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Gender

Patricia O’Brien

Gender – culturally constructed identities, roles and sexualities for men and women – is vital to understanding the cultural kaleidoscope of the Pacific. Gender deepens understandings about how Pacific peoples were impacted by the waves of historical forces and events following the region’s incorporation into a global economy of commerce, ideologies and humanity from the sixteenth century. The Pacific’s ‘European era’ commenced along the cultural and commercial highways of Southeast and East Asia and, after the Magellan voyage, from the Americas. The frontiers of European contact continued to be forged through to the 1930s when peoples in Highland New Guinea became the last to be ushered into the European era following the intrusion of Australian gold-seekers. Through centuries of exploration and commercial contact, of resource harvesting and mining, of plantation and pastoral economies, of colonial governance and settlement, and of war and travel, gendered systems shaped Pacific history.

As gender was both pervasive and central to the making of this history, there are a multiplicity of ways in which its impact on history can be explored. Here, we will investigate gender in the Pacific through the framework of power and its overlapping frames of racial ideologies and conceptions of sexuality and bodies. Though European colonialism was a global phenomenon, its coalescence with indigenous and extant cultures in and around the Pacific formed new societies or layered existing ones with altered ideas about gender that gave this region’s history a distinctive cast. Genders extended beyond complementary constructions of men and women, encompassing a range of alternatives, often determined by sexual preference and embodied in a variety of ways. Though this chapter focuses upon women and constructions of femininity, examining such ideas necessarily says a great deal about men and masculinities. The historical impacts of gender occurred in ways so diverse that this chapter will explore illustrative case studies from China, Japan, Oceania, the Pacific littoral and Australia, where we begin.

In 1976, the ashes of a woman were scattered into the waters of the D’Entrecasteaux Channel off the coast of Tasmania. Since her death one hundred years earlier, the woman’s remains had been contested as had her extraordinary life, lived through the brunt of Britain’s imperial expansion into the Pacific. The woman’s name was Trugernanna and she was born on Bruny Island off the southeast coast of Van Diemen’s Land around 1812, almost 25 years after Britain colonised Port Jackson, present-day Sydney (see Figure 13.1). Aiming to replace lost American colonies, Britain established a base for maritime and commercial connections with Chinese and other Asian ports and as a beachhead for a new settler society destined to extend British control over the vast continent of what became known as Australia, but was then New Holland. Though Dutch and French explorers had indelibly marked the place where Trugernanna was born on European maps, it was the frontiers of British empire that wrecked Trugernanna’s life into its extraordinary shape.

After British and French explorers had mapped and described Trugernanna’s people and country some decades before her birth, the next wave of intruders arrived as sealers plundering the coast of Van Diemen’s Land. Sailing south from Port Jackson, the sealers set up remote communities near their quarry where they could process seal skins for one of Australia’s first export products – merchandise to offer China in the colossal Anglo-Chinese trade imbalance. The sealers not only raised seal populations; they also kidnapped women and girls from coastal communities on the mainland and Van Diemen’s Land. The women were taken to live on remote islands in Bass Strait where they worked as hunters of seals and muttonbirds, preparers of skins and feathers, and domestic helpers and they also became mothers of the surviving indigenous peoples of Van Diemen’s Land, the Palawa peoples. From 1803, Van Diemen’s Land became the second node of British imperial expansion in the South Pacific. Like Port Jackson, this settlement was a penal colony designed for permanent ongoing occupation. Palawa lands were coveted for livestock pasture and soon the pressures for land and resources erupted into a violent and increasingly brutal struggle. Into this world, Trugernanna was born.

Her first encounters with white men were with sealers, whalers and foresters who killed, kidnapped and raped women. In order to survive in this transformed world, Trugernanna may have sold sex at sealers’ camps. During these encounters she may have produced children and also contracted venereal diseases, as would so many other women across the Pacific. When she met a missionary tasked with finding a
solution to the costly frontier wars that intensified in the 1820s due to the upsurge in pastoralism, Trugernanna acted as an emissary for the ‘Friendly Mission’ aimed at encouraging beleaguered warring tribes to surrender and accept relocation away from settler farms to a ‘safe’ environment on a remote island in Bass Strait. Due to her role in the ‘Friendly Mission’, Trugernanna became a prominent historical character and was painted into iconic colonial images of the history of Van Diemen’s Land, and would later be photographed when that technology evolved. In 1834, Trugernanna moved with her people to Flinders Island, a place safe from settler violence but not from the ravages of disease or the pressures of Christian evangelism that aimed to fundamentally alter her traditional culture, not least through imposing new gendered systems onto Aboriginal women and men. When Charles Darwin arrived in Van Diemen’s Land in 1836, he was impressed that in thirty years ‘all the aborigines have been removed to an island in Bass Strait, so that Van Diemen’s Land enjoys the great advantage of being free from a native population’.1

When the Van Diemen’s Land colony expanded across Bass Strait, Trugernanna travelled there too, and ended up on trial for the murder of a whaler along with two men and two other Aboriginal women. The men were hanged, the first public executions in present-day Melbourne, whilst Trugernanna and the other women were freed to return to Flinders Island in 1842.2 In 1847, Trugernanna and those members of the community that had not perished in the unhealthy conditions on Flinders Island were returned to the Tasmanian mainland. As more of this community continued to perish at alarming rates, Trugernanna’s fame began to hinge on her status as a surviving remnant of a ‘dying race’, and then she fallaciously became known as the last of her people.3

When she died in 1876, she was buried against her express wish, as she feared her bones would be disinterred and sold as a scientific specimen like many before her; fears that were realised. Her skeletal remains were on display in the Tasmanian Museum from 1904 to 1947, a macabre trophy of white triumph over ‘unfit’ indigenous people. It was not until the century of her death approached that campaigns to have her remains released and cremated succeeded, and her ashes were scattered by Palawa people, the descendants of Aboriginal women and men.

The scattering of Trugernanna’s ashes launched her on another journey. She became a part of the immense and ongoing project of recovering the histories of women and non-Europeans that was transforming Pacific history from the 1970s onwards. Thus as Trugernanna’s ashes washed through the waters of the Pacific, she became connected with other Pacific women, part of the project of unearthing and investigating how gender impacted their lives and the course of history since the coming of Europeans. Trugernanna has been likened to a ‘spectre’, haunting white Australia’s history of race relations with its Indigenous peoples.4 For gender historians, her story goes to the heart of tensions that arise in writing gender history with its implicit or explicit attempt to explode assumptions that women were not historical actors but universal victims to external male-driven forces: assumptions that applied manifold to women who did not belong to European elites. The challenge for gender historians has been to render their subjects as full-fledged historical actors who had ‘agency’ over their lives but at the same time not to lose sight of the overwhelmingly negative impacts of colonialism on non-European communities. One interpretation of Trugernanna portrayed her as using her sexual wiles to betray her people.5 Another rendered her
story in the context of brutal colonial violence, asserting that she survived through pragmatism, holding onto traditional culture whilst making 'her own adjustments on her own terms' to colonial intrusion. Trugernann's story shares much with the history of the Americas and mainland southern Australia where colonialism came fast and the asymmetries of military power, population size, disease and an overwhelmingly male intrusive population forced rapid realignments and accommodations. In other parts of the Pacific – Oceania, South-east Asia and the Pacific littoral of mainland Asia – the story of colonialism played out differently, with many regions yet to be so disrupted by colonial intruders.

Colonial historical layer sat atop existing indigenous systems where gender was a central organisational category of every society, but in varying ways. Though heterosexuality dominated, in Polynesian cultures for instance there was cultural space of additional genders, men who dressed and lived as women – fa'afafine in Samoan – whose lives were a widely accepted and normalised expression of gender. Colonial disruptions to these existing systems varied in degree and pace across the region, leaving uneven, divergent and sometimes unexpected outcomes over place and time. In the Sino-Pacific world, gender was shaped by Confucian ideas about hierarchies based on social rank, gender and age. In these societies, 'righteous' behaviour was conveyed through 'moralizing tracts and biographies' promoting ideals for 'woman as submissive, chaste, hard-working, and obedient to her parents, husband and senior relatives'. Colonial contacts were heavily restricted in northeast Asia until the middle of the nineteenth century. The 1842 Opium War forced the signing of unequal treaties between China and Britain, a colonial tactic replicated in 1854 when the United States' 'Black Ships' entered Japanese waters and forcibly 'opened' them to all manner of western influences. Before this period, Europeans had been permitted 'to cross' the barriers of China and Japan, but the 'severest restrictions' applied. Dynastic China required these foreigners to adopt Chinese dress and to be strictly confined to their own precincts. They were 'never permitted to return home': for instance, the Jesuit priests (with their vows of chastity) were permitted access to the Chinese court from the latter part of the sixteenth century, though they adhered to strictly policed racial and gender divisions. This contrasted greatly to the Portuguese colony of Macau (territory rented by China in the 1550s), where foreign men mixed more freely with local Chinese people. The lack of contact with women through these heavily mediated encounters spurred colonial stereotypes of the region 'that centred on mysterious and sequestered

women with practices such as foot-binding taking a central place in the orientalist gaze. This orientalist gaze increased in utility and intensity along with imperial designs and activities from the 1840s, depicting Imperial China as corrupt and corroding, exemplified through the treatment of women. But were Chinese women universally oppressed as the stereotype of an ignorant, economically parasitic and clustered about the same young woman was the existence suggested? Gender scholars have been at pains to show how interpretations of Chinese women as universally passive ignore the considerable maternal power that women wielded within the family and also the economic contributions women in all classes made to their households in the pre-Communist era. Communist from the late 1940s claimed to 'liberate' women from Confucian constraints, suppressed them through negating gender differences and the rigid hierarchies built around such ideas, and freeing women from a life of domestic servitude. Evaluating such claims has produced a major body of work.

In terms of colonial impact, gender in the Sino-Pacific was shielded from the effects of increasingly large numbers of incoming peoples, excepting colonies like Macau and, from the 1840s, Hong Kong, where Chinese and incoming peoples commingled and formed fusion societies and cultures. A 'closed' Northeast Asia contrasted diametrically with other areas of the Pacific which, to western eyes, were saturated with femininity. In the Polynesian Pacific, women and their cultural practices were usually restricted in their cultural expressions. In the 19th century, for instance, women were forbidden to attend men's meetings, and were required to cover their heads when they entered male gatherings. This was based on the belief that women's presence at these gatherings would lead to sexual impropriety. Such restrictions were common in many traditional Polynesian societies, and were often enforced by local leaders and religious authorities. The restrictions were meant to protect women's virtue and maintain the social order. However, these restrictions were also influenced by colonial attitudes, which sought to 'civilize' indigenous cultures and impose their own values. As a result, women's roles and status were often diminished, and their voices were silenced in public and political spheres. This is a reminder of the complex and multifaceted nature of colonial impact, and the ways in which gender and power relations were shaped by colonial discourse and practice.
cultures being studied and described. The works of Margaret Mead from the 1920s, for instance, investigated gender, adolescence and sexual cultures in Sāmoa, New Guinea and Bali. Her most famous work, which launched her career and came to define sexual cultures not only in Sāmoa but also in the wider region, was The Coming of Age in Sāmoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilization, first published in 1928. Based on the confessions of girls about their unfettered sexual freedoms during adolescence, the book spurred the idea of 'free love' that underlay the West's 'sexual revolution' of the late 1960s. Mead’s findings about the sex lives of Sāmoan girls have since been challenged, if not debunked. Bronisław Malinowski likewise drew increased international attention to sexuality and the Pacific with his 1929 classic work of sexology, The Sexual Lives of Savages, based upon fieldwork undertaken in the Trobriand Islands when it was under Australian colonial rule.

Descriptions of the Other were often slanted with chronicles of European contact. The interaction between anthropology and history in both the generation of sources and in the academic work on the region is important – as it is in other regions – and the borders between the disciplines are blurred. Both disciplines were framed on the notion that Western observers provided impartial vistas into Pacific societies, cultures and the past, as in the case of Mead. Since the 1970s such notions of objectivity have been exposed by postcolonial scholars as deceptions and another form of imperial control and empowerment. The pitched battle of the 1990s between Gananath Obeyesekere and Marshall Sahlins over Cook's death in Hawai'i invigorated the postcolonial pushback against the colonising gaze of the disciplines of anthropology and history, with global repercussions. This was reworked and twisted within Pacific history, by postcolonial and feminist scholars, forming a specific branch of gender history.

The prominence of gender in Pacific historical texts has spurred much academic work. In addition to textual readings, investigations of visual representations have played a particularly prominent role. This is most apparent in the work on the South Pacific – Pacific Islands and Australia – where anthropology and history, text and visual representation have marked studies of gender to a striking extent. Postcolonial scholars, who objected to scholarly practices that perpetuated colonial hierarchies and concepts, emerged internationally. Though voices from the Pacific have also had a considerable impact in shaping studies of gender in Pacific history, scholars from a mix of intellectual traditions – art history, history of science, anthropology, film studies, postcolonialism and feminist studies, as well as history – have variously studied representations of racialised femininity and masculinity, demonstrating how regional particularities, such as Polynesia versus Melanesia, have had considerable cultural and historical importance.

Examining the historical impact of colonial stereotypes and how greatly Pacific women's lives diverged from colonial stereotypes has also provided a rich vein of historical investigation. Linking studies of representations with the lives of historical figures shows how women defied simplistic archetypes. In many areas of the Pacific – Polynesia, for example – women have historically held considerable political power. Ka'ahumanu, kuhina-nui to King Kamehameha of Hawai'i, was an influential figure at the outset of American missionary activity. Missions attempted to prevent young Hawaiian women from engaging in sexual commerce with nations of US whalers who arrived in Hawaiian ports from the 1820s expecting the legendary 'refreshment' that island women were supposed to bestow willingly on male crews. The missionary quest to curtail sexual connections between Hawaiian women and New England whalers would have had no effect were it not for Ka'ahumanu imposing a kapu on young women, preventing their interaction with whaling crews. This action both preserved Ka'ahumanu's chiefly authority and protected the women from an exploitative exchange with the US crewmen, some of whom turned to violence to express their displeasure at the attack upon their perceived rights to sex. Ka'ahumanu's influence was critical to the introduction of Christianity, a turning point in Hawaiian history on many levels, not least of which entailed a layering of ancient Hawaiian notions of masculinity and femininity with additional and often anathetical ideas about how men and women should act and be valued in society.

These machinations of imperial power and competing notions of imperial masculinity, Pacific femininity and Christian ideas of gender had a dramatic impact on 1840s Tahiti. Here Queen Pōmare IV was confronted by French Admiral Abel Aubert Dupetit Thouars' gunboat diplomacy aiming to extend French control over the islands. The encounter between Dupetit Thouars and the young queen, who was supported by British missionaries, is replete with gendered and racialised dimensions. French sources condemned Queen Pōmare as drunk, sexually lascivious and disorderly in body and habit, whilst British sources focused upon her feminine suffering and maternal virtue, portraying her as a Pacific Queen Victoria (see Figure 15.2). Dupetit Thouars and the other Frenchmen involved were meanwhile cast as brutish violators of her realm. The iconography of Queen Victoria also featured in the overthrow in the 1890s of Hawaiian Queen Liliuokalani by American planters. The projected virtue of
Within two years of the publication of Margaret Mead's classic *The Coming of Age in Samoa*, which cast Samoan women both sexually and politically, Samoan women in the Mandated Territory of Western Samoa had formed an arm of the nationalist movement opposed to New Zealand rule. Following the massacre by New Zealand forces of Mau leaders who espoused non-violent resistance in Apia on 28 December 1929, the New Zealand military then raided homes in search of other Mau men who had fled into the steep and heavily vegetated hills behind the town. New Zealand was accused in this new phase of waging a 'war on women and children'. In the wake of these developments, the wives of four Mau leaders – Ala Tamasee, Rosabel Nelson, Faumuani Malietoa (wife of High Chief Faumuina) and Patsami Tuimalealifano – formed the Women's Mau along with significant numbers of other women who were affected by this violent turn of events (see Figure 13.3). The New Zealand administrator's report to the League of Nations on this development described those who had formed the Women's Mau as 'dissolute', thereby aligning women's political activism with being 'public women' or 'prostitutes' – a connection which had been made both

Figure 13.2 George Baxter, *Pomare Queen of Tahiti, the Protestant Christian Surrounded by her Family at the Affrighted moment when the French forces were landing, 1845*

the Queen stood for the worth of her people and the justice of their cause; protecting indigenous rights and lawful political processes. US economic and strategic interests in the islands nonetheless overrode this, and Hawai'i was annexed to the United States in 1898.

These high-ranking women, along with other similar examples, received their authority through traditional systems of familial prestige and hereditary power. Once imperial zones had been established across the region by the turn of the twentieth century, women organised in innovative ways to challenge the excesses of colonialism.

Figure 13.3 *Leaders of the Women's Mau*, 1930
before and since by detractors of women’s involvement in the political realm, but was here compounded by racial inferences of ingrained sexual ‘immorality’. This accusation enraged Samoan nationalists. The leaders of the Women’s Mau demanded a public apology from the administrator that was never professed.20

Forty years after this episode of Samoan women’s involvement in political protests against New Zealand, an eighty-year-old Māori woman, Whina Cooper, became the figurehead for the civil rights movement for Māori throughout the country. In a powerful and symbolic protest, in 1975 Cooper led the thirty-day Māori Land March, 700 miles down the length of New Zealand’s North Island to the nation’s capital of Wellington (see Figure 13.4). The march drew thousands and focused international attention on inequities and injustices endured by Māori through breaches of the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi. Arguably, the scarf-wearing Whina Cooper is as iconic a figure in New Zealand history as was Rosa Parks in the 1960s struggle for Civil Rights in the United States. Cooper’s life had been characterised by community leadership ‘gifted’ by hereditary factors and mana (authority and power). She became the first president of the Māori Women’s Welfare League which gave her a national profile in indigenous affairs. Cooper’s activism was not aimed at rights for Māori women over that of Māori men, but rather for justice along racial lines between indigenous Māori and the Pakeha [European] majority: this was an objective shared by many anti-colonial women activists around the region, who perceived the main barrier to social equity to be not the oppression of all women by men (as western feminists did), but rather the oppression of racial minorities, of which they were a part.21

The historical function of gender and power was concentrated when hybrid Pacific communities founded by Pacific women and incoming men were created throughout the region. An investigation of the histories of these communities provides many insights into how Pacific women defied the passivity of colonial stereotypes. From Pitcairn Island to Nāgātāi Island in Micronesia and in sealing and whaling communities from Bass Strait, New Zealand to the Bonin Islands in the Okhotsk Sea, and in ‘Eurasian’ communities across the region from Batavia, Macau and French Indochina, it was the seemingly most unremarkable historic events that have had the most considerable historical legacy. The intimate commingling of colonial peoples (usually men) and indigenous people (usually women) generated mestizo populations across the region. Yet in traditional historical narratives, which have been preoccupied with the public deeds of white men, this aspect of colonial history has received the least historical attention.22

Despite their prevalence throughout the region, mixed populations were the focus of attention, sometimes for their perceived ‘degeneracy’, and at other times as drivers of racial improvement.23 The intermingling of white male whalers and traders with Māori communities in New Zealand began in the late eighteenth century in the far north, before spreading gradually throughout the country following the
establishment of sealing, timber getting and other extraction industries. European men learnt that marriage to highborn Māori women brought with it numerous advantages of social prestige and land entitlements, though this entailed considerable reciprocity. Pacific communities through marriage – accrued different powers than those where women were extracted from their familial networks and protections. In New Zealand, white observers were struck by the seeming prestige that Māori women held in their societies. In this they were correct: Māori women's mana was retained to a far greater degree than in other colonial scenarios around the region. A critical difference in New Zealand was that white men were absorbed into Māori communities to a far greater extent making these men subject to extant power and gendered systems that preserved the social status of women and curtailed that of colonial men.

Ideas about racial superiority and inferiority played an important role in shaping intimate relations throughout the region. In tropical beachcomber communities, foreign men melded into nineteenth-century tropical island societies according to their political utility. Beachcombers often married local women, gained access to land and then acted as traders and go-betweens for local people and European merchants. Some of the intimate relationships between island women and beachcombers were affectionate and were regarded as marriages. Yet the intervention of racial views in these intimate connections compounded the inherent inequality between men and women in nineteenth-century marriage, so that many beachcombers considered their marriages as versions of a master–servant relationship.

Relations in Australia's twentieth-century colony of Papua were shaped by anxieties about the perceived sexual threats by Papuan men to the growing number of white women in the colony. Accordingly, the colonial administration passed the White Woman's Protection Ordinance in 1926 which was based on unfounded fears that the influx of greater numbers of white women into the territory was leading to an upsurge in sexual violence against them by Papuan men. Such anxieties were common in other colonial settings, diverting attention away from the most significant instance of predatory sexual behaviour; that perpetrated by white men towards local women. In the Papuan case, the presence of a significant 'half-caste' population (admitted by colonial administrators), identified the more pervasive story of cross-racial sexual exploitation of Papuan women by white men, though these relationships were largely hidden and illicit.

The discretion that Papuan women had in entering these relationships was limited, a number of historians have concluded, citing an acknowledgment by Australia's administrator of the neighbouring New Guinea territory that 'a few years ago...it was practically impossible to find a white man, except the Missionaries, who had not his mamy [an indigenous woman], and that in the procuring of the mamy her like or dislike was not of the least importance'.

In northern Australia, the politics of intimacy and the mixing of races played out in intriguing ways. In the pastoral economy that dominated northern Australia in the twentieth century, Aboriginal women operated as vital workers, prized for their skills on horseback, and as intimate partners of many white men employed in the industry. Such intimate relationships and the resulting mixed-race community, were so prevalent and troubling to government authorities that legislation was introduced in the Northern Territory in 1911 to make such liaisons unlawful. To skirt this legislation, the practice of dressing Aboriginal women to appear as men became widespread. As was the case in Papua, violence and force were highly significant factors in white men's gaining access to Aboriginal women, yet, even within these circumstances, women were able to exercise some self-determination.

Intimacy in Pacific history also involved domestic service relationships. Domestic service was a dominant mode of interaction between colonial men and women and indigenous peoples in mostly women across the region. It involved cooking, cleaning and childcare and often also included sexual relations too, initiated within the asymmetric power relationships inherent in domestic service that were compounded by the dynamics of colonialism. Racial dynamics operated in some unique and draconian ways. In twentieth-century Australia, governments attempted to solve a number of 'problems' through linking the domestic service needs of middle-class, white families with the government practice of removing Aboriginal children, in this instance girls, from their mothers. (Aboriginal boys were also removed for their families and hired out as farm labourers.) It was hoped that removed girls, who would be exposed to affluent white society, would spurn relationships with Aboriginal men in favour of white partners, thus 'diluting' or eradicating Australia's indigenous 'problem' along eugenic reproductive principals. A number of Aboriginal-authored accounts, such as Margaret Tucker's Everyone Cared (1977), Glenyse Ward's Unna You Pullas (1991) and Doris Pilkington's story of her mother and aunts, Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence (1996), detailed the effects of being a young girl caught up in this grand scheme to preserve race and gender orders.
revealing the benefits of the scheme, these accounts and others reveal the inhumanity these girls experienced in institutions and in white homes, where paragons of white femininity sometimes brutalised the young girls in their charge, and they were routinely sexually abused by the men of the household. A high number of girls left domestic assignments pregnant.33

These twentieth-century views of white women in suburban Australia are part of the long history of European women’s presence in Pacific history. Wherever they appeared, white women added layers of complexity to this gendered history. The first European women to enter Pacific history were involved in Portugal’s colony, Macau, and then the Spanish colony of the Philippines from 1565.32 European women were present in small numbers. Donna Ysabel Barretos, for example, was the wife of Spanish captain Don Alvaro de Mendaña who attempted to establish a Spanish colony in the Solomon Islands, the supposedly fabled Biblical lands, in 1595.33 The short-lived experiment ended in a disastrous loss of life (with about three-quarters of the colonisers having perished) due to attacks from locals and tropical diseases. When Don Alvaro died, Donna Ysabel was made the governor of the settlement, though the Solomon settlement was soon abandoned, with the return of the population limping into Manila. There, Donna Ysabel married the governor’s cousin three months later.34 Yet such lives were rare: European men greatly outnumbered European women in Iberian Pacific colonies, resulting in substantial mestizo populations.

The presence of white women in the Pacific has produced some interesting arguments. Many male-centred studies of empire argued that the late arrival of white women in colonial areas increased the distance and tensions between imperial men and colonised people, as they came between the intimate colonial bonds white men had forged with Indigenous women and their communities. In the Pacific, such views were challenged by studies that tested the view that ‘idle white ladies’ poisoned harmonious colonial situations through their demanding, moralistic and racist presence.35 The colonial society of Fiji offered one such setting in which these empire-wide questions about the effect of white women’s presence were deliberated. Fiji was a plantation economy where a small, white population presided over Indigenous Fijians and indentured labourers imported from British India to work the sugar plantations. In one account, white women were defended and absolved of the accusation that it was their presence that eroded good relations between whites, Indians and Fijians in the late nineteenth century when there was an increase in the numbers of white women. Instead, a sentimental picture of racial harmony, especially between white women and their Fijian servants, was proposed. This cross-racial bonding of women, a case of universal sisterhood, was posited upon shared female experiences of marriage, birth and childrearing that transcended race: a view that can rarely be sustained in a colonial setting. Critics of this account pointed to the lack of attention given to the historical views of Fijian or Indian servants, who no doubt had quite divergent views about the sentimental relationships between white women and their household staff.36

The presence of white women had significantly different historical outcomes in tropical colonies such as Fiji than it did in temperate settler societies. For example, the key to the success of the British settler empire, with its Pacific concentration in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States, was the presence of substantial numbers of European women amongst the ranks of settlers. Their reproductive work not only produced biologically European offspring, but these women also kept a British culture and identity relatively intact.37 From the formative works in Australian women’s history there has been a steady stream of scholarship on convict women as founding mothers. In differing ways, these works have enriched understanding about the lives of convict women and their purpose in the grand scheme of Britain’s imperial outreach. They have stressed the factors of work, sexuality and the reproductive intent behind the transportation of thousands of women to Australia between 1788 and the 1840s, comprising about one-sixteenth of the transported population. Other historians have highlighted the story of convict women who rejected the seemingly mandatory heterosexual and reproductive destiny in favour of homosexual relations.38

There were considerable gender imbalances in Pacific populations, compounded by mid-century gold rushes in California and southeast Australia. The relative absence of women troubled authorities who feared the results of masculine frontiers. Pervasive homosexual relations among men was a leading concern, and part of the rationale for a push to ‘domesticate’ the frontier in the form of Selection Acts (in Australia) or Homestead Acts (in the United States) from the 1860s onwards; such policies sought to break up large landholdings into smaller family-run farms. In the Australian case, these acts were complemented by female immigration schemes. The re-creation of a different frontier society based upon family units, it was hoped, would shift the character of the frontier from one dominated by ‘raiding men’ to one that was tamed by women with
their 'civilising' Christian virtues and tender concerns of childrear-
ing. Such ideas strongly drive suffrage campaigns that were successful first in New Zealand and Australia. Taming the excesses of white working-class masculinity, with its stereotyped alcoholic and violent tendencies directed at women in the home, was a political agenda for middle-class white women.\(^\text{39}\)

It is telling that British officials initially contemplated bringing women from China and the Pacific Islands to be wives and mothers of antipodean working-class stock in the planning stages of the Port Jackson colony in the late eighteenth century. The abandonment of this plan set this antipodean settler society on a different racial course towards aspirationally white-only societies. The influx of substantial numbers of Chinese miners, who were almost exclusively male, prompted the redefinition of the United States and Australia as 'white men's countries'. New Zealand followed suit after their first gold rush in the 1860s.\(^\text{40}\) Chinese men were being pushed out of China into these increasingly hostile societies because of the deterioration of the Qing Dynasty and accompanying economic hardships intensified by the financial terms of unequal treaties. This situation was compounded by the Taiping Rebellion (1850–64) which aimed to overthrow traditional systems of governance and cultural structures, particularly of Confucian gender hierarchies. The rebellion proclaimed the equality of men and women, and 'Taiping armies included women's battalions and women soldiers'. Despite this seemingly radical departure from the status quo, ultimately the 'Taiping Rebellion could not break free of feudal ideology' with its axiomatic gender hierarchy of men over women, in spite of all protestations to the contrary.

In white settler nations the movement of large numbers of Chinese men, pushed by internal disruptions and attracted to the booming mining economies, was met by restricted immigration laws that set race-based criteria upon which one could enter these 'white countries', though Chinese men, and other nationalities, circumvented restrictions in various ways.\(^\text{41}\)

The establishment of plantation economies throughout the region coincided with the expansion of the mining frontiers that expanded into western Pacific Islands in the second half of the century in French-run New Caledonia and New Guinea 'shared' by the Netherlands, Britain and Australia and Germany from the 1880s. Indentured labour, again overwhelmingly male, and originating mainly in Asia, and especially from China, France's Indo-Chinese colonies and also from the Pacific Islands provided the labour force for these two colonial economies. The overwhelmingly masculine make-up of these non-European migrant populations (with the major exception of Indian men and women brought to Fiji to be workers on the sugar plantations) prompted not only further race-based restricted immigration policies, but also a grotesque cultural shift.

The sexual threat to white women posed by Indigenous men that had been such an important (and largely imagined) anxiety in settler frontier mythologies was recalibrated and Asian men were now portrayed in sexually threatening ways as peddlers of opium and seducers of vulnerable white women, thereby polluting the purity of the white races. Articulations of gendered and racial anxieties can be found across the cultural spectrum, with political cartoons being an especially virulent means of communicating cultural fears. The work of US-born cartoonist Livingston Hopkins, who published cartoons in the stridently racist Bulletin magazine in Sydney, epitomised the monstrous dimensions of miscegenation anxieties — especially in his 1902 cartoon Prebald Possibilities — A Little Australian Christmas Family Party of the Future.\(^\text{42}\) Briton Robert Fletcher likewise encapsulated the perceived perils of racial death and the deploration of white masculinity through cross-racial relations in His Native Wife (1924). In this novel, Fletcher provided a fictionalised account of his real-life experience as a plantation overseer in the New Hebrides when he 'accompanied' a relationship with a local woman, Onēla Kohkome. In His Native Wife, the leading male character endures the erosion of masculinity and self-worth, finally sacrificing himself to sharks: his death was a metaphor for white racial extinction occasioned by the crossing of races.\(^\text{44}\)

The upsurge in colonial activity in the Pacific and the accompanying denigration of non-Europeans in the second half of the nineteenth century was challenged in many ways. In Japan, these forces were met with a unique response that would have a far-reaching impact on the region, culminating in the Pacific theatre of the Second World War and beyond. The traumatic intrusion by the United States into Japanese territory and history from 1853 set Japan on a path of rapid political reform involving the restitution of the Meiji Emperor, the westernisation of its institutions and the swift industrialisation of its economy. In its effort to westernise and modernise at a remarkable pace, there was also questioning about the status and role of women. The leading educator and social critic Fukuzawa Yukichi is credited with being the first to grapple with questions about women, gender and what aspects of Japanese tradition should be jettisoned or retained regarding women. Fukuzawa made key gendered prescriptions be considered crucial to modernising Japanese society, arguing against polygamy, for the education of girls regardless of rank or wealth (noble women had been receiving
education before the Meiji reform period), for greater equality between the sexes, a higher social status to be assigned to women as well as greater attention paid to improving women's health. Some of Fukuzawa's ideas were adopted promptly, whilst others would take longer to break entrenched ideas about women and their subordinate status. It was not until 1947, when the Japanese Constitution, written during the Allied Occupation, was enacted, that gender equality was given the protection of the law.

Japan's modernisation also entailed militarisation. In order to fend off European domination, Japanese leaders mimicked many European strategies to advance national power, particularly in relation to imperial expansion. In Korea (annexed in 1910) Japan commenced a programme of settler colonialism, with mass migrations of Japanese to Korea and the implementation of numerous assimilationist policies designed at blending Japanese settlers with Koreans, not the least of which was the promotion of intermarriage between the two groups. Despite public acclaim for couples that entered into such marriages, rates of intermarriage remained low, due to 'mutual contempt and antagonism'. The effects of denigrating racial and gendered ideas were brutally apparent when Imperial Japan launched its attack against the Chinese nationalist capital in 1937, unleashing sexualised violence against the people of Nanjing, an atrocity that became known as 'Rape of Nanking'. After this shocking incident, the system of 'comfort women' was expanded throughout Japan's imperial zone as Japanese officials excused the sexual violence as a consequence of the pent-up frustrations of soldiers who 'required' sexual access to women. This system of sexual slavery had a particular impact on Korean women but also engulled women throughout Imperial Japan's range. Though this scheme of ensuring sex for soldiers was not unique to Japan (previously France and Britain had devised similar systems in imperial arenas) it remains one of the most challenging legacies of the Second World War with all its unprecedented horrors, as does the Rape of Nanking, marking an apogee of colonial rule saturated with gendered power. The impact of the war upon the Pacific is immeasurable, in every respect. The war disrupted gendered ideas about femininity and masculinity, transforming notions of gendered work, societal roles, sex and political ambitions, not to mention colonial orders. Marriages between Allied servicemen and Asian wives were the first to test rigid restricted immigration laws. The end of the Second World War was quickly followed by anti-Communist wars that were also heavily influenced by anti-imperial ambitions. The Korean War, and the Vietnam War in particular, transformed the countries where the wars were fought and on the horizons of combatant countries, further breaking down Asian immigration barriers into white settler societies, and increasing social prejudices against intermarriages. The 1960s and 1970s sparked numerous 'revolutions': decolonisation and power struggles in newly independent countries, civil rights movements targeting race, feminist ones targeting gender inequalities, sexual revolutions, globalisation, educational, economic and technological ones.

All of these vast changes have had an untold impact on Pacific people and, in many instances, have had a multitude of positive effects on and 'closing the gaps' for life opportunities and living standards for men and women across the region. But these vast changes have come unevenly, and many Pacific peoples still live in poverty, the majority of them and many Pacific peoples still live in poverty, the majority of them and many Pacific peoples still live in poverty, the majority of them

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were fought and on the horizons of combatant countries, further breaking down Asian immigration barriers into white settler societies, and increasing social prejudices against intermarriages. The 1960s and 1970s sparked numerous 'revolutions': decolonisation and power struggles in newly independent countries, civil rights movements targeting race, feminist ones targeting gender inequalities, sexual revolutions, globalisation, educational, economic and technological ones.

Gendered hierarchies have changed, but nonetheless remain in place. Political and economic power remains predominantly a male preserve, notwithstanding relatively recent examples of female heads of state and female heads of government throughout the region from the Philippines, Indonesia and South Korea to New Zealand and Australia. As power shifts in the Pacific away from the West and towards China, perhaps one of the most significant challenges in the region will emerge from that nation's marked gender imbalance. Hawaiians have a saying that 'the past is in front of us' and historians of gender in the Pacific will continue to have much to offer with as they explain historical continuities and changes, and evaluate how gender continues to shape the region's history in profoundly important ways.

Notes

3. Ryan, Tasmanian Aborigines, pp. 268–70.
5. Vivienne Rae Ellis, 'Truganini: Queen or Traitor?' (Canberra 1981).
17. See, for example, Bernard Smith, Imaging the Pacific: In the Wake of Cook (Melbourne, 1992); Teresa Traïna, Bikinis and Other Specifics in Oceania, The Contemporary Pacific 6 (1994), 87–109; Hanmi Kay Trask, From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai’i (Honolulu, 2012).
30. Margaret Tucker, If Everyone Cared (Sydney, 1977); Glensey Ward, Uma You Fullah (Broome, 1991); Doris Pilkington (Ngugi Garimara), Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence (St Lucia, Qld, 1996).
34. Miriam Estrensen, Terra Australis Incognita: The Spanish Quest for the Mysterious Great South Land (Sydney, 2006), p. 15.
36. Jane Haggis, 'Gendering Colonialism or Colonizing Gender?', Women’s Studies International Forum 13 (1990), 111–12.
38. Joy Damousi, Deported and Dubious: Female Convicts Sexuality and Gender in Colonial Australia (Cambridge, 1997).
42. Compare Adam McKeown, ‘Movement’, ch. 7 in this volume.

14

Politics

Robert Aldrich

The states of the Pacific, island and littoral, display dramatically varying political institutions and ideologies. On the marches of the Pacific, an emperor reigns in Japan, Thailand and Cambodia enthroning kings with a semi-divine status, Malaysia has a rotating monarchy; in Tonga, too, a crowned head of state rules. In Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and Canada, as well as several island nations, the Westminster system of government represents a British imperial legacy. The People’s Republic of China, North Korea, Vietnam and Laos espouse a Marxist ideology. The United States forms a federal republic, with most of the Central and Latin American states unitary presidential republics. France, the United States, New Zealand and Australia administer non-contiguous territories in Oceania. Such diversity results from centuries of change during which indigenous forms of politics were challenged by colonialism, reacted to, and eventually blended with ideas and institutions from outside.

In 1983, the Paris-based Institut du Pacifique heralded the Pacific as the ‘new centre of the world’.1 Though not suggesting that the Pacific, ocean and land, formed a Braudelian unity, the institute pointed to linkages that it claimed justified a regional analytical approach corresponding to a geopolitical reality. The position provoked critiques about the proposed dense grid of connections and about definitions of where the Pacific begins and ends, alongside reminders that already a century earlier, geopolitical theorists (and colonial lobbyists) had prophesied the advent of the Pacific as the political and commercial centre of a new world order.2 Commentators have continued to voice reservations about the Pacific as a ‘Mediterranean in the making’.3 Some have nevertheless identified aggregated zones within the Pacific, one of the most useful being a ‘Pacific Asian region’.4

In strategic and military politics, certain lines can indeed be drawn across the Pacific, both past and present, from Spanish colonialism in Mexico and the Philippines in the 1500s to American expansion
12 Race

The accounts of explorers are still useful for understanding peoples’ perceptions of each other in the Pacific. Most explorers were European, but they did include a few indigenous pilots and interpreters, such as the Tahitian priest and pilot Tupata, who had firm views on the inferiority of other island cultures: see, most recently, Joan Druet, Tupata: Captain Cook’s Polynesian Navigator (Santa Barbara, CA, 2011). The definitive edition of Cook’s own journals is The Journals of Captain James Cook on his Voyages of Discovery, ed. J. C. Beaglehole, 4 vols. (London 1955). The Resolution Journal of Johann Reinhold Forster, 1772–1775, ed. M. E. Hoare, 4 vols. (London, 1982), complete with reflections on race, make an interesting counterpart. Charles Darwin’s Voyage of the Beagle, of which there are many editions, is a prime example of how ideas of race and the Pacific helped constitute each other. An intriguing take on explorer mortality is Anne Salmond, The Trial of the Cannibal Dog: Captain Cook in the South Seas (London 2003), while Bernard Smith’s classic, European Vision and the South Pacific, 1768–1850, 2nd edn (New Haven, 1985) remains well worth reading.

Racial mixing and its myths around the Pacific littoral are discussed in Adelle Perry, On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia 1849–1871 (Toronto, 2001); Darron Jalesa, Racial Crossings: Race, Intermarriage, and the Victorian British Empire (Oxford 2011); and Gwenn A. Miller, Kodesh Kreol: Communities of Empire in Early Russian America (Ithaca, NY, 2010). Mexico is a good point of entry into the myriad complexities of race in Pacific Latin America: see María Elena Martínez, Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico (Stanford, 2008) and Boni Katzew and Susan Dears-Smith, eds., Race and Classification: The Case of Mexican America (Stanford, 2009). On the Aryan myth in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, see Tony Ballantyne, Orientalism and Race: Aryanism in the British Empire (Basingstoke, 2002).


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Further Reading


14 Politics

Most works on individual countries and cultures provide detailed material on political systems and the changes they have undergone. Some volumes also provide useful transnational and cross-cultural perspectives. David C. Kang, East Asia before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute (New York, 2010), offers a good introduction to the Chinese system of tributary states, and O.W. Wolters, History, Culture and Region in Southeast Asian Perspective, rev. edn (Ithaca, NY, 1999) develops the idea of political 'mandalas' in Buddhist states. Anthony Milner, The Malay (Oxford, 2011) is a recent overview of that cultural zone. Douglas L. Oliver, Oceania: The Native Cultures of Australia and the Pacific Islands (Honolulu, 1989) remains an authoritative source on the indigenous societies of the southern Pacific. An interpretive introduction to politics in South America is David Bushnell and Neil Macaulay, The Emergence of Latin America in the Nineteenth Century (Oxford, 1994).


For the political ferment in Asia in the late 1800s and early 1900s, Benedict Anderson, Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination (London, 2008), is especially interesting in linking the Philippines with ideological ferment in Europe and the Americas. Peter Zegers, After Empire: The Conceptual Transformation of the Chinese State, 1885–1924 (Stanford, 2012), offers an excellent study of the ideology and strategy of government and opposition there. Pankaj Mishra, From the Ruins of Empire: The Revolt against the West and the Remaking of Asia (London, 2012), stresses the role of Asian theorists and the importance of Japan as a meeting-place for nationalists. Donald Keene, Emperor of Japan: Meiji and His World, 1852–1912 (New York, 2002) is a wide-ranging study of personalities and politics in Japan itself.

Anti-colonial movements are well covered in the literature, and collections of the writings of such figures as Mao Zedong, Ho Chi Minh and Sukarno are invaluable for understanding their ideology and tactics. Biographies of individual leaders, past and present, provide a good lens through which to view political developments. For the Francophone areas, for instance, there is Pierre Brocheux, Ho Chi Minh: A Biography, trans. Claire Dukker (Cambridge, 2007), and on the later leader of New Caledonia's independence movement, Eric Waddell, Jean-Marie Tjibaou: Kanak Witness to the World—An Intellectual Biography (Honolulu, 2008).

Alfred W. McCoy, Josep M. Fradera and Stephen Jacobson, eds., Endless Empire: Spain's Retreat, Europe's Eclipse, America's Decline (Madison, WI, 2012), discusses the rise and fall of Pacific empires. The four volumes of Shaun Breslin and Richard Higgott, eds., International Relations of the Asia-Pacific (London, 2010), comprise a compendium of scholarly articles and provide a tour d'horizon of security, development and regional issues, as well as the theorising of international politics.