

Pia Schölnberger (Hg.)

# Das Museum im kolonialen Kontext

Annäherungen aus Österreich





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Annäherungen  
aus Österreich

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Sabine Eggers, Te Herekiele Herewini,  
Te Arikirangi Mamaku, Constanze Schattke, Katharina Buttinger,  
Matthias Eggers Gorab, Margit Berner

## **Māori and Moriori Human Remains in the Natural History Museum in Vienna Exhumed, Shipped, Traded and Inventoried**

### **Abstract**

Over the past decades, researchers and the media alike have intensively discussed the origins of human remains stored in museums, particularly those from colonial contexts. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, physical anthropology in particular contributed to social and political discrimination and conflicts through the hierarchical classification of humans into races based on the study and collection of human remains. More recently, discussion on the origins of human remains within museums and institutions, mostly initiated by descendants, has led to an increase in provenance research and triggered a growing debate on the colonial mindset of their collectors, but also of the institutions themselves. These processes are visible in the collections of the Natural History Museum in Vienna (NHMW). This essay reports on the ongoing provenance research of the fifty Māori and Moriori ancestors still housed in the Department of Anthropology (DA) in the NHMW. Our research shows that first attempts at repatriation began in 1945, with official requests reaching the NHMW after New Zealand launched its repatriation programme in 2003. Based on the original diaries of Andreas Reischek, the main collector of the human remains from New Zealand, along with archival documentation and published reports, we examine the provenance of this collection at the DA-NHMW. In collaboration with our colleagues in New Zealand, we draw attention to the unlawfulness of this collection. The interdependency of collecting strategies and research methods, as well as colonial politics of the time, are described. On the basis of these facts, the swift repatriation of the Māori

and Moriori ancestors is advocated, especially now that the official repatriation procedures is being dealt with by the political institutions of both countries.

## Introduction

The 250th anniversary of James Cook's arrival in New Zealand reignited the feeling that he and his crew had rather occupied than discovered this region. This date in October 2019 consequently triggered numerous protests in New Zealand, but was addressed at the same time by Austria's Federal Chancellery, in a meeting entitled "Das Museum im kolonialen Kontext" ("The museum in the colonial context") at the Weltmuseum, Vienna. This paper is an outcome of this meeting, fostered by the developments triggered by a recent official request for the repatriation of human remains to New Zealand. We dedicate this article to the descendants of the people whose remains were unlawfully transferred from New Zealand to Vienna under a colonialist and racist mindset.

Centuries ago, during the colonial period in Europe, countless expeditions were undertaken to foreign countries and other continents to gather information and systematically collect material evidence about minerals, plants and animals, as well as the ethnography and anthropology of Indigenous populations. These expeditions were often not only about acquiring scientific knowledge, but also economic ventures.<sup>1</sup> The objects of anthropological and ethnographic research were gathered against the background of salvage anthropology, guided by the idea of researching and collecting material on the last remnants of "vanishing people" and "vanishing races".<sup>2</sup> This means anthropologists and ethnographers of the period believed that people and cultures were disappearing, rather than constantly changing and adapting. Moreover, many of these people were "primitive" in the understanding of European scientists and would be pushed back by progressive colonization and inevitably drowned out by the customs of Western civilization. The colonizers destroyed the environment, houses and cultures of the Indigenous peoples and thus were ultimately the cause of the predicted disappearance of these cultures. This colonialist-racist context is particularly evident in the acquisition of human remains.<sup>3</sup> It is therefore no surprise that the long-cultivated, traditional image of these early "adventurers" as innocent explorers has been necessarily deconstructed over the past decades.

Institutions and scientists provided the explorers with missions and detailed instructions for collection activities.<sup>4</sup> The voyagers collected not only for their private interest and professional experience, but also for other purposes – they often sold their collections to finance subsequent journeys. To compile these collections, cooperation



was necessary with colonial officials, governments, missions, the military, police stations, other institutions of power, as well as collaborators of all sorts. The acquisition of the desired collections was often connected with violence and greed. Not only were ethnographical and cultural artefacts collected, but also human remains such as mummies, skulls, skeletons and hair samples. Moreover, these “research” programmes included instructions for taking measurement data and making plaster casts, films, photographs and sound recordings. It was thought that these multiple recording techniques were necessary for documenting all the features of the supposedly vanishing peoples for science and posterity.<sup>5</sup>

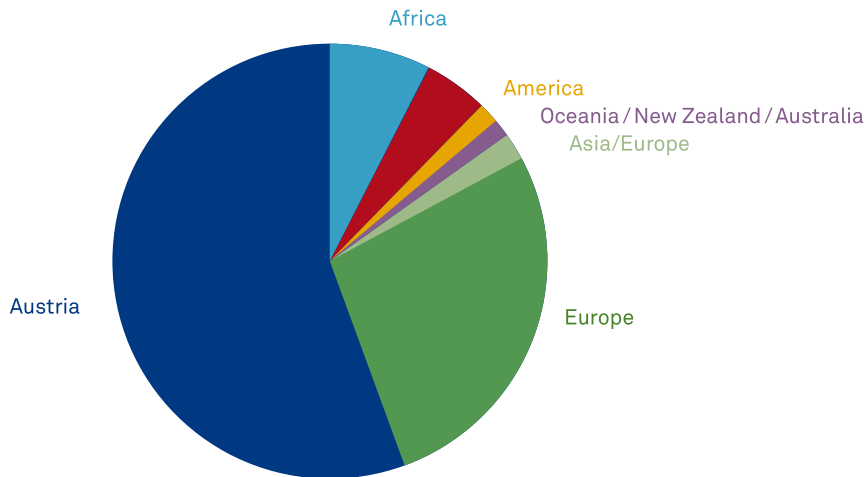
Human skulls were collected for nineteenth century Western museums with a view to describing features typical of different “races”, and comparing and especially classifying them into a hierarchical manner. This research agenda was strongly influenced by prejudice and racial ideologies,<sup>6</sup> which contributed to disastrous racist consequences worldwide.

It is our duty as members of society, and particularly as museum curators and scientists, to deal with this legacy and making reparations.<sup>7</sup> Austria has never been a colonial power per se. However, since it supported colonial mindsets, institutions and countries for decades,<sup>8</sup> it is not surprising to find evidence of looting in the collections and unlawful actions in the archives of (and related to) the Natural History Museum of Vienna (NHMW). Evidence of unlawful events and unethical decisions regarding the human remains of the Indigenous people of New Zealand – the Māori and Moriori<sup>9</sup> ancestors – by the NHMW are the focus of this article.

Using recent results of provenance research, we aim to document and openly disseminate the circumstances under which Indigenous human remains reached the museum and who was involved in these transactions. This will shed light on unlawful occurrences then and today and will be integrated into the approach to be employed in repatriating these remains to the country of origin. With our growing effort in provenance research, we aim to offer the communities of origin and other interested parties all available information possible on the collections of the Department of Anthropology of the NHMW.

### **Structural background to the osteological collection at the Department of Anthropology, Natural History Museum Vienna**

Today, the osteological collection of the Department of Anthropology (DA) at the NHMW contains around 40,000 inventory numbers associated with skeletal remains.



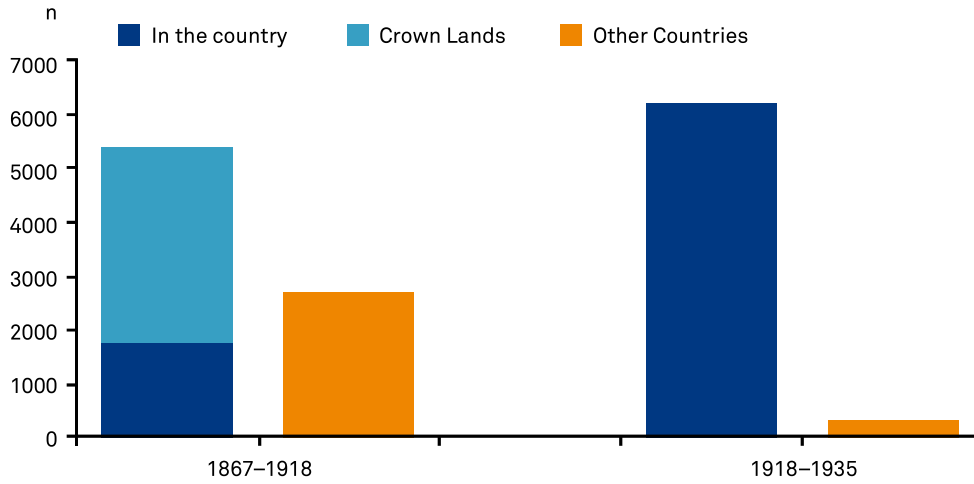
**Fig. 1** Provenance of the osteological collections of the DA-NHMM by contemporary national/geographical borders (inv. nos. 1 to 15,099, acquisition dates 1867–1935)

The majority of the collection consists of human remains retrieved from archaeological excavations, which were handed over to or were excavated by the museum staff. Older parts of the collection originate from burial sites, cemeteries, charnel houses and dissected cadavers. The oldest remains date from the Upper Palaeolithic (circa 35,000 years ago), but most of the collection ranges from the Neolithic period (circa 10,000 years ago) to the nineteenth century.

In order to determine the extent of the collections with colonial acquisition contexts, we examined the first five inventory books from the foundation of the collection in 1870 until 1935, which comprise 15,000 inventory numbers. This gave us an insight into the extent to which collection strategies have changed since the end of the Habsburg monarchy. Figure 1 provides a general overview of the geographical origins of the human remains inventoried during this period. More than three-quarters of the collection is from Austria and Europe – with over half originating from Austria alone.

According to the date of accession (not the date of entry in the inventory) – the period between 1867 and the end of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1918 contains around 8,000 numbers, while the period from 1918 to 1935 includes around 7,000 numbers (see fig. 2). For the period of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, around 22 per cent of the material came from within the modern borders of Austria, with up to 45 per cent from the former crown lands (including occupied territories), and about 35 per cent from other countries. In contrast, between 1918 and 1935 almost all inventory

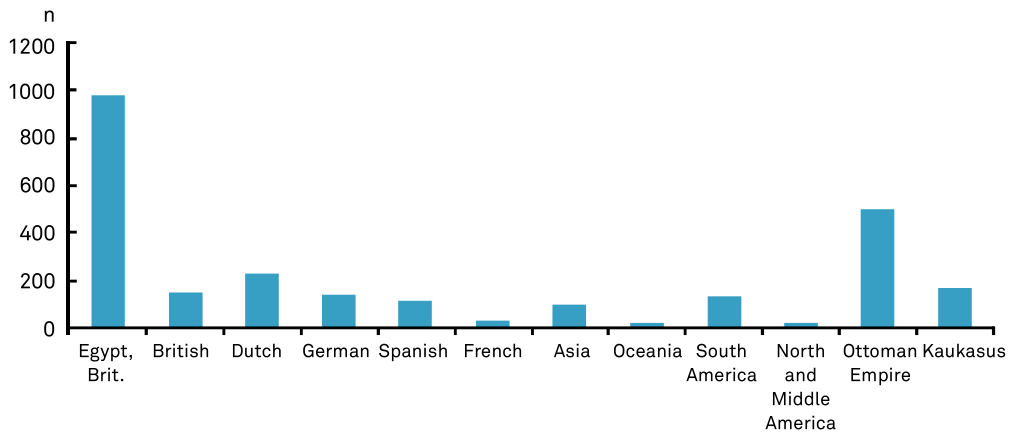
Māori and Moriori Human Remains in the Natural History Museum in Vienna



**Fig. 2** Provenance of the osteological collections of the DA-NHMW by date of acquisition (inv. nos. 1 to 15,099, acquisition dates 1867–1918 and 1918–1935). Key: dark blue – collections from inside contemporary Austria; light blue – collections from the Austro-Hungarian Empire crown lands; orange – collections from other countries.

numbers belong to human remains originating from Austria, while only 3.5 per cent were acquired from other countries.

The distribution by colonial provenance is presented in Figure 3 and shows that human remains were acquired from British, Dutch, German and Spanish colonial areas, with very few from French colonial territories. About 1,000 inventory numbers are related to archaeological excavations carried out under the British mandate in



**Fig 3** Provenance of the osteological collection by colonial or geographical-political context (acquisition date until 1918)

Egypt. There is also a considerable number of inventory numbers from the Ottoman Empire and the Caucasus.

In summary, from a geographical point of view, our analysis reveals that in the early years of the institution, there was an interest at the NHMW in studying not only “races” from colonial territories, but also people and “races” from Europe and the imperial holdings.<sup>10</sup> During the Habsburg Monarchy, there was a strong research interest in peoples and cultures in the south-east, a focus that was to recur during the Nazi era.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, an increasing national and regional focus in the collection strategy can be identified. Unlike ethnographic museums, the DA-NHMW has always placed emphasis on archaeological and prehistoric excavations from the local region.

It is for this reason that by 2021, only two human remain collections from the DA-NHMW had been restituted. Between 2009 and 2011 the DA, along with the Pathological-Anatomical Collections of the Narrenturm – PASIN of the NHMW – and in collaboration with the Austrian Academy of Sciences, repatriated human remains to Australia.<sup>12</sup> The second repatriation refers to the skeletal remains of the couple Klaas and Trooi Pienaar, who were returned to South Africa in 2012 for re-burial.<sup>13</sup>

## **Māori and Moriori human remains in the Department of Anthropology, Natural History Museum of Vienna**

The connections between New Zealand and Austria-(Hungary) are longstanding. In 1857, the same year the Austrian emperor Franz Joseph ordered the construction of the NHMW, the Austrian war frigate *Novara* set off on its two year circumnavigation of the globe, resulting, among many other things, in the acquisition of the first Māori and Moriori human remains for the Austrian crown.<sup>14</sup>

Opened to the public in 1889, the NHMW's art and architecture reflect the fascination with New Zealand, with a romanticized painting of a Māori village and a decorative caryatid pair (see fig. 4) installed during construction.<sup>15</sup> At this time, the gallery with the picture was part of the ethnographical-anthropological section of the museum.<sup>16</sup> The meaning of these images has changed considerably since then, and the DA is committed today to educating the public about the errors and issues with the representations and the contexts within which they were commissioned. Moreover, the DA-NHMW will soon repatriate the human remains unlawfully taken from New Zealand and will continue to foster changes in attitude in the future.

All of the Māori and Moriori ancestral remains still housed in the NHMW at the beginning of 2021 were acquired during the period of the Austro-Hungarian

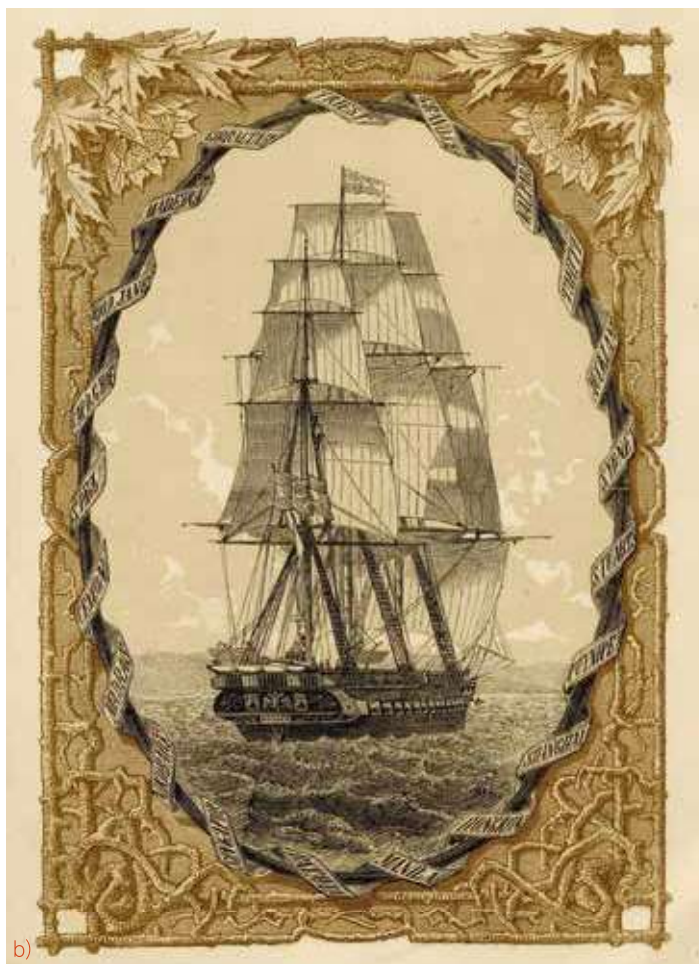


**Fig 4** Romanticized painting of a Māori village (by Alois Schönn, 1826–1897), and a decorative caryatid (by Viktor Tilgner, 1844–1896), representing a tattooed Māori man holding a tewhatewha axe © A. Schumacher, W. Reichmann, respectively.

Monarchy, between 1867 and 1918. According to the entries in the DA inventory book, the majority of the fifty inventory numbers associated with the Māori and Moriori remains were acquired by Andreas Reischek ( $n=35$ ), while others are linked to the Novara expedition ( $n=9$ ), the Habsburg Crown Prince Rudolf ( $n=2$ ), an unknown physician via the Fasana expedition ( $n=1$ ), Dr J.W. Bell ( $n=1$ ), Julius Haast ( $n=1$ ), and finally O. Trautmann ( $n=1$ ) (see fig. 5). These fifty inventory numbers refer to twenty-seven complete skulls, twenty calvaria (skulls without mandibles) and fifteen loose mandibles and maxilla fragments. It is important to note that six inventory numbers are missing, and part of the skull is missing in four cases.

### **A brief historical account of the repatriation requests between 1945 and 2017 regarding the Māori and Moriori human remains housed at the DA-NHMW**

Shortly after World War II, the first requests for repatriation of Māori ancestors were made to different institutions worldwide. Two petitions (1945 and 1946) for the return of thirty-seven “Māori relics unlawfully removed from King Country” were submitted to the NHMW by New Zealand, a British Crown Colony from 1841



**Fig. 5** People who were involved in the collection of the human remains from New Zealand still housed in the NHMW and the frigate Novara:

a) Julius von Haast – AfW-PORT0481

b) frigate Novara – Zoo HB 66.078

c) Ferdinand von Hochstetter – AfW-PORT217

d) Crown Prince Rudolf – wikimedia, Lithographie von Adolf Dauthage, 1880

e) Andreas Reischek – AfW-PORT685. AfW: Archiv für Wissenschaftsgeschichte NHMW; Zoo HB: Zoologische Hauptbibliothek NHMW.

to 1907. New Zealand approached the British Government for support. Initially, the representatives of the British Government partially favoured the request for restitution and discussed the rationale for doing so for a couple of years. They then selectively collected information on the objects originating from New Zealand. One of the people contacted to share information on the Māori collection was Dominik Josef Wölfel, curator of the Ethnographic Museum Vienna at the time. However, this petition did not mention the request for the restitution of human remains put forward by New Zealand. As a result, Wölfel replied that the world-famous collection of “Māori objects” had been protected against the destruction of World War II and would be placed on public display shortly; he did not mention restitution. This correspondence suggest that the British officials trusted the word of the Viennese above that of the Māori, possibly because they were concerned about future restitution requests for objects from New Zealand from British institutions. Communication then ended and no restitution occurred from Austria to New Zealand in the next four decades.<sup>17</sup>

The first human remains were repatriated from Austria to New Zealand only forty years later, in 1985, when curator Hanns Peter (1931–1993) from the Ethnographic Museum Vienna (now the Weltmuseum) personally took the mummy of the Waikato dignitary, Tupahau, back to Auckland.<sup>18</sup> According to the German book *Sterbende Welt*, edited by his son, Andreas Reischek Jr, the New Zealand “explorer” Andreas Reischek wrote in his diary that he knew about the tapu<sup>19</sup> infringement he had committed in looting the Waikato dignitary’s remains and transporting them to Austria in the late nineteenth century. However, in the English version of his book, *Yesterdays in Māoriland*, this part was omitted.<sup>20</sup> Following this, as far as we know, the DA-NHMW has been involved in provenance research and negotiations on repatriation for more than twenty years. It replied to an inquiry from Helen Tunnah of the New Zealand press in 1997 about the existence of the Māori and Moriori remains and the likelihood of the remains being returned to New Zealand by stating that repatriation could not be decided by the Department alone.<sup>21</sup>

In 2003, the New Zealand Government created the Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme in the Te Papa Museum in Wellington. Since then, the remains of around 600 Māori and Moriori ancestors have been repatriated by museums in Paris, London, Gothenburg, Lund and New York, to cite but a few.<sup>22</sup>

In 2013, Te Arapata Hakiwai asked the DA-NHMW to provide information on Māori and Moriori ancestral remains within its collection to help the Te Papa Museum determine future activities. The DA-NHMW requested a year to conduct research, which the Te Papa representatives agreed to. It responded in 2014 with a list of skulls/calvaria and mandibles once taken from New Zealand.<sup>23</sup>



**Fig 6** Visit of the New Zealand delegation to the Department of Anthropology at the NHMW in 2017 © W.Reichmann, Archive DA-NHMW

In November 2014, Rhonda Paku<sup>24</sup> visited the Weltmuseum and the NHMW. Her visit triggered the second repatriation from Austria to New Zealand. In May 2015, the Weltmuseum officially handed over remains of Māori ancestors to the New Zealand delegation. This included a tattooed skull from the Johann Georg Schwarz collection (toi moko), as well as a juvenile mummy, a coffin fragment containing human bones and nine vertebral bones integrated into basketwork from the Reischek collection.<sup>25</sup>

The Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research (BMWF) launched the forMuse Programme in 2008 to support research in and about Austrian museums, which coincided with the establishment of the Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme. Under Maria Teschler-Nicola, the seminal forMuse-project began in 2009 in the DA-NHMW with two main objectives: a) to collect information on the provenance of human remains and the collectors; and b) to provide an educational/expository concept. The biographies of eighty-seven collectors, as well as the remains of 3,000 individuals were to be researched.<sup>26</sup> To date, however, only one overview chapter has been published on this theme.<sup>27</sup> Although the correspondence regarding the New



Zealand collection is available to the authors of the present paper, they do not contain detailed results from the forMuse project as a whole, nor specifically on the Māori and Moriori collection.

In 2017, discussion between New Zealand and the DA-NHMW was resumed following a request from a delegation of the Te Papa Tongarewa Museum to visit Vienna. The aim of the visit was to pay respects to the ancestors. Te Herekiele Herewini visited the DA-NHMW accompanied by three other Māori and Moriori representatives (see fig. 6). At that time, the new curator (Sabine Eggers) at the DA and team invited guests from the University of Vienna and the Weltmuseum for the presentation of the programme. All participants felt very touched when the elders invited us to accompany them through the ceremony dedicated to their ancestors. After the New Zealand delegation presented the Repatriation Programme of the Te Papa Museum to the invited guests and the NHMW staff, friendly discussions between the New Zealand delegation and the curators of the DA ensued. We all agreed to collaborate in provenance research.

This marked a new start in the provenance research of the human skeletal remains in the DA-NHMW. We aim to collaborate closely with groups asking for repatriation and researchers with different expertise to build the most accurate picture possible of the history of the collections and the collectors.

Novel provenance research about the Māori and Moriori human remains commenced in 2017.

As of July 2021, the New Zealand collection in the DA-NHMW consists of fifty inventory numbers (including three that were originally housed in the Pathological-Anatomical Collections of the Narrenturm – PASIN, which belongs to the DA-NHMW). The in-depth report of the provenance of the Māori and Moriori ancestral remains is the subject of a forthcoming work. Below, we provide a preliminary report on the research started from scratch in 2017.

As already mentioned when discussing the structural background to the DA's osteological collection, we began our research on the provenance of the New Zealand remains with the DA inventory books, along with archival documents from the NHMW, the National Library and the Weltmuseum. This documentation was supplemented by published reports and the original diaries of Andreas Reischek. One of the authors (Margit Berner), together with Ildikó Cazan and Gabriele Weiss (from the Weltmuseum), provided copies of these diaries, as the originals are curated by Stephan Weigl at the Oberösterreichisches Landesmuseum in Linz. To our knowledge, this is the first time the original diaries have been used to reconstruct the provenance of the Māori and Moriori ancestors collected by Reischek. This is of fundamental importance, since the books based on these diaries were romanticized by Reischek's son, excluding direct evidence of the exact circumstances of the collection and the ethical issues involved.

It was not easy to reconstruct Reischek's account of collecting human remains in New Zealand. Painstakingly, a team of six researchers (Sabine Eggers and five students) worked through the 1,500 pages of handwritten texts and lists in self-taught English and German, lacking punctuation, grammar and paragraphs, to build a database on the provenance of each Māori and Moriori ancestor from his collection. In some cases, we found detailed evidence of Reischek's looting of human remains (sometimes along with grave goods) from sacred places, including the tactics he employed to evade Māori surveillance, and how he risked his life while consciously breaking tapus. Reischek rarely documented from which *iwi* or tribe the remains were taken or the position he found them in.

The provenance research on the Māori and Moriori remains collected by those other than Andreas Reischek is based on the archival material housed in the NHMW and other documents. In various cases, the identification and provenance of certain inventory numbers was hindered because they were not specified in detail or the items were missing. The reasons for this include misspelling, erroneous numbering, lack of documentation, uncontrolled transport between different locations and institutions and the effects of war on collections and archives. Therefore, there is still much to do to unravel more details of the circumstances in which these human remains became part of the NHMW.

### **How Andreas Reischek obtained his collection: a short summary of his unlawful collecting practices**

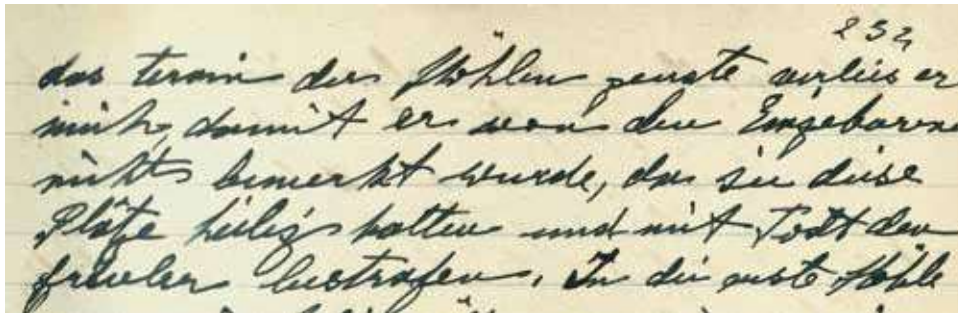
Sent to Christchurch to help prepare an exhibition at the Canterbury Museum, Andreas Reischek (1845–1902), an Austrian hunter, taxidermist and autodidact, was a New Zealand enthusiast. This is attested to by the fact that he used his own funds to stay much longer than planned in New Zealand (from 1877 to 1889) and that he often described how concerned he was about the fate of some of the rare, native animals, and about the Indigenous people and their culture.<sup>28</sup> He used the salvage anthropology argument of “the vanishing paradise” to collect as many objects and as much information as possible for himself and the Austrian crown.<sup>29</sup> However, by treating human remains no differently than mineral, plant or faunal material, Reischek reflects the colonialist, classificatory and racist mindsets governing the creations of anthropological collections worldwide.<sup>30</sup> During his stay in New Zealand, he not only hunted and collected vast quantities of animals, plants and mineralogical and geological specimens, but also collected ethnographic objects and details, as well as Māori and Moriori ancestral remains. Whilst early publications, especially those of his son

Day of Islands 1855.  
Māori Schädel gesammelt aus Höhlen,  
Felspalten, hohlen Bäumen, Kampf-  
plätzen und Küchenmiedens, Es ist  
eine der schwierigsten Aufgaben, da  
alle diese Plätze Tapu heilig sind  
und sie Niemand betreten darf od[er] kann  
ohne von den Eingeborenen bemerkt  
zu werden, welche von frühem  
Morgen bis abends herum streifen  
besonders wenn sie Mistrauen hegen

**Fig 7** Entry in Reischek's diary "Sammlungen": Māori Schädel gesammelt aus Höhlen, Felspalten, hohlen Bäumen, Kampfplätzen und Küchenmiedens, Es ist eine der schwierigsten Aufgaben, da alle diese Plätze Tapu, heilig, sind und sie Niemand betreten darf od[er] kann, ohne von den Eingeborenen bemerkt zu werden, welche von frühem Morgen bis abends herum streifen besonders wenn sie Mistrauen hegen. "Māori skulls from caves, crevices, hollow trees, battle places, and kitchen middens. It is one of the most difficult tasks, since all these places are tapu, sacred and nobody should or could enter them without being caught by the Indigenous, who roam around day and night especially when suspicious."<sup>32</sup>

Andreas Reischek Jr (1892–1965), romanticized his encounters, travels and collecting activities,<sup>31</sup> our research using his original diaries sheds new light on his unethical activities.

Excerpts from his diaries (see figs. 7 to 9) indicate that not only did he steal human remains from a wide variety of areas, but he also knew that he was infringing tapus



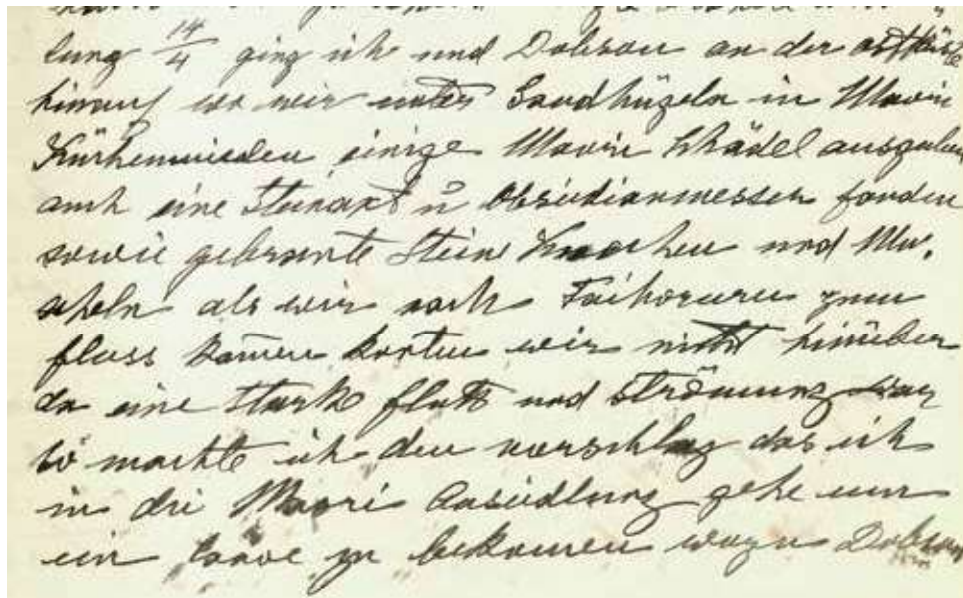
**Fig 8** Entry in Reischek's diary, August 1879: Nachdem der Informant/Komplize „[...] das Terrain der Höhlen ze..te verlies er mich, damit er von den Eingeborenen nichts bemerkt wurde, da sie diese Plätze heilig halten und mit Todt den Frevler bestrafen.“ After the informant/accomplice "[...] showed [me] the cave he left me alone, so that he would not be caught by the indigenous people, since for them these places were sacred and the sinner would be punished with death."<sup>33</sup>

and that this would result in severe punishment or death should he be caught. These excerpts also demonstrate the lengths he went to in order to rob the Māori of their ancestors in spite of the warnings of his companion (not mentioned by name) and the understanding that this was in violation of Māori beliefs.

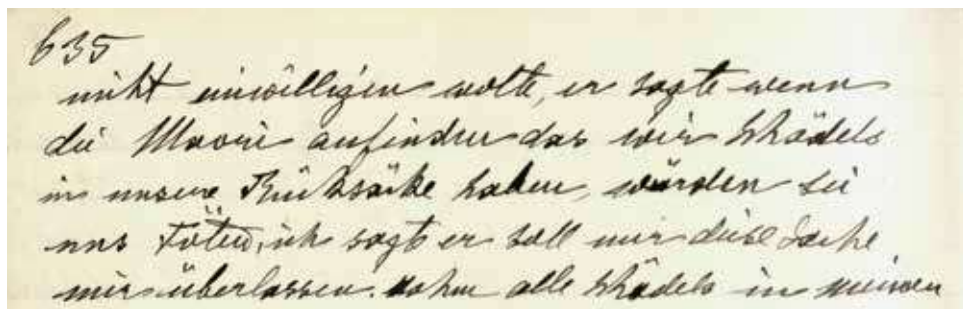
Time and again Reischek was warned by assistants or informants who accompanied him, possibly under coercion, that raiding Māori holy places for human remains was punishable by death. And yet, without scruples or shame, he took sacred skulls and looted graves.

There is also clear evidence that Reischek exchanged six pillaged skulls for different Indigenous cultural artefacts, as can be seen in his collection list.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, it is also evident from various sources that he betrayed the indigenous people who trusted him. One example was King Tawhiao, who according to the description in Reischek's son's books, allowed Reischek, as the first white man to be given this honour, to explore the Māori kingdom and to hunt different species of birds.<sup>36</sup> The books also claim that Reischek was named the honorary chief Ihaka Reiheke Te Kiwi Rangatira Autiria, "Andreas Reischek, the Kiwi, Emperor of Austria" by King Tawhiao.<sup>37</sup> However, it is clear this generosity was not reciprocated, as Reischek wildly transgressed the freedoms granted by the king. He did not restrict his activities to hunting birds – instead he robbed that which was most sacred to the Māori, their dead.

When Reischek finally returned to Vienna in 1889, the acting director of the NHMW had no interest in his collections, nor in hiring him. Because Reischek wished "his" New Zealand collection to stay in "his" beloved Austria, he refused to sell



Am 14<sup>ten</sup> ging ich und Dobson an der Ostküste  
hin auf wo wir unter Sandhügeln in Māori  
Küchenmieden einige Māori Schädel ausgruben  
auch eine Steinaxt u[nd] Obsidianmesser fanden  
sowie gebrante Steine Knochen und Muscheln  
als wir nach Fairbairns Fluss zu  
fluss kamen konnten wir nicht hindern  
da eine starke flut und Strömung war  
so machte ich den vorschlag das ich  
in die Māori Ansiedlung gehen  
ein laube zu bekommen wegen Dobson



635  
nicht unwillig war, er sagte wenn  
die Māori aufinden das wir Schädel  
in unsere Rucksäcke haben, würden sie  
uns töten, ich sagte er soll mir diese Sache  
mir überlassen. nahm alle Schädel in meine

**Fig 9** Entry in Reischek's diary, East-Coast Wangarei, 14 April 1883:

[...] ging ich und Dobson an der Ostküste hinauf wo wir unter Sandhügeln in Māori Küchenmieden einige Māori Schädel ausgruben auch eine Steinaxt u[nd] Obsidianmesser fanden sowie gebrante Steine Knochen und Muscheln [...] er [Dobson] sagte wenn die Māori aufinden das wir Schädel in unsere Rucksäcke haben, würden sie uns töten, ich sagte er soll mir diese Sache mir überlassen. nahm alle Schädel [...].<sup>34</sup>

"[...] I and Dobson went to the east coast where we dug out some Māori skulls, an obsidian stone axe as well as burned stones, bones and shells out of the sand [...] [Dobson] said that if the Māori find out that we have skulls in our backpacks they would kill us, I replied he should let me handle that. Took all skulls [...]."

it to museums in Berlin or London.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, it was only when the Austrian banker Baron Carl von Auspitz donated a generous amount of money to Reischek, that the contraband collection from New Zealand reached the NHMW.<sup>39</sup>

### **The provenance of the Māori and Moriori human remains associated with expeditions and collectors other than Reischek**

Amongst the Māori and Moriori collection at the DA-NHMW, nine inventory numbers are related to the Novara expedition (1857–1859), which was the first Austrian circumnavigation. It had political, military-colonial, economic as well as scientific goals.<sup>40</sup> Karl von Scherzer was the scientific director of the expedition, while Ferdinand von Hochstetter was in charge of enlarging the skull collection of the NHMW.<sup>41</sup> Famous naturalists such as Charles Darwin, Charles Lyell, Ernst Haeckel, and Carl Philipp von Martius influenced the scientific model of the Novara expedition, which was overseen by the Austrian Academy of Sciences.<sup>42</sup> In the zoology section, the instructions were to collect as many skulls as possible from different human “races”.<sup>43</sup> This aspect of the mission was primarily undertaken by Dutch, French and German military and hospital physicians, although officers from Austrian embassies and consulates also participated in the collection and trade of human remains.<sup>44</sup>

Despite comprehensive research on the Novara collections, the exact circumstances under which the human remains from New Zealand were collected and transferred to the Novara expedition is unknown. The majority of the Novara skull collection derives from acquisitions and museum donations.<sup>45</sup> Emil Zuckerkandl (1849–1910), an Austro-Hungarian anatomist, was the anthropologist in charge of the morphological descriptions of the human remains brought by the Novara expedition to Vienna. He stated that six skulls from New Zealand Indigenous peoples were taken from the King’s Cave near Auckland by the explorer Charles F. Heaphy, the physician Carl Frank Fischer and the Reverend Arthur G. Purchas. Two further skulls belonging to individuals from the Chatham Islands were acquired by George Bennett, director of the Australian Museum, and by the Australian scientist Edward S. Hill.<sup>46</sup> There are inconsistencies in the number of New Zealand skulls associated with the Novara expedition, because the DA-NHMW holds at least ten inventory numbers, not eight as outlined by Zuckerkandl. However, already in 1875, Zuckerkandl pointed out many issues with this collection, not only referring to the number of skulls, but also to missing mandibles and mistakes in the numbering of the remains.<sup>47</sup>

Seven further inventory numbers are associated with items from New Zealand, acquired or donated to the NHMW by different individuals. They refer to the following:

Julius von Haast (1822–1887), a German professor of geology at Canterbury College and founder of the Canterbury Museum in New Zealand, donated two complete skeletons from this museum, which were transported from Sydney to Austria on the frigate *Helgoland* in 1880. One of the skeletons had been taken from a sand mound in Waimarama, and the other from a crevice in Papanui.<sup>48</sup> From these skeletons, only one skull is still present at the DA-NHMW. The whereabouts of the missing remains still needs further research.

The Austrian Crown Prince Rudolf (1858–1889) possessed two crania from New Zealand, which ended up in the DA-NHMW. He possibly got them as a present from Julius von Haast, but that has to be further explored.<sup>49</sup> One inventory number is associated with a skull handed over by an English physician to the Fasana expedition sometime between 1871 and 1889.<sup>50</sup> Further research needs to be done in order to confirm the circumstances under which this skull was acquired. Further research is also needed to clarify circumstances as well as the biographies of the people involved in the collection of the following two skulls: one skull was brought by the steersman, O. Trautmann, along with a little clay idol.<sup>51</sup> Finally, one last skull was excavated from a battlefield near Wanganui by Dr J.W. Bell, which he donated to the NHMW in 1884.<sup>52</sup>

## Scientific analyses and exhibitions of the New Zealand collection of the DA-NHMW

During the roughly 150 years that the Māori and Moriori remains have been at the NHMW, they have been craniometrically studied, compared to other populations, and/or 3D-scanned.<sup>53</sup> Some of them have also been exhibited. After the *Novara* anchored in Trieste, part of its collection was exhibited in the Craniological Department of the Novara Museum in the Augarten in Vienna from 1860<sup>54</sup> to 1864, where it was open to the public three times a week. Thereafter, it was transferred to the Museum of Anatomy at the University of Vienna.<sup>55</sup> According to an old catalogue of the Anthropology Exposition of the NHMW, skulls from New Zealand were exhibited again between 1978 and 1999 in the “race gallery” (“Rassensaal”), in which humankind was presented in a racist way that assumed that there were fixed categories of race.<sup>56</sup>

After ferocious public protest, the exhibition was closed for more than a decade, and only reopened in 2013 with a focus on hominin evolution, only showing replicas of long-extinct human lineages.<sup>57</sup> The current exhibition avoids violating individual dignity

and aims to present correct approaches to dealing with sensitive collections of human remains.<sup>58</sup> The anthropological collection housed at the DA-NHMW, consisting almost exclusively of *Homo sapiens*, is only marginally addressed in the public exposition, although some of the guided tours of the depots of the museum put selected visitors in visual contact with particular collections of human remains. However, it must be stressed here that the human remains from New Zealand have not been visible to anyone since 2017, respecting the will of the Māori and Moriori descendants.

A critical discussion based on state-of-the-art research on the sensitive collections of the remains of about 3,000 individuals associated with colonial contexts and still housed in the DA-NHMW is being carried out on parts of it: a) within the project “Contexts of Colonial Acquisition in the Natural History Museum, Vienna”, supported by the Federal Ministry of the Republic of Austria, Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport; b) according to requests for provenance research and repatriation put forward by communities of origin, and c) in parts, proactively. Since provenance research is a growing demand and duty, transparent and open access to the collection’s origins as well as new positions for researchers with this expertise would ameliorate communication and collaboration among people of diverse cultures.

## Conclusion

The unlawful provenance of the Reischek collection of Māori and Moriori human remains housed in the DA-NHMW is irrefutable. This, along with other factors, leads us to fully favour and support the repatriation of these human remains to New Zealand. Although we are currently not able to describe in detail the contexts associated with Māori and Moriori human remains collected via the expeditions or collectors other than Reischek, we assume that their circumstances were similar. Further research is needed to confirm or (perhaps) refute this assumption.

Furthermore, it is crucial to remember that for the Māori and Moriori, living in close proximity to the ancestors is an important part of identity. Thus, the significance of the collection of human remains from New Zealand is much greater for the Māori and the Moriori than it is, or was, for science. This is evidenced by the fact that this collection has only rarely been investigated by scientists in the past 150 years. Furthermore, studies that could theoretically be carried out in future would not provide significant new information. Bioarchaeological investigations on this collection are meaningless, because there is no contextual archaeological information, and DNA or isotope studies are impossible on account of ethical concerns with sampling expressed by the Te Papa Repatriation Programme.



Therefore, we favour and fully support repatriation of all Māori and Moriori human remains still housed in the DA-NHMW to New Zealand. At this time, the repatriation process is being promoted and discussed in the New Zealand and Austrian governments, and we are hopeful that swift repatriation will result.

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  - 8 See Walter Sauer in this volume.
  - 9 The Māori originated from Polynesia and came in several waves to mainland New Zealand in the fourteenth century. They developed their own distinctive culture, language, mythology and art traditions. Moriori are the early Māori who settled on the Chatham Islands; Richard Walters et al., in *Journal of World Prehistory* 30 (2017): 351–76, doi:10.1007/s10963-017-9110-y.
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- 58 *Ibid.*, 23.