

*Remaking Micronesia: Discourses over Development in a Pacific Territory, 1944–1982*, by David Hanlon. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998. ISBN 0-8248-1894-6, cloth; ISBN 0-8248-2011-8, paper; xv + 305 pages, tables, maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, us\$50.00; paper, us\$34.95.

No one before has attempted to write the history of American colonialism in Micronesia during the post-World War II era, in part because the topic is extremely complex and “experience near.” David Hanlon is to be congratulated for tackling such a difficult and timely subject, and for initiating what he (and I) hope will be greater attention by historians and anthropologists to the impact and consequences of America’s presence in these islands. His work is brave, outspoken, and controversial, and it is a “must” read for anyone interested in the neocolonial or postcolonial Pacific world. Some of my comments below are critical, but they must be understood as criticism rooted in respect for the boldness and sweep of Hanlon’s effort.

His challenging and provoking book lies at the intersection of the new Pacific history and critical (post-structural) anthropology. Hanlon’s openly partisan positionality challenges readers to view events in a different light and forces them to reflect anew on the meaning of post-World War II economic and political developments in the former US Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. But at the same time, his overwhelming use of current social science jargon occa-

sionally distracts the reader from the important issues addressed.

In *Remaking Micronesia* Hanlon seeks to reveal the “strategy of domination” (3) that he believes America pursued in Micronesia during the 1944–1982 period. He argues that economic development was the vehicle by which the US government sought to achieve “a more effective hegemony” (10) over the island(er)s, suggesting that such development “became a strategy designed to provide a new, more comfortable, malleable, and reassuring identity for the inhabitants of this prime piece of strategic real estate” (19). In Hanlon’s view, the United States sought “domination through transformation” (32), and he is concerned to lay bare “the dynamics of a larger exploitative process” (60) that was masked as economic development.

He approaches his task through an examination of discourses over development, where discourse is taken “to include all of the recorded speeches, conversations, and debates as well as books, reports, plans, studies, and policy statements” (8). These discourses are filtered through the work of Gustavo Esteva and Arturo Escobar, spiced with numerous references to a pantheon of contemporary social science gurus (Homi Bhabha, Michel Foucault, Antonio Gramsci, Ranajit Guha, Fredric Jameson, Edward Said, Marshall Sahlins, James C Scott, and Nicholas Thomas, among others), and then steeped in a broth of one part Marxism, one part poststructuralism. The resultant potion is both heady and heavy.

It is heady as an intelligent “take” on a complex set of recent events in

which the author makes good use of these many influential writers to construct his own story about postwar Micronesia. But it is also heavy in the sense of heavy-handedness: one comes away from reading this book feeling rhetorically bludgeoned by “in” language. Words such as hegemony (and hegemonizer!), hybridity, gaze, domination, resistance, subaltern, exploitation, entangled, polyvocality, representations, and the like are repeated so frequently that they interfere with Hanlon’s valuable critical historical observations.

Although he tries to sidestep it, Hanlon has difficulty avoiding “conspiracy theory” language in presenting his case. For example, he refers to “the past and future *purposes* of economic development in the islands” (19, my italics), to “the crasser and more *self-serving* aspects of America’s presence” (43, my italics), and to economic development “as an ultimately discursive *strategy* of domination *designed* to better possess Micronesians by remaking them” (235, my italics). Although the book is a historical account of economic development in American Micronesia, America is presented in much of the text as a Machiavellian manipulator of Micronesian innocence. Hanlon also discusses local “resistance” to “the destructive, divisive forces of American dominance” (51), but even though I believe my personal politics to be very close to Hanlon’s, I came away feeling I had gotten a rather one-sided story.

In Hanlon’s defense—and there is *much* to defend here—he offers “other voices” at many points in the book. Some are Micronesian voices,

notably those of important postwar political leaders like Tosiwo Nakayama, Resio Moses, John Mangefel, Lazarus Salii, and Oscar de Brum. Others are the voices of Americans in the islands, including some anthropologists, who spoke out against perceived injustices or bad policies and proposals. Nevertheless, one retains the impression at the end of the book that the neocolonialist capitalist juggernaut rolled along unimpeded and largely unopposed.

Hanlon’s historical exposé has as a goal to “lift the blanket of American domination to see what else lies under it” (4), and much is revealed when he peeks underneath. Economic development is demonstrated rather convincingly to be part of “a larger transformative project that was essentially cultural” (80). Colonialism and capitalism are shown to be “development’s progenitors” (150), and Hanlon discusses what he calls “strategic colonialism” (202) and “nuclear colonialism” (211) to good effect. Indeed, a strong case can be made that this book is primarily about colonialism, neocolonialism, and postcolonialism in Micronesia.

As such, Hanlon’s book fills a substantial void in the literature. It should be widely read, not because it is the last word, or the only word, on what has happened in these islands since World War II, but precisely because it stakes out and documents a strong position. At several places in his text Hanlon calls for various kinds of ethnography to be written (eg, of power, language, style, negotiation, encounters with modernity), as a way to emphasize one of his major points: “We are, I believe, only at the begin-

ning of understanding what economic development really is and what it might mean to others who are the objects or subjects of its agenda” (185). This fine and certain to be controversial critical history of American colonialism masked as economic development makes a significant contribution toward such understanding.

MAC MARSHALL  
*University of Iowa*

\* \* \*

*Japan's Aid Diplomacy and the Pacific Islands*, by Sandra Tarte. Pacific Policy Paper 26. Canberra: National Centre for Development Studies, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, and Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1998. ISBN 0-7315-2363-6, viii + 241 pages, tables, figures, map, photographs, notes, bibliography, index. Paper, A\$29.

In October 1997 Japan convened its first summit with the Pacific Island nations. Despite considerable presummit publicity and high expectations, the summit did not result in any significant announcements or breakthroughs. Although this event took place after Sandra Tarte's richly detailed *Japan's Aid Diplomacy and the Pacific Islands* went to press, its in-depth examination of Japan's bureaucratic processes and policy-making apparatus helps explain why the summit could promise so much and achieve so little.

This volume, which comes from an Australian National University PhD

thesis, provides the best available analysis of how Japan has become a major player in the region over the past thirty years, at the same time finding it difficult to assume a leadership position among the traditional metropolitan Pacific powers such as France, Great Britain, and the United States. The motivations and competing influences that have shaped Japan's official aid policies and diplomatic positions are analyzed in terms of both domestic and international contexts. Tarte marshals an impressive array of evidence from published sources and interviews conducted across the Asia-Pacific region to show how Japan's economic interests in natural resources, particularly fisheries, and more recent interest in regional stability, have made it a leading donor nation to the Pacific Islands.

With the end of World War II, Japan abandoned its imperial designs on the region as well as its direct involvement in Micronesia. A period of inattention during the 1950s and 1960s ended in the early 1970s, when the prospective establishment of two-hundred-mile exclusive economic zones and Japan's increased concern about Soviet initiatives, resulted in policies that promoted steadily increasing levels of official development assistance to the Pacific Islands region. As a major fishing power, Japan's private sector and government agencies worked hand in hand, which tied development aid to access to Pacific Island nations' fisheries. Interestingly, this close coordination has not always engendered effective intragovernmental cooperation. Tarte shows how bureaucratic rivalries and inefficiencies within Japan have at