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REVIEWS

CROWE, Andrew: *Pathway of the Birds: The Voyaging Achievements of Māori and Their Polynesian Ancestors*. Albany: David Bateman Ltd., 2018. 288 pp., biblio., illus., index, maps, notes, plates. NZ$49.99 (softcover).

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It comes as no surprise that "popular science" books are often overlooked by scientists themselves. Unfortunately, this contributes toward a gap between academic researchers and the general audience. Thankfully for both sides, some authors still produce admirable contributions that help bridge this gap. Andrew Crowe succeeded in such an endeavour with his new book, bringing together a vast amount of information and piecing it together in an understandable and engaging way to tell us the story of the ancient Polynesian voyagers. The task was certainly daunting when one considers how quickly the related literature has increased and information has become more complex. It took Crowe 15 years to read, absorb and synthesise the dense scientific literature which, to be honest, is not always the most digestible for someone "outside the field".

As Crowe explains himself, his efforts are aimed at redressing a bias in the way the amazing migrations of Polynesians are usually covered in the media, with "Māori and their settlement history [being] portrayed in a manner that is condescending, distorted or muddled" (p. 14). This book was thus initially written for a New Zealand audience, which drove both the main thread—how did Polynesians come to discover and settle in Aotearoa?—and the organisation of the chapters. The latter may appear confusing at first. As an archaeologist obviously concerned with chronology, I was expecting the structure of the book to follow the migrations of the Polynesians as we now know they happened, from West Polynesia to the margins of the Polynesian Triangle. Instead, Crowe chose to visit groups of islands along three main voyaging routes: from Easter Island to Pitcairn and the Austral Islands; from Hawai'i to the Society Islands; and from the Marquesas to the Cook Islands. All roads, potentially, lead to Aotearoa. Crowe justifies this approach in order to "challenge a common misconception that the first inhabitants of these islands remained in isolation, lacking the capability of getting back" (p. 15). In between, he includes chapters focused on traditional wayfinding, exploration and discovery, and adaptation to New Zealand's particular ecological conditions. Although departing from classical narratives of migrations, his organisation remains compelling and surely succeeds in demonstrating the unrivalled voyaging capacities of Polynesians generally and Māori specifically.

Anyone familiar with Crowe's previous publications knows that he is one of New Zealand's most famous writers of natural history and a specialist of native plants and birds. He did not abandon his passion for Pacific flora and fauna in this new volume. Indeed, he superbly brings together evidence from archaeology, oral traditions, ecology, ethnobotany, navigation, bird migrations and astronomy to reconstruct the reasons and conditions of these deep-sea voyages and subsequent regional interactions. Crowe takes the reader on a journey through the archipelagos,

highlighting for each the specificities of the local environment as well as the cultural and linguistic characteristics that make them both truly Polynesian and unique at the same time. For each, he devotes much attention to describing introduced crops from Southeast Asia and South America, discussing potential routes of transfer into the islands. Unsurprisingly, he also lingers over birds' patterns of migration, traditionally observed by the Polynesians themselves and potentially an incentive for them to travel further. Although those lines of enquiry have proved to be very valuable for understanding the human colonisation of the Eastern Pacific, they sometimes sound a bit repetitive throughout the chapters. On the other hand, one would have appreciated deeper exploration of other aspects of Polynesians' lives, such as the sociopolitical features of the chiefdoms or the importance of the *marae* 'ceremonial sites'. Although these topics are touched upon, their critical importance in the development of the complex Polynesian societies may be not stressed enough. These small omissions are, however, compensated for by the rich illustrations that further enhance the quality of this book. More specifically, I would highlight the quality of the numerous maps that were created for each chapter, summarising linguistic (e.g., sharing of names), archaeological (e.g., interisland exchange of artefacts) and environmental information in a clear fashion, and on which I am sure many colleagues will rely for teaching.

Another noteworthy quality of the book lies in the exhaustive review of Polynesian places. Crowe does not omit archipelagos commonly left aside in the big narratives: the Pitcairn group is covered with Mangareva, a whole chapter is dedicated to the Tuamotu atolls, discussion of the Line Islands is included with Hawai'i, and the Polynesian Outliers play a significant role in Crowe's final sections.

Chapter 10 remains in my view a tour de force of this volume. Crowe describes here what a voyage of settlement may have looked like in the most accurate and vivid way. Imagining a planned voyage from Rarotonga to New Zealand, we embark on a canoe and visualise Matariki rising on the horizon, follow the humpback whales and the petrels, observe the clouds and swell patterns, and learn how the Māori survived at sea for weeks with regards to such factors as hydration, provisioning and changing temperatures. Again, readers familiar with the anthropological literature on the subject will find no new information here, but very few writers since K.R. Howe's (2007) edited volume *Vaka Moana* have brought such freshness and liveliness to these accounts. This, undoubtedly, makes a difference in engaging global audiences with the topic.

The final two chapters review current theories on the origins of the Māori people as well as potential later contacts with not only Eastern Polynesia but also the Polynesian Outliers and other parts of the Western Pacific. Crowe remains cautious in discussing hypotheses, some of which still require further research, and simply offers the reader a truthful synthesis of the current state of knowledge. The excellent 12-page list of references included at the end of the volume will certainly guide the enticed reader.

I would, without a doubt, add this book to the list of readings for any students enrolled in an Introduction to Pacific Archaeology and Anthropology course alongside more specialised and topical volumes. But I would also surely recommend it to anyone curious about Polynesian peoples and their incredible achievements.

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Howe, K.R. (ed.), 2007. *Vaka Moana, Voyages of the Ancestors: The Discovery and Settlement of the Pacific*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

MAGEO, Jeanette and Elfriede Hermann (eds): *Mimesis and Pacific Transcultural Encounters: Making Likenesses in Time, Trade, and Ritual Reconfigurations*. New York: Berghahn, 2017. 278 pp., biblio., figs., illus., index, notes. US$130.00 (cloth).

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The eighth volume in the successful ASAO Studies in Pacific Anthropology series, this fine volume of 11 chapters (including Introduction and Afterword) has been admirably edited by Mageo and Hermann. Mageo's broadly theoretical Introduction in Part I frames the volume thus: "Our aim is to examine the (re)production of cultural likenesses, along with the cultural forms and forces they configure, as well as to explain how these (re)productions repeat and vary identifiable practices and performances and at the same time are turning points in a cultural history or an interesting set of histories: points of transcultural encounter" (p. 6). Key themes prominently interwoven throughout the collection include—as one might hope to find in such a thoroughly thought-out collection addressing this topic—questions of personal and cultural authenticity, the performative constitution of identity, Western acculturation and (of course) materiality and tradition. The ethnographic contexts of the papers are diverse: Australia, Papua New Guinea (four cases), Sāmoa, Aotearoa New Zealand, Tahiti, Banaban Fijians and the Marshall Islands. Equally, the historical range is large—from narratives of Indigenous Australians' first interaction with Europeans to contemporary Tahitian tourist weddings. Several chapters trace diachronic transformation in mimetic practices between these two poles, and so there will be many things in this volume to inform the more specific research interests of every reader: from warfare to fashion, Christmas to Paramount Studios. This variety, quirkiness and juxtaposition of contexts is one of the real delights in the volume. It is entirely as entertaining a read as it is a thought-provoking one.

Mageo (pp. 6–15) posits three ("heuristic" and mutually "porous") forms of mimetic practice that arise in transcultural relationships—with at least some implied linear correlation to the historical processes of colonial acculturation: first, incorporative mimesis, in which extraneous cultural symbols may be drawn into local cognitive schemata, or vice versa, under politically benign conditions; second, emblemising mimesis, in which indigenous cultural tropes are essentialised, reified as identity-defining and performatively instantiated in contrast to intrusive forms; and third, abject mimesis, which is informed by the writings of Homi Bhabha and Julia Kristeva to characterise the kind of "abjectly" acculturated personhood Mageo identifies in mature colonised middle classes (citing Bhabha's "not quite/not white" and V.S. Naipaul's "mimic men"). This trichotomy is an elegant, rational model and goes far beyond any interpretive constructs we have hitherto had for reading the trends of cultural mimesis in the Pacific. As with all fruitful ideas, however, it provokes questions: one might ask where a classificatory space exists in the model for a cognitively congruent and holistically actualised bicultural personhood—something that Hermann's chapter addresses. To my thinking, it is precisely the individual, intracommunity variability of transcultural experience, and the contextual power asymmetries that it frequently indexes, which drive many expressions of both incorporative and emblemising mimesis; abjectness, therefore, is perhaps only the most negative of a potential range of outcomes, or etic readings of them. Equally, I

am left uncertain about how (or whether) these three forms of transcultural mimesis further transmute in the variably decolonialised, globalised and urbanised contexts of the contemporary Pacific.

On a smaller sociological scale, the ensuing ten chapters (including Joshua Bell's Afterword) can each be viewed as a working out of these intercultural dynamics and blurred boundaries of performative representation. The central nine chapters are organised into three thematic parts. Part II, "Mimesis through Time", addresses the historical specificity of mimetic practices. In Chapter One, Francesca Merlan presents an interesting study of mimesis in early encounters between Indigenous Australians and the crew of Nicolas Baudin's cartographical voyage (1800–1803), framing imitative behaviour as relational, politicised and ethnohistorically specific. Mageo's own chapter deftly interweaves strands of psychology, visual anthropology and dress history to explore the interpretive utility of two Winnicott-influenced constructs—transitional images and transitional imaginaries. She uses these constructs to narrate the mimetic interplay of cultural schemata of self-presentation and representation between Sāmoans and German colonists around the turn of the twentieth century. In Chapter Three, Sarina Pearson brings Part II of the volume to a close with a fascinating analysis of transcultural mimesis between hosting Māori (Te Arawa of Whakarewarewa and Ngāti Raukawa of Ōtaki) and touring Native American performers of the Hopi and Navajo nations, during a 1926–27 Paramount Studios promotional tour for the western *The Vanishing Race*. Against a contextual backdrop which takes in Cook Islands cowboys and the short stories of Witi Ihimaera, she makes a close analysis of contemporary news media and a set of wonderful photographs to deftly elucidate the mimetic capital at play in a distinctive encounter, carefully teasing out themes of ethnic objectification, the front stage and back stage of cultural performance and the nascent discourse of a globalised indigeneity.

Part III, "Selling Mimesis: From Tourist Art to Trade Stores", analyses the relationship between mimesis and economic forces. It opens with Joyce D. Hammond's delightful and incisive exploration of authenticity play and performative mimesis in "contemporary traditional" Tahitian tourist weddings, thoroughly embedded in a close reading of Karen Stevenson, Anne Salmond, Adrienne Kaeppler and others. The situation one encounters in Tahiti today, Hammond concludes, is "a cumulative expression of complicated exchanges that draw heavily upon mimesis" (p. 133), which has been fed by both western and Mā‘ohi imaginaries over the last 250 years. In Chapter Five, Sergio Jarillo de la Torre picks up analogous themes in his study of Trobriand Islands tourist art carving since the 1960s. As well as usefully charting the early history of western encounters with the marvels of Trobriands sculpture, de la Torre applies Mageo's concept of emblemizing mimesis to critically unpack the classificatory category of *tokwalu*—works that emblemise Trobriandness for foreign consumption—within an enduring carving context of initiation, magic and the dreaming of new prototypes: for readers with an interest in the ontological specificities of the artistic process, this is a rich and stimulating text. Roger Ivar Lohmann closes Part III with an engaging and impassioned discussion of what he happily describes as the recent "failed mimesis" of capitalist market economics—that ubiquitous Pacific icon, the "trade store"—among the Asabano of southern Sandaun province, PNG. As he concludes, "The Asabano engagement with capitalism is a case of attempted

mimesis that is short-circuited by the stability of characteristics of Asabano society that are antithetical to the functioning of capitalism: intimacy, egalitarianism, and isolation" (p. 182); what an admirable situation to be in.

Part IV, "Ritual Mimesis and Its Reconfigurations", explores the role of mimesis in the performative instantiation of both ethnic and religious identities. Elfriede Hermann's own ethnopsychological chapter focuses on mimetic transculturation among the modern Banabans of Rabi Island in Fiji. It concerns itself with elucidating the complex conceptual interplay between sameness and difference on one hand, and universality and cultural specificity on the other; she does this through a charming materiality study of decorated cakes and costumes associated with first and twenty-first birthday celebrations that is both historically and ethnographically fruitful. In Chapter Eight, Laurence Marshall Carucci takes the reader to the Marshall Islands at Christmastime with a study that first echoes and then extends Mageo's concept of emblemising mimesis to incorporate antithetical transcultural representations. The *wöjke* 'Christmas tree' of Ujelang—which he describes as "an exploding piñata-type contraption, but often much larger" (p. 214)—features prominently in his early analysis and evokes a wide-ranging exegesis from echoes of cargo phenomena to postwar nuclear testing; thereafter he develops a useful concept of the antithetical mimesis of Westerners within a more everyday context of timekeeping schemata and churchgoing. Doug Dalton closes Part IV with a study of interaction between the Rawa people of New Guinea and German missionaries in the years after 1900, and the development of Rawa Christianity thereafter; Dalton's chapter is theoretically intricate and closely argued in a landscape of ideas drawing upon Gregory Bateson, Roy Wagner and Bronwen Douglas, but deeply rewarding for it—as one might expect. Joshua Bell's Afterword both is a perceptive analytical discussion of the foregoing chapters and offers its own ethnohistorical case study: an exploration of mimetic material interactions and staged field photography between the Tombe villagers of northern West Papua and the personnel of the 1926 American-Dutch Expedition, in which the Smithsonian Institution participated. As Bell concludes, this volume cannot be the "last word" on mimesis in anthropological thought, but it does offer a theoretically rich, ethnographically varied and historically sweeping collection of interpretive tools and approaches. This powerful collection will undoubtedly become essential reading for any scholar working in this area.

McRAE, Jane: *Māori Oral Tradition: He Kōrero nō te Ao Tawhito*. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2017. 252 pp., biblio., index, notes. NZ$45.00 (softcover).

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I was fortunate to have grown up in a world where my elders taught our oral traditions predominantly by word of mouth. When I hear or read about oral traditions now, I appreciate, however, that there is a difference between oral traditions and oral histories, particularly in western scholarship. Many of our own people, I suspect, would likely think that these are the same thing, but those who dedicate themselves to the scholarly

pursuit of understanding Māori or indigenous oral accounts will know that little attention has been given to their different meanings and valuations. For Māori, this is a continuing dilemma because the tensions between supposed viable history and not-so-reliable traditions have been significant to the colonisation and displacement of our historical knowledge. In his 1926 essay published in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, Te Rangihīroa (1926: 181) suggested that Māori oral traditions were "more closely associated with historical narratives" and "must be regarded as history derived from an unwritten source". Decades later, Jan Vansina (1985: 27–28) also highlighted the value of "oral tradition as history", pointing out that while these include "verbal messages" and songs, in truth not all sources are oral traditions. Few writers have addressed the relationship of power between oral tradition and history. For that reason, Jane McRae's *Māori Oral Tradition, He Kōrero nō te Ao Tawhito* was a text that I was looking forward to with much anticipation. In an earlier work, "E Manu, Tena Koe!", McRae (2001) explored an array of Māori writing produced in nineteenth-century Māori-language print and newspapers, and in *Ngā Mōteatea: An Introduction* she (2011) examined Apirana Ngata's renowned written collection of tribal songs. Much of McRae's focus has been on written oral accounts, which are very different to the oral recordings most oral historians work with. This perhaps explains why she prefers the term oral tradition.

McRae writes that her aim in *Māori Oral Tradition* "has been to describe the oral tradition as a whole, its genres and special character, that is, the compositional style which demonstrates that it derives from an oral society, from *te ao tawhito*, the old world before the arrival of Europeans " (p. 3). The orality she invokes is drawn from an ancient world, but I found this curious and odd, when so much of the knowledge she is referring to, whether sung, spoken or performed in various other ways, is still a living practice. This is where the book itself feels most limited. Here, in a book about oral tradition, the archive McRae draws on is static and flattened out on the page, but in living reality the *waiata* 'songs', *whakapapa* 'genealogies', *whakataukī* 'proverbs' and *kōrero tuku iho* 'histories, stories of the past' she refers to also have a vibrant living archive of orators, singers and composers in the present. Thus, a focus on oral traditions as "literatures" and texts is only one minor part of a living oral history and tradition well beyond the writing McRae draws on. Had she undertaken interviews with present-day orators, singers, composers and tribal historians, this would have been a very different book, one where orality might be seen as much more than archaic textual sources.

There are five core chapters in this book, in addition to an introduction, a conclusion, notes and a bibliography. The structure of the study is fashioned to parallel that of a *whaikōrero* 'formal speech' where orators carefully select and deliver the appropriate whakapapa, whakataukī, korero and waiata in a specific order "to fit the circumstances and to make a point" (p. 5). McRae notes the importance of this order relevant to "the form of each genre", highlighting the priority of whakapapa over "all other genres" in that the "prior knowledge of a genealogy" may be necessary to understand allusions or cryptic references in a saying, narrative or song (p. 5). Whakataukī, she argues, are significant as they "anticipate the numerous set phrases which, as is typical of oral traditions, make up the patterned or formulaic language that

Māori oral composers used in the longer genres of *kōrero* … the songs and chants" (p. 5). This emphasis on "long ago" seems to ignore the existence of an ongoing and evolving living practice of whaikōrero, song composition and language delivery that is not limited to ancient written texts. These *taonga* 'treasures' continue to grow and develop as our people continue to live these practices at *tangi* 'funerals', *hui* 'meetings' and various tribal performances today.

McRae notes that one aspiration for her book "has been to draw attention both to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writing of the traditions from memory and to some of the writers, as a way of acknowledging their assiduous and enterprising recording and their skills as composers" (p. 5). This is an important point, an opportunity to witness the transition of purely oral worlds in an expansion where oral forms were already mixed with visuals and texts. Carving, which preceded writing, and *tā moko* 'tattooing' were both part of the world of oral delivery. Writing became a new vehicle for remembering and transmission. But how did these histories become traditions? On what grounds were they relegated from the ranks of historical accounts to the far less verifiable classification of native traditions? This book does not answer these questions. *Māori Oral Tradition*, McRae states, is written for a particular audience in "Māori language and oral literature". Her intention is to explore how Māori oral knowledge was passed on and came to retain its "orality" in print. Unfortunately, in many ways McRae's study furthers the misunderstanding that Māori oral traditions or kōrero tuku iho are something different from, and lesser than, actual history.

"The oral tradition", according to McRae, "comprises what Māori in te ao tawhito (the old world) composed, remembered, told and retold over generations—and their descendants, from the nineteenth century, wrote down" (p. 11). This statement highlights some of the problems with McRae's framing of oral tradition, which seeks to confine the authenticity and indigeneity of our knowledge to one particular recorded version or account. Our traditions continue to evolve and grow as we do, incorporating many traditional teachings but also newer, more recent episodes featuring the values, adventures and understandings passed on by our relatives from living memory. They are living and vibrant accounts, and are disputed, especially the accounts committed to print.

Traditions, then, should perhaps be considered the actual practices and rituals of transmission, whereas the content, narratives and memories—the history component—is a separate body of knowledge based in experience, all of which is kept and shared to maintain this historical knowledge—our kōrero tuku iho. So this is where descriptions of Māori oral histories as traditions tend to collide, converge and diverge, in a confusing fashion that maintains a reductive and distanced view of oral traditions as synonymous with the Māori past, but not credible enough to be afforded the position of history.

Beyond my preoccupations with the contest between tradition and history, Jane McRae's book is an important text that reveals how interconnected Māori oral history is with writing and "literature". It offers an important thesis on the orality of Māori knowledge, particularly in her reference to the oral formula—a popular theory employed by ethnomusicologists and folklorists interested in ballads and oral traditions where composers recited and kept knowledge in a system of recall centred around set

patterns and rhythms. McRae's book fits within a large international body of work where native histories are unfortunately reduced to traditions. The use of Māori *kupu* 'words' to describe what McRae calls oral traditions is interesting. She uses "kōrero tuku iho" (lit. 'words handed down'), a phrase that others, myself included, have used to define oral history and not just traditions. I encourage anyone who wants to deepen their knowledge of Māori and New Zealand history to take into account Maori perspectives on these issues. More importantly, the obvious entry points to understand Māori oral histories and traditions is to ask and speak with Māori themselves. These are not bodies of knowledge best learnt from books. They need to be experienced, heard, felt, shared, seen and lived.

Māori Oral Tradition is a good book, well written, easy to read and follow. It is set in a western-style field of tradition and oral literature that sometimes appears to forget that indigenous peoples have our own ways of thinking about the sources that too many define as "traditions". For oral historians in Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond, this is a lesson worth learning. Where do oral traditions in New Zealand really fit in the disciplines of history and oral history? Are Māori oral traditions, if that is what they truly are, just another form of oral history in New Zealand? In exploring these questions in the twenty-first century, Jane McRae's book might be a good place to start.

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