



Grass Huts and Warehouses: Pacific Beach Communities of the Nineteenth Century (Pacific Studies series)

Caroline Ralston

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A pioneering study of early trade and beach communities in the Pacific Islands and first published in 1977, this book provides historians with an ambitious survey of early European–Polynesian contact, an analysis of how early trade developed along with the beachcomber community, and a detailed reconstruction of development of the early Pacific port towns. Set mainly in the first half of the 19th century, continuing in some cases for a few decades more, the book covers five ports: Kororareka (now Russell, in New Zealand), Levuka (Fiji), Apia (Samoa), Papeete (Tahiti) and Honolulu (Hawai'i). The role of beachcombers, the earliest European inhabitants, as well as the later consuls or commercial agents, and the development of plantation economies is explored. The book is a tour de force, the first detailed comparative academic study of these early precolonial trading towns and their race relations. It argues that the predominantly egalitarian towns where Islanders, beachcombers, traders, and missionaries mixed were largely harmonious, but this was undermined by later arrivals and larger populations.

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