

Beyond a Mountain Valley: The Simbu of Papua New Guinea, by Paula Brown. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995. ISBN 0-8248-1701-X, xx + 296 pages, maps, photographs, notes, table, glossary, bibliography, index. US\$36.

This book aims "to gain a historical perspective [on] the relationships, interactions and intergroup perceptions of Simbu and strangers—how the Simbu have become involved with and participated in the world beyond the valley," after these Papua New Guinea highlands people were "discovered" by Australians in 1933 (xii–xiv). Professor Brown's intensive fieldwork in Simbu in 1958–1965 focused on processes of change, including detailed work with Harold Brookfield on land use, with four field trips since 1970, the period of my own work on Simbu politics and history.

Increasingly, anthropologists recognize that their work can make major contributions to history. Brown says this Simbu history, "studded with events, announcements and performances, is memory and record, rather than my judgement of 'what actually happened'. Of many versions, recollections, and reports, all add new perspectives. There is surely no single truth" (xiv). Long before "post-modernism" and this study, however, historians and social scientists have collated, selected, and evaluated many voices and interpretations, without necessarily inventing a *single* truth.

The methodology inevitably affects the quality of this multifaceted local-level study. Aside from using her own field notes, questionnaires, and docu-

ments, Brown says she "guided the collection of statements of elders and accounts by some literate young people, who interviewed, recorded and wrote comments about Simbu and about themselves at my request" (xiv). Hence the book covers more ground and events than could a single fieldworker, especially in the last decade, when even local travel can be hazardous for Simbu and outsiders alike. The downside is that assessing the quality of these multiauthored contributions can be difficult, unless the reader can contextualize them.

The first half of the book discusses a series of incidents that have, as Brown says, entered Simbu folklore and affected how Simbu engaged with the colonial state and how younger generations now reassess it. These events are the initial transit through the Wahgi Valley in March 1933, led by Patrol Officer Jim Taylor and prospector Mick Leahy, with eighty police and carriers, when the visitors were seen as ghosts; the August 1933 incident at Kunabau, when a bushknife was stolen from Taylor's returning patrol, whose members perceived they were about to be speared and in response shot and killed a number of people; the murders of two missionaries in the Simbu Valley in December–January 1934–35; the subsequent arrests by patrols led by Taylor in 1935; and the various attacks on Taylor and police in the upper Simbu Valley when they walked between groups that at the time were fighting, whereupon the patrol members were attacked and in self-defense killed many fighters as yet unfamiliar with firearms. Nonetheless, Brown accepts the frequent Simbu verdict that

Taylor's "peaceful approach—backed by the demonstrated power of guns" promoted peacemaking (244).

The outlines of these events emerge somewhat haphazardly from Simbu, missionary, and official narratives. Many primary sources were used, but not A A Roberts's important first 1935 report on politics in the Chimbu Valley based on missionary observations in the first two years of contact, which describes authoritative precolonial Simbu leaders of clan groups—whom Roberts called "chiefs." There is little probing or evaluation of the stories Brown and others collected from Simbu informants. The Kunabau shootings were variously "many" (60, 61), "one" (61), "plenty" and "some" (62), "two to three hundred" (62, 235), and "a lot" (235). Taylor's report mentioned "one," and five decades later in an apparently generic comment he admitted his figures were "modified" (64). Brown's maps do not show most of the places named or the locations of most of her informants, many of whom live well away from the sites of this and subsequent incidents. These details are known to few non-Simbu, but would be needed to identify myth-making in process. This book does not name those killed or rigorously explore the various actors' perspectives—in contrast with other studies about the same era such as *Lightning Meets the West Wind* (concerning the Malaita massacre of 1927 and the subsequent British Solomon Islands Protectorate punitive expedition) by Roger Keesing and Peter Corris, or *Like People You See in a Dream* (concerning the Hides-O'Malley patrol into the Southern

Highlands in 1935) by Edward Schiefelin, Robert Crittenden, and others.

The next section is more interpretive, using mainly official documents and mission histories to summarize the erratic establishment of colonial control in central Simbu in the 1930s. Brown not only interprets Simbu leaders in the middle period of colonial rule after the Pacific War as being dependent, but—quoting Ian Downs among other prewar patrol officers—argues that the stature of prominent prewar Simbu leaders was created by officialdom, through their links with the patrol officers and police. Perhaps the core generalization of the book is that Simbu village officials and leaders were colonial creations, as argued by Brown in her 1963 *American Anthropologist* (AA) article. Brown does not mention here the arguments of Nilles (who observed in *Oceania* [1950, 4] that some village officials had had real authority predating the colonial era, and that it was those who lacked it who became arbitrary oligarchs). She rejects Salisbury's argument (in AA 1964) that (some) Simbu big-men were despotic (236). I would argue that there is a need to identify that Simbu leaders displayed varying styles and influence, both before and after colonial contact and "pacification," and to recognize (as demonstrated in Brown's quotations from Downs's 1939 and 1940 patrol reports) that they were "strong" before the government enlisted them (133). There is need for precision: clearly some precolonial Simbu leaders had immense authority, extending beyond their clan or tribal group, whereas if the great colonial leader Kondom Agaundo really "dom-

inated the Simbu,” as Brown argues, one wonders why he lost the 1964 election when others of his age-group succeeded (247–248).

A chapter on changes in the Simbu economy and lifestyles contains broad observations reminiscent of Brown’s 1972 book, *The Chimbu*, but—contrary to the book’s stated aim and title—barely mentions the interactions of Simbu with outsiders or explores the lives of the twenty thousand or so Simbu who live outside the province. The book then skims over the decolonization period, surveys the ambitions of Simbu students, describes electioneering in the mid-1980s, and sketches the biographies of Simbu political heroes and some women activists.

This pioneering and eclectic overview will long be cited, especially for its vivid quotations and its splendid early contact photographs. Unfortunately, for this reader, Brown’s analysis is not driven by a coherent interpretation beyond the statement that “the heroic image is a cumulative effect of many Simbu observations and recollections” (257). To me, this “many-sided story” does not strongly convey the logic(s) of social and political processes under way, such as is found in Andrew Strathern’s *A Line of Power* or in Robert Gordon and Mervyn Meggitt’s *Law and Order in the New Guinea Highlands*. After an introductory discussion of theories of oral history and mythmaking, the book makes scant reference to pertinent comparative publications or to the several directly relevant ethnographic dissertations on Simbu for which Brown was adviser or examiner.

This book hints at the gloomy side

of Simbu’s colonial past, without close examination of the literature it cites (such as August Kituai’s dissertation on police). Tantalizing hints of major political discontent with the postcolonial elite are left undiscussed, including an informant’s prediction of “anarchy” and call for “revolution” (206, 229). Brown concludes, “The dark side of the future involves existing warfare, robbery, gangs and political venality. I am confident that the new heroes will deal with these issues just as the old ones confronted the problems of their times” (257). She does not demonstrate how ethnographic history could assist their analysis. These are matters with great contemporary saliency that were raised by Brown’s correspondents and that appear to overwhelm contemporary Simbu. It is to be hoped this book will stimulate further analysis of these outspoken people and their vigorous responses to real problems.

Unnecessary blemishes detract from the book. The writing often lacks precision and clarity, with abrupt changes of topic and idea within paragraphs. Frequently the time frame is hazy, partly because of the hoary choice of “traditional” times as the “ethnographic present.” Several times the text appears self-contradictory, and sharper editing is needed. Numerous points are touched on repeatedly over consecutive pages and sometimes reiterated (examples: a whole sentence on both 153 and 155, and thrice Kondom is the administration’s “favorite” leader at 247 and 248). Such an oratorical style translates awkwardly into print. There is carelessness and inconsistency: Taylor left government service in either 1949 or the early 1950s, not

both (239), and Meg Taylor is not Mick Leahy's daughter (268n7). Several times the constitutional and political history is wrong (including both sets of dates for Joseph Tiene's parliamentary term, 118 and 217). The referencing needs cross-checking, because—among other things—several items are missing, Marilyn and Andrew Strathern are conflated (256), Jolly and MacIntyre twice become Jolly and MacIntosh, several authors' names are misspelled, several subtitles are missing, and an elision renders Jenny Hughes's 1985 thesis title ungrammatical.

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White Australia Defied: Pacific Islander Settlement in North Queensland, by Patricia Mercer. Studies in North Queensland History 21. Townsville, QLD: James Cook University, 1995. ISBN 0-86443-559-2, xvi + 375 pages, maps, tables, figures, photographs, notes, bibliography, index. Paper, A\$30.

In his foreword, B J Dalton states that this book is the first to describe the Pacific Islanders who remained in Australia after the vast majority of imported laborers were deported under the "White Australia policy" in the first decade of the twentieth century. Between 1863 and 1904 an estimated 62,500 Pacific Islanders (many of them returnees) entered Queensland to work on farms and plantations there. After deportation, an estimated 1200 to 2500 remained, many illegally.

The author began her research (in collaboration with Clive Moore) by collecting oral histories of their descendants in order to study the nineteenth-century plantation period and labor trade, topics that have by now been thoroughly researched. The book is an expansion of her doctoral study, bringing the history of these people up to the early 1990s.

The methodology is "historical demography, [which] involves reconstruction of the demographic features of a community through aggregation of individual and family life histories built up from" local records in which names appear, supplemented by oral histories. The review of records appears to be comprehensive. Hundreds of footnotes indicate the source of every fact.

The central question addressed by the book is why this population did not disappear, as "was confidently expected," and at times even "pronounced as an accomplished fact" in Dalton's words. By her title, Mercer appears to suggest that Islanders persisted because they defied the extensive discrimination practiced against them by labor unions and legislatures. They continued to be employed illegally in sugar, reminiscent of illegal immigrants elsewhere, and to actively resist attempts on several occasions to exclude their children from schools. Interestingly, such efforts failed because of opposition from white churchmen, planters, and commercial interests who benefited from their trade or conversion. Marginalization and discrimination were the major factors accounting for the persistence of the population. As Mercer states, their