

well as musical CDs, and a Rotuma Web site arranged by the anthropologists themselves, on which they have posted, among many other sources, electronic copies of all their publications.

In an epilogue, Jocelyn Linnekin situates the collection in the broader social science literature on cultural identity, especially social-constructivist approaches, and summarizes the broad themes and importance of the papers. The epilogue also offers some useful directions for further study, such as the relationship between consumer desire and cultural identity.

In sum, this collection of essays is useful and informative yet inevitably uneven. Some essays offer clear, concise arguments that are aimed, moreover, at a wide readership (eg, Gardner, Howard and Rensel). Other contributions present fascinating case studies (eg, Jeudy-Ballini, Kolig). Yet some entries will likely appeal only to regional specialists (eg, Miedema). Surprisingly, there is little incorporation of empirical and theoretical material from other disciplines, regions, and contexts. Those contributions that discussed diasporas could surely have benefited more from contemplating some of the growing literature on this topic—a topic that is increasingly salient and cutting-edge in many disciplines ranging from American studies to Jewish studies—than from citing Foucault. Nonetheless, it is a book well worth consulting by all Pacific scholars interested in how to study, theorize, and construe cultural identity in the contemporary Pacific.

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*The People of the Sea: Environment, Identity, and History in Oceania*, by Paul D'Arcy. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006. ISBN 978-0-8248-2959-9; xvii + 294 pages, figures, maps, notes, bibliography, index. US\$36.00.

Paul D'Arcy, who teaches Pacific and environmental history as well as colonial race relations at the Australian National University, makes two major claims in this short and impressively researched book. First, he says academics have neglected the maritime dimension of Pacific history. Second, he maintains that “the realities of living in an oceanic environment promulgated openness to external influences among Islanders. As a result, the impact of Westerners is perhaps exaggerated” (2).

Like the proverbial shoe that may or may not fit, depending on the last used and the foot in question, his first allegation must be carefully qualified to be sustained. D'Arcy acknowledges that much has been written about Pacific Islanders and the sea. The problem as he views it, however, is that Pacific scholars have not been writing the right kind of stuff about the ways in which living in this great ocean have shaped human values and survival strategies. Unfortunately (he tells us), what has been written has been rooted too firmly in “Western scientific discourse”; as a consequence, he says, “Islanders’ conceptions of the ocean” have evidently not been properly valued (8).

However popular it may still be in the social sciences and humanities to disparage science as a way of knowing, the substance of this book belies

such an antagonistic claim. Judging by the piecemeal and largely anecdotal character of the documentary evidence carefully assembled here for our consideration, it is painfully clear that not all that much has been recorded about what Pacific Islanders know (or once knew) about the sea and its sometimes capricious ways. In this regard, it is also telling that D'Arcy chooses to juxtapose Western science against "Islanders' conceptions" rather than, say, against "Islanders' science." Are our Western ways of knowing important things really so different from Islander ways of paying attention to the world?

Whatever your thoughts on this matter, I would argue that it is not so much our neglect as it is our basic ignorance of what others know that is at the root of the problem. It may be true, as the commonplace goes, that ignorance of the law is no excuse, but lacking reliable documentary information (scientific or otherwise) is a genuine excuse for why historians and others might be hampered in saying much about connections between people and the ocean.

The author's second major claim—that the vagaries of the sea have "instilled an expectation and openness toward outside influences, and, accordingly, the rapidity with which cultural change could occur in relations between various groups" (1)—is more readily supported, although once again D'Arcy weakens his case by adding that this observation "runs counter to the dominant paradigms of recent Pacific Islands' historiography" (1). I am not sure how one determines "paradigmatic dominance," but I do know that decades ago this same claim

was the centerpiece of what scholars such as Thomas Gladwin (*East is a Big Bird*, 1970) and William Alkire (*Lamotrek Atoll and Inter-Island Socioeconomic Ties*, 1965) were telling us about what it takes to live in such a challenging environment.

Others may also agree with me that there is strong narrative tension throughout this book between the author's scholarly reporting of what is known (often too little) about "the environment as a significant influence on cultural and historical patterns" in the Pacific (12), and his understandable desire nevertheless to give us take-home generalizations even when facts, perceived by Westerners or otherwise, are few and geographically far between. Often the generalizing falls short. A few examples are appropriate: "Humans have an ancient biological relationship with the sea. Most evolutionary scientists now believe that all life on earth originated in the water" (27). "The seas of Oceania were bridges as well as barriers" (64). "The Pacific is not particularly treacherous to travel on. Commentators compare it favorably with the Atlantic" (67). "Islanders usually waited for favorable winds rather than sail in dangerous conditions" (67). "Islanders exhibited deep ambivalence toward sailing beyond the reef" (69). "The sea is unforgiving to the ill prepared" (70). "Islanders literally sang their way across the sea" (71). "Seafarers carried ritual objects and magical chants for protection" (85). "Most Islanders expected intrusions from beyond the horizon" (118). "Islanders sought to control forces from beyond the horizon by every means available" (133).

Readers of this book soon discover that D'Arcy has restricted the scope of his survey in two ways that may further disappoint them. He focuses his attention almost exclusively on Fiji, Polynesia, and Micronesia—here all somewhat misleadingly glossed as “Remote Oceania.” He repeatedly also says he is writing only about the period between 1770 and 1870, although much of the information he relates is based on sources dating back only to the twentieth century, a limitation that may help explain why his generalizations often have a seemingly timeless quality about them—so timeless that what he says could as well apply also to the Caribbean or (dare I suggest it?) Melanesia or Indonesia.

I was struck in this regard by what he reports in chapter 3, “Communication and Relative Isolation in the Sea of Islands.” A decade ago, a prominent Australian linguist accused two of my colleagues and me of seeing the Sepik coast of New Guinea as a model for the rest of the Pacific—evidently a silly thing to do. Didn't we know, he scoffed, that there is a big difference between how people live their lives in New Guinea and in the central Pacific? Perhaps, but what D'Arcy reports about the web of social, economic, and political ties between communities and localities in the farther reaches of the Pacific sure sounds a lot like what my colleague Robert L. Welsch and I have been reporting about human relationships along New Guinea's northern shores.

Because of its disapproving tone and narrative construction, this book is less the book I was hoping it was when I began reading it. Nonetheless, D'Arcy convincingly establishes

beyond a doubt that it is indeed unfortunate we know so little about the nexus between Islanders and the sea. The Pacific is not the only place where foreigners have not listened long and carefully enough to what local people can tell them about the dance of life that those dwelling beside the ocean must lead to survive and prosper. In the late 1970s, the archaeologist Peter Bellwood published a pioneering survey of South Seas archaeology, titled *Man's Conquest of the Pacific* (1978). I have always felt this book was wrongly labeled for several reasons, starting with the obvious truth that the sea is not a beast that can be conquered. However, in the twenty-first century it is painfully true that we now know the sea is a place that can be destroyed. Let us hope that it is not too late to learn about Oceania's particular needs and offerings.

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*Borrowing: A Pacific Perspective*, edited by Jan Tent and Paul Geraghty. Pacific Linguistics 548. Canberra: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University, 2004. ISBN 0-85883-532-0; xi + 330 pages, tables, figures, bibliography. A\$99.00 (including GST).

It is a truism that the Pacific is where East meets West, where cultures sometimes clash and often influence each other. Nowhere is this more apparent than in language. Many European languages—especially local varieties thereof—have borrowed from Pacific