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IMAGES AND APPRAISALS OF NEW ZEALAND 1839-1855

A COGNITIVE-BEHAVIOURAL APPROACH TO
HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY

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A Dissertation Presented for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Geography, University of Auckland

1975

FRONTISPIECE

THE EMIGRANTS

Painted by W. Alsworth; lithographed by E. Walker.

The Mackay family about to leave Scotland for New Zealand in 1845. The scene includes their home, Drumduan; and the privately chartered ship 'Slain's Castle' in the Bay. The Mackays settled at Nelson.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have assisted in the collection of material for this dissertation. The help and advice of the reference librarians and their assistants is much appreciated, especially that given at the Alexander Turnbull Library and at the National Archives in Wellington; at the Hocken Library and at the Otago Early Settlers' Museum in Dunedin; at the Mitchell Library in Sydney; at the Australian National Library in Canberra, and at the Tasmanian State Archives in Hobart.

The author would also like to acknowledge the permission of the Alexander Turnbull Library to reproduce the photographs of paintings used for Plates 1, 2 and 3, and the permission of the Rex Nan Kivell Collection, Australian National Library, Canberra, to reproduce the painting used as the frontispiece. Acknowledgement is also made to the Hocken Library, Dunedin, for permission to reproduce copies of early emigration posters seen in Figures 4 and 7.

The financial assistance provided by the research grants awarded by the University of Auckland Research Committee made possible the collection of most of the manuscript material available in Australia and New Zealand.

The helpful advice, criticism and encouragement of my Supervisor, Associate-Professor A.M. Gorrie is much appreciated. The author also values the interest taken in this research by all concerned.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation considers the images and appraisals of New Zealand in the period 1839 to 1855. The expectations of British emigrants were examined in terms of the information available about New Zealand, the nature, accessibility and dissemination of information, and the images about the new environment created in the accessible sources of information. These expectations, largely drawn from the images, are compared with the appraisals made by the emigrants after arrival and settlement.

The dissertation was developed at three levels: as an historical geography using a cognitive-behavioural approach, being concerned with the relationships between information, images, and appraisals, and examining a specific process - emigration to New Zealand from 1839 to 1855.

In light of the recent anxiety and pessimism over the future and direction of historical geography, the use of new concepts and methodologies has been regarded as a necessity. While there are many problems and complexities inherent in the use of a cognitive-behavioural approach to historical geography, the concepts of perception, image, and appraisal offer much to the understanding of how man evaluated and behaved in the world of the past. It is suggested that the use of relevant cognitive-behavioural ideas broadens the areas for research by offering a new perspective to the past and by encouraging the use of much previously unused material.

The second concern was the relationship between information

and image and between image and appraisal. The role of information was found to be most important in the development of images about the new environment. The appraisals also reflected the information contained within the images. It was suggested that it is impossible to reconstruct images of the environment in their totality but that it is possible to reconstruct simpler sub-images of specific features in the environment. It is in this manner that the historical geographer can make a major contribution to the understanding of man's behaviour, in relation to the geography of past times.

The third concern was with the process of emigration to New Zealand in the period 1839 to 1855. Although much information about New Zealand was available, the intending emigrants had access only to limited sources of information, much of which was promotional in nature. The images of the physical environment were largely drawn from these sources. These images appear to have been the basis of the expectations of most of the emigrants. The later appraisals made of the physical environment showed a close relationship to the images, although several discrepancies occurred. These discrepancies reflected the distortion of information, the role of imagination and the personal evaluations of different sources of information.

Emigration to New Zealand in the period 1839 to 1855 was, therefore, examined in terms of the images and appraisals made of the new environment. While general satisfaction with the new homeland was expressed, few of the emigrants considered New Zealand to be an 'Eden of the South Seas'.

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