

ers but will offer those interested in land tenure, law, and legal pluralism in Oceania much to think on. The numerous exquisite and often breathtaking full-color photographs of Cook Islands material culture and historical contexts in combination with lengthy extracts from primary materials will serve as sources of inspiration to students and a stimulus to future Cook Islands scholarship. Regional libraries will wish to have copies. Profits from the volume will be donated to the Cook Islands Library and Museum Society, a privately funded and volunteer institution, which has worked to preserve and promote Cook Islands material culture since 1963.

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*Greed and Grievance: Ex-Militants' Perspectives on the Conflict in Solomon Islands 1998–2003*, by Matthew G Allen. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013. ISBN 978-0-8248-3854-6; 243 pages, maps, tables, illustrations, photographs, notes, appendixes. Cloth, US\$55.00.

Reading *Greed and Grievance: Ex-Militants' Perspectives on the Conflict in Solomon Islands 1998–2003* by Matthew G Allen reminded me of several things. First, it reminded me of the civil uprising since 1998; the militant rule and activities then in towns and rural villages; the various attempts to attain peace, particularly through the Townsville Peace Agreement in 2000 that resulted in the cessation of overt fighting; and people's reception

of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) in 2003. These observed behaviors and events persuaded me to learn more about the perceptions of ex-militants in the conflict. I also wondered what these ex-militants could relay to an expatriate scholar like Allen who is attempting to make sense of the country's social uprising. More important, I was also eager to learn from the book how this complex Melanesian conflict is perceived under the auspices of greed and grievance.

My very first impression was that the book is very well arranged, rendering the lines of arguments easy to follow. The book is divided into seven chapters with detailed assessments of historical developments and background information to assist readers who might have limited knowledge pertaining to the "tensions" specifically and to Solomon Islands more generally. The author skillfully weaves the overall and often contradictory accounts by members of the two former conflicting groups into a story of failed coexistence. According to his research, Guadalcanal ex-militants subscribed to the notion of Guadalcanal as the motherland that must be saved, while the Malaita ex-militants advocated for the security of other Solomon Islanders from the threat of Guadalcanal militants. The author capably knits these distinct and contrary positions into one national story under the title "Continuities and Symmetries."

The book captures very powerful personal stories by individuals who contributed physically during the conflict. The stories of events and emotions that led these individuals to

commit to a process of hate, atrocities, and pillage are well captured and described by the author. For instance, the account of how one Malaita militant decided to join the fight after witnessing the humiliating and inhumane treatment of a girl and her father is sensitively expressed in the book. Similarly, the book vividly illustrates the case of a Guadalcanal youth who was convinced that the only way to free his island from exploitation by others was to join the fight. These personal revelations demonstrate the fragility of people's intentions to remain neutral and coexist when faced with immense insecurity.

Allen has done an excellent job of uncovering and rediscovering historical evidence that may have been forgotten over time. The wealth of historical detail and information he provides is reinforced in the appendixes and notes. These aid the reader's appreciation of the sorts of arguments disclosed by ex-militants, despite obvious levels of exaggeration in some of their accounts. The author spent productive time listening to youths on both sides of the conflict and has efficaciously retold their stories in the pages of this book. Such is the hallmark of a great researcher and scholar. Gaining the trust of ex-militants in order to gather and then convey their accounts to a regional and global audience is a remarkable skill, not easily replicated. The author must be commended for an approach that successfully balanced viewpoints from former members of opposing groups.

It may also be useful to highlight certain "soft spots" in the book. First is the risk that ex-militants may have

misconstrued or indeed deliberately misrepresented certain matters. These could be ideas or stories that were never heard of before and may have been orchestrated to impress the expatriate researcher. A case in point is the brief history provided by two Guadalcanal ex-militants as explicated in appendix 2. For instance, there are repeat references to local Guadalcanal people protecting the "devil stones" (gold) from the whites during the early encounters, implying that gold was everywhere. Through such accounts, gold is unnecessarily elevated as a central factor contributing to the tensions—a highly questionable proposition. Since the book's ultimate aim is to propagate the perceptions of ex-militants from all sides of the conflict, there is a risk that when published, such stories could also perpetuate the misrepresentation and manipulation of information. I acknowledge, though, that the author did his best to clarify some of these things in footnotes.

There are also other statements made that are not fully explored or may not be relevant to the discussion. For instance, there is an assertion that during the crisis more deaths were the result of natural causes than by the conflict itself. On the contrary, Solomon Islanders then felt that the tensions actually forced people to live healthier lifestyles and eat healthier local foods. I felt that this plus other matters such as logging issues were not appropriately supported with evidence.

I would also have wanted to see some insights into the role that church and religious affiliations played in decisions made by ex-militants, since

the book indicates that 98 percent of the population is Christian (37). The state, Christianity, and local cultures usually contribute to our understanding of social change, conflict, and politics in Solomon Islands. Denominational membership may have played a role in the rationale for participation in the conflict by ex-militants. Churches also played an important role in the peace and reconciliation processes and activities following the signing of the Townsville Peace Agreement and the cooperative intervention. This is an area of immense importance and may warrant further research if we are to really understand the perceptions shared by militants and their participation in war and peace.

*Greed and Grievance* is a must-read for those who long to understand the views, aspirations, and stories of ex-militants during the crisis and in relation to their perception of the modern state in Solomon Islands. The book is a remarkable contribution to the literature on the Solomon Islands conflict, politics, and development. It furnishes evidence showing that Solomon Islands is struggling to build a modern state and may need to find ways to incorporate the different linguistic and cultural groups across the country to progress on this front. The views revealed by ex-militants are testaments to the fact that there is still a lot to do to unite Solomon Islands under a modern state. The book very well expressed the idea that, in the eyes of many ex-militants and citizens generally, the government is the successor of the colonial state, an “outsider,” and the inheritor of past wrongdoings. Unless the modern state

recognizes this and works toward making amends, the fundamental views held by militants shown in the pages of the book will linger into the future.

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*Unearthing the Polynesian Past: Explorations and Adventures of an Island Archaeologist*, by Patrick Vinton Kirch. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015. ISBN, 978-0-8248-5345-7; xix + 379 pages, notes, appendix, glossary, index. Cloth, US\$45.00.

Most attempts at synthesizing the archaeology of the Pacific Islands have presented the big picture of human migration and adaptation to these diverse and insular environments over the last 3,500 years, none yet exceeding Patrick Vinton Kirch's book *On the Road of the Winds* (2000). In the twenty-four chapters of *Unearthing the Polynesian Past*, Kirch instead presents a personalized account of the conflict between the development of scientific theory, the politics and funding of research institutions, and the political and logistical challenges of conducting archaeological research with indigenous communities over the last fifty years. Hypotheses will stand if data are repeatable and testable, but in archaeological research, especially in the Pacific Islands, this is not often possible, as Kirch attests. What could be excavated or collected in the 1970s and 1980s may now be irretrievable