

extensively about these, except to observe that the controversy seems to stem from a fear that the individual traditions bear to varying degrees the imprint of White's own authorship. If this is indeed the case, as so many fear, clearly the texts of the traditions in *The Ancient History* require a critical re-evaluation. In this regard, a few observations may not go amiss about the factors any such programme of reassessment needs to take into consideration.

Concerning White's editorial function, it would be useful to discover what practices were followed by other nineteenth century editors. White was associated with Sir George Grey over many years. His editorial practice may suggest what to expect in White's own case.<sup>85</sup> What should not happen in any evaluation of White as an editor is to try him as if he were a colleague in the late twentieth century.

Of course the texts of the traditions remain crucial in any such consideration. One might ask about the origins of such material. How did the Maori texts for *The Ancient History* come into being? A preliminary examination of evidence suggests a variety of origins.<sup>86</sup> Some texts were written directly by the informant, others by an intermediary (sometimes another Maori, sometimes not). Regarding Maori authors, details need to be discovered about their authority to relate the traditions and the source of their knowledge: was it a 'canonical' tribal version or highly idiosyncratic? Similarly, a Pakeha intermediary must be as vigorously evaluated as White himself. An additional factor to consider here is the process involved in reducing any Maori oral tradition to a written text.

How do such autographs, where they exist, compare with printed texts in *The Ancient History*? Here some techniques and principles from textual criticism may be usefully employed. What is known of *The Ancient History* suggests that texts were derived from multifarious sources, including Maori manuscripts, Maori newspapers, Land Court reports, Maori letters to officials, other manuscript collections by Pakeha (in which case their authors and procedures need to be investigated), other scholarly publications (although these were acknowledged), White's own manuscript collection, and his personal recall of conversations and incidents spanning his adolescent and adult life. It is quite possible that any single text may be derived from one or more such sources.

As the issues raised illustrate, a comprehensive evaluation of *The Ancient History* will be a mammoth undertaking. Yet it would be encouraging to think that in the second century of the work's existence some attempt might be made in this direction. It would be the most fitting salute to the endeavours of one of New Zealand's earlier scholars.