Since *aropa* so admirably complements Christian principles of love and charity, I found Anuta in the early 1970s to live out its religious ideals with amazing consistency. As the island is drawn into the world capitalist economy, a system of social relations based on *aropa* has grown increasingly difficult to sustain. Nonetheless, Anutans have survived their periods of stress, met the test, and, for the most part, remained faithful to the values of their ancestors” (220).

Updating is of importance in anthropological work and should be carried out wherever and whenever possible. Personally, I can only agree with Feinberg’s realistic analyses. We have both made efforts to work as translators of different Polynesian cultures and languages and make them intelligible to the readers. Feinberg has done a perfect job; he is a good translator. His linguistic and cultural analysis of Anutan lifeways seems to be both thorough and sympathetic. In my view, it is admirable and of the utmost importance that the author has made the effort to learn Anutan language (and use it even in his dreams). I wish that all students would follow his example and learn the appropriate languages in their respective fields of study. The endnotes and the glossary in the back of the book are very valuable. The section entitled “Lessons for America” (220–223) is enlightening for future students to understand how the structure of a micro-society reflects the structure of the macro-societies in the world when studied in detail.

However, when the back cover informs the reader that this book is “stimulating” and “engaging” for an undergraduate audience, I beg to disagree that this is true for the entire text. As an example, the graphic figures 3.2 to 3.4 on calculations of effective kin relationships need more guidance for younger students than the author offers (76–78). Also, a total index for this second edition would have been very helpful. During my reading, I missed the instant guidance that an index would provide. One curious detail is that the title on the front cover does not correspond with the one on the title page.

Apart from these minor shortcomings, I can highly recommend this well-written book for students and nonstudents alike. All readers with an interest in the Pacific region will benefit from Feinberg’s enthusiasm, knowledge, and insight.

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This timely and very important collection of studies and essays on schooling and education in Vanuatu brings together researchers, and most importantly, primarily ni-Vanuatu who are on the “front lines” of educational practice, to describe, assess, and critique contemporary schooling
and suggest dramatic changes for the future. Although specifically and expertly focused on local conditions, this book is strikingly applicable to the Pacific Basin as a whole. Yet anyone working in third world educational contexts—whether in the so-called “developing” world or in economically poor areas of the so-called “developed” world—will find that the issues, problems, dreams, and struggles of administrators, teachers, and students are virtually the same everywhere.

Kabini Sanga (Solomon Islander, University of Wellington) and John Niroa (ni-Vanuatu, Ministry of Education, Port Vila) begin the introduction by quoting the latest indictment of formal, westernized education in the Pacific: “three decades of considerable investments in education has not made a significant impact on the educational developments of Pacific communities” (F Pene, ‘A Taufe’ulan-gaki, and C Benson in Tree of Opportunity: Re-Thinking Pacific Education, published by University of the South Pacific, 2002). Sanga and Niroa describe the revolutionary conference, “Re-thinking Vanuatu Education Together in 2002,” held in the wake of a 2001 regional colloquium on Pacific education at the University of the South Pacific, Suva. From that 2001 conference, two findings emerged: “in spite of decades of educational development, Pacific peoples have not owned the formal education process but have instead viewed it as alien and imposed from outside”; and “Pacific peoples have failed to develop clearly articulated visions for their educational and developmental pathways” (15). Obviously, the two are interconnected, but it is difficult to see how Pacific peoples could have felt they “owned” education when (as the editors and several authors in the volume point out) schooling over the past 100 years has been largely shaped by outside consultants from the “developed” world—where, ironically, the economically and socially privileged benefit most from schooling. Vanuatu was the first Pacific Island nation to take up the challenges issued by the 2001 colloquium, and this book is the outcome of that initiative.

The book’s twenty-eight chapters and authors cover the challenge of changing schooling in Vanuatu: language(s), policy, expenditure/investment, education levels, nonformal education, curriculum, relationships of schools to community and families, research and planning, and finally, recommendations for the future. A list of primary, secondary, and tertiary schools with maps and many photographs of educational contexts enrich the book. As it is not possible to do justice to the book’s breadth and depth in a short review, I will consider the recommendations that come from the authors. In so many ways these recommendations are those that all of us concerned with Pacific Islands education have made for years, now adjusted to current situations, but if anything, more pressing than ever: the need for more primary schools in rural areas; the need to maintain a teacher–student ratio of no more than 1 to 30—which is already less than ideal but at least preferable to conditions at many schools now; the need to distribute students more evenly between rural
and urban schools. Behind this last need is the imbalance in resources between fairly well financed urban schools and poorly financed and staffed rural schools, which leads parents to try to get their children into urban schools. Links between and the engagement of parents are needed. The school day should be lengthened or shifts created to better utilize facilities. Nongovernmental organizations should be encouraged to set up private schools financed outside the public system, to relieve stresses on the national budget. While these recommendations are focused on Vanuatu, many are relevant to schools throughout the Pacific Islands.

However, embedded in the book are other recommendations that do not end up in the final list at the end. One of these, which as a longtime educator I consider critical, is the incorporation of local and indigenous educational practices and epistemologies (ways of creating and communicating knowledge) into schooling. Several authors who are in educational practice emphasize this need. We must start where children and their communities are with regard to learning-teaching strategies, ontologies, and epistemologies, even if the goal is to bring them into the forms of knowledge valued in the globalized, technologized world. Most of the children going to school in Vanuatu and elsewhere in much of the world will not attain an educational level that places them in careers requiring the forms or levels of knowledge that seem to be the focus of schooling or higher education. Instead, if destructive youth urban drift is to be stemmed, partially educated students will have to return to the village, subsistence agriculture, and related ways of making a life. They need an education that both prepares them for village life and allows them to be critical, reflective thinkers, voters, and decision makers sufficiently enabled to be citizens of the world, Pacific region, their country, and their community. Educators and parents have yet to figure out how to design the absolutely crucial form(s) of education that will actually work for the majority of the world’s children. This is an essential task of the twenty-first century, and must be done locally, not imposed from the outside.

The book makes a major contribution to the discussion of schooling and education in the Pacific, because its authors speak with many voices and differing opinions, so that the overview and the detailed case studies we read open us to the complexity of what educators in the Pacific Islands face. Hopefully, other Pacific countries will take up the Vanuatu initiative. Hopefully, Vanuatu will act on the tremendous amount of work that has gone into the conference and into producing this book, toward rethinking and reinventing education and schooling.

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