

PERSPECTIVES ON THE TREATY OF WAITANGI

The Treaty of Waitangi is New Zealand's founding document. The Treaty has resulted in years of conflict and wrong doing towards the Māori of New Zealand and is still very much a subject of dispute in New Zealand today ...

Ranginui Walker is a Māori historian who writes about Māori history in New Zealand. Walker writes about the Treaty of Waitangi in his book *Ka Whaiwhai Tonu Matou* pages 90-97. In this source it reveals that he has a bias view on the Treaty resulting in a negative perspective of the Treaty. This source excerpt is shown from an observation and is a modern day source. This source shows that the Treaty of Waitangi was a confusing document that the Māori did not understand when they signed it. Firstly, Walker talks about the four English versions of the Treaty that were created but which did not match the Māori translation of the Treaty. The copy of the Treaty that the Māori translation was written from has never been found. This shows that the Treaty is a confusing document - if you do not have matching copies then no one is able to reasonably discern which Treaty is morally and truthfully correct meaning. Therefore, no one copy of the Treaty could be used for verification. This makes the Treaty a very confusing document for the Māori as they did not understand English properly and would not have been able to know whether it was correct or not.

Secondly, Walker also talks about the articles of the Treaty in the English and Māori version not matching by only one or two sentences. In article one it says that "the purpose of the Treaty...succession of chiefly sovereignty over New Zealand to the Queen of England". This was made clear in the English version of the Treaty but not in the Māori version as it was obscured by Henry Williams' translation. The English version states "Her Majesty the Queen of England, absolutely and without reservation, all the rights and powers of Sovereignty which the said Confederation or Individual Chiefs respectively exercise or possess..." which in the Māori version when translated back into English states "...cede absolutely to the Queen of England forever the complete governance of their lands"...

The "Our Nations Story", a New Zealand textbook from the 1940's, pages 20-23 gives a very different perspective to the one Ranginui Walker provides us. The textbook was written as a compilation of the history of the British in New Zealand. It was written to meet the guidelines of the history standards at the time of publication. It is a past source which was written from a British/English point of view making their perspective different to that of others.

Tamati Waka Nene made a splendid speech in which he told the Māoris that he was sure the Queen wished only to be their friend..." This shows that Tamati Waka Nene was told the Treaty would be good for the Māori and that the British only wanted to be friends with the Māori and that nothing bad would happen to them if they signed the Treaty. Before Nene made his speech, some of the chiefs would not sign the Treaty. Nene's speech would have most likely been the turning point which convinced them that it would be of benefit to them if they did sign.

This source says that "You will understand how important the Treaty of Waitangi was in the story of New Zealand. By it, our country became a British colony; and by it the Māoris remained the real owners of the country." This tells us that the Treaty was like the beginnings of our country being a part of the rest of the world by having laws and some sort of justice system. It was through that by becoming a colony the Māori were still the real owners of the country only they were now protected by the Queen of England. This source praises the Treaty for taming New Zealand and that it plays a very important part in New Zealand's story. It shows that the Treaty was good for New Zealand as the Māori were still owners although the ruler of their country had changed.

"...it remains the fairest Treaty ever made between Europeans and a native race; indeed in many ways, it was much fairer to brown man than to white..." To me this shows that the Treaty was to benefit the Māori more than the Pakeha that had come to New Zealand. It says that the Treaty was one of the fairest ever made between Europeans and a

native race; this may be true for the Pakeha, but in the eyes of the Māori, this is not true. This shows that the authors thought the Treaty was fair and that the Māori were of an understanding that the ideas were fair and honest. This adds to the positive perspective given in this source of the Treaty of Waitangi. The authors of the compilation think that the Treaty was that fairest ever and they think that it was good for the Māori and it favoured them over the Pakeha.

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William Colenso wrote a book about the Treaty of Waitangi titled '*The Authentic and Genuine History of the Signing of the Treaty of Waitangi*' published by the Government printer in 1890... "If the natives do not know the content of this treaty it is no fault of mine... Mr Colenso: 'True... but the natives are quite children in their ideas.'" Colenso's conversation with the Governor shows us that he could see that the Māori were not able to comprehend the ideas given to them in the Treaty. He saw that their civilization was quite childish and that they had a lesser knowledge of rules and regulations. The Māori were not as developed in the sense of modernisation compared to the Europeans. They lived a very easy life by living off the land by hunting and gathering, whereas the Europeans had created ways to help them live like stoves and guns and other man made goods. This shows us that William Colenso saw that the Māori were not able to fully understand the Treaty presented to them. This reveals Colenso's negative perspective on the Treaty of Waitangi as he tried to tell the Governor that they could not understand the Treaty and that it was confusing to their "childish" mind...

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Keith Sinclair was a New Zealand historian. He was born and raised in Auckland, New Zealand. He studied at Auckland University College; he was awarded a PhD and became a Professor of History at the University in 1963. In Sinclair's book "*A History of New Zealand*", pages 70-73 he talks about the circumstances of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. This book was published in 1959 and was one of the first books Sinclair wrote.

"What those who signed or those who refused may have understood the Treaty; it is difficult to say... One chief interpreted the Treaty as meaning that 'the shadow of the land goes to Queen Victoria, but the substance remains with us.'" This shows that Sinclair knows that the ownership of New Zealand goes to the Queen of England but the land still belongs to the Māori. Each chief had a different perspective on the Treaty; Sinclair says that those who refused to sign the Treaty may have understood it and its contents while those who signed were not fully aware of what it meant. This shows that Sinclair holds a neutral perspective on the Treaty of Waitangi and that he has no strong feelings to be for or against the Treaty. He states that some Māori may have understood while others did not.

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I support Ranginui Walker's negative perspective on the Treaty of Waitangi. I think it is the most convincing perspective as he has knowledge of the event and he feels that the Treaty is a confusing document that the Māori did not understand when they signed it. I think that the British made a terrible mistake when writing the Treaty. Not one of the English versions matches the Māori version of the Treaty, although the copy that the Māori version was translated from has never been found. This is a large problem because if you do not have matching copies of the Treaty then no one is able discern which Treaty is correct.

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I feel that by the wording of the Treaty of Waitangi, the Māori were wrongfully tricked into signing something in exchange for trade. The words rangatiratanga and kawangatanga were used incorrectly and if they had been used properly, the Māori may have understood the messages that the Treaty were trying to convey for New Zealand.

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I have a positive perspective on the Treaty of Waitangi Tribunal as I believe this government established body is doing it's utmost to right the wrongs of the Treaty. However, I believe that there should be a time limitation on claims to the Tribunal. This would enable it to finally settle all retrospective claims and enable New Zealand and all New Zealanders to move on in a fully integrated society into the future.

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