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**‘Jacinta Ruru, Angela Wanhalla and Jeanette Wikaira (Editors),
Books of Mana: 180 Māori-Authored Books of Significance’**

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Jacinta Ruru, Angela Wanhalla, and Jeanette Wikaia (Editors), *Books of Mana: 180 Māori-authored books of significance* (Otago University Press, 2025), 256pp. Hardback. NZ\$65. ISBN: 978-1-9900-4885-2.

Books of Mana: 180 Māori-authored books of significance provides an elegant introduction to a world of Māori scholarship. It is a book about books that has been lovingly put together by people who enjoy and value books and understand the important role books play in recording, nurturing, growing, and transmitting knowledge.

The inspiration for *Books of Mana* came from a curated list of 150 Māori-authored books of non-fiction that was compiled for an exhibition, called Te Takarangi, that was launched in 2018. The editors have subsequently added a further thirty titles to be included in *Books of Mana*. Non-fiction books only represent one strand of Māori scholarship. This list does not include the significant body of work produced by Māori researchers that has been published in academic journals. Nor does it include the powerful stories of the Māori world that are contained in novels, short-stories, and poetry. Of course, there were also centuries of oral tradition that preceded the arrival of the written word in Aotearoa, in which Māori knowledge was recorded, theorised, and debated. Nevertheless, the collection of this list of 180 books demonstrates a long history of deep engagement by Māori in this form of scholarship.

Taking the selected titles as its foundation, *Books of Mana* considers several different dimensions of these books. The volume is divided into three substantive parts: 'Te Takarangi: The Collection'; 'Why We Write'; and 'Books as Taonga [things that are treasured/highly valued]'. There are stunning images of book covers, authors, and subjects throughout and there is also an appendix which includes a brief description of each of the 180 books selected for the updated list.

The first part, 'Te Takarangi: The Collection', provides a closer look at some aspects of the selected books. The editors discuss the process of curating the list and the body of distinctive Māori scholarship, of which this collection is merely a sample. One might query the decision to only draw from major publishing houses, excluding some smaller, Māori publishers, though the list is not intended to be comprehensive. The editors also identify a set of twelve 'anchor books' from amongst the 180 titles. These are works that have significantly guided Māori research and researchers such as *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou/Struggle Without End* by Ranginui Walker (1990), and *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), as well as earlier works by the likes of Peter Buck (Te Rangi Hīroa), and Pei Te Hurinui Jones. One of these 'anchor books', the multi-volume collection of traditional Māori songs and chants, *Ngā Moteatea*, also has a separate chapter (by Wayne Ngata) devoted to it, reflecting the exceptional body of knowledge it contains. This part of *Books of Mana* also considers the relationship between Māori books and the growth of New Zealand publishing houses and reflects on the art and imagery used on the covers of Māori books in, respectively, a chapter by Spencer Lilley and an interview of Huhana Smith by Bridget Reweti.

The second part of *Books of Mana*, 'Why We Write', includes chapters that discuss: the acknowledgments and dedications made by Māori authors (Angela Wanhalla); writing as an act of resistance (Maria Bargh); the role that many of the listed books have made to language revitalisation (Poia Rewi, Rawinia Higgins, and Victoria

Campbell); Māori practices of knowledge sharing through the written word (Megan Pōtiki interviewed by Jacinta Ruru); the voices of Māori women (Angela Wanhalla); and the creation of Māori and Indigenous theoretical spaces (Hinekura Smith).

The third part of *Books of Mana* examines 'Books as Taonga', exploring the ways in which books are valued, treasured, and cared for. Jeanette Wikaira provides the framing chapter for this part, pointing to the nature of books as valued physical artefacts that also contain and embody knowledge, history, and treasured images. These themes are picked up and developed in chapters by Matariki Williams, Paul Meredith, Jacinta Beckwith, and an interview with Chris Selwyn, which draw out important considerations for archives, libraries, and schools in maintaining and nurturing knowledge and the sources in their care.

Books of Mana is a beautifully produced publication and a remarkable celebration of published Māori scholarship. It reveals the breadth and depth of this strand of scholarship in a way which is carefully curated to create an accessible entry point for a wide readership. It will be an enjoyable and interesting read for anyone with a fondness for books.

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