

The book then divides into three sections — ‘colonial workers and the condition of labour’ (six chapters), ‘case studies on Pacific workers’ (13 chapters), and ‘labour, politics and class’ (seven chapters). Each chapter has ‘notes’, which generally consist of very useful commentaries on the main sources. There is a very extensive bibliography and a well-compiled index. It is well beyond the scope of this review to list, let alone to try to examine so much material, particularly since it is so diverse. But collectively these 26 chapters are for the most part informative and they do extend our horizons of ‘labour’ in the Pacific islands well beyond many of its former confines. Inevitably the quality of some of the chapters is uneven. A few are only three or four pages long. While they are collectively extensive in their coverage, they are still far from comprehensive, which is scarcely surprising given the vastness of the topic. What is a little disappointing is that no attempt is made to give a comparative summation of the topics/case studies, except for a final chapter that examines the rather narrow issue of the development of class analysis for the Pacific. Thus the book as a whole provides a great deal of raw material for the synthetic overview, but that overview is still elusive. Perhaps that is an inherent and inevitable weakness of such ‘collections’?

This book is a worthy pioneering effort in Pacific historiography, and perhaps it might inspire similar treatment for a good many other deserving topics. But it is not an easy read, and it is certainly not a primer for newcomers to Pacific islands or labour scholarship. But those who already have a knowledge of either or both will find its material ripe for plunder for sources, reference and advanced teaching purposes.

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THE 15 PAPERS in this volume make up a diverse, and apparently randomly-ordered, collection of subjects, methods, and styles. Six articles concern French mentality and attitudes. Colin Forster gives a broad-brush overview of the evolution of French penal policy, showing how it eventually led to penal settlement in New Caledonia. Michel Panoff, in a somewhat superficial paper more like anti-French pamphleteering than a serious attempt to uncover root causes, contrasts British, German, and French approaches to the plantation business (1880-1900), showing how a specifically French ‘style’ obtained. He clearly implies a defect in the French national character on a state and a personal level: a lack of enlightened self-interest. If this is so, it would be interesting to be told why Panoff thinks this might be the case. In a jump to the present, Jean Chesneaux discusses the place of the Pacific in the French state’s ‘Grand Design’. He ranges far beyond the Pacific, which is but one of many elements in the ‘Grand Design’ of a *puisseance mondiale moyenne* and provides an analysis (hardly new to readers of, say, *Le Monde*) of attitudes and their consequences too often misunderstood by the rest of the world. Karis Muller looks at French conceptual obstacles to considering independence as an option for New Caledonia. Bronwen Douglas’s substantial paper on the 1878-79 war in New Caledonia is well-researched, even-handed, and insightful, putting this crucial event of New Caledonia’s history — an event whose effects on the psyche of both

Caldoches and Kanaks pertain still today — into a balanced historical, political, and social perspective. Frédéric Bobin gives a coherent account of the European community in New Caledonia, where a sharp distinction must be made between the Caldoches and the metropolitan and other, ex-colonial, French immigrants since the 1960s.

Three articles are basically about social history. Dorothy Shineberg looks at New Hebridean indentured labour in New Caledonia (1865-1925) in a stylishly presented piece of sleuthing. She estimates that by 1925, some 12,500 ni-Vanuatu had come to work in New Caledonia. Her focus is the poor record of New Caledonian employers in paying their workers, but she also shows the importance of ni-Vanuatu in the local economy. She does not discuss the linguistic effects of their sojourn, but the distinctly New Caledonian flavour of French borrowings in Bislama, and the Bislama borrowings in New Caledonian French, clearly derive from the relatively massive ni-Vanuatu presence in New Caledonia over 60 (or more) years. Isabelle Merle describes the foundation of Voh, on the West Coast of New Caledonia, by mainly peasant French settlers at the end of the nineteenth century, out to conquer their place in the sun. It is a useful antidote to Panoff's paper, in that it gives the background of people whose descendants are today as much victims of history as the colonized indigenes. Hugh Laracy begins with a useful and witty background to the establishment of the New Hebrides Condominium and goes on to show, à propos of a series of murders, how constitutional and legal issues in the Pandemonium were viewed by each (European) side, and the consequent legal and administrative outcomes.

Three articles concern current local politics. Alain Chanter reviews the intersection of the media and political activities in New Caledonia, Karin von Strokirch the impact of nuclear testing on politics in French Polynesia, and Bruno Saura the role of the churches in French Polynesian politics.

Patrick Pillon and François Sodter's article has a misleading title, 'The impact of colonial administrative policies on indigenous social customs in Tahiti and New Caledonia', but their topic is land tenure and the different modifications thereof, partly resulting from different precolonial models and partly from different policies in each territory; the broader anthropological perspective is missing.

J.-L. Rallu gives a detailed demographic survey of each French Overseas Territory in the Pacific, in which trends are implicitly or explicitly linked to social and political history. He projects trends through to 2030AD (for New Caledonia, an absolute majority of Melanesians by 2000AD) but refrains from political crystal-ball gazing.

Darrell Tryon's 'The French language in the Pacific' is an up-to-date summary of current knowledge on the regional varieties of French which have evolved in the region. It contains, however, an error of interpretation: Tryon sees (p.283) New Caledonian French as 'the product of the interaction of many groups of diverse backgrounds in an environment far from metropolitan French, with a majority Melanesian population and a broad spectrum of diverse language backgrounds' (which it is) 'where French progressed from being a kind of relexified Beach-la-mar to the distinctive code it has become today' (a view not supported by any evidence of which I am aware). A minor error of fact: if a New Caledonian refers to a *Poken* s/he is not referring to an Aussie tourist's shorts (p.285), but to the person (*c'est un blady Poken*).

The volume also contains a brief introduction by Deryck Scarr, a useful bibliography of French publications relating to the Pacific (1984-91), and some reviews, only one of which is relevant to the theme.

As with most collections, the articles vary in quality. Some are summaries of already known facts, some have more handwaving than content, but most are meticulous, workmanlike, original investigations, and overall the standard is high.

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