

*Queen Sālote of Tonga: The Story of an Era 1900–1965*, by Elizabeth Wood-Ellem. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1999. ISBN 1-86940-205-7, xviii + 376 pages, maps, figures, photographs, illustrations, notes, glossary, bibliography, index. NZ\$69.95.

The appearance of this work is a landmark event for all those scholars interested in the historic development of modern Tongan society as well as for Tongans themselves in their seeking a systematic understanding of their own recent historic past. It is also a very good, well-crafted read, an exemplar of storytelling in the genre of narrative history.

I met Elizabeth Wood-Ellem briefly in 1974 on her arrival in Tonga and my exit from a year of dissertation fieldwork concerning the conditions of the nobility a century after Tupou I's reforms. She was in the unusual circumstance of being thoroughly familiar with Tonga through her own family past (she begins, "Queen Salote Tupou III of Tonga was the great figure of my childhood, a myth in her own lifetime . . ." ix), yet of being personally unfamiliar with what Tongan society was like in the 1970s when she was in Tonga to undertake her dissertation research (completed in 1981 with an impressive work that is the foundation for this carefully nurtured publication nearly twenty years later).

She was born in Tonga, the daughter of the Rev Dr Harold and Dr Olive Wood, important figures in the Wesleyan education system in Tonga during the 1920s and 1930s, who knew Queen Sālote well (Dr Wood gave the oration at the Queen's funeral in 1965). In reconnecting with Tonga as

a scholar, Wood-Ellem both made use of extraordinary venues of access to information and had the distanced critical eye of an outsider's inquiry. This is a carefully considered and weighed history of events and persons, produced according to the highest standards of scholarship, yet at every turn it is an intimate, empathetic account as well. Written very much from the Queen's point of view, it succeeds at being both biography and "the story of an era" as its subtitle claims. Perhaps, only in an aristocratic society that is structured by kingship from top to bottom has such an achievement of writing the history of the monarch simultaneously with that of the society been possible.

Wood-Ellem claims that her history is the fulfillment of the desire of Queen Sālote herself for a history of Tonga including her reign. It is also likely to be the fulfillment of a family legacy: Dr Wood's brief, but much used text, *History and Geography of Tonga*, was influential in giving generations of Tongans a structured sense of their early history (it was referred to authoritatively and countless times in the villages where I lived in the 1970s); this account, however it circulates, will give Tongans the same structured, but much more detailed and elaborate frame in which to reference and think about their present. It captures a history very much alive in the 1970s, but now less so in younger generations. Still, this story of Tonga in the first half of the twentieth century is no less vital for understanding a very different sort of present now unfolding.

Certainly for those scholars who have worked in and on Tonga during the reign of Tupou IV (1965–), this

volume will fill a critical gap. Especially for anthropologists, the history of Tongan modernity has been a blind spot, making it very difficult to properly temporalize their work. Even the very best contemporary ethnographic work in Tonga has constantly been contextualized and measured in terms of Tongan society at the time of Captain Cook or Tongan society in the time of Tupou I, for which excellent sources exist (for example, the writings of Elizabeth Bott, with Tavi, Noel Rutherford, Sione Lātūkefu, and H G Cummins). There was always the sense of seeing the present in Tonga in terms of its very distant past. The critical events of the reigns of Tupou II and Queen Sālote, when, as this work recounts so well, the control of the Tupou dynasty was stabilized and the history of Tonga itself was thoroughly mythologized, were a matter of bits and pieces, local stories overheard in the field.

One sensed that the contemporary culture and society of Tonga should be told in terms of this fascinating, inaccessible, and partial history, but in the absence of scholarship (which Wood-Ellem has now produced) the older history could be the only context for understanding rank, funerals, kava ceremonies, noble–commoner relations, and so on. For those of us who struggled with this partiality and inaccessibility of Tonga’s modern history, this work has provided a new screen by which to understand Tonga, at least in the 1970s and 1980s. My experience while reading this book was a series of enlightening “Aha!”s—repeatedly putting what I thought I knew, or suspected I knew, in a more certain context.

The main limitation of this work

follows from its biographical point of view. The totality of the “king machine” in Tonga tends to overdraw the homogeneity of society and the focus on the kingship. The reality of this structure in Tongan society can hardly be denied. But research in the churches, or among the various nobles, or among those who lost out in the changes that the Tupous wrought, or among the commoners in general (including the many declassified by Tupou reforms) evokes what James Scott has called the “hidden transcripts” of history. These are abundantly evident in Tonga, but until this history they could have no real context of delineation and discussion. As such this book sets the baseline for future research, placing Tonga in the stream of recent productive interactions between anthropology and history that evaluate in sophisticated detail the colonial and postcolonial histories of the places that anthropologists had treated outside modernity or even ahistorically. This work resets scholarship on Tonga by giving its culture and social processes a knowable past.

While this work is by no means indigenous history, it makes skilled and sustained use of the best of the anthropological materials and adds to them with originality. It deals forthrightly and directly with those matters that would perhaps be unspeakable (or at least unspeakable in direct discourse) in Tongan genres of narrative. It lucidly recounts the scandals, conflicts, and complex turns of dynastic history during the regime of Tupou II; it shows how tenuous was the hold of the Tupous over the chiefly factions well into the reign of Queen Sālote; and it documents the work of Queen

Sālote as mythmaker, covering over for her people, for the British, and for scholars (without prior aid of a history such as this) just what a contested feat sustaining the kingship was. Queen Sālote emerges here as a fully human figure in history, as well, uncannily, as a figure larger than history, as the paramount Polynesian chief whose mana (charisma?) challenges the craft of historical narrative. Wood-Ellem has thus managed to preserve the power of Tongan ideas within European habits of narrative.

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*American Anthropology in Micronesia: An Assessment*, edited by Robert C Kiste and Mac Marshall. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999. ISBN 0-8248-2017-7, xx + 628 pages, figures, maps, photographs, tables, notes, appendixes, bibliography, index. US\$45.

This book assesses over fifty years of American anthropology in Micronesia. In the introduction, Robert Kiste and Suzanne Falgout sketch the historical, political, intellectual, and professional contexts of American involvement as researchers, administrators, and consultants. From the postwar anthropological commitment to provide data on Micronesian social and political orders to aid the naval and succeeding civilian administrations of the United States Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, research foci change from applied to disciplinary concerns through the 1960s and thereafter. The subsequent chapters follow the introductory format in considering the administrative, politi-

cal, and local contexts of research on the one hand and the disciplinary trends that influence research agendas and the research results that influence the larger discipline on the other.

David Hanlon's chapter surveys the relationship between history and anthropology in Micronesian research from the colonialist applied focus to the micro-histories of the 1980s and 1990s to the possibilities for locally produced counter-ethnographies by Micronesians. William Alkire sees two streams in postwar research in cultural ecology and ecological anthropology—regional issues such as demographic fluctuations on small islands; the relationship between land tenure, resource use, and population; interisland exchange networks relative to resource distribution and mobility; and disciplinary issues, such as the relationship between cultural and bio-anthropological theories, the applications of system theory to understanding island populations, and so forth. Research findings have had little impact on the larger discipline.

Mac Marshall characterizes the results of kinship and social organization studies in Micronesia as a common, ever-changing set of cultural ideas that are variously combined in different communities, illustrating this in research on siblingship; kinship and descent systems; adoption and fosterage; links between kinship, land, and food; marriage practices; incest rules; and postmarital residence. Here, one sees the shift from classification to processes of constructing and maintaining relationships.

Glenn Petersen's chapter on politics in postwar Micronesia ignores the impact of research on the larger discipline, focusing on how the conditions and conduct of research reveal or