

Book Reviews

RODMAN, Margaret *Deep Water: Development and Change in Pacific Village Fisheries*. Boulder, Colorado: Waterview Press, 1989.

The book is about fisheries development in Vanuatu, a small group of Southwest Pacific islands known until recently as the New Hebrides. It's purpose is to describe development from the disparate perspectives of the villagers of Vanuatu and of the government fisheries personnel.

If the goal of fisheries development is self-sufficiency, one must ask, self-sufficiency for whom? Increased commercial productivity, enhances national self-reliance, but it may simultaneously erode it among fishermen; 'if these villagers reach the point where they have to go fishing in order to earn a wage instead of going fishing in order to catch supper, they may be less self-reliant as a result of "development"' (p. 5). This (as Rodman acknowledges) is not an original insight in the development literature. But it needs to be repeated and explained in a Pacific island context if island policy-makers and aid-givers are to be expected to take note.

Rodman describes different perceptions within Vanuatu of 'cargo' – freezers, fishing boats etc. – obtained with foreign aid. The Vanuatu Fisheries Department, she says, views cargo as beneficial, tending to equate development with increased capital investment because aid donors prefer to support the purchase of equipment rather than to cover services which are less tangible. It judges the success of development less in terms of what it accomplishes for the village recipients than in terms of how much additional aid it attracts. One village is described as 'a showcase of development' for the Fisheries Department because 'the cold room and 15 boats looked impressive to Japanese aid donors,' although business was poor and benefits spread inequitably (p. 151).

In contrast, 'islanders, while enjoying the cargo, are wary of finding themselves in a position where they would have to do nothing but catch fish,' and 'display a passive resistance to commercialization of their labor' (p. 149). 'Ni-Vanuatu are well aware of some of the perils of commercialization, even if the ones that worry them are not always those of consumerism and the profligate uses of natural resources that concern [western observers],' she asserts (p. 7); their concerns are more with maintaining their 'social and economic options' (p. 7) in a society where 'no one ... is willing to be a full-time anything' (p. 7). 'While participation in the cash economy through markets is part of everyday life for islanders, relatively few are, or want to be, more deeply involved' (p. 8).

This is a message that one hopes will reach those who distribute development aid in the region. Few of them have lived in island villages, for which much of the aid is intended. They are thus often poorly informed about such realities and, in consequence, sometimes have unrealistic expectations about the feasibility of directed changes, and the speed with which they can be accomplished.

While Rodman states that 'a radical change in peoples' attitudes toward money, work, and government is required to transform intermittent simple commodity producers into people who work regularly to provide the money that creates the tax base to keep local government running' (p. 147), she stresses that this change should be accomplished only by degrees, 'through slow, steady change that does not disrupt traditional lifestyles' (p. 153).

But is even *this* cautious goal achievable? I made similar assertions a decade ago (see also Lingenfelter 1977), but I can't think of any examples of shallow-water fisheries development in Oceania that have since justified my optimism. Assuming that transforming the simple commodity economies of many Pacific islanders to capitalist economies can be accomplished without seriously disrupting traditional lifestyles ignores a whole suite of grim social and related medical problems widely associated with economic development in the region. In parts of Oceania where cash economies have expanded further than in Vanuatu villages, traditional lifestyles have often been replaced by ones characterized by escalating rates of heart disease, diabetes and alcoholism (e.g., Coyne 1984), mental illness and suicide (e.g., Pacific Islands Studies Program 1985) drug use and crime, and that contribute, as well, to serious environmental degradation (e.g., Hatcher *et al.* 1989). (One might argue that the causal connections in the region between developing market economies and these problems are not rigorously proven, but the relationship is too strong to ignore.)

Rodman is capable of artful evocation of setting and mood; the first paragraph in the book, for example, is a little gem of this sort. But the writing moves abruptly and sometimes jarringly to and from this poetic prose to an expository style more typical of writing on development anthropology. This seems to lie at the root of the vague dissatisfaction some readers expressed to me about the book. But it would be a pity to undervalue it because of these stylistic inconsistencies. The story Rodman has to tell is interesting and instructive.

One might wish, however, for a more detailed treatment of Vanuatu's political economy, as well as greater acknowledgement that the problems she describes are not the only important ones facing fisheries development in the country. And the author made many of her points more concisely in a journal article (Rodman 1987). But, for natural resource managers and foreign aid donors in the region, the dimensions of some of the problems and issues they face are captured in the book in a more personal – and thus perhaps more persuasive – way than is possible in a journal article.

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HANNIG, Wolfgang *Towards a Blue Revolution. Socio-Economic Aspects of Brackishwater Pond Cultivation in Java*. Yogyakarta (Indonesia): Gadjah Mada University Press, 1988. xxxii + 404 pp. ISBN 979-420-110-3.

In one of the early evaluation studies of Indonesia's Green Revolution programme, a research team pointed to the negative impacts of this type of agricultural modernization. In particular, they criticized its employment effects, the more so as these tended to be highly gender-specific. As criticism in Indonesia's New Order political climate is frowned upon if it is not considered to be 'constructive,' the authors hastily added to their conclusions that probably the final solution to Indonesia's food problem, rural poverty and declining employment could come from a 'Blue Revolution.'¹ By this, they meant a programme for modernizing the extensive coastal fishing sector as practised in brackish-water ponds (*tambak*) along the North coast of Java (as well as in parts of the Lesser Sunda islands, Sumatera and Sulawesi).

It is this sector of the rural economy which Hannig discusses in the commercial edition of his Bielefeld Ph.D. thesis. Fieldwork for this dissertation in development sociology was carried out in the mid-1980s in several areas of North Central Java.

Social research into these fishing communities has been very limited, and, as such, Hannig's study certainly is a pioneering effort in tackling both the organization of 'aquacultural production,' the way it is linked to other sectors of the rural and national economy, the socio-economic impact it has on social differentiation, and the way in which the Indonesian government has tried to boost production of milkfish, prawns and shrimps through intensification and credit programmes. Hannig's main conclusion is that particularly government policies during the last two decades have reinforced and often exacerbated unequal access to resources and that they have led to further socio-economic differentiation in the *tambak* communities.

In many respects, the structural impact of this 'Blue Revolution' bears a close similarity to what has been reported on the Green Revolution in Javanese rice cultivation: a rapid increase in production and productivity on the one hand (*tambak* production more than doubled between 1968 and 1982), and a concentration of resources among a small coastal elite of village notables on the other. Accelerated commercialization has brought a tighter control over production by trading networks, and, hence, a greater dependency on world market prices.

The author discusses the structure of the coastal economy and the importance of *tambak* cultivation in Central Java in general, and in two villages in particular. It is these case studies which show a richness of detail on the ecology and technology of fish farming, the social organization of production (through systems of tenancy and sharecropping), the increased control of the village elites over fish ponds and the expanding role of formal and informal credit systems among these 'peasant-fishermen.' Evaluating past experiences with Indonesia's development programmes brings him in his final chapter to outlining an 'integrated and target-group oriented development planning' which is better suited to the needs of the pond cultivators and their tenants and sharecroppers.

The study provides the reader with a wealth of data and analytical observations which make Hannig's study a major source of information on the economic organization of *tambak* cultivation in Java. It shows, however, a number of weaknesses which leave the reader with more questions than answers. These weaknesses regard both the historical depth of the study, the theoretical analysis, the methodological approach and the presentation of the material.

An analysis of social transformation like Hannig presupposes sufficient information on the baseline of social change in order to compare contemporary developments with

the situation before the 'Blue Revolution' came to Indonesia. Previous research on *tambak* cultivation may be scanty, but it is certainly not completely absent. In fact, a detailed study of this sector of the economy and moreover one carried out in Hannig's research area itself, encompassing one of the villages he studied in depth has been published in 1930 in the Dutch journal *Koloniaal Tijdschrift*.² As Burger addresses exactly the same topics (ecology, technology, access to fish ponds, tenancy, concentration of ownership, etc.) Hannig could have benefitted immensely from a historical comparison with the pre-Independence situation, and it would have prevented him from exclusively focusing upon present-day government intervention as a major factor in bringing about social differentiation.

In coping with the general theoretical implications of his findings, Hannig prefers sweeping statements in his discussion of rural transformation and social differentiation by applying rigid economic conceptions of social class (pp. 147-49). A similar deterministically inclined approach is visible in his analysis of the relationship between ecology and production technology in *tambak* cultivation. Moreover, his preference for 'policy-relevant' research brings him to often include normative or moralistic statements in his analysis of local politics and government intervention.

This theoretical shallowness seems to be closely related to Hannig's research methodology, and, in particular, his quest for 'objectification.' The leading Indonesian sociologist Sajogyo who wrote a foreword to the volume, has pointed to the fact that 'pond cultivators (...), labourers, tenants, and traders and on the other hand, development administrators, from village heads, extension officers to higher officials, are presented as people "without a face." The story remains abstract' (p. x). The author of the preface to Hannig's book, Hans-Dieter Evers, adds, with a peculiar sense of understatement, that 'the study does not quite reach the level of sophistication required of a "thick description" in the sense of Clifford Geertz. Local knowledge, cultural values, and emic interpretations do not form a central theme of the study' (p. xii).

It is, indeed, hard to imagine that Hannig who apparently is well acquainted with the way of life of *tambak* fishermen and their families, never mentions 'real people' rather than the 'social categories' that wander through the pages of his book. Even in the case studies of villages in Pati and Semarang, the author distances himself nearly completely from the 'participants' view' of what is happening inside their communities. This way of presenting the intricacies of socio-economic transformation contrasts sharply with Hannig's blaming the Indonesian government for treating peasants as a mere 'factor of production' (p. 357). He urges the government to trade this attitude for the idea that 'originally and objectively they are probably the most decisive subject of development.' If so, they certainly would deserve to be the subject of a sociological analysis.

So we are unfortunately left with a study of an important sector of the rural Javanese economy which provides a host of information on its structure and organization but little on the dynamics of social and cultural change accompanying the rapid transition from small-scale to international fish and shrimp production.

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1980 Skippers and Strategies: Leadership and Innovation in Shetland Fishing Crews. *Human Organization* 39(3):227-32.

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