

Encompassing Others: The Magic of Modernity in Melanesia, by Edward LiPuma. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000. ISBN 0-472-11068-3; xi + 342 pages, maps, bibliography, index. Cloth, US\$26.95.

This book argues that Melanesian societies have been greatly transformed through a process of encompassment: through incorporation within a state and through saturation with “Western capitalism, Christianity, and commercially driven mass culture” (5). Primarily employing data collected in 1974 and in 1979–1980 among the Maring of Papua New Guinea’s Western Highlands, Edward LiPuma proposes that to understand this encompassment we must recognize the importance, not only of generational differences among Melanesians, but also of fundamental similarities between Melanesians and others.

First, we must recognize that the critical agents in the modernist transformations of Melanesian societies have been those “who are coming of age, those who are in the throes of forging their identity, those who grasp history intuitively as the difference between the world they encounter and that portrayed by their parents” (63). It is those of the junior generation who have sought to “amplify their personal freedom, to listen first and foremost to their own voice and that of their generation” (66); it is those who have sought to escape the authority of their seniors who “did not understand the logic of business, the individual rights of persons, and other wisdoms of the West” (66). It is those

who have sought, most generally, to relax the obligations of kin and community.

Second, we must recognize that such modernist transformations have been possible because Melanesians—whether juniors or seniors—are not in any absolute way different from persons elsewhere. LiPuma (challenging the dichotomizing of the “new Melanesian ethnography”) strongly argues that everywhere “there exist both individual and dividual modalities or aspects of personhood. . . . From this view, it is a misunderstanding to assume either that the social emerges out of individual actions (a powerful strain in Western ideology that has seeped into much of its scientific epistemology) or that the individual ever completely disappears by virtue of indigenous forms of relational totalization (such as those posited for certain New Guinea societies). It would seem rather that *persons emerge precisely from that tension between dividual and individual aspects/relations*” (131–132, emphasis as given). Thus, encompassment in Melanesia has involved the promotion, the elaboration, of that already present—the individual aspect of this tension.

These fascinating preliminaries completed, LiPuma documents the processes of encompassment in various social, economic, and epistemological domains. He moves the reader through twisted histories of generationally contested engagements: between the logic of sorcery and the justice of modernity, between the meaning of traditional valuables and the uses of contemporary money, between a belief in magic and a faith

in Christianity, between the construction of the body ethnomedically and the treatment of illness biomedically, between the instruction of youth indigenously and the schooling of them contemporarily.

Along the way, LiPuma provides useful syntheses of the work of others as well as splendid insights of his own. Importantly, these insights do not only elucidate Melanesian societies. They also frequently elucidate western ones (for he finds that the West “wants to misrecognize itself” [302]). Thus, as only one example of many, he considers why Melanesians often, though importantly not always, abandoned indigenous valuables for western money. In addressing this question, he rejects both the universalist “steel-for-stone” position and the relativist “economy of difference” one.

The universalist position posits that just as steel axes were (apparently) recognized as more efficient than stone ones, so too money was seen as better—more durable, easier to manage. However, this view of money as self-evidently superior cannot adequately account for the fact that some societies did, in actuality, continue to use shells. Moreover, this view of money frequently carries a cognate view, that of capitalism as self-evidently superior—as an obviously more efficient way to organize socioeconomic life. But this view of capitalism cannot adequately account for the coercive nature of “the encounter between Melanesia and the West, the economic violence of colonialism and Christianity, or the profound changes in knowledge and spirit animated by capitalism” (188).

Conversely, but equally problematically, the relativist position posits that there is an absolute disjunction between western money and, for instance, pearlshells. Yet such a view of difference cannot deal with the ease and speed with which (many) Melanesians adopted western money. Significantly, LiPuma suggests that the disjunction between money and pearlshells has been overemphasized since both have been constituted out of social relations. Indeed, if money had a force different from that of pearlshells, it was not because there was anything intrinsically different about money; rather, it was because money was historically used as part and product of a capitalist set of relations. But it might equally be used as part and product of other kinds of relations. In fact, “Westerners do indeed use money in relations based on ‘diffuse enduring solidarity’; no, they do not always associate money with the pursuit of short-term individual gains; yes, they do sometimes direct their personal ambitions toward the reproduction of the group” (190). Just as there is an individual dimension to a Melanesian person, there is “a ‘dividual’ dimension to the Western person, a dimension that is concealed by, among other realities, our ideology of money” (190).

Notwithstanding the ease and rapidity with which Melanesians adopted money (and the like) within the processes of encompassment, LiPuma also argues that the “road to modernity could not help but be a struggle [as Melanesians] . . . had to make a space for identity and pride within the framework of encompass-

ment” (305). In their encounters with capitalism, Christianity, and internationalized western culture, they had to steer between the pole of self-abnegating capitulation leading to loss of identity and that of self-destructive resistance leading to economic and political marginalization. “And so ‘combined strategies’ of accommodation and self-creation began to emerge” (305). But here the (somewhat outdated) ethnography is not as strongly on LiPuma’s side and his examples of such combined strategies appear thin.

Indeed, my primary criticism of this often illuminating book—a book which, as I have indicated, encapsulates and theoretically extends the work of many anthropologists of Melanesia—is that it should be more ethnographically rich (more a demonstration, less a didactic). Nonetheless, the argument is very smart and must be considered by anyone writing about the contemporary Pacific (and beyond).

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Public Policy and Globalization in Hawai‘i. Special issue of *Social Process in Hawai‘i* (40), guest-edited by Ibrahim G Aoudé. Honolulu: Department of Sociology, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, 2001. ISBN 0-8248-2492-X; xxvii + 240 pages, tables, figures, appendixes, bibliography. US\$17.00.

The initial question posed by guest editor Ibrahim Aoudé in the introductory essay in *Public Policy and Globalization in Hawai‘i* is at once challenging and compromising. He asks, “What public policies should Hawai‘i devise for it to at least derive some benefits from globalization?” (xii). The question is challenging in the sense that public policy toward globalization is particularly vexing from the perspective of a place such as Hawai‘i that has become so dependent on external resources. It is compromising in the inevitability implicit in the trade-off, “to *at least* derive some benefits from globalization” (emphasis added). In spite of the fact that this question has been asked so many times before, why is it so difficult to answer—or swallow? What makes this current brand of globalization, that is, the transnationalization of capital and production amid a worldwide system of multinational corporations and ever-present US hegemony, all that different or new from what we’ve experienced before? Can the promises of the so-called “New Economy” offer any real hope to the people of a geographically remote place such as Hawai‘i? Are there new lessons to be learned that may be of relevance to other island