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## **SHAPING MAORI IDENTITIES AND HISTORIES**

Collecting and exhibiting Maori material culture  
at the Auckland and Canterbury Museums from  
the 1850s to the 1920s

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## Abstract

As museums now reinterpret their collections, many of which have their foundations in the experience of colonialism, we may ponder the contextual meanings and discursive practices scripted into them during their formation. *Shaping Maori identities and histories* critically examines the processes of collecting and exhibiting Maori material culture at the Auckland and Canterbury Museums from the 1850s to the early 1900s. It interrogates the values, meanings and motivations that drove these processes, and the way new identities and histories were established for Maori people as a result of these practices. Ethnology as a discourse within the context of the museum and the exhibition has been used to establish and authorise meanings in relation to Maori history and identity. The following discussions problematise these relationships within the context of emerging museum theory. These practices of representation are viewed as a 'cultural text' in order to read and understand the cultural and ideological assumptions that have informed them.

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## Table of Contents

### CHAPTER ONE p1

#### **The Din of White Noise**

Ethnology, museums, exhibitions and representations - the construction of Maori

- 1.1 A reflexive approach - the 'politics of representations'
- 1.2 Challenging the authority of ethnological and anthropological discourse
- 1.3 The implications - museums and representations
- 1.4 The production of Maori - the conceptual and theoretical context

### CHAPTER TWO p27

#### **Saving the records and mementos of the Maori Race**

Collecting Maori at the Auckland Museum - 1850s to the 1880s  
motivations and meanings

- 2.1 Obtaining 'good' specimens
- 2.2 Forming a more complete collection of Maori specimens
- 2.3 Salvaging the Maori Race
- 2.4 Completing the catalogue of the Maori Race
- 2.5 Expressing the essence of the Maori Race

### CHAPTER THREE p51

#### **Completing a catalogue of the Maori Race**

Collecting Maori at the Auckland Museum - 1880s to the 1920s

- 3.1 The drive for completeness
- 3.2 Ensuring authenticity
- 3.3 Producing the perfect specimen
- 3.4 Legislating identity
- 3.5 Exchanging ethnological and anthropological specimens
- 3.6 Value as a discursive practice
- 3.7 Cheeseman's vision

### CHAPTER FOUR p76

#### **Registering the facts for research and instruction**

Haast, archaeological investigation and the mapping of Maori identity and history  
at the Canterbury Museum – 1860s to 1880

- 4.1 The desire to know and define a new environment
- 4.2 The museum as a civilising and status seeking ritual
- 4.3 The conceptualisation of Maori identities and local history
- 4.4 Gathering the 'facts'
- 4.5 Fixing the evidence

**CHAPTER FIVE** p110

**Completing collections and the production of a traditional Maori identity and history**  
Ethnographical collecting at the Canterbury Museum – 1870s to the 1920s

- 5.1 Saving the evidence of the traditional Maori phase
- 5.2 Completing an ethnological story of progress
- 5.3 Broadening the evidence base - Ethnography and Anthropology
- 5.4 Universal boundaries for reading the workings of progress
- 5.5 Notions of completion

**CHAPTER SIX** p131

**Arranging the natural world**

Exhibiting natural history at the Auckland and Canterbury Museums - 1850s to the 1880s

- 6.1 A room respectively stored with specimens and curiosities
- 6.2 A curator is known by the company his specimens keep
- 6.3 Architectural design as a metaphor for classification
- 6.4 The new museum idea - arranging for research or popular education?
- 6.5 Knowing and representing natural resources
- 6.6 An insight into the beauty and diversity of the natural world
- 6.7 Space and the expression of classification
- 6.8 Arranging according to carefully thought out theories
- 6.9 Catering for the didactic needs of popular and scholarly audiences

**CHAPTER SEVEN** p174

**Illustrating the manners, customs and mode of life of the Maori Race**

Arranging Maori at the Auckland Museum from the 1850s to the 1920s

- 7.1 Aspects of Maori life and technology
- 7.2 Enlargement is required to remove the incongruity of arrangement
- 7.3 A hall devoted to the ethnological portion of the collections
- 7.4 Space as a representational tool
- 7.5 The language of classification
- 7.6 Speaking to the eyes
- 7.7 Labelling – the structured management of meaning
- 7.8 Providing a more human focus
- 7.9 Making classification more intelligible
- 7.10 Representing a correct idea about Maori life
- 7.11 Facilitating racial referencing
- 7.12 The inclusion of social context

**CHAPTER EIGHT** p222

**Showing the gradual advancement of the human race**

Arranging Maori at the Canterbury Museum - 1860s to the 1880s p217

8.1 Producing a visual narrative of history

8.2 Objects of fine art

8.3 Space and the reading of knowledge

8.4 A display of progress – Haast's 1874 concept for a racial arrangement

8.5 The Maori House - *Hau-te-ana-nui-o Tangaroa*

**CHAPTER NINE** p250

**Mapping Maori identity and history**

Exhibiting Maori collections at the Canterbury Museum – 1875 to the 1920s

9.1 Arranging the Maori Room according to theoretical divisions

9.2 The pre-traditional Moa hunter past

9.3 The traditional Maori past

9.4 Space, order and intellectual intent

9.5 Completing the Maori Room

9.6 Illustrating the rise and progress of the human race – the Ethnological Hall

**CONCLUSION** p293

**REFERENCES** p299

## List of Graphics

1. Thomas Cheeseman, Curator/Director, Auckland Institute and Museum, c1880s (Collection of the Auckland Museum)
2. Julius Haast, Director, Canterbury Museum, 1871 (Collection of the Canterbury Museum)
3. Map of the Moa hunter encampment at the mouth of the Rakaia River, North Otago in Haast, J. (1872a) 'Moas and Moa Hunters, Address to the Philosophical Institute of Canterbury' in the *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute* Vol 4 1872, Plate V
4. Interior of the original gallery, Auckland Museum, Princes Street, showing the ornithological, feline and Kauri gum displays, 1928 (Collection of the Auckland Museum)
5. Interior of gallery space showing the grid layout, Ratite and bear species display, Auckland Museum, Princes Street [date unknown] (Collection of the Auckland Museum)
6. Exterior of the Princes Street building with the caretaker's cottage on the left and Ethnological Hall on the right [date unknown] (Collection of the Auckland Museum)
7. View from the mezzanine gallery showing the design of the internal spaces, Auckland Museum, Princes Street [date unknown] (Collection of the Auckland Museum)
8. Sketch of the Canterbury Museum, Rolleston Avenue, Christchurch in 1876. The original building is shown on the left and the 1872 addition on the right. (Collection of the Canterbury Museum)
9. Interior of the exhibition gallery, Canterbury Museum, showing the arrangement of ornithological and mammal collections with Julius Haast on the left, 1872 (Collection of the Canterbury Museum)
10. Moriori, Gorilla and European anatomical display, c1872 (Collection of the Canterbury Museum)
11. Interior of the original gallery illustrating the 'incongruous' arrangement of collections, Auckland Museum, Princes Street, pre-1891 (Collection of the Auckland Museum)
12. View of the original gallery showing the juxtaposition of natural and cultural specimens, Auckland Museum, Princes Street, pre-1891 (Collection of the Auckland Museum)
13. Mezzanine floor display showing a series of mats exhibited with classical statuary, Auckland Museum, Princes Street, c1880s (Collection of the Auckland Museum)
14. Interior of the Ethnological Hall, Auckland Museum, Princes Street [date unknown] (Collection of the Auckland Museum)
15. Section of wall display case showing series of fishing technology, canoe bailers and paddles [date unknown] (Collection of the Auckland Museum)

16. Interior of the Ethnological Hall showing the display of the Malaitan canoe and *waka tau*, Auckland Museum, Princes Street, c1890s (Collection of the Auckland Museum)
17. Series of *mere* (fighting clubs) 1902 (Collection of the Auckland Museum)
18. Interior of the Maori Hall showing the display of *heitiki* on the far right, Auckland Museum, Princes Street, c1905-1920s (Collection of the Auckland Museum)
19. Detail of the series of *mere* showing the Greenstone Mere - *Mere Pounamu* and Carved Whalebone Mere - *Waha Tau*, 1902 (Collection of the Auckland Museum)
20. Display of personal ornaments made from bone, Auckland Museum, Princes Street, c1905-1920s (Collection of the Auckland Museum)
21. Display of hair-combs in the 'Personal Ornaments' case, Auckland Museum, Princes Street, c1905-1920s (Collection of the Auckland Museum)
22. Interior of the Ethnological Hall with Thomas Cheeseman on the left, Auckland Museum, Princes Street, c1902 (Collection of the Auckland Museum)
23. Interior of the Maori Hall showing the house *Te Rangitihī* on the left and the arrangement of canoe prows, Auckland Museum, Princes Street, c1905-1920s (Collection of the Auckland Museum)
24. Interior of the Ethnological Hall looking towards the entrance to the Maori Hall, Auckland Museum, Princes Street, c1905-1920s (Collection of the Auckland Museum)
25. Far left corner of the Ethnological Hall, Auckland Museum, Princes Street, c1905-1920s (Collection of the Auckland Museum)
26. Art Exhibition Catalogue, The Committee for the Art Exhibition 1870, in MS Papers 37-283 Manuscripts Section, Alexander Turnbull Library
27. Art Exhibition Catalogue: Class I Fine Arts, The Committee for the Art Exhibition 1870, in MS Papers 37-283 Manuscripts Section, Alexander Turnbull Library
28. Sketch plan and proposed addition to the Canterbury Museum buildings, Ground Plan, 1874, in *Report to the Provincial Council*: Session XLI, No 24, 'Memorandum by Dr Haast with sketch plan of proposed additions to museum buildings. By order of His Honor the Superintendent, Christchurch, May 30th, 1874.' Canterbury Museum Records 4/1. Files kept by Directors previous to 1948, B1/F10 1874. Canterbury Museum Archives
29. Sketch plan and proposed addition to the Canterbury Museum buildings, Upper Plan, 1874, in *Report to the Provincial Council*: Session XLI, No 24, 'Memorandum by Dr Haast with sketch plan of proposed additions to museum buildings. By order of His Honor the Superintendent, Christchurch, May 30th, 1874.' Canterbury Museum Records 4/1. Files kept by Directors previous to 1948, B1/F10 1874. Canterbury Museum Archives
30. Interior of the Maori House [date unknown] (Collection of the Canterbury Museum)
31. Floor plan of the interior of the Maori House, 1895, in Canterbury Museum, *Guide to the Collections in the Canterbury Museum*. Christchurch: Lyttleton Times Co Ltd. 1895, p211
32. Interior of the Maori House, 1900 (Collection of the Canterbury Museum)

33. Interior of the Maori House showing the case 'Ornaments and Amusements' in the foreground, c1900-1905 (Collection of the Canterbury Museum)
34. Label: Greenstone Adzes (Collection of the Canterbury Museum)
35. Label: Ancient Maori Bowl (Collection of the Canterbury Museum)
36. Label: Carved Slab, Tolago Bay (Collection of the Canterbury Museum)
37. Display of Maori figures on the porch of the Maori House, Canterbury Museum, 1906
38. Floor plan of the interior of the Maori House, 1906, in Canterbury Museum, *Guide to the Collections in the Canterbury Museum*. Christchurch: Lyttleton Times Co Ltd. 1906, p203
39. Floor Plan of the Ethnological Room, Canterbury Museum, 1906, in Canterbury Museum, *Guide to the Collections in the Canterbury Museum*. Christchurch: Lyttleton Times Co Ltd. 1906, p135
40. Ethnological Room (from the left corner) showing African collections in the foreground, European objects in the centre and Malay, Polynesian and Melanesian specimens on the far perimeter wall, c1895-1900s (Collection of the Canterbury Museum)