

ning of understanding what economic development really is and what it might mean to others who are the objects or subjects of its agenda" (185). This fine and certain to be controversial critical history of American colonialism masked as economic development makes a significant contribution toward such understanding.

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*Japan's Aid Diplomacy and the Pacific Islands*, by Sandra Tarte. Pacific Policy Paper 26. Canberra: National Centre for Development Studies, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, and Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1998. ISBN 0-7315-2363-6, viii + 241 pages, tables, figures, map, photographs, notes, bibliography, index. Paper, A\$29.

In October 1997 Japan convened its first summit with the Pacific Island nations. Despite considerable presummit publicity and high expectations, the summit did not result in any significant announcements or breakthroughs. Although this event took place after Sandra Tarte's richly detailed *Japan's Aid Diplomacy and the Pacific Islands* went to press, its in-depth examination of Japan's bureaucratic processes and policy-making apparatus helps explain why the summit could promise so much and achieve so little.

This volume, which comes from an Australian National University PhD

thesis, provides the best available analysis of how Japan has become a major player in the region over the past thirty years, at the same time finding it difficult to assume a leadership position among the traditional metropolitan Pacific powers such as France, Great Britain, and the United States. The motivations and competing influences that have shaped Japan's official aid policies and diplomatic positions are analyzed in terms of both domestic and international contexts. Tarte marshals an impressive array of evidence from published sources and interviews conducted across the Asia-Pacific region to show how Japan's economic interests in natural resources, particularly fisheries, and more recent interest in regional stability, have made it a leading donor nation to the Pacific Islands.

With the end of World War II, Japan abandoned its imperial designs on the region as well as its direct involvement in Micronesia. A period of inattention during the 1950s and 1960s ended in the early 1970s, when the prospective establishment of two-hundred-mile exclusive economic zones and Japan's increased concern about Soviet initiatives, resulted in policies that promoted steadily increasing levels of official development assistance to the Pacific Islands region. As a major fishing power, Japan's private sector and government agencies worked hand in hand, which tied development aid to access to Pacific Island nations' fisheries. Interestingly, this close coordination has not always engendered effective intragovernmental cooperation. Tarte shows how bureaucratic rivalries and inefficiencies within Japan have at

times worked to the advantage of Pacific Island nations during negotiations over fishing rights. Alternatively, Japan's proclivity to push large infrastructure projects (for implementation by Japanese construction firms) on island governments without providing maintenance or operational support has produced numerous monuments that have been of little real benefit to island development.

Over time, the ribbon-cutting ceremonies and large per capita infusions of aid funds to the Pacific have not always produced correspondingly large and positive results in advancing Japan's international stature. Tarte suggests that the more visible Japan's aid has become in the Pacific, the more criticism it has frequently attracted. Criticisms have included insensitivity to Pacific Islands cultures, introduction of inappropriate technologies, and lack of interest in grassroots projects designed to benefit broad segments of island societies. From a diplomatic perspective it has also been apparent that Japan's returns from aid investments have not always been commensurate with or translated into leadership on the Asia-Pacific stage. Tarte clearly illuminates how tensions between alliances with the West and the desire to be aligned with Pacific Island nations on issues such as nuclear testing and New Caledonia's political status, for instance, are further complicated by contravening pressures to provide Japan's fishing industry with the smallest possible payments to Pacific Island nations for catches taken from their fishing grounds. Subventions in the form of official development assistance are frequently relied on to balance these tensions.

But in the final analysis, Tarte questions the degree to which aid power is useful as a foreign policy tool.

In reviewing a volume that is essential reading for anyone interested in Pacific Islands development, one is hesitant to ask for much more. However, Tarte's immersion in the particular facets of Japan's development aid and diplomacy would benefit from consideration of the larger theoretical context, including issues associated with the political economy of development more generally. The reader is also left wondering whether closer examination of particular projects funded by Japan in the Pacific would have revealed other important lessons about the nature of Japanese aid in a manner similar to the insights gained some thirty years ago in Albert Hirschman's *Development Projects Observed*. Comparisons by Tarte with the literature on aid in Asia and Africa might also have shown that many of the aid pathologies she describes are common to other nations' bilateral aid programs. Finally, one wishes that the author had attempted to summarize what in her view all this aid has accomplished for Pacific Islanders. Let us hope that Tarte, who now teaches politics at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji, will continue to write on this subject as Japan faces some of its most serious economic problems in fifty years, making the effective use of decreasing aid funds more important than ever.

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