

# Treaty-making, Colonial Policies, and Indigenous Subjugation in New South Wales and Aotearoa (1788-1840)



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## Introduction

To this day, Indigenous communities in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand endure the impairments brought by colonists. Yet, current research on British settler colonialism lacks an emphasis on the treaty-making process that consolidated the oppressive colonial power dynamics. By comparing the treaty-making approaches of the British Empire in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, this research hopes to explore the critical role of treaties in shaping complex and evolving relationships between Indigenous groups and colonial powers.



## Hypothesis

The distinct treaty-making approaches in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand can be attributed to their contrasting historical foundations. Australia's establishment as a penal colony and Aotearoa New Zealand's initial independence between 1788 and 1840 resulted in divergent colonial policies and power dynamics. Furthermore, the differential attitudes toward the Indigenous communities, Aboriginal and Māori, in these regions further shaped the diplomatic strategies and outcomes of the treaties.

## Methodology

By analyzing treaties, diplomatic records, letters to the London colonial office, and relevant secondary sources, it will identify the similarities and differences in British diplomatic strategies, the rationales for treaty-making, the negotiation and signing processes, each party's rights and obligations, and implications for the indigenous community. To address the asymmetrical power dynamic between the British officers and the Indigenous peoples, the study recognizes the importance of incorporating indigenous sources alongside colonial documents.

## Findings & Challenges

Letters by colonial officers like Arthur Phillip and William Hobson demonstrate the differences in attitude toward the Indigenous communities. They treated the Aboriginals with a hostile attitude with the intention to subvert their authority. In contrast, they viewed the Māori as friendly and cooperative. Regrettably, no preserved written Indigenous sources from the 18th and 19th centuries were found in the archive, posing a significant challenge for my research that aimed to comprehensively explore historical events from both colonial and Indigenous viewpoints.



## Implications

This research aims to fill a gap in the current literature on British settler colonialism by focusing on the transnational treaty-making process. It will shed light on the historical and ongoing impact of colonization and contribute to ongoing discussions about decolonization, social equity, and restorative justice. By bringing attention to the historical roots of contemporary issues facing Indigenous communities, it hopes to advance the cause of Indigenous self-determination around the world.

## Next Steps

To address the lack of Indigenous sources, an approach introduced by Native American scholars Pleasant, Wigginton, and Wisecup will be adopted to resist colonialist narrative and account for Indigenous perspectives. Additionally, it would be interesting to discuss the legacy of the colonial era considering the trajectory of British colonialism in Aotearoa New Zealand resembled Australia. By connecting sovereignty, land rights, and constitutional history with colonial policies and treaty-making, it hopes to identify how treaties were interpreted in colonial Oceania and how Indigenous people combated colonial encroachment.

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