



Book Reviews

The People of the Sea: Environment, Identity, and History in Oceania, Paul D'Arcy, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, 2006. xviii + 292 pp., maps, figs (incl. b & w photographs), bibliographic references, index. ISBN: 978-0-8248-2959-9 (hardcover). USD36.00 [USP Book Centre student price FJD80.00].

Written sources about Pacific Islanders and their ties to the sea are diverse and abundant. These primarily reflect Western views on the ways the inhabitants of Oceania perceived and interacted with this habitat. There is, however, a growing body of literature by Pacific Islands scholars that seeks to redress some of the alleged misconceptions. Paul D'Arcy, although versed in the Western academic tradition, attempts to present a balanced and comprehensive account of the indigenous experience with the ocean from a variety of angles, including navigation technology and infrastructure, subsistence activities, marine tenure, culture contact between island communities and encounters with Europeans, and the social and spiritual dimensions of voyaging. As such, this study aims to fill a gap 'in the maritime dimension of the region's history'. The time frame covers the first one hundred years of intensive European contact (1770–1870) in Remote Oceania (generally coinciding with the conceptual divisions of Polynesia and Micronesia), and illustrates the dynamic nature of Pacific Islanders' relationship with the marine environment.

The strength of this book is the successful integration of a wide body of evidence into a relatively compact format, complementing more detailed ethnographies and historic approaches on the subject, as well as regional studies of early Pacific settlement prior to European contact. In keeping with the evolving character of culture, the author avoids the pitfalls of trying uncritically to project the richness of ethnohistorical data into the more distant past when environments, maritime technologies and societies differed.

Centuries of human–environment interactions have shaped local worldviews to produce societies who no doubt forged some of the closest links with the ocean realm, echoing Hau'ofa's (2000) thinking about the significance of the sea as the medium that holds the region's diverse cultures together. Likewise, studies of archaeological remains, such as fishhooks,

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suggest experimentation and expanding knowledge among Oceania's ancient colonists as they moved across biogeographical and geological boundaries (Allen 2002). The sea not only became a part of people's cosmology; it may also have played a role in shaping their physical appearance and perfected certain senses (Houghton 1996).

A major theme addressed by D'Arcy relates to the extent of inter-island and inter-archipelago voyaging after European contact. He questions the long-held assumption that communication networks among insular communities generally declined after the imposition of colonial rule (debate continues as to whether a major climate shift beginning in the 14th century AD prompted a similar decline – Nunn 2000). Although this is true in some instances, he points out that the new order established by Westerners actually promoted greater freedom of movement because it became less dangerous to venture beyond familiar territory and make contact with non-kin groups. Islanders also adopted introduced technologies to improve on traditional canoe designs. Moreover, a number of indigenous people joined foreign vessels and thus became agents of culture change while expanding their geographical horizons. Where navigational knowledge declined other factors associated with colonialism, such as introduced diseases, may have reduced the pool of experienced navigators. Depopulation also occurred as a result of forced removal of Islanders by blackbirders. Natural catastrophes like typhoon and drought imposed similar constraints on people's ability to organise successful trips and expeditions.

A chapter on sea tenure highlights the dynamic processes regarding contested space. As with their attempts at limiting voyaging, colonial administrators were more or less successful at codifying marine tenure institutions. This resulted in conditions that were basically unsuited to the dynamic nature of fisheries and to traditions of expanding and contracting social networks, which had allowed for flexibility in use rights or transferred rights. However, one may question whether this flexibility is well adapted to modern-day changes of growing populations, more efficient extractive technologies and expanding market opportunities for marine resources.

While not denying the impact of Western contact in eventually transforming elements of the insular social fabric, D'Arcy depicts most Pacific Islanders as being far more expectant of outside influences than they had been credited for. The degree of culture contact among groups before European discovery was variable, but important enough to permit the incorporation of new ideas, objects and people. The arrival of Westerners



ought to be cast in the same light. For example, some of these outside influences articulated themselves with existing cosmologies. Captain Cook's first encounter with the inhabitants of the island of Hawai'i caused less consternation than his unexpected return that eventually led to his death at the hands of angry Hawaiians.

A case study on the regional history of the Western Caroline Islands provides the author with the opportunity to synthesise the themes addressed in previous chapters, while expressing opinions on contemporary issues about the role of the ocean and its resources to Pacific Islands governments and the general public.

The book closes with an appendix on the maritime historiography of Oceania, which sums up some of the primary sources for maritime themes and proposes avenues for future research based on the author's set of topics in need of more coverage.

In this otherwise comprehensive and well written study, there are a few inaccuracies. Corals do not photosynthesise, but use the products of photosynthesis accomplished by their symbiotic zooxanthellae (pp. 23–24). Ailinglaplap Atoll in the Marshall Islands is misspelled (p. 26). The high islands of Chuuk lagoon lie east not west of the bulk of atolls comprising the Western Caroline Islands (p. 151). On page 178 D'Arcy seems to imply that anthropologists, unlike geographers, are not very much interested in human–environment relations. This is all the more surprising given the fact that the Pacific Islands have inspired several works on cultural or human ecology, including Roy Rappaport's study of warfare, ritual and environment in New Guinea, Marshall Sahlins's classic accounts on island production systems and their links with sociopolitical complexity, and William Alkire's atoll research. The number of recent and ongoing studies by anthropologists (and archaeologists) related to the marine environment (e.g. Aswani 1999; O'Day 2004; Sosis 2002; Thomas 2001) should dispel any notion that only geographers hold the monopoly on environmental research.

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Crossing Cultures: art, politics and identity, ed. Sylvia Kleinert, Charles Darwin University Press, Darwin, 2006. 250 x 175 mm, xiv + 149 pp., b & w photographs, references list with each paper. ISBN 0-9758356-4-5 (p/b). AUD27.50 (– GST) + freight.

This scholarly book is a collection of ten postgraduate papers presented (there is no indication out of how many) at the Crossing Cultures conference held at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory in Darwin in November 2005. An informative Contributors' page provides insight into the diversity of the authors' work and research interests in interdisciplinary studies, which include anthropology, archaeology, visual art, art history, history and politics. What is abundantly clear throughout all of the papers is a strong sense of commitment: these writers urgently want their concerns heard. They seek to educate the reader to sit up and take notice of continued injustice in the complex and slippery historical relationships between colonisers and the colonised, particularly in Australia and Southeast Asia. In fact, their research speaks volumes as the overarching question of integration and assimilation seems to be a paramount issue facing many cultural groups in our world today.

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Steven Farram's detailed chronology of the shifting power positions of traditional Timorese rulers takes the reader through the all-too-familiar scenario where colonial invaders manoeuvre themselves into stolen positions of power. Brief reference to the pivotal role of rebel leaders suggests a dramatic political undercurrent that strengthens the sting of this essay. Matthew Stephen writes about a nineteenth century period in colonial Northern Territory when the role of sport and leisure among colonial British, Aborigines and the immigrant Chinese mirrored political and racial tensions of the times. Also with a focus on the Northern Territory, Daryl Guse examines the unsettling issues about the historical and contemporary treatment of Aboriginal human remains.

Small museums in particular are taken to task for their inability to utilise appropriate interpretive strategies in exhibition policy. Paul Clark's essay relates the curious dilemma surrounding display of confiscated Indonesian fishing boats donated by the Australian government rather than collected, therefore lacking documentation that would otherwise have been provided as a normal part of museum research. Unfortunately, these boats are currently displayed as 'ethnographic curiosities' rather than as 'living culture'. Stephanie Thompson's paper also calls into question practices in natural history museums in western Sydney that are unable or unwilling to present an accurate picture of dispossession and continuity of residence of Aboriginal cultural groups. A major issue is whether there is even a place for Indigenous history inside predominantly Eurocentric museums. Reactions from local cultural groups suggest museums can play a role in presenting history as well as acting as a 'keeping place' for cultural objects but 'collaborative dialogue' is rare.

Several papers deal specifically with visual arts forms. Anna Lawrenson's compelling presentation on 'appropriative' portraiture adopts a postmodern art concept where an artist speaks through a dramatic reenactment of a photograph from the colonial period, not only creating a visual memorial, but also attempting to provoke debate about historical connections between the borrowed work and the new work. Issues of identity – for the forgotten subject and for the artist – are central to this art form, as in the example of Fiona Foley's photographic reenactments of her ancestors. Other examples include an interpretive reconfiguration of Crossland's iconic 1854 painting of Aboriginal cricketer Nannultera with Melbourne artist Destiny Deacon representing playwright Eva Johnson as Nannultera and pointedly wielding an axe instead of a cricket bat in a setting symbolic of the Aboriginal flag.



Adroitly juxtaposed on the cover of the book, the painting and the photograph engender deep thought into the lives of others in a subjective manner. Charlene Ogilvie's essay also highlights the positive effects of the symbiotic relationship that can occur between photographer and subject in exhibits of photographs as commentaries on Aboriginal issues and events by non-Indigenous photographers.

Cath Bowdler's paper showcases the paintings of Ngukurr artist Gertie Huddlestone, whose insights into Christian life at the CMS Roper River Mission were a positive source of inspiration for a combined Aboriginal and Christian view of her world. Readers are treated to an especially striking image of the award-winning *Garden of Eden II* (1999) with its richly textured 'stylized plant forms' but without the 'high key, strong colour' as the image is in black and white. A comparison is drawn with another Ngukurr artist, Maureen Thompson, whose memories of mission life were much less positive.

Joanna Barrkman's 'Symbols of Power and Life' provides a comprehensive historical account of the multi-faceted 'social life' of Indian trade textiles in Atoin meto society in West Timor. Culturally significant in prior headhunting practice, these textiles have found a continuing presence 'as a source of regenerative power and life' for clan life.

While many of the papers dwell on the past or present, the final paper by Birut Zemits clearly looks to the future, specifically to the role of filmmaking as a participatory process with an untapped potential to promote understanding of environmental issues across cultures and languages.

Reading this selection of papers is much like looking at artwork. Not only is it essential to go beyond the surface, to establish a dialogue with the work, but also without a thorough grounding in intercultural context, colonial or contemporary, much of the meaning will surely be lost. Every paper includes at least two sizeable visuals, which strengthen discussions. Even more were needed as much of this book is about visual culture and its complex relationship with social and political reality.

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International Aid Impacts on Pacific Education, eds Kabini Sanga & 'Ana Taufe'ulungaki, He Pārekereke, Institute for Research and Development in Māori and Pacific Education, Victoria University, Wellington & Institute of Education, University of the South Pacific, Suva, 2005. 21 cm, 364 pp., photos, tables, figs, bibliographic references, index. ISBN 0-475-12228-3 (p/b). FJD25.00.

Re-thinking Aid Relationships in Pacific Education, eds Kabini Sanga, Cedric Hall, Cherie Chu & Linda Crowl, He Pārekereke, Institute for Research and Development in Māori and Pacific Education, Victoria University, Wellington & Institute of Education, University of the South Pacific, Suva, 2005. 21 cm, 448 pp., photographs, tables, diagrams, bibliographic references, index. ISBN 0-475-12227-5 (p/b). FJD25.00.

These two volumes are closely related. The first, on aid impacts, consists of country aid analyses commissioned for the 2003 Re-thinking Pacific Educational Aid conference organised in part by the Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative (RPEI)* and held in Nadi, Fiji. These analyses served as discussion papers during the conference. The second volume, on re-thinking aid relationships, consists of the proceedings of the conference and contains a much larger number of statements concerning aid across the region. In short, the first achieves a certain depth whereas the second offers breadth in educational aid analysis in the region.

In the commissioned analyses Sanga's opening chapter outlines four distinct discourses of aid to the Pacific region, following a typology by Leginsky and Andrews (1994). This chapter gives the collection a useful theoretical basis. Sanga does not use the word discourse but in a post-structuralist, Foucauldian sense, this is what they are. They describe four distinct ways in which aid is both described and prescribed. He terms them thus: *development education*, *global education*, *economic development* and *organisational development*. Like all discourses they limit what can be said and not said about aid, its purposes, who benefits and who does not. There is a degree of the 'critical' in these four discourses in that the uneven power relations between donor and recipient are exposed, in turn helping to explain one of the collection's initial claims: that despite high levels of aid, little in their education systems has changed for Pacific people. Coxon and Tolley provide a similar theoretical basis early in the second volume. After carefully explaining and critiquing modernisation theory, they make the

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suggestion that current Pacific aid arrangements unfortunately can still be explained in terms of this theory.

Giving Pacific educational aid relationships such a theoretical grounding is important. However, it is not without its problems. The first is the discursive boundaries that the opening chapters in both volumes place around what can and cannot be said about the critique of aid itself. The discourses of aid, either intentionally or unintentionally, do tend to leave a silence around the recipients of aid. The discourses and some of the accompanying chapters work to deconstruct and expose donor interests, leaving only little room for recipient interests in and desires for aid. Additionally, there is little concession to a recipient 'insider' politics and an analysis of the often uneven power relationships between Ministry of Education elites and others who receive benefits from current aid arrangements (the 'per-diem classes') who are at the interface of donor-recipient relationships and who get to travel, study and 'workshop' their way around the region and beyond. Others at the community level, particularly teachers, are often excluded. The Tonga chapter, in contrast, does note the class-based nature of scholarship distribution that favours already socially mobile Tongan families. Modernisation discourse as a way of interrogating foreign aid both historically and presently also tends to leave 'recipients' silent, erased or as passive victims, ignoring the social fragments within recipient societies whereby some benefit and some do not. In short, Pacific agency in the aid relationship goes unexamined. Accordingly, both collections do tend toward a rather gloomy homogenised picture of donors and aid relationships across the region. Donors are demonised, the relationships are hegemonic and recipients passively turned off. The Vanuatu analysis, where the aid 'negatives' far outweigh the aid 'positives', is perhaps the most illustrative of this. Many of the authors point out the self interest of the donors and the often repeated 'lack of ownership' of aid projects by recipients.

Nevertheless, some of the country analyses concede a more complex set of aid relationships and provide more nuanced accounts. In Samoa, for example, local priorities have precedence within development 'partnerships'. Some, for example the Solomons analysis, attribute degrees of agency to recipients. These, however, are in the minority. It is important to point out that these chapters are not theoretically grounded in the same way as the



opening two chapters are. They are heavy on descriptive narrative of aid and somewhat light on critique. The descriptive material, complete with tabulated aid-related statistics for each country, is both enlightening and at times alarming but on its own is not enough to explain why or how aid relationships work to achieve the at times unsatisfactory outcomes.

Enormous changes – socially, economically, culturally and all together – have taken place, globally as well as in the Pacific region, over the past decade or more. Given this, a critical analytical framework is needed to offer a better explanation of contemporary Pacific life marked by fluidity, heterogeneity, mobility and a porosity in old cultural, social and geographical borders, including aid donor–aid recipient relationships. Perhaps more useful would be postcolonial analyses that move debates beyond the RPEI's often simplistic binary pairings of Pacific insider–Western outsider, coloniser–colonised and in the case of these two collections, aid donor–aid recipient, to an acceptance of the multiple, the fluid and the heterogeneous in relationships between Pacific people and others.

If educational aid relationships in the Pacific region are to be thoroughly re-thought then the collections could well have been more nuanced with a wider range of beneficiaries interrogated and a more specific focus on 'how' their benefits accrue. Exposing the 'how' might just be the start of a more equitable arrangement in the future. To be sure, this involves exposing donor interest, which the collections do quite well via their interrogation of modernisation theory and its variants; but where it exists, recipient interest in and desires for aid also need to be brought into the re-thinking debates.

* The RPEI has recently added 'PP' to its acronym, to signify 'by Pacific people for Pacific people'.

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Reconciling Customary Law and Received Law in Melanesia: the post-independence experience in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, Kenneth Brown, Charles Darwin University Press, Darwin, 2005. 250 x 175 cm, 248 pp., table of cases, index of legislation, bibliographic references, appendix (Customs Recognition Act 2007), index. ISBN 0-9757614-8-X (p/b). AUD49.00 (incl. GST, not required overseas; excluding freight).

When colonial administrations were set up in the Pacific Islands, here, as elsewhere in the world, they brought with them their own law – both legislation and common law – and legal structures in the form of an adversarial court system. That law, now known as ‘imported’, ‘inherited’ or ‘received’ law, was applied to the expatriate and local populations to varying degrees. The local populations already had their own law in the form of ‘custom’ and the operation of this ‘custom law’ especially as far as it regulated relations amongst the indigenous population and within a family capacity was largely left untouched by the colonials. With the departure of colonial administrators and the advent of independence, National Parliaments were established who adopted national constitutions and began passing their own legislation. In these sovereign countries, their own constitutions and legislation were to be paramount; until such time, however, as the legislation introduced by the newly independent legislatures would provide for every area, the received law was to continue to apply in order to plug any gaps.

How ‘custom’ or ‘customary law’ may be defined are harder questions to answer and early in Brown’s book there is a useful discussion of these terms from both legal and anthropological points of view.

As a result of their colonial periods, in both Solomon Islands and Vanuatu there is a plurality of legal sources available to determine the issues of the day. In Solomon Islands these are: (i) the Constitution, (ii) Acts of the Solomon Islands Parliament (includes those Acts, Ordinances, Instruments, Orders etc. in force in the country at independence), (iii) UK Acts of Parliament of general application and in force on 1 January 1961, (iv) the customary law of Solomon Islands and (v) the rules of UK common law and equity.

The Vanuatu situation is of course complicated even more by the fact that it was a condominium with two colonial powers sharing power, the United Kingdom and France. Thus, that list can be expanded by the addition of French law and the fact that one source is a common law and the other a civil law system.

This legacy of a plurality of sources of law can make it difficult to establish what law applies in each particular circumstance. National

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constitutions have attempted to cater for this by setting out a hierarchy of the various sources in the form of the primary source and the various alternatives in descending order of preference. However, such hierarchies can be further complicated by the nationality of the parties to which the law is to be applied and can become a minefield in cases of mixed nationalities. Such complexity cannot bode well for the development of coherent and clear legal solutions. Certainty and predictability in the law are undermined, thereby impeding operation of and adherence to the rule of law. How can one plan effectively in both business and personal matters if it is not clear what the law is? How can true justice be delivered in such circumstances? In developing countries such as Solomon Islands and Vanuatu where 90% of the population live a rural subsistence existence and where custom governs their daily lives, what law should govern their relations with each other and with the state?

Leaving aside the questions of what should happen, there is even confusion as to what the legal hierarchies provided for actually are, and then whether or not what is being applied in practice is what is provided for in law!

An examination and review of this subject is indeed overdue.

The author, Kenneth Brown, spent eight years practising law in Solomon Islands first as a judicial officer and then as the country's first public solicitor. He therefore has extensive personal experience on which to draw and reflect. It is obviously a subject that interests him greatly as it was the choice of topic for his doctoral research and he is currently pursuing research interests in the areas of cultural relativism, customary law and modern human rights norms.

The depth of research and the time for reflection have combined to produce a work that provides a major contribution to our understanding of the underlying conflict within these pluralist systems. The book is a serious attempt to tease out the various elements of the puzzle. He does this by a detailed examination of the theory and practical applications of the various legal sources across the fields of constitutional, family and succession law; the constitutional provisions for their place in the hierarchy of laws; the operational effects of nationality on their application and how they may be reconciled with overarching issues of human rights especially as regards gender equality issues. In the words of the author himself,

the two central themes of this work [are] firstly, the prospects for reconciliation or accord between customary and received law, and secondly, the human rights issues involved in promoting a frontline role for customary law. (p. 215)



In addressing these themes the author has meticulously picked through the relevant legislation of both countries and the case law to expose the weaknesses within the current system.

He slams the current situation as being ‘dysfunctional, anomalous and illogical’. He finds that ‘present customary law is out-of-kilter with current progressive views on gender equality’ and that family law is ‘riddled with rules that effectively favour men’. However, his considered and detailed analysis of the constitutional provisions and case law provides a strong argument that ‘these are prima facie unconstitutional [and] this represents a powerful weapon for women’. Therefore, it will be up to legal practitioners and the public to take some of these ideas forward and challenge discriminatory laws as unconstitutional. However, his examination of the history of case law in both Solomon Islands and Vanuatu also suggests a sometimes (at least up to now) quite stunning ‘failure and/or reluctance by Counsel and the Judiciary to confront and analyse the fundamental problem of the relationship and ranking between different sources of law in a plural system’. He identifies this as being partly because of the difficulties experienced by a legal administration that is steeped in Western legal principles. Yet Mr Brown’s thoughtful review of the case law should provide cause for those engaged in delivery of justice perhaps to stand back for a moment and attain a more critical, informed and strategic perspective on the plural systems and how, and in what direction, they might best be developed.

He also takes the opportunity to conduct a most useful examination of the Solomon Islands Customs Recognition Act and expounds an interesting view. For a number of reasons, he opines, this Act, should it be brought into force, would in its effect operate to demote the status of customary law from that which it enjoys under the current Constitution.

This book will appeal to students, jurists and practitioners alike and those with an interest in developing a Pacific jurisprudence. It will make fascinating reading for those who are too busy dealing with the daily practicalities of finding appropriate legal solutions to pressing problems to consider the bigger picture.

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A Trial Separation: Australia and the decolonisation of Papua New Guinea, Donald Denoon, Pandanus Books, Canberra, 2005. xviii + 228 pp., maps, bibliographic references, index. ISBN 1-74076-171-5 (p/b). AUD45.00 in Australia; AUD40.91 int'l.

The metaphor of the rocky marriage that supplies the title of this book suggests a study of the period of the separation of Australia and Papua New Guinea, the years since 1975. That might stretch the meaning of 'decolonisation' but it seems to be what the author intended: in his own words, 'decolonisation is by no means complete and independence is a work in progress' (p.197). The bulk of the book, however, is concerned with bringing Papua New Guinea to independence; then, for the last two chapters, it jumps thirty years to very recent times.

Only when one reaches the end of the book does one realise what Donald Denoon was trying to do. The book is a vehicle for the two brief essays at the end, and it is only after reading those that one can appreciate the structure and emphasis of the earlier chapters. Those make awkward reading, for rather than telling the story of the preparations and progress towards independence in a coherent, thematic manner, the emphasis is largely on personalities, anecdotes and vignettes that give some insights into decisions that were made along the way. This is not conventional historical explanation, and leaves a good deal unsaid, but for those already familiar with the story – best learned elsewhere – there is much interest, as well as illumination of the opacity of the bureaucratic and political process.

In the last two brief chapters, the most important part of the book and the part that justifies the title, Denoon tries to evaluate Australian decolonisation, and the frequent judgments that Papua New Guinea's independence years have been a conspicuous disaster. The first, 'Independence and its Discontents', considers the much trumpeted view that Papua New Guinea is a failed state. He draws attention to the familiar verses of this song: the rapid turnover of governments, the short tenure of most parliamentarians, corruption, financial mismanagement, the lack of law and order, and the shrinking of government services, especially in rural areas. The criticisms are not just those of elderly former colonial officials complaining of 'sour grapes' or of academic observers who measure everything against an abstract ideal; critics include many Papua New Guineans, and especially survivors of the decolonising years, both elite and demotic. Denoon considers these judgments harsh and unfair in their lack of balance.

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Many of the criticisms are true, but they overlook significant achievements of government and an abundance of wealth and vitality. Moreover, he asks whether a comparison with other modernising states shows that Papua New Guinea is significantly unsuccessful. The answer is that it does not. A successful, functioning democracy and an honest, efficient bureaucracy are seldom characteristic of new nations, and even in settler societies in which re-population accompanied the introduction of democracy and bureaucracy, an extended bedding-in time is typical. There is not much that is unusual about the state formation and development challenges in Papua New Guinea, nor in the way that those challenges are being met.

In the final chapter, Denoon addresses the question of aid, tracing briefly the evolution of the aid industry and its application to Papua New Guinea. He avoids unequivocal answers on its usefulness and its motives, but leans towards the position that it limits or even erodes sovereignty. This is not a controversial conclusion, but he seems to endorse the view that it hardly makes any difference in the long run. It does, however, place Australia and Papua New Guinea in a patron–client relationship more characteristic, he says, of the paternalistic 1960s than of the optimistic 1970s.

This discussion is preliminary to the two questions that seem to have been Denoon's starting point: could decolonisation have been managed or timed better, and was independence an appropriate goal to have set for Papua New Guinea at all? The argument is surprising, considering that the bulk of the book in its emphasis on particulars seems to make every historical development highly contingent. Denoon argues on the contrary that things could not have been much different, and to the extent that they might have been, the outcome would have been no better, and possibly worse. Law and order had not been fully or securely established over the whole country when Australia left, the timing of independence was largely beyond the control of those who seemed to be in charge, Papua New Guinea could not have been more developed at the time. There were such constraints and long-range determinants both global and local, that there seems to be an inexorable inevitability about the whole process, making it 'hard to imagine plausible alternatives' (p.193). The bringing of the new nation into being was, he concludes, an extraordinarily successful bureaucratic achievement, on both sides. As to whether independence was an appropriate goal, Denoon seems to be saying that Australia's and Papua New Guinea's interests are so complementary and entwined that the event of 1975 is best



seen not as a divorce, but as a trial separation in which the future relationship of the two remains undecided.

The conclusion is unexpected; few could accuse Denoon of being an apologist for Australian colonial policy or postcolonial foreign policy, and there is a note of mockery mixed with respect for the agents of history throughout this book. Like his conclusion about his subject, however, this book has the appearance of being a work in progress in that it leaves so much unsaid, so much undeveloped, and the final arguments suggested rather than demonstrated.

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Papua New Guinea Yearbook 2006, ed. Brian Gomez, published by *The National* and Cassowary Books, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. 182 pp., full colour, tables, graphs, photographs, maps. ISSN 1726-121X; ISBN 9980-86-043-X (p/b). AUD65.00 (incl GST); NZD75.00; elsewhere AUD75.00 (incl airmail). Subscriptions available @ www.thenational.com.pg

The *Papua New Guinea 2006 Yearbook* is the fifth annual edition of the PNG yearbook produced by Pacific Star, publishers of *The National*, one of two daily newspapers in Papua New Guinea (PNG). The 'book' itself is in a tabloid format and is financed in part by the twenty-three advertisers listed in the 2006 edition. In format and style the *Yearbook* is oriented to those involved in the market economy and portrays an aura of 'growing optimism' intended to secure foreign investment and confidence in the political economy of the country.

The *Yearbook* is a compendium of issues affecting Papua New Guinea that includes politics, economics, culture and society, land reform, business, agriculture, forestry and fishing, construction and building, traditional culture, natural disasters, law and languages; it also provides tables of key national statistics and the PNG personal and company tax regime. A review of the *Yearbook* can highlight only a few of the articles devoted to these issues.

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Of particular interest in this issue is the article on the Government of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, by Edward P Wolfers, Professor of Politics, University of Wollongong (NSW, Australia) – on leave, Adviser, Bougainville Peace and Restoration Office. This is a lucid article detailing a very complex political process and demonstrating the move, after a long period of armed conflict (1989–1997), from peace making to peace building in Bougainville. It specifies the authority and structure of the autonomous government; provides an historical analysis of events leading up to the elections in May–June 2005; and provides a nuanced study of the election results and the subsequent formation of the Bougainville Executive Council and swearing in of the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) on 15 June, presided over by the Chief Justice of Papua New Guinea.

One of the clear challenges facing the ABG is the economic issue of financing autonomy and the opening up of the mining issue, silence about which has hitherto been ‘one of the unspoken rules of the peace process’. Other challenges examined include the development of a ‘claims culture’, and roadblocks and guns. In moving from peace making to peace building the author holds that if peace building is to succeed as a joint venture between the National Government and the ABG then there needs to be a commitment to the *Bougainville Peace Agreement* by the political leaders, the institutions of Government and officials at the National level.

This article will be of interest to potential business investors in the autonomous Bougainville, as well as students and researchers of political/economic autonomy and supporters of peace throughout the Pacific Islands countries region and the world.

The ‘Culture’ section of the *Yearbook* contains an article entitled ‘Sorcery in Simbu: facing the challenge of traditional belief systems’ by Franco Zocca of the Melanesian Institute in Goroka, Eastern Highlands of PNG. The article stems from an ongoing 2003 research project of the Melanesian Institute titled *Sanguma* (Tok Pisin term for sorcery and witchcraft) *in Paradise*. The article is a case study of the *Kumo*, ‘the most talked about form of destructive magic in Simbu ...’ and the Christian mission response to witchcraft in Simbu Province. The author notes that there are similar terms and kinds of witchcraft found throughout the Highlands in Mt Hagen, Jimi Valley, Wahgi, Bundi, Asaro and Enga.



The article includes a survey of anthropological and social science literature and conservative Christian evangelical responses as they pertain to explanations of the *Kumo*. But of most interest is the discussion of the characteristics, habits, and organisation of *Kumo* – people, the treatment of alleged witches among Simbu people, and violence related to *Kumo* – generated from the unstructured interviews about these phenomena. According to this view the *Kumo*-bearers ‘are, in their great majority, people of low status in society: women (especially the elderly and widows) childless couples, old people and children’. It leads the author to conclude that ‘Instead of protecting the weakest in society ... Simbus are getting rid of them in barbarous ways ... [and] the *Kumo* institution is partly responsible for the atmosphere of fear, suspicion and mistrust that characterizes dealings of Simbus with other clans and even among themselves’.

The article has a tendency to emphasise the negativity of *Kumo* as it relates to Christianity. The concluding section is very much an apology of Western Christian theology and how lessons learned in European societies managing to get rid of witchcraft can be applied to developing countries. For Zocca, the challenge to traditional belief in *sanguma* in Simbu is ‘to convince people to accept scientific explanations for sickness and death and to punish those who accuse, torture and murder [the *Kumo*-bearers]’.

The ‘Culture and Society’ section of the *Yearbook* is the review of three recently published anthropological works: Michael Goddard’s *The Unseen City: Anthropological Perspectives on Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea*; *The Name Must Not Go Down: Political Competition and State–Society Relations in Mount Hagen, Papua New Guinea* by Joseph Ketan; and *Village on the Edge: Changing Times in Papua New Guinea* by Michael French Smith.

In addition to these reviews there is a one-page synopsis of the latest issue of the *South Pacific Journal of Philosophy and Culture*. The feature of Vol. 8 (2004–05) is a forum on failed and vulnerable states with papers by Professor Allan Patience discussing PNG; Joseph Anuga outlining the process of collapse of Liberia and Sierra Leone in West Africa; and Professor Edward P Wolfers examining the viability or vulnerability of small states. The journal in its present form emerged from the *South Pacific Journal of Psychology* in 1996.

As stated at the outset a review of the *Yearbook* cannot do justice to all the articles in it. Other sections that caught my attention are ‘Natural Disasters’ by Hugh Davies, ‘The Law’ by Lawrence Kalinoe,



‘Superannuation/Fund Management’ by David Kavanamur and ‘Political Processes’ by Henry Okole – all former colleagues of mine at the University of Papua New Guinea. In sum, *Papua New Guinea Yearbook 2006* is a timely, readable and informative publication that provides a comprehensive overview of current issues in Papua New Guinea.

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Immaterial objects of thought

Le sabbat des lucioles: sorcellerie, chamanisme et imaginaire cannibale en Nouvelle-Guinée, Pierre Lemonnier, Éditions Stock, Paris, 2006. 410pp., 2 maps, glossary, bibliographic references. ISBN 2-234-05853-8. 20,99•.

This monograph adds an interesting dimension to the already rich literature of the Anga confederation of tribes in Papua New Guinea. The best-known ethnographies on that confederation are those by Maurice Godelier (Baruya), Gilbert Herdt (Sambia) and Jadran Mimica (Ikwaye), but they all deal with the northern Anga, of the Eastern Highlands Province. The work of Pascale Bonnemère and Pierre Lemonnier, mostly available in French only, deals more specifically with the Ankave (southern Anga, Gulf Province). The standard ethnography of Ankave, *Le pandanus rouge* by Pascale Bonnemère, focuses on social organisation, family, representations of the body, sexual differentiation, personhood.

Pierre Lemonnier, husband of Pascale Bonnemère, assisted the Godelier team on comparative and technological issues,¹ but in addition he accumulated data on very subtle aspects of personhood – linkages and metamorphoses between human persons and animals, as well as spirits, especially in a sorcery context, on which data vary greatly between Anga groups. The book under review presents data of a unique kind of composite spirit-animal-persons, *ombo*, glossed as ‘imaginary monster, cannibal humanoid’, exclusively part of Ankave culture. These beings exist only as constant preoccupations of all Ankave; neither the ethnographer

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nor any of his informants has ever seen them, though some people possess small tokens they believe to have belonged at one time to an *ombo*, who inserted them to sorcerise the bodies of their victims. Why do ethnographers ever study such immaterial objects of thought?

Lemonnier's book was published by Stock as part of a 'series' entitled *Un ordre d'idées* (an order of ideas). The topics presented in that series of books all purport to deal with activity of someone discovering an alien, unfamiliar world or some part of it and presenting that world in comprehensible formal order. These books provide fine detail but are accessible and interesting to lay readers. Stock's interest in exploration of the order of the Ankave universe might also have been aroused by the universality of the issues involved, such as boundaries between body, soul, spirit; between human and animal, culture and nature, live and dead.

The answer to a question like, what are the *ombo*? is very complex. To begin with, the *ombo* plays a key role in many systems, such as: (1) Social and kin relations, if rules of exchange and sharing are violated (chapter 15), especially at the ambiguous margins of kinship (real and classificatory cross-cousins); (2) Medical diagnoses, shamanistic theory and practice (*passim*); (3) In a very different framework, they are part of a ritual system, especially mortuary rites. Lemonnier's grasp of technological anthropology helped him to make a brilliant contribution to the general analysis of drum and mask symbolism (chapters 11 and 13); (4) The connection between the mythic *ombo* system (chapter 14 and *passim*) and other *ombo* systems is loose and partial. The author's efforts of cutting and pasting parts of these disparate systems in order to simulate a possible conceptual unity are not always convincing.

Moreover, Melanesianists looking at the components of each system have, generally speaking, met many of them often before.² Though the combinations are unique, components all tend to have a family likeness. Lemonnier has great knowledge of the literature, but the comparative facts cited rarely go beyond the Anga confederation. Final analysis (in chapter 16) leaves us with one basic paradox: what the Ankave say of the human condition (as analysed by Lemonnier) is an impressive *imago mundi* of universal relevance, but why is it that other nations do not have any *ombo*? There are parallels with witchcraft in medieval Europe, which was likewise a fully articulated system of thought, but the author limits his comparison to a list of resemblances;³ if he intended an in-depth comparative study, he would have had to explain the differences as well.



My verdict on the book in general is, however, rather positive. The problem of whether the multiple systems of these cultures should be perceived as a unity is to some extent a theoretical one, but it does have an ethnographic dimension. Some cultures go very far in distorting factual data to ensure an internal 'fit', while others are more tolerant of historically recognised anomalies. Lemonnier and his Ankave informants appear to belong to the latter kind, recording such anomalies with commendable precision. Lemonnier may sometimes have gone to undue lengths to create an illusion of unity, emerging out of the available fragments, but the vast island of Papua–New Guinea is full of mobile bits and pieces of culture whose local fit is necessarily imperfect. Even so, his book offers many moments of great insight, for which I am very grateful. I do not mind being told that the *ombo*' world is a mirror of the visible one, as long as the author steadily keeps in mind that the reliability of such mirrors has its limits, as illustrated in the *Alice in Wonderland* prototype.

Notes

- ¹ One of his books, *Guerres et festins* (1990), is a mainstream « comparative survey of peace, exchange and competition in the Highlands of New Guinea ».
- ² As an illustration of such parallels, I shall give some examples from Orokaiva mythology (Iteanu & Schwimmer 1996). A shaman who healed Totoima's son replaced his body parts, eaten by an *ombo*'-like figure, with a recently killed wallaby (tale 7). The malady of Tiambu Peambu produces physical effects, similar to an *ombo*' attack, that are invariably provoked by refusal to *share* food (tale 12). A drum provides spirits of the dead with a passage way from a space of death to a space of immortality (tale 19). A parallel of *ombo*' feasting on blood is found in the essay 'Natives of Lake Kutubu', all Parts, but especially in Kutubu Stories (Williams 1976).
- ³ Lemonnier provides such a list (p. 371), notes some of the cultural differences and admits that he has no satisfactory explanation for the differences noted (p. 383).



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Bougainville before the conflict, eds Anthony J Regan & Helga M Griffin, Pandanus Books, RSPAS, Australian National University, Canberra, 2005. 176 x 250 mm, xl + 566 pp., maps, illus., notes, bib., index. ISBN 1 74076 138 3 (hardback) AU\$85.00 (int'l AU\$77.10).

At 566 pages, 28 essays and almost as many authors, this book is not easy to sum up in a brief review. The title seems to indicate its purpose – to attempt somehow to explain, by reference to its past, the 'conflict', 'crisis', 'civil war' that came to identify Bougainville since 1988. The book is divided into five sections: The Place and the People (five essays), The Colonial Period to World War II (eight essays), Economic and Social Change Post-World War II (seven essays), Perspectives on Particular Bougainville Societies (six essays), Towards Understanding the Origins of the Conflict (two essays).

The five essays of the first section (by Spriggs, Davies, Tryon, Ogan and Friedlaender respectively) address the distant past through the disciplines of archaeology, geology, linguistics, cultural anthropology and genetics. This section seems to situate the people of Bougainville firmly in place in the natural world – an uneasy impression foreshadowed in the editors' introduction (p. xxxiv) where they speculate that the 'possibility of secession in Bougainville ... was perhaps a dormant strand of psychological energy – a human expression of the volcanic landscape'.

Friedlaender's essay embodies Bougainvillean identity through a concentration on skin colour – a feature the editors draw to our attention

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as somehow of primary importance several times on the first page of the Introduction, initially by repeating here Douglas Oliver's curious observation that Bougainville was 'the black spot in an island world of brown skins' (p. xxvii).¹ Anthropometric studies of Bougainvilleans have been extensive. As well as skin colour, Freidlaender's data included blood samples, fingerprints, teeth, and head and body shape studies. I would be very interested in how these samples were collected, how they are used and the Bougainvillean response to this research. Projects of a similar nature in other parts of Papua New Guinea and in Solomon Islands² have been the subject of scrutiny and protest, but if such has been the case on Bougainville, we are given no indication here. This section combines various disciplines creating a model (with a scientific cast) of the past as 'revealed' to Bougainvilleans rather than recounted by them.

The next section covers the colonial period up to and including World War II with eight essays written by historians. There are three essays by Hugh Laracy, who seems to claim the self-evident nature of historical facts as if they, too, were samples on a slide.

The foregoing narrative [of the first phase of the 'pacification' of southern Bougainville], a sequentially ordered chronology of events, is innocent – at least explicitly so – of 'theory'. It has no skeleton of argument, and eschews analysis in favour of reportage. Which is not to say that it should be seen as devoid of meaning. Rather, the explanation of the events is contained in the relating of them. (p. 123)

Such an ex cathedra position bestowed on history reinforces rather than (in Laracy's words) 'inoculate[s] any historical reconstruction against the subjectivity of the historian ...' (p. 123). Overall, this entire section of essays could be described as the history of the *wailman* on Bougainville, as seen through *wailman's* eyes. Peter Elder, too, in his essay on the period between the wars, seems to privilege history and archival sources in contrast to 'anthropologists, ethnographers and collectors of material culture ... [who] have a place here because of their contribution to understanding the background of some historical sequences and it is for them to uncover the myths, fables and magic knowledge of Bougainvilleans markedly absent from this account of Bougainville between the wars' (pp. 142–3).



Anthropologists work very closely with living people who share much more about their society than the esoterica referred to by Elder.

Helga Griffin's essay is focused on 'pre-mining Bougainville', which simply reinforces my unease at the way in which the book reconstructs the history of Bougainville on the basis of landmark events of European origin, such as colonialism, foreign wars and mining. She points out (p. 201) that Oliver's personal history³ of Bougainville was subsidised by BCL (Bougainville Copper Limited). The volume under review, too, acknowledges financial and other support from Riotinto Minerals (PNG) Limited, along with the Australian Agency for International Development, and the State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project in the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at the Australian National University in Canberra (p. xi). Griffin is very concerned in her essay to explore, in a confused, inconsequential manner, possible bias in the work of other scholars as she herself makes unsubstantiated claims about the 'possible influence of the hidden values of the record makers' (see pp. 202, 205 and throughout her chapter). One can only wonder at her motives. Is it not inconsistent then to suppose that Bougainvilleans and Papua New Guinea anthropologists represented in this book are immune from personal bias and/or self interest as she seems to suggest? As an overview and critique of the literature on Bougainville Griffin's essay is incomplete and somewhat disappointing.

The third section, on economic and social change after World War II, is particularly interesting. Here we see the impact of Australian colonial policy on the indigenous people, such as the belief – reported by Scott MacWilliam as embedded in that policy – that 'development could not be allowed to occur spontaneously, but instead only through the activities of private enterprise' (p. 226). The constant manipulation of Bougainvillean initiatives, however successful, in order to restrain creative enterprises that had the potential to withdraw from colonial control is valuable not only for its detail but for the examples it gives of a people aware of their circumstances and active in their response. Lummani's essay on cocoa and copra production in Bougainville is a valuable contribution to understanding how these enterprises disrupted the checks and balances of indigenous political economy. 'Aspects of traditional culture, such as power relations, land-use patterns, access to land, attitudes and behavior, were significantly affected by cocoa planting on communally owned land' (p. 250). Bougainville



cultures were subtle and egalitarian, and as traditional social forms began to give way to cash based inequalities, the social movements that attempted to incorporate money and the organisation of labour in more communal, self-governing ways were discouraged, demonised and suppressed. Lummani asks if Ona's resistance movement might have left Bougainville even more dependent on cash income than before (p. 252). However, it is not the cash itself that will decide; it will be the political will of the people that will determine their relationship to the cash economy. See also James Tanis's essay at the end of the book, where he gives an account of Damien Dameng's long-standing movement, his establishment in the early 1960s of his own government called Me'ekamui Pontau Onoring and its recognition by Kabui under the North Solomons Provincial Government as a 'private government' based on legitimate grievances and values (p. 461). Like many such movements, this one is often portrayed in the press *and* by some academics as a strange cult with an emphasis on the fifty toea collected in lieu of paying tax to the government.

Don Vernon, author of the essay on the Panguna mine, was project manager of the CRA evaluation team in 1966 and held management positions with Bougainville Copper up until 1986. (His current position and biography are not listed with the other authors at the back of the book.) Vernon acknowledges (p. 265) those academic authorities on Bougainville and Papua New Guinea 'whose insights we prized' – Ogan, Oliver and unnamed others, as well as Griffin and Wolfers. (Interestingly, Vernon's footnote on p. 273 explicitly states that Jim Griffin and Ted Wolfers were not 'in the employ of, or contracted by, CRA or BCL'. Do we assume the others were?) Although it is interesting to read Vernon's point of view, I would add to Helga Griffin's list of lacunae in research (pp. 202–03) in-depth independent research on Bougainville Copper and its operation on Bougainville. Many Bougainvilleans were employed by BCL, for example Mel Togolo and James Tanis, who have contributed two of the best essays in this book. It is valuable to have their accounts of that experience. In fact it would be almost impossible to find Bougainvilleans who were not either employed by the mine, beneficiaries of royalties, shares, education or health care because of the mine, or sufferers of the loss of well-being, culture, land or even their very lives because of the mine. It would be interesting to shift the focus, however, to the global corporation itself. Other lacunae might be research that focuses more on Australia and other foreign interests, as



well as the interests of the Papua New Guinea Government in relation to how they have impacted on Bougainville. James Tanis (pp. 471–2) lists these and other ‘big questions’ at the end of his essay ‘Nagovisi Villages as a Window on Bougainville in 1988’.

This book suggests a future where Bougainville scholars will themselves debate the past, present and future of their islands. Bill Sagir’s discussion of born chiefs, identity and power in the Haku area of Buka provides a very interesting account of the nature of traditional tribal leadership, one that I believe offers an alternative view of what constitutes good governance and should serve to qualify assumptions about what constitutes a ‘failed state’. At the 2006 ‘Pacific Futures’ conference at Auckland University, Māori academic Manuka Henare pointed out that ‘in Pacific historical and anthropological’ terms the state was a ‘new kid on the block’ in the Pacific, where societies had existed for thousands of years, where the state as a form of political organisation should be distinguished from ‘the nation’, which ‘in its Latin root term, *nasci*, is to be born into, and from which derives the term nation. It refers to where one was born – and Pacific *nations* are thousands of years old, are robust and had not failed. Inherent in membership of a nation are the moral, political, economic and cultural rights and duties that flow to each person and the groups constituting the nation’ (Henare, personal communication, 2006).

Roselyne Kenneth reinforces the nature of inherited authority and its matrilineal basis on Bougainville. Her discussion of the ways in which land is used (or not used) is another important insight into the nature of traditional tribal social organisation and the economic/political pressures on women’s authority. I concur with her understanding that women’s power is significant even though it is not ‘public’ in the European sense of what constitutes public versus private.

It is not possible to cover all the essays in this book. I have tried to review it in the form of critique, which is how I think it should be read. It is not a complete representation of Bougainville history, or Bougainville voices. There are Bougainville and expatriate scholars who are not represented, or even referred to, notably Moses Havini, who is not in the index and I don’t recall seeing his name in the text. I think the way the book is promoted as a ‘comprehensive picture’ suggests something like an ‘authoritative’ or ‘official’ history: that is an unwarranted claim.

Notes

¹ [They cite Douglas Oliver, *Black Islanders: a personal perspective of Bougainville 1937–1991*, Hyland House, Melbourne, Vic., 1991, p. 3. Oliver's original statement is 'a "black spot" in an island world of brownskins (later called redskins)' – suggesting perhaps that there has been a subtle shift in emphasis on the part of the editors. Friedlaender in the present volume cites the same source as saying 'referred to by Douglas Oliver as "The Black Spot of the Pacific"' (p. 58), so perhaps the shock value of the statement is responsible for distortion in the eye of more than one reader. – *Ed.*]

² See Ruth Liloqula, 'Value of life: saving genes versus saving indigenous peoples', in *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, 20(2), 1996.

³ Douglas Oliver, *Bougainville: a personal history*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, Vic., 1973. [Helga Griffin (p. 199) tags the 1991 book referred to in note 1 as a revised and updated version of this book, though Oliver himself does not appear to make such a statement. The C-I-P data for the 1991 book do note it as [Rev. ed.], though again, the comment does not appear to come from the text itself.]

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The UN in East Timor: building Timor Leste, a fragile state, Juan Federer, Charles Darwin University Press, Darwin, 2005. xiv + 134pp. 25 x 17.6 cm, map, b & w photographs, bibliog. ISBN 0-9757614-5-5 (pb). A\$46.00 plus p & p A\$4.50 for orders within Australia; A\$41.82 plus p & p A\$13.50 for orders outside Australia.

Recently a Dutch academic wrote that the international community needs to rethink fundamentally its approach to statehood and give space to internal actors to find their own future. The UN, he argued, can be an obstacle to stateness if it demands conformity to a failed model.¹

Juan Federer's study of the UN in East Timor demonstrates precisely the danger of prioritising sovereignty over stateness. East Timor 'was mishandled', he argues, 'because of the prevalence of outdated conceptions of state sovereignty' (p. xi). Self determination should not be applied uncritically if 'entities do not fulfill certain minimal criteria'. It is necessary,

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he says, to develop democratic state institutions before independence. This was never done in the case of East Timor.

What is needed and what I am advocating for, is a shift in understanding: a paradigm shift. An acceptance needs to be developed of the reality that a class of entities exists in our contemporary world that requires nurturing from the international community before their aspirations to sovereign membership in the international system can be adequately fulfilled. (p. xiii)

After 1960 the UN determined that self-determination would no longer be based on historical or ethnic nationhood, but on all the peoples captured by a particular colonial government. Self-determination itself would be equated with decolonisation (p. 10).

This reinterpretation, Federer claims, has left a troubled legacy, with East Timor simply the latest example of a country experiencing the consequences of insufficient state building prior to independence. East Timor's history alone should have alerted the UN to the need for special measures. Neglected by the Portuguese, traumatised by the Indonesians, the people of East Timor in 1999 possessed little sense of nationhood. Certainly they lacked the necessary human resources and institutions for effective self-government and had no tradition of democratic government. Moreover, their country was almost totally dependent on foreign aid for survival.

East Timor was a land without governance, without an economy, no basic services, no food, no law, and almost no visible inhabitants. None of the institutions set up for the Indonesian Timor Timur province had survived, and most of the alleged *development* – which Suharto had attempted to use to legitimate his occupation – had been destroyed. (p. 69)

Forty per cent of its population (825,000) lived on less than US 55 cents a day, 60 per cent were illiterate, and life expectancy was only 57 years. That East Timor found itself in this situation owed much to the shortcomings of its colonisers. But it was also due to the shortcomings of the international community since the Indonesian invasion in 1975. The goal of self-



determination after 1999 gave many foreign governments the opportunity 'to clean their record' (p. 65); unfortunately they again acted unwisely, according to Federer.

Instead of deploying a modest border control force, the UN spent large sums of money that would have been much better spent on state-building activities (p. 71). Instead of pursuing real trusteeship, it mentored East Timor through a succession of short-term Security Council peacekeeping and reconstruction mandates that made long-term state-building engagement impossible. This action was in part based on a false assumption of cost effectiveness. In addition, virtually every administrative and skilled human resource and material required was imported into the country, adding further to the exclusion of popular participation in government and fuelling resentment and xenophobia (p. 79). Equally, this UN failure to build trust between its people and the locals 'gave strength to those interested in hijacking the process to establish themselves in power' (p. 82).

Federer suggests that the Brazilian UN Special Representative was biased towards the Portuguese-speaking East Timorese, many of whom had spent the years of Indonesian occupation in exile. Their pressure to assume office caused the UN to shorten the state-building process and advance the independence date. By late 2000 it introduced power-sharing, which was neither democratic nor based on professional competence, but greatly consolidated the authority of this 'new self-serving, privileged class' (p. 91). Very quickly, this class maximised its own advantage by adopting Portuguese as the national language, despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of people spoke Tatum and most of the educated population has been schooled in Bahasa Indonesia. The poor performance of the UN, and in particular the impact of its large multinational foreign contingent on the local population, undoubtedly contributed to the haste for independence. But the UN had its own reasons. It wanted to end what had been a very expensive mission. 'It was easier to opt out quickly, while the mission appeared successful, leaving the blame for an eventual failure to the East Timorese', Federer argues (p. 94).



Federer's thesis is that the international community must shift its focus in post-conflict situations from merely staging elections to long-term assistance in nation building. On occasions this will require long-term UN tutelage (p. 101). When the UN bestowed independence on Timor Leste in May 2002, it left behind a hastily assembled administration whose personnel was still traumatised, as well as being poorly educated and ill prepared for self government. The country possessed a confusion of Portuguese and Indonesian laws and few qualified legal personnel. In addition, its military and police possessed no civilian oversight, an omission that contributed to instability in 2006, after Federer had completed his book. Nonetheless, his final words remind us where much of the responsibility for East Timor's fragility lies. The international community, he says, abrogated 'its primary responsibility to ... ensure that the foundations for a viable state were properly laid', and failed to facilitate 'the emergence of truly representative and capable leaders, freely chosen by a sufficiently discerning population before the fledgling state was thrown into the harsh arena of the sovereign state system, to swim or drown' (p. 106). It is a harsh judgment but a timely one.

Note

¹ Martin Doornbos, *Global Forces and State Restructuring: dynamics of state formation and collapse*, Palgrave Macmillan, London & New York, 2006, p.113.

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Public Finance in Fiji: theory and practice, Mahendra Reddy, Development Studies Program, Pacific Institute of Advanced Studies in Development and Governance, University of the South Pacific, 2005. xii + 209pp., figs, tables, bibliography, subject index. ISBN 982-01-0644-3 (pbk). USP Book Centre student price FJD12.50.

Popular view has it that the Pacific Island economies in general and the Fiji economy in particular have not achieved performance levels that were expected of them. It is natural, therefore, to seek explanations for this phenomenon and to examine what corrective actions can be taken. In the book being reviewed here Mahendra Reddy packages his attempt at addressing this question (in the context of the Fiji economy) as a text in public finance geared specifically towards students in Fiji. Thus the text aims at direct identification of the policy levers that may exist at the level of public finance – identified principally as taxation, expenditure and governance – to improve the performance of the Fiji economy. Beyond this, the book aims to make this discovery intelligible to future generations of Fiji policymakers, who are, of course, the current generation of students. Both of these are laudable goals and for this the book should be welcome.

The book is organised as follows. Chapter 1 places some of the principal concerns of public finance in the context of the operation of the economy. Chapter 2 gives an overview of the Fiji economy, in particular the sectoral composition of the economy, the role of the sugar economy and major macroeconomic aggregates. Chapter 3 is devoted to a review of the needs for public intervention in the marketplace and chapter 4 discusses budgetary norms and practices with particular reference to Fiji. Chapter 5 analyses the composition and incidence of public expenditure in Fiji. Chapter 6 is the taxation analogue of chapter 4 whereas chapter 7 discusses the structure and incidence of taxation in Fiji. Chapter 8 analyses the development of the government budgetary deficit in Fiji and argues that, even though this is sustainable in a formal sense, worrying trends have emerged. Chapter 9 underscores the importance of good governance in improving public sector performance and examines the Fiji record in this area. Chapter 10 concludes.

On the whole the book is well written and in an engaging style. The choice of topics is good and the exposition clear.

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That said, I have a number of comments to make.

The book tries to cover too much ground. On each of the theoretical issues covered there exists a vast literature – some of it dealing specifically with conditions in developing countries. Take, for instance, tax incidence. There is considerable empirical literature on that for a number of countries, including some island countries. In its double-pronged effort both to survey the literature and to provide quantitative estimates for the Fiji economy the book neglects crucial advancements in tax incidence theory, e.g. general equilibrium or tax incidence with unemployment. Throughout, the book emphasises partial tax incidence analysis. A more fruitful line of analysis would have been to provide the rudiments of general equilibrium incidence through the standard ‘Edgeworth box’ method and then say that estimates were available only for the partial equilibrium case. This would have provided more complete coverage of the topic. The book would have become longer as a consequence but that should not have caused concern. Most modern public economics books I have seen are more than 500 pages long!

While on the one hand the book covers too much ground, on the other it ignores key areas that would have been of concern to a Fiji audience. This would include, for example, issues of corporate taxation and issues relating to tax incentives to revive important industries like sugar. Given that Fiji needs to attract foreign capital on a substantial scale to boost an underperforming economy, the design of fiscal incentives to attract and retain such investment would seem to be important.

In general, given that the book devotes a whole chapter to issues of governance, there should have been more discussion of incentive effects of taxation and government expenditure. Surely these incentive effects impinge on the state of governance of the economy and students need to know about the welfare costs – deadweight or otherwise – of taxation.



Another significant omission is an analysis of the supply of public goods – local as well as national – within the Fiji economy. This would have fitted in well with issues of governance discussed in the book.

While there is discussion of individual taxes such as import duties in relation to some issues, say sources of public revenue, there is very little discussion of tax reform and the agenda that should be set for it. In fact the entire area of expenditure and tax reforms appears to be inadequately treated.

Nevertheless, the book does have a number of important strengths as well. First, it must surely rank as the first volume to put together public finance data on Fiji within a cogent framework. I was certainly impressed by the amount of work the author has put in to collect such data and present them within an analytical framework so that the book can be of interest not just to students but to all those interested in Fiji's economic development. Second, supplemented with some other readings the book could certainly be used as text for undergraduate courses in public finance. Another potential use for the book would be when conducting cross-country comparisons of public finance issues, particularly for small island nations. What lessons does the experience of Fiji provide for conducting public finance reforms in other Pacific island states? These and similar issues would surely be of immense interest to the academic as well as the policy communities.

Mahendra Reddy's book is a pioneer in its area. Like many pioneering works it has some shortcomings, not the least of which is the fact that it includes some topics that need not have been included and excludes some that should have been included. Nevertheless, it does make a significant contribution to our understanding of Fiji public finance and should be welcomed by all concerned.

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September 2006*



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