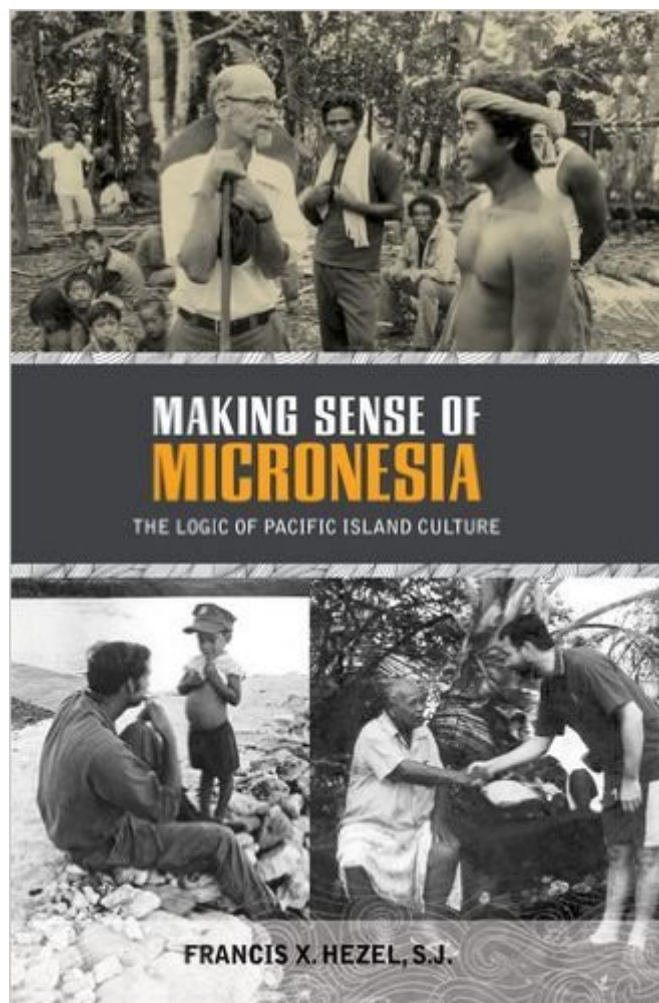


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Making Sense Of Micronesia: The Logic Of Pacific Island Culture



Synopsis

Why are islanders so lavishly generous with food and material possessions but so guarded with information? Why do these people, unfailingly polite for the most part, laugh openly when others embarrass themselves? What does a smile mean to an islander? What might a sudden lapse into silence signify? These questions are common in encounters with an unfamiliar Pacific Island culture. *Making Sense of Micronesia* is intended for westerners who find themselves in contact with Micronesians— as teachers, social workers, health-care providers, or simply as friends—and are puzzled by their island ways. It is for anyone struggling to make sense of cultural exchanges they don't quite understand. The author focuses on the guts of island culture: the importance of the social map, the tension between the individual and social identity, the ways in which wealth and knowledge are used, the huge importance of respect, emotional expression and its restraints, island ways of handling both conflict and intimacy, the real but indirect power of women. Far from a theoretical exposition, the book begins and ends with the real-life behavior of islanders. Each section of every chapter is introduced by a vignette that illustrates the theme discussed. The book attempts to explain island behavior, as curious as it may seem to outsiders at times, against the over-riding pattern of values and attitudes that have always guided island life. Even as the author maps the cultural terrain of Micronesia, he identifies those areas where island logic and the demands of the modern world conflict: the dilemmas of development. In some cases, changes are being made; in others, the very features of island culture that were highly functional in the past may remain so even today. Overall, he advocates restraint in our judgments on island practices, in our assumption that many of these are dysfunctional, and in leading the charge for development before understanding the broader context of the culture we are trying to convert.

Book Information

Hardcover: 224 pages

Publisher: University of Hawaii Press (April 30, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0824836618

ISBN-13: 978-0824836610

Product Dimensions: 5.9 x 0.8 x 8.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (11 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #874,034 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #269 in [Books > History >](#)

Australia & Oceania > Oceania #1512 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Customs & Traditions #6471 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Anthropology > Cultural

Customer Reviews

This personal account of Fran's work in Micronesia draws together some 30 years of dedication to Chuuk and MicSem for future generations. He provides an overview from his perspective as a Jesuit priest of a theme he uses as subtitle for the book "The Logic of Pacific Island Culture", as it applies to one area of the Pacific, Micronesia. A Bibliography over and above the Suggested Readings that cites Hezel's previous publications would enhance the accessibility of information on Micronesia for students and other interested readers.

I had the good fortune to work with Fran Hezel back in the late '70's at Xavier High School, Chuuk. He was running the groundbreaking "Micronesian Seminar." Simply put, in order to "make sense" of Micronesia, you have to read Fran Hezel. No one has done more for the history and the sociology of this Pacific region than Fran. I was delighted when I learned of this, his latest work, and relieved to know that he is still researching, still writing, still in top form. Of course, anyone who knows Micronesia knows that in praising Fran and his latest book, all I'm doing is commenting upon the obvious!

Making sense of Micronesia does just that - it makes sense of many of the cultural practices that often times drives a non-Micronesian crazy. As Hezel unpacks the different cultural practices and explains the whys, you actually come to understand that there is a logic to it all - and it then makes you question your own culture.

Francis Hezel gives a respectful and sensitive explanation of some of the most baffling Micronesian customs. There cannot be a westerner with greater credibility and insight to speak on this subject. Wish I had read the book BEFORE I went there!

It is an opportunity to learn more about the Micronesians that have migrated to the Hawaii Islands inclusive of their needs of medical, education, and jobs.

Did not enjoy writing style. Felt like I had to wade through a lot to get to the points. Points were good, however.

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