

Buschmann, Rainer F.: Anthropology's Global Histories. The Ethnographic Frontier in German New Guinea, 1870–1935. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009. 234 pp. ISBN 978-0-8248-3184. Price: \$ 55.00

In the past few decades Anthropology has rediscovered History, but in the eyes of Buschmann and some others the merging of the two disciplines has been somewhat parochial, focused on “the local understanding of a particular society's historical development” (1). His preference is for “global histories” that deal with the “dynamic interplay between metropole and periphery” (3), in which the metropole provided the theoretical framework for the practice of ethnography and ethnology, with the periphery supplying the data. At least for the 19th and much of the 20th centuries, such projects would seem to promise new insights for issues regarding the relationship between Anthropology and colonialism. In Buschmann's view, “One would be hard pressed to find a better test case than German New Guinea to investigate the interaction between the ethnographic frontier and its interplay with the multitude of colonial projects existing in the Pacific Ocean” (9).

The reader should be alert to the point that by “ethnographic” Buschmann means, for the most part, “ethnographica,” i.e., artifacts. In 1886, soon after the establishment of the new colony of German New Guinea, an independent Museum of Ethnology was established in Berlin, with Adolf Bastian as its first director. Artifacts in the form of carvings, masks, and other objects were already flooding into Germany, eventually by the tens of thousands, from New Guinea and elsewhere in Germany's colonial realm. There arose a huge market on the Continent for these pieces, valued as art by many as they were by others as manifestations of societies in the early stages of social evolution. Bastian was interested less in the objects themselves than in the “elementary thought processes” that produced them, as evidence of the “psychic unity” of mankind. Colonial officers were requested to collect as many of these as possible from Melanesia, seen as less tainted by “Civilization” than, say, Polynesia, although the German Colonial office regarded this as an unwelcome distraction from their administrative duties.

Drawing upon archival materials, Buschmann leads us through the intense competition and rivalry that developed towards the turn of the 20th century between Bastian's museum and others that were created during this time. “Ethnographica” were for some a commercial bonanza, while for others their collection and display served as witnesses of Germany's colonial greatness. The various museums soon were sending large expeditions, with professional collectors sweeping the Southwest Pacific of all that their ships could carry.

However, Bastian, and his successor, Felix von Luschan, wanted more than objects for display cases; for Luschan, “*primary collecting* shifted the emphasis of ethnographic study away from material culture to a careful consideration of the indigenous mentalities entering artifact production. In other words, primary collection carried with it the germ of intensive fieldwork among indigenous peoples” (70, emphasis added). Towards that

end, Berlin's preference was for trained ethnographers to spend long periods of time in single communities, as Emil Stephan had done on New Britain and Edgar Walden on New Ireland. Luschan also sent Richard Thurnwald to Bougainville (and later to the Sepik interior of New Guinea), with the support of Albert Hahl, the governor of German New Guinea, who saw such intensive fieldwork as a way to obtain census and linguistic data of value for administrative purposes. Buschmann views these early instances of intensive fieldwork as “German 'Malinowskian' Moments” (113), but they were not to bring about a revolution in German Anthropology comparable to what occurred in Great Britain after the War. The author appears to attribute this difference largely to accidents of history, as Stephan died in the field, Walden died early in World War I, and Thurnwald was interned by the Australians during that same conflict. Other factors, though, included the continuing competition among museums, delays or even suppression of publication as the “ethnographica” continued to pile up in museum storerooms, and a persistent emphasis on the part of German anthropologists on description and classification – of societies as well as of objects – as evolutionary interests gave way to diffusionist preoccupations.

It could be argued that one difference between British and German development of ethnography and ethnology during the time periods Buschmann is mainly concerned with (the 1880s through the 1920s), but left unaddressed by him, is that British Anthropology at that time was based largely in universities rather than museums, except as these were attached to universities. Buschmann's analysis would be strengthened by a clearer and fuller discussion of what was happening, or what was not, in that part of the German metropole.

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“Visual Sense. A Cultural Reader” is the latest volume in the innovative Sensory Formations series overseen by David Howes and published by Berg. The series consists of a collection of readers that are each dedicated to exploring a different sense, including: “The Auditory Culture Reader”; “The Book of Touch”; “The Smell Culture Reader”; “The Taste Culture Reader” and the more general examination of sensory life: “Empire of the Senses.” Taken as a whole, the series offers a comprehensive overview of the major theoretical approaches pertaining to the sensory dimensions of social, cultural, and political life, and as such provides a timely response to the “sensory revolution” that is taking place across the social sciences, arts, and humanities.

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