



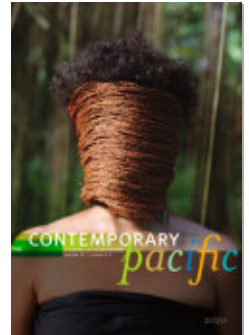
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*Living Kinship in the Pacific* ed. by Christina Toren  
(review)

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Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands in mid-2003. It challenges the idea that the conflict was primarily a result of tribal and atomistic binaries between Solomon Islanders. Instead, McDougall argues that “the violence had little to do with the failure of local people to transcend local bonds of kith and kin to embrace a more cosmopolitan national identity. Rather, it arose from a broadly shared frustration with a state that consistently failed to serve the common good, and political elites who seem more responsive to the agendas of diverse transnational actors than to the needs of the ordinary citizens they are supposed to serve” (15).

This book provides a valuable insight into how the people of Rannongga, like other Solomon Islanders, engage with strangers. It shows how descriptions of isolation and disconnections experienced by societies at the margins of state power and global forces are often inaccurate. The author utilizes multilayered subjects—Rannongga communities, the Solomon Islands state, international nongovernmental organizations, multinational corporations, the stranger-researcher-guest—to show how people from Rannongga negotiate and weave relationships that thread beyond their island. It also demonstrates the degree and nature of their agency in forging these relationships, while simultaneously acknowledging the economic power of outside forces.

*Engaging with Strangers* is a valuable contribution to scholarship about Solomon Islands in particular and the Pacific Islands more generally, and it would be a useful resource for students in anthropology, sociology,

history and political science, especially those planning to work in Solomon Islands or other Melanesian countries. McDougall does a wonderful job of knitting a narrative that is accessible, engaging, and informative. Her work breathes life into ethnographic research and provides useful reflections on ethnography. As someone who comes from the Weather Coast of Guadalcanal, a place often referred to as “isolated,” I find that this book validates what I have always known: We were never isolated. We have always been cosmopolitan.

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*Living Kinship in the Pacific*, edited by Christina Toren and Simonne Pauwels. Pacific Perspectives: Studies of the European Society for Oceanists 4. New York: Berghahn Books, 2015. ISBN cloth 978-1-78238-577-6; ISBN paper 978-1-78533-520-4; 274 pages, illustrations, bibliography, index. Cloth, US\$135.00; paper, US\$29.95.

Edited by Christina Toren and Simonne Pauwels, the collected works that make up *Living Kinship in the Pacific* offer case studies that examine kinship practices throughout the Pacific across both space and time. As Toren and Pauwels explain, “The book’s objective is straightforward: to provide case studies of contemporary Pacific kinship, and in so doing arrive at an understanding of what is currently happening to kinship in an area where deep historical links provide for close and useful comparison” (1). More provocatively, the collection

does not merely aspire to compare and document kinship in the region. Rather, there is an expressed intent to situate kinship practices within a larger understanding of history as living and integral to contemporary practices and kinship-related worldviews. In Toren and Pauwel's estimation, "What is under discussion here is not history as something external to us, confined to the past, nor history as it is known or generally understood, nor history as it is written nor the personal history we can recollect and tell to others, but rather history as it is lived" (3).

This volume's endorsement of history as lived and fundamental to kinship practices of the past and present aligns with wider calls among Pacific scholars to listen to and engage deeply with stories, for it is through the stories of community that history truly comes to life. *Living Kinship in the Pacific* brings together just a few of the many stories of the Pacific. The eleven chapters, divided into three sections, weave together both academic and practical aspects of research through the experiences of its scholars, clearly illustrating the diversity in kinship practices in the Pacific. They primarily employ ethnographic approaches to kinship and related issues in Fiji, Tonga, Sāmoa, Tokelau, Papua New Guinea, and Taiwan.

Anthropologists Unaisi Nabobo-Baba and Jara Hulkenberg do well in exploring communal kinship in their respective contributions, which focus specifically on Fiji and explore kinship through "gifting." Drawing on the classic anthropological concept of "the gift," the contributors advocate for understanding and appreciating gifting

practices as more than just birthday or Christmas presents that will ultimately go to waste. In the context of Pacific kinship, it encompasses far more.

As Nabobo-Baba describes, gifting represents *veikauwaitaki* (mutual concern and empathy), which is the foundation of Fijian kinship. She recounts the story of the gifting of a *tabua* (whale tooth) from one chief to another as a means of solidifying *veidinadininati vakavanua vakaturaga* (his chiefly promise). Though this kind of promise and the gifting associated with it are replete with complex layers of meaning, *veikauwaitaki* lies at the core. This demonstrates concern for the welfare of kin and others, as well as empathy for others' troubles (23). Nabobo-Baba thus shows that gifting in the context of kinship is ingrained into societal values that are practiced by the community as a whole.

*Veikauwaitaki* is more than just a word; rather, it guides social actions that are acknowledged by all levels of the community.

Hulkenberg's chapter explores the ways in which practices of exchange extend past the homeland and into foreign lands through the processes of migration. As migration occurs, kinship becomes transnational and transformative in many different ways. Because resources may differ in foreign places, so too do the gifts that are presented or exchanged. For example, in looking at Fijians in the United Kingdom, Hulkenberg illustrates that money has become prominent in acts of gifting (76). Though it is important to acknowledge that items frequently gifted in the homeland, such as *tabua*, are often replaced by items available in foreign lands,

Hulkenberg makes it clear that the obligations and significance of kinship and gifting remain. She argues that people must know themselves through retaining their virtue and obligations in order to genuinely remain part of the vanua (land), regardless of where in the world they may live.

Sibling relationships feature prominently in some chapters. Françoise Douaire-Marsaudon, for example, examines the brother-sister relationship in Tonga, specifically in the context of the fahu (eldest sister), and she details how the fahu system reinforces solidarity between siblings. The sibling relationship is built early on and extends across generations, with siblings treating each other's children as their own. Douaire-Marsaudon illustrates the dynamics of the sibling relationship through her attention to the prominence of shared obligations and responsibilities between brothers and sisters and the resulting intergenerational links and bonds. Of the fahu's many roles, her responsibility to transmit knowledge and wisdom to her eldest brother's firstborn son plays a pivotal role in ensuring the continuity of both the family and broader kinship systems.

In the final chapter, Toren identifies ritual as a unifying theme for the collection. She considers the role that rituals play in developing and sustaining relationships, and, speaking to the individual contributions that make up *Living Kinship in the Pacific*, she notes that "each chapter is replete with the ritualized behaviors appropriate to particular forms of relationship, of life-cycle rituals in which kinship is central and of explanations for both ritual and ritualized behavior" (243).

Her chapter emphasizes that rituals and ritualized behaviors develop in connection with the influences that each generation experiences. Moreover, she argues that ideas of what, how, and when rituals of kinship are performed will differ across generations due to changing influences and experiences, such as the proliferation of new forms of technology.

Although *Living Kinship in the Pacific* does well in emphasizing the centrality of kinship in the region, the collection relies considerably on approaches that position the contributors as observers "looking in" on various societies and practices. Scholars engaged in Pacific-focused work largely agree that we have a responsibility to actively engage with the communities we research, all the while acknowledging our positionality and the lived histories and worldviews that we bring to our work. There is, however, a glaring absence of careful attention to the authors' positionality within the kinship stories they document. While their observations are useful, they often do not clearly indicate the level to which they themselves have, if at all, forged meaningful kinship or other ties with the communities about which they write. If history is indeed alive, as asserted early on in the book and demonstrated through the ongoing and ever-changing practices of kinship, then I am left wondering whether, and to what extent, the contributors are actually living kinship with their subjects rather than simply observing them.

Despite the absence of a more intimate and critical look into the contributors' kinship with those whose

experiences they present, the fact remains that each story was transformative in itself. *Living Kinship in the Pacific* offers an important and unique way of understanding the region and its communities through its sharp conceptualization of the often vast and layered worlds of kinship. Exploring these worlds through clear case studies offers readers a largely accessible pathway into the complexities and nuances of kinship and surrounding issues. This volume proves a valuable addition to resources for students of Pacific studies and, more specifically, for both aspiring and seasoned researchers heading into the region to engage with communities and their stories. Most importantly, this volume serves as a reminder of the kinship we each hold to this place we call the Pacific.

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*Grappling with the Bomb: Britain's Pacific H-Bomb Tests*, by Nic Maclellan. Canberra: ANU Press, 2017. ISBN paper 9781760461379; ISBN e-book 9781760461386; xxiv + 383 pages, timeline, glossary, notes, bibliography, index. Paper, US\$37.46; e-book, free download.

Nic Maclellan's *Grappling with the Bomb: Britain's Pacific H-Bomb Tests* explores the little-known history of Britain's nuclear testing program on Malden and Kirimati (Christmas) Islands in the late 1950s in what was then the British-controlled Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony and is now the independent nation of Kiribati.

The book title is a play on Operation Grapple, codename for the British military operation that involved nine nuclear tests between May 1957 and September 1958 and exposed i-Kiribati (Gilbertese) laborers and civilians, Fijian soldiers, Māori and nonindigenous New Zealanders, British service members, and others to dangerous levels of radiation despite British claims to the contrary. In approximately 350 pages, the book brings together previously published work and new archival research and interviews with governmental officials, survivors, and family members to paint a multiperspective account of British nuclear testing, the health implications for those involved, and the lengths the British government has gone to since the 1950s to deny any causal links between the two. Maclellan's work is impressive not only for its attention to the impacts of British nuclear testing on the lives of Indigenous Pacific Islanders and their families but also for what it reveals about nuclear testing within the larger context of Western imperialism, Cold War geopolitics, decolonization, and antinuclear activism.

*Grappling with the Bomb* is organized into twenty-two brief chapters, each focused on the connections of one or more individuals to British nuclear testing in Kiribati. Chapters one to three use British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill, Marshallese nuclear survivors Lemeyo Abo and Rinok Riklon, and Japanese fisherman Matashichi Oishi to consider how the US-Soviet nuclear arms race, US testing in the Marshall Islands, Britain's desire to develop nuclear weapons in the face of US secrecy, and interna-