

Ethnobotany of Pohnpei: Plants, People and Island Culture

Book Announcement

Compiled and edited by:

MJ Balick & Collaborators. Chapter contributors: K Albert, MJ Balick, J Daniells, L Englberger, T Flynn, W Law, RA Lee, D Lee Ling, A Levendusky, DH Lorence, A Lorens, J Phillip, D Ragone and B Raynor. Published in 2009 by University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, in association with The New York Botanical Garden. 585 pages.

This book presents a rich compilation of readable information and beautiful photographs on Pohnpei's plants, including those used in traditional medicine, as well as Pohnpei's major plant foods, yam, breadfruit, banana, and taro, and a chapter on *Piper methysticum*, locally known as sakau, or kava in other parts of the Pacific. The ultimate goal of the book 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. Professor Balick also points out, "Local foods, combined with a more active lifestyle, can help address the epidemic of diabetes and other diseases that are plaguing Pohnpeians." Recent findings are presented on the striking nutrient content of many of Pohnpei's food crops, for example, Utin lap, the colorful carotenoid-rich banana variety that is featured on the cover of the book, and Karat, treasured as an infant food in Pohnpei, and how these varieties provide important health benefits. The book, which involved ten years of field work, is the most comprehensive ethnobotanical study undertaken to date in this part of Micronesia, recording 1,041 plant species. As carried out in close collaboration with Pohnpei local people, international specialists, and the Mwoalen Wahu lleilehn Pohnpei (Pohnpei Council of Traditional Leaders), this book sets an example for transdisciplinary research and collaboration. For anyone interested in the link between plants, people and island culture, this is book is a valuable read.

The book can be ordered on-line from the University of Hawai'i Press website for a subsidized price of \$28 plus shipping.

