

importance of 'whiteness' in the thinking of Remana Hi (ch.37) comes from a line in 'Ecclesiastes', the association of white with positive values is a feature of Maori writing in this period, reflecting the Pakeha assault on Maori dignity and identity.

Mana From Heaven is, however, a survey which uncovers a largely forgotten section of history. As a resource, its comprehensiveness is unlikely to be surpassed, and it opens up rich avenues of study. By revealing the enormous influence of introduced ideas Elsmore has courageously opposed the erroneous view that, having tried Pakeha religion and found it wanting, Maori returned to the ways of their ancestors. The traditional Maori world was irreparably changed in the nineteenth century. *Mana From Heaven* shows that Maori society succeeded in restating its identity not by retreat, but by the vigorous assertion of the right to change.

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Ples Blong Iumi: Solomon Islands, the Past Four Thousand Years. Edited by Hugh Laracy. Institute of Pacific Studies at the University of the South Pacific, Suva, 1989. 176pp. NZ price: \$35.

THIS BOOK is a collection of essays, with some historical focus, on Solomon Islands written by young Solomon Islanders, with Dr Hugh Laracy as 'facilitator' and editor. Laracy, working quietly and modestly, has done this service to budding islands writers and their governments before in *Tuvalu: A History*, published in 1983. His task was not an enviable one, given the highly political nature of these exercises in the ideology of newly independent states.

The genesis of this collection is unique: advertisements went out through the media in Solomon Islands, so the contributors were largely self-selected. It is hardly surprising then that only one of the 14 writers is a woman. In this book there is an enormous amount of information of interest to both Solomon Islanders and outsiders. It, in the main, is clearly written even when the material discussed is quite complex. Topics focus mainly on social themes — education, social change, the arts, concepts of time, writing, pre-history, oral history, population movement, and religion. As well, there is a chapter on land and economy, and there is one on politics. Several useful and mainly statistical appendices are included, although the National Anthem (p.160) and the chronology (pp.152-156) imply what can only be a false picture of Solomons society, that women are not significant. This is ironic in the light of the book's theme — society — as women are society's primary conservators, a fact acknowledged in passing in Moffat Wasuka's chapter on education (p.99).

There is always a danger in a book commissioned to affirm national identity that 'Merrie Melanesia' can be overstressed — a trap that most of the poets and novelists discussed by E. Iamae (pp.43-45) have avoided. Perhaps this explains why there is virtually no mention of a not inconsiderable part of early Solomons history involving warfare, and the suspicion with which these small-scale societies viewed each other, even down to the micro-level of clans. Head-hunting, with its significant demographic effect, is glided over while neither attendant slavery nor cannibalism are mentioned. Of course, Melanesians are sick of the Western obsession with such topics, but this book exemplifies how far the pendulum can swing the other way. One gets an impression of a peaceful, harmonious group of islands disrupted by often barbaric 'araikwao' (white people). It would be too much to expect sustained self-criticism in the first collection of historical essays by Solomon Islanders, but near-universal concord pre-European contact is a new myth.

Some differentiated views emerge. Sam Alasia ably melds old myth, history and current views in his essay 'Population Movement', in which he highlights the growing tensions caused by the migration of Malaitans from their own island into the central and western Solomons, where they are often not welcome. In 'Land and Economy', John Ipo details for Solomons the ubiquitous effect of capitalism on third world subsistence economies, in stimulating disputes among local owners as to who should 'develop' the land for cash cropping.

Sam Alasia's chapter on politics leaves the reader still curious. In touching on issues such as the scandals of Chief Minister Mamoloni's private deal for a commemorative issue of coins in 1975, and the Minister of Agriculture, Sethual Kelly's, questionable allocation of government houses in 1985, Alasia relieves some of the triumphal blandness of a litany of names and dates. That there are far more interesting stories between the lines is clear to anyone familiar with the contorted ways of Melanesian politics. Readers would be wise to allow for the fact that the writers of the book are public servants who, like their colonial predecessors, have to mind what they say in the small society of the modern Solomons. Governments, whether colonial or independent, are not all that different.

The chapter on time by J. Waleania is one of the most original in the book. The writer concentrates on the calendar of his own people from Lilisiana on Malaita. He describes Solomon Islanders' concept of cycle time, though the idea of historical time is hardly mentioned. Perhaps this indicates it did not exist?

Waleania points the way to where future culture or historical studies by Solomon Islanders could go. He has been able, it would seem, to draw on the knowledge of his own people and relate it to a wider context — the rest of Solomons as well as Western ideas of time. This teaches us all something new about how people perceive themselves and their world. It seems likely that many of these mainly urban-employed young people did not have the opportunity to glean more information from specialist elders concerning their world-view and their perception of their history. However, this can be only a tentative assessment by the reviewer because of the way this book is documented. Except for odd references given within the text itself, the reader cannot be sure if the information and views expressed reflect those of the writer (and presumably his/her own people) or are the thoughts of an anthropologist, geographer or historian. Now and then specific information appears — for example concerning war-hero Vouza's motives in assisting the Americans (pp.26-27) — that does not seem to be from the writers' informants or from the sources listed in the bibliography. This paucity of attribution is a disservice to specialists within both Solomons village society and the academic community.

There are occasional errors of fact — for example, freehold purchase of land legally ceased in January 1912, not 1914, and purchase of land was not stopped to all except Solomon Islanders: the colonial government still could and did purchase land from Solomon Islanders (p.127). With this mandatory reviewer's admonition over, *Ples Blong Lumi* is a commendable collection and the general reader will find in it a reliable and often lively introduction to many facets of today's Solomon Islands. A pioneer work, it invites a range of criticism, but its authors are to be thanked for opening the path. At last a start has been made by young indigenous scholars in analyzing wider aspects of Solomons society and history.

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