

WALKER, ANTHONY R. (ed.). *Pika-Pika: The Flashing Firefly. Essays to Honour and Celebrate the Life of Pauline Hetland Walker (1938–2005)*. New Delhi: Hindustan Publishing Corporation, 2009. Pp. xv + 489. ISBN: 81-7075-087-3.

The title of this volume, *Pika-Pika*, is a Japanese onomatopoeic expression for the flashing of fireflies. The image, the editor tells us, uniquely captures the special quality of the life that the book honors. This life was that of the editor's wife, Pauline, who died in March 2005 after a long battle with cancer.

The book comprises twenty essays written by academic colleagues and friends of the Walkers, most of them anthropologists. These are arranged under seven headings reflecting Pauline's primary interests in life: 1) music, song and dance; 2) literature, poetry and the stage; 3) pottery; 4) handicrafts; 5) women's issues; 6) traditional healing; and 7) religious diversity, myth and ritual. Individual essays are topically diverse, ranging from an exploration of the biographical roots of an American jazz quartet to a quest for the origins of the El Dorado myth among the priest-healers of an Amerindian society, the Ika, of northeastern Colombia. Asia, however, looms large, particularly South, and most especially, Southeast Asia. This is understandable, as, among fellow anthropologists, the editor, who did fieldwork in both northern Thailand and Yunnan, is best known for his meticulous ethnography of the ritual life of the Lahu, a Tibeto-Burman-speaking people of the mountainous borderlands of mainland Southeast Asia and southwestern China.

Three essays in the collection deal with this same general region. One, a poignant account by Elizabeth Hinton, recalls, forty years later, Pwo Karen music-making through memories evoked by rereading field notes and listening to now all-but-forgotten tape recordings. A second essay, by the linguist James Matisoff, examines syntactic parallelism in Lahu religious poetry, while a third by Paul Cohen, 'In the footsteps of the Buddha', offers a fascinating account of the continuing relevance of pilgrimage narratives in Theravada Buddhism and the role of traveling monks in bringing about a present-day Buddhist renaissance among the Tai-speaking peoples of the upper Mekong and southwestern Yunnan. In a fourth essay, the longest essay in the collection, Tarun Chhabra describes the traditional costumes of the Toda, the first people with whom Anthony did fieldwork, including the famous embroidered cloaks worn by Toda adults and the embroidery motifs that embellish them.

In the section on women's issues, Richard Moore offers an insightful analysis of the changing nature of a women's fertility association devoted to the worship of the Mountain Goddess (*Yama no Kami*) in a rural village in the Tohoku region of northern Japan; Mary T. Howard writes on female circumcision in Tanzania; while Kim Myung-hye describes the appalling treatment of Korean women forced into sexual slavery during World War II and recent efforts to bring to light and make amends for the suffering they experienced.

In a much briefer essay, Deborah Akers describes the curing sessions of faith-healers in village Nepal; Shuichi Nagata writes on the commercialization of Native American crafts, in particular Hopi kachina images; and Erika Bourguignon speculates on the possible origins of human dance, drawing on her studies of African-derived ritual trance-dance traditions in Haiti.

Returning to Southeast Asia, two essays deal with Borneo. In the first, Tan Chee-Beng, a former student of Anthony, now Professor of Anthropology at the Chinese University of

Hong Kong, examines the material culture of a Badeng community in Sarawak. This he does in an illuminating way by describing how hand-crafted implements and domestic furnishings are, or at least were until recently, put to use by longhouse people in the course of an average day. In 1998, the community was uprooted from its home area, and forced to resettle in another district, as a result of the infamous Bakun hydro-electric project. In the second essay, Pudarno Binchin describes traditional Brunei Dusun methods of healing. A subtext of both these essays is a story of rapid cultural loss, intensified in the Badeng case by logging, deforestation, and involuntary resettlement. Two essays deal with Indonesia. In the first, the late Roger Long reflects on forty years of scholarly research to trace the impact of recent technical innovations—electric lighting, sound amplification, radio, television and commercial recording—on the seemingly ever-changing Javanese art of shadow puppetry. In the second paper, Gregory Forth follows up his recent book, *Nage Birds*, to explore two seemingly pan-Austronesian themes in Indonesian bird myths, one involving the transformation of a neglected child into a bird, the other the replacement of an absent parent or parents by a bird of prey.

In addition to carrying out fieldwork in India, Thailand and Yunnan, the Walkers, for more than twenty years, made Southeast Asia their home. Here, Anthony taught anthropology in Malaysia (1972–78), Singapore (1979–86), and, from 1999 to the present, in Brunei Darussalam. While Pauline frequently accompanied him in the field and, as Anthony tells us in his Introduction, from the time of their marriage onward, edited all of his published writings, it was while the couple lived in Singapore that Pauline found her own voice as a writer, particularly as a dance and theatre critic. Writing profusely throughout the 1980s, her special forte was Asian, particularly Indian, dance, and modern fusion styles incorporating different performance traditions. Vineeta Sinha, another former student of Anthony, now Associate Professor of Sociology at the National University of Singapore, in 'A felicitous meeting: Pauline Walker and the Singapore Indian Fine Arts Society', surveys Pauline's writings of this period. Noting that they not only gave encouragement to regional artists by bringing their work to critical notice, but that, from the perspective of the present, they now constitute an invaluable historical record documenting the development of the Singapore art scene during a period in which, as Sinha puts it, "the Republic was moving, with ever increasing rapidity, towards becoming a major multi-cultural centre for the performing arts" (p. 80).

The Walkers also lived for a time (1997–99) in Fiji, where Anthony was attached to the University of the South Pacific's Institute of Pacific Studies. Here, Pauline resumed writing and, through her friendship with the Fijian potter Taraivini Wati, renewed an earlier interest in pottery. Two essays in the collection reflect this connection. The first, by John and Jean McKinnon, describes the last remaining community of indigenous potters in Vanuatu, while the second, by Paul Gerghy, offers a culturally-informed biography of Taraivini Wati, the most famous Fijian potter of recent times, who died less than a year before Pauline herself, in 2004.

This reviewer was a teaching colleague of Anthony in the 1970s and 80s, both in Malaysia and Singapore, and is privileged to have been a friend of the Walkers ever since. Between them, Pauline and Anthony formed a remarkable partnership. Pauline, ever optimistic and generous of spirit, helped sustain, wherever the Walkers made their home, a lively, eclectic

BOOK REVIEWS AND CRITICAL ESSAYS

fellowship of friends, students, and fellow scholars to which this wide-ranging, highly readable volume bears fitting witness.

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