

while increasingly more is discovered about McPhee and the narrator. Urale brings to the screen what Pacific Island author Albert Wendt brought to the world of literature when he wrote in 1976 that much canonical writing about Pacific Islanders from outsiders merely provided a forum for "papalagi fantasies and hang-ups, dreams and nightmares, prejudices and ways of viewing our crippled cosmos, than of our actual islands" (15).

By the film's end the narrator candidly reaches his own self-realization by admitting that he is chasing a fantasy, largely the creation of others. But, like the average "Joe Bloggs" in his charmingly un-politically correct manner, by the end of the film he cares little for the deconstruction of his fantasy that has taken place on both theoretical and practical levels. His joy remains in the visual pleasure received from viewing a beautiful and seductive island maiden. This titillation is encouraged by Urale's filmic technique as the camera's eye seems to stroke each tactile image, caressing from top to toe brown, curvaceous bodies, gliding in tune to mellifluous island harmonies. To return to the question of who is watching whom and plunge into the ironic, here is a brown woman watching, filming, and ultimately deconstructing the voyeuristic creations of a white male who paints brown women.

Audiences tire quickly when being preached at. This film is both witty and playful, moving beyond the obvious and into the ironic. It both celebrates and critiques attractive, paradisiacal images of the Pacific Islands and their women and proceeds to playfully investigate fantasies surrounding the stereotype of the South

Seas dusky maiden. Urale does so, not with the righteous anger of a politicized Pacific Island woman, but in the spirit of Cook Island artist Ani O'Neil (who reappears throughout the film), which laughs at itself, playing upon itself with a complicit audience.

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Kava: The Drink of the Gods, 90 minutes, VHS-PAL, color, 1998. Research, photography, and editing, Thorolf Lipp; producers, Asesela Ravuvu, William C Clarke, and Bob Maclay; produced by the Institute of Pacific Studies and the Media Centre, University of the South Pacific, Suva; distributor, Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, PO Box 1168, Suva, Fiji; US\$20 plus postage.

The video cover is not wrong. This film provides a wonderful "journey through Oceania with its stunning cultural and natural beauty and richness," consistently taking advantage of the compelling visual attractiveness of the region. A few quibbles might arise: some "live" shots are a little stilted, having been acted for the camera, and the pronunciation of some Pacific words in the narration is a little anglo, but these are minor distractions. The images, color, and sound quality cannot be faulted, and overall the video is a superb technical production.

The subject matter also holds enormous intrinsic interest for students of the Pacific. This interest has been fueled by definitive publications like *Kava: The Pacific Elixir* (Lebot, Mer-

lin, and Lindstrom, 1997), and now this video review of kava is a welcome addition. The audiovisual medium is so evocative that the olfactory and tasting senses of experienced kava drinkers may also be stimulated as they watch.

The video is largely documentary, incorporating much historical, cultural, and factual material and then raising contemporary issues. The videomakers have drawn on expertise from regional organizations, government departments, and knowledgeable people. At times though, the coverage is uneven: while tackling important and complicated issues relating to the international kava trade, it can also be touristy, including peripheral descriptions of food preparation methods that inform viewers that “coconuts must be grated before the cream can be extracted.”

The title of the video suggests that the religio-cultic associations of kava have particular significance, but too much is made of this theme. The important role of kava in traditional religious practice is undoubted, and these associations are reflected in its widespread ceremonial use today, but more overt spirituality than is warranted is attributed to both formal and informal use of kava in modern Pacific societies, which have been Christianized for around two centuries. The use of eerie new-age background music and ominous shots of fruit bats may heighten these mystical overtones in the mind of western viewers, but one wonders if this accurately represents the worldview of modern Pacific Islanders enjoying a kava-drinking session with their friends.

The 90-minute duration of the

video is perhaps a little lengthy for many potential viewing contexts, but allows for a well-paced survey of kava from a range of perspectives. (Thorolf Lipp reports that a 58-minute version, focusing on the ethnographic aspects, has now been produced.) The first hour includes three 15-minute segments from three locations. The first covers kava growing and preparation in a village in Vanuatu; the second highlights the ceremonial role of kava in the context of a chiefly visit to a Fijian village; and the third includes a narrative of a kava-origin story while focusing on formalized kava-drinking at a meeting of village leaders in Samoa. The final half-hour of the video takes kava out of its traditional ritual and ceremonial context, and kava-drinking in informal contexts is described for Fiji and Samoa. At this point the lack of any coverage in the video of kava-drinking in Tonga is most felt, as there, more than elsewhere, social kava-drinking has taken on pervasive and elaborated functions. For example, the informal *faikava* (kava circle) provides a locus for courting of the young woman making the kava, and the organized *kalapu* (kava club night) is an important fund-raising event for church and community activities, both in Tonga and among the diaspora.

The long-recognized psychotropic and social merits of kava-drinking, whereby it enhances both individual mental states and shared feelings of empathy, are often mentioned (although there is little detail about the kava plant as a traditional medicine), and there is good discussion of the linkage between modern kava-drinking and national identity, especially in Vanuatu. The downside is

also recognized: negative physical effects resulting from kava overuse are mentioned, although not a lot is made of the negative social effects of kava abuse, which result in a serious anti-kava stance being adopted by some women's and church groups.

However, the critical modern issue results from the evolution of kava from a recreational narcotic beverage into a commercial pharmaceutical product of incredible potential. Kava has long been a cash crop serving domestic markets, but its further development into an international commodity, which accelerated into a boom market in the late 1990s (and then crashed, perhaps temporarily, at the end of 1998), has raised important matters relating to intellectual property rights and associated questions of the export of kava plant stock and the development of kava growing outside the Pacific. While the claims of the kava-growing nations of the Pacific to some kind of proprietary ownership of kava are given expression in the video, they are drowned out by the more numerous voices of kava entrepreneurs and traders, as well as the representatives of the pharmaceutical sector, who persuade the viewer that a natural plant can never be protected as an item of intellectual property.

Having been convinced, viewers may have second thoughts. Have the idyllic scenes and mystical sounds romanticized nature's soporific, and entranced them into concurring with the Pacific region losing control over the production and marketing of this commodity? This nagging suspicion is enhanced by the realization that a somewhat psychodramatic subplot has been interspersed throughout the

video, involving footage from Germany. This hails the beneficial effects of a particular named brand of kava tablet, and highlights the groundbreaking scientific work of the particular named pharmaceutical company that has produced it, and whose experts are given the final word on numerous occasions. Has an attractive, appealing survey of the role of kava in Oceanic society been subverted into a commercial promotion for the German laboratory, its product, and its plans to develop huge kava plantings outside the Pacific? This possibility, and the fact that my own university sponsored it, is a little troubling, so I think I'll find a local kava bar and have a shell to set my mind at rest.

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Kilim Taem. 50 minutes, VHS, color, 1998. In Bislama, with English subtitles. Directors, Anthony Mullins, Randall Wood; producer, Jan Cattoni; distributor, UNICEF, Fiji. Email: UNICEF@is.com.fj

Kilim Taem (Killing time) is a documentary based on interviews with young people in Vanuatu's capital, Port Vila. It addresses the problems young ni-Vanuatu are currently facing, especially in urban areas. Fifty percent of the population of Vanuatu is under eighteen; half of them have been born since Vanuatu achieved independence in 1980. The problems young people now face did not exist even ten years ago, and, until this film was made and screened, most people in the country had not noticed the