

kind of postcontact shift in the significance of pearl shells. Where these had originally been emblematic of the external networks through which this Highland New Guinea people imported them, pearl shells later came to represent interiority and local identity, while western money has come to denote exteriority and modernity.

The excellent introduction is counterpointed by two admirable concluding commentaries. Foster's deft survey includes the marvellous aside "Coins and notes are, in a profound Melanesian sense, the skin of the state—the site where Melanesians might look for news about their relationship to the powerful forces brought by contact with white people and their institutions" (exactly the kind of suggestive observation needed to theoretize Wahgi comments to me about the designs and watermarks on currency). Finally, Guyer's overview of the Melanesian and African literatures, her identification of the culturalist tendencies of the former and the political economy approach of the latter, and her reflections on the desirability of a return to interregional comparison, should be compulsory reading for Melanesianists.

Two very minor complaints about this otherwise valuable volume: among the two dozen or so illustrations, it would have been nice to have had a map or two; and where the word *discreet* is used on page 22, the editors mean *discrete*.

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Confronting Fiji Futures, edited by A Haroon Akram-Lodhi. Canberra: Asia Pacific Press, Australian National University, 2000. ISBN 0-7315-3642-8, xv + 321 pages, tables, figures, notes, bibliography, index. Paper A\$30.

On 19 May 2000, just as this collection entered production, Fiji changed forever when failed businessman George Speight and his accomplices seized Mahendra Chaudhry's constitutionally elected government at gunpoint, then held them hostage for eight weeks in Fiji's parliamentary complex. A two-page "Stop Press" was inserted to detail these dramatic developments and warn readers that they provided "an unfortunate reminder of the salience of the issues raised" in this book. The observation is valid, although force of circumstances has highlighted a disjunction between a title contemplating Fiji's futures and preoccupations with the immediate past.

The collection is organized in two parts: the first is about politics, economics, and social inequality. Most of the focus is structural and institutional, dealing with the 1997 constitution (Yash Ghai); electoral process and outcome in 1999 (Satendra Prasad); the economy (Sepheri and Akram-Lodhi); institutional rigidities in economic performance (Birman Prasad and Kumar); social policy (Cameron); labor market deregulation (Chand); and women and work (Jacqueline Leckie). Part Two is about the "Fijian" question, and considers problematic reform attempts and the indigenous community (Sutherland); affirmative action and communal capitalism

(Ratuva); ecotourism (Korth); and the politics of identity (Robertson). Overall, the study concentrates on the twelve years from Fiji's emergence from Rabuka's 1987 coups to the false dawn of legitimized electoral contest in 1999.

Standing back from the details of this informed, generally well written material, what emerges from the twelve-year experience? At least five issues deserve mention, including Fiji's attempts to meet the needs of its indigenous people by affirmative action programs that failed through defective accountability; deep-seated resistance to change; rational prescriptions clashing with perceived realities; the fragility of Fiji's social capital; and the abuse of the politics of identity by those pursuing personal gain while claiming to remedy public economic disparities. Although well amplified by these papers, the onus rests with the reader to construe these themes now briefly considered.

Detailing the orthodox structural adjustment policies begun by Fiji during the 1980s, Sepheri and Akram-Lodhi note that an ostensible objective was to transform Fiji's sluggish growth and high tax habits into a more dynamic, outward-looking set of practices. State instruments were employed to balance private-sector growth with protections of indigenous interests, policies that expanded the scope of ethnically based patronage within the state and society. This encouraged the rent seeking that Prasad and Kumar characterize as income-generating activity, conducted to the neglect of productivity improvements and the detriment of national welfare. The collapse of the National

Bank of Fiji is cited as a good example of how rent seeking emerged with notoriety in Rabuka's post-coup Fiji.

Yet as Ratuva notes in his excellent contribution, Fiji has never promulgated a coherent blueprint for affirmative action. He bemoans the state's inability to create an institutional framework that might foster profitability among ethnic Fijian businesses. For Satendra Prasad, the policies of structural adjustment pursued under Rabuka exerted uneven impacts throughout different communities, possibly aggravating long-standing provincial tensions. Overall, the damage done by failing to match economic liberalization with political reform emerges unmistakably from these essays.

Regarding resistance to change, three contributions deserve note. In his commentary on the 1997 Constitution, Ghai reveals how the pathbreaking Reeves Commission saw the political parties use their inquiry to incite supporters and incur animosities against other communities. The old vituperation across racial lines was accompanied by habitual internal disarray, Ghai claiming that the Reeves Commission erred on the side of optimism regarding the actual state of institutionalization, discipline, and coherence within Fiji's political parties. Conditions since 1987, moreover, offered few incentives to take ethnic cooperation seriously. Second, Prasad and Kumar's contribution illustrates the legacy of neglect that has dogged the antiquated, yet still powerful Native Land Trust Board. These authors concede that their recommendation for a sale of all native land under lease, and cessation of commu-

nal ownership, would prove controversial. Third, Leckie's contribution claims that for most women in Fiji, the extremes they face are less polarized choices than a set of precarious balancing calls between demands both old and new, and reflecting personal and collective needs for adjustment.

The consequences of rational prescription at odds with perceived reality emerge from Sutherland's castigation of the grand design that was supposed to uplift indigenous Fijian commerce. Ratuva views with similar skepticism current Interim Government leader Qarase's 1995 ten-year plan for indigenous economic revitalization, which was influenced by Malaysia's attempted social engineering. Prasad notes that the 1997 Constitution provided for power sharing by different parties in the executive. The same document directed the state to facilitate programs designed to achieve effective equality of access to education, land, housing, and commercial participation. Accordingly, Prasad believes this carried the seeds of potential cabinet conflict, given major party differences regarding the appropriateness of so-called "neoliberal" and "more market" applications to Fiji.

Fiji's evident decline in social capital is depicted by Leckie's observations regarding increased violence against women; by Chand concerning the decline in union membership; and by comments from Ratuva that, in the corporate culture that emerged in the indigenous community, the task of distinguishing between market, personal, and communal conduct has been rendered problematic—probably deliberately so.

The question of whether the 1997 Constitution could have survived to gradually wean Fiji from the politics of race necessarily remains unanswered. For Prasad, an essential objective of the 1997 Constitution's alternative voting system was to facilitate the emergence of cooperative arrangements and to foster alliances between ethnically based parties. That did not happen in 1999, voters using the election to punish parties deemed complicit in suspect accommodations. Taking a historical perspective, Robertson underlines the continuing costs of Fiji's failure to confront its past, in particular the way that colonial and postcolonial élites encouraged and then exploited ethnic divisions to maintain personal power and wealth.

This is a rewarding collection, although some puzzling omissions are evident. Given its future economic, social, and political relevance, education hardly features beyond the page apiece appearing in contributions by Cameron on social policy and Sutherland on the Fijian question. The Indo-Fijian community lacks adequate attention throughout the study. Here, readers remain curious but uninformed about the possible futures facing this 44 percent of Fiji's population. If anything has been learned following the country's now third resort to force in politics, it is surely that the "Fiji question" is beyond effective management by the indigenous community vainly trying to act on its own.

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