

repeatedly reworked for local consumption in a strategy that effectively prevents “other [non-Biak] scripts from making sense” (237).

There is a great deal in Rutherford’s argument to admire, and, as with all good arguments, much to take issue with. Her area studies allegiances tend to reproduce the nationalisms of New Guinea’s colonial boundaries (Biak’s position is clearly signaled in the subtitle of the book). Despite her claims to be looking east as well as west for analogies, this is an account of Biak society oriented very much toward Jakarta and Indonesianist ethnography, and sometimes strangely detached from historical or ethnographic contexts elsewhere in New Guinea. Given the excellence of her ethnographic and historical research, one might also call into question the author’s willingness to attribute potency to “foreign” theorists (Foucault, Kierkegaard, Derrida, and Spivak among them), whose capacity to generate domestic wealth in the form of expanded insights into Biak ethnography is not always evident. But there is considerably more depth and sophistication to the arguments of *Raiding the Land of the Foreigners* than a brief review can compass, and perhaps the strongest recommendation to prospective readers is that it opens up contemporary West Papuan society for analysis and understanding in a way that should banish the simple narratives of resistance and marginality from future accounts.

CHRIS BALLARD
Australian National University

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Under the Gun: The Small Arms Challenge in the Pacific, by David Capie. Wellington: Victoria University Press, in association with [the] Peace and Disarmament Education Trust, Department of Internal Affairs, 2003. ISBN 0-86473-453-0, 160 pages, tables, appendixes, notes. Paper, US\$24.95.

It was the kind of thing one might expect in a Schwarzenegger blockbuster, but not in downtown Port Moresby. In December 1999, a gang of gun-toting men hijacked a commercial helicopter and used it to land on the roof of a bank. Armed with military rifles and grenades, they stormed the building in search of the vault (91). The operation failed, and police shot the helicopter down into a busy street, leaving all five men either dead or fatally wounded.

Staggering, first of all, is the sheer audacity of the crime. The incident, after all, took place in broad daylight and was carried out by individuals by the barrel of a gun. What was perhaps even more startling, however, was the police’s reckless response. Killings of this nature, where suspects are shot while committing an offence, contribute to an escalating succession of retributive violence. Although the most extreme incident of its kind to date, this event, among others, has sparked talk of a new “gun culture” in the Pacific.

Unlike many press reports on the Pacific’s deteriorating law and order problems, which are often keen to deploy anecdote rather than evidence, David Capie’s book, *Under the Gun: The Small Arms Challenge in the Pacific*, carefully deconstructs the

rumors and myths surrounding the small arms trade that allegedly plagues the region. Capie establishes that, contrary to reports of a thriving interstate gun trade, the Pacific is “uniquely vulnerable to the threats posed by small numbers of uncontrolled firearms” (121).

Capie’s plan in the book is simple and straightforward. His study is divided into seven parts, which look, in turn, at various assertions made about the small arms challenge in the Pacific: that legislation and enforcement capacity are critical indicators of instances where societies will be more susceptible to gun violence; that an extensive licit and illicit trade exists in the region; that increasingly pronounced law and order problems in the Pacific are due to the proliferation of illegal weapons within states; that guns are sourced from either military and police armories or surplus World War II supplies. Each of these claims is then calmly held up to the evidence and shown to be either correct or misleading. A set of conclusions and policy recommendations follow, with useful appendixes that list military and police weapons inventories and US arms exports to the Pacific.

Balanced, compelling, and thorough in its use of available evidence, this book offers much to help policy makers in their initial efforts to deal with the problem. They do, however, require a better understanding of the situation at a local level before invoking disarmament schemes, such as those suggested briefly on page 115 (disarmament and demobilization strategies, including “weapons for development” programs).

As you might expect, given the book’s genesis as a report commissioned by the New Zealand Public Advisory Committee on Disarmament and Arms Control, Capie depicts a well-presented and thoroughly researched portrait of some of the challenges posed by small arms trafficking in the Pacific. Capie chooses to focus in most explicit detail on the four countries whose “histories of problems with firearms, violent crime and conflict and political instability” are more pronounced: Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu (18).

In chapter 1, Capie’s useful cross-national comparison of small arms legislation proves an informative resource for academics and policy makers. The book’s concluding pages importantly stress that “even ‘perfect’ laws would not address all the challenges presented by firearms in the Pacific” (117).

In chapter 3, Capie attempts to deal with the “wildly contradictory accounts about the scale and sophistication of weapons trafficking in parts of the Pacific” (76). He deduces that most illicit high-powered weapons in circulation are sourced domestically, which should not, however, encourage complacency, because “just a few dozen weapons” can have a hugely destabilising influence in the region (88).

Chapter 4 shifts to an account of the various contexts in which Papua New Guinea’s gun culture has emerged. These are violent crime, tribal fighting, human rights violations, and what Capie terms “bullets at the ballot box” (94). Capie acknowledges that an examination

of transnational arms smuggling alone does not capture “the diffuse range of deleterious effects” caused by small arms in Pacific societies (90). This chapter clearly demonstrates that the ready availability of weapons has enabled some groups, whether motivated by ethnic, political, or criminal agendas, to pursue their goals by armed conflict and violence rather than by more peaceful means. It also records how traditional forms of fighting have grown dramatically more bloody in recent decades.

Chapter 5 is excellent in its analysis of armory security and weapons control procedures. It has serious implications for the regional militaries, in some instances challenging their very existence. An informed source claims that Vanuatu’s Mobile Force was forced to “borrow” ammunition from the Vanuatu Police Force’s patrol boat “in order simply to be able to conduct basic exercises and target practice.” Meanwhile, the storage of weapons aboard the police patrol boat was so poor that “any would-be rebel taking control of this vessel would capture almost all the military ammunition in the country” (106).

The book offers valuable suggestions in its final chapter. But will tighter laws actually achieve their aim of reducing the amount of gun crime? The conclusions rely too heavily on legalism to supply solutions to the small arms challenge, and they exclude considerations of “society,” on which the state attempts to impose order. The book would benefit from a review of the various institutions of civil society in the Pacific because they are likely to provide the most hopeful

prospect for addressing the region’s small arms challenge. A number of local communities have already taken steps to tackle the growing problem of guns and violence in their areas and have experienced slow but steady success.

Under the Gun arguably leaves unresolved the more fundamental questions surrounding the small arms challenge. This appears to be the author’s intention. However, the title misrepresents the scope of the study. It implies that the broader “challenges” around which the small arms issue arises—gender, rising levels of poverty and unemployment, the lasting influence of kinship ties and institutions of indigenous Melanesian societies—will be explored. Accordingly, anyone who reads this book hoping to find explanations for the culture of violence that drives young men (such as the Isatabu Freedom Movement militia man featured on the cover) to carry and use a gun, might be disappointed.

Therefore, the only definite criticism that should be leveled at the book is the inappropriateness of the title. A minor change would make it more descriptive of the content and obvious intent of the book—which is about the trade and proliferation of small arms and light weapons—rather than the more comprehensive notion that the word “challenge” suggests. The title would then represent what the book truly is: a good starting point for more critical studies in this area.

Overall, however, *Under the Gun* does not pretend to provide great insights into the causes of the small arms challenge. It is successful in

what it primarily sets out to do in that it offers “an introduction to the problems presented by small arms and light weapons in the Pacific Islands” (17); identifies “some significant shortcomings in existing regulatory regimes and weapons control practices within states” (121); and, most importantly, seeks to raise the profile of the issue in the region. The book leaves us with little doubt that a “gun culture” has taken root in some Pacific societies. It is useful in explaining where the supply of weapons comes from, and leaves it to future researchers to identify what drives the demand.

EDWINA THOMPSON

Australian National University

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Akono'anga Maori: Cook Islands Culture, edited by Ron Crocombe and Marjorie Tua'inekore Crocombe. Rarotonga: Institute of Pacific Studies in association with the Cook Islands Extension Centre, University of the South Pacific, the Cook Islands Cultural and Historic Places Trust, and the Ministry of Cultural Development, 2003. ISBN 982-02-0348-1, 370 pages, tables, figures, maps, photographs, appendix, glossary, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, US\$19.00, plus postage.

Ron Crocombe and Marjorie Tua'inekore Crocombe are well known for their lasting contributions to the study of Cook Islands culture. According to their long-standing political position, they have promoted the publication of local views, and thus they have paid special attention to editing and

publishing both old manuscripts and contemporary authors' views. The present volume is in line with that policy and represents a major enterprise of putting together articles by nearly thirty Cook Island writers—too numerous to be individually mentioned here—covering major aspects of their culture and social life. Thus the book represents insiders' views with a rich variety of local perspectives on both traditional and modern questions. The aim of the volume as a whole is serious. It is a contribution to the discussion about cultural development in a Pacific mini-state with a resident population of 13,000 and many more Islanders living and working overseas. The articles do not represent a nostalgic view of a lost past but discuss the problems of Cook Islands society in a very concrete way, taking an open position on questions of politics, economy, domestic violence, and even recent developments in Rarotonga's nightlife.

The creation of local forms of artistic expression that are globally recognized is one of the main trends in the native people's quest for cultural recognition. The Cook Islands are well known for their expressive culture. This recognition precedes the recent admiration for their dance performances made widely known by growing numbers of tourists visiting the islands. Already in the nineteenth century, as a result of learned missionaries, the poetics of the islands received wide attention. Local writers also began publishing local oral traditions and poetry a hundred years ago. It is therefore no wonder that the book begins with a group of articles discussing the artistic expression of