



**Far left** This tekoteko suffered a “do-it-yourself” job. It was given a concrete cap and concrete ankles — with disastrous results.

**Left** Here the front was painted but the back wasn't, so front and back reacted differently to the elements. Hence the cracks and rot.

**Above** The head of the figure at left. Concrete extends from crown to chin. Deep cracks have appeared, and only the stainless steel headband holds it together.

## WOOD

Unless precautions are taken to guard against biological attack, dry rot and wet rot, wooden artefacts can suffer serious damage by the growth of fungi or by attack from borer. Carvings made in timber are not always tanalised. They are usually set in concrete or in the ground and in most cases it is there that the rotting starts. The timber is kept moist for long periods of time by the water held in the concrete and rot sets in, the wood gets soft, the mechanical strength disappears, and eventually the wood will crumble at a touch.

Borer attack is serious and if allowed to go unchecked can do great damage. The only *effective* way of dealing with this problem is fumigation, and this should not be done by borerbomb, but by a reputable professional firm which deals with fumigation. It should be followed by spraying with an insecticide. For portable artefacts this spraying is not

necessary if they are stored properly, but in the case of buildings it is advisable. It is not always possible to do this however, particularly with decorated houses. Then one has to rely on fumigation only, but as soon as new borer infestations are shown up again by fresh borer dust, fumigation has to be carried out once more.

*A word of warning:* The use of borerbombs is not advisable as these have practically *no* effect at all on borer. They only affect the borer fly in flight and, as borers fly for about two months, it means in practical terms that one has to let off bombs over two months, and keep the smoke in the building for twenty-four hours each time. Even then the larvae inside the wood will not be affected and they will go on destroying the interior of the wood.

Wooden carvings outside buildings are exposed to the elements and invariably develop cracks due to stresses brought about by the changing elements such as temperature and humidity. Wooden carvings like the poupou, pou-mua and amo are usually set in the ground and/or concrete, and it is there that deterioration sets in. They are all also subjected continuously to rain, dust, sun, etc. The dust settles into the cracks and holds the moisture for long periods. Bacteria start to grow and rotting sets in slowly but surely, and over a long period of time the timber will lose its strength: although looking good on the outside, one day somebody will be able to put a finger through its protective coat of paint! Thus areas to watch are: where the carving enters the ground or concrete, and the various cracks. Also, by tapping the wood one can observe differences in sound: the deteriorated areas should sound hollow whereas sound timbers have a solid sound.

If there is deterioration, ask for advice; do not attempt a do-it-yourself job. I have seen too many “jobs” done which have caused more damage and created real difficulties for the restoration of the object. In one case concrete was poured into the head of a wooden figure and resulted in a core of rotted timber down the total length of the figure. The concrete held the moisture of rain and bacterial growth was prolific, causing the rot to spread throughout the figure. In another case concrete was poured around rotted timber to hold it in shape, but in fact this process accelerated the deterioration. PVA glue has been used to “preserve” wood carvings, but this is the wrong material and actually causes destruction. Again, do not experiment, but ask advice.

## TEXTILES

Cloaks, piupiu and other fibrous materials are usually kept indoors in cupboards or drawers and sometimes hung on walls. Ideally they should be kept in controlled conditions of temperature and humidity. This is practically impossible in private collections and in meeting houses, but there is a lot that can be done to extend the life of these materials. Storage and handling are of the utmost importance.

I witnessed an incident one night when a person who gave a talk brought with him various cloaks with feather borders, two of which were completely covered with kiwi feathers. The cloaks were folded into a smallish suitcase and when taken out were shaken, and consequently feathers flew everywhere. The storage and handling was wrong. Ideally textiles, particularly ancient ones, should *not* be folded. The fibres become very brittle due to age, and folding will break them and tears will appear in time. Exposure to the sun will not restore life into these fibres, although I was assured by the owner that that was what he did to “preserve” them. I have already pointed out what excessive light does to these materials.

Textiles should be rolled up on cardboard rolls which have been covered by polythene to prevent acid from the cardboard entering the textiles, and they should be interleaved