

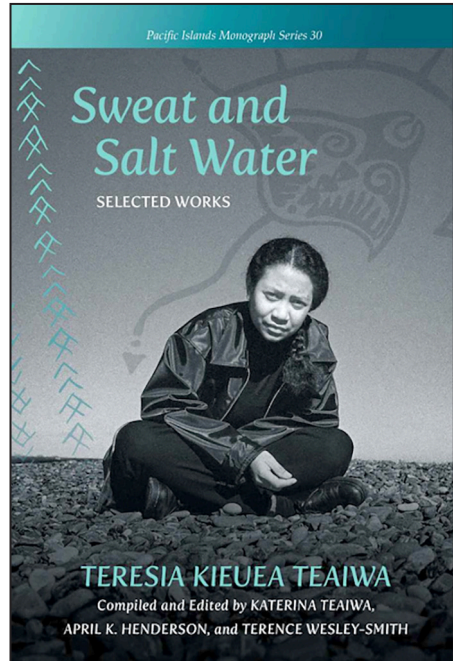
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A skilful weaving of Teaiwa's creative legacy

Sweat and Salt Water: Selected Works: Teresia Kieuea Teaiwa, compiled and edited by Katerina Teaiwa, April K. Henderson and Terence Wesley-Smith. Pacific Islands Monograph Series. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. 2021, 286 pages. ISBN 9780824890285.

S*WEAT and Salt Water: Selected Works* is a collection of texts written by Banaban, I-Kiribati, and African-American Pacific studies scholar and educator Teresia Kieuea Teaiwa, which was put together by her sister Katerina Teaiwa and friends and colleagues April K. Henderson and Terence Wesley-Smith. Described by Katerina as '[a] true labour of love and occasional, intense grief', the book was published posthumously. While, as the editors note, 'it is impossible to contain or present the dazzling spectrum of Teresia's published work in just one volume' (p. xvii), the selected texts were originally published between 1992 and 2017 and as such provide an idea of the variety of Teaiwa's intellectual and creative writing across her career.

Indeed, we can find Teaiwa's earlier



work *Microwomen: US Colonialism and Micronesian Women Activists* (Teaiwa, 1992), in which she argues that a 'woman-centered view of history and politics is vital for an accurate understanding of the power dynamics and change involved in colonialism' (p. 106) and demonstrates that 'women's assertion of their interest is very much a part of decolonisation' (p. 105). The book also includes some of her most recent research on women soldiers from Fiji, in which she demonstrates that 'militarisation in the Fiji context has not been solely a colonial project but has also been part of an indigenous nationalist turn and is now in a post-/neo-colonial phase of development' (p. 148).

The texts are organised around three thematic sections: Pacific Studies, Militarism and Gender, and Native Reflections, reflecting the focus of

her research at the time of her death: ‘research into theory, practice and pedagogy of Pacific Studies’ and ‘research into gendered dynamics of militarism in the Pacific’ (Salesa, 2018, p. 98). The editors have also compiled a bibliography of Teaiwa’s work spanning from 1992 to 2018.

In his series editor’s note, Tarcisius Kabutaulaka writes that Teresia Teaiwa ‘has not really gone away. She is still with us in another form and can be seen through our mind’s eye. [...] She continues to speak to us through her works and the relationships she weaved in this life’ (p. vii).

This cannot be more evident than in *Sweat and Salt Water*. First, because the framing of the book from Kabutaulaka and Sean Mallon’s foreword to the editors’ introduction and their careful selection and compilation of texts demonstrate that this was indeed a labour that could only be fueled by love. Teaiwa’s writing is characterised by the relations she skillfully weaves in her work, in the form of stories such as the ‘Yaqona/Yagoqu’ chapter, citations of academics and students, footnotes, and dedications, such as in her poem ‘How Does Change Happen (For Jully Makini)’.

In fact, each one of her texts draws us into an ocean of relationships, which guides us through not only her own work and life but also that of other intellectuals, teachers, students, poets, artists, activists, and persons who have crossed her path.

While I have myself never had the chance to meet her, it is through her

work and her commitment to making connections that I encountered Suzanne Ouneï, a Kanak feminist and pro-independence activist who had a significant impact on my political imagination and relation to my home country Kanaky-New-Caledonia.

In ‘The Ancestors We Get To Choose’, she explains how she was herself introduced to her and other important activists and theorists of sovereignty and independence in the Pacific in Haunani-Kay Trask’s first decolonisation seminar at the University of Hawai’i, where she was doing her MA in history (p. 225).

This specific chapter is also a genealogy of Pacific studies scholars that is ‘patriarchal, masculine, and significantly white’ (p. 226), but who have significantly shaped the field. It is a call to engage more ‘broadly with theory and theorists of all kinds’ (p. 231) in order to practice sovereignty, self-determination and intellectual agency. Teaiwa asserts:

I do not like theory when it is used as a weapon. I especially dislike theory when it is used like a silencer on a gun. I prefer to see and use theory as a frame, a magnifying glass, a key, a plow, a sail, an oar. (p. 226)

It is through this lens that one should read *Sweat and Salt Water*.

The pieces selected also allow us to testify to the playfulness of her writing and thinking, through for example the use of the metaphor of the body to theorise Indigenous Pacific participation in

the military-industrial complex or the metaphor of the classroom as a canoe.

Each section of the book also includes at least one poem, which constitute chapters in themselves, reflecting Teaiwa's assertion that creative work should be taken as seriously as critical work (Salesa, 2018, p. 101). This is further exemplified in her teaching practice in which she prioritises student-centered and collaborative learning.

For example, in 'Charting Pacific (Studies) Waters' she explains 'Akamai', a creative option which offers students the opportunity to exhibit or perform their major assignment artistically. Her pedagogy encourages students in Pacific studies to value the learning process as much as the destination of achieving their qualifications and to see learning as a lifelong project.

The book reminds us of the generosity and integrity of Teresia Kieuea Teaiwa in her willingness to implicate herself, share personal stories and the passion that animates her writings. Her work embodies and 'invites a more intimate approach to knowledge' (p. 53). A thousand words is not sufficient to express how the book gracefully illuminates her commitment to critical scholarship and to interrogate

power in all its forms, but also her deep commitment to ethics and collaborative learning.

Teresia Kieuea Teaiwa's work opens what the Kanaky-New Caledonia-based Ceméa (Centre d'Entrainement aux Méthodes d'Education Actives) Pwārā Wāro calls 'the fields of possible', in that it moves its readers not to remain passive in the education we receive and give, to challenge our theoretical comfort zones, to remain critical even when it goes against the grain, and more importantly, to always put collaboration at the centre of our endeavours. As series editor Kabutaulaka comments: 'This is Teresia's gift to us' (p. viii).

Reference

- Salesa, D. (2018). Teresia K. Teaiwa: Crying salt water. *The Journal of Pacific History*, 53(1), 96-102.
- Teaiwa, T. K. (1992). *Microwomen: US colonialism and Micronesian women activists*. In Rubinstein, D., (Ed.), *The proceedings of the Eighth Pacific History Conference* (pp. 125-141). Mangilao: University of Guam Press.