
REVIEWS

Willie Dari, Vasiti Ligairi, and Solange Petit-Skinner, *Adolescents in Fiji*.
San Francisco: MacDuff Press, 1994. Pp. 128. US\$15.

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THIS INTRIGUING MONOGRAPH is co-authored by two Fijian researchers, Willie Dari and Vasiti Ligairi, and Solange Petit-Skinner, a French researcher trained in both anthropology and psychology who has considerable experience in the Pacific. The research on which this work is based was conducted, apparently in the early 1980s, under the aegis of the French Ethnological Mission of Fiji, which was directed by Petit-Skinner and funded by France's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The mission's goal was to train Fijian researchers, have them tape-record Fijian traditions to establish an archive of indigenously gathered materials, and then have these researchers publish a series of monographs about various themes in Fijian culture based on the materials. Although the mission was closed during the political turmoil of the late 1980s, an archive of thirteen hundred tape cassettes has been deposited with the Fijian government. In 1985 the first of a series of three projected books was published: *Fijian Protocol*, by Dari and Petit-Skinner (San Francisco: MacDuff Press). This book, published nine years later, is the second of the series. The third of the series, featuring the research of Leata Saunua on birth rituals, will be published sometime in the future.

This monograph is divided into three parts: (1) "Circumcision," based on the interviews conducted by Dari; (2) "First Menstruation," based on the interviews conducted by Ligairi; and (3) "Interviews about Puberty in Fiji," which features transcripts of two of the interviews used by the authors.

Petit-Skinner states that she trained her colleagues in the nondirective, psychological interviewing techniques of Carl Rogers, designed to allow the persons being interviewed to express themselves freely about the topic, raising and elaborating on themes they consider important. This strategy carries over into the syntheses based on the interviews, for the descriptions of circumcision and first menstruation are written very much from a Fijian point of view without the overt intrusion of Western methodological and theoretical concerns. In addition to the technical and social details of circumcision and first menstruation, we therefore learn much about how Fijians feel about these two events. For example, the authors stress how proud the boys are to have gone through this portal into adulthood and to have endured the pain of having their foreskins cut--though now usually done with a razor blade rather than a bamboo knife. (Incidentally, the term "supercision" might be preferable to "circumcision" in that the top of the foreskin is slit, not cut all the way around and removed. The distinction is important, for, according* to a Fijian expert quoted [p. 37], the operation leaves the two halves of the foreskin bunched up underneath the head of the penis for "the pleasure of the two partners" that is part of "the sweetness of life.") In the last few pages of the menstruation chapter, the authors do venture some generalizations about the symbolism of the blood shed with supercision and first menstruation, but these too are linked to Fijian beliefs rather than exogenous theories. It is this focus on the Fijian view that makes this modest monograph particularly valuable.

In addition, I would like to commend the strategy on which this project was based. In the 1830s an American missionary, Sheldon Dibble, was teaching on Maui Island, Hawaii, at the Lahainaluna School, which had been set up to train Hawaiian teachers for missionary schools. Dissatisfied with the lack of teaching materials on Hawaiian culture and history, Dibble organized a seminar of his best and brightest pupils to do field research on Hawaiian traditions to develop the needed corpus of materials. This initiative stimulated a number of the members of that seminar, notably David Malo and Samuel Manaiakalani Kamakau, to go on to a lifetime of research and writing on Hawaiian traditions, the results of which now provide some of our best sources on Hawaiian culture and history. Although Petit-Skinner's initiative might seem to have come too late to have a comparable impact on indigenous Fijian scholarship, judging from the evident enthusiasm of both her colleagues and the elders they interviewed it may well be that her efforts will extend, through the continued research and writing of her Fijian colleagues, long past the short duration of the French Ethnological Mission.