

THE UNCOMFORTABLE OXFORD PODCAST
A VERY BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE BRITISH EMPIRE

Episode 4 - Thursday, May 20th

THE PACIFIC OCEAN

On the 'Polynesian question' or how the Pacific Islands were first settled (pre-European 'contact'), see:

Christina Thompson, *Sea People: The Puzzle of Polynesia* [a recently published and accessible account of the debate around human settlement of the Pacific and the continuing academic debates on the issue]

Patrick Vinton Kirch, *On the Road of the Winds: An Archaeological History of the Pacific Islands before European Contact*

On the voyaging and oceanic traditions and cultures of Pacific peoples, see:

David A. Chang, *The World and All the Things Upon It: Native Hawaiian Geographies of Exploration*

Ben Finney, Hōkūleʻa: *The Way to Tahiti* [an account and history of the voyages of the Polynesian Voyaging Society in the 1970s which confirmed the validity of Oceanic, long-distance voyaging techniques and knowledge]

Two accessible and balanced accounts of Cook's voyages are:

Nicholas Thomas, *Discoveries: The Voyages of Captain Cook*

Anne Salmond, *The Trial of Cannibal Dog: Captain Cook in the South Seas*

For a damning indictment of Cook's legacy and for a perspective of one of the key activists in the Hawaiian sovereignty movement (and former Professor of Hawaiian Studies), see:

Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i*

For an overview of nineteenth century history of the Pacific and imperialism, see:

Nicholas Thomas, *Islanders: The Pacific in the Age of Empire*

Matt Matsuda, *Pacific Worlds*

Noelani Arista, *The Kingdom and the Republic: Sovereign Hawai'i and the Early United States*

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For an accessible account of the place of the Pacific in the 20th (and 21st centuries) see:

Simon Winchester, *Pacific: The Ocean of the Future*

An academic 'textbook' and thematically structured series of essays which is a very useful resource to dive deeper into **current issues academic historians are grappling with in Pacific History**, see:

David Armitage & Alison Bashford (eds.), *Pacific Histories: Ocean, Land, People*

One of the most important essays in Pacific studies, which reconsiders the place and framing of the Pacific in the world from a Tongan perspective is:

Eveli Hau'ofa, "Our Sea of Islands", [Find here.](#)

[Australian National University \(ANU\) Press Website](#) - the ANU is one of the most important institutions in the world for the training and production of Pacific history and Pacific studies and their Pacific series is free to download. The series includes books such as:

Greg Fry, *Framing the Islands: Power and Diplomatic Agency in Pacific Regionalism*

Many of the **leading museums and galleries** in the United Kingdom hold large collections of material culture and art from (and depicting) Pacific cultures:

- Royal Museums Greenwich - 'Pacific Encounters' Exhibit - <https://www.rmg.co.uk/see-do/we-recommend/attractions/pacific-encounters>
- The British Museum - 'Oceania' Exhibits - <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/galleries/oceania>
- Explore items held by the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford (and the Cook-Voyages Collection) - <http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/weapons/index.php/tour-by-region/oceania/oceania/index.html> and <https://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/cookvoyages/index.php/en/index.html>
- Explore collections of the National Museums Scotland: <https://www.nms.ac.uk/collections-research/our-research/highlights-of-previous-projects/pacific-collections-in-scottish-museums/>
- Horniman Museums and Garden: <https://www.horniman.ac.uk/explore-the-collections/anthropology-collection/>
- An excellent resource to learn more about Cook's voyages has been put together by The British Library - <https://www.bl.uk/the-voyages-of-captain-james-cook>
- See resources relating to the 2018-2019 'Oceania' major exhibit at the Royal Academy, London - <https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/articles/tag/oceania>

Want to stay up to date with the latest news from the Pacific region? see:

- ABC 'Pacific Beat' <https://www.abc.net.au/radio-australia/programs/pacificbeat/>
- RNZ Pacific <https://www.rnz.co.nz/international>
- Griffith University 'Pacific Outlook' - <https://blogs.griffith.edu.au/asiainsights/category/commentary/pacific-outlook/>

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In the podcast, there's reference to the '**Gweagal Shield**', currently held by the British Museum, an evocative symbol of the 'first encounter' between Cook's crew and indigenous Australia.

- The object remains highly contested to this day. Scholars have questioned the provenance of the item - is the shield held at the museum genuinely from Cook's voyages? How was it procured? Was it stolen? Should it be restored?
- There will be a discussion of the shield Dan Hick's forthcoming book, *The British Museums: The Benin Bronzes, Colonial Violence and Cultural Restitution* but it is worth also looking at other published resources on it:
- The shield itself: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/E_Oc1978-Q-839
- The contemporary debate: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-05-11/british-museum-battle-for-stolen-indigenous-gweagal-shield/11085534> and <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/sep/25/the-gweagal-shield-and-the-fight-to-change-the-british-museums-attitude-to-seized-artefacts>