia Curtis Tuhou Ngata), V Kainuku Ariki. Fourth row: Willie Marama, Teke Marama, Tuaine Teaea, Tuaine Tamarua, Sam Henry. Insert: left: Pa Ariki, right: Paitai Tekeu.

Ngata declared the 1934 tour an outstanding success (Figure 6).²²⁹ He was immensely proud that the Māori race from throughout New Zealand had come together at Waitangi for the first time. “Old differences” had been removed, an achievement partly due to the unifying effect of the Rarotongans as they visited the various tribes.²³⁰

²²⁶ “Orakei,” *AS*, 19 July 1932.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ Angela Ballara, “Te Wherowhero, Piupiu,” *DNZB*, Te Ara-the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, last modified October 30, 2012, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/3t26/te-wherowhero-piupiu>; “Rarotongans and Maoris,” *PIM*, August 24, 1934, 9; “Vaka Takitumu welcome King Tuheitia,” *The Cook Islands Herald Online Edition*, 23 September, 2009. These links are still celebrated today (2014).

²²⁹ “Rarotongan Party,” *AS*, 20 February 1934; “Cook Islands Arikis,” *AS*, January 1934.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

Two years later, Ngata arranged further Government assistance for Island leaders to attend the opening of a new meeting house at Waitara.²³¹ This included the unveiling of a statue in memory of Maui Pomare.²³² In time, Ngata recognised the deficiencies within the Cook Islands administration; the system, including the *taihoa* policy, had failed a people who had already experienced “significant Europeanisation”.²³³ To redress the balance, he decreed the exclusive use of English in schools. With limited employment in the islands, however, “the main value of his policy was to equip islanders to take unskilled jobs in New Zealand during and after WWII”.²³⁴ Ngata had unwittingly prepared the way for post-war migration, rather than encourage Islanders to participate in their own economy.²³⁵

Edward Pohau Ellison was another member of the Young Māori Party who earned the respect and affection of the Cook Islands people.²³⁶ Of Ngai Tahu and Te Ati Awa descent, Ellison graduated from Otago Medical School in 1919.²³⁷ That same year, he was appointed as Deputy Resident Commissioner to Niue, and in 1925, travelled to Samoa to study tropical diseases. He later furthered his knowledge under the tutelage of a world-famous leprosy specialist at Makogai.²³⁸ After a short term as Medical Officer and Deputy Resident Commissioner to the Cook Islands, Ellison returned to New Zealand to replace Buck as Director of the Division of Māori Hygiene. He returned to the Cook Islands in 1931, and in addition to the above duties, was appointed Commissioner of the High Court.²³⁹

Faced with rudimentary facilities and a lack of trained staff, Ellison made an “outstanding contribution” to the health of Polynesian peoples, particularly in leprosy, tuberculosis and child health.²⁴⁰ As an intransigent New Zealand bureaucracy delayed improvements to passenger shipping, the outer islands remained relatively isolated, but Ellison overcame many such difficulties. Deeply loved and trusted by the people, he was

²³¹ Walker, 320-321.

²³² "Call to Waitara," *AS*, 6 June 1936.

²³³ Thompson, 80.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 86.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ Sean Ellison, "Ellison, Edward Pohau," *DNZB*, Te Ara-the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, last modified June 7, 2007, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/4e9/ellison-edward-pohau>.

²³⁷ Sean Ellison.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, and Kingi M. Ihaka, "Edward Pohau Ellison," *Te Ao Hou = The New World* 44, no. September (1963): 46, accessed September 8, 2014, <http://teaohou.natlib.govt.nz/journals/teaohou/issue/Mao44TeA/c16.html>.

²³⁹ Sean Ellison.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*; "Cook Islands," *AS*, 27 October 1926.

admired as both doctor and friend.²⁴¹ When his first wife died in Rarotonga in 1926, the people “were sympathy itself”, and Tinirau insisted Tini should be laid to rest in the Makea family cemetery.²⁴² Buck supported Ellison through his loss and feared his friend might lose heart; “[o]ur kinsmen over here need someone of the Ellison stamp to look after them” he told Ngata, “he has their full confidence and affection”.²⁴³ Ellison delayed his retirement during World War Two and served until 1945.²⁴⁴ Other aspects of his role as an Island administrator are discussed in chapters three and four.

Prominent New Zealand Māori charged with overseeing Cook Island affairs gradually recognised the educational and social desires of the people. By necessity, these men operated within Eurocentric constraints, making their overall contribution difficult to assess. As a colonised people, they understood that true sovereignty in the Islands lay with white New Zealanders, and the process of modernity must proceed within these parameters. Gilson acknowledged the limitations, as they attempted “to set the pace for their respective governments on financial policy”.²⁴⁵ Each struggled with insufficient resources to affect the improvements deemed necessary.²⁴⁶ Other commentators have been less sympathetic, and Wilson was highly critical of their failure to stimulate Island leadership between 1900 and 1934”.²⁴⁷

In recent historiography, the collaborative attitude of New Zealand Māori in the colonial era has aroused censure and debate. Policies of assimilation are viewed as “ethnocentric intervention, insidiously undermining indigenous peoples”.²⁴⁸ Such accusations are easily extended to the Cook Islands administration, described by Thompson as “a unique government of colonial subjects by members of their own race.”²⁴⁹ Louise Mataia argues in defence of New Zealand Māori and Pacific Islanders during this period. She believes these indigenous peoples “were trying to assert themselves as British citizens, the Māori as a New Zealander with equal standing to the

²⁴¹ Debbie Futter-Puati, “Maki Maro: Tuberculosis in the Cook Islands: A Social History, 1896-1975” (MA Thesis, University of Auckland, 2010), 37, 42; IT120/8/1: Allegations by Drury Low to Prime Minister 1946 re Cook Islands, Wellington [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwantanga, National Office, Wellington], Low to PM Peter Fraser, 27 March 1946.

²⁴² Buck to Ngata, 20 September 1926, in *Na to Hoa*, Vol. 1, 46-47.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ *Ihaka*, 49. Ellison received the King George V Silver Jubilee Medal in 1935 and an OBE in 1938, honours which recognised his long and dedicated service to the Polynesian people. The Cook Island people hoped Ellison would replace Ayson as Resident Commissioner and were unhappy when Tailby was appointed instead.

²⁴⁵ Gilson, 167.

²⁴⁶ Gilson, 167-168

²⁴⁷ Wilson, 32.

²⁴⁸ Brian Sweeney, “Te Rangi Hiroa/Sir Peter Buck: Aotearoa Anthropologist,” New Zealand Edge.com, accessed September 14, 2014, <http://www.nzedge.com/heroes/buck.html>.

²⁴⁹ Thompson, 80.

Pakeha”, and the Pacific Islander, “as a patriotic British subject”.²⁵⁰ In the face of physical defeat, rapid change and population decline, many tribal leaders in Aotearoa New Zealand had little alternative but to follow the course of least resistance, in the hope of ensuring their people’s long-term survival and prosperity. In the peaceful Cook Islands, where Christianised islanders suffered at the hands of disreputable incomers and introduced diseases, they were encouraged to follow a similar pattern. In doing so, they looked to New Zealand Māori as the epitome of progress.

Charges of collaboration with *papa’a* might equally be laid at the feet of the Cook Island *ariki*. In many respects, Makea Tinirau presents as a leader of comparable qualities and ambitions to Pomare and Ngata. He shared their vision and desire to seek out a place for his people in the modern world. Numerically, indigenous Islanders remained much stronger in the dependency and the people were spared the trauma of land alienation.²⁵¹ Nevertheless, Tinirau embraced assimilation and partnership with Europeans as a means of achieving a modern and prosperous Island society. His role as mediator and peacemaker perpetuated the “friendship and brotherhood” established during the mission period, compliance rewarded in 1933 when he received the Order of the British Empire.²⁵² Evidently, neither Island leaders nor Māori Ministers took action to diminish the inherent paternalism practised by New Zealand officials such as Hugh Ayson. Buck found him “very decent”, and inclusive of “local residents brown and white”, although Ngata believed cliques developed when officers served too long in Rarotonga.²⁵³ Islanders became too reliant on officials to meet their needs, and Ayson used pomp and ceremony to divert attention from unsound administrative practices.²⁵⁴

Thompson has asked why the overt paternalism of New Zealand officials “aroused no concerted protest from Cook Islanders”.²⁵⁵ Epeli Hau’ofa offers an explanation.

Those in dominant positions above their subordinates could have significant consequences for people's self-image and for the ways they cope with their situations. Such views, which are often derogatory and

²⁵⁰ Louise Marie Tuimanuolo Mataia, “‘Odd Men from the Pacific’: The Participation of Pacific Island Men in the 28 (Māori) Battalion in the Second World War”(MA Thesis, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand (2007), 38.

²⁵¹ Beaglehole, “Social Change,” 238.

²⁵² “Cook Is. Chief Visits New Zealand,” *PIM*, 28 April, 1938, 62; “Honoured by European and Maori,” *PIM*, 15 March 1939, 46.

²⁵³ Buck to Ngata, 20 September, 1926, in *Na to Hoa*, Vol. 1, 46.

²⁵⁴ Thompson, 80-81; Ngata to Buck, 17 December, 1928, in *Na to Hoa*, Vol. 1, 159.

²⁵⁵ Thompson, 81.

belittling, are integral to most relationships of dominance and subordination, wherein superiors behave in ways or say things that are accepted by their inferiors, who in turn behave in ways that serve to perpetuate the relationships.²⁵⁶

Hau'ofa goes on to say that

Belittlement in whatever guise, if internalized for long, and transmitted across generations, may lead to moral paralysis, to apathy, and to the kind of fatalism that we can see among our fellow human beings who have been herded and confined to reservations²⁵⁷

Dick Scott alleges Tinirau's friendship with Ayson allowed him to be controlled and manipulated. I would suggest that in his turn, Tinirau charmingly overrode any vestige of discontent among the ordinary people. His magnetism and power were evident. At his funeral in 1939, thousands paid tribute at a lavish ceremony, where singing and dancing was "prolonged for seven days and nights".²⁵⁸ Three years later, when his daughter Takau succeeded to the Makea title, World War Two had already reached Island shores. Many lives were in the midst of change, and this period will be further discussed in subsequent chapters.

Conclusion

The ongoing instability of the Cook Islands' economy undoubtedly influenced the potential for future migration; the extent to which this can be blamed on its colonial power relationship with New Zealand remains a vast and debateable topic. This study is less concerned with the material aspects of these arrangements, focusing instead on social and cultural factors, and in particular, the renewed associations between New Zealand and Cook Island Māori. This interchange was mutually beneficial and enriching, providing the elite with greater opportunities for travel and intermarriage. It seems unlikely, however, that the daily lives of ordinary Islanders were enhanced by these interactions.

This point was not lost on several commentators. In 1947, the radical R.A.K. Mason exposed "the long and terrible years of European cruelty, despotism and

²⁵⁶ Epeli Hau'ofa, "Our Sea of Islands," *The Contemporary Pacific* 6, no. 1 (1994), 148-149.

²⁵⁷ Hau'ofa, 152.

²⁵⁸ "Honoured by European and Maori".

neglect”.²⁵⁹ In 1969, S.D. Wilson reflected on an administration which allowed affairs to merely “run along, with as little positive interference or change as possible”.²⁶⁰ Dick Scott consistently derided New Zealand’s input, under the scathing title of “Years of the Pooh-bah”.²⁶¹ In 1994, Pacific historian Roger Thompson described New Zealand rule as authoritarian and paternalistic, a flawed system which permitted “significant freedom” to resident commissioners and thus endorsed their position as “the expert who knew what was best for the Islanders”.²⁶² Again, scholars such as Gilson took a less critical view, and even the acidulous Mason was forced to concede that “there were men in New Zealand and in the Cook Islands administration who battled for the natives”.²⁶³ Even he acknowledged that genuine efforts “were continually frustrated by officialdom, vested interests and by white troublemakers in the islands”.²⁶⁴

In all fairness, assuming responsibility for a distant group of islands posed something of a conundrum for New Zealand. The voluminous reporting of the Islands’ administration indicate many good intentions on the part of officials, but the pre-war experience in administering distant island territories proved “an altogether tougher and less glamorous matter than the late nineteenth century politicians would have imagined”.²⁶⁵ The strategic use of compliant Māori leaders within the imperial project further complicated New Zealand’s imperial rule. In the absence of broader experience, the Māori Ministers tackled issues based on the problems already experienced by their own people. Given the distance, isolation, climatic difference and limited resources, applying wisdom in any tangible sense was fraught with difficulties. Carroll failed to develop an effectual relationship with the people; greater personal involvement may have overcome the paternalistic and patronising attitude which became his hallmark. To a degree, Pomare and Ngata redressed the balance, though closer alignment with New Zealand Māori and attention to education.²⁶⁶ By going beyond the material, they earned the respect and affection of the Islands people, but with the benefit of hindsight, these

²⁵⁹ R. A. K. Mason, *Frontier Forsaken: An Outline History of the Cook Islands* (Auckland N.Z.: Challenge Journal, 1947), 5.

²⁶⁰ Wilson, 32.

²⁶¹ This title originates from the Pooh-Bah, Lord-High-Everything-Else, a character in *The Mikado* by W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan. It has come to signify a pompous ostentatious official, especially one who holds many offices and fulfils none of them.

²⁶² Thompson, 80.

²⁶³ Mason, 70.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Lindsay Watt, “Decolonisation Chapter VII,” in *New Zealand as an International Citizen: Fifty Years of United Nations Membership*, ed. M. Templeton (Wellington, N.Z.: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 1995), 111.

²⁶⁶ Wilson, 58.

ambitious men have been adjudged here as collaborators in New Zealand's colonial project.

Overall, these findings effectively challenge the assumptions of Lowe and Airey, who in 1945 placed little importance on contact between these indigenous peoples in the modern era.²⁶⁷ While Pomare gave little thought to migration, Ngata was convinced New Zealand would draw young Cook Islanders to its shores. By adopting new lives in New Zealand, they would be ushered into the modern world. The extent to which he would have encouraged this transition will forever remain unknown, as his direct involvement in Island affairs ended with his resignation as Minister of Māori Affairs in 1934.²⁶⁸

Finally, this chapter has proven that Cook Islanders were never officially encouraged or assisted to look to New Zealand for an alternative future prior to 1940, despite their status as citizens of the colony. Educational and training opportunities merely equipped young Islanders for roles within their own sphere. In reality, the Polynesian perception of movement negated any such barriers. New Zealand Māori migrated from this region some 1000 years earlier, and through renewed acquaintance and the bonds of intermarriage, Cook Islanders light-heartedly relished their new position as *tuakana*.²⁶⁹ Welcome relationships with Māori Aotearoa, along with historic ties with white New Zealand, eventually rendered this a favoured destination in the eyes of the Cook Island people, during and after World War Two.

²⁶⁷ Lowe and Airey, 252.

²⁶⁸ Much has been written about the circumstances surrounding Ngata's resignation. He was accused of misusing his position to show unfair partiality to family and one of these charges relates to the Cook Islands. Irregularities were alleged in the approval of funding for the 1930 visit by Māori to Rarotonga, when his son, daughter and grandson joined the group.

²⁶⁹ Mason, 22-23; "The Cook Island Natives," *Press*, 2 November 1906; "Islands Recruits," *NZH*, 8 October 1915; "The Cook Island Natives," *Press*, 2 November 1906.

Chapter Two

The National Space: The Cook Islanders and World War One

We are commencing a new century, and with its dawn let us commence a new life - one of expansion and on the forward path of our ultimate destiny... our dear old flag will for ever float over the islands insuring justice and freedom to all.¹

~ Premier Richard Joseph Seddon, 1900

In the early years of the twentieth century, New Zealand assumed the role of an imperial power in the Pacific and began to fashion “its own webs of influence” in the region.² When the colony annexed the Cook Islands in 1901, their peoples were granted an identical legal status with mainland New Zealanders, in so far as all were now British subjects. Britain had little input into the affairs of this last outpost of Empire; what this delegation of rule actually implied in regard to the power relationship between the colony of New Zealand, and its colony, the Cook Islands, was never clearly defined.³ Former Island administrator, Frederick Moss, was quick to point out New Zealand had no legal power to control “such additions”, and questioned the consequences of making the islands “part of ourselves”.⁴ These issues would certainly dictate the course of the relationship which evolved over the following fifty years.

Legal versus social citizenship

From 1901, the New Zealand public were occasionally reminded that the Cook Islands were part of their country, and nominally at least, their inhabitants were fellow citizens.⁵ The implications of this truth were seldom understood. In 1927, when called upon to clarify the Cook Islanders status, the Crown Solicitor confirmed the Islanders possessed the same ordinary rights of British citizenship as other New Zealanders, at least while

¹ Premier Richard Seddon (abridged), 28 September, Vol. 114, *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, 1900, 423-425.

² Tony Ballantyne, *Webs of Empire: Locating New Zealand's Colonial Past* (Wellington, N.Z.: Bridget Williams Books, 2012), 45.

³ Ballantyne, 42; S.D. Wilson, "The Record in the Cook Islands and Niue 1901- 45," in *New Zealand's Record in the Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Angus Ross (Auckland, N.Z.: Longman Paul for the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, 1969), 58.

⁴ "Our New Tropical Fellow Colonists," *AS*, 6 September 1901.

⁵ Ernest Beaglehole, "Social and Political Changes in the Cook Islands," *Pacific Affairs* 21, no. 4 (1948): 390; "New Zealand's Dependency," *AS*, 29 July 1910; "Island Tomatoes," *AS*, 8 October 1930; "A Retrograde Step," *AS*, 6 October 1920. These newspaper articles are a representative sample of those periodically reminding New Zealanders that the Cook Islands were part of New Zealand.

physically present in the Dominion.⁶ Evidence shows that administrators and politicians generally failed to embrace this fact, but because few Islanders sought residence in New Zealand during this period, the question of citizenship required little further consideration.

In this context, “citizenship” was a rather obscure and malleable concept. This chapter will firstly examine the changing perceptions of this term during the first forty years of the twentieth century, in order to provide some relevant definition. Secondly, the relationship between New Zealand and the Cook Islands will be investigated in relation to understandings of legal and social connectedness. Historically, immigration and notions surrounding citizenship have gone hand in hand, and the controlled nature of movement between these countries is examined here.⁷ I would argue that certain implied impediments existed during this period which constituted an imagined border, a barrier which prevented Cook Islanders from taking advantage of their entitlement to unrestricted access to New Zealand prior to World War Two.

These inferred boundaries applied equally to those who left the Islands at the behest of government, as was the case with men who volunteered to serve their King and Empire during World War One. This chapter will focus on circumstances relating to this relatively large departure and highlight the expanded world view of those engaged in overseas military service. According to Philippa Levine, racial subordination was a “crucial ruling strategy” for British imperialism, both at home and in the colonies, but the enormity of World War One catalyzed changes in ideas about citizenship and race.⁸

While authorities needed the “warrior skills” of colonial men, they were cognisant of the potentially destabilizing effect on non-white soldiers.⁹ It seems inevitable that indigenous soldiers engaged in defending the British Empire would experience changing perceptions of place within the realm, and in the aftermath, the Cook Island veterans were among many who began to question issues of status and citizenship.¹⁰ This awakening led to a period of civil unrest in the islands, an

⁶ IT121/1/5, Part 5: Natives-Rarotongan Children in the Care of Mrs M. Davies [sic], Island Territories Department, Wellington [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwantanga, National Office, Wellington], Crown Solicitor to CID, 18 July 1927.

⁷ Jeffrey Miles Scofield, “The Promotion of Place: Immigration Policies, Citizenship and Economic Reform in New Zealand” (MA Thesis, University of Otago, 2011), 4.

⁸ Philippa Levine, “Battle Colors: Race, Sex and Colonial Soldierly in World War I,” *Journal of Women's History* 9, no. 4 (1998): 105-106.

⁹ Ibid.; Cynthia H. Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 61.

¹⁰ Dick Scott, *Years of the Pooh-Bah: A Cook Islands History* (Rarotonga; Auckland, N.Z.: CITC; Hodder and Stoughton, 1991), 144.

unprecedented demonstration of anger that vigorously challenged New Zealand's colonial relationship and imperial attitude toward their island dependency. This was also an era when nations increasingly imposed restrictions on population movement across their borders, procedures that were inherently racist. I intend to examine the controls imposed on the peoples of the Cook Islands in light of these evolving changes.

Citizens of New Zealand

The people of the Cook Islands, that region defined by nineteenth-century imperialism, began to explore the wider world at the earliest opportunity. Many never returned and some settled permanently in New Zealand. In 1936, 103 Cook Islanders were recorded in the Dominion; fifty were of "mixed-blood" and fifty-three were designated "full-blood".¹¹ One man had arrived in New Zealand forty years earlier, while twenty-four individuals had been resident for over ten years.¹² In the classic style of nineteenth century imperialism, Seddon had proclaimed the colony's benevolent intent toward the Cook Islands in 1901, yet thirty-five years later, less than 1 per cent of the population had chosen to migrate.¹³ In light of the "special position" occupied by New Zealand, and the colonial office stipulation they should become citizens, this number appears relatively small.¹⁴

In chapter one I proposed several reasons why New Zealand's administrative authority was seldom challenged in the Islands, an acquiescence which evidently extended to scholars, cultural groups and other Island visitors, who generally accepted the transitory nature of their time in the Dominion. According to Jeffrey Scofield, the emerging foundations of immigration and citizenship in New Zealand are best understood through the waves of emigration bringing British people to a part of the Empire which, in itself, possessed no formal constitution. The signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 is considered by many to signify the foundation of New Zealand as a

¹¹ Anthony Hooper, "The Migration of Cook Islanders to New Zealand," *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 70, no. 1 (1961): 13. The 1936 General Census of New Zealand was the first to include separate statistics for "Polynesians other than New Zealand Maoris".

¹² Ibid. It seems possible, given the levels of intermarriage previously discussed, that higher numbers with Cook Island ancestry were present within the New Zealand population by 1940.

¹³ More accurately, the percentage was 0.87 per cent. This calculation is based on data provided by Norma McArthur, page 195 of *Island Populations of the Pacific*. The total population in 1935 was 11943.

¹⁴ Ron Crocombe, Makiuti Tongia, and Tepoave Araitia, "Absentee Landowners in the Cook Islands: Consequences of Change to Tradition," Vol. 2, Case Study 8, 157, in *Making Land Work*, Australian Agency for International Development, 2008, accessed September 1, 2014, http://www.ausaid.gov.au/Publications/Pages/3363_9223_6836_1452_8140.aspx; Colleen Ward and En-yi Lin, "Immigration, Acculturation and National Identity in New Zealand," in *New Zealand Identities: Departures and Destinations*, ed. Tracey McIntosh, James H Liu, Tim McCreanor and Teresia Teaiwa (Wellington, N.Z.: Victoria University Press, 2005), 156.

colonial nation-state.¹⁵ Henceforth, the colony's legal and political institutions were founded on the Westminster system, and unlike revolutionary societies such as America and France, there was initially no clear constitutional basis for distinguishing among British subjects during immigration procedures.¹⁶

Self-governing colonies within the British Empire were principally responsible for their own immigration policies. Seeking autonomy in its domestic affairs, New Zealand chose to manage the movement of people across her borders, and in spite of her reputation as Britain's most dutiful daughter, developed institutions and modes of political intervention reflecting local conditions and issues.¹⁷ This is demonstrated most amply in the colony's relationship with the Cook Islands. In the New Zealand context, early European settlement created a burgeoning local citizenship, "with a prevailing sense of a supranational pan British identity".¹⁸ This engendered a form of "social citizenship", one devoid of any legal status.¹⁹ Nevertheless, those born or naturalised in New Zealand remained strictly British subjects, and there were no New Zealand citizens as such.²⁰

World events throughout the first half of the twentieth century forced a more serious consideration of these matters. Due to security concerns in the wake of World War One, notions of citizenship were increasingly attached to perceptions of nationality. In 1915, the British government introduced passports and exit permits as a means of regulating and monitoring population movement, and across the globe, racist undercurrents permeated these procedures. In response to the political realities following World War Two, New Zealand aligned with other Commonwealth countries, and on 1 January 1949, passed the British Nationality and New Zealand Citizenship Act. On that day, New Zealanders officially assumed the status of both British subjects and citizens of New Zealand, and maintained this status until 1974.²¹

In light of these developments, exit restrictions put in place in the Cook Islands may appear reasonable. Those wishing to leave were required to obtain an exit permit, and this process was unquestioningly and rigorously controlled by the Resident

¹⁵ Scofield, 3. At that time, all those living in New Zealand became British subjects, including Māori, who theoretically assumed the same status as British settlers.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.; Neil Lunt, Paul Spoonley, and Peter Mataira, "Past and Present: Reflections on Citizenship within New Zealand," *Social Policy & Administration* 36, no. 4 (2002): 347.

¹⁸ Scofield, 2

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 4-5

²¹ Ibid., 22, 49.

Commissioner.²² The point of difference was that, in effect, Cook Islanders needed permission to move from one part of New Zealand to another. In 1938, Ayson recognised the need to officially sanction this long-established practice; until this time these actions had no basis in law. When drafting the Cook Islands Departure Regulations 1939, Ayson did discuss these with the Island Council of Rarotonga, however, the Cook Islands Department's subsequent questioning suggests there was little official consultation.²³ In the intervening years, Island administrators had assumed the right to control the movement of Cook Islanders across their imagined border, and these regulations merely formalised a long-term understanding of New Zealand's right to control this particular population movement.²⁴

This situation quietly evolved during the early years of the New Zealand administration. Initially, "the government had no desire to impose complex laws and advanced social services on a 'semi civilized people'", and Gudgeon experienced little interference in his dealings with the Island Councils.²⁵ The Cook and Other Islands Government Act 1901 temporarily extended New Zealand laws into his domain, however, a series of local ordinances, Orders in Council and Amendments to the Act were made in response to local conditions. Rather than become an integral part of New Zealand, a separate set of practices gradually evolved which were specific to the Cook Islands.²⁶

A more comprehensive law was later enacted; the Cook Islands Act 1915 repealed all former legislation, including that passed by the Federal and Island Councils.²⁷ This Act provided for a legislative council, known as the Island Council of Rarotonga, and for similar institutions on other islands at the discretion of the governor. These were composed of the *ariki* and other ex-officio members, including the resident

²² Ernest Beaglehole, *Social Change in the South Pacific: Rarotonga and Aitutaki* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1957), 350. Conversely, a New Zealand citizen could not enter the Cook Islands, i.e. move to another part of New Zealand, without an entry permit.

²³ IT102/4/6, Part 3: Regulations-Immigration-Passports and Permits, 1938-1942, Island Territories Department, Wellington [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwantanga, National Office, Wellington], Ayson to CID, 13 February, 1939.

²⁴ These regulations came into force over seven months before the declaration of World War Two and were unrelated to population controls during wartime. No official reason was given for their inception other than "to save confusion," however, the content of other letters in the file imply these were intended to prevent a young Island woman from travelling to join a former Island official in New Zealand. If this was the case, then the regulations were a massive colonial intervention into the domestic and private lives of its subjects.

²⁵ Richard Gilson, *The Cook Islands, 1820-1950*, edited by R. G. Crocombe (Wellington, N.Z.: Victoria University Press in association with the Institute of Pacific Studies of the University of the South Pacific, 1980), 13.

²⁶ R. G. Crocombe, *Land Tenure in the Cook Islands* (Melbourne, Vic.: Oxford University Press, 1964), 221.

²⁷ Cook Islands Amendment Act, No. 40, *New Zealand Statutes*, 1915, 183-284.

commissioner or resident agents. The composition was largely decided by the resident commissioner and these bodies had limited law-making power in regards to local affairs.²⁸ From the New Zealand viewpoint, these changes eventuated “simply because the Islands are unable to support a standard of living comparable with that of New Zealand and there would be obvious difficulties if all mainland laws, regulations, and practices were applied in their entirety in the islands”.²⁹ Economic development was considered paramount, to ensure the people became self-supporting as soon as practically possible. However, policies were never put in place to regulate the level of control administrators might exert over the daily lives of the Islands people.³⁰

In its first forty years of rule, the New Zealand government gave little or no consideration to permanent migration from the Cook Islands. While never implicitly stated, Cook Islanders in New Zealand were regarded as *manuhiri*, or guests, with one notable exception. Pacific Island men serving with New Zealand’s armed forces during World War Two believed they shared the national space at that time, and to a certain extent, the military shared this understanding.³¹ This might also be applied to the Cook Island men who served as part of the NZEF during World War One. I argue, however, that any sense of inclusion they might have experienced was overshadowed, if not negated, by official anxieties over their return to the Islands.

World War One

When England declared war on Germany in August 1914, the Cook Islands’ Resident Commissioner, Henry Northcroft, placed a notice in the Avarua post office.³² In this immensely loyal outpost of Empire, the Islanders were officially at war, and on several islands, men began drilling under the command of Resident Agents and the local constabulary.³³ In New Zealand, many Māori were anxious to volunteer for overseas service, but the British Government resisted their inclusion “in the wars of the white

²⁸ Anthony H. Angelo, *Constitutional Law in New Zealand* (Alphen aan den Rijn, Netherlands, 2011), 130.

²⁹ M101/12, Part 1: Cook Islands Administration Policy: Changes of Policy Arising from Ministerial Visits, Ministry of Island Territories, Wellington [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwantanga, National Office, Wellington], DIT to Secretary, Public Service Commission, 28 September, 1953.

³⁰ Gilson, 100, 117; Scott, 89.

³¹ Alice Te Punga Somerville, *Once Were Pacific: Māori Connections to Oceania* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 95-97.

³² Scott, 131.

³³ Margaret Pointer and Kalaisi Folau, *Tagi Tote E Loto Haaku = My Heart Is Crying a Little: Niue Island Involvement in the Great War, 1914-1918* (Government of Niue; Suva, Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 2000), 9.

race against a white race”.³⁴ British authorities lifted these racial restrictions in mid-1915 and only when a lengthy conflict was indicated.³⁵

Until this time, the affairs of the world had gone on while the Cook Island people looked on and wondered; now relatively large numbers of men answered the call of King and Empire and went out into the world for the first time.³⁶ Approximately 500 men from the scattered islands of Atiu, Mangaia, Mauke, Aitutaki, Mitiaro, Manihiki, Puka Puka, Penrhyn and Palmerston volunteered for active service, nearly 6 per cent of the islands population.³⁷ Thus drawn into international affairs, the patriotism shown by “Britain's most distant possessions” was regarded as the most singular of loyal responses during World War One.³⁸ In September 1915, the first Cook Island contingent began training in New Zealand; meanwhile, Pomare raised a contingent of 200 men from neighbouring Niue.³⁹ According to war historian, Timothy Winegard, the Niuean contingent retained a separate identity throughout, whereas, the term “Rarotongan” came to encompass recruits from throughout the Pacific. Smaller numbers of volunteers from Samoa, Fiji, Norfolk Island, Tonga, Hawai’i, Society Islands, Tahiti, Chatham Islands, Gilbert Islands (Kiribati), Ocean Island and the French Territory of the Tuamotus were incorporated into the “Rarotongan” ranks.

Pacific Island soldiers trained alongside New Zealand Māori at Narrowneck Camp near Devonport in Auckland. They impressed military leaders with their physical strength and aptitude. Although 80 per cent of the Cook Island men spoke no English, they were considered relatively well educated, “a magnificent race ... cheerful, attentive, enthusiastic and intelligent ... better material for conversion into soldiers could not be found”.⁴⁰ This patronising language tends to diminish the challenges faced by Pacific Island men while engaged in overseas military service, as it is evident a number of

³⁴ Christopher Pugsley, *Te Hokowhita a Tu: The Maori Pioneer Battalion in the First World War* (Auckland, N.Z.: Reed, 1995), 20. This also applied to the Fijians. Ratu Lala Sukuna, a young law graduate in the United Kingdom, wanted to join up, but the British would not allow this. Instead, he joined the French Foreign Legion and won several distinctions in battle. Sukuna became a very significant leader in his country of Fiji after the war.

³⁵ Scott, 131.

³⁶ Scott, 141; “Outposts of Empire,” *Daily Herald* (Adelaide, South Australia), 1 December 1916. Scott recorded the observations of H. Bond James, a long-serving LMS missionary in the Cook Islands.

³⁷ Scott, 141.

³⁸ Scott, 15.

³⁹ “Recruits from Nuie [sic],” *Wanganui Chronicle*, 11 September 1915.

⁴⁰ J. L. Sleeman, “The Supply of Reinforcements During the War,” in H. T. B. Drew, *The War Effort of New Zealand: A Popular (A) History of Minor Campaigns in Which New Zealanders Took Part, (B) Services Not Dealt with in the Campaign Volumes, (C) the Work at the Bases*. Official History of New Zealand's Effort in the Great War; V. 4 (Auckland N.Z.: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1923), 15; Timothy Winegard, *Indigenous Peoples of the British Dominions and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 109; Pointer, 27.

problems impeded their training. Many struggled to adapt to New Zealand's colder climatic conditions, and with little natural immunity to European diseases, cold-related illnesses were commonplace.⁴¹ Those unaccustomed to wearing footwear struggled to adjust to heavy boots and this caused some medical problems during preliminary training.⁴² Army rations proved trying for those who had never regularly eaten meat and the sick parades revealed a large percentage who suffered from digestive tract problems as a result of this change of diet.⁴³

For those from the islands of Aitutaki and Rarotonga, this was perhaps less of a transition. Children there were raised on a diet of pork, fish, fowl and goat meat and the Cook Islanders predilection for bully beef, or tinned meat, was well known.⁴⁴ Island produce had long-been exchanged with whalers and traders in return for this prestigious commodity, and this was consumed at important events such as weddings, funerals and feasts.⁴⁵ Islanders would reportedly "spend their last shilling" on this treat, and while theft was almost non-existent in the Cook Islands, European residents knew to keep their supplies securely under lock and key.⁴⁶ On arrival at Narrowneck, Cook Island soldiers were pleased at the amount of meat offered, and believed this privilege made the long voyage to New Zealand well worth the effort.⁴⁷ However, the consumption of fresh meat did not agree with everyone, and special rations were instituted for all the Pacific Island men, with less meat and more fish, fruit, bread and vegetables.⁴⁸

The Cook Islanders proved "wonderfully adaptable" in overcoming the difficulties of their transition to New Zealand conditions.⁴⁹ War historians praised their rapid adoption of European language and customs, and noted with satisfaction, that within a few months, they were "more than worthy to serve with the other forces of the British Empire".⁵⁰ Attached to the 3rd Māori Contingent, the 250 Pacific Islanders formed the bulk of company.⁵¹ Arriving at Suez on 16 March 1916, they joined the newly formed Pioneer Maori Battalion and shared in a traditional welcome, "an ancient Maori

⁴¹ Winegard, 109. A number of Pacific Islanders died while at Narrowneck Camp.

⁴² Pointer, 20.

⁴³ Winegard, 109.

⁴⁴ Ernest Beaglehole, *Social Change in the South Pacific*, 142-143; "Cook Islands," *NZH*, 20 February 1903.

⁴⁵ Roger Haden, *Food Culture in the Pacific Islands* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Greenwood Press, 2009), 20, 207.

⁴⁶ "Polynesian Soldiers," *NZH*, 30 October 1915.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Sleeman, 16.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*; "Recruits From Nuie". The contingent was 350 strong.

ceremonial on the Egyptian desert”.⁵² The Rarotongans established a close rapport with their New Zealand “Maori cousins”, enjoying their similarities of language and serving alongside one another with credit and distinction.⁵³

In many regards, foreign battlefields proved educational for Pacific Island soldiers. In the company of men from throughout the Empire, they earned the admiration and respect of their compatriots. They also developed an awareness of the rights and entitlements available to British subjects, those already enjoyed by their fellow citizens in New Zealand. This welcome exposure to new experiences and cultures came at a high cost, particularly in regard to health. Lack of immunity to continental diseases posed an extreme risk and attrition was particularly high among the Niuean troops. A month later, when the Pioneers struck camp in Egypt, over 50 per cent of the Niueans were hospitalised, and when sent forward to France the following month, even higher numbers succumbed to illness. The decision was made to send all the Niueans home. The Cook Island troops also suffered immensely from the cold in France, but they were retained in these taxing conditions for another twenty months.⁵⁴

In spite of the challenges faced, the Rarotongan Company earned many accolades for their contribution to the war effort. Renowned for their exceptional physical strength, they were engaged in numerous heavy engineering projects.⁵⁵ Due to the adverse affects of the climate, the second Rarotongan contingent was deployed to the warmer regions of the Suez, Sinai and Palestine, where New Zealand and Australian forces prevented the Ottoman Empire from occupying the Suez Canal and Egypt. Military leaders commended the Rarotongans’ stamina and ability to withstand strenuous work in torrid conditions, especially during the long attack on the Turkish stronghold.⁵⁶

Having proven its worth, the Rarotongan Company was employed “for special work”. Attached to a British formation of heavy artillery, they competently handled the large 6-inch howitzers and the medium trench mortars at Gaza, and later played an

⁵² Hugh Stewart, *The New Zealand Division 1916-1919: A Popular History based on Official Records* (Auckland, N.Z.: Whitcombe and Tombs Ltd, 1921), 9.

⁵³ “Cook Islands: “Victoria’s Last Born Child”, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 July 1933; “News of the Day,” *AS*, 23 January 1934.

⁵⁴ Winegard, 110. Over 80 per cent of the Niueans who made the round trip were hospitalised at some point.

⁵⁵ Kolokesa Māhina-Tuai, “FIA (Forgotten in Action): Pacific Islanders in the New Zealand Armed Forces,” in *Tangata O Le Moana: New Zealand and the People of the Pacific*, ed. Sean Mallon, Kolokesa Māhina-Tuai, and Damon Salesa (Wellington, N.Z.: Te Papa Press, 2012), 144; Scott, 139-140.

⁵⁶ “The Rarotongans,” *DOM*, 13 February 1919; Ron Palenski, *Kiwi Battlefields* (Auckland, N.Z.: Hodder Moe, 2011), 155.

important role in the “great ammunition column”, ensuring the supply of food and ammunition to the front line (Figure 7).⁵⁷ In June 1918, numbers were bolstered by the arrival of the 3rd Rarotongan contingent, and all were engaged on the ammunition column along the Mediterranean coast.⁵⁸ Seamanship honed in the islands proved useful as the men adeptly handled the lighters bringing stores from ship to shore.⁵⁹



Figure 7: Rarotongan soldiers, World War One. Wilson, L F (Mrs): Photographs taken during World War I of the New Zealand Expeditionary Forces in Jerusalem, and the Auckland Mounted Rifles in Egypt, Sinai and Palestine. Ref: 1/2-066834-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22299038>.

The Rarotongans’ commanding officers were generous in praise of their men. Captain Bush claimed no contingent maintained a cleaner conduct record or coped better from a medical point of view. Only malaria could overcome these valiant men and this had affected over 70 per cent. Even so, mortality rates were not considered heavy, and there were no fatalities from the light form of influenza they encountered.⁶⁰ In spite of these glowing accounts, other sources allude to a high death toll and large numbers hospitalised with complications from measles, dysentery and influenza. Records often fail to distinguish between Cook Islanders, New Zealand Māori, Niueans and other Pacific Islanders, therefore accurate numbers are not available. Dick Scott alleges a heavy, hidden cost, including deaths in camp in New Zealand, and the loss of over 23 per

⁵⁷ Palenski, *ibid.*; “The Rarotongans,” *DOM*, 13 February 1919.

⁵⁸ “The Rarotongans,” *ibid.* This was particularly difficult work over territory ravaged by retreating Ottoman forces.

⁵⁹ Palenski, 101.

⁶⁰ “The Rarotongans,” *DOM*, 13 February 1919

cent of those stationed in France, eight from sickness and one from wounds.⁶¹ Scott believes these and other details were deliberately kept from the New Zealand public.⁶²

The recruitment of Pacific Island soldiers created some problems for the New Zealand authorities and their return home was not without complications. When the troopship *Malta* left the Suez in January 1919, she carried 250 Rarotongan soldiers who had served in Egypt and Palestine; also on board were over 400 New Zealand officers and men.⁶³ Plans were in place to return the Cook Islanders to Rarotonga as soon as the ship reached Wellington, but when a number of “slight pneumonia cases” developed among their number, the entire contingent was placed in isolation. On arrival at Fremantle, their illness was diagnosed as “identical with pneumonia influenza”.⁶⁴ Some were reportedly in a very serious condition, and sixteen men, fourteen of whom were Rarotongan, were hospitalised under the authority of the Western Australia authorities at the quarantine hospital at Woodman Point.⁶⁵ The “Maori” troops, as they were described by the Australian newspapers, all made a successful recovery, while the *Malta* resumed her voyage to New Zealand.⁶⁶ During this time, a further six Rarotongans and two Europeans developed symptoms, and on 28 January, the ship was held at anchor in Wellington Harbour while the condition of the passengers was assessed.⁶⁷

Rumours were rife as to the severity of the influenza, but the public were reassured there was no reason to suppose the outbreak “among the islanders” would develop into a more virulent strain.⁶⁸ The doctor attached to the contingent believed the Rarotongans had suffered only “light touches of ordinary lobar pneumonia”, brought on by sleeping on the deck in the tropics.⁶⁹ Health authorities agreed this was a milder strain, but nevertheless adopted stringent precautions against any further spread.⁷⁰ They considered it safe to disembark the European section of the passengers, but

⁶¹ Scott, 142; Margaret Pointer, “Difficulties faced by Pacific Islanders in the NZEF,” Ministry for Culture and Heritage, last modified September 2, 2014, <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/war/pacific-islanders-nzef/difficulties>.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ “Arrival of the Malta,” *NZH*, 28 January 1919; “Influenza Epidemic,” *The Register* (Adelaide, SA) 11 Jan 1919.

⁶⁴ “Arrival of the Malta”.

⁶⁵ “Telegrams,” *Geraldton Guardian* (WA) 11 Jan 1919.

⁶⁶ “Arrival of the Malta”; “Telegrams”; “Influenza Epidemic,” “Pneumonic Influenza,” *Western Mail* (Perth, WA) 17 Jan 1919.

⁶⁷ “Quarantine of the Malta,” *DOM*, 29 January 1919.

⁶⁸ “Quarantine of the Malta”; “Safeguarding the Public Health,” *Press*, 28 January 1919.

⁶⁹ “The Rarotongans,” *DOM*, 13 February 1919. Dr Dawson was a former Medical Officer of Health in Rarotonga and had cared for the men for over a year.

⁷⁰ “Quarantine of the Malta”.

advised delaying the Islanders return home.⁷¹ The possibility of infection being carried to Rarotonga was considered “extremely remote”, but clearly not worth the risk, given that the island had not been visited by the more recent, particularly severe strain of influenza.⁷² The Rarotongan contingent and their contacts were immediately placed in quarantine on Somes Island in Wellington harbour.⁷³

Government authorities had good reason to exercise caution. In November the previous year, Spanish influenza had decimated the populations of Samoa, Fiji and Tonga. Known today as “the most deadly and acute epidemic of the modern age”, within approximately eight weeks, over 20 per cent of Samoa’s population was dead. Losses in Fiji mounted to over 5 per cent and similar numbers were lost in Tonga.⁷⁴ Blame for the pandemic lay with the *Talune*, which sailed from Auckland during an outbreak of the disease. A number of sick passengers boarded the ship, and although illness was evident, authorities in the ports of call took no precautions to isolate the ship, apart from those in American Samoa.⁷⁵ Rarotonga was not included on the route, but several months earlier, the island had been struck by an influenza epidemic that claimed forty-five lives in five weeks.⁷⁶ Infection was spread by shipping workers returning from Tahiti, and the other islands of the group were only spared by the vigilant actions of Resident Commissioner, Frederick Platts, who immediately suspended all mail and passenger traffic until the danger had passed.⁷⁷

The Rarotongan soldiers were restored to health within two weeks of their return. Although released from quarantine, authorities chose to keep them on Somes Island until transport home was arranged. Others returning with the NZEF were entitled to certain privileges, but as a local newspaper noted at the time, there was no

⁷¹ “Influenza on the Malta,” *AS*, 27 January 1919. It is notable that some months later, the Governor General, the Earl of Liverpool, having recently visited numerous British and New Zealand ports in the Pacific, commented on the much less stringent procedures in place when compared to American facilities. A “mere glance” at the passengers determined whether they were fit to land. However, in doubtful situations, non-European passengers might be placed in isolation, while Europeans were permitted to disembark on the condition they visited the hospital daily. These situations are discussed by John Ryan McLean in “Setting a Barricade against the East Wind: Western Polynesia and the 1918 Influenza Pandemic,” PhD Thesis, University of Otago, 2012.

⁷² “Arrival of the Malta”. An influenza epidemic in 1909 had affected both the indigenous and European population of Rarotonga, but only two fatalities resulted.

⁷³ “Influenza on the Malta”. At this time newspapers were announcing the imminent return of the Pioneer Battalion. According to Pugsley, they arrived as a complete unit and received a tumultuous welcome in several regions.

⁷⁴ John Ryan McLean, “Setting a Barricade against the East Wind: Western Polynesia and the 1918 Influenza Pandemic” (PhD Thesis, University of Otago, 2012), 5-6. Most deaths occurred in the fifteen to forty-five year age group. There was no outbreak in American Samoa because of strict quarantine.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 181, 217

⁷⁶ Scott, 158.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

such limelight for the Rarotongan soldiers.⁷⁸ New Zealand soldiers were issued with civilian clothing on arrival and received three weeks leave prior to final discharge; during that time they could travel freely throughout the country on rail passes. Different procedures were put in place for the repatriation of Pacific Island men. When the Niueans were returned to New Zealand in September 1916, there was some discussion over the nature of their entitlements. Travel within the Dominion was not considered desirable in this instance, and the men were contained in a convalescent home until their departure for Niue. Once home they were issued with civilian clothing and took their official discharge three weeks later, therefore, final leave was taken in Niue rather than New Zealand.⁷⁹

By keeping the men in uniform and denying any opportunity for independent travel, the actions of New Zealand authorities might be interpreted as a means of circumventing future disturbances to white hegemony, or removing any temptation for the soldiers to remain in the Dominion.⁸⁰ In the event, the Cook Island soldiers were also excluded from free access to the mainland. While awaiting transport home, however, they were permitted ample organised shore leave. A newspaper article reminded the public how these soldiers had served the Empire with distinction, and the men were “thrown on the hospitality of the citizens of Wellington”.⁸¹ The Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) and Salvation Army arranged numerous events and paraded the soldiers through inner city streets. Activities included concerts and other entertainments, and visits to the zoo and theatre.⁸² A picnic and aquatic sports day was held in their honour at Days Bay; this attracted large crowds, and during these supervised activities, the troops conduct was reported as exemplary.⁸³ Their European commanders were unwilling to speculate on the extent to which “Western Civilisation” had influenced the men during their wartime travels, but certainly felt this had some impact on their charges.⁸⁴ Having been treated to “a right royal time” in the city, the men finally boarded the *Paloona* for their return to Rarotonga on 25 February, 1919.⁸⁵

⁷⁸ “The Rarotongans,” *DOM*, 13 February 1919.

⁷⁹ Pointer, 63.

⁸⁰ Ibid.; Lachlan Paterson, “The Similarity of Hue Constituted No Special Bond of Intimacy between Them’: Close Encounters of the Indigenous Kind,” *Journal of New Zealand Studies*, no. 14 (2013): 20.

⁸¹ “The Rarotongans,” *DOM*, 13 February 1919; “The Rarotongans,” *EP*, 11 February 1919.

⁸² “The Rarotongans,” *AS*, 11 February 1919; “Rarotongan Troops,” *NZH*, 12 February 1919

⁸³ “The Rarotongans,” *AS*, 11 February 1919; “Local and General,” *DOM*, 18 February 1919.

⁸⁴ “The Rarotongans,” *DOM*, 13 February 1919.

⁸⁵ “Local and General,” *DOM*, 18 February 1919.

Warriors return

Great preparations were made for the soldiers' homecoming. The people wished "to give the men the welcome they deserved" and to express their gratitude and joy.⁸⁶ They were relieved to see that most had not been "spoiled" by spending time in other countries, but it soon became evident that some felt aggrieved and intended to cause trouble.⁸⁷ Numerous reasons were mooted. The war had deprived the local fruit industry of shipping and the adverse affects on the islands economy meant their families had struggled financially during their absence.⁸⁸ Some accused Maui Pomare of renegeing on an added inducement when the men enlisted, alleging he had promised to cancel any unpaid fines and erase their debts at the trading stores when they returned; the first condition had been honoured but the debts remained.⁸⁹ There was little paid employment for the men to return to, and accusations of price fixing by some of the European exporters aroused anger.⁹⁰

The situation rapidly deteriorated, and six days after the soldiers return, annoyance turned to anger on the streets of Avarua. When local European traders dictated terms of use for the five pound clothing vouchers issued on the men's discharge, they soon learned their debasing practices would no longer be tolerated.⁹¹ Upwards of seventy returned soldiers, half of whom were awaiting transport home to the outer islands, attacked and looted the stores in a "mutinous state".⁹² For over twenty-four hours, "the settlement was at the mercy of the rioters", and officials reported "a most trying fortnight" until the "danger of further outbursts was past".⁹³ During this time, practically "every white man" joined forces to defend against this threat to imperial rule.⁹⁴ In the aftermath, twelve rioters were convicted and five were sentenced to five years imprisonment in New Zealand.⁹⁵ Pomare was also accused of inciting hostility toward European residents, by branding them as "beachcombers and bad men" and advised the soldiers against them.⁹⁶ This was considered irresponsible, given the "white

⁸⁶ "Rarotongan Riots," *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 26 March 1919.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Scott, 145.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 134, 144.

⁹⁰ Scott, 144-147

⁹¹ "Rarotongan Riots," *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 26 March 1919.

⁹² *Ibid.*; "Correspondence," *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 25 October 1919; Scott, 147.

⁹³ "Rarotonga Riots," *DOM*, 11 September 1919.

⁹⁴ "Rarotonga Riots."

⁹⁵ Scott, 149; "Cook Island Fruit," *AS*, 11 September 1919. The cost of damage incurred was deducted from the men's final army pay. Those imprisoned were released after serving eight months of their sentence.

⁹⁶ "The Island Tour," *AS*, 2 July 1919. Pomare admitted saying this, but claimed his remarks referred to "all bad white men in all parts of the world".

population” numbered a little over 100, and the indigenous population upwards of 7000; some considered it a miracle the outbreak had not ended in a serious massacre.⁹⁷

With the benefit of hindsight, some European residents were more magnanimous. Damage to property and mere insults hurled at white residents were considered mild reactions, given other world-wide manifestations of unrest during this period.⁹⁸ In the wake of the economic struggles engendered by World War One, racial and class antagonisms had erupted in riots in Britain and other parts of the empire; Continental Europe and North America were also adversely affected.⁹⁹ In the Cook Islands, the initial outburst was rapidly quelled, with a number of “the better behaved soldiers” assisting to maintain law and order.¹⁰⁰ Ill-feeling continued to simmer and hasty arrangements were made to transport disorderly outer-islanders to their final destination.¹⁰¹ New Zealand residents in Rarotonga later commented more sympathetically on this unexpected turn of events, unfortunate circumstances in which a number of returned servicemen had “spoiled their otherwise excellent record by acts of violence and crime”.¹⁰² It was noted that prior to the war, “it was an unheard of thing for the natives to get abstruserous—they are generally so quiet inoffensive ... the war demoralised them and they are worse than ever for drink, I hear [sic]”.¹⁰³ When the Governor General, the Earl of Liverpool, visited Rarotonga three months later, reporters detected an unusually sombre mood among the people. Although efforts were made to stimulate interest “amongst the natives”, this had apparently met “with a strange lack of enthusiasm”.¹⁰⁴

For the Rarotongan contingents, service in the NZEF ranged from one to three and a half years, and after such a lengthy absence, many found it difficult to resume their former lives.¹⁰⁵ This was a common experience for the indigenous peoples of the British Empire, who responded willingly to the manpower needs of the allied forces and shared equally in the burdens of war.¹⁰⁶ Modern warfare incorporated many underprivileged groups in society, and although racial prejudice permeated their participation,

⁹⁷ Scott, 160; “Correspondence,” *Wairarapa Daily Times*, 25 October 1919; “Trouble at the Cook Islands,” *DOM*, 25 October 1919.

⁹⁸ Scott, 160.

⁹⁹ Scott, 148; Winegard, 227.

¹⁰⁰ “Cook Island Fruit”.

¹⁰¹ Scott, 148-149. Menacing behaviour toward Europeans reportedly continued on some of the outer islands for a time.

¹⁰² “Cook Island Fruit”.

¹⁰³ “A Pacific Gem,” *Wanganui Chronicle*, 21 August 1919.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Scott, 153-156.

¹⁰⁶ Winegard, 259.

involvement encouraged a new self-consciousness and sense of status.¹⁰⁷ The Cook Island men gained new skills, including competence in English, and achieved higher material standards. A number clearly envisaged an accelerated attainment of equal rights.¹⁰⁸ Throughout the world, the hopes of the indigenous soldier of Empire were seldom realised and few returned to more fulfilling or prosperous lives.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, at the armistice, Britain reinstated its pre-war exclusionist policies.¹¹⁰

On their return home, the Cook Island veterans found their status diminished rather than enhanced. Any hope of political empowerment had been effectively quashed by the Cook Islands Amendment Act of 1915, which passed quietly into law while many were overseas. These extensive constitutional changes occurred with little consultation, and without ever being translated into Maori; the Act was in force before most realised the implications.¹¹¹ This Act abolished all previous indigenous decision-making bodies and gave the Resident Commissioner authority to veto decisions made by the newly established Island Councils. These changes further imposed New Zealand regulation and control, and any remnant of Island self-government appeared lost.¹¹²

Social theorists have claimed that military service provided many sons of Empire with an effective pathway to participatory citizenship. In return for services rendered, returned soldiers were able to make claims on the state for welfare needs or to acquire land and education.¹¹³ This was certainly the case in New Zealand, where those discharged from the NZEF could apply for loans to purchase land through Government settlement schemes, or to finance home ownership and business opportunities. The New Zealand Returned Soldiers' Association (RSA) also supported the men's repatriation, promoting an adequate pension scheme and advancing employment rights. This included the availability of ongoing occupational training and further education.¹¹⁴

In contrast, the Cook Island veterans received few rewards for carrying out their patriotic duty. Isolation from the mainland generally excluded them from the post-war

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 259.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.; Scott, 141.

¹⁰⁹ Winegard, 259.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Scott, 146; W. S. Lowe and W. T. G. Airey, "New Zealand Dependencies and the Development of Autonomy," *Pacific Affairs* 18, no. 3 (1945): 252. Throughout the years of the British Protectorate, indigenous representatives met in a series of Island Councils and collaborated through a Federal Council.

¹¹² Gilson, 130.

¹¹³ Bryan S. Turner and Chris Rojek, *Society and Culture: Scarcity and Solidarity* (London: SAGE Publications, 2001), 203.

¹¹⁴ Stephen Clarke, "Return, Repatriation, Remembrance and the Returned Soldiers' Association," in *New Zealand's Great War: New Zealand, the Allies, and the First World War*, ed. John Crawford and Ian McGibbon (Auckland, N.Z.: Exisle Publishing, 2007), 170-172.

benefits received by their New Zealand counterparts.¹¹⁵ A number were entitled to a war pension, but to qualify, the men must be certified medically unfit as a result of war service. This required an appearance before the War Pensions Board and this facility did not extend to Rarotonga. Few men were able to travel to New Zealand to complete this process.¹¹⁶ With time on their hands and little money to spend, the veterans began to question the fairness of their current condition. Platts, the Resident Commissioner, found employment for nine of the veterans in public service or law enforcement roles, and communicated with officials in Wellington on behalf of others who wished to return to New Zealand to find work. Pomare was quick to dismiss this appeal and propose an alternative plan. The government would provide assistance and training in crop selection and production, and with the benefit of new techniques, the men might then become superior producers of the islands' staple products.¹¹⁷

This decision effectively excluded the Cook Island servicemen from the New Zealand nation space once their wartime services were no longer required. Formal immigration policy at this time permitted discrimination, including the exclusion of race "aliens" and others perceived as potential burdens on public institutions. By restricting who was allowed in, the New Zealand government was actively involved in demarcating the boundaries of citizenship by only accepting those who suited the "needs" of the administration.¹¹⁸ In effect, this gate keeping process allowed government officials to determine the racial constitution of New Zealand society.¹¹⁹ This policy evidently extended to Cook Island Maori, the indigenous people of its own Pacific colony, who were not in fact immigrants, but "fellow citizens".¹²⁰

According to Tony Ballantyne, "the nation space is the product of complex legal processes that have frequently reshaped the spatial and legal boundaries of the nation".¹²¹ Mass warfare during World War One lent credence to fears surrounding state security and induced greater state regulation of human mobility.¹²² In early 1915, the British Government introduced passports and exit permits, mechanisms which became

¹¹⁵ Denis Fairfax, "Karika, Pa George," *DNZB*, Te Ara-the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, last modified October 29, 2013, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/3k2/karika-pa-george>.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.* Resident Commissioner Frederick Platts attempted to procure pensions for soldiers invalided home, and to secure some other benefits granted to New Zealand soldiers, but with limited success.

¹¹⁷ "Rarotongan Troops," *NZH*, 24 April 1919.

¹¹⁸ Scofield, 48-49

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹²⁰ "Our New Tropical Fellow Colonists".

¹²¹ Ballantyne, 271.

¹²² Radhika Viyas Mongia, "Race, Nationality, Mobility: A History of the Passport," *Public Culture* 11, no 3 (1999): 554; Matthew Henry, "Border Geostrategies: Imagining and Administering New Zealand's Post-World War One Borders," *New Zealand Geographer* 64 (2008): 197.

“central to the production of citizenship across the globe”.¹²³ These documents naturalised “the territorial boundedness of a national space as self-evidently the legitimate abode of certain people”, and according to Mongia, attempts to restrict movement across national lines were explicitly racialised.¹²⁴ Although the marker of “difference” was now anchored in a “universal” category of nationality, this system was effectively used to justify distinctions based on race.¹²⁵

During the first half the twentieth century, borders became “sites of variable control”, and those in power at the colonial border abrogated the right “to define the nature of any connection, flow or exclusion”.¹²⁶ Administrative barriers were not necessarily self-evident; rather, territorial pretensions were veiled and played out at the border in different ways and for different purposes.¹²⁷ In New Zealand, efforts focused on excluding Chinese and Indian immigrants, groups considered a threat to “white New Zealand”.¹²⁸ Restrictive policies for non-British migrants emphasize the state’s role in regulating human mobility, and according to geographer, Matthew Henry, the maintenance of British standards, and indeed, “the civilizational integrity of New Zealand”, were believed to be at stake.¹²⁹

These threats were conceptualised in a variety of ways, as bureaucrats exercised significant powers to create the ideal world they imagined through intervention at the border.¹³⁰ Fearing for Māori travelling abroad, Apirana Ngata asked Prime Minister, William Massey, whether they might be defined as undesirable immigrants on their return. Ngata was assured, for the purpose of the Bill, that Māori would be treated as “honorary Europeans”.¹³¹ In reality, the paternalistic regime adopted by the Department of Internal Affairs restricted the ability of Māori to obtain passports to leave New Zealand. This applied, yet unofficial barrier to the movement of Māori suggests outward movement was controlled, as was the case for Cook Island Maori.

In the years following their return, a number of the Cook Island servicemen became disillusioned and unsettled. Some felt stifled within small island communities, where life was closely regulated by the church and representatives of New Zealand’s

¹²³ Henry, 197; Ballantyne, 271.

¹²⁴ Mongia, 554.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 555.

¹²⁶ Henry, 196.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ward and Lin, 156.

¹²⁹ Scofield, 16; Henry, 200-201.

¹³⁰ Henry, 197, 200.

¹³¹ Ibid., 201.

colonial administration.¹³² Some chose to move to larger population bases, and Tahiti and Western Samoa were favoured destinations.¹³³ Others bided their time, in the hope of eventually realising change and political empowerment.¹³⁴ They would wait another twenty years before world events again challenged the status quo. World War Two presented the opportunity for Cook Islanders to participate in overseas service of a very different kind.

Conclusion

World War One provided the first opportunity for Cook Island men to leave in significant numbers and to become acquainted with foreign cultures in the distant lands of the “Old World”. In the same way as New Zealand Māori, patriotism allowed participation “as part of the wider multi-cultural imperial family as well as national citizens”.¹³⁵ Military service kept them within acceptable bounds which affirmed the “dominant colonial and imperial ideologies”.¹³⁶ However, as Lachlan Paterson illustrates, “transnational Indigenous interactions” could be an enlightening opportunity for “native self examination”.¹³⁷ While united in service to King and Empire, Cook Island men enjoyed the prestige, albeit temporarily, of being treated as the equals of other members of the fighting forces.

Even though their Island departure was made under the auspices of the government Minister charged with their welfare, this movement evidently posed a threat to border control. At the conclusion of war, they were treated as immigrants to, rather than citizens of, New Zealand. The Rarotongan soldiers were not afforded the freedoms and privileges enjoyed by other members of the NZEF and were disappointed when they resumed the status of the indigenous “other”. With a broadened outlook and sense of empowerment, many were no longer content to be relegated to the status of second-class citizens within their own Islands. These changing attitudes were evidenced in actions which threatened the stability of colonial rule in the islands. Although the New Zealand regime rapidly subjugated the dissenters, this uprising may have influenced the decision not to allow Cook Island men to engage in overseas service during World War Two. This prohibition will be discussed in chapter four.

¹³² Scott 144-145.

¹³³ Scott, 154; Pointer, “Economic, social and political impact”, Ministry for Culture and Heritage, last modified 2 September, 2014, <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/war/pacific-aftermath/economic-social-impact>.

¹³⁴ Scott, 54-55, 232.

¹³⁵ Paterson, 28.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 20, 32.

Once home, Cook Island soldiers were denied the opportunity to return as New Zealand citizens and to share in any benefits that might imply. In spite of numerous applications and understandings of the term “citizenship” during this period, this would ultimately have acknowledged their membership of the state and granted a status, even in the absence of clearly defined rights.¹³⁸ In the event, any suggestions of self-determination or travel to New Zealand were immediately and effectively quashed. By excluding returnees from the process of obtaining pensions, their rights and privileges differed greatly from their mainland counterparts, and for many years, their sacrifices were virtually ignored.¹³⁹

It is evident that “citizenship” was in a constant state of flux throughout this period and therefore the term itself is difficult to define. What is certain is that racism was inherent in the control of population movement across the globe. Ethnicity played a major role in determining New Zealand’s national identity, and in denying rights to Cook Island soldiers, the British nation of New Zealand was eschewing the notion of oneness with these Pacific peoples. As Moss had bluntly pointed out, if the Cook Islands were to be incorporated in the colony, New Zealand would “no longer be able to boast itself a purely white man's country”.¹⁴⁰ Many years would elapse before New Zealand was comfortable enough to assume any sense of a Pacific identity; meanwhile, European New Zealanders were bound together by their very “Britishness”. These characteristics were apparently more important than any form of legal and social citizenship which might embrace their colonial subjects in the Cook Islands.

By highlighting the events and outcomes of the Cook Islanders’ participation in World War One, this chapter has shown how Island servicemen were viewed and treated as a distinct and separate group. As colonial subjects rather than true citizens of New Zealand, they were effectively excluded from the nation once their perceived usefulness had passed.¹⁴¹ In their secluded Island domain, far distant from superiors in Wellington, officials exercised an array of autocratic powers to maintain order and

¹³⁸ Scofield, 19.

¹³⁹ Scott, 142-145. Resident Commissioner Hugh Ayson made a special effort to ensure all veterans received a servicemen’s headstone and were laid to rest with a sense of dignity, recognition and gratitude.

¹⁴⁰ Scofield, 5, 60.

¹⁴¹ Winegard, 259.

compliance, and quietly policed their imagined border between the Cook Islands and New Zealand.¹⁴²

¹⁴² Beaglehole, "Social and Political Changes," 390; Damon Salesa, "A Pacific Destiny: New Zealand's Overseas Empire, 1840-1945," in *Tangata O Le Moana: New Zealand and the People of the Pacific*, ed. Sean Mallon, Kolokesa Māhina Tuai, and Damon Salesa (Wellington, N.Z: Te Papa Press, 2012), 111. According to Salesa, these men were disproportionately drawn from police, military or legal backgrounds.

Chapter Three

Breaching the Borders: The Cook Island Domestic Scheme

Float lightly, float lightly, my sailing canoe,
Like a bird of the air with thy soft flapping wings –
We'll anchor ere long on far distant shores...¹

~ Ancient Polynesian chant used when crossing the Great Ocean of Kiwa

Some twenty-two years after the return of the Cook Islands' World War One soldiers, another war presented the opportunity for young Islanders to move beyond familiar shores. When Britain and France declared war on Germany on 3 September 1939, Cook Island men were again anxious to prove their worth on distant battlefields. The New Zealand government denied these wishes and encouraged alternative service mining phosphate on Makatea in French Polynesia.² Another form of recruitment did take place in the Islands, although this was not directly related to the war effort. From early 1941, a government initiative authorised the employment of young women for domestic service roles in private New Zealand homes. Over a period of almost eighteen months, officials despatched at least 100 suitable candidates, as quickly as selection and shipping would allow. As word of the Cook Island Domestic Scheme spread quietly through Wellington's higher society and beyond, through Government, business and farming circles, the Rarotongan house-girl promised to ease the domestic labour shortage for a few privileged citizens.

In this chapter I focus on the political aspects of this imported Polynesian labour scheme, the first structured and organised effort to recruit Pacific Island workers for the New Zealand labour market.³ I highlight the problems perceived by officialdom and efforts to control Cook Island women on home soil. While contained under the roof and influence of the male head of household, these young women were viewed as domestic assets, manageable commodities financially bound to employers and subject to the

¹ "Cook Islands," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 July 1933.

² Fertilizer was vital to New Zealand and Australian farmers struggling to meet the increased demands of wartime production. The Japanese capture of Nauru ended supplies of cheap phosphate and Makatea was used an alternative source.

³ After World War Two, the New Zealand Government considered other Pacific Islands as potential labour sources, including the Western Samoa Trust Territory.

control of their colonial rulers.⁴ Tensions surfaced when the young women began to move toward more independent lifestyles, and as officials attempted to rein in these women, their actions generated some unforeseen political conflict. I ask whether the paternalistic anxieties of officials reflect genuine concerns for the well-being of minors under their assumed authority, or whether these concerns constitute an extension of established colonial hierarchies. The motives of wartime Prime Minister (PM), Peter Fraser, will also be called into question. Whereas one might expect a “characteristic expression of Labour anti-colonialism”, his actions in this instance appear to contradict long-held opinions regarding his sympathy for the people of the Pacific.⁵

The Cook Island Domestic Scheme

By late 1941, the Cook Islands’ Resident Commissioner, Hugh Ayson, was growing accustomed to communications from anxious New Zealand housewives. Catherine Blackley, wife of the managing director of a substantial Wellington-based company, apologised for writing, but the domestic question in New Zealand was really “quite appalling”. Catherine, along with a number of her social acquaintances, was “most anxious” to secure a housemaid from the Islands.⁶ Wartime labour shortages in New Zealand had allowed many women in paid domestic employment to escape this unglamorous occupation, and while the civilian population was expected to make personal sacrifices during wartime, some wealthier households were unhappy to be deprived of their customary live-in help.⁷ Although women’s groups lobbied extensively throughout the war on behalf of those in genuine need, they failed to convince the

⁴ Employers advanced money for fares and supplied the women with warm clothing on arrival. These costs were repaid in instalments and deducted from wages. These evolving arrangements were instituted and discussed between June 1941 and October 1942, in correspondence between the Cook Islands Department, the Resident Commissioner and the employers. Employment conditions are further discussed in the following chapter.

⁵ W. D. McIntyre, “Peter Fraser’s Commonwealth: New Zealand and the Origins of the New Commonwealth in the 1940s,” in *New Zealand in World Affairs*, Vol. 1, 1945-1957, ed. Alister McIntosh (Wellington, N.Z.: New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, 1977), 50, 55, 57.

⁶ IT121/1/6, Part 1: Natives-Cook Island Girls for Domestic Service in New Zealand, Island Territories Department, Wellington [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwantanga, National Office, Wellington], Blackley to RC, 6 November 1941. This file series consists primarily of restricted files which are used subject to the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade standard conditions of use. To protect the privacy of individuals no identifying information is included in this text. Part 1 is not restricted.

⁷ Nancy M. Taylor, *The New Zealand People at War: The Home Front*, Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War, 1939-1945 (Wellington, N.Z.: Historical Publications Branch, Dept. of Internal Affairs, 1986), 676; IT121/1/6, Part 1: A number of letters to the Cook Islands Department and Resident Commissioner express a sense of desperation and urgency over the lack of domestic help.

Government to adopt measures to ease the domestic problem.⁸

These wartime employees were preceded by a small number of enterprising young Islanders who travelled independently to New Zealand throughout the 1930s. This small-scale movement was temporary and individualistic; some young men “tried their luck” at hop and fruit picking, while others found work as general farm hands.⁹ A few arrived with no purpose other than to look around.¹⁰ The *Evening Post* noted the arrival of one young man in 1936. The “Rarotongan boy” of about eighteen years was eager to take up a new life on a farm near Whakatane, but was noticeably overawed by the unfamiliar sights and sounds of Wellington city. His travelling companion, a “much older girl” on her way to a position in Napier, was more representative of young migrants during this time.¹¹

During the 1930s, most new arrivals were “girls” in their twenties who had been promised employment as domestic servants.¹² They were generally selected by islands-based church and company representatives, on behalf of family and acquaintances in New Zealand. Cook Island officials, including Ayson and Chief Medical Officer, Edward Ellison, sometimes assisted with these arrangements in a private capacity.¹³ Once resident in New Zealand, domestics might suggest willing friends or relatives and act as go-betweens for potential employers. The Rev. Challis of the LMS, who served in the Cook Islands for over thirteen years, witnessed this small volume of movement, but he believed this territory was not viewed with any significant interest as a labour source until ten young men were recruited to work on Hawke’s Bay sheep farms in the early

⁸ Charlotte Macdonald, “Strangers at the Hearth: The Eclipse of Domestic Service in New Zealand Homes c. 1830s-1940s,” in *At Home in New Zealand: History, Houses, People*, ed. Barbara Brookes (Wellington, N.Z.: Bridget Williams Books, 2000), 55-56; Melanie Nolan, *Breadwinning: New Zealand Women and the State* (Christchurch, N.Z.: Canterbury University Press, 2000), 213.

⁹ Peter H. Curson, “The Cook Islanders,” in *Immigrants in New Zealand*, ed. Keith Westhead Thomson and Andrew D. Trlin (Palmerston North: Massey University, 1970), 173; “Rarotongans in New Zealand,” *PIM*, August 1938, 63; “Cook Islanders: Warning Against New Zealand Attraction”, *PIM*, December, 1942, 27; “From the Cook Islands,” *AS*, 3 May 1930.

¹⁰ Curson, “The Cook Islanders,” 173.

¹¹ “Far From Home: A Bewildered Youth,” *AS*, 6 January 1936.

¹² “Rarotongans in New Zealand”; “Cook Islanders: Warning”.

¹³ IT121/1/6, Part 1: RC to CID, 24 May 1941; IT121/1/6, Part 3: Natives-Cook Island Girls for Domestic Service in New Zealand, Island Territories Department, Wellington [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwantanga, National Office, Wellington], CID to Paora, 14 December 1942; IT121/1/6, Part 3: CID to RC, 13 November 1941. Ellison also served as Deputy Resident Commissioner and Commissioner of the High Court.

years of World War Two.¹⁴ Until early 1941, and the inception of the “Cook Island Domestic” scheme, there was no official involvement in bringing these young workers to New Zealand.

As the shortage of domestic labour in New Zealand reached crisis proportions, the potential to employ greater numbers of Island women was realised. For the first time, the Cook Islands Department became involved in these arrangements. The secretary, William Tailby, was instructed, by persons unknown, to recruit three young housemaids from Rarotonga, for service in the homes of three high-ranking civil servants associated with the department.¹⁵ Hugh Ayson, the long-serving resident commissioner and land court judge on the Islands, known to most as “Judge Ayson”, selected suitable candidates and processed their exit permits.¹⁶ He did not appreciate further instructions to recruit more workers.¹⁷ By May 1941, he had reluctantly approved twenty candidates, aged from fifteen to nineteen years, and despatched them from Rarotonga on board the *Matua*. This was the largest appreciable number of Islanders to leave for New Zealand for some time, as departures seldom ever exceeded twenty in any one year.¹⁸

According to an article in the *Pacific Islands Monthly* magazine, the “girls” were expected to “get on splendidly” in their new role.¹⁹ Ayson was less optimistic, and from the outset, discouraged any hasty promises to deliver domestics to overwrought New Zealand housewives.²⁰ During an accumulated eighteen years in charge, he diligently preserved the well-oiled processes of governance in the Islands and thwarted many attempts to “throw sand in the machinery”.²¹ Acutely aware of potential problems, he discouraged any policy which encouraged an exodus of young females, and strongly opposed the use of Government officials as agents in this process, “except in very special cases”. He informed Tailby that, “while every help will be given as in the past, I do not

¹⁴ Robert L. Challis, “Immigrant Polynesians in New Zealand: Aspects of Stability in Adjusting to Change,” in *Polynesian and Pākehā in New Zealand Education: The Sharing of Cultures*, ed. Douglas H. Bray and Clement G.N. Hill (Auckland N.Z.: Heinemann Educational Books, 1973), 44. Challis became Pastor-in-charge of the Pacific Islands Congregational Church in New Zealand and was appointed to a Government welfare role among Pacific Island peoples living in New Zealand.

¹⁵ IT121/1/6, Part 1: CID to RC, 24 June 1941.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, RC to CID, 24 May 1941.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, RC to CID, 26 January 1942.

¹⁸ “Rarotongan Girls Find New Zealand Jobs,” *PIM*, May 1941, 43; Curson, “The Cook Islanders,” 173.

¹⁹ “Rarotongan Girls Find New Zealand Jobs.”

²⁰ IT121/1/6, Part 1: CID to RC, n.d., and CID to Dalgety and Co., 22 October 1941; Ron Crocombe, “Ayson, Hugh Fraser,” *DNZB*, Te Ara—the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, last modified October 30, 2012, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/4a27/ayson-hugh-fraser>. Ayson was appointed Judge of the Native Land Court and High Court of the Cook Islands in 1916. He served two terms and a total of 20 years as Resident Commissioner between 1922 and 1943.

²¹ Crocombe, “Ayson, Hugh Fraser”; “Cook Islands,” *AS*, 15 December 1943.

like to deal with these matters".²² Following a series of terse communications, the voice of a superior authority overruled all objections. "I am to advise", wrote Tailby, "that owing to the shortage of girls willing to enter domestic service in New Zealand, the Department has been instructed to assist those who are desirous of obtaining domestic help from the Cook Islands and to request you to help in this direction also".²³

Some compromises were made to calm the troubled waters between Wellington and the Cook Islands. By mid-1942, Ayson was no longer required to select domestics on behalf of New Zealand clients and this task was allocated to other interested parties.²⁴ Island trader, William H. Watson and several other private individuals were permitted to act in this capacity, and Dr. and Mrs. Ellison continued to assist private individuals in this way.²⁵ Ayson retained sole responsibility for the issuing of exit permits, and initial applications continued to be dealt with by the CID. By refuting any official sanction of these arrangements, administrators absolved themselves of all responsibility for the workers' aptitude or behaviour.²⁶ Correspondence suggests otherwise, with applicants generally referring to the government "scheme in operation", bringing "girls" from Rarotonga.²⁷

The scheme continued to operate quietly under official auspices. Only a small number of young women could meet the exit requirements, therefore, this was considered a small-scale and short-term remedy for New Zealand's domestic woes.²⁸ In the absence of family, Cook Island administrators assumed the role of chaperone and displayed a paternalistic oversight of young Island women in the Dominion.²⁹ This sense of state liability and control was accentuated in a wartime society which feared the freedoms afforded unsupervised single women, conditions which threatened the traditional gender imbalance and might give rise to sexual impropriety.³⁰

It was "common administrative practice" that all Cook Islanders destined for New

²² IT121/1/6, Part 1: RC to CID, 24 May 1941, and RC to CID, and 26 January, 1942.

²³ Ibid., CID to RC, n.d.

²⁴ Ibid., CID to RC, n.d. and 24 June 1941.

²⁵ Numerous letters in the IT121/1/6 file series verify this.

²⁶ IT121/1/6, Part 1: CID to Pascoe, 29 July 1942; "Rarotongan Domestics in New Zealand," *PIM*, February 1943, 27; "Rarotongan Girls Find New Zealand Jobs"; "For Women Domestic Work," *AS*, 20 November 1942.

²⁷ IT121/1/6, Part 1: Halstead to Immigration Department, 12 August 1942, and numerous other letters.

²⁸ Ibid., RC to CID, 26 January 1942; "Rarotongans for New Zealand," *PIM*, August 1942, 9. Exit permits were issued under the Cook Islands Departure Regulations 1939. These were in place eight months before the declaration of World War Two.

²⁹ "Rarotongan Domestics in New Zealand"; "Native Girls: Use as Domestics," *Cairns Post* (Queensland, Australia), 13 January 1943.

³⁰ Deborah Montgomerie, *The Women's War: New Zealand Women 1939-45* (Auckland, N.Z.: Auckland University Press, 2001), 149-152.

Zealand should pass a medical inspection and demonstrate a reasonable level of English language competency.³¹ Many, if not most countries, exercised similar caution in regard to the health status of immigrants, and made similar connections between race, disease and migration in law and practice.³² The primary health concerns in the Cook Islands were tuberculosis (TB), filariasis and hookworm, the first being widely prevalent and accounting for approximately 27 per cent of all deaths.³³ New Zealand's island status allowed maritime quarantine practices which kept several diseases out, and as previously discussed, these restrictions operated in conjunction with race-based exclusions.³⁴ Along with other "white" British settler nations in the Asia-Pacific region, New Zealand believed her borders were constantly under threat from "undesirable races" and assumed the right to ensure racial purity.³⁵ Indeed, New Zealand prided itself on obtaining a "magnificent class" of British immigrant, healthy individuals who passed rigorous medical inspections at the point of application. They also spoke good English, and were sure to assimilate successfully into British New Zealand.³⁶ Irish migrants were always subject to rigorous medical examination; they were taken aboard the ship prior to sailing and individually examined by a doctor before being allowed to proceed.³⁷

The British Government believed New Zealand occupied an immensely favourable racial position, inasmuch as it was "probably more British than the British Isles themselves".³⁸ With no appreciable "foreign admixture", and "no coloured problems", empire builders envisioned a pool of British stock which would "maintain and safeguard the Empire for centuries to come".³⁹ Amid a popular fear the colony's small European population would be overwhelmed by Asian migrants, public sentiment in New Zealand generally favoured the continued exclusion of non-British foreigners.⁴⁰ Cultural uniformity was "a source of national pride", sentiments reflected in immigration

³¹ Curson, "The Cook Islanders," 168; "Rarotongan Domestic in New Zealand".

³² John Welshman and Alison Bashford, "Tuberculosis, Migration, and Medical Examination: Lessons from History," *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* (1979-) 60, no. 4 (2006), 282.

³³ Debbie Futter-Puati, "Maki Maro: Tuberculosis in the Cook Islands: A Social History, 1896-1975" (MA Thesis, University of Auckland, 2010), 31, 43-44.

³⁴ Welshman and Bashford, 283.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.; "Magnificent Class," AS, 22 April 1926.

³⁷ Angela McCarthy, *Irish Migrants in New Zealand, 1840-1937: 'The Desired Haven'* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005), 106. The Irish were also a people colonised by Britain.

³⁸ "Magnificent Class".

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ OECD Publishing 2014, *Recruiting Immigrant Workers: New Zealand 2014*, OECD Publishing, 35, accessed September 8, 2014, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264215658-en>.

legislation which explicitly excluded groups such as the Chinese and Indian hawkers.⁴¹ Furthermore, the Immigration Act 1899 introduced a language or education test, which intending immigrants encountered at the border. Its uneven application, combined with the discretionary powers of immigration officials, meant those perceived as different from the British type might be conveniently disqualified from entry.⁴² These restrictions effectively created a “White New Zealand Policy” based on racial preferences.⁴³

The Immigration Restriction Amendment Act 1920 further strengthened the white bias and allowed officials greater power to exclude individuals.⁴⁴ Persons of non-British birth and parentage could no longer enter New Zealand without a permit. This included any “aboriginal Native or the descendant of an aboriginal Native of any dominion other than the Dominion of New Zealand or of any colony or other possession or of any protectorate of His Majesty”.⁴⁵ While proficiency in English was no longer required for entry, written applications were made deliberately difficult for “foreigners”. This provided a means of assessing individuals and rejecting those deemed racially or ethnically different. The success of these policies is evident, as prior to World War Two, 96 per cent of non-Māori New Zealanders were of British extraction. In 1945, less than one per cent of the population were classified as “race aliens” such as Chinese, Indians, and Pacific Islanders.⁴⁶ Māori were at best, “a marginalised indigenous minority by virtue of their specialised citizenship status”, and the legal position of non-British migrants varied according to their imperial or foreign origins.⁴⁷

This was the political and cultural climate into which the young Cook Island women ventured during World War Two. Given differences in treatment between British settlers, indigenes and “others” in immigration procedures, the Cook Islanders status was ambiguous at best. New Zealand law appears malleable and indeterminate in dealing with Island people moving to the Dominion and the degree of scrutiny imposed

⁴¹ Tom Brooking and Roberto Rabel, “Neither British nor Polynesian,” in *Immigration and National Identity in New Zealand*, ed. Stewart W. Greif (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1995), 36; Jacqueline Leckie, “Silent Immigrants: Gender, Immigration and Ethnicity in New Zealand,” in *Immigration and National Identity in New Zealand*, ed. Stewart W. Greif (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1995), 54.

⁴² Brooking and Rabel, 26-28.

⁴³ OECD, 34-35.

⁴⁴ Leckie, 54.

⁴⁵ Immigration Restriction Amendment Act, No. 23, *New Zealand Statutes*, 1920, 78-83.

⁴⁶ Brooking and Rabel, 36, 34; Colleen Ward and En-Yi Ling, “Immigration, Acculturation and National Identity in New Zealand,” in *New Zealand Identities: Departures and Destinations*, ed. Tracey McIntosh, James H Liu, Tim McCreanor, and Teresia Teaiwa (Wellington, N.Z.: Victoria University Press, 2005), 155.

⁴⁷ David Pearson, “Citizenship, Identity and Belonging: Addressing the Mythologies of the Unitary Nation State in Aotearoa/New Zealand,” in *New Zealand Identities: Departures and Destinations*, ed. Tracey McIntosh, James H Liu, Tim McCreanor, and Teresia Teaiwa (Wellington, N.Z.: Victoria University Press, 2005), 26.

was unique to Cook Islanders. Exit permit requirements and medical checks overseen by the Resident Commissioner suggest these individuals were defined and treated as immigrants, rather than persons migrating within the bounds of New Zealand. These exclusionary practices also suggest they were not regarded as “aboriginal Natives” of the Dominion. The English language requirement could be perceived as a prerequisite for assimilation into the dominant Pakeha lifestyle, however, as I will show, permanent residence was neither considered nor encouraged, and it was generally assumed the young women would return to the Islands. I suggest there were more pragmatic reasons, such as determining the migrant’s ability to understand her employer’s instructions.

Certainly, the fear of transferring TB to New Zealand was a very real one. The Cook Islands lacked the resources and facilities to effectively treat sufferers, yet the Resident Commissioner vigilantly deterred Islanders from travelling to New Zealand sanatoriums. Ayson argued this was undesirable, given “natives do not stand a transfer from the warm climate of the Islands to the more rigorous climate of New Zealand”.⁴⁸ This contradicted medical opinion which blamed hot humid conditions in the Islands for accelerating the disease. Debbie Futter-Puati investigated the history of TB in the Cook Islands, and asked why the rights of indigenous Islanders were never discussed or asserted prior to World War Two.⁴⁹ If the Islands were indeed part of the Dominion, and the people New Zealand citizens, why were they not entitled to travel freely and enjoy unrestricted access to New Zealand, whatever their health status? Futter-Puati’s research revealed thirty-six patients who circumvented this discriminatory system to obtain treatment in New Zealand, including one of the Islands’ top teachers. She considers these inconsistencies are indicative of the colonial relationship between the two countries, and the hierarchical nature of the status of Cook Islands Maori in relation to Europeans.⁵⁰ These discriminatory practices are confirmed by the enquiries Ayson made during permit procedures; he insisted on clarifying intentions and knowing the planned place of residence, “particularly in the case of natives”.⁵¹

Ayson resented the casual nature of the Cook Island Domestic scheme and felt duty-bound to highlight potential problems. First, employers must understand the

⁴⁸ Futter-Puati, 32-34. The writer is quoting the Resident Commissioner.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 35-36.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ IT121/1/6, Part 2: Natives - Cook Island Girls for Domestic Service in New Zealand, Island Territories Department, Wellington [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwantanga, National Office, Wellington], RC to CID, 13 August 1942.

importance of easing the transition of Islanders into life and work in the alien environment of New Zealand. Knowing family commitments would call some home, and others would not adapt successfully, he insisted employers guarantee a return passage should the need arise.⁵² The young women would then be “perfectly at liberty” to return home at the employer’s expense, “regardless of whether her reason is adequate or otherwise”.⁵³ This would bring peace of mind to the families while safeguarding the Administration from having to meet these costs. The well-being of the workers was evidently important, yet Ayson appeared to harbour deeper anxieties.



Figure 8: Hugh Fraser Ayson. S P Andrew Ltd: Portrait negatives. Ref: 1/2-043532-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/23164062>.

Ayson (Figure 8) feared this short-sighted scheme might tarnish the good reputation of his office. He advised that a more noticeable presence of young Island women in New Zealand might lead to undesirable consequences. In the past, some employers paid their “girls” at below the award rate; if this practice continued, his Administration would appear party to the flouting of employment regulations. If the department was besieged with requests, he would be placed in “the unenviable position” of having to ask women to go. Should problems arise, the parents would be quick to

⁵² IT121/1/6, Part 1: RC to CID, 24 May 1941. These are similar to the basic prerequisites for the current The Recognized Seasonal Employers Scheme (RSE), New Zealand, accessed September 13, 2014. http://www.ilo.org/dyn/migpractice/migmain.showPractice?p_lang=en&p_practice_id=48.

⁵³ Ibid., RC to CID, 26 January 1942.

blame him for their troubles. Ayson considered this an unacceptable degree of responsibility to place on his shoulders during wartime, as “one never knows how the girls will behave in New Zealand”.⁵⁴ Given the limited number of suitable candidates, however, demand was soon expected to exceed supply, and the scheme would thus reach its natural limits.⁵⁵

If Hugh Ayson was considered a fly in the ointment, then William Tailby was the salve to soothe domestic ailments. As word of the scheme spread quietly through the upper stratum of New Zealand society, the pile of letters on Tailby’s desk grew accordingly. In the absence of official guidelines, he compiled his own list of “special cases” and illuminated the excellent credentials of the applicants.⁵⁶ Ayson could rest assured the young domestics were destined for the homes of important and influential persons, “very nice families” known to the Department.⁵⁷ Carl Berendsen, a senior public servant and diplomat, required a maid; he had wide experience in the Pacific and had previously administered the Cook Islands.⁵⁸ Other high-ranking Government officials who requested maids were Ernest Marsden, head of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, and Lt. Colonel Cedric Salmon of Army Headquarters, Chief to the Heads of Staff, whose wife was a daughter of former PM William Massey.⁵⁹

Salmon was also a local business magnate, and the Department was willing to assist many within his social circle. His partner in the engineering company of Cory-Wright and Salmon was another worthy recipient, and James Stellan, the foremost subdivision developer in the Wellington region, would claim two maids.⁶⁰ Tailby was eager to accommodate the wishes of Sir Ernest Davis, brewery baron and former Mayor of Auckland, a regular correspondent who would eventually procure two housemaids for each of his residences.⁶¹ Prominent medical men such as Sydney Rhind and William Simpson also featured; both were senior surgeons at Wellington Hospital and personal

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., RC to CID, 24 May 1941.

⁵⁷ Ibid., CID to RC, n.d.

⁵⁸ Ian McGibbon, “Berendsen, Carl August,” *DNZB*, Te Ara-the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, last modified June 5, 2014, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/4b25/berendsen-carl-august>.

⁵⁹ “Orange Blossoms,” *AS*, 28 February 1923; Ross Galbreath, “Marsden, Ernest,” *DNZB*, Te Ara-the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, last modified November 3, 2014, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/4m41/marsden-ernest>; Nigel Stace, “Cory-Wright, Silston,” *DNZB*, Te Ara-the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, last modified June 7, 2014, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/4c37/cory-wright-silston>.

⁶⁰ Stace; “Stellan's Mounteds,” *AS*, 24 March 1942.

⁶¹ Graham W. A. Bush, “Davis, Ernest Hyam,” *DNZB*, Te Ara-the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, last modified June 7, 2013, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/4d7/davis-ernest-hyam>.

friends of Tailby.⁶² Well-to-do farming families throughout the North Island hastily applied to hire “Rarotongan house-girls”, and private boarding schools desperately requested up to eight maids.⁶³ With no system in place to allocate workers based on genuine need, the successful applicants were hardly the most deserving cases. Within a few months, however, all were being advised of a lengthy wait.

Initially, the departure of so many Island daughters caused little concern for the Cook Island’s people, and throughout 1942, young women continued to leave “by the dozen”.⁶⁴ While inclined to be homesick and shy at first, Wellington housewives reported the young domestics were quick to learn their duties.⁶⁵ Catherine Blackley wrote to thank the Department; they were well-pleased with their housemaid and already quite fond of her.⁶⁶ Parents in the Islands shared their daughter’s progress with pride and a degree of competitiveness, and glowing reports of life in New Zealand enticed others to follow.⁶⁷ Letters home reassured families they were not forgotten and most doubted their daughters would stay away for long. Domestic service for twenty-five shillings a week in “cold and windy Wellington” was surely a poor exchange for the warmth and familiarity of their native home. Nevertheless, some suspected Island life would no longer appeal to their young women once they had experienced the modern pleasures of New Zealand society. Their homecomings were awaited with interest.⁶⁸

Some in New Zealand suggested an extension of the scheme, and in November 1941, Wilfred Goodwin, a former Director of Agriculture in the Cook group, began

⁶² Ron Easthope, Sydney Devenish Rhind, Capital and Coast District Health Board, Ministry of Health, New Zealand Government, accessed September 13, 2014, http://www.ccdhb.org.nz/hhist/staff/RhindSD_19211940A.html; Ron Easthope, William Henry Simpson, Capital and Coast District Health Board, Ministry of Health, New Zealand Government, accessed September 13, 2014, http://www.ccdhb.org.nz/hhist/staff/SimpsonWH_N.html.

⁶³ IT121/1/6, Part 2: There are numerous letters to this effect. Wellington Diocesan School, and Woodford House and Hereworth Schools in Havelock North, all applied for maids.

⁶⁴ “Rarotongans for New Zealand,” *PIM*, August 1942, 9.

⁶⁵ “Rarotongan Domestics in New Zealand,” *PIM*, February 1943, 27.

⁶⁶ IT121/1/6, Part 1: Blackley to CID, 9 June 1942.

⁶⁷ IT121/1/6, Part B: Natives-Cook Island Girls for Domestic Service in New Zealand, Island Territories Department, Wellington [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwantanga, National Office, Wellington], New Zealand Police to CID, May 1944; “Rarotongans for New Zealand.”

⁶⁸ “Rarotongans for New Zealand”; “Cook Islanders: Warning.” Limited population data exists for this period. Forty-seven per cent of the indigenous population of the Cook Islands (11,943) were female in 1936; of these, 11 per cent (624 girls) were aged between five and nineteen years. No significant overall proportional decrease of girls in this age group is evident between 1936 and 1945, but these figures do not take into account variations in gender proportions on individual islands or the large number of absent males. In 1943, the New Zealand Government had allowed the French Phosphate Company of Oceania to hire Cook Islanders to mine phosphate deposits in Makatea, and in 1945 about 485 Islanders were resident there.

promoting a larger movement of workers from the Islands.⁶⁹ Others opposed these plans, and hoped that “the social, economic and industrial balance of the Islands would not be upset by anything so absurd”.⁷⁰ They cited instances where Pacific Islanders had been removed from their homelands to supply labour in distant places, situations generally “attended with disaster by the Polynesians”.⁷¹ The Rev. Challis feared migrants would soon find New Zealand’s individualistic society incompatible with Island values.⁷² A New Zealand correspondent for the *Pacific Islands Monthly* advised young people to think very carefully before trading their tropical home for the intense cold of New Zealand. The unidentified writer considered them ill-fitted to the climate and overly susceptible to epidemics of measles or mumps.⁷³ Unless travelling for educational purposes, they “would be far better off in their own Islands, rather than become domestic servants in another country”.⁷⁴

As their young people began establishing themselves in this far-off place, this development was received with a sense of foreboding in Island communities.⁷⁵ The increasing numbers provided welcome company for the earlier arrivals and it seemed few intended to return home in the foreseeable future.⁷⁶ In reality, life in domestic service was not always as portrayed in cheerful letters home. Brought to New Zealand at the employer’s convenience, workers were required to repay the cost of their fare, regardless of whether their work situations proved satisfactory. In many instances, money for the return fare was also set aside from wages, and costs, including clothing, could total £23, or the equivalent of almost five months wages.⁷⁷ These commitments left little money for spending or sending home to family. Discrepancies between

⁶⁹ “Market Gardens,” *AS*, 21 November 1941. Goodwin believed the horticultural industry would benefit from Cook Island labour during wartime.

⁷⁰ “Labour shortages: Agents are Snooping Around Polynesia,” *PIM*, December 1941, 54; “Cook Islanders: Warning.” The latter was written by a New Zealand correspondent but the source of this opinion is not identified.

⁷¹ One such disaster ever-present in Pacific memory was the slave trade of the 1860s, when Polynesians were kidnapped and otherwise recruited to work in Peru. The social structure of many atolls was destroyed; Tongareva (or Penrhyn) lost over 80 per cent of its population. Over 6000 Polynesians were taken into slavery and only 257 survived the ordeal. The extent of this genocide is described in Harry Maude’s *Slavers in Paradise: The Peruvian Labour Trade in Polynesia, 1862-1864* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1981).

⁷² Challis, “Immigrant Polynesians,” 46; “Labour Shortages”.

⁷³ “Cook Islanders: Warning.”

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ “Cook Islanders: Warning.”

⁷⁶ “Rarotongans for New Zealand”; “Rarotongan Domesticity in New Zealand.”

⁷⁷ Sandra Coney, *Every Girl: A Social History of Women and the YWCA in Auckland 1885-1985* (Auckland N.Z.: Auckland YWCA, 1986), 219-220.

employers also suggest deceitful practices on the part of some.⁷⁸

Officials were careful to report a wage rate of twenty-five shillings, the legal minimum, but in reality, all these matters were determined at the employer's discretion.⁷⁹ Most young women believed they were legally bonded until the debt was extinguished and until that time they had forfeited rights of mobility.⁸⁰ One domestic was led to believe she was employed under New Zealand's wartime Man-power regulations, and would be sent home if the terms were breached, however, there is no evidence to suggest this was the case.⁸¹ Most recruits did remain with their original employer until the fare was repaid, but some found these conditions unbearable and ran off. A more personalised account of their experiences is given in chapter four.

Many countries have relied on imported labour for domestic service and this role is often filled by ethnic minority groups. These migrants are generally excluded from more attractive employment and often form an underclass of workers based on race.⁸² While this had not previously been the case in New Zealand, there was a view at the time that the Cook Island house-girl had assumed this role.⁸³ European women hired through imported labour schemes were often subject to binding contracts, but these conditions were seldom used to enforce a term of service, and there were few repercussions if they left prearranged employment.⁸⁴ According to New Zealand historian Charlotte Macdonald, this free will and right of mobility were "the principal elements of power" for domestic servants who entered the unknown environment of a stranger's home.⁸⁵

The isolated nature of the women's employment troubled some observers. An article in the *Pacific Islands Monthly* suggested "a system of indenture" was in place, and asked whether this was "really in the interest of the natives".⁸⁶ The Young Women's

⁷⁸ IT121/1/6, Part 5: Natives-Cook Island Girls for Domestic Service in New Zealand, Island Territories Department, Wellington [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwantanga, National Office, Wellington], Confidential; Dick Scott, *Years of the Pooh-Bah: A Cook Islands History* (Rarotonga; Auckland, N.Z.: CITC; Hodder and Stoughton, 1991), 227.

⁷⁹ IT121/1/6, Part 3: CID to indecipherable, 6 March 1943.

⁸⁰ Robert L. Challis, *Social Problems of Non-Maori Polynesians in New Zealand* (Noumea, New Caledonia: South Pacific Commission), 1953, 12; Jeffrey Sissons, "Siteless Ethnography: Possibilities and Limits," *Social Analysis* 43, no. 2 (1999): 91.

⁸¹ Teupoko I. Morgan, *Cook Islands Women Pioneers: Early Experiences in Aotearoa-New Zealand = Vainetini Kuki Airani* (Tokoroa, N.Z.: Anau Ako Pasifika, 2001), 1.

⁸² Rosie Cox, *The Servant Problem: Domestic Employment in a Global Economy* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 16.

⁸³ "Will Island Girls Be Made Bond Slaves?" n.d., enclosure in IT102/3/1, Part 1, Ordinance - Makea Nui Takau Ariki; Mrs Love, Island Territories Department, Wellington [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwantanga, National Office, Wellington].

⁸⁴ Macdonald, 55.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ "Cook Islanders: Warning Against New Zealand Attraction", *PIM*, December, 1942, 27.

Christian Association (YWCA) traditionally assumed a maternal role in supporting single migrant women in New Zealand, and members also assisted the young Cook Island migrants.⁸⁷ They considered them appallingly vulnerable, the most “helpless” ever dealt with. Their “indefinite bonding and lack of job choice” was considered unacceptable, and members were deeply concerned that such young “girls” should be isolated and bound in domestic service.⁸⁸ In 1942, Wellington Branch members contacted a number of young Rarotongan women living in the city and formed a new club known as Teare Maori.⁸⁹ The Auckland Branch recognised a similar need, and in March 1943, placed notices in a local newspaper, to inform the women and their employers of a planned “Island Girls’ Club”.⁹⁰ Employers were encouraged to allow their workers an afternoon off to attend social gatherings, but in reality, the YWCA thoroughly disapproved of the domestics scheme.⁹¹

Suggestions of indenture may seem excessive given the terms of employment appear to favour the employee. Young women were not coerced into this role; on the contrary, most felt privileged to be chosen for this employment. Although demand was high, government officials were unwilling to exert any pressure to increase the numbers. These terms therefore bear no resemblance to those applied to Pacific Island workers in the disreputable labour trade of the 19th and early 20th centuries. There were no official or binding contracts, and in spite of implications to the contrary, no penalties were legally enforceable if employment was abandoned. However, it is evident that the inherent understanding of colonial power relationships, as projected by Island officials, was effectively extended to New Zealand, where control was assumed and willingly accepted by the majority of young domestics.

Not all the wartime migrants remained compliant colonial subjects in this exciting and promising new environment. By late 1941, a number of the earlier arrivals had moved to more lucrative and congenial work in factories and hospitals. They considered their obligations discharged and few assumed any compulsion to return home. With no perceived barriers to settling in New Zealand, they embraced

⁸⁷ Katie Pickles, “Empire Settlement and Single British Women as New Zealand Domestic Servants during the 1920s,” *New Zealand Journal of History*, 35, no. 1 (2001): 34.

⁸⁸ Coney, 219-220. As Ayson’s vigilance was increasingly impeded by illness, girls as young as thirteen slipped through the selection process.

⁸⁹ 36th Annual Report of the Young Women’s Christian Association, Wellington, August 1942, MS-Papers-5232-2, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. The YWCA had operated an International Club in the city for four years.

⁹⁰ “Domestics Wanted,” *AS*, 4 March 1943; “Island Girls’ Club,” *AS*, 29 March 1943.

⁹¹ Coney, 219-220.

independent city lifestyles and shared the amenities and recreations enjoyed by all young New Zealand women.⁹² Ayson was deeply concerned his absent “natives” were moving beyond his control. He warned Tailby that any hold over the migrants would be lost once they left domestic employment and this movement was sure to unsettle others.⁹³ Tailby agreed that independence was not necessarily “to their advantage” and strongly discouraged the trend.⁹⁴

Official anxieties appeared justified when Ayson heard disquieting rumours of misconduct in 1942. He was alerted to “a house of ill-repute” in Auckland, where two Cook Island women were allegedly capitalizing on the susceptibilities of younger and less sophisticated migrants. Ayson feared some requests for domestics might be for this or similar houses, and workers now leaving the safety of domestic employment might find themselves “in similar degrading circumstances”.⁹⁵ He requested police investigate the address in question. No signs of illegal activity were detected, and as no complaints had been received about the behaviour of Cook Island women, New Zealand police harboured no concerns for the moral well-being of women proceeding from the Islands. The owner of the home in question, who had lived in Auckland since 1938, believed at least sixty Island women had taken up domestic work in the city. About half remained in this employment, while others had “drifted into other avenues of honest work”.⁹⁶

Police were happy to notify the satisfactory outcome of their enquiries, but this positive report did little to allay the fears of the official chaperones. From June 1942, administrative unease was magnified by the arrival of thousands of American troops who were stationed throughout the North Island. Officials believed vulnerable Island women were at higher risk in cities full of servicemen, and this situation “might not lead to ultimate good”.⁹⁷ As the CID scrambled to monitor women at large, other Government agencies continued to become involved in their welfare. The apparent “unrest of native girls” soon came to the attention of Man-power authorities charged with directing the wartime labour force. They believed conditions for those engaged in industry were “not entirely satisfactory”, and the freedoms gained on leaving domestic service

⁹² Challis, *Social Problems*, 12. Sissons, "Siteless Ethnography," 91.

⁹³ IT121/1/6, Part 1: RC to CID, 26 January 1942.

⁹⁴ IT121/1/6, Part 3: CID to Davis, 22 December 1942.

⁹⁵ IT121/1/6, Part 2: RC to CID, 13 August 1942.

⁹⁶ IT121/1/6, Part 3: New Zealand Police to CID, 6 October 1942.

⁹⁷ IT121/1/6, Part 5: Dept. of Island Territories (hereinafter DIT) to Minister of Internal Affairs, 9 July 1945, Confidential. This was written retrospectively by Cyril McKay, Secretary of the CID, to explain earlier details of the scheme to Peter Fraser. Record keeping was inconsistent throughout, and some documents had been transferred to other files. No records exist for the period 31 March 1943 to 3 July 1944.

compromised their moral safety. Several were already pregnant and it was clearly time to return them all home.⁹⁸ As a matter of policy, Man-power authorities refused to assist Island women moving to self-obtained employment and advised them instead to return to their former employer. Failing this, they were told to obtain other domestic employment through the CID, or to “return forthwith to Rarotonga”.⁹⁹

The unsympathetic and moralistic attitude of the CID did not always find favour with other agencies. By August 1942, in light of ongoing rumours, and “persistent local complaints”, Ayson was proposing to limit the number leaving.¹⁰⁰ Meanwhile, New Zealand officials attempted to gather evidence against their wayward charges. Given the perceived misdemeanours were moral rather than legal ones, police were not entirely comfortable when asked to investigate pregnant Island women, and were hesitant to apply any pressure on behalf the Department to persuade them to return home.¹⁰¹ Child Welfare Officers sent to assess the living situations of young mothers were equally reluctant; some interpreted these moves as harassment, and one Māori social worker strongly protested to the Department that women who had been sent for should be treated in this way.¹⁰²

With mounting criticism on various fronts, the CID was not alone in favouring the repatriation of young Island women.irate former employers insisted domestics who had absconded should be returned home as punishment. Even some with a more sympathetic interest believed they were increasingly at risk, and unless a welfare officer was appointed to look after their interests, they must be sent home.¹⁰³ Island communities now lamented the loss of so many marriageable young women, and Ayson too was confronted with growing discontent.¹⁰⁴ By late 1942, amid fears of a “moral disaster” in New Zealand and a social catastrophe in the Islands, it was decided the

⁹⁸ IT121/1/6, Part 5: National Service Department to DIT, n.d.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ IT121/1/6, Part 2: CID to RC, 5 October 1942, and RC to CID, 13 August 1942.

¹⁰¹ IT121/1/6, Parts 5 and C: Confidential.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ IT121/1/6, Part 5: DIT to PM Peter Fraser, n.d., July 1945 and National Service Department to DIT, n.d. These facts emerged as McKay reviewed the entire scheme in 1945.

¹⁰⁴ IT121/1/6, Part 2: CID to RC, 5 October 1942. Norma McArthur considered the decline in rate of increase of the Cook Island’s population from 1936 clearly attributable to emigration, a movement perhaps more extensive than indicated by annual statistics. In analysing changes of sex ratio and age structures within the islands, McArthur believed patterns of mortality and fertility were also influential, however, as many islands were too small for individual analysis, only the population of Rarotonga was examined alone. These results are also potentially skewed by mobility within the group. Norma McArthur, *Island Populations of the South Pacific* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1967), 205-208, 211.

scheme should be suspended until the entire situation could be reviewed.¹⁰⁵

In January 1943, the Labour government received some bad publicity relating to the scheme.¹⁰⁶ Officials were accused of endeavouring to make “bond slaves” of Island “girls”, who were allegedly subjected to “never-ending hours of work” and unregulated wages.¹⁰⁷ Due to frequent complaints from employers, and fears the women were leaving “to better themselves”, officials were apparently “toying with the idea of bringing down regulations” to force them to remain in domestic service. This would deprive women of “any chance of benefiting themselves by seeking other avenues of employment”; “[it] cannot be conceived”, wrote the unidentified accuser, “that any Labour Party ministry would allow anything of that nature to be perpetuated under its regime”.¹⁰⁸

In May 1943, the Islands’ administration underwent organisational changes. The CID came under the umbrella of the newly-established Department of Island Territories (DIT), and PM Peter Fraser assumed responsibility for this portfolio. Taking account of all the circumstances, Fraser decided to discontinue the scheme and place an indefinite prohibition on Cook Islanders leaving to engage in domestic or other work in New Zealand.¹⁰⁹ If not for a newspaper article bringing the matter to public attention, the average New Zealander may have remained unaware of the scheme’s existence.¹¹⁰ Citing adverse social and economic conditions in the Islands, the article advised that the CID was no longer accepting applications for domestic servants from that source. This decision ended the “influx of domestics from Rarotonga”, but brought no closure for the DIT.¹¹¹

Fraser seemed disinclined to accept the matter was concluded unless those considered troublesome could be returned home by the department. In 1944, his efforts continued, and several potential discrepancies were identified in legislation. Fraser believed these potentially cast doubt on the Cook Islanders’ rights to New Zealand citizenship, technicalities which might provide a solution to the problem of Island women remaining against official wishes.¹¹² At this time, Fraser had limited experience

¹⁰⁵ IT121/1/6, Part 2: RC to CID, 13 August 1942, and CID to RC, 5 October 42; IT121/1/6, Part 5: McKay to Minister of Islands Territories, 9 July 45.

¹⁰⁶ “Will Island Girls Be Made Bond Slaves?” This newspaper article is not sourced or fully dated, but the content and place of insertion in the file suggests these allegations were made in January 1943.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ IT121/1/6, Part 5: DIT to Minister of Islands Territories, 9 July 1945.

¹¹⁰ “Island Domestics,” AS, 20 April 1943.

¹¹¹ IT121/1/6, Part 3: CID to RC, 22 January 1943.

¹¹² IT121/1/6, Part 5: DIT to RC, 28 July 1944.

of Pacific matters, and in December 1942, the DIT sought a Crown Law opinion regarding intentions to repatriate, preferably under the terms of the return fare guarantee.¹¹³ The Crown Solicitor's ruling on the matter not only excluded this course of action, but firmly warned against the sentiments behind it. The return fare guarantee was not legally binding, and more importantly, permanent residence had been granted on entry to New Zealand.¹¹⁴ The Department was reminded that "the persons in question are not only British subjects, they are also citizens of New Zealand", therefore sending them home would be an "interference with the direct liberties of the subject". Furthermore, the Cook Islands were an integral part of the Dominion which did not "enjoy representation in Parliament". For this reason, the Courts of Justice could be expected to be "particularly vigilant in the protection of their civil rights".¹¹⁵

Throughout this period, Ayson's health was in steady decline. By late 1943, he was virtually crippled and forced to retire, and his position in Rarotonga was filled by William Tailby.¹¹⁶ The new secretary in Wellington was Cyril McKay, an administrator with extensive experience in the Pacific.¹¹⁷ For several years, the new Department continued to be inundated by applications for domestics. The existing conditions were repeatedly explained; the Minister had decided "the number of young Cook Island women working in New Zealand was enough", and only those travelling to attend school or join relatives, "for purely family reasons", would now be issued with exit permits.¹¹⁸ McKay also fielded letters from disgruntled former employers who still insisted the department exercise control over the women. Again he patiently reiterated the legal position. The Cook Islands were part of New Zealand and the DIT had very little authority, indeed, "Cook Islanders expect to be treated in every respect as New Zealanders".¹¹⁹

McKay was driven to find a more intelligent way of dealing with the situation. In

¹¹³ IT121/1/6, Confidential: Crown Solicitor to CID, 7 December 1942. Disclosing the name of this file would disclose the identity of the young woman involved.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. The return fare guarantee was a contentious issue. There was no standard format and employers were merely asked to write and sign a letter stating their agreement. No legal advice was sought prior the instigation of the "Cook Island Domestics" scheme. Oversights such as these further reinforce the ad hoc nature of the undertaking. A number of employers whose girls left them demanded a release from this contract and questioned their ongoing liability. A Crown Law opinion was required to settle these issues.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ "Cook Islands," AS, 15 December 1943; R.H. Garity, Report on a Visit to Rarotonga, 6 August 1943, Entry 44463, Box 70, RG 338, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), College Park, USA.

¹¹⁷ IT121/1/6, Part 5: DIT to Hunter, 17 July 44. Cyril McKay had served twenty-four years as a New Zealand administrator in Western Samoa, the latter eleven as Secretary of Native Affairs. In 1948 he was appointed New Zealand's first representative on the South Pacific Commission and later wrote about his experiences in *Samoa: A Personal Story of the Samoan Islands* (Wellington: A H and A W Reed, 1968).

¹¹⁸ IT121/1/6, Part 5: DIT to confidential, 4 April 1945.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., DIT to confidential, 17 July 44, and other similar letters.

July 1944, he began to assess the actual extent of problems induced by the scheme.¹²⁰ Records were limited to several files of correspondence and it was necessary to gather updated information on the women's current situations. A circular letter was sent out to employers, and where possible this was forwarded to women no longer in their employ.¹²¹ These enquiries found almost half still resident with their original employers, but in interpreting the remaining data, McKay and Fraser reached two very different conclusions. Fraser assumed an "unsatisfactory wastage" of twenty-one women out of 100, with a serious proportion having suffered from "moral delinquency". He expected this situation to "deteriorate with the passage of time".¹²² Island leaders should persuade the women to return home, as this would be "a move in the right direction".¹²³ The *ariki*, many of whom met in their respective councils, agreed with this suggestion, however, they wished be fully advised of problem cases before any official action was taken. Parents might then be encouraged to write to their daughters and ask them to come home, thereby sparing families the disgrace of a forced return.¹²⁴

With growing perceptions of a gender imbalance, many Islanders now wished the women to return. Nevertheless, they also resented their young people being treated differently from other New Zealanders.¹²⁵ Fraser evidently expected the Island councils to support his decision to return the women, but some were unwilling to comply. Most women had acquitted themselves well and some believed the alleged misdemeanours were exaggerated.¹²⁶ Some employers also feared for their lost opportunities. One of the earliest arrivals was employed by Carl Berendsen; she was now training as a nurse and he objected to her forced return.¹²⁷ As negotiations continued, an indefinite suspension on the movement of Cook Islanders was increasingly interpreted as an injustice to worthy individuals wishing to travel to New Zealand for broader experience.¹²⁸

McKay felt obliged to draw Fraser's attention to the many inconsistencies of the situation. The government had already drawn criticism for encouraging Cook Islanders to work under indenture conditions mining phosphate in Makatea, while prohibiting even one from coming to New Zealand.¹²⁹ In contrast, Niueans travelled to and from

¹²⁰ Ibid., DIT to confidential.

¹²¹ Ibid., 18 July 1944.

¹²² Ibid., RC to DIT, 28 July 1944, and DIT to Crown Solicitor, 23 August 1944.

¹²³ Ibid., DIT to RC, 27 September, 1944.

¹²⁴ Ibid., RC to DIT, 19 August 1944.

¹²⁵ Ibid., DIT to PM Peter Fraser, n.d.

¹²⁶ Ibid., RC to DIT, 19 August 1944.

¹²⁷ Ibid., RC to DIT, 28 July 1944, and "Wellington – Rarotongan Girls," n.d.

¹²⁸ Ibid., RC to DIT, 28 July 1944.

¹²⁹ Ibid., DIT to RC, 28 July 1944. This employment scheme is discussed in the following chapter.

New Zealand without restraint and a change was now in process to allow similar access for Western Samoans.¹³⁰ McKay believed a groundswell of opinion was developing against New Zealand policies that treated its Island peoples as foreigners. Should this criticism be made public, the government would find itself in a weak and indefensible position. He advised against any further discriminatory practices.¹³¹

Fraser was unmoved by this advice and resolved instead to enact legislation to repatriate those women causing concern. He asserted the need to safeguard their welfare, and reasoned they would suffer less future trouble if returned to Island life.¹³² The Crown Solicitor's second response was even sharper and more succinct. He reminded again of the Cook Islands' status as part of New Zealand; to expatriate a British subject from the North Island to Rarotonga was "no more lawful than to expatriate him from the South Island to Stewart Island". An amendment to the Cook Islands Act would be required if the Government was serious in this intent.¹³³

Interestingly, this was not the first such ruling by Ernest Currie, the Crown Solicitor, in regard to the status of Cook Islanders in New Zealand. In 1925, while visiting friends in Rarotonga, Margaret Davis of Wellington engaged a fifteen year old as a nursemaid and house-girl. She was also entrusted with the care of an eleven year boy, whose parents wished him to further his education in New Zealand. Ayson was reluctant to allow the children to leave Rarotonga under private arrangement, and on the basis of information received regarding their care, soon insisted they be returned.¹³⁴ As a matter of policy, the education department monitored and reported on the progress and behaviour of Cook Island scholarship pupils in New Zealand, and Ayson requested similar surveillance measures for the children in Davis's care.¹³⁵ He also asked the Child Welfare Department to investigate, and when an officer visited the Davis home, the housemaid was found to be alone. Reportedly, this situation posed "a considerable amount of danger to a young native girl".¹³⁶

Ayson may have held sway in the Islands, but in the highly regulated Dominion of

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid., DIT to RC, 28 July 1944.

¹³² Ibid., DIT to Crown Solicitor, 23 August 44,

¹³³ Ibid., DIT to Ministry of Island Territories, n.d.

¹³⁴ IT121/1/5, Part 1: Natives-Rarotongan Children in the care of Mrs M. Davies [sic], Island Territories Department, Wellington [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwantanga, National Office, Wellington], Davis to Minister for the Cook Islands, 5 July 1926. The Rev. H. Bond James, LMS missionary in the Islands, provided Ayson with an unfavourable report of the children's supervision. Mrs. Davis's uncle shared these concerns relating to their welfare.

¹³⁵ Ibid., CID to Assistant Director of Education, 18 May 1926.

¹³⁶ Ibid., Education Dept. to Child Welfare Dept., 30 May 1926.

New Zealand, no one authority could immediately direct the children home. Hindered by bureaucratic process, Ayson meanwhile continued to exert his customary influence in Rarotonga. He informed the children's parents of their impending return, and refused a travel permit for the boy's older sister to join him in Wellington. Bebe had intended to work part-time while studying music, with a view to returning to teach in the Islands. Ayson put paid to these plans, on the grounds that Bebe had recently started work as a probationer nurse in the Rarotonga dental clinic. He decided that it was in her best interests to stay there.¹³⁷

Incensed by this interference, Margaret Davis protested directly to Maui Pomare, then Minister of the Cook Islands. While "only too ready to accept advice and co-operation from anyone really interested in Rarotonga", she deeply resented Ayson's "scandalous" methods. She insisted that Pomare immediately modify Ayson's "action among the Maories [sic] in this matter".¹³⁸ Island administrators feared Davis would contest and publically disclose any efforts to remove the children, and requested a Crown Law opinion to clarify their authority to implement this plan.¹³⁹ In reply, the Crown Solicitor stated:

So far as I am aware, no such power exists. The powers of the Cook Islands administration over Cook Island natives under the Cook Islands Act 1915 appear to extend to them only while in the Cook Islands. Politically, Rarotonga is a part of New Zealand and Rarotongans in New Zealand have the ordinary rights of British subjects. Their liberty can only be interfered with by due process of law.¹⁴⁰

Concerns for the children's welfare were possibly justified in this instance, and these events demonstrate how officials exercised a duty of care over young Islanders living in New Zealand. However, this case does reveal several disturbing aspects relative to my argument. This situation amply demonstrates the degree of authority invested in the Resident Commissioner, and his assumed right to convey an outcome devoid of any basis in law or truth. The parents were fully satisfied with the care provided by Davis, yet Ayson assumed the right to disregard their wishes, even taking the liberty of informing them the children were about to be returned. He considered it within his

¹³⁷ Ibid., Ayson to CID, 27 September, 1926.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 5 July 1926; Davis to Minister for the Cook Islands, 20 August 1926.

¹³⁹ Ibid., CID to Crown Solicitor, 8 July 1927.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., Crown Solicitor to CID, 16 July 1927.

rights to determine their future prospects and to influence the parents accordingly. In doing so, he assumed a legal authority which simply did not exist, at least not in New Zealand. One refreshing aspect of this case is the challenge issued by Margaret Davis in the face of imperial injustice.¹⁴¹

Returning to 1945 and the wartime scenario, Cook Islanders were becoming much less accepting of New Zealand's dominance over their lives. War had reached the islands in the form of US garrisons established on Aitutaki and Penrhyn in November 1942. In the following chapter, I discuss the rapid social changes which took place during this friendly invasion.¹⁴² Both at home and in Auckland, the people were becoming increasingly politicised by trade union activity and were vociferous in demanding their rights.¹⁴³ When elected in 1935, New Zealand's first Labour Government had promised to assist their island dependency, and by now many were impatient for progress.¹⁴⁴ Following complaints over Makatea, some Cook Island men were allowed into New Zealand, but a quota was still under discussion, and rights of entry remained a highly-contentious issue.¹⁴⁵ Once again, McKay advised moderation, to keep these matters from public attention. By his estimate, out of approximately 100 young women originally brought to New Zealand under the scheme, the total number of "failures" at the change of conditions was perhaps only eight. He argued that some of these lapses would surely have occurred had they remained in Rarotonga. Only three were deemed in need of repatriation, so did the Minister really believe an Act of Parliament was justified?¹⁴⁶

Fraser's response to these issues appears very much at odds with popular perceptions of his attitude toward Pacific peoples. To provide at least some understanding of this stance, it is necessary to digress from the political realm to the wartime environment of Wellington, where charitable events and social undercurrents may offer some enlightenment. Peter and Janet Fraser were held in high regard by New

¹⁴¹ Margaret Davis took a brave stand given gender attitudes at that time. She was only twenty-four years of age, separated from her husband, and in paid employment. In the absence of a male head of household Ayson refused to release the children into her care unless her father assumed overall responsibility for their welfare.

¹⁴² For further details of social conditions in the Cook Islands during World War Two, see Rosemary Anderson, "Marike koe: The American Children of the Cook Islands", in *Mothers' Darlings of the South Pacific*, ed. Judith A. Bennett and Angela Wanhalla (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, forthcoming).

¹⁴³ Richard Gilson, *The Cook Islands, 1820-1950*, edited by R. G. Crocombe (Wellington, N.Z.: Victoria University Press in association with the Institute of Pacific Studies of the University of the South Pacific, 1980), 192-195. I expand on these events in chapter four.

¹⁴⁴ Scott, 207.

¹⁴⁵ IT121/1/6, Part 5: DIT to MIT, 9 July 1945.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., DIT to MIT, n.d.

Zealand Māori and well known for their sympathies and practical support.¹⁴⁷ Janet was widely recognised for her unstinting welfare efforts, activities which brought her into contact with Takau Love, the daughter of Cook Island leader Makea Nui Tinirau.¹⁴⁸ This acquaintance may have been significant in providing Fraser with additional information about Island domestics in New Zealand.

Born in Rarotonga in 1904, Takau (Margaret) Tinirau spent many of her early years in New Zealand.¹⁴⁹ In 1928, she married Eruera Te Whiti o Rongomai (Tiwi) Love, who belonged to a prominent Māori family at Petone.¹⁵⁰ She embraced Māori culture and was “proud to call herself an adopted daughter of the race”.¹⁵¹ Her welfare activities followed in the proud tradition of her husband’s family, and her former guardian, the “socially unassailable” Lady Miria Pomare, wife of Maui Pomare, was undoubtedly a fine example and mentor.¹⁵² Takau continued to promote her own culture and became something of an ambassador for the Cook Islands. As a popular guest speaker at local functions and events, she often shared aspects of island life, and following the death of her father was referred to locally as the “Queen of Rarotonga”.¹⁵³ During World War Two, her husband served overseas with the 28th Māori Battalion and was promoted to become its first Māori Commander. Meanwhile, Takau was actively engaged in patriotic work and fundraising, tasks she continued even after Tiwi was killed in action at El Alamein.¹⁵⁴

The paths of Janet Fraser and Takau Love appear to have crossed on a regular

¹⁴⁷ James Thorn, *Peter Fraser: New Zealand's Wartime Prime Minister* (London: Odhams Press, 1952), 243-244.

¹⁴⁸ Michael Bassett and Michael King, *Tomorrow Comes the Song: A Life of Peter Fraser* (Auckland, N.Z.: Penguin, 2000), 107; “Mrs. Fraser's Gesture,” *AS*, 24 April 1941; “To Bid Farewell,” *AS*, 22 September, 1941; “A Rarotongan Air,” *AS*, 13 March 1941; “Maori Mourning,” *AS*, 8 March 1945.

¹⁴⁹ Takau was known variously as Mrs Tiwi Love, Takau Rio Love, and Makea Takau Ariki.

¹⁵⁰ Tiwi Love studied law at Victoria University College and became an interpreter with the Native Land Court.

¹⁵¹ “Hutt Valley News,” *AS*, 22 February 1937.

¹⁵² M. P. K. Sorrenson, ed. *Na to Hoa Aroha = from Your Dear Friend: The Correspondence between Sir Apirana Ngata and Sir Peter Buck*, Vol 1, 1930-32 (Auckland, N.Z.: Auckland University Press, 1986), Buck to Ngata, 12 March 1928, 73; Miria Louise Woodbine Pomare, “Pomare, Mildred Amelia Woodbine,” *DNZB*, Te Ara-the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, last modified January 8, 2014, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/4p16/pomare-mildred-amelia-woodbine>; Agnes Broughton and Patricia Grace, *The Silent Migration: Ngati Pōneke Young Maōri Club 1937-1948: Stories of Urban Migration* (Wellington, N.Z.: Huia Publishers, 2001), 2, 90, 116; Angela Ballara, “Love, Ripeka Wharawhara,” *DNZB*, Te Ara-the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, last modified October 30, 2012, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/3114/love-ripeka-wharawhara>.

¹⁵³ “Rarotonga's Queen,” *AS*, 10 July 1940; “Rarotongan Queen Gives Talk,” *AS*, 6 September 1940. Succession to the title was challenged and several years elapsed before an outcome was declared. The final decision rested with Ayson.

¹⁵⁴ Susan Love De Miguel, “Love, Eruera Te Whiti o Rongomai,” *DNZB*, Te Ara-the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, last modified October 30, 2012, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/5117/love-eruera-te-whiti-o-rongomai>.

basis and it seems reasonable to assume an acquaintance. Takau's friends and family, including Lady Pomare and her in-laws, Ripeka and Hapi Love, were closely associated with the Ngati Poneke Maori Association in Wellington.¹⁵⁵ Ngati Poneke is an honorific term for the urban iwi of the Wellington area, Māori from various tribes who joined to share social, cultural and sporting events from the late 1930s.¹⁵⁶ Interested Pakeha also took an active part, and Janet Fraser was an acknowledged leader within the association.¹⁵⁷ She organised numerous charity functions where Takau was present and vice versa. The proceeds of these events usually supported Māori missions or provided treats for Māori and Cook Island soldiers serving overseas.¹⁵⁸ In 1941, Janet paid a personal tribute to Takau for her valuable contribution to the Women's War Service Auxiliary.¹⁵⁹

Many young Cook Island women living in Wellington supported Takau's patriotic work, performing at fundraising concerts and entertaining the American troops (Figure 9).¹⁶⁰ They also joined in social activities at the Ngati Poneke Young Maori Club, attending dances and other functions there.¹⁶¹ Takau took a personal interest in the women's welfare and offered protection and guidance where possible.¹⁶² When issues arose, it is possible she discussed her concerns with Janet Fraser. Janet assisted her husband by researching current issues and passing on her findings, a "behind the scenes" contribution that afforded the PM a better understanding of the problems confronting New Zealanders.¹⁶³ Janet would be aware that once the American soldiers began flooding into the cities, Māori committees were making every endeavour to induce their young women to leave and return to their homes, "for their own good".¹⁶⁴ Peter Fraser admittedly had limited experience of Polynesian affairs at this time, but through his wife and other acquaintances, he may have heard some of the less positive

¹⁵⁵ "Maori Mourning".

¹⁵⁶ Joan Metge, *Rautahi: The Maoris of New Zealand* (1967; reprint, London: Routledge, 2004), 241; H.M. Mead and S.M. Mead, *Tikanga Māori: Living by Māori Values* (Wellington, N.Z: Huia, 2003), 225. "Poneke" is the Māori language name for Wellington, derived from "Port Nicholson". Local newspapers show "Poneke" competing in a range of sports in the city from the late 1930s.

¹⁵⁷ "Maori Mourning".

¹⁵⁸ Broughton and Grace, 55; "Carnival News," *AS*, 2 May 1941; "A Rarotongan Air," *AS*, 13 March 1941; "Farewell Parties," *AS*, 19 September 1941; "For Women, Mrs. Rio Love," *AS*, 26 January 1943. Some Cook Island men enlisted in New Zealand with the 28th Māori Battalion.

¹⁵⁹ "Farewell Parties".

¹⁶⁰ "Rarotongan Leader in War Work," *PIM*, March, 1943, 9. The personal experiences of the young women feature in the following chapter.

¹⁶¹ Rangi Glennon, pers. comm., 8 Aug, 2012.

¹⁶² IT121/1/6, Part 5: Lady Superintendent, Napier Hospital to CID, 8 June 45.

¹⁶³ Thorn, 67.

¹⁶⁴ IT121/1/6, Part 5: RC to DIT, 11 July 1945.

consequences of the Cook Island Domestics scheme.¹⁶⁵



Figure 9: Cook Islanders entertain the American troops, Wellington, c. 1943. Private collection of Grace Hutton

In 1942, Makea Takau Love returned to the Islands to take up her inherited duties as *ariki*. She now believed Island women in New Zealand were becoming “a continual source of trouble to all concerned in their well-being”, and favoured their return. This view was shared by the Island Council of Rarotonga, the prime decision-making body. Island leaders preferred to face a charge of bureaucracy rather than one of neglecting their young people’s welfare.¹⁶⁶ It is possible Takau conveyed these sentiments directly to the Frasers, as she certainly showed no hesitation in contacting the PM to discuss other welfare issues relating to the Cook Islands’ people.¹⁶⁷

William Tailby also had an extensive personal involvement with the Cook Islands.¹⁶⁸ His sister-in-law was married to Robert McKegg, owner of the dominant Cook Islands Trading Company, and Tailby was a book-keeper for that firm in Rarotonga for a

¹⁶⁵ Bassett, 282. Peter Fraser had both personal and political connections with another scheme bringing domestics to New Zealand. Between 1908 and 1938, young Anglo-Indian women arrived from Dr Graham’s Homes in Kalimpong, India, and as devout Presbyterians, Janet and Peter Fraser supported the efforts of Scottish Presbyterian missionary, Rev. Dr John Graham, in placing migrants for settlement. Janet served on a local committee dedicated to their welfare, and personally assisted at least one young woman to resolve employment issues while in domestic service. Jane McCabe examines this migration scheme in “Kalimpong Kids: The Lives and Labours of Anglo-Indian Adolescents Resettled in New Zealand between 1908 and 1938,” PhD thesis, University of Otago, 2014.

¹⁶⁶ IT121/1/6, Part 5: RC to DIT, 16 Aug 44, and RC to DIT, 11 July 1945.

¹⁶⁷ IT102/3/1, Part 1: RC to CID, 14 June 1943, and Makea Nui Takau Ariki to PM Peter Fraser, May 27, 1943.

¹⁶⁸ According to Scott, Tailby was a very unpopular Resident Commissioner between 1943 and 1951.

time.¹⁶⁹ He then served the Islands administration as both treasurer and collector of customs.¹⁷⁰ His wife Effie was “keenly interested in native welfare” during her time there and was well respected for her caring attitude toward invalids at the local hospital.¹⁷¹ She was also a popular Commissioner of Girl Guides, a movement she believed gave Island girls “an interest in their otherwise uneventful lives”.¹⁷²

In 1938, William was posted to Wellington as secretary of the CID, and the Tailbys also attended many patriotic functions and fundraising events during wartime.¹⁷³ It is known that Effie assisted at least one of her former Girl Guides, Caroline Marsters, to find domestic work in the city.¹⁷⁴ The Tailby family appear to have taken an active interest in the Island domestics and would invite a number to their home at weekends. Here the women relaxed with their guitars and ukuleles and enjoyed dancing and singing together. In time, they brought their boyfriends along, including young American servicemen.¹⁷⁵ If the Tailbys harboured concerns for their moral well-being, these may have been on the agenda when William “placed the whole question” of Island domestics before the PM in late 1942.¹⁷⁶

In light of these contacts, it seems reasonable to suggest that Peter Fraser’s hard-line stance may have been influenced by associations and intelligence both humanitarian and political. In addition to concerns over moral well-being, Fraser may have been made aware of instances of exploitation by employers. Finding an acceptable solution was increasingly challenging however, as political discontent and agitation continued to draw attention to the problems. An indefinite prohibition on Cook Islanders coming to New Zealand now seemed untenable; notwithstanding, the DIT and Island Council believed some restrictions were still required.¹⁷⁷ As long as manpower

¹⁶⁹ “Marriages,” *AS*, 9 December 1920; Scott, 232.

¹⁷⁰ Scott, 182; “Personal,” *AS*, 24 December 1932; Tax Liability, *AS*, 27 April 1938.

¹⁷¹ “Retirement of Cook Island’s Chief is Reported,” *PIM*, August 1951, 13.

¹⁷² “League of Mothers,” *AS*, 18 March 1936.

¹⁷³ “Hospitality for Men on Leave,” *AS*, 2 June 1941; “Here and There,” *AS*, 11 June 1942; “Wellington Service Clubs,” *AS*, 11 May 1942. The family returned when William was appointed secretary to the Cook Islands Department.

¹⁷⁴ Caroline Munokoa Tutera Marsters Hutton, unpublished personal recollections.

¹⁷⁵ June Baudinet and Tanya Savage, “Lost Opportunities: June Margaret Baudinet (née Taringa) and Tanya Savage,” in Petty, Bruce M. *New Zealand in the Pacific War: Personal Accounts of World War II* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2008), 205.

¹⁷⁶ IT121/1/6 Part 3: CID to Paora, 16 December 1942.

¹⁷⁷ IT121/1/6, Part 5: McBirney to DIT, 27 March 1945. The Cook Islands Act of 1915 provided for a legislative council at Rarotonga, known as the Island Council of Rarotonga, and for councils on other islands at the discretion of the governor. These were composed of the *ariki* (tribal leaders) and other ex-officio members, including the Resident Commissioner or Resident Agents. Composition was largely at the Resident Commissioner’s discretion, and these bodies had limited law-making power in regards to local affairs. Anthony H. Angelo, *Constitutional Law in New Zealand* (Alphen aan den Rijn, Netherlands: Kluwer Law International 2011), 130.

shortages continued, there was a very real danger of depopulating the Islands and leaving migrants “stranded” after the war.¹⁷⁸

The political consequences needed to be carefully weighed against social considerations.¹⁷⁹ It was apparent that women already in New Zealand had no wish to return permanently to Rarotongan conditions. Only the brightest and most promising young women were selected and many now married away. As a consequence, Island councils were now dealing with a surplus of males throughout the group; further migration was considered potentially detrimental to the future population.¹⁸⁰ On the other hand, the demand for Island workers was steadily increasing, and some Island leaders saw no good reason why Cook Islanders, as New Zealand citizens, should be deprived of opportunities there.¹⁸¹

Meanwhile, circumstances were affecting a change in Fraser’s approach to Pacific issues. Over the course of World War Two, doubts arose over the capacity of the mother country to protect her far-off Dominions. As confidence diminished, Fraser was drawn into plans for a more expansive approach to international peace and security.¹⁸² For New Zealand’s wartime leader, these developments brought changing aspirations, and the government was forced to reappraise issues of citizenship within their Island territories. In early 1944, the Canberra or Anzac Pact established the machinery for cooperation between New Zealand and Australia, and Fraser ambitiously envisaged a South Pacific Commission working to share information on health, education and economic development for all the South Pacific Islands’ dependencies.¹⁸³

By September 1944, Fraser was taking active steps to diffuse growing tensions between the Cook Islands and New Zealand.¹⁸⁴ He reminded Parliament the Cook Islands were part of New Zealand and encouraged members to become more familiar with the Dominion’s responsibilities in the Pacific.¹⁸⁵ He believed that, “as the native people developed”, they should be given greater opportunities to have a closer

¹⁷⁸ IT121/1/6, Part 5: DIT to Osborne, 4 April 1945.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., DIT to RC, 18 May 1945.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., RC to DIT, 11 July 1945.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Angus Ross, *New Zealand's Foreign Policy: Towards an Independent Foreign Policy*, Essays on the Development of New Zealand's Foreign Policy: The Macmillan Brown Lectures, 1977 (Christchurch, N.Z.: University of Canterbury, 1977), 22.

¹⁸³ Bassett, 265. “Island Welfare,” *AS*, 19 January 1944.

¹⁸⁴ IT121/1/6, Part 5: DIT to RC, 27 September 1944.

¹⁸⁵ Fraser also made a brief visit to the Pacific two months later and visited Rarotonga, Aitutaki and Penrhyn.

association with the New Zealand Parliament.¹⁸⁶ He also called for a change in attitude by those who continually complained of problems in securing domestic help. “The day when girls could be worked all sorts of hours had gone”, he said, and there was “no reason why any woman able to do her own domestic work should look to anyone else”. This was more important than “unnecessary bridge playing”, and those in real need of help were the mothers of young children.¹⁸⁷

By the time the war ended in May 1945, Fraser was acutely aware of the new political realities New Zealand must face in its ongoing relationship with Pacific nations.¹⁸⁸ As a consistent supporter of the United Nations as a world body, Fraser also recognised the need to portray an enlightened and humane New Zealand.¹⁸⁹ From 26 June 1945, when he signed the Charter of the United Nations, the Dominion rapidly progressed toward constitutional autonomy and independence from Britain.¹⁹⁰ In 1946, the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference approved the aims of the South Pacific Commission, and New Zealand’s style of authority in the region came under greater scrutiny.¹⁹¹ In September 1945, as his transition to international statesman was imminent, Fraser again raised the possibility of Cook Island representation in the House. He believed this subject now deserved careful consideration, “with the object of making the people feel that they were, in fact, citizens of New Zealand”, and entitled to both responsibilities and privileges as such.¹⁹²

In line with Fraser’s vision, more coherent policies were implemented in relation to migration from the Cook Islands. In November 1945, it was agreed that “girls” and all other Cook Islanders should come to New Zealand as “free people seeking free employment”.¹⁹³ By this time, over 200 young Cook Island women were living in the Dominion.¹⁹⁴ In 1946, the DIT sent out another circular letter asking for details of living conditions, type of employment, rate of pay, and suitability of accommodation. Recipients were not legally obliged to furnish this information, but McKay endorsed the

¹⁸⁶ "The Cook Islands," *AS*, 20 September 1944.

¹⁸⁷ "Domestic Help," *AS*, 22 September 1944.

¹⁸⁸ Bassett, 325-326.

¹⁸⁹ Tim Beaglehole, "Fraser, Peter," *DNZB*, Te Ara-the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, last modified September 25, 2013, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/4f22/fraser-peter>; Damon Salesa, "A Pacific Destiny: New Zealand's Overseas Empire, 1840-1945," in *Tangata O Le Moana: New Zealand and the People of the Pacific*, ed. Sean Mallon, Kolokesa Māhina Tuai, and Damon Salesa (Wellington, N.Z: Te Papa Press, 2012), 164. In 1944, Samoa expressed the wish for a larger measure of self-governance.

¹⁹⁰ Bassett, 295.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 325-326.

¹⁹² "Cook Islands," *AS*, 26 September 1945.

¹⁹³ IT121/1/6, Part 5: DIT to RC, 8 November 1945.

¹⁹⁴ Curson, "The Cook Islanders", 173-174.

practice, in the belief that an accurate record was preferable to “a lack of knowledge which may lead to misconceptions as to what the situation really is”.¹⁹⁵ The young women who responded expressed few regrets at their decision to come to New Zealand, and most now enjoyed more rewarding work in hospitals, hotels and clothing factories. Some had married and settled into family life, while a few still remained with their original employers. In general, all were comfortable and happy and wished to stay.¹⁹⁶ By May 1946, in his standard response, McKay wrote that it was “a pleasure to have received so many letters containing good news of Cook Island people who are in New Zealand”.¹⁹⁷ This was a welcome change of tone in a series of Government administrative records which focused on the problems the scheme created, rather than any successes or more rewarding experiences.

Conclusion

Driven by shortsighted and selfish motives, the Cook Island Domestic scheme made no effort to direct workers to those in greatest need and therefore made little contribution to the war effort. The impromptu and unofficial nature of its inception led to administrative shortcomings, and to a degree, these were cloaked by allegations of improper conduct by a proportion of the young migrants themselves. Cook Island administrators assumed rights of authority over Island women in New Zealand, and within these convenient and manageable situations, future job prospects or residential status need not be considered. But when the domestics moved toward the independent lifestyle enjoyed by most New Zealanders, Island women at large ceased to be desirable residents. Attempts at control were made under the guise of welfare, until moves to repatriate attracted unwanted attention and censure, especially as issues surrounding the women’s freedom were clouded by perceptions of moral decline.

As Terrence Loomis and others have noted, Cook Islanders, Niueans and Tokelauans were granted unrestricted access to New Zealand as a result of colonial authority over their islands.¹⁹⁸ Ostensibly at least, they were never in the position of

¹⁹⁵ IT121/1/6, Part 5: DIT to multiple recipients, 1946.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. A number of letters substantiate this, however, only a small, representative portion of the letters received by the Department were retained for the record. These were generally limited to accommodation and employment conditions and the overall satisfaction of the respondent.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., DIT to multiple recipients.

¹⁹⁸ Terrence Loomis, “Recent Political Experiences of Cook Islands Migrants to New Zealand,” in *A World Perspective on Pacific Islander Migration: Australia, New Zealand and the USA*, ed. Grant McCall and John Connell, 229-236. Kensington, N.S.W.: Centre for South Pacific Studies, University of New South Wales, Bureau of Immigration Research, 1993, 229; Ernest Beaglehole, “Social and Political Changes in the Cook Islands,” *Pacific Affairs* 21, no. 4 (1948): 390; Curson, “The Cook Islanders,” 168.

“temporary guest workers” in the same way as Samoans and Tongans. While this is true in theory, this chapter has shown how, during the first forty-four years of New Zealand’s rule over the Cook Islands, officials exercised an exceptional degree of power to restrict and control the movement of the indigenous population. Driven by some vague understanding or unwritten policy, this regime involved a permit system based on a medical examination and proven English language proficiency, requirements reminiscent of those imposed on non-British immigrants to New Zealand.

For over forty years Cook Islanders visiting or temporarily resident in the Dominion were treated as provisional citizens. Authorities preferred to keep them within a manageable space, safely contained within a boarding school, army camp, island or private home. In these settings, officials continued to differentiate between Cook Islanders and New Zealanders, and maintained their imagined borders on home soil without any great difficulty. This chapter has also revealed how expectations of control extended beyond official circles into the public sphere. Many of those who employed Island house-girls believed they could be retained in service and were infuriated when they left. They felt justified in demanding their forcible return or expulsion from the Dominion. These reactions may have stemmed from a lack of knowledge of the rights of Cook Islanders; alternatively, these may demonstrate a wilful reluctance to acknowledge any such rights. Whether indicative of societal ignorance, racist attitudes, or a sense of colonial superiority, few excuses can be offered for the government officials responsible for the Cook Islands during this period. The Crown Solicitor’s ruling of 1927 should have ended all ambiguity over rights of citizenship.

For a time, even one of most highly-regarded Prime Ministers in the nation’s history struggled to comprehend these issues. Along with the Island Territories portfolio, Peter Fraser inherited a scheme that clearly conflicted with Labour Party ideals. While great sacrifices were made on many fronts during wartime, the CID quietly indulged some persons of rank and influence through a scheme providing house-girls. This merely permitted the uninterrupted social life of some deemed worthy, and in relation to the enormity of wider events, the machinations of the scheme appear irrelevant and inappropriate. Perhaps it is not surprising that Fraser was both hasty and dismissive. Any advantages the scheme might have brought were certainly short-lived, as paid domestic service in New Zealand homes had all but disappeared as an

occupation by the end of the war.¹⁹⁹

This chapter has told of young Cook Islanders who were recruited for a different form of service during wartime. It has reiterated and reinforced the arguments of chapter two, both in regard the colonialist attitude of their New Zealand rulers and the exclusionary policies inherent at the border. It has shown how the young domestics were viewed and treated as temporary immigrants, rather than bona fide migrants moving within the boundaries of New Zealand. These findings support the opinion of historian, Damon Salesa, who implies a certain duality of intent in New Zealand's relationship with the Pacific. While advancing the moral and political reach of British imperial power, New Zealand created a colonised space within the empire state, one which effectively excluded Pacific peoples from the nation.²⁰⁰ A metaphorical wrapping of cotton wool protected the people and insulated against social change. Ongoing "tutelage" failed to prepare them for political independence, or to assume "the rights, privileges, responsibilities and duties of New Zealand citizens".²⁰¹ An extended period of "purposeful inactivity" effectively delayed the possibility of any form of independence until some unknown future date.²⁰²

The term "purposeful inactivity" might also be applied to policy-makers during this period. Few checks and balances regulated the authority of Island administrators, and there were few official policies to consult and apply in regard to the rights of Islanders to move freely within the Dominion.²⁰³ I believe this nebulous state of rule effectively denied rights of citizenship and sustained a strong and deliberate impediment to migration. The official imperative to return Cook Island migrants, particularly unsupervised indigenous women, was clearly evident during the operation of the domestics' scheme. In this wartime context, welfare concerns are understandable, yet attempts to repatriate can also be viewed as part of the ongoing process both to protect the colonial children, and to exclude the indigenous "other" from the nation space. The reactions of the returning Rarotongan soldiers had already shown how exposure to the

¹⁹⁹ Macdonald, 55; Paul Callister, Lisa Tortell, Jessie Williams, "Paid Domestic Work: A Private Matter or a Public Policy Issue?" (Institute of Policy Studies Working Paper, 09/02, March 2009, School of Government, Victoria University of Wellington), 1, 3.

²⁰⁰ Damon Salesa, "New Zealand's Pacific," *The New Oxford History of New Zealand*, ed. Giselle Byrnes (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2009), 150, 155.

²⁰¹ Ernest Beaglehole, "Social and Political Changes," 390-391.

²⁰² Ibid.; Salesa, "A Pacific Destiny," 111.

²⁰³ Salesa, *ibid*; M101/12, Part 1: Cook Islands Administration Policy: Changes of Policy Arising from Ministerial Visits, Ministry of Island Territories, Wellington [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwantanga, National Office, Wellington], Secretary of Island Territories to Public Service Commission, 28 September, 1953.

world posed a substantial threat to the colonial hierarchy. If young Cook Island women could not be controlled in New Zealand, how great were the dangers posed by liberated Island men?

Arriving at the dawn of New Zealand's national self-recognition, there is little indication that the women's "service" legitimised their position within the nation space, as was the suggested experience of the World War Two soldiers.²⁰⁴ Their wartime influx apparently rendered the Cook Islander as "a foreign and mobile Indigene", an "anomaly" and potential "threat to the expected norms of the colonising ideal".²⁰⁵ They clearly challenged New Zealand's accepted national history, one "partly grounded on encounters and interactions between the components of the Māori -Pakeha dyad".²⁰⁶ Island soldiers were denied the benefits of citizenship after World War One, but by the close of World War Two, young Cook Island women had claimed the rights of British subjects and assumed the privileges of New Zealand residents. In the process they stirred controversy incommensurate with their numbers and influence, unwittingly challenging perceptions of colonial power relationships, and contributing to divergent forces which questioned New Zealand's relationship with its Pacific neighbours during this period. Their choice to remain on New Zealand soil influenced policy-making in regard to the status of the Cook Island peoples as New Zealand citizens, and eventually affected a reappraisal of the Dominion's statutory and moral obligations toward its Island Territories. These developments would have a significant effect on future migration.

Many Cook Islanders who came to New Zealand during the World War Two commented how this move suddenly "turned them from natives possessing no rights into full citizens".²⁰⁷ When this new migratory flow crossed the great Ocean of Kiwa and cast anchor on the far distant shores of Aotearoa New Zealand, a series of "self-sought and far reaching difficulties" followed in its wake. The prophecy of Frederick Moss had come to pass, and the "misty view" so eloquently invoked by Seddon was finally dissipated.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ Alice Te Punga Somerville, *Once Were Pacific: Māori Connections to Oceania* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 95-97.

²⁰⁵ Lachlan Paterson, "'The Similarity of Hue Constituted No Special Bond of Intimacy between Them': Close Encounters of the Indigenous Kind," *Journal of New Zealand Studies*, no. 14 (2013): 20.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ R. A. K. Mason, *Frontier Forsaken: An Outline History of the Cook Islands* (Auckland N.Z.: Challenge Journal, 1947), 100.

²⁰⁸ "Our New Tropical Fellow Colonists," *AS*, 6 September 1901.

Chapter Four

Aspirations: The Cook Islanders and World War Two

Who can blame the natives for wanting to make a little hay – or
grass skirts - while the US sun shines?

~ *Pacific Islands Monthly*, November 1944

Introduction

In 1941, World War Two reached the reefs and atolls, beaches and palm-groves of the Pacific on a scale and at a pace few could ever have foreseen. When New Zealand declared war on Germany on 3 September 1939, any prospect of travel for work or military service undoubtedly proved a great temptation to young Cook Islanders.¹ The interwar years had been difficult ones. Many struggled with the effects of poorly developed trade, distance from markets, and growing population pressure.² The economic restraints of the Great Depression further impacted on Island prosperity, and in 1932, Apirana Ngata implored the New Zealand Government not to “shirk” its “most important” civilising mission.³ “For good or for ill”, he declared, “the missionaries and the seamen, the traders and the tourists and the officers of the Government” had brought “the complicated problems of the great world” to the South Sea Islands, and “their culture cannot now be barred by any device of man”.⁴

Ten years later, those troubles erupted into another World War, and for the first time, these events directly impacted on the daily lives of Pacific Island peoples. Damon Salesa claimed that for New Zealand, this was “*the great imperial war*”, one that profoundly shaped its “style of ruling and the experiences of those it ruled”.⁵ I agree with Salesa, but in the case of the Cook Islands, I do not believe this constituted the sharp turning point in history his words imply. Rather, I would argue the experiences of war accentuated an existing and deep-rooted discontent. In this chapter I am interested

¹ Robert L. Challis, *Social Problems of Non-Maori Polynesians in New Zealand* (Noumea, New Caledonia: South Pacific Commission), 1953, 3; Peter H. Curson, "Polynesians and Residence in Auckland," *New Zealand Geographer* 26, no. 2 (1970): 170; "Cook Islanders: Warning against New Zealand Attraction," *PIM*, December, 1942, 27.

² Peter H. Curson, "The Cook Islanders," in *Immigrants in New Zealand*, ed. Keith Westhead Thomson and Andrew D. Trlin (Palmerston North: Massey University, 1970), 158-160; Challis, *Social Problems*, 3-5.

³ "Cook Islands," *AS*, 5 March 1934; "Civilising Mission," *AS*, 8 November 1932.

⁴ "Civilising Mission". Ngata was especially concerned at the lack of educational facilities throughout the Islands.

⁵ Damon Salesa, "New Zealand's Pacific," in *The New Oxford History of New Zealand*, ed. Giselle Byrnes (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2009), 163. Given that all the major combatants in the Pacific War were colonisers in the region, Salesa does not view this conflict as primarily a war between nation states, but a war between empires.

in the broader social aspects of economic and political change during this period, factors leading to shifts in allegiance, aspiration and attitude among the Islands' people.

In this chapter I show the tentacles of globalisation rapidly entwining these far-flung islands. I outline wartime developments that heightened individual and collective aspirations for a higher standard of living and show how advancement became possible for some. I begin with the abnormal labour conditions in New Zealand during World War Two, and the domestic labour shortage which brought over 100 young Cook Island women to the dominion as housemaids. I discuss previous efforts to recruit women for this role and examine factors common to all. Using official records, and where possible the stories of the women themselves, I offer a more humanised account of the migration experience.

The previous chapter showed Island administrators intent on controlling these seemingly powerless and displaced young women; I now present an alternative picture of the girls' transition to New Zealand society. I show why this isolated environment was unsuited to Island workers, and the least likely employment they would choose to remain in. I do not portray hapless victims; rather, I reveal young women overcoming difficulties, embracing opportunities and sharing the benefits of their new lives. The girls' influence on further migration will also be investigated here. Although Cook Island men were excluded from military service during World War Two, this chapter shows how the broader consequences of war provided opportunities closer to home. In 1942, the US military occupation of Aitutaki and Penrhyn brought new ideas, well-paid employment and higher social expectations.⁶ Some men chose alternative war service mining for the French Oceanic Phosphate Company on Makatea, and earned enough money to consider opportunities further afield. When ultimately faced with a return to the precarious livelihoods of the pre-war era, I show how these experiences encouraged Islanders to consider migration to New Zealand, as the most viable means of achieving economic and lifestyle goals.

Island prospects

Despite Gudgeon's predictions of a dying race, the early years of the twentieth century

⁶ Judith A. Bennett, *Natives and Exotics: World War II and Environment in the Southern Pacific* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), 147-149, 228-229; Ernest Beaglehole, "Social and Political Changes in the Cook Islands," *Pacific Affairs* 21: 4 (1948): 389; R.H. Garity, Report on a Visit to Rarotonga, 6 Aug. 1943, Entry 44463, Box 70, RG 338, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), College Park, USA.

witnessed a significant population recovery in the Cook Islands.⁷ During the interwar years, conditions throughout the group were often unstable, and while no one actually starved, some might go hungry during storms and poor seasons.⁸ Generally, the income from a little cash-cropping was sufficient to buy the European “luxuries” many had grown accustomed to, but pressure on resources meant limited prospects for the young.⁹ An increasing number of outer Islanders migrated to Rarotonga during the 1930s, but not everyone had access to land, and incomers often became reliant on wages for their livelihood.¹⁰

Life in Rarotonga undoubtedly increased sophistication and heightened aspirations, but wage-earning opportunities were extremely limited.¹¹ An average Island education was equivalent to that of a ten to twelve year old in the New Zealand system, and only Rarotonga offered “advanced” teaching to age fourteen.¹² A few went on to become pupil teachers or gained scholarships to attend Māori colleges in New Zealand; boys benefited more than girls but scholarships were suspended during the war.¹³ Even so, higher posts in the Islands appeared beyond the reach of the indigenous population, irrespective of education.¹⁴ Boys might work on their own plantations or in the local stores, but employment for young women was almost non-existent between leaving school and marrying.¹⁵ A small handicrafts industry, and a clothing factory which opened in Avarua in the early 1940s, were the only wage earning possibilities.

Girls could find domestic work in the homes of resident Europeans, but this was not a popular option. The servant girl shortage led some locals to claim it was easier to obtain housemaids in Wellington.¹⁶ Girls reportedly learned their duties quickly, but were “apt to become restless under the ordered regularity of European customs”.¹⁷ Most would simply leave and not return if detained past midday.¹⁸ In 1931, the Avarua

⁷ Richard Gilson, *The Cook Islands, 1820-1950*, edited by R. G. Crocombe (Wellington, N.Z.: Victoria University Press in association with the Institute of Pacific Studies of the University of the South Pacific, 1980), 158-160.

⁸ Gilson, *ibid.*; Challis, *Social Problems*, 3-5.

⁹ Gilson, 153-154; Curson, “The Cook Islanders,” 169.

¹⁰ Challis, *Social Problems*, 3-5; Gilson, 158-160.

¹¹ Challis, *ibid.*; Curson, “The Cook Islanders,” 169.

¹² *The New Zealand Official Year-Book* (Wellington, N.Z.: Statistics New Zealand, 1942), accessed September 1, 2014, http://www3.stats.govt.nz/New_Zealand_Official_Yearbooks/1942/NZOYB_1942.html.

¹³ Gilson, 173; “Rarotonga,” *AS*, 12 January 1931.

¹⁴ Rangi Glennon, pers. comm., 8 August 2012; Challis, *Social Problems*, 3-5.

¹⁵ Challis, *ibid.*; “Rarotonga,” *AS*, 12 January 1931; Gilson, 173.

¹⁶ “Life in the Tropics,” *Press*, 17 July 1911; Dick Scott, *Years of the Pooh-Bah: A Cook Islands History* (Rarotonga; Auckland, N.Z.: CITC; Hodder and Stoughton, 1991), 227.

¹⁷ “Life in the Tropics”.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

postmaster's wife complained about her housemaids; they needed constant supervision and showed "no initiative or idea of the word responsibility". She had to tell them "each day to light the fire etc."¹⁹ Whether enjoyable or otherwise, girls and boys in these positions did have an opportunity to improve their English language skills. This did little to enhance job prospects in the Islands, but did enable them to consider seeking unskilled work in New Zealand when the opportunity arose.²⁰

On a visit to Rarotonga in 1937, a New Zealand official condescendingly noted the "impression of Arcadian simplicity and innocence". Within two years, events conspired to disrupt the idyllic lives of the "happy natives" he perceived.²¹ On the declaration of war, Island leaders immediately offered an expeditionary force of up to 2000 men, but their generosity was declined as a "matter of policy".²² Instead, the New Zealand Government regulated to prevent the enlistment of Pacific Island men, restricting eligibility to "full blooded whites up to but not including persons of half European blood".²³ More than twenty indigenous Cook Islanders enlisted without difficulty in New Zealand and joined the Māori Battalion or merchant navy, but according to Mason, the odds of men leaving the Islands with this intention were likened to "those of men making their way out of an Axis-occupied county".²⁴

These race-based limitations were deeply resented.²⁵ In August 1941, Putua Rangitira (Willie Browne), attorney for the Ariki and Islands' people, presented a 5000 strong petition to Parliament. He declared that, "as part of the Dominion ... it is insulting to our manhood that we are deprived, without given a reason, of taking our rightful place in the defence of the liberties that we alike hold dear".²⁶ Problems of acclimatisation and the terrific "wastage rate" during World War One were offered as reasons for their exclusion.²⁷ Few veterans had remained physically fit and an estimated one third of the Rarotongan soldiers died as a result of overseas service. These losses

¹⁹ "Rarotonga," *AS*, 12 January 1931.

²⁰ Gilson, 77-78, 171. "The South Seas Native," *Poverty Bay Herald*, 31 August 1908. From the mid-1930s, English was the medium of instruction in Cook Island schools, but this was seldom spoken in the home. Gilson believed migration stemmed from a desire for both economic and educational improvement.

²¹ "Happy Natives," *AS*, 7 October 1937.

²² MIT101/12, Part 1: Cook Islands Administration Policy - Changes of Policy Arising from Ministerial Visits, 1929-1954, Ministry of Island Territories, Wellington [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwantanga, National Office, Wellington], DIT to PM Peter Fraser, 11 August 1943; "For Empire," *AS*, 5 September 1941.

²³ Louise Marie Tuimanuolo Mataia, "'Odd Men from the Pacific': The Participation of Pacific Island Men in the 28 (Māori) Battalion in the Second World War" (MA Thesis, University of Otago, 2007), 32-33.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 39; R. A. K. Mason, *Frontier Forsaken: An Outline History of the Cook Islands* (Auckland N.Z.: Challenge Journal, 1947), 80.

²⁵ Mataia, 33.

²⁶ "Keen to Serve," *AS*, 27 August 1941.

²⁷ "For Empire," *AS*, 5 September 1941.

were not to be repeated.²⁸

As previously discussed, World War Two did permit overseas service of a different kind. The Cook Island Domestics scheme arose in response to an existing labour shortage in New Zealand, one further exacerbated by wartime mobility. The crisis intensified when the government committed to supplying food to US forces in the Pacific.²⁹ As farmers' wives began "breaking down" through overwork, the domestic labour shortage was declared one of the gravest problems facing the rural sector during wartime.³⁰ Hospitals and institutions also struggled to maintain essential services, prompting women's groups to proclaim a national emergency in all sectors of the community.³¹

In reality, the lack of domestic servants in New Zealand was a perennial problem.³² For decades, a range of employment opportunities allowed colonial-born girls to evade this low-paid drudgery. According to Charlotte Macdonald, pride of race rendered Māori women equally reluctant to serve in the isolated environment of the European household.³³ By the 1920s, girls enjoyed regular hours and good wages in the more congenial surroundings of shops, offices and factories, and increasing leisure hours might be spent in cinemas and dance halls.³⁴ Numerous government immigration schemes attempted to meet the insatiable demand for servants and targeted single British women for this role.³⁵ Only the "best quality" of migrant was accepted, rather than meet the cost of returning unsuitable candidates to distant homelands.³⁶ Katie Pickles points out that "authorities went to great lengths to control domestics", and to protect them from abuse, and during the 1920s, surveillance was not unusual.³⁷ However, most new immigrants sought better opportunities and greater happiness abroad, and few women intended to remain in domestic service. The servant shortage

²⁸ Scott, 224; "Remembering Cook Island Soldiers," *The Cook Islands Herald Online Edition*, 23 March 2012.

²⁹ J. V. T. Baker, *The New Zealand People at War: War Economy*, Vol. 2, Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War 1939-1945 (Wellington, N.Z.: Historical Publications Branch, Dept. of Internal Affairs: Government Printer, 1965), 78; "War Jobs to Do," *AS*, 13 September 1941.

³⁰ Deborah Montgomerie, "Man-Powering Women: Industrial Conscriptation During the Second World War," in *Women in History 2*, ed. Barbara L. Brookes, Charlotte Macdonald, and Margaret Tennant (Wellington, N.Z.: Bridget Williams Books, 1992), 189; "Big Problem: Girls for Farms," *AS*, 10 July 1941.

³¹ Deborah Montgomerie, "Man-Powering Women," 189; "Increased Wages," *AS*, May 1941.

³² Charlotte Macdonald, "Strangers at the Hearth: The Eclipse of Domestic Service in New Zealand Homes C. 1830s-1940s," in *At Home in New Zealand: History, Houses, People*, ed. Barbara Brookes (Wellington, N.Z.: Bridget Williams Books, 2000), 42, 46-48.

³³ Katie Pickles, "Empire Settlement and Single British Women as New Zealand Domestic Servants During the 1920s," *New Zealand Journal of History*, 35, no. 1 (2001): 38-39; Macdonald, 50-52.

³⁴ "Big Problem"; Macdonald, 54.

³⁵ Pickles, "Empire Settlement," 25-27.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 37.

merely provided “a convenient, paid, interim occupation”.³⁸ Most completed a one year contract of service and “did no more”.³⁹ Many soon married or found other employment, but the high attrition was tolerated.⁴⁰ These European escapees were of the “preferred type” for permanent settlement and would eventually produce “good New Zealanders”.⁴¹

By the 1930s, the New Zealand servant-girl was considered a relic of a bygone era.⁴² There was little sympathy for those, who “through wealth or snobbishness”, still desired a maid about the house.⁴³ During World War Two, a community-minded approach was encouraged to deal with genuine cases of domestic hardship.⁴⁴ Women who complained of household deprivation, while maintaining “a pre-war programme of bridge, golf and social calls”, were denounced for leading a selfish life.⁴⁵ They were advised instead to expend their time and energy as volunteer emergency housekeepers.⁴⁶ Some families gladly met the expense of importing a housemaid from the Cook Islands. For young Island women, domestic service was apparently more appealing in the New Zealand setting, and they willingly entered into these arrangements. Although not directly linked to the war effort, there was a definite sense of contributing to the greater good by releasing others for war work.⁴⁷ This presented young women with a rare opportunity to move beyond the influence, desires and opinions of their elders.⁴⁸ Given attachment to family, however, it seems unlikely this was an individual choice, as decisions were generally made collectively by extended families who acted for the benefit of the entire group.⁴⁹

As reports of life in New Zealand filtered back to the Islands, many more girls were eager to take part of this wartime adventure.⁵⁰ Some were personally selected. While holidaying in Rarotonga, the Smiths made enquiries among the nuns and other European residents to find suitable housemaids. They selected and nominated two

³⁸ Ibid., 39-40.

³⁹ Ibid., 38.

⁴⁰ Ibid., and Macdonald, 49, 55.

⁴¹ Pickles, “Empire Settlement,” 26, 32.

⁴² Macdonald, 56.

⁴³ “The Domestic Problem,” *AS*, 5 November 1934.

⁴⁴ “War Jobs to Do”. Women with young children were considered the most deserving, especially where the husband was serving overseas.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Rangi Glennon; “Islanders Migrate to Dominion,” *NZH*, 6 July 1950.

⁴⁸ Challis, *Social Problems*, 3, 5; Scott, 227.

⁴⁹ Although the individual has agency, even in recent times, the decision to migrate is made within the context of the wider family. This is a pivotal element of Cook Islands’ culture. See Elizabeth Foster Wright-Koteka, “Te uu no te akau roa’: Migration and the Cook Islands”, (MA Thesis, Massey University, 2006), pp. 42-51, 102-110, 148-149.

⁵⁰ Rangi Glennon.

fourteen-year-olds to work in their Hawkes Bay farmhouse. Once exit procedures were completed, Komera and Topa sailed for Auckland, and after six days on the ocean, their arrival was an exciting, yet “strange experience”.⁵¹ The sense of dislocation was suddenly overwhelming; both felt the cold intensely and at first they cried and wanted to return to Rarotonga. A Salvation Army officer met them at the ship; she calmed their initial fears and provided a meal before putting them on a train to Napier.⁵² Volunteers who welcomed Island women in this capacity came to understand their special needs; unlike other immigrants, they had never seen a train or tram before and often knew little English. Most considered them very vulnerable.⁵³

Many girls did suffer weeks of loneliness and trauma on arrival in New Zealand, and during this period, their well-being and happiness rested entirely with the employer.⁵⁴ Officials no doubt considered the private homes of well-to-do New Zealanders an adequate sanctuary from the inevitable culture shock, however, the tenor and attitude within households varied greatly.⁵⁵ New arrivals from the Islands were susceptible to cold-related illnesses and adjusting to new situations was often complicated by periods of sickness.⁵⁶ A number of girls who contracted measles on the voyage were laid up in unfamiliar homes for several weeks. Mrs Hunter’s “girls” succumbed, and while one recovered fully, the other was overcome by an “attack of melancholy”. The Hunters paid her passage home on medical advice.⁵⁷ Eighteen year old ‘Cora’ recovered from this setback, but was diagnosed with tuberculosis soon after. She spent over a year in a sanatorium while plans were made for her repatriation. Fortunately, her mistress took a personal interest, visiting every week and providing for all her needs.⁵⁸ Several others spent more lengthy and lonely terms in sanatoriums;

⁵¹ Teupoko I. Morgan, *Cook Islands Women Pioneers: Early Experiences in Aotearoa-New Zealand = Vainetini Kuki Airani* (Tokoroa, N.Z.: Anau Ako Pasifika, 2001), 12.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Sandra Coney, *Every Girl: A Social History of Women and the YWCA in Auckland 1885-1985* (Auckland, N.Z.: Auckland YWCA, 1986), 220; “For Women Domestic Work,” *AS*, 20 November 1942. The YWCA also promoted social groups for “displaced persons” or refugees.

⁵⁴ “Cook Islanders: Warning”.

⁵⁵ Challis, *Social Problems*, 12-13. “For Women Domestic Work,” *AS*, 20 November 1942.

⁵⁶ “Cook Islanders: Warning”.

⁵⁷ IT121/1/6, Part 5: Natives-Cook Island Girls for Domestic Service in New Zealand, Island Territories Department, Wellington [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwantanga, National Office, Wellington]: Hunter to CID, 19 July 45.

⁵⁸ IT121/1/6, Part 2: Natives-Cook Island Girls for Domestic Service in New Zealand, Island Territories Department, Wellington [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwantanga, National Office, Wellington]: Ewan to CID, n.d.; IT121/1/6, Part 3: Natives-Cook Island Girls for Domestic Service in New Zealand, Island Territories Department, Wellington [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwantanga, National Office, Wellington]: Ewan to CID, December 1942; IT121/1/6 Part 5: Hunter to CID, 19 July 1944.

those who survived this experience generally wished to return home.⁵⁹

Terms of employment bound “girls” to their employers, regardless of whether their situations were tolerable. Their range of experiences was as broad as the ocean they crossed. The general servant, or “maid of all work”, was the most common form of domestic service in New Zealand. Traditionally, women entering live-in service relinquished the benefits of family and private life; power and class relationships within this environment rendered her homeless in almost every sense.⁶⁰ Any vestige of individuality might be extinguished by household rules, constant direction and endless demands, and loss of personal freedom could result in nervous strain and exhaustion.⁶¹ This was a challenging and distressing environment for the uninitiated, and especially for Cook Island girls with a limited knowledge of European ways.⁶²

Island domestics had no experience in the care of a modern style European house. They were totally unfamiliar with hot running water, washing machines, water closets, electric or gas cookers and telephones. Ayson was acutely aware they were “very raw”, but conceded that this allowed employers to train them up in the manner they desired.⁶³ In later years the “girls” prided themselves on gaining new skills, overcoming a fear of electricity and learning to operate a range of new devices.⁶⁴ Also engrained in their memories were the arduous work hours, cooking, cleaning, laundering, gardening and minding children, doing practically every household task imaginable.⁶⁵ Mediating with the outside world, through everyday interactions such as answering the door, taking telephone messages and dealing with sales and trades-people, was a challenge for uninitiated maids with limited English.⁶⁶

Exit procedures should have safeguarded both parties from language complications, but this was not always the case. ‘Una’, an older “girl of perhaps forty years”, slipped through the system and was quickly rejected by her first employer. She

⁵⁹ IT121/1/6, Part 5: Napier Hospital to CID, 8 June 1945, and Bayly to CID, 4 July 44.

⁶⁰ Dorothy Page, *The National Council of Women: A Centennial History* (Auckland, NZ.: Auckland University Press with Bridget Williams Books and National Council of Women, 1996), 39; Macdonald, 42.

⁶¹ Page, 6; Rosie Cox, *The Servant Problem: Domestic Employment in a Global Economy* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 16.

⁶² Although not always enjoyable, some migrants would later recall this experience as a good introduction to Pakeha ways.

⁶³ IT121/1/6, Part 1: Natives-Cook Island Girls for Domestic Service in New Zealand, Island Territories Department, Wellington [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwantanga, National Office, Wellington]: RC to Upton, May 1942.

⁶⁴ Morgan, 1, 13; Scott, 228; Robert L. Challis, "Immigrant Polynesians in New Zealand: Aspects of Stability in Adjusting to Change," in *Polynesian and Pākehā in New Zealand Education: The Sharing of Cultures*, ed. Douglas H. Bray and Clement G.N. Hill (Auckland, N.Z.: Heinemann Educational Books, 1973), 58.

⁶⁵ Morgan, 13; Challis, "Immigrant Polynesians," 58. A number of letters in the IT121/1/6 file series also support this claim.

⁶⁶ Macdonald, 45.

could not take instructions or answer the telephone; neither could she tell the time, therefore her mistress could not send Una out with the children as she had no idea when to return.⁶⁷ This placed the department in an “awkward” situation. Una was hastily reassigned, but the new mistress was equally unwilling to persevere. The unhappy “girl” was removed by a near-relative until the CID found a more sympathetic placement. Once Una had learned English and other necessary skills, her confidence was a little restored, but still she remained quiet and withdrawn.⁶⁸ Even after several years, her mistress considered it unlikely she would leave their household unless to return home.⁶⁹

Even those better equipped for life in New Zealand struggled to adapt. The “girls” shared a common language, religion and citizenship with their employers, but even so, it was difficult to reconcile their vastly different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds.⁷⁰ Long and solitary hours in domestic service only heightened their sense of loneliness. Many lamented the depersonalised daily human relationships they encountered in modern New Zealand society.⁷¹ At this time, few New Zealanders were aware of the village life which once kept them “at one and secure”.⁷² Employers often failed to equate shyness and homesickness with the loss of group life.⁷³ Less empathetic mistresses labelled their “girls” moody and sulky, and one asked for a replacement, “with a brighter nature and was more likeable”.⁷⁴ In contrast, well-meaning mistresses assumed a motherly responsibility and conscientiously supervised their charges. This very kindness and protection could unwittingly heighten feelings of separation from friends and family.⁷⁵

It was well known that New Zealand’s expansive rural environment was uninviting to all new immigrant domestics.⁷⁶ This degree of isolation was virtually unknown in Britain, where a profusion of rural villages dotted the landscape. European women seldom remained in service for long in remote country areas, and even good wages of 35/- a week plus keep were insufficient enticement in the years leading up to World War Two. Servants generally felt more secure in the city and were comforted by

⁶⁷ IT121/1/6, Part 1: Neale to CID, 4 August 1942.

⁶⁸ Ibid., CID to RC, 17 August 1942.

⁶⁹ IT121/1/6, Part 5: Neale to DIT, 3 August 1944.

⁷⁰ Curson, “The Cook Islanders,” 187.

⁷¹ Ibid. This was a view supported by Challis and others.

⁷² Challis, *Social Problems*, 6.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ IT121/1/6, Part 2: Nathan to CID, 10 September 1942; Challis, *Social Problems*, 6; Challis, “Immigrant Polynesians,” 47.

⁷⁵ Challis, *Social Problems*, 6.

⁷⁶ Pickles, “Empire Settlement,” 37.

safety in numbers.⁷⁷ Cook Island girls were sought after for country posts, but many were traumatised by the geographical and social isolation. According to Challis, many felt “like sitting down to die because of the lack of companionship”.⁷⁸

Komera and Topa were glad of one another’s company on the Hawkes Bay farm. They were delighted with their comfortable living quarters, complete with a radio set and “everything they wanted”.⁷⁹ Komera was trained to cook, while Topa learned to do all the housework. Neither felt unduly overworked, but Topa’s contentment was short-lived. Six months later, she left the “backblocks” for higher wages and a better lifestyle among her own people in Wellington.⁸⁰ Komera grew desperately unhappy without her friend. The Smith family were understanding and kind, and did everything within their power to alleviate her obvious distress. They helped with household chores and took her out with them whenever possible. Komera grew very fond of her mistress, and later said she could not have wished “for a better mother” to look after her during this difficult time.⁸¹

Yet Komera too was overwhelmed by a need for her own people. Once a week, she travelled to town to meet a friend who boarded at Hukarere Girls College. They hugged and cried and exchanged news of family and friends, and it was “a real joy” to talk in their own language. Komera spent all her money on treats they could enjoy during this precious time together.⁸² Gradually, she met Māori and other Cook Islanders in the area and her world began to widen. After several years with the Smiths, she joined a shearing gang as a cook, and four years after her arrival, her workmates met the cost of a fare home to Aitutaki, as a gift to Komera. She found the island very much changed and was glad to return to New Zealand. She joined the kitchen staff in a regional hospital and enjoyed an active social life with co-workers and friends in town. Only then did she overcome her agonizing sense of loneliness.⁸³

Some employers strived to meet the innate social needs of their Island housemaids. Many would readily have employed two girls, as company for the other,

⁷⁷ Ibid., 35.

⁷⁸ Challis, *Social Problems*, 12.

⁷⁹ Morgan, 14.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., 15.

⁸² Ibid., 14. According to Broughton and Grace, Māori women in the cities had similar experiences, crying with unreserved joy when meeting a relative or friend.

⁸³ Morgan, 15-16.

but limited numbers meant this was seldom possible.⁸⁴ The departure of Topa, and others like her, proves this was no guarantee of contentment, especially in rural areas. Mrs Smith had informed the CID of Topa's restlessness and the efforts made to keep her happy.⁸⁵ Topa was determined to join her sister in Wellington, but when the Smiths finally agreed to this, she burst into tears and said she no longer wanted to go. "They are girls of moods", explained Mrs Smith, but "ever since she and most of the Rarotongan girls in Hawkes Bay had a week together in Hastings ... she has settled down and been as happy and contented as possible".⁸⁶ Not for long, however.

Desperate applicants went to great lengths to attract the Cook Island domestics. A Christchurch doctor proposed a collective arrangement, as several of his colleagues were also "willing to take girls so as to make a local group".⁸⁷ Numerous requests came from the South Island, but the CID believed Island girls were unlikely to accept positions in the colder regions.⁸⁸ Tailby advocated a cohesive approach in rejecting these applications, "rather than have girls leave these employers to find work in a more congenial climate".⁸⁹ This was apparently no deterrent to Ellison, who continued to select domestics for Canterbury farmers.⁹⁰

As Ayson's health declined, other Island officials were less vigilant in managing the exit procedures, and some younger girls were permitted to leave. Rangi Oberg recalled how excited she was to follow in her cousin's footsteps, but at only thirteen years of age, she soon regretted her decision. She grew desperately unhappy when pressed into hard labour on a Wairarapa farm. A neighbouring farmer recognised her plight and offered her a job. In this family she was treated just like another daughter, joining them at the dining table and learning to drive. When old enough, she was allowed to take the car to town and go to dances.⁹¹ Rangi was very grateful, as she knew of others less fortunate.⁹²

⁸⁴ IT121/1/6, Part 1: RC to Blackley, 15 January, 1942. Numerous other applicants expressed this wish. Some wished to employ a young male rather than a female, but Ayson advised against this. He believed youths in domestic service would soon become restless or be influenced away by friends.

⁸⁵ Considerable correspondence between employers and the CID supports this statement.

⁸⁶ IT121/1/6, Part 3: Smith to CID, 12 January 1943.

⁸⁷ IT121/1/6, Part 2: Allison to CID, 17 October, 1942.

⁸⁸ Ibid., CID to Ross, 9 November, 1942; IT121/1/6, Part 2: CID to RC, 5 October, 1942 and 2 November, 1942. In addition to numerous private enquiries, the CID received an application from the Christchurch Home Service Association, who sought girls for farmers and essential city posts. In 1943, the Nelson District Council of Primary Production approached the Department of Agriculture regarding the possibility of "importing" both men and women for farm and domestic labour.

⁸⁹ IT121/1/6, Part 2: CID to RC, 5 October, 1942 and 2 November, 1942.

⁹⁰ Numerous letters refer to these placements.

⁹¹ It was customary for the maid-of-all-work to eat her meals alone in the kitchen.

⁹² Morgan, 6. Rangi eventually moved to Wellington and worked as a waitress in a hotel.

Throughout history, domestic servants have been subject to physical and mental abuse at the hands of their masters. The less worldly-wise were especially vulnerable to unwanted sexual advances. It appears Tailby was unduly confident of the impeccable bona fides of his chosen employers, as some became disturbingly amorous toward their Island domestics. Girls left as quickly as possible for “less complicated” situations and warned others to avoid these households.⁹³ In spite of this, only one allegation of sexual harassment came to the attention of the CID. ‘Mata’ did not arrive under the domestics’ scheme, but worked as a housemaid for a New Zealand family living in Aitutaki in the early 1940s. When they returned to the Bay of Plenty, she chose to move with them. Her employer decided their neighbourhood was “an extremely difficult Māori area for a young girl”, and restricted her movements and contacts, ostensibly for her own protection. More disturbingly, Mata claimed he “became rather familiar” toward her, and his intentions were “somewhat more pronounced” when his wife was absent.

Despite her relative isolation, Mata made friends among local Māori. When she left her employer on their advice, he railed against the “interfering Maori neighbours” who enticed her away. Confident of his rights of ownership, he called upon the local Manpower authority and CID to force her return, otherwise, to send her home forthwith. Fortunately for Mata, local officials were primarily concerned for her welfare. The Native Affairs and Child Welfare departments were consulted and a thorough investigation carried out. Mata received considerable support and a Māori welfare officer provided employment in her own home. This gave Mata the opportunity to save money for a return passage, but she had no wish to leave in the near future, and intended to stay in New Zealand for at least another year.⁹⁴

City life provided a more transparent environment, but this was no safeguard against exploitation. Mrs Donaldson considered her Rarotongan maid “a definite acquisition” and welcomed her “fellow Islanders” into their Wellington home. She overheard the girls discussing another friend, who was worked excessively and never allowed out, and insisted her husband report the matter to the CID.⁹⁵ ‘Beth’ found herself in a similar situation. She left enjoyable work as a maid in the Rarotonga Hospital to join her friends in Wellington. Her accommodation was wonderful, but her workload was onerous. This included heavy outdoor men’s work, which she knew “a

⁹³ IT121/1/6, Part 2: CID to Commissioner of Police, 1 September, 1942; Scott, 311.

⁹⁴ IT121/1/6, Confidential file. ‘Mata’ remained in New Zealand and married into a Māori family.

⁹⁵ IT121/1/6, Part 3: Donaldson to CID, 25 March 1943. It is not known what action was taken, if any.

housemaid shouldn't be doing".⁹⁶ Beth repaid her fare as quickly as possible, and within a year, found work as a housemaid in the nurses' home at a public hospital. Twelve months later her outlook was much happier, "[i] love my job here" she wrote, "the very work I used to do at home".⁹⁷

When opportunities presented, Cook Island women showed a preference for domestic work in hospitals. Anna married a New Zealander in Aitutaki and moved to Whakatane before the war. She missed her family immensely, and in 1941, sent for her cousin 'Nora' to keep her company. She arranged work for Nora as a domestic at the local public hospital, but allowed several months for her to acclimatise. During this time, Anna familiarised Nora with European ways and helped improve her English. The Matron was impressed by Nora's aptitude and ability, and offered employment to other Island girls. Nora soon saved enough money to pay her sister's fare, and other relatives were also supported and encouraged to join them in this guaranteed and relatively well-paid work.⁹⁸

Wartime in the Islands

As Cook Island girls continued to cross the ocean to New Zealand, the Japanese were steadily advancing across the Pacific, and by late 1941, the US military was planning an alternative ferry route between Hawai'i and New Zealand. Aitutaki and Penrhyn were chosen as sites for US Naval Air Transport System Bases. By November 1942, over 1000 US army men had occupied each island. The main contingents departed after one year, but a garrison of between two and three hundred men maintained services at each base throughout the war.⁹⁹ During this period, the islands' people were introduced to an entirely new way of living.¹⁰⁰

At this time, the isolated atoll of Penrhyn (Tongareva) was perhaps the least affected by outside influences. Only three or four ships called each year and a wireless station had opened only five years earlier.¹⁰¹ Life in this fragile environment was

⁹⁶ Ibid., 'Beth' to Department of DIT, 8 July 1944.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ IT121/1/6, Part 1: Low to Sleight, 15 March 1942; IT121/1/6, Part 5: Low to CID, 9 July 1944.

⁹⁹ Karl C. Dod, "The Corps of Engineers: The War against Japan," *United States Army in World War II: Technical services*, Vol. 6, Part 6 (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Army Assoc., 1966), 162-169; Bennett, 147; Theodore D. Graves, *Behavioral Anthropology: Toward an Integrated Science of Human Behavior* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004), 216.

¹⁰⁰ Beaglehole, "Social and Political Changes," 389; John Wesley Coulter, "Impact of the War on South Sea Islands," *Geographical Review* 36, no. 3 (1946): 409; Dod, 162-169.

¹⁰¹ Coulter, 413; "Penrhyn Wireless Station," *AS*, 1 July 1937. According to Coulter, even during the period of occupation (1941-1945), only thirteen ships put in there.

tenuous at the best of times and the inhabitants were no strangers to adversity.¹⁰² This was once a famous pearl-island of the Pacific, but exports of shell had fallen in recent times.¹⁰³ The Americans were confident of hiring at least seventy labourers from the population of 500.¹⁰⁴ On Aitutaki, fertile soils supported a more plentiful lifestyle for over 2000 residents. Few families were reliant on wages, but Island commerce had long been hindered by New Zealand's lethargy in developing trade.¹⁰⁵ The "fantastic outpouring" of American money proved very welcome, and at the height of developments, two thirds of Aitutaki's able-bodied men were employed in airfield construction.¹⁰⁶

Many families experienced an unprecedented influx of cash.¹⁰⁷ Men earned relatively "fabulous" sums unloading military supplies and equipment and in various service roles at the bases, while women were well paid for doing the American laundry.¹⁰⁸ As the servicemen brought large quantities of previously unappreciated handcraft, the trade in local goods prospered; on Aitutaki, Islanders bartered intensely with US aircrews stopping over to refuel.¹⁰⁹ The allied occupation became "a profitable and exciting adventure", allowing access to previously unavailable luxury items, such as tobacco, chewing gum, and canned foods.¹¹⁰ In 1943, some wealthy Islanders sailed to Rarotonga to spend their money, only to find the stores depleted due to wartime shipping restrictions.¹¹¹

To some extent, the established economies of the entire group were affected by wartime events.¹¹² The hula-skirt industry in Rarotonga was revived and some astute traders sent bulk supplies to kin working in Auckland, to sell to American servicemen on

¹⁰² Dod, 162-169; Jack McKillop, "The Cook Islands: Physical Description and History," accessed September 14, 2014, <http://www.pacific-war.com/bases/cook.html>. McKillop was part of the Airways and Air Communications Service of the United States Air Force from 1956 to 1959 and compiled the "Combat Chronology of the US Army Airforces from 1941 through 1945".

¹⁰³ *The New Zealand Official Year-Book* (Wellington, N.Z.: Statistics New Zealand, 1942), accessed September 1, 2014, http://www3.stats.govt.nz/New_Zealand_Official_Yearbooks/1942/NZOYB_1942.html.

¹⁰⁴ Dod, 169.

¹⁰⁵ *New Zealand Official Yearbook*, 1942.

¹⁰⁶ Bennett, 147; "Many Openings for New Zealand Traders," *AS*, 3 July 1945.

¹⁰⁷ Coulter, 412.

¹⁰⁸ Coulter, *ibid*; Bennett, 257.

¹⁰⁹ Bennett, *ibid*; Scott, 231-233.

¹¹⁰ Coulter, 412; McKillop; "Many Openings for New Zealand Traders".

¹¹¹ IT102/2/1, Part 1: Ordinance, Makea Nui Takau Ariki; Mrs Love, Ministry of Island Territories, Wellington [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwantanga, National Office, Wellington], Browne to Makea Nui Ariki, 28 April 1943.

¹¹² Gilson, 153; Coulter, 409; "Fruit Supplies." *AS*, 15 January 1945.

leave.¹¹³ Many were engaged in this “colourful little industry”.¹¹⁴ The people of Manihiki sent large quantities of goods some 222 miles (358 km) across the ocean to Penrhyn, to supplement the thriving souvenir market.¹¹⁵ These incomes were a “tremendous boon” to those previously unable to earn, let alone achieve such immediate financial rewards (Figure 10).¹¹⁶ Before long, cash became a commodity “without which even Pacific Islanders cannot get along these days”.¹¹⁷ As one journalist commented, “who can blame the natives for wanting to make a little hay- or grass skirts - while the US sun shines?”¹¹⁸



Figure 10: Joe Cross, Seaman First Class, US Navy, showing off his Aitutaki souvenirs. WW11 Chandler District Honor Roll, Official City Web Site for Chandler, Arizona. <http://www.chandleraz.gov/>.

This buoyant tone suggests all Cook Islanders benefited from the US occupation, but in reality, not everyone thrived during wartime.¹¹⁹ Trade virtually ceased due to lack of shipping and many incomes were lost. This proved a “very trying, difficult and lean” period for some.¹²⁰ In 1943, several destructive storms left some Islands gravely short of food.¹²¹ With no aid forthcoming from New Zealand, Takau Love wrote directly to PM

¹¹³ Bennett, 257; “Revival of Hula Skirt Trade,” *PIM*, November 1944, 14. An estimated 50,000 decorated skirts were shipped from Rarotonga during 1943 and 1944.

¹¹⁴ “Revival of Hula Skirt Trade”; “Sale of Hula Skirts,” *AS*, 17 April 1944.

¹¹⁵ Bennett, 257.

¹¹⁶ Graves, 216-217.

¹¹⁷ “Revival of Hula Skirt Trade”.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ “Fruit Supplies”.

¹²⁰ IT102/2/1, Part 1: Takau Love to PM Peter Fraser, 27 May 1943; “Fruit Supplies”;

¹²¹ IT102/2/1, Part 1: Takau Love to PM Peter Fraser, *ibid.*; “Storm in Islands,” *AS*, 17 March 1943; “Island Hurricane,” *AS*, 23 December 1943.

Fraser, to inform him of their plight and relay the desperate need to relieve pressure of resources.¹²² Island leaders now had more pragmatic reasons to send men off to war, and volunteers from Pukapuka, Mitiaro, Atiu and Mauke waited to hear whether they might serve overseas. Island leaders requested a company of “Rarotongans” be included in the Māori Battalion or 3rd Division; alternatively, they suggested despatching a labour unit to New Zealand.¹²³

The possibility of Cook Island men travelling for work in New Zealand was immediately ruled out. Officials apparently wished to prevent the “social dislocation” suffered by Island girls already sent for domestic service, a “practice” now discontinued.¹²⁴ Behind the scenes, however, they alluded to other reasons for repeatedly denying Cook Island men the opportunity serve, issues that were never publically disclosed. In correspondence with the PM in August 1943, the secretary of the Ministry of Island Territories, R.T.G. Patrick, wrote

The reasons for the non-acceptance of Cook Island natives in the N.Z.E.F. are of course well known to you, but it has been considered injudicious to make any public statement in this regard; the Resident Commissioner has, however, from time to time, published suitable notices in regard to their non-acceptance.¹²⁵

As previously shown, there were undesirable consequences when World War One soldiers returned to the Islands armed with worldly knowledge; perhaps officials intended to avoid another challenge to white hegemony.

In the event, Cook Island energies were diverted to needs closer at hand. Farm production in Australia and New Zealand depended on phosphate fertiliser, normally sourced from Nauru. The increased demands of war made this even more crucial but enemy activity had ended these supplies.¹²⁶ An alternative source was negotiated at Makatea, and Cook Island men were offered service, “of the first importance” to the war

¹²² IT102/2/1, Part 1: Takau Love to PM Peter Fraser, *ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ IT102/4/16, Part 2: Regulations - Labour, Ministry of Island Territories, Wellington [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwantanga, National Office, Wellington], DIT to Acting Minister of Island Territories, 7 July 1944.

¹²⁵ MIT101/12, Part 1: Cook Islands Administration Policy - Changes of Policy Arising from Ministerial Visits, 1929-1954, Ministry of Island Territories, Wellington [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwantanga, National Office, Wellington], DIT to PM Peter Fraser, 11 August 1943.

¹²⁶ Bennett, 121; EX17/1/3, Labour-General-From Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelaus, 1942-1950, Ministry of Island Territories, Wellington [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwantanga, National Office, Wellington], DIT to RC, 1 September 1943.

effort, mining phosphate in French Polynesia.¹²⁷ There was no shortage of willing participants, and the first party of eighty-five workers, mainly from the outer islands, departed in 1942.¹²⁸ On the completion of a one-year contract, thirty-eight men re-engaged for a further term, and three hundred more volunteered for less than 260 available positions.¹²⁹ In time, this particular dislocation proved even more contentious than the domestics' scheme.

On the home front

The war years were regarded as a time of rapid change, of danger and transience where social conventions might be renegotiated. In New Zealand, both Māori and *Pakeha* women were conscripted for essential war work. Under the Industrial Manpower Emergency Regulations (1942), twenty to thirty year olds were required to register for direction, and from February 1943, this was extended to eighteen and nineteen year olds. By January 1944, all women under forty years of age were liable for industrial conscription.¹³⁰ Whether by choice or compulsion, many young women were introduced to city life for the first time. During this turbulent period, their patriotic response was often interpreted as a source of social problems; this was certainly the case from June 1942, when tens of thousands of free-spending US servicemen flooded into northern New Zealand cities.¹³¹

Women's mobility during wartime permitted new-found civil liberties, unprecedented personal freedoms that coincided with increasing concerns over unrestrained sexual behaviour in New Zealand.¹³² With large numbers of local men absent on overseas service, many welcomed the Americans' generous company and courteous ways. Entertaining the "Yanks" became part of the nation's wartime commitment and Māori cultural groups rallied to the cause.¹³³ Cook Islanders also participated, and those associated with Ngati Poneke and Orakei Pa regularly performed for the servicemen. In Auckland, their "hulas and other native dances" added "colour and atmosphere" at many patriotic and charitable functions.¹³⁴ Takau Rio Love drew on

¹²⁷ IT102/4/16, Part 2: DIT to Acting Minister of Island Territories, 7 July 1944. A number of wives and children accompanied the men.

¹²⁸ Men from Rarotonga were discouraged at this point, as their labour was required to restore damaged plantations and buildings.

¹²⁹ IT102/4/16, Part 2: DIT to Acting Minister of Island Territories, 7 July 1944.

¹³⁰ Montgomerie, "Man-powering Women," 185.

¹³¹ Deborah Montgomerie, *The Women's War: New Zealand Women 1939-45* (Auckland, NZ.: Auckland University Press, 2001), 12, 19.

¹³² Montgomerie, *The Women's War*, 152.

¹³³ Broughton and Grace, 176, 179, 197, 202.

¹³⁴ "Maoris to Aid Maoris," *AS*, 23 June 1944.

a pool of up to thirty Island girls living in Wellington, to create a tropical atmosphere greatly appreciated by their audiences.¹³⁵ By November 1942, however, the excessive drinking and loose behaviour of some Māori women were causing concern. A hyper-vigilant society condemned their actions and held these as examples of moral decline induced by war.¹³⁶ Cook Island girls leaving the sanctuary of their employer's home came under similar scrutiny, whether deserved or not, and any errant behaviour was likened to the worst of the Māori girls.

Containment in private homes shielded Island girls during their transition, but nothing could prepare them for the perils of the wartime city. Island administrators used pregnancy outside of marriage as a barometer of moral decay and this occurred in at least seven cases. The employer's responses were varied. Several were sympathetic, providing for maternity care and the needs of the baby. Others requested the Department return their wayward charges to the Islands and some simply cast them out.¹³⁷ For twenty three year old 'Rama', her troubles began at the Wellington home she was sent to in 1942. Her mistress held regular parties and often hosted American servicemen. One of the guests befriended Rama, and when she fell pregnant, her mistress asked her to leave. Rama made her way to Auckland, where she was taken in by a sympathetic family at Orakei Pa. A district nurse and child welfare officer visited her there, and Rama believed they were trying to help her. In reality, they were investigating her "condition" on behalf of the CID, who intended to return her home.

Cook Island girls in "trouble" in New Zealand were generally reluctant to return home. This was largely based "on a feeling that they would be ashamed when they do".¹³⁸ Rama lied, and claimed she had no surviving relatives to return to, rather than confront the "disgrace" that would entail. Officials enlisted the help of the Island Council in Rarotonga, to assure her she would receive a "sincere welcome". Citing the lack of work available at home, Rama still refused to return. A welfare worker from the National Service Department, who helped "in Maori matters", intended to place her in employment as soon as the baby could be put out to "board", but Rama's support networks among Māori circumvented these plans.¹³⁹ The final official record in this case

¹³⁵ "For Women Mrs. Rio Love," *AS*, 26 January 1943; "Rarotongan Girls," *AS*, 23 January 1943; "Carnival News," *AS*, 2 May 1941; "Still Increasing," *AS*, 6 April 1943.

¹³⁶ Some women were reportedly living in brothels and equally undesirable circumstances. Māori leaders complained to Paraire Paikea, Minister in Charge of the Maori War Effort, and insisted on better arrangements for young women sent to the cities.

¹³⁷ Confidential files.

¹³⁸ Confidential file, 27 July 1944.

¹³⁹ If this had eventuated, Rama would have been required to pay for her baby's maintenance.

finds both mother and child happily settled in the home of the head teacher of a native school in the far north. The teacher's wife was reportedly Rama's "Aunt", and the couple were willing to care for the child should the need ever arise.¹⁴⁰

Nineteen year old 'Ana' met an American sailor at a "Rarotongan Night" at the Trades Hall in Wellington in early 1944. Her mistress did nothing to discourage the relationship; she allowed Ana to go out with 'Mario' and welcomed his regular visits to her home. That all changed when she learned Ana was pregnant. She convinced Mario they needed to marry, but Ana rejected these arrangements. Following a heated argument, she packed her belongings and left.¹⁴¹ Concerned for Ana's safety, and mortified at the thought of her "walking the streets", the employer reported the situation to the CID. She offered to help with costs toward the baby and Ana's eventual passage home. With police assistance, Ana was located in the central city, at the home of Mrs Henry, a friend of Takau Love, who offered accommodation and refuge to Island girls experiencing difficulties. Known to the CID, Mrs Henry was considered reputable and sincere; nevertheless, the department preferred the girls to remain in domestic service.¹⁴²

As this was hardly a criminal case, the police were sympathetic in dealing with Ana. Their enquiries revealed she had been "well brought up" under the supervision of nuns in Rarotonga, and was "a girl of good character" when she arrived in New Zealand. Her downfall was her unawareness "of the dangers of a city in war time".¹⁴³ Fearing "trouble from her mother", Ana refused to return home voluntarily. With so many girls now in New Zealand, she knew parents were doing a good deal of boasting about how well their children were getting on. Returning "in disgrace" would undoubtedly ridicule her parents and place them in "greatly dreaded" circumstances.¹⁴⁴ Takau Love offered to accompany her home, but Ana said she preferred to stay in New Zealand. Some girls chose to marry the father of their child, a step which magically negated the need for further surveillance.¹⁴⁵ In this regard, the experiences of these young women were similar to others during this period who dealt with the shame and stigma of unmarried pregnancy.

¹⁴⁰ Confidential file.

¹⁴¹ The US military would have forbidden this marriage as Ana was almost full-blooded Maori.

¹⁴² IT121/1/6, Part 5: McKay to National Service (Manpower Division). n.d., 1944. McKay made these comments retrospectively.

¹⁴³ Confidential file.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. The quote comes from a police report sent to the CID.

¹⁴⁵ IT121/1/6, Part 5: Child Welfare Dept. to Supt. of Child Welfare, Wellington, 18 August, 1944.

Town and country

Throughout the war, country housewives prided themselves on providing a safer moral environment for Cook Island girls. Mrs Hunter was very pleased when 'Rini' joined their farming household; she was settled and happy and proved a great help "during most difficult times".¹⁴⁶ Comfortably situated in every respect, Rini had her own bathroom and a sitting room with a wireless. Within three years, she had all but repaid her passage money and had "a tidy sum" in her savings account.¹⁴⁷ Mrs Hunter thought Rini was a sensible girl, but was not so sure about the other Island girls in the district. Not knowing "much about the facts of life", she believed they were easily led, and much "better out of the towns", especially given the American presence. She was sure girls could be happy enough in the country, "if they are able to get away from time to time".¹⁴⁸

Some in the rural sector made extraordinary efforts to maintain a supply of Island housemaids. Mrs Deans' domestic of three years left at the beginning of the war to join the Women's War Service Auxiliary. This was a great inconvenience, as Mr Deans was often absent on military duties, and Mrs Deans must take his place on the farm.¹⁴⁹ It was such a blessing when Dr. Ellison agreed to select two Cook Island girls on her behalf. When she learned the scheme had been suspended, she took the liberty of writing directly to PM Fraser. She hoped he would not object to her raising the subject, "but I know that you most sincerely appreciate the difficulties of the country housewife".¹⁵⁰ She suggested a special dispensation for rural employers, and promised to organise get-togethers for Island girls in her own area, as they did in Hawkes Bay. "All lead a very quiet life in the country these days", she wrote, but "we take our girls to town with us and always bring them home". This was the "only means of giving them an outing, and in this way one would be able to see that they are properly looked after".¹⁵¹

In the cities, "girls" often had a wider social circle and were more settled and happy. Caroline Marsters worked for the family of Dr Rennie in Wellington and stayed for over five years (Figure 11).¹⁵² Others left at the earliest opportunity, driven by the need to recreate something akin to traditional group living. This is hardly surprising, given the communal nature of their upbringing. The isolation of live-in domestic service, particularly in country areas, was possibly the least likely situation they would choose to

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., Hunter to CID, 19 Jul 44.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ IT121/1/6, Part 3: Deans to PM Peter Fraser, 23 January 1943.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Caroline Munokoa Tutera Marsters Hutton, unpublished personal recollections.

remain in.¹⁵³ In contrast, shared accommodation in hostels and boarding houses, and working together in factories and hospitals, went some way to compensating for the loss of group life; these spaces became emotional comfort zones.¹⁵⁴ One girl happily described her work and living arrangements in a YWCA hostel as “just like my home in the Islands”.¹⁵⁵ As the diverse work and lifestyle opportunities outside of domestic service became widely known, Cook Island women gradually embraced the social life and recreations available to all young New Zealanders. More importantly, sisters, cousins and friends provided support networks that ensured a comfortable transition to mainstream life.¹⁵⁶



Figure 11: Caroline Marsters, a domestic worker from the Cook Islands, with the Rennie children, Wellington, c. 1942. Caroline remained with the Rennie family for six years. Private collection of Grace Hutton.

Several of the young domestics had extended family in New Zealand who took an interest in their welfare, but evidently, employers who assumed ownership of their

¹⁵³ Curson, "The Cook Islanders," 168.

¹⁵⁴ IT121/1/6, Part 5: Many letters express these sentiments.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., Confidential file, 10 July 45; Challis, *Social Problems*, 8.

¹⁵⁶ IT121/1/6, Part 1: RC to CID, 26 January 1942.

workers considered their rights took precedence over family ties. A Rarotongan man living at Orakei Pa was concerned about his two nieces, who were hired by a station owner near Gisborne. He wanted them to join his family, to ensure their good conduct in New Zealand. One girl accepted, and was engaged in essential work under the war effort in Auckland. The Uncle organised similar work for his other niece, and sought permission from the CID to assume responsibility for the welfare of both. The employer was doubly incensed by this “interference”, and demanded the CID put “the acid ... on this gentleman and instruct him to mind his own business”.¹⁵⁷ Takau Love, who was known to the girls as “Aunty Takau”, also kept a close eye on girls in rural placements.¹⁵⁸ When Topa grew unhappy, it was Takau who negotiated her departure with the Smiths and took her to Wellington.¹⁵⁹

The story of Komera and Topa typifies the varied nature of the young women’s introduction to New Zealand life.¹⁶⁰ The Rev. Challis was fully aware the domestic labour shortage would never be solved by using of Cook Island girls; “where they made good in this way”, he wrote, “they usually had an understanding and affectionate employer”.¹⁶¹ Likening them to “a piece of wood floating on the sea at the mercy of the wind and waves”, Challis recognised the need for “group warmth” and the suitability of team employment, situations in which Islanders would later top the list of desirable employees.¹⁶² The young women were unaccustomed to steady toil day after day, and being forced to work at least part of everyday could break their spirit. Acrimonious partings were not unusual, and Challis heard “many bitter things said” by mistresses whose girls just walked away.¹⁶³ Well-intentioned employers asked him what more they could have done to keep them happy, but few understood, that in the absence of family and friends, the pleasant, private accommodation they provided was an isolating rather than rejuvenating space. They forgot “that the gilt on the cage does not make it any less cage-like”.¹⁶⁴ Even Island administrators conceded that the fault did not lie entirely with the girls’ restlessness, but also with the employers’ failure to understand “the character

¹⁵⁷ IT121/1/6, Part 3: Confidential file, 21 December, 1942, and 30 December, 1942.

¹⁵⁸ IT121/1/6, Part 5: Lady Superintendent, Napier Hospital to CID, 8 June 1945.

¹⁵⁹ Morgan, 14.

¹⁶⁰ Morgan, 15-18; “Siteless Ethnography: Possibilities and Limits,” *Social Analysis* 43, no. 2 (1999): 91; Challis, “Immigrant Polynesians,” 47.

¹⁶¹ Challis, *Social Problems*, 12-13.

¹⁶² Challis, “Immigrant Polynesians,” 47, and *Social Problems*, 8, 12. Challis was borrowing a Cook Island saying.

¹⁶³ Challis, *Social Problems*, 2, 12.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

of the natives”.¹⁶⁵

A small number of Cook Island men also migrated to New Zealand during World War Two. Sponsored as farm workers by private arrangement, most failed to adapt to rural isolation and drifted toward Auckland, where construction and factory work was readily available.¹⁶⁶ Unlike the young women, they suffered no repercussions and there was no surveillance of individuals. Women too were attracted to the warmer climate of Auckland, and by 1942, the growing “native population” in the city was causing “considerable apprehension”.¹⁶⁷ This placed pressure on existing resources, and as slum areas developed in the inner city, racial discrimination began to surface. Cook Islanders were implicated in growing social problems, and warned to think very carefully before leaving the conditions they were accustomed to.¹⁶⁸ Notably, this advice took no account of the economic hardship many Islanders were suffering, or the social conditions driving this movement. The perceived problems of the receiving country were clearly paramount.

Wartime prosperity in the Islands was a temporary and unsettling aberration, and in the post-war era, conditions were more variable than ever. Rapid development during this period had unhappily highlighted their “political backwardness”, a view supported by the Americans.¹⁶⁹ The relaxed and outwardly respectful manner of the American servicemen was in marked contrast to the “shut in colonial personality” they were accustomed to.¹⁷⁰ According to Beaglehole, even “the easy-going Islander” could not experience the excitement of the war years “without getting new ideas about themselves in relation to the powers of administration and government”.¹⁷¹ Islanders had no representation in Parliament and no right to vote, but political spirits were bolstered when the people learned of the freedom and democracy enjoyed by others.¹⁷² They witnessed American military personnel able to vote in federal elections, even while serving in one of the most isolated outposts of the Pacific campaign.¹⁷³ They increasingly

¹⁶⁵ MIT101/12, Part 1: Cook Islands Administration Policy - Changes of Policy Arising from Ministerial Visits, 1929-1954, Ministry of Island Territories, Wellington [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwantanga, National Office, Wellington], DIT to PM Peter Fraser, 11 August 1943.

¹⁶⁶ Scott, 227.

¹⁶⁷ “Cook Islanders: Warning”.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Gilson, 193.

¹⁷⁰ Scott, 232.

¹⁷¹ Beaglehole, “Social and Political Changes,” 391.

¹⁷² Coulter, 409.

¹⁷³ T.J. Baldino and K.L. Kreider, *Of the People, by the People, for the People: A Documentary Record of Voting Rights and Electoral Reform* (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood, 2010), 270-276. This became possible under the Soldiers Voting Act of 1942.

begrudged the distinctions being made between Europeans and themselves, both at home and in New Zealand. As British subjects, they particularly resented restrictions on movement and claimed the right to travel throughout the Empire at least.¹⁷⁴ They resented the power invested in the Resident Commissioner, as his word was always “supreme” and they had no say in anything he did.¹⁷⁵ Some grew confident of securing a more enlightened administration, and traditional compliance began to wane.¹⁷⁶



Figure 12: Mr W Tailby, in front of an aircraft, Rarotonga, Cook Islands, September 1945. Whites Aviation Ltd: Photographs. Ref: WA-00971-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/30630105>.

For many, the return to pre-war conditions was untenable. Their brief introduction to American consumerism had instilled a taste for modern conveniences and amusements; dances, picture theatres and radios provided novel alternatives to church activities.¹⁷⁷ In the wake of war, airmail communication and air transport brought the outside world within easier reach, and deprivations became even more obvious (Figure 12).¹⁷⁸ With a greater awareness of the outside world, and an inferred

¹⁷⁴ MIT101/12, Part 1: Cook Islands Administration Policy - Changes of Policy Arising from Ministerial Visits, 1929-1954, Ministry of Island Territories, Wellington [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwantanga, National Office, Wellington], DIT to PM Peter Fraser, 11 August 1943.

¹⁷⁵ IT120/8/1, Allegations by Drury Low to Prime Minister, 1946, re Cook Islands, Ministry of Island Territories, Wellington [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwantanga, National Office, Wellington], Low to PM Peter Fraser, 27 March 1946.

¹⁷⁶ Beaglehole, “Social Change,”

¹⁷⁷ Beaglehole, “Social and Political Changes,” 391; Coulter, 409; Ron Crocombe, “The Theological Students' Walk-out, Rarotonga, 1954,” *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 79, no. 1 (1970): 7. Regular church attendance by men began to decline on Rarotonga, Aitutaki and Penrhyn during World War Two.

¹⁷⁸ Scott, 232; William George (Bill) Coppel, *Education in the Cook Islands since 1939, reviewing the effect of World War II on educational work* (1948), Miscellaneous Papers Concerning Education in the Cook Islands 1922 – 1966, Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, PAMBU 1033, Folder 1.

sense of belonging, the bright lights of New Zealand beckoned the more adventurous. However, most were unable to earn enough money for the fare.¹⁷⁹ All-the-while, Island men working in New Zealand were growing accustomed to consistently good wages and conditions, a point made painfully obvious in 1944. Several migrants returned with the Works Department to construct an airfield at Rarotonga, and local labourers were incensed to learn that ex-residents paid at New Zealand rates received up to ten times as much to carry out the same work.¹⁸⁰

The Congregational Church, to which 75 per cent of Cook Islanders belonged, clearly anticipated this migratory trend. As early as 1944, church leaders acted to mitigate any losses.¹⁸¹ Numbers in Auckland were considered high enough to merit a permanent pastoral presence dedicated to migrant needs, and Pastor Tariu Teaia of Rarotonga was assigned to the role. Teaia met new arrivals off the ships and provided practical assistance, in addition to spiritual guidance.¹⁸² Migration to Makatea proved less satisfactory, however, and unpleasant work and living conditions there fuelled discontent. In April 1945, Island leaders at Rarotonga heard the complaints of twenty men who claimed they had been “virtually blackbirded” into slavery. They were allegedly subject to rigid indenture, low wages and an unsanitary environment, and were expected to survive on poor food and little water.¹⁸³ The *ariki* condemned the scheme, and a report reached the desk of Pat Potter, Maori Liaison Officer to the Auckland Trades Council.¹⁸⁴ Labelled “the worst labour scandal in New Zealand history”, the horrors of the “whole affair” were subsequently published in the Trade Union paper *Challenge*. This exposure initiated a government enquiry.¹⁸⁵

By 1945, over 500 Islanders were “scattered throughout the Dominion”. At least half were resident in Auckland, and in October of that year, the Cook Island Progressive Association (CIPA) formed a branch in the city, to support a similar organisation in the

¹⁷⁹ Rangi Glennon.

¹⁸⁰ “Rapid Travel,” *AS*, 13 January 1945; Mason, 100; Scott, 231, 233. Guaranteed minimum wage legislation in New Zealand protected migrants from exploitation. They were also entitled to Social Security Benefits.

¹⁸¹ The Congregational Church derived from the LMS.

¹⁸² IT90/21/2, Part 1: Cook Islands, Islanders in New Zealand, General Welfare 1947-1961, Island Territories Department, Wellington [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwantanga, National Office, Wellington], DIT to Ministry of Island Territories, 24 September 1948 and Challis to PM Peter Fraser, 15 August 1948. Teaia was a former school teacher in the Islands.

¹⁸³ Mason, 81-82. From a government point of view, wage rates for Cook Islanders working on Makatea were low because they paid no direct taxes or rent, a minimum for food and clothing, and made no contribution to the cost of war.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*; H Roth, “Albert Henry as Labour Organizer a Struggle for Power in the Cook Islands” *The Journal of Pacific History* 12, no. 3 (1977): 176.

¹⁸⁵ Roth, 176-177; Mason, 81.

Islands.¹⁸⁶ Members contended that one law applied to the white people and another to Cook Island Maori.¹⁸⁷ Under the leadership of Albert Henry, future Prime Minister of the Islands, the Auckland group adopted aggressive trade union methods to address the economic struggles of their people.¹⁸⁸ Progress was swift. In 1946, for the first time since 1912, the territory gained direct representation in the form of a Legislative Council.¹⁸⁹ The following year, Princess Te Puea Herangi, who welcomed Makea Tinirau and his party to Ngaruawahia in 1934, made the long-awaited reciprocal visit to the Islands, to show support for their political goals.¹⁹⁰ Beaglehole was somewhat disdainful of her intentions, and “rather vague ideas of Maori unity”, however, Te Puea furnished Fraser with a “highly critical report” of her observations on her return.¹⁹¹

In the post-war years, strikes and industrial action in the Islands drew attention to local grievances. Island representatives personally enlightened Fraser on issues he might otherwise “never hear” about.¹⁹² They alleged that Government officials sent to solve Island problems were “led up the garden path”, feasted and entertained by Island administrators, and kept from those who might divulge the truth.¹⁹³ This ploy was deeply resented by most Islanders.¹⁹⁴ Young migrants in New Zealand were also used as pawns in political manoeuvrings to highlight these issues.¹⁹⁵ A moving appeal in the *Auckland Star* in April 1946 portrays a very negative view of the girls’ experiences.

Our islands are now so poor that our young people are flocking to New Zealand to earn a living. They often fall into bad living conditions and bad company, not knowing any better. Many of our young girls have developed TB and died in New Zealand. Others have gone home to die. Under ordinary conditions many would have remained in our islands and become mothers of large families.¹⁹⁶

¹⁸⁶ Roth, 177; “Cook Islanders,” *AS*, 13 November 1945.

¹⁸⁷ IT120/8/1: Low to PM Peter Fraser, 27 March 1946.

¹⁸⁸ Roth, 177.

¹⁸⁹ Gilson, 200. Self-determination was many years distant and nineteen years elapsed before this became a political reality.

¹⁹⁰ Te Puea visited Rarotonga and Aitutaki.

¹⁹¹ Beaglehole, “Social and Political Changes,” 391; Scott, 248-251; “Waitangi,” *AS*, 29 December 1933; “Rarotongans and Maoris: Very Cordial Relationship,” *PIM*, August 24, 1934, 9. Te Puea’s ancestors had also welcomed Queen Makea at Whatihoehoe in 1885.

¹⁹² IT120/8/1: Low to Tirikatene, 25 July 1946.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ Roth, 178. Nurses, women fruit packers and watersiders were involved in industrial action.

¹⁹⁶ “Moving Appeal: Cook Islands Plaintiff,” *AS*, 20 April 1946.



Figure 13: Young Cook Islanders in Wellington, c. 1947. Private collection of Grace Hutton.

Evidence suggests, however, that migration was a trend of choice rather than necessity. In the post-war years, even larger numbers of Island women accepted sponsorship for work in New Zealand (Figure 13). Hospitals offered attractive wage and accommodation packages for domestic workers and nurse aids, and clothing manufacturers provided similar incentives to those willing to learn the trade.¹⁹⁷ Men sometimes accompanied their wives, going along “for adventure, new scenes and the excitement of city life”.¹⁹⁸ Workers in Makatea could earn enough to buy a one-way ticket to New Zealand, and by 1950, over 1000 Cook Islanders were resident in New Zealand.¹⁹⁹ This was approximately one fifteenth of the Islands population.²⁰⁰ Numbers were increasing by about 200 per year, a migration rate more than half that of the natural increase.²⁰¹ Departures continued under supervision and those desiring to leave were still subject “to examination for health and character”.²⁰²

¹⁹⁷ IT121/1/6, Part 5: Auckland Office, DIT to CID, Wellington, n.d., and Cambridge Clothing Co., Auckland to CID, 4 March 1946. Auckland Hospital proposed night classes for Island girls wishing to train as nurses. Although few Māori women were ever employed as domestics in private homes, they too were sought after for domestic roles in hospitals in the post war era.

¹⁹⁸ Beaglehole, “Social and Political Changes,” 138.

¹⁹⁹ Department of Island Territories, Cook Islands Annual Report for Year Ended 31st March, 1950, *AJHR*, 1950 Session I, A-03, 9; Rangi Glennon; Scott, 230. In 1949, 157 men were employed in Makatea, nearly 6 per cent of the population. As at 31st March, 1950, there were 309 male labourers employed, the largest groups having come from Rarotonga and Mangaia.

²⁰⁰ IT121/1/6, Part 5: DIT, Auckland Office to DIT, Wellington Office, 23 May 1946, and Cambridge Clothing Co., Auckland to DIT, 4 March 1946; Gilson, 207; “Cook Islands Exodus,” *NZH*, 6 July 1950.

²⁰¹ Their numbers in Rarotonga were replaced by incomers from the outer islands.

²⁰² Cook Islands Annual Report, 1950.

The Congregational Church continued to exert a powerful influence over Cook Islanders residing in New Zealand.²⁰³ In 1947, the Rev. Challis was appointed welfare officer amongst Pacific Island migrants and received government funding for this role.²⁰⁴ He sympathetically recalled the suffering and loneliness of early migrants, whose anxiety and frustration sometimes resulted in the inability to cope. Nevertheless, the “power of the magic touch of the mainland” had its effect, and the tides of movement could not be held back.²⁰⁵ The church functioned as a refuge, an insulated space “to withdraw voluntarily from the stress and strain of urban life”.²⁰⁶ It fostered established customs and promoted a feeling of group consciousness, creating an environment where migrants could discuss problems in their own language and according to Polynesian norms.²⁰⁷ Most Cook Island migrants regarded the church as their principal welfare and guidance agency.²⁰⁸

In 1950, Fraser responded to parliamentary and media criticism over the visible and growing presence of Polynesians in Auckland. He now expressed a special interest in the welfare of Pacific peoples. In acknowledging the irreversible influence of the “outer world”, he echoed the views of Ngata eighteen years earlier. Cook Islanders had learned the advantages of living in New Zealand, including full rights of citizenship and the welfare state. He reminded the public that New Zealand had assumed responsibility for these Islands, and these migrants were no different from the ancestors of all New Zealanders, who left home for similar reasons.²⁰⁹ Their choice was now between remaining at home, “impatiently or otherwise, or seeking wider fields”.²¹⁰ A rightful and readily accessible new life awaited them in New Zealand.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the Cook Islanders wartime experiences reorienting personal and national aspirations and paved a path toward globalisation.²¹¹ In chapter one, I established the foundations of Island discontent; I present this chapter as evidence

²⁰³ Hutton, Caroline Marsters, interview by Tuakana Carlson, Wellington, 3 December 1996.

²⁰⁴ IT90/21/2, Part 1: RC to DIT, 24 March, 1948; “Missioner to Work among Polynesians in the Dominion,” *DOM*, 14 July 1948.

²⁰⁵ Mason, 100.

²⁰⁶ Curson, “The Cook Islanders,” 190-191.

²⁰⁷ Robert L. Challis, “The Pacific Islanders in Urban Environments,” *New Zealand in the Pacific*, ed. Bruce Brown (Wellington, N.Z.: New Zealand Institute of Public Administration, 1970), 114.

²⁰⁸ Curson, “The Cook Islanders,” 190-191.

²⁰⁹ IT90/21/2, Part 1: Statement by PM Peter Fraser regarding the entry of residents of New Zealand dependent territories into the Dominion, July 1949.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, DIT to Ministry of Island Territories, 15 July 1949; “Pacific Islanders Face Readjustment Problem in N.Z.,” enclosure in IT90/21/2, Part 1: 12 July 1949.

²¹¹ “Happy Natives,” *AS*, 7 October 1937.

of war hastening, rather than instigated this process. During World War Two, even the inhabitants of the remotest islands became aware of the vast and exciting world beyond, with attractions, entertainments and amenities their parents could never have dreamed of.²¹² War highlighted the limitations of colonial bonds with New Zealand, and this realisation proved a catalyst for political and social change. Cook Islanders had a greater knowledge of New Zealand life, and their metropole finally presented as an accessible land of opportunity, promising regular incomes and the modern standard of living many now desired.

This New Zealand migration story varies demographically from the accepted norm, where immigrant groups of more recent origin have contained smaller proportions of females. The gender structure of Cook Island migrants followed a different pattern, as prior to 1950 the majority were young single females.²¹³ As an ethnic minority group in an unfamiliar land, they were relegated to the isolation of domestic service. Initially, they had few personal contacts, and their lives were dominated by those looked up to as the prestige group in the Islands. They suffered bouts of loneliness and homesickness common to many migrant women, especially those socially isolated from their own culture.²¹⁴ Their trauma was similar to that of Māori women encountering the urbanised world for the first time; both groups found themselves on the margins of mainstream society. Not all young Cook Island women lived with impeccable moral rectitude, but at a time when the sexual freedom of all women came under scrutiny and censure, some were made exemplars of moral decline.

In this chapter I have shown the Cook Island domestics negotiating the minefield of life on the home front. They were anything but hapless victims. In the face of anxious officials and overbearing employers, they demonstrated a high degree of agency, dispelling doubts over their ability to adapt to the New Zealand way of life. As they encouraged one another toward higher goals, their support networks rendered the isolation of domestic service bearable, enabling most to endure until their financial obligations were discharged. Their aims and ambitions were no different from other young women brought to New Zealand under similar circumstances, who used this as a

²¹² J. R. Hanan, "New Zealand Responsibilities in the South Pacific", *New Zealand in the Pacific*, ed. Bruce Brown (Wellington, N.Z.: New Zealand Institute of Public Administration, 1970), 84.

²¹³ At the time of the 1945 census, Cook Islander females in Wellington city outnumbered males by almost three to one.

²¹⁴ Jacqueline Leckie, "Silent Immigrants: Gender, Immigration and Ethnicity in New Zealand," in *Immigration and National Identity in New Zealand*, ed. Stewart W. Greif (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1995), 61.

convenient stepping stone to a more fulfilling lifestyle.²¹⁵ Unlike their European counterparts, however, their residential status was ambiguous and contested, and when problems arose, they were expected to return to the Islands. They were clearly not considered the preferred type for settlement.

After the war, many of the young women travelled home for a holiday, but few ever returned to live permanently.²¹⁶ Even those who had difficulty adjusting were unwilling to return to Island life.²¹⁷ Rather, their evident success “instilled the glamour of city life into their friends” and encouraged others to share in their new-found prosperity.²¹⁸ According to Challis, “the greatest single factor” in accelerating the movement of Cook Islanders to New Zealand was their willingness to help one another through the process of settlement and adaptation.²¹⁹ In this case, the role fell predominantly to young women. In conjunction with the church, they created physical and psychological sanctuaries that protected newcomers from the desolation and loneliness they had endured.²²⁰ The transmission of language and culture generally has limited appeal to young migrant women, and this task is usually reserved for older females.²²¹ In the absence of their elders, many young Island women assumed guardianship over their culture in the New Zealand setting, and strove to raise their people’s profile.²²² As leaders within their communities, a number have since been recognised for their contribution toward migrant integration. One would later describe the challenges of her first ten years in New Zealand as “the steps of a pioneer”.²²³ This seems an appropriate and well-earned title.

²¹⁵ Pickles, "Empire Settlement," 38.

²¹⁶ Numerous letters in IT121/1/6, Part 5, mention girls returning home for holidays. Employers were often concerned their “girls” would be denied re-entry.

²¹⁷ Morgan, 15-18; Sissons, "Siteless Ethnography," 91; Challis, "Immigrant Polynesians," 47.

²¹⁸ Scott, 227; “Islanders Migrate to Dominion”; “Many Pacific Islanders Attracted to N.Z. Cities,” *Dominion*, 9 July 1950.

²¹⁹ Challis, "The Pacific Islanders," 103.

²²⁰ This is a recurrent theme in Morgan’s *Cook Islands Women Pioneers*.

²²¹ Leckie, 74.

²²² Sissons, “Siteless Ethnography,” 91. This is another recurrent theme in Morgan’s *Cook Islands Women Pioneers*.

²²³ Morgan, 18.

Conclusion

As Epeli Hau'ofa noted, the rapid expansion of the world economy since World War Two had a particularly liberating effect on the lives of the peoples of Oceania.¹ In post-war New Zealand, industrial development encouraged the permanent and long-term migration of Pacific Islanders. Long disadvantaged, Cook Islanders increasingly looked to New Zealand as a promised land where they could attain full rights and privileges of citizenship, and share the levels of income and social services available to all New Zealanders. As greater numbers sought to establish a foothold in New Zealand, this took on aspects of a mass movement.²

Apirana Ngata forecast a time when the Islands' population would seek an outlet in this direction, and ancient Polynesian migrations would repeat in the modern manner. Migrants were no longer guided by the stars, but family and friends acting as instruments of transition, helping newcomers navigate their path into a new society. Today, the role of the resident Cook Island community in inaugurating and assisting new migrants is well recognised, however, the origins of this "cultural island" within New Zealand society are virtually unknown.³ In this thesis, I have shown that, as early as 1950, Cook Islanders could rely on their own social, familial and church resources to provide the comfort of community in the New Zealand setting.

I have argued that the foundations of these support structures were laid by the young women who arrived during the 1940s. Many in New Zealand believed Island Polynesians would assimilate easily with Māori, due to ethnic and cultural similarities, but this was not the case. Where sufficient numbers of Cook Islanders congregated, they seldom mixed with other Pacific Islanders or Māori.⁴ According to Challis, marriage registers did not reflect any willingness on the part of young Island women to marry into New Zealand Māori families.⁵ Curson observed that Island Polynesians tended to look down on Māori, who in turn viewed them as rather primitive.⁶

In 1965, the Cook Islands become a self-governing territory in free association

¹ Epeli Hau'ofa, "Our Sea of Islands," *The Contemporary Pacific* 6, no. 1 (1994), 155.

² Peter H. Curson, "The Cook Islanders," in *Immigrants in New Zealand*, ed. Keith Westhead Thomson and Andrew D. Trlin (Palmerston North: Massey University, 1970), 173, 176.

³ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁴ *Ibid.* As numbers in New Zealand grew, few pan-Cook Island bonds were evident, rather links between migrants from the same island or village were closer and more spontaneous.

⁵ IT90/21/2, Part 1: Cook Islands, Islanders in New Zealand, General Welfare 1947-1961, Island Territories Department, Wellington [Archives New Zealand/Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwantanga, National Office, Wellington], Challis to MIT, 7 December 1951.

⁶ Curson, "The Cook Islanders," 194.

with New Zealand. Albert Henry, leader of the Cook Islands Party, was elected as the territory's first prime minister, and the Islands finally achieved "a separate international personality".⁷ This placed the relationship with New Zealand on a higher and more mature level, and the Islands' people started along a "new road".⁸ This course might have been taken much earlier, had Europeans not imposed a form of closed society in the Islands. Missionaries secluded their infant peoples from the moral pollution of the outside world, while overbearing New Zealand officials quietly excluded their colonial children from their own society.

The imperial aspirations of colonial New Zealand clearly exceeded political capacity and financial resources; there was a general perception, however, that the Cook Islands were easy to manage.⁹ Their Island subjects were considered easy-going and contented, lacking in ambition and totally unprepared for citizenship in the modern world. Set on an indeterminate pathway to adulthood, Government policies did little to advance the assumed infantile state of their charges, and during the term of New Zealand rule, time virtually stood still in the Islands. Meanwhile, New Zealanders generally regarded the Cook Islanders as exotic curiosities, novel New Zealanders in name only. Growing associations between Islanders and New Zealand Māori were patronisingly credited with strengthening a sentiment of "aroha" (love) for New Zealand.¹⁰ Island leaders looked to their *tuakana* in Aotearoa as the embodiment of enlightenment and Pakeha in government took advantage of this relationship by using compliant Māori leaders as part of their subjugation process. As a colonised people, Māori understood that true sovereignty in the Islands lay with white New Zealanders, and strongly encouraged the Cook Islanders to retain possession of their land.

As I have shown, New Zealand extended little *aroha* toward the Cook Islanders in terms of inclusion or sense of citizenship. Movement to the metropole was certainly never encouraged; indeed, administrators monitored and controlled the private lives of their subjects to prevent migration, even to the extent of fabricating an unofficial border to contain the people. Nevertheless, the Cook Islands' people perceived "a kind of kinship" with their rulers, ties born of the "familiarity that comes from Pacific people having had the experience of dealing with colonial administrators, teachers, traders and

⁷ Lindsay Watt, "Decolonisation Chapter VII," in *New Zealand as an International Citizen: Fifty Years of United Nations Membership*, ed. M. Templeton (Wellington, N.Z.: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 1995), 118.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹⁰ "From Rarotonga," *AS*, 27 January 1934.

missionaries".¹¹ As patriotic British subjects and nominal citizens of New Zealand, Island leaders looked to their colonial rulers for a pathway into the modern world.

Given the geographical isolation, and the Islanders sense of imposed exclusion from events of the wider world, it is remarkable that the Cook Islands' history should be so strongly influenced by the World Wars. Beaglehole noted how this conflict "left a stirring and dissatisfaction as a gift to the last and contemporary period".¹² Coulter also recognised the political effects, and anticipated that Island administrators would face greater challenges to their authority in the future.¹³ Damon Salesa contended that New Zealand was forced to change its style of rule in the Pacific as a result of World War Two, and I have shown this to be the case.¹⁴ However, this thesis has elaborated on these fleeting observations, and shown that the social ramifications of both wars were much wider than previously thought. Indeed, I have shown that wartime experiences reoriented and accelerated personal and social aspirations, solidifying an existing knowledge base and galvanising those dissidents intent on change.

Finally, this thesis has shown that Cook Island migration in modern times did not begin as a form of collective behaviour in the post war era. To prove my argument, I have revealed the traffic in information that gradually broadened the world view of the Islands' people and eroded compliance for New Zealand's style of rule. In retracing the earlier, more individualistic journeys of Cook Islanders who experienced the modern world, with a particular focus on the years between 1920 and 1950, I have uncovered the road they travelled, one consolidated by knowledge and paved with aspiration. In spite of the many obstacles along that path, for many Cook Islanders, mobility translated into new lives in New Zealand.

¹¹ Teresia Teaiwa and Sean Mallon, "Ambivalent Kinships? Pacific People in New Zealand," *New Zealand Identities: Departures and Destinations*, ed. Tracey McIntosh, James H Liu, Tim McCreanor, and Teresia Teaiwa (Wellington, N.Z.: Victoria University Press, 2005), 208-209.

¹² Ernest Beaglehole, "Social and Political Changes in the Cook Islands," *Pacific Affairs* 21: 4 (1948): 389.

¹³ John Wesley Coulter, "Impact of the War on South Sea Islands," *Geographical Review* 36, no. 3 (1946): 409.

¹⁴ Damon Salesa, "New Zealand's Pacific," in *The New Oxford History of New Zealand*, ed. Giselle Byrnes (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2009), 163.

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Appendix

List of Ministers of the Cook Islands and Senior Officials

New Zealand Government Ministers charged with the Administration of Islands Affairs

1901	R.J. Seddon (Liberal)
1903	C. H. Mills (Liberal)
1906	J. McGowan (Liberal)
1909	Sir James Carroll (Liberal)
1912	Sir Maui Pomare (Reform)
1928	Sir Apirana T. Ngata (United)
1934	M. J. Savage (Labour)
1940	F. Langstone (Labour)
1943	Peter Fraser (Labour)
1949	F. W. Doidge (National)
1952	T. Clifton Webb (National)
1955	T. L. Macdonald (National)
1958	J. Mathison (Labour)
1961	Sir Leon Gotz (National)
1964	J. R. Hanan (National)

Resident Commissioners

1901 – 1909	Lt.-Col. Walter Edward Gudgeon
1909 – 1913	Capt. James Eman-Smith
1913 - 1916	Henry William Northcroft
1916 – 1921	Frederick William Platts
1921 – 1923	John George Lewis Hewitt
1923 – 1937	Hugh Fraser Ayson (1st term)
1937 – 1938	Stephan John Smith
1938 – 1943	Hugh Fraser Ayson (2nd term)
1943 – 1951	William Tailby
1951 – 1960	Geoffrey Nevill
1961 - 1965	Albert Oliver Dare

Secretaries to the Cook Islands Department

1907-1912	F. G. B. Waldegrave
1912 -1913	Capt. J. Eman Smith
1914-1915	No appointment*
1916 – 1921	G. C. B. Jordan
1921-1928	J. D. Gray
1928-1937	Stephan John Smith
1938-1943	William Tailby
1943- 1947	Cyril G. R. McKay
1947-	John B. Wright

* The work was undertaken by a chief clerk