lytical precision, and written in a lucid and flowing style. Thanks to Poyer, the survivors of the Ngatik massacre still have much to teach us.

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More Than a Living is a text that, in many ways, reaffirms the worth and significance of good, sensitive, and sensible ethnography. It is a book written with respect, concern, and affection for the people who constitute its subject. The site of Mike Lieber's research is the Polynesian outlier of Kapingamarangi, located in the Eastern Caroline group of the larger geographical area called Micronesia. Although some might dismiss the book's focus on fishing as myopic or mundane, Lieber convincingly shows fishing to be a practice intimately linked with and deeply reflective of the Kapinga view of themselves, their world, and their past.

Lieber writes of fishing as part of a larger environmental, social, and ritual order that once constituted the community on Kapingamarangi. To his credit, he does not attempt to reduce or simplify so rich and complex a topic; rather, he endeavors to make as clear as possible how fishing was and is organized within Kapinga society. Throughout the twentieth century, major change has occurred, not only in Kapinga fishing practices, but in all aspects of life on that atoll. Acknowledging this fact, Lieber combines cybernetics and systems theory to explain how Kapinga cope with potentially threatening, disturbing forces in order to sustain stability and coherence in their world. He also employs the anthropological idea of culture to explain how Kapinga give meaning to their lives in a changing world.

An acute attention to ethnographic detail complements Lieber's impression of theory and concept. He gives meticulous attention to eighty-four different kinds of fishing activities ordered through seven separate and distinct techniques. Of these eighty-four fishing activities remembered by Lieber's informants, only fifteen continue to be employed today. The University of Illinois anthropologist also examines traditional constraints, seasonal and climatic variations, and the ways Kapinga named, mapped, remembered, and thus knew the reefs, shallows, and open ocean areas of their environment. The gods proved as variable and vital an environmental category of influence as the winds, tides, and stages of the moon. Men trained their sons to observe the regularity in the habits and habitats of different species of ocean creatures so that they might recognize the intervention of the gods in the deviations and departures from these observed patterns.

The cosmological significance of fishing receives careful scrutiny and provides an acute measure of the
change affecting the social organization of Kapingamarangi in this century. The Kapinga word for fishing translates literally as the “surfacing of the sacred”; it indicates the formerly deep and intense relationship between the people and their gods. The community’s very survival depended on its relationships with the gods, causing political authority to be vested in the organization of the priesthood, which Lieber terms “the cement that held this community together as a single entity” (5). The Kapinga priesthood was organized into two ranked sets, one headed by the high priest, called di aligi hagaludu, and the other by a “calling priest” known as di aligi hagadago. The high priest’s control over the natural resources on the atoll meant that he effectively determined the number of canoes to be built, led the rituals associated with fishing, determined the timing of ritual fishing expeditions, and directed the division and distribution of the catch. The men’s club-houses, led by headmen or tomono, served as local intermediate organizations, between the priesthood and larger Kapinga society.

Like most of the other activities on the atoll, fishing required the cooperation of the high priest and the tomono. These men, acting in consort, determined the ownership of canoes and the composition of the crews who worked them. A fisherman’s knowledge of the reef derived from his actual experience of it, which in turn depended on the cordiality of his relationships with the high priest, the tomono, and the canoe owners. A fisherman’s career paralleled his journey through life and could be construed as a series of concentric and expanding circles that radiated from the island toward the horizon; a man’s ability to move from one circle to the next measured his increasing social status and his skills as a fisherman.

Given the centrality of fishing to Kapinga survival, it is not surprising that changes in fishing technologies, methods, and rituals mirror the disruption to atoll life resulting from contact with the Euro-American and Asian worlds. While More Than a Living both underscores the value of good ethnography and reminds anthropologists of the need to address their particularistic research to larger systems and social orderings, I find myself most attracted to the possibilities that Lieber’s book raises for the practice of history in the Pacific. In short, Lieber writes an ethnography of fishing that also serves as a history of Kapingamarangi. For Kapinga people of the late twentieth century, the practice of fishing has become a painful metaphor for the disintegration of their community. This ironic transformation of fishing from a symbol of social order to a metaphor of disorder resulted from conversion to Christianity and the imposition of colonial rule.

Initial contacts with Europeans beginning in 1877 introduced sailcloth, metal hooks, files, and pliers. These foreign technologies made little initial impact on traditional fishing practices; Kapinga tended to prefer their own strategies and techniques. The arrival of Europeans, however, did present Kapinga with an alternative source of wealth and power independent of the atoll’s gods. This development led to a decline of the priesthood and a more prominent role for the
tomono, who found their power enhanced by the intermediary role they played with these foreign forces. The pace of change accelerated significantly with the establishment of Japanese colonial rule over Micronesia in 1914. A series of natural disasters, compounded by the arrival of an aggressive, demanding, and militarily backed Japanese trader determined to reorganize the nature and purposes of economic activity on the atoll, disturbed life on Kapingamarangi in profound ways. There followed the abandonment of the cult house, the adoption of Christianity, and the establishment of a Kapinga colony on the island of Pohnpei, the closest center of Japanese administrative authority in the area. These developments broke the link between the secular and the sacred in Kapinga society, created a new form of government around a king chosen by popular consensus, and allowed for a fairly consistent flow of people, goods, and ideas between Kapingamarangi and a now much larger, not so easily ordered or understood world. Men’s houses also declined as the Protestant church became more central to the life of the island. Lieber writes that, by 1919, the entire hierarchy of constraints emanating from the presence of the gods, along with the gods themselves, had been eliminated.

The secularizing effects of this cosmological collapse on the practice of fishing resulted in greater access to native and non-native fishing technology. The most dramatic change came in the area of canoe ownership. The demise of the priesthood left landowners free to control their own trees, and in turn made it possible for more individuals to make and own canoes. The nearby Polynesian outlier of Nukuoro, which had provided Kapin­gamarangi with its first missionaries in 1917, now became the source of new fishing methods and new styles of fishing canoes. Individual and small-group fishing became increasingly common by the 1930s and at the expense of the larger, more communal efforts that had once characterized the organization and practice of fishing on the atoll. Later, during the American administration of the area, the introduction of imported fishing equipment, most notably the speargun and the outboard motor, would further atomize fishing on Kapingamarangi.

These later changes in fishing practices reflected other and larger developments in the atoll’s polity and general social organization. In stark contrast to the Japanese colonial administration, the United States took a more active and interventionist posture toward life on Kapingamarangi. The ideology of democracy moved decision making further from the informal consensus of the men’s house toward majority sentiment as expressed in council meetings and general community gatherings. The relationship between the atoll and the administration became at once more intimate and ambiguous because of the bewildering, seemingly incomprehensible collection of departments, offices, agencies, and programs through which policy trickled down in irregular, confusing, and sometimes contradictory flows. Given their sense of hierarchy,
community, and personhood, Kapinga found this intensified dilution of local authority disorienting.

Recent political developments have brought more confounding layers of power and authority, and thus have added to the deep anxiety with which Kapinga regard the outside world. In place of the American Trust Territory government headquartered on Saipan, Kapinga now find themselves a part of the Federated States of Micronesia, and the more immediate and frightening State of Pohnpei. Lieber describes Kapinga as caught in a schizophrenic double bind of sorts, in which they simultaneously acknowledge their dependency on powerful outside forces, the severe social dislocation this dependency brings, and the need to find appropriate local solutions to externally induced problems. What is at stake, believes Lieber, is the survival of a monocultural community in a multicultural world.

Lieber finds some hope for the future in the 1982 decision by one group of Kapinga to return to more traditional ways of living. He also sees Kapingamarangi’s current elected representative to the Pohnpei State Legislature as dealing effectively with the outside world in behalf of the people of his atoll. In his role as mediator and provider, this individual is accruing power and status similar to that of Kapingamarangi’s first king, David, who emerged in 1917 to lead the island in an equally traumatic, troubling time. In effect, writes Lieber, the Kapinga are now engaged in looking both within and outside themselves to select new organizational and governing modes to meet their needs in these changing times.

The extremely high quality of Lieber’s ethnography leads me to accept his assessments and share in his cautious optimism. While there might be those who would have wanted a more subtle, nuanced treatment of historical change or greater attention to contemporary gender relations against the decline of a prominent, ritually endowed sphere of male activity, I choose to focus on the different and exciting kind of history that is *More Than a Living*. Anyone interested in the possibilities of ethnographic history in the Pacific will find the book a profitable and provocative read. It is about so much more than just fishing.

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*Island Kingdom: Tonga Ancient and Modern*, by I C Campbell.


Ian Campbell is one of the few historians of Tonga who is familiar with the sources for both traditional and modern Tonga. He is a scholar of the contemporary scene, able to analyze local politics and social trends, and steeped in the traditional lore, particularly as understood by modern-day Tongans. This overall familiarity has its advantages and disadvantages. The strength