

some Japanese) oral accounts and translated historical records. The book clearly suggests that the nature of Modekngēi, in the past and present, has been extremely intricate and constantly evolving through time.

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*Oceania: An Introduction to the Cultures and Identities of Pacific Islanders*, by Andrew Strathern, Pamela J Stewart, Laurence M Carucci, Lin Poyer, Richard Feinberg, and Cluny Macpherson. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2002. ISBN 0-89089-444-2; vii + 272 pages, figures, maps, notes, photographs, bibliography, index. US\$30.00.

Creating a book with the scope promised by this title cannot have been an easy task. Fortunately, a reviewer's job is eased by the editors' clear statement of goals: "The book is intended primarily for use in college level courses for undergraduates" (3). I have taught different versions of a course on peoples of the Pacific to American undergraduates for about a quarter century and write my review with that experience in mind.

Differences between *Oceania* and any comparable texts are quickly apparent. Eschewing conventional "culture area" labels as anachronistic, the book's three main sections are entitled "The South-West Pacific," "The 'Eastern Pacific'" (note the additional quotation marks), and "The West Central Pacific." The first section comprises just a few pages more than either of the others, though the population represented by the first is about

five times that of the other two combined. All sections attend to issues of history and change, as well as basic ethnography, but each pair of authors has been allowed a distinctive style of presentation. Detailed "case studies"—ethnographic or thematic—appear in all sections.

"The South-West Pacific" here includes the islands of New Guinea, the Solomons, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, and Fiji. Presentation moves from the southeast to northwest with the most pages devoted to the largest populations, in the Solomons and New Guinea. The case studies include the specific (eg, "The Asmat of Irian Jaya: Art and Its Changing Meanings," which cries out for an illustration or two) and general (eg, a particularly effective treatment of "'Cargo Cults' and Millenarian Movements as Objects of Study"). This section is generously larded with comparisons of the authors' own work with Papua New Guinea Highlanders to that with other populations. Given the linguistic, cultural, and historical differences separating these Highlanders from all the Austronesian speakers elsewhere in the region, the comparisons are not always convincing. The final subsection, "An Overview of Political Problems," admirably fulfills the book's intention to make students aware that Islanders live with both tradition and modern institutions.

It is not clear why the next section is entitled "The 'Eastern Pacific'" since this authorial pair writes throughout of "Polynesia" and "Polynesians." This is perhaps the most conventionally presented section, beginning with geography and language, and moving on to subsections on prehistory, seafaring, subsistence, and expressive arts,

before taking up “Central Themes in Polynesian Culture.” “European Contact” is followed by “Contemporary Issues,” in which the cases treated at length are those of Māori, Sāmoa, and Anuta. These cases repeat some material from earlier pages, but repetition is not necessarily a defect in a book designed for student use.

The authors of “The West Central Pacific” are at pains to say “that Micronesia does not exist” (187), a matter of some contention among specialists in the region. However, they do write plausibly about the linguistic and archaeological evidence for at least two separate settlements of the far-flung islands, and no one is likely to disagree with the claim that the respective colonial histories have been different. It is this section that most extensively lives up to the book’s subtitle on the subject of “identity,” devoting fifteen pages and examining the topic both by island group and thematically. This is also the section I thought was written with some genuine literary flair.

Specialists in Pacific Island studies will inevitably find details with which to quarrel. For example, the Bougainville mine began full-scale operations three years before Papua New Guinea’s independence (contrast with page 52), while quoting population figures given by Douglas Oliver more than forty years ago supports a picture of modern Native Hawaiians that is lacking in nuance, to say the least (125–126). One could always debate the choice of case studies.

However, the book has been written for undergraduates, not specialists, and its strengths and weaknesses should be assessed accordingly. Its

great strength is the emphasis on history, change, and Islander agency in the modern world, breaking out of the artificial ethnographic present that still shadows too much anthropological writing about the region. All of the authors have long associations (about four decades in some cases) with those they write about, giving their descriptions both perspective and empathy. Bibliographies and suggestions for other reading are up-to-date, however much any specialist might make different choices.

With regard to undergraduate texts, questions always arise as to what students already bring to a course. This book seems to assume an introductory knowledge of cultural anthropology; terms like “cross-cousin marriage” are not explicated. There is also some tension as to the amount of attention that should be paid to broader questions of anthropological theory. How much do students who are presumably interested primarily in the Pacific Islands need to learn about Radcliffe-Brown’s “famous article on ‘The Mother’s Brother in South Africa’” (127) or David Schneider’s critique of kinship studies (214)? The South-West Pacific section has particular difficulty in resolving such tensions.

Keeping costs in line with student purchasing power may have led to certain less significant shortcomings in the book. It lacks the attraction as a physical product that undergraduates have come to expect. Maps are uninspired. All of the photographs were taken by the several authors; among other problems, this might give a student the erroneous notion that all residents of the South-West Pacific look like Papua New Guinea Highlanders.

On the other hand, the set of photos in this section is well captioned; those in the other two sections are not.

These criticisms notwithstanding, if I were asked to teach a class on peoples of the Pacific in the upcoming academic term, I would certainly give this book a try, while remaining attentive to student feedback. Even if this were the only text used, an instructor has the option to complement the presentation with lectures and visual media. The acid test for any textbook is always what the students get out of it. I am sure the authors will be anxious to learn the answer from their colleagues.

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*Birthing in the Pacific: Beyond Tradition and Modernity?* edited by Vicki Lukere and Margaret Jolly. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002. ISBN 0-8248-2408-3; xi + 249 pages, tables, maps, figures, photographs, notes, bibliography, index. Paper, US\$19.95.

This book is a treasure. Nuggets of insight and challenge abound throughout, as the authors reevaluate past work with respect to childbearing, offer a sustained critique of the received wisdom from many disciplinary perspectives, and point the way to future exploration of women's lives and confinement. In every chapter, some gems are clearly visible, the author's stance and acumen making them shine and sparkle, while other jewels still lie buried in the text, await-

ing an astute and careful reader to mine, cut, and polish them.

Birthing is a critical site for understanding the intersection of medical/social/cultural aspects of life (to the extent that these can be viewed as separate domains of inquiry, even heuristically). In her introduction to this volume, Jolly positions birthing as another intersection, as "a fundamental process of all human life, . . . a subject of academic research, and . . . a central concern of health policy deliberation and action" (1). Lukere, in her conclusion, points to other aspects of this intersection and its wide relevance: "Childbirth is a process personal, collective, physical, symbolic, significant in countless ways. It is also a sometimes precarious deliverer of life and death" (201). The authors—four anthropologists, a community health worker, and a historian—use their particular disciplinary and advocacy backgrounds to address simultaneously (in Scheper-Hughes' phrase) the "poetics and pragmatics" of these intersections. The result is a rich, complex, and provocative volume that puts epidemiology, biomedicine, and social policy into cultural-phenomenological contexts.

Jolly's theoretical overview demolishes several persistent binaries that so plague much of the general literature on birthing, and debates the deeply entrenched notion of "development" underlying most maternal and child health endeavors. Central binaries discussed are "traditional-modern," "natural-technological," "indigenous-colonial," "passive-active." Each of the six data-based chapters fleshes out in multiple ways the limitations of binary positions and offers