

of time, and having various kinds of relationships with Samoan women, as a growing mixed European/Samoan population attested. The written record, as important as it is for an analysis of first contacts, may not reflect the actual diversity of these relationships.

Tcherkézoff concludes that there has been a major misunderstanding of European-Samoan sexual encounters stemming back to first contacts almost three centuries ago. As a result, he sides with Derek Freeman in his critique of Margaret Mead on the issue of Samoan sexuality. He believes that Freeman was correct in asserting that Samoans were sexually restrictive rather than sexually permissive. However, Tcherkézoff does not agree with Freeman's theoretical position, which he labels "quasi-sociobiology." He notes that one can agree with Freeman's ethnographic observations without embracing his theory, and that one can disagree with Freeman theoretically without embracing Mead. Yet this book is not about Mead or Freeman, who are discussed only briefly, or the controversy itself. It is about the broader issue of how we understand Pacific pasts. And here Tcherkézoff has offered readers an important new interpretation of material that we thought we knew. This is not an easy book to read, but for those readers who have been immersed in debates about the nature of Pacific history, it will provide many useful insights.

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*Island of Angels: The Growth of the Church on Kosrae / Kapkapak lun Church fin acn Kosrae, 1852–2002*, by Elden M Buck. Honolulu: Watermark Publishing, 2005. ISBN 0-9753740-6-0; 592 pages, tables, figures, maps, photographs, appendixes, in English with Kosraean summary translations of each chapter, notes, bibliography, index. US\$24.95.

*Island of Angels* recounts the history of the Christian church on the Micronesian island of Kosrae from the 1852 arrival of the first Congregational missionary couple. Author Elden Buck himself served as a missionary on Kosrae from 1958 to 1962. His wife, Mary Alice Hanlin Buck, had earlier been a missionary on the island and contributed to the new translation of the Kosraean Bible, completed in 2002. Buck's documentary research and firsthand Kosrae experience produced a monograph of twenty chapters, each exhaustively covering an era in the history of the island's mission and independent church.

The book begins with a discussion of pre-Christian life. It goes on to recount the experiences of Benjamin and Lydia Snow, the first missionaries. Buck gives special attention to the history of the boarding school at Wot ("Mwot"), where in 1879 the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions provided missionaries to educate and train Kiribatese and Marshallese children. He describes the work of the Baldwin sisters (Elizabeth and Jane) at Wot between 1911 and 1940 in exhaustive detail, including their first translation of the entire Bible into Kosraean in 1926. He leads readers through the Japanese and

American periods, concentrating on the enduring faith of Kosrae's Christians as they coped with the deprivations of World War II and adapted to the changes introduced by the American government. Buck concludes by describing changes in the Kosraean church in the past thirty years, including the controversial shift from infant to adult baptism and in the governing structure of the all-island church.

The book is a thickly detailed temporal narrative, with practically no interpretation or analysis. It is very thorough: Buck mentions virtually every event of the last century and a half connected to the mission and church, describes the work of all missionaries ever stationed on the island, and seemingly names every Kosraean pastor and church leader of the past and present. He quotes dozens of lengthy passages from missionary journals and letters, most of which provide a sense of the devotion of the residents of this "island of angels" to their cultural variant of Christianity. Buck fills the book with praise for the devotion and good works of members of the Kosraean church. Himself a former minister of the Church of Christ, Buck's admiration for the Christians of Kosrae and for the dedication of those Americans who brought them the gospel is almost unqualified. The handy appendix lists all Kosraean pastors from 1869 on, all missionaries and a brief description of their activities, and all deacons, lay ministers, and other important church leaders. A two or three page summary in Kosraean precedes every chapter. For these and other reasons, most Kosraeans will find the book a valuable resource, and I suspect that

many will consider it downright inspirational.

I found a few features of *Island of Angels* mildly annoying. The plethora of names sometimes made the narrative hard to follow, even for one who is familiar with Kosraean church history and with Kosraean names. Other readers probably will have a rougher time than I. Each chapter is divided into dozens of sections, some of which are no longer than a sentence or two. Although these divisions make it easy to locate a particular topic, the narrative is more disjointed than it needs to be. Although understandable given his objectives, Buck chose to organize the book's chapters temporally rather than topically. For example, information about the mission schools at Wot or the Baldwin sisters is scattered widely among the chapters, making it difficult to learn about a particular subject. A careful mixture of a temporal and a topical organization would have alleviated this problem. The book's length and incredible detail make reading it a foreboding project for most nonspecialists.

To his credit, Buck acknowledges the many ways in which Kosraean Christianity is distinctive: strict rules for joining and maintaining membership, public confessions, quarterly visits to churches in other villages to encourage "fallen" members to rededicate themselves, integration of feasts into the church's structure, and other features. Also on the positive side, Buck describes some of the divisions between the pastors of the four village churches in the 1980s, so readers are led to see that even Kosrae's most "angelic" persons also are human beings. The author quite cor-

rectly emphasizes that the church is the dominant cultural force on Kosrae, in the sense that most public activities center around church functions and much discourse concerns church affairs.

On the other hand, descriptions of various social problems are largely missing from the book, except for brief mentions. Like many other Micronesian youth, most young Kosraean males are out of the church for years due to alcohol and/or tobacco use, to violent behavior connected to drinking, or to illicit sexual activities. Almost all eventually give up these sins and become members in good standing—even becoming deacons and pastors—but one wishes that Buck had devoted more attention to this pattern. Members of the Kosraean church are also sometimes intolerant of those Kosraeans who adopt the faith of other Christian religions.

On reading the preface, those readers who are intolerant of writers with an avowedly religious slant may be tempted to find their histories of Pacific missionization and Christianization in other books that appear less slanted. That would be unwise, because Buck's book is a wonderful resource for scholars interested in subjects like missionary history or the indigenization of Christian beliefs and practices. In addition to Kosraeans, other Micronesians and scholars of Micronesia will find *Island of Angels* informative even if they use it only as a reference source.

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*Vision and Reality in Pacific Religion: Essays in Honour of Niel Gunson*, edited by Phyllis Herda, Michael Reilly, and David Hilliard. Canberra: Pandanus Books; Christchurch: Macmillan Brown Center for Pacific Studies, 2005. ISBN 1-74076-119-7; 343 pages, notes, index. A\$34.95.

This collection is a tribute to the scholarship of a prominent Pacific historian who was also a caring and well-loved mentor, now retired from the Australian National University. All thirteen contributors were at one stage students of Niel Gunson, and he would be justly proud of their scholarship. His notable contributions to the field of Pacific history are addressed in an excellent introductory essay by Michael Reilly and Phyllis Herda, who also offer concise overviews of the papers. The volume takes us on a long and varied journey, in both time and space: from consideration of indigenous religious precepts, through initial reactions to the Christians' one god, to the consolidation of church institutions that remain integral to Islander lives. It then moves on to the dynamics of a missionary leadership long distrustful of Islander intellectual capacities, the impact of particular missionaries and divergent church philosophies of conversion, and to chapters on the Mormon and Baha'i faiths in the Pacific.

Individual Polynesians feature prominently as historical figures in the earlier chapters (by Herda, on the Hikule'o myths of Tonga; Kieran Schmidt, on the gift of the gods in traditional Sāmoa; Hank Driessen, on the Raiatean priest, Tupa'ia; Andrew Hamilton on ideas of God and the