

The Politics of Evolving Cultures in the Pacific Islands. Proceedings of a Conference Sponsored by The Institute for Polynesian Studies, Laie, Hawaii: The Institute for Polynesian Studies, 1982. Pp. 365. \$19.95.

The central motif of *The Politics of Evolving Cultures in the Pacific Islands* is only coyly intimated by its title. One could be excused for suspecting that the anthology might be an exercise in political science from the reference to politics, or an aspect of area studies by the mention of the Pacific Islands. While many of the contributions to this collection are drawn from one or the other (or both) traditions, the underlying theme for the entire work is grounded firmly in political anthropology. More particularly, the volume explores the concept of political culture and the influences that have modified or are continuing to affect the political cultures of the Pacific Islands.

Political scientists may question the attribution of political culture to anthropology given the concept's long, if controversial, career in their discipline. However, the emphasis and usage of the term in this volume of collected papers from the February 1982 conference owe their debt of inspiration to anthropology. Even the format of the work underscores this approach by apportioning the substantive contributions along the

great ethnogeographic divisions of anthropology--Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia. (Although, perhaps unexpectedly for a conference organized by The Institute for Polynesian Studies, not only is the allocation to the three areas unequal but the Polynesian section is limited to three entries, two of which center on New Zealand.)

One of the consequences of this general approach to political culture is that the level of analysis tends to be at the island level or lower. Examples here include Peter Black's assessment of "The In-Charge Complex and Tobian Political Culture," Glenn Petersen's review of "Ponape's Body Politic: Island and Nation," Donald Shuster on "More Constitutions for Palau," Richard Feinberg's treatment of the "Structural Dimensions of Sociopolitical Change on Anuta, Solomon Islands," and Lamont Lindstrom on "Cultural Politics: National Concerns in Bush Areas on Tanna (Vanuatu)." With the exception of the two introductory chapters (one a keynote address on the responsibilities of academic observers by a doyen if not the doyen of Pacific Islands-oriented political scientists, Norman Meller, and the other a provocative survey of the role of political science in the teaching of Pacific Island politics by Stephen Levine), only Peter Larmour's "Alienated Land and Independence in Melanesia" and Ted Wolfers' study of the emergence of provincial governments in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands treat themes on something larger than the national level.

The narrow focus of the individual contributions does not, of necessity, present a problem and, indeed, could well be regarded as a virtue under some circumstances. Nevertheless, in the field of Pacific Islands studies there is no agreed framework for research or common theoretical explanations which would automatically insert these individual studies into a larger mosaic of understanding. It may be that no unifying theoretical perspectives can be developed which could give Pacific Islands studies a veneer of sub-disciplinary coherence, but, should such prove to be the case, it ought to be demonstrated rather than assumed.

This is not to suggest that none of the works in this volume offer any general theoretical or conceptual conclusions. Yaw Saffu's "Aspects of the Emerging Political Culture of Papua New Guinea," the chapter by Daniel Hughes and Stanley Laughlin, Jr. entitled "Key Elements in the Evolving Political Culture of the Federated States of Micronesia," and that by Black on the Tobians specifically raise theoretical concerns. Yet, the theories are not drawn from any uniqueness of the South Pacific political experience but rather the Pacific Islands are used as laboratories to test theories or concepts from elsewhere. It would seem a pity, somehow, if the politics of this region were doomed only to provide sui

generis examples of *exotica* rather than to make contributions to the mainstream of political studies.

The absence of theory undoubtedly helps to explain two other characteristics of these papers. A large number of the works spend a significant proportion of their space on what can be termed "scene-setting." Most authors in this field (*mea culpa* also!) assume few readers will be well versed in the material they wish to cover and therefore give extensive historical or anthropological background before embarking on their primary topics. Then, perhaps because of inertia created through this scene-setting exercise, most continue with this historical-descriptive approach to present their data. Katherine Nakata, with her use of survey data in "The Costs of Fa'a Samoa Political Culture's Complementarity with the Modern World System," was one of the few to break the historical-descriptive pattern. The chapters by Larmour and Wolfers similarly are noteworthy for their use of comparative data.

Paralleling the motif of political culture throughout most of the contributions is the theme of colonialism (or a variant such as decolonization). The impact of the colonial experience clearly has transformed political attitudes and orientations in the Pacific Islands. James Jupp reviews its impact on the national politics of Vanuatu, Carl Lande assesses the consequences for attitudes toward entrepreneurship in PNG, Marjorie Smith examines the ramifications of trusteeship on land tenure in Micronesia, and Alan Clark considers the implications for partisan electioneering in New Caledonia. The issue is so ubiquitous, in fact, that few, if any, of the contributors fail to touch on it either explicitly or implicitly. Yet with the exception of the TTPI and New Caledonia the subject itself is substantially retrospective. This emphasis therefore suggests that our analysis of political events in the Pacific Islands is still very much at the stage of data gathering and reflection on how we got to where we are.

Lest these observations be taken as criticisms of the works in this volume, it should be pointed out that these papers are fairly representative of the state of the art in Pacific Islands political studies. There is the inevitable unevenness of a cross-disciplinary anthology, but this is not strikingly different from similar works. Overall, the organizers and contributors have grounds for being pleased with the relatively high standards achieved.

But here is the rub. The methodological rigor of Pacific Islands studies is still rather "spongy." The organizers and contributors are to be congratulated not so much for the content of their proceedings but for having recognized the need to hold the conference that gave rise to these

proceedings. It is now up to the rest of us to accept the challenge posed by the Institute's director, Jerry Loveland, when he referred in the volume's preface to the "professional study of Island politics." This work is certainly a step in the right direction.

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