REVIEWS

Ahmed Ali and Ron Crocombe, eds., *Politics in Melanesia.* Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies of the University of the South Pacific, 1982. Pp. xii., 170, illustrated, maps, index. F$10.00 cloth. F$7.00 paper.

———, *Politics in Micronesia.* Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies of the University of the South Pacific, 1983. Pp. xii, 168, illustrated, maps, index. F$8.00 paper.

Melanesia and Micronesia are studies in geopolitical contrast. The decolonial process alone separates the recent historical events of these two cultural areas in a distinct manner. For Kiribati, the "local concept of independence . . . meant more than political autonomy." Though there was a noticeable absence of I-Kiribati nationalism, individual island patriotism governed the course toward independence. Once separation from Tuvalu was achieved, the issue of Banaban secession became a primary obstacle to final self-government. While such a complex issue obfuscated negotiations, Roniti Teiwaki believes that the decolonial process "could have been better facilitated if the British Government had so wished by stalling separatist aspirations."

Changes in the political status of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands also followed a curious course of events and circumstances. Though American policy in the early 1970s was committed to preserving the geopolitical integrity of Micronesia, the differing objectives of each major island group soon led to fragmentation of the area. In the Northern Marianas, Agnes McPhetres remarks that it was easy to become both "pessimistic and critical" with the rapid manner in which decisions were made, commitments given, and structures established

during the negotiations for commonwealth status, without any real understanding of what was really happening. With the Federated State of Micronesia the problem was the "slow transfer of administrative and budgetary authority from the Trust Territory Government." One of the more creative responses by the FSM government was to seek status as a state agency in order to facilitate direct federal appropriations to the islands. The principle of decentralization of authority, according to David Hanlon and William Eperiam, has been one of "the most delicate problems," especially over questions of jurisdiction between the local and central governments.

In Belau (Palau), economic development and self-determination are the "generally accepted goals" of the islanders. The local leadership, however, has yet to develop a "consensus on the strategy and methods of achieving these goals." In spite of such aspirations, there is still a "strongly-felt desire to maintain and preserve selected aspects of culture and tradition amidst the many changes taking place in the region." Curiously, however, Belauans have a "marked propensity, almost a predilection, to adopt foreign ways while firmly believing the adoptions will not change them fundamentally." Among the paramount questions facing the new republic is how to reconcile local aspirations with the American demands emanating from their strategic interests. The negotiations over "free association" and the corresponding controversy over the ratification of the final document revealed the underlying tensions among the competing members of the local elite groups. Land use, environmental pollution, and economic development, conclude Gwenda Iyechad and Frank Quimby, will likely persist as paramount issues in this particular respect.

Similar though distinguishable questions confront the Marshalls. Divisiveness is a "significant problem for the Marshalls." Building consensus and trust is as "important as political and economic independence," Following the political separation of the islands from the Trust Territory, the development of factions was hardly surprising. Although the government is accomplishing certain things, it has not been building either trust or confidence. Differences, says Daniel Smith, based upon party affiliation, traditional status, and family ties enter into political consideration across a broad front.

The struggle for civil and political rights has been a long-term matter for Guam. After lengthy periods of colonial rule, increased contact with American mainlanders "intensified the desire of the Guamanians for citizenship and self-government." In spite of the impetus to liberalize the territorial government, the "notion of separating from the United States is difficult to accept." As a ward of Congress, Guamanians, in the

opinion of Carlos Taitano, will find it necessary to continue the struggle for greater self-determination.

For Nauru, the first independent Micronesian state, "there are no extremes of wealth and poverty, nor any rigid class lines." Unlike the rest of Micronesia, Nauru's economic condition is without anxiety. Although expenditures have been lavish by any standard, the resources and reserves are still substantial. Such fortunate circumstances, however, are not without problems, both real and potential. For Nauru, the politics of the island are synonymous with the politics of phosphate. According to Ron Crocombe and Christine Giese, absentee leadership due to this fact makes the island republic especially vulnerable to mischief.

While distance and isolation characterize much of Micronesia, cultural differences operating within relatively small and populous areas are typical of Melanesia. For Papua New Guinea, the colonial legacy has persisted in the domestic psychology and administration of government to the extent, in Stephen Pokawin's opinion, that the "lack of major changes in the inherited institutions have been caused by the lack of political will and initiative from both leaders and the population." Independence has become more complicated "with Papua New Guineans going against themselves." Many people are now "scheming for political advantages which in the colonial period were not so obvious."

By contrast, Irian Jaya's path to independence has a long and bitter history. The "Indonesianisation" of the Melanesian population has contributed to the emergence of a native resistance movement with attendant raids, reprisals, and refugees. The political and diplomatic history of Irian Jaya is an example of "constant betrayal in which the interests of a small Melanesian population have been sacrificed to those of its larger neighbors." Peter Savage notes that with such an observation in mind, any attempt to fashion a "Pacific way" will be constrained by the needs of metropolitan capital.

In New Caledonia, colonial repression of the native society approached genocidal proportions. Yann Celene Uregei feels that there are two major sources of tension. The economic causes are attributed to local mineral resources wherein a small number of metropolitan consortia have managed to monopolize the metalurgical industry with the aid of the French administration and armed forces. Politically, the French administration has consistently refused to consider the demands of the Melanesians for self-government. Successive metropolitan statutes have suppressed Kanak aspirations while enhancing metropolitan power.

Many of the independent Melanesian states have been almost routine-

ly confronted with maintaining the integrity of their respective plural societies. As described by Ahmed Ali, Fiji society possesses a "symbiotic economic relationship" among its constituent communities. In politics, to the contrary, major political parties follow communal and ethnic lines. The seeming paradox in the political configuration has produced mutual anxieties and insecurity in local society. The Indians dominate the mercantile and agricultural sectors as well as the demographic profile. The Fijians, on the other hand, possess substantial landholdings much of which is in demand by Indian agriculturalists. The differences contribute to strengthening racial stereotypes, which in turn has led to a decline in inter-community relations since independence. The compensatory advantages given to Fijians in education and the civil service compelled a drop in Indian support for the Fijian-dominated Alliance party. Correspondingly, the rise of the Fijian nationalist party intensified not only racial divisions, but also the divisions among the Fijians themselves. Similarly, religious distinctions among the Indian community underscored this aspect in the internal politics of the Indian-dominated Federation party. If nothing else, Fiji has managed to maintain a modicum of social stability even though race remains "the most significant factor in politics."

The insular fragmentation of Vanuatu is a fundamental consideration in its politics. In spite of French resistance to independence, a political turning point in Vanuatu's political development came not out of a change in colonial policies, but rather out of the mistaken belief that a francophone political majority would soon emerge that would enable continued metropolitan presence in the islands. The success of ni-Vanuatu nationalism produced contrary results and an impetus that France and Great Britain could neither overcome nor inhibit. Multiple intervention in post-independence affairs, concur Grace Molisa, Nikenike Vurobaravu, and Howard Van Trease, resulted in short-lived secessionist actions on Espiritu Santo and Tanna. Though independence became a reality, economic developlment was left to an uncertain future. The former condominium government provided little in the way of support for an economically viable infrastructure. The colonial government, moreover, did little or nothing to qualify the islanders to fill key administrative posts. Such factors aside, one of the critical issues facing the new state is that of "maintaining and expanding the support of the majority, to embrace those disaffected groups which were involved in the pre-independence rebellion."

The concept of an independent Solomon Islands is a "new phenomenon" to the majority of Melanesians. The symbols of nationhood for the most part came into existence only since independence. The develop-

ment of a national identity, however, has been encouraging. Two important factors, argues Francis Saemala, are integrally important in this particular respect. First, "senior public servants must become more sensitive to the real social needs of the people for education, health services, and a sense of belonging to the government and the nation," The second consideration is that "the development of the economy must be such that important resources are not drained out in the pursuit of modernization along the line of industrial nations."

The similarities and differences in the experiences of various Pacific island groups make for interesting copy. What is especially salient is the growth of nascent forms of nationalism. Though most of the independent states in Melanesia assumed the same territorial configurations imposed by previous colonial regimes, almost the opposite occurred in Micronesia where separation or fragmentation became a key characteristic of pre-independence development. Such permutations in national self-perceptions are in themselves important features of the region. While each chapter of these two volumes is prefaced with useful data, it would have been a service for the editors to have provided a final summarizing chapter analyzing the major directions that political movement in these two cultural regions has taken. The two works, however, are most useful in understanding the politics unique to these island groups.

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