resource extraction. The challenge for future scholars is to take Van Fossen’s work further by exploring in greater detail the political economy of tax havens and the agency of states and of key actors within the state. Such work would go further in describing who benefits from the maintenance of tax havens and offshore financial centers and how these key actors are able to ensure that Pacific Island states continue to protect their pecuniary interests. Van Fossen describes the world of offshore havens as a kind of “meeting place—a point of intersection between different spheres which may be separated onshore, a channel joining the white, grey and black economies, where the legitimate world makes contact with the underworld. Lawyers, accountants, bankers and investment advisors may serve criminal and legitimate businesses, allowing them to transact with each other, and even contact local politicians for additional opportunities” (5). Offshore tax havens also provide a meeting place for the global forces of capital, the emplaced local and idealized “fiscal paradise.” What is needed is a deep ethnography of this meeting place in countries in the Pacific that illuminates the connections between key players and the coalitions of interest formed. In the meantime, Van Fossen offers readers a wide-ranging and extensive look at the murky world of tax havens and offshore financial centers as they operate in Pacific countries.

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Jay Dobbin, who passed away the year this book was published, identified the goal of his study as a descriptive reconstruction of preindustrial Micronesian religions. It was a formidable task, given the dynamic and varied nature of those belief systems prior to contact, their replacement or diminishment resulting from the widespread adoption of Christianity, and the fragmentary nature of the sources available. Dobbin opted for an older anthropological approach to his topic. He employed a Geertzian understanding of religion as a symbolic meaning system that provides explanation and guidance to human beings. In short, Dobbin sought to understand the religious symbols and accompanying beliefs and practices that gave meaning to Micronesians’ world. The value of this study lies in its presentation of the dynamism, fluidity, and complexity of Micronesian spirituality before and at the time of engagement with continental voyagers, missionaries, researchers, and colonial officials.

The book begins with an introductory chapter that provides definitions; identifies and critiques the ethnographic, linguistic, and archaeological sources on which it draws; and offers an overview of Micronesian religions. There follow individual chapters on the Chuukic-speaking islands, Pohnpei, Kosrae, the Marshalls, Yap, Palau,
and Kiribati and Nauru. As is so often the case with studies of Micronesian histories and cultures, the Mariana Islands are largely omitted because of their earlier, extensive, prolonged, and assumedly fatal exposure to Spanish colonialism. A concluding chapter provides a summary of the similarities and variations that characterize Micronesian religions. According to Dobbin, what made Micronesian religions “Micronesian” were shared or similar beliefs in a hierarchy of deities and spirits; the order and organization of varying cosmological schemes; common ritual patterns that infuse the practices of divination, healing, and curing; an understanding of death as a rite of passage to another place; and a general wariness regarding the spirits of the dead.

Dobbin’s chapter on the Chuukic-speaking islands that stretch from Tobi in the west to the Mortlocks in the east is his most detailed and compelling. These islands evidence what anthropologist Mac Marshall has termed the essence of “Micronesian-ness.” The genealogy of this region’s gods is remarkably consistent. The sky god Wonofaát or Olofat is found across this arc of islands, though his personality and actions vary. The prevalence of sacred places and the classes of people, often priests, who inhabited or served these places constitute two other common features of Micronesian religions. Dobbin, himself a Roman Catholic priest, concluded that Micronesian religions were not ones of excessive ritual or religiously sanctioned taboos. He understood them as religions of life that focused on the practicalities and necessities of daily living and that possessed a devotion to a variety of art forms ranging from canoe building to dance, tattooing, and weaving. Dobbin believed that “the gentle nature of Micronesian religion is a considerable achievement in a world that has sacralized torture, death, cannibalism, and mass human sacrifice” (221).

Dobbin was very much a believer in Micronesia. He made clear at the outset of his study that there exists a sufficient degree of cultural similarity among the islands to speak confidently of a Micronesia and its religions. The assertion ultimately comes across as strained, at least to this reader. Differences tend to be minimized as variations in an attempt to maintain the integrity and viability of the term “Micronesia.” The linguistic and cultural differences that separate Yap, Palau, and the Marianas from the rest of the region are largely muted. The distinctiveness of Palau’s precontact religion, with its emphasis on the wealth and advantage to be derived from ancestral spirits, is too quickly put aside in favor of features that resemble those of other islands.

Other differences are examined but without challenging the thematic concept of a Micronesia. There are the very particular political roles assumed by Pohnpeian priests at such prominent religious sites as Salapwuk, Wone, and Nan Madol. The unique shell-shaped cosmos of the Marshalls, Kiribati, and Nauru differed markedly from the inverted bowl–like view of the sky world found in most other islands to the west. In the Marshalls, a focus on power distinguished the relationships between gods and people from interactions between the human and the godly elsewhere in the region.
The prominence of a ritual calendar at Rull in Yap that linked social class, taboo restrictions, priests, and sacred sites in an intricate system of social and religious symbols was exceptional. All of these differences and distinctions bring into serious question the characterization of these island religions as Micronesian.

There are also issues around the author’s use of sources. Dobbin recognized clearly the limitations of his sources in terms of the limited time their German, Japanese, and American authors spent in the field; the language limitations of these researchers; and the changing historical contexts that included colonialism and war. For the most part, Dobbin used these sources judiciously and well, though he might have interrogated more carefully their conceptual, analytical, and discursive frameworks. Dobbin was also wary of oral traditions, expressing concern about their reliability and value. He nonetheless reconstructed a persuasive history of the political evolution of Pohnpei’s sacred sites from transcribed oral histories or written histories derived from oral accounts. The welcome boldness of this history dissipated, however, when the author took a much more skeptical position on the contact between the megalithic sites of Nan Madol on Pohnpei and Leluh on Kosrae. The archaeological record suggests likely interaction, though the nature and direction of that engagement remains ambiguous. Oddly, Dobbin concentrated instead on the question of Kosraean origins for religious and political structures on Pohnpei as well as on Chuuk. A more appropriate focus of his research would have been the likelihood of communication and influence among the three island areas. An almost exclusively archival study, Dobbin’s research could also have benefited from collaboration with local historians such as those who appeared in *When Spirits Roamed*, the 2011 video produced by the Micronesian Seminar on Pohnpei.

Dobbin was careful to distinguish between magic and religion. Borrowing from Sir James Frazer, Dobbin characterized the former as forcing spirits to action while the latter seeks divine or otherworldly assistance through prayer and supplication. But how meaningful is the distinction between magic and religion when applied to precontact island societies? It may well be that these terms fail to adequately represent what were more integrated systems of living that involved the interaction between different realms, and the people, gods, and spirits who populated them. What is ultimately lost in this otherwise valuable study is the opportunity to reconceptualize the area called Micronesia differently—to see it not as a single cultural area but rather as related zones of contact, interaction, and exchange whose differences were as important as their similarities.

Slowed by illness in the last years of his life, Dobbin turned to his friend, colleague, and fellow priest, Francis X Hezel, sj, for assistance in the completion of this work. Hezel delivered. To his considerable credit and scholarly legacy, Dobbin has enriched the possibilities for the study of the past in the area called “Micronesia.” His work reminds all of us that people took their gods with them when they migrated. Sky spirits such
as Anulap, Luuk, and Olofat and ancestral or patron goddesses such as Inemes of the Chuuk Lagoon area, known as Inahs on Pohnpei, were very much a part of this movement and its history.

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Making Sense of Micronesia sensitively and vividly depicts the cultures of Micronesia for readers unfamiliar with the region and its inhabitants. Drawing on more than four decades of personal experiences as a Jesuit priest and based on insights gleaned from interviews, conversations, and research, Francis X Hezel engagingly presents his own process of slowly stumbling toward cultural knowledge. Shaped by embarrassing moments, awkward encounters, and cultural collisions, the result is an enjoyable glimpse—what he at one point terms a “cultural guidebook” (165)—into the general cultural patterning of the Islanders of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau. As Hezel acknowledges, many features of this synthesis may resonate with other island groups in Micronesia and the broader Pacific.

After the introductory chapter on the history of cultural change and the social context of Micronesia, the book’s twelve main chapters each delve into and seek to illuminate one key aspect of general Micronesian culture that may seem at first glance to be mystifying to foreigners. After opening each chapter with a revealing vignette, Hezel examines each theme from his emergent understanding of the ways in which Micronesians think about each topic while also suggesting how the underlying traditions have been changing even as they endure. Although the chapters build on each other, they can also be read as stand-alone sections focusing on and highlighting particular themes. For instance, in the first two chapters Hezel writes of the persistence of a personalized face to every aspect of Island life, and he connects this to the primacy of a collective identity and the importance of cooperation and solidarity. These three “peaks in the cultural landscape” (166) are carefully interwoven in the remaining chapters, which speak to the following issues: generosity and the redistribution of wealth; circumspection and the guarding of information; the importance and meaning of silences when communicating; the significance of strong forms of respect; the private and familial nature of sex; the strict division of labor and the indirect power of women in society; culturally patterned emotional responses of love, affection, uncertainty, and loss; and culturally mediated mechanisms for coping with conflict. In the summary chapter, Hezel importantly outlines the ways in which the traditional Micronesian worldview clashes with the contemporary aims of foreign-imposed economic development.

In this work, Hezel complements