

attend to different elements of social organization, and have different emphases, they arrive, by somewhat different routes, at remarkably similar conclusions about the processes of change in two Polynesian migrant enclaves. In this respect, these studies are valuable contributions both in their own right, and as contributions to the comparative study of the Pacific diaspora. Theoretical, disciplinary, and methodological preferences will undoubtedly lead readers to prefer one approach over another, but both of these works are important contributions to scholarship of the diaspora, and much is to be gained from reading them together and from seeing them as elements of a larger intellectual problem.

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*La Saga du kava, du Vanuatu à la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, by Annabel R Chanteraud. Collections Îles et Archipels, no 29. Bordeaux: CRET et DYMSET, 2001. ISBN 2-905081-40-6; 288 pages, figures, tables, photographs, appendixes, notes, written in French. €35.

This “saga” of kava (*Piper methysticum*) is a revised PhD dissertation in cultural geography. This plant, cultivated only in Oceania, is famous for the particular properties of the drink extracted from its crushed and diluted roots—muscles loosen and a psychic state generally characterized by a peaceful detachment is created. In this work, Annabel R Chanteraud recounts the history of the consumption of kava in Vanuatu, and also in

New Caledonia. She begins with pre-colonial history, when kava consumption was strictly regulated, reserved for the men, and confined in nakamal (men’s house). She traces that history up to the present, when in the city as well as in the villages everyone can drink kava. The author has conducted lengthy fieldwork—administering survey questionnaires, engaging in participant observation, collecting statistics, and consulting the available literature.

Chanteraud first presents a review of the literature on mythology related to the appearance and domestication of kava in Vanuatu. The various myths associate the birth of kava with that of the human societies in these islands. For the author, the mythology connects kava with the history of the settlement of the islands and the political development of these societies, corresponding with waves of Polynesian migration. The social rules of Vanuatu society, based on sexual dualism and the egalitarian sharing of tasks, can be read in the rites of preparation and consumption of kava that accompany significant social events. More widely, the history of consumption of kava provides a good vantage point from which to draw out the different elements of the history of the country, from what preceded first European contact to recent struggles for independence. In their aim to acculturate these colonized societies, the nineteenth-century missionaries restricted the consumption of kava, even to the point of total proscription on certain islands. That is why, beginning around 1910, the consumption of kava became a symbol of resistance to oppression.

In the cities of Luganville and Port

Vila, it was the elders who first began to drink kava; they were followed by the youth, who had previously not consumed it. Urban kava bars offered a peaceful place where participants could weave together and tighten links among people from the same islands. Confirming kava's political uses, in the late 1970s minister and independence leader Walter Lini held up kava as the agent of national reconciliation. Under the banner of reviving custom, he placed kava at the center of agricultural and economic planning. The government of Vanuatu promoted large-scale cultivation and also democratized the consumption of kava. This led to the opening of numerous places of consumption. Today, both cities in Vanuatu count an increasing number of such places, ranging from small, district nakamal (open only to men), to large, downtown kava bars (open to the public).

The author next investigates the economic market for kava. The various fields of production, the techniques of cultivation, the fluctuations in the price for kilos of fresh kava roots and for cups of kava, and the profitability and stability of the market are described and analyzed. Possible medicinal outlets, as well as the creation of a seal of quality, are also discussed.

Using New Caledonia as an example, Chanteraud dedicates the last part of her book to a description of how kava consumption has been exported beyond the borders of Vanuatu, with mounting success. At first, kava was prepared by and for ni-Vanuatu emigrants settled in Noumea; now it is consumed by increasing number of inhabitants of New Caledonia, both

Oceanian and European. Thus, according to the author, kava drinking can be seen as a trans-cultural urban rite.

It is necessary to note some deficiencies in the maps and source references in the book. Some maps (such as those on pages 17 and 215) lack scales and north/south orientations. Myths are not usually placed in context, and the storytellers' names are not provided; Chanteraud only writes, "old people say"—but who are these old people? Furthermore, bibliographic references for some myths are incomplete, giving only an author but not a specific work (eg, myth 6 on page 76) or are not referenced at all (eg, myth 2 on pages 33–35 and myth 10 on page 61).

More problematic is the book's portrayal of ni-Vanuatu in rural settings as passive subjects directed by social rules, whereas those in the urban world are represented as actors in their social game. Following from these assumptions, Chanteraud says that ni-Vanuatu come to Port Vila to realize what she calls an "urban dream" (125) in which there is less social control and more fun than in rural settings. Knowing all the fieldwork that was carried out during the author's research, it is a pity more raw data were not included in the book, instead of such subjective judgments.

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