

Pacific Forest: A History of Resource Control and Contest in Solomon Islands, c. 1800–1997, by Judith A Bennett. Cambridge: White Horse Press and Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2000. White Horse Press ISBN 1-874267-09-X; Brill ISBN 90-04-11960-4; xvi + 512 pages, tables, maps, illustrations, measurements, abbreviations, notes, bibliography, index. US\$151; €123; £75.

Islands of Rainforest: Agroforestry, Logging and Eco-tourism in Solomon Islands, by Edvard Hviding and Tim Bayliss-Smith. SOAS Studies in Development Geography. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2000. ISBN 0-7546-1233-3, xvii + 371 pages, illustrations (figures, plates, maps), notes, glossary, bibliography, index. US\$84.95; £47.50.

Most of us are familiar with the exhortation, Think Globally, Act Locally! which often appears in the company of other peremptory statements about how to change the world, including how to save tropical rain forests. These two books about forest use in Solomon Islands persuasively argue for something more difficult and more intriguing. They encourage readers to try to think from local perspectives toward global issues when considering priorities, courses of action, and possible futures for countries and communities where rain forest still abounds. Bennett's work extends her earlier history of the former British colony and contemporary state of Solomon Islands (*Wealth of the*

Solomons, 1987), here focusing on changing beliefs and perceptions about the forest and its uses and the impact of changing technology on the forest environment over time. Hviding, a cultural anthropologist, and Bayliss-Smith, a human geographer, approach similar issues from the perspective of one small but spectacularly resource-rich subregion of Solomon Islands, the Marovo Lagoon of New Georgia. Because Western Province, and within it mainly New Georgia, has been the largest contributor by volume and value to Solomon Islands log exports, these works dovetail in their examination of forests, land use, and the international logging boom at two levels: national-governmental and village communities. Both discussions are framed in terms of the great time span from prehistoric past to near present. The authors' different kinds of expertise provide three lenses through which to understand the ecology, people, and politics of the current situation. Hviding and Bayliss-Smith argue for a localized view of the global agendas (Save the Rainforest, Buy Eco-timber, Create World Heritage Sites) that have been visited on Marovo people, drawing an analogy with the colonization-missionization process. By the end of their discussion, the sweeping agendas of globalization rhetoric seem vastly oversimplified and unitary compared to the complexity and political density of life in Marovo Lagoon.

These works subvert the powerful and often implicit nature-culture dichotomy that is intrinsic to a west-

ern worldview by looking at the environment through the lens of social and historical process and at social and historical processes through the lens of the environment. Both discussions document the extent to which local views of land and resource rights have been misunderstood and waved aside by governments, missions, and international companies. The clash of worldviews on this issue is acute, disorienting, and persistent. Solomon Islanders have always resisted alienation of their land, but exactly who has the right to decide title and resource use remains a vexed question in relation to commercial resource extraction, and one that is heightened as resources become ever more valuable in global markets.

Bennett begins with the forest cycles that have emerged from geologic and climatological processes. Solomon Island forests are adapted to cyclone damage and can recover fairly quickly and well. The differences between cyclone disturbance and logging are substantial. After logging, much less material is left to protect the seedbed and nourish returning plant communities. Under human gardening regimes, forests have undergone substantial modification through slash-and-burn cycles of use and fallow for growing taro and yams. The cycles of plants in the secondary forest have been and are a rich source of plant materials for food, medicine, technology, and ritual purposes, and include new stands of commercially valuable trees.

Near the time of colonization, the sweet potato was introduced along with new (metal) technology that allowed different gardening patterns, heavier settlement nearer the coast,

and an endogenous demise of head-hunting and raiding in favor of garden production. The colonial government furthered these changes by developing coconut plantations and allowing missionization. The first resident commissioner of the protectorate, Charles Morris Woodford, believed that the indigenous people, almost a part of nature, would soon become extinct. Although he felt they should not be exploited, he did not see a future for them. He viewed the land and its resources as available to those who would and could develop them for capitalist production, recognizing rights to land only where it was under cultivation. The extensive areas over which Solomon Islanders negotiated access to resources, Woodford saw as vacant. For him, the forest was an obstacle to the progress of civilization, to be cut and burned to establish coconut plantations. Reforestation would not become an issue for many years, although botanists recommended it early on.

By the 1920s, logging was beginning to develop, for local milling and export to Australia, but it was often technologically inefficient. Following the 1929 depression, it was barely profitable due to Australian import tariffs. Bennett describes the complex series of legislative acts through which the government appropriated land for logging. It failed to establish either guidelines or procedures for regulating Solomon Islanders' willingness to cut down trees, in part because their forests seemed to them limitless and inexhaustible.

The effects of World War II were enormous. Under Japanese then American occupation, forest was destroyed by fighting and by major logging ini-

tatives to support the war effort. Partly because of Americans' more egalitarian style of interaction, the war also left many Solomon Islanders with a more critical attitude toward the colonial administration. These changes ushered in a period of increasing disparity between local views of colonial government as outsiders who usurped indigenous land and resources for profit, and colonial administrative views that the government needed to develop its own forest estate to fund operations for the public good. The philosophy of government forest administration, a legacy of British colonial rule elsewhere, was conveyed by civil service foresters teaching at British colleges, whose students became forest researchers and administrators in Solomon Islands. Two individuals in particular, F S Walker (colonial forester) and Keith Trenaman (chief forestry officer), embodied this legacy with mixed results. Their work led to research and reforestation initiatives of long-term value for understanding forest ecology. Walker, cognizant of local ownership of specific trees, advocated direct royalty payments for them. He also furthered confusion about rights to land and to its resources by recommending that landownership be registered with the government. Fixing territories and ownership was not in keeping with the flexibility and use-rights perspectives of indigenous landholding groups.

Throughout the development of government forestry, the struggle continued between the government as mediator of the use of forests and Solomon Islanders' desire to use their forests for their own development. Despite confused and inconsistent legislation regarding land and timber, the

market for logs was developing both in Solomon Islands and abroad, and timber companies continued to request and get permission to log. While technology, disease, and low profitability restrained the growth of the logging industry, Trenaman focused on developing the forest estate as the basis of large-scale production for export as a way to support the government. No governmental structure or legislation was developed for loggers and resource owners to deal with each other in a mutually acceptable and predictable manner—a problem that became acute when the value of logs rose and companies went directly to local groups to make deals. In the meantime, the government became ever more dependent on logging revenues to fund basic operations, leaving reforestation projects to be funded by external sources.

Bennett details the progress of four long-term logging companies—Allardyce, Kalena, Viru, and Levers—and their relationships to the government and local leadership. The most well known of these is Lever's Pacific Timbers, which cut its losses and withdrew following the burning of the logging camp at Enoghae by Jericho villagers. From 1963 to 1985, in the years just prior and subsequent to independence, more logging agreements were struck between local communities and logging companies. Leadership prerogatives shifted from community-based to individualistic, and Asian companies entered, negotiating in terms of gifts and favors, or bribes.

As log stocks were depleted elsewhere, Asian companies moved in with a vengeance, obtaining concessions and extensions amid a welter of

faulty legislation and confused local decision-making that mainly benefited companies and individuals. The Timber Control Unit was established in the 1980s to try to reduce wastage and loss of revenue through transfer pricing. Additional efforts to preserve the forest resource were initiated under pressure from western donor countries and financial agencies, and during the brief tenure of Prime Minister Billy Hilly (mid-1993 to November 1994). From 1985 to 1995, the overall situation veered toward crisis proportions under pro-logging Prime Minister Solomon Mamaloni, whose nearly bankrupt government was at one point brought to heel by the Central Bank, then rescued by the sale of timber concessions to a Korean logging company for far less than their ultimate commercial value.

Bennett juxtaposes this difficult story of profits, losses, deceptions, and shifting accountability among local groups, multinational companies, and ambitious politicians with a stunning cost-benefit analysis by forester Ross Cassells. Cassells estimated the worth of forests mainly in terms of their value for subsistence. Using conservative figures, he valued these resources at S1\$10,512.14 per year per seven-person household. Compared to one-time royalty payments, the ratio of losses to gains is of the order of 7 to 1 (324).

In some areas, local leaders, eco-timber initiatives (SWIFT), and educational programs through locally based nongovernment organizations such as the Solomon Islands Development Trust have offset the rapacious logging of recent years, and Bennett devotes considerable space to these efforts. Nongovernment organizations,

churches, donor countries, and financial institutions weigh in on the fate of Solomon Islands' forest resources. To date, both the government and local people have lost much. Bennett argues that Solomon Islanders should not be villainized for cutting their forests. The history she provides shows how and why rural people have had few viable alternatives for making their way into the modern economy. Shrinking forests and population pressure are now forcing reevaluation of resource exploitation and conservation.

Hviding and Bayliss-Smith give us the story literally from the ground up in the case of Marovo Lagoon. Much of the sociocultural information will be familiar to readers of Hviding's earlier work, *Guardians of Marovo Lagoon* (1996), but here it is appropriately recast from a land-based perspective, with much new information about land use and careful integration with the ecological data and interpretations of Bayliss-Smith. The wonderful chart of locally useful plants in different forest and garden regimes (52-71) amply demonstrates the substance of Cassells' argument as presented by Bennett. This impressive repertoire of forest resources is illuminated by describing the relationship of a descent group (*butubutu*) to its land estate (*puava*), which varies over time in terms of membership and use rights allocated for specific purposes. Over long periods, social relations and subsistence regimes have adapted to the introduction of sweet potatoes, metal-based technologies, pacification (a process already under way at colonization), and missionization.

Throughout 150 years of contact, Marovo people have used their philosophy of complementary sides to social

decision-making processes to subject outside influences to their own agendas and political process. Roughly the first half of the book is devoted to establishing the deep integration of Marovo people's way of life with land and maritime resources (land-sea, root crops-fish, wet-dry), concluding with the local importance of many tree species that are the prime target of commercial timber companies. Current changes in agroforestry include a process of people moving from villages to hamlets as population pressure requires them to move further along the coast and into the forest to find more garden land. Bayliss-Smith analyzes four villages with different kinds of access to market and garden land, as well as different church affiliations, concluding that each of them shows signs of ecological stress and ecosystem degradation. At the same time, agroforestry is being called on to fill a gap in commercial activity between copra-making and fishing and impending logging.

Some parts of Marovo have already experienced extensive logging and others likely will, as companies offer gifts and benefits, and town-based entrepreneurs seek high profits despite disputes about their claims to forest areas. Logging often occurs through diverse, even idiosyncratic arrangements beset by disputes and litigation. Overall, chiefs and council members have gained power through disputes over ownership of land and trees (never successfully conceptualized as separate by the government). The rise of Job Dudley Tausinga, a prominent church leader, environmental activist, politician, and now business leader, is a telling story of how big-men politics

contributes to unpredictable and complicated negotiations of local and personal interests in the high stakes of logging concessions.

Hviding and Bayliss-Smith ask the pointed question, "If large-scale logging is bad, is small beautiful?" They recount efforts to shift to sustainably produced sawn timber, encouraged by nongovernment organizations. Ecotourism and status as a World Heritage Site are alternative utopian visions about how to "rescue" Marovo Lagoon and its inhabitants from ecological devastation. Because these efforts are subsidized and thus controlled by outside organizations, such initiatives run counter to Marovo people's desire to carve their own future in relation to the world market. Direct deals with logging companies and potentially large windfall profits appeal to people's sense that exploiting their forests should be under their control. The authors' conclusion is that the people of Marovo will not be able to think differently about their forest until it becomes more scarce and in a sense has been domesticated by the infrastructure of logging. At that point, they predict, replanting with commercially valuable trees will provide a new agroforestry regime on a manageable commercial scale. In the meantime the relationship of *butubutu* to *puava* must also undergo some transformation into smaller, better-defined groups, changes that may eventually emerge as villages become a series of hamlets.

These books are difficult to summarize because they contain so much carefully detailed information and analysis, which is an important strength. The authors describe both

difficulties and promising developments as Solomon Islanders become incorporated into the commercial economy and more sophisticated about nation-state politics. Conservationists, foresters, ethnographers, and a wide variety of Melanesianists will appreciate these detailed discussions of large-scale changes in local terms. Both analyses provide excellent models for the kind of work needed to grasp the cultural meanings and politics of environmental issues.

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The Pacific Islands: An Encyclopedia, edited by Brij V Lal and Kate Fortune. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000. ISBN 0-8248-2265-X; xxxvi + 664 pages, illustrations, glossary, indexes, CD-ROM. US\$115.

Hefty to hold, and visually striking to behold, this contemporary encyclopedia is valuable in terms of the wealth of current, detailed information it contains, yet also somewhat awkward in its organization. In spite of the slight difficulty in maneuvering through the pages, *The Pacific Islands: An Encyclopedia* would be a useful reference guide in the bookcase of anyone interested in the Pacific Islands.

As stated in the first paragraph of the preface, "This volume is the latest, and assuredly not the last, attempt to understand the remarkable world of the Pacific islands in all its variety and complexity through a range of perspectives contributed by scholars across the world. It brings together discrete or scattered information on

the major aspects of Pacific island life, including the physical environment, peoples, history, politics, economy, society and culture" (xv). This mammoth project was a decade in the making and one can easily understand why. The sheer logistics of pulling together a volume of such weight, with some two hundred contributors, and including maps, several hundred photographs, cross-listings, a glossary, and more, is mind-boggling. This was an ambitious undertaking and is a remarkable accomplishment. In general, the information is comprehensive and current. The contributors, who represent a variety of perspectives, in most cases write with profound professional knowledge and stylistic finesse.

Before one even opens the cover, it is clear that this is not a typical encyclopedia. The attempt to be exhaustive and up-to-date is palpable. The mix of bright, colorful images on the glossy dust jacket sets the tone. There are pictures of the painted face of a Huli dancer in her feather headdress and shell necklaces, a man from New Caledonia squatting in front of his bountiful catch of tuna with rubber boots and plastic items in the background, an aerial vista of a "typical atoll" in Tonga, a detail of a floral appliqué quilt from the Cook Islands, and the bright orange, lacy pattern of a yellow hydrocoral *Distichopora* species. In other words, between these covers one will find everything from the traditional to the contemporary, the natural to the hand-crafted, and perspectives that illustrate distant outlines and close-up detail.

Once one opens the cover, the array of information is astonishing. One can