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978-1-107-03759-5 - Decolonisation and the Pacific: Indigenous Globalisation and the Ends of Empire

Tracey Banivanua Mar

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## Introduction

### Sailing the winds of change – decolonisation and the Pacific

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... against imperialism there is no such thing as a small people, and ... any people, no matter how small in numbers its population, is able to face the most barbarous aggression.<sup>1</sup>

There are few things with the capacity to unite, and divide, the peoples of the Pacific basin more than the Ocean itself. It has moved us, fed us, separated and linked us, inspired our songs and visual culture, and left us in awe. In 1978 activists, students, trade unionists, Christians, atheists and communists gathered in Pohnpei, in what is now the independent Federated States of Micronesia, to discuss strategies to protect the Ocean and its people from the effects of French, American and British nuclear testing. It was an extraordinary meeting by international standards, the first of its kind in the brave new decolonising world. For it was attended by Indigenous peoples from all over the Pacific and its rim, with the exception of West Papua whose representative was not granted an American visa to visit Pohnpei.<sup>2</sup>

Three years earlier, at the Nuclear Free Pacific Conference in Fiji, delegates had followed a circuitous route to the conclusion that colonialism underpinned nuclear testing. If colonised peoples, whose territories were testing grounds for all sorts of external militaries, had the independent capacity to say 'no' to what was done on their lands, nuclear testing might be stopped. In Pohnpei, Australian Aboriginal delegates, along with Maori, Kanaka Maoli, Kanak, Tahitian and Chamorro

<sup>1</sup> Somara Mahel, President of the Peoples Republic of Mozambique to FRETILIN, Democratic Republic of East Timor, 28 November 1975, *Vanua'aku Viewpoints*, 7:1 (1977).

<sup>2</sup> Vimal Madhavan, 'Introduction', in *Nuclear Free Pacific and Independence Movements Conference Proceedings* (Suva: Joint Conference Committee, 1975). Indigenous peoples are loosely rather than categorically defined in this study, where the term 'Indigenous' is used generally to indicate the first peoples of a region. The term is used in the following pages to refer both to Indigenous and colonised peoples on their own country, and Indigenous peoples residing off country, but whose indigeneity, and the management of it, was the reason for their displacement.

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representatives therefore resolved to support each other in the fight for decolonisation, sealing the promise with a ‘Charter to establish the Rights of Indigenous Peoples’.

The Pohnpei Charter was a radical document for its time. It invoked ‘the rights of indigenous peoples’ against ‘the degrading influences of Imperialism and Colonialism’ and asserted that these rights were defined by the customary systems of land tenure, indigenous languages, customs and land, sea, water, mineral and fishing rights that had all been subject to ‘direct attacks made by the colonial systems’. It recognised these rights as extending to those ‘nations that have been forced into a Fourth World position of subjugation in their own lands’, as well as to those experiencing ongoing imperialism in their postcolonial world. It asserted that the Indigenous peoples of Australia, New Caledonia, Tahiti, Hawaii, New Zealand, Micronesia, West Papua and East Timor were still subject to colonialism and noted that the antidote, decolonisation, was ‘an established procedure’ encouraged by the United Nations but yet to be fully extended to the peoples of the Pacific. Accordingly the Charter demanded that ‘the implementation of the policies of decolonization’ be extended to Indigenous peoples of the entire region, including those in the ‘fourth world’ settler colonies, along with a ‘return to the sovereignty of their ancestral lands’.<sup>3</sup>

At first sight the Pohnpei Charter is an anomaly. The accepted orthodoxy in historical accounts of decolonisation in the Pacific is that there was no energy for decolonisation in the islands. No nationalist movements forced colonial powers to their knees, and isolation, micro-status and a deficit of development, sophistication and capacity ensured the Pacific saw little of the solidarity and radicalism of African and Asian territories. Yet the aspirational manifesto articulated in the Pohnpei Charter was a shout-out to the various conditions of colonisation that exceeded the United Nations’ limited view. The decolonisation that the Charter called for departed sharply from the ‘procedure’ and ‘policies’ of decolonisation that had been developed over the 1960s by colonial, imperial and global bodies. It used terms such as ‘fourth world’, a term only coined in 1974 by Canadian George Manuel of the National Indian Brotherhood of Canada to describe the condition of Indigenous peoples in settler states – decolonisation’s forgotten people.<sup>4</sup> In 1972 Manuel had established the World Council of Indigenous Peoples after visiting New Zealand and Australia. What he saw had convinced him that political

<sup>3</sup> ‘Charter to Establish Rights of Indigenous Peoples’, in *Nuclear Free Conference Proceedings*.

<sup>4</sup> George Manuel, *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1974).

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unification of Indigenous peoples was the only means of achieving a state of decolonisation.<sup>5</sup> The vision articulated in 1978 was therefore a radical, intellectually militant expression that was connected by language to global webs of thinking and expression. It therefore fits awkwardly with the standard story of decolonisation in the Pacific and suggests that there are lost stories to be told, ones that could completely reset the established narrative.

Research for this book began as a search for the deeper story behind the Pohnpei Charter. In 1978 at the level of international organisation there was not an established discourse of ‘indigenous rights’ as an extension of decolonisation. It was not until 1982 that the United Nations established a Working Group on Indigenous Populations, the first mechanism dedicated to Indigenous peoples at the global level. It was not until 1993 that a Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples was completed, and another fourteen years before it was ratified. Yet here on this tiny island in the northern Pacific in 1978 a disparate coalition of Indigenous peoples from places spread across 30 per cent of the Earth’s surface had articulated their own Charter on Indigenous rights using terminology from the leading edge of international discourse. It contained the kernels of what would eventually form the bundles of economic, cultural and group rights now known and ratified by the United Nations in *The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. The Pohnpei Charter therefore points to a political sophistication, physical mobility and a cosmopolitan connectedness to international networks that has been completely underestimated by existing histories of decolonisation. As the stories told in this book convey, the intellectual threads that came together in this document put the Pacific, or Oceania, at the forefront, not lagging in the slipstream, of the process of un-colonising peoples.

The ‘winds of change’ that eroded European empires and shaped the political and territorial contours of the modern world arrived late in the Pacific and as a largely spent force.<sup>6</sup> As this study shows, the new records becoming available to historians show that by the mid-1960s, the only imperial powers that even contemplated decolonisation in the Pacific were Britain and Australia, and they explicitly reconfigured the process to ensure it met their imperial desires. In addition, the proliferation of new

<sup>5</sup> Douglas Sanders, *The Formation of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples* (Denmark: The International Secretariat of the International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs, 1977), p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> The famous winds of change speech was given by the British PM, Harold Macmillan, in Ghana in 1960, during his tour of British central and southern African possessions. For a discussion of the tour, see Wm. Roger Louis and Ronald Robinson, ‘The Imperialism of Decolonization’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 22:3 (1994): 505–11.

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and old settler colonies in the Pacific makes this region a signal example of the many limitations of formal decolonisation. For Indigenous peoples who are minorities within nominally independent settler nations, and for others for whom the ‘imperialism of decolonisation’ is intensified by the micro-status and isolation of the Pacific islands in world affairs – a status ushered in during the colonial era – decolonisation has been fragmented, precarious and contingent.<sup>7</sup> Formal decolonisation in many cases was experienced as an ambivalent set of events that were remote or disconnected from the newly imagined communities of diaspora that were emerging in the Pacific’s universities, villages, reserves, missions and urban ghettos.

This book charts the emergence, convergence and parting of ways of two distinct phenomena of decolonisation. The first was Indigenous and had its roots in the early colonial period as a dialogue that Indigenous peoples maintained with colonial powers, and in which they asserted their right to choose the best and reject the worst of colonisation. It began as localised responses, but quickly developed international and transnational linkages, shadowing the imperial networks of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The second was an international response to this kind of agitation the world over. When Resolution 1514 (XV), or the endlessly titled *Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples*, was passed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1960, the imperative of global powers converged and intersected with the general mood for independence radiating from colonised peoples. As we will see through a ‘fly-on-the-wall’ observation of administrative powers’ responses to United Nations resolutions, however, it was very quickly reconfigured as the next ‘stage’ of imperial appropriation for military and economic gain. As is traced through the pages of this book, these versions of decolonisation, the former focused on decolonising people and the latter on territory, remained constantly in tension, dialectically opposed and co-productive.

In telling this story, this book charts the sometimes parallel, sometimes intersecting, paths and border crossings of anti-colonial and Indigenous political movements that have helped to define and shape the postcolonial, or rather still decolonising, Pacific. Its observations include subversive mobilities; religious sovereignty and autonomy movements; militant Polynesian Panthers and black and brown power movements; and other subtle expressions of decolonisation that expanded beyond the territorial confines of colonial and national borders. In doing so the book adopts an unconventional framework within decolonisation histories. First, it treats

<sup>7</sup> Louis and Robinson, ‘The Imperialism of Decolonization’.

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decolonisation as a movement whose story begins in the nineteenth century, substantially re-positioning the timeline of decolonisation. Second, by accessing disparate social and cultural expressions of anti- and postcolonialism it weaves the threads of colonised and Indigenous Pacific peoples' counter imperial networks into the broad fabric of empire's decolonisation.<sup>8</sup> Third, it looks at the Pacific region or Oceania as an inter-connected whole, a 'sea of islands' as Epeli Hau'ofa put it, and as a crucial contributor to a wider global conversation of decolonisation.<sup>9</sup> As the 1978 Pohnpei Charter indicates, this was primarily through an insistence that decolonisation in settler colonies be framed by the same paradigm of expectation as the decolonisation of external territories.

### Decolonisation and history

The study of decolonisation is a discrete field of historical enquiry within studies of empire. Originally coined in reference to the decline and dismemberment of the European empires, 'decolonisation', since at least 1960, has connoted the birth of nations and the deliverance of national sovereignty to non-self-governing territories.<sup>10</sup> Martha Kaplan and John Kelly have pointed out in their essay on 'Nation and Decolonization' that the emergence of the nation state as the 'paradigmatic political unit' for global politics was concurrent with the post-1945 programme of decolonisation.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, this era is generally seen to be that period between 1945 and 1990 when the United Nations' membership grew from the original 51 nation states to 159 as new postcolonial nations were born. In accounting for this rapid transformation in global affairs, historiography has been dominated by the nation as the culmination of decolonisation, reflecting a wider historical and political tendency to situate the nation as the un-interrogated 'sovereign ontological subject' of history.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Alan Lester, *Imperial Networks: Creating Identities in Nineteenth-Century South Africa and Britain* (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>9</sup> Epeli Hau'ofa, 'Our Sea of Islands', in *We Are the Ocean: Selected Works* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), pp. 27–41.

<sup>10</sup> M. J. Bonn, *The Crumbling Empire: The Disintegration of World Economy* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1938).

<sup>11</sup> John Kelly and Martha Kaplan, *Represented Communities: Fiji and World Decolonization* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001), pp. 1–29.

<sup>12</sup> Antoinette Burton, 'Who Needs the Nation?', republished in her *Empire in Question: Reading, Writing and Teaching British Imperialism* (Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 45; Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (London: Zed, 1986).

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## 6 Sailing the winds of change – decolonisation and the Pacific

While the agenda and chronology of the United Nations tends to structure current historiography, most overviews locate the history of decolonisation before 1945. Until quite recently most followed the lead of M. J. Bonn, whose 1938 book on the crumbling of empire is often cited as the first to coin the term ‘decolonisation’.<sup>13</sup> He argued that decolonisation, or the retreat and weakening of empire, paralleled Oswald Spengler’s popularised notion of the decline of the West. It had metropolitan causes and followed a metropolitan agenda. His argument went on to influence many of the post-1960 histories in the vein of R. F. Holland, Rudolf Albertini, Henry Grimal and John Darwin, who also tended to argue that, as Henry Grimal put it, ‘colonialism contained the seed of its own destruction’.<sup>14</sup> These and similar histories tended to see decolonisation as only those set of events that led to the end of empire, and inexorably to the establishment of new nation states. Moreover, interested primarily in narrating the decline of empires, they explored the colonial territories perceived to have had the greatest impact on metropolitan centres and world affairs – principally Asia and Africa. The Pacific was largely ignored.

As histories of decolonisation began to branch out from studies of the decline of the British Empire to studies of the process of decolonisation itself, the early concentration on Asia and Africa compounded. While the overwhelming majority of studies of decolonisation ignored the Pacific, a few notable scholars have placed the region into a wider international story. Raymond Betts’ 2004 study, for example, briefly discussed Fiji, Tonga and Papua New Guinea, and Wm. Roger Louis’ histories of the British Empire have included integrated, as opposed to the more commonly appended, discussions of decolonisation in the Pacific region.<sup>15</sup> These accompany a modest scholarship that has focused on individual island nations, often without broader reference to the regional or global context.<sup>16</sup> Most recently W. David McIntyre’s *Winding up the British*

<sup>13</sup> Bonn, *The Crumbling Empire*.

<sup>14</sup> R. F. Holland, *European Decolonisation 1918–1981: An Introductory Survey* (London: Macmillan, 1985); Rudolf von Albertini, *Decolonization: The Administration and the Future of the Colonies, 1919–1960*, trans. Francisca Garvie (London: Africana Publishing Company, 1982); Henry Grimal, *Decolonisation: The British, French, Dutch and Belgian Empires, 1919–1963*, trans. Stephan De Vos (London: Routledge, 1965), p. 3; John Darwin, *The End of the British Empire: The Historical Debate* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1991).

<sup>15</sup> Raymond Betts, *Decolonization: Second Edition* (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2004); Roger Louis, ‘Introduction’, in Judith Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: OUP, 1999), pp. 1–46; W. David McIntyre, ‘Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands’, in Judith Brown and Roger Louis (eds), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 667–92.

<sup>16</sup> Donald Denoon (ed.), *Emerging from Empire? Decolonisation in the Pacific: Proceedings of a Workshop at the Australian National University*, December 1996, (Canberra: Division of

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*Empire in the Pacific Islands* has focused on British decolonisation across the Pacific in a detailed, archivally rich account of British intent and reactions to local conditions.<sup>17</sup> It is one of the only focused accounts of decolonisation in the Pacific that looks at multiple sites within the same analytic frame. But it is a decidedly British story that is told, and one in which Indigenous peoples are rarely visible.

There is an established body of scholarship producing discrete national histories of decolonisation in the Pacific.<sup>18</sup> The increasing tendency of this scholarship, however, has been to visit decolonisation from the perspective of postcolonial political upheaval. Its focus is on a history of flawed nation-making, weak national consciousness, failed political independence and poor governance. As Helen Gardner and Christopher Waters have noted of the scholarship in the western, or Melanesian, Pacific in particular, this grew from an initial concern to problematise neo-colonialism in early literature.<sup>19</sup> But the instability of particularly the western region of the Pacific in the 1990s has since inspired an even more negative literature.<sup>20</sup> Donald Denoon and Hank Nelson have emphasised separately that decolonisation is still unfolding post independence, and an increasingly vast scholarship since the 1990s emphasised failed states, arcs of instability, Balkanisation and decolonisation as a ‘door to disaster rather than emancipation’.<sup>21</sup>

Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, 1997); Max Quanchi, ‘End of an Epoch: Towards Decolonization and Independence in the Pacific’, *Agora*, 43:4 (2008): 18–23; Clive Moore, *Decolonising the Solomon Islands: British Theory and Melanesian Practice* (Melbourne: Alfred Deakin Research Institute, Deakin University, 2010).

<sup>17</sup> W. David McIntyre, *Winding up the British Empire in the Pacific Islands* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>18</sup> For a succinct historiography see Helen Gardner and Christopher Waters, ‘Decolonisation in Melanesia’, *The Journal of Pacific History*, 48:2 (2013): 113–21; Steward Firth, ‘Decolonisation’, in Robert Borofsky (ed.), *Rememberance of Pacific Pasts: An Invitation to Remake History* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), pp. 318–20.

<sup>19</sup> A representative sample of this literature can be found in the contributions to Denoon, *Emerging from Empire?*; Barry Macdonald, ‘Decolonisation and Beyond: The Framework for Post-Colonial Relationships in Oceania’, *Journal of Pacific History*, 21 (1986): 125.

<sup>20</sup> Gardner and Waters, ‘Decolonisation’, p. 115.

<sup>21</sup> Hank Nelson, ‘Liberation: The End of Australian Rule in Papua New Guinea’, *Journal of Pacific History*, 35 (2000): 269; Donald Denoon, *A Trial Separation: Australia and the Decolonization of Papua New Guinea* (Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2005). On the failed state literature see Gardner and Waters’ excellent overview in their ‘Decolonisation’, p. 117; Graeme Dobell, ‘The “Arc of Instability”: The History of an Idea’, in Ron Husken and Meredith Thatcher (eds), *History as Policy: Framing the Debate on the Future of Australia’s Defence Policy* (Canberra: Australian National University E-Press, 2007), pp. 85–104; B. Reilly, ‘The Africanisation of the South Pacific’, *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 54:3 (2000): 261–8.

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Despite being an afterthought in most overviews of decolonisation, there is much in and around the Pacific that promises to productively expand and complicate our understanding of what decolonisation is, should be and was. The proliferation of settler colonies in the region (Australia, New Zealand, New Caledonia, Hawaii, French Polynesia, American Samoa, Guam, and arguably Fiji and West Papua) in which Indigenous or colonised peoples have limited sovereignty brings real ambiguity to the meaning of decolonisation. As Lorenzo Veracini has explored, settler colonialism is inherently resistant to it, for the national sovereignty and identity of settler nations are often predicated on Indigenous peoples within settler territories being essentially non-self-governing.<sup>22</sup> This presumption is affirmed by histories of decolonisation that, focused on national territories, tend to leave the sovereignty of people unproblematised. Reconfiguring histories of decolonisation from the angle of vision offered from the Pacific, however, offers the opportunity to refocus on people rather than territory, as agents of decolonisation. In and around the Pacific, as a response to inherent territorial limits, Indigenous formations of decolonisation often exceeded the nation. As the 1978 Pohnpei Charter suggests, a virulent strain of conviction developed in and around the Pacific that located the ultimate site of decolonisation in peoples, not territory. Perhaps in revisiting this, we may learn of the innovative means by which independence and self-determination were practised in the absence of it being gifted by administering states.

The vast majority of decolonisation literature and historiographical debate on decolonisation reflects the sources that are most readily available. The key debates revolve around those who argue that decolonisation was, as Bonn originally asserted, a metropolitan affair and those who have argued with David Birmingham or Ronald Robinson that it was driven by the periphery, resulting from the withdrawal of Indigenous collaboration, or the increasing pressure of Indigenous nationalisms.<sup>23</sup> The overarching commonality of these histories, however, is that they present decolonisation through the prism of international diplomacy.<sup>24</sup> Such work stresses and naturalises the institutional and gendered aspects of the transfer of

<sup>22</sup> Lorenzo Veracini, 'Settler Colonialism and Decolonisation', *Borderlands*, 6:2 (2007): n.p.

<sup>23</sup> Darwin, *The End of the British Empire*; John Springall, *Decolonization since 1945: The Collapse of European Overseas Empires* (London: Palgrave, 2001); Dietmar Rothermund, *The Routledge Companion to Decolonization* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006); Wm. Roger Louis, *Ends of British Imperialism: The Scramble of Empire, Suez and Decolonization* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2006).

<sup>24</sup> Rothermund characterises these as political and diplomatic histories, constituting a discrete school of decolonisation scholarship. Rothermund, *The Routledge Companion*, p. 32.



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power, and the ‘subaltern’ stories of everyday women and men have tended to be either absent completely or rendered cultural (rather than historical or political). Moreover, through a tendency to see the achievement of postcolonial nationhood and the necessary retreat of European imperial powers as the end of the story of decolonisation, the historiography remains overwhelmingly Eurocentric and gender blind.<sup>25</sup> Even conscious attempts to consider decolonisation from the local perspective, as championed by David Birmingham, have tended to focus on the push and pull of a metropolitan–periphery relationship.<sup>26</sup>

By tapping into the postcolonial concerns of Indigenous Pacific scholarship, this book moves towards the decentring and provincialising of metropolitan powers.<sup>27</sup> Its concentration moves from the imperial turn of considering two-way connections between imperial metropolises and colonial peripheries to considering primarily transnational lateral connections and networks throughout the peripheries.<sup>28</sup> Although transnationalism in new imperial and feminist studies of empire is now commonplace, Antoinette Burton and others have argued more recently that studies still tend to privilege transnational relationships between the metropole and colony, rather than lateral and transcolonial links. Exploration of these, she argues, is ‘one of the most exciting directions of the newest of the new’ studies of empires and their ends.<sup>29</sup>

The significance of telling stories of decolonisation from the peripheries is not just about the provincialising of Europe. It is also about the new insight and historical depth that can be gained from observing the

<sup>25</sup> Partha Chatterjee, ‘Colonialism, Nationalism and Colonialised Women: The Contest in India’, *American Ethnologist*, 17:1 (1990): 622–3.

<sup>26</sup> David Birmingham, *The Decolonization of Africa* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1995).

<sup>27</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000). For an overview of Pacific postcolonial scholarship, particularly of literature, see Susan Najita, *Decolonizing Cultures in the Pacific: Reading History and Trauma in Contemporary Fiction* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008); David Hanlon, ‘Beyond “The English Method of Tattooing”’: Decentering the Practice of History in Oceania’, *The Contemporary Pacific*, 15:1 (2003): 19–40; Vilsoni Hereniko, ‘Indigenous Knowledge and Academic Imperialism’, in Robert Borofski (ed.), *Remembrance of Pacific Pasts: An Invitation to Remake History* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2000).

<sup>28</sup> Ann Curthoys and Marilyn Lake, ‘Introduction’, in A. Curthoys and M. Lake (eds), *Connected Worlds: History in Transnational Perspective* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2005); Antoinette Burton (ed.), *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and through the Nation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003). For studies exemplifying the imperial turn in British empire studies see the collection of essays Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose (eds), *At Home with Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>29</sup> Burton, *Empire in Question*, pp. 278, 18.

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subaltern, subjugated and subversive webs of connections that existed between colonised peoples. As Elleke Boehmer put it, studies of cross-border power relations and interactions of colonised peoples undermine prevailing tendencies to privilege the relationship between the ‘European self and other; of colonizer and colonized’.<sup>30</sup> Studies that detect and track Indigenous peoples’ mobilisation of imperial networks of information, knowledge and social or economic capital are a growing and increasingly rich body of work. In an early study Elizabeth Ellbourne argued, in 2005, that Indigenous peoples used imperial networks to interact both in ‘imagination’ and in person, with empowering bodies of imperial knowledge in the nineteenth century.<sup>31</sup> So too Ravi de Costa’s 2006 study of what he calls ‘Indigenous transnationalism’ in Australia considered similar networks in the twentieth century, as has John Maynard’s work on Aboriginal transnationalism in the 1920s.<sup>32</sup> Most recently contributors to the collection edited by Jane Carey and Jane Lydon on *Indigenous Networks* also demonstrate the variety and richness of translocal Indigenous political activity.<sup>33</sup> This study therefore builds on an emerging scholarship that is exploring the inter-constitutive networks, interactions and exchanges that took place and chart the counter networks and hidden ‘webs of empire’.<sup>34</sup>

By focusing on the webs of connection that echoed and subverted the wider institutional history of decolonisation this book also engages with a third historiographical feature of decolonisation scholarship. As the excitement of the era has given way to the realities of new nations facing new imperialism, historiography that was already defined by a focus on the nation state as a framework of analysis has developed a narrative of noble failure. As Rothermund’s 2006 comprehensive overview of the birth of decolonised nations argued, the scrambled carve-ups of the colonial era, national self-interest, Cold War politics, and debt burdens set many new

<sup>30</sup> Elleke Boehmer, *Empire, the National, and the Postcolonial, 1890–1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Elizabeth Ellbourne, ‘Indigenous Peoples and Imperial Networks in the Early Nineteenth Century’, in Phillip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis, (eds), *Rediscovering the British World*, (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005), p. 62.

<sup>32</sup> John Maynard, ‘“In the Interests of Our People”: The Influence of Garveyism on the Rise of Australian Aboriginal Political Activism’, *Aboriginal History*, 29 (2005): 1–22; Ravi De Costa, *A Higher Authority: Indigenous Transnationalism and Australia*, (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2006).

<sup>33</sup> Jane Carey and Jane Lydon, *Indigenous Networks: Mobility, Connections and Exchange* (London: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>34</sup> Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, ‘Bodies, Empires and World Histories’, in Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton (eds), *Bodies in Contact: Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 3.