BOOK REVIEWS

fully argued account is an excellent addition to our knowledge of the phenomenon of the Christian experience and sets the stage, skillfully, for the very research that Barker and his fellow authors hope to encourage.

JAMES BOUTILIER
Royal Roads Military College
Victoria, BC

* * *


Sepik Heritage is a collection of more than fifty papers originally presented at a 1984 Wenner-Gren symposium entitled “Sepik Research Today” held in Basel, Switzerland. The organizers invited every anthropologist, geographer, art historian, and linguist who had done research in the Sepik region of Papua New Guinea (broadly defined as the East Sepik Province, the Ramu area of the Madang Province, and the Sandaun Province excluding the Tefomin area) since about 1960 and had remained active in their discipline. The resulting group of contributors includes Papua New Guineans, Australians, Americans, and Europeans.

Among the stated purposes of the volume is to document the Sepik as a culture area, a task that includes both
finding common patterns in Sepik culture and social organization, and reconstruc
ting historical migrations of people and the diffusion of cultural practices among groups. Part 2 of the book, “Intercultural Connections,” is devoted to the task of historical reconstruction through examining archaeological evidence of landscape changes (Swaddling), the diffusion of East Asian words into Sepik languages (Philsooph), art styles (Craig), and current ritual practices to find rites not well integrated into the local cosmology (Huber). In addition, several papers in other sections try to reconstruct the movement of peoples and practices by examining myths and oral history (Wassmann, Bragge) and cult-house architecture (Hauser-Schaublin). The result is a rich portrait of both Sepik history and scholarly methods of reconstructing it. Papers by Forge and Filer deal with similar issues by analyzing why particular cultures come to dominate their neighbors through military conquest, through exporting cultural complexes, or by attracting immigrants.

The emphasis on historical relationships among Sepik cultures also contributes to another aim of the volume, that is, to document and analyze processes of cultural change. Schuster, Newton, and Kaufmann all suggest that a historical approach to Sepik societies will help the Papua New Guinean national elite to define Papua New Guinean identity in terms of regional “heritages” and to shape a development strategy suited to New Guinean tradition and worldview. Toward these ends papers in part 1, “Concepts of the Past,” examine local conceptions of history in general (M. Schuster, G. Schuster, Wassmann) and of particular aspects of local history (Bragge, Scaglion, Josephides). Of particular interest are papers by Scaglion and Josephides which analyze the impact of European missionaries and labor recruiters on local attitudes toward New Guinean culture and toward introduced institutions. These themes are taken up again in part 3, “The Impact of the West,” where papers examine the influence of colonization on local cultural identity, social structure, and attitudes toward economic development. High points in this section include papers by Smith and Allen that analyze ways in which particular preoccupations in local culture have influenced reactions to Westerners and development. Part 9, “Conveying the Past,” explicitly addresses ways anthropological studies of the Sepik can be useful to Papua New Guineans by describing various attempts either to help local people market handicrafts or to make use of traditional principles in modern endeavors such as architecture. The remaining sections of the book (“Social Relations and Authority,” “Person and Socialization,” “Engendering Gender,” “Sickness and Health,” “Visual and Aural Art”) contribute to the picture of Sepik culture and social organization.

Introductions to sections do little to pull out regional patterns, but several themes resurface frequently in the papers. These include: the importance of specialized ritual knowledge in Sepik political systems; the complexity of gender relations in societies where myth and ritual emphasize sexual antagonism and male dominance but
relations between men and women may be a great deal more egalitarian and complementary in day-to-day life (Harrison, Losche, Williamson, and Forge all make this point); the "flexible" nature of Sepik social structures where adoption into groups defined by lineal principles is frequent; and the profound impact of colonization and missionization on Sepik peoples (discussed in papers by Allen, Lutkehaus, Gewertz and Errington, Smith, May, Roscoe, and Scaglion, among others). Papers by Harrison, Lipset, and Barlow also point to the importance of understanding local concepts of personhood to analyzing leadership patterns in societies where authority is largely personal in character.

The volume is useful in drawing together the work of scholars from various disciplines and countries, and particularly in making available to an American audience at least a brief introduction to the work of Swiss and German ethnographers who publish primarily in German. The emphasis on regional patterns and relationships is valuable, as Strathern suggests in his closing remarks, in forcing anthropologists to become less "narrow minded" and to look beyond the confines of one small group to the ways groups affect each other and change over time. The contributors' concern with what their work can give to Papua New Guineans is also commendable. These goals, however, perhaps would have been better served if the editors had made a more rigorous selection among the papers (for quality and thematic continuity) and had added introductions dealing with such theoretical issues as the usefulness of taking a regional perspective on cultures; how to define a "culture area" and what such a notion contributes to our understanding of culture; and what "cultural tradition" or "heritage" is and how it is linked to cultural or national identity. A discussion of this last topic would have been particularly helpful given that one of the stated aims is to help Papua New Guineans formulate a national identity by documenting their "heritage."

Important questions about defining heritage and determining its role in new multicultural nations like Papua New Guinea are raised by Soroi Marepo Eoe who asks how we decide what phase of an always-changing way of life is "tradition" and whether the attempt to capture such a "tradition" in museums is a Western practice of little concern to Melanesians. Tuzin suggests that preserving "heritage" may do little besides attract tourists to the Sepik and also that "authentic culture" consists less of a catalogue of precontact practices and artifacts than in emotional and intellectual orientations acquired in childhood. The volume as a whole would have been improved by greater discussion of these and other issues in introductory essays.

KAREN BRISON
Washington University

* * *