

rural Thailand. Nishizaki's rigorous treatment of the cultivation of political authority deserves imitation. With diligence, further refinement may even be possible.

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MANAGING MODERNITY IN THE WESTERN PACIFIC. *Edited by Mary Patterson & Martha Macintyre. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2011. 326 pp. (Figures, maps.) A\$34.95, paper. ISBN 978-0-7022-3900-7.*

This is an edited volume containing contributions from anthropologists on various aspects of modernity in Pacific Island countries, mostly focusing on capitalism. All but one of the nine chapters are based on ethnographic material. The subjects covered include: the influence of libertarian ideas on the Nagriamel movement in Vanuatu; Papua New Guinean women's negotiation of the cash economy over recent decades; a comparison of the role of community in Solomon Islander villagers' ways of relating to the Church versus relating to logging companies; individualism and Christianity in Fiji; fast money schemes in Papua New Guinea; gambling in the Cook Islands; development and the Personal Viability movement in Papua New Guinea; and international financial services in Vanuatu. Chapter 1, by Richard Sutcliffe, is a reflective piece on the roles of secularism, rationalism and magic in Western modernity.

The central theme of the book is a two-sided question about presumptions of irrationality and religious/cultic/magical approaches in Pacific Islander modernities, and flipside presumptions about the rationality and secularism of Western modernities. There is a long history through colonialism, modernization theory and developmentalism of preconceiving Pacific Islanders as unsophisticated in their dealings with the modern world, and capitalism in particular, with Westerners as the significant Other in this image. This theme is addressed by some authors, such as Sutcliffe, by showing that Western modernity is not as secular and rational as it is usually assumed to be, but should be understood as being normatively secularist and rationalist, and concomitantly derisive of approaches perceived to be non-secular or irrational. Western modernity has in fact always been shot through with magico-religious elements and remains so. The Comaroff's discussion of millennial capitalism and the role of enchantment in it is one of the theoretical threads drawn upon at several points in the book. This part of the preconception, questioning the extent to which Western modernity is actually like the image presented vis-à-vis Pacific Islanders, is also discussed in the editor's introduction and mentioned by several other authors.

The bulk of the book then deals with the other side of the preconception, about Pacific Islanders' ways of managing modernity. The close inspection

enabled by the ethnographic method shows that Pacific Islanders' approaches to modernity are as sophisticated as anyone else's, including in terms of magico-religious aspects. Many of the chapters point out that phenomena often portrayed as irrational may indeed be rational in people's specific circumstances.

Kalissa Alexeyeff's chapter shows that in the context of large-scale redundancies in the public service as a result of neoliberal policy changes in the Cook Islands, spending large proportions of time and income in "housie" gambling may be seen as a reasonable thing to do. Opportunities for formal work or other forms of more conventional "productive" activity are so limited as to not offer much of a solution, and housie games also offer unemployed people a way to continue their sociality, including through public gifting. Alexeyeff refers to Susan Strange's prescient work on casino capitalism, as do several other of the authors, to show that contemporary global capitalism is in any case a form of gambling, and to challenge dominant perceptions of engaging in world markets as an easily accessible way to improve people's quality of life. For many Pacific Islanders, participating fruitfully in world markets is not an achievable option. The casino nature of contemporary financial capitalism, moreover, means no one has the power to control or even always accurately predict the movements of those markets. Even if Pacific Island governments were to comply with all donor recommendations for "good governance," it is far from clear that their opportunities to gain more of what they want from modernity would improve. The authors argue that some of what may appear to be irrational economic behaviour arises from this situation in which more conventionally rational choices (gain employment, run a business) are not feasible. Gregory Rawlings' ethnography of the financial services sector in Vanuatu underlines the precariousness of attempts to gain benefits from these global flows.

The idea of Melanesian cultures as distinguished by *dividual*, relational senses of personhood versus possessive individualism is another theoretical thread running through several of the chapters, including the introduction, Debra McDougall's chapter, Martha Macintyre's chapter and Nick Bainton's chapter. Problems are pointed out in assumptions underlying some arguments of utter incommensurability between these two senses of personhood. One is that modern capitalism need not be predicated on possessive individualism; plenty of varieties of capitalism around the world in societies not noted for their individualism attest to that. Another is that in contemporary Melanesia *dividuality* and *individuality* frequently coexist in people's senses of self. Martha Macintyre points out that for increasing numbers of people in Papua New Guinea, who live most of their lives in urban settings, the cash economy looms much larger than the rural non-capitalist economy, and this is changing social relations in all sorts of ways, although not necessarily making them possessive individuals.

In sum, the book is a useful read for anyone working on the anthropology

of modernity and capitalism, of Pacific Island peoples, or on development in this region. It is well priced to be readily accessible.

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SUMMONING THE POWERS BEYOND: Traditional Religions in Micronesia. *By Jay Dobbin with Francis X. Hezel. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011. 286 pp. (Tables, figures.) US\$55.00, cloth. ISBN 978-0-8248-3203-2.*

In the early 1970s a solitary, peripatetic Jehovah's Witness missionary occasionally wandered through Awak, the Pohnpei village where I was living and working. Having learned that I did my graduate studies in New York City, where he had trained at his sect's headquarters, he would sometimes stop to chat. One day, in what seemed to be a moment of exhausted resignation, he unburdened himself to me: He'd been unable to make any progress converting Pohnpeians, he said. His evangelical approach depended upon offering to prospective converts a vision of redemption that would save them from much suffering in their lives after death. But life on Pohnpei, he had concluded, was so pleasant that the island's people imagined a largely bucolic afterlife and hence had no interest at all in his wares. He didn't see how he could continue trying to put the fear of God into them, he lamented, and in fact I never saw him again.

I recount this tale because the late Jay Dobbin's able survey of Micronesian religion quite emphatically bears this fellow's story out. Calling attention to the absence of, among other things, cannibalism, ritual sacrifices of living creatures, prolonged fasts and other forms of ritual denial, and witchcraft (which he distinguishes from sorcery), Dobbin speaks of the islands' traditional or indigenous beliefs and practices as "gentle religions."

I think it is accurate to call the religions of Micronesia religions of life, inasmuch as they are focused on the practicalities and necessities of daily living. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the elaborate ritual for good crops and therapies associated with spirit-given powers to heal and cure. The distribution and sharing in the bounty of good food was also part and parcel of many religious rituals. Religious ritual certainly reinforced the belief that the proper response to bounty is distribution, not accumulation (220).

His book is, I believe, the first full-length consideration of Micronesia's religions in nearly a century, a task not undertaken since James Frazer's little-known or -remembered volume 3 of *The Belief in Immortality and the Worship of the Dead* in 1924. Though Francis Hezel's contributions to the work are acknowledged on the title page, they are not clearly spelled out, but knowledgeable readers will see them everywhere in both the range of