

## A quick look at the history of the Pacific

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### Abstract

For a long time, scientists have tried to determine the approximate date of the entering and settling of human beings in Australia and the Pacific Islands. The wide-ranging data for three immigrant groups suggest that people from South-East Asia were the first to enter New Guinea and Australia. Then Mongoloids from Central Asia were the second ones. Finally the third group from very Far North Asia began to break in and inhabit the whole Pacific in 4000-2500 BC. For Asians, this process took thousands of years as step by step they anchored themselves in various islands, established tribal communities, built their cultures, improved the ways of communications, created primitive socio-religious systems, involving themselves in various activities according to their requirements and circumstances. These transformed Asian people into Pacific Islanders and developed their familiarity with tribal clashes, fights and assorted quarrels inside their clans.

Australian and Oceanic societies, functioning and coexisting according to their traditional peaceful manners, had been unexpectedly intruded upon by the Europeans at the very beginning of 16<sup>th</sup> century. The first to sail across the Pacific from South America to the Mariana Islands was Ferdinand Magellan from Spain. Then Christian missionaries, sailors and prospectors moved to the Pacific in order to see, later on to know, and finally to get something precious from there. Finally in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the colonisers from Europe, America and Australia closed the list of (very often unwanted) trespassers. After the controversial colonisation period and unfortunate experiences of the First and particularly the Second World Wars, the Pacific people went into a phase of decolonization. At present there are thirteen independent countries in the Pacific, the others are free to choose what they want and some are still in the process of struggling for their sovereignty.

**Keywords:** Pacific, Oceania, Australia, Pacific Islands, Pacific Intruders, Colonisation of the Pacific

### Introduction

Some scientists say that humanity of the same shape that exists in this world today dates back for more than 70,000 years. Whatever one says about it, this date is controversial. Going directly and looking at the issue of the first settlements in Australia and New Guinea the scientists place human beings there for the years 50,000-25,000 BC. Then the New Guinea Highlands were inhabited back ca. 10,000 BC. This happened at the time when Mongoloids from today's China and Mongolia moved towards the same direction on the south and

pushed the dwellers from the coastal areas toward mountainous parts of the Island. These two pre-historical immigrant groups were able to travel safely from island to island as the sea level was lower than that of today. There were two parts of land at that time close to each other: *Sunda* as one (where Indonesian islands and south-east parts of Asia are placed today) and another land called *Sahul* (present New Guinea taken as one with Australia). Then the rest of the Pacific began to be inhabited not earlier than 4000-2500 BC. This process was prolonged until ca. 1300 AD when the European society was in the peak of Medieval development and slowly on the move towards the Renaissance.

### **Migration and navigation of the Pacific**

The first wave of people entering the Pacific (New Guinea, Australia and Tasmania) was from South-East Asia (Australoids). The second wave of migration into the Pacific (10,000 BC) was in the vast numbers from the area of China (Mongoloids). The rest of the Pacific islands were inhabited as early as 4000-2500 BC. This third wave of arrivals settled first in Saipan of Mariana group of Islands. *TeAra – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand* briefly presents these moves of settlers in the whole Pacific. According to the historians after the attempts made to settle the Mariana Islands, in 1500 BC the settlements took place in Vanuatu, New Caledonia and Fiji Islands. Then some islanders in 1200-1000 BC moved to the Caroline Islands. Around 200 BC until the time of the Birth of Christ the dwellers from Fiji began to navigate via Samoa and reached today's French Polynesia. From there further movements were made towards Hawaii in 600 AD, Eastern Islands in 800 AD and finally to New Zealand in 1250-1300 AD. Some historians argue that New Zealand was discovered much earlier (400 AD). This is a new controversy looking for an academic solution.

Studying the above information, we must say that the pre-European settlements in the Pacific occurred quite late. The question remains: why? A brief answer on this query is given by G. Barclay in his book *A history of the Pacific, from a stone age to the present day* when he says that,

The obstacles in the way of long-distance ocean travel out of sight of land were enormous. Chief among the practical problems was the simple one that sailors really had no reliable way of knowing where they were going, except by following a familiar coastline. Exceptionally brave might be prepared to sail out into the unknown for a few days and might even be able to get back home, reckoning by currents, winds or the stars. (...) Some assistance was provided at about the beginning of the twelfth century by the invention of the compass, apparently by the Chinese, who had also discovered by 1122 that the magnetic north indicated by a compass needle did in fact vary from the true north.

Finally exaggerated fear and trepidations were somehow over when Christopher Columbus mistakenly discovered a 'new world' (the American continent). This achievement gave the sailors a new encouragement and they began their journeys across the oceanic waters of the Atlantic (but not yet the Pacific).

Meantime a problem occurred, when Alexander VI, by the Treaty of Tordesillas on 25 December 1492, drew a Line of Demarcation (starting point was Brazil) and granted political rights of the western 'world' to Spaniards and the eastern 'world' to the Portuguese. Soon the possibility of exchanging goods and trading with the Far East people arose. In a better position was the Portuguese Government. In many ways the Spaniards mingled with them in order to do business. But soon Portugal began to oppose the arrangement and was not happy to allow Spaniards as a national team to move into their territories, particularly to the Spice Islands (Moluccas). This was the reason why Spaniards, who penetrated a vast area of South America, commenced searching for a route from there to Far East Asia via the Pacific.

### **The Pacific and its sub-regions**

The Europeans made a tremendous impression on the Pacific. It was not only a vast marine basin but a very peaceful sea (hence the name Pacific which derives from the Latin word *pacificus*, peaceful). Its waters extend from the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands in the north to Antarctica in the south. From the side of Asia in the northern hemisphere the Ocean touches the waters of Okhotsk Sea, Japan Sea, Yellow Sea, East China Sea, South China Sea, Philippine Sea and Celebes Sea; then in the southern hemisphere, Moluccas Sea, Bismarck Sea, Solomon Sea, Arafura Sea, Coral Sea and Tasman Sea over to America to the east. The greatest depth of the Pacific Ocean is the Mariana Trench (11,034 m. below sea level). If we take account of the most frontier territories on the Pacific Ocean: in the north are the Kure Atoll in the group of Midway Islands; in the south, the Campbell's Islands; in the east the Sala-y-Gomez Islands, and in the west, Salawati Island near the western cape of New Guinea.

All islands lying in the Pacific keep their names, given either by the native people or in later days by the European intruders. For many decades the Pacific islands and Australia have already been known as Australia (Australia is treated as a continent) and Oceania and is recognized as the fifth part of the world. All islands in the Pacific (Oceania) are divided into three geographical segments: Polynesia, Micronesia and Melanesia. Historically, Oceania was referred to as Near Oceania and Remote Oceania. Near Oceania refers to New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Australia and generally to the rest of Melanesian geographical parts. The Remote Oceania refers to the lands of Polynesia and Micronesia.

Polynesia covers the eastern part of Oceania and is made up of Hawaii as the 50<sup>th</sup> State of the USA, New Zealand, French Polynesia, the Cook Islands (associated with New Zealand), Wallis and Futuna Islands as Overseas French Territory, Niue (associated with New Zealand), Western Samoa, American Samoa, Tokelau (under New Zealand administration), Tuvalu, Tonga, Pitcairn Island together with a few nearby islands under the responsibility of the British High Commissioner in New Zealand, Easter Island and the Sala-y-Gomez Islands as Chilean possessions. Micronesia embraces in its border the Republic of Palau, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas as part of the USA, Guam (USA), Nauru, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Kiribati and Republic of the Marshall Islands. Melanesia covers the four independent states: Papua New

Guinea, Solomon Islands, Fiji and Vanuatu, and two politically undecided or unvoiced areas: New Caledonia and West Papua (Irian Jaya).

The term 'Melanesia' is derived from the Greek words *melas* and *nesos* meaning 'black islands'. The inventor of the notions 'Melanesia' and 'Micronesia' is the French explorer, Jules Sebastian Cesar Dumont d'Urville in 1832. After arriving in Melanesia he noticed that the dwellers were of dark skin (black), hence the name given to these islands. The name 'Micronesia' suggests that the islands of this sub-group are very tiny. Finally 'Polynesia', which was for the first time coined by French historian and geographer Charles de Brosses in 1756, can be translated as 'many islands'.

### **Peopling of the Pacific**

It has been already mentioned that two major groups entered the Pacific area while intruding into these marine territories. The first were Australoids from today's Indonesia and from other nearby islands who entered New Guinea and Australia (at those times New Guinea and Australia did not have their names) ca. 50,000 – 25,000 BC. We must say that these people arrived at the first stage somewhere from South Asia (they might even have some links with African antecedents) and after arriving and settling in Indonesia, they continued their moves towards the Pacific. They first settled in New Guinea and Australia and then might have reached even New Ireland, Buka and the Solomon Islands. While traveling at sea they used to make their crafts from bamboo as this material was widely available and it allowed them to skillfully build this means of transportation. Being water-dwelling people, they possessed the ability of being good fishermen. While staying on land they were hunters and gatherers.

The second group of settlers (the Mongoloids) came from China much later and they began to settle in New Guinea and Australia and also – most probably – somewhere nearby. Since the earlier settlers were present there, in some areas the newcomers had to fight with them and push them aside further into the Highlands. This is the basis for the theory that the many present highlanders in New Guinea are the former coastal people who had been chased away and pushed into the higher territories of the island. From the same area of China and Central Asia, the people began to organize further intrusion into the Pacific. As was mentioned earlier, this intervention is dated at 4000 BC (not earlier). But who were these strangers exactly?

The Pacific people (Polynesians, Micronesians, Melanesians and Australians), including their languages and culture, spread from the northern Hawaiian Islands towards New Zealand in the south, then from New Guinea in the west to Easter Islands in the east. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the scholars completed and recognized, as for this time, racial groupings of the Pacific people with their characteristics. Today these academic judgments are widely revised and adapted to the newest discoveries made through further research and studies, especially after 1960s.

Scholars are puzzled by the languages which the Pacific Islanders use. Frankly speaking, the Pacific languages could be divided into two groups: the Austronesian (sometimes called Malayo-Polynesian) and the Non-Austronesian (also called Papuan). This is a proof that from the very old time Polynesians, Micronesians, Melanesians and Australians mingled and mixed in high proportion. The Lapita pottery context is a proof for this as well.

### **Lapita pottery complex**

Another amazing occurrence in the Pacific is the Lapita artistic ware, which shows how the people of the Pacific interrelated among themselves, proof of the fact of their whereabouts and tribal connections and also verifying their artistic abilities. The Lapita pottery is connected with archeological excavations found in various islands of the Pacific which found items produced from 1000 to 500 BC. The author of *The New Encyclopedia Britannica's* entry *History of Oceania* states that this archeological work is evidence ...

that there was an early human settlement in New Guinea, perhaps 25000 years ago. Then at some later date, there was a new complex of settlement, which was not that of hunters and gatherers but of horticulturalists who had domesticated animals. This complex was taken, fully formed, with the first settlers of other Pacific islands, together with a ground-stone technology. The pottery called Lapita ware (from the site at which it was first systematically examined in New Caledonia) indicates the track of these settlers. It has been found in New Britain, near Rabaul, and in the New Hebrides, in Fiji and in Tonga. Its makers had settled in Fiji by 1000 BC and in Tonga by 500 BC. They were the formative influence in what has been classified as Polynesian culture. In the Marianas, in Micronesia, a related type of pottery goes back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC. It seems, therefore, that what is distinguished as Polynesian was filtered through Melanesia to western Micronesia, and to western Polynesia, where it developed distinctive characteristics that were then taken by the original settlers to eastern Polynesia, where the Marquesas were settled about AD 500. On this evidence, the three divisions of Oceania, that so struck the first Europeans, originated within the islands themselves.

It is worthwhile to look at the issue of Lapita pottery from the side of ceremonial gift-exchange. These practices (exchanges) are very ancient and important in the whole Pacific, particularly in Melanesia. The people from Trobriand Islands are famous for their *kula* system (chain) exchange with those who live away from them in other islands. In the western central highlands of Papua New Guinea (PNG), in Enga, the important tradition of exchange is called *tee*. The Melpa people from Mount Hagen vicinity also exercise exchange and they call it *moka*. And in Southern Highlands Province (Mendi region) the *mok ink* exchange is known. So, the Lapita pottery might be partly treated as an exchange tradition as well among those who lived in the islands where potteries were discovered and identified.

### **European exploration, discovery and contacts**

The first European who reached the Southern Pacific was Vasco Núñez de Balboa in 1513. In 1519, another navigator, Ferdinand Magellan, began his mission across the Pacific and began to search for a way from America to the eastern coasts of Asia. He was able to sail from the southern point of America and in 1920 he reached Mariana Islands and then the Philippines. From that time on, the Philippines had strong ties with Spain until the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The next Spaniard who arrived in the Pacific Islands was Alvaro de Mendaña de Neira. In 1567 he moved from Peru and found many small islands in the southern part of the Pacific (Spaniards discovered the Solomon Islands twice: in 1568 and in 1595). In later years his company adjoined to Portuguese navigator, Pedro Fernández de Quirós, who within a short time had formed his own team and was cruising in the south. In 1606 he discovered the other locations of northern Cooks, Tikopia and New Hebrides. His companion, Luiz Váez de Torres, was able to reach southeastern New Guinea and then he claimed (correctly), that New Guinea and Australia were not one big land, but separated with a strait, which was called after his name.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Dutch sailors appeared in the Pacific. In 1615-1616 Jacob le Maire found Tonga, New Ireland and New Hanover. After that in 1642, Abel Janszoon Tasman while sailing in the southern waters of the Pacific noticed New Zealand, Tonga, some Fiji islands and New Britain. The Dutch were interested in commerce, not in scientific discoveries. For some time they stayed in particular islands and afterwards they moved to Batavia (Jakarta), their headquarters in the East Indies.

Almost a century later (in 1699), other national teams or individuals began to appear more and more frequently in the Pacific. One of them was an Englishman (although not the first), Francis Drake, who appeared in the Pacific in the year 1578, and William Dampier, who was active as a sailor in New Britain, New Hanover and New Zealand. He was credited for his passion to know more about the location of certain islands. Just for a change, in 1722 the Dutchman was seen in full activity in the Pacific waters. Jacob Roggeveen, who crossed the Pacific from the east to the west, was seeking for commercial possibilities. During this voyage he discovered Easter Islands, Tuamotu Archipelago, part of the Society group and the Samoan Islands. Roggeveen's voyages were important from the scientific point of view. Unfortunately, the continental wars in Europe stopped for some time the process of further discoveries in the Pacific and its people.

In the year 1765, John Byron went to the Pacific on behalf of the British Government. In the years of 1767-1768, other representatives of the British Empire, Samuel Wallis, Philip Carteret and Louis Antoine Bougainville, arrived on the islands previously localized by other sailors. These are: Tahiti, Solomon Islands, Samoa, New Hebrides and New Guinea. In 1769 the greatest Pacific explorer, James Cook, began his mission. In his three separate voyages to the Pacific he visited many islands. Unfortunately, during his voyage to the northern

Pacific in 1779, he lost his life in a battle with the Hawaiians. Soon the new era in the Pacific occurred, the pre-colonial era.

### **Changes, first settlements and pre-colonial Pacific societies**

The historians agree that, in the year 1770, part of Australia (New South Wales) was discovered by James Cook and was declared as a British dominion. Since Britain got into trouble with their possessions in North America and in 1776 the independence of the United States of America was declared, Great Britain began to face problems with the convicts: America did not allow them to transport these people across the Atlantic and place them in their newly established country. So the new place discovered by Cook was marked for this purpose: Australia! In 1788 the first fleet of convicts arrived in Botany Bay.

In 1788 an idea was implemented in the Pacific by Great Britain that has partly a political character. The Europeans' curiosity slowly developed and began to change. It was not enough for them to discover, learn, study and 'to get something from the Pacific' (an idea of exchange which had perfectly fitted to the Pacific mentality), but slowly their interest shifted into the area of 'mastering' the Pacific societies. We can say that Great Britain practically and successfully initiated the process of colonization, although not to the extent of that which took place and shape in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Let us say this period might be called a time of pre-colonization or the early European settlements. The convicts sent to Australia had to remain there and organize their life to survive. This kind of newness is not only an experience changing for arrivals but also for indigenous people in the Australian continent and later on in the other islands of the Pacific. Oceania became a source of supply and then competition. Not only British convicts but also other Europeans were getting more knowledge about the possibility to make exchange and trade with the Pacific islands, e.g., Tahiti, from where pigs were transported to Australia in 1793. The intruders were very much after sea cucumber, pearl shells, coconut oil and copra. Soon sandalwood was found in Fiji, and in New Zealand the seal hunters and fur traders settled, having a kind of business connection with Hawaii. These contacts, the unexpected appearance of white Europeans, the growth of trading communities and establishment of plantation societies in the midst of the Pacific people brought confusion, expectations and in many cases fear, since the Europeans did not often correspond to the local culture and customs as they did not understand them (e.g., in case of needs for more land and labor).

In order to comprehend holistically the whole matter of exploration, discovery, contacts and the first settlements among the Pacific people, it is important to evaluate these deliberations in the light of Christian missionary activities. We must remember that the Christian missionaries had travelled to the Pacific with a deliberate plan: to change its dwellers and make them followers of Christ. This truth was common to various Christian denominations and churches. The missionaries were able to achieve this aim under very basic conditions: they had to dwell among the people and mingle with them.

The first Spaniard fleet that was going across the Pacific always had a Catholic chaplain on board. At the first stage, the priests did not make any serious attempt to convert the indigenous people into Catholicism (in some cases they occasionally mingled somewhere with them), because the scenario was uncertain. Collecting information from various sources, we learn that Magellan had a few priests with him on board. J. Garrett in his work *To live among the stars: Christian origins in Oceania* gives an account:

When the Spanish expedition of Ferdinand Magellan crossed the ocean from the southern tip of South America to the Mariana Islands eastward of the Philippines in 1521, its members brought the banners, crosses and incense of the mass for the first time into the Pacific.

Keeping Magellan's experience in mind, the idea of reaching out to the Pacific people remained in the hearts of explorers and those priests sailing with them on the ocean waters. In 1568, Spanish navigators and four Franciscan friars reached the land of Solomon Islands (Santa Isabel) where they were known for naming this archipelago as Solomon Islands. In 1595 the Spaniards managed to return to that region, but they did not make any progress in the area of Christianization. So, contacts with the indigenous people were highly limited.

There is a conviction that in 1605 the Spaniards, under the command of Torres with one chaplain on the board, were able to reach the shore of today's Papua New Guinea (PNG). The chaplain went onto the land of Sideia Island and said the first Mass on Papuan soil. One year later the Spaniards landed in the New Hebrides (Vanuatu) with ten Franciscans on board. But there were no looked-for missionary results.

These few stories above show us how the explorers and religious men were anxious to reach out to the indigenous people of the Pacific. The Spanish Government made every effort to overcome obstacles and difficulties. Finally the opportune time occurred and the first organized Catholic mission was set up in the Philippines.

In 1668 the Spanish Queen and Regent, Queen Mariana, sent Jesuits eastward from the Philippines to Guam, the large island in the Ladrone Islands (*raskol's* islands). ...The missionaries went accompanied by a military garrison to protect Spanish trade and, where necessary, to help the missionaries to restrain the Spanish soldiers, sailors and officials from exploiting and attacking the native people.

The natives became upset with the style and methods of the Spaniards that were implemented while dealing with them. In 1685 some locals challenged Christianity and turned against its agents (missionaries and army personnel). As a result they killed fourteen missionaries. The mission ceased completely and was discontinued. When the work of evangelization was revived again there, the missionaries had to undertake much effort from the start.

The Spaniards expressed additional determination in 1772 and 1774 when they reached Tahiti. Their missionaries made attempts twice, but again – everything was in vain. This again demonstrated how difficult it was for the Europeans, in general terms, to settle in the Pacific islands for a longer time.

The other point is that we see only Catholics involved in the idea of missionary evangelization in the Pacific. The question arises: what about Protestants? To give an answer on this issue is not too difficult, when we look at the development of Protestantism in Europe. Their starting point in Europe was the year 1517. And it took them quite a time to consolidate in the European Continent first. But after ca. 200 years of existence or even more, the Protestants began to be worried and disturbed while looking at the strategy of implementing their 'creeds' in different areas overseas. Regarding these issues, the Catholics had already had their own tactics. But for the Protestants, there was a simple and primary question: who among them should take care of missions abroad? How should they be organised? How could they be founded? How could one ensure that the missionary efforts would be prolonged and stable? These questions began to draw the Protestants from a kind of lethargy. Finally they made attempts to move abroad.

It is very true that the Protestants departed Europe quite early and went to America. In the case of the Pacific Ocean, they appeared there at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They tried for the first time in Tonga, but were unsuccessful. So, the next point of their missionary attempt was Tahiti. Strangely, the attempts made by Catholics there in 1772 and 1774 did not bring the desired results, but the London Missionary Society (LMS) members' efforts in the year 1797 were a 'victory'. For the first time, the Protestant Christian missionaries settled in the midst of the Pacific people. This date (1797) is a remarkable date while considering the development of mutual relations between the indigenous people of the Pacific and European explorers including Christian missionaries. Then another Protestant group of missionaries from Boston settled in Hawaii in 1820. The Catholics initiated their mission in Hawaii (Honolulu) in 1827, and up to 1844 they had structurally covered the whole of Oceania. Within a short time, we can see other denominations entering into the Pacific. These were Presbyterians in Vanuatu in 1839 where they became the victims of cannibalism and to where they returned in 1852; Methodists in Tonga (1822) and Fiji (1835); and Anglicans in New Zealand (ca. 1840).

### **Colonial period and its repercussions**

Colonialism, in general terms, has various shapes and characters. In the Pacific, we can see that it developed step by step. So, at the first stage we can talk about pre-colonialism. This period slowly transforms into a phase of colonialism. Despite these 'academic' peculiarities, the first colonial attempts in the Pacific were instigated by Spanish explorers since they arrived in the Philippines at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. From there, their influences extended to the Marianas and to the Caroline Islands. In later years Spain also made an attempt to take over Tahiti and Easter Islands but without success. The finale of Spanish presence in the Pacific came at the very end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (1898) when the

USA took responsibility for the Philippines and Guam Island, which, geographically is a part of the Marianas and still belongs to the USA until today.

In the same year, the Caroline Islands, with two important centers – Pohnpei and Yap – and the Marianas were sold to Germany. Since at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, the USA had already much power, so following contemporary political style and mentality, they began their colonial policy and had already annexed in the Pacific: Hawaii (1898) and then part of Samoa through a commercial company while dealing there with Germany.

Another noteworthy colonial possessor in the Pacific was Great Britain. In 1788 their fleet with a number of convicts arrived in Australia and commenced a new (colonial) history of Australia. In 1840 the British took over as its possession New Zealand; in 1874 Fiji became its colony through the Deed of Cession; in 1884 Papua (South-East New Guinea, at this time called British New Guinea); in 1888 the Cook islands; in 1892 the Gilbert and Ellice Islands; and in 1893 Solomon Islands also became part of British Empire. In 1906, having constant quarrels and rivalry with France, the New Hebrides were declared as a condominium (some islands became British and some French). As was said, Britain's great political rival at this time was the Government of France. The opportunity occurred when the Catholic French missionaries (Picpusians) took over the responsibility for the newly created Prefecture Apostolic of Sandwich (Hawaiian) Islands in 1825. The missionary contingent appeared there in 1827. Soon the missionaries were forced to look for other islands in the Pacific. In partnership with them, it created opportunities for the French colonists to enter step by step into Marquesas (1842), Tahiti (1844), New Caledonia (1853), Wallis and Futuna (1887), and finally to the above-mentioned New Hebrides (condominium). Also, early enough the German (Germany as a unified political unit began to exist in 1871) commercial enterprises developed their business in Samoa.

Through their inner business policy, the company had to deal with the USA Company and this divided Samoa in two directions: pro-German and pro-American. After Germany strengthened their political and then military position, they went further and took part in the colonization of the Northern-East New Guinea (later on called Wilhelmsland) with all islands nearby at the Bismarck Sea and then added to it the northern Solomon Islands (Buka and Bougainville) in 1886, the Marshall Islands was annexed in 1885 and in 1886 Nauru. Finally when Australia received its independence in 1901, Great Britain handed over its British New Guinea colony to Australia (1906). This part of New Guinea was called Papua by Australia.

So, coming to the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, the whole Pacific was practically colonized except the Kingdom of Tonga. This political *status quo* had been attuned to the unexpected and unfortunate reality at the moment when the First World War broke out in 1914. So, the colonial German possession in Micronesia moved under the military control of Japan; Wilhelmsland under the control of Australia; and German Samoa under the control of New Zealand.

Appearance of prospectors and colonists in the Pacific had brought a lot of confusion and created animosity between the indigenous people together with those Europeans who embraced the Christian codes and principles (some prospectors deserve acknowledgement for their exemplary conduct). Unfortunately, the majority of the ordinary arrivals had only one wish in mind: to gain in the Pacific as much as possible and become richer. Other values did not penetrate their heads. Talking about the mutual relations with the indigenous people, we must say that the problem everywhere was the same: first of all in America, then in Africa, and finally in Oceania and Australia. In some Asian countries many cases have also been reported and were alarming. It is true that the indigenous people in the Pacific were aggressive to newcomers, but – on the other hand – when later on the islanders noticed how the white intruders were performing, their unpleasant ‘action’ changed into more unpleasant ‘reaction’ and brought a lot of calamities, killings and hostilities. Such practices like black birding, compulsory and exhausting tasks, forceful labor supply on various plantations, never before experienced alienation from the land, corporal punishment, introduction of alcohol drinking, tendency for womanizing, lack of interest in and understanding of the local culture and mentality etc., did not create a spirit of mutual assistance and did not build partnership solidarity, but generated hatred and fury.

In light of such experiences, we can understand why the islanders misinterpreted the role of the missionaries, comparing them and identifying them with those Europeans who appeared in the Pacific only for commercial purposes. Unfortunately, the victims of those wrong perceptions were quite often innocent and fair missionaries: e.g., fourteen Jesuit missionaries killed on Mariana Islands in 1685; St. Peter Chanel SM killed in Futuna on 1841; Bl. John Mazzucconi PIME killed on Woodlark Island in 1855; Anglican Bishop John Coleridge Patteson killed in 1871 on Solomon Islands together with his companions: John Atkin (a New Zealander) and Stephen Tarsamioro (a Solomon Islander); Protestant missionary James Chalmers killed on Gearibari Island in the Gulf of Papua in 1901; and ten missionaries with seven local Christians killed in the Baining area (Gazelle Peninsula) in the year 1904.

Many European missionaries appealed to the monarchs and rulers of the colonial countries to curb those behaviors which were contradictory to what the missionaries preached and taught. The missionaries tried to convince the white colonizers to act more wisely and perform humanely, and less in the spirit of emotion or anger. Colonial governments reacted to such excesses of their citizens in the Pacific and published special decrees and issued laws. On the other hand, the civil rulers of colonizing countries had been aware of the very low educational status and roughness of those intruding into the Pacific (at the same time we must admit that sometimes the missionaries behaved badly enough and by that, caused all sorts of unpleasant comments until today). The actions of the governments and churches were helpful but not enough. Therefore in many cases, the scars of those abuses and inhuman relations are still noticeable today in South America and in Africa. In Oceania these relations had been less damaged. At least!

When the First World War was over, the former German colonies were transferred under the care of the League of Nations. This world organization shifted the political responsibilities for these colonies to the same countries as was done in 1914 but under their civil authorities (Micronesian colonies under Japan; Western Samoa under New Zealand; and Wilhelmsland under Australia). Over the next 20 years, things developed quite efficiently until the outbreak of the Second World War in 1941. The European governments implemented administration in their colonies, imitating the patterns and structures taken from their home countries. Suddenly the whole Pacific discovered that the Japanese behaved like Russians in Europe in 1939. Since Japan became an ally of Germany and attacked the USA on 8 December 1941 at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, automatically they were against Australia and all colonies under European governments. Therefore in the years 1942-1945, the whole Pacific was involved in the fierce battle against fascist Japan. The final result of this battle was Japan's loss, casualties of Pacific Islanders (as example is the case of the Catechist from Rabaul, PNG, Bl. Peter ToRot, who was executed by injection in July 1945), much psychological harm, material destruction and devastation including confusion and misunderstanding. When the war was over, new challenges were looming on the Pacific horizon.

### **Western influences and Pacific society today**

More solid and objective encounters of the Westerners with the Pacific reality are dated from the time of the Second World War. After the war, the general feeling for the Pacific people among the Europeans began to improve. In connection with these matters, a special commission (the South Pacific Commission) was established in 1947 in order to look at, study and question what the Westerners, especially Americans, could do in the Pacific in the areas of education, health and social welfare. The British Commonwealth itself emerged to spread the idea that the time for a step by step de-colonization process had come. The effect of this new philosophy was the independence granted to Western Samoa in 1962. This process, initiated in 1962, continued. How does the political status of the Pacific Islands look like at the present is shown in the following table.

In order to make things correct and just, the USA Department of State established an Office for Pacific Affairs in 1978. Now the opinion circulates, especially in USA, that the Pacific economy is overlooked. This has no 'generous' character. It is based on commercial perspectives existing in this oceanic basin. The Pacific rim countries on the side of America and Asia and the leading countries in the Pacific itself have tremendous potential taking into account the developing containerized business (ship transportation), fisheries and mineral resources placed at the bottom of this Ocean. An additional issue in the Pacific is its political safety. Therefore many of its countries (independent and those not fully or only partly free) are in association with the USA, Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia or France (mostly English speaking countries). This is a certain assurance for the people of the Pacific that the history of the Second World War will not repeat itself there.

**Political Oceania**

<b>Polynesia</b>	<b>Micronesia</b>	<b>Melanesia</b>
<b>Hawaii Islands</b> (since 1959 the 50 <sup>th</sup> State of the USA)	<b>Republic of Palau</b> (Sovereign Country since 1994 under a Compact of Free Association with the USA)	<b>Papua New Guinea</b> (Independent country since 1975)
<b>Midway Islands</b> (Unincorporated Territory of USA)	<b>Commonwealth of Northern Mariana</b> (part of the USA since 1986)	<b>Solomon Islands</b> (Independent country since 1978)
<b>New Zealand</b> (Independent country)	<b>Guam</b> (Unincorporated Territory of the USA)	<b>Republic of Fiji</b> (Independent country since 1970)
<b>French Polynesia</b> (Autonomous Overseas Country)	<b>Republic of Nauru</b> (Independent country since 1968)	<b>Republic of Vanuatu</b> (Independent country since 1980)
<b>Cook Islands</b> (since 1965 Self-governing country in free association with New Zealand)	<b>Federated States of Micronesia</b> (Independent country since 1979)	<b>New Caledonia</b> (Overseas French Territory)
<b>Wallis and Futuna Islands</b> (Overseas French Territory)	<b>Republic of Kiribati</b> (Sovereign country since 1979)	<b>West Papua (Iran Jaya)</b> (part of Sovereign Republic of Indonesia)
<b>Niue</b> (Self-governing state in free association with New Zealand)	<b>Republic of Marshall Islands</b> (Independent country since 1986)	
<b>Western Samoa</b> (Independent country since 1962)	<b>Wake Islands</b> (unorganized, unincorporated Territory of the USA, administered by the Office of Insular Affairs)	
<b>American Samoa</b> (Unincorporated Territory of USA)		
<b>Tokelau</b> (Non-self-governing Territory of New Zealand)		
<b>Tuvalu</b> (Independent country since 1978)		
<b>The Kingdom of Tonga</b> (Sovereign State) (		
<b>Pitcairn Group of Islands</b> (Overseas United Kingdom Territory)		
<b>Easter Island</b> (Special Territory of Chile annexed in 1888)		
<b>Kermadec Islands</b> (almost uninhabited island, annexed to New Zealand in 1887)		

Source: Wikipedia the free encyclopedia; J. Łysek (Ed.), *Polityczny Atlas Świata 1992...*, pp.173-184; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/...

**Other political organisms of the Pacific**

<b>Australia</b> (Independent country since 1901)
<b>Norfolk Island</b> (Overseas Australian Territory)

Source: J. Łysek (ed.), *Polityczny Atlas Świata 1992...*, pp.171,176.

The Pacific Islands together with Australia make a colorful mosaic of races, cultures, languages, traditional performances and tales, traditional religious convictions, interesting landscaping, reefs, pleasurable diving spots, rich flora and fauna. These particulars attract more and more tourists to come to this region to experience the authenticity of the tropics. What the people of the Pacific need are peaceful coexistence, adjustment to proper principles, the preservation of traditional human values and respect for their natural environment.

In the Pacific as such (Australia with Oceania) there is a great number of very small Islands, e.g., Howland Island, Sala-y-Gomez Island, Minamitori Island etc. which are recognised as properties of USA, Chile, UK, France, New Zealand, Australia, Japan or others. Many of them are uninhabited.

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