

Placental Politics: CHamoru Women, White Womanhood, and Indigeneity under US Colonialism in Guam. By Christine Taitano DeLisle. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021. 247 pages. \$90.00 cloth; \$39.95 paperback, \$19.99 ebook.

Throughout the various stages and structures of colonization from past to present, Indigenous women have been consistently excluded from conversations surrounding law and politics because their matriarchal strength threatens the heteropatriarchal foundations of colonial states. In order to highlight Indigenous women's acts of self-determination that have been purposefully ignored throughout the his-tories of North America and the Pacific Islands, Christine Taitano DeLisle restores and recovers CHamoru women's sovereign resistance to colonization through *Placental Politics*. To present a more holistic account of colonial encounters and CHamoru activism, Taitano DeLisle highlights the various routes and roots that the US naval officers, their wives, and CHamoru women explored in their efforts to maintain self-determination.

In this book are many unique and forward-thinking approaches to remembering Indigenous women's sovereignty that directly relate to the clever and discrete means that CHamoru women asserted self-determination through *pattera* (midwife) birthing practices until post-World War II. For example, Taitano DeLisle embeds CHamoru language and concepts directly in her work as a means of asserting CHamoru self-determination within academic spaces, but also draws attention to the significance of CHamoru women and *pattera* continuing to speak in their own language within hospitals that were overseen by the US Navy. In doing so, she highlights that creatively circumventing the English language within hospitals allowed for CHamoru resistance through an invaluable connection to culture supporting community futurity, which the US Navy did not understand.

As a result of their position to support births both within and outside hospitals, *pattera* had the unique opportunity to both accept and reject certain features of imported American birthing techniques as a means of asserting notions of progress from CHamoru political contexts. *Pattera* held CHamoru *inafa'maolek*—the restoration of harmony or order—at the heart of their work in various ways, such as resisting the cash economy by only accepting what families had to offer. Reciprocity, futurity, and relational responsibility was the heart of their work, as *pattera* considered not only the needs of the mother and baby but the overall well-being of families, although Taitano DeLisle is straightforward about the reality that *pattera* were not always trusted by their communities because of their occupation in liminal spaces within and between CHamoru community and US Navy hospitals.

Relative to the importation of Western science and health practices is the complex imposition of tour-of-duty feminism by white women who were nurses and/or

married to US naval officers. Taitano DeLisle analyzes the role of white women who believed they made strides to support and empower CHamoru women and their communities. To some extent, naval nurses and the wives of officers acted as mediators among CHamoru women, *pattera*, and Naval doctors. However, the relationship between CHamoru peoples and colonial US naval forces were nonetheless rooted in paternalistic imperialism, as the motivation to mediate stemmed from white women's recognition of a duty to "care for [CHamorus] now that they're under the flag" (87). To this end, it is also unique that Taitano DeLisle interrogated the ways in which white women, specifically naval nurses and wives of the officers, contributed to colonial heteropatriarchal violence against CHamoru peoples—as women have been erased as political agents on all sides of his-story.

By generating conversations about how white women actively participate as actors of colonialism, imperialism, and white supremacy, as well as demonstrating how CHamoru women resisted cultural erasure through the self-determination of *pattera*, Taitano DeLisle uniquely contributes to the fields of gender, sexuality, and women's studies; public health; Indigenous feminisms; critical Indigenous studies; and Indigenous law and governance. This book could be strengthened by drawing comparisons to Indigenous women's activism and resistance worldwide that has contributed to futurity and cultural continuity, as it would further emphasize the strength of Indigenous women's political agency as a global community (for further reading, see Manuela Picq [2018]; Audra Simpson [2016]). I deeply admire how CHamoru women were brave and clever in their relationship with white women and the US Navy, and how their work as *pattera* was deeply rooted in *inafa'maolek* as they learned to incorporate new routes for birthing practices and women's empowerment from their own cultural and political contexts.

As a result of the intergenerational strength influenced by the *pattera*, CHamoru women continue to push back against US imperialism and militarization strength. Taitano DeLisle notes that Maria Hernandez, leader of direct-action group Prutehi Litekyan, refused partnership and kinship with the military in order to protect CHamoru communities from being subjected to a live-fire training range in 2017. By rooting herself deeply in what it means to be a good steward in CHamoru contexts, and engaging self-determination as a route for activism, Hernandez' actions serve as an example of how "CHamoru of the twenty-first century have redefined the political and cultural terms of CHamoru womanhood, gender, and indigeneity, and have staked renewed roles as stewards and protectors over lands, peoplehood, and communities" (198).

Placental Politics helps to recover Indigenous women's agency as political actors and activists by honoring the various ways in which CHamoru women and *pattera* circumvent colonial institutions and ideologies to support community and cultural futurity. Taitano DeLisle offers a rich and deep history of CHamoru women's roles in community, especially the *pattera*, throughout the various and ongoing stages of colonization. In doing so, she highlights the ways in which current CHamoru community existence and resistance has been shaped by their her-storic self-determination, agency, and activism. I recommend this book to Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in

North America, the Pacific Islands, and worldwide, as it is essential for understanding the importance of Indigenous women's subtle yet powerful acts of self-determination and sovereignty, and thus the urgent need to honour their role as matriarchs for the security of cultural continuity and community futurity.

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