

Pacific to reconsider the philosophical foundations of their shared pedagogical practices. Given that the university caters for the tertiary education of more Pacific Islanders than any other institution in the region, this is a crucial development.

Epeli Hau'ofa once suggested in an interview with Subramani that his novel *Kisses in the Nederends* (1987) be placed alongside the Bible in motel rooms. In fact, in 1993, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the University of the South Pacific, Hau'ofa was able to achieve an earnest distribution of *A New Oceania*. At the university graduation ceremonies that year, each student was presented with a copy of the collection of responses to "Our Sea of Islands." When asked whether he might consider providing incoming students with free copies as well, Hau'ofa answered that if on-campus students were interested in the book they had access to it, but he was more interested in sending the book "out there"—but with real people, not faceless distribution or retail companies. *A New Oceania* may rival "Our Sea of Islands" yet in its travels. For one thing, the book is so loosely bound that each page is perfectly poised to go on its own thrilling voyage, to discover and be rediscovered.

TERESIA K TEAIWA
*University of California
 at Santa Cruz*

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The Pearl-Shellers of Torres Strait: Resource Use, Development and Decline, 1860s–1960s, by Regina Ganter. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1994. ISBN 0-522-84547-9, xvii + 299 pages, maps, figures, tables, plates, appendixes, glossary, notes, bibliography, index. A\$29.95.

Michel de Montaigne, in defiance of the expansionist commercial logic of his time, railed against the depredations of sixteenth-century resource-raiders thus, "the richest, the fairest and the best part of the world topsitruvied, ruined and defaced for the traffick in Pearles and Pepper." Four hundred years later, Ganter's case-study of the rise and fall of the Queensland pearling industry is the sportscasters' "*deja vu* all over again."

The first rush to the Queensland pearl-fields followed within a year of their discovery in 1868. As rapidly as new pearlshell deposits were found, they were stripped of shell and, despite the opening up of more and more distant beds, "that first extraordinary harvest" was never repeated.

The once vibrant and important export industry evolved from and perpetuated colonial resource-raiding in Torres Strait, "at the margin of the South Pacific." A century later, unwilling either to abandon its "fossilised" practices of labor and natural resource management or to add value to its product through local processing, the Queensland pearlshell industry imploded. Depressingly, the structural weaknesses that brought about its collapse (evident as early as the 1890s) were apparent in the Australian indus-

try as a whole and exist, Ganter suggests, in many of Australia's contemporary natural resource industries.

Ganter's thorough and wide-ranging study is based on her 1991 PhD thesis, which won the inaugural Australian Historical Association prize in Australian History in 1992. The thesis in turn grew out of two oral history consultancy reports for the Australian Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority on early sightings of the crown-of-thorns starfish on the reef, and the Japanese experience of the pearling industry. According to Ganter, her thesis findings vindicate the authority's support for "restrictive principles of current fisheries management" (xvi). Excerpts from more than a hundred interviews with former divers and crew, along with twenty black-and-white photographs from private and public collections, add human texture to her book.

This sorry tale of the depletion of the pearl-fields and consequent industry failure was recapitulated by the other Australian Barrier Reef regional ventures into whaling, turtle-canning, guano-mining, and sandalwooding that shared its fate. For Ganter, who discusses the issue in some detail, they all involve "a basic contradiction in the use of common resources for private profit" (6). That same tension between the economic and the ideological today powers the passionate forestries management debate throughout the Pacific.

Books like this cover a lot of ground and synthesize a lot of data. There was nothing inevitable about the choices made by the pearlers, and the book is thematically structured in order to

highlight what might have been—those occasions on which the industry might have innovated in response to changing conditions but failed to do so.

The first four chapters address the pearling workforce: the legislative and administrative framework, Australia's early trade and labor relations with Asia and the Pacific, the disgraceful role of the state as a guarantor of cheap labor. They also provide fascinating accounts from oral and written testimony of Torres Strait Islander, Aboriginal, and Japanese involvement in the industry. The last four chapters review resource use and management: technological innovation, government intervention, marketing initiatives, and tellingly compare unsuccessful Australian with successful Asian fisheries management.

Ganter's careful reading of early sources counters a number of myths about Torres Strait contact history: for example, that the early captains were independent entrepreneurs, and that marine workers participated "without distinction" in the fisheries. Ganter reconstructs a network of partnerships and ownerships linking Torres Strait enterprises with the major Pacific trading companies; she demonstrates that, with the shift to mass production in the 1890s, "functional differentiation [of labor] coincided with ethnic boundaries" (31). (In fact, from the very beginning an informal but no less pervasive racial hierarchy operated, one that was internalized by Islanders and persists to this day.) There are a few factual inaccuracies, but these are minor and inevitable in a work of such breadth and do not invalidate Ganter's structural arguments. For example,

John Stewart Bruce (no index entry) arrived on Murray Island in August 1881 not 1886; Charles Edwards did not die before 1870, as Ganter infers from the reports she looked at: he gave evidence at the 1874 Sydney Museum enquiry and in 1875 captained the *Chevert* expedition to New Guinea; the London Missionary Society missionary was Samuel not Steve McFarlane (no index entry); Hammond Island (no entry) was officially inaugurated as a Catholic mission in 1929, not 1930; Edward not Edmund Pitt (no index entry), the son of a Jamaican father and New Caledonian mother, was born on Murray Island, Torres Strait, and his identification as a South Sea Islander is problematic; Filipinos (no index entry) began to be employed earlier than Ganter suggests, probably from the mid-1870s, after the introduction of the diving dress. By October 1884, the date of his arrival on Thursday Island, Catholic missionary Father Ferdinand Hartzler found the settlement "populated by a small number of Europeans and about eight hundred Catholics from Manila scattered amongst the various islands. They were there fishing for pearls." By 1885 they constituted the third largest ethnic group after Indonesians and Pacific Islanders, though by the 1890s all groups were far outnumbered by the preferred Japanese.

Ganter's major argument, first proposed by John P S Bach in his confidential report to the Department of Commerce and Agriculture, "The Pearlling Industry of Australia" (1955), is that the pearlshell industry, and the northern centers it supported, need not have collapsed, if only the shellers had

taken a longer-term view and been prepared to jettison their outmoded and ultimately self-defeating mass-extraction practices. Alternatives, such as resource husbandry, artificial cultivation, local processing, and small-scale harvesting by indigenous residents, were rejected by shellers interested only in maximizing output in the short term. A sad consequence was the opportunity lost to Torres Strait Islanders and Cape York Aboriginal people, with traditional claims to the area and therefore a likely interest in conserving resources, to gain a measure of independence by participating in a decentralized industry. One alternative, an island cooperative lugger scheme, was set up in 1904 but in effect sabotaged by the Queensland government before it took control in 1930.

Ganter has not been well served by her publisher: the index omits boat names, conventionally listed in books of this kind, as well as some personal and place names; capitals are used for some titles (Government Resident and Colonial Secretary), but not others (police magistrate and justice of the peace); all of the plates have been mispositioned, and there is no errata slip in the copy I bought.

These gripes aside, the book raises hard questions about the legacy of a colonial mindset that views natural resources as unlimited and the right to exploit them without hindrance as God-given; about Australia's dependence, as a mass extractor and supplier of unprocessed materials, on overseas markets; about the strength of Australia's commitment to resource harvesting and processing strategies that

would contribute to both regional and national prosperity; and about Australia's uncritical adherence to British-derived philosophies of economic organization. It analyzes the complex subject of race relations at Australia's margin: the pearling industry relied for its survival on cheap indigenous and imported indentured labor from Papua New Guinea, other Pacific islands, and Asia. It was the only industry exempted from the provisions of the White Australia Policy and the importer of indentured labor until thirty years ago, far longer than is generally realized. (The postwar struggle to retain this exemption, documented by Adrian Cunningham in his MLitt thesis, 1992, from the Australian National University, makes for interesting reading.) These long-standing problems were recognized, but each solution tried—shell-bed closures, size limits, license restrictions, and a Commonwealth marketing board—proved too radical to be implemented for long.

Anyone interested in natural resource management and the consequences of laissez-faire and self-serving administration, will find ammunition here against critics of conservation and sustainable development. I recommend the book also to readers with an interest in race relations and labor history in Australia, and the historical roots of Australia's Asian and Pacific interconnections.

ANNA SHNUKAL
University of Queensland

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Strategies for Melanesian Agriculture for 2010: Tough Choices, by J Brian Hardaker and Euan Fleming. Pacific 2010 series. Pacific Policy Paper 13. Canberra: National Centre for Development Studies, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, 1994. ISBN 0-7315-1931-0, vi + 156 pages, bibliography, index. Paper, A\$25.

This volume is one of a series initiated by the National Centre for Development Studies at the Australian National University that "seeks to highlight the consequences of failing to recognise and plan for the effects of population growth in the island states of the South Pacific over the next two decades." The series is directed at "island leaders" and those "in the industrial countries responsible for the design and delivery of . . . development assistance." This particular volume states that it covers the Melanesian countries of Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu and seeks to "address some strategic questions about the longer-term development of Melanesian agriculture, . . . and suggest how agriculture needs to change." It is based on the premise that agriculture "must provide the fundamental driving force for long-run economic transformation" and be "the engine for general economic development."

There is no doubt that the volume contains much good advice for policy-makers in the region. The underlying and frequently reiterated messages are that Melanesian governments have been unsuccessful in most of their attempts to use policy instruments to