

Best of Both Worlds

THE STORY OF ELSDON BEST AND TUTAKANGAHAU

JEFFREY PAPAROA HOLMAN

In 1895 a meeting took place in the rugged Urewera ranges – Tūhoe country – that would have lasting effects on our views of traditional Māori society.

Elsdon Best, a self-taught anthropologist and quartermaster on the road past Lake Waikaremoana, was sought out by a leading Tūhoe chief, Tutakangahau of Maungapōhatu. The stories he gave to Best to be recorded for future generations are with us today. Best went on to become a noted Pākehā authority on a people he would style as the last of 'the oldtime Māori'.

- How much did the old man tell him?
- Was the information freely given?
- Can Best's writings – so pervasive today in our understanding of Māori culture – be truly relied upon?

In his unique examination of this historically significant relationship, Holman poses such searching questions, further informing a vital national debate on the shared identity – and destiny – of Māori and Pākehā.

Jeffrey Paparoa Holman is available for interview from Christchurch



Jeffrey Paparoa Holman was born in London in 1947 and immigrated to New Zealand in 1950, living out his early years mostly on the South Island's West Coast. His colourful career path has taken him to sawmills, shearing gangs, social work, bookselling and, since 1997, a return to mid-life study at the University of Canterbury, graduating with a PhD in Māori Studies in 2007. His interest in te reo Māori and Māori Studies in general, along with a postgraduate honours degree in English, led him to his thesis topic, the writings of Elsdon Best on Māori spirituality.

Holman is an award-winning poet, with two recent titles from Steele Roberts: *As Big as a Father* (2002) and *The Late Great Blackball Bridge Sonnets* (2004). His poetry and reviews have appeared in the *New Zealand Listener*, *Landfall* and *The Press*. He lives in Christchurch, where he works as a freelance writer and creative writing tutor, and is currently working on a new book of poetry.

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**To book an interview with Jeffrey Paparoa Holman or for further information
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