

Culture

Erratum



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Ethnographers of seaboard Melanesia have long worked in communities where copra production, articulated with subsistence cultivation, has been a foundation of the economy, where Christianity has long supplanted ancestral religion, and where old cultural forms have been transformed (or abandoned) to pursue new opportunities and valued goals. Most of us have been remarkably adept at ignoring, or filtering out of our ethnographic accounts, much that has been central in the lives of those with whom we have lived—including the coconut plantations and smoky copra driers as well as the churches. Rodman's account forcefully and valuably places the Longanans in the twentieth century, not the mythical ethnographic present. If the Melanesia she represents is not the one anthropologists most like to imagine—and in consequence, have left mainly to the geographers and economists—Rodman explores it with impressive theoretical sophistication, drawing on recent developments in the interpretation of meaning and ideology, in and beyond anthropology.

Rodman shows how the Longanans have been agents in their own history, seizing upon the opportunities created by their very peripherality within a schizophrenic condominium (the colonial regime) to pursue copra production so as to fit it into their own culturally-shaped conceptions of land, place, and community. The precolonial land-tenure system of southeastern Ambae (Aoba) was highly flexible and individually-oriented. In explicating the old system of place and land, Rodman shows skillfully both how it accommodated to the new opportunities of the colonial period and how it allows of ideological manipulation: those who have gained power, wealth and influence in the new arena of copra production can invoke the old to legitimize the new.

The Loganan system of customary land tenure has not impeded the accretion of land in the hands of a few, and the consequent accumulation of personal wealth that underlies the emergence of new forms of social inequality. ... Men follow traditional paths to wealth and power into a world of new consequences. ... This illusion presents richer Longanans as masters of tradition ... (p. 164).

Rodman's unusually fine-grained analysis of land-holdings, tract by tract, shows through the filters of ideology how land has been acquired, who has accumulated it, how it is used, and to what ends. Explicating the motives and strategies of large and small producers, she shows how and why the Longanans can imagine that they control an economic system in which they are in fact very marginal participants.

Production of a cash-crop seems hardly the stuff of myth. ... [But] traditional illusions associated with production are myths that I have sought to demystify and denaturalize through historical explanation of their

social basis. But ... analytical explanation does not remove the reality of the illusion. Therefore, I have also tried to be myth-reader, seeking to enrich our understanding of how rural Melanesian producers behave by accepting the truthful ambiguity of their illusions about themselves (pp. 5-7).

Stepping back to examine that system, at national and international levels, she connects a local, culturally inflected view to the world system, in the process showing the distortions of a focus either on the local or the global at the expense of the other. She shows vividly both "the vulnerability of all Longanan producers to the broader system that created and continues to sustain their participation" and "the power that Longanans exert over an independent little world: power that is shared yet unequal, and power they express in custom, experience in place, and nurture with the flexibility of land tenure" (p. 165).

Erratum

The second last paragraph on page 111, *Culture* 6:2, 1986 should read as follows:

The term *naxnoq* "applies to any being, event, or ability which appears to exhibit or express some form of 'power'" (p. 139). In her second article, she analyzes the extra-ordinary powers of the shaman and places in a cross-cultural context the role of symbolic imagery in curing procedures. Shane presents a well constructed argument on the social position and power of the *Gitsonk*, a group of artists responsible for the manufacture of religious paraphernalia used in secret society dances. She concluded that they had a special status that wielded considerable power in the society. The article by Halpin, placed under *Material Culture*, fits well into this set. While looking for the meaning behind two 'twin' stone masks she develops further the concepts and uses of power, mainly in the *naxnoq* dramatizations.

We regret any confusion caused by the omission of these sentences.