

MAORI MUSIC PRESERVED

TO save some traditional Maori music from extinction, two men recently made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. They were W. T. Ngata, an officer of the Maori Affairs Department, and J. M. Barraud, an NZBS technician. The place they visited is a village about 80 miles north-east by road from Gisborne. Shown on the maps as Waitakaro, it is known locally as Hiruharama; the Maori name for Jerusalem.

The object of the visit to Hiruharama was to record as many as possible of the chants contained in Sir Apirana Ngata's book *Nga Moteatea*. This book was published almost 30 years ago, but the tunes that went with the poetry could not be set down as no satisfactory musical notation was available. More recently, Ashley Heenan, an NZBS officer, has developed a notation for Maori music, but this has yet to gain acceptance. Mr. Ngata (who is Sir Apirana's son) used a portable tape recorder owned by the Maori Purposes Fund Board—which arranged the project—and operated by Mr. Barraud. After five days' work the pair had obtained recordings of some 150 chants. Later, in other parts of the country, attempts will be made to obtain more. Mr. Ngata considers it unlikely, however, that more than half of the chants in *Nga Moteatea* will have survived.

The choir of Ngati Poron people used for the recording numbered from 12 to 20 at various times, and consisted largely of elderly people. Their average age was about 70, with one singer just on 90. Mr. Ngata thought their voices recorded "remarkably well." And, of course, it was only the old people who remembered the chants. "The young people know only a few they happen to like."

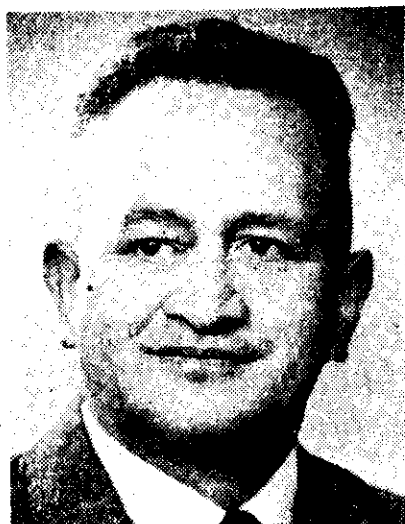
In addition to the chants, the team recorded some items by local school-children, and by the Hikurangi parish choir. Wherever possible, chants not included in *Nga Moteatea* will also be re-

corded, but few are anticipated. Mr. Ngata found that some of the old chants were still changing and growing, but there were few recent compositions.

In the past, attempts to record Maori music often met with opposition. The reason was that much music, for instance, sacred music, is intended for specific occasions. It was feared use might be made of it merely for entertainment. Nowadays, however, more and more people are becoming conscious of the need to preserve this music, and opposition is crumbling.

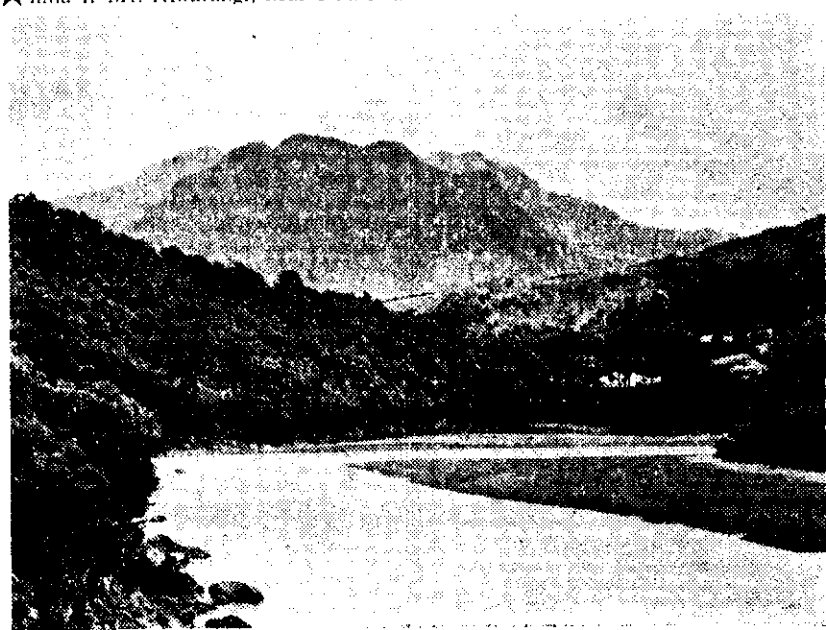
The tape recordings made at Hiruharama are now in the possession of the Maori Purposes Fund Board. It is intended to make pressings from them so that disc recordings can be made available to the Maori people. Copies will be preserved by the board, and probably by various libraries.

For its own Maori Library, the NZBS is cutting disc copies from the original tapes. This is not without difficulty, as the tapes of portable recorders tend to slow down as the battery weakens. This shows as a speeding effect when the tape is played back on a normal machine. However, technicians have found a way to combat this effect, and the chants that find their way to the library will be neither too fast nor too slow.

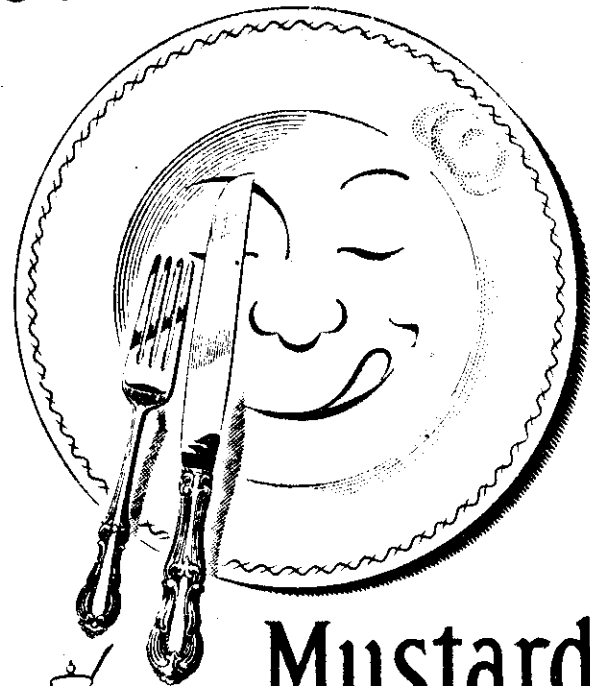


Spencer Digby photograph

RIGHT: W. T. Ngata, who led the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and (below) the district in which the Maori music was recorded—Mt. Aorangi and behind it Mt. Hikurangi, near Ruatoria



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