

Painting with Hinemihi

As part of the proposed restoration of Hinemihi decisions about the colour of her carvings will need to be made

Please create your own colour scheme for Hinemihi on the outline drawing and leave it with us for future reference!

Investigating Hinemihi's Painted Surface

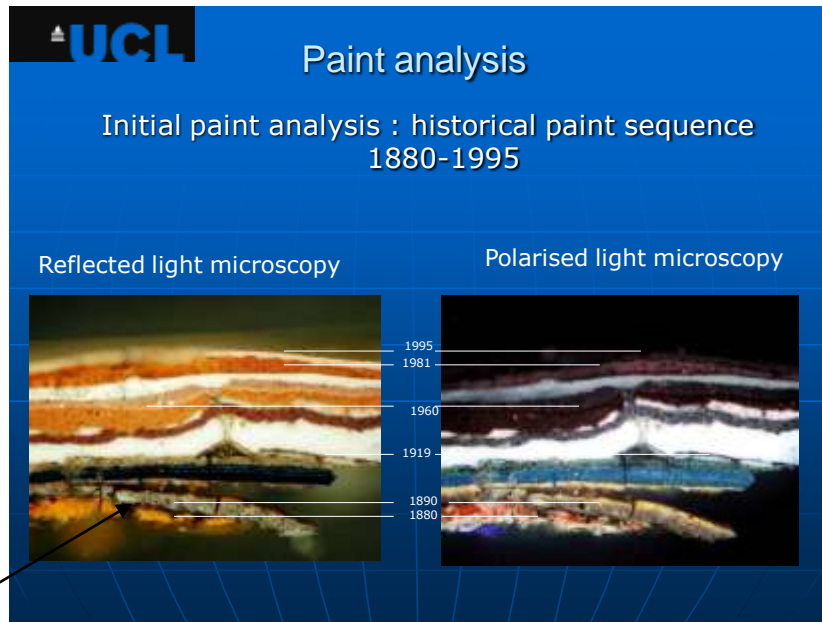
The analysis of 55 paint samples (less than 3 mm square) from Hinemihi has helped us understand how Hinemihi has appeared at different stages in her past. This was done using a range of analytical techniques i.e. optical microscopic examination of the prepared cross sections, ultraviolet (UV) and polarised light microscopy (PLM), Raman Spectroscopy and Scanning Electron Microscope with Energy Dispersive X-ray (SEM-EDX).



Cross section of a paint sample from Hinemihi's maihi (bargeboards) showing the longest paint sequence

This revealed paint sequences that consisted of two to twelve discrete layers. The colours present in the cross sections were: red/orange (that changed to reddish/pinkish in later interventions), white, blue and black. Some layers showed a significant degree of deterioration possibly indicating of a long period of exposure to the environment.

Within the paint sequence, evidence of the 1886 eruption of Mount Tarawera would enable us to demarcate between Hinemihi's time in New Zealand, and her time at Clendon Park. A dense hard layer is often encountered when cleaning the painted surfaces of historic meeting houses in the Rotorua area of New Zealand, which is thought to relate to this layer. Information about the Mount Tarawera eruption suggests that the "Rotomahana mud" that would have fallen on Hinemihi was silica rich. Only recently (May 2010) Maria Pombo Cardoso was able to identify a dense layer rich in silica near the base of the painted sequence, which separated the orange, blue, black and white earliest layers from later colour schemes.



1886 This images represents the suggested chronological sequence for the identified paint layers on Hinemihi's carvings.

In considering the conservation of Hinemihi's painted carvings, information from paint analysis provides "historic justification" for the selection of a certain painted scheme to be recreated. It is however more likely that the eventual painted scheme for Hinemihi will reflect a dialogue between the Hinemihi's people, Maori community, and the National Trust. In working with meeting house conservation in New Zealand, the decision of the Marae committee and the tangata whenau (local community) take precedent over historic evidence.



Paint analysis carried out recently at UCL suggests that the earliest painted decoration for Hinemihi (1880?) was a vibrant combination of orange, blue, white and black (photo: Emilia Ralston based on an 1880 photograph of Hinemihi)

The value of this scientifically generated information is to provide one way of understanding the conservation needs of Hinemihi. The use of such information is to provide a starting point for a dialogue. In this way the conservation of Hinemihi will be less a response to Hinemihi as an "art work" and more as a response to the needs of Hinemihi's people.