

MATERIAL CULTURE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF "THE OTHER": MUSEUMS IN LATE NINETEENTH-CENTURY AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

David Dorward



useum exhibits are complex and multi-layered events. In the enclosed space of museums, cultures are captured, catalogued and reconstructed according to principles alien to their creators. Art and artefacts, distanced in time and space, are transformed into representations of reality. The physical nature of material culture imparts an illusion of unproblematic authenticity, hallowed by the edifice of nineteenth-century neo-classical museum temples. The contents of exhibitions are in large measure determined by acquisition policies of past curators, with often radically differing agenda. Changing fashions continually consign once treasured items to hidden storerooms. The choice of artefacts, their juxtaposition and identification, conveys subtle but powerful messages. There is a dialectic between audience and objects that can both challenge and reinforce cultural assumptions.

There is a growing literature on the role of museums, exhibitions and photography in constructions of "the Other" in the late Victorian and Edwardian eras. While the themes of empire identified in these studies have resonance in Australia and New Zealand, Antipodean museums were not simply clones of British institutions. Settler societies were seeking to address their own, quite different questions relating to wresting a livelihood and colonising the landscape. If the multifaceted functions of museums are to be understood, museums on the periphery of empire, such as those in Australia and New Zealand, need to be understood within colonial cultures in which they were conceived.

Most of the major museums in Australia and New Zealand have been the subject of celebratory histories. In addition, there is an increasing awareness of the role of museums in preserving and defining indigenous culture, both Aboriginal and Maori. Yet, neither celebratory tomes nor revisionist ethnography prepare one for the range of cultures secreted in the institutional basements. How is it that so much non-indigenous "exotica" came into Antipodean museums? Was it ever displayed and, if so, to what ends? The study of such material tells us more of curators, colonial society and cultural imperialism, than the peoples they purported to portray.

Colonial museums, symbols of local pride and achievement, appeared in most major metropolitan centres. They were one component in a wider cluster of related institutions: philosophical societies, acclimatisation gardens, reading rooms/public libraries, art galleries, mechanics institutes, great public exhibitions and universities. While each was unique, with its own pedigree and particularities, they were founded by a like-minded educated middle class, whose values, attitudes and assumptions they reflected. A number of themes intertwine throughout, such as a preoccupation with extracting wealth from the colonies, the role of such institutions in the moral education

of the lower classes in rude outposts of empire, the colonisation of indigenous culture, and the sanitising of the violence of Empire.

Colonial museums grew out of and retained many of the characteristics of a much older tradition of amateur curio collections. While the new museum curators sought local and international recognition (in part through differentiation from the older tradition of eclectic curiosity exhibits), amateur collectors continued to play a significant role in shaping the museum collections and culture until well into the mid-twentieth century. Amateur collectors were often prominent on the Museum Boards of Trustees, and many acquired considerable expertise, challenging the authority of the museum curators and directors. On the other hand, curators were eager to assert their own professional status and claims to authority. Such tensions underlay the controversial dismissal of Gerard Krefft as head of the Australian Museum in 1874 (Strahan 33-35).

The tensions between the often influential amateur, with their cabinet of curios, and the budding curators, with wider aspirations for recognition as men of science, persisted throughout the century. Museum curators were dependent upon local patronage, encouraged through publication of long lists of donations in the annual reports of the Trustees. They read like a social register of colonial society. In the interest of public relations, if not science, little appears to have been refused. For example, seven bags of worms were presented to the South Australia Museum in 1911 and a deformed chicken in 1914 (South Australia Museum, Annual Reports, 1911 and 1914).

It was a period of ever-expanding interest and inquiry. The phenomenal growth of museums, both in terms of quantity and range of interest, rapidly outstripped accommodation, resulting in spaces which often presented little more than a confusing muddle to the visitor:

The existing building contains only one room fitted for the exhibition of specimens of Natural History. Into this space are crowded animals, birds, reptiles, fishes, a large collection of insects, crustacea, shells and geological specimens; also a variety of ethnographical objects, illustrative of the history of the Aborigines of Australia and of the Polynesian Archipelago; while a collection of casts from the antiquity, most valuable as illustrative of the highest condition of art, can only be seen in detached positions, in bad light, and other interesting collections cannot be seen at all. (Australian Museum, Annual Report, 1858: 1)

There was little to distinguish such displays from the much maligned cabinet of curios, yet the situation also reflected the multifaceted roles of colonial museums.

In part, the pre-eminence of public museums lay in their claims to the "completeness" of their collections. Natural history specimens could be arranged with great precision, facilitating more effective identification of natural resources. However, museums transcended the mere utilitarian. Bird skins mustered by species in vast classificatory regiments, or mounted in "lifelike" tableaux, crammed display cases. Taxonomy and archetype samples collected from around the world imparted a

universalist dimension to the nineteenth-century Western preoccupation with hierarchies and completeness. It was a manifestation of an attitude toward the totality of knowledge that found expression in Lord Acton's *Cambridge History* and *The Complete Oxford English Dictionary*. The universalist claims of colonial museums helped locate "civilisation" within the rude colonial landscape. They were an assertion of the supremacy of science, not only in wresting a living from a new and potentially hostile environment, but also in the right to do so. Science, "Progress" and Empire were fused. Colonial museums proclaimed this supremacy, reassuring the colonisers of their rightful hegemony.

As storehouses of practical information, complete and systematically arranged, museums were both repositories and disseminators of information. They had to justify continually their budgets and, from inception, performed an educative function. In the alien environment of the Antipodes, European naturalist folk-wisdom was of limited value. Even basic knowledge, such as the choice of timbers for construction, had to be acquired anew. At a time when many of the colonisers were illiterate, museums conveyed information through archetype samples. Blocks of polished wood laminated into massive trophy displays were a popular feature of exhibitions and museums, serving to identify alien species and their uses. As Captain Andrew Clarke, Surveyor-General of Victoria, remarked in 1855:

In the establishment of a National Museum [of Victoria] we have the elements of much good. It is not to be a mere collection of curiosities, serving rather to bewilder than to instruct. It is not to contain specimens that are interesting only because they are beautiful. I hope to see in that museum a complete collection of all the ores that are useful, of all the woods that are suitable for shipbuilding, for roads and for tramways. . . . I desire to see the museum filled with all those objects that are peculiarly valuable in a new country, to the exclusion of merely ornamental specimens. (qtd Prescott 1-2)

Across the Tasman, Julius Haast was agitating along similar lines for what became the Canterbury Museum in Christchurch.

Of all the natural sciences, geology reigned supreme. It was the great science of the nineteenth century, serving as the core of evolutionary evidence and the classificatory science *par excellence*. Minerals could be arranged with great precision and archetype samples used to identify new strata. If only samples could be acquired from all over the world, it would be possible to document and delineate geological progression with exactitude. Once all the pieces were in place, the whole would be revealed. Colour, texture, and the structures of physical samples were also crucial to identification. Colonial geologists strove to compile specimen collections from across the globe in order to put their own little patch into the matrix, to understand its formation and to unlock its hidden wealth. Consequently, government geologists accumulated vast sample collections, consisting of boxes and boxes of labelled rocks, for the purposes of identification. In 1863, James Hector, then Provincial Geologist, exhibited his mineralogy collection at Otago, affording many a novice prospector their first glimpse of gold-bearing ore and other valuable minerals. One of the principle

functions of the Colonial Museum in Wellington, established in 1875, was the care and classification of the mineralogical standards collection of the New Zealand Geological Survey (Colonial Museum and Laboratory Annual Report 1866).

The founding directors of these museums were inevitably geologists or natural scientists. All had trained abroad in the natural sciences. None had previous museum experience. Their roles as curators grew out of other occupations, such as academics or government geologists. The majority were British, appointed on the recommendation of metropolitan patrons. However the patron-client relationship, "the web of intellectual kinship" (Mulvaney), was far more complex than the familiar British ties. A significant minority were German and were instrumental in forging links with Continental scholars and institutions. The extent to which German background and education influenced their attitudes toward issues such as race and language in their new homelands are aspects yet to be adequately explored. They were outside the British patronage network and had to overcome their marginality within colonial society.

Geology offered entrée to international scholarship and recognition through the power of nomenclature. Geologists mapped and named the mountains, rivers, glaciers and passes, colonising the landscape. Julius Haast, a German migrant, provincial geologist and later Director of the Canterbury Museum, named a mountain after Joseph Dalton Hooker, Director of Kew Gardens, another after Charles Darwin, a pass after himself, and the Franz Joseph Glacier after the Emperor who raised him to the nobility. Such links raised the profile and pride of aspiring Antipodean men of science. Their findings were published in international journals and brought credit, not only to themselves individually, but to colonial society generally, through their elevation to membership of learned societies.

The literature tends to emphasise a hierarchical central-peripheral imperialist model, focusing on the role of metropolitan institutions, such as Kew Gardens and the British Museum. Kew Gardens was instrumental in colonising the landscapes through the dissemination of ideas and "stuff." Botanical specimens were sent to Kew from all over the Empire, from whence they were redistributed across the globe. Remote West African botanical stations supplied the seeds for now towering trees in the botanical gardens of Wellington and Melbourne (Royal Gardens, Kew, 1888-1895). Every major settlement had its Acclimatisation Society for the introduction of "useful" plants and animals, often located adjacent to and associated with the museum.

Julius Haast, in his capacity as President of the Philosophical Institute of Canterbury, declared in proposing the establishment of an Acclimatisation society: "We should like to see the hare and the partridge in our fields, the stately deer, the roe, and the peasant occupying our hills and our forests, while our Alpine rivers are well calculated for . . . the propagation of the salmon and trout." The ecology of the Antipodes was transformed. It was Europeanised, not only through the introduction of familiar species, but through the cultural values associated with European game. Acclimatisation societies were not simply for the introduction of new commercial species but for the transplanting of an often idealised European lifestyle. In the colonies, the colonisers could live out their fantasies of squirearchy.

What is less well documented is the Antipodean perspective, the role of curators and amateurs as major suppliers of unique flora and fauna to the world. Provincial

geologists *cum* museum curators led local collectors in feeding overseas demand, returning from each survey trip laden with botanical specimens, animal skins and ethnographic "curios." The colonial museum formed the link between two networks of exchange, one local, the other international. The web extended across Europe and the Americas, into Africa, Asia and the Pacific, initiated and maintained through a complex anthropology of barter and gift-giving. Maintenance of such networks resulted in an increasing diversity of specimens circulated across the globe in volumes beyond the needs of science or display. If the power of nomenclature provided the introduction, the subsequent exchanges were fundamental to the integration of fledgling Antipodean men of science into the global network.

The songbirds were silenced so they could be disembodied and scientifically reconstructed in an act of ascendancy and control. Animals had to be killed and collated before they became extinct. So rapacious was Haast in supplying his ever-widening network of exchange that the Canterbury Museum Board of Governors became seriously concerned, declaring in 1878, that they were "very much averse to the destruction of the New Zealand Fauna for the purpose of exchange with other Museums, and would call his attention to the fact that there are objects such as fossils, which might be available for the purposes of exchange" (Canterbury Museum Committee Minutes, 1878).

The acquisition of ethnographic material was initially little more than an adjunct to natural history collections. In 1856, the Australian Museum purchased "insects, shells and ethnographical objects, from the French Missionary Settlement at Woodlark Island" (Australian Museum, 1857). Frederick McCoy, the founding director of the National Museum of Victoria, rejected Aboriginal material as being of no interest to science (Prescott 48). "Ethnography" was a residual category, comprising anything of human fabrication not considered "art," irrespective of cultural origins:

a Native American spear,
wooden paper-knife from York Minster,
a Russian Policeman's cap,
aboriginal stone adze from Murrumbidgee
carved mask from New Caledonia. (Australian Museum, Annual
Report, 1858: 8)

Indigenous material culture tended to be consigned to the category of "curiosities" or ornamental specimens.

The transition from a preoccupation with geology and natural history to the appropriation of indigenous material culture began in the 1860s, spurred by a growing conviction of inevitable extinction of indigenous Antipodean societies. In 1859, the New Zealand Colonial Medical Officer had observed that the Maori were doomed to extinction, though he attributed their fate largely to the spread of venereal disease (Fenton n.p.). The theme of Maori demise was recurrent throughout the *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute* in the nineteenth century. As William Colenso, a settler "Maori expert," noted in 1868: "Children are every year becoming fewer. Marriages are rarely fruitful" (69). Across the Tasman, "anthropology in Australia was driven by the expectation of Aboriginal extinction, by the urgency of

preserving the records of a dying race" (Griffiths 26). Yet, though the "native races" might share a common fate, colonial assessment of Aboriginal and Maori cultures was markedly distinct. Whereas Aborigines were deemed to be without history, the Maori were seen as:

a race of savages, barbarous beyond conception, and practicing rites, of so foul a kind, that the very existence of such rites was often doubted by modern writers. And yet, these people possessed characteristics which were calculated to redeem them even in the eyes of civilised men. Brave to a fault, having a clear perception of the distinctions of rank, and therefore proud in character, they possessed a large amount of intellectual capacity, and even of latent moral character. (Travers 309-10)

The Dunedin New Zealand Industrial Exhibition of 1865 included a special section on "Maori and other Aboriginal Manufactures and Implements" (*New Zealand Exhibition, 1865*). The Exhibition catalogue emphasised Maori technology and their capacities for assimilation as indicative of their superior status to that of Australian Aborigines:

Compared with the Native inhabitants of Australia, and of many of the uncivilised islands in the South Pacific, the Maoris stand out as their superior in every respect. Their extreme aptitude has enabled them to adopt easily many of the habits and customs of European civilisation, and to throw off a great deal of the barbarism of their forefathers. . . . Excepting in a few special articles, the traditional manufactures and weapons have become almost obsolete amongst the Maoris, and it is acknowledged by themselves that some of their formerly most cherished arts are being rapidly forgotten. . . . The arts and manufactures of a people are the most valuable records of its history. What important ethnological facts have been ascertained by means of bits of broken pottery or rusted metal? The history of the Maori race is still unwritten, but in their habits, language, weapons, tools and manufacture, we trace their affinity to other races, and are enabled at any rate to build up reasonable conclusions as to their origin. For many reasons it is desirable that collections of aboriginal implements and productions should be preserved. They are not only interesting but instructive. (*New Zealand Exhibition, 1865*: 321-22).

The Maori material was divided into two classes: Articles of Use and Articles of Ornament (332). The Maori were located within a European hierarchy of technologically defined "progress."

Nothing so captured the Victorian imagination of settler society as the Maori meeting house with its intricate design and elaborate craftsmanship, which was yet perceived as quintessentially savage. The acquisition of a Maori meeting house became a goal of every New Zealand museum. When the Canterbury Museum secured a North

Island Maori meeting house in 1874, it was decided that the carved panels were too valuable to be set into the ground, so a special stone and concrete plinth was constructed alongside the Museum. As it was to house the New Zealand "ethnographic" collection, the physical remnants of "true" Maori culture, it was decided the customary *tukutuku* fibre wall panels would be replaced by fluted kauri planks. As thatch was too dangerous (and expensive), a corrugated-iron roof was substituted. Moreover, as it had been partially damaged in the Hau-Hau war, two Maori carvers who had worked on the original building were hired to produce replacement elements. The construction was under the supervision of Walter (later Sir Walter) Buller, a settler "Maori authority." In November 1874, Buller wrote:

The carvings in front have a very imposing appearance. I mean those covering the moulding to the doors and windows. I suggested painting out the silly fancy work on the outside post and giving it a coat of red. . . . The only defence the Maori artists could offer was that this illustrated the "moku" or "tatu" markings on a woman's breasts and arms. I told them we wanted a *house* and not a woman. He grinned and said he would paint it out. We must be careful to have nothing introduced that we cannot defend. (Buller to Haast, 26 Nov. 1874)

The Maori artists had been reduced to workmen, with Buller the arbitrator of "authentic" Maori culture. In an ultimate act of appropriation, the settlers become the authoritative custodians of indigenous culture.

Like the extinction of the native fauna, the imminent demise of indigenous societies galvanised colonial museum collection. At the founding of the Colonial Institute (genesis of the National Museum), the governor proclaimed: "It will be one of the main objects of this Institute to collect all records that can help to throw light on the very complicated and difficult, but highly interesting subject—the past and present condition and future prospects of the Maori race" (Bowen 7). Nevertheless, Maori and Aboriginal material culture continued to be located ambiguously in museum collections. Haast went to considerable trouble to acquire a Maori tattooed head from England for the Canterbury Museum in 1873, but it was a curio, and thus deemed unsuitable for general display. It sat in a glass case covered by a cloth, to be viewed only upon request (von Haast 684).

In the 1870s, under the influence of Social Darwinism and evolutionary theory, museums began to reorganise their collections:

The ethnological collections as well as those of antiquity and of art could be kept separate in the wing specially designed for them, beginning in the lower part with prehistoric remains . . . and advancing gradually to the gallery upstairs built for the purpose with light from the top to contain works of art, showing the gradual advancement of the human race from manufacturing of rude flint implements to the highest productions of great artists (von Haast 701).

The visitor advanced from the lower levels of rudimentary origins upward to the light of civilisation.

Paradoxically, with the concept of evolution came an increased emphasis on the distinctiveness of races, at times merging with a pre-Darwinian polygenesis theory of origin. The older simplistic black-white dichotomy gave way to a more elaborate evolutionary schema, underpinned by phrenology and eugenics. In 1870, Thomson reported to the Otago Institute:

I found that the brow of the European equalled 88, of the Eastern Asiatic 71 and of the Negro 60. The ape of the Indian Archipelago, I may add, equalled 44. [Consequently] the jet black native of Central Africa may be likened to one pole of humanity and the fair, light-haired native of Scandinavia may be likened to the other, between which there are links innumerable until the chain is joined. (24-25).

Racial hierarchies could be demonstrated with supposed mathematical precision by measurement of skulls, and amateur collecting of native skeletal remains was a well-established colonial pursuit which took on the dimension of scientific inquiry. On the basis of Maori skeletal remains from various New Zealand collections, Professor John Scott of the University of Otago pronounced that "the vertebral column is typically savage in the form of its component parts" (62). Scientific demand for Antipodean skulls and skeletal specimens mushroomed. By the late 1870s, Antipodean museums, like those overseas, were festooned with rows of skulls. As the demand for "specimens" grew, a new institution of professional museum suppliers emerged, such as Henry Ward of the Natural Science Establishment in Rochester, New York.

A regular visitor to Australia and New Zealand, Ward's letterhead read:

Ward's Natural Science Establishment

Minerals, Rocks, Fossils, Geological Relief Maps, Models and Diagrams, and Archaeological Specimens. Casts of Fossils, Skins and Skeletons of Animals, Invertebrates (Crustaceans, Shells, Corals, etc.) Glass Models of ditto, Anatomical Models, Human Skeletons, Skulls and Skeletons of Races, etc. (Ward to Haast, 16 Aug 1881)

In response to a request from the Canterbury Museum for Native American ethnography, Ward replied:

We can for 600 dollars give you a stalwart Indian warrior (mounted with wax head and hands) in full costume, with weapons, both bow and arrow and quiver, and his rifle and knife—as he has fixed them to suit his savage taste. Add 150 dollars to that (750) and he shall be the actual Indian (so far as skin of head, arms, hands, lower legs and feet go—you shall have the skeleton) nicely stuffed. Add 275 more (1,025) and his horse of their peculiar breed all rigged out with their native saddle, bridle, lariat, hobbles, etc. shall stand by his side or he be mounted on it. Add 175 more (1,200) and his high wigwam of

tanned buffalo hides daubed with paint, snakes, etc., and some of its utensils, shall stand by the side. But these things take time to prepare (at least a year) and are cash. (Ward to Haast, 15 Sep 1878)

In other words, first shoot your Indian, which would cost less than the horse and saddle. It was part of a global trade in human remains in the name of science, whereby the "Other" was reduced to mounted specimens, like the songbirds. Yet the transformation of Antipodean museum collections and the display of skulls was more than a mere imitation of European pseudo-scientific racism and evolution. At issue was nothing less than the survival of, not only the indigenous races, but of the colonisers.

In 1870, Thomson had argued, on the basis of craniometry and language, that:

It cannot have escaped the notice of those who have made ethnography their study, that conquering nations eradicate the languages of weaker nations only in their own zone of latitude, or rather in the iso-thermal lines; whence they overcome tropical people, they neither extrude the natives, nor in any degree expunge the roots of their language. As their northern energies die out, or as their intercourse ceases, the remnant of their dominion is only shown by partial intermixture of blood and a slight glossarial adaptation of words expressing abstract ideas or foreign necessities. . . . Northern nations may cross the tropics and implant themselves and their language in their respective opposite zones, but if they intrude beyond the iso-thermal lines of their original habitat, they degenerate and their language deteriorates and dies out. (35)

In 1876, Coleman Phillips asserted that while Africans and other "native races" were better suited to the tropics than Europeans and would therefore survive, "the Maoris in New Zealand are certain to die out, being unable to survive the contact in temperate zones with the more fitting white races. . . . It was an error for any portion of the Malayan races to wander so far south. Certain climates kill natives just as surely as contact with the white race" (79). His views came with the added authority of having been read previously before the Royal Colonial Institute, London.

The violence of colonisation and responsibility for the demise of the "native races" sat uncomfortably with the proclamations of civilisation. Climate theory absolved settler society of responsibility by positing a "scientific law of nature." Yet the corollary of the "dying native" was the concern that settlers, removed from their native environment, might undergo degeneration. As the President of the New Zealand Institute speculated:

Consider, for example, the prevalence of anaemia among the young people of New Zealand. Does this spring from the exceptional indifference to and breach of hygiene laws? Or have geological and meteorological facts something to do with it? Has the perpetual bath of sunshine . . . some disadvantages in forcing on too rapid development and otherwise? Is it the large amount of ozone that we

breath an unmixed blessing? Is not our drinking water frequently so soft as to lower the strength of the animal organism? (Hutton 1890: 627)

Inspired by the eugenicist Francis Galton, Henry Ogg Forbes set up an "anthropometrical laboratory" at the 1889-90 New Zealand and South Sea Exhibition in Dunedin. It was extremely popular, "notwithstanding the charge of sixpence made for admission into the laboratory and its situation in a rather out-of-the-way annex of the Science Court." Measurements were made of 4664 persons "for the purpose of discovering what has been the effect (if there has been any) of their residence under the social conditions that exist in the Australasian Colonies, and in a climate which had remarkable effects on introduced animals and vegetable life" (Hastings 163). Though his data were never published, Forbes presented a summary to the New Zealand Academy in which he claimed that, contrary to widespread fears, those born in the Antipodes were physically superior to migrants.

The phobia of degeneration was intertwined with miscegenation, the degeneration of European stock through intercourse with the natives. The problem with mass exhibits of skulls was that the message of racial hierarchy and the dangers of interracial offspring were not self-evident to those unversed in the details of craniometry and pseudo-scientific racism. Rude, untutored colonial workmen needed to be taught the dangers of their profligate habits and museums were an important arena of public edification. Non-indigenous ethnographic material was acquired in increasing quantities to contextualise the indigenous "Other" and settler societies within a universal hierarchy of humanity. Ethnological artefacts increasingly took their place beside the ubiquitous displays of skulls as cultural markers.

Among the main suppliers were dealers, such as W.D. Webster and W.O. Oldman, who produced profusely illustrated sales catalogues. Non-indigenous material culture (African, Asian, Oceanic and Amer-Indian) arrived in mixed lots, for example 78 articles to the Canterbury Museum on 2 March 1901, including an Abyssinian Bishop's mitre and two ecclesiastical urns, a 17th-century janus-headed Benin brass knife handle, an Asante stool, a Madagascar drum and a Zulu penis cap (Canterbury Museum, Registration Book).

From the *Guide to the Collections of the Canterbury Museum* published in 1900, it is possible to "walk through" the displays, through photographs, floor plans and a case-by-case description of contents. Visitors were guided on a circumnavigation of the artefacts in the Ethnological room, beginning with the Tasmanian Natives, "the nearest representatives of primitive man . . . still in the Palaeolithic stage of culture," on to Aboriginal Australians, then Melanesians or "Oceanic Negroes," next the Polynesians or "Oceanic Caucasians," then Malay, Indonesians and Negritos: "The Malays, or Oceanic Mongolians . . . are Mohammedans and are fairly well cultured and speak a well developed language. They came after the Indonesians." The Ainu held a special place of honour, being "European, not Mongolian," while the Chinese were presented as a once great people in a state of decay. The greatest array of artefacts came from Japan, reflecting increasing trade and "development." The Japanese Courts were a prominent feature of late Victorian trade exhibitions in the Antipodes and Europe. India was presented as the original homeland of the Negro race, and shared with Native

Americans and Africans a place just below the Persian and the Moor, while Europeans, symbolised by manufactures, old and modern, held centre stage. It was a complex image of "progress" and demonstrated the flexibility of racism in response to parochial preoccupations. The Chinese were portrayed as having fallen from past heights and were placed below Africans who were accorded an unusually high position in the evolutionary scheme.

Lest the relationship between race and culture elude the audience, there were smaller cases of human skulls between the cases of artefact. In addition, the catalogue drew attention to the skeletons in the Mammal Room:

In the Mammal Room (Case 6) will be found the skeleton of a Melanesian, from the New Hebrides, standing side by side with that of a gorilla. This man has very long arms, but they fall far short of those of the gorilla. The differences between the skulls are immense. A European child of four years old has a brain twice as large as an adult gorilla. (Hutton 1900: 194)

The skeletal physiology of the Melanesian was contrasted with that of a gorilla, but when it came to brain capacity, the reference was to a European child. There was also a skeleton of a European, standing alongside that of a horse.

Anthropometry was to dominate ethnographic research at many Antipodean museums until well into the 1930s, with a continuing and insatiable demand for skeletal material. The grizzly nature of the trade was earlier captured in the correspondence between the Director of the South Australia Museum and a supplier in Port Darwin:

Respecting native skeletons, I write to say that I am anxious to get some for the Museum but at the same time it is difficult for me to say beforehand what we should give, because so much depends upon the condition and completeness. I might say however as some guide to you that I would give £5 for a complete native skeleton in good condition. If it is not complete it would be worth something, but so much less according to what was lacking. I must also say that it is not very easy for every bone to be gathered by those not knowing the various bones. However if you like to send down from 1 to six on the terms I will do the best I can in the interest of the museum. If you cannot get whole skeletons, you might get some skulls which we also want for the collection. For these we would give 5/- if complete or less if wanting the lower jaw. I could take 20 of these. As regards the golden winged parrots, if you can send good or fairly good skins, we would give 10/- each for 6 or any less number. Trusting we may hear from you again (Sterling to Johnstone, 22 Feb 1909).

In reply . . . I prefer male skeletons but if you are sending several you should include one or two females and one juvenile. If they should be new enough to smell, the best thing to do is to get them dried as much as possible and after that the best thing that would be possible for you

to do is to smother them with ashes when packing and you should be very careful to pack all the bones belonging to one skeleton separately, wrapping up so that they may not get mixed up. Then as I told you, we should be glad to have any skulls over and above those belonging to the skeletons (Sterling to Johnstone, 20 Apr 1909).

The commerce in material culture and human remains was an integral part of colonialism, not simply a manifestation. It was fundamental to the "creation" of Empire. Museums imparted an understanding of distant cultures, enabling observers to locate themselves in a world of change and uncertainty.

The First World War marked a watershed or epilogue to this practice. Many of the museum staff went off to war, never to return. In the economies of the post-war period and through the Great Depression, the ethnographic displays slowly crumbled. In the Australian Museum, under the influence of American research funding, focus shifted increasingly to Oceanic ethnography (Australian Museum, Annual Report, 1921-1939). In the South Australia Museum: "Cases at the eastern end of the General Court have been arranged to illustrate the genealogical "tree" of man, his relationship with the anthropoid apes; the various modern and fossil types are represented by skulls or their casts. These recently arranged exhibits have created much interest" (South Australia Museum, Annual Report 1928/29). Meanwhile, white ants gradually ate away at the floor and the legs of the cases in the area housing the ethnological displays (South Australia Museum, Annual Report, 1929/30-1932/33). Evolutionary and diffusionist displays continued to pervade museum exhibits long after they had ceased to be fashionable in anthropology. At a time when physical anthropology and the racist classification had lost centre stage to structural-functionalism and fieldwork, ethnologists at the South Australia Museum remained preoccupied with the measurement of Aboriginal skulls, which numbered between 500 and 600 by 1925 (South Australia Museum, Annual Report, 1924/25: 11). Museums had ceased to be at the centre of intellectual ferment and public education. Racism, never far from the surface, permeated Antipodean society, but the White societies had defined their hegemony.

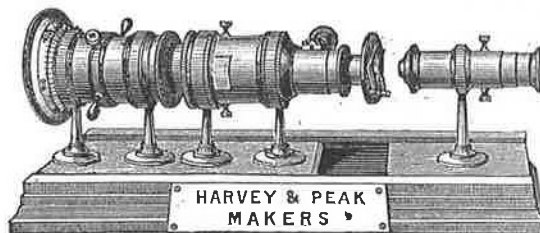
The interwar period and into the post-World War II era were characterised by their consistency. To the extent that Antipodean museums maintained "ethnographic" exhibits, they remained within an evolutionary context, and the Pacific Cultures Exhibit in the South Australia Museum in 1996, with its serried ranks of weapons and tools, interspersed with skulls, could have been taken directly from diffusionist displays by Henry Balfour at the Pitt-Rivers Museum at the beginning of the century.

Works Cited and Consulted

- Alexander, E.P. *Museum Masters: Their Museums and Their Influence*. Nashville: American Association of State and Local History, 1983.
- Alloula, M. *The Colonial Harem: Images of Subconscious Eroticism*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1986.
- Allwood, J. *The Great Exhibitions*. London: Studio Vista, 1977.
- Altick, R.D. *The Shows of London*. Cambridge Mass.: Harvard UP, 1978.
- Australian Museum, Annual Report of the Trustees. New South Wales Legislative Assembly, various years.
- Bolt, C. *Victorian Attitudes to Race*. London: Routledge, 1971.
- Brockway, L.H. *Science and Colonial Expansion: The Role of the Royal Botanic Gardens*. New York: Academic Press, 1979.
- Bowen, Sir George Ferguson. "Inaugural Address." *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute* 1, 1868.
- Buller, Walter, to Julius Haast. 26 Nov 1874, von Haast Papers, series 37, file 39, National Library of New Zealand.
- Canterbury Museum Committee Minutes. 30 Jul 1878.
- Canterbury Museum, Registration Book, 1892-1901.
- Chapman, W.R. "Arranging Ethnology: A.H.L.F. Pitt Rivers and the Typological Tradition." *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture*. Ed. G.W. Stocking. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1985.
- Cheeseman, T.F. *The First Fifty Years of the Auckland Institute and Museum and its Future Aims: A Jubilee Sketch*. Auckland: Wilson, 1917.
- Colenso, William. "On the Maori Races of New Zealand." *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute* 1, (1868): 1-75.
- Colonial Museum and Laboratory, First Annual Report, by James Hector. Wellington: Government Printer, 1866.
- Coombes, A. "Blinded by Science: Ethnography in the British Museum." Pointon, 102-19.
- . *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1994.
- Crosby, A.W. *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986.
- Curtin, P.D. *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850*. Madison: Wisconsin UP, 1965.
- Dunstan, D., ed. *Victorian Icon: The Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne*. Melbourne: The Exhibition Trustees, 1996.
- Fenton, F.D. *Observations on the State of the Aboriginal Inhabitants of New Zealand*. Auckland: n.p., 1859.
- Fox, P. "Memory, the Museum and the Postcolonial World." *Meanjin* 51.2 (1992): 308-18.

- Greenhalgh, P. *Ephemeral Vistas, The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851- 1939*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1988.
- Griffiths, T. *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996.
- Haast, J. "First Presidential Address." Canterbury Philosophical Institute, 1862. von Haast Papers, National Library of New Zealand, series 37, file 244.
- Hastings, D. Harris, comp. *Official Record of the New Zealand and South Sea Exhibition held at Dunedin, 1889-90*. Otago: Government Printer, 1890.
- Hutton, F.W. *Guide to the Canterbury Museum*. Christchurch: Canterbury Museum, 1900.
- . Presidential Address. Canterbury Philosophical Society. 6 Nov 1890. *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute for 1890*. Wellington: Dedbury, 1891.
- Karp, I., C. Muller Kreamer, and S. Levine, eds. *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture*. Washington: Smithsonian Institute, 1992.
- Karp, I., and S. Levine, eds. *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*. Washington: Smithsonian Institute, 1991.
- Royal Gardens, Kew. *Bulletin of Miscellaneous Information*. London: HMSO, 1888-1895.
- Lorimer, D. *Colour, Class and the Victorian: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*. Leicester: Leicester UP, 1978.
- Lumley, R. *The Museum Time-Machine*. London: Routledge, 1988.
- Haast, Julius. Memorandum Concerning the New Museum Building. Canterbury Provincial Council, Session 41, No. 24, 30 May 1874.
- Miller, E. *That Noble Cabinet: A History of the British Museum*. London: Deutsch, 1973.
- Morphy, Howard. "The Original Australians and the Evolution of Anthropology." *Australia in Oxford*. Ed. M. Morphy and E. Edwards. Oxford: Pitt Rivers Museum, 1988. 48-61.
- Mulvaney, D.J. "Patron and Client: The Web of Intellectual Kinship in Australian Anthropology." *Scientific Colonialism, a Cross-cultural Comparison*. Ed. W. Reingold and M. Rothenburg. Washington: Smithsonian Institute P, 1987.
- , and J.H. Calaby. "So Much That Is New": Baldwin Spencer, 1860-1929, a *Biography*. Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1985.
- New Zealand Exhibition, 1865: Reports and Awards of the Jurors and Appendix. Dunedin: Mills, 1866.
- Peterson, N. "'Studying Man and Man's Nature': the History of the Institutionalisation of Aboriginal Anthropology." *Australian Aboriginal Studies* 2 (1990): 3-19.
- Phillips, Coleman. "Civilisation of the Pacific." *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute* 9 (1876): 59-95.
- Pointon, M., ed. *Art Apart: Art Institutions and Ideology Across England and North America from 1800 to the Present*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1994.
- Prescott, R.T.M. *Collections of the Century: The First Hundred Years of the National Museum of Victoria*. Melbourne: National Museum of Victoria, 1954.
- Schneider, W.H. *An Empire for the Masses: The French Popular Image of Africa, 1870- 1900*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood, 1982.

- Scott, John H. "Contribution to the Osteology of the Aborigines of New Zealand and of the Chatham Islands." *Transactions of the New Zealand Institute*, 1893.
- South Australia Museum, Annual Report of the Board of Governors, 1907/08 to 1932/33.
- Stanburg, P. *Mr MacLeay's Celebrated Cabinet*. Sydney: MacLeay Museum, U of Sydney, 1988.
- Stepan, N. *The Ideas of Race in Science: Great Britain 1800-1960*. London: MacMillan, 1982.
- Sterling, E.C. to W. Johnstone, 22 Feb 1909. State Archives of South Australia. GRG 19/11/1.
- Sterling, E.C., to W. Johnstone, 20 Apr 1909. State Archives of South Australia. GRG 19/11/1.
- Stocking, G.W., Jr. *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1985.
- Strahan, R. *Rare and Curious Specimens: An Illustrated History of The Australian Museum, 1827-1979*. Sydney: Australian Museum, 1979.
- Thomson, J.T. "Ethnological Considerations on the Whence of the Maori." *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute* 4 (1871): 23-48.
- Travers, W.T.L., FLS. "On the Changes Effected in the Natural Features of a New Country by the Introduction of Civilised Races." *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute* 2 (1869): 299-330.
- Turrill, W.B. *Joseph Dalton Hooker: Botanist, Explorer and Administrator*. London: Nelson, 1963.
- von Haast, H.F. *The Life and Times of Sir Julius von Haast: Explorer, Geologist, Museum Builder*. Wellington: Avery, 1948.
- Ward, Henry. Letter to Julius Haast. 15 Sep 1878. von Haast Papers. National Library of New Zealand. Series 37, file 146.
- . Letter to Julius Haast. 16 August 1881. von Haast Papers.



HARVEY & PEAK
(By Appointment to the Royal Institution of Great Britain.)

SUCCESSORS TO

W. LADD & CO.,

BEAK STREET, REGENT STREET, W.

Catalogue per post 8d.

LEWIS WRIGHT'S

PROJECTION POLARISCOPE,

Showing axes of Crystals, &c., on a well illuminated and flat field.