Part B:

What’s in the Hole of Doughnut?

The hole in the doughnut is a general metaphor of pacific islands and islanders as marginalized nations and ignored people among Pacific Rim nations. A series of ideologies have significant influences on it, including imperialism, developmentalism, orientalism, tropicalism and continent-based thinking. In order to understand the origin of this notion, it is essential to start with the origin of the notion of Pacific Rim.

According to Bruce Cumings in his article “ Rimspeak; or, The Discourse of the “Pacific Rim”, the notion of Pacific Rim generated in the late 1970s, unfolding era of the Pacific was aiming to attract donors’, exporters’ and importers’ attention to acquire funding in Asian or international studies. It unveiled potential Asian markets in front of western investors and motivated revaluation of East and Southeast Asia. Westerners, mostly Americans recognized and defined Pacific Rim from a biased and narrow-minded view. In particular, in the mid-1970s, Japanese miracle economic growth as a typical NIC (newly industrialized countries) became a threat to western countries, especially America. The height of notion of Pacific Rim or Asian Pacific is in 1989, when an American movie named “Black Rain” was shoot with a traditional Americanism plot indicating how Japan as a threat being defeated at last.

As Connery on his article Pacific Rim reckons that, the concept of the Pacific Rim was formed in the mid 1970s and it had played a dominant role in United States geographical imaginary theory until the late 1980s. The dominant position comes as a consequence of a particular stage of late capitalism, which is represented by the remarkable political and economic characteristics of United States during the late cold war-era from the 1970s to the late 1980s. Distinguished from Orientalism, the Pacific Rim theory hypothesizes a mutual penetration and shared relationship integration without any center - neither
hegemony power center nor the hypothetical "balance of power". From the actual paper needs, this concept of scope includes the United States, Canada, Mexico, Japan, and “Four Tigers" with US-Japan relationship as the regional soul. "The Pacific Rim" point of view derived from the United States was originally used to describe geological activity, and began to appear in national security field works in 1960s. To the 1970s mid-century, under the influence of a series of factors, its national security background began subside so that the foundation of Pacific Rim topic was able to be established. These factors include: (1) U.S.-China relations thawing, (2) the Vietnam War, (3) Japan ranked the first place on world economic, (4) After the war American hegemony was unprecedentedly queried because of the global recession. In Bruce’s opinion, the ideology of internationalism and containment is rooted in its executives’ working background on Wall Street and other U.S. financial capital organization. These financial institutions have strong regional economic strength as support and destined to benefit from international economic without trade barriers. Besides, the need for free flow of capital through water and information age stimulated the formation of this theory. Ultimately in the late 1980’s, with the symbol of suppressing Japan, the American-perspective Pacific Rim theory with internationalism has come to an end.

However, an unavoidable key point we should notice is that the notion of Pacific Rim is a EuroAmerican construct, an invention in order to benefit creators. The people of the Pacific Rim did not know they inhabited a new sector of world system until they were told. These western social constructions do not mean how natives think of themselves. It is said that European and Pacific islanders have had different perception of Pacific region: the former viewed it as empty and such perspective influenced and generated their biased action accordingly.

Take a look at “Imagining Oceania: Indigenous and Foreign representation of a Sea of Islands” written by Margaret Jolly. Cartography can be regarded as a partial depiction of the world and analysis
of maps of Pacific islands can unveil the foreigners’, also known as outlanders’ perspective on the Pacific. Moreover, it could also be used to compare with views showed on maps of islanders and analyze the varied correlation between indigenous people and outlanders. The map of Tupaia, an indigenous priest who joined the Endeavour led by Captain Cook in 1769 and another drew by Johann Reinhold Forster are juxtaposed to show indigenous and foreign representations of Oceania. It is found out that indigenous and foreign representation of geographies and peoples separate as “double visions”. Islanders navigated and explored their surroundings in a primitive way, which results in limited formations of visual, aural, olfactory and kinesthetic knowledge system while outlanders did that in a more scientific advanced way relatively in ways that highlighted some parts and excluded others for their own benefits. Nevertheless, to some extent, the indigenous views have been influenced by foreign information and commons on the condensation of time and space in both indigenous genealogies and foreign cartographies or ethnologies exist. Furthermore, the classification of Pacific region as Polynesia, Melanesia and Micronesia which have been spread and accept widely by now was put forward by outlanders with a sense of superiority. Physical characteristics were seen as immutable essences and application of developmentalism was concerned in judging and categorizing islanders. Not only such bias existed in racist ideologies but also in sexist ones, which is explained by investigating the typical example of eastern-Pacific women’s sex appeal to European men. Due to such western biased perspective of Pacific Rim, a hole in Pacific Ocean was generated: Pacific islands were marginalized as empty as the hole in doughnut.

It is obvious that Oceania has made some positive contributions to this whole area. First of all, Pacific Islands’ interconnected geological positions have benefited sea transportations and international trades. Besides, regardless of Militourism theory, islands’ well-preserved ecological environments and diversity of historical, cultural, linguistic legacies play essential roles in fields of tourism and academia.
Also, Pacific activists, artists, intellectuals who challenge the limited ideology of “Rim” and make great efforts in decolonization of their homes, will definitely create brilliant records in world history.

In conclusion, no matter how the definitions of Pacific Rim vary, the hole in doughnut has never been filled completely. Pacific islanders are used to seeing themselves as marginal, playing alone with colonial visions with their own histories, knowledge, cultures being neglected and categorized to unimportant list. Islanders live in between dynamically connected by ocean, but have suffered or are suffering greatly from influences caused by colonialism and globalization. Get rid of biased stereotypes, Oceania positive contributions in terms of historical, cultural, linguistic legacies and ecologic diversity as well as significant roles of interconnection among Pacific Ocean should not be overlooked. As Epeli Hawofa indicates in his work “Kisses in the Nederends”, in spite of Pacific islands only serving as a small portion of the whole world and categorized inferior to other so-called superior nations, they are as indispensable as every existed nation and should be emphasized. After all, Pacific islands are “Our Sea of Islands”.