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Polynesia and Micronesia: Sociocultural Aspects

The two geographical areas commonly referred to as 'Polynesia' and 'Micronesia' consist of a scattering of relatively small and widely disseminated islands across the central, south, and northwestern Pacific Ocean. The two areas are complementary to Melanesia, the third area customarily recognized in the insular Pacific. Together, the three areas are commonly referred to as the 'Pacific Islands' or 'Oceania,' although these categories, particularly the latter, occasionally include Australia and Tasmania, and occasionally the larger islands of Southeast Asia. While some geographical, social, cultural, linguistic, and historical generalizations can be made about each of them, Polynesia and Micronesia are meaningful entities beyond simple areal demarcations only as a result of historical contingencies, in which the history of Western colonialism in the Pacific figures prominently.

1. General Identification

The terms 'Polynesia' and 'Micronesia' are convenient labels for geographical areas whose social, cultural, archeological, historical, political, and linguistic significance is somewhat arbitrary. In modern-day usage, the term 'Polynesia' refers to all island and island groups falling within a large triangular area whose apexes are New Zealand to the south, Hawaii to the north, and Rapanui (Easter Island) to the west. The largest islands and island groups of the region are Tonga, Samoa, Rarotonga and the Southern Cooks, Tahiti and the Society Islands, the Marquesas, and Hawaii, in addition to the much larger New Zealand. Politically or culturally notable smaller islands include Niue, Wallis and Futuna, Tuvalu, Tokelau, the Northern Cooks, Rapanui, Pitcairn Island, and the Tuamotus, Austral, and Gambier Islands.

In addition, a geographically heterogeneous group of about 18 islands and sections of islands are commonly identified as 'Polynesian Outliers' societies because they are located outside of this triangular area: in Melanesia to the west (e.g., Takuu off Bougainville Island, Sikaiana and Rennell in the Solomon Islands, Mae and Mele in Vanuatu) and, in the case of two islands (Nukuoro and Kapinga-

marangi), in Micronesia to the northwest of the Polynesian Triangle.

Micronesia forms a wide arc of small islands spanning from the western region of Insular Southeast Asia to the Central Pacific, comprising the following island groups: Palau and outlying islands, Guam and the Mariana Islands, Caroline Islands, Marshall Islands, Gilbert Islands, and two isolated islands, Nauru and Banaba (Ocean Island). Contemporary political considerations may include island groups of the Central Pacific like the Phoenix and Line Islands; although geographically located in the Polynesian Triangle, these islands, which were not permanently inhabited until the modern age, are governed by Kiribati, the modern state based in the Gilbert Islands. With the exception of Guam, the islands of Micronesia are small, although some of the largest atolls in the world are found in the region (e.g., Kwajalein in the Marshalls).

Islands of many different types are found in Polynesia and Micronesia: a few continental islands (e.g., Guam); volcanic structures, some of which can be substantial in size (e.g., Hawaii); raised coral islands of different types (e.g., Tonga); atolls (e.g., Kiribati); and combinations of these.

2. The Historical Contingency of Labels

The societies of each of the two regions share a number of characteristics with one another, although it is impossible to arrive at a list of necessary and sufficient conditions that would determine whether a given society should be identified as Polynesian or Micronesian, or as something else. The reason for this is twofold. First, commonalities among the societies of both areas are balanced by important patterns of variation (to the extent that no feature of social organization, for example, will be found in all societies in question). Second, many societies in other areas of Oceania display sociocultural characteristics identical to those prevalent among Polynesian or Micronesian societies. Perhaps the least controversial criterion for 'Polynesian-ness' is language: all languages spoken natively in the islands are more closely related to one another than to any other language. Indeed, the reason for identifying Outlier societies as Polynesian is primarily linguistic: all Outlier communities speak languages that are most closely related to the languages spoken on islands of the Polynesian Triangle. In terms of social organization and culture, however, Outlier communities vary widely, from bearing considerable similarity to the rest of Polynesia (e.g., Tikopia) to having much more in common with their more immediate non-Polynesian neighbors (e.g., the Polynesian-speaking villages of Ouvea, Loyalty Islands).

Yet even this criterion is not devoid of caveats: on the boundary between Melanesian Fiji and Polynesian Tonga, historical linguistic evidence suggests a con-

tinuum of gradual linguistic differentiation rather than a clean break. Furthermore, linguistic factors are of little use as determiners of what Micronesia includes and what it does not: all languages spoken in the area are related to one another, but some (e.g., Chamorro of the Marianas and Palauan) are historically closer to languages spoken outside of Micronesia (e.g., in the Philippines) than to the other languages of Micronesia.

Two additional issues further complicate the problem. First, many Polynesian and Micronesian societies are increasingly diasporic, and significant communities of Samoans, Wallisians, Cook Islanders, Caroline Islanders, for example, are well established in New Zealand, Australia, the United States, and the metropolitan centers of Oceania. In some cases, emigrant communities are much more populous than the island-based communities. Second, the characterization of some areas of the region as 'Polynesian' or 'Micronesian' is historically well motivated but, from a contemporary perspective, is part and parcel of acrid political debates. Such is the case of Hawaii, New Zealand, and Guam, where the original Polynesian or Micronesian inhabitants, as well as recent migrants from other Pacific Islands, today form numerical and political minorities, albeit vocal ones in terms of identity politics. These observations highlight the problems associated with attributing human significance to the definitions of Polynesia and Micronesia.

To say that the regions are arbitrarily defined does not mean that their characterization is haphazard. Rather, the definition of sections of the globe as 'Polynesia' and 'Micronesia' is deeply embedded in a history of elaboration of certain differences and similarities and the obscuration of others to suit politically dominant agendas, of the kind that suffuses any characterization of the 'other.' In this case, this history is that of Western colonial hegemony and of the intellectual endeavors that ran alongside it. When Enlightenment-era Europeans invented it, the term 'Polynesia' ('many islands') was applied to the entire Pacific region. In the course of the nineteenth century, it became more common to restrict the term to its current referent, and to contrast it with the newly coined 'Micronesia' ('small islands') and 'Melanesia' ('black islands'). As the etymology of the latter term indicates, race and its various associations figured prominently in the newly created finer distinctions. The term 'Polynesia' came to embody (mostly positive) images of noble fair-skinned otherness already prominent in the Enlightenment and early Romantic intellect, in contrast to Melanesia in particular, which Westerners deemed to be dominated by dark-skinned and uncivilized savagery (Smith 1985, Thomas 1989).

3. Initial Human Settlement

The prehistory of Polynesia can only be understood in the context of human movements in the Pacific region since about 3500 BP. Around that date, a wave of

people appears to have traveled gradually from west to east from Southeast Asia, settling islands of Melanesia, some of which were already inhabited while others were not. The most salient archeological evidence for this conjecture is a lowly style of decorated pottery referred to as 'Lapita,' fragments of which are found in insular Melanesia and Western Polynesia, carbon-dated to 3500–2000 BP. Lapita pottery makers and users appear to have been accomplished long-distance sailors, fisherfolk, and agriculturalists, to have organized their communities in hierarchical fashion, and to have spoken languages ancestral to most languages of insular Melanesia and Polynesia.

They reached Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa around 3000 BP, an area in which, according to some researchers, migrations may have 'paused' for a while (while maintaining active contact both externally and with the West from where they had come). Such a 'pause' would have allowed a social, cultural, and linguistic distinctiveness to emerge that would eventually become what is now recognized as Polynesian distinctiveness.

From the Fiji–Western Polynesia area, early Polynesians settled the rest of Polynesia in the course of the following two millennia, finally reaching Hawaii in about 650 AD and New Zealand around 1000 AD (Bellwood 1979, Kirch 1996). There is no convincing evidence of any subsequent prehistorical human settlement in Polynesia other than the Lapita potters and their descendants, although they intermarried with their non-Lapita-making neighbors, forming as diverse a genetic pool as is found in any other part of the world.

Micronesia's prehistory is much more heterogeneous and complex than that of Polynesia, and less well understood. Evidence of human settlement in the Mariana Islands dates back to approximately 4000 BP. The archeological record indicates a Southeast Asian connection for this early population, as does relatively more recent evidence gathered on Palau and Yap. The rest of the Caroline Islands, the Marshall Islands, and the Gilbert Islands were settled by a northwestward back-migration from eastern Melanesia. Languages spoken in this region, commonly referred to as 'Nuclear Micronesian,' exhibit greater linguistic homogeneity than other Micronesian languages, suggesting a more focused history of prehistoric settlement.

4. Contacts and Movements

It is difficult to issue brief general statements about the history of Polynesia and Micronesia since colonial encroachment because of the diversity of experiences and heterogeneity of influences. European travelers began sailing through Polynesia and Micronesia early in the Age of Discovery, making contacts with Islanders that were sporadic except in Guam and the Marianas, which were situated strategically on the sea

road between the Philippines and the New World. Spain claimed the islands in the mid-sixteenth century, a move which was followed by the virtual decimation of the Islanders, through disease, slaughter, and forced resettlement.

Contacts between Westerners and Islanders in both Polynesia and Micronesia began earnestly at the end of the eighteenth century, and often had equally tragic consequences on the island populations. Enlightenment-era travelers, spurred on by complex and sometimes contradictory motivations, roamed Polynesia in particular, making contact with Islanders in a variety of fashions that ranged from the hostile to the very friendly. They were soon followed by Christian missionaries (who would eventually succeed in converting all of Polynesia and Micronesia), adventurers and traders, developers seeking to establish plantations and other large-scale ventures, whalers, and of course governments seeking to establish colonies and spheres of influence, often under the pretext of protecting their citizens. In Polynesia, the key players (big and small) in the nineteenth century were predominantly British and French, to which American and German interests added competition later in the century. In Micronesia, Spain continued to hold political and economic sway, until it was completely displaced at the end of the century by the United States and Germany.

A notable consequence of Westerners' increasing visibility in nineteenth century Polynesia was the consolidation of hitherto politically fragmented chiefdoms. In Tonga, Tahiti, and Hawaii (and to a lesser extent Samoa), ambitious and astute chieftains utilized the new tools that Westerners introduced to the islands (trading goods for firearms, protection for religious conversion) to defeat their contenders and impose their rule over entire islands and island groups, establishing themselves as sovereigns under the protection of Western powers. Of these kingdoms, only Tonga remains to this day.

By the dawn of the twentieth century, European powers had divided Polynesia and Micronesia (as well as Melanesia) into sphere of colonial domination and influence. The end of World War I somewhat reshuffled the distribution of these spheres, introducing Japan as a colonial power in Micronesia (except the Gilbert Islands, which by then had become a British colony). World War II had a profound and dramatic effect on all of Micronesia, which was the stage of some of the fiercest battles, as was Melanesia. In contrast, Polynesia (other than Pearl Harbor in Hawaii) remained in the background of the conflict.

5. *Political Re-emergence*

In tune with the worldwide decolonizing trends of the second half of the twentieth century, island nations began obtaining their independence from world

powers, particularly Great Britain, which by then had also delegated some of its colonial authority to Australia and New Zealand. In Polynesia, for example, Western Samoa (now Samoa) was granted independence in 1962, and Tonga ceased to be a British protected state in 1970. Decolonization in island groups held by the United States and France (Micronesia and French Polynesia, respectively, in particular) was and still is a slower, more complex, and conflictual process. A notable factor in both cases is the use by both powers of islands for nuclear testing until well into the 1990s.

Today, France maintains a colonial presence in French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna (both Polynesian groups), which is contested in the former but receives general local approbation in the latter. The United States signed Compacts of Free Association with the Federated States of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands in 1986, and with Palau in 1994, and since then these entities have been recognized as sovereign nations despite some continuing US security interests in the islands. American Samoa and Guam are unincorporated US territories in which the federal government continues to maintain control of many functions, in spite of some local opposition in the case of Guam. The Northern Mariana Islands is a Commonwealth with more control of local affairs. Rapanui is administered by Chile, despite some political tension, and tiny Pitcairn Island (Polynesian from a geographical point of view) by Britain. New Zealand holds special political ties with three now self-governing territories, namely Niue, Tokelau, and the Cooks. Hawaii, a state of the United States, and New Zealand are both postcolonial entities in which the politics of indigeneity are tense. These varied historical connections, as well as the different configurations in which domination, resistance, and everything in between are embedded, have contributed to the socio-political diversity of both regions.

The states and territories of Polynesia and Micronesia include some of the tiniest political entities of the world, such as Tuvalu (10,000 inhabitants, 26 km²). Outside of New Zealand, most are heavily dependent on world powers, relying on foreign aid, migrations, and access to preferential markets to ensure at least a semblance of economic viability and, in some cases, political stability. The notable exception is Nauru, which is one of the richest countries of the world because of decades of phosphate mining.

6. *Society and Culture*

In precontact times, the societies of Polynesia and Micronesia displayed a certain degree of sociocultural commonality, as witnessed, for example, in a tendency to have stratified political systems and in the elaboration of certain symbolic complexes such as *tapu*

(roughly, 'religiously-based prohibition') and *mana* (roughly, 'efficacy of divine origin') in Polynesia. However, the recognition of patterns of commonality must always be qualified in at least two ways. First, one must be attentive to the dynamics through which certain characteristics have come to be identified as 'typically' Polynesian or Micronesian in spite of the fact that these characteristics are absent in some societies of the region. Second, 'precontact times' is a vague characterization at best, and all island societies experienced radical changes over the centuries, some of which can be identified archeologically, in the course of which 'typical' Polynesian or Micronesian characteristics appeared in and disappeared from particular societies.

A significant number of societies in both regions appear to have been stratified political entities, the more so in Polynesia than in Micronesia. Particularly on large islands and island groups, chiefdoms were organized around a leadership that derived power through a combination of genealogical ties to both sacred and profane entities that confirmed claims to power (ascription) and personal performance that hopefully confirmed these claims (achievement). In some of more stratified societies, persons were also ranked into categories ranging from the highest ranks, which were commonly sacralized, to the lowest ranks, whose members were often not considered human. Other societies, in contrast, displayed little stratification and emphasized egalitarianism and consensual decision-making. Political organization on some islands was centered on localized kinship units, particularly in Micronesia but also on the smaller islands of Polynesia. The rough correlation between the amount of resources to be produced and organized and the degree of social stratification, at least in Polynesia, led some early researchers to propose that one engenders the other: chiefs, as resource managers, increase in importance as resources increase in volume (Sahlins 1958). Few anthropologists today would give such determinative power to resource management (and indeed the empirical evidence does not support the proposal), although it certainly plays a role in the development and elaboration of social stratification.

Prevalent patterns throughout the area centralized the identification of a common founding family ancestor, creating in some societies a pyramid-shaped kinship structure. In Polynesia, the most important branch was the senior patrilineal branch, and members of other branches reckoned their relative status according to their relative distance from the main descent branch, measured through relative patrilineality and seniority. Micronesian societies are predominantly matrilineal. There, matrilineal clans have historic claims to particular pieces of land and are the basis for social organization. Rank is based on claims of founding settlement of particular pieces of land. Probably all Polynesian and Micronesian societies also offered the possibility of bilateral affiliation,

whereby kinship could be based on either patrilineal or matrilineal principles, thus providing room for maneuvering for individual advantage. In Polynesia, there emerges an east-west contrast between societies in which gender and its associations constitute a pivotal organizational principle for kinship organization (as in Tahiti and Hawaii), and societies in which seniority plays a greater role (as in Samoa and Tonga). Adoption in its various guises was and is also prevalent throughout Polynesia and Micronesia.

Many aspects of precontact (or early contact) society and culture have reproduced over time and continue to characterize contemporary circumstances. However, any statement about contemporary Polynesian and Micronesian societies must take into consideration the enormous transformations that these societies have undergone in both bygone days and more recent times, introducing dynamics and agents that have been variously resisted, localized, and transformed. Two examples will suffice. The first is the recognition that many contemporary Polynesian and Micronesian societies are vigorously diasporic. While strong sociopolitical forces continue to ground society and culture in the 'islands of origin,' these forces are increasingly subject to contestation as second- and third-generation expatriates constantly negotiate their place across different identities and allegiances. The second illustration is the fact that Christianity, which is two centuries old in some area of Polynesia and Micronesia and much more recent in others, is almost universal and highly visible in both regions. In some parts of Polynesia, it has become one of the main backbones of hierarchy, exchange systems, and kinship, and is viewed as one of the most fundamental tenets of 'tradition.' In short, like all social groupings around the world, Polynesian and Micronesian societies are dynamic and adaptable entities, whose boundaries, core cultural values, and principles of social organization are subject to change, reassessment, and potential contestation.

See also: Colonialism, Anthropology of; Colonization and Colonialism, History of; Cultural Assimilation; Melanesia: Sociocultural Aspects

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N. Besnier

Popper, Karl Raimund (1902–94)

1. Popper's Life

Karl Raimund Popper was born in Vienna, Austria, on July 28, 1902. His father, Simon [Siegmond Carl] Popper (1856–1932), who had come from Bohemia to Vienna, was a well-established lawyer with his offices and family residence in the center of Vienna. Karl Popper's mother, Jenny Popper (née Schiff) (1864–1938) came from a musical family and was a gifted pianist herself. Both Simon and Jenny Popper were Jews by origin, but converted later in their lives to Protestantism. Besides their son Karl, they had two older daughters, Dora (1893–1932) and Anna Lydia (1898–1975).

Karl Popper left high school (Franz Josef Gymnasium) at the age of 16 without a degree, moved out of his parents' home and attended lectures at the University of Vienna on various subjects, in particular mathematics, philosophy, physics, and psychology. Besides occasional jobs to earn his living (e.g., coaching American students), Popper was engaged in social activities. For some time, he worked as an assistant of Alfred Adler on neglected children. Hints in Popper's autobiography indicate that this connection (through which he got acquainted with Adler's 'individual psychology') contributed to Popper's later critique of psychoanalysis as a 'pseudoscience.' In his youth, Popper had a strong favor for democratic socialism. For a few months, he even considered himself a communist, from which he refrained, in 1919, after witnessing a shooting incident in which socialist workers were killed by police forces. This experience of a useless sacrifice of lives demonstrated to him the futility of ideologies. A second, more intellectual

experience in 1919 was his taking interest in Eddington's test of Einstein's eclipse predictions carried out at an expedition of the Royal Astronomical Society, whose results gained widespread publicity at the time. During a total solar eclipse which was observed from West Africa and Brazil, a shift of apparent position of stars in the presence of the sun's gravitational field could be established, as predicted by the general theory of relativity. This coined Popper's later insistence that scientific theories develop by exposing them to possibly falsifying experience. Around that time, Popper visited a lecture by Einstein in Vienna.

The young Popper also tried manual work. From 1922 to 1924 he was an apprentice to a cabinet maker. At the same time, he passed the high school exams ('Matura') as an external participant and formally enrolled as a student at the University of Vienna. He also considered becoming a musician. After being disappointed with the sort of music cultivated in the Schönberg circle, he enrolled as a student of Church Music at the Vienna Academy of Music ('Konservatorium') and stayed there for one year. He was admitted upon submission of a fugue for organ in F sharp minor. Besides his scientific studies at the University of Vienna, in 1924 he qualified as a primary school teacher. Since no appropriate teacher's post was available at the time, Popper worked as a social worker with neglected children.

In 1925 Popper became a student at the Pedagogic Institute of the City of Vienna, where he stayed until 1927. This institute, which Popper was admitted to due to his status of a social worker, had been newly founded. It was linked to the University, though formally independent. In today's terms, its purpose was to scientifically accompany and evaluate the school reform movement. This school reform movement had been politically supported by the Austrian social democrats since 1919 and was in 1925 still very strong in Vienna. It was characterized by ideas of abolishing school learning as an accumulation of facts in favor of developing a more autonomous and participating attitude. The influence of these ideas on Popper should not be underestimated. His later criticism of what he calls the 'bucket theory of knowledge,' i.e., the inductive generation of knowledge by collecting facts, is related to pedagogic proposals on how learning proceeds or should proceed. Actually, Popper's first published papers were in this field and appeared in journals belonging to the school reform movement. The very first one *Über die Stellung des Lehrers zu Schule und Schüler (On the teacher's attitude towards school and students, 1925)* is very significant in this respect.

At the pedagogic institute, Popper met Josefine Henninger (1906–85), who was training as a teacher and who was to become his wife in 1930. (They had no children.) He also met the psychologist Karl Bühler and the philosopher Heinrich Gomperz, both of them

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