

Acknowledgments

Many, many people in Palau have, each in different ways over the past seventeen years, let me into their lives, spent time and shared their knowledge with me – meral ma sulang. My dear friend Simeon Adelbai has allowed me to use one of his paintings as the cover image for this book. It's full of Palauan oral history, depicting two spirits chanting in front of a bai while facing mesikt el btuch – the Pleiades; in front is Temdókl, guardian at the entrance of the divine other world. Thank you so much, Sim.

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The manuscript for this book was finished in the middle of the first European COVID-19 lockdown in spring 2020. During that time, I often thought that someone should write a book about atmospheres of the pandemic (and I'm sure very soon someone will). With life as we knew it turned upside down for months on end, people around me reacted very differently to the eerie atmosphere all around. No one would have denied the impact of that atmosphere, and many people I know turned to music much more attentively than they had before: to realign with the situation, to cope with their anxieties surrounding the virus, and to *feel* themselves more closely amidst the public panic characterizing those days. My own lockdown experience was infused by all those sentiments. But it also included, and that part effortlessly

put those bleaker aspects in perspective, the life-affirming and energetic presence of my three children Leonhard, Hannah Lou and Karla, who taught me more than anybody else. My husband Patrick Eisenlohr I can't thank enough for everything including his unwavering support and encouragement, but also for the many, many discussions on sonic atmospheres we had and continue to have. They've altered my course of thinking more than once. It has been a wonderful journey.

Birgit Abels, July 2021



Figure 1 Bai ornament in Ngril as documented by Augustin Krämer during the Hamburg South Seas Expedition. (Krämer 1929b, double plate 26) Krämer's dscription: "A depiction 'of the singer Goldegól, who came from Nggëiangël to the south on the old kaberruöög [kaberruuch] boat with his baskets full of songs to help build the dock of Ngarekamáis (right), left Ngarekobasáng'." (KETC 2017c, 41)