

Culture



N. MIKLOUHO-MACLAY, *Travels to New Guinea: Diaries, Letters, Documents* (D. Tumarkin, compiler), Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1982, 519 pages, \$7.95 (cloth) — in Canada: through Progress Books, Toronto

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[See table of contents](#)

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development priorities drawn from the contributions to the conference, which gives specific recommendations for (1) furthering livestock development in a manner supportive of the interests of pastoral peoples; and (2) the future of pastoral research, emphasizing a “*rap-prochement* of anthropologists and development planners” and specific areas of future investigation relating to the influence of the state, regional perspectives, the impact of the market, the nature of the household economy, and relationships between pastoral systems and environmental resources of semi-arid lands.

One theme emerging from these papers is that the complexity of land use for pastoralism defies many generalizations. Harold Schneider’s controversial work on the meaning of cattle for African pastoralists, Peter Hopcraft’s observations that pasture care and improvement is not rewarding since the individual cannot claim the benefits, and Walter Goldschmidt’s summary of development program failures (such as the attempts to impose ranching schemes) are just a small part of the eloquent testimony in this volume to the disastrous results of making assumptions about livestock-raising that are not informed by detailed knowledge of local and regional systems. Generalization is also hindered by lack of data on even the most crucial questions, such as the sources of desertification, and this points to the importance of the research priorities outlined by Galaty and Aronson.

A central focus in this volume is a political economic perspective on pastoralism. This emphasis on the regional context of pastoral production reflects not only the enormous expansion of political economic thought in the social sciences in the last decade, but also the very real changes in the boundaries of African pastoral social systems. As the editors note:

Today, government interventions in the form of livestock marketing systems, pricing policy, schemes of settlement development as well as education have fundamentally influenced pastoral societies. Not only do pastoralists live within political economies of nation-states and international relations but are directly affected by intergroup dynamics of power operating through the state. (p. 129)

Viewed in this context, governmental development schemes for pastoralists often represent perspectives at variance with and even hostile to the interests of pastoralists, as several papers note.

The goal of fostering communication among specialists in pastoralism leads the conference organizers and editors to stress commonalities of interests among the participants, however, and the result is that the conflicts inherent among the participants are downplayed in the presentation of the proceedings. This may explain the African focus as well — a discussion of pastoral development in China, Mongolia and the Soviet Union might have raised issues that would

not foster the diplomatic goals of the conference, but they would have provided important new perspectives on the political economy of pastoral development. While the concentration on African issues unifies the papers, it also limits the range of possibilities given serious consideration. The collectivization of pastoral production deserves discussion in relation to Africa, where the twin concerns of cultural survival of pastoralists and national development needs have not been successfully joined.

The Future of Pastoral Peoples should be in every academic library. It serves as both a superior review of major issues and research regarding African pastoralism and pastoral development, and as a “text” to be analyzed to better understand the current state of discourse on this topic and on the relationship of anthropology to development. Ten or twenty years from now, it will be fascinating to look back to see the extent to which this conference addressed vital aspects of the social transformations affecting and affected by pastoralists.

N. MIKLOUHO-MACLAY, *Travels to New Guinea: Diaries, Letters, Documents* (D. Tumar-kin, compiler), Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1982, 519 pages, \$7.95 (cloth) — in Canada: through Progress Books, Toronto.

By John Barker
University of British Columbia

Much of the early writing on the indigenous peoples of the South Pacific resembles nothing so much as the frippery today peddled by authors of travel brochures and racy novels: goggle eyed glimpses of dusky stereotypes moving restlessly under the palm trees. Fortunately, a few extended and often sensitive accounts arising out of early encounters between Europeans and Islanders survive from various parts of the Pacific. Eastern New Guinea fared somewhat better than other areas, for it came within the orbit of the colonial powers at a relatively late date when interest in the study of ethnology was rapidly growing in Europe. A small number of missionaries, administrators, and natural scientists — caught up in the spirit of the times — wrote articles and books of their observations and experiences for educated audiences in Europe and Australia. Of this select group, none surpasses in importance the Russian researcher Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay.

Born to a railway engineer in 1846, Miklouho-Maclay developed a taste for the natural sciences in his early adolescence. He attended universities in Russia and then Germany, where he was a student of Ernst

Haeckel, one of the major biologists of the time. While working at the Zoological Museum of the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg in 1869, Miklouho-Maclay completed a study of the Museum's collection of sponges and became interested in the Pacific region. He decided to undertake a long-term expedition to the Pacific under the auspices of the Russian Geographical Society. Preliminary research, in preparation for this venture, soon brought to the attention of the young scientist the polygenist versus monogenist controversy raging in the racialist anthropology of the day. With sympathies towards the view that all races had descended from one ancestor, Miklouho-Maclay decided to make the study of human populations in New Guinea a major component of his expedition.

In 1871 Europeans knew little about New Guinea or its inhabitants. Only limited portions of the coastal areas had been visited and surveyed; the interior was entirely unexplored. Those Europeans who had briefly touched down at points on the New Guinea coast described the island as a place of unrelenting fever populated by blood-thirsty savages. It was this isolation that made New Guinea so attractive to Miklouho-Maclay; he would be able to find there "primitive tribes unaffected by others that have risen to a comparatively higher stage of civilisation" (11). In addition, one might add, he was almost guaranteed to find hitherto unrecorded species of animal and plant life. In September 1871, with the company of a Swede and a Polynesian as servants, Miklouho-Maclay landed from a corvette of the Russian navy at a spot along the north coast of New Guinea, not far from today's town of Madang. In all, Miklouho-Maclay spent 22 months on the "Maclay Coast", as it came to be known, in three visits spread out between 1871 and 1883. During the same period he visited the Moluccas and various parts of the southern coast of New Guinea. As he travelled, the scientist built up impressive collections of specimens, artifacts, and sketches along with his notes. These became the basis of a number of articles, many of which — like the diaries — were published long after their author's death.

Miklouho-Maclay was a remarkable man, and while it would be impossible to match the tone of adoration in the compiler's forward, this translation of the scientist's diaries and selected letters is welcomed for its ethnographic and historical importance and for its human interest. Taking these points one at a time, the first thing to note is that Miklouho-Maclay was not a fieldworker in the modern sense. He observed and measured the natives, he learned their language, but he did not participate in their lives for more than the minimum required for his scientific objectives. The researcher refused to live in indigenous villages or to stand for any signs of familiarity or equality on the part of Melanesians (388). One does not find in the diaries

any systematic understanding of New Guinean culture. On the other hand, the diarist's observations are often acute and engaging. We learn a variety of fascinating details of the lives of the "pre-contact" New Guineans: what they ate, what they wore, how they built their houses; quarrels, feasts, sorcery, and war. The text is greatly enhanced by excellent reproductions of many of Miklouho-Maclay's sketches of individuals, places, and objects.

The letters and occasional comments upon political matters in the diaries in *Travels to New Guinea* will be of most interest to specialists. Miklouho-Maclay's stance on the future of the New Guineans, at a time when Australia and Germany were both showing interest in the area, was not dissimilar to that of other humanitarians on the scene, notably the missionary James Chalmers. Miklouho-Maclay wanted villagers to be protected from the excesses of the colonial system, but at the same time he felt that some sort of outside political rule had to be brought to bear upon the seemingly anarchistic tribes of New Guinea. In spite of D. Tumarkin's exercise in hagiography in the forward, Miklouho-Maclay comes across as a man of his time.

Nevertheless, he was a man with an amazing set of experiences. The diaries are the most fascinating as a narrative of a cross-cultural encounter. Miklouho-Maclay appears as a type of intellectual Robinson Crusoe; through his (assumed) superior rationality he is always in charge of the situation regardless of the dangers. Less than a month after arriving on the edge of this strange new world, Miklouho-Maclay ventures into a village. The women run in terror while the men swiftly gather about the scientist. A spear is brandished before his face. But the Russian is tired from his long walk in a hot sun. He pulls a mat off a shelter and throws himself down upon it. Two hours later, refreshed by his deep sleep, he walks away from the amazed villagers. In the weeks that follow, strange noises are heard at night, rumours flow of impending attacks. The servants fear for their lives. Miklouho-Maclay notes these things along with the durations of the repeated bouts of fever that wreak his and his companions' bodies. He investigates further when it suits his research purposes, but often he simply tolerates and endures these disruptions.

It is not long before the villagers work out that the white man must be a deity of some kind, probably hailing from the moon (which he calls "Russia"). Miklouho-Maclay eventually learns of his growing reputation. One man asks him privately, "Maclay, can you die?" (388); other men try to enlist his powers against their enemies. While remaining aloof from the villagers' affairs, Miklouho-Maclay makes use of the influence of his reputation to visit far-flung settlements in safety. But sometimes it is impossible to be

completely indifferent to local concerns. On his second trip to the Maclay Coast, the scientist learns of a proposed raid of one village upon another in retaliation for deaths thought to be caused by sorcerers. Miklouho-Maclay decides that he must "ban the war" (384). He does this by firmly threatening an unnamed misfortune that will fall upon anyone taking up arms. Such is the power of gods. Miklouho-Maclay's staggering confidence in the midst of an unfamiliar people and devastating attacks of fever is shaken very rarely. It is perhaps revealing that one of these odd moments of disorientation comes about when he finds himself without that most Western of cultural artifacts — his watch stops (188-90).

To sum up: *Travels to New Guinea* is not only an important historical document, it is fun to read. The narrative is often brisk and vivid. This translation of Miklouho-Maclay's diaries and letters will be a welcomed addition to the book-shelves of Melanesia specialists. It will also be of engaging interest to students of the cross-cultural encounter.

James CLIFFORD, *Person and Myth: Maurice Leenhardt in the Melanesian World*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1982. 270 pages, US \$28.50 (cloth).

By Pamela Peck
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In a biography which is both evocative and analytical, Clifford invites us to know the enigmatic Maurice Leenhardt who was at once missionary, anthropologist, colonial reformer and historian of religion. Some of us, like Clifford himself, no doubt first encountered Leenhardt through his study in religious phenomenology called *Do Kamo: Person and Myth in the Melanesian World*. Others may not have been introduced to him at all since, as Clifford points out, a phenomenological approach has found little support in existing ethnological theories and it is still rare today to look at culture primarily from the point of view of the person as Leenhardt did.

Clifford's text follows Leenhardt's life of "plenitude" (Leenhardt's own terminology for experiential complementarity of differences as opposed to conflicting roles) through his education as a missionary, various trips to the field, mission activities, the meeting and conversations with Levy-Bruhl, writing, university lecturing and family life. And what emerges from this unusual biographical profile is a study of considerable

benefit to the discipline of Anthropology in at least three major areas, any one of which in itself would have made the book entirely worthwhile. While they are interrelated facets of Leenhardt's work, we can nevertheless isolate them for comment as: complementarity of the missionary and anthropologist roles, approach to fieldwork and theoretical stance.

With regard to the first area, Clifford's book has something to say to those who see the roles of missionary and anthropologist as irreconcilable. One has first to understand that Leenhardt was not a missionary-turned-anthropologist. "Ethnography was, from the beginning, an integral part of his mission work; and his anthropology continued to be shaped by the fundamental goals of his evangelism" (3). The essential complementarity was Leenhardt's interest in personal authenticity. And investigating its nonrational basis, he became concerned about how the participatory essence (within which Melanesian authenticity was "lived") could survive the conditions dictated by European colonial expansion. His was not a program of religious conversion; in fact, Leenhardt questioned conversion and concentrated on the dilemma of the Melanesian "personage" (not yet a person and opposed to individual) who, without concrete participatory supports, was adrift, alienated and deprived of *communitas*. Rather than imagining a people yearning for the Gospels, he said, it is better simply to see "various tribes looking for a support" (76). Missionary activity, then, centered on safeguarding (but not preserving) the traditional culture in order that the process of acculturation would not entail the sacrifice of one's personhood without the opportunity for a renewed authenticity. Indeed, Leenhardt's missionary activity was a peculiar brand of "applied anthropology"!

The above central goal directioned Leenhardt's approach to fieldwork. For in order to investigate personal authenticity, the subject must be understood "from within". This undertaking demanded a reciprocity in ethnological interpretation and Leenhardt brought to the exercise his unique hermeneutical style and experience. Fieldwork was to be seen not as a process of description or interpretation of a bounded other world but rather as an interpersonal, cross-cultural encounter that *produces* descriptive-interpretive texts. The initial authorship is plural; only eventually are data transformed into descriptions and interpretations which can be identified as the work of a single writer.

And finally, what is the value of Leenhardt's phenomenological stance as a theoretical model?