



Kalissa Alexeyeff and John Taylor (editors)

Touring Pacific Cultures

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reviewed by [Gretchen Stolte](#)

1. 'Culture through tourism' is a concept that may seem an anathema to academics and researchers. While culture remains a concept that is practically sacrosanct, tourism has a reputation for passive engagement with the different and the strange. Cultural tourism fares no better as an act concocted for consumption. There is currently a plethora of publications exploring the use of tourism as tools and gateways for economic development, examining both the pitfalls and successes available as case studies. What makes *Touring Pacific Cultures* stand out is how the editors, Kalissa Alexeyeff and John Taylor, have put together a volume that is both informative and outstandingly innovative. Their description of the book's goals in the introduction to explore 'how culture is defined, produced, experienced and sustained through tourism-related practices' (p. 2) is well realised.
2. First, the volume is commendable on its structure and composition. In point of fact, this book should be the template for future edited volumes in its approach to including a wide range of typically marginalised voices and overlooked perspectives. Two-thirds of the 31 contributions are by women authors and almost one third of the authors identify as First Nations South Pacific Islanders. Compared to other contemporary volumes, this inclusion of minority and marginalised voices as *the* voices of authority is praiseworthy. Additionally, *Touring Pacific Cultures* is available as a bound copy with full-colour plates lavishly populating each chapter. As many of the writings point to and use specific imagery in exploring stereotypes and histories of tourism in the Pacific, having such imagery included adds much to the narratives being discussed. The bound copy comes with a hefty price tag (78.00AUD) but thankfully, it is also published as a free eBook, [downloadable as a PDF](#). Having the PDF option not only makes the volume accessible to a wide range of audiences, but it also makes it available to communities across the Pacific who might have an interest. Indigenous communities give much to researchers and having their contributions locked behind paywalls or expensive academic books is a problem more researchers need to address in their publishing choices. Thankfully, the editors of *Touring Pacific Cultures* have opted for formats that are both well executed and accessible. Future editors should take note in showing a commitment to such intersectionality principles in publishing.
3. The content of the volume further illustrates the innovative and inclusive approach Alexeyeff and Taylor chose to take. Scattered throughout the book are contributions of poems, artworks and writings which offer entirely new ways of critically thinking and writing about tourism in the Pacific. Selina Tusitala Marsh's poem, 'Statued (stat you?) Traditions', engages critically with the colonial and anthropological past that spans the Pacific as well as the romantic and highly sexualised views

that accompany tourist expectations. Marsh's contribution is one of several poems by First Nations writers that grace the volume and they are all welcome editions in creating a thoughtful and creative approach to unpacking the various themes of colonialism, cultural traditions and tourism. One final non-traditional chapter worth mentioning is Jo Diamond's 'Writing Home on the Pari and Touring in Pacific Studies' (Chapter 13). Performed at the conference where much of these chapters were originally presented, it is aptly described as a 'scholarly performance pieced framed as a mystery tour' p. 227). As a material culture anthropologist, this was the stand out chapter of the volume for me. The description and exploration of the development of the Moori pari or women's woven bodice is deeply personal, well researched and creatively presented. The inclusion of non-traditional chapter formats should be lauded as a model for acknowledging different forms of First Nations' knowledge, much of which involves women's knowledge.

4. The organisation of the chapters is well thought-out. The buildup of the chapters is both historically linear and thematically complex. It is a book you can read cover to cover and enjoy even without previous knowledge of Pacific Island cultures or histories. That said, the authors contextualise their chapters for an international audience and they can be appreciated on their own. *Touring Pacific Cultures* includes a generous 31 chapters of contributions to the field of tourism studies across the Pacific. As I cannot possibly do justice to all of them in a review, I have selected a handful that demonstrate particularly interesting and fresh approaches and narratives.
5. At the heart of examining the intersection between culture and tourism is the tension between economic development and the danger of cultural exploitation. Mandy Teagus's pointed question in her chapter 'Yuki Kihara's *Culture for Sale* and the History of Cultural Performance' (Chapter 10) is based on her critique of Yuki Kihara's gallery performance where Samoan dancers would perform for a few minutes when visitors put money in a bowl. Teagus asks if such performers were sharing culture or were they 'ethnographic objects, on display' (p. 143); it is a question that many researchers grappling with the intersection of culture and tourism face. The chapter juxtaposes Yuki Kihara's gallery piece with the history of Samoan colonial world tours and how agency can be conceived and measured. It is a powerful chapter in its handling of the idea of selling culture and will resonate with readers familiar with this side of cultural tourism. Along those same lines, A. Marata Tamaira's chapter, 'Native Realities in an Imaginary World: Contemporary Kanaka Maoli Art at Aulani, A Disney Resort & Spa' explores where 'engagement with the tourist industry constitutes complicity with the broader hegemonic power structure and where it functions as a form of strategic intervention' (p. 168). Tamaira does not shy away from asking the tough questions about Kanaka Maoli artists and their potential Disney-fication of cultural iconography (p. 177). Together, these two chapters contribute a great deal of insight into how economic development, culture and tourism intersect.
6. Two authors focused on concepts of the unperformance or the unexperience via intriguing frameworks through which to understand different conceptions of tourism. Michelle MacCarthy's 'Touring "Real Life"? Authenticity and Village-Based Tourism in the Trobriand Islands of Papua New Guinea' (Chapter 22) uses Dean MacCannell's concept of constructivist authenticity (p. 340) and Ning Wang's concept of existential authenticity (p. 341) together to tease out the allure of tourists travelling to remote villages to experience cultural life rather than to the more structured 'cultural tourism' package experiences found elsewhere. These two frameworks are handled deftly in describing how tourists perceive the authentic (the constructive) and how the tourists feel the authentic (the existential). On the side of 'unexperience', John Cox's chapter, 'Bandit *SingSing*: The Tourism Unexperience', describes a journey to a dance festival, filled with many pitfalls and tribulations. It is an honest and sometimes humorous chapter about fieldwork to which many researchers can relate.

7. The audience for this book is wide-ranging and should appeal to a number of disciplines. Anthropologists should read the book for its contributions to the culture concept and its grappling with the 'traditional' and contemporary (e.g. chapters 22 and 9). Sociologists studying economic development and value will find many useful chapters (e.g. chapters 5 and 24). Material culture and museum academics will enjoy the chapters that illuminate some of the more interesting object histories across the Pacific (e.g. chapters 11 and 15). Historians will find several interesting narratives documented inside these pages (e.g. chapters 3 and 21). Gender studies academics will find the chapters on the role of women, men and children in developing economic opportunities and in representations of identities useful contributions (e.g. chapters 12 and 18). For each discipline, there are several chapters appropriate for coursework reading lists, PhD literature reviews and university reading groups.

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