

EDITORIAL

## The magic of Melanesia

In this third issue of *Synkrêtic*, we navigate to Melanesian waters.

We begin in Papua New Guinea, where the Filipino missionary Leonardo N. Mercado lived in the late 1980s. His observations on Melanesian culture, philosophy, and on several languages spoken in the highlands remain relevant to the modern reader. Remembered as one of the leading Filipino philosophers, Fr. Mercado notes the similarities between his and Melanesian culture.

In the next piece, an excerpt from the celebrated anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski's influential *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), we join a fleet traversing the Trobriand Islands that lie scattered off the east coast of Papua New Guinea. His account captures one tribe's feat of navigation and the glorious magic of Melanesia, with the fleet vying to escape a giant octopus, homicidal rocks, and witches to survive the trip.

Further south, the magic continues in an excerpt from Dr Claire Moyse-Faurie's collection of Indigenous Kanak oral history from New Caledonia, newly translated for this journal, in which brave women are turned to stone for disobeying orders, a mountain walks and crows like a rooster, and an undead chicken calls from inside his killer's stomach.

Tacking northwest to reach Solomon Islands, the essay by Victoria University of Wellington's Associate Professor Kabini Sanga and Dr Martyn Reynolds on ethics provides rich insights into the ethical framework of the Gwailao clan of East Malaita. This

thought-provoking piece challenges non-Indigenous researchers to question their ‘Western-biased ethical system that assumes individual rights to be paramount’ over local ethical systems that are ‘exoticised’ by the academy.

Staying in Solomon Islands, the filmmaker Amie Batalibasi discusses the impact of the painful and unresolved legacy of the blackbirding trade, the enslavement of 60,000 Pacific islanders on Queensland’s sugar plantations, on her native Malaita and descendants in Australia. Offering a unique perspective, Dr Anouk Ride reflects on her experience as an Australian in the country’s capital, Honiara, during the 2021 riots and COVID-19.

We sail southeast to the easternmost tip of Melanesia in Dorell Ben’s charming short fiction “He”, a story about a son’s fraught homecoming on his native island of Rotuma and his new beginnings on the Fijian mainland. On a different island, the Fijian-Australian University of Sydney Professor Jioji Ravulo, the first Pasifika professor in Australia, shares his passion for supporting Pacific islanders through research, social work, and music.

Heading back north to Micronesian waters, the University of Guam’s Professor James D. Sellmann observes that Pacific logic is non-correlational, meaning that something can be both true-and-false, unlike either-or logic baked into Western thought by Aristotle.

We finally reach the subcontinent, the end point of this issue’s journey, with Ben Gaskin’s review of Professor Daniel Raveh’s *Daya Krishna and Twentieth-Century Indian Philosophy* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2020). This reflective piece strikes up a memorable conversation with the colourful and incisive Indian thinker who, in an earlier issue (Issue 1, ‘The West’s goddess of reason’, 46-57), also blew on the cobwebs of Aristotelian logic like his Pacific friends.

*Daryl Morini*