

A View from Aotearoa New Zealand *by Te Herekikie Herewini*

In May 2015 I was invited to provide a review of the document with the title in English „Recommendations for the Care of Human remains in Museums and Collections“. This document is designed as a set of guidelines for museums in Germany that have collections of human remains.

My interest in this set of guidelines is in a professional capacity as the repatriation manager at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa), and therefore my particular interest is as means of understanding the policy guidelines as a process of seeking and negotiating the physical return of the Māori and Moriori ancestral remains from institutions in Germany.¹

In reference to Germany, Te Papa has repatriated from the Übersee-Museum Bremen in 2006, as well as from the Frankfurt Museum of World Cultures and the Senckenberg Museum of World Cultures in 2011. Te Papa's present research indicates there are approximately another 50 kōiwi tangata (Māori skeletal remains), kōimi tangata (Moriori skeletal remains) and Toi moko (tattooed, preserved heads of Māori or Moriori origin) still awaiting repatriation from Germany.

From the outset full support is offered to the words of Dr. Volker Rodekamp provided in the document's foreword on page five who said, „We view these recommendations not as the end of the debate, but rather as the beginning“. I would like to add that I hope my commentary encourages further discussion, which is of benefit to enhancing the „recommendations“.

The document in question is separated into the following sections including a: Foreword; (1) Introduction; (2) Addressees and Terms; (3) Background Information; (4) Recommendations for the Care of

¹The Māori words used in this paper will have the tohutō or macron placed over the long vowels, as this is the preferred writing system by contemporary Māori language speakers and writers.

Human Remains; and the members of the „Human Remains Working Group“ are identified.

Definitions

In respect to the foreword, introduction, target group and definitions of the terms used, such as: Human Remains; Context of Injustice; and People of Origin, these are very useful as they clarify the intent and purpose of the document, who it relates to, and the meanings of these terms in the German context.

Human Remains

The definition of human remains presented on page 9, in a broad sense is very similar to the definition by the New Zealand government (for repatriation purposes only) of kōiwi tangata Māori/Māori skeletal remains. The point of difference, however, is that Te Papa's programme can only seek the return of *unmodified remains*, and not those remains which are modified post mortem.

Examples of these items in the Māori cultural context include fish hooks and traditional musical instruments such as kōauau (Māori flute) where they are made of human bone, and where the bone has been deliberately refashioned and carved into a different item belonging to the material culture.

Toi moko on the other hand, have not been carved, or refashioned into something that resembles another object. The mummification process merely allows for the integrity of the original human features of the tupuna (ancestor), to be maintained and recognised, so the tupuna could be revered or despised in our traditional culture. This would now equate to the embalming process for Māori, where departed loved ones upon death are embalmed, and mourned by their families and communities.

Context of Injustice

On page 10 of the document the term „context of injustice“ is highlighted and defined, followed by some examples of where an exception may exist.

In respect to Māori and Moriori remains that were traded overseas it is important to note that both Māori and Europeans traded in our ancestral remains, and there are many examples of ancestral remains being stolen, and the heads of fallen Māori warriors traded by the victor of the battle.²

In saying that, it must still be highlighted that the victims of the theft and the families of the fallen warriors did not agree for their loved-ones to be taken or traded overseas. Therefore, it is important to note that Te Papa's primary aim is to return ancestral remains to their iwi (tribe), communities of origin, or their place of provenance. It would be incredibly erroneous to rationalise that because some Māori participated in the trade of remains, this permits museums to continue to house, collect and exhibit our ancestral remains.

Fading of memories after 125 years?

Highlighted on page 11 of the document is the notion that after approximately four or five generations, which may equate to 125 years, the memory of the deceased person fades and therefore it will be difficult to genealogical map or connect to people living today. Overwhelmingly, the repatriation work of Māori communities in the 1980s and 1990s as well as Te Papa's repatriation programme tell quite a different story in respect to the Māori and Moriori context.

One example concerns the rangatira (chief) Hohepa Te Umuroa of the Whanganui region who was incarcerated by the newly established New Zealand government in the 1840s, and sent to prison in Tasmania where he died and was buried. In the 1980s this tupuna was repatriated from Australia and returned to his people, and buried alongside the majestic Whanganui river in Koroniti. The time span the tupuna

²Ngahuia Te Awekotuku / Linda Waimarie Nikora, *Mau moko. The World of Māori Tattoo*, Auckland 2007, p. 48; Nicola Smith / Amber Aranui, *For Evolution's Sake: The collection and exchange of kōiwi tangata from Te Waipounamu*, in: *Archaeology in New Zealand* 53,3 (2010), pp. 185-194; Maui Solomon / Susan Forbes, *Indigenous Archaeology: A Moriori Case Study*, in: Caroline Phillips / Harry Allen (eds.), *Bridging the Divide: Indigenous Communities and Archaeology into the 21st Century*, Walnut Creek, CA 2010, pp. 213- 232.

(ancestor) spent in Australia is well past the 125 years mentioned above, yet he was fondly received by his iwi (tribal group).³ Another example is that of the ariki (high ranking chief) Tūpāhau who is said to have lived in the 1700s in the Waikato and Tainui regions. The theft of this mummified tupuna (ancestor) by the collector Andreas Reischek in the 1880s is well documented. Tūpāhau was taken to Austria and placed in the Imperial Natural History Museum in Vienna. In 1985 this tupuna was returned and buried on Mount Taupiri, the sacred mountain of the Tainui people.⁴ The memory of Tūpāhau, like many Māori ancestors was well preserved although he lived in the 1700s. His memory has been captured in kōrero (oral histories) and whakapapa (genealogies) that have been passed down generation after generation by his descendants. These same narratives and the stories have been written down in many circumstances, and now provide evidence of an iwi connection to tribal land and resources.⁵

More recently the „Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme“ on 27 January 2016 returned three tūpuna (ancestors) to the Whanganui region, which was identified as their place of provenance. We do not know the names of these ancestors or how old they are, however, we were able to achieve repatriation through the whakaaro rangatira (ultimate respect) the iwi (tribes) of the region have for the ancestral remains.⁶ These ancestors were buried along with 70 other Māori

³More information can be found at: <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1t80/te-umuroa-hohepa> (12.12.2016).

⁴Ray G. Prebble, 'Reischek, Andreas', from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 30-Oct-2012, see <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2r14/reischek-andreas> (12.12.2016).

⁵More information can be found at: <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Pom02Lege-t1-body-d1-d9.html> (12.12.2016). For more information about Andreas Reischek and stolen Māori remains see: <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2r14/reischek-andreas> (12.12.2016).

⁶Amber Aranui / Te Herekikie Herewini, *Kōiwi Tangata Report. Kōiwi tangata provenanced to the Whanganui Rohe* (2016), pp. 1-42, see https://www.tepapa.govt.nz/sites/default/files/whanganui_kt_report_date_25_jan_2016_v2.pdf (12.12.2016); Ruth Wilkie, 'Te Umuroa, Hohepa', from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 30-Oct-2012, URL: <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1t80/te-umuroa-hohepa> (12.12.2016).

and non-Māori ancestral remains that were housed at the Whanganui Regional Museum.

In summary all three examples above provide evidence that time is irrelevant to the connection Māori and Moriori maintain with the tūpuna (ancestors), and this may very well hold true for other Indigenous peoples as well.

Section 3. Background Information

In section three, the detailed and well-researched background information is presented about the collection and trade of human remains in Germany, with both European and non-European examples of collections provided. Detailed coverage of issues related to methods of scientific analysis, as well as those perspectives pertaining to human remains from western ethnographic, sociological, religious, and scientific-academic viewpoints are highlighted. To add, the issues covering legal ownership according to German law, and ethical concerns are intricately and delicately considered from many perspectives.

From Te Papa's perspective any research undertaken on the kōiwi tangata, kōimi tangata and Toi moko is to acquire and confirm their regional provenance within Aotearoa New Zealand. This is done by following threads of information pertaining to the collectors, traders, ships, auction houses and the accession information in overseas institutions.

Te Papa does not undertake invasive research or testing on Māori or Moriori ancestral remains, as we find there is little value in conducting DNA testing, isotope testing or carbon dating as accession information already indicates the remains are Māori or Moriori, and these same groups in general have had continuous tenure in their respective territories until the period of the signing of the „Treaty of Waitangi“ in 1840. Although much has been promised with isotopic testing and how it can be used to identify provenance by matching minerals in bones, teeth and hair with regional locations in Aotearoa New Zealand, to date, little detail about isotopic reference locations

covering the whole country has been placed within the public domain.

Who has control of human remains?

The guidelines delicately touch upon the issue of ownership of human remains in Germany. From my experience of negotiating the return of Māori and Moriori ancestral remains both past and present from Germany, the reality is that the control of the ancestral remains usually rests with the state government who has control of the institutions where the ancestors are housed. It is these same state governments which decide on whether our request to repatriate is approved or declined, and therefore the museums manage the remains on behalf of their state government.

For Te Papa, when ancestral remains are returned, Te Papa only becomes the custodian for the tūpuna (ancestors), until they are returned to the whānau (family), hapū (subtribe), iwi (tribe) and or their hau kāinga (homeland).

Section 4. Recommendations for the Care of Human Remains

After reviewing the set of recommendations I can appreciate that it concerns both Indigenous remains and non-Indigenous remains, and covers the five areas: 4.1 Collecting; 4.2 Preserving; 4.3 Research; 4.4 Exhibiting; and 4.5 Return.

As for section 4.1 „Collecting“, given the context of injustice of how Indigenous ancestral remains were acquired, collected and traded in the past, it would be best to dis-continue this practice. Overwhelmingly the evidence indicates Indigenous remains were removed from their homelands or burial sites without the permission, approval or consent of the individuals concerned, or their families. I would suggest the focus should be on returning these remains to their communities of origin. This requires an institution to rewrite its internal human remains policy, from that of collecting and displaying Indigenous human remains to that of repatriation of the same remains.

Next is section 4.2 „Preserving“. As a museum Te Papa supports the work undertaken to conserve and preserve Indigenous remains. An

important element of Te Papa's work is to care for the tūpuna (Māori ancestors) and karapuna (Moriāori ancestors) in a Wāhi Tapu (Sacred Repository). This is a dedicated space, where the tūpuna/karapuna are housed according to sound museum conservation practice and tikanga Māori (Māori philosophical and customary practice). The two elements of conservation and tikanga are combined in the following way. In the past a Wāhi Tapu was a secluded and hidden place that could be in a cave, on an island, on a hill top or mountain that had restricted access due to the topography of the natural environment. In the modern context, Te Papa's Wāhi Tapu is managed by policy that restricts access to those that care for the human remains. To add, to maintain the high level of tapu (sacredness) in the Wāhi Tapu, certain items are not permitted to enter the space, including food, water, and cigarettes. Many of these practices are also supported by strict conservation procedures including placing the tūpuna (ancestors) in a room that is climate controlled, handling the ancestors with latex gloves, and placing all the ancestors in acid free conservation boxes. Finally, when the kaimanaaki (caregivers) for the ancestors enter and exit the Wāhi Tapu, this is strictly done according to Māori tradition and culture by acknowledging the ancestors with karakia (traditional chants) and waiata tangi (laments).

An additional 31 international human remains are cared for in the Wāhi Tapu. These remains are provenanced to North and South America, the Pacific Islands, Asia and Europe. As an initial step to return these ancestors, we actively contacted North American Indian tribes, and provided them with detailed reports about their ancestral remains housed at Te Papa. It is our intention to do this for all the international ancestral remains.⁷

Comments on section 4.3 „Research“ were already given in the paragraphs on section 3. Section 4.4 is devoted to the „Exhibition of Māori and Moriāori human remains“. Similar to what has been said

⁷More information about the care of ancestral remains housed at Te Papa can be found at: <https://www.tepapa.govt.nz/about/repatriation> (12.12.2016).

above, and given the situation of how Indigenous remains have been collected and traded in the past, I would think there is no substantive rationale available for these same remains to be exhibited. It is important to note that Te Papa has a policy not to exhibit Māori or Moriāori, and that this has been the museum's practice well before I started in October 2007.

Section 4.5 concerns the „Return“. As indicated above, Māori and Moriāori remains were stolen from burial places, or traded against the wishes of the family of origin. That is the basis of our repatriation claim, combined with the notion that each Māori or Moriāori ancestor has the birth right to return to the spiritual home of origin, for burial and to rest amongst their kith and kin.

To help us understand the repatriation process in Germany, it would be useful for each museum to have a full list of Indigenous remains housed at their institution, which would be available to the communities of origin, as well as their nation's representatives in Germany. In addition to this, it would be very useful to have a comprehensive repatriation policy available as well. This policy could possibly have the following components, including:

- a) Identifying who is able to make a repatriation request;
- b) Identifying and explaining the rationale for considering a repatriation request;
- c) Explaining the process of considering the request, including period of time required; and
- d) Identifying the group, board, or state council that would consider the repatriation request, the decision making process, and the framework used to determine the final decision.

Research and Partnerships

While the repatriation request is being considered it would be extremely useful to appreciate the perspective of the Indigenous community in seeking repatriation. This can be done through a number of mechanisms, such as inviting the leaders of the community to meet, present and articulate their repatriation request, or alternatively, meeting with the community in their homeland.

Through Te Papa's initial international inventory research from 2003, the repatriation programme was able to access the details and create a list of where most Māori and Moriori ancestors are housed in institutions around the world. The majority of these ancestral remains are in Europe and North America, and therefore we have focussed on actively meeting with institutions in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Sweden, France, Austria, Canada and the USA to inform each institution about our programme, including its goals, aims and objectives. Te Papa has also been open to receiving a number of international interns and expert exchanges from these respective countries who have undertaken important research about the trade of Indigenous human remains. I believe the experience of international people coming to work alongside Te Papa's repatriation programme has provided them with an increased awareness across a range of intersecting areas including repatriation, museology, human rights, Indigenous rights, science, ethics, values and culture. Many of these interns are now undertaking PhD research, and/or work in the museum sector.

Handover ceremony

From Te Papa's experience, when a repatriation request is approved, it has been most beneficial to host a formal handover ceremony, which allows a small delegation from the community of origin to uplift their ancestors in a way that is culturally respectful and meaningful. Plus it will allow the institution to return the remains with dignity and respect. The arrangements for the ceremony would be agreed upon well in advance, and could include (i) the names of official speakers and representatives, (ii) cultural elements, (iii) signing of

transfer documentation, and (iv) the agreement related to the media component and how to manage this element.⁸

Repatriation Fund

The Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme is resourced and funded by the New Zealand Government with the full support of Māori and Moriori tribal groups. My observation internationally is that many other Indigenous communities receive little support from their governments to achieve repatriation. In light of this, and in consideration of how Indigenous human remains entered museums in Europe, it would be appropriate for European institutions to create a repatriation fund that would enable active engagement with communities seeking repatriation. The fund would be specific to repatriation, and help these same communities actively engage in the repatriation process such as, meetings, research, knowledge exchange, as well as funding the handover ceremonies, and freighting of the ancestors to their homelands.

Summary

To provide a summary of my review I consider the document in its fullness to be thoughtful in its approach, well balanced in its views, very well researched, and delicately and sympathetically approaching a range of very sensitive issues. In saying that, there are a number of issues that I would highlight as a means of generating further discussion in the hope of enhancing the document in the future.

a) There is sufficient evidence available that highlights the context of injustice of how indigenous remains have been collected, traded and received into collections in museums across the world. In light of this I would argue that the document could have examples of how museums have been proactive in returning Indigenous remains, and how this

⁸June Jones / Te Herekiele Herewini, Repatriation of Māori ancestors: a partnership approach (2015), pp 1-10, see <http://www.fihrm.org/conference/documents/FIHRM2015JonesandTHHerewiniedit.pdf> (12.12.2016). Video footage of the handover ceremony at Birmingham University is available at webpage: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZlANNmGdZ8> (12.12.2016).

has been beneficial for the museum and the Indigenous community concerned.

b) The view taken that it is difficult to identify the community of origin for ancestral remains that are older than 125 years, seems rather subjective, and does not seem to be informed by numerous examples of Indigenous peoples actively seeking the return of their ancestors well passed this time span.

c) Given the above, it is quite reasonable to suggest that museums refrain from collecting additional Indigenous remains, but to focus on conservation of the remains they house, and undertake quality historical research that is beneficial in helping to achieve provenance for the tūpuna (ancestors).

d) I would suggest that it is beneficial to actively engage with communities of origin for these ancestral remains, in particular providing them with key information and repatriation policy, so they may consider their approach with the museum.

e) In addition it is important for museums across the world to acknowledge that Indigenous communities may not have access to the required resources to actively engage in the repatriation process, and that this is considered by the museum's board, regional council or state government. It is most likely the lack of resources available that is preventing these groups from initialising contact with museums in Germany, and not a lack of interest or loss of connection with the tūpuna (ancestors).

In closing I would like to end with a whakataukī or traditional Māori saying: „Nāku te rourou nāu te rourou ka ora ai te iwi – With my food basket and your food basket our people will be nourished“. It is an acknowledgement to people working cooperatively, highlighting the benefits to the community of combining resources and efforts. I would like to suggest to those German museums that are interested in proactively repatriating the Indigenous remains they house to their communities of origin, that you form a group, or an alliance to work together, so that you can support each other as the work progresses.

As the repatriation manager at Te Papa I am happy to work with such a group with the aim of supporting Te Papa efforts in repatriating all the Māori and Moriori ancestral remains housed in Germany. Kia ora koutou katoa! Since the Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme (KARP)⁹ was established in 2003, it has repatriated over 350 Māori and Moriori ancestral remains from international institutions.

Glossary

Aotearoa is one of the original Māori names for New Zealand. It is now common to use this word by both Māori or Pākehā living in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Hapū is sub-tribe.

Iwi is the tribe, tribal groups or tribes.

Karapuna is the Moriori word for ancestor/s.

Kōimi tangata is the Moriori word for their skeletal remains.

Kōiwi tangata is the Māori word for their skeletal remains.

Māori are the Indigenous Polynesian people of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Moriori are the Indigenous Polynesian people of Rēkohu Chatham Islands.

Pākehā is the Māori word for foreigner, and can also be used in reference to White or European New Zealanders.

Rangatira is a chief of a hapū or an iwi.

Rēkohu is the Moriori word for their Island home, commonly known as the Chatham Islands in English, and Wharekauri in Māori.

Tikanga has many meanings including deep seated philosophy, strategy, customary practice, set of rules and guidelines, and doing the right thing.

Toi moko is the word used by Maui Pomare to describe a preserved tattooed head. This is a modern word, and has no derogatory connotations associated with it.

Tupuna is ancestor (singular).

Tūpuna is ancestors (plural).

⁹More information about the Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme can be found at: <https://www.tepapa.govt.nz/about/repatriation> (12.12.2016).

Whānau is the family grouping.
Wāhi Tapu is a sacred repository.

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