

CARVED FIGURES OF MURIWAI AND HER SON ON LOAN TO MUSEUM

While most of the more than 130 pieces of the Tanewhirinaki meeting-house carvings are now safely stored in a new building erected for that purpose on the Waioeka marae, several pieces have been retained in Opotiki for loan to the Auckland museum and preservation treatment there.

Included in these are the 100-year-old pou manawa, or centre poles supporting the ridge, the beautifully executed and unusual figures of the chieftainess Muriwai and her eldest son, Tanewhirinaki himself.

Tanewhirinaki was drowned at sea while fishing near Matata. The story goes that Muriwai, noted for her stubbornness, refused for some time to leave her Whakatane home when told a party, assumed at first to be a war party, was approaching. When she did emerge she discovered it was the party bearing her son's body.



Tanewhirinaki, left, and Muriwai. On Tanewhirinaki's head is the end of the pole which supported the ridge pole of the meeting-house.

TATOOS

Because he was so young when death struck, Tanewhirinaki had not yet been tattooed and his handsome likeness, cut from totara, has none of these marks of a Maori warrior.

On the other hand, Muriwai has the complete face, thigh and buttock tattoos of a man and clutches a mere to her breast, presumably because she assumed leadership of her tribe.

She is the ancestress of the Whakatohea, which was named to recall this stubborn old woman. Because of Muriwai the women of the Whakatohea retain more rights than any other Maori women and are believed to be the only ones allowed to speak on a marae or welcome visitors there. "A daughter of Muriwai" today is a leader among her people.

TREASURES

When the 100-year-old carvings were rescued from rotting in their derelict shed at Waioeka earlier this year it was thought at first that the tattooed figure was a male. Closer examination, however, left no doubt that this was a female and the other a male figure. Their value in dollars would be tremendous;

recently a pair of carved heads alone sold in London for \$16,000.

Those tribal treasures will, of course, never be sold and are, in fact, beyond price to the tribe. They are on loan to the museum only so long as they are not needed here to complete the meeting-house should it be rebuilt, or they are asked for by the tribe for some

purpose. On a similar understanding are those pieces of the carvings travelling with the Te Kooti exhibition and in Gisborne this week, and others which are to be loaned to the new Whakatane Museum.

Mr D. Simmons, ethnologist from Auckland Museum, who has displayed the keenest interest in the carvings, will oversee the packing of the figures for transport next week.



College students carrying one of the larger pieces of carving into the new storage shed on the Waioeka marae on Monday.