

Sterling Robbins, *Auyana: Those Who Held onto Home*. Anthropological Studies in the Eastern Highlands of New Guinea, No. 6. Washington: University of Washington Press, 1982. Pp. 274, illustrations \$35.00.

This volume is an ethnographic monograph, albeit a very unusual one. The people described are the Auyana, one of the four Eastern Highlands groups studied in the New Guinea Microevolution Project. Using social organization as a focus, the volume examines the interrelationships among Auyana social structure, warfare, wealth, and marriage.

Ethnographic studies generally concentrate on the results of a researcher's analysis rather than the process by which these results were

reached. This volume, in contrast, takes the reader through Robbins' field experiences and learning processes, explaining in detail the manner in which classifications were made, and providing the "raw" quantitative data concerning Auyana attributes and activities on which Robbins' analysis is based. In working "from scratch," Robbins has rejected conventional terms of social organization in favor of three social units central to Auyana society: sovereignties, pooling units, and subpooling units. Although this nomenclature will be unfamiliar to the anthropological reader, Robbins does a creditable job of defining and describing each of these units, which proves to be useful in understanding the fluidity of social groupings in New Guinea.

The volume is the sixth to be published in the series "Anthropological studies in the Eastern Highlands of New Guinea," and the second ethnography. As such, it is an integral part of what promises to be a detailed, controlled comparison of four related groups living to the south and east of Kainantu. This linkage with a broader project has resulted in an unexpected positive feature in the current volume. The four project ethnographers were asked to gather comparable data using Murdock et al., *Outline of Cultural Materials* (1950). Such basic ethnographic data is presented in Robbins' second chapter, "A Framework," and is exactly the sort of valuable comparative material that other researchers frequently seek but rarely find in most problem-oriented anthropological monographs. Unfortunately, however, the potential usefulness of this body of data is reduced by the book's rather superficial two-page index.

While the rejection of conventional modes of analysis has its benefits, there are certain drawbacks that are apparent in this volume. Unconventional units of analysis make a scan reading of the volume difficult if not impossible. Tables are very complicated, sometimes unnecessarily so. Many contain alphanumeric designations for various categories where a gloss would be more comprehensible. Titles are not always informative. Table 30, for example, is entitled "Fights between Sovereignties: Much Interaction." Without reading the associated text, it is not apparent that the numbers in the table represent homicide deaths rather than skirmishes, fights, and so on.

Furthermore, it is not always obvious to the reader how the categories in tables were collapsed for statistical testing. This is of particular concern since at least part of the analysis is incorrect. For example, on page 129 Robbins states, "Table 11 affirms this and the difference is significant, at α .05 level in the Chi square test for significance." Yet, by inspection, Table 11 did not look significant, and indeed my own calculations show that it is not (Chi square = 1.58, d.f. = 1, $p > .05$).

The ethnographic present for the volume is the early 1960s, and the monograph is a reworking of the author's 1970 Ph.D. thesis. Unfortunately, when the 1970 manuscript was revised, current literature was not considered and the theoretical present for the volume is still 1970. Sixty percent of the sources cited in the bibliography are from the 1960s, and some 84 percent are from the 1950s and 1960s. Of the six sources more recent than 1970, five are largely courtesy references to the other volumes in the series.

In general, the lack of concern with contemporary literature does little damage to the basic ethnography, which is excellent. In a few places, however, inaccuracies have crept in. For example, on page 182 Robbins states, "Although fighting in the Highlands of New Guinea has often been described as 'intense' no authors have provided systematic quantitative data on the intensity." While this may have been true in 1970, it is certainly not true now. Meggitt's excellent monograph, *Blood Is Their Argument* (1977), immediately comes to mind as a counterexample.

Despite all these criticisms, the book is, in balance, an excellent ethnography and a valuable contribution. It was researched at a time when precontact patterns came readily to the minds of informants, and these basic data are timeless. A twenty-five year history of Auyana warfare is particularly useful. The volume provides some interesting insights into the nature and fluidity of social organization in New Guinea and suggests some testable propositions about the relationship between warfare and other social phenomena.

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