Review: [untitled]
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cultural hybridity and changing racial identifications in Latin America is simply passed by. Key material by writers such as Marvin Harris, John Chance, Harry Hoetink, Verena Martinez-Alier, and others does not appear; even Frank Tannenbaum’s classic work of 1946 is absent. One chapter sustains at length the idea that biological hybrids are more vigorous than their parents, criticizing writers from the 1920s who were dubious about the qualities of mulattoes, without any reference to the context of the scientific thought on “race” of that era. All this, combined with an expansive and slightly overwrought Hispanic prose style that does not translate well into English and tends to digress and even ramble at times, seems to place the book in another time and encourages the eyes to glaze over. This is a pity because the subject is one that needs more investigation.

The book starts with a general discussion of processes of biological and cultural mixture, without breaking new ground, and without making entirely clear what particular line of argument the author is taking. The concept of “race” is, tellingly, never defined and is understood throughout as some kind of biological reality. The solid material starts with chapter 5, as Esteva-Fabregat explores in detail the first century of sexual relations between Iberians, Native Americans, and Africans. Here his continentwide focus gives the reader a good grip on the microprocesses of mixture in a variety of contexts. He is also good at showing the contingent nature of “racial” classifications. The emphasis is on the conquest period rather than on the consolidated colonial era, and this bias is not entirely corrected in a chapter on Ibero-American cities in the 18th century, which is mainly concerned with presenting demographic statistics taken from a contemporary source. Here use of the quite extensive literature on socioracial structures in, say, Mexico is sorely lacking. The next chapters focus on the physical anthropology of race mixture, heterosis (the vigor of the hybrid), serology and so on, although it is never clear how these topics fit into an overall line of argument. Chapter 11 posits a connection between heterosis and social dominance, but the argument is simply that the former was greatest in the progeny of Spaniards during the early years since the socially dominant position of the Spaniards allowed them to protect themselves biologically and select from a varied group of mates. But the consequences of these biological processes are mediated so thoroughly by social factors that it is hard to come to any interesting general conclusions.

The book is also rather biased toward the Hispanic pole of the cultural and biological equation. Esteva-Fabregat does mention Native American and African resistance, but these come across as blips on the chart of a ubiquitous movement toward the dominance of Iberian culture. In a very general sense, of course, the latter has indeed dominated; but much historical and anthropological work has addressed the complex cultural interactions involved—which again makes this volume seem rather out of touch. In sum, although some of the central chapters have useful material for students and researchers, this is a disappointing book.


FREDERICK ERRINGTON
Trinity College

In what is almost a tour de force, Lamont Lindstrom presents a clearly written and comprehensive genealogy of the term cargo cult as well as a provocative and often witty interpretation of the desires and interests that this term continues to serve: he explains why cargo cult has become a “solid genre of writing for describing Melanesian society” (p. 13) as a whole and why the term is now applied beyond Melanesia by a variety of people including Western journalists, novelists, movie makers, and politicians. Lindstrom answers, “We enjoy contemplating and discoursing upon cargo cults not merely because such a category serves a global political structure of interest, but also because it fulfills a cultural organization of desire” (p. 9).

First appearing in print in 1945 and replacing terms such as Vaiala Madness, cargo cult featured in the often competing colonial discourses concerning the postwar shape of the Melanesian world. Anthropologists soon picked up and propagated the term—giving it scientific weight—by focusing relatively sympathetically on native perspectives. In Lindstrom’s view, however, their legacy has been decidedly mixed: from their early focus on the symbolic value of cargo (on local desires, for instance, to achieve material and hence moral equivalence with Europeans), anthropologists’ “context-sensitive, sometimes empathetic cultural readings, in the end, have stained Melanesia with both a cargo-cult culture and psyche.... Any conspicuous Melanesian hope or desire today might be read as cargo; any conspicuous Melanesian social action or organization might be revealed as cult” (pp. 71–72).

A substantial portion of the book explores the varied descriptions that compose the large cargo cult corpus about “John Frum,” a movement on which Lindstrom has focused in his own Vanuatu fieldwork. Lindstrom perceptively notes that two motifs figure importantly in this European discourse about Vanuatan desires: natives especially covetous of refrigerators and natives willing to wait endlessly for cargo. Suggesting that these motifs demonstrate with particular sharpness the significance of European interests in constructing cargo cults, Lindstrom pursues his argument that we are the real “cargo cultists.” Our preoccupation with cargo cults reflects our Western “metadiscourse of desire itself” (p. 198), which strongly affects the way in which we think and feel—in which we yearn. Whether for reasons derived from processes of Lacanian psychology or under the impetus of capitalism, we desire most that which never gets fulfilled. Hence, Lindstrom observes, “cargo stories and crazy-love stories seduce and captivate us because they speak to us and remind us about the truth of desire” (p. 205)—which is to say, that what we ultimately want (whether cargo or love) is unobtainable.

BRUCE KNAUFT
Emory University

This volume documents the tense challenge that increasing capitalization poses for marital relations in Pacific societies. The topic is highly important, but gender is thereby cast in a restrictive economic frame. The volume's five ethnographic chapters from Papua New Guinea are complemented by studies of marital change on Pohnpei, Yap, Samoans in Hawaii, and Indo-Fijian marriage. Evidence documents loosening collective or corporate male control over individuals' marriage choices. But increased autonomy is buttressed by inflationary bridewealth and heightened demands for cash or commodities on all sides. Men's and women's competing marital expectations are galvanized by men's dominant control over cash and marital financing——and by men's reciprocal opportunity to deplete finances through drink, gambling, or womanizing. Men's predominance in wage work often reduces women's effective marital influence and the perceived value of their domestic production. Cash demands of inflated bridewealth simultaneously pressure or shame younger men and reduce the authority of wageless elders. Women emerge as sandwiched between pressure to attract wealth through marriage, disapproval for being too flirtatious or promiscuous, and the stress of relocating to town——either under a husbandly thumb or without support. Village life, by contrast, entails either relative poverty or a double load of uncertainty and labor for women to maintain children, garden, and kin obligations while absentee husbands pursue monetary success.

The details and permutations of such portraits——configured across a wide rural-urban continuum——are critical to the emerging ethnography of the South Pacific. By highlighting the cutting edge of change, however, we find less about slow-track alternatives and local cultural values that elaborate and twist rather than rupture as they confront postcolonial circumstance. A notable exception is Shireen Lateef’s outstanding contribution about Indo-Fijian marriage. The other praiseworthy chapters are about Papua New Guinea by Zimmer-Tamakoshi, Jorgen- sen, Pflanz-Cook, and Rosi and Zimmer-Tamakoshi. Marriage changes are richly documented and analyzed on ethnographic and historical grounds to presage new paths in the postcolonial study of Oceanic marriage.

Notwithstanding this contribution, there is general neglect of important new developments in feminist theory and of subjective dimensions of power/resistance. Many recent advances in the ethnography of Melanesian, Micronesian, and Polynesian gender are left aside rather than engaged. The repeated equation of marriage with business becomes slightly too facile, especially given the strong emphasis on “romantic love” that emerges ethnographically in many of the chapters. Economics and culture become alternatives rather than bedfellows.

As against the book’s better ethnographic contributions, its problems are extended rather than diminished in Marksbury’s introduction and Ward’s conclusion. The introduction addsuce acculturation and marital change based on dated structural-functionalist assumptions from Africa, while the conclusion resorts to jarring essentialisms in its pitch for a wider audience. Bridewealth rules are compared to the Federal Reserve system and home mortgages (p. 250), since “sentimentality is not the essence of marital systems that resemble business transactions” (p. 249). If “the new rules for the business of matrimony came from outside the system” (p. 251), we can take solace in the fact that “the real work of marriage, whether in the Pacific or elsewhere, is done by women” (p. 254) and that “the myriad cultures of the Pacific will start to look more like . . . those in suburban New Jersey” (p. 262). It becomes an authorial irony that “their view of marriages sounds like that of educated American women” (p. 256). Fortunately, the strong ethnography of the book’s better chapters belies this bleached assessment.


GABRIELE STÜRZENHOFECKER
University Of Pittsburgh

Discussions on sexual inequality and gender hierarchy developing out of the feminist debates during the 1970s specifically focused on the question of women’s status and subordination. Definitions of these concepts in cross-cultural analysis have always been problematic, and particular formulations adopted have also reflected the preference of authors for cultural versus material factors as the explanatory variables. Throughout these debates