

carried out 'the most extensive experiment in free market neoliberalism that has yet been attempted anywhere in the world' (p.311). In Davidson's view, 'No other country has moved so far or so fast in its attempts to "dismantle" a traditional welfare state and introduce the full monetarist and neoliberal prescription' (p.325). The end result, he predicts, if 'Rogernomics' (or presumably the equivalent) were to continue, must be a residualism even more extreme than that of the 'American model'. The conclusion is that a system based on social insurance is inherently more stable than any attempt to base welfare on 'egalitarianism' or on redistribution between classes. The implication is that the New Zealand model was a failed experiment.

While Davidson deals in 'models' he does not lose sight of the historical complexity in his analysis. Although his recounting of New Zealand history is based on secondary sources, he throws new light on the history of social policy in New Zealand through his extensive knowledge of welfare in Sweden and other countries.

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Te Tala o Niuoku, the German plantation on Nukulaelae Atoll 1865-1890. By Doug Munro, Suamalie N.T. Iosefa and Niko Besnier. Institute of Pacific Studies of the University of the South Pacific, Suva, 1990. 50 pp. NZ price: \$17.50.

IN 1865, a sailing vessel of the trading company Godeffroy & Sohn, with a pioneering cohort of London Missionary Society teachers on board, arrived at Nukulaelae, the southernmost of the eight main islands of Tuvalu. In addition to providing passage for the religious mission, the German captain obtained a 25-year lease on the islet of Niuoku. Whether or not he obtained genuine title for that length of time is a moot point. The Nukulaelae consensus is that he did not. What is clear is that the company established a copra plantation, managed and worked by off-islanders. The locals, having initially accepted this venture because it provided some employment, turned against it during the depressed decade of the 1880s. Conventional historical research lends weight to factors such as lower copra prices, drought and hurricanes; but the oral traditions which are at the core of *Te Tala o Niuoku* highlight opposition to the amount paid for the lease and its duration. The authors have uncovered documentary evidence suggesting the contract was valid (at least in European terms) and not quite as ungenerous as legend states. Nevertheless, there was misunderstanding, if not blatant exploitation. The islanders' resentment expressed a real fear of land alienation that remains powerful to this day. Given their powerlessness and lack of allies, their only recourse was endurance. The eventual expiry of the lease is still commemorated annually on the island. Indeed, this book was published to mark the centenary of the return of Niuoku to local control.

For all the intriguing details of the dispute presented here, there is a tantalizing sparseness of information on the economic circumstances behind the Niuoku occupation. The authors argue that a Peruvian blackbird's raid in 1863 made a foreign plantation more difficult to resist, but it may also have made the offer more attractive. Given that Nukulaelae probably had 'spare carrying capacity' in the 1860s and 1870s, a number of questions arise. Was the decision to accept the contract reached collectively, or were specific landholding groups more centrally involved? Were there internal disputes over land ownership rights in addition to the dispute with Godeffroy & Sohn? Why was the

company interested in establishing a plantation at an isolated and comparatively infertile atoll? True, Niuoku is the largest of the chain of islets (motu) that surround the spacious lagoon of Nukulaelae, but we are told little about it otherwise.

Perhaps these issues pale beside the longstanding symbolic importance of Niuoku in local discourse. By providing Tuvaluan and English texts, *Te Tala o Niuoku* undoubtedly fulfils its role of reflecting back to the community their concerns, while allowing a wider audience to assess conflicting views of an important aspect of colonial history. This is not 'indigenous history' in the strictest sense, but it does attempt an interesting blend of local and foreign interpretations.

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Tungaru Traditions: Writings on the Atoll Culture of the Gilbert Islands. By A.F. Grimble, edited by H.E. Maude. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1990. 382 pp. Australian price: \$44.95.

SIR ARTHUR GRIMBLE'S best-known works are undoubtedly the two books of essays, *A Pattern of Islands* and *Return to the Islands*, which were published in 1952 and 1957 shortly before his death. Based largely on BBC radio scripts, these are urbane, elegant tales of Gilbertese life and society — not always strictly accurate, and imbued with stereotyped views; as Maude points out in his brief introduction, 'factual content is subordinated to literary effect'.

Grimble was, however, also a serious though strictly amateur student of anthropology and during his earlier years as an administrator in the old Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony he had unparalleled opportunities to gather information from a generation of elders who had not yet rejected traditional ways. Some of this was published in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* and other scholarly journals in the years between 1920 and 1934. Nevertheless, whether through inattention or inclination, Grimble remained largely untouched by the influences of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, whose works were transforming anthropological theory and practice during those years. He remained a devotee of Haddon and Rivers — and, incidentally, an admirer of Percy Smith's work.

At his death, Grimble's unpublished notes and papers came into the custody of Harry Maude, by then established in the newly-formed Department of Pacific History at Canberra. Under Maude's care the 'Grimble Papers' have long been available to research students. In publishing a selection from them here Maude expresses the hope that they might make Grimble's very solid achievements more widely known, and the information more readily available to the Gilbertese.

The book is divided into three parts. Part I is a miscellany of field notes on aspects of 'traditional culture'. This is perhaps a treasure trove for specialists who can place the notes in wider contexts. But it is also a rather bewildering array of diverse and unrelated scraps of information, responsible for most of the more arcane entries in the book's excellent index — ranging from 'Adoption, of cats' through 'Invisibility' to 'Vaginal tickler'. Part 2 is much sterner stuff, made up of a good essay on 'Clan and Totem' and three others on aspects of the *maneaba*, or meeting house, which is such an important focus of Gilbertese life. True to the Rivers and Percy Smith mode of interpretation, Grimble was preoccupied