

Much of authors' research material, including their transcribed interviews with over 136 individuals, are scheduled for deposit in the Pacific Collection of Hamilton Library at the University of Hawai'i.

ROBERT C KISTE

*University of Hawai'i at Mānoa*

\* \* \*

*The French-Speaking Pacific: Population, Environment and Development Issues*, edited by Christian Jost. Brisbane: Boombana Publications, 1998. ISBN 1-876542-02-0, 271 pages, figures, maps, photos, tables, notes, bibliography. Paper, A\$32. <http://www.uq.net.au/~zzjlache/boombana>

This book aims to present English readers with a synthesis of recent French research in the Republic of Vanuatu and the three overseas territories of Wallis and Futuna, French Polynesia, and New Caledonia. It is the revised and updated English version of the proceedings of a 1994 island-hopping conference organized by the French National Committee on Geography. It provides a unique combination of information on the French-speaking Pacific in terms of natural (terrestrial and marine) and human (sociocultural and economic) geography from a historical and contemporary perspective. The richness of the approach is enhanced by the multidisciplinary of the contributors.

The book begins with a large, 36-page chapter by Gilbert David, on the Republic of Vanuatu, that examines the physical geography, climate, maritime area, environment, socioeco-

nomics, and human aspects, as well as the past twenty-five years of administration, politics, demography, agricultural activities, fisheries, and service-sector development. It is followed by two chapters on the French Pacific territories. The first, by Emmanuel Vigneron, asks if the three overseas territories can be considered a French "region," with specific characteristics outside their common colonial and administrative heritage. He concludes that they share very little outside their dependence on the international community. Vigneron also examines economic constraints and shows that the French Pacific contains the most subsidized entities in the world. He predicts that, due to the weaknesses of the region's economies, there will be widespread economic and social crises generated by a rapidly growing youth population with few employment opportunities. The second chapter in this group, by Christian Jost, looks at environmental constraints generated not only by the natural degradation of the environment but by other processes such as extraction (mining and deforestation); transfers (via transport and migratory routes); and concentrations of waste matter and human presence.

These chapters are followed by two comparatively large chapters on New Caledonia. In the first, Bernard Capocchi examines the physical characteristics of this Melanesian island group, and in the second, Jean-Pierre Doumenge takes a historical and geographical approach to the territory's cultural, demographic, economic, and political realities. A chapter on the "Communities and Economics of French Polynesia," by Paul Le Bour-

diec, Gerard Motiet, and François Merceron, is next—a rather short piece (12 pages, compared to the 44 pages on the human aspects of New Caledonia) on the geography, demographic history, economic cycles, production, and development policies of the territory.

The book then turns to specific natural geography, with chapters on the “Functioning of Coral Reefs and Atolls” by Francis Rougerie, and the “Coastal and Lagoon Environment of Huahine,” Leeward Islands, by Catherine Gabrie and Claude Payri, who make recommendations for the development and management of the natural environment. There follows a series of short chapters on Polynesia: “Aspects of the Distant and Recent Prehistory of the Polynesians,” by Eric Conte (the differences among and fundamental unity of Polynesian cultures); “Tahiti and the Polynesian System,” by Louis Monnier (how Tahiti and its capital Pape‘ete are the center of the Polynesian system); “From Eden to Tourist Paradise,” by Philippe Bachimon (the image of Tahiti as a tourist paradise is compared to the reality of the place); and “What Development after the CEP?” by Gilles Blanchet (the crisis and challenges resulting from the scaling down and closing of the nuclear testing center).

The book concludes with three chapters on Wallis and Futuna. The first, by Frédéric Angleviel, Thierry Agostini, F Dupuy, and P Lavault, examines the geography, history, and development challenges faced by Wallis. The second, entitled “The Horn Archipelago: Futuna and Alofi,” by Catherine Courvasier, looks at physical geography only, and the final

chapter, by Marc Soule, looks at the human geography of Futuna.

This book is like an assorted chocolate box of French scholarship on the Pacific, and although there is a large variety of samples there is also some unevenness between them. For example there are 44 pages on the human aspects of New Caledonia and only 5 pages on those of Futuna. Some articles are purely natural geography, while others are a mix of natural and human geography or just human geography. Some deal with the deep historical past, while others cover only the past twenty-five years.

There are also some problems of clarity with the grayscale used in some of the maps and tables, which makes them difficult to read, and thus the information is lost. My final comments concern the bibliography. Since the bibliographic references are almost one hundred percent French, it may be difficult for an English reader to find further information on a specific subject. It would have been helpful if the bibliography had included more English titles. A suggested-reading section for Anglophone readers would have been very helpful for the book’s English audience.

DONNA WINSLOW

*Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam*

\* \* \*