

*Fiji in Transition: Research Papers of the Fiji Constitution Review Commission*, volume 1 (ISBN 982-01-0333-9; vii + 312 pages, tables, figures, notes, bibliography) and *Fiji and the World: Research Papers of the Fiji Constitution Review Commission*, volume 2 (ISBN 982-01-0334-7; vii + 358 pages, tables, appendix, notes, bibliography). Both volumes edited by Brij V Lal and Tomasi R Vakatora. Suva: School of Social and Economic Development, University of the South Pacific, 1997. Paper. Each US\$30; both US\$55.

In contrast to earlier constitutional reviews in Fiji, the 1995–1996 Fiji Constitution Review Commission demonstrated a genuine desire to investigate the dynamics of multiracial societies and to recommend constitutional changes that might reduce the paramourcy of racial politics and check Fiji's political drift toward authoritarianism. Time will tell how successful the commissioners were, but there can be no doubting that—as a result of their work—for the first time in Fiji's constitutional history the institutions of civil society now have an opportunity to act as a counter to the dominance of political institutions. Many of the articles presented here by two of the commissioners in this two-volume set of the Commission's research papers acknowledge the importance of civil society in this regard.

Volume 1, *Fiji in Transition*, is primarily concerned with matters internal to Fiji. While no paper directly researches the consequences of the two coups in 1987, this is central to the concerns of many of the volume's contributors, although the way each

approaches the subject is widely different. Paul Geraghty rails against “westernization” and multiracialism (English, he says, is only useful “to prepare oneself for residence overseas”), and claims that only Fijianization can restore harmony to the islands (20). Instead Vijay Naidu and Isimeli Cokanasiga argue separately for multiracial accommodation and declare education central to national integration. Cokanasiga believes it is “the main instrument for the development of society” and calls for a massive investment in education (229). In terms of accommodation, Naidu additionally argues that English serves as an important neutral language (a point raised later by Alison Quentin-Baxter with regard to Mauritius in volume 2), but is adamant that its provision should never be used as an excuse not to teach all Fiji's children the country's two main languages—Fijian and Hindi (191). Accommodation is also at the heart of Subramani's paper on civil society. Colonialism provided civil society little scope for development; nor, as it transpired, did postcolonialism. Fiji, Subramani declares, must recognize that it is multicultural, that multiculturalism is its social reality. Its political structures must reflect this reality also. Only then will Fiji be able to achieve the necessary sense of security and stability to develop (40).

Most of the volume's other writers would agree. Ilaitia Tuwere and Paula Niukula both examine the role of religion in Fiji, particularly the coups' fostering of religious fundamentalism and nationalism. They argue for pluralism and religious freedom, while Imrana Jalal argues for gender equal-

ity. Gender issues gained new prominence in Fiji after 1990, because the postcoup constitution deliberately sought to reinforce female disadvantage. But in doing so it provided new points of contact that cut across nationalist definitions of race, as did a number of other colonial legacies. They too did not fit well with the postcoup order, as Annelise Riles describes with regard to “mixed race” peoples. National unity had to accommodate differences, not exclude them. A similar plea is found in Teresia Teaiwa’s paper on Kioa and Rabi Islanders and Alan Howard and Janet Rensel’s paper on Rotumans. No strategies are provided here, but David Forsyth’s paper on the Fiji economy (the only such paper in this collection) demonstrates one important consequence. Fiji’s failure to accommodate difference, he says, has produced an uncertain investment environment that has trapped the country in a low-income status and seen poverty escalate. The remaining papers on land, fisheries, and Fijian participation in commerce indicate that issues affecting the aboriginal peoples of Fiji cannot be so easily separated from the health of the whole community or from principles of sound management.

Volume 2, *Fiji and the World*, contains papers that illustrate various constitutional practices in other parts of the world and particularly in multi-ethnic countries. Some of these papers—such as Timothy Sisk’s—relate directly to mechanisms for power sharing. But Michael Pinto-Duschinsky warns that power sharing is not a panacea and may give undue weight to institutional engineering (48). Similarly, Shaheen Mozaffar argues against

drawing absolute distinctions between homogeneous and nonhomogeneous societies. In the end, he says, there are no blueprints for democratic success, no cultural or economic preconditions for sustaining democracies. Instead institutions must encourage peaceful conflict management and political accommodation and foster tolerance of divergent views. After all, only political stability can enable economic growth and nurture a civil society composed of national problem solvers (81). Constitutions, John Darby states, are not the place to indicate preferences; to do so restricts adaptability when circumstances change (119). And power sharing, David Welsh warns, can have unintended consequences. It can weaken oppositions and give rise to forms of authoritarianism that ultimately further restrict the potential to strengthen civil societies (179). Indeed state sovereignty, Alex Frame argues, might best be limited and divided (259).

Many of the remaining papers in volume 2 focus on the specific constitutional arrangements of Malaysia, South Africa, Canada, India, and Papua New Guinea. In some instances they are presented in ways that make no effort to draw conclusions relevant to Fiji’s circumstances. But where they do, the conclusions can be particularly enlightening. Quentin-Baxter is one of the few writers in this volume whose assessment of constitutional arrangements for ethnic harmony in three nations incorporates the importance of economic prosperity in the equation (138). Welsh notes that democracies have survived best where they were undergirded by strong middle classes and a resilient civil society (179). It is a pity that more papers

here do not draw the connection with noninstitutional factors. Fortunately Michael Reisman's focus on human rights provides a brief corrective, and suggests why individual rights—rather than group rights—provide the kind of basis needed in most societies for recognizing diversity.

These two volumes certainly provide readers with some indication of the kind of input received by the Fiji Constitution Review Commission. But they also provide important reflections on matters of state and society that have much wider application than just Fiji or the commission. In this regard the volumes would have been much more useful had they been accompanied by an introductory article that attempted to tie together the diverse articles and indicate how they and the questions they raise were received by the commission, and how they relate to wider debates on diversity, and society–state issues.

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*An Introduction to the Anthropology of Melanesia: Culture and Tradition*, by Paul Sillitoe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. ISBN 0-521-58186-9, cloth; ISBN 0-521-58836-7, paper; xxiii + 254 pages, maps, figures, photographs, tables, index, chapter bibliographies. Cloth, US\$59.95; paper, US\$19.95.

The Melanesian region has long provided popular images in the West of primitive peoples. Paul Sillitoe uses his field research in New Guinea as a launching pad for an introductory text for the anthropology of Melanesia

and a general overview of ideas about the region. Although Melanesian cultures were never static, he asserts that many modes of being can still be discerned from the period before the rapid and dramatic changes produced through contemporary globalization. Consequently, his work documents the beliefs and practices that sustain *kastom*, not as an exercise in primitive essentialism but as part of contemporary peoples' search for sociocultural identities in a rapidly changing lived environment. Unfortunately, because Sillitoe concentrates primarily on New Guinea, the text's conceptual and geographic reach is limited. The work would also have benefited from a broader ethnographic base that clarified the transformations taking place in both local communities and contemporary anthropological thought.

Sillitoe uses the notion of "ethnographic fact" coupled with a revisionist critical perspective to shape the empirical evidence gathered by various anthropologists. Each chapter is presented in the "ethnographic present tense," not to express timeless backwardness, but as a snapshot of the community at a particular historical moment. The chapters are structured to examine topics such as objects and their exchange, agriculture and correlated social relations, nonhierarchical power relations, beliefs about ancestors, and practices perceived as magic, witchcraft, or religion. One society is used to illustrate each topic, even though it may be an element of a number of the region's societies.

The first chapter introduces Melanesia as a geographic region, details the racial variation and integration