

Parāone's horses: a letter from Hōhepa Tamamutu, 1875

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When horses were first introduced to Aotearoa they were so rare and expensive that they were owned only by the most powerful families. In Taupō in 1844, a travelling artist, G. F. Angas, found that the only horse in the region belonged to Te Wāka, son of the great Te Heuheu. Sent as a present by a northern rangatira (Te Wāka Nēnē), the animal had been shipped to Tauranga then taken overland with much trouble and excitement. Now Te Wāka was to be seen galloping along the shores of the lake, and young people had covered 'nearly every flat board within the settlement' with 'numberless charcoal drawings of men on horseback' (Angas II, 111-12).

The usual word for 'horse' is 'hōiho', but a poetic, celebratory term also came into use at this time. Its origin lay in the early-morning sight and sound of Pākehā attempting to mount their horses. They would run after them calling, 'Come here!'—and these English words became the Māori 'kāmia', a word used mainly when horses were being honoured in formal speech.

Later, herds of wild horses appeared in some parts of the country and it became possible to catch the animals and break them in, strenuous and often dangerous work though this was. Although they were still expensive, horses now were common enough for their use to have far-reaching effects upon perceptions of distance, journeys undertaken, and relations between iwi.

In 1875, Ngāti Tūwharetoa in the Taupō region were visited by a large party of Ngāti Raukawa, an iwi from the north. Nearly all were on horseback, but Parāone Taupiri and his (unnamed) wife made the journey on foot because their horses had recently died. With plenty of time to think on the way, Parāone composed a waiata to sing upon his arrival. Ngāti Tūwharetoa were related to his hapū of Ngāti Tahu (see Grace 202, 255),¹ and they were rich in horses, for wild herds roamed their tussock uplands. He would see what effect an eloquent appeal might have.

On a Taupō marae, Parāone sang of his grief then gave the reason. Addressing his horses [kāmia],² he traced the journey their wairua [spirits] must now be making. He then addressed six of the leading rangatira in the Taupō region, asking for their help in language similar to that which in the past had been employed by singers seeking military assistance in avenging a defeat in battle. By replacing Parāone's horses these men would avenge their deaths and, in effect, bring them back.

Finally Parāone spoke of Tongariro, the tapu mountain of Ngāti Tūwharetoa, in words which courteously identify the rangatira with their mountain and seem at the same time to be addressed to all of Ngāti Tūwharetoa.³

The six rangatira made a gracious response, presenting Parāone (and, in effect, his people) with no fewer than seven horses. Apparently each of the rangatira gave a horse, while the seventh was regarded as coming from Tongariro in general.

One of these Taupō rangatira was Hōhepa Tamamutu, who lived to the north of the lake. Tamamutu wrote to a Māori-language paper, *Te Wananga* (for which, see Sinclair 118-20), to tell the story. The letter was not published in *Te Wananga* but was preserved by the then editor John White, and is now among his manuscript papers in the Auckland City Libraries (NZMS 714. John White. *Papers & Memoranda Vol. 3* (Letter by Hōhepa Tamamutu)). I am grateful for permission to publish it here.

Oruanui, Taupō.
Hepetema 16, 1875.

Ki te kaituhi o *Te Wānanga*,

Tēnā koe, kia ora tonu koe mō te uta atu i tēnei waiata ka tukua atu nei e ahau mō runga i te matenga o ngā hōiho o Parāone Taupiri, o Ngāti Tahu, o Ngāti Raukawa.

Pohara⁴ ana taua tangata i te hōiho i te rā i whakatika mai ai a Ngāti Raukawa ki Taupō; ka haere hoki taua tangata, ka waha i ōna pikaunga ki runga i ō rāua tuara ko tāna wahine. Ko Ngāti Raukawa, e whitu tekau, i runga katoa i te hōiho; ko taua tangata me tāna wahine ki raro i te whenua oke ai. Ka oma ngā hōiho o te katoa, ka titiro ōna kanohi, ka puta tōna mihi ki a rāua ko tāna ruahine. Kātahi ka titoa tōna tangi e mau i raro nei.⁵

E muri ahiahi, takoto ki te moenga,
Ka rarua aku mahara, ngaro noa te kāmia
I te hikitunga wae nō Ngāti Raukawa.
Tērā pea kōrua kei ngā wī ka hau
I roto ngā Roto Takawha,
Kai atu rā ngā rori ka tuwhera i roto Atiamuri.
Tērā pea kōrua kai ngā titahatanga i roto Whakaheke,
Ka kitea mai kōrua e Ngāti Te Whetū.
Mā wai e rangaranga tō kōrua mate i te ao?
Mā Te Hemopō, mā Hōhepa Tamamutu,
Mā Te Papanui, mā Te Heuheu,
Mā Paurini Karamu, mā Kīngi—Tongariro ē!—
Ka hoki mai ki ahau!

Nā ēnei tāngata e mau nei ō rātou ingoa i roto i tēnei waiata i hoatu he
hōiho mō taua tangata—e whitu hōiho.

Heoi anō,
nā Hōhepa Tamamutu i tuku atu.

Oruanui, Taupō.
September 16, 1875.

To the writer of *Te Wānanga*,

Greetings, and thank you for taking on board this waiata I am sending.⁶ It is about the death of the horses that belonged to Parāone Taupiri, of Ngāti Tahu and Ngāti Raukawa.

This man had no horses on the day Ngāti Raukawa started out for Taupō, so he set out—he and his wife—carrying their packs on their backs. There were seventy people from Ngāti Raukawa, all on horseback, while that man and his wife were struggling along down on the ground. All the other people's horses were galloping along, and when his eyes beheld this he expressed the sorrow he felt for himself and his old lady. And he composed this lament that is given below.

Grieving in the evening, I lie on my bed
With troubled thoughts, my horses gone
From Ngāti Raukawa's expedition.
Perhaps you are in the sounding tussock
By the Takawha Lakes,
Passing along the roads that lie open at Atiamuri.
Perhaps you are on the winding paths at Whakaheke,
Where Ngāti Whetū will see you.
Who will make good your deaths in this world?
Te Hemopō will do so, and Hōhepa Tamamutu,
Te Papanui, Te Heuheu,
Paurini Karamu and Kīngi—O Tongariro!—
And you will return to me!
And the men named in this waiata gave horses to that man. They gave
him seven horses.
That is all.
This was sent by Hōhepa Tamamutu.

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¹ Ngāti Tahu are a hapū in the Atiamuri and Orākei-kōrako districts; Pōhaturoa at Atiamuri was their main pā (Grace xi).

² Using a standard poetic device, he first speaks of his horses, then addresses them without further preliminary.

³ The two mountains now known as Tongariro and Ngāuruhoe used to be seen as together forming a single mountain, Tongariro, of which Ngāuruhoe was the peak.

⁴ This word 'pohara' must be formed from 'hara', which Williams (1971: hara (iii)) defines as 'miss . . . come short of'.

⁵ The line lengths of the waiata are uncertain.

⁶ Māori-language newspapers were frequently spoken of as waka [vessels] which sailed to their readers laden with information.