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essays work on their own merits, and it is refreshing to see someone exercise the freedom of the press in Oceania in a way that serves to hold public officials and elected leaders accountable. Johnson’s editorials are consistently even tempered, and at the same time he is unafraid of violating the unwritten rule in close-knit Island societies that one should not criticize those in positions of power. Some of the more perilous ground that Johnson admirably covers includes the hypocrisy of RMI government leaders criticizing the opening of the first mosque in the country in light of the nation’s explicit religious freedom laws; the building tension between political leaders’ discourse on climate change as imminent and immediately observable and the most recent science that has concluded that many Pacific Island atolls, notably those in the Marshalls, have actually increased in size over the past half-century; and the political maneuverings of Kwajalein Senator Tony de Brum, who, as an international representative for both climate change and the RMI lawsuit filed against the nine nuclear powers in recent years, Johnson suggests has been emblematic of the current RMI administration’s use of international grandstanding to excuse a lack of action on domestic issues. In this way, the book makes for some refreshing reading.

And while this will not be confused with an academic book, it makes for a worthwhile companion to more theoretical and analytical works on these same issues, of which Peter Larmour’s *Interpreting Corruption: Culture and Politics in the Pacific Islands* (2012) comes to mind. Johnson’s book provides a set of grounded examples of what appears to be a well-established dysfunction in Pacific Island governments writ large. Perhaps in future editions he might consider connecting his opinions and observations to larger conversations about corruption and governance in Oceania that are already ongoing and very necessary.

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New accounts of Polynesian relations with colonizers in the early contact period seem theoretically indebted to Marshall Sahlins’s elegant reconstruction of the 1779 murder of Captain Cook in Hawai‘i, *Islands of History* (1985). Sahlins interpreted Hawaiian views of Cook’s arrival in Kealakekua Bay as in conjuncture with how the British saw their hosts in order to illustrate a broader theoretical argument against Whig history, that is, history as a narrative of progress and from the viewpoint of the victors (see *The Whig Interpretation of History*, by Herbert Butterfield [1965]). In Sahlins’s well-known argument, Cook came ashore during Makahiki, the local new year’s celebration of the rise of the Pleiades that heralds the annual return of Lono, the ancestor-spirit who
brings back the wet season of growth and fertility and becomes the object of festivity and revelry before being ritually “killed.” According to Sahlins, at least some Hawaiians thought that Cook was Lono incarnate, and this identification contributed to the larger cultural context and meaning of his death.

Now, Jeffrey Sissons, an anthropologist who focuses on Māori history and culture, has contributed a no less compelling, although somewhat less exquisite, sequel to Sahlins’s account of the death of Captain Cook. In *The Polynesian Iconoclasm: Religious Revolution and the Seasonality of Power*, Sissons focuses on related ritual phenomena that took place in the region during the first few decades of the nineteenth century following contact.

Although his theoretical goals echo Sahlins, Sissons also wants to refine or redefine that earlier argument from a framework borrowed from Pierre Bourdieu that features ritual practices over cosmology. But, to my mind, this is a minor point. The major contribution of Sissons’s careful, rich book is historical. He traces the repeated ways in which the early years of religious change in the early decades of the nineteenth century got mapped onto “the seasonality of power,” a phrase that is his gloss for the wet/dry times of the Polynesian year when society used to shift from decentralized and egalitarian forms of communitas to the renewal political hierarchy around the figures of chiefs and religious leaders usually called “priests” in the literature. Cook obviously had the bad luck of getting caught up in the period of the former rather than the latter.

Drawing mostly from early nineteenth-century missionary reports occasionally supplemented by a Polynesian voice such as that of the great Mo’orean chief Pomare, Sissons doggedly traces the seasonally based pattern in which chiefs and priests throughout the region again and again rejected Polynesian cosmology and adopted Christianity.

During the wet season, when the Pleiades were visible, or “above” the horizon, these leaders performed acts of religious iconoclasm. They rejected taboos that decreed gender-segregated commensality; they unwrapped and exposed their secret images of ‘Oro and other ancestor-spirits, abandoned conviction in the efficacy and prestige of mana, and tore down their sacred marae. During the subsequent dry season, when the morning stars were “below” the horizon, they then erected new church buildings and decreed new laws to substitute for the old taboos. For example, Sissons details the arresting case of the first missionary printing press in the Society Islands whose floor was built with stones from the old marae that had been destroyed near the site. Some of the old hierarchical and gender-based taboos were re-installed. The house was considered too sacred for commoners to enter. New objects of power were produced from the new sacralized center: fetishized hymnals and spelling books endowed with mana-like authority were now wrapped with barkcloth covers the way the sacred spirit-images had been prior to the iconoclasm. Like the old order, when spirit-ancestors had been bound by barkcloth, book-bindings bound the new society under the sovereignty of a kind of stranger-
Sissons’s principal trope, “the seasonality of power,” and this general argument, are meant to make the point that in Polynesia, the initial decades of colonial domination, did not result from a concerted form of unilateral action that was expressed in a single voice. Colonial domination was not a simple assertion of superior force and violence. Not to discount the tragedies of disease, dispossession, and humiliation, it nevertheless drew on a combination, or what I would call dialogue, between the interests and cultural capital of Polynesian elites on the one side and foreign interests and cultural capital on the other. History need not be the spoils of the victors.

Polynesianists of all varieties should find much of interest in Sissons’s book. In addition, it will be useful in middle- or upper-level undergraduate courses on the region, as well as in graduate seminars on the anthropology of social change not only in the Pacific but, given its broader theoretical concerns, for more general pedagogical agendas.

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Te Vaka. 30 October 2015, Hawaii Theatre Center, Honolulu.

Te Vaka, the award-winning and wildly popular South Pacific fusion group representing and featuring music and dance influences from many Pacific Island cultures, kicked off their US tour on 9 October 2015, with stops in Florida, Washington, California, Arizona, and Hawai‘i. Touring members included founder,