

# HISTORICAL AND TECHNICAL REPORT

*TE HERU O HONGI*  
*HONGI'S HAIRCOMB*

**E4877**

**BRISTOL MUSEUM & ART GALLERY**



**REPORT PRODUCED BY**  
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## KUPUTAKA/GLOSSARY

<b>Kupu ē-kaupapa/Term</b>	<b>Whakamāramatanga/Definition</b>
Haerenga	Journey
Hapū	Sub-tribe
Haehae	Parallel lines used in carving designs
Heru	hair comb ornament (also known as a titireia)
Hītori	History
Iwi	Tribe
Kaiwhakairo	Carver
Karu	Eye/s
Kaumātua	Respected elders
Kawa	Protocols of practice, how things are done (see also tikanga)
Paraoa	Whalebone
Pūrākau	Stories, oral history
Mātauranga	Traditional knowledge
Rangahau	Research
Rangatira	Chief or chiefly in nature
Rauponga	Combination of haehae lines and pātaki.
Taonga	Cultural treasure or artefact
Tāhuhu Kōrero	Background story
Tikanga	Correct procedure or custom (see kawa)
Tinana	Body
Tūpuna	Ancestors
Te Ao Māori	The Māori World or Māori worldview
Uhi	Chisel
Uri	Descendants
Waewae	Legs
Whakanakonako	Embellishments
Whakapapa	Genealogy
Whānau/Whanaunga	Relative/s

## KUPU WHAKATAKI/PREFACE

*‘Ko te manu e kai ana i te miro nōnā te ngahere, ko te manu e kai ana i te mātauranga nōnā te ao.’*

The forest belongs to the bird who feasts on the miro berry, the world belongs to the bird who feasts on education.  
Māori Whakatauki/Proverb

The *whakapapa* and *hītori* of *taonga*, or the provenance and history of cultural treasures, are as important as the items themselves. Whenever the term *taonga* is used within this report, the author is referring to cultural treasures, although Western practice usually refers to them simply as artefacts or objects.

*Mātauranga* (knowledge) of who the *kairaranga* (weaver) or the *kaiwhakairo* (carver) was, the *iwi* or *hapū* (subtribe) from which they affiliate, the identity of the receiver, and the reasons for the gifting – are also *taonga* and unfortunately, far too much of this information has been lost to time.

Māori *taonga* rest in countless institutions around the world, museums, galleries, libraries, and private collections, and although the author does not take issue with this as such; he does feel that far too many *taonga* are displayed, or held, without an appropriate level of cultural and historical context. After visiting several museums in Europe, the United States of America, Australia, and the United Kingdom, the author noticed that several of our *taonga* had either minimal information, no cultural context, or worse, some information panels bore the terms ‘Unknown’ or ‘Unidentified’ and the name of the collector or collection was more prominent than the *taonga* itself.

As a weaver, a novice carver, and a Māori historian, the author felt that he was able to examine select *taonga* from institutions in countries to which he travels and produce documents that would provide these institutions with a general level of historical and technical information. The author has been fortunate to have undertaken extensive international travel, for work, research, and holidays, and has recently begun integrating museum and gallery visits into these trips; contacting institutions prior to any of his *haerenga* (journeys), to ascertain what *taonga* they have, and what he might want to access and examine – or what they would like to know more about.

By no means does he claim to be an expert in the study of Māori *taonga* and feels that there are others of greater standing within the field; however, he offers his knowledge, as best as he is able, to produce research documents that provide substantially more information than is currently held on these specific *taonga*.

The compilation and provision of these reports serve several purposes: to do the *taonga* justice by visiting and spending time with them; to examine them and promote their whereabouts; make their locations known to Māori (and other interested persons); and to uncover their *pūrākau* (stories) and bring them back to life. This third practice of uncovering their *pūrākau* achieves several outcomes, these being: to reunite them with *uri* (direct descendants) and *whanaunga* (relatives); to provide the institutions with a credible and informative record of the respective *taonga*; and ensuring their stories are not forgotten – *ka maumahara tonu tātou kia rātou*.

This particular *pūrākau* includes the experiences of an influential Ngāpuhi *rangatira* (chief), Hongi Hika, who visited Sydney, Australia, in 2014, and England in 1820; where he was feted by British society; attended Cambridge University and assisted in the compilation of an English Māori dictionary; visited the House of Lords and met several dignitaries; and was given an audience with His Majesty King George IV. This *taonga* is a *heru*/hair comb which after being gifted in the Bay of Islands, Aotearoa New Zealand, subsequently made its way to Bristol, England, in the mid-1800s.

## HAURONGO/BIOGRAPHY



The author's cultural background sees him affiliated with the *iwi* (tribes) of Ngāpuhi, Ngāi Tūhoe, Te Whakatōhea, and Te Whānau-a-Apanui, as well as having connections to Alveston in Gloucestershire, Bloomsbury in London, and Helsingborg in Sweden – all of which he has visited.

He is ex-military, having served in the army as a paratrooper and then military police officer; before studying a Bachelor of Arts, and then a Master of Teaching degree, and becoming a history teacher, and a military and Māori historian.

The author is a cultural practitioner: *kairaranga* (weaver), novice *kaiwhakairo* (carver), and *kaihaka* (performer).

He is a published author, producing articles, reports, and story books; produced a historical short film; delivered lectures around the world; and contributed towards exhibitions in institutions in Aotearoa New Zealand, and Australia.

The author's research has been referred to in the media; mentioned in legal cases; used on government websites; presented in museums; stopped the sale of *taonga* at auction and assisted in the repatriation of *taonga* back to Aotearoa New Zealand.

He has also appeared on television and radio in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia, as a *tumu kōrero* (historian), in documentaries, news, and cultural programs.

The author is a husband, father, and grandfather, who believes in the importance of teaching his *whānau* (family) *mātauranga* and *toi Māori* and including them in his *kaupapa rangahau* (research projects); taking them with him on these *haerenga* (journeys) if the opportunities allow.

It is his goal to contribute toward *Māoritanga* and *Te Ao Māori* (The Māori World) in a positive and impactful manner and hopes that this report goes some way towards achieving this objective.

## ARA RANGAHAU/RESEARCH METHODOLOGY



The author with Lisa Graves – Curator of The World Collection, and Deborah Hutchinson – Natural Sciences (Geology) Curator.

This report was compiled by the author, utilising: online and library/archive-based research; consultation with curators; conducting interviews with members of the Ngāpuhi *iwi* (tribe); as well as carrying out several physical examinations of the *heru/titireia* itself. The physical examination of the artefact was undertaken at the Bristol Museum & Art Gallery, on 24th January 2024. The online and library-based research was undertaken between March 2024 - November 2024. The consultation process and interviews with Ngāpuhi academics and kaumātua began in May 2024, and are ongoing, as per Māori *kawa* and *tikanga*.

Facsimiles of original documentation, provided by the Bristol Museum & Art Gallery during the research process, included: the *Bristol Institution donor book*, *Bristol Museum and Art Gallery Anthropological Register 1894*, and the *Bristol Museum and Art Gallery Index card for E4877*. Information from, and images of these documents, are provided by permission of the Bristol Museum & Art Gallery. All physical descriptions, including measurements, and any condition notes, were obtained during the author's examination of the *taonga*.

## HE MIHI/ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks, and acknowledgment goes to the following people and institutions for their support and assistance: Bristol Museum & Art Gallery (Lisa Graves – Curator of World Culture, Deborah Hutchinson, Natural Sciences (Geology) Curator, and Polly Bence – PhD Candidate at the universities of Bristol and Exeter); Te Runanga A Iwi O Ngāpuhi (TRAION), and the people of Ngāpuhi – for entrusting me with the honour of researching and examining this *taonga* (cultural treasure); Ngāpuhi Tohunga Whakapapa (Genealogist and historian) Hone Sadler.

# **PŪRONGO KŌRERO O NEHE HISTORICAL REPORT**

# TĀHUHU KŌRERO/BACKGROUND STORY

*‘Ana tā te uaua paraoa.’*

*‘Behold the strength of the sperm whale.*

*I am powerful – attack me at your own peril..’ – Māori whakataukī*

## Physical whakapapa

The Māori people have a long and meaningful relationship with *tohorā* (whales)

‘It is said that whales guided the canoes that brought the first people to New Zealand. In one story, the Tākitimu canoe travelled behind a pod of whales during a storm. In another, a water spirit, thought to be a whale, calmed the waves for the canoe of the Tainui tribes. Priests who navigated called on sea animals to guide the canoes and protect them from storms.’<sup>i</sup>

In traditions, there are many Māori who rode whales, one of these *pūrākau* (stories) tells of Paikea, the youngest son of Uenuku, a chief from Mangaia in the Cook Islands.



This carving of Paikea, the whale rider, was made by the well-known East Coast carver Pine Taiapa. It sits at the roof apex of Whitirēia marae in Whāngārā. Paikea is the ancestor of the Ngāti Konohi sub-tribe, here at Whāngārā, as well as the Ngai Tahu people of Te Wai Pounamu (South Island).<sup>ii</sup>

<sup>iii</sup>Paikea was the youngest and favourite son of the chief Uenuku from the island of Mangaia in the present day Cook Islands. This favouritism made Paikea's elder brothers extremely jealous. They conspired to kill Paikea while fishing offshore and tell Uenuku he drowned. But the night before the trip Paikea feigned sleep and overheard his brothers plotting. When far out to sea Paikea foiled their plan by deliberately sinking the canoe and drowning his brothers.

Now adrift in a great ocean, Paikea clung to a canoe plank and awaited his own death. It was then that Tohorā the whale appeared and lifted Paikea onto his great back. Tohorā took Paikea south to New Zealand and the settlement of Whangara just north of present-day Gisborne. Here, Paikea began a new and prosperous life.’



Te Tahī-o-te-rangi rode a whale from White Island to the Whakatāne River. And the priest Tūnui rode his pet whale at Cape Kidnappers in Hawke’s Bay.

A generic name for whale is *tohorā*, however, there are names for specific varieties, such as: *Hakurā* or *Iheihe* – Scamperdown whale; *Paikea* – Southern humpback whale, or a whale with a white belly and deep grooves along its length; *Pakake* – Minke whale; *Ūpokohue* – blackfish or pilot whale; and the much sought after *Pāraoa* – Sperm whale, hence the use of the word *pāraoa* when attached to whalebone *taonga*.



Scamperdown whale<sup>iv</sup>



Minke whale<sup>v</sup>



The Humpback whale<sup>vi</sup>



Sperm whale<sup>vii</sup>

Māori harvested food and materials from whales that occasionally stranded on their shores. This sustainable, low-impact whaling began changing in the late 1700s, when foreign ships from Western nations came to hunt the large pods of whales in Pacific waters; with a few Māori becoming involved in the later 1700s, such as famed Ngāti Kahu chief, Ruatara, who worked onboard the Sperm whaler the *Argo* as it travelled around the South Pacific. In the mid-1800s, Māori were working in the shore stations or commanding the whaleboats, as did the author’s Ngāpuhi *tupuna* (ancestors) who invested in a pair of whaling vessels and plied their trade in the waters of Ipīpiri (Bay of Islands).

The author is drawn to this *titireia* or *heru*, having personal connections with this *taonga* on two levels. In the first instance, there is likely a genuine link between Hongi Hika, who appears to be the original *kaitiaki* of this *titireia* or *heru*. Secondly, as mentioned above, the author’s *tupuna* (ancestors) were whalers, having purchased a pair of ‘clinkers’ and whaling in the waters of *Te Pewhairangi* (The Bay of Islands) in the latter half of the 1800s. Unfortunately, two of three chiefly brothers, Rewiri Tarapata, and Witeria Taawhi,<sup>viii</sup> lost their lives in a storm off the coast of *Rakaumangamanga*; a mountain that was sacred to the *hapū* of *Te Patukeha* and *Ngāti Kuta*, to which the author identifies as being one of his *maunga* (mountains).

## Metaphysical whakapapa

Available evidence suggests that this *heru* (hair comb) once belonged to the Ngāpuhi *rangatira* (chief), Hongi Hika, who was one of the most influential identities from 19<sup>th</sup> century New Zealand history.

Hika visited Sydney, Australia, in 1814, where he stayed for a period of five months. During this time, Hika observed the European legal system, infrastructure, agricultural practices, and trade. He was hosted by people such as the Reverend Samuel Marsden, Governor Lachlan Macquarie, and others. Whilst staying with Marsden, Hika carved a wooden bust of his own likeness (including traditional facial markings) from a fencepost on Marsden's Parramatta farm. Prior to his departure back to Aotearoa New Zealand, Hika was appointed a magistrate which would give him authority in dealing with British citizens in his homelands; however, as a chief in his own right, he already had the authority to direct *tauiwi* (foreigners) in his own lands.

In 1820, Hika travelled to England, staying for five months, and being feted by British High Society. He invited to several social events, fairs and soirees, and visited towns including London, Cambridge, Ipswich, and Norwich. Whilst in Cambridge, Hika attended Queens' College, where he assisted Prof. Samuel Lee (a renowned linguist) in compiling a Māori English dictionary titled *A Grammar and Vocabulary of the Language of New Zealand*. Hika also met young law student, Baron Phillippe de Thierry, with whom he agreed to a trade deal; whereby Hika would receive approximately 500 muskets, powder and ammunition, which he would use to devastating effect on his return to Aotearoa New Zealand, escalating the sanguineous Musket Wars – changing the face of warfare in his homelands forever. Whilst in London, Hika visited Westminster Palace on 21<sup>st</sup> October where he met the Peerage in the House of Lords; was given an audience with King George IV at Carlton House on 13<sup>th</sup> November where he was given a personal tour of the house, the armory, and then taken to view the Royal Arsenal in Woolwich and the Royal Menagerie in Pall Mall. Whilst in London, Hika was hosted by identities such as Sir John Mortlock and lady Jane Pym, and Reverend Basil Woodd.

In 1821, Hika stopped in Sydney, Australia, during his journey back to Aotearoa New Zealand, where he collected his cache of firearms, before returning to the Bay of Islands to begin planning his campaigns against southern tribes over the next few years.

\*For more information – see the Provenance section pp. 19-24

## Whakahokia mai/Repatriation

There does not appear to be any impropriety involved in the acquisition of this taonga by the Bristol Museum and Art Gallery. This *taonga* is recorded as being gifted by Bishop Pompallier to Count Pawel Strzelecki, who in turn, then on-gifted it to Naval officer William Breton, who left it to his daughter Adela after his death, and Adela donated this and other objects to the Bristol Museum and Art Gallery. A credible link can be made between this *heru* and Hongi Hika, and to the Ngāpuhi *iwi*, and this would be an amazingly historically and impactful *taonga* for a New Zealand-based museum to loan or have as part of their collection – especially Te Kōngahu Museum at the Waitangi Treaty Grounds.

# **PŪRONGO KUPU Ā-KAUPAPA**

## **TECHNICAL REPORT**

## Pūrongo Tīariari/Existing Report

Bristol Museum Object Catalogue (museum plus)

Some of the terminology here may come from historical records and thus be outdated.

This catalogue information is for research only and the PRM retains copyright over its contents.

Description:

Hair comb ornament. Whalebone.

Object numbers: E4877

Geographical provenance: Aotearoa New Zealand

Cultural group: Māori

Local name: Pāraoa heru or Titireia (Whalebone hair comb).

Persons: Unknown Maker. Original owner: Māori chief, Hongi Hika. Subsequent owners: Bishop Jean-Baptiste Francois Pompallier; Count Pawel Strzelecki; British Commander William Henry Breton;

Provenance: The earliest known provenance for this taonga is 15th May 1839, when it was gifted to French clergyman Bishop Jean-Baptiste Francois Pompallier in the Bay of Islands, New Zealand. Subsequently, it changed hands between Polish explorer Count Pawel Strzelecki, who in turn presented it to British Commander William Henry Breton, leaving it (and the rest of his collection) to his daughter, Adela Breton. It was then bequeathed to the Bristol Museum in 1923, by Adela Breton.

Acquisition date: 1923.

Collection: Breton Coll.

Date / Period: Date made: Circa late 1700s – early 1800s.

Dimensions: Length: max 185 mm Width: max 70 mm.

Weight: 45 grams.

Responses and research:

Researcher Polly Bence (PhD student) info

Literature:

Keywords: Māori. Titireia. Heru. Hair comb. Pāraoa. Whalebone.

Class: Clothing Class: Geology.

Material / Technique:

Material: Whalebone. Red wax.

Process: Traditionally shaped and cut.

Primary documentation:

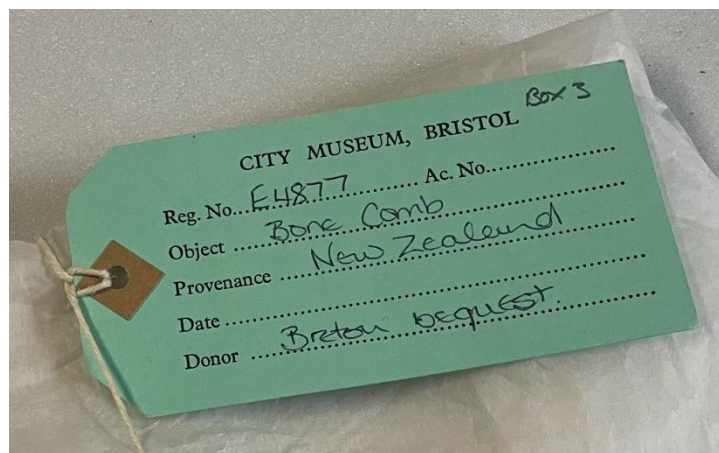
## Taipitopito tirohanga/Examination details

**Initial Examination Date:** 24th January 2024

**Examination location:** Geology Library, Bristol Museum & Art Gallery, Bristol.

**Staff present at examination:** Lisa Graves – Curator of the World Collection; Deborah Hutchinson – Natural Sciences (Geology) Curator; and Eleanor Hasler – Paper Conservator.

**Pinetohu/Labels, tags:** There are currently two identifiers regarding this *taonga* (artefact/cultural treasure) One of these is a light blue cardboard identification tag, bearing the following details 'BOX 3 E4877 Bone Comb New Zealand Breton bequest', which is tied to the storage box with a string. The other is a small permanent marking on the *taonga* itself, on its lower left edge, and bears the following details 'E.4877' written in red ink (at a measure of 15 mm x 5 mm).



CITY MUSEUM, BRISTOL Identification tag.



Permanent identification marking on *taonga*.

### Whakaahuatanga/Description:

This *heru* or *titireia* is a pre-contact, early-contact artifact, crafted from *pāraoa* (whalebone), in the shape of a *kōkoea* (shrimp). The external surface is slightly convex and displays an appearance somewhere between ivory and light greyish in colour, with noticeable scratches (in a myriad of directions) over most of its surface (which appear to have been intentional and part of the production process). It has a small carved *kanohi* (face) on the right edge just above the centre of the *taonga*, created from both surface etching and complete depth cutting. The inner portion of the *karu* (eye) is scarlet red. The reverse has a slight concave, and has a smoother surface, lacking the scratches that are visible on the external side. There is handwritten text, in black ink, toward the upper portion of the *taonga*, and another smaller text situated across the centre of the *taonga*. This surface bears a slightly different colour, appearing beige in colour but showing small greyish specks which are evident within most whalebone composition. At the lower end, it has seven *niho* (teeth), of which those toward the centre are longer than the outermost few, which are both slightly shorter and appear to taper inwards at each edge.



Front or external surface

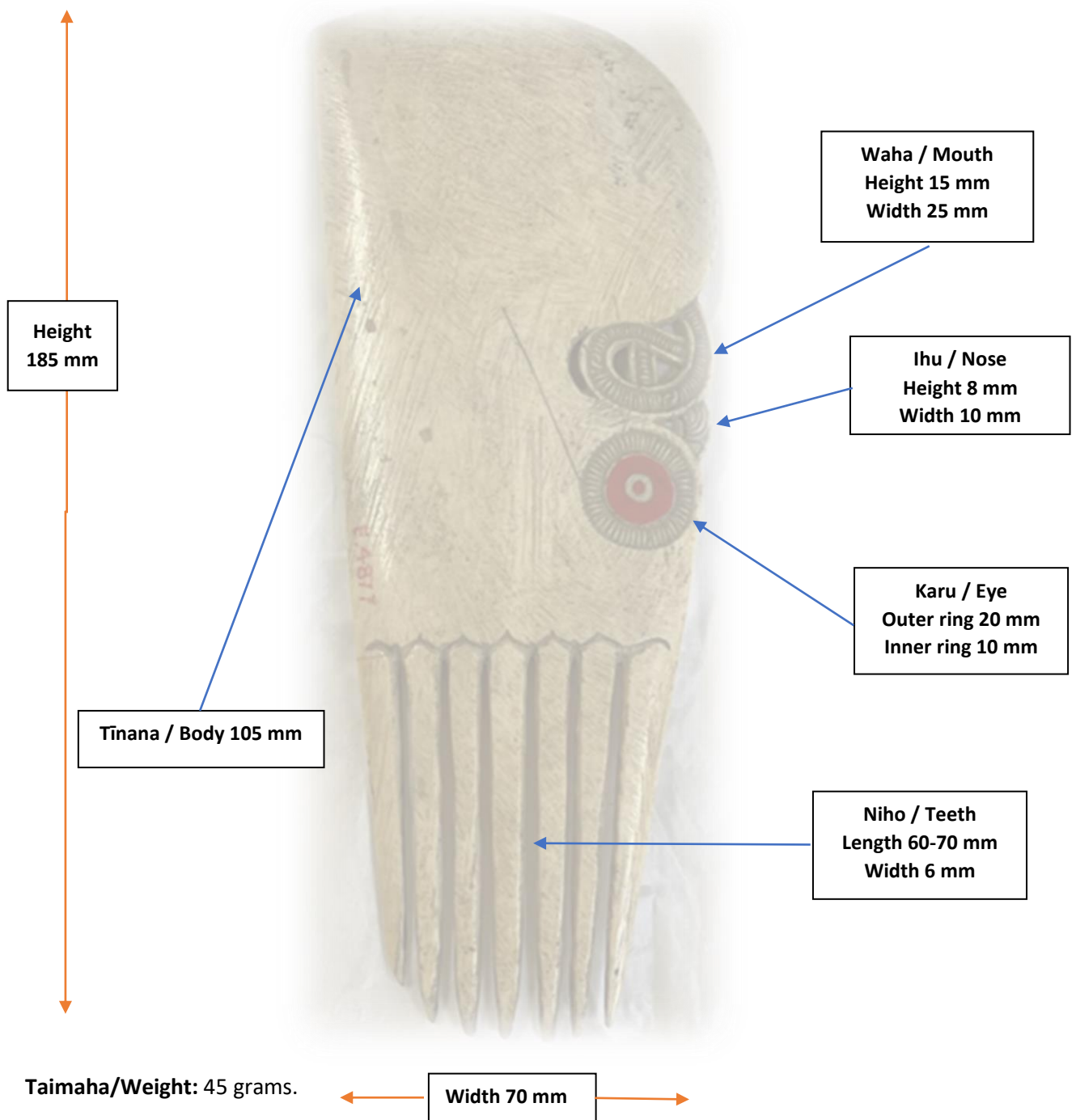


Reverse or interior surface

### Inenga/Dimensions:

The length of this *taonga* at the longest point is 165 mm measured from the top edge to the bottom of the *niho* (teeth). This *taonga* is also 70 mm in width, at its widest point. The length of the upper portion of the *taonga* to the junction where the top of the *niho* measures 105 mm, whilst the *niho* themselves range between 70 mm in height toward the centre, and 60 mm toward the outer edges.

The outside *karu* (eye) measures 20 mm in diameter, with red-coloured inner *karu* measuring half that size at 10 mm in diameter. Inside hole around which the *tīnana* (body) is carved is 20 mm in diameter. The *waha* (mouth) measures 25 mm in width, and 15 mm in height, and the *ihu* (nose) measures 8 mm in height, and 10 mm in width.



### Rauemi/Materials:

*Pāraoa* or whalebone is tough, durable, and aesthetically attractive material, and easy to work into a myriad of weaponry (*mere*, *wahaika*, *kotiate*, and *hoeroa*) and ornamental jewellery including ear and neck pendants (*titireia*, *heru*, etcetera).

Traditionally, Māori did not hunt *tohorā* (whales), viewing them as *aratohu* (guides) or *kaitiaki* (guardians); preferring to source their whalebone and *niho* (teeth) from whales that had stranded themselves. *The bones* were left to dry for a few years, to cure, before being utilised.

Māori did not have the bright scarlet red pigments until European contact, when they then gained access to coloured woollen threads, paints, and waxes. The traditional Māori 'red' consisted of a pigment known as *kōkōwai*, which was made by mixing ochre with liquids such as shark liver oil to produce a reddish-orange slurry or paste. Another traditional pigment that may have had a reddish-brown appearance could have been *tanekaha* (produced by boiling a type of tree bark), however, this is more of a brown than a red.

### Whakanakonako/Embellishments:

'The *heru* design depicted within this *taonga*, represents the *kōeke* (*Paratya Curvirostris*) or freshwater shrimp. It has a *manaia* face, carved using the *rauponga* style (which comprises of *pākati* or *niho taniwha* designs combined with *haehae* lines). It is crafted to appear as though it is in the form of a shrimp when it is curved, having contracted their body into a U-shape. The curved trunk of the shrimp is represented by the rounded top of the *heru*, and the *hiku* (tail) is styled to become the *niho* (teeth) or prongs.

### Pakarutanga/Condition:

This *taonga* appears to be in excellent condition, with no cracks, or missing pieces, and without any noticeable structural or aesthetic damage. There is a small measure of staining within the whalebone itself, however, that is to be expected with *heru*; which have been in prolonged contact with human *makawe* (hair) and *kiri* (skin) and absorbing human oils over time. There is one mark etched into the external surface, that stands out against the remainder of the scratches; that being an unusually straight line, 30 mm in length, that runs from the back of the *karu* (eye) diagonally toward the centre of the *tīnana* (body). This marking seems too clean compared with the myriad of other scratches and is possibly an intended feature of the design. The condition of the red-coloured pigment (wax inlay) used to detail the inner ring and pupil within the *karu* (eye) is quite clean and does not appear to be missing any portions.

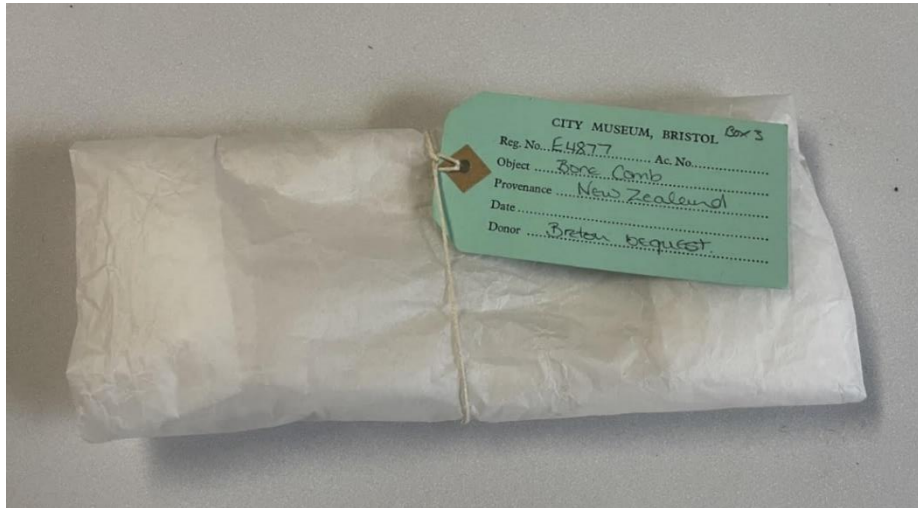


This clear, straight etched line creates questions.



## Whakaaturanga, Whakahaumarutanga rānei/Display/Storage:

Before Polly Bense's discovery<sup>ix</sup> that this *taonga* may have belonged to Hongi Hika, it was stored in this small, rectangular cardboard case, which was wrapped in white acid-free paper and then tied up with a string. The presence of the word 'Box 3' suggests that this parcel is then held in a larger box designated with the number three (3); which has now been identified as 'NZ Box 3', the NZ referring to New Zealand.



Hongi's *heru*, safe and secure until it is next visited.

## Community engagement and reaction:

The author's visit, examination, and subsequent sharing of this *titireia* or *heru* on social media has generated a measure of interest within certain arenas of academia, and within the museum world, but most importantly, within the Māori community. The author's choice to wear the *titireia* or *heru* during the examination brought it to the attention of the world, however, it also resulted in a challenge by one of his *whanaunga*<sup>x</sup> (relatives); and then an opportunity for some initial conversations surrounding the choices by those who access and handle *taonga*.

*'Have to ask....why would you feel the need to put such an old, treasured taonga in your hair? If that had been on display back here there's no way that would have been allowed to happen. Out of respect firstly, and 2ndly ...last thing anyone would want is a broken tooth comb for the sake of a photo. Research or not....it's just not something you do with Taonga as old as these. Tikanga tuatahi!' – Ko Ness Ahau.<sup>xi</sup>*

In *Te Ao Māori* (The Māori World) we have a cultural framework known as *kawa* and *tikanga* (cultural policies and procedures), that differs regarding beliefs and practices from *rohe* to *rohe* (one tribal area to another). What may be acceptable in one *rohe* may not be in another, and one must always be cognisant of that, so as not to transgress on a host, or cause offence by your actions. The author's choice to wear the *titireia* or *heru* was done so from the highest level of respect that he holds toward Hongi Hika (a relative, and a personality) to whom he has committed a substantial period of his academic and cultural career, researching). No offence was intended toward Hongi, or his *uri* (descendants) the aim was to bring both Hongi and the *titireia* or *heru* back to life, to allow them to live again in these modern times. Here, the author's *whanaunga*, was concerned about two issues; those being: the belief that the *taonga* was *tapu*, having belonged to a chief as important as Hongi Hika; and secondly, the care and preservation of the *taonga* for perpetuity.



The author wears the *titireia* or *heru*, which serves two purposes: the first is to value it as a functional item for which it was intended, ensuring it continues to serve its purpose; and second, as a means of bringing Hongi's memory back to life metaphysically.

Renowned Māori artist, George Nuku responded:

*'...this is an interesting situation here - one side is advocating on the part of a physical preservation and maintenance of our ancestor's works and the other side is advocating for the metaphysical preservation and maintenance of the ancestor. I firmly do not believe that there should be a 'one size fits all' rule here at all - each circumstance must be considered within its context.'* – George Nuku.

Here, Nuku shows a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between the beliefs of some, and the aims of another, where both parties are in awe of the *taonga* but have differing views on how they could or should be represented.

Historically, within *taha Māori* (traditional Māori life) the idea of a museum was foreign to Māori. Although they may have possessed treasured *taonga*, they were never expected to last forever; as they were functional tools, garments, and ornaments, and were expected to degrade, or become unusable after some time, and were then discarded.

Maakarita Paku supports the wearing of the *taonga* when she writes:

*'tautoko, bringing functional taonga out to wear on special occasions is important and should be normalised, especially by uri. They are not meant to be locked away all the time.'* – Maakarita Paku.

Academic, David Wansborough also understands the author's intent, when he writes:

*'it is wonderful that you feel the power of this carving. But perhaps because Brent Kerehona Pukepuke-Ahitapu senses the numinous of the venerated ancestral taonga, he demonstrated its function. Who will forget this photo? Because of his reverence and respect, it transcends a work of art in a museum showcase and shows how an art object elevates the wearer's consciousness.'* – D. Wansborough.

The author does not use these supporting comments to justify his actions, his choices are his to make, and he is to face any consequences or repercussions if they occur. They are simply to demonstrate that there are a range of viewpoints held by others around how and why people do what they do.

To be clear, however, certain *taonga* are viewed as being *tapu* (sacred), especially items related to the *upoko* (head) or *makawe* (hair); and the topic of whether wearing *taonga* such as this is acceptable, unacceptable, or restricted by conditions, will be further explored in appropriate spaces into the future. The author appreciates being challenged in this manner, and this will lead to clearer understandings within the framework of *kawa* and *tikanga* (cultural policies and procedures) regarding the examination and handling of *taonga*.

### Whakapapa/Provenance:

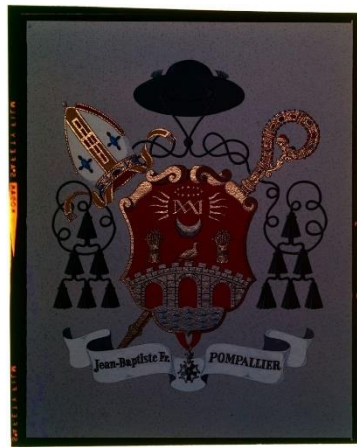
The author refers to the following sources and references, to show the validity (and relevance) of the information provided.

‘Text on the back of the comb: "Souvenir de la part de Mngr Pompallier Evêque de Marrourui [?] donné à St Maria Nouvelle Zealande 15 de Mai 1839 Peigne de Guerre de Honge’.’<sup>xii</sup>

Jean-Baptiste Francois Pompallier was the first Roman Catholic Bishop in Aotearoa New Zealand and is recognised as the major influence behind the establishment of the Catholic faith in the antipodes. Arriving in Aotearoa New Zealand in 1838, as the Vicar Apostolic of Western Oceania (having been appointed to that position in 1836), he was then made the Vicar Apostolic of New Zealand in 1842. A Vicar Apostolic (normally a bishop of a titular see), is usually in charge of an apostolic vicariate, usually in a mission country, not yet ready to be made a diocese.



Jean-Baptiste Francois Pompallier<sup>xiii</sup>



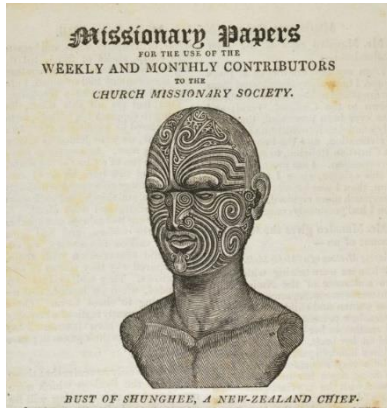
Bishop Pompallier coat of arms<sup>xiv</sup>



Bishop Pompallier<sup>xv</sup>

Referred to as ‘Honge’ in the above source, Hongi Hika, was an enigma. Famed as a war chief during the sanguineous Musket Wars of the 1820s, he was also a diplomat and an entrepreneur. He travelled to Port Jackson (Sydney), Australia, in 1814, where he carved a wooden bust of himself for the Reverend Samuel Marsden (which was sent to the CMS Headquarters in London in 1815), and then ventured further afield, to England in 1820. Whilst in England, Hongi attended Queens’ College, Cambridge University; where he assisted Professor Samuel Lee (a linguist), and Missionary Thomas Kendall, in compiling an English Māori dictionary. Hongi was feted by English high society, attending countless events and soirees; being introduced to the Peerage in the House of Lords in September, and granted an audience with King George IV at Carlton House in November, where he was taken on

a tour of the Royal Armoury, the Royal Menagerie (zoological park), and the Royal Arsenal in Woolwich. For a more comprehensive account of Hongi Hika's life and his experiences, refer to *Hongi Hika: A Portrait*, in the Journal of Museum Ethnography. No 32. pp. 209-224, written by this author.



Bust of Shunghee, A New-Zealand Chief.<sup>xvi</sup> Hongi and Waikato. Circa 1820.<sup>xvii</sup> The Rev Thomas Kendall, Hongi and Waikato<sup>xviii</sup>

The *Sancta Maria* referred to above, is not a place, but the name of a ship, a schooner named *Sancta Maria*,<sup>xix</sup> on which Pompallier arrived at Hokianga, Aotearoa New Zealand, in 1838. Only months later, Pompallier would relocate to the Bay of Islands,<sup>xx</sup> having purchased land in Kororāreka (modern-day Russell) which was effectively the main trading and political epicentre at that time. It is here that he and his Marist colleagues would build their headquarters, Pompallier House, between 1841-1842.<sup>xxi</sup>



The schooner, Sancta Maria.<sup>xxii</sup>



Pompallier House, Russell, N.Z. 116

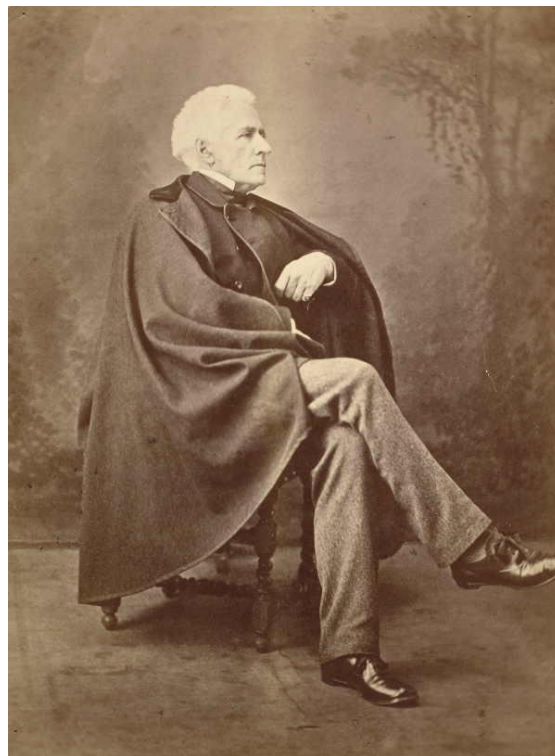
Russell Pompallier House.<sup>xxiii</sup>

'Transcribed by Dr Alice Christophe at the British Museum June 2022 who said in this instance 'souvenir' means previous owner, Monseigneur is a honorific title - Bishop Pompallier arrived in Aotearoa in 1839. Gifted at St Maria, New Zealande, Mai 15, 1839, War comb of Honge. There spelling/grammar mistakes in French (Zealande instead of Zelande and 15 de Mai, instead of 15 mai) which leads her to think that the writer is bilingual. According to this inscription this is a comb that once belonged to Hongi Hika of the Ngāpuhi iwi, who visited England and King George IV in 1820.'<sup>xxiv</sup>

The description of 'War comb of Honge' definitely refers to a *titireia* or *heru*, and to elaborate on Hongi Hika, he was renowned as a war chief throughout the sanguineous Musket Wars of the 1820s; revered in the North by his kinfolk, but feared and despised by those who would face him in conflict.

'From index card: "E4877, Bone comb, bone, N. Island New Zealand. Carved as a shrimp with a red eye. Length 18cm, width 7cm. Breton beq. 'Souvenir de la part de Mgnr Pompallier Eveque de Maronai donne a St Maria Nouvelle Zealande 15 de Mai 1839', 'Peige de Guerre de Shonge. Given by Count Strlecksy (sic.) to W. H. Breton. Strzelecki, was a Polish explorer. Skinner (1936) says probably from North Auckland. Worn by a Hongi warrior".'<sup>xxv</sup>

Count Pawel Strzelecki (who would later become known as Sir Paul Edmund Strzelecki after gaining a Knighthood), was an explorer and a scientist; who travelled extensively, and contributed toward science and geology around the world. Strzelecki arrived in Aotearoa New Zealand in January 1839, where he visited Kororāreka (Russell),<sup>xxvi</sup> placing him in a position to meet Pompallier; who had recently relocated there from the Hokianga, so the exchange of the *taonga* directly between these two men appears to be a genuine possibility. Strzelecki conducts the first geological survey whilst he is there, then travels to Australia at the end of April; and within weeks of his arrival, he is meeting with influential people and achieving tremendous feats - one of which was scaling Australia's highest mountain. He named Mt Kosciuszko in honour of Polish Lithuanian and American freedom fighter General Tadeusz Kościuszko, who he respected highly. Strzelecki travelled to Melbourne, then Tasmania, arriving in Launceston on 7 July, and quickly organising his Tasmanian Expedition. In December 1841, he became friends with Governor Sir John Franklin, and Lady Jane Franklin; and in January 1842, Franklin and Strzelecki establish the Tasmanian Society of Natural Sciences and the magazine *Tasmanian Journal*. Strzelecki left Tasmania in October, bound for Sydney, and he would not return to Tasmania – which is important regarding the possible window of exchange, of the *taonga* between the next *kaitiaki* (guardian).



Sir Paul Edmund Strzelecki<sup>xxvii</sup>

From original Bristol Ethnography register p.198: "War comb, bone, Honge New Zealand, Collected by W.H.B. in Tasmania (or NZ?) in 1839. Worn by Shonga, a great warrior. & Coll Breton 1923 D."<sup>xxviii</sup>

The initials 'W.H.B.' refers to William Henry Breton, who in the source above, is described as a 'British Commander'. This, however, may be incorrect and the reference to him being a 'British

Commander' may refer to his brother, who was a Commissioned officer; having begun his career as an ensign in the 4th Regiment of Foot in March 1815, and subsequently progressing through the ranks as Major-General, Colonel, and ending his career as a Lieutenant-General.

The William Henry Breton we are referring to, was a Naval officer, a lieutenant in the Royal Navy, who first visited Australia in October 1829, arriving in Freemantle in Western Australia. He wrote the memoirs *Excursions in New South Wales, Western Australia and Van Dieman's Land, during the years 1830, 1831, 1832, and 1833*. He travelled back and forth between Australia and England over the next few years, however, he found himself in Tasmania, and on 4<sup>th</sup> December 1835 'he is appointed Justice of the Peace for Van Dieman's Land and a week later appointed a Coroner of the Territory and Police Magistrate for Circular Head. Then on 24 December 1835 he is Police Magistrate at Richmond when an interchange between the magistrates at Circular Head and Richmond is gazetted. As part of the job-swap Breton is also appointed Commissioner of the Court of Requests and Deputy Chairman of the Court of Quarter Sessions, for the Police District of Richmond.'<sup>xxix</sup>

In 1839, and whilst he was acting in these official capacities, he may have met Count Pawel Strzelecki, who was in Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania) from the first week of July and would remain here for the final two years of his stay in Australia. In 1841 Breton was appointed Police Magistrate in Launceston, and he was still in Van Dieman's Land when Strzelecki departed for Sydney in late September the following year. The two men would have undoubtedly met and formed a friendship at some point during the two-year period in which they were both there; especially as they would have been in the same social circles. This provided the two, many opportunities in which to exchange the *taonga*.

Breton took 18 months of leave of absence from this position in 1848, which was extended in 1850 and he resigned in 1852. In 1849 William and Elizabeth returned to London and a daughter, Adela Breton was born there that year. A son Harry D'Arch Breton was born in Bath in 1851. In 1852 he purchased a four-storey Georgian townhouse in Camden Crescent Bath.<sup>xxx</sup>



Family portrait: a young Adela Breton with her mother Elizabeth, father William and his twin brother.<sup>xxxi</sup>

Breton passed away on 22 July 1889, leaving his possessions, which amounted to £45,587 to his daughter Adela Breton, his wife having passed away some years earlier.

Adela was born in Bath, however, during her childhood the family travelled extensively through Europe; visiting France, Switzerland and Italy, with Adela studying art while staying in Florence. She became 'an archaeological copyist, researcher and watercolourist. A lady of leisure and private means, she devoted her time to her interests in history and geology. She was an intrepid traveller and failed to conform to the stereotype of the Victorian spinster, journeying extensively in Mexico and other Central American countries, accompanied only by her Indian guide and companion, Pablo Solorio.<sup>xxxii</sup>

She spent much of her time in Mexico and worked there with archaeologists. As an artist, she painted for pleasure and also for work. To preserve them and make them accessible, she copied wall paintings in ancient Mexican temples, already damaged and rapidly disappearing during her lifetime. Adela Breton's works have proven instrumental in retaining details, and knowledge, thus ensuring they are not lost to time.



Southwest wall in the Upper Temple of the Jaguars.<sup>xxxiii</sup>



Northwest wall in the Upper Temple of the Jaguars.<sup>xxxiv</sup>



Watercolour painting of the mural at la Casa de Barrios, Teopancaxco, by British explorer Adela Breton.<sup>xxxv</sup>

'Little known in her own country, in the Americas Breton is revered by scholars of Mesoamerican art and culture, especially for her watercolours and tracings of the frescos of the Upper Temple of Jaguars at Chichén Itzá in Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula.'<sup>xxxvi</sup>



Miss Adela Breton.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

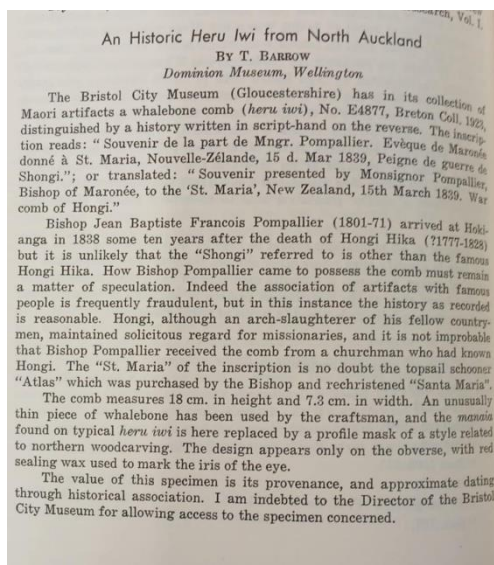
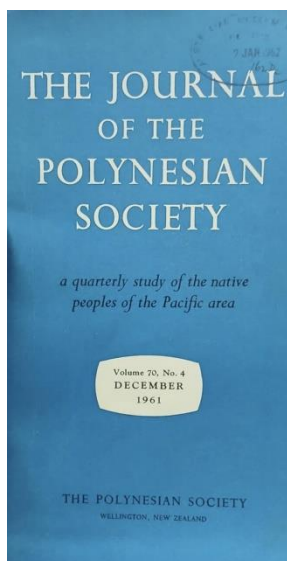
From 1899 Breton loaned material to the newly established *Bristol Art Gallery & Museum of Antiquities*. In her letters, she urged the Director to establish it as a centre for Central American study in Britain and, in 1923, bequeathed her entire collection, including Hongi's *titireia* or *heru*, to the museum.

It was Terrence Tui Barrow's<sup>xxxviii</sup> opinion that 'The value of this specimen is its provenance, and approximate dating through historical association.'<sup>xxxix</sup>



## Hītori tanga/Publication history:

The author was alerted to the publication of an article titled 'An Historic Heru Iwi from North Auckland' regarding this *taonga* in late October 2024, by Australian-born Māori academic, Myles Maniapoto; who located it in a copy of *The Journal of the Polynesian Society*.<sup>xi</sup> As of the date of publishing this report, this particular *taonga* has not been mentioned in any other publications; however, it is mentioned in a forthcoming Doctoral thesis submitted by researcher Polly Bence, a PhD student at the Bristol Museum & Art Gallery.<sup>xii</sup>



## Ngā tuinga a te kaituhituhi/Author's notes:

Initially, I was hopeful that this *taonga* may be original, however, as there was much research to do to confirm this, I was resigned to the fact that it may have been mistakenly attributed to Hongi Hika. When I began the research element of this project, I was able to confirm links between all of those to whom provenance was indicated. This is consistent with Barrow's opinions in his 1961 article mentioned on page 24 of this report. Additionally, when handling this *taonga*, I felt a certain *wairua*, and when I wore it in my hair, it was almost like a bolt of energy ran down my spine, providing another aspect of validity to the research process.

## Rārangi pukapuka/Bibliography-End Notes

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## Tūtohu/Sign off

The author would like to acknowledge and thank Myles Maniapoto, for his *Te Reo Māori* translations, without whom, this report would not have been produced in its current bilingual format.

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**Rā/Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> November 2024