

Colonizing Madness: Asylum and Community in Fiji

The establishment of the first mental asylum in Fiji in 1880 marked the beginning of a long and complex history of colonizing madness in the country. This article explores the ways in which colonial psychiatry and the asylum system were used to control and marginalize indigenous Fijians, and the impact this has had on the development of mental health services in Fiji.



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by Jacqueline Leckie

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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Colonial Psychiatry and the Asylum System

Colonial psychiatry was based on the idea that mental illness was a sign of inferiority and that indigenous peoples were more prone to mental illness than Europeans. This ideology was used to justify the establishment of asylums in Fiji and other colonies, which were seen as places where indigenous people could be isolated and treated.

The asylum system in Fiji was harsh and inhumane. Patients were often subjected to physical and psychological abuse, and they were often denied basic rights such as the right to vote or to own property. The conditions in the asylums were so bad that many patients died from neglect or abuse.

The Impact of Colonialism on Mental Health in Fiji

The legacy of colonialism has had a profound impact on mental health in Fiji. The asylum system created a stigma around mental illness, and this stigma has persisted to the present day. As a result, many people with mental illness in Fiji are reluctant to seek help, and they often suffer in silence.

In addition to the stigma associated with mental illness, colonialism also disrupted traditional Fijian healing practices. These practices were based on the belief that mental illness was caused by supernatural forces, and they often involved the use of traditional healers. However, colonial authorities banned traditional healing practices, and this led to a loss of cultural knowledge and expertise in the treatment of mental illness.

The Role of Community-Based Mental Health Initiatives

In recent years, there has been a growing movement in Fiji to develop community-based mental health initiatives. These initiatives are based on the belief that mental illness is a community issue, and that it can best be treated in the community. Community-based mental health initiatives provide a range of services, including counseling, support groups, and vocational training. These services are designed to help people with mental illness to live full and productive lives in the community.

Community-based mental health initiatives are challenging the legacy of colonialism in Fiji. They are providing culturally appropriate care for people with mental illness, and they are helping to reduce the stigma associated with mental illness. These initiatives are essential to improving the mental health of indigenous Fijians and to creating a more just and equitable society.

The history of colonizing madness in Fiji is a complex and tragic one. However, there is also hope for the future. Community-based mental health initiatives are challenging the legacy of colonialism and providing culturally appropriate care for people with mental illness. These initiatives are essential to improving the mental health of indigenous Fijians and to creating a more just and equitable society.



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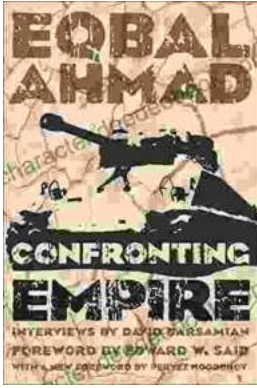
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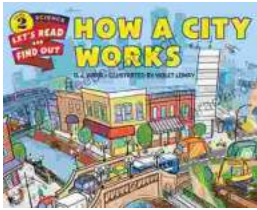
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