

Abstract

This thesis deals with the repatriation of *Toi moko* (tattooed, preserved heads of Māori or Moriori origins) from overseas institutions back to the country of their origin, New Zealand. *Toi moko* are considered to be not only human remains but also cultural artefacts, pieces of native art, which are important for cultural reproduction. The significance of *Toi moko* for Māori culture is explained in accordance with Cultural Memory theory introduced to Social Sciences by the German cultural scientists and Egyptologist Jan Assmann. The aim of this work is to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the meaning of *Toi moko* in Māori society, to summarise its historical development, and to reflect the recent efforts of *Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme* that is undertaken by the *Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa* and funded by New Zealand Government.

Key Words

cultural memory, cultural identity, culture, ethics, Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme, Māori, native art, New Zealand, tattoo, Toi moko