

Book and Media Reviews

the state of barkcloth painting by Mbuti today is in question because of the civil wars in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Recently a leader of the Mbuti testified before the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues concerning their oppression by neighbors who treat the Mbuti, also known as Pygmies, as animals to the point of the cannibalization of the Mbuti.

In comparing the visual material cultures of Ömie and Mbuti, the exhibition of a new video edit of twentieth-century media by the late American photographer and filmmaker William F Wheeler made the Mbuti works in vitrines (glass museum cases) seem more contemporary; and the central staging in the Ömie room of a vitrine with a large nineteenth-century book open to an engraving of a bird of paradise framed those works to seem nostalgic and romantic. Such framing engages a peaceful paternalism, which crowds out any political and religious reference from the artworks and their display and marginalizes indigenous works such as these from the landscape of contemporary art.

As work by women artists, in their aesthetics, I think the Ömie and Mbuti works can be compared most significantly to exhibitions in the Los Angeles area such as the recent *ATA: Exhibition of Contemporary Samoan Art* (28 April–4 May 2012) at the Harris Gallery, University of LaVerne, where urban Pacific Islands artists referenced tattoo and barkcloth painting. They can also be compared, in aesthetics and techniques, with contemporary American works of provisional painters who engage themes of feminist critique, non-monumentality,

and provisional materials and composition, like many of the works shown at the *Made in L.A. 2012* exhibition at the Hammer Museum, also on the UCLA campus (25 June–2 September 2012). The rarely acknowledged influence of indigenous works by women artists on contemporary art internationally makes the silent proximity of such exhibitions poignant.

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Once Were Pacific: Māori Connections to Oceania, by Alice Te Punga Somerville. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012. ISBN cloth 0-8166-7756-6, ISBN paper 0-8166-7757-3; xxx + 288 pages, photo, notes, publication history, index. Cloth, us\$67.50; paper, us\$22.50.

The study of indigenous Pacific literatures tends to reflect the oceanic vastness of its scope. Alice Te Punga Somerville's *Once Were Pacific: Māori Connections to Oceania* combines the oceanic sweep of contemporary anglophone Pacific literary studies with a focused study of Māori cultural articulations of Pacific identity, calling attention to the critical intersections of Oceanic and indigenous identification. By tracing out the ways in which Māori "once were" (and still are) Pacific, the author draws critical attention to the many unspoken disjunctures and unexpected connections between what is understood as "Māori" and what is considered "Pacific," ultimately presenting an elegant and flexible analysis of the discourses surrounding indigeneity,

migration, and diaspora in the contemporary Pacific.

In one of its most crucial interventions, *Once Were Pacific* illustrates the way that Māori articulations of indigeneity—"We were always here"—and Oceanic affiliation—"We arrived here"—are mediated through the triangulation of the colonial nation-state (Aotearoa/New Zealand), the historically and genealogically linked Polynesian Pacific region (Oceania), and indigenous cultural heritage (Māoritanga). The resulting relationships highlight three key metaphors: tapa (cloth), koura (crayfish), and the paintbrush, which Te Punga Somerville uses to organize her book. These key metaphors are drawn from the author's reading of a famous early painting created by Tupaia (a navigator from Ra'iatea who traveled with Captain James Cook on his first voyage to Aotearoa) that depicts an exchange between English naturalist Joseph Banks and a Māori chieftain. While the painting has often been taken as a relatively straightforward representation of Māori-European contact, Te Punga Somerville's introduction notes that Tupaia's implied presence behind the paintbrush, as well as the items being traded—a koura for a piece of tapa cloth—reframes this encounter not only as a moment of first contact between Māori and the West, but also, and more crucially, as a moment of reconnection to a remembered Pacific past. She points out that the "extraordinary fondness" that Cook noted the Māori held for the tapa cloth (xv)—which exceeded Māori interest in any of the Western goods the Europeans could provide—testified to the

ongoing affinity between Māori and other Pacific cultures whose technology they shared. By reframing this moment of first contact as a moment of remembered connection, Te Punga Somerville shifts the terms of the discourse to decenter the primacy of European culture and technology and focuses instead on the intra-Pacific dynamics that have shaped Māori culture, literature, and identity.

The first section of the book, covering the "realm of tapa" (4), analyzes a variety of works, performances, and individuals that have attempted to articulate what it means to be Māori living in the diaspora. Chapter 1, "Māori People in Pacific Spaces," analyzes a range of historical and cultural events testifying to Māori peoples' ongoing investment in a broader Pacific world. Te Punga Somerville draws examples from the life of Te Rangihīroa/Sir Peter Buck, a Māori scholar-politician who spent twenty years in Hawai'i as the director of Bishop Museum; from the development of the Māori village in the Polynesian Cultural Center on the north shore of O'ahu; and from the ambivalent inclusion (or non-inclusion) of Māori work in a variety of Pacific and New Zealand literary anthologies. The second and third chapters focus more specifically on literary work, with close analyses of texts by Māori writers from the diaspora (Vernice Wineera, Evelyn Pathu-awa-Nathan, and Robert Sullivan) as well as by selected Māori writers in Aotearoa whose works engage directly with Pacific regional politics (Witi Ihimaera, Hinewirangi).

The book's second section is framed by the metaphor of the koura, refer-

ring to the many ways that articulations of Māori and Pacific identities converge and diverge in Aotearoa. Chapter 4 focuses on collaborations between Māori and Pacific Islander (Pasifika) artists and communities, including the Auckland-based hip-hop group Nesian Mystik and the performance poetry collective Polynation. The next chapter turns to depictions of Māori-Pacific collaboration in short fiction by Māori authors Api-rana Taylor, Patricia Grace, and Briar Grace-Smith, while chapter 6 analyzes works by Pasifika poets Alistair Te Ariki Campbell (Cook Islands) and Karlo Mila (Tongan and German ancestry) that attempt to articulate what it means to claim one's Pacific heritage in Aotearoa, where one maintains the simultaneous roles of guest (manuhiri), distant relation (fānau/whanau), and immigrant.

The final chapter of this section takes on some of the most potentially controversial material in the book—an analysis of the representations of disconnection and conflict between Māori and Pasifika communities—but the author thoughtfully handles this sensitive material by calling attention to the way that representation of such conflict often hides the claims for recognition by the nation-state that frequently lie at the center of the strife. Te Punga Somerville notes that “as long as Māori and Pasifika communities insist that their primary relationship is with the New Zealand nation-state, relationships between these communities will struggle to function beyond the narrow parameters that the state provides” (175). In this way, she suggests that even these moments representing intra-Pacific

strife transcend the binary oppositions of Māori-Pasifika or Māori-Pākehā (people of European descent): these conflicts, too, are an effect of the ongoing triangulation of nation-state, regional affiliation, and indigenous identification. In the book's conclusion, Te Punga Somerville returns to the metaphor of the paintbrush to acknowledge how the technological and infrastructural presence of the colonial nation-state can help to shape, build, but also distort these relationships.

One area of the book that could have been more strongly positioned was its juxtaposition of diverse literary and cultural phenomena. *Once Were Pacific* analyzes anthologies, films, individual biographies, live performance, music, and cultural centers. However, the formal connections between these representational arenas are more implied than explained. Te Punga Somerville acknowledges that the examples she draws come from “dramatically distinct” and “disparate” genres (35), yet throughout the book there are also strong implied connections between poetry and hip-hop, genealogy and biography, deeply felt historical facts and fiction. Theorizing the relationship between these distinctive genres and their underlying formal connections would have been a useful addition to this already strong and thoughtful work.

The clarity and liveliness of Te Punga Somerville's writing makes *Once Were Pacific* an accessible and enjoyable book for scholars and general readers alike. For specialists in Pacific literature, the impressive body of archival work included in this volume—as well as the analyses

of texts often overlooked in the study of Pacific or Māori literature—serves as both a valuable resource and an invitation to engage in further research and study. With its thoughtful cultural analysis and its acute theorization of the way that concepts of indigeneity, migration, and nation circulate throughout the region, *Once Were Pacific* makes a welcome and much-needed contribution to the fields of Māori, Pacific, and indigenous literary studies.

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Ua Mau Ke Ea, Sovereignty Endures: An Overview of the Political and Legal History of the Hawaiian Islands, by David Keanu Sai. Honolulu: Pū‘ā Foundation, 2011. ISBN 978-1-4507-8237-1; 156 pages, photographs, notes, glossary, references, index. Paper, US\$35.00.

David Keanu Sai’s recent *Ua Mau Ke Ea: Sovereignty Endures* argues that the United States has been illegally occupying Hawai‘i since 1898. Sai contends that, though the United States has treated Hawai‘i as the fiftieth state, the Hawaiian Islands, having been recognized as an independent state in 1843 by Britain and France and by a host of other countries thereafter, never had a ratified treaty merging this island nation with the United States. The first text for high school and college students to address Hawai‘i’s legal status under US occupation, *Ua Mau Ke Ea*, with its accompanying CD of documents and a documentary directed by Kau‘i

Sai-Dudoit, offers a trove of information regarding the US occupation of Hawai‘i and asks students to reexamine the colonization rubric as it has been applied to Hawai‘i, affirming that despite the United States’ illegal occupation, Hawai‘i’s sovereignty endures.

With an implicit awareness that young minds are key to ending the US occupation, Sai’s work demonstrates how Hawaiian history has shifted in recent years toward more precise discourse on the US occupation. In the past decade, the discourse has evolved from Noenoe Silva’s *Aloha Betrayed* (2004), which described Hawai‘i as a “(neo) colonial state” under “continued occupation . . . by the United States” (2004, 9), to Tom Coffman’s revised edition of *Nation Within: The History of the American Occupation of Hawai‘i* (2009), which acknowledged “a growing body of historical work by a new generation of Native Hawaiian scholars” writing about the US occupation of Hawai‘i (2009, xvi). Sai is the latest in this academic and popular trend, one of the emerging Native Hawaiian voices contributing to this shift from “colonization” and “annexation” to “occupation” as the legal and political term to describe Hawai‘i.

Sai distinguishes colonization from occupation under international law, noting, “Colonization/decolonization is a matter that concerns the internal laws of the colonizing State and presumes the colony is not sovereign, while occupation/de-occupation is a matter of international law relating to already existing sovereign States” (115). Although Hawai‘i has been occupied for over a century, Sai