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LANGUAGE, IDEOLOGY, AND IDENTITY:
Referencing Maori in Biographical Collections

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Abbreviations

NA National Archives, Wellington.
WTU Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.
NZPD New Zealand Parliamentary Debates.

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Introduction

This study will examine how Maori are textually represented in the construction of New Zealand. It will do this by comparing texts of collected biography, dating from the late nineteenth-century until the present. Obviously this use of Maori is not unique to reference biography, but this thesis will largely focus on the texts¹ at hand not the wider cultural practices that may lie behind them. The focus on the "text" at expense of "context" reflects the underlying belief that the making of the Maori culture has largely been a textual act.² Texts do not reflect wider political or academic procedures, they construct them. This thesis will look at this phenomenon in the specific location of the reference biography genre.

The texts chosen to form the basis of this study, may appear an arbitrarily selected group with very little that would encourage a natural comparative study. However, as the study progresses the affinities these works have in their modes of textual production will be illustrated. At this point it will be enough to state that these texts all collect together multiple biographies, in the broadest sense of the word, under a national title. Most are concerned with constructing a Maori biographical object in this textual site.

To examine the biographical construction of Maori, emphasis will be on a comparison between *A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* of 1940 and *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* which has

¹ "Text" in this study will take on a wider meaning than "book". Following Derrida, a text will be seen as going beyond the apparent borders of single entities to the other writings that inform the production of meaning in single writings. See, Derrida, Jacques, 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences', *Writing and Difference*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978.

² This approach toward cultural invention can be broadly categorised as "constructivist". See, Tilley, Virginia, 'The Terms of the Debate: Untangling Language About Ethnicity and Ethnic Movements', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 20:3(1997), pp.497-522.

been published since 1990.³ These two works are the major centres of academic and government attempts to use biography for nationalistic purposes. Other collections will also be used, including *The Cyclopedia of New Zealand*,⁴ *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*,⁵ *The Book of New Zealand Women*,⁶ and collections ascribed to Cowan⁷ and Gudgeon.⁸ These other texts will largely be used to show similarities and differences to the *Dictionaries of New Zealand Biography* that are present in the body of collected biography as a whole. Book length biography is largely left aside in this study, except at points where they overlap with collected biography. Reference biography forms a distinctive genre that needs study in its own right.

Most of these collections are reasonably well known in the historiography of New Zealand but a brief introduction is necessary to locate them in the context of this study. Gudgeon's work carries two titles; *The Defenders of New Zealand* and *Heroes of New Zealand*. Published in 1887, in Auckland, it is a collection of military biographies. The subjects are all soldiers of various kinds -

³ Oliver, W.H. (ed.), *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, 1769-1869*, vol.1, Wellington: Allen and Unwin/Department of Internal Affairs, 1990; Orange, Claudia (ed.), *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, 1870-1900*, vol. 2, Wellington: Bridget Williams Books/Department of Internal Affairs, 1992; Scholefield, G.H. (ed.), *A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, (2 vols), Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1940.

⁴ *The Cyclopedia of New Zealand: Industrial, Descriptive, History, Biographical Facts, Figures and Illustrations*, (6 vols), Wellington: Cyclopedia Company, 1897-1906.

⁵ McIntock, A.H. (ed.), *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1966.

⁶ Macdonald, Charlotte, Merimeri Penfold, and Bridget Williams (eds.), *The Book of New Zealand Women: Ko Kui Ma Te Kaupapa*, Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1991.

⁷ Cowan, James, *Maori Biographies: Sketches of Old New Zealand: Descriptive Catalogue of Maori Portraits Painted by Herr. G. Lindauer*, Auckland: H. E. Partridge, 1901; *Book of the Maori Chiefs*, Wellington: Texaco Publications, 1933.

⁸ Gudgeon, Thos. Wayth, *The Defenders of New Zealand: Being a Short History of Colonists Who Distinguished Themselves in Upholding Her Majesty's Supremacy in These Islands*, (alternative title, *Heroes of New Zealand and Maori History of the War*), Auckland: H. Brett, 1887.

volunteers, armed constabulary or imperial soldiers who fought in the land wars. Gudgeon wrote the work as a 'chronicle to their services, so that after-generations may look back with pride on the doings of their forefathers'.⁹ Of the 94 entries that comprise the main section of the work, 11 are kupapa Maori. Most of these eleven are today recognised leaders of the kupapa armies. Major Kemp, Major Ropata, Renata Kawepo, Mete Kingi and Wiremu Katene are included.

The Cyclopedia of New Zealand is a massive work. Published by a private company between 1897-1906. It is made up of six volumes organised on a provincial basis. Some volumes run to over 1500 pages. The vast majority of entries are biography of living subjects. The amount of biography produced in these volumes far outstrips any other New Zealand text¹⁰ but Maori biography are barely present in it. This can partially be explained by the fact the vast majority of biography were included on payment by the subject. *The Cyclopedia of New Zealand* has multiple functions written into it. Chief among these is as an advertisement for potential immigrants.¹¹ These factors, coupled with the way discourses of "development", "settlement", and "progress" are arranged in the text leaves Maori occupying a peripheral textual space. This makes the work unique in terms of New Zealand reference writings. In most other collections appropriation of the indigenous is the key commodity in the writing a national text.

The two collections of James Cowan biographies are, in contrast to *The Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, totally devoted to Maori entries. One, the *Book of the Maori Chiefs*, is a give-away collection of six

⁹ Ibid, title page. It has been described by one critic as a 'sacred object', to be placed along side the Bible in the home of the colonists, see, McEldowney, Dennis 'Publishing, Patronage, Literary Magazines', Sturm, Terry (ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature in English*, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1991, p.549.

¹⁰ This gives this work present uses beyond that of other New Zealand reference biography, e.g., Morton, Madelaine, *Women Named in the Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, (microfilm), Auckland: New Zealand Society of Genealogists, 1986.

¹¹ *Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, vol.1, v.

biography sponsored by Texaco. This can be seen in the light of a whole sub-species of textual productions that circulated Maori biographies through popular media such as calendars, post cards, newspapers and magazines between the wars.¹² These texts located a New Zealand nationalism in the presence of biography of Maori. *Sketches of Old New Zealand*, as the title suggests, makes similar use of the Maori object in constructing a text of New Zealand. These biographies are a companion to the Partridge collection of Lindauer sketches and paintings.

The 1940 *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* was sponsored by the Department of Internal Affairs as part of the centennial publications. Modelled on the British *Dictionary of National Biography*, it seeks to reconstruct New Zealand's past through 'information about any person who had significance in the dominion'.¹³ Maori biography was key to this. The two volumes of the work include entries of people dead by 1940. A proposed third volume of living subjects was never completed because of disputes over payment, copyright, and content between the editor, G.H. Scholefield and the Department of Internal Affairs.¹⁴

The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, dating from 1990, is best read as an update of the 1940 dictionary into the language of the present national discourse. Maori are the supreme site of nationalism in this work. Like its 1940 predecessor it was produced by central government to commemorate the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. The first two volumes, published in 1990 and 1992 and loosely covering the periods 1769-1869 and 1870-1900, will be used for this study. By focusing on the first two volumes only, this study will largely be an account of biography of nineteenth-century Maori. This makes comparison with the 1940

¹² E.g., Scholefield's 'Nga Rangatira' calendar with sketches by Henry Edwards.

¹³ Scholefield, vol.1, xii.

¹⁴ G.H. Scholefield to Secretary of Internal Affairs, 2/4/1949; Department of Internal Affairs internal memo, 17/6/1955; G.H. Scholefield to Secretary of Internal Affairs, 19/2/1962, IA1 62/9/2, NA.

Dictionary of New Zealand Biography possible as the vast majority of Maori entries in that volume "made their mark" in the nineteenth-century.

Between the two dictionaries of biography lies *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*. This work is a standard national encyclopaedia, in three volumes, produced by the Department of Internal Affairs. Biography are interspersed among other historical and geographical entries. Published in 1966, Maori biography are self-consciously important to the text's make-up.¹⁵ Like *The 1990 Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, the idea for the work lay with bureaucrats in Internal Affairs and was approved by cabinet.¹⁶ This state sponsorship of the biographical text is one point where the genre's production varies from the original British model in New Zealand.

The Book of New Zealand Women, by contrast, had no direct government sponsorship. Some grants from university funds 'to assist research and writing'¹⁷ helped fund the project. Like *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* it is concerned with the appropriation of the Maori biographical object. However, it forms a kind of 'alternative'¹⁸ reconstruction of New Zealand history to *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*. This is done through the construction of a 'women's experience' in its biography. All these texts are a combination of imported genres and local practices. Construction of Maori biography reflects this and therefore forms a good example of how New Zealand has imagined itself over the past one hundred years.

When this project is described to people, they respond invariably that it sounds like a literature thesis not a history one. However, this thesis is not located in the wrong academic site. The reason is simple. The jury may still be out on what history is, but it seems

¹⁵ *Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, vol.1, x.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, ix.

¹⁷ *Book of New Zealand Women*, inside title page.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, vii.

that the discipline of history is fundamentally concerned with constructing the effect of change through time in its text. Reference biography will be represented as changing over time in this thesis. When a Maori entry is read in the 1990 *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* there is some fundamental difference from the corresponding entry in the 1940 *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*. This may seem an obvious point but locating this change is problematic.

This thesis, therefore, is a search - a search for where the obvious difference seen in collected biography over time is best understood to reside. Chapter One will look for changes in textual form. Foucault wrote that history is the last resting place for anthropology.¹⁹ Historical biography must be one of the most extreme disciplines of this. It is a textual form that relies on its ability to represent the traditional western concept of humanity - the individual - as narrative. This first chapter examines the narrative structure of the different texts of reference biography in New Zealand. It concludes there is no fundamental difference in structure between nineteenth-century and late twentieth-century production of Maori biography.

Chapter two will examine how "sources" are used in the construction of Maori. It will be seen that a relatively stable set of knowledges are continually transformed into Maori reference biography. How these sources are used will be the focus of this chapter. This combination of a reasonably stable set of narrative tactics and source material produces a relatively stable object - the Maori as "other". The indictment most commonly levelled against "postcolonialism" is its inability to conceive of a subject in terms beyond the "other".²⁰ Chapter three will illustrate this continuity in reference biography of Maori from Cowan through Scholefield and into the present. It may seem unfair to level the accusation of

¹⁹ Foucault, Michel, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, London: Tavistock Publications, 1972, p.14.

²⁰ Bhabha, Homi, 'Minority Manoeuvres and Unsettled Negotiations', *Critical Inquiry*, 23:3(1997), pp.431-459, 437.

reference biography constructing an "other" in its text. It has been argued that history cannot conceive of its object in any way.²¹ However this chapter will seek to illustrate how the stability of commodities used to represent the "Maori" are a specific "other"; the result of the form and historiography used in writing reference biography in New Zealand.

Maori reference biography maybe producing a text of the "other" but this is not producing a standard ideology over time. It will be argued that only in the political effect of biography can significant divergence be found in depictions of Maori. Chapter four will seek to illustrate different ideologies present in the texts. This will be done by showing how the metaphors of power are arranged around the Maori biographical object. It is only on this level that present biographical representation of Maori differs from what preceded it.

The methodology used in this thesis is a mixture of various writing on the nature of history and literature. If one basic assumption overrides the study it is Derrida's notion that writing does not directly signify non-textual objects. Instead literature connotes through transference and difference within the system of writing. The role of the historian is therefore, not to assess the accuracy of the representation of the object, but to read the metaphors of the writing to reveal the ideology present in textual production.

To do this various concepts of textual analysis have been employed in this thesis. Chapter one does not make large scale use of recent theory of biography. The issues raised in this discourse, such as whether biography is primarily fiction or non-fiction, the differences between literary and historical biography, or how biography reflects developments in the history of the concept of personality, are peripheral to the questions of the how and why the Maori is constructed as biography. Instead some narrative theory will be called upon to show how the texts of this study create a Maori "life". The narrative of the life is read as a kind of

²¹ A famous illustration of this is Derrida's critique of Foucault's writing on madness. See, Derrida, Jacques, 'Cogitio and the History of Madness', *Writing and Difference*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978.

overarching metaphor, that provides a code which the reader recognises as mimicking a life.

Chapter two uses De Certeau's and other writings on the nature of historical production to inform the notion that "sources" are a process of constructing, privileging, and self justifying certain knowledges in Maori biography. Chapter three's use of theories of the "other" obviously owes a lot, indirectly, to the writings of Edward Said. He described *Orientalism* as 'a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience....In addition the Orient has helped to define Europe'.²² If Orient is substituted for Maori and Europe for New Zealand, the basic premise of chapter three is well summarised. Closer to home, Bernard Smith's study of European textual experience in the South Pacific is a very early and helpful model for this kind of thesis. Chapter four's focus on the text as ideology borrows heavily from Foucault's and Bakhtin's concepts of "truths" as literary production.

The purpose of this thesis is to help shed some light on the construction of nationalism through the production of history in general and biography in particular. The relationship in New Zealand between government and academic production of knowledge is central to this process. The interest in government sponsored production of history reflects the belief that this process continues to be influential in the ways nationalism is imagined in New Zealand. The fundamentally political nature of using and producing "Maori" history is beginning to be acknowledged.²³ It is hoped this thesis will contribute to the process of historians being aware of the political ends they serve.

²² Said, Edward W., *Orientalism*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1978, p.1.

²³ E.g., McHugh, Paul, 'Law, History and the Treaty of Waitangi', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 31:1(1997), pp.26-42.