

Notes on geography and language

The Pacific can be a difficult geographic concept to define. It is complicated by a range of ideas about the Pacific as a region. Historian Matt Matsuda wrote that defining what ‘the Pacific’ means is a ‘daunting challenge’.¹ Matsuda goes on to discuss the difficulty of ‘history drawn from such a complex set of boundaries, nested temporalities, and geographies’.²

In this book ‘the Pacific’ is used to describe the south-westerly area of the Pacific Ocean, often known as the South Pacific. This area stretches from Papua New Guinea in the west, and the Cook Islands and French Polynesia to the east. These areas are often described as Melanesian and Polynesian cultural areas – which are themselves constructions. To the north of the equator – what Crocombe and Meleisea describe as a ‘big geographical and cultural divider’,³ lies Micronesia. Kiribati is the most northerly nation that features in this research; other Pacific Island states north of the equator tend to be more closely linked to the United States of America and have attracted less attention from the Australian Government in relation to aid. This focus aligns closely with British imperialism; many of the states and territories in the Pacific that the Australian Government has been concerned with over the period covered in this book are former British colonies.

1 Matt K Matsuda, ‘The Pacific’, *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (2006): 758, doi.org/10.1086/ahr.111.3.758.

2 Matsuda, ‘The Pacific’, 759.

3 Ron Crocombe and Malama Meleisea, ‘Higher Education in the Pacific Islands: Spheres of Influence, Trends and Developments’, *International Journal of Educational Development* 9, no. 3 (1989): 164, doi.org/10.1016/0738-0593(89)90044-8.

This book also discusses the nation now known as Papua New Guinea, and the former territories that make it up (in the timeframe of this book) – the Territory of Papua and the Trust Territory of New Guinea. The legal distinctions between these territories are important, and affect the status of their residents as part of the Australian state.

As Hank Nelson has written, ‘the names for the east of the island of New Guinea are confusing’.⁴ In 1906, Australia was granted control of the south-eastern half of the island that had been British New Guinea, which became the Territory of Papua. The north-eastern half was German New Guinea, until 1921 when it became ‘officially’ Australian New Guinea, a mandate territory under the League of Nations and later a trust territory under the United Nations. Both territories were administered together by the Australian Government, becoming officially known as the Territory of Papua and New Guinea. They are not, however, the same territory. There are key administrative differences that change the status of the individual residents of these territories. The impact of these administrative differences will be discussed across this book.

This book discusses international education at length. The terms used for the globally mobile student cohort that is part of what is now known as international education have varied over the decades covered in this book. In the early postwar years students were generally referred to as ‘Asian students’. Later they were known as ‘overseas students’ and in contemporary times they are referred to as ‘international students’. All of these terms are used at times in this book, and they all refer to the same grouping: students who have travelled from one country to another for study.

4 Hank Nelson, ‘Liberation: The End of Australian Rule in Papua New Guinea’, *The Journal of Pacific History* 35, no. 3 (1 December 2000): 269–80, doi.org/10.1080/00223340020010562.

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