

they scoffed at this threat, the sailor had his mates fire their weapons at a coconut tree, shooting off fronds and nuts in a cloud of smoke. Then the sailor stepped forward and opened his shirt to reveal his warrior tattoo and identity as the missing Lojeik!

If you want to know what happened next to this liminal voyager, and about the surprising adventures of thousands of other Oceanians who roamed the world during this era, I highly recommend that you read this fascinating book.

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Tokelau: A Historical Ethnography, by Judith Huntsman and Antony Hooper. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996; ISBN 0-8248-1912-8. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1996; ISBN 1-86940-153-0. xii + 355 pages, maps, photos, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, US\$39.00, NZ\$69.95.

Tokelau is a Polynesian archipelago consisting of three isolated atolls in the central Pacific. The island group is several hundred kilometers north of Sāmoa, west of the Northern Cook Islands, and east of Tuvalu. This volume represents three decades of research by two prominent anthropologists, both independently and in collaboration. The authors bring together a wealth of ethnographic and historical material, organized around a set of themes reflecting both anthropological and indigenous Tokelauan concerns.

The book comprises two main

sections. The first three chapters focus on contemporary ethnographic issues, while the last six are essentially historical. Chapter 1 describes the physical setting, including both the natural environment and village layout. Chapters 2 and 3 focus on the fundamental units of social organization: the village and the kinship system, respectively. The historical chapters (4 through 9) loosely alternate between presenting a Tokelauan perspective as gleaned from oral traditions and a European view as reconstructed from the journals of sailors, missionaries, traders, and colonial administrators. Chapter 4 describes the relationships among the three atolls from the mythic past until well into the period of European contact. Chapter 5 lays out indigenous views of the three communities, emphasizing what makes each unique and how, despite their distinctive personalities, they came to be united into a single polity. Chapter 6 explores the transformations produced by European contact, the establishment of Christianity, and the decimation of the atolls by slave traders during the nineteenth century. Chapter 7 outlines the politics of religious affiliation. It is followed by two chapters detailing Tokelau's colonial history—a history that has involved political attachments at various times to Western Samoa, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, and eventually New Zealand. A substantial postscript outlines the relationship between Tokelau and New Zealand through approximately 1970, and a brief theoretical conclusion rounds out the work.

In many ways, this reads like an old-fashioned ethnography, with all of

the attendant strengths and weaknesses. It is theoretically informed but somewhat eclectic, with an emphasis on ethnographic data that sometimes suggests a lack of focus and makes it easy to get lost in the detail. On the other hand, by refusing to force the data into a theoretical straitjacket, the authors inspire confidence that their portrait of Tokelauan history and social structure would be recognizable to their informants.

The volume's central concern with history mirrors the Tokelauans' preoccupation with the past as a way to make sense of their present. In this respect, it echoes the sentiments of several recent books on the Pacific. Huntsman and Hooper do an admirable job of combining insights from oral history with documentary evidence to unravel what most likely took place on the atolls over the past several centuries. In consequence, they necessarily take oral traditions seriously. Still, they treat them primarily as a window into systems of indigenous signification rather than accounts of a real past. Many readers will undoubtedly accept this as a sensibly cautious approach, and one that has been well established in anthropology; others may be bothered by the tendency to privilege archival documentation as a guide to actual events.

Connected with historical concerns are the intricate political and social relations among the three communities, and the way in which events are reinterpreted by each to reflect its own unique perspective. The communities, despite their geographical proximity, cultural and ecological similarities, and mutual interdependence, differ in

political and social structure, religious orientation, attitudes toward rank, and relations with the outside world. Fakaofu, the "main island," has been the most populous of the three atolls through most of the group's history. It has been politically and militarily dominant, and its people define their atoll as "the land of chiefs." Historical documents also depict the Fakaofu as confident and assertive in their dealings with Europeans. Nukunonu, which for generations was politically dominated and exploited by Fakaofu, thinks of itself as an egalitarian community, made up of four complementary "houses." Its people are wife-givers and sisters' children in relation to Fakaofu, and, according to archival records, the customary diffidence and caution with which the Nukunonu had to treat their chiefly "mothers' brothers" has been extended to outsiders at large. Atafu is said to have originally been populated by aggressive savages. When they were driven out, the atoll was resettled by colonists from Fakaofu. Thus, a preoccupation of Atafu's inhabitants—portrayed by European commentators as spontaneous and audacious—has long been to demonstrate that they are not subordinate to their presumably senior Fakaofu kin.

In the course of this discussion, Huntsman and Hooper reject ecological explanation and make a case that differences among the atolls must be understood in terms of a dialectical relationship between historical accident and structures of significance. Central values that pervade the archipelago, helping to instill a sense of unity and common purpose among its

inhabitants include *māopoopo* ‘unity’, *fēalofani* ‘mutual compassion’, and *filēmū* ‘peace’. These concepts appear repeatedly throughout the book, especially in sections dealing with the post-contact period.

It is good to have a thorough, integrated, and widely accessible account of Tokelau history and culture, and in this respect the volume is a valuable contribution. The theoretical focus, while of interest, seems to be largely a framework on which to hang the data. The writing is clear and generally straightforward. The book is well edited, with few typographical errors.

Tokelau is a fairly thick volume—over 300 large pages—produced on slick, high quality paper, with dozens of photographs and other illustrations. In some ways it resembles a coffee-table book; yet the price is surprisingly reasonable considering the quality of production. For academic authors to receive such treatment from a publisher is certainly refreshing. It will be interesting to see if a historical ethnography of an obscure Pacific archipelago can attract sufficient readership to make this work a winner in the marketplace.

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The Covenant Makers: Islander Missionaries in the Pacific, edited by Doug Munro and Andrew Thornley. Suva: Pacific Theological College and Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1996. ISBN 982-02-0126-8, xii + 321 pages, maps, photographs, notes, references, index. US\$111, includes surface postage.

This remarkable but uneven book contains fifteen essays about Pacific Islanders who have served as missionaries in Polynesia, Micronesia, and Melanesia from the early nineteenth century to the present day. These men and women came from earlier centers of missionary activity like Tahiti, Tonga, the Cook Islands, and Sāmoa, and were sent by the London Missionary Society, the Methodist missions, and Roman Catholic missions to a succession of frontiers, like Fiji, Tuvalu, southern Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, and Papua. The authors come from diverse intellectual communities; some use theological and missiological vocabularies; a number are themselves Pacific Islanders. As the editors point out, however, all are attempting to “retrieve the pastors” for a general audience, to explore what these missionaries were up to and who these men and women really were.

The task is not easy, because Pacific Islander missionaries have come to be known more by reputation than by record. European missionaries praised or criticized their work; ship captains, scientists, and government personnel commended or condemned their character. Home congregations sometimes memorialized their missionary brothers and sisters; the people they