

Ko Tītokowaru: te poupou rangatira Tītokowaru: a carved panel of the Taranaki leader

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ABSTRACT: In 1905, Augustus Hamilton, the director of the Colonial Museum (now the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, or Te Papa), bought for the museum a carved poupou (panel) that depicted Taranaki rangatira (chief) Tītokowaru, which he acquired from his friend Henry Hill, a Napier educator and collector. Around 1953, this poupou was loaned to the Department of External Affairs for display at the newly opened New Zealand Embassy in Paris, France. The poupou remained in Paris until recently, when research in 2012 revealed its whereabouts, and ensuing discussions allowed its return to Aotearoa New Zealand. This paper documents the history and initial acquisition of the Tītokowaru poupou for the museum collections, its loan to Paris, and its subsequent return to Te Papa in October 2013.

KEYWORDS: Riwha Tītokowaru, poupou (carved panel), tā moko (tattoo), Māori, rangatira (leader), Te Papa, National Museum, Dominion Museum, Paris Embassy, Augustus Hamilton, Henry Hill, East Coast, Taranaki, France, New Zealand.

Introduction

E kore a hau e mate
Ka ore a hau e mate
Ka mate ano te mate
Ka ora ano a hau

– Tītokowaru 1868

I shall not die
I shall not die
When death itself is dead
I shall be alive

– translation of Tītokowaru (1868) quote by Maguire
(2011: 61)

Riwha Tītokowaru (c. 1823–88) is remembered for his declaration ‘I shall not die’, which originated in a letter he wrote on 25 June 1868, when imprisoned for land occupation, to a chief at Māwhitiwhiti of the Ngāruahine iwi (tribe) (Cowan 1923: 174). The letter was intended to instil defiance in the Māori of Taranaki; the quote above is an excerpt from the second page of this letter.

Tītokowaru was a prophet, a successful military strategist, a visionary, a peacemaker and a renowned leader of the Taranaki iwi (peoples). He was born in Ōkaiawai, south Taranaki, and was referred to as Riwha in his early days because the name Tītokowaru was reserved for his father and grandfather. He belonged to the Ngāti Manuhiakāi hapū (sub-tribe) of the Ngāruahine iwi, and Tangahoe hapū of Ngāti Ruanui. On his mother’s side he was affiliated to the Ngā Rauru iwi, also of the west coast of the North Island.

Tītokowaru’s fighting tactics were well documented during the New Zealand (land) wars on the Taranaki west coast in 1868–69, a period that has been referred to as ‘Tītokowaru’s war’ (Belich 2010). He earned the respect of non-Māori at this time, possibly because they were fearful of his power and the implications of someone in his position so publicly standing up to confiscations of West Coast whenua (land). Tītokowaru had the ability to use and combine Māori and Pākehā (European) knowledge, including writing in Māori (Belich 2010: 4). Initially he was a pacifist, and identified with the peaceful beliefs of both



Christian and Pai Mārire religious movements (Belich 2010: 5). It is thought that he trained early on as a tohunga (priest), as he was later known to perform ancient Māori ceremonies, principally in matters relating to war (Belich 2010: 7).

Anecdotal accounts of Tītōkōwaru's appearance differed depending on the objectivity of the person describing him. Apparently, he did not have a facial tā moko (tattoo), and was 'five feet nine in height and somewhat spare and muscular, with fine bone, an alert active man, but by no means good looking' (Cowan 1911: 333). It was said that 'his skin was rather darker than the general run of Maoris, and his nose low in the bridge, with wide nostrils' (Cowan 1911: 333). Later in life, he had a long black beard and, due to illness, became frail and reserved (Belich 2010: 7).

Another memorable trait was Tītōkōwaru's distinctive deep, loud voice, which demanded attention, impressing his friends and frightening his foes (Belich 2010: 7). He was known to dress quite formally in a European suit, complete with a black bowler hat, before the wars, then later wore more casual attire that was a mix of European and Māori fashion of the time (Belich 2010: 8).

Tītōkōwaru carried wounds such as the scar from a rifle bullet received at the battle at Sentry Hill in 1864, which cost him the sight in his right eye (Belich 2010: 5). He was imprisoned for unlawful land occupations after the 1868–69 wars, during which time his health suffered greatly. He died in 1888 at his homestead in Ōkaiawai, and it is said that close to 3000 people attended the tangi (funeral gathering) (Broughton 1993: 26). It is not known if he had children.

Acquisition of the poupou Tītōkōwaru

Research of the Māori collections of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa) in 2012 revealed the existence of a carved panel of Tītōkōwaru (Fig. 1). It was discovered that the carving had originally been acquired by Henry Thomas Hill (1849–1933), a collector and educationalist of British descent (O'Rourke 2007). Hill advocated for education on North Island's East Coast, and resided in Napier when he did most of his collecting. He was also a keen scientist who contributed to the natural

Fig. 1 Tītōkōwaru poupou, New Zealand, c.1850–1900, wood, pāua shell, paint, 1115 × 375 × 66 mm. Maker unknown (Te Papa ME002589).



Fig. 2 *A collection of Māori carvings of various kinds from the East Cape District in Mr H. Hills Collection, Napier. The Titokowaru poupou is situated just right centre of the image (photo: photographer and date unknown, but assumed to be A. Hamilton, c. 1899–1900; Te Papa MA_B.021215).*

environment collections and publications of the Colonial Museum (now Te Papa)¹ in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Hill acquired hundreds of taonga Māori (treasures) from Hawke's Bay, Gisborne and East Cape on the East Coast. He later sold the majority – more than 400 pieces of his Māori collection – to the Colonial Museum in Wellington via Augustus Hamilton (1853–1913). Hamilton was director of the museum from 1903 until his death in 1913, and oversaw the name change of the Colonial Museum to the Dominion Museum in 1907. The two were well acquainted and correspondence between them was informal at times, with Hill often addressing Hamilton as his 'Dear friend' (O'Rourke 2007). An avid collector himself, Hamilton acquired taonga from numerous collectors throughout his leadership of the museum, making significant contributions to its nineteenth-century Māori collections.

Hamilton was heavily involved in the day-to-day business of the museum, collecting and recording taonga Māori, and photographing people and taonga – specifically people wearing cloaks from the museum. Hamilton organised for some images of Hill's collections in Napier to be taken in 1898–1900. One in particular was taken of various items that included the Titokowaru poupou (Fig. 2) (O'Rourke 2007: 73). In 1904 and 1905, Hamilton organised the purchase of 422 Māori artefacts from Hill at a cost of £500, to be housed at the museum on behalf of the New Zealand government (O'Rourke 2007: 128). In an inventory of the Māori collections belonging to 'Mr H. Hill of Napier' on 17 September 1904, the Titokowaru poupou – described as a 'carved slab (green mere)' – was catalogued as item number 51, and was purchased for £2 (Hill 1904–05; O'Rourke 2007: 134).

According to Te Papa archives, the pou pou depicting Tītokowaru was integrated into the Colonial Museum collections around 1905 (Hill 1904–05). It appears that it was not formally accessioned or registered with a museum registration number at that time. Additional conflicting archival records specify that the pou pou was deposited at the museum as part of Alexander Turnbull's collection in 1913. Alexander Horsburgh Turnbull (1868–1918) bequeathed numerous taonga to the Dominion Museum, and the documentation tabled this pou pou as part of his collection after his death. It was registered in 1913 with the museum registration number 2589 and description 'Carved slab figure Tītokowaru' amongst other 'articles received from A H Turnbull esq. at various times' (Turnbull 1918–19). It is unclear exactly how and why the pou pou was registered and associated with Turnbull as the collector rather than Hill, but it is assumed that as Turnbull deposited parts of his collection at the museum between 1893 and 1915, the pou pou became assimilated into his collection. As a consequence, the provenance remained unknown until correspondence was discovered between Hill and Hamilton listing the pou pou in Hill's collection, along with the photograph of the carving amongst Hill's items confirming this (Fig. 2) (O'Rourke 2007).

No information on the date or place in which the pou pou was carved, or the name of the carver, have been located, but it is likely that it was carved in the 1880s or early 1890s. As a photograph was taken of the pou pou in Hill's collection in 1899 or 1900 (Fig. 2), this indicates it was carved before 1898. In one of Hill's letters to Hamilton, dated 29 August 1904, he confirmed that he had personally acquired all the items in his collection from the 'East Coast and Bay of Plenty districts' and that 'they represent a separate and special type of Native work and production' (O'Rourke 2007: 119). Hamilton, as the director, also reported on the purchase of Hill's collection in the *Museum Bulletin* for the year 1905, acknowledging that it was acquired by the government in two instalments, 'mainly representing the ethnology of the people between Napier and East Cape' (Hamilton 1906: 20).

Description of the pou pou

The Tītokowaru pou pou is a commanding representation of Riwha Tītokowaru. A pou or pou pou is described by Hamilton as a 'post made from upright broad slabs usually carved to depict ancestors' (1901: 108). This figure has

been carved out of a solid block of wood and has the following dimensions: height, 111.5 cm; width, 37.5 cm; depth, 1.7–6.6 cm; weight 9.20 kg. The carving in the panel is shallow, detailed and precise, with soft, rounded lines in the primary figure (Fig. 1). It is not known what type of wood was used for the carving, but it is likely an endemic hardwood species such as rimu (*Dacrydium cupressinum*), mataī (*Prumnopitys taxifolia*) or tōtara (*Podocarpus totara*). The wood has been painted dark brown on the front only.

The pou is constructed around the central standing figure of Tītokowaru, with two elaborately carved secondary figures standing in profile behind him (Fig. 1). Specific design elements and identifiers have been implemented to indicate his high status and mana (authority). At the bottom of carving, the name 'TITOKOWARU' is inscribed in capital Roman letters (Fig. 3).

The green-painted mere (hand club) in the figure's right hand symbolises Tītokowaru's rangatiratanga (chieftainship) (Fig. 4). His face is long and lifelike, with pāua-shell (*Haliotis iris*) inserts as reflective pupils within the eyes. Pāua shell is also used to fill and highlight the white tips of the two huia (*Heteralocha acutirostris*) tail feathers worn in the hair (Fig. 5). The adornment of huia tail feathers is also representative of Tītokowaru's status or mana.

The figure's facial tā moko has certain aspects in common with nineteenth-century Māori tattoos, including three to four lines or rays on the forehead, known as tiwhana (Fig. 5) (Robley 1998: 70). The designs on the chin and upper lip, the double spirals on the cheeks, the lines around the mouth and the two double spirals linked on the nose can also be seen in other tā moko. The symmetrical koru-based (loose spiral) design in the middle of the forehead may, however, relate more specifically to the wearer's social status and was often seen in high-ranking chiefs (Robley 1998). As Riwha Tītokowaru didn't have a tā moko, the presence of a facial tattoo on the pou pou likely represents a perceived symbolism for his status and importance as a leader, and not necessarily a literal depiction of the man.

The large, outward-deflecting double spiral patterns carved into the figure's shoulders and thighs (Fig. 1) are known as rauru, in which haehae (long parallel grooves) and pākati (short dog-tooth patterns) are carved in conjunction (Mead 1986: 170). Mead (1986: 170) states that this pattern commemorates Rauru, the eponymous ancestor of Ngā Rauru of Taranaki (an iwi of Tītokowaru) and a famous carver known throughout the East Coast of North Island.



Fig. 3 Tītokowaru poupou. Close-up of the writing at the bottom of the carving (Te Papa ME002589).



Fig. 4 Tītokowaru poupou. Close-up of the mere (hand club) (Te Papa ME002589).

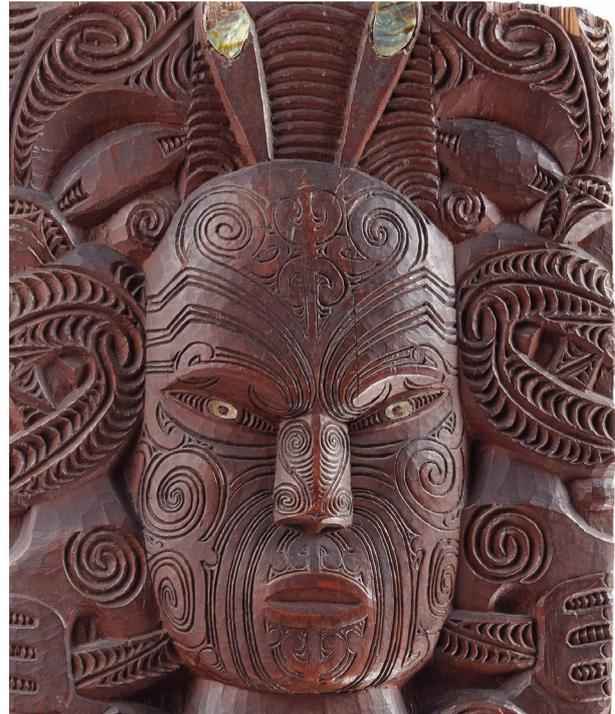


Fig. 5 Tītokowaru poupou. Close-up of the face (Te Papa ME002589).

Smaller, less elaborately carved double spirals are located in the joints of all three figures. Tītokowaru has a distinctive collar-bone motif that runs in an arc across his chest as haehae and a single line of pākati (Fig. 4). The carved designs on the face and body of the primary figure show

similarities with other whakairo (carving) designs from different areas, which could make it difficult to attribute the style to a specific area or carver. A metallic stamp with the registration number 2589 is fixed to the upper edge in the middle of the carving.

Loan of the poupou to the New Zealand Embassy in Paris

In 1949, the Department of External Affairs (now the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade)² requested a loan of Māori carving and weaving examples from the Dominion Museum for the Paris legation at the New Zealand Embassy in France (Māori Ethnology 1947–72). Around 1953, the Tītokowaru poupou was listed with 10 other taonga from the museum loaned to External Affairs for the Paris legation. The Tītokowaru poupou was recorded as a ‘Carved Human Figure 2389 [error for 2589]’ (Foreign Affairs Artifacts c. 1978–91).

In 1954, *Te Ao Hou* magazine featured an account from an East Coast farmer, Wallace (Warihi) Tako, who had travelled to Europe and America the previous year and saw the Tītokowaru poupou at the New Zealand Embassy in Paris (Taylor 1954: 14). He was told at the time by Miss Jean McKenzie, the chargé d’affaires, that the carving ‘once belonged to Tītokowaru’ and that she had obtained it from a French museum and intended to return it to New Zealand. It has not been possible to verify whether Tītokowaru ever owned the carving, and the carving has never been associated with a French museum.

In 1982, John Yaldwyn, director of the National Museum, requested the return of the loaned Tītokowaru poupou in order to catalogue, register and check it for conservation purposes (Foreign Affairs Artifacts c. 1978–91). That year, the carving was measured and photographed in detail by a Department of External Affairs representative; at the time, these were the only known recent photographs of the poupou Tītokowaru (Foreign Affairs Artifacts c. 1978–91). However, it was then decided by the museum ethnologist that the carving should remain in Paris because of its size and the expense of returning it to New Zealand (Foreign Affairs Artifacts c. 1978–91).

Return of the poupou to Te Papa

The rediscovery of the carved panel was initiated by archival research conducted in 2011–12 into Te Papa’s Māori collections at the New Zealand Embassy in Paris in the 1970s. Archived material referred to the carved Tītokowaru amongst the 10 museum taonga displayed at the embassy, and 10 Department of External Affairs items returning from Paris for conservation (Foreign Affairs Artifacts c. 1978–91). While most of the museum taonga were returned in the

1970s and 1980s, a physical search of the museum’s whakairo Māori collection in 2012 indicated that the location of the Tītokowaru carved panel was unknown.

In April 2012, as part of my continued search for the panel, I sent the images of the poupou taken in 1982 and related material to New Zealand Embassy staff in Paris in the hope of locating the carving. The Tītokowaru poupou was subsequently located on display on the main wall of the reception area of the New Zealand Embassy in Paris.

While attending a conference in France in June 2012, I arranged a time with the New Zealand Embassy in Paris to see and photograph the Tītokowaru poupou. On my return to New Zealand, Te Papa placed a request for the loaned carving to be returned to New Zealand and the museum. Following discussions between representatives at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the museum covering the provenance of the Tītokowaru poupou, its ownership and the length of the loan, it was determined that the carving be returned to Te Papa after six decades abroad. A contingent of Te Papa staff was present at the New Zealand Embassy in Paris in October 2013 while Paris conservators reported on the condition of the carving and oversaw its packing and preparation for travel. Te Papa staff accompanied the carving from Paris to New Zealand to ensure the physical and cultural safety of its return. While no information is known about the maker or location of the carving, the person represented by the poupou has importance to the people of Taranaki, both whānau (family) and iwi. On the day of the carving’s return to the museum, several members of the associated iwi and hapū of Tītokowaru supported Te Papa staff in its welcome home. They previously had no knowledge of this poupou, its origins or its whereabouts.

E te Rangatira, i ngā kanohi, ngā ngākau o ōu uri, kāore anō koe ki a mate.

Conclusions and future research

Continued research is planned to investigate the origins of this poupou of Tītokowaru by tracing Hill’s movements and collecting along the East Coast in the mid- to late 1800s. Details of when and where the poupou was carved would contribute to an understanding of its history and provenance, including who may have carved it and why. What was the initial intention for the poupou? Was it carved to honour Tītokowaru? Did Tītokowaru ever own the carving? Where did the poupou originally sit? Was it in a meeting house or another type of structure?



Fig. 6 Taiaha (long fighting staff), Te Porohanga (assumed), New Zealand, 1800s, wood, red sealing wax, kōkōwai (red ochre), cordage, 1720 × 61 × 25 mm. Maker unknown (Te Papa ME002380).

Further research into the origins of the Tītokowaru carving may be undertaken by studying the patterns that are unique to this poupou, potentially making connections with carvers or carving styles from various iwi and regions. Some carvers incorporate a signature or sign that is unique to them, and it is possible this may be the case for this poupou (Simmons 1986: 85). Talking to carvers could also shed some light on its origins. More information can possibly be

obtained by analysing the wood, pāua or paint on the poupou. Finally, continued museum archival research into the movement of the poupou following its acquisition and subsequent loan to Paris may return additional knowledge.

Research on Tītokowaru and the poupou has initiated further discussions regarding taonga in Te Papa's collections associated with the Taranaki leader, including a taiaha (long fighting staff; ME002380) (Fig. 6) that is thought to be



Fig. 7 Mere pounamu (greenstone hand club) Te Takere, New Zealand, 1500s, kawakawa (dark pounamu [greenstone]), 365 × 115 × 21 mm. Ngā Ruahine (attributed) (Te Papa ME013928).

Te Porohanga, his famous divining rod or staff. On 11 July 1868, at Te Ngutu-o-te-manu, this sacred taiaha helped Tītōkōwaru select his fighting 12 ‘Te kau ma rua’ (Belich 2010: 83). The 12, along with 50 others (who did not include Tītōkōwaru), successfully attacked Turuturu Mōkai, a British constabulary redoubt, that night (Belich 2010: 86).

The weapon that is assumed to be Te Porohanga has a movable top or head. The head is well carved with S-curve

spirals and a straight centre line. Red sealing wax circles the eyes. Kōkōwai (red ochre) has been used to cover the wood. Cordage is fashioned to the top, and the crown of the carved head is broken and appears to be old. The total length is 172 cm, the head measures 15.7 cm, and the widest part of the blade is 6.1 cm, narrowing to at least 2.7 cm. The depth is 2.5 cm and the weight is 767.7 g. The taiaha was collected and sold through private dealers until it was presented to the museum by Walter Buller in October 1911, when it was given the Buller registration number 375 and later the Dominion Museum number 2380.

Te Papa also holds a striking mere pounamu (greenstone hand club) that is said to have been Tītōkōwaru’s mere Te Takere (ME013928), acquired in the 1800s (Fig. 7). It is stated in the acquisition notes for this mere that it once belonged to Tītōkōwaru and that the previous owner was ‘Reverend Broughton, Nukumarū Pā’. The estimated date of production is 1500–1800. The pounamu is identified as a type of kawakawa (dark greenstone). The handle has been broken and at some stage mended. The blade tapers to a pointed butt, with a small hole drilled straight through. The total length is 36.5 cm, the width 11.5 cm, the depth 2.1 cm and the weight 1,153.1 g.

These three taonga represent a strong association to Tītōkōwaru, either through depiction or through provenance and ownership. They each tell a story of the Taranaki leader at a time in New Zealand history when issues of war, peace and authority over land were pertinent.

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Notes

- 1 Te Papa originated as the Colonial Museum, which opened in 1865 behind Wellington's Parliament Buildings. In 1907, the museum became known as the Dominion Museum, and in 1936 it moved to a new site in Buckle Street. In 1972, it was renamed the National Museum. Twenty years later, in 1992, the museum became known as the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, and in 1998 it moved to its current site on Cable Street, Wellington.
- 2 The Department of External Affairs, in charge of all official foreign affairs, was established in 1943. It changed its name to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1970, then the Ministry of External Relations and Trade in 1988. In 1993 it became the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), as it is currently known.

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