



Ethnobotany of Pohnpei: Plants, People, and Island Culture

Michael J. Balick

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"Ethnobotany of Pohnpei" examines the relationship between plants, people, and traditional culture on Pohnpei, one of the four island members of the Federated States of Micronesia. It is the result of a decade of research by a team of local people and international specialists carried out under the direction of the Mwoalen Wahu Ileilehn Pohnpei (Pohnpei Council of Traditional Leaders). It discusses the uses of the native and introduced plant species that have sustained human life on the island and its outlying atolls for generations, including *Piper methysticum* (locally known as sakau and recognized throughout the Pacific as kava), which is essential in defining cultural identity for Pohnpeians. The work also focuses on ethnomedicine, the traditional medical system used to address health conditions, and its associated beliefs. Pohnpei, and indeed the Micronesian region, is one of the world's great centers of botanical endemism: it is home to many plant species found nowhere else on earth. The ultimate goal of this volume is to give readers a sense of the traditional ethnobotanical knowledge that still exists in the area, to make them aware of its vulnerability to modernization, and to encourage local people to respect this ancient knowledge and keep such practices alive.

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