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## REVIEW

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Cluny Macpherson and La'avasa Macpherson. *The Warm Winds of Change. Globalisation in Contemporary Samoa*. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2009. Pp. 224. ISBN 971869404451. US\$45.00 paper.

Reviewed by *Unasa Leulu Felise Va'a*

Cluny and La'avasa Macpherson's book on social change in Samoa is an excellent read, well structured and full of helpful anecdotes based largely on the authors' own experiences in Samoa and among migrants in New Zealand. Central to the thesis is the idea that Samoan society has been undergoing social change since the earliest contacts with Europeans as a result of the impact of the Western ideologies represented by Christianity, capitalism, and colonialism.

According to the authors, Christianity introduced the notion of a "single, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent god" instead of the numerous district and family gods that predominated in ancient Samoa (p. 101). Capitalism introduced the notion of private property, individual ownership, and exclusive access to land and the rights to retain profits from its exploitation (p. 102). Previously, land was communal property, and any profits that accrued from its use reverted to the extended family. Colonialism introduced the idea of nation state in which "power, authority and administration were centralized primarily for the convenience of colonial powers" (p. 103). Before global contact, Samoan government rested largely in the hands of village councils, that is to say, the political system was decentralized. To these three ideological models may be added a fourth one: the scientific model of health, which effectively excludes supernatural agency

as the cause of disease and instead substitutes a scientific one based on the agency of bacteria and viruses.

However, the effects of these changes were not destructive because they were controlled largely by the Samoans themselves to the extent that they did not seriously disrupt the traditional aspects of social organization. The effects of these changes relating to “the foundations of its theocracy, the essence of the human condition, the actiology and causes of health and illness, the nature of land and labour, and the character and origins of governance and the law” were largely invisible, the authors argued (p. 116). This was because the changes “could be grafted on to existing bodies of Samoan belief” so as to “minimize their impact on the Samoan worldview and lifestyle and on their personal standing” (pp. 116–17). In time, the memory of their origins was lost, having been internalized. Thus, “Each of the ‘new’ ideologies represented major departures from Samoan models of society, and yet each seems to have been incorporated into the worldview and lifestyle of the village so completely that they are no longer thought of as having origins beyond the village” (p. 105).

Samoan secular and religious elites have largely succeeded in controlling the extent and pace of social change in the past, but this may not be true in the future, the authors argue. They provide three reasons for this. First, Samoa is increasingly exposed to new ideologies, and elites may no longer be able to control the content, speed, or the ways in which these enter and are incorporated into Samoan culture and society (pp. 119–20). Second, Samoan elites are becoming more diverse than was once the case and may not be able or willing to form a single view on new ideas or to agree to a consensual course of action as was once the case (p. 120). Third, those agencies promoting these contemporary ideologies may have greater leverage than those that promoted some of the earlier ones and may not be as willing to allow Samoan elites to control the process (p. 120).

That is to say, change is inevitable, always has been, except that now it is going to become even more difficult for the indigenous elites to manage, and the leadership of the elites themselves will be challenged by the new nontraditional centers of power (e.g., by the untitled migrants, human rights groups, aid donors). Even the leadership of the center of power, the Samoan heartland itself, will be challenged by the nontraditional migrant centers overseas. Thus, the center may have to “reconfigure itself in ways that make it easier to embrace or risk losing the very commitment on which its continued existence depends” (p. 191).

In their concluding chapter, the authors relate that the emphasis of their study has been on the dynamism of social change rather than on cultural continuity in Samoan society. The authors feel that emphasis on cultural

continuity understates real changes that are taking place, as well as the dynamism evident in the society's engagement with challenges from global forces and the concerns of the village people with issues of social change (pp.187–88).

The study took many years and is full of interesting and relevant anecdotes from relatives, neighbors, and migrants. However, I would have liked to see an extensive input of statistical tables, especially when comparing the achievements of one period (e.g., economic performance) with another. Because this book makes an ideal text for social change in Samoa, I think the inclusion of statistical tables, already available from government records and other academic publications, would have produced an even more exciting publication. Such tables would have put the comments and narratives of the authors in better perspective.

Another minor point is the year of the arrival of the first Wesleyan missionary, Rev. Peter Turner. According to the book (p. 31), Rev. Turner visited Samoa in 1828, but according to my sources, Rev. Turner arrived in Samoa in 1835. He arrived at Faleu, Manono, and that day has been commemorated in Samoan oral history as the *Taaao na i Faleu ma Utuagigi* (the historical day at Faleu and Utuagigi, commemorating the arrival of the Wesleyan mission).

It was a Samoan-turned-Methodist named Teoneula (or some such name) who arrived in Samoa in 1828 and began setting up Wesleyan congregations at Salelologa and Palauli, Savaii, based on those he had encountered in Tonga, while he was living there. He might have been in exile in Tonga as a member of a defeated war party. Fauea, the Samoan who accompanied the London Missionary Society missionaries John Williams and Charles Barff to Samoa in August 1830, was also another famous war exile of the period. Although Samoans living in Wallis and Futuna might have encouraged Catholic missionaries to evangelize Samoa (p. 32), it was not until 1845 that they first arrived under the sponsorship of the powerful chief, Mataafa.

### Conclusion

The Macphersons have done a magnificent survey and have looked and commented brilliantly on the extensive literature about social change in Samoa. My main criticism has been the absence of statistical tables that are readily available from government annual reports and other records. Perhaps it is a matter of different priorities, description and analysis versus mathematical formulae.

The thesis about social change is easily sustained, and the reasons given for this are widely known; namely, Christianity, capitalism, and colonialism. Also, the authors argue that the new forces that induce social change, such as global forces represented by international human rights conventions, human rights organizations, aid donors, and so on, will be even harder for the traditional elites to accept.

The argument about the dialectical oppositions posed by cultural continuity and the dynamism of change must surely pose a riddle for all concerned. The central question is, when all is said and done, is it the nature of society to resist change (as one noted social scientist said) or to welcome any opportunity to change? This is difficult to answer, especially because even the Macphersons admit the existence of cultural continuities. What we are witnessing, especially about current events, is that the propensity to resist change is commensurate with the desire to welcome it, even force it. Thus, if Samoan society shows dynamism in welcoming and coping with social change, to the same extent it will resist social change. That is, neither side wins. Or so it seems.