

Book and Media Reviews

The Contemporary Pacific, Volume 29, Number 1, 191-222
© 2017 by University of Hawai'i Press

such as *Talanoa Ripples* (Jione Havea, 2010) and *Talanoa Rhythms*, which I edited (2011). Both volumes published selected papers from Talanoa Oceania conferences in 2008–2009 and dealt more centrally with the concept but are never mentioned. Acknowledging existing works on the core topic by other Pasifika authors, irrespective of fields and disciplines, would be a good step forward in building a research culture.

The subtitle, “Building a Pasifika Research Culture,” is also misleading because it gives a false impression that there was no existing culture of inquiry prior to BRCS (Building Research Capability in the Social Science network) and this volume. Likewise, many of the methodologies employed by the researchers are not Pasifika, but rather seem to encourage Pasifika researchers to continue to use non-Pasifika methodologies for studying Pasifika people. A few works discuss Pasifika concepts, but while they are drawn on, they could have been integrated in a more systematic way. Pasifika deserves more than the preservation and promotion of Euro-centric approaches and methodologies.

However, despite my skepticism, this volume opens up new avenues and alternatives for ongoing talanoa about issues that matter to Pasifika researchers and communities. I commend the editors and contributors for giving voice and space to Pasifika perspectives. The work deserves a wider audience and should inform policy design and practices in educational, political, and social settings.

NĀSILI VAKA‘UTA
Auckland, New Zealand

* * *

Aloha America: Hula Circuits through the U.S. Empire, by Adria L Imada. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012. ISBN cloth, 978-0-8223-5196-2; paper, 978-0-8223-5207-5; ix + 270 pages, abbreviations, notes, glossary, bibliography, index. Cloth, US\$89.95; paper, US\$24.95.

Aloha America: Hula Circuits through the U.S. Empire is an interdisciplinary work that explores how hula performances aided in the securing of Hawai‘i as part of the US empire. Adria Imada examines the various ways that female hula dancers embodied the relationship of hospitality between Hawaiians and the United States from the time of Hawai‘i’s illegal overthrow in 1893 to its becoming the fiftieth state in 1959. Tracing an arc between the Hawaiian monarchy’s deliberate resurgence of hula practices in the face of American cultural and political imperialism, the first hula circuits that came to the US continent and Europe in the late nineteenth century, and contemporary hula circuits, she specifically shows that Hawaiian performers engaged in counter-colonial, rather than anticolonial, acts that have both strengthened and weakened US hegemony in the Islands. This history of performance, argues Imada, obfuscates the American occupation of Hawai‘i. Imada is an associate professor of history at the University of California, Irvine. Being from Hawai‘i and a practitioner of hula, she brings experience and knowledge to this important work.

In chapter 1, “Lady Jane at the Boathouse: The Intercultural World of Hula,” Imada discusses the resurgence of hula as a cultural and political

practice under King David Kalākaua. Despite direct opposition by Christian missionaries, who were influential in hula's suppression earlier in the century, under Kalākaua hula became state sponsored in 1886. As Imada demonstrates, the monarchy viewed hula as an essential practice that empowered Native Hawaiians in a globalized world that continuously but also paradoxically reinforced Native Hawaiian inferiority. When diplomats and foreign travelers came to the Islands, Kalākaua hosted guests at the Healani boathouse and showcased Hawaiian arts and culture including hula. Once reserved for people of a certain status and genealogy, under state sponsorship, hula became something in which commoners were able to participate. Specifically, this shift allowed females from commoner backgrounds to increase their cultural and political capital by engaging in hula. Additionally, hula began to incorporate the various cultural influences in the Islands including non-Hawaiian words and instruments. This type of hula was known as hula ku'i. Imada details these practices as acts of resilience, writing, "In the face of vast cultural and political dislocation, they were actively shaping a Native Hawaiian modernity that would help them adapt to and survive formal colonization in the next decades" (46). While many changes were occurring in the Islands, she demonstrates that Native Hawaiians actively created a world that was modern and yet still centered in Native Hawaiian epistememes.

In chapter 2, "Modern Desires and Counter-Colonial Tactics: Gender, Performance, and the Erotics of Empire," Imada traces hula and hula troupes

in the continental United States and Europe in the late nineteenth century. Piecing together sparse archival sources amid an overabundance of unnamed photographs of women and troupes, she uses a nonlinear chronology to highlight what James C Scott calls "hidden transcripts" (see Scott's *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* [1990]). Incorporating personal photographs and mementos of performers, this chapter highlights methods and narratives that are often obscured in or absent from national and state archives. Following a hula troupe that performed at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893, on the vaudeville circuit, and in various theaters and palaces in major cities in Europe, for example, Imada reveals some of the movements, desires, and challenges encountered by its members. Originally departing before the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom, the troupe found themselves as both colonial subjects and cultural ambassadors while engaging in counter-colonial acts by performing certain chants, songs, and pieces that honored their sovereignty. Tracing hula's move from being solely a cultural practice to one tied to capital, Imada highlights how dancers gradually became active agents negotiating a settler colonial economy while being exploited as a cultural commodity more broadly.

In chapter 3, "Impresarios on the Midway: World's Fairs and Colonial Politics," Imada analyzes the Hawaiian village at the Columbian Exposition and some of the gendered consequences of the dancers. Negotiating the political terrain as performers in the colonial empire, hula dancers were gendered as female, and this gender-

ing extended to Hawaiian land and sovereignty. Imada shows how women performers, constantly negotiating exotification and the commodification of their culture, were shunned by the wider society for their supposed lewdness. However, men involved with hula and hula circuits were not centered in these performances. Rather, as Imada notes, the Hawaiian men utilized their cultural and financial capital to broker hula and to attain and build successful political careers outside of the hula circuits.

The shift from hula as a practice that settlers deemed depraved to one that was viewed as a profitable commodity in the 1920–1930s is discussed in chapter 4, “‘Hula Queens’ and ‘Cinderellas’: Imagined Intimacy in the Empire.” During this time, hula was generally perceived as useful toward the building of a tourist economy. Once defamed, hula and its practitioners were valorized for creating the illusion of intimacy between the United States and Hawai‘i. For instance, Imada critiques how pictures of female hula dancers circulated throughout the American empire in ways that emphasized an exotic and feminine familiarity of Hawai‘i even for people who had never visited the Islands. Becoming popular and acceptable, female hula dancers subsequently received press coverage and enjoyed a greater level of autonomy to travel and take part in entertainment circuits in the United States. However, Imada notes that only “certain” bodies could perform this role. As she states, “The colonial production of hospitality demanded more than the embodied knowledge of an ‘authentic’ Hawaiian; it required a brown-skinned body

to perform these acts of deference and aloha” (197). These feminized images of women thereby aided in the securing and transforming of Hawai‘i from an overseas territory into a state, an economic and performative process that was concurrent with US militarization of the Islands.

In the last chapter of the book, “The Troupes Meet the Troops: Imperial Hospitality and Military Photography in the Pacific Theater,” Imada explores how hula was used by the US military as a form of entertainment that could boost the morale of troops that were largely stationed in Hawai‘i during World War II. She analyzes the genre of wartime entertainment and specifically how luaus were seen as a form of imperial hospitality between willing Native Hawaiians as hosts and American troops as guests. Imada uses the English term *luau* to describe events specifically produced for tourists rather than *lū‘au*, which is the Hawaiian term to describe a celebratory feast among locals (324n8). Since troops were exposed to the realities of life outside of the live performances, Imada notes how military films became a more productive tool in staging notions of hospitality.

Overall, *American Aloha: Hula Circuits through the U.S. Empire* is a nuanced analysis of hula as a counter-colonial practice. Although Imada asserts that hula performers and hula circuits are counter-colonial and not anticolonial acts, I wonder how hula can function any differently within a settler system given her argument. How can hula be seen as both a cultural and a political practice? How can hula practitioners that maintain ‘ike kupuna (ancestral knowledge)

be understood as being anticolonial in a capitalist system that is based and premised on Native erasure? Since hula is now a global phenomenon, moreover, how do non-Native Hawaiian bodies function within this circuit of performance?

Imada has clearly opened venues for new and exciting research, activism, and dance in Hawaiian studies and American studies. This important book weaves archival, ethnographic, film, and personal memoirs to document hula practitioners as part of hula networks that circulated throughout the United States and Europe. I commend her for challenging the popular and state records of hula dancers as merely colonial objects and for offering a much more complicated understanding of Hawaiian agency and resistance.

KĒHAULANI VAUGHN
*University of California–
 Riverside*

* * *

The Making of Asmat Art: Indigenous Art in a World Perspective, by Nick Stanley. Canon Pyon, UK: Sean Kingston Publishing, 2012. ISBN 978-1-907774-20-1, xiv + 249 pages, illustrations, map, notes, references, index. Cloth, US\$110.00.

In his latest book, Nick Stanley explores interactions between artists working in south Papua and international audiences. Rather than a study of the art itself, this book explores the notion of Asmat visual culture in European imaginations. The title, *The Making of Asmat Art*, does not refer to the technical process by which

Asmat artists carve their famous sculptures but instead suggests how the international art market creates what we know as “Asmat art.” With this perspective, Stanley situates Asmat visual culture within a larger, international context while at the same time rooting these practices and interactions in a longer history.

It is no surprise that Stanley is interested in the notion of Asmat art given his previous work that engages with collecting, display, and depictions of Asmat culture (*Being Ourselves for You: The Global Display of Cultures* [1998]; *The Future of Indigenous Museums: Perspectives from the Southwest Pacific* [2007]). This type of engagement with Indigenous visual culture and the role it plays in international markets is significant because it moves away from notions that Indigenous art is static and somehow represents a “tradition” operating in spite of, or in opposition to, “modernity.” Instead, Stanley demonstrates how Asmat visual culture actively participates in dynamic processes of negotiation, trade, and power.

The book is organized chronologically, tracing interactions between Asmat and Europeans from the days of James Cook’s eighteenth-century voyages to contemporary artists’ renderings of the famous carved shields from the region. The first four chapters explore missionary and anthropological interactions with the Asmat, as well as the region’s role in the international art market. Using journals and photographs from those early explorations, Stanley begins his study by asking how Asmat people have historically been depicted by Europeans. He is specifically interested in the process