



Book Reviews

Latte in the Marianas: By the Community, For the Community

By Kelly G. Marsh (Taitano) and Jolie Liston.
The Latte in the Marianas: Art, Icon, and Archaeology Project, Guam, 2021 ISBN: 978-0-578-52109-1. pp. 152. USD \$65

This volume offers a compelling tapestry of heartfelt essays and creative works by more than 80 residents of the Mariana Islands, including cultural practitioners, artists, historians, poets, archaeologists and educators. Many (but not all) of the essays are offered in both CHamoru and English, in a side-by-side fashion. Readers of this lavishly illustrated book are invited to honour and celebrate the profound cultural significance of latte, the ancient two-piece stone columns that once elevated traditional wood and thatch buildings in the Mariana Islands. Such buildings were (and still are) a nexus of indigenous CHamoru culture that has long fascinated residents and visitors in the islands. The essays, paintings, drawings and photographs of latte in the volume exemplify the exceptional creativity of the island's residents.

A brief introduction orients readers to the creation of the volume, and it provides a glossary of words that characterise three components of the two-piece columns: *Latte/Latti'*, *Haligi* and *Tāsa*. The remainder of the volume is organized into four thematic sections: *Taotao Tāno'yan Tāsi*, *Taotao Latte* (People of the Land and Sea, People of Latte); *Ginen i Manmōfo' na*, *Para i Manātatte* (From the Past, For the Future); *Numa'la'la i Latte* (Bringing Life to Latte) and *Hinanao-ta Mo'na* (Our Journey Forward). These sections are followed by an epilogue, endnotes, recommended readings and contributor biographies. Scholarly publications by archaeologists and documentary historians dominate the list of recommended readings. The biographies and photographs of the volume contributors is a veritable “Who’s who” in the commemoration and preservation of the archipelago’s ancestral heritage. The collaboration of cultural practitioners, artists, educators, and scholars in the production of the volume – with guidance provided by the *manāmkō'* (elders) – is truly special.

The essays in the volume embody an eclectic and accessible mix of thought-provoking statements about latte and their use as a cultural icon, as well as other essays that exhibit the perspectives of archaeology, documentary history and education. Concise archaeological summaries in the volume aid general readers and students who would like

broader geographical, temporal and technological insights on the origin and development of ancient CHamoru culture. Authors of other essays emphasise the vital ancestral linkages that are offered by latte and their contemporary representation in various arts (e.g., paintings, drawings, etc.) and crafts (e.g., pendants, stained glass, wood carvings, etc.).

The adoption of latte as a contemporary cultural icon is a particularly complex and variegated phenomenon; from their use in the construction of residential carports and civic buildings, for example, to their use as a symbol of identity and resistance to past and ongoing colonial forces (e.g., Spanish, American) that have hindered political sovereignty in the Mariana Islands for five centuries. Any resident or visitor in the Mariana Islands is acutely aware of latte. Simply put, they are virtually everywhere, but the contributors in this volume do not take them for granted; they are keenly aware of the threats that latte face in the wake of economic development.

A hasty glance at the volume by hurried readers might leave some with the impression that it is nothing more than a “coffee table” book. It is not. This volume is a tangible repository of cultural knowledge about latte that has been generated and perpetuated in the Mariana Islands for centuries. Compiling this volume was surely a monumental task for Kelly G. Marsh (Taitano) and Jolie Liston, as well as the 80+ authors who gave so freely of their time and effort in crafting their respective essays, poems, and other works of art. There is yet another distinctive feature of this volume: its creation was sponsored by a variety of institutions ranging from public institutions and non-profit foundations to corporate firms, including (but not limited to) the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Guam Visitors Bureau, the Northern Marianas Humanities Council, the Guam Preservation Trust, Kaleidic Design, the Ayuda Foundation and Micronesian Heritage Consulting, LLC. Inter-institutional cooperation of this kind leveraged complementary skill sets towards the realization of a shared goal of honouring and protecting the cultural value of latte in the Mariana Islands.

This volume exemplifies a model of community engagement that is uncommon in today’s turbulent world; its substantive content and its thoughtful tone will appeal to the broader public as well as academic scholars and other readers. Anyone who contemplates a visit to the Mariana Islands would benefit by first consulting this important volume. Its wide-ranging circulation promises to enhance understanding of its rich cultural heritage. *Latte in the Marianas* is destined to become a classic that will be

treasured and shared by generations of residents and visitors to the islands.

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Archaeological Perspectives on Conflict and Warfare in Australia and the Pacific
 edited by Geoffrey Clark and Mirani Litster.
 ANU Press, Terra Australis 54, 2022. pp. 266.
 ISBN 9781760464882. US \$72.00.

Archaeological data seem ideally suited to study warfare. The materiality of group conflict (e.g., weapons, defensive structures, skeletal trauma) and its extensive spatial scale have long drawn archaeologists to try to address fundamental questions about the antiquity, root causes, diversity of practices and resulting effects of war. In this new volume, we turn our attention to these questions in the Australia and Oceania regions. Editors Clark and Litster provide an introduction and theory overview in the first chapter, followed by 12 case studies that range in timeframe from the Pleistocene to the mid-20th century CE, and cover Australia, New Zealand, Guam, Rapa Nui, the Marquesas, Palau and Tonga.

Anderson provides an in-depth analysis of evidence for historic warfare in New Zealand, combining archaeological evidence with a detailed reading of oral traditions and historic documents. His innovative use of oral traditions as a way to re-interpret the archaeological evidence is inspiring, and could be applied to other cases where oral traditions are well documented.

Pardoe writes a brief overview of evidence for violence on the skeletal record of Australia, with a focus on the Murray River region. While skeletal injuries are relatively common, many were likely non-lethal, and it is impossible to differentiate individual/domestic violence from organised group violence (i.e., warfare), or even self-injury, as has been documented for mourning practice.

Martinsson-Wallin reports on evidence of warfare from Rapa Nui, a place where war and violence are key features of many interpretations of its history. She finds little evidence for group violence in archaeological and skeletal record, particularly before European contact. This is somewhat at odds with some oral traditions and documentary history for Rapa Nui, but in agreement with several other case studies in this volume that trace increased violence to European colonial invasions.

Dixon et al. review evidence for warfare in Guam, focused on the Ritidian site from earliest settlement some 3500 years ago up to today when it is adjacent to an American military installation. This place has an identity as

a “traditional place of conflict”, with archaeological and documentary evidence for pre-colonial violence, as well as a place of resistance to Spanish, German, Japanese and American colonial intrusions.

Molle and Marolleau summarise the existing ethnohistoric and archaeological evidence for warfare in the Marquesas. Their nuanced read of the ethnohistoric documents and secondary scholarship is cast against a detailed examination of archaeological evidence for defensive structures. As is a common theme in this volume, the archaeological evidence does not currently suggest the level of endemic and frequent group violence noted by non-Marquesan visitors.

Liston summarises the diverse and extensive earthworks of Palau. Although some have interpreted these as defensive structures, Liston rightfully questions whether this was always their actual function, and suggests that many of the structures had primary functions other than defence. As with many others in this volume, she calls for more intensive archaeological work to better identify how these structures were made and used.

Parton et al. report on high resolution lidar analysis of the Fisi Tea earthworks in the Kingdom of Tonga. As the authors mention (and this reviewer concurs), mapping large earthworks in densely vegetated tropical areas with traditional survey methods is extremely challenging. The vegetation-penetrating abilities of lidar make it ideally suited to mapping. Parton et al. combine this survey data with targeted excavations, which reveal chronology and construction details, which the authors use to draw conclusions about construction labour and purpose of this monumental defensive structure.

Reepmeyer et al. also use lidar survey in the Kingdom of Tonga, in this case to evaluate the geographical aspects of 51 fortifications identified on Tongatapu. The authors conclude that the forts are not uniformly associated with agricultural field systems or water sources. Some of them do appear to be associated with residential zones, but others are not, leaving the authors to call for more detailed work on transport routes and settlements to better explain why they were built in some places and not others.

Grguric writes about violence between Australian aboriginal groups and European colonial settlers, as exemplified by fortified homesteads. This chapter evaluates aspects of these structures during the 19th century colonial expansion, and also their role and meaning now, when they are often used to illustrate a false history of Aboriginal violent aggression against “innocent” white settler “victims”. Grguric calls for the preservation of these structures but with a more balanced and sensitive interpretation.

Bedford also delves into the violent conflict between indigenous people and European invaders in the 19th and early 20th century CE, in this case from Malakula Island in what is now Vanuatu. As with several other authors in this volume, Bedford utilises European documents, but reinterprets violent events through an indigenous lens. He intriguingly reports how a survey trip to a village site

abandoned after an attack in 1916 “unlocked” Malakula memories of the event and aftermath (despite it having taken place over 100 years earlier). As with Grguric and others, Bedford calls for substantially more attention to be paid to this violent history, which he argues could result in at least partial resolution of contemporary struggles in the region.

Wesley and Viney conclude this volume with a fascinating analysis of WWII era rock paintings in Arnhem Land, Australia, a time when Aboriginal communities were impacted by war-era Australian resettlement practices and military build-up. By identifying features of the ship and plane painted at the Djulirri panels, the authors dated the images to within a few years, based on which version of these rapidly evolving machines were depicted. This high precision dating can allow access to the dynamics of the wider painting panel, and potentially provide insights into how new foreign materials were incorporated into (and affected) spiritual life.

These 12 case studies provide an engaging and diverse set of approaches and conclusions, and together make this volume a very worthwhile read. I wished for more: the volume lacks the comprehensive regional coverage promised by the title. Several parts of this region (e.g., New Guinea, Fiji, Hawaii) have been the subject of warfare studies and their absence here seems somewhat glaring (the editors acknowledge that the global pandemic caused several contributors to drop out). Neighbouring Island Southeast Asia has been the subject of similar recent studies, including the ANU Press volume immediately preceding this one in the series (O'Connor et al., 2020), and some engagement with this wider region would be productive.

The volume is also hampered by a somewhat limited engagement with global warfare studies, which could have been more thoroughly addressed in the overview chapter by Clark and Litster. There are missed opportunities to bring warfare studies from this region into deeper conversation with evolutionary ecology approaches, for example. This body of theory (among others) could be a way out of a simplistic cause-effect dyads between climate change and conflict. Climate change does not necessarily lead to food (or water) shortages, and these shortages do not always lead to violent conflict. There are many models available that hypothesise detailed mechanisms that could trigger violent conflict in some situations. We need to investigate the specific links intermediate to climate patterns and individual choice to engage in group conflict. For example, farmers rely on predictable weather, and mitigate unpredictability with crop choices, planting/harvesting scheduling, storage, relocation and other means. Uneven levels of storage across a region may make raiding an attractive strategy. Leaders who offer organised violence as a political solution to social and economic stress are supported by followers under certain conditions more than others. Violence is often associated with a surplus of young male labour, and crop failures may be one factor that free up this labour from farming tasks. Food shortages seem more

frequently an effect of warfare than a cause (food shortages are one tragic effect of the 2022 violent conflict in Ukraine), and there may be a feedback loop that these shortages free up even more young male labour for use in conflict.

Finally, we need a more diverse approach to warfare studies that includes studies of places and times when warfare is not employed. Australia and the Pacific likely have many examples of these peaceful situations, and these cases may help us better understand why group violence is used under certain conditions. Similarly, it is possible that the most common material evidence for warfare, fortifications, are defensive structures that serve to reduce or eliminate actual violent conflict, and may be evidence of a sort of cold war, which is far less violent than hot war.

Despite these minor complaints, I found this volume to be useful and inspiring. ANU Press provides a valuable service by publishing these volumes and making them available for download free of charge (or you can buy a physical copy for relatively low cost). This book will be a useful addition to the library of any scholar interested in conflict studies in the Australia-Pacific region and beyond.

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Farmers or Hunter-Gatherers? The Dark Emu Debate

By Peter Sutton and Keryn Walshe.
Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2021
ISBN: 978-0-522-87785-4. pp. 264. AU \$34.99

The Dark Emu debate refers to the controversy arising from Bruce Pascoe's book *Dark Emu: Black Seeds: Agriculture or Accident?* Pascoe's volume was first published in 2014, and republished in 2018, with an additional version for younger readers published in 2019. Peter Sutton and Keryn Walshe in writing *Farmers or Hunter-Gatherers?* take issue with Pascoe's thesis that at that the time of colonial conquest Aboriginal Australians practiced agriculture, stored food, lived in permanent villages, and sewed clothes. They consider that this account misrepresents what the historical records indicate and that, indeed, Pascoe provides a distorted picture of Aboriginal Australian socio-economy by his uncritical and at times misleading accounts. At the core of the critique is a disagreement with Pascoe's attempt to demonstrate a dichotomy between hunter gatherers and

farmers, that Aboriginal socio-economies should be characterised as involving either hunting and gathering or agriculture. Pascoe claims to have revealed evidence that Aboriginal people practiced agriculture but in doing so Sutton and Walshe suggest, Pascoe falls into the trap of using technological and economic complexity as a measure of a people's worth. Sutton and Walshe demonstrate that no revelation is possible because agriculture was not adopted in pre-conquest Aboriginal Australia due, in their view, to a widely shared belief system where the "reproductive spark that maintained plant populations was spiritual rather than connected with a secular human technology". Pascoe did not ask Aboriginal Australians for their views on the lack of agriculture and so was unaware (or at least did not describe in *Dark Emu*) such spiritual understandings.

The Sutton and Walshe book is divided into 13 chapters with a separate conclusion. Peter Sutton wrote the majority these with Keryn Walshe contributing chapters 12 and 13 discussing claims for agricultural implements and the archaeological evidence for settlement and aquaculture at Lake Condah, respectively. Chapter 2 provides detail of ethnographic accounts of spiritual propagation of species through ritual acts extending from Queensland, New South Wales, and the lower Murray River, across the arid zone to the south and north of western Australia. Pascoe is criticised for both the lack of attention to such propagation ceremonies but also for supporting a Eurocentric understanding of cultural complexity that equates the physical attributes of resource management with increases in cultural complexity harking back to now discredited theories of social evolutionism. Sutton and Walshe propose instead that complexity should be understood from the "intricate webs of kinship and social structure in the richness and grammar of language in myths and narratives that bind place to place". This critique of outdated theory in Pascoe's *Dark Emu* is continued throughout the book.

Chapter 3 asks the question whether Aboriginal Australian languages included terms that describe the actions of working the earth (hoeing, tilling and ploughing) and making gardens that Pascoe asserts existed. A comprehensive search fails to find words with these meanings. Chapter 4 considers environmental management including fire stick farming. This chapter comes closest to a theoretical discussion of resource management, plant and animal domestication, and agriculture but the focus is on whether Pascoe's book revealed for the first time that Aboriginal people were "ecological agents", to use Marcia Langton's term, or whether such understandings were well established in the literature before *Dark Emu*'s initial publication. Sutton and Walshe marshal scholarly citations indicating the latter.

Chapter 5 focusses on the social evolutionism critique. The original *Dark Emu* featured a list of material culture in the form of pottery, sewn clothing, agriculture, permanent settlement and houses made from stone that were claimed to demonstrate sophisticated society. The list is a throw-back to similar lists proposed by culture historians of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (e.g., Lubbock 1865)

that culminated in Gordon Childe's (1936) Neolithic package linking together the management of domesticated plants and animals, and adoption of new technologies such as polished and ground stone tools, and the use of pottery. Sutton and Walshe point out that accumulating traits does not equate with increased socio-economic complexity, a critique that of course also applies to Childe's package notions. Chapter 6 follows with a detailed consideration of claims for agriculture with Sutton and Walsh suggesting that in 1788, Aboriginal economy sat somewhere between hunter-gathering and agriculture. Their critique takes Pascoe to task for suggesting that large numbers of Aboriginal people were engaged in agricultural activities, with the authors considering evidence for seed collection and grinding, tuber conservation, and the transplanting of species. They conclude that evidence for cultivation is lacking and critique the use of terms like incipient, proto, and early when associated with economic development.

Chapter 7 deals specifically with apparel, and Pascoe's claims for the use of sewn clothing. Sutton and Walshe again amass ethnographic accounts to show that while many Aboriginal people wore clothes, the majority did not with differences reflecting seasonal variation depending on location within the continent as well as less pragmatic reasons. Chapter 8 discusses aquaculture, a term the authors suggest should not be applied to pre-conquest Australia. They acknowledge the Lake Condah, Brewarrina River, and Glyde River fish traps but suggest that Pascoe generalises these examples too far when suggesting they typified fishing activity across the whole continent. Chapter 9 discusses dwellings, critiquing the assertion that Aboriginal people constructed permanent structures that were occupied for extended periods, often year-round, with large clusters of these dwellings forming villages. The occasional use of stone footings for habitation structures are explained by a lack of access to abundant organic materials. Chapter 10 covers mobility with another dichotomy critiqued, in this case involving Pascoe's contrast between frequent movement and permanent settlement. The chapter includes an extended critique of Pascoe's understanding of the scholarship on the history of post-1788 colonisation. This critique leads into chapter 11 with a discussion of the sources on which the original *Dark Emu* volume was based, largely reports by European explorers and the need to place the observations they made together with the language they used into historical context before ascribing meanings.

The two chapters by Karen Walshe critique claims by Pascoe for agricultural implements, including cylcons, grooved picks, and Juan knives and in Chapter 13 a detailed consideration of Lake Condah fish traps and associated stone circles. The presentation is similar to previous chapters in the sense that Walshe evaluates Pascoe's claims in detail against the published evidence.

The short conclusion comes closest to investigating the question of why Pascoe wrote *Dark Emu* in the first place, noting that non-Aboriginal Australians are often attracted to works like *Dark Emu* in search of forgiveness for the actions that occurred during colonial times.

This summary does little justice to the level of scholarship Sutton and Walshe provide in drawing together a wealth of ethnographic accounts that illustrate a very different view of Aboriginal socio-economy to that described in Pascoe's *Dark Emu*. That Australian Aboriginal people did not practice agriculture before 1788 will come as no surprise to colleagues who have read both ethnographic and archaeological accounts, and indeed as Sutton and Walshe indicate, asked Aboriginal people knowledgeable about their preconquest history. Study of the "Neolithic" has developed markedly from the time of Childe and others writing in the early-20th century, those scholars that seem to have at least indirectly influenced Pascoe in his choice of attributes. Agricultural origins, if such a term should be used at all, is now a topic where diversity of response is well attested with the notion of inevitable progressions toward complexity laid to rest. The theoretical basis of such studies is touched upon by Sutton and Walshe but perhaps not in the detail that is might have been. The by now extensive international literature concerned with plant and animal management, domestication, and agriculture is only rarely referenced. If it had been, a more nuanced critique of the dichotomy Pascoe claims between hunter gathering and agriculture might have been possible. That Aboriginal Australians before 1788 practiced environmental manipulation is well established and Sutton and Walshe provide examples throughout their book. But this management did not lead to domestication and therefore agriculture was not present following the definitions provided by Zeder (2015). The reasons why are likely to be multi-dimensional involving aspects of the plants and animals available but also the nature of the management decisions made intentionally by Aboriginal

people in the past. There remains much work to do to understand these fascinating management strategies as practiced at different times and in different parts of the continent before 1788.

After reading *Farmers or Hunter-Gatherers? The Dark Emu Debate* I was left thinking of the challenge that the volume raises for archaeologists interested in the history of pre-1788 Aboriginal Australians. Sutton and Walshe show that the presence of agriculture is not the question to be addressed. But, there are other questions involving the history of human interaction with plants and animals in different settings across Australia that will provide insights into the series of choices the Old People made and the historical contexts of these choices. These insights should be just as interesting to non-Aboriginal Australians as the misplaced notions of pre-1788 agriculture.

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