Shirley Lindenbaum. *Kuru Sorcery: Disease and Danger in the New Guinea Highlands.* Palo Alto, California: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1979. Paper. Pp. xii, 174, illustrations, maps, bibliography, index, glossary. $4.95.

Those who enjoy a good detective story will be intrigued with Shirley Lindenbaum's book. *Kuru Sorcery* is about puzzling mysteries and the slow, sometimes frustrating search for clues and solutions. What causes kuru, a debilitating and fatal degenerative disorder of the central nervous system? *Who* causes kuru, and why? How do the Fore people of the Eastern Highlands of Papua, New Guinea cope with the social and biological devastation caused by kuru? What can we learn from kuru and the Fore? Lindenbaum ably answers these questions with an engaging writing style all too often absent from anthropological works.

Lindebaum first guides us through the process of discovering the cause of kuru. Patrol officers formed the first hypothesis, that kuru was psychosomatic, but observation of kuru victims in a clinical setting led medical researchers to reject this idea. They then speculated that, because of its localization in a small breeding population, kuru had a genetic basis.

However, anthropologists demonstrated that many of the supposed genetic relationships between victims were actually forms of fictive kinship. Furthermore, they documented the slow spread of kuru among the Fore during the twentieth century. The incidence of kuru seemed to be correlated with the introduction and dispersion of endocannibalism in the south Fore region. Kuru affected those who were cannibals, namely, mature and productive women. Where cannibalism was on the decrease, the incidence of kuru was also falling. Epidemiological evidence suggested that kuru was caused by a slow virus, transmitted through Fore funerary customs. A medical model for kuru had been found, although the virus itself has not yet been isolated.

For the Fore, the question of "what causes kuru" was simple to answer: kuru is but one of many forms of sorcery. Who was causing kuru, and why, were the real problems. Kuru sorcery disrupted Fore society: in a single decade, 1,100 people in a population of 8,000 fell victim to the disease. Its victims were mainly child-bearing, pig-raising, gardening women, the mainstay of Fore society. Once-powerful men were reduced to "rubbish men" as their wives died. They could no longer participate in the exchanges and redistributions of wealth on which they had built their reputations. The increase in kuru both raised and reflected political animosities, as once-friendly neighboring groups came under suspicion of harboring and encouraging kuru sorcerers. The Fore world had become one of chaos, confusion, and distrust.

Lindenbaum documents the Fore search for resolution of the physical and social problems posed by unchecked kuru sorcerers. She presents us with an "epidemiology of social relationships." Kuru is not the only disease caused by sorcerers, and sorcerers are not the only causal factor of diseases. Sorcery and disease in Fore society can only be understood in the context of social organization. Fictive kinship affiliations predicated on the exchange of food are an important feature of Fore social organization, but these affiliations are brittle, and one always fears betrayal by one's neighbors. Thus, danger lies not only outside the community: danger lurks within. Fore attempts to curb kuru reflect this evaluation. At first, the Fore sought physical cures from Gimi and other outside groups. When that failed, they used old, but disregarded, large-scale associations to call meetings denouncing the practice of kuru. Their search had turned inward, and they pleaded with one another to stop the killing.

As Lindenbaum sees it, the underlying problem, of which kuru sorcery is a manifestation, is one of dominance, power, and marginality. Therein lies a lesson for us all: we fear those we dominate and those who are mar-

ginal to our existence because they have the power to disrupt our world. To the "haves," tyranny and chaos are the tools of the "have-nots,"

This is an important book in several respects. It is timely in that it deals with current issues in medical anthropology and the study of cannibalism. It is timeless because it discusses age-old human conditions of fear and despair. Lindenbaum treats the Fore and their condition sympathetically, setting an excellent standard for anthropological reporting. Such treatment does not cloud an engaging analysis and the presentation of ideas on sorcery and social change, formation of groups and boundaries, and other themes.

The analysis does have its weak points, however. In particular, the argument on pollution and sorcery could bear some rethinking. At one point, we learn that "Sorcery is a severe case of pollution." Two pages later, sorcery is convincingly disassociated from pollution. Conceptual refinement and clarification would help here. Overall, though, the integrity of the work does not suffer from the few weak points.

Footnotes at the bottom of the pages rather than at the end of the book would have preserved continuity for the reader and would have lessened the reader's sense of frustration.

Kuru Sorcery's minor drawbacks are far outweighed by the breadth and depth of ideas presented. It is a provocative work that has appeal for a wide audience, and I highly recommend it for scholars and students alike.

Marty Zelenietz
Department of Anthropology
St. Mary's University
Dalhousie University
Halifax, Canada