# *Tribal Capitalism: Oxymoron or efficient mode of production?*

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> What a contrast between the well-clad, reading, writing, thinking American, with a watch, a pencil, and a bill of exchange in his pocket, and the naked New Zealander, whose property is a club, a spear, a mat, and an undivided twentieth of a shed to sleep under.

So wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson in his famous essay 'Self-reliance' published in 1841. The theme of self-reliance and individual effort for individual benefit was strong in nineteenth-century western thought as was time-consciousness and the idea that property must be individually owned. Emerson wrote as the colonisation of New Zealand was just beginning but even into our own time, there is still widespread acceptance that individual self-interest not only drives human-beings to act in ways that benefit society as a whole, but also that it motivates individuals to higher levels of productivity. Associated with these ideas are others to the effect that tribal economies are not inherently driven to maximise surplus production or the benefits of trade.

Indeed, it is often taken for granted that 'Tribal Capitalism' is an oxymoron — that tribalism and capitalism cannot coexist.[1] Although the theme of this conference, 'Varieties of Capitalist Development and Corporate Governance', acknowledges that these concepts are not as fixed as is sometimes suggested, the economic practices of communal societies continue to defy many standard terms, definitions and assumptions. Moreover, a consideration of early colonial New Zealand, the extent of Maori production, and the ways in which tribal groups engaged with capitalism casts doubt on the efficacy of common assumptions.

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[1] Evident in the title of Dr Gary Hull's contribution to *Capitalism Magazine,* 25 November 1997,: 'The Pied Pipers of Tribalism: The "Million Woman March" Should Have Promoted Individualism Not Tribalism', online at: http://www. CapMag.com/article.asp?ID=37 and the World Socialist Movement's claim that 'the dog-eat-dog environment' created by capitalism leads people to make common cause against other tribal groups in their struggle for economic survival ('Tribalism, colonialism and capitalism', p.7, online at: http://www.worldsocialism.org/articles/tribalism_colonialism_and_capitalism.php).

After discussing Maori commercial initiatives in the early decades following European contact, this paper will cross-relate some of the key features to other communal societies as research elsewhere indicates that the New Zealand situation was not entirely unique. Evidence that at least some tribal or communal systems of enterprise were more productive than individualist ones suggests that today's scholars may be blinded by their theories in much the same ways as their nineteenth-century counterparts were blinded by theories of racial difference. Were they, and are we, inclined to see what we expect rather than what was really there?

The Christian teachings of individual self-reliance, wealth accumulation, and thrift are often assumed to be fundamental to the adoption of capitalism by tribal societies but Maori were keen traders immediately following contact and showed what might be considered 'capitalistic' tendencies immediately after their first contact with Europeans. For example, when James Cook's *Resolution* revisited Totara-nui in November 1773, an individual named Te Wahanga, who had supplied the vessel with fish earlier that year, reappeared with pounamu (jade) chisels and hatchets. Anne Salmond conjectures that he had calculated pounamu would prove a far more profitable item of exchange than fish and consequently made a six day round trip to acquire a worthwhile stock.[2] Maori regularly accumulated trade goods such as fish and, eventually, potatoes, with an eye towards the available market and, as their exchange opportunities increased, expanded their production of in-demand trade goods. They gained commercial experience quickly, too. Cook's journal records that the exchange of tapa (Polynesian bark cloth) for Maori curios was weighted in the Europeans' favour until an old man, already familiar with the foreigners, taught them how to negotiate better prices. When more regular trade was established, Australian newspapers reported that Maori were extremely shrewd in making bargains', and that trade with them was 'becoming every day less lucrative' as they better understood western commercial systems and avoided the need for foreign middlemen.[3]

[2] Anne Salmond, *Two Worlds: First Meetings Between Maori and Europeans 1642-1772*, Auckland, 1991, p.91.

[3] The *Sydney Gazette* cited in R. P. Wigglesworth, 'The New Zealand Timber and Flax Trade 1769-1840', PhD thesis, Massey University, New Plymouth, 1981, pp.192-3; *Launceston Independent*, 1834, cited in

Maori tribal enterprise was generally managed by hereditary chiefs. First-born children typically succeeded, but effective leadership could pass to a junior sibling if the first-born lacked the appropriate attributes. Economic wealth and signs of prosperity were very important for raising the status of the chief and his kin-group, strengthening their ability to form alliances, and consequently increasing wealth and political strength still further. However, status was gained by and expressed in a reputation for liberality towards relatives, guests, or travellers so the appropriate distribution of wealth was of primary importance. Its mere accumulation was counter-productive in terms of tribal well-being and prestige.

Yet despite its communal framework, Maori social norms did not prevent individual initiative. The motivation for voluntary contributions lay in the reciprocal nature of tribal society. Greater contributions enhanced mana or social standing and the level of participation in tribal affairs. In this way, the individual could reap personal gains while simultaneously improving the lot of the tribal group.

Leaders were primarily responsibility for establishing a sound economic base with ample supplies of food. So new products and technologies were quickly adopted to maximise trading opportunities. White potatoes, for example, which had been introduced by Cook and others, were cultivated extensively in many areas so that as early as 1803 a New South Wales trading vessel was able to purchase seven to eight tons of 'very fine' examples.[4] Potatoes had a more ready market than kumara, the native sweet potato, being a particularly convenient and valuable source of vitamin C for ships' crew at sea for long periods. But, when British settlement began, Maori enterprise extended to cultivating wheat, the staple diet of the settlers.

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Evelyn Stokes, *A Review of the Evidence in the Muriwhenua Lands Claims*, Waitangi Tribunal Review Series, Vol. I, Wellington, 1997, p.70.

[4] R. P. Hargreaves, 'Changing Maori Agriculture in Pre-Waitangi New Zealand', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 72, 2, June 1963, p.103.

In 1831, a group of thirteen chiefs wrote to Britain's King William IV requesting a trade relationship and, three years later, when the HMS *Buffalo* was in New Zealand seeking spars for the British Navy, one of the signatories, wrote to the King seeking his own trade alliance. To help clinch the arrangement, Titore Takiri not only sent some very precious gifts, but implied an associated political compact by saying that the shipment of spars accompanying his letter were for His Majesty's battle ships lest he and the French should 'quarrel'.[5] In Maori society, alliances were a time-honoured way of binding groups together in perpetuity and peace-making was often consumated by a marriage between high-ranking members of the contending groups. It was a long-term strategy.

That concept was applied to the Treaty of Waitangi, under which New Zealand was annexed to Britain in 1840. As a means of incorporating the newcomers into the existing society, this alliance was conceptualised in terms of a familial relationship. 'Kinship was the conceptual language of Maori social organization, not necessarily the thing itself', as James Belich explained.[6] Before 1840, European traders typically entered into the host society by marrying local women of rank. However, once the colonisation process got underway, the flood of immigrants from Britain increasingly included women and children and men were more likely to find spouses within their own communities. But land was still made available to settlers in a considered way in order to obtain associated economic benefits such as access to trade goods, technical knowledge and employment.

Maori often referred to Governors as 'fathers' or 'parents', but Hoani Wiremu Hipango of Whanganui referred to the land itself as his sister, while Te Mawai proclaimed that the land he made available for settlement was consequently 'married to the Europeans' and that anyone who meddled with it would be guilty of adultery.[7] The marriage metaphor frequently resurfaced, as in 1863 when a dispute arose in the Waikato area between pro-government groups and supporters of the Maori King. Wiremu Te Wheoro and his people refused to relinquish the wealth that had been 'put into [their] house' on the basis

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[5] William Yate, *An Account of New Zealand and of the Church Missionary Society's Mission in the Northern Island*, orig. pub., 1835, Wellington, 1971, p.271.
[6] James Belich, 'Myth, Race, and Identity in New Zealand', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 31, 1, 1997, p.14.
[7] Taylor to Grey, 12 June 1848, GL NZ T5A(1), Auckland City Library.

that they could not 'send back our wife with whom we have slept'. The debate continued on this occasion with references to the government as a 'wife', wealth as her dowry, and discussions as to whether she had been adulterous.[8]

But as the European presence increased, so did the pervasiveness of their ideologies. The writings of Adam Smith and his successors to the effect that individual self-interest and individual ownership was the greatest spur to economic growth were so thoroughly subsumed into European common-sense that the colonists' faith in its power to stimulate Maori efforts was unshakable even in the face of evidence to the contrary. For despite their expectations, Maori appear to have cultivated more hectares per head than Europeans, and were more productive when their lands were communally owned than later as the individualisation of land tenure progressed. Moreover, since related ideologies led Europeans to see kinship as a burden rather than a source of security, it was paradoxical that the viability of Maori enterprise was doubted by promoters of self-reliance on the basis that inter-tribal rivalry prevented autonomous groups from combining their efforts in capitalist enterprise. Missionaries, for example, claimed that the expected inter-tribal co-operation did not occur while recording instances in which it did.[9]

Pre-industrial societies such as the Maori were accustomed to working according to seasonal patterns. The nature of task-oriented economies with their variables such as weather, necessitates an irregular work pattern with bursts of activity at certain times and enforced idleness at others. Yet, despite its naturalness, the irregular work cycle was lamented by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English moralists and mercantilists as much as it was by missionaries and settlers in New Zealand.[10] Indeed, the demands of an industrialising society produced representations of the English labouring classes that were comparable with those of 'lazy natives' elsewhere. As E. P. Thompson's investigation of 'Time, work-discipline, and industrial capitalism' showed, the complaints from authority

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[8] J. E. Gorst, Report of a disturbance at the Kohekohe, *Appendices to the House of Representatives*, 1863, E3 no. 11 enc. 6, p.18.

[9] See, for example, Hazel Petrie, 'Bitter Recollections? Thomas Chapman and Benjamin Ashwell on Flourmills and Ships in the Mid-nineteenth Century, *New Zealand Journal of History*, April 2005.

[10] E. P. Thompson, 'Time, work-discipline, and industrial capitalism', *Past and Present*, 38, 1967, p.72.

figures, including churches and would-be employers; the methods for instilling cultural and attitudinal changes in the potential workforce; and the attention paid to these 'problems' by educators, had many parallels in nineteenth-century New Zealand. Arguments against the unenclosed countryside — said to be inefficient and wasteful of time — produced criticisms of late eighteenth-century English cottagers that also closely equate with later criticisms of Maori work ethics and rationales for reducing the extent of their land ownership. Rather than work as a day labourer, the English small holder was purported to acquire 'a habit of indolence' from 'sauntering after his cattle'; and when labourers possessed more land than could be cultivated by the immediate family in the evenings, 'the farmer [could] no longer depend on him for constant work'.[11] Resentment of time 'wasted' at seasonal fairs and market days was also echoed in attacks on Maori customary gatherings such as tangihanga (funerals); and English workers, like Maori, were accused of paying little heed to future consequences.[12]

From the late eighteenth century, considerable numbers of Maori served as crew on European vessels, others found employment in whaling and sealing operations, or traded timber, flax, pork, and potatoes. There was recognition of their relatively advanced form of agriculture, skills in fishing, preparing flax, weaving, and decorative arts.[13] Yet, when Samuel Marsden first proposed a New Zealand mission, he argued that: 'little or no progress can be made in teaching them the Gospel' until 'moral and industrious habits' were induced.[14] In apparent contradiction, he later wrote that Maori: 'neither want industry nor natural ability of mind nor strength of body. All these they possess, perhaps, in superior degree to any other barbarous race upon earth.'[15] Missionaries even complained that their industriousness caused them to neglect their spiritual duties.[16] So suggestions that Maori should be inculcated with habits of industry did not reflect the

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[11] ibid., p.77.
[12] ibid., passim.
[13] M. P. K. Sorrenson, 'How to Civilize Savages: Some 'Answers' from Nineteenth-Century New Zealand', *New Zealand Journal of History,* 1 9, 2, 1975, p.98.
[14] P. Havard-Williams, ed, *Marsden and the New Zealand Mission: Sixteen Letters,* Dunedin, 1961, p15.
[15] Quoted in Sorrenson, p.99.
[16] For example, Alfred Brown Journal, 29 August 1848, MSS A-179, University of Auckland Library; & Kerry Howe, 'Missionaries, Maoris, and 'Civilization' in the Upper-Waikato, 1833-1863: a study in culture contact: with special reference to the attitudes and activities of the Reverend John Morgan of Otawhao', MA thesis, University of Auckland, 1970, p.129.

view that they were less than hard-working but rather that their attitude to work was 'uncivilised'. Disciplined work habits, carried out according to a weekly clock rather than seasonality, were essential for the observance of the Sabbath and other Christian duties. Communalism was considered 'immoral' because it discouraged self-reliance and thrift. However, it was widely reported, especially in the early period, that Maori groups were reserving the bulk of their production for trade purposes, sometimes going hungry in the process. This may not have equated directly with 'saving for a rainy day' but was certainly an example of communal restraint for larger economic objectives.

In the missionary period, 'habits of industry', especially connected with horticultural production, were also expected to provide a substitute for warfare. The so-called 'musket wars' of the 1820s and 1830s initially disproved this theory, but by 1840 a Northland trader evinced some optimism that the 'new passion' for barter might 'be regarded as the primary cause of [Maori] progression, from uncivilization to a new moral state of existence'.[17] Their enthusiasm for trade was hardly new at this point, but missionaries, government agencies and settlers consistently preached a unified set of messages promoting regular work habits, individual wealth accumulation, and the virtues of thrift.

Despie this, missionaries demonstrated a range of attitutudes towards Maori commercial enterprise. Some despaired that it had a negative impact on their moral and spiritual welfare, while others viewed the effective utilisation of their lands as essential for justifying their continued ownership. The Reverend Thomas Grace's encouragement for Maori to manage their own enterprises and control their prices provoked hostility from settlers, traders, government officials, and his fellow missionaries, which ultimately led to his dismissal in 1853.[18] Undaunted, he published an anonymous circular that the *Southern Cross* called a 'profane application of Scripture texts to political purposes' and which, it said, was extensively circulated in the Maori language.[19] This document contained a list of eighteen questions, most of which were partnered with scriptural

[17] Joel S. Polack, *Manners and Customs of the New Zealanders,* orig. pub. London, 1840, facsimile ed., Christchurch, 1976, p.183.
[18] Judith Binney, *Redemption Songs: A life of Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuki*, Auckland, 1995, p.20.
[19] Janet E. Murray, 'Thomas Samuel Grace', NZDB, Vol. 1, p.155. Murray states that few of the 250 copies printed were actually distributed.

references in response, suggesting that Maori were wrong to alienate their lands that ought to be handed down to their descendants. Outraged, the newspaper asked:

> how far will millions of uncultivated acres – a wilderness of fern and bush, promote their advancement in civilisation or Christianity? Is there the shadow of a chance of one-tenth or twentieth of these lands being occupied by the descendants of the present possessors? Is not the unfortunate decrease of the native population an admitted fact?

Here we see the by-then widely accepted idea that Maori were a dying race being used to justify the alienation of their land to help save them. For those who demanded 'Progress', the 'advancement of the Aborigines' was best served by opening up the land for settlement by 'industrious farmers … to convey industrial knowledge, [and] set the example of cleanliness, of steady labour, and of decent habits'.[20] Such arguments took for granted the convenient theory, then supported by a declining Maori population, that non-white races were doomed to extinction in the face of competition from white races but that this otherwise 'inevitable' demise could be averted by their becoming 'civilised'; that is, individualised, self-reliant Christians.

In 1849, Messrs Newman, Forsaith, and Brown, petitioned the Colonial Secretary to encourage immigration by 'throwing open the country' and eliminating restrictions on purchasing land directly from Maori. In support of their argument that more immigrants would boost commerce, they referred to 800 tons of flax exported from New Zealand in 1831. That claim not only understated the quantity of flax by some 383 tons, but ignored the very relevant fact that the resident European population of the North Island was then a mere 225 to 250.[21] Contrary to the point they sought to prove, they were indicating that production was greater on a per capita basis when Maori had numerical and political control, their society was communal, and their land communally owned.

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[20] *Southern Cross*, 17 October 1854, p.2.

[21] Newman, Forsaith, Brown, and 165 others to the Colonial Secretary, 2 July 1849, Enc. 1 in No. 56, Grey to Earl Grey, 7 July 1849, *Great Britain Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. 6, p.182. Eight hundred tons of flax was purchased by the British Navy Board, but the total amount exported that year was reported as 1182 tons (W. L. Williams, W. L, *East Coast* (N.Z.) *historical records*, Facsimile ed., Christchurch, c1998, p.5). Population estimates from: Peter Adams, *Fatal Necessity: British Intervention in New Zealand 1830-1847*, Auckland, 1977, p.23.

The same was true of William Fox's book entitled *The Six Colonies of New Zealand*. In this substantial piece of New Zealand Company propaganda, he explained that Maori depression was the result of contact with civilised men: the 'great ships that throng his harbours', the magnificent buildings, the colonist's watch, plough, axe and pocket-knife 'all declare in a language which he cannot misunderstand, that it is a superior race which has come to share his country'. And so, according to Fox, the savage could only sit down and brood in silence 'until his appointed time'.[22] To support his argument that contact with civilised people had a beneficial impact on savages, Fox compared the mission settlements at Otaki and Waikanae unfavourably with another Maori community at Motueka, which he claimed had not been subjected to any interference by missionaries or government, but had a 'close and harmonious' intercourse with European colonists. Fox provided statistical data on the population of each settlement and the number of acres in wheat and other produce to demonstrate that far more cultivation took place on the 'free intercourse system' which allowed colonists to employ Maori without the barriers imposed by the missionaries' 'separate system'.[23] In an earlier publication concerning the Nelson settlement, Fox noted that the Maori rate of cultivation (770 acres per 615 persons) 'compared well' with the European ratio of 3465 acres per 2867 persons. In fact, it was slightly better. Fox was apparently oblivious to the fact that his claims of greater production where Maori came under less interference from Europeans ran counter to his other argument that they benefited from a European presence.

Fox's 1866 book on *The War in New Zealand* argued against Maori retaining their lands on the grounds that it was contributing to their inevitable extermination as a race.[24] He claimed that every acre occupied by Europeans had been bought at prices 'quite equivalent to any value the land had, or ever could have had, if we had not gone there to give it value by our capital and our labour'.[25] Maori were ever reluctant to part with more land than necessary. It was their primary capital asset. However, unlike the settlers, they could not use it as security against loans for further development because it

[22] William Fox, *The Six Colonies of New Zealand,* London, 1851, pp.56-7.
[23]ibid., pp.70 & 77-81.
[24] William Fox, *The War in New Zealand*, orig. pub. London, 1866, Facsimile ed., Christchurch, 1973, p.260.
[25] ibid., p.16.

was communally-owned. The colonists brought capital but, because their systems were incompatible with Maori ones, Maori were unable to benefit to any great extent. In order to acquire the capital necessary to buy profit-producing plant, they needed to sell at least portions of their land outright.

Resident Magistrate Walter Buller was reiterating what colonial officials widely considered to be common-sense when he reported that '[s]o long as [Maori] lands are held in common they have, properly speaking, no individual interest in improvements and consequently there is little or no encouragement to industry or incentive to ambition'.[26]

The idea that Maori would have greater incentive if the fruits of their labours were for their own personal or household benefit underlay many of the arguments for in favour individualising their land, but, despite the pervasiveness of the belief, evidence suggests that these imperatives did not act as a spur to Maori energy. One writer described this as a notion they were 'quite unwilling to grasp'.[27] The Reverend Buttle was one who perceived that Maori efforts were more fruitful in a communal context:

> Of habits of individual industry and steady application to work [the Maori] ... hardly know anything and can do nothing but in large combination and under the influence of excitement; but under such circumstances they can sometimes perform wonders.[28]

Yet, despite their regular occurence, such observations were almost entirely disregarded and Europeans continued to insist that Maori abandon their 'communistic' habits, embrace the mantra of self-reliance, and cease their 'indolence'.

In Natal, South East Asia, and elsewhere, the rhetoric of lazy natives related primarily to a demand for agricultural labour, whereas in New Zealand the pivotal point of contest between settler and Maori was not the demand for labour, but for land. Hence,

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[26] Stuart Banner, 'Two Properties, One Land: Law and Space in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand', *Law & Social Inquiry*, 24, 4, Autumn 1999, p.832.
[27] R. A. Loughnan, *New Zealand at Home,* London, 1908, p.198.
[28] Quoted in Howe, p.124.

allegations of laziness went hand in hand with those of 'idle land'.[29] A Native Land Court was established in 1865 specifically to end customary land tenure, detribalise Maori and facilitate the purchase of their land by Europeans. But, despite the allegations of 'lazy Maori' there was not only recognition of Maori contributions to the development of the country by their labour, but also through taxation. In 1856, Governor Gore Browne informed the Colonial Secretary that North Island Maori contributed considerably more to the customs revenue than Europeans, at a rate of 51 to 36.[30] James Belich has calculated that Maori were then consuming some £500,000 worth of imported goods per year — about £10 per capita.[31] Charges of characteristic improvidence contradicted claims that various tribes or individuals were 'wealthy' or held 'big bank balances'.[32] Furthermore, such allegations tended to focus on their failure to accumulate funds, overlooking other strategies to secure future prosperity. In 1879 Spencer von Stürmer congratulated those Hokianga people who had opened savings bank accounts and invested moneys in other ways, but also mentioned that promises of European settlement, which had induced Maori to sell land to the Crown, remained unfulfilled.[33] A settler presence was understood to attract trade and increase prosperity, so land sales for that purpose were understood to be long-term investments and the Government's failure to honour their side of the bargain put Maori at a severe disadvantage.

The motives behind Maori land sales were often misunderstood as was their agricultural practice. Francis Dart Fenton saw the latter as:

> careless and improvident to a degree that is astonishing to any person who is acquainted with their covetous disposition. The moment a succession of crops has lessened the productive powers of land, it is abandoned, and immediately becomes covered with a prolific crop of docks and other noxious weeds.[34]

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[29] See, for example, S. H. Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native,* London, 1977, p.83: Keletso E. Atkins, *The Moon is Dead! Give us our Money!: The cultural origins of an African Work Ethic, Natal, South Africa, 1843-1900,* London, 1993, p.1; and Hazel Petrie, 'The "Lazy Maori": Pakeha Representations of a Maori Work Ethic 1890-1940', MA thesis, University of Auckland, 1997.

[30] Browne to Labouchere, 31 May 1856, Enc. 1 in No. 96, *Great Britain Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. 10, p.228.

[31] James Belich, *Making Peoples*, Auckland, 1996, p.214.

[32] For example, *Appendices to the House Of Representatives*, 1875, G-1, p.5 & *New Zealand Times,* 11 September 1880, cited in Keith Sinclair, *Kinds of Peace,* Auckland, 1991, p.27.

[33] *Appendices to the House Of Representatives*, 1879 G-1, p.2.

[34] *Appendices to the House of Representatives*, 1860, F No 3, p. 137-138.

Maori culture prohibited the use of manure — customary practice being to allow the land to lie fallow until the soil's nutrients had replenished naturally, but this logic was interpreted as lazy, wasteful, and inefficient. So, among other initiatives designed to promote 'superior' practices, Maori were invited to join settler exhibitions, agricultural competitions, and regattas.

The concept of individual competition and prizes was well established in British society to encourage improvement in various fields of endeavour. In New Zealand, prizes were advertised for stock, farm and garden produce as well as for the best plough and pair of horses and the best plough and pair of bullocks, being the 'property of one person'.[35] Given the sponsors' confidence in self-interest as the paramount inducement, prizes were taken-for-granted incentives. However, a report concerning Auckland's 1854 Anniversary Regatta casts some doubt on their potency. Lamenting the lack of interest shown by Maori and Europeans in small canoe races, the reporter admitted there was 'no lack of enthusiasm or exertion' for the large canoe race involving crews of about 50 men.[36] Prizes contingent on one owner were blatantly designed to foster individual ownership, but the greater interest in team effort suggests that such incentives were not highly effective.

Nevertheless, the alleged connection between 'industriousness' and material wealth was sometimes accepted by Maori. For example, a Rotorua Land Court minute book records a witness's claims to rank based on his 'ownership' of major items, including a large canoe, meeting houses, and a large fishing net. 'I want to show the court what an industrious and wise man I am', he said. 'Although the [other] claimant presumes to be my equal in rank, my resources are far beyond his'.[37] This chief was asserting his own industriousness over another's on the basis of each of their tribal groups' capital resources, but it was also clearly accepted that those of the leader and the group were one and the same. Wealth accumulation under the trusteeship of a respected leader was not

[35] *Maori Messenger*, 31 January 1850, p.1.
[36] *New Zealander*, 1 February 1854, p.2.
[37] Quoted in Roger Neich, 'The Veil of Orthodoxy: Rotorua Ngati Tarawhai Woodcarving in a Changing Context', in S. M .Mead and B. Kernot, eds, *Art and Artists of Oceania,* Palmerston North, 1983, p.254.

resented as long as it was distributed appropriately, according to culturally accepted norms.

However, the position of the hereditary chiefs was changing — largely as a result of government policies. The Maori-language newspaper *Te Korimako*, sponsored by philanthropically-minded settlers, stated that Maori were observed to be extremely enterprising when Europeans first arrived and consequently gained significant wealth, but went on to argue that the breakdown of chiefly authority and old patterns of living had led to laziness and confusion.[38] *Te Korimako* lamented the passing of traditional leadership but it was inevitable that messages urging individual self-reliance, which were a regular feature of this paper, would conflict with the functioning of chiefly leadership for communal benefit. The paper frequently applauded the work of tribal leaders in establishing commercial enterprises or other projects considered praiseworthy, but a commitment to adopting European conventions and willingness to make land available for settlement were essential if tribal groups were to obtain government assistance with agricultural development or the purchase of capital plant. However, as Europeans gained numerical and political strength, government assistance was granted more selectively. Hence, a note appended to a group of Manawatū chiefs' request for a plough, stated that although Chief Land Purchase Commissioner Donald McLean considered the applicants a 'well conducted and quiet body of people', they were of 'no great influence'.[39] Yet, when Ngāti Haua's applied for a loan to complete a flourmill the following year, McLean endorsed it on the basis that they had made land available to the Crown.[40]

From 1846, the expansion of wheat cultivation in response to immigration and settler demand, saw Maori communities commissioning their own water-powered flourmills, which, in turn, stimulated wheat production still further.[41] Apart from feeding their own people and providing hospitality, surplus flour — like pigs and other produce — was

[38] *Te Korimako*, 15 March 1884, p.1.
[39] Notation by Kemp on Hori and others to Grey, 20 July 1853, Letter 411, GNZ MA, Auckland City Library.
[40] IA1, 1854/2484, transcript by Rose Young, 'Flour mills' file, Reference Library, WMAH, Hamilton.
[41] Hazel Petrie, *Chiefs of Industry:Maori Tribal Enterprise in Early Colonial New Zealand*, Auckland, 2006, pp.129-30.

used to purchase additional farm implements or to pay tradesmen.[42] In 1851, Te Waru of Rangiaowhia, who expected to cover the £400 cost of a new mill from the proceeds of the current crop, also proposed to set some aside as a contribution to a proposed hostelry and warehouse near Auckland where Maori traders could stay and wheat could be stored.[43] Some proceeds from flour sales went towards the cost of their children's education.[44] Wiremu Kīngi Mohi Te Matakatea's Taranaki people were also among the many groups growing wheat and building water-powered mills by the 1850s. By 1855, he had a store at Umuroa and, according to Ian Church, the wealth from his horticultural production enabled him to establish a college for 400 students as well.[45] Other leaders diversified, too, into other forms of production or services.

Since sailing ships were the principal means of communication before the development of roads or overland transport systems, it should not be surprising that this was another industry Maori engaged in from an early stage. By the early 1850s, they dominated coastal shipping but this involvement also enabled them to transport their goods directly to large population centres such as Auckland where competition between merchants allowed them to secure better prices and purchase manufactured goods more cheaply. It was a trend that forced still more European middlemen out of business.

The lack of statistical data, inconsistencies in official records and the logistical problems that hindered the compilation of Maori population figures during this period make it difficult to accurately estimate the extent of Maori production either overall or on a per head basis. However, when Cook's *Endeavour* first visited New Zealand in 1769, William Monkhouse and Joseph Banks estimated that just under half a hectare per person was under cultivation at Anaura, which equates with 1.25 acres per person — without the

[42] For example, John Morgan Journal, 4 April 1850, MS 213, Auckland War Memorial Museum; & Morgan to Grey, 3 June 1850 & 9 July 1850, GLNZM44 5 & 6), Auckland City Library.
[43] Morgan to Grey, 21 February 1851 & 8 May 1851, GLNZ M44 (10 & 11), Auckland City Library.
[44] Morgan to Grey, 20 November 1849, Enc. 5 in No. 33, *Great Britain Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. 6, p.108.
[45] Ian Church, 'Te Matakatea, Wiremu Kingi Mohi', in Claudia Orange, ed., *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, Vol. One, Wellington, 1990, p.471.

benefit of European implements or techniques.[46] But by engaging in trade, Maori acquired tools and machinery so that, by 1854, when European farmers in the Wellington area were still without a single plough, Wiremu Kingi's people at the Waitara River had 35. They also had 20 pairs of harrows, 40 carts, 300 cattle, 150 horses, a small flotilla of sailing-boats, and a considerable amount of money.[47] Three years later, in 1857, Attorney General William Swainson reported that the Mataatua and Tuwharetoa tribes, estimated at over 8000 people, had upwards of 3000 acres in wheat, 3000 acres in potatoes, nearly 2000 acres in maize and upwards of 1000 acres in kumara. His total of about 9000 acres cultivated in crops by a population of 8000 equates to 1.125 acres per head, compared with a rate of .915 acres per head for Europeans 13 years later.[48] Swainson added that these tribes owned nearly 2000 horses, 200 head of cattle, 5000 pigs, 4 water-mills, 96 ploughs, 43 coasting vessels averaging nearly 20 tons each, upwards of 900 canoes, and that they supplied 46,000 bushels of wheat with a market value of £13,000 to European traders that year, supporting the view of an 1847 *Southern Cross* reader, who claimed that Maori cultivated more land than the European population 'even reckoning man for man'.[49] Furthermore, official statistics showing that grain comprised 72.4% of Auckland's exports in 1855,[50] that Auckland exported 71,613 bushels that year, and that more than 82,228 bushels of Maori-grown wheat was received by coastal vessels in addition to 1372 bags brought by canoe, indicate that their contribution to the provincial revenue was demonstrably very significant.[51] The evidence, therefore, does not support claims that Maori social systems and communal

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[46] Salmond, pp.164-5 & 167. Figures for the Nelson area c1849 were not dissimilar, indicating that over 1700 acres were being cultivated by a total population of 1426 (W. A. Chambers, *Samuel Ironside in New Zealand: 1839-1858*, Auckland, 1982, p.188).
[47] Arthur S. Thomson, *The story of New Zealand: past and present, savage and civilized*, Vol. II, Murray, London, 1859, p.224.
[48] The Pākehā population was estimated at 248,000 in 1870 and their acreage under crop (excluding grasses) was 227,015 acres (Muriel F. Lloyd Prichard, *An Economic History of New Zealand to 1939*, Auckland & London, 1970, pp.97 & 403).
[49] William Swainson, *New Zealand and its Colonization*, London, 1859, pp.65-66; and *Southern Cross*, 17 July 1847, p.3.
[50] C. G. F. Simkin, *The Instability of a Dependent Economy*, Oxford, 1951, p.123.
[51] W. T. Parham, 'Maori Wheat Growing and Flour Milling', 'Maori Wheat Growing and Flour Milling, 1845 – 1880', *Historical Review*, IX, 2, June 1961, p.43.

ownership of land were either inefficient or detrimental to production.[52] But can these patterns be extended to other tribal societies?

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An article published in the World Bank's *Research Observer* twenty years ago stated that 'The rule that a person in possession of property has only a right of occupation, not genuine ownership, is not conducive to productivity' despite admitting that 'This is largely a matter of inference, for there are not detailed studies of the link'.[53] Detailed studies are now available debunking the link in quite distinct cultures, times and parts of the world, but the idea that indigenous peoples are not economically motivated and that individual land ownership and individual endeavour for individual gain are universal motivators of productivity are still too readily accepted.

In previous centuries, missionaries and government officials tended to stress difference between 'civilised' people and 'savages' but differences between Maori and European attitudes towards trade have been similarly overstated in historiography on the basis that all Maori transactions were 'gift exchange', which has tended to conceal their economic motivations.[54] Alexandra Harmon perceives a similar situation with regard to Native American economic history:

> Although the past fifty years have brought an end to the segregation of ethnology and history, a recognition of Indians' historical agency, and even a few studies that historicize the category "Indian," the notion that Indians are radically other still has academic adherents.[55]

In a similar vein, it has been suggested that Native American interest in such matters as economic growth, land distribution, tribal prosperity and private property has been

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[52] W. A. McCleverty reported Maori cultivation of about one acre per head for the Wellington area in 1847 (which rate had dropped significantly by 1850), but, according to Steve Quinn, this may be an underestimation ('The McCleverty Reserves and Wellington Maori', at: http://www.waitangi-tribunal.govt.nz/reports/niwest/wai145/Chapt11.pdf, p.267, 16 Sep 2003).

[53] G. Feder & R. Noronha, 'Land rights systems in sub-Saharan Africa', *Research Observer* (World Bank), 2, 2, 1987, p.158, cited in Catherine Besteman, 'Individualisation and the assault on customary tenure in Africa: Title registration programmes and the case of Somalia', *Africa*, 64, 4, 1994, p.487.

[54] Hazel Petrie, '"For a Season Quite the Rage"? Ships and flourmills in the Maori Economy 1840-1860s', PhD thesis, University of Auckland, 2004, p.27.

[55] Alexandra Harmon, 'American Indians and Land Monopolies in the Gilded Age', *The Journal of American History*, June 2004, 90, 1, p.133.

overlooked because of the tendency 'to associate economic individualism as antithetical to Native people'.[56]

Yet the histories of tribally-organised societies in North America and elsewhere demonstrate that their responses were similar to those of Europeans despite differences in the cultural context. Frank Tough, for example, showed that Indians in northern Manitoba successfully challenged the Hudson's Bay Company's monopoly there in the post-1870 period. Using similar source materials, accounting data from the Company's posts, Tough disproved the claims of E. E. Rich that Indians did not operate as rational economic people. Moreover, whereas Abraham Rotstein's work described Indian responses in terms of gift-exchange and thus distinguished sharply between European and Indian economic practice, Tough's data analysis reveals how Indian middlemen enabled their people to obtain higher prices by taking their pelts further afield and increasing competition between potential purchasers. Although inconsistency in observations did not permit a clear analysis of the impact of price on productivity in this instance, assumptions might be made on the basis of empirical evidence that the producers were profit-driven.[57]

The allegedly immoral nature of nomadic and communal lifestyles was frequently cited to discourage the continuation of hunting economies in favour of settled farming. But the individualisation of land was also a frequent concomitant of these notions. In the United States, Senator Henry L. Dawes, who sponsored the Dawes Act of 1887,[58] objected to the communal ownership of land by American Indians on the basis that it discouraged 'selfishness, which is at the bottom of civilization'.[59] He, too, claimed that Indians lacked incentive to work for their own gain without titles to private tracts of land. Such beliefs were certainly convenient by way of justifying the reallocation of tribal lands to European settlers.

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[56] Nicolas G. Rosenthal, 'Beyond the New Indian History: Recent Trends in the Historiography on the Native Peoples of North America', History Compass 4/5, 2006, p.964.
[57] Frank Tough, Índian economic behaviour, exchange and profits in northern Manitoba during the decline of monopoly, 1870-1930', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 16, 4, October 1990, pp.391-2.
[58] The Dawes Act or General Allotment Act was passed by the U.S. Congress to provide for the granting of landholdings or allotments to individual Native Americans from what were communally-held tribal lands.
[59] Harmon, p.106.

Around the world, systems of land title registration have commonly been instituted in areas previously subject to customary tenure. In North America, New Zealand, Africa and elsewhere, systems have been put in place to circumscribe land on a geographic basis and allot its ownership as an economic, even speculative, commodity. Yet, as Catherine Besteman has shown quite convincingly, land title registration programmes in Africa, instituted on the basis that they would facilitate development and increase agricultural productivity, failed to achieve those aims.[60] In part, this was because the process of land registration led to a large proportion of absentee owners, many of them urban business men or civil servants, who knew little about farming and often left their land idle, having purchased it more for reasons of status or speculation rather than utility.[61] Once land is commodified and ceases to be a means of livelihood, risk aversion strategies and ways of maximising sustainable use may be lost. Farmers in Somalia, for example, had previously attempted to hold land in each of three land types because each could be more productive under different conditions. Consequently, family landholdings throughout their village's land base tended to be fragmented and non-contiguous. But because subsequent official policy against letting land lie 'ídle' restricted families to only one parcel of land, they could not abide by the law and continue to follow their own successful, time-proven farming strategies. The overall effect of land registration has been to reduce productivity.

Surplus production among the Eastern Cherokees during the 1830s was the specific focus of a study by David Wishart because the level of economic development was the subject of heated debate at that time. Opponents of removal argued that the Cherokee had successfully adopted white agricultural methods whereas removal advocates maintained that little evidence of progress existed. Wishart's calculations demonstrate that, contrary to the views of President Andrew Jackson and others who argued for their removal to Oklahoma, a large number of Cherokee households had been producing surplus food. As his analysis of per capita corn output for selected regions of the southeast in 1850 and

[60] Besteman.
[61] ibid, pp. 494-505.

1840 and for the Cherokees in 1835 showed, per capita Cherokee corn yields were in the same range as those for southern up-country whites in the antebellum period and the figures for 1835 exceed those reported for white Virginia farmers in 1850. These are complex issues which require further research but as Wishart has suggested, the greater levels of productivity reported for Floyd County farmers as compared with those in Dekalb County, may reflect the advantage the former gained from taking over Cherokee investments in farm capital following removal. Did supporters of removal deliberately understate the extent of economic progress among the Eastern Cherokee to support a general policy of Indian removal, or were they, like William Fox and others in nineteenth-century New Zealand, seeing what their theories anticipated or convenience dictated rather than what empirical data, such as Wishart gleaned from the 1835 Eastern Cherokee census, might have told them?

Wishart's figures were extrapolated on the basis of household production but, as was pointed out to him in the course of writing his paper, this might have been the wrong unit by which to measure Cherokee production:

> Anthropological evidence for the North Carolina Cherokees suggests that town-centered, communal, aboriginal forms of production were operative well into the second half of the nineteenth century. These towns and their production systems were called the *gadugi* and operated under the direction of a benevolent community chief.

But despite admitting that, in some instances, it may have been possible for households to produce less than subsistence levels of food on their private plots while earning a livelihood in the context of the *gadugi*,[62] Wishart continued:

> Clearly a communal system of labor organization could cause the *gadugi* to be noticeably less inclined towards surplus production than private farmsteads. Once subsistence was produced by the *gadugi*, labor likely ceased.[63]

So again it is assumed that labour for communal benefit is undertaken less enthusiastically than labour for personal gain.

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[62] The term 'gadugi' means 'working together' in a communal way. Historically, it meant working together towards common goals such as building a community council house, or harvesting corn during the Green Corn Ceremony.

[63] David M. Wishart, 'Evidence of Surplus Production in the Cherokee Nation Prior to Removal', *Journal of Economic History*, 55, 1, 1995, p.136.

In tribal societies, extended families were typically co-operative economic units, generally able to provide for themselves but, in times of war or disaster, the wider group offered a form of social security. However, in order to maintain credibility within this milieu, the individual could not accumulate too much wealth without raising the suspicion that he or she had neglected the wider community or cheated someone. Frederick Hoxie described an incident when a Crow man gave away all the money he had just received for the lease of his land in a very conspicuous way. A local subagent despaired, but as Hoxie explains, in the atmosphere of economic exclusion that the Crow experienced, where community self-sufficiency was denied and menial labour meant conforming to foreign expectations and dependence on the market economy, families such as this man's 'preferred the celebration of community and the traditional Crow value of generosity to the pointless thrift preached by Indian Office functionaries'.[64] Because social relationships define one's access to resources and provide the continuity lacking in the market economy of wage-earning, those who fail to invest enough time in social relationships place themselves at great risk of losing their economic safety net.

The prestige value of generosity is evident over and over again but, as the history of Maori commercial enterprise shows, this feature did not necessarily have an adverse effect on productivity or the desire to increase profit levels. Motivation was embedded in the society's ideals. So, too, were the mechanisms for binding trading allies together through kinship relations, whether real or conceptual. The fundamental importance of kinship in Dakota society was such that the fur traders who moved into their geographic realms were, like those in pre-Treaty New Zealand, incorporated into their society through a genealogical framework. They frequently married Dakota women, which process formed kin relationships naturally, but were normally referred to as 'brother' indicating an egalitarian relationship with the traders. The United States President and other government emissaries on the other hand were refered to as 'father', just as New Zealand Governors were by Maori, suggesting a more one-sided relationship than that of

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[64] Frederick E. Hoxie, *Parading Through History: The making of the Crow nation in America*, Cambridge, 1995, p.294.

brother for Dakota fathers were responsible for providing food and other aid to their children without the expectation of immediate repayment.[65] Studies of Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya and other areas of Africa confirm that other groups with abundant land also granted use rights to immigrants or other outsiders by incorporating them into their own societies as villagers or group members. In Somalia, for example, clan membership was a prerequisite of land allocation but, individuals could become clients of the relevant clan through a process of formal adoption in order to acquire territory.[66]

Tribal leaders tended to appreciate that the presence of white people was a means of increasing their prosperity so were keen to sponsor traders or others they perceived as potentially valuable conduits of economic benefit. A similar rationale lay behind the preference shown by members of the Crow nation for leasing land to white ranchers more familiar with the northern plains, less likely to ruin their pastures by overgrazing, and with whom they could strengthen long-term relationships. But despite objections from Crow leaders, bureaucrats, acting on their behalf, insisted on awarding permits to the highest bidder. Through this and other polices, the Crow lost control of their own economic development and their farming operations suffered. In support of granting leases to their 'friends', a Crow leader wrote of their preferred tenant: 'When Indians have been hungry, he has fed them' and 'When they have had hay, he has bought the hay to help feed his sheep; he has bought much hay from the Indians that he did not need'. However, as in New Zealand, the situation changed as the non-Indians' presence was entrenched through the privileging of official policy and reciprocal relationships broke down.[67]

Where land is communally-owned, an emphasis on equitable or culturally appropriate distribution tends to be a key role of leadership. Even among traditionally hunting societies such as the Plains Indians, it was not necessarily the most productive hunters who rose to leadership, but rather skilled facilitators of collective action who were able to

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[65] Mary K. Whelan, 'Dakota Economics and the Nineteenth-Century Fur Trade', *Ethnohistory*, 40, 2, Spring 1993, pp.252-3.
[66] Besteman, pp.491-2.
[67] Hoxie, pp.35 & 283-6.

accumulate a surplus of both goods and reciprocal obligations that could be mobilised to gain support for their projects. Effective leadership depended on personal qualities and knowing how to distribute collective production appropriately. But, because long-term social security benefited from sharing networks, the economic contributions of individuals tended to be similar. On the Great Plains, individual freedom was maintained by the representation of all families in the councils and, in much the same way as the Maori system, by the need for consensus agreement on matters of group action. Co-ordination was rewarded but not essential for survival.[68]

As Maori only received material or technical assistance by making land available for settlement, abiding by government regulations and adopting Christian lifestyles, so, too were Crow farmers required to remain on their reservation and 'keep their places in order' if they were to be issued with wagons and implements necessary for effective farming. Those who flouted these requirements not only lost the assistance of the Crow Agency, but were also denied rations and, more drastically, served time in the guard house.[69]

Despite attempts on the part of tribal societies to resist the imposition of new lifestyles and attitudes, some adjustments could be enforced through violence or institutionalised punishment. However, other changes could be more difficult to impose. One of these was the move from task oriented production towards labour time by the clock which was a component in the colonists' mission to bring civilisation, progress and individual identity to communal societies. The failure of tribal societies to respond was a matter of constant frustration. But for those societies on the peripheraries of the global economy such re-orientation has still not taken hold because it offers no benefits and may instead have negative implications. As Kathleen Pickering has shown, Lakota households on the Pine Ridge reservation, who lack opportunities for full-time, permanent wage work, are obliged to make fragmentary allocations of time between clock-based wage jobs and task-oriented forms of production governed by social relationships. The Lakota do not

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[68] Russel Lawrence Barsh, 'Plains Indian Agrarianism and Class Conflict, *Great Plains Quarterly*, Spring 1987, p.84.
[69] Hoxie, p.272.

actively resist the internalisation of clock time but simply flout time-values that interfere with the task-oriented demands of what are for them more materially certain, socially embedded economic activities which maintain traditional support networks and aid their survival even today.

In the case of colonised people especially, it has sometimes been suggested that because many tribal societies have not discarded their older religions, they are not motivated by Christian imperatives and live for the present rather than a future life.[70] But the nature of reciprocal rights and obligations which are typical of such societies, the inducements offered to traders or other outsiders of perceived economic value, risk aversion strategies, and the tendency to a long-term view with regard to land use belie such assumptions. More often evident are barriers to the most efficient economic development of land and resources, especially through land alienation and a lack of access to capital.

It is hard to deny the convenience of neo-classical ideologies to those who promoted them. That is not to say that they were necessarily offered with the conscious intent of dispossessing indigenous populations but, with the benefit of hindsight, we would be wise to reconsider whether these expectations can still be sustained. An inter-disciplinary approach to research, with greater attention to indigenous voices, may throw a brighter light on the complex sets of factors that have and do motivate productivity in non-European and pre-industrial societies. Old patterns may offer lessons for today.

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[70] John A. Johnson, review of *Red Capitalism: An Analysis of the Navajo Economy*, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 65, 2, June, 1975, p.321.

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