Object: War Canoe Prow
Indigenous name: Tauihu
Culture/location: Maori (New Zealand)
Date: 1750-1850
Materials: Totara wood
Dimensions: H. 14.76 x W. 15.35 x D. 40.55 inches
Institution and accession number: Horniman Museum, 1967

Object: River Canoe Prow
Indigenous name: Tauihu
Culture/location: Maori (New Zealand)
Date: Around 1800
Materials: Wood and abalone shell
Dimensions: None given
Institution and accession number: Denver Art Museum, 1949.4464

This summary compares and contrasts two canoe prows from New Zealand: a war canoe prow and a river canoe prow, both from the same general time period. I chose these as they represent something close to home for me, the love of oceanic travel. This project allows me to delve into the differences in canoes and their utility. The war canoe prow on the left, and the River Canoe Prow on the right are both great examples of the tendency in Maori art to combine utility and spirituality. These canoes are crafted from a singular log of tŌtara or kauri wood; both trees are native to New Zealand. These artifacts reflect the Maori's history and culture of warfare. This prow is a part of a vessel meant to transport those who will engage in battle. Because of this, it is important for it to be infused with a large amount of mana to aid in the successful completion of the task. (Keesing 1984, 147) When compared to the river canoe prow, one can see the extra time put into carving the object. Interestingly, though this is a war

canoe prow, it is daintier looking than the river-canoe's prow. While we might imagine that the war canoe would be sturdier than that a river canoe because of its use in transporting warriors into battle and not take part in the battle itself, the seemingly fragile appearance results from all of the carving work and prayers infusing the object. While a thicker and uncarved prow would be sturdier, it would lack mana in comparison (Grabski 2016). Rather, though dainty looking, the intricacy of the war canoe prow speaks of ferocity in a way that the river canoe never could. With the purpose being explicitly for war, the prow, imbued with mana, strengthened the resolve in the warriors through the carvings that represented the intense energy stored inside.

Impressive because of the time and dedication required to carve the war prow, this object is more than simply an artifact of war. In the middle of the prow, between the two symmetrical koru, is an abstract representation of a Tiki. This is particularly interesting because this abstract, unsubstantiated Tiki is uncommon. While most Maori Tiki are shown as stout and strong, this one lacks such characteristics (Neich 2002, 19). The size and shape of this Tiki is also related to its purpose and location on the narrow prow of the boat. Its narrowness is a characteristic of the prow, and the holes allow for the Tiki to have form when looked at from both the left and the right. Furthermore, the Tiki may be interpreted as a sign of protection (Gathercole 2002, 100). While there is a Tiki facing forward to protect the individuals inside of the canoe from the dangers of going forward, the abstract Tiki looks out to the sides protecting from dangers that would come abeam of the vessel. When compared to the river canoe prow position of the Tiki's face makes sense. The river canoe does not need the same protection that a war canoe would need as it only ventures inside of its lands and was not used in warfare.

The comparative lack of decoration on the river canoe prow suggests that it possesses less mana or that it belonged to the vessel of a commoner rather than a noble. Low relief carving is seen primarily on the prow's head. Maori art is often completely covered in low-relief carving (Morris 1986, 571). However, in this case, what would be considered the Tiki's neck is not elaborately carved. This observation suggests that this object has less mana than an object

covered with more extensive or elaborate carving. The differences in carving may indicate the distinctive purpose of each canoe. The river canoe prow, which is less elaborately carved, may also have less mana because it was likely used for less important tasks than warfare. While it is less elaborately carved, the river canoe prow still exemplifies Maori designs such as the Koru and Tiki Mana'ia.

The river prow is distinctly Maori for a myriad of reason. Like many other Maori pieces, this piece is composed of two materials: it is carved of wood and its eyes are inlaid with abalone. The head itself is distinctly Maori with the beaklike mouth with the tongue sticking out as well as the nose and mouth. Compared to human figural sculptures (Tiki) across the Polynesian islands the features of Maori Tiki share a commonality with some of the carvings of Easter Island as both incorporate human and bird-like features (Hongi 1918, 162). The low relief carving is perhaps the hallmark of the Maori origin of this work. The many spirals engraved in the head such as those around the jaw-hinge suggest that this object has had extra work put in to enhance the mana (Keesing 1984, 139). The spirals known as Koru symbolize new life, strength, growth and peace. This is quite fitting as this boat was meant for river navigation and not transportation for war. Using the canoe was most likely to provide sustenance for family and community, rather than transportation for the purpose of taking life.

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