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In Colonial New Guinea: Anthropological Perspectives
(review)

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In Colonial New Guinea: Anthropological Perspectives, edited by Naomi M McPherson. ASAO Monograph Series 19. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001. ISBN 0-8229-5751-5; xiv + 247 pages, figures, maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index. US\$22.95.

Many things happened within colonial New Guinea according to those contributing to Naomi McPherson's edited collection, *In Colonial New Guinea*. "First contacts" were transformed into German, British, and Australian administrations and these were first consolidated and then replaced or reconfigured, at least partly in response to two world wars (Brown). Local people were controlled and represented—and the representations themselves changed in relationship to the kinds and degrees of control effected (Jaarsma). Anthropologists were caught up as the representers, but also as the teachers and sometimes as the consciences of the colonists (Westermarck). Filmmakers were enjoined to capture the history-in-making, especially since having a colony had become important to Australian national identity (Foster). Men were made and mates were saved as they became colonial officers and (sometimes) died gloriously for God and country (McPherson). Paternalism was melded with paranoia as indigenous peoples proved less than grateful for the progress proffered, particularly when it came in the form of a huge mine (Nash). White widows and divorcees were destabilizers of the masculinist, colonial ethos (of matey men moving steadfastly through the morass of indigenous unruliness while

trying to make fortunes along the way), somewhat because the (less-than-motherly) gals proved as shrewd and as capable of treating local people badly as the guys (Lepowsky). Episodic structures of time were conjoined with linear ones as indigenous leaders (and others) came to terms with events in their own, often recursive ways (Scaglione). And people were variously encompassed—by colonial officers, missionaries, and development experts (who rarely stayed more than three days)—becoming differently, although inevitably, locally modern (Shaw).

Each of the authors contributing to the collection (edited from papers presented at a symposium held during meetings of the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania) tells a different part of the story. And each makes clear that the part she or he tells conveys only an aspect of a colonial project that was a "complex multiplicity of historical and cultural contingencies, events, and imaginings [that] created a mosaic of colonial experiences" (McPherson, 1). Indeed, the symposium and subsequent book were meant to allow participants to explore "specific events, experiences, personalities, and perceptions that constituted the transformative nature of Australia's colonial projects in Papua New Guinea" (McPherson, 2). The most general goal, as Ogan makes clear in his afterword, was an anthropology of colonial situations: "recognizing such situations as sociocultural systems worthy of study; focusing on social relations between colonizer and colonized, with the understanding that these two categories themselves may comprise multiple agents and projects

that can be variably in cooperation or conflict; recognizing that, like all social relations, colonial situations can be a matter of negotiation rather than simple oppression; attending to emergent cultural forms; and placing all studies in a comparative historical context” (Ogan, 194).

For the most part, the book is effective. Certainly, the data presented are fascinating; the stories told, often compelling. Nonetheless, these articles remain somewhat too sketchy for my ethnographic tastes. None accomplishes a fully convincing anthropology of colonial situations. To be sure, such an accomplishment would be difficult in a short piece. After all—and as the volume implies—to be fully convincing means evidencing as well as articulating three related processes: (1) the ongoing social engagements between culturally different peoples; (2) the complex cultural understandings and misunderstandings that, sometimes, could serve the different interests of all; (3) the various manners in which the colonists (granted, a diverse bunch) did, in fact, frequently wield their greater power to serve themselves (including by propounding their ideas about development) rather than to serve the locals (diverse as well). Many of the articles successfully evidence only one—and not the range—of these processes. And (somewhat correspondingly), the articulations are simply not consistently, adequately worked through. The volume’s juxtaposition of articles undoubtedly creates a whole greater than the sum of its parts—takes us closer to an understanding of the ways social life was constituted and experienced in colonial New Guinea.

But, again, it does not take us all the way there. Hence, I cannot help but look forward to fuller versions of the articles—versions that the data, the stories, and the important topic more than warrant.

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Ethnographic Artifacts: Challenges to a Reflexive Anthropology, edited by Sjoerd R Jaarsma and Marta A Rohatynskyj. Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2000. ISBN 0-8248-2302-8; viii + 255 pages, notes, bibliography, index. Paper, US\$29.95.

Most contemporary social and cultural anthropologists are well aware of the divided character of ethnography, a practice of creating knowledge and a form of representing it that is foundational to their discipline. Being persons in-between when conducting fieldwork, strangers who also belong, they have double responsibilities when they write, as well. They must take into account the effects of publishing their findings on the communities they study and they must simultaneously address the concerns of the academic discipline to whose body of knowledge they contribute. While perhaps in the past these two sets of audiences and responsibilities could have been kept quite separate, certainly since the end of the colonial period differentials of power have shifted. As citizens of nation states, the people ethnographers study today tend to have more say and control over the parameters of ethnographic research. They also have