

Richard Feinberg, ed., *Seafaring in the Contemporary Pacific Islands: Studies in Continuity and Change*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1995. Pp. 245, illus. US\$35 cloth.

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There has been an interesting as well as a tired dichotomy of thinking about “voyaging” in the Pacific. Interesting because of questions concerned with the ability of voyagers to control their efforts across vast areas of a watery space in order to reach land and, in the settlement eras, to successfully prosper and possibly engage in return voyages of communication. These speculations, attempts at documentation through the paucity of European references to these voyagers, and the practical experiments undertaken by David Lewis and Ben Finney are all concerned with what must be seen as incredible journeys, regardless of how they were actually achieved.

The thinking has been tired because of a habitual practice in all kinds of literature, both scholarly and popular, to assign an either/or identity to “voyaging.” As we are occasionally told in comments usually tucked away in the bowels of some greater concern with modernity, this voyaging, for all its illustrious past, is now “dead.” And as such, it wallows in the past. It is only the romantics, the individuals pricked by a yearning for the spectacular, who resist recognizing this foundational fact of Pacific life. Outboard motors and jet planes have nothing to do with this heritage. It is a loss basic to “contact”

and to degrees of acculturation that have transported much of the Pacific, including many of its most far-flung islands, into closer and closer contact with the “global community.”

It is true that the literature on voyaging is filled with both fascinating and questionable conjectures on the capabilities of indigenous, noninstrumental voyagers of the past and, in the case at least of Polowat and Satawal, the present. Putting aside discussion and tests concerned with basic questions related to determining set and drift (which would include the pioneering computer simulations of drift and navigated voyages by Levison, Ward, and Webb [1973] and the voyaging experiments recorded by Lewis [1972] and Finney [1988]), expanding landfall targets by swells, bird observations, and stellar routes at sea, there is still plenty in the literature that provides a rich collection of issues and perspectives on the voyaging heritage of Oceania. These would include Tupaia's map dictated to Captain Cook in 1769 that speaks directly to the question of indigenous geographic knowledge of distant islands before contact, the map's translations and reversals of Tupaia's intents by Forster (1777) and Hale (1846), Lewthwaite's 1966 defense of his characterization of Tupaia as a “Polynesian geographer,” Hornell's 1935 attempt to draw a parallel between Scandinavian and Oceanic boat construction as well as all the other attempts to make cultural and material diffusion connections across the Pacific. This material achieved its best and most elaborate expression in Haddon and Hornell's *Canoes of Oceania* (1975). On the borderline would be the early debates on the “sacred calabash” supposedly used on the Tahiti to Hawai'i leg and enabling one to make an accurate westward turn to landfall in Hawai'i by lining Polaris up at a 19-degree angle in one of the three-foot calabash's four holes drilled near its top (Rodman 1928), Sanchez y Zayas's 1866 reference to a cane filled with water used at night to determine latitude, traditional references to arrivals at the ice-chunked seas of the Antarctic (Best 1923), and references to a Fijian navigational string chart (Smith 1891). At the representative edge would probably be Jourdain's 1970 speculation that Tahitians may have used a land-finding technique consisting of a small pig that, after being tossed overboard, would have immediately turned toward the nearest island because of its strong sense of smell.

What this epistemology of “voyaging” undercuts in visions of a greater past are the complexities of social and cultural relations that allow for the importation of the human compulsion to move that is apparent in “voyaging,” to its relevant function in symbolism, mythology, and identity. The death of “voyaging” in Peter H. Buck's images of Kupe (1926) do not (and actually could not) mean the death of its social and cultural heritage. To do so is to force a Eurocentric standard, a stubborn phenomenology, if you will, of the

kind of grandeur that washes over early texts on the noble savage. What has been needed is a new approach to voyaging that allows for the exploration of its human and cultural roots in contemporary Pacific societies.

Fortunately Richard Feinberg's edited collection of papers, *Seafaring in the Contemporary Pacific Islands: Studies in Continuity and Change*, finally offers this approach and serves to reflect what has always been a part of voyaging, its canoes and its subjects. Laurence M. Carucci's work, for example, on the "Symbolic Imagery of Enewetak Sailing Canoes" notes that "the Enewetak and Ujelang people, like the residents of Sikaiana [examined in this volume by William H. Donner], are unceasing sailors, whose love for the sea will long outlive the last canoe. The trope that equates life with canoe voyages dominates daily discussion now as in the past" (p. 19).

Sailing, regardless of its distance, involves the transformation of the "magical potency of the wind into directed activity," rendering power unto the otherwise socially restricted individual (p. 21). Carucci elaborates upon the semantics of the canoe and the terminological extension of its components to those of the vehicles of "contact," such as the automobile, and of the inheritance of power through sailing and by harnessing the supernatural dimensions in a distant sky and the sea. Canoes further reflect hierarchical relationships of Enewetak people through the responsibilities of individual crew members, whose cooperation, however, also provides a representation of "people's interdependence in the voyage through life" (p. 25). Canoes in fact transcend time, even in what Carucci suspects are the waning days of the Enewetak canoe. Although most individuals on Enewetak refer to canoes as still possessing a major part of everyday life, only the aged canoe builders, who regret the passing of an era, refer to these canoes in the past tense. This transcendency of time at the hands of a material object of the past also seems to be reflected in the Enewetak association of sailing skills with the fact that the Marshallese of the Ralik and Ratak chains have not been able to exercise control over the island.

Other papers in this timely collection include Maria Lepowsky's "Voyaging and Cultural Identity in the Louisiade Archipelago of Papua New Guinea," which ties a close analysis of canoes and sailing in with the ceremonial inter-island exchanges and feasting Lepowsky depicted in her *Fruit of the Motherland* (1993). The cosmology of the sea and voyaging is laden with mythical figures and supernatural forces that do not need voyages of significant distance to materialize. The flying witches Malinowski recorded continue to threaten sailing canoes and have been blamed for the loss of three canoes, all originating from the witch-infested island of Motorina. Spirits also reside in more dangerous reef passages and whirlpools. But despite these dangers, interisland voyaging in the archipelago represents a defiance of outside

bureaucratic interferences that have attempted, in both political and religious formats, to discontinue this fundamental part of ceremonial practices. External attempts to suppress these traditional means of transporting significant cultural goods and the inherent motives and consequences of these attempts have only strengthened a sustained and determined sense of cultural and social autonomy.

Donner's "From Outrigger to Jet: Four Centuries of Sikaiana Voyaging" also complements Lepowsky's work by expanding upon a characteristic "voyaging ethic" of Sikaiana life (p. 144). In this ethic, there is the desire to voyage (to travel), to participate in the vibrant voyaging "metaphors of social life" (p. 150), and to engage in voyaging by either outrigger or plane. The act of voyaging is surrounded by a "system of symbols and meanings that organizes experience and behavior" (p. 144). Donner's discussion on these metaphors expands their foundational origins into the areas of song, courtship, and the identification of terms that commonly refer to any vehicle of transport. "Lulu" designates the steering of either a canoe or a car and "vaka" (boat) applies to all vehicles, regardless of their speed. As a metaphor, seafaring enables the equating of the danger of a secret love affair to a dangerous voyage. And without a wife, a man describes himself as "an outrigger without the parts that are essential for navigation" (p. 151).

Alan Howard examines indications of previous navigational knowledge among the people of Rotuma that are found in scattered sections of early log-books, journals, and legends. They suggest previous voyages to Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, Tikopia, Kosrae, and even to Raiatea in the Society Islands. Large double canoes were found by Wood in 1875 to have fallen into disuse. Howard summarizes the basics of Rotuman canoe construction gleaned from sources of the late nineteenth century and from McGregor's 1932 field notes, which include a Rotuman canoe lexicon that Howard provides in a table encompassing McGregor's notes with those from Churchward's 1940 dictionary of the Rotuman language. A seafaring tradition transformed itself into the service of Rotuman men on European ships, providing them with not only extensive experience at sea (and providing Rotuman society with information sources on the outside world), but also with a relatively high level of income for an isolated island. Historical sources demonstrate that Rotuman men were habitually referred to as sought after, high quality sailors—characteristics that extend to their present-day employment as crewmen. And although there are no canoe journeys beyond Rotuma's own reef, "travel abroad, in general, is metaphorically a sailing experience, and at its core remains a canoe journey" (p. 134). Howard suggests that the distinction Rotuman sailors have earned for themselves may be a consequence of the strong "personal characteristics" (p. 138) of good seamen that they already possessed and that the

symbolic centrality of sailing and the canoe in Rotuman culture may be a reflection of this. Howard also underlines the fact that, although there may be a collective, emotional ambivalence to the sea, it nevertheless remains defined by its mystique, part of which provides for a cultural, idiomatic association of sea and sky.

Other papers in this collection include Susan Montague's focus on one of the few indigene-constructed boat harbors in the Pacific, at Kaduwaga in the northern Trobriand Islands, and the harbor's historical and contemporary role in establishing Kaduwaga's place as a commercial and communication center. It remains a center that is particularly significant for repairs and replenishing of canoes for return voyages to other points in the Trobriands. Harry Powell examines the political dynamics derived from seafaring on Kiriwina, the main island of the Trobriands, particularly the northeastern Kiriwinans' political motivations in maintaining a strong position in the *kula* competitive gift-exchange system that subsequently served to preserve the northeastern canoe construction and sailing traditions. Edvard Hviding argues that the people of the Marovo Lagoon in the Solomon Islands, while engaged in contemporary seamanship involving large canoes with outboard motors, maintain a linkage of cultural identity with a voyaging past. This linkage emphasizes the "symbolic significance of an intimately known and classified seascape" (p. 90) that provides a well-maintained understanding of the significance of stories and traditions that form the contextual value of place names. Feinberg continues with his work on Nukumanu in a paper that draws upon the "continuity and change" in Nukumanu seafaring evident in the cosmological adaptation of things European as well as in the beneficial force of this cosmology, reflected in the continuation of single outrigger canoes and numerous sailing techniques of their Nukumanu ancestors. Nukumanu's relative isolation, small population, and location relative to islands that provide reasonably good prospects for successful landfall (in Nukumanu's case, these voyages are often to Ontong Java) have all served to make it possible for Nukumanu to maintain comparatively more of its seafaring traditions. Although Howard, Powell, and Montague each provide single-page illustrations of some aspect of canoe construction, Feinberg's chapter offers several drawings on Nukumanu canoe structures and riggings as well as several Nukumanu identifications of constellations with approximate English translations and common Western identifications of these stars.

Finally, Gene Ammarell examines the continuity points of seafaring among the Bugis of South Sulawesi, Indonesia. These are most clearly manifested in navigational techniques involving star paths, swells, tides, wind patterns, and other aids in land finding. The process of dead reckoning increasingly involves the use of the magnetic compass, although there are clear indica-

tions from Ammarell's fieldwork that its use as a reference in numerous examples is secondary and that star courses can serve as a comparable substitute. Ammarell's narrative on this navigation among traders, whose voyages include the 212 nautical miles from Ujung Pandang to Bima, is supplemented by several illustrations of Bugis trading boats. Ammarell also includes illustrations of twelve- and sixteen-point variants of the wind compass, which indicate discrepancies between the wind compasses in both Polynesia (particularly Tikopia and Anuta) and in Micronesia. The illustration of the Micronesian version appears to generally correspond with points of the international compass. Ammarell also includes several interesting, illustrated perspectives on the Bugis stars and asterisms of the southern and northern skies and a few comparative Bugis and Western designations of constellations and asterisms that appear to provide for the use of guiding stars in voyages to the east and west. Bugis maritime technology and its retention and modification, like those of other islands and island groups examined in this collection, is affected by physical, social, and economic factors; these factors deserve additional study in the context of contemporary seafaring.

The book's epilog, written by Ward Goodenough and Feinberg, provides an effective tying together of the spiritual dimensions that have an impact across all these environments. Seafaring's functional role as a metaphor of life and indigenous identity is, overall, a common theme throughout these studies, which serves to distance the common requirement that voyaging and the sea be affiliated with the spectacular. With this book's overdue focus on the impact of a voyaging heritage and the living of lives in accordance with change and continuity, it is possible to talk genuinely about relevance, practice, and spirit in the same breath. For this reason alone, but also for the depth of fieldwork and the quality of its conveyance throughout these papers, it is difficult to find something to criticize about this book. It makes the bifurcation of thinking about voyaging a point at which the understanding of change is either to assume a process of perpetual loss or the creation of new ways to explore what has been a part of Pacific societies for so long.

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