
Historians will know Oskar Spate the historian for his three-volume tour de force on the Pacific since Magellan (The Spanish Lake, 1979; Monopolists and Freebooters, 1983; and Paradise Found and Lost, 1989). Oskar Spate the geographer has enjoyed world fame since the publication in 1954 of India and Pakistan, still recognized as one of the finest examples of regional geography in the English language (and translated into Russian in 1957). The delightful, lithely written small book under review reminds us again of Spate's further strengths in economics and anthropology and of his wisdom, humanity, and humor. His own words from the preface best illuminate the subject of the book as “slices of a life much of which has been spent on the margins of history in Burma, India, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, and Fiji”; it is these countries (each of which is treated specifically in at least one chapter) that provide the geographic setting of On the Margins of History.

The book is the third in a series, History of Development Studies, issued by the National Centre for Development Studies at the Australian National University. Spate was preceded in the series by Heinz Arndt and Ben Higgins and will be followed by E. K. Fisk—all four men having been leading figures for many decades in research and writing related to development in various parts of southern and southeastern Asia and the Pacific Islands. The purpose of the series is to allow such scholars to reflect informally on their past work and its meaning. Oskar Spate makes the most of the opportunity and of his aim to show “how it felt at the time.”

Tying together his own day-to-day experiences and acute observations with grand events and larger processes, he creates in the first four chapters of the book vivid and memorable pictures of colonial life in Burma before World War II, of the political and economic workings of imperialism there and in India, of the end of British domination in South and Southeast Asia, and of such momentous events as the birth of Pakistan in 1947, a political happening which he admits to be “big history” and in which he played a role as an applied geographer working out how, most legitimately, the Punjab might have been partitioned between India and Pakistan. In the final two chapters of part I, which is devoted to South and Southeast Asia, he recounts a revisit to India in 1956 and one to Burma in 1967.

Spate revisited India while preparing a second edition of India and Pakistan and tellingly notes changes since being there ten years before, examining, among much else, the shift in emphasis from agriculture in the first Five Year Plan toward industry in the second: “It could be plausibly argued that industrial development . . . was badly needed to provide new inputs for agriculture. . . . But there was a dilemma here: even more of the rural population
would become surplus if agriculture were organized with maximum labor-saving efficiency: yet another of the interlocking vicious circles which entangled the rural economy like rolls of barbed or concertina wire” (71). Similarly, Spate’s return to Burma in 1967 evokes a sharp but compassionate probing from many sides that clarifies the country’s sad fate today.

In part 2, attention is turned to the Pacific, which Spate began to study in 1951, when he left London to take up the Foundation Chair of Geography in the new Research School of Pacific Studies at the Australian National University, a position he held until 1967, when he became the school’s second director. Chapter 7 covers his visits to Papua New Guinea in the early 1950s. The first trip, in the company of Jim Davidson and Raymond Firth, “was an occasion to spy out the land and identify likely research possibilities” (87), for a major factor in the foundation of the Research School of Pacific Studies was the need for firmer and deeper knowledge of Papua New Guinea.

By his second visit, Spate was already putting his knowledge to applied purpose, serving as convener of a small working party, which also included economist Trevor Swan and anthropologist Cyril Belshaw, to advise the Australian minister for territories on the direction that economic development policy should take. Pungently rejecting then prevalent fallacies about the nature of Papua New Guinea’s land and its availability for settlement, Spate’s report came down strongly in favor of fostering indigenous involvement in the market economy rather than following the then common talk of extending plantations and encouraging small-scale white farming settlement. Whatever the tensions of Papua New Guinea today, think of the alternative had Spate’s recommended policy not been effected.

Chapter 9 continues the PNG story into the 1960s and beyond, detailing Spate’s significant role in the foundation and development of the University of Papua New Guinea and giving a sparkling interpretation of the purposes of education and the development of a people’s identity. But it is chapter 8 “The Fijian People 1958” that tells the story—set graphically as always in the geographic and socioeconomic milieu of the day—of Spate’s greatest contribution to applied social science in the Pacific: how, as a government-appointed one-man commission of enquiry into the economic problems facing the (ethnic) Fijian people, he came to write *The Fijian People: Economic Problems and Prospects* (1959).

His diagnosis and prescription, still commonly spoken of in Fiji as “the Spate report,” was based on village-level consultations uniquely wide for a visiting expert, and greatly aided, as he firmly acknowledges, by Fijian anthropologist Rusiate Nayacakalou, who served as “a truly excellent interpreter” (101). The report contrasted the strongly communal traditional Fijian way of life, *vaka Viti*, with individualism and established a new model of Fijian rural development that led the colonial government to relax the Fijian Regulations and to favor more overtly the independent farmers (*galala*). Issues that Spate wrote of more than three decades ago remain wholly alive
in Fiji today, and this chapter, which in looking back provides an admirable summary of the 1959 report, as well as the uncommonly prescient report itself, provides much clear understanding of the complex and confused conflicts in Fiji's recent history.

To conclude the book, Spate reintroduces his serious but not solemn essay "On Being an Expert," which was written after his Fiji experience and first published in 1961. He observes that much has changed, some things for the better, during his more than half a century of scholarship and participation on the margins of history (or its center). Yet, "the modern world is a remorseless beast; once you get involved in the machine of modernization you must follow it through regardless" (132). In studying or advising about this matter, there are few better examples than Oskar Spate's lifelong attempt, well displayed in this book, to give "all that one has both of intellectual passion and of human feeling—and yet these two must be disciplined into strict balance" (138–139).

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When a distinguished British social anthropologist writes a book on emotion, that's news. A. L. Epstein, professor emeritus at the University of Sussex, well known for his writing on political and legal issues in Central Africa and Melanesia, has done just that.

In the last two decades, anthropologists have paid increasingly more attention to the role of emotion in human behavior. There have been many important contributions toward understanding how culture shapes emotion, as well as some progress toward sorting out the mix of pan-cultural and culture-specific in emotion behavior. Most of these studies have emerged from dissertation research by younger scholars. It was little more than twenty years ago that emotion emerged almost by accident as a focus of research (eg, Jean Briggs's Inuit study), but more recent research has been specifically designed to investigate emotions (eg, Catherine Lutz's Ifaluk study.)

Epstein comes to emotion through a very different route. He had already done extensive ethnographic work, but came to feel that for some questions, the current concepts of social anthropology were inadequate. While trying to understand a political crisis over federation in Central Africa, he found himself pushed to draw on psychoanalytic ideas about emotion to explain the very different reactions of different populations. As Epstein developed his thinking about emotion he drew especially from psychologists like Sylvan Tomkins (whom he praises), anthropologists like Catherine Lutz (whom he criticizes), and most ingeniously and interestingly, from the 1979 novel, Aimbe the Pastor, written in English by Paulias Matane, a Tolai.

For a decade now, Epstein has been writing short pieces on emotion, sharpening his pen, as it were. Perhaps the most notable of these was his 1984