4

‘A Defining Characteristic of the Southern People’: Southern Māori Mobility and the Tasman World

Michael J. Stevens

Historians—especially historians interested in identifying and recovering ‘native’ agency—assume that Asia, America, Australasia, and Africa are populated by ‘indigenous people’ whose activity consists in their expression of authentic cultural idioms tied to their ‘native’ place. Such a perspective makes migration and mobility seem an inauthentic and unnatural form of economic and cultural expression.

Jon E. Wilson¹

We [Ngāi Tahu] are essentially southern both in geography and disposition and that is a reflection of our history. Since the early nineteenth century when we first learnt about muskets, potatoes and whaleboats and that fabled place Poi Hakena—Port Jackson, Ngai Tahu have been crossing the Tasman to trade, to settle and to marry. The voyage west has always been more attractive to us than the journey north.

Tipene O’Regan²

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2 O’Regan 2002: 36.

Introduction

In *The Welcome of Strangers*, archaeologist Atholl Anderson wrote that while mobility was common in pre-European Māori life, it was more frequent within the South Island's Kāi Tahu tribe, to which he and I belong.³ Indeed, Anderson described mobility as 'almost a defining characteristic of the southern people'.⁴ This chapter outlines the causes and consequences of Kāi Tahu mobility. In doing so, it focuses especially on Murihiku, an area south of the Waitaki River and the Foveaux Strait region.⁵ It argues that pre-existing patterns of Māori mobility in this locale expanded in response to sustained European contact from the early 1800s that emanated out of Sydney and, from the late 1850s, Melbourne. Māori knew these places as 'Poihakena' and 'Poipiripi'—transliterations of Port Jackson and Port Phillip, respectively—names that speak directly to the maritime nature of the Tasman world in which large numbers of nineteenth-century Māori people moved.⁶

My chapter traces Kāi Tahu individuals who visited and lived in New South Wales and Victoria over the long nineteenth century. It considers how connections with these places affected southern Kāi Tahu families and communities who remained embedded in Murihiku and Foveaux Strait. According to Alan Lester and Zoë Laidlaw, their experiences were 'no less shaped by trans-imperial networks, and they were no less active participants in the new social assemblages' that emerged before and after formal colonisation, which began in southern New Zealand in 1848.⁷ I support Lester and Laidlaw's view that an investigation of the relationship between in situ communities and trans-imperial networks is the next logical step for indigenous history.⁸ Both Kāi Tahu individuals who directly engaged with trans-imperial networks by travelling beyond home shores, and those who participated in these networks from home

3 I mostly use the dialectical southern Māori 'k' instead of the diphthong 'ng' of North Island derived standardised Māori orthography. Therefore, unless I am quoting something to the contrary, Ngāi Tahu is expressed as Kāi Tahu and the likes of mahinga kai as mahika kai and rūnanga as rūnaka.

4 Anderson 1998: 118.

5 See Stevens 2011.

6 Georgie Crow estimates that 1,000 Māori individuals left New Zealand in European vessels in the early contact period. Many of them sailed to, or through, Poihakena, which 'quickly became an important site in the expanding Māori world'. Indeed, several 'made it their home for extended periods of time'. Crow 2014: 91.

7 Lester and Laidlaw 2015: 8. In 1848, the *John Wickliffe* and *Philip Laing* arrived at Port Chalmers with nearly 350 Scottish settlers who inaugurated the Dunedin settlement. See Olssen 1984: 33–39.

8 Lester and Laidlaw 2015: 9.

places, remained connected by genealogy and kinship practices. They were also connected by *takata pora* (ship people)—multiethnic and polyglot crews of sealers, traders and whalers, who were memorably, if somewhat problematically, termed 'Tasmen' by James Belich.⁹

Many *takata pora* entered into enduring relationships with Kāi Tahu women between the 1820s and 1860s, producing large families whose descendants have constituted the corpus of Kāi Tahu since the early twentieth century. Although these men opened up new avenues of Māori mobility, the familial ties forged with Kāi Tahu communities often circumscribed their own capacity for movement. As Bishop Selwyn noted during an 1844 visit to Foveaux Strait, 'the great hold upon these men is their love of their children'.¹⁰ Itinerant and resident *takata pora* altered Māori life ways and senses of place in southern New Zealand. Many of the cultural elements they introduced were perpetuated and are now considered key components of southern Kāi Tahu culture. This includes circuits of mobility that encompass Australia, especially its eastern and southern seaboard, which this chapter illuminates.

Ka Nukunuku, Ka Nekeneke

Anderson, Aroha Harris and Bridget Williams have recently restated the centrality of migration and mobility in Māori experience, noting that these variables have been present 'from the earliest movements to the present day'.¹¹ From the time of Polynesian settlement of the New Zealand archipelago (c. 1200 AD), movement was at the core of the development of a distinctive Māori culture, especially its southern Māori variant.

As Anderson has shown, initial Polynesian settlement centred substantially on the South Island, where abundant moa (large flightless birds) and fur seals fuelled rapid population growth.¹² Once these protein sources were exhausted, settlement refocused on the warmer North Island and the cultivation of *kūmara* (sweet potato), the hardiest Polynesian crop.¹³

9 Belich 1996: 131–32. I say problematically because women often travelled on ships that operated between New South Wales and New Zealand in the first half of the nineteenth century.

10 Selwyn, 'Journal of the Bishop's Visitation Tour from December 1843 to March 1844, New Zealand. Part III —11 February 1844', cited in Irwin 1948: 151.

11 Anderson, Harris and Williams 2014: 10.

12 Anderson 2014b: 77.

13 Anderson 2014b: 85, 94–96.

Continued population growth during this martial period pushed some North Island-based genealogical groups in a southerly direction.¹⁴ By such means, Kāti Mamoe kin groups shifted from the east coast of the North Island, across Cook Strait and into the east coast of the South Island, in the late sixteenth century. Kāi Tahu groups repeated this pattern in the early eighteenth century.¹⁵ A key part of the Kāi Tahu strategy to hold and expand territory in the south was the development of a pā (fortified settlement) at Kaiapoi (c. 1700).¹⁶

Kūmara were grown at Kaiapoi Pā, near the southern limit, and valuable mahika kai (wild-foods) were located to the south. Millions of tītī (sooty shearwater/mutton-bird) that nest on islands clustered around Rakiura (Stewart Island) were especially important as a winter food source and valuable trade item. Groups from Kaiapoi made seasonal visits to these islands to harvest and pack pre-cooked juvenile tītī into bags made of cured bull kelp, called pōhā. Riches entered Kaiapoi from other directions, including pounamu (nephrite jade) from the South Island's west coast. Thus, the village functioned as a trading hub; as Tipene O'Regan has observed, it was to the wider Kāi Tahu resource economy as Singapore was to the British Empire.¹⁷ Its name, Kaiapoi, reflects this, denoting a place where:

'Kai' must be 'poi' or swung to the spot ... potted birds from the forests of Kaikoura in the north; fish and mutton birds from the sea-coasts of the south; kiore [Polynesian rat] and weka [small flightless birds] and kauru [cabbage tree stem] from the plains and mountain ranges of the west.¹⁸

Seasonal harvesting of mahika kai and trade between horticultural and non-horticultural zones, centred on Kaiapoi, were important ways in which Kāi Tahu kin groups maintained connections across a massive tribal area. Marriage was another way. Whakapapa (genealogy) shows how marital unions were used to bind together widely dispersed people and resource sites. This can be seen in the truce negotiated by Kāi Tahu and Kāti Mamoe in the late eighteenth century at Poupoutunoa:

14 Anderson 2014b: 116–19.

15 Anderson 2014b: 119.

16 Anderson 1998: 36–37.

17 O'Regan 1990: 12.

18 Locke Travers and Stack 1971: 182.

The first [marriage] was between Raki-ihia of Ngāti Māmoe and Hinehākiri, the cousin of Ngāi Tahu's leading chief, Te-hau-tapunui-o-Tū. The second union was between Honekai, the son of Te-hau-tapunui-o-Tū, and Kohuwai, the daughter of Raki-ihia. These marriages were arranged at Kaiapoi and confirmed at Taumata in Otago.¹⁹

Likewise, in the 1820s and 1830s, Te Pahi and his brother, Te Marama, were regionally prominent chiefs who were married to Wairua and Piki, sisters of the Upoko Ariki Te Maiharanui.²⁰ Te Marama and Wairua appear to have lived mainly at Kaiapoi; Te Pahi and Piki were based in the Foveaux Strait region. Both couples participated in the annual tītī harvest. A third brother, Tahatu, was a leading chief at Ōtākou, near the present-day city of Dunedin.²¹ While there are differing views regarding the extent of regional cooperation and unity at this time, these ties demonstrate the dispersed, yet interconnected, nature of Kāi Tahu tribal leadership and seats of political power. They also reveal the constant back and forth of communication and return visits between the tribe's dominant families.

Kāi Tahu authority prevailed over Kāti Māmoe in Murihiku and Foveaux Strait at the time takata pora visited southern New Zealand, partly through these marriages.²² Anderson suggested that the arrival of takata pora from the 1790s drove Kāi Tahu and Kāti Māmoe to maintain peace with one another.²³ Certainly, the ethnographer Herries Beattie was told that when the two peoples ceased fighting they did not necessarily live 'in perfect trust together'. However, this underlying 'latent suspicion was mitigated when the white men came sealing and later whaling on the coasts, and died out completely when the white settlers came'.²⁴ Moreover, several Kāi Tahu people and families were pulled south, curious about the newcomers and desirous for trade with them.²⁵ This pattern was accelerated from 1830 with the capture and killing of Te Maiharanui by Ngāti Toa chief Te Rauparaha, the subsequent destruction of Kaiapoi Pā in 1832 and the death and capture of many Kāi Tahu people.²⁶ This left Kaiapoi, and much of the wider region, largely deserted.²⁷

19 Tau 2006: 124. See also Anderson 1998: 51.

20 Anderson 1998: 92–94.

21 Anderson 1998: 94.

22 Anderson 1998: 92.

23 Anderson 1998: 75.

24 Beattie 1916: 96.

25 Anderson 1998: 207.

26 Anderson described Ngāti Toa invasions as a 'demographic disaster' and estimated they left a fifth of the population killed or captured. Anderson 1998: 206. See also Dacker 1994: 10–11.

27 Anderson 2014a: 184–85; Tau 2006: 127–28; Anderson 1998: 90; Dacker 1994: 11.

Kāi Tahu communities emerged and expanded in Murihiku at the time of their transformative encounter with takata pora. Ships and men from Port Jackson engaged with southern Māori *in* these places and it was *from* these places that Kāi Tahu people first travelled to Sydney, thereby expanding physical and mental horizons. This pattern of compounding mobilities brings to mind Epeli Hau'ofa's often-quoted notion of 'world enlargement', which refers to the way in which European interest in the Pacific extended pre-existing circuits of indigenous mobility.²⁸ To frame that argument in southern Māori terms, from the 1820s, Kāi Tahu entered a process of 'poi' enlargement, one in which a Kaiapoi-centred world was replaced by a Murihiku-centred one that expanded to include Poihakena and Poipiripi as key nodes.

Ōtākou me Ruapuke

Two places were central to Murihiku being integrated into the Tasman world: the village of Ōtākou, which is located on the eastern side of Otago Harbour, just inside its entrance, and Ruapuke Island in Foveaux Strait. Ōtākou was discovered and occupied soon after the Polynesian discovery of New Zealand, and a Kāi Tahu community was living there by the dawn of the nineteenth century. Cross-cultural encounters with sealers and other Tasman world travellers began shortly thereafter. Then, in 1831, two Kent-born, Sydney-based brothers, Edward and Joseph Weller, landed at Ōtākou and negotiated with local chiefs to establish a shore whaling station.²⁹ One of these chiefs, Tahatu, used a traditional technique to secure the agreement: marriage. His daughter, Paparu, was married to Edward and the couple had a daughter whose many descendants are now located on both sides of the Tasman Sea, including at Ōtākou.

The Weller brothers' settlement, which mixed whaling with shipbuilding, and farming with trading in flax, fish and preserved Māori heads, came to employ as many as 85 men. Rebuilt after it was destroyed by fire in 1832, the station sat at the 'centre of a network of seven stations from Banks Peninsula to Foveaux Strait'.³⁰ When Tahatu died from introduced measles in 1835, the high-born cousins, Karetai and Taiaroa, filled any leadership vacuum. The latter was born at Banks Peninsula but migrated

28 Hau'ofa 1994.

29 Entwisle 1990.

30 Entwisle 1990.

south to Ōtākou and was highly mobile within and beyond southern New Zealand. He was at Rakiura and Ruapuke at various times throughout the 1820s (at least 300 kilometres south of Ōtākou) and was active in fighting northern Māori at various South Island battles in the 1830s (e.g. Kaiapoi about 400 kilometres north of Ōtākou). He also made multiple trips to Sydney during that decade and continued to represent Kāi Tahu interests at key Māori events in the North Island into the 1860s.³¹ After Edward Weller's wife Paparu died in 1836, Taiaroa's daughter, Nikuru, became his second wife. She died three days after giving birth to their daughter, Nani, who went on to marry Raniera Erihana/Daniel Ellison, giving rise to the notable Ellison family.³²

Edward Weller took over the running of the Ōtākou station after his brother Joseph died in 1835; however, following declining catches from 1837, he handed over control to his sister's husband in 1840. He then returned to Sydney and lived alone as 'a Victorian colonial squire in up-country New South Wales'.³³ One of Edward's grandsons was Thomas Rangiwhia Ellison (1867–1904), best known in New Zealand for suggesting a playing kit featuring a black jersey with a monogrammed silver fern at the inaugural meeting of the New Zealand Rugby Football Union in 1893. Ellison, whose wife was also Kāi Tahu—a daughter of John Howell who established a shore whaling station at Riverton in 1837 and later switched to farming—toured New South Wales en route to England as a member of the New Zealand Natives Team in 1888. During this visit it is said that he visited his grandfather, Edward, who had left Ōtākou almost 50 years prior.³⁴

Taiaroa's cousin, Karetai, was similarly mobile. He commonly visited settlements in Foveaux Strait; took part in inter-tribal musket wars in the northern South Island; and made several trips to Sydney, including for up to a year in 1834, when he and one of his wives were guests of Reverend Samuel Marsden in Parramatta. The couple possibly introduced measles to Ōtākou upon their return from New South Wales in 1835. Karetai, who

31 Oliver 1990.

32 A large number of Raniera and Nani's 12 children and numerous grandchildren achieved considerable educational, commercial and sporting success in colonial New Zealand and advanced numerous Māori causes, including redress from the New Zealand Government for Te Kerēme, the Ngāi Tahu Claim. See Edward and Ellison 1998: 148–49.

33 Entwistle 1990.

34 Edward and Ellison 1998: 149.

is estimated to have had eight wives, has numerous descendants and many of them continue to be based at Ōtākou; they are also found in Bluff, Southland's industrial port town and a number of Australian settings.³⁵

As with Ōtākou, Ruapuke Island assumed great importance on New Zealand's pre-colonial frontier. Significant numbers of Kāi Tahu began settling in the Foveaux Strait region between 1810 and 1820, by which time Ruapuke probably began to be densely occupied.³⁶ Powerful Kāi Tahu chiefs based themselves on the island, not only because it was a staging post for the Titi Islands and its seasonal bounty, but also to be closer to, and trade with, takata pora. Its value also lay in its connections with another nearby island, Whenua Hou, which is located on the west side of Rakiura. From the mid-1820s, Whenua Hou was home to a community of sealers and whalers who mostly came to southern New Zealand via Sydney and their Kāi Tahu wives and children.³⁷ It is unclear whether Kāi Tahu groups settled on Ruapuke before or after the Whenua Hou community emerged, but, either way, the latter was a central means by which takata pora were incorporated into this Māori polity.

Ruapuke was the main residence of the chief Te Whakataupuka, son of Honekai and Kohuwai; later, of his nephew, Tuhawaiki; and, later still, of Topi Patuki, son of the aforementioned Wairua and Te Marama. Some, including O'Regan, credit Te Whakataupuka's father, Honekai, with grasping the island's strategic importance. According to O'Regan, 'he took them out there because of its trade possibilities—it was [like] Rauparaha and Kapiti [Island]'.³⁸ The trade possibilities O'Regan referred to centred in part upon harakeke, so-called New Zealand flax, especially whitau, the dressed fibre or 'hemp' that Māori women expertly extracted from it and which literally held Māori villages together.³⁹

Harakeke and whitau were key drivers of British imperial and colonial interest in Murihiku. In late 1822, the New South Wales Government contracted Captain Edwardson to take the *Snapper* to southern New Zealand and secure samples of hemp and information about it. Edwardson found an abundance of harakeke at Ruapuke and negotiated for two Kāi

35 Evison 1990.

36 Anderson 1998: 68, 207.

37 Anderson 1998: 76. See Middleton 2007.

38 O'Regan, 12 September 2007, interview by the author.

39 Captain Edwardson stressed the centrality of harakeke for Māori and explained that 'it furnishes clothing, roofs for the huts, cordage, the largest nets and the string with which to attach the pieces of wood of which the canoes are composed'. McNab 1909: 317.

Tahu women to extract whitau near the ship 'with the promise of fish-hooks, nails, knives, scissors, hatchets, razors, glass beads and trinkets'.⁴⁰ In arranging this and subsequent trade encounters, Edwardson was aided by the chief Te Pahi and the Pākehā-Māori James Caddell (c. 1794–1826), a former ship's boy whose life had been spared by southern Kāi Tahu during a violent encounter with sealers from the *Sydney Cove* led by Honekai at or near Rakiura in 1810.⁴¹ The *Snapper* also 'shipped a large quantity of potatoes for Sydney' and visited Bluff. A cordial meeting there with the chief Te Wera resulted in Edwardson taking one of his 'relatives' back to Port Jackson. It is highly likely that this person, referred to as 'Jacky Snapper', was Tuhawaiki (c.1805–44). Caddell and his wife Tokitoki, a niece of Honekai's, were also on board.⁴²

Edwardson arrived in Sydney in March 1823. The *Sydney Gazette* reported that the *Snapper* brought 'about a ton of prepared flax'; however, the paper was mostly interested in its passengers—'two chiefs, one of whom is accompanied by his wife'.⁴³ Confident in Edwardson's assertion that systematic trade was possible, the colonial government sponsored further expeditions to Murihiku, continuing to utilise chiefly relationships and Caddell's services as interpreter. The records created by these journeys, especially the writings of Captain John Rodolphus Kent, provide unique insight into the regional and trans-Tasman mobility of Kāi Tahu at this time. Kent's observations of the seasonal tītī harvest, including the drowning of Te Pahi and many of his people in 1823 while returning from the Tītī Islands to Ruapuke, are of enduring value to the tribe.⁴⁴ This is especially true for my own Bluff-based family, as we are direct descendants of Te Pahi and continue to harvest tītī through rights inherited from him. Kent also recorded a party of Kāi Tahu tītī harvesters at Ruapuke who had travelled by sea from 'about the lookers on [Kaikoura] of Cook's chart ... for the purpose of procuring winter food', demonstrating the extent to which genealogy entitled people to resources far from their usual places of residence and the great value, as well as the considerable risks, attached to the southern tītī harvest.⁴⁵

40 McNab 1909: 310.

41 See Hall-Jones 1990.

42 Beattie 1919: 158–59.

43 McNab 1909: 317.

44 Transcript of Extracts of Journal kept by John Rodolphus Kent, MS-0440/13, Hocken Library, University of Otago: 18.

45 Transcript of Extracts of Journal kept by John Rodolphus Kent, MS-0440/13, Hocken Library, University of Otago: 19.

In 1824, during another flax trading voyage, the *Elizabeth Henrietta* was wrecked in Foveaux Strait. Named after the wife of Governor Lachlan Macquarie, the 150-ton government brig broke free from two anchors and was blown ashore at Ruapuke. As well as causing a major headache for colonial mariners and administrators—requiring two further voyages from Sydney to refloat the vessel—the wreck had the ecological consequence of releasing mice onto Ruapuke. This is the earliest record of their arrival in New Zealand, a full six years before the second recorded invasion at the Bay of Islands. The mice were given the name ‘hinerata’, a Māori transliteration of Henrietta.⁴⁶ Mice are still known by that name by the owners of Ruapuke, who maintain homes there and are all descendants of the nineteenth-century chiefs mentioned in this chapter.⁴⁷

Sydney also introduced other undesirable things to southern Kāi Tahu, including diseases. There is no evidence of introduced epidemics among Kāi Tahu before 1830; however, by the end of that decade, they had well and truly left their mark.⁴⁸ In mid to late 1835, the *Sydney Packet* visited Preservation Inlet and ‘found the measles very bad among the Maoris’. A year later, the same vessel again called into Ruapuke. The ship’s crew had been badly affected by a strain of influenza long present at Sydney and resident Kāi Tahu ‘threatened to kill the steward for introducing this new disease among them’.⁴⁹ The impact of measles, which killed Te Whakataupuka in 1835, was not confined to either Ōtākou or Foveaux Strait; the peripatetic nature of Kāi Tahu individuals and families meant that the disease spread—and spread quickly. Despite their awareness of the threat of epidemic disease, Kāi Tahu individuals, including chiefs, continued to visit Sydney and engage with its agents on home shores after the mid-1830s.

Alongside Taiaroa, Karetai and another regional chief, Tuhawaiki, who succeeded his uncle Te Whakataupuka, ‘sold’ large tracts of land to Sydney-based speculators in 1838. In January 1840, a group of 10 Kāi Tahu chiefs, led by Tuhawaiki, visited Sydney and met with Governor

46 Houghton 1895: 209.

47 See Searle, Jeremy, Jamieson, Gündüz, Stevens, Jones, Gemmill and King 2009. See also blog. tepapa.govt.nz/2013/01/08/hunting-henriettas-on-ruapuke-island-on-the-tail-of-new-zealands-first-mice/

48 Anderson 1998: 76.

49 McNab 1913: 175. Pybus claimed that this event occurred at Ōtākou: ‘In 1836, the *Sydney Packet* arrived at Otakou with a few influenza cases on board. Immediately the disease attacked the Maori, and the people died in hundreds, reducing the population to an alarming degree.’ Pybus 1954: 56. See also Anderson 1998: 193.

Gipps who asked them to sign a treaty at Government House; they refused.⁵⁰ By this stage, the Māori presence in Sydney had been common for more than a decade and visits like this were no longer necessarily reported in newspapers.⁵¹ As well as rejecting Gipps' treaty, Tuhawaiki ignored his subsequent proclamation against land sales by purporting to sell the South Island to the currency lad turned whaling magnate John Jones (c. 1808–69) and his associate, William Charles Wentworth—the so-called Wentworth–Jones Deed.⁵² However, at Ruapuke in June 1840, Tuhawaiki signed a copy of the agreement subsequently known as the 'Treaty of Waitangi', which purported to uphold Māori property rights and chiefly authority while simultaneously ceding sovereignty to the British Crown.

In mid-1844, the trajectories of convergence between Ruapuke and Ōtākou were highlighted when Tuhawaiki oversaw the New Zealand Company's purchase of the Otago Block, paving the way for a Wakefield-inspired settlement, eventually known as Dunedin.⁵³ After introducing cattle to Ruapuke on his return from Sydney, Tuhawaiki spent the early 1840s focused on the sea, ferrying goods and passengers around southern New Zealand and co-owning several vessels.⁵⁴ However, during the protracted negotiations for the Otago Block, he reputedly made a stirring speech in which he reflected critically on events of the past 10–15 years, especially the connections with colonial Australia:

We were once a numerous people ... We are but a poor remnant ... dotted in families ... where formerly we lived as tribes ... We had a worse enemy than Te Rauparaha and that was the visit of the pakeha with his drink and disease ... the very scum of Port Jackson shipped as whalers or landed as sealers on this coast. They brought us new plagues, unknown to our fathers, till our people melted away.⁵⁵

50 Dacker 1994: 18; Craw 2014: 88–89.

51 Craw 2014: 93, 95, 95–100.

52 Evison 2006: 44; Dacker 1994: 18.

53 Evison 2006: 51–60.

54 Anderson 1990a.

55 Pybus 1954: 56–57. Without denying that Tuhawaiki made a speech, or its general thrust, David Haines points out that it was recollected by George Clarke Jnr and put into writing by him 43 years after the event. It cannot therefore be considered what Tuhawaiki said word for word; it was, rather, a 'retrospective dramatisation of events'. Haines 2003: 49–50.

Tuhawaiki's comments recognise the critical place of engagement with Poihakena for the prospects of southern Kāi Tahu. While it is possible that his description of the impacts of disease and alcohol may have been exaggerated for effect, there is little doubt that, in this period, Kāi Tahu confidence in meeting the challenges of European expansionism was severely strained by depopulation.⁵⁶ Confronting this challenge was made much harder when, a few months after the Otago Deed was signed, Tuhawaiki drowned near Timaru en route to Wellington.

Kāi Tahu and the Tasman World After 1844

Georgie Crow has recently re-examined the 'considerable Māori engagement with Australia' between 1793 and 1839 and concluded—quite rightly—that 'Māori actively helped to cultivate a Tasman World in the early nineteenth century'.⁵⁷ I agree with Crow that the movement of southern Kāi Tahu individuals and families to and from Australia's southern and eastern seaboard was inaugurated by the pre-colonial frontier, but it was not limited to this time period. Kāi Tahu, on Ruapuke and in other communities around Foveaux Strait, continued their mobile existence and connections with colonial Australia during the era of large-scale South Island land purchases by the Crown, between the 1840s and 1860s. In many ways, this process grew stronger between the 1860s and the 1930s, when shipping networks linked the southern port of Bluff, my hometown, with colonial ports on both sides of the Tasman and more distant points across and beyond the English-speaking world. Such traffic persisted throughout and beyond the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and is a key component of contemporary Kāi Tahu life. The 'world beyond the waters', as Crow put it, forever became part of our Kāi Tahu world. Not only have we never stopped operating within it, we commonly continue to do so in maritime ways.

The persistence of mobile and expanding southern Māori life ways can be seen in the Kāi Tahu chief Topi Patuki (c. 1810–1900). Topi was born in South Otago when his parents, Te Marama and Wairua, returned to the Canterbury region after the annual tītī harvest in Foveaux Strait. He later shifted to Foveaux Strait and Ruapuke sometime before Ngāti

56 Montgomerie 1993: 50.

57 Crow 2014: 90.

Toa destroyed Kaiapoi Pā. In 1838, as mentioned above, he accompanied Tuhawaiki to Sydney and worked on the whaling station established in Bluff.⁵⁸ During the colonial encounter, he and his children were present at events such as land sales, sittings of the Native Land Court, political meetings, Māori hall openings, regattas, horse races, weddings and tangi, which occurred across the Kāi Tahu domain.⁵⁹ However, his primary residence was on Ruapuke, where he 'became the effective leader' after Tuhawaiki died, as Tuhawaiki's son and heir apparent, John Frederick Kihau, was in his early teens.

An expert whaler who spoke good English and 'dressed in the style of the better class of English sailor', it was Topi who welcomed Reverend J.F.H. Wohlers of the North German Mission Society, Foveaux Strait's first foreign resident missionary, to Ruapuke in 1844. When Kihau drowned in 1852, Topi became the acknowledged chief in Foveaux Strait, albeit at a time when chiefly authority was rapidly eroding. Four years later, he took Kihau's widow, Madeline Kurukuru, as a second wife.⁶⁰ She bore him sons whose descendants have been, and still are, active participants in the region's seasonal tītī harvest and commercial fishing in Foveaux Strait, as well as in Australian waters.

Underlining Ruapuke's networked existence in the maritime world of pre-colonial and early colonial New Zealand, in May 1845, Wohlers explained to his mission superiors in Germany that:

For the time being this island ... remains the most suitable place for the mission, because it is a kind of gathering place, where everybody, native or European who crosses through these waters comes ashore.⁶¹

However, Wohlers added that 'in the future it cannot maintain any significance for cultivation, because even for agriculture it is too rocky'.⁶² Wohlers worked hard to teach the residents to grow crops, including wheat that could be ground into flour. He also introduced sheep to Ruapuke.⁶³

58 Anderson 1990b; Anderson 1998: 100.

59 See, for example, 'News of the Week', *Otago Witness*, 7 November 1874: 14; *Evening Star*, 3 July 1879: 2; 'MIDDLE ISLAND NATIVE LAND PURCHASES ROYAL COMMISSION', *Akaroa Mail and Banks Peninsula Advertiser*, 16 March 1880: 2; 'The Tangi at Moeraki', *Otago Daily Times*, 18 April 1881: 3; 'MAORI HALL AT LITTLE RIVER', *Star*, 20 April 1885: 3; *Otago Daily Times*, 8 January 1895: 2.

60 Anderson 1990b.

61 Wohlers 1845.

62 Wohlers 1845.

63 Wohlers 1895: 193.

However, his efforts did not effect the social changes he anticipated and a suite of pre-existing resource practices, most of them sea-based, prevailed. The tītī harvest is a case in point: early on in his mission, Wohlers found himself ‘rather lonely on this island’, almost all the residents having left to ‘gather some fat meat for the winter’.⁶⁴ The harvest, and the mobility it required, persisted throughout Wohlers’ 40-year residence on Ruapuke and is still a central activity for many southern Kāi Tahu families today, including mine.

Aside from having maritime rather than terrestrial inclinations, Ruapuke-based Kāi Tahu families did not focus their efforts on growing crops and livestock for trade because, despite finding a market among initial colonists on the Southland plains in the late 1850s, this declined as soon as these newcomers became self-sufficient. This was a familiar story. When ‘settlers increased in numbers and confidence, they found fewer uses for native expertise’, as Montgomerie put it.⁶⁵ A partial exception to this rule was the rural labouring sometimes available to Kāi Tahu workers on the mainland. Sheep shearing, in particular, employed many people, which arguably resembled an aspect of the traditional Kāi Tahu economy, in that the work was peripatetic, communal, intergenerational and gender inclusive.⁶⁶ Its seasonal nature also meant it could be worked in with the tītī harvest.⁶⁷

Much of Wohlers’ published writing focused on the widely debated question of the ‘dying Māori’, which he considered to be mainly a consequence of tuberculosis and interracial marriage in southern New Zealand.⁶⁸ Wohlers strongly supported the colonial ideal of a racially amalgamated New Zealand and thus endorsed interracial marriage. He additionally saw mixed-race households as offering protection against tuberculosis. On this basis, he correctly predicted that Foveaux Strait’s ‘half-castes’, as he termed them, would be the region’s surviving ‘natives’.⁶⁹

64 Wohlers 1845: 037.

65 Montgomerie 1993: 17.

66 Wohlers 1895: 193.

67 A similar state of affairs defined Kwakwaka’waka life in late nineteenth-century British Columbia. Despite colonial prescriptions against it, they, like southern Kāi Tahu, used wage labouring to underpin mobile rather than sedentary lifestyles. Both benefitted from the fact that the ‘timing of the ... wage labor cycle conveniently matched the older migrations for food and resource collection’. Raibmon 2005: 27.

68 See Wohlers 1870: 229–34; Wohlers 1881: 123–34. See also Stenhouse 1996: 124–40.

69 See Stevens forthcoming [2018].

However, to paraphrase Te Maire Tau, while interracial marriage certainly transformed Kāi Tahu as a tribe, it did not lead to its anticipated disappearance.⁷⁰ In the case of Ruapuke, a key driver of depopulation was simply young inhabitants moving their primary residence away from the island, especially by the late 1860s.⁷¹ Wohlers wrote that:

The young men [who had] grown up with the sound of the roaring sea singing in their ears, had little taste for agriculture and cattle raising, but they were so much the bolder sailors, saw something of the wide world and gained experience.⁷²

Although, according to Wohlers, most of them returned, 'married the young girls, and built little vessels', they 'came to the conclusion that the little island of Ruapuke ... was not adapted for them'.⁷³ In 1857, the island's population was 127; however, by 1887, two years after Wohlers died, only 16 people remained. Many of its residents had relocated to Rakiura or joined relatives on the mainland, especially in Bluff.⁷⁴

An Australian-based descendant of marriages between Kāi Tahu women and various tākata pora has accurately described colonial-era Bluff as 'a halfway house between [Foveaux Strait's mixed-race] island communities and the Europeanised mainland'.⁷⁵ James Spencer, an ex-sealer and whaler whose life and family are discussed in more detail in the next section, established a store in Bluff in the mid-1830s. He was joined by William Stirling, a whaler who established a shore whaling station in Bluff in 1836 on behalf of (or at least with assistance from) John Jones, the aforementioned whaling merchant.⁷⁶ Both Spencer and Stirling married Kāi Tahu women and had families. In contrast to Ruapuke, the colonial town of Bluff was described as having a large native population

⁷⁰ Tau 2008: 204.

⁷¹ Wohlers 1895: 199. The island's role as refuge in the context of Ngāti Toa invasions ended as early as 1839, when hostilities formally ceased and its function as a base to interact and trade with newcomers did not carry over into the colonial encounter. Accordingly, many Kāi Tahu people on Ruapuke whose primary residences had earlier been in Otago or Canterbury returned north to these regions. Those from, or who remained in, the south commonly shifted to whaling stations or colonial towns that grew out of some of them such as happened at Riverton and Bluff. See *Southland Times*, 21 February 1887: 2.

⁷² Wohlers 1895: 198–99.

⁷³ Wohlers 1895: 198–99.

⁷⁴ *Southland Times*, 21 February 1887: 2.

⁷⁵ McDonald 2016.

⁷⁶ See Stirling 1936: 11.

in 1863;⁷⁷ similar observations were made periodically throughout the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In 1955, an elderly West Indian seaman, who settled in the port in the 1890s, recalled that ‘there were a lot of Maoris’. A female visitor in 1937 likewise noted that ‘Maoris are plentiful’, but added that ‘few of them ... do not show some admixture of pakeha blood’. Nevertheless, she observed the ongoing presence of Kāi Tahu material traditions: ‘On the outside walls of all their houses may be seen hanging the kelp bags in which the mutton-birds ... are stored’.⁷⁸

Shipping routes connecting Sydney and Melbourne to New Zealand from the 1860s meant that many colonists or visitors arrived at, or departed from, Auckland or Bluff. In 1887, the Bostonian writer and publisher Maturin M. Ballou visited Bluff, then officially known as Campbelltown, and recorded that ‘among the spectators of the ship’s arrival who had come to the pier were a score of half-breeds—Māori girls and men, laughing and chattering like little monkeys’.⁷⁹ The ‘young women of this descent’ were described as having fine eyes and rich brown complexions and as answering ‘to our quadroons of the Southern States in appearance’.⁸⁰ However, Bluff’s Kāi Tahu residents were not the immobile playthings of racialising American visitors—as another encounter, reported in a local newspaper, powerfully illustrates:

Two citizens of the United States of America were in Bluff and were desirous of visiting Ruapuke [and] asked a Ruapuke native what he would charge to take them across in his boat’.⁸¹

The answer they received was £3.

[The] Yankees, always with an eye on the almighty dollar, haggled over the fare until they had it reduced to £1 and were chuckling over their cleverness in beating the ‘ignorant savage’.⁸²

77 Bassett 1993a: 6.

78 ‘Felix Devalon, who has sailed seven seas, celebrates his 90th birthday next Sunday’, 5 October 1955, cited in *Early Bluff: The Newspaper of the Bluff History Group*, October 2009, 16: 4; Wiseman 1937: 32.

79 Ballou 1888: 286–87.

80 Ballou 1888: 288.

81 ‘Reminiscences of Topi’ in ‘Ruapuke: Random Recollections and Reminiscences’ undated newspaper clipping, Rata Harland Scrapbook Collection, access courtesy of Maurice Skerrett (hereafter Harland Collection).

82 ‘Reminiscences of Topi’ in ‘Ruapuke: Random Recollections and Reminiscences’ undated newspaper clipping, Harland Collection.

However, once their visit to Ruapuke had concluded, and the Americans asked to be returned to Bluff:

[They] were at once told that the return fare ... would be £5 down before leaving the Island. The Yanks blustered and bounced but it was of no avail, the Māori would not come down; so after waiting another day they had to pay over the five pounds demanded and probably left New Zealand with a more respectful knowledge of the reasoning powers of the Maori.⁸³

Sea transport and commercial links between southern New Zealand and southern Australia were further consolidated from 1875 with the rise of the Union Steam Ship Company, a large and powerful corporation that grew out of the estate of John Jones, who moved from Sydney to North Otago in 1843 and became an influential figure in colonial Dunedin.⁸⁴ In 1883, Melbourne's *Argus* observed that the company's boats were an 'important factor in the trade and prosperity' of southern New Zealand, and that the 'commercial interests of [the lower] South Island are closely allied to Victoria, so the arrival of the Melbourne boats one would imagine would be anxiously looked for'.⁸⁵ Meanwhile, many Kāi Tahu men on the shores of Foveaux Strait turned to inshore fishing for employment in the mid to late nineteenth century.⁸⁶ This became increasingly the case from the mid-1880s when a freezing works was established on Bluff's foreshore that enabled fish to be frozen and exported, along with oysters, to Melbourne on Union Steam Ship vessels.

In the early twentieth century, a retired Bluff fisherman, 'Old Bill', recalled oystering in Foveaux Strait in this era, before engines allowed boats to 'run to timetable like a train'.⁸⁷ In earlier days, he explained, there was one company of oyster merchants, the Bluff Oyster Company, which was owned and operated by 'Captain Anglem, Tom Gilroy, Joey Ward an' I think old Charley Bradshaw'⁸⁸—all individuals who were (by birth

83 'Reminiscences of Topi' in 'Ruapuke: Random Recollections and Reminiscences' undated newspaper clipping, Rata Harland Scrapbook Collection, see fn 81, Harland Collection.

84 McLean 1993; Tapp 1990.

85 'Roundabout New Zealand. The Bluff to Dunedin', *Argus*, 26 May 1883: 13.

86 Wohlers 1895: 199.

87 'Oystering Then and Now. Stirring Sailing Days Recalled. 'Old Bills' Reminiscences [sic]', undated newspaper clipping, Harland Collection.

88 Charles Bradshaw married the Kāi Tahu woman Rena Lahey. Their first-born child, also Charles (or its transliteration, Taare), is Tipene O'Regan's Pōua. Tipene O'Regan, 26 March 2015, email message to author.

or marriage) from Kāi Tahu families, with the exception of Ward who became the local member of the House of Representatives and, later, New Zealand's Colonial Treasurer and Premier.⁸⁹ Old Bill remembered that:

A lot of oysters were sent to Melbourne in cement casks. I've seen the decks of ... the Union Company's boats fair stacked up with casks ... You don't see that nowadays ... those were good days.⁹⁰

According to other reports, it was in 1896–97 that Foveaux Strait's fishing industry boomed, 'owing to the export trade to Melbourne'. Growth was so phenomenal that Bluff-based merchants negotiated to establish a station, with cleaning and packing sheds and accommodation, on Māori-owned Ruapuke. 'At the height of the station's prosperity there were from 60 to 80 men engaged in cod and net fishing'; the little settlement was described as resembling a mining camp, due to its 'roughly built shacks ... and a good sprinkling of run-away sailors ... of many nationalities'. Cleaned and cased fish were sent to Bluff by regular cutter and 'conveyed to the Freezing Works' and then to Melbourne.⁹¹ Unfortunately, overfishing brought declining catches and the station was abandoned by 1903. Yet, a fine spell of winter weather in 1917, during which plenty of oysters and fish were landed in Bluff, meant that an 'intercolonial boat' was 'badly wanted to place a big consignment ... now held in cool store on the Australian markets'.⁹² The Melbourne service ended in 1930 but its memory lived on. Nearly two decades later, a visitor to Southland wrote that 'one is constantly reminded that Bluff is actually nearer to Hobart than Auckland and the people sigh for the restoration of the Bluff–Melbourne steamer service'.⁹³

With respect to the colonial period, I have thus far referred only to Kāi Tahu males who travelled to and from Australia and further beyond. However, Kāi Tahu females also travelled. A case in point is Iwa Skerrett.⁹⁴ Iwa's great-niece, Angela Skerrett-Tainui, recalled that, as a child, there was a photograph of 'a beautiful Maori maiden looking regal in a feather cloak' on the wall of her grandfather's house in Bluff. She asked him

89 Bassett 1993b.

90 'Oystering Then and Now. Stirring Sailing Days Recalled. 'Old Bills' Reminiscences [sic]', undated newspaper clipping, Harland Collection.

91 'When Fishing Boomed' in 'Ruapuke: Random Recollections and Reminiscences' undated newspaper clipping, Harland Collection.

92 *Southland Times*, 12 July 1917: 4.

93 'Land of Promise', *Nelson Evening Mail*, 11 December 1947.

94 Also known as Evaline, or Eva Skerrett, but also the full transliteration Iwa Kereti.

who the woman was, and he replied: 'That is my sister, Iwa. She went to England for the coronation of King George V with a Maori concert party and never returned'.⁹⁵

Born on Rakiura in 1890, Iwa and her parents relocated to Bluff to join her maternal grandparents when she was two years old. She told a Sydney reporter that in about 1900—when, probably because of kin connections, she was living with my great-great-great-grandparents⁹⁶—the Premier, Richard John Seddon, 'visited our little town ... and we children sang a song of welcome. The big man called me to him and told me I had a glorious voice'. She later joined the choir at St Matthew's Anglican Church in Bluff and was invited to sing at concerts.⁹⁷ In late 1909, Iwa competed in a musical competition in Dunedin in which she placed second; its judge, Mr Orchard of Sydney, described her as 'a contralto with a future'.⁹⁸ Thereafter, she was offered singing lessons and asked to join a Te Arawa-based Māori concert party being assembled by Maggie Papakura, who had accepted invitations to perform in Australia and London.⁹⁹ The group's tour began with an outdoor performance for 6,000 people in Melbourne. It subsequently performed in Sydney—a place Papakura reportedly had an 'an undying love for'—then Adelaide and Perth.¹⁰⁰

Described as a 'Maori mezzo-soprano', Iwa delighted her audience and it was predicted that she 'should become a great favourite in Sydney'.¹⁰¹ She also found favour in the UK, where she remained after performing at the Festival of Empire and Coronation Exhibition in 1911. Finding fame as 'Princess Iwa', she joined and became a lead singer in the Royal Carl Rosa Opera Company, performing 'at top halls and theatres from London to Glasgow to Paris', often in Māori attire with backdrops of New Zealand scenes.¹⁰² She represented New Zealand at an Anzac ceremony and entertained troops in World War I training camps. She married

95 Crean 2015.

96 The Bluff Public School Register for 1900 lists John Haberfield, of Greenhills, as Eva Skerrett's guardian. Eva's Aunt Elizabeth (née Honor, formerly Newton) was married to John. Their only son, William, is my grandfather's grandfather. Stevens 2015.

97 'Iwa, the Maori Singer', *Sunday Times*, 1 January 1911: 20.

98 'Stage Gossip', *Otago Witness*, 10 November 1909: 68.

99 Northcroft-Grant 1996.

100 'The Maori Village', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 December 1910: 3.

101 'The Maori Village', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 December 1910: 3.

102 Crean 2015.

a principal tenor with the Royal Carl Rosa Opera Company and had a circle of friends that included Australian soprano Dame Nellie Melba, actor Mary Pickford and Charlie Chaplin.¹⁰³

Iwa planned to visit southern New Zealand in 1915, but this did not eventuate. Her brother George, who served at Gallipoli, attempted but failed to meet her when he was in London recovering from injuries. Iwa, who had children, neither saw George nor returned to New Zealand, before her death in 1947.¹⁰⁴ Other Kāi Tahu women who went to Australia or further abroad in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century also never returned to their Kāi Tahu communities. For instance, Kuini Lahey and her two children; essentially evacuated from Moeraki to New South Wales to escape a difficult marriage, Lahey remarried there, had further children and is buried there. According to Tipene O'Regan, a higher *proportion* of these Australian-based Kāi Tahu, many into their second or third generation in Australia, are in more 'regular communion' with tribal affairs than those in New Zealand. Evidence of this is found in tangihanga (funerals) on our marae (communal Māori meeting complex) in Bluff where, as O'Regan has stated, 'it is not uncommon to find significant numbers of Australians gathering over our dead. These are 'Ngāi Tahu Australians, yes, but still Ngāi Tahu'.¹⁰⁵ Further examples of these trajectories and enduring connections are commonly found in our tribe's monthly newsletter, *Te Pānui Rūnaka*, and Invercargill's main newspaper, the *Southland Times*.

In October 2014, *Te Pānui Rūnaka* noted the recent death of Harry Taiaroa Pene in Tasmania. His children explained that 'his ashes were brought back ... to be buried with our mother Gwen, daughter of Puhī Taiaroa-Royal in Rotorua' and that they—his children—came from Darwin, Melbourne and Tasmania to accompany him to Te Mangungu Marae in Naenae, where a tangihanga took place. The family then travelled northward, 'stopping off to pay our respects to our tūpuna [ancestors] at Kikopiri Marae and Kererū Marae'.¹⁰⁶ Two years earlier, the Kāi Tahu community at Ōnuku, near Akaroa on Banks Peninsula, recorded that George Tainui ('Butch') Robinson had died in a truck accident at Mareeba near Cairns,

103 Crean 2015.

104 See Schultz 2016: 62–76.

105 O'Regan 2002: 37.

106 *Te Pānui Rūnaka*, Ono/October 2014: 30.

Australia, and that his whānau (family) had passed on their thanks to Ōnuku and the nearby Kāi Tahu settlement of Wairewa for the koha (gifts and donations) they sent.¹⁰⁷

Conversely, some Kāi Tahu 'Mossies'¹⁰⁸ have lost touch with their Kāi Tahu families and communities; some are like 'Tai te Kiteraki and Toi te Uatahi', two boys who 'went to sea and never returned' but were believed to have settled in New South Wales.¹⁰⁹ Yet, many of these people are willing and able to reconnect with their Kāi Tahu side, as a story from *Tē Pānui Rūnaka*, published in mid-2014, illustrates:

And here we sit in the wharehūi [meeting hall] at the marae. [We] are told we affiliate to Arowhenua [near Temuka, in South Canterbury]. Our ancestral grandmothers Potete Ashwell and her daughter Rebecca Lewis and all our kaumātua [elders] now passed on, being represented by we 13 'very blond' Ngāi Tahu Ozzies.

This visit was described as the culmination of 30 years of 'journeying to reconnect with our whakapapa'. Although their marae host, Uncle Joe Waaka, was not sure of their genealogical connection and much remained 'clouded in mystery', they noted that 'those here, who keep the home fires burning, have big wide, open spaces in their hearts'.¹¹⁰

The group was attempting to retrace the steps of their tipuna (ancestor), 'Dadda Lewis', who left his whānau, the Ashwell family, in the late 1890s, and travelled to Goondiwindi, a town in south-east Queensland, where he worked as a shearer. Here he met and married a first generation Australian, Mary Ellen Ursula Hammill, whose parents had come from Ireland. The couple had a family of four boys and four girls, whose descendants have spread out across the globe.¹¹¹ Other members of the Ashwell family have more recently relocated to Queensland, as the 'socio-economic destruction of far southern New Zealand proceeds apace'. In O'Regan's words, 'young Ngāi Tahu leave and they do not head North. They do what Ngāi Tahu have always done and they head for Australia'.¹¹² This was evident in Brisbane—now possibly the fourth largest urban concentration

107 *Tē Pānui Rūnaka*, Whā/August 2012: 8.

108 Common Tasman world slang term meaning 'Maori Aussies'. Some New Zealand-based Maori grandparents also refer to Australian-based mokopuna (grandchildren) as 'moko-roos'.

109 Beattie 1994: 464.

110 *Tē Pānui Rūnaka*, Mātahi-ā-Te Tau/May 2014: 17–18.

111 *Tē Pānui Rūnaka*, Mātahi-ā-Te Tau/May 2014: 17–18.

112 O'Regan 2002: 37.

of Māori in the world¹¹³—during its 2011 floods. In an article entitled ‘Skipper from Bluff saves boat’, the *Southland Times* reported that Roy Ashwell, a skipper on one of Brisbane’s CityCat ferries, narrowly managed to move his houseboat before the marina it was tied to was washed down the Brisbane River. Speaking to a reporter while motoring up the coast to Scarborough after a night moored near St Helena Island, Ashwell, a former meat inspector at Bluff’s Ocean Beach Freezing Works, commented that although he had been in Brisbane for 30 years, Bluff was still home.¹¹⁴

Bluff’s Spencer Family¹¹⁵

The story of Dublin-born James Spencer (c. 1790–1847) and his Kāi Tahu descendants is an apt case study that draws attention to the enduring place of mobile Māori livelihoods in southern New Zealand, particularly Bluff, as well as ongoing connections with the Tasman world, including travel to—and work within—the Australian colonies.

Spencer first appears in the southern South Island’s historical record in the mid-1820s as a sealer. A Peninsula War veteran, he ventured to Australia upon the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars and, by 1832, was at the Preservation Inlet whaling station in south-west New Zealand. There he witnessed the first land sale in southern New Zealand.¹¹⁶ In 1835, Edward Weller’s Sydney-based brother, George, referred to Spencer as ‘one of the Codfish mob’, suggesting he was part of the Whenua Hou community.¹¹⁷ Spencer purchased land in Bluff from Tuhawaiki at around this time and established a store that bought excess provisions from American whale ships and onsold them. One of his sons later noted that ‘French and English whalers used to put in to the Bluff ... so there was more traffic than one might think’. James also collected and sold whalebone and traded in ‘feetow’ (whitau) that he sold in Sydney.¹¹⁸

113 Heather 2012.

114 Morgan 2011.

115 This section draws on research from a Māori Summer Studentship hosted by the Department of History and Art History co-funded by the Division of Humanities at the University of Otago and Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu in 2015–16, which was undertaken by Rosie Welsh (nō Kāi Tahu).

116 Beattie [1935].

117 Middleton 2007: 24–25.

118 Beattie [1935].

In early 1841, James married a Kāi Tahu woman, Meri Te Kauri (1816–76)—also known as Tinirauwaho, Mary Jane Spencer and Jane Shepard—in Waikouaiti (present-day Karitane); this was the first Christian marriage conducted in the South Island.¹¹⁹ Meri hailed from Ōtākou but relocated south to the Foveaux Strait area, specifically Ruapuke Island, possibly in response to Te Rauparaha and Ngāti Toa.¹²⁰ James and Meri had two children, James (1842–1903) and William Te Paro (1844–1938).¹²¹ Their lives, as with most of their Kāi Tahu contemporaries, were shaped by a confluence of southern Māori customs and European maritime traditions. Though based primarily in Bluff, their father, James, continued to travel to Sydney for business transactions and to make good on pre-colonial land purchases in the port. A trip to Sydney in late 1846 was occasioned by illness rather than commerce and he died at sea on the return voyage in March 1847.¹²² Captain Stirling and another whaler, the Isle of Mann-born John 'Jack Tiger' MacGibbon, who came to Bluff with Stirling, were trustees of James' estate. His will, made in 1846, specified that funds be put towards the maintenance and education of his two sons, who would inherit his real estate and personal property when William, the youngest, reached the age of 21.¹²³

Both James and William married women like themselves—people from Foveaux Strait with Kāi Tahu mothers and European sailor fathers. James married Charlotte Ann Kure Whenua Edwards (1844–1900), who was born on Whenua Hou, and William married Louisa Te Memeke Coupar (1846–1930), who was born at The Neck, on Rakiura. Louisa's mother was Te Mahana and her father was Stewart Coupar, originally from Dundee, Scotland.¹²⁴ Aside from two years spent in Temuka, William and Louisa spent most of their time in Bluff.¹²⁵

119 Ellis 1998: 19.

120 Ellis 1998: 19.

121 According to William Spencer, his father, James, whose middle name was either Power or Powers (Te Paro being a transliteration), had three younger brothers, two of whom were named William and John. Beattie [1935]: (2).

122 Beattie [1935]: (6).

123 Ellis 1998: 14–15.

124 Ellis 1998: 67. Both Meri Te Kauri and Te Mahana are represented in the large carved pou-wāhine inside the whare-tipuna, *Tabu-potiki* on Bluff's Te Rau Aroha Marae. See Christensen 2013: 160–71.

125 Beattie [1935]: (11). See Mikaere 1998.

William worked at a number of occupations during his lifetime and in a number of places. In his youth, he drove sheep from Bluff into the developing agricultural hinterland. In late 1861, aged 17, he travelled on the ship carrying the first cargo from the Invercargill wharf to Australia.¹²⁶ Leaving the vessel in Melbourne, William worked and travelled his way inland, shearing in sheds across Victoria, before spending two seasons shore whaling at Twofold Bay in southern New South Wales.¹²⁷ He returned to Bluff in May or June 1864, at around the same time as the negotiation and signing of the Rakiura Deed. This document formally extinguished native title to Stewart Island but safeguarded the Titi Islands for Kāi Tahu individuals and families genealogically entitled to them.¹²⁸

William found employment shearing on Southland farms and constructing gold dredges throughout the lower South Island.¹²⁹ He also helped to construct the Waipori power station, south of Dunedin, during which time he visited the nearby Kāi Tahu settlement, Maitapapa, whose residents included individuals and families from Whenua Hou and Rakiura.¹³⁰ William also took part in sealing expeditions in Fiordland and went gold prospecting on the South Island's west coast. From his Bluff home, which was located very close to his brother's, William fished, oystered and spent numerous seasons engaged in the tītī harvest.¹³¹ This took place on Te Poho o Horomamae, a Tītī Island located on the east side of Rakiura near the entrance to Lord's River, to which Louisa had beneficial rights through her mother.¹³² A large number of William and Louisa's descendants, many of them primarily Bluff based, continue to maintain houses and harvest tītī on this island. One of them, who is New Zealand's Ambassador to Chile, flew from Santiago with her daughter to take part in the harvest in 2017.

Before James and William could succeed to their father's land at Bluff, a neighbouring property owner, George Green (1810–72), an English-born Sydney boat builder, later based in Dunedin, cajoled their mother into signing their interests over to him.¹³³ This was done in collusion

126 Ellis 1998: 66.

127 Ellis 1998: 66; Beattie [1935]: (5).

128 Stevens 2014.

129 Beattie [1935]: (11).

130 See Wanhalla 2009: 10–11.

131 Beattie [1935]: (11).

132 Ellis 1998: 157. The island is commonly known as Horomamae but is also sometimes referred to as Owen Island.

133 'THE LATE MR GEORGE GREEN', *Otago Witness*, 7 September 1872: 10.

with the local constable and other Bluff residents who stood to materially benefit.¹³⁴ However, when William turned 21, he and James were able to access their father's sealed papers in Sydney, including his land deeds, Crown Grants and a duplicate of his will. With the assistance of an Invercargill solicitor, this evidence was presented to the Commissioner of Crown Lands and legal proceedings were commenced against Green. It was found that Green had obtained Meri's and William's signatures by deception and, in 1868, New Zealand's Legislative Council passed special legislation to cancel a land grant made to him and instead award a 200-acre block to James and William. However, it seems that legal expenses forced them to subdivide and sell-off part of the land.¹³⁵

Soon afterwards, James became embroiled in Bluff's so-called newspaper races, which were triggered by the Franco-Prussian War and Bluff's proximity to the Australian colonies where updates of the conflict originated. The Franco-Prussian War was Australia's biggest overseas news story of 1870 and updates about it entered Adelaide from P&O mail ships. These updates were then telegraphed throughout the eastern colonies.¹³⁶ Bluff performed a similar function when it received mail from Melbourne.

Speaking from the port in 1930, William recalled that 'people here were deeply interested in the conflict, in particular those who had come from the Old Country'.¹³⁷ Bluff had two shopkeepers at the time, each representing rival Invercargill-based newspapers, to whom they telegraphed the most important overseas news.¹³⁸ 'The agent whose paper

134 Ellis 1998: 28; Beattie [1935]: (6).

135 Ellis 1998: 28; Beattie [1935]: (6).

136 Putnis 2007: 6.2–6.3.

137 'The Newspaper Race: Mr W. Spencer's Narrative', undated newspaper clipping, c. 1930, Harland Collection.

138 'The Newspaper Race: Mr W. Spencer's Narrative', undated newspaper clipping, c. 1930, Harland Collection. In 1865, the New Zealand Government built an electric telegraph in the South Island and the prominent Christchurch businessman and politician James Edward FitzGerald, who owned the Christchurch *Press* and had been Canterbury Agent in London, arranged for his brother Gerard to use the telegraph to transmit news from Bluff under the name of the New Zealand General Telegraphic Agency. Its first telegram, sent to Christchurch in May 1865, 'was a summary of news prepared in Melbourne'. O'Neill 1966: 865. Long-running advertisements for the Telegraphic Agency noted that Bluff Harbour, where its Head Office was based, 'occupies as the first port of arrival and last of departure for the steamers carrying Her Majesty's English and Australian Mails, as well as its growing importance as a port of call for sailing vessels of large tonnage'. It listed the company's principle agencies as being Melbourne, Adelaide, Sydney, Brisbane, Launceston, Gallo, Suez Alexandria, Malta, Marseilles Paris and London. See, for example, *Southland Times*, 5 January 1866: 1; *Nelson Examiner and New Zealand Chronicle*, 2 March 1867: 4.

arrived first', explained Spencer, 'naturally had the first use of the wire. Therefore the race for this privilege was always keenly waged'.¹³⁹ Both agents had a boat and crew of top oarsmen to row out and meet any approaching vessel. William's brother, James, rowed in one of these boats. One agent had a light whaleboat fitted out for the purpose, while the other responded by 'getting a strong four-oared boat of a racing pattern specially built for the service in Hobart'. The two crews 'were as keen in rivalry as their employers' and met ships past Stirling Point, 'even into the Straits', to retrieve copies of Melbourne and Sydney newspapers. Racing for Stirling Point, each boat would deliver their respective parcels to waiting horsemen and 'the race by horse from the point was often more exciting than the boat race'. The race ended at the post office 'with cheers for the winner'.¹⁴⁰

William and James Spencer's histories illustrate how Bluff's rhythms and the lives of its Kāi Tahu residents continued to be shaped by their proximity to Australia, well after formal colonisation began in southern New Zealand. Through them, we can see that Kāi Tahu linkages with Australia, which began on New Zealand's pre-colonial frontier, did not end—or perhaps even wane—during the colonial encounter.

Conclusion: Three Thousand Miles from 'Home'?

In July 2015, two months after I returned to Dunedin from Bluff following that year's tītī harvest, conducted on our family's island in Foveaux Strait, I travelled to Sydney for the annual meeting of the Australian Historical Association. The conference theme, fittingly, was 'Foundational Histories'. During my stay, I wandered along the city's Foveaux Street and located archival material relating to Bluff and Ruapuke in the Mitchell Library. My wife and I also arranged to meet a childhood friend from Bluff. She was an ex-neighbour who I last saw in London, almost a decade earlier. She too, is Kāi Tahu; in her case, one of the many descendants of the Sydney-born Nathaniel Bates (1819–87), a whaler and brother-in-law

139 'The Newspaper Race: Mr W. Spencer's Narrative', undated newspaper clipping, c. 1930, Harland Collection.

140 'The Newspaper Race: Mr W. Spencer's Narrative', undated newspaper clipping, c. 1930, Harland Collection.

of the aforementioned George Green.¹⁴¹ Bates 'had three wives—two Ngai Tahu women on the Foveaux Strait coast and one in Hobart' and, as O'Regan put it, 'the regularity of his trans-Tasman travel is attested by an extraordinary number of children'.¹⁴²

My friend's Kāi Tahu father was raised near Kaiapoi and did his apprenticeship as a carpenter before moving to Bluff where he had extended relatives. He went to sea and eventually skippered an oyster boat, the *Ranui*, owned by Otakou Fisheries, a cooperative based in Ōtakou that is owned and operated by descendants of chief Taiaroa, particularly its Ellison branch.¹⁴³ My friend's parents moved to Sydney in the late 1980s in response to Bluff's falling economic fortunes and this is where their two children, and now grandchildren, all live. When my wife (who comes from the Ellison branch of the Taiaroa family) and I met my friend in Sydney, it was mainly to give her an unused oyster sack, stamped 'RANUI 86'. The significance of this gift, aside from its rarity because the boat had not been oystering in over 20 years, was that my friend had recently given birth to a daughter whose middle name was Ranui. Our gift, handed over in a café near the University of Sydney, provoked a short tangi (cry) and hugs, followed by a visit to a picture framer. This oyster sack now hangs in the lounge room of an inner-city Sydney home, a combined statement about Bluff, the persisting maritime nature of the Tasman world and the diverse trajectories of Kāi Tahu lives within it.

141 George married Nathaniel's sister, Maria, at St Phillip's Church, Sydney, in April 1830. See Broad n.d. For more, see 'THE LATE MR GEORGE GREEN', *Otago Witness*, 7 September 1872: 10.

142 O'Regan 2002: 36. Bates reportedly fathered between 31 and 33 children, see 'Accidents and Fatalities', *Otago Daily Times*, 15 July 1887; 'The Drowning Accident at Riverton', *Southland Times*, 18 July 1887: 2. Angela Wanhalla noted that Bates first entered into a customary marriage with Hinepu and the couple had three children before she died. In 1848, he married Harriet Watson, a daughter of fellow whaler Robert Watson and his wife Parure. Bates later moved a married woman, Ann Pauley, also a daughter of a whaler and a Kāi Tahu woman, into his and Harriet's household in Riverton after she became pregnant with his child. Their relationship lasted 23 years. Wanhalla 2009: 49, 51.

143 The *Ranui* was built over eight years from 1928 by a Norwegian boatbuilder at the southern end of Rakiura very close to where, in 1826, Taiaroa had met members of an expedition intent on delivering the first planned British settlers to New Zealand. My grandfather was transported to and from our family's Titi Island as a young child on the *Ranui* with its first owner, Captain Billy Thompson, just before the vessel was taken over by the New Zealand Navy in 1941. During World War II it serviced sub-Antarctic Islands but also ventured as far north as the Solomon Islands. The *Ranui* remained in the central Pacific after the war, acting as a supply ship to remote islands and as a Royal Yacht for Queen Salote of Tonga. In 1954, it was purchased by George Ellison (1907–91) and brought back to southern New Zealand. The *Ranui* was then based mainly in Bluff and used for crayfishing and oystering until the early 1990s when the Foveaux Strait oyster fishery collapsed. See Rakiura Museum Book Committee 2008: 121.

A few years earlier, in mid-2012, Tahu Potiki, the Ōtākou representative to Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu (who is married to a granddaughter of George Ellison and whose father-in-law's first two names are Edward Weller), reflected on the migration of tens of thousands of Māori to Australia and its 'influence on the evolution and expression of Maori identities'. His thoughts were triggered both by the death of an elderly relative and by six of the latter's grandsons returning to Ōtākou to attend his tangihanga. He observed that these young men, all descendants of chief Taiaroa, worked in physically demanding jobs and earned good money, and that 'all of them were able to afford to fly home with their young families'. Moreover, 'they are all browned up and most bear quality Maori tattoos and when their grandfather was carried from the house they and their cousins performed a rousing haka'.¹⁴⁴ Echoing O'Regan's sentiments observed earlier, Potiki noted that, despite living in Australia, 'their lives are still heavily influenced by a Maori upbringing and they have strong identities'. Potiki quite rightly wondered if this would continue following the death of their patriarch and the 'three thousand miles distance between them and home'. In his opinion, these young men were 'in new territory'.¹⁴⁵

My assessment, based on historical evidence, is that the territory that these young Kāi Tahu men and their families are in is not especially new, but, rather, that they are following in the footsteps of their ancestors. That said, as O'Regan has acknowledged, the recent movement is more dramatic. Writing in 2002, O'Regan noted that the fastest growing geographic locations on our tribal register are second and third generation Australians; he observed that a 'steady stream of young adults from the south are migrating there and a noticeable group of retiring parents are moving to be closer to their grandchildren'. However, fundamentally, this is not a new phenomenon; instead, it is one in which 'the old pattern continues stronger than ever'.¹⁴⁶

As for those of us Kāi Tahu who remain 'in place' in southern New Zealand, our lives continue to be shaped by patterns cast by early nineteenth-century connections to Australia. Our disproportionate involvement in southern New Zealand's inshore fishing industry, our seascapes, our places of work and play, and our everyday conversations include placenames like

144 Potiki 2012.

145 Potiki 2012.

146 O'Regan 2002: 37.

Foveaux, Henrietta, Paterson, Lord, Bunker and Bungaree. Many of us, as I have shown, are active participants in the annual mutton-bird harvest, a word—if not a practice—that came to us from Norfolk Island.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, many of the commercial boats owned and operated by Kāi Tahu families in places like Bluff, Rakiura, Riverton and Ōtākou—boats that frequently run families to and from our Titi Islands—have been purchased in Australia. For instance, in June 1954, Tasmania's *Examiner* noted that 'Mr. Charlie Waitiri, of The Bluff, New Zealand' purchased the Launceston fishing vessel, *Buccaneer*, built in Hobart in 1946. In making the five–seven-day, 1,368-kilometre trip from Flinders Island to Bluff, the newspaper noted that, in addition to four men from Launceston, Waitiri's crew included his daughter, the aptly named Moana McQuarrie. Waitiri, who purchased the vessel 'for crayfishing off The Bluff', commented that 'New Zealand fishermen thought highly of Tasmanian-built boats', and that, since October, 'Bluff fishermen had purchased nine boats from Australia, the majority of which had been built in Tasmania'.¹⁴⁸

Reflecting on the longevity of Sydney as one of New Zealand's most important cities and—for a century—New Zealand as one of Sydney's most important hinterlands, James Belich memorably concluded that throughout the nineteenth century 'the Tasman Sea was more bridge than barrier'.¹⁴⁹ In a later assessment of Australasian circuits of people and money, Belich argued that, prior to Australian federation in 1901, 'most of the people crossing the Tasman probably did not see themselves as migrating, but shifting and wandering within a single system, a linked constellation'.¹⁵⁰ This chapter's description and assessment of southern Kāi Tahu communities supports Belich's claims. However, the way these patterns persisted beyond the colonial encounter calls into question his claim that New Zealand abandoned the Tasman world when it chose not to federate.¹⁵¹ At the very least, if 'New Zealand' did indeed abandon it, we southern Kāi Tahu did not; to paraphrase Ralph Waldo Emerson—a sea, once stretched, never returns to its original dimensions.¹⁵²

147 Anderson 2001: 6.

148 'Rough Tasman Crossing Avoided By Mail Delay', *The Examiner*, 8 June 1954: 4.

149 Belich 1996: 134.

150 Belich 2001: 47–48.

151 Belich 2001: 48.

152 After 'the mind, once stretched by a new idea, never returns to its original dimensions', attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson among others. See Makowsky 2013: 1.

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