Michael Allen, Ed. *Vanuatu: Politics, Economics and Ritual in Island Melanesia.* (Studies in Anthropology). Sydney: Academic Press, 1981. Pp. xviii, 425, maps, figures, tables, references, areal bibliography, index. Hardback $39.50.

Scholars of both Melanesian and Polynesian Studies have long been intrigued by the apparent social and cultural diversity of the islands of Vanuatu (formerly the New Hebrides) for several reasons. First, the patterning of this diversity has suggested not only problems for functional analyses, but also problems of complex historical processes at work that might be illuminated through the analytic lenses of various diffusionist and evolutionary models. Second, the structure of this variation has significantly. complicated those key sociocultural patterns that have been believed to characterize Melanesia as a distinctive cultural region. Third, particular features of the ethnographic complexity of this archipelago have led some scholars to speculate on its possible position as a "border region" that may shed light on the significance of often facile, global contrasts between the putatively "classic" patterns of Melanesia and Polynesia.

The societies and cultures of Vanuatu differ in matrilineal and patrilineal modes of descent and in the ways in which descent, kinship, and political-ritual organization are interrelated. The patterns of male-female relationships and the cultural ideology and social implementation of political-ritual power and authority are interwoven with these differences. Various kinds of secret associations are represented among the islands, but not all societies possess these institutional forms. Most societies have developed some form of political-ritual hierarchy based on ranked grades that unite men of different kin groups through tusked pig sacrifice, acquisition of insignia and titles of status, masks, dances, taboos, and various other ritual privileges, but the sociopolitical functions of these hierarchies vary among these societies.

These and other facets of sociocultural variation in Vanuatu have attracted focal attention in the early ethnographic surveys of Codrington, Humphreys, Rivers, and Speiser; the rich, but often ignored field studies of Deacon and Layard; and the long-term research endeavors of Guiart. Beyond the extensive work of Guiart, however, research interest in the area almost vanished until a revival in the late 1950s led by scholars from the University of Sydney. Allen's brief introduction situates the contributions to this new collection in their historical context, and a fine areal bibliography is provided. The fourteen original essays in the volume repre-

sent some of the best analyses of this recent renaissance, with new data and problems and often a sense of the continuing vitality of earlier interests.

Allen's first essay and Blackwood's contribution are the most explicitly comparative undertakings of the volume. Linking his sense of problem critically to the earlier concerns of Deacon, Layard, and Rivers, Allen explores the functional interdependence of modes of descent, local organization, secret societies, ranked grades, and political structure in north Vanuatu. He sees this form of comparative analysis, however, to be a prerequisite to understanding "the developmental processes that underlie cultural diversity, especially . . . in . . . political relations" (p. 10). In this regard, he proposes and defends a general hypothesis. On the one hand, in social systems characterized by patrilineal descent, patri-virilocal residence, discrete male cults, and flexible group membership, politically significant groups are generally aligned with kinship, affinity, and locality through extensions of the lineage principle. Politics becomes only partially detached from these foundations in elaborations of age grades and the status of the big-man in ceremonial exchange. On the other hand, matriliny is less flexible in political group formation due to inherent limitations based on natural features of female reproduction that are stressed in matrilineal reckoning. Avunculo-virilocal residence sunders the bond between kinship, locality, and political leadership, and different political institutions that are not bound to the constraints of kinship, notably the voluntary secret societies and public graded societies of north Vanuatu, are formed. This provocative essay has the most developed theoretical implications of perhaps all the contributions to this volume.

In a related, but contrasting comparative study of north Vanuatu, Blackwood explores variants of the graded society in east and west Aoba, the Small Islands, and southwest Malekula in relation to differences in social structure, political organization, and modes of exchange. He argues that the incorporation of balanced or generalized exchange in rank-taking ceremonies varies with respect to the dominant patterns of social structure, especially as descent criteria are exploited in the formation of local groups. Through the rank-taking idiom of exchange, which both defines and transcends descent-phrased local group formation, aspirants to political leadership use the graded society in competition for influence and power.

Most essays deal with problems of tradition and social change in political structure and tactics in relation to graded societies. In his essay on west Aoba, Allen suggests that orthodox, conservative images of the legiti-

macy of political ascendency and control in graded societies and other contexts have perhaps always been invaded by minor cultural innovations, rule-breaking inversions, and more revolutionary claims to new orthodoxies vis-à-vis tradition in Melanesia. In west Aoba, new religious, political, and economic institutions now provide tactical means of recasting traditional images of political legitimacy in new structural forms that remain linked to grade-taking ceremonies. Funabiki examines the elaborate symbolic significance and conservative, ritualized production of tusked pigs as sacrificial animals in the graded societies of south Malekula. In a fine study of north Ambrym, Patterson shows how imported rank-taking ceremonies and traditional rites of kinship have become intertwined and mutually reinforcing, and that legitimate ascendency to high rank and political influence and control involves both ritual forms. In a fascinating analysis of the sociology of knowledge and political power on Malo, Rubinstein argues that knowledge and power are complexly interrelated, and that the scope, focus, and force of social knowledge are altered when an important person persuades others of the objective legitimacy and efficacy of his personal knowledge and experience. He demonstrates how the internal political power and knowledge once associated with the top ranks of the traditional graded society have been gradually replaced as the loci of authority by the church hierarchy and affected by other external political and economic forces. In a splendid essay on southeast Ambrym, Tonkinson explores the changing configurations of tradition or *kastom* (and its linkage with sorcery) and Christianity in patterns of political control. He elegantly analyzes the decline and partial reemergence of tradition with respect to the early opposition between church and sorcery and the recent detachment of sorcery from the prerogatives of traditional leaders.

Further aspects of tradition and change are examined in Philibert's study of Efate and Facey's essay on Nguna. In the context of a useful overview of the colonial history of Vanuatu, Philibert demonstrates how the village of Erator on Efate has adapted to myriad facets of modernity in a manner that has permitted both a sense of traditional identity, autonomy, and relationship to land and a decision-making strategy that has successfully exploited a particular political situation for economic benefit. Facey's analysis of Nguna explores change in a traditional political system based on hereditary titles and many features of the so-called big-man complex, combining matrilineal and patrilineal characteristics. In a context of dispersed matriclans, residential units organized around an agnatic core, and an absence of secret societies and open graded societies, tradi-

tional chiefs wielded influence through trade, exchange, feasts, political mediation, ritual relationships to a "sacred man," and so on. Modern, Christian chiefs now inherit titles, lands, and other prerogatives of office patrilineally, have few political-ritual sanctions, and share power with agents of church and state institutions.

Two contributions are concerned with the political, economic, and ritual significance of male-female relations. In a study of south Pentecost, Jolly examines tradition and change in the sexual division of labor; male-female access to the resources and tools of production; male-female differences in control, consumption, distribution, and exchange of products of labor; and ideological representations of these contrasts in myth and ritual. In the colonial era, traditional male economic dominance has been elaborated in several nontraditional ways. In her insightful analysis of east Aoba, Rodman demonstrates how exchanges in pigs (male wealth) and mats (female valuables) between men and women are integrated through the slaughter of pigs by unmarried females in grade-taking ceremonies. This essay is an important contribution to the complementarity of male and female participation in systems of exchange, and provokes comparison with the related studies of Feil, Strathern, and especially Weiner.

The last three, quite diverse essays focus on Tanna. In a subtle analysis, Lindstrom explores the various cultural frames of Tannese speech contexts, forms, and taboos (in ordinary time and social activity) in contrast to the use of *kava* (in *kava* time and other contexts), and transformations of this contrast, in various definitions of status and contexts of dispute, exchange, and mediation. In another study of the sociology of knowledge and political leadership that invites some comparison with Rubinstein's essay, Bastin examines parallels, complementary aspects, and oppositions in the roles of traditional ritual knowledge and modem church, education, and business forms of knowledge in the acquisition and maintenance of political influence and power. Both traditional and modem kinds of knowledge are associated with particular lineages, are interwoven with considerations of kinship and marriage, and are linked to recognized claims of hereditary leadership in political process. Finally, in a fine reanalysis of the John Frum cargo movement, enhanced by new data, Brunton explores the Tannese experience of Europeans and Christianity in relation to patterns of social organization, exchange, and marriage. He suggests that the John Frum cult constituted an elaborate attempt by pagans to reverse a progressive social "disintegration" caused by Christian converts who refused to adhere to traditional forms of marriage exchange. By pagan supernatural means cast in Christian idioms, the movement suc-

ceeded in reviving essential social and political relations between pagans and Christians that had been sundered in the missionary zeal to create an autonomous community of believers.

In summary, although there are many implicit and explicit comparative threads woven through sets of these essays, the volume is not coherently thematic beyond its regional focus. This areal emphasis alone will make this ethnographically rich and varied volume particularly valuable to scholars of Melanesia, for it represents a unique survey of recent research on Vanuatu. The complex relationship of tradition, social change, and modernity, however, is recognized to some extent in all of the varied contributions. In this regard, the exemplary ethnographic analyses of Allen, Brunton, Patterson, Rodman, Rubinstein, and Tonkinson are perhaps the best in delineating a coherent problem and in constructing a logical argument. Yet, only Allen's remarkable comparative essay really develops a theory of social change in the spirit of the early endeavors of Deacon, Layard, and Rivers. Despite the many comparative implications in these explorations of tradition and change in modes of descent, local organization, secret societies, grade-taking ceremonies, knowledge and speech, economic organization, marriage and exchange, male-female relations, and political structure and process, there is little explicit comparison. Indeed, Allen's masterful prolegomenon sets the stage for a task yet to be accomplished. Only through detailed and problem-oriented comparative analysis will the societies and cultures of Vanuatu emerge to inform the contours of the Melanesian cultural region of which they are so significantly a part.

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