



Review

Reviewed Work(s): Upon a Stone Altar: A History of the Island of Pohnpei to 1890. by David Hanlon

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some ideas which anthropology might do well to take on board.

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FITZHUGH, WILLIAM W. & ARON CROWELL (eds).

Crossroads of continents: cultures of Siberia and Alaska. 360 pp., illus., maps, bibliogr. Washington, London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988. \$45.00 (cloth), \$24.95 (paper)

This publication accompanies an exhibition now circulating in the United States. It is, perhaps, the most important anthropological exhibit mounted since travelling exhibitions began in the 1960s. It is not, like many exhibitions, concerned with the art and/or material culture of a single people, or the reinterpretation of a culture. Instead it seeks to bring together and explain—archaeologically, historically and ethnographically—the peoples of the North Pacific-Bering Sea region in a single display. In particular, it concentrates on the origins of the population of the Americas, cultural influences across Bering Strait, and historic contact between Russian and United States' explorers and administrators and native peoples.

Included in the book are 36 essays about Siberia and Alaska by American, European and Soviet scholars. They vary considerably in quality; some are run-of-the-mill explanations of single societies or art styles. Many others such as Crowell on the 'Prehistory of Alaska's Pacific Coast', Arutiunov on various Siberian peoples, Holm on 'Art and culture change at the Tlingit-Eskimo border' will become standard texts. The book is illustrated with hundreds of coloured illustrations of artefacts, and superb multi-coloured maps—for instance of the summer incidence of plankton in the Arctic, and historic trade routes.

The whole project, a mammoth undertaking, started in 1977. It was organised by two archaeologists, Fitzhugh and Crowell, with their colleagues at the Smithsonian and elsewhere and with Arutiunov and his colleagues in the Soviet Academy of Sciences. It arose because of the presence of superb collections of Siberian materials in New York, and equivalent but earlier collections of Alaskan materials in Soviet museums. The New York Siberian collections were acquired at the time of the Russo-Japanese wars at the turn of the century while the Soviet collections of Alaskan ethnography were made before the sale of Alaska to the United States in 1867.

In this project the archaeological emphasis, and the art museum tradition in exhibition display, have had the effect of relegating contemporary native peoples to a minor role. The vast majority of illustrations are of historic things and not of people; the essays about contemporary life do not make sufficient visual compensation for this. There is another slight bias in the exhibition and book: non-US and non-Soviet sources are not well used. The writers were not aware of Japanese sources on Pacific travel as detailed in K. Plummer's *The shogun's reluctant ambassadors* (Tokyo,

1984), do not use the visual materials in C. Sotos's *Los pintores de la expedición de Alejandro Malaspina* (Madrid, 1982), and have not included sufficient visual material by the artist J. Webber as now published by R. Joppien and B. Smith in *The art of Captain Cook's voyages*, Vol. 3, 'The voyage of the *Resolution* and *Discovery* 1776-1780' (New Haven and London, 1988). But these are minor points in a vast and ambitious project, whose benefits extend far beyond the present book.

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HANDWERKER, W. PENN. *Women's power and social revolution: fertility transition in the West Indies* (Frontiers of Anthropology 2). 254 pp., tables, bibliogr. Newbury Park, London: Sage Publications, 1988. £35.00 (cloth), £14.95 (paper)

This book is in the series 'Frontiers of Anthropology' but it is in something of a time warp. It attempts a very materialistic theory to explain modernisation and reduced birth rates in developing countries. The goals of this process are the familiar Westernisation goals of the 1950s: depersonalisation of social relationships, egalitarian societies with religious, political and economic 'freedom', nuclear families, primacy of the conjugal relationship, and an emphasis on what parents owe their children. In this modernisation process people come to limit the number of children they have.

What drives this social change is people striving to improve their material well-being and their access to resources. Improved social and cultural patterns arise through natural selection which favours any idea or behaviour that optimises resource access for individuals, and especially for women.

There is passing reference to Alan Macfarlane's hypothesis that English individualism and capitalism had been present for centuries before people began to limit births, and that industrialisation creates inequalities, but such evidence is not reconciled with the author's claims. Elsewhere, when we read the literature on abandoned children and single parent families we wonder where that brave new world of conjugal bonding is located. The author is blissfully unaware of the ecology movement as a political force and does not doubt for a moment that more is better.

The book concludes with a case study from Barbados set out in very conventional demographic format. The fertility rate for 1950 to 1980 is examined against such variables as 1) real wages calculated by the Central Bank, 2) the proportion of the labour force employed in manufacturing, 3) the level of tourism, and 4) increasing skilled labour in the sugar industry. This section is quite devoid of any anthropological insights.

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HANLON, DAVID. *Upon a stone altar: a history of the island of Pohnpei to 1890* (Pacif. Isl. Monogr. 5).

xxviii, 320 pp., illus., maps, tables, bibliogr.
Honolulu: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 1988. \$32.00

In assembling this history the author utilises an 'Islander-oriented' approach to the documentary record—derived from the work of J.W. Davidson—and a Sahlins-inspired use of 'oral traditions that, in speaking of the island's early periods, convey many of the key values that have helped to shape Pohnpeians' involvement with their land and the larger world' (p. xvii).

The structure of chapter 1 follows local traditions and divides the past into a 'Period of building' (beginning with first settlement), which subsequently was transformed by new immigrants into the 'Period of the Saudeleurs' (marked by coercive political centralisation) that, in turn, gave way to the 'Period of the Nahmwarkis' (a restructured order of competing chiefdoms). The remainder of the book details the responses of these chiefdoms to contact with Europeans and Americans.

Chapter 2 addresses the occasional and irregular visits of early explorers (1595–1828) and the establishment of an infamous beachcombers' community (1830–1840). Chapters 3 and 4 deal with the more intensive contact that began with the arrival of traders and whalers in the 1840s and 1850s and the American Protestant missionaries in 1852. The missionaries' efforts at conversion and 'civilising' are viewed from the perspective of chiefly political manoeuvring in chapter 5. In 1886 Pohnpei was formally incorporated into the Spanish colonial empire, which both shifted action from the early contact centres of the east and south to the northern districts of the island, and increased the numbers of historical actors and the webs of interaction (chs 6 and 7). Through it all, the author concludes, the Pohnpeians and their culture have 'survived and persevered' (ch. 8).

This is first-rate history, concisely and clearly written, which succeeds in its main objective: in demonstrating that Pohnpeians were indeed primary actors in their history rather than passive victims. This reviewer can only fault some of the author's handling of oral traditions. Although he states his intention as one to identify core themes and structure, he also cites oral accounts as historical fact. J.R. Swanton and Peter Buck might have agreed with this, but neither Lowie nor Malinowski would have. B.S. Cohn has offered sound advice in this regard: 'great caution is obviously necessary as [oral] history reflects as much about present social and political structure as it does about the past and is constantly being changed to account for changing situations' (*International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* 6:444).

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MASCIE-TAYLOR, C.G.N. & A.J. BOYCE. *Human mating patterns* (Soc. Stud. hum. Biol. Symp. 28) x, 237 pp., illus., tables, bibliogr. Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988. £25.00

This book is an excellent sampler of current approaches to the study of the evolutionary

consequences of the way people choose their mates. To a lesser extent it probes the causes for the observed patterns of mate choice, providing an evolutionary, economic or ideological argument according to the author's persuasion. I hope very much that it will be read by social as well as biological anthropologists, for it demonstrates in a positive and invigorating way the extent to which this is a subject integrated if not at inception then by revelation to several of the collaborators here. It also clearly demonstrates, to those who affect still to doubt it, what a powerful tool the reductionist approach is.

The editors have gathered together a wide range of authors across the fields of evolutionary biology, human biology, medical genetics, biological, social and historical anthropology, and they have organised the material into four sections: historical and demographic studies; mate choice and assortative mating; medical and biological aspects of inbreeding; and social, cultural and religious factors. Of these sections, only the third lacks a natural coherence, with the two excellent papers on animal mating patterns (A.F. Read and P.H. Harvey) and mate choice in non-human primates (D. Quatt) not quite meshing with P. Harper and D.F. Roberts's authoritative reflection on mating patterns and genetic disease and Bittles and Makov's elegant analysis of inbreeding effects on humans.

The book begins with Macfarlane, Swedlund and Jakobi & Darlu each reviewing a particular tradition of studying mating patterns: briefly, these are respectively the English historical demographers, the American genetical demographers and, most interestingly because largely unsung in English, the French approach to genetic structure inspired by the work of Jacquard. Completing the first section is a study of inter-ethnic marriage and marriage distance by Peach and Mitchell.

Part 2 considers the extent to which people choose marriage partners who have the same characteristics as themselves. It seems to me that the authors of all three papers do not sufficiently introduce their private worlds to the general reader of this volume. That said, all the papers are substantial. Susanne & Lepage review assortative mating by phenotype, Lasker—off at a bit of a tangent, this—summarises progress in the study (which he himself ingeniously devised) of recurrent marriage of couples having the same pair of different surnames, whilst Mascie-Taylor both reviews and presents fresh data analysis on the correspondence of mates for psychometric characters.

The final part of the book is the one named as dealing with social, religious and cultural factors in the choice of mates. In fact, the entire volume explicitly confronts these topics, for, as several authors point out, among people mate choice is determined through social as much as through physical opportunity and constraint. Dyke and Rivière use genealogies from fieldwork and computer simulation to test whether the Tno, horticulturalists from Brazil and Surinam, marry as they say they should. Reynolds