

Questions and Answers

1. How many repatriations have there been to date?

From 1985 to December 2013 Te Papa and its predecessors have repatriated 409 Māori and Moriori ancestral remains from overseas institutions. In 2003 Te Papa was formally mandated by the New Zealand Government to seek the repatriation of Māori and Moriori ancestral remains housed in institutions around the world. This programme is called the 'Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme'.

2. How many Māori and Moriori ancestral remains are still to be repatriated from overseas?

Te Papa estimates there are at least 650 Māori and Moriori ancestral remains still to be returned to New Zealand. Most of these are in European institutions.

3. How many ancestral remains has Te Papa returned to their place of origin?

Te Papa has returned 104 ancestral remains to their place of origin. Some of these *tūpuna* (ancestors) repatriated to locations in New Zealand are ancestral heads or skulls, which in the past may have been *Toi moko*.

4. What happens to the ancestral remains once they arrive at Te Papa?

The ancestral remains will be welcomed with a *pōwhiri* (ceremonial welcome) conducted by Te Papa and the local Māori community. This ceremony acknowledges their homecoming, and greets the ancestors with tears of affection and warmth.

They will then go through a period of quarantine and conservation. Te Papa does not accession *Toi moko*, *kōimi tangata* and/or *kōiwi tangata* into their collections, but does have a guardianship role and will care for and house the remains until the time they return to their kith and kin in New Zealand.

Once back in New Zealand further research will be undertaken to verify and confirm provenance before being returned to their *whānau* (family) of origin.

5. What does Te Papa's research into the ancestral remains involve?

Te Papa's research involves a lot of detective work, and over the next five to ten years we will concentrate on four streams of research, including:

- a. Verifying accession information held by individual museums about the *Toi moko* and *kōiwi tangata* they house;
- b. Verifying historical information that is contained in Māori oral histories and early accounts by European and American explorers, collectors and traders from the time of 1770,

- c. In particular the inter-tribal battles that may have led to the trade of their enemies' heads; and
- d. Working with experts in *tā moko* (Māori tattooing) to possibly identify provenance through *moko* (tattoo) designs and patterns on the *Toi moko*.

6. Does Te Papa conduct DNA Testing?

Te Papa does not conduct DNA testing on Māori or Moriori ancestral remains, however, this may be considered as a possible avenue to follow in the future.

7. What is the significance of this repatriation to the Māori and Moriori communities?

The Māori and Moriori people are humbled by the gracious gesture of the American Museum of Natural History in New York.

Returning the remains of these ancestors allows Māori and Moriori living today to reconcile and honour the past. For Māori and Moriori communities the connection between the past and present is at the forefront of their collective memory.

Although the identity of the *Toi moko* is unknown, we honour them by bringing them home and offering them a resting place where their *wairua* (spirit) may rest.

8. Who is meeting the costs of this repatriation from the USA?

Following discussions by Māori and the New Zealand Government in the late 1990s Te Papa was formally mandated in 2003 by the Government, and resourced appropriately to undertake these repatriations. Te Papa has budgeted approximately \$100,000 (NZ dollars) towards ensuring the 107 *Toi moko*, *kōimi tangata* and *kōiwi tangata* return safely to New Zealand. These costs includes packing, freighting and travel for a small delegation from Te Papa to receive and participate in the handover ceremonies for the *tūpuna* (ancestors) in New York, and to also provide Māori cultural and repatriation seminars.

9. What is the history of the *Toi moko* being repatriated?

Of the 107 Māori and Moriori remains returning from New York, 35 are *Toi moko* (Māori preserved heads) associated with a British soldier and collector called Major Horatio Robley.

In the 1860s Robley was in New Zealand as a colonial soldier and became extremely fascinated with the Māori people and the *Toi moko*. When he returned to the UK he became an avid collector of *Toi moko*, and in the latter part of his life he had hoped to return his collection of 35 ancestral heads back to New Zealand. The New Zealand Government at that time was not agreeable to the arrangement and the collection was sold to New York in 1907, where they have been housed ever since. More information about the history of the ancestral remains being repatriated can be found in the attached documents.

10. What is a *Toi moko*?

A *Toi moko* is a preserved Māori tattooed head. These heads were a traditional part of Māori culture and were created to either revere a loved one or revile an enemy.

In traditional times a *Toi moko* of an important chief belonging to an enemy could be returned to the mourning *whānau* (family) as a means of creating peace between the tribal groups. When Europeans began to arrive in *Aotearoa*, they became curious about the *Toi moko*, and through this contact the added dimension of trading in mummified heads became

an important part of interaction between local Māori tribes and visiting Europeans, Australians and Americans.

Toi moko are also known as *mokomōkai*, *mokamōkai*, *ūpoko tuhi*, and *mōkai*.

11. Is a *Toi moko* a ‘shrunken head’ of a ‘slave’, ‘chief’ or ‘warrior’?

Although from time to time, *Toi moko* have been referred to as ‘shrunken heads’ this is not the correct term for these Māori ancestral remains. Importantly some *Toi moko* are the heads of Māori chiefs and warriors that may have died of natural causes or fallen in battle. There is also evidence that some of the *Toi moko* are heads of ‘slaves’ that were purposefully created for the trade to Europeans, Americans and Australians.

12. Who and what is a *kōimi tangata*?

Kōimi tangata is the Moriori word for skeletal remains of their ancestors. The Moriori are the indigenous Polynesian people of Rēkohu also known as the Chatham Islands. Rēkohu is a group of islands to the east of the main New Zealand islands in the South Pacific.

Most of the Moriori skeletal remains departed from their homeland, through activities associated with newly established colonial and regional museums in New Zealand after the 1860s. Many of the directors of these institutions also collaborated in this trade as well.

The Moriori people see the return of the *karapuna* (ancestors) as an important part of reviving their culture, language and understanding of their place in Polynesian history.

13. Who and what is a *kōiwi tangata*?

Kōiwi tangata is the Māori word for Māori skeletal remains. Although it has been mentioned above that prior to 1840 the mummified heads of enemy chiefs and warriors were actively traded overseas, most of the Māori skeletal remains left later through activities associated with newly established colonial and regional museums in New Zealand after the 1860s. Many of the directors of these institutions also collaborated in this trade as well.