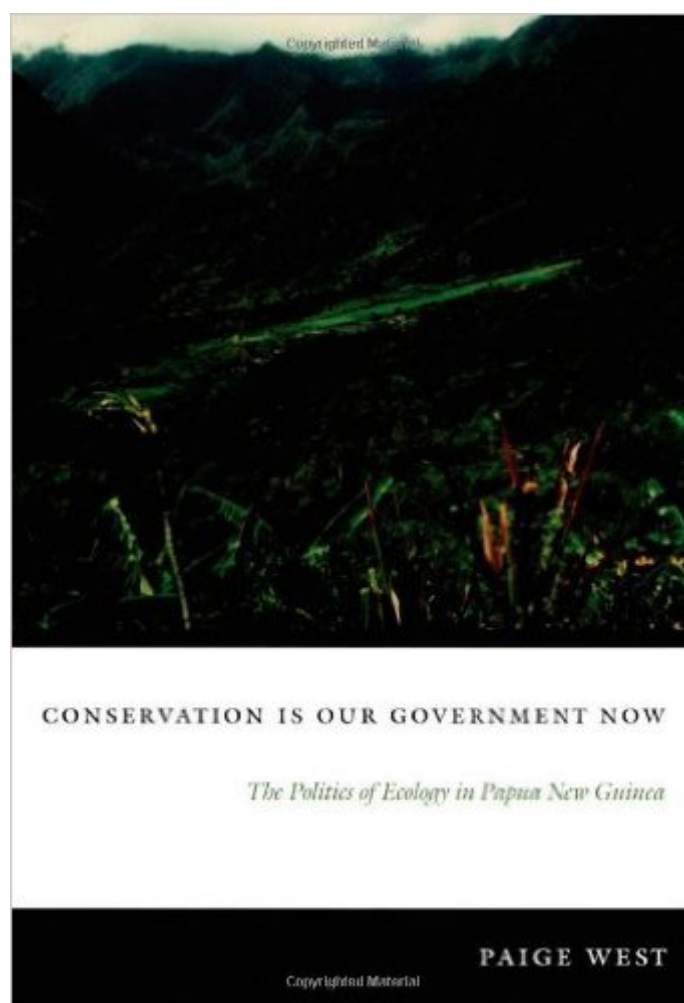


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Conservation Is Our Government Now: The Politics Of Ecology In Papua New Guinea (New Ecologies For The Twenty-First Century)



Synopsis

A significant contribution to political ecology, *Conservation Is Our Government Now* is an ethnographic examination of the history and social effects of conservation and development efforts in Papua New Guinea. Drawing on extensive fieldwork conducted over a period of seven years, Paige West focuses on the Crater Mountain Wildlife Management Area, the site of a biodiversity conservation project implemented between 1994 and 1999. She describes the interactions between those who ran the program—mostly NGO workers—and the Gimi people who live in the forests surrounding Crater Mountain. West shows that throughout the project there was a profound disconnect between the goals of the two groups. The NGO workers thought that they would encourage conservation and cultivate development by teaching Gimi to value biodiversity as an economic resource. The villagers expected that in exchange for the land, labor, food, and friendship they offered the conservation workers, they would receive benefits, such as medicine and technology. In the end, the divergent nature of each group's expectations led to disappointment for both. West reveals how every aspect of the Crater Mountain Wildlife Management Area—including ideas of space, place, environment, and society—was socially produced, created by changing configurations of ideas, actions, and material relations not only in Papua New Guinea but also in other locations around the world. Complicating many of the assumptions about nature, culture, and development underlying contemporary conservation efforts, *Conservation Is Our Government Now* demonstrates the unique capacity of ethnography to illuminate the relationship between the global and the local, between transnational processes and individual lives.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A multispecies zeitgeist is sweeping anthropology. A central reference point for this lively conversation is a question that was first posed by Donna Haraway: "what counts as nature, for whom, and at what cost?" Paige West speaks to this question - exploring how the idea of nature was torqued during encounters among New Guinea highlanders, biologists, and other foreign ecophiles. West illustrates how a hybrid environmental ethics was forged among competing political, economic, and symbolic systems. She offers us intimate portraits of long-distance, interspecies love. Describing photographer David Gillison's affair with the Bird of Paradise, she unravels a fetish logic that separates particular species from ecosystems and explores how commodification extracts nature from social relations. Chronicling ambivalent emotions - desire, mourning, and anxiety - she opens a window into the affective dimensions of trans-cultural and multispecies contact zones. Set in the Crater Mountain Wildlife Management Area, a place that was formed amidst countervailing institutional agendas and jockeying by diverse agents, this ethnography attends to how conservation was enacted amidst material and social inequalities. Some residents of Maimafu, a village in the Management Area where West conducted her fieldwork, engaged with environmentalists in hopes of chasing after the elusive idea of development. Even as some men from Maimafu reaped modest benefits from these social relations with foreigners, as they gained access to symbolic capital and modest sums of money, this conservation project initially did not directly benefit many women. It reinforced local regimes of patriarchy.

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