

## **‘Maori and Pakeha – Two Peoples or One’?**

RALPH PIDDINGTON AND ‘SYMBIOSIS’ IN  
MID-TWENTIETH-CENTURY NEW ZEALAND



In February 1952, Ralph O’Reilly Piddington, the Foundation Professor of Anthropology at Auckland University College, rose to address an audience of Māori schoolteachers in the city.<sup>1</sup> In a little more than a year since taking up the position, the expatriate Australian had begun establishing the discipline at Auckland in earnest, including advocating for the teaching of *te reo Māori*. During the address, Piddington warned that the indigenous people of New Zealand, who had started a long-term migration from rural districts to cities and towns, faced a possible danger. Their future contribution to the nation could be limited to providing a ‘brown proletariat’.<sup>2</sup> By the time he gave the talk, Piddington had begun arguing that if Māori undergoing urbanization were to substitute Pākehā cultural orientations for their own – an implicit objective of government policy during the 1950s and early 1960s – they would experience a devastating loss of identity and cohesion.<sup>3</sup> Māori would forfeit customary satisfactions, while remaining a physically distinct and occupationally subordinate minority. Alternatively, Piddington suggested that preservation of traditions would help Māori adapt as a group to the social and economic demands of a modern, Pākehā-dominated society. In the foreseeable future, the two peoples of New Zealand would live in physical proximity while embracing cultural differences.<sup>4</sup> Piddington was careful, however, to disassociate this desirable degree of ethnic differentiation from the discriminatory and highly undesirable racial segregation then structuring society in South Africa and the southern states of the USA.<sup>5</sup>

This article examines Piddington’s expression of a vision of New Zealand’s future – which he labelled ‘symbiosis’ – in which Māori and Pākehā would coexist in a relationship of mutual dependence, while recognizing differences between their cultures. The paper demonstrates that university-based anthropologists, and Piddington in particular, played an important role in the developing sensibility of an emerging generation of leaders and scholars, while having a limited impact outside the academy. Key members of this group were Māori. Coming of age as scholars in the post-war decades, their quest for cultural self-determination dominated race relations discourse in New Zealand from the 1970s. Prominent participants in this conversation

included former students of Piddington, junior members of staff he had hired, and individuals otherwise associated with the department he founded. Piddington and especially younger intellectuals, who were both inspired by him and whose greater cultural knowledge played a significant role in shaping his thought, insisted that Māori should not assimilate with Pākehā but instead strive to attain economic parity while conserving fundamental and communally sustaining points of divergence.

As a primarily intellectual discourse, the contemporary social and political influence of symbiosis was somewhat amorphous, but it was a trenchant and intellectually sophisticated repudiation of assimilation – a position that had become widespread in progressive circles by the 1970s. Here I argue that Piddington's assertion that Māori would be equal with Pākehā society, rather than absorbed into it, has distinct value for historians of race relations and the evolution of intellectual life in twentieth-century New Zealand for several interlocking reasons. Piddington's idea was characterized by simultaneously looking back with perceptiveness to the earlier assimilative arguments of Māori intellectuals Apirana Ngata and Peter Buck, while looking forward to political and social shifts of the post-1960s era.<sup>6</sup> Drawing on both a long tradition of indigenous thought and international expertise in colonial anthropology, Piddington formulated ideas about the Māori struggle to uphold the integrity of traditional Māori culture in opposition to the 'benevolent assimilation' expected of ethnic minority and indigenous populations by New Zealand and other Anglo-dominated nation states of the mid-twentieth century.<sup>7</sup> Piddington was not the first or only intellectual, however, whose support for Māori autonomy helped influence the installation of a policy of biculturalism by New Zealand's fourth Labour government.

Historians have previously examined two events in Piddington's career. Geoffrey Gray has discussed his exclusion from the Australian anthropological fraternity following impolitic public allegations of Aboriginal exploitation he made while a young field worker for the Australian National Research Council (ANRC) in Western Australia during the late 1920s.<sup>8</sup> Gray and Doug Munro have also contextualized the appointment of Piddington to head the new Department of Anthropology at Auckland.<sup>9</sup> Despite this focus on significant episodes in his life, historians of race and culture in New Zealand have not devoted extensive analysis to Piddington's arguments about symbiosis. The exception is an important chapter in Stephen Webster's *Patrons of Maori Culture: Power, Theory and Ideology in the Maori Renaissance* (discussed later in the article) that addresses symbiosis within a broader discussion of Piddington's contribution to New Zealand anthropology.<sup>10</sup> The neglect of Piddington's thought on the Māori-Pākehā relationship is perhaps

understandable. As an Australian, Piddington was considered an outsider to New Zealand's cultural conversation. While his teaching and textbooks established his legacy as a pioneering professional anthropologist, most of his research scarcely touched on New Zealand and was relatively obscure in this country. Although Piddington promulgated symbiosis in his teaching, conference presentations, media appearances and pamphlets, he did not explicate the idea in a widely distributed publication until the late 1960s.

Despite the limited scholarly engagement with Piddington's thought on the Māori-Pākehā relationship, the prism of symbiosis in fact casts important light on the relationship between the rise of the professional social sciences and the maturation of an interracial movement for Māori cultural autonomy. In examining and recovering from obscurity the ideas of a key mid-twentieth-century social scientist and educator regarding one of New Zealand's fundamental national questions, this article ultimately addresses a wider failure of historians to scrutinize early post-World War II intellectual discourse in this country. Such reluctance to engage with an unfashionable intellectual period has enabled an elision of the diverse and incremental intellectual origins of biculturalism and the emergence of often simplistic cultural narratives in which liberal New Zealand underwent a singular postcolonial epiphany in embracing the idea of Māori autonomy during the 1970s.

### **Early Life and Career**

Piddington's career prior to arriving in Auckland is worthy of attention because the expertise in colonial anthropology he had acquired over nearly two decades – as a student and researcher, and in the military – enabled the development of the theory of symbiosis. Piddington was born in Woollahra, Sydney on 9 February 1906 to Marianne Piddington (nee O'Reilly), a social worker who wrote and lectured on sex education and eugenics, and Albert Bathurst Piddington, a barrister and reforming member of the high court bench and state legislature.<sup>11</sup> As an undergraduate, Piddington studied psychology at Sydney University, taking up anthropology when A.R. Radcliffe Brown established the department. He gained a BA in 1928 and a joint MA in psychology and anthropology with first class honours in 1932. Piddington subsequently won a grant to undertake field research among the Karadjeri at La Grange Bay in remote northwest Western Australia for the ANRC and then undertook research in the area for racial psychologist S.D. Porteus of the University of Hawai'i. In 1932, he travelled to England on a Rockefeller Foundation fellowship to begin a PhD at the London School of Economics (LSE) entitled 'Culture and Neurosis', under the

supervision of C.G Seligman. Piddington also studied at the LSE with the doyen of functionalist anthropology, Bronislaw Malinowski.<sup>12</sup> Piddington was subsequently appointed to positions at the University of Edinburgh and the University of Aberdeen, where he helped establish the teaching of anthropology. While his research career was interrupted by service in the British and Australian armies (in the latter he trained administrators in Papua New Guinea), Piddington had published several papers and monographs in colonial anthropology prior to arriving in Auckland.<sup>13</sup>

In late 1949, Piddington was appointed Foundation Professor of Anthropology at Auckland University College. He oversaw the expansion of the department and held the position until his retirement in 1971.<sup>14</sup> During the first decade of his tenure at Auckland in particular, Piddington and members of the Anthropology Department presented an alternative to the prevailing assimilation policy in proposing the idea of symbiosis. The following section considers the demographic, economic and policy contexts of the Māori situation in mid-twentieth-century New Zealand. ‘Symbiosis’ attempted to negotiate and, in some ways, to challenge these circumstances. While not receiving much attention at first, even within the academy, ‘symbiosis’ nonetheless significantly influenced the discourse of younger scholars. Many of these intellectuals later became centrally involved in discussions on ethnicity and the imagined shape of the New Zealand nation during the ‘Māori renaissance’ of the mid-to-late twentieth century.

### **Government policy and Māori thought in mid-twentieth-century New Zealand**

When Piddington arrived in New Zealand in 1950, the Māori population was beginning to undergo a remarkable revival. A mere half-century earlier, Māori resurgence on a significant scale appeared unlikely. By the end of the nineteenth century, the combined impact of introduced disease, the defeat of North Island Māori in military conflict with the settlers, and land dispossession had depressed the Māori population to half its 1840 level.<sup>15</sup> Māori health began recovering in the first two decades of the twentieth century, however, accelerating during the inter-war and post-Second World War periods.<sup>16</sup> After the Second World War in particular, the Māori population underwent social, spatial and economic reorientations, as increasing numbers of workers and their families departed rural home districts in search of higher-paying employment and other opportunities in cities and towns. The percentage of the Māori population living in urban areas and (non-rural) boroughs rose from 9.3% in 1936 to 17.7% in 1951 and continued to increase in the following three decades, including a period of mass migration in the 1950s and early

1960s.<sup>17</sup> By 1986, more than 80% of Māori lived in urban areas.<sup>18</sup> Despite the introduction of Social Security by the first Labour government in 1938, the pressures – both financial and psychological – of participation in a money economy, psychologist Ernest Beaglehole found in a 1946 'social study', were intruding even on country and small-town life.<sup>19</sup>

Māori population revival and urbanization raised new challenges for intellectuals and policymakers – not least Māori leaders. Many concerned thinkers became convinced that cultural knowledge, and increasingly, anthropological expertise, would crucially assist Māori as they strove to reconcile their culture with imperatives of the national economy. In the 1920s and 1930s, MP for East Coast Māori and amateur anthropologist Apirana Ngata had established tribally based programmes of agricultural land development as a vehicle for Māori economic advancement. From both a deep personal knowledge of the culture and a deepening engagement with anthropological scholarship, Ngata observed that traditional social structures had not significantly unravelled in many Māori settlements. Ngata and his friend, professional expatriate anthropologist Peter Buck (Te Rangi Hiroa), argued that Māori did not need to jettison traditional sensibilities and structures in order to prosper materially under 'modern' economic conditions.<sup>20</sup> Customary features of Māori society should rather form the base upon which Māori could construct a vibrant and adaptive modern identity.<sup>21</sup>

M.P.K. Sorrenson, Steven Webster and Jeffrey Sissons have noted that Ngata's thought and – prior to his dismissal from cabinet in 1932 – political clout played a pivotal role in the questioning of longstanding expectations that Māori would eventually assimilate to Pākehā society completely.<sup>22</sup> Ngata's position on the uplift of Māori reflected the intellectual parameters of the time and he did not, Webster suggests, 'really express respect for Maori cultural autonomy'.<sup>23</sup> While he was critical of complete cultural assimilation and sought to harness remaining aspects of traditional society – specifically collectivism and tribal rivalry – to improve the economic position of Māori, Ngata did not aim to fundamentally disrupt the assimilationist paradigm. His views had a particularly strong influence on the intellectual evolution of Ivan Sutherland. Sutherland, awarded a PhD at the University of Glasgow, was appointed to a lectureship in Thomas Hunter's Department of Philosophy and Psychology at Victoria University College, Wellington, in 1924. During the late 1920s and 1930s, Sutherland was a leading Pākehā academic proponent of the notion that Māori were capable of adapting their culture to the demands of modern society and that it was not necessary for them to deliberately shed conventional and customary ways. Following American anthropologist Paul Radin, Sutherland, one of the only New Zealanders truly

familiar with international developments in psychological anthropology, also played an important role in debunking the notion that Māori were culturally disposed to resist rational thought. Ngata himself had endorsed this position as recently as the late 1920s and Sutherland is regarded as responsible for changing his mind on the matter. It was Ngata, however, who convinced Pākehā intellectuals such as Sutherland that Māori leaders had recognized a need to move closer to Pākehā economically and culturally, while continuing to be a distinct and proud people.<sup>24</sup>

After 1935, under the first Labour government, the Department of Native Affairs strove to provide economic equality to Māori. The department became involved in housing and land development, working closely with Ngata to implement the latter. Yet the ultimate success of agricultural land development schemes was limited by several factors, not least that the land still held by Māori was insufficient to support the fast-growing population in agriculture. Although interpreted as a compromise between the government's emphasis on achieving equality and Māori desire for greater control of their own affairs, the 1945 Māori Social and Economic Advancement Act resisted Māori pressure to empower tribal bodies in ways that would provide semi-autonomy.<sup>25</sup> In 1947 the department was renamed the Department of Maori Affairs. The change supposedly reflected greater official sensitivity to how Māori understood their distinctive cultural and social needs.<sup>26</sup> As urbanization increased during the middle of the century, policymakers within the department argued that the Māori future lay in urban occupations and environments. Facilitating this transition – still conceived of in terms of cultural as well as economic assimilation – was acknowledged to represent a significant challenge and opportunity for the builders of the post-war state.<sup>27</sup> Commentators in the media, and some Māori themselves, however, expressed scepticism about urbanization as a 'drift involving moral and cultural decline'.<sup>28</sup>

Ernest Beaglehole was the most prominent contemporary Pākehā academic proponent of psychology and anthropology aiding the modernization and assimilation of Māori.<sup>29</sup> As Peter Mandler has observed, the post-war years were the height of public faith in the ability of academic 'experts' to improve intergroup relations, both within societies and in the realm of international diplomacy. Due to their recognized cultural knowledge, anthropologists were, albeit relatively briefly, favoured experts consulted by expanding state-planning bureaucracies to help manage the relationship of ethnic majority and minority groups.<sup>30</sup> Beaglehole's thought and career are illustrative of mid-twentieth-century social scientific assumptions regarding the future status of Māori in an assumedly Pākehā-dominated nation. In 1937, the

New Zealand-born, London and Yale-educated psychological anthropologist suggested that New Zealand 'could well call upon the anthropologist to take some of the guess work out of the contact between European and native Polynesian'.<sup>31</sup> While in the United States, Beaglehole had studied Hopi society in Arizona and worked as a consultant to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. He was appointed senior Lecturer in Mental and Moral Philosophy at Victoria University College in 1937. In early 1938, Ernest and wife Pearl won a grant from the New Zealand Council for Educational Research and the Carnegie Corporation of New York to conduct 'an observational survey of Maori life near the town of Otaki, north of Wellington on the lower west coast of the North Island'. Published in 1946 as *Some Modern Maoris*, the conclusions of the Beagleholes' research report contradicted the prescriptions of Ngata and Buck that the transition to modernity must be graduated and based on traditional social structures. Their study instead encouraged Māori to rapidly shed core cultural characteristics, in particular collective ways of living, which they deemed to be incompatible with 'modernity'. Māori should instead internalize an acquisitive drive and individualism presumed to characterize the psychological orientation of Pākehā society.<sup>32</sup>

The expectation that rapid assimilation was the best strategy for Māori informed the policy adopted by the Department of Māori Affairs in the post-war period. By the 1950s, however, the department was beginning to replace assimilation with the concept of 'integration'. This policy envisioned the combination of the two races as an incremental process.<sup>33</sup> Officials such as Secretary of Maori Affairs T.H. Ropiha began to see traditional structures as providing a sound base for the Māori transition to a 'modern' lifestyle, rather than as obstacles in the path of Māori progress.<sup>34</sup> As Richard Hill and Aroha Harris have observed, however, policy during the 1950s and 1960s remained essentially assimilationist in its conviction that the ultimate merging of Māori and Pākehā into a single, Pākehā-oriented national culture was both desirable and inevitable.<sup>35</sup> In 1961, the vision of New Zealand as culturally unitary in the future, rejected by Piddington and his associates in favour of the idea of symbiosis, was implied by the *Report on the Department of Maori Affairs*, known as the 'Hunn Report' after its chief author, Acting Secretary for Maori Affairs Jack Kent Hunn.

### **Establishing the Department**

To understand the emergence of Piddington's interest in the future development of Māori and Pākehā, it is important to briefly discuss the period of energetic organizing that followed his arrival in Auckland to found the Department of Anthropology in October 1950, and relationships formed

during this period with students and staff. The Auckland College Council had set Piddington the task of establishing a broad-ranging anthropology department. He thus endeavoured, as he had done previously at Aberdeen and Edinburgh, to encourage multiple facets of anthropological enquiry, including those, such as archaeology, which he was known to disdain. The staffing of the department began in 1950 with the appointment of three junior colleagues. W.R. Geddes, who trained at the London School of Economics and had recently served as the Sociological Research Assistant to the government of Sarawak, was appointed as lecturer in social anthropology. Bruce Biggs, previously a schoolteacher on the remote East Coast, began a part-time position teaching Māori language. R.A. Scobie, Education Liaison Officer at the Auckland War Memorial Museum, also joined the department as a part-time lecturer in technology and primitive economies. In 1953, archaeologist and pre-historian Jack Golson was appointed lecturer in archaeology.<sup>36</sup>

Piddington devoted particular energy to establishing the teaching of the Māori language, and secured a full-time junior lectureship for Biggs in 1951. By 1952, the department offered a full lecture course in Māori Studies at Stage 1. The course, taught by Biggs, was the first of its kind in the country. Piddington supported Biggs, to the detriment of his relations with arts faculty colleagues, by leading a campaign for the extension of Māori teaching to Stage 2 level. The request prompted fierce resistance from an 'old guard' of professors of romance languages. They contended that Māori, as allegedly a language 'without a literature', was unworthy of advanced study.<sup>37</sup> Piddington and Biggs prevailed, however, and teaching of the subject at Stage 2 was approved in 1953.<sup>38</sup> With encouragement from Piddington, Biggs took leave in 1955 to begin PhD study at the University of Indiana at Bloomington. On his return he took the important step of establishing the first linguistic laboratory in the country at Auckland University College.

Biggs was one of several early members in the department to engage critically with government policy regarding Māori. Joan Metge was another who shared this concern. Born in 1930, Metge had recently completed an MA in Geography when she enrolled in Piddington's Stage 2 Anthropology course in 1952. Under Piddington's supervision, from 1953 until 1955, she undertook a pioneering empirical study of the migration of Māori from rural northern districts to Auckland. This research was published as *A New Maori Migration* in 1964.<sup>39</sup> An older associate of the department, Maharaia Winiata, was also an important participant in the discourse of Māori cultural autonomy. Born in 1912, Winiata, of Ngāti Ranginui membership, was a Methodist minister and former schoolteacher. He was appointed tutor-organizer of the Adult Education programme at the University of Auckland in 1949. Winiata

become friends with Piddington, who assisted him in obtaining a scholarship to undertake doctoral studies at the University of Edinburgh in 1952.<sup>40</sup> From the early 1950s Piddington, Biggs, Metge, Winiata and others made the adaptations facing Māori a core focus of departmental research, with Piddington spearheading the public promotion of symbiosis as an alternative to assimilation-oriented government policies.

### **Assimilation challenged**

In the first year of his appointment, Piddington and Biggs took a short field trip to Northland, having judged Biggs's native East Coast too distant. The pair stayed in pubs and visited primary schools, where they met with headmasters. When applying for the job at Auckland, Piddington had expressed an intention that the department provide courses in applied anthropology to train government personnel interacting with both Māori and the indigenous populations of New Zealand's Pacific dependencies.<sup>41</sup> This was a role for anthropology that Beaglehole had similarly championed at Victoria University College.<sup>42</sup> In the first year of the Auckland department's existence, Piddington began preparing a memorandum to the government requesting additional funding to cover an expansion of the department to provide such practical instruction.<sup>43</sup> The trip thus appeared to be an attempt to survey ways in which those working directly with Māori would benefit from anthropological training. While away, Biggs recalled observing both that Piddington drank heavily alone at night and that 'Ralph was more at ease with the teachers than with Māori'. He did not fit in or seem at ease in 'bi-cultural' situations. Piddington, Biggs later observed, seemed 'pretty much of a racist'. Despite an evidently sincere lifelong commitment to assisting the social and economic 'advancement' of 'primitive' peoples, he appeared to Biggs inwardly certain of European cultural superiority.<sup>44</sup>

The spirit of this allegation is echoed in Webster's observation that Piddington possessed an essentialist view of culture that prevented him from developing a convincing theory of social change.<sup>45</sup> Despite his interest in acculturation, Webster suggests, Piddington could not help but view other cultures through the lens of 'a timeless ethnographic past'.<sup>46</sup> The romanticism underlying his (un-nuanced) view of traditional culture as socially nourishing but non-dynamic accompanied an equally simplistic analysis of modernity as an objective condition defined by alienation and psychological conflict.<sup>47</sup> This notion of tradition and modernity as discrete dual states sat uneasily with Piddington's contention that elements of both may be successfully combined in the 'emergent development' of 'a Maori value system' within a semi-autonomous situation of symbiosis.<sup>48</sup> Piddington's dualist cultural

model was thus both naive and constricted by a fundamental rigidity. While acknowledged by Piddington's students, it is important to note that this contradiction did not apparently deaden his influence on contributors to the debate on the Māori-Pākehā relationship. Despite the temptation to see it as an insurmountable flaw, Piddington's construction of culture is perhaps more accurately identified as a limitation those familiar with his teaching and writing became aware of in the course of their own intellectual development and research.<sup>49</sup>

Other early associates, such as Norman Perry, were less sceptical about Piddington's cultural perspective. Perry, a former secretary to Apirana Ngata, established a unique garment factory at Opotiki in 1949. Staffed exclusively by Māori and run with respect for community needs, the success of the business demonstrated the ability of Māori to thrive in a modern working environment – with minimal cultural adjustments. Perry sought out Piddington soon after his arrival in Auckland. The pair spoke about a comment Perry had recently made on radio that 'integration is not the music of unison but harmony', and Piddington informed Perry of his own idea of symbiosis. Piddington later visited Opotiki and was impressed with the factory, which appears to have influenced his thought about the Māori situation.<sup>50</sup> He would mention the operation in his most widely disseminated essay on symbiosis, not published until 1968, to illustrate his point that adjustment to modern material conditions did not mean that Māori had to lose communal traditions. In subsequent years he sent students to visit the plant and analyze its operations.<sup>51</sup>

In May 1951, Piddington and Biggs travelled to Christchurch to address a conference sponsored by the Royal Society of New Zealand. Biggs described the paper, 'Synchronic and Diachronic dimensions in the Study of Polynesian Cultures' – published later that year in the journal of the Polynesian Society – as a 'bombshell'.<sup>52</sup> In the address Piddington criticized an excessive focus in Polynesian anthropology on speculative 'reconstructions' of indigenous history and culture prior to the 'point zero of culture contact with Europeans'. He claimed that efforts in this direction, implicitly the earlier work of Percy Smith, Elsdon Best and other amateur anthropologists, were little more than guesswork, 'laughable in terms of the work of modern historians'.<sup>53</sup> Antiquarian speculation, distinct from credible recent investigations of pre-European culture and economics by Peter Buck and Raymond Firth respectively, had 'no relevance to the practical problems of human adjustment', which he conceived as the essential contribution of science to 'human needs' and progress. He thus called for increased study of Polynesian communities, in particular the processes of acculturation they had been undergoing for decades, which continued to shape their experience.<sup>54</sup>

During the following year, Piddington and others in the department explored this belief in the practical application of anthropology to cultural adjustments facing Māori. This investigation would lead them to critique the assimilative precepts of government policy. In 1952, Piddington submitted a memorandum to the government proposing an expansion of the department to include the training of civil servants. In his annual report the following year, however, Piddington recorded that talks with government to fund the proposal had broken down for financial reasons.<sup>55</sup> It is possible that the increasing questioning of assimilation from within his department played a role in the decision.

Both the perceived benefits of applied anthropology and scepticism towards assimilation were embodied in Piddington's paper 'Maori Child Welfare: the Cultural Background', published in the *Bulletin of Child Welfare Workers* in November 1952. Welfare workers, the paper contended, needed to appreciate Māori values, attitudes, and assumptions, or the 'absolute logics' that conditioned behaviour in cultural situations.<sup>56</sup> Understanding the Māori past was valuable to welfare workers, not in the antiquarian sense Piddington had recently disparaged, but for the insights it offered into 'Maori social behaviour today'. Piddington, in effect, was stressing the importance of cultural knowledge in the practice of welfare.

In the most significant section of the article, Piddington argued that the Māori desire to attain a standard of living on par with that of Pākehā did not mean that they should shed all traditional cultural orientations. Some Māori, 'confused about the relative merits of Maori and Pakeha ways', could give the impression that they favoured a policy of cultural assimilation. This group was 'apt to neglect the positive contribution which Maori culture can make to the welfare and happiness of the Maori peoples'.<sup>57</sup> Others associated the preservation of Māori culture with segregation. Piddington felt that to adopt such a view was to 'fail to distinguish between a way of life voluntarily chosen by a minority group and one imposed on them by a dominant group of an alien race'.<sup>58</sup> Rather than providing a temporary cushion during a period of transition to full integration, Māori culture was desirable in its own right, providing non-material satisfactions the Pākehā world was unable to match. The low incidence of neurotic disease Beaglehole had recorded among the Māori population was perhaps the leading cultural advantage.<sup>59</sup> Māori were 'obviously not going to merge with the Pakehas racially and culturally within a generation', although Piddington conceded that 'in the long run the two races will in some ways merge'.<sup>60</sup>

This critique of assimilation appeared more directly in the address, 'Social Implications of Maori Population Trends', which Piddington gave to the

New Zealand Geographical Society in the same year. The speech constituted the major public exposition of the symbiotic vision. Pointing to the rapid increase in the Māori population, accelerating migration to the cities, and reports that inter-marriage was occurring at lower rate than anticipated, Piddington concluded: 'It is probable that Maori will continue to exist as a distinct racial unit in the New Zealand population for a very considerable time to come.'<sup>61</sup> 'Outright and complete cultural assimilation', he argued, was neither possible nor desirable. Advocates of this policy underestimated the vigour of Māori culture and the futility of attempts to displace it. Even if Māori were able to shed longstanding ways, it would have a deleterious effect on acculturation, as racial difference and the preponderance of Māori in the lower echelons of New Zealand industry would continue to mark them out as a 'brown proletariat'.<sup>62</sup> 'While 'the Maori' should 'in certain respects approximate more and more to Pakeha standards', Piddington argued, 'he should do this as Maori and from Maori motives'. Symbiosis thus presented a more mutually rewarding alternative to the assimilationist orientation of racial policy in New Zealand.

Piddington presented a perspective more attuned to New Zealand's international reputation in 'Maori and Pakeha: the Future', an article he wrote for *The Student: Magazine of the Student Christian Movement*. The essay contended that the 'present and future relations of Māori and Pakeha was the most important social issue facing the people of New Zealand today'. New Zealand was 'widely regarded as a country where two races have achieved a large measure of mutual adaptation'. New Zealanders deserved to feel a measure of pride, though not complacency, because their country was the world's most successful 'laboratory for race relations'. If the nation succeeded in promoting racial harmony despite the challenges posed by the renewal and urbanization of the Māori population, it would demonstrate that the 'thorny problem' of 'race prejudice' might be overcome. Piddington then reiterated the existence of a political division between assimilation and symbiosis, suggesting that the assimilative vision propounded by Ernest Beaglehole reflected a Pākehā view that most aspects of traditional Māori culture were inferior to their own and should be jettisoned for the sake of progress. This belief was indicative of New Zealanders' failure to see Māori-Pākehā relations as part of a larger need to appreciate the value of non-European cultural backgrounds.<sup>63</sup>

The contentions of Piddington and his associates that symbiosis was a desirable alternative to assimilation did not go unnoticed by the media. Piddington's comments to the meeting of Māori schoolteachers in February were widely reported. The Wellington correspondent for Reuters interpreted

Piddington's warning about the possible formation of a 'Brown Proletariat' should urbanization continue unmanaged, in addition to his suggestion that Māori and Pākehā should live in the future as interdependent but culturally distinct, as 'cutting right across' the purportedly assimilationist views of 'two of Maoridom's foremost figures': the late Ngata and Buck. Piddington's inference that New Zealand would be a more harmonious society should distinct cultural entities be preserved attracted criticism from the Ngāti Pōneke Māori Association, the ruling body of the Ngāti Pōneke Māori Club. Established by a group of Māori civil servants in 1937 'to try to get the young people off the street and rouse their interest in Maori culture', the club provided a range of activities for Māori who had migrated to Wellington. In the post-war period, Ngāti Pōneke emerged as probably the most thriving of several of non-traditional iwi. Piddington had argued previously that Māori needed to move closer to Pākehā in many fields. Yet the members of the association, who were predominantly educated Māori civil servants, read his statements as an affirmation of separatism, and argued that 'the dominant culture today, as far as the Maori race is concerned, is the Pakeha culture' and that 'it is axiomatic that where there is no adaptation there is no equality'.<sup>64</sup>

In the second week of July 1952, Piddington chaired a series of radio panel discussions sponsored by the New Zealand Broadcasting Service, entitled 'Maori and Pakeha – Two Peoples or One?', which was also the title of the first programme. The discussions comprised five additional programmes: 'The Legacy of the Nineteenth Century', 'The Maori Comes to Town', 'The Maori in our Economic Life', 'Maori Education Today', and 'The Future'. The panellists represented distinct perspectives, including Māori and Pākehā, government officials and museum staff, former leaders of the Māori Battalion, and three members of the Auckland Anthropology Department: Metge, Biggs and Scobie. Interviewed by the *Listener* prior to the airing of the first instalment, Piddington again presented the notion of a split between those who felt that 'Maori culture on the whole should be fostered' and others who believed that 'it would be best for the Maori people to be absorbed as fast as possible in our [Pākehā] way of life'. For a Māori perspective on the issues to be discussed in the programme, the *Listener* turned to Maharaiā Winiata, who noted that the recent death of great leaders like Ngata had intensified a need to train Māori to take advantage of 'modern methods and Pakeha help'. He observed, however, that most Māori felt that their culture and tradition held so much value that they 'should not be thrown away'.<sup>65</sup>

In May 1953, the department hosted a four-day research conference in recognition of the attention staff and students had devoted to 'Maori problems'. The aim of the meeting was to 'undertake a systematic review of

research already done' and to consider projects for the future.<sup>66</sup> The conference session presented by Joan Metge, which involved a review discussion of the Beagleholes' *Some Modern Maoris*, queried that study's recommendation that Māori should rapidly replace their traditional cultural orientations with a generic Pākehā culture grounded in an idealized 'rugged individualism'. She questioned whether the dysfunction the Beagleholes supposedly encountered in their study was 'in fact enough advanced to constitute drift', and argued that it would be difficult to prove that Pākehā ways were more desirable.<sup>67</sup>

Maharaia Winiata, who had recently returned from doctoral study in Scotland, provided the most cogent and detailed explanation of the operation of cultural symbiosis in New Zealand in a radio broadcast on 6 March 1955. The address, 'Two Peoples, One Nation', began with a historical introduction. Winiata argued that having been dispossessed of their land and subdued militarily in the nineteenth century (and thus neutralized as a threat), Māori had since been increasingly 'accepted' into the many facets of Pākehā life. Yet he argued that a 'unity in diversity' or 'dual frame of organization' prevailed in New Zealand society. The term, Winiata explained, described the way in which Māori and Pākehā intermingled extensively in certain social and economic fields, yet withdrew in other respects 'into separate compartments'. He noted that while Māori were migrating to cities and towns in significant numbers, a majority still lived in the country districts where most of their activities remained focused around marae social centres. While relying on Pākehā for work, recreation and other needs, rural Māori were in general 'differently organised' and culturally separate from neighbouring Pākehā communities.<sup>68</sup>

Winiata also observed that 'even in cities, despite Pakeha pressure, the Maori groups tended to be associated with themselves rather than the Pakeha groups surrounding them'. Despite ongoing intermarriage, the majority of 'half-caste' products of these unions 'still seem to ally themselves with the cultural features and ideals that have become the true marks of being a Maori'. Māori values were noted to differ from those of Pākehā, yet 'permeating all are needs, beliefs and values learnt from school, in the church, from the press, the cinema, and daily experiences that grip Māori'. Māori participated in many institutions with Pākehā, yet specialized departments and representatives often responded to their unique needs. Such differentiation gave 'compactness to the group and a degree of status in a society overwhelmingly European'. He sounded a critical note, however, by pointing out that the system provided a 'confined scope for talented Maori, and at the same time helps to keep the Maori out of the mainstream of things in a place the Pakeha thinks the Maori should occupy in society'. Winiata concluded that 'symbiosis' nonetheless

kept ‘a working balance between the two groups’.<sup>69</sup>

James Ritchie rebutted Winiata’s belief that a degree of racial separation was inevitable and in some senses necessary. Ritchie was a senior lecturer at Victoria University College. With his future wife, Beaglehole’s daughter Jane, and four other researchers, Ritchie – under Beaglehole’s guidance – led a study of a Māori community at Murupara in the central North Island during the 1950s.<sup>70</sup> He claimed that there was no evidence that a policy of cultural preservation was necessary, and ‘no reason why Maori and Pakeha relations should not undergo a change from stressing of differences to the stressing of similarities’. Winiata ‘would better serve his people’ by encouraging them to attain success by ‘Pākehā criteria’.<sup>71</sup> Ritchie believed that quick assimilation was necessary, a stance partly informed by his experiences at Murupara, whose residents he felt had ‘passed the point of no return in the recovery of Māori cultural vitality’.<sup>72</sup> It bears noting, however, that Ritchie appeared wary of separate development, rather than enamoured for culturally arrogant reasons with assimilation. By the late 1960s, Ritchie’s perspective underwent a significant shift and he became a leading advocate of Māori autonomy and a bicultural vision for New Zealand’s future.<sup>73</sup> In the 1950s and early 1960s, however, Ritchie remained unconvinced that separate development was a viable option for Māori. Although it was not yet a widely known idea, by the mid-1950s symbiosis was evidently beginning to attract attention, and resistance, from figures outside the department.

In 1957, Piddington presented his most sophisticated address to date, which married his concern for Māori adaptation with symbiotic theory. The talk, given to a conference organized by the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science in Christchurch, would not be published until 1968. Piddington opened the revised version with a critique of the ethnographical assumption that the traditional ways of ‘pre-literate indigenous communities’ were inevitably supplanted or eroded following contact with more advanced European societies. This perspective, Piddington argued, ignored the possibility that ‘the direction of change in such situations may not always, or even usually, be unilinear’.<sup>74</sup> In a reference to Ernest Beaglehole, he criticized anthropological labelling of contemporary Māori society as ‘disorganized’. Piddington instead contended that through ‘positive’ and ‘spontaneous’ processes of cultural development, Māori were developing new institutions that combined elements from both cultures, tailoring new technologies and values to their needs.<sup>75</sup> Piddington called this process – which represented ‘neither a return to the old days, nor complete assimilation’ – ‘Emergent Development’.<sup>76</sup>

Piddington argued that material progress and the maintenance of Māori culture were not ‘mutually exclusive’: ‘Emergent Development can and will produce material progress without a renunciation of the non-material benefits provided by traditional society.’<sup>77</sup> Piddington here referenced the factory established by Perry at Opotiki to demonstrate that Māori ways could be reconciled with contemporary economic demands. Māori had ‘condensed centuries of material progress into little over a hundred years’ and they had done so ‘without renouncing their cultural heritage’.<sup>78</sup> While they did not necessarily have ‘the best of both worlds’, they had ‘acquired a substantial share of the advantages of each’. Rather than targeting an amalgamation of Māori and Pākehā, official policy should promote a ‘social symbiosis’. Piddington explicated this alternative vision with reference to the relationship of the British and the French in Canada (where he had conducted research into kinship in Quebec). ‘Well informed’ Canadian critics, Piddington reported, accepted a symbiotic situation in which ‘French and English will never be one ... but they can come to understand one another.’<sup>79</sup>

### **The Hunn Report and ‘Integration’**

The release of the Hunn Report in 1961, and its citation of symbiosis, brought the idea to wider attention. The document articulated a vision of Māori progress and the people’s role in New Zealand’s future that was different from, if partially sympathetic to, the one promoted by Piddington. In January 1960 Prime Minister Walter Nash, who had taken over the portfolio of Maori Affairs in 1957, appointed senior public servant J.K. Hunn Acting Secretary of the department. Hunn was assigned with undertaking a review of Māori assets, a brief he interpreted to include human resources.<sup>80</sup> Although Hunn submitted the report to Nash in August 1960, Nash buried the document, ostensibly because the opposition would be forced to attack it in the lead-up to an election. The report, which languished until the National government released it the following year, presented a rigorous statistical portrait of the Māori population, as well as indicating the essence of the government’s ‘integration’ policy. In preparing the report, and devising the integration philosophy delineated by the document, Hunn worked closely with John Booth, the first trained anthropologist to be employed in this capacity in the New Zealand public service. Booth, who had been educated partly at London University, is an important yet often overlooked figure in the history of social science research in New Zealand – probably because he never held a university appointment. During the 1950s, Booth worked for the Department of Maori Affairs as an anthropologist – while also

publishing significant research on Pangaru in Northland that demonstrated his conviction that modernization was not synonymous with cultural assimilation.<sup>81</sup>

Hunn and Booth's conception of integration, although not always well defined, sought to establish an official middle ground between the increasingly unsatisfactory assimilation policy and the perspective – shared by intellectuals such as Piddington and many Māori – that some recognition of cultural distinctness and autonomy was necessary. The comprehensive population figures presented by Hunn and Booth revealed that Māori lagged behind Pākehā in numerous social and economic indicators. The stated aim of the government was to devote resources toward ameliorating these imbalances and raising Māori as quickly as possible to full participation in a modern lifestyle seen as equivalent to that of Pākehā but also 'advanced' non-white peoples such as the Japanese.

The report outlined four possible 'racial policies': 'Assimilation', meaning to absorb, or blend the Māori into the Pākehā culture, with a complete loss of the former; 'Integration', 'to combine (not fuse) the Maori and Pakeha elements to form one nation wherein Maori culture remains distinct'; 'Segregation', implying 'a theoretical concept of apartheid'; and finally 'Symbiosis', defined by the report as 'to have two dissimilar peoples living together but as separate entities with the smaller deriving sustenance from the larger (seemingly an attempt to integrate and segregate at the same time)'.<sup>82</sup> Of the options, integration was deemed 'the obvious trend' and 'conventional expression of policy'. Urbanization seemed both inevitable and 'the quickest and surest way of integrating the two species of New Zealanders'. The document recommended eliminating a minority of Māori 'complacently living a backward life in primitive conditions', while letting a purported 'main body' of the population – comfortable in both the Māori and Pākehā worlds – choose whether to raise itself to the status of a 'detrribalized minority'.<sup>83</sup> Although the report professed that integration 'implied some continuation' of Māori distinctiveness, it assumed a Social Darwinist approach to culture.<sup>84</sup> Only the 'fittest' elements of Māoridom had so far survived and it was 'entirely a matter of individual choice' which ones were kept alive. Despite the apparent cultural respect, the report adhered to assimilationist precepts. As quickly as in two generations, Hunn predicted, 'they [Māori] should be well nigh fully integrated'. In a speech on Waitangi Day 1961, Minister for Māori Affairs Ralph Hanan encapsulated the spirit of the policy in his comments that 'a true merging of two peoples' would allow for a degree of Māori distinctiveness equivalent to the status of the Scottish and Welsh in the contemporary United Kingdom.<sup>85</sup>

The Hunn Report had mischaracterized and dismissed 'symbiosis'. Yet by citing the theory in the list of potential racial policies, the document revealed that the vision of New Zealand's future articulated by Piddington had achieved a degree of prominence. What is more, the integration encouraged by the report was conceived of primarily as an incremental process, despite hopes it would occur more quickly in urban contexts. With this position, the department thus distinguished its policy somewhat from the indifference to the endurance of Māori culture and belief in rapid assimilation advocated by the Beagleholes, having apparently been pulled, in a dialectical movement, toward an appreciation for autonomy by the more radical rhetoric of Piddington and the other proponents of symbiosis.

By the time of the publication of the Hunn Report, Piddington had begun a physical deterioration associated with increased drinking. He did not respond publicly to the document. Some younger associates at the time, however, praised the report's repudiation of explicit assimilation and its professed respect for Māori culture, however superficial, as well as its pledge to direct great government resources to facilitate Māori assimilation. Joan Metge wrote to Hunn shortly after the report's publication to assure him of her 'fullest support for [your] conclusions and (with a few minor reservations) for your proposals'. Two areas that gave her pause, though, were the suggestion that a standard definition of Māori, based on blood quota, be introduced, and an allegation that the continued existence of Māori schools constituted segregation.<sup>86</sup>

The Hunn Report prompted anger, however, from many observers, Māori and Pākehā, including a spirited response by Bruce Biggs, published in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society*. Biggs argued that the 'oversimplification of race relations by the one person in New Zealand who had most power to implement his view is disturbing'. In particular, he criticized the report's conceptualization of integration as a continuum on which individual Māori could be placed, with urban Māori living the highest material lifestyles the most culturally integrated, while their counterparts in the country clung to traditional ways. Biggs also attacked the report's description of Māori 'language, arts and crafts' and 'institutions of the Marae' as 'relics' and accused the report of encouraging Māori to adopt 'holus bollus' a western culture that 'is probably the most stressful the world has ever known'.<sup>87</sup> The assimilationist precepts of the Hunn Report remained central to government policy toward Māori throughout most of the 1960s, despite the scepticism expressed by Biggs and others.

A significant event in Piddington's contribution to the discourse of cultural autonomy occurred at this late stage in his career. In 1968, a

concise and accessible distillation of symbiosis, 'Cultural Symbiosis and Assimilation', was republished – presumably due to its assumed relevance to the changing social and intellectual climate – in the essay collection *The Maori People in the Nineteen Sixties*, edited by Erik Schwimmer. A European immigrant who worked for the Department of Maori Affairs in the 1950s and edited its magazine *Te Ao Hou* [The New World], Schwimmer was an important contributor to the development of social science research on indigenous life in mid-twentieth-century New Zealand. While receiving advanced anthropological training overseas during the 1960s, he published two important books and several papers.<sup>88</sup> The inclusion of the essay in Schwimmer's collection was significant, as Piddington was no longer an active commentator on the Māori-Pākehā relationship by the late 1960s. Younger scholars such as Schwimmer clearly saw Piddington's ideas as theoretically relevant for negotiating a profound turn beginning to occur in both Māoridom and politically liberal New Zealand. This turn was toward preserving Māori customs and structures and away from the conviction that cultural conformity was necessary for Māori to successfully adapt to the modern economy.

## Conclusion

Piddington remained influential within the Anthropology Department during the 1960s, although he became increasingly removed from its daily affairs. He continued to undertake research, mostly on kinship in French Canada and Australia, where he returned to study the Karadjeri in 1965. As the decade progressed, Piddington's ability to undertake professional tasks withered. His drinking, long excessive, increased to unmanageable levels, and his health declined. Staff, several of whom Piddington had assisted both intellectually and professionally, were protective of and loyal to their colleague. The 'triumvirate' of Biggs, Geddes and Ralph Bulmer – the latter would replace Piddington as head of the department – assumed greater responsibility for running its programmes. Piddington officially retired on 31 January 1972. He died at Takapuna, Auckland, on 8 July 1974.

By the time of Piddington's death, growing endorsement of Māori autonomy revealed an erosion of the faith in fundamental Anglo cultural superiority that had belied even the most sympathetic of past attempts to improve the welfare of indigenous peoples. Symbiosis had been a fringe position when Piddington and associates began voicing the notion in the early 1950s, despite evident connections with the earlier commitment to the endurance of Māoritanga espoused by Māori intellectuals Ngata and Buck. In the early 1970s, Māori cultural, and in some cases economic, autonomy was

pushed to the forefront of New Zealand's liberal discourse by a new generation of scholars and activists, some of whom had trained in the Anthropology Department at Auckland. This shift in perspective played a crucial role in the installation of a policy of biculturalism by the fourth Labour government during the 1980s. Many of the more politically active young Māori thinkers, such as Ranginui Walker, Syd and Hana Jackson, Pauline Kingi and Pita Sharples, were probably more inspired by the late 1960s decline of integration and rise of black cultural nationalism in the United States. They read work by international critics of colonialism such as Frantz Fanon, and travelled to the United States and Australia to observe other black and indigenous movements. Key figures in academic Māori anthropology, however, such as Joan Metge and Bruce Biggs, were closely associated with Piddington as students and benefited from his patronage and support for their discussions of the Māori-Pākehā relationship and advocacy of Māori culture. As this essay has demonstrated, despite his presentation of symbiosis as an alternative to assimilation, Piddington's students – many of whom provided inspiration and even leadership to the subsequent Māori renaissance – surpassed him intellectually and in influence. Historicizing post-war intellectual discourse helps illuminate key changes in how members of the academy grappled with developments – the urbanization and 'modernization' of Māori – which contributed vitally to a realignment of New Zealand society in the second half of the twentieth century.

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## NOTES

1 I would like to thank Angela Wanhalla, John Stenhouse and the two anonymous readers for their helpful comments on this paper.

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