

Book and Media Reviews

The Contemporary Pacific, Volume 26, Number 2, 555-587
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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: The Logic of Pacific Island Culture, by Francis X Hezel, SJ. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013. ISBN 978-0-8248-3661-0, xii + 182 pages, maps, suggested reading, index. Cloth, US\$27.00.

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

his more academic treatment of related topics in *The New Shape of Old Island Cultures: A Half-Century of Social Change in Micronesia* (2001). By chronicling his own real-life experiences and those of others in the tradition of the best reflective ethnographic writing, he brings the narrative to life while underscoring a lifetime's dedication to understanding local people and their beliefs and practices. For instance, we witness the tragedy of a teenager named Tomaso, who committed suicide after his father's refusal of a request for money; we feel the confusion and embarrassment when a volunteer compliments the beauty of a student's sister; we notice an apparent and perhaps misleading lack of affection between a husband and wife when one of them departs on an international flight; and we follow Hezel to the woods after a memorable meal where he vomits up his dinner with complete lack of secrecy. Having spent considerable time in the region, I can relate to the poignancy of nearly every vignette with great empathy.

Hezel acknowledges the possibilities and limitations of this approach. Caught in a nearly timeless present, a deliberate blurring of the complexities of the numerous Island societies within this region enables Hezel to generalize about a singular Micronesian culture in comparative counterpoint to a Western worldview. This works. The many vignettes, written for broad appeal, resonate with anyone who has either spent time in Micronesia or has engaged with Micronesians abroad, and this invites the reader to relate first as a regional stranger coming armed with only an outsider's limited

and almost surely biased perspective. Then, introducing the local perspective, Hezel challenges the reader to question his or her own ethnocentric assumptions.

With so many recent examples of ethnic tension, discrimination, conflict, and violence emerging between diasporic Micronesians and locals in Hawai'i and elsewhere, it is increasingly important for teachers, social workers, health-care providers, and the general public to learn about Micronesian beliefs, customs, and ethics from within Micronesians' own culture. Hezel has provided such a reference, written in clear prose, free of academic jargon. However, the promotion of a pan-Micronesian identity in the book, while resonant with Hezel, may be counterproductive for some Micronesians, especially those in Hawai'i who are fervently trying to educate others on the distinctiveness of their cultures (eg, Marshallese, Chuukese, Yapese) in their attempts to avoid being incorrectly identified and further marginalized. In addition, readers concerned about addressing the social, health, and educational issues facing Micronesians abroad are offered only one vignette that takes place outside the region. This is the illuminating story of intercultural communication differences between a fifth-grader named Mariano and his teacher, presumably on the US continent. The inclusion of more encounters such as this would better embrace the global dimension and lived experiences of many Micronesians today. Still, as Hezel clearly intends, if the book encourages readers to pause before making and acting on unwarranted judgments against

Micronesians, it will have provided an important and felicitous service.

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Polynesian Outliers: The State of the Art, edited by Richard Feinberg and Richard Scaglion. Ethnology Monographs 21. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 2012. ISBN 978-0-945428-15-2 viii + 225, figures, maps, tables, notes, bibliography. Paper, US\$25.00.

Polynesian Outliers: The State of the Art will likely be the definitive general reference on Polynesian outliers for years to come. The so-called Polynesian outliers consist of two dozen widely separated and generally small islands that lie outside of the Polynesian triangle and whose inhabitants speak Polynesian languages and display a variety of customs and traits often associated with Polynesian cultural contexts. This volume skillfully brings together fifteen leading experts from varied disciplines including cultural anthropology, archaeology, linguistics, and cultural geography in an exceptionally productive synthesis.

In their introduction, Richard Scaglion and Richard Feinberg present a comprehensive and detailed overview of the "state of the art" in Polynesian outliers that includes sections on "Outlier Groupings and Relations" and "Studies in Polynesian Relations." The authors recognize that the outliers comprise a residual category rather than a unified group of islands and associated sociocultural phenomena. Complementing the text are a useful table and two maps locating the Poly-

nesian outliers in cultural and regional contexts. Unfortunately, a couple of the outliers described in the text could not be found on either map.

Chapters 2 and 3 concern the prehistory and archaeology of the Polynesian outliers. Together, these two chapters present a comprehensive overview of past and recent archaeological investigations on these islands. In chapter 2, Patrick Kirch reviews the more recent archaeological work performed in the Northern Outlier Atolls, the Southeast Solomon Islands outliers, and the Vanuatu outliers. Using detailed archaeological evidence, Kirch amply shows that the prehistoric sequences of investigated outliers reveal varied and complex settlement histories of these small islands. He goes on to argue that while the outliers are not simply remains of early Polynesian migration, neither are they isolated enclaves of Polynesian drift voyagers who arrived following the settlement of the Polynesian Triangle. Kirch points out some important theoretical concerns: "First, it is clear that outlier culture histories are often as complex as those of major southwestern Pacific archipelagos, and that no single framework or theory can account for outlier settlement as a whole. Each outlier must be investigated on its own terms. Second, the very term 'outlier' (while too ingrained to abandon) is misleading, a misnomer. Though they are outlying with respect to Triangle Polynesia, these islands are central to the prehistory of the entire southwestern Pacific, and their sequences mirror major cultural currents that have created distinctive patterns of ethnic diversity in eastern Melanesia" (25).