

Book and Media Reviews

The Contemporary Pacific, Volume 32, Number 1, 277-301
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issues of representation, including discussions of the historical formation of a unified Melanesian identity and how contemporary Melanesians empower themselves. As Tarcisius Kabutaulaka expresses, “they have captured the colonizer’s weapon and used it for self-empowerment, creating a new breed of natives who are neither noble nor ignoble; they are the ‘alter-natives’” (262). This powerful statement echoes and contributes to contemporary discussions of the self-determination rationale in the Pacific. The volume’s remaining four chapters further engage with the dynamic tensions around cultural identity within local communities. Different from the bureaucratic, business, religious, and global tourists’ perspectives that too often frame Oceania’s communities, a distinct vision of an alternate path to the future emerges, found in the strong cultural identities, lives, and realities that make Pacific Islanders capable of engaging with the ever-increasing impacts of the world.

Throughout the collection, the dominant theme is that of illuminating Pacific alternatives through close attention to local voices, without whom it would be impossible for us to see these Pacific perspectives. The book reenvisions local-national-global relationships in a way that strikingly departs from the standard development calculus that equates a strong nation-state with a centralized national culture. Hviding and White and their coauthors brilliantly illustrate, often in active engagement with the communities in which they work, that cultural heritage can be a political innovation in developing distinctive Pacific alternatives with implications

for community governance, the management of land and sea resources, and the futures of Pacific states and their peoples.

CHENG-CHENG LI

University of Hawai‘i–Mānoa

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Dispossession and the Environment: Rhetoric and Inequality in Papua New Guinea, by Paige West. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016. ISBN cloth 978-0-231-17878-5; ISBN paper 978-0-231-17879-2; ISBN e-book 978-0-231-54192-3; 195 pages, map, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, US\$90.00; paper US\$30.00; e-book, US\$29.99.

What do a middle-aged Australian surfer, a capacity builder fluent in bankspeak, and a tourist-scientist interested in “discovery” all have in common? In *Dispossession and the Environment: Rhetoric and Inequality in Papua New Guinea*, Paige West argues that these sorts of positionalities are capitalist and assist in perpetuating rhetorical and physical acts of dispossession against Papua New Guinean (PNG) individuals and communities. West’s multisited analysis of rhetoric situates dispossession temporally, in terms of autochthonous imaginings of PNG communities as beyond and before; spatially, in tourism, development, and conservation-mediated landscapes; and personally, in the stories and articulations of dispossession provided by research partners. This work extends our recognition of the implications of Western ontology and epistemology on PNG people and places while also

moving beyond criticism to construct something entirely new.

West begins by reminding readers situated in environment or conservation science of the significant need to engage social and critical theories. Contributing to conversations in Marxism, political ecology, the ontological turn in anthropology, and decolonial methods, West links theorizations of dispossession by accumulation to the ahistorical production of peoples and places in Papua New Guinea by outsiders. She explains how processes of accumulation and dispossession “today rest . . . on the discursive, semiotic, and visual production of both Papua New Guinea and Papua New Guineans as outside of the natural order of things—with the assumption that the natural order of things is a kind of linear progression fantasy in which everyone . . . should have come to live, in urban, cosmopolitan ways” (23). The vignettes that follow surf tourists, development projects, conservation science, and PNG philosophy illustrate how rhetorical moves affect PNG sovereignty: spatially, economically, and discursively. Additionally, throughout the text, West documents that Papua New Guineans are not passive recipients; rather, they viscerally experience these acts of dispossession and resist and theorize them.

Chapter one analyzes the representational practices of the surf industry and those who fall within its currents. West discusses the replication of historic forms of travel writing, which emphasize discovery, frontier, and “primitive” places. In this imagining, Papua New Guineans are cast as “easygoing” locals, at risk of

being changed by the world or losing something essential about their simple (idyllic) lives serving the benevolent surf tourists at resorts owned by Australians. Drawing from Vincent Crapanzano, West incorporates the idea of the “beyond”; for Western surfers, both Papua New Guinea and Papua New Guineans are ahistorical, liminal, and disappointingly out of reach—beyond. This imaginative process not only entails rhetorical dispossession, since “the found ‘primitive’ justifies the assumed modernity and superiority of the Australian,” but also has material effects on accumulation within the tourism industry (61).

Drawing once more from the rhetorical imagination of foreigners, in the second chapter, West interrogates how this casting as before or beyond enables the framing of Papua New Guineans as unable to understand modernity and its accoutrements, like how to manage money (at household or organizational levels). West searingly shows that “underlying all this well meaning do-gooder-ism, there is an inherent focus on creating particular types of state-citizens and particular types of relations to land and natural resources that set the stage for ongoing dispossession” (73). Development projects are not merely about increasing incomes for rural Papua New Guineans; they are also about destroying customary tenure to allow for new forms of economic activity (including conservation) and creating new consumption-oriented citizens. This formation also obscures infringements on sovereignty and acts of dispossession that play out through capacity building sessions, such as discussions about the adminis-

tration of conservation funds in which PNG Institute of Biological Research scientists are reduced to laborers for big international nongovernmental organizations (BINGOs).

In Chapter three, West shares Gimi worldings, whereby through a relational process Gimi are co-constituted by plants, animals, and landscapes in a continual cycle of becoming. In contrast, central to BINGO conservation problem formation is the idea that Indigenous peoples do not value their environment and therefore exploit it; this logically implies that providing an economic value for the ecosystem, such as ecotourism or handicrafts, will resolve tensions between humans and nature. As is expected, this rough framing miscasts both the people and the so-called nature, clearing the way for BINGOs to determine the proper ways to manage resources, dispossessing “Papua New Guineans of sovereignty over biodiversity in their country, currently and in the future” (77). This rhetorical flourish also glosses over the complexity of Gimi relations with each other and the environment, exacerbating processes of uneven accumulation and dispossession within communities by favoring men over women. BINGOs certainly do not come across as innocent. Central to their work is the need to bring at-risk or high-value environments into being through “discovery” trips and research, benefitting from the unacknowledged expertise of communities and often putting them at risk physically in the short term and through the imposition of new management schemes and development projects in the longer term.

Significantly, West not only

analyzes the processes of dispossession enabled by Western rhetoric, she also creates space for a retelling of this story in a Gimi worlding both outside of and in creative tension with Western theoretical framings. The final substantive chapter builds on and expands the Gimi frameworks of chapter three—a Gimi philosophical contribution to theoretical conversations around accumulation and dispossession. Five stories are shared: an old Gimi story, ethnographic recountings of two stories from the field, a story of Gimi interaction with conservation, and, finally, a new story that asks us to “imagine an anthropological world where the analytic forms we choose might be derived from Gimi philosophy as easily as they are derived from continental philosophy, critical theory, Marxist theory, or any of the many other analytic frames to which we, as anthropologists, have had allegiances over the years” (114).

West’s *Dispossession and the Environment* is a necessary advancement of the field, articulating the discursive power of capitalism, Western imagination, and intervention in driving dispossession in Papua New Guinea. However, I believe West accomplishes something much more nuanced. Drawing from over two decades of fieldwork in Papua New Guinea and her careful engagement with the work of Linda Tuhiwai Smith, West attempts “the interweaving of multiple theoretical traditions in ways that do justice to the complexity of people’s global lives” (34). As West notes, representations “are more than just ‘discourse,’” and we, as scholars, scientists, and writers, should think critically about which philosophers we cite and how

our sources might be expanded to include our research partners themselves. Rather than emphasize Western discoverers and theorists, we might shift our focus to the Papua New Guineans woven throughout this text, who resist, reconstruct, and suffer as a result of acts of dispossession and accumulation.

FOLEY PFALZGRAF
University of Hawai'i-Mānoa

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Pacific Futures: Past and Present, edited by Warwick Anderson, Miranda Johnson, and Barbara Brookes. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2018. ISBN 978-0-8248-7445-2; 314 pages, illustrations, maps. Cloth, US\$78.00.

To paraphrase the major themes from this edited volume: History is the future, and the future is part of our present. Warwick Anderson, Miranda Johnson, and Barbara Brookes's edited volume, *Pacific Futures: Past and Present*, is aptly titled, reflecting a collection filled with historical accounts and present conversations, all looking to futures of and about the Pacific region. Like many works in Pacific Islands studies, *Pacific Futures* opens and closes with Epeli Hau'ofa's transformative insights, notably in Johnson's introduction with the vision of "Our Sea of Islands" and in the book's conclusion with a call for Pacific Islanders to define their pasts and present. This collection, however, focuses heavily on futures, imagined or imposed, by colonial projects and the intentional or unintentional agents of those projects. It explicitly docu-

ments futures imagined for Pacific Islanders through the figures of the missionary, the anthropologist, the sociologist, the teacher, the cartographer, the geneticist, the scientist, and the empire(s). Many of these are still imagined futures; others have been largely discarded as Pacific Islanders resist futures imagined for them, not by them.

This book is divided into four sections, which together are composed of twelve chapters. The two larger sections, "Genealogies of the Future" and "Weedy Historicities," generally focus on the past. This is key to this book's purpose. In Chris Ballard's "Afterword: Pacific Futurities," he distinguishes the book as not itself centered on futurity, as many have done, but as laying the groundwork for a more "serious" inquiry into Pacific futurities (280). Ballard considers Huli historicity in suggesting a spiral temporality; it is not quite cyclical, but it looks to the past works to imagine the future. Sandwiched between the two larger sections are two smaller ones, titled "Transit Futures" and "Asian Pacifics." These smaller sections are more tightly focused on specific topics.

To start with these smaller sections, the first chapter, Frances Steel's "Time Is on Our Side," looks at the introduction of both steamships and flight to the Pacific, considering British imperial desire to connect Canada and New Zealand, as well as how US military interests aligned with commercial flight. Ships remade the colonial map of the Pacific through necessary refueling, and flying boats privileging previously ignored coral atolls remade the map once more, but