

reflections on consultancy at Porgera. One of his complaints is that consultants' reports have had little impact: internal reporting relegates long-term social monitoring to departments that are out of the corporate loop, and mechanisms for action and feedback are undeveloped. This circumstance results from a limited corporate attention span, with management rarely looking beyond the crisis of the moment. Further instances of myopia are evident in the neglect of available ethnography and the failure to examine linkages between Porgera and surrounding areas. Interestingly, management is much more attentive to environmental fears than to social monitoring, a predilection they share with some of their metropolitan critics.

Taken as a whole, *Dilemmas of Development* has the potential to move debates about mining and local people beyond environmental alarms and stories of indigenous resistance to a consideration of the situation of those who live near a working mine and may have left home to do so. In the process of describing what's actually going on, the book offers a more complicated picture and gives a better idea of what there is to learn. This looks like progress.

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Paradise for Sale: A Parable of Nature, by Carl N McDaniel and John M Gowdy. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. ISBN cloth, 0-520-21864-7; paper, 0-520-22229-6; xiv + 225 pages, illustrations, maps, notes, index. Cloth, US\$45.00; paper, US\$17.95.

The authors of *Paradise for Sale: A Parable of Nature* use the current state of affairs in Nauru—in their view a devastated and unproductive physical environment and irretrievably diminished “native” culture—to extrapolate the 21 square kilometer Pacific island's dire circumstances to Planet Earth as a whole. Simply put, they believe Nauru symbolizes our global island of limited natural resources and distinctive cultures in danger of being overexploited and homogenized by rampant capitalism. Relatedly, the book explores different cultures' worldviews (or “myths”) and examines how seemingly inherent (and mostly unquestioned) cultural cosmologies determine humans' interactions with the natural world and the sustainability of the society in the long term.

Biologist Carl N McDaniel, director of undergraduate environmental science, and economist John M Gowdy, director of the PhD program in ecological economics at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute have written numerous works focusing on the negative environmental impacts of current economic systems and explored various alternative approaches they feel can lead to greater sustainability. They bring considerable knowledge to the general topics explored in this book.

However, their lack of Pacific Islands experience, their preconceived notions of what is happening to the world, and prescriptive views of social behavior and change, leave Nauru, the supposed topic of this study, submerged beneath the politics they wish to promulgate.

Most Pacific scholars will have a visceral aversion to yet another idealistic portrayal of the Pacific Islands as fallen paradise and Pacific peoples as noble savages—carefree natives living in harmony with nature. In spite of the off-putting title of their book, to their credit McDaniell and Gowdy initially avoid overly simplifying Nauruan culture and the complex history behind Nauru's current dilemma. Yet, despite their obvious concern for and interest in other cultures, the authors do not avoid being constrained by their preconceptions. Almost apologetically, they admit that "the book had been written and only fine-tuning remained, but [we] knew little firsthand about the Nauruans" (175), a situation that inevitably makes Nauru and Nauruans superfluous in the substantive portion of the book. In their eagerness to shove Nauru into their predetermined framework of societal "overshoot and collapse," which supports their overarching agenda, they unwittingly replace the complex, dynamic Nauruan society from earlier in the book with a generic, romanticized, static culture corrupted by the influences of modern civilization.

Chapter 1 attempts a comparison between "western" philosophy and "traditional" Nauruan perspectives. While there is adequate discussion of the roots of the "western" worldview, from Plato and Aristotle onward, and

the subsequent development of rationality, the scientific method, and a separation of humankind from God and nature, their lack of knowledge of Nauru limits that discussion to an ethnographic catalogue of physical appearance, clans, marriage, sexual relations, subsistence production, and recreation. The hollow descriptions offer little to support the assertion that, in contrast to "western" society, precontact Nauruan civilization was intimately connected to nature.

Chapter 2 provides a standard overview of Nauru's recent history of cultural and environmental upheaval brought about by initial European contacts, the monetization of the economy, the colonial experience, the development of the phosphate industry, independence, and the social and economic challenges currently faced by the island's ten thousand inhabitants. Those unfamiliar with Pacific Islands history gain some understanding of the multitude of forces at work in the region over the past five hundred years and are provided with some grounding on which to ostensibly explore the thesis that Nauru's experience can be applied to the world as a whole.

Unfortunately, this is where Nauru largely becomes redundant to the discussion. Chapter 3 is essentially an effective primer on global environmental challenges such as biological diversity loss, overpopulation, and climate change. Chapter 4 attempts to demonstrate how different "traditional" cultures (Australian Aborigines, Kalahari !Kung, Polynesians of Rapa Nui, Greenland Norse, and Ladakhis) have unique "myths" that determine their relationship to the natural environment and ultimately

the society's success or failure. Chapter 5 provides a brief history of the evolution of the world as understood by western science, and illuminates the recent convergence of "traditional" and scientific worldviews exemplified by the assertion that scientists now understand "we are not separate from but an inextricable part of earth's biotic adventure" (108). In light of this "new" understanding, the authors conclude that the "world economic culture [must transform] its archaic, and now unbelievable, mythological base" (99). Chapter 6 further discusses (cultural and biological) diversity and extinction, contending that since actions based on the western myth are destroying the productivity of ecosystems (humanity depends on) we must make immediate corrective changes to avoid the uncertain point of inexorable collapse. Chapter 7 rightly points out that the developed world's veneration of the market system is not a natural state of affairs and offers several examples of successful cultures that do not glorify capital generation and accumulation. The chapter also notes that current economic thinking does not and cannot fully comprehend the complexities of human activity, forcing societies to measure progress and success in a very narrow manner. Appreciating the essence of these chapters is critical if meaningful changes in Nauru and elsewhere are to occur, but the sheer breadth of issues addressed means that none is given adequate attention. These subjects have been more thoroughly explored elsewhere, and the attempt to cram them all into this small book means that Nauru itself becomes marginal to the discussion.

Nauru reemerges in chapter 8 with the authors' clarion cry. In light of all the aforementioned issues of concern, and based on the conclusion that Nauru's previously sustainable culture has been supplanted by the destructive "western" *modus operandi*, McDaniel and Gowdy ask, "How can they behave differently?" After arrogantly lamenting Nauruans "missed opportunity" at recreating some mythical past on achieving independence, the authors now encourage the Islanders to bravely change their future. By doing so, Nauru can lead the way by showing the world how to "create cultures that respect the whole creation, that bring out the best human qualities, and that are compatible with equitable and enduring habitation" (174).

This highly readable book will largely appeal to those who already accept its premise and possibly convert others to wish and work for progressive change. In that sense, it is of lasting value. However, due to the authors' desire for broad popular appeal and resulting overly general approach, it will do little to inform those with a background in the Pacific Islands. Like Nauru itself, which has had over eighty percent of its surface removed by phosphate mining, so too is Nauru absent from eighty percent of this book. As the authors readily admit in the Coda, "The story of Nauru has yet to be written" (175).

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