Overall, Fojas’ *Islands of Empire* is a welcomed contribution to interdisciplinary scholarship focusing on empire building across the Pacific, Oceania, and Caribbean. Yet, the book could have also offered a more robust analysis of spectatorship practices and U.S. settler colonialism, especially as the latter extends beyond the binary of the colonized/colonizer and “white American/native.” Perhaps, in her most conspicuous omission, Fojas gestures to the possibility of spectatorship throughout her book, as the audience holds the “potential power and agency” (p. 35) to decode, even disidentify, with the dominant messaging of mainstream cinematic works. However, Fojas’ filmic readings reify a single interpretation of the visual text: a work that ultimately replicates hegemonic relations. Hence, ruminating upon recent works with film history, such as Hye Seung Chung’s *Hollywood Asian* (2006) and Laura Isabel Serna’s *Making Cinelandia: American Films and Mexican Film Culture before the Golden Age* (2014)—both which consider subaltern interpretations of classical Hollywood films among gendered and racialized cinema-goers—several questions emerge. First, even as these films remain within the dominant Hollywood cinema, how might spectators offer heterogeneous interpretations that do not necessarily abide by the fixed binary of dominant/oppressed? Simultaneously, as spectators occupy heterogeneous subject-positions and share complex relations with the moving image, how might they destabilize the notion that cinema can only serve as a tool of cultural imperialism? Despite these oversights, *Islands of Empire* is a carefully researched and insightful addition to ethnic studies and cultural studies scholarship.

Crystal Mun-hye Baik
Assistant Professor, Department of Ethnic Studies
University of California, Riverside


JoAnna Poblete’s *Islanders in the Empire* is a richly detailed account documenting the lives of Filipino and Puerto Rican laborers in Hawai‘i under U.S. imperialism during the early twentieth century. A comparative analysis on labor and migration, Poblete describes the ways in which citizenship was experienced by both Filipinos and Puerto Ricans, who were neither citizens nor foreigners, based on what she refers to as their “ambiguous political-legal status” (p. 2). To analyze this relationship more critically, Poblete coins the
terms *U.S. colonial*, which she notes, “highlights the liminal and subordinate political-legal status of multiple groups who have come under direct U.S. authority,” and more importantly, the term *Intra-colonial*, which describes “colonized people living in a second colonized place,” in this case, Hawai’i (pp. 2–7). She uses these terms to help chronicle the impact of colonialism on each group, how it affected their relationship to each other, and in response, how these migrant laborers were able to challenge the conditions they faced.

Focusing on the Ola’a Plantation on the island of Hawai’i, Poblete demonstrates how Filipino and Puerto Rican intra-colonials experienced some similarities under U.S. colonialism, but more so, how their differential treatment affected their daily lives. With regards to their similar colonial experiences, because of their ambiguous political-legal status, Filipinos and Puerto Ricans were not able to exercise the privileges of full citizenship. Both Filipinos and Puerto Ricans were also subjected to intense Americanization programs and indoctrinated in colonial U.S. education, yet had very limited access to constitutional protections, which left them vulnerable to exploitation by the Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association (HSPA). They also both experienced what Poblete calls *open colonial mobility*—their exemption from U.S. immigration restrictions that other groups experienced during the early twentieth century (p. 3). This allowed the HSPA to recruit both groups to labor on their plantations. Despite these similarities, differential treatment of Filipinos and Puerto Ricans was much more pronounced. For example, Puerto Ricans were eventually granted statutory U.S. citizenship with the Jones Act in 1917, upon becoming an unincorporated territory. Filipinos however, remained U.S. nationals until the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934, which reclassified them as foreigners with immigration restrictions.

In Hawai’i, the HSPA began their recruitment efforts with Puerto Rican workers after they sought opportunities in the aftermath of Hurricane Ciriaco in 1901. Recruits included both individuals and entire families. Ultimately Puerto Rican recruitment failed because of the poor working and living conditions on the plantations. Because these conditions did not improve, nor were laborers given funds to return to Puerto Rico, workers in Hawai’i and their families back home were able to counter the HSPA with their own anti-recruitment campaigns. Letters back home detailed the horrible treatment and isolation workers in Hawai’i faced, which discouraged further migration from Puerto Rico.

Learning from their failures with Puerto Ricans, Filipino recruitment and retention was more successful. The HSPA offered more enticements and accommodations, including perks once workers completed their contracts. These included free return passage, family and friend reunification programs.
and more mobility, which resulted in large numbers of Filipino recruits to migrate to Hawai‘i. Only obedient workers however, could take advantage of these accommodations. If Filipinos went on strike or were suspect of being labor agitators, they were not eligible for these programs and benefits. This was one way the sugar plantation industry could control the behavior of their workers.

Given that Puerto Ricans had no local representatives in Hawai‘i and felt abandoned by their home government, and Filipinos had a labor commissioner that served the needs of the HSPA over their own interests, both groups turned within their own communities to find leaders who could help them with their everyday issues and labor troubles. As Poblete notes, these came in the form of ethnic mediators. Filipinos, for example, turned to religious leaders as mediators. Since ethnic mediators served both their ethnic communities and the sugar plantation industry, they ended up experiencing conflicting roles and expectations by having to balance their loyalties. Yet, in the end these pastors saw their ultimate duty as serving their ethnic community and religious institution. For Puerto Ricans, labor agents also played the middleman role between workers and the HSPA. However, once migration ended and the sugar industry stopped paying the Puerto Rican labor agents, these community mediators also ceased providing services for the workers. Their profit driven motives led them to pursue other interests, which in turn left Puerto Rican intra-colonial workers more vulnerable to exploitation. Overall, ethnic mediators were important advocates for their communities at a time when both groups had very limited legal and political protection in Hawai‘i.

Deeply rooted in archival sources, oral histories, and written with concise prose, Poblete does a remarkable job situating Hawai‘i, Puerto Rico and the Philippines in the context of U.S. empire in the Pacific and the Caribbean. She illustrates how U.S expansion into these regions was vital for it to produce a global imperial machine that circulated not just soldiers and weapons between colonial outposts, but laborers. Intra-colonial workers became a vital component to producing wealth for U.S. business and political interests, as Native Hawaiians were being dispossessed of land and other resources to accommodate the rising settler plantation economy. Her study shows how workers navigated these machinations of imperialism and found ways to create community and meaning in their everyday lives while being separated from their family back home.

Islanders in the Empire makes a significant contribution to the fields of Hawai‘i history, comparative ethnic studies, and U.S. labor, socio-legal and immigration history. Her transnational, comparative approach helps to expand our understanding of the complexities of U.S. empire and how colo-
nial subjects navigate other colonized spaces in ways that are both complex yet telling in the narrative of U.S. expansion during the early twentieth century. Indeed, the continued political and military presence of the U.S. in both the Pacific region and the Caribbean are reminders of this ongoing rearticulation of empire in the twenty-first century.

Rudy P. Guevarra, Jr.
Associate Professor
Asian Pacific America Studies
School of Social Transformation
Arizona State University, Tempe


Surely no American foreign mission has drawn as much attention, scholarly or otherwise, as the work of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) in the Hawaiian Islands. The ABCFM itself started the ink flowing with its early promotional efforts, which celebrated the importance of Hawaiian women of noble rank in the mission’s initial success. No one disputes that Ka‘ahumanu in particular played a crucial part in her role as kuhina nui or co-ruler. Contemporary scholarship has also deepened our understanding of the missionary wives, especially through the publications of Patricia Grimshaw and Jennifer Fish Kashay.

Jennifer Thigpen has nonetheless made a valuable contribution to this literature by connecting the dots in her book Island Queens and Mission Wives: How Gender and Empire Remade Hawai‘i’s Pacific World. She convincingly argues that it was the relationship between these women that gained the mission a favorable reception. The exchange of gifts between the women, not the preaching of the men, elicited the patronage of Ka‘ahumanu. The strength of Thigpen’s book lies in the way she contextualizes this relationship in the politics of Hawai‘i’s Pacific world. She emphasizes that the missionaries were by no means the first Westerners to have extensive dealings with Hawai‘i’s rulers. Ka‘ahumanu’s approach with the missionaries adopted the diplomatic style of Kamehameha, who had learned to deploy “symbols of Western civilization when they seemed beneficial or provided the opportunity to facilitate trade” (p. 11). The items of clothing that the mission wives produced for her served
Description. No Reviews Available. Quantity. 1.Â Due to Covid-19 precautions the Customer Experience Team is not taking calls. Try our alternative more convenient channels. Stay home, stay safe and don't touch your face :) 24/7 Live Chat. Chat with us anytime. FAQ. Find your answer. Desertcart provides a seamless and secure shopping platform with 70 million+ products from around the globe delivered to your door. Track Order. Contact.