blame was attributed to “maternal insouciance,” including blaming mothers for conditions beyond their control. But, Jolly argues, both in the past and at present many indigenous women have resisted being characterized as “bad mothers,” especially in contrast to white women as “good mothers.”

Leanne Merrett-Balkos describes Anganen women in Papua New Guinea as welcoming many of the innovations in childbirth introduced to them in the late sixties by Catholic sisters, but with intriguing and significant limits. Anganen beliefs imbue the placenta and umbilical cord with symbolic meaning that assures a child’s group affiliation. In order to acquire the afterbirth when giving birth at the aid post, Anganen women collectively protested and succeeded in getting the sisters to give them a portion of it for ritual and symbolic manipulation.

Finally, Christine Dureau describes changing contexts of maternity in Simbo, Western Solomon Islands, in terms of a shift in emphasis from the precolonial importance of the relationship between brothers and sisters to the modern emphasis on the relationship between husband and wife and the effects of this shift on childbirth and maternity.

The rich ethnographic and historical detail of the articles is greatly augmented by Jolly’s and Ram’s excellent introductory and closing essays, which contextualize the case studies in terms of general theoretical discussions of modernity (Jolly), anthropology (Jolly and Ram), and feminist theory (Ram). As Ram points out, only recently have feminists begun to examine maternity and the embodied experience of motherhood, and when they have, they have focused exclusively on western women. The articles in this impressive volume contribute substantially to illuminating understanding of women’s experiences of maternity and the effects of modernity on them in other parts of the world.

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The Duna are northwestern neighbors of the Huli people, long known from the ethnographic work of Robert Glasse as notable among New Guinea Highlanders for their practice of cognatic descent (together with long genealogies, apocalyptic cosmological ideas, and strict gender segregation, among other things). Relatively less well known, the Duna came to anthropological attention through the work of Nicholas Modjeska, which centered on the mode of production, and on the political economy of gender in particular.

It makes sense, then, that Gabriele Stürzenhofecker began her own Duna field research, based at Aluni (about 7 km northwest of Modjeska’s field site), intent on exploring the implications of cognatic kinship for the political economy of male–female rela-
tions, specifically for female “agency.” She wondered whether “women would maintain garden plots in their natal area as well as their husband’s area” and whether such land rights would give them control over the products of their labor (2). Over the course of her fieldwork, however, her central interest in female agency drew her away from kinship-centered questions and toward questions about Duna ideas about “consumption” and “witchcraft.” She also became interested in the dynamics of social transformation and historical consciousness in Aluni. In contrast with other highlands areas, Aluni presents an apparently contradictory situation in that there has been relatively little economic change (little development of wage work and cash cropping), but a striking decline in ritual activity in the face of mission and government pressure. This situation bears directly on an understanding of contemporary Duna gender relations.

*Times Enmeshed* is organized to set up these topics, and to highlight the open-endedness of the present “moment” with respect to male and female relations, consciousnesses, and possibilities. Beginning with an account of the colonizing encounter (chapter 1), Stürzenhofecker presents Duna cosmological images of the “ground” and its end (nowadays complexly entangled with Christian mission constructs) as a framework for discussing memory and place (chapter 2). Together with a sociological analysis of locality and residence (chapter 3), this is necessary background for an understanding of the sociopolitical logic of witchcraft ideas. An ethnography of Duna marriage practices (chapter 4) provides key data for Stürzenhofecker’s argument about the distinctiveness, compared to other Highlanders, of Duna exchanges—which deemphasize affinal exchange partnerships and foreground intergenerational debts. The author takes her marriage data, together with an analysis of the implications of Duna residence rules, to suggest that as social agents, women are disadvantaged compared to men. The point is further reinforced in a description of everyday experience (chapter 5) that emphasizes the gendered organization of space and of consumption.

In interesting counterpoint, Duna witchcraft discourses (chapter 6) attribute considerable power to women. However, consistent with the foregoing, witchcraft power is a negative value as it is implicated in disruptions of “proper” consumption behavior (that is, consumption privileging men). Here as elsewhere in the book, the analysis is attentive to changes in Duna practices and values from pre- to postcolonial times. Stürzenhofecker suggests that Duna witchcraft ideas and enactments are tools for making sense of some of the historical contradictions with which people in Aluni have been wrestling. In this context, too, women are disadvantaged: “males, both individually and collectively, project a fear of threatening female agency through their concern that witches may attack them, while females, realizing that only their sex is held to possess this agency, are made collectively afraid of accusations of this kind” (179). The effect of this climate of fear is, in Stürzenhofecker’s account, to reinforce male “hegemony.”
Despite its admirable attention to historical change, this book holds fast to the classic style of ethnographic description. Its language characterizes cultural practices in normative or generalizing terms (as in: “after a period of courtship in which a man and woman exchange small presents, the man’s family embarks on the venture of assembling the required items of wealth for his bride-price” [101]). It rushes to abstraction and comparison rather than describing observed events and lingering a bit on the messy particulars. As a result, one comes away with very little feeling for Stürzenhofecker’s method and style of engagement with her interlocutors. Nor does the author’s literary strategy do justice to her important intention to convey the ambiguity, confusion, and open-endedness pervading contemporary Duna lives. The point is asserted, but not shown, and has less rhetorical power than it might otherwise.

What is more, while the book systematically explores questions of gender, it gives readers more of what appear to be Duna male perceptions than female ones. Unanswered questions as to whether Duna men and women are in agreement with one another, and about the (inevitability gendered) sources of the ethnographic data, become especially pressing in the second half of the book. Indeed, neither male nor female “voices”—both in the sense of what this or that person actually said to another or to the ethnographer, and beyond that, in the sense of situated, gendered interests—are particularly audible in the text.

Overall, and despite these disappointments, this is a thoughtful and useful book. It complements Modjeska’s ethnography and links thematically with work being done elsewhere in the region. It ought to be of interest to Pacific area scholars and others working on the historical transformation of social relations, gender values, and cosmologies.

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