

# From Sudan to Samoa: Imperial Culture and Legacies in New Zealand's Rule over the Mandated Territory of Western Samoa

Wednesday 29 Oct. 2014 4:15-5:30pm

School of History Seminar Series

**Speaker: Patricia O'Brien**, School of History, ANU

**McDonald Room**, Menzies Library, ANU



The Black Saturday Massacre of December 1929 was the most notorious event in New Zealand's rule of the Mandated Territory of Samoa. This seminar looks at this event anew by examining the impact of the Governor General of New Zealand, Sir Charles Fergusson. Fergusson was a veteran of the Second Sudanese Campaign, Northern Ireland and World War One. Once he became New Zealand's Governor General in 1925 he continued to take a deep interest in imperial affairs, this time in the Pacific. His imperial experience, particularly in the Sudan, shaped his outlook on the

Samoaan resistance movement – the Mau – that emerged in late 1926 and then bedevilled relations between New Zealand and Samoa for a decade. As the main connection between New Zealand and the British Empire through his Vice Regal position, Fergusson, and his conduct in Samoan affairs, demonstrate the way New Zealand operated as an empire within an empire. A study of Fergusson also illuminates how colonial cultures and legacies impacted the course of events leading up to the massacre. This seminar also focuses on other key figures in the history of the 'Samoaan Agitation', as the New Zealand government defined it, particularly the Samoaan nationalist leader, Ta'isi O. F. Nelson. It also highlights additional aspects of the history of the League of Nations' mandates system.

**Dr Patricia O'Brien** is a newly appointed ARC Future Fellowship in the School of History in RSSH, CASS. Before coming to ANU in 2014 O'Brien was based in the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University Washington DC. In 2011 she was the John I. Kislak Fellow in American Studies at the John W. Kluge Center at the Library of Congress, Washington DC, and in 2012 she was the J. D. Stout Fellow in New Zealand Studies at Victoria University Wellington. She is the author of *The Pacific Muse: Exotic Femininity and the Colonial Pacific* (Seattle, 2006) as well as numerous chapters and articles on colonial, indigenous and gendered histories centred on Australia and the Pacific within a broad arc of imperialism. Her Future Fellow project is entitled 'Colonialism, Violence and Resistance in the Interwar Pacific: Australia, New Zealand, New Guinea, Samoa and Beyond'.