

Barry Macdonald, *Cinderellas of the Empire: Towards a History of Kiribati and Tuvalu*. Canberra: Australian National University Press. 1982. Pp. xii, 335, maps, bibliography, subject index. A\$19.50.

To write a book on two distinct island groups, one Micronesian and the other Polynesian, from precontact times to the present, is a daunting task. Yet this book goes a long way toward accomplishing this. It is well researched and, though a general history, is committed to minute detail and includes individual interpretation.

Dr. Macdonald's major theme is that despite the contact with European whalers, beachcombers, and traders, the encroachment of Christian missionaries (English, American, Hawaiian, and French), the accommodation of British government officials and their policies, and the impact of World War II, both Kiribati (Gilbert Islands) and Tuvalu (Ellice Islands) have retained their distinctive cultural identity. Both island groups have adapted to Western innovations and ideas in their own way and at their own pace.

Each phase of the exposure to the Western world is presented. First came the traders from the mid-1830s onward, who generally dealt with the Gilbertese (I Kiribati) according to the values of the host culture. In 1857 came the first white missionary, Hiram Bingham Jr., son of the famed missionary to Hawaii of the 1820s. The mission representing Boston Puritanism did not prosper, primarily, according to Macdonald, because the islanders lacked extensive contact with whites. The I Kiribati had not begun to question their own mores nor could they perceive any value in the Christian message. The London Missionary Society, which set up missionary bases in the Ellice Islands, fared much better. With greater exposure to traders and their goods, these islanders had already begun to examine their traditional beliefs. A vacuum of receptivity existed as it had in Hawaii in the 1820s. But whether the missions were a success or failure is only one issue. The other is the effects, subtle or otherwise, that the

missions generated. Macdonald neglects to note the important pre-conditions the missions fostered that so eased the establishment of the British Protectorate in 1892.

The first resident commissioner for the Protectorate was Charles Swayne. This book would have benefited from a table of all resident commissioners and their respective dates of service. Swayne collected all the island laws, many of which had been modified by Christian teaching, and devised a common code. He recognized high chiefs in the northern section of the Gilbert Islands and so froze a fluid situation, for no one high chief maintained "office" for an extended period of time, except in Butaritari and Abemama where hereditary chieftainships prevailed. In the southern and Ellice Islands, the office of magistrate was established, which bypassed the authority of the old men of *the maneaba* or *maneapa* (community houses) of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands respectively. Swayne also "created" the village style of habitation for hitherto the Gilbertese had lived in scattered hamlets.

It was Telfer Campbell, however, a fiery Orangeman, who from 1895 to 1908 left the deepest imprint on Gilbert and Ellice Island society for many a decade. Campbell desired model communities and established an administrative hierarchy to bring this into effect. He repudiated the policy of maintaining the power of high chiefs and island governments. Instead, he wanted law and order in the British style. Nor did he have much regard for religion, whether Protestant or Catholic (the French Catholics had arrived on Butaritari in 1889), and instead proclaimed work as "a good religion for the natives." A public works campaign was set up involving all adults.

Yet adherence to the old values persisted. High chiefs and their families remained a potent political force, although not every island had such figures. The chiefly elites often undermined the authority of native governments. The *unimane* of old men of the Gilberts remained aloof from native governments but presided in informal councils that continued to settle land disputes, organize village social life, and act as a check on the native governments.

The Ten Year Plan of Reconstruction and Development and Welfare, approved by the British after World War II, emphasized rehabilitation, the provision of new land to relieve the atoll overpopulation, and the improvement of social services. These services consisted of the high school, a teacher training college, a new hospital, a small-ship harbor at Betio, and an administrative center. All these developments took place on South Ta-

rawa, Gilbert Islands, in the 1950s. And SO began the exodus to South Tarawa that continues today. By the 1970s one-quarter of the Gilbertese population lived on South Tarawa.

On South Tarawa traditional values were modified to adapt to the new system of the cash economy; but they did not evaporate. The I Kiribati believe it is shameful to either exploit or be exploited by a fellow islander. Translated into practical terms, this means that excess fish cannot be sold but must be given away. It is, however, acceptable to sell one's goods to a cooperative where face-to-face transactions are avoided. Even on the outer islands, the *mronron*, a form of cooperative, exists. They have been organized because they represent a multiplicity of sharing. Also, a Gilbertese would be loath to work for another person since independence is highly valued. Similarly, however, it is permissible to work for a seemingly anonymous institution such as the government.

Meanwhile, the colony drew closer to separation and independence for the two distinct island groups. In 1975 separation was completed and Ellice islanders left South Tarawa. Three years later the Ellice Islands became the independent Tuvalu, and the following year Kiribati became an independent nation.

Cinderellas of the Empire concentrates far more on Kiribati than Tuvalu, limiting discussion of the latter to the beginning and conclusion of the book. However, the book more than succeeds in its goal of being "towards a history of Kiribati and Tuvalu" and is essential reading for any who wish to know more of these two new nations, whether it be their past origins or their present political situation.

Sandra J. Rennie
Australian National University