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In the Shadow of the Palms: More-Than-Human Becomings in West Papua. By Sophie Chao. Durham: Duke University Press, 2022. x+321 pp.

Sophie Chao's book asks readers to rethink the existing paradigms of multispecies worldmaking by questioning facile assumptions of the inherent morality of non-human species in relation to human communities through a rich ethnographic analysis of the Marind, a community of lowland Indigenous peoples in Merauke, West Papua. Chao's sympathetic and urgent voice brings readers deep into the ontological crisis caused by the oppressive presence of the palm oil sector.

As something both obscured yet ever-present in transnational commodity chains, palm oil is largely discussed within the conceptual frames of expansion, extraction and extinction. The book explores these themes from the lens of the Marind communities that Chao lives, breathes and dreams with. The main thrust of the book is the close ethnographic attention paid to Marind ontologies, thus revealing a key aspect of the Plantationocene: "In the proliferating being of oil palm, the forces of neoliberal capitalism and settler-colonization resist conceptual abstraction and find a material grip. Violence reveals itself as a multispecies act" (p. 5). In other words, analysing the formation of Marind's relationship with oil palm provides a subversive new analytic to imagine plant and other non-human beings as agents in the plantation ecosystem.

The book is structured into four couplets of chapters, each focusing on a paradoxical aspect of Marind life. The first, about place, demonstrates how the Marind respond to the infrastructure that concretizes their dispossession (e.g., state roads and maps) through their bodies, becoming pharmakonic pressure points and phenomenological cartographers. With the boundaries of humanness caught in limbo, the second couplet focuses on the ontological anxieties arising out of oil palm plantations. For example, the fourth chapter, "The Plastic Cassowary", is a narrative highlight of the book,

telling a story about a cassowary chick that illustrates the anxieties that come about with modernizing diets and lifeways. Like the chick that acts and eats “plastic”—a Marind category that includes all things modern, from cell phones to instant noodles—the oil palm future contains *abu-abu* (grey, ashy) horizons of both posthumanity and multispecies possibility. The chapter illustrates how describing the changes in Marind life with the concept of “resistance” is overly simplistic and, to an extent, anthropocentric.

The third couplet reviews this same quandary through a binary exploration of Marind perceptions of sago palm, pregnant with semiotics of birth and reproduction, and the “selfish”, destructive oil palm. But just as the degradation of sago palm is seen as existentially damning, the Marind also feel pity for the oil palm, as the plasticizing logics of the plantation economy complicate Manichean modes of multispecies thinking that place non-humanity as good and humanity as evil. Finally, the fourth couplet illustrates deep existential threats across space and time. While the apocalyptic affect among the Marind could present a possibility of “temporal resistance” (p. 178), the collective spread in nightmares reveals something poignant about both the destructive effects of agribusiness and also the possibility of solidarity across onto-oneiric realms. Across the text, Chao plants vignettes of these vivid dreams in between each couplet, replicating a sense of inescapability that captures even the author herself. Her turbulent experiences in the field challenge what responsible research must look like for the service of her interlocutors’ safety. This facet of the book is a testament to the tenacity and rigour of her work in the field. *In the Shadow of the Palms*, in sum, is an excellent exercise in telling “*better, bitter stories*” (p. 25), not just of despair but also of a more capacious set of multispecies entanglements.

Overall, the book crafts theoretical connections outside of conventional approaches to assemblages and more-than-human ontologies in fascinating and insightful ways. Chao’s citations of North America-based Native Studies work deliver in facilitating the consonance of the Marind’s plight with other Indigenous communities around the world. In a similar vein, Chao also applies the work

of critical race scholars to extend the context of Atlantic chattel slavery to that of the Marind, who also face issues of racialization and oppressive plantation economies. In presenting these works outside of their usual “zones of theory”, to use Lila Abu-Lughod’s term (1989), the book represents a radically inclusive assemblage of ethnography and theory, observable both through its content and its structure. This book is essential reading for those interested in finding connections between academic discourses of multispecies theory and critical race studies.

Orven Mallari

Department of Anthropology, University of Michigan; 101 West Hall, 1085 S. University Ave., Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1107, USA; email: orven@umich.edu.

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The Candidate’s Dilemma: Anticorruptionism and Money Politics in Indonesian Election Campaigns. By Elisabeth Kramer. New York: Cornell University Press, 2022. 216 pp.

As the largest democracy in Southeast Asia, Indonesia has held several democratic elections since the fall of the authoritarian regime in 1998, which have been lauded for their fairness and transparency. But while Indonesia has made significant progress in terms of democratic consolidation, it still faces significant challenges in terms of corruption and money politics, particularly during election campaigns. Elizabeth Kramer’s book provides a comprehensive analysis of these challenges and the strategies that political candidates use to navigate them.

The Candidate’s Dilemma is based on extensive political ethnographic work and interviews with political candidates, party