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FOR EVOLUTION'S SAKE: THE COLLECTION AND EXCHANGE OF KŌIWI TANGATA FROM TE WAIPOUNAMU

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Introduction

The title of this paper 'For Evolution's Sake' was born out of the research currently being carried out by the Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme based at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. The Programme was established in 2003 by the Government, with the support of tangata whenua, to return the human remains (kōiwi tangata and Toi moko) of Māori and Moriori from overseas institutions with the ultimate goal of returning them to their whenua and descendant communities. This paper discusses the collection and exchange or trade of kōiwi tangata from Te Waipounamu.

The collection in context

Considering the historical context allows us to better comprehend the realities of the collection of kōiwi tangata from Te Waipounamu and indeed the whole of New Zealand. It is important to consider some of the key reasons why human remains have been (and continue to be) collected, preserved, studied and exhibited.

The Renaissance period, from the 14th-17th centuries, brought with it a scientific revolution which emphasised the importance of method, practical experience, observation and empirical evidence (Dear 2001; Boas Hall 1994). As a result, repositories were created for the safe-keeping of scientific evidence including human remains. Cabinets of curiosities were one of the first repositories established and are considered to have been a precursor to the modern day museum (MacGregor 2007; Mauries 2002). In addition medical schools around Europe, and later the United Kingdom, began to form their own collections of

kōiwi tangata and from 1595 many also established anatomy theatres where dissections could be witnessed by students and the public (MacGregor 2007).

During its prime, phrenology influenced wider science and society in many ways (Livianos-Aldana *et al.* 2007); therefore it is not surprising that it was also a significant factor in the collection and exchange of human remains. The so-called science of phrenology was pioneered by Dr. Franz Joseph Gall who proposed that certain areas of the brain were responsible for certain mental faculties (Quigley 2001; van Wyhe 2002). Gall further proposed that if an individual was well-developed or lacking in a certain mental area (such as benevolence or wit) bumps or hollows would be apparent on the corresponding surface of the skull. From the early 1800s phrenologists demanded human skulls and casts for their investigations, and most individuals and phrenological societies began to establish collections of kōiwi tangata for research and exhibitions (Turnbull 2001). Gall himself had a large collection of human crania, and is said to have been “such an assiduous collector that the Viennese used to specify in their wills that their crania should be protected from his researches” (Quigley 2001:106). However phrenology quickly lost much of its popularity and was soon dismissed as quackery and a pseudo-science (Turnbull 2001). As a result, many kōiwi tangata once collected and used for phrenological studies were relegated to the collections of museums, such as a Māori skull (B.3508) from Otago which was sold by the phrenologist Professor Hume to the Australian Museum, Sydney in 1884.

‘Social Darwinist’ theories of evolution also played an important role in the collection and exchange of human remains during the 19th century. According to Creed and Hoorn (2001) by the 1860s, “many European museums and universities had become the site of scientific work focused on re-interpreting the nature of human origins in the light of evolutionary theories” (p. xvi). Widespread assent was given to these theories at the time, and, accordingly, kōiwi tangata from around the world were utilised for the development of racial hierarchies (Quigley 2001). Samuel George Morton, whose work is said to have sired scientific racism in the United States of America, is one well-known Social Darwinist who collected and utilised kōiwi tangata for this purpose (Dain 2002; Fredrickson 1972; Quigley 2001).

General curiosity was another common reason for the collection of kōiwi tangata, along with the desire of settlers and military men to send ‘curios’ from exotic lands to their patrons on the other side of the world (Creed & Hoorn

2001). As we shall see, all of the above factors are evident when we look at the collection and exchange of kōiwi tangata from Te Waipounamu.

The beginnings of the collection and trade in New Zealand

The collection of kōiwi tangata from Te Waipounamu, and in fact New Zealand, began with Captain Cook's first voyage aboard the *Endeavour*. On 17 January 1770 Joseph Banks, the famous botanist, and Cook were each offered 'the bone of the forearm' of a person recently deceased, which they both accepted (Edwards 1999:102). Three days later, while still anchored at Tōtaranui, Banks traded a pair of old white linen drawers for the preserved head of a boy aged about 14 or 15 years old (Beaglehole 1962). This trade took place as a consequence of Banks's request for proof that Māori consumed the flesh of their enemies. According to Banks and Cook, a few days after the request the same man returned to their ship with at least four preserved Māori heads/Toi moko. The trade, however, took place reluctantly, as Banks records: "...I enforc'd my threats by shewing Him a musquet on which he chose to part with the head..." (Hooker 1896: 248). During Cook's second voyage on the *Resolution* in November 1773, while at Queen Charlotte Sound, Lieutenant Richard Pickersgill obtained an unpreserved head (Thomas and Berghof 2000) in exchange for a single nail (Sparrman 1953).

We have been unable to locate any of the remains collected from these voyages, though it is likely that the heads collected by both Banks and Pickersgill were given to the surgeon and anatomist John Hunter of the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow (Thomas and Berghof 2000). In 1806 Hunter's collection was moved to what is now the Royal College of Surgeons, London. In 1941 the Royal College of Surgeons building was bombed and unfortunately the mummification series, which included Toi moko, was completely destroyed (Fforde 2005).

The Toi moko trade

Toi moko continued to leave this country from the time of Cook's first voyage, and the first Toi moko recorded to have been sold in Sydney was taken there by one William Tucker. Tucker, a sealer and convicted thief, is believed to have stolen the Toi moko from somewhere in or around Foveaux Strait in May 1810 (Entwisle 2005). In approximately 1814 Tucker returned to New Zealand and settled at Whareakeake where he is said to have built a house and lived

with a Māori woman. He also began to trade other curios with Europeans who called into the area (Entwisle 2005).

Though records regarding Toi moko identify Te Waipounamu as the place where the first trade occurred, it was at the opposite end of New Zealand in the Bay of Islands that the more extensive trade of heads for muskets and gun powder, and vice versa, took place from the early 1800s (Cruise 1823). Kapiti Island followed the Bay of Islands as a key port in which to obtain these ‘curios’ from the mid to late 1820s, and quite possibly up until the 1840s (Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme 2010). Recent research has shown that many of the Toi moko traded from Kapiti during this time are likely to have come from Te Waipounamu. Many battles between Māori of the upper half of the South Island and Ngāti Toa, along with their allies, took place between about 1827 and 1834 with devastating effects in Te Tau Ihu (the upper portion of the South Island; Crosby 1999; Ballara 2003). However, Te Waipounamu was also a key port for the trade. In the 1820s Sydney traders would call there for spars, potatoes and “valuable ‘curios’, particularly preserved tattooed Māori heads” (Evison 1993: 31). And in early 1833, Tūhawaiki is recorded as selling 10 heads from Murihiku to American ships for “two muskets, or a keg of gunpowder, a piece” (Evison 1997: 64).

In Te Papa’s Wāhi Tapu there is at least one Toi moko likely to have come from the upper half of the South Island. Information associated with this tupuna, which was repatriated from Scarborough Museum, England, in 1998 states that Richard Bayley Mann, captain of the *Eleanor*, obtained the Toi moko via trade from Kapiti Island in 1834. Shipping records confirm that the *Eleanor* was indeed in the area at the time (McNab 1913). Further information indicates that the “Chief had been fighting on the island of New Zealand, by thear called the Main...” The passage goes on to say that “he with eight others were invited to dine with an old chief of Entry Island, in Cooks Strait” after which he and the others were killed (Meadley 1890: 122).

The Toi moko trade continued freely in New Zealand up until 1831 when a ban, followed by an Act of Parliament, was imposed by Governor Darling of New South Wales on the masters and crews of vessels trading between the colony (NSW) and New Zealand.

The collection and exchange of kōiwi tangata from Te Waipounamu

The export of Toi moko dramatically decreased after the ban, however a few are known to have been traded after that time. Two Toi moko, for example, were obtained in early 1840 from a missionary brig in the Bay of Islands by Captain Charles Wilkes (Wilkes 1844). Nevertheless, after 1831 Toi moko

became a rare trade commodity. Coincidentally it was around this same time that the collection and exchange of kōiwi tangata began in earnest as people all over the world began to amass large collections. In those times kōiwi tangata belonging to Māori and other 'exotic' or 'primitive' peoples were in particularly high demand (Creed and Hoorn 2001). Research to date indicates that kōiwi tangata from Te Waipounamu ended up in institutions around the world including England, Ireland, Germany, Austria, Australia, Italy, France and Sweden.

A range of different people have collected and exchanged kōiwi tangata, from amateur curio-hunters to well-respected scholars. The following individuals, for example, are known to have donated kōiwi tangata from Te Waipounamu to the University of Edinburgh, Scotland: A.M. McNab, who sent one cranium from Riverton Beach; W. Riddell, who sent two skulls from Chasland's Mistake; O.H. Wilde, who sent a cranium from near the Aparima River; Dr. John Adolphus Laing, who sent a skull from Kaiapoi, and was a registered medical practitioner for a time in Akaroa (Wright-St Clair 2003); S.J. Aarons, who sent a skeleton with provenance only to the South Island; and Robert V. Fulton, who sent a cranium from near the Waikouaiti River (Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme 2010). Several of these men were former students of the University of Edinburgh, which may explain why they sent the kōiwi tangata there. Another individual, Dr. William Will, had also studied at the University of Edinburgh but chose to send the skeleton of a Māori female he dug up from near the Catlin River to Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland in 1889. Dr. Will is known to have been living in the Dunedin area at that time, working as a medical practitioner (Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme 2010; Wright-St Clair 2003).

Sir Julius von Haast

Haast arrived in New Zealand in December 1858. At the time New Zealand was preoccupied with finding coal as a source of fuel for the colony, and geologists were in great demand (Nathan 2009; Thode 2009). After initial explorations with Ferdinand Hochstetter, Haast went on to undertake an extensive geological survey of the Nelson area, and in 1861 he became Canterbury's provincial geologist (Burrows 2005; Fisher 1993; von Haast 1948). Records indicate that Haast came across a number of kōiwi tangata *in situ* during his explorations. Site record forms reveal that Haast was the first to investigate burial sites at Shag River (F40/4), Redcliffs Flat (M36/24) and Moa Bone Point Cave (M36/25), from which place he took several skulls and a fully articulated skeleton to the Canterbury Museum (Haast 1874). Unfortunately the majority of Haast's reports make little mention of the kōiwi tangata found. Haast was the

founding director of the Canterbury Museum from 1868, and when he moved into his office there he is said to have taken a number of specimens from his explorations and early exchanges (Sheets-Pyenson 1988a).

Haast sent a number of kōiwi tangata from Te Waipounamu to various individuals and institutions all over the world (Burrage 2001; Maling 1990; Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme 2010; Sheets-Pyenson 1988a; Sheets-Pyenson 1988b). In recognition of the contributions he had made to the collections of the Austrian Emperor Archduke Rudolph, Haast was conferred with a knighthood in 1875 allowing him to style himself ‘von Haast’ (Beust 1879; von Haast 1948). Haast donated at least one skull to the Hessian State Museum in Darmstadt, Germany. And in his paper entitled ‘Moas and Moa Hunters: Address to the Philosophical Institute of Canterbury’, Haast described how he had also sent two Māori skulls from some sandhills near Selwyn to Professor Dr. C.G. Carus, the President of the Imperial German Academy of Naturalists, in 1868 (Haast 1871). Haast is also associated with several crania donated to the French naturalist Quatrefages (Quatrefages & Hamy 1882). Furthermore, archival correspondence shows that Haast was also involved in various exchanges with Oxford University whilst Director of the Canterbury Museum (Rolleston 1871). Finally, we also know that Haast sent kōiwi tangata found “on the north part of the eastern coast of the island” to the Gothenburg Natural History Museum, Sweden, in 1876 (Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme 2010).

Interestingly, Haast also engaged other men to collect kōiwi tangata for him. William Rolleston, who owned a station at Rakaia Forks, for example, is known to have collected both Māori and Moriori kōiwi tangata for Haast. Haast later sent these kōiwi tangata to Professor George Rolleston at Oxford University (Rolleston 1871). Frederick Huth Meinertzhagen, of Waimarama, also obtained five skeletons and 13 crania for Haast (Meinertzhagen 1875-9). In 1876 these kōiwi tangata were sent by Haast to Italy, Sweden, Austria, and Germany (Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme 2010). We are currently undertaking further research into Haast’s activities and hope to eventually identify all of the kōiwi tangata distributed by him that are still awaiting their homecoming.

Haast is said to have been determined to obtain a Toi moko for Canterbury Museum’s collection but found this to be a difficult task. Eventually, after many enquiries, in early 1873 one Toi moko arrived from England, sent from either the Duke of Buccleugh or Lord Kinniard (von Haast 1948). This Toi

moko was placed on display in the Museum until Haast was warned to place it out of sight due to Māori sensitivities (von Haast 1948).

National and international changes

Much has evolved over the last 240 years since Joseph Banks traded his used pair of white linen drawers for the preserved head of a youth. Attitudes are changing regarding the collection, exchange and treatment of human remains both in New Zealand and at an international level.

Māori and Moriori have expressed through hui (Te Papa 1998), as well as during the many domestic repatriations carried out by New Zealand museums, that it is time for their ancestors to return home. In 2003 a formal policy was established to prepare a programme for the repatriation of kōiwi tangata and Toi moko, and Te Papa was mandated to act on their behalf through the Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme (New Zealand Government 2003). Kōiwi tangata policies have also been established by many of our museums, the New Zealand Historic Places Trust, and Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu (Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu 1993).

There are many in the scientific and medical world, however, who remain opposed to the repatriation of human remains due to their 'scientific value'. Dr Robert Foley, Director of the Leverhulme Centre at Cambridge which holds over 18,000 skeletal remains including Māori and Moriori, believes regarding repatriation that "the loss to science would be incalculable" (Mackie 2003: 14). This thought, however, is not shared by all on an international level. Many institutions, organisations and governments have established policies and legislation which deal with the display, care and repatriation of human remains. Many museums in the United Kingdom, for example, have policies which are based on or guided by the Department for Culture Media and Sport's Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums (2005). The United States of America has the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (1990) which aids the indigenous peoples of the USA, including Hawai'i, in the return of their ancestors and associated burial objects. Meanwhile, the World Archaeological Congress has adopted in its code of ethics the Vermillion Accord on Human Remains (1989) and the Tamaki Makau-rau Accord on the Display of Human Remains and Sacred Objects (2006).

An important development in attitudes regarding the repatriation of kōiwi tangata or more specifically Toi moko from New Zealand has recently taken place in France as a result of Rouen Museum's decision to repatriate a Toi moko that has been in their collection since 1875 (Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme 2010). In 2007 the Toi moko was prevented from leaving the country by the French Minister of Culture as advice was sought from the French

Government's Scientific Committee to consider the merits of repatriation and also to "verify that there is no unjustified damage to their national heritage" (Doland 2007). As many will be aware, a bill was recently passed allowing French museums to deaccession Toi moko from their collections and, if they choose, repatriate them back to New Zealand.

Though collection and research still continues around human remains, in New Zealand it is being undertaken with greater iwi consultation, support and participation, which in light of the last 240 years is a vast and important change in the way the dead are treated and respected. 'For Evolution's Sake' can now be seen in a new light; not for the sake of how we are thought to have evolved, but how thought itself has evolved.

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