

# **Preface: Scholar, Teacher, Mentor, Friend: Essays in Honour of Martha Macintyre**

This volume emerges from a two-day gathering in February 2019 at the University of Melbourne to celebrate the work of Martha Macintyre, whose four decades of groundbreaking scholarship exemplify the contributions that anthropologists make to grappling with the challenges of inequality. The first day involved the presentation of tributes and celebratory papers by close colleagues, friends and former students, some of which can be found at the end of this volume. The day concluded with a celebratory dinner that featured somewhat raucous (and largely unpublishable) informal speeches by Colin Filer, Margaret Jolly, Mary Patterson and Deborah Gewertz. The second day comprised a scholarly workshop titled ‘The persistence of inequality in the Pacific’, in reference to Martha’s seminal 1998 paper on the persistence of gender inequality in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and her enduring ethnographic attention to the issue of inequality in its many guises.

Crossing the boundaries between academic and applied work, Martha’s research has focused on some of the most pressing problems that have been faced by Papua New Guineans: poverty, ill health, criminal violence and police violence, environmental destruction and the impacts of resource extraction. Throughout her corpus, she has tracked the effects of unequal power relationships between men and women. Whether writing of classic anthropological subjects such as Massim exchange and mortuary ritual or gender relations, masculinity, health and medicine, human rights, law and order, mining and development or political ecology, Martha has investigated the ways that unequal social relationships within and beyond indigenous societies generate physical, structural and symbolic

violence. Her work highlights distinctively Melanesian understandings of personhood but also always analyses cultural difference as emerging within a broader context of historical change.

In an era when anthropology, generally, and Melanesian anthropology, in particular, has tended towards abstractions—grand theorisations of the nature of the person, the cosmos or social relations—and where ethnographic detail is sometimes valued only for the ways it serves theory, Martha has given primacy to these wicked real-world problems of unequal social relations. She cuts through assumptions that are often taken for granted and prevailing ideologies to grasp better the experiences, frustrations and perspectives of those people that she writes about and collaborates with. Indeed, the force of her writing often comes from her indignation at the injustice of a world in which some lives are valued more than others, and access to resources and opportunities flow from these valuations.

Martha has continued to return to PNG, which is by no means an easy place to conduct research. Her sustained on-the-ground engagement with her ethnographic interlocutors, Papua New Guinean colleagues and co-researchers is evident in her writing, which is incisive and sophisticated but always written with a broader audience in mind. Martha is a former president of the Australian Anthropological Society, and she was editor of its flagship journal, *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, from 2008 to 2015. In 2012, she was elected a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia and she is a Life Fellow of the Australian Anthropological Society and the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania. She has inspired several generations of anthropologists with a remarkable legacy of teaching and mentoring. Moreover, she has been instrumental in laying down the foundations for a future generation of anthropologists to find new ways of making anthropology relevant and useful in the lives of others.

Here, we have merely sketched the contours of this remarkable career—we can do no better than to point readers to Neil Maclean's perceptive Prologue to discover Martha's multifaceted scholarship. The first chapter of this collection then orientates readers to the question of inequality in the Western Pacific, past and present, to situate the substance of this volume and the focus of Martha's research. The longer chapters that comprise this book take issues that have been at the core of her work as a starting point for exploring multiple dynamics and scales of inequality as we enter the

third decade of the twenty-first century. Margaret Jolly's characteristically cogent Interlude provides a moment to reflect upon the connecting themes throughout the volume, followed by a coda comprising an edited interview with Martha that charts her experiences and encounters with anthropology and a bibliography of her work to date. This provides the setting—or the *mise en scène*—for a series of personal tributes to Martha as scholar, teacher, mentor and friend.

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**Note: January 2021**

It is with deep sorrow we acknowledge one of our contributors who died in the days before this volume went to press. Fred Errington was a great friend to all of us and, together with the love of his life Deborah Gewertz, produced foundational studies of class and social change in Melanesia. Fred was a towering figure in anthropology and worked to encourage others and nurture their ideas. This volume carries the imprint of his collegiality and scholarship.

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