

BOOK REVIEWS

Pacific Nations and Territories

The Islands of Micronesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia

by Reilly Ridgell

3RD EDITION, REVISED

HONOLULU: BESS PRESS, IN COOPERATION WITH THE PACIFIC REGION
EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY, 1995
VII + 174 PAGES

Pacific Neighbors

The Islands of Micronesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia

by Betty Dunford and Reilly Ridgell

HONOLULU: BESS PRESS, IN COOPERATION WITH THE PACIFIC REGION
EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY, 1996
IV + 188 PAGES

When Reilly Ridgell was assigned to teach world geography to high school students on Guam in the mid-1970s, he soon discovered that there were virtually no instructional materials available on the Pacific. Conventional textbooks often dealt with the Pacific islands in a single page—or less. Ridgell wrote *Pacific Nations and Territories* to fill that void; to give his students and others a general overview of various Pacific island groups. This third edition of *Pacific Nations and Territories* is a more polished version of its predecessors (the first edition was published in 1983, the second in 1988.) It includes updated information for twenty-six island entities, as well as maps, charts, drawings, black-and-white and color photographs, an index, and a somewhat dated bibliography.

The book is divided into two parts. Part One, "Pacific Background," deals with Pacific geology and geography, the peopling of the Pacific, and post contact history and development. Part Two, "The Islands," focuses on the many nations and territories that make up Micronesia (tiny islands), Melanesia (black islands, because of the skin color of the inhabitants), and Polynesia (many islands). This classification system was devised by Europeans trying to impose some kind of order on the vast Pacific. However, scholars today contend that these arbitrary labels do not (and never did) accurately reflect the complex cultural, geographic, or political boundaries of the area. Ridgell uses the Micronesia-Melanesia-Polynesia schema as an organizational framework for his book but points out its inadequacies. For example, he notes that Fiji has traditionally been classified as Melanesian, but that much of its historical contact has been with the Polynesians of Samoa and Tonga.

Ridgell uses the same headings to organize information about

each of the twenty-six island groups: general geography (including a map); people and culture; economy and resources; political status; and major problems. He provides facts and figures about places as familiar as Hawai'i or as little-known as the island nation of Niue. The problems foreign countries have caused in the Pacific are not overlooked. The atomic testing the United States conducted in the 1950s continues to haunt the radioactive atolls of Bikini and Enewetak in the Marshall Islands. Ebeye, an island on Kwajalein Atoll, also in the Marshalls, is identified as the worst slum in the Pacific. The independence movement in New Caledonia, an overseas territory of France, is discussed, as is the nuclear testing France has conducted in French Polynesia.

PACIFIC NATIONS AND TERRITORIES is written at the ninth grade level in the fact-filled style of traditional textbooks. It includes vocabulary words and simple who, what, where, when, and why recall questions. It is used as a textbook in schools throughout the Pacific. As a teacher and a curriculum writer, however, I find its greatest value as a reference source. It includes, for example, maps of every Pacific island group, with each tiny island carefully labeled. (These are the dots that disappear in most atlases simply because many of the islands are so small.) It presents the population, location, size, and political status of each island group in an easy-to-locate format. It contains a two-page summary of colonial acquisitions in the Pacific, a valuable resource that can be used to develop lessons about colonialism and nineteenth-century imperialism in the Pacific. It also includes information about World War II in the Pacific and how it continues to impact the region today.

PACIFIC NEIGHBORS is a simplified version of *Pacific Nations and Territories*, a sentence-by-sentence rewrite at a fourth grade reading level, written to accommodate younger students and those for whom English is not a first language. Like its predecessor, it was written primarily for students in the Pacific but could be used by students in the United States, Australia, and New Zealand as well. Its organizational structure is identical to that of its model, and it uses the same photographs and maps in a slightly different layout. Vocabulary words are bold-faced throughout the text, defined in the margins, and then included in a glossary. It is printed in a larger font size and does not contain the useful running heads of its predecessor.

Sometimes when different versions of the same book are created, the errors in the first reappear in the second. This seems to be the case with the map on page 19 of *Pacific Neighbors* that illustrates Pacific migration patterns. Tonga, and Wallis & Futuna are erroneously identified as Melanesian (rather than as Polynesian), and Tuvalu has been included in Micronesia (rather than Polynesia). It is possible to see these mistakes because each island group is labeled by name. It is much more difficult to determine if these same errors were made earlier on a comparable, although not identical, map on page 23 of *Pacific Nations and Territories* because name labels were not included. However, a careful look indicates that Tonga, and Wallis & Futuna were erroneously included in Melanesia, and that error carried over to the second map. (It's impossible to figure out which tiny dot represents Tuvalu on the first map.) Both maps need a legend.

Both *Pacific Nations and Territories* and *Pacific Neighbors* contain valuable information that is almost impossible to find, at least all in one place, in other sources. Although I would not use either book as a primary textbook, I recommend both as references for school libraries and as classroom resources. If economic circumstances forced me to choose one over the other, I recommend selecting *Pacific Nations and Territories* because, understandably, it addresses the complexities of the Pacific in more detail. ■

FURTHER REFERENCES

Howe, K. R., Robert C. Kiste, and Brij V. Lal, editors. *Tides of History: The Pacific Islands in the Twentieth Century*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994.

Kluge, P. F., *The Edge of Paradise: America in Micronesia*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1991.

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IIAS Internet Guide to Asian Studies

by Annelies de Deugd

LEIDEN: INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR ASIAN STUDIES, 1996
80 PAGES

This booklet purports to offer the results of a year's work collecting information found on the Internet regarding Asian Studies. It is divided into two uneven parts: a user's guide and a directory. The first provides an introduction to the ways of gaining access to the Internet, from file transfer protocol (FTP) and electronic mail, to discussion and mailing lists, Telnet, Gopher, and the World Wide Web (WWW). The second and much longer part is devoted to listings of Internet resources useful to Asian studies arranged according to electronic lists, Gopher sites, WWW sites, newsgroups, library catalogues, electronic publications, and various associations, societies, and institutes. Each section is subdivided further according to country and theme, providing network identification, full list address, and brief description.

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