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**The Pene Haare Manuscript and Issues**

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**Associated with the Translation of Historical Texts  
Written in Indigenous Languages**

**He Puna Korero: Journal of Maori and Pacific Development**  
**Volume 9 Issue 2 (Sept 2008)**

**Tipene, Jillian<sup>1</sup>; Crombie, Winifred<sup>2</sup>; Roa, Tom<sup>3</sup>**

**Abstract:** With particular reference to a request to translate into English a manuscript dated 1923 and written by the Maori author Ngakuru Pene Haare, we identify here a range of issues and problems associated with the translation of historical texts written in indigenous languages, suggesting ways in which they might be addressed. Among the problems identified in this case are the paucity of information that is publicly available about the author, the context in which he lived and worked and the events about which he wrote, the absence, or sporadic use in the manuscript of a range of conventions associated with contemporary writing, the occurrence of archaic and/or esoteric words and expressions, and the presence of symbolism that is deeply culturally-embedded. The primary conclusion is that the translation of manuscripts such as this must be ethically-grounded and fully research-embedded. It must therefore involve the mentorship of knowledgeable elders, be guided by procedures that are appropriate in terms of the culture out of which the source text emerged, accompanied by meticulous and wide-ranging research, and take full account of the wishes of the author of the manuscript where these have been stated, or can be inferred.



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**To cite this article:** Tipene, Jillian; Crombie, Winifred and Roa, Tom. The Pene Haare Manuscript and Issues Associated with the Translation of Historical Texts Written in Indigenous Languages [online]. He Puna Korero: Journal of Maori and Pacific Development, Vol. 9, No. 2, Sept 2008: 3-66. Availability: <https://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=201652682760395;res=IELNZ> ISSN: 1175-3099. [cited 26 Jul 18].

**Personal Author:** Tipene, Jillian; Crombie, Winifred; Roa, Tom;

**Source:** He Puna Korero: Journal of Maori and Pacific Development, Vol. 9, No. 2, Sept 2008: 3-66

**Document Type:** Journal Article

**ISSN:** 1175-3099

**Subject:** Translating and interpreting; Maori language; History;

**Identifier:** Pene Haare, Ngakuru

**Peer Reviewed:** Yes

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