

As Polynesian explorers sailed the Pacific and discovered new islands and territories, on the other side of the world, European explorers were doing much the same.

In 1492 – over 200 years after Māori first began to settle Aotearoa – Italian explorer Christopher Columbus became the first European to reach the

coast of America. Five years later Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama became the first European to reach India.

Portuguese and Spanish navigators sailed the Pacific Ocean in the 1500s but there is no firm evidence that Europeans reached Aotearoa before Dutch Explorer Abel Tasman arrived in 1642.



Ortelius's Map of 1589 illustrating the completely unknown - and generally assumed to exist - Southern continent.

A Question of Balance – The Great Southern Continent and other myths and legends...

Ever since Roman times, and even before, the belief in Terra Australis Incognita – an 'unknown land of the South' – was present in writings and maps; despite a complete lack of any evidence or documented knowledge of the continent.

It was generally believed that in order to balance out the continental land mass in the Northern Hemisphere, there needed to be an equivalent land mass in the Southern Hemisphere. The idea of the Great South Land persisted – and even featured in maps between the 15th and 18th centuries; despite the fact that no map-maker had

been there, seen it or even knew for sure it existed. What they did, instead, was draw a series of 'artist's impressions' of what the land might look like.

The myth of Terra Australis persisted, however – and was a driving force for exploration in the Pacific right through until the 18th Century.

One of those explorers was Abel Tasman who sailed in search of the southern continent which many Europeans thought might exist in the South Pacific. In December 1642, on one of those journeys of discovery, the Dutch voyager sighted Aotearoa, which he named New Zealand.

Enlightened Self-Interest

As new lands were found by Europeans – along with the previously undreamed of wealth and resources that they contained – an unprecedented age of imperialism and colonisation began as countries like France, Great Britain, Spain, Italy and Portugal set out to exploit these new-found cash cows.

At the same time, an intellectual movement was evolving in Europe that sought to make sense of this new world, and capture the super-abundance of knowledge that it contained.

France was at the leading edge of this intellectual and philosophical revolution, known as the Enlightenment. Fueled by the minds of people like Rene Descartes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the Paris of Louis XIV had become the capital of intellectual exploration and debate.

The Enlightenment championed the use and celebration of reason and, together with advances in scientific thinking,

was a movement for its time. As the world grew bigger, so did human capacity to process and understand the new information it offered up. The Enlightenment provided the tools to do the job. Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus was a prime example. The genius who pioneered the system of species classification – still used today – enabled every species of flora and fauna to be catalogued, named and placed within a framework of understanding that identified where each one fit with the other.

Meanwhile Enlightenment philosophers applied science to understand the ever-growing family of humanity. Rousseau, for example, reading about peoples from these newly found lands around the globe, taught that these persons – living in their state of nature – were unsullied by the forces that beset their unfortunate brothers and sisters living in Europe. They instead enjoyed an existence that was morally neutral and peaceful.



A scene from the Quiberon Bay battle between the French and British navies.

The best of enemies...

During the 1700s there were no less than six wars fought between Great Britain and France – including the Anglo-French War (1778-1783) that was part of the American Revolutionary War.

The most significant of these, however, was the Seven Years' War which took place between 1756 and 1763. During this particular conflict one of history's most significant naval battles took place – the Battle of Quiberon Bay.

The battle was the high point of British efforts to eliminate French naval superiority, which gave the French the potential to carry out an invasion of Great Britain. A British fleet of 24 ships engaged 21 French ships and by the end, a third of the French ships had either been sunk or run aground. The threat of invasion had ended and the power of the French Navy had largely been broken.

The series of wars between both countries had produced a number of experienced naval warriors on both sides – household names today who had cut their teeth in

the furnace of battle. Mariners like James Cook who saw action during the Seven Years War and the Bay of Biscay, Nova Scotia and surveying the St Lawrence River in preparation for the taking of Quebec.

On the French side, a young Marion du Fresne played a leading role in the rescue of Bonnie Prince Charlie after the battle of Culloden, and served with distinction in the French Navy, fought three major battles with the Royal Navy as captain of a frigate and was promoted to Fireship Captain. And with the fall of Quebec to the British – and the loss of Canada (aka New France) – it fell to Louis-Antoine de Bougainville to negotiate the terms of Canada's surrender.

In response, Bougainville set himself the task of discovering new lands for France to replace the empire she had lost. Britain – smarting from its loss of the American colonies – was thinking much the same thing.



A French Naval officer's hat from the 19th Century



A Royal Navy officer's hat from the 19th Century.

Exploration – intellectual and otherwise – was the watchword of the day as there was literally a whole new world out there waiting to be discovered. The French, in particular, grasped the possibilities and set forth. Spurred on by a thirst for knowledge, the promise of conquest and the chance of a more than satisfactory return on

investment with the discovery of the Great South Land, waves of French mariners like Louis-Antoine de Bougainville and Jean de Surville made for the Pacific. In their wake, English competitors like Samuel Wallis and Lieutenant James Cook – every bit as curious, and every bit as 'Enlightened' – sought the same opportunities.



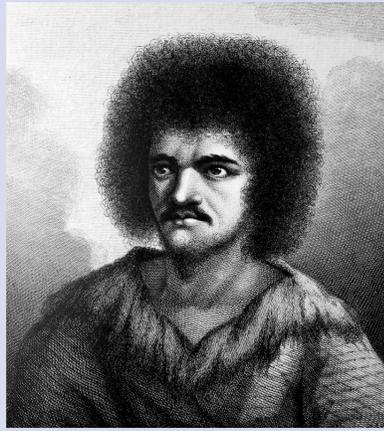
French naval officer and later Pacific explorer Louis Antoine de Bougainville.



Marc-Joseph Marion du Fresne.

Bougainville returned to France in 1769 after circumnavigating the globe. On board his ship was a Tahitian named Ahutoru who was keen to return to France with him and his crew.

Ahutoru was treated well, and introduced to all the leading



The young Tahitian Ahutoru who would become 'the darling of Paris'.

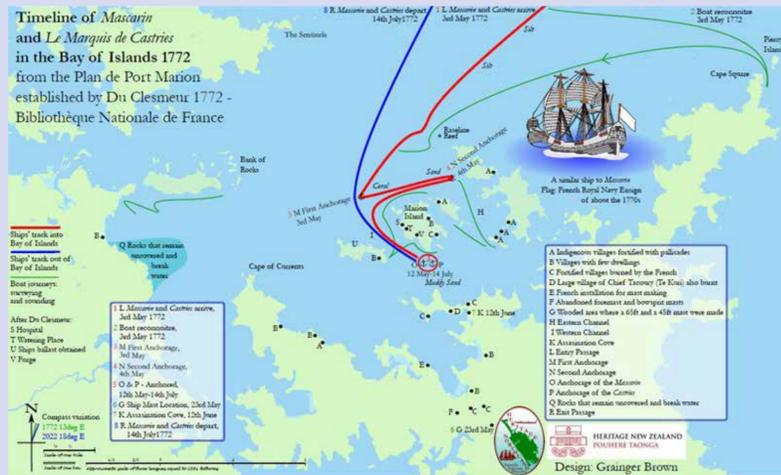
nobles, including King Louis XV, and rapidly became the 'darling of Paris'. Ahutoru embodied all the ideals of the 'noble savage' promulgated by the Enlightenment, and then popularised in the salons of

Parisian gentlefolk.

After months of being feted, however, Ahutoru began to pine for home, and in March 1770 the Tahitian embarked on a former French India Company vessel *Brisson* bound for Ile de France (Mauritius).

At the same time, Marc-Joseph Marion du Fresne – a privateer from a wealthy but not particularly noble family – was cooling his heels in Ile de France desperate for some action. When word came that Ahutoru would be arriving, and that he was looking to return home, Marion du Fresne saw opportunity.

Already somewhat famous for playing a leading role in the extraction of Bonnie Prince Charlie safely to France, Marion du Fresne was keen to take his maritime career to the next level. In the Ahutoru assignment he saw an opportunity to advance his situation financially and socially. And if he happened to discover the Great Southern Continent in the process of sailing to Tahiti, nobility would surely beckon...



Map showing the movements of Marion du Fresne's two ships Mascarin and the Marquis de Castries in 1772 (map courtesy of Grainger Brown).

Change of plan...

Only days after Marion had loaded up his flagship Mascarin and departed Mauritius en route for Cape Town, the unthinkable happened. Ahutoru reported

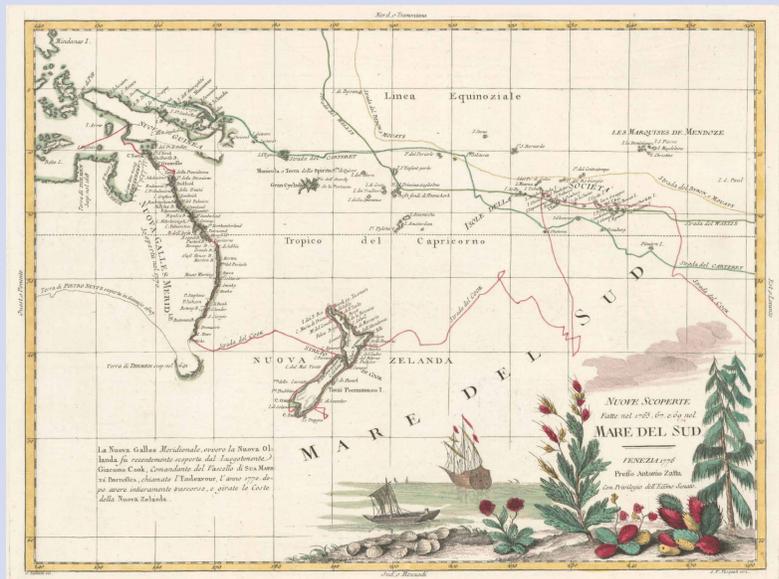
feeling unwell and showed signs of smallpox. Other crew members also developed the disease, and later recovered – though sadly Ahutoru did not. The young Tahitian's body was sewn into a canvas shroud, given a Catholic requiem and buried with full military honours.



The Bay of Islands as mapped by Marion du Fresne.

With Ahutoru went a popular ship mate, the main purpose for the voyage to Tahiti, and – crucially given subsequent events in Aotearoa – a valuable interpreter. Ever the optimist, however, Marion pivoted and sailed on with Aotearoa in his sights.

A map of Aotearoa at the time of Marion du Fresne's voyage.



Storm clouds ahead

In early May 1772, Marion du Fresne arrived in New Zealand waters with his ships the *Mascarin* and the *Marquis de Castries*. Du Fresne's ships had been hit by a gale and were looking for a place to anchor, make repairs – following a disastrous collision between the ships off Prince Edward Island – and tend to the many sailors on board the ships suffering from scurvy. The Bay of Islands seemed perfect.

Du Fresne set up a hospital tent for his sick crew at Waiti Bay – next to Waipao Bay where Cook had landed three years earlier – and a forge was set up on the opposite side to make iron bands needed for re-masting.

The time du Fresne and his men were in the Bay was the longest period of time that Māori and Pākehā had spent with each other. Besides some tensions between the two peoples, initial contact was relatively peaceful, though in time that would change as cultural and other misunderstandings compounded. The result was disaster.

The mere presence of this tribe of foreigners, oblivious to the laws of tapu and other cultural constraints, would inevitably result in miscommunication and misunderstanding.

For a start, Marion's men began planting crops – which would have awakened concerns as this action tended to indicate settlement, and also implied a claim on the land. The presence of the ships in the Bay also inspired fierce competition for trading access with these foreigners, both between and within different tribes, having a destabilising effect on lines of rangatira authority. As Marion's popularity increased among common people, so too did his perceived threat to rangatira.

Incidents of pilfering and petty theft increased – a broader indicator that the French were overstaying their welcome. Two events, however, are likely to have been the nail in Marion's coffin.

Reports of one incident, recorded by Marion's second lieutenant of the *Marquis de Castries*, Toussaint Le Dez, described how a group of people "came to meet [Marion] as they usually did but in greater numbers. They spread their cloaks on the ground, made him sit down upon them, fixed to his hat four white feathers, the distinctive mark of chiefs, then they began to sing, repeating his name often and seeming to want to make him understand by their

respectful, submissive manner that they recognised him as their chief."

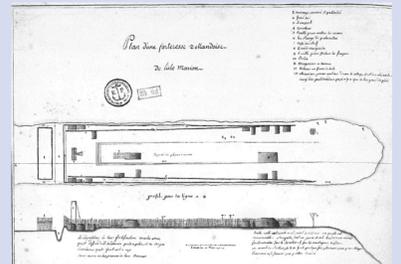
Significantly, Te Kuri – the predominant rangatira of the area – was not present at this ceremony.

When warned of what appeared to be growing threats from Māori, Marion famously reassured his officers that all was well between the two peoples. "Since I do them nothing but good, surely they will not do me any harm," the child of the Enlightenment and big Rousseau fan duly postulated.

The second incident occurred when Marion's men took part in a fishing expedition in a bay that had been pronounced tapu after the bodies of two drowned men had been washed up. Marion and his men continued fishing, ignoring directives from Māori to stop.

As utu for this and other offences, the leaders Te Kauri and Tohitapu killed du Fresne and some of his men 'so that evil might not come on their tribes for the evil of those people for ignoring the tapu of the beach where the corpses had lain'.

The surviving French officers responded with fury, driving Māori from the Bay in order to



A detailed drawing of Paeroa Pā. The French were to destroy the pā in response to the killing of Marion.

secure the hospital tent, and to finish replenishing their water supplies. They then took their revenge by sacking and burning Paeroa Pā. The French remained for another month, completing their preparations and wreaking vengeance before finally leaving the Bay. By the time they left, over 200 Māori had been killed.

Marion du Fresne's disastrous stay in the Bay of Islands had major repercussions for Māori living in the area. Change was to impact everyone – not least of all Ngare Raumati, whose territory included Moturua Island. Ngāpuhi integrated with the earlier tribes and are now ahi kā in the Bay.

Just as importantly, the pain that resulted from the French sojourn in the Bay of Islands would influence the perspective of Te Iwi Wiwi held by Māori for generations to come.

Marion's map overlaid onto an aerial digital image of Moturua Island.

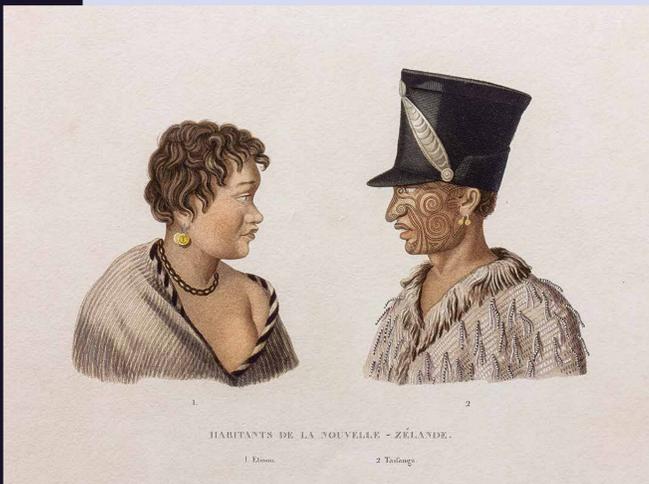


By the early 1800s, Great Britain and France were the dominant imperial powers in the world, and were vying with each other for domination in the Pacific.

After spending a considerable part of the 1700s at war with each other, these two powers kicked off the 1800s – with yet another war; this time the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815) which happened to

coincide with increased interest in the settlement of the Pacific by Europeans.

Inevitably the old enmities and tensions between Great Britain and France would spill over into the Pacific as both countries began to flex their geo-political muscle. Aotearoa was no exception.



Rawiri Taiwhanga (right) – responded with great concern with the arrival of the French exploration vessel *La Favourite* in 1831. *Memories of du Fresne's time in the Bay were still fresh in the minds of many Māori.*

The French are coming! The French are coming!

In October 1831 13 Ngāpuhi rangatira [chiefs] gathered at Kororipo Pā to discuss the composition of a letter to King William IV of Great Britain – asking him for help to protect their land.

The meeting sought to affirm the relationship with the British Crown established in 1820 with the visit by Hongi Hika and Waikato to London, where they met King William's elder brother, George IV. The hui involved the 13 rangatira and the Church Missionary Society missionaries.

met at Kororipo Pā, the French ship *La Favourite* had sailed into the Bay of Islands. The ship was a discovery vessel commanded by Captain Laplace and not a war ship, though rumours were rife that the French were planning to settle New Zealand.

The rumours were alarming enough to cause the New South Wales Governor to order a British naval ship to investigate – and if it found the French to have taken possession, to lodge a protest on the grounds of prior possession by Britain.

In fact, Laplace had only stayed a few days to rest his crew. Nevertheless, his ship's presence in the Bay was enough to cause ripples of fear, as Paihia-based missionary Marianne Williams recorded in her diary on October 3, 1831:

“David Taiwanga [Taiwhanga] came running in to tell me that the ship was now come, about which we had heard so much ... that they were the enemies of King William, come to

spy out the land, and had 400 men on board; that as Mr Williams was at Kerikeri at the

Committee, I must give him the flag of our nation to hoist upon the flagstaff on the hill.”

Marianne countered – somewhat lamely perhaps in Taiwhanga's eyes – with the explanation that the flag rope was broken, which was the reason no flag had been hoisted for several Sundays.

“Oh! He would send a boy up; would I not give him a rope?” wrote Marianne.

“I should have it again in a few days. Did I not wish to shew the

flag of my country? Then, if they tore it down, Mr Williams would write to the rulers of our land to fight for us...”

Taiwhanga's comments highlighted a general sense of concern about the French which was felt by both the Governor of New South Wales and rangatira alike, and was one of the factors that brought the chiefs together at Kororipo Pā.

A translation of the original letter written in Māori by Manuka Henare of the University of Auckland, reveals what was on the minds of the rangatira who had gathered at Kororipo. One of the key purposes of the letter was to ask the king to “be a friend and ally with us, including that of being a protector and guardian of these islands in case of further discrimination and retaliation from other foreigners, including the likelihood of invasion to take from us our land”.

The chiefs also requested that

“if in the event that some of your own people interfere in our ways and provoke us by devious actions... and we include those who have run away from any of your trading ships, it is best that you be their judge and deal swiftly with them; otherwise they will experience the anger and righteousness of Māori people”.

The letter was then signed by ‘us the leaders of the Māori people’ and can be seen as a request for friendship and protection – rangatira to rangatira – and even a signal, perhaps, that the King should ‘sort out’ some of his more troublesome subjects in New Zealand before Māori did.

It was also the first step on the road towards the Declaration of Independence of 1835, which sought to further formalise the Crown relationship with the Northern Tribes – and which was followed by the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840.

He Whakaputanga

There are two versions of the Declaration: the English text created by Busby, and the te reo Māori document that was signed.

He Whakaputanga (which can be translated as ‘an emergence’ or ‘declaration’) consisted of four articles. It asserted that sovereign power and authority in the land (‘Ko te Kingitanga ko te mana i te w[h]enua’) resided with Te Whakaminenga, the Confederation of United Tribes, and that no foreigners could make laws.

Te Whakaminenga was to meet at Waitangi each autumn to frame laws, and in return for their protection of British subjects in their territory, they sought King William's protection against threats to their mana. They also thanked the King for acknowledging their flag.

Thirty-four northern chiefs signed He Whakaputanga on 28 October 1835. Busby sent it to the King, and it was formally acknowledged by the Crown in May 1836. By 22 July 1839 another 18 chiefs had signed, including Te Hāpuku of Hawke's Bay, and Te Wherowhero, the Waikato Tainui ariki who was to become the first Māori king in 1858.

Busby saw the Declaration as a step towards making New Zealand a British possession. He believed

it would ‘be the most effectual mode of making the Country a dependency of the British Empire in everything but the name.’

Māori intentions were somewhat different. The rangatira who signed He Whakaputanga were continuing a tradition of safeguarding their people in the face of rapid change.

Northern Māori had been meeting in the Bay of Islands, Hokianga, Whangaroa, and Whangārei before 1835 to manage their relationships with Europeans. In contrast to Busby, the signatories saw He Whakaputanga as a way to address the challenges posed by European contact, to strengthen an alliance with Great Britain, and to assert their authority to the wider world. For Ngāpuhi, He Whakaputanga emerged out of the meetings of Te Whakaminenga, rather than Te Whakaminenga emerging from He Whakaputanga.

The culmination of these dynamics was the eventual signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi on February 6 1840 and in subsequent signings around the country. The influence of the French – and the game of imperialism played by France and Britain – can be felt in both of our founding documents.



Hongi Hika (Centre holding taiaha), Waikato (left) and missionary Thomas Kendall (right). The painting was completed when the two rangatira were in England – the same time as Hongi's fateful meeting with Baron Charles de Thierry.

One of the requests made to King William was an invitation for him to become a friend and ally in response to a fear that other powers would come and take away their land. The main enemy identified by the chiefs was the ‘tribe of Marion’ – the French, a direct reference to French explorer Marion Du Fresne and his disastrous visit to the Bay of Islands in 1772.

Whether it was a coincidence or not, just days before the chiefs

He whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nui Tirenī.

1. Ko matou ko nga Tino Rangatira o nga uri o Nui Tiri. i raro mai o Hauwaki kua oti nei te huihui i Waitangi i Tokerau 28 o Okatapu 1835. ka whakaputa i te hangarauanga o te matou ke mui a ka meatia ka whakaputanga e matou ke Wenua Rangitira. ka huihuia i te whakaminenga o nga hapu o Nui Tirenī.

2. Ko te Kingitanga ko te mana i te wenua o te whakaminenga o Nui Tirenī ka meatia nei kei nga Tino Rangatira ana ke i te matou huihuinga. a ka mea hoki e kore e tukua e matou te wakarite tuu kei te tahi huinga ke ake, me te tahi kawaranga hoki ka meatia i te wenua o te whakaminenga o Nui Tirenī.

An image of He Whakaputanga [the Declaration of Independence] prior to Te Tiriti o Waitangi in 1840.

Vive la France

2022 marked the 250th anniversary of the arrival of French explorer Marc-Joseph Marion du Fresne in the Bay of Islands – and a timely opportunity to reflect on the story of the French in New Zealand.

When Britain succeeded in annexing New Zealand in 1840, the English version of events became the dominant narrative which continues to this day. It's fair to say that historians have only scratched the surface of the French side of our story. There is a way to go to fully understand the significant impact the people

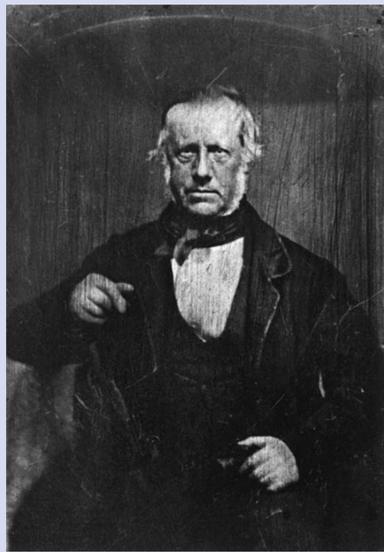
of Ngāti Wīwi had in shaping our history.

The vast treasure trove of source material written in French – and therefore not easily accessed by many non-French-speaking historians – has also probably influenced how history is told. Stories of French achievement are all but unknown.

There has been under-representation of the French side in the telling of our history – and indeed the Māori perspective of the French. The 250th anniversary represents an opportunity for us to begin to look at this little-understood part of our history.

de Thierry-ation of a big dream

Charles de Thierry was one of life's optimists.



Baron Charles de Thierry.

An Anglo-French 'baron', his first brush with New Zealand took place in the rarefied halls of learning at Cambridge University in 1820. It was here that he met the two Northland rangatira, Hongi Hika and Waikato, who had travelled to England to assist Professor Samuel Lee in compiling a Māori-English dictionary.

Charles de Thierry signed a deal with Hongi Hika to purchase 40,000 acres of land in the Hokianga. In April 1824 de Thierry's debts had caught up

The de Thierry family crest.

with him and he spent some time in several English Debtors Prisons until October that year. It is interesting to note that part of his debt was to a gunsmith, and it is possible that he provided guns to Hongi and Waikato as payment for the land in New Zealand.

De Thierry later claimed that Hongi had also appointed him 'Sovereign Chief' – a title that proved to be as worthless as the land transaction itself.

Full of expectation, de Thierry arrived in Tahiti en route to New Zealand in 1835 and announced his intention of taking up his fiefdom, somewhat naively advising British Resident James Busby of this fact by letter. When he arrived in New Zealand, however, he found a very different reality.

Charles de Thierry discovered that 'his' land had already been occupied – and that local rangatira Patuone and Nene strongly denied that Hongi had the right to sell land in what was most definitely their territory in the first place.

The two leaders felt sorry for de Thierry, however, and gifted his wife 800 acres. It still wasn't enough for de Thierry to put into place his grand plan for colonisation however. His dream of ruling a French colony in the

South Pacific was over.

De Thierry's big-noting in Tahiti had flow-on consequences in New Zealand, however.

James Busby, the British Resident at Waitangi, heard about de Thierry's grand designs, and was alarmed. His response was to use the situation as an opportunity to call a hui of Northland Māori

tribal leaders at Waitangi with the intention of thwarting de Thierry's plans.

The result was He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tirene – the Declaration of Independence – which asserted New Zealand's independence as a sovereign nation, and which was signed by the Rangatira present.

Religious Freedom – courtesy of Bishop Pompallier

At the first signing of Te Tiriti at Waitangi on February 6 1840, a fourth article was added to the Māori text of the Treaty signed at Waitangi, at the request of Bishop Jean Baptiste Pompallier.

In Māori the fourth article said: "E mea ana te Kawana ko nga whakapono katoa o Ingarani, o nga Weteriana, o Roma, me te ritenga Māori hoki e tiakina ngatahitia e ia", which means "The Governor says that the several faiths (beliefs) of England, of the Wesleyans, of Rome and also of Māori custom shall alike be protected by him".

This article guaranteed religious freedom for all in the new nation, including Māori.



Bishop Jean-Baptiste Pompallier – the mover and shaker who introduced religious freedom to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Paper Mulberry confirmed

Joseph Raoul – a quartermaster / pilot on board the French naval vessel *Recherche* – recorded some ship-based trade that took place when the vessel was off Spirits Bay in March 1793, referring in passing to an unusual trade item:

“Not having anything else they gave us their ornaments which consist of little plaits of paper mulberry passed through their ears,” he wrote.

The reference to paper mulberry is only one of two known written records of the delicate tapa-like

paper that was made by Māori from the bark of the Aute or Paper Mulberry tree (*Broussonetia papyrifera*).

The other is by that well known scientist and child of the Enlightenment, Sir Joseph Banks, who travelled with Cook on the *Endeavour*. Thanks to Raoul's mention of paper mulberry we now have two known written sources.

The existence of a second written record of aute as used as an ornament for the ears is an important addition – but also a reminder that there is a significant body of information about our early history which has not yet been widely tapped.

Jean de Surville – a close call with destiny

French explorer Jean de Surville barely rates a mention in the history books – despite the fact that he and Lieutenant James Cook were sailing in the same waters at much the same time as Cook's first voyage to New Zealand in 1769.

At their closest point, the *Endeavour* and Surville's ship *St Jean Baptiste* came within about 30 nautical miles of each other off the coast of Northland.

French-speaking historian, naturalist and politician Michael Lee writes how the explorers came within an ace of encountering each other near North Cape in his recent book *Navigators and Naturalists*: "... had Surville rounded the evening of the next day when Cook was bearing up on North Cape, it would have made for one of the most dramatic encounters in the

annals of seafaring. The history of New Zealand would have most certainly been different."



French explorer Jean de Surville who came within a whisker of arriving in New Zealand before Cook.