

Ngā Mōteatea: An Introduction / He Kupu Arataki

By Jane McRae, translated into Māori by Hēni Jacob.

Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2011.

ISBN: 1869404909 (10) & 978-1-869404901 (13)

Reviewed by Dr Mary Boyce

The purpose of the book

This book does what it claims to do. Jane McRae provides a concise, satisfying and enticing introduction to the four-volume set of *Ngā Mōteatea*, the new editions published in 2004-2007. Hēni Jacob of Ngāti Raukawa very skillfully renders the content in Māori.

The four volumes are substantially the work of Apirana Ngata of Ngāti Porou. His work was later complemented by contributions from Pei Te Hurinui Jones of Ngāti Maniapoto, Tamati Reedy of Ngāti Porou, and Hirini Moko Mead of Ngāti Awa. The Preface to this introduction to the mōteatea collection tells us that Ngata himself intended to write an introduction to *Ngā Mōteatea*, a ‘pocket edition ... [comprised of] a selection of the easier songs’ (p.8). This has finally been realized in this volume. The book was funded by The Polynesian Society, Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga, the New Zealand Lotteries Board and Creative New Zealand. It contains a selection of photographs and illustrations from the Auckland City Library, Alexander Turnbull Library and Auckland Art Gallery.

Summary of the book

This book is aimed at ‘teachers and students of Māori language and oral literature’ and those who teach, compose and interpret traditional songs (p.9). It also hopes to serve a more general readership. The book is fully translated into Māori. The Māori text is presented on the left hand page, the English on the right.

The book begins with a brief kupu takamua /preface, and thereafter has three main sections. These are entitled:

1. Te hanganga o Ngā Mōteatea / The making of Ngā Mōteatea (pp.10-47)
2. Ngā waiata o roto i Ngā Mōteatea / The songs of Ngā Mōteatea (pp.48-117)
3. Ētahi waiata tekau / Ten songs (pp.118-155)

The three main sections are followed by whakamihi/acknowledgements. The book concludes with a bibliography of 37 items cited.

Te hanganga o Ngā Mōteatea/The making of Ngā Mōteatea

In the first section, the origin of the four volume set of *Ngā Mōteatea* is outlined, with particular emphasis on the valuable research and scholarship of Apirana Ngata in collecting, translating, interpreting and annotating the songs and in compiling the collection. The initial three volumes of *Ngā Mōteatea* were collected, compiled, explained and partly translated by Ngata. The first two volumes were published in 1928 and 1929. The third volume appeared in print after his death. Pei Te Hurinui Jones completed the translations of the songs in the first three volumes. He and Ngata had corresponded regularly about mōteatea over the years. Jones is recognized as a highly skilled translator

(it was he who translated Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* into Māori: *Te tangata whai-rawa o Wēniti*, 1946).

Tamati Reedy edited Ngata's draft manuscript for volume four, and this was subsequently published without English translations. Hirini Moko Mead later translated volume four. Ngata, Jones, Reedy and Mead consulted experts from many iwi while collecting the material and annotating it for the mōteatea volumes. The knowledge and contribution of these iwi experts is acknowledged.

Jennifer Curnow and Jane McRae edited all four volumes for the new editions, which were published between 2004 and 2007. These new editions come with CDs of recordings of many of the songs included in the volumes, an exciting addition for those of us with a keen interest in these song poems.

Te Hanganga o Ngā Mōteatea/The Making of Ngā Mōteatea provides satisfying detail of the background and education that Ngata brought to the substantial initial phase of this collection. It comments on his tenacity in persisting with this mammoth task alongside his significant contributions to this country and to the Māori community. It explains his concerns that the knowledge and practice of mōteatea would dissipate to an alarming extent as the cultural and linguistic change resulting from colonialism continued to affect Māori communities. It reminds us that Ngata acknowledged the community efforts that facilitated and contributed to his own work, a practice that is equally if not more relevant in today's research community. Ngata actively sought information and corrections from the Māori communities where the songs were from. He was careful to acknowledge those who provided him with information. He saw the publication of the collection as a repository for future generations.

Section one concludes with notes on the recordings of the songs, including the work of Mervyn McLean and others, an outline of the publication history of Ngā Mōteatea, and notes too on the future of Ngā Mōteatea.

Ngā waiata o roto i Ngā Mōteatea/The songs of Ngā Mōteatea

Section two outlines the contents of the four volumes and guides the reader as to the type of research and scholarship the collections facilitate. The major types of song are described, together with their sub-types, and their themes and imagery, and reference is made to well-known songs of each type. More specific examples are drawn from the ten songs featured in this volume, which are explained in some detail in this section. The details reveal the complexity, intelligence and beauty of Māori poetic compositions.

The role that songs play in their intended cultural context is also explored, with examples and references to other scholarly work, and these give insight into the songs as records of history and customary practices, of a Māori way of being and thinking and behaving. The relevance of the tribal derivation of the waiata, and, the identities of the composers and their processes of composition are also outlined. A useful outline of the nature of the structure and poetic language of mōteatea is given.

Ētahi waiata tekau/Ten Songs

Section three presents the ten songs used as exemplars in section two in the form they were published in the four volume set of *Ngā Mōteatea*.

The songs and their tribal origins are as follows:

- i. He tangi mō Mokowera/A lament for Mokowera (Te Ati Awa)
- ii. He waiata whakaaraara pā/A sentinel's song (Ngāti Toa)
- iii. He waiata nā te puhi mō tana haranga/A song by a maiden about her misconduct (Rongowhakaata)
- iv. He apakura/A dirge (Ngāti Porou)
- v. He waiata nā Parearohi/A song by Parearohi (Ngā Puhi)
- vi. He waiata aroha/A love song (no tribal origin given).
- vii. He tangi mō te matenga i Te Ika-a-Ranganui/A lament for the defeat at Te Ika-a-Ranganui (Ngāti Whātua)
- viii. He waiata oriori/A lullaby (Ngāti Porou)
- ix. He waiata aroha mō Hauauru/A love song for Hauauru (Ngāti Maniapoto)
- x. He waiata tangi mō Te Aokapurangi (Te Arawa)

It can be seen that the selection spans songs from a range of iwi from Te Ika-a- Māui, the North Island. It also spans a range of song types.

The book's strengths and weaknesses

Ngā Mōteatea: An Introduction/He Kupu Arataki provides a new audience with a useful, accessible selection of shorter waiata and their explanations as a means of beginning to appreciate the nature of these songs, their cultural significance and their sublime use of language. It will lead many of these readers into exploring the broader collection in *Ngā Mōteatea*. It provides those familiar with mōteatea a summary reminder of the range of treasures within the full collection, and a way of introducing others to them. I would happily use this as a text in an introductory course on Māori song poetry.

I am sure that many of us familiar with mōteatea have our own favourites that we would like to be included in the selection of songs in this introduction. For example, I might have chosen *E timu rā koe e te tai nei*, by Hārata Tangikuku of Te Whānau-a-Ruataupare as an exemplar of the use of nature imagery to describe physical ailments and condition. I might also want to include others such as *Ka eke ki Wairaka*, *E pā tō hau* and *Poia atu taku poi*, songs that I would be likely to include in an introductory course. With such a glistening pool to draw from, selecting the ten for inclusion must have been a daunting task, one that the author has completed with elegance and skill.

Jane McRae's fine work in compiling this introduction is enhanced by the excellent rendition of the text into te reo Māori by Hēni Jacob. While it is not the purpose of the translation, many learners of Māori would benefit from comparing the English with the Māori to find examples of how to put ideas into Māori in a Māori way, not as English cloaked in Māori words. The scholar, teacher and broadcaster Wiremu Parker, Ngāti

Porou, used to tell his students that there were three essentials of quality translation: do not add to the original, do not take away from the original, and, most important of all, render the text into the idiom of the receiving language. Hēni Jacob shows exceptional skill here.

I have not noticed any significant weaknesses in this book. However, I would like to have a dedicated CD to accompany this book, providing readers with easy access to the recordings of the songs in the introduction. Four of the ten songs do not currently have recordings on the CDs that accompany the four volume full set of *Ngā Mōteatea*. If these are still sung today, it may be possible to make a contemporary recording so that all ten songs are represented on an accompanying CD. I would also appreciate a CD that introduces users to the music of these waiata and the differences in tempo and pace that is characteristic of the various genres. The older recordings could be supplemented with contemporary recordings of the songs to indicate how performance has changed over time. A useful addition to the text would be to provide a summary reference list of the ten songs, their song and volume number from *Ngā Mōteatea*, and the specific CD where each recording can be located.

Overall, *Ngā Mōteatea: An Introduction/He Kupu Arataki* is a very useful addition to the four volumes of *Ngā Mōteatea*. It provides an introduction that is less overwhelming than delving immediately into the full volumes. It leads the reader to want to access the broader collection, and provides some ways of doing that. I recommend the book to lovers of poetry, newcomers to mōteatea, students of te reo Māori, and to teachers who want a quality text as the basis of a course in Māori language or song poetry.