

## Book and Media Reviews

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*Changing Contexts, Shifting Meanings: Transformations of Cultural Traditions in Oceania*, edited by Elfriede Hermann. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011. ISBN 978-0-8248-3366-4; xiii + 365 pages, illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, US\$58.00.

This volume, a deeply textured topography of the concept of tradition in the Pacific, emerged from a symposium in 2006 that complemented an exhibition of the Cook/Forster Collection of the Georg August University of Göttingen. Over twenty contributions range across Oceania, taking anthropological and historical perspectives on the complex, evolving articulations between pasts and presents and demonstrating that the work of making tradition appear unified and stable is fraught and sometimes contentious.

The volume begins with two introductory chapters, one by the editor, Elfriede Hermann, and one by Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin, describing the history of the Cook/Forster Collection. The book's first section then offers a group of six chapters linked by the theme of "Early Encounters." David Hanlon traces connections between the monumental sites of Nan Madol (Pohnpei) and Lelu (Kosrae), in Micronesia, and Margaret Jolly reenvisions the histories of Mai and Tupaia, men from Raiatea who sailed with Captain Cook. Both Hanlon and Jolly draw on the work of Greg Denning to motivate their stimulating comparisons of place and person. The next three chapters analyze constructions of race, sex, and violence, with Bronwen Douglas's and Anne Salmond's works harmonizing especially well. Douglas

examines agency and authorship in 1820s French depictions of "racial" characteristics in Tahiti and New Ireland, concluding, "Indigenous presence pervades firsthand voyage materials and persistently disrupts the more remote, more racially charged genres of narrative and ethnography" (88). In a complementary fashion, Salmond argues in her chapter on myths of sexuality in early contact Tahiti, "The more . . . audiences are likely to be judgmental of what they read, the more the account is forged for their reception" (104). Gundolf Krüger then examines Georg Foster's continually shifting understandings of the significance of warfare in Aotearoa, Tahiti, and Tonga, and the section concludes with Serge Tcherkézoff's summary of developments in the definition of "Polynesia" that predated Dumont d'Urville's famous classification by seventy-five years.

Next comes an evocative trio of papers on the topic of "Memories." Lamont Lindstrom writes about practices of naming people and places in Tanna, Vanuatu, as projects of drawing history into eternity and vice versa; historical events and personae are commemorated and repeatedly represented, and, as Lindstrom quotes Maurice Leenhardt, "names return periodically, marking a rhythm of original personalities which are the group's strength" (148). Ton Otto extends Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's well-worn (and now strongly qualified) argument about the invention of tradition, analyzing how Paliu Maloat's famous reform movement in Manus, Papua New Guinea, helped foster attention to the past as a distinct referent and resource. The

third chapter, by Wolfgang Kempf, shows how Banaban dance performances in Fiji represent a shared past. His chapter is notable as one of the few to place Christianity at the center of analysis, with close examination of a dance illustrating the arrival of the first missionaries to the Banaban homeland. Like many groups in Oceania, Banabans represent Christianity's arrival as the replacement of darkness with light, but unlike many other representations of the pivotal moment, Banabans focus on their ancestors' willingness to be gradually persuaded.

The following section, titled "Global and (Trans)local Processes," begins with two chapters on dance that complement Kempf's. Miriam Kahn traces the development of Tahitian dancing for touristic spectacle, describing how performances have been reshaped and recontextualized as recordable visual displays. Jacquelyn Lewis-Harris considers classic problems in theories of the gift (materiality, alienability, coercion), drawing especially on Marcel Mauss, Chris Gregory, and Simon Harrison as she analyzes dance performances of Solien Besena, a group from Papua New Guinea with significant presence in Australia. The two chapters that follow, by Martha Kaplan and John Kelly, examine polarizations of traditional categories in Fiji. Kaplan counterposes the ritual use of water by a nineteenth-century indigenous prophet with modern marketing of Fiji Water, the expensive bottled drink, as a substance so pure it has never been polluted by humanity. Kelly offers a provocative argument that the indigenous Fijian token of the Oceanic type *mana*, often denoting effective

action, has developed in dialogue with the Indo-Fijian category *shanti*, "a conception of religious peace and well-being," (236), with the former coded relatively masculine and the latter coded relatively feminine or androgynous (Indo-Fijians are the descendants of South Asian immigrants to Fiji). The section concludes with a short chapter by Françoise Douaire-Marsaudon on a clash between traditional and bureaucratic justice systems in Wallis-'Uvea brought about when a high-ranking woman embezzled money for the king's benefit.

The fourth and final main section, "Cultural Exchange and Identities," offers three chapters, beginning with Toon van Meijl's inspired analysis of Māori uses of the terms *iwi* and *aroha*—broadly, "tribe" and "love" (266)—in analogies of continuity that portray Maoridom as transcending time; "tradition is represented as timeless, as continuous," van Meijl concludes, "but with the paradoxical aim of re-acquiring control of the direction and pace of change in New Zealand society" (274). Paul van der Grijp follows with a discussion of Epeli Hau'ofa's call for Oceanic artists to liberate themselves and set their own standards. Such projects, van der Grijp shows, are complicated by the banal realities of making a living in a commodified art market, but his mini-biographies of artists evoke Hau'ofa's celebratory tone: it may be a struggle, but they all achieve degrees of satisfaction and success. Curiously, the last chapter, Karen Nero's meditation on a trio of Palauan objects in the British Museum, almost takes the metaphors van Meijl describes literally; she describes the objects as

“symbols of . . . timeless feeling,” and her analysis dissipates into grandiose comparisons of bowls and canoes with comets and stars, an oddly ephemeral conclusion to such a well-grounded volume (308).

The book ends with chapters by Peter Hempenstall and Aletta Biersack summarizing the volume’s themes. Both are complimentary but offer critical insights and suggestions for future work. For example, Hempenstall points out that a consideration of Christianity’s role in social transformations was “conspicuously absent in any systematic examination” at the original symposium and reflected in the chapters here (321). Biersack concludes her comprehensive overview with a well-considered list of “lessons” from the volume that also point to future possibilities.

The volume’s strength is its vibrant heterogeneity married to sure expertise—here are well-established scholars investigating the depths and nuances of topics they have spent decades thinking about. Its weakness is that by traveling on such well-trodden paths some of the contributors find it difficult to locate new paths, new directions toward unexpected endpoints on our scholarly maps. Or, to put it bluntly: all of the arguments in this volume are worthwhile and valid, but few of them push us to places we haven’t visited many times before. In its own way, the book serves as a double mirror of the anthropological tradition, pointing to the numerous ways that anthropologists’ and others’ attempts to make sense of the “past” have played a role in shaping Pacific pasts even as the book itself attempts to contribute,

once again, to the meanings that tradition is believed to offer.

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*From Modern Production to Imagined Primitive: The Social World of Coffee from Papua New Guinea*, by Paige West. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012. ISBN 978-0-8223-5150-4; xvii + 255 pages, photographs, tables, notes, references, index. Paper, US\$25.95.

In this book, anthropologist Paige West leads us on a global journey from a small Gimi-speaking village in the highlands of Papua New Guinea, through processing plants in Goroka, to the port of Lae, and ultimately to coffeehouses in New York, Hamburg, Brisbane, and Sydney, providing a formidable discussion of insights and ethnographic observations of the Papua New Guinea coffee industry and its place in the larger world of global commerce. In doing so, West helps us see the unexpected complexity of all aspects of the coffee industry: production, exporting, marketing, and consumption.

This book is a rich blend of careful theoretical discussion, academically sound analyses, informal personal reflections on incidents in fieldwork, and the resulting relationships the ethnographer develops. West foregrounds the discussion that constitutes the primary focus of each chapter and then reviews it at the end. At first this rhetorical approach might seem too elementary for such a project—too