

being disentangled, the book at many points reads as though the diaries have been tidied up for publication.

That said, there is much to enjoy in *History Boy*. Once the labyrinth has been cleared, the endearing wit and the understatement are palpable. As with the generality of historians' autobiographies, Tarling does not dump on colleagues but he does mention his duties within the Auckland history department, in fighting against trendy change for the sake of student numbers, and as an academic administrator when he stood up to be counted for his belief in not tinkering or overturning a system that was working satisfactorily — the radical conservative who staunchly upheld Cardinal Newman's vision of what a university ought to be about. There is a lovely passage on satire (p.173). There is also his prescient statement, when asked to give a lecture on whether Australia was an outpost: 'asking that kind of question made you an outpost' (p.124). The detail sometimes overwhelms the discussion, yet there is ample bounty in *History Boy* for those who care to look.

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#### NOTES

1 Nicholas Tarling, *Historians and Southeast Asian History*, Auckland, 2000, pp.112–20.

2 Nicholas Tarling, 'History and Histrionics', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 11, 2 (1977), 105–11.

*Sailors and Traders: A Maritime History of the Pacific Peoples*. By Alastair Couper. University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, 2009. xiii, 262pp. NZ price: \$150.99. ISBN 978-0-824832-39-1.

IN EARLY APRIL 2009 Somali pirates boarded a German cargo ship off the Horn of Africa. Amongst the crew taken hostage were 11 men from Tuvalu and one from Fiji. The pirates demanded a NZ\$24 million ransom. This as yet unresolved incident is an extreme example of the contemporary hazards of work at sea. Yet it is not particularly surprising that the recent spike in seaborne terrorism in the Gulf of Aden should be felt so keenly by Tuvalu, a group of atolls in the Pacific with a total land area of 26 square kilometres, given that connections between Pacific seafaring and the global maritime environment have deep historical roots. The continuity in maritime work and trade in the history of the Pacific peoples is the subject of Alastair Couper's new book.

It always seems quite strange to reflect that the maritime dimensions of Pacific history do not have a richer scholarly tradition. Couper cites only three books which have made dedicated or sustained examinations of the world of indigenous seafarers: Paul D'Arcy's *The People of the Sea* (2006), David Chappell's *Double Ghosts* (1997) and Richard Feinberg's edited collection *Seafaring in the Contemporary Pacific Islands* (1995). In this context Couper's historical survey, spanning from first human settlement of the Pacific through to the contemporary challenges of the decentralized maritime world, is a very welcome and timely addition to the field.

A visiting professor of maritime history at the Greenwich Maritime Institute, Couper draws on decades of experience and knowledge in Pacific maritime affairs, as well as a broader command of maritime history from global perspectives. *Sailors and Traders* is a clearly written, highly accessible and balanced survey which summons wide-ranging evidence, including published voyaging accounts, colonial records, statistical data, shipping registers, port surveys, ethnographies and personal experience, as well as numerous articles and books on Pacific history.

The first chapter, a reflection on the commonalities of a seafaring existence and identity across cultures throughout history, is the most wide-ranging of the book, aligning examples from the Pacific with other maritime settings and epochs. Chapters two, three and four chart familiar waters, summarizing the achievements of the first Pacific settlers in maritime technology and navigation, the inter-island networks of seaborne exchange established over the following centuries, and the encounters between European mariners and indigenous people at 'first contact'. The following five chapters chronologically explore indigenous engagements with commercial shipping, both on and beyond their own shores; the displacement of indigenous crews with the rise of restrictive colonial regulations, steam technology, large shipping companies and white labour unions; and the various indigenous attempts to run maritime trade on their own terms, including boycotts, strikes, the establishment of local shipping companies, local ownership of vessels and the formation of trade unions. The final two chapters examine maritime issues from the 1960s to the present, including the nature of regional shipping, the professionalization of seafaring, the emergence of the Pacific Forum Line and the hiring out of island sovereignty as flags of convenience. The international employment of indigenous seafarers is discussed using Kiribati, the principal county of recruitment, as a case study. In all of these ways Couper charts the challenges, new influences and creative responses that close existence with the maritime environment has continually presented and demanded of Pacific peoples and societies over this broad sweep of human history.

The book opens with a quote from the historical geographer Kären Wigen about the international efflorescence in scholarly attention to the sea, yet *Sailors and Traders* is a more traditional, empirical study of seafarers and seafaring than other recent forays in this interdisciplinary field, such as Bernhard Klein and Gesa Mackenthun's edited collection *Sea Changes: Historicising the Ocean* (2004) or Elizabeth DeLoughrey's *Roots and Routes* (2007), which explore the complex and rich cultural world of the sea through questions of meaning, identity and power. Wigen's article opens a special issue of the *American Historical Review* dedicated to the historiography of sea and ocean basin history. As Alison Games, a contributor to that forum, reflected in the context of the Atlantic World, the connections between the social and cultural histories of seafaring and the historical specificity of ocean basins are underdeveloped. As a historical survey, *Sailors and Traders* is impressive in scope, clarity and conciseness. It is the first to offer such a wide-ranging maritime history of the Pacific. The next step, I believe, is to reflect more explicitly on what these histories of indigenous sailors and seafaring practices can tell us about the Pacific world 'whole', what work these maritime mobilities and networks of exchange did to knit together island communities with each other and with places beyond this ocean basin, and with what consequences.

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*Kon-Tiki Revisited*. By Robert Langdon. Australian Scholarly Publishing Pty Ltd, Melbourne, 2009. xvi + 378pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 978-1-74097-1348.

IN *KON-TIKI REVISITED*, ROBERT LANGDON combines and builds upon a number of previous works that were published in academic journals and as books by the author. Completed before Langdon's unexpected death in 2003, *Kon-Tiki Revisited* synthesizes an overwhelming amount of evidence taken from historical documents, linguistics, ethnography, archaeology, biological anthropology and botanical remains, weaving them together into a tale of complex origins, dispersals and interactions of peoples in