

Ian C. Campbell, *A History of the Pacific Islands*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989. Pp. 239, maps, tables, glossary, bibliography, index. US\$30.00 cloth, US\$10.95 paperback.

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Any book purporting to be in any sense a history of the Pacific Ocean and its peoples deserves to be treated in terms of what it takes in, not what it leaves out. The Pacific washes the shores of both Asia and the Americas; and Australia, Japan, and Indonesia are at least as entitled to be designated as Pacific Islands as are New Caledonia, Tonga, or the Marianas. There is also the problem of whether to focus on the continuing experience of the Polynesian, Melanesian, and Micronesian peoples themselves, treating the European involvement as being something in the nature of a brief intrusion; or whether to regard the European impact as overwhelmingly significant, altering massively and permanently the course of the development of earlier arrivals in the region. Some selection of area, period, and theme is inevitable, and almost any can be justified, provided that whatever is selected is treated in a manner accessible and useful to the reader.

Campbell's book scores very high on both counts. His style is lucid, resourceful, and what the Eighteenth Century would call copious. He provides maps and comparative linguistic and cultural tables that are convenient indeed. He also has a capacity to appreciate worthwhile human qualities and a sense of characterization displayed to advantage in his studies of the benevolent John Thomas and the mixed blessing John Geddie, and in a superb tribute to Cook, who really does seem to have deserved all the good things said about him.

It is no criticism to say that Campbell's subject matter is essentially the history of the European impact upon the Island peoples, rather than that of the Island peoples themselves. It does, however, mean that his

book is far more enlightening on certain areas of the Pacific experience than on others. The distinction may be a fine one but its practical significance is considerable, for the more history an Island people might have in their own right, the less he has to say about them. For example, little is said about the extraordinary political history of Tonga and Fiji and their diplomatic and dynastic relations; the tumultuous saga of conflicting local and foreign imperialisms in Hawaii; or the near-fatal decline, struggle for survival, and reemergence of the Maori people of New Zealand, perhaps the most substantial historical achievement of the Polynesian race. And the horror story of Easter Island hardly rates a mention. What is supplied is a highly informative and remarkably comprehensive account of trade, missionary activity, and the colonizing process generally, concluding with succinct, enlightening, and generally objective and judicious chapters on the experience of the Island peoples during decolonization and in the first decades of recovered independence. Here indeed the problem of what to take in and what to leave out can hardly be solved satisfactorily. It is not really logical to take in the inconvenient, relatively minor intrusions of Libya into Pacific affairs but leave out the intimate and enduring concern of Indonesia in the Papua New Guinea-Bougainville imbroglio or the brooding presence of India in racial issues in Fiji. And it is surprising to say the least to see West Irian described as a colonial territory and Indonesian control there compared with the worst of seventeenth-century Spanish or nineteenth-century French regimes. This may or may not be true but it is completely irrelevant; what is relevant is that the Indonesians think West Irian is a part of Indonesia. The only useful comparison would be between their methods of maintaining control there and those employed by, say, China in Tibet, which the Chinese think is part of China, or by India in Kashmir, which the Indians think is part of India. And one would naturally expect a certain amount of historical evidence and statistical data to support any such comparison.

This is the real problem with a book that overall provides a valuable complement to the studies of the Pacific already in print, even if it might not supplant any of them. It is always difficult to make a judgment as to just how much reliance should be placed on a historical study that supplies no documentation or other source material whatever. The problem is exacerbated in this case by the quite inadequate nature of the bibliography, which is merely a list of materials for further reading. Unquestionably Campbell has read and researched far beyond what is enumerated here. But it would have been helpful if he had indicated just what materials his narrative and analyses are based on. And it would have been still more helpful if the index had not managed to omit

most of the names and a fair number of the subjects dealt with in the book. One is entitled to expect better from the publications of academic presses.

One other small point. There is no question that in terms of endurance the voyages of the Polynesian seafarers are unsurpassed in maritime history. But there seems little future in arguing that they must have possessed technologies and techniques that there is no proof they actually did possess, because otherwise they could not have made voyages that there is no proof that they actually did make. It is difficult enough to comprehend how they could have made the voyages we know they made with the technology we know they had.