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This multi-authored volume reports on recent archaeological excavations on Mangareva, carried out in 2001 and 2003. At a conference on Mo'orea in 2000, Mangareva was identified as a significant gap in the East Polynesian archaeological record for two main reasons: it was a likely point of origin for the colonisation of Easter Island, and geochemical sourcing of basalts indicated that Mangareva was central in a long-distance interaction sphere that reached from Pitcairn to the Marquesas. Consequently, investigations were carried out by archaeologists from the Australian National University, the University of California at Berkeley, Université de Polynésie Française and the University of Otago.

Chapter 1 (by Kirch and Conte) provides the background to the project, with a brief overview of the history of research and some relevant issues in East Polynesian archaeology: chronology, particularly the relative timing of colonisation in various archipelagos; variation in ancestral Eastern Polynesian societies, building on the phylogenetic model of Kirch and Green; patterns of landscape evolution, acknowledging the growing recognition that environment and society interact dynamically, which is acutely relevant in the constrained Mangarevan environment; long-distance interaction, particularly voyaging capabilities and the nature of inter-archipelago exchange; and economic and social change, seeking to understand how the stratified society described ethnographically on Mangareva evolved in such a resource-poor environment. All of these issues, of course, are closely interrelated. The chapter ends with a summary of previous archaeological work, of which there is not a great deal, and a research strategy.

In Chapter 2, Kirch provides a more detailed environmental and ethnographic background. Unlike the lagoon and reef, the land was never rich and it had been much degraded by the time of European contact. Traditional society is poorly known following wholesale social, subsistence and settlement changes initiated by 19th century missionaries. Enough has survived or been credibly reconstructed, however, to provide a sound context for the archaeology. It is clear that constant warfare was the direct result of scarce resources.

Chapter 3 (by Conte, Kirch, Weisler and Anderson) describes the archaeological investigations. This volume is very much a progress report, with the two seasons of work representing a programme of extensive survey and test-pitting. Despite reports by Kenneth Emory in the 1930s that all major sites had been destroyed in missionary
times, a number of remnant *marae* and *paepae* were recorded on several of the islands. Coring transects located extensive subsurface cultural levels, and small test excavations revealed these in greater detail, providing datable samples and guiding the selection of areas for more detailed investigation and excavation during planned future field seasons.

Kirch, Coil, Weisler, Conte and Anderson, in Chapter 4, present the analysis of 24 radiocarbon dates. Dating of first occupations in Oceania inevitably seems to attract controversy. This is bound to be the case here, especially since the authors propose that Mangareva was a source of Easter Island colonisation, for which some remarkably early dates are still accepted. The dates demonstrate an 800-year prehistoric occupation, not long enough to support an early colonisation of Easter Island from Mangareva, but consistent with accepted occupation spans from elsewhere in East Polynesia. It is a pity that the oldest date obtained, cal A.D. 945–1030, has been arrived at through some special pleading—basically guessing $\Delta R$ values, as well as the diet of the bird whose bone was dated—which would not stand up to the scrutiny of chronometric hygiene that one of the chapter’s authors has previously championed. Clearly, a programme of careful dating should be a priority for future work.

Chapters 5 and 6 describe the analysis of faunal assemblages (by Howard and Kirch) and avifaunal assemblages (by Worthy and Tennyson), respectively. Fauna analysed include marine molluscs, land snails, terrestrial vertebrates, fish and birds. Pig and dog were recovered, though both were exterminated in late prehistory. Land snails are of particular interest as nearly all endemic taxa have become extinct since colonisation, presumably through a wider environmental crisis whose causes and timing could be better understood through land snail analysis, presumably a focus of future research. As one would expect, given the marine focus of subsistence, fish dominate the bone assemblages, though there is no evidence from either fish or marine molluscs of decreasing size or increasing stress on marine resources over time.

The majority of bird bones, including those of extinct species, came from Layer III at the Onemea site. This is the same layer that yielded the early date described above. It would normally be expected that bird extinctions, especially on a place like Mangareva with its limited land area, would occur within a generation or two of initial settlement, so Onemea could be presumed to represent this time period. Unfortunately the dating so far is inconclusive at best.

Chapter 7 (by Weisler, Conte and Kirch) describes the excavated artefactual assemblages, including fishhooks, needles and awls, coral files, pounders and flakes. A more complete analysis of adzes is undertaken, including five collected during fieldwork and a further 31 in local private collections. Importantly, Mangareva’s place within a wider interaction sphere is confirmed through the geochemical sourcing of basalt adzes and flakes, with material derived from Eiao in the Marquesas and Tautama on Pitcairn.

Chapter 8 (by Kirch and Conte) concludes with an outline of proposed future research. They seek to “reconstruct the *longue durée* of Mangarevan society” (p.156) through a multidisciplinary study examining, in particular, environmental change and relating it to socio-political change.
Volumes of this kind essentially stand or fall on two counts: initially on the clarity of the presentation of the data; but most importantly on the strength of the concluding chapter and its contribution to the wider discipline—this is the part of the book most likely to be widely read, after all. In terms of the data this volume cannot be faulted, though few but writers of book reviews might feel obliged to read it in such detail. On the second count, remembering that it is an interim report, it also succeeds. The project has achieved its objective of expanding the recorded site inventory. It has clarified, though perhaps not definitively, the date of first settlement and the cultural sequence. It has made further contributions to the growing understanding of post-settlement long-distance contact and exchange. And it has added to our understanding of dynamic human-environment interactions in Polynesia. I was particularly intrigued by the last of these contributions, with the suggestion that the drastic depopulation of seabirds soon after settlement disrupted the terrestrial nutrient cycle, with phosphorus and nitrogen from guano no longer available, further depressing terrestrial resources. Islands, while no longer considered to be laboratories for testing neo-evolutionary hypotheses, are coming back into favour as testing grounds for modelling complex processes, since on islands these are often simpler in their operation while intensified in their effects. Unique societies and environments like Mangareva may have much to say.


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This book provides a great deal of detail about changing political circumstances during the 1990s in Papua New Guinea, as well as the changing requirements and expectations of the World Bank and other donor institutions in relation to forest policy as an aspect of loan conditionality. It has been a number of years since this book was published, so the question arises as to whether it is still of relevance. Certainly the topic of forest policy and the role of national and multinational agencies in its formulation is still of great political importance in Papua New Guinea, as it is in other parts of Melanesia. Also, the various stakeholders vying for influence seem to be much the same through time, although their degrees of influence have fluctuated. This book provides a detailed account of the interests and actions, over the decade, of the primary stakeholders in forest policy, namely the World Bank (and to a lesser extent other aid donors), four different Papua New Guinea governments, logging companies, resource owners (and their putative representatives) and environmental non-government organisations. There is little doubt that the interplay of the same stakeholders is significant to the present.
The book is structured chronologically, considering the dynamics of forest policy under each consecutive government. It starts with a chapter on the World Bank’s stake in forest policy reform in the critical period of 1989 to 1994. This period was critical because the closure of the Panguna mine in Bougainville resulted in much decreased Government revenues and a fiscal crisis for the PNG Government, which led in turn to the negotiation of a structural adjustment loan from the World Bank in 1990. One of the conditions which the World Bank attached to this and subsequent loans was reform of forestry policy that was seen to be weak in relation to the powerful logging companies operating within the country. Second, the Barnett Commission of Inquiry uncovered evidence of widespread corruption in forestry, and this provided the impetus for a new Forestry Act, which was gazetted in 1992. The election of the Wingti government in that year resulted in the appointment of a crusading Minister of Forests who clamped down on logging permits and increased regulation under the Act.

The Wingti government was displaced by the government of Julius Chan in 1994, and the three-year span of this government was characterised as a test of political wills between the PNG Government and the World Bank’s programme of reform. The Economic Recovery Program supported by the Bank was conceived as a series of short-term measures to promote macroeconomic and structural stability, and one of these was strengthened natural resource management. There was an outcry by students and NGOs against a proposal for land reform, and this condition was abandoned. Further, divisions within the Chan government and the assertion of “resource owners rights” resulted in only fragmented implementation of forestry policy.

When the Skate government came to power in 1997, the forestry objectives of the World Bank were focused within the Forestry and Conservation Project (FCP), which had the central objective of strengthening government capacity to promote conservation and regulate logging through a Logging Code of Practice, an Environmental Protection Authority and a Conservation Trust Fund. The struggle between various stakeholders became intense in this period, with the Forest Industries Association (representing loggers) accusing the World Bank of painting the forestry industry as bully boys in order to get other stakeholders, such as the NGOs representing civil society, on the side of the Bank’s programme. The Skate government oscillated between different policies, and in the 1999 Budget provided tax relief to the log export industry. This stand alienated the World Bank, despite the Government’s implementation of some elements of its structural adjustment programme. This chapter has a great deal of detail about the characteristics of the FCP, and the conditions imposed on this part of the Bank’s loan.

In 1999 the election of the new Prime Minister, Mekere Morauta, gave the appearance of more stable government, and this was an image that the Australian government marketed within the donor community. The World Bank used this opportunity to allow the new government to promote the merits of restructuring rather than risk the anti-restructuring outcry of 1995. Also, forestry became less central in the range of conditions promoted by the World Bank, with fiscal management, transparency and accountability becoming central concerns. A moratorium on new logging licenses promoted by the bank was agreed to in principle, but was never effectively implemented.
In the concluding chapter, the author states, “The most predictable feature of PNG politics is the probability that a new government will present a new policy face to the Bank on two occasions in each period of five years between national elections…” (p.116), and an assessment of this statement is perhaps a test of the enduring value of this study of the relationship of the PNG Government and World Bank through the 1990s. There is not enough room here to review fully subsequent developments, but there is little doubt that struggles between the various stakeholders have continued unabated since the election of the Somare government in 2002. Perhaps symptomatic of the ongoing struggle of political wills between the PNG Government and the World Bank was the jointly-announced termination of the Forestry and Conservation Project in May 2005, after nearly two years of unsuccessful negotiations.

In conclusion, this book is a useful national case study typifying global struggles on various environmental issues, revealing the multiple interactions of not only government and multilateral institutions, but also the role of other stakeholders. There is a great deal of detail on political events, loan conditions and so on, so this book is not an easy read, but it is certainly a useful reference source.


MEREDITH FILIHIA
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One of the keys to understanding a culture is to be fluent in its language and all its nuances. To be culturally aware means to be able to pick up subtle differences in meaning indicated by certain inflections in words or, as in Tongan, to understand that the use of a particular word does not always simply mean what it appears to be saying.

In Tongan, such a linguistic device is called heliaki. It is frequently used in oratory, poetry and songs, where particular birds, flowers and places can be used to refer indirectly to the king and nobility. For example, the monarch could be referred to as the sun; the Tu’i Tonga, the former paramount chief and spiritual leader in Tongan society, might be called to mind by reference to the tavake toto, a seabird.

However, in the Reed book of Tongan Proverbs: Ko e Tohi ‘a e Reed ki he Lea Tonga Heliaki, ‘Okusitino Māhina explores the use of heliaki in everyday social intercourse. A necessary aspect of his work is a discussion of how the Tongan language has changed over time in response to both internal and external influences. He also discusses the difficulty of translating languages that originated in two such diverse social settings as Tonga and Western society.

According to Māhina, “Tongan language is strictly poetical, which is in complete contrast to the English language, which is predominantly scientific” (p.25). Whilst this statement is arguable, there are a number of problems when trying to translate Tongan
poetry into English, especially when attempting to maintain rhyming structures. This is also true when translating proverbs, some of which rely on rhyme and rhythm to make their pithy points. By way of illustration: “Pelepele pea mele” (referring, for example, to a spoilt child who becomes a source of humiliation) loses much of its impact when translated as “A favourite who turns bad” (p.81). This is what Mähina refers to as “time-space conflicts between languages—i.e., the resolutions of tensions arising from the forms and content of the languages. These are brought about because languages, like cultures... are different from one another” (p.23).

As a native speaker of Tongan, Mähina has grown up hearing these proverbs in regular use. He states that his initial interest in the Tongan language began when he was a high school student, and he pursued his studies of language, poetry, music and dance at ‘Atenisi High School, and later at ‘Atenisi University under the tuition of Professor Futa Helu and the poet laureate Malukava, among others. Many of the proverbs and their meanings were collected and discussed at informal kava parties.

Mähina has collected more than 600 proverbs, and his work is thus easily the most comprehensive of its kind. Each proverb is presented in Tongan with an English translation, and the meaning is then explained in both languages. Many of the proverbs come from two sports that were favourites in Tongan society in the past, namely heulupe (pigeon snaring) and lafo, a game that was played with discs on a mat. The abundance of proverbs originating from these pursuits shows the close relationship between society and the language that facilitates communication amongst its members. It also shows the persistence of the metaphors in that, even though these once common games are no longer widely played, the proverbs are still used and their meanings are comprehended. Not all the sayings listed would be considered to be proverbs by English speakers; some would be interpreted as metaphors and others as idioms. But Mähina is correct in stating that the collected sayings draw their significance from the way in which they symbolise something other than the words at their face value.

The proverbs have been arranged under alphabetically-listed topic headings, which is generally useful, but on occasion can lead the reader astray. One of these is the heading “Anorexia” (p.41), which refers to a highly-specific eating disorder, when later in the book the more general and more appropriate heading of “Thinness” is used (p.189). In some cases, proverbs have been put under headings that seem to suggest the opposite of what the proverb is saying. For example, under the heading ‘Compatibility’ (p.56) the proverb “Living together like basalt rocks and husked coconuts” is listed, with the explanation that this is a proverb that refers to the weak (the husked coconuts) always being crushed by the strong (the basalt rocks) when they are placed together.

These things aside, the book is valuable because of the way it shows the richness of imagery in the Tongan language as well as the changes that have become evident as a result of contact with the outside world. The book is a useful resource for studying many aspects of Tongan society, culture and history. Some proverbs have been introduced as a result of Tonga’s contact with its nearby neighbours, such as “Hiki lepo”, a reference to a story that features a Fijian demi-god and the launching of a particular canoe at the island of ‘Uvea (p.42). Others are drawn from Tonga’s ongoing contact with Westerners. Reflecting Tonga’s progression in history, there
are proverbs that refer indirectly to the Tongans’ relationships with their missionary teachers, while others talk about introduced products such as iron. The inventions and pastimes of the modern world are also mentioned in sayings such as “Pisi pisi pumu” (p.134); the explanation being that this is a reference to the “pish pish boom” sound of souped-up cars and their hi-fis, popular among boy racers in Nuku’alofa. Some explanation about the basis on which proverbs or sayings have been included would have been useful. This last saying seems to rely far less on the concept of heliaki, meaning something other than the words that are spoken, than do most of the other proverbs in the book.

The collected proverbs give an insight into Tongan astronomy, mythology and legends, history, geography, social structure, prejudices and humour. Above all, the book shows the richness of Tongan language, as well as its strength and persistence in the face of the ever-increasing invasiveness of English. There is no doubt that The Reed Book of Tongan Proverbs: Ko e Tohi ‘a e Reed ki he Lea Tonga Heliaki is a significant contribution to the study of Tongan culture and language, for Tongans and non-Tongans alike.


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In this volume Smith attempts to evaluate the archaeological evidence for an Ancestral Polynesian Society (APS) formerly located in what is today called West Polynesia and from which all Polynesian societies are descended. The work is in effect a critique of the formulation of the APS as developed by Kirch and Green in the 1980s. The usual cast of suspects is paraded, with historical linguistics, phylogenetic models and ethnogenesis providing the bogeymen. There is no review of the historical linguistics, which are apparently dismissed as contaminating data. Although it is noted that the “…relationship between the empirical archaeological evidence and the idea of culture or society remains under-theorised” (p.6), there is no attempt here to theorise it clearly, or to theorise some alternative formulation. The reader is left wondering how we will know if the APS beast is finally recognised and cornered—or whether it is a figment of our archaeological imagination.

Despite the theoretical trappings, the substantive goals of the volume are admirable, and it provides a comparative analysis and dataset of use to all students of the archaeology of the region. A chronometric hygiene exercise is conducted to create a sound chronological basis for comparative analysis. This has the usual strengths and weaknesses. It reminds us, as usual, how thin our chronological data set truly is and how often we depend on isolated dates or dates with poor context that would never survive any programmatic culling. Smith combines the critiqued radiocarbon data with a review of site stratigraphy (Chapters 5 and 6) to form chrono-stratigraphic
units for subsequent analysis. This is perhaps one of the most useful exercises in the volume for a student not familiar with the literature. In the following chapters Smith assesses data on ceramics, non-ceramic artefacts (primarily adzes) and the subsistence economy. It is useful to see the published data pulled together here. Given the strong theoretical critique, however, it is unfortunate that there is no new analysis of the artefacts. If the original formulation of the APS is flawed, then you would expect the errors to lie in the data analyses upon which it is based. The data is limited at best and what is needed is not a comparison of old conclusions but a careful reanalysis of primary data. The category plainware does not tell us much by itself when what we want to know is whether Tongan plainware is like that from Samoa or, for that matter, whether it is the same as that from elsewhere in the Western Pacific. Similarly, variation in raw material may account for differences in adze form, but this needs to be more than a suggestion. If the critique of the APS as a useful archaeological unit depends on the demonstration of a lack of continuity across space and time, then careful analysis is required. One would expect that the use of gross categories and the results of varying analytical methodologies would generate a pattern of overall similarity (e.g., they had dentate stamped pottery, then it disappeared) underlain by some variety generated by different analysts. This is apparently the kind of pattern Smith reports in her analysis chapters and in her conclusions. Given the conclusion that the data are similar throughout the region and temporal span in question, you might expect the verdict to be positive for the APS. Wrong! Despite the lack of any evidence of differential cultural input into the region, or different rates of change across the region, it is asserted that a model which argues for a common cultural heritage for the people of the area is wrong and based on a biased essentialising model of ethnogenesis which privileges tree-like linguistic models of cultural change and discounts lateral cultural inputs.

Now it is true that any evolutionary scheme which creates units of time and space can be critiqued for essentialising units which do not reflect the variability that is the basis of evolution. However, just as we can define *Homo erectus* according to some criteria and use the term to talk about history, archaeologists can do the same with archaeological data. Archaeologists can also attempt, albeit with much greater difficulty than biologists or linguists, to assess arguments for historical lineages. The historical models which are to be assessed can, of course, come from anywhere. The use of linguistic models is most certainly not prohibited and given that they are based, compared to archaeological methods, on well developed methodology, they might often be preferred. In the APS case the linguistic model suggests the theory that people bearing Polynesian cultural traits are derived from a generally common background in the Tonga-Samoan region and that this background was developed over a period of time before further diversification into East Polynesia. The alternate model might suggest that the region of interest should be larger, perhaps involving areas to the west such as those of Island Melanesia in Remote Oceania as briefly reviewed by Smith in her concluding chapters. Of course linguistics would also suggest a deeper common ancestry for that region as well. Throughout this region people had dentate stamped pottery and then they did not. This tells us that the historical forces underlying the change are common to a particular historical trajectory. Just as the appearance of Coke
cans in the archaeological record correlates with the spread of Western economy, so too the spread of Lapita ceramic technology and design, and its subsequent demise, must be associated with a fundamental cultural fact bearing the seeds of its own systematic transformation. We cannot disprove the APS because it shares a history with neighbours to the west. Neither can we disprove it if nothing dramatic happens in the archaeological record of the APS region after the Lapita transformation. It might well be the case that the lack of any dramatic change, in contrast with its neighbours to the west, is what creates the baseline Polynesian historical signature.


JENNIE ELIZABETH MORGAN

*Puke Ariki and District Libraries, New Plymouth*

This Victoria University Press edited compilation draws together a disparate series of essays which are situated within, and theorise about, the somewhat protean field of cultural studies. It is divided into 13 chapters (including an introduction by editors Smith and Wevers), and contributors to this volume both comment on, and work with, various modes of display in their professional lives. Although several contributors stress that the volume is not an overview of recent developments in New Zealand-based cultural studies (see Calder, Chapter 6), Smith and Wevers introduce the compilation as a showcase of recent thinking around culture that is occurring across disciplinary and institutional borders (p.14). Indeed it is a forum from which the contributors both deconstruct, and yet paradoxically firm up, the terrain of cultural studies in New Zealand.

From the outset, the title flags to the reader that a central concern of the book is display. Following much recent new museological literature, the contributors argue that the act of display (far from being neutral and objective) is grounded in ideological construct. Many different modes and discourses of display are discussed including photography (Skinner, McFarlane), sculpture (Blackley), architecture (Walker and Clark), memorials (Williams), text (Prentice), exhibitions (Brown, Brunt), and festivals (Armstrong and Potts, Smart). What is “on display”, it turns out, are the narratives which fundamentally inform and guide how we choose to display ourselves and others.

Like much established scholarly thought, this book suggests that the modes and discourses of display under discussion are the sites/sights on which identities are asserted, realised and contested on both individual and collective levels. In particular, the contributors choose to focus on collective representations, or how we as a nation display ourselves. From Skinner’s comparison of alternative tourist discourses in the
photography of Westra and Riethmaier (Chapter 5), to Walker and Clark’s discussion of the presentation of the Treaty of Waitangi and the vision of nationhood this asserts (Chapter 10), readings of display in this book reflect the slippery and ephemeral notion of collective identity.

Avoiding singular readings of identity, the contributors choose to focus on examples of display that have functioned to assert alternative and overlooked narratives. These “failure of sights”, as Smith and Wevers call them, speak not only of narratives that have been excluded but, interestingly, move beyond much literature to suggest that this may also be a purposeful strategy. This is demonstrated both in McFarlane’s essay (Chapter 8), where the unseen in Anne Ferran’s photographs speaks of absent histories louder than any image could, and also in the chapter by Armstrong and Potts, who argue that “failures of site” operate to market successfully a local identity based on “the wild” to regional, national and international markets. Importantly, this reflects a broader concern of the book, which is to understand how display functions in a changing historical, economic and political world. This concern with what Brunt (Chapter 13) calls “historicity”, or Walker and Clark (Chapter 10) call “indexicality”, is reiterated throughout the essays.

For Calder (Chapter 6), a central concern of the field of cultural studies is an interest in the power to define and represent. Likewise contributors investigate the politics of not only by identifying multiple and alternative narratives of collective identities, but also by dissecting the complex relationships between these. Chapters by Brown and Brunt explore the tensions surrounding different visions of “new Māori art” in recent exhibitions. This speaks more broadly of what is or is not considered Māori art and who claims the authority to be able to define and represent this through these presentations. Smart’s essay (Chapter 9) on the New Zealand contribution to the 2001 Venice Biennale stands out among the collection by exploring the process of negotiation that occurs within a single group to arrive at a collective representation of identity. By delicately separating out the different agendas (personal, institutional and State) at play during the branding of New Zealand on the international stage, he reflects on the complexities that occur when a group of disparate individuals must arrive at a single representation of identity. These agendas are often mutually exclusive, a point Neill (Chapter 11) echoes when she questions how a bicultural paradigm at Te Papa Tongarewa is to sit with the economic undercurrent of New Museological practice. Importantly Smart, like On Display in general, observes that not only is identity reflected through display, but also the very act of display is integral to the creation of these identities.

Significantly the essays draw attention to the relationship of the audience to these presentations by suggesting that discourses of identity are packaged for consumption by pluralistic audiences in a global market. Disappointingly, however, audiences are conspicuously silent and in some cases, like William’s tour of Cambodian genocide memorials (Chapter 12), notably absent. This is particularly evident in Walker and Clark’s contribution that equates the public presentation with the reception of the Treaty of Waitangi (and the vision of nationhood that this reflects) at Te Papa Tongarewa and the National Archives. This runs the risk of overlooking the pluralistic nature of audiences and curtailing any active role that they may have in the interpretation of display.
In a more general sense *On Display* steps back from the intricacies of display to collectively question the analytical value of ideological concepts employed in cultural studies and, consequently, the identity of this field of study. Calder (Chapter 6) and Prentice (Chapter 7) discuss the ambivalent and shifting nature of the local in an increasingly global market. If the idea of the local is no more than savvy cultural branding for consumption in a global market (as suggested by Armstrong and Potts and, to a lesser degree, Smart), then it must be asked what cultural studies within New Zealand is based upon. Struggling to situate a “home-grown” cultural studies, Calder suggests that a more fruitful line of thought is to distinguish this by a particular way of seeing with a focus on the ordinary.

While the book successfully achieves its aim of providing an overview of current contemporary thought on the politics of display, it would have benefited on a practical level from several additions. Most notably the lack of images in Skinner’s essay provides unnecessary difficulties for those not immediately familiar with the photographs under discussion. Better editorial choices concerning the order of the essays might also have helped to build momentum and develop a more thematic reading (in particular placing Brown with Brunt, and Skinner with McFarlane and Williams). The advantage of this is exemplified when reading concurrent chapters by Walker and Clark (Chapter 10) and Neill (Chapter 11), where a dialogue on museums and New Museological practice is successfully developed. This being said, one of the charms of this book is that the current organisation (a kind of heterotopic order) does reflect underlying concerns to avoid simplistic and singular readings which a categorical distinction might have imposed.

This book will undoubtedly interest everyone who participates in and thinks about the interplay of modes of display and identity in New Zealand. Striking a successful balance between a case-study approach and more theoretical contemplations, *On Display* contributes to the field of museological thought by providing a sense of the complexities of display. What really sets this book apart, however, is that in trying to distinguish a unique, locally-based cultural studies, the contributors simultaneously draw attention to and grapple with the nuances that an increasingly global reality provide for the interplay between discourses of display and national identity.


CAROLINE VERCOE
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*Art and Social Change* emerges as a timely and relevant contribution to the growing body of writing focusing on contemporary art from the Asia-Pacific region. The theme is timely given the often volatile political and social developments in this region and the rise of the so-called war on terrorism. Its inclusion of recent contemporary art also offers an exciting opportunity for writers to explore and initiate discussion regarding the relationship between art and its potential to function as fundamentalist agitprop as well as a cogent tool for social and cultural change. Published by Australian-based
Pandanus Books, its emphasis is quite firmly on Asia as opposed to the Pacific (Polynesian art other than Māori is completely absent). Comprising 28 essays, 20 focus on Asia, predominantly on particular regional practices; two on the Pacific (a survey of Melanesian art and Māori art from New Zealand); three on Australia and three theme-based overviews. One puzzling omission is the work of Pacific artists based in New Zealand, many of whom have garnered much critical success both locally and internationally. This being said, Art and Social Change does emerge as a comprehensive introduction to a wide range of artists’ work from a diverse number of cultures and nations.

Long-time Australian curator and academic Caroline Turner is the editor and author of four essays (one of them co-authored). She is well placed to select key contributors to this discourse, as she is also the co-founder of the very successful Asia-Pacific Triennial. Turner edited Tradition and Change: Contemporary Art of Asia and the Pacific (1993), the first major publication focusing on contemporary art produced in the Asia-Pacific region. Art and Social Change shares close affinities with Tradition and Change in terms of its approach. Several essays are re-presented as updated versions and five of the authors who have essays in Tradition and Change also feature in Art and Social Change. Both texts comprise survey-based essays that trace developments predominantly in Asia, with the majority taking a historical, chronological point of departure. In her introductory essay, Turner states that the emphasis of the publication is to focus on “the extraordinary changes that have taken place in this region since the early 1990s” (p.1). Taking social change as a broad theme, she alludes to the rise of Asia as a political force and its complex and often fraught political and social environments.

The strong inclusion of curators results in a number of essays focusing on particular exhibitions and art institutions highlighted as signifiers of key developments in the arts. Attention is also paid to the different burgeoning art infrastructures emerging in this region. This allows for interesting insights and issues to be raised in relation not only to the importance of certain exhibitions but also to the relevance of the increasing number of international Biennales and Triennales in Asia. Alison Carroll, in her essay “Choppy waters: Arts infrastructure and networks in Asia”, contends that, unlike Australia and New Zealand, it is independent art spaces, private institutions and commercial galleries rather than state financed galleries and museums that frequently offer the sites for leading contemporary art in Asia. She offers examples from Japan, Thailand, Singapore and India. She also questions the relevance of staging Biennales and Triennales in this region. Writing about the rise of these large scale international events, she states, “It challenges central tenets of ‘Asian’ culture. It does not respect tradition, it challenges the status quo and accepted hierarchies…. For viewers in Asia less used to seeing contemporary art because the practice of visiting museums is less established, and also not knowing about the art of even their neighbours, this context-less, often unexplained, often very sophisticated and complex work also remains impenetrable” (p.551). Xu Bing’s essay “Chinese art” also raises concerns regarding the direction of the arts in Asia. Discussing the challenges of establishing a supportive and compelling art infrastructure in China, he asks the question, “bearing
in mind China’s unique national conditions and the historical development of its State art galleries, how can these galleries move away from their passive and peripheral status and assume their rightful role?” (p.348).

In her theme-based essay “Art in a globalised state”, Jen Webb makes the point that despite the all-encompassing spectre of globalism, there is no such thing as a truly global arts culture. She writes that this is because “identity and cultural attachment—which are expressed through art—rely on emotional and traditional resonances. The Coca-Colonisation of the (Mc)world can’t hope to achieve this because it is comparatively recent, manifestly commercial and lacks the specific signifiers of cultural identity to which people can relate” (p.39). Webb highlights the problems of a global approach to issues of cultural imperialism because a truly universalising world view would necessitate engagement with a myriad of languages, dialects, customs and local vernacular. Art and Social Change brings together discussions relating to a wide range of art practices. It illustrates the ways that art can bolster and maintain state interests as well as undermine, subvert and challenge them. Often, however, the focus on social change becomes somewhat lost in the attention to historical survey. Chronological surveys are by nature generalising. This results in a lack of specificity as well as a privileging of certain art forms (especially painting or two-dimensional works) at the expense of a more complex and diverse approach. The focus on presenting a historical context in which to situate the overriding concerns and themes of the book means that many of the essays tend to cover a large number of artists and discuss a limited number of works, rather than providing detailed discussions of particular artists’ work or focusing on more recent art practice. In saying this, Art and Social Change is a very useful and wide-ranging introduction to the development of the arts, especially in the Asian region, with essays discussing art in tandem with social and political change. Many stop short of discussing more recent art in much detail, but it does lay the foundation for future publications which do this, and provides a sound point of departure for more specialised initiatives focusing on this region, which is increasingly becoming a player on the international art scene.