

JPS

The Journal
of the
Polynesian Society

VOLUME 128 No.1 MARCH 2019

Special Issue

TE AO HOU: WHAKAPAPA AS
PRACTICAL ONTOLOGY

THE POLYNESIAN SOCIETY
THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
NEW ZEALAND



“IMAGES STILL LIVE AND ARE VERY MUCH ALIVE”:
WHAKAPAPA AND THE 1923 DOMINION MUSEUM
ETHNOLOGICAL EXPEDITION

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ABSTRACT: The first major photofilmic record of the Waiapu River region of Aotearoa New Zealand occurred over a three-week period in March–April 1923, when the filmmaker and photographer James McDonald documented local cultural activities on the East Coast. McDonald was a member of the fourth Dominion Museum ethnological expedition from Wellington, invited to Waiapu by Apirana Ngata to record ancestral *tikanga* ‘practices’ that he feared were disappearing. Despite the criticism of ethnographic “othering” in the resulting film *He Pito Whakaatu i te Noho a te Maori i te Tairawhiti—Scenes of Māori Life on the East Coast*, this paper suggests that the fieldwork, from a Ngāti Porou perspective, was assisted and supported by local people. It addresses the entanglements of this event and delineates the background, purpose and results of the documentary photographs and film in relation to Ngata’s cultural reinvigoration agenda. This article also reveals the various relationships, through whakapapa ‘kin networks’ hosting and friendship, between members of the team and local people. Drawing on the 1923 diary kept by Johannes Andersen and on other archival and tribal sources, the author closely analyses these relationships, what Apirana Ngata calls *takiaho* ‘relational cords’, which are brought to light so that descendants can keep alive these connections through the remaining film fragments and beyond the frame. These kinship and relational networks were forged and deepened through education, politics, wartime experiences and loss, pandemics and health reform, as well as shared cultural understandings. This reflection on the *takiaho*, the cords of connection, demonstrates the complex relational logic that informed the Māori subjects in the films, enabling the “photo business” to be carried out by the expedition team, in the process producing a lasting cultural legacy for descendants. As Merata Mita memorably put it in 1992, “Images still live and are very much alive”.

Keywords: Waiapu, New Zealand, Ngāti Porou, ethnographic filmmaking, Apirana Ngata, James McDonald, Te Rangihīroa (Peter Buck), whakapapa ‘kin networks’, *takiaho* ‘relational cords’

At home in Aotearoa, I greet the images of my ancestors verbally and speak to them as they come forth on the screen. For I know that while they have passed on, the images still live and are very much alive to me.

—Merata Mita (1992a: 73)

In the early 1980s, “a jumble of fragmentary images entered the world of light” (Dennis 1992: 61) in the form of nitrate film negatives shot between 1919 and 1923 as part of four Dominion Museum ethnological expeditions to Gisborne, Rotorua, Whanganui and Te Tai Rāwhiti. Four historic films were compiled from surviving footage, consisting of short segments centred on particular activities, with each segment commencing with an explanatory intertitle. These extraordinary and lively silent documentary images are *taonga*—‘treasures’ that are deeply valued by the Māori communities in which they were made. They carry the *wairua* ‘immaterial essence’ of the people and places, customs and practices documented. While it is now evident that some of the material had been shown in public, much of it had not. Since the 1980s, the films have been restored and returned through multiple screenings to the communities where they were created, changing the way in which film archiving is done in Aotearoa. The people in these films, disconnected by some 60 years and more from their living descendants, now communicate through the moving images. In viewing the films, we, the living, respond through speaking to our ancestors, addressing them verbally as if they were present in the room with us.

Yet much remains unknown or unrecorded about the contexts in which the films were made and the relationships beyond the frame. As Merata Mita (1992a: 75) has noted, “material divorced from the people loses its value, the people keep it alive”. This paper examines the Tai Rāwhiti film, aiming to shed light on *whakapapa* ‘genealogies’ and *whanaungatanga* ‘relationships, kinship, or sense of family connections’ between a participant in one of the film fragments, farmer and community leader Panikena Kaa, the filmmaker James McDonald, the instigator Apirana Ngata at whose home the team stayed, and his lifelong friend (*hoa aroha*), medical doctor, soldier and anthropologist Te Rangihīroa (Peter Buck). Drawing on the 1923 diary kept by Johannes Andersen, first chief librarian at the Alexander Turnbull Library, and other records, oral and written, *takiaho* ‘relational cords’ are brought to light so that descendants can keep alive these connections through the remaining film fragments and beyond the frame.

THE PHOTO BUSINESS

After breakfast we rode, taking the photo business in the buggy, to the mouth of Waiapu so as to see how the 14ft kahawai [*Arripis trutta*] net is used. A big Maori got into the shallow water where the river makes over the bar, holding the mouth of the net to the sea, & going with the current in a sweep along the beach. . . . The surf was very heavy today, & a strong wind was blowing off the land, so our man caught no fish. Once or twice the sea threw a wave up over the narrow spit where we stood, but the wash was only an inch or two deep, except one wash which went over McDonald’s boot-tops. (Andersen 1923: 28)

This entry pencilled by Andersen recounts the first film and photographic record of Ngāti Porou tribal netting for kahawai at the mouth of the Waiapu River. This demonstration appears in a compilation of filmed scenes that became *He Pito Whakaatu i te Noho a te Maori i te Tairawhiti—Scenes of Maori Life on the East Coast*, and in two quarter-plate photographic images. While Andersen does not name the “big Māori” who assisted the Dominion Museum team members, Te Rangihīroa identifies him as Panikena Kaa of Rangitukia in *The Maori Craft of Netting* (1926: 620). Kaa’s identity was further confirmed by his granddaughter Keri Kaa, who assisted the Film Archive when a print of the surviving original footage was made and screened in the 1980s. As well as getting his feet wet, New Zealand-born Scotsman James Ingram McDonald—the photographer and artist for all four ethnological expeditions—operated both still and moving cameras, documenting ancestral *tikanga* ‘practices’ such as fishing, making *tāruke kōura* ‘crayfish pots’ and related activities. During the Waiomatatini expedition McDonald focused on the “photo business” of recording, while Te Rangihīroa initiated requests for knowledge on how things are made or done, particularly regarding netting and fishing, Andersen collected information on *whai* ‘string games’ and ethnologist Elsdon Best gathered terminologies, histories and other information.

In his unpublished paper “The Terminology of Whakapapa” (Ngata ca. 1931; see also this issue), Apirana Ngata described how in Māori, *takiaho* emerges as both a thing—a cord for stringing fish on—and an act of tracing relationships:

Aho, kaha. Literally a line, string or cord. In relation to a pedigree or genealogy this is a figure that would naturally occur to a weaving, cord-making, net-making, fishing people. The reciter conceived a connected string on which the persons concerned in the matter of his recitation were strung along in sequence and by lifting the string displayed them prominently. The string was the aho or kaha. The act of tracing it along in memory was “taki”, and of lifting it “hapai”. ...Aho is most commonly used in the expression “aho ariki”. *Takiaho* is a cord on which fish and shell fish are strung, and also a line of descent. (Ngata ca. 1931: 2)

Strung together, the film fragments are the most publicly visible trace of this historic expedition. Each sequence in the film can be conceived of as being displayed on this relational cord of connection. Similarly, photographic prints are pegged along a string in the darkroom for drying, which has become a crafted display method for viewing. In this paper, “*takiaho*” is used as a conceptual tool for tracing and recalling lines of connection as a way of understanding the social context of the Tai Rāwhiti ethnological expedition.

In particular, it demonstrates how kinship and friendship networks outside the frame have significance and bearing on the Tai Rāwhiti East Coast film, particularly this sequence with Panikena Kaa, revealing how the familial and social networks of Apirana Ngata, his *whānau* ‘family’ and those of Te Rangihīroa operated to ensure the success of the expedition. The connection between Panikena Kaa, Ngata and Te Rangihīroa reveals previously unexplored nuances in the non-familial relationships involving what appear ostensibly to be Pākehā-controlled camera technology and Māori subjects (the former being New Zealanders of European ancestry). In this sense, the analysis proposes a relational cord along which the persons concerned are traced and their connections displayed.

A SHORT RESURRECTION

They [the images] reply in many subtle and not so subtle ways; through the clothes they are wearing, the work they are doing, the ceremonies they are performing, the body language, the facial expression, and elements of their style ... and in that journey, on screen, from darkness to light, another life lives, short resurrections are made. (Mita 1992a: 73)

Mita’s statement here aptly describes the cultural knowledge embedded into these images. If one examines the film sequence involving Panikena Kaa, it becomes apparent that despite its brevity, the clip resurrects the *āhua* ‘appearance’ of an expert demonstrating an important cultural practice in a threshold place between the river and the ocean. The body of water is an ancestral being—Waiapu Kōkā Huhua, “Waiapu of Many Mothers”—and mother of many. This alludes not only to the great number of female leaders of the area, but also to Waiapu as a home to many species and beings. The Waiapu river mouth film sequence is just one minute long. It is preceded by a sequence of a woman diving for *kōura* ‘crayfish’ at Whareponga and followed by a fishing demonstration of the stone channel and net method at Waiomatatini. After the intertitle “Te hī kahawai i te wahapū o Waiapu Awa. Fishing for kahawai at the mouth of the Waiapu River”, Kaa enters the water, single-handedly wrestling the huge net in strong winds and the tidal currents of the river mouth. The wind is whipping the waves. Entering the frame from the right, he moves quickly with the current, water over his knees. After holding the scoop-net down in the water until the river meets the ocean waves, Kaa demonstrates the action of lifting the net up out of the water and onto his back. The intertitle uses the term *wahapū* for river mouth, whereas locally it is always referred to as the *ngutu awa*.

The changeable river mouth is a place governed by strict protocols, *ngā ture o te ngutu awa* ‘the laws of the river mouth’:

There are many ture (rules) to be adhered to at the ngutu awa and they were strictly enforced in earlier years. ... Nunu Tangaere said, “if you disrespected the rules, you’d see the sea change—becoming rougher. You could even get carried out to sea and nearly drown.” (*Nati Link* 2015)

The agency of the sea as a being that reacts to rule-breaking by becoming rougher is explained by the world view of the collective Ngāti Porou Tūturu *hapū*—a ‘sub-tribe’ of the lower Waiapu River. The river mouth is a dangerous place with strong tidal currents where *taniwha* ‘water spirits or creatures’ dwell, including my own ancestor, Taho. The act of catching kahawai is not just going fishing but an activity involving restricted knowledge, where any distractions can be life-threatening. The importance of kahawai fishing to Ngāti Porou is outlined in the Ngāti Porou Treaty of Waitangi settlement (New Zealand Government Treaty settlement documents, Ngāti Porou Settlement 2010: 1).¹



Figure 1. Panikena Kaa, and possibly Riwai Raroa, Waiapu, 1923. Photograph by James McDonald. Courtesy Kaa family and Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa ref MA_A.004068/1 108 4260.

In the film clip, Kaa wears a white shirt as a gesture of modesty. If the camera had not been present he would have been naked, as that was (and still is) the cultural practice when kahawai fishing at Waiapu. Being naked was a pragmatic response to keeping safe when working with the nets in a river mouth with a strong current, where clothing could be weighty and restrictive. This is an aspect of the tikanga ‘cultural protocols’ of the river. There are two quarter-plate photographs surviving of Kaa with his 4.2-metre-long kahawai scoop-net. One, reproduced here (Fig. 1), was first published in Te Rangihīroa’s *The Maori Craft of Netting* (1926: Plate 105) and identified as “*kupenga kahawai kōkō*”. Te Rangihīroa was at pains to differentiate this method, “*kōkō*, with short vowels, which means to ‘to scoop’ or ‘scrape up’” (1926: 615), from the more common *kōkō* ‘prodding’ method, which involved use of a pole and pointed net (pp. 615, 620), the former being a speciality of Rangitukia Village (p. 622). Figure 1 shows a second man who is possibly Riwai Raroa, based on a pencilled note in Te Rangihīroa’s 1923 notebook, now held at Bishop Museum in Honolulu. The kahawai season usually runs between December and February, with the main schools of kahawai gone by March. Te Rangihīroa notes the significance of kahawai to the people of the river:

During the kahawai season, people camped on the beach, and while the men were landing the fish, the women would clean and hang them up. Two tripods of driftwood were set up to support a crossbar, on which the cleaned fish were hung up to dry—this was called the whata. Inland people would come down to the beach with carts, and drove them away laden with dried kahawai. (Buck 1926: 622)

The filming took place a month after the usual end to the season. Why was Kaa, fisherman, farmer and community leader, prepared to demonstrate on camera the art of “*kupenga kōkō*” (following Buck 1926) at a time when the kahawai runs were over? And knowing that he is unlikely to catch any fish, why would he be filmed—contrary to the local practice of naked net handling—in his white shirt? Certainly Kaa was an expert net handler. One of his descendants, Charl Hirschfeld, writes:

Physically he was strong of upright gait and possessed of deep blue eyes which made him stand out in a crowd of his immediate fellow-compatriots. In the prime of his manhood he was able to swim the channel between the tip of East Cape and Whanga o Kena (East Island), a stretch of water with powerful tides and currents. He gathered kai moana [‘seafood’] in abundance for his whanau and whanaunga [‘relatives’] and was respected for his prowess at fishing. (Hirschfeld 2013)

Scoop-net fishing at the river mouth is an activity restricted to men. Knowing that he had no control over who would see the footage in the brief resurrections of its screenings, Kaa's choice to wear his shirt indicates that he had considered how to mediate the rules of the river mouth. Although this is an ethnographic film in which the makers sought to record customary tribal ways, it is performed in a present-day manner, with the white shirt being a sign of refusal from Kaa to be filmed naked. It does not conform to the idea of the "ethnographic present" evident in other films of the times. It also is reminiscent of other more recent recordings of scoop-net fishing in the river mouth, for example, for the television show *Waka Huia* (2016) which used archival Radio Ngāti Porou footage of Waiapu River mouth resident John Manuel teaching young men—dressed in shorts and sports shirts—the *ture* 'laws' of netting kahawai. For Ngāti Porou, scoop-net fishing is a tribal taonga, a treasured practice worthy of sharing.

A MATTER OF CONSIDERABLE IMPORTANCE

Prior to the 1920s, when the advent of automobile road transport changed the passage of goods, the main trading gateway for the northern East Cape was Port Awanui, located six to seven kilometres south of the Waiapu river mouth. About five kilometres inland is Waioamatatini, where the meeting house Porourangi is located. It is also where Te Whare Hou, known as the Bungalow—the home of Māori member of Parliament Apirana Ngata and his family—still stands today. When Ngata invited the ethnological expedition team to his home district to photograph and film the arts and crafts of Ngāti Porou, factors such as introduced diseases, warfare and environmental changes were compounding cultural losses of knowledge. Cultural hubs like Waioamatatini in the Waiapu Valley were slowly depopulating. Centuries-old systems of governance, education and social, cultural and familial relationships were being turned upside down, and a new order prevailed. Under Native Land Court legislation, collectively held land was divided and households individualised. Not all *tangata whenua* 'people of the land and sea' were able to sustain a living in the communities that had been at the heart of their tribal worlds. Some coastal communities like Port Awanui were economically declining, so leaving in droves, those families made their lives elsewhere. This swiftly transforming environment was the setting into which the ethnological expedition brought film and still cameras, wax-cylinder recording devices and notebooks as tools to document the cultural lifeways of Ngāti Porou.

In a noteworthy show of support from a Māori filmmaker, Mita wrote about McDonald's role in the recording of taonga:

By now there was an awareness by some Maori elders and scholars of the need to record and preserve, and McDonald's work was regarded a matter of considerable importance.

During this period he [McDonald] had strong support from Te Rangi Hiroa (Dr Peter Buck) and Apirana Ngata, and through the patronage of these two men in particular McDonald received the assistance of many influential Maori in the areas to which they travelled and recorded. (Mita 1992b: 40)

Mita also noted that the remaining record “stands as a monument to their labour and foresight. It is among the most remarkable and rare material of its kind found anywhere in the world” (Mita 1992b: 40). As McDonald’s great-great-granddaughter Amiria Salmond has pointed out (this issue), to a large extent the expeditions were Māori-led and Māori-supported enterprises, initiated by Te Rangihīroa and Ngata as well as McDonald. Earlier, in 1989 after viewing *He Pito Whakaatu*, the late Barry Barclay, a Ngāti Apa filmmaker and writer, supposed that McDonald’s camera was “a bit like an outsider peering into rural life as it was then” (Barclay 1989: 8). In an analysis of images of Māori in New Zealand film and television, Martin Blythe describes the films as occupying “a peculiar existence at the bicultural edge between a Pakeha-controlled technology and the Maori subjects of the film” (Blythe 1994: 56–57). The allusion to peering, perhaps through a window, is expanded as Blythe states: “In that sense, the films in the Eighties and beyond are a window into the past and the future, particularly for those Maori whose tipuna (ancestors) and tribal areas appear in them” (p. 57). Barclay goes on to say:

[T]he images have great beauty; they are priceless for ethnographers and very moving for the Maori community who can feel the presence of their immediate ancestors in much the way they sense their presence in carvings in the meeting house—which to many outsiders are nothing more than sculptures. (Barclay 1990: 97)

This is the only documentary filmic record of life on the East Coast for the better part of the twentieth century, instigated by Ngata, the most important contemporary leader of Ngāti Porou of his time. Yet, who are the immediate ancestors in the film? Is the camera an outsider peering through a window into rural life? Or was it a welcomed *manuhiri* ‘guest’? Is it the contemporary commentators who are the strangers? Very little is known of the people in the film and photographs, nor how they came to be included, despite the apparent willingness of the people to be participants. The tipuna who appear in the Tai Rāwhiti film are influential leaders and cultural experts: for example, the only remaining Iwirākau-style carver, Hōne Ngātoto, whom in 1908 Ngata had commissioned to carve the “Māori Room”—a formal study in the Bungalow (Ellis 2012: 268–69)—demonstrates *kōwhaiwhai* ‘painting decorative patterns for house rafters’ in the film.

With a 63-year gap between the making of the film and its first public showing in 1986, most people who had participated in the Tai Rāwhiti expedition had died. Even Port Awanui girl Mary (Meretuhi) Maxwell, named in Johannes Andersen's diary as the 15-year-old buggy driver for the crew, had passed away in 1983. By 1986, tribal recall of the events was scant. References to the local context in the literature are also brief, with a focus on the Dominion Museum team and the later reception of the film rather than on the people who participated in it (Barclay 1989; Blythe 1994; Kelly 2014).² Barclay's image of the filmmaker peering through a window was accentuated by Kelly (2014: 60) who wrote that while Ngata and Buck (Te Rangihīroa) lent *mana* 'authority' and prestige to this exercise, the Pākehā present (Elsdon Best, Andersen and McDonald) exerted more control over the filmmaking. Against this I argue that Ngata and Te Rangihīroa's roles in enabling the East Coast recordings are pivotal to the participation of the many cultural experts who appear on screen. The role of *iwi* 'tribal' hospitality has not been sufficiently analysed as an affirmation of the *kaupapa* 'purpose' of the expeditions.

Blythe asks what the McDonald/Best/Andersen expeditions wanted from these films. I see it as equally, if not more, important to ask what Ngata, Te Rangihīroa and—in the case of the East Coast—Ngāti Porou communities wanted from them. Barclay, Blythe and Kelly are responding to all four films produced from the Dominion Museum expeditions. Regional differences and the contrasts between the "event" films (Hui Aroha in 1919 and Rotorua in 1920) and the tribal films (Ngāti Porou and Whanganui) have not been sufficiently explored to draw out the differences in *iwi* engagement. Instead, they are treated collectively, with McDonald, the filmmaker, as the uniting factor in their production. There is no discussion of host–guest relationships during the filming, although these were pivotal in all cases. Indeed, Kelly (2014: 114) erroneously states that there was a "lack of active *iwi* involvement in the making of these films". This is despite the New Zealand Film Archive at the time noting that the team "had the help and sympathy of many leading Māori in the area who regarded the recording of arts and crafts and tribal lore a matter of considerable importance" (Kelly 2014, Appendix Four). On the other hand, Amiria Salmond draws out the significant role played by Apirana Ngata in aligning the expeditions with his *iwi* development agenda:

This was part of Ngata's explicit strategy to employ *nga rakau a te Pakeha* (the tools of Europeans) in the recording of old forms of knowledge and material arts—*nga taonga a o tipuna* or the treasures of the ancestors—for use in the Young Maori Party's programme of economic and cultural reinvigoration. (Henare 2007: 100)

Certainly for the East Coast expedition, the team was hosted at *marae* ‘ceremonial meeting places’ at Whareponga, Waiomatatini, Rangitukia and Te Araroa, and a screening was held at the community hall in Tikitiki. Here, the role of the *haukāinga* ‘local people’ should not be underestimated, nor should the cultural reach of Apirana Ngata and his whānau be disregarded. Between Arihia Ngata’s family in Whareponga where the Ngārimu family of Materoa Reedy—a highly respected female tribal leader—also lived and the Kōhere, Kaa and Wi Repa families in Rangitukia and Te Araroa respectively, as well as many other contributors, *manaakitanga* ‘hospitality, sharing and care’ was offered across the district. Hosting Te Rangihīroa—Major Buck, a holder of the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) who had been in Gallipoli, the Somme and Passchendaele alongside the sons of local whānau—was a matter of reciprocity, mana and tribal honour. The purpose of recording tribal knowledge, instigated by a local leader for his own people and not for a Pākehā audience, was also a matter of tribal pride.

HĀPAI: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WHAKAPAPA AND WHANAUNGATANGA

Despite colonial ruptures to the social fabric of Ngāti Porou, systems of kinship ties (whakapapa) as the dominant method of understanding connections had not diminished. Relationships between local Māori and Pākehā settlers, along with friendships with people of other tribes forged through education, war and trade, remain powerful instruments in a changing world. As Ngāti Porou tribal leader Apirana Mahuika wrote:

Like in all other iwi, the significance of whakapapa as a determinant of all mana in Ngati Porou cannot be discounted or overlooked. ... [whakapapa] survived post-European contact and continue[s] in existence today. (Mahuika 2010: 147)

This was despite profound transformations in life in the region, and across the country. During the last two decades of the nineteenth century on the East Coast and elsewhere, Māori systems of justice, trade and education were being usurped by Pākehā systems. In Ngata’s account of whakapapa terminologies, he notes, “‘Hapai’ is to raise or lift up and ... is applied to lifting or raising the aho ariki so as to display it” (Ngata ca1931: 3). The next section of this paper aims to raise up and display significant relationships in order to illuminate how non-familial friendships and *manaakitanga* resonated throughout the expeditions, thus expanding the function of kinship and whanaungatanga.

For many young Māori, growing up at a time when the Māori population was declining and Māori as a people were thought to be dying out, the opportunity of being educated with the tools of the Pākehā was sometimes

perceived as a kind of escape out of a downward spiral. In the process, new networks of relationships were founded. Many were already involved in the Anglican church, which had had a strong presence on the East Coast since 1834. Pivotal to these new networks were the friendships forged at Te Aute College (an Anglican boarding school for Māori boys), where bonds were established away from the tribal context of hapū, iwi or *whare wānanga* ‘ancestral schools of learning’. In this way, the concept of *whanaungatanga* ‘family-making’ expanded beyond hapū- and iwi-centred contexts into Pākehā systems of education, church, and later, the army. This was to have profound ramifications for Māori life in the twentieth century.

Early in the twentieth century, young men like Apirana Ngata, Rēweti Kōhere and his brother Poihipi, Tūtere Wi Repa and Timutimu Tāwhai from the East Coast, along with Māui Pōmare, Te Rangihīroa and Edward Pōhau Ellison from the West Coast and Frederick Bennett from Te Arawa, were returning from their studies at Te Aute to their home communities, earnestly railing against some Māori cultural practices. These included lengthy *tangihanga* ‘funeral rites for the dead’, customary Māori marriage systems, a reliance on what they saw as bogus Māori spiritual and medicinal advisors, described in a 1907 parliamentary speech by Ngata as ‘bastard *tohungaism*’ (New Zealand Parliamentary Debates 1907: 519; see also Walker 2001: 127)—instead preaching abstinence, sexual morality, health and land reform (Paterson 2007: 28; Walker 2001: 69–71, 126–28). Land reformation became intertwined with moral reform (Walter 2017: 104–5). Out of this context, the Young Maori Party (YMP) was born.³ Fighting fire with fire, the evangelical zeal of the group aimed at meeting head-on the impacts of colonisation (disease, alcohol, land sales) using other colonial tools (religion, education and health reform). At the same time, they wanted to preserve language, arts and poetry as cultural practices seen as “desirable”, as outlined in their 1909 YMP Manifesto. After the flush of righteous youthfulness had passed, all these men proved to be leaders in their respective fields. Later, Ngata, Te Rangihīroa and Pōmare also recognised the uniqueness of Māori culture and set about recording songs, games, arts, ancestral stories and practices.

The important roles played by these Pākehā-educated young Māori would be vastly different from earlier Māori leaders. Nonetheless the ability to connect through ties and networks remained a crucial skill, used to their advantage throughout their political, religious and medical careers. A relational ethos based on *whakapapa* laid the groundwork for the Dominion Museum team, and their filmmaking and photography. Behind this too were the powerful networks of Te Rangihīroa and Ngata, and friendships forged at Te Aute. In 1898, Riwai Te Hiwinui Tawhiri, a Ngāti Porou student at Te Aute, had invited Te Rangihīroa—a *rāwaho* ‘outsider’ from Ngāti Mutunga,

Taranaki—to come to the East Coast after his preliminary medical exams and work at scrub-cutting. As guests of Anglican minister Eruera Kāwhia, they stayed at Taumata-o-Mihi marae in the Rauru meeting house. Decorated Ngāti Porou soldier Arapeta Awatere stated, “Here, during his school days at Te Aute College, Peter Buck was initiated by tohungas [skilled or specialist persons] into Maaori esoteric lore” (Awatere 2003: 24) while Buck’s biographer, J.B. Condliffe, suggested that this visit was instigated by Ngata as a way of bringing him into contact with a Ngāti Porou way of life. During the summer of 1898–99, when Te Rangihīroa fell in love with a high-born young Ngāti Porou woman, Matoroa Ngārimu, her people did not regard him as a worthy suitor (Condliffe 1971: 74–75). Twenty-four years later, on 6 April 1923, Matoroa—now the aforementioned Mrs Reedy—hosted Best and Andersen at her home, but not Te Rangihīroa, who on this occasion was accompanied by his Pākehā wife, Margaret. By this time, it was Te Rangihīroa’s army days and his close friendship with Ngata that fuelled his connections to the East Coast, rather than old flames.

KAUWHATA: ELEVATING ANCESTRAL PRACTICES

The Dominion Museum ethnological expedition, which lasted for about three weeks, commenced with a *pōwhiri* ‘ceremonial welcome’ at Whareponga Marae on the East Coast on Saturday 17 March 1923. Ngata’s wife, Arihia, was from Whareponga, and her family ran the local hotel. Her father, Tuta Tāmāti, had been a founding member of the Polynesian Society, and along with Paratene Ngata was one of the first honorary members of Te Aute College Students’ Association (TACSA) (Walker 2001: 75). Although Tāmāti had died many years earlier, it is likely that Arihia’s close relationships at Whareponga ensured that the hospitality was lavish, a point that Andersen makes in his diary. The leisurely and convivial process of *hui* ‘social gatherings’, along with the hospitality and support from various members of the Ngata whānau, brings into question Barclay’s positioning of McDonald’s camera as “peering in from the outside”. Blythe’s reading is more nuanced, acknowledging the substantial Māori input and Ngata’s role as instigator, at the very least, for the East Coast photographs and films (Blythe 1994: 56). In Blythe’s analysis of these films, he makes a point that that “the films are not simply ‘historical record’; they are also Home Movies—both literally and figuratively”; and he goes on to say that “they evoke neither a timeless eternal nor the historic past” (Blythe 1994: 57).

Taking another term from Ngata’s whakapapa terminology, the Tai Rāwhiti films and photographs might be understood as examples of *kauwhata*—“display[ing] as on a stage or frame in tied bundles, as of fish or articles of food, the elevation giving prominence” (Ngata ca. 1931: 3). Each vignette features

Ngāti Porou experts demonstrating ancestral practices, in this sense lifting each sequence to display their skill. Whakapapa and whanaungatanga were essential factors in the formation of the expedition, the choice of those who appear in the images and the practices that were displayed and given prominence in the film—fishing, netting and food-gathering practices, *tukutuku* ‘woven ornamental latticework’ and *kōwhaiwhai* for instance. The gender restrictions of scoop-net fishing activities means that unlike other film sequences from the same expedition that show women participating in making *hāngi* ‘ovens’, diving for kaimoana and working in the fields harvesting *kumara* ‘sweet potato’ (*Ipomoea batatas*), the trip to the Waiapu River mouth only features men.

Although plans to get pictures at the Waiapu river mouth are mentioned in the diary, there is only one surviving film sequence. It is likely that the first attempt with Kōhere on 30 March was unsuccessful. Andersen notes: “The gear was taken into Kohere’s buggy, & Dr Buck, McDonald & I rode on horses. We stayed at Kohere’s place for tea & for the night” (Andersen 1923). The Kōhere homestead is across the road from the Rangitukia rugby grounds, now called George Nepia Memorial Park after the famous rugby player who married Te Huinga, Hēnare Kōhere and Ngārangi Tūrei’s daughter. Today, a memorial stone for nationally prominent nineteenth-century tribal leader Mōkena Kōhere stands on the Hahau block, next to the house which replaced the homestead Tarata, once lived in by Poihipi Kōhere, minister for St John’s Parish. Situated across from Hinepare Marae, St John’s Church was largely built by Poihipi’s grandfather Mōkena Kōhere who—from the 1850s onwards—had ushered in a new style of chieftainship that, according to Rarawa Kōhere, needed to “socialise the wider aggregations of communities aimed at addressing new and emerging issues to deal with multi-faceted relationships” (Kōhere [1949] 2005: 207). In Rangitukia, the meeting between the community hosts and the ethnological expedition guests—with their technological tools for recording cultural practices—was an example of these multi-faceted relationships.

After dinner that night, the team relocated to “the meeting house”—Tairāwhiti, at Hinepare Marae. Andersen, a Dane who could not speak or understand Māori, commented that at the meeting house, “one or two long speeches having already been made, there was more speechifying” (Andersen 1923: 27). Given Hinepare’s location between the Kaa and Kōhere homesteads, it is highly likely that members of both families and other community people were present to formally welcome Te Rangihīroa and the other members of the team to Rangitukia. Buck had served as a medical officer in the New Zealand Pioneer Battalion during the Great War with Second Lieutenant Hēnare Mōkena Kōhere and Captain Pekama Rongoaia Kaa, who were killed on the Somme and at Passchendaele respectively. Kōhere lies

in Heilly Station Cemetery on the Somme while Kaa is buried at Kandahar Farm Cemetery, Nieuwkerke, West Vlaanderen, Belgium.

Since both of these men had died overseas, with no opportunity for their whānau to lament over their bodies, the Rangitukia people must have welcomed the opportunity to share their loss with Te Rangihīroa, who had been with Hēnare after he was wounded by a bursting shell in the trenches during the battle for the Somme in 1916. A letter dated 26 October 1916 written by Padre Hēnare Wainohu sent from France to Poihipi Kōhere may well have been read out:

Before he was taken to the dressing station that night he expressed a wish to see Major Buck (Te Rangi Hiroa). To him he said, “I ask of you that after I am gone to place my boys, all from the Ngati-Porou Tribe, under my cousin, Lieutenant Pekama Kaa.” Major Buck replied, “Yes, I’ll carry out your wish.” Then, looking up to the major and myself, he remarked, “I have no anxiety now, for I know the boys will be in good hands, and as for myself I shall be all right.” (Kōhere 1949: 75–76)

Hēnare died on 16 September 1916, aged 36, leaving behind three young children. On hearing the news of Kōhere’s death, Ngata had composed “Te Ope Tuatahi”, both a *tangi* ‘lament’ and recruitment song, including a verse mentioning Hēnare, and named his youngest son Hēnare Kōhere Ngata when he was born in December 1917.⁴

I haere ai Henare
Me tō wīwī,
I patu ki te pakanga,
Ki Para-nihi rā ia.

Farewell, O Henare,
and your ‘clump of rushes’
who fell while fighting
in France.⁵

Although the decision to promote Kaa was not Te Rangihīroa’s, he was no doubt influential in passing on Kōhere’s wishes to his commanding officers. Pekama Rongoaia Kaa, who took over from Hēnare Kōhere, was the second child of Matewa and Panikena Kaa, one of the well-known families of Rangitukia, and a generation younger than Ngata, Te Rangihīroa and the Kōhere brothers (Hirschfeld 2017: 1). Hirschfeld states that “Pekama’s father Panikena knew about the incident, referring to it in a letter (dated 21 September 1917) to Sir James Allen and in which he expresses his pride in his son being selected by Hēnare Kōhere to take charge of our [i.e., the Ngāti Porou] soldiers” (2017: 22). On 14 August 1917, almost a year after Kōhere died, a seriously wounded Pekama—who had refused to be shifted until his men were carried to safety—was lethally hit by a shell. (Pugsley in Hirschfeld 2017: 29). He was 22 years old. Possibly the first of their families to have travelled to the other side of the world, this wartime journey had proved fatal for both Kōhere and Kaa. Hirschfeld also notes:

Henare Kaa had also served in the Battalion; he was at sea going to Europe when Pekama fell in battle so did not see his brother alive. Obviously Buck knew Henare who survived the war and was at Rangitukia in 1923. Henare reached the rank of corporal. (Charl Hirschfeld, email to author, 12 July 2018)

At the time when the first Dominion Museum ethnological expedition attended the Hui Aroha to welcome home the Pioneer Battalion in Gisborne in 1919, which Ngata had organised and many of the local people had attended, Te Rangihīroa had not yet returned from service abroad. In 1923, during the fourth expedition to Tai Rāwhiti, the Kōhere and Kaa whānau had their first chance to host him on their own marae after the tragic deaths of their sons. Te Rangihīroa's personal relationships with both of these men are part of the backdrop to the visit to Rangitukia and the overnight stay at the Kōhere homestead. Bound together by war, this was also a gathering of old boys from Te Aute College, which both Kōhere brothers, Te Rangihīroa, Ngata and Kaa had all attended.⁶ Together with Māui Pōmare and Timutimu Tāwhai, also Te Aute old boys, Rēweti Kōhere and Ngata had formed the Association for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Maori Race in response to an influenza outbreak on the East Coast in 1891 (Walker 2001: 69–70). Later, efforts by Kōhere and Ngata at health and cultural reform gave rise to TACSA in 1897, better known as the Young Maori Party (Wi Repa 1907). Both Rēweti and his younger brother Poihipi had become ordained Anglican ministers, although by 1921, Rēweti had returned to live at Rangiatā, on a farm near the East Cape lighthouse. In 1923, Poihipi Kōhere lived at Tarata, the homestead in Rangitukia where their grandfather, Mōkena Kōhere, had dwelt. This gathering reunited a group of men who sought to hold onto their cultural values, land and language while embracing Pākehā education. The women of the tribe, also community leaders in their own right, were also present to host these auspicious guests. These were educated, worldly people whose own agendas saw them participating in local and national politics, shaping the world around them in the face of rapid change.

The evening must have been emotionally charged, given the wartime experiences that had forged bonds of grief between Te Rangihīroa and the whānau of the men in his battalion alongside whom he had fought. In the absence of sound recordings of their speeches, one can still use whakapapa to stitch together a picture of the cultural fabric of the Waiapu, Ruawaipu and Ngāti Porou Tūturu hapū at this time. As Hirschfeld notes:

Although they probably had not met before this occasion Panikena is likely to have welcomed Buck as someone who was a part of the Whānau. Buck is likely to have given Panikena a recitation of Pekama as a man of ability in the field, well admired by his troops, brave and cool under pressure, dignified as an officer and a gentleman and as a natural leader of men. (Hirschfeld, email to author, 12 July 2018)

Although McDonald and Andersen left the marae around midnight to walk the short distance back to the Kōhere homestead under calm, starry skies and a moon that was almost full, it is likely that Te Rangihīroa stayed late into the night, talking with the families of his dead comrades. In his 1923 exercise book he names Panikena Kaa and Riwai Raroa of Rangitukia on the page opposite his drawings and measurements of the kahawai scoop-net. Raroa’s son William was another young soldier who had died and was buried abroad, in this case a possible victim of the 1918 influenza epidemic. It is seems highly likely that the Raroa whānau were also present.

The moon nearing full on 31 March bode well for the team’s plans to go to the river mouth the next morning to film fishing for kahawai. The relationship between Te Rangihīroa and the Kaa family meant that Panikena Kaa was willing to demonstrate this for them. The Waiapu River mouth is approximately three or four kilometres from the Kōhere homestead via road and then along Waikākā Beach. On their way, the expedition team passed by Hinepare Marae where they had spent the previous evening, then Rangitukia Native School (now called Tāpere-Nui-a-Whātonga after the whare wānanga

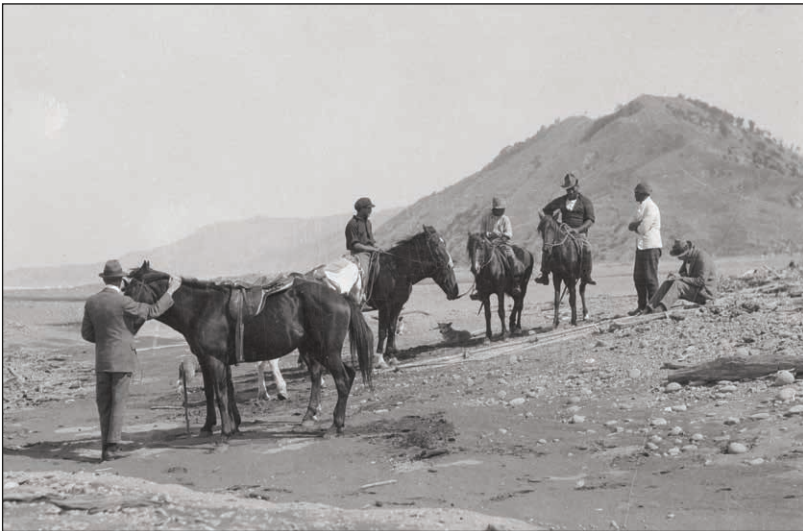


Figure 2. Arrival at beach, Waiapu, 1923. The group is on the north side of the Waiapu River mouth, on Waikākā Beach; Pōhautea is the hill behind them. Photograph by James McDonald. Courtesy of the Kaa family and the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa ref MA_A.004091/1 107 4293.

that was once the local “university” at nearby Te Kautuku). Less than a hundred metres after the school is Whataamo, where the Kaa whānau lived. The Taiapa whānau, famed as carvers, lived just along from them. This short stretch of the river, on both sides, produced some of the most influential people in Ngāti Porou during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These families had also sent their most educated sons to the Great War, many of whom never returned. Knowing that they had lost many of the inheritors of these ancestral tikanga may also have been a factor in agreeing to record them. Loss, grief, mutual respect, reciprocity and manaakitanga were all factors in these relationships, knotting them together, shaping the events during the Dominion Museum ethnological expedition, with Panikena Kaa braving the heavy surf to demonstrate kahawai net techniques for Te Rangihīroa and McDonald’s camera recording this tikanga for posterity.

Filmed from Waikākā Beach on the northern side of the Waiapu River, the camera faces the sea, without reference to any landmarks. It is impossible to know precisely where the ever-changing river mouth was at the time of filming, and therefore the brief sequence is unable to provide distinct



Figure 3. Arrival at beach, Waiapu, 1923. Te Rangihīroa is taking field notes, while Panikena advises him. Photograph by James McDonald. Courtesy of the Kaa family and the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa ref MA_A.004090/1 106 4292.

indicators about subsequent environmental changes. One of the two surviving quarter-plate photographs taken of the party arriving at Waikākā Beach shows Pōhautea—the sentry hill on the south side of the river mouth—stripped bare of trees (Fig. 2). The image includes Kaa, Te Rangihīroa, Andersen and three other people on horseback who have accompanied them to the river mouth. These were probably Riwai Raroa along with members of the Kōhere and Kaa whānau. In the other image the camera faces the sea, documenting Te Rangihīroa balancing his exercise book on his knee as he pencils notes from Kaa, with two men looking on, with the horse-drawn buggy carrying the “photo business” to the left of the frame (Fig. 3). This documentary photograph is one of only a few images from the Tai Rāwhiti expedition that demonstrates the sharing of knowledge from a local expert with one of the team, within the frame, on location.

* * *

These historic film and photographic images offer vignettes to be lifted up for closer analysis. In this context the haukāinga had extended their manaakitanga to the team, hosting them at Hinepare Marae and in their homes. This enriching of connection and the respect accorded to the honoured guests is not visible in the short moments recorded in the film. Yet, understanding why the haukāinga chose to participate is crucial to understanding these images as more than ethnographic remnants. Together, McDonald’s flickering film fragments and still photographs, Andersen’s diaries and Te Rangihīroa’s notebooks reveal deeper connections with the haukāinga than are immediately apparent. As a practical method, whakapapa offers a way to make connections in the knots along the takiaho cord.

Hirschfeld’s account reveals the mutual trust and respect for tikanga and the role of the camera in this deeply Māori context:

Panikena was both a Maori modernist and traditionalist, something he lived out as part of his own life. In acceding to allowing Buck and McDonald to gather information from him personally and to permit himself thereby to be photographed was an expression of living the modernist-traditionalist contradiction. On the one hand it was about a tightly tikanga guarded centuries-old method and on the other hand about ethnographic and technologic media (writing and photography) presenting the verisimilitude of something intensely Maori. Without Panikena’s approval in a heartfelt way the Buck fishing expedition at the Waiapu is likely to have lacked the success that the record now generates as a historical piece of some significance. (Hirschfeld, email to author, 12 July 2018)

These kinship and relational networks were forged and deepened through education, politics, wartime experiences and loss, pandemics and health reform, as well as shared cultural understandings. This reflection on the *takiaho*, the cords of connection (a concept that could be used as an analytical tool in exploring other historic images in Māori contexts), and the *kauwhata*, the elevation of the practices of netting and fishing, indicates the complex relational logic that informed the Māori subjects in the films—enabling the “photo business” to be carried out by the expedition team.

For *Merata Mita*, at the conclusion of the short resurrection of connecting with an ancestor on screen comes the time of ritual acknowledgment of “our creator and our implacable link to the earth, its creatures, the elements and the seasons, the stars and the planets and the entire universe because that is what I have been taught and that is what those images continue to teach” (Mita 1992a: 73). Such a moment is recorded in the film clip of *Panikena Kaa* helping *Te Rangihīroa* and James McDonald to record the art of *kahawai* fishing at the mouth of the *Waiapu River*—*Waiapu Kōkā Huhua*, *Waiapu* the fertile mother.

NOTES

1. One of the Ngāti Porou Deed of Settlement Statements of Association confirms: “The *Waiapu River* has been a source of sustenance for Ngāti Porou *hapū*, providing water, and various species of fish, including *kahawai*. The *kahawai* fishing techniques practised at the mouth of the *Waiapu River* are sacred activities distinct to the *Waiapu*.” (New Zealand Government Treaty settlement documents, Ngāti Porou Settlement 2010: 1).
2. With its focus on audience and the Film Archive’s role in bringing the films to light, Kelly’s thesis discusses the pivotal experiences that Sharon Dell, of the Alexander Turnbull Library, and Jonathan Dennis, director of the Film Archive, had when first screening the films in the 1980s, and the audience reactions to seeing their *tīpuna*, mostly unnamed, on screen. Despite the many years in which the films were hidden away, they eventually found their audience of *uri* ‘Māori descendants’.
3. Young Maori Party member Ellison would later replace *Te Rangihīroa* as director of the Division of Maori Hygiene in the Department of Health (1927), and in 1928, marry my great-grandfather George Boyd’s youngest daughter, Mary Karaka Boyd.
4. Despite close family ties, Ngata and Rēweti Kōhere parted company politically with the rise of the Labour Party. In his 1986 essay, “Voting in the Māori Political Sub-system 1935–1984”, Robert Chapman (1999) explains that in the 1938 general election, Rēweti Kōhere stood against Ngata as an endorsed Labour candidate. A third candidate, Rātana’s Tiaki Omana, divided the candidacy, effectively splitting the vote. That year, votes for Ngata declined, but he held

his seat. It is beyond the scope of this paper to follow up on the social–familial implications of the political stand by Kōhere against Ngata.

5. First and second verses of “Te Ope Tuatahi” by Apirana Ngata, the 1916 recruitment song for the First Māori Contingent for the Pioneer Battalion. Full version available at: <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-CowMaor-t1-back-d1-d3.html>
Song available at: http://www.folksong.org.nz/te_ope_tuatahi/index.html
6. Years attending Te Aute College: Rēweti Kōhere (1887–91), Apirana Ngata (1883–90), Poihipi Kōhere (1896–99), Te Rangihīroa (1895–98), Hēnare Kōhere (1895–98) and Pekama Kaa (1908–11), who had won the 1908 Te Makarini junior scholarship for those years (E-03 Education: Native Schools 1909: 10).

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