

collapse is an enigmatic one, it does not hold up when held to the light of the actual proof. Furthermore, he argues that the use of spectacular and exaggerated stories as a warning may not have the desired effect of getting people to take action. They often become numb to the story or paralyzed instead.

More often than not, the decline of cultures is not a result of conscious choices, but rather a slow process; telling the story of this process can still serve as an interesting warning without violating the truth and stripping a group of people of their dignity. Questions about the collapse theory have been rising over the last 10 years. Boersema openly admits that he is not the only person supporting the new view, but he began asking questions early on. What he brings to the table with this book is a well-researched overview of Rapa Nui culture and the growing evidence against the collapse theory.

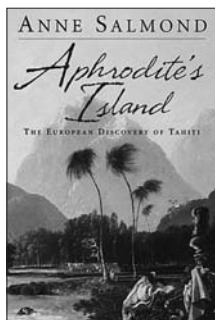
In sum, this is a book that will provide any layman interested in Rapa Nui with a thorough view on both the culture and the new conclusions that are being drawn. Most of the popular literature on the subject still leans strongly towards the collapse and this book aims to bring new insights to a broader public. This is a book written by a man passionate about the subject, who has read virtually everything there is to read on the subject and has helped progress the issue himself as well. I could not help but respect the author for his approach.

Salmond, Anne R. *Aphrodite's Island: The European Discovery of Tahiti*

Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009. 544 pp. ISBN 978-0-520-26114-3. US\$45.00 (hardcover), US\$24.95 (softcover).

Salmond, Anne R. *Bligh: William Bligh in the South Seas*

Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011. 528 pp. ISBN 978-0-520-27056-5. US\$45.00 (hardcover).



Review by James L. Flexner,
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Tahiti lies at the center of two excellent recent books by Anne Salmond, one of the contemporary masters of historical anthropology focusing on culture contact in the Pacific. One of the interesting things about reviewing these books together has been seeing the way that the form of history can change depending upon the lens through which it is viewed, while also noting the common themes that emerge in these works, which resonate throughout the Pacific. In *Aphrodite's Island*, Salmond focuses on the Tahitian perspective of the first European encounters, both in the sense of making the island of Tahiti the focal point of the history she is writing, and in emphasizing the indigenous Tahitian perspective of these early interactions. *Bligh*, on the other hand, focuses on the story of one of the most famous navigators of the late 18th century. But, while Bligh is probably best remembered for the dramatic mutiny on board the *Bounty*, Salmond's biography largely emphasizes the formative nature of the experiences of Bligh and his crew – including Fletcher Christian, the ringleader of the eventual mutiny – in Tahiti in shaping the events that would come later on.

Both *Aphrodite's Island* and *Bligh* are richly detailed accounts of important cross-cultural encounters in the South Seas, with enormous casts of characters and often thick descriptions of specific events that happened within these encounters. *Aphrodite's Island* works through Tahitian interactions with the British explorer Wallis, the first European to visit Tahiti, followed by the French with Bougainville, Captain Cook, who used the islands of Tahiti as a regular stopping point in his exploratory expeditions, and the Spanish led by Boenechea, who attempted to establish the first European settlement on Tahiti. But the book is equally concerned with the experiences and discoveries of Tahitian explorers, such as Ahutoru, Tupaia, Hitihiti, Ma'i, Pautu, Tetuanui, Tipitipia, and Heiao, who travelled throughout the Pacific Islands, to Britain, and to Lima on various European ships, though not all would return alive to their homeland. Tupaia especially made a major impression on New Zealand Māori, being recognized as a great *tohunga* (priest, wise man) and even inspiring a sort of cargo cult among some local people, revealing that culture contact was not just about Europeans interacting with Polynesians (Salmond 2009:262-263). *Aphrodite's Island* is a fascinating account of contact in Tahiti, and will be valuable for years to come, especially for comparative analyses alongside other works by Salmond, Denning, and Sahlins, among others, outlining the historical anthropology of contact elsewhere in Polynesia.

Bligh follows the career of William Bligh, but is atypical of the various biographies of this famous character in naval history because of its emphasis on

the role of Polynesian people and places in shaping the historical events in which Bligh was involved. Salmond centers the narrative in Polynesia, and especially Tahiti, from Bligh's early experiences as a young master on board the *Resolution* with Captain Cook, to his long stays in Tahiti on the *Bounty*, and later the *Providence*, where Salmond praises the unprecedented anthropological understanding that Bligh was able to gain of Tahitian culture. At the same time, this part of the story shows the transition from the initial fascination that Tahitians had for Great Britain to the gradual souring of the relationship as the British became less and less useful within the sphere of local power struggles. Of course, the dramatic mutiny on the *Bounty* and Bligh's heroic run to Timor on board the *Bounty*'s launch are captured in vivid detail, as are the experiences of the mutineers on Tahiti, Tupua'i in the Australs, and Pitcairn. Salmond's account of the trial of the mutineers captured on Tahiti, and the subsequent publications reinterpreting the event between Bligh and his enemies, notably Fletcher Christian's brother Edward, provide a fascinating account of British naval and upper-class politics towards the end of the 18th century. Salmond's biography is sensitive to the character of Bligh, recognizing both his positive traits as a talented navigator and sailor, as well as a gifted ethnographer, but also noting his foul temper and habit of verbally humiliating his inferiors (though Bligh was remarkably gentle in his use of corporal punishment compared with his contemporaries, including Captain Cook). This is a welcome addition to the various accounts of the life of Bligh and the mutiny on the *Bounty*, but also a valuable account of how a few people's experiences, ambitions, and struggles can shape history in a significant way.

Focusing on the place of Tahiti in *Aphrodite's Island*, and the narrative of one British sea captain in *Bligh*, Salmond's two narratives tell the story of European contact in Tahiti from different perspectives, but also reveal some of the recurring themes of early colonial encounters throughout the Pacific. The first theme is the importance of local social networks and hierarchies in shaping the ways that encounters were experienced and interpreted. This is equally true for Tahiti, with different chiefly families using different foreign powers in struggling to gain the upper hand towards becoming the *ari'i maro 'ura* (paramount chief), and in Britain, with men striving for promotion within the Admiralty as with Bligh, or for influence within aristocratic society as was the case for Sir Joseph Banks. The second theme that Salmond returns to many times throughout both books is the tendency for people to understand cross-cultural encounters in mythical terms. Just as the Tahitians could see

Europeans as "The glorious children of Tetumu", or see signs of the god 'Oro in European fireworks, Europeans interpreted Tahiti in terms of classical myths of Cythera, the island of Aphrodite, and Tahitian people in terms of characters from Homer's *Odyssey* and Virgil's *Aeneid*. As Salmond (2011:21) notes in the introduction to *Bligh*, "the tale of the mutiny on the *Bounty* and its aftermath is not just a Western story. At its heart, the historical trajectories of Britain and the South Seas intersect, transforming lives on the islands as well as on board the ships and back in Europe." The structure of history as created within these cultural encounters for both Westerners and Tahitians was simultaneously pragmatic and empirical, as much as it was romantic and mythical.

The third theme that emerges from these books, again relevant throughout the Pacific Islands, is the formation of connections – material, social, and ecological – through these early encounters with Europeans in the South Seas that would shape the history of these islands as well as Europe through the present. From the earliest arrival, Europeans had a transformative impact on Tahitian ecology. Salmond notes numerous occasions where Europeans intentionally and unintentionally introduced flora and fauna to Tahiti, planting fruit trees, vegetables, and tobacco, and introducing cattle and goats, as well as cats and rats (not to mention introduced diseases, which may have caused the population to plummet from about 200,000 in 1772 to about 30,000 just 16 years later; see Salmond 2011:195). Notably, foreign cultigens were sometimes interpreted in Tahitian terms. Shaddock (a type of grapefruit) was known to Tahitians as 'uru no *Peretane* (British breadfruit), and was considered unpalatable. At the same time, the primary motivation for the *Bounty* expedition was to take breadfruit trees from Tahiti to feed slaves in the West Indies. Ironically, after Bligh's successful later expedition to Tahiti on board the *Providence*, it turned out that black slaves in the Caribbean found breadfruit unpalatable initially, and it was the larger, juicier varieties of Polynesian sugarcane also carried on this expedition that were of immediate benefit to plantation owners (Salmond 2011:429).

Material culture was likewise an all-important vector for forging connections between Europe and the Pacific. The trade in iron tools and nails for pigs, yams, and breadfruit is a typical refrain in South Seas encounters, but equally important was the trade in 'curiosities', Polynesian artifacts of shell, feathers, stone, and wood which sailors hoped to sell for a profit back in Europe. Again, though, the curiosities trade worked both ways, as Tahitians appropriated European objects, such as the red pennant from the

Dolphin, which was incorporated into a powerful *maro 'ura* (red feather girdle) from the *marae* Taputapuata (Salmond 2009:85), or the portrait of Captain Cook often used to summon his *mana* during important rituals (e.g., Salmond 2011:158-159). Furthermore, just as Europeans were trading for Tahitian objects with the hopes of making a profit by selling to wealthy gentlemen looking to augment their collections, Tobin, one of the officers on the *Providence*, noted that there were Tahitians with their own “cabinets of curiosities”, notably Pomare II, eventual paramount of the island, likely also accumulating western objects in order to appropriate their power (Salmond 2011:373).

Finally, these two books are remarkable as histories of European exploration and discovery in that they do not focus exclusively, or even primarily on Europeans. Polynesians are recognized as equal participants in cross-cultural interactions, rather than as passive observers or victims as is typical of much colonial historiography. Naturally, the books are about Europeans such as Wallis, Bougainville, Banks, Cook, Boenechea, and Bligh, but they are also about the Tahitians Tu, 'Itia, Teri'irere, Vehiatua, and Pomare. From the first moments of contact, Tahitians and Europeans formed friendships (most powerfully in the *taio* bond, which involved a partial merging of identities), some of which were sustained over decades, especially with Bligh (“Parai”) and Cook (“Tute”) who visited the islands repeatedly. Friendship is a crucial, but underexplored aspect of culture contact, and Salmond has contributed a useful account of the ways that this type of bond has shaped world history. More typically emphasized in the history of colonialism in the Pacific are the sexual and sometimes romantic encounters between European sailors and Polynesian women. Salmond provides a sensitive but realistic account of these entanglements and how they shaped the way each culture viewed the other (especially in the European view of Tahiti as an earthly paradise), even making a convincing argument that the *Bounty* mutiny was largely motivated by the romantic attachments that the sailors serving under Bligh formed during their stay in Tahiti. Overall, the strength of Salmond's approach to historical anthropology, in top form in both *Aphrodite's Island* and *Bligh*, lies in her ethnographic sensitivity to both Polynesians and Europeans, in interpreting the ways that people's cultural perspectives, practices, and traditions shaped the history of these dramatic and often world-changing encounters.

Richards, Rhys. *The Austral Islands: History, Art and Art History*.



Porirua: Paremata Press, 2012. 236 pp, 145 illustrations (30 in color). ISBN: 978-0-473188-86-3. NZD\$50 (softcover). To order, email mrhys@paradise.net.nz.

Review by Jennifer M. Huebert,
University of Auckland

This is a nicely illustrated volume on the art and history of the Austral Islands. Many of the artifacts featured within are in museum and private collections across the UK and USA, and most were collected by foreign visitors during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The items reviewed in this volume include wooden paddles, *tapa* cloth, wooden drums, various ivory and other wood carvings, and mixed-media objects including several headdresses.

The book is divided into three sections. The first part, which accounts for about half of the book, consists of observations made by early foreign visitors to the Austral Islands. These visits began with Captain Cook, who first approached Rurutu in 1769. Though he did not land, Joseph Banks noted the islanders' intricately carved weapons and canoes, colorfully decorated *tapa* cloth capes, and feather headdresses. It was not until the *Bounty* mutineers came to Tubuai in 1789 that any sustained interaction with the Austral Islanders occurred, and so the first extended description of the islanders was recorded in the journal of James Morrison (1935). After 1800, visits by foreigners steadily increased; first by whaling ships needing provisions and merchants looking for sandalwood, and then by missionaries who spent time on the islands of Ra'ivavae, Rurutu and Tubuai. These early visitors to Tubuai provided detailed accounts of the daily life and customs of the islanders, and numerous passages quoted in the book are from their journals. The isolated southern island in this archipelago, Rapa, was visited occasionally, and those contacts are summarized. Throughout these first chapters on island history, the author highlights relevant descriptions of artifacts seen and collected by early foreign visitors. The first section concludes with author's commentary on the challenges of studying objects well out of their cultural context, a particular challenge in locations such as this where many traditional arts were not widely practiced by the late 19th century.

Part two of this book consists of 21 pages of color plates illustrating the elaborately carved tall wooden