

The Typhoon of War: Micronesian Experiences of the Pacific War, by Lin Poyer, Suzanne Falgout, and Laurence Marshall Carucci. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001. ISBN 0-8248-2168-8, xiii + 493 pages, maps, photographs, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. US\$54.

Featuring a rich array of Micronesian voices, anthropologists Lin Poyer, Suzanne Falgout, and Laurence Carucci offer readers a fine historical resource that testifies to the resilience and agency of diverse Islanders in challenging times. *Typhoon of War* culminates from more than three hundred interviews conducted by the authors in the early 1990s in Chuuk, Kosrae, the Marshall Islands, Pohnpei, and Yap in an oral history project funded primarily by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The use of individual memories and experiences, as well as collective community songs and dances, significantly enriches knowledge of the Second World War from the eloquent and poignant perspectives of those Islanders who directly suffered its consequences, but who are typically unrepresented in the plethora of military histories of Micronesia in World War II. Although the broad spatial focus is on the entire Micronesian region, the authors devote most of their attention to those islands on which they conducted their interviews. Additional secondary-source materials have been incorporated for Palau and the Mariana Islands, and a few references are made to events affecting Kiribati and Nauru.

The authors rightly note that “little is known of the local view of the conflict, largely because Pacific Islander

representations of history have been primarily oral and performative, recorded in narrative, dance, drama, and song” (3). This absence of Micronesian voices in the canonical American and Japanese histories does a disservice to those peoples whose lives were so transformed in the years before, during, and after the war. The authors locate the many ways in which diverse groups of Micronesians uniformly mark the Second World War as a turning point in their personal and national histories. As Poyer, Falgout, and Carucci write, “World War II in Micronesia meant, in short, both terrible suffering and momentous change. Nothing would ever be the same again” (14).

Although the book's temporal scope explicitly centers on the war years of 1941 to 1945, the authors extend their analysis to a much broader time frame, beginning with an important contextualization of daily life in the early period of Japanese colonial rule from 1914 and ending with contemporary Micronesian relations with the United States. Relying primarily on secondary sources, the authors map out the general contours of prewar Micronesian island economics, education, labor, religion, and interpersonal relations with Japanese immigrants under the Nan'yō-chō, Japan's civil administrative body. According to their sources, including Micronesian interviewees, despite the realities of racism and discrimination under the Nan'yō-chō, Islanders integrated into the Japanese economy, creating “regional and global connections, while [remaining] rooted in familiar life at home” (17).

In their treatment of the war, Poyer, Falgout, and Carucci attempt to avoid

a simple and single story of victimization, instead focusing on the ways in which Micronesians actively responded to the exigencies of critical food shortages, extreme labor demands, poor living conditions, separation from families and home islands, harsh disciplinary demands of Japanese military leaders, and incessant bombings of their islands. Additionally, they demonstrate well the diversity of Micronesian experiences along trajectories of island, rank, gender, and age, as well as degree and type of involvement in the war. Poyer, Falgout, and Carucci assert, "While memories of war work throughout Micronesia are predominantly those of hardship and suffering, it must be repeated that no experience is uniform—not even that of suffering" (104). Just as the authors exercise caution in demonstrating the variety and variability of Micronesian experiences and opinions of the war, so too do they point to differences in Islander experiences with Japanese persons. Despite the preponderance of traumatic experiences, for example, the authors note that Micronesians are generally reluctant to condemn Japan for their sufferings, instead indicting war itself as the culprit. As they point out, "Micronesians distinguish between prewar and wartime, and when speaking of the war, they distinguish civilian from military Japanese and navy from army personnel. And when speaking of the Japanese military, Micronesians call attention to individual differences, explicitly acknowledging the kindness of friends, while affirming frequent harshness" (215).

The last third of the book proceeds from the years of war to the postwar

American occupation. Here the authors focus on some of the more problematic aspects resulting from America's occupation of the islands, particularly highlighting the initial flood of food, clothing, medical supplies, and other forms of US aid to the islands. Poyer, Falgout, and Carucci liken the United States to a chief whose power is evidenced through seemingly unlimited acts of largesse, asserting that "American offers to help and resources to do so (such as sending large ships to very small, distant islands) confirmed Islanders' view of their chieflike power. This belief created confusion and some resentment when the resources of the U.S. administration in Micronesia dropped precipitately after the war" (267). The authors, as well as some of their interviewees, characterize American policymakers as generally racist and uninformed and criticize American expatriates as persons who segregated themselves from, rather than integrated with, the Micronesian communities where they lived and ruled. These physical and cultural chasms between Micronesians and Americans exacerbated the already-troubling consequences of the war, including environmental destruction, food shortages, fish scarcities, and land tenure problems. Micronesians still contend with these vexing problems today, and thus the authors assert that the Islanders' wartime experiences have "indicated the outlines of current and future political and economic strategy" (348).

Poyer, Falgout, and Carucci artfully weave their interviews into a well-written account that reads fluidly despite hopping continually from island to island across time. They

skillfully demonstrate the complexity of both the prewar and wartime periods by showing that the categories of “Micronesian” and “Japanese” require a sophisticated contextualization in order to have appreciable meaning. Their treatment of the United States and Americans, however, lacks the same complexity and contextualization, insofar as their analysis of the entire Trust Territory period is only superficially assessed. Their attempt to demonstrate the profound legacy of the Second World War as enacted continually in Micronesians’ political, economic, and cultural dealings with the United States would require another volume, and its cursory treatment here detracts from the strength of their wartime historicization of Micronesia. As the first comprehensive treatment of World War II in Micronesia from the perspective of the Islanders, *Typhoon of War* is a welcome, necessary, and long-overdue contribution to Pacific Islands and world history. Poyer, Falgout, and Carucci deserve praise for enlightening the rest of the world about some of the trenchant oral memoirs of Micronesian peoples whose words and songs have been treated here with the utmost respect and dignity.

ANNE PEREZ HATTORI
University of Guam

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Fiji before the Storm: Elections and the Politics of Development, edited by Brij V Lal. Canberra: Asia Pacific Press at the Australian National University, 2000. ISBN 0-7315-3650-9; xii + 205 pages, tables, figures, map, glossary, notes, references, index. A\$32; US\$30.

The contributions to this collection were for the most part written in the aftermath of the 1999 Fiji general election (which brought the People’s Coalition led by Mahendra Chaudhry to power) and before the coup attempt of May 2000. Half the chapters deal with the election or with political developments leading up to that election; the other half are studies of economic development in Fiji, with one that offers an analysis of women’s roles in politics. The volume was completed and published in the months following the political upheaval of May 2000. The opening and closing chapters, both written by the editor (Professor Brij Lal of the Australian National University), thus incorporate some analysis of the crisis and its long-term implications for Fiji.

This is a volume that traverses the highs and lows, the promise and despair, of Fiji in the last decade of the twentieth century. Appropriately, the first substantive chapter is by Sitiveni Rabuka, the man who did so much to define Fiji’s politics in that decade. In a personal memoir, Rabuka reflects on his political convictions and the factors that impelled him along the path he took, from “soldier to military ruler, politician to practitioner of democracy,” and (at the time of writing) Commonwealth mediator and peace-maker in Solomon Islands.

Inevitably one looks for clues as