

## Book Review

***Papua Neuguinee: Gesellschaft und Kirche: Ein Okumenisches Handbuch***, Herwig Wagner, Gernot Fugmann, Hermann Jansenn, eds, Neuendettelsau: Freimund Verlag, 1989, hardcover, 464 pp, 16 colour photographs; folding map. No price given.

It would be of little use to describe this German book, if it were not (1) that it proves the substantial interest, which Europeans have in PNG, in particular, for the new challenges placed before the local churches, and their responses, and (2) that the book contains some insights, which deserve to be taken up locally, in order to further develop a contextualised theology in Melanesia.

The title, listed above, is handsomely produced by an editorial board of three people, who each have had ten years or more experience in this country. They were able to enlist the cooperation of over 30 other specialists, including nine Papua New Guineans, belonging to several Christian denominations. Their “ecumenical handbook” depicts, in the first half, the historical and sociological background (13-108), and subsequently describes the various churches and Christian organisations, which feature, on the religious map of PNG (111-226). The main essays of section one are by H. Janssen, about prehistory society and traditional religion, and by K. D. Mrossko, who fills the historical picture, from the first Portuguese explorers till political independence in 1975. Shorter essays treat Melanesian identity (Bernard Narakobi), national and international politics, and even the recent issues affecting the economy and ecology.

The next section, of also 100 pages, opens with the longest contribution of the whole book, by R. Pech, detailing church growth, from the Marists Fathers (Woodlark, 1845), till the arrival of the evangelical churches after World War II. This synthesis is followed by shorter expositions about the major churches, dedicating a greater-than-usually-expected space to several groups associated with the Evangelical Alliance. There is also a sympathetic article about the SDA church (R. K. Wilkinson), but one misses the presence of the Salvation Army, whose profile, in PNG religious life, is greater than its small numbers would lead one to expect.

In the shorter essays, the ecumenical dimension is repeatedly touched upon (159, 175, 187, 195), while it also receives its own treatment, from the pen of J. D. May (219-226). We find, for several churches, relevant maps, and even detailed statistics (132, 141, 146, 164, 189, and also 386), but a chance has been missed to harmonise these data; neither do they agree with the overview given in the appendix (429). The discussion by J. Snijders in *MJT* 2, 1989, 208-213, should be consulted. In the course of the text, about a dozen or so instances of institutionalised cooperation are mentioned, but it is impossible to make out each time which religious groups belong to any given umbrella organisation.