

land New Guinea culture leads us to reflect on ourselves: What is our culture's role and impact elsewhere? What have we given, what have we contributed, to others? Have we made their lives better, by offering an absolutist ethic to substitute for their secular ethic (where moral obligations stem from social obligations)? And why have we done it? Pragmatic as the Gahuku are, it is hard not to see them as victims of marginal incorporation into the Western world.

This is an intensely personal book, one that teaches us as much about the anthropologist and his relationship with people as it does about the people themselves. It is also Read's lasting tribute to Makis, his friend and key informant. Makis' ghost haunts the book and the people in it. Appropriately, the book closes with personal reconciliations that put the ghost to rest.

Read's book should not be missed. Clearly and evocatively written, it can be understood and appreciated by general reader and specialist alike. Only time will tell, but I believe that *Return to the High Valley* will take its place as one of the classic works in anthropology.

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*The Bishops' Progress: A Historical Ethnography of Catholic Missionary Experience on the Sepik Frontier*, by Mary Taylor Huber. Smithsonian Series in Ethnographic Inquiry. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988. xii + 264 pp, maps,

appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. US\$29.95.

Mary Taylor Huber first encountered missionaries in Papua New Guinea while assisting her husband on fieldwork at Wamu village in the Sepik district. She also encountered anthropologists' reactions to them: distaste, skepticism about their task, and hostility toward "what often seems an uninformed a priori condemnation of indigenous ways of life" (4). Anthropologists, she concluded, have adopted "a critical stance" toward missionaries "seldom adopted in their approach to the study of native peoples," and have generally cast their accounts of them "in the ironic mode" (4-5).

Intrigued by what she saw and heard of mission-villager relations, Huber chose to make the Catholic missionaries of Wewak, capital of the Sepik district, the subject of her dissertation. Her informants were her subjects, the missionaries of the Society of the Divine Word, and the Koil Islanders, migrant settlers in the town, among whom she lived. She also used public mission and government records, but no manuscript sources such as letters and diaries.

Huber's interest lies not so much in the changes wrought by the missionaries on the lives of the people of the Sepik as in how the missionaries' experience of living and working in the Sepik molded and changed the missionary project itself. She explores the adaptations the missionaries were forced to make by their environment: "the inevitable contradictions between local imperatives and metropolitan ideals" (xi).

In a survey chapter based on wide reading of published sources, Huber introduces the Sepik district, a colonial frontier little troubled by economic development or much administrative intervention until after World War II. Into this underdeveloped region in 1896 came the missionaries of the Society of the Divine Word, a congregation founded during the revival of Catholic missionary work in the second half of the nineteenth century. Previously established in China, South America, and Togo, Africa, they came to New Guinea with a clear definition of their status and role. But the nature of the environment, Huber argues, forced the first of the accommodations required of the missionaries.

To explain the modifications required of the missionaries, Huber employs Frederick Jackson Turner's concept of the "frontier" which, for her, is more than a geographical frontier. She defines it as "the space between effective practice and authentic ideals." On the frontier the lines between the sectors of society became blurred; status and role became less clearly defined. The priests of the Society of the Divine Word, bringing their spiritual mission to the underdeveloped Sepik, found that due to the lack of "a civilized infrastructure," they were forced to put spiritual work aside to concentrate on building a material base, traditionally the preserve of brothers, not priests. This approach was later to be validated by Vatican Council II, but in the 1890s development work was treated with suspicion as deflecting missionaries from real, that is spiritual, work. In the Sepik the visionary prefect apostolic, Father

Eberhard Limbrock, was the architect of the mission's plantations and industries.

A second major adaptation identified by Huber was that forced by the indigenous social and cultural situation. Because of the deep divisions among the indigenous people, their political fragmentation and cultural diversity, the metropolitan model of closely knit hierarchical community was not apposite. Missionaries were isolated from each other and from central authority. Huber uses several neat ecclesiastical images to illustrate the adaptations made by the missionaries to each of the environmental challenges. As Father Limbrock, the plantation priest, reflected the missionaries' response to their undeveloped diocese, so Bishop Joseph Loerks, and his mission boat, became a new focus for community in the fragmented society of the Sepik. Styling himself the servant of his missionaries, he became a symbol of unity for the mission through his travels.

Continuing her broadly chronological account of the development of the mission, Huber analyzes the triangular relationship between the missionaries, the government, and the Sepik peoples before World War II and traces the devastating effect of cargo cults, and more especially war, on the mission. With over half its personnel lost, stations in ruins, discredited by the cults and the alleged collaboration of Catholic New Guineans with the Japanese, the mission struggled to reestablish the relationship with government and people. But changing circumstances—a more active, interventionist postwar government, and a people determined to par-

participate more fully in the new order—led to the need for new adaptations. Huber defines a new frontier for the missionaries, the “cultural gap” that appeared to limit the Sepik people’s capacity to enter new forms and institutions fully. The missionaries’ response was to diversify their mission into a range of social and economic areas to help their people adjust to the modern world, an adaptation sanctioned by Vatican II. As Father Limbrock and his plantations were the symbol for the first frontier, and Bishop Loerks and his boat the symbol for the second, so Bishop Leo Arkfield, the “flying bishop,” and the aeroplane became the symbol of the third.

As Huber’s analysis moves into the 1970s, “localization” becomes the new frontier, a political imperative based on government policy and an ecclesiastical imperative based on the resolutions of Vatican II. She discusses some of the tensions and ambiguities inherent in attempts to implement this goal. Huber concludes her analysis with a discussion of the value of mission studies. Their extrinsic value, she contends, lies in the knowledge they offer of a region and its people, and the understanding they provide of missionary-ethnographers, usually the earliest observers of traditional societies. But she argues too for an intrinsic value, for the understanding of “the broader human condition” (212) offered by studies of such a community. She ends with a plea for comparative mission studies.

This book looks at missions from a

refreshingly novel perspective. It is a healthy antidote to old-style mission studies which tend to suggest that foreign missionaries arrived with a preconceived blueprint that was imposed on passive recipients; it is also a counterbalance to the orientation of more recent studies, which generally focus on the impact of the mission process on the local peoples rather than the impact of the environment on the mission process. It is a detached and scholarly work; one could perhaps wish for a little more flesh and blood. Huber argues that the character and style of an individual missionary are essential ingredients in mission-villager relations, yet she gives little feeling for the missionaries as individuals. It is a pleasure to read in the penultimate chapter of the craftsman, Brother Joe, and we glean a little understanding of the three mission heads who become the images for the changing patterns of mission work, but generally the missionaries are rather anonymous and disembodied. Perhaps the conceptual framework for this study has been elaborated a little too insistently at the expense of content. One is not left with a solid, rounded impression of the mission or its workers. My only other criticism is a minor one: a number of typographical errors, of which the most unfortunate is the name of an Australian prime minister, J. G. Gorton.

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