

this way is to discount most kinds of unpleasantness, for example, bargaining over brides, monetization of social relations, marriage away from sisters, because these do not affect a woman's ability to bear children. Does any detail of daily existence bother these imper-turbable women?

One of the lessons of gender scholarship in anthropology has been to demonstrate the difficulty of comparing societies. The present work is yet another instance that upholds this finding. By discarding approaches that have made the greatest claims to universality in the study of behavior, namely economics and psychology, we are free to begin afresh. The book raises a question, then, which needs to be asked from time to time: what is it that we want to know about other women's lives and to what end? The authors talk about wishing to aid the women's movement in the West in creating greater equality between the sexes; they conclude that our knowledge of cultural alternatives is the major tool we have to make changes in our own society.

A final note: one of this book's most successful aspects is its deft incorporation of personal information (especially about Gewertz) into its arguments. It must be seen not only as a contribution to gender and Melanesian scholarship, but to the newer tests of monographic writing, regarding to what extent and how our personal lives can and should figure in our studies.

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New Caledonia: Anti-Colonialism in a Pacific Territory, by Helen Fraser. Canberra: Peace Research Centre, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, 1988. ISBN 0-7315-0484-4, 88 pp, map, photographs, appendixes, notes, select bibliography. Paper, price not stated.

Helen Fraser reported for Australian newspapers from New Caledonia from 1982 to 1985 and now edits the newsletter, *Pacific Report*. Her slim volume chronicles events in New Caledonia from the early 1980s to the signing of the Matignon Accord between the pro- and anti-independence political factions and the French government in 1988. Most of her information comes from her own experiences in the French South Pacific territory, including conversations with various political figures. She charts the changing positions and strategies of the various political parties and the government in Paris, the episodes of violence that have periodically broken out in the territory, and the attitudes of the Australian government and several international organizations, such as the South Pacific Forum and the United Nations.

Fraser's narrative moves rapidly; the first hundred years of the French presence in New Caledonia are summarized in two pages. Little information is provided on the economy of the territory, and no background on the Melanesians or the settlers is given. Even some events of recent years, notably the hostage-taking and aftermath on Ouvea island in 1988, are very briefly treated. Readers unfamiliar with the New Caledonian situation may find the cast of characters (and the

array of political organizations) confusing. A few errors have crept into the text; for example, there was a referendum in New Caledonia in 1958, not 1957; the "Republican Party" in France is not the RPCR; the name of the French ambassador to the United Nations is misspelled. The bibliography consists of only six works. The publisher may be faulted for omitting all French accent marks.

Nevertheless, Fraser has put together a useful summary of recent events which can be read in conjunction with other studies, such as John Connell's *New Caledonia or Kanaky?* (Canberra: National Centre for Development Studies, 1987). Her booklet does not claim to be an in-depth investigation, and any reader looking for a full understanding of the complex situation of New Caledonia may be misled. For instance, Fraser pays no attention to the intricacies of metropolitan French politics and the ways in which New Caledonia functioned as a stake in electoral campaigns in France itself;

this vital dimension of the problem, fortunately, is well covered in Maurice Satineau, *Le Miroir de Noumea* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 1987). Similarly, in order to understand some of the central issues in the conflict, such as the land question, the reader will have to look elsewhere (in this case, to the works of Alain Saussol and Alan Ward).

Fraser's work does not attempt an analysis of the situation, nor does it contain a conclusion. Events subsequent to the publication of the booklet, including the assassination of the independence leaders Jean-Marie Tjibaou and Yeiwene Yeiwene, show that predictions are foolhardy. Developments that take place over the next few years will undoubtedly make such periodic updates as Fraser's necessary, and her work is handy for readers who require a straightforward and accessible summary.

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