

AP World History

The Imperialism of Cultural Assimilation

James Gump, “The Imperialism of Cultural Assimilation: Sir George Grey’s Encounter with the Maori and the Xhosa, 1845-1868,”

Abstract: *A governor in New Zealand (1845–53 and 1861–68) and in South Africa (1854–61), Sir George Grey was recognized by his contemporaries as one of the most successful colonial administrators in the British empire. Grey’s reputation rested in large part on his celebrated “native policy,” which he characterized as a program of “amalgamation.” This article examines the implementation of Grey’s amalgamation strategy between 1845 and 1868 and evaluates its effects. The immediate legacy was the advent of a spirited resistance, a cultural rejection of colonial domination by the Xhosa and the Maori. At the same time, Grey’s policies helped pave the way for white supremacy in South Africa as well as the alienation of millions of acres of Maori land in New Zealand.*

In early 1855, shortly after George Grey took up the governorship of the Cape colony in South Africa, a letter arrived from London dispatched by Grey’s old friend George Barrow. “If you succeed with the Natives there in any degree approaching to what you have done in New Zealand,” Barrow wrote, “what a glorious triumph it will be after all that has been said of the impossibility of doing anything with them.”¹ By the mid-1850s Grey was widely recognized as one of the most successful colonial governors in the British empire. As Barrow’s letter implies, Grey’s reputation rested on his apparent success in dealing with the Maori during his governorship of the New Zealand colony in 1845–53. Grey’s celebrated “native policy” in New Zealand emphasized racial “amalgamation,” the systematic assimilation of the Maori to a Western cultural ideal, as well as their rapid incorporation into the labor force. Could a similar policy resolve tensions in South Africa’s volatile eastern Cape, thus sparing the British government the expense of another frontier war? Might Grey’s amalgamation scheme overcome, as Sir George Napier put it, the white settlers’ “determined hostility to the Coloured races” as well as their “determined prejudice never to admit of the possibility of a Black man becoming equal to a white”?² The colonial secretary, the duke of Newcastle, believed so. When Newcastle offered Grey the Cape governorship in June 1854, he praised Grey’s “energy and steadiness of purpose” in New Zealand—a career, the duke judged, affording “a just hope and pledge that the permanent interests of another extensive and increasingly important Colony will surely advance under your government.”³

With Newcastle’s official vote of confidence, Grey embarked on the Cape governorship with a list of programmatic imperatives based on his experience with racial amalgamation in New Zealand. What was the governor’s agenda? Grey articulated his guiding principles in 1855: “talented and honorable European gentlemen being brought into daily contact with the [Xhosa] chiefs, and interesting themselves hourly in their improvement and advancement will in degrees gain an influence over them which will in the course of time induce them to adopt our customs and laws in place of their own, *which the system I propose to introduce will gradually undermine and destroy.*”⁴ In other words, the “advancement” of the Xhosa, as for the Maori, required the insertion of European settlers as well as the “destruction” of indigenous cultures. Thus, while advancing the scope of the settler empire, Grey’s policies held dire consequences for indigenous land rights, economic independence, and political autonomy. As for cultural transformation—and irrespective of his lofty pronouncements—Grey would generally fail in his quest to “colonize the minds”⁵ of his indigenous subjects. Indeed, the rejection of forced acculturation manifested itself conspicuously through widespread millenarian movements in South Africa and New Zealand in the 1850s and 1860s.

The ambiguous legacy of Grey’s governorships in New Zealand (1845–53 and 1861–68) and in South Africa (1854–61) is compounded by a personality prone to authoritarianism and deceit. As the historian

AP World History

The Imperialism of Cultural Assimilation

Keith Sinclair put it, Grey's "conduct is a never-failing source of astonishment. Such a mixture of greatness and pettiness, breadth of intellect, and dishonesty, is rarely met with." During his two governorships of New Zealand, Sinclair asserts, Grey ruled "with a despotism... shrouded by the meshes of his guile."⁶ Grey's contemporary Edward Eyre, lieutenant governor of the province of New Munster, wrote that Grey operated "with much distortion, some absolute untruths, great rancour, malicious insinuations, sinister suggestions—all calculated to impress a person at a great distance unacquainted or only partially acquainted with the facts."⁷ In the words of historian J. G. Peires, Grey "was a great Colonial governor," one who "implemented successfully the established objectives of early Victorian imperialism." On the other hand, Grey's "despotic inclinations and paranoid obsessions... fuelled his extraordinary capacity for crushing and subjugating indigenous peoples, while loudly and sincerely proclaiming that he was doing so in their own best interests."⁸

In this article I seek not to vilify Sir George Grey, who was one of the most remarkable colonial governors of the nineteenth century,⁹ but rather to identify the contradictory impulses in Victorian imperialism and to evaluate their effects. If Grey is unique as a colonial governor, it is due to his discursive virtuosity in finessing these contradictions and in rationalizing their consequences. Despite Grey's grandiose claims, however, one finds that the immediate legacy of his "imperialism of cultural assimilation"¹⁰ was the advent of a spirited resistance, a cultural rejection of colonial domination by the Xhosa and Maori. At the same time, Grey's policies helped pave the way for white supremacy in South Africa as well as the alienation of millions of acres of Maori land in nineteenth-century New Zealand.

Grey's views on the rapid assimilation of native peoples evolved from his background as a Victorian liberal and practicing Christian. Born in 1812, a week after his father was killed while fighting Napoleon's forces in the Peninsular War, Grey was raised by his pietistic mother. Her religious influence made a lasting impression, as did the tutelage of Reverend Richard Whately, who inspired the young Grey with liberal views on penal and educational reform, emigration, suffrage extension, and Catholic emancipation. Early on, Grey envisioned himself following in the footsteps of his father, a lieutenant colonel in the British Army. Grey gained admission to the Royal Military College of Sandhurst in 1826 and following his commission in 1830 was posted in Ireland for the next six years. Ireland exposed Grey to an unimaginable poverty, which profoundly affected him. As a result, he decided to forego a military career for a profession dedicated to administration and reform. As Grey put it, he wished to experience "the greatness of the work of attempting to do something for the hopeless poor."¹¹

Grey imagined the British empire as a destination for Britain's suffering masses as well as the global arena for his liberal activism. With the authorization of the Colonial Office, he set off in 1836 to explore the uncharted coast of northwestern Australia. After two expeditions, however, he gave up hope of founding the colony of which he dreamed. Nonetheless, he recorded his experiences in meticulous detail. Grey's *Journals of Two Expeditions of Discovery in North-west and Western Australia* offers a compendium of his views on imperialism and the "civilizing mission." For example, Grey marveled that "the rapidity of communication from point to point, had introduced such vast effects in the march of improvement among distant lands, as only eye-witnesses can believe." The London merchant, "with the wizard wand of commerce... touches a lone and trackless forest, and at his bidding, cities arise, and the hum and dust of trade collect." How ironic, Grey thought, that these anonymous Londoners, seated in dark and dingy countinghouses, could execute schemes that resulted in such striking transformations. Joining forces with London merchants were those "noble minds," no doubt like himself, "who have a perception of the true object of their calling, who feel a just and laudable pride that they are the employers and benefactors of

AP World History

The Imperialism of Cultural Assimilation

3

mankind... who, within the last fifty years, have either actually erected or laid the stable foundation of six great empires, offsets of that strong nation, who, together with her progeny, is overspreading the earth, not by the sword, but by the gentle arts of peace and beneficence.”¹²

In Grey’s view, “the gentle arts of peace and beneficence” carried a price for recalcitrant aborigines. Grey believed that the inevitable advance of Anglo- Saxon civilization would sweep away the “ancient races” and consign their “antique laws and customs” to oblivion. “Primitive” cultures must yield at any rate, for in Grey’s view they represented “strong-holds of murder and superstition,” the antithesis of Christian morality.

To believe that man in a savage state is endowed with freedom either of thought or action is erroneous in the highest degree. He is in reality subjected to complex laws, which not only deprive him of free agency of thought, but, at the same time by allowing no scope whatever for the development of intellect, benevolence, or any other great moral qualification, they necessarily bind him down in a hopeless state of barbarism, from which it is impossible for man to emerge, so long as he is enthralled by these customs; which, on the other hand, are so ingeniously devised, as to have a direct tendency to annihilate any effort that is made to overthrow them.¹³

Supremely confident that his ethnocentric assumptions constituted an absolute truth, Grey postulated that the separation of indigenous peoples from white settlers—a view previously supported by Colonial Office humanitarians—was counter-productive. Segregation, designed to protect indigenous peoples from the effects of white expansion and to prevent conflict, accomplished neither goal. Grey felt that separation only perpetuated suspicion, ignorance, and savagery, thereby exacerbating, not restraining, frontier warfare. Isolating indigenes from the inevitable advance of “civilization” only served to decrease their chances of surviving the nineteenth century. Therefore, from Grey’s perspective the only solution was radical assimilation, what he called “amalgamation.” By exposing societies like the Maori and Xhosa as rapidly as practicable to Western justice, education, health care, and agricultural techniques, by absorbing them into white employment, and by teaching them Christian morality, colonial rule could prepare these native peoples to compete as equals with European settlers and advance accordingly.¹⁴

Grey’s assimilationist paradigm, consistent with the views of his compatriots James Mill, Charles Trevelyan, and Thomas Babington Macaulay, constituted part of a transnational discourse in the nineteenth century. In France, for example, assimilation was a feature of republican ideology and ran “through French colonial theory and practice from the previous days of the Bourbon monarchy to the future moments of the Fourth Republic.”¹⁵ Assimilation, in both theory and practice, may have reached its peak in the United States. In the last two decades of the nineteenth century U.S. government agents and Christian reformers waged an aggressive campaign to “Americanize” the American Indians. High-minded agents of change, such as the Indian Rights Association, sought the Indian’s “redemption from heathenism and ignorance, his transformation from the condition of a savage nomad to that of an industrious American citizen.” Herbert Welsh, secretary of the Indian Rights Association, in 1886 called for legislation that could guide the Indian “from the night of barbarism into the fair dawn of Christian civilization.”¹⁶

Grey’s own views on compulsory assimilation, neither new nor unusual, impressed his superiors in the Colonial Office, which appointed Grey to the governorship of South Australia in 1840. Despite his efforts to establish protectors and set up a handful of schools, Grey was largely unsuccessful in “amalgamating” the small Aboriginal population. He did succeed, however, in balancing the budget—a task he later

AP World History

The Imperialism of Cultural Assimilation

mishandled in South Africa and the Antipodes—and based on this fiscal success Grey was appointed governor of New Zealand in 1845. He inherited a colony riven with violent conflict between settlers and Maori over land claims. Five years earlier Maori chiefs had signed the Treaty of Waitangi,¹⁷ by which Maori believed their land rights had been secured. At the same time the British government chartered land companies whose fundamental goal was to take Maori land away.¹⁸

Grey finessed this contradiction with grace and guile. For example, he thought he must “allay the feelings of irritation stated to be rising in the native mind, and to prepare [the Maori]... cheerfully to receive that form of Government which it may ultimately be thought necessary to introduce to secure the future welfare of this country.”¹⁹ He assured Maori leaders that their land rights were secure and sought to mediate land disputes between Maori and *pakeha*.²⁰ Shortly after his arrival in New Zealand Grey wrote to the chiefs of the Ngati Toa and Ngati Awa that “the Queen has directed me to do all in my power to ensure your safety and happiness. Maoris and Europeans shall be equally protected and live under equal Laws, both of them are alike subjects of the Queen and entitled to her favor and care. The Maoris shall be protected in all their properties and possessions, and no one shall be allowed to take anything from them or to injure them. Nor will I allow the Maoris to injure one another—an end must be put to deeds of violence and blood.”²¹

Grey also nurtured personal friendships among nonhostile Maori leaders, enhancing his prestige among them by learning the Maori language and culture. In so doing, Grey believed he could manipulate Maori leadership to his point of view. As he put it, “I soon perceived that I could neither successfully govern, nor hope to conciliate, a numerous and turbulent people, with whose language, manners, customs, religion, and modes of thought I was quite unacquainted.”²² If persuasion failed, Grey was perfectly prepared to break the power of uncooperative Maori chiefs. In a confidential memorandum to Earl Grey in May 1847, Sir George wrote that “the object of the older chiefs has always been to draw back the mass of the native population to their old barbarous customs, on which alone the authority of their chiefs rested. These old customs of the natives are probably the most murderous and horrible which have ever existed in the world, and I cannot but dread [the consequences] if any steps are taken which should unite a large proportion of the native population against us.”²³

To preempt a potential “native combination” in New Zealand, Grey arranged for the capture of the neutral Ngati Toa chief Te Rauparaha in 1846 and imprisoned him without trial for eighteen months. This humiliating assault—the captors trapped Te Rauparaha in his own house and subdued the aging leader by grabbing his testicles—destroyed Te Rauparaha’s *mana* (prestige).²⁴ When the powerful Ngati Tuwharetoa leader Te Heuheu protested the unwarranted seizure, the governor invited the chief to Auckland. “I... feel sure,” Grey wrote, “that when you have heard all the evil of Te Rauparaha’s conduct, you will see that I have acted rightly, and that your thoughts upon this matter will be the same as my thoughts when you come to see me.” Grey assured Te Heuheu that “you shall see for yourself how bad a man Te Rauparaha has been” and signed the letter “From your father, G. Grey.”²⁵

And what of Grey’s amalgamation schemes during his first governorship in New Zealand? With rather meager financial resources, the governor subsidized mission schools, established hospitals, and appointed resident magistrates, supported by Maori assessors, to introduce British law in Maori districts. Despite the extremely limited impact of these initiatives, Grey boasted of their crowning success. On the eve of his departure for the Cape colony, Grey wrote the secretary of state for the colonies that “both races already form one harmonious community, connected together by commercial and agricultural pursuits, professing the same faith, resorting to the same Courts of Justice, joining in the same public sports, standing mutually

and indifferently to each other in the relation of landlord and tenant, and thus insensibly forming one people.”²⁶

Grey’s manufactured triumph in New Zealand convinced the Colonial Office that he could rescue the unstable Cape colony, his next assignment. In fact, Grey’s aggressive efforts to impose British hegemony in New Zealand contributed to a growing unease among Maori chiefs “that they were losing control of their own destinies, and [were] being subordinated to the political and economic power of the settlers.”²⁷ For example, in various places on the east and west coasts of North Island, fighting had already broken out among the Maori between the *tuku whenua* (the landsellers) and the *pupuri whenua* (land-holders).²⁸ By the early 1850s some Maori chiefs had begun to worry that “amalgamation” constituted less a genuine biracial sharing of power than a one-way capitulation to European domination.

When Grey arrived in South Africa in 1854, he found few sympathetic Xhosa chiefs and nothing like the Treaty of Waitangi. Therefore, in the words of Peires, Grey “applied his ‘civilization’ policy with a rigour untempered by sympathetic restraint.”²⁹ According to his biographer James Rutherford, Grey’s policy in South Africa “was to undermine the power of the chiefs, break up the larger tribes into smaller more manageable units, overawe them by a show of military force, remove large numbers of natives out of the province altogether, concentrate the rest in village settlements under European officers, and convey large areas of the best land to Europeans. [Grey] announced in 1857 that the [Xhosa] must either be absorbed by the Europeans or succumb to them.”³⁰

Furthermore, Grey’s assimilation policies in South Africa came in the wake of a series of catastrophes in the eastern Cape. In 1850 the War of Mlanjeni (1850–53) erupted among the Ngqika³¹ Xhosa, whose ancestral lands had been annexed to the British empire as British Kaffraria in 1847. During the war, the imperial scorched-earth policy devastated the region, driving many Xhosa men and women into migrant labor. Confiscated lands fell into the hands of white speculators or were awarded to Mfengu³² collaborators. Expropriation and proletarianization were followed by an epidemic of lung sickness in cattle; beginning in 1854, the disease wiped out nearly 100,000 head of Xhosa cattle. Xhosaland represented a nation “driven to desperation by pressures that people today can barely imagine.”³³

The cattle epidemic, which also undermined the major source of wealth for Xhosa chiefs, afforded Grey, in his words, “a most favorable opening for destroying the whole of that portion of the Kafir system of polity, which renders the progress of the Kafirs in the arts of peace impossible.”³⁴ Grey’s “assimilation” program for Xhosaland, which included the establishment of schools and a hospital, and public works employment, rested on the transformation of Xhosa chiefs into salaried employees of the colonial state. As Grey explained it, “every chief of importance will receive a certain regular income for which he will be dependent upon the government of the country, and will therefore have the strongest interest in its maintenance and success.”³⁵ A corollary to this plan was Grey’s intention to bring thousands of European settlers into British Kaffraria. White farmers, who could employ Africans as laborers, might wean the Xhosa from their “idle vagabond pastoral life” and teach them the “habits of industry.”³⁶ Thus, despite the rhetoric of assimilation, Grey did not “aim to ‘assimilate’ the ‘natural leaders’ [i.e., chiefs] into colonial society as equals, but to break their power as ‘natural leaders’.” In so doing, Grey hoped to simultaneously convert “the mass of the Xhosa into a labour force for white colonists on the basis of a *newly constructed* and only pseudo-traditional form of government.”³⁷ As Grey boasted, his plan could “win [the Xhosa] to civilization and Christianity, and thus change by degrees *our present unconquered and apparently irreclaimable foes* into friends who may have common interests with our-selves.”³⁸

AP World History

The Imperialism of Cultural Assimilation

In the space of a decade Xhosaland had experienced the dislocations of subjugation and deprivation, and it now encountered the radical intrusion of the colonial state. Many Xhosa responded with a millenarian movement typically described as the “cattle killing.” As the historian Martin Legassick notes, “unprecedented world-historical developments brought unprecedented world-historical responses.”³⁹

The cattle-killing prophecy arose from the visions of a fifteen-year-old Xhosa girl named Nongqawuse. In her vision, Nongqawuse claimed that “the whole nation will rise from the dead if all the living cattle are slaughtered because these have been reared with defiled hands, since there are people who have been practicing witchcraft.”⁴⁰ After the destruction of all defiled cattle and corn, she prophesied, harmony, goodness, and material abundance would prevail forever. Peires argues convincingly that Nongqawuse’s prophecy represented an amalgam of traditional Xhosa beliefs and the Christian ideas of sacrifice and resurrection. In the Xhosa cosmology, the notion of personal immortality, the omnipresence of recently departed kinsmen in the lives of the living, was a central belief. Hence, the prediction that the dead would rise to a regenerated Earth seemed credible to many Xhosa, especially in light of their dire circumstances. As a nineteenth-century Xhosa writer put it, “the idea that a person does not die was an original belief of we black people. When, therefore, [Nongqawuse] spoke of the rising up, she was [merely] setting a spark to things that were already known concerning the ancestors.”⁴¹

By the 1850s these common Xhosa beliefs adapted some features of Christian doctrine as well. Since the establishment in 1817 of the first station in Xhosaland by the London Missionary Society, elements of Christian belief, especially the idea of the resurrection, had gained wide currency among the Xhosa.⁴² Therefore, in an ideological milieu that combined old ideas and new, despair as well as hope, Nong-qawuse’s argument and predictions bore a tragic cogency. The majority of the Xhosa complied with her instructions. By the end of 1857 the Xhosa had destroyed 400,000 head of cattle, and in the ensuing famine more than 40,000 Xhosa died of starvation.⁴³

The cattle-killing experience divided the Xhosa people into two parties, the “soft” believers (*amathamba*) and the “hard” unbelievers (*amagogotya*). The majority “soft” faction, which included a vast cross-section of chiefs and commoners as well as most women, regarded themselves as the loyal defenders of the traditional Xhosa values of mutual aid and communal solidarity. According to a nineteenth-century commentator, the Xhosa people were “hospitable by custom more than by nature. It is considered disgracefully mean to eat in the presence of any one not provided with food, without offering them some. . . Children are taught habits of generosity as far as food is concerned from their infancy, and little creatures of two or three years of age may be seen handing their morsel from one to another, so that each may have a taste.”⁴⁴ The minority “hard” party, composed principally of men who benefited from the economic and social opportunities of the colonial presence, considered the killing senseless.⁴⁵

Grey interpreted the cattle-killing as a plot among the Xhosa chiefs to overthrow white rule and regarded the tragedy as an opportunity to launch some of his major assimilationist goals.⁴⁶ As Grey informed his commissioner John Maclean in 1856, “I am very anxious that the crisis which has recently taken place in Kaffraria should in as far as possible be made a source of advantage to our interests.”⁴⁷ In this vein, Grey advanced his system of government-appointed “headmen”; indentured nearly 30,000 Xhosa laborers to employers in the Cape colony; and invaded chief Sarhili’s territory in the trans-Kei, opening the chief’s country, as well as British Kaffraria, to white settlement.⁴⁸ Simultaneously, he refused assistance to Xhosa unbelievers who were endangered by vengeful believers and undermined the work of the humanitarian Kaffir Relief Committee, which, in Legassick’s words, sought to aid “the victims of a famine of (in modern terms) Somalian dimensions.”⁴⁹

AP World History

The Imperialism of Cultural Assimilation

7

Thus, despite the wealth of evidence undermining his position, Grey displayed Panglossian certitude in the beneficence of British expansionism. As he wrote in early 1857, “unprecedented and disastrous as this whole affair has been, and unaccountable as the delusion was, under the influence of which the Kaffirs have been led astray, there can, I think, be little doubt, that great ultimate good will flow from it.”⁵⁰ In particular, Grey exulted in an event that served to further undermine the power of the Xhosa chiefs:

The influence hitherto possessed by the Chiefs continues in the present state of general destitution rapidly to decline, and I hope that this will so effectually be the case, that they can never hereafter exercise an influence over their race, which they have hitherto almost always employed for evil...The power of these Chiefs had already received a severe blow from their having been compelled to derive their Revenues from the Government ...and I feel quite satisfied that their late conduct has irretrievably destroyed that portion of their influence which was still left to them, and that henceforth we may govern the country ourselves, the Chiefs being mere dependents upon us.⁵¹

The triumphant tone of Grey’s official dispatch in 1857 belies a period of unhappiness in the governor’s professional as well as private life. Grey’s propensity for overspending his British Kaffraria account, as well as his advocacy of the federation of Britain’s South African possessions, earned him the rebuke of the Colonial Office. Due to his administrative transgressions, Grey was recalled temporarily to London in 1858. Only a change in governments, and the restoration of Grey’s supporter the duke of Newcastle as secretary of state for the colonies, saved Grey’s position in South Africa. On the voyage back to Cape Town in the flagship *Forte*, Lady Grey developed a romantic attachment to Admiral Sir Henry Keppel. The Greys’ marriage was already rocky by the 1850s. Eliza Grey suspected her husband of being unfaithful, based perhaps on his penchant for flirting with young ladies. At any rate, Grey grew hysterical when he learned of his wife’s (likely unconsummated) liaison with Keppel. He first threatened suicide, then put Eliza ashore at Rio de Janeiro and sent her back to England. Another thirtysix years passed before the Greys were reconciled.⁵²

Grey’s tenure in the Cape ended in 1861. Meanwhile, an influx of Europeans into New Zealand in the 1850s boosted land sales to *pakeha* in the colony.⁵³ In response, the Waikato tribes formed a pan-tribal anti-land-selling league in the late 1850s known as the Maori King movement.⁵⁴ Following the outbreak of war in 1860 over a land dispute in Taranaki, the Taranaki tribes joined the King movement as well. The dislocation of war and colonialism gave rise to the millenarian movement Pai Marire (The good and peaceful), also known as Hauhauism.⁵⁵ It originated in 1862 from the teachings of Te Ua Haumene in southern Taranaki. As a boy, Te Ua had been baptized Horopapera by the Wesleyan missionary John Whiteley, and as a young man he worked as a religious adviser and preacher. Te Ua became a supporter of the King movement in 1860 and remained a faithful subject of the Maori king. In 1862 he claimed to have received the Angel Gabriel. “It was on the fifth day of September [1862], that the Angel of God appeared to me... The message of Gabriel was that I should reject the warlike practices. That is to reject the heavy yoke of the flints of the rifles, that you might be glorified by God, that you might stand here on the roof of clouds.”⁵⁶

Te Ua’s prophecy blended elements of Christianity⁵⁷ with traditional Maori belief, and emphasized unity and peace. For example, in Te Ua’s vision, the end of the world would bring a New Jerusalem for the Maori faithful: a place free of despair, illness, and pain; a time in which the living would reunite with the dead; a world liberated of the unrighteous. Since only the righteous would survive, many of Te Ua’s teachings focused on virtuous behavior. In this respect, he emphasized New Testament parables as well as

AP World History

The Imperialism of Cultural Assimilation

the peaceful arts of Maori culture. According to Maori scholar Lyndsay Head, Te Ua encouraged “the peaceable song, the peaceable *haka* (dance), the peaceable *oriori* (songs about tribal identity sung to high born sons), [and] the peaceable tattoo of the face, lip, and chin.”⁵⁸ Thus conceived, Hauhauism peaked between 1864 and 1866, embraced by approximately one-fifth of the Maori population. Te Ua’s relationship with the King movement solidified in 1864, when the second Maori king Matutaera converted to the Pai Marire faith. Te Ua rechristened the king “Tawhiao” (Encircle the world) during a ceremony in late August of that year.⁵⁹

Much to Te Ua’s dismay, some Hauhau militants made use of the religion to settle old scores and strengthen their position in local disputes, thus stereotyping the movement as bloodthirsty fanaticism. Such a view derives especially from the execution and decapitation of the white missionary Carl Sylvius Volkner by a Pai Marire follower in 1865.⁶⁰ As historian Paul Clark has demonstrated, however, such incidents of violence represent the exception and not the rule, and were exaggerated by white settlers to justify the subjugation of all Maori resisters. The “bulk of Pai Marire supporters,” according to Clark, “were attracted by its promise of peace.”⁶¹ Historian James Belich describes Pai Marire as “a peace-oriented adjustment cult, though strongly opposed to the alienation of land, and eager to strengthen Maori identity.”⁶² Despite the peaceful orientation of the movement, the activities of Te Ua’s more militant Pai Marire disciples gave rise to new divisions in Maori society, bolstering the ranks of Maori collaborators.

Meanwhile, Grey had returned to the volatile New Zealand colony as governor in 1861, determined to win over the Kingites through his “new institutions” policy.⁶³ Before his arrival Grey had been instructed by the colonial secretary “to take care that neither your own mission, nor the cessation of hostilities when it arrives, shall carry with it in the eyes of the Natives any appearance of weakness or alarm. It would be better to prolong the war than to end it without producing in the Native mind such a conviction of our strength as may render peace not temporary and precarious, but well grounded and lasting.”⁶⁴

Therefore, Grey prepared for war ⁶⁵ yet remained confident that he could capture the Kingites’ hearts and minds through moral suasion. For example, in a letter written to the Maori king Matutaera in February 1862, Grey pleaded with the Maori leader to separate himself from the “faulty teaching” he was receiving. Grey signed his appeal “from your father, the everlasting friend of the children.”⁶⁶ The governor’s patronizing letter, written to a Maori leadership enflamed by nationalistic passions, also represented a thinly disguised threat. In the words of Rutherford, the governor “was virtually dictating peace at the point of the sword as he had done in British Kaffraria in 1857, and the odds in New Zealand were against his being able to avoid hostilities.”⁶⁷

Grey’s supreme confidence in his rhetorical skills, his authoritarian temperament, and his religious commitment to racial amalgamation all blinded him to the tenacity of Maori nationalism as represented in the King movement. Rebuffed by Kingite chiefs again and again during 1862, Grey prepared the Colonial Office for a “serious crisis” that was brewing in New Zealand “which now appears... daily increasing.”⁶⁸ In early 1863 Grey moved troops to the turbulent Taranaki region. Then in July, based on the unfounded pretext that the Kingites were planning a “bloodthirsty” assault on Auckland, he authorized the invasion of the Waikato. Grey’s specific role in plotting the Waikato war well in advance of July 1863 remains murky. Yet as Belich comments, Grey “could certainly have taught Machiavelli a trick or two in methodology.”⁶⁹

Although the Waikato phase of the New Zealand Wars had run its course by late 1864, Maori resistance continued throughout the 1860s. Incensed that the main body of Kingites still refused to submit to British

authority, and appalled by the apparent spread of Hauhau militancy in 1865 and 1866, Grey struck some “sordid bargains... with settler premiers in order to retain as much influence as he could in the now self-governing colony.”⁷⁰ Such agreements included the confiscation of more than 1,215,000 hectares of Maori land,⁷¹ as well as the subjugation of Hauhau militants. In a defense of the confiscation legislation, Grey argued its necessity as “an example to show that those who rose in arms against their fellow subjects of another race, suffered such a punishment for doing so as might deter others from embarking in a similar career. It is therefore [necessary] to deprive such persons of a considerable portion of their landed properties, and to provide for the future safety of the Colony, by occupying such lands with an European population.”⁷²

Regarding Pai Marire, Grey officially condemned the movement and declared his intention to suppress it. With Grey’s sincere approval, Major-General W. C. T. Chute waged a Shermanesque campaign in southern Taranaki in early 1866, shooting prisoners, burning and looting villages, and destroying crops. On 15 February 1866 Grey entertained Chute at a banquet in Wellington “unrivalled by anything of the kind ever before given in New Zealand.” Guests included the settler ministry, heads of departments, officers of the imperial and colonial forces, and principal citizens of Wellington. Following a toast to the general, Grey hushed the assembly and proclaimed: “Gentlemen, I say that we should acknowledge not only that General Chute has restored peace and tranquility to a previously most dangerous district, but that he has given us an example which must be of the greatest possible use to ourselves, and those who are to follow us. (Cheers)” Grey’s speech was followed by the band’s spirited rendition of “See the Conquering Hero Comes.”⁷³

In early 1867 Grey expressed confidence that the Maori population was “now in a better state than I have ever previously known it,” and that “the European population... can again safely traverse the interior of the country [and] spread into all parts of it, developing the great resources of valuable districts which are now but little known.”⁷⁴ Contrary to Grey’s account, however, demoralization affected a significant number of Maori *hapu* (clans) in the late 1860s, and major centers of Maori resistance bisected the North Island. The King Country, for example, “nearly two-thirds the size of Belgium,”⁷⁵ remained virtually autonomous until the mid-1880s. The Colonial Office tolerated Grey’s preposterous assertions, even his land thefts and unprovoked invasions,⁷⁶ but could no longer accept his unwarranted expenditures and continual disobedience. Grey received his dismissal notice in August 1867 and was replaced as governor of New Zealand early the next year.⁷⁷

The Colonial Office may have grown weary of Grey’s administrative style, yet it remained committed to his amalgamation strategy in principle. And herein lies the rub. For Grey as well as for colonial officialdom in general, “amalgamation,” despite what the term implied, never meant a genuine sharing of power or an authentic merging of cultures. Instead, compulsory assimilation required indigenous societies, such as the Maori and Xhosa, to capitulate wholeheartedly to white domination. Unwilling to accept such inequitable terms, many resisted. Hence, in both New Zealand and South Africa Grey’s governorship witnessed the opening of spacious tracts of land to white settlers at the expense of indigenous cultivators. As Grey explained it, “when once the serious and terrible evils which spring from such an attempt [to flout British law] are made manifest, I think it becomes the duty of the European population, and of the well-disposed amongst the Native population, to take every precaution within their power which they can take without acting unjustly or unmercifully, not only to repress and terminate such an attempt, but to prevent such an attempt from being ever again made.”⁷⁸ Thus Grey could rationalize these revolutionary transformations in New Zealand and South Africa as the just and merciful price of

AP World History
The Imperialism of Cultural Assimilation

progress. In reality what happened was another phase of empire building, notable for its tragic outcome as well as its display of cultural resilience.