

**Geismar, Haidy, and Anita Herle:** *Moving Images.* John Layard, *Fieldwork and Photography on Malakula since 1914.* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010. 308 pp., ph. ISBN 978-0-8248-3503-3. Price: \$ 90.00

Early field photography in Melanesia has been handsomely served, with whole monographs devoted to the images of Bronislaw Malinowski, Frank Hurley, F. E. Williams and now John Layard. But where the treatments of the first three were restricted largely to the reproduction of images and documents from the archives, Haidy Geismar and Anita Herle have added a much more challenging – and rewarding – emphasis on repatriation of the images to source communities in Vanuatu. The result sets a new standard for the research, treatment, and publication of historical photography in the Pacific.

A student of W. H. R. Rivers, who rather summarily abandoned him at his field site on Malekula in the New Hebrides in 1914, John Layard has been something of a forgotten figure in the early history of British anthropology, failing to find his place in the canonical origin myths that every discipline invents for itself. The authors seek, in part, to redress this oversight, couching their account of his photography within the broader frame of Layard's career, from field anthropology through his devastating breakdown to psychoanalysis. Their sketch of the circumstances in which Layard arrived on Atchin Island, off Malekula, provides an excellent introduction to consideration of his field methods and experiences, and to his publications, including the much-delayed book, "Stone Men of Malekula" (London 1942).

Visual documentation, the authors argue, played a central part in Layard's field method, and their approach is itself experimental, interspersing their own essays on his photography and on the role of his images in visualising the past on the islands of Atchin and Vao with photo-essays that privilege the experience of the visual, supplemented by Layard's own captions. Two further chapters round out the volume, the first a previously unpublished review by Layard of contact between Atchin Islanders and Europeans, and the second an extended account by the former curator of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, Kirk Huffman, on the intersection between Layard's life and work, and the development of cultural policies and practices in newly independent Vanuatu.

Layard was an enthusiastic photographer, producing almost 450 quarter-size glass plate negatives during the approximately nine months he spent in the New Hebrides; more than 200 of these, most previously unpublished, are reproduced in this volume, uncropped and unretouched, frequently marked by cracks in the plate and other blemishes, furnishing the reader with a strong sense of the materiality of image production in the field. A crucial breakthrough in the authors' research was the re-discovery at the University of California, San Diego, of Layard's original captions, which enabled the images to be sequenced correctly and to be placed more precisely within the context of his field notes and other writings. Layard's choice of subject over time is revealing of his developing familiarity with his host communities, as well as his strongly individual sense of the appropriate. He focused on cap-

turing the visibility of ritual life during a revival of local interest in recovering earlier practices, aided no doubt by his presence and enquiries. The absences in his oeuvre are revealing: there is not a single image designed to register anthropometric details (which cannot have pleased Haddon back in Cambridge), there are very few images of women, and certain critical moments in rituals that he witnessed and described were left uncaptured by his camera, registering instead as absences or silences.

Haidy Geismar's lucid and self-critical account of the repatriation of Layard's photographs to Malakula is exemplary in its awareness of the politics and ethics of recirculation of historical materials. An early visit to Vao in 2000 to work with local carvers ignited an interest in Layard's photos, with which she returned in 2003, and then again in 2006, this time with Layard's captions. Interviews organised around the images, and the restaging of certain images at original locations, opened the door to an entirely novel set of perspectives on the contexts and content of each image. Geismar has written powerfully elsewhere of the politics and the struggles over ownership and interpretation that attended her repatriation of Layard's images. Rather than simply distributing images amongst the Atchin and Vao communities, Geismar, Herle, and Malakula Cultural Centre director, Numa Fred Longga, have also produced a beautiful booklet, dense with photographs and written entirely in Bislama (Haidy Geismar, Anita Herle, Numa Fred Longga, "John Layard long Malakula 1914–1915" [Cambridge 2007]) – a substantial material return to the source communities.

Two minor reservations in conclusion: Mr. Wright, who appears in more Layard photographs than any other European (pages 157, 159, 283 in this book) and whose house generated the ruins on which Geismar sat for many of her interviews, was not a trader, as the authors infer from his activities. Alfred E. Wright was an Adventist licentiate missionary, present on Atchin from March 1914 while the head of the mission, Calvin Parker, was on furlough. Prominent in the photographs as a contemporary and possible occasional companion in the field, Wright, who is strikingly absent from Layard's field notes and his autobiography, stands for a different kind of silence. Secondly, Geismar and Herle are surely correct in emphasising "the role of the visual not merely as illustration but as a methodological tool" (117) in Layard's "Stone Men," yet the 39 photographs in his book are out-numbered by 88 line drawings and sketches. The relationships between Layard's field sketches, photographs, and line drawings from photographs are scarcely explored here, but it must be important to understand when (and what) he chose to draw rather than photograph, and what his grounds were for selecting line drawings over photographs in his publications, beyond the simple exigencies of cost. Geismar and Herle close with a delightful photo of Layard's friend, Ma-taru, inscribing the length of Layard's nose on the shoulder of his daughter – mirroring the closing illustration in "Stone Men," which is an indifferent line drawing of the same beautiful if imperfect original glass plate photograph.

Chris Ballard