

the first 'local' scientific report on the Moa to have been researched, written, read, and published in New Zealand⁸⁵—is primarily a descriptive account. Haast did little more to advance the Moa question than to arrange his specimens according to the metrically-based classificatory categories which Owen had already created. It was, however, a claim for priority within the still small community of New Zealand scientists. The paper elicited a spirited discussion. While Haast defended his approach and was defended on the grounds that 'he had followed Professor Owen', he was criticised on the same basis by Walter Mantell who noted that 'Dr. Haast showed great courage in endeavouring to determine species upon no other data than . . . the very unsatisfactory test adopted by Professor Owen.' Haast later attributed Mantell's sarcasm to his dislike of Owen⁸⁶ but it was at least as much a criticism both personal and professional of Haast himself and a support for Hector who was his main competitor in the development of a New Zealand science.⁸⁷

Yet at the same time, Haast, respectful as he sought to be, found himself at odds with Owen who, in matters of zoology, treated him with some condescension, reserving still to himself the responsibility for the authoritative definition of Moa taxonomy. Although he could compliment Haast on the results of his research, still his role did not permit him to accept easily results when they contradicted his own. Yet, at the source of the data, Haast saw himself competent to do in New Zealand what earlier had been expected from London. To a letter from Haast on 10 March 1873 raising questions about Owen's classification and gently criticising him for editing Haast's conclusions to suit his own, Owen replied with some asperity:

I am induced to suggest that if my kind friends would trust me to determine other points other than "time" and "place" [i.e. the geological setting] in relation to specimens transmitted, I should be free & wholly responsible for my conclusions. But if *they* add to these "conclusions" their own views on the nature of the specimen, I may err, and do them an injustice by omitting any notice of opinions or conclusions communicated to me. This puts me in a rather perplexing position. I have, to my regret, laid myself open to blame by passing over, without notice, a name or opinion sent with a specimen, which I have believed to be erroneous & I have come to a conclusion always to quote such information, relying on my correspondents loyalty to truth to forgive the exposition of what may seem to be an error.⁸⁸

To suggest to Haast, even in kindness and goodwill, that his knowledge and anatomical skill were too limited or parochial to realise the full potential of his Moa material seemed an affront both to him as a professional and to his institution and Province which he felt were already being treated shabbily in the matter of exchanges.