Issues in Monetary Economics of the South Pacific Island Countries


You can’t tell a book by its cover—those unfamiliar with monetary economics could perhaps be forgiven if they assumed Issues in Monetary Economics of the South Pacific Island Countries by Dr T.K. Jayaraman was going to be as dull as the two-tone blue cover chosen for this book. They would be wrong. Jayaraman has a distinguished body of work on the currencies of the Pacific, and this collection of his papers provides a comprehensive overview of the history of currency management in the island nations. With increasing regional engagement, and with currency regimes again an issue for discussion, it is a timely volume and one that provides an excellent reference for students of Pacific monetary economics. This book sells itself to those in the know—despite the unexciting cover art!

The papers contained in this volume include some of Jayaraman’s most informative work. Current issues are explored in papers such as ‘Is there a case for a single currency for the South Pacific islands?’ from Pacific Economic Bulletin, 18(1), a personal favourite as it provides a comprehensive overview of the motivating factors behind monetary unions and shared currency arrangements. Several papers draw on the theme of exchange regime management, including ‘Is there a case for a freely floating exchange rate in Fiji’ (Pacific Economic Bulletin, 14(1)) and ‘Currency management arrangements in Vanuatu: a case for a currency board in Vanuatu’ (Pacific Economic Bulletin, 16(2)). Jayaraman investigates the role of central banks throughout the region in ‘Central bank independence in the South Pacific’ (Public Organization and Review, 2000) and investigates financial sector reforms in papers covering Fiji and Samoa. The chapters cover issues in each of the major economies of the Pacific islands as well as discussing issues common throughout the region. It also addresses issues from a political and policy perspective, which makes a nice counterbalance to the heavier economics in the body of most chapters.

A number of additional chapters bring the book together in a cohesive narrative. The first chapter sets the scene with a review of neoclassical literature on the role of money and investigates its applicability to Pacific island economies, while the paper ‘Monetary policies in the South Pacific island countries: past trends and future directions’ provides an overview of issues looked at in more detail in subsequent chapters. However, the book does stray from its topic a little. I felt that perhaps the discussions of private investment were a distraction—possibly better suited to a volume on economic growth and development, and while these chapters touched on interesting issues, they were unable to explore them at any further depth given the parameters of the volume. The book is also prone to problems of events overtaking record—the tables in Chapter 2 listing the ‘Current status of reforms’ in a variety of countries are already outdated, appearing to be drawn primarily from reports written in 2000. While all research work is necessarily dated by the time it is published, and while there may have been no changes to the status quo at the time of writing, it may have been useful to chronicle the implementation dates of the reforms discussed rather than to simply describe them as ‘current’.

This volume stands as the most comprehensive reference to date on Pacific monetary economics, and this in itself is to be commended. However, as an academic text, it will not bring the issues discussed
outside of the academic realm. Perhaps it is time for a similarly comprehensive work, aimed at those with policy and political interests, to promote greater understanding of the monetary issues facing Pacific island economies over the next few decades.

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**Globalization and Culture Change in the Pacific Islands**


*Globalization and Culture Change in the Pacific Islands* forms part of Prentice Hall’s wider Exploring Cultures reference series. Assembling many of the best anthropologists of the region, the collection seeks both to ground globalisation in the actual experiences of Pacific islanders and to address globalisation in the Pacific in all its discordant guises. For the most part, the collection succeeds in its mission. In that it relates these experiences to the comparatively culturally homogenous countries of Polynesia, the diverse Melanesian states and Micronesia, it provides an important bridge between development studies, area studies and anthropology.

In addition to introductory chapters by Lockwood and Robert Borofsky, the contributions are organised into sections about nation-states and ethnic conflict, global economic integration, transnationalism and the environment, identities and cultural representations, social relations, community, well-being and global and local religions.

Lockwood begins with the premise that globalisation ‘has become the hallmark of the twenty-first century as it articulates new forms of social organisation—an increasingly borderless world where flows of capital and new technologies are propelling goods, information, people, and ideologies around the globe in volumes’ (p. 1). She continues: ‘[t]he complexities and scale of these processes oftentimes precludes an understanding of...how the forces of globalisation are experienced and shaped by real people in...diverse regions’ (p. 1). Lockwood’s greatest contributions are in situating the succeeding chapters in global perspective, highlighting the effects of colonialism, the flows of capital and the major debates on globalisation, and in introducing the areas under consideration.

Given the unique opportunity to explore these issues in Pacific contexts, Borofsky laments that too few scholars consider the Pacific islands. He makes compelling arguments for why they should. Researchers can engage in dialogue with individuals who experienced the initial encroachment of the West firsthand. As Borofsky notes, in the Papua New Guinea highlands, where whites arrived only in the 1930s, personal memories and global forces collide: there are still living people on both sides of the encounter who remember ‘first contact’. According to Borofsky, Pacific islands ‘represent, if anything, the dynamic, changing cultural formations we are coming to associate with globalisation—as nation states become reconfigured in new forms’ (p. 41). They offer ‘the most...regionally condensed historical timelines of the global changes that have taken place in recent millennia—from human settlement to European contact to colonialism to postcolonialism’ (p. 41).

For the most part, the collection refuses to characterise Pacific islanders as present and future casualties in the path of the unstoppable advance of Western cultures, religions and capital, seeking rather to