

*Book Review*

***Sweat and Salt Water: Selected Works***

*Sweat and Salt Water: Selected Works*. By Teresia Kiuea Teaiwa. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2021. 289 pages. ISBN 9780824890285.

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*Sweat and Salt Water* is a collection of writings by the late Dr. Teresia Teaiwa, who was the head of Pacific studies at Victoria University in Wellington (VUW), New Zealand, until her unfortunate passing in 2017. This book was compiled and edited by a team of writers who had close ties to her. Those of which included her sister Katerina Teaiwa, her VUW colleague April K. Henderson, and Terence Wesley-Smith. The title "*Sweat and Salt Water*" came about from a conversation she had with the late Professor Epeli Hau'ofa at the University of the South Pacific (USP) in Suva, Fiji. She was asked if she could contribute an epigraph to solidify his argument on regional identities within the Pacific. She responded that islanders sweat and cry salt water so they know that the ocean is really in their blood. Dr. Teaiwa was well known for her skills in poetry, activism, and community development. Her work touched the lives of many in the Pacific, as well as those ardent followers of her work the world over. Her critical and creative ability is clearly evident in her writing. The editors of this book have carefully selected key papers that truly reflected how she felt about the subjects she taught and her personal connection to her *vanua* (Fijian term that denotes land and people), which consisted of more than just one in particular. Those places being Fiji, Rabi Island, Banaba, and the United States (US), to which she had maternal links. This book is divided into three broad sections: "Pacific Studies," "Militarism and Gender," and "Native Reflections."

The "Pacific Studies" section revealed how Dr. Teaiwa engaged with students in order for them to be more critical of the region, not only to see the positives but to also analyze the difficult paths followed and the experiences faced by our ancestors many centuries ago. Her belief in the notion of both teaching and learning is admirable, as she often considered herself a learner despite her being a teacher by profession. This alone revealed her belief in higher education and how she wanted to encourage deeper learning in a metaphorical "canoe," which is the classroom. She wanted to see every student she taught, regardless of their upbringing, creed, or ethnic background, garner a greater appreciation for the Pacific.

The "Militarism and Gender" section demonstrates how Dr. Teaiwa had over the years openly criticized US colonialism and its impact on regions, more so in the Northern Pacific in Kiribati and Nauru. She strongly voiced her concerns about the impact of the US military presence and the bombing of Bikini Atoll in 1946. She strived to be the voice of the voiceless, particularly for women. In Chapter 8, she outlined how women stood for

themselves in Chuuk to create change in 1976 and 1977. Similarly, in the Republic of Palau, a delegation of women appeared before the US Senate, which became a historic and rather revolutionary event. In the Marshall Islands, the example of the Palau women inspired their anti-nuclear activism, which then later influenced other similar activism within the region. Male dominance in militarism intertwined with masculinity was a subject she raised regarding the impact of colonialism on women. Dr. Teaiwa documented and highlighted how the women were able to respond to the military and cultural nuances of being “submissive.” Micronesian women, as well as women in Fiji, were not just “passive bystanders’ but were actually participants in empowerment and decolonization efforts. She rightfully asserted a female-centric view of history and politics in Pacific colonialism.

The “Native Reflections” section highlights Dr. Teaiwa’s upbringing in Fiji, more specifically, her connection to the island of Rabi. Poetry and theatre within this section served as a powerful and creative way to recall memories and reminisce about her childhood. One particular memory included the relocation of her family from Banaba, an event that was romanticized to be a “pleasant experience” by the mainstream media. The abbreviated history of Banaba in Chapter 14 is indeed useful as it contained a cumulative time-line beginning in 1804, when Banaba was recorded and mapped by explorers to 1995, when Rabi islanders made an allegiance to the Fiji government during the review of the 1990 constitution. This history, however, is something many do not want to be reminded of as the role of the British government in this relocation process was something of which no one should be proud. Dr. Teaiwa used iTaukei (indigenous Fijian) native words in this section, such as *kanikani*, *yaqona*, and *yagoqu*. As a Fijian language speaker, I was able to understand the main points she wanted to share and I find this empowering. Scanning the references for Chapter 14 highlighted two of her own writings that solidified her own personal views of not only Rabi Island but also of neighboring *Kioa Island*, which shared similar experiences with the relocation of islanders from Vaitupu Island in Tuvalu.

An element of the book I enjoyed was the way it is divided, which made it very easy to read. It really captured the three areas of focus that Dr. Teaiwa had worked on for a number of years. She analyzed the debate on Pacific studies as she looked at writings by authors such as Terence Wesley-Smith who is, in fact, one of the editors of this book. Her ability to record personal experiences as a teacher in the field of Pacific studies was phenomenal. Dr. Teaiwa was able to articulate the many challenges she faced as she navigated her “canoe” in the vast ocean of learning. She was well equipped with the many experiences and recollections of living in Fiji, which enhanced her passion for teaching. She acknowledged many individuals that helped shape her view of the region, one of whom was late Professor Epeli Hau’ofa. Both are well known for their creative ways of thinking, teaching, and writing. As a past student of the USP, I am so blessed to have crossed paths with both of them. Hau’ofa was my sociology professor and Dr. Teaiwa was a young academic back then, whose poetry slams were attended by many. I was fortunate to have attended one of her poetry readings, held at the Community Recreational Centre at the USP campus one evening. I remember her reading one poem on the forced relocation of her people from Banaba to Rabi Island. She was excited at first to be delivering her poems in front of a packed audience, and when she started reading her work, she got emotional and tears began to flow. She cried the whole way through her reading and touched many of us. I realized that

day that Dr. Teaiwa truly carried her work in her heart, and always delivered everything wholeheartedly with tremendous genuineness. She will always be my role model, someone I look up to in the field of academia, research, and writing. Dr. Teaiwa was well known for investing creativity in her work, something I plan to do myself in years to come.

This book is highly recommended especially to those studying colonial history, women and militarism, and Pacific studies. Dr. Teaiwa effectively articulated her struggles of growing up in Fiji, living in the United States, and having mixed ancestry. She did not view this as a downside of her identity but something she wove into her humble tapestry of life as a source of empowerment. Her stories feel personal and raw, which is what makes this book special. As someone who lived in Fiji and on many occasions crossed paths with her, it made me appreciate her book even more. Dr. Teaiwa's voice offers strength and hope for future writers in the Pacific.

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