both (239), and Meg Taylor is not Mick Leahy’s daughter (268n7). Several times the constitutional and political history is wrong (including both sets of dates for Joseph Tiene’s parliamentary term, 118 and 217). The referencing needs cross-checking, because—among other things—several items are missing, Marilyn and Andrew Strathern are conflated (256), Jolly and MacIntyre twice become Jolly and MacIntosh, several authors’ names are misspelled, several subtitles are missing, and an elision renders Jenny Hughes’s 1985 thesis title ungrammatical.

BILL STANDISH
Australian National University


In his foreword, B J Dalton states that this book is the first to describe the Pacific Islanders who remained in Australia after the vast majority of imported laborers were deported under the “White Australia policy” in the first decade of the twentieth century. Between 1863 and 1904 an estimated 62,500 Pacific Islanders (many of them returnees) entered Queensland to work on farms and plantations there. After deportation, an estimated 1200 to 2500 remained, many illegally. The author began her research (in collaboration with Clive Moore) by collecting oral histories of their descendents in order to study the nineteenth-century plantation period and labor trade, topics that have by now been thoroughly researched. The book is an expansion of her doctoral study, bringing the history of these people up to the early 1990s.

The methodology is “historical demography, [which] involves reconstruction of the demographic features of a community through aggregation of individual and family life histories built up from” local records in which names appear, supplemented by oral histories. The review of records appears to be comprehensive. Hundreds of footnotes indicate the source of every fact.

The central question addressed by the book is why this population did not disappear, as “was confidently expected,” and at times even “pronounced as an accomplished fact” in Dalton’s words. By her title, Mercer appears to suggest that Islanders persisted because they defied the extensive discrimination practiced against them by labor unions and legislatures. They continued to be employed illegally in sugar, reminiscent of illegal immigrants elsewhere, and to actively resist attempts on several occasions to exclude their children from schools. Interestingly, such efforts failed because of opposition from white churchmen, planters, and commercial interests who benefited from their trade or conversion. Marginalization and discrimination were the major factors accounting for the persistence of the population. As Mercer states, their
identity “has been created as much through external rejection . . . as through an internal perception of commonality.” However, if by defiance one means a political or cultural effort to retain an ethnic identity, there is little evidence of it. Efforts during the 1970s to “revitalise their cultural consciousness” appear to have received little continued support from within the North Queensland population.

Rather, it seems to me, the evidence presented indicates that people resisted in day-to-day ways only within the practical limits set by outsiders, just as the migrants did in the colonial period. Accommodation was primary, then as later. Adrian Graves (Cane and Labour: The Political Economy of the Queensland Sugar Industry, 1862–1906, Edinburgh, 1993), has demonstrated how raw recruits in the nineteenth century adapted remarkably to harsh, demanding circumstances by sharing information on labor conditions with fellow Islanders, rehiring, and bargaining individually and collectively for better wages and working conditions. As they gained experience the immigrant workers rapidly came to understand the wage and contract system and took advantage of it. Mercer also notes pragmatism as one of the key traits of the Pacific Islanders as a people. To me it is the key feature of the story Mercer tells.

The book contains a wealth of factual material on a comprehensive variety of economic, social, and cultural topics, including language, religion, sorcery beliefs, marriage practices, gender taboos, agricultural knowledge, food preferences, cooking, naming practices, the use of flowers, and crafts. In all of these respects acculturation appears to be similar to that of many other marginalized people. The most valued and durable aspects of the pan–Pacific Island culture that has emerged appear to be oratory and song, sharing, community responsibility, assistance to the old and indigent, the guarding of young women, and the disciplining of young children by unrelated elders. All are traceable to common patterns in the cultures from which they came, although the present generation cannot trace them to specific islands of origin.

The book holds much of interest on the early conversion of both migrants and native-born to Adventism and Pentecostalism. These religions appealed because they allowed for greater emotional expression, sanctioned the desire for a change of social status, and were led by Islanders, rather than outsiders.

Although the book does not place these descriptions in a theoretical or comparative context, those with theoretical interests in marginalized people, comparative acculturation, religious syncretism, revitalization, and other topics will find it a valuable source for comparative studies.

STEPHEN T BOGGS
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa