

shown only by the illumination of the analysis it provides. How well is it able to meet the author's second and third goals of the study? These are no less than "to establish that tradition plays a central role in the contemporary politics of Fiji and Tonga, and to discuss how it does so," and "to show how various social forces at work in both countries are affecting tradition and thereby promoting and reinforcing political challenges to traditional authority" (xxiv). The questions of what tradition is being adduced and in what ways it is central, in terms of either political institutions or the established mores and lifeways of the common people, are hardly considered. The assumptions about, rather than the exploration of, the relationship between tradition and politics hardly allow for the play of various traditions within the political arena, or the way in which the same tradition may be brought into play by different people as an ideology in defense of separate and even opposing interests. The whole notion of the representation of different interests, which might be thought central to the discussion of politics anywhere, is largely absent from this study.

Without further analysis of the societies and an evaluation of the factions, frictions, and social cleavages in their constituencies, it is hard to appreciate many of the Islanders' observations. Wise, witty, and insightful though many of their comments are, they do not add up to nor substitute for an analysis of politics. The distinctive flavor of political relations and process in each of the two countries eludes the fragmentary presentation of interview material. Despite all the author's provocative attempts to

draw them together in a web of wider theories that range from psychological reductionism to postmodernism, the Islanders' observations remain disparate, disembodied opinions and, finally, as such, pretty much weightless on the political scale. Changing their minds about the nature of leadership or the political and economic structures does not lead inevitably to political change; only political action does. The effects of the 1987 military coups in Fiji are a salutary reminder of this. So, too, are the years of talking about democracy in Tonga, which to date have not led to structural change. There, change will occur quickly if only one person, the monarch, who is now the highest traditional leader, changes his mind about the present system. As Fijian and Tongan history teaches us, that is a highly traditional thing to do.

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Common Worlds and Single Lives: Constituting Knowledge in Pacific Societies, edited by Verena Keck. Explorations in Anthropology. Oxford and New York: Berg, 1998. ISBN cloth, 1-85973-164-3; paper, 1-85973-169-4; vi + 417 pages, notes, bibliographies, index. Cloth, US\$57.50; paper, US\$22.50. Distributed in North America by New York University Press.

This edited volume is a thought-provoking collection that touches on several fundamental long-term concerns of the discipline of social anthropology. It comprises sixteen chapters by individual contributors

plus an introduction by the editor. The topics of the individual chapters range across almost the full breadth of social anthropological inquiry, and the reader is struck that a decade or so ago they would not have appeared in a single cohesive volume. Their present juxtaposition is made possible by the fundamental nature of the inquiry that focuses their common topic: the nature of culture and of knowledge.

The chapters are based on a selection of papers from those presented at the Conference of the European Society of Oceanists held in Basel in 1994. They are ordered under five headings: Embodied Personhood, Changing Life Histories, Local Recasting of Christianity, Experiencing Outside Worlds, and Appropriating New Forms of Knowledge. The first chapter, "Reflection on Knowledge in an Oceanic Setting," by the venerable Sir Raymond Firth, is presented as a prologue. The last chapter, "The New Modernities" by Marilyn Strathern, is presented as an epilogue. If fault were to be found with inappropriate juxtaposition of various chapters, it could be queried what the commonalities are that link the common-sense reflections of the prologue with the abstract, often cryptic, logic of the epilogue. But then, an argument could be made that Sir Raymond's contribution stands firmly on the collective wisdom of the founding period of the discipline, while Strathern's highlights contemporary struggles and future directions.

The introduction by Verena Keck reviews the theoretical problem reflected in the title of the volume, and that is the link between personal experience (single lives) and extant common knowledge (common worlds).

Indeed, this is the fundamental issue of much of the discipline of social anthropology and sociology. Keck states that the consideration of the problem at the end of the century must be done in the context of questioning the basic utility of time-honored concepts such as culture, the individual, and knowledge (16). But it is culture that receives the most attention and seems to lie at the base of the entire inquiry, and not only because of its ubiquitous appropriation outside the discipline, as noted by several writers. Keck summarizes the difficulties with the concept as understood in the present. Although it is still possible to accept that culture is learned, acquired in the experience of everyday life, the link between a culture and a territory cannot be maintained. Second, it is no longer possible to accept that it is equally distributed among all people who are "members" of a "cultural group" (3).

This logic dictates that what had been conceived as culture must now be treated as knowledge, either as an "abstract pool of information" or as "knowledge in practice" (10). Turning to Bourdieu's concept of habitus, Keck sees a possibility of its operationalization in the investigation of "which form knowledge/knowing is *mentally* at the disposal of the actor" (12). Keck states that the aim of the collection is "to provide an analysis of the nature of knowledge transmission in post-Colonial Pacific societies" (16). An array of instances follows.

The identification of the transmission of knowledge as the focus of inquiry implicates methodology and the disciplinary reporting of findings. Several chapters reflect on the manner and context in which knowledge is

transmitted by Pacific Islanders, to the researcher as well as to the audience of scholarly texts. Andrew Strathern in "A Twist of the Rope" writes about the contrasting experiences of producing a life history, first with the renowned Ongka and then with his contemporary Ru. He concludes, "If autobiographical life history as a genre has something potentially important to tell us, it is because it represents a moment in which the teller makes the transformation from his or her own embodiment to a self-projected objectification" (134). Lisette Josephides recounts complex Kewa "stories" of divorce, remarriage, and dispute settlement, partly in the form of a play to emphasize that people in negotiating these situations "did not merely respond to situations; they responded to their implications for the perception of the self" (164). Once knowledge becomes the object of study, reflexivity concerning all of its transformations cannot be avoided.

It is not possible to discuss each of the chapters that make up the volume. Some stand out more than others, for a variety of reasons. One of the most thought-provoking is Andrée Grau's "On the Acquisition of Knowledge: Teaching Kinship through the Body among the Tiwi of Northern Australia." In discussing Tiwi "kinship dances" the author must consider nonverbal intelligence as expressed in the dance. In the process, she offers a critique of the radical constructivist position and refers to the late John Blackings's concept of "angelic qualities" (75). At issue are old debates about universals based on biology or the propensity for "culture," or both, as well as questions about language and knowledge. This chapter, focusing

on dance as the communication of meaning through the body, exemplifies the boldness of many of the contributors in returning, perhaps in new language, to long-standing concerns.

Common Worlds and Single Lives: Constituting Knowledge in Pacific Societies has much to offer anyone interested in ethnography as a way of knowing the world. It provides a convenient outline of the discipline's struggle with basic concepts and issues, as well as a rich array of ethnographic instances that lead to engaged reflection.

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Theorizing Self in Samoa: Emotions, Genders, and Sexualities, by Jeannette Marie Mageo. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998. ISBN cloth, 0-472-10920-0; paper, 0-472-08518-2; xv + 292 pages, photographs, notes, glossary, references, index. Cloth, US\$57.50; paper, US\$22.95.

Jeannette Mageo has written a book filled with ideas about Samoan culture, constructs of self, socialization, and historical changes. She had the rare perspective of being an insider-outsider by virtue of her marriage to a Samoan and her employment as a college teacher in Samoa. This volume appears to be three different books. The first postulates cultural elements of a Samoan self, the second a construction of elements of childhood socialization, and the third a historical reconstruction of the influences of foreign missionaries and US military on the "reconfiguring" of Samoan ideas or "discourses" of male and primarily female selves and sexuality.