

processes in daily life, is here worked on the virtual bodies of the mask figures.

Finally, Fajans suggests that Baining society and culture challenge Bourdieu's concept of the "habitus," which entails assumptions both of social patterning of bodily activities at an unconscious level and of dominance-seeking social actors. The Baining, she says, produce themselves self-consciously and do not assume that anything about social life occurs "naturally," that is, without intention and work. In this work of producing and reproducing themselves and society they are radically egalitarian, as evidenced by their preference for adoptive ties (non-gender-specific reproduction) over biological ones.

The discussion of Baining play might have benefited from reference to some of the theoretical literature on play that highlights the extent to which play depends on creating a frame that both separates and conjoins it with "real," mundane life, thus enabling it to function as a meta-commentary at multiple levels. The fervor with which the Baining play, and with which they seem steadfastly to resist explicating the process, suggests that it embodies important paradoxes—expressing necessary transgressions of the social-natural boundaries—whose "reality" or "truth value" would be seriously undermined by explanation.

Given the well-documented difficulty of analyzing a cultural way of life that expresses itself in such radically different ways and without any tradition of exegesis, introspection, or even

gossip, Fajans is to be congratulated for providing these insights into how Baining actors make their very distinctive world.

KATHLEEN BARLOW
University of Minnesota

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The Cassowary's Revenge: The Life and Death of Masculinity in a New Guinea Society, by Donald Tuzin. *Worlds of Desire: The Chicago Series on Sexuality, Gender, and Culture*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1997. ISBN 0-226-81950-7 (cloth); ISBN 0-226-81951-5 (paper), xiii + 256 pages, maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, US\$45.00; paper, US\$18.95.

This remarkable book is a study of the demise of a men's cult in Papua New Guinea during the mid-1980s. Many communities in Papua New Guinea over the past century have abandoned male initiation ceremonies, willingly or otherwise. But this monograph is the only detailed firsthand examination of such an event. The location of the study is the Arapesh settlement of Ilahita, one of the largest indigenous village communities in Papua New Guinea. Tuzin first carried out research there in the early 1970s, producing a highly regarded series of publications on the rich and complex male initiation system and its associated social organization, art, ritual, and architecture. The cult—called Tambaran in Pidgin—permeated all aspects of Ilahita people's lives and was central to

their sense of collective identity. Through a combination of techniques of secrecy, deception, and violence, it sustained a system of male authority over women, albeit an authority morally ambivalent even to Ilahita men themselves.

In 1985 Tuzin returned to Ilahita with his family, after an absence of thirteen years. He found the Tambaran cult recently defunct and the community split between two religious camps: traditionalists, mainly older men, who clung to the few remaining vestiges of the old religion, and zealots of a Christian revivalist movement with strong millenarian and cargo-cultic overtones. The year before, revivalist devotees had exposed the Tambaran secrets to the women and burned sacred objects. To these Christians, the Tambaran spirits represented Satan, and the cult itself was an obstacle preventing the arrival of the millennium. Women, never having been tainted by association with the cult, played a key role in the movement as the prophets through whom the Holy Spirit spoke. Indeed, the traditional order had been virtually inverted, with women now effectively the ritual superiors of men. In a curious way, these events appear to have been prefigured in Ilahita's creation myth. In this myth—a variant, Tuzin suggests, of the “swan maiden” story found virtually worldwide—the First Man finds a beautiful cassowary woman bathing in a pool, steals her cassowary skin, and takes her home as his bride. After many years of marriage, she regains her skin and kills her husband; their many children become the progenitors of all the different peoples in the world. The “cassowary's

revenge” of the book's title is both this killing of the primordial man by his cassowary wife, and the “killing” of the Tambaran by the village women. If the myth contained a prophetic truth, foretelling the Tambaran's eventual demise, it was because the myth contained an existential truth, admitting to the very real fears and insecurities of Ilahita men in their relations with their womenfolk.

Another, equally intriguing, strand of this book concerns the way Tuzin himself became drawn into the events surrounding the Tambaran's overthrow, and into the religious and mythological interpretations that the villagers placed on these events. According to the myth of origin (or certain modifications made to it following the Second World War), the cassowary's youngest son went to “America,” the land of the dead, whence the myth promises his eventual return. When Tuzin returns to Ilahita, he does so amid expectations that he himself is this youngest brother, having returned from America and from the dead, to bring the millennium to Ilahita. This is a fascinating study of the way myth and reality appeared to fuse, and an ethnographer found himself a key figure in his own informants' religious aspirations, at an important turning-point in the history of a Papua New Guinea village.

The dark side of this book is undoubtedly Tuzin's accounts of the increased domestic violence, social disintegration, and conflict that he found on his return, and that he attributes to the breakdown of the Tambaran cult and men's loss of masculine identity. I suspect that some readers will question

his conclusion that societies everywhere require all-male institutions like Tambaran cults to give men a secure sense of their own masculinity. Such institutions, Tuzin seems to suggest, are benign in comparison to the anomic violence that must inevitably erupt without them. Quite apart from this provocative conclusion, this book, by one of the most literate of today's anthropologists, is sure to fascinate anyone interested in contemporary religious processes in Melanesia, and in the changing patterns of gender relations in the region.

SIMON HARRISON
University of Ulster

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Sites of Desire, Economies of Pleasure: Sexualities in Asia and the Pacific, edited by Lenore Manderson and Margaret Jolly. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997. ISBN: 0-226-50304-6 (paper), xii + 367 pages, figures, photographs, notes, bibliography, filmography, index. Cloth, US\$54.00; paper, US\$19.95.

Asia and the Pacific Islands have been the most relentlessly hypersexualized of all sites subject to the western fantasizing gaze. This eroticization has continued from the era of overt imperialism to the current transnational commodification of bodies and desire through sex tourism, globally circulating pornography, and the no-less-invasive images of Hollywood films and "docudramas" like Dennis O'Rourke's infamous *The Good Woman of Bangkok*. Yet scholarship on Asia and the Pacific has avoided

sexual themes, particularly from a "cultural" (as opposed to economic or epidemiological) perspective, while the recent burst of western sex scholarship has too rarely turned its attention to the region. Manderson and Jolly's collection, *Sites of Desire, Economies of Pleasure*, is a welcome and much-needed first step in filling this gap in the literatures. The twelve essays in this collection, particularly the masterful introduction by the two editors, explore the interpenetrations and coproductions of Asian-Pacific and western sexual gazes, practices, and mythologies, and go far beyond anthropology's past expositions on "the sexual lives of the natives," to examine what the editors call "the deep histories of sexual contact and erotic entanglement between Europeans and 'others'" (1).

The introduction lays out the theoretical stakes. Moving deftly among recent theoretical debates surrounding essentialism and constructivism, the relationship of gender to sexuality and of sexuality to reproduction, colonialism and postcoloniality, Orientalism, race, AIDS, and the political economy of sex, the authors quickly put paid to any kind of universalizing notion of "sex" as a "natural" instinct, but also refuse a too-easy relativism that over-emphasizes the exoticism and difference of a unitary Asian-Pacific sexuality. The authors persistently question the very enterprise of studying sexuality without imposing or projecting western sexual models; leaving the question open, they advocate a new attention to nonwestern theories of sexuality, and to the ways that in the contemporary globalizing