

time, for it is another example of the excellent technical standards of production for which the University of Hawai'i Press has become noted.

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Another Way: The Politics of Constitutional Reform in Post-Coup Fiji, by Brij V Lal. History of Development Studies 7. Canberra: National Centre for Development Studies, Asia Pacific Press, Asia Pacific School of Economics and Management, Australian National University, 1998. ISBN 07315-2381-4, ix + 223 pages, appendixes, glossary, map, selected contemporary biographies, selected contemporary statistics, bibliography, index. A\$29.99.

Justifiably glowing evaluations of Brij V Lal's latest book, *Another Way: The Politics of Constitutional Reform in Post-Coup Fiji*, by some leading Pacific Island scholars are to be found on its back cover. Lal, a Pacific historian at Australian National University and a member of the Constitutional Review Commission, has produced a remarkable volume combining a very well written narrative of the events, personalities, and interests that have been prominent in the review of Fiji's decreed 1990 Constitution with the author's own incisive interpretations of the unfolding drama of post-coup Fiji.

The book consists of five chapters and four appendixes. In the first four chapters, the author provides his account of the politics of the review process, the work of the Constitu-

tional Review Commission, reactions to the commission's report and recommendations, the deliberations of the Joint Parliamentary Select Committee (JPSC), and the unanimous adoption of the Constitutional Amendment Bill of 1997. The fifth chapter is an ensemble of ten unrelated pieces, including an extremely readable and humorous essay by Lal entitled Submissions, which provides an account of oral presentations by individuals and groups on the 1990 Constitution. Glimpses of the relationship among the three commissioners, Sir Paul Reeves, Lal, and Tomasi Vakatora, are provided as well as how, "with time" Lal and Vakatora's natural suspicion of each other, "[was] transformed into trust and trust into friendship."

In "Beginnings," the very first section of the book, the author recollects his movements on the fateful morning of the military coup, 14 May 1987. He provides a personal account of his own initial reaction of disbelief and the responses of his family members and close friends. He recounts the widespread condemnation of the military takeover, the pro-coup celebrations by Taukeists, and the slow return to constitutionality.

The first chapter, "Sowing the Seeds," touches briefly on the various explanations of the coups and the efforts to turn the country around to some form of constitutional rule. Insights are provided into the powerful vested interests in Fiji society and the dynamics of the politics of extremism, which influenced the constitutional committee appointed in 1987 and led by Sir John Falvey, the former attorney general.

Lal gives a balanced account of the 1990 Constitution by describing at length the president's justification for its provisions, which embedded indigenous Fijian political paramountcy. This entrenchment was to protect the indigenous community from being reduced to the plight of marginalized indigenous people in Australia and New Zealand. He shows that the opposition to the 1990 Constitution centered on its very lopsided ethnic representation, reservation of senior public service positions along ethnic lines, gerrymandered electoral arrangements, bias against urban ethnic Fijians, and support for systematic discrimination against Indo-Fijians.

The second chapter, appropriately captioned *The Whirlwind*, is about the eventful period between mid-1992 and early 1994. It begins with the electoral campaigns and the leadership struggles within the two major ethnic categories, Sitiveni Rabuka versus Josevata Kamikamica and Jai Ram Reddy versus Mahendra Pal Chaudhary. Far from creating unified ethnic blocs, the 1990 Constitution gave rise to intense intra-ethnic divisions. Rabuka's *Soqosoqo Vakavulewa ni Taukei* (SVT) emerged triumphant with 30 of the 37 seats reserved for ethnic Fijians. The moderate multi-ethnic All National Congress failed to win any seat. Among Indo-Fijians, the National Federation Party (NFP) took 14 seats and the Fiji Labour Party (FLP) the remaining 13.

Unhappy about Rabuka's style of leadership, however, the SVT dissidents stuck during the vote on the 1994 budget, and the collapse of the SVT government led to the snap election of February 1994. Although Rabuka's

SVT party was returned with a larger number of seats, 32 out of 37, Lal's analysis shows that overall there was a decline in the votes cast for it, and even though the Fiji Labour Party had lost 6 seats and 5 percent of the votes, it still had more than 43 percent of the Indo-Fijian votes.

Lal documents the numerous problems, many of its own making, that the SVT government faced after the elections of early 1994. These included the prevalence of widespread mismanagement and corruption in government and parastatal bodies, the ethnic bias in recruitment and promotion extending to cronyism and nepotism, the deployment of senior military officers in high positions in the public service, and the F\$220 million National Bank of Fiji debacle. His observation that the "disaster at the Bank was not an aberration but a predictable result of a system of patronage-based, non-accountable management" (54) is apt and extendable to nearly all sectors of the government.

Chapter 3, "A New Course," recounts the review of the 1990 Constitution, from the initial deliberations in 1992 involving Rabuka, Reddy, and Chaudhary, to the appointment of the Joint Parliamentary Select Committee and eventually the three-member Fiji Constitutional Review Commission. As a member of the commission, Lal shares the issues raised in the 800 oral and written submissions received by the commission, and he writes with some feeling about these submissions; he sees the humorous aspects of some of the presentations; he is critical of many of the serialized monotonous submissions of Indo-Fijian organizations, which in

any case had almost identical sentiments about the 1990 Constitution; he is moved by many of the submissions made by ethnic Fijians and especially the respect and warmth of their ceremonies; he is daunted by the prospects of bridging the huge divide between indigenous Fijian calls for the retention of their political paramountcy and those of Indo-Fijians seeking a nondiscriminatory political system. He also writes sympathetically about the submissions of various women's groups that wanted an end to the discrimination that women and their children suffered with respect to citizenship rights. He is able to put to good use his skills as a historian to analyze Fiji's constitutional problems emerging from its communal and Westminster past, reflected in the submissions generally and particularly in those of the *Soqosoqo Vakavulewa ni Taukei* and the NFP-FLP Coalition.

In the final section of this chapter, Lal provides a broad sweep of several of the prominent recommendations of the commission, recommendations that were designed to achieve an open, representative, multi-ethnic government that looked after the interests of all communities (77).

Chapter 4, entitled *New Foundations*, provides detailed coverage of the treatment given to the Constitutional Review Commission's report (800 pages and 694 recommendations) by those responsible for ushering in the changes to the 1990 Constitution. He also follows the deliberations of the Joint Parliamentary Select Committee on the recommendations of the commission, flagging significant areas of concern such as the selection of the president, the composition of the

Council of Chiefs and the Senate, the electoral system, mechanisms for power sharing, and the nature and scope of parliamentary opposition. He comments on the remarkable spirit of dialogue between the government and the opposition sides, and the critical statesmen-like roles played by Rabuka and Reddy in guiding their colleagues. Although in a number of significant ways the JPSC decisions were at variance from what the commission had envisaged, 577 of the 694 recommendations were accepted unchanged.

The major weakness in this otherwise comprehensive and meticulous coverage of the review of the 1990 Constitution and the adoption of the 1997 Constitution, is its failure to address the role played by civil society organizations to foster dialogue and discussions among politicians and other influential persons in society, organizations such as the leadership of religious groups, the trade union movement, the women's movement, and, in bringing all of them together, the Citizens' Constitutional Forum. Established subsequent to a series of national consultations on crucial aspects of a new constitution for Fiji, beginning in 1993, the forum brought together local and international actors to dialogue on such critical issues as indigenous rights and paramountcy, electoral systems, representative and responsible government, and power sharing. It was not formed just to make a submission to the Constitutional Review Commission (61).

There are a few minor errors. On page 57 Lal states that the 1990 Constitution was decreed five years after the 1987 coups when it was promul-

gated three years later. There are also several misspellings, including the name of the president of the Methodist Church and the name of Dr Bavadra's clan, Werecoakaka.

In this book, Brij Lal has been able to masterfully weave a story around his own personal experiences and perspectives with historical events that have taken Fiji from being another one of the many twentieth-century human tragedies brought on by ethnic conflict to being an example of the building of trust between culturally diverse groups through cooperating ethnic leaders. The unanimity of the commissioners in their report and that of the Joint Parliamentary Select Committee and the Parliament is truly a feat of remarkable proportion.

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The Cambridge History of the Pacific Islanders, edited by Donald Denoon with Stewart Firth, Jocelyn Linnekin, Malama Meleisea, and Karen Nero. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. ISBN 0-521-44195-1 cloth, xvii + 518 pages, maps, index, bibliography, notes, glossary. US\$79.95.

The appearance toward the end of the millennium of *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Islanders* raises many contestable premises about Pacific historiography and representation. If such a comprehensive volume had appeared a decade earlier it would have been greeted with greater accolades than have been published in recent reviews. Maybe this is because the old certainties of region, culture,

and history have been disrupted—theoretically and through actual shifts within postcolonial societies. Although historians were once confident to write grand regional narratives elsewhere, they have been more reticent in the Pacific. Four, among other, impediments blocked an authorized history of the Pacific. These included not only insufficient accessible research, but also a lack of confidence. The new wave of Pacific historians emerging from the 1970s, particularly the “Canberra school,” was usually reluctant to present generalizations about the region, preferring to speak about their specializations. Third, many historians were motivated to write history from the inside out, to revise the imperial school of Pacific history. This emerging reluctance to locate the subject within colonial narratives followed the decolonization of Pacific colonies. By the 1980s historiographical issues of indigenous voices, authenticity, and the kinds of history being published began to be contested. A fourth impediment was the economics of publishing. Pacific Islanders were absent in global histories. This marginality appeared to verify the lack of a market for a regional history.

Donald Denoon and his fellow contributors have therefore taken a brave step in facing these challenges. They have given splendid vent to the accumulated research concerning Pacific Islanders. It is easy to quibble over inclusions and exclusions, but the coverage of existing Pacific scholarship, including considerable ethnographic data, is impressive and usefully summarized in bibliographic essays at the end of each chapter.