data on fish remains, invertebrate marine fauna and general artefact descriptions. The only noticeable omission is the lack of any analytical treatment of lithic artefacts such as adzes, flaked tools and debitage from the site.

Fishing strategies varied over time at Nu‘alolo Kai. There was an early and consistent focus on large easily caught inshore taxa; later, small pelagic fish from the reef margins were added to the catch. Intriguingly, some inshore taxa increase in size throughout the prehistoric sequence, contradicting typical expectations of resource depression. The analysis of turtle remains uncovers unexpected patterns as well. Turtles were often targeted by colonising populations, as they can offer a high return for hunting effort in virgin environments. At Nu‘alolo Kai, however, turtles are not seen in the archaeofauna until about AD 1500, some centuries after first occupation. And while the Nu‘alolo Kai collection is unusually well-preserved and large, turtle still contributed a minor component to the overall diet. Continuing with unexpected patterns, birds were important for subsistence and raw materials, but despite long-term human predation, they were a stable resource. The chapter on mammal remains indicates that the earliest residents introduced pigs, dogs and rats to Nu‘alolo Kai, and that pig and dog were the major sources of terrestrial protein in people’s diet.

The chapters on both coral artefacts and ornaments of shell and bone undertake the classification approach mentioned above. This allows the authors to generate hypotheses about behavioural variation over time; for example, abrading techniques remained relatively unchanged. Some artefact uses are identified through comparison with ethnographically documented specimens, leading the editors to suggest that artefacts interpreted as lei nihoa palaoa, a status object worn by elites, signify the presence of chiefs at Nu‘alolo Kai.

In their concluding synthesis chapter the editors highlight the relatively small impact of subsistence behaviours on marine and bird fauna. While there is some evidence for pressure on these resources, they are largely stable over time. This resilience is attributed to ancient Hawaiian practices of “stewardship, which regulated production in order to maintain populations and reduce resource stress” (p. 199).

Abundance and Resilience is an excellent addition to the archaeology of Hawai‘i. The book is the first to realise the archaeological potential of the vast Nu‘alolo Kai collections and will be of interest to all students and scholars of Hawaiian prehistory and contemporary Native Hawaiian issues.


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Niue was annexed by New Zealand in 1901 and since independence in 1974 has been in a relationship of free association with New Zealand. In spite of these close ties, which go back more than 100 years, publications on the history of Niue have been few when compared with those on other Pacific Islands. However, that “to date, this
story has not been told”, as the back cover text of Margaret Pointer’s book suggests, or that this is the “groundbreaking… first fully documented account of this most isolated Pacific nation” (Otago Press media release) is a bit overstated. The seminal, though unpublished, 1993 PhD thesis of Thomas Ryan, as well as his 1984 compilation of 18th and early 19th century excerpts from ships’ logs and published narratives of European contact in Niue, are easily available in New Zealand university libraries and certainly well-known to all scholars of Niuean history, as are McDowell’s 1961 thesis, Vilitama’s and Chapman’s 1982 book published in Niue, or perhaps even my own 2009 publication containing a long main chapter on Niuean history.

Having said that, Mrs Pointer’s book is a well-researched, beautiful and very readable summary of Niuean history between 1774, the time of first European contact made by Captain Cook’s vessel, and 1974, the year of independence. Divided into four main parts, “Early Contacts”, “Empire”, “New Zealand Administration”, “The Road to Self-Government”, the island’s European contact and further history is covered in 16 chapters, each (as in some of the aforementioned earlier works on Niuean history) introduced by a suitable quotation. As with her earlier, truly ground-breaking book on Niuean servicemen in the First World War, Mrs Pointer has based her work on thorough, meticulous study of the relevant written primary sources, tracked down in archives all over New Zealand and Australia—whalers’ logs; missionaries’ journals, letters and diaries; all kinds of administrative documents, even personnel files, from the time of the very short British Protectorate and the time of the very long New Zealand administration; and letters and journals of important chroniclers and researchers like Percy Smith or Jock McEwen. On top of that, she gained access to private family papers of New Zealanders who worked in the Niuean administration before independence, and she interviewed some of them and other contemporary witnesses of important events.

Several short insertions on coloured pages have been strewn through the main text, giving attention to special topics for which detailed sources were available, but which would have gone beyond the scope and flow of the actual text. Their colour-coding and short-read quality add to the attraction of the book and, more importantly, the themes they cover are either deeply relevant in Niuean oral history, as I recall from many conversations during my own work with Niueans, or they are not very well-known and promise to be of interest, especially to readers well-versed in Niuean history: e.g., “The Wreck of the Mission Ship John Williams, 1867”, “A Niuean at Gallipoli” and “The Mother of Niue Education”.

Apart from its sound grounding in the written primary sources, it is above all the beautiful illustration work which makes this book a real asset—for example, the first European map of Niue and depictions of her coastline drawn in 1774, and of Niuean men drawn in 1853. Margaret Pointer has unearthed a great number of rare photos from collections in New Zealand, Australia and Great Britain, as well as from private photo collections, many of which have never been published before.

Several photos serve as concrete illustrations for matters mentioned in the text, which adds to the appeal of the book—for example, a present-day photo of a tiale ‘gardenia’ in exactly the same position as William Hodges’ drawing of one in 1774; museum photos of maka ‘fighting or throwing stones’ and katoua clubs similar to those hurled at Captain Cook’s party; etchings of ships which touched Niue Island;
and depictions of Malden Island or whaling where many Niuean men found work.

The book is well-written and enjoyable to read. However, for a book published by a university press, I would have wished for a little more support with sources concerning general statements about historical developments in the world, or in Niue. Although as someone familiar with sources on the Pacific and particularly Niue, I can guess a number of the relevant sources here, it would be good to see them mentioned—especially as the book will certainly be used as a reference by scholars just starting to study Niuean history and looking for further leads.

Selectively and rarely, precision seems to be overridden for the sake of smooth writing; impartiality and distance—again expected in a university press book—give way to imaginative description or even value judgements which reflect an exclusively European perspective, blending out possible critical Niuean counter-attitudes, e.g., the assessment of patuiki or “king” Togia being “an old man, rather ineffectual” in his role (p. 135) (see also p. 73 “with a mix of curiosity and apprehension” or pp. 91-92 on the missionaries and their wives).

The close reliance on administrative and missionary primary sources sometimes comes with a lack of verification through other sources. For example, there do exist different versions than the one given on Taole’s return after the abduction by a slave ship and on his brother’s destiny in Peru (p. 116), and there even is a primary source suggesting that there were other returnees to Niue apart from Taole (see Arthur Gordon’s 1904 Fiji: Records of Private and Public Life, 1875-1880). Likewise, contrary to Mrs Pointer’s assumption (p. 149), there is no evidence that the tiputa ‘bark cloth poncho’ was actually ever worn in Niue; it seems to have been solely produced as a poa or duty for the London Missionary Society’s to sell elsewhere (see Neich and Pendergrast’s 2004 Pacific Tapa).

Most primary sources used in the book come from non-Niuean chroniclers and writers. Niuean perspectives, however, are often passed on orally and not necessarily shared with non-Niueans. Pointer’s coverage of Resident Commissioner Hector Larsen’s murder relies nearly exclusively on official files, letters by and interviews with non-Niueans (except Robert Rex who thought highly of the Resident Commissioner). Although Mrs. Pointer lists Dick Scott’s 1993 book on the murder case in her bibliography, she does not refer to it; Scott interviewed Niuean contemporary witnesses and quoted a number of voices critical of Hector Larsen.

To conclude: Most of what Margaret Pointer has written on Niuean history is not new and has been written before. What makes this book so special, however, is the way—how—it has been written and published: the rare and wonderful illustrations, particularly many historical photos hidden away in archives until now and never published before; and the text’s sound grounding in the relevant primary sources. This makes for a concise, beautiful and concrete introduction into Niuean history. Well-written and a pleasure to peruse, it will find many readers among people interested in Niue, and among Niueans themselves.

References


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This is another important addition to the Lapita literature. Arising from a research forum focussing on Lapita decoration, the volume presents an eclectic range of papers, from a brilliant review of the settling of Remote Oceania, to an insightful deconstruction of the Eastern Lapita Province, with plenty in-between to prehistoric links between the Solomon Islands and Papua, a review of Lapita vessel forms from Mussau, and another from a number of assemblages, an update on the archaeology of the Isle of Pines, and an intriguing comparison between secondary burials of Vanuatu, Island Southeast Asia (ISEA) and Taiwan.

The introductory chapter by the editors is an overview of Lapita, a history of discoveries and a background to the development of the ceramic database developed by Chiu. This is an excellent history of Lapita, although there are a couple of points that need clarification. First, it is noted that Golson defined the term “Lapitoid” by a synthesis of data on dentate decoration. In fact “Lapitoid” was defined by Golson to include the non-dentate wares from the assemblages. His concept of Lapitoid went beyond decorative techniques and included other morphological characteristics. There is more to Lapita than dentate stamping.