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***The role of a museum (Te Papa) in the
rejuvenation of taonga puoro***

***A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in
Museum Studies***

***At Massey University, Manawatū,
New Zealand***

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2015

Abstract

This thesis examines the role of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa in the rejuvenation of taonga puoro (Māori musical instruments). The purpose of this study is to examine the Museum's relationship with taonga puoro practitioners.

This thesis documents the foundation of the Haumanu taonga puoro revitalisation group and their relationship with Te Papa. Therefore I have selected instrumental figures – Dr. Richard Nunns and Brian Flintoff, to elucidate their insight on this topic. The late Hirini Melbourne remains a constant and treasured presence throughout the process for Nunns and Flintoff. However, the focus of the thesis is to identify what has Te Papa done and can do better, to help facilitate the rejuvenation of taonga puoro, based on the years of developing a relationship with the Haumanu group. Furthermore, within this context, I examine my own practice as a Māori Curator at Te Papa.

The central question to this study is the role of Te Papa, in terms of its relevance to one particular sector, the Māori cultural practitioners and revivalists. The challenge is: how much is Te Papa willing to risk, in relaxing control - to be relevant to the needs of this community?

Four key research questions are explored: what has Te Papa done to help facilitate the rejuvenation and maintenance of puoro, what could Te Papa be doing more of to nurture the rejuvenation and maintenance of puoro; what are the key factors that support an achievement of these objectives: and, what are the challenges for the future.

Te Papa documentation from 1995 to 2014 is also a primary source. As a Māori Curator at Te Papa, I reflect on my role and the tensions between personal, cultural and professional roles that the rejuvenation of taonga puoro creates.

The thesis argues that cultural revitalisation, as a process of ‘liberation’ (Kreps 2003a) has a transformative power, to redefine the significance of taonga in museums as cultural and spiritual inspiration for present and future generations. The ‘creative potential’ (Royal 2006) paradigm opens up a future for knowledge development that museums should be a part of. This potentiality has cultural and social benefits, which is identified as a restorative healing process, a philosophy of health and wellbeing, a form of ‘hauora’ (healing).

This inductive research shows that the role of a museum is important to practitioners’ but there are contradictions and paradoxical issues to museum practice that make situations complex. This research reveals that ‘taonga puoro, taonga hauora’ is a model that can transform museum practice by operating not just to preserve materiality, but the intangible aspects of a peoples’ living culture.

Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to Dr. Richard Nunns, Brian Flintoff and the Haumanu group; past, present and future.

E āku rangatira, e ngā pou kikī, e ngā pou kākā o te ao tūroa, tēnā koutou katoa. Mihi atu rā ki te hunga kua whetū rangitia, okioki rā.

Ka huri ki te hunga ora, e ngā manu kākākura, tēnā koutou katoa. Tēnei he mihi atu ki a koutou e ngā kai pupuri taonga.

This thesis would not be possible without the generous sharing of insight, knowledge and advice from the following people;

Dr. Richard Nunns and Brian Flintoff for allowing me to interview them. Many hundreds of hours of discussion over the years has provided great guidance and a wealth of material. My appreciation to Peter Millward, Chief Executive Officer of the Nelson Provincial Museum for providing a venue to interview Richard. Thanks to Shane Pasene for agreeing to be interviewed. Valuable information from meetings, wānanga, workshops, public performances and events have contributed to the thesis. I wish to acknowledge all those many people who are passionate about taonga puoro, and have been participants of that journey, particularly the late Dr. Hirini Melbourne whose legacy lives on in his beautiful music and words of wisdom.

Many thanks to the talented members of Haumanu that Te Papa has been associated with over the years, especially Warren Warbrick, James Webster, Horomona Horo and Alistair Fraser. Special acknowledgement to Dante Bonica and the Te Ao Kōhatu group who are extraordinary in their practice

and vision. Thank you to the taonga puoro staff at Te Papa past and present, particularly Shane Pasene and Tom Ward, who have contributed to the kaupapa and continue to keep the taonga puoro warm in the museum's care. Credit to Norman Heke, my work colleague on many recording projects, for his assistance over the years with this kaupapa. Most of the images in this thesis were photographed by Norman.

My utmost respect and gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Susan Abasa, for the immense support and valuable guidance over a protracted period of time. I wish to thank Dr. Claudia Orange, for providing practical advice and encouragement. I also acknowledge Dr. Conal McCarthy and Annie Mercer of the Museum and Heritage Studies Programme, Victoria University of Wellington for their support.

Thanks to Dr. Arapata Hakiwai, Dr. Huhana Smith, Karen Mason, Rhonda Paku, Steve Brady and Vicki Bee for ensuring my study was supported at Te Papa. I am appreciative of my colleague Dougal Austin for reading through some of my drafts. Many thanks to all advisors, mentors, museum colleagues, friends and whānau who have shared their enthusiasm for puoro, advice, support and insight.

Lastly, but not least, I would not have managed without my partner Maikara Te Rangikauhoe Thorpe for his constant patience and encouragement, and our whānau for their support.

Ahakoia taku iti, he iti nō te kōpua kānapanapa

Although my contribution is small, it comes from a deep well spring.

Ngāti Kahungunu proverb.

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Reader's note

The name 'Haumanu', meaning 'breath of birds', was given by the late Dr. Hirini Melbourne to a movement of people passionate about rejuvenating the sounds and traditions of taonga puoro, Māori musical instruments. Brian Flintoff (personal communication, 15 December 2014), recalled that Hirini specified the name for the group by joining 'Hau' and 'Manu' together as 'Haumanu'. The name also is a metaphor for the revival of taonga puoro.

'Taonga' are highly valued objects, knowledge, practices, places, resources and cultural aspects that link to ancestral history, customs, spiritual beliefs and worldview. Taonga are tangible and intangible expressions of what is uniquely Māori, imbuing a sense of cultural identity and belonging.

Glossary

Ātua – spiritual deity

Hapū – pregnancy, sub-tribe

Hau kainga – home people

Hine Raukatauri – Female spiritual entity of flute music

Hongi – formal greeting, pressing noses

Ihi – essential force

Iwi - tribe

Kaitiaki – guardians

Kahu huruhuru – feather cloak

Karakia – prayers

Karanga – female call

Kaumatua, kaumātua, elder, elders

Kaupapa – agenda/philosophy

Kawa – marae protocol (Marsden 1975) marae etiquette (Walker 1975)¹

Kete – woven basket

Mamae – pain, emotional hurt, loss

Mana- spiritual authority and power. Enduement of objects with spiritual power through the indwelling spirit over it (Marsden 1975)

Manaakitanga – hospitality, kindness

Māoritanga – corporate view that Māori hold about ultimate reality and meaning (Marsden 1975)

¹ Walker, Ranginui 'Marae: A Place to Stand' in Te Ao Hurihuri; The World Moves On

Mātauranga – knowledge, mātauranga Māori – ancestral knowledge passed down

Mauri – life force, ethos. Mauri-ora, life principle (Marsden 1975)

Papatūānuku – Earth mother

Pātaka – carved, elevated storehouse

Pounamu – nephrite, New Zealand jade, greenstone

Poutokomanawa – carved ancestor, centre-posts of a whareniui

Taonga – cultural treasure, tangible and intangible

Tangata tiriti – non-Māori, people who live in Aotearoa New Zealand by right of the Treaty of Waitangi

Tangata whenua – people of the land, indigenous people

Tapu- sacred state or condition of a person or thing placed under the patronage of the gods (Marsden 1975)²

Taumata – top of mountain. Meaning goal achieved

Te Papa Tongarewa – Te Papa Kuru Tongarere, Te Arawa mōteatea referring to a precious type of pounamu pendant. Name given by Te Arawa elders to the Museum of New Zealand.

Tikanga – appropriate behaviour, values, customs

Tohu – spiritual sign, indicator

Tohunga – chosen one, appointed (Marsden 1975)

Waiata – songs

Waka – canoe

Waka tūpāpaku – receptacle for deceased's remains

² Māori Marsden; 'God, Man and Universe', in Te Ao Hurihuri: The World Moves On; King, Michael (edit) 1975; Hicks Smith and Sons Ltd, Wellington

Wairua – soul, sacred spirits (Te Kapunga Dewes 1975)³

Whakapapa – genealogy

Whakatauki - proverb

Whānau - family

Wana – be excited, inspiring awe

Wehi – to be awesome

Taonga puoro – Māori musical instruments

Hue - gourd

Karanga manu – bird caller

Kōauau – cross-blown flute

Nguru – semi-closed, cross blown flute

Pahū – drum, gong

Pūpū harakeke – flax snail shell

Pūrerehua – bullroarer

Pūmotomoto – long flute associated with the transferal of knowledge and prayer to babies

Pūtātara – conch shell trumpet

Pūtōrino – bugle flute

Tōkere – castanet type instruments

Wenewene – finger holes on kōauau and nguru

³ Te Kapunga Dewes, 'The Case for Oral Arts', ibid

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