Ethics and Resources of Research on Traditional Therapies in Aotearoa/New Zealand

Essential concepts and strategies in regard to health and healing from a Maori point of view will be discussed. Hereby the issue of Maori health can not be seen apart from the social and cultural changes and the extensive land alienation with loss of traditional economy that followed the process of colonisation. An overview on some aspects of new innovative health programmes using empowerment strategies and a culture-based philosophy of health and healing will be given. Traditional knowledge of healing has never died, but the present revival evokes a discussion of who will control this knowledge, which has been generated by the local Maori group. In regard to anthropological field research some important issues like ethics in field work, the protection of Indigenous Property Rights or the problem of access to ancestral land used for collecting medicinal plants, will be discussed. The paper is based on several ethnographic field studies which were conducted between 1989-2001 on the North Island of New Zealand, granted by the Austrian Science Fund.