

on the nineteenth-century creation of the Kanak reservation system nicely complements another essay on inadequate Kanak education). But Marie Lepoutre of Houailou offers a fine piece on the coexistence of “official” western and covert traditional medical practices on Lifou, and Teulières-Preston is Noumea-based. So is André Ouetcho, a co-author of the essay on precolonial archaeology—a provocative study that revisits fatal impact discourse by hypothesizing major Kanak depopulation from epidemics introduced by European ships before colonization, in contradistinction to accepted theories.

This book is a treasure of the latest scholarship on Kanak culture change, and it is regrettable, as Robert Aldrich pointed out at a workshop in Canberra ten years ago, that the general “lack of translations limits distribution and makes it difficult for undergraduate and postgraduate students to become acquainted with the French research on the Pacific” (*Pacific Islands History: Journeys and Transformations*, edited by Brij Lal; Canberra, 1992, 82–83). Apart from notable exceptions such as the University of Hawai‘i Press’s translation and publication of Joel Bonnemaïson’s *La Dernière Ile* as *The Tree and The Canoe*, and the current translation under way in New Caledonia of Dorothy Shineberg’s recent *The People Trade*, colonial linguistic boundaries continue to hinder our collective understandings of Oceania.

DAVID CHAPPELL  
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa

\* \* \*

*Radio Happy Isles: Media and Politics at Play in the Pacific*, by Robert Seward. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1999. ISBN paper, 0-8248-2106-8; x + 234 pages, map, appendixes, glossary, notes, index. Cloth, US\$45.00; paper, US\$24.95.

In *Radio Happy Isles*, Robert Seward seeks to create a full portrait of a Pacific Islands mediascape, albeit a mediascape composed of distinct local voices. Seward chooses radio as his subject rather than television or video, as television has not yet become a dominant medium in the Pacific Islands. Seeing the Pacific as a full space of “overlapping voices on the radio,” Seward maps how radio is produced locally and also circulates within the broader space of the Pacific. The result is a highly readable study that makes a significant intervention in media studies and Pacific studies.

Seward’s book serves as an extended argument against the “cultural imperialism” paradigm in which “South” countries are seen at the mercy of “North” countries’ dominant media. Parts of the cultural imperialism model certainly apply to some developing nations of the Pacific. However, as Seward examines reciprocal radio flows to and from stations in the Pacific and how foreign news material actually is incorporated, the cultural imperialism argument breaks down considerably. *Radio Happy Isles* is more than a simplistic study of local resistance in the Pacific through radio. Instead, Seward provides an overview of Pacific Islands radio in formation and at work from the early 1980s until the late 1990s.

The book is organized into six essays, each dealing with a particular aspect of Pacific radio, with noticeable overlaps. The essays' respective topics are the programming choices of a radio station serving a single community; the Pacific indigenization of a British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) model; the creation of a Pacific Island Broadcasting Association (PIBA) and its PACNEWS news exchange service; the news net system of PACNEWS; decisions and constraints that structure Pacific broadcast news; and western media's view of the Pacific. This book is focused on institutions and is not a reception study by any means.

Seward indicates that he spent several years listening to radio broadcasts and visiting various radio stations in the Pacific. Some of the places he concentrates on are the Solomon Islands, Bougainville (Papua New Guinea), Tonga, Fiji, and Samoa. In terms of radio production, these areas share material constraints, governmental and societal interests that threaten independent journalism, and a desire to create a Pacific sound. The result is not a case-by-case study organized by region, but a free mix; for instance, an example from the Solomon Islands may be closely followed by one from Fiji, then another from Tonga.

As Seward does not discuss his methodology in detail save in a brief acknowledgments section, his data collection and research methods remain unclear. He cites several key sources that were founding members of PIBA or coordinators in Pacific newsrooms. In addition to these interviews, Seward seems to have had access to the archives of PIBA, PACNEWS, and some Pacific radio stations. Some station general managers

seem to have been more cooperative and forthcoming than others. Radio Tonga, for example, gave Seward tours and allowed him access to the newsroom and broadcasts, while Seward was forced to rely on other sources to discuss ZAP, the Samoa Broadcasting Service.

His archival research at Pacific news stations works particularly well in chapter 3, "Fax in Exile." Focusing on the creation of the regional news service, PACNEWS, Seward begins by talking about how Pacific broadcast training was fought for, contested by, and eventually funded by UNESCO, later giving shape to PACNEWS. As a small media clearinghouse, PACNEWS received regional stories from Pacific islands, edited and rewrote them, then sent them back to those Pacific stations as a bulletin for rebroadcast. The Fiji coup in 1987, however, shut down PACNEWS less than a year after it formed. In addition to the political instability that resulted in the expulsion of PACNEWS's Indian news editor and two technicians, the news exchange also faced technological difficulties described effectively by Seward.

In the late 1980s, technologies taken for granted by western media, such as direct-dial telephones, facsimile machines, and word processors were not available in most Pacific newsrooms. PACNEWS and Pacific news stations had to work via radio telephones (one-way telephone via an operator), extremely slow telex machines, and old typewriters. The transmission of the news to PACNEWS headquarters—which itself was moving from Suva, Fiji to Auckland, New Zealand, to Honiara, Solomon Islands, then Port Vila, Vanuatu, under

conditions of exile—and its compilation back out to other Pacific islands was nothing but a minor miracle. In the early 1990s, many newsrooms finally made the transition to fax technology.

Despite the occasional ambiguity of his research methods, Seward's overarching argument about the importance of small media in the Pacific holds true for the production of radio news. He demonstrates that much of the news PACNEWS receives from Pacific islands originates from radio reports. Media flows within the Pacific, he contends, are also unique and complicate the one-way information-flow model from the first world to the third or fourth world. Pacific radio flows reciprocally, as in the case of Radio New Zealand International (RNZI), which sends PACNEWS its stories and subsequently rebroadcasts PACNEWS stories. RNZI news originates from Pacific newsrooms that RNZI hopes to target with its own broadcasts. "Pacific audiences," writes Seward, "are hearing . . . an echo of their own voices" (136). In this echo, media flows from poor to rich countries, and from small to big newsrooms. Seward establishes that "small media" may in fact be "big media" and vice versa.

Yet other assertions of his are not backed by empirical findings. While Pacific radio broadcasts undoubtedly echo and reverberate, who are listening to these broadcasts and what are people's reasons for paying close attention? What are the social spaces of radio reception in places like Tonga, Fiji, New Zealand, and Niue? We hardly see or hear people in the act of receiving these broadcasts. While Seward should not be faulted

for choosing an institutional study over a reception study, he does generalize about the social practice of radio, as in the conclusion of chapter one: "Radio captures the social and cultural sphere [of the Pacific] because it is not just bedroom radio or car radio or kitchen radio or even office radio of Western developed nations" (37). If he is to make such claims about the listening practices of Pacific Islanders, he should at least sketch these audiences. Even as far as radio producers are concerned, we only occasionally get in-depth insight into how engineers, reporters, and station managers might be bound by complex political, cultural, and social relationships. Complicated social networks, especially in small island communities, may not be reducible to a matter of mere government interference and commercial bias.

While this study is not an ethnographic one, Seward's narrative strategy helps to impart a sense of the "localness" of Pacific radio. He quotes often from broadcasts—some in Pidgin and others in English—offering an idea of what radio might sound like, with its regional music and personal service announcements. He also interrupts his essays with interludes that expand on his ideas and provide illustrative anecdotes. One particularly effective section, "Muddy Tapes," reveals how recording tapes are hoarded and recycled by Pacific broadcasters because of limited station budgets. This quick story embedded in a larger analysis of reciprocal media flows reveals much about the structural constraints and possibilities of Pacific radio.

*Radio Happy Isles* is to my knowledge the first comprehensive mono-

graph on contemporary Pacific media that treats the region as one large mediated space. While the gaps in the study are apparent, they also point toward numerous follow-up studies, including those that pay ethnographic attention to social practices around media production and reception. Seward provides productive schemas, such as his insistence on the importance of sound to Pacific communities. I can see other researchers picking up where Seward leaves off: to studies that address the intertextuality of radio news broadcasting and oral storytelling; the diverse social spaces where radio is consumed in urban and rural Pacific communities; or developing web technologies that are helping to connect Islanders and diasporic communities.

ADRIA L IMADA  
New York University

\* \* \*

*Representing the South Pacific: Colonial Discourse from Cook to Gauguin*, by Rod Edmond. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. ISBN 0-521-55054-8; xii + 307 pages, notes, index. US\$59.95.

*Storied Landscapes: Hawaiian Literature and Place*, by Dennis Kawaharada. Honolulu: Kalamaku Press, 1999. ISBN 0962310271; 112 pages. Paper, US\$7.95.

The time frame of Rod Edmond's book moves from Enlightenment-era contact in the South Pacific to the First World War and defeat of Germany; the spatial frame is the Polynesian triangle as affected by the colonial cultures of Britain, France, and the

United States. In lesser hermeneutic hands, this book could easily have the feel and reach of a "round up the usual suspects" text, but it is much more important than that. Edmond pushes the white mythology of Euro-american representation to some end point of complexity and subtle self-undermining. At many points (especially in the introduction and epilogue), he acknowledges the limits of working inside this very "colonial discourse" frame as inadequate to represent or approach Native Pacific voices and views of Oceania.

For Edmond, however, there is no place to stand outside white mythology or to claim some interpretive immunity from the tropological sway of "the textuality of history" and staying power of canonical representations (51). Like the very writers he describes, Edmond is working "both within and against the dominant traditions of representing the Pacific" (262); this western negotiation with cultural otherness turns out to be a way of preserving their power of aesthetic and political complexity from charges of mere orientalism or colonial appropriation. He defends Pacific cultures from tropes of elegiac vanishment and orientalist typing. But in effect Edmond preserves western writers in various genres from their own displacement by more indigenous-centered voices and forms, showing that like Stevenson (and the late Pacific phase of Jack London) western writers can create a situated dialogue of European modes and Polynesian stories and forms.

Edmond claims we cannot suddenly or totally disengage prior classifications, mappings, tropes in some act of decolonization by fiat, and I would