

Hilke Thode-Arora, ed. 2014. *From Sāmoa with Love? Sāmoan Travellers in Germany, 1895-1911: Retracing the Footsteps*. Munich, Museum Funf Kontinente, Hirmer. pp. 253, illus.

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This remarkable book documents, in words and illustrations, Sāmoan participation in the traveling ethnic shows that were popular in Germany in the two decades prior to the First World War. These shows featured indigenous people performing dances and other exotic “customary” performances from North America, Africa, Asia and the Pacific Islands, in Zoos around Germany. Among these, the Sāmoan shows were particularly popular due to the seductive charms of Polynesian women and the lure of the South Seas in the imaginations of many Germans. The pioneering entrepreneurs who masterminded many of these travelling shows were the brothers Fritz and Carl Marquardt. Fritz established his connections in Sāmoa when he was a minor official in the Apia Municipality, a political entity established by the governments of Britain, German and the United States in the late 19th Century to protect the interests of their expatriate citizens in Sāmoa. This preceded the colonial partition of Sāmoa in 1899 and the establishment of a German administration in the western islands of Sāmoa, and an American naval administration in eastern Sāmoa.

The book is prefaced by ‘words of welcome by Sāmoa’s Head of State, His Highness Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi, and by His Royal Highness Franz Duke of Bavaria (the book was produced by the Museum Funf Kontinente [Museum of Five Continents] in Munich, Bavaria). It comprises an introduction and eleven illustrated essays. To contextualise the book Galumalemana A. Hunkin provides an overview of Sāmoan culture, and Peter Hempenstall an overview of “Germany’s Pacific Pearl”. The latter provides an excellent historical summary of Germany’s presence in Sāmoa and it’s economic and colonial ambitions. Hilke Thode-Arora, who also edited the collection, contributes seven of these essays, explaining the phenomenon of ethnic shows in Europe, and the history of the German “traders in ethnographica”.

More analytically, Thode-Arora explores German fantasies about Sāmoa, including arresting cartoons images of conquest, depicting a large white business man (Germany) rapturously clasping (or being clasped by) a dusky island maiden representing Sāmoa. The photographs and posters advertising the shows portray handsome warriors, but more frequently beautiful young women, and a languorous Sina with her eel, affirming the sexualisation of Sāmoa in the German mind. The programmes for the shows promised, “forty lovely girls ... scantily dressed in short costumes” (p.103).

Sāmoa became officially German in 1900 and the German Colonial Society applied pressure to ban the recruiting of people from German colonies for ethnic shows. The Sāmoa show that travelled Germany in the years 1900-1900 managed to avoid the ban with the justification that it served diplomatic and economic ends, rather than mere entertainment. It was partly organised and led by high-ranking Sāmoans including Te’o Tuvale and Tamasese Lealofi I. On this tour it was unclear as to whether Tamasese was there to be exhibited (he was advertised as an attraction in posters for the show), or whether he was there for diplomatic purposes to meet the Kaiser and other high-ranking Germans (which he did).

Although with historical hindsight and from a contemporary perspective these shows may seem vulgar and exploitative, it also seems unlikely that the Sāmoan participants saw them this way.

Although there were many hardships involved in the tours, it is more likely that Sāmoans saw them as great adventures, as gestures of friendship, and following 1900, as affirmations of their new status as Pacific Island Germans. Hilke Thode-Arora made considerable efforts to locate the relatives to learn more about the lives those who toured. The book concludes with an interview with the New Zealand-Sāmoan artist Michael Tuffery discussing his *Siamani-Sāmoa* art exhibition, which was shown in Munich in 2014 in conjunction with the *From Sāmoa with Love? Sāmoan Ethnic Shows in the German Empire* exhibition at the Museum of Five Continents.