

Harry H. Jackman, *Copra Marketing and Price Stabilization in Papua New Guinea: A History to 1975*. Pacific Research Monograph, no. 17. Canberra: National Centre for Development Studies, Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National University, 1988. Pp. xiv, 281, maps, bibliography, tables, photographs, appendixes, graphs. A\$20.00.

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Copra has played a significant role in the economic history of many Pacific nations, including Papua New Guinea. On a macroeconomic level, it was that nation's major export until the early 1960s, and it continues to constitute a not insubstantial proportion of Papua New Guinea's exports. It has also been a major factor in the introduction of Papua New Guineans, especially those in island and lowland areas, to various aspects of the Western cash economy. This book is a narrowly focused and detailed account of the economic history of copra and copra marketing in Papua New Guinea, from the beginnings of production in the early stages of contact to 1975. Jackman's approach is basically descriptive and chronological, and although one might wish for some additional analysis, the clarity and straightforwardness can only be appreciated.

Several themes interweave with the historical presentation. One is that copra and coconut-oil marketing and pricing can only be understood in the context of the world market. Jackman is careful to include not only copra production and marketing in this discussion; he places

copra in the larger context of oils and fats that compete with one another, such as palm, soybean, rape, and groundnut oils. The impact of various world marketing factors is carefully detailed. A second theme of general interest is the divergent concerns and behaviors of the three major constituencies active in copra production: the indigenous small producers, the plantation growers, and the large companies such as Burns Philp, Carpenters, and Steamships. The administration enters as a fourth--often mediating--player in the negotiations concerning regulatory issues such as the establishment of marketing boards and the stabilization of prices.

Following a short first chapter containing basic information on the nature of the coconut, copra, and how it is made, Jackman begins a chronological presentation of copra production and marketing. He starts with a description of early trading, the establishment of trading stations, and the beginnings of the big trading companies. He then describes the years of increasing village as well as plantation production, the growth of companies, and initial attempts to regulate the industry by administrative actions. He details the effects of World War I and the problems following it, such as shipping, unstable prices, and ensuring the production of quality copra. The history continues as the author details the development of centralized marketing and price stabilization schemes that evolved in the aftermath of World War II. The concluding chapter summarizes the author's main points and makes suggestions and predictions for the future.

Only once does Jackman veer from a strict chronological presentation. He takes a relevant detour in chapter 6 to describe the nature and history of the cooperative movement among village producers, including reasons for their successes and failures. As a former government official deeply involved with cooperatives, his information and insights are especially useful. He contrasts cooperative groups with individual entrepreneurs and wonders if the cooperative societies failed because of competition from rising entrepreneurs or because they were inadequately advised and guided.

The book, although narrowly focused, is an important contribution to the economic history of Papua New Guinea. It is carefully and methodically documented and detailed. The author pays meticulous attention to the differences between British Papua and German New Guinea, and follows significant problems (such as shipping and quality assurance) throughout the historical presentation. Although as an anthropologist I wanted more discussion of the impact of various regulations and events on the local level, I was also aware that I needed to be

reminded of the importance of global and national happenings and of the' larger context in which local events took place. The chapter on cooperatives was especially insightful, and one can only hope that Jackman focuses his attention on their history in a future monograph.