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Arts of Vanuatu, edited by Joël Bonnemaison, Kirk Huffman, Christian Kaufmann, and Darrel Tryon. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press; Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux; Bathurst, NSW: Crawford House Publishing, 1996. ISBN 0-8248-1956-X, 338 pages. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography. US\$79.

In the past decade the disciplines of anthropology and art history have witnessed a paradigm shift. This has led scholars to question the very foundations of their study. As art is a product of material culture, and social structure frequently determines art production, the fine line between anthropology and Oceanic art history has blurred. This has led to interdisciplinary programs, or, for those recently joining the bandwagon, cultural studies.

Arts of Vanuatu is not only an outcome of these new ideologies, but is an excellent example of how a multidisciplinary approach affords a fuller understanding of a particular culture. Vanuatu, a country where more than a hundred languages are spoken, where social organization falls into both big-man and chiefly categories, where trading relationships staved off incessant warfare, and where performance

(dance, song, costume) is recognized as an integral part of art production, cannot be understood through one lens. The result is a volume with thirty-one writers and four editors.

The complexity of Vanuatu is mirrored in this work. The book incorporates "highlights," clearly set off by its design, which are short entries or descriptions of objects such as combs, flutes, and bowls. These offer information about a variety of topics and specific artistic complexes usually omitted from a compendium of this sort. They also demonstrate the value placed on objects often ignored. This volume makes one year for similar treatment of the other island nations in the Pacific.

Not only does this book incorporate new methodologies, it questions the role of a museum or cultural center. It is not just an academic exercise, but a clear statement concerning the role of museums in the twenty-first century. Essays by Huffman and Sam suggest that, no longer bell jars and preserver of culture, the Vanuatu Cultural Center functions best as a resource and an exponent of cultural change. Lis-sant Bolton characterized the center as "unusual in the museum world. It concentrates not so much on objects as on oral traditions, not so much on preservation as on revival, not so much on displays as on what happens on dancing grounds in remote islands" (*Art and AsiaPacific* 1996, 3 [3]: 25). The significance of this ideology in relation to the artistic traditions of Vanuatu is reiterated by Boulay, who comments that "seeing the art objects by themselves in an exhibition is, of course, frustrating for those who have seen

them where they were originally presented. . . . The Malakula head-dresses without their wearers, . . . the Ambrym slit-gongs without their dancing ground, the Tannese feather sculptures without the 500 dancers who show them off, the Ambae women's mats without the accumulation and display" (14). Clearly, the center's stance is that the arts of Vanuatu are not static, not meant to be hung on walls, but are vital, living, breathing, changing traditions.

In 1996 the new Vanuatu Cultural Center opened, an international traveling exhibition titled *Ritual Arts of Vanuatu* was launched, and *Arts of Vanuatu* was published. These can be seen as separate achievements, each standing on their own merits, or as a triumvirate expression of cultural and artistic identity. The influence of the center's past director, Kirk Huffman, is clear. With thirteen essays in the volume, Huffman details his belief in the vitality of ni-Vanuatu traditions and his respect for them. The center's hosting of an international exhibition seems incongruous, but, as Patterson suggests, this discrepancy demonstrates the complexity of the arts of Vanuatu. She states, "If, in focusing on artefacts removed from their cultural setting, we run the risk of losing an important means of 'reading' their significance, we can perhaps be encouraged by the reminder that, as we have seen in the case of Ambrym, cultural fluidity and transformation is the norm, not the exception, and that creativity lies within the heart of tradition" (262).

Arts of Vanuatu takes these positions into consideration, at the

same time challenging its role as an academic publication. It is not a picture book but contains exquisite photographs. It is more than an art history text, as it includes linguistic, migration, and ethnographic essays. It is more than an anthropology text, as it addresses contemporary art. The authors and editors of this volume take a contemporary position toward art and cultural production. There is not only the voice of the white academics but also of the "ni-Vanuatu field-worker" vitally necessary for the collection of contemporary traditions. In an era of culture studies, this volume forges new ground.

However, trying to be everything to everyone has its problems. The essays range from very detailed descriptions to personalized "letters from the field." Some are academically based, some offer historical fact. In an era of "postcolonialism" the Vanuatu voice is a welcomed presence and a balance to most of Huffman's entries, which end in apology. The volume is uneven, yet the breadth of information gathered offers insight into the complexity and diversity of Vanuatu's artistic traditions.

Arts of Vanuatu, edited by Joël Bonnemaïson, Kirk Huffman, Christian Kaufmann, and Darrel Tryon, is a collection of essays. It advances a pedagogical statement that demands an interdisciplinary approach to the understanding of Vanuatu's myriad cultures. The book's scope includes essays on prehistory, migration, linguistics, social organization, belief systems, economics, architecture, music, and contemporary art. It acknowledges a variety of

contemporary issues—*kastom*, national icons, fluidity of cultural traditions, the indigenous voice—and redresses the discrimination toward oral traditions, performance, the ephemeral, and women's arts. This book bridges a myriad of issues, ideologies, and cultural and political agendas. It is an excellent resource.

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Becoming Tongan: An Ethnography of Childhood, by Helen Morton. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996. ISBN 0-8248-1758-8, ix + 343 pages, tables, maps, photographs, appendixes, glossary, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, US\$45.00; paper, US\$22.95.

Morton's *Becoming Tongan* is a bold and arresting attempt by a non-Tongan to describe and analyze, using conventional social science research techniques, what she perceives to be the process whereby Tongans "learn" their culture, the process of socialization. Apart from a few minor (typographical) errors (such as *palagu* instead of *palaku* on page 106, or *'ofafine* instead of *'ofefine* on page 127) the book, although written primarily for other academics and university students, would also appeal to those interested in Pacific peoples generally. It is appropriately illustrated, with a bibliography that might have been even more useful to students of anthropology and sociology had the author spent time at the University of the South Pacific,

particularly in the Pacific Collection of the library.

Initially motivated by what she confessed to be "culture shock" at what she describes as "violence" between parents and their children, Morton's fascination with Tongan childhood drove her to carry out a study on the subject. The results have been a PhD and this book, which in my view is a most welcome addition to the literature on Tonga, particularly given the dearth of written information on the topic of Tongan childhood. *Becoming Tongan* therefore promises to go a long way toward helping enhance non-Tongans' understanding of what it means to be Tongan, since for Tongans themselves, particularly those born and raised in Tonga, the question does not normally arise.

The question of how a person becomes a member of a culture is one that has rightly preoccupied the thinking of many anthropologists since the beginning of their discipline. After all, "culture," if defined as the way of life of a people, has to be "learned" and "transmitted" to succeeding generations. This desire to find out both what had to be learned and how this was done was perhaps what motivated Margaret Mead to "study" Samoans in her day. More recently, questions of identity, personhood, self, and emotions have become increasingly important not only in the western world but perhaps more to the point, in postcolonial and postindependent (Pacific) societies where portrayals of people who were both subjects in and objects of western research have often been targets of claims of ethnocentricity and arrogance by some local scholars.