

Guardians of Marovo Lagoon: Practice, Place, and Politics in Maritime Melanesia, by Edvard Hviding. Pacific Islands Monograph Series 14. Honolulu: Center for Pacific Islands Studies, School of Hawaiian, Asian, and Pacific Studies, University of Hawai'i and University of Hawai'i Press, 1996. ISBN 0-8248-1664-1, xxix + 473 pages, maps, figures, photos, tables, appendixes, notes, glossary, references, index. Cloth, us\$45.

Ethnography has generated its own "mental map" of the Pacific Islands, so that one navigates around the islands of Melanesia, or through the highlands of New Guinea, by reference to the outstanding landmarks in ethnographic scholarship. Thus in Solomon Islands we have the well-charted outliers, such as Tikopia (Firth), Ontong Java (Hogbin), and Bellona (Elbert and Monberg), which surround the main islands whose prominent landmarks—some a little erased by time—can easily be distinguished, for example Ulawa (Ivens), Guadalcanal (Hogbin again), Malaita (Keesing, Ross, Burt), Choiseul (Scheffler), and Bougainville (Oliver). Until now, most of the western Solomon islands were lost in the mists of obscurity. Other than Simbo (Hocart), these large and mysterious forested islands were relatively uncharted, from the ethnographic standpoint. It is a pleasure to record that the biggest blank on our mental map of Solomons ethnography, New Georgia Island, has now been triumphantly filled by Edvard Hviding by means of his outstanding new book.

It is not often that a reviewer has the opportunity to signal such an

achievement. I believe that *Guardians of Marovo Lagoon* will take its place as a permanently valuable record of New Georgia ethnology, in particular the postcontact history, modern social organization, and maritime culture of Marovo Lagoon along the eastern half of New Georgia. It is a book that no serious Melanesianist should ignore, and one that no library with a commitment to the region can afford to be without. The University of Hawai'i Press is to be congratulated for producing a book of outstanding quality, profusely illustrated, and impeccably edited by Linley Chapman for the Pacific Islands Monograph Series. The press has also published the book at a price that even keen students might afford.

Guardians of Marovo Lagoon is the third publication in book form that has been generated from Edvard Hviding's long period of engagement with the people and Area Council of Marovo Lagoon, with their marine resources and system of tenure, and with their language and other aspects of culture. I know from my own travels around New Georgia in 1996 that Hviding's earlier books (1995a, 1995b) are already widely distributed and well read throughout the Western Solomons. The first, written in the Marovo language, is a collection of custom stories. The second is in both Marovo and English, and is a dictionary of environment and resources in which the biota and landforms are classified and described according to indigenous conceptions and taxonomy, but are also identified in scientific terms (including botanical and zoological nomenclature) that make the

accounts consistent with the conventions of western knowledge. Hviding was also involved, in 1996, with the production of an ethnographic film, produced in collaboration with the National Museum in Honiara, that promises to reveal in visual form some further dimensions of this remarkable area—an area that until recently was little known to ethnographers and others.

The book currently under review is based on three major periods of fieldwork in the period 1986–1992, reinforced by some shorter visits in the last five years. It is a revised and extended version of the doctoral dissertation Hviding submitted in 1992 to the University of Bergen, Norway. Hviding's original project was unusual in two respects. First, the area on which he has focused, Marovo Lagoon, remained a blank on the ethnographic map largely because it was assumed by anthropologists to be “uninteresting” because it was thought to have been severely transformed by the suppression of headhunting raids by British warships in the 1890s and the subsequent impacts of Methodist and Seventh Day Adventist missionary activity and the copra trade. Second, his research is unique because of its focus on an aspect of Melanesian culture almost entirely disregarded in most of the “classic” ethnographic accounts. For a research student to focus on an apparently obscure topic in an unknown but unpromising region seemed, when I first learned of Hviding's proposals in 1985, to be foolhardy in the extreme. I am very happy to have been proved completely wrong.

The book begins with a review of maritime Melanesia that comes to the simple and basic conclusion that much too little is known about the relationships of coastal Melanesians to the marine environment that forms a significant context for their lives. In the case of Marovo Lagoon, neither land nor sea has been properly understood by outsiders, or is not documented except in the glimpses of passing travelers and district officers. In his reconstruction of Marovo history and the analysis of maritime relationships, Hviding therefore starts with a clean slate. Yet the subsequent chapters of the book amply demonstrate that the ten thousand Marovo people (double the population of the 1960s) have retained large elements of their traditional knowledge and use of the lagoon and its resources, and the near-shore fisheries. They have also been able to adapt systems of tenure and management to accommodate changing technology and to meet the new challenges of church authority, the money economy, colonization by copra planters, bitter fighting between Japanese and Americans, and the recent intrusions of companies engaged in tuna-bait fishing in the lagoon and logging its forested hinterland.

A review of this length cannot do justice to the richness of the insights gained by Edvard Hviding, for example through the many hundreds of hours that he spent as an active participant in fishing trips from his home base at Chea, or journeying the length and breadth of the lagoon to discuss the politics of sharing or excluding others from the use of marine resources. Marine tenure is discussed

in the evolving context of Marovo leadership, ritual practice, and maritime technology. The “ethnographic present” is utterly banished from this account, which displays great sensitivity to the dynamism of this society from at least the 1850s onward. What we see today is just the latest episode in a series of adjustments by the Marovo people and their leaders to the opportunities and challenges of the outside world. The story is unfolding at an accelerating rate, as Malaysian loggers now exceed the earlier efforts of the Japanese tuna fishers in a race to commoditize the resources of the lagoon for the benefit of foreign companies and their shareholders.

In a chapter entitled “The Work of the Guardians: Confronting Global Systems” the social anthropology of this embryonic “globalization” process is considered. The village world of Marovo is still superficially similar to the almost closed communities of the colonial past (more closed than in the precontact period, Hviding argues), but the surface appearance of “tradition” is misleading. Whereas Malinowski fretted in the Trobriand Islands because he was starved of news of the Great War in Europe, an event quite outside the knowledge of his informants, Hviding in Marovo Lagoon never escaped from the discourse of global warming, rainforest destruction, biodiversity prospecting, privatization, and the new world order, because this is increasingly the context in which key decision-makers in Marovo Lagoon now operate. The World Wide Web has not yet arrived in villages in the Western Solomons, but

the prophets of globalization are already manifest in the workshops and propaganda of Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, ecotourism consultants, and the Kumbulan Emas logging company. In a book already rich in insights about changing ways of managing shellfish beds and reef fisheries, Hviding confronts also the new challenges to Marovo autonomy that the conflicting agents of environmentalist utopia and capitalist magic are now offering. As Hviding shows, “present-day discourses in Marovo, oppositional, confrontational or otherwise, borrow freely and innovatively from global systems of political economy and meaning.” These borrowings include domains as diverse as anthropological kinship theory, colonial land legislation, Christian doctrines, and environmentalism.

I believe *Guardians of Marovo Lagoon* will take its place as an ethnographic classic that opens new windows on a Melanesian society seen through the optic of marine tenure. The people of Marovo Lagoon have been well served by their ethnographer, whose book serves as a model of collaborative anthropology research that meets both the wishes of local communities to see their customs documented, and also the exacting standards of innovative scholarship. In both respects the frontiers of knowledge have been significantly extended.

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A Sustainable Future for Melanesia? Natural Resources, Population and Development, by Bob Thistlethwaite and Derrin Davis. Pacific Policy Paper 17. Canberra: National Centre for Development Studies and Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, 1996. ISBN 0-7315-1998-1, xii + 180 pages, tables, figures, references, index. Paper, A\$25.

If the period from the 1930s to the 1980s in the Pacific might be described as the era of culture in terms of research and scholarship, the 1990s might be similarly described as the beginning of the era of development. This change is obvious on several dimensions, one being that currently development studies appear to form the fastest growing body of literature on the Pacific. Virtually every year reports ranging from magazine feature

articles to regular books are published on some aspect of development in the region. *A Sustainable Future for Melanesia? Natural Resources, Population and Development* is an example of the burgeoning literature on development in the Pacific.

Coauthored by Bob Thistlethwaite and Derrin Davis and published in 1996, this book is part of the Pacific 2010 series jointly produced by the National Centre for Development Studies and the Research School for Pacific and Asian Studies at the Australian National University in Canberra. With its striking picture on the front cover, of a large truck hauling logs on a dirt road running through a coconut plantation, the book could be easily mistaken for a popular guide to the Pacific. But, behind the deceptive cover, it is a book worth reading. Written in very accessible language, it provides (in nine short chapters) a factual overview of what the status of sustainable development in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Fiji might be by the year 2010. The authors gauge their estimates on the basis of information thus far available on the natural resources, population growth, economics, consumptive habits, and so forth, of the four Melanesian countries. They were also guided by personal knowledge gained from years of involvement in development projects in the Pacific.

In the first chapter Thistlethwaite and Davis deal specifically with defining sustainability, explaining the different reasons behind its current popularity in development discourse both in the Pacific region and internationally. The authors argue that because of