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Te Maori Past and Present: Stories of Te Maori

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Abstract

Te Maori has been acknowledged as an exhibition of great power, an event that had tremendous impact on New Zealand museums, Maori, and New Zealand in general. It generated a lot of comment, both at the time and in subsequent years. This thesis examines the story of Te Maori. It begins with the telling of the story of the event - the dawn opening ceremonies, their impact on the popular imagination of the American and New Zealand public, and the impact of the taonga themselves. The thesis then argues that, while this account is 'Te Maori', Te Maori is also wider than those events. Te Maori is also the stories and accounts and attempts at analysis that accompanied and followed those events. In that vein, those stories are examined - the story of Te Maori, the story of the stories. The articles discussed are more than just accounts of an exhibition, they are also part of that exhibition - part of the tradition and momentum generated. The thesis then moves on to document the story of someone who was involved with the Te Maori Management Committee, Mina McKenzie. This story shows that the process through which things were done, and the energy so generated, were essential to the success of the exhibition. Finally, a more 'anthropological' story is offered, which situates the issues raised by the various accounts within anthropology. By presenting many different perspectives on the one event, it is suggested that a more accurate, more complete telling of Te Maori is rendered.

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