

The Art of Tivaevae: Traditional Cook Islands Quilting, by Lynnsay Rongokea, with photographs by John Daley. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001. ISBN 0-8248-2502-0; 132 pages, figures, photographs. US\$29.95.

The Art of Tivaevae is a popular work for the nonspecialist. Its subject is the quilts (sometimes spelled tivaivai) found in the Cook Islands and the women artists who create them. In the introduction, Lynnsay Rongokea (a Cook Islander and daughter of a quiltmaker) discusses the importation of tivaevae techniques to the Cook Islands by Christian missionaries. She describes the range of visual styles and design patterns, particularly floral motifs, and how tivaevae are used as gifts to friends and as formal presentations at special occasions, such as funerals, weddings, and other rites of passage. A significant part of the introduction is made up of an explanation of the techniques used in the creation of these colorful artworks. The words of the Cook Island artists themselves, with pictures of the women and examples of their quilts, constitute the remainder of the book.

The Art of Tivaevae is a beautiful volume with numerous, excellent color photographs of various quilts and the Cook Islands landscape taken by John Daley. These images are complemented by black-and-white portraits of the artists. Beyond this visual introduction to tivaevae, perhaps the most important aspect of the book is the first-person narratives of the Cook Islands women in which they discuss their lives as artists, daughters, mothers, and members of their communities. Too often, in both popular works

and scholarly tomes, the living voices of real people are lost in the writing process. It is a rare author who lets her subjects speak for themselves.

In spite of the wonderful photography and the effective voices of the women, *The Art of Tivaevae* does have some weaknesses. The occasional error in the text can be quite distracting. For example, in the first paragraph on page 18, a discussion of quilt designs utilizing both appliqué and embroidery incorrectly labels such works as *tivaevae tuitui tataura* instead of the correct term, *tivaevae tataura*. In addition, the description of various assembly methods gives a number of details for parts of the process, but few for other stages. The gaps can make it hard for nonquilters to follow, and leaves those readers who are interested or knowledgeable in needlework techniques a bit frustrated. In addition, the family links between some of the quilters are initially unclear. Although grandmother Mareta Matamua's statement is immediately followed by that of her daughter, Esther Katu, and granddaughter, Ani Katu, the heading in the left-hand top corner of the pages gives the impression that the second and third entries are somehow misplaced. It was only with a second reading that the relationships between the three women became clear. Of course, these are minor problems. Perhaps the major drawback with *The Art of Tivaevae* is in its failure to provide a greater context to the narratives of the artists.

No history of textiles in the Cook Islands prior to tivaevae is presented in the book's introduction. We are told that "tivaevae slipped easily and permanently into the daily and ceremonial life of Cook Islands society" (9).

Yet there is no sense of why this might have been so. Textiles like tapa (bark cloth) and handwoven mats were both socially and ritually important throughout Polynesia before the arrival of Europeans. In many groups (including the Cooks) these older forms have been augmented or replaced by western cloth, which is manipulated and used with island priorities. Are the uses of tivaevae today in the Cook Islands postcontact phenomena, or have the quilts become modern substitutes within ancient practices? Quilting techniques similar to those found in the Cook Islands also exist in other parts of Polynesia. Hawai'i, the Society Islands, and Tonga come to mind. The existence of quilting in Tahiti is touched on in the artists' statements, yet it is not acknowledged in the discussion at the beginning of the book. There is also no bibliography to help direct the reader who wishes to learn more. Some depth of history or breadth of geography, even if limited, would have provided a much stronger background against which to understand the creation of tivaevae in the Cooks. The absence of this context intimates a sense of timelessness, which contradicts the living and evolving tradition about which the artists themselves speak.

The Art of Tivaevae, in spite of its flaws, does introduce the expert in Pacific studies and those generally interested in either Polynesia or quilting to this beautiful art form. The artists' narratives also contribute to the importance of the book. Although *The Art of Tivaevae* should be bought and enjoyed by all who have a love of the Pacific and its cultures, specialists

will find its usefulness limited to the enjoyment of beautiful objects and the sense of place evoked by the words of the Cook Islands women.

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Kula: Myth and Magic in the Trobriand Islands, by Jutta Malnic, with John Kasaipwalova. Wahroonga, NSW: Cowrie Books, 1998. Distributed by University of Hawai'i Press. ISBN 0-646-34617-2; 222 pages, glossary, map, figures, photographs, bibliography, index, appendix. US\$49.00.

Kula: Ring of Power. 51 minutes, NTSC, 2000. Written by Rob Scott Mitchell, Jutta Malnic, and Richard Dennisen. Directed and edited by Michael Balson. Produced by National Geographic Explorer USA, ZDF Germany, Finnish Broadcasting Corporation, and Sky Visuals. Distributed by University of Hawai'i Press for Cowrie Books. ISBN 0-8248-2313-3. US\$30.00.

For almost a century, the Kula exchange system of southeastern Papua New Guinea has been a classic subject of anthropological enquiry. Most of the literature on this complex and ever-adapting subject has been written by researchers who have worked in the Southern Massim. The island of Kiriwina in the Trobriands, prominent since Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), is the ethnographic center of both book and film.

These two publications can be seen