

Beauty for Development? Betel Aesthetics and Socioeconomic Stability in Urban Solomon Islands

Stephanie Ketterer Hobbis & Geoffrey Hobbis

To cite this article: Stephanie Ketterer Hobbis & Geoffrey Hobbis (2022): Beauty for Development? Betel Aesthetics and Socioeconomic Stability in Urban Solomon Islands, The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology, DOI: [10.1080/14442213.2022.2115123](https://doi.org/10.1080/14442213.2022.2115123)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14442213.2022.2115123>



© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 01 Oct 2022.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 304



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Beauty for Development? Betel Aesthetics and Socioeconomic Stability in Urban Solomon Islands

Stephanie Ketterer Hobbis  and Geoffrey Hobbis 

Betel users are easy to identify. When chewed, betel colours its consumers' saliva, teeth and lips in a distinct bright red. Since proper use of betel requires spitting of excess saliva, the practice also tends to stain the spaces surrounding its consumers. Because of these distinct aesthetic markers, betel has become a site of contestation in urban Solomon Islands. The practice is publicly discussed as a failure to realise the country's tourist potential as an 'island paradise' and, consequently, as a threat to the country's socioeconomic stability and development. Based on fourteen months of ethnographic field research in Solomon Islands, we critically engage with these debates about betel aesthetics as a pathway to socioeconomic stability and development. We demonstrate how betel aesthetics are centrally embedded in everyday processes of 'cultural humiliation' that are central to Solomon Islanders' encounters with the global political economy. Simultaneously, many Solomon Islanders reject foreign betel narratives. Instead, they emphasise the everyday significance of betel for socioeconomic stability according to Solomon Islanders' interests, needs and values. By comparing aesthetic and socioeconomic visions about betel, we uncover deep-seated inequalities and possibilities for everyday resistance in development encounters.

Keywords: Development; Beauty; Betel; Humiliation; Solomon Islands

Introduction

Hillary insisted on driving Stephanie home from their interview¹ at one of the expat-dominated hotels in downtown Honiara, the capital of Solomon Islands. As part of her ethnographic research on everyday visibilities of the Solomon Islands state,

Stephanie Ketterer Hobbis, Sociology of Development and Change, Wageningen University, Wageningen, Netherlands. Email: stephanie.hobbis@wur.nl. Geoffrey Hobbis, Center for Media and Journalism Studies, University of Groningen, Groningen, Netherlands

Stephanie had reached out to Hillary as an officer in the Participating Police Force (PPF), a subdivision of the Australia-led civil and military intervention force (RAMSI), which had been deployed to Solomon Islands in response to a civil conflict. The so-called ‘Tensions’ (1998–2003) had led to Solomon Islands’ classification as the Pacific’s first failed state. Nearly all government services had faltered, economic enterprises collapsed, and violence was common, in particular, in urban areas (see Moore 2004). Invited by the Solomon Islands Government, RAMSI had been tasked with civil disarmament in the short term and with establishing the foundations for long-term stability by means of state- and policebuilding (Braithwaite et al. 2010).

Stephanie’s conversation with Hillary echoed many of our encounters with state-builders and development workers more broadly. On the drive home, Hillary emphasised the achievements of the intervention force, the successes of disarmament programmes, and an overall positive collaboration between foreign and local police officers. However, Hillary lamented the persistence of what she described as corruption and patron-client relationships in Solomon Islands political and economic systems.² Both, she felt, undermined efforts to increase Solomon Islanders’ trust in state representatives as ‘neutral’ agents that prioritise objective enforcement of the law above all else but, most importantly, above personal connections and obligations. Hillary was frustrated. Like many other of our respondents and other international observers (see S. Hobbis 2017), she wondered about the permanence of the peace process once RAMSI would fully withdraw.

Suddenly, when approaching White River, a settlement on Honiara’s western border where we lived with a family we met during our rural fieldwork in Malaita Province, Hillary shifted the tone and focus of the conversation. Rallying from her disillusionment, Hillary brushed the aforementioned challenges aside, highlighting instead what she considered an alternative way out of Solomon Islands’ instabilities. Hillary pointed at the betel sellers along the road and the red stains that mark the area around them:

If we can at least get rid of them ... Betel nut is destroying Honiara ... The town has changed so much over the last years. You must have been to Hyundai Mall? Other malls will be built soon and the old, ugly Chinese stores will be torn down. The roads are starting to look better too. Like the planters along the road with the paintings from local artists. Don’t they look great? ... This year a record number of cruise ships will be docking in Honiara. More and more tourists are coming and reviving the economy. Perhaps there is hope for Solomon Islands after all. More development will be crucial to maintain peace. The problem is all the betel nut. I do not understand why anyone would chew them. Disgusting. All they do is leave stains, on your teeth, the area around you, everywhere. The spitting is the most disgusting part. Doesn’t it look like blood? It is nearly impossible to remove. I avoid walking at all costs and never on the street in sandals. The sidewalks are covered in stains. So disgusting. Tourists come to the Solomons for the untouched environment. Its beautiful islands. No one wants to see betel nuts.

We heard many versions of Hillary’s lament during our combined and largely overlapping months of ethnographic fieldwork in Solomon Islands—six in Honiara

and eight with Lau speakers in the rural Lau Lagoon, Malaita Province, with continual trips in between (2014–2015, 2018, 2019)—and equally observed them during our ongoing engagement with Solomon Islands-centric social media, especially Facebook (2014–2022). What these narratives share is a concern with Solomon Islands aesthetics as a pathway to stability. According to this vision it may be difficult, if not impossible, to address, for example, the perceived corruption in the political process. However, stability may still be possible through socioeconomic changes that precipitate development, understood as a more comprehensive integration in the global industrial-capitalist economy. Proponents of this vision often suggest that stability will arrive by means of cruise ships and broader (eco-)tourism ventures—a currently ‘untapped source of economic growth’ with ‘world class ... potential’ (Asian Development Bank 2017, 276)—if, but only if, Solomon Islands and Solomon Islanders are able to realise the country’s promise as an aesthetically pleasing tropical island paradise.

Hillary had just finished her explanation about the aesthetic dangers of betel for the Solomon Islands’ tourism industry when it was time for Stephanie to continue the rest of her journey afoot. Hillary rushed off as Stephanie was immediately called by the women running the betel stands along the entrance to White River. They pointed at her white teeth and insisted that Stephanie needed some *dami*. *Dami*, a Lau word that is also commonly used by other Honiara-based Solomon Islanders, refers to ‘chewing a mixture of Areca palm nut [often referred to as betel nut], the leaf, stem or catkin of the Piper betel plant, and slaked lime usually made from sea-shells or coral’ (Marshall 1987, 15).³ In other words, *dami* refers to consuming and finally spitting betel in the way that Hillary had just described as ‘disgusting’ and a key obstacle to her vision for, at least, socioeconomic stability in the country. Stephanie did not hesitate. She bought a handful of *dami* to chew herself and to immediately redistribute among the women who had first initiated the conversation. The vendors and some of their customers laugh as Stephanie told them about how long she had brushed her teeth in the morning to remove all traces of her *dami* consumption for her downtown interviews today. But they were also quick to point out that foreigners do not take seriously the concerns of those chewing *dami*.

This paper engages with these debates about *dami* aesthetics and how they link to competing visions for Solomon Islands socioeconomic stability as a development alternative to the political stability that RAMSI and PPF representatives such as Hillary were there to promote. We discuss how *dami* aesthetics are centrally embedded in processes of ‘cultural humiliation’ (Sahlins 1992; Robbins & Wardlow 2005) as a (however unconsciously) perceived stepping-stone to stability through socioeconomic development. Simultaneously, we show how *dami* practices can be a source of socioeconomic stability themselves, reflecting the values, needs and interests of Solomon Islanders. We argue that the aesthetic narratives surrounding global–local encounters reveal continued (neo)colonial entanglements in statebuilding and development practice, where socioeconomic stability is uneasily conceptualised at the intersections of continuity and change.

Humiliation as a Source of Stability?

In ‘The Economics of Develop-Man in the Pacific’, Marshall Sahlins (1992) proposed a theory of development that accounts for the broader processes of cultural change that accompany economic transformations. Sahlins argued that before people give up on their culture, before they shift from what he terms ‘develop-man’ to ‘development’, they ‘must first learn to hate what they already have, what they have always considered their well-being. Beyond that they must despise what they are, to hold their own existence in contempt—and want, then, to be someone else’ (1992, 24). In other words, this perspective holds that development requires cultural change while cultural change necessitates humiliation (Robbins & Wardlow 2005). Herein ‘local appropriation of the West yields to appropriation of the local by the West—a submission motivated not by externally imposed coercion, but by internally felt self-loathing’ (Foster 2005, 207).

Historically, a prime Melanesian example for such processes of humiliation is the ongoing frictional encounter with Christian Churches and their missionaries (Goldsmith & Macdonald 2019; Sahlins 1992). Today, over 90 percent of Solomon Islanders identify as Christian. Remnants of ancestral religions remain but often there are no surviving ancestral priests, as was also the case in our primary field site, the Lau Lagoon of Malaita Province; and Christian Churches continue to work actively to remove other last reminders to the ancestral religion. They destroy ancestral artefacts through ‘acts of “blessing,” “anointing” and “baptizing”’ (White 1991, 109), and they widely preach the significance of ancestral abandonment (S. Hobbis 2019). Exemplary is the mantra ‘never look back, never turn back, never go back’ which we encountered painted on the walls of an Indigenous Anglican priest’s home, and reiterated many times over during his sermons. Despite proclaimed commitments to syncretism in the Anglican Church (White 1991), this priest and many others often echo Sahlins’ prognostics; in this case, a belief that development will only arrive in the country if Solomon Islanders fully commit to Christianity and forget their ancestors, related rituals, behaviours and beliefs.

Comparable perspectives permeate other areas of Melanesian lives, specifically also food-based encounters (e.g. see Bashkow 2006; Jourdan 2010). For example, in West Papua, Sophie Chao has detailed how development initiatives aiming to improve food security have essentially contributed to ‘infantilising and animalising’ Indigenous foodways and, more broadly, ways of life, ‘[perpetuating] the racial violence of capitalism and imperialism through the medium of (equally racialised) food’ (2022, 813). Instances of such ‘gastrocolonialism’ (Fresno-Calleja 2017) can also be found in Solomon Islands. Stephanie has shown elsewhere (S. Hobbis 2017) how RAMSI food habits—RAMSI personnel largely consumed meals flown in from Australia while rarely sharing meals with Solomon Islanders and especially not meals involving Solomon Islands foods—have negatively affected some Solomon Islanders’ confidence in a stable, peaceful future that does not only involve adopting foreign political systems but also diets.

In other words, evidence for processes of cultural humiliation is easy to find, often driven by foreign voices but also embraced by local ones. Yet, previous research, including our own, is also filled with evidence to the contrary, at least when it comes to local responses to ‘cultural humiliation’, which Sahllins himself described as ‘double-edged’ (1992, 24). Cultural humiliation can facilitate cultural self-awareness as well. ‘The people have discovered they have their own “culture.” Before they were just living it. Now their “culture” is a conscious and articulate value. Something to be defended and, if necessary, reinvented’ (1992, 24–25). For instance, efforts aimed at destroying the ancestral religion are often met with efforts to reconcile differences between Christianity and ancestral cosmological and social orders (S. Hobbis 2019; Jebens 2011; Timmer 2015).

Similarly, local foods are frequently embraced, even explicitly as a form of activist resistance to gastrocolonialist processes (Fresno-Calleja 2017). For example, urban Solomon Islanders regularly request so-called *hom kaikai* (home foods) as quasi-remitances from rural relatives, lamenting how foreign foods fail to nourish not only their bodies but also relationships with lands and, thus, with their historically embedded sense of self and belonging (S. Hobbis 2017). Simultaneously, Christine Jourdan (2010) has shown how Solomon Islanders have integrated rice, as a quintessential ‘whitemen’ food (see Bashkow 2006), into local foodscapes including ritually significant events such as bridewealth exchanges, essentially making this foreign food their own.

In general, the vast corpus of research on continuity and change in Melanesia has complicated an implied dualism, continuity *or* change, in ‘modernisation’ discourses. As Robert Foster put it, ‘Melanesians reject the limited choice between *either* being more like themselves *or* being more like ourselves’ (2005, 209). Instead, they oscillate between alternatives, somewhere between ‘both’ or ‘neither’. Still or perhaps in particular because of an uncertain wavering between continuity and change, anxieties about the desired future remain central to experiences with, and discussions of, modernity, development and related transformations. Melanesian encounters with the global political economy and its values are fraught with what David Lipset (2017) described as an uncertainty rooted in ‘alienation’, a fundamentally and continuously undermined ontological belonging in a global world that is increasingly visible and continuously present in Melanesia.

We contend that discussions about urban⁴ betel aesthetics are particularly insightful for uncovering how these anxieties manifest themselves and are navigated in day-to-day life. Previous research has already demonstrated how aesthetic narratives or appearance more broadly are, similar to religion or food, central to how Pacific Islanders experience and navigate the uncertainties embedded in their global encounters (Barnett-Naghshineh 2021; Besnier 2011; Cummings 2013; Rollason 2008). Research has also uncovered how cultural humiliation processes are (too) often embedded in foreigners’ engagements with Pacific Islanders’ bodies. For instance, Gaia Cottino (2014) complicates foreign judgements of the ‘obesity epidemic’ in Tonga by highlighting clashes between global health interventions and Tongan cultural practices related to food, beauty and body size ideals.

At the same time and despite the centrality of *dami* as a source of material livelihood, immaterial values and practices across Melanesia (Hukula 2019; Iamo 1987; Sharp 2012, 2016, 2021), and despite open dismissal of betel as obstacle to development by (some) elites and foreigners such as Hillary (Martin 2007; Pratt 2014), considerably less attention has been paid to the complexities of cultural humiliation and socioeconomic continuities and change linked to betel aesthetics and practices. We do so here, first by detailing the case against betel, elaborating on Hillary's critiques with an emphasis on local voices as they become visible in public debates, in news and social media alike. Then, we follow the voices of those who make the case for betel as a source of both social and economic wellbeing.

A Source of Stained Development

Shortly after our arrival in Solomon Islands in February 2014, Solomon Islands daily newspapers announced that the Honiara City Council was attempting to ban the sale of *dami* along Honiara's main street, echoing a similar 2013 ban in neighbouring Papua New Guinea (see Hukula 2019; Sharp 2013). *Dami* could still be purchased at any other location in town, including public markets, but the city would hire new security personnel to patrol the main street and fine anyone selling betel there. With a research interest in statebuilding, we curiously observed the announcement, attempts at implementation and eventual failure of the ban. We quickly realised that we were merely witnessing one of many previous and ongoing⁵ efforts to 'rid' downtown Honiara of the 'disgusting' habit and stains for a cleaner city, or at least for a cleaner downtown core and for its foreign visitors. In early 2012, a similar ban, justified through aesthetic reasoning, was attempted ahead of the 11th Pacific Arts Festival:

Some visitors say that the city of Honiara is very dirty, particularly when people sell betel nut on the streets ... The arts festival is just around the corner, so although it may be uncomfortable to many, we must do this to give a good impression to our visitors. (*Solomon Times* 2012)

The 2014 ban was similarly justified by critiques of betel aesthetics. An editorial in the *Solomon Star*, Solomon Islands main daily newspaper, published shortly before our arrival, is exemplary. It emphasises the negative aesthetics of betel chewing and spitting while calling on the city council to be more decisive in their actions against the practice:

Where ever the so-called golden nut is sold, there's bound to be dirt and red stain everywhere.

It looks as though we've condemn our city to nothing less than a dumpsite.

The vendors ... must be told their action is not helpful in the effort to promote the image of Honiara as a nice clean place ...

To Honiara City Council law enforcers, it's time to get out of your office and monitor what's going on at our streets. (*Solomon Star* 2013)

These excerpts reflect Hillary’s concerns. They indicate a seemingly broad endorsement of the notion that chewing and spitting *dami*, and generally aesthetically displeasing infrastructures, are an obstacle to attracting and satisfying the needs of foreigners visiting (and/or living in) Honiara. They further identify two culprits that are both, so it seems, not adequately concerned with ensuring the ‘beauty’ of the city: (1) those spitting betel nut on the pavement and (2) Honiara City Council, which fails to attract support for betel bans.

Social media discussions reveal a comparable preoccupation with the cleanliness and beauty of Solomon Islands capital—including a dedicated Facebook group titled ‘Friends of the City’⁶ with a mission ‘to enhance people participation through people’s volunteerism to build a clean, healthy, pleasant and sustainable Honiara City’ (Figure 1). Debates on this Facebook group and others focus on chastising those who chew betel in public—with the public referring specifically to those sites visible to foreigners. Comments regularly emphasise an ‘attitude problem’ when it comes to the cleanliness of their city; and similar debates can be found throughout Solomon Islands Facebook.

On May 11, 2017, the following was posted on Forum Solomon Islands–International (FSII), at the time one of Solomon Islands’ most influential Facebook groups and civil society organisations:

Betel nut chewers must be fined on the spot for spitting in public space. The newly paved aisle around market is spat on. Just passed by this morning to see one of the workers dusting off the erected white rails. I only pray we love our facilities and take good care of it as this foreigner did.

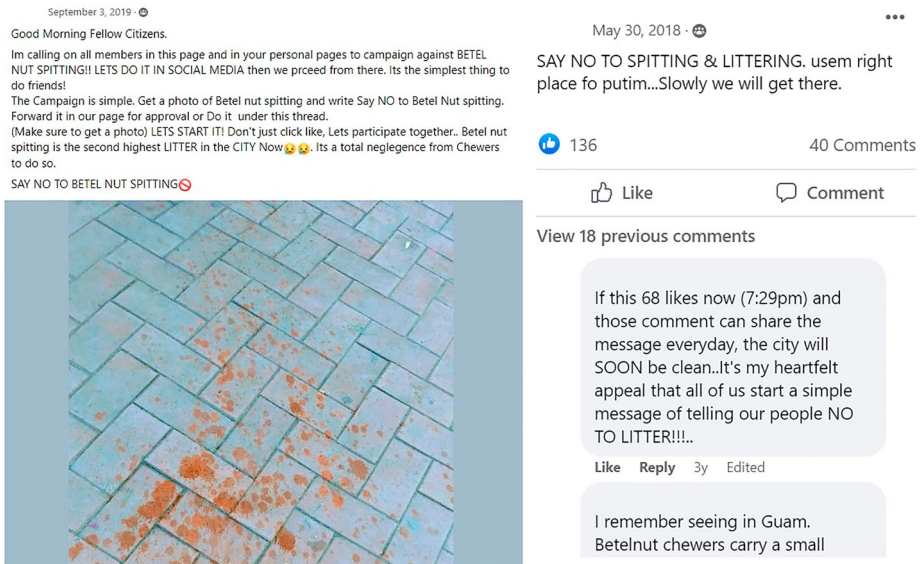


Figure 1. Facebook posts and discussions about betel-stained urban infrastructures.

The post received significant attention including ninety-two comments, with most indicating, in one way or another, the kind of ‘internally felt self-loathing’ (Foster 2005, 207) central to cultural humiliation. Comments include:

Attitude problem is our big challenge and need to address it!!

Tumas na oketa. Tru nao No care attitude big tumas lo Solo. Time town start lelebet look nice osem umi try take ownership and maintain cleanliness lelebet oketa ... [This is too much. It is true that we have too much of a ‘no care’ attitude in the Solomons. When town starts to look a bit nice, we must try taking ownership and all maintain some cleanliness ...]

An extremely sad state of affairs. Brainless idiots. Reflection of practice at home [the villages] so may be difficult to break. Habits ...

With this kind of attitude, solo by no sa develope lo hem. [With this kind of attitude Solomon Islands will never develop.]

We should get rid of culture because [in] many homes betel is primary source as a culture food ...

Should garem small bottle for spiti inside. [Should have a small bottle to spit inside.]

The final comment, also on the thread itself, represents a small number of voices on Solomon Islands Facebook that do not fundamentally object to the practice of chewing and spitting betel in town. Instead, these voices identify other challenges linked to infrastructures, often a lack of infrastructures that allow for spitting betel in a ‘cleaner’ fashion (see also Figure 1). The vast majority of posts and comments, however, focus on the ways in which, to repeat some of the core phrases, betel and those chewing it are ‘brainless idiots’ with an ‘attitude problem’. According to several of these participants on Solomon Islands Facebook, this attitude problem can be traced to ‘culture’ which they associate with village life. These voices contend that at least those areas that are in the global spotlight—Honiara—require this ‘culture food’ to be abandoned for development. In other words, following Sahlins’ proposition, many commentators embrace the perceived negativity of the practice and call for a fundamental aesthetic cultural change, at least among urbanites, to better reflect outsiders’ such as Hillary’s visions for the isles and, consequently, to facilitate desired economic development.

However, most social and news media critiques of betel aesthetics clearly focus on the negative impact of betel stains on urban infrastructures and specifically in Honiara’s downtown core. Unlike Hillary, and other foreigners like her, who we often found to express a general distaste for *dami*, at any place and at any time, Solomon Islanders’ endorsement of these critiques seems to narrow them down to those places most likely frequented by foreigners. This is even reflected in Honiara’s attempted betel ban which did not affect places like White River, where Hillary dropped me off but was not actually able to enter herself. The PPF had classified the area as ‘too volatile’ to be accessed outside of official police operations, typically

involving escort by armoured vehicle staffed by armed personnel. In other words, those Solomon Islanders endorsing betel bans in various media outlets do not necessarily reject betel per se. Instead, at least in as far as it is discernible from these media debates, they limit the 'sense of self-loathing' that accompanies the practice spatially, consequently, also creating spaces where the practice can continue to persist in opposition to foreigners' broader aesthetic desires.

Besides, these media voices are by no means necessarily representative of Honiara's residents. Newspapers are in their reach primarily limited to English-speaking literate elites. Similarly, most of the Facebook discussions on betel take place in English and are again primarily indicative of the perspectives of (some) elites, and they are, as such, also public, visible to the preying foreign eye. In our everyday conversations with Solomon Islanders, around betel stands, markets or even outside government offices, attitudes towards betel were far less dismissive. Indeed, we did not even encounter many extensively anti-betel attitudes among members of Honiara's educated, often salaried middle class. While Rachael Goberman-Hill noted that many of her middle-class respondents rejected betel to '[mark] them out as different to their less affluent relatives' (1999, 162, footnote 12), most of our middle-class respondents were avid chewers of betel, at least at home or in 'non-official' settings. They would often, similar to Stephanie, brush their teeth avidly before heading to work or the downtown core, but they did not reject betel at large. They regularly expressed frustrations about the dual lives they often had to lead, even arguing for betel as a source of social stability and participation in the very cash economy that tourists are hoped to facilitate in betel-free island paradise.

A Source of Social Belonging

When we arrived in the country to start our fieldwork, Geoffrey spent a considerable amount of time engaging with government stakeholders in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and the Ministry of Education. It was difficult at first. No one wanted to talk to him. This is understandable. One would not expect (positive) attention walking off the street into the PMO in Canberra, Wellington or Ottawa for that matter. Being turned away so many times, Geoffrey noticed *dami*-chewing staff on break under the leaf verandah to the side of the building. So, he bought some *dami* from a street vendor, bit into the nut and began chewing its juicy interior with the pepper leaf and lime. Unlike Stephanie, Geoffrey rarely had to brush the *dami* stains from his teeth as he barely partook in what was for him a literally stomach-churning practice. Maybe his perpetual inexperience led him to always misjudge how much leaf and lime were needed. Maybe his stomach was just too sensitive. Hard to know. But that day at the PMO Geoffrey was quickly distracted from the discomfort as shock took over at how differently staff treated him. Everyone, from security guards to secretaries to bureaucrats and even high-ranking politicians, seemed delighted by the spectacle and curious to know more about the foreigner with red-stained *dami* lips and teeth.

This moment turned out to be a ‘cock fight moment’, going from outsider to insider not much different from when Clifford Geertz (1972) and Hilda Geertz ran from the police alongside everyone else in attendance after participating in an illegal cock fight in Bali. By not only chewing *dami* but by doing so intensely publicly, possibly for other foreigners such as Hillary to see, Geoffrey demonstrated, first, a willingness to embrace Solomon Islands and the values of its inhabitants and, second, to do so at a potential cost to his own standing among ‘his own’, the foreign largely white elite. Suddenly Geoffrey’s experience with government stakeholders shifted. He joined into many casual conversations, getting to know security guards’ and political elites’ visions for the country. Just as Stephanie’s brushed, white teeth invited Hillary to open up about her frustrations with Solomon Islands politics and aesthetics, so did Geoffrey’s betel-stained, red teeth invite local government stakeholders to share their own perspectives on questions related to stability and development, including their frustrations with foreign attitudes towards the country.

Geoffrey’s experience here and many others like it complicate the arguments brought forward against betel aesthetics. Rather than emphasising a disruption in potential social relations—between Solomon Islanders and foreigners, statebuilders as much as tourists—they highlight the centrality of betel for strengthening social networks, at least those between Islanders and those willing to embrace their ways of life. Reflecting research from across Melanesia (Hirsch 1990, 2005; Iamo 1987; Sharp 2012), we largely encountered betel as ‘an essential ingredient in intercourse between both individuals and groups ... [signalling] amity, goodwill, a desire to cooperate’ (Marshall 1987, 21) and, as such, a central component of nearly all facets of life. Betel exchanges happen on a day-to-day basis and at exceptional events, assuming central roles in compensation and reconciliation payments and during bridewealth exchanges. In each case, betel serves the purpose of building relationships.

Simultaneously, if betel is withheld it has the opposite effect, facilitating a deterioration in trust and, consequently, destabilising social relations. Exemplary for the latter is the following conversation with Bruno after a campaign event for the 2014 National Election:

Stephanie: What did you think about this candidate? Do you think you will vote for him?

Bruno: He is not a good candidate. I cannot vote for him.

Stephanie: Why is that?

Bruno: I know this man. I met him in Honiara not long ago. I asked him for *dami* and he did not give it to me. I saw that he had some. Andreas [points to the house next door] will tell you the same [...]

Stephanie: How about his promise to provide more funds for the school and to renovate the road?

Bruno: Everyone’s promises are the same. But this one will not be a good leader. He will not keep his promises but just keep all the money for

himself. Yesterday's candidate was much better. He brought betel nut [...] for everyone who came to listen [...]

Stephanie: So you think yesterday's candidate will be a good leader?

Bruno: I do not know. Often candidates give only during the campaign. Today's candidate does not even give now. [...]

Stephanie: Would you vote for a candidate because they gave you *dami*?

Bruno: They all should give you *dami* ... and if you know they have *dami*, but it is not why I vote for a candidate.

There is plenty to unpack in this and similar conversations about the intricacies of Solomon Islands electoral politics and the challenges that they entail—often also linked to debates about the ‘problems’ with culture (see Wood 2016). What matters here is the way in which sharing of betel is seen as indicative of a basic courtesy, a pre-requisite for any further trust in the leadership capacities of the given candidate and, thus, in the candidate's capacity to realise at least this voter's vision for Solomon Islands future. In other words, exchanging *dami* is central to everyday acts of giving and receiving as ‘the essential foundations upon which trust is built’ (Hundleby 2017, 110). Those who do not partake in the practice are, in turn, quickly looked at with suspicion by those who do. This holds true both for people like Bruno's candidate but also for people like Hillary whose white teeth and explicitly dismissive statements about *dami* suggest an even more fundamental rejection of the practice.

This is not to say that *dami* exchanges are a necessary pre-condition for establishing and maintaining social relationships. Alternatives, especially other foods or food-like substances such as rice or tobacco, are often also deemed acceptable indicators of a commitment to ‘the creation and affirmation of relationships [as] the key goal of interaction, [where] exchange is carried out precisely in order to foster mutual recognition’ (Robbins 2008, 48). Geoffrey, for example, often shared and communally smoked *savusavu*, locally grown tobacco, to compensate for his struggles with *dami*. Similarly, Bruno's statements suggest that he was largely concerned about the candidate not giving at all. As a result, *dami* is but one possible way to establish trusting relationships. However, among these possibilities, our respondents often identified it as particularly pertinent. Unlike the consumption of most foods including tobacco, the consumption of *dami* is especially forceful as an embodied practice of shared belonging because it has lasting aesthetically visible effects.

A Source of Economic Stability

In a critical assessment of betel practices in Solomon Islands, Stephen Pratt (2014) acknowledges the social, moral significance of betel. However, he contends that this significance is, at best, a challenge to be overcome. While Pratt's argumentation does not focus on the effects of betel aesthetics on tourists, he emphasises the negative

impact of betel on economic stability. He argues that especially in urban areas, where betel do not grow and must be imported from the rural provinces, too much income is diverted to *dami* from perceived needs such as electricity and, in turn, that reduced *dami* consumption would free significant spending capacity to improve urbanites' quality of life. Our research stands in stark contrast to this—or Hillary's—economic argumentation and is much more closely aligned with Timothy Sharp's (2012, 2013, 2016, 2021) longitudinal research on the betel trade in neighbouring Papua New Guinea as, largely, a source of socioeconomic wellbeing. We encountered betel as a means for Solomon Islanders to participate in the cash economy without, however, compromising their immediate socioeconomic needs and values as was often the case, for example, when engaging with tourists.

Stephanie often joined in the activities of women buying and reselling betel in Honiara. One morning, she accompanied Sarah and Matt, a husband-and-wife team with an urban *dami* market stall, to Honiara's port. They got there far too early but Sarah had hushed them along, not wanting to miss the boat that was supposed to arrive from South Malaita, filled with fresh betel. Such boat cargo often sold out quickly and if they did not succeed in getting at least one of the bags, they would have to buy one from a middleman at a considerably higher price.⁷ While waiting, Stephanie remembered a recent newspaper announcement about the anticipated arrival of an Australian cruise ship. Knowing that Sarah was also skilled at local crafts, especially knitting bags, and her affinity for market activities, Stephanie inquired if Sarah would be trying to sell some to the arriving tourists. The news article had even specifically called on local craftspeople to set up stalls close to the docking port. Sarah responded with laughter. She explained that she had never tried doing so herself but had heard too many stories from others to even bother.

Tourists, Sarah explained, did not respect the value of the goods she and others created. They would insist on haggling, essentially accusing sellers of being con men, of not offering a fair price. Sarah's expression was both filled with disgust and sadness. She had heard that in other places—in Africa she seemed to recall—haggling was common but in Solomon Islands, Sarah insisted, it was not. Sarah affirmed that price negotiations sometimes happened, for example, when buying in bulk or when discussing bridewealth. However, the assumption was always that a set market price was fair, representative of the time, materials and energy that had been put into a given product. Claiming otherwise, she explained, was an insult (see also Maranda 1969; Ross 1978)—and insults are, historically and today, one of the primary reasons for social instabilities and outbreaks of violence (Ross 1978; Hobbis & Hobbis 2022). By far too often demanding goods to be sold for less, even less than half of the price they are offered at, Sarah explained, tourists demonstrated a lack of respect for Solomon Islander vendors; and so, she continued, did those foreigners and Solomon Islanders who suggested that they should 'just go along with it' and simply increase the prices to make room for haggling.

Stephanie later met one of Sarah's friends, Lara, who had tried to haggle with tourists, following the advice of those who promote what Rupert Stasch (2021) described

as a 'self-lowering' aimed at engaging with 'modernity' by accepting its apparent superiority (see also Rollason 2010). However, Lara struggled to fully embrace, in her case, the practice of haggling, falling apart into a panicked fluster whenever she tried to negotiate with tourists. Whenever a tourist would start talking to her, she explained, she would immediately agree to any suggested price, or even lower her prices further in her own counteroffer. As a result, Lara perpetually kept selling goods far below the price she needed if she hoped to at least break even. At the same time, Lara had gotten in trouble with other Solomon Islanders who noticed the prices she advertised. Immediately recognising that Lara's prices were unfair, they would shame her for engaging in such an insulting practice, demeaning herself and, so these commentators suggested, also demeaning Solomon Islands in tourists' eyes.

The contradictions and uncertainties in these experiences with tourists echo those surrounding betel aesthetics and socialities, and they are central to why most of our respondents preferred selling betel than engaging with tourists. During many other conversations with betel vendors, we learnt that selling betel was often also a complicated affair, particularly when it came to pricing. Betel sellers needed to figure out how to ensure that they would make some financial profit—or at least not a loss—while knowing that they would give away a noticeable portion of their produce for free every day to family members and all kinds of acquaintances, and even us anthropologists. However much we tried to pay for every single betel nut that we hoped to buy at a betel stall, we would nearly always get some free ones thrown in as well, signalling that very goodwill that is so central to betel exchanges. These challenges, so we were told, were not unsurmountable, however. On the contrary, echoing broader research on successful Indigenous entrepreneurial activities in the Pacific (see Scheyvens et al. 2020; Spann 2022), these challenges are central to 'doing business' in a culturally respectful and, subsequently, successful way as a means to further social belonging, first, and only second to meet financial aspirations.

Betel are a 'quintessential commodity' (Hirsch 1990, 26) in this ability to balance the needs of both the reciprocal and cash economy. Reflecting the flexibilities of historical and contemporary 'bush markets' where Solomon Islanders often irregularly sell surplus from gardening and fishing (Hobbis & Hobbis 2022), selling betel is highly flexible. A betel stall can be as large, or small, as the seller desires or is able to afford on a given day, and it does not, by any means, have to be a daily activity. Betel is also relatively easy to acquire. Unlike garden produce or fish, betel do not require an extensive investment in bodily labour—they grow without much input from gardeners (usually in rural areas). As a result, even by the time they reach Honiara, often by being sold through multiple middlemen along the way, costs for betel remain largely manageable.⁸ Nearly anyone with access to just some cash can, consequently, get into betel sales at any time and any place, making betel a central commodity in households' income strategies (see also Hukula 2019; Sharp 2012). Betel help support other livelihood strategies, be they subsistence-focused or salaried, as they flexibly allow for meeting irregular costs such as school or medical

fees or, for example, to address temporary shortcomings from delayed paychecks or even bank closures.

In addition, betel are a fundamentally local product. Because they are grown in the provinces and domestically sold and consumed, they contribute significantly to ‘the flow of people, goods and money ... [connecting] urban and rural places, and [redistributing] wealth within the country’ (Busse & Sharp 2019, 127). In other words, betel sales do not rely on foreigners, their interests, needs or values, including their unpredictable presences in Islanders’ lives. Betel economics are, consequently, very different from the tourism economics that Hillary and others would like to realise as a source of stability in Solomon Islands. Betel economics are not confined to the cash economy but bridge possibilities for income generation and reciprocal exchange (see also Sharp 2016). As a result, they provide a source of socioeconomic stability that is anchored in Solomon Islanders’ priorities, across the isles, urban and rural environments.

Beauty for Development?

The tensions between the foreign-led and, at times, elite-endorsed complaints about the aesthetic ‘dangers’ of betel and the everyday significance of betel exchanges for social reproduction and cash generation offer intriguing insights into deep-seated inequalities and possibilities for everyday resistance in development encounters. On the one hand, they reveal troublesome entanglements between colonial aesthetically justified racial hierarchies and contemporary foreign encounters. On the other hand, they problematise notions of stability at the intersections of continuity and change in statebuilding and development practice.

Beauty narratives have assumed a central role in the history of Melanesian⁹ encounters with Europeans, with European descriptions of the islands centrally featuring racial hierarchies and ethnocentrism (Kabutaulaka 2015; Lawson 2013). Already the Spanish conquistador and explorer Álvaro de Mendaña y Neira, credited as ‘discoverer’ of Solomon Islands in 1568, noted the ‘ugliness’ of teeth-blackening, a practice linked to betel aesthetics,¹⁰ on Santa Isabel, today’s Isabel Province:

The women are better looking than those of Peru but they disfigure themselves greatly by blackening their teeth, which they do on purpose, both men and women; the boys and girls are better looking and less ill-favoured, because their teeth are white. (Cited in Zumbroich 2015, 540)

More broadly and even more dismissively, Jules Dumont d’Urville described Melanesian bodies as ‘disagreeable’, ‘uneven’ and ‘often frail and deformed’ (cited in Kabutaulaka 2015, 113). He then used this aesthetic judgement to ‘draw a parallel between the physical features, morality, and social organizations of Melanesians and Africans’ (Kabutaulaka 2015, 113), basically arguing that Melanesians should be treated just like ‘black people from Africa, who by then had long been subjected to European-perpetrated slavery in the New World’ (Kabutaulaka 2015, 113).

Hillary's disgust for the aesthetics of betel-stained bodies and infrastructures echoes these racist depictions of Melanesian aesthetics even though, unlike Dumont d'Urville, she locates her aesthetic assessment in a changeable bodily practice. When expressing her hopes for a betel-free island paradise that corresponds to the aesthetic demands of foreign tourists, Hillary blamed a lack of development on Solomon Islanders' culturally situated aesthetic choices—the choice to chew and spit betel—and their incompatibility with foreign values—'beautiful' white teeth and infrastructures. By so doing, she affirmed an aesthetic hierarchy, not unlike Mendaña or Dumont d'Urville. She basically demands Solomon Islanders' submission to dominant 'Western' aesthetics, at least, if they are to 'progress' economically and to achieve stability within the global economic system that foreign statebuilders and development workers such as herself are there to build.

Local news and social media discussions about betel consumption as an 'attitude problem' that prevents development demonstrate how at least some Solomon Islanders have adopted this critique. They echo Tarcisius Kabutaulaka's argumentation that some Melanesians have 'internalised' historically dominant 'negative representation of Melanesians—and darker-skinned people more generally' (2015, 122), in this case negative representations of betel practices and, especially, their aesthetic markers. Simultaneously, these discussions reflect Will Rollason's (2008) observations that Melanesians are well aware of the significance of 'appearances' as pathway to development, 'that development means, or happens, when the appearance of the place changes' (2008, 21). In other words, Honiara and its residents need to change their appearance, to become aesthetically more 'pleasing' to foreign statebuilders and tourists by removing betel-stained teeth, lips and infrastructures.

At first sight, dismissive media discussions about betel's stains on Solomon Islands' outward appearances then seem to reaffirm Sahlins' proposition about the significance of cultural humiliation in development encounters. They indicate an 'internally felt self-loathing' (Foster 2005, 207) that fosters a desire to 'get rid of culture' and specifically of betel as 'culture food', as a Solomon Islander suggests on Facebook. They further point to at least some Solomon Islanders' willingness to engage in 'self-lowering' (Stasch 2021) in response, and specifically to make aesthetic adjustments according to foreign critiques as a necessary stepping-stone to development. However, the spatial demands of these debates—calls to restrict betel consumption only in downtown Honiara, where most foreigners are—also suggest a strategic, though submissive, use of this 'self-loathing' and 'self-lowering' in engagements with the foreign gaze. In most cases, proponents of betel bans do not suggest a comprehensive abandonment of betel practices and the culture they represent. Instead, betel is to be removed from foreign eyes to avoid further humiliation. In other words, 'self-lowering' in the particular context of urban Honiara 'might be described as an effort of exercising favorable, qualified control, amidst wider conditions of lacking control' (Stasch 2021, 267) in urban encounters with foreign statebuilders, development workers and tourists alike.

Simultaneously, there is an inherent tension between discursive endorsements of foreigners' aesthetic critiques of betel and a practised commitment to the consumption and exchange of betel as a cornerstone for everyday social reproduction. Continued failures of betel bans and the many who sell and chew betel in the downtown core, including, even performatively as Geoffrey did, in front of government offices, reveal the 'double-edged' (Sahlins 1992, 24) dimensions of cultural humiliation. Critiques against betel have made betel visible as a key component of Solomon Islands culture. Consequently, betel practices have assumed 'a conscious and articulate value' (Sahlins 1992, 24), as reflected in Sarah's comparison between the competing moralities of betel and tourist markets. However, this visibility does not negate the uncertainties embedded in the tension between foreign aesthetic critiques, discursive embraces of them and their practised rejection. On the contrary, the tensions surrounding betel practices reveal a fundamental disconnect in Solomon Islanders' encounters with international development and the inequalities embedded therein.

This disconnect is especially visible in the contradictory conceptualisations of socioeconomic stability linked to betel debates and practices and the competing temporalities they entail. Criticisms of betel aesthetics espouse the notion that socioeconomic stability is something to be created, a potential that lies in Solomon Islands future but not its present. They equate stability with a shift away from betel consumption and towards an embrace of foreign tourists and the economic development they are supposed to bring. In comparison, an embrace of betel practices locates Solomon Islands socioeconomic stability not in change but in the socioeconomic continuities that they offer. Reciprocal betel exchanges are central to reaffirming and building relationships of trust, while their abandonment fuels uncertainty and subsequent social instability. Simultaneously, selling betel is seen as a reliable source of both social and economic wellbeing, unlike tourist markets which some sellers argue undermine their morality and their ability to meet financial needs.

In other words, the tensions surrounding betel aesthetics and practices reveal a fundamental contradiction in visions for Solomon Islands socioeconomic stability: a conviction that stability is only possible through socioeconomic change versus a conviction that current practices and values are the cornerstone for present and future socioeconomic stability. Centrally, this contradiction is deeply embedded in longstanding inequalities. While Solomon Islanders often reject foreign demands to abandon betel because of the stability that betel socialities and economics offer in the present, the embrace of strategic 'self-lowering' uncovers the deep-seated uncertainties in global-local encounters. Foreigners appear to be unwavering in their critiques, necessarily demanding submission to their interests, needs and values and, thus, never really being prepared to meet Solomon Islanders as equals. After all, even the betel sellers that Stephanie talked to, after her interview with Hillary, explained how prudent it had been for Stephanie to brush her teeth ahead of her interview. They were certain that most foreigners would not even take Stephanie, a white European, seriously if *dami* had coloured her lips and teeth in a bright red.

Conclusions

Much more could and should be said about betel entanglements with ‘modernity’, beyond our urban focus and also beyond our discussions of tourists, statebuilders and economic development. Especially missing from our reflection is an in-depth engagement with the religious dimensions surrounding the consumption of betel and their aesthetics. For example, some denominations like Seventh Day Adventists demand betel to be abandoned alongside all other ancestral practices, in this case, for the purpose of salvation and, at times, development to come (see also Jebens 2011, 97). However, we also chewed betel with many members of charismatic denominations who would again brush their teeth before attending church events. Simultaneously, even individuals who actively consume betel struggle with insecurities about *how* they should acquire them, if they should unquestionably pay for every single betel they consume (unless, perhaps in the case of gifts within a nuclear family) to escape from the ‘dependency’ (Martin 2007, 288) of reciprocal exchanges. Reciprocity itself is here seen as an obstacle to a ‘modern’ independence that is deemed necessary to effectively participate in business exchanges with foreigners, in particular (see also Martin 2007), thus, again highlighting the centrality of betel in Melanesian negotiations of cultural humiliations.

Betel is particularly fruitful to think with, as an aesthetically hyper-visible materialisation of the uncertainties that accompany continuity and change processes including longstanding histories of racialised othering. Still, only few have foregrounded betel practices in their analyses (see Hirsch 1990; Hukula 2019; Martin 2007; Sharp 2012, 2016), and especially not when considering the often very uneasy personal encounters between Melanesians and foreigners, be they statebuilders, development workers or tourists. We, therefore, conclude with a call for more dedicated research on the substantive role that betel practices and aesthetics play in Melanesian encounters with the foreign gaze. Doing so not only allows for better understanding the contours of Melanesian modernities but also offers an entry point to better grasp what, and how much, continues to go wrong in especially ‘Western’ engagements with the region. After all, the contestations and contradictions surrounding betel practices reveal a fundamental, unequal disconnect about visions for Solomon Islands present and future, and what Solomon Islands ‘development’ should and might entail.

Notes

- [1] All interviews with foreigners in Solomon Islands were completed in English; all interviews with Solomon Islanders were completed in Solomon Islands Pijin, at times mixed with Lau (a vernacular).
- [2] Cox (2009) critiques these simplified perceptions of patron-client networks in Solomon Islands.
- [3] *Dami* is a mild stimulant with the strength depending on the age of the areca nut (the fresher the weaker) and the amount of lime consumed.

The active principles are alkaloids of which arecoline and arecaidine are the most important. The former is hydrolyzed to the latter by calcium hydroxide, that is, by the lime that is chewed with the nut. The chewing of the three ingredients produces the bright red salvia by a chemical process not yet elucidated. (Burton-Bradley 1979, 482)

- [4] Rural debates on betel aesthetics have their own dynamic complexities that are not part of this paper.
- [5] Beautification efforts have also continued after the failed 2014 betel ban; for example, in preparations for Honiara hosting the 2023 Pacific Games, with the PG2023 Environment Beautification, Weather and Keep Honiara Clean Services Committee identifying betelnut markets as ‘one of the greatest challenge[s]’ (SIG 2021) to get the city ready for visitors.
- [6] Friends of the City has 5058 members as of February 4, 2022, an impressive number given Honiara’s overall population of approximately 80,000.
- [7] For a discussion of the rise of middlemen in the betel trade and the complex moral and socio-economic challenges that arise from it, see Sharp (2021).
- [8] Betel shortages, e.g. due to a bad harvest, can lead to temporary price hikes that disrupt the continuities and affordability of the betel trade, at least for urban end-users. However, price fluctuations tend to be temporary, being eventually counterbalanced by the arrival of new or more betel from the provinces.
- [9] Melanesia itself is, historically, a problematic, racialised category translating into the ‘black islands’ and standing in comparison to Polynesia as ‘the many islands’ (see Kabutaulaka 2015; Lawson 2013).
- [10] There are different techniques for teeth-blackening across the Pacific Islands. While many do not directly involve betel, there are some overlaps including mixing of teeth blackener with betel quid for comparable (and improved) aesthetic results (see Zumbroich 2015, 541).

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful for the provocative and constructive responses to early drafts of this paper during an EWIS event on urban aesthetics, a workshop on the life of beauty at the University of Zurich and discussions at the Diversity and Inequality Seminar at Radboud University Nijmegen. The authors also thank two anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments.

Funding

This work was supported by Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada [grant number 201211DVC-236411-303307] and the Fondation Martine Aublet, Fondation de France.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

Stephanie Ketterer Hobbis  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7038-7413>

Geoffrey Hobbis  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8644-6916>

References

- Asian Development Bank. 2017. *Asian Development Outlook 2017: Transcending the Middle-Income Challenge*. Mandaluyong City: Asian Development Bank. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/237761/ado-2017.pdf>.
- Barnett-Naghsheh, Olivia. 2021. "What Women Want: Fashion, Morality and Gendered Subjectivities in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea." *Critical Studies in Fashion & Beauty* 12 (1): 67–89.
- Bashkow, Ira. 2006. *The Meaning of Whitemen: Race and Modernity in the Orokaiva Cultural World*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Besnier, Niko. 2011. *On the Edge of the Global: Modern Anxieties in a Pacific Island Nation*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Braithwaite, John, Sinclair Dinnen, Matthew Allen, Valerie Braithwaite, and Hilary Charlesworth. 2010. *Pillars and Shadows: Statebuilding as Peacebuilding in Solomon Islands*. Canberra: ANU E Press. <https://press.anu.edu.au/publications/series/peacebuilding-compared/pillars-and-shadows>.
- Burton-Bradley, Burton G. 1979. "Arcaidinism: Betel Chewing in Transcultural Perspective." *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* 24 (5): 481–488.
- Busse, Mark, and Timothy L.M. Sharp. 2019. "Marketplaces and Morality in Papua New Guinea: Place, Personhood and Exchange." *Oceania* 89 (2): 126–153.
- Chao, Sophie. 2022. "Gastrocolonialism: The Intersections of Race, Food and Development in West Papua." *The International Journal of Human Rights* 26 (5): 811–832.
- Cottino, Gaia. 2014. "Obesity 'Epidemic' in the Kingdom of Tonga: Critical Notes on the 'Right' Body Size." *Journal des Anthropologues* 138–139: 65–87.
- Cox, John. 2009. "Active Citizenship or Passive Clientelism? Accountability and Development in Solomon Islands." *Development in Practice* 19 (8): 964–980.
- Cummings, Maggie. 2013. "Looking Good: The Cultural Politics of the Island Dress for Young Women in Vanuatu." *The Contemporary Pacific* 25 (1): 33–65.
- Foster, Robert J. 2005. "Frustrating Modernity in Melanesia." In *The Making of Global and Local Modernities in Melanesia: Humiliation, Transformation and the Nature of Culture Change*, edited by Joel Robbins, and Holly Wardlow, 207–216. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Fresno-Calleja, Paloma. 2017. "Fighting Gastrocolonialism in Indigenous Pacific Writing." *International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 19 (7): 1041–1055.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1972. "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight." *Daedalus* 101 (1): 1–37.
- Goldsmith, Michael, and Fraser Macdonald, eds. 2019. "Religious Rupture and Revival in the Pacific." Special Issue, *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 128 (4).
- Goberman-Hill, Rachael J.S. 1999. "The Constraints of 'Feeling Free': Becoming Middle Class in Honiara (Solomon Islands)." PhD diss., University of Edinburgh.
- Hirsch, Eric. 1990. "From Bones to Betelnuts: Processes of Ritual Transformation and the Development of 'National Culture' in Papua New Guinea." *Man* 25 (1): 18–34.
- Hirsch, Eric. 2005. "Efficacy and Concentration: Analogies in Betel Use Among the Fuyuge (Papua New Guinea)." In *Consuming Habits: Drugs in History and Anthropology*, edited by Jordan Goodman, Andrew Sherratt, and Paul E. Lovejoy, 88–102. London: Routledge.
- Hobbis, Stephanie Ketterer. 2017. "Peacebuilding, Foodways and the Everyday: A Fragile Confidence in Post-Intervention Solomon Islands." *Social Anthropology/ Anthropologie Sociale* 25 (4): 470–484.
- Hobbis, Stephanie Ketterer. 2019. "Rescuing Honiara, Rescuing Gwou'ulu: Negotiating Frictional Village-Town Relations and Politico-Religious (Dis)unity in Solomon Islands." *Journal of Polynesian Studies* 128 (4): 435–456.

- Hobbis, Geoffrey, and Stephanie K. Hobbis. 2022. "Beyond Platform Capitalism: Critical Perspectives on Facebook Markets from Melanesia." *Media, Culture & Society* 44 (1): 121–140.
- Hukula, Fiona. 2019. "Morality and a Mosbi Market." *Oceania* 89 (2): 168–181.
- Hundleby, Irene K. 2017. "Kwaimani ana liohaua gia: The Heart of Us." PhD diss., University of Otago.
- Iamo, Wari. 1987. "One of the Things That Brings Good Name is Betel: A Keakalo Conception of Betel Use." In *Drugs in Western Pacific Societies: Relations of Substance*, edited by Lamont Lindstrom, 135–148. Lanham: University Press of America.
- Jebens, Holger. 2011. "Beyond Globalisation and Localisation: Denominational Pluralism in a Papua New Guinean Village." *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 12 (1): 91–110.
- Jourdan, Christine. 2010. "The Cultural Localization of Rice in the Solomon Islands." *Ethnology* 49 (4): 263–282.
- Kabutaulaka, Tarcisius. 2015. "Re-presenting Melanesia: Ignoble Savages and Melanesian Alter-Natives." *The Contemporary Pacific* 27 (1): 110–145.
- Lawson, Stephanie. 2013. "'Melanesia': The History and Politics of an Idea." *Journal of Pacific History* 48 (1): 1–22.
- Lipset, David. 2017. *Yabar: The Alienations of Murik Men in a Papua New Guinea Modernity*. New York: Palgrave.
- Maranda, Pierre. 1969. *Lau Markets: A Sketch*. Working Papers in Anthropology. Vancouver: University of British Columbia.
- Marshall, Mac. 1987. "An Overview of Drugs in Oceania." In *Drugs in Western Pacific Societies: Relations of Substance*, edited by Lamont Lindstrom, 13–50. Lanham: University Press of America.
- Martin, Keir. 2007. "Your Own Buai You Must Buy: The Ideology of Possessive Individualism in Papua New Guinea." *Anthropological Forum* 17 (3): 285–298.
- Moore, Clive. 2004. *Happy Isles in Crisis: The Historical Causes of a Failing State in Solomon Islands, 1998–2004*. Canberra: Asia Pacific Press.
- Pratt, Stephen. 2014. "The Challenge of Betel Nut Consumption to Economic Development: A Case of Honiara, Solomon Islands." *Asia-Pacific Development Journal* 21 (2): 103–120.
- Robbins, Joel. 2008. "Rethinking Gifts and Commodities: Reciprocity, Recognition, and the Morality of Exchange." In *Economics and Morality: Anthropological Approaches*, edited by K. E. Browne, and B. L. Milgram, 43–58. Plymouth: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Robbins, Joel, and Holly Wardlow, eds. 2005. *The Making of Global and Local Modernities in Melanesia: Humiliation, Transformation and the Nature of Culture Change*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Rollason, Will. 2008. "Counterparts: Clothing, Value and the Sites of Otherness in Panapompom Ethnographic Encounters." *Anthropological Forum* 18 (1): 17–35.
- Rollason, Will. 2010. "Working out Abjection in the Panapompom Beche-de-mer Fishery: Race, Economic Change and the Future in Papua New Guinea." *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 21: 149–170.
- Ross, Harold M. 1978. "Baegu Markets, Aerial Integration, and Economic Efficiency in Malaita, Solomon Islands." *Ethnology* 17 (2): 119–138.
- Sahlins, Marshall. 1992. "The Economics of Develop-man in the Pacific." *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 21: 12–25.
- Scheyvens, Regina, Glenn Banks, Suliasi Vunibola, Henna Steven, and Litea Meo-Sewabu. 2020. "Business Serves Society: Successful Locally-Driven Development on Customary Land in the South Pacific." *Geoforum* 112: 52–62.
- Sharp, Timothy. 2012. "Following Buai: The Highlands Betel Nut Trade, Papua New Guinea." PhD diss., Australian National University.

- Sharp, Timothy. 2013. "Fear and Loathing in Port Moresby: Chewing Over the Betel Nut Ban." *State, Society and Governance in Melanesia in Brief* 2013/10. http://ssgm.bellschool.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/2015-12/SSGM_IB_2013_10_Sharp_0.pdf.
- Sharp, Timothy. 2016. "Trade's Value: Relational Transactions in the Papua New Guinea Betel Nut Trade." *Oceania* 86 (1): 75–91.
- Sharp, Timothy. 2021. "Intermediary Trading and the Transformation of Marketplaces in Papua New Guinea." *Journal of Agrarian Change* 21 (3): 522–544.
- Solomon Islands Government (SIG). 2021. "PG2023 Environment Beautification, Weather and Keep Honiara Clean Services Committee Meets." March 25. <https://solomons.gov.sb/pg2023-environment-beautification-weather-and-keep-honiara-clean-services-committee-meets/>.
- Solomon Star. 2013. "Where are the Council's Law Enforcers?" *Solomon Star*, December 11. <http://www.solomonstarnews.com/index.php/viewpoint/editorial/item/747-where-are-the-councils-law-enforcers>.
- Solomon Times. 2012. "Betel Nut Banned in Honiara Town." *Solomon Times Online*, February 7. <http://www.solomontimes.com/news/betel-nut-banned-in-honiara-town/1591>.
- Spann, Michael. 2022. "'It's How you Live' – Understanding Culturally Embedded Entrepreneurship: An Example from Solomon Islands." *Development in Practice* 32 (6): 781–792.
- Stasch, Rupert. 2021. "Self-Lowering as Power and Trap: Wawa, 'White', and Peripheral Embrace of State Formation in Indonesian Papua." *Oceania* 91 (2): 257–279.
- Timmer, Jaap. 2015. "Building Jerusalem in North Malaita, Solomon Islands." *Oceania* 85 (3): 299–314.
- White, Geoffrey. 1991. *Identity Through History: Living Stories in a Solomon Islands Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wood, Terence. 2016. "Is Culture the Cause? Choices, Expectations, and Electoral Politics in Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea." *Pacific Affairs* 89 (1): 31–52.
- Zumbroich, Thomas. 2015. "'We Blacken Our Teeth with Oko to Make Them Firm': Teeth Blackening in Oceania." *Anthropologica* 57 (2): 539–555.