

Patrick O'Reilly, *Tahiti au temps de la reine Pomare*. Paris: Société des Océanistes Publication No. 37 and Les Editions du Pacifique, 1976. Pp. 239. 45 frs.

Rarely can a scholar today so dominate a field of historical research as to be justified in calling it his own. One who can is Father O'Reilly whose pre-eminence in the field of Tahitian scholarship remains virtually unchallenged. From his previous works on Tahitian culture, we have come to expect a scholarly look at Tahitian society. This new publication does not disappoint us in this regard. As suggested by the title, this erudite publication about Queen Pomare IV of Tahiti tells more than just the historical account of the queen's long and troubled reign (1827-1877). It opens the doors and windows on a past age and lets us examine Tahiti of a hundred years ago.

Nineteenth century Tahitian culture is brought to life through his use of an interesting literary style that is thoroughly documented by the use of published and unpublished works: the weekly news of Papeete called the *Messenger de Tahiti*, the eye-witness accounts of Alexander Salmon (the famous English merchant and landowner in Papeete), and by the various letters and reports housed in the French Archives in Paris not immediately available to other Pacific scholars. He frequently quotes from these sources and lets the people speak for themselves. Nothing escapes his view. He presents fascinating details from the speeches given in the legislative assembly to the evening entertainment sponsored by the queen. His chapters on economic life are especially valuable since most histories so often ignore these activities and concen-

trate on the more popular political struggle between England and France. Fortunately, Father O'Reilly spares us all these details.

The book begins with a chapter that briefly describes the queen's parentage, her ascension to the throne, her palace, personal possessions, and personality. It ends with a chapter written in a solemn manner that describes her death and the funeral rites held for this beloved queen.

Between these two chapters are interesting sections that deal with many phases of Tahitian life: the government, the early whaling boats in Tahiti, commercial negotiations in Papeete, the important religious groups (Protestants, Catholics, and Mormons), everyday hygiene and medicine, communications and the postal system, the intellectual life and education, and, of course, entertainment. In a relatively slight book for so extensive a topic, there are bound to be oversights. The book, however, is an example of how much can be gleaned from an apparently very limited source, and of how such a wide variety of subjects can be covered in such a short space.

Overall, Father O'Reilly does a creditable job of achieving his stated goal of showing Tahitian life as it was during the reign of Queen Pomare IV. This work is a piece of research and scholarship that students of all levels of Pacific history will find helpful and entertaining.

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