

or other writers in articulation with the findings and perspectives here developed. As it stands, the volume presents a fine blend of quality ethnography, areal focus, and theoretical penetration. It is a vital companion piece to Andrew Strathern's edited *Inequality in New Guinea Highlands Societies*, engaging many of the same issues, but from an opposed areal and theoretical perspective. In the best academic tradition, this opposition is not polemic or ultimately negative, but dialectical and progressive.

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*Vengeance Is Their Reply: Blood Feuds and Homicides on Bellona Island, Part 1: Conditions Underlying Generations of Bloodshed; Part 2: Oral Traditions*, by Rolf Kuschel. *Language and Culture of Rennell and Bellona Islands, Volume 7*, 1989. Copenhagen: Dansk Psykologisk Forlag. ISBN 87-7707-0164, 289 pp, illustrations, references, indexes. US\$90.00.

Oral narratives describing the history of Bellona Island, a Polynesian outlier in the Solomon Islands, recount that 195 homicides took place before the pacification of the island in 1938. This works out to an average of 9.3 homicides per generation in a population that was probably never much more than 450 people. These homicides were part of a pattern of feuding that sometimes continued for generations: one feud is described as involving twenty-eight separate encounters over the course of several hundred years.

In *Vengeance Is Their Reply*, Danish social scientist Rolf Kuschel records and analyzes these oral narratives about traditional feuding on Bellona. This book is the seventh volume in a series of books on the language and culture of Rennell and Bellona islands. Over the past thirty years, these Polynesian outliers have been systematically studied by a team of Danish and American researchers and are among the most thoroughly studied social systems in the Pacific. In a period when anthropology is given to interpretation and most publishers are parsimonious in printing materials for specialized audiences, the publications on Rennell and Bellona provide remarkably detailed ethnographic and linguistic information. Many volumes in this series include extended samples of Rennell-Bellona texts, both in the vernacular and in English translation. Kuschel's book continues this scholarly tradition and is another important contribution to the ethnography of Oceania.

Part 1 of *Vengeance Is Their Reply* describes the cultural and social factors that cause Bellona's homicides and feuding. Part 2 includes vernacular transcriptions and English translations of 150 oral narratives that describe these feuds and form the basis for the analysis in part 1. Kuschel criticizes most anthropological studies of feuding for their lack of detailed and long-term data. He explains one very admirable reason for including the narrative texts: "Thus by publishing the Bellonese material in its entirety, I want to make the primary data available to other scientists who, from other theoretical starting points, would like to

reanalyze it or use it in comparative studies" (16).

Kuschel spent a total of about eighteen months between 1968 and 1983 researching this topic. In addition, he uses the expertise and information of other researchers who have studied Rennell and Bellona society and culture. His main conclusion is that Bellona's feuds were not the result of competition for limited economic or land resources. Rather, they were caused and maintained by cultural values that emphasize reputation and prestige, of both individuals and social groups. Moreover, Kuschel emphasizes that Bellona's feuding is socioculturally rule governed and patterned (for example, women and children were usually spared and there was respect for certain sanctuaries).

Both parts 1 and 2 should be included in any library that is serious about maintaining its Pacific collection. Part 1 should be read by people interested in Polynesian ethnography because it offers a rare view of traditional patterns of feuding, conflict, and disputes. Probably, with a moderate amount of supervision from the instructor, both parts can be recommended to advanced undergraduate students in anthropology. The texts in part 2 provide raw material for re-analysis, for both professionals and students.

Kuschel's presentation is straightforward, and his writing style is readable. There are, however, occasional sentences that would be improved by further editing. The charts and figures (71 in part 1 and 40 in part 2) are clear and help explain the discussion in the text. I had minor problems with some

of his terminology and his explanations of certain features of the social system. For example, I found misleading his use of the terms social *strata* and *stratification* to refer to relationships based on the achievement of prestige and renown. Although I have some background in studying Polynesian social organization, I did not understand his discussion of Bellonese "clans," "sub-clans," and "lineages."

Part 1 begins with a brief review of the anthropological literature on feuding, a useful explanation of his approach to the issue, and then a discussion of his research methods. In chapters 2 and 3, he provides some general background about Bellonese social life, including land tenure, social organization, and religion. In chapters 4 through 7, Kuschel describes how feuds develop and the conventions and attitudes that determine how feuds are managed. Chapter 8 summarizes the book; some readers will want to read this chapter before starting the book, because it provides the clearest statement of Kuschel's argument.

Given the perimeter of the problem Kuschel set for himself, this book is an outstanding contribution. My main criticism is that, by focusing exclusively on the narratives and events before 1938, Kuschel limited the book's contribution to the understanding of broader issues concerning conflict and disputes. There is only a very brief explanation of why Christianity and the British protectorate's government were able to stop the feuding. Homicides after 1938 are briefly mentioned, and then, without sufficient explanation, Kuschel excludes them from the analysis. It is not clear whether or not

some old feuds continue to the present in nonviolent ways (ridicule, adultery, land disputes, song taunts, gossip). Kuschel doesn't explain whether the concern with personal and group reputation, which motivated the disputes in former times, still exists at present. Moreover, I wasn't completely satisfied with Kuschel's argument that feuding did not result from competition over land use and resources. This conclusion would be more forceful if it included an analysis of disputes (or lack of them) over resources on Bellona since 1938. On the few occasions when Kuschel does provide brief discussions of present-day conflict, they are enlightening and help explain important factors affecting motivations and allegiances in traditional feuding.

Readers will be grateful for what there is. Perhaps a study of conflict and disputes since 1938 will be in a future volume of the Rennell and Bellona series. If so, I hope the authors will include texts. In any case, the present volume provides a rare and detailed analysis of the oral narratives that record feuding in a pre-Christian Polynesian society.

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*Cultural Alternatives and a Feminist Anthropology: An Analysis of Culturally Constructed Gender Interests in Papua New Guinea*, by Frederick Errington and Deborah Gewertz. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987. ISBN 0-521-33492-6, xi + 185 pp, illustrations, notes, references, index. £20.

In this study of the Chambri, a Sepik group of Papua New Guinea, Errington and Gewertz reconsider Margaret Mead's work on what she called sex roles, offering instead their analysis of gender interests. Gewertz is a Sepik specialist; Errington has worked in several other areas, including island Melanesia.

This book invokes a number of dualisms—in addition to contrasting theories of male-female relations, pairs of ethnographers, societies, and generations figure into its makeup. The mixture of the personal and the sociological, the concrete and the abstract, makes the book enjoyable reading, but sometimes raises issues that are not answered. It is not always clear whether a particular feature should be regarded as style or argument. The monograph's challenge to conventions is readily seen in the choice of illustrations, which in addition to photos of classic ethnographic subjects (e.g., "A woman, behaving as a child, stuffs raw sago down her throat," 109) includes views of Gewertz' daughter, cartoons, a sketch made by a Chambri child, and a cover that brings to mind the mood of Gauguin's South Seas paintings.

The book begins in an appealing way by posing a question raised by a fieldwork incident: Gewertz' irritated reaction when her male informant Yorondu announces his intention to show previously unrevealed ritual objects to Errington alone, thus treating her as a member of the category "female" rather than as a professional anthropologist. In effect, the book is an attempt to understand the differing cultural assumptions that collided in this incident. We learn in the final