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### **Buschmann, Rainer F.: Hoarding New Guinea: Writing Colonial Ethnographic Collection Histories for Postcolonial Futures.**

284 pp. Lincoln: University Nebraska Press, 2023. ISBN 978-1-4962-3464-3

In his book *Hoarding New Guinea: Writing Colonial Ethnographic Collection Histories for Postcolonial Futures*, Rainer F. Buschmann offers a comprehensive analysis of the emergence and development of ethnographic collections from Papua New Guinea in the context of colonialism. During the colonial annexation period before the First World War, over a period of three decades (1885-1914), self-proclaimed collectors extracted most of the material collections that are kept in German Museums today. The author begins with an introduction to the history of collections created in a colonial context, with the help of a quotation from Hans Blum, a former planter's assistant and expedition member of the New Guinea Company. The quote sheds light on the colonial logic of the mass accumulation of material culture. Reasons for the collecting hype included the salvage paradigm<sup>1</sup> of preserving cultures, but also the desire for prestige, on the one hand on the part of the museums and on the other hand on the part of the acquirers, by awarding them medals of the German Empire. And of course, there were also economic factors. In the four chapters, Buschmann explores the values of cultural property in terms of exchange, trade, prestige, or propaganda. He uses the concept of fluidity to explain that values are created in a reciprocal process between Europeans and the local population. Case studies offer insights into colonial 'collecting practices' and their effects on indigenous communities. As an introduction to his detailed analysis of the intertwined histories of Papua New Guinea and Germany, the author uses the historical source criticism of publications. The source-critical analysis of correspondence from the colonial period between members of the New Guinea Company and German museums, as well as the correspondence between various actors in

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<sup>1</sup> This refers to the idea, widespread around 1900, that the material culture of non-European societies had to be saved because the people who produced them were doomed to extinction.

the colonies and Felix von Luschan on behalf of the Royal Museum of Ethnology (now the Ethnological Museum) in Berlin, offer various motives for the enormous appropriation. Other methodological approaches include archival research to reconstruct the histories of the collections and interviews. He calls the Europeans' insatiable pursuit of the material culture of the Pacific and its systematic appropriation or accumulation 'Hoarding' (p. 9).

By integrating various disciplines such as history, anthropology and cultural studies, Buschmann aims to draw a comprehensive picture of colonial networks. The theoretical framing is taken from a post-colonial theoretical framework, which he also uses to analyze the dynamics of power and representation. Ethnographic collections are presented as an expression of colonial power and control over indigenous cultures. The author also tries to work out the effects of these practices on the local people through their agency by recognizing the active exchange and trade with Europeans. Finally, he discusses current decolonization efforts and offers future-oriented strategies. The detailed appendix indicates the quantitative dimension of the hoarded collections in Europe.

The book's greatest strength is its careful balance between historical depth and contemporary relevance. From an anthropological perspective, the methodological approaches used by Buschmann did not fully consider the complexity and multi-layered nature of the knowledge systems of the Indigenous communities. Through his structured approach, however, Buschmann succeeds in illuminating the complex interrelationships between colonial history, ethnographic collections and current decolonization efforts, and in formulating well-founded proposals for future developments. He thus makes a contribution to current (specialist) debates on provenance research and restitution in museum anthropology. Unfortunately, there is no reflection on the author's own positioning. From a museum studies perspective, strategies are needed to come to terms with the past as mentioned, but also to enable future, fairer relations between former colonial powers and indigenous communities. The involvement of Indigenous communities in the reappraisal and restitution of cultural assets is essential. *Hoarding New Guinea* significantly contributes to the discussion about colonial collections and their future. It challenges museum experts and scholars to critically reflect on their role in dealing with the colonial past and to contribute actively to a more just future. This is an indispensable work for all those concerned with post-colonialism, anthropology and museum practice.

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