

[Book Review]

## *The Challenges of Island Studies*

*The Challenges of Island Studies*. By Ayano Ginoza, ed. Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2020. 116 pages. ¥12,869 (hardcover).

*The Challenges of Island Studies* includes six individual research articles and one panel discussion emerging from the international symposium titled “Prospects and Challenges for Envisioning Regional Science for Small Islands” organized by the Research Institute for Islands and Sustainability (RIIS). In the first part, the individual research chapters, 1 through 6, offer visionary contributions from different perspectives in the current island study field, covering society, politics, colonialism, culture, tourism, and sustainable development. The second part, the panel discussion, contributes to more transdisciplinary and trans-regional multi-directional dialogues. This book reflects a growing recognition of the use of interdisciplinary and feminist lenses in the study of current issues in island studies.

This book provides Asia-Pacific-centered case studies with multi- and interdisciplinary-based research perspectives and theoretical frameworks as well as theoretical discussions on island studies. A range of island issues is introduced from both contextualized and political perspectives, such as the establishment of the academic institution RIIS for island research, the perception of island safety in Guam, and US Militarism in the Pacific. The book shows current interdisciplinary development within and outside of the academic field, the diversified view of the cultural landscape, and island local language developed through human and cultural interactions. The final part of the book also highlights current research challenges, such as the diversification of different understandings and definitions of islandness and perceptions of the size of islands, their borders, and ownership, as evident in case studies including Guam, Okinawa, and Taiwan.

Aiming to foster diversified island study theories and trans-disciplinary methods development points of view, *The Challenges of Island Studies* covers a considerable range of island research-related questions, for example: How can we re-think island studies through an interdisciplinary research perspective through the emerging hub of RIIS? From whose perspective should island security and safety be considered? How can critical ocean studies connect perspectives arising from feminist, indigenous, and multispecies literatures? How, where, and who directs the evolution and future trajectory through the institutional framework of islands studies? What stands in between relics and the heritage landscape? How do historical Ryukyu migration and interaction shape language

development and regional culture?

While answering these research questions, the book emphasizes the importance of interdisciplinary perspectives of gender studies and political bodies. Although the seven chapters have different focuses on the challenges of island studies, the importance of these interdisciplinary perspectives always shapes the core structure for this book. The feminist lens is well integrated with other concepts arising from indigenous epistemologies, post-/colonization, militarization, and environmental studies.

Chapter 1 begins by introducing the definition, conceptualization, and interpretations of islandness and its current challenges through a contextualized framework arising from the “heterolingual address” theory, which allows the author to conduct comparisons with other island literature. Using mixed research methods, chapter 2 highlights the gap between patriarchal “militarized (in)security” that protects powerful “others” and what a feminist perspective considers “safe havens.” Chapter 3 provides a critical discussion of naval hydro-politics and militarization studies aimed at a demilitarized island future. Chapter 4 conducts a systematic “state of the art” analysis to examine the institutional framework of island studies and explore its future development through interdisciplinary lenses. Chapter 5 aims to establish a conceptual framework that connects both cultural heritage conservation and landscape in the developing of tourism in the case of Taiwan. Through interdisciplinary approaches that cover linguistic geography, history, archeology, physical anthropology, folklore, and folk music, chapter 6 develops a linguistic phylogeography in dialectics to demonstrate the linguistic development and transformation of Ryukyuan languages.

Most of the chapters lay a foundation for the panel discussion in chapter 7 that prompts a series of new questions, such as: How do island scholars define and understand islandness? What methodological approaches are helpful to develop these ideas? And what are the challenges and prospects for “critical island studies”? The intense critical debate in this section highlights the many issues in island studies. Concerns include imaginative “islandness” and “islandscape,” powerful states in relation to smaller island entities, fragile island cultures, research approaches of normative, empirical, and practical science, phenomenology, and the concept of “critical ecologies.”

This book contributes to research on Asia-Pacific islandness that emphasizes feminist and indigenous perspectives as well as interdisciplinary and relational geography. The research methods applied in all the chapters are transdisciplinary, experimental, and forward-looking. This book can be a trigger to arouse further interest in trying to expand the scope of this kind of research into the larger context of global islands. It is worth noting that the readers may also find a few deficiencies in the book that are still worth discussing but have been neglected by chapter authors. For example, in chapter 5, the author mentions “remoteness” and “isolation” (57), concepts from relational geography. However, from the discussion and case study, the concept of landscape is not well connected and developed enough from a relational theory perspective, nor is it linked to the concepts of islandscape or islandness. This weakened the connection between landscape case studies

and island studies.

In all, *The Challenges of Island Studies* provides a selection of critical insights that cover the current challenges of island studies and its future projections. Notably, this book tries to go beyond the fact that “in the fields of humanities and social sciences, these words are discussed, theoretically as well as genealogically, in a mutually exclusive relation to each other” (13). Chapters 1 to 6 are very suitable for researchers focusing on specific island research and case studies. People interested in the current issues of island studies will find chapter 7 (the panel discussion) most useful. In this part, scholars are not only trying to answer the proposed research questions from different research angles and experiences but also to put forward emerging questions and new leading directions for future research. For readers interested in a comprehensive introduction to island studies, adding *An Introduction to Island Studies* (Randall 2020) would make a great reading combination. Island and interdisciplinary scholars who focus on critical island studies should find this book beneficial.

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#### **References**

Randall, James E. 2020. *An Introduction to Island Studies*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield.