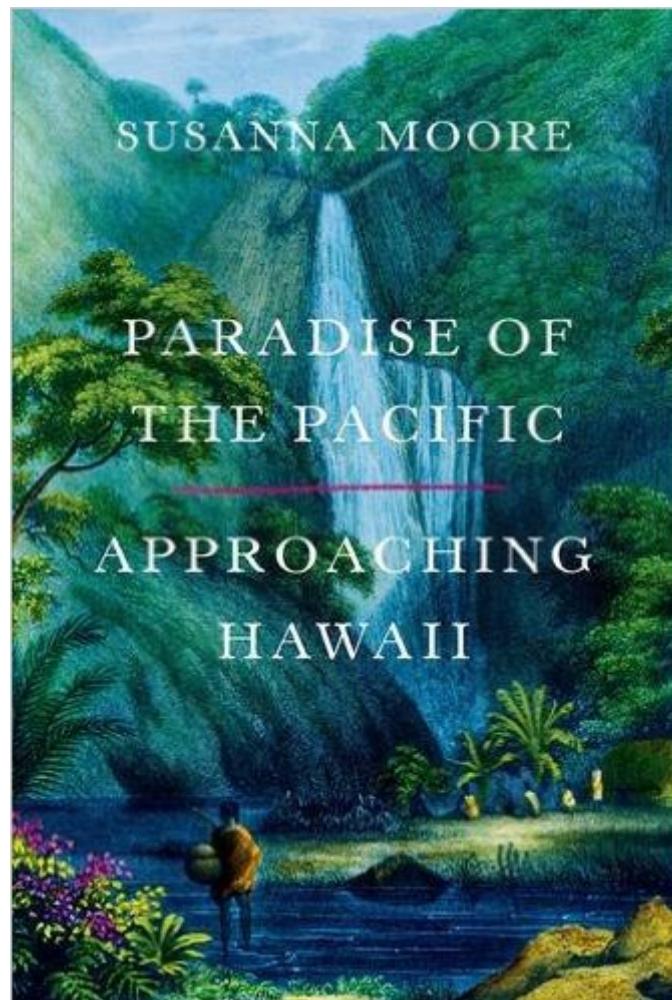


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Paradise Of The Pacific: Approaching Hawaii



Synopsis

The dramatic history of America's tropical paradiseThe history of Hawaii may be said to be the story of arrivalsâ •from the eruption of volcanoes on the ocean floor 18,000 feet below, the first hardy seeds that over millennia found their way to the islands, and the confused birds blown from their migratory routes, to the early Polynesian adventurers who sailed across the Pacific in double canoes, the Spanish galleons en route to the Philippines, and the British navigators in search of a Northwest Passage, soon followed by pious Protestant missionaries, shipwrecked sailors, and rowdy Irish poachers escaped from Botany Bayâ •all wanderers washed ashore, sometimes by accident. This is true of many cultures, but in Hawaii, no one seems to have left. And in Hawaii, a set of myths accompanied each of these migrantsâ •legends that shape our understanding of this mysterious place. In Paradise of the Pacific, Susanna Moore, the award-winning author of In the Cut and The Life of Objects, pieces together the elusive, dramatic story of late-eighteenth-century Hawaiiâ •its kings and queens, gods and goddesses, missionaries, migrants, and explorersâ •a not-so-distant time of abrupt transition, in which an isolated pagan world of human sacrifice and strict taboo, without a currency or a written language, was confronted with the equally ritualized world of capitalism, Western education, and Christian values.

Book Information

Paperback: 320 pages

Publisher: Farrar, Straus and Giroux; Reprint edition (August 2, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0374536171

ISBN-13: 978-0374536176

Product Dimensions: 5.4 x 0.9 x 8.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (29 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #212,171 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #63 inÂ Books > History > Australia & Oceania > Oceania #3421 inÂ Books > History > Americas > United States > State & Local

Customer Reviews

This is a difficult book to describe. It is an utterly absorbing story, a kind of history told through the lives of participants--even the grimly proper missionaries come through as living, breathing human beings. This is not your book, if you are looking for nature. modern Hawai'i. a travelog or traveler's guide, or modern history. It stops at the point of American annexation of the islands. That said,

Moore tells an absorbing story, primarily from Captain Cook's "discovery" of the islands to the annexation, much of it told in the form of interaction between the American missionaries and the dynasty of Kamehameha and his descendants. I'd suggest sampling a few pages before you buy. My guess is that many readers will love the book but that some will wonder why it was written. There is a great deal of Hawai'iian history that's background but not described in detail. This background includes such things as the arrival of whaling ships (largely American), the white (and also from Asia) beachcombers, the sandalwood trade, and details of the conquest of most of the islands by Kamehameha. The overall story is not ethnographic, not an academic analysis, not sociology nor a detailed account of missionary activity. It's first and foremost a narrative about people. The Hawaiians descended from migrants encountering a new land, who over centuries formed an elaborate culture. The missionaries encountered a new land and new culture and tried to change it for what they saw as better. In the background are the arrivals of whaling ships, of commerce. There have been many arrivals in the islands, of course, including Chinese and Japanese and others brought in to work the fields. The central story remains the extended Kamehameha family and native interaction with missionary ideas.

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