

Tungaru Traditions: Writings on the Atoll Culture of the Gilbert Islands, by Arthur Francis Grimble. Edited by H. E. Maude. Pacific Islands Monograph Series no. 7. Honolulu: Center for Pacific Islands Studies and University of Hawaii Press, 1989. ISBN 0-8248-1217-4, xxxii + 384 pp, illustrations, abbreviations, notes, glossary, bibliography, index. US\$38.

Tungaru Traditions is the long-awaited edition of "The Grimble Papers" on Gilbert Islands ethnography and ethnohistory, prepared by H. E. Maude. The papers are a treasure trove based on fieldwork between 1916 and 1926, and their publication is an event for the Republic of Kiribati, Kiribati Studies, Pacific Studies, and Pacific Anthropology.

Maude writes: "It is my hope that this book will serve to establish Grimble's reputation as the pioneer ethnographer who discovered and recorded the main features of Gilbertese social organization. . . . The fact that the gist of what he recorded still stands as valid today as when he first penned it is a remarkable tribute to the scrupulous care with which he conducted his field research over sixty years ago" (xxvi). It is time, indeed, to inscribe the name of Sir Arthur Francis Grimble in the general history of anthropology.

Grimble's position is already secure in the history written by I-Kiribati scholars and in the national oral tradition: He was posted to the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony from 1914 to 1932, and was Resident Commissioner for the last six years, a career memorialized by the very historical people it most affected. His position is also

secure among other historians of Kiribati and of the Pacific Islands. His interpolation into the general history of anthropology becomes possible with the publication of the papers, and with the greater certainty with which we can place him in the "circle" of W. H. R. Rivers.

While Grimble's Rivers-type diffusionism has never been in doubt, Maude's observation in the introduction (Maude himself another Cambridge man) makes the intellectual connection more central: "At Cambridge Grimble had met the anthropologist W. H. R. Rivers, author of many works on Melanesia and then beginning research on his best-known book, *The History of Melanesian Society*. It was Rivers who turned his interests toward ethnographic research in general, and the Pacific Islands in particular as a suitable locale for field studies; and it was Rivers who later directed his studies in Pacific anthropology with reading lists, tutorials, and expert advice" (xix, reference omitted).

This is not exactly the same Grimble as the very Edwardian figure of "callow youth affecting poetry" that he paints of himself in his best-selling books of the 1950s. Grimble became a master of the self-created legend, as did Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski (but for a different audience).

Thinking through the implications—even positive implications—of Grimble's "Cambridge connection" is easier now because of a positive reevaluation of Rivers. There are recent works on Rivers (and Haddon, eg, by Slobodin, Langham, Stocking), and the discipline has been taking a more critical look at the actual (as opposed to the self-

declared) achievements of the "next generation" of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown. We are also more open to the possibility that a "paradigmatic diffusionist," such as Grimble, might use conventions for the description of social organization very similar to those of a nondiffusionist.

While the Rivers connection does not *explain* what Grimble did, it is helpful in respect to at least three concerns: diffusion and migration, intensive fieldwork, and an anthropologically enlightened colonial administration.

Diffusion and Migration We can reasonably posit a relationship of the diffusionist canon to Grimble's own "reference myth," that of the heroic migration of a people with a more complex society in the distant past, of which even the precontact I-Kiribati, he claimed, might be a kind of "remnant." I think that Grimble's overall view of the society included the idea of a double loss of authenticity—the first in the migration period; the second in the contact period (especially in the southern islands). This may be related to his overestimation of the degree to which traditional institutions were in decline (see Barrie Macdonald, in *More Pacific Islands Portraits*, 211–229 [1978]).

The Rivers-Haddon connection may help us to understand his continuing commitment to the idea of the Indonesian migration route, and his interest in particular ethnographic subjects (eg, sun cults, death and burial practices, totemism, kinship, genealogies; he cites Rivers and Haddon on some of these issues).

I do not mean to discount Grimble's

contribution, as I-Kiribati people themselves, like other Oceanic peoples, speak about migrations and genealogies, death and the heavens. Commitment to diffusionism does not explain precisely *how* Grimble went about describing the subjects that the approach identified as worthy of attention.

Intensive Fieldwork Even in his diffusionist period, Rivers' contributions were not limited to theories of origin. He argued programmatically for the importance of long-term, careful fieldwork using indigenous languages. George Stocking observes that "Rivers' 'investigator' was still more of an 'inquirer' than an 'observer'" (p 91 in *Observers Observed: Essays on Ethnographic Fieldwork*, 70–120 [1983]). This applies to Grimble as far as the material for his ethnographic work is concerned. His more observational conclusions (and his self-inclusion as part of the story) appear more in the two popular books.

"Rivers did insist, however, on the specialization of the ethnographer's role . . . because government officials and missionaries had little time after the performance of their regular duties, because they lacked appropriate training, and because their occupations brought them into conflict with native ideas and customs" (Stocking 1983, 92). We may hope Rivers was not thinking of Grimble here.

The "winners" in the next academic generation, such as Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, were instrumental in "professionalizing" and "functionalizing" ethnography at the same time. People such as Grimble must have seemed like remnants of the preprofes-

sional generation of "men on the spot" (such as Codrington), rather than the "fieldworker-theorists" of the new age (see James Clifford in 1:118–146 [1983]).

"Enlightened" *Colonial Administration and Applied Anthropology* Rivers also argued for a colonial administration that was anthropologically enlightened, if still thoroughly colonial. His administrators didn't change things when they didn't have to, and when they did have to, at least knew what they were doing. Anthropology could help them be aware of the possible unanticipated consequences of administered change, by directing their attention to the closer interdependence of institutions in the "lower" cultures (see W. H. R. Rivers, in *Science and the Nation*, 302–328 [1917]). Grimble's expressed positions on culture change in colonial administration were often very close to Rivers' (which is not to say that Rivers was their source, or that Grimble was consistent; see Macdonald 1978).

Radcliffe-Brown, who beat Grimble out for the Anthropology chair at Sydney, was Rivers' first real student, and Malinowski graciously declared Rivers to be his "patron saint" of fieldwork. These two young "professionals" played their careers out successfully in academic settings. We should try to reconceptualize Grimble (and perhaps others like him) in relation to them, not only as a remnant himself, but as representing *in practice* the intensive fieldwork and applied anthropology components of these movements, if he did end up holding onto diffusionism too long. He indeed combined the latter with functionalist thinking, both in

his interpretations and in his administrative activities (but did take a swipe at Durkheim in one of his papers).

Grimble's work is of the most enduring value, I believe, the closer it stays to what he collected—the stories, spells, customs, genealogies—that either he transcribed, or that literate I-Kiribati transcribed for him. (His knowledge of the Kiribati language is legendary even now.) He was careful about rechecking the work with his I-Kiribati sources. At the same time, it would be useful if Maude could write more about Grimble's actual methods of work (if they can be reconstructed), and about how his information became the texts that we have. It would also be helpful to have a published record indicating which texts have available "originals" in the Kiribati language.

Maude is certainly right that the best anthropological writing in the corpus is on the Kiribati *maneaba* system, the *maneaba* being the meeting houses that both constitute and embody Kiribati communities. While there is a good deal of material here to be developed on traditional Kiribati social organization, perhaps the greatest potential for new insights lies in the data that can be used to further reconstruct traditional religion and ritual practice. One of the challenges in the material (that I believe perplexed Grimble) is the variety in the mythic and folkloric record (eg, of accounts of the origin of the islands, of the first spirits, of the origin of death), a challenge that may be met by distinguishing different genres of narrative and investigating further the contexts of their transmission.

H. E. Maude's work in the book is

itself a major contribution to Pacific scholarship. His introductory essays, "A. F. Grimble as an Anthropologist" and "The Grimble Papers" include new material on Grimble and his research.

The Notes include annotations to the text by both Grimble and Maude. Maude's additions include critical notes on Grimble's arguments; Grimble cross-references; citations to the publications of more recent scholars; translations from the Kiribati language. The Notes constitute a register of important issues and sources in Kiribati ethnography and history.

Maude's Glossary is methodologically as well as substantively interesting: "The following definitions represent, whenever possible, my understanding of the meaning which Grimble gave to some important terms used by the Gilbertese to express traditional concepts in their culture when it was in an intrinsically pristine state" (353).

The Bibliography is a great deal more than a set of references for the book. It is the most complete bibliography available (that I know of) in print on the I-Kiribati, and includes citations to theses that are not widely known.

We may declare fulfilled Maude's hope that the book will secure Grimble's reputation as premier Kiribati ethnographer. We can also suggest that Grimble's ethnographic contributions might have faded academically had it not been for Maude's very judicious use of them, and that if Grimble's work is treated with renewed respect, it is largely as a consequence of the respect with which Maude's own work is held in the field. This volume, in the very high standard Pacific Islands Mono-

graph Series, benefits from careful editing and is well produced.

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Prehistoric Architecture in Micronesia, by William N. Morgan with photographs by Newton Morgan assisted by Dylan Morgan. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988. ISBN 0-292-76506-1, xvi + 166 pp, maps, line drawings, photographs, bibliography, index. US\$49.50.

Traditional Architecture in the Gilbert Islands: A Cultural Perspective, by John Hockings. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1989. ISBN 0-7022-2179-1, xii + 254 pp, maps, glossary, line drawings, bibliography, index. A\$24.95.

In these thought-provoking books on the traditional architecture of Palau, Yap, the Marianas, Pohnpei, Kosrae, and Kiribati, Morgan and Hockings reveal valuable information for scholars of Micronesian culture, practicing architects in the islands, and the Micronesians from whom the information is obtained and to whom it is now returned. The concerted effort of the authors and their publishers in making these welcome sources of information available reflects the honorable academic commitment to sharing knowledge in the human sciences. Both studies incorporate practical and unique knowledge of the art of building in Micronesia—an art that is now, unfortunately, disappearing, yet should be treasured and revived. To this end I