BOOK REVIEWS

and human interest. The material is presented in local and personal terms, with direct quotation from informants used to good effect. A feature of the book is its illustration of variety in the Islanders' experience of the war: some were inhabitants of zones of bitter fighting, as in Pohnpei, Palau, and New Britain; some feigned submission to the Japanese invaders, as in Santa Isabel; some were recruited into the armed forces, as in American Samoa; some from Malaita and Tanna served as laborers; and some, as on Sikaiana, Santa Cruz, and Sapwuahfik (in the Carolines), were awed bystanders of the tumultuous events occurring in their neighborhoods. There was also much variety in the cognitive responses of the Islanders to their experience of war and of the ways in which it passed into local tradition. In exploring such issues and relating them to the stories it has to tell, The Pacific Theater is a work of remarkable sophistication. Given the number, consistent quality, and thematic unity of the contributions, there is little to be gained from singling out individual essays for particular commendation.

On the other hand, a historian reviewer is surely entitled to make an exception in the case of the one historian among the authors. That is James Boutilier, who writes about the celebrated Solomon Island coastwatcher and guerrilla leader Donald Kennedy. Various of Kennedy’s exploits have long been well known, and even mythologized; here they are presented accurately and objectively and within the context of the indigenous cooperation that Kennedy needed in order to function behind Japanese lines. This was important, not just because of the subtleties of indigenous loyalty, but because of Kennedy’s habit of incurring the personal antipathy of those with whom he had to work. In telling Kennedy’s story Boutilier has written a good piece of history; that is, up to the standards set by the anthropologists in this book.

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This volume presents a set of retrospective essays on the ethnology, prehistory, and early contact history of an important region in anthropological research. The essays are not merely reviews of the literature but rather efforts to define and pursue significant problems. The authors are all experienced Polynesian scholars, and their essays are intended for a sophisticated audience of professional anthropologists and graduate students. The volume is required reading for Polynesianists.

The editors and authors use two themes to integrate the volume: a "reconstructionist project" involving an understanding of the Polynesian past, and a "presentist project" dealing with ongoing Polynesian societies. Since one of the editors, Robert Borofsky, is currently working on a volume on contact and change as well as an edited
volume on Pacific issues in historical perspective, contemporary Polynesia receives less attention than might otherwise be the case.

The first chapter, on Polynesian prehistory by Patrick Kirch, reviews the origins, dispersal, and development of Polynesian cultures. Kirch argues that the area’s archaeology is still in its infancy and that only the use of linguistics and contemporary ethnography, along with archaeology, can provide holistic reconstruction of the past. Alan Howard and John Kirkpatrick follow with a comprehensive review of social organization, including sections on descent groups, social stratification, kinship, incest, adoption, alliance and exchange, and gender. They demonstrate how far this field has come since the classic work of Raymond Firth. Based largely on their work among the New Zealand Maori, Jane and James Ritchie discuss socialization and character development in Polynesia, emphasizing the ease with which Polynesians redefine their social worlds as conditions change. This chapter is almost alone in the volume in addressing the contemporary adaptation of Polynesians to the modern world.

Two of the most challenging chapters are by Bradd Shore and George Marcus. Shore offers a new look at the concepts of *mana* and *tapu*, attempting to illuminate the Polynesian worldview by finding cultural patterns implicit in ethnographic detail. Marcus focuses on the kingly/sacred and populist/profane dimensions of Polynesian chieftainship, believing that a reintroduction of the cultural idea of kingship will provide a richer way of viewing the sacredness and ordinariness of chiefs.

Adrienne Kaeppler’s chapter on art and aesthetics provides a useful review of the field. She calls for a broad conception of aesthetic ideas, including housing and spatial arrangements and their relationship to other aspects of society such as political structure. The last chapter is a comparative examination of the early contact period by Robert Borofsky and Alan Howard. Using data from several societies, they look at trade, theft, and violence in Polynesian-Western interactions.

The editors provide a clear introduction and conclusion, and each chapter looks ahead to further research as well as evaluating past work. Yet while each is worthwhile reading, the chapters do not form a tightly integrated whole. Polynesian scholarship is now too voluminous for one individual to master, while theoretical differences, topical specialization, and intra-island focus have fragmented knowledge. The result is that there is more ethnographic detail available for comparison but not necessarily a better basis for the integration or synthesis of this knowledge.

One theoretical approach that has been very influential in Polynesian scholarship over the past decade is the structuralist history of Marshall Sahlins. Five of the seven chapters in *Developments in Polynesian Ethnology* employ ideas from Sahlins in one manner or another, especially the chapters by Shore and Marcus. Since his recent work has become so important, it would have been helpful if Sahlins himself had had a chapter in the volume, or perhaps there could have been a chapter critically evaluating structuralist history and related approaches to Polynesian data.

Structuralist history uses cultural

such works before assessing anthropology’s contribution to this and other important issues. Developments in Polynesian Ethnology provides a sound foundation for further areal synthesis.

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The enormous significance of this book lies in great part with the central question it poses: What does it mean to write about culture in our time? “These days,” Rosaldo writes in the preface, “questions of culture seem to touch a nerve because they quite quickly become anguished questions of identity” (ix). Situating his work within the context of the ongoing debate about the nature of “cultural literacy” and renewed interest in redefining American national identity, Rosaldo argues for the need to pluralize precisely these cultural categories of “literacy” and “identity.” The task of social analysis is not one of reinstating the privilege of certain modes of knowing and being at the expense of others; rather, it entails the discovery of those other identities and literacies that have been historically repressed.

Writing about culture for Rosaldo thus involves rethinking such cherished social science categories as “objectivity,” “distance,” and “thick descriptions” in terms of more indeterminate qualities such as subjectivity, engagement, and emotional force. In doing so, he seeks to interrogate the suppos-