

Richard Feinberg and Karen Ann Watson-Gegeo, eds., *Leadership and Change in the Western Pacific: Essays Presented to Sir Raymond Firth on the Occasion of His Ninetieth Birthday*. London School of Economics Monographs on Social Anthropology, no. 66. London: Athlone Press, 1996. Pp. xiv, 416, index. US\$90 hardcover.

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This volume honoring Sir Raymond Firth began as a special session held in the year of his ninetieth birthday at the annual meeting of the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania (ASAO) in March 1991 in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. The special session was followed by an international conference hosted by the London School of Economics in late December of the same year. Professor Firth was unable to attend the conference in Canada but did participate, with vigor, in the London conference. The topics addressed at the conferences and in this volume focus on issues that have long interested Professor Firth: the varieties of forms of leadership, the changing nature of leadership, and the relationship between leadership and political-cultural change.

The collection contains thirteen chapters: an introduction that gives an overview of the data chapters and a synthesis of the themes uniting them, eleven data chapters, and an epilogue. This final chapter addresses, from the viewpoint of an Africanist, the issues raised in the book and the authors' debt to the ideas of Professor Firth. The data chapters consider issues of leadership and change from the ethnographic perspective of societies in Micronesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia.

Social scientists have studied political leadership from a variety of positions. This variety is mirrored in the approaches taken by the authors, who address the topic using data collected during their field research and their understandings of the nature of leadership in the societies where they studied. For example, many authors examine expectations by particular societies of the behavior and personal qualities of leaders. Three ethnographers follow the careers of leaders against the background of cultural expectation in an attempt to analyze and explain the success or failure of leaders in those societies.

A second theoretical problem addressed by many of the authors is the

definition and distribution of leadership types such as those in the big-man/ chief dichotomy proposed by Marshall Sahlins (1963). Professor Firth's repeated observation that legitimacy, even for Polynesian chiefs, is based on a complex interplay of ascribed and achieved characteristics provides the basis for analysis. Contributors also build on the recognition that neither the big-man nor chief model describes ethnographic fact (Godelier [1982] 1986; Godelier and Strathern 1991). This volume complements these earlier works in its effort to document the effect of contact on changing patterns of traditional leadership and the response of leadership to pressures of modernization.

Rather than attempting to apply theoretical models and propositions to ethnographic cases, the contributors to this collection use a more "Firthian" approach. They start with ethnographic problems for which they attempt to find theoretical explanations. For example, in their attempt to understand the variety of patterns of leadership, authors draw on the suggestion by Bradd Shore that leaders are not limited to one model of reality. Instead they may carry several, possibly inconsistent, models that they can use, combine, and discard at will depending on situation, context, and individual objectives. This concept of multiple models is explored by most of the chapter authors.

The contributions to this collection reflect the two-step process of consultation, enhanced by the participation of Professor Firth, during which authors met to debate theoretical problems. The chapters are of high quality, both in content and writing style. Although the ethnographic data on which discussion is based are from the South Pacific region, the issues here—like the concerns of Professor Firth—are universal ones of interest to political anthropologists and political scientists whose work encompasses the globe. This volume will be of value to students of political leadership, legitimacy, and change whatever their discipline or regional speciality.

## REFERENCES

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