

Finally, the book offers useful perspectives on the nature of Indigenous communities, and indeed, all communities archaeologists might work with. A key takeaway message is that Indigenous communities are not necessarily unified or uniform, simple, or unchanging. A second point is that relationships with Indigenous people cannot be developed over weeks or months. The chapters in this book all derive from long-term partnerships created by investing years, if not decades, into working with particular groups of people, largely on their own terms. The Maluku case study provides a fascinating glimpse into the development of a research trajectory in an area with complex and contested identities during a period of violent conflict followed by a reengagement with cultural heritage as an instrument of peacemaking and community building. The chapter on Higaunon features a nuanced analysis of the ways indigeneity is being redefined within a rapidly changing social context, as oral traditions transition to written, and as traditional forms of chiefly power are out of necessity complemented with ones that engage directly with national governance structures. Overall, the book provides a valuable addition to ongoing debates about what it might mean to be “Indigenous” in the modern world. These studies should not only be of interest to regional specialists in Southeast Asia and the Pacific but also provide an important comparative perspective with similar work happening in the Americas, Africa, and other parts of Asia.

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***Oceania, 800–1800CE: A Millennium of Interactions in a Sea of Islands.* James L. Flexner. 2021. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 69 pp. \$20.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-10882-328-9. \$15.75 (e-book), ISBN 978-1-10891-378-2.**

Timothy M. Rieth

International Archaeological Research Institute Inc., Honolulu, Hawai'i, USA

James Flexner's *Oceania, 800–1800CE* is a slim and approachable, broad-brush-stroke overview of a dynamic period of Pacific history. The book is one volume in the “Elements in the Global Middle Ages” series from Cambridge University Press, and Flexner presents Oceania—the Pacific Islands within Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia—as “another example of a broader process of cultural florescence and evolution during the period falling in and around the Middle Ages” (p. 1). The book's seven chapters introduce the region, summarize the last large-scale/expansive population movement in Oceania (settlement of East Polynesia), consider intraregional and extraregional population encounters, review political developments, describe Pacific Islander-European engagement, and offer a brief statement on how understandings of a millennium of history can inform current and future decisions by Pacific Island communities.

The book's introduction to Oceania addresses two fundamental problems still underlying anthropological and archaeological research in the region: the concept of unilinear cultural evolution and the division of the Pacific into the culture areas of Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia (both baggage of our discipline's past). Flexner succinctly deconstructs these issues while acknowledging the heuristic utility, at least in certain contexts, of recognizing these culture areas within the broader sphere of Oceania. Importantly, though, the examples of population interaction and exchange he provides raise the possibility for a more nuanced and dynamic mapping of cultural-historical relationships across time and space.

The subsequent three chapters largely focus on Polynesia, including Polynesian Outliers in Melanesia and Micronesia (18 islands in southeastern Melanesia and central Micronesia that have

communities speaking Polynesian languages and exhibiting Polynesian cultural traits), with some reference to southeastern Melanesia and short shrift given to Micronesia. Flexner is honest in acknowledging this geographical bias emphasizing island groups where he has conducted research (and Oceania is a large region to cover in 69 pages), but it would have been beneficial to better incorporate Micronesia to round out the regional synthesis. The summary of the settlement of East Polynesia and later political developments is familiar to regional specialists and does a fine job synthesizing some recent research as well as incorporating oral traditions and ecological data. That said, a more critical review of the initial colonization chronologies would be worthwhile, which would include stating some of what we do not know—wholly or in part—and also posing questions about how well we actually know what we think we know, such as these: What is the variability of the contexts and contents between the earliest archaeological records of different island groups and inferences about past behavior? What was the sequence of colonization across Oceania during this period (not just East Polynesia)? How rapidly did populations disperse and was there a constant or variable tempo? Of equal importance, what was occurring in West Polynesia, the homeland for initial migrants to East Polynesia, immediately preceding eastward expansion?

Flexner discusses the integration of the Polynesian Outlier communities with the larger surrounding populations as processes of adoption and retention of particular social behaviors, material culture, and language. Adoption and retention went in both directions and is a telling example of the broader theme of adaptation and resilience among Pacific Islanders. This also provides a segue to his discussions of European incursions into the Pacific beginning during the early sixteenth century. Flexner's summary of initial Pacific Islander–European encounters begins as a conventional history of who, when, where, but it offers refreshing examples of these encounters from the former's—rather than the latter's—perspective. This is illustrated by selected events during British Captain James Cook's three voyages to the Pacific, which show Pacific Islanders acting to leverage British support in local political machinations and interpreting and explaining British actions through indigenous lenses—that is, Pacific Islanders as active agents rather than passive recipients during these engagements.

The book ends with a short chapter on the potential application of knowledge from “a millennium of contacts” (p. 46) to address present and future challenges. Flexner uses the concept of “historicities” (borrowed from Chris Ballard, “Oceanic Historicities,” *Contemporary Pacific* 26[1]:96–124, 2014)—a lived history inclusive of “elements of the past that exist in the present and future” (p. 46)—to characterize Pacific Islanders' experiences of history. In this way, they provide exemplars or adaptation and resilience that may be mobilized for addressing issues such as climate change, natural resource management, and the region's role in geopolitics. It would have been helpful for Flexner to provide examples of how archaeological research—conducted by Pacific Islanders or non-islanders—can contribute in concrete ways, and this chapter seems like a missed opportunity to discuss community-based archaeology and efforts to better disseminate archaeological information to host communities.

My strongest critique of Flexner's otherwise worthwhile effort is aimed at the series. I am at a loss as to how a consideration of roughly AD 800–1800 in the Pacific as a component of the “Global Middle Ages” offers any classificatory, let alone explanatory, utility. By broadening the definition of the Middle Ages as a period of “cultural florescence and evolution,” it can be applied equally to any period of time in Oceania's multimillennial history. As a general presentation of certain topics relating to the period from AD 800 to 1800 in the Pacific (though largely East Polynesia and southeastern Melanesia), this book offers researchers and contemporary communities useful and thought-provoking information and ideas.

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