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Fokus / Focus  
The University of Things  
Theory – History – Practice



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## MUMMIFIED HEADS (MOKOMOKAI / UPOKO TUI) FROM NEW ZEALAND IN THE ETHNOGRAPHIC COLLECTION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GÖTTINGEN

Gundolf Krüger

For a long time Anthropological Museums missed to reflect on the restitution of objects which are nowadays important with regard to the construction of cultural identity or rather to the certification as cultural heritage and of which therefore the repatriation should be made from an indigenous point of view. Amongst others such objects are especially human remains. Because of their ethnic-judicial and political brisance they are seldomly shown during exhibitions and are by now the focal point of recent restitution debates. This also applies to two mummified heads (*mokomokai*) of the Maori of New Zealand which remain in the Göttingen University's Ethnographic Collection until today. Enquiries concerning the origin of the heads have shown that there used to be a third head in the Collection. This one got lost in mysterious ways after the year 1942 and is nowadays most probably privately owned. This means that Göttingen not only has to deal with questions concerning the restitution, but also with a legal problem which lays in the loss of such an object.

### INTRODUCTION

For many years, ethnographic museums and their collections failed to give any concrete thought to the repatriation of cultural objects taken in the act of travel and colonization. From an indigenous perspective, such objects belong in their place of origin, where they have acquired significance in terms of ethnicity, cultural identity and cultural heritage. Today examples of objects deemed particularly worthy of repatriation include *human remains and materials of sacred significance*, as codified by the "Code of Ethics for Museums from the International Council of Museums" (ICOM), "the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act" (NAGPRA), and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, in 1990 and 2007, respectively. Given their ethically and politically explosive nature, and their doubtless exotic effect, human remains are rarely put on exhibit. In Germany, the *Institut für Museumsforschung* in Berlin is currently working in collaboration with the *Deutscher Museumsbund* and the federal government to determine which human remains are still being exhibited in German museums and which lie dormant in their storerooms. Efforts are also being made to formulate recommendations for their restitution.

Two mummified and tattooed heads – *mokomokai/upoko tui*<sup>1</sup> from the Maori of Aotearoa in New Zealand – which are part of Göttingen University's Ethno-

1 Georg Schifko, 'Anmerkungen zur literarischen Rezeption des Leipziger Völkerkundemuseums und dessen mumifizierten Maori-Kopfes', in: Claus Deimel, Sebastian Lentz & Bern-



graphic Collection (Fig. 1), are affected by these proceedings. Research on their origins has revealed that a third head was once in the collection, but was mysteriously lost after their acquisition in 1942. According to all indications, this third head is now in the possession of a private individual. The author of this essay is aware of this individual's name, but does not wish to mention it out of consideration for the owner's personal interests. The emergence of this third head presents a legal issue for the University of Göttingen concerning the circumstances surrounding how the object was lost.

#### THE ENCOUNTER SITUATION

The cultural significance of *mokomokai* can be derived from the testimonies of Europeans in their encounters with the Maori in the 18th Century. These mention

hard Streck (eds.), *Auf der Suche nach Vielfalt. Ethnographie und Geographie in Leipzig* (Leipzig: Leibniz-Institut für Landeskunde, 2009), pp. 501–8, p. 507, has recently made it clear that the conventional name *mokomokai* has a pejorative connotation from the Maori perspective, and should be replaced by the term *upoko tuhi*, meaning “beloved memento mori”, according to the Maori anthropologist Te Awetokuku. However, for the sake of contemporary accuracy, the traditional term *mokomokai* will be used hereinafter. I thank George Schifko from the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Vienna, and Benjamin Oehse, an expert on Maori film culture in Berlin, for the evidence they provided. Not least thanks to their help, this paper presents a revised version of Krüger 2012 and will appear in the German version of a Berlin conference proceedings on the *Charité Human Remains Project*, edited by Holger Stoecker.

intertribal conflicts of the Maori, and refer to honoring deceased and respected relatives. The heads of slain enemies were intended to demonstrate the weakness of the vanquished, in the sense of war trophies.<sup>2</sup> Ritually, the preservation of mummified heads was associated with the idea that strength could be drawn from them and implemented with extraordinary effectiveness, or *mana*. Often mounted on the border fences of farms, hamlets or villages, mummified heads were meant to deter foreign invaders and is document of the valor and military prowess of a tribe. Carved wooden effigies also occasionally fulfilled such functions, and, with the tattoo patterns carved into them, could be attributed to specific individuals.<sup>3</sup>

There are two reasons the *mokomokai* were created. As Sir Peter Buck explains:

One was that important chiefs who died or were killed on a campaign in enemy country had only the head preserved because it was impossible to take home the whole body over a long distance. The preserved head in lieu of the body was wept over by the widow and the tribe. The second cause was to bring back the head of a detested enemy chief that he might be insulted and reviled in death by the widows and orphans he had created in life. As the heads of both friend and foe worth preserving were those of chiefs, it followed that the preserved heads were well tattooed.<sup>4</sup>

The mummification of *mokomokai* was observed as early as the first South Sea expedition of Captain James Cook (1728–79). On 20 January 1770, *HMS Endeavour* anchored in Queen Charlotte Sound in the northwest of the South Island of New Zealand. Kupaia, Paramount Chief of Motuara, showed the Europeans four mummified heads: “These skulls had their brains taken out, and some of them their eyes, but the scalp and hair was left upon them. They looked as if they had been dried by the fire, or the heat of the sun.”<sup>5</sup>

Based on sources available today, this process of mummification proceeded as follows: Eyes and tongue were removed from the head of the deceased; the eyes were either sewn shut, filled with pine resin or anti-rot herbs or – with advancing European contact – replaced by imported glass eyes. The foramen magnum was subsequently enlarged to remove the base of the skull bone and the brain through the opening; the head was steamed to make it easier to remove the flesh of the facial muscles underneath the skin and to replace it with flax (*Phormium tenax*) as a plastic filler; insertion of wooden sticks in the nostrils served to stabilize the

2 cf. Eva-Maria Günther, ‘Mumien aus Ozeanien – eine kurze Übersicht’, in: Alfried Wiczorek, Michael Tellenbach & Wilfried Rosendahl (eds.), *Mumien. Der Traum vom ewigen Leben* (Mainz: von Zabern, 2007), pp. 113–6, p. 114.

3 cf. David Lewis & Werner Forman, *The Maori. Heirs of Tane* (London: Atlantis-Verlag, 1982), p. 92–3.

4 Rangī Te Hiroa [Sir Peter Buck], *The Coming of the Maori* (Wellington: Maori Purposes Fund Board, 1950), p. 300.

5 Sydney Parkinson, *A Journal of a Voyage to the South Seas in His Majesty's Ship the "Endeavour"* (London: Parkinson, 1773), p. 116.

shape of the nose. Finally, sun exposure and smoking over a fire or oven-similar devices and subsequent preservation of the head with oils made the head durable.<sup>6</sup>

A characteristic feature of the heads was their tattooing, called *moko* (= referring to a lizard-like, or curvilinear appearance), which was an indication of the tribal as well as the social origins of the individual within the stratified society of the Maori. Individual tattoos followed the specific arrangement of standard patterns, which, using straight lines anchored in spiral ornaments and radiating/sinuous lines, differentiated *iwi* (tribe) or *hapu* (subtribe) according to superordinate and subordinate affiliation, *ngati* (locality of a tribe) according to specific local group affiliation and *kainga* (village or small settlement) according to family background. The status of a chief *ariki* (who is a member of a hereditary noble rank), also corresponded to a particularly rich decoration with tattoo patterns. In men, tattoos often covered the whole face; in women, only the area around the lips and chin.<sup>7</sup> Even today, natural models for the patterns include the lizard, which is respected and feared as the epitome of cunning, of the blooming sprouts of the New Zealand fern leaf, which symbolize strength and resilience.<sup>8</sup>

During the 18th/19th century, as European interest in acquiring *mokomokai* grew, the Maori saw the sale as a way to obtain European firearms.<sup>9</sup> This produced a flourishing trade, which reached its peak in the 1820s, and included the heads of pakeha (slain white men).<sup>10</sup> Some Maori began to engage in manhunts, partly stimulated by white contractors. Members of the lower social classes who had no tattoos were sometimes given elaborate face decorations post-mortem to increase their resale value.<sup>11</sup>

Trade in mummified heads was particularly intense in the northeast of the North Island, in the *ngapuhi* area near the Bay of Islands. Opposition originating from a missionary station established in 1814 eventually led to a law prohibiting

6 cf. Schifko, *Anmerkungen zur literarischen Rezeption des Leipziger Völkerkundemuseums*, p. 504f.; Günther, *Mumien aus Ozeanien*, p. 114.

7 Early detailed documentation of Maori tattooing can be found in Horatio G. Robley, *Moko or Maori Tattooing* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1896), pp. 39–46; and H. Ling Roth, 'Maori Tatu and Moko', *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 31 (1901), pp. 29–64. An overview of the different designs of tattoos and a related attempt at tribal allocation can be found in Simmons & David, *Whakairo. Maori Tribal Art* (Melbourne et al.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985). For a standardized distinction of male and female tattoos, see "Panel of tattooed faces, commissioned by the Dominion Museum in 1894 and carved by Tene Waitere. Primarily an example of the different tattoo designs for men and women", in Te Awakotua, Ngahuia, 'Maori: People and Culture', in: Dorota Czarkowska Starzecka (ed.), *Maori. Art and Culture* (London: British Museum Press, 1996), pp. 26–49, p. 42.

8 cf. inter alia, Michael Tellenbach et al., 'Mumien aus Ozeanien in den Sammlungen der Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen', in: Alfred Wiczorek, Michael Tellenbach & Wilfried Rosendahl (eds.), *Mumien. Der Traum vom ewigen Leben* (Mainz: von Zabern, 2007), pp. 350–1, p. 350.

9 cf. Lewis & Forman, *The Maori. Heirs of Tane*, p. 93.

10 cf. D. Wayne Orchiston, 'Preserved Human Heads of the New Zealand Maoris', *The Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 76/3 (1967), pp. 297–329, p. 297.

11 cf. Robley, *Moko or Maori Tattooing*, p. 170; Te Hiroa, *The Coming of the Maori*, pp. 300–1; Lewis & Forman, *The Maori. Heirs of Tane*, p. 93.

the trade in 1831. Nowadays, close to 250 heads are assumed to be contained in museums and private collections outside of New Zealand.<sup>12</sup> Only a very few *mokomokai* were collected before 1815. The first heads documented by Europeans can be found in the travel descriptions of Cook's three Pacific expeditions (1768–80); none are mentioned by other European travelers around the same period.<sup>13</sup>

## PROVENANCE RESEARCH

It is rumored that the two *mokomokai* in Göttingen were collected by one of Cook's expeditions, during his stays in New Zealand in 1769/70, 1773 and 1777. Given proof of their provenance, these would count as some of the earliest evidence of their kinds and could therefore be of particular reluctance to repatriation.

The former curator of the Ethnographic Collection of Göttingen, Manfred Urban, sought clarification on this matter during the late 1970s. He turned to D. Wayne Orchiston from the University of Melbourne's Department of History with photos of Göttingen's *mokomokai*. In his answer, Orchiston denied any possibility of their originating within the time window of Cook's travels, but he did date the alleged mummification of both heads to the period before 1820, with the following words:

Incidentally, I am amazed by the configuration of the lips on your two specimens: if you refer to pp. 324–5 in my 1967 Polynesian Society Journal paper you will see that this 'pouting' form is only found on the heads of relatives and friends. Now it is generally believed that the Maoris ceased preserving the heads of their relatives and friends when trafficking in heads became commonplace, that is, from about 1820. Consequently, friends' heads are rare, and most of the preserved Maori heads found in the museums of the world are those of warriors taken in battle, and preserved by their enemies. The two heads in your museum therefore have special significance. Moreover, there is a high probability that they were preserved prior to 1820.<sup>14</sup>

Regardless of Orchiston's assessment, Göttingen has been confronted over and over again with queries about its Cook/Forster collection, which comprise around 500 Polynesian cultural artifacts. Even if the *mokomokai* did not originate from Cook's travels, they may have belonged to the naturalists Reinhold and Georg Forster, who sailed in the second expedition (1772–75).<sup>15</sup> From sources docu-

12 cf. Schifko, *Anmerkungen zur literarischen Rezeption des Leipziger Völkerkundemuseums*, p. 506.

13 cf. Orchiston, *Preserved Human Heads of the New Zealand Maoris*, p. 800–1.

14 D. Wayne Orchiston to Manfred Urban, 30 November, 1977, Wissenschaftliches Kulturarchiv (WKA) of the Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, filing cabinet 1a–3b, custodian's room.

15 Whether James Cook collected a head in situ for the Hunterian Museum in London, or whether one of the two Forsters did so during Cook's second voyage; or they came into possession of one or the other during another South Sea journey in the last third of the 18th Century, after which it eventually landed in the Göttingen collection, were questions that were discussed prior to a recent television production about Georg Forster. There was no conclu-

menting Cook's three voyages, it seems that the captain and members of his expedition saw a minimum of four and a maximum of seven heads on their first trip to Queen Charlotte Sound (South Island) on 20 January 1770. On 10 November 1773, they saw a mummified female head in Tolaga Bay (North Island). Moreover, in the same month, Third Officer Richard Pickersgill bought from a Maori in Totaranui, Queen Charlotte Sound, the perfectly preserved head of a recently killed youth in exchange for a ship nail.<sup>16</sup> This head, however, cannot be regarded as evidence of a *mokomokai* because it was not preserved in the typical mummification fashion. Submerged in alcohol, it found its way to London as a curiosity and apparently served the purpose of scaring people, as described in a letter from Daniel Solander to Joseph Banks: "Pickersgill made the Ladies sick by showing them the New Zealand head, [...] It is preserved in Spirit and I propose to get it for Hunter [Hunterian Museum, G.K.]"<sup>17</sup>

The two Forsters did not acquire a head, but rather only human teeth, which later found their way into the Pitt-Rivers Museum in Oxford.<sup>18</sup> Since no mention is made of *mokomokai* in the sources documenting Cook's third voyage to New Zealand in 1777, the following summary can be posited: In addition to the head purchased by Pickersgill, there was only one *mokomokai* among the heads sighted on the first and second trips that can be shown to have been traded. This made its way to Europe. Joseph Banks acquired this specimen in Queen Charlotte Sound on 20 January 1770 in exchange for

a pair of old drawers of my white linen. The head appeared to have belonged to a person of about fourteen or fifteen years of age, and evidently showed, by the contusions on one side, that it had received many violent blows which had chipped off a part of the skull near the eye.<sup>19</sup>

While a substantial part of the Maori cultural artifacts from the Banks collection later came to the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, at the University of

sive answer; cf. WKA, Korrespondenz Cinecentrum GmbH Hamburg/Adrienne Kaeppler/Gundolf Krüger, 30 May – 10 August 2011.

- 16 Georg Forster, *Reise um die Welt*, 1. Teil (Georg Forsters Werke. Sämtliche Schriften, Tagebücher, Briefe. Reise um die Welt, 2nd Volume, ed. by Gerhard Steiner) (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1989), pp. 402–8.
- 17 WKA, "Letter received by Banks from Daniel Solander, 14 August 1775", State Library of New South Wales, Australia, section 15, series No. 72,181.
- 18 cf. Adrienne L. Kaeppler, 'Die ethnographischen Sammlungen der Forsters aus dem Südpazifik. Klassische Empirie im Dienste der modernen Ethnologie', in: Claus-Volker Klenke (ed.), *Georg Forster in interdisziplinärer Perspektive. Beiträge des Internationalen Georg Forster-Symposiums in Kassel, 1. bis 4. April 1993* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1994), pp. 59–75, p. 74.
- 19 Joseph D. Hooker (ed.), *Journal of the Right Hon. Sir Joseph Banks Bart., K.B., P.R.S. During Captain Cook's First Voyage in H.M.S. Endeavour in 1768–71 to Terra Del Fuego, Otaheite, New Zealand, Australia, The Dutch East Indies, Etc.* (New York: Macmillan, 1896), p. 248; Cook refers to a tear above the temples in: Beaglehole, J. C. (ed.), *The Journals of Captain James Cook on his Voyages of Discovery*, Vol. I: *The Voyage of the Endeavour 1761–1771* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press., 1955), pp. 237, 282.

Cambridge, the head acquired by Banks was "tactfully not mentioned by him".<sup>20</sup> Indications as to its whereabouts are as difficult to find in Kaeppler's *Artificial Curiosities* (1978) as indicated in the two comprehensive documents on "Preserved Maori Heads" by Orchiston.<sup>21</sup>

A chronological review of all archives available at the University of Göttingen's Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology relating to the acquisition and historical allocation of the two Göttingen *mokomokai* yields the following information:<sup>22</sup>

- Sixty-six ethnographic items can be found under art objects/artifacts in the first inventory of the Georgia Augusta Academic Museum, but none referring to *mokomokai*.<sup>23</sup>
- The acquisition catalogue on the Cook collection contains 349 entries, none of which refers to *mokomokai*.<sup>24</sup>
- The estate of Reinhold Forster contains 69 entries, partly in reference to object groups; there is no evidence of *mokomokai*, even among substantiated private gifts from the Forsters to Göttingen scholars and friends.<sup>25</sup>
- In the 1830s, a catalogue divided into "Anthropologica" and "Ethnologica" came into being in the form of a collection of loose sheets of paper on which all items are individually listed and numbered: The section "Ethnologica"

20 Wilfred Shawcross, 'The Cambridge University Collection of Maori Artefacts, made on Captain Cook's First Voyage', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 79 (1970), pp. 305–48, p. 344.

21 Orchiston, "Preserved Human Heads of the New Zealand Maoris"; D. Wayne Orchiston, 'Preserved Maori Heads and Captain Cook's Three Voyages to the South Seas: A Study in Ethnohistory', *Anthropos*, 73 (1978), pp. 798–816.

22 Correspondence between Blumenbach and Banks in Warren R. Dawson (ed.), *The Banks Letters. A calendar of the manuscript correspondence of Sir Joseph Banks, preserved in the British Museum (Natural History) and other collections in Great Britain* (London: Trustees of the British Museums, 1958); Frank William Peter Dougherty, *COMMERCIVM EPISTOLOGICVM J.F. BLUMENBACHII. From correspondence on the classical age of natural history. Catalogue on the exhibition in the foyer of the Lower Saxony State and University Library, 1st June – 21 June 1984* (Göttingen: Univ. Göttingen 1984); Frank William Peter Dougherty, *The Correspondence of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach*, Vol. I: 1773–1782. Letters 1–230. Revised, augmented and edited by Norbert Klatt (Brosamen zur Blumenbach-Forschung, Vol. 2) (Göttingen: Klatt, 2006), might have been able to shed light on the Göttingen *mokomokai* due to the matching timelines contained in them. However, information is missing in Kroke's overview of the bibliography of Blumenbach's writings (Claudia Kroke in collaboration with Wolfgang Böker & Reimer Eck, *Johann Friedrich Blumenbach. Bibliographie seiner Schriften* (Schriften zur Universitätsgeschichte, Vol. 2) (Göttingen: Universitäts-Verlag, 2010), and in a review of the Blumenbach skull collection in Göttingen's Center of Anatomy (Michael Schultz & Hans-Jürg Kuhn, 'Die Blumenbachsche Schädelammlung in der Göttinger Anatomie', in: Dietrich Hoffmann & Kathrin Maack-Rheinländer (eds.), 'Ganz für das Studium angelegt'. *Die Museen, Sammlungen und Gärten der Universität Göttingen* (Göttingen: Wallstein-Verlag, 2001), pp. 169–72).

23 WKA, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, *Catalogus Musei Academici, 1778/79*, pp. 406–9.

24 WKA, George Humphrey, *Catalogue* (London, 1782).

25 WKA, Anonymous, Loose-leaf collection (Hall, 1799).

consists of 441 entries and contains reference to two "moko moko" from New Zealand.<sup>26</sup>

After reviewing all correspondence from the 1820s and '30s, letter dated 1834 have been found showing that Johann Friedrich Blumenbach received the heads from the English royal house: The German-born upholsterer and native of Hanover Heinrich Ludwig Goertz, who was employed at Windsor Castle, gave notice of "2 New Zealand [...] heads"<sup>27</sup> intended for the Academic Museum in a letter to Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, tax official in the Kingdom of Hanover and son of the Göttingen philosopher of the same name. Blumenbach, as the responsible curator, received the two heads shortly thereafter (Fig. 2).<sup>28</sup>

Fig. 2 a

26 WKA, Cat. A. Ethnologica, o.J., no. 174–5.

27 WKA: Heinrich Ludwig Goertz to Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, 21 April 1834.

28 WKA: Heinrich Ludwig Goertz to Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, 28 July 1834.

*Wieczorek & Rosendahl, Schädelkult, p. 379.*

Considering the Göttingen acquisition date (before or possibly after 1820) with respect to the time of origin of the heads in New Zealand, both heads seem to correspond to what Orchiston told Urban in 1977. In view of these circumstances any connection to Cook's travels can be ruled out.

The two *mokomokai* were properly added to Göttingen's museum inventory much later, during the introduction of an Ordinariate of Ethnology in 1934. On the index cards of this time and still valid today, they are referred to as New Zealand "head trophies" (Oz 344 and Oz 345).<sup>29</sup> When the Second World War began in 1939, the ethnographic collection was closed and all the objects were moved, so

29 It is interesting that the index cards contain the words "Old Collection [= Blumenbach Collection, G.K.] 1834" written in pencil in old German handwriting, barely legible and without further details. Apparently, someone must have encountered earlier correspondence on the acquisition of the two heads in 1834. The former curator, Manfred Urban, has denied having made this remark himself, and could not name the author.



the discovery of a memo from 1942 that refers to the acquisition of a further *mokomokai* is interesting. This contains a machine-written receipt and a letter of thanks (without name or signature) certifying that the ownership of mummies from Peru, Chile and Egypt, a skull from the Mundurucu in Brazil, and 26 framed images along with "1 skull trophy from the Maori in New Zealand" from Göttingen University's Anatomical Institute was transferred to the former Institute for Ethnology.<sup>30</sup> While all newly acquired items were properly inventoried and are still in the Ethnographic Collection, the Maori "trophy skull" has disappeared. The original Göttingen Center of Anatomy building in Bahnhofstrasse 26, burned down in April 1945, resulting in the destruction of valuable archives. According to information provided by Michael Schultz the present Chairman of Blumenbach's skull collection at the current Center of Anatomy, University of Göttingen (Faculty of Medicine) there appears to be no confirmation, of the provenance of this head however, Part II of a publication on "Anthropological Collections in Germany" entitled "Göttingen. The Anthropological Collection of the University of Göttingen, founded by Blumenbach and taken over by Johann Wilhelm Spengel" in 1874 contains the crucial words: "No. 164, tattooed head of a New Zealander".<sup>31</sup> This revealing entry provoked a further search of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach estate in the Göttingen State and University Library. This produced evidence that the head had found its way to the Center of Anatomy after Blumenbach's death in 1840, and from there into the possession of the Institute for Ethnology in 1942. On 6 December 1822 Blumenbach received a letter from the English Major William Davison which, on behalf of his friend the Duke of Northumberland, announced that a "mail car from Hanover" sent the same day would deliver to Blumenbach a well-secured box containing a "Head of a New Zealand Prince" for his "Cabinet of Natural History". He stressed: "I think you will acknowledge it wbe [sic] one of the best preserved Specimens [that] ever came to Göttingen".<sup>32</sup> A note from the Duke of Northumberland, Alnwick Castle, dated 2 November 1822, was attached to the letter, in which the Duke expressed to Blumenbach his hope that the donation of a "perfect" specimen of a "mummified head of a New Zealand chief" would be a valuable asset to the museum. The day before Blumenbach received the letter from Davison, he had received a letter from his son Georg Heinrich Wilhelm Blumenbach, an administrative officer in Hanover. Davison had been with him, and had told him "what treasure he has brought

for you from the Duchess of Northumberland".<sup>33</sup> On 7 December 1822, Blumenbach received the precious gift with the following words written on it: "mummified head of a New Zealander from D[uke] o[f] Northumberland".<sup>34</sup>

This proof of acquisition demonstrates that there was indeed a third head in Göttingen. This may have been the head which the professor of the Institute for Ethnology, Hans Plischke, received in 1942. Apparently, it was never inventoried, but rather, resold. A close trading partner of Plischke was the art and natural history dealer Arthur Speyer. According to a statement by the current private owner, one *mokomokai* came from Speyer, who had supposedly acquired it in Göttingen and then resold it to the ancestors of the current private owner. This very fine specimen (with a nephrite ear pendant or *kuru*) was on display in 2011 at the exhibition "Schädelkult" (Skull Cult) in the Reiss-Engelhorn Museums in Mannheim<sup>35</sup> and bears a striking resemblance – especially regarding the rows of teeth – to a picture of a *mokomokai* (without ear pendant) which Robley had previously described as the only "Specimen in [the] Göttingen Museum" (Fig. 2 a, b).<sup>36</sup> By "Göttingen Museum", Robley must have meant the original Center of Anatomy on the Bahnhofplatz, since the Academic Museum was dissolved after the death of Blumenbach in 1840, and the building demolished around 1872.

#### THE REPATRIATION ISSUE

Based on the proof of a third Göttingen *mokomokai*, it would be desirable if research could establish a firm connection between Hans Plischke and Arthur Speyer, as well as to reconstruct its history and clarify its legal status. Further research in the correspondence of the Duke of Northumberland – wherever they may be found – might shed light on how the third Göttingen head had originally found its way to Alnwick Castle. A close examination of the *mokomokai* exhibit in the Mannheim "Schädelkult" exhibition leaves no doubt that this specimen, apparently identical to the third Göttingen *mokomokai*, did not originate from Cook's journeys. The proof lies in the missing traces of violence that Banks described on the eye and above the temples of the *mokomokai* acquired in 1770. Moreover, it cannot be the head of a "14- to 15-year-old youth".<sup>37</sup> The beard growth visible on the photograph from Robley as well as in the Mannheim exhibit (Fig. 2 a, b) clearly indicates an adult. "In addition, the extent of the tattoo is not what one would expect on a 15-year-old youth". Some of the tattoo patterns appear deep and un-

30 WKA: Confirmation of receipt, 15 September 1942, and letter of thanks to Erich Blechschmidt, Director of the Anatomical Institute of the University of Göttingen, 15 September 1942.

31 Johann Wilhelm Spengel, *Die von Blumenbach gegründete Anthropologische Sammlung der Universität Göttingen, aufgenommen im Jahre 1874* (Hermann Schaaffhausen: Die Anthropologischen Sammlungen Deutschlands, Teil II: Göttingen). Verschiedene anthropologische Gegenstände (Braunschweig: Vieweg, 1880), p. 90.

32 Manuscripts Department of the Lower Saxony State and University Library (SUB), Blumenbach V, 43, 9–10, 13. William Davison to Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, 12 June 1822.

33 SUB, Blumenbach V, 43, 11–12; Georg Heinrich Wilhelm Blumenbach to Johann Friedrich, Thursday, 5 December 1822.

34 SUB, Blumenbach V, 43, 7, Blumenbach File "New Zealanders".

35 cf. Alfred Wiczorek & Wilfried Rosendahl (eds.), *Schädelkult. Kopf und Schädel in der Kulturgeschichte des Menschen. Begleitband zur Sonderausstellung* (Regensburg: Schnell und Steiner, 2011).

36 Robley, *Moko or Maori Tattooing*, Fig. 178.

37 Hooker, *Journal of the Right Hon. Sir Joseph Banks*, p. 248.

healed, thus it may have been a post-mortem production during a time of head trafficking between the Maori and white traders.<sup>38</sup>

Fig. 3: Male mokomokai head, Oz 345. The acrylic glass installation (H 50 cm, B u. L 35 cm) originates with the Maori artist George Nuku and was provided to the Göttingen collection. Nuku refers to his work as "whare o te toa", which describes a house for the warriors resp. for the temporary accommodation of ancestors and the philosophy that is connected with the circumstances of their accommodation. Photo: Robert Scheck, Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology of the University of Göttingen.

It is unclear what will happen to the two *mokomokai* located in Göttingen. Both heads have been registered by the Te Papa Tongarewa Museum in Wellington via personal contact with the Maori ethnologist, Patricia Wallace.<sup>39</sup> One point of view, which is gaining increasing acceptance, considers an ethical solution to keep them at the premises where they are currently located, classified as cultural treasures, or *taonga*, from a Maori perspective. This provides accommodation

38 WKA, Notification from Georg Schifko to the author, 14 October 2012.

39 WKA, Herewini to the author, 18 December 2009.

similar to a Maori *wahi tapu* (sacred room, sacred place), i.e., an undisturbed room where sacred artifacts are kept<sup>40</sup> in reverent peace and where they can be researched (and possibly exhibited) until a consensus on how to proceed further is reached (Fig. 3).<sup>41</sup>

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- 40 cf. Maximilian Bochenek, *Die Ethik der musealen Repräsentation von Human Remains vor dem Hintergrund der gegenwärtigen Repatriations-Debatte, unveröffentl. Bachelor-Arbeit an der Sozialwissenschaftlichen Fakultät der Georg-August-Universität Göttingen* (Göttingen: Universitäts-Verlag, 2010).
- 41 The two Göttingen *mokomokai* are in storage and are seldom, using an artistic installation (a hood as a temporary 'home') custom-built specifically for these heads by the Maori artist George Nuku. Presentation of the heads in lectures for the purpose of displaying scientific 'picture citations' seems permissible (consultation with Ron Lambert, former director of the New Plymouth Museum in New Zealand); mere display in the media, however, is regarded as ethically irresponsible (cf.: WKA, Notice from Benjamin Ochse, 13 October 2012).

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## JURIDICAL AND ETHICAL ASPECTS OF DISPLAYING ANATOMICAL SPECIMENS IN PUBLIC

Robert Jütte

### ABSTRACT

Until recently the legal community has tolerated, at least, the practice of creating, storing and displaying specimens of human remains without the consent of the deceased. Current legislation regulating the treatment of human remains held in collections, museums and public places is still highly fragmentary, and is insufficient for the resolution of the legal and ethical problems associated with them. This was one of the reasons why a working group consisting of experts from different academic fields (museums studies, pathology, anatomy, forensic medicine, law, medical history, bioethics) was set up in Germany in 2000. It should be mentioned that their work was not commissioned by any governmental institution but that it was initiated by a few people who were concerned about the lack of regulation in a highly sensitive field. Its task was to draft recommendations on the treatment of human remains in collections, museums and public places. In view of the fact that legislation regulating the treatment of human remains in collections, museums and public places is highly fragmentary these recommendations published in 2003 intended to set up a legal framework for the dignified treatment of human remains in the future. These recommendations have in the meantime been approved by the German Medical Association as well as by the Secretariat of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the German federal states. They did not become, however, legally binding, but had nevertheless a positive effect on the display of human remains in medical museums and anatomical collections all over Germany. They also serve as a kind of benchmark for handling human remains in ethnographic collections. The bottom-up approach (initiative by experts in the field, then seeking approval by legal institutions and government institutions) proved to be very successful in the German context. The paper deals with the rationale behind these recommendations and the impact they had on the display of human remains.

In 2005 the Los Angeles Police Department investigated the theft of a plastinated specimen. A thirteen-week-old human fetus, acquired from an old anatomical collection, was taken from Gunther von Hagens' Bodyworlds 2 at the California Science Center. The theft occurred in the early hours of Saturday, March 26, during the last weekend of the exhibit, which officially closed at midnight. This spectacular theft must have disturbed the self-image of Dr. von Hagens, creator of the exhibits and inventor of the plastination technique, who – according to his own words – “has designed BODY WORLDS 2 to reveal significant insights about human anatomy, physiology and health, presenting an unprecedented view of the