

ferent arms of the state. Hassall argues that “instability in the structure of the executive branch of government is one of the main threats to the security of Vanuatu’s system of government” (242). While *kastom* (custom) provides a degree of stability in society, the fit—or lack of it—between modern and traditional authorities could cause conflicts.

Lopeti Senituli discusses the demands for democratic reform that have been occurring in the Kingdom of Tonga. He asserts that changes are inevitable, and arise from within (in what he describes as the monarch’s “road to Damascus” conversion), rather than from outside. He states, “Tonga is managing this inherently tricky transition by drawing on its own values and institutions” (284). The violent riot in Nuku’alofa in November 2006 happened after the chapter was written, and was therefore not featured in the discussions.

Today, international intervention to address intrastate conflicts is an important aspect on security and development in the region. Clive Moore discusses the experiences of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), which intervened to rebuild the state, establish order, and facilitate public sector reforms.

The region also offers examples of reconciliations. Nic Maclellan discusses the reconciliation process following the tragedies in New Caledonia in the late 1980s. He examines the challenges and opportunities associated with the process, and highlights the fact that although New Caledonia has dropped out of the region’s security radar since the 1980s, it still faces

many development and governance issues.

It would have been great to see more discussion of conflict resolution and reconciliation. That, however, is probably the topic of another book. Some of the chapters in this volume could have included more information and more elaborate analysis. But I understand that they were written for a conference and the authors might not have had time to improve them. In spite of the above, this book is a useful contribution to the discussions of development and security in the Pacific Islands. I recommend it to anyone interested in these issues, and as a reading for courses on development and security in the region.

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*The Insular Cases and the Emergence of American Empire*, by Bartholomew H Sparrow. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006. ISBN paper, 978-0-7006-1482-0; ISBN cloth, 978-0-7006-1481-3; xii + 300 pages, notes, chronology, bibliographic essay, index. Paper, US\$16.95; cloth, US\$35.00.

This well-researched and very thorough book exposes the struggles of the early nineteenth century US Supreme Court to define a legal avenue for the United States to hold sovereignty over island territories occupied after the Spanish-American War of 1898. Through a detailed analysis of Supreme Court cases titled “The Insular Cases,” which offer an often-over-

looked historical perspective, Sparrow gives the reader a rare glimpse into the mechanics of US colonial power. Sparrow demonstrates that it was this series of Supreme Court decisions over how to keep and rule these territories within the legal frame of the US Constitution that transformed “what the United States meant for constitutional purposes and for the US political system” (250).

This is a legal history of colonial power and of how the United States redefined itself as a nation, but it is neither ethnographic nor descriptive in its methodological or research focus. Because the book meticulously dissects US empire through constitutional cases and law, the inhabitants of the many US territories and colonies are almost completely lost, their voices only heard in brief descriptions of the constitutional cases.

The absence of colonized perspectives makes the book deficient in racial and cultural analyses and depth. But these facts should not diminish the importance of this work. After all, US colonialism at the very highest levels of theoretical power is interpreted and made, one ruling at a time, in the form of Supreme Court decisions. Thus, although the colonized are essentially invisible, the Insular Cases decisions, centered on theories of power and nation, have extreme consequence for the daily lives of the colonized. Colonial policies are based on these decisions and actuated on the ground.

The Insular Cases, Sparrow explains, were decided when the United States had a nascent overseas empire, still giddy with new-found notions of US sovereignty and wobbly on its colonial legs. Prior to

1898, historical precedent dictated a general pattern—“Every time the United States extended the domain of its sovereignty, the protections of the US Constitution followed”—in other words, the Constitution “followed the flag” (2). However, after both imperial Spain and the Hawaiian monarchy “lost” their island territories to the United States, the US Supreme Court began a momentous legal journey meant to sort out how these territories should relate to US constitutional law, and through the process delineated what the United States actually should be and look like as a nation-state. This journey was spurred because the United States as a colonial ruler was confronted with new experiences that moved the US administrations of the time into ambiguous landscapes. Never before had the United States been so poised to fulfill the desires of immense global (economic) power and influence, yet at the same time been so conflicted about those desires; never had the United States attempted to rule land that was not contiguous to its existing territory in such “remote” places; and never had the United States tried to tackle the dilemma of “governing” and potentially “incorporating” such large, seemingly “foreign,” and far-off populations, while also attempting to enact such virulent racist hierarchies and ideals—all within the mythology of colonial benevolence.

Sparrow explores this legal process through nine chapters. In the first several chapters (including the introduction through chapter 3), Sparrow provides a historical and legal context of how the United States acquired the territories before the watershed

moments of 1898; how the United States envisioned and rationalized itself as a global empire; and how the United States tried to both claim and distance Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Guam, and Hawai'i according to its own interests. For those in the United States who desired US expansion, the newly acquired territories seemed to promise grand opportunities to create new markets and investments for US business interests—economic aggrandizement coupled with global power being the persistent theme in US empire, as Sparrow rightly drives home. Thus, Sparrow summarizes, “the rise of the United States as a commercial, seagoing power depended on a larger navy, on more coaling stations (needed for refueling coal-burning steamships), and on new naval stations (i.e., naval bases)” (65). Hence, for many with governmental or business power in the United States, the new territories were perceived as a logistical “necessity” to accomplish US imperial goals.

The middle chapters (4 through 7) provide a detailed discussion of the Insular Cases themselves. The striking feature of these chapters is the heterogeneity of power—something that colonial theory dictates, but that is often overlooked when analyzing empire. US colonial power often is painted as a monolithic force, but those involved at the top levels of creating it are frequently battling over the details. Especially in the early Insular Cases, a striking diversity of opinion exists about how to express US sovereignty in legal terms. In these cases, the slight majority of justices (many of the early decisions were often five to four) were prone

to constitutionally justify the US colonial/expansionist bent. Through innumerable constitutional manipulations, this majority opinion expresses that the US Congress (and to some extent the executive branch) has the right to rule these territories as it sees fit—meaning that Congress can apply the Constitution to these territories in part, or in whole, or not at all, as the case may be. On the other hand, some of the Supreme Court justices (most notably Justice John Marshall Harlan, a former Southern slave owner) could not stomach the idea of the United States as an “imperial” power (at this juncture in history, at any rate). Sparrow quotes Justice Harlan as stating: “The idea that this country may acquire territories anywhere on earth, by conquest or treaty, and hold them as mere colonies or provinces—people inhabiting them to enjoy only such rights as Congress chooses to accord them—is wholly inconsistent with the spirit and genius as well as the words of the Constitution” (97). However, as Sparrow reveals, the majority’s opinion quickly became the legal “standard.”

But the most fascinating chapters are the last two (8 and 9), in which Sparrow connects the legacy of the Insular Cases to the United States’s process of making itself an “informal empire.” He contends that it is through US economic and business interests, backed up by the looming force of the US military, that the United States is able to finagle effective power over many other nations. Therefore, he argues, the United States does not need to colonize other areas to get what it wants, because it follows an “informal” imperial trajec-

tory, which began almost immediately after the United States gained its early twentieth century territories. Sparrow does a wonderful job of distilling many complicated factors into a coherent argument that elucidates the current state of affairs for the United States (the Iraq war, the war on terror, US economic troubles, and so on). Contemporary US policies evolved from a historical/political/economic/military arc in which the United States positioned itself to grasp and maintain global influence.

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*Eagle vs Shark*. DVD/35mm, 88 minutes, color, 2007. Written and directed by Taika Waititi. Produced by Ainsley Gardiner and Cliff Curtis. Executive Producer: Emanuel Michael. Created by Miramax Films and Whenua Films Ltd in association with the New Zealand Film Commission and Unison Films. Languages: English and Spanish; subtitles: English, French, Spanish. Distributed by Miramax Films. US\$19.99.

*Eagle vs Shark* is a film in which dorky posers obsessively try to win games they all seem destined to lose. In the backwards metropolis of urban New Zealand, Jarrod works as a video-game salesman at Screenblasterz, while nearby his secret admirer, Lily, serves up burgers at Meaty Boy. When Lily is fired from her cherished fast-food job for being unpopular, she throws caution to the wind and crashes Jarrod's exclusive "animal party." Jarrod,

dressed as an eagle, is impressed by Lily's shark costume and even more impressed by her video-game skills. They soon end up in Jarrod's bedroom where he shows off his most promising art projects, which seem hopelessly unpromising. After awkwardly consummating their new relationship, the viewers quickly discover Jarrod has a hidden dark side. He is obsessed with returning to his childhood home to "kick the ass" of his high school nemesis Eric, a Samoan bully, who, according to Jarrod, is responsible for ruining his life. "I used to be a bit of a nerd," Jarrod confesses.

Lily is seduced by Jarrod's need to win, and in classic codependent form she quickly enlists her brother to give them a ride out to Jarrod's small, country town. Here, Lily discovers the true nature of Jarrod's problem lies more in his relationship with his dysfunctional family than with any Samoan tough guy. Jarrod is consumed with gaining love from his oblivious father, who lives in a constant state of mourning over the mysterious death of Jarrod's heroic brother. Lily learns that Jarrod wants to reclaim his brother's lost throne, and restore his dad's happiness by taking on his high school nemesis and becoming the new family hero. The problem is that no matter how hard Jarrod practices his karate moves for the big fight, his inner geek betrays him. But, following a humiliating defeat, Lily is the one person who still accepts him. Unlike Jarrod, Lily is not obsessed with denying her nerdiness. In accepting herself she is able to accept Jarrod, and in the end, helps Jarrod do the same.

Developed at the Sundance Directors and Screenwriters Lab, *Eagle*

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