

Chiefs Today: Traditional Pacific Leadership and the Postcolonial State, edited by Geoffrey M White and Lamont Lindstrom. East-West Center Series on Contemporary Issues in Asia and the Pacific. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997. ISBN cloth, 0-8047-2849-6; xiv + 343 pages, map, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, US\$49.50; paper US\$18.95.

Leadership in the Pacific Islands: Tradition and the Future, edited by Don Shuster, Peter Larmour, and Karin von Strokirch. Pacific Policy Paper 30. Canberra: National Centre for Development Studies, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University and Mangilão: Micronesian Area Research Center, University of Guam, 1998. ISBN 0-7315-2372-5; xi + 149 pages, appendix, notes, bibliography. Paper A\$20, US\$15.

Chiefs Today, a collection of essays edited by Geoffrey White and Lamont Lindstrom is a welcome contribution to the literature on leadership and political systems in the Pacific. The volume focuses on the position of chiefs in the present-day Pacific Islands and their relationships with the state. The term *chief* has become the common gloss for a great variety of traditional leadership types throughout the Pacific region. Lindstrom and White define chiefs as political leaders drawing their authority and influence from a discourse on local tradition. They distinguish three main types: chiefs who represent the state, serving as its statesmen (for example in Tonga); chiefs who function as the state's intermediaries and brokers at the local level, exercising state control and pro-

viding state services; and chiefs who act against the state as representatives of local identities and aspirations. The case studies in chapters 2 to 14 illustrate the various discourses that have contributed to the persistence, transformation, and (re)emergence of chiefs in the Pacific. The editors do not attempt to systematize these discourses, but I do not believe that it would inflict gross conceptual violence on the idiosyncrasies of the various cases to characterize them as discourses on state, democracy, and nationhood, discourses on Christianity, discourses on tradition, and discourses on business and development.

Cluny Macpherson discusses the persistence of chiefly authority in Western Samoa (chapter 2). He shows how chiefs and missionaries entered a "natural alliance" to their mutual gain, a collaboration that continues up to the present. Through various transformations of constitutional arrangements, the chiefs have continued to wield considerable political power, formalized and legitimated by the state. The Tongan case, described by Kerry James (chapter 3), is special in that it is the only surviving kingdom in the Pacific. The centralization of power in the royal family, the restricted number of appointed nobles, and the state ministers have effected a transformation of traditional chieftainship. Even though this hierarchical system enjoys great legitimacy in Tonga, James points to problems deriving from its rigidity. In chapter 4 Robert Franco compares the "populist and hierarchical vitality" of the Western Samoan chiefly system with the continuity and stagnation of the Tongan monarchy and nobility.

Toon van Meijl elaborates the

urban-rural opposition within the M'ori population of New Zealand (chapter 5). The rural-based tribal chiefs engaged in strategies to enhance the empowerment of M'ori tribal organizations through a process of political devolution. Urban groups reacted by forming pantribal organizations, which achieved political recognition as regional authorities. Stephanie Lawson uses the case of Fiji (chapter 6) to argue forcefully that tradition can be used as a political tool to serve certain interests, in particular those of an indigenous elite. She emphasizes that the present political position of chiefs is largely a colonial construction, but is legitimated on the basis of a discourse on tradition that opposes western values of political equality and liberty, inclusion and participation. Alan Howard and Jan Rensel move the scene to Rotuma, an isolated Polynesian island in the Republic of Fiji (chapter 7). Even though the authority basis of chiefs is more fragile than in other, more stratified Polynesian societies, the discourse on chiefs plays an important role in local politics.

Chapters 8 to 10 deal with the Micronesian region. Eve Pinsker describes the variation in the four states constituting the Federated States of Micronesia, namely Kosrae, Pohnpei, Chuuk, and Yap. At the FSM national level there is a discourse about traditional leadership defined largely in opposition to elective or bureaucratic leadership, but traditional leaders do not function as a group at the national level. Glenn Petersen investigates the history of moves to create a Chamber of Chiefs in the Federated States of Micronesia,

which would have established chiefs as a relevant group of actors on the national scene. Even though the proposal was finally accepted by the Constitutional Convention, it was patently rejected by the citizens of the Federated States in the constitutional referendum of 1991. Petersen explains this outcome by referring to the Micronesian preference for a duality in the power system, namely between the national Congress and the traditional polities represented by the chiefs. Laurence M Carucci shows that western intervention has consistently and increasingly empowered chiefs in the Marshall Islands. Even though post-World War Two American policy officially discouraged chiefly rule, the American presence was only the latest phase of the consolidation of the power of chiefs through their control over the distribution of moneys coming from outside (damage payments, leases, etc).

Chapters 11 to 13 address eastern Melanesian cases, where the late-colonial and post-colonial states have been fertile grounds for the development of chiefly claims and statuses. Lamont Lindstrom discusses the situation in Vanuatu, where chiefs have flourished since independence in 1980. In relation to the state, chiefs serve two main functions: they convey traditional legitimacy to the state and assist it with forms of "crowd control." In return chiefs have received very little constitutional power, though they have the potential to oppose the state and its leaders. Geoffrey White describes a rather similar situation in the Solomon Islands. Here too, attempts to empower chiefs have resulted in very little change in their institutional posi-

tion. White argues that the lack of legal status should not obscure the reality of a political discourse that empowers local chiefs, a discourse that is grounded in cultural continuities, and, therefore, should not be considered an “invented tradition.”

The chapter written by the late Roger Keesing provides a sequel to his much earlier article “Chiefs in Chiefless Society” (*Oceania* 38 [1969]: 276–280), which deals with the Kwaio in the Solomon Islands. He shows how paramount chiefs have emerged in the colonial context. Even though a conception of hereditary leadership existed among the Kwaio, there is little evidence that “real” chiefs existed in this inland society in precolonial times, unlike the situation in some coastal areas in the Solomon Islands. Kathleen Adams provides the only case from outside the Pacific region, namely the Toraja people from upland Sulawesi in Indonesia. These people speak an Austronesian language and have a strongly developed hierarchical and chiefly system. In the context of the modern Indonesian state, which espouses a more egalitarian rhetoric, the Toraja chiefs are faced with increasing challenges to their authority. They fight back not only by invoking *adat* (tradition) but also by referring to democracy, anti-communism, and the state ideology of Pancasila.

Chapter 15, by Peter Larmour, is called “Conclusions: Chiefs and States Today.” It provides some useful conceptual clarifications, for example by comparing chiefdoms and states, as well as state officials and chiefs. Larmour analyzes the forms of social power employed by chiefs and states,

referring to conceptual distinctions derived from Lukes (three dimensions of power), Mann (infrastructural versus despotic power) and Foucault (sovereign versus disciplinary power). Somewhat disappointingly, the conclusion of this exercise is rather general: “Once we have seen the various forms power may take, it is hard to conclude that states are generally or always more powerful than chiefs, either in relation to each other or in relation to third parties” (284).

Even though Lindstrom and White strongly oppose an evolutionary narrative concerning chiefs, they end their introduction on a more conclusive note, stating, “From today, the Pacific state’s future will dictate that of the Pacific chief” (18). In my view this statement rightly summarizes a tendency that can be observed in the case studies included in the volume. Contemporary chiefs achieve their status and power in articulation with modern states and are dependent on this larger political context to an extent that does not appear to be true for the reverse relationship. The case studies further testify to widely varying trajectories of chiefly authority. In some cases a strong chieftainship has been able to use the opportunities provided by modern statehood to consolidate itself. In others the colonial and post-colonial state has provided a rich breeding ground for the (re)emergence of chiefly statuses.

The introduction and conclusion of the volume refrain from making generalizations relating to Pacific regions, and there are of course good reasons for this in view of recent deconstructions of the Melanesia-Micronesia-Polynesia division. Nevertheless the

reader cannot help being impressed by the striking regional differences in the articulation of chieftainship and statehood, from the well-established and constitutionally integrated chiefly statuses in Polynesian countries, to the more fragile and legally less formalized positions in Micronesia, to the even more fluid variety of leadership positions in Melanesian states. This difference becomes even more striking if the comparison is extended to the New Guinea area, which is unfortunately missing in this otherwise ethnographically rich volume. In Papua New Guinea a discourse on chiefs is emergent, just as in the rest of the Pacific, even though it is less prominent and formalized than in eastern Melanesia (see Richard Scaglione, "Chiefly Models in Papua New Guinea," *The Contemporary Pacific* 8 [1996]: 1-31; R J May, *(Re?) Discovering Chiefs: Traditional Authority and the Restructuring of Local-Level Government in Papua New Guinea*. Canberra: Department of Political and Social Change, Australian National University, 1997). Scaglione suggested that the hierarchical cultural heritage of Austronesian speaking peoples in Papua New Guinea is contained and opposed by the non-hierarchical cultural models of Papuan speakers, who are in the majority in that country. This is an argument about the impact of cultural traditions on the development of political forms, just like White's suggestion (chapter 12) about the incompatibility of person-centered forms of leadership common in Melanesia and the formalization required by state bureaucracies.

The different historical trajectories of chiefly systems in the eastern and

western Pacific raise questions that still need to be answered. I sympathize with the volume's focus on discourses about leadership, but would argue that this does not necessarily mean that one should abstain from developing typologies and generalizations. Perhaps it would be useful to invoke more actively the theoretical heritage of Max Weber, who in spite of some superficial criticism in the introduction (2) appears to inform much of the theoretical debate in the volume and has pioneered relevant conceptual distinctions (such as the one between legal-bureaucratic and traditional authority, which permeates the volume) as well as the idea of the existence of different cultural and social spheres within a society.

These comments should not detract from the value of this volume, which I find intellectually very stimulating and pertinent to contemporary political developments in the Pacific. It is to date the best guide to the topic of chieftainship in the Pacific and it is also relevant for more broadly comparative studies of the articulation of traditional and modern discourses of leadership.

The relevance of critical studies is demonstrated by the contents of a curious publication by the National Centre for Development Studies, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, in collaboration with the Micronesian Area Research Center, University of Guam. *Leadership in the Pacific Islands*, edited by Don Shuster, Peter Larmour, and Karin von Strokirch, is curious in at least two ways. In the first place it is an example of a Pacific chief actively promoting and

participating in academic discussions about traditional and modern leadership. Palauan Chief Roman Tmetuchl hosted the fifth conference of the Pacific Islands Political Studies Association in Palau in 1996 and subsidized the publication of this booklet. The first chapter consists of the speech of Tmetuchl, in which he warmly defends the important role of chiefs in contemporary Palauan society and points to the introduction of the American sociopolitical system as the cause of much social unrest in the islands. Chapter 3, by Donald Shuster, describes the biography of Chief Tmetuchl before he was chief (later in life he was elected as high chief of Airai). Tmetuchl has had a very impressive career as a leading Palauan politician and businessman. For many years he was president of the Palau Congress and, among other things, was the driving force behind Palau's separation movement. His political clout waned when he lost in elections for the presidency of Palau three times in a row. During his years in power he was instrumental in effectively limiting the political power of chiefs. Now, in his old age, he appears to have changed position, defending traditional leadership and criticizing the American presidential system.

The volume is also curious because it is a very mixed collection of quite different contributions. These range from a useful analysis of the declining political power of Palauan women in modern politics by Juliana Anastacio to a plea for heroism in Pacific leadership (Tim Bruce). Dirk Ballendorf describes the life of the American William Vitarelli as a colonial hero in Micronesia and Karin von Strokirch

provides a more critical and useful analysis of the long hold on political power by the Tahitian Gaston Flosse, who served three terms as president of French Polynesia. Larry Gerston analyzes the United States' Pacific policy under the second Clinton administration, and Robert Rogers analyzes the failure of Guam's leaders to secure more political independence from the United States. Using the Cook Islands as an example, Michael Goldsmith provides an entertaining and insightful analysis of media misrepresentation and overheated speculation concerning Pacific Islands politics, in which terms like *crisis* and *coup* predominate. Robert Churney questions a set of dichotomies deriving from "Euro-American political philosophical orientations" such as traditional versus modern, traditional versus democratic, and élitist versus pluralist. While he claims that there is nothing intrinsically and universally good about either modernism or tradition, his analysis of the situation in Fiji, American Samoa, and Palau reads as a conservative and often questionable defense of traditional political forms. For example, he does not hesitate to defend the Fiji coup as an attempt by 350,000 indigenous Fijians to retain control against "the threat of 350,000 non-indigenous Indians." He argues that "Fijians, as indigenous people, deserve at least a slight hegemony in their own land." His advice to other Pacific nations is "not to allow a Fiji-type of racial or ethnic-based political problem to develop if it can be prevented." He also defends élitism as a system that may produce a higher quality of leadership than egalitarian democracy.

Churney's article is a rather disconcerting example of the way discourses on race and tradition can be used to defend the rights of élites (see especially the chapter by Lawson in *Chiefs Today*). One may safely assume that he voices opinions that have wider currency in the Pacific and therefore warrant serious consideration and criticism. However, it remains curious that this little booklet, published by a serious institution like the Australian National University, combines such different intellectual products within one cover without any comment or explanation.

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Colonizing Hawai'i: The Cultural Power of Law, by Sally Engle Merry. Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000. ISBN cloth, 0-691-00931-7; paper, 0-691-00932-5; xii + 371 pages, tables, figures, photographs, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. Paper, US\$18.95.

K naka Maoli scholars have learned to be skeptical whenever a new book arrives on the shelves containing the word Hawai'i in its title, and written by someone who is not Native. I was even more doubtful of Merry's work and its focus on western law and its colonizing capacities, because that was the primary theme of my own dissertation and the book that I am finishing.

I perceived immediately that our work was not at all similar, and that

she handled the Foucauldian themes of discipline and gender in ways that I could never quite make clear in my dissertation. I was even dismayed that her work seemed so much more thorough in several places than mine. While I disagree with her approach in some important ways, I also recognize what a worthy piece of scholarship it is.

Sally Merry brings the perspective of the cultural anthropologist to this social history of law in Hawai'i. Her concerns are strongly related to recent theoretical trends that stem from the writings and theories of Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci, using their ideas on hegemonic discourse as the lens through which she examines western law as a colonial tool. The Hawaiian Kingdom is the arena where European and American (*haole*) ideas and practices confronted the Native Hawaiian, and Merry is clear that the result of the confrontation was an ambiguous blend of responses in which Hawaiians altered their identities, conforming to the ideas of civilization while resisting colonization itself.

Along the way the author presents intriguing analyses of the legal system as a "site of power" wherein a different kind of discipline emerged from what had been in place before contact, namely a discipline that was self-imposed and self-correcting. While Native participation in and acceptance of the legal system grew, because law was an ideology that altered meanings and relationships in Native society, it gradually came to alter and reconstruct elites who were Native and *haole* while reconstituting the populace or *maka' inana* and immigrant