

BOOK REVIEW

Rodrigue Levesque, compiler and editor, History of Micronesia; A Collection of Source Documents, 18 volumes, Levesque Publications, Gatineau, Quebec, Canada

Micronesia is an area of the world which has gotten relatively little attention from western scholars. Ferdinand Magellan gets credit for discovering the region when he landed at Guam on 6 March 1521, and claimed the area for the Spanish. The region has geographic, cultural, and political definitions. Geographically, it includes the Mariana, Caroline, and Marshall Islands, as well as Nauru and Kiribati (Gilberts). Culturally, it includes the same groups, and some anthropologists place Tuvalu (Ellice Islands) ethnically in Micronesia. Politically, it is generally identified, especially since WWII, with the American administered Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI) which encompassed the Marianas (except Guam which is a U.S. Territory), the Carolines, and the Marshalls.

Today, the region is comprised of several political entities, four of which were carved from the old TTPI. These are: The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), the Republic of Palau (RP), the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), and the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) which is comprised of the island groups of Chuuk (Truk), Pohnpei (Ponape), Kosrae (Kusaie) and Yap. These are all freely-associated with the United States and are referred to as the FAS.

The historiography of the region can be complicated for scholars since each island group has its own singular culture and history as well as language. Oral

historiography-the culture of the word-is the tradition in the islands, and it has been the bailiwick of cultural historians, anthropologists, and human geographers.

Colonial historiography-the culture of the book-has been entirely different. It can be said that the islands of Micronesia, and elsewhere in the Pacific, actually have two histories: (1) imperial/colonial history, and (2) island cultural (oral) history.

Rodrigue Levesque has amassed an impressive collection of colonial documents from the archives of Europe primarily, and also from America, which are available here for the first time in an organized, sequential, and efficient way. No institutional library in Europe should be without them, because they are a part of European history, as well as the histories of Germany, France, Great Britain, and other nations on the continent.

Besides colonial documents, there are also included reports from early European explorers and others who visited the islands prior to actual colonization. Generally, the colonial sequence has been: Spain, 1521 to 1898; Germany, 1899 to 1914; Japan, 1914 to 1945, and America 1945 to 1987.

Levesque himself, is a careful and indefatigable scholar. He has lived in Micronesia, speaks several languages, and has translated most of these documents from

[to be continued on page 66]