

BAKER, Jade (Ngati Porou, Ngati Awa)

BIO

Ko Jade Tangiāhua Baker taku ingoa
Nō Ngāti Porou me Ngāti Awa ōku iwi
Kia ora koutou.

I hail from the 'Eastern Bay of Plenty sunshine' and currently live in Te Kaha but I also frequent Auckland where most of my research is based at Tamaki Paenga Hira, Auckland War Memorial Museum. I am in my second year of a full time PhD programme and my project builds profiles of museum-based taonga from Ngāti Awa in consultation with our mātauranga-a-iwi or tribal based knowledge. I am particularly interested in researching collectors who were operating in the Bay of Plenty immediately after the Raupatu (Land Confiscations of 1865-66).

ABSTRACT

'Te Ara o te Kuri': Retracing Complex Pathways

While there has been much research examining the social lives and agency of objects, little attention has been directed to understand how collectors impacted upon indigenous communities as they collected in their area. This presentation provides an indigenous perspective of the experiences of one iwi or tribe as they encountered a colonial collector.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, Gilbert Mair (1843-1923) collected in the field nearly three hundred taonga that he deposited under various arrangements in Tamaki Paenga Hira, Auckland War Memorial Museum. Many of these taonga retained their ancestral names and therefore, the potential for iwi researchers to access a continuum of mātauranga-a-iwi or tribal specific knowledge through whakapāpā or genealogy and oral sources of community memory. Reconnecting this information with their source community has revealed how some taonga were not only sites of exchange but also a nexus to other types of entangled relationships.

In examining the antics of Gilbert Mair, this paper argues that colonial collectors operating in Aotearoa contrived their collections as a form of 'inverse diaspora' and obfuscated the impact of their activities upon indigenous communities. It therefore retraces how iwi of the Mataatua tribal region, through presentations, initiated and reciprocated relationships with Mair and how he appropriated not only their taonga, but also their land and women.