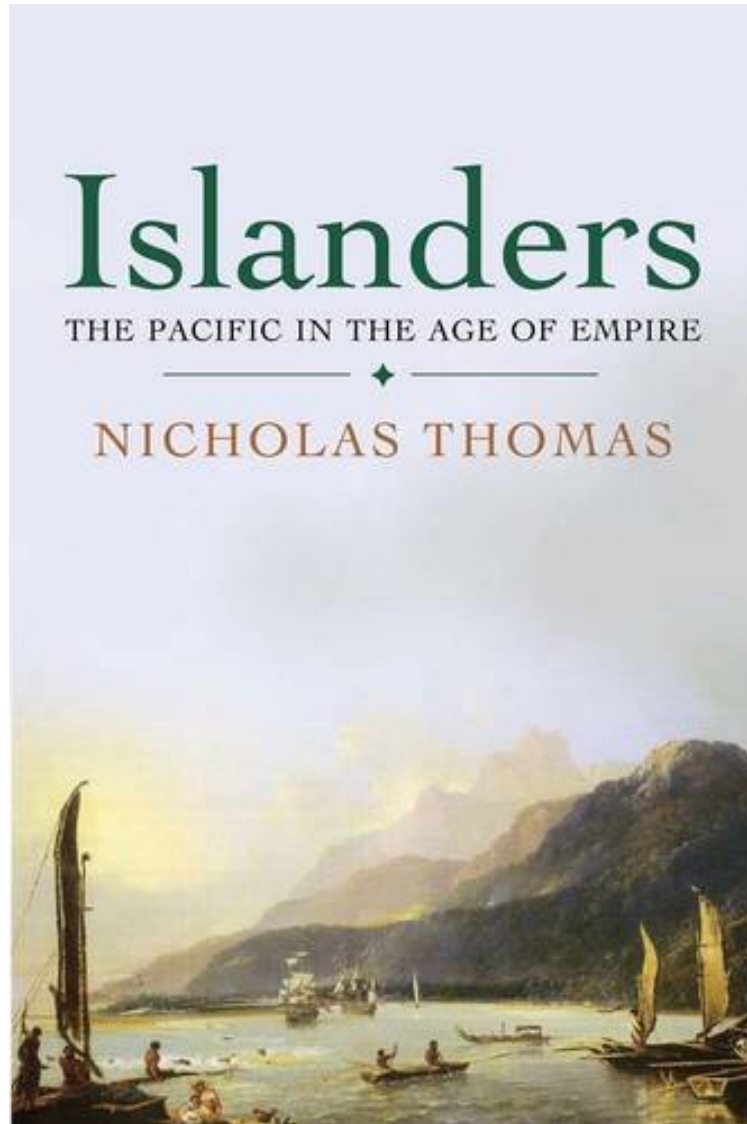


(Download pdf ebook) Islanders: The Pacific in the Age of Empire

Islanders: The Pacific in the Age of Empire

Nicholas Thomas

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Nicholas Thomas : Islanders: The Pacific in the Age of Empire before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Islanders: The Pacific in the Age of Empire:

10 of 18 people found the following review helpful. IslandersBy David AllenRather heavy going, but very informative, I had bought the book looking for a history of European expansion into the Pacific Ocean area and the manner in which the various colonial powers developed or exploited their areas of interest. This book certainly gives a good idea of the manner in which the Europeans and Americans vied for power in this area and the nature of

Melanesian and Polynesian society and its reaction to white expansionism. 7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Finally the Full Story of the Pacific in the Age of Empire By Historypro Nicholas Thomas has long argued against the idealized and romanticized vision of indigenes which sees them as "innocents" and especially "spiritual people" who are roughly victimized by uncaring and predatory imperialists. The problem with this seemingly sympathetic view, he has pointed out, is that it strips indigenous people of their agency and views them as comparatively immobile groups to whom little happened until Europeans arrive. This view, Thomas has argued, merely perpetuates the mythology of imperialism in which the "superior" and active imperialists confront the "inferior" and passive indigenes. Against these views, Thomas has consistently made the point that the actions and motives of both sides of the imperial encounter were more subtle and varied than either imperial interpretation allows. In *Islanders*, Thomas drives this point home with a story of 18C and early 19C Pacific imperialism that confounds imperial and romanticized indigenous history alike. Winner of the 2010 Wolfson Prize, one of Britain's most prestigious book awards, in *Islanders* we learn of London missionaries who consistently failed to convert islanders, not because of indigenous moral incapacities (as the missionaries thought), but because the islanders found little in the lifeways or persons of the missionaries to recommend them or their religion. We also learn about many islanders who signed on to British, American, and other European ships for no other reason than to see the places where the foreign ships had come from. Even in the darker era of late 19C imperialism, when ships raided Melanesia and the western Pacific in general for labor to work Australian plantations, we see some islanders making their own use of the exploitative labor system. *Islanders* is a path-breaking book that makes the case that islanders, like everyone else in the imperial Pacific, forged their own, independent accommodations to economic and social change in an era often marked by brutality, exploitation, and subjugation. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Debunks the Romantic South Seas trope. These islanders were real people, not passive dwellers in paradise. By lyndonbrecht This is mostly a survey with a focus on the 1800s, with a lot of good detail and quite diverse coverage reflective of the extreme diversity of the islanders and their cultures. His main point is that the islanders were not the passive victims of colonialism, Many islanders took advantage of opportunities offered by a widening world, sometimes as crew, sometimes as a kind of tourist, sometimes to seek knowledge or advantages of some kind--in other words they were adventurers, curious about the outside world, not so different from the colonialists themselves. To an extent this book is a corrective of the romantic South Seas tradition that sees the islanders as lazy in paradise. Thomas has written an excellent history that compares well with a number of other books on this and related subjects recently published. His focus is on all the islanders and their encounters with a widening world. There is some discussion of individual cultures.

This compelling book explores the lived experience of empire in the Pacific, the last region to be contacted and colonized by Europeans following the great voyages of Captain Cook. Unlike conventional accounts that emphasize confrontation and the destruction of indigenous cultures, *Islanders* reveals there was gain as well as loss, survival as well as suffering, and invention as well as exploitation. Empowered by imaginative research in obscure archives and collections, Thomas rediscovers a rich and surprising history of encounters, not only between Islanders and Europeans, but among Islanders, brought together in new ways by explorers, missionaries, and colonists. He tells the story of the making of empire, not through an impersonal survey, but through vivid stories of the lives of men and women some visionary, some vicious, and some just eccentric and through sensuous evocation of seascapes and landscapes of the Pacific. A fascinating re-creation of an Oceanic world, *Islanders* offers a new paradigm, not only for histories of the Pacific, but for understandings of cultural contact everywhere.

"Thomas description of the journey into the imperial world of the Pacific is made inclusive and companionable with lovely asides [a] comprehensive but gripping book" Katrina Schlunke, Times Higher Education Supplement