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Florencia E. Mallon, ed. *Decolonizing Native Histories: Collaboration, Knowledge, and Language in the Americas*. Narrating Native Histories Series. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012. vi + 262 pp. \$89.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8223-5137-5; \$24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8223-5152-8.

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Decolonizing Methodologies in Practice: Lessons from the Americas and the Pacific

Decolonizing Native Histories is an ambitious work. The product of a conference at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, its seven essays analyze how researchers and their indigenous subjects interact and then suggest ways to remake these relationships to be more equitable, collaborative, and productive. The essays selected for the volume are more geographically diverse than is usual, covering topics in Peru, Bolivia, Louisiana, Hawai'i, Rapa Nui (Easter Island), Guatemala, Mexico, and Colombia. This is intentional, as the collection seeks to decenter the focus of the volume from the Americas (p. 24).

The book is divided into three parts. In part 1, an essay by J. Kehaulani Kauanui, which weighs strategies of de-occupation against strategies of decolonization for indigenous Hawaiians, is paired with Riet Delsing's essay on Rapanui responses to Chilean colonialism. Kauanui concludes that neither de-occupation, based on a recognition of the sovereignty of an independent Hawaiian state, or decolonization along the lines of U.S. federal policy toward native groups in the continental states are either likely or wholly satisfying. Despite having a wildly divergent colonial history, Delsing argues, the Rapanui are faced with a similarly unenviable choice: to advocate for self-government as part of Chile or to attempt some form of independence. As Delsing perceptively notes, Chile is not likely to agree to de-occupation, leaving the Rapanui with limited options. At the same time,

the dreams of some Hawaiian activists for de-occupation seem implausible given the current haole demographic, economic, and political dominance, raising questions about the actual, viable choices faced by Hawaiian activists. While these two essays do an excellent job of outlining the debates facing indigenous actors in Hawai'i and Rapa Nui, they are ultimately unable to suggest a clear way forward.

Part 2 has three thought-provoking essays that explore how historians and activists can and should write the histories of indigenous peoples. Non-Latin American specialists might look at these essays, focusing on Columbia, Mexico, and Bolivia, and question their relevance in non-Latin American contexts. And while Latin America does have a particular history of colonization, the three studies are the most widely applicable to global contexts. Particularly insightful is the observation of Joanne Rappaport and Ablelardo Ramos Pacho that the real divide in attempting collaborative history is not so much between nonnative academics and indigenous researchers, but between activists and academics. Building on long experience organizing and working in native communities, Rappaport and Pacho are part of a growing body of scholars who are finding creative and practical ways to address the problem of who should do native history and how. Equally important in this respect is the captivating narrative of Jan Rus and Diane L. Rus of

their work with the Taller Tzotzil, the only organization to publish the words of the people of Chiapas (Mexico) in Tzotzil-Maya, a language spoken by about four hundred thousand residents. Rus and Rus examine their own involvement in this project from 1985 to 2002, and in so doing demonstrate how theories of decolonizing methodologies are often juxtaposed against the pragmatic realities of actually practicing collaborative research in a divided community undergoing startling change. Like Rus and Rus, Fernando Garc  s V., writing about Bolivia, also grapples with the problems of converting an oral culture to written form. He, in particular, experiments with representation of text on the page, arranging columns of Quechua alongside their English translations to demonstrate the problems inherent in the process of translation, especially when dealing with converting speech to writing.

Part 3 shifts gears again, this time pairing essays by two younger indigenous academics, Brian Klopotek and Edgar Esquit, both of whom offer insider critiques of the Choctaw and Maya, respectively. Klopotek  s essay on antiblack racism among the Choctaw has tremendous potential, but at only sixteen pages, never moves beyond a rather superficial examination of the issues at hand and only suggests that these attitudes need to be confronted despite, or perhaps because, of the importance of identity in Native American political activism. The topic is important, and one can only hope this essay is an indication of Klopotek  s future research. Esquit, in contrast, probes how educated, urban Maya elites deploy an identity as Maya to claim power and place both nationally and in relation to poorer, rural Maya. He ends by suggesting that greater attention to the full range of Maya histories, to the complexity of Maya identity, will benefit not only the Maya elites but also the Maya community as a whole

as it moves forward.

Like many other conference books, some of the essays in *Decolonizing Native Histories* are stronger than others. Some, like Klopotek  s, are extremely suggestive and interesting, but far too brief. Others, such as the essay by Rus and Rus, should be required reading for junior scholars interested in the field. But while *Decolonizing Native Histories* shares this variability with many other conference books, it also has some issues that arise out of its ambitious desire to engage with methodological theory and decolonization in a diversity of locations. In a book dealing with such a diversity of perspectives and sites of inquiry, it requires great skill to orient the reader to each new topic. Some of the essays accomplish this with far greater success than others, and as a result, especially for a non-Latin Americanist, the collection can be hard to navigate the first time through. At the same time, because it is grappling with methodological issues, there is a distinct tendency to stay at the more general, non-specific, and theoretical level of analysis. While a Latin American specialist would probably have little difficulty filling in relevant background information, it does make the volume harder to access for nonspecialists, even those well versed in these debates in other contexts. Those criticisms aside, *Decolonizing Native Histories* offers a rare opportunity to explore the issues surrounding attempts to decolonize the writing of history in a diverse array of locations. Playing these sites off against each other helps not only to reveal the common challenges faced by academics and activists in pursuit of such a goal, but also to suggest some ways to move forward. The editor, Florencia E. Mallon, is to be commended for skillfully weaving these varied essays together in a meaningful and insightful manner.

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