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MĀORI AND MUSEUMS

THE POLITICS OF INDIGENOUS RECOGNITION

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Museum Studies at Massey University, Palmerston North

David James Butts
2003
This thesis is dedicated to
my father, Lesley James Butts, and
my mother, Angelina Marea Butts (née Gargiulo)
ABSTRACT

As a result of colonialism indigenous peoples have been marginalised within their own customary territories. In an analysis of the politics of cultural recognition Tully (1995) proposes the reconceptualisation of the ‘common ground’: sites, including public museums, within which different cultures negotiate their relationships within the modern nation-state, where the rights of indigenous peoples can be recognised on the basis of the principles of mutual recognition, continuity and consent. This thesis examines the impact of the politics of indigenous recognition on the evolving relationships between Māori and museums, focusing on Māori participation in the governance of regional charitable trust museums in New Zealand.

The international context is explored through an investigation of indigenous strategies of resistance to museum practices at the international, national and local levels. The national context within which Māori resistance to museum practices has evolved, and subsequent changes in practice are then outlined.

Two case studies of regional charitable trust museums, which began to renegotiate Māori participation in their governance structures in the late 1990s, are examined. The different governance models adopted by Whanganui Regional Museum, Whanganui, and Tairawhiti Museum, Gisborne, both effected major shifts from the historical pattern of limited Māori participation in the museums to the representation of all tangata whenua iwi on the new trust boards. The governance negotiation processes and the responses of interested parties are analysed. The case studies demonstrate the importance of understanding the historical context within which public institutions are embedded and the forces that lead to contemporary adjustments in power relationships.

Both new governance models have resulted in genuine power sharing partnerships between tangata whenua and the museums. Finally, the extent to which the two institutions have subsequently moved towards becoming ‘common ground’ where the recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples can be realised is analysed.
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E aku rangatira,
Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa.
Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou.
Nā koutou tēnei mahi i tautoko, i āwhina.
Nā koutou i whakaae ki te whai wāhi o tēnei mahi

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Oki oki mai rā i te poho o ō koutou mātua tīpuna.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER ONE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Research Objectives</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.1 Cultural Heritage Maintenance</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.2 Evolving Relationships</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.3 Governance</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Conceptual Framework:</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towards a Politics of Indigenous Recognition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.1 Colonisation</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.2 Power/Knowledge</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.3 Colonial Discourse</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.4 Power/Resistance</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.5 Colonialism and Museums</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.6 The Politics of Cultural Recognition</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.7 The Discourse of Tolerance</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.8 Indigeneity</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.9 Mutual Recognition</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.10 Treaty Relationships</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Thesis Outline</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TWO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESEARCH METHODS</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0 Introduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Literature Review</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Case Studies</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1 Archival Research</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2 Interviews</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.3 Data Analysis</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Other Issues</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1 Ethics/ Informed Consent</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2 Insider/ Outsider Dynamics</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.3 Confidentiality</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.4 Limitations</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# PART ONE
INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL CONTEXTS

## CHAPTER THREE
SITES OF INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE

### 3.0 Introduction 43

### 3.1 Declarations of Indigenous Rights 44

#### 3.1.1 Draft Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 44

#### 3.1.2 The Mataatua Declaration 46

#### 3.1.3 Turning the Page 47

### 3.2 Repatriation 55

#### 3.2.1 A Legislative Model: NAGPRA 1990 56

#### 3.2.2 A Treaty Model: The Nisga’a Treaty Agreement 61

#### 3.2.3 Moral Suasion: Australian Aboriginal Remains 64

### 3.3 Indigenous Cultural Centres 68

#### 3.3.1 U’mista Cultural Centre and Kwagiulth Museum and Cultural Centre 70

#### 3.3.2 Makah Cultural Center 77

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4.0 Introduction 83

### 4.1 Political, Economic and Social Context 84

### 4.2 Te Māori 86

### 4.3 Māori Control of Māori Heritage 90

### 4.4 Repatriation 95

### 4.5 Changing Attitudes within the Museum Sector 99

### 4.6 National Museum Organisations 100

### 4.7 The O’Regan Report 104

### 4.8 National Services Bicultural Programme 105

## PART TWO
LOCAL CONTEXTS

## CHAPTER FIVE
REGIONAL CHARITABLE TRUST MUSEUM GOVERNANCE MODELS

### 5.0 Introduction 111

### 5.1 Overview 118

### 5.2 Governance Models 121

#### 5.2.1 Mana Whenua Model: Te Manawa 122

#### 5.2.2 Regional Tangata Whenua Models: Taīrāwhiti Museum Trust and Whanganui Regional Museum Trust 126

### 5.3 Comment 131
CHAPTER SIX
WHANGANUI REGIONAL MUSEUM:
MĀORI PARTICIPATION 1895-2002

6.0 Introduction 137
6.1 Early Developments 1891-1938 138
  6.1.1 Establishment of the Museum 138
  6.1.2 Te Mata o Hoturoa and Teremoe 142
  6.1.3 Māori Representation on the Board of Trustees 144
6.2 Māori Associate Board Members 1938-1967 145
  6.2.1 Te Wehi o Te Rangi 146
  6.2.2 A Representative Collection 148
  6.2.3 Associate Members and Māori Associate Members 149
6.3 Māori Board Members 1968-1993 154
  6.3.1 Transition 154
  6.3.2 Te Wehi o Te Rangi 154
  6.3.3 Te Māori 157
  6.3.4 Tangata Whenua Representation 157
6.4 Governance Reform 1993-2001 161
  6.4.1 Governance Reform Initiated 161
  6.4.2 Moutoa Gardens – Pakaitore Marae 163
  6.4.3 District Council Request for Governance Reform 164
  6.4.4 Te Roopū Mahi mo ngā Taonga and the Raukawa Model 167
  6.4.5 Public Opposition 172
  6.4.6 New Governance Model approved by Museum Society 177
6.5 New Governance Model in Operation 180

CHAPTER SEVEN
WHANGANUI REGIONAL MUSEUM:
GOVERNANCE TRANSFORMATIONS

7.0 Introduction 185
7.1 Symbols of Mana 186
7.2 Relationships between the Museum and Pūtiki Whānau 190
7.3 Towards a New Governance Relationship 195
  7.3.1 Civic House Trustees’ Perspectives 195
  7.3.2 Tikanga Māori House Trustees’ Perspectives 204
  7.3.3 Director’s Perspective 214
  7.3.4 Trustees’ Perceptions of the Director 220
7.4 Whanganui Case Study Discussion 222
  7.4.1 Historical Relationships 222
  7.4.2 New Governance Relationships: Continuity and Change 225
  7.4.3 Governance Reform Process 228
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure One: Bicultural Museum Governance Continuum 114
Figure Two: Regional Charitable Trust Museum Governance 119