

MONDAY 9 MAY 2011

MEDIA RELEASE

FIRST REPATRIATION OF MĀORI REMAINS FROM ROUEN MUSEUM, FRANCE



The first repatriation of Toi Moko (tattooed preserved heads) from France will take place from the Rouen Museum today, 9th May 2011.

‘This momentous occasion is filled with joy but is also a time for reflection on the journeys of these tupuna (ancestors). The French Government have provided Te Papa, on behalf of Maori, the ability to bring these ancestors home’, said Ms Michelle Hippolite, Te Papa’s Kaihautū.

The Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation programme has been working with the Rouen Museum to see the safe return of Māori remains to Te Papa since 2007 and as part of a wider repatriation initiative across Europe.

Rouen Museum was proactive in requesting the repatriation of the Toi moko housed at their Museum, citing the need to bring closure to the *"hateful trafficking of another era"*.

In order to expedite the many red tape issues around repatriation of human remains Rouen Senator Catherine Morin-Desailly and Senator Richet proposed a new bill which would allow the repatriation of Toi moko from France. This was passed by the French government on 5 May 2010 and signals a sea change in attitudes to the repatriation of human remains held in French museums.

For the Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation programme this is the first repatriation of Māori human remains from France. Estimates vary between 12 and 20 as to the exact numbers of Toi moko held in French Museums which may follow.

In addition to the Rouen repatriation a further eight Māori ancestral remains have been repatriated by Te Papa from five museums and institutions in Sweden, Germany, Norway and France between 29th April and 9th May 2011.

The institutions are:

- Lund University, Lund, Sweden. (29th April)
- Frankfurt Museum of World Cultures, Frankfurt, Germany. (3rd May)
- Senckenburg Museum of Natural History, Frankfurt, Germany (3rd May)
- Oslo University, Oslo, Norway (5th May)
- Rouen Museum, Rouen, France (9th May)

Of the ancestral remains being repatriated there are three Toi moko (tattooed preserved heads) and five kōiwi tangata (skeletal remains). The Toi moko and kōiwi tangata are to be received onto Te Papa's Marae on Thursday 12th May.

'I would like to thank our Museum and University colleagues involved in supporting and planning for the repatriation of these tupuna, said Michelle Hippolite.

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Further information regarding the repatriating institutions and the Aotearoa Repatriation Team follows this media release.

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Notes for editors:

Toi Moko from Rouen – A Background

The Toi moko was given to the Rouen Museum by one of their citizens in 1875 and according to their accession notes it is that of a Māori Warrior. There is no further information about the Toi moko but research on provenance will be undertaken on return to New Zealand.

Background Information about the Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme

Karanga Aotearoa is the government mandated authority that negotiates the repatriation of Māori ancestral remains on behalf of Māori. The Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation programme invites institutions to repatriate kōiwi tangata and Toi moko held in their institutions. Once an institution indicates they are willing to take the conversation further, the programme keeps in regular contact and then submits a repatriation case for the governing body to consider. In some situations a repatriation agreement with an institution can take less than 12 months, however, in most circumstances a longer period is required.

Toi moko and kōiwi tangata are returned from overseas institutions to Te Papa on an interim basis only. Neither Toi moko nor skeletal remains are accessioned as part of Te Papa's collections and Te Papa has a policy prohibiting their exhibition. Rather, kōiwi remain in Te Papa's dutiful custody pending return to their attributed place of origin. The single goal of repatriation is not to hold the remains at Te Papa indefinitely but to return them to their communities. Māori and Moriori believe that through this ultimate return to their domestic homelands the dead and their living descendants will retrieve their dignity.

International repatriations

To date, Te Papa and its predecessor, the National Museum, has repatriated ancestral remains from twelve countries bringing home close to 322 kōiwi tangata (skeletal remains). We estimate that there are over 500 still awaiting their homecoming.

Domestic repatriations

To date, Te Papa and the Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme have returned 83 ancestral remains to their papa kāinga.

Domestic repatriations have been carried out in the North Island to Ngāti Kurī, Ngāi Tai, Te Tairāwhiti, Muaūpoko, Ngāti Apa, Ngāti Maniapoto, Whanganui, Tauranga Moana iwi (i.e. Ngāi Te Rangi, Ngāti Ranginui and Ngāti Pukenga), Ngāti Whakaue and Ngāti Te Ata.

In the South Island they have been returned to Ngāi Tahu and Rangitāne o Wairau.