

here do not draw the connection with noninstitutional factors. Fortunately Michael Reisman's focus on human rights provides a brief corrective, and suggests why individual rights—rather than group rights—provide the kind of basis needed in most societies for recognizing diversity.

These two volumes certainly provide readers with some indication of the kind of input received by the Fiji Constitution Review Commission. But they also provide important reflections on matters of state and society that have much wider application than just Fiji or the commission. In this regard the volumes would have been much more useful had they been accompanied by an introductory article that attempted to tie together the diverse articles and indicate how they and the questions they raise were received by the commission, and how they relate to wider debates on diversity, and society–state issues.

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*An Introduction to the Anthropology of Melanesia: Culture and Tradition*, by Paul Sillitoe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. ISBN 0-521-58186-9, cloth; ISBN 0-521-58836-7, paper; xxiii + 254 pages, maps, figures, photographs, tables, index, chapter bibliographies. Cloth, US\$59.95; paper, US\$19.95.

The Melanesian region has long provided popular images in the West of primitive peoples. Paul Sillitoe uses his field research in New Guinea as a launching pad for an introductory text for the anthropology of Melanesia

and a general overview of ideas about the region. Although Melanesian cultures were never static, he asserts that many modes of being can still be discerned from the period before the rapid and dramatic changes produced through contemporary globalization. Consequently, his work documents the beliefs and practices that sustain *kastom*, not as an exercise in primitive essentialism but as part of contemporary peoples' search for sociocultural identities in a rapidly changing lived environment. Unfortunately, because Sillitoe concentrates primarily on New Guinea, the text's conceptual and geographic reach is limited. The work would also have benefited from a broader ethnographic base that clarified the transformations taking place in both local communities and contemporary anthropological thought.

Sillitoe uses the notion of "ethnographic fact" coupled with a revisionist critical perspective to shape the empirical evidence gathered by various anthropologists. Each chapter is presented in the "ethnographic present tense," not to express timeless backwardness, but as a snapshot of the community at a particular historical moment. The chapters are structured to examine topics such as objects and their exchange, agriculture and correlated social relations, nonhierarchical power relations, beliefs about ancestors, and practices perceived as magic, witchcraft, or religion. One society is used to illustrate each topic, even though it may be an element of a number of the region's societies.

The first chapter introduces Melanesia as a geographic region, details the racial variation and integration

that “resists tidy-minded regional classifications” of the people (7), and describes the linguistic differences between districts. Sillitoe then focuses on how food is acquired in the Fly estuary, relating a broad topic to the specifics that can be learned by studying a particular region. He portrays the complexity of peoples’ knowledge in relation to plants, animal life, and geographic locality. Photographs of people engaged in daily tasks using natural products add a lively humanity to his descriptions. Food acquisition is then linked to and compared with the more sedentary occupation of swidden agriculture in the Bismarck Range, enabling Sillitoe to illuminate the ways that environment interrelates with culture, and to detail how gardens and pigs are given economic and ritual importance.

In chapter 4 the Admiralty Islands situate a discussion of socialization, child-rearing, and gender relations and accentuate the most disturbing aspect of the book. Although introductory in nature the “ethnographic facts” presented reinforce masculine perceptions of male–female relations and women’s putative inferiority. Many of the suggested readings seemed outdated, and could have benefited from the appraisal of gender relations in which Sillitoe engages in chapter 9. Indeed, throughout the work a more radical evaluation of the descriptions that are presented as “factual” evidence would have strengthened the explanatory power of many of the portrayals.

Sillitoe’s theoretical discussion of formalism and substantivism is problematic in that it exemplifies his reliance on Western dualistic modes of

thinking while introducing descriptions of exchange cycles and practices in chapter 5. The intricacies of the *kula*, and debates about its role in trade in the Massim Archipelago, are elucidated. A primary focus on male *kula* exchange rather than a balanced debate about the relations and differences between women’s *lisala dabu* and male trade reflects the weakness in anthropological literature produced by many male scholars when addressing women’s work cross-culturally. For although Sillitoe refers to Annette Weiner’s *Women of Value, Men of Renown* (1976), he does not reflect her insights.

Deepening his analysis of exchange practices, Sillitoe describes sociopolitical exchange in the Southern Highlands, a term that considers “a wider class of activities and because of its novelty has the merit of some neutrality” (84). In using personal field research Sillitoe is on stronger ground. He details Wola beliefs, values, and practices in relation to pig-killing and distribution, and bridewealth. His interest then pivots to Bougainville to analyze the competitiveness generated by big-men practices, providing explanations of the position’s status, gains, and benefits. The topic dovetails into a discussion of technology in the PNG highland fringe, in which Sillitoe links the potential for nonexploitation in a relatively egalitarian economy with a Marxist analysis of modes of production.

Chapter 9 returns to the issue of gender relations to offer a balanced, intellectual discussion of Western feminists’ intervention in anthropological thought. He describes the sexual division of labor among the Melpa peo-

ples of Papua New Guinea's Western Highlands, acknowledges women's active agency as producers, and the power of women's families in maintaining cordial social interactions. His description of the resolution of intra-familial disputes is extended to an analysis of social dispute settlement in the broader Kapauku community of Western New Guinea. He examines the ways that vested self-interest is more effective than abstract justice, and how disputes are settled by kin intervention and reimbursement through goods.

Using case studies, Sillitoe describes the power relations operating within accusations of sorcery on Dobu Island, their value as social sanctions and as checks on the accumulation of power, and how sorcerers' skills are employed. Further reservations arise, for the chapter is based on "classic" references that have not engaged with contemporary reflections about how Western perceptions have shaped notions of "witchcraft" and "sorcery" in non-Western communities. A similar reservation obscures the value of the chapter that addresses warfare and cannibalism in the Balim region. The description and analysis are useful, but the lack of a critical approach, such as that taken in Barker, Hume, and Iverson's *Cannibalism and the Colonial World* (1998), which queries how cannibalism has been represented in the Western imaginary as a potent signification of "savagery," diminishes the chapter's worth as a teaching tool.

Sillitoe confronts socially tolerated violence by addressing the psychological effects and intergenerational relations of power that inscribe initiation rites on the Sepik River, and by por-

traying the torment and trauma experienced by young boys at the hands of older males. By no means presenting an abstract sketch, he uses photographs and vivid description to portray how young males are culturally transformed into violent warriors. Unfortunately his theoretical orientation is anchored in a psychosocial perspective that privileges accepted male-oriented Western perceptions.

The penultimate chapter describes how illness and death are negotiated by the Orokaiva of the northeast coast of New Guinea. Using local understandings, Sillitoe elucidates the presence of spirit forces in people's lives and how people live with them. He concludes his work with a Bogaian origin myth to illuminate the ways that narratives form people's sense of who they are within their community.

The most positive aspects of the work are its desirable focus on Melanesia and the coherent and vivid portrayals of "traditional" practices. But Sillitoe's work concentrates too narrowly on Papua New Guinea. An incorporation of contemporary work from New Caledonia, Vanuatu, and Fiji may have strengthened the work's utility as a teaching text. In comparison with Grant Evans' edited collection, *Asia's Cultural Mosaic* (1993), the work does not offer a sufficiently critical framework within which to present "classic" descriptions and theories, an approach that would have enhanced its use as a contemporary text for undergraduates as they launch into the twenty-first century.

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