

Trevor devotes his final chapter to the key question "Will Japan Change?". He rightly dismisses the decade-long promises of change and deregulation by uninterested officialdom as catering to Western wishful thinking that some time in the future due to "different young people" an internationalised Japan will somehow be similar to the U.S. There is no empirical evidence for this. Rather, increased conformist job pressures in an ever tighter labour market – as in the West – will ensure that Japan does not turn into a second California.

With the probability of an implosion of the financial sector and the inability of a public bail out, Japan is bound to change its current mismanagement: for better or for worse. The chances are that popular consensus will opt for reforms patterned along its traditional exclusionist ways.

Malcolm Trevor has written an interesting book, hopefully thought provoking enough to restimulate the long overdue debate about the world's second largest economy.

Albrecht Rothacher

RON CROCOMBE, *The South Pacific*. Suva: University of the South Pacific, 2001. 790 pages, A\$ 45.00. ISBN 982-02-0154-3

The objective of this monograph is to outline past, present and future trends in the Pacific, an extremely diverse region of 1,200 languages, identities, cultures and societies, covering 28 nations and territories over a west-east distance of 10,000 kilometres (West Papua to Easter Island) and 5,000 kilometres north to south (Hawai'i to New Zealand). It is a rewritten, updated and expanded version of earlier editions published since 1973 under the titles *The New South Pacific* and *The South Pacific: An Introduction*. Its author is a professor emeritus who founded and headed the Institute of Pacific Studies at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji's capital Suva for nearly 20 years until 1988. He lives in the Cook Islands.

The book is structured in seven parts with 24 chapters, which systematically cover the main topics of the region typically divided into the cultural areas Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia. Part one presents a chronology of the main historic periods and introduces geographic definitions, describes the physical context of the region, outlines human history since the arrival of the first migrants 50,000 years ago and gives an overview of the health situation.

Part two discusses the future of the region's linguistic complexity and fragmentation (harbouring one quarter of all languages worldwide) and outlines the transformation of principles of social organization as a result of changing patterns of communication, commercialization and migration. It further traces the debates about a regional cultural identity summarized in slogans such as "unity in diversity".

The next part deals with factors which influence thought, perception and ideas of value. The chapters include presentations of arts, architecture and sports, a discussion of religious systems and the influential role of churches in politics, as well as philosophies, ideologies, values and ethics, followed by two sections which examine formal education and the intensifying flows of information and media presence in the region.

The economic sphere lies at the heart of part four. The first chapter outlines constraints and opportunities of land and water resources. This includes a discussion of traditional land rights and current trends of modification (land registration, productivity) under pressure from growing populations, commercialization and mounting aspirations. The following chapter deals with the shift from village-based subsistence economies to ever more diversified, transient and vulnerable economies influenced increasingly by global markets.

Chapter 13 outlines the significance of new technologies, commerce and colonization. It presents the history of the failure of cooperatives and state-owned businesses with astronomical losses, mainly as a result of political cronyism. The growing importance of trade in so-called rights of sovereignty is impressive. These include security rights, offshore financial centres, citizenship and passports, tax and gambling havens, flags of convenience, telephone sex, domain trade, waste storage and money laundering from crime and drug deals with Russian gangs, Japanese *yakuza* and mafia-linked Italians. The overall economic stagnation in most countries is contrasted by small islands such as Rarotonga in the Cook Islands with 10,000 inhabitants, which hosts no less than 855 international companies, 10 insurance firms, 24 banks and over 500 trusts. The final chapter of this section describes the shrinking economic role of governments and the increasing level of debt and aid.

Part five is about politics, government and leadership, from the experience of the past to the potential of the future. The chapters cover traditional and colonial politics and their interplay with leadership, survey the process of attaining constitutional independence, describe elections, parties, and political forces and processes of present political systems; they discuss the role of heredity and chieftainship, ethnicity and gender in the allocation of power. Further sections focus on the growing evidence of corruption – often legitimized and covered as tradition –, of gift-giving and reciprocity, discuss concerns about the declining quality of governance and related issues such as decentralization and the growing importance of non-governmental organizations. These sections further outline the increasingly difficult security situation and the role of and fading respect for security forces, analyse regional interaction and foreign relations, and discuss the intensifying relations with the Pacific Basin and the wider world as a result of globalisation.

The prospects of the region for the 21st century are evaluated in part six. The final seventh part contains appendices giving basic facts about every nation and territory, a selection of Pacific Island Regional Organizations and websites, a list of journals and film guides relevant to the Pacific, and finally an extensive bibliography and index.

With its nearly 800 pages and thousands of facts and arguments the book is a huge inventory. It is the most detailed and comprehensive compendium of the region available, a must for libraries with a focus on Asia and the Pacific or international relations. Minor errors should be seen as inevitable; these include, for instance, on Papua New Guinea, the erroneous statement that the provincial government system has been abolished, that the *National* newspaper takes a soft approach in regard to political criticism, the geographic localization of the Lihir mine or the name (Robbie Lak; it should be Father Robert Lak) or knighthood (Utula Samana has not been knighted) of some politicians. The number of languages and citizens mentioned in

different parts of the book is also confusing, because it is unclear whether they belong to the Pacific region as a whole or only to parts of it.

However, the analysis of processes and development trends – be they social, economic, political or governance-related – is cogent. The book lifts the veil on long-standing, ‘politically correct’ platitudes summarized in catchwords such as self-reliance, sustainable human development or the rhetoric of equity, often used by leaders who exploit their citizens in the name of tradition. Despite the declining importance of kinship relations and traditional values in favour of individualism, regional trends of racist discrimination based on blood, genes, ancestry and sometimes the Old Testament are intensifying to prevent political rights and equal economic participation. Ethnicity (and ethnic superiority) will remain more important in the Pacific than concepts such as classes, strata or other social criteria.

The book also highlights dramatic changes in patterns of immigration, investment, trade and tourism. Europeans as a highly influential section of the population for the last 200 years are losing ground steadily (with the exception of French territories), as are people of Indian and Chinese ancestry. Investments now come from East and South East Asian high-income countries, whereas workers are from low-income states of these regions. This shift is reinforced by Australia’s and (to a lesser extent) other countries’ stand against corruption and budget help and the willingness of Japan, China (the most influential nation in the future) and Taiwan to help out in return for political support and economic access. Seen thus, it is plain that the South Pacific will be radically different for coming generations.

Also stimulating is Crocombe’s discussion about what independence really means (Ch. 16, in the reviewer’s view the most stringent part). Dependent countries in Micronesia and Polynesia with high levels of health, education, social services and, most important, every possibility of free access to countries such as the USA, France, New Zealand and Australia, contrast with sovereign nations especially in Melanesia, where the bulk of the population, with extremely low standards of living, is “lost in the bush”.

In general, most of the long-romanticized South Pacific countries follow the negative pattern of other developing countries. What seems to be missing are leaders with high moral and ethical standards and integrity (as at the euphoric coming of independence more than two decades ago), transparent and accountable governments and societal discourse about the integration of values, cultures and principles to meet present and future challenges. Or, in the words of the late independence movement leader of New Caledonia, Jean-Marie Tjibaou (quoted on p. 179): the return to tradition is a myth, “our identity lies in front of us”.

Roland Seib