

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

prehistoric Polynesia. It is obvious that this book is the result of years of painstakingly detailed historical scholarship, but in some instances, Langdon's analysis of the available evidence leads to some questionable interpretations.

The book begins by exploring the age-old debate regarding the South American sweet potato's (*Ipomoea batatas*) introduction and dispersal throughout Polynesia, and Langdon unsurprisingly sides with the late Thor Heyerdahl on this issue. Langdon sets out to convince the reader that the sweet potato was carried into the Pacific by South American Indians sailing on balsa rafts. He starts by setting the story to a backdrop of a trans-Pacific voyage by a group of voyagers from island South East Asia who supposedly arrived in Ecuador around 200 BC. According to Langdon, these voyagers brought bamboo rafts that later became the prototype for the Ecuadorian balsa raft, which, according to the author, was undoubtedly the sailing vessel used by South Americans to colonize the eastern Pacific. However, there is at present no evidence for such a voyage at this time. Langdon goes on to cite the evidence of pottery shards on the Galapagos Islands as proof that Polynesia was settled by American Indians from the East, but he does not account for the absence of pottery in the islands of East Polynesia. Instead, he ends the discussion with the statement that 'on that evidence [of sailing distances] alone, American Indians are much more likely, *a priori*, to have brought the sweet potato to Polynesia than Polynesians' (pp.47–48).

During subsequent chapters, Langdon continues to present analyses that are dominated by *a priori* assumptions that are not actually fully supported by the available evidence. It is evident that he has done a great deal of research as he combines his extensive knowledge of linguistics with a large number of historical texts to explore the distribution of a number of plants with South American origins into the Pacific during the late pre-contact period. While there is botanical evidence for many of these plants having been dispersed throughout the Pacific prior to the seventeenth century, the dispersal mechanisms are not clear. Nevertheless, the vast majority of Pacific scholars concur that Polynesian navigators travelled to the South American mainland and returned to Central East Polynesia with domesticated plants from South America. This more widely accepted view has gained additional support since the completion of this book with the radiocarbon and DNA evidence of a Polynesian chicken from a pre-Columbian site in Chile that was presented by Alice Storey et al. in 2007.

Langdon completely dismisses the notion that Polynesian seafarers were responsible for the dispersal of South American domesticated plants in Polynesia. In relation to his discussion of the sweet potato, he posits that members of a 'lost caravel' that apparently landed on Amanu Atoll during the sixteenth century were responsible for bringing the sweet potato, or *kumara*, to New Zealand. He proposes architectural similarities between the *horreo* (Galican storehouses) and the *pātaka* (Māori storehouses), and claims that the name *pātaka* is clearly derived from the Castilian word for sweet potato, *pataca*. At first glance, this Māori word may appear to bear a striking resemblance to the Castilian word; however, if we look at the word *pātaka* within a Māori context, it very well could have combined the words *pā*, or enclosed space, with *takaa*, which means to prepare food, thus *pātaka* may have signified that this structure was an enclosed space for foods that would be prepared. Additionally, there is archaeological evidence that many other foodstuffs and items were stored in *pātaka*, so Langdon's argument that these structures were named after the sweet potatoes which were stored in them is without merit.

Following his discussion of the sweet potato, Langdon goes through a long list of domesticated plants, making similar claims about their dispersal into the Pacific from South America. While some of his arguments are compelling, the majority of them are largely based on very limited written accounts from early European visitors, who seem to have erroneously labelled a number of plants and animals that were newly encountered in their travels, basing their observations on what they knew from Europe. Thus, these

texts cannot be taken at face value. The issue is further complicated by the fact that Langdon combined this evidence with linguistic evidence from vocabularies that were collected during the historic era in a number of island groups, and these vocabularies were undoubtedly influenced by increasing interactions with visitors from outside, as well as the movement of Pacific Islanders themselves to different island groups.

The most useful aspect of *Kon-Tiki Revisited* is that it combines much of Langdon's work into a synthesis that is relatively easy to follow and comprehensive. Although a number of his specific conclusions seem overstated and misguided, based on the available evidence, Langdon's attention to detail in historical research deserves accolades. There are a number of uncertainties about the nature of interaction between ancient Polynesians and South American Indians, and while this book does not provide many well-grounded answers, it is useful in addressing a number of issues in this area of research that require clarification and will surely be the focus of continued debate.

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