

book encyclopaedic in the style of the Human Relations Area Files World Culture series were it not for what to McDowell must be the centerpiece of the book. This is a reinterpretation—rather than a refutation—of Mead's analysis of reciprocity and the brother-sister relationship in the social structure. The society was said to consist of landholding patrilines and corporate groups the people called "ropes." "Rope" relations were paired. They were composed of generations of cross-sex kin, mothers, sons, and daughters on one side and fathers, daughters, and sons on the other. McDowell's reinterpretation basically is that these "ropes" were not descent groups but a "complex interweaving of relationships and ties that began and ended with brother-sister exchange marriage" (269).

In McDowell's summary judgment of Mead as anthropologist, the possibility of reinterpretation demonstrates that Mead had astonishing powers of observation and was ahead of her time. Her Mundugumor material is richer than her theory. And what of the sexes in Mundugumor? By the 1980s, they still had their clans and "ropes" but the men were now chartering airplanes to sell betel nuts and tobacco to Highlanders instead of making war and initiating youth. Of the women, unfortunately, McDowell adds nothing, except to say that she saw a game of coed basketball going on while she was there. No pathos here.

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Decentralization in a Developing Country: The Experience of Papua New Guinea and Its Health Service, edited by Jane A. Thomason, William C. Newbrander, and Riita-Liisa Kolehmainen-Aitken. Pacific Research Monograph no. 25. Canberra: National Centre for Development Studies, Australian National University, 1991. ISBN 0-7315-0940-4, ISSN 0155-9060, x + 162 pp, tables, bibliography, index. A\$25.

When, in 1975, Papua New Guinea gained independence, the new nation inherited an administrative dilemma of its colonial past—centralization versus regional rule. In the past, the authority of the Australian administrator in Port Moresby was tempered by the reality of actual administration by district officers, the true lords of their isolated domains. For both the old colonial and the newly independent government, centralized political control was made difficult by the cultural and linguistic fragmentation of Papua New Guinea's peoples (some 700 distinct languages), and the difficulties of travel and communication in the largely roadless, mostly rugged terrain.

This dilemma was epitomized in the health system of the Australian colonial era. There was the big man in Port Moresby, the director of health services, who formulated policy, oversaw the few general hospitals, and recruited expatriate staff. There were also major national health programs, notably, from the mid-1950s to its collapse in the early 1970s, the National Malaria Eradication Program. However, the main dispensers of health care at the "people" level were the reasonably well-trained, intrepid medical assist-

ants (mostly Australian), some of whom made incredible patrols in the course of their work, and the doctor-boys who provided basic medical care at the village level.

This monograph by knowledgeable but largely expatriate scholars (only one contributor is a Papua New Guinea national) is an account of how Papua New Guinea's health system has evolved since independence. It is a telling account of the conflicts and compromises between the national government and provincial governments; between rich provinces and poor provinces; between the bureaucracy and the politicians who wanted to bring them under their control. Several chapters are devoted entirely, or in part, to the political power distribution, in favor of the provincial governments, that became legally formalized by the 1976 Organic Law on Provincial Government.

In respect to the health system under that law, some functions were to be retained by the national government (eg, medical training, licensing and maintenance of standards, general hospitals, provision of specialist services, pharmaceutical services); some functions were to be delegated, "on loan" from the national authority as it were (eg, provincial hospitals, malaria control, extension services); and some functions were to be transferred outright to provincial control (eg, aid post and health centers, ambulance services, disease control programs). The general picture presented in this monograph is that the road to decentralization was/ is a shambles. The health workers, at all levels, became demoralized in their uncertainty as to whom they belonged

to and to whom they were answerable. Importantly, it is claimed that after the Organic Law on Provincial Government was enacted, cooperation and communication between the provincial hospital and aid post deteriorated. Also asserted is the opinion that the health infrastructure deteriorated and this sorely affected outreach programs, especially the extended immunization program which depends on the availability of transportation.

Although health services are inseparable from the political process, health unlike politics can be measured. Health care has quantifiable products. In chapter 6, "Performance of the Health System after Decentralization," Newbrander, Aitken, and Kolehmainen-Aitken make an assessment of quality by using maternal and child health as a representative standard of overall performance. They concluded that decentralization had no significant overall impact on maternal and child health by their measures of attended hospital deliveries, immunizations, and antenatal coverage. However, they noted differences between provinces, the richer provinces, as would be expected, providing significantly better maternal and child health services and consequent usage than the poorer provinces (the interested reader should refer to the 1990 paper by Garner, Thomason, and Donaldson in *Health Policy and Planning* 5:49-59, for other useful quality assessments and measures of health facilities in Papua New Guinea).

What is regrettably missing from this monograph is an account of actual health status as it has been affected by decentralization. Province by province, is there more or less neonatal mortal-

ity? Malaria? Diarrheal and pulmonary diseases? Are people living for a longer or shorter length of time? The authors of this monograph, although not addressing these issues directly, paint a bleak picture. This contrasts to the reviewer's impressions gained from working and research trips to small towns and remote villages made from 1962 to the present. I have noted many of the same deficiencies alluded to in the monograph—insufficient staffing, insufficient funding for public health projects, too great a dependence on missionaries for health services and training. Nevertheless, my impression has been one of progressive improvement of health services—particularly at the village level. I have found adequate health care being provided even in the most isolated villages. Even the beleaguered health services of the less economically developed provinces are performing heroically.

I strongly recommend this monograph to all those interested in the interplay between politics and the health of the public. Let us not be blinded by our elegant biomedical technology; in many aspects of health services and policies, we in the United States are a Third World nation also. The lessons from Papua New Guinea are instructive as we grope toward the resolution of problems of access to quality health care.

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Micronesia: Decolonisation and US Military Interests in the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands, by Gary Smith. Canberra: Peace Research Centre, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, 1991. ISBN 0-7315-1223-5, ISSN 1030-2154, ix + 131 pp, maps, appendixes, bibliography, notes. Paper, A\$12.

Gary Smith's excellent monograph provides a nuanced and well-researched analysis of the complex and Pentagon-driven relationship between the United States and its (former) Micronesian wards. Smith has managed to organize an impressive array of obscure documents into the most concise compendium to date on the United States' postwar stratagems in the 2100 Micronesian isles, along with rich accounts of the Islanders' sociopolitical responses, especially during the protracted negotiations designed to move Micronesia into a post-trusteeship status with the United States.

Beginning with an overview of the general themes developed further in the book, Smith recounts the inherent tensions between US strategic policy and the Islanders' pursuit of self-determination in the former Japanese Mandated Islands, islands placed under an unprecedented "strategic" United Nations trust at the close of World War II.

Smith describes in painstaking detail how the desire for true self-determination in Micronesia was consistently thwarted by the *realpolitik* ambitions of the United States during the Cold War. From the massive nuclear weapons testing program conducted in the Marshall Islands between 1946 and