

*Once Were Pacific: Māori Connections to Oceania.* By Alice Te Punga Somerville. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 2012. 265pp. NZ price: \$31.49 (pbk). ISBN 9780816677566 (hardcover), ISBN 9780816677573 (pbk).

This book examines the ‘intersections of Indigeneity and migration’ in regard to Māori and the rest of Oceania’s people and places (p.xxi). For historians who might think the title signals a new history, this book will disappoint because its evidence is not archive-based or the outcome of oral histories; rather, its evidence is creative works by Māori and other Pacific peoples. Even so, taken as a history of ideas and the how art reflects life, Te Punga Somerville’s critical literary studies approach has much to offer historians and others interested in Oceania’s interconnections as well as disconnections. She takes her cue from the work of Albert Wendt and Epeli Hau’ofa, who both revaluated Oceania as a connected sea of islands rather than ‘islands in far sea’ (pp.5–6). In origin, Māori ‘once were Pacific’, part of this connected world, but to what extent they still are or could be is teased out here via literary and other productions.

This is a subtle and multi-layered critical work for it goes beyond written texts to performance. An appealing conceit frames the study around the cover image by Michael Tuffery (a New Zealander of Samoan, Rarotongan, and Tahitian ancestry), based on the Ra’iatean Tupaia’s painting of an exchange of tapa cloth by Joseph Banks for a crayfish offered by a Māori in 1769. The paintbox used by Tupaia and that of Tuffery link them across time. The tapa becomes the Oceanian region outside Aotearoa / New Zealand but connected, even if by fragments; the crayfish (koura) is Aotearoa / New Zealand. As in the painting, they connect across space.

The book is in two parts followed by a conclusion: Part I, covering the ‘realm of tapa’ (p.4), considers how Māori are located within Pacific spaces beyond Aotearoa / New Zealand; Part Two, the ‘realm of koura’ (p.95), examines how Māori and other Pacific peoples interact within New Zealand. Part I ranges from the work of Te Rangihiroa (Sir Peter Buck) as ethnographer and director of the Bishop Museum in Honolulu to performances at the Mormon Pacific Cultural Centre in Hawaii, to a proposal for regional anthologies. The main focus is the work of some who could contribute to these – Vernice Wineera, Evelyn Patuawa Nathan and Robert Sullivan – all based or published in Oceania outside New Zealand, as well as the few Māori writers in New Zealand who have articulated Māori experience within Oceania: Witi Ihimaera and Hinewirangi Kohu-Morgan.

In Part II, Māori and Pacific (or Pasifika) connections within Aotearoa/New Zealand come to the fore, as well as some of the complexities and conflicts, making this a more political perspective, absent largely from Part I. Collaborations between Māori and Pasifika peoples are evident in resistance to the nation state, as seen in the ephemeral 1973 multi-Polynesian language publication, *Rongo*; in music, such as the group Nesian Mystik; and in poetry, *Polynation*, a DVD made in 2008. The study moves on to consider how Māori – Taylor, Grace and Grace-Smith – write about connections with the region, then how Pasifika writers within New Zealand, mainly Campbell and Milo, portray how they as manuhiri (guests) articulate connections with Māori. In Chapter 7, using *Romeo and Juliet* as the template, Te Punga Somerville critiques the plays *Romeo and Tusi* and *Once Were Samoans*, as well as a TV drama series, *The Market*, that reveal the disconnections between Māori and Pasifika (specifically, Samoan) experiences when intimate relations are involved.

The concluding sections discuss the writer’s position as an academic and the need to find hidden or misplaced writings by Māori in English as well as Māori. Far more research is both needed and necessary to appreciate the full creativity of ancestors, both intellectually and of blood and bone, whose work still lies sleeping in old desks, museums and archives.

The conclusion is considerably more controversial, for it raises the issue of Māori–Pasifika disconnection and argues that often competition for the state’s resources is at the heart of this. Intertwined are settler claims (and Pasifika fit into this on occasion), at least among some, that

in New Zealand ‘all people come from somewhere else’ (p.206). This is true, but what tends to be forgotten is that ancestral Māori happened to be the first and should, in their view, be considered indigenous first people, as people of the land. So long as that is remembered by more recent arrivals some real possibilities of positive dialogue will prevail and, as prefigured by Ngahiwī Tomoana among Pasifika peoples, a ‘Hawaiki nation’ to champion indigenous rights across Oceania could emerge (p.210).

Because so much of the Māori–Pacific connectedness at least since the late nineteenth century has been mediated or interrupted by the colonial state – as we learn in this work – there is a tendency to put aside how this has had embodied consequences. In relation to ancestors and connections with the Pacific, Te Punga Somerville notes in the final chapter of Part II that at the base of main poutokomanawa (supporting post) of Victoria University’s marae, Te Herenga Waka, is a figure representing Te Rangihīroa, who did so much work in and for Oceania. In addressing colonialism’s impact on Māori and on Māori–Pacific relations and thus on their creative works, it is easy to forget there are other layers of complexity induced by second-wave settlers. Just as *Romeo and Juliet*, a product of a colonizing nation, provides a universal theme played out in Pasifika theatre, Te Rangihīroa and many of the writers and artists discussed in this book along with its author have a European heritage as well as an Oceanic one. Part of their heritage, as much as colonialism, enables them to read, see, and hear each other’s work. This richness of identity, while not the central focus to this work, nonetheless deserves some acknowledgement, even if only because manuhiri have become ancestors. As Linda in Patricia Grace’s *Mutuwhenua* reminds us, every branch of whakapapa ‘touches every other’ (p.202). More widely, in Oceania’s genealogies, with the exception of Ihimaera’s novella *The Whale Rider*, both Melanesia and Micronesia have almost fallen off the map in this study. This attenuated sea of islands extends east from Fiji and south from Hawai’i. *Once Were Pacific* is well researched, lucid, and a significant contribution to literary studies broadly defined. Even so, it is about a Polynesian Pacific. Given the histories of interactions between Māori and the Pacific beyond Aotearoa, be they ancient or modern, it would be more correct to say so in the title.

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*Samoa’s Journey 1962–2012: Aspects of History.* Edited by Leasiolagi Malama Meleisea, Penelope Schoeffel Meleisea and Ellie Meleisea. Victoria University Press, Wellington, 2012, 245pp. NZ price: \$40.00. ISBN 9780864738356.

*Samoa’s Journey 1962–2012* is a scholarly contribution to the celebration of Samoa’s fiftieth anniversary of political independence in 2012. The book has essays from 29 academic and research staff of the National University of Samoa (NUS) and describes in seven chapters selected aspects of legal, political, religious, economic and sociocultural development since independence. The chapters are well written and rich, with noteworthy information on the respective areas of development. This will make the collection useful reading for those wishing to learn about modern Samoa, as well as a good resource for undergraduate teaching.

The introduction by Leasiolagi Malama Meleisea points out that the tone of the book ‘is celebratory’ (p.16). This indeed is echoed through the chapters, which emphasize the milestones achieved through each sector of Samoan society over the years. In law and custom, for example, localizing the judiciary has been a meritorious achievement marked by, among other things, the appointments of both men and women judges as well as the establishment of the Law and