

Maori artefacts overseas

The only extensive catalogue of Maori artefacts held overseas has recently been published by the Auckland Institute and Museum's assistant director, Mr D Simmons.

The unique publication gives comprehensive descriptions and photographs of what is believed to be 99 per cent of the Maori art and tools currently in American and Canadian museums.

Involving almost nine years research, the catalogue has been published with the assistance of a New Zealand Lottery Board grant of \$20,000.

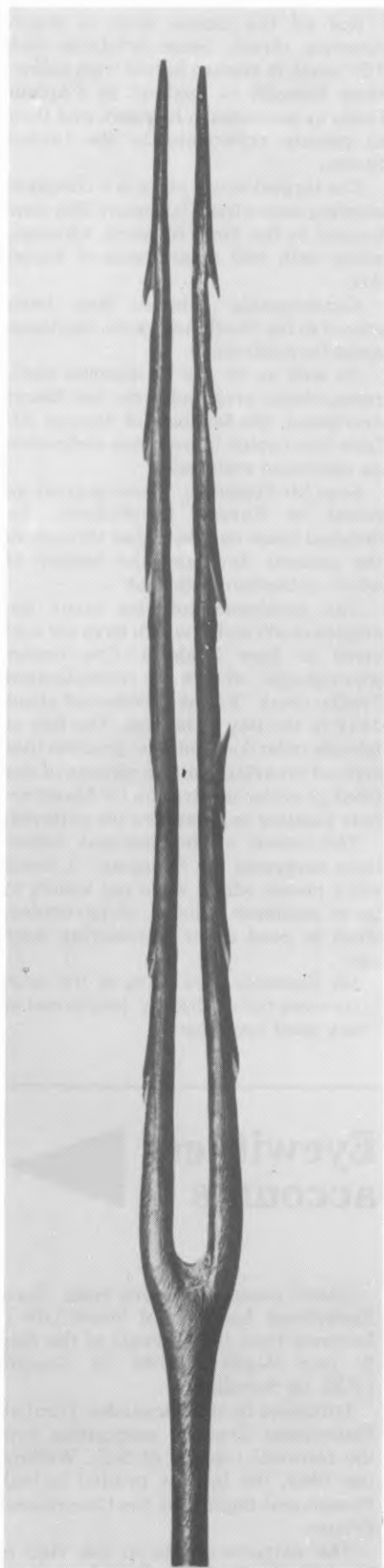
In work at present are catalogues detailing artefacts held in museums in the United Kingdom and Europe.

Primarily for the benefit of the Maori people, the detailed descriptions and identifications in the North American catalogue have helped Maori tribes to regain part of their lost culture. As art styles changed over the centuries, much of the knowledge was not passed on. The catalogue, says Mr Simmons, gives Maori artists original works to

refer to and to gain inspiration from.

Mr Simmons recorded the artefacts during four months travel in the United States and Canada, visiting museum and private collections, tracking down some 2500 items. The finished book contains 300 plates, with 600 illustrations, some of which are in colour. All that is known about a particular piece is given; style, description, what part of New Zealand it came from and when, and where it is now.

Mr Simmons says much of the Maori art in the United States is housed in East Coast Museums. In the late 18th century, early traders from Massachusetts on the 'tea run' to China took back hundreds of items when they left the Bay of Islands ports. In Salem, Massachusetts, for instance the Essex Institute was set up in 1792 to record the voyages of traders. Enterprising men soon persuaded ships' crews to bring back curiosities from around the world. Some of the Maori items are still identified with latitude and longitude.



A Maori war spear, dating back to about 1830. Part of the Fuller collection in the United States, and documented in a catalogue of Maori artefacts published with the assistance of the New Zealand Lottery Board.

Early Images of the Maori

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