

***Moving Images: John Layard, Fieldwork and Photography on Malakula since 1914.* Haidy Geismar and Anita Herle. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010. 320 pp ***

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The photographs published in *Moving Images* were taken by John Layard in 1914-1915 and are now housed in the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge. Although the images themselves are unremarkable in the eyes of this reviewer, the presentation and use of this collection are exceptional. The authors' research projects involving these historical photographs also included an exhibit of selected images mounted in Malakula and the publication of a native language version of this book.

Photographs are fragments of the past and we must have information from the photographer, subjects, and viewers to ground our analysis. This book touches all these bases and does so in an original format. The different voices presented include those of the original photographer, scholars, and descendants of the New Hebrides people, the Malakulans who were the subjects of the photographs. It is a groundbreaking "how to" project using archival photographs. Although the Pacific Islanders are not my area of specialization, I could hardly put the book down.

The basic structure alternates essay chapters and photo essay chapters. The photo essays include a variety of subjects, both traditional culture, such as Stone Men (Chapter 2), and the ceremony of initiation (Chapter 6), as well as the transitional culture, including the consecration of a non-indigenous whaler boat, a substitute for their more traditional sea-going canoes (Chapter 8). In some of the photo essays the images are presented in the order assembled by Layard in his personal photograph album, giving us insight into what the photographer's perspective was on various topics. The authors use Layard's own captions, based on his original field data that include indigenous words, names of people, places and dates, and technical information on his camera's recording. This is about as close as one can get to the original photographer's intent and presence. One of Herle's hypotheses is that Layard's photographs of individuals became increasingly personal. Although the photographer in no way "went native," Herle suggests that Layard's photographs "impart an intensity marked by their immediacy and strength of emotion. His photographs reveal an ethnographic presence not always framed by the palpable separation of observer and observed" (109). As a reader new to the subject, I am not sure I agree with Herle's observation that these images depict "strength of emotion" on Layard's part. Re-contextualized over time, Layard's photographs were used in his professional publications, his colleagues' work (he generously shared his photos with other scholars), an academic archive, and then returned to the original community.

In the essay chapters the authors use text from three generations of viewers. The historical account of Layard's early fieldwork in Chapters 1 and 3 grounds the reader in Malakula culture and gives insight into British social anthropology in the early 20th century. The Chapter 5 essay is from an unpublished manuscript by Layard written for a colleague, Tom Harrison, some 20

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years after Layard's initial fieldwork and shows "how Layard continued to creatively re-engage with his own material over the years" (146). Chapter 7 is an essay based on an account by Kirk Huffman, the Curator of the Vanuatu Cultural Center 1977-1989, who gave up his academic work to become an advocate for the Malakula population. This chapter depicts the "continuing engagement [of Layard's material] with the people of Malakula up until his [Layard] death in 1974 and demonstrates the importance of his work for academic researchers and ni-Vanuatu" (207) who re-claimed practices in recent times that were central to their development of a national and cultural identity. Huffman's efforts culminated in 1989 when his indigenous counterparts took over the running of the cultural center. The final essay in Chapter 9 details how Geismar took Layard's photographs back to the communities in 2003 and sought "to encourage ni-Vanuatu to participate in the process of documenting and reflecting upon their own history, as well as to actively participate in museum projects and archival research around collections originally made within their own communities" (260). Her "walking with the photographs" re-photographing the images at their place of origin and the new data that were gathered from this technique were well described and fascinating (264-270). Geismar demonstrates how the importance of photography as evidence goes far beyond what most of us are accustomed to imagine: evidence was more than just recognition of people and places, but "an important figuration of history, an embodiment of both an event and its subsequent narration" (282). Geismar equates the scholarship of looking at photographs with the interpretative practice of archaeology, "in that a material image may be interpreted as a fragment of the past in the present, which however needs to be made whole by interpretive narration... photographs, generally thought of as two-dimensional images, thus need to be made analogous to three-dimensional places and persons" (277). This is a novel way of describing photo research. That the indigenous people inspired this metaphor is revealing of how much there is to learn from the present-day descendants of the original subjects.

Having said the above, this reviewer must note that the publisher did not provide top quality photo reproductions. The press did a conscientious job of printing the full images of the 200 black and white photographs, but whether it was the paper used or the process of printing from digital scans, rather than directly from "best quality glossy prints" made from the original glass negatives, the published images suffered. The scholarly usefulness of the book was also diminished by the fact that no index was provided. Despite these problems the book is a must for any scholar who is looking for methods to integrate archival photos into their research. The book was the winner of the Society for Visual Anthropology's Collier Award for 2012 an award given for a work that achieves excellence in the use of photographs to communicate anthropological knowledge.

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