

Still, Samson clearly feels it was all worth it, if only because it let him see so much of the world, to experience so many countries and to accustom him to having to understand so many viewpoints just to survive.

A fascinating book about a fascinating time.

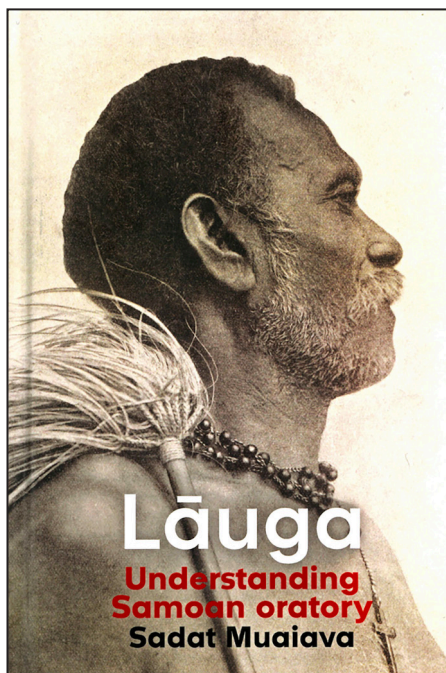
New guide to Samoan oratory

Lāuga: Understanding Samoan oratory, by Sadat Muaiava. Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2022. 336 pages.

THIS beautifully produced book is a guide to the art of Samoan public speaking that is embedded in the practices of chiefly speeches (*lāuga fa'amatai*) or sermons (*lāuga fa'alelotu*). It is intended to guide those who may be asked to speak at significant occasions, especially those within the Samoan diaspora who may have lost some of their familiarity with this significant cultural skill.

The author provides instructions and guidelines for those unfamiliar with or even intimidated by the idea of speaking formally and explains how and under what circumstances protocol and social relationships guide their performance and their audience's expectations.

Because *lāuga* draws on many sources for information, the book is balanced with examples and personal recollections. It also looks at related rituals and cultural performances such as welcomes and acts of atonement.



For non-specialised audiences Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's apology for the Dawn Raids using a traditional Samoan gifting ceremony, the Sua, will probably be the most familiar.

It includes Minister for Pacific Peoples Aupito William Sio's speech in support of the apology and the presentation of gifts that accompanied it. This provides an example of the power and use of words and the significance given to them in Samoan culture.

The minister said: 'She has humbled herself for the sake of the Pacific people of Aotearoa—an act of aroha. She has covered herself with a fine mat as act of humility. She has asked forgiveness for the wrongs committed by others.'

Then he went on to say: 'Our elders say "stones turn to dust, but words live

on” . . . Like the Sua gifting custom we present to you the manifestation of the words of today’s apology. May our words continue to live on and offer strength and confidence to all future generations of Pacific Aotearoa.’

Faux footnotes and a false frontispiece

Dakuwaku, by Anurag Subramanai. Honolulu: Lo’ihi Press, 2021. 327 pages.

THIS book tries very hard to be very clever, with a thousand literary, Pacific and other allusions dripping from every page and a writing style that is (I think) intended (perhaps) to mirror the comic prose of Swift and Boswell.

There are copious faux footnotes, a false frontispiece, addenda, exhortations to the reader and other literary devices that have not been seen since the steam press was invented. It is, in short (possibly) an attempt at what we used to call a picaresque novel in first year lit.

It is clearly intended to be very clever and very creative and is, alas, utterly impenetrable.

I suspect that it was intended (maybe) to be a sort of Indo-Fijian version of *Tales of the Tikongs* with much satire and a vast cast. Alas, I suspect that the satire—and indeed much of the book’s meaning—will be apparent to nobody but the author (who, incidentally, apparently has a pet mongoose called Slinky).



DAKUWAKU

A True Account of the History, Peculiar Customs and Strange Rituals of the Inhabitants of Dakuwaku of the Ebononēsos Sphere of The Great Antepus Basin. In Two Books. Book One, by Beejoo Lala, First of Rambeehar, Dakuwaku, then of Kookooberra, Dingroodum: Gentleman, Chronicler, Yarn-Spinner and Friction-Maker.

A NOVEL BY ANURAG SUBRAMANI

Too much is going on and too much has been attempted for the average reader, or at least one with limited patience, to persevere much beyond the 12th footnote on page 51 about the life of Chin-Choonamma who caused a great scandal by becoming the kept woman of the up and coming Khattakuttu MadRapper Samir K. Chambee.

It is to be earnestly hoped that the author’s next project, a people’s history of Fiji, will be blessed with greater clarity.