

Book and Media Reviews

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Pacific Women in Politics: Gender Quota Campaigns in the Pacific Islands, by Kerryn Baker. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2019. ISBN hardback: 9780824872595, 212 pages, illustrations, references, and index. Hardback, US\$68.00.

The Pacific Islands context is rife with opportunities for analysis of women's participation in contemporary politics. Kerryn Baker's *Pacific Women in Politics: Gender Quota Campaigns in the Pacific Islands*, the latest addition to the University of Hawai'i Press's Topics in the Contemporary Pacific Series, edited by Brij Lal and Jack Corbett, makes an important contribution in this area through an exploration of the diversity of recent gender quota campaigns in Sāmoa, Papua New Guinea, Bougainville, and France's Pacific territories. As noted by the editors, Baker offers a theoretical approach to exploring the merits of the different gender quota campaigns and a "how-to" overview of the processes that brought the campaigns to fruition (viii). Using interviews with campaign participants, Baker outlines the paths followed in each setting, participants' varying definitions of "success," and the distinctive outcomes of each. Significantly, she brings gender quota literature into conversation with the Pacific Islands context. Baker also successfully examines the colonial legacies of these four geographic spaces in terms of traditional gender roles and cultural norms in order to argue for increased women's participation in the political sphere. That said, the book's methods and data section is lacking, and the author does not sufficiently situate herself in

relation to her interviewees. While the depth and breadth of the interviews are significant, the absence of analysis of the researcher's positionality is problematic.

The book's central chapters consider the geographical and political contexts in which, and processes by which, each gender quota campaign was organized and, where successful, implemented, with one chapter devoted to each. Chapter 2 examines the path toward and successful implementation of Sāmoa's parliamentary gender quota campaign, which called for 10 percent of seats to be reserved for women prior to the 2016 election. Baker begins the chapter by analyzing historical changes to the fa'amatai system, the extended family unit headed by a chosen matai (chief or titleholder), explaining that women's complementary gender roles and influence within Sāmoa's feagaiga (sacred covenant) were diminished as a result of colonial and missionary influences (31). She argues that women's lack of participation in contemporary Samoan politics can be attributed to the matai title system and the notion that women are more risk averse than men when it comes to seeking public office (34). Sāmoa's parliamentary gender quota campaign sought to address this disparity, and it received a boost when it gained the support of Prime Minister Tuila'epa in 2011. The varying involvement of international nongovernmental organizations is a running theme in all four case studies. In Sāmoa, those who opposed the gender quota campaign argued that outside involvement evoked colonial hegemony and that anything supported by international nongovernmental organi-

zations should be avoided. Ultimately, Baker argues that political stability in Sāmoa resulting from the prime minister's leadership was instrumental to the gender quota system's passing.

Chapter 3 is distinguished from the other chapters by its focus on Papua New Guinea's "unsuccessful" gender quota campaigns for nominated and reserved legislative seats. Contemporary Papua New Guinean culture ascribes gender norms that perpetuate male-dominated public political participation (64). Notably, opposition to the gender quota campaign painted women's political participation as promulgated by urban, elite, educated women—a demographic sometimes portrayed as less culturally "authentic" than rural women and as promoting a Western approach to women's political participation. Although the gender quota campaign prior to the 2012 general election was not ultimately successful (it was not adopted), Baker demonstrates that the political actors she interviewed did not all characterize the campaign as a failure. Rather, they found success in women's overall increased participation in Papua New Guinea's national political decision-making process as a result of the campaign.

Chapter 4 situates Bougainville's gender quota campaign for three reserved parliamentary seats for women within the context of the community's struggle for independence, resistance to mining by multinational corporations, and matrilineal land-tenure system. Women have played a prominent role in Bougainville's struggle for autonomy from Papua New Guinea and in the peace process in particular, with their roles as

mothers informing the negotiations. As their behind-the-scenes activities contributed to the success of the peace process, despite being excluded from the formal peace talks, women were able to use their platform to negotiate more space for women in public affairs. The 1995 United Nations Beijing Conference on Women also helped gender quota campaign activists find a network of support from advocates and donor agencies in other Pacific spaces. Bougainville's successful reserved seats campaign resulted in a system in which women are elected by the general electorate rather than by women alone, giving them a status equal to their male counterparts (97). This success has been characterized as a start to a longer process of increased female representation.

The book's most distinctive case study is that of the French Pacific territories. The French metropole's implementation of gender parity laws in 1999 required New Caledonia, French Polynesia, and Wallis and Futuna to adopt and apply similar laws for all legislatures. Since the path to gender parity in these areas was completely exogenous, parity laws contributed to an increase in the number of female legislators in the French Pacific legislatures discussed. However, opponents in New Caledonia's Loyalty Island Province argued that the parity laws imposed by French mandate infringed on traditional Kanak culture, especially due to increased calls for decolonialization in the area since 2013. Indeed, the men who were "given" limited power within the territorial government by the metropole were unlikely to be willing to share it with women. Baker

argues that the distinction between the two sides of the public sphere—the political and the customary—meant that women pushing for acceptance of the parity laws could play a role in the political public sphere without impeding their less public and long-accepted roles within village affairs. For all the debates, parity laws in the French Pacific have dramatically increased the numbers of women in the legislative assembly, ranging from 30 percent in Wallis and Futuna to 50 percent in the Loyalty Islands Province in 2018. Looking only at numbers, this is an unqualified success. However, Baker argues that numbers are only a small fraction of the measure of success, as the upper echelons of power in the French Pacific territories continue to lack representation by women.

In the last chapter, Baker interprets the various meanings ascribed to gender-quota campaign “success” through descriptive, substantive, and symbolic means. She argues that success—whether by virtue of increasing numbers of women in office, changing decision-making processes, strengthening cultural norms that empower women to participate in public affairs, or renegotiating and redefining aspects of culture to meet women’s own goals—is only a start. While each chapter addresses what Baker calls “the meaning of success” in the different contexts, the volume does not include a discussion of the implications of that success moving forward. While the focus is on the adoption and implementation of gender quotas, some analysis of what happens beyond implementation would have offered insight into the importance of gender quota cam-

paigns in general and in the Pacific in particular. In other words, what kinds of legislation do the elected women propose and successfully (or unsuccessfully) shepherd through to actual concrete policies, and why is this important? While the window of analysis is necessarily short—gender quotas have only recently been implemented in these Pacific contexts—some discussion of the types of legislation that women politicians are bringing forward would have been enlightening. Perhaps this would be a useful spin-off for future research.

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The Moral Economy of Mobile Phones: Pacific Islands Perspectives, edited by Robert J Foster and Heather A Horst. Canberra: ANU Press, 2018. ISBN print 9781760462086, v +148 pages, figures, notes, bibliography, index. Print, US\$45.00.

Money Games: Gambling in a Papua New Guinea Town, by Anthony J Pickles. ASAO Studies in Pacific Anthropology, volume 10. New York: Berghahn, 2019. ISBN hardback 9781789202212, vii +203 pages, figures, tables, notes, bibliography, index. Hardback, US\$135.00.

In thinking about social and economic change in the Pacific, we keep returning to the analytic categories Marshall Sahlins presented in “The Economics of Develop-man in the Pacific” (*Res*, 1992, 21:12–20). There, he distin-