

social structure, shifting concepts of community, Maisin ancestor religion, and Christianity, and lastly, development and the fight to protect their forest property. At the same time, a central question preoccupies the book: How do the Maisin answer the challenges modernity has posed to their culture, answers that are illustrated by the Uiaiku people who live in a large, resource-rich village where Barker and his wife, Anne, have done research intermittently since 1981. Given the lengthy fieldwork, Barker is well positioned to consider and analyze this question. What is more, he has read through archival materials by anthropologists, missionaries, and government administrators that stretch all the way back to the beginning of the 20th century.

Basically, he argues that the relationship between the Maisin and modernity, although subject to various kinds of vicissitudes, has been bilateral. Although the book's title would suggest that indigenous conservation is its theme, to probe this bilateral relationship to modernity, Barker sustains a discussion of a certain aesthetic dimension of Maisin material culture through the ethnography. This is the bark cloth called "tapa" that women produce from local trees and decorate with red and black, geometrical, and curvilinear motifs.

Tapa cloth used to be widespread throughout the Pacific but survives today in only three locations in Polynesia, and among the Maisin people in PNG. For the latter, tapa is seen as nothing less than a privileged expression of their autonomous identity. Barker explicitly acknowledges its indigenous value not only through the book's new cover photograph depicting three girls wearing tapa and by dubbing the Maisin a "tapa people," but also by introducing more than half of its chapters with brief, first person accounts of his own efforts to sit with Maisin women and learn how to produce the cloth. (These narratives nicely evoke participant-observation. But the issue of how Maisin women and men understood what Barker, being male, was up to is left open. Was he classified as an honorary woman or just a White, *hors catégorie* anthropologist? He never says.) Tapa cloth production, he does go on to allow, resembles contemporary Maisin social action. Conventions of manufacture are passed along from mother to daughter through talk and become taken-for-granted. However, at the same time, innovations of designs and manufacture do indeed occur. After completing his little piece of tapa in chap. 5, Barker begins to open up a more explicit and wide-ranging investigation of the relationship of tapa to modernity in PNG. In less capitalist times, tapa had ritual uses, trade value, and so forth. Inevitably, it took on exchange-value as a commodity in the late 20th century.

In 1995, conservation activists, NGOs, such as Greenpeace, and international donors, got involved on behalf of threats to the Maisin environment from Asian logging interests who had conspired with urban Maisin kin and the national government to gain rights to begin to harvest their old-growth forests. Seeing tapa as a sustainable product that could be linked both to conservation and the rights of indigenous peoples more generally, and to women in particular, Greenpeace tried to encourage a market

for it in the national capital and abroad. A village-based cooperative, Maisin Tapa Enterprise Ltd., was formed and a museum exhibit was planned in California. The market was strong, a lot of tapa was produced, and money flowed into the villages. Men began to invent new tapa designs and were even adorning them on hats and neckties. In 1997, Greenpeace licensed a tapa design to use on coffee mugs and T-shirts.

By 2000, however, tapa sales had more or less collapsed and the whole enterprise had turned into a malaise of jealousy and suspicion not only of managers and outsiders who were accused of profiting at the expense of ordinary villagers but village men resisted permitting Maisin women to hold equal roles in the cooperative. In 2007, tapa production had all but come to an end. The trees, it was said, had stopped growing after a big cyclone destroyed Maisin villages and gardens. There was no market access, money was in short supply, and, despite their initial court victory five years earlier, logging, and now mining, companies were again trying to play their hand.

But as I say, the story of tapa and modernity, like that of the Maisin, is one of fluctuation, rather than conclusive success or defeat. Ten years later, regular boat service to the capital had started, a market was again accessible and tapa was once more being produced. Moreover, in 2015, the national court made a second decision in favor of the Maisin landowners and against logging.

"Ancestral Lines" is a vivid portrait of how the Maisin draw upon their past to shape the modern present which, like tapa designs, they continue to recreate anew. It is a rich, ambiguous depiction of rural PNG which should appeal to multiple audiences. Because of the way it is written, theoretical simplicity, and first-person narratives of fieldwork experience, the book is eminently suitable for entry-level undergraduates encountering cultural anthropology for the first time. It would also be useful in courses on material culture in society and, of course, on sociocultural change. In addition, "Ancestral Lines" is a welcome entry into the emerging literature on rural conservation in the Pacific.

David Lipset

**Barnard, Alan:** *Language in Prehistory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. 184 pp. ISBN 978-1-107-69259-6. Price: \$ 24.99

In the final pages of his book "Language in Prehistory," Alan Barnard considers the place of social anthropology on the academic landscape that spans from the arts and humanities to the sciences. A similar question can be asked about the reflection on language origins as a field of academic interest. On the one hand, this grand question clearly has its roots in centuries of speculative philosophising, but this is in sharp contrast with a recent empirically driven tradition of language evolution, which quite explicitly seeks to sever those links and instead aspires to belong with the sciences. (This trend is very clearly visible, even boasted about, in the very recent introductory texts to special "language origin" issues in several journals including *Language and Communication*, *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, or *Journal of Neurolinguistics*.)

Barnard also has a short comment on this [45].) Barnard's book is interesting in that it combines both, as the author frequently goes almost mid-sentence from Whorf or Foucault to last year's results on ancient hominin DNA or primate vocalisation. However, overall, the book is leaning more towards the former – “philosophical” – tradition in the study of language origins.

This is partly reflected in the book's content, but mostly in the style of its presentation. The 135 pages contain a healthy dose of facts and observations that are all relevant, informative, and interesting, but fail to be connected into a coherent whole. Rather, the form is that of a loose essay, combining reviewing literature and commentary with asides, interludes, and personal stories and anecdotes. The relatively popular character of “Language in Prehistory” does make it accessible to non-specialists, which is certainly a virtue – but it does come at a price. The description goes in-breadth rather than in-depth, and some very general assertions, such as that language is inseparable from culture, cognition, or even myth (95) do not always unpack into adequate specifics. Some subtleties are necessarily lost, as for example when the author makes straight-forward inferences from having the modern FOXP2 mutation to having language (e.g., 111, 123, 130; admittedly with some caveats). Finally, the picture of language emergence would be more complete with a discussion of several lines of laboratory research such as cultural evolution experiments or experimental semiotics, which in the last decade have become probably the most important source of evidence for the field of language evolution.

Consequently, “Language in Prehistory” is somewhat disappointing; this is especially so, coming from such an accomplished author of imposing academic stature. The reader will be hard-pressed to find a central motif, a unifying theme, or even the “red thread” that would afford the coherence necessary to bind the book together. A potential central claim is the importance of the narrative and myth-making functions of language for its origins (xi, 54): complex language was needed to tell stories. (So, a “narrative theory,” as opposed to, e.g., a “foraging theory” or “memetic theory [53 f.]. These are of course just descriptive labels, not theories in a technical sense.) Barnard indeed addresses these points repeatedly and from different angles, but just stops short of developing the many valuable insights into systematic argumentation.

When it comes to the advantages, the breadth of Barnard's scholarship is impressive. The author reviews a good selection of more or less specific arguments made in the field of language evolution, and even to readers broadly familiar with this literature, the book offers some new insights. One example is a useful review of the ranges of dates that have been put on the earliest origins of language and/or human behavioural and cognitive modernity (35–38, 110–113). From today's perspective, it is also interesting to observe how over the last decade Barnard's own estimate of 130,000 years (as a minimum for “early language”, e.g., 24, 110, 131) has gone from a bold to a mainstream or maybe even conservative one.

Perhaps the greatest strength of “Language in Prehistory” derives from its anthropological point of view – par-

ticularly valuable given how anthropology is underrepresented in language evolution. In this respect, Barnard's book is a useful reminder of fascinating facts that we are otherwise prone to overlook – especially facts about hunter-gatherers, such as their intellectual sophistication or pervasive multilingualism.

Sławomir Waciewicz

**Bharadwaj, Aditya:** *Conceptions. Infertility and Procreative Technologies in India.* New York: Berghahn Books, 2016. 292 pp. ISBN 978-1-78533-230-2. (Fertility, Reproduction, and Sexuality, 34) Price: \$ 110.00

Aditya Bharadwaj introduces the book describing how traditional and modern interpretations permeate each other to engage with reproductive technologies. It is a challenging research idea to tread as “modern” or “traditional” fluid entities and it is very difficult to draw a line between the two. The author expresses the cultural disjunction between the metaphors of baby-making as “natural” (*prakriti*) and “biomedical” (technology). He talks about contemporary Hindu interpretations that connect the imagined past to the present and the present to the imagined future, especially with reference to nuclear bombs, aircraft, IVF, surrogacy, and stem cell technologies. These are claims that cannot be proved or disproved. The author refers to Ramayana and Mahabharata, Rigveda, Upanishad, Arthashastra, Manu script as classic traditional texts, while biomedicine is defined as a modern entity. He clearly states that he does not want to engage in a discourse on whether this produces innocuous, expedient consequences or whether India faces a “mistaken modernity.” His argument is that interpretations that draw on the past do not establish a truthful and objective narration of the present. He says that contemporary Indian reality, that is seemingly modern, is traditional inwardly and those traditional concerns that appear to be traditional are in fact curious interpretations within its cultural context. This book intends to raise concerns about how traditional cosmological frameworks shape beliefs and norms about human (in)fertility, which in turn produces stigma and suffering, and how patients and clinicians make sense of the success and failure of biomedicine in the wider context of Hindu traditions.

A detailed review of culture and infertility in chap. 1 refers to Vedic and Puranic texts in interpretations describing sperms as “seed” and womb as a “field,” idealized role of motherhood, symbolization of a son as an accomplishment of fatherhood, and notions of female purity, among others. He refers to the Manu script, in which the presence of the seed would mean the male receives primacy but the absence of the seed would mean that the field gains prominence (donor insemination). Male fertility, hence, can easily be overcome by replacing his seed with his brother's, but not the field (the womb). These understandings, he says, place a higher burden of fertility on women which, according to him, is disseminated through dramatization of the epics in media. According to the author, the *niyoga* model provides explanation for accepting new reproductive technologies such as donor insemina-