intriguing account of an Indo-Fijian, Harigyan Samalia, who incorporated the Fijian leader in his vision of a harmonious Fiji nation. However, Vatukaloko themselves kept Navosakavadua’s name alive in their own “post-colonial dialogue” (174). In her penultimate chapter, the author carries the story further, noting that the Fiji Labour Party, founded in 1985, drew substantial support from the Vatukaloko (188). Drawing together earlier material, she concludes, “The Vatukaloko have come to accept colonial, Christian, and national systems. . . . But simultaneously they seek to envision this larger world of different articulating systems as the working out of their land-centric system” (199).

I hope to have made clear my high regard for a book that warrants the attention of an audience wider than that of Pacific Island specialists. It is not without shortcomings. Some readers will find the wealth of detail, especially Fijian personal and place names, daunting. The concluding chapter is less impressive than what has gone before, although the author continues to pose her interpretations in a modest manner—something I never expected to write about a book originating in the University of Chicago’s Anthropology Department. The overall impact is of a first-rate piece of scholarship, delivered in a thoughtful, and thought-provoking, narrative.

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Those familiar with Fran Hezel’s The First Taint of Civilization: A History of the Caroline and Marshall Islands in Pre-Colonial Days, 1521–1885 will need no urging to buy Strangers in Their Own Land. Together, these two volumes provide an unparalleled summary of the political, commercial, and missionary influences of Europe, the United States, and Japan in these islands. Their production is a service to Islanders, to students of Pacific history, and to scholars seeking an introduction to the maze of historical resources for eastern Micronesia.

Hezel states clearly that he seeks to write a “social history rather than a political chronicle of colonial rule” (xv), explicitly distinguishing his goals from those of historians who have written extensively about the role of Pacific islands in larger schemes of empire. But Hezel also apologizes for presenting something less—or, rather, something other—than the new historiography that has transformed the writing of nonwestern pasts. His book, he writes, “breaks no new methodological ground, offers no stunning reflections on how history should be done” and so, he implies, seeks to be nothing more than a humble recounting of events. Of course the author is
being both modest and tongue-in-cheek: where basic history assembled from scattered, scarce, and multilingual documentary sources is just now being written, no apology for doing old-fashioned work is necessary. But in fact, while Hezel takes pride in not following the trend, he simultaneously pays homage to it: *Strangers in Their Own Land* significantly includes Micronesian voices. Using ethnography, published oral histories, and his own three decades of personal experience in the islands, Hezel ensures that indigenous initiatives and responses to foreign efforts are integrated into this historical account. *Strangers* pursues a simple chronological framework, beginning with the modest and ill-fated Spanish attempts at colonial control of its less-regarded colonies south and east of the Marianas, and covering successively the German, Japanese, and American colonial eras. This straightforward presentation frames two sorts of complexity. First, Hezel manages to deal with commercial, political-administrative, and socio-religious activities in each major island group under each colonial power (as well as covering major demographic, meteorological, and botanical incidents). Second, he consistently works to incorporate Carolinian and Marshallese attitudes and activities. This means for the most part detailed treatments of events that are crucial to the local understanding of colonial history, but that rate only a few paragraphs or pages in an empire-oriented account: Palau’s Modekngei movement, the Sokehs rebellion, the momentous dispute between Marshallese chiefs Kabua and Loeak. It also means that, whenever possible, Micronesian actors are named, described, and credited with their words or deeds that had historical impact. Less successfully, Hezel tries to characterize Islanders’ attitudes in general toward a colonial policy or agent.

I say less successfully because it is impossible to identify a source for such characterizations, and those immersed in the documents of the past run the risk of representing not what Islanders thought, but what contemporary foreigners recorded as their impressions of what Islanders thought. Hezel has much personal insight and a good knowledge of Micronesian culture and oral history to counterbalance this danger, but in the end it will be Micronesian historians who will more fully write this part of the history of contact. Hezel knows that it is his job to provide them with materials, and, perhaps equally important, a future straw man to knock down. While such interpretive criticism can await the new generation of Micronesian scholars, two current audiences will have minor complaints. Those who like their history spiced with political argument will be disappointed with the bread-and-potatoes diet here, especially with Hezel’s rather bland and gingerly treatment of the later American era and the status negotiations leading to independence. On the other hand, why ask for trouble? Any number of commentators who lived through those years has favored us with colorful opinions. A narrative that at least untangles the complex negotiation chronology and indicates the main points of fractious disagreement has its own value.
An anthropological audience will also wish for more, in a different way. On a few occasions, anthropological research that could have shed light on the “why” of historical events is not considered (e.g., Chuuk’s unexpectedly rapid pacification under German rule; the problems that German district officer Georg Fritz experienced with Pohnpei’s chiefs). More generally, social science always longs for more systematic comparisons than narrative history allows: Why was Yap a “model colony” for the Germans, but written off as a loss by the Japanese? What were the effects of similar depopulation in different island groups? Given that Japanese and Americans were both susceptible to romanticizing the “simple life” of South Sea peoples, why did they take such radically different approaches to economic development?

Though he does not deal with them, Hezel’s book allows the ready formulation of such questions, which means that it is not so much “unproblematic” history, as it is “unproblematizing.” His best comparisons are implicit. For example, the Japanese understood that Micronesians’ use of imports did not reflect any deep commitment to foreign ways: “The decisive test for the Japanese government was not what kind of clothes the people wore, but how they thought and what they believed” (170). The reader’s mind returns to this observation with greater understanding of its significance when reading in a later chapter about American (mis)understandings of Micronesian political goals.

Did Americans working in Micronesia ever understand this distinction, so clear to Japanese administrators? One result of Hezel’s labor is that younger researchers will be able to see more readily the sorts of questions that can be asked of historical and cultural information in this region. The book will then stimulate additional research into Micronesian social history of the sort we have seen done successfully in Polynesia.

In his introduction, Hezel hopes that Strangers will help familiarize Micronesians with “a colonial experience that is still largely unplumbed and often unintegrated” (xiv). The consistency of the Micronesian response to foreign intervention—from Spanish ineptness in handling missionary competition to American confusion of socioeconomic means with national security ends—shows that the conscious study of their history will give Micronesians another tool with which they can manage their increasingly proactive role in international relations. This book, filling a major gap in the coverage of Micronesia’s history, will be as valuable to them as to Pacific scholars.

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