

Leslie B. Marshall, ed., *Infant Care and Feeding in the South Pacific*. Food and Nutrition in History and Anthropology, vol. 3. New York: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1985. Pp. 355. \$58.00 hardcover.

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Not merely a child health manual for the South Pacific as the title might suggest, this volume is broadly significant for those who are interested in women, children, food, or health. By discussing the factors influencing the feeding of infants in changing Pacific societies, the contributors highlight many critical issues of human welfare in the region. This is a well-integrated collection of nineteen papers that grew out of a symposium of the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania, held in 1983 following a working session on the same topic in 1982. Readers of

Ecology of Food and Nutrition will already have seen twelve of the nineteen papers, which are reprinted from that journal.

Fifteen of the papers are predominantly ethnographic. Of these, ten are concerned with Papua New Guinea (Marshall, Jenkins et al., Lepowsky, Montague, Conton, Tietjen, Barlow, Counts, Chowning, Carrier). Two deal with the Solomon Islands (Akin, Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo), two with Fiji (Morse, Katz), and one with Western Samoa (Nardi). The distribution of societies was opportunistic, and readers should be cautious about generalizing from this sample to the Pacific as a whole, or even to all of Papua New Guinea. (In all fairness, the editor and discussants do not encourage us to draw such inferences.) The PNG papers mostly concentrate on middle-income rural areas, neglecting all of the least developed, westernmost provinces, which regularly report the highest levels of malnutrition and infant and toddler mortality. At the other end of the spectrum, lacking papers from the Highlands and the affluent provinces of East New Britain and North Solomons, we cannot easily judge how infant feeding is affected by women's participation in cash cropping. One contribution of this publication will be to serve as a model for and encourage this needed research.

Marshall's own research in Port Moresby, in addition to providing data on urban infant feeding (chap. 2), positioned her to communicate her enthusiasm to other researchers entering PNG to undertake the field studies that produced several of the other papers. Her contribution thus goes beyond that of editor and conference organizer to that of midwife for research.

The authors are predominantly women anthropologists, and the several whose disciplinary origins are outside cultural anthropology have also made use of ethnographic methods. Even so, the papers are methodologically diverse. They confirm the value of combining complementary methods including direct observations of behavior, interviews, and biomedical data such as measurements of children's weight, height, and upper arm circumference and food consumption. The most sophisticated among the papers is the one by Jenkins, Orr-Ewing, and Heywood, who collected high-quality data of all these types. However, some of the papers with the thinnest data, relying on anecdotal participant-observer data from fieldwork in which infants were not even the major topic of research, make trenchant observations of special usefulness to health workers. Montague, for instance, notes the discrepancy between the Trobriand dietary ideal (yams/taro), which is likely to be emphasized in responding to nutrition surveys, and the actual foods eaten by Trobriand children.

Four discussants provide commentary on the ethnographic papers. Bambi Schieffelin notes that beliefs and social context influence feeding choices, which vary among individuals as well as across the societies. Biddulph comments as a pediatrician with special interest in breast-feeding. Gussler draws together threads concerning women's work, noting what is perhaps the most striking of the general findings: that even rural women in subsistence economies may find it difficult to combine breast-feeding with their extra-household subsistence tasks. Van Esterik praises the contribution that the papers make to major questions of cultural anthropology beyond the applied/health care area and the Pacific region.

Since some may balk at paying this price for an inexpensively bound text edition with many of the papers available elsewhere, purchasers should note that they may write the publisher, Gordon and Breach, for details of a book discount plan called the Science and Arts Society. Pacific ethnographers and other students of social change will find this valuable and stimulating source of data on too-often neglected interactions among women's economic activities, social organization, the socialization of children, cultural beliefs about food, and health. a