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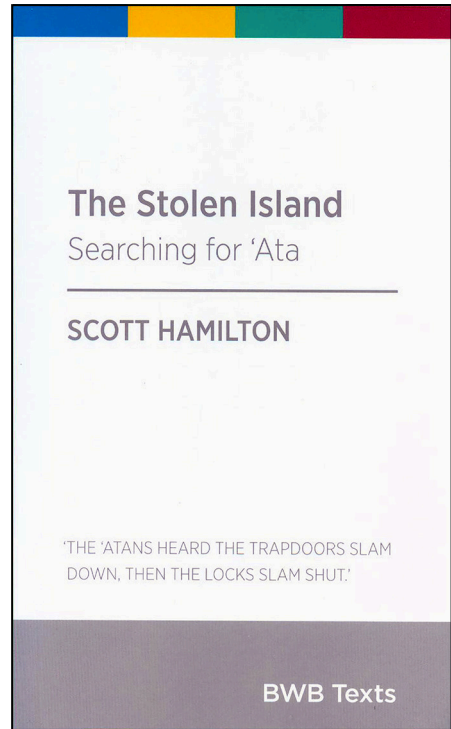
Decimation of a Tongan island by slaver's trickery

The Stolen Island: Searching for 'Ata, by Scott Hamilton. Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2016. 112pp. ISBN 978-0-947518-11-0.

LOCATED even further south than temperate Nouméa, Tonga's tiny island of 'Ata might have become the jewel of the kingdom's burgeoning tourist industry. Imagine a Tongan resort that would not only be mild in winter, but pleasant in summer.

Alas, it was not to be. As Scott Hamilton poignantly describes in his concise account, *Stolen Island*, an Australian whaler, the *Grecian*, anchored offshore in June 1863, tricked nearly half the island's over 300 inhabitants to come aboard to trade, then locked the exits and delivered them to a slave ship, the *General Prim*, bound for Peru. Shortly after their arrival in port, the Peruvian government enforced its abolition of slavery and ordered all captured islanders, including Tahitians and Tongans, repatriated.

Yet the prisoners were again betrayed: this time by being labelled a medical threat by the captain of the returning vessel and dumped on remote Cocos Island, where all but 38 perished. Finally in November, a



Peruvian warship brought survivors to the seaside village of Paita, where the descendants of some 'Atans may possibly live today.

Before continuing this review, a word about author Hamilton, already known to many readers of *PJR*. Scott earned a doctorate in sociology from the University of Auckland in 2009 on the strength of a cogent critique of E.P. Thompson, an independent British socialist of the last half of the 20th century; remarkably, the study was published by the University of Manchester within three years of Hamilton's defence.

Following publication, Hamilton joined Tonga's 'Atenisi Institute for a year as associate dean. Currently he's collaborating with Auckland University

of Technology filmmaker Paul Janman on a history of the Great South Road, after receiving a literary grant from Auckland's mayor to as well chronicle the artery in print.

Back to 'Ata. After learning of the abduction, Tonga's king shipped its remaining residents to the island of 'Eua, within sight of the island of Tongatapu, on which the capital Nuku'alofa is located.

The second half of *Stolen Island* speculates both about the descendants of those transferred to Peru and those relocated in 'Eua: Can those in Paita be traced? Have they prospered? How do 'Atans in 'Eua differ from indigenous

'Euans? (To confirm the flexuous journey of his people, Masalu Halahala, chief of the 'Atan village on 'Eua, greeted Kiwi literati at Stolen Island's recent launch.)

Hamilton's kinetic capsule sweeps like a tornado siphoning Lapita settlement, Dutch exploration, South American slavery, Down Under servitude, infectious disease, Kiwi justice, Tongan gossip, and the adventure travel of an intrepid Spaniard. Yet at the end of the day it is 'Ata that remains—a rocky isle, now uninhabited, with its 18th century ruins glimmering in the subtropical sun, as your Airbus hurtles you to bustling Auckland.



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