

colonialism, social structuration and change. The thread which connects it all, is of course, Jeremy himself. With his hand on the tiller, he guides us through his changing engagements with Indigenous people and with developments in anthropological practice and thinking over time. Beckett's facility with the pen, is consistent throughout, and is particularly well demonstrated in the second chapter, 'Walter Newton's History of the World - or Australia'. Here we are back with Lévi-Strauss and Sahlins, including arguments at that time about the structure of the conjuncture, raw vs cooked, hot vs cold societies. In a clever sleight of hand Beckett renders Lévi-Strauss's binaries, and Sahlins' argument about Captain James Cook's reception in Hawai'i (and the reception and production of change/ continuity in broader cultural contexts) thus: 'As long as the unique event came 'raw', in the sense of being unencumbered by intrusive meanings, they could 'cook' it according to their own recipes' (30). And in this fine collection of papers, we see too, how Beckett himself has 'cooked' his knowledge according to his own, unique recipes.

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## Land's End: Capitalist Relations on an Indigenous Frontier

By **Tania Li**

Duke University Press. 2014

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This is an inspiring book. Tania Li's much anticipated ethnography is the result of over two decades of engagement with agrarian issues among the Lauje highlanders of Sulawesi. This was a period of intense change for the highlanders. The livelihoods and land tenure that Li first recorded in the 1990s were dominated by food production and land was conceived as a limitless resource, available to (and rightfully belonging to) anyone who put it into cultivation. While production for trade with the neighbouring coastal population and others was part of this constellation, people were not dependant on capitalism as their food production and the open land frontier made withdrawal a constant option. But lives were hard. The area was prone to catastrophic droughts, child mortality was high, and there were vanishingly few opportunities for education. People understood themselves as poor, and desired change.

Swidden cultivation demanded long fallow periods between uses of particular areas, so memory of precisely who had originally cleared a particular plot was often hazy and – up until the arrival of cacao and cloves in the 1990s – was considered of only secondary

importance because land was more abundant than people wanting to work it. Cacao and cloves changed all of this. As trees rather than annual crops, they stood as an enduring symbol of the ownership rights granted to those who planted them. The resulting process was one of enclosure, where a resource that was previously held in a sort of commons was progressively privatized by those with the labour, capital and foresight to act quickly at the beginning of the cacao boom. For those who did not enclose land in this way, for one reason or another, the land frontier quickly closed behind them, leaving them locked out not only from the cash economy of cacao and cloves but also from the food production that had formerly sustained them. They depended now on wage work, but cacao and clove need minimal labour. There was no way forward and no way back. Land became for the first time a commodity to be traded, and even those who had managed to plant trees soon found themselves landless and jobless after being forced to sell.

Intriguingly, Li argues that this was not the result of state planning or a development program: the spark that drove the Lauje to enclose their own commons was the desire they had for change and the existing understanding that labour entitled one to ownership. In the scenario this produced, however, people with no land found their labour almost completely worthless: the set of meanings that had carried them to this point could not sustain life once the frontier closed. I have provided a sketch here, but the story Li tells is much more complex than this. She pays ample attention to the diverging experiences and decisions of different Lauje farmers, showing their distinct scenarios and strategies while also acknowledging the underlying values that they shared. She assesses the impacts of changing national politics, development projects and NGOs, local government figures, and merchants in this process. She also considers the impact of the nature of cacao and cloves themselves, as well as the climate and soils in the area, as influential parts of the story.

This is an inspirational book, then, in terms of how an ethnography of such a complex process can be conceived and written in terms that are clear, level-headed, balanced and thorough. She guides us through the details, without getting lost in them. She faces tragedy, but without resorting to pre-fabricated political stances or shrill ethical position-taking in order to find solace. It is also an inspirational book in terms of its concluding argument: for a politics of distribution. Increasingly, and in many parts of the world, land hungry developments or processes of spontaneous enclosure like the one Li describes are driving people formerly engaged in food production off the land. This is an accepted part of capitalist expansion, and is often eagerly embraced as part and parcel of the transition to modernity by development agencies. The assumption is often that surplus labour will be absorbed in wage work in new sectors opened up elsewhere or sustained by residual pockets of subsistence production. Li argues

that in the face of mounting evidence this assumption needs to be abandoned. The un- and under-employed are not a passing aberration and nor will the land frontier continue to sustain them. These people are not waste products to be discarded: they are an integral part of the increasingly common phenomenon of jobless economic growth, where the land is needed but the people are not. In this scenario, she argues, work and the right to live need to be decoupled through the provisioning of guaranteed basic income and services.

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**Engaging with Strangers: Love and Violence in Rural Solomon Islands**  
By **Debra McDougall**  
New York: Berghahn Books 2016  
Pp: xx + 287  
Price: US\$120

When a boat left the shores of Australia to return hundreds of Melanesian laborers to their homes in the South Sea Islands, deportees were heard to shout from the deck 'Good-bye Queensland, good-bye white Australia, good-bye Christians' ('The deportation of Kanakas', *Wagga Wagga Express*, 29 August 1907, p. 2). It is hard to say whether this was a final protest over the laborers' near slavery in Queensland or a lament over their forced deportation, which in fact, many laborers opposed. Since then, and for over a century now, Western society and the indigenous peoples of Melanesia have regarded each other as strangers. It is easy to forget that once they stood in a very different, although equally fraught, relationship in the plantations of Queensland, and that it was only when this kind of relationship was severed that a new colonialism, one based on the governmentality of cultural difference, could be built.

Now it seems so natural to say that Australians and Melanesians come from different worlds. Yet, among the residents of what were once the South Sea Islands, there are many communities who are still thinking about the Coral Sea as a space of crossing rather than a boundary. Here, on the outer edges of an anxious Australian state, many islands communities imagine alternative kinds of relationships with others in a global order. Throughout island Melanesia from the Torres Strait to New Caledonia, one finds a myriad of tellings and retellings of this encounter. Torres Strait Christian communities celebrate their ancestral conversion every year, now long after those who met the missionaries have gone. Vanuatu Christians seek to apologize publicly for the killing of long-dead missionaries. Some Solomon Islands communities have written down customary laws in the hopes of reinforcing the

border between themselves and Western culture. For these and others of this region, colonial legacies shape the politics of recognition and the prospects for self-determination.

One such community is described by Debra McDougall in her ethnography of Ranongga island in western Solomon Islands. People of Pienuna village, where she conducted research, are committed to a 'radical openness to others' as part of their understanding of their belonging to their own communities (21). Their kinship to each other, in their minds, owes to acts of hospitality and adoption of the lost. In her book, McDougall presents Pienuna Christianity, cash-earning, and citizenship as projects of applying their cosmopolitan ethos to contemporary conditions, and discovering new strangers which they can bring into their community.

Like the rest of insular Melanesia, Ranongga occupies a conjuncture of cultures. To outsiders, their interpretations of Christianity and their displacement or rejection of traditional institutions seems to confirm the marginality in their contemporary global order. These are victims of the colonial project of cultural domination, and their apparent embrace of that domination seems all the more out of step with today's postcolonial era. McDougall shows how false this image is. People of Ranongga produce borders in order to create strangers, and hence opportunities to extend their relationships. Their interculturalism is not simply a legacy of the past, but rather comes into being now through the ways they narrate their contacts and encounters with others. For McDougall, the meeting of newcomers on the beach of Ranongga is a central trope for people's thinking about their engagements in a wider world. Change itself is conceptualized as travel, and vice versa. Hence, their identity as Christians is epitomized in a story of adopting and pledging to protect the evangelists who once came ashore. Likewise, while they lament people's zeal for money and the commodification of their own relationships, marketplaces are clearly demarcated from domestic spaces, not simply to enforce a segregation of spheres, but enable new kinds of ethical transactions, like fundraising gifts for church. Towns are treated as terra incognita, and yet in doing so, provide an opportunity for creating enclaves.

McDougall also argues that Ranonggan ways of engaging with foreign ideas and forces as new kinds of strangers puts their own identities at risk. Many Ranonggans say that some people spend too much time outside of their community and 'lose their passports' (188). It is a compelling image, because it suggests simultaneously that any stranger can be welcomed but that this welcome means that one can no longer go home. When Ranonggans act as hosts to foreign people and institutions, they affirm their sovereignty over their homes. Yet for some, this connection to foreign worlds also affords them with the possibility of imagining an alternative way of life. Many migrants to towns now see themselves as citizens and consumers rather than voyagers. To recruit the powers of foreign capital or