

The Economy of Fiji: supporting private investment

International Development Issues No. 40,
Australian Agency for International
Development, Canberra, 1995, ISBN 0 642
22013 1, 130 pp, no charge.

This new title in AusAID's International Development Issues series provides an overview of recent economic developments and current social and environmental conditions in Fiji, but its focus is very much on constraints and opportunities for private sector investment.

Its main argument is that, despite Fiji's relatively favourable position with respect to natural and human resources, physical infrastructure, entrepreneurial activity, tourism potential and market access, recent economic performance has been disappointing. Low levels of both private and public sector investment are identified as a major contributory factor. Stimulating investment, including foreign investment, is seen as essential if sustainable growth is to be achieved.

During the 1970s, domestic investment in Fiji exceeded 25 per cent of GDP in most years. The investment climate was stable during the early post-independence years, thanks in part to sound macroeconomic management and favourable conditions in industries such as sugar and tourism.

Growth began to slow in the late 1970s and declined even more in the 1980s. Economic policy in the early 1980s was inward looking and highly interventionist. Public investment was reduced from 14 per cent of GDP in 1981 to 7 per cent in 1986, but there was no counterbalancing surge in private investment. The military coups in 1987 resulted in a severe economic crisis, including a sharp decline in private investment.

The post-coup government acted quickly to end the crisis and restore investor confidence. A number of measures were enacted which stabilised and restructured the economy and made it more internationally competitive. Economic performance during 1988–90 was strong and direct foreign investment recovered well from its 1987 slump.

The economy has since shown little or no annual income growth. A significant factor has been low investment rates. Government investment averaged just 2.7 per cent of GDP between 1989 and 1993 (although investment in private enterprises such as airline and utility companies was a further 5.3 per cent of GDP). Foreign investment did not sustain its post-coup recovery in spite of the continuance of the Tax-Free Factory (TFF) Scheme and other incentives.

The rationale for foreign investment and the potential benefits (and costs) to both the host country and the investor are succinctly summarised in the report. Fiji is aware of the need to encourage foreign direct investment and has established the Fiji Trade and Investment Board as part of this effort.

The report analyses the Board's orientation and performance in some detail and notes that the Board has recently been restructured to give it sharper focus and bring it closer to being a genuine 'one-stop shop' for foreign investors.

Nevertheless, other significant deterrents to investment remain. The report identifies several of these, including uncertainty with regard to tenancy arrangements (particularly on sugar lands) and the implications of the current constitutional review. Expectation of continuing discrimination against the Fijian Indians is cited as a major cause of continued emigration and unwillingness to invest among the Indian community,

Reviews

traditionally one of the major sources of private investment.

Governments seeking to lure foreign investors commonly offer generous fiscal incentives, and Fiji is no exception. The AusAID report devotes considerable attention to this issue. Incentives currently available under the TFF Scheme are described. While many of these may appear to be consistent with the principle of an efficient taxation system, the authors caution that there are several problems with the scheme, among them being an inefficient degree of discrimination between particular activities and sectors, and a lack of consistency and transparency in determining eligibility for concessions. Their conclusion—in line with the views of organisations such as the World Bank and the Forum Secretariat—is that investment incentives are no substitute for improvement of the overall investment climate and can in fact be counter-productive.

The final section of the report examines potential opportunities in agri-business, fishing, forestry, mining, manufacturing, tourism and other services. The role of government in facilitating investment and reducing constraints in these sectors is highlighted.

The Economy of Fiji: supporting private investment follows the tradition of the AusAID International Development Issues series in its high-quality presentation and provision of a wealth of current economic and social information for the country, including a comprehensive statistical annex. Provisional 1994 data are included in many of the tables.

The strong focus on investment in this report is consistent with current awareness in the South Pacific region of the crucial importance of investment (particularly from overseas) in stimulating economic development. For instance, at the 1995

South Pacific Forum in Madang, Papua New Guinea, member countries agreed to work towards implementation of the set of non-binding investment principles adopted by APEC members in late 1994. This is aimed at sending a message to potential investors that the region is serious in its determination to attract and facilitate private investment inflows. As a practical first stage in this process, current efforts are being targeted at achieving 'transparency' in investment regimes around the region.

This report was prepared by John Fallon and Tim King of Economic Insights Pty Ltd. It is a timely and welcome contribution to the understanding of constraints, opportunities and requirements for stimulating growth through investment in Fiji. Moreover, while Fiji is by no means typical of Pacific island countries, many of the findings and recommendations have broad applicability throughout the region.

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Land Custom and Practice in the South Pacific

R. Gerard Ward and Elizabeth Kingdon (eds)
Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995,
ISBN 0 521 47289 X, 290 pp, A\$80

In Australia, the High Court's Mabo decision recognised the existence and persistence, in some narrow circumstances, of 'native title'. In the island states of the South Pacific however, customary land tenure has continued to apply to most rural, and some urban, land. The authors describe how, under the guise of custom, ownership is increasingly privatised into the hands of individuals and families rather than groups.

Reviews

The book is much more than an edited set of country case studies. It is coherent and grounded in the authors' continuing research in the region. Three of the seven chapters are analytical and comparative, while the country chapters address issues that go well beyond land tenure: the divergence between what can be reconstructed about the past, official versions of custom, introduced law, and day-to-day practice in the South Pacific.

The first chapters by Gerry Ward and Elizabeth Kingdon consider land tenure in functional, comparative and ideological terms, and put the South Pacific into a world-historical context of technological change, population growth, urbanisation, commercialisation, and the rise and proliferation of centralised states. Parallels are drawn with Japan, China, Europe and Africa—but are not pushed far. Though the changes described are broad and unexceptionable, the move to put the South Pacific in a global context is very welcome. This ground has earlier been covered by Ron Crocombe's work on South Pacific land tenure, as the authors acknowledge in their references to Crocombe's work on Cook Islands (where he was a theorist of the invention of tradition, before that term was coined). But the analysis lacks Crocombe's socio-biology of territory, and advocacy of islander perspectives.

Chapter 2 is a brisk but highly effective summing up of the characteristics of land tenure in the Pacific, seamlessly bringing together ecological, technical, anthropological and historical material in the best traditions of ANU human geography.

The four country chapters each begin with a largely historical introduction to the pattern of tenure in each country, then shift focus to particular places the authors

know well (a district in Vanuatu; three villages in Western Samoa; an island in Tonga and six villages in Fiji). These detailed cases are elegantly illustrated with clear and apposite maps and diagrams: the production quality of the book is very high, including a good bibliography, and a country-coded index.

Each author concludes with a discussion of related broader themes. Margaret Rodman focuses on the disjunction between the national rhetoric of *kastom* and local practice in the non-implementation of an *Island Courts Act* in Vanuatu. Tim O'Meara explains the shift to more individualised tenure in Western Samoa. Kerry James considers the impact of population growth and commercialisation in Tonga, including urban Nuku'alofa. Gerry Ward, co-editor of the book, and co-author of the comparative and analytic chapters, concludes his chapter on Fiji with a discussion of the communal model of Fijian land tenure, and the institutions like the Native Land Trust Board that grew up around it. He concludes that the future may lie in the past: a more realistically individualistic model would be quite like some of the late nineteenth century practices which the colonial orthodoxy displaced.

While systems of production and their commercialisation are described, the authors are not greatly concerned with economic issues (though they conceptualise farmers as economists would, maximising their advantages within institutional constraints). This distinguishes their approach from earlier writing on customary land that was preoccupied with questions of productivity, and the possibility that communal ownership might be an obstacle to development. These authors seem more relaxed about development: informal markets are seen to be emerging, in spite of custom and the

Reviews

law. Commercialisation is taking pace, in spite of official rhetoric. The authors have a more 1990s concern with questions of identity, and the governability of political systems based on unrealistic understandings of the past, and the present.

The book leaves us with two big questions. Why the disjuncture between reified custom, the law, and practice? And does it matter anyway?

The authors show how customary land tenure has become a symbol of national—or in Fiji, ethnic—identity. They recognise that democratic politicians are not unnaturally reluctant to disturb national myths, even though as members of a new élite, they are benefiting from individualisation. Here the literature on nationalism might help the argument further. Nationalism typically involves the recovery and revaluation of hitherto denigrated folk traditions. In Europe, it was often languages. In the South Pacific, it has often been customary land tenure. Anthony Smith (1995:76–83) argues that indigenous intellectuals—absent from this book—play a key role in nationalist revivals. History, linguistics and archaeology provide material for the construction of a nationalist story of common origins, and national distinctiveness. This construction often involves downplaying awkward facts about the past, such as individualism. An early theorist of nationalism, Renan (1882, cited in Smith 1995), described it as a process of forgetting. It is also, as the authors point out, a process of homogenising a new, national cultural space that is necessarily dismissive of regional or ethnic variation from the orthodox model. Hence sub-nationalists, aided by their own intellectuals, construct their own stories of shared distinctiveness to justify decentralisation or secession.

In the end the authors ask: do these disjunctures matter? Margaret Rodman

(Chapter 3) had already wondered if the contradictions within custom, and between practice, essentialised ideas, and law might not, in the end, be ‘productive’, allowing change without conflict (p. 108). It is certainly untidy, and irritating to historians, anthropologists and geographers that popular versions of custom and history are untrue, and that people will not publicly acknowledge the privatisation of land tenure that they know is going on—and sometimes actively abet. Yet ambiguity and contradiction may protect the weak as well as the elites who now manipulate the system—as they probably did in the flexible, embedded pre-colonial systems that the authors generally commend.

The book’s final image is of a breathing space, in which contradictions may flourish, but exhorts leaders to bring rhetoric and reality together. Yet nationalism, in Australia as much as the South Pacific, seems to require a minimum of forgetting inconvenient truths—as the Mabo decision reminded us. And academics in the human and social sciences, like the distinguished authors of this excellent book, are often implicated in its construction.

References

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Overseas Aid Motivations: the economics of Australia's bilateral aid

Rukmani Gounder, Aldershot, Avebury, 1995,
ISBN 1 85972 0757, £35.00

Why do countries give aid? Is it because they are responding to the needs of the

Reviews

recipient countries? Is it because they are protecting their own interests? Gounder attempted to answer these questions in the case of Australia. In the process another question is asked: is it because donor countries' utility depends not only on what they consume, but also on what poorer countries consume?

These are fundamental questions in the literature on aid and the search for answers, even for a minor player like Australia, is an exciting exercise.

Although it is not presented as such, Gounder's study has four distinct parts. The first presents a very brief history of the origins of aid (Chapter 1) and an equally brief look at the impact of aid on economic growth and income distribution (Chapter 2).

The second part describes Australia's aid program (Chapter 3); analyses the extent to which the Jackson Report's recommendation on the geographic distribution of aid has been implemented (Chapter 4); and presents results on trends in per capita Australian aid to countries over time and on differences in such aid between recipient countries (Chapter 5).

The third part introduces different models of aid motivation, including the author's humanitarianism model (Chapter 6); tests the validity of these models for Australian aid, using first per capita aid given (Chapters 7 and 8) and second absolute aid given (Chapter 9) as the dependent variable; and examines the presence of bias in Australian aid against lower income and densely populated countries (Chapter 10).

The fourth part summarises the study's findings and points to areas where further research is needed (Chapter 11).

Gounder's study is a welcome contribution to the economic literature on Australian aid, especially since so little

has been written before or after the publication of the Jackson Report in 1984. However, its usefulness is reduced by the absence of an overarching analytical framework, a less than systematic treatment of the issues raised and the use of a rather heavy prose style.

Whether aid is given as a response to the needs of recipient countries or as a response to protecting the vested interests of donor countries, there is an assumption that it will promote economic growth in the recipient countries. For the first motivation, the link is self-evident. For the second, it is less so, but nonetheless real, for without growth any commercial or strategic gain will be but temporary. Likewise, if a donor country's welfare also depends on the aid it provides to others, this welfare will be adversely affected if the aid results in greater poverty.

The impact of foreign aid on economic growth is discussed in Chapter 2 but only fleetingly, without doing justice to the rich literature on the subject, and not as the implicit backdrop for the discussion later on.

The force of Gounder's findings could also have been strengthened by a re-arrangement of his material. The discussion of the Pearson Report, the Brandt Report and the Jackson Report at the end of Chapter 2 is misplaced. It belongs in Chapter 1 but without the Jackson Report. The Jackson Report might have been big news in Australian aid circles but is small beer internationally.

Part 3 (Chapters 3, 4 and 5) should have been limited to a description of the Australian aid program, with the Jackson Report as a backdrop. Important observations are made on Australian aid (for example, its geographic distribution and differences in the per capita aid level to countries), but no explanations offered. In this context, some of the material in Chapter 4 is misplaced.

Reviews

Such explanations should be given in Part 3. For example, an important finding from Part 2 is the shift in Australia's bilateral aid to countries in its adjacent regions. This would suggest the 'donor interest' model holding sway over the 'recipient need' model. Part 3 does test the validity of such models but it does not flow logically from the way Part 2 has been presented.

The testing of the aid motivation models also leaves something to be desired. Take, for example, the author's own humanitarianism model. While the proposition that a country's utility is dependent on what it and its poorer neighbours consume is acceptable, it does not necessarily follow that the per capita aid it gives is inversely related to the per capita income of its recipient countries.

Another questionable practice is the use of the donor's per capita aid level as the dependent variable in testing the three models. The Australian population stays the same whatever the identity of the recipients and it makes sense to use the per capita aid level only if the exercise is to explain variations in the per capita aid given by different donors to the same group of recipient countries over a given period. That others have made the same mistake is no excuse.

Last but not least, the force of Gounder's argument is reduced by a style that is not easy to read. This is perhaps not surprising as the book is a revised PhD thesis and reads like one. Possibly the lesson here is for publishing houses to take a firmer line in asking not only that the book contain up-to-date data but also that it be rewritten for a much wider audience.

Lest it be thought that I find little of value in this book, let me hasten to say that Gounder has produced a useful study. I have benefited from reading it and am impressed by the author's command of

the aid literature and the econometric techniques used. As a member of the Jackson Committee, I was naturally delighted to learn that the results show that many of our ideas were implemented. What did not come through in the study is that changes in the direction and type of aid would not have been possible if the recommendations on the administration and management of AIDAB (now AusAID) had not been accepted and implemented. In my view, these recommendations are the most important of the many made by the Jackson Committee.

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Human Resource Development: small Pacific island countries

Pacific Studies Series, Office of Pacific Development, Asian Development Bank, Manila, 1995, ISBN 971 561 072 2, 201pp.

This publication is the first in a new series of Pacific studies being sponsored by the Asian Development Bank. Based on a number of overview papers prepared between 1993 and 1995, this single volume is a collation of the original studies on five small Pacific Island countries: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Niue and Tuvalu. With the exception of Niue, the studies were undertaken by the Asian Development Bank. The original study on Niue was done by the New Zealand government. A further set of overview studies on other Pacific island countries was completed by the World Bank.

The volume contains a consolidated analysis for each of the five countries, a concise sub-regional overview and a number of short reports on women in development in selected Pacific countries.

Reviews

The overall purpose of the original country studies was to assist governments and donors in formulating plans, policies and programs for human resource development. Link between education and training, social cohesion and sustained economic activity and growth are pursued throughout the document.

A valuable feature of this summary volume is that it provides a succinct treatment of the principal human resource development characteristics and issues for each country and at the same time places these in a sub-regional setting. As well as gaining insight into the resource-related characteristics of each of the targeted countries, the reader has the opportunity to examine similarities and differences among countries. This process is facilitated by the carefully crafted Overview and by the inclusion in several of the tables of comparable data for Fiji, Tonga, Western Samoa, Kiribati, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands. As a consequence, governments, private sector leaders and donors can more readily enhance their understanding of a given country by considering development needs and strategies, not only within that country, but also across other small Pacific island countries.

The format for the five target countries is similar, with a brief analysis of key macroeconomic and social indicators, having particular regard to factors such as employment trends, labour market needs, the development of workplace skills, gender issues and planning. This broad analysis is followed by a description of key indicators and trends for education and training and of related expenditures. Consideration is then given to strategies for improving human resource development responsiveness in this sector. The analyses of education and training issues include access, equity, quality, relevance, demand/supply and cost-effectiveness.

While the proposed strategies for addressing education and training issues vary in detail from country to country there is a marked similarity in terms of the main thrust for remediation. Common strategies include institutional strengthening for system planning, management and monitoring of effectiveness; attention to standards; reviewing of curricula and materials; teacher development and deployment; and upgrading of facilities and equipment. In most cases, the strategies are accompanied by a statement of priorities, followed by quasi-recommendations for action.

The proposals are intended as a basis for discussion. While a compelling rationale can be found for each of the proposals when considered separately, there is a sense in which, collectively, they give the impression of being formula driven. Accordingly, there is a need to consider the cumulative effect of the full set of proposals for each country. The basis for such caution is not so much a concern for desirability, but rather for feasibility and sustainability. As the reviewer did not have access to the original studies, it was not possible to ascertain the extent to which the recommendations were drawn from earlier papers.

The final section on women in development is in the form of a series of case studies on Cook Islands, Kiribati, Tuvalu and Solomon Islands. Though valuable in terms of providing a brief outline of the general position in each of the countries, the section appears to be something of an afterthought.

Generally, the presentations are clear and very readable. There are helpful figures and references, however, the inclusion of a regional and five country maps would have been useful. There are some inconsistencies in style and a number of editorial errors.

This is a valuable publication. It should be compulsory reading for senior public and private sector leaders in each

Reviews

of the countries and for any donors undertaking or considering project initiatives in the sub-region. The messages are equally applicable to consultants, to those interested in human resource development small countries, and to students of development education. The theme of interrelatedness among the economic, social and education and training sectors is particularly pertinent to all parties committed to investment and long-term sustainability in the smaller Pacific island countries.

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Island Exiles

Jemima Garrett, ABC Books, Sydney, 1996,
ISBN 0 7333 0485 0, 200 pp, A\$16.95

Jemima Garrett's book on the experiences of the Nauruans during World War II is a good book, and well worth reading for a general as well as for a specialist readership on the Pacific.

Garrett has worked for the ABC as a Pacific reporter for many years as well as writing for the *Pacific Islands Monthly*. She brings a clear and interesting style to this story while disguising the depth of research and the craft of construction behind the writing of the story.

The book begins with the story of the Angam girl. The birth of this child in the 1932 symbolised for Nauruans the survival of their people, since at her birth Nauruans numbered 1500. This was a rebuilding of their population after the losses through disease that followed colonisation first by Germany in 1888, and then by Australia following the colonial settlement of World War I. Angam day again became central to

Nauruans during and after the second war, since at least one third of them died during that war. Now Nauruans number over 3000 people and their future is not in doubt from war or disease but from the exhaustion of Nauru's phosphate deposits, whose exploitation enabled Nauruans to become the richest of Pacific islanders in the post World War II period.

The central story of this book focuses on the World War II period. It tells of the abandonment of Nauru by Australian forces in 1942 when a Japanese invasion force threatened. The Japanese took over in August 1942 and imposed control of the island. The Nauruans were forced off much of their land, pressed into forced labour to build an airstrip and to mine phosphate, and felt Japanese military discipline in every part of their lives.

One part of the Japanese strategy in the Pacific was to build Truk (a group of islands to the northwest of Nauru) into their major military base for Pacific operations. More than one thousand people were deported to Truk for the duration of the war—the centrepiece of Garrett's story is what happened to these Nauruans.

In the early years on Truk, the Nauruans reconstructed two communities on separate islands of the group and, ably led by Head Chief Detudamo, worked out a *modus vivendi* with the Japanese in terms of food, work and protection of their women. Given its status as a major base, Truk then began to be bombed incessantly: many died, including many Nauruans. The allied blockade of Truk meant that it could not be adequately resupplied, so that severe food shortages resulted in malnutrition and starvation. In these circumstances, Japanese brutality escalated over food stealing, and horrendous punishments of beatings resulting in deaths were common among Nauruans.

Reviews

Even in these circumstances the two communities hung together. By the end of the war however a third of the Truk Nauruans had died from starvation, from the effects of allied bombing, from illness and from Japanese brutality.

Some months after the end of the war the Truk Nauruans were returned home. Garrett then tells the story of what happened to those Nauruans who were left behind on Nauru. They also suffered brutalisation by the Japanese, bombing and starvation and also had many deaths. But the remaining community had become more fragmented than the Truk community. They lacked effective leadership, there were accusations of collaboration with the Japanese, and because the Japanese had transported the Banabans from Ocean Island along with Gilbertese to Nauru during the war, the Nauruans had been a minority on their own island.

The story ends with the joyous reuniting of the community on Nauru, and the return of the Australian administration and representatives of the British Phosphate Commission who held the concession to mine phosphate there. The Australians expected to re-establish the imperial order as before, with the Nauruans 'bottomside' and themselves 'topside' of the island, a spatial location that symbolised who was in charge. The Nauruans were not willing to accept this and thus began the struggle for power, first led by Detudamo and then by the younger generation led by Hammer de Roburt—a movement which resulted some 20 years later in Nauru's independence from Australia and control of the phosphate. As elsewhere in the Pacific, the war experience had shown the imperial powers to have feet of clay, and had begun the erosion of the power of the colonialists.

This bare-bones telling of the story conveys little of the richness or subtlety in Garrett's writing of it. This book not only fills a gap in war history and in the history of the Nauruans, but in using the voices of the Nauruans themselves as its main source, reconstructs that period in individual human and community terms. The voices of Nauruans like Agnes Harris and Violet McKay—through extensive interviews—tell us what they were like and give a clear impression of the distinctive character of the Nauruan community on Truk. These interviews are supplemented by the use of diaries of the war by Nauruans, Nai Fai Ma (a Chinese), and the war diaries of Australians and Japanese. Garrett has used these original sources with great effect to give us an understanding of the daily lives of Nauruans on Truk and on Nauru.

These individual and community experiences are set within clearly drawn contexts of wider events. Garrett sketches in the Australian and British Phosphate Commission imperial style before the war, Japanese movements of islanders around the Pacific during the war and clear explanations of the Japanese and Allied war plans and actions which are necessary background to what happened to the Nauruans.

In short, *Island Exiles* is a gem. It fills a significant hole in the history of the Nauruan people and does it in such a way as to recreate convincingly an era of sadness and deprivation in human terms. And it is good history in its good use of primary and secondary sources in a creative way to serve its central purpose.

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Reviews

Tradition versus Democracy in the South Pacific: Fiji, Tonga and Western Samoa

Stephanie Lawson, Cambridge Asia Pacific Series, Cambridge University Press Melbourne, 1995, ISBN 0 5214 9638 1, 228pp. A\$75

Stephanie Lawson's new book extends her earlier work on the failure of democratic politics in Fiji. Here comparisons are made with Tonga, where a pro-democracy movement is challenging the constitutional privileges of the nobility, and Western Samoa which adopted universal suffrage in 1991. Meanwhile she enters, with zeal and sophistication, a wider and older debate about the universal claims of western values, and the character of resistance to them. That debate currently includes arguments about 'Asian values', and the importance of 'good government' for developing countries, but it goes back at least as far as conservative, nationalist reactions to the universal claims of the French revolution. It is her ability to apply Western political theory and engage in important contemporary arguments that has made Lawson's contribution to the study of South Pacific politics so distinctive, and valuable.

The introduction lines up her target, which is the use of tradition to shore up local élites, and immunise them from criticism from within, and without. She notes an ambiguity in some claims for tradition: reactions against 'the West' have sometimes adopted Western ideas, including that of a fixed, unchanging, communal past disturbed by the fatal impact of Europeans. Lawson identifies her project with those inside each country, particularly in Tonga, who are fighting for democracy. Her enemy is relativism: she believes in that purpose of social sciences to equip people to make value judgments (p. 6).

The intellectual centrepiece of the book is the sustained essay on tradition and democracy. Showing how traditionalism treats the past as authoritative, and continuous with the present, she finds some South Pacific defences of tradition speaking in a very similar language to European conservatism.

Three case studies follow, based on wide reading, local newspaper and parliamentary reports, her own fieldwork (in Fiji), and more recent interviews (in Tonga and Western Samoa). The two chapters on Tonga and Western Samoa are the most original and engaging. Each begins with a careful, clear headed account of each country's political history, paying particular attention to processes of centralisation, and intersection with the West.

She provides a valuable account of the rise of the pro-democracy movement in Tonga, and conservative reactions to it. Tongan intellectuals are comfortable with the language of Western democratic theory, and in Tonga Lawson finds the clearest exemplar of her argument about the opposition between tradition and democracy. Western Samoa is more paradoxical. At independence, Western Samoans had voted to limit rights to stand and vote in elections to holders of chiefly titles (*matai*). The number of these titles had since proliferated, widening eligibility to vote and stand in elections. Lawson describes the subtle debates about democracy and tradition that took place, particularly in a parliamentary committee chaired by Tupua Tamasese. She concludes, with some Samoan observers, that the eventual adoption of universal suffrage was, in part, a move to conserve tradition, by removing it from contamination by electoral politics.

The chapter on Fiji is less satisfying. In part this is because, as the author says, the

Reviews

arguments against democracy in Fiji invoke ethnic difference as well tradition. It is also because the author gets occasionally bogged down in defending political and intellectual positions taken after the 1987 coups. Nevertheless, the chapter gives an efficient account of the 1990 Constitution, and the two general elections following it. However, there are no local voices as promised in the introduction, and which enriched the accounts of Western Samoa and Tonga. They were not silent, particularly after electoral politics started up again in 1992. At the end of the chapter Lawson briefly refers to local dialogue about democracy that grew up around a series of cross-ethnic and cross-party 'consultations' sponsored by Yash Ghai, academics from the University of the South Pacific, and an international non-government organisation. These canvassed ideas about proportional representation, indigenous, cultural and minority rights that cut across what Lawson earlier called the 'plural society' syndrome.

Meanwhile, the global debate on democracy has shifted since the time of the coups. Particularly relevant to the arguments of the Fiji chapter are Canadian philosophical attempts to reconcile liberalism with indigenous rights, and to address Quebec claims to recognition as a 'distinct society' in Canada—Carens' review of Lawson's earlier book, to which she refers (p. 51), draws on this tradition. The Fijian regime's attempt to shift the discourse from 'race' to 'indigenouness' brings the argument home to inhabitants of settler societies like Australia and Canada.

The conclusion weighs in against the valorisation of identity, authenticity, and insider accounts of the South Pacific. Lawson is on the side of the universal, though universalism has sometimes been

as bullying as Fijian particularism. My own preference would be for a system that accepts differences, without having to naturalise them, or having to look to their eventual elimination. It is a measure of the success of Lawson's latest book that it invites and engages argument—and makes the reader look forward to her next excursion.

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