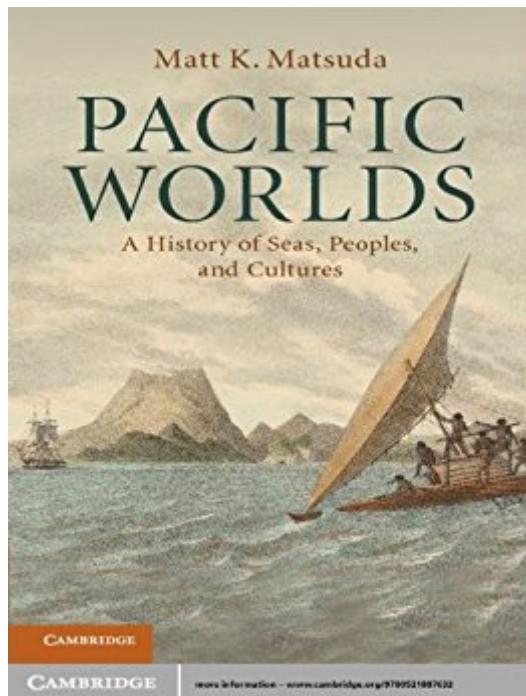


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Pacific Worlds



Synopsis

Asia, the Pacific Islands and the coasts of the Americas have long been studied separately. This essential single-volume history of the Pacific traces the global interactions and remarkable peoples that have connected these regions with each other and with Europe and the Indian Ocean, for millennia. From ancient canoe navigators, monumental civilisations, pirates and seaborne empires, to the rise of nuclear testing and global warming, Matt Matsuda ranges across the frontiers of colonial history, anthropology and Pacific Rim economics and politics, piecing together a history of the region. The book identifies and draws together the defining threads and extraordinary personal narratives which have contributed to this history, showing how localised contacts and contests have often blossomed into global struggles over colonialism, tourism and the rise of Asian economies. Drawing on Asian, Oceanian, European, American, ancient and modern narratives, the author assembles a fascinating Pacific region from a truly global perspective.

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Customer Reviews

rich in details and enlivened by carefully selected, more than just vivid snapshot accounts through time. Along the way, we are introduced to diverse local beliefs, customs (hierarchy, taboo/kapu systems, etc.), natural resources to be coveted by Europeans and Asians. The perspective the author employs is that of trans-localism: "These are not sequential narratives of civilizations, countries, and nations...This history is episodic, a collected set of characters and experiences...: the stories take on full meanings only when linked to other stories and places" (p. 5). Some of the larger topics discussed are as follows:> Ancient Lappita (strictly speaking, a specific ceramic pattern) culture that sprang from the encounter of migrating Austronesians (starting 3000 BCE) and indigenous Papuans. By means of commerce of voyaging vessels political and kinship ties were established, extending as far east as Samoa and Tonga. Powerful trading and tribute network of the Micronesian Yap (cf. spiritual and administrative center of the megalithic Nan Madol on the island of Pohnpei - "on a stone altar") and Polynesian Tonga (from the 12th century). The Srivijaya empire (683-13th c.), "whose domination extended from the Indonesian islands to the Malay Peninsula, and north...to the Philippines" (p. 33).> Arab merchants, navigators, scholars and the spread of Islam: sultans of Malacca (founded 1400) by Iskandar Shah (originally a fugitive Hindu prince named Parameswara), overseeing the vital route between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, and those of Tidore and Ternate. Ming China's treasure fleet commanded by the Muslim admiral Zheng He (1405-33). Portuguese arrival in pursuit of silk and spice: Albuquerque's conquest of Malacca (1512); Magellan reaches the Philippines (1521) on assignment from the Spanish Crown.> Spanish marshall Martin de Goiti, with an order from Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, subjugates Maynilad (> Manila) in 1570, the center of Indianized kingdom of Tondo. Local Chinese trading communities rebel against their Spanish overlords; Muslim armed opposition under sultan Kudarat (1655-68). AndrÃ©s de Urdenata sails from Manila to Acapulco (Mexico) in 1565, establishing the so-called "Spanish Lake" with silver laden galleons from America to trade for silk and spices in Asia and the Pacific. Mendana and Quiros's trip (in part to discover the Great Southern Continent) to the Solomons (1567), the Marquesas (1595), and New Hebrides/Vanuatu (1606). They were the first Europeans to visit Melanesians and Polynesians (Enata), the latter of which "were becoming strongly hierarchical and centrally organized" around the same time (p. 68). Interactions and the creation of mixed colonial societies via the Manila-Acapulco/Monterey circuit - Chinos/Filipinos and Mexican/Californian Amerindians (chapter 9).> Enter the first multinational corporation, the Dutch East India Company/VOC: foundation of Batavia/Jakarta in western Java (1619), wars against and in alliance with local sultanates. Willem Janszoon sights what later will be known as Queensland

(Australia) in 1606, Schouten and LeMaire visit Tongan waters (1616/7), Abel Tasman discovers Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) and drops anchor off of the Taitapu Bay, Aotearoa/New Zealand (1642-44)."To gain the long-desired monopoly, clove growing was prohibited beyond the island of Ambo. In 1650, the Dutch systematically uprooted, cut down, and burned all other trees in the region; anyone attempting to plant, nurture, or sell cloves was ordered to be executed...Attempting the biological and botanical control of a global market by dominating a local place, Dutch agents drenched all nutmeg shipments with lime so that no fertile seeds could be used to germinate plants anywhere else" (p. 79).> Portuguese based in Macao and Spaniards in the Philippines (and Canton) acted as intermediaries in trade b/w China and Japan (1543-1630s), and were followed by the Dutch in the same capacity, who were allowed to stay on the tiny artificial island of Deshima at Nagasaki. Japanese - Chinese pirates (kaizoku/wako) from the mid-16th to the first decade of the 19th c.: Wang Zhi, Lim Ah Hong, Zheng Zhilong, Chang I Sao; the role of Formosa/Taiwan.> New interlopers appear on the scene (British and French): encounters w/ island cultures (especially Polynesians) where political and spiritual power were aligned - Oro priests of Raiatea. Samuel Wallis makes a landing at Tahiti (1767); de Lap^orouse and Bougainville explore Tahiti, Samoa, New Guinea, and the Solomons. James Cook's 3 multi-year missions: verifies the frozen world of Antarctica, reaches Hawai'i in 1788 - "Much of the [first] expedition's cartographic, cultural, and historical knowledge was developed in collaboration with a highly skilled and noted navigator-priest named Tupaia, who had been driven out of Raiatea to Tahiti by Boraborans" (p. 137).> Missionary activities in the early 19th century: London Missionary Society and their native agency (John Williams, Maretu, et al.). Transformation of Hawai'i under Kamehameha and queen Ka'ahumanu - unified political state, whalers, ports with active commerce in sandalwood, otter fur, pineapple. Chaplain Samuel Marsden and the Maori chief Ruatara. Australia as a penal colony - about 160,000 men and women were forcibly transported b/w 1788 and 1868. Long before the British, Malay fishermen from Makassan landed on the northern shores of Australia (Aboriginal Yolngu of Arnhem Land) to harvest sea cucumber (trepang).The importance of Guangzhou/Canton - from 1747 to 1842 all official commerce was supervised by the Qing commissioned superintendent called Hoppo and went through Hong merchants; trans-Pacific trade with the U.S.; Opium Wars.> Thomas Stamford Raffles builds a modest base in Singapore (1812), challenging Dutch influence and the sultan of the region. James Brooke, "the romantic paragon of the colonial adventurer," makes himself the White Rajah of Sarawak (1841). New Zealand is annexed to the British empire by the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi (1848), decade-long Maori uprisings ensue. Admiral Abel Dupetit-Thomas claims French sovereignty of the Marquesas, Tahiti (1842, French-Tahitian War

1843-6); New Caledonia meets the same fate in 1853, and from 1864 convicts arrive - indigenous Kanak revolt in 1878. The growth of colonial settlements and plantations (sugarcane, pineapple, cotton, etc.) and the new sandalwood circuit required large-scale labor. Recruited work gangs from the New Hebrides gave way to "blackbirding", which in essence meant kidnapping and harsh slavery exploitation in Australia and Fiji (see Pacific Islanders Protection Act of 1872). Masses of indentured laborers from India were also brought to Fiji. Rise of German interest thanks to J. C. Godefroy and Son of Hamburg, initially specializing in coconut meat (copra) and establishing headquarter in Samoa (1857), then moving on to New Guinea (Kaiser Wilhelmsland, 1885).> The U.S. widens her sphere of influence, resorting to gunboat diplomacy to break up the isolation of Japan (Perry's fleet, 1853), to overthrow the Hawaiian queen Lili'uokalani (1893), and to bring an end to the Spanish rule of the Philippines (1898), consolidating American hegemony after the bloody American-Philippine War (1899-1901). Narrative snippets from the WWII Pacific theater, where due attention is given to the brutal Japanese occupation as well as to natives being caught b/w the frontlines. Also discussed are Melanesian scouts, guides, porters, and "coastwatcher" islanders. Did you know that two of them (Biuku Gasa and Eroni Kumana) saved JFK's life after his torpedo boat had been sunk by a Japanese destroyer at the Solomons (p. 288)? The impact of American military presence on millenarian "cargo cults" combined w/ earlier messianic motifs: "[T]hey were less about deities than popular responses across generations and Pacific territories to colonial conditions and changing political circumstances" (p. 294).> Decolonization: Nationalist leaders Sukarno and Mohammed Hatta proclaim Indonesia's independence (1945) and aspire to revive the glory of the Majapahit empire. In doing so, Jakarta engages in vicious wars w/ West Papua and East Timor. Nauru, Fiji, Tonga gained sovereignty in 1970. Local antinuclear movements achieve their goal when France, Britain, and the U.S. agree on the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone, and the U.N. issues a Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in 1996. Environmental concerns often go hand in hand with indigenous peoples' reclaiming their ancient heritage: the still ongoing resistance that was triggered by the activities of the Australian mining conglomerate Rio Tinto in Bougainville (pp. 330-34); in 1992, the Australian High Court "overturned the doctrine of terra nullius, erasing the fiction that Europeans had settled an 'empty' continent" (p. 361); the Maori's Waitangi Tribunal was formed in 1975; Hawaiian Bumpy Kanahele and the community of Waimanalo, etc. & tons more... Endnotes = references (pp. 379-412), incomplete index (413-36); plus 5 maps and 50 b&w illustrations.

Highly detailed and well-written nonfiction on history of Pacific Ocean exploration. A little too much

on the area of Papua, and Indonesia, I would have preferred more on the Islands that are normally considered as South Pacific, excepting Hawai'i. The account would be easier to follow if dates were more frequently mentioned.

A magnificent contribution--Matsuda's fluid and expansive historical mind is astonishing!

I got this book for a history of the pacific course that I am taking. This book has a lot of great info and is well put together. I have read other books by Matsuda and would recommend it to anyone looking to learn more about the pacific

Interesting book on a not so common topic. One of the best books on Polynesian and Melanesian history.

Matt Matsuda's "The "Pacific World" is really an overview. The area covered is too vast for a book of this length to go into much depth, but it is a quite well-written survey. I rank it a strong 4 stars rather than 5 because I think the maps are so-so and the illustrations good but could be better. Matsuda has attempted what may actually be impossible short of a multi-volume collection. The strength of the book is that it gives the islanders what academics call "agency." In this context, that means the various islanders are shown not as innocent bystanders of historical currents, but actors of significance in this vast Pacific drama. It is not just the islands--in a book like this, the coverage is usually Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia, to use the old divisions. Matsuda describes how islanders interacted with each other, as well as later colonial powers and Asian entities like China and what is now Indonesia. I found the book useful for better understanding post-colonial events in such places as Fiji, Bougainville and New Caledonia (okay, this island is still under French rule). In some places, multinational corporations make generous bribes to local bureaucrats for permission to strip away natural resources. There is some consideration of topics like the Spanish colonization of the Philippines (colonized from Mexico!). The present is probably better than the colonial era, but many islanders live in tiny places with almost no resource base, and traditional cultures are being altered and destroyed, languages lost. Matsuda touches on some of this. Overall, the book could be more thorough--I was hoping for more on Hawai'i--but has a quite impressive historical reach.

Pacific Worlds is a bitter review of the Polynesian triangle, its history and people.

Very good. Mr. Matsuda is to be praised for his ability to present in a rather short volume such a vast topic. The author intelligently weaves the stories of many countries and places all around the Pacific, in a vibrant and yet scholar presentation. It is easy to read and one ends with a satisfactory feeling of having been led on a well structured and comprehensive introduction to the history of the Pacific. Mr. Matsuda seems to keep a cool head while discussing matters, and is never biased (or at least not so much that I would notice). On a negative note, the maps provided are clearly insufficient, and it would be good to have information on the origin of the illustrations. Also, a few more dates here and there, to keep easier track of facts, would enhance the narrative. However, I do not think these secondary flaws should detract from a five star rating: to my taste it is an accomplished work.

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