

Book and Media Reviews

The Contemporary Pacific, Volume 28, Number 2, 491–529
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invoked by artifacts that are valued by Kwaio people for their ornamental beauty are, in Akin's view, matters that unfortunately cannot be ignored. Akin, like Revolon, draws attention to the importance of who is doing the evaluating and under what circumstances.

This is a fascinating book that should be read thoroughly by anyone interested in art, material culture, or museum collections from any part of the Pacific, not just Solomon Islands. There is not room in this review to consider every chapter in detail, but all make major contributions about the complexity of valuing objects in this era. Peter Sheppard and Richard Walter manage to amass a wealth of data regarding shell artifacts and skull shrines on Roviana and Vella Lavella in a manner that not only brings previously published historical information up to date but also reveals the value of shell artifacts as projections of their users and wearers even if they lived in the past (chapter 3). Edvard Hviding's chapter 10, about contemporary production of canoes primarily in the Marovo Lagoon region of New Georgia island, will stand as the preeminent one on the subject for some time to come. In conclusion, all of the chapters have value not only for content but above all for the perspectives they offer—those of Solomon Islanders.

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The Black Pacific: Anti-Colonial Struggles and Oceanic Connections, by Robbie Shilliam. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015. ISBN cloth, 978-1-472-51923-8; paper, 978-1-472-53554-2; 251 pages, bibliography, index. Cloth, US\$112.00; paper, US\$29.95.

There has not been much sustained discussion about connections among African and diasporic African peoples and Pacific Islanders. The most pronounced attention has gone to mobilizations of radical tactics and political styles associated with Black Power and Black Consciousness by Pacific activists across the region from the late 1960s through the early 1980s. In Aotearoa/New Zealand, where Robbie Shilliam sets *The Black Pacific: Anti-Colonial Struggles and Oceanic Connections*, adaptations of Africana thought by Pacific Islanders have been given a largely sociopolitical explanation: young urban Māori and immigrant Islander communities from former New Zealand colonies, displaced from the land and disaffected by the state, were temporarily drawn to compare their situations with those of urban African Americans and Black South Africans.

In *The Black Pacific*, Shilliam works within, around, beneath, and in “ways otherwise” (29) to this delimiting, period-bound narrative; in particular, he counters the tendency to compare Black and Indigenous peoples in terms of their situations vis-à-vis colonialism or neocolonial commodity culture rather than to reactivate “sideways” legacies of their connections to each other. The philosophical negation within Eurocentric

social thought of both “the Children of Legba” (Africana peoples, including the diaspora) and “the Children of Tāne/Māui” (Polynesians, and by inference all Pasifika peoples), he argues, has obscured their “rich” and “deep relationality” across times and places.

To demonstrate how retrieving a durable history of Africana/Pasifika relations might provide a spiritual “compass” and “energy store” going forward, Shilliam invites the reader to retrace key moments and movements (including the Springbok protests and the Black Women’s Movement) and to “walk with” community activists, artists, musicians, and nineteenth-century Māori prophets, whose thought and activism are concisely portrayed and contextualized. The encounters of peoples and ideas narrated in *The Black Pacific* are organized not chronologically but “along degrees of intensity” (149); in this, the structure of the chapters doubles the “grounding” process among Pasifika and Africana peoples that for Shilliam deepens as it moves from “comparativism” to “identification” to “inhabitation” to “enfolding.” Further, in quoting extensively from interviews, often without breaking the flow of the text with attributions, and through referencing his own participant observations, Shilliam performs how the book itself unfolds out of groundings among Pasifika, Africana, and Pākehā (white New Zealander) activists.

In chapter 1—which fuses ideas from Walter Rodney, Walter Dignolio, and “RasTafari” thinkers—Shilliam describes “grounding” as a form of “reasoning” that retrieves “deep relation,” a “decolonial science”

set against a “colonial science” that segregates, categorizes, and “produces” static knowledge rather than “cultivating” co-creative thought. Chapter 2 connects the recovery of “living knowledge traditions” (7) to extending a global anticolonial infrastructure in which Black Power articulates with the drive for mana motuhake (Māori sovereignty, self-determination). One aim of *The Black Pacific* is to rebind Black diasporic and indigenous peoples by winding back through colonial histories to “uncolonized spiritual hinterlands” (136), where the Children of Legba and Tāne/Māui “walk together.” The strong claims that emerge out of this integrative vision (in which the RasTafari “I-n-I” resonates with the Māori “tātou tātou,” meaning “already part of oneself” [149]) are that Māori can co-inhabit with Blackness (which at times extends to include all sufferers of white colonial racism) without dis-identification from Māoridom and that Black diasporic peoples, through alliance with movements for indigenous self-determination, can discover more ethically and culturally grounded analytics for contesting settler colonial and oppressive global structures.

Shilliam’s discussion of activist groups Ngā Tamatoa and the Polynesian Panther Movement (PPM) in chapter 3 shows how the localization of Black Panther strategies—the PPM developed its own ten-point community program and “PIG patrol” (Police Investigation Group)—moved beyond the comparative and through a contentious period of identification, which ended its public political phrase after “political blackness” had “done what it needed to do” (67), in

part by exploding Pākehā exceptionalism (the belief that race relations in New Zealand were exceptional in comparison to other settler colonial states). Chapter 4 shows how, in developing antiracist strategies, Māori and Pasifika activists drew on Black liberation theology, which saw revelation as “emanating out of suffering” (71), advocated “becoming black with God” (73), and displaced the white supremacist interpretation of the Bible, recasting the narrative of bondage, exodus, and redemption as in nineteenth-century African-American religious thought.

In chapter 5, Shilliam critically engages the 1979 Keskidee Aroha tour, in which a London-based Africana community acting troupe, along with a group of Ras singers, toured Aotearoa/New Zealand at the behest of a collective that included Māori, Polynesian Panther Movement, and Pākehā activists. The “binding” that the organizers envisioned was visually captured in a motif for the tour, designed by Niuean activist Tigilau Ness, which intertwined coconut tree fronds, drawn in the style of Māori *kōwhaiwhai* (curvilinear patterns), with “the dreadlocks of RasTafari-I” (94). Building on interviews with participants—including Māori filmmaker Merata Mita, whose *Keskidee Aroha* (with Martyn Sanderson, 1980) documents the scope of the project and tensions that arose within it—Shilliam reads the tour as an example of the arts as a means of cultivating a shared “dread love” and “aesthetic blackness.” Chapter 6 explores scenes in which reggae music and RasTafari religion facilitated grounding among Africana and Pasifika peoples; reggae,

he shows, resonated with Māori traditions of “musical activism against land appropriation” (110), and Pasifika reggae bands consistently aligned with the Māori reparations movement. Against the suggestion that appropriating RasTafari styles turned Islanders away from their own cultures, Shilliam clarifies that RasTafari insist that fellow sufferers draw on their own cultural resources for survival—on knowing “themselves in the world on their own grounds” (125). This, he acknowledges, may be at once a “straightforward commandment, but a complex practice” (125).

From political, theological, and artistic bindings, Shilliam turns in the later sections of the book toward spiritual “enfolding of RasTafari” alongside Pasifika prophetic traditions (129). Chapter 7 recalls visions of Ham walking with Shem from the thought of mid-nineteenth-century Māori prophets Te Ua and Te Kooti. Against the grain of missionary ideology, in which “salvation for Shem” relies on “damnation for Ham” (140), Shilliam foregrounds how Māori prophets reinterpreted biblical hermeneutics in their own terms. Because for Shilliam the spiritual and the manifest domains are interconnected, these early efforts presage PPM initiatives to provide jobs, training, protection from police, and other projects catalyzed by Black thought as reenactments of a deep relation with twined spiritual roots. Chapter 8—which discusses the Māori prophet Tahupōtiki Wiremu Rātana and the Rātana religion, Pākehā poet James K Baxter’s Hiruharama (Jerusalem) project, and infusions of Māori concepts with RasTafari meanings—describes

directions taken by Africana-Pasifika intersections, which, while “small in number,” were “big in effect” (116).

The Black Pacific makes spirited, intimate, and incisive contributions toward appreciating and encouraging “deep relation” among Māori, Pasifika peoples in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and African and diasporic African peoples; in the process, the book elaborates and models decolonial ways of rethinking “international relations” and global theory, the fields in which Shilliam has published a series of innovative essays (see rob-bieshilliam.wordpress.com). As its title announces, *The Black Pacific* reflects the current shift toward regarding the Pacific as an understudied counterpart to the kind of Atlantic Ocean-focused discourse articulated in works such as Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic* (1993), Peter O’Neill and David Lloyd’s edited collection *The Black and Green Atlantic* (2009), and Jace Weaver’s *The Red Atlantic* (2014). Yet despite a series of sketches in chapter 9 (titled “Africa in Oceania”) that suggest that the book’s analysis could be extended throughout the region, Shilliam’s *The Black Pacific* is not primarily concerned with charting the crisscrossing movements and shifting identities of Africana peoples in Oceania or with “blackness” as it functions within Oceania, particularly in relation to Melanesia. Rather, in keeping with his staunch support for indigenous self-determination and his espousal of authentic being as rooted and redeemable in scriptural, spiritual, and cosmological time, his “Black Pacific” refers to those vital moments across time and place in which the Children of Tāne/Māui “walk

together” with the Children of Legba, co-inhabiting and enfolding together though their joint pursuit of reparative “ancestral ties” and “restitutive justice” (13).

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Voices of Fire: Reweaving the Literary Lei of Pele and Hi‘iaka, by ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014. ISBN cloth, 978-0-8166-7921-8; paper, 978-0-8166-7922-5; 312 pages, photographs, notes, glossary, works cited, index. Cloth, US\$75.00; paper, US\$25.00.

Voices of Fire: Reweaving the Literary Lei of Pele and Hi‘iaka is based on ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui’s decade-long research on and study of Pele and Hi‘iaka literature published between 1861 and 1928, and it is “the first book-length study of Hawaiian literature that engages the discourse of Indigenous literary nationalism interwoven with Indigenous Pacific-based literary theory” (xxviii). For those unfamiliar with Pele and Hi‘iaka, ho‘omanawanui clarifies that Pele is “the Hawaiian akua [god] associated with volcanic activity, land formation, and hula” and her “favored youngest sister, Hi‘iakaikapoliopole,” is “a primary hula deity” (xxiv). The work that went into this project is impressive: ho‘omanawanui collected thirteen versions of the Pele and Hi‘iaka tradition, several of which are epics that were published as daily or weekly series for a year or more in Hawaiian-language newspapers; prepared