

New Guinea, New Caledonia, Fiji, and Vanuatu. Lack of representation from Northern Pacific (Micronesian) societies, however, continues an entrenched but unfortunate north-south divide that permeates and thus limits the scholarly literature on the Pacific Basin.

These latter comments notwithstanding, this carefully crafted collection is a very valuable and welcome addition to the literature. It makes a contribution not just to Pacific scholarship but also to the entire arena of maternity in the contemporary world as it lucidly and provocatively uncovers and grapples with central tensions and dilemmas permeating current scholarship. This volume will spur students and faculty in a wide range of disciplines (such as social science, epidemiology, demography, history, and economics, to name a few central disciplines), as well as clinicians, policy makers, and politicians, to (re)examine their assumptions about the science and existential realities that underlie birthing and reproduction.

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Village on the Edge: Changing Times in Papua New Guinea, by Michael French Smith. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002. ISBN 0-8248-2609-4; xviii + 214 pages, maps, photographs, notes, glossary, bibliography, index. Paper, US\$17.95.

Is there an anthropologist who conducted fieldwork in Papua New Guinea during the 1970s who does not dream of returning to the original

research site? Wouldn't we all, like Kenneth Read (*Return to the High Valley*, 1986), like to return to "high valleys" of our youth and first fieldwork? The journey we envision is a complex personal pilgrimage as well as an intellectual and academic quest: What happened to our friends and the people who meant—and mean—so much to us? Have their lives been altered, experiences been modified, new meanings evolved? Michael French Smith originally did field research on Kairiru Island off the north coast near Wewak in 1975-76 and was able to make brief and informal visits back to the village of Kragur in 1981, 1995, and 1998. In this book he chronicles these visits and reflects on the changes perceptible to him through this period. A variety of Kragur voices (from both village and town) addressing these changes are a strong element in the narrative.

Smith does not claim to have conducted a thorough study of sociocultural change, but he does pick up on significant themes from his earlier published work (*Hard Times on Kairiru Island*, 1994)—especially the embeddedness of material and moral concerns in Melanesian societies—and thus contributes significantly to our knowledge of transformation in Papua New Guinea. He carefully summarizes data from 1974 and then recounts what he encountered in later years. The puzzles perplexing the people of Kragur in 1974 only intensified as a capitalistic economy, characterized by commodities, competition, and individualism, penetrated the texture of people's lives and challenged their understanding of value and creation of meaning. The dilemma people face is one that seems to have no satisfactory

solution: If they relinquish the centrality of reciprocity as the basis of their social relationships, they must also give up their core belief that to be “good,” to be moral, is to be generous and hospitable; if they engage in predominantly market-driven relationships based on commodity rather than gift, individual rather than social network, they necessarily relinquish being virtuous. But at the same time, if they choose not to participate in these new commodity-based relationships, they will not achieve the prosperity evident among other groups, such as Europeans and elite Papua New Guineans; material success is inherently embedded in moral and social success. Moral and material concerns melt together, and the conundrum of determining appropriate action as well as constructing meaning becomes even more problematic.

Smith’s earlier work concerned the nature and role of religion, especially the Catholic Church, in Kairiru life, and this volume extends that earlier discussion and provides additional information and analysis. The Church plays a direct part in the escalation of the tension between overlapping yet conflicting systems of value: the disjuncture and perhaps even conflict between Church rhetoric, especially of equality and generosity, and the perceived reality of human behavior within capitalistic systems is probably more evident to Kragur villagers than many western theologians.

Although a variety of scholars and professional anthropologists will benefit from reading this book, Smith’s intended audience is much wider (and includes residents of Kragur, some of whom have read his earlier work and comment in this volume). In academe,

Village on the Edge will be particularly useful in teaching undergraduates about three important topics, not because it contains advanced theoretical discussions of them but because it includes suggestive and basic material that can lead instructors into more complex considerations. The first of these is the intricacy of understanding change in Papua New Guinea, the ways in which indigenous belief systems are challenged and yet also, at the same time, interpret aspects of the powerful forces that have impinged from without. The second is the nature of issues of reflexivity and representation in anthropology. Smith does not go to great lengths to include subjectivity, plumb his personal psychological states, or focus on highly abstract aspects of the problems of representation and reflexivity, but he does include enough personal and processual material (“How did you do that? How did you feel?”) to help students to begin thinking about these issues. The voices of the people of Kragur that are heard here sometimes conflict with one another and sometimes conflict with Smith’s own voice, and the illustration of this multivocality is a rich teaching opportunity. Finally, Smith’s honest account of his work for the World Bank in Papua New Guinea and the role of the World Bank in general can initiate significant and important conversations about the nature and force of capitalism and its role in global change.

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