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**Foreign Ethnology Collections**  
**in the**  
**Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements**  
**for the degree of**  
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## Abstract

Museums today face many challenges. Some of these affect parts of collections which, as a result of changing policies and practices, have become inactive and/or no longer relevant to the mission of the museum. At the same time these changes have resulted in new collections being developed.

The subject of this study is foreign ethnology collections (excluding Pacific) held in four metropolitan museums in New Zealand, focusing in particular on those in the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

The development of the foreign ethnology collections in these museums shows that they followed a similar pattern to museums in general, and colonial museums in particular, although each has its own unique history. As a result of its early policy and practices the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa has smaller, more disparate collections than the other three museums, and unlike these museums nearly all of its foreign ethnology material was passively acquired.

Current policy and practices in the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa relating to the foreign ethnology collections have meant that they are virtually inactive. In comparison, the foreign ethnology collections in the other metropolitan museums are fairly active. In addition to the existing collections all four metropolitan museums are developing a new type of foreign ethnology collection relating to the cultural diversity of this country, in particular Asian immigrant groups. The future for these new collections is promising.

The future for the other foreign ethnology collections, however, is less certain, especially for those held in the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa although there is potential for them to become at least partially active. It is proposed that the development of a national computer database would assist in making decisions about the future development, management and use of all foreign ethnology collections.

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