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Surveying the eighteenth century in its entirety, Jacobs considers this to have been more an age of partnership between Dutch and Asians than one of confrontation. As such, the eighteenth century stood in clear contrast to the seventeenth. For the VOC in its second century, cooperation with local brokers and élites had become more of a general rule than imposed monopolies and wars. This, however, is one of the few things in the book which I find less convincing, since unequal trade conditions still prevailed in many of the arenas of VOC operation in Asia, and since there was still much war and plenty of coercion to be observed on the supply side. On this issue I would suggest that further research is as necessary as it is in the questions of corruption and private trade.

This is, as I have said, an extremely useful monograph, addressing a wide range of topics and problems. At the same time its clear structure and functional illustrations make it a very accessible publication. Hopefully in the near future the entire book, or at least its conclusions in the form of articles, will also reach international (that is, non-Dutch) audiences. Jacobs' book has a great deal to say to Asianists everywhere in the world, and as the number of Asianists capable of reading Dutch is rather limited, the results of this study should be brought to their attention in English.


TOON VAN MEIJL

This book aims at assessing the relationship between the changes in cultural diversity in Melanesia since the arrival of European colonists about a century ago, and the history of anthropological interest in those changes. It demonstrates that the mutual influences between the culture area of Melanesia and the development of the anthropological discipline are considerable. The author proceeds from the viewpoint that Melanesia is the most culturally and linguistically diverse region in the world, for which reason it occupies a special place in the understanding of cultural variation. This is reflected, among other things, in the many theoretical contributions that Melanesian studies have made to anthropological scholarship over the last century.

The largest part of the book is made up of three previously published articles in which the main research question is addressed by focusing on specific ethnographic subjects that have intrigued social anthropologists for a long time: bodily images, warfare and gender relations. Although these articles
are introduced by a new headnote in order to situate the ethnographic accounts within the context of the main argument of the book, the chapters have otherwise remained largely unchanged and are relatively separate documents. The core chapters are preceded by an introduction in which the author discusses the relevance of the concept of 'culture area' for the anthropological study of Melanesia. The final chapter provides a more reflexive approach to the interpretation of Melanesia as a world area, and analyses the development of this construction in relation to the history of theoretical orientations in anthropology.

The first ethnographic chapter documents the extraordinary variety of bodily practices and beliefs in Melanesia. It also discusses anthropological attempts to understand these practices, not only within their larger cultural and regional contexts, but also theoretically by recognizing that in Melanesia personal and even physical identities are generally shaped through social and spiritual experiences. The body in Melanesia is a multidimensional symbol that is intimately related to cycles of fertility, depletion and regeneration, including seasonal changes in the physical environment, biological changes within the individual body, and social and spiritual changes through which interpersonal relationships develop and decline. While these cycles tend to be seen as separate in the West, they are intricately interwoven in Melanesia. In consequence, the body is not considered a bounded entity in Melanesia, but an index of relationships between the self, the social and the spiritual.

While the first chapter is relatively descriptive, the second and the third deal with sophisticated debates based on an impressive corpus of ethnographic data. The second chapter provides a relatively comprehensive overview of the study of warfare in Melanesia, and relates the historical variations in the interpretation of warfare with the change of theoretical paradigms in social anthropology. Furthermore it assesses the historical influences that have shaped the anthropological perspectives in the past, such as the accounts by missionaries and colonial administrators. In early ethnography warfare was largely ignored, while the impact of violence was still underestimated in structural-functional approaches. Following the dominance of this theoretical orientation over a period of several decades, the interpretation of warfare in Melanesia has long focused on the connection between warfare and social order. Later this approach was supplemented by perspectives that emphasized ecological change and economic intensification. Knauft's critique of the study of warfare focuses on the lack of attention to the cultural foundation and the psychological dynamics of warfare and violence. It is disappointing, however, that he himself stops short of elaborating this viewpoint by neglecting to formulate specific new departure points for further development of the study and interpretation of warfare and violence in Melanesia.
The third ethnographic chapter deals with changes in gender relationships under the impact of modernity. The transformation of male prestige, female propriety and sexual identities in Melanesia is compared and contrasted with parallel developments in Amazonia. It appears that in both regions male status is increasingly dependent on the acquisition of cash and commodities, and less on corporate male activities. At the same time, women's extradomestic activities are constrained and polarized against male status, as a result of which their labour and fertility are being devalued. The comparison with Amazonia is interesting, but at the same time it remains rather basic and therefore also underexposed in relation to the Melanesian material.

In the final chapter the author pulls together the various strands of the ethnographic arguments and moves onto a more general level of discussion. He documents the relation between Melanesian studies and the history of anthropology in detail, and analyses the relationship between the region and theoretical trends in the discipline. This discussion is interesting, also for non-regional specialists, since Melanesia has been used as a laboratory for anthropological debates on cultural diversity and the possible relation between ecological adaptation, sociopolitical organization, and ethnographic themes such as bodily images, warfare, and gender relationships (but also exchange, ritual and religion). The ethnography of Melanesia, however, remains to a large extent in what Trouillot has described as the 'savage slot'. Knauft argues that this label is phrased in terms of a false dichotomy between a primitive and a postcolonial approach that fails to take into account the rapid changes in indigenous ways of life, not in the last place under the impact of globalization. He cogently advocates the standpoint that in contemporary Melanesia it is essential to take into account the mediation between tradition and modernity, especially between gifts and commodities, cults and churches, big men and elected leaders, clan connections and class relations.

It is interesting that Knauft, who holds a reputation for being an innovative theoritician, is rather critical of postcolonial approaches to Melanesia. He is concerned that current interest in the (admittedly far-reaching) influences of globalization on local lifestyles in Melanesia will be detrimental for the classic ethnographic approach of tribal dynamics. The difference between a postcolonial and a so-called 'primitive' approach is not posited only in terms of contrasting methodological perspectives. The author takes great pains to make clear that the difference also touches on epistemological disputes regarding the prime driving forces of change, internal or external. Knauft seems to assume that internal dynamics are at least as strong as exogenous forces, but he does not make this explicit at any length. As a result he leaves open too many avenues for further exploration of the main issue, and ultimately neglects to tackle the dialectical dynamics of cultural change in a sub-
stantial manner. Nevertheless, there is much of interest in this book for the general reader who wishes to familiarize himself with the fascinating field of Melanesian studies. I doubt, however, whether the theoretical reflections in this book will help to move Melanesian studies to the cutting edge of contemporary anthropology.


JENNIFER NOURSE

I do hope this superb collection of essays critiquing the usefulness of the concept 'household' as women's domain will be read by more than just regional specialists. Its theoretical claims and empirical evidence reveal the need for a more fluid approach to 'households'. The book convincing argues that private household and public work domains are neither distinct nor gendered, and that it is female agents who subtly challenge hegemonic restrictions about home and work.

In the introduction, Section I, Nolton's overview, 'Food for thought: reflections on the conference and the set-up of this book' discusses the merits of examining the household concept through 'multiple perspectives', creating a balance between ideal expectations and demands of daily life (p. 7).

Saptari's 'Women, family and household: tensions in culture and practice' offers theoretical grounding. She examines how colonial perceptions of home/work and private/public domains have influenced current state ideology and how the state imposes these private/public dichotomies onto women. Saptari suggests that women's agency, not households, should be the scholarly focus, since one 'cannot predict whether women will substantiate post-colonial (gendered) dualisms, or defy those hegemonic domains' (p. 23).

Section II, 'Dominant notions of family and household', begins with 'Colonial ambivalences: European attitudes towards the Javanese household (1900-1942)' by Locher-Scholten. She demonstrates that during the early twentieth century under Dutch colonialism it was only élite Javanese women who were expected to incorporate Dutch domestic values. The 'colonial government needed the [peasant] household as an [intact] economic unit to keep (agricultural) production going' (p. 35). Locher-Scholten concludes that the association of household with women is an historical phenomenon and should not be essentialized.

Similarly, Blackburn and Hatley's 'Representations of women's roles in