



Shifting Images of Identity in the Pacific, eds Toon van Meijl & Jelle Miedema, KITLV Press, Leiden, Holland, 2005. viii + 269 pp., index. • 30.00 (p/b). ISBN: 90 6718 244 3

Identity isn't what it used to be. Luckily, we have a series of edited volumes describing research in a wide variety of Island communities that helps us evaluate what it was, is, and might become. Van Meijl and Miedema present the most recent in a distinguished set of collections discussing community and identity through solid ethnography and theoretical philosophising.

Put this volume of papers presented at the 1999 European Society for Oceanists conference on your shelf next to the three resulting from Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania symposia, and you will have a thirty-year perspective on the transformation of cultural and political identities in the Pacific, and of anthropology's understanding of them—and these represent only a fraction of the many publications on cultural identity in the Pacific.¹

There are many monographs and journal articles on identity, too, of course, but edited volumes have a particular value in dealing with this complex topic. Like the others, *Shifting Images* includes research from throughout the Pacific and the Pacific diaspora, allowing for comparison of disparate and similar cases. Also like the others, it begins and ends with summary and reflective comments that help us gauge the state of the theoretical and ethnographic debate on the topic of identity. Toon Van Meijl offers the introductory survey of the chapters, outlining the key issues treated, and Jocelyn Linnekin, veteran of the Pacific 'invention of tradition' wars, offers an epilogue that brings the study of identity fully into the 21st century with a 'to-do' list for future researchers.

To indicate, briefly, what you will find here: van Meijl's 'Introduction' presents a view of new meanings of identity and culture, and fits the succeeding chapters into this perspective; Don Gardner describes in detail the precolonial and postcolonial history of Miyanmin identity (Mountain Ok region, Papua New Guinea); Jelle Miedema discusses continuities and changes in identity in the Bird's Head Peninsula of West New Guinea (Papua); Allen Abramson untangles complexities of



rituals, chiefs, land rents, capitalism and modernity in Fiji; Monique Jeudy-Ballini explores Sulka (New Britain, Papua New Guinea) perplexity over Western desire for their ceremonial masks as Melanesian art; Judy Flores describes the reconstitution of Chamorro identity in the Mariana Islands through artists' work; Erich Kolig takes on challenging topics of indigeneity and multiculturalism in Maori–Pakeha relations and politics in New Zealand; Wolfgang Kempf describes how Banabans in Fiji use dance and drama's 'thirdspace' to create narratives of survival; Elfriede Hermann considers how emotions relate to issues of power, again with Banabans of Fiji; Alan Howard and Jan Rensel describe how the relatively 'weak' sense of Rotuman identity abroad nonetheless finds itself (with a little help) in electronic community. Finally, Linnekin's 'Epilogue' asks: 'Is "cultural identity" an anachronism in a transnational world?' The key, to her, depends on what happens to 'distinctive collective identities in a world in which a single political economy—that of transnational market capitalism—has the potential to make cultural and national boundaries irrelevant' (244). Her suggestions for future research indicate how anthropologists can contribute to answering that question.

Ethnographers dealing with the Pacific Islands have been active in examining complexities in the construction and alteration of identities since the topic came to the forefront of social science research in the 1970s. Many issues of self-consciousness, political pragmatism, symbolism, boundary marking, nesting identities and diaspora (among others) have been fruitfully explored in the context of island communities—seemingly so bounded, yet widely linked through ocean paths and shared languages and lifestyles. *Shifting Images* takes the next step in this research tradition, looking at how current trends of transnationalism and globalisation are shaping identities, and at the role of shifting anthropology theory in explicating them. Thanks to editors van Meijl and Miedema for laying the foundation for work on this topic in the region for the 21st century.

Note

¹ The ASAO-derived volumes are: *Pacific Atoll Populations*, ed. V Carroll, University of Hawai'i Press, 1975; *Exiles and Migrants in Oceania*, ed. M Lieber, University of Hawai'i Press, 1977; and *Cultural Identity and Ethnicity in the Pacific*, eds J Linnekin & L Poyer, University of Hawai'i Press, 1990. [See also Stewart & Strathern, *Identity Work*, reviewed by Norton in this volume.]

Lin Poyer

Department of Anthropology
University of Wyoming

In the Far Islands: The Role of Natives from the Philippines in the Conquest, Colonization, and Repopulation of the Mariana Islands, 1668–1903, Augusto V De Viana, University of Santo Tomas Press, Manila, 2004. ISBN 7 15062814 (pbk). US\$17.95

The Chamorro people of the Marianas share a great affinity with the Filipinos : as some observers have noted, they also share a love–hate relationship. So close, in fact, are Chamorros to Filipinos, that virtually every Chamorro person in the world has Filipino blood in their veins, and probably also Mexican blood as well.

The reason for this is not hard to find. For 250 years, the Spanish galleons that plied the vast sweep of ocean between Mexico and the Philippines stopped in Guam en route. Nor is that the only reason. Spain formally claimed the Marianas when Miguel Lopez de Legaspi stopped at Umatac in 1565. Spain administered her Guam colony from Mexico until 1815 when Mexico became independent, and then she administered the Marianas from the Philippines.

On several occasions in history, the Spanish entertained ideas about closing out the Marianas completely, transporting the islanders to the Philippines, and absorbing all Chamorros into the population there. At one time in the eighteenth century when it seemed almost certain that Spain would put such a proposed policy in force, it was the Jesuits who vigorously spoke out against Spain's plans. They pointed out the

The Journal of Pacific Studies, Volume 28, no.2, 2005, 368–369

© by JPacS Editorial Board (SSED, USP)