

WEBS OF EMPIRE

Locating New Zealand's Colonial Past

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CONTENTS

Preface: Connections, Comparisons and Commonalities	6
Acknowledgements	9
Note on Language and Usage	12
INTRODUCTION: Relocating Colonial Histories	13
REFRAMING COLONIALISM	25
1. Race and the Webs of Empire	26
CONNECTIONS	51
2. Writing Out Asia	52
3. Teaching Māori About Asia	67
4. India in New Zealand	84
5. Te Anu's Story	107
EMPIRE	125
6. Sealers, Whalers and the Entanglements of Empire	126
7. Christianity, Colonialism and Cross-Cultural Communication	139
8. War, Knowledge and the Crisis of Empire	161
WRITING	179
9. Archives, Empires and Histories of Colonialism	180
10. Mr Peal's Archive	192
11. Paper, Pen and Print	207
12. Writing and the Culture of Colonisation	230
PLACE	247
13. Thinking Local	248
14. On Place, Space and Mobility	266
CONCLUSION: Writing the Colonial Past	285
Editorial Note	298
Endnotes	300
Index	361

PREFACE

CONNECTIONS, COMPARISONS AND COMMONALITIES

This book explores how the British Empire operated during the nineteenth century, focusing on the development of the imperial connections and cultural processes that underwrote New Zealand's incorporation into the empire and shaped its development. It especially considers the role of knowledge – about the environment, the indigenous people and their traditions, and the place of Māori within the deep history of human migrations and social development – in empire-building and colonisation. But the history of colonial knowledge making offered in *Webs of Empire* is never simply a story of the unproblematic transplantation and reproduction of British traditions and conventions to an empty colonial space. Rather, it demonstrates that translation, accommodation and improvisation significantly shaped colonial knowledge in a setting where indigenous communities struggled hard to protect their autonomy, remained able to contest state policy and maintained key aspects of their knowledge systems even as they lost their sovereignty and valued sources. Even this volume is primarily imagined as an attempt to grapple with the cultural history of British imperialism; strong emphasis is placed on processes of indigenous knowledge transmission and the significant imprint of some of these traditions on British understandings of landscape, Māori cultural origins and traditional history, te reo Māori (the Māori language) and Māori cosmology and ritual life.

In reconstructing some key forms of colonial knowledge and the ways in which cultural difference was produced within the empire, many of the essays in this volume complicate or challenge framings of the colonial past that are organised around simple dichotomies such as colonisers/colonised or settler/native. They do this in two key ways. First, they highlight important forms of translation and appropriation, novel religious idioms that blended old and new and innovative forms of indigenous modernity that sit uneasily with neat visions of bounded and fixed cultures. Second, many of the essays here demonstrate that many seemingly small and localised encounters were underpinned or inflected by connections that reached out beyond the immediate site of engagement. Many of the linkages that

I explore in the volume tied New Zealand to Britain's Asian empire, especially its colonial holdings in India. The authority of national histories means that such networks often seem surprising now, but I suggest that these expansive links were integral to the operation of the empire. India in particular functioned as a sub-imperial centre as well as a religious and intellectual touchstone for important strands of Anglophone thought for much of the nineteenth century, and its influence was threaded through the economic, cultural and religious life of colonial New Zealand in a variety of ways. Rematerializing the networks and processes that created various forms of interdependence between so-called settler colonies (such as Canada, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand) and Britain's dependent empire in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean is particularly important, I would suggest, given the prominence of scholarship on the so-called British World since 2000. That approach, which has been driven by a desire to re-center the history of the white settler colonies within scholarship on the British Empire, has shown interest in imperial networks, but primarily when such connections forged alliances and bonds between white colonists in various colonial locations in addition to the 'imperial centre', Britain itself. It is possible to read this volume as an extended riposte to any reading of imperial history that implicitly or explicitly makes the history of the empire primarily a story of colonisers or Britishness and thereby renders indigenous mentalities, pre-colonial social formations and native textual traditions and sources marginal or even invisible.

Thus, in exploring New Zealand's place within the empire, *Webs of Empire* is also about how historians work: how they conceptualize their archives, how they read source material, how they position themselves in relationship to the places they study and the spatial units they deploy (from the locality to the district to the province to the nation to the empire) and how they can reconstruct the forms of cultural traffic that knitted the empire together. Such methodological questions have become prominent points of debate within the voluminous scholarship produced on British colonialism since 1990: while often heated, such exchanges have generally been productive, and they have opened up a variety of different pathways into the past.

Aspects of the volume intersect productively with Canadian scholarship. The essays that reassess knowledge production and communication, for example, merit reading against Cole Harris's studies of British Columbia or even the paradigmatic works of Harold Innis on media and communication, works that are themselves a key touchstone for several pieces in this collection. The studies of mobility and place making work alongside the scholarship of Carolyn Podruchny, Nicole St-Onge and Brenda Macdougall on the centrality of mobility in the operation of the fur trade and making of Metis communities. And the essays that explore connections to Asia and encounters between colonists of Asian origins and Māori

bear useful juxtaposition with the recent work of Henry Yu and Renisa Mawani on the engagements produced by imperial mobilities, migration and colonisation. More generally, the arguments here about the nature and consequences of imperial connections can be read in dialogue with Laura Ishiguro's work on the expansive global familial connections of BC colonists, Adele Perry's influential investigations of power and cultural difference at the edge of the British Empire or Mawani's *Colonial Proximities*. And given the growing interest in global or transnational reframings of the Canadian past, this volume will serve as further stimulus for critical work that is alive to the need to write histories that look both under and beyond the nation.

Hopefully, *Webs of Empire* will not only offer a valuable set of insights into one colony and its imperial connections but will also feed into broader debates over how to make sense of empires and how to write histories of colonialism. In particular, it might help catalyse new work on the connections and commonalities that link the histories of Canada and New Zealand or help stimulate new comparative work. Such work can build on some solid foundations, including Mark Francis's monograph on colonial governors, Katie Pickles's studies of imperial feminism, Charlotte Macdonald's work on bodily culture, Kenton Storey's exploration of press networks, Angela Wanhalla's examinations of mixed-descent communities and recent scholarship on comparative legal cultures. These examples have demonstrated that there is real value in both comparative and connective histories that prise open nationally bounded approaches to writing about colonialism. That is a crucial project if we are to make sense of the legacies of empires, which were so central in producing many of the continuities and commonalities that link societies such as Canada and New Zealand, even as the weight of geography, the particularities of the demography of particular communities and their respective positions within the empire produced very real and important divergences. Assessing those connections, uniformities and differences is one key avenue for making sense of how the British Empire worked and its role in producing a particular form of global modernity.

NOTE ON LANGUAGE AND USAGE

This volume uses macrons to mark long vowels in te reo Māori words and proper names (for example, iwi, hapū, churches, meeting houses and canoes) but not on personal names and places. Using macrons was not a common practice during the nineteenth century, the focus of this book. All quotes in this book are direct transcriptions, so such material drawn from nineteenth century texts will typically lack macrons. More generally, there are some cases where it is also unclear where macrons might have been used with historical names and in these instances no macrons have been inserted.

Another linguistic issue relates to dialectal variation. In the southern South Island there is preference for ‘k’ in the place of ‘ng’ digraph. Throughout the volume when I discuss those portions of the Ngāi Tahu iwi that live south of the Waitaki river, I have used the southern dialect forms that prefer ‘k’ (thus ‘Kāi Tahu’ rather than ‘Ngāi Tahu’ or ‘rakatira’ rather than ‘rangatira’). When I am discussing the broader tribal community or Māori culture and history more generally, however, I revert back to the ‘ng’ usage.

INTRODUCTION

RELOCATING COLONIAL HISTORIES

Colonisation and its legacies continue to stand at the heart of New Zealand life. The fact of colonisation is undeniable, but it is an awkward and frequently divisive heritage, generating faultlines across the cultural and political landscape. The nature of colonial rule, its immediate effects and its role in producing abiding inequalities are most visibly contested in front of the Waitangi Tribunal, an institution that has been integral to reshaping the state since 1985 and whose inquiries have generated a substantial body of historical research and argument. But colonialism is widely debated beyond the Tribunal: it is subject to often heated exchanges in parliament, in editorials and letters to the editor, on talkback radio, and on blogs. The colonial past also provides rich material for New Zealand creative artists, who are not only drawn to its drama and conflict, but have also seen it as a powerful mirror to reflect on the shape of our contemporary society and our values, anxieties, and conflicts.

For successive generations of Māori activists, colonialism has been central in explaining the challenges their people face: they have persistently sought recognition and some have demanded redress for the wrongs of the past. Conversely, some academics and Māori leaders, a significant number of politicians and many state functionaries have also suggested that the colonial past is the source of a set of guiding ideals that provide the charter for creating a fairer and more just society, a bicultural New Zealand built around the ‘principles’ of the Treaty of Waitangi. Embracing these principles, it has been suggested, will allow New Zealanders to ‘heal’ the past and move forward together with a clear contract guiding cross-cultural relations.¹

There remains, however, significant public anxiety about such visions. For many Pākehā, Treaty talk makes them worry about the shape of the future. But, equally importantly, it also has little to do with their understanding of their own connections to the colonial past. Heated public exchanges over the violence and inequalities of colonialism seem far removed from the family trees and stories passed down the generations that frame many families’ sense of history. By their very nature, popular genealogy and family history have little interest in the political economy of the colonial order. Genealogies record the marriages and births that

make families, while family histories tend to narrate how ‘migrant’ ancestors worked hard, built relationships, struggled to get ahead in New Zealand. Some New Zealanders still feel that these contests over the colonial past should be put aside, this difficult history should be forgotten, and that the nation’s focus should be confronting ‘contemporary’ problems and building a vibrant economic future.

Thus, colonial history has been a key ground for what Russell Brown has called the ‘Great New Zealand Argument’, the protracted and perhaps endless contest over the nature of our past and our national identity.² Historians have made crucial contributions to these arguments and, more broadly, scholarly work on the development of colonial New Zealand has fed into a wide range of contemporary discussion through accessible and popular national histories, influential documentaries, and high school texts written by leading professional historians. Historical scholarship has also shaped public understanding of the colonial past through exhibitions and museums (including, but not limited to the national museum Te Papa Tongarewa) and through important public history initiatives such as *Te Ara*, the online encyclopaedia of New Zealand produced by the Ministry for Culture and Heritage.

Although historians influence arguments over colonialism and its legacies, contemporary interpretations of colonialism remain open to debate. This is not surprising: after all, history as a discipline can be understood as a contest of interpretations and the range and complexity of archival materials that historians use can support a wide range of readings of the past. Assessing the quality of extant work against the evidence and asking new questions of archives allows historians to contest existing interpretations and to elaborate new visions of the past. Drawing on a particular professional trajectory and archival work, the journal articles and book chapters gathered here develop a distinctive approach to New Zealand’s history from the 1770s through to 1900. While they offer reassessments of well-known transformations that shaped colonial culture – such as the wars of the 1860s or the rise of Māori Christianity – more broadly they reflect on lesser-known stories and offer new vantage points on the colonial past.

Taken together, these writings stress the need to understand colonialism in New Zealand not as the distant foundations from which an increasingly confident and independent nation developed, but rather as part of the larger dynamics of British empire-building. These chapters reconnect New Zealand’s history with broader history of Britain’s commercial intrusions, territorial conquests, and transfers of population to imperial frontiers, placing a particular emphasis on the significance of a diverse and shifting range of connections to Britain’s colonies in Asia. Although it seeks to return New Zealand’s development to the history of the empire that shaped it so profoundly, this collection does not aim to turn back the cultural clock and to simply view New Zealand’s history from the perspective of London. Rather, it explores the interactions between global

forces, imperial linkages, and local developments on the ground on the New Zealand frontier. By stressing the value of neglected archives, exploring histories that sit uneasily within received ways of thinking, and framing our colonial past within larger global processes, *Webs of Empire* offers some new pathways into the colonial past.

The chapters that make up this collection have been written over the past eleven years, appearing as essays in a wide range of international and New Zealand publications. The main body of the book is made up of four groups of chapters. While it would have been possible to organise them in a variety of other schemes, each group of chapters works well together and can be productively read as a set. Most of the clusters are organised roughly by order of publication and this chronological scheme allows readers to trace developing ideas and shifts in interpretation and emphasis.

The collection opens with 'Race and the Webs of Empire', establishing most of the themes that run through the collection as a whole. These include the integrative work of empire, the changing nature and significance of networks that linked the colony to India, and the ways in which colonial encounters generated new understandings of cultural difference and new forms of knowledge. When it was first published in 2001, this piece offered a distinctive new approach to the history of British empire-building. In the old imperial history tradition, historians frequently saw the empire from London (or, less frequently, the industrial mill towns or Oxbridge) and imagined power, influence and capital flowing from the imperial centre out to the colonial periphery. In the late 1980s and 1990s, this tradition had been rejuvenated by the detailed and sophisticated work on the development of the imperial economy by Peter Cain and Tony Hopkins. Cain and Hopkins argued the power and influence of the 'gentlemanly capitalists' – merchants, financiers, and moneymen – of England's southeast, rather than northern industrialists, played a pivotal role in driving forward the extension of British imperial power, both through direct colonial rule and 'informal imperialism' in places like China and Argentina.³

At the same time, a cohort of feminist historians led by Catherine Hall, Antoinette Burton and Mrinalini Sinha had also turned their focus to the connections between the metropole and its colonies. Where Cain and Hopkins's focus was economic, this feminist work examined the ways in which empire-building modified culture, focusing on how colonialism depended upon and in turn reshaped gender ideologies.⁴ Hall, Burton and Sinha were deeply interested in how the colonies shaped Britain itself, identifying connections with the colonies which transformed the landscape of British high politics, intellectual life, and debates over the rights of women. This kind of work was energised by a set of long-running and overlapping debates within Britain over the nature of Britishness, the impact of migration from the Commonwealth on British culture,

and the legacies of British imperialism. This tradition of politically engaged scholarship predated the call of the anthropologist Ann Stoler and the historian Frederick Cooper to bring metropole and colony into a single frame in a widely cited 1997 essay.⁵ These feminist examinations of the interweaving of British culture with its Caribbean and South Asian colonies laid the foundation for the ‘new imperial history’, which took shape in the later half of the 1990s and which was defined by its interest in what Bengali historian Partha Chatterjee called the ‘rule of colonial difference’.⁶

‘Race and the Webs of Empire’ pushed the analytical concerns of the ‘new imperial history’ in a new direction by offering a distinctive model for understanding the spatial organisation of the British Empire. It was a gloss on *Orientalism and Race: Aryanism in the British Empire*, published in December 2001 and a revision of my Cambridge PhD thesis. In tracing the dissemination and reworking of the idea of an ‘Aryan race’ across the British Empire – from India to Britain and Ireland, to Southeast Asia and Polynesia, including New Zealand – both ‘Race and the Webs of Empire’ and *Orientalism and Race* placed new emphasis on ‘horizontal’ connections that gave the empire shape. ‘Horizontal’ linkages were the networks and exchanges that fashioned new forms of interdependence *between* colonies. In New Zealand’s case some important horizontal connections include the movement of sealers, whalers and sailors across the Tasman Sea, the influence of Port Jackson capitalists in the exploitation of southern New Zealand’s natural resources through to the 1840s, and the flows of migrants from the Australian colonies to settlements in New Zealand, including the influxes of white miners in 1861–2 and then Cantonese miners from Victoria from 1865. While such relationships between Australia and New Zealand might be well known, a host of other relationships between New Zealand and other British colonies also developed. *Orientalism and Race* particularly highlighted a range of personal, institutional and textual connections that formed between British India and New Zealand. It demonstrated how these carried ideas and arguments about cultural difference and racial history shaped by British colonialism in India to New Zealand and reconstructed the ways in which these India-derived templates were reworked and contested in New Zealand. This approach did not deny the significance of Britain itself and continued to explore the important ‘vertical’ linkages which linked individual colonies back to Britain itself and vice versa. It did however demonstrate that colonial development was shaped by a complex mesh of flows, exchanges, and engagements that linked New Zealand to other colonies as well as to Britain, the heart of the empire.

As a result of its emphasis on the coexistence of these vertical and horizontal links, this approach imagined the empire as a web-like structure and it offered a new way of thinking about the operation of the empire. Rather than envisaging the empire’s structure as resembling a spoked wheel, where Britain was simply

linked to each colony through a discrete and self-contained relationship, it reimagined the empire as messier and more dynamic, a set of shifting linkages that were constantly being remade as the relationships between colonies, as well as between Britain and its colonies, shifted. The historical geographers Alan Lester and David Lambert have summarised the significance of this new vision:

Ballantyne's project has been dependent on an unusually explicit and extended discussion of the British empire's weblike spatiality. He argues that the image of the web 'captures the integrative nature of cultural traffic, the ways imperial institutions and structures connected disparate points in space into a complex mesh of networks'. As Ballantyne notes, the utility of a networked or 'webbed' conceptualisation goes further: it enables us to think about the inherent relationality of nodal points or 'centres' within an empire. Undercutting the simple metropole-[colony] binary divides, places and people can be 'nodal' in some of their relations with immediate hinterlands or subordinates (Calcutta in relation to Bengal, for instance), and yet simultaneously 'peripheral' in some of their relations with other Centres (Calcutta in relation to London).⁷

Chapter Ten in this collection, 'Mr Peal's Archive', recounts how this 'web' model took shape through archival research, but here it is important to note that this way of thinking about the nineteenth-century empire has been productive because the web metaphor was deeply rooted in Victorian culture. In her response to *Orientalism and Race*, Catherine Hall suggested that this was one of the strengths of the analytical model, noting that George Eliot's *Middlemarch* deployed webs as a metaphor for the exploration of 'provincial life' in Victorian Britain.⁸ The metaphor of the empire as a web of connections was also frequently used in discussions of imperial policy and colonial connection in Britain, the Australian colonies, and New Zealand, especially in the later years of Victoria's empire.⁹

In the wake of 'Race and the Webs of Empire' and the publication of *Orientalism and Race*, the idea of the 'webs of empire' has been widely adopted and invoked by historians of modern British imperialism. It has also been embraced by scholars working on the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century empire, including the study of Tudor and Stuart cosmopolitanism by Alison Games entitled the *Web of Empire*, and by scholars of Spanish, French and other imperial systems.¹⁰ Often it has been used to gesture towards the significance of the connections and the cultural traffic that were the lifeblood of empires, rather than as a starting point for research that carefully reconstructs the operation of the changing circuits of imperial systems. Nevertheless, together with Alan Lester's work on the imperial networks that supported British colonial governance and humanitarian reform movements, *Orientalism and Race* offered a significant template for thinking about the broader patterns of movement and exchange that underpinned the empire as well as moulding the development of individual colonies.¹¹

My own later study of the transformation of Sikh culture, *Between Colonialism and Diaspora* (2006), reaffirmed the value of the approach and placed particular emphasis on the ways in which colonial networks followed, cannibalised, extended and reworked pre-existing indigenous networks. Unlike the developing 'British World' approach to the history of the empire, which focused on settler colonies (Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa) and highlighted the bonds that linked whites across the empire, *Between Colonialism and Diaspora* also stressed the ability of colonised people to generate patterns of regularised contact and exchange. Under British rule colonised people constructed their own independent sets of contacts (for both cultural purposes and to enable resistance against empire) as well as building institutional, financial and political webs of connection that nestled inside imperial networks.¹² Thinking about the webs of affiliation and association created by indigenous and colonised peoples – before, during and after empire – remains a productive line of thought and its value in the New Zealand context has been stressed by Damon Salesa and Alice Te Punga Somerville.¹³ *Between Colonialism and Diaspora* briefly discussed New Zealand's place in Punjabi diasporic networks during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, gesturing to the broader history of New Zealand's historical relationships with Asia.¹⁴

Links to Asia are the focus of the first grouping of chapters in this volume, gathered under the rubric 'Connections'. These pieces emphasise the integrative work of empires in 'Race and the Webs of Empire'. The first of these, 'Writing Out Asia', offers a set of critical reflections on how the history of transnational forms of interdependence have been marginalised by the strength of national history writing in New Zealand. Rather than suggesting that Pākehā racism was the sole cause of the marginalisation of Asia and Asians in the national imaginary – a common argument – this chapter argues that the exclusion of Asians was in fact central to the project of nation-building from the late nineteenth century. More broadly, it suggests that while the reworking of national history into a bicultural mould has rested on a deepened appreciation of Māori histories and, more particularly, on Māori-Pākehā relations, this new model still depends upon the exclusion of Asia and Asians.

After writing this polemical essay, it was necessary to reconstruct some of these historic connections to Asia beyond my initial work on Aryanism. One significant starting point for that project was an essay co-authored with Brian Moloughney, examining how networks that linked Otago to China and India changed over time and shaped the region's colonial culture.¹⁵ In that essay, which is not included in this collection, we offered some thoughts on how such networks operated and changed shape within a context of colonisation, traced the ways in which Asia imprinted colonial material culture in the south, and identified some significant encounters between te ao Māori and Asia in the Murihiku region (south of the Waitaki river).

Such encounters could be imaginative as well as face-to-face. Chapter Three, 'Teaching Māori About Asia', offers some broad reflections on Māori engagements with Asia and Asians before focusing more narrowly on the ways in which Māori readers 'discovered' Asia in newspapers in the second half of the nineteenth century. This chapter, which can be productively read alongside other recent studies of Māori newspapers (especially Lachy Paterson's *Colonial Discourses*), stressed the texture and complexity of colonial racial formations.¹⁶ It noted that Māori themselves wrote about the nature of race and cultural difference and also exhibited significant interest in Asia. Māori editors and writers offered critical reflections on political developments, including colonial rule, in Asian colonies and these types of engagements with Asia were obviously meaningful for some Māori communities as some supported charitable initiatives designed to help India and China during times of crisis.

Chapter Four, 'India in New Zealand', works on an even bigger canvas and draws attention to some of the ways that connections to India helped shape colonial economic life and social practices and how they also moulded understandings of religious difference in New Zealand. It highlights the importance of Protestant Christianity in influencing colonists' engagements with India and, in particular, providing a framework for understanding South Asian religious traditions. As the chapter shows, such questions were not simply academic: the growth of theosophy and the commitment of colonial Protestants towards supporting overseas missionary work meant that the nature of Hinduism was subject to regular debate in the colony.

The final chapter in this section moves away from these broad reflections on the role of economic, religious, and cultural links to Britain's Asian colonies in the making of New Zealand to reconstruct the life of one man. It explores the shadowy history of a lascar, a sailor from India, who made his home amongst Kāi Tahu Whānui in the first half of the nineteenth century. 'Te Anu's Story' explores the difficulties of reconstructing such encounters and reflects on where he fitted into developing ideas about cultural difference in the south of the South Island. His story is a reminder of the long history of cross-cultural encounters in these islands and the ways in which individual lives can sit uneasily with the broad racial categories that are frequently mobilised in explaining the development of New Zealand society.

These chapters on Asia's significance in shaping colonial life all stress the pivotal role of the British Empire in mediating the relationships between locations and communities in New Zealand and those in Asia. The three chapters that make up the second section of the volume focus on the dynamics of empire-building in nineteenth-century New Zealand. The first of these, 'Sealers, Whalers and the Entanglements of Empire', examines the cultural forms that enabled early imperial intrusions into southern New Zealand. Rather than seeing the signing

of Treaty texts in 1840 or the arrival of the first colonists attached to the Otago colony in 1848 as initiating the south's incorporation into the British Empire, this chapter explores the region's imperial connections from the 1790s, offering a reassessment of sealing and whaling. Setting aside popular stereotypes of these men as rambunctious working-class adventurers, it sees their work as driving forward particular forms of imperial extraction and as providing the foundations for the region's colonisation, a process that was shaped by the capital and initiative of powerful maritime magnates as well as the endeavours of individual sealers and whalers who settled in the south.

This re-evaluation of sealing and whaling is grounded in a reassessment of the culture of these industries. Although it has been common to stress the informal and oral nature of maritime culture, this chapter highlights the importance of writing in shaping the organisation of these industries and in propelling the exploitation of the resources found on the New Zealand frontier. The connections between culture and empire also are at the centre of Chapter Seven, which explores the connections between Christianity, colonisation and cross-cultural communication in nineteenth-century New Zealand. It suggests that the ability to read and write frequently allowed Māori to wrench control of Christianity out of the hands of missionaries and was a key element of the construction of a range of indigenised Christian traditions during the nineteenth century. These used Christian teaching, the Bible, and innovative Māori readings of Christianity as powerful and flexible tools that could be deployed in criticising the developing inequalities of the colonial order, to map alternative visions of the colony's social and political future, and to assert God's particular love for Māori. This chapter demonstrates that while Christianity and colonialism were entangled in some significant ways, new religious traditions also reshaped Māori society and were at the heart of Māori attempts to reorder their society and to exercise control over their prospects.

The connections between religion and colonial rule are also explored in Chapter Eight. Where Chapter Seven examines the links between religion and colonial power in New Zealand across the nineteenth century, this chapter focuses on a narrower period – the late 1850s and 1860s – but places New Zealand in a broader imperial context. It offers a connective and comparative reading of the crises and conflicts that shook British rule in New Zealand and India and the strategies that the British used to reconstruct their authority. While it examines the importance of information gathering and cross-cultural understanding, it highlights the limits of 'knowledge' as an explanatory tool for making sense of these conflicts and the subsequent reordering of imperial power. The chapter stresses the ways in which colonial states re-established their authority through these crises, as they deployed violence and coercion, but also made use of the law and court systems to suppress threats to their authority. It also highlights some

of the states' strategies designed to build new connections to communities that remained 'loyal' in order to shore up authority in the long term. This exercise in reading the histories of colonial India and New Zealand against each other shows that colonial anxieties about the 'native mind' and the threat of rebellion persisted into the twentieth century and that religious movements amongst colonial populations caused particular concern. Moreover it demonstrates that colonial regimes were consistently anxious about the limits of their knowledge and power and this anxiety often propelled violent and coercive responses to any challenge to the state's authority.

The kind of culturally oriented approach to the history of empire-building that runs through these first two sections of *Webs of Empire* has frequently focused on 'colonial knowledge'. Over the last two decades historians have been consistently interested in how knowledge gained in the colonies reshaped European world views as well as the ways it facilitated colonial conquest and control. My understanding of the nature and development of colonial knowledge emerged out of working in archives in Britain and India. At the same time, however, it was also shaped by scholarship on colonial India that emphasised the 'dialogic' processes that made knowledge on the frontiers of the empire. In this view, 'colonial knowledge' was not simply produced by Europeans working within established European intellectual frameworks, but rather it was generated out of cross-cultural engagements and negotiations between European imperial agents and local experts, intellectual traditions, and knowledge traditions. This kind of work – produced by Eugene Irschick, Chris Bayly, and Norbert Peabody – emphasised the ways in which colonial knowledge was implicated in local conversations, debates and tussles.¹⁷ Such a reading was at odds with the more instrumentalist approach of some anthropologists and historians who emphasised the ways in which 'knowledge' was largely constructed on British terms with the aim of being wielded as an instrument of colonial control.¹⁸

Questions about the development of colonial knowledge form the focus of the third section of this collection: 'Writing'. In Chapter Nine, an essay written in 2004, I set out some of the possibilities that the literature on South Asia might offer for New Zealand historical writing and note some of the striking divergences between the historiographies of the two colonies. In exploring the particular value of using archives as sites of analysis, rather than thinking of them as storehouses of evidence, I place particular emphasis on the underdevelopment of scholarship on gender and knowledge construction in the New Zealand context. This remains an important gap in our historiography and although my work on South Asian and global history is attentive to gender and sexuality, my own writing on colonial knowledge in New Zealand has to date made only limited use of gendered analysis.¹⁹ Future work should think carefully about how sexuality mediated knowledge production as well as exploring the ways

in which knowledge within the colony was ordered around gendered divisions, including important distinctions between public knowledge and private or familial knowledge.²⁰

The remaining chapters in this section branch out in a variety of directions. Chapter Nine's concern with how historians conceptualise archives is extended in the subsequent chapter. This uses the archive of a British tea planter based in Assam held by the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington to think about the awkward relationship between archives produced by empire-building and national repositories that might be thought of as providing the memory for the nation state. 'Mr Peal's Archive' explores both the centripetal and centrifugal forces that shape the function of archives as it explains the particular importance of Peal's collection in generating the 'webs of empire' model at the heart of *Orientalism and Race*. This piece was written while I was teaching at the University of Illinois at Urbana and was imprinted by an ongoing set of conversations with my colleague and collaborator Antoinette Burton and a group of other scholars who were also preoccupied with the question of the archive.²¹

Chapter Eleven, 'Paper, Pen and Print', turns away from thinking about the expansive connections that facilitated the imperial traffic in knowledge to examine how different ways of recording knowledge shaped social organisation in a specific community. This chapter came out of a large collaborative project on the colonisation of southern New Zealand and particularly focused on the ways in which new knowledge technologies transformed the world of Kāi Tahu Whānui during the nineteenth century.²² It was shaped by extensive archival research, especially in the massive archive of the 'collector' Herries Beattie, but at a conceptual level was framed by my ongoing engagement with the great Canadian historian and political economist Harold Innis's writings on empire and communications.²³ This examination of the transformation of the knowledge order at the heart of Kāi Tahu life draws on Innis as it emphasises the role of knowledge technologies in reorienting Kāi Tahu communication and social practices from reproduction through time to connecting communities across space. In charting these shifts 'Paper, Pen and Print' places a group of Māori communities at the heart of the colonial story. This approach complements an important line of argument offered in Chapter Twelve, 'Writing and the Culture of Colonisation'. That chapter presents a broad assessment of recent scholarship on the colonisation in New Zealand. In particular it develops a critique of the 'cultural colonisation' approach pioneered by Peter Gibbons and developed by several historians of the colonial past. This kind of history has stressed the ways in which Pākehā cultural practices have secured political dominance and naturalised the presence of Pākehā, masking the violence of colonisation. This chapter suggests that one of the major problems with such an approach is that it places Māori outside the history of colonialism, making Māori objects who

were acted upon, not active subjects who attempted to resist, reshape, or retreat from the colonial order. More broadly, this chapter suggests that a key limitation of post-colonial historical writing in New Zealand is that it has disconnected colonisation from capitalism, an argument that resonates with the approach to imperial extraction developed in Chapter Six.

The final section of the volume offers two chapters that explore questions relating to place and locality. In these pieces the changing shape of colonial networks and the circulation of information and ideas are explored in a specific locale, Gore and its surrounding communities in eastern Southland. Chapter Thirteen examines the connections between intellectual life and sociability in shaping community formation in Victorian Gore. It highlights the role of local institutions and cultural practices in forging forms of connection within Gore and its district. But it also shows that this late developing rural town was never isolated and, in fact, locals were engaged with important imperial and global developments through their reading and writing. This chapter suggests that it is possible to write a history of colonial intellectual life that moves away from focusing on reading the texts written by well-known politicians and intellectuals, to focus on the processes through which knowledge was produced and consumed. Moreover, this chapter shows how it is possible to examine the operation of networks in a particular colonial locality. Where my earlier work on Aryanism reconstructed the broad shape of several sets of web-like imperial networks, this work on Gore examines how webs of interdependence and exchange intersected in and helped give shape to one colonial community.

This approach is extended in Chapter Fourteen, which develops a broader model for thinking about the relationships between place and space in how historians write about the colonial past. It particularly explores some of the ways in which 'New Zealand' was constructed as a national space and emphasises how the nation was shaped by the regulation of mobility and exchange. In urging historians to think under as well as across the nation – the ideal of much 'transnational history' – the chapter suggests that places were generated by the work of networks and mobility. In this view, towns like Gore are reimagined as knot-like conjunctures where both local networks and larger scale webs of connection converge and are given shape by infrastructure and institutions. Such an approach offers an important alternative to models of historical analysis that are insufficiently grounded. It also offers a useful starting point for thinking about the links between colonisation and the development of capitalism, a set of relationships that generally have been conceived of in relatively narrow terms within recent New Zealand historical writing.

'Writing the colonial past' brings the collection to a close by offering some reflections on the connections between archival research, historical writing, and popular debates about the colonial past. This concluding chapter returns

to the limits of histories that are framed around a national story and reflects on the limits of historical work that echoes state-sponsored visions of history. But this chapter also draws attention to the importance of disciplinary craft in shaping historical analysis and stresses the ways in which archives can unsettle established interpretations and narratives and generate new analytical models, a broad argument that draws upon the particular experience at the heart of Chapter Ten.

When viewed against received understandings of the colonial past, some of the material and arguments brought together in this collection may seem surprising. It is important to state that these chapters were not designed as a kind of sustained revisionist critique of New Zealand historical writing, but took shape through the attempt to make sense of archival research. Of course, that research itself has had a particular trajectory that was shaped by my training at Cambridge within the traditions of imperial and South Asian history. While that background has directed me towards certain collections of material and has given me a particular set of analytical tools, the resulting research does open up broader questions about New Zealand's place in the British Empire and the relationship between imperial connections and local forces in shaping colonial culture.

Those dynamics are nicely captured in the map that adorns this volume's cover. Taken from the *Harmsworth Universal Atlas and Gazetteer* of 1906, it represented New Zealand within a complex mesh of commercial, communication, and transportation networks. These linkages tied the colony to Australia, the Pacific, the United States, and South America and placed it within a set of imperial and global connections that traversed a variety of distances. The islands that make up New Zealand were themselves imagined as reservoirs of valuable resources rather than simply being depicted as a self-contained political entity. A range of commodities were inscribed in red capitals on the regions that produce them. These included the well-known export commodities of 'WOOL', 'BUTTER', 'CHEESE', and 'MUTTON' alongside 'GOLD', as well as less glamorous products like 'TALLOW' and 'HIDES'. This map imagined the empire as a system of circulation. It represented the wide array of staples, consumables, raw materials and luxuries that moved through criss-crossing transportation networks to reach markets across the empire. By highlighting these linkages, it powerfully articulated the integrative power of empire and capitalism. It can also be read as an expression of the global imperial consciousness promoted by Britain's commercial and colonial reach. As such, it neatly encapsulates many of arguments that are developed in the following pages.