The “Clothing the Pacific” project funded by the Economic and Social Sciences Research Council of the United Kingdom has its first tasty, even exotic, fruits in this collection of fascinating essays on the place of clothing in colonial and mission history in the Pacific Islands. Susanne Küchler, Director of the Project, which is based in the Department of Anthropology at University College, London, points out in her Preface (p.xi):

Clothing was one of the key visual markers of the advent of colonialism in the Pacific, and was seen by Europeans as one of the signs of the acceptance of civilization by islanders. However, the way in which foreign clothing was perceived and incorporated by islanders did not necessarily reflect these ideas, but involved the investment of indigenous preoccupations into new materials.

The evidence of how clothing figures in the negotiation of Polynesian and Melanesian identities, sometimes through processes of accommodation and adaptation, sometimes through episodes of resistance and rejection, is brought together within a unique source text. *Clothing the Pacific* adds immeasurably to knowledge of the multiple histories of cloth and clothing. Chloë Colchester writes in her Introduction (p.1): “[D]ress has become a focal point of cultural debate in the islands” (p.1). Indeed, she points out that “[b]oth in the islands and in the Pacific diaspora, dress has become a focal point of conflicting values” (p.3). In the Pacific context, as these stylish contributions demonstrate, the clash of civilisations plays out through cloth/ing with vim and vigour.

The dress wars of religion are amply displayed in this region of the world. The lament of Attwater, Robert Louis Stevenson’s character in *The Ebb-Tide* (quoted by Colchester, p.2), that “clothes are not Christianity” may be exact formal theology, but as an insight into the ubiquity of sartorial expressions of religious conflict bubbling away in the South Seas, it lacks historical and sociological sensitivity. Colchester’s probing analysis of the interplays and time-lags between the dress traditions of hard-pressed indigenous peoples, hard-nosed missionary evangelicals and (just as zealous) hard-edged secular fashionistas, is a trenchant rebuttal of “the unease with which any interest in clothing is so often greeted, as if it diminished the gravity of human affairs” (p.2). On the contrary, redemption, that search for a privileged place in the
order of things, and conversion, the business of negotiating “between cultures”, spin out in cloth terms at every turn. Dress figures prominently in Pacific expressions of the perennial tensions between other-worldly and this-worldly fashions in faiths.

What characterises the present era of this relentless sartorial drama is its self-consciousness, indeed, its overt politicisation. Colchester comments (pp.4-5):

As Pacific diaspora communities have become entrenched in Auckland, Wellington, Sydney and Los Angeles, the politics of dress has started to come to the fore. The 1990s witnessed the emergence of Pacific fashion activists … conscious of precisely the issues of globalization, identity and postcolonialism that are now of concern to anthropologists.

The native voice comes across loud and proud in this volume in contexts as diverse as religious ritual, political action, domestic settings, festival gatherings, performance art and tourism. The flow and counter-flow of sartorial power and influence between metropole and periphery is evidenced here with an abundance of considered examples and apt illustrations (some 62 in all), a number of which are hilarious (see Figure 1.3 “Then and Now”, p.3), astonishing (see Figure 2.2 “A young woman of Otaheite, bringing a present”, p.65), breathtaking (see Figure 5.4 “A woman from Erromango”, p.124), poignant (see Figure 5.5 “Presbyterian converts from Epi and Paama clothed in Sunday best”, p.130) and, fittingly, “in your face” rebellious (see Figure 7.10 “T-shirt design by Siliga Setogo for Popo Hardware”, p.188).

Lissant Bolton’s exposure of the “gendered” conversion process whereby imported “all-concealing tent-like cotton pinafores” (p.1) became the “Mother Hubbards” (“not a term used for European women’s clothing”, p.129) of Vanuatu, Fiji and Hawaii addresses examples of imperial “flow”. Rossana Raymond’s visual essay on her experience, as an international model, of “a renaissance of Pacific culture” (p.193) provides illustrations of “counter-flow”. See, for instance, the illustration “G’nang G’near” (on p.196 and the front cover) showing how the Pacific gay scene turns its “patchwork” multiculturalism to sartorial political advantage. Alain Barbadzan’s “methodological gamble” (p.25) with the material remains of pre-invasion religious effigies such as the Tahitian To’o (“feathered gods”, p.26), breathes a second life into vital components of culture too readily disposed of in mausoleums dedicated to the sins of appropriation of anthropological ancestors—museums. The forensic investigation by Nicholas Thomas of the “social life” of barkcloth (tapa) and the “migrant” (p.84f) Polynesian poncho (tiputa) demonstrates how Oceanic materials are actively interwoven with indigenous spiritualities. Küchler’s intricate appreciation of the polyvalent appliquéd quilts (tiavaeae, tifaifai and kappa lau) of the Cook Islands attests to “another type of economy” (p.115).

Ping-Ann Addo makes a compelling case for comprehending Tongan textiles as denizens of “two kingdoms”: “Christianity and the Tongan way of life” (p.141). Serge Tcherkézoff’s insights into “the social manipulation of cloth” (p.51) draw us into a rich Polynesian lexicon and dense labyrinth of moral negotiation appertaining to native dressways as these undergo colonial contact, contagion and, at points, corruption. At the same moment, “locals” were no slouches in exploiting the political, economic,
ceremonial and, one suspects, comedic possibilities invested in their dressways and that
ever-provocative “other”, “nudity” (whole or in part). Had Captains Cook and Bligh,
countless sailors, tourists, missionaries and, no doubt, the occasional anthropologist
had the advantage of Tcherkézoff’s hermeneutics of Samoan and Tahitian dancing
un/dressed bodies (“only naked from the European point of view”, p.71), who knows,
histories of empires and sexualities may have been otherwise.

Clothing the Pacific is a must-read for specialists in the lively field of dress and
fashion studies and a good read for the general reader. Future volumes from the project
team are anticipated with relish.

Lal, Brij V. and Kate Fortune: The Pacific Islands: An Encyclopedia. Honolulu:
University of Hawai‘i Press, 2000. xxxvi + 664 pp., CD, figs, index, maps, photos.
Price: US$115.00 (cloth).

THEGN LADEFOGED
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The Pacific Islands: An Encyclopedia is a comprehensive synthesis that aims
to understand the “variety and complexity” of Pacific islands “through a range of
perspectives” (p.xv). In their preface, editors Brij Lal and Kate Fortune are explicit
about adopting “flexibility and inclusiveness as operational principles in commissioning
contributions”. They reject the notion that there are objective, verifiable facts about
Pacific Islands and accept the subjective nature of knowledge with “shaded meanings”
(p.xxx). Indeed, with 200 contributing authors, one is presented with a diverse array
of perspectives. Ultimately, this approach leads to a full volume that is internally
contradictory and repetitive in places, but nonetheless authoritative and successful
in presenting a vivid picture of the people and places of the Pacific.

The volume is organised into eight broad subjects: Physical Environment, Peoples,
History, Politics, Economy, Society, Culture and Island Profiles. The “Physical
Environment” section opens with a sub-section about the sea. This sub-section begins
with a brief description of the Oceanic environment, but it then proceeds to some
rather specific details about molluscs, dugongs, and other animals, before finishing
with descriptions of ocean trenches and the Minerva Reefs. The mishmash of topics
within this first 18 page sub-section is indicative of the entire volume; clearly this
is an encyclopaedia with individual entries as opposed to a coherently organised
narrative. The “Physical Environment” section does provide a good overview of the
region, with comprehensive coverage of Pacific Island geology, climate and natural
phenomena. While the descriptions in these sub-sections are excellent, there are few
maps and this often makes it difficult to grasp the text fully.

The “Peoples” section of the volume includes a good sub-section on the settlement
of the Pacific, with an overview by Peter Bellwood and a section on Lapita by Matthew
Spriggs. The other sub-section entries are the “Settlement of New Guinea”, “Settlement
of the eastern Pacific” and “Settlement of the northern Pacific”. The logic behind dividing the settlement of the Pacific into these headings is not entirely clear, and this is nowhere more apparent than when we read about the settlement of Hawai`i within the section on the northern Pacific. In this instance there seems to be a strict adherence to geography as opposed to historical process. The “Peoples” section includes a fairly detailed account of the region’s languages and linguistic relationships, shorter sub-sections on voyaging and demography, a comprehensive sub-section on Pacific diaspora, and a sub-section with brief descriptions of the major urban centres.

The “History” section starts with a sub-section called “Histories in the Pacific” in which there is a sub-sub-section called “Genealogies”. Within this sub-sub-section there are five entries, including discussions on Nan Madol, Lelu Ruins, Ha’amonga-a-Maui, Hawaiian heiau, and “Who carved the statues of Easter Island?”. Why these somewhat unrelated topics are grouped under the heading of “Genealogies” is unclear, a situation that is prevalent in many other sections of the book. Things do become organisationally clearer in subsequent sub-sections of the “History” section, although, for example, under the “Traditional rulers” sub-sub-sub-section of the “Indigenous chiefly systems, titles and trade” sub-sub-section, we jump from Tahitian rulers to Hawaiian rulers, back to Tahitian rulers, to a Tongan ruler, back to a Tahitian ruler, to a Hawaiian ruler, and on and on. The organisation of the entries about individual leaders is chronological and many of them are written by different authors, the result being a very disjointed depiction of a sample of Pacific Island leaders from the early European contact era. Within the remainder of the “History” section there is very good coverage of early European visitors, and discussions of changing religious beliefs, trends in trade and labour, land tenure and alienation, colonial rule, the Second World War and post-war Pacific.

The “Politics” section begins with a brief overview of politics in the Pacific and then proceeds to 60 short biographies of recent political leaders. Following this is a very interesting sub-section on protest movements, with 14 case-study entries ranging from the quest for Hawaiian sovereignty over the past 100 years to pro-democracy movements in Tonga. There is an interesting sub-section on the Pacific in relation to the rest of the world, with discussions about how various colonial powers have used and abused their powers. Within this sub-section is a discussion of New Zealand in relation to the rest of the Pacific, a categorisation which tends to distinguish New Zealand from other Pacific Islands, a trend apparent throughout the volume. Indeed, New Zealand is an obvious omission from the “Island Profiles” section of the book, again reinforcing the erroneous notion that New Zealand might not be considered a Pacific Island.

The “Economy” section includes entries on agriculture, fishing, forestry and mining, a short section on labour relations, and a section on financial and economic development. The entries are factual and succinct, providing a limited introduction to a selection of Pacific economic activities. Sections Six and Seven of the volume cover “Society” and “Culture”. In the “Society” section the “Gender” and “Family Relationships” entries provide good overviews, whereas the “Social Order”, “Education” and “Health” entries seem quite particularistic. Within the “Culture” section there are subsections on “Culture and Identity”, “Performance”, “Pacific Arts”
and “Literature”. The 50-odd individual biographies of Pacific writers are informative, and the “Culture” section as a whole leaves one with a sense of rich creative activity in the Pacific. The final section of the volume includes individual “Island Profiles”, with some 37 individual entries ranging in geographic scale from single islands (e.g., Rotuma) to multiple archipelagos (e.g., Federated States of Micronesia).

As an encyclopaedia the volume successfully balances the competing objectives of presenting detailed and particularistic accounts versus comprehensive and general overviews. It is a standard reference that readers will often be able to dip into for specific information or a general understanding of a topic. There are some significant omissions, but in general it is well-balanced. While the organisation of the volume is at times a bit confusing and there are internal contradictions, the production values are good and the volume is a valuable resource.


MICHAEL GODDARD
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Bomana Goal is Papua New Guinea’s largest prison, situated just outside the nation’s capital, Port Moresby. The author conducted 14 months of fieldwork there in 1994 and 1995. During this period he lived with a Dominican community at the Bomana Catholic Seminary, a few minutes’ walk from the prison. The seminary would have been a fascinating fieldwork site in itself, and I think I would have preferred participatory observations from a year or so there to the prison ethnography presented in this book. I had been curious to read it, having some familiarity with Bomana since the early 1970s, when it was still a colonial institution—I have acquaintances who have spent time in the gaol, and I conducted some research interviews there in the early 1990s. Yet, despite the citing of a reasonable body of ethnographies of PNG intending to contextualise the experiences and responses of inmates and the author’s designation of Bomana as a “postcolonial” prison, its representation in this book failed to evoke for me the gaol just outside Port Moresby that I know. Nor did the sprinkling of Pidgin, some engaging local cartoons as illustrations and some historical material manage to convey the particularity of this prison.

Reed is an excellent writer, and the attraction of the book for some readers will undoubtedly lie in his descriptive skill and the accessibility of his analytic sections. His touchstones in the latter respect are Foucault (although he is not an uncritical disciple) and the post-1980 Marilyn Strathern. His working material is mostly the discourse of inmates, as they relate their pasts, talk of life in prison, speculate and reflect on the social life from which they are excluded, write poems and songs, negotiate their Christianity, and so on. The book, he tells us, examines the “series of negations that prisoners characterise as the principle of their penal lives” (p.4), and Bomana is a site
of “radical perspectives” (p.4). By the end of the book, I had not discovered the latter. The author is seduced by the discourse he represents; so much so that he embraces it and joins his own discursive art to it to the extent that at times it is difficult to tell where the inmates’ representation of their experience ends and the author’s lyrical interpretation begins. Here and there it reads almost like a novel.

As a result, perhaps, of Reed’s literary facility, Bomana may be oddly familiar to readers with no knowledge of Papua New Guinea. The modern Western prison has been depicted often enough in books and movies that a stereotype has emerged. It is a closed environment, in which we have come to expect ambivalent relations between inmates and warders, the playing out of power relations among inmates, a preoccupation with unavailable heterosexuality expressed through compensatory homosexuality and onanism, mixed reflections on the comforts and discomforts of kinship relations, and sequestration’s effects on experiences of time and space. We encounter all the above in this book. While it is intended as an ethnography of a postcolonial PNG prison, it is rather like a docu-drama of a Western prison in which the staff and prisoners are Melanesian.

The prison is on the outskirts of Port Moresby, and needs to be contextualised especially in the social and cultural life of Port Moresby, even though many inmates come from other parts of PNG. Herein lies the basic anthropological inadequacy of the book. The author’s knowledge of Port Moresby reflects (for me, at least) a mainly expatriate view and, despite his exegetical recourse to Melanesianist ethnographic literature, he seems uninformed about the indigenous social world from which many of Bomana’s inmates come. They talk to him, for example, about urban criminals (raskals) and their activities, and of people’s fear of them. But the author reflects European and perhaps indigenous elite, rather than more common, local responses, when he represents city-dwellers as locking themselves away at night in fear of raskals who roam the dark streets, and taking some comfort from social-scientific explanations of “raskalism” (pp.74-75). Violent thieves are indeed a common concern, and many of them think of themselves as owning the streets after dark. But the byways of the city beyond the security fences have far more nocturnal “street life” than Reed’s stereotype allows for, and its ordinary citizens have no need of social scientific explanations of raskal behaviour.

Other passages also disclose a need for more local knowledge. For example, on being told by a prisoner that the latter considered himself a “cowboy”, and noting prisoners’ references to movie cowboys, Reed offers a discussion of the cowboy as an American outlaw (pp.60-65), perhaps unaware of a ludic tradition of “kauboi” in Port Moresby going back to the 1960s, whose satirical imagery was engendered by the direct experience of colonialism, and which has gone through its own transformations in the hands of a succession of characters in wide-brimmed hats. While there is no harm in linking the discursive imagery of prisoners to American reflections on outlaw figures and the opposing forces of civilisation and wilderness (p.61), there is surely deeper analytic potential in examining it in relation to local history.

Bomana has not only become a distinctly Papua New Guinean prison over the past few decades, but it is also different from other gaols and lock-ups around the country, by virtue of its relationship to Port Moresby and its involvement in the
city’s history. Anthropologically, this is significant to any social-scientific study of the prison. In relying so heavily on the discourse of inmates, Reed has described and analysed the experiences of being in a prison, perhaps a “postcolonial” prison, but I do not think he has captured the experience of being in this particular prison as well as he might have.


LYN CARTER  
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Christine Tremewan’s *Traditional Stories from Southern New Zealand* has brought together a major collection of Māori narratives, which provide an insight into the traditions and Māori dialect of the southern region of New Zealand. The book was developed from Tremewan’s Ph.D. thesis which was completed at Canterbury University in 1992. The thesis was a thorough study of Māori language use in 19th century oral traditions collected by the Reverend Wohlers during the years that he lived and worked on Ruapuke Island. It also included detailed comparisons of the motifs characteristic of Māori narratives and their earlier Polynesian counterparts. While Tremewan still explains and compares the scope and significance of the shared traditions, in *Traditional Stories* she provides a readable general text for a non-academic audience. That said, however, the book is still useful for teaching because of the informative commentaries that accompany each story and of the overall structure of the book.

The book begins with a general introduction to Murihiku, the southern region of New Zealand, and its peoples, Kati Mamoe, Waitaha and Kai Tahu. The introduction contains information about Māori storytellers and about the German missionary Reverend Wohlers to whom they told their stories. Wohlers arrived on Ruapuke Island in 1844 and set about learning and studying the local language in order to further his work. He eventually developed an interest in the many stories and other oral traditions from the region. Tremewan notes that Wohlers may have had more than a scientific interest in recording traditions, because he managed to incorporate a depth and richness in his transcriptions which indicated “sensitivity to the poetic elements of the stories” (p. xiii). Further sections in the Introduction trace the evolution of ideas within the common motifs that are to be found throughout the southern stories, their northern counterparts and wider Polynesian communities. Tremewan also includes a section outlining the history of the Wohlers collection, which is divided between archives in Wellington, Auckland and Dunedin. Several of the narratives had been published in the *Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute*, which proved a valuable resource for Tremewan during her research. This last section of the
Introduction, “Notes on this edition”, contains an explanation as to how Tremewan dealt with each of manuscripts, particularly when there were omissions in the three main collections. For example, she explains that because no copy of “Ko Tinirau” was found she was able to use a version published by John White together with a version found in the Transactions for further assistance.

Tremewan has taken 18 narratives from Wohlers’ collection, and each is dealt with in its own chapter. It is through the structure of these chapters that the true value of the collection becomes evident. Each chapter is introduced with a summary in English of the main themes in the story. The narrative is first transcribed in a way that is faithful to the original manuscript. Some minor editing has been done in order to improve grammar. Macrons have also been added to indicate vowel length. Some of the punctuation has also been modified, but Tremewan has retained spelling as it appeared in the original manuscript and has avoided using more accepted usage. She gives the example of the word tutai that is more commonly spelled tutae (p.xxii). She stated that her aim was to “preserve possible examples of southern dialect rather than correct them to North Island form” (p.xxii).

The transcription is followed by a full translation of each narrative. Tremewan’s interpretations of the narratives have been sensitively addressed, and the notes that further explain her methods are easy to follow and understand. There are always going to be different interpretations of parts of the translations, particularly from members of Kati Mamoe who may understand differently the significance of some details. Tremewan has justified her translation decisions with detailed explanations of her conventions and editorial changes. Her interpretations are consistent with her overall aim of providing “straightforward, close English translation of the narratives” (p.xxi).

The commentary following each translation is valuable for the way Tremewan links the recurring motifs. It provides the reader with a sense of the regional diversity in the narratives, hinting too at the diversity among hapu and iwi groups as opposed to a generic “Māori” people. The story “Ko Tinirau” (p.122) is a good example. In this, as in other narratives, each of the versions offers names and place names that are geographically and whakapapa-specific. Likewise, the section entitled “Island Polynesia” further illustrates the pattern of ideas, values and knowledge that links Aotearoa New Zealand with its Polynesian neighbours. The story “Ko Waitiri” (p.164-92) is a good example of how representative the stories are of the early links between New Zealand Māori and their Polynesian cousins. Tremewan comments that the Waitiri myth is so widespread in Polynesia that she is only able give an idea of “their number and distribution” rather than detail all the regional versions as she does with other narratives (p.190).

A mention should also be made of the nine illustrations and three maps that are spread throughout the volume. These add to the universal nature of the work and help to broaden the appeal beyond academic-only interest. They add a visual dimension to the commentaries by providing readers with examples of some of the characters and entities contained in the stories. In a preliterate Māori past, the recitation of oral traditions relied very much on being able to create pictures and images with words
and formulaic expressions characteristic to the different oral genre. The drawings are a worthwhile addition because they provide images that may be less familiar to non-New Zealand readers.

Tremewan has kept very close to her stated purpose for the overall work of making the narratives from Murihiku accessible to the modern reader. She has also introduced the reader to linguistic aspects of a study of Māori oral genre. She explains clearly and with authority the beauty and complexity of the southern Māori language and how it has been used in each of the 18 narratives. The book’s value lies not only in its welcome addition to writings on Māori oral genre, but also in allowing the stories written down so long ago to now have a voice and once again be heard.