Anglo-American Imperialism and the Pacific: Discourses of Encounter
Edited by Michelle Keown, Andrew Taylor, and Many Treagus. London, Routledge, 2018.
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When I was a doctoral student, a group of students and teaching staff travelled to a coastal village east of Canberra called Kioloa every year, to breathe in the air from the Tasman Sea, which we normally had no chance to be exposed to in the inland capital city. One of the purposes of this retreat was intensive research training, including seminars run by professors, all eminent in fields of Asian and Pacific history, who we normally had few chances to converse with. Among them was Professor Tony Reid, a graduate of Victoria College, who is also known as the champion of Southeast Asian history. He took us outside and suggested a brainstorming exercise. We were tasked to come up with a simple, short, yet evocative description about Canberra. 'Far from the Pacific', exclaimed one student. 'Although the Australian National University houses a research centre for the Pacific studies and a number of staff and students are committed to researching the region,' he continued, 'this place feels distant from the region.' The deck became quiet, each of us trying to digest his remark in the late spring rural silence.

'Far from the Pacific'. It has been lingering in my mind ever since, and every time I recall that moment, I tend to pause and think of the meaning of the silence among us. Perhaps, his remark might have upset some. But it was so astute that it was hard to disagree in describing Canberra's political and intellectual environment as the capital of Australia where residents are often overwhelmingly characterised as 'white', 'liberal', and 'middle-class'. His remark became important to reflect on and challenge my limited scope as an academic who studies the modern history of Japan and East Asia, the other side of the Ocean. Despite its geographical location and historical and political connections, in Japan, too, the Pacific feels distant as if numerous historical relations in the past have been forgotten, including the history and memory of the Asia-Pacific War. This historical 'amnesia' was reinforced in the post-war era, particularly since the 1970s, by the commodification of the southern islands as a travel destination, which involved mass financial investment in the land and tourism industry notably in Hawai'i, Guam, and Saipan. The memory of war and colonisation was replaced by exoticised representations of the body, culture, and climate of the South Sea as 'heaven'. It is this cultural commodification that closes the windows to understand the lived experience and deep historical and cultural connections, while also allowing for the gentrification of the land and destruction of the local livelihood.

In this sense, the incident around Chechemeni in December 1975 should be remembered as a critical case that starkly embodied the amnesia in post-war Japan. This little-known event happened at the Expo on Okinawa Island. After twenty-seven years of American occupation, Okinawa's administration was handed over to its 'motherland' Japan in May 1972. The Okinawa Oceanic Expo '75 (or 'Okinawa Kaiyō-haku' in Japanese) was organised to celebrate Okinawa Prefecture's 'reversion' to Japan, and to impress the world with the new outlook of the country. The restoration of this southern-most tropical island prefecture brought a great chance for Japan to refresh its identity as a 'maritime state'. A highlight of the Expo was a traditional Carolinan canoe, Chechemeni, sailing all the way from Satawal Atoll (in today's Federated States of Micronesia) into Okinawa to recreate the ancient maritime network between Okinawa and the southern islands. However, as the canoe approached the port, the navigators had to stop because the Japan Coast Guard did not allow their entry. Apparently, the Coast Guard did not have any knowledge of a 'single outrigger sailing canoe' nor

anticipated it would appear to enter the port. In the end, the Japanese authority allowed the canoe's entry, not as a guest, but in the category of 'drifting object', like driftwood or seaweed. As critic Shimao Toshio argued, the Pacific has never come into Japan's vision as a major cultural reference, unlike the continental worlds (China, India, Europe and North America). The vast and dynamic oceanic region and the local lives appear to exist as a backwater of the continental civilisations. This negation is undeniably reflected in the range of recent destructive actions such as the release of the contaminated water from the nuclear power plants, continuous dumping of enormous amounts of plastic waste, and RIMPAC and military exercises with the US and other countries on the rim. 'Far from the Pacific' is, therefore, not an impression that emerged spontaneously but the consequence of Japan's political and economic activities and desire.

This book, *Anglo-American Imperialism and the Pacific: Discourses of Encounter* (Routledge, 2018) edited by Michelle Keown, Andrew Taylor, and Mandy Treagus, draws my attention strongly to the world that has long been amputated by my country of origin and expertise and gave me numerous words to link the two different worlds of the 'Pacific'. The book consists of three sections and nine contributed chapters, written by scholars and activists in literature, cultural history and Cultural Studies. By highlighting the transformative periods in the region, namely from the colonial era in the nineteenth and the post-colonial time in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, all the chapters are dedicated to the present entanglement of the colonial and neo-colonial histories and the local resistance in places such as Micronesia, Samoa, Fiji, Hawai'i, New Zealand. Yet, the scope of this collected volume goes beyond the Pacific and the implications of each chapter are truly global, while grounded in the region as a primary site of exploration. The Foreword by Rob Wilson and the Introduction by the editors not only set out the direction of the book but also embody very powerfully and convincingly why 'doing', not just considering, cultural inquiry of the Pacific islands matters for the advancement of the critical research of humanity. By charting the history of the transition of imperial power from old (European) to new (America) in the region, those two chapters show us how the 'scrambles of the Pacific' (as in those of Africa) from the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century were vital in shaping and understanding the socio-cultural conditions of the post-colonial struggles in the region. Three sections, 'Military, Religious and Cultural Imperialism in Pacific Literature', 'Transatlantic Trajectories in the Pacific Film, Photography and the Visual Arts,' and 'Cross-Cultural Alliances and Tensions in Pacific Discourse' have respective themes and rationales. Yet, by reading each chapter, I find many of them are echoing one another although they are grouped in different sections. Therefore, towards the end of the book, the readers would discover common issues in the respective locations and communities throughout the Pacific.

One of the common issues that each chapter revolves around is the complexity of cultural representations. This is strongly presented in the chapters by Michelle Keown (Chapter 1), Mandy Treagus (Chapter 4), Jeff Geiger (Chapter 5), Nicholas Thomas (Chapter 6), Paul Lyons (Chapter 7) and Sharrad (Chapter 8). Complexity can be a detrimental term that dilutes the criticality and nuanced analyses on the subjects. But that is not the reason why I employ it. To the contrary, the term indicates uneasiness in discussing the history and cultural politics in the region in the post-colonial contexts, which ultimately enables us, particularly those who are unfamiliar with the local contexts, to avoid reductionistic framing of the issues around post-colonial conditions of the Pacific world. In other words, those chapters appear to suggest how the knots of the colonial entanglement and their legacies today need to be taken into account to illustrate, and to represent, the cultural conditions in the region. The arguments by Teaiwa (Chapter 2), Marsh (Chapter 3), and Najita (Chapter 9) become more powerful when reading

them while remembering the historical and cultural contexts discussed in the rest of the book. Particularly inspiring was Teaiwa's reference to cases from the Middle East and discussion of the continuum of Anglo-American imperialist global order that imposed comparable problems inter-regionally.

If this summary of the book, including my personal reflection, is of any interest then I would recommend this book for those who feel 'far from the Pacific'. In the time called 'the Asia-Pacific' century, this collected volume is definitely essential reading beyond the narrowly defined field of expertise.