

Monopolists and Freebooters. [The Pacific since Magellan: Volume II]. By O. H. K. Spate. Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1983. 426 pp. Aust. price: \$39.

THE ENTHUSIASM, ambitious vision, and scholarship that characterized Oskar Spate's *The Spanish Lake*, the first volume in his *The Pacific since Magellan*, are maintained in Volume II. This large tome covers the period 1600-1750, which Spate calls the Dark Age of Pacific historiography. Presumably this is because English readers are so poorly served in this time between the relatively well-known Spanish and Portuguese activity in the sixteenth century and the so-called great age of exploration from the 1760s when English heroes like Cook strode the region's historical stage. Now this period is vividly illuminated by Spate's extraordinary, synthetic overview.

Where Volume I has as its principal story the turning of the Ocean into an Iberian domain, Volume II sees Spanish and Portuguese predominance challenged by the Dutch and English. Continuing his masterly account of the great geopolitical and economic rivalries of the European powers, he lets the story range widely around the Ocean's boundaries — Australia, the Philippines, China, Japan, Russia, the Americas. Like Volume I, it is still largely eurocentric in focus and deals with continental rather than insular dimensions of the Pacific. (The Pacific islands and their inhabitants will take their place in Volume III.) However, *Monopolists and Freebooters* is different from its predecessor in that the story now becomes diabolically complicated. With regard to Dutch activity, for example, Spate outlines 'the most complex conflict imaginable, conflict at once commercial, military, national, and ideological, moving from one side of the Pacific to the other. . . . The interlocking struggles involved Dutch and Iberian, Macaonese and Manileños, Jesuits and Franciscans; Japanese and Chinese; Ming and Manchu; Atchenese, Javanese, Buginese, Moluccans, Makassars; freebooters Asian or European or Eurasian'. There are times when following the story becomes a little difficult and the inattentive reader will easily become lost in its very richness of detail. Yet even those readers without the tenacity to comprehend a difficult tale well told will still find this an extremely valuable work of reference.

Having already reviewed Volume I in glowing terms (as did most other reviewers), and having no wish simply to repeat the superlatives, let me say that Volume II deserves similar praise. If saying this book represents more of the same appears too bland an endorsement, let me add that I am eagerly awaiting Volume III, especially as it will return to ground rather more familiar to the historians of the Pacific islands. Spate wrote in his preface: 'As one passes seventy, Time's wingèd chariot becomes damnably noisy.' I hope that vehicle's decibels do not increase for a long while yet

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