

## Book and Media Reviews

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of the ethnography coming out of research there, I guess the answer is no, we can't leave Kiriwina. Nor, it seems, should we.

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*Artefacts of Encounter: Cook's Voyages, Colonial Collecting and Museum Histories*, edited by Nicholas Thomas, Julie Adams, Billie Lythberg, Maia Nuku, and Amiria Salmond. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016. ISBN 978-0-8248-5935-0, 348 pages, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, US\$68.00.

*Artefacts of Encounter: Cook's Voyages, Colonial Collecting and Museum Histories* is a striking collection of photographs and essays about the Early Pacific collection at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Cambridge (MAA). With its large format and glossy images, this volume may seem like a coffee-table book. However, the essays and extensive catalog within make this project a valuable resource for any scholar studying the material cultures of Oceania, histories of collecting and museum display, and colonial contact zones.

The editors form a powerhouse of scholars and curators: Nicholas Thomas, MAA director, well-known scholar of Oceanic history, and author of numerous books including *Colonialism's Culture* (Princeton University Press, 1994) and *Entangled Objects* (Harvard University Press, 1991); Julie Adams, curator of Oceania at the British Museum;

Billie Lythberg, an Auckland-based art historian; Maia Nuku, associate curator for Oceanic art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art; and Amiria Salmond, former MAA curator and author of *Museums, Anthropology and Imperial Exchange* (Cambridge University Press, 2005). Together, this group of curators, anthropologists, and art historians has compiled an exciting and refreshing look at objects from the Cambridge collection, which, with over two hundred objects, is one of the most important collections of Captain James Cook's voyage artifacts worldwide.

The book is divided into five parts, beginning with part 1, "Encountering Artefacts." This section includes an introduction by Thomas and Adams and three essays by other members of the editorial team. The first of these was written by Thomas and describes the history of the MAA Pacific collection and how this history is a part of each story told by these objects of encounter. Simon Schaffer's contribution broadens the scope of "artefacts" to include scientific instruments aboard European ships. In their essay "Relating to, and through, Polynesian collections," Lythberg, Nuku, and Salmond suggest a way of studying these artifacts not as remnants of the past but as "vectors of still-active ancestral agency, even as living ancestors" (44). Using three case studies—Māori cloaks, Tongan ngatu (bark cloth), and Tahitian tamau (plaited belts)—the authors examine in detail the process of making these objects and how this relates to notions of genealogy. For example, in looking at ngatu, the authors describe how in Tongan conception humankind

is made of layers, just as ngatu is made of layers of bark cloth pounded together.

These introductory essays are followed by photographs of select objects with brief but detailed analyses written by individual members of the team. These sections are arranged chronologically according to major expeditions in the Pacific. Part 2, therefore, focuses on objects from Cook's first voyage in 1768, while part 3 showcases Cook's second and third voyages in 1772 and 1776, respectively, as well as Captain George Vancouver's expedition in 1791. Part 4 highlights objects collected by missionaries and travelers from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century. Part 5 concludes the book with a catalog of the MAA Pacific collection, complete with a photograph of each item and brief descriptions of objects not mentioned in the body of the book.

By selecting a small number of objects to examine in detail rather than attempting a comprehensive account of the Cambridge collection, the book departs from other catalogs that are often formulaic in their effort to paint a "complete" picture. Instead, the book's structure reflects how the editors, during their research in the Cambridge archives, "looked at things together, observing each other's reactions and responses, and voicing thoughts, questions, doubts and confusions" (20).

The essays in *Artefacts of Encounter*, therefore, reflect these conversations, reactions, and questions. Some essays focus on the provenance of the object, following its trajectory from an initial encounter between European explorers and local Indigenous

communities to the cataloging and display of the object back in Europe. For instance, Adams describes how the researchers discovered a large bale of Tahitian bark cloth during one of their initial "encounters" with the Cambridge collection. Her essay follows their efforts to discover more about the bale's history as it changed hands over time. Other essays focus on the value Indigenous communities attributed to these items. For instance, Nuku's discussion of four fly whisks, or tahiri, from the Austral Islands, suggests these objects are more than simply tools for keeping bugs away, but instead were integral to religious practices. These two cases provide just a small sample of the range of issues encountered in these essays—a range that would be missing if the book attempted a more comprehensive, authoritative account of the entire Pacific collection at Cambridge.

As the title suggests, the book is specifically looking at what these objects may tell us about cross-cultural encounters during this "formative" stage in colonial history. The authors argue, "These collections are representative not only of technologies or belief systems in a compartmentalised sense, but of indigenous cultures at the formative stages of their modern histories" (17). This book is therefore useful for any scholar of colonial encounters in the Pacific because of the way it situates these objects as mediators across different cultures. The essays also provide new interpretations and theories about Indigenous beliefs and material culture; thus, art historians and visual studies scholars will also find this to be a valuable resource.

One of the most important con-

tributions this volume makes, however, is in terms of methodology. By prioritizing storytelling and talking “around” objects (20), the editors invite their readers to bring their own interpretations and insights into the conversation. The book itself is a product of encounters between researchers, objects, Pacific communities, and readers. These encounters continue today when museums engage Pacific communities and their diaspora in these collections. It is therefore fitting that *Artefacts of Encounter* includes contemporary artists from the Pacific whom the curators have worked with and whose works engage with issues of cross-cultural encounters and colonial legacies. Thomas muses over the photography of Mark Adams and the installations by Semisi Fetokai Potauaine. In other essays, the artists themselves talk about their work. John Pule describes the thoughts behind his canvas piece *The Splendid Land*, while Lisa Reihana and George Nuku discuss their projects for the 2006 MAA exhibition *Pasifika Styles*. These contemporary interludes throughout the book bring the early artifacts into the present and exemplify how “encounters” with these objects are still occurring today.

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*The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty*, by Aileen Moreton-Robinson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015. ISBN 978-0-8166-9216-3, xxiv + 239 pages, notes, publication history, index. Cloth, US\$94.50; paper, US\$27.00.

*The White Possessive* is a powerful compilation, bringing together a decade of previously published writing by distinguished Indigenous Australian scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson (Goenpul). The book makes a persuasive case that critical indigenous studies, as a rising field encompassing scholarship by and about issues relevant to Indigenous peoples globally, should pay greater attention to race, and, specifically, the critique of whiteness. Moreton-Robinson argues that “Indigenous studies scholarship has rarely interrogated the mutual constitution of the possessiveness of patriarchal white sovereignty and racialization,” despite the centrality of what she terms “white possessive logics” in the lives of Indigenous peoples in Canada, the United States, Hawai‘i, New Zealand, and Australia (xiii). She defines “possessive logics” as a concept that marks “a mode of rationalization . . . underpinned by an excessive desire to invest in reproducing and reaffirming the nation-state’s ownership, control and domination” over Indigenous lands and bodies (xii).

At issue is the contention, shared by Moreton-Robinson and other indigenous studies scholars like Chris Andersen, that too often the field has focused too much on defining Indigenous cultural difference, despite the fact that this has not lead to greater