

Haere atu ra e taku reta i runga i nga ngaru tuatea o te moana, i roto i nga hihi o te ra, he koko tena te rere atu na, no nga rakau o Matata. (Manunui Hori Hapi)³

Go forth my letter upon the breaking waves of the sea, within the rays of the sun, soaring from the forests of Matata.

In my short time as a researcher in the Manuscripts section at the Turnbull, I have found that the Library holds many important writings of tupuna Maori and about tupuna Maori. They can be roughly categorised thus:

1. Written by tupuna Maori (in Maori or English) of their own volition (e.g. Te Kooti Rikirangi notebook).⁴
2. Written by tupuna Maori (in Maori or English) at Pakeha instigation (e.g. genealogies and traditions written by Matene Te Whiwhi at the dictation of Mokau or Te Rangihaeata).⁵
3. Dictated by tupuna Maori, written by Pakeha in Maori or English (e.g. manuscript dictated by Tureiti Te Heuheu, written by Elsdon Best, 26 May 1913).⁶
4. Writings by 'informed' Pakeha about tupuna Maori and matters Maori (e.g. Elsdon Best, John White).

It is important to understand these differing circumstances and how they affect the various manuscripts. There certainly were papers written as a direct record of the history and traditions of the people, but my opinion is that tupuna Maori did not record information that was personal to them and their families if they knew the books were going to be seen by people beyond their own families.

There have been instances of tupuna Maori who have recorded their own whakapapa (genealogy), but I read them with much caution. If I see a book that contains whakapapa for instance, from people other than my own, I tend to place it to one side. It is simply none of my business. There are, too, my own tupuna who have written whakapapa and history from my tribe. For example, in the Matene Te Whiwhi/Te Rangihaeata manuscript mentioned above much of my own whakapapa is recorded and I had sweaty palms again when I read it. But I was not surprised to find that some of the whakapapa was wrong. This is not to say that I am disputing the words of my tupuna, I am not, but I understand the circumstances surrounding the writing of that document. Sir George Grey put the idea into the minds of Te Rangihaeata and Matene Te Whiwhi to write such a manuscript. This proposal, in 1852, came at a time of much tension between the Government and Ngati Toa and Ngati Raukawa. It came hard on the heels of the conflict in the Hutt Valley in Wellington and appeared at the time of Rangihaeata's bitter retirement at Paeroa Pa, Poroutawhao, Horowhenua. Why would these two powerful men write such a document? What was going through their minds and why did