

William L. Rodman and Dorothy Ayers Counts, eds., *Middlemen and Brokers in Oceania*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1982. Pp. ix, 307. \$16.00.

Middlemen and Brokers in Oceania is the ninth volume published in the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania (ASAO) Monograph Series. The collection of papers--an introduction, eight case studies, and a concluding contribution--has its origins in an ASAO meeting of nine anthropologists with research experience on "middlemen and brokers in Pacific societies." Their working session led to a symposium involving the presentation of papers and including as a discussant an anthropologist, Marc Swartz, who had investigated middleman roles outside Oceania. His views round off the volume in the concluding chapter.

This collection of seminar papers is linked by the concept of "middleman" but--as is always the case in edited volumes--it is quite variable in interest, quality, method, and style. James Boutilier (a historian) has written an interesting account of Solomon Islanders' evolving conceptions of the British colonial government during a fifty-year period (1893-1943). It begins with a personal touch: "One day in June, 1972, I was sitting by the sea at Munda in the Solomon Islands. . . ." The narrative soon takes on a more familiar, detached, historical tone, but the sketches of the district officers--rumors of "womanizing tendencies" here, "celebrated dipsomaniacs" there--are memorable and make useful points about the vicissitudes of colonial service.

The other contributors are anthropologists commenting on the results of their field research as well as on questions of definition and approach relating to the study of mediators, or go-betweens, between and among individuals, groups, bureaucracies, cultural traditions, and whole societies. William Rodman discusses middlemen acting as quasi-judicial mediators involving personal-community conflicts in Vanuatu. In fact, the title of his paper is misleading: his research was conducted between 1969 and 1971, and between 1978 and 1979, in the New Hebrides. The islands became Vanuatu in 1980, but his research and findings relate to an earlier period. Daniel Hughes and Debra Connelly contribute an interesting, succinct, well-written chapter on Ponapean attitudes toward elected officials at several levels of the colonial political structure. The major defect of the article--which the authors acknowledge--is that most of their data were gathered in 1966 (or sixteen years prior to the publication of this book) and so "it would be false to assume that the situations described here have remained the same." This is a comment applicable to many of the papers. Nevertheless the Hughes-Connelly account of what might be described as

the Ponapeans' first impressions of leaders legitimated according to what were then novel criteria is plausible and thought provoking. Dorothy Ayers Counts' paper investigates a middleman's capacity to act "as an agent of modernizing change" and centers around events occurring in two villages--Kandoka and Taveliai--in northwest New Britain, Papua New Guinea. A second Papua New Guinea study is the paper by Susan M. Pflanz-Cook and Edwin A. Cook on the Manga of the Jimi River Valley of the Western Highlands District. The fieldwork was conducted from 1961 through 1963, and again in 1971 and 1972. As in many of the papers, the effect of a person's acquaintance with new values and approaches--on himself and on his community--is examined in an interesting way although the conclusions are fairly unsurprising: "If he is successful in his persuasiveness, he will continue as a . . . leader. . . ."

Henry Rutz's paper is principally a study of strategies used by Fijian villagers to influence government involvement in rural development. His analysis is based upon models of "rational village brokerage," but in addition to the theoretical enterprise in which he is engaged there is a basic human story which he has to tell, and it is one that holds considerable fascination. Jean-Marc Philibert's paper is based on fieldwork conducted on the island of Efate in the then New Hebrides, between December 1971 and April 1973. The article provides a well-organized account of two middlemen, one a village chief, the other an entrepreneur, and the means by which one achieved success as a quiet innovator--a sort of Tory reformer--while the other's more flamboyant style led to his "downfall." Paul Shankman's study of *pulenu'u*, village mayors, in Western Samoa is lucid and sensible. It is most valuable in pointing out the obstacles facing alien administrations--in this instance both colonial and independent--seeking to introduce new leadership roles within profoundly conservative, hierarchical, closed communities.

Readers interested in a brief understanding of the central theories of the book will be impressed with the closing chapter by Marc Swartz. In it he summarizes and compares the authors' main propositions and findings in a thoughtful way, lending them an individual coherence and a collective congruence that they do not always possess. As a middleman himself, he successfully translates the authors' papers from their origins in field work and symposia to a full, book-length collection. In so doing he makes explicit some of the assumptions underlying anthropological research--assumptions that he describes as "not fully stated"--to conclude that "a somewhat different analytical approach would be beneficial and would lead to further advances." In general terms, there is a need for candid exchanges of research findings and theoretical perspectives among Pacific

researchers on themes of social and cultural change and continuity. To this overall effort, this book--like the monograph series of which it forms a part--makes a useful contribution.

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