status to which Kuper and his sons readily ascribed. Kanana, on the other hand, never relinquished her "native status," which insured her continuous access to customary land.

Byer aims to transcend the hegemony that Kuper and his sons have established over the historical and anthropological resources on Owa Raha. Bernatzik, for instance, had to stay with Kuper and his family on the island in the 1930s. Kuper and Kanana became his main informants. Whenever Bernatzik attempted to bypass Kuper's authority, massive tensions between the two would arise. These tensions would induce Kuper to denounce Bernatzik's carnal relations with two minors on Owa Raha. Although Bernatzik was never convicted of the charge, the accusation itself, recorded in the colonial archives, once again reminded Byer of her personal connections to the island's past. Henry Kuper's last surviving son, Albert Wote Kuper, seeks to replicate the Kuper-Bernatzik relationship with Doris Byer. Byer even offered him the possibility of becoming the second author of the book. But once Kuper realizes that his version of the past does not sit very well with that of other people interviewed by the Austrian ethnologist, the relationship between the two deteriorates to the point where he demands cash from Byer.

Perhaps this book may not be as innovative as Byer would like, especially since two prominent researchers working along similar lines, Richard Price and Klaus Neumann, are conspicuously absent from her bibliography. But there is much to be found in this work that does add to the field of Pacific studies. Her attempt to bridge the silence dividing three generations of Owa Rahans who shared their experiences with Byer would warrant an English translation, if only to make her book at least partly accessible to those to whom it is dedicated—the future generation on Owa Raha.

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Woven Gods: Female Clowns and Power in Rotuma, by Vilsoni Hereniko. Pacific Islands Monograph Series 12. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press and Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1995. ISBN: 0–8248–1655–2, xiii + 197 pages, figures, photographs, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, US$32; paper, F$15.

The focus of this innovative ethnography is the female clown who presides at weddings on Rotuma, the tiny northernmost island in Fiji. Selected by the bride's family, the clown is the supreme ruler of the wedding celebrations. Entertaining the celebrants with her antics, she also is empowered to command the guests to obey her embarrassing commands. Hereniko is concerned not only with the wedding clown's performance but in her waning power in response to western influences. He succeeds in demonstrating that her cultural origins, while no longer remembered by the Islanders, are probably sacred and related to the culturally prestigious fine mats made by women and exchanged at weddings.

That is the ethnographic substance of the book; its eclectic style is another matter.

Woven Gods is not a conventional ethnography. While its level of scholarship is high, a short time ago it would have been unpublishable by a university press because it violates established editorial principles for a scholarly monograph. But the postmodern intellectual revolution that privileges reflexivity, disparity, and difference has affected academic presses as it has other domains of thought and practice. For senior anthropologists, the once inconceivable is now on their bookshelves.

Hereniko has written what he calls a "playful, subversive ethnography" (141). Although as an ethnographer he is something of a clown manqué, his postmodern stance in *Woven Gods* is not a superficial one but motivated by a strong personal conviction. "It is time," he writes, "for Pacific Islanders to infuse western scholarship with their own ways of being and doing" (140). Unlike most ethnographers of South Pacific peoples, Hereniko was born and raised on the island he writes about. Leaving Rotuma at sixteen, he studied in Fiji, England, and Hawai'i; today he is a published and produced playwright who teaches Pacific literature at the University of Hawai'i.

From this culturally diverse biography, Hereniko acknowledges a number of selves competing for attention in shaping his ethnography: "a Rotuman self, a fiction-writing self, and an interpretive 'anthropological' self." He then asks, "Do I deny certain parts of myself in this scholarly study, or do I exploit my many selves to inform my analysis?" and decides on the latter. "Fiction and nonfiction," he continues, "subjective and objective accounts, intuition and dreams inform the findings in this book, and pose questions that are equally problematic for 'western' scholarship" (8–9). Like a Rotuman clown, the author plays "different roles depending on the demands of the moment, refusing to be wholly one or the other." To be "inconsistent," he expounds, is to be "Rotuman" (91). Despite Hereniko's attempts to harmonize the voices of his various selves, too often they sound like an ungainly mixture of discordant parts. To read the book is to veer clumsily among a farrago of data and styles. So fasten your seatbelt, reader; this ethnography is going to jerk you around.

Contributing to the book's general awkwardness is the presentation of the text, more or less, as an odyssey of Hereniko's research process, including side trips that are occasionally dead ends. A chapter titled "Mythologizing Humor and Clowning" opens with four verbatim and plodding transcripts of translated interviews with wedding clowns that Hereniko frankly states he finds "unilluminating" (51). Although not concerned with myth, they are apparently included here because it was then that he decided to examine Rotuman mythology for narratives related to clowning. The interviews, which do little to advance the thrust of his text, might have been included in an appendix. Instead his single appendix—the only comparative review of the Pacific ritual clowning literature in existence—constitutes one of the most important "chapters" in the book.

Once designated as chapter four, when his anthropologist self was declaring, "My topic is clowning; I want to understand this phenomenon as fully as possible" (8), he notes that "my Rotuman self finds this chapter expendable . . . so I relegate it to an appendix" (10). While it is obvious which self is the boss of this book, we can be grateful that his anthropologist self did not acquiesce completely.

It is not the topsy-turvy style of *Woven Gods* that will be remembered, but the valuable interpretive data Hereniko has provided about Rotuman female clowning. There are interesting discussions regarding relations between kin groups, chiefs and commoners, and males and females in terms of clowning and humor. Each of these social sets is prone to internal conflict, but at weddings, via the clown's outrageous actions—she can order even a chief to dance alone or stand in the sun—these relations are momentarily inverted and thereby publicly reexamined. Chiefs and ordinary men, for example, are taught humility and how it feels to be on the obeying side of a relationship.

Some of Hereniko's most absorbing data are about the changing role of the wedding clown in contemporary society. As western influences increase, there is confusion among Islanders about her proper role, and even among the clowns themselves. Within ten years or so, Hereniko believes she will completely disappear, just as the clowns who performed during the weaving of certain fine mats disappeared in the 1960s. One of the most original parts of his study is his discussion of the religious origins of Rotuman female clowns that suggests they were intimately related to the world of the spirits. His evidence on the clowns who presided at the weaving of the sacred red feathers to a fine mat representing the entangling and taming of a malevolent spirit is especially convincing and complements other recent work on the sacredness of Polynesian fine mats.

Woven Gods is a valuable, if unsuccessful, experiment in writing an ethnography. If Hereniko writes another, I hope he will recall an anecdote in his epilogue. Returning to his village with his doctoral degree, he joins the men around a bowl of kava telling stories. When asked to tell them a "Professor story," he initially hesitates then begins to relate for the first time in his village his findings about the wedding clown. Eyes glaze over, heads begin to nod, and he quickly brings his little talk to a close. After a painful silence, someone asks "Okay, how many women did you screw in Hawai'i?" and it dawns on him the kind of "Professor story" they wanted to hear. By privileging his anthropological self, he notes that he had failed to connect with his fellow Islanders. In a reverse way, by privileging his Rotuman and fiction-writing selves in *Woven Gods,* he has failed to connect as effectively as he could with his anthropological audience. Just like the wedding clown, to communicate successfully, one must address the audience at hand.

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