

The ‘ahu ‘ula and mahiole of Kalani‘ōpu‘u: a journey of chiefly adornments

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ABSTRACT: Among the most significant Pacific cultural treasures in the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa) are the ‘ahu ‘ula (feathered cloak) and mahiole (feathered helmet) that once belonged to Kalani‘ōpu‘u, a high chief on the island of Hawai‘i in the late 1770s. He gifted these objects to English explorer James Cook in 1779, and they eventually found their way to New Zealand in 1912. More than a century later, in 2014, representatives from the Office of Hawaiian Affairs and the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum (Bishop Museum) approached Te Papa about reconnecting the ‘ahu ‘ula and mahiole with the Hawaiian people. A long-term loan emerged as the best process to enable this historic reconnection to take place. This article presents the history of display for the ‘ahu ‘ula and mahiole in the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. It outlines how their preparation for loan in 2016 created circumstances for community engagement, cultural interaction and the enacting of indigenous museological practice.

KUMUMANA‘O: ‘O kekahi o nā mea ‘oi loa o ka makamae i mālama ‘ia ma ka Hale Hō‘ike‘ike ‘o Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa), ‘o ia ka ‘ahu ‘ula a me ka mahiole a Kalani‘ōpu‘u, he ali‘i nui i noho i ka mokupuni ‘o Hawai‘i i nā 1770. Nāna nō i makana aku i ia mau mea makamae i ke kāpena Pelekānia ‘o James Cook i ka makahiki 1779. I ka hala ‘ana o ka manawa, ua hō‘ea ka ‘ahu ‘ula a me ka mahiole i New Zealand i ka makahiki 1912. Ma hope o ho‘okahi kenekulia a ‘oi, i ka makahiki 2014, ua hui nā ‘elele o ke Ke‘ena Kuleana Hawai‘i a me ka Hale Hō‘ike‘ike ‘o Bīhopa me nā ‘elele o Te Papa no ke kūkākūkā ‘ana e pili ana i ka hiki ke ho‘iho‘i ‘ia ka ‘ahu‘ula a me ka mahiole i ka lāhui Hawai‘i. Ua hāpai ‘ia ka mana‘o no ka hā‘awi ‘ia ‘ana o ia mau mea makamae ‘elua no ka manawa lō‘ihi, a ua ho‘oholo ‘ia ‘o ia ka mana‘o maika‘i no ka ho‘opili hou ‘ia ‘ana o ia mau mea makamae i nā kānaka Hawai‘i. Ma kēia ‘atikala nei, e hō‘ike ‘ia ana ka mō‘aukala o ka ‘ahu ‘ula a me ka mahiole i ka Hale Hō‘ike‘ike o New Zealand ‘o Te Papa Tongarewa. E hō‘ike ‘ia ana nā mea waiwai i kupu a‘e i ka ho‘omākaukau ‘ana i ia mau mea makamae no ka ho‘iho‘i ‘ia ‘ana i Hawai‘i i ka makahiki 2016. Ua kupu a mohala nō nā ha‘awina no ke kaiaulu, no ka mo‘omeheu, a no ka hana ‘ana me nā mea ‘ōiwi ma ka hale hō‘ike‘ike.

KEYWORDS: Hawai‘i, Kalani‘ōpu‘u, James Cook, feather cloak, Te Papa, Pacific, museums, ‘ahu ‘ula, mahiole, Bishop Museum, community engagement, feathers, decolonising museums, indigenous museology.

Introduction

On 26 January 1779, the Hawaiian high chief Kalani'ōpu'u (c. 1729–82) took the cloak he was wearing and draped it over the shoulders of the English explorer Captain James Cook (1728–79). According to Lieutenant James King in his journal, the chief 'got up & threw in a graceful manner over the Captns Shoulders the Cloak he himself wore, & put a feathered Cap upon his head, & a very handsome fly flap in his hand' (Beaglehole 1967: 512). His people brought four large pigs and other offerings of food. At the time, the 'ahu 'ula (feathered cloak) and mahiole (feathered helmet) were worn only by the highest-ranking leaders in Hawaiian society. They were complex constructions of fibre and treasured bird feathers. 'They were symbols of chiefly divinity, rank and authority ... the greatest treasures that eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century ali'i [chiefs] could bestow' (Kahanu 2015: 24). Less than three weeks after this historic gifting, Cook was killed at Kealakekua Bay, Hawai'i. The 'ahu 'ula and mahiole left the islands with the remaining members of his expedition.

The subsequent history of the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole has been traced in detail by Adrienne Kaeppler (1974, 1978, 2011). On their arrival in England, Sir Ashton Lever (1729–88) acquired both items for his private museum, the Holophusicon or Leverian Museum. There, an illustrator called Sarah Stone made a painting of the 'ahu 'ula; this record has enabled Kaeppler to confirm its subsequent movements. Thomas Atkinson, a close friend of Joseph Banks, the botanist who accompanied Cook on his first voyage (1768–71), bought the cloak and helmet at the sale of the Leverian Museum in 1806. Somebody later gave them to William Bullock (c. 1773–1849), the owner of another private museum. At the sale of Bullock's museum in London in 1819, they were part of a group of items purchased by Charles Winn (c. 1795–1874) for his private collection. They stayed with the Winn family for nearly a century, before they were returned to the Pacific.

The journeys of the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole from Hawai'i, and through the hands of private collections and institutions, brings into relief their long disconnection from the people who created them. Their travels are part of a devastating history of colonisation and cultural loss in the Hawaiian Islands. However, as this article suggests, these cultural treasures have been sent on a trajectory that gives them new purpose and relevance almost 250 years after they first left Hawai'i. The article documents the

most recent history of the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole, which covers more than a century of storage and display in New Zealand's national museum. Although geographically and physically disconnected from the Hawaiian people, the objects have not remained isolated and static. Like many items in museum collections, they have continued 'picking up new significances, connections and meanings' (Gosden & Marshall 1999: 170). Some scholars use the metaphor of biography to describe this process, and talk of objects as having biographies or social lives, where they accumulate stories, associations and history through the many ways people (and institutions) interact with them (Kopytoff 1986; Gosden & Marshall 1999). In the spirit of this discourse, this article maps the biography of the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole from 1912 to 2016. It tells the story of how these items, once a surprising gift to the nation of New Zealand, went on to become a focal point of new processes of cultural recovery and self-determination for contemporary Hawaiians.

We have developed this article from a series of three seminars titled 'The 'ahu 'ula of Kalani'ōpu'u: stories of a sacred cloak', organised at Te Papa in association with the Hawai'i Cultural Centre, Wellington.¹ It is co-authored by the seminars' presenters, with additional contributions from staff involved in working with the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole before their departure for Hawai'i. The first part of this article is a chronology that outlines what we know of the history of the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole since their arrival at the Dominion Museum in Wellington in 1912. There is a particular focus on the period between the late 1990s and 2016, a time of increasing Hawaiian community interest in the Hawai'i collections at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa). The chronology demonstrates that the social significance and histories of artefacts does not always end when they become part of museum collections. If artefacts have social lives, then the museum is a new context that mediates a fresh (albeit restricted) range of possibilities for the object to be part of alternative transactions, and to circulate and be engaged with different people in new situations. Throughout their time at Te Papa and its institutional predecessors, the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole were used for a range of purposes: to bring visitors through the museum doors, to facilitate institutional partnerships, as ethnological specimens and historical artefacts, and to educate.

The second part of the article describes events of late 2015 to early 2016, and Te Papa's preparation of the 'ahu



Fig. 1 'ahu 'ula (feathered cloak), 1700s, Hawai'i, maker unknown. Gift of Lord St Oswald, 1912. Te Papa (FE000327)

'ula and mahiole for their return to Hawai'i. It documents perspectives from staff and community members to shed light on aspects of the museology relating to the treatment and movement of cultural treasures. The 'ahu 'ula and mahiole were a catalyst for the investigation and recovery of knowledge, and the enacting of cultural protocols and renewal of cultural connections. The first two accounts are from textile conservation and collection management staff who deinstalled and stabilised the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole in preparation for travel to Hawai'i. They are followed by the reflections of Te Papa's Kaumātua (Māori elder) and Kaihautū (Māori leader), who oversaw the negotiations and indigenous ceremonial protocols related to the loan and handover process.

The epilogue and final reflection is from members of the Hawai'i Cultural Centre in Wellington. As residents of Wellington, they regularly visited the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole at Te Papa. They advised staff and performed cultural protocols during the deinstallation, and shared cultural knowledge that informed the conservation treatment. These accounts and this article as a whole are a companion to another paper in this edition of *Tubinga*, authored by Noelle Kahanu (p. 24).



Fig. 2 Mahiole (feathered helmet), 1700s, Hawai'i, maker unknown. Gift of Lord St Oswald, 1912. Te Papa (FE000328/2)

A chronology of display²

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The biography of the ‘ahu ‘ula and mahiole began well before their gifting to James Cook, and it continued to unfold across the many decades after they left Hawai‘i and eventually arrived in New Zealand. The history of artefacts collected on Cook’s voyages and now held at Te Papa are documented by Kaeppler (1974, 1978), and in part by Livingstone (1998) and Davidson (1991, 2004, 2012). These histories trace movements of the ‘ahu ‘ula and mahiole from Hawai‘i, through collectors’ hands in the United Kingdom, and eventually to New Zealand. They authenticate the artefacts and their connection to James Cook, they verify the journeys they were part of, and they bring further precision to our understanding of historical people, places and events. Within the space available in the present article, we don’t attempt to recount these narratives in full; rather, we add to them by tracing for the first time the history of the ‘ahu ‘ula and mahiole within Te Papa and its institutional predecessors. We emphasise the key moments where people have exhibited, talked about and visited them, and we add further stories to the history of these most sacred objects.

1912: gifted to the Dominion Museum, Wellington

In 1912, Charles Winn’s grandson, Rowland Winn, 2nd Baron St Oswald (1857–1919), gave the ‘ahu ‘ula and mahiole to the Dominion of New Zealand. They were part of a collection of rare and beautiful artefacts, including such treasures as a Society Islands mourning costume and a number of Māori taonga (cultural treasures), some of which had a direct connection with Cook’s voyages. The gift came as a complete surprise to the museum’s director, Augustus Hamilton. He commented in a letter at the time, ‘Goodness knows what the reason was that prompted Lord St Oswald to send them out to New Zealand’ (Hamilton to Edge-Partington, 18 November 1912). They have been in the national collection ever since (Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa n.d.).

1937: Hawaiian featherwork exhibition

In 1937, the Dominion Museum held an exhibition of Hawaiian featherwork, featuring the items from the Lord St Oswald collection. A short article in the *Evening Post* made a connection between the feather-covered cloaks of the ‘Maori and Hawaiian Islanders’, noting the ‘variety of designs of brightly-coloured feathers worked on a base of woven fibre’ (‘Feather work’ 1937).

1960: Bishop Museum, Hawai‘i

In 1960, the ‘ahu ‘ula was loaned by the Dominion Museum to the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum (Bishop Museum) in Honolulu, Hawai‘i. In October, *Conch Shell: News of the Bishop Museum* reported that each year the museum would attempt to bring back to Hawai‘i an example of featherwork for display during Aloha Week (now called the Aloha Festivals), an annual tourism pageant that was established in 1946. The publication noted that ‘This year the Dominion Museum of Wellington, New Zealand, has generously loaned a large Hawaiian feather cloak, which to the best of our knowledge, was presented to Captain Cook’s expedition in 1779. Aloha Week marks the first return of this cloak to Hawaii.’⁴ Loans of this kind between institutions were common. The motivations may have been collegial, in the interests of institutional prestige or for the purposes of cultural diplomacy.

1978: *Artificial Curiosities*, Hawai‘i

In 1978, the ‘ahu ‘ula and mahiole travelled to the Bishop Museum, where they appeared in the landmark exhibition *Artificial Curiosities: being an exhibition and exposition of native manufactures collected on the three Pacific voyages of Captain James Cook, R.N.* from January to August of that year. This exhibition was curated by Cook voyage scholar Adrienne Kaeppler. The loan constituted part of the Cook voyage collections and confirmed the authenticity of the ‘ahu ‘ula and mahiole.



Fig. 3 Pacific Hall exhibition, 1984, National Museum, Buckle Street, Wellington.

1984: National Museum redisplay, Pacific Hall

In 1984, a new display of the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole was prepared for the Pacific Hall of the National Museum (formerly the Dominion Museum). The 'ahu 'ula underwent major conservation treatment, and major investment was made into an atmosphere-controlled, bullet- and disaster-proof display case with backlit label text and colour illustrations. The display case was positioned prominently in the centre of the entrance to the exhibition hall. The occasion was marked by a special event on 2 July 1984, hosted by local Māori leader Maui Pomare and opened by Kenneth Francis Kamu'okalani Brown, a member of the board of trustees at the Bishop Museum. As part of Brown's speech, he said:

Today's recognition of the cape and helmet symbolizes a new-found appreciation, even awe, for the objects themselves and for the civilization for which are holograms ... So the cape and the helmet bring forth and echo to, resonances thru time and thru thought. As they speak for Hawaii here in New Zealand, they also call across the seas. They speak of commonalities, new-found associations and aspirations. These, between and among Maori and Hawaiian, and all others, too. Visits become more frequent. Initiatives, cultural and spiritual, are going forward. So, new linkages are being formed. The ripples spread out! As we progress, let us always remain mindful of these sacred objects, vibrating with mana here in this place, but felt and drawn upon for resolve and strength, wherever we go. (Brown 1984)



Fig. 4 Apu (coconut shell cup), 2004, Hawai'i, by Delos Reyes Anthony. Gift of Ka hale mua o Maui loa, 2004. Te Papa (FE012712/1)

1998: Te Papa redisplay

In 1998, the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole were redisplayed as part of the opening exhibitions of the newly established Te Papa. During the opening ceremonies for the museum, Kamana'opono Crabbe from Hawai'i composed and performed a chant for Kalani'ōpu'u's 'ahu 'ula and mahiole. Once again, the display of the objects attracted significant resource and investment from the museum. They were exhibited as part of a selection of museum icons that didn't sit within the core narrative exhibitions, but whose historical or cultural significance warranted their display as stand-alone exhibits. The exhibit was titled *Feathers of the Gods*⁵ and was located in a physically separate space adjacent to larger exhibitions relating to Māori, Pacific cultures and the Treaty of Waitangi.⁶ The label text includes commentary from Hawaiian scholar Rubellite K. Johnson, Emeritus Professor of Hawaiian at the University of Hawai'i.

2004: Ka hale mua o Maui loa

In 2004, members of a Hawaiian men's cultural group, Ka hale mua o Maui loa (including Kamana'opono Crabbe), visited the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole, and a feathered image of the god Kū, to pay homage to them with an 'awa (kava) ceremony (Tengan 2008: 203). Ty Tengan, an anthropologist and one of the members of Ka hale mua o Maui loa, recalled the event:

we set up the 'awa in front of the display of Kalani'ōpu'u's cape and helmet; the image of Kū, typically held in the back, was brought out for us. We gave our chants, and the two men whose genealogies linked them to the chief gave the offerings of 'awa in 'apu (coconut cups) they had carved especially for the occasion and were to be left there. When we completed the ceremony, we moved to the open foyer where a host of the museum dignitaries were awaiting us. There we did an 'awa ceremony to sanctify our relationship with the museum ... Hema Temara, the marae coordinator, told us later that if we had asked for Kū, the cape, and the helmet, she would have been forced to give them to us since we had conducted all the proper protocols. Next time we'll bring an extra suitcase. (Tengan 2008: 209)

2009: *Tales from Te Papa*

In 2009, the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole were filmed for a television documentary series called *Tales from Te Papa*, in which stories related to significant objects in the museum's collections were shared in short episodes lasting a few minutes. It was a groundbreaking project in New Zealand, whereby Te Papa reached out to television and online audiences. In episode 52, 'A captain's chiefly gift', Herman Pi'ikea Clark, a Hawaiian scholar and descendant of Kalani'ōpu'u, was interviewed about the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole and asked what they represent for the Hawaiian people. Clark's involvement in providing expert commentary is part of our effort as Pacific cultures

curators to engage with the Te Papa principle of mana taonga⁷ and decentre ourselves as the primary knowledge-holders around our collections. The 'ahu 'ula and mahiole were the focus of the first of two Hawai'i-related episodes of *Tales from Te Papa*, where we experimented with sharing the creation of object narratives with members of Pacific community.⁸ It was their significance as important cultural treasures that pushed us to consider who could speak to them in such a public presentation.

2009 onwards

An increasing number of Hawaiian artists, researchers and school groups include Te Papa on their travel itineraries to New Zealand so they can engage with tangata whenua (indigenous people), visit Kalani'ōpu'u's 'ahu 'ula and mahiole, and view other cultural treasures from Hawai'i in the museum's collections. Wellington-based Hawaiian academic Emalani Case describes the 'ahu 'ula display at Te Papa as a pu'uhonua, a place of refuge, sanctuary or peace that she often shared with friends and relatives visiting her in New Zealand. However, not all visitors to the museum were at peace with the representation of Kalani'ōpu'u's adornments at Te Papa. The visit of Ka hale mua o Maui loa to see the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole in 2004, and Ty Tengan's quip 'Next time we'll bring an extra suitcase', wasn't the only time a Hawaiian had offered to take the 'ahu 'ula with them when they left New Zealand.

As Hawaiian scholars, activists and artists have visited the display case at Te Papa, some of their responses have been memorable and demonstrated to us, if we didn't already know it, the significance of these cultural treasures for Hawaiians. One prominent Hawaiian academic, while standing before the cloak, angrily criticised Te Papa's label text in the display and the interpretation of the Hawaiian scholar we had worked with, saying, 'If I had a hammer, I'd smash this case and take the cloak with me right now!' It was an emotional and intimidating response, but I understood that this person was a committed indigenous historian and activist, so what kind of response should I have expected? It was the first time I had witnessed an emotional reaction to the cloak but it was not the last. On another occasion, a leading Hawaiian artist and cultural expert looked upon the display with me, and as part of his quiet reflections he said, 'I would love to see this cloak return to Hawai'i to our people, but who will be ready to stand up and take

responsibility for its return; who will do this?' I assumed that behind this question was a concern that the 'ahu 'ula and its future would be subject to the cultural politics of an indigenous people for whom there were many competing priorities – sovereignty, self-determination, education and economic self-sufficiency. It would be the responsibility of more than one or a few people, and perhaps beyond the resources or claims of one or two institutions or museums.

Not surprisingly, the most diplomatic response was from a senior museum professional, a Hawaiian, who praised Te Papa for looking after the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole so well. She suggested that the value of the 'ahu 'ula being so far away from home was in its role as a kind of ambassador for the Hawaiian people and their culture. This was a generous and diplomatic response, perhaps intended to relieve us of a little of the burden of holding something so treasured, so far away from its people. It was also a sentiment that would help maintain the relations between us as museum professionals, especially as the commenter's own museum was the holder of cultural treasures of significance to Māori. However, her response is not unusual. There are other examples of source communities and museums describing cultural treasures from which they are estranged as 'ambassadors' (Jolly 2011: 127; Knowles 2011: 232; Hogsden & Poulter 2012: 268), but as Hawaiian scholar and curator Noelle Kahanu has said (quoting Edward Halealoha Ayau), 'even ambassadors can be called home' (pers. comm., 2016).

From 2013, interest in returning the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole to Hawai'i gained momentum. Te Papa was visited by delegations from the Bishop Museum and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs. Conversations began about the possibility of a long-term loan of the chiefly adornments to Hawai'i. This dialogue was partially inspired by the successful 2010 reunification of the three last great Kū images from museums in the United Kingdom and the United States (Kahanu 2014). It was further shaped by the developing professional relationships between Te Papa staff and Hawaiian museum workers, artists and academics. In 2014–15, further meetings took place and a loan of the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole to Hawai'i emerged from a partnership between the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Te Papa, the Bishop Museum and Hawaiian Airlines. On 23 September 2015, Te Papa staff deinstalled the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole from their display in preparation for the journey to Hawai'i in March 2016.



Fig. 5 'The 'ahu 'ula of Kalani'ōpu'u: stories of a sacred cloak' seminar series at Te Papa in association with the Hawai'i Cultural Centre, Wellington (24 February to 2 March 2016).

As a curator of Pacific cultures, the most significant shift I have witnessed since I joined Te Papa in 1992 has been in how we talk about the 'ahu 'ula – from its value as an ethnological specimen collected on voyages of European exploration, to an artefact with the potential to strengthen the connections of contemporary Hawaiian people to their history and cultural identities; from Cook's cloak to Kalani'ōpu'u's cloak, and from feather cloak to 'ahu 'ula. The catalogue of photographs of the 'ahu 'ula highlight changes in interpretation over time: photographs taken in 1959 are catalogued as 'Hawaiian Feather Cloak – Captain Cook relic'; in 1977 as 'Captain Cook's Hawaiian feather cloak'; in 1984 as 'Captain Cook's Hawaiian cloak'; and in 2015 as "'ahu 'ula (feathered cloak); 1700s; Hawaiian'.⁹

This curatorial reworking of the catalogue is part of a decolonising of museology that is an ongoing project in various parts of the world. However, some of Te Papa's stakeholders were not convinced of the merits of the removal of the 'ahu 'ula from the museum for such a long period, highlighting competing claims on its history and associations (Mallon 2016). The chronology reminds us that the 'ahu 'ula is part of multiple coexisting narratives, part of a process of classifying and reclassifying. It is part of the history of textiles and featherwork in Hawai'i, of leadership and chieftainship in eighteenth-century Hawai'i, of James Cook and his voyages of exploration in the Pacific, of nineteenth-century private collectors in the United Kingdom, and of the reclaiming and enacting of indigenous masculinities. It is part of the relationships between institutions and individuals. And it is part of the history between indigenous peoples and developments in decolonising museology.

Rediscovery, reconnection and return

After the deinstallation of the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole, a series of three seminars was organised at Te Papa in association with the Hawai'i Cultural Centre, Wellington (24 February to 2 March 2016). Titled 'The 'ahu 'ula of Kalani'ōpu'u: stories of a sacred cloak', the seminars were part of a curatorial effort to build awareness around the cultural significance of the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole before they were returned to Hawai'i. The presentations were also an opportunity to develop an understanding of the formal qualities of the garments and the artistic and technical skills they represented. The 'ahu 'ula and mahiole had remained inaccessible behind glass since 1997, and some of Te Papa's current textile conservators had not had the chance to examine them closely. In the following section, and building on the seminars, I invited Te Papa staff to share aspects of their presentations and their role in the processes of rediscovering, reconnecting and returning the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole to Hawai'i.¹⁰

Conservation

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This section briefly outlines the conservation approach and treatment of the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole. A detailed article reporting on the treatment is in preparation (forthcoming).

The 'ahu 'ula and mahiole were on permanent display at

Te Papa from 1998, and prior to this were on permanent display in the Pacific Hall of Te Papa's predecessor, the National Museum. The 'ahu 'ula was displayed in Te Papa on a convex metal support covered in black nylon fabric, contained within a custom-built bullet-proof glass case in an environmentally controlled gallery. It was illuminated with motion-activated fibre-optic lights positioned within the case to reduce cumulative light exposure. It was not possible to examine the 'ahu 'ula while it was on display as a wall had been erected within the exhibition space, preventing access to the display case.

Te Papa takes a bicultural approach in terms of the leadership of the museum and its museological practice. In many ways, this informs much of our conservation methodology and ensures that, where possible, our work is informed by indigenous and non-indigenous approaches and knowledge. The significance of this taonga and the importance of preparing the 'ahu 'ula for its return journey was felt by all parties who were involved in this project. The conservation and object support team were responsible for ensuring the cloak would withstand the demands of the journey during transit and display, while being mindful of the Hawaiian community's requirements.

The treatment undertaken for the 'ahu 'ula and the mahiole was collaborative and involved working across the teams within Te Papa and alongside representatives of the Hawaiian cultural practitioners based in Wellington. The first step, before assessing the 'ahu 'ula and removing from it from the display case, was to commence the process with appropriate prayers and chants led by members of the local Hawaiian community.

The return of the 'ahu 'ula to Hawaii presented conservation staff with an opportunity to examine previous treatments and the impact of display methods. Fortunately, the most recent treatment (1984) of the 'ahu 'ula had been well documented. We were able to observe a number of historical stitched repairs undertaken on the underside of the cloak and a number of more recent linen patch supports. A linen patch had been stitched to the reverse of the 'ahu 'ula along the upper edge, providing some support to a tear and compensating for an area of loss in one corner. We completed some X-ray fluorescence (XRF) spectroscopy analysis to determine the presence of any pesticide residues that could potentially have health and safety implications for museum staff and community members interacting with the 'ahu 'ula.

As the 'ahu 'ula had been on long-term display at Te Papa, and the museum's ability to photograph and document the cloak had greatly improved during that time, we felt justified in removing the linen support patches to enable the garment to be examined and photographed in full. This was a valuable opportunity to record the overall construction of the base of the cloak; the netting technique, cordage and feather binding; and the method of attachment to the olonā (*Touchardia latifolia*) netting foundation. This information was not visible or accessible when the cloak was on display within its case. We were extremely fortunate that pathologist Mark Jones was able to assist with this process. He brought considerable expertise, along with his own microscope and camera, to record the details of manufacture and enhance what we could see with the naked eye. We were particularly interested in understanding the net-making technique and in being able to replicate the knot used in the netting. The 'ahu 'ula has a pieced foundation made up of many sections of very fine olonā netting cut and shaped to fit. Tiny bundles of fine feathers, each bound together, are secured with a continuous olonā thread to the foundation. The red and yellow feathers are attributed to 'iwi (*Drepanis coccinea*) and 'ō'ō (*Moho nobilis*) birds. In the 1700s Kia manu (bird catchers) practised capture and release techniques in their harvesting of specific species of birds for their feathers.¹⁴ Working with magnified images from the microscope, a piece of unfinished fishing net with net gauge still present, and ethnographic references from the Pacific Islands,¹⁵ we successfully replicated the knot and produced some small samples of net.

The study of knots and net-making became compulsive, and we made comparisons with western net-making traditions and referred to documented indigenous net-making techniques.¹⁶ We were fortunate to have Rangī Te Kanawa contribute her skills as both a Māori weaver and conservator to this project. This led to further questions and observations, including Rangī's query about whether the makers applied a binding agent to the tip of the feather bundles.

Our net samples were by no means as finely worked as the olonā netting of the 'ahu 'ula, but by undertaking this practical exercise we gained a greater appreciation of the skill and work involved in producing the cloak. We were also excited to receive emails from staff at the Bishop Museum, some of whom are weavers, who sent us photographs of their net-making samples. We hope

the observations and documentation we have made will assist other researchers and practitioners. Throughout the treatment of the 'ahu 'ula, we endeavoured to provide an open studio. On several occasions, Rangi and Anne Peranteau (Conservator Textiles) shared observations and treatment updates with community representatives, university students and Te Papa staff.

A full-size digital print of the 'ahu 'ula was also produced for its eventual handover to the Hawaiian delegation. We undertook this as an exercise to provide visitors a sense of how the cloak would have appeared when worn (the 'ahu 'ula is too fragile to be displayed on a form and needs to be fully supported, with the weight evenly distributed to prevent stress on the cloak foundation and further feather loss). This was a new venture for the conservation team, and we found that there were some limitations and technical issues to resolve. Options for fabrics on which we could print were very limited as we wanted one with some weight so we could best replicate the drape of the 'ahu 'ula. The full-size replica provided a greater sense of how the feathered geometric patterns of the 'ahu 'ula met at the centre front of the cloak and were designed to be viewed as it was worn. For the pōwhiri (ceremonial welcome) of the Hawaiian delegation, the digital copy was displayed on a form alongside the original 'ahu 'ula and returned with the garment to Hawai'i. Issues that arose with the production of the digital 'ahu 'ula need to be further debated and discussed. For example, by producing a digital copy we could give a greater visual sense of how the 'ahu 'ula may have looked as it was worn, but were diminishing the mana (status) of the original cloak?

Following the work to document the structure and condition of the 'ahu 'ula, the next step was to stabilise the cloak to enable its display at the Bishop Museum. Our approach to the conservation treatment was to employ fully reversible techniques that wouldn't compromise the integrity of the original garment. A dyed nylon net was stitched to the entire reverse side of the 'ahu 'ula to provide it with some stability. We wanted to provide support but not conceal the netting. A cotton organdie patch was applied to provide support to an area of loss at the upper edge. We specifically designed this patch to integrate visually and provide support, not replace an area of loss.

Our use of an existing mount presented some challenges in terms of modifying it for transportation and a new display. Specifically, it needed to provide overall support

for the 'ahu 'ula, to reduce any direct handling of the garment and to transport it on its mount inside a crate. Rangi and Anne stitched the 'ahu 'ula to linen support fabric, which was then wrapped around the metal mount. This was undertaken in part to cover existing display fabric that could not be removed from the mount. Rangi and Anne worked together, passing the needle from one side of the cloak to the other, and with Anne working from under a table. The linen fabric was then removed from the stretcher and secured to the mount. Detachable handles were fitted to the mount to enable the 'ahu 'ula to be moved without any direct handling and to enable the mount to be attached in the crate tray for transit. Data loggers were attached to the crate interior to record environmental conditions during the course of the 'ahu 'ula's journey.

The mahiole had been on display with the 'ahu 'ula at Te Papa since 1997, and due to controlled display conditions it experienced very little light exposure, helping preserve it. On examination of the helmet, Nirmala Balram (Conservator Ethnographic Objects) found the frame structurally stable, and noted little fading of and staining on the feathers. A mount, similar to those used for hats, was custom designed for the internal shape of the mahiole and secured to it to prevent any lifting and dislocating during transit. External supports to hold the helmet in place would have risked crushing the feathers.

It was a great honour for us to be involved in the conservation of the 'ahu 'ula. Its treatment provided an opportunity for conservation intern Catherine Williams to be involved in the XRF examination. She said that the chance to learn from Te Papa staff, external specialists and community representatives as they collaborated to facilitate the research, treatment and eventual loan of the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole was one of the highlights of her 12-month object conservation internship. Indeed, our experience was enriched by all those who accompanied us on this journey and shared their personal responses and knowledge. We would like to acknowledge and thank everyone involved.

The journey home

*Grace Hutton*¹⁷

In the first week of September 2015, I was informed that the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole were going to be returned to Hawai'i as a long-term loan to the Bishop Museum. As Collection Manager Pacific Cultures at Te Papa, my responsibility was to organise the deinstallation of the items from their display case as soon as possible, as I was about to depart for some time overseas.

Before we began the actual deinstallation of the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole and their removal from the display case, I felt that a formal Hawaiian ritual was needed to ensure the safe journey of these significant cultural treasures to Hawai'i. Sean Mallon, Senior Curator Pacific Cultures at Te Papa, contacted local Hawaiian academic Emalani Case to arrange this. On 18 September 2015, a group of 20 Te Papa staff, consisting of conservators, installers, curators, collection managers and others, assembled at the display case, where Emalani, Kawikaka'iulani Aipa and Kamalani Kapeliela of the Hawai'i Cultural Centre performed mele (songs) and speeches were made. The display case originally butted up against a wall, but this had been moved out of the way by an exhibition organiser. After the ceremony, we gathered at the back of the display case to remove the mahiole and the 'ahu 'ula from their mounts and take them to Te Papa's Conservation Lab. Before I left to go overseas, I completed an 'Application for permission to export a protected New Zealand object from New Zealand' form,¹⁸ which I submitted to the Ministry for Culture and Heritage. Permission was subsequently granted for the export of the mahiole and 'ahu 'ula until 2026.

On my return to New Zealand, I had paperwork to complete for the United States Customs and Border Protection and New Zealand Customs Service agencies. There was no need to apply for a permit from the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) as none of the natural materials used in the manufacture of the objects was from protected species listed in the CITES appendices. The most complicated form that had to be completed for the entry of the items into a United States territory was the United States Fish and Wildlife Service for the Federal Fish and Wildlife Permit. Fortunately, institutions like Te Papa use affiliated customs agents to guide and help them with completing

the appropriate documentation. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service asked for a feather count of the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole. We were able to undertake this task as we had already done a feather count when we loaned two other Hawaiian feather cloaks and a feather helmet to the de Young Museum in San Francisco for the exhibition *Royal Hawaiian Featherwork: Nā Hulu Ali'i* in 2015. For the loan to de Young, Rachael Collinge (Conservator Textiles) and I counted how many feathers were in a single bunch used in the manufacture of the garments. We counted several bunches, finding that the number of feathers ranged between 7 and 12, making an average of 10 yellow or red feathers per bunch. I measured each lineal part of the feathered design so that we could calculate the total area. I sent these measurements to my daughter Sarah Culliford, who is a quantity surveyor working in London. She did the maths and sent me back the area of each section in square centimetres (Fig 6).

Rangi and intern Kororia Netana then counted how many feather bunches were in 1 cm², and I multiplied that figure by the area of each block of feathers to get the number of bunches they contained. I calculated that there is a total of 1,079,137 yellow feathers and 3,339,525 red feathers in the whole of the 'ahu 'ula. Colin Miskelly, Curator Vertebrates at Te Papa, informed me that the 'iwi and 'ō'ō birds are from the order Passeriformes and each bird has between 1,500 and 3,000 feathers. So rather than the estimate of 20,000 birds used in the manufacture of the 'ahu 'ula, as was written on the display case label, my belief is that far fewer birds may have been used – possibly closer to 7,000 'iwi for the red feathers.

The 'ahu 'ula and the mahiole travelled in separate wooden crates on Hawaiian Airlines. The crates travelled together on a dedicated pallet in the aircraft hold, with the mahiole crate secured on top of the 'ahu 'ula crate. The large crate weighed approximately 200 kg, while the smaller crate weighed 30 kg.

To prepare for the pōwhiri for the Hawaiian delegation (held on Friday, 11 March 2016), a number of staff moved the 'ahu 'ula and the mahiole to the paepae (threshold) of Rongomaraeroa. The tray that housed the 'ahu 'ula and its mount was covered with a white Tyvek cover, attached with Velcro around the sides. There was one lighthearted moment when I pulled the cover off and it unexpectedly floated up to my lips, leaving a lipstick outline in the centre of the cover. Rangi had to machine-stitch a small patch to cover it up because there was no time to make a new one!

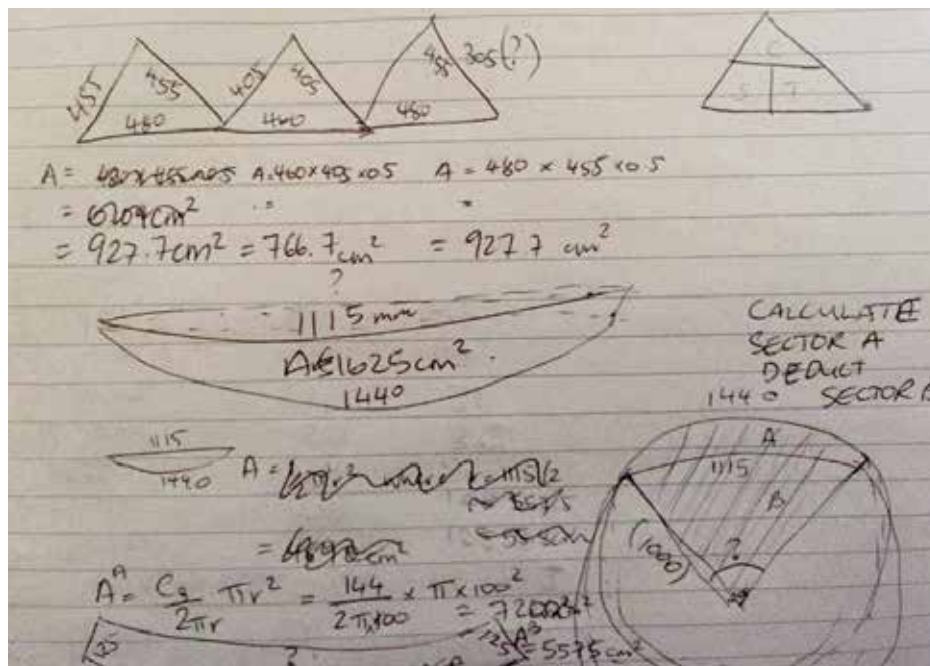


Fig. 6 Measurements of the red and yellow areas of the 'ahu 'ula.

In addition to my duties as Collection Manager Pacific Cultures, I was also assigned to accompany the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole to Hawai'i. We left Te Papa on Saturday, 12 March at 8am on a road journey by truck to Auckland, a distance of 650 km. There were a couple of coincidences that made the journey memorable. Late the night before, a John Webber painting titled *Portrait of Captain James Cook* (c. 1780) was returned to Te Papa from overseas accompanied by a courier. It had been loaned to Anchorage Museum, Alaska, for an exhibition called *Arctic Ambitions: Captain Cook and the Northwest Passage* (27 March–7 September 2015). That loan started in 2012 but the painting didn't travel to Alaska until 2015. Once the exhibition closed in Alaska in September 2015, the loan of the painting was extended and it went to New York for another exhibition, arriving back at Te Papa on 11 March. The dates for the transportation of the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole to Hawai'i also changed, from early March to 11 March. Events transpired to make sure that Cook and Kalani'ōpu'u were still crossing paths over 200 years after they first met. Perhaps they needed to say their farewells one last time? Our customs agent said that the delivery truck coming to Te Papa and then leaving the next day with a separate consignment was a unique event.

On the journey to Auckland Airport, a group of Hawaiian *kia'i* (guards) travelled in one car behind the truck. Another

of the *kia'i* travelled in the truck with me and the driver. A film crew from Hawai'i who were documenting the objects' return followed behind. Once we arrived in Auckland at the airport cargo shed, the *kia'i* assisted me with wrapping and securing the crates to the pallet. They were also allowed to accompany the crates onto the tarmac, a role usually carried out by a customs agent but in this case permitted because Hawaiian Airlines, a partner in the process, helped to ensure that culturally appropriate practices could be followed. We arrived safely in Hawai'i on the morning of Saturday, 12 March, and again the *kia'i* disembarked from the plane onto the tarmac to accompany the crates to the cargo shed. There the crates were unloaded from the pallet and transferred to a truck for the drive to the Bishop Museum.

As both a Pacific Islander and Collection Manager Pacific Cultures at Te Papa, I enjoyed being involved in ensuring the safe transportation of two significant Hawaiian cultural treasures. It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Over the years, I have met many Hawaiians who have travelled to Te Papa to connect with its Hawaiian collection, especially the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole. They all articulated their desire to see these two taonga back in Hawai'i. For the Hawaiians who live in New Zealand, the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole were their *mauri* (life force). We were told by them that Te Papa was somewhere they could visit regularly because they could connect with their *ipukarea* (hometown) through the 'ahu

'ula and mahiole, which had so much mana and presence in the museum. I feel extremely fortunate to be associated with all the people who journeyed alongside us to enable the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole to make the long journey back home. I loved the whole experience, especially the welcome given to the cultural treasures by the Hawaiian community at the Bishop Museum, which was singularly moving. It was an amazing journey.

Reforged connections – a tangata whenua perspective

*Te Waari Carkeek*¹⁹

As a whole, Māori people have a great appreciation and love for Hawaiians, their culture, their dances and their language. We see reflected in them some of the best parts of ourselves. Their style, tenacity and resilience are part of our shared Pacific heritage. We are guilty of ethnic and indigenous romanticism. We copy their hypnotic tunes while creating enduring Māori kapa haka (cultural group) classics, and we emulate their speech and gestures. We imagine what it's like to be a Hawaiian; in some ways we look alike, sharing similar but differing colonial pasts. Imitation being the greatest form of flattery, evermore similarities arise. Expressing our indigeneity at home and globally has challenged both Māori and Hawaiians for decades. We both inhabit warrior pasts, beliefs we take pride in. We freely express mana tangata (human/individual rights), mana rangatira (leadership of a group) and mana whenua (authority over land, sea, rivers and mountains), but were both brutalised culturally, economically and spiritually. Empire-led armed invasions took our lands, traditions and spirituality. Tribally belittled and seriously damaged, we were compromised as races for commercial gain. We both show appalling health and incarceration statistics, with too little economic growth or progress. What is there left to be thrilled about? The core of Hawaiian culture survives, and we as Māori can help it flourish.

We as Māori, under the sheltering roof of Te Papa, our indigenous protector and cultural warrior, provide living frameworks for ngā taonga tuku iho (gifts handed down). Rongomaraeroa and tupuna whare provided a sacred space for the cloak and helmet of Kalani'ōpu'u to enter after they were removed from their long, protected tenure on

display at the back of the *Treaty of Waitangi: signs of a nation* exhibition. Sacred prayers were invoked to light Kalani'ōpu'u's journey back to the arms of his Hawaiian nation. His people would use their own cultural model. We Māori, assured of our place in Te Papa and Aotearoa New Zealand, provided the grounding net of ngā taonga tuku iho so that unique joint cultural nations blended. A new magical experience was created, an amazing potency of reformed connection. Through joint cultural understanding, the descendants of Kalani'ōpu'u shared their joy, which was streamed live in Hawai'i, mainland United States, Aotearoa New Zealand and throughout the world.

Rongomaraeroa, our courtyard, and Te Hono ki Hawaiki, the whareniui or meeting house, were an impressive backdrop and stage for this traditional exchange. Years of preparation, negotiation and interaction between Te Papa and the Bishop Museum, supported by Māori and Hawaiian leaders, culminated in the reconnection of ancestral ties. Very personal and sacred ceremonies supporting cultural revival caused unprecedented levels of media interest.

On the day we met the Hawaiian delegation face to face on Te Papa's marae, the vastness of our Pacific Island neighbourhood disappeared. Our people were excited, both as hosts and as Ngāti Toa iwi in residence at Te Papa. A member of the Hawaiian delegation surprised everyone by delivering part of his speech in Te Reo Māori, prompting one of the tangata whenua to stand and respond in the Hawaiian language. Appropriately, and when the time was right, the chairperson of the Bishop Museum, the most senior member of this delegation, spoke on behalf of her group. The line of officials from the Bishop Museum completed their presentation. The Office of Hawaiian Affairs, supported by song and dance in the beautiful Hawaiian language, and with their generosity of spirit and a wellspring of soul food overflowing and engulfing the whole marae, offered gifts carrying much kaona (meaning) to Te Papa. These were accepted in the spirit of unity.

Yes, we Māori share a similar language to the Hawaiians and can follow much of what they said. But those people present who didn't have that language facility listened with their senses, felt the emotion and were touched by the spirit of what was being expressed. It is this aspect of the ceremony that affected the hearts, minds and souls of many who were present. Tears flowed, feelings overcame us all as Kalani'ōpu'u's soul essence melded into his people, and something very special took place.



Fig. 7 Participants at the ceremony marking the return of the mahiole and 'ahu 'ula of Kalani'ōpu'u, from Te Papa to the Bishop Museum in March 2016. Te Papa, Cable Street, Wellington.

The conduit of humanity's collective ancestry opened to all, and in those moments amid the sacred space at Te Papa's marae we became one.

The proposals to return the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole, sacred artefacts of Kalani'ōpu'u, brought a sense of awe and wonder, and the greatness of the mighty Pacific's shared soul uplifted and honoured all. Māori and Hawaiian shared in the ceremony and cultural riches flowed together in a unique moment on Rongomaraeroa. In Te Papa, our iconic intermediary, we showed the world that our shared Pacific cultural identities are alive and well.

Te hokinga atu (the return): ōku whakaaro (reflections) *Arapata Hakiwai*²⁰

Tēnā koutou katoa. It gives me great pleasure to write about my personal thoughts and reflections on the recent return of the mahiole and 'ahu 'ula of Kalani'ōpu'u, an ariki nui (high chief) on the island of Hawai'i, from Te Papa to the Bishop Museum in March 2016. Experiencing the return of these taonga whakahirahira (important treasures) back

to their 'āina (homeland) and people is a personal highlight of my career, and one that I will for ever remember. At the time of the return of these priceless treasures, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs website noted the deep significance of what was happening and the contemporary importance of the kaupapa (proposal). Under the title 'Kalani'ōpu'u inspires our movement forward', the website said, 'We can take a look back and see how our ali'i [chiefs] handled the changing times to continue to assert their sovereignty and perpetuate our culture' (Crabbe 2016).

What I witnessed in Hawai'i was that the return of these ancient treasures had a profound impact on the Hawaiian people of today. Kamana'ōpono Crabbe, Ka Pouhana (chief executive officer) of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, was absolutely on point when he wrote on the website that Kalani'ōpu'u has deep significance and meaning for the generations today:

in the 21st century, building a nation isn't just about politics, but about partnerships and working together for a common good. Viewed one way, we put a lot of work into this. In another way, we are only servants and a conduit to open a pathway so all the people of Hawai'i can share in the inspiration of an ancient king who comes alive for a new generation in 2016. (Crabbe 2016)

The Bishop Museum and Dr Crabbe played an important role in the discussions and arrangements for the return of the treasures. Dr Crabbe's long association with these treasures was particularly evident: in 1998 at the opening of Te Papa, he composed and performed a chant for the 'ahu 'ula display; and in 2004 he was part of a group that travelled to Te Papa to perform important rituals that requested the return of the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole. Dr Crabbe reminded everyone that Hawai'i's rich past can continue to play a powerful role in the pursuit of Hawaiian self-determination when he said, as reported in *Ka Wai Ola*, the newsletter of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, that the 'treasures can connect us to Kalani'ōpu'u, the individual and the warrior chief, but they can also connect Hawaiians and the greater Hawai'i public to the ancestral past'. He was also quoted as saying that the 'Hawaiian ali'i leader continues to inspire us in the 20th century to strive for our self-determination and reclaim our ancestral sovereignty' ('OHA makes 'ahu 'ula return a priority' 2016).

Taonga have trajectories that have often taken them out of their indigenous tribal worlds across oceans, nations, time and space, and placed them in unfamiliar environments where their values and customary knowledge and understanding have become disconnected. My colleague Paul Tapsell has written extensively in this area. He talks about the myriad array of relationships that taonga have in the patterned universe of Māori society, and how they can often appear and disappear like the flight of the tūi bird, whether stolen, gifted or repatriated (Tapsell 1997). In reference to Māori tribal taonga, Tapsell notes that they 'were cloaked in the mana, tapu [protection] and korero [stories] of their origins', and that Māori source communities seek to honour the trajectory of ancestors to whom they belong (Tapsell 2011: 96). It was my strong observation that the return of the treasures of Kalani'ōpu'u to the present generations of Hawaiian people honoured the high chief and the qualities and mana he had during his lifetime.

Thousands of Māori and Pacific taonga are housed in hundreds of museums throughout the world, confined to passive existences on shelves in backroom storage areas. Their mauri remains deactivated and in limbo, waiting for their descendants to one day visit them, caress them and greet them. The return of these treasures made me reflect deeply on museum practice and why these repatriation initiatives are not happening more often. To see the very foundations of cultural identity uplifted by the return of

these treasures to Hawai'i 237 years after they were both presented by the high chief Kalani'ōpu'u to Captain Cook was immensely emotional. The chants, speeches and the pounding beat of hula pahu (drum dances) echoed over the landscape, touching the hearts and minds of those privileged to be there and experience the event.

There are many academics who have written about the relationship between material culture and identity and well-being, but being involved in the process first hand is something that gives reality and meaning to words written in books. The power, dignity and respect of the ceremonies was apparent to everyone, and for me it reaffirmed that the return was the right thing to do – he pono, he tika. The return, or te hokinga atu, was reminiscent of the euphoria and excitement associated with the international touring Māori exhibition *Te Maori* in the 1980s.

Te Maori shook New Zealand and the world, and it mobilised Māori in ways not seen for a long time. The world saw the mana and close, enduring relationships Māori have for their taonga, and began to ask questions about the shabbiness of museum practice in Aotearoa New Zealand. In a similar Polynesian way, te hokinga atu of the mahiole and 'ahu 'ula of Kalani'ōpu'u signalled to the world that these treasures are still important in the Hawaiian nation of today. The return of the taonga to Hawai'i was a very special moment in time for our Hawaiian relations, as many thought it would never happen.

As Kaihautū of Te Papa I knew that this was a kaupapa (subject) that had been calling for many years. Regular visits by Hawaiian groups, artists and practitioners to their ariki nui's treasures at Te Papa and their hope that some day the mahiole and 'ahu 'ula would return home made this clear.

The journey of the return is as important as the return itself. It was highly appropriate that the exhibition where the mahiole and 'ahu 'ula were to be displayed at the Bishop Museum was titled *He Nae Ākea: Bound Together*, as it is my understanding that this reflects the connection of Kalani'ōpu'u to his land and people; the connection between the peoples, nations and cultures throughout the centuries who have cared for these treasures; and the connection between the three institutions involved in this return – the Bishop Museum, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs and Te Papa. The collaboration and whanaungatanga (relationship) established between our organisations is something museums need to do on a more regular basis.

The journey of the return started in early 2014, when

a delegation from the Bishop Museum, including artists and cultural experts, visited Te Papa. At that time, I had just become the acting chief executive officer of Te Papa, as well as being the Kaihautū. The impassioned plea of the delegates to see the two treasures reconnected to their homeland and people was clearly evident. They recounted their experiences when the Kū figures were returned to Hawai'i from the British Museum and Peabody Essex Museum in 2010. I heard and felt their pain, anguish and deep desire to see their treasures returned home. These descendants were bearing a heavy responsibility, as they were carrying the mana of their ancestors and their ariki Kalani'ōpu'ū. For me, the decision was simple and clear. After learning of the full history of the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole from Sean Mallon, Senior Curator Pacific Cultures, and following discussions with the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, the Bishop Museum and the artists and cultural practitioners, it was clear to me that I had to take this request to Te Papa's board of trustees. This I did very quickly, and our board members were in full support of this reconnection and return home.

The repatriation was realised by many people and organisations. In particular, it was inspired by the hearts and minds of the Hawaiian people, who had a vision that could help to strengthen, unite and inspire them based on the mana and foundations of their past. The welcoming ceremonies were deeply moving, and I could feel the presence of the ancestors and the connection we as Māori have with our Pacific relations. The words of the Kamehameha Schools aptly describe this significance when they wrote that the triumphant return was 'a testament to the impenetrable bond between kānaka [people] and 'āina' and that the 'strength of our identity as 'ōiwi [indigenous people] should not only be honored as part of our history but fortified as a foundation for our future' (Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum 2016).

It was only appropriate that Te Papa's Rongomaraeroa be the place to welcome our Hawaiian whānau (family) and farewell the taonga before their journey home. The rituals of encounter on Rongomaraeroa within the embrace of Te Hono ki Hawaiki, our ancestral wharenui, celebrate our strong relationships with the Pacific and were strongly felt by all those present at Te Papa. The pōwhiri was one important ceremony among many that prepared the pathway and journey home. The words of welcome from our resident tribe, Ngāti Toa Rangatira, welcomed our relations within the wairua, or spirit, of our ancestors.

The ancestors were acknowledged and called to, and their korowai, or cloak of protection, was made manifest with the many rituals conducted.

The journey home was as much a spiritual journey as it was a physical one. Māori ancestors met Hawaiian ancestors, and our gods were called upon to clear the pathway for a safe passage. The whaikōrero (oratory), karakia (chants), tauparapara (incantations) and waiata (songs), both in Aotearoa New Zealand and in Hawai'i, resonated with greetings to Kalani'ōpu'ū and the ancestors. Ironically, or perhaps in a quirk of history, a portrait of Captain Cook returned to Te Papa at the same time as the mahiole and 'ahu 'ula were journeying back to Hawai'i. Did this chance meeting symbolically signal a reconnection and reconciliation of two peoples and two cultures 237 years later?

Finally, I would like to thank the board, chief executive and staff of the Bishop Museum for their partnership in this kaupapa (significant repatriation), along with the strength and commitment of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs and the people of Hawai'i. As the Kaihautū of Te Papa, it was my honour to be part of the journey that enabled these taonga to return home. Honouring our ancestors is a strong feature of Polynesian peoples, because it affirms where we have come from and where we are going. Our past has always been important to us, as our ancestors stand with us, are a part of us and continue to help guide us in this ever-changing world. The stars aligned 237 years after Kalani'ōpu'ū gifted Captain Cook his 'ahu 'ula and mahiole, and I know that these taonga will be anchors in the revitalisation of the Hawaiian language and identity, and in the ongoing journey for Hawaiian self-determination.

Mauri ora ki tātou katoa.

Epilogue: feathered whispers

*Emalani Case, Kawikaka'iulani Aipa
and Kamalani Kapeliela²¹*

Historian Greg Dening once wrote that we never observe the past. Rather, we observe the past as it has been interpreted, transformed and presented to us in some way: 'All we observe are the texts made of living experience – whether these texts are something written down in a letter or a journal, whether they are oral traditions transcribed in some way, whether they are material objects, like a feather cloak, enclosing its narrative in a color, a design,

a texture' (Dening 1997: 420–421). Without being able to observe lived experiences as they happen, or as they are 'lived', we must use our imaginations to find their significance. As Dening proposes, imagination empowers us to hear the stories that are perhaps no longer being told; to see the past in ways that have escaped recent memory, or recent ability; and to begin to grasp just some of the complexities of those experiences. Imagination is not about make-believe or fantasy. Instead, it's about being brave enough to engage with the past in a meaningful way, one that takes history out of its shackles – assigning it to a particular point, place or person in time – and frees it for our use, for our learning and for our continued experience of living.

While we cannot observe the past directly, we can observe the present; we can watch history unfold as each minute passes and becomes the past that future generations will come to interpret, reinterpret and make meaning from. In October 2015, we stood and watched two objects from the past – objects with millions of feathered whispers begging to be heard, millions of feathered stories waiting to be read – as they were prepared to make their way home. These were not objects with *one* story, or one single, complete history. The 'ahu 'ula and mahiole of one of our most prominent chiefs, Kalani'ōpu'u, were layered with many histories: stories knotted into their intricate nettings; stories worked into their structure by the hands of those who created them; stories soaked into them like the sweat and blood of their wearers; stories of chieftainship, of conquest, of crossings, of colonisation and of continuing. We observed the present, as Kalani'ōpu'u's chiefly regalia lay before us. Yet, that observance was not without a remembrance of the past (or at least some version of it).

As contemporary Hawaiians, we cannot pretend to know what this journey home will mean for each and every person who will come to interact with these objects, or attempt to hear, read and *feel* the narratives enclosed in their colors, textures, designs and shapes. However, what we can perhaps offer is this: the past can serve as a source of constant inspiration for us if we let it. As author and poet Albert Wendt reminds us, 'Knowledge of our past cultures is a precious source of inspiration for living out the present', or further, 'Our dead are woven into our souls ... If we let them they can help illuminate us to ourselves and to one another' (Wendt 1976: 76).

Kalani'ōpu'u is one such ancestor who has been woven, or even knotted like a million delicate feathers, into our

souls. Even when we no longer listen – or no longer know *how* to listen, or what to listen for – he is there, trying to teach us. The journey of his 'ahu 'ula and mahiole serve as a reminder of that. What exactly we have to learn from them will depend on the individual. However, what we can say for the lāhui (nation), or for the many aloha 'āina (patriots) who continue to breathe and fight for Hawaiian rights and sovereignty on every level, is that their meanings are rich and varied. We need only look at examples from their journey around the world to imagine what they must have inspired and will inspire in the years to come.

Imaginings

When Hawaiian scholars took to the newspapers in the nineteenth century to record the lives of our ancient chiefs, they described their exploits and adventures in detail, as if each small event was like a tiny feather, seemingly insignificant on its own, but in context, completely necessary. One such writer was Joseph Poepoe, who, between 1905 and 1906, recorded the story of Kamehameha I (c. 1736–1819) in *Ka Na'i Aupuni*, the Hawaiian-language newspaper named for the famous chief. While writing about Kamehameha and his celebrated uncle, Kalani'ōpu'u, Poepoe described many battles, looked at prophecy and strategy, and highlighted training and skill. In his descriptions, he also spoke of the sight of 'ahu 'ula and mahiole. When warring chiefs travelled over hillsides, they turned the land red with 'ahu 'ula, and when they boarded their war canoes, their opponents 'ike mai la i ka alapu [*sic*] aku o na moana i na ahoula [*sic*] a me na mahiole' (saw the ocean turn entirely red with feathered cloaks and helmets) (Poepoe 1906). We can only imagine what these people must have thought when they saw the land and sea turn red with soldiers and chiefs adorned in 'ahu 'ula and mahiole. While we cannot say for certain what they must have felt, we are sure that the sight must have inspired something, whether fear and dread, hatred and anger, or awe and amazement.

Two hundred and thirty-seven years ago, Kalani'ōpu'u's 'ahu 'ula and mahiole were gifted to Captain James Cook at Kealakekua Bay. Although Cook never left the island of Hawai'i, these treasured items did, making their way by ship to England, where they were viewed by thousands in a new land. What curiosity they must have inspired. Perhaps they became tokens of a far-away place and culture, a 'far-away' people. Perhaps they, too, were exoticised,

romanticised or even degraded and disrespected. Perhaps they weren't. While we are not sure what an English man or woman must have thought looking at the deep reds and bright yellows of our chiefs, or what reactions would have been stirred within them, we are sure that the objects must have stirred something.

While the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole were away, things changed, lives in Hawai'i changed. After the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian kingdom, a writer in the Hawaiian-language newspaper *Ke Aloha 'Āina* seemed to lament the fact that some of his people had never seen an 'ahu 'ula, a mahiole or other chiefly symbols like kāhili, or feathered standards. Imagine all the feathered whispers unheard, all the feathered stories unknown. Thus, in 1901 an invitation was put out for people to go to Wakinekona Hale, the home of the deposed Queen Lili'uokalani, to see these items: 'E hoike i ko kakou aloha alii oiaio imua o na malihini o na aina e e noho pu nei iwaena o kakou, i ike mai ai lakou he mea nui ka Moiwahine ia kakou kona lahui' (Let us show our true love for our chiefs in front of all of the foreigners from other lands who now live amongst us so that they will see that our Queen still means a great deal to us, her nation) ('He ike alii nui' 1901).

For a people learning to live with the overthrow of their queen and the subsequent illegal annexation of their kingdom to the United States, we can only imagine what the sight of an 'ahu 'ula must have inspired in them: honour and gratitude, sadness and longing, or perhaps love and a deepening sense of aloha 'āina, a renewed and inspired sense of patriotism. Generations prior, 'ahu 'ula turned oceans red; they covered hillsides as warriors marched to battle. They adorned our chiefs and stood as symbols of rank and mana. In 1901, however, it seems that their appearance in public had become rare. Thus, to view a cloak and helmet then surely must have stirred some feelings.

In 1912, when Kalani'ōpu'u's 'ahu 'ula and mahiole were unexpectedly gifted to New Zealand, they became part of the national museum's collection and remained there until their departure. We write this from New Zealand, in the country these objects left in March 2016. Before they were returned to Hawai'i, we observed history as it happened. We watched the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole as they were prepared for their anticipated journey home, and as they lay in front of us, we could only imagine the moana, or the ocean, that they would once again cross. These sacred symbols of our chiefs would be making their

way home, not by wa'a, or canoe, but by plane, leaving a trail of histories along the way, turning the ocean red once again, but this time with ancestral memories. We could see them, we could feel them, and at times we could hear their feathered whispers, telling us of a time yet to come. Their journey would continue.

As we marvelled at their beauty and at the skill of our ancestors, we realised that each generation of people has seen and understood these objects differently, always revealing something about the times in which they lived. What a Hawaiian in 1779 must have thought at the sight of an 'ahu 'ula and mahiole – treasured items that were apparently so abundant that they could turn oceans red – would have been drastically different to what a Hawaiian in 1901 would have thought, just a few short years after the illegal annexation of Hawai'i. These reactions and inspirations are different to those that felt by us, raised in the years following the Hawaiian Renaissance, and raised to be aloha 'āina. Our interpretations of them will always be a product of the present, of who and what we are *now*, of where and when we happen to be today.

For us, right now, these objects represent hope. They represent a past that *lives* and breathes in the present, a past that can and will continue to inspire. They represent our ali'i, and their skill and resilience. They represent the work of our people, who could conceptualise and create such intricate designs – so intricate that our contemporary minds cannot fully grasp how they completed them. They represent stories and the richness of our histories. They represent journeys across oceans, unconfined by human-created boundaries. They represent connections – old and new – and they represent kuleana, or a sense of responsibility to our land, to our nation, and to our moana, our region. We can only imagine what they will come to mean in the future, what they will continue to teach us about ourselves, what they will continue to whisper and tell us when we are ready to listen, what they will continue to reveal about our pasts and our presents when we are prepared to follow. For now, we smile knowing that they are home to start a new journey, having crossed the expansive moana, reminding us of the 'ula (red) that has and shall continue to unite us.

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Notes

1. The seminars were organised by Sean Mallon (Senior Curator Pacific Cultures) and held in the Conservation Laboratory at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa), Wellington, in February 2016. The presenters were Rangi Te Kanawa, Mark Sykes, Grace Hutton, Anne Peranteau and Sean Mallon from Te Papa; and Emalani Case, Kawikaka'iulani Aipa and Kamalani Kapeliela from the Hawai'i Cultural Centre, Wellington.
2. A short version of this chronology was published as a Te Papa blog post on 18 February 2016 (Mallon 2016).
3. Senior Curator Pacific Cultures, Te Papa.
4. I am grateful to the blog site *Nupepa* for drawing our attention to this newspaper article. See 'Kalaniopuu's ahuula and mahiole that he placed on Cook, 1779/2016', *Nupepa* blog post, 17 February 2016, retrieved 31 August 2016 from <https://nupepa-hawaii.com/2016/02/17/kalaniopuus-ahuula-and-mahiole-he-placed-on-cook-1779-2016>.
5. The display *Feathers of the Gods* was curated by Stuart Park with assistance from Janet Davidson (Concept Leader Pacific).
6. These exhibitions were *Mana Whenua* (1997–present); *Mana Pasifika: celebrating Pacific Cultures* (1997–2006) and *Treaty of Waitangi: signs of a nation* (1997–present).
7. One of Te Papa's key organisational principles is mana taonga, which 'affirms that the spiritual and cultural connections of the people to whom taonga or treasures belong are acknowledged at Te Papa. In a practical sense, this accords rights to those with such connections, to participate in the care of their taonga or treasures, and to speak about and determine the display or other usage of their taonga or treasures by Te Papa' (Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa 2009: 7).
8. Clark also presented episode 51, 'The feathered face of war', in which he introduced the Hawaiian 'aumakua hulu manu (feathered god figure). Several experts from other Pacific Islands communities presented episodes later in the television series.
9. See the following photographic records in Te Papa's

collection database: Hawaiian Feather Cloak – Captain Cook relic FE000327, 07.07.1959, by Frank O'Leary, Te Papa (MA_B.009469); Captain Cook's Hawaiian feather cloak FE000327, 11.1977, by Roger Neich, Te Papa (MA_CT.001454); Captain Cook's Hawaiian cloak – under FE000327, 25.05.1984, by Warwick Wilson, Te Papa (MA_B.016115); 'ahu 'ula (feathered cloak) FE000327, Sep 2015, by Norman Heke, Te Papa (MA_I.369646).

10. The seminars were presented to Te Papa staff, Kava Club (a local Pacific and Māori arts collective) and Pacific Studies students from Victoria University of Wellington.
11. Conservator Textiles, Te Papa.
12. Conservator Textiles, Te Papa.
13. Conservator Ethnographic Objects and Sculpture, Te Papa.
14. See M.H. Marzan, and S.M. Ohukani'ohia Gon III, (2015). 'The Aesthetics, Materials, and Construction of Hawaiian Featherwork'. Pp. 26–38. In: Caldeira, L., Hellmich, C., Kaeppler, A.L., Kam, B.L. and Rose, R.G. (eds). *Royal Hawaiian featherwork: nā hulu ali'i*. San Francisco, CA: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco in collaboration with the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum and University of Hawai'i Press, 284 pp.
15. The principal reference used was Te Rangi Hiroa (P.H. Buck), *The material culture of the Cook Islands (Aitutaki)*, New Plymouth: Thomas Avery and Sons, 1927.
16. As described in Thérèse de Dillmont, *Encyclopedia of needlework* [English edition], Alsace: Mulhouse, 1886.
17. Collection Manager Pacific Cultures, Te Papa.
18. As the 'ahu 'ula and mahiole are more than 50 years old and were in a public collection, permission was required from the Ministry of Culture and Heritage for them to travel out of New Zealand. This was achieved under Section 7 of the Protected Objects Act 1975.
19. Ngāti Toa Rangatira; Kaumātua, Te Papa.
20. Kaihautū, Te Papa.
21. All three authors are members of the Hawai'i Cultural Centre, Wellington.

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