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Abstract

The terms 'Polynesia' and 'Micronesia,' nineteenth-century European inventions, have survived as convenient labels to refer to two large regions of the insular Pacific. These regions were peopled in the last 4000 years by waves of seafaring immigrants from Southeast Asia, who established patrilineal societies in Polynesia and matrilineal societies in Micronesia, which exhibit various degrees of stratification. The intensification of contacts with Westerners during the Enlightenment heralded an era of colonialism that brought about radical transformations. With few exploitable resources, contemporary societies of Polynesia and Micronesia tackle problems that range from deteriorating health to the possible effects of global warming.

History of Geographical Nomenclature

The region that has commonly been referred to as 'Oceania' since the early nineteenth century was peopled by successive waves of prehistoric settlers. The last of these were a seafaring people who settled in the islands of the Pacific, mingling with prior occupants in the case of New Guinea and neighboring areas and occupying uninhabited islands further west, all the way to Hawai'i in the Northern Pacific, New Zealand in the far south, and Easter Island in the southeast corner of the region. The social and cultural similarities among the islands east of and including Fiji reflect not only their relatively recent peopling by the same people but also the fact that islanders maintained active contact with one another throughout prehistory, even across vast distances, thanks to their sophisticated navigation technology. For them, the Pacific represented not a vast ocean dotted with minuscule islands, but rather a 'sea of islands,' in the memorable phrase of Tongan scholar Hau'ofa (1994), namely a vast network of human settlements connected to one another through kinship, exchange, alliance, history, and cosmology.

In 1756, French scholar and politician Charles de Brosses coined the term 'Polynesia' to refer to all islands of the Pacific east of Australia, hoping to persuade the French court to finance their exploration and eventual colonization, convinced as he was that they would prove to be 'rich in spices.' The label remained standard in European writings for several decades, during which Europeans began to take a keen interest in the Pacific Islands. Explorers, as well as their contemporaries who read and commented on the journals of their voyages that they published to great acclaim, were informed by the humanistic universalism of the Enlightenment and early Romantic eras that viewed humanity as one. They saw 'primitive man' as a model for humanity, living in harmony with nature and one another, and unencumbered by the trappings of 'civilization.' In particular, Tahiti and the Society Islands figured prominently in the elaboration of this romantic primitivism after first contact with British and French navigators in 1767 and 1768, respectively.

The early nineteenth century witnessed a radical shift in the European philosophical climate, particularly in France, with the emergence of a preoccupation with racial difference, which was now viewed as evidence of the polygenetic origin of humans and of the evolutionary inequality among them. It is in this racialist context that two French navigators with scholarly aspirations, Jules Dumont d'Urville and the lesser-known Grégoire-Louis Domeny De Rienzi, simultaneously devised a typology of Pacific Islanders based on their physical appearance, particularly skin color, and a division of the Pacific Islands into three large regions (in addition to a fourth one, 'Malaysia,' applied to insular southeast Asia): Melanesia (i.e., dark islands), Micronesia (i.e., small islands), and Polynesia (i.e., many islands), the referent of the latter being now much reduced in size. The different preoccupations of European observers of Pacific Islanders at different times are inscribed in the historical evolution of maps (Tcherkézoff, 2008) and iconographic representations (Smith, 1985/1969). At the time of contact, islanders themselves referred to their homes with names for individual islands if they were small enough or, in the case of larger islands, with the names of specific villages, regions, or language groups. Many of these toponyms were varied, complex, and contested.

Polynesia and Micronesia as Cultural Areas

Despite the morally problematic historical foundation of this nomenclature, 'Polynesia' and 'Micronesia' have remained to this day convenient labels for geographical areas whose social, cultural, archeological, historical, political, and linguistic significance is somewhat arbitrary. Polynesia and Micronesia are complementary to Melanesia, generally considered to comprise New Guinea and adjacent islands, the Solomon Islands, New Caledonia, and Vanuatu.

Micronesia encompasses Palau and outlying islands, Guam, the Mariana Islands, Caroline Islands, Marshall Islands, and Gilbert Islands, as well as two isolated islands, Nauru and Banaba (Ocean Island). Contemporary political considerations may include island groups of the Central Pacific like the Phoenix and Line Islands; although geographically located in Polynesia, these islands, which were not permanently inhabited until the modern age, are governed by Kiribati, the modern state based in the Gilbert Islands.

Polynesia includes all islands and groups falling within a large triangular area whose apexes are New Zealand to the south, Hawai'i to the north, and Rapanui (Easter Island) to the

west. The largest islands and island groups of the region are Tonga, Samoa, Rarotonga and the Southern Cooks, Tahiti and the Society Islands, the Marquesas, and Hawai'i, in addition to the much larger New Zealand. Fiji and Rotuma are sometimes considered part of Melanesia and other times part of Polynesia. Politically or culturally notable smaller islands include Niue, Wallis and Futuna, Tuvalu, Tokelau, the Northern Cooks, Rapanui, and Pitcairn Island, as well as the Tuamotus, Austral, and Gambier Islands, which are politically subsumed under French Polynesia. In addition, a geographically heterogeneous group of about 18 islands and sections of islands are commonly identified as 'Polynesian Outliers' societies because they are located outside of this triangular area: in Melanesia to the west (e.g., Takuu off Bougainville Island, Sikaiana and Rennell in the Solomon Islands, Mae and Mele in Vanuatu, North and South Ouvea Atoll in the Loyalty Islands) and, in the case of two islands (Nukuoro and Kapingamarangi), in Micronesia.

Islands of many different types are found in the two regions: a few continental islands (e.g., Guam); volcanic structures, some of which can be substantial in size (e.g., Hawai'i); raised coral islands of different types (e.g., Tonga); atolls (e.g., Tuvalu); and combinations of these. These various morphological structures, combined with a vast array of climatic conditions (from subarctic to equatorial climates, from wet to dry), provided prehistoric settlers with very different problems of ecological adaptation.

The human groupings that inhabited each of the two regions at the dawn of contact with Europeans shared a number of social and cultural characteristics with one another, and continued to do so well into the modern age. Yet many societies of insular Melanesia display characteristics that are identical to those prevalent among Polynesian or Micronesian societies, reflecting the fact that all three regions were settled by the same people in prehistoric times, even though the newcomers found already inhabited land in the Western part of Melanesia. In addition, commonalities among the societies of both areas are balanced by important patterns of variation, to the extent that no feature of social organization of culture will be found in all societies in question.

Perhaps the least controversial way of identifying Polynesia is linguistically: all languages spoken natively in the islands are more closely related to one another than to any other language. Indeed, the reason for identifying Outlier societies as Polynesian is the fact that all their members speak languages that are most closely related to the languages spoken in Polynesia. In terms of social organization and culture, however, Outlier communities vary widely, from bearing considerable similarity to the rest of Polynesia (e.g., Tikopia) to having much more in common with their more immediate non-Polynesian neighbors (e.g., the Polynesian-speaking villages of Ouvea, Loyalty Islands). Yet even this criterion is not devoid of caveats: on the boundary between Fiji and Tonga, historical linguistic evidence suggests a continuum of gradual linguistic differentiation rather than a clean break. In contrast, linguistic factors are of little use as determiners of what Micronesia includes and what it does not: all languages spoken in the area are Austronesian, but some (e.g., Chamorro of the Marianas and Palauan) are closer to languages spoken outside of Micronesia (e.g., in the Philippines) than to the other languages of Micronesia.

Contemporary Polynesian and Micronesian societies can only be understood with reference to the fact that many became diasporic in the course of the second half of the twentieth century, a trend originally motivated by labor migration to the industrial centers of the Pacific Rim. Today, one finds in New Zealand significant communities of Samoans, Tongans, Niueans, and Cook Islanders; Samoans and Tongans are also settled in comparatively large numbers in Australia; both are also represented in Hawai'i and the Continental United States, where Caroline and Marshallese Islanders are also numerous, at least in comparison with the size of the populations in the island groups of origin. Emigrant communities in many cases are much more populous than the island-based communities. While the Cook Islands and Niue, two small Polynesian states partially under New Zealand's political jurisdiction, have 19 000 and 1400 inhabitants, respectively, Cook Islanders living in New Zealand number 58 000 and Niueans 22 000 (2006 figures). Micronesian and Polynesian people also migrate internally to urbanized or industrialized centers of the Pacific Islands. Thus Guam, New Caledonia, Fiji, and Hawai'i are home to many Pacific Island migrant communities originating from surrounding island groups.

Initial Human Settlement

Around 3500 BP, a wave of people traveled from East and Southeast Asia, settling in the islands of Melanesia, some of which were already inhabited while others were not, and occupying the entire insular region in a relatively short time (3500–1000 BP). While the process inevitably involved backtrackings, sidesteps, and false starts, its general West-to-East direction is reflected in the relative heterogeneity of cultures, social structures, and languages in the Western Pacific compared to the relative homogeneity of societies and languages further east.

The most salient archeological evidence for this conjectured prehistoric migration is a lowly style of decorated pottery referred to as 'Lapita,' fragments of which are found in insular Melanesia and Western Polynesia, carbon-dated to 3500–2000 BP. Lapita pottery makers and users appear to have been accomplished long-distance sailors who utilized large outrigger sailing canoes, skilled fisherfolk, and agriculturalists of staples that they brought with them, such as taro, believed to be among the first food crops ever to be domesticated (around 10 000 BP in tropical Asia). Among other sources of food that they may have transported on their long voyages figure pigs, dogs, and fowl. They organized their social life in hierarchical fashion. They spoke languages that belonged to the Austronesian language family, the largest in the world in terms of its geographical spread and number of different languages, with daughter languages spoken today from Madagascar to Easter Island, including Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. With few exceptions (such as the languages of Western Micronesia mentioned earlier), languages of these regions all belong to the Oceanic group of Austronesian.

Around 3000 BP, the settlers reached Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa, an area in which, according to some researchers, migrations may have 'paused' for a while. Such a pause would have allowed a social, cultural, and linguistic distinctiveness

to emerge that would eventually become what is now recognized as 'Polynesian.' From the Fiji–Western Polynesia area, early Polynesians settled the rest of Polynesia in the course of the following two millennia, finally reaching Hawai'i in about 650 AD and New Zealand around 1000 AD (Kirch, 2000). There is no convincing evidence of any subsequent prehistoric human settlement in the insular Pacific other than the Lapita potters and their descendants (particularly from south America), although they intermarried in Melanesia with their non-Lapita-making neighbors, forming as diverse a genetic pool as is found in any other part of the world.

Micronesia's prehistory is much more complex than that of Polynesia, and less well understood. Evidence of human settlement in the Mariana Islands dates back to approximately 4000 BP. The archeological record indicates a Southeast Asian connection for this early population, as does archeological evidence gathered on Palau and Yap. The rest of the Caroline Islands, the Marshall Islands, and the Gilbert Islands were settled by a northwestward back-migration from eastern Melanesia. Languages spoken in this region, commonly referred to as 'Nuclear Micronesian,' exhibit greater linguistic homogeneity than other Micronesian languages, suggesting a more focused history of prehistoric settlement.

Society and Culture

Many aspects of precontact society and culture have reproduced over time and continue to characterize contemporary circumstances. In precontact times, the societies of Polynesia and Micronesia displayed certain degree of sociocultural commonality, as witnessed, for example, in a tendency to have stratified political systems and in the elaboration of certain symbolic complexes such as *tapu* (roughly, 'religion-based prohibition') and *mana* (roughly, 'efficacy of divine origin') in Polynesia (Howard and Borofsky, 1989). However, the recognition of patterns of commonality must always be qualified in at least two ways. First, one must be attentive to the dynamics through which certain characteristics have come to be identified as 'typically' Polynesian or Micronesian in spite of the fact that these characteristics are absent in some societies of the region. Second, 'precontact times' is a vague characterization at best, and all island societies experienced radical changes over the centuries, some of which can be identified archeologically, in the course of which 'typical' Polynesian or Micronesian characteristics appeared in and disappeared from particular societies.

A significant number of societies in both regions were socially and politically stratified, the more so in Polynesia than in Micronesia. Particularly on large islands and island groups, chiefdoms were organized around a leadership that derived power through a combination of genealogical ties to both sacred and profane entities that confirmed claims to power (ascription) and personal performance that hopefully confirmed these claims (achievement). In some of more stratified societies, persons were also ranked into categories ranging from the highest ranks, which were commonly sacralized, to the lowest ranks, whose members were often not considered human. Other societies, in contrast, displayed little stratification and emphasized egalitarianism and consensual decision

making. Political organization on some islands was centered on localized kinship units, particularly in Micronesia but also on the smaller islands of Polynesia. The rough correlation between the amount of resources to be produced and organized and the degree of social stratification, at least in Polynesia, led some early researchers to propose that one engenders the other: chiefs, as resource managers, increase in importance as resources increase in volume (Sahlins, 1958). Few anthropologists today would give such determinative power to resource management (and indeed the empirical evidence does not support the model), although it certainly plays a role in the development and elaboration of social stratification.

Prevalent patterns throughout the area centralized the identification of a common founding family ancestor, creating in some societies a pyramid-shaped kinship structure. In Polynesia, the most important branch was the senior patrilineal branch, and members of other branches reckoned their relative status according to their relative distance from the main descent branch, measured through relative patrilineality and seniority, although matrilineal descent could also play an important role. Micronesian societies are predominantly matrilineal. There, matrilineal clans have historic claims to particular pieces of land and are the basis for social organization, with rank being based on claims of founding settlement of particular pieces of land. Probably all Polynesian and Micronesian societies also offered the possibility of bilateral affiliation, whereby kinship could be based on either patrilineal or matrilineal principles, thus providing room for social and political maneuvering. Adoption in its various guises was and continues to be prevalent throughout Polynesia and Micronesia.

Throughout Polynesia, gender figures prominently in the reckoning of rank, although the specifics of this interaction differ across societies. In Samoa and Tonga, for example, the relationship between sisters and brothers is foundational to the cultural and social organization of society, with sisters being superior in rank to brothers, particularly if senior to them. However, the prevailing ideology throughout the region dictates that the husband is the head of the family, including his wife, although the extent to which this ideology is the result of nineteenth-century missionaries' reconfiguration of the Polynesian family is not known. At first contact with Europeans, Tahitian society included a category of transgender males that took some aspects of women's identity, which is now widespread throughout Polynesia, but less obviously so in Micronesia (Besnier and Alexeyeff, 2013).

Early Contacts with Europeans and Colonialism

While Pacific Islanders maintained active contacts between islands and island groups prior to establishing contact with Westerners in the region, Europeans' arrival and gradual colonial domination over the islands brought about fundamental changes. Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch travelers had sailed through Polynesia and Micronesia since the very early days of the Age of Discovery, but their contacts with Islanders were sporadic, ephemeral, and often violent. The exception to the first two characteristics (but not the third) are Guam and the Marianas, which Spaniards saw as strategically situated on

the sea road between the colonial centers of the empire in the Philippines and the New World. Spain claimed these islands in the mid-sixteenth century (later extending its claim over the rest of Micronesia), a move which was followed by the virtual decimation of the Chamorro inhabitants of Guam and the Marianas through disease, slaughter, and forced resettlement.

Contacts between Westerners and Islanders in both Polynesia and Micronesia did not begin in earnest until the end of the eighteenth century, when the relatively peaceful period following the end of the Seven Year War in Europe (1763) enabled France and Britain to fund expeditions to the Pacific Islands and other parts of the world. These voyages were driven by complicated, overlapping, and sometimes contradictory motivations, including the desire to find lands hitherto unknown to Europeans and exploit the resources they might offer (particularly the conjectured *Terra Australis Incognita* or 'unknown land of the South'), the intellectual curiosity that reigned during the European Enlightenment, and scientific endeavors, the most celebrated being the mapping of the transit of Venus from Tahiti, which secured funding for Captain James Cook's first voyage around the world (1768–71).

Enlightenment-era contacts were considerably more peaceful than those of earlier centuries. Still, despite the ideals of the Enlightenment that suffused them on the European side, different perceptions of what these contacts were about, particularly different ideas about property, did occasionally lead to serious conflicts. Perhaps the most celebrated from the Westerners' perspective is Captain Cook's violent death on the Big Island of Hawai'i, the analysis of which became the topic of a spirited intellectual exchange in the 1990s between two prominent anthropologists about whether or not Hawaiians viewed Cook as a god (Sahlins, 1987; Obeyesekere, 1992). But even when islanders did not suffer casualties at the moment of contact, in many parts of Polynesian and Micronesia they subsequently suffered from the new diseases, economic upheavals, wars, land dispossessions, outright massacres, raids by slavers, and other calamities that were associated, directly or indirectly, with the increasing Western dominance over the region. Some scholars in the nineteenth century expressed concern over the possible complete disappearance of Pacific Islanders, a sentiment echoed in the twentieth century in the 'fatal impact' approach to early contacts advanced by some historians (Moorhead, 1987).

Early European travelers to the Pacific Islands were soon followed by a broad variety of Westerners, including adventurers, traders, whalers, and employees of colonial corporations seeking to establish plantations and trading empires. Those whose impact was most consequential were missionaries of various Christian denominations, particularly adherents of the nonconformist evangelical movements that were then sweeping Britain in the late eighteenth century. They later competed with Catholic missionaries (who had been firmly implanted in Guam since the sixteenth century) and Mormons, who first arrived in the Tuamotu Islands as early as 1844. Members of the London Missionary Society, founded in 1795, arrived in Tahiti in 1797 and, after some vicissitudes, managed to convert a chief whose power had been greatly increased by his direct contact with earlier European visitors. In the socially stratified societies of Polynesia, the strategy of first converting the powerful with the rest of the population following suit led to swift and effective conversions. Today, all islanders adhere to some form of Christianity, with different denominations often competing for adherents.

A notable consequence of Westerners' increasing visibility in nineteenth century Polynesia was the consolidation of hitherto politically fragmented chiefdoms. In Tonga, Fiji, Tahiti, and Hawai'i (and to a lesser extent Samoa and New Zealand), ambitious and astute chieftains utilized the new tools that Westerners introduced to the islands, trading natural resources for firearms and protection for religious conversion, to defeat their competitors and impose their rule over entire islands and island groups, establishing themselves as sovereigns. The emergence of these societies in the modern age was accompanied by radical reconfigurations of power structures, with the introduction of new forms of inequality but also emergent notions of citizenship protected by constitutions. Of the kingdoms established in the nineteenth century, only Tonga remains to this day, others having fallen to the imposition of colonial rule. The most egregious case was the illegal overthrow by the United States of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893 with the pretext of protecting the interests of American plantation owners.

In the course of the nineteenth century, European powers and later the United States sought to establish colonies and spheres of influence, competing over the richer islands (e.g., Tahiti, New Zealand, Samoa), while annexing island groups with few or no exploitable resources in the context of international treaties designed to regulate their spheres of influence. In Polynesia, the key players in the nineteenth century were predominantly British, French, and German. Beginning in 1842, France established a protectorate, and later colony, over Tahiti and numerous adjacent islands. Māori chiefs in New Zealand were made to sign the infamous Treaty of Waitangi with Britain in 1840, the consequences of which are still argued over to this day. The Cook Islands became a British protectorate in 1888, the administration of which was transferred to New Zealand in 1901. In 1900, the British consul essentially forced King George II of Tonga to sign a treaty that made the kingdom a protected state of Britain. The Tripartite Convention of 1899, signed by Germany, the United States, and Britain, placed the larger islands of Samoa under German control, while the US Navy took over the administration of the smaller eastern islands of the group, which have been known as American Samoa to this day.

In Micronesia, Spain hung on to the last significant remnants of its colonial empire until its defeat in the Spanish–American War of 1898, when Guam came under US control (along with, outside the region, the Philippines and Puerto Rico, while Cuba became independent under the control of the US). A German–Spanish Treaty in 1899 added to the German empire the Caroline, Mariana, and Marshall Islands, as well as Palau and Nauru.

During these transformative decades, several pioneering scholars documented the societies and cultures of the two regions. Polish-born John Stanislaw Kubary (1846–96), for example, who eventually became an employee of the Hamburg-based plantation firm Godeffroy und Sohn (as well as an Australian citizen), wrote detailed accounts of the Micronesian societies among which he lived. German-educated Russian aristocrat Nikolai Mikloukho-Maclay (1846–88), who

also settled in Australia, documented Micronesian as well as New Guinea societies and championed Pacific Island people against colonial exploitation. Their important descriptive works have been largely forgotten because of their authors' short lives and the fact that they wrote in Polish and Russian, respectively. Slightly more enduring are the detailed works about Palau, Samoa, and Hawai'i of German ethnologist Augustin Krämer (1865–1941).

The end of World War I somewhat reshuffled the distribution of colonial powers, with Western Samoa passing into the hands of New Zealand after Germany's defeat. Japan, an ally of Britain and France at the time, emerged as a colonial power, being granted by the League of Nations in 1920 a South Pacific Mandate (*Nan'yō-chō*) over previously German-controlled Micronesia. During the two-and-a-half decades of Japanese rule, Micronesia experienced an influx of labor migrants, who came to work on plantations, in mines, and in fishing ventures, and eventually numbered more than twice the number of native Micronesians (approximately 100 000 immigrants for 40 000 Micronesians). The fact that most came from the former southern kingdom of Okinawa, which Japan had annexed 4 years after the 1868 Meiji Restoration, meant that they shared a colonial master with Micronesians, with whom many established cordial relations. Japanese rule and the Okinawan migration that it enabled left a strong cultural imprint on Micronesia.

World War II had a dramatic effect on all of Micronesia, which, with Melanesia, was the stage of some of the fiercest battles of the Pacific Theater. Micronesian lives were profoundly affected by the conflict and its aftermaths (Poyer et al., 2001). In contrast, Polynesia (other than Pearl Harbor in Hawai'i) remained largely in the background of the conflict. At the end of World War II, the United Nations created a Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands over all of Micronesia except the Gilberts, Nauru, and Guam, which the United States administered from 1947. The American administration took great pains to obliterate prior Japanese influence. Piggy-backing on the military administration, American anthropologists made Micronesian societies and cultures into the object of sustained research (Kiste and Marshall, 1999), studiously ignoring the substantial ethnographic corpus produced by Japanese anthropologists in prior decades, which to this date remains largely unknown outside of Japan.

Decolonization

The worldwide decolonizing trends of the second half of the twentieth century affected the entire Pacific Island region, as island nations began obtaining their independence from world powers. In Polynesia, Western Samoa (now Samoa) was granted independence in 1962, and Tonga ceased to be a British protected state in 1970. Decolonization in island groups held by the United States and France (particularly Micronesia and French Polynesia, respectively) was and still is a slower, more complex, and conflict-ridden process. A notable factor in both cases was the nuclear tests that both powers conducted in the islands until well into the 1990s, which created economic booms but also fundamental transformations in the lives of

people, including ecological and health problems for the affected populations (Johnston and Barker, 2008).

Today, France continues to maintain a colonial presence in French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna (both Polynesian groups), which is contested in the former but receives general local approbation in the latter. The United States signed a Compacts of Free Association with the Federated States of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands in 1986 and with Palau in 1994, and since then these entities have been recognized as sovereign nations despite continuing US security interests in the islands. American Samoa and Guam are unincorporated US territories in which the federal government maintains control of many functions, in spite of some local opposition in the case of Guam. The Northern Mariana Islands became a Commonwealth of the United States in 1986, whose citizens hold US citizenship but whose government controls internal affairs, although the extent of this control has been the subject of complex negotiations.

Rapanui (Easter Island) has been administered by Chile since 1888, despite political tension, and tiny Pitcairn Island (Polynesian from a geographical point of view) by Britain. New Zealand holds special political ties with three self-governing territories, namely Niue, Tokelau, and the Cook Islands. Hawai'i, which became the 50th state of the United States in 1959, and New Zealand are both postcolonial entities in which the politics of indigeneity are tense: indigenous Hawaiians and New Zealand Māori, numerical minorities in their own land, have claimed, with varying degrees of success, ownership of resources (primarily land) that were taken from their ancestors when Hawai'i and New Zealand became settler colonies. Fiji, which gained independence from Britain in 1970, has been rocked since 1987 by a series of coups triggered by ethnic conflicts between ethnic Fijians, who maintain ownership of key resources like land, and the descendants of immigrants from South Asia that the British colonial administration in 1879–1920 brought as indentured workers and later as free immigrants. By the late 1960s, Fiji Indians had become numerically dominant but, since the coups and the ethnic violence that accompanied them, many have emigrated to New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and the United States. These varied historical connections, as well as the different configurations in which domination, resistance, and everything in between are embedded, have contributed to the sociopolitical diversity of both regions. Standard reference works on the history of the Pacific Islands, including Polynesia and Micronesia, are Denoon (1997) and Lal and Fortune (2000).

Polynesia and Micronesia in the Global Age

The states and territories of Polynesia and Micronesia include some of the tiniest political entities of the world, such as Tuvalu (12 000 inhabitants, 26 km²), with few viable economic resources. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, they have been particularly affected by economic problems. The dearth of natural resources in the two regions stands in sharp contrast with some island groups of Melanesia, where minerals and timber have generated substantial wealth for at least some segments of society. In post–World War II years, Nauru stood out as the exception, with one of the highest per capita incomes

in the world thanks to decades of phosphate mining, although extensive financial mismanagement since the end of mining in 2006 have radically altered this situation.

At the same time, capitalism and its institutions have become increasingly determinative, sidelining although not entirely obliterating traditional economies based on reciprocity. Similarly, global forces, in the form of increased population mobility and neoliberal policies enacted by such global entities as the World Trade Organization, are radically altering the social, cultural, and economic landscape in Polynesian and Micronesian societies. The region's economies (be it that of states or that of families) are experiencing increasing difficulties maintaining themselves simply with labor emigration, the remittances that emigrants generates, and a reliance on the continuation of foreign aid from wealthy donor nations, all of which are deeply vulnerable to the vagaries of global economies.

Some states of the region have experimented with what can be described as 'postmodern.' Some states of the region have experimented with what can be described as economic ventures. Polynesian and Micronesian microstates have been particularly proactive in these endeavors. Tuvalu, for example, has invested considerable energy in developing 'resources of jurisdiction,' that is, resources that only exist because of its status as a state. It began with the issuing of increasing quantities of postage stamps aimed at collectors. When philately waned (and the British company contracted to produce the postage stamps was found to be defrauding the government), Tuvalu persuaded Western donor nations to contribute to a trust fund instead of providing direct economic aid. Besides collecting license fees from foreign ships fishing within its 200-mile exclusive economic zone (totaling 600 000 square miles), the country also leased out its telephone country code to international corporate interests, although the Church of Tuvalu pressured the government to end the lease when it found out that the code was used mainly for phone-sex services. Most spectacular is the lease to a Canadian dot-com corporation of the Internet suffix, which fortuitously happens to be '.tv' (thus homophonous with 'television') and is now ubiquitous on the Internet.

Other ventures of the kind, which frequently come with serious social and political drawbacks, have included the sale of nonresidence passports to wealthy stateless foreigners (Tonga), offshore banking (Cook Islands), the sale of flags of convenience to shipping companies (Marshall Islands), the management of detention centers for asylum seekers to Australia (Nauru), and the establishment of offshore factories employing migrant workers (Mariana Islands). More traditional forms of economic development have included the attempt to transform the emigration of low-level unskilled labor into the export of professional labor, such as trained seamen, soldiers, and, most spectacularly, professional athletes. Rugby players from Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa have acquired visibility on the global circuit of athlete mobility, and Samoans who can legally migrate to the United States are overrepresented in American football. Significant numbers of (primarily indigenous) Fijians are recruited in the British armed forces.

These economic ventures, over which island states exert various levels of control, as well as the transnationalization of island populations, have had a considerable impact on the everyday lives of islanders, both materially and culturally. Today, many inhabitants of societies that are the dispersal centers of diasporas lead lives that refer at once to a local and a global context, generating a 'bifocality' of social life that aligns these societies with other diasporic societies of the world (Besnier, 2011). At the same time, island countries have become not only the departure point of labor migration but also its destination, particularly for labor migrants from the People's Republic of China. One manifestation of these complicated dynamics is the emergence, since the last decade of the twentieth century, of new globalized forms of charismatic and Pentecostal Christianity that challenge the hegemony of Christian denominations that have become definers of 'tradition' in the last two centuries and link disenfranchised citizens to global forms of belonging.

The profound changes that have accompanied the emergence of modernity have had a negative effect on the health of islanders. In addition to the surge in cancer rates among populations that have been affected by nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands and French Polynesia, noncommunicable diseases have increased dramatically. Nauru is reputed to have the highest rate of type-2 diabetes in the world, with Samoa and Tonga ranking very high as well. Contributing factors are a genetic propensity for obesity, increasingly sedentary lifestyles, and dramatic changes in dietary habits, including the consumption of low-quality fatty imported meats (Gewertz and Errington, 2010).

Finally, global warming, perhaps the most complex manifestation of the global condition, is poised to affect the region in a particularly dramatic fashion. Polynesia and Micronesia include several political entities that are in danger of complete disappearance within a few decades unless the industrial powers of the world implement radical policies. These include Tuvalu, Tokelau, Kiribati, and the Marshall Islands (as well as, elsewhere in the world, the Maldives and several Caribbean nations), all of which consist of low-lying atolls that are immediately threatened by rising sea levels. Of course, like all disasters and impending disasters, the predicaments faced by these countries and their peoples are as much an ecological phenomenon as a matter of discursive representation. Some politicians and citizens of these countries, for example, have argued that providing health care, adequate transportation, and unimpeded access to labor markets are more pressing priorities than global warming. Clearly, the future of the region is the object of multiple positions of a wide variety of global issues that will, one hopes, take into account the local dynamics of ordinary people's daily lives.

See also: Climate Change; Enlightenment; Oceania, Sociocultural Overviews: Melanesia.

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