

HISTORY

EMPIRE BUILDERS: THE PACIFIC

2 x 50' (ENG, GER)

The idyllic Pacific Islands have been a battleground for centuries - from wars to colonial rivalry between France and UK to controversial nuclear tests by France and the United States

Indigenous Austronesian and Polynesian tribes fought one another for centuries, sometimes even eating their victims after successful conquests. In the 18th century, great European powers launched 'journeys of discovery' in search of continents in and beyond the South Seas. These journeys were often flagged as great scientific explorations of the natural world, but the Europeans also introduced deadly diseases and occupied and suppressed the indigenous people of these dream destinations.

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1. Ancient Mariners

We look at how the Polynesians spread out across the Pacific and examine the cultures they took with them, constructing elaborate temples to their beliefs in places like Easter Island, off the coast of Chile and Nanmadol in Micronesia. We also look at the warrior tribes of the Māori, who voyaged to New Zealand from Eastern Polynesia in the 14th century finding a place uninhabited by humans

2. Pacific Conquests

We look at the history of European colonisation of the Pacific. The Spaniards were the first to explore the region following the establishment of the galleon route between the Philippines and Acapulco in Mexico in the 16th and 17th centuries. Thereafter in the 18th and 19th centuries the British and French sought spheres of influence in the Pacific establishing colonies there and embarking on religious crusades to Christianise the population. In the 20th century the Pacific became the battleground for war between new superpowers. Japan and America.