

**TAUTAI: Sāmoa, World History, and the Life of Ta'isi O.F. Nelson.** By *Patricia O'Brien*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2017. xxviii, 399 pp. (B&W photos., illustrations.) US\$72.00, cloth. ISBN 978-0-8248-6653-2.

This biography sets the life of Ta'isi Olaf Frederick Nelson (1883–1944), a Samoan merchant and anti-colonial political leader, in the context of twentieth-century colonialism and the British Empire. He was the son of a Swedish settler-trader, August Nelson, and Sinagogo Masoe from Safune Savai'i. This was a period in which race was the justification for colonial rule in Asia, Africa, and the Pacific Islands. Colonial officials told themselves stories about how their regimes were for the benefit of the colonized people they ruled. Believing they belonged to a superior race, European colonizers claimed that colonialism was a project to civilize the child-like natives. The colonial race-based order was one in which white people ruled brown people. The racist narratives of those times depicted mixed-race people as half-castes, those who could upset and subvert the colonial order. Those with family connections on both sides of the imposed racial divide were regarded with prejudice and suspicion.

Maintaining racial hierarchies was central to colonial rule throughout the British Empire (Damon Ieremia Salesa, *Racial Crossings*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). To divide and conquer, the colonizers had to ensure that mixed-race people were marginalized and mistrusted. Accordingly, if the “simple” natives objected to colonial laws, there must have been a villain who was misleading them who had to be silenced. In the opinion of successive Administrators of Samoa in the 1920s and their political allies in New Zealand, that villain was Nelson. He was a rich, successful, respected man who supported the objections of other Samoan leaders to laws that deprived Samoans of basic rights. Nelson became a scapegoat and was blamed as an agitator for supporting the Mau independence movement. The Mau movement passively resisted New Zealand rule, which was granted under a League of Nations Mandate over Samoa in 1921, following New Zealand's disastrous military administration (1914–1920). The memory of New Zealand's failure in 1918 to quarantine the islands from an influenza pandemic that killed approximately one in every five Samoans, mainly young adults, was a major factor in Samoa's resistance to New Zealand rule.

Nelson had initially advocated the racial classification system by which the population was divided into “natives” and “Europeans,” which included part-Europeans as well as white settlers and colonial officials. However, the heavy-handed paternalism of New Zealand's civil administration soon led him to reject a system in which Samoans had few legal rights. Nelson took the chiefly title of his mother's family Ta'isi to emphasize his Samoan identity and founded a newspaper criticizing the policies of the administration. Unable to accept that the growing rebellion against them was initiated by Samoan leaders, the New Zealand administration blamed Nelson as a half-caste

instigator and sponsor of the Mau. In their view, the simple natives could not have hatched ideas of justice and equality for themselves. The story they told the world was that Nelson was not a “real” Samoan, but a half-caste, whose criticism of the New Zealand administration was motivated solely by his business interests. They said that Nelson was not only a troublemaker but an exploiter who cheated and misled the Samoans.

A number of those who have written on the Mau movement have suggested that Nelson was mainly motivated by threats to his business interests. O’Brien challenges this explanation, pointing out that in the New Zealand colonial administration’s efforts to separate part-Samoan business operators and planters from their Samoan family and village connections, they introduced a government-subsidized copra-buying scheme. At the same time, they placed the confiscated German plantations under management by the colonial administration. Instead of selling off the plantations to the likes of Nelson, the colonial administration corporatized them as the New Zealand Reparation Estates, which became, upon Samoa’s independence in 1962, the Western Samoan Trust Estates Corporation. These extensive plantations never regained the efficiency and prosperity that they had under the large German corporation from whom they were confiscated.

The Mau was organized in villages throughout Samoa and had the support of three of Samoa’s four paramount chiefs, with direct leadership by two of them. Members of the Mau wore uniforms and held regular protest processions along the main street of Apia town in front of the colonial administration’s headquarters. A political climax was reached in 1929 when the police opened fire on one such peaceful demonstration killing a number of Samoan leaders, including one of the paramount chiefs, Tupua Tamasese Lealofi. The Mau was declared a seditious organization and troops were brought in from New Zealand to quell it. The year before, Nelson had been exiled to New Zealand along with two other part-European members of the Mau. During his five years of exile, Nelson canvassed his wide circle of influential friends around the world, including famous Maori leaders of the time. He was able to write in elegant, articulate English as well as Samoan, and wrote hundreds of letters and articles to support the cause of Samoan self-government. He also travelled to Geneva to make Samoa’s case to the League of Nations, but was shunned as a result of the New Zealand delegation’s insistence that he was a dangerous agitator. Shortly after his return to Samoa, Nelson was found guilty of treason, and on the most dubious evidence sentenced to ten additional years in exile as well as eight months imprisonment in New Zealand. As a result, he was ruined financially.

*Tautai* is an extremely detailed history in which O’Brien has meticulously researched Nelson’s life and times with the cooperation of Nelson’s heirs, including the former head of state and prime minister of Samoa, Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Tupuola Tufuga Efi. The Nelson family has preserved Nelson’s correspondence and publications, as well as many other records

of his life and times. Until now Nelson's story has been barely told, and in telling it, O'Brien has provided the deepest historical account ever written of colonial Samoa between the two world wars.

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MALAMA MELEISEA

**WAYS OF BALOMA: Rethinking Magic and Kinship from the Trobriands.** By Mark S. Mosko with Tabalu Pulayasi Daniel, Molubabeba Daniel, Pakalaki Tokulupai, and Yogaru Vincent; foreword by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. Chicago: HAU Books; The University of Chicago Press [distributor], 2017. xxxvii, 473 pp. (Graphs, map, B&W photos.) US\$40.00, paper. ISBN 978-0-9973675-6-0.

In this important volume, Mark Mosko presents a reinterpretation of some of the key tenets of Trobriand social organization, delivered as a direct challenge to much of the classic ethnographic analyses of this "sacred place" in anthropology's canon. In particular, he revisits aspects of the observations and theories advocated by Bronislaw Malinowski and Annette Weiner, suggesting that in many respects they misunderstood or misrepresented Trobriand ideas about cosmology and exchange.

The introduction sets out Mosko's mission to address two "puzzles" which have plagued previous analyses of Trobriand sociality: one relating to the ways in which magic is made effective (Malinowski's theory being the power inherent in the words themselves), and secondly, the assertions about Trobriand matrilineality and ideas about procreation. Mosko is especially concerned with the relationship between magic and kinship, and centres his analysis around various instances of *bwekawa* (sacrifice), which he argues is the key to understanding how magic and kinship are intimately related. He uses the Levy-Bruhlian concept of participation and a modification of Marilyn Strathern's new Melanesian ethnography (NME), with its focus on partibility and dividuality (a variant he describes as newborn Melanesian ethnography, or NBME), to assert that *baloma* (spirits) are animated beings who figure prominently as active agents in the daily lives of Trobrianders, making magic efficacious as recipients of reciprocal *bwekasa* sacrifices and being responsible for Trobriand origins and societal reproduction. He asserts that "[the] notion of *kekawabu* 'images' and *peu'ula* 'powers' or 'capacities' associated with them hold the key to unlocking the tie between magic and kinship and virtually all the additional beliefs and practices that follow from it" (15).

Although aligning the work in many ways with that of Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, known for his theoretical insights regarding Amazonian "perspectivism" and alternate ontologies, Mosko's approach is as much structural/functional, at pains to describe a total social system with all parts