The shape of New Zealand’s regimental system: a thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Defence and Strategic Studies at Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand

Abstract
Unit cohesion has been identified as a strong factor in the way soldiers overcome their fear of death in battle. Imperial Roman soldiers felt loyalty to the legion and its standard was more than a signal to rally towards in battle; British soldiers show similar loyalty to their regiment and Colours. Historians of a strong military background often write of the British regimental system as particularly effective in maintaining ethos and fighting spirit. Yet, reading any one of their descriptions of the regimental system offers only a vague insight of the structures and character of a uniquely military organisation. Identifying a regimental system is a particularly difficult task, even for those who are part of one. Although New Zealand has inherited the idea of regimental system from the British, it is a much smaller nation with a correspondingly smaller all-volunteer armed force and a more egalitarian society. The size of the New Zealand Army, with fewer regiments, seems to suggest that it has escaped both the benefits of regimental cohesion and the damaging effects of aggressive tribalism between its units. This thesis will challenge that assumption by showing that the New Zealand Army has a strong cultural history with definite characteristics of a regimental system. It will be seen that the New Zealand Army’s regimental system adapts its values according to its own particular cultural pressures and legacies.

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