

Portrait of Chief Tuterei Karewa, Ngati Maru Tribe, New Zealand

Horatio Gordon Robley



Description

Horatio Gordon Robley (1840-1930)

Portrait of Chief Tuterei Karewa, Ngati Maru Tribe, New Zealand

Head and shoulders, wearing a traditional pihepihe, his face decorated with a moko or facial tattoo
Signed lower right: H.G. Robley, inscribed along the lower edge: TUTEREI KAREWA / Chief Thames Ngati maru tribe and further inscribed on a label attached to the reverse: No3 of Maori Collection / 1864 / Portrait of TUTEREI KAREWA / Ngati Maru tribe Thames / partly tattooed -[T]hame[s] 64 back of pot[rait]
Watercolour over pencil
Sheet 28.5 by 20.5 cm., 11 ¼ by 8 in.

Provenance:

Acquired in New Zealand circa 1985 by the father of the present owner;
Private Collection, UK

The sitter in this portrait was an important Maori chieftain and warrior. He was the son of Ruangakau, a chief of Ngati Maru, survivor of the Battle of Ttara P, and Te Waimihi of Ngati Whanaunga and Te Tini-o-Toi. In the 1860s, Chief Karewa was involved with negotiations between the Maori tribes and the European powers with regard to land ownership in New Zealand. Records indicate that, in response to European interests in gold prospecting on their lands, Karewa was a key participant in meetings of chiefs of the Hauraki region. Correspondence from 1863 offers details from these meetings in which Chief Karewa acknowledged European control over certain regions but maintained that the Hauraki chiefs had independent land rights. Given that these negotiations took place in 1863 and that the present portrait was executed the following year, Robley probably chose to portray the chieftain as one of the most influential members of the negotiations.

Horatio Robley was a Major-General in the army who saw service in New Zealand, Mauritius, South Africa and Sri Lanka. He was also an artist of considerable talent. Robley arrived in New Zealand in January 1864 and during the Tauranga Campaign in 1864, Robley made a remarkable series of sketches and paintings, which are now in the National Library of New Zealand. He immediately took a deep interest in Maori culture and language and the present work appears to be amongst the earliest which he executed. During his time in New Zealand, Robley met a Maori woman, called Herete Mauao, with whom he had a son, named Hamiora Tu Ropere. In addition to the present image, Chief Tuterei Karewa was depicted by Robley on at least two other occasions. Both of these images seem to derive from the photographs taken by Arthur James Iles (1890-1920). The present work appears to depict the chieftain as a significantly younger man, when he has dark rather than silver hair. Chief Karewa wears a pihepihe, which was a type of cloak adorned with pokinokini or cylindrical tags made of flax. The facial moko referenced whakapapa or genealogical lines and acknowledged the status of an individual.