

# LINES ACROSS THE SEA

## *COLONIAL INHERITANCE IN THE POST COLONIAL PACIFIC*



EDITED BY

BRIJ V LAL

AND

HANK NELSON

*Published by the Pacific History Association - Brisbane 1995*

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**Cover Photograph: "The Resident Magistrate holds court over an unruly Labourer".  
by T.J. McMahon in Papua, 1915.**

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## PREFACE

### What is to be done, and who is to do it?

*Donald Denoon*

These papers entrench and extend the tradition of pre-Christmas Canberra gatherings, attracting practitioners in several disciplines, addressing a topical theme by means of historical analyses. This conference was typical in the high calibre of discussion. It was characteristic also in a less happy sense: Pacific Island history continues to be written mainly by non-indigenous scholars based outside the islands.<sup>1</sup> To be sure, native Hawaiian and Maori scholars are trenchant in their academic and political statements; and Fijian and Papua New Guinean academics exercise increasing authority in the intellectual life of their own countries. Many, such as Madiu Andrew and James Gissua in this collection, and Nahau Rooney who also attended, are drawn into political and administrative domains; and a few who persevere in academia project their ideas onto the larger, regional canvas. Pacific Island History, as a broad, regional sub-discipline, seems more congenial to expatriate than to indigenous scholarship. The only general accounts of the region - by Oskar Spate, Kerry Howe, Ian Campbell and Deryck Scarr - have been constructed by metropolitan scholars; and the ethno-history tradition - from Marshall Sahlins to Greg Dening, Klaus Neumann, Nicholas Thomas and Gananath Obeyesekere - attracts scholars from the same circumstances.

Whether the explanation lies in personal preference, the intellectual climates and heavy teaching loads of regional universities, limited opportunities for travel, or the sheer cost of research, the outcome is the same. This imbalance poses the question how best to harmonise the regional perspectives of much expatriate research, with the mainly national focus of most indigenous discourse. The assessment of the colonial inheritance might seem an unlikely place to seek that harmony. At independence and immediately thereafter, no such discussion could have taken place: but the passage of time has made the debate not only possible but necessary. Not only do many governments lurch from crisis to crisis, but 'the state' itself is contested in many parts of the region. In the extreme case of the new

Micronesian states, carved out of the former American Trust Territory, the limits of sovereignty are so clear and substantial that international recognition is at issue. Elsewhere, differing degrees of 'free association' with former colonial powers raise similar questions in a minor key. The financial crises of Papua New Guinea, so well delineated by Desh Gupta, are mirrored on a smaller scale elsewhere. Development strategies are by no means agreed, whether in agriculture or in manufacturing; and Hanlon's portrayal of economic development as a political ideology rather than an economic enterprise could be applied usefully to many new nations beyond Micronesia.

A conference designed to illuminate the impacts of colonialism on Pacific Islanders also threw much light on the influence of Islanders on colonialism. This represents a curious inversion. A generation ago, scholars commonly analysed colonial structures, often under the rubric of comparative colonial administrative studies. In reaction to that emphasis, a dominant theme of recent historical and anthropological writing about Pacific Islands is the revelation and re-evaluation of indigenous agency in the creation and elaboration of colonial power-structures. That enthusiasm expressed the sense of liberal scholars that decolonisation was desirable and inevitable, and the link between historical agency and the recovery of sovereignty was often explicit.

An occasional and unfortunate consequence of the search for indigenous agency was the assertion of a homogeneous Islander agenda, minimising the diversity of interests spawned by gender, ethnicity and social condition.<sup>2</sup> As these errors are corrected in turn, and increasing social complexity swims into focus, colonialism itself receded into the background as an uninteresting given. A re-evaluation of colonial authority is clearly overdue, as an element of unravelling the crises which beset national government structures from New Guinea to Samoa, and the challenges to the legitimacy of the state itself from Hawaii to New Zealand. The conference, and the papers which it generated, show that it is possible to present



nuanced accounts of both social and governmental dimensions, privileging neither, and exploring the dynamic interactions between them.

Robert Parker's evaluation of the Australian administrative record in Papua New Guinea is both a reminder of older scholarship, and a prefiguring of the re-emergence of 'governance' as an essential dimension of post-colonial research. In that tradition, Larmour demonstrates the enduring value of comparative studies of policy development and application. In stark contrast is Andrew Peacock's memory of the transitional years in Papua New Guinea as an era of exceptional hazards, narrowly (and perhaps luckily) avoided. Parker and Larmour perceive colonial (and by implication post-colonial) governance as a deeply flawed enterprise whose ultimate purpose, however, is to steer human affairs into orderly channels, and to achieve a rational distribution of resources. Politicians and administrators may share that aspiration, but are necessarily more alert to the misadventures which at every turn threaten to derail the project.

The colonial inheritance bedevils policy-formation in every state and in virtually every dimension of life. Maddocks elegantly describes the unforeseen consequences of the application of 'appropriate technology' and techniques in the education of medical students; and parallel arguments have been developed elsewhere, for the counter-productive effect of 'appropriate education' in late-colonial school systems. When political independence coincided with an undeveloped economy, curious alliances developed. Trade unions (as in Papua New Guinea, analysed by Andrew and by Gissua) performed not only the conventional role of representing workers in industrial negotiations, but were also the sites of the accumulation of capital, and took upon themselves the role of modernising sectors of the economy long neglected in the colonial dispensation. The already-vexed and confused politics of Fiji (described by Lal) are compounded by the adoption of the common development option of textile production by means of a low-paid and mainly female labour force (analysed by Leckie). In the longer term, these roles created peculiar dilemmas for union leaders, without precedent in better developed economies.

These papers variously analyse governance by elucidating the interaction of post-colonial structures of government, lop-sided economic conditions, and powerful ethnic and 'wantok' interests. The research agenda of

governance runs far beyond the specific topics addressed here. In the eastern Pacific, the ascribed authority of chiefly families is under siege - precisely as inherited authority is sought in the western islands, as an alternative to the perceived venality of elected politicians. Especially in Melanesia, no agreement has been reached on the optimum division of powers and resources between the centre and autonomous provinces (considered in the context of the Solomon Islands by Frazer). The politics of natural resource exploitation would be a matter of urgent concern even if the Australian Government had not insisted on highlighting these questions at the 1994 South Pacific Forum meeting. Indeed it is politics rather than economic or environmental issues which introduces such uncertainty to the management of (for example) forest resources throughout the eastern Pacific and oil, copper and gold mining in the same region. In Bougainville, Ok Tedi, Misima and the Western and Southern Highlands, it is the interaction of local and provincial and national sources of authority, rather than geological or engineering issues, which will determine whether massive ore deposits are mined at all. It may be no accident that regional resource-management has been most successful in respect of fisheries - an arena controlled exclusively by national governments.

Paradoxically, the colonial inheritance gains significance as the colonial era recedes into the past. This collection not only summarises current issues and recent research: it is equally a foretaste of the work to be done to understand today's state structures in their historical and political contexts.

## References

1. See the discussion by Doug Munro, 'Who "Owns" Pacific History?: Reflections on the Insider/Outsider Dichotomy', *Journal of Pacific History*, XXIX, 2 (1994), 232-7.
2. These tendencies are well analysed by Nicholas Thomas, 'Partial Texts: Representation, Colonialism and Agency in Pacific History', *Journal of Pacific History*, XXV:2 (1990), 139-58.

# INTRODUCTION

*Brij V Lal*

In December, 1993, the Division of Pacific and Asian History in the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies of the Australian National University hosted an international conference on 'Colonial Inheritance: The Pacific Islands Experience.' It followed two previous such gatherings, one looking at the French presence in the Pacific Islands and the other at developments in Pacific Islands historiography.<sup>1</sup> Our agenda in 1993 was simple. Colonialism had left its indelible influence on the economies, politics and social policies, on arts, styles, values and leisure, on institutions and structures, and on self-perceptions, on identities of communities and new nations of the region. Our intention was to assess the material and non-material assets and debts, to invite comparisons, and to ask for an evaluation of colonial records and legacies in the light of subsequent events. We proposed to carry out such an evaluation around a number of key processes, institutions and issues, including the structure and function of the state and parliamentary politics in the post-colonial Pacific, education, media, literature, and economic and political developments from a variety of disciplinary perspectives.

To that end, we invited a number of scholars and participants in the events to make a detailed evaluation of colonialism's legacy in the Pacific Islands. We chose the participants on the basis of their experience with and involvement in the issues on our agenda. Surveys and references to explanatory theories in other places and among other peoples, we felt, were often irrelevant and another imposition of exotic, inappropriate cultural artefacts on a region and people already laden with foreign baggage. This volume contains a revised selection of papers presented at the conference. We are thankful to the various authors for their willingness to participate. And we express regret to other participants whose papers could not be included here for reasons of cost and other contingencies.

As I listened to the papers and to the discussions that followed, I thought back to two other conferences I had attended. The first was a conference on social issues in national development planning held at the University of the South Pacific in Suva in 1975, and attended by many distinguished Pacific island political leaders, intellectuals and community workers. The date is important. The mid-1970s was the high noon of

immediate post and pre-independence euphoria in the region. By then, several islands had gained their independence: Western Samoa (1962), the Cook Islands (1965), Nauru (1968), Fiji and Tonga (1970), Niue (1974), and Papua New Guinea (1975). The Solomon Islands followed in 1978, Kiribati in 1979 and Vanuatu in 1980.

Optimism tinged with innocence pervaded the conference. Planned development was the way forward, everyone gathered agreed. Broad community participation in national decision making was important, and non-material values had to be given their due place in the planning process. Leaders and would-be leaders talked idealistically about the goals of development. These included local control of the economy, economic self-reliance, equitable distribution of economic benefits and services among the people, decentralisation of economic activity, change with respect for custom, emphasis on rural development and greater participation by women in all forms of social and economic activity. In short, people-directed development in the 'Pacific Way.' That was the catch-phrase of the 1970s, embodying a mix of consensus, compromise, dialogue, togetherness and a sense of shared destiny. These values are reflected in all the development plans of the island countries around this time.

In 1986, I attended the 17th Waigani Seminar in on 'The Ethics of Development' in Port Moresby. The very topic of the conference suggested that something had gone wrong. Many papers confirmed this view. Development of sorts had, of course, taken place but in ways that seemed to mock the goals articulated in the development plans. Father John Momis of the Melanesian Alliance captured the pervasive mood of pessimism. The 'ethical rules we set for ourselves at independence have been largely ignored,' he told the gathering. 'We have a country incredibly rich in resources, with a manageable population, yet listening to our people and observing trends, it is clear that things are not going right. We are developing a very disadvantaged class of urban squatters and a large group of poor unemployed. We have great divisions between the minority who are very rich and the rest of the population.'<sup>2</sup> Momis's views were echoed by many others. Ron Crocombe, a noted scholar of Pacific affairs, said: 'Nepotism, the favouring of relatives, subordinates and associates of the powerful, traditionally an

acceptable principle, has become a major problem in the central Pacific aristocracies today, where it reduces the confidence and motivation of the ordinary people.’<sup>3</sup>

Clearly, the Pacific islands of the late 1980s and the 1990s are a very different place to what they were in the mid-1970s. Politically-motivated assassinations, military coups, secessionist movements, urban violence, mismanagement of natural resources, creeping corruption in public life: these are a part, though not, of course, the only part, of the contemporary reality of Pacific island life that would have been unimaginable in the 1970s. Scholars from various disciplines have explored the causes and consequences of these problems from a variety of perspectives. This collection of papers attempts to examine one dimension: the contribution of colonial inheritance to some of the problems besetting the post-colonial Pacific. That inheritance differed from place to place and from time to time. As a result, no clear pattern emerges, but there is broad agreement that the legacy bequeathed by colonialism is a factor that cannot be ignored in any understanding of the problems and dilemmas facing the islands today.

The volume opens with papers on Papua New Guinea. Andrew Peacock, who was the Minister for External Territories shortly before PNG gained her independence, and who played a key role in the negotiations leading to it, describes his feelings and experiences. As a record of one who was present at a critical moment in Papua New Guinea’s history, Peacock’s paper is an important document. Robert Parker, who has had a long professional association with PNG politics, discusses the administrative legacy bequeathed by Australia. He provides a critical appraisal of the Hasluck era, particularly the attempts to impose an Australian law and order system which he says was largely irrelevant to the needs of ordinary villages. The result was a ‘steady decline during the decade [1960s] in indigenous respect for and resort to Australian legal institutions, and ... a resurgence of illicit traditional dispute-setting practices including resort to violence, along with a decline in the general security of persons and property.’ In the last years of colonial rule, when Papua New Guineans were taking control, the Village Courts Act was passed in 1973, with the first village courts introduced in 1975. But by then, Parker suggests, much harm had already been done, and post-independence Papua New Guineans have had to bear the burden of Hasluck’s policies.

Hank Nelson takes a broader look at Australian legacy in Papua New Guinea. He

explores the complexity of governing a colony that few Australians knew or cared about. He is critical of Australia’s record. ‘By any quantitative measure, Australia left Papua New Guinea poor, sick, ill-educated and with little effective infrastructure of government,’ he says; but, then, he asks, which colonial power did any better? In fact, since evaluation is inherently a comparative exercise, Australia’s record stands up rather well when placed against that of France, for example, or Indonesia, or the United States. Nelson’s point about colonialism’s penchant for drawing neat arbitrary lines for administrative self-interest regardless of the cultural realities on the ground, goes to the core of the Bougainville crisis: two culturally and ethnically different groups forced into an arranged marriage of convenience by two careless parents with little forethought about the consequences of their decision. In some places, such as Kiribati and Tuvalu, such marriages were terminated amicably at independence, but elsewhere, the (sometimes) uneasy union or division continues. The lines, once drawn, cannot be redrawn easily.

Colonial intervention not only drew arbitrary lines between islands and regions; it also altered the balance of power within them. Regions and groups favoured by the colonial rulers advanced, often at the expense of those that resisted colonial intrusion. In Fiji, for instance, the more Polynesian-influenced eastern maritime provinces, rose to a position of hegemony in Fijian affairs under colonial tutelage. Similarly, their paramount chiefs became the arbiters of Fijian custom and tradition throughout Fiji, including the less hierarchically demarcated Melanesian areas. In time, and backed by the force of law, this arrangement became the new orthodoxy; and those who challenged this order did so at their cost. An important part of the political struggle in post-coup Fiji is the attempt to redefine the balance of power in Fijian society. This effort is most prominently manifested in the demands by western Fijians for the recognition of the fourth confederacy, the Yasa VakaRa, which, they hope, will accord them power commensurate with their number and contribution to the national economy. Not surprisingly, their demand runs into stiff opposition from the Fijian establishment. But how long this colonially-created imbalance can be maintained is an urgent issue in Fijian politics.

Colonial and post-colonial politics in Fiji is the subject of my chapter. I examine the political culture Fiji inherited from its colonial past and how that continues to inform the present political debate in the country. Race and racial

compartmentalisation formed the cornerstone of the colonial polity. With few modifications, that pattern has continued in post-colonial Fiji. When the pillars of the racially-based system were threatened by the victory of the Coalition, a military coup restored the status quo. Fijian (chiefly) political paramountcy is entrenched in the post-coup constitution decreed in June 1990, but that constitution has not provided the framework to solve some of the fundamental problems facing the Fijian people and the nation at large. I argue that a workable and broadly acceptable constitution will need to be based on new thinking that moves away from an emphasis on race as the principle of political organisation to one that is more inclusive and broadly participatory.

Nancy Pollock examines the sorry legacy of colonial rule in Nauru, and describes a history of depopulation and devastation through the mining of phosphate. Australia, Pollock argues, failed to meet the condition of its mandate by allowing the interests of the phosphateers to take 'precedence over financial and political interests of the Nauruans.' In 1992, following a ruling of the International Court of Justice in the Hague, Australia agreed to pay over one hundred million dollars as compensation for mining damage during its administration, but the social and psychological costs of marginalisation cannot be measured in monetary terms.

Unlike Nauru, Tonga was never formally colonised but was a British protectorate. Tonga is a monarchy, and so it is not surprising that state power is concentrated in the hands of a few hand-picked nobility who are answerable to the king. But the social and economic foundations of Tongan society have been changing since 1970. More and more Tongans migrate to Australia and New Zealand and other countries for short-term employment. Others leave permanently but contribute through regular remittances. Western-style university education and exposure to ideas of democracy, individual freedom, political accountability of leaders, free speech and the like have wrought important changes in Tongan society. Sione Latukefu examines the historical origins of some of these developments.

Micronesia, colonised successively by Spain, Germany, Japan and the United States, has a cumulative, multi-layered legacy. When the trusteeship arrangement which gave the United States the administrative jurisdiction over the islands came to an end in the mid-1980s, the various island entities, now firmly in a dependent relationship, entered into compacts of free association with the United States. Just how free

or voluntary is this arrangement is the subject of much dispute. The argument that with the inauguration of the compacts, which formally terminated the trusteeship, the Micronesian islands became independent is strongly contested by Glenn Petersen. He takes us on a tour of the tortuous negotiations which produced the compacts and asserts that the independence claim is spurious. In fact, he argues, the United States 'never intended to grant, has not in fact granted, and does not in fact intend to grant' independence to Micronesia. David Hanlon is in broad agreement with this view. 'I work from the assumption that the decades-old program of economic development has existed as a part of a larger colonial agenda designed to make or re-make the islands in ways that reflected, served and affirmed the national ideology of the United States.' For him, the whole project was a 'somewhat disguised but nonetheless insidious effort to better possess Micronesians by remaking them in an image and likeness that was distinctively reflective of and submissive to the dominant values and interests of American society.' American possession of Micronesia will endure.

In the Melanesian states -- Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands -- a conscious effort was made at the time of independence to shift power from the centre to the provinces and regions. This was done partly to acknowledge the social and cultural diversity that is Melanesia. Decentralisation, the leaders believed, would address local concerns and needs, encourage local participation in the process of administration, mobilise support for development plans, and generally spread the ideals of democracy. But the reality turned out to be different. As Ian Frazer says for the Solomon Islands, 'provincial capitals have become mini versions of the larger nations, replicating on a smaller scale the same kind of inequality and uneven development that is found nationally. Provincial government might have brought some modification to the highly centralised government system that existed under colonialism but it has not escaped the same problems of centralisation and elitism at the provincial level.'

Frazer's assessment is echoed in other studies of local government and decentralisation in the Pacific. In Tonga, for example, the 'local government is a means by which the central government may inform, consult or placate local communities without conceding them any power - particularly the power to disagree.'<sup>4</sup> And in Papua New Guinea, too, the prospects for genuine power sharing between the centre and the provinces do not look bright. The problems of bureaucratic inertia, inefficiency, corruption and lack of resources aside,

the major obstacle seems to be that some of the new leaders have inherited the mentality of their former colonial masters.

This is evident in other fields such as public health. In a sensitive survey, Ian Maddocks looks at the development of medical training in Papua New Guinea. He was there at the beginning and centrally involved in the profession of medicine. He and others who worked with him had a vision of health care for the country 'in which many rurally-based graduates concentrated on disease prevention and health promotion, supervised effective measures of disease control and provided frugal but effective curative care for common diseases' through a 'planned and a centrally-controlled health system.' But Maddocks realises now that his vision was influenced by his Australian experience and, in the Papua New Guinea context, an alien system of ethics. The cultural background of the students, their own aspirations and understandings of what was involved in being a medical doctor were not given their due weight. 'We promoted rural practice, but of course we did not demonstrate it.' It is an honest assessment. Is this legacy to some extent a part of the problem afflicting public health services in Papua New Guinea today, along with lack of resources and poor infrastructure? Whatever the reasons, it is clear that attempts to decentralise health services in that country have failed. As one recent survey says 'Decentralisation appears to have made little difference to trends in maternal and child health service performance indicators. Such changes as can be attributed to decentralisation have, in fact, indicated a negative effect.'<sup>5</sup> Papua New Guinea, however, is not the only island state to experience this predicament.

Nor is it an exception in the fields of agriculture and economic development, explored here by Scott MacWilliam and Desh Gupta. MacWilliam contests the view that attributes PNG's agricultural problems solely to colonial neglect. He identifies other sources of strains in the scheme of smallholder farming, including the collapse of international arrangements, the drive by governments to reduce expenditures, and the growing economic and political influence of the indigenous capitalist class. Gupta focuses more specifically on the performance of the post-independence PNG economy, and identifies factors which constrain socio-economic developments. These include not only the ongoing crisis in the mining industry, but also the pattern of government expenditure which has failed to provide a stimulus to the economy.

Robbie Robertson provides a detailed account of Fiji's post-coup, Tax Free Zone experiment in which the state did participate actively. The Tax Free Factories, particularly in the garment industry, 'became a show piece of postcoup Fiji's economic planning,' he writes, but the experiment also created enormous social and economic problems for workers who 'confront new government-sanctioned forms of exploitation: extended working hours without additional or overtime pay, body searches, reduced lunch breaks, payment in kind, and illegal night work.' For all the visible signs of growth, Robertson argues, Fiji 'has yet to deviate from the well worn neocolonial path.'

Land and patterns of landownership lie at the core of many social and political issues in Pacific island societies. They exercised the minds of political leaders at the time of independence. Some islanders wanted to eliminate all colonially-derived land titles in favour of pre-colonial arrangements, while others wanted to restrict foreign ownership of indigenous land. Peter Larmour examines the approach of four Melanesian states to these issues, and asks why changes in land policy at the time of independence were followed by legislative inactivity afterwards. Among the reasons are the emergence of other pressing concerns such as mining and forestry, the global retrenchment of state intervention in the public arena, and the absence of political will to confront controversial initiatives. While land will remain a sensitive issues throughout the Pacific, it is likely to become one of the most contentious issues in Fiji for the remaining years of this century, as the government grapples with the problems caused by the expiry of the Agricultural Landlord and Tenants Act that regulates lease arrangements between Indo-Fijian tenants and Fijian landlords.

Gissua, Andrew and Leckie explore aspects of the trade union movement and industrial relations in Papua New Guinea and Fiji. They discuss the colonial inheritance of industrial relations and the struggle of unionised labour. They agree that the colonial legacy has had an important influence in shaping the structure of post-colonial industrial relations, and they point to the difficulties that lie ahead for the union movement: divisions in their ranks, poor leadership and inadequate mechanisms for resolving industrial disputes. Nowhere in the islands have the trade unions become as prominent as in Fiji. Radicalised by the anti-union policies and practices of the Alliance government, the Fiji Trade Union Congress backed the Fiji Labour Party in 1985 which, in coalition with the National Federation

Party, won the general election only to be deposed in a military coup in May 1987, after being in office for just a month. Since then the unions have had to face the wrath of the post-coup government determined to curtail their power, indeed to reduce them to political impotence. The future looks grim. The state's encouragement of racially-based unions (such as the Viti Civil Service Association), coercive legislation, the emphasis on deregulation and privatisation, the pressure to rationalise expenditure from international financial institutions, all work to undermine the development of a multiracial working class solidarity. In Fiji, it has been the intervention, or the threat of intervention, of such organisations as the International Council of Free Trade Unions, which has prevented the government from assuming an even more hostile, anti-trade union stance.

Paul Sharrad and Sina Va'ai look at the evolution of creative writing in the islands, which was virtually non-existent at the time of independence. The impetus for this came from two regional universities, the University of Papua New Guinea and the University of the South Pacific, both founded in the late 1960s. These two institutions have played a far greater role in the transformation of Pacific island society than has generally been realised. Apart from training people to meet the developmental needs of the various post-colonial governments, they also produced the first generation of creative writers in the islands, their work facilitated by committed individuals and institutions such as Albert Wendt and Marjorie Crocombe and the South Pacific Creative Arts Society in Suva and Ulli Beier in Port Moresby. Short stories, plays, poems, novella were published in periodicals such as *Mana* and *Kovave* and in small anthologies. The 1970s was the heyday of creative writing in the islands. Of course, much is still being done, as Va'ai's survey shows, but perhaps the scene has changed. To take the example of Fiji alone, writers such as Satendra Nandan, Sudesh Mishra, Som Prakash, Vilisoni Hereniko, Raymond Pillay have left the islands, while others have either faded from the scene (Pio Manoa) or entered other professions (Jo Nacola). Beier has returned to Europe and Wendt is working in New Zealand.

In the final contribution to this volume, Sean Dorney, the Australian Broadcasting Company's television correspondent in Port Moresby provides a personal account of the excitements and frustrations of working in Papua New Guinea. He highlights the ignorance about the country in Australia where, as Dorney says, sometimes even journalists do not know that East

Timor is not Bougainville. Such ignorance is not confined to Australians. Nonetheless, for all its problems, Dorney argues, the media is alive and well in Papua New Guinea. Newspapers have been published in the Pacific islands in various forms for more than one hundred and fifty years. The oldest surviving one is the *Fiji Times*, founded in 1869. Today, all the major island groups have newspapers. Television is a very recent introduction, and nearly everywhere government-controlled. What social and psychological changes this new medium will bring to the island populace it is too early to tell, but there can be little doubt that the telecommunications revolution is there to stay and will impinge on island life in unanticipated ways in years to come.

In recent years, there has emerged a growing body of literature on contemporary social, political and economic developments in the Pacific islands.<sup>6</sup> The latest and perhaps the most moving contribution comes from the Tongan novelist and anthropologist Epeli Hau'ofa, now teaching at the University of the South Pacific. He rejects the view that denies islanders agency in the modern world, consigning them to a permanent state of helplessness and hopelessness:

The idea that the countries of Polynesia and Micronesia are too small, too poor and too isolated to develop any meaningful degree of autonomy, is an economic and geographic deterministic view of a very narrow kind, that overlooks culture history, and the contemporary process of what may be called 'world enlargement' carried out by tens of thousands of ordinary Pacific islanders right across the ocean from east to west and north to south, under the very noses of academic and consultancy experts, regional and international development agencies, bureaucratic planners and their advisers, and customs and immigrations officials, making nonsense of all national and economic boundaries, borders that have been defined only recently, criss-crossing an ocean that had been boundless for ages before Captain Cook's apotheosis.' (6)

The Pacific, he says, is a sea of islands, and not just islands in the sea. The way forward is clear, Hau'ofa says:

Oceania is us, Oceania is expanding, Oceania is hospitable and generous, Oceania is humanity rising from the depths of brine and regions of fire deeper still, Oceania is us. We are the sea, we are the ocean, we must wake up to this ancient truth and together use it to overturn all hegemonic views that aim ultimately to confine us again, physically and psychologically, in the tiny spaces which we have resisted accepting as our sole appointed place, and from which we have recently liberated ourselves. We must not allow anyone to belittle us again, and take our freedom.

All the contributors to this volume will share Hau'ofa's anguish, even his outrage at the manner in which the islands have been consigned to the margins of history. They, too, would stand up for freedom and independence for the island peoples. But they will all also agree, I think, that the colonially-constructed lines across the sea will not be erased easily.

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# Ministerial Memoir: Papua New Guinea's Transition to Independence

*Andrew Peacock*

YOU MAY ASSUME that politicians like using the first personal pronoun; it might be my upbringing or some form of false modesty, but I generally don't. But I am required to do so today, having been asked to give the background, from a practical and political viewpoint, to the events leading up to the Independence of Papua New Guinea (PNG).

In fact I attended every Independence ceremony in the South Pacific between 1970 and 1980, with the single exception of Fiji's. But my concentrated focus, in particular over a ten month period in 1972, was on PNG. I was sworn in as External Territories Minister on 2 February 1972 and voted out of office, along with my Liberal-Country Party colleagues, on 2 December of that year.

I will begin by giving you a little background as to how I became External Territories Minister.

In 1971 I was labouring under a variety of pressures as a very young Minister for the Army, having been appointed at the age of 30. As you know, we were very heavily involved in Vietnam. I had already visited PNG once whilst a student at Melbourne University. The Army portfolio took me frequently to PNG because as Army Minister I was responsible for the Pacific Islands Regiment (PIR) as it then was, now the PNG Defence Force.

In March 1971 there was a change of Prime Minister in Australia and I went down with the ship supporting John Gorton. For some unaccountable reason known only to Doug Anthony, leader of the Country Party, Bill McMahon, the new Prime Minister, wanted to sack eight of Gorton's Ministers. Anthony understood that if those eight got frustrated and crossed the floor, the Government would fall, and so he stopped McMahon after he'd sacked only four or five. I don't know if I was on the list or not, but I remained.

However, I wasn't told by the new Prime Minister that I would remain a Minister, but by his Private Secretary. Between March 1971 when McMahon took up office and the third week of the Budget Session, whilst viewed by the public as a key and active Minister, I had not had one conversation with my new Prime Minister. One day in the first week in September, the telephone rang on my Ministerial desk and the Prime Ministerial light came on. I pressed the button and said 'Yes, Prime Minister'. McMahon said 'Who's

that?'. 'It's Andrew Peacock', I said. 'I don't want to talk to you', he said and hung up. A rather shattering experience for one who felt that he was on a steady upward incline toward the position that McMahon held.

And so matters continued until a cyclone hit Townsville in December 1971. The Prime Minister was planning to go for a holiday on the Gold Coast, but was persuaded that this would not look well in the midst of the devastation and that he should instead go and visit Townsville. As I was the Army Minister responsible for the important army barracks at Townsville, the Prime Minister reluctantly had to take me with him. We didn't talk much on the flight up. He was reading a book on swimming pool maintenance, so I talked to Sonia, his wife.

We dashed through Townsville - I think it took about 40 minutes. We then took off for Coolangatta airport. A cartoon the next day showed a devastated bar with a couple of blokes leaning on it and the caption was 'Geez, first a cyclone and now a lightning visit'. Anyhow, by the time we finished it was late in the day and Sonia suggested I stay the night in the same apartment as the McMahons, which I did. He had no say in this arrangement, being still immersed in swimming pool maintenance. But he did awaken me at five the next morning to go for a run on the beach - Bill was an extremely fit fellow. So we went for a run - I got exhausted, sat down, he kept running, came back, sat down next to me and said 'If you didn't have this Army portfolio, which one would you like?'. I said 'Territories - I love PNG.' He said, 'Why?'. And I said, 'Because I think it's an enormous challenge. I think we could do a lot. I think we're going too slowly up there.' He said, 'Well, we're spending a lot of money on it too, you know.' That was the end of the conversation.

Three weeks later he called me to say that Ceb Barnes<sup>1</sup> had decided to stand down and that I could have the Territories portfolio if I wanted it. These were the only two conversations I had with him during the ten months he had been Prime Minister.

I was sworn in on 2 February 1972. I spoke with Ceb Barnes for half an hour. He gave me his summary of the development of PNG, which was that Hasluck's task had been education and general development, his own had been and



industrial development and commerce, and that my job would be law and order. I blanched a bit at that. I then spent an hour with David Hay who had been Administrator and was then Secretary of the Department of External Territories. I then went to PNG, which in those days involved going via Sydney and Brisbane and only then up to Moresby. I arrived on the same day I had been sworn in and immediately held a 40 minute press conference!

At this point, I would like to say that there is now a fetish about media management by political parties and politicians in Australia. For example, there is no way now that a 32 year old, just sworn in as Minister, would fly out of the country and immediately sit down and give a 40 minute press conference. It just wouldn't happen. Nowadays, these things have to be managed! There would be some weeks of reading in and analysis of what policy aspects to emphasise. Politicians criticise the media, but in my view the media has every justification for anger at this sort of thing. And when late yesterday I got out a very lengthy transcript of that first press conference, I was staggered at the brashness of a 32 year old flying to PNG the day he was sworn in as Minister and saying what he wanted to do. I had not got Cabinet endorsement for my position but the press were fairly lenient with me because I was meeting with them straight away. This loss of frankness in Ministers' dealings with the media is an interesting change in our political culture.

To return to the situation in PNG, my predecessor, Ceb Barnes, emphasised that I was going to have to address law and order issues. I didn't find this surprising because there were already stirrings for self-government. There were the demonstrations led by Michael Somare of the Pangu Party, there was extensive cargo cult activity, a breakdown in law and order was commencing, particularly in the Highland payback attacks were rising.

For the first time, a District Commissioner (a Mr Jack Emmanuel), had been murdered on the Gazelle Peninsula. The Mataungan Association had been formed, Oscar Tammur and John Kaputin were agitating over land tenure and the like. There were the stirrings of secession on Bougainville. It seemed to many a tenuous situation.

I was approaching this situation from a fairly simple perspective based, in part, on advice I received the day I was sworn in as External Territories Minister from my predecessor in the seat of Kooyong, the late Sir Robert Menzies, who had long taken an interest in my career. He telephoned me - he wasn't well, he'd had a stroke -

and wished me well and asked me what I thought of my new position. I said 'I think we've got to quicken the pace to self-government'. He said 'It's probably better to go sooner than later'. And I totally agreed with him.

So I made my first Ministerial visit with my predecessor's comments on law and order in my mind. It was my firm view that given this deterioration in the security situation, if the Government sought to restrain the movement towards self-government and independence, it would bring about a backlash of perhaps even horrific proportions - even in a relatively small country such as PNG.

And I had sought no guidance from Cabinet; that reality started to dawn when I was in the plane on the way to Port Moresby. But I quickly formed the view that I really had to try and work myself out of the job. I had to increase the pace towards independence and get to a point where, hopefully, someone on the PNG side would say, 'I think you've got to slow down'.

In fact, by August 1972 Michael Somare did ask me to slow down. He said that the pro-self-government groups weren't able to cope with the pace. It was sound advice from him, as we needed to get as smooth and orderly a transition as possible. But I felt I had to achieve a particular momentum to put behind us criticisms of the Government's past performance.

Leaving aside my own role in 1972, let me expand on these criticisms. I actually concluded my term as Minister for External Territories feeling that whilst the pace of change had not been fast enough, Australia had not, overall, been a bad colonial power. In the 60s, I had felt that despite the bricks and mortar that the British left, the French were, interestingly enough, better colonialists. I changed my mind in the 70s when as Foreign Minister I had to handle certain other issues in the Pacific. But in the 60s I held the view that the French were classically non-racist. And I felt that British rule placed all sorts of other impediments in the way of territories emerging into independence - even though their institutional framework was better. The French cultural element was better.

I didn't have much guidance on what awaited me in PNG. I knew that I had a first class Administrator in Les Johnson; Gough Whitlam paid credit to him in the Parliament when he retired. Whitlam referred to him as 'the final and the finest Administrator', and he was. He'd also been Director of Education and was just the right man for the job. In fact, using the first personal

pronoun, I think, as it fell into place in 1972, we were all the right people at that time.

Les wanted to move the pace. David Hay had been more conservative as Administrator, but then he had been enormously constrained by Canberra. The Department of External Territories gave the Administrator very little leeway whatsoever; Administrators had to report back to Canberra all the time for advice. David, therefore, understanding this situation, wanted as Secretary of the Department to free things up. I also had a Department which everyone in Canberra viewed as the dregs of the civil service. I found that to be totally untrue. I found, over time, that I had a Department that would really move to the pace and, in the way that the Pentagon Papers revealed that the United States bureaucracy had done extensive contingency planning, it had quietly been doing far more work on a more rapid transition to self-government and the devolution of power than had been evident in public statements.

There were some flaws in the Department's advice to me through the period of 1972 and some flaws in the Administration's advice to me. I made mistakes. But I found myself, once we increased the pace, to be extremely well served by both the Department and the Administration.

I made something like 21 trips to PNG in 1972. But as I said, I was already convinced when I first arrived that we had to move sooner rather than later, although I was constrained in the first two months because we had to await the House of Assembly elections. This election was fought on the issue of whether or not there should be internal self-government.

The largest party, the United Party, was opposed to self-government. I got sick of going around PNG to be met at airstrips by a man in a grass skirt with a bone through his nose, *bilas*<sup>2</sup> in his hair, carrying a bloody pig and a *bilum*<sup>3</sup> and someone standing beside saying 'this man is the physical embodiment of the reason why you can't have self-government'. It was quite clear that it was a setup; it happened too often. This was part of the United Party's orchestrated campaign opposing early self-government.

The elections were held in late February and early March. The House of Assembly was to convene on 20 April and the first vote there would determine who had the numbers. To form the Government would require 50 votes. The results of the election gave the United Party 46 or 47 seats. The Pangu Party under Michael Somare had 26 or 27. The Peoples Progress Party under Julius Chan had 10 seats.

The first piece of rare flawed advice I got from my advisers in Canberra was that it was obvious that the United Party would govern with a small coalition of independents. There were a number of independents, particularly from the Highlands, who did not want early self-government. My Department also advised me to find a way to distance myself from my earlier public statements in favour of self-government. I had already been criticised for making these while the election was being fought. It was difficult, but I had to express a view.

I had with me as my Press Secretary an outstanding young man named Michael Darling. He was fluent in Pidgin, he had frequently visited PNG as a student and he had served as a conscripted platoon commander in the PIR at Wewak. After leaving the Army he had hiked right through PNG, taking canoe trips to the islands. And he had met and knew probably half the activists in the Pangu Party. He had been my Press Secretary as Army Minister and he stayed with me for my first six months as Territories Minister.

Michael Darling kept saying to me 'Somare is extremely confident of being able to form a Government, so for God's sake don't listen to this advice from Canberra. Pangu is emphatic they can form a Government.' So I talked to Michael Somare and he was in fact emphatic that he could form a Government. I then had a very worthwhile conversation with Julius Chan who said to me 'Look, philosophically I'm with the United Party, but they will not do for PNG what Pangu will do for PNG. So my inclinations are now to support Pangu, but I want to wait and see what happens.' Obviously there was a personal element involved there and understandably so.

The night before the House of Assembly convened on 20 April, Michael Darling brought me a count which showed that Pangu, with all their efforts to form a coalition still only had 46 members, and therefore were theoretically one short of the United Party. At the very time I was reading this, Les Johnson brought me a statement of Michael Somare's announcing that he did in fact have the numbers, that he had more than 50 votes, and that the Peoples Progress Party had better decide whether they were going to join Pangu in Government or not. Somare's statement went on to say that if the Peoples Progress Party didn't decide in the next half hour, he was going to announce his prospective Ministry and they wouldn't be part of it. Twenty minutes later Chan announced that he would join a coalition with the Pangu Party and

when they went in to vote the next day, the coalition had 53 or 54 votes. In fact Somare, consummate politician that he was, announced that he had the numbers when he didn't - it was a bluff and it worked.

I dwell on this because whoever formed the Government at that time really determined the future of PNG. In my view, had the United Party been the Government and sought to constrain the movement to self-government, we would have had a vastly different situation. For example, I would not have been able to win any support for a faster pace in Canberra. Australian policy would have been one of restraint and the reaction would have been demonstrations and bloodshed. So PNG now had a Government comprising a national coalition that in the case of Pangu wanted immediate self-government, but in the case of the People's Progress Party was more interested in the form of the Government that was put together. Michael Somare saw me the next day and said 'I want early, not immediate, but early self-government but at present I'm more interested in the shape of self-government'. I responded by proposing that we hold constitutional talks in June 1972. Interestingly enough he suggested July - a month later. And ultimately we decided to hold constitutional talks, the first of a series of historic talks to transfer power, on 27 and 28 July 1972.

To illustrate developments from the perspective of the Australian Government, I want to tell you of some of the difficulties I had. I happen to think my Department of External Territories did a very good job, but it sometimes displayed a tendency towards 'steady as she goes' and 'keep things moving slowly'. I still retain the first briefing note I got from the Department because it worried me as much as did Ceb Barnes' comments on law and order. The note said that:

The outlook for PNG is at best uncertain for the following reasons:

1. There are few accepted leaders prepared to accept the responsibility of exercising power nationally.
2. Modern ways in relation to local government, paying tax, the law, disposal of land, etc. have not yet generally taken root. Their continuance still depends on the administration. There are simply no indigenous equivalents on which to fall back.
3. The administrative framework of government still depends on expatriates.

And I can go on.

4. The economy still heavily depends on expatriates. The economy is heavily dependent on increasing annual Australian grants, etc.

The message was clearly that PNG was just not ready for self-government; you cannot move so quickly.

This document was given to me on 2 February 1972. By the end of February, I had made three trips to PNG and I concluded I wasn't going to accept that sort of advice. And as I told you, I was still awaiting the outcome of the House of Assembly election. In this mood, I made an address to the University of Papua New Guinea which radicals like Hank Nelson were boycotting because they thought I was just another Tory trying to frustrate the inevitable left of centre victory! And with this Departmental advice still ingrained in my mind, I said in that speech:

In the past, and in other countries, there have been people who have argued that because there are not experts in all fields then a country should not move to self-government. This is not the view of the Australian Government.

Remember that at this stage I didn't even have Cabinet endorsement for my position!

The Government believes it should help PNG move towards self-government. It should not just sit back and wait for it to happen.

That caused quite a stir and as a consequence I was required to lodge a Cabinet submission. Interestingly enough all my Liberal colleagues supported me in Cabinet. I had some opposition from the Country Party as it had close ties with the United Party.

Their more conservative outlook was understandable, but even so I was given a fair degree of encouragement. So much so that within a few weeks and still before the House of Assembly had met, I was saying in Brisbane on 8 April:

We believe the best way for

people in Government to learn the skills of Government is to actually practice them. The Australian Government believes it should help PNG towards self-government. We should be remiss if we sat back and just waited for it to happen. This is quite a different matter from imposing self-government regardless of the wishes of the people.

What I have been saying should not be taken as indicating that we are imposing a Westminster system of Government on PNG.

It is the policy of the Australian Government that the choice of the system of government to be ultimately adopted in PNG is one for the people of that country.

You will note that by now I was calling PNG a country - a significant change of terminology. Prior to that we had always referred to the 'territory' - it was all part of the symbolism as well as the reality of colonial rule. I continued:

There never has been an intention to bind PNG to an Australian Constitution or an Australian pattern of administration. There is ample room for innovation and experiment. I would anticipate that talks will be held at a Ministerial level later this year between the Commonwealth and PNG leaders on the question of handing over further powers and moving further towards self-government. I would not be surprised if a timetable including a target date for self-government was one of the topics of these talks and I would welcome this.

I'm rather proud that I was saying this as early as April 1972, today I probably wouldn't have done it, but in my early thirties I did. It was before the results of the House of Assembly election were known. I was spelling out that we had no objections to a timetable, but that we would not impose one ourselves. I went on:

The preparations I want to make will be with the aim of putting PNG in the strongest position to handle its own affairs by the time of self-government. This is an aim that is uppermost in my mind and one that will figure predominantly at the talks to be held later this year. A country that handles its own affairs is self-governing in fact and not just in legal form. PNG must gain the realities of self-government and not just the facade. The realities of government mean that Papuans and New Guineans must see their way clear to run their own affairs without having to rely for expertise and skills on outside sources. There are real difficulties in that there is a lack of depth in the civil service at this juncture. But that simple fact does not provide any reason to stall the movement towards self-government.

I was criticised for that speech because a new Government hadn't been formed in the House of Assembly. But it was crucial in my mind to establish, particularly amongst Papuans and New Guineans, that there was an absolute preparedness on Australia's part to move quickly to self-government provided the elected House of Assembly so wanted it. And I think that this created an atmosphere in which, when Michael Somare put his coalition together, they could begin to move immediately towards self-government.

So within a matter of eight weeks, we had totally reversed the perception of 'no self-government for many years, no independence for some generations'. That was risky but it was the only way to go. I got a lot of support from Ministers in my own Party - senior though they were to me. I had no Liberal dissent and whilst the Country Party were slower on this, in fairness to them, because of their contact with the United Party, I can understand them being wary.

I made other speeches, again as early as April 1972, talking about the post-independence challenge in PNG. Speeches calling on Australians to adjust to the likelihood that PNG would soon be independent and that we would have to establish post-independence relations on a sound footing. I said that we would be remiss if we found ourselves

celebrating the independence of PNG without adequate preparation for the post-independence period, particularly post-independence relations between the two countries. I repeat, all this had happened in a matter of months and I'm rather pleased that the record stands up so well.

Now this is very much first personal pronoun stuff. But I began this talk prepared to eschew false modesty. The longer you are in politics the more you recognise you do not really make much difference to your own country - but I might have made one in PNG. And bearing in mind Julius Chan's criticism the other day of a current lack of Australian respect for PNG's sovereignty, I recall that at the beginning of June 1972 I said:

While Australia will remain important to PNG, we should not seek to build an exclusive relationship based on the mistaken belief that past assistance places PNG under an obligation to us. Looked at from PNG's point of view, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines and Japan as well as the island nations of the Pacific will have important places in the eyes of PNG governments. I cannot anticipate that there will be no divergences of interest after independence and that PNG will not grow away from Australia. It may turn to other models of government, administrative organisation, and even economic organisation. Independence, however, should mean exactly what it says.

I believe this stands up fairly well.

I want to emphasise that all of the travelling I did to PNG and all of the discussions I held there just reinforced in my own mind the view that though Australia had been slow at moving towards acceptance of independence, we were now on the right track. The worry was always that when we did transfer power, there would be a lack of depth in the PNG civil service. It seemed to me we couldn't correct that overnight. We had established training colleges and these were doing a sound job, but there were still insufficient trained people.

To give you a flavour of the sort of pressure our efforts to accelerate the move to independence came under from more conservative elements, I will describe the constitutional talks on 27 July 1972 .

On 27 and 28 July, Michael Somare and I sat down to discuss the transfer of extensive legislative and administrative power to PNG. We had an enormous range of powers and programs to hand over. Some powers had already been transferred but even so Australia had until recently exercised a veto because the Governor-General, on the advice of the Minister for External Territories, could overturn any proposal by any Minister in PNG.

Looking through the speeches made at those discussions I note Michael Somare's comment that he was very glad that Australia had such a progressive Minister for External Territories - no false modesty here!

Another interesting speech was by the Leader of the Opposition, Matt Toliman, who was a very fine person and from the Gazelle Peninsula. He had been a Minister in the previous House of Assembly and was Leader of the United Party. Matt Toliman, speaking on behalf of the Opposition, was not in favour of the more rapid pace towards independence. The United Party was starting to adjust to the fact that there had to be self-government, but they weren't keen on independence.

On 27 July 1972, Toliman went so far as to say:

Should the Government's policy on full internal self-government be attained by early 1974, we feel that it is still not too late to examine alternatives to early independence. We think there should, and could, be a special relationship between a self-governing PNG and the Commonwealth of Australia along the lines of the United States of America/Puerto Rico arrangement. We all know the feelings of the vast majority of the people. They oppose early or full independence and we are sure they would follow the United Party policy on this point.

So, whilst admitting there were grounds for criticism of Australia's earlier delay in

countenancing independence, the irony is that by mid 1972 the Leader of the PNG Opposition, who had won more seats than any other party but less than an absolute majority, was still arguing that the destiny of PNG should be in some Commonwealth association with Australia akin to the US/Puerto Rican arrangement. Interestingly enough, that latter relationship has recently been confirmed.

We didn't entertain that notion for a moment and even in the United Party support for it was waning. Matt Toliman was no longer in control of 46 or 47 members even though they'd all been elected as United Party representatives. Mr Thomas Kavali had been elected to the House the sole representative of the New Guinea National Party. A very astute man, Mr Kavali. Whilst Michael Somare was trying to put his coalition together, Kavali had persuaded six of the independent Highlanders to join his New Guinea National Party, even though they had been elected as independents. He also took one or two from the United Party and brought those into coalition with Somare as well. So the New Guinea National Party had established a role for itself.

But even though the United Party numbered less than 47, Matt Toliman was still the Leader of the Opposition and still leader of the largest party in the Parliament. And he was calling for a slowdown in the move towards independence.

I fear that I may not be addressing the academic concerns of this audience. But I think that there is currently a rush to rewrite the history of this period. I recently saw an ABC TV program that completely glossed over this period, which really did see the development of a framework for PNG as a fine independent nation. It is understandable that some might want to gloss over this period because there was, prior to 1972, some degree of paternalism in the relationship. It is probably difficult to be an administering authority without being in some way paternalist, particularly at that time. It was not 1993. It was a vastly different world - as all of us know. But I think it is important to recognise that the way in which a trustee leaves a territory, one in which it is the governing authority, accountable to the United Nations as well as to its own people, is extraordinarily important. I was always very proud of the way we finished the job.

I say 'we' although the Coalition was swept out of power on 2 December 1972 and the actual task of seeing through the date of self-government and independence was left to the then Labor Party. Gough Whitlam and I used to talk about it a great deal. We got on well in those days

and he spoke well of my period as Minister. And it does seem to me we left PNG with a substantially larger reservoir of goodwill between the former colonial power and the newly emergent country than existed in most other comparable situations. Fiji is often held up to me as an example of where there was a smooth and easy transition, but I don't think the Fijian situation was as difficult as PNG's could have been. I feel that we minimised the difficulties in the transition because we moved the pace.

I should add that there were also, of course, pressures in Australia to desist from faster moves to early self-government. The movement towards a centralised system of government ran counter to the churches' interest; the Catholic Church, for example. I'm not critical of the work they did, but of their attitude towards self-government and independence. The Catholic Church, for example, was strongly in favour of a federal structure in PNG. The Democratic Labour Party, so influential in Australia in keeping the Liberal/National Parties in power for so long, were also in favour of a federated PNG.

But I was strongly of the view then that a country containing 500 different tribes speaking more than 700 different languages needed not a fragmented system, but a more centralised system.

After I ceased to be Territories Minister, the question of autonomy for Bougainville arose. I'd always believed that Bougainville ought to have a degree of autonomy, but when the provincial system of Government was first mooted in PNG, I discussed the matter with Michael Somare. At that stage I was the Shadow Foreign Minister and I rang him and said: 'Why are you doing this? Why are you setting up a provincial system of government? This is going to haunt you in the future.'

And he said to me (and I well remember the conversation): 'If I don't establish a provincial system, I may lose Bougainville and PNG will end up just another exporter of coffee, tea and copra. I have to have Bougainville's copper contributing its resources and revenue to the task of nation building. Unless I give Bougainville that autonomy, PNG will not be a viable entity.' This was the origin of the system of provincial government. I agreed with Somare's political assessment. He persuaded me, as so often was the case.

I think PNG owes the Somares and the Chans of this world an enormous amount. Particularly, at that time, Michael Somare. I had met Somare when I first went to PNG and when he

was an angry young man. He was to become a very close personal friend. I suppose in those days we were both a couple of smooth operators and we probably deserved one another! But we were able to achieve a fair amount together and his astuteness, his timing, his capacity for negotiation in 1972 in putting that coalition together was something at which I marvelled.

And it is well to remember that had it not come together, then the future of PNG and its relations with Australia would have been vastly different. I had started out on the assumption that because the Westminster system was the system I knew well, it was the system for PNG. But I very quickly came to realise that institutionalised division between Government and Opposition might well be the antithesis of what a Melanesian society requires, a society where you need to sit and talk and talk your way through problems. At the end of the day we did hand over a Westminster system, but we did so on the basis that we expected this to change and change substantially. I've been amazed that it hasn't changed to a far greater extent.

That covers my involvement with PNG as External Territories Minister. However, I was very pleased some years later, as Minister for Foreign Affairs, to renew my involvement on at least two important occasions. One was the negotiation of that extraordinarily intricate Torres Strait Agreement that demarcates the maritime boundary between PNG and Australia. I in fact had far more difficulty in negotiating this Agreement with Queensland than I did with PNG.

The other issue was the move, over a three or five year period, to untied grant aid. This shift epitomised my view that PNG must be allowed to set its own priorities rather than be forced to accept tied program aid. I note that the Australian Government has now reversed that decision. I think, however, untied aid was the right decision to take in the 70s. There was already too much determination of development priorities by Australia. I now reluctantly accept the need to return to program aid. This means, however, that Australia will now be seen in PNG as just another aid donor, and I do regret that.

PNG achieved independence on 16 September 1975 and here we are in December 1993. I think we are witnessing a situation where, for whatever reason, bilateral relations have drifted somewhat.

I think it is a slightly ominous drift. If I were to name Australia's key foreign policy relationships, they would have to be: PNG, New Zealand, each ASEAN country, Japan and the

United States. Of course, it is always a dangerous thing to identify 'special relationships' because those not deemed as special can take offence - though it's not as offensive as accusing someone of being recalcitrant. But I don't think there would be too much disagreement over this list.

And so I conclude a fairly personal account - including perhaps excessive use of the first personal pronoun - an account of an interesting 10 months in PNG. I have left many anecdotes out, but nevertheless, I have tried to give you the flavour and thoughts of someone seeking to bring about historic change.

### References

1. Charles Barnes, Minister for Territories, later External Territories, from 1963-1972.
2. *Bilas* - decoration such as feathers, paint, plants etc.
3. *Bilum* - string basket.

# Appraising the Colonial Record: Australia in Papua New Guinea

R.S. Parker

What developments in a colonial territory's history can be attributed - especially after a lapse of years - to the policies of a colonial ruler, as distinct from factors ranging from terrain, resources and general 'culture contact' to indigenous culture, economy, and post-colonial politics? Are there any plausible standards, ethical, moral or social, that can be fruitfully applied to such assessments?

One criterion seems at first sight easy to apply: how was the colony created? Unless it was by settlers from the metropolitan country moving to an empty land, or by annexation convincingly approved by current inhabitants, colonisation must have originated in an invasion and occupation by force, and *prima facie* the annexing power had no right to be there.

Australia's colonies of Papua and New Guinea belonged in this category.

At no time were the indigenous inhabitants of Papua or New Guinea consulted about the various dispositions by Germany, Britain and Australia of their ancestral lands except the final liberation (and that was a non-negotiable Australian decision). In the beginning, white men appeared in various parts of Niugini and told those they met that they now owed allegiance to a Queen, a King or a Kaiser and were subject to an inscrutable influence - a foreign system of law. This is the most important sense in which a colonial hegemony may be pronounced beyond the pale of moral acceptance. We may say that all colonies similarly established have been morally illegitimate to that extent.

However, the establishment of a colony determines its later history only in part. There are many options for ruling; many kinds of relationship may evolve between rulers and ruled; colonies, and their indigenous and non-indigenous inhabitants, undergo cultural changes positive and negative, attain many degrees of peace and prosperity or the reverse. It may be possible to allot different marks for the colonial regimes' contribution to some of these outcomes - better marks for some regimes than others; and conceivably to compare the record of a colonial occupation with those of the pre- and post-colonial periods in the same territory. Is it possible to conceive a balancing of an illegitimate mode of acquisition against net gains as a colony?

To illuminate the problems the subject selected, chosen partly for its presumed familiarity to more experienced students of the colonised world, is the clash between Western ideas of the administration of 'justice' and a 'tribal' society's approach to social order and the settlement of disputes.

Early Australian declarations of policy towards both Papua and New Guinea included the preservation of 'native laws and customs in so far as these [were] not repugnant to the standards of the civilised world'. However, the very nature of indigenous 'law' was fundamentally at odds with Western concepts, that is with the idea of a set of specialised institutions trying to apply a body of fixed rules objectively and consistently to the maintenance of social norms and the resolution of disputes.

Instead, the economic, social and moral obligations of group members were based upon the patterns of kinship. The rules which undoubtedly existed - governing family relations, the disposition of land and personal property, and social behaviour - varied from village to village, and were not embodied in written codes but inculcated by adult example and precept and by initiation rites. 'Anti-social' behaviour within the village was discouraged by community censure and the sense of 'shame'. Civil disputes were talked out by lengthy debate between the parties with possible intervention by village elders or 'big men' - or determined by superior force. The criterion for peaceful resolution was the restoration of social harmony rather than the satisfaction of abstract canons of uniform 'justice'. The only remedy against affront or injury was self-help: an attempt by the injured party's group to inflict retribution or secure appropriate compensation from any or all of the offender's group.

In short, courts, law and judicial proceedings in the Western sense were unknown, and remained an enigma to the bulk of the population up to independence. In addition, many of the indigenous customs themselves, beginning with inter-village warfare and individual violence, were unacceptable to the white rulers and prohibited by white law.

Hence the development of law and legal institutions, as far as this affected the indigenous population, was one of the most baffling areas of



policy for all the colonial administrations in Papua and New Guinea. Before the 1950s all of them, in fact, despaired of finding any indigenous institutions or individuals capable of applying law as Westerners conceived the process, and they were unwilling to countenance any other approach to the matter, at least in the short run. At the same time all the colonial regimes before World War II lacked the resources to install a specialised court system of their own wholly staffed by full-time professionals.

As a result, the Australian attempts to give some recognition, in their own courts, to the different rules under which indigenes were accustomed to live, proved quite unable to obviate the indigenous need for the continuance of their own methods of social regulation at the village level. The administrators were torn between the desire to disparage and discourage these methods and the reluctant admission that it might be wiser to accord some qualified legitimacy to what they could not destroy. In the end, Papua New Guinea reached independence without any promising resolution of these problems or of the underlying conflict between basically incompatible conceptions of social regulation.

While most of the introduced law applied to everyone in both territories, there was in this period a body of law governing indigenes alone, and therefore discriminatory on racial grounds. Essentially, it embodied the Australian sense of obligation to legitimise by legal enactment the powers assigned to field officers of the Administrations to establish 'law and order' and bring about the improvement of village life - on the assumption that even the latter could only be achieved by coercion.<sup>1</sup>

The first of these Native Regulations formed a simplified criminal code forbidding such activities as theft, adultery and sorcery; the list came to include other acts which were not offences under the law applicable to expatriates. In time they also covered almost every aspect of native life and development, applying the principle of coercion to improvements in village hygiene, education, the cultivation of cash crops, even recourse to medical treatment.

The administration of these regulations was a prime function of field officers: in their administrative capacity by way of orders to villagers (to which the regulations required obedience); in their police capacity by way of arresting and charging suspected offenders against the regulations; in their capacity as jailers when

offenders were sentenced to imprisonment; and in their magisterial capacity as Courts for Native Matters (Papua) and Courts for Native Affairs (New Guinea).

These courts had a limited jurisdiction to deal only with disputes between, and offences by, native people. Their importance among the functions of field officers was registered in Papua by the very title of 'Resident Magistrates'. The corresponding officers in New Guinea inherited the German title of 'District Officer'. Despite some differences in jurisdiction, in both sets of courts there was an emphasis on informal procedures, relaxed rules of evidence, allowance of the use of indigenous languages and the discovery and recording of relevant native custom.<sup>2</sup>

It is not necessary here to describe the higher courts which had both native and expatriate jurisdiction, except to say that they applied rules of evidence and procedure mainly modelled on those in the Australian States, and to record T.E. Barnett's remark that 'for native litigants, the existence of an adversary procedure in courts, with the parties expected to follow formal rules and established English conventions, tends to make the whole procedure meaningless and confusing'.<sup>3</sup>

This exotic legal system had no place for indigenes except as litigants, accused, witnesses, interpreters, or policemen. Australian authorities made no effort in either territory to establish statutory tribunals staffed by indigenous people, though it was clear that the volume and peculiarities of conflict among native citizens were far greater than the introduced courts could cope with, and that those courts had often an imperfect understanding of the cases they did handle.

Reluctantly recognising these facts, the Australian Administrations made three kinds of concession. First, they omitted certain subjects from the jurisdiction of the introduced courts, most notably rights over native land which were accepted as being governed by native custom and were protected by colonial law. Second, they allowed their courts to take indigenous customs into account in hearing and deciding civil cases and generally 'permitted' indigenous 'tribal institutions, customs and usages ... to continue in existence' subject to territory ordinances and the 'general principles of humanity'.<sup>4</sup> Third, they affected not to notice the informal exercise of quasi-judicial powers throughout the territories by village big-men, village councillors, and

indigenous minor government officials - often with the tacit assent of government field officers.

The question of land tenure is too big and complex for inclusion here. Of the other responses, 'recognition of native custom' raised problems familiar in all similar colonies. At the end of the 1960s an Australian lawyer could still say that native customs were 'uncertain and hard to prove, vary from place to place, and even from time to time in the same place, and the same sanctions may not be applied to all persons in the same way for similar offences'.<sup>5</sup> Dilemmas abounded. Should the state of custom be proved to the court as a matter of fact or of law, or simply be given judicial recognition? What kind of evidence could be 'proof' of a custom, given that it was 'uncodified, rarely recorded in any readily available or completely trustworthy form, unsystematised and largely inchoate' ?<sup>6</sup> How long should a custom have been in force to be recognised? What should be done in case of a conflict of custom (e.g. where litigants came from different areas)?

In practice the answers given to such questions varied with the attitudes of individual magistrates and judges, and the extent to which the courts made any obeisance to 'custom' varied with the subject matter. For example, they accepted the validity of native customary marriages and marriage customs, including polygamy, and evaded divorce; native customary marriages could only be dissolved by customary procedures. In criminal cases, on the other hand, the introduced written law was applied exclusively and no customary offences were recognised. Notions of group responsibility and 'pay-back' were ignored, police were required to find a specific offender, guilt had to be proved according to the laws of evidence and punishment consisted of fines, imprisonment or execution. Even here, however, there was some allowance for custom, in the more ready acceptance of defences of 'accident' or 'provocation', and in sentencing.

Nevertheless, from sheer necessity the great majority of village 'crimes' and disputes continued to be dealt with, at least in the first instance, by informal village processes, frequently conducted by village constables, village councillors and in New Guinea the native officials inherited from the German regime, the *luluai*. Though not appointed with judicial powers, the officials acted sometimes because they were already traditional 'big-men', sometimes because they could use their official

prestige in this manner to become big - or bigger - men within the village community.

The practice was condoned by both Administrations but acknowledged more openly in New Guinea than in Papua. At the end of the period under review D.M. Fenbury estimated that up to 75 per cent of native causes in Niugini were heard by what he called 'illicit tribunals' - illicit, presumably, in so far as the members, by using official insignia (*luluai*, councillor or police caps and badges) or aping 'court' procedure, illegally claimed some sort of government imprimatur for their activity, as against purely traditional modes of settlement which the Administration could hardly proscribe at village level.<sup>7</sup>

After the brief interregnum of P.C. Spender's ministry (1949-51) following the defeat of Labor in 1949, Prime Minister Menzies appointed P.M.C. Hasluck, a former political science tutor, journalist and External Affairs officer from Western Australia, to a single consolidated portfolio of Territories (including Papua and New Guinea along with the Northern Territory of Australia and a number of minuscule island territories in the Indian Ocean and the south-west Pacific).

In a summary sketch of the attitudes Hasluck brought to his task in Niugini, we must first note his belief in the benefits of transplanting Australian institutions and practices there despite the very different Territorial environment. In this he showed a typical Australian Philistinism and insularity, but in a marked degree. At the end of the 1950s he summed up in a phrase what he had often said at greater length: 'The New Guinea situation is unique and comparisons with Africa and Asia are inapplicable'.<sup>8</sup>

Instead of a judicious resort to such experience and knowledge (which of course need not have precluded taking due account of the Territory's peculiarities) Hasluck relied on establishing a set of 'principles' in the emerging polity - 'justice', 'freedom', 'representation', 'trusteeship', - while disclaiming any specific 'blueprints' or 'goals'.

This raises a more general question which is nevertheless relevant to our subject. Consistently with his scorn of goals, Minister Hasluck was not an originator of new policies. He declares in his own memoir that

At the commencement of my work I found no need to restate policy. My reading of

departmental papers and public pronouncements did not arouse any immediate doubts about the objectives and principles that had been declared.<sup>9</sup>

And scholars generally agree that Hasluck continued on the path laid down by his predecessors, Labor's E.J. Ward and his own party's P.C. Spender. What then is left as Hasluck's 'contribution' — as what his severest critics<sup>10</sup> called 'Hasluck's undoubted achievements'?

I think it can best be summed up in a section heading of one of his own frequent addresses: 'An Increased Scale of Effort'. He succeeded in getting the Australian appropriations for Papua and New Guinea multiplied several times over in a dozen years, and relentlessly drove his public servants to spend the money on more of what was already planned: more staff in the Territory, more pacification, more patrolling, more hospitals, drugs and health education, more schools and training, more indigenes in the cash economy, more cash economy, more wharves, airstrips, and roads. When he left the portfolio, he had also laid the foundations for two universities, for a House of Assembly with an overwhelming non-official majority elected on a common roll, and for a World Bank investigation to produce a comprehensive economic development plan. In this light, we might imagine Hasluck himself summing up his general approach to colonial administration as 'pragmatism informed by principle'.

Although the 1950 UN Visiting Mission expressed the hope that plans to establish 'native courts' would proceed as quickly as possible, the government's policy as framed by Hasluck was directly opposed to this. He formed a number of views on judicial reform during the decade. He rejected official proposals inconsistent with these and initiated moves to install his own concepts; the net result was that there was no important change during the 1950s.

The idea of entrusting village influentials with wide civil powers and criminal jurisdiction at grassroots level, in such matters as assaults, theft and disobedience to lawful orders, dated back at least to 1924, when Colonel John Ainsworth, a former Chief Native Commissioner of Kenya, reported to the Australian government on the administration of New Guinea. Nothing was done in either territory beyond J.H.P. Murray's experiment with 'native assessors' in

Papua, 1929–42. The idea of authorising 'village courts' was raised again after World War II in the Army Directorate of Research, especially by Drs L.P. Mair and H. Ian Hogbin, anthropologists, supported by the lawyer J.H. Wootten. Like Murray and other orthodox lawyers at every stage, the then Chief Justice in Papua and New Guinea, Mr (later Sir) Beaumont Phillips, poured cold water on the proposals on the grounds that Papuans and New Guineans had no conception of 'justice' in the British mode and no legal training. Nevertheless Mair and Hogbin were able to persuade the Minister for External Territories, E.J. Ward, to include in the *Papua and New Guinea Act 1949* a provision for 'native village courts and other tribunals on which natives may sit as adjudicating officers or assessors'.<sup>11</sup>

This was the provision on which the 1950 Visiting Mission based its hopes. But in the absence of any interest on the part of Ministers Spender and Hasluck, it was 1954 before a Village Courts Ordinance was drafted, largely under the influence of D.M. Fenbury and C.J. Lynch (an unorthodox legal officer in the Territory department of Law, later Legislative Draftsman), and submitted to Hasluck with the endorsement of the Executive Council. In rejecting the proposal out of hand, Hasluck went beyond the indigene's 'unfamiliarity with justice', and foreshadowed his confessed preference, in this field, for advice 'from lawyers bred in the British and Australian tradition of the rule of law and not from field officers of the Administration'.<sup>12</sup>

He argued that:

- (1) any separate system of courts for natives (and hence the existing Courts of Native Affairs and Courts for Native Matters) was undesirable in principle;
- (2) the proposed courts would be unduly subject to the influence of the Administration;
- (3) their freedom to invoke local custom in the settlement of disputes would produce a chaos of conflicting precedents;
- (4) they would undermine British principles of the administration of justice, by applying the traditional principle of maintaining village harmony and satisfying all parties rather than enforcing a uniform abstract rule;
- (5) the draft unduly subordinated the judicial

- system to administrative convenience;
- (6) exemption of the village courts from the orthodox rules of evidence would make for two systems of justice — the native receiving substandard justice;
- (7) the proposed selection of court members from panels nominated by local councillors or elders, and the localised character of the courts generally, would invite nepotism and corruption.<sup>13</sup>

These objections reflected Hasluck's underlying convictions that Papua and New Guinea badly needed 'a single body of law and a single system of justice, equally accessible to all and even in its incidence', and that the 'courts should be freed from Administration influence so that in future years they could not become the instrument of any government'.<sup>14</sup> In other words he wished to introduce the (British-derived) Australian judicial system in its entirety, along with all its legal principles; his policy was 'assimilationist' here as elsewhere. What is more, he wanted immediate change in this direction, and demanded it from the Administration throughout the 1950s.

Encountering delay or even resistance, he called on the aid of orthodox lawyers from Australia — not so much to get an objective appraisal of the problems as to secure 'independent' rationalisations of his already confirmed beliefs. Thus in 1952 he asked Professor (later Sir) Kenneth Bailey, a Melbourne constitutional lawyer, 'to investigate and report on criminal Justice in the Territory' — but never got a definitive report. When Chief Justice Phillips retired in 1957 Hasluck found a successor in Melbourne barrister, A.H. Mann, Q.C., who, as Hasluck later wrote, 'fully shared my own ideas';<sup>15</sup> by mid-1959 he had secured from Mann an acceptable paper outlining 'Points calling for investigation and revision in the legal system'.

This fortified Hasluck, still encountering Administration scepticism and inaction, in eliciting from D.P. (later Sir David) Derham, this time a Melbourne Professor of Jurisprudence, a 'report on the system for the administration of justice in the Territory' which was delivered at the end of 1960. Derham's report, produced after a five-week investigation in the Territory, duly confirmed Hasluck's preconceptions, but also contained warnings against precipitate change which Hasluck ignored when ordering, early in 1961, the immediate implementation of Derham's

recommendations.

The responsible Territory officials, in fact, fully shared the Minister's ultimate aims, but neither Hasluck nor his orthodox legal mentors from Australia could see this since they did not have enough first-hand experience of Papua and New Guinea (or of similar territories elsewhere) to understand the officials' arguments — some practical and some sociologically sophisticated — against attempts to impose the full panoply of Australian justice directly and immediately. In the first place, as Fenbury and others argued, it was not possible to carry out Hasluck's wish to transfer the field staff's police, judicial and custodial (prison) functions rapidly to elaborate, specialised institutions on British or Australian lines — whether manned by whites or blacks — because the necessary resources of trained and experienced manpower, as well as of capital installations and equipment, were not remotely in sight and would take many years to mobilise no matter how much of the available effort was put into it. In the meantime the maintenance of rough-and-ready '*kiap* justice' and with it the morale of the field staff was essential if there was to be any British-type justice at all. As it was, '*kiap* justice' was itself inadequate to cover the field, as shown by the universal presence of 'illicit' village tribunals operated by *luluai*, councillors, other native officials and traditional village elders, variously estimated to be dealing with 70 to 90 per cent of grassroots 'crime' and litigation, in accordance mainly with traditional norms.

As for their proposal for village courts, the sponsoring officials argued that such a system, supervised by the government but drawing upon experienced indigenous manpower, would not only be more practicable in the short run than an extension of orthodox tribunals on the Australian model, but also be preferable as a 'fountain of British justice' and as a basis for an ultimately uniform body of 'common law'. While Hasluck (and Mann) thought they could build in the Territory 'a code ... based on English common law' which would ultimately evolve (through interpretation and the recognition of local customary practices) into a 'Territory common law',<sup>16</sup> the Administration officers believed the process must happen the other way round.

An alien system of (British or Australian) common law could not be imposed from without, because villagers mainly needed — and respected — their own common law in the

form of local custom. Building upon *that*, however varied it might be at the outset, the necessities of social and economic evolution, the spread of common education and geographical mobility, and the integration of the village court system with the introduced hierarchy of higher courts would gradually develop a consistent body of Territory common law. After all, this was how common law had evolved in British communities themselves.

And a government-sponsored village court system would offer not only the one reasonable hope of displacing the universal system of illicit village tribunals, but also a prospect of integrating local customs where those tribunals offered none. In the absence of a legitimate village courts system, the existing Australian court structure, not reaching down to the village level, provided no alternative to the pervasive illegal tribunals.<sup>17</sup>

Having rejected — perhaps failed to understand — these arguments, Hasluck concentrated on other issues during the 1950s, some important, some comparatively trivial. He tried to underline the dignity of the judiciary and its separateness from the executive. In 1953 he disapproved of the practice whereby the Chief Justice became Acting Administrator during the absence of the Administrator; in 1955 he ruled that the Assistant Administrator and not the Chief Justice should act on such occasions. In 1956 he refused to consider nominations made by the Administrator for a new Chief Justice. He related judicial salaries in the Territory to those in Australia, not to those of the Administrator or other Territory officials.

All this was intended to rub in the idea that the judiciary was co-ordinate with, and independent of, the Administration, and that at no level should the courts be thought to be an arm of the Administration. The new Chief Justice Mann's idea of establishing the majesty of the law in indigenous minds was personally to design and have erected, at various points in the Territory, a bizarre and expensive style of courthouse, vaguely aping the Sepik *haus tambaran* but in concrete and galvanised iron, for use by the judges on circuit and their entourage. Field officers deplored the waste of money on this futile ostentation since the buildings could be put to no other use and lay idle most of the time.

To sum up, the official system of justice that prevailed throughout the 1950s continued to be a mixture of formalised law and courts wholly derived from Australia (though with an extremely

limited jury system for capital cases against Europeans only) and of *kiap* justice' at the lower, rural levels, under which field officers combined police, magisterial and custodial powers. Alongside this dual system the illegal village courts, '*kot bilong mipela*' (i.e. 'our courts'), remained indispensable to deal with the bulk of inter-native litigation at the grassroots. At the same time the Minister of Territories was embarking on a program, not to build a legal system upon indigenous foundations or even to integrate introduced with indigenous institutions, but to make the whole judicial system an even closer and more rigid approximation to that of industrialised Western nations.

In the early 1960s the upper end of the introduced court system comprised the Supreme Court (with appeal by leave to the High Court of Australia), and the Courts of Petty Sessions (Papua) and District Courts (New Guinea). These courts had jurisdiction over people of all races, but in practice operated mainly for the expatriate population and the more sophisticated indigenous people living in urban areas. The Supreme Court, however, went on circuit throughout the Territory to hold criminal trials which formed the bulk of its work.

Between these higher courts and traditional village dispute settlement lay the intermediate realm of the Courts for Native Matters (Papua) and Courts for Native Affairs (New Guinea), which as we have seen administered the Native Regulations applicable only to indigenous people. These courts were staffed almost entirely by field officers of the Administration — the *kiap* — who, of course, were vested with administrative, police and custodial powers as well as their functions as magistrates. In the latter respect this part of the system offended against the European juridical principle of 'separation of powers' between judicial and executive agencies.

These courts were 'intermediate', also, in the sense that field officers (who received an elementary legal education as part of their formal training) tended, as a matter of practical necessity, to combine elements of the traditional indigenous approach to dispute settlement with their more orthodox magisterial role. Thinly spread though it was, the *kiap* service provided the only regularly accessible form of Australian authority throughout the rural hinterland, and villagers brought to the *kiap* those disputes they could not settle — or keep settled — among themselves. Armed with a degree of intimate

local knowledge, aware of government policies and interests in his district, burdened with many other duties, and having the necessary administrative discretion, the *kiap* often settled such matters 'out of court', by informal inquiries, consultations and mediation, to the optimal satisfaction of those concerned - rather than take the time and tedious trouble to hold a formal court with its legalistic procedures which might meet more exacting standards of 'justice' but be less effective in keeping the peace in the village.

Added to the complexity and contradictions in the legal situation as a whole was the lack of any indigenous participation in the administration of the Australian law, except as interpreters, policemen, witnesses, litigants or defendants. This was the result partly of policy but mainly of a dearth of professionally-trained lawyers of any kind. There was not a single fully-qualified indigenous lawyer in the Territory as late as mid-1966. By the end of the decade there was one — with an Australian degree. There was a grave shortage of expatriate lawyers. In mid-1966 it was estimated that there were between 50 and 60 qualified lawyers engaged in professional legal work in the Territory, including the judges and full-time magistrates, the legal staff in the department of Law and its Public Solicitor's Office, and fewer than a dozen private practitioners. The Secretary for Law claimed at that time that his department was 40 per cent. understaffed in the professional sector.<sup>18</sup> As J.H. (later Mr Justice) Wootten told a Port Moresby seminar:

The simple fact is that the great bulk of the legal work of the Territory is not being done at all. The only persons whose legal problems are being adequately attended to are the Administration and the tiny handful of non-indigenous inhabitants. ... [Very largely the] two millions [sic] indigenous inhabitants ... are touched by the legal system of the Territory only if they are charged with a major criminal offence in which event they will be prosecuted, defended and tried by professional lawyers.<sup>19</sup>

This was the position nearly six years after Hasluck had inaugurated a series of paper

reforms — that is, legislation and official instructions — whose success depended above everything else on a Territory-wide supply of qualified lawyers, especially indigenous lawyers, and of professionally trained police. The shortage of such police, though somewhat reduced, also remained endemic throughout the decade.

In Professor Derham's *Report on the System for the Administration of Justice in the Territory of Papua and New Guinea*, delivered to the Minister in December 1960, Hasluck found full confirmation of the views he had already formed about the above situation, and a series of precise and palatable recommendations for dealing with it. Restricting the report's circulation to selected officials and allowing no time for critical comment, early in February 1961, by his own account, he directed that 'immediate action should be taken to put the recommendations into effect'.<sup>20</sup>

This apparently meant the main recommendations: there were some which no attempt was ever made to implement. In a short statement to parliament in October 1961 Hasluck summarised a number of Derham's recommendations and very briefly indicated the ways in which he proposed to carry them out.<sup>21</sup> Derham's primary points confirmed Hasluck's existing convictions: judicial functions and executive functions should be separated and administered by different persons; there should *not* be separate systems of law and courts for the different races — all should be subject to the same unified system, which qualified indigenous people should help to administer.

Bringing the existing arrangements into conformity with these two principles depended for its success upon the inter-related timing of a number of necessary intermediate steps — none of them likely to be easy or rapid. In particular, a nationwide corps of legally-trained indigenous officials and a nationwide body of trained professional police — neither of which existed in 1961 — would be needed if *kiaps* and local government councils were to be divested of their judicial and police powers without creating a vacuum of government-maintained law and order throughout the rural areas.

Derham himself was aware of the problem. His report advocated a gradual change, beginning in the 'more advanced areas of Lae, Port Moresby and Rabaul', and did not propose that field officers should be stripped of their judicial and police powers before others had been

recruited and trained to assume them. A few years later he greeted the Ordinance for establishing a single system of Local Courts (see below) with the same warning:

I have real doubts . . . as to whether it is wise or even possible to introduce in one stride such a separate and independent jurisdiction with common forms and common powers over the whole Territory....

[T]o deprive the administrative officers responsible for government of their magisterial powers before it is possible to provide competent officers to exercise those powers separately and frequently, may be to attempt too much at one time.<sup>22</sup>

However, the actual rate of change was not determined by Hasluck's or anyone else's will, but by administrative bottlenecks, manpower shortages, legislative delays, official resistance and indifference. This can be illustrated by brief reference to what happened to a few of Derham's recommendations during the 1960s.

First, Derham fully endorsed Hasluck's 1955 rejection of 'native village courts' of lay justices applying largely native custom. He proposed that the courts especially concerned with native matters should be made 'an ordinary part of the judicial system', and should cease to have a separate 'native matters' jurisdiction as soon as trained native people were available as magistrates. Hasluck accordingly ordered that a new Local Courts Ordinance should replace the Courts for Native Matters and Courts for Native Affairs, to be followed as soon as possible by repeal of the Native Regulations applying only to indigenes.

The Local Courts Ordinance did not pass the Legislative Council until 1963, and from lack of the necessary manpower and resources was not proclaimed in force until January 1966. Once established, the integrated local courts were supposed to be reasonably accessible to villagers and deal with 'native custom' matters among others - hence to be staffed in part by Assistant Magistrates, honorary and untrained, empowered to accept complaints, make orders binding people to keep the peace and to protect property.

By 1969 about 250 of these had been appointed - many illiterate and most unable to speak English - and could supply only a minority of localities. The bulk of magistrates in local courts during the decade had to be the same *kiaps* who had run the predecessor courts, so the 'separation of powers' was not achieved and the mediation procedures were much the same as the *kiaps* had practised for decades. But once a matter was in the court the Western adversary system was invoked and the magistrate was not encouraged to take an inquisitorial role.<sup>23</sup>

The Native Regulations continued in force through most of the decade and were administered by the Local Courts when established. Even after the bulk of the Regulations were repealed in 1969 a number - on health, adultery, sorcery and administrative control - remained.

Second, looking to the independent state of the near future, Derham recommended that as soon as possible there should be native participation in the membership and administration of local courts, but said that persons not qualified in Western law should not exercise judicial functions. He proposed that selected field officers should be trained to become full-time magistrates, and that there should be a scheme of training of native people as magistrates and clerks of court.

Hasluck approved such a scheme in 1962, but the difficulty was to find indigenous people literate in English and with enough basic education to begin training. After a pilot scheme in 1963, two courses began at the Administrative College of Papua and New Guinea three years later, turning out about sixteen graduates by the end of 1967 for appointment as assistant magistrates to gain experience with a serving magistrate before their final appointment as magistrates. By about the same time ten indigenous patrol officers had also been appointed as part-time local court magistrates and received some legal training. More than twelve years were to elapse after the Derham Report before a reasonable number of Papuans and New Guineans became available for magisterial work in the lower courts.<sup>24</sup>

Third, following another of Derham's recommendations, Hasluck initiated a new Local Government Ordinance (1963, proclaimed in force 1965), depriving local government councils of their constables and law and order functions. Hasluck set about recruiting and training more police, some from abroad. Again there was a

dearth of qualified recruits, and Downs<sup>25</sup> draws a picture of corrupt local police in rural areas 'dispensing a brand of rough justice that they were totally incompetent by training or experience to prescribe and had no authority to perform'.

Fourth, there was Derham's recommendation that local courts should be empowered to take note of established native customs in specified matters. The Local Courts Ordinance granted them jurisdiction over 'all matters arising out of and regulated by native custom, other than such matters as are within the exclusive jurisdiction of the Land Titles Commission'. To fill this out and provide more general guidance, the Administration got the Legislative Council to pass in 1963 the Native Customs (Recognition) Ordinance, which set out the rules allowing courts to 'enforce' or otherwise 'take into account' native custom in civil cases.<sup>26</sup> Barnett thought at the time that '[c]onsidering the great variety of customs and conditions, the local court, as an arm of the central government, is likely to be a clumsy instrument for dealing with such delicate matters', and he described the Native Customs (Recognition) Ordinance as 'an extremely difficult Ordinance raising untold legal problems ...'.<sup>27</sup>

The Native Customs (Recognition) Ordinance 1963, based partly on British Solomon Islands and Ghanaian legislation, preserved the vagueness of the notion of 'custom' in Papua and New Guinea, which as Lynch noted was 'largely inchoate and has usually been taken to be enormously variable over relatively short distances', was 'vastly different from anything that could be called customary law in any lawyer's sense', and even more different from the English legal concept of custom as a rule existing 'from time immemorial'.<sup>28</sup> The Ordinance, *per contra*, defined a custom in relation to the time and place where an issue arose, and permitted a wide range of evidence to establish itself including hearsay and expressions of opinion. It required all courts to recognise, take account of, and enforce native customs in regard to specified matters in civil cases, and these matters included land, marriage, divorce, custody of children and transactions intended by the parties to be governed by custom. There was a general limitation that customs would not be recognised if 'repugnant to the principles of humanity', inconsistent with legislation, contrary to the welfare of a child, or if recognised likely to cause injustice or be against public interest.<sup>29</sup>

There was no provision for the codification of custom (usual in Africa), and Barnett noted the problems the Ordinance set for courts, of deciding whether to apply customary law where a common law rule was applicable, and how to choose between two or more conflicting customs.<sup>30</sup> In a survey of the legal system at the end of the decade Barnett summed up:

Most village litigants have access in practice only to Local Courts, which usually deal with [disputes involving custom] by a process of mediation based on the magistrate's view of reasonableness and justice [i.e. nearer to the established *kiap* approach than to Derham's]. The parties (and sometimes the part-time *kiap*-magistrates) have little idea of the rules of common law. There is no legal impediment barring village litigants from the District or Supreme Courts, but in practice lack of finance, experience and legal advice frequently stops them. As a result there is little judicial guidance on the resolution of the conflict between common law and custom, both of which may apply to natives in civil cases.<sup>31</sup>

We need not accept the notion, developed by a number of observers, of a 'gap' in the law and order system, created during the 1960s by the policy of removing rural law and order functions from field officers and local government councils before an adequate coverage of rural areas could be assumed by professional police and local courts with indigenous professional staff. In practice, *kiaps* and 'illicit indigenous tribunals' continued in most of their accustomed roles. There is, however, a considerable body of testimony to a steady decline during the decade in indigenous respect for and resort to Australian legal institutions, and to a resurgence of illicit traditional dispute-settling practices including resort to violence, along with a decline in the general security of persons and property. These trends were generally attributed, not so much to the notion of the 'gap' as to the attempts of the



Administration and the official courts — under Ministerial direction and government policy — to make increasing use of European statutory and common law concepts and strict rules of evidence in the administration of the law by all responsible officials.<sup>32</sup>

Evidence supporting these assertions — not entirely free from the possibility of bias in its mode of compilation — was assembled in a survey initiated in 1963 by Fenbury, as Secretary of the department of the Administrator, and with the Administrator's approval. He asked District Commissioners to report on 'current trends in indigenous attitudes towards the Territory courts and the law generally' — excluding any views of their own about the system. A summary of the D.C.s' answers prepared in the department said they were 'virtually unanimous' that

The indigene had confidence in the Department of Native Affairs Officer, [and] understood the punitive aspects of the administration of justice, but not the present corrective and educational intentions, nor the move for separation of the executive and judicial functions.

According to the summary the people reportedly directed their heaviest criticism at the Supreme Court. The indigene did not understand the court processes, particularly legal argument, the relationship between the participants and counsel, the intricacies of pleading, and acquittal through legal technicalities.

To the indigene the Supreme Court is part of the Government, and its aloofness, incomprehensibility, inconsistency, and weakness are the faults of the Government, and justice is manifestly not done.

Detailed examples were given of delays in hearings by the Supreme Court, a growing backlog of land disputes which had been removed from the jurisdiction of Native Affairs officers without adequate alternative provision, indigenes treating corrective institutions as 'something of a joke', their bafflement at the apparent lightness and inconsistency of sentences, hence taking the law violently into their own hands, increases in capital crime, and so on.<sup>33</sup>

The same problems were repeatedly noted by a variety of commentators of different backgrounds throughout the decade and beyond.

Charles Rowley, a historian who was Principal of the Australian School of Pacific Administration for fifteen years and had experience of the Territory dating back to World War II, commented in 1965:

Perhaps the pursuit of a too lofty ideal of legal unity may simply expedite the development of antipathy to a central administration which seems to some local leaders to neglect its responsibility to govern; so that a villager may break village customs and cause hardship to others, but make no breach of law which may be established in court, or a known tax defaulter can use a technicality to escape penalty.<sup>34</sup>

The Dean of the new Law Faculty in the University of Papua and New Guinea, Professor P. Gerard Nash, headed a section of his inaugural lecture: 'Why our Procedural and Evidentiary rules are not *per se* appropriate to the Territory'. He thought the real problem lay in the point made at the beginning of this paper, viz. in 'the completely different set of concepts possessed by the primitive indigene and the expatriate barrister and judge, by whom the trial is conducted'. He quoted the recent *Report on Higher Education in Papua and New Guinea*,<sup>35</sup> which referred to

The inherent difficulty of exchanging terms, concepts, and thought processes, developed over centuries, between two radically different cultures, poles apart in social structure, economic basis, and historical evolution — and expressing themselves in languages which have no faintest family relationship.<sup>36</sup>

Professor Nash went on to detail the practical problems of evidence in the courts of the day.<sup>37</sup>

Among these and other critiques of the kind none is stronger or more comprehensive than that of Ian Downs, field officer and District Commissioner of the 1940s and 1950s, planter

and businessman, member of the Legislative Council and House of Assembly, and author of the officially-sponsored history of Australia's post-World War II administration of the Territory. Downs devotes twelve pages of his book to the issues and policies of the 1960s in the administration of justice, focusing on the Derham Report, its background, and the attempted and actual changes which followed. Here are some of the points he made:

The [local government] council system had been designed to teach the people to conduct their own affairs in accordance with the rule of law. It was naive to imagine that councillors and council business could remain aloof from law and order. The vacuum was partly filled by councillors convening their own illicit tribunals.<sup>38</sup>

Our courts seemed to Melanesians to place too high a value on the sanctity of the rules of evidence, to be diverted by what seemed to be technical trivia, to over-value inanimate objects, to have a biased regard for the status of women and to have no comprehension of vendetta responsibilities and metaphysical influences on the motives of people.<sup>39</sup>

As in other matters, after the 1972 election and formation of the indigene-led, virtually autonomous National Coalition in the House of Assembly, the Australian Department of External Territories abdicated the tight control it had previously exercised over the development of legal institutions and legal policy in Papua New Guinea. An academic lawyer working in Port Moresby at the time writes that the immediate result was a virtual vacuum in such policy-making. The Department of Law in Port Moresby (as distinct from one or two of its individual members) had never taken much interest in attempts to develop locally adapted legal institutions and techniques, and at the time was particularly ill-equipped to do so. The officials who had shown an imaginative and well-informed concern with those problems were all working outside the Department: C.J. Lynch as

Legislative Counsel (i.e. chief parliamentary draftsman); Peter Lalor as Public Solicitor, long in tense relations with the Department; and John Ley, Counsel to the House of Assembly and from September 1972 released to serve the Constitutional Planning Committee. That committee had also appropriated one of the ablest indigenous lawyers, Bernard Narakobi (later Chief Justice).

Hence it is understandable that there was only one important structural change to the legal system in the first half of the 1970s, namely the establishment of village courts (see below); other changes were by way of administrative and staffing developments in the existing system.

The Administration's attempts to increase indigenous staffing in legal institutions offered a particularly painful example of the paucity of suitably-educated indigenous people.

At the Local Court level the number of full-time indigenous Magistrates rose from 27 in mid-1971 to 50 at mid-1973, with 17 more about to be appointed. We have noted the appointment of between 140 and 150 indigenous Assistant Magistrates, to sit with Local Courts at hearings and, where helpful, to mediate between parties. Division of District Administration field officers were appointed as Local Court Magistrates from time to time in remote areas to supplement the full time Magistrates when necessary. The majority of these were still Australian in the mid-1970s.

Dependence on the *kiap* in the administration of justice remained still greater at the District Court level. Of the eighteen District Courts (one for each District) at this period, from nine to twelve were manned by Resident Magistrates, all *kiaps* of whom four were indigenous by 1973; five by Stipendiary Magistrates (qualified barristers or solicitors, probably all expatriate in the period); and the remaining courts by Reserve Magistrates who were drawn from the body of indigenous Local Court Magistrates.<sup>40</sup>

As one of the last gestures of Australian judicial policy, the Papua New Guinea Act was amended in 1973 to permit appointment of non-Australians to the Supreme Court, but only one such appointment had been made up to 1977. John Kaputin, while Minister for Justice in 1973-74, established a precedent of appointing to the Supreme Court Australian lawyers with PNG experience.

As we have seen, the introduced Australian law (specifically the Laws Repeal and

Adopting Ordinance 1921-1952) purported to 'permit' the tribal institutions, customs and usages of the indigenous people 'to continue in existence in so far as the same are not repugnant to the general principles of humanity'. We also noted that the Native Customs (Recognition) Ordinance 1963 authorised 'native custom' to be recognised, enforced and pleaded in all (introduced) courts, unless repugnant to humanity, inconsistent with Australian law in the Territory, 'against the public interest', or not in the best interests of a child. However, given the attitudes of Australian Ministers and officials, backed up by the views of Professor David Derham in his *Report on the Administration of Justice* of 1960, along with the domination of the courts — upon and in front of the bench — by Australian lawyers and kiaps, custom had received short shrift in court proceedings except as a factor to be considered when fixing sentences in criminal trials. There were, however, a few instances of attention being paid to custom, if only in order to modify its influence.

Under the Local Government Ordinance 1963-1971, local government councils could recommend to the Administrator the enforcement, variation or abolition of any native custom in the council area. Councils could also vary custom by implication when they made council rules. The main example of this was the practice, growing during the 1960s and 1970s, of councils trying to limit the steady inflation of bride price which was occurring in some areas, especially where bride price was commuted into cash as the cash income of villagers increased. By 1971 some thirty-nine councils had made rules setting maximum bride price or otherwise regulating marriage settlements.<sup>41</sup>

Another example of the growing recognition of customary institutions was legislation to facilitate business activity by customary groups. In 1969 when C.J. Lynch drafted a bill for this purpose, it was set aside because legislation based on Australian companies law to ease the activities of foreign businesses and local entrepreneurs was considered more urgent. However, in 1973 under the National Coalition, Lynch as First Legislative Counsel had the opportunity to redraft a bill nearer to his original intentions, prepared on T.E. Barnett's initiative by an Australian academic lawyer, Peter Fitzpatrick; the House of Assembly passed it in June 1974 as the Business Groups Incorporation Act.

More generally, as Bayne points out-

The sentiment that the legal system imposed by the Australian government was antithetical to the values of Papua New Guinea communities was articulated by politicians whenever legal issues were discussed in the House of Assembly and remained evident in the period after independence.<sup>42</sup>

Of course the architects of that system, such as Hasluck and Derham, would neither have denied the fact nor apologised for it. The values of Papua New Guinea communities in the jurisprudential field were antithetical to *them*, and they deliberately sought to supersede them. Their attitude was maintained into the 1970s by the Australian Administration, as in the following reference in the *Annual Reports* to what David Fenbury had called 'illicit native tribunals':

No action has been taken to recognise the jurisdiction of extra-legal indigenous tribunals. Any tribunal other than one established by law is illegal, and the policy is to encourage the people to turn to the proper judicial authority which is provided by statute.<sup>43</sup>

Nevertheless, by this time the Administration had begun to have second thoughts about the opposition it had maintained since Hasluck's time to the idea of official courts administered by ordinary Papuans and New Guineans. This arose from concern about the efficacy of the existing 'local' court system — which as indicated earlier was far from a grassroots system.

In February 1971 External Territories Minister Barnes asked a senior officer in his Canberra Department along with the Territory Secretary for Law to report on a number of questions: how to relieve the pressure on Supreme Court judges of appeals from lower courts, especially since the establishment of the Full Court of the Supreme Court in 1969; how to speed up the localisation of magistrate positions in the lower courts; and how effective was the present court system 'at village level' having in

mind 'proposals for the establishment of village courts and village constables'.<sup>44</sup> By December these officers had drawn up detailed terms of reference for designing a scheme to link legal administration with villages by means of village justices.

This had produced no results before the accession to power in 1972 of the National Coalition, which proceeded to appoint one expatriate and one indigenous District Court Magistrate to recommend a system of village courts. Accepting their proposals, the Government produced a White Paper which was enthusiastically endorsed by the House of Assembly. The Department of Law circulated in April 1973 a set of legislative proposals for discussion; reservations were expressed by a number of different legal authorities including the Law Society and speakers at the 1973 Waigani Seminar.

The first draft of the Village Courts Bill did little more than provide official recognition for existing unofficial mediatory procedures.<sup>45</sup> Dissatisfied with its provisions, the Pangu party's Barry (later Sir Barry) Holloway, Speaker of the House of Assembly, initiated discussions with Ministers, senior officials and others from which emerged the Village Courts Act passed late in 1973.<sup>46</sup> The Act demanded no formal qualifications for village court magistrates, but gave ample powers to the courts to adjudicate and make orders for compensation, fines or the performance of community work. A village court was not to be bound by any law, other than the Act, that was not expressly applied to it, but 'shall ... decide any matter before it in accordance with substantial justice' (s. 30). Under section 20 the courts were required to apply relevant custom as determined in accordance with the Native Customs (Recognition) Ordinance. Custom could be applied even if contrary to some other law, and local government councils could make rules declaring the custom in their own areas. The first village court was established in February 1975.

This was the one important structural change to the justice system in the twilight years of the colonial regime. It suggested that the ideas of Fenbury and Lynch, so summarily dismissed by Hasluck nearly twenty years before, were more congenial to emerging indigenous leaders than those of the colonial government and conventional Australian lawyers which had prevailed ever since. This did not mean that the

village court experiment would necessarily work smoothly or successfully. It would simply be another part of the complex colonial inheritance for Niuginians to manage henceforth.

The incompatibility of Niugini's traditional mode of social regulation with Australian concepts and institutions of 'justice' raised the most fundamental and difficult issues for colonial policy and, by the same token, for its valuation. Hasluck and his advisers mustered a multitude of arguments against customary law in an emerging modern state.

Value dilemmas abound here. Can the colonial power rightly call upon Niuginians to abandon their time-honoured customary culture? But is it not its duty to equip them for a Westernised future? Should it secure indigenous consent to a revolutionary change? But how could non-literate agriculturists give 'informed consent' in such a matter? Thanks to administrative bottlenecks and educational backlogs, Australia left no clear legacy in this field at Independence. Can a colonial policy, however well-meaning, be censured for administrative incompetence?

What primarily made havoc of Australian colonial policy at the last was the sudden imminence of Independence, in 1970. Policy was smothered by the mechanics of 'casting off', as expected decades of further 'preparation' evaporated overnight. This did not happen by indigenous demand - they weren't doing the casting off - but as a by-product of Australian domestic politics. Which prompts a couple of final provocative thoughts for people now enjoying hindsight: Did the Niuginians consent to Independence? Did Independence come too soon?

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  26. Barnett 1969, pp. 167, 166.
  27. Barnett 1969, pp. 167, 170.
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# From ANZAC Day to Remembrance Day: Remnants of Australian Rule in Papua New Guinea

*Hank Nelson*

On 23 July 1994 Sir Fred Reiher, the Papua New Guinea High Commissioner to Australia, laid a wreath at the Fuzzy Wuzzy Angel monument at the Canberra Services Club.<sup>1</sup> It was the thirteenth Remembrance Day, the day when the people of Papua New Guinea recall the experience of war.

When Papua New Guinea was an Australian Territory Anzac Day was a big occasion. Those extensive areas of white crosses of the war cemeteries outside Port Moresby, Lae and Rabaul were appropriate settings for moving ceremonies. But Anzac Day, so obviously Australian, was not an appropriate national holiday in independent Papua New Guinea. The government of Papua New Guinea searched for a replacement. It was to be called Remembrance Day, and it was briefly celebrated on 15 August, the day when the war ended in the Pacific.<sup>2</sup> In 1945 there were still ground fighting in the Sepik District of the mainland, on Bougainville and on New Britain. The end of the war was certainly significant in Papua New Guinea. But from 1982 Remembrance Day has been celebrated on 23 July, the day when the Papuan Infantry first went into battle against the Japanese in 1942. It was a brief encounter at Awala, before the Papuan police and infantry joined the retreat through Kokoda.<sup>3</sup> The shift to 23 July has been to something more specific to Papua New Guinea, a shift to battle rather than peace, and to soldiers and to a beginning - the beginning of the recognition that Papua New Guinean soldiers would gain in a World War. Remembrance Day is now much more like Anzac Day. And Anzac Day, while it is not a national holiday, is still important in Papua New Guinea. It is still a day for dawn services, wreath layings and meetings of black and white ex-servicemen.<sup>4</sup> Papua New Guinean perceptions of war, the way they remember war, and the importance they give to war in making their nation have clearly been influenced by Australia. Also, Remembrance Day as it is now emphasises a wartime partnership and shared experience between Australians and Papua New Guineans. It begins with Australians and Papuans side by side in battle. Wartime memory in Australia is a potent force sustaining sympathy for Papua New Guinea: Remembrance Day now generates some reciprocal sentiment.

There is still a significant difference from Anzac Day: Remembrance Day does not have popular support. In 1993 in Kavieng a New Ireland leader of the ex-servicemen rose to speak, and wept at the obvious neglect of the veterans - few people had turned up for the ceremony, shops had not closed, and politicians and senior public servants had stayed away.<sup>5</sup> In Port Moresby in 1994 the Lord Mayor, David Unagi, 'was angry and disappointed at the poor attendance at the Remembrance Day celebrations at Ela Beach'.<sup>6</sup> But it is difficult to generate popular enthusiasm on 23 July. It is not just that on that day in 1942 little happened, but that at the time the significance of the fighting for the Papuans was unrecognised and unreported. Speakers have few incidents to talk about, few particular men to name, and almost nothing to say about how the news was spread and received. Where in Australia during the Second World War over half a million people served overseas less than 10,000 Papuan New Guineans formally enrolled as soldiers, policemen and medical assistants, and the Papua New Guinean ex-servicemen have suffered from a lower life-expectancy, and the survivors are less likely to be living in the major urban centres.<sup>7</sup> Papua New Guinean ex-servicemen have neither the numbers nor the national organisation to provide a basis for popular support. The shift of emphasis in Remembrance Day to the soldiers has been away from the dominant Papua New Guinean experiences of the war.

The Second World War had a profound but uneven impact on Papua New Guinea. Those at the centre of the turmoil had nearly four years of violence, but for many people of the highlands the news and disease that travelled, community to community, from distant, strange people and strange events was all they knew of a world war.<sup>8</sup> And thousands were beyond even the talk of war. In 1945 the people of villages inland from Wewak or Torokina or Kerema or Salamaua did not know whether their experiences of war were common or unique - there was no generalised national experience of war. That was true for the next twenty years. Films, newspapers, radio, books, public speeches and school lessons were rarely directed at Papua New Guineans: there was no turning of particular peoples' knowledge of war



into a national experience.<sup>9</sup> The history of the war remained what was remembered and spoken - the history of the war stayed local for a generation. At that level, memories of the war could still be painful and divisive, they might not easily be made public, and even within a small community they are not uniform or comprehensive. In those desperate days of battles and changing rulers, when one third of the community died, people made difficult and terrible decisions to ensure the survival of themselves and their families.<sup>10</sup> And it is the strengths, weaknesses, divisions and complete absence of particular histories of war that have to be combated by those who want 23 July to be popular and national.

Even where Papua New Guineans want to create an institution that is theirs, but owes something to Australia and a shared history, unexpected forces from the past and the present complicate and distort events, and at any given time the product is different from the intention, and even from the best description.

In spite of the involvement of Australians in overseas wars, and the stress that Australians have placed on what they have done in war, it is probable that the most significant task undertaken by Australians overseas was their role in the making of the independent nation of Papua New Guinea. But Australian concerns about policies in Papua New Guinea may not have influenced the result in one seat in one federal election. Consider cases where other nations have ruled countries close to them - France and Algeria, England and Ireland. Governments have been determined by the question of colonial policy. Australia's possession of Papua New Guinea has had almost no impact on who Australians thought that they were. What Australians have done in Papua New Guinea is not seen as a significant Australian achievement or failure. In war Australians have always been junior partners. But in Papua New Guinea Australians decided policy and put it into action. And what Australians bequeathed the three million people of Papua New Guinea in 1975 has a significant influence in that country and in the region. We should wonder why Australians so rarely consider their record in Papua New Guinea. We should wonder why there are so few signs in Australia - in monuments, in language, in art, in consciousness - of the ninety-one years of Australia's formal relationship with Papua New Guinea. By design (through the white Australia policy) and indifference Australians have insulated themselves from reciprocal influence.

Independence Day, 16 September 1975, in Port Moresby was a day of public euphoria and optimism. There was much to applaud. The Australians had taken their leave quickly, peacefully and generously. There were no political prisoners to be released; no freedom fighters to emerge from the hills and take their uniforms, guns and anger into office; and no smoke from the burning of the out-going government's files to drift among the celebrating crowd. As John Guise, the first Governor-General said, they lowered the Australian flag, they did not tear it down. But two decades of independence have revealed defects and rigidity in the Australian legacy. The easy assertions about finding a new way and Julius Chan's simple statement, 'Now it's up to us', seems to have been too optimistic. The burden of the past is often heavy on the present.

There are two assertions now made about the timing of Papua New Guinea's independence. One is that when the Whitlam Australian Labor Government came to power in 1972 then there was a sharp quickening of the speed of Australia's disengagement. It is true that Whitlam made aggressive statements before coming to power. For example, early in 1971 Whitlam made it clear that if Labor won the next election - and that was then increasingly likely - Papua New Guinea would soon be given self-government and independence. He said:

It may be true that men cannot be forced to be free; it is certainly true that men cannot be forced to rule others. An Australian Labor Government will not be blackmailed into accepting an unnatural role as rulers over those who have no say and can have no say in electing us.<sup>11</sup>

It was a clear statement that Papua New Guinea was going to be independent - he was almost saying that Papua New Guineans were going to be independent whether they wanted to be or not.

Note the changes in the moral stance of the colonial power. What was before 1914 the responsibility of the superior to the inferior - the white man's burden - was a sacred trust from 1919, and was after 1945 a responsibility under a United Nations trust and an obligation to repay a war debt to the Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels. By 1971 that same sacred trust and debt of war had become immoral, repugnant.

But we now know that the Administrator, Les Johnson, thought that Whitlam's assertions were close to what was then the Australian administration's working assumptions.<sup>12</sup> Whitlam had made the Australian public aware of what was happening to their immediate north; but the fact that the Whitlam government came to power in 1972 had almost no impact on the course of events and only a slight influence on their speed. The change of government and the change of minister from Andrew Peacock to Bill Morrison made no difference to the date of internal self-government. On the motion of Michael Somare the House of Assembly set the target date of 1 December 1973 for self-government while Peacock was Minister, and that was achieved - without public ceremony - when Morrison was Minister.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps the change of government advanced the date of independence by between six months and two years, but once all powers except defence and external affairs were transferred then it was in the interests of Australia to go quickly. Obviously Australia did not want to be in the position of formal responsibility without controlling the policies or instruments of power. In any case, in the light of what could have been done to prepare Papua New Guinea for independence, a difference of less than two years would have been of almost no significance.

It is still worth asking whether the Australians granted independence too soon. But whatever the deficiencies in their preparations for independence, they got the timing about right. In 1973 and 1974 the Australians faced problems that they could not solve. The dissident movements on the Gazelle Peninsula and on Bougainville and the increasing lawlessness in the highlands meant that had Australia stayed another five years - and five years was a minimum to make any worthwhile difference - the Australians would have had to use force. Australians would have had to gaoil people who would have been seen as political prisoners. Whether or not the batons were wielded and rifles were fired by black police or troops, the situation would have appeared the same to the international community: Australians would have been seen as imperialist thugs. There is an inescapable problem for a colonial power faced with a dissident movement. When the dissidents come into violent confrontation with the colonial power then they gather the support of others in the colony. The dissidents are seen as nationalists, even if their aims - as in a separatist movement - are to leave the embryonic nation. The colonial power becomes the common enemy of what are in other circumstances incompatible forces. Australia

escaped, but only just, that unenviable situation where there could be no success, and opprobrium and defeat were likely.

If we glance at the present political map of Africa we see all those patches, those distorted rectangles, straight arbitrary lines, curves to enclose pockets of nations and lines that wander with rivers. So many of the lines came out of the colonisation of Africa. People have died and continue to die to change lines on the map of Africa. The lines may be the most obvious, important and enduring legacies of colonialism in Africa.

Australians and New Zealanders rarely think about borders. The sea makes the lines on their maps - and in their minds when they think about the limits of nationhood. It was something many brought with them from the British Isles. Nations end where dirt ends and water begins. But continental Europeans, and particularly eastern Europeans, can rarely be unconscious of the significance of lines on maps.

And lines on maps have been an important legacy of colonialism in our area. Samoa is divided. Half is an unincorporated territory of the USA, and most of that half's people live in the United States, and the other half is the independent state of Western Samoa - with strong ties to New Zealand. The division of Timor between the Dutch and Portuguese is still strong in minds even if the line is diminished on the map. The lines on the map inherited by the new nation of Papua New Guinea are certainly significant. They are the legacy of the four colonial powers that have ruled the island.

In 1828 the Dutch claimed New Guinea to the 141st meridian.<sup>14</sup> They claimed it as part - or perhaps an extension - of sultanates that came within their territory in the East Indies. It was the 141st meridian in the south, but just where the boundary was in the north was uncertain. It did not matter. When Germany and Britain laid claim to eastern New Guinea in 1884 both accepted the 141st meridian. The line was fixed although at that time there was no permanent Dutch settlement in New Guinea.

There was some moderation of the 141st meridian. When it was discovered that the Fly River cut the border, the river bed was made the boundary. But of course that gave a little more land to British New Guinea. The Dutch were compensated by shifting the border south of the Fly to the east. It is now on 141 degrees 1 minute and 10 seconds east: the border is an arbitrary line

drawn with meticulous concern for an equal division of the colonial spoils.

Dutch New Guinea was attacked by Indonesian troops, was nominally controlled by the United Nations Temporary Executive Authority in 1962-3, and was confirmed as part of Indonesia by what was termed an 'act of self-determination' in 1969. It is now Irian Jaya, a province of the Republic of Indonesia. The land boundary between Papua New Guinea and Indonesia is over 600 kilometres long, one of the great arbitrary land borders. It cuts through people - particularly on the north coast, in the Bewani, and among the Ok peoples - who traded, married, hunted, gardened and fought across the border lands. Now as migrants come into Irian Jaya from other parts of Indonesia and Irian Jaya is pulled more to the west, what once registered a carve-up between colonial powers has become something more.

It is where one lingua franca - Indonesian - ends and others - English and Tok Pisin - begin. It is becoming where two of the world religions - Islam and Christianity - meet. In the broadest terms it may become where Southeast Asia ends and Melanesia begins, a major eastward shift of a line demarking cultures and how peoples define themselves.

Nearly every year there have been reports of violence along the border. One of the most dramatic incidents was in 1984 when over 10,000 refugees crossed from west to east. But usually the Australian press gives just two or three column inches on an inside page - reporting an Organisasi Papua Merdeka (OPM) attack, or Indonesian troops crossing into Papua New Guinea, or a kidnapping, or an arrest. Papua New Guinea lives with refugees, minor sporadic violence and foreign troop incursions.<sup>15</sup>

Because it is a long land border, because it cuts diverse and difficult country, because it cuts people of one culture, because a guerrilla movement, the OPM, operates across it, because profound changes are taking place on either side of it, we can predict trouble - given the best will of the national governments.

In 1886 Germany and Britain sorted out their border in the Solomons. All the northern Solomons - Bougainville, Choiseul and Ysabel - went to Germany, and the south to Britain. In 1899 they did another deal. Britain conceded Western Samoa to Germany, and Germany gave up some of the Solomons. Choiseul and Ysabel became British, and Germany retained only Bougainville. It became part of German New Guinea administered from Rabaul. When

Australian troops captured Rabaul in 1914, Bougainville was seen as part of 'Late German New Guinea' and was retained as a district of Australian New Guinea. From 1945 it was part of the combined Australian Territory of Papua and New Guinea. In 1975 Bougainville was included within the independent nation of Papua New Guinea.

At various times the Bougainvilleans have asserted their sense of separateness. They did it at independence in 1975, and it was significant that they chose to change the name of their Province from Bougainville to the North Solomons. The sense of separateness of the Bougainvilleans is sustained by geography and by the distinctive physical appearance of the Bougainvilleans. It was stimulated, but not created, by the opening of the giant copper mine at Panguna in 1972.

The current phase of violence began in 1988 with the blowing up of the pylons carrying the electricity supply to the mine, and became of increased national importance with the closure of the mine in mid 1989. There has now been six years of violence. We do not know how many of the 140,000 people on Bougainville have died in violence or because they have been deprived of health services. Probably over a thousand.<sup>16</sup> And of course nearly all other services, such as schools, have been closed. The causes of the violence and why the violence has continued on Bougainville are complex, but one factor has certainly been that basic sense of difference from the rest of Papua New Guinea.<sup>17</sup>

Consider the recent history of Bougainville: from 1886 it was nominally German, in 1914 it was occupied by Australians, in 1942 it was captured by Japan, in 1943 the USA troops landed at Torokina on the west coast, in 1944 and 45 the Australians returned, and in 1975 Bougainville became a province of the independent nation of Papua New Guinea. All those changes could have taken place within just one life-time. It is probably reasonable to say that through all those changes Bougainvilleans have thought they were governed by foreigners. They have a sense of themselves as incidentals in other nations' histories. One issue now being contested on Bougainville is not whether Bougainville will be separate, but who will articulate and negotiate the degree of separateness.

In 1879, before Britain and Germany had claimed eastern New Guinea, Queensland pushed its border north to include the Torres Strait Islands. And that began the struggle of the Torres Strait Islanders to establish their identity. They want us

to remember always that it is Australian Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. After Britain, then Australia, acquired southeast New Guinea there were several attempts to sort out the Torres Strait border. But a settlement was not reached until 1978, and then it was between the independent nations of Papua New Guinea and Australia.<sup>18</sup>

For those ninety-nine years from 1879 to 1978 the border that enclosed all of Torres Strait within Queensland and Australia was seen as temporary or unjust. The problem for the Australians was to share the area without conceding land or dividing the peoples of the Torres Strait, and to avoid a fight with Queensland over the power of the Australian government to dispose of state assets. The Torres Strait Treaty of 1978 was negotiated with goodwill on both sides. The result is a confusion of five different lines: a seabed resources line across the middle of the Strait, a swimming fishes line, lines enclosing the territorial seas of the northern islands, a Protected Zone delineation line, and lines marking the sea boundary between Papua New Guinea and the northern islands - Boigu and Saibai. It is now difficult to say where Australia ends and Papua New Guinea begins. It does not matter as long as the occasion does not arise where precision is needed.

As it is now, the southern boundary of Papua New Guinea is a buffer zone of intersecting lines. The Torres Strait Islanders are within Australia, and they have clear historical and cultural connections to the Melanesians to their north, and they assert a separate identity. Perhaps the cartographic imprecision is appropriate.

The boundaries inherited by any new nation are important: they are an obvious definition of nationhood. The boundaries bequeathed to Papua New Guinea make the definition of nationhood difficult. It is a half island attached to other islands, one of which is aberrant. Its nationalism must be learnt. On two of its borders Papua New Guinea has had to deploy troops for long periods; on two of its borders people have died; and the ramifications of having a young state dependent on the defence forces for its integrity will continue.

The Australians have certainly not been exclusively responsible for the creation of the boundaries of Papua New Guinea. But Australians have had little experience in land borders and were not always alert to the difficulties that the borders would create, and they were not always the most proficient tutors in boundary administration. Was there ever an opportunity to adjust the boundaries?

There was a slight chance to change the Solomons border after First World War and again after the Second World War, and those slight chances were never seized, nor were they likely to have been seized, by the two powers then administering the Solomons, Australia and Great Britain.

Proximity long confused Australians about whether policies in Papua New Guinea should be different from those in the other great Commonwealth possession, the Northern Territory.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps both were to be Australian states. From annexation many of the basic institutions of British New Guinea were deliberately transferred from Australia.<sup>20</sup> Where in Fiji Dr (later Sir) William MacGregor had worked with Sir Arthur Gordon to integrate Fijian custom and organisation into the colonial order, in British New Guinea MacGregor often imposed Australian laws and practices. Among the first laws he enacted were the Queensland Criminal Code and Queensland mining law. Believing that British New Guinea would one day be part of the proposed federation of Australasian colonies, MacGregor was obliged to tie the area to Australian precedents.

Fifty years later in 1939 Sir Hubert Murray wrote to his brother Gilbert:

in Papua the ultimate fate of the natives is as part of an Australian State - in the Mandated Territory of New Guinea it is independence. It may seem rather ridiculous that New Guinea should ever be independent - yet we contemplate the independence of the Philippines, and in a hundred years the New Guinea natives might easily be the equal of the Philipinos of to-day.<sup>21</sup>

The same assumption about Papua's constitutional destiny was accepted by the committee of the Australian parliament enquiring into the possibility of amalgamating Papua and New Guinea.<sup>22</sup> If Australia's policy then was to prepare Papua to become an Australian state it follows that those charged with implementing that policy should be judged on how well they prepared Papua for integration into the Australian federation rather than on the extent to which they built for an independent nation. But in fact Australia was uncertain of its purpose in Papua for well over eighty of its ninety-one years of rule.

As the day when Papua might make the transition to state seemed so far away Australians

did not have to think about the contradictions inherent in the notion of adding half a million black people to a white Australia. They lived with ambiguity. Australians in Papua were not colonists: they were still in Australian Territory. But the Papuans were not Australians although they lived in the same place. The people of Papua had their own stamps, but used Australian coins. The Australians in Papua were on the Australian frontier - sometimes inside and sometimes beyond the Australian border. They expected the credit that Australians gave other pioneers, and were hurt when they were seen as exploiters, adventurers and colonisers. Yet they were likely at other times to see themselves as builders of points of civilisation in what was clearly another and different part of the British Empire. The Union Jack, rather than the Australian flag, was flown at Government House, Port Moresby, until the 1950s.<sup>23</sup>

In the Mandated Territory of New Guinea the uncertainty took a different form. New Guinea was a prize of war and part of the compensation paid for 60,000 Australians killed in the First World War; and those Australians who took up positions in the government and on plantations did not expect their reward to be temporary. In 1919 William Hughes, the Australian Prime Minister, told Woodrow Wilson, the American President, that northeast New Guinea was a 'frontier question' and Australia looked to its 'ultimate incorporation'.<sup>24</sup> But Australians were also conscious of obligations they had accepted under the Treaty of Versailles: Australians were guardians of 'peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world'.<sup>25</sup> There were gross inconsistencies between a 'sacred trust' and a 'prize of war'; but they too could be left to a distant future.

The uncertainty of Australia's intent persisted after the Second World War. The combined territories were said to be under the guidance of an 'Administering Authority' trying to

bring [the people] as quickly as possible to the stage where they will be able to manage their own affairs and decide their political future as a people.

That was repeated in the annual reports to the United Nations during the 1960s. If single terms were required then 'self-determination' and 'self-government' were favoured.<sup>26</sup> Australia seemed to be saying that Papua New Guineans could have what they wanted when they were at a stage to

decide for themselves. A policy so apparently generous and benign was difficult to oppose; but it was of course misleading. Papua New Guineans had to be on some constitutional road while they were being brought to the point of 'self-determination' - the initial decisions could not be theirs. In 1968 the Minister for Territories, Charles Barnes, was still talking about something other than independence for an internally self-governing Papua New Guinea. It was not, he said, a practical possibility for the Territory to become as seventh state 'for the time being', although he could not rule out what might happen in the distant future. But there would be, he said, 'this closer association' with Australia: 'Our futures are destined to run parallel'.<sup>27</sup> His statement was not a reflection of the idiosyncrasies of a particular minister. His predecessor, Sir Paul Hasluck, had spoken in 1958 of 'a future time when the people of Papua and New Guinea will seek self-government and some measure of independence'.<sup>28</sup> His use of the qualification, 'some measure', sustained the illusion of a lasting constitutional tie. If Australia had endured the tyranny of distance then Papua New Guinea suffered the confusion of proximity.

Eventually Papua New Guineans were told that whatever way they went they would all go together. 'Self-determination' did not mean that some could make one choice while others made another. Nor could they choose to become an Australian state. And in the end independence was as much an Australian choice as it was Papua New Guinean. That clarifying and hardening of the Australian position was not expressed effectively until 1971, just two and half years before self-government and four years before independence.<sup>29</sup>

The lack of a clearly defined policy coupled with the misleading belief that Papua New Guinea would somehow continue to have a formal constitutional relationship with Australia stopped Australians from developing - or allowing to develop - institutions and procedures in law, politics, education and administration that were appropriate to a separate nation. The policy adopted by Macgregor had continued; and that was desirable if the territories were to become part of Australia or just 'run parallel'. The confusion of Australia's policy sprang easily from the confused Australian perceptions of New Guinea - it was sometimes on and within their frontier and sometimes it was overseas. The perception and policy in turn help explain why Papua New Guineans came so suddenly to power and at the same time struggled to define the basic institutions

of government. It was a fundamental deficit of Australian rule that Papua New Guineans took office so inexperienced in executive government, with so few defined policies, and with some organs of government either breaking down or being changed.

The failure of Australians to clarify their policies towards Papua New Guinea also meant that in the years immediately before independence Papua New Guinean public debates were almost entirely concerned with what various groups within Papua New Guinea wanted, and when various steps towards self-government and independence should take place. For example, in mid 1971 the House of Assembly debated and passed a motion that the Australian parliament send to Papua New Guinea a delegation 'to determine the wishes of the Papuan people'.<sup>30</sup> The question of the timing of constitutional change was even more dominant in public discussion. As a result the more important long-term issues, such as what policies should be adopted by a self-governing Papua New Guinea, were rarely considered. The most important division between the parties in the House of Assembly in 1971 and 1972 was the speed of constitutional change; and that distinguishing characteristic disappeared in September 1975. Nothing of equal significance replaced it.

The self-congratulations of Australians about the orderly transfer of power and the apparent rationality of the constitutional steps disguised the reality. In 1951 the Legislative Council was established with three nominated Papua New Guineans; in 1961 its membership was increased to include six elected Papua New Guineans; in 1964 the House of Assembly first met with full adult franchise for 44 open electorates; in 1968 the House of Assembly was expanded and Papua New Guineans who met the required educational standard could stand for regional electorates; and in 1972 the House was again enlarged. At the same time as the House was shifting to increasing numbers of elected Papua New Guineans members, Papua New Guineans were being given experience in the executive as Under-Secretaries, then Ministerial Members, and as members of the Administrator's Council (later the Administrator's Executive Council). But when the Somare coalition government was formed in 1972 only three members (Paul Lapun, John Guise and Kaibelt Diria) had had any experience of nominal executive government, and within twenty months the coalition ministry ruled a self-governing Papua New Guinea. The apparently orderly

constitutional changes of twenty years had been effectively compressed into less than two.

During the three years of Papuan New Guinean initiation into national government - from when Somare took office in 1972 to independence in 1975 - the executive faced successive crises while the Constitutional Planning Committee and the whole parliament considered the form of government to be adopted by an independent Papua New Guinea. The new nation then came into existence with an untried constitution and its new definitions of relations between the various levels of government and between officers and arms of government and of new procedures. For example, the method of securing a vote of no confidence in a prime minister, the powers of the ombudsman set out in the constitution and the notion of organic laws were all new to Papua New Guineans and alien to Australians.

The second level of government, the provincial assemblies, were almost entirely new: they bore little resemblance to the old District Advisory Councils. It could be said that Papua New Guineans, having made the decision to establish the provincial assemblies, should accept responsibility for their creation and performance; but the provincial governments arose in part from regional feelings stimulated by Australian administration and they were created to contain secessionist forces that the Australians had been unable to moderate.

At the level of the local councils Papua New Guineans inherited a system that had partly broken down. The councils had once been the great hope of Australians in their attempt to implant traditions of orderly western-style government. In 1962 after a decade as Minister Hasluck wrote a minute stressing that each council was to be a 'school of political advancement'.<sup>31</sup> Fifteen years after the war thirty-nine councils had been formed and they covered only fourteen per cent of the total population. From 1960 growth was rapid with the number of people in councils tripling in three years so that just under half the population were formally under council rule by 1964. As a result most people voted in the first general election for the House of Assembly before they had a local council, and another thirty per cent had only recently been included in a council. Rather than the councils being training grounds, most people were initiated into the mechanics of voting at a national election.

In the early 1960s, when the councils were being spread rapidly, disillusioned villagers in the older council areas were already turning away. The councils had not given them what they wanted:

the dignity that went with understanding and controlling their own affairs, an entry into *bisnis*, and an effective means of settling disputes and curbing crime. In the 1960s, too, the councils were enlarged so that some forty or fifty councillors might be elected to administer 30,000 people: it was no longer local and there was no effective village-level institution. This was the situation, then, inherited by a self-governing Papua New Guinea in 1973: a minority of the people were within the boundaries of vigorous local government councils, and the rest were in areas where either the council worked fitfully to carry out minor public works and public welfare projects or it had virtually ceased all effective operations. Even where the councils worked they tended to operate at a level that left many villages with no formal institutional ties to the national system. In the main towns local governments that covered squatters, suburbs, business districts and traditional villagers were new and in flux. To put the worst case: Australians relinquished power to inexperienced Papua New Guineans, and at neither the local, nor provincial nor national levels did they move into systems of government that were known, efficient and doing what Papua New Guineans wanted.

Since the introduction of universal franchise in 1964 there have been seven general elections - three since independence.<sup>32</sup> Governments change at elections - as they did from Chan to Somare in 1982, and in 1992 from Namaliu to Wingti. The elections are boisterous, tough, free festivals of democracy. The Australian administration worked hard to devise an electoral system that was simple, efficient and just. Voting is not preferential: it is a simple first past the post system. Each person votes for two candidates: in a local electorate and in the larger provincial electorate. There is one house in the parliament. People are keen to stand - the general educational standard of candidates has been rising - and about seventy five per cent of the eligible voters turn up to vote. That is relatively high.

But this is what happens in many electorates. In the Kundiawa Open electorate in 1982 twenty-nine candidates stood. About 15,000 people voted. Sixteen candidates got over 500 votes, and the winner got just 1,244 votes. That was eight per cent of all votes cast, and five per cent of potential votes. In 1992 an average of fifteen candidates stood in each electorate, and half of those elected got less than twenty per cent of the vote.

In an extreme and simplified case, the electorate is made up of extended families and

clans.<sup>33</sup> Each of these communities puts up its own candidate - each feels obliged to do so. The election then becomes a test of group size and allegiance. Policies and party allegiance are irrelevant. Candidates may not campaign outside their home area. The winning candidate is not the choice of the majority, and is not seen as the representative of most people. If you ask some people, 'Who is your representative?' you might be told, 'We don't have one. Our man got beaten.' In these circumstances the aim of parties, and of ambitious leaders in the parliament, is to recruit the candidate with the strongest group support in the electorate - either before or after the election. Particular candidates, not parties and not policies, are important after the election as well as before. It encourages a system of bidding to recruit successful candidates. It means that candidates in the election, and in allegiance to parties or loosely aligned groups within the parliament, are not committed to a policy. It makes for a volatile system held together by personal loyalties and favours.

All this arises because of the imposition of an electoral system on small communities where group consciousness exceeds concern for, or knowledge of, parties or policies. The fact that the system does not work well is not necessarily because of any failure or delinquency of Australians - it illustrates the problems that arise when institutions are imposed on a new social environment. It would have been presumptive of Australians to think that they could devise a new system specifically for Papua New Guinea. There is at least one qualification to this. Had Australians given Papua New Guineans more experience of executive government, and had the debates before the 1972 election been concerned with matters of policy rather than when self-governing powers would be transferred to Papua New Guineans, then perhaps stronger parties based on policies might have developed.

The political system need not matter all that much if the public service is efficient. The problem for Papua New Guinea is that government is very much dependent on the political system. High-ranked Papua New Guinean public servants, recognising the significance of the elected executive government, have shifted, or tried to shift, into the parliament.

From the mid 1960s many Papua New Guineans public servants were doing training courses, acting as under-studies, shifting to the new glamour positions as they opened up - say in foreign affairs - but few of them were staying long

in important middle and upper level positions. In 1968 there were no Papua New Guineans in the first division of the public service. In 1972 when the Somare government took office and was gathering the powers for self-government, there was just one Papua New Guinean head of department - Paulius Matane, Head of the Department of Business Development. At that time there were still over 6000 overseas officers employed under the Public Service Ordinance - one third of all public servants.<sup>34</sup> The Papua New Guinean public servants came as late and as quickly to power as the politicians. And perhaps that has been more significant.

Unlike the haze that clouded their constitutional goals, the Australians expressed a precise educational target. J.K.Murray, the first postwar administrator, said in 1946, 'The first requirement in universal literacy'.<sup>35</sup> Changes in government in Canberra and in the administration in Port Moresby brought slight modification to the basic policy. Twenty years after the end of the Second World War the aim was 'mass literacy, i.e., to teach all indigenous children to read and write in a common language'.<sup>36</sup> Yet Australians maintained a policy in terms of teacher training, school curricula and buildings that made it impossible for them to come close to reaching their stated objective. On the eve of self-government only about half of the children of primary school age had a school to go to, and about one-third of those entering a primary school reached grade six. At independence two-thirds of adults were illiterate and just twelve per cent of appropriately aged males and seven per cent of females were in secondary schools.<sup>37</sup>

Clearly Australia should have either changed its aim or adopted radically different means of reaching it. The new Papua New Guinea government faced the handicap of an ill-educated population relative to other third world countries; an expanding population that meant even to keep the same per cent of children in schools there had to be a rapid expansion in the system; and complex issues about how to achieve an equitable and efficient distribution of government funds when for the next thirty years there was no chance of schools being provided for all.

Apart from literacy there are other simple indices commonly used to measure nations.<sup>38</sup> Life expectancy at the time of independence was about forty. It is now about fifty-five. That is still low compared with other low income countries. Infant mortality per 1000 live births was over 130 in the 1970s, again very high compared with low income

countries. The daily per capita calorie intake was low. In 1970 the total government revenue raised within Papua New Guinea was less than the money granted by the Australian government. By 1975 the internal revenue was greater than the grant from Australia, but independent Papua New Guinea still had a dependent economy. By the early 1990s the grant money had fallen to less than twenty-five per cent of internal revenue. By these simple calibrations of the economy and welfare, at independence Papua New Guineans, compared to populations in other low income countries, were poorly educated, were poorly fed, had high death rates, low life expectancy, low per capita income and an economy with a high dependence on overseas aid.

Australia left a daunting list of problems for Papua New Guineans, and gave them few efficient tools to use. But Papua New Guineans did have political and material advantages over many peoples made subservient at the height of western imperialism. Most natural resources remained to be exploited by Papua New Guineans; there was almost no tradition of political intimidation; free elections were accepted as way of changing governments; there was little corruption; there were no international enemies; a reserve of mutual goodwill remained in both Australia and Papua New Guinea; there was a free press; there was a tradition of frank, direct and generally benign contact between government officers and villagers; there was record of getting benefits to the 'bush'; the health service from 1945 was innovative and appropriate; the central courts were established as strong, independent institutions; and Australia had been served by many officers who were more talented and dedicated than their salaries or public estimation required. Many of the 'outside men' of the 1930s and later had a respect for their village subjects and formed personal relationships with them that allowed them to move easily between bantering and seriousness. Their attitudes have yet to be analysed and placed in the context of other Australian and imperial racial values of the time. If we assume that the irresponsible and intolerant Australians had an influence, then we must also accept that these other Australians had a lasting impact.

In this survey of Australian remnants north of Torres Strait few intangible influences - such as the way Anzac Day seems to have influenced Remembrance Day - have been examined. But many other factors outside politics and economics - such as sport, beer, radio and television, and art - are worthy of consideration. A fundamental legacy



of colonialism is simply the map - the lines reflecting the arbitrary enclosing of space and people that Papua New Guineans must transform into a nation. That in itself is a formidable task. It would be possible (and exhausting) to make a careful evaluation of the basic political institutions inherited and created at independence; and there are standard social and economic indicators of national development. By any quantitative measure Australia left Papua New Guineans poor, sick, ill-educated and with little effective infrastructure of government. But another measure is comparative. What was the Australian legacy to Papua New Guinea relative to that left other ex-colonial states - relative to the ex-colonies of Africa? The comparison can be brought closer to home: to New Caledonia, to the Solomons, to Borneo - another great island with arbitrary divisions - to the Philippines. In a relative judgement Australia's legacy moves up the international league ladder. Perhaps not to the top, but getting a run in the elimination finals.

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# Managing Ethnicity in Colonial and Post-colonial Fiji

*Brij V. Lal*

Politics in Fiji has been the subject much scholarly debate in recent years, inspired in no small part by the coups of 1987 and their aftermath. The role of ethnicity in the political process has often been at the centre of that debate. On the one hand there are scholars who argue that 'planned political change for development cannot succeed unless conceived through the prism of ethnicity.' For them, the 'ethnic factor is integral to the environment; it is at once both the subject and object of change.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand there are scholars who locate the dynamics of Fijian politics not in ethnicity but in class and other such socially-constructed phenomena.<sup>2</sup> My purpose here is not to revisit the theoretical debate about the motive force in Fiji politics. Instead, it is to see how the state has attempted to manage the question of ethnicity and to assess its relevance for political behaviour in Fiji. The focus is on the post-colonial period, including the period since the coups of 1987, but the roots of the problem are firmly embedded in Fiji's tortuous history. The foundations of post-colonial structures were laid in the colonial era, and they were maintained and nurtured in the post-colonial period. Continuity with past patterns of politics rather than change in new directions was the hallmark of Fiji's transition to independence. We begin, therefore, with a glance at the management of ethnicity in the colonial period.

## **Fiji: Three-Legged Stool**

The colonial self-image of Fiji was as a three-legged stool. The three legs of the stool were the Fijian, Indo-Fijian and European communities, each of which supposedly accepted their designated place in the colonial scheme of things and made their separate but equal contribution to society.<sup>3</sup> The Fijians provided the land, the Indo-Fijians labour and the Europeans capital and management. In this way, each group contributed to the maintenance of a harmonious colonial equilibrium. This was a comforting myth with some correspondence to reality. But the metaphor hid a far more complex, fluid picture of the colonial polity. To start with, none of the groups was socially homogenous or necessarily united in their diverse interests. There was no equality of power, privilege or status among them. Nor was there equality between Indo-Fijian labour on the one hand and European

power on the other. Nor, again, was the colonial state itself the neutral, benevolent, disinterested arbiter of conflict among the three groups.

Benevolence was the rhetoric; the reality was different. Colonialism in Fiji, as elsewhere, was ultimately about control. And this was reflected powerfully in the institutions and processes of daily life in the colony.<sup>4</sup> All power was centralised in the hands of the governor and his small (advisory) executive council, which consisted of a majority of ex-officio members (heads of government departments) and a minority of nominated members representing the three main ethnic groups. The legislative council was a caricature of the westminster system where the government was always assured of majority votes. The colonial government took its orders from the Colonial Office in London to which alone it was answerable. The colonial state also intervened not only to control but also to define the social and cultural life of the colony.<sup>5</sup> Thus all those practices, rituals and ceremonies that were deemed threatening, offensive or otherwise unacceptable, were outlawed, and its practitioners punished. The education system, rudimentary though it was, encouraged the ethos of 'a deeper sense of patriotism, a stricter self-discipline, a harder endurance, a deeper respect for others and a strict obedience to lawful authority.'<sup>6</sup> In short, colonial policies and practices kept the colony under tight reign.

In the management of ethnicity, the strategy of compartmentalisation of the different ethnic groups was central to the larger goal of colonial control and consolidation. The three main ethnic groups, Fijians, Indo-Fijians and Europeans, were different from each other in terms of culture, social background and historical experience, though, of course, there were many conditions and interests which also united them. Nonetheless, the maintenance of the differences became the object and *ration d'être* of government policy.

The foundations of ethnic separation were laid at the time of cession in 1874. Sir Arthur Gordon, the first governor (1875-1880), adopted the policy of indirect rule as the principle of colonial government in Fiji, the 'general aim [being] the development of native society in such a way as to enable it to stand on its own feet in the strenuous conditions of the modern world.'<sup>7</sup> To that end, the government prohibited the commercial

employment of Fijian labour on European plantations, introduced a system of taxation which enabled Fijians to live in the villages and pay their tax in kind, and created a plethora of legislation that defined and regulated social and economic interaction with the other communities. An advisory body, the Great Council of Chiefs, was created to advise the government on matters pertaining to Fijian society.<sup>8</sup>

The imposition of a uniform code of laws and customs backed by the power of the state, distorted and froze at a particular moment in time a fluid and flexible situation. Those Fijians who felt marginalised or wanted a greater role in the affairs of their people, protested against the new neo-traditional order: one thinks of Apolosi Nawai or the Viti Caurvou, for example.<sup>9</sup> But often, their acts of resistance came to naught. In any event, a separate system of Fijian administration, dominated by chiefs and supported by the colonial government, kept the Fijian people close to their rural, subsistence moorings well into the 1960s, when it was abandoned in response to internal demands for change and external criticism.<sup>10</sup>

The second leg of the Fijian stool were the Indo-Fijians, whose roots went back to 1879 when the first group of Indian indentured labourers arrived in Fiji. By the time emigration ended in 1916 (the indenture system itself was abolished in 1920), some sixty thousand had arrived in the colony on a five year contract.<sup>11</sup> When their indenture ended, the majority decided to stay on in Fiji, encouraged by a colonial government keen to develop a local source of cheap labour, and for other personal and social reasons. Controlling the indentured population on the plantations was easy enough. The labourers were scattered throughout the colony, isolated and vulnerable to pressure from their employers. Their interests were represented in government by the Agent General of Immigration. In 1916, the Indo-Fijians were granted one nominated seat on the Legislative Council, though the choice of the person was contested. But problems arose when indenture ended. For once free, the Indo-Fijians began to demand political rights commensurate with their numbers and their contribution to the economic life of the colony. Their agitation for political equality, and specially for a common electoral roll (one person, one vote, one value) spawned the fear of 'Indian dominance' which helped to forge a coalition between European and Fijian interests. Preventing the Indo-Fijians from gaining an equal political footing in the colony became an important part of the colonial endeavour.

Europeans constituted the third leg of the Fijian stool. Though numerically small, they were a powerful force in Fiji society and politics. They controlled the public service and the commercial life of the colony. As members of the privileged 'British race,' they expected their interests and aspirations to be accorded first priority in colonial matters.<sup>12</sup> When these were not fully realised or thwarted, they championed other causes, including federation with New Zealand in the early years of this century. After the 1920s, they forged a coalition with the Fijian chiefs against the threat of Indian dominance. With minor variations, that coalition persisted well into the post-colonial era.

The fear of Indian dominance was one important equation in colonial Fijian politics. Another, often invoked in conjunction, was the Deed of Cession by which the Fijian chiefs had ceded their islands to Great Britain.<sup>13</sup> That document was interpreted as the charter for the protection of Fijian rights—the paramountcy of Fijian interests—and the government, with the concurrence of chiefs, used it as a tool to subvert any change that it did not approve itself. The opportunity for inter-ethnic dialogue was thus restricted to the ornate chambers of the Legislative Council. Those individuals or groups which attempted to penetrate each others boundaries or sought to question the legitimacy of the policy of ethnic compartmentalisation faced the wrath of the colonial state. And powerful vested interests in the different groups used ethnicity to suppress internal dissidence and demand for the re-structuring of power.<sup>14</sup>

### Independence: Race is a Fact of Life

Key assumptions and values which underpinned the management of ethnicity in the colonial era were carried over into the post-colonial period, and enshrined in the 1970 independence constitution. These included paramountcy of Fijian interests, parity for Indo-Fijians and privilege for Europeans. The principle of parity between Fijian and Indo-Fijian interests was recognised in the elected House of Representatives. Of the fifty two seats, twenty two each were reserved for Fijians (272,000 in 1980) and Indo-Fijians (306,500). The privileged position of the General Electors<sup>15</sup> (19,000) was recognised by giving them five seats. Twelve each of the Fijian and Indo-Fijian seats and three of the General seats were to be elected on purely communal rolls, and the remaining twenty five seats on multiracial cross-voting rolls. In the Senate, the principle of Fijian paramountcy was

recognised by giving the Great Council of Chiefs eight of the twenty two seats, the Prime Minister 7, the Leader of Opposition 6 and the Council of Rotuma one. Given that both the political leaders nominated Fijian members, more than half the senate at any given time consisted of Fijian members. But numbers by themselves were not as important. The GCC nominees had the power of veto over any legislation that touched, even remotely, on matters of Fijian interests. These included the Fijian Affairs Ordinance, Fijian Development Fund Ordinance, the Native Lands Ordinance and the Agricultural Landlord and Tenants Ordinance. Specifically, the constitution provided that legislation regarding 'Fijian land, custom and customary rights shall not be passed by the Senate unless it is supported at the final vote thereon in the House by no less than six of the Great Council of Chiefs nominees.'<sup>16</sup>

The method of election and the composition of the House of Representatives was an 'interim solution' for the first parliament after independence. This compromise solution had been reached in the pre-independence talks in Suva and London because of the stalemate over the method of election to parliament. The National Federation Party pressed the principle of common roll, while the Alliance stood on the principle of communal roll.<sup>17</sup> To avert collapse of the talks, both parties agreed to defer the matter to a royal commission of inquiry at a later date. In 1975, Professor Harry Street headed that enquiry. He recommended, among other things, that while the communal seats with their existing weightage should be retained to allay ethnic fears, the remaining national seats should be converted to common roll seats in five constituencies 'with no restriction of race or religion for either voters or candidates'. He recommended further that the election for these seats should be on the basis of single transfer vote.<sup>18</sup> In this way, communal sentiments would be respected while at the same time the arena for multiracial competition and cooperation for votes would be increased. The Alliance rejected the recommendations, and the report remained undebated.

Why? The interim solution had worked to the party's advantage. In the first post-independence elections in 1972, the Alliance had won handily with over 80 percent of Fijian communal and 24 percent of Indian votes. The lesson was clear: the Alliance could remain in power indefinitely if it could only preserve its Fijian constituency and split enough Indo-Fijian votes to win a handful of the marginal national

seats. That, Ratu Mara, the Alliance leader and prime minister, said on several occasions, had been the advice given to him by his political advisor David Butler of Nuffield College, Oxford. In fact, that formula worked well for the Alliance party except in the April 1977 elections, when a 25 percent shift of Fijian votes away from the Alliance party resulted in its temporary defeat. The Alliance party remained in power from 1970 to 1987.<sup>19</sup>

The logic of a communal electoral system produced its own problems. One was the growing disenchantment of the Indo-Fijian community with the Alliance government. It felt excluded and marginalised in national decision making. As a result, the leading lights of the Indian Alliance, Sir Vijay Singh, James Shankar Singh, MT Khan, among others, left the party, complaining of step-brotherly treatment. James Shankar Singh, once an Alliance minister, was blunt: 'It is my sad experience throughout the existence of the party that Indian Alliance leaders and members have merely been made tools or vehicles of convenience by the party leader, and once the general election is over and Ratu Sir Kamisese [Mara] conveniently seated in the Prime Minister's chair, he treats them like a bunch of coolies.'<sup>20</sup>

For its part, the Alliance party was not overly concerned with the departure of the Indo-Fijians from its ranks. Hoping to manipulate the existing cultural and religious divisions in the Indo-Fijian community to its advantage, the Alliance attempted instead to consolidate its Fijian base in the 1970s and the 1980s. That base was not as safe as it once had been. There was, for instance, the challenge to Alliance rule from Sakiasi Butadroka, whose overtly anti-Indian platform--Fiji for the Fijians, Indians go back to India cry--hid a powerful attack on the political hegemony of eastern chiefs. Mara, the paramount chief of Lau was Butadroka's principal target.<sup>21</sup> In western Viti Levu, dispute over the formula for sharing the proceeds of the lucrative pine industry between the government and the western landowners led to the formation of a regionalist political party, the Western United Front which sought to promote the interests and aspirations of the western Fijians.<sup>22</sup> The carefully constructed edifice of Fijian polity was in the danger of being dismantled. This was evident in the results of the 1982 general elections in which the National Federation Party-Western United Front came within two seats of dislodging the Alliance from power.

Why this Fijian dissidence against a Fijian-dominated government? The main reason was the

feeling among many Fijians in Viti Levu, Fiji's largest island, that they were being neglected by a government which, as they saw it, was devoting its attention to improving the life of Fijians in eastern parts of Fiji, the bastion of Fijian establishment. They alleged that Lau, Mara's own province, was receiving a disproportionate share of development aid, scholarships, and hurricane relief money. Mara naturally denied the charge of favouritism, but statistics seemed to confirm the allegations. For example, between 1984 and 1986, Lau, one of the smallest Fijian provinces, received \$528,000 in scholarships, 21 percent of all the money allocated for Fijian scholarships. The larger provinces received much less: Ba, \$156,000 (6.2 percent), Tailevu, \$364,244 (14.5 percent), and Rewa, \$221,638 (8.3 percent).<sup>23</sup> Commenting on this disparity, Timoci Bavadra, the leader of the Fiji Labour Party said:

It is important to remind ourselves that the government resources poured into Lakeba are derived from wealth produced by others elsewhere in the country. It is time that the government stopped viewing the rest of Fiji as serving the interest of a few centres in the east. The people of Lakeba are entitled to a share in the national interest, but just a share. It is time we had a government that is more truly national in outlook.<sup>24</sup>

In other words, under the rhetoric of promoting the Fijian interest, Mara and his government were, in fact, promoting the interests of certain sections and regions of Fiji.

Mara continued to cultivate and consolidate his ethnic constituency so crucial to his political survival. This he did through patronage, coercion and marginalisation of recalcitrant opponents. At the same time, he made overtures to the National Federation Party to form a government of national unity. Mara's paper was long on the analysis of problems of multiethnic states but short on solutions.<sup>25</sup> It proposed 'adequate participation by all communities in decision making process to obtain consensus for critical policies thereby nullifying the likelihood of a sense of alienation developing in any one or more ethnic groups through apparent or real exclusion.' But precisely

how that was to be accomplished through a meaningful formula for power sharing, remained unclear. NFP leader Jai Ram Reddy said: 'What we need to do is to develop a creed which will require the privileged in our society, be they Indians, Fijians or Europeans, to help those who are the weakest in our community irrespective of race, colour or religion.'<sup>26</sup> That went to the heart of the matter. Reddy proposed a more class-oriented approach; Mara saw the proposal more as an exercise in damage control: stopping the haemorrhaging of Indo-Fijian support by coopting the NFP as a junior partner in a government of national unity, and quelling internal Fijian dissent without sacrificing the basic tenets of communally-based politics. So, unsurprisingly, the government of national unity floundered.

### Labour Coalition and Coup

By the 1980s, the foundations of Fijian society were being changed in ways in which communalism appeared to have less relevance to the demands of daily living, certainly less meaning than before. Fully one third of the Fijian population was living in urban or peri-urban areas.<sup>27</sup> The drift toward urban areas brought its own problems such as unemployment, overcrowding in existing housing and ancillary facilities, breakdown of traditional family status patterns and conflict of values and aspirations, tensions between long-settled and newly arrived people, and the general problems associated in the transition to a wage earning and cash economy. Of course the break with the village was not sudden, but a gradual process of distancing, both physical as well as psychological, had begun.<sup>28</sup> Another change of consequence was the growth of a wage earning labour force, from 51,000 in 1970 to 80,000 in 1980, and an increase in the same period in the number of registered trade unions from 30 to 49.<sup>29</sup>

In the villages, too, important changes were afoot. The monetisation of the village economy emphasised the primacy of the nuclear family over the communal group. The increasing importance of cash crops--banana, ginger, sugar cane-- and growing links to urban centres facilitated by improved communication emphasised the need for individual enterprise and initiative over traditional ways of doing things. R.G. Ward wrote:

The combined introduction of new skills, new technology and

money have weakened the functional cement which binds the village society. This does not mean that the structure has collapsed, or will do so in the near future. It does mean the risk of disintegration exists if other factors shake the edifice.<sup>30</sup>

Natural calamities such as hurricanes, floods and droughts added their own complications. The net result of these changes, which required grappling with the forces of the modern world in all their bewildering complexity, was for a kind of politics that went beyond the anachronistic race-based politics. It was exemplified in the emergence of the Fiji Labour Party in 1985.

Backed by the trade union movement, especially the powerful Fiji Public Service Association, the party committed itself to the values of democratic socialism, advocating social justice, balanced economic and regional development, public ownership of selected commercial ventures, nationalisation of certain industries such as gold mining, and improving the condition for the working class.<sup>31</sup> But realising that working alone it could not dislodge the Alliance from power, Labour, on the eve of the 1987 elections, formed a coalition with the National Federation Party. It won that election by four seats. It has often been argued that only some 10 percent of the Fijians voted for the Coalition, and as such, the new government did not reflect the true wishes of the Fijian people, that it was an Indian-dominated government. For that reason, it had to be removed from power, which was done through a military coup in May 1987.

This is not the place to rehearse the various arguments on the causes of the coup.<sup>32</sup> Essentially, there are two schools of thought on why the coup took place. At the one end of the spectrum are those, such as Deryck Scarr, who see the coup fundamentally as a racial conflict between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians. The elections had brought forth a government which Fijians, especially Fijian chiefs, did not control; it had upset the 'balance of power' and tacit understandings of power sharing in Fiji, according to which the Fijians were to control the government and the Indo-Fijians and others commerce. Therefore, it had to go. The coup was thus inevitable.<sup>33</sup>

Most scholars reject the purely racial explanations of the coup.<sup>34</sup> Racial fears, of course,

played a part; it could not have been otherwise in a racially compartmentalised society where cross-cultural/ethnic cooperation was discouraged. My argument is that these deeply felt anxieties were exploited by politicians for their own ends, people who knew well that Fijian interests were securely entrenched in the constitution. This is not to say that the Coalition victory did not threaten the foundations upon which the edifice of post-colonial politics of Fiji had been built. That threat came not from Indo-Fijians but from other sources. The non-racial democratic socialist ideology of the Coalition posed problems for Alliance's philosophy of communal politics. The Fijian communal constituency was, for the first time, in danger of being fragmented. The process of crossing the boundaries had begun in a small way, and there was no telling where it might end. That was one danger the election of the Coalition posed.

There were others as well that went to the core of indigenous Fijian politics. For the first time, a Fijian commoner, actually a minor chief, had been elected to the highest office in the land. Before then, national politics had been dominated by high chiefs (Ratu Mara, Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau, Ratu Sir George Cakobau, for example). Bavadra was a self-made, middle class Fijian. All his other Fijian colleagues in the Coalition were from similar backgrounds: trade unionists, academics, senior public servants. Their success at the national level would have implicitly questioned the Fijian ideology that held that the privilege of leadership is the prerogative of chiefs. And Bavadra was adamant about drawing a distinction between the Fijians' traditional obligations and their political rights. As he put it:

The chiefly system is a time-honoured and sacred institution of the taukei. It is a system for which we have the deepest respect and which we will defend. But we also believe that a system of modern democracy is one which is quite separate from it. The individual's democratic right to vote in our political system does not mean that he has to vote for a chief. It is an absolutely free choice.<sup>35</sup>

Chiefs and their supporters thought otherwise. Said Sitiveni Rabuka: 'The chiefs are the wise men in



Fijian society. Take that power away and give it to the commoners, and you are asking for trouble.<sup>36</sup> Bavadra wanted chiefs to revert to their traditional role as the leaders of their people. The chiefs, on the other hand, wanted to be the chiefs of the whole nation.

Not only was Bavadra not Mara, a paramount chief, he came from the wrong side of Fiji, western Viti Levu, neglected both by the colonial as well as the Alliance governments and long the centre of dissent in Fijian society. Western Fijians had perennially complained, to use Apisai Tora's words, of being the victims of 'nepotism and conspiracy' of eastern chiefs.<sup>37</sup> For them, Bavadra's victory was the fulfilment of generations of western Fijians' struggle for dignity and a proper share of power in the national scheme of things. The Coalition victory seemed to send forth the message that those Fijians long consigned to the margins were now at the centre, and those who had monopolised power for so long were being shifted to the periphery. That perception of shift in the traditional balance of power generated a powerful momentum of its own. The fear of the eastern Fijians and others opposed to the Coalition, was not unfounded. As Prime Minister and Minister of Home Affairs, Bavadra had the power to appoint more 'non-establishment' Fijians to important positions in the public service and in statutory organisations. Whether he would have deliberately set out to do so will remain moot.

My argument, to repeat, is not that race and racial fears were not important. Enough has been written on that to warrant detailed discussion here. My point, rather, is that there were other (non-racial) factors internal to the Fijian society itself that played a far larger role than has generally been acknowledged.

### 1990 Constitution

Five years after the coups and after several abortive attempts, a new constitution was decreed in July 1990. In promulgating it, President Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau said:

I want to assure you that it is the government's intention to lay a strong foundation for a republic with a stable, caring and productive society. We seek a new order of hope, of peace, reconciliation and progress in which the fundamental rights and

freedoms of all citizens are guaranteed. We seek understanding, trust and tolerance.<sup>38</sup>

These hopes remain unrealised as the constitution continues to be rejected by nearly half the population.

The constitution is a self-avowed attempt to enshrine ethnicity and traditionalism as the core elements in Fiji's political system. There is no need here to subject the constitution to detailed scrutiny,<sup>39</sup> but several of its features need mentioning. The clear intent of the present constitution is to entrench Fijian (chiefly) control of the political process in Fiji and to 'exclude the Fiji Indians from any meaningful share of political power.'<sup>40</sup> The real power in Fiji resides not in the elected House of Representatives but in the unelected Great Council of Chiefs, the *Bose Levu Vakaturaga*. It appoints the president, always to be a Fijian chief from one of the three existing confederacies (traditional power centres of Kubuna, Burebasaga, Tovata). The President's office is invested with wide ranging as opposed to nominal powers usually repositied in the office of an unelected Head of State. At the same time, the GCC dominates the Senate. Of its 34 members, the GCC nominates 24 members, the Council of Rotuma one, the rest being representatives of other communities chosen by the President. The Senate acts as a house of review. No bill affecting the Fijian Affairs Act, the Fijian Development Fund Act, the Native Lands Act, the Native Lands Trust Act, the Rotuma Act, the Rotuman Lands Act, the Banaban Land Act and the Banaba Settlement Act, can be passed without the assent of not less than eighteen of the twenty four GCC nominees in the Senate.<sup>41</sup> Clearly, then, the GCC remains the most important arbiter of power in Fiji.

The enormous power enjoyed by the chiefs under the present constitution prompts questions about its structure and source of authority. The GCC was created by Fiji's first governor, Sir Arthur Gordon, soon after cession to advise the colonial government on matters relating specifically to Fijian society.<sup>42</sup> When Fijians were given representation in the Legislative Council, the GCC nominated the Fijian members; it was not until 1963 that Fijians were given the right of universal franchise. So, the GCC became not only the cultural but also the political representative of the Fijian people to the outside world. Its role as the

guardian of Fijian interests was recognised in the 1970 constitution, as noted above.

Under that constitution, the GCC consisted of 154 members, including all Fijian members of parliament, appointees of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Home Affairs, and the Governor General, and nominees of the various provincial councils. After the coups, the membership was reduced to 52, removing the automatic membership of all Fijian parliamentarians to that body. The new arrangement invests supreme decision making powers in the hands of a select group of chiefs, with the rest of the council playing an advisory role. The GCC has become a two-tiered body consisting of the *Bose ni turaga* and the *Veivosaki ni Turaga*. The Bose consists of ten representatives each from the existing three confederacies, two representatives from Rotuma, three nominees each of the President and the Fijian Affairs Board, and one representative from each of the fourteen provinces. The Veivosaki is the executive arm of the council made up of twelve high chiefs, four from each of the confederacies.

This reversion to an explicitly chief-dominated structure was justified by Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau this way:

A chief and his people are one. The turaga cannot be a turaga without the vanua, and the vanua cannot exist without the turaga. Chiefs have been mediators and conciliators between the Fijian people and the Indian community. They have used their authority to ease communal tension and enhance harmony. Chiefly leadership has done much to bring Fiji into the modern world and to spur our economic progress.<sup>43</sup>

Let us accept, for the sake of argument, the rhetoric about the progressive role chiefs have played in national life as mediators in and conciliators of contentious issues.

But if the reversion to traditionalism is in the Fijian interest, why are sections of the Fijian society itself dissatisfied with the move. Why, for example, do many western Fijians insist on a separate confederacy of their own? How does one explain the submission of a twelve-member delegation to the Constitution Inquiry and Advisory Committee criticising the constitution for discriminating

against the progressively productive, better educated, forward thinking Fiji citizens of all races in favour of that minority segment of the community that represents (and seeks to reserve for itself) the aristocratic, undemocratic, privileged pattern of colonial life.<sup>44</sup>

Why, again, have some prominent western Fijians launched a separate Viti Levu Council of Chiefs<sup>45</sup> if the Great Council of Chiefs is the representative organisation of all Fijians? If the coup was about giving Fijians greater control over their own resources, why has the call by western landowners and others for a more equitable distribution of the proceeds from their lands, been resisted by the government? The reason would appear to be that the reversion to traditionalism is an attempt to re-trench the status quo in Fijian society. In other words, the opportunity provided by the coups for a more equitable distribution of power in Fijian society, has been used for other purposes, including shoring up the position of chiefs.

The same strategy is apparent in the distribution of seats in the House of Representatives. Of its 70 seats, Fijians have 37 seats, Indo-Fijians 27, General Voters 5 and Rotumans one, all elected from racially prescribed constituencies, with no opportunity for voting across racial lines. But what is more important, in terms of the argument developed above, is the allocation of seats among the Fijians. Two things need to be noted. The first is that of the 37 Fijian seats, only five are allocated to urban Fijians, who make up fully one third of the indigenous population. Their under-representation in parliament is thus glaring. The other aspect of the present electoral arrangement is the under-representation of many areas not traditionally allied to the dominant regions in Fijian society. The province of Ba with a population of 55,000 (according to the 1986 census) has three seats in parliament, the same as Lau with a population of 14,000; Rewa with 48,000 Fijians will have the same number of seats, two, as Kadavu, with a population of 9,600. These iniquities will increase with time as more Fijians drift to towns and become more contentious as Viti Levu Fijians demand their share of power and resources.

**Elections and Ethnicity, 1992-1994**

In June 1990, the Great Council of Chiefs launched a new political party for the taukei, the *Sogosoqo ni Vakavulewa ni Taukei* 'to promote the unity of the Fijian people and the consolidation of their culture and tradition.'<sup>46</sup> The party was expected to be an umbrella organisation for all Fijians, in the manner of the Fijian Association of the colonial days, united in purpose and working together towards a common goal. But the reality turned out to be different. The first hint of difference and disagreement came over the question of the leadership of the party. Since the SVT was sponsored by the chiefs, many Fijians expected and wanted the new party to be headed by a chief of relatively high status and above the political fray. Among the contestants was Adi Lady Lala Mara, the paramount of the Burebasaga confederacy. So also was Sitiveni Rabuka, of non-chiefly background, who defeated Mara for the post. A commoner defeating a high chief was an unsettling spectacle for many Fijians. Said Sakiasi Butadroka, leader of the Fiji Nationalist Party: 'If the SVT delegates can put a commoner before a chief, then I don't understand why a chiefs-backed party can do such a thing, putting a chief—in this case the highest ranking chief, Ro Lady Lala—before a selection panel.'<sup>47</sup> Even more ungainly was the sight of Rabuka's open verbal warfare with Ratu Mara who made no secret of his personal antipathy toward Rabuka. Mara went further. He backed Josefata Kamikamica as his preferred successor as prime minister.<sup>48</sup> This spectacle, too, dismayed Fijians. The rhetoric of unity appeared to be just that: rhetoric.

The 1992 election results showed clearly just how illusive the goal of Fijian unity was. Although the SVT won thirty of the thirty seven Fijian seats, it won only 66.6 percent of the total Fijian votes cast (112,447). Its strongest support was in the small eastern constituencies of the Koro Sea where it won 89 percent of the total votes cast (27, 658), but in rural Viti Levu, it won only 49.7 percent of the total Fijian votes (52,538). In the 1994 snap election, the SVT won only 64 percent of the total Fijian votes, though it was able to improve its position in parts of Viti Levu.<sup>49</sup> But despite this electoral victory, Rabuka's hold on power remains tenuous. This is partly because of his own inexperience, but perhaps more importantly, it is also due to continued opposition to him personally by important sections of the Fijian population, including Mara loyalists. A constitution that was supposed to promote unity among the Fijians has ended up dividing them up as never before. It has produced audible murmurs of

social tensions and regional and provincial rivalries, distressing and confusing a people used to political unity at the national level. And the chiefs' sponsorship of a political party has proved to be a divisive, contested decision.<sup>50</sup>

Current developments will ensure the continuation of this trend. The evanescent fear of Indian domination has opened up space for more debate about matters internal to Fijian society, matters which would have remained hidden from public view before the coups. The disappearance (or imminent departure) from the political scene of the reassuring presence of paramount chiefs of national authority and prestige—Cakobau, Ganilau, Mara, to name the three most important ones—has opened up opportunities for other leaders not necessarily committed to the traditionalist ideology. 'The Fijian people are now maturing politically; they are beginning to look more at issues [rather than the status of the contender],'<sup>51</sup> says Josefata Kamikamica. Sitiveni Rabuka himself 'believes that the dominance of customary chiefs in government is coming to an end and that the role of merit chiefs will eventually overcome those of traditional chiefs: the replacement of traditional aristocracy with meritocracy.'<sup>52</sup> Taukei scholar Asesela Ravuvu agrees: 'The new political system emphasises equal opportunities and individual rights, which diminish the status and authority of chiefs.' And although the chiefs 'are still the focus of many ceremonial functions and communal village activities, their roles and positions are increasingly of a ritualistic nature.'<sup>53</sup> This at a time when the chiefly position is being entrenched in the political system.

Ethnicity has played a central role in the organisation and functioning of Fiji's political system, distorting political discourse because it hid other cleavages in the society. Efforts to reinstate it are under way, as Fiji prepares to establish the mechanism to review the 1990 constitution. Sitiveni Rabuka has stated his position clearly: 'If we are to move forward with the review, it is absolutely essential that the government should first secure the full support and understanding of the Fijian and Rotuman communities through the Bose Levu Vakaturaga.'<sup>54</sup> That, in effect, will mean the acceptance of the principle of the paramountcy of indigenous interests. The opposition is equally adamant. According to Jai Ram Reddy, the Leader of the Opposition,

a government has to be responsive to the needs of all communities. Any future

constitution which does not aim for that objective will fail. The notion that one community alone should be able to be in government without the need for any support from the other communities is quite abhorrent and will create serious divisions in society.<sup>55</sup>

Therein lies the central issue in contemporary Fijian politics. Many Fijians, for reasons of their own, argue that democracy is a colonial imposition, a foreign flower unsuited to the Fijian soil. But so, too, are some of the most important institutions of Fijian society. The modern Fijian state itself is a colonial construct. Christianity is a flower foreign to the Fijian soil, having arrived in the islands in only 1835. The Great Council of Chiefs and the pattern of land tenure are also expedient inventions of colonialism. The list does not end here. It seems so futile to reject history to re-create a mythical past that never was. The danger inherent in such a project should by now be obvious.

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# Nauru's Post-Independence Struggles

*Nancy J. Pollock*

In 1968, Nauru achieved its independence. It was the second Pacific nation, after Western Samoa, to throw off the shackles of colonialism. For Nauru it meant gaining control of what was left of a natural resource, phosphate, that had been mined for sixty years for the benefit of the British Phosphate Commission with only minimal returns for Nauruans<sup>1</sup>. The British Phosphate Commission (BPC) consisted of Australia and Great Britain with a 40 per cent share each, and New Zealand with a 20 per cent share. This consortium established the mine, extracted and processed the phosphate and sold it to themselves at a beneficial rate. Australia was also the administering nation, first under a League of Nations Mandate in 1919, and later under a United Nations Trusteeship in 1945. Over that 60 year period, Nauruans were constantly asking for a greater share of phosphate profits and a better deal. So independence in 1968 was a culmination of their persistent efforts.

The post independence period has been a testing time for Nauru. It had to buy the mine from the BPC for \$A20 million, and set up the Nauru Phosphate Corporation to run it, selling the phosphate at world market prices. These changes resulted in the need for Nauru to manage its own affairs, now made more complex by the new found wealth, and the vagaries of the world economy. All decisions were made in the knowledge that Nauru had a finite resource - 1996 was the date when the phosphate was predicted to run out. So independence led to a number of endeavours to accomplish in the short term all that was necessary to establish a viable future for the next generations of Nauruans.

They were fortunate to have a viable political body, the Nauru Local Government Council, that had been their main means of conveying their dissatisfactions to Australia as the administering body and to the BPC. That Council had been set up in 1951 to replace a Council of Chiefs instituted by the BPC in 1927. The new body was a conscious step to democratize Nauru by setting up eight electorates, seven of which were to elect one Council member each, and the eighth, most populous district, was to elect two members. The same electorates were later used for electing Parliamentary members. This strong system of local government, funded through the Nauru Royalty Trust Fund, took on an insistent lobbying role, both for an increased share of the phosphate royalties as well as for more autonomy for Nauruans.

Before independence the NLGC was the body which met regularly with the U.N. Visiting Missions and presented their dissatisfactions to them (for a transcript of one such meeting, see U.N. - *The People Speaking* 1965). The Council was headed first by Timothy Detudamo who had been the island's spokesperson since the 1920s, and later by Hammer deRoburt.

The Nauru Local Government Council was a particularly significant establishment as it decentralized the power structure,<sup>2</sup> while also giving Nauruans a means to voice their frustrations to the administering authority, Australia. Paradoxically, it strengthened the power of its elected head, Detudamo who had been appointed as Head Chief in 1927 under the old chiefly system. But with a population of less than 2000 until the 1950s, its impact was more structural than pragmatic. It provided Nauruans with an authentic channel of communication through which they could voice their concerns to the administering authority and ultimately to the United Nations Trusteeship Council. It was a strong base from which to build the infrastructure of self-rule.

It served its purpose well as the people were agreed on the main issues. These included demands for more royalties from phosphate, and control of their own affairs. The issue of resettlement, proposed by Australia in 1961, was considered carefully by the NLGC, but rejected on the grounds that Nauruans would have to share Curtis Island in the Gulf of Carpentaria with Australian Aborigines, which would mean a loss of their autonomy. They had seen what had happened to their Banaban cousins who were resettled from neighbouring Ocean Island in 1946 on Rabi island, off Vanua Levu in Fiji, and did not want the same to happen to themselves. There was general consensus about the steps necessary to achieve their goal of independence.

NLGC was dissolved in 1992 and replaced by the Nauru Council comprising the Cabinet with the president as minister in charge. The NLGC had run up a series of debts from its wide range of activities, so the dissolution was aimed to curb its powers and reduce expenditure out of the Nauru Royalty Fund and the Nauru Development fund, both drawn from phosphate revenues<sup>3</sup>

We will examine Nauru as a case study in the light of three themes that run through this book. Firstly the change in the nature of control after independence has lifted some restraints while also



imposing new ones. For Nauru, economic support whether in aid or loans was not the issue for post-colonial ties that it was for other small Pacific island states; for Nauru the concern was how to manage an already developed resource of international significance but one that had a finite lifespan. Nauru thus fell outside the league of Pacific nations seeking economic development strategies as their prime focus. But they shared the long term goal of seeking to manage their resource, phosphate, to ensure a viable future for Nauruans.

A second theme is that of nationalism and establishing a clear identity. Nauruans were noticeably different because of their wealth, as journalists have delighted to headline them.<sup>4</sup> But they, like the other islands, wanted to establish a distinctive identity, with the right to build their future on their own terms. Each nation chose a distinctive flag and other characteristics that marked each nation as having a unique identity. *Kastom* in Vanuatu and *Fa'asamoa* in Western Samoa are but two of the terms that appeared in local languages to represent these distinctive qualities, reasserting aspects of their distinctive cultural heritage. For some Melanesian states and provinces that has brought its own conflicts. For other island states, it has required compromises to their sovereignty, for example Federated States of Micronesia.

Issues of identity can be most clearly seen in the new pan-Pacific associations. The South Pacific Forum as a political body representing the independent nations gives each island nation a voice - and up to now a chance to express the widely shared principle of generosity in hosting the annual conference. Nauru was the most recent nation to put on its display for Forum participants in August 1993. South Pacific Arts Festivals and South Pacific Games are examples of other occasions where that new found identity, and nationalism, are vividly expressed. Nauruans are proud of their weightlifter, Marcus Stephen, who put them on the medal table at the Commonwealth Games in 1982 and again in 1994.

Internationalism is a third theme. The nations of the South Pacific were dragged into the international arena by events of World War II, and the subsequent growing interest in the Pacific Basin. The place of small island states remains unclear, as the larger nations around the Pacific basin form a strong politico-economic body. This is a subject of concern both for the small Pacific states, and for metropolitan nations such as New Zealand, Australia and the United States. Nauru is very small, but that size is belied by the importance of the phosphate resource.

Many island states have seized the opportunity to make new alliances beyond those that existed in the colonial era. For Nauru this internationalism has come mainly through trade and investment round the world - a matter of considerable interest both at home as well as by other nations. The islands of the Pacific are part of a world system that brings repercussions, both positive and negative, that are no longer cushioned by colonial protectionism. The inter-dependency issue is one which Nauru is well aware of, its own environmental situation being the subject of a court case before the International Court of Justice in the Hague, as discussed below.

### Control - Towards Autonomy

Nauru's main aim in seeking independence from Australia and the Trusteeship status was to gain control of what was left of its own phosphate. Two thirds of the area containing phosphate, namely 'topside' or the interior of the island, had already been mined by BPC in 1968. The phosphate had been mined without the agreement of Nauruans, nor were they apprised of its full value. Land owners received a halfpenny per ton, or one seven hundredth of the price for which phosphate was being sold in 1908. That amount gradually rose to seventeen shillings and sixpence by the time of independence, due to the concerted demands of the Nauruans through the NLGC; but that was still only a miniscule proportion of the returns to the BPC members.<sup>5</sup>

Under the terms of the independence agreement, Nauru was to buy the mine plant for \$A20 million within six years. Australia was hoping they would not succeed, as they and the other two Commission members wanted to continue mining. They desperately needed the cheap phosphate to maintain their pastoralist economies. As Minister Talboys noted in 1968, 'The superphosphate that we manufacture locally from Nauru and Ocean islands accounts for 90% of the total fertilisers used in New Zealand';<sup>6</sup> a similar dependency on Nauru phosphate existed in Australia. Nauruans thus had potentially lucrative returns if only they could find that initial capital.

Nauruans knew that they wanted to control for themselves the returns from phosphate, even though they had not been apprised of the value of the profits over the preceding twenty years. They knew that the phosphate had been sold on the world market providing a lucrative income to BPC, but they did not know just how much income had gone to the BPC. They also knew that they had been

receiving only minimal returns to the Nauruans through royalty funds. After independence, the newly established Nauru Phosphate Corporation swiftly moved to sell all the phosphate at world market prices to the highest bidder. Australia and New Zealand had to buy fertilizer at world prices, a factor that had a strong onflow on to their economies in the 1970s.

Nauruans had only ever received a very minor share in the value of phosphate exports before independence.<sup>7</sup> Despite their lobbying, by 1966 they were still getting less than 30 per cent of the value of phosphate exports. Fourteen percent was directed by BPC toward the administrative costs of the island, a cost, Weeramantry argues, that should have been borne by the administering authority, not the administered. One point three per cent of the value was placed in the Nauru Royalty Trust Fund which was designed to provide Nauruans with new housing and other infrastructure support. Eight point one per cent was placed in a Nauru Community Long Term Investment Fund that was designated to support Nauruans once the phosphate ran out. And four point four per cent was paid as direct returns to those landowners as their land was mined out.<sup>8</sup> It is very clear that the British Phosphate Commissioners believed they were the owners of the phosphate deposits on Nauru, so they paid Nauruans on the principle that it was only according to needs rather than to the value of the phosphate sold.<sup>9</sup>

Under the terms of the Trusteeship in the 1950s and 1960s, various U.N. Visiting Missions asked to see the books, in order to assess whether Nauruans were getting a fair return. But the figures were not revealed in total. A part of the picture became clearer when Nancy Viviani published figures on the payment to the various funds in the Appendices to her account of events leading up to independence.<sup>10</sup> The accounts proved difficult to obtain even in 1990 when the Commission for the Rehabilitation of Nauru under the leadership of Weeramantry sought to establish just what money had gone where.

The proportion set aside for rehabilitation amounted to \$599,325 in 1968, which Weeramantry labels a 'meagre sum'.<sup>11</sup> By 1990 Nauruans' own investment towards rehabilitation had reached the total of \$214 million. The question the Commission for Rehabilitation was examining was whether Australia and the British Phosphate Commissioners should have set more funds aside for rehabilitation. The 1990 Rehabilitation Commission found that the latter two bodies were responsible to the sum of \$72 million.

The investment of those returns was another issue over which Nauruans wanted to assert their own control at independence. Until 1968 the sums had been very meagre, though just how meagre has been hard to establish as the British Phosphate Commissioners would not open the books for scrutiny by the United Nations Trusteeship Council. Since 1968 Nauru has invested its profits world-wide. It set up its own shipping line, Nauru Shipping, and its own airline, Air Nauru, as well as investing heavily in property, including Nauru House in Melbourne and a number of hotels around the world.

Nauru, too, has kept the exact amount of its investments very private, even from most Nauruans. So it is unclear how or where reporters such as Alexander Frater for the *Observer* in 1982 obtained figures. He reported that Nauru had a per capita income of about \$20,000; the annual profit was \$40 million; the Nauru Phosphate Royalties Trust was valued at \$222 million.<sup>12</sup> Even the Commission for the Rehabilitation of Nauru, set up by the Nauruan Government to seek compensation from the former British Phosphate Commission, had difficulty in getting reliable figures on the exact value of the various funds. Today this issue is beginning to cause dissent in the community as Nauruans need money from these funds set aside on their behalf to meet the rising costs of living in the 1990s. Claims of mismanagement are being asserted. It is noteworthy that in August 1993 a group of Nauruan women brought this matter to the attention of the Pacific leaders attending the Forum meetings on Nauru by protesting on the airport runway. Their specific concerns were the expense of the Forum and the earlier financial loss of investment in a musical in London which was a flop. They consider the money needed to support future Nauruans is being spent unwisely.

### Rehabilitation

At independence Nauruans inherited an island two thirds of whose interior had been rendered impassable and useless. They were left with a sea of coral pinnacles, some fifty feet high, around which the phosphate had been extracted, thereby removing the tracks they had formerly used to cross the island, and every vestige of vegetation which had also formed part of their daily life. The big tamano (*Calophyllum inophyllum*) trees which were very valuable as nesting sites for the noddy terns, which Nauruans used to catch for feasts, as well as providing valuable shade and leaf mould and carving material had been bulldozed to the

ground. And the bush which had a cooling effect on the climate, as well as providing medicines and foods, had all been removed. Nauruans had been paid one shilling for each coconut and pandanus tree destroyed by the mining operations. But those shillings were not sufficient to buy food from the stores.

The large question facing the Nauruans was: what was to happen to the major part of their island rendered useless? They foresaw that with an increasing population the rim of their island would be too small to accommodate their needs, so they would need the interior for the use of future generations. Australia had already suggested relocating Nauruans off Nauru, a suggestion firmly rejected in the 1960s. And suggestions of bringing in soil (from Australia and New Zealand in the ships returning after delivering the phosphate) to fill in between the pinnacles had been deemed impracticable.

The Commission for the Rehabilitation of Nauru was set up in 1986 by the Nauruan government to address this and associated issues. Based in Melbourne, it was headed by an international lawyer, Dr. Christopher Weeramantry, with Mr. Challen, an Australian engineer, Mr. Degidoa of the Nauruan Language Bureau as fellow Commissioners, and Dr. Barry Connell, another international lawyer, as the Secretary. It found that Nauru had been excluded from participation in and control of the phosphate industry, and that the partner governments had made substantial profits from Nauru phosphate without rehabilitating the mined land. In addition, during the period of administration by the British Phosphate Commissioners, their own interests took precedence over financial and political interests of Nauruans. This situation had led to a situation of conflict between the duties of a mandatory power/trustee and their own commercial interests.<sup>13</sup>

The former BPC members were being asked to make good the deficit in payments to Nauruans during their 62 years of mining as well as making good the damage caused by mining to the land. Nauru took their case to the International Court of Justice in the Hague seeking to have the court declare Australia responsible for mining damage before independence in 1967. In 1992 the Court accepted that Nauru had a case, finding that Australia did have to make reparations for that mining damage. The rulings were to be brought up for further clarification in 1993. However Australia agreed to settle the matter out of court with a payment of \$A107 million, and a compact of settlement that precludes Nauru making any further

claims, but does include some ongoing Australian support. The repercussions of this settlement on New Zealand and Great Britain are not yet clear.

Nauru thus has achieved some assistance towards the reparation costs which were estimated in 1987 to be \$A216 million.<sup>14</sup> That sum included the cost of rehabilitating the land Nauruans themselves had mined since independence as well as the costs of rehabilitating land mined before 1968. The sum Nauruans set aside at independence will help with this immense task, but they will still need sympathetic treatment by the former Commissioners if they are not to join the other nations of the Pacific that are economically dependent on their former colonial powers. The base issue behind the rehabilitation claim was for Nauruan control over their own lives and the land they live on.

### Population Growth

Only since independence have Nauruans achieved numerical supremacy on their own island. Previously they have been outnumbered by the labourers introduced to work the phosphate, plus the administrators.<sup>15</sup> Nauruans were reluctant to work in the mine. Labourers were brought from China and the Pacific islands, such as Kiribati and Tuvalu. The latter two were favoured by the British as a way to provide an income for their colony of densely populated, but economically impoverished atolls. More recently Filipinos have been brought in to supplement the numbers of Kiribati. And Nauruans have brought in Indians in the 1980s to assist in the administrative areas formerly handled by Australians and New Zealanders.

Nauruans have been very conscious of the need to increase their population size ever since the turn of the last century. When mining began the Nauruan population fell from 1550 to 1250 due to dysentery and infantile paralysis epidemics.<sup>16</sup> For the next 40 years Nauruans strove to make the magic figure of 1500 again. They achieved this in 1932 only to be decimated again by the death of some 400 Nauruans while exiled by the Japanese on Truk.<sup>17</sup> By 1949 the population had reached 1524 and has continued to grow since that time. According to the 1992 census the population of Nauruans is 6,831 (Nauru National Population Census).

In part that 'need to grow' philosophy can be attributed to a recognition that they were constantly dominated by others in their own land. From 1921 to 1968 Nauruans found themselves only

half the population of their island. With non-Nauruans so much in evidence, this factor served to warn them that they needed the numbers to gain some measure of control over their own affairs. By 1966 the situation was particularly threatening as there were 1,167 Chinese, 428 Europeans, 1,532 non-Nauruan Pacific islanders for a total of 3,127 immigrants against 2,921 Nauruans. A total population of 6,048 persons on a diminishing land area concerned the Nauruan leaders, at both a pragmatic level as well as at a philosophical level.

Even though duplicate facilities had been established by the British Phosphate Commission with separate housing, and a separate hospital for the Gilbertese workers, Nauruans own access to housing, particularly land for setting up a house was becoming difficult. Land around the cantilever site in the southwest corner of the island in the Districts of Aiwo and Boe was mainly used by the phosphate corporation requiring not only new logistic arrangements for Nauruan uses of their land, but also new structural arrangements regarding their use of land in other districts.<sup>18</sup>

The 'need to grow' philosophy was also fuelled by a strong sense of Nauruan pride in being Nauruan. Relative to many other Pacific island societies, Nauruans have not married out, as one might expect with such a large non-Nauruan population in close proximity. They have tended to marry other Nauruans. Nor have they migrated away from their island permanently. There are pockets of Nauruans in and around Melbourne, and a few in England and New Zealand, but Nauruans prefer to maintain their close associations with their own island. Their own airline and shipping line have helped to make it possible to move away for a few weeks or months and return, and to obtain goods that might be more readily available in metropolitan countries. Investment in communications has thus served to support the population at home, and maintain a level of control over their own community.

Matrilineality is still strong on Nauru, providing a strong motivation to maintain connections with 'home'.<sup>19</sup> A Nauruan belongs to Nauru through her or his ties to their mother, as well as by membership of a named clan. A child must be registered as its clan's offspring within seven weeks of birth or it is ineligible for the benefits of Nauruan citizenship. Births and deaths are still recorded in the weekly Nauruan gazette in terms of mother's name and clan name. This strong matrilineality not only provides a reinforcing bond between Nauruans, but also provides the main

avenue of access to land rights, hence to claims on any money from mining that accrued to those land holders. Some of the rights are miniscule, but they do offer a reason for maintaining strong attachment to Nauruan identity. Whether matrilineality controls the land rights, or access to land (and thus phosphate money) has served to reinforce the importance of matrilineal bonds is hard for an outsider to argue. They are certainly mutually reinforcing issues.

### Health

Another issue over which Nauruans found themselves to be lacking control was their health. Diabetes was found to be prevalent in the Nauruan population in 1976. There followed a large number of publications noting that the incidence of diabetes in Nauruans was the second highest in the world, and 65 per cent of the population were labelled as obese. These high rates were attributed to 'the effects of Westernization'.<sup>20</sup> Associated factors listed were high blood pressure, high blood fat levels, plus kidney and eye disease, peripheral nerve disease, infections and premature death, as well as increased numbers of stillbirths and miscarriages. The marvel is that with so many health problems the Nauruans survived in enough numbers to reclaim their independence.

The cause of diabetes in Nauru and the eastern Pacific has been the subject of much scholarly research. Some researchers such as Zimmet have questioned whether the high incidence of diabetes is due to environmental or genetic factors. The early researchers lay the blame on a diet of imported foods, plus lack of exercise, and a 'Western' style of living. Genes, held over from the days when the diet was irregular, and lifestyle more active, i.e. before mining, possibly played some part, but were not then considered a major factor. Ten years later the genetic factor is considered to be the major cause of what is now being called a 'diabetes epidemic'.<sup>21</sup>

While Nauruans are the subjects of all this research, they are not in control of it. The investigations were carried out as part of a larger WHO study of the incidences of diabetes in Pacific Island populations, and the results published in international journals. Only popularised versions of these findings reach Nauru in publications such as *Time* or *New Scientist*, or the *Observer Magazine* section. Nauruans thus had no control over the image of themselves that was being portrayed around the world. The implied message is that Nauruans have let their wealth run away with them,

indulging in unrestrained consumption of the best the world can offer to the detriment of their health.

### Identity

Nauruans wanted to assert their own identity and gained that chance with independence. Even shortly after mining began they maintained their case to Australia as the mandate administrator, and later as the United Nations trustee. When Australia began to make plans to relocate Nauruans on Curtis island off the coast of Australia, the Nauru Local Government Council asserted its opposition on the grounds that they would lose their rights of sovereignty.<sup>22</sup> They have sought to construct a positive view of Nauru as a nation, and of Nauruans as contributors to Pacific leadership and community issues.

Their identity as a nation is strongly embedded in the notion of their matrilineal social structure. Their ties to one another are founded on the basis that their mothers are recognized Nauruans, belonging to a named clan which goes back into Nauruans past. Those clans existed before mining and European take over of the island by Germans and then the British Phosphate Commissioners. And those clans persist to the present day as the fundamental groups to which all Nauruans belong. In times past new clans were created for women arriving on Nauru from the Gilberts, Ocean and other cognate islands. They were affiliated to a special clan, whose name meant flotsam, washed up by the sea. They could work land for a chief, but did not have their own rights to it. Their children however could be granted full rights by the chief, and would become Nauruans. Land was the essence of their identity.<sup>23</sup>

Loss of land through mining thus threatened the Nauruan identity. Not only were the rocks representing their ancestors, and events in their past heritage annihilated by the processes of mining, but they were told by the British Phosphate Commissioners that that was not their land in the first place; rather it was said to belong to those who established mining rights over it. Not content with obliterating the very essence of their being, that carried strong symbolic notions that outsiders could not possibly appreciate, those same intruders were reluctant to grant Nauruans autonomy in their own island.

Demographic problems that threatened Nauruans' existence in the past have largely been overcome as noted above. But in the post independence era population growth poses its own problems. These have played a strong part in the

argument for the need to rehabilitate topside land. With a growing population of Nauruans alone, as well as the 2000 contract workers, pressure is already being felt on the small rim of the island. Nauruans need that interior rehabilitated so that structures that require large acreages such as the airport and the secondary school can be relocated. These would free up land for housing and other infrastructure facilities.

Nauruans are not migrating away from their island permanently. Unlike other Pacific islands post independence, Nauru has lost only a very small proportion of its population to countries such as Australia, the United States and New Zealand. Those who do move away for employment maintain their ties with Nauru, and endeavour to have their children registered as Nauruan even if they are born overseas. Marriage between Nauruans and non-Nauruans has also not increased. Nor has Nauru sought to limit its population growth, like Kiribati and the Republic of the Marshalls. Its positive population policy is thus a marked divergence from the policies of its neighbours. For this small central Pacific Island nation the aim is to strengthen the core of people calling themselves Nauruans. With almost 7000 representatives of their island nation today, they are in a stronger position than they were in 1968.

That very smallness, together with their isolation, has served to reinforce the unique identity of which Nauruans are very aware. A small group of people with very close bonds of kinship and neighbourliness to one another has a cohesion that is lacking in many very large populations, notably those of cities. Add to that smallness the Pacific values of generosity and sharing, particularly amongst relatives through a range of sibling ties, and we can see that there are strong cohesive factors that hold Nauruans together, and serve to reinforce their mutual identity.

The adversities that Nauru suffered during the colonial period also strengthen its identity in post-colonial times. The shared memories of the older generation of the dreadful sufferings they endured during World War II when their population was divided and neither sector had food or the basics of life, endure. Those who survived those dreadful times when they cradled their relatives as they died in such hostile circumstances are not bitter; but those shared experiences provide strong bonds to the other survivors, and their descendants. They fought to live to be free. Now they are free they want to hold on to what they had struggled for in the past, so that a new generation of Nauruans can live a better life.

## International Relations

Nauruans are concerned not only with their own internal well being, but also with the well-being of the Pacific societies of which they see themselves a part. Hammer deRoburt asserted this position most forcibly by becoming the Pro-Chancellor of the University of the South Pacific, and taking a leadership role in both the South Pacific Conference and the South Pacific Forum. Nauru established Air Nauru to serve the other nations of the Pacific as well as its own needs. It faced opposition from the major airlines, but supported the Air Pacific consortium during the big fight for what deRoburt called 'the South Pacific lake'. In his own words, 'I am moved to comment that at least so far as civil aviation is concerned, once the Trust relationship ended, goodwill from the airlines of our former Trust powers was apparently at an end. Why indeed should this be so? Gentlemen in a word it is jungle tactics of international aviation'.<sup>24</sup> Air Nauru's problems continued long after 1980 but it is still in existence. Nauru, after deRoburt, has continued to assert its role in Pacific affairs. It has been an active and vocal participant in South Pacific Forum meetings. In August 1993 it played its part in hosting the annual meeting, a role that is becoming increasingly costly.

Those neighbourly ties are being formalized. Nauru under the leadership of Dowiyogo, and the Republic of the Marshalls under Amata Kabua have joined with Kiribati and Tuvalu to establish a bloc of small island states. This bloc is a formalized response to the Melanesian bloc which made a forceful stand on the two coups in Fiji in 1987. The similar ecology and location in the face of droughts and other Pacific hazards provide a basis for cooperation. This grouping of small atoll and low island states, representing some 160,000 people is more powerful than any one of the individual islands on its own. It is likely to be a significant lobby group at the Forum and other pan-Pacific associations, as well as in negotiations with former colonial powers.

Nauru's phosphate has put her into the international trade market. There she faces the competition of alternative fertilizers, and the price wars as other nations fight to save their economies. Economic recession has hit Nauru as it has hit the rest of the world. But Nauru has less resilience. It has a finite resource in phosphates, and must invest today if the future population is to have anything to live on. If the books are ever opened to allow Nauruans to see exactly how much has been invested, they will understand just how

vulnerable they are in the world of international investments. That situation would open the way for even more consultants and advisers telling them how to spend or save that money. No nation is an island; each is involved in the international scene.

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# Tonga at Independence and Now

## *Sione Lātūkefu*

Tonga was unique during the colonial period in being the only country in the whole of the Pacific that escaped being formally colonised. Tonga evaded colonisation through a particular set of factors which included her small size and meagre resources<sup>1</sup>, isolation from main trade routes, lack of strategic importance, Britain's policy of minimum intervention and the ascendancy of Tonga's remarkable ruler, King George Tupou I. Tonga's full independence was however slightly modified when Britain imposed on her a treaty of friendship and protection in 1900 (with a supplement in 1905). During the intervening years until full independence was regained in 1970, Tonga was allowed to manage its own internal affairs subject to the provisions of the treaty. The origins of what happened between 1970 and the present can therefore be traced directly to the foundations laid by King George Tupou I during the nineteenth century. Consequently, discussion of Tonga at independence and now will be unavoidably different to other Pacific countries which were former colonies. In the past twenty-five years, Tonga has undergone major changes, both politically and socially. The process of modernization helped to create a new educated middle class, which has become vocal and openly questioning of the existing system, particularly through the recent 'Pro-Democracy Movement'.

The British colonial policy of minimum intervention<sup>2</sup> however, appears to have been a major factor in preserving Tonga's autonomy. The British government favoured and encouraged indigenous governments, supported and guided by missionaries and responsible settlers as long as no other world power exerted undue influence over these governments. The internal political events in Tonga in the 19th century enabled Britain to maintain this policy of minimum intervention. This was due to the rise to power and the eventual unification of Tonga in the 19th century under, King George Tupou I, who was unequalled as a warrior-statesman either in Tonga or elsewhere in the Pacific.<sup>3</sup>

King George was able to foresee the inevitability of the tidal wave of European impact, and he opted to ride the wave rather than go against it. He clearly perceived that the Tongan traditional cosmology was inadequate to explain the power, technology and wealth of European

intruders, and when the Methodist missionaries came, he quickly accepted their teachings and their world view, championing their cause. Most Tongans came to accept christianity and its moral values, represented by Methodism current at the time, in place of the traditional belief system. During his reign formal education was promoted, the country was unified under a central government, and the rule of law introduced, culminating in the promulgation of a written constitution in 1875 which validated the monarchy. Tonga thus gained the respect of the colonial powers operating in the Pacific, and treaties were successfully negotiated and signed with France, Germany, Britain and USA. These gave official recognition to King George's rule, thereby ensuring the security of Tonga's independent sovereignty.<sup>4</sup>

Upon his death in 1893, aged 96, King George Tupou I's great-grandson, crown Prince Tāufa'āhau, succeeded him as King George Tupou II. Unfortunately, the young King was ill prepared for the weighty responsibilities of the tasks before him.<sup>5</sup> Revelling in the privileges and glamour of his high office, he shirked its important responsibilities. His irresponsible and extravagant life-style led to near bankruptcy of the government forcing its premier, Sāteki, to borrow heavily from the German trading firm, the Deutsche Handels-und Plantagen-Gesellschaft (D.H. & P.G.) during the late 1890s, thereby allowing the company to exercise undue influence over the government. This situation disturbed the British who wanted no potentially hostile power to exert stronger influence on Tonga than hers. Britain therefore sought a new treaty with Tonga which would safeguard her own interests. The opportunity arose after the settlement of disputes over Samoa between Britain, Germany and USA in 1899 in which Germany and the USA gave up their treaty rights to Tonga in favour of the British. In the following year, 1900, Britain negotiated and partly forced a treaty of friendship upon the reluctant King and his government, establishing a British protectorate over Tonga, and giving Britain complete control of its external relations.<sup>6</sup> It also gave the British Resident and Consul the right to advise on internal matters and Britain gained partial extra-territorial jurisdiction.

The country's corrupt financial situation<sup>7</sup> continued however, prompting strong opposition



from the settler community and some educated Tongan chiefs. The then British Agent and Consul reported that the Tongan Government was 'corrupt from top to bottom',<sup>8</sup> his advice on internal matters was never sought and his counsel ignored. In 1904, the High Commissioner, Sir Everard im Thurn sailed to Tonga with strict instructions from the Colonial Office to purge the Tongan Government, and if the King resisted, to have him deported and the country annexed. Upon his arrival, im Thurn called a meeting of the Privy Council and informed the King and his ministers that the King of England had sent him to tell them 'to turn away from their bad practices'.<sup>9</sup> In auditing the books his officers found a deficit of 2,000 pounds and when Sateki refused to explain this, he and his son, Fotu, the Treasurer, were arrested and deported to Fiji. The investigations continued and the Government was found to have a deficit of 5,000 pounds. After offering them a British loan to cover the debt, he informed the King that he must appoint a new government, under the premiership of Sione Mateialona, a grandson of Tupou I. Early in 1905, the King was presented with a supplement to the 1900 treaty in which he was required to rule with and through the chiefs; to seek and take advice from the British Agent and Consul who was to be consulted on major government appointments and changes to existing ones and particularly on financial matters. The King tried to defer making a final decision, but the High Commissioner insisted that he must either sign or be deported. Reluctantly the King signed the document on 18 January 1905.<sup>10</sup>

This historic event had significant effects on Tonga's relations with Britain. It meant that the Treaty of 1900 and its 1905 Supplement had now overshadowed Tonga's laws and Constitution.<sup>11</sup> It continued to be the case for the remaining 13 years of Tupou II's reign, and also throughout the long reign of his successor, Queen Sālote Tupou III who reigned till 1965. During her 47 year reign there were revisions to the 1900 Treaty and its 1905 Supplement in 1958, 1965 and after her death, quite substantially in 1968, paving the way for the restoration of full independence to Tonga on 4 June 1970.<sup>12</sup>

What has subsequently happened in Tonga since 1970 has been a culmination of the vision of Tupou I and his advisors in the second half of the 19th century. The socio-economic, political and religious reforms that Tupou I had implemented were amazingly radical for their time and enabled Tonga to take advantage of development without

losing its cultural integrity. The following reforms were among the most significant:

### 1 Limiting the powers of the chiefs and commoner emancipation

In Tonga the traditional powers of a chief over his people had been absolute and arbitrary. King George decided soon after his conversion to Christianity to work towards limiting the powers of the chiefs and emancipating the commoners from their bondage. Using legislation to limit their powers, he undermined their traditional authority.<sup>13</sup> At the same time he tried to raise the status of the commoners, enabling them to gain education, own land and aspire to positions of influence in religion and politics that had previously been restricted to the chiefly classes. The gradual diminution of chiefly powers began as early as 1839 in the first Code of Laws<sup>14</sup> which prevented chiefs from forcibly taking commoners property and their powers were more explicitly stated in the 1850 code and the 1862 Emancipation Edict which ended serfdom. These reforms were further developed and enshrined in the 1875 Constitution.

### 2 Replacing the Traditional value-system with Christianity

The rapid and effective Christianization of Tonga by the Wesleyan Methodist missionaries within three decades of the re-establishment of the mission in 1826 brought about a transformation of traditional Tongan religion and society. They achieved religious conversion, introduced literacy, improved health and the quality of life. The replacement of traditional values that had supported the old order brought about radical change. Traditionally the commoners had no place in religion and lacking souls were believed to become vermin after death, unlike chiefs who had souls and went to paradise. Christianity treated commoners and chiefs as equals in the sight of God and offered everyone salvation. In this way Christian teachings became an important social leveller.<sup>15</sup>

### 3 Promoting Formal Universal Education and Health Services

The missionaries used education as an essential means of converting the Tongans, and the King fully supported this aspect of their work, believing

that it was the key to the knowledge, power and wealth Europeans had, which Tongans too could acquire. Accordingly, primary education was made compulsory in the late 1850s. He personally requested that an outstanding educationist, Rev J.E. Moulton (later Dr J.E. Moulton) should be sent to Tonga to establish Tupou College where, with the King's approval, chiefs and commoners were treated alike. For a long time this was the training institution for both state and church appointees.<sup>16</sup> Health care too was an important arm of the Methodist missionaries' efforts to gain converts. The devastating effects of newly introduced diseases that came with European impact made it the more urgent to administer medicine in an endeavour to arrest rapid depopulation. Later, King George bequeathed the revenue from the lease of crown lands to provide his people with free education and health services.<sup>17</sup>

#### 4 Democratising Political Decision Making

Influenced by his adopted christian values King George decided to provide for commoner representation in the Parliament, equal in number to the nobles, in the 1875 constitution. It was the first time that commoners were allowed to share in political decision making - an important and radical step towards the democratisation of the Tongan system of government.<sup>18</sup> Educated commoners were elected to parliament and appointed to the public service and church positions. The whole country has now accepted and accommodated a new, educated, commoner dominated elite (*ha'a potu*).<sup>19</sup>

#### 5 Modernising the Economy

King George wholeheartedly accepted the Protestant work ethic which the Methodist missionaries had tried to instil. He urged his people to work hard, cultivate the land and plant their crops for their own use and for the maintenance of their obligations (*fatongia*) to their chiefs, their church and the government. To facilitate this he legislated to forbid alienation of land and to reform land tenure allowing commoners to enjoy individual land ownership for the first time.<sup>20</sup> For it's time, the kind of socio-economic, political and religious structures King George I and his foreign advisors and local supporters managed to establish, imperfect though they may have been, were indeed quite remarkable.

During the reign of his successor King George Tupou II, much time and energy was spent confronting opponents, which inevitably brought political instability and social disunity. Initially, education, health services, the economy and land distribution provided for in the constitution, were imprudently neglected and allowed to deteriorate.<sup>21</sup> Religious bigotry became rife, particularly between the Free Church of Tonga and the Wesleyans.

Princess Sālote succeeded her father upon his death in 1918. She inevitably inherited many of the problems which had plagued her father's reign. During the first decade and a half of her eventful forty-seven years as queen, she devoted herself to trying to break down serious opposition to her reign and restore unity; repair the economy and usher in political stability and religious tolerance. By 1941, these admirable objectives had generally been achieved.

Her success seems to have been largely due to a combination of several important factors, namely: her innate intelligence and remarkable gifts of oratory; her strong, yet warm and attractive personality which won the hearts of both her subjects and outsiders and her image as a religiously devout, motherly and caring ruler.<sup>22</sup> Besides these personal attributes was the unwavering and vigorous support of her high ranking consort, Prince Viliami Tupoulahi Tungi Mailefihi,<sup>23</sup> her able and unassuming Chaplain, Rev. Rodger Page,<sup>24</sup> a number of powerful chiefs and educated commoners and a succession of British officials who, unlike some of their rather hostile and paternalistic predecessors, were much more supportive and sympathetic and became trusted friends.<sup>25</sup> Time was also on the Queen's side. Many of her powerful and determined early opponents being elderly, were gradually replaced by a new generation of younger leaders, chiefs and commoners, who came to appreciate, admire and respect the Queen's leadership and who enjoyed the warmth of her maturing personality as she grew in wisdom and stature.

The first task was to restore unity. Many opposing chiefs believed that as a young woman, she would remain a figurehead and that Tungi would be the actual ruler. Tungi was a staunch Wesleyan and consequently was unpopular with the majority of his peers, despite his high chiefly rank. Many noble members of the legislature were Free Church of Tonga, and most of the people's representatives at the time were actually drawn from chiefly families who had failed to be selected as nobles by either Tupou I or his successor, and consequently felt resentful of the monarch.<sup>26</sup> As

well, there was opposition from some foreign public servants, particularly lawyers who disapproved of some of the reforms promoted by Sālote and Tungi, and tried to create difficulties.<sup>27</sup> Because of the 1905 Amendment to the 1900 Treaty with Britain, Sālote was unable to dismiss expatriate opponents, and consequently she longed for a time when Tongans would be sufficiently educated and professionally trained to ease the government's heavy reliance on foreign experts.

Meanwhile, using her constitutional prerogative to appoint ministers to the Cabinet and the Privy Council, Sālote appointed able Tongans and foreigners, with the express purpose of lifting the performance of the executive. Her opponents, however, viewed this as a blatant political manoeuvre and hardened their opposition, particularly in the parliament where they at first had the numbers.<sup>28</sup> Sālote however managed to gradually and effectively ignore parliament and skilfully turned it into a willing tool of her administration, as younger supporters gradually replaced former opponents.<sup>29</sup>

One of the most serious causes of disunity had been the split between the numerically stronger, but unwieldy and disorganised Free Church of Tonga and its source, the better managed Wesleyan Mission. In the early 1920s Sālote decided to unite the two factions of the Wesleyan faith. This led to bitter conflicts and litigation in 1924 but in the end the Queen won, and a much stronger re-united Church emerged, as the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga. However, it was not the complete victory that had been hoped for, since the ageing president of the Free Church of Tonga, the Rev. J.B. Watkin, a few ministers and over three thousand followers refused to join the re-united Church.<sup>30</sup> Despite this, the Queen had gained in prestige and won the respect and affection of the great majority of her people.

The economy also received attention from Sālote and Tungi, who as a keen and able farmer led through example. The plantation on his estate of Kauvai was a model for others to follow, though on a smaller scale. He and Sālote encouraged the nobles to follow Tungi's lead, and the commoners were urged to register their allotments and to plant crops for both domestic consumption and export.<sup>31</sup>

Believing as King George Tupou I had done,<sup>32</sup> that education provided the knowledge necessary for nation building, a new Education Act was passed in 1927 aimed at improving the quality of education and providing scholarships for able students to study overseas, at secondary schools in

Australia, New Zealand and at the Fiji Medical School. Since the Government College was to be given a more technical and agricultural orientation, Sālote and Tungi decided to improve the standard of education at Tupou College and Queen Sālote College.<sup>33</sup> Their efforts were readily facilitated by the presence of highly qualified and dedicated missionaries such as Dr E.E.V. Collocott and Dr A.H. Wood. The Queen sent her own sons to Tupou College and encouraged the enrolment of sons of some of the nobles, even giving assistance with fees, in the hope that these young men would eventually become better educated leaders, as well as loyal supporters. A select few were chosen for overseas scholarships and sent to Newington College, Sydney, which was where Tungi himself, and some others had been sent at the turn of the century. Among the new group of students to Newington were Crown Prince Tupouto'a (later Tungi, and now King Tāufa'āhau IV), and his younger brother Prince Fatafehi Tu'ipelehake. Others were educated in New Zealand, such as the present Prime Minister, Noble Vaea and Noble Tuita (who is now a retired Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Lands). Prince Tu'ipelehake later studied agriculture in Queensland while the Crown Prince gained an Arts/Law degree from Sydney University in 1942, becoming the first Tongan with a university degree. The decision for the Crown Prince (and future King of Tonga) to study for a degree in Arts/Law was a direct result of the frustration that Sālote and Tungi had to endure at the hands of arrogant expatriate lawyers.<sup>34</sup> Sālote's aspiration to ease the burden of relying heavily on overseas experts was now beginning to bear fruit, as the overseas scholarship holders gradually returned to become prominent in the government and the public service. Others were to follow a few years later, such as Dr Sione Tapa, who became the first university educated medical doctor (later the first Tongan Minister for Health) and Mahe 'Uli'uli Tupouniua, the first Tongan to qualify in commerce (later to become the first Tongan Minister for Finance).

Sālote and Tungi also directed their attention to improving the health situation in the country. Soon after the 1918-19 influenza epidemic in which about eight per cent of the population died, a Department of Health was established<sup>35</sup> to help, among other things, promote personal hygiene and sanitation in the villages, and medical orderlies and nurses were trained locally. Sālote gave her unqualified support to the Rockefeller Foundation's campaign against hookworm in 1924 and its efforts to build a

medical school for the Western Pacific in Suva in 1929.<sup>36</sup> Selected scholarship students were sent to study medicine in Suva where they qualified as Tongan Medical Practitioners. These together with qualified nurses, and other health workers, helped to improve the health services markedly.

Queen Sālote in later years turned her attention to formulating a clear development policy for her government - a policy in which the importance of Tongan customs and traditions was to be recognised and modified where necessary to meet the needs of modernisation in a way which would be most beneficial to the people. In 1950 a Traditions Committee was established to carry out research on Tongan culture, which was chaired by the Queen until her death. An anthropologist, Dr Elizabeth (Bott) Spillius, worked with the Committee and the linguist, Dr C.M. Churchward, produced a dictionary and grammar of the Tongan language. Queen Sālote wanted to ensure that the best of Tonga's customs and traditions were not destroyed through modernisation.<sup>37</sup>

Another of her deep concerns was the status of women in Tonga, and she was determined to improve their welfare and position in the society. She wanted to eradicate legal discrimination against women and fostered legislation to give women the right to inherit land. An Act to that effect was passed in 1922 and in 1951 the constitution was amended to give women the right to vote, which they did for the first time seven years later.<sup>38</sup> In 1953, the Queen established the *Langa Fonua 'a e Fefine Tonga* (Tongan Women's National Development Association), which aimed to promote traditional handicrafts, to ensure that these skills would not be lost. Classes were organised in the villages at which women with expertise taught others to sew, embroider and to cook nutritious meals. The Association fostered the general improvement of hygiene and nutrition in villages. The handicrafts produced by the women were not only used in their homes but also presented at ceremonies and in traditional exchanges as well as sold in the markets, earning much needed cash for the villagers who were mainly subsistence farmers.<sup>39</sup>

After the death of Tungi Mailefihī in 1941, the Princes returned from their studies in Australia in the following year, and took over the vitally important supporting role their father had played so effectively. The Crown Prince, Tupouto'a Tungi, was made Minister for Education in 1943; Minister for Health from 1944 to 1949 and Prime Minister from 1949 till 1965 when he succeeded his mother to the throne, as King Tāufa'āhau Tupou

IV. His brother, Prince Fatafehi Tu'ipelehake became Minister for Lands and Agriculture and was made Prime Minister in 1965, until his retirement in 1991. Many of the major changes in education, health services, economic development and politics during the latter half of Queen Sālote's reign were initiated by Prince Tungi between 1943 and 1965.<sup>40</sup>

From 1942 until her death in 1965, Queen Sālote managed to build up an aura of reverence. With adroit manipulation of Tongan custom and tradition, combined with a warm charismatic personality, a deep sense of religious devotion, her inspired and undisputed leadership made most people of her generation and practically all younger ones, regard her as being sacrosanct. They gave her unquestioning loyalty, love and respect, and such was her stature, that any thought of criticism or refusal of anything she requested or demanded would have amounted to sacrilege. Her sons growing up within this atmosphere were both deeply affected in their thinking, actions, and attitudes to people.

Crown Prince Tupouto'a Tungi, from the moment he took over office in 1943 determined to modernise Tonga.<sup>41</sup> He had opportunities to pursue this objective in the various ministerial positions he held in Education, Health and later as Prime Minister, giving special attention to upgrading the education system, health services and Tonga's economy, a continuation of what was started by Sālote and Tungi. As Minister for Education, his policy was 'Education for Development'. A Teachers' Training College was established in 1944, modernising education in Tonga, aiming at improving standards of teaching in primary schools. Three years later in 1947, Tonga High School was established, in an effort to upgrade post-primary education and to enable the selection of the most able students for study overseas on scholarships.<sup>42</sup> Special emphasis was placed on teaching English as a second language and vocational training. Promising students were picked from both government and church primary schools for placement, and those who excelled were selected for further study overseas, assisted by scholarships from Tongan and overseas governments to undertake academic, professional courses and technical training. From these beginnings in the late 1940s Tonga slowly built up its own skilled manpower, trained and educated to undertake the task of modernisation. The enthusiastic response to education by Tongans is shown by the fact that it now has the highest proportion of PhDs per head of population anywhere in the world.<sup>43</sup>

After Tungi also became Minister for Health in 1944, he set about reforming Tonga's health services which were in need of significant reform and were described in 1945 as poor. Dietary deficiencies, hookworm, yaws as well as tuberculosis, typhoid and filaria were of serious concern.<sup>44</sup> For the whole population of about 42,000 at the time, there was one European doctor, fifteen Tongan medical practitioners trained in Fiji and ten locally trained nurses and a few medical orderlies. The number of hospitals and clinics was quite inadequate and people living in the more remote areas had extreme difficulty in reaching medical services. To overcome many of these health problems, a New Zealand nursing specialist was hired to establish a mobile ante-natal and child welfare clinic, assisted by locally trained nurses, and mobile services made regular visits to health centres on the main island of Tongatapu.<sup>45</sup> Working together with the *Langa Fonua* committees in the villages, hygiene, nutrition and clean water supplies improved the health situation throughout the country.

Recognising the dangers of an economy totally reliant on a small number of agricultural export products and dominated by multi-national trading companies, Prince Tungi set about modernising and diversifying the economy, providing alternatives which would ensure significant local participation. He determined to change the economy from being basically subsistence with a few cash crops such as copra and bananas, into a predominantly market economy with a complimentary subsistence sector. A series of development plans were drawn up, the first being a Five Year Plan begun in 1965, which was followed in 1970 by a further four Five Year Plans.<sup>46</sup> The intention of these Plans was to promote commercial agriculture and fishing; marketing handicrafts; small industries; banking; co-operative societies; tourism; technical education; and communications, including shipping air-travel, telecommunications, newspaper, and broadcasting. Some encouragement was given to emigration in search of education, work or permanent residence overseas.

As Crown Prince, and later His Majesty King Tāufa'āhau Tupou IV, Tungi was in a much stronger position than his predecessors to carry out reforms because he was of the highest ranking birth, derived from the combination in his person of the three Royal dynasties, as well as being the most highly educated person in Tonga. Sālote and Tungi had helped tremendously to smooth the way

and create the right atmosphere for him. From 1943 and for the next twenty-two years when he held the key portfolios in government, no one in Tonga was in a position to criticise him, or place any obstacle in his path. The people and the parliament were prepared to support whatever he wanted to do to facilitate his modernisation programme.<sup>47</sup> Led by his younger brother, Prince Fatafehi Tu'ipelehake, the other ministers and parliamentarians gave their unqualified support. In general, there was high expectation and complete trust that the young Tāufa'āhau would equal if not surpass his illustrious namesake, the first Tāufa'āhau, King George Tupou I.

In an article published in 1967 however, the present writer provided a critical analysis of some of Crown Prince Tungi's activities.

Being the highest ranking and best informed Tongan, he felt little inclination to listen to or to seek advice from any quarter and differed markedly in this respect from his mother. During his term of office as Premier democratic institutions- Parliaments and Cabinet in particular- had become mere rubber stamps for his own policies. Perhaps the unfortunate failure of some of his schemes could have been avoided and money which Tonga could ill afford to waste have been saved, had he been prepared to seek expert advice on these matters. Nor did he consider it necessary to find out the feelings and aspirations of the people, being convinced that what he did was in their best interests and those of the country, and feeling equally confident of their loyalty, devotion and love. He had every reason to feel confident, for Tongans are proud of his scholastic and other achievements.... He commanded the respect of the Tongan people, and he was revered by them; but he remained somewhat aloof from them both socially and intellectually.<sup>48</sup>

Although the reforms and projects initiated by Prince Tungi were not all successful, his modernising efforts had wider ramifications. The Churches, for example, enthusiastically accepted places offered to them by the Government in its newly established Teachers' Training College, and made conscious efforts to improve standards in their denominational schools. Following the establishment of the Tonga High School and the expansion of government scholarships for overseas study, some churches established their own high

schools and began sending a few of their top students to overseas schools including universities.<sup>49</sup>

One church established an agricultural training college while others engaged in various agricultural and business ventures. Families and groups of individuals took up the challenge of development and began sending their sons and daughters overseas for education and training.<sup>50</sup> Others launched business ventures ranging from commercial farming to small industries and retail and wholesale businesses including small village trade stores; others took up communication services - local transport including buses, taxis and inter-island shipping as well as establishing independent newspapers and periodicals. Tourist related activities were also promoted by private and semi-official organisations and enterprising entrepreneurs. Many of these business ventures failed, but over time the more efficiently managed have survived. Others sought opportunities for temporary work overseas or to emigrate, both legally and illegally, in search of permanent residency mainly in New Zealand, Australia and the United States of America. As they established themselves and found regular employment, they sent remittances to their families at home helping significantly to boost the local economy.<sup>51</sup>

By 1970 when full independence was restored, many positive signs of development were apparent from the policies initiated earlier by King Tāufa'āhau Tupou IV, and there was greater material prosperity and growing aspirations among the wider population to share these benefits. At the same time, problems had followed the process of modernisation. The improvement in health had been followed by a sharp decline in infant mortality, lengthening of the adult life span and an inevitable population explosion. In the sixteen years between 1950 and 1966 the population grew from 43,388 to 76,121, with a growth rate of more than three per cent per annum.<sup>52</sup> As early as the 1950s, Prince Tungi had foreseen the possibility of overpopulation and its consequences for a small country like Tonga with its limited land-mass and resources. A family planning scheme had been established to try to check the trend, but it was not quite successful. From the 1970s on the increasing emigration of Tongans was a far more effective means of checking population growth. It is estimated that there are now between 60,000 and 70,000 Tongans living overseas, while the total population of Tonga remains between 95,000 and 100,000.

Ironically, it was the very success of the present King's modernization efforts, which has

promoted the emergence of a relatively strong middle class of educated men and women, now liberated from fear and ignorance, more independent economically, who have a wider and clearer perspective of Tonga, its people and culture. They have become outspokenly critical of the Royal family, nobility, politicians, senior bureaucrats and churches.<sup>53</sup> The existence of radio broadcasting and independent newspapers has facilitated their activities.

The recent development of a Pro-Democracy Movement in Tonga is a clear manifestation of this trend. In the late sixties and seventies, well educated and highly qualified church leaders such as Dr. Sione Amanaki Havea and the Revd. Siupeli Taliai of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, and the late Bishop Patelesio Finau of the Roman Catholic Church, as well as Futa Helu, an educator and independent thinker, began to be openly and publicly critical of the Tongan monarchical system, and its corrupt and undemocratic nature.

Others followed, including well educated and more independent minded, Parliamentary Peoples Representatives, particularly Akilisi Pohiva, a great-grandson of Finau Filimoe'ulie, a half brother of Tupou I on his father's side, and descended from the famous Tongan missionary in Fiji, Jioeli Bulu on his mother's side. After gaining an Arts Degree from U.S.P., Pohiva returned to Tonga to lecture at Tonga Teachers College. He also took over a current affairs radio program, in which he was critical of the monarchical system, educational and economic system and exposed corruption in high places. It became popular, but was abruptly terminated in 1985 when Pohiva was transferred to another public service position and eventually dismissed without notice or explanation. Unable to continue broadcasting, he and others produced a bi-monthly political newsheet, *Kele'a*, in 1986, which exposed unjust actions by government and corrupt practices. It told of parliamentarians collecting allowances for trips they never made, as well as detailing allowances and salaries the élite paid themselves.<sup>54</sup> Parliamentarians agreed to give themselves a full day's pay for every hour of overtime. It also exposed high levels of corruption, such as false claims for expenditure and allowances by some Ministers' of the Crown, most of whom were nobles. *Kele'a* became so popular, that its circulation jumped from 1000, to 10,000 in three months.<sup>55</sup>

Another development which prompted strong reaction from the people was when Mahe'uli'uli Tupouniua, one of the most highly qualified and

respected Ministers for Finance in the Pacific region, was forced to resign his position in February 1986 for not immediately approving a request from the Palace Office to increase its travel funds. He was replaced by a younger economics graduate, Cecil Cocker, who immediately brought in a retail sales tax of 5%, while reducing personal income tax to a flat rate of 10%, as well as reducing company tax substantially. This radical tax reform was immediately attacked by the *Kele'a*, pointing out that the poor were being made to pay more tax, while the rich paid less. A petition against this sales tax, was organized by Laki Niu, a young law graduate and strong supporter of the *Kele'a*, and signed by 11,000 people. The parliamentary representatives decided that members should go out and explain the new tax to the people. Their efforts were regarded as overtime and the members received unbelievably generous allowances, ranging from T\$1, 218 to T\$10, 391 for twelve days' meetings.<sup>56</sup> The people showed their anger at the next election, in 1987, when they elected six new members out of nine, including, Laki Niu and 'Akilisi Pohiva as the number two and number three People's Representatives for the Tongatapu electorate. One historian rightly points out that 'this was not only the most educated Parliament ever elected [six were university graduates, including four of the newly elected]; it was also the first one in which issues rather than kinship and local loyalties determined voters' choices'.<sup>57</sup> Led by Pohiva, Niu and Teisina Fuko (one of the re-elected Ha'apai People's Representatives), some of the People's Representatives continued both within and outside Parliament, to attack the sales tax, parliamentarians' remunerations among other issues, and attempted unsuccessfully to impeach the Minister for Finance during the 1987-1989 parliament.

These members also uncovered and attacked the sale of Tongan passports to foreigners. In an endeavour to raise further government revenue, the King and his Ministers, had secretly decided to sell Tongan passports to foreigners, particularly Chinese in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Had this occurred in the 1950s or 1960s no parliamentarian would have raised an eyebrow, viewing it with gratitude as an act of selfless benevolence of their illustrious Crown Prince for the benefit of his people. Instead, this new breed of highly educated parliamentarians questioned the secrecy, the constitutionality and the accountability of the executive on this matter. They also wanted

to know how much had been collected, and the whereabouts of the funds. The public exposure of these matters through radio, newspapers and kava parties, created keen interest in politics among the people, as well as causing anger among the supporters of the establishment. Having got nowhere in parliament, Pohiva organised and presented on the November 1988 an unsuccessful petition signed by about 7,000 people to His Majesty, for action to be taken on matters raised. In September 1989, Fuko frustrated, walked out of parliament and the rest of the People's Representatives spontaneously joined him and boycotted parliament for two weeks. In spite of intensive campaigning by the Government and their supporters to persuade the Tongatapu electorate to drop Pohiva in the 1990 election, the people re-elected him with a record majority as the number one member for Tongatapu, Niu again as number two and a new member, Willy Fukofuka, an Arts graduate, ex-public servant and editor of the *Kele'a*, as number three, dropping the conservative, number one sitting member.

On March 1991, Dr. Havea, Bishop Finau and some of the People's Representatives, led a march of 2, 500 people to the palace to present His Majesty, with a petition requesting the dismissal of the Minister for Police, Hon. 'Akau'ola, for the unconstitutional sale of Tongan passports to foreigners. It also called for the revoking of the amendments to the constitution, passed in an emergency session of Parliament on 18 February 1991, to make legal the sale of passports retrospectively. They were not allowed to see the King. Later the Government explained that the unconstitutional sale of the passports, was an honest mistake and the only sensible and honourable thing to do had been to correct the mistake by amending the constitution.

Meanwhile, the three new members for Tongatapu, one from Ha'apai and one from Va'vau, supported by Dr. Havea, Bishop Finau, Futa Helu and other prominent men and women, initiated the formation of the Tongan Pro-Democracy Movement in 1991, and organised a successful Pro-Democracy convention in November 1992, on the 'Tongan Constitution and Democracy' just three months before the next election in February 1993. Once again, in spite of bitter campaigning by Government, nobles and their supporters against Pohiva, the voters re-elected him number one, and Niu who had by then fallen out with Pohiva, was dropped, and the number two went to Fukofuka, while the number three went to

a former Accountant-General and Secretary for Finance and strong supporter of the Pro-Democracy Movement, 'Uhila Leava'a. The Ha'apai electors dropped their conservative member and elected a Pro-Democracy Movement supporter, Uliti Uata, a very prominent businessman and one Pro-Democracy Movement member from Vava'u, Masao Pa'asi. The present parliament therefore, has six committed Pro-Democracy members, two independents (one from Vava'u and one from the Niuaas) and one conservative from 'Eua,<sup>58</sup> who passed away quite recently.

In the aftermath of the elections, the Minister for Police, alleged that the Pro-Democracy members of parliament had done absolutely nothing for the people. In a way, this is quite correct, for they have not been able to give people any tangible development or infrastructure, simply because they had no control over the public purse or influence in the decision making process. What they have achieved, has been to check irresponsible and excessive expenditure by parliamentarians, bringing in a greater measure of honesty and accountability.<sup>59</sup>

At present the Pro-Democracy Movement's effectiveness appears to have been undermined by several factors: the untimely and sudden death of Bishop Finau in October 1993, the retirement of Dr. Havea and the absence overseas of Fr. 'Akua'ola, the foundation chairman of the Pro-Democracy Movement; the conviction of Pohiva on libel charges brought against him by the speaker of parliament and the Crown Prince and his confession that as an untrained journalist, he had failed to check his facts properly; the lack of unity among the six professed Pro-Democracy members of parliament, and the recent establishment of a political party by the three Peoples Representatives of Tongatapu and the two from Ha'apai and Vava'u, which seems to have split the Pro-Democracy Movement. Meanwhile the government and their supporters are consolidating their stand against the changes advocated by the Pro-Democracy Movement.

In conclusion, through the absence of formal colonisation and the uninterrupted continuation of self government, Tonga was able to maintain gradual development and improvements in education, health services and the economy which were initiated from within rather than imposed by an outside colonial administration. This was already apparent during Queen Sālote's reign when she and Tungi Mailefihi aimed at significant involvement and participation by Tongans in the development process. Gradually, well educated

and skilled Tongans have replaced expatriate public servants and foreign experts were given shorter contracts rather than permanency.<sup>60</sup> In addition, the fact that land had not been alienated in Tonga resulting in the absence of a large foreign settler community, meant that the Tongan people as a rule, never became plantation labourers for foreigners nor did they develop the attitudes to Europeans found in colonised parts of the Pacific before independence (the 'Yes Masta' syndrome which was so often replaced later by intense hatred and racism). To Tongans, *Tau'ataina* (independence), has always been their birthright. Most have been unaware that Tonga's complete independence had been compromised by the British interests from the early 1900s until its full restoration in 1970. They viewed the connection with the British as that of a benevolent and friendly protector of Tonga from potential foreign invaders, such as the Germans and the Japanese, and their attitudes towards other foreigners, the British in particular, remain favourable. Perhaps such an anglophile attitude comes from the fact that the two systems of government in both countries are so similar.

Tonga differs from other countries of the Pacific which were formally colonised, in not having the often over-hasty preparations for self-government and independence imposed by a colonial power, which have led in later years to conflicts and problems within the region.<sup>61</sup> Ironically, Tonga's modernization process was responsible for certain inevitable problems such as the population explosion; brain drain through overseas migration; urban drift with its resulting squatter settlements, increasing poverty and criminal activities; corruption in high places; and open criticism and questioning of those in authority which have caused serious concern and irritation among the leaders. Although some attempts have been made to address these problems, the tendency had been to ignore and even ridicule many of the advocates of reform. The general dissatisfaction and concern for honesty, social justice and accountability from political leaders have been evident in recent elections where candidates of the Pro-Democracy Movement have been given considerable voter support.

Their vote appears mainly to reflect their desire to force politicians to restore justice, accountability and honesty to government, rather than a desire to see radical changes



to the system.<sup>62</sup>

In spite of all this, Tonga continues to be the most peaceful country in the Pacific, its government the most stable, and its people, in general, enjoy a relatively comfortable standard of living. However, the continuation of stability, peace and prosperity of Tonga will depend on how the modernizing monarch, King Tāufa'āhau Tupou IV, responds to the legitimate demands for necessary reforms. He alone, under the present outdated constitutional parliamentary structure, could successfully initiate any move to facilitate such changes.

## References

1. While this argument is quite valid it may be pointed out that smaller Pacific islands or groups of island with much fewer resources than Tonga such as Niue, Cook Islands, Tuvalu and Kiribati were still colonised for other reasons.
2. See E.C. Campbell, 'British Treaties with Polynesians in the Nineteenth Century': S. Latukefu, 'The Treaty of Friendship and Tongan Sovereignty', W. Renwick (ed.), *Sovereignty and Indigenous Rights* (Wellington, 1991), 69 and 83 respectively.
3. For a more detailed discussion of King George Tupou I's career, see Latukefu, 'King George Tupou I of Tonga', J.W. Davidson and D. Scarr (eds.), *Pacific Islands Portraits* (Canberra, 1970), 55-75. See also E.W. Gifford, *Tongan Society* (Honolulu, 1929), p. 91; W.P. Morrell, Britain in *The Pacific Islands*, (Oxford, 1960), pp. 50-3, 127-8, 311-27; D.L. Oliver, *The Pacific Islands* (New York, 1961), pp. 181-2.
4. Latukefu, *Church and State in Tonga* (Canberra, 1974), 216; A.H. Wood, *History and Geography of Tonga* (Nuku'alofa, 1932), p. 59.
5. 'E. Fusitu'a and N. Rutherford, 'George Tupou II and the British Protectorate', N. Rutherford (ed.), *Friendly Islands: A History of Tonga* (Melbourne 1977) p. 174; see also I.C. Campbell, *Island Kingdom: Tonga Ancient and Modern* (Christchurch 1992), p. 108; S. Latukefu, *The Tongan Constitution: A Brief History ...* (Nuku'alofa, 1975) p. 67; D. Scarr, *Fragments of Empire* (Canberra, 1967) p. 108-9.
6. Campbell, *Island Kingdom*, pp. 110-3; Latukefu, *The Constitution* p. 69-70. See also Renwick (ed.), *Sovereignty and Indigenous Rights*, pp. 67-82 and 83-88. For a detailed study of the relationship between Britain and Tonga during the period of British Protectorate, 1900-1970, see P.A. Lavaka, 'The Limits of Advice: Britain and the Kingdom of Tonga, 1900-1970', PhD thesis (ANU, Canberra, 1981).
7. Rutherford, *Friendly Islands*, pp. 183-5; Campbell, *Island Kingdom*, pp. 110-116; Latukefu, *The Tongan Constitution*, pp. 69-71.
8. Rutherford, *Friendly Islands*, p. 185; Latukefu, *The Tongan Constitution*, pp. 70-71.
9. Rutherford, *Friendly Islands*, p. 186.
10. Latukefu, *The Tongan Constitution*, p. 2; Rutherford, *Friendly Islands*, p. 187; Campbell, *Island Kingdom*, p. 115.
11. Latukefu, *The Tongan Constitution*, p. 73.
12. Latukefu, *The Tongan Constitution*, p. 82.
13. For a comprehensive study of the chiefly system in Tonga today, see G.E. Marcus, 'The Ancient Regime in the Modern Kingdom of Tonga: Conflict and Change among the Nobility of a Polynesian Constitutional Monarchy', PhD thesis (Harvard, University 1975). C.G. Powles, 'The Persistence of Chiefly Power and its Implications for Law and Political Organisation in Western Polynesia', PhD thesis (ANU, Canberra 1979) pp. 230-351. The reality of the situation is that the noble title is held by one person (male), his brothers and sisters miss out and many if not all will marry commoners. Consequently in the next generation most of them, with the exception of the few who may marry nobles, will become increasingly remote from the title, and inevitably merge with the majority of the population as commoners. The eldest son of the incumbent will inherit the title, while his other siblings follow the way described above. There are now 33 nobles. Tupou I added 10, Tupou II added 2, and Queen Sālote (Tupou III), 1.
14. Tatukeyu, *Church and State in Tonga*, p. 223.
15. Latukefu, 'The case of the Wesleyan Mission in Tonga', *Journal de la Société de Océanistes XXV*, 1969, pp. 97-112; Latukefu, *Church and State in Tonga*, pp. 68-82.
16. Campbell, *Island Kingdom*, pp. 76-77; N. Rutherford, *Shirley Baker and the King of Tonga* (Melbourne, 1971), pp. 24-6; A.H. Wood, *Overseas Missions of the Australian Methodist Church*, Vol. 1, Tonga and Samoa (Melbourne, 1975), pp. 127-31.
17. Latukefu, 'King George Tupou I of Tonga', Davidson & Scarr, *Pacific Islands Portraits* (Canberra, 1970) p. 72.

18. Latukefu, *Church and State in Tonga*, p. 211.
19. It is now common to say in the salutation at the beginning of any formal speech - 'Tapu mo hou'eiki; tapu mo ha'a matapule; tapu mo ha'a potu' (educated elite) etc. See Latukefu, *Church and State in Tonga*, pp. 78-80.
20. Latukefu, *The Tongan Constitution*, pp. 57-8.
21. Although the reformed government under the Premiership of Mateialona was extremely unpopular with the King and his supporters, it was actually quite successful in repairing the damage done by the previous government to the economy. Within two years outstanding debts were paid off and a modest surplus of two thousand eight hundred pounds remained, and in the next five years an ambitious and successful public works programme launched the building of roads, wharves, hospitals, government buildings and public concrete water storage tanks in villages to provide clean water throughout the country. Unfortunately Mateialona was forced to resign in 1912. See Rutherford, *Friendly Islands*, p. 187; Latukefu, *The Tongan Constitution*, p. 72; Campbell, *Island Kingdom*, pp. 114-8.
22. A.H. Wood and E. Wood, 'Queen Sālote Tupou III', Rutherford, *Friendly Islands*, pp. 193-4. For a comprehensive and scholarly study of the reign of Queen Sālote and her Prince Consort, see E. Wood Ellem 'Queen Sālote Tupou III and Tungi Mailefihi: A Study of Leadership in Twentieth-century Tonga, 1918-14', PhD thesis (University of Melbourne, 1981).
23. Tupou I gave Tungi the name Mailefihi (*maile* (myrtle), *fih*i (intertwined)). (A.H. Wood and E. Wood Ellem, in N.Rutherford (ed.), *Friendly Islands : A History of Tonga*, 1977, p. 192). Mailefihi is an allusion to the fact that so many chiefly families are intertwined in his pedigree. The choice of Tungi Mailefihi to be Sālote's consort was deliberately designed to weld all three dynasties: the Tui Kanukupolu (Sālote's father), Tui Tonga (Sālote's mother) and the Tui Ha'atakalua (of which Tungi was heir), in their eventual offspring. According to Queen Sālote, when the gun salute was fired to indicate that her mother had given birth to a baby girl, young Tungi's grandfather, Tungi Halatuituia or Tungi Vaivai, gave an extremely loud *fakaulu* (a shrill shout) 'Iu....huhu' in his excitement at the news, that a royal wife for his grandson, Tungi Mailefihi, had now been born (Personal communication).
24. Rodger Page was a younger brother of Sir Earl Page, the founder of the Country Party (now National party) in Australia and a one time Prime Minister of Australia. The former served in Tonga from 1908 to 1947 and was President of the Church from 1925 until his retirement. He was an extremely wise but unassuming leader with tremendous love for the country and its people. he became the closest confidant of Sālote and Tungi, their trusted adviser, indeed the power behind the throne, but he always, prudently kept to the background.
25. In particular, Islay McOwan who was British Agent and Consul at the time the young Sālote came to the throne in 1918, and J.S. Neil who ably and loyally served in Tonga from 1927 until 1937. Latukefu, *The Tongan Constitution*, 79; Rutherford, *Friendly Islands*, 198; Campbell, *Island Kingdom*, pp. 126, 133, 138.
26. Campbell, *Island Kingdom*, pp. 127-8. It was natural for members of chiefly families who missed out being made nobles to seek public recognition in other ways such as becoming people's representatives in Parliament, high ranking public servants through education or church leaders and officials. Initially commoners tended to look up to certain members of such former chiefly families with known and acknowledged leadership qualities and voted for them as people's representatives in parliament. See Wood Ellem, 'Queen Sālote Tupou III', pp. 206-7.
27. Campbell, *Island Kingdom*, p. 126; for a discussion of the close alliance between the expatriate and Tongan opponents during the early stages of Queen Sālote's reign, see Wood Ellem, 'Queen Sālote Tupou III', Chapter 6, pp. 198-239.
28. See Campbell, *Island Kingdom*, pp. 125-6.
29. One historian wrote; '...Sālote continued to treat Parliament as a subordinate body... in her view the government was herself and her privy council and Parliament existed to give legal force to the decisions and actions of the government.' Campbell, *Island Kingdom*, pp. 184.
30. Campbell, *Island Kingdom*, 131; Rutherford, *Friendly Islands*, pp. 197-9; Wood Ellem, 'Queen Sālote Tupou III and Tungi Mailefihi', Chapter 7, pp. 240-99.
31. Campbell, *Island Kingdom*, pp. 127-8.
32. Latukefu, *Church and State*, p. 75.
33. Campbell, *Island Kingdom*, pp. 136-7.
34. Rutherford, *Friendly Islands*, p. 200; Campbell, *Island Kingdom*, p. 133.
35. Rutherford, *Friendly Islands*, p. 197.
36. Campbell, *Island Kingdom*, p. 141-2; Rutherford, *Friendly Islands*, p. 200.
37. Tongan Government Gazette, 1959; Campbell, *Island Kingdom*, p. 169.

38. Latukefu, *The Tongan Constitution*, p. 80.
39. Campbell, *Island Kingdom*, p. 186.
40. S. Latukefu, 'The Pro-Democracy Movement in Tonga', *The Journal of Pacific History*, Vol. 28, No. 3, p. 62; Campbell, *Island Kingdom*, p. 169.
41. Campbell, *Island Kingdom*, p. 162.
42. Dr. Langi Kavaliku, Deputy Premier and Minister for Education and Works, Akau'ola, Minister for Police, Cecil Cocker, Minister for Finance, some of the Peoples Parliamentary Representatives, heads and senior members of the public service, Futa Helu and others, were among the outstanding Tonga High alumni.
43. 'A. Taufe'ulungaki, 'Educational Achievements - a Jewel in the Crown', paper at the Tongan History Association, 1993, Nuku'alofa, 29 June.
44. Campbell, *Island Kingdom*, p. 163.
45. J. R. Baker, 'Contemporary Tonga: An Economic Survey', Rutherford, *Friendly Islands*, pp. 206, 234-5; Campbell, *Island Kingdom*, p. 164.
46. Campbell, *Island Kingdom*, pp. 190-2, 195-7, 198-204; Rutherford, *Friendly Islands*, pp. 241-6.
47. Latukefu, 'Tonga After Queen Sālote', *Journal of Pacific History*, Vol. 2, 1967, pp. 159-62.
48. As was to be expected this article, was not favourably received by the Tongan establishment and Royal family, and the present writer was ostricised for writing it, until 1975. Latukefu 'Tonga after Queen Sālote', *The Journal of Pacific History* 2, 1967, p. 161.
49. The Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga sent Sione Latukefu (the present author) and Siupeli Taliai to the University of Queensland in 1955-58, and others followed later. It established Tupou High School in 1963 and the Hango Agricultural College on the island of 'Eua in 1969, Wood, *Overseas Missions of the Australian Methodist Church*, Vol. 1, pp. 235-6. The Mormon Church established Liahona College in 1953, 'the largest and most ambitious educational undertaking in the Kingdom', Campbell, *Island Kingdom*, p. 169.
50. Among these private students were the present Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education, Dr Langi Hu'akavameiliku (Kavaliku) the first Tongan to gain a PhD; the present Government Secretary Taniela Tufui, the second Tongan to gain a Law degree after His Majesty; the present Tongan High Commissioner in London, Sione Kite, and Professor Futa Helu, the founder of the 'Atenisi Institute, to mention just a few. Some of them received government support towards the latter part of their studies while others did not receive any assistance.
51. Rutherford, *Friendly Islands*, pp. 232-4.
52. Campbell, *Island Kingdom*, pp. 188-9; Rutherford, *Friendly Islands*, pp. 206-7, 230-1.
53. See Latukefu, 'The Pro-Democracy Movement in Tonga'; S. Lawson, *Tradition versus Democracy in the Kingdom of Tonga* (Canberra, 1994). *Lipooti 'o e Konivesio ki he Konisitutone mo e Temokalati (Convention on Constitution and Democracy Report* (Nuku'alofa, 1992); 'Eveli Hau'ofa, 'Thy Kingdom Come: The Democratisation of Aristocratic Tonga' (Suva, 1993); W.E Cowling, 'Temokalati [Democracy] and the 'sublimity' of tradition in Tonga' a paper presented at the Annual Conference of the New Zealand Association of Social Anthropologists (Waikato University, 1993).
54. *Kele'a*, 7:4 (Oct. 1992), p. 4.
55. Latukefu 'Pro-Democracy Movement in Tonga', JPH, 1993, p. 57.
56. Campbell, *Island Kingdom*, p. 219.
57. Campbell, *Island Kingdom*, p. 219.
58. Latukefu, 'Pro-Democracy Movement in Tonga.', p. 61.
59. In 1986, the Tongan Parliament spent T\$ 1, 600, 000 on overtime, but after the public exposure of this information, expenditure had dropped in 1987 to T\$130, 000, and in 1992 it was a mere T\$ 20, 000. *Kele'a*, July/August, 1993, p. 5.
60. Latukefu, *The Tongan Constitution*, p. 74.
61. In the case of Papua New Guinea, the educational policy of the Menzies government until the early 1960s, under Paul Hasluck, Minister for Territories, was to promote universal primary education. A United Nations' Mission visited Papua New Guinea in 1962 and reported negatively on Australia's failure to prepare the country for independence and to foster the education of an elite to take over government after independence. Within a decade, a crash program of education had established high schools and tertiary institutions including an Administrative College and the University of Papua New Guinea for training students locally, while others were sent overseas to hastily prepare for self-government and independence in 1975.
62. Latukefu, 'The Pro-Democracy Movement in Tonga', pp. 60-1; Lawson, 'Tradition versus Democracy in the Kingdom of Tonga', p. 27; Cowling, 'Temokalati [Democracy]', p. 16.

# Why is Micronesian 'Independence' an Issue?

*Glenn Petersen*

The governments of Micronesia's freely associated states and representatives of the United States government now maintain that these Micronesian states are independent. Others, however, have argued that Micronesian free association does not constitute what is generally conceived to be independence. The simple fact that both the U.S. and the Micronesians find it necessary to assert Micronesian independence signals some implicit acknowledgment that resolution of the issue is not an entirely straightforward matter. In this essay I ask why Micronesian independence is problematic. I do not intend to provide a solution to it. Indeed, my answer to the question of whether Micronesia's freely associated republics are independent is equivocal: it depends. Two issues must be raised immediately. Why, after nearly three decades of negotiations, does the issue remain so problematical? And of what relevance is the uncertain character of Micronesian political status to the rest of the Pacific and the world?

Throughout its near half-century of trusteeship, the U.S. was determined to make Micronesian independence a non-issue. Though the U.S. government was at the time unwilling to admit openly that it would never consider Micronesian independence as a possible outcome of the negotiations to end trusteeship - it was nevertheless the case that all parties to the negotiations were aware that the U.S. would never countenance the possibility of a genuinely independent Micronesia. Given the Micronesians' opposition to anything that would impede Micronesian self-government, a stalemate was in the offing. It was initially avoided through mutual agreement upon a vague political status, termed 'free association', the details of which could be worked out later.

Throughout this period, free association was portrayed as an alternative to independence. Today, however, the two statuses are spoken of as co-existing simultaneously; that is, the FSM, the Marshalls, and eventually (it is assumed) Palau are both freely associated and independent. The often confusing and complex political status of Micronesia's freely associated republics must be approached not merely through adversary readings of international law and treaties, but in the historical context of the political battles fought to achieve that status.

Though the history of Micronesian political status has its singularities - the area was organized

as the United Nations' only 'Strategic Trust Territory' - the ambiguity characterising its political status during the period of transition from outright colony to sovereign state is perhaps not unique. The actual degree of autonomy exercised by the freely associated governments may not significantly differ from that of many other Pacific island nation states. Examination of the Micronesian case may help raise issues that can eventually clarify some of the unresolved arguments concerning the question of just what constitutes independence.

## The Current Argument Over Micronesia's Political Status

In a recent article, Edward Michal, a United States State Department Pacific islands specialist, has attempted to develop a 'theory' explaining why the FSM and the Marshalls are independent. He maintains 'that the term free association no longer accurately describes the relationships of the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands with the United States'. Although he argues that free association is no longer an applicable category, he nevertheless maintains 'that the implementation of the compact of free association served to constitute these polities as "protected states", that is, sovereign nations that have delegated part of their inherent powers to another nation'. Therefore, he concludes, the FSM and the Marshalls 'are not only sovereign but independent, despite the seeming limitations of the compact and its subsidiary agreements'.<sup>1</sup>

Michal addresses his arguments particularly toward claims put forward by Firth (1989), Smith (1991), Ghai (1985), James (1986), and McKibben (1990), among others, that the compacts' subsidiary mutual security agreements impinge upon the Micronesians' autonomy substantially enough to call their sovereignty into question. He concludes that none of these positions is valid.<sup>2</sup> I will not explore here the array of legal arguments he brings forward; reasonable students of the issues will continue to disagree over the relative importance and impact of these points. What I do wish to call attention to is what he calls 'the most telling argument against the hypothesis that neither nation is sovereign,...the willingness of other nations to enter into normal diplomatic relations with and establish embassies in both countries' (1993:314). Michal's position is that the

questions of Micronesian sovereignty and independence are best adjudged in the context of their current relations with other nation-states, rather than in the historical context of their relations with the United States. In choosing this approach, however, he generates much of the confusion I am attempting to unravel in this essay. Indeed, I would argue that the underlying point of Michal's article is to help direct the continuing evolution of Micronesia's relations with other nation-states.

The crux of the issue is Michal's insistence that the Micronesian governments' entry into free association was 'voluntarily agreed to' and that they 'voluntarily accepted certain restrictions on their sovereign powers.'<sup>3</sup> He does so because the legal argument on which he bases his 'theory' that these are protected states asserts that such a state 'has voluntarily chosen to restrict the exercise of its sovereign rights in a certain area'.<sup>4</sup> The historical material Michal has marshalled, however, casts doubt about the voluntary character of Micronesian free association into doubt. He cites, for instance, the opening lines of the so-called Hilo Accords, which defined the key principles upon which free association would eventually be founded: 'During the life of the agreement the political status of the peoples of Micronesia shall remain that of free association as distinguished from independence'.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the United States Congress, in the process of deliberating over approval of the compacts, was told by the President's negotiating staff that 'in the view of the United States, the Freely Associated States, while having sovereignty and full self-government, will not possess the attributes of independence called for in the eligibility criteria of the United Nations Charter'.<sup>6</sup>

This is the reality of the historical situation. The United States had no intention of ever granting Micronesian independence, the Micronesians were fully aware of this, and the compacts of free association were negotiated while the Micronesians were forced to choose between two options: annexation and free association. Given the restricted range of choice open to them, it cannot be claimed that the Micronesians' entry into free association was voluntary. I will not pursue the rest of Michal's arguments further here. Suffice it to say that his article serves to lend credence to my overall point: the question of independence can only be addressed within specific contexts, not as a free-floating theoretical issue.

### The Puerto Rican Prologue

To provide a relevant historical perspective on free association, I begin with Puerto Rico. The American approach to resolution of the Micronesian political status question was in some measure shaped by the history of its dealings in Puerto Rico, where the local pre-occupation with the political status question is an obsession. Puerto Rico is an archetypical colonial society with little or no underlying strata of precolonial, indigenous sociopolitical or cultural organization. All the island's original inhabitants, known as the Taíno, had either perished or fled within 50 years of the initial Spanish occupation, 500 years ago. For the past two hundred years or so, since the winds of independence first swept the New World, Puerto Ricans have been organizing themselves around political positions that have been framed in terms of the island's status vis-a-vis the metropolitan powers that have ruled it. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the island's leadership reached an agreement with the United States, ratified by the Puerto Ricans in 1952, instituting a form of local self-government known in English as 'Commonwealth' and in Spanish as 'Estado Libre Asociado' (ELA), which translates as 'Free Associated State.' An American version of free association, then, predates that of the Cook Islands and Niue relationships with New Zealand, which are frequently cited as the models for the Micronesian pattern. In 1967 by a substantial margin and again in November 1993 by a narrow margin, the Puerto Rican electorate voted to preserve this form of free association rather than to pursue full integration as a state within the Union.

The Puerto Ricans have not been especially interested in independence, believing it to be far too costly and fearing loss of the easy entry into the United States that American citizenship now provides, but independence advocates (who have drawn between three and five percent of the vote in recent elections and the 1993 political status referendum) have influenced the character of debate on the island, forcing the commonwealth and statehood parties to make issues of Puerto Rican nationality and culture, as well as use of the Spanish language, central to all political discussions and plans. Puerto Rican apprehensions about statehood stem from two different sources. The first is the murky projections about what it would mean for local economy and cultural life, and concerns about continued American discrimination against what is an essentially Hispanic - and therefore alien - society. The

second is the assertions that the only honourable alternative to statehood is independence. The overwhelming majority of Puerto Ricans want a permanent union with the United States; at issue is simply the degree of local autonomy. Since the 1967 plebiscite, no Puerto Rican party has managed to achieve a simple majority in gubernatorial elections, and it seems to have been clear to the United States government that the dynamics of the Puerto Rican status question turn on the hotly contested question of just how close - rather than how distant - the island's relationship with the United States should be.

When the United States began political status negotiations with the Micronesians, it drew upon its relations with Puerto Rico, and assumed that Micronesians, like Puerto Ricans, would desire a closer relationship with the U.S. This view was reinforced by the fact that the Trust Territory's headquarters were located in Saipan, where the Chamorro society of the Marianas islands had many creole aspects resembling Puerto Rican culture, and where, for a variety of historical reasons, the local people did indeed want a closer relationship with the United States. Indeed, they fought for and achieved a political status named, if not entirely patterned, after Puerto Rico's Commonwealth. Moreover, the United States had been determined from the very outset to hold onto them permanently. The Navy had been preparing to seize the islands ever since its plans to annex them were thwarted in 1898,<sup>7</sup> and the United States military agreed to the trusteeship only with the understanding that its special strategic provisions guaranteed permanent control over, if not permanent union with, the area.

When the Congress of Micronesia was established in 1965, one of its earliest steps was creation of a committee to negotiate future political status, and it was this committee that first initiated the process of bringing trusteeship to a close. While the United States government's negotiators came to the early talks with the 1967 Puerto Rican situation in mind, expecting to bring the Trust Territory into permanent union with the United States, the majority of Micronesians were determined to avoid annexation at all costs. Over the years, the negotiations' abundant travails and delays were rooted in the very different sets of assumptions the two sides brought with them. Much of the ill will and mutual accusations of bad faith can be understood as products of these misunderstandings (though the greater part of the difficulty certainly had more to do with the substance of those differences).

### Negotiating Distinct Status Alternatives

To demonstrate that free association was negotiated as a distinct alternative to independence, and not as a modified version of it, I now consider relevant aspects of the political status negotiations between the Micronesians and the U.S. The history of these negotiations is adequately treated in McHenry (1975), Smith (1991), and Michal (1993); my intention here is not to recount this history but to focus on certain key elements of the evolving relationship between free association and independence options. Although the U.S. position at the beginning of the status talks with the Congress of Micronesia was influenced by its experiences with Puerto Rico, the Americans could hardly offer a copy of the Puerto Rican commonwealth agreement, which was specific to Puerto Rico's history and recent political dynamics. Instead, U.S. negotiators presented the Micronesian representatives with a copy of Guam's Organic Act.<sup>8</sup> The Micronesian Congress had, for a variety of reasons, no interest in this status. In a series of talks between 1967 and 1972, the two sides agreed only on two major points: Micronesia was neither to be annexed nor independent. The vague residual or default alternative came to be called 'free association', and the U.S. negotiators eventually believed that there was mutual agreement on its ultimate implementation, on terms largely to be defined by them. The American position has been documented by John Dorrance, who was at the time the U.S. State Department's Pacific islands specialist and a participant in most of these negotiations.

U.S. political objectives throughout the 1960s and early 1970s remained unchanged and were assumed to be consistent with the wishes of the Micronesian people: termination of the UN trusteeship and annexation of the Micronesian islands as a U.S. territory. Washington believed that the fundamental requirements of strategic denial and forward deployment could be protected by only that political course. That this objective was not consistent with the obligation to develop Micronesia toward self-government or independence was

little understood or simply ignored.<sup>9</sup>

U.S. endanger international peace and security'.<sup>10</sup>

A combination of tensions deriving from the American insistence on their rights of eminent domain, growing pressures for separate status talks in the Marianas, and Micronesian disenchantment with the Americans' cavalier attitude toward Micronesian rights general, among other things, led to a significant disruption in the course of the negotiations.

In 1972 the Congress of Micronesia (which normally convened in Saipan, at Trust Territory headquarters) met in special session on Pohnpei. Frustrated with the progress of the status negotiations, on September 2 Congress passed Senate Joint Resolution No. 117 (S.D. 1, 9/2/72), which read in part, 'Be it resolved...that the Joint Committee on Future Status is hereby authorized and directed to conduct negotiations with the U.S. regarding the establishment of Micronesia as an independent nation, while continuing negotiations toward Free Association.'

A few weeks later, during the sixth round of status talks at Barber's Point Naval Air Station in Hawaii (Sept. 28-Oct. 6, 1972), U.S. Ambassador F.H. Williams summarized the history of the negotiations, observing that the Micronesians had until that point been pursuing an interest in free association. 'The U.S. Government, in turn, after lengthy consideration, agreed not to pursue its preference for a commonwealth relationship, but rather agreed to work with the Joint Future Status Committee toward the Congress of Micronesia's stated and preferred objective.' In response to the Congressional resolution instructing the Micronesian status representatives to begin negotiating independence, Williams fired a shot across their bow:

I should say again, however, that the circumstances which led to the Trust Territory's designation as a strategic trust will continue to exist whatever your future status might be. I cannot imagine, for instance, that my Government would agree to termination of trusteeship on terms which would in any way threaten stability in the area and which would in the opinion of the

This diplomatic language is of course open to many interpretations. Some Micronesian leaders and scholars speak of it as being a 'smoking gun' - it represents the point at which the U.S. came the closest, on paper, to telling Micronesian negotiators that Micronesia would never be permitted to achieve outright independence, in the generally accepted sense of the term. The implications of this pronouncement cannot be gauged simply on its own, *prima facie* terms, but must be studied in the larger context of the negotiations as a whole and in subsequent admissions by participants in them.

In later years, Dorrance acknowledged that 'U.S. negotiators until the late 1970s also asserted that independence was not a political option available to Micronesia' (1992:83). His remarks in this context are, however, a bit disingenuous. Knowing its responsibilities under the Trusteeship Agreement, the American government had steadfastly refused to admit that it would never allow the Micronesians to achieve independence. More recently Felix Moos, an anthropologist who served with the U.S. negotiating team, has not only acknowledged that the U.S. would not countenance Micronesian independence, but has also asserted that the Micronesians themselves did not perceive independence as an option. They were, he asserts, led astray by outside agitators, particularly another American anthropologist, Thomas Gladwin. Gladwin, who had been the first anthropologist employed by the Trust Territory government and who had originally been a staunch defender of the colonial administration, was in the late 1960s and early '70s speaking caustically against the American position in the islands, and may have influenced some Micronesian students at the University of Hawaii. Moos, whose testimony largely matches Dorrance's is certain that the Micronesians would not have otherwise ever considered the possibility of independence. Moreover, he argues, independence was considered a genuinely possible alternative by only a handful of Micronesian leaders influenced by American radicals.<sup>11</sup>

Twenty years later, we are at last able to document the Americans' entrenched opposition to Micronesian independence. Despite all the Americans' dissembling, the Micronesians understood the real American position as well as the U.S. negotiators did. Any attempt to analyze the historical relationship between free association

and independence options that does not take into account the fact that free association was the only status alternative short of annexation that the U.S. would permit the Micronesians to pursue cannot account for the confusing nature of the compacts that resulted from these negotiations.

### The 1975 Vote for Independence and Against Free Association

In 1975, the U.S., through the Trust Territory administration, together with the Congress of Micronesia, called the Micronesian Constitutional Convention in Saipan, where, just weeks earlier, the population had voted overwhelmingly to enter into a 'Commonwealth' relationship with the U.S. To guide the delegates, the Micronesian Congress decided to hold a 'Referendum on Future Political Status.' The notion was that the ConCon would better be able to design a new, self-governing Micronesian government if it had some idea of what sort of future political status most Micronesians were contemplating. It is not clear that the vote had any impact - indeed, it was largely ignored at the time and its import has subsequently been denied by Micronesian leaders, some of their American advisers, and negotiators for the U.S. This collective amnesia is a consequence of three factors. First, the format of the ballot was confusing, listing as it did a series of status alternatives and asking voters to cast a yes or no vote for each. In some areas voters simply voted 'yes' for the one status option they preferred and ignored the rest, while in other places some 'no' votes were also cast. This makes it difficult to interpret the outcome. Second, the referendum was held just as the Northern Marianas were breaking away from the Trust Territory and as both Palau and the Marshalls had begun to consider holding their own separate status talks with the U.S. Third, voting in the Central and Eastern Carolines - that is, the islands that eventually formed the Federated States of Micronesia - indicated that people were not especially keen on free association, the status Micronesia's leaders understood to be the only alternative (other than annexation) acceptable to the U.S.

I analyzed the 1975 vote at the time, in one of the only two independent newspapers then published in the Trust Territory,<sup>12</sup> and subsequently explored it in greater depth.<sup>13</sup> Given recent developments, it seems to me that the episode calls for further clarification, but here I can do no more than draw upon my earlier analyses. On the ballot there appeared Independence, Free Association,

Commonwealth, Statehood, and continued Trust Territory status; the only items of any interest to most voters were independence, free association, and continuation of the trusteeship. The following tables present the vote for the five Trust Territory districts that participated in the referendum and then for the districts that eventually came to comprise the FSM.

Several points call for clarification. Because Palau and the Marshalls were considering separate negotiations with the U.S., there were calls in both regions to boycott the referendum; voter turnout was low in these districts, as evidenced by the relatively small number of ballots cast. Because voters could vote affirmatively for as many alternatives as they wished, or abstain from voting affirmatively for all of them, the sum of all affirmative votes in any district does not necessarily equal the total number of votes cast. In the Marshalls, significantly more total ballots were cast than the sum of the votes for the three status alternatives I am discussing here, while in Palau the sum of the votes for these alternatives was significantly greater than the total number of ballots cast. Nevertheless, for both the entire Trust Territory and for the future FSM, the sums of the affirmative votes are not much different than the total ballots cast. For this reason, I conclude that most voters cast an affirmative vote for one and only one alternative, treating the ballot as a normal choice of a single selection from among a set of alternatives, rather than as an opportunity to note all the alternatives acceptable to them. These affirmative votes for each status alternative are what I am concerned with here.

Within the five participating Trust Territory districts, free association received the fewest votes of the three alternatives, while continued trusteeship received the most. In both Palau and the Marshalls, continued trusteeship received large majorities of the votes. In the future FSM, independence received a plurality of the vote, with continued trusteeship getting the second largest total and free association receiving the fewest votes. In both Pohnpei and Chuuk districts, independence received a plurality, though the option was shunned in Yap. Dorrance's claim that 'sentiment in Micronesia for independence' never 'became a majority position' (1992:83) is technically correct, but independence did in fact achieve a clear plurality among the five alternatives that appeared on the 1975 ballot.

The totals in Tables 1 and 2 show that in aggregate, for both the entire participating Trust Territory and the future FSM states, free



association was in 1975 the least popular status alternative. In the future FSM states, in particular, free association was viewed as an alternative entirely distinct from independence, the most desired status. Had independence and free association been conceptually merged, the votes for them would have been closer, and would not have had the status quo option - continued trusteeship - interposed between them.<sup>14</sup> In subsequent years I have encountered a rather consistent tendency to discount the obvious implications of the

arguments against the relevance or importance of the 1975 vote suggest that the FSM leadership has always recognized the very real distinctions between free association and independence.

### The 1983 Plebiscites and American Responses

Following years of false starts and reversals, the Marshallese, FSM, Palauan, and American governments signed Compacts of Free Association in 1982-83. As Dorrance phrases it, 'The U.S.

**Table 1: 1975 TTPI Referendum on Political Status**

**Vote By Districts**

District	Marshalls	Palau	Pohnpei	Chuuk	Yap
<b>Totals</b>					
Ballots Cast	3683	2279	5878	7405	295022195
Independence	116	377	3415	3272	1357315
Free Association	864	1139	2086	1139	17796850
Trust Territory	1596	2583	1596	2583	11098785

**Table 2: 1975 TTPI Referendum on Political Status**

**Vote by Future FSM States\***

District	Pohnpei	Chuuk	Yap	Totals
Ballots	5878	7405	2950	16233
Independence	3415	3272	135	6822
Free Association	2086	1139	1779	5204
Trust Territory	1596	2583	1109	5288

\* Kosrae was at that time included in Pohnpei District.

1975 referendum on grounds that there were more 'no' votes against independence than against any of the other status alternatives. This is interpreted to mean that a plurality of voters opposed independence. On Pohnpei, however, the overwhelming majority of voters simply marked 'yes' for the single alternative they most preferred and ignored the rest of the items. The tallies from other areas suggest that in most cases voting patterns were similar. Because relatively few voters opted to vote against alternatives, only a count of affirmative votes seems to be relevant. This tendency to denigrate the vote makes it easier to ignore its implications and allows the FSM leadership to rationalize the fact that they pursued free association, the least favoured alternative, rather than independence, the most favoured. Given the U.S.'s adamant opposition to Micronesian independence, this rationalization hardly seems necessary now, but continuing

ultimately accepted independence as a political option mandated by the UN trusteeship agreement. By the time that concession was made, the free association package was virtually complete'.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, independence was acknowledged as a possibility only because the 'free association package' had been completed. At the time of the FSM plebiscite on the Compact, free association was being touted by American advisers to the FSM government as 'virtual independence.' It was not represented as genuine independence, given all that had transpired during more than fifteen years of negotiations.

The Compact was translated, disseminated, and discussed in educational programs and in innumerable informal discussions. The FSM government itself promoted an affirmative vote for the Compact, while the local Catholic Church offered a nonpartisan analysis of all status possibilities. Pohnpeian discussions of the

Compact, in particular, challenge any correspondence between free association and independence. Pohnpeians saw the Compact as an affront to their dignity, and many spoke of it as abrogation of their right to 'mana' (Pohnpeian *manaman*), sovereignty, over their island. Many saw it as a threat to their security, depriving the Micronesians of any right to ultimate control over their territory. Many Pohnpeian voters framed the choice they faced as between rice and breadfruit - that is, between continuing American financial subsidies and regaining full autonomy. In their minds, nothing could have been clearer than the distinction between independence and free association.<sup>16</sup>

While a majority of the FSM's voters in three states approved the Compact, it was narrowly defeated in Pohnpei.<sup>17</sup> On a second, advisory part of the ballot, Pohnpeians called for independence. The Pohnpei State Legislature then proceeded to vote against free association as well. Because the Compact received majorities in the three other FSM states and was approved by their legislatures, it was put into effect. Pohnpeians have shown great forbearance in their willingness to live with a status which they rejected, but there should be no confusion about their views of the status options.

At no point in the long history of Micronesia's political status negotiations is the official American view of the 'mutual security' treaties more clearly presented than in testimony before the U.S. Senate during hearings at which ratification of the compacts was considered. The notion that Congress perceived these compacts as bilateral agreements 'entered into by two co-equal sovereigns'<sup>18</sup> cannot be sustained in the context of the following exchange at the 1984 Senate Energy Committee hearings, between Senator J. Bennett Johnston and Fred Zeder, the U.S. 'Ambassador' to the Micronesian status negotiations.

*Senator Johnston:* Ambassador Zeder, with respect to denial, the provisions say that if the Government of the U.S. determines that any third country seeks access to or use of the Marshall Islands [these provisions hold for the FSM and Palau as well] for military purposes, et cetera, then we can deny. [He then hypothesizes about Soviet fisheries.] Could we

determine that these ostensibly civilian personnel and ostensibly trade missions have a military usefulness and, therefore, a military purpose?

*Mr. Zeder:* Yes sir, Senator, that's very clear and precise in the compact...

*Sen. Johnston:* In other words, is it understood that we have full plenary power to say that any activity is military even though we may be wrong?

*Mr. Zeder:* Yes, we do, sir, and we intend to use it.

*Sen. Johnston:* Any activity whatsoever, we could determine to be military and prevent it?

*Mr. Zeder:* Yes, sir.

*Sen. Johnston:* All right, I think that's clear.

In the American system of constitutional law, the Supreme Court studies Congressional records in order to determine the Congress's intent when it acted - in this case, when it ratified these compacts. Sen. Johnston was, for the historical record, making the Senate's position absolutely clear. In later hearings before the House of Representatives the FSM government would insist that this was not its understanding of the treaties, and the Department of State would then reiterate the U.S. government's insistence that these were indeed the terms to which the U.S. was agreeing. Later events suggest that some in the FSM government accept this American interpretation.

In the course of ratifying the compacts the U.S. Congress unilaterally proceeded to introduce a wide range of alterations to the agreements. Some of these made radical changes in the kinds of economic relationships the compacts were meant to establish. Resio Moses, then the Governor of Pohnpei, and now the FSM's Foreign Minister, wrote a letter decrying the nature of these modifications. He observed that

The multitude of amendments offered by the House of Representatives of the U.S. Congress represent something much different than a recognition

of our inherent sovereignty and our dignity as a self-governing people. The amendments are patronizing in language, condescending in spirit, and meddlesome in fact.

The problem lies much deeper than the language of the amendments offered by either the House or the Senate. The problem lies in a basic misunderstanding within Congress of the true nature of the Compact, of the true sense of our people as a nation, and of the true responsibilities of the U.S. in these closing years of the Trusteeship. Cosmetic or even substantive concessions attained in the next few weeks over amendments made by the House or Senate will not rectify the fundamental misconceptions which lie at the root of these amendments.

Changes in attitude cannot be made overnight, but we firmly believe that a very definite and visible foothold, which truly and effectively mandates respect for ourselves as an independent, self-governing people, must be attained within the U.S. Congress before we accept implementation of the Compact, in any form.<sup>19</sup>

Micronesia's leaders had gone through two decades of negotiations and struggle; they accepted a relationship that many never wanted in the first place; they compromised themselves in the eyes of many of their own people. Having finally convinced a majority of their people to agree to free association, they then found themselves once again confronting Congress over precisely the same questions that had plagued the negotiations from the outset: the nature of Micronesian sovereignty. There can be no doubt that at the time the Micronesians voted on the compacts and the U.S. Congress ratified them none of the parties to the agreements perceived them as independence. The

U.S. Congress was determined to prevent the Micronesians from achieving independence and the Micronesians believed that the status Congress was agreeing to provided them with far far less than they had voted for when they approved the compacts.

### The 1990 FSM Constitutional Convention

After 11 years of Micronesian self-government the United Nations had not yet terminated trusteeship, though in 1986 the U.S. unilaterally declared that the Trusteeship Agreement had ceased. In 1989 the FSM's voters called for the first Constitutional Convention since the original Constitution, which had been drafted in 1975 by representatives from all the Trust Territory's districts, been ratified in 1978, and put into effect in 1979. I have described the ConCon at length elsewhere;<sup>20</sup> my intention here is only to make reference to several episodes relevant to the political status question.

When proposals to amend constitutional passages detailing the transition from trusteeship status to autonomy were considered in committee, a long and, by Micronesian standards, acrimonious debate ensued.<sup>21</sup> At least one delegate insisted that the constitution be amended to demonstrate that even though the United Nations had not yet terminated the trusteeship, the Micronesians were nevertheless sovereign and independent. Numerous arguments were raised in opposition. Some were rooted in a desire to preserve the original wording, to record for posterity language that demonstrated the peaceful nature of the transfer of power in the islands, and other objections concerned the issue of whether the FSM was indeed recognized as either sovereign or independent by any other powers. The delegate who proposed these amendments told the committee, 'If we don't do this, it may call into question our sovereignty. It may affect the powers of the national and state governments with respect to the U.S. It is a step declaring that the Trusteeship Agreement is terminated and the FSM is a sovereign and independent nation.' One of the staunchest opponents of the proposed changes responded, 'the thrust of your testimony is that by deleting a sentence [from the constitution] we are exercising our sovereignty.' Came the reply, 'No, we are sovereign right now.' Another delegate, one of the FSM's most revered, and articulate, leaders, then argued, 'It doesn't matter whether we think we are sovereign; the issue is whether others believe we are. I would like to be sovereign, but that's not enough - someone has to recognize that. Then we'll be sovereign. We want everyone to

recognize us as sovereign, so we have to compromise to get them to do so.'

In studying the entire debate before this committee, in the contexts both of the ConCon as a whole and the full history of the status negotiations, no straightforward conclusions can be drawn about the ConCon delegates' views concerning Micronesian sovereignty and independence. But my point is not that there is, or was, any straightforward view, rather, that even the Micronesian leaders could not agree upon their country's political status as recently as mid-1990.

At several critical junctures in the ConCon, during committee meetings, delegates were reminded that the compact allowed the U.S. to cut off the FSM's funding if the agreement were breached. Regarding provisions concerning the storage of nuclear (or other hazardous) materials within the islands, and again with respect to the possibility of providing a constitutional means for the secession of FSM states, the FSM's acting Secretary of External Affairs (i.e., Foreign Minister), who was also a ConCon delegate, explained to committee members that passage of these provisions would immediately provoke the U.S. government, which would in turn call him in for 'consultations.' Another delegate - a state governor - then explained how this would probably lead to the curtailment of scheduled payments under the compact and thus to immediate financial disaster. In each of the episodes committee leaders pulled back from further consideration of the issues, much to chagrin of delegates less concerned with mollifying the U.S.

The FSM, whatever its status, still cannot govern itself without interference from the U.S. All legal arguments to the contrary notwithstanding, it is clear that the freely associated states are not operating as independent states. This is not to suggest that other countries, whose political status may not be in question, are not subject to similar constraints. But such constraints ordinarily are imposed at the level of policy, while in Micronesia these issues operate at the very fundamental level of interpreting and even modifying the constitution.

At the 1990 ConCon all the states shared a common desire to shift power and financial controls away from the national government to the states. There were many reasons for this, not all of them shared by all the states. But one of the most salient factors explaining overall consensus on the larger point was the belief that the central government was serving as a proxy for U.S. interests - that is, the U.S. continued to wield far more influence within the FSM than most

Micronesians were comfortable with. As one delegate put it, 'We don't need two drivers any more.' A thoroughly revised constitution (104 amendments to it were proposed), it was hoped, would indeed shift control over a wide range of issues to the states and thereby thwart U.S. attempts to shape FSM policy to its own devices.<sup>22</sup> I am not prepared to consider the accuracy of this perception, but merely to report that the 1990 FSM ConCon cannot be understood outside the context of the delegates' sense that the FSM was in fact, if not in name, unable to operate independently of the U.S. government.

Thus, at no point during the negotiations on Micronesia's future political status did either the Micronesians or the Americans ever openly suggest that free association was anything other than the only viable alternative to independence. This is equally true of pronouncements preceding both the 1983 plebiscites and the 1986 declaration that trusteeship was no longer in force. By mid-1990 there were Micronesians arguing that the Marshalls and the FSM were sovereign and independent, but these claims were contested within the islands and not recognized by the U.S.

### Some Reflections on Colonialism

In his opening address to the Colonial Inheritance conference, the Hon Andrew Peacock observed of Australia's relations with Papua New Guinea that the manner in which a country leaves a colonial situation where it has been the governing authority is extremely important; it is likely to shape the character of subsequent relations between the two states. In this light, the American departure from Micronesia has been especially problematic and may result in lingering discord of a sort that goes beyond the ordinary tensions between ex-colonies and their former administering powers. Much, though by no means all, of the friction underlying this relationship can perhaps be traced to the ways in which the U.S. established its rule in the area. Never having acknowledged that its status in Micronesia was in fact that of a colonial power, the U.S. has seemed unprepared to decolonize the area.

This American disposition is by no means peculiar to the U.S. presence in Micronesia. In *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (1972), William Appleman Williams outlines the history and character of the 'Open Door' Policy that has long defined U.S. foreign relations. While there is considerable debate over the nature of the forces that shape this policy, as well as some of the

particulars of its implementation,<sup>23</sup> few have disputed Williams' basic thesis: it has suited U.S. purposes to open and maintain access to markets abroad while engaging in as little outright annexationist empire-building as possible (at least once the great binge of 1898 had subsided). Henry Stimson, one of the leading architects of the Open Door policy in the first half of the twentieth century, was a key participant in the 1945 negotiations at Yalta, where the Allies' plans for post-war territorial suzerainty were thrashed out (though hardly resolved). In the course of the Yalta talks then Secretary of War Stimson addressed a memorandum to U.S. Secretary of State Stettinius, communicating his views on the disposition of the Micronesian islands.

Acquisition of them by the United States does not represent an attempt at colonization or exploitation. Instead, it is merely the acquisition by the United States of the necessary bases for the defence of the security of the Pacific for the future world. To serve such a purpose they must belong to the United States with absolute power to rule and fortify them. They are not colonies; they are outposts, and their acquisition is appropriate under the general doctrine of self-defence by the power which guarantees the safety of that area of the world.<sup>24</sup>

Stimson's views were entirely in keeping with the Open Door outlook: the U.S. did not see itself as a colonial power and was not, therefore, engaged in acquiring colonies. Never having admitted to themselves that they had indeed established the U.S. as a colonial power in Micronesia, American leaders could not bring themselves to believe that the U.S. needed to decolonize - that is, grant the islands outright, uncompromised independence.

For this reason, if for no other, current American rhetoric should not be taken at face value. The U.S. State Department is now engaged in putting 'spin' on Micronesian status, and it appears to be succeeding. In his review of Gary Smith's work on Micronesian decolonization,<sup>25</sup> T.J. Johnson, a retired U.S. Navy admiral who served for three years in Micronesia as 'the Representative of the Commander, US Pacific Command,' finds

that 'Smith's assertions that the freely associated states are not truly independent do not pass muster on several accounts.' Citing precisely the same arguments regarding international recognition marshalled by Michal, Johnson concludes that this evidence 'demonstrates that the international community has recognized and accepted the concept of free association in which an independent state, the United States, has assumed an obligation to ensure the political independence and territorial integrity of two other equally independent states'.<sup>26</sup> And a current textbook in political geography makes the leap from noting that the compacts of free association 'provided for considerable self-government but not independence' to asserting that 'eventually both Micronesia and the Marshall Islands became independent'.<sup>27</sup> In neither case is there any discussion of how a status that the U.S. Congress approved as an explicit alternative to independence can be transformed into independence without Congressional action. Given the way things seem to be going, the notion that the Micronesian republics are independent may in fact not be at issue much longer. But it is not yet a moot point.

Attempts to recast histories of decolonization in immediately subsequent years, or even as they are still unfolding, are hardly isolated cases. Basil Davidson, in his discussion of modern African political dilemmas, warns against 'a certain historical hindsight which has liked to suggest that the British and the French were amiably ready to pack and go.... There was not much in those last years of colonial rule that was amiable about the attitudes and actions of colonial officialdom' (1992:105). And in 1960 C.L.R. James, a brilliant chronicler of the Caribbean, African, and African-American colonial inheritance, wrote of the British Colonial Office,

The idea that they trained the people of the Gold Coast for self-government and independence is the literal reverse of the truth. Here again is the paradox. It is the people of the Gold Coast who trained, bludgeoned, the Colonial Office into the meaning of self-government and independence.<sup>28</sup>

Nor is the issue merely one of interpretation; the recasting of colonial history can have very real consequences. Regarding

contemporary Russian imperial tendencies, Mark Katz argues that

When the Western European powers withdrew from their colonies in the third world, they retained significant influence in some (notably the French in sub-Saharan Africa) and little or none in others. None of the former powers, however, attempted to rebuild their colonial empires after having given them up. Powerful forces in Russia, though, appear determined to do just that.<sup>29</sup>

It is worth considering the possibility that the U.S. might find it expedient to pursue a similar strategy. American political leaders formulated the Open Door policy and the military set their sights on Micronesia well before communism and Cold War appeared on the horizon. There are few good reasons to think American interests in the western Pacific are likely to change much in the early years of the twenty-first century. The problem of Micronesian independence remains vital precisely because so many aspects of America's global interests and power relationships continue to be played out among Russia, China, Japan, Vietnam, Indonesia and the region's other nation-states. To put it simply, Micronesia continues to occupy a key strategic location; indeed its importance is likely to increase in ways that Smith (1991), in his analysis of the area's strategic role, may have overlooked. As long as the U.S. government - and the Congress in particular - are unwilling to revise the treaties that compromise Micronesian independence, Micronesian independence must remain an issue.

### **Conclusion: The Distinction Between Micronesian and American Positions on Micronesian Independence**

Today, Resio Moses, the FSM Foreign Minister, states that the FSM is an independent nation-state and that free association is a 'bilateral pact' between two independent states. The U.S. Department of State likewise refers to the freely associated Micronesian states as independent, but protected, states.<sup>30</sup> The turning point of course, was the end of the Cold War and the Soviet Union's eventual collapse, which led it, in December 1990, following receipt of more than one

billion dollars in food credits from the U.S., to vote in the UN Security Council to terminate the Trusteeship Agreement as it applied to the Northern Marianas, the FSM, and the Marshalls. This in turn led to the admission of the FSM and the Marshalls into the United Nations and their more general diplomatic recognition as independent states, a condition which serves as Michal's main criterion for arguing that the freely associated states are indeed independent. Whether they are or are not independent, in my opinion, depends entirely upon the context in which the issue is raised. Because both the Micronesian governments and the U.S. have recently been asserting Micronesian independence, I have tried here to show why the matter is in doubt.

The character of free association, as ultimately accepted by both the Micronesians and the U.S., was shaped under conditions which made genuine independence for the Micronesians impossible. In short, the Micronesians did not enter voluntarily into free association - they were coerced into accepting it. These agreements - the Compacts of Free Association - remain in force, and no matter what the agreements are called they will remain in force as written. To give the name 'independence' to something which was specifically designed to be something other than independence simply because of changes in the attitudes or perspectives of third parties challenges our means of interpreting history. It mocks what is known as a realist perspective because it ignores the fact that the power arrangements between the U.S. and the Micronesians remain unchanged, both in their legal framework and in the harsh realities of cash flows and control over them. It mocks an idealist or utopian perspective because it ignores the fact that a great many Micronesians were long rebuffed in their insistence that the terms of free association were inequitable and insulting to their right to reclaim sovereignty over their islands; it equally ignores their recognition that the negotiations were essentially one-sided, without, a well-grounded moral standing.<sup>31</sup> To claim that what had long been framed as two distinct alternatives - free association and independence - are now one and the same, verges on the borders of Newspeak.

I believe that a good many Micronesian leaders agreed to implement free association not because they were interested in achieving freely associated status for their islands, but because it was the only way they could stave off annexation and successfully preserve opportunities for ultimate independence. Having achieved a legal agreement, the Micronesian governments were eager to assume

full self-government, so they acquiesced in the U.S. declaration that the trusteeship was no longer in force, even while the U.S. was blatantly insisting that free association provided it with powers over internal Micronesian affairs that the Micronesians did not acknowledge. Now, with UN Security Council termination of trusteeship and admission of the freely associated states into the United Nations accomplished, the Micronesian governments can at last reclaim that which had evaded them through a quarter-century of negotiations. They boldly assert their independence.

The U.S., on the other hand, refused to contemplate any possibility of Micronesian independence. It did its best to thwart aspirations toward it, and denied that any such sentiments existed, even when they were expressed in a well-supervised referendum. In the context of the Cold War, the U.S. denied, abrogated, or ignored nearly every principle it claimed to stand for. It was ultimately forced to agree to virtually full Micronesian self-government. But the U.S. government made sure that it retained a legal right to interfere with the internal affairs of the freely associated states at any point it chose to. The existence of this residual caveat serves to demonstrate the American government's ultimate denial that it has ever granted the Micronesians independence in any generally accepted sense of the term.

For the freely associated Micronesian states, it makes sense to assert their independence. It is what they have always felt was theirs by right. One can hardly deny them recognition as independent states. On the other hand, the U.S. is attempting to claim by fiat that it has granted something that it in fact never intended to grant, has not in fact granted, and does not in fact intend to grant.

I began this essay by referring to Puerto Rico, and I now return briefly to it. There is a movement among Puerto Ricans opposed to annexation and assimilation into the U.S. to modify Commonwealth into a new form of free association, consciously borrowing from the Micronesian model. In May 1993, at the second national conference on American insular territories (organized by the University of the Virgin Islands but convened in Washington, DC), it was asserted by a number of participants - particularly by Howard Hills, now an attorney in private practice but formerly a member of the U.S. team that negotiated Micronesian status - that Micronesian 'independence' is the model Puerto Ricans should be pursuing. Advocates of this position believe that

the Micronesians exercise far more local autonomy under their compacts than do the Puerto Ricans under theirs. On the one hand, many Puerto Rican leaders favouring this position have begun to speak of the existing Commonwealth agreement as a 'bilateral pact' between equals, drawing upon exactly the language now used in Micronesia to describe the co-existence of free association and independence. On the other, those who advocate statehood argue that as citizens of a freely associated republic, Puerto Ricans would lose their American citizenship. As the Micronesian case demonstrates, nothing in this realm is certain, no matter how well documented it may be. The Micronesians, I think, learned from Puerto Rico (among other examples) that the more quickly they attempted to get out from under U.S. rule the more successful they would be. Puerto Ricans in turn, may be learning the possibilities of pursuing, and achieving, two apparently contradictory goals at the same time.

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# The End of History for the Edge of Paradise? Economic Development and the Compacts of Free Association in American Micronesia

*David Hanlon*

In this essay, I argue for a reconceptualization of economic development in the Caroline, Mariana and Marshall Islands, until recently known as the United States Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. I work from the assumption that the decades-old program of economic development in American Micronesia has been part of a larger agenda to make or remake the islands in ways that reflected, served and affirmed the national ideology of the United States.<sup>1</sup> 'Making them like US' would be another way of phrasing it. Recent changes in the political status of the islands and the emergence of four self-governing entities from the former Trust Territory do not alter substantially the patterns of American rule. The Compact of Free Association, implemented on 3 November 1986 for the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and the Republic of the Marshall Islands and on 1 October 1994 for the Republic of Palau, might appear as the culminating phase of a process that disguises continued American control of the area with rhetorical gestures toward local sovereignty and economic development. Francis Fukuyama would identify this larger process as the end of history. I examine the compact, then, in light of Fukuyama's thesis and offer readers a tour of 'compacted Micronesia' through a critical reading of P. F. Kluge's book, *The Edge of Paradise*. I close with some reflections on how economic development in American Micronesia might be calculated differently from the ways and means advanced by Fukuyama, Kluge and others.

## Ending History?

The phrase, 'the end of history', comes from a book written by Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*.<sup>2</sup> Fukuyama argues that liberal democracy constitutes the endpoint of ideological evolution and the final, most nearly perfect form of government; as such, the triumph of liberal democracy throughout the globe represents the end of history. Fukuyama's thesis draws heavily from the work of Hegel who understood history as a single, coherent, evolutionary process. Hegel saw human history as working its way from simple tribal societies based on slavery and subsistence agriculture through various theocracies, monarchies, and feudal

aristocracies, and ultimately to modern liberal democracy based on technologically driven capitalism. In Fukuyama's analysis, the inevitable triumph of liberal democracy results from the interplay of pragmatic economics, rational science, and a primordial human drive for recognition. From this interplay emerges a mature capitalist economy capable of meeting the needs of all. The end of history brings too the appearance of a universal 'last man', content, democratic, free, prosperous, productive, and globally conscious.

Marx, as Fukuyama notes, also wrote of the inevitable march of history, but a history whose end was the socialist state, not liberal capitalist democracy. For Fukuyama, the events of the late 1980s and early 1990s have proved Hegel right and Marx wrong. The demise of communism in Eastern Europe and the disintegration of the Soviet Union leave the United States as the most perfect example of a liberal capitalist democracy. The world, according to Fukuyama, is becoming like 'US'. Not surprisingly, conservatives within the American political arena have responded enthusiastically to Fukuyama's thesis and to the recent political events in the world that would seem to validate it.

Fukuyama's work pays little attention to matters of culture, colonialism and the politics of development. Colonialism comes under what Fukuyama would describe as history with a small 'h'; events in time that are negative, destructive and seemingly regressive, but that are ultimately overcome by History with a capital 'H'.<sup>3</sup> Big History works as a single progressive movement leading to a universal and homogenous global economic system. Culture for Fukuyama constitutes only a series of obstacles to economic development that include religion, national, racial and ethnic loyalties, highly stratified social systems, and rigidly centralized forms of power and government that limit free association among people.<sup>4</sup>

Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* is interesting not because it represents a particularly salient treatise on political economy, but because it reflects what some observers believe or even fear to be the outcome of American colonialism in the Caroline, Mariana and Marshall Islands. Fukuyama presents a vision of a world

order that is not about independent national entities but a simple universal state. The end of history for Micronesia, then, means the incorporation of these islands by the United States. In the Northern Marianas, that eventuality might already appear accomplished through the commonwealth agreement that makes those islands an American territory. In the Caroline and Marshall Islands, the political status of free association with the United States looks to be an intermediate status ultimately leading to a closer, more permanent affiliation with the United States.

### The Compact of Free Association as 'Mechanism'

Fukuyama writes of a uniform 'Mechanism', fuelled by modern natural science, that directs human social organization toward liberal democracy.<sup>5</sup> In this sense, one could view the Compact of Free Association between the United States and the governments of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau as being a part of the 'mechanism' that moves the islands toward the end of history. I would like, then, to consider the Compact of Free Association as a 'mechanism' that seeks to overcome what might be different and distinctive about the people of the Micronesia. In short, the compact can be read as preface to the attempted subsumption of an area into a global American-dominated economic order. Of course the Compact of Free Association does not mark the end of history or anything close to it. What it does invite is a more careful, cross-culturally nuanced consideration of attempts to transform island peoples into productive workers and responsible consumers, and of local understandings and responses to those attempts.

The result of seventeen years of negotiations through four separate American presidencies, the compact has been viewed by its supporters as satisfying American security interests, while recognizing the integrity of Micronesian governments.<sup>6</sup> The compact provides funding to maintain existing governmental operations and to develop self-sustaining economies for the three Micronesian states. In outline form, the Compact of Free Association with the three Micronesian governments recognizes their sovereignty, their right to complete control over all domestic and internal matters, and their authority to conduct their own foreign affairs though in consultation with the United States.<sup>7</sup> The United States, assuming responsibility for defence and security matters,

pledges to defend the freely associated states 'as if they were a part of the United States'.<sup>8</sup>

For the FSM and the Marshalls, the compact has a fifteen-year life; the agreement with Palau is longer, extending over a fifty-year time period.<sup>9</sup> The Micronesian governments' promise not to engage in any activity deemed incompatible with the U.S. commitment to insure the security of the area and agree, essentially to close their lands and waters to the military forces of other nations unless otherwise requested by the United States. Separate agreements with the Marshalls and Palau grant the United States military continued operation of the Kwajalein Missile Range, and use options to lands on Babelthuap and to parts of Koror's Malakal Harbor. The compact may be terminated either by mutual agreement between the freely associated state in question and the United States, or unilaterally by either of them. Under Title IV of the compact, certain provisions relating to economic assistance and security matters would remain in force in the event of early termination. Finally, the compact provides that on the thirteenth anniversary of the enactment of the compact, the United States and the freely associated states will begin negotiations to renew, revise or end the Compact of Free Association.

The financial terms of the Compact of Free Association provide the FSM with an annual block grant of \$59.06 million, while the Marshalls receives a yearly average allotment of \$37.06 million.<sup>10</sup> Estimates for the just-implemented compact with the Republic of Palau project a yearly assistance level of roughly \$24 million. Forty per cent of this block grant money is earmarked for infrastructure development and revenue generating projects. The remaining 60% of the block grants is to meet the administrative costs of government and related services. The compact's funding scheme provides for the reduction of United States grant assistance to the FSM and the Marshalls after the fifth and tenth years. While the terms of the compact with Palau extend over a fifty-year period, most of the financial assistance offered by the United States is 'front-loaded' during the first fifteen years of the agreement. The interest and investment income earned from a first-year, lump sum payment of \$66 million comprises the principle source of United States funding for Palau between the sixteenth and fiftieth years of the compact.

The compact also specifies a first year appropriation of \$150 million to cover United States liabilities incurred by its nuclear testing program in the Marshalls. In addition, the people of irradiated atolls of Bikini, Enewetak, Rongelap,

and Utirik are guaranteed a total of \$183,750,000 in quarterly payments, while another \$45.75 million has been set aside to handle outstanding or additional claims filed before a claims tribunal. Total compensation for American nuclear testing in the Marshalls comes to about \$420 million.

The compact and its subsidiary agreements also commit the United States to provide at no cost to the Micronesian governments an extensive international telecommunications network, airline and airport safety services, a regulatory system for commercial air traffic, natural disaster relief, weather forecasting services, and use of the United States Postal Service's international facilities. Other subsidiary agreements address marine space jurisdiction, military use and operating rights agreements, and legal matters involving extradition, liability, prosecution, and immunity.

During the course of congressional hearings, representatives of other American territories complained about the special tax and trade incentives denied them but granted to the Micronesian governments under the terms of the compact.<sup>11</sup> The complaints led to the dropping of these special incentives from the final version of the compact. As compensation, the Micronesian governments receive access to the domestic assistance programs of a number of federal agencies including the Federal Deposit Corporation, the Small Business Administration, the Economic Development Administration, the Rural Electrification Administration, the Job Partnership Training Act, the Job Corps, and the Department of Commerce's programs in the areas of tourism and marine resources development. Such additional access to United States federal programs supplements significantly the continuing and nonreimbursable technical assistance already committed in the compact from the United States Forest Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the United States Coast Guard, and the Department of Interior's Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. The actual dollar amounts provided for by the compact are difficult to calculate because of provisions for inflation, the contributions of U. S. federal programs whose services are authorized but not specified in dollar amounts, and unspecified compensatory adjustments, in health, education and environment. Best estimates put the total cost of the compact with the three Micronesian governments at roughly \$2.7 billion.<sup>12</sup>

In Fukuyama's vision of the end of history, national sovereignty and independence ultimately count for little in a universal, triumphant

structure of liberal capitalist democracy. Sovereignty and independence, however, proved key concerns in the negotiations between the American and different Micronesian governments over the Compact of Free Association. At the outset of those negotiations in 1969, the Congress of Micronesia endorsed four fundamental principles to guide formal deliberations on the termination of the Trusteeship Agreement and the establishment of a future self-governing political status for the islands.<sup>13</sup> The first identified the sovereignty of Micronesia as residing in the people of the islands and their duly constituted governments; the second asserted that Micronesians possessed the right of self-determination and with it the power to choose between independence and a status of free association with any other nation or organization of nations; the third endorsed the right of Micronesians to adopt a constitution and to amend, change or revoke that constitution at any time; and the fourth principle stipulated that any agreement to associate freely with another nation should be expressed in the form of a revocable compact terminable unilaterally by either party.

Just how effectively these four principles are honoured in the Compact of Free Association remains a matter for intense debate. Representatives of the Micronesian governments all spoke positively and enthusiastically about the Compact of Free Association, at least in public. As early as 1983, the FSM Congress' Committee on External Affairs had endorsed the compact initialled at Hilo, Hawai'i on 1 October 1982 as recognizing the Federated States of Micronesia as a 'sovereign nation, established under a constitution adopted by its people, with full control over its internal and foreign affairs'.<sup>14</sup> Speaking before a subcommittee of the United States House of Representatives' Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, then Vice President Bailey Olter of the Federated States of Micronesia described the Compact of Free Association as offering both the United States and the FSM the opportunity to replace the Trusteeship agreement with a 'healthy and solid relationship' designed for the future.<sup>15</sup> Olter went on to affirm that his own people understood the terms of the Compact of Free Association and favoured the close relationship with the United States under that compact. Before a similar congressional hearing, Oscar DeBrum, Chief Secretary for the government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, called the compact a less than perfect document of compromises that nonetheless allowed a fair and equitable relationship

between the United States and the Marshall Islands.<sup>16</sup>

Representatives from the United States also spoke in support of the compact. Among these many commentators was a consciousness that an end was at hand; comments, testimonies, and opening and closing remarks employed words such as 'culmination', 'conclusion', 'termination', and 'finalization' in assessing the negotiations over the Compact of Free Association. Those words, I believe, related not only to the end of protracted negotiations over the dissolution of the Trusteeship, but reflected as well a sense that the differences between Micronesians and Americans had been overcome. The compact and its subsidiary agreements sought to make the islands compatible with American notions of life and government; it promised to complete Micronesians' transformation from backward island peoples into productive, responsible, hard-working near-Americans in close association with the world's leading capitalist democracy.

Outside, and even sometimes within the arenas of official comment, could be heard dissident voices that had a decidedly different understanding of the compact, and its effects and purposes. Men like Andohn Amarich and Lazarus Sali, the chief negotiators for the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of Palau respectively, conceded with an air of resignation that the Compact of Free Association with the United States was the best deal under the circumstances.<sup>17</sup> Much more pointedly, Dwight Heine called 'free association' nothing more than a term; the approval of the Compact of Free Association, he said, would only increase the Marshalls' dependency on the United States;

'Who are we kidding? The fact of the matter is that for forty years, U. S. administrations have conditioned us to be dependent on the U. S. mentally, socially and economically. The Marshalls will have no choice but to renew the compact . . . making the region even more dependent on the U. S.'<sup>18</sup>

The Pohnpei State Legislature expressed its reservations about the compact, especially those sections that specified the overriding paramountcy of American security interests and allowed for

American review of all financial accounts and records at every level of government within Micronesia.<sup>19</sup> The Pohnpeian legislators saw these latter powers as a serious disruptive incursion on the autonomy and integrity of both the national and state governments of the FSM.

During the course of the United States Congress' review of the document, a host of witnesses from legal, academic and church communities voiced their concern or opposition to the compact. Dr. Mark Roberts of Harvard University described the compact as hundreds of pages long, written by a very clever bunch of American lawyers with a very convoluted, ultimately self-serving system of cross referencing,<sup>20</sup> and difficult for even a trained professional to comprehend. Roberts's assessment was seconded by Senator Johnson Toribong of the Palau Legislature who characterized the compact as a 'masterpiece of cross-referencing . . . difficult to read, written in English by attorneys, full of ambiguities.'<sup>21</sup> Prof. Roger Clark of Rutgers University Law School, a consultant to different Micronesian governments during the negotiations, likened the document to something designed by an unscrupulous insurance company. Speaking before the United Nations Trusteeship Council on 1 December 1982, Clark pointed out that what is given on the first page may be taken away by the small print in one of the eleven subsidiary agreements.<sup>22</sup> Arnold Leibowitz, in his 1989 book *Defining Status: A Comprehensive Analysis of United States Territorial Relations*, characterized the various subsidiary agreements as often containing provisions too difficult politically to be placed in the text of the compact itself.<sup>23</sup>

This was especially true in matters involving the deployment of nuclear weapons and radioactive materials through Micronesian land, seas, and airspace. With direct reference to section 324 of the Compact of Free Association with Palau, Roberts pointed to how the restrictions on the use, test, storage, or disposal of nuclear, toxic, chemical, gas or biological weapons by the United States could be circumvented by provisions in the Mutual Security Pact and Military Use and Operating Rights Agreements.<sup>24</sup> These provisions distinguish between armed and unarmed nuclear weapons; they also designate the United States as the ultimate determiner of crisis situations that might necessitate the presence of nuclear weapons within Micronesian territory. Roberts concluded that the subsidiary agreements concerning security issues and military operations in the islands

ultimately permit the United States to do whatever it wants whenever it wants.

For many critics of the American presence in Micronesia, the compact does little more than insure the primacy of American defence and security interests in the area. Catherine Lutz, writing in the *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* in June, 1986, charged that the United States was buying out Micronesia not with the prospects of genuine economic development but with 'imported food, tobacco, alcohol, and government payroll checks' that only insured the continued dependence of the area on the United States.<sup>25</sup> Addressing the plebiscites on the Compact of Free Association that were held in June of 1983, she likened the 'free' choice of Micronesian voters to 'those of boat passengers who have been taken far from their shore by a pilot whose interests and itinerary are not their own and who are then given the choice of remaining on the boat or swimming the 200 miles back to shore.'<sup>26</sup> An anthropologist with extensive field experience in the central Carolines, Lutz argued that the statements of American support of the compact evidenced the language of a paternal colonialism; Micronesians were said to have 'come of age' under the 'guidance and tutelage' of the United States. In Lutz's estimation, the compact simply disguised the annexation of Micronesia.

Henry Schwalbenberg, the assistant director of the Micronesian Seminar on Moen in Chuuk, undertook an extensive analysis of the Compact of Free Association between December of 1981 and April of 1984. Schwalbenberg expressed particular concern about the mutual security pacts between the United States and the Micronesian governments.<sup>27</sup> In agreeing in perpetuity to the principle of strategic denial the FSM, the Marshalls and Palau were depriving themselves of their most crucial bargaining chip in any future political negotiations with the United States. All things considered, the Jesuit brother concluded that the compact was 'more association than free.'<sup>28</sup>

Those concerned about how free the Micronesian governments really were under the compact would find much to be concerned about in a letter written to three very conservative members of Congress on 4 June 1981, by James L. Buckley, then Under Secretary of State for Security Assistance, Science and Technology.<sup>29</sup> In that letter, Buckley noted that modernization and development in Micronesia were being imperiled by what he called 'traditionalism'. Buckley believed that until governing elites could overcome the impediments inherent to their culture, gross social and economic inequities would continue within the

Micronesian communities, adding that Micronesian sovereignty was not innate, as the compact seemed to acknowledge, but was rather a matter of United States congressional discretion. United States responsibilities toward the area and its people transcended the limitations and concerns of international law; solid proof of local Micronesian governments' ability to insure the welfare of their citizens was required before absolute sovereignty could be granted. Buckley expressed his own view that free association in Micronesia would most likely lead toward a closer, more permanent relationship with the United States. Buckley envisioned some form of commonwealth status for the FSM, the Marshalls and Palau, or a union with other Pacific territories that might eventually evolve into statehood.

Buckley's comments on the restrictions and conditions of Micronesian sovereignty seem to be mirrored in those provisions of the compact that permit United States' intervention and involvement in the process of local government. Section 102 of Title I of Public Law 99-239 approving the compact between the United States and the FSM and Marshalls governments stipulates the submission of economic development plans by both Micronesian governments. Section 231 of Article II of the compact with Palau also calls for the submission and review of a national development plan. These national development plans, revised submitted at five-year intervals over the life of the compact, are to be reviewed by the President who then reports to Congress within sixty days of receiving the documents. In making his assessment, the President is required to solicit the views of the Secretary of the Interior, the Administrator of the Agency for International Development, and the heads of appropriate executive departments.

In testimony before a House Subcommittee, Ambassador Fred Zeder, the President's personal representative to the Micronesian status talks between 1981 and 1986, said the purpose of this requirement was to ensure the success of a mutually appropriate, desirable set of economic goals and objectives involving the American and Micronesian governments.<sup>30</sup> For him, this system of monitoring and control was sufficiently rigorous to ensure the prudent allocation of compact funds, and flexible enough to be consistent with the self-governing status of the Micronesian governments.<sup>31</sup> Zeder further justified this requirement as a remedy for the chronic lack of long term economic planning in the Trust Territory. Thinking it rather ironic that the world's

leading capitalist economy would be insisting upon a national development plan, representatives of the Federated States of Micronesia, during the course of negotiations over the compact, asked their American counterparts for a copy of the United States' national development plan or, if that were unavailable, a copy of the development plan for New York City!<sup>32</sup> They received neither.

If free association is understood to be more about association than sovereignty, the provisions of the compact to promote the economies of the islands might be construed to be more about control than development. Section 233 of Title II of the compact authorizes the conduct of audits on all monies extended as economic assistance and identified in section 211 of the same Title II. Even more sweeping, however, are the provisions in Section 102.c.1 of Public Law 99-239 implementing the compact. This section gives the Comptroller General of the United States and his General Accounting Office the authority to audit all grants, program assistance, and other forms of aid provided to the FSM. In pursuing this duty, the Comptroller General is given access 'to such personnel and to such records, documents, working papers, automated data and files, and other information relevant to such a review'.

These extensive powers are enhanced further by other legal requirements in the legislation approving the Compact. Under section 102.c.4, the Government of the Federated States of Micronesia is required to provide financial statements which account for the use of all funds provided by the United States under the compact. The submission of such financial statements is required within 180 days after the end of the fiscal year in the United States. Section 103.m.1 of Public Law 99-239 makes similar requirements for audits and the submission of annual financial statements by the Republic of the Marshalls.<sup>33</sup> In addition, supplemental provisions to section 177 of the compact providing money for validated claims against damage, loss and suffering as a result of the American nuclear testing in the Marshalls require the services of a fund manager to supervise the expenditure and recording of all monies in connection with this authorization. Similar requirements are placed upon the lump sum payment of \$66 million to the government of Palau during the first year of the compact; section 211, Article II of the compact's Title II calls for a separate agreement on the monitoring and review of all investment income earned from this money. In short, a scrutiny of the Compact of Free Association, particularly those areas dealing with

economic assistance and with the management and supervision of that assistance, suggests that economic development remains subordinate and subservient as it always has in American Micronesia to the dictates of strategic politics.<sup>34</sup> If the history of the islands called 'Micronesia' were only about American colonialism and compacts of free association, the future would look a great deal like the past.

### Touring the Edge of Paradise

What of American Micronesia in the years immediately following the implementation of the Compact of Free Association? P. F. Kluge, in his book *The Edge of Paradise*, provides a very personal and particular vision of the islands. Kluge writes of the Caroline, Mariana and Marshall Islands in 1989, three years after the implementation of the compact in the FSM and the Marshalls, and four years after the inauguration of the commonwealth agreement in the Northern Marianas. A former Peace Corps volunteer, author of what ultimately became the preamble to the constitution of the Federated States of Micronesia, and now professor of creative writing, Kluge details a trip he took to Micronesia in search of the meaning behind the suicide of his close friend and second President of the Republic of Palau, Lazarus Salii. Kluge's text is deeply affected by grief, angst, a consciousness of aging, a sense of loss, and a feeling of powerlessness. Shattered hopes and failed dreams provide the metaphors that organize Kluge's narrative and shape the meaning he finds in Salii's death.

Kluge had once looked at a younger, more idealistic, charismatic Salii as the one who would take a group of conquered, colonized, misadministered islands and transform them into proud, bustling island communities that stood at the center of the Pacific. For Kluge, the contemporary situation in the islands now mirrors Salii's fate. Kluge sees the islands as possessing the same kind of dilapidated quality that characterized their physical infrastructure in the immediate post-World War II years. Almost fifty years after America's initial occupation, Koror in Palau, like most of Micronesia, still exudes the ambience of a 'ruined estate, abandoned by owners and overseers, inherited by local workers, newly liberated and somewhat at a loss'.<sup>35</sup> Concrete houses, air conditioners, sewers, paved roads and shopping malls are all products of the American presence; they do not change, however, the town's essential nature which is '... ramshackle and nondescript,

a disappointment to visitors who expected thatch roofs, breezy porches, and raffish charm.<sup>36</sup>

Kluge chronicles a Micronesia in which the different island groups have settled their fates and made their deals with the Americans. He counts a total population of less than one-hundred thousand, speaking nine mutually unintelligible languages and surviving on 'a shaky, artificial lopsided economy based on scrap metal, copra, fish and government subsidy in an area . . . so far, so small and located off the edge of the world.'<sup>37</sup> The net effect of five decades of American bumbling and mismanagement is the creation of a welfare state that resembles more an urban ghetto or a North American Indian reservation than a Pacific Island. Kluge comments that those, like himself, who had once rooted for Micronesians now find themselves confronted with the prospect that island leaders are using their new powers to trash the place and each other.

Based on his travels, Kluge writes of opportunities turning into opportunism, of leaders gone bad, of corruption, nepotism, conflicts of interest, privileges abused, cronyism, carpetbaggers, extravagant finders' fees, and sweetheart deals. Majuro, the atoll capital for the Republic of the Marshall Islands, presents itself to Kluge as a 'feast of ironies, a warren of houses and warehouses and shacks that feels like a slovenly picnic in the mid-Pacific, like Central Park after one of those Puerto Rican holidays, all trashed and pissed on.'<sup>38</sup> Majuro suffers from a plethora of 'Third World' problems that include unplanned urbanization, rising expectations, rapid population increase, polluted lagoons, and poisoned reefs. Assaulting the physical senses are 'the smell of rotting wood, the sight of rusty roofs, the mid-day heat, the flies and mosquitos, potholes and puddles, ghetto crowding, and bus terminal torpor.'<sup>39</sup>

Moving further west on the Air Micronesia island hopper from Honolulu, Kluge reaches Pohnpei where he comments on the proclivity toward excessive drinking there and on the 'beer tumours' of Micronesian males that give them the look of a life-long pregnancy. Meanwhile, American expatriates sit in local bars and speak of the island in renal, anal and crude sexual metaphors that underscore their alienation, ignorance, and racism. Chuuk, for Kluge, remains 'dreaded Hogoleu' with too many people, so many problems, and not enough land. Moen Island, the site of Chuuk state's district government, exists as a dusty, crowded dead-end place, all shacks and wash lines, plastic buckets, dying dogs, dead cars, idling people, and monotonous Chuukese music.

With the exception of Yap which is small, conservative, careful, prudent, free of major population pressures, and lead by an effective collaboration of traditional chiefs and elected local officials, the islands of the Caroline group that comprise the Federated States of Micronesia struggle on as troubled places; they flounder some days, 'floating and drifting the rest; less like islands than lifeboats, left behind by a large ship's sinking, paddling in circles, waiting for something to show up on the horizon, a continent they can land on or a rescue vessel that will toss them a line.'<sup>40</sup>

Saipan, benefiting from Japanese tourism and the lucrative terms of its recent commonwealth status, is described as looking like an American suburban fantasy land and as being the most corrupt place on earth. Prosperity has brought complaint as well as wealth to the Chamorros of the island. There is, writes Kluge, considerable fear and distrust of alien workers from as far away as Sri Lanka who crowd the garment factories and work in the hotels, and of Chinese and Korean merchants who outwork and undercut local merchants. Upon reaching Palau, his ultimate destination, Kluge proceeds to indict that island group for its pride, malice, opportunism, and mystery. Kluge cites one expatriate observer's comments that Palauans are 'just as fouled up as the other Micronesians are.'<sup>41</sup> Government provides the first refuge of employment, the religion and opiate of the people. Kluge suggests that Palau with its layers of national, state and local governmental institutions, may be both the most over-governed and the most ungovernable place in the world. Palauans' penchant for bickering with one another is manifest in their modern-day proclivity to sue, and in their use of outside agencies and experts for advantage against local rivals. Even the most promising and carefully planned development projects fall victim to disputes among different groups of Palauans over land use and ownership. Kluge sees the future of the Caroline and Marshall islands as a source of intense local anxiety. He quotes an expatriate resident of Pohnpei who understands well the intimate, long-standing relationship between global strategic politics and American levels of funding for the islands;

. . . there's no god damned source of funding to run the fucking place. What source of money is going to take the place



of the millions they're getting now? They're supposed to lose four or, five federal programs next year, and they're talking like its the end of the world . . . if Gorbachev winds down the fucking cold war, we're fucked. Anybody who goes to bed here and prays for peace ought to be shot.<sup>42</sup>

For Kluge, Micronesia represents a once gallant, well intentioned exercise in trusteeship gone tedious and corrupt. Trying to work through his affection, nostalgia and longing for the islands of his youth, Kluge acknowledges that his great hope was that the islands would remain stable and stationary. Instead, they became something else, he writes, 'something . . . loose and drifting, small-feeling places to escape from, not to.'<sup>43</sup> With direct reference to the pressures that caused his friend Lazarus Salii to take his own life, Kluge comments that no man is an island and that no island is an island either. If the Compact of Free Association has brought the end of history to American Micronesia, it is a bad end to read Kluge's vision of it.

### Beyond Ends and Edges: Recalculating Economic Development

Kluge's *The Edge of Paradise* does not stand alone; it is the most recent example of a fairly extensive body of both popular and academic literature that addresses the failure of economic development in American Micronesia. Like Kluge, most critics of the American presence in Micronesia point to the long-standing primacy of strategic interests in the area and the consequent need to bind the islands closely to the United States through some long-term political arrangement.<sup>44</sup> Given this line of analysis, economic development never amounted to little more than a charade; political absorption, not the promotion of self-sufficient viable economies, constituted the United States' ultimate objective in the islands. I am more concerned, however, with economic development not as a casualty of essentially strategic politics but rather as a strategy of domination, itself. A seemingly more benevolent strategy of rule, the promotion of economic development in American Micronesia represents, I believe, a process of change no less disruptive and destructive than other colonial initiatives in its effects upon the peoples, places,

and cultures of the area. While most criticisms of American colonialism in Micronesia have focused on more overtly political methods of control, I see in the plans for economic development a somewhat disguised but nonetheless insidious effort to better possess Micronesians by remaking them in an image and likeness that was distinctively reflective of and submissive to the dominant values and interests in American society.

There exists, I think, another way to read the history of economic development in American Micronesia and perhaps elsewhere. We need to take economic development both a little more and a little less seriously. We need to understand that the issues at stake in the transformation that is economic development cannot be measured in terms of gross national products, per capita income, import-export ratios, capital gains, or even employment statistics. We need to consider too economic development as a transformative process that aspires to be near total in its reach and effects and that is resisted in ways that can be subtle, masked, confounding, and even contradictory.

In offering these thoughts on calculating or figuring economic development differently in American Micronesia, I do not mean to portray American colonialism as a monolithic force - focused, directed and efficient in its program of rule, administration and change. Nicholas Thomas, in his *Colonialism's Culture*, defines colonialism as a deep, penetrating program of change operating on almost all levels of a colonized society, but a process that is also complex, varied and sometimes self-defeating in its workings.<sup>45</sup> Thomas advocates a realization of colonialism's particular features in a given locale and time, and a recognition too of the diverse, conflicting agenda and strategies employed by different groups of people from a single colonizing nation. In the case of American Micronesia, there exist substantive and critical differences that separate international bureaucrats, federal officials, local administrators, development planners, expatriate businessmen and entrepreneurs, missionaries, Peace Corps volunteers, professional researchers, and media people. These need to be kept in mind as well.

The issues with which I deal are essentially conceptual. The Compact of Free Association does not mark the end of history for the Marshalls, Palau and the Federated States of Micronesia. The making of history will go on in ways that are very much culturally ordered and locally significant. The islands of the former Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands have not been made over into liberal democracies. The land owners of

Kwajalein atoll wrestle with the Marshallese government over compensation and representation as do the citizens of the irradiated atolls of Bikini, Enewetak, Rongelap and Utirik.<sup>46</sup> The group known as the Voice of the Marshalls, representing those islands and atolls to the south, continue to resist the dominance of the north and the Kabua family. In the Federated States of Micronesia, individual states and various factions grapple with each other in ways that may lead to the eventual dissolution of the entity.<sup>47</sup> Pohnpei contests for advantage with Chuuk, while within Chuuk itself, the Faichuk area struggles for recognition as a separate and fifth state. Political divisions within Palau, a major contributing factor in the decade-old battle over the approval of the compact, will not cease now that Palau is formally in free association with the United States. The patterns of the Palauan past are too strong, deep and alive to allow for an end to local history. In the Commonwealth of the Mariana Islands, territorial incorporation into the United States has created not new or near-Americans, but issues around local autonomy and control that will serve as the stuff of history for decades to come.

I suspect, too, that the Compact of Free Association will not bring what most of us understand to be economic development to the Caroline, Mariana and Marshall Islands. The people of Micronesia struggle to be more and other than simply productive workers or responsible consumers in 'free association' with one of the worlds' major capitalist democracies. At the same time, negotiations that begin in 1998 over the renewal of the compact may well result in a drive toward commonwealth status for the FSM, the Marshalls and Palau. Just what commonwealth status might mean for these island entities and how the attendant notion of dependency is to be understood in its cross-cultural adjustments constitute vital issues in reassessing economic development for the area. On the other hand, the most important part of the existing compact may well be Article IV of Title I that allows citizens of the different Micronesian nations to enter, work and establish residence as nonimmigrants in the United States and its territories. It may well be that future histories of the people of the greater Micronesian area will include places such as Guam and Hawaii.

Those of us who like our development quantifiable, and our heroes clearly identifiable, rooted in place and time, and engaged in what we perceive to be overt acts of resistance against forces of exploitation and control may find it

difficult to keep up with the movement of people and the changing character of life in Micronesia. We may need to develop a greater sense of nuance and subtlety that admits to both the polyvocality and polylocality of a Micronesian diaspora to other areas of the Pacific and the world. Such a journey for those who undertake it will involve extensive, complicated, intensely personal and wrenching negotiations over meaning and identity in distant, alien, sometimes hostile settings within the parameters of a global economic order. It may be a world of degradation, suffering, mimicry, violence, discrimination and suffering. It may also prove a world in which there results something creative, resistant and syncretic; something, to paraphrase James Clifford, that is more ambiguous and more historically complex, and that requires that we perceive both the fading of certain orders of diversity and distinction, and the creation or reformulation of others.<sup>48</sup> The future history of Micronesia and more particularly of economic development may occur in ways and places that we have yet to recognize or anticipate.

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2. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York, 1992). For an encapsulation of Fukuyama's argument, see his 'By Way of Introduction', pp. xi-xxiii. Critical reaction to Fukuyama's assessment can be found in Alan Ryan, 'Professor Hegel Goes to Washington', *New York Review of Books*, 39:6 (26 March 1992), pp. 7-13; Michael S. Roth, 'Review of *The End of History and the Last Man* by Francis Fukuyama', *History and Theory*, 32:2 (1992), pp. 188-197.
3. Ibid., pp. 55-57.
4. An exposition of Fukuyama's very limited and particular notion of culture can be found in the chapter, 'The Coldest of Cold Monsters', pp. 211-22.
5. Fukuyama, p. 71.
6. A recent academic statement of this position can be found in Edward J. Michal, 'Protected States: The Political Status of the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands', *The Contemporary Pacific*, 5:2 (Fall, 1993), pp. 303-332.

Michal, using the 19th century notion of protected states in consensual security agreements with larger metropolitan nations, argues that the Compact of Free Association recognizes both the sovereignty and independence of the FSM and the Marshalls. Michal takes issue with Stewart Firth's belief that the compact undermines rather than recognizes the national integrity of the two Micronesian governments. See Firth, 'Sovereignty and Independence in the Contemporary Pacific', *The Contemporary Pacific*, 1:1 and 2 (Spring and Fall, 1989), pp. 75-96. For an initial assessment of Michal's position see Petersen's contribution in this volume.

7. For a very thorough, detailed and critical assessment of the terms of the Compact of Free Association and what they mean for the governments of Micronesia, see Henry J. Schwalbenberg, S. J., *Memos on the Draft Compact of Free Association, #1-#13* (Moen, Truk, 1981 to April, 1984). See also Schwalbenberg's, 'Compact of Free Association: More Association Than Free', *The Pacific Magazine*, 7, 3:32 (1982), pp. 28-31, and 7, 3:33 (1982), pp. 28-31.

8. This phrase comes from the United States House of Representatives, 'Approving the Compact of Free Association with the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia and Approving Conditionally the Compact of Free Association with Palau', *Report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs Together With Supplemental Views (Including Cost Estimate of the Congressional Budget Office) on H. J. Res. 187*, 99th Congress, First Session, Serial No. 99-198, Part I, 1 July 1985 (Washington, D. C., U. S. Government Printing Office, 1985), p. 4.

9. The compact exists as *Public Law 99-239: Compact of Free Association Act of 1985 Between the United States and the Governments of the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands*; it was signed into law on 14 January 1986. The compact between the United States and the Government of Palau was approved separately by the United States Congress and was signed into law on 14 November 1986 as *Public Law 99-658*. Because of major differences with the constitution of Palau over the issue of nuclear weapons and radioactive materials, the implementation of the compact was delayed. On 30 November 1987, the United States Congress passed a joint resolution authorizing the implementation of *Public Law 99-658* at a mutually agreeable time between the governments of Palau and the United States, and after the differences between the compact and Palau's constitution have been reconciled. That implementation finally took place on 1 October 1994.

10. These figures are estimates drawn from the dollar amounts specified in the compact and approved as *Public Law 99-239*. An earlier, somewhat more modest set of compact expenditure projections can be found in

the 1 July 1985 report of the House's Committee on Foreign Affairs and entitled 'Approving the Compact of Free Association with the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia and Approving Conditionally the Compact of Free Association with Palau', pp. 11-14.

11. For a summation of these objections by other U. S. territories, see the statement of Roger Mintz, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Tax Policy with the United States Department of the Treasury in United States Senate, *Hearing Before the Committee on Finance*, 99th Congress, First Session, S. Hrg. 99-182, 29 July 1985 (Washington, D. C., United States Government Printing Office, 1985), pp. 1-2.

12. United States House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, 'Approving the Compact of Free Association with the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia and Approving Conditionally the Compact of Free Association with Palau', p. 5.

13. These principles can be found listed in Arnold H. Leibowitz, *Defining Status: A Comprehensive Analysis of United States Territorial Relations* (Dordrecht: 1989), p. 643; see also Gary Smith, *Micronesia: Decolonisation and US Military Interests in the Trust Territories (sic) of the Pacific Islands* (Canberra, 1991), p. 10.

14. United States House of Representatives, 'The Proposed Compact of Free Association: The Federated States of Micronesia', *Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Public Lands and National Parks of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs*, 99th Congress, First Session, Serial No. 99-9, Part III, 19 March 1985 (Washington, D. C., U. S. Government Printing Office, 1985), p. 155.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

16. United States House of Representatives, 'On The Proposed Compact of Free Association: The Marshall Islands', *Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Public Lands and National Parks of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs*, 99th Congress, First Session, Serial No. 99-9, Part II, 14 March 1985 (Washington, D. C., U. S. Government Printing Office, 1985), p. 15.

17. Salii's remark is recorded in P. F. Kluge, *The Edge of Paradise: America in Micronesia* (New York, 1991), p. 32. Andohn's assessment is cited in David L. Hanlon and William Eperiam, 'The Federated States of Micronesia: Unifying the Remnants', *Micronesian Politics*, edited by Roniti Teiwaki (Suva, Fiji, 1988), p. 103.

18. United States House of Representatives, 'On the Proposed Compact of Free Association: The Marshall Islands', p. 183.
19. United States Senate, 'On S. J. 286 - A Resolution to Approve the Compact of Free Association and For Other Purposes', *Hearing Before the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources*, 98th Congress, Second Session, S. Hrg. 98-1067, 24 May 1984 (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1984), p. 185.
20. Roberts's remarks can be heard in the film, *Strategic Trust: The Making of a Nuclear Free Pacific* (The Cinema Guild, 1984). A copy of this film is located in the Sinclair Library's Wong Audio-Visual Center on the campus of the University of Hawai'i at Manoa.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Leibowitz, *Defining Status*, p. 596.
24. Roberts in the film, *Strategic Trust: The Making of a Nuclear Free Pacific*.
25. Catherine Lutz, 'The Compact of Free Association, Micronesian Non-Independence, and U. S. Policy', *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 18:2 (April - June, 1986), p. 26.
26. Ibid., p. 26.
27. Henry Schwalbenberg, S. J., 'American Military Needs in Micronesia: Valid Perceptions or Unnecessary Contingencies?' Compact of Free Association Memo No. 7 (Moen, Truk: Micronesian Seminar, October, 1982), p. 25. See also Schwalbenberg's Memo No. 9 entitled 'The FSM and Denial'.
28. Henry M. Schwalbenberg, S.J., 'Compact of Free Association: More Association Than Free', *The Pacific Magazine*, 7, 2:32 (March - April, 1982), pp. 28-31; and 7, 3:33 (May - June, 1982), pp. 28-31.
29. United States House of Representatives, 'Approving the Compact of Free Association Between the United States, the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia', *Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Affairs and Its Subcommittees on Human Rights and International Organizations, Asia and Pacific Affairs, and on International Operations, on H. J. Res. 187*, 99th Congress, First Session, 23 April, 1985 (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1985), p. 23-34.
30. United States House of Representatives, 'The Impact of the Proposed Compact of Free Association on Economic Development in Micronesia', *Hearings of the Subcommittee on Public Lands and National Parks of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs*, 98th Congress, Second Session, Serial No. 98-56, Part III, 21 May 1984 (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1984), pp. 111-112.
31. Ibid., p. 118.
32. Personal communication from Mr. Dan Perin, formerly National Planner for the Federated States of Micronesia, Kolonia, Pohnpei, 4 June 1991.
33. There are no provisions within the compact or its enabling legislation, PL 99-658, that mandate or authorize the conduct of audits in Palau by any agency of the United States government.
34. Speaking before the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs' Subcommittee on Public Lands and National Parks on 21 May 1984, Ms. Patricia Krause of the U. S. General Accounting Office acknowledged the stringency of the planning and auditing requirements in the compact, but added that their effectiveness would depend on the cooperation of the American and Micronesian governments to monitor the appropriate expenditure of compact monies. This statement aside, the potential for American intervention and control in the process of government in Micronesia remains formidable.
35. Kluge, *The Edge of Paradise*, p. 3. For two very different reactions to Kluge's book, see Robert C. Kiste's review in *The Contemporary Pacific*, 5:1 (Spring, 1993), pp. 208-210; and that of Glenn Petersen in *Isla*, 1:1 (Rainy Season, 1992), pp. 125-131. My own assessment is close to that of Petersen.
36. Ibid., p. 5.
37. Ibid., p. 16.
38. Ibid., p. 44.
39. Ibid., p. 45.
40. Ibid., p. 174.
41. Ibid., p. 189.
42. Ibid., p. 87.
43. Ibid., p. 242.
44. As representative works of this school of analysis, see Gale, *The Americanization of Micronesia*, and Roff, *Overreaching in Paradise*. Consult too Jane Dibblin, *Day of Two Suns: U. S. Nuclear Testing and the*

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*Pacific Islanders* (New York, 1988); Donald McHenry, *Micronesia, Trust Betrayed - Altruism vs. Self-Interest in American Foreign Policy* (New York, 1975); David Nevin, *The American Touch in Micronesia* (New York, 1977); and Gary Smith, *Micronesia: Decolonisation and US Military Interests in the Trust Territories (sic) of the Pacific Islands* (Canberra, 1991); Roy H. Smith and Michael C. Pugh, 'Micronesian Trust Territories-Imperialism Continues?' *The Pacific Review*, vol 4, no. 1 (1991), pp. 36-44. For a consideration of the legacy of dependency on current efforts at economic development in Micronesia, see John Cameron, 'Economic Development Options for the Federated States of Micronesia at Independence', *Pacific Studies*, vol. 14, no. 4 (December 1991), pp. 35-70.

45. Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Travel, Literature and Government* (Princeton, 1994).

46. Smith, *Micronesia: Decolonisation and US Military Interests in the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands*, p. 77, describes the United States as trying to use the Republic of the Marshalls government as a 'political buffer to shield itself from the direct repercussions' of its nuclear and military activities in the island group. The Kwajalein landowners' disputes with Majuro can be seen then as a reflection of this situation.

47. On this point, see Glenn Petersen, 'The 1990 Federated States of Micronesia Constitutional Convention: Calm Before the Storm?' *The Contemporary Pacific*, 6:2 (Fall, 1994), pp. 337-369.

48. James Clifford, 'Introduction: The Pure Products Go Crazy', *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. (Cambridge, MA, 1988), p. 17.

# Decentralisation and the Postcolonial State in Solomon Islands

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There has been a lot of interest in decentralisation and ethnicity in Melanesia since countries in that region became independent.<sup>1</sup> The reasons for this are by now quite familiar. Imperial rivalry in the late nineteenth century led to the formation of centralised states in the Western Pacific where they had never existed before. These states encompassed extreme cultural and linguistic diversity. The different forces that came with colonialism laid the foundation for a new social and economic order. During colonial rule that order remained relatively secure, and the territorial integrity of those states remained intact, through the coercive power that was available to the colonialists. There was little concern with building legitimacy and internal cohesion. As colonial rule came to an end, political leaders confronted the task of building modern states. It was a situation in which regional identity and local loyalties outweighed any sense of national identity or commitment to the newly installed national government. Micronationalist activity was common and threatened postcolonial stability.<sup>2</sup> Decentralisation of government provided one way of accommodating regional aspirations and national unity.

Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands both adopted systems of provincial government within a period of six years of each other. In both cases, the decision to proceed along this path arose out of recommendations made by government committees especially set up to investigate possible systems of government for those countries. In Papua New Guinea it was the Constitutional Planning Committee which was set up in 1972, and in Solomon Islands, the Special Committee on Provincial Government, set up in 1977.<sup>3</sup>

The main reason for continuing interest in decentralisation in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands especially, is because until now, provincial government has failed to live up to the claims that were made for it when it was introduced. It has not prevented new attempts at secession and other outbreaks of regional unrest, and it has not brought the anticipated improved performance and effectiveness to government. In many parts of the Solomons, for example, government services have deteriorated since provincial government was introduced. It has contributed to political integration but more at the regional level rather than the national level. It has also been the basis

for further divisiveness, both inter-provincial and intra-provincial. One observer of decentralisation, and formerly a supporter of it, has gone so far as to describe the system of provincial government in Papua New Guinea as destroying the nation.<sup>4</sup> In both countries there have been attempts at different times to abolish provincial government, the most recent attempt being that started by the Wingti Government in Papua New Guinea in October 1992 and which still has not been resolved.<sup>5</sup>

The poor record of provincial government and the attempts to abolish it must be set against strong continuing demand for decentralisation. In Solomon Islands, political parties supporting greater regional autonomy gained the ascendancy in the 1980s over the main centralist party, the Solomon Island United Party. Provincial government survived and became more deeply entrenched. Set against the failures and shortcomings that have been revealed so far, this rather paradoxical situation raises important questions about the nature of postcolonial politics and the way in which decentralisation and ethnicity have been used as political issues. It also raises questions about the postcolonial state and the inability to command greater legitimacy and feelings of national identity.

The roots of this situation lie in the history of colonial rule. Here I propose to discuss this from two main perspectives, one dealing with the changing form of ethnicity under colonialism, and the other looking at the role of the state in the economy. I show that colonialism gave rise to new ethnic categories and ethnic formations. These became the basis for emergent patterns of ethnic consciousness and mobilisation which gradually intensified in the 1930s and 1940s and posed serious challenges to the colonial state. In the post-war period these challenges were largely contained through the introduction of local government and through carefully controlled participation in central government.

The growth of political consciousness in the three decades leading-up to independence was uneven. Participation in government set the stage for new patterns of ethnic rivalry. This did not diminish as government institutions were upgraded and reformed, it only took new forms. The colonial administration believed that political consciousness and experience could be built in

stages, ending up finally with a strong national consciousness. At the time of independence that final stage had not yet been reached. Regional consciousness was still far stronger than any feeling of national identity or commitment to national institutions. This gap provided the opening for more intensive ethnic rivalry, now conducted on a regional basis, and now waged around demands for decentralisation. Partial devolution of power to the regions in the form of provincial government was the concession that central government had to make to maintain a unitary state.

Since the introduction of provincial government, arguments over decentralisation have continued. At one level this has been a fight over further political devolution and how that should be controlled. At another, it has been a fight over the kind of influence which ethnicity should be allowed in the postcolonial state. Opponents of decentralisation and supporters of a unitary state, have argued that ethnicity needs to be transcended. They are committed to building nationalism and shaping a state which will stand above ethnic demands. Against them there are those who defend decentralisation, want to see it taken further, and use ethnicity to support their case. It is the latter group which gained ascendancy in the 1980s and by this ensured that the state would be opened up to ethnic pressure in a way that it had never been under colonial rule. The consequence of this is that ethnicity has come to have an ever increasing influence on many different aspects of national life, from economic and social policy through to the organization and running of key national institutions. In the last four years, during the course of the Bougainville crisis it has also come to influence the conduct of foreign affairs.

The other factor to consider is the role that has been played by the state, particularly during late colonialism and after independence. Colonial rule set a precedent for a high level of state intervention, more so after the war when it was assumed that the best way in which to stimulate growth and development in the territory was to rely on government assistance and direction.<sup>6</sup> This gave rise to a large and expanding bureaucracy. Since independence the bureaucracy has continued to expand as 'statist' policies have been continued. Post-independence governments have been inclined to give 'preference to bureaucracy over market as the principal mechanism of assigning resources and income in society'.<sup>7</sup> Reliance on the state was reinforced in the Solomons at the time of independence by the formation of several public enterprise corporations and by state participation in

a number of large joint ventures. Much of this activity was co-ordinated through the formation of the Government Shareholding Agency (since changed to Investment Corporation of Solomon Islands).<sup>8</sup>

The political consequences of relying on a statist development policy were that the state became the most important site for the pursuit of economic advantage and for the various conflicts arising out of that. The state is where the most intensive struggles are taking place for access to scarce resources. Those taking part include individuals, political parties, trade unions, provinces and other regional groups, and the emerging local bourgeoisie. At the centre of these struggles, and with an advantage over everyone else, are the political and administrative elite. As Fitzpatrick has pointed out, in this situation where 'the state is immediately and closely involved in production, in the extraction and redistribution of surplus, and in class and inter-group struggles' its autonomy and legitimacy are in doubt.<sup>9</sup> Moreover the distribution of surplus depends on pre-capitalist relations of a patron-client form. These relations then come to 'penetrate and shape the very institutions of the state'.<sup>10</sup>

Decentralisation, and the sanction it has given to ethnic demands, has provided a legitimate basis for clientelist relations and the politics of patronage. The political and administrative elite have become the key players here.<sup>11</sup> They are the ones who must attempt to manage and allocate the resources over which conflict is taking place. As Fitzpatrick says this is the 'politics of stalemate' trying to shape and adjust state distribution to a multitude of diffuse, particularistic demands'.<sup>12</sup>

### Colonial Rule

The annexation of the Solomons was largely the outcome of international rivalry in the Western Pacific.<sup>13</sup> Fearful of German and French intentions, the British moved to consolidate their control over islands which, by the late nineteenth century, had become strategically and economically important to Australia. The present boundaries of Solomon Islands came into effect between 1893 and 1899. Annexation started with the southern Solomons - New Georgia, Guadalcanal, Nggela, Malaita and Makira. Rennell, Bellona and Sikaiana were added in 1897, the Santa Cruz Group in 1898, and Choiseul, the Shortlands, Santa Isabel and Ontong Java in 1899, after being acquired from Germany under the Samoan Tripartite Convention.<sup>14</sup> These moves took no account of cultural and linguistic

boundaries. Indeed, the British barely understood the kind of diversity which existed there and which was being incorporated within a single state. They did know that the people lived in small isolated communities and there was no widely recognized political authority through which they could negotiate their occupation of the area.

Colonialism set the international boundaries of the present state, opened the territory to plantation capital, introduced a highly centralised administrative structure through which it would exercise control, and created a totally foreign social and political order within which new patterns of differentiation and achievement would emerge. Ethnicity and class were the two main forms of differentiation to appear under the new order. They were closely inter-related and became apparent from very early on, under the combined influence of the plantation industry, missionaries and the administration. The colonial order was characterized by an ethnic hierarchy, with a clear horizontal division between Europeans and Solomon Islanders. Within this hierarchy, the multiple languages and local cultures were the basis for further vertical divisions among Solomon Islanders. These divisions were subject to a continuing process of redefinition as new ethnic names were used, new ethnic boundaries were formed, and new ethnic groupings appeared under the influence of the colonialists.

The main interest here is in the history of these ethnic divisions and what they meant for the administration of the territory and the preparations that were made for independence. As Howard points out, ethnic differences lent themselves to the deployment of a 'divide and rule' strategy during colonial times and were used to maintain control and to ensure a labour supply for capitalist enterprise.<sup>15</sup> This began in the Solomon Islands when pacification was the main concern, and continued thereafter. I argue that while this was convenient for the colonial administration it became extremely problematic during the lead-up to independence when ethnic differences became a threat to the maintenance of a unitary state. Colonial officials found that what had been a convenient tool of administration was no longer appropriate for a potentially self-governing territory.

One of the first steps that was taken after the British established a resident administration in the Solomons, was to set up regional stations with their own district staff and then to use them to secure and subordinate the immediate hinterland. This included Gizo (1899), the Shortlands (1906),

Malaita (1909), Guadalcanal (1914), Makira and Isabel (1918).<sup>16</sup> Below the level of these district stations, attempts were made to work through local leaders and set up a form of indirect administration. This had very limited success and sometimes brought the reverse of what it was meant to achieve, fermenting local unrest rather than ensuring stability. Even so, we see local communities gradually being incorporated within a larger regionally organized structure, in accordance with the demands of a centralised administration. These efforts were greatly aided by mission activity. Eventually the territory came to be divided into eight administrative districts, which were then divided into sub-districts, around 80 in total, with their own locally appointed headmen.<sup>17</sup>

The setting up of an administrative structure was carried out with minimal disruption to the traditional economic base of local communities. Considerable resettlement took place, often under the influence of missions more than the administration. This included movement from inland areas to the coast, and the formation of larger, more centralised communities. Despite this the majority of Solomon Islanders retained their land and continued to depend on subsistence production. Allegiance to kin-based communities and the territories which they controlled, continued to be the main basis for group loyalty and affiliation. As much as new ethnic identities began to emerge, representing the larger units within which people were being organized, they were still identities with a strong basis in land and the local environment. A major feature of ethnic differentiation was wide variation in the size and cultural distinctiveness of different language groups.

The history of colonial rule divides readily into two separate periods. Prior to World War Two, the territory was largely administered for the benefit of the European-controlled copra industry. There was little interest in Solomon Islanders except as indentured labourers and rescued souls. They were denied any participation in the formal administration of the territory. After World War Two, there was recognition of the need for social and political development. Participation in government was now something to be actively encouraged, albeit under the control of the colonial authorities.<sup>18</sup>

Colonial rule created a unitary state and once preparations for self-government were begun, there was no question that it would continue to remain as such. For the British that meant having a strong central government that was committed to



national unity, supported by a second tier system of local government. Except for some experiments with sub-district councils, Solomon Islanders did not have any experience of either kind of government before 1950. In making up for this, much greater emphasis was put on developing local government, but in 1950, four Solomon Islanders were nominated to the Advisory Council, and from then on there was participation at both levels. In some cases the same people were involved as when local council presidents were nominated to the Advisory Council or, in later years, to the Legislative Council. Both kinds of experience contributed to the growth of regionally based ethnic consciousness.

The British assumed that local government would work best if it was started in a small way among people who shared a common language and culture. The first councils and courts were tried in sub-districts on a trial basis with the aim of building political awareness and responsibility through local experience. Larger councils would be formed, covering a wider area and larger population, once leaders were able to show that they could overcome their 'excessive parochialism'.<sup>19</sup> There was the idea that this would slowly lead to the growth of national political consciousness.<sup>20</sup>

There were some places in which sub-district councils did perform reasonably well but the policy had to be modified not long after it was introduced as a result of events in the most heavily populated district of the territory.<sup>21</sup> On the island of Malaita sub-district councils were either subverted or completely taken over by the Maasina Rule movement which started in 1944 and soon became a major political force on the island.<sup>22</sup> The movement formed its own island-wide political structure, encompassing the majority of the population. The only way in which the administration was able to bring it to an end was by abandoning the plan for sub-district councils and instead, negotiating the formation of an island-wide council.

Maasina Rule grew out of a number of different influences including in particular, Malaita's role as the main source of indentured labour in the protectorate. Malaita was a large island with around 12 different language and dialect groups. An island identity had grown through the experience of labour migration and mission activity. Now the island represented a larger ethnic formation, making a claim against the colonial state. With the formation of the Malaita Council

this claim was effectively contained in the routine of restricted local government.

Malaita was not only the first district council to be formed, it was also the largest. It set a pattern for the continuing development of local government. It also set the stage for the growth of ethnic rivalry as other regions began to organize and establish a relationship with the state.

The process of amalgamation by which this came about, took place partly through local initiative, and partly through the intervention of the administration. There were twenty-four councils in 1963, by 1977 this had been reduced to eight, seven rural and one urban. In this process it was the larger islands that amalgamated first - Malaita, Isabel, Makira, Guadalcanal - and the Western District. It was the smaller islands, which also had the most to lose, that were the last to amalgamate. In some cases (Anuta and Tikopia) amalgamation continued to remain uncertain.

Amalgamation in its final form represented the last step in a long process of arriving at regional units sufficiently large to provide a practical and economic basis for local government administration. The process was facilitated by the growth of new ethnic/island identities but sometimes the amalgamations went far beyond this and it was administrative convenience that prevailed. The main problem with the final structure is that it was quite uneven. There was a substantial difference in the population of council areas, with the largest being nearly six times the size of the smallest. Also big differences exist in the land area and in the other resources in each council area. The councils varied in the degree of cohesiveness being shown and the strength of common identity. These factors would have implications for their treatment at the national level, and their effectiveness and efficiency at the local level. The council structure set the stage for continuing ethno-regional rivalry; it also ensured that this would be a highly uneven contest.

In all the years that local government was developed, including the last three years of reform between 1974 and 1977, there was the idea that it would operate under the same principles as local government in Britain. The only powers exercised by local councils would be powers devolved to them by central government. They would always be subject to the monitoring and control of central government. In deciding what responsibilities would be undertaken at each level of government, it was decided that local government 'should undertake all activities except those which, because

of the wider effects of the issues or nature of the resources involved, cannot in practice be devolved to the local level'.<sup>23</sup> In practice local councils were encouraged to take responsibility for basic services, such as education and health, and to undertake to collect some of the revenue required for providing these services.

In parallel with the changes in local government, we also see steadily increasing participation by Solomon Islanders in central government.

This also contributed to the growth of regional consciousness, except that there was a reverse trend to what took place at the local level. Whereas the number of local government councils was steadily reduced and the political units they represented got larger, the number of central government politicians was increased and the size of the units which they represented slowly reduced.

The constitutional changes and the general trends that accompanied them are well known.<sup>24</sup> Executive and Legislative Councils made up of wholly appointed members were established in 1960. In 1964 the Constitution was altered to provide for the election of eight of the ten unofficial members of the Legislative Council. In 1967, the number of unofficial members was increased from 10 to 14, all of them directly elected according to universal adult franchise. Official members still outnumbered unofficial members but in 1970, when the Executive and Legislative Councils were replaced with a single Governing Council, and the number of elected members increased to 17, they then outnumbered the official members. In 1974 the number of elected members was increased to 24. In that year a new Constitution was enacted and there was a return to the traditional division between the legislative and executive branches of government and a ministerial system of government. In January 1976 under an Order in Council made in November 1975, the 1974 Constitution was amended and self government was conferred on the Solomon Islands. Later that year another election was held for the Legislative Assembly at which point the Assembly had 38 seats.

The constitutional changes between 1960 and 1974 might be described as carefully controlled preparation for the ultimate transfer of power at independence, they are referred to as laying the foundation for the working of a Western democracy based on the Westminster model.<sup>25</sup> It is also the case that a foundation was being laid for the continuation of a unitary state after the transfer of power. The only precedent set for that was

colonial rule which up until then had been bureaucratic and authoritarian in nature.<sup>26</sup> It was quite apparent in the early 1970s that Solomon Islanders had very little commitment to national institutions and very little interest in national issues.<sup>27</sup> The one institution in which this was critically important if there was going to be a unitary state was the legislature itself. To ensure legitimacy this had to be representative. One condition for this was introducing universal adult suffrage. But Solomon Islands was also a multi-ethnic state and we need to look at the kind of measures taken to ensure representativeness on an ethnic basis.

It becomes clear that these measures, at least in the early period when members were nominated, were largely based on regional divisions and regionally-based local councils. As the number of nominated members was increased, the numbers representing each region were adjusted according to their size. This did more to reinforce regional consciousness than promote the growth of national consciousness as the administration was trying to do.

During the time of the Legislative Council the number of unofficial Solomon Island members was increased twice in 1964 and 1967, and regional concerns were a major influence on the numbers chosen and the way in which they were elected. Out of the eight elected members in 1964, Malaita had three, Central had two, and Eastern, Western and Honiara had one each. There were complaints from the Western District that one member was not enough. When it was decided they should get two members in 1967, the number allocated to other regions was increased proportionately. Hence the jump from eight to 14 at that time. Further increases in 1970, 1973 and 1976 meant that representation was extended to minority island groups such as Rennell and Bellona and Ontong Java (Malaita Outer Islands), even though on a population basis they were much smaller than the average size electorate. In 1976, with 38 seats, the Legislative Assembly reached the size it would be at independence when it became the National Parliament, and the size it would stay until 1993.

The colonial administration found it could not allocate seats solely on the basis of population. The way in which ethnicity came to be used owed a lot to the history of local government. This is shown especially by the case of Malaita. It was a special case not just because it was the largest council but because it was the first to amalgamate and also because of the circumstances in which it

amalgamated. This meant that in the early stages of constitutional advance Malaita was singled out for special attention. By the time other councils achieved their final form, one in particular, Western Council, was demanding equality with the rest. Being unable to achieve that in national institutions it sought equality through regional autonomy. The demand for equality might be seen as legitimate on an ethnic basis although historical precedent precluded that from being considered. This will be taken up in more detail in the next section.

In presenting the history of local government it has been shown that this was the basis for growth in regional consciousness. It has also been argued that by the time of independence regional consciousness was far stronger than national consciousness. It was inevitable then that there would be ethnic rivalry in the national legislature particularly when there was some imbalance in the relative strength of the regions on which ethnic calculations were based.

### **Independence - Decentralisation and Ethnicity become National Issues**

Solomon Islands became independent in July 1978. A number of national institutions had been put in place to lay the basis for authority in the new state, and to ensure that it would remain unitary. These included a public service, judiciary, and a police force. The most important national institution was a written constitution which had been developed over more than two years of negotiation and consultation.<sup>28</sup> This made the Queen the head of state, represented by a governor general, appointed on the recommendation of the legislature every five years. The Constitution also provided for a single-chamber, parliamentary form of government based on Westminster principles with separation of the executive and the legislature. The main modification to the Westminster system was an enhancement of the role of the legislature, most noticeably in its power to appoint and dismiss the prime minister. Executive power was in the hands of a cabinet headed by the prime minister. The Constitution provided for 30 to 50 constituencies for the purposes of election of members of Parliament (S. 54). At independence there were 38 and this was not increased until 1993 when the number was raised to 47.

Not everyone supported independence in 1978 or the institutions on which it was based. The opposition party in the National Parliament, the National Democratic Party (NADEPA), argued

to have independence delayed so there would be more time to examine the issues.<sup>29</sup> One of the leading provinces, Western Province, boycotted the celebrations. Their protest was directed at the Independence Constitution. They wanted a guarantee that there would be devolution of power to the provinces. Ultimately they wanted a more federal political structure.<sup>30</sup> The Western Breakaway Movement was active between 1974 and 1979 during the critical period of constitution-making and finalising the shape of the post-independence state. Some of its leaders called for secession but this did not have total support.<sup>31</sup> The movement was centred at Western Council headquarters where it had a collective leadership made up of national parliamentarians, council leaders, chiefs and various community leaders.<sup>32</sup> The Western Council was formed in 1972 through voluntary amalgamation of five local councils, fulfilling the intentions of the colonial administration for the rationalisation of local government. The Western region comprised a large number of islands and many different language groups but had long been administered as a single district. This, and the influence of the Methodist Mission, had contributed to the emergence of a new ethnic formation, characterized by a very strong regional consciousness.

Western demands for greater regional autonomy started some years before independence. In 1975, a submission was made by the Western Council in support of federal government to the committee that was formed to recommend a constitution for the Solomons. It was rejected. The Committee invoked its terms of reference which required it to take account of the ability of the country to pay 'from its own resources'.<sup>33</sup> The Committee felt that devolution should take place through local government and recommended that there should be a 'simple statement of principle to that effect' in the Constitution.<sup>34</sup> They also indicated ways in which local government legislation might be amended in order to increase the autonomy of local government councils. This did not satisfy the opponents of a unitary constitution. Circulation of the report led to renewed calls for 'effective and full devolution' from members of local government councils in Western, Isabel, Eastern and Guadalcanal Provinces.<sup>35</sup> Another strong supporter of federal government was NADEPA led by Bartholomew Ulufa'alu.<sup>36</sup> The national government remained firmly committed to a unitary system but did make two concessions to those demanding greater regional autonomy. First was a statement

guaranteeing a degree of autonomy to the provinces and secondly, agreeing to the setting up of a special committee to look into provincial government.<sup>37</sup>

Between 1977 and 1979 the Special Committee on Provincial Government chaired by the experienced politician, David Kausimae, became the main focus for those who were seeking greater provincial autonomy. When it reported in May 1979, it identified a large number of powers and functions that could be transferred to provincial government from the national government.<sup>38</sup> The Committee argued on the basis of cultural differences and geographical separation that decentralisation was necessary for national unity. It also stipulated that it would be possible to do this and also maintain a unitary state.<sup>39</sup> One observer was more sceptical. Herlihy pointed to a number of problems that the committee overlooked in its recommendations, including increased costs, administrative difficulties, reduced government capacity for economic management, a 'strong bias in favour of the better-developed provinces' and a 'high potential for disunity'.<sup>40</sup> The Kausimae Committee played an important role in keeping up the momentum for decentralisation. In doing so, it took the side of the provinces, many of whose leaders were on the Committee. With them it set itself against the central bureaucracy and many national politicians. The political and administrative elite were primarily interested in maintaining and consolidating the power of the state. This resistance to decentralisation meant there was another two years and a change of government before provincial government was finally introduced. In one of the first moves that they made after coming to power in August, 1981, the coalition government of Solomon Mamaloni, introduced and passed the Provincial Government Bill 1981,<sup>41</sup> setting in operation the system which is still in place now.

The Western Breakaway Movement died out in 1979 with part of its leadership co-opted by central government, and its main demand in the hands of the Kausimae Committee.<sup>42</sup> The immediate threat of secession or separation was averted but the interest in greater regional autonomy remained and would remain even after provincial government was introduced. The Western protest was directed specifically at the concept of a unitary state as it was constructed by the colonial administration during the years leading up to independence. As we have seen this was based on a limited number of ethnic formations, of unequal size, gradually formalised under a system of local government, given representation

in national government according to their size. Under this policy, there would always be unequal representation at the national level.

In a sense, demanding greater political autonomy was the Western Council's way of protesting against this inequality. They were seeking the kind of equality offered by the United Nations, the equality commanded by sovereign states, irrespective of their size. They might have sought this equality in the national legislature and argued that ethnicity or regionalism take priority over population. In looking at the allocation of seats in the legislature it is noticeable that some allowance has been made for ethnic minorities, such as smaller Polynesian islands in the country, but there has been less a tendency to equalise representation among the larger ethnic regions.

The proposal for federal government put forward by the Western Council proved to be one of the most durable and potent ideas in postcolonial politics. It is one of the key ideas around which ethnic rivalry has continued. The idea has been largely opposed by Malaita, and supported by nearly every other province in the country.

### Provincial Government and Decentralisation in the 1980s

The era of provincial government was launched on 1st February 1982, when seven provinces were all formerly established throughout the country on their 'first appointed day'.<sup>43</sup> The number of provinces and their boundaries were the same as had been brought into existence under the last phase of local government reform between 1974 and 1977. Provincial government is modelled closely on the same lines as national government. In each province there is a legislature (Provincial Assembly) and an executive (Provincial Executive) which is responsible for the administration of the province. Provincial executives are accountable to their assemblies in the same way as the National Executive (Cabinet) is accountable to Parliament. The assembly has the power to elect and dismiss the premier. The executive is chosen by the premier from among members of the assembly. Creating places for another 158 salaried politicians, in addition to the 38 at the national level, has greatly extended the arena for political competition.

The transfer of powers and functions from central government to the provinces was not automatic, but depended on the negotiation of devolution orders with the respective provincial ministry. The first devolution order that had to be

negotiated was that providing for the exercise of legislative powers and financial powers set out in the Act. The day on which these powers were taken up was described as the 'second appointed day'.<sup>44</sup> All provinces reached their second appointed days by August 1984. Since then the negotiation of devolution orders has continued, with each province setting its own pace and its own aspirations for the transfer of power. By putting devolution on an individual basis like this, the legislation has provided continued scope for the 'divide and rule' approach used in the colonial past.

Provincial government has provided wide scope for the enhancement of regional identity. New ceremonies have been created marking important steps on the road to provincial status, and these have become opportunities for affirming regionalism through speech-making and cultural display. The most important ceremony now is the annual anniversary of the second appointed day. Provincial executives have used their powers to declare this a public holiday and organize major celebrations at provincial headquarters.<sup>45</sup> Here there are close similarities with the celebrations marking the anniversary of independence which are held every year in the capital, Honiara. Both ceremonies include 'traditional' cultural performances, using the past to try and give legitimacy to the nation and to each region.<sup>46</sup>

The introduction of provincial government immediately increased the size and cost of government generally. It was estimated in 1988 that national and provincial governments together accounted for one-third of the workforce and had operating budgets (excluding investment programs) equivalent to 50 per cent of cash national income.<sup>47</sup> Reliable information on provincial government financial performance has not been available for some years, suggesting that the expansion in size and cost of government has not been accompanied by improved efficiency and accountability.

One of the most important arrangements that is used by central government to try and manage its relations with the provinces is the annual Premiers' Conference.<sup>48</sup> The meeting is not a requirement that is written into the Act. It is organized and financed by central government through the Ministry of Home Affairs. No other form of co-operation or consultation between Premiers has yet emerged. Since these meetings started they have been used by provinces to exert pressure on central government over the pace and terms under which powers and resources have been transferred to them. There have been

frequent complaints about the lack of finance and inadequate staffing. There has also been opposition to the way in which powers are devolved, especially the use of agency agreements. What provinces resented but could not escape was their continuing dependency on central government. This only added to the larger struggle for greater regional autonomy.

By the late 1980s, provincial governments had come to take responsibility for the basic services which are most in demand from village communities: primary and provincial secondary schools, hospitals and clinics, roads, water supplies, agricultural extension, and local government. They were also finding that the funds they received were insufficient to maintain these services let alone expand and improve them as they needed to do. One consequence of this has been a deterioration in services in many provinces including schools closing before the end of the academic year, hospitals and clinics running out of drugs and equipment, agricultural extension staff unable to tour, roads and other infrastructure no longer maintained.

In the face of these difficulties and a national government which from 1985 had steadily increasing external and domestic deficits, provinces came under constant pressure to generate more of their own revenue.<sup>49</sup> Among other things that has meant most provinces forming their own business arms, such as the Isabel Development Authority, the Makira Economic Development Authority, Malaita Shipping Company, and the Western Province Investment Secretariat. These business arms are now involved in managing plantations, running shipping services, and a range of other commercial activities. This activity took a new turn in 1989 when provincial governments started entering into large loans with the backing of national government. Western Province borrowed \$3.5 million from the National Provident Fund to build a housing estate at the new industrial town of Noro, to provide rented accommodation for employees of Solomon Taiyo Limited, and Guadalcanal Province borrowed \$5 million from a commercial bank to purchase a plantation and property in Honiara.<sup>50</sup> More recently, Malaita Province has made a \$3.5 million loan from the National Provident Fund for the purchase of a passenger ship. The political fighting that took place in this case shows the leverage which provinces have with central government in their attempts to play a bigger economic role. Originally the National Provident Fund Board refused this loan application. This led

to the Directors being removed and replaced with a Board that then approved the loan.<sup>51</sup>

The main area in which provinces are constantly reminded of their clientalist relationship with national government is funding. Provinces continued to depend on central government for the greater proportion of their revenue. Between 1980 and 1987 grants (mostly from central government) comprised 75 to 83 per cent of total provincial government revenue.<sup>52</sup> The rest was raised by provincial governments themselves through various rates, licences, fees and services.

The money received from central government comes in the form of grants. The number of grants has slowly increased since 1977, so that by 1988 there were ten different grants altogether.<sup>53</sup> These included a Fixed Service Grant to cover those services devolved under devolution orders, a Revenue Sharing Grant paid out of fish exports, a Productive Resource Grant based on export production within each province and representing ten per cent of income from the total gross exports produced by provinces, and a number of tied grants covering services such as education, road maintenance and health.

Provincial governments are always seeking to increase their grants. Apart from this, what has been particularly contentious about funding has been the criteria used to determine the relative size of grants. Ever since local government came under a separate ministry in 1974, population has been one of the main factors used to determine distribution of funds. This was a continual reminder of the difference in size of each council/province. As regions gained more power and responsibility this came to be opposed, especially by the smaller provinces.<sup>54</sup> There were attempts to use other criteria but they had limited success and population still represented the main principle used. The matter was taken up by the Kausimae Committee. They felt that there should be more encouragement for what provinces were able to achieve in production, especially in the extraction of natural resources. There was the idea that grants should be seen as incentives rather than handouts.<sup>55</sup> This idea has come up frequently in the debates over decentralisation and came to represent one of the points used by those arguing for more regional autonomy. The history of provincial grants shows that central government did start to make a move in this direction in 1978 with the introduction of derivation grants based on the principle of returning revenue to those provinces in which it was derived.<sup>56</sup> This was at the time of the Western breakaway movement and was a

response to that. Since then there has always been some funding allocated on this principle. In 1988 it was the Productive Resource Grant. This has gone some way to appeasing those provinces in which export production is highest, especially Guadalcanal, Western and Central Provinces but it has not stopped their demands. The issue is still used by certain political parties (the People's Alliance Party and more recently the Group for National Unity and Reconciliation), and by certain politicians (Solomon Mamaloni) as an election issue. Given that in all areas of export production there are large differences between provinces in the volumes produced, if funding should take this path, it will only increase existing inequalities and the divisiveness associated with it.

In the four years between 1989 and 1993 when Mamaloni was in power, there were further changes in provincial funding. These changes were not directed at improving the financial position of provinces and their services (although that was given some attention), so much as attempting to do something about what was argued as a shortage of capital in rural areas. What this meant in reality is that the number of hand-outs was increased, there was an attempt to distribute them more widely, and this inevitably added to the particularistic and personalised nature of provincial funding. However ineffectual and inadequate this has been for the further development of the provinces and for meeting their real needs, as a continuation of the clientalism started under provincial government it was a political winner. Contesting the 1993 election as the Solomon Islands Group for National Unity and Reconciliation, members of the Mamaloni Government won an unprecedented number of seats for a sitting government in the election, and only missed returning to power by one vote in the election for prime minister.

The Mamaloni Government set up the Provincial Government Funding System as the main vehicle for injecting private capital into the provinces. It was intended that this would also work in conjunction with external financing such as aid and loans. One set of grants described as Small Community and Provinces Special Assistance (SICOPSA) were channelled directly (on a population basis) to Area Councils with a smaller proportion going to Provincial Governments. Another source of funds has been the Provincial Development Unit which gets its funds from bilateral aid donors. Since 1988 it has been channelling its funds specifically towards community-based 'income generating projects'. A

third source of funds which came to prominence during this period was a special constituency discretionary fund made available to national parliamentarians for use in their electorates. Between 1992 and 1993 (during the lead-up to the 1993 election) the value of this fund was increased from \$27,000 to \$100,000.

Eversince decentralisation became a major issue in the 1970s it has been closely linked to ideas about development. Starting with the moves that were made to introduce local government reform, and continuing thereafter in the demands that were made for greater regional autonomy, we see the argument being put forward that decentralisation would help to promote rural development. Originally the idea was that by strengthening local government, giving it more power and resources, this would increase participation in development, and bring the economic growth necessary for national economic self-sufficiency.<sup>57</sup> As demands for greater regional autonomy increased it came to be argued that provincial governments should be allowed to 'run their own economic development' and make themselves independent of central government.<sup>58</sup> Mamaloni continued to push this argument through the 1980s in association with his support for federal or state government. Speaking in Parliament in 1985 in the course of moving a motion for a constitutional review he said:

It is time that provincial governments be given the rights to control their own resources, land, forests and seas. It is now time to pay back to provinces what is due to them in terms of produce and commodity derivations. In other words provinces have been supporting the central bureaucracy for many many years with some very nonsense expenses. Now is a turn of the central government to give back what is due to the provinces. Sir, let us give (to) provinces, let the provincial government generate more revenues directly for themselves, so they can be invested for their people.<sup>59</sup>

Similar arguments to this can be traced back to the 1970s. It is significant that these arguments have been put forward over a period when there has been increasing emphasis on the exploitation of natural resources, especially timber and fish.

One of the issues here is sharing of the benefits from these resources, with Mamaloni arguing that more of the revenue from them should be going to provinces, and ultimately the 'owners' of the resources.<sup>60</sup> The extraction of these resources has depended on foreign investors and they have got most of the benefits so far, to the disadvantage of national and provincial government, and resource owners. The record of commercial logging since the early 1980s has shown this more starkly than anything else. After 1977, when forestry legislation was amended to allow logging companies to negotiate directly for the acquisition of timber rights with private owners, there was a marked increase in the number of foreign logging companies working in the Solomons and in the volume of output. Despite the continuation of licensing procedures supervised by the Ministry of Natural Resources, that expansion coincided with decentralisation and did not have the controls and protection needed to ensure that government and landowners alike got a fair deal from logging companies.<sup>61</sup>

There could now be a similar situation unfolding in the Solomon Island tuna industry: In the last three years, three provinces have entered into joint venture fishing agreements with companies from the Philippines and Singapore.<sup>62</sup> The last two agreements have drawn strong criticism from the Forum Fisheries Agency. The details of one of these agreements between Choiseul Province and Marrisco (PTE) Ltd., of Singapore, which has seen the formation of Luru Marrisco Ltd, shows a deal in which all the advantages go to the joint venture partner. The company has been given a maximum catch quota of 15,000 metric tonnes per annum for 15 years, with the right to renew for another 15 years. The royalty paid to the province represents an estimated 0.05 per cent of the value of the catch.<sup>63</sup>

In relation to this kind of economic activity provinces are being encouraged to regard themselves as sovereign states with the power to do whatever they like with the resources they have within their boundaries. In the case of deep sea fishing, it seems likely that boundary disputes will develop between provinces as more of these joint ventures are established.<sup>64</sup>

One of the main arguments for devolution of power from central government to the provinces

has been that it would bring government closer to the people and in that way improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of government overall. This has not happened. Instead, provincial capitals have become mini-Honiaras, and provinces have become mini versions of the larger nation, replicating on a smaller scale the same kind of inequality and uneven development that is found nationally. Provincial government might have brought some modifications to the highly centralised government system that existed under colonialism but it has not escaped the same problems of centralisation and elitism at the provincial level.

At the time of local government reforms, when larger regional units were being created by amalgamation, the colonial administration created a third tier of government immediately below the level of district councils. This three level structure has been maintained ever since. There were changes in the name given to third level units each time local government was reformed and changes in their responsibilities and functions. This level of organization in government, is the same level at which cultural and linguistic differences are recognized, and one of the factors which has made government at this level important historically has been the need to recognize the kind of role these differences play in local communities and in local economies. A case in point is customary land tenure. Between 85 and 90 per cent of land in Solomon Islands is still under customary tenure and more than 80 per cent of the population still live on customary land. The rules and conventions relating to land, and patterns of ownership and usage, all vary from one local district to the next. Any matter affecting customary land, has to be resolved at the local level. This has been one of the responsibilities that has been dealt with by Area Councils.

The third level of government has always been the most neglected and ignored. When provincial government was introduced, the third level became known as local government. The Kausimae Committee had recommended that the powers and functions of local governments be set by an Act of Parliament. Under the Provincial Government Act 1981 provision is made for the transfer of all powers relating to local government to provincial assemblies. Since provincial government was introduced there has been a noticeable difference between provinces in the support that has been given to local government. In some provinces their situation has worsened to the point where Area Councils have sometimes

broken down completely. The main problem has been lack of staff and lack of adequate funding. Area Councils are expected to raise some of their own revenue through local taxes and fees but that has not been very successful.

By neglecting local government and allowing uneven development to worsen, provinces have had trouble in maintaining unity and preventing threats of separatism from within their boundaries. There has always been a risk that the accommodations and compromises that were made when local council amalgamation first took place, would not hold and there would be renewed claims for separate political status from sub-regional groups. This has happened under the provincial government system, and has led to the formation of two new provinces as a result. The island of Choiseul gained provincial status in 1990 through separating from Western Province, and Rennell and Bellona gained provincial status at the beginning of 1993 after separating from Central Province. One province which has not split up yet but which has faced threats of separatism from within is Malaita. There are long-standing divisions within this province which have been worsened by big differences in the level of development throughout the island. There have been several protests by different sub-regional groups against the authority of the province and threats of separation.<sup>65</sup>

There has been one attempt to abolish provincial government and to replace it with a structure based on Area Councils. This arose out of a review of the provincial government system which was set up by the Kenilorea Government in 1986. The Minister responsible for the review was the Minister for Home Affairs and Provincial Government, Andrew Nori, a politician representing the West 'Are'are electorate of Malaita. Nori first entered parliament in 1985 after winning a by-election. He entered parliament as a member of the People's Alliance Party (PAP) which at the time was the main opposition party in parliament. Nori left PAP soon after and formed his own party, the Nationalists' Front for Progress (NFP). By then he was an outspoken critic of provincial government arguing for its abolition. The review committee reported in 1987 but Nori did not release the report. Instead he appointed a new in-house committee to examine its recommendations. This led to the preparation of the *Provincial Government Review White Paper* in which the main recommendation was that the system of provincial government established under the Provincial Government Act 1981, be abolished.<sup>66</sup> It was proposed instead that Area



Councils should be upgraded and called Area Assemblies, and that they become the second tier of government with legislative and policy making powers, and responsibility for services in their area.

The Provincial Government Review White Paper was tabled in the National Parliament and debated but that was as far as this attempt to abolish provincial government reached.<sup>67</sup> The proposal was put to a meeting of provincial premiers in August, 1988. Only two provinces expressed a clear opinion about it. Western Province opposed it, Malaita Province supported it. Two provinces were not represented at the meeting, and the rest did not come out with a clear preference.<sup>68</sup> Another major problem for Nori was that the Constitutional Review Committee, which had been set up in 1987, also submitted its report in 1988 with two recommendations quite different from his own. One was a detailed proposal for federal government in which provinces would become states with much more autonomy than provided for them under the provincial government system. The other recommendation proposed a continuation of the unitary state and the provincial system.

The defeat of the Alebua Government in the February 1989 general election and the return to power of Mamaloni and the People's Alliance Party brought an end to threats against provincial government and put decentralisation back on the agenda. Throughout the 1980s, national politics was dominated by two main parties, the Solomon Islands United Party led by Kenilorea and Alebua, and the People's Alliance Party led by Solomon Mamaloni. The United Party stood for strong central government much in keeping with the colonial state. It was committed to national planning, and central control of all major policy decisions. The Alliance Party, on the other hand, was a firm advocate of decentralisation. It was not content with provincial government but pushed for the introduction of federal or state government. The election results of 1980, 1984 and 1989, show both parties running very close in 1980 and 1984, and then the Alliance Party clearly in front by 1989. The United Party was reduced to four seats in 1989 and only two in the 1993 election. Its demise might be seen as a final break with the colonial order.

After ten years of provincial government, support for decentralisation is still as strong as ever. Factors which gave rise to this at independence are still relevant today. The postcolonial state has remained weak and fragile;

regionalism continues to be much stronger than nationalism. One issue which has not diminished is demand for federal government. This has the support of at least two political parties (PAP and the Solomon Islands Labour Party), and some provinces. It was widely expected that there would be a move in that direction after the 1989 general election. The People's Alliance Party, which won the election outright, had pledged during the election campaign that it would act on the recommendations of the Constitutional Review Committee within 12 months of the election if it came to power. Once in office Mamaloni failed to meet that promise. It was explained in late 1989 that the poor state of the economy prevented them from going ahead at that time. This was a major backdown for Mamaloni after campaigning for constitutional change for nearly ten years.

In 1990, under the threat of a motion of no confidence from the party on his style of leadership, Mamaloni resigned from PAP and formed a new government. This was a major development in Solomon Island politics as it was the first time, since independence, that government comprised a personal coalition rather than a party coalition. In putting himself outside party influence or control, Mamaloni only continued a trend which had been apparent for some time of relying on strong personal rule. There was a lot of other evidence for this during his last four years in office, including his unconventional style of economic management, his approach to foreign affairs, control of the public service, control of the media and, in particular, his handling of the Bougainville crisis and the support that was given to the Bougainville secessionists in the Solomons.

Mamaloni has been able to build his influence through his support for decentralisation, and by playing a leading role in the implementation of provincial government and the fight for greater regional autonomy. Under his influence the postcolonial state has come to represent more of a neo-patrimonial state.<sup>69</sup> The problem with this is that there has not been any improvement in government overall, only the reverse. So the state is no closer to the kind of legitimacy required for stability and unity in the future.

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46. This has been analysed at the national level in relation to the celebrations that were held for the tenth anniversary of independence by LiPuma and Meltzoff, 'Ceremonies of independence and public culture in the Solomon Islands', *Public Culture* 3 (1990), 77 - 92.
47. Hughes 'Climbing the down escalator', 4.
48. Ralph R. Premdas and Jeff S. Steeves *Decentralisation and Political Change in Melanesia: Papua New Guinea, The Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu* (Suva, 1984), 111-119.
49. Solomon Star 18/11/83, 3; Government Monthly 31/1/85,2; Government Monthly 31/8/85, 3; Solomon Nius 13/3/86,7-8; Solomon Nius 19/2/87, 6; The Nius 30/5/89,8-10,11; Solomon Nius 30/7/91, 6; Solomon Nius 30/9/92, 4.
50. Central Bank of Solomon Islands, *Annual Report 1989* (Honiara, 1990), 35.
51. Central Bank of Solomon Islands *Annual Report 1992* (Honiara, 1993), 47.
52. Statistics Office *Provincial Statistics Statistical Bulletin 15/87* (Honiara, 1987), 44.
53. Solomon Nius 15 April, 1988, 6-7.
54. Larmour 'Solomon Islands', 91-92.
55. *Ibid.*, 91.
56. *Ibid.*, 88.
57. Ministry of Home Affairs *The Development of Local Government, Plan of Operations 1974-1977* (Honiara, 1973), 8-10; See also *National Development Plan 1975-1979*, Vol 1 (Honiara, 1975), 12.
58. Solomon Mamaloni 'Politics of rural development' in Stephen Oxenham (ed.) *The Road Out. Rural Development in Solomon Islands* (Suva and Honiara, 1981), 82.
59. National Parliament of Solomon Islands *Hansard* 20 August - 6 September 1985, 54.
60. Mamaloni came to the view that this was one of the main issues underlying the Bougainville crisis. See his letter to Manus Premier, Stephen Pokawin, *Post Courier* 5 November, 1992,11.
61. Maev O'Collins 'Forest logging in the Solomon Islands: economic necessity as the overriding issue?', in Stephen Henningham and R.J. May (eds.) *Resources, Development and Politics in the Pacific Islands* (Bathurst, 1992), 145-161.
62. Solomon Nius 18/9/90, 8; Solomon Nius 30/7/91, 6; *Bisnis Nius* December 92/January 93, 4-5; Solomon Star 18/12/92 1-2; Solomon Star 8/1/93, 2.
63. *Bisnis Nius* December 92/January 93, 4-5.

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64. Accusations of poaching were made by an Ontong Java businessman (and election candidate) against Luru Marrisco Ltd during the 1993 election campaign.

65. See Solomon Islands Government Monthly Magazine 31 December, 1982, 4; Solomon Star 29/10/82, 4; Solomon Nius 27/5/88, 1-3;

66. Solomon Islands, Ministry of Home Affairs and Provincial Government *Provincial Government Review White Paper*, (Honiara, 1988), 15.

67. National Parliament of Solomon Islands, Hansard 15 June - 1 July, 1988.

68. Solomon Star 26 August, 1988, 8-9.

69. Clapham *Third World Politics*, 48; Sandbrook *The Politics of Africa's Economic Stagnation*, 88-89.



# Health Care in *Gware* - Did We Miss the Omens?

*Ian Maddocks*

Around the time I left Papua in 1974, I wrote a paper entitled 'Medicine and Colonialism',<sup>1</sup> using episodes in the colonial history of Papua New Guinea to suggest that health care was as much an instrument of colonial control as any other Australian initiative. I cited, for example, the venereal disease campaigns of the early 1900s, when medical assistants left no lap-lap unturned in their endeavours to locate the unsightly condition granuloma inguinale, and incarcerated sufferers in 'Lock Hospitals'; I noted the intrusive imperatives of malaria control, the insistence by itinerant patrols on hospitalisation for sickness, the efforts to deter the people of Hanuabada burying their the dead in the traditional beach location by cutting off the village water supply.

In this paper I have sought to examine our efforts at medical training, and how they fitted into that model. We, who established and taught in the Papuan Medical College when it was the leading tertiary institution in the country, and who staffed the first Faculty of Medicine within the University, thought we were sensitive to the real health needs of the country, and we tried in our curriculum to make a medical graduate who was different. Paradoxically, the graduates, it now appears, strove to be like us. There was a cognitive dissonance operating here.

We brought, or in our earnest discussions we evolved, a vision of health care for Papua New Guinea: one in which many rurally-based graduates concentrated on disease prevention and health promotion, supervised effective measures of disease control, and provided frugal but effective curative care for common diseases. This was a planned and centrally-controlled health system, very different from what we knew in Australia, where health care had grown of itself, higgledy-piggledy. We recognised the diversity of Papua New Guinea, but we saw it as a whole, and the network of young Australians scattered across its folded face, united in the adventurism of this exotic and rapidly changing situation, made it seem manageable, even tidy. The first editorial I wrote for the *Papua New Guinean Medical Journal* in 1965 was entitled 'The Search for a National Character',<sup>2</sup> and health care was going to contribute to that.

I have scanned documents which accompanied me on my somewhat regretful return to Australia in 1974; regretful because, like many Australians who shared experience in PNG with

me, I had enjoyed my time immensely, had become used to accepting responsibility and authority far greater than I could reasonably have achieved in Australia, had become known in medicine in Australia for what I was doing and was told I was doing good.

The documents include my personal correspondence for the period 1969-1972, the minutes of the Faculty Board of the Papuan Medical College and Faculty of Medicine from 1965 to 1970, the transcripts of papers delivered at Annual Symposia of the Medical Society in 1969, 1973 and 1974, Annual Reports of the Department of Public Health for 1971-72 and 1973-4, the Second Papua New Guinea Health plan 1986-1990, and issues of the *Papua New Guinea Medical Journal* up to 1980. This is a highly selective set of references; it happened to be all I could find in the boxes lined along the top of my bookshelves at home. So I am an imposter at a meeting of distinguished historians; my message is personal, intuitive and inadequately researched, and my material is colonial rather than post-colonial.

'Gware' is a Motu word for an omen, an event which offers a warning or a premonition. I have set out to ask whether in this material and in my memories from that time there were signs which we, who were the last generation of colonialists, might have discerned and taken warning from, signs that our assumptions were misplaced, our idealism uncritical, our optimism unjustified.

Because, clearly, things did not work out as we planned:

## 1. Student Numbers

The Papuan Medical College was founded in 1960 with encouragement from Drs. John Gunther and Roy Scragg, and under the leadership of Eric Wright, a man greatly influenced by Walter Strong when Wright was a medical assistant in pre-war Papua, and keen to show the same confidence in medical training for natives as Strong had shown in his initiative of sending young Papuans to Sydney for medical training in the early 1930s. In an editorial in the *Papua New Guinea Medical Journal* in 1960,<sup>3</sup> Wright envisaged the need for 50 medical graduates per year, and a teaching hospital complex in Port Moresby of 1,000 beds. He concluded: 'Nobody can say what the economic or political

future of the Territory will be, but we should not underestimate the ability of the people to adjust to change and, at least, we cannot be accused of regarding third-class standards as being good enough'.

In its beginnings, the Papuan Medical College was the most prestigious educational institution in the country; almost the only government institution to pretend to the status of tertiary education.

Numerous projections of the future output of medical graduates were made during the 1960s and 1970s. Figures 1 and 2 are estimates from 1965<sup>4</sup> and 1966,<sup>5</sup> compared with the actual annual graduations from the Papuan Medical College and Faculty of Medicine.

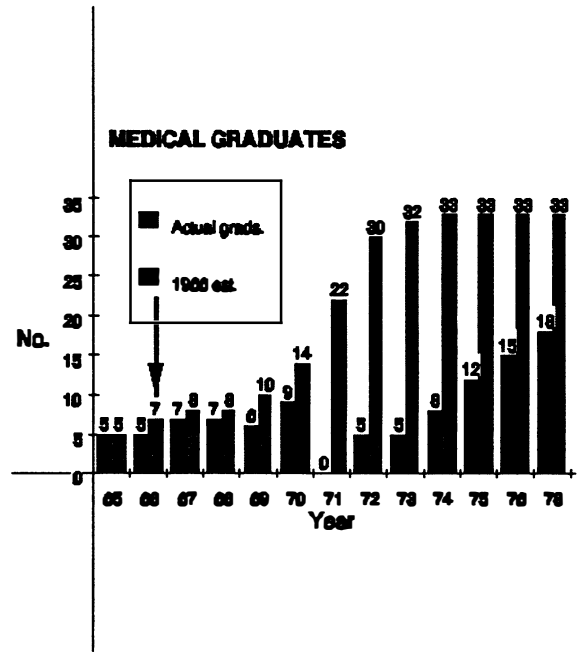


Figure 2. 1966 Estimates of annual graduates compared with actual

A chart illustrating cumulative totals of graduates over the same period shows an increasing divergence of actual and expected national medical manpower.<sup>6</sup>

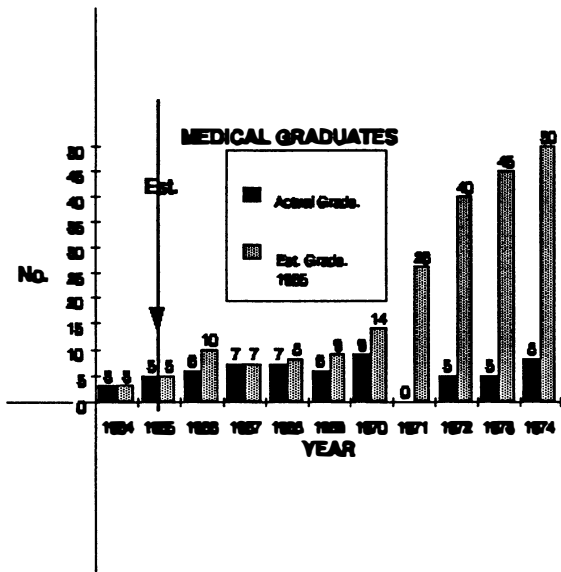


Figure 1: 1965 Estimates of annual graduates compared with actual

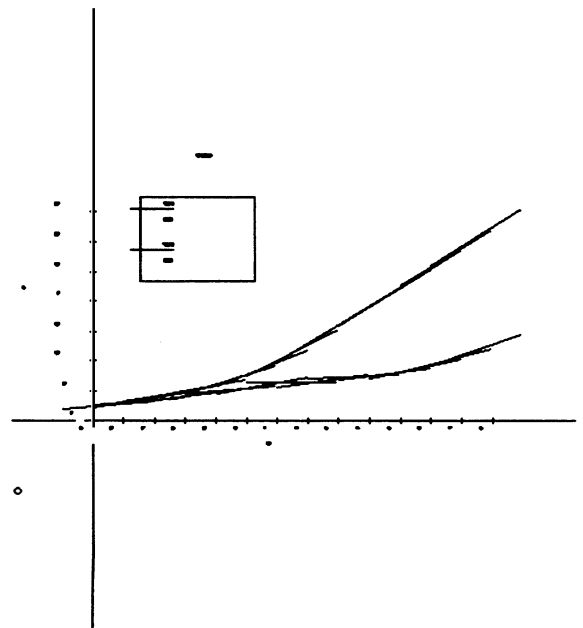


Figure 3. Cumulative Totals for actual and expected graduates in medicine

Predicting the future was a favourite fantasy indulged in by all of us through the 1960s. One needed to be very bold to foresee a rate of change anything like what eventuated. About 1956, Gunther, then Director of Public Health, wrote a document in which he predicted the appointment of the first Papua New Guinean Director of Public Health in 1984 (which, as those whose memories go back to Orwellian times will recall, appeared to carry a particular eschatological significance). This was kept under lock and key, marked 'Confidential, never to leave this office'. In the manner of things in those relaxed times, I came across it on a shelf in Konedobu and held it in my own office for some years, so radical and exciting did it seem at the time. Gunther did not predict a time for independence, nor, if I recall the document correctly, did he envisage the establishment of the University in any way comparable with what actually occurred. But at a time when most Australians in New Guinea were predicting that Australian leadership would be required well into the next century, Gunther was clearly ahead of his time.

The reasons for the failure to reach the target number, some 30-35 graduates per year, seemed to lie partly in disappointing recruitment of national students into medicine, and partly to a formidable drop-out rate.

#### a) Recruitment

In 1966, it was anticipated that by 1968 there would be 25 students/year entering the course, and by 1970, 30 students entering preliminary year, with some additional students coming into the first year program. By 1976, hopes were expressed for a cohort of 40 students entering second year from the University. Neither of those predictions were achieved. In the 1960s, the Medical College conducted its own recruitment campaigns, and used a film about medical training which several staff took to show at distant high schools to attract students into medicine. However, the University, which graduated its first students in August 1970, appears to have exercised significant competition. In the first few years it was difficult to fill quotas in either institution, and there was a status attaching to the Waigani University campus which

weighed against the attraction of the medical course.

Visiting Mission high schools, I discerned staff encouragement for students to take up the healing work of Jesus, but relatively few achieved the necessary grades, and for those who did the attraction was mainly travel to Port Moresby and obtain a degree, a magic passport to status.

High-school students may have been impressed by the fact that it took seven years to emerge from the health training system, whereas a University degree took only three years. Certainly, when I spoke to high-school students they asked about this difference, and while I hoped that the long course might be interpreted as indicating higher status, they more often may have seen that the medical course was harder to pass. Professor Isi Kevau has suggested to me that the knowledge that several of the first graduates from the University were rapidly accelerated into positions of influence, and became closely associated with Government Ministers, wielding political influence, did not go unnoticed by those applying for a tertiary education. Further, it was known that doctors were posted to rural areas after graduation, and the riots of the early 70s did not reassure students that it would be good to work in a strange part of the country. There were few entrants into medicine from the highlands and few highlands graduates in the 1970s.

A number of overseas students passed through the course in those early years, and successful applications were received from Tonga, New Hebrides, Solomon Islands, Micronesia, Africa and Australia, with others from Iran, Hong Kong failing to be effected. It was felt that overseas students assisted in maintaining academic standards, and allowed classes to be of reasonable size. But most of these graduates left Papua New Guinea either immediately on graduation or after completing a period of resident training, and did not become available to the National Health Plan. Even by 1978, we had achieved relatively few highlands graduates.



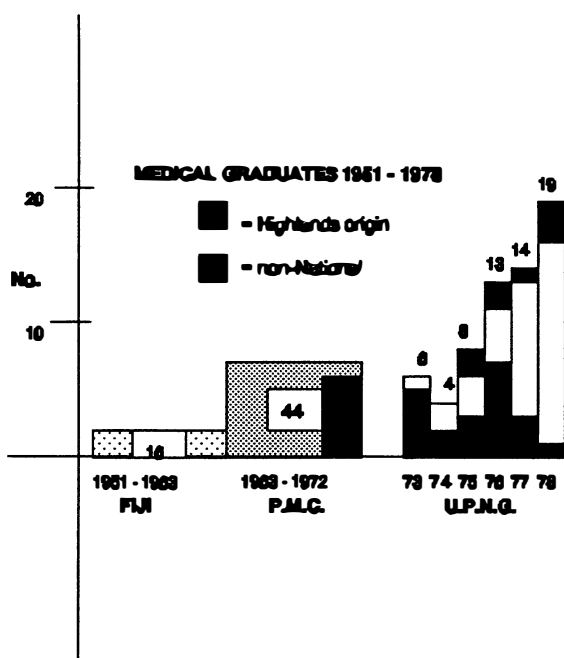
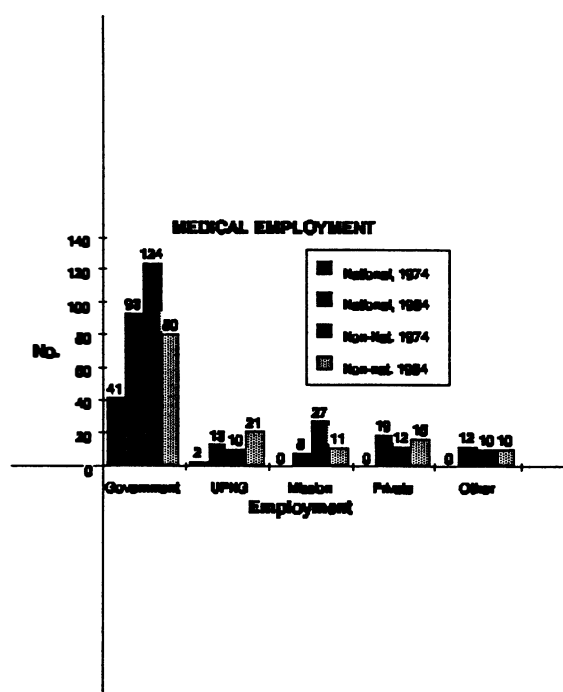


Figure 4. Origins of Medical Graduates, 1951 - 1978<sup>7</sup>



b) Geographical Distribution of Graduates

b) Failure Rates

These were impressive. In 1966, the Faculty heard that in first year 10 students had passed, one had been awarded a supp. and nine had been failed. It was thought that they might be considered for entry to the University in another Faculty. In spite of this, the forward projections that year assumed almost no drop-out.

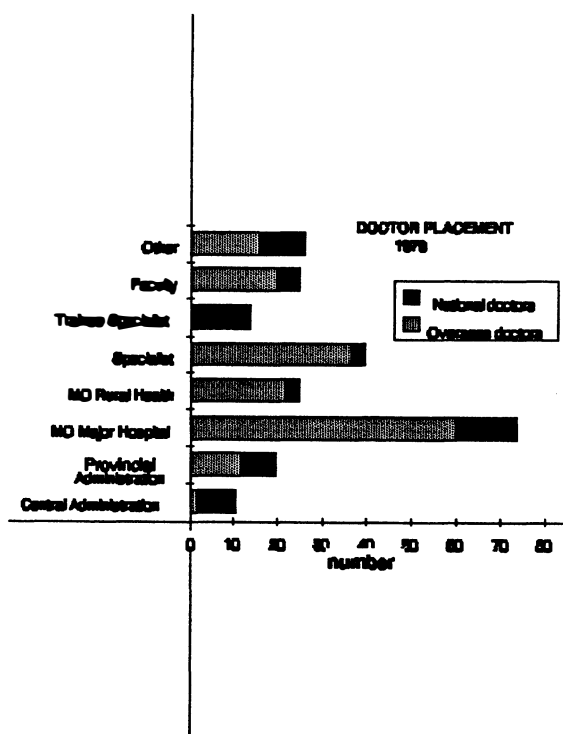
2. Career on Graduation

a) Public or Private

Figure 3 shows the estimated numbers of doctors in various areas of employment in the two years 1974 and 1984.<sup>8</sup>

In 1974 there were a total of 43 local graduates post-residency training, in 1984, 145. Of these, 19 had moved away from government employment into private practice, 13 to the University, eight to missions, and 12 to some other employment, e.g. army, red cross, or non-medical work. Only 64 of all the possible graduates were available for government work, a far cry from the 400-500 anticipated back in 1966.

Figure 5 shows where doctors were deployed in 1979.<sup>9</sup> Only a tiny proportion were working in rural situations, in spite of the many firm commitments of the Faculty at the time of its formation that it would not resemble Africa or other former colonies, but would insist on preparing graduates for preventive and health promotion activity in rural areas. The most remarkable finding, harking back to Gunther's 1950s plan, was the predominance of local graduates in headquarters and administration posts, and the significant number who had entered specialist training.



I suggest that two factors were at work here:

- a) a bewildering speed of localisation of administrative positions, forced by the retirement of expatriate officers from the Australian administration around the time of independence and by a persuasive ideology that this was an essential component of that change.
- b) an innovative post-graduate program, the Master of Medicine, which involved application for a registrar post in Port Moresby (this allowed training plus assessment for later opportunity), a period of placement overseas in a specialist training post, and an examination, written and clinical, conducted in Port Moresby with the assistance of external examiners from the relevant discipline.
- c) **Specialist or generalist**

In 1966, it was proposed to the Faculty Board of the Papuan Medical College that a local Diploma in Anaesthetics be established to allow recognition of the experience and ability of Dr. Himson Mulas, a graduate of the Fiji School of Medicine then working in anaesthetics in Port Moresby.<sup>10</sup> Mulas could not sit for

an Australian Diploma because he did not have a registrable primary qualification. Discussion concluded that a post-graduate diploma awarded by the Medical College would have no outside recognition and would only lead to further frustration.

By 1973, however, a local Master of Medicine qualification had been approved by the University, and this became the pathway for entry into specialist status in PNG. There is little doubt that the Master's program, with its invitation to time in Port Moresby, experience overseas and the promise of specialist status at the end, has been particularly attractive to graduates. For 1994, I am told, there are 10 applications for 3 registrar posts in Medicine in Port Moresby.<sup>11</sup> It has been instrumental in developing a teaching Faculty in Medicine which is entirely local, and must be regarded as highly competent; it has equipped the provincial hospitals with recognised national specialists in all the major clinical disciplines, while freeing them from the need to undertake overseas specialist examinations which are notoriously and deliberately difficult, and of marginal relevance to practice in Papua New Guinea.

There have been opportunities for students to undertake Master of Medicine training in public health and preventive medicine, but these disciplines have failed to attract students in the same way as have the clinical disciplines. In vain have idealistic teachers and specialists from overseas or from centres outside Port Moresby preached the priority of preventive and rural medicine, as they had did throughout the 1960s.

### 3. The Medical Curriculum

The aim of the medical curriculum, from the beginnings of the Papuan Medical College, was to equip students for practice in rural areas. Initially, graduates were to be AMO's (Assistant Medical Officers) or AMPs (Assistant Medical Practitioners) with authority over districts and responsibility for administration of preventive and public health campaigns. The fact that this stated intention was not being achieved in the placement and practice of graduates was a constant source of frustration to many expatriate observers. It was seen as essential

to give students a sufficiently prolonged and intensive experience in rural areas to make them both confident and effective there. In 1967 it was proposed that second year students spend a period of two months in rural training, studying district geography, history, anthropometry, sociology and physiology. The fourth year period of training (some two months at Saiho in the Northern District of Papua) was to be transferred to Kainantu in the Eastern Highlands, and be of six month's duration, and this would require at least two additional full-time staff, plus staff housing, offices and a laboratory, accommodation for 30 students and three long-wheel based landrovers, capital cost at least \$120,000.<sup>12</sup>

In that year, Professor Macdonald, Consultant in Child Health reported to the Faculty:

I agreed with the lecturers in Surgery and Obstetrics that it was essential for certain fundamentals of these two subjects to be taught along with appropriate practical experience related to the requirements of a medical diplomate in remote parts of the Territory. There is no reason why this cannot be done in a rural setting provided that the staff is available. . . I formed the opinion that because of time-tabling and logistic reasons a six month period in a rural training centre solved many problems.

Richard Lovell, Professor of Medicine in Melbourne wrote:

My impression is that their short time living in strange villages in 4th year during their rural training helps them greatly. Some acknowledged that this is initially a frightening experience . . . I would judge that this rural practice experience is admirable as a means of inculcating self-confidence.

In the time of the Papuan Medical College, an emphasis on community medicine and public health

may have been more effective than it later became within the University. In 1969, I wrote:

The spread of behavioural science teaching through four years of the medical course, the community health practice experience for senior students, the two-year intern program prior to registration are all well-established. Further, being a small closely-knit unit, the Faculty have remained flexible and agreed changes at all levels of the course proceed year by year. Most impressive, perhaps, is the interest and involvement which all staff have demonstrated in making their teaching appropriate to the work which graduates will be called upon to do, and the involvement of nearly all teaching staff in the community health teaching program.<sup>13</sup>

In later years, however, that optimistic appraisal seemed to have been replaced.

Frank Shann, for example, a highlands-based paediatrician, in 1979, at a seminar on Medical Training:

Somehow medical students have to be convinced of the central role of public health - its challenge, its importance. At present the prestige lies with clinical medicine.<sup>14</sup>

Michael Alpers (Director of the Institute of Medical Research) also:

My greatest concern is that we will continue as we are now, with new ideas bobbing up here and there, being tried out and evaluated or not, as the case may be, and with voices from the bush and the provinces occasionally being heard in outbursts of anger and frustration, but with very little change from the centre.<sup>15</sup>

Professor Gordon Cook on the other hand, a clinician, was defensive and hostile to itinerant preachers of prevention:

I regard 'medical tourists' to be here to do a job and not indulge in idealistic and farcical debates; their feet must be firmly on the ground, and they must realise that doctors *cannot* be trained in rural areas.<sup>16</sup>

In the end, while the postgraduate training produced many excellent clinicians, those who espoused preventive medicine were more often the failures from the clinical courses; students did not wish to emulate them, students did not demand rural experience but rather resented it taking them away from the clinical work, staff were difficult to recruit for rural teaching, vision and money for support of rural programs was lacking, and in recent years rural experience has been limited to a trip of just two-three weeks.

Were there signs which we might have discerned?

1. We expected too much of our students.

There was scant recognition of such factors as personal problems, isolation from family supports, and family pressures arising from traditional expectations. The Medical College seemed to us to have its own very intimate family atmosphere, with time set apart in June for the staff-student sports day, the participation of several staff in the College Aussie rules team, the yearly 'Island Night' revue, to which staff and students contributed skits and songs. The problem of dropping-out was not unique to the medical course. All students on the Boroko campus - medical students, medical assistants and male nurses - were tightly packed in four-to-a-room bedrooms in the back wing of accommodation which also housed the female nurses, and the nurse drop-out rate was very high also. To meet this problem the Mission representatives proposed to build a chapel between the two blocks.<sup>17</sup> A minute of the 51st meeting of the Faculty Board records: 'The Dean said that he did not feel that marriage by students during the course was a good thing, and that by providing accommodation this would encourage students to marry.'

Australian consultants usually were generous in their assessments. Professor Blackburn, I recall, gave a pass to Amelia Homba in her final viva in 1964, even though Amelia, in a state of severe shock, was unable to speak a word over the course of twenty minutes. Fortunately she had, at my suggestion, written down her findings on the case, and was able to mutely push the pages across the table to him. Howard Eddy, consultant in surgery in 1966, noted an 'outstanding' performance from Adrians Dedda, in a final surgical examination 'conducted in an exactly similar manner to that in Melbourne in adhering strictly to time, and in the extent and depth of the subject matter discussed and the assessment of results.'<sup>18</sup> (4)

In all the projections it was assumed that once a student had achieved third year there would be an eventual graduation of that student, so opportunity to repeat a year was often allowed. Numerous students whose subsequent careers revealed surprising inadequacies in knowledge and practice were allowed to repeat almost every year of the course. Occasionally other opportunity in business or administration was preferred to fronting up once again with the prospect of failure. It must have been hard being so different, singled out from many others to climb through a long series of educational barriers and taxing experiences. Not all retained their poise or sanity. Adrians, he who was outstanding in his final surgery examination, soon afterwards demonstrated evidence of schizophrenia, responded poorly to treatment and was sent back to West Papua, where some years earlier the Indonesians had shot his brother.

The first students in Medicine had certainly had very uneven preparations. Ilomo Batton, a confident Napoleonic figure dominating the student body in the early 1960s, and later a vigorous public proponent of 'Paradesia' as the best name for an independent nation, did not attend school until he was 12 years old. This may have explained some interesting gaps in Ilomo's knowledge and several recognisable idiosyncrasies: in his final paper he ordered the investigation of electro-convulsive cardiograph, and later, at a provincial hospital was reported to have ordered intravenous milk.

Even Isi Kevau, now Dean of Medicine and the only Papuan Fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, was schooled in Motu by an LMS pastor for the first four years of school, a less than rigorous preparation for later academic life, and characterised by authoritarian discipline and rote learning from the blackboard not

much different from what his uncle Tau Legu recalled from the 1930s: 'A badina, a maragina: B badina b maragina' (Big A, little A etc). It was quite uncommon for a student to enjoy reading outside of set texts, and comprehension was poor.

## 2. We preached rather than practised.

We promoted rural practice, but of course we did not demonstrate it. Like staff everywhere in teaching hospitals who have never left the teaching hospital but who prepare the next generation of general practitioners, we proposed hypothetical situations for student response: 'This patient comes to you at Green River . . . ' Trips to rural areas were, for us, exciting diversions, opportunities to collect publishable data and photographs to bemuse the folks at home. For young graduates a rural placement more often meant isolation, awesome responsibility, and very little professional support.

One of the consultants to the Medical College, when discussing rural training in 1966, reported that the students told him they had felt themselves regarded by the villagers as superior people, 'they treated us like Europeans'.

Robert Black, Professor of Tropical Medicine in Sydney, noted in 1965 the use of the word *primitive* by students in referring to rural populations: 'I noted some attitudes of the medical students which should be kept in mind. They appear to have seized upon the word *primitive* in anthropology, and apply it in a depreciatory way to their fellow-countrymen. . . it is an indication of the amount of social distance which develops between the medical students and the general population . . and this distance may become so great that they are unable to function in the community because they are only comfortable in the hospital environment.'<sup>19</sup>

This was not a warning we could readily hear. It was the sort of thing which we knew had happened in Africa, but Papua New Guinea was going to be different. Yet our students were very aware of, and concerned for, their status in world terms. In 1969 I suggested that there be no final examination, explaining that the students had been through such an extraordinary and progressive selection process since high school that they must surely be fit to graduate. There was a very sharp reaction from the students; I was clearly trying to depict their course as inferior, second-rate. Everyone knew that Australian schools had final examinations, so we must have them too. The various aspects of the course in which there was innovation for which we were applauded in

Australia were constantly under pressure from within the students body to conform to their ideas of what was a 'proper' course.

In reviewing the vigorous arguments which we mounted in the late 1960s to advocate University faculty status for the Medical College it is interesting that two arguments were going on simultaneously, one directed at maintaining the highest professional standards, and the other at ensuring maximal relevance and commitment to preventive medicine and community and rural health. We saw no conflict here; our students clearly did.

## 3. Did we teach Medical Ethics?

I have the program for the 1969 graduation; six students graduated, one from West New Guinea, one from the Solomons, four from Papua New Guinea. Prizes were awarded, his Honour the Administrator presented these and an address, and the students joined in reciting the Declaration of Geneva, the latter day Hippocratic Oath. It includes the pledge: 'I will not permit consideration of religion, nationality, party politics or social standing to intervene between my duty and my patient', but it contains no direct prohibition of sexual contact with a patient.

As far as I can recall, ethics was not taught as a formal course in the Medical College nor in the Faculty. I do remember inviting Dr. Tony Tonakie to speak with a class about his experience in general practice in Port Moresby, suggesting that perhaps one day some graduates of the College would take up general practice (little did we know). Tony described his work from different perspectives completing his account with: 'Then there's ethics. Ethics is easy: leave the sheilas alone and don't rubbish your mates. That's all you need to know about ethics'.

When, therefore, a patient complained that one of our most senior and respected graduates had invited her to his room, and he was charged with a misdemeanour, his defence was that no one had ever told him it was wrong. We could find no indication that this had ever been spelt out. A report of the Medical Board for 1968 states that a registered medical practitioner was found guilty of professional misconduct in having had sexual intercourse with a married female patient in his hospital office and he was suspended for three months.<sup>20</sup> A report for 1969 charges that a medical practitioner took a female patient from the hospital and had sexual intercourse with her. He was asked to pay a fine of one hundred dollars.<sup>21</sup>

I think that we assumed that the dedication which was apparent in the staff of the institution, their commitment to teaching and to good medical practice, even their commitment to Papua New Guinea's future, would somehow be transmitted and absorbed into the life of the graduates without being written down. So we did not speak out about abuse of narcotic drugs, about sexual relations with patients, about stealing or selling government supplies. We strove to give a good example.

#### 4. One Country?

We saw Papua New Guinea as one country, but clearly our students did not. Perhaps we should not have been surprised by the reluctance of doctors to be posted outside their home districts. A young man living beside us in Pari village (just outside of Port Moresby) was posted in 1973 to a small school near Kainantu. He was back in three weeks. 'It was terrible', he said. The pupils knew nothing; their fathers stood around the classroom with bows and arrows and I was not allowed to punish their children; and at night the girls kept coming to my house asking to come in, saying they wanted to marry me. They were covered in pig grease, they were horrible'. A more telling message may have come from the murder of Dr. Luke Rovin near Goroka following a vehicle accident in 1972. Today, Dr. Kevau tells me, leading Papuans summoned to meetings in the Highlands do not stay around for the festivities; they head for home as soon as possible.

We did not anticipate, of course, the establishment of the provincial governments and the decentralised health bureaucracy which exaggerated the loss of focus and central control which we had assumed. I am told that one of the consequences of this has been an opportunity for provincial leaders to recruit medical staff themselves from overseas, often without good advice. There was a warning of this in the early seventies, when Dr. Toua went to Manila, and selected some 17 Filipino doctors to build up staff numbers in Papua New Guinea. They were almost all unsuited and ill-prepared for the work they faced, and most survived only briefly.

#### 5. Private Practice

We did not anticipate the rush of graduates into private practice. What was its attraction? Money was important, since the increasing fees charged by the international schools in the major centres required considerably higher incomes than those

available in the government. Avoidance of arbitrary re-location may also have been a factor, since that would also interfere with children's education, and might cause frank apprehension for family safety. Some who went into private practice had failed in government service (eg. had made dismal attempts at a Master's examination) and faced re-location to rural work; some are said to have avoided active disciplinary action for misdemeanours by resigning from the service.

It was well known that in Africa health staff made money on the side, selling their services in the hospital, stealing drugs to sell outside the hospital. We felt that Papua New Guinea had a stronger mission influence, and that the example of selfless practice which we demonstrated would prevail. But we might have seen a message in the examples of careful exchange so common in Papua New Guinea. I remember asking a physiology class to recruit some children around the wards or among the staff families who lived on site at the hospital, and make some measurements on them. Few were able to produce results; only the redoubtable Ilomo, who admitted that he had paid the children to cooperate.

Then there was the famous graduation feast on the occasion of the award of the first University degrees in medicine. Isi Kevau, the only national graduate in a class of five, was to make the speech on behalf of the graduands, and it seemed proper to invite his village, Pari, to provide entertainment at the ceremony, which was an important occasion graced by Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam and by all the Vice-Chancellors of Australia. Following the ceremony, supper was served in the adjacent refectory, but when the distinguished guests entered they found Pari village had arrived first; the men lined up at the bar imbibing spirits with speed and enthusiasm, the women moving down the tables shifting haunches of pork, plates of vegetables and fruit into their *kiapas* (string bags). Very soon the boards were bare. One bemused Vice-Chancellor sighted a plate of biscuits and cheese emerging from the kitchen and headed hopefully towards it; only to see a broad-hipped Papuan woman cut across his path, and sweep the contents skilfully straight into her *kiapa*.

It is, of course, customary to feed the group who has danced for you, and the string 'doggy bag' is the order of the day. From the point of view of Pari village, the University's generosity was exceptional, but expected. We might have realised that exchanges involving health

care could not expect to be entirely free from such expectations.

## 6. Personality or Science?

Much of the success for which we early medical teachers were congratulated sprang from our cohesion: a common background, a shared spirit of adventure and a shared vision of breaking new ground. We were all Australians, many of us had worked in other parts of the Territory and we shared a commitment to the development of the country as a whole; we were friends, we shared many social as well as work occasions.

But perhaps that small closely-knit faculty was counter-productive in that it inhibited opportunity for students to capture a vision of the broader dimensions of medicine and science. They often seemed passive participants in the exercise, waiting to be told, seeking to please when they could. This is suggested by the study shared with faculty staff in 1967 by Professor of Education, Ernest Roe, who offered several examples of difficulties in concept among high school students. One I remember clearly was an excuse for late attendance: 'The bus missed me'.<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps our students worked for us, rather than for careers which they could only dimly perceive. They did not study to attain knowledge, or to participate in the great brotherhood of medicine. They accepted our paternalism as part of the deal. Morris Wainetti, in an open student forum, complained rather ruefully that when a student delegation came to meet me, as Dean, with firm ideas for change, they usually left with completely different ideas, swayed by my persuasive argument.

In the village, I treated persons with tuberculosis. The regimen demanded attendance three times a week over many months to receive painful injections. In most instances, attendance was regular, but I formed the impression that the patients came because they knew that if they did not I might be cross with them, and anger was recognised as leading to bad luck and ill-health.

The students watched us carefully, and knew us well. In the short history I prepared concerning Pari Village,<sup>23</sup> I referred to the memories among the older men of the pre-war times, when the administration of central Papua was similarly intimate and effected through known personalities. W.R. Humphries, for example, Resident Magistrate, was remembered as 'Misi Umpress'; he spoke Motu fluently, with a definite 'l' for that sound in Motu which lies between 'l'

and 'r' - so they liked to mimic him and his vigorous Motuan oaths. The 'Gavana', Hubert Murray, would sometimes ride his horse to Pari in the late afternoon, occasionally dismounting to talk with the constable or councillors, but usually staying on his horse, and handing down a stick or two of tobacco, then, as he spurred away, reaching into a saddle-bag to throw small fragments of tobacco or sweets into the air for the people to jump for - 'Moale herea!' (great fun). The villagers kept cheerful memories of this benevolent paternalism, and perhaps there is similar nostalgia for the first close-knit Faculty.

## Conclusion

The health transition in Papua New Guinea continues. The diseases which indigenous graduates are treating in the towns are less often malaria and diarrhoeal disease, and more often, especially among the politicians and senior public servants, the diseases of affluence and obesity - diabetes, hypertension, coronary artery disease, gout. Those whom we thought to train for rural practice, specialising in tropical diseases and public health, are well versed in these diseases through their urban training and their overseas secondments.

Perhaps we did not get it so wrong after all?

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# Continuities and Discontinuities in Papua New Guinea Agriculture

*Scott MacWilliam*

Agriculture in Papua New Guinea seems to have changed little since Independence in 1975. The major export crops remain coffee, cocoa, palm oil and copra. Only in copra has there been a substantial reduction in export tonnages. For coffee, cocoa and palm oil, there have been important increases, although in each case quantities exported have fluctuated considerably around a rising trend line. All four crops are produced principally for export, with domestic consumption small.

While it is harder to make precise statements about aggregate levels of crops produced for local consumption, whether after being marketed or not, the impression remains that there continues to be increases in amounts as well as in the adoption of higher yielding and more readily marketed varieties. The absence of substantial nation-wide data collection undoubtedly makes such a claim difficult to substantiate but equally hard to rebut.

For any assessment of the Australian colonial presence, the continued vitality of agriculture in PNG may provide considerable satisfaction to anyone anxious for positive indicators of that heritage. Of course, the same statistics and situation can also be used to argue that production could and should be even better, if only the colonial power and its officials had behaved differently. The literature arguing the latter case has explained the unsatisfactory condition by the absence of a development plan, racism, neglect and the powerful position of the European settler large farmers who supposedly gained preferential treatment to the detriment of indigenous (ie. smallholding) farmers. The settlers have had their own defenders, who use a form of 'trickle-down economics' to propose that indigenous small farmers benefited by the largeholder introduction of crops not previously cultivated.

The concern here is not to pursue directly the question of whether Australian colonialism benefited agriculture, or whether since 1975 PNG has made the most of that legacy or battled against it. Instead I will try to show the limits of focussing principally on Independence as the point of division. It will be argued that the continuities, already established in the first ten years after World War II, remain more substantial than the discontinuities that arose from the political-legal

changes of the late 1960s and 1970s. The current decade, however, contains the possibility of a comprehensive break.

A serious weakness of many studies of PNG is that the country is rarely given a satisfactory location in global changes. In the case of agriculture, I have in mind how a specific type of agricultural production, based upon households attached to smallholdings, became and remained central to the idea of development which has informed state practices throughout the twentieth century. The fact that most agricultural produce comes from smallholdings in a large number of countries is intimately connected to the spread, since the late nineteenth century, of a particular idea of development.<sup>1</sup> PNG is one of a number of locations where the idea of development and state practices, informed by the idea have been joined to secure the predominance of smallholder agriculture.

The principal element of the idea of development was that state power could be constructed and directed to reduce the threat to social order posed by the advance of capitalism. Deleterious effects arising out of the development of capitalism, in particular its tendency to produce disorder in the form of unemployment and poverty, could be contained and social order maintained by state action to re-attach labour separated from the means of production by the anarchy of capitalist competition. In some locations, including colonial Victoria in Australia and Quebec in Canada, this meant state schemes for expanding manufacturing to soak up pools of unemployed workers. In primarily rural countries, particularly the colonies of the British Empire, state action was designed to check in advance the separation of labour from the means of production by giving primacy to smallholder agriculture.

In recent research in the Australian Archives, I have been struck by the very close connection between the colonial welfare plans and policies of British governments, during and after World War II, and Australian officials' thinking about post-war PNG. The central element of the connection is the mutual regard for this particular idea of development.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the late colonial period the primacy of smallholder agriculture continued as a principal element of development plans. Even the nuclear estate ventures, for oil palm especially,

which became important in the last decade of colonial rule, sought to extend household family labour processes through forms of centralised coordination and supervision applied to resettled smallholders. In the autobiography of Australia's long-serving Minister for Territories, Paul Hasluck, as much as in the 1960s plans of international agencies, such as the World Bank, development was closely associated with increased export and domestic food crop production by households. The stated purposes of such a form of development were twofold: the first, to raise living standards, including improved nutrition, health and education. The second object was to secure the continued attachment of labour to land. The principal purpose of joining households to smallholdings was to block the formation of a landless, particularly urban, proletariat invariably seen by authorities as the principal threat to social order.<sup>3</sup>

Although important elements of the earlier idea of development have been under challenge in post-colonial PNG, as discussed below, nevertheless the primacy of smallholder agriculture has remained at the forefront of state plans. Two instances, a decade apart, will suffice to make the point although it would be possible to add many more from official reports, whether of international agencies such as the World Bank, or domestic state branches. In 1983, Primary Industry Minister Denis Young made a ministerial statement which represented his own views, and those of key advisers. That statement proclaimed a preference for future expansion to take place in the smallholder form, and for barriers to be strengthened against further growth in largeholdings.<sup>4</sup> More recently Prime Minister Paias Wingti repeated his well-known belief in the need to strengthen 'village life' through state supported growth in smallholdings.<sup>5</sup> Mr Wingti specifically coupled an enlarged flow of state revenues directed toward rural households with the battle against the breakdown of social order.

In contemporary PNG, there is no doubt about the predominance of smallholding agriculture. Whether the smallholders are described as subsistence farmers, petty commodity producers or a semi-proletariat, in all of the major export and domestically consumed crops households produce most of the annual output.

Even in the downturn of the late 1980s-early 1990s, when both large and small holdings have reduced outputs, the smallholder predominance continues. In the case of coffee, the largest agricultural export crop, smallholders produced between 72 and 78 per cent of total

output in peak as well as trough years.<sup>6</sup> There is a similar predominance of the total produced by smallholders in cocoa and copra. In palm oil and sugar output figures are kept confidential precluding definitive statements about the respective proportions produced on large and small holdings. However, sugar is largely a plantation crop, grown by Ramu Sugar, but the position with palm oil is especially difficult to ascertain. When there is a very small amount of largeholding production aimed at domestic food markets, and when smallholders produce large quantities of non-marketed crops, the predominance of the latter is even greater than what simply pointing to the characteristics of export crop production would suggest.

It is important to recognise that this predominance was not established as a consequence of greater attention being paid to smallholder agriculture by the post-colonial state, at the direction of indigenous politicians forced to respond by the weight of rural voters. The primacy of smallholders was imbedded in state plans, and the practices of colonial officials, at least since the end of World War II. While the relative importance of PNG-located and Australian-based personnel, as well as the role of internationally generated policies, is as yet poorly understood, the outcome is not in doubt.

If the proposition, of the centrality of indigenous agriculture for colonial state practices and policies, is at all controversial it is partly because of the lingering misconception of the place of largeholdings, including those owned by the settlers who established estates from the late 1940s. Certainly this misconception informs many of the accounts constructed from the late 1960s until the mid-1980s, by settler protagonists as well as their critics. In brief, the preeminence of settlers and international plantation-operating firms has been confused with the predominance of households.

This is not simply an empirical matter, of correctly identifying the moment when smallholder production of a particular crop began to exceed output from largeholdings. (In the case of coffee, cocoa and copra, the moments are the 1963/64, 1978/79 and 1979/80 crop years respectively.) Nor is it defined by other empirical questions, such as the greater land area utilised by householders growing these crops, or the relative numbers of workers employed cultivating plants and harvesting bushes in the two production forms. The significant point is instead that PNG was one location where a specific idea of development drove a state sponsored scheme of smallholder

agriculture. Post-World War II state power was constructed to secure expanded household production.

The scheme was comprehensive, involving the erection of barriers against other forms of commercial and industrial capital, as well as the provision of a range of state services intended to increase the capacity to labour of households in occupation of smallholdings. Marketing authorities overseeing producer prices restrained any tendency of trading firms to impoverish smallholders,<sup>7</sup> and accelerate the separation of households from land.<sup>8</sup> Whether the services were medical, educational or communications (roads, bridges, air and sea), their principal objects were informed by the idea of development discussed above.

It is necessary to deal here with one objection to the description that a state sponsored scheme of smallholder production was predominant during the late colonial period. The objection is that the smallholder expansion occurred in spite of state neglect, even opposition.<sup>9</sup> Certainly there are important instances where indigenous growers spontaneously adopted crops, and did so at a rate which left state officials scrambling to provide extension services and other facilities. The mid-1940s smallholder adoption of coffee in the Eastern Highlands<sup>10</sup> turned out to be a forerunner of the very rapid spread of bush plantings from the mid-1950s into neighbouring Chimbu and Western Highlands. While administration officials tried to keep control of the explosion in plantings, reports indicate that often households acted beyond the direction of agricultural extension and other officers. There also were moments when, and locations where, state officials discouraged the planting of crops, including in the 1960s coffee in the Highlands, but households continued to extend coffee holdings.

However in the case of coffee, and also the very rapid adoption of cocoa from the early to mid-1950s by households on the Gazelle Peninsula, spontaneity never transcended the limits of the state scheme, nor its purpose, to advance accumulation (of capital). Households did not produce either crop in order to increase consumption levels of non-marketed produce, but to raise living standards through commodity production and consumption.

Where households increased production against declining and/or rapidly fluctuating international prices, the colonial state searched for ways to cushion producers from the full effect of reductions or variations. The Coffee Marketing Board (CMB), for instance, was established after the 1950s coffee boom had subsided and there was

a danger that low prices would discourage smallholders from growing a crop which had been so recently adopted. The colonial administration, and the Australian Government, supported the adoption of a preferential tariff for imports of PNG coffee into Australia in order to maintain prices to growers. Because the measures also assisted settler growers should not be allowed to conceal that the adoption of the tariff coincided with smallholder output exceeding that from largeholdings. With settlers constrained from planting more bushes, and the household plantings yet to reach a peak—either in area or output—the tariff, and the other activities of the CMB, were principally driven by the need to secure smallholdings against international pressures to further lower prices.

Subsequently the CMB adopted a policy of reducing the number of settler companies that exported coffee from largeholdings, and gave priority in quotas to the firms that endeavoured to increase the amount of coffee sold to countries other than Australia. This policy was made necessary because PNG production rapidly exceeded the amount consumed in the metropolitan country. If the policy of reducing the numbers of trading firms in the domestic market appears, from the intellectual fashions of the last decade, to be a restriction of competition as well as antithetical to individual and national advance, its purpose nevertheless is intelligible in the context of the prevailing scheme of smallholder agriculture. Enlarging the international consumption of the crop which had become integral to the living standards of a large proportion of Highland households conformed with the contemporary development of capitalism and the creation of social order through the state.

It is important to recognise to what extent the post-colonial independent state adopted measures, including agricultural price stabilization schemes, to link national objectives with the established primacy of smallholder agriculture. As international markets entered a period of rapid price fluctuations and then longer-term decline, from the mid- to late-1970s until the present, state officials have been forced to deal with the possible effects of the changes on smallholder output.<sup>11</sup> The fact that the output had become central to not only the living standards of many households but also to the health of the national accounts ensured that for most of the post-colonial period domestic opposition could be over-ridden. As well, when conditions such as coffee rust primarily threatened smallholders, specific immediate measures were adopted to ensure that household predominance was

not undercut.<sup>12</sup>

However in the 1980s and early 1990s, important international and domestic, economic and political, changes have acted upon the scheme of smallholder agriculture. These changes, which give increasing urgency to the policies and practices of state officials in contemporary PNG, have the potential to either dismantle the previously established scheme or force a very substantial reformulation of it.

The fundamental tension between the anarchy of capitalist competition and social order is widely recognised in political thought, including that described as liberal. As already suggested, dealing with the tension played an important part in the formation of the idea of development, which inserted a major role for the state. At particular moments over the last two hundred years, specific conditions in the development of capitalism have forced the tension to the fore, including periods when large numbers of unemployed emerged and private property faced threats from the propertyless. Whether the location is PNG, Australia or anywhere else on the globe, such a period is occurring once again. The important question is why the renewed appearance of the tension has taken the forms it does in contemporary PNG.

The short answer is not the most commonly given responses, such as the lingering legacy of colonial neglect or a return to pre-colonial barbarism.<sup>13</sup> It is that specific features of the contemporary development of capitalism are in the process of dismantling the previously established form in which social order was constructed through the late and post-colonial state. The central element of that form has been the scheme of smallholder agriculture, which is under increasing strain.

The strains have emerged from a number of principal sources. The first is the breakdown of a series of international arrangements, which underpinned the expanded production and consumption of PNG's major agricultural exports. Probably the most prominent of the arrangements to collapse was the International Coffee Agreement (ICA). The 1989 suspension of the ICA, framed since the early 1960s to deal with a condition of permanent global overproduction quite different to the more limited forms of supply exceeding demand which previously had appeared, has been associated with real prices not experienced by growers, at least since the 1930s. A similar point could be made for commodity markets in the other major export crops.

Attempting to maintain prices to growers through various forms of state support has collided with the second source of strain, the drive by nearly all post-Independence governments to reduce expenditures. Whether one locates the source of the drive internationally, in what has been termed the 'fiscal crisis of the state' and the global ascendancy of neo-liberalism, or domestically, PNG governments have acted in line with the prevailing wisdom. (By at least one account, they have done so more successfully than most.<sup>14</sup>) The drive not only has led to continuing attacks against various forms of price stabilisation/support, but also to moves to reduce expenditures on health, education and transportation. When price supports as well as these expenditures have been central to the scheme of smallholder agriculture, reduction diminishes state practices that were important for both elements of the idea of development.

The third source of strain has been the growing economic and political ascendancy of the indigenous capitalist class, Papua New Guineans who accumulate through the ownership and control of the means of production and exchange.<sup>15</sup> The class's presence initially was felt in the takeover of many of the largeholdings and commercial operations previously owned by the settlers and international firms. Since the late 1970s there has been a continuing push to extend the class's activities, including into the expanding areas of mining, logging and manufacturing. As has been pointed out,<sup>16</sup> in the case of PNG the international fashion of privatization of state agencies effectively refers to what has been termed nationalization, that is indigenisation. State financial agencies, including the Investment Corporation, have sold off their holdings to local businesses, while the commercial and other operations of national and provincial governments have been moved into the hands of private owners and operators.

The indigenous push also has extended to efforts to remove the barriers placed in the way of domestic capital (ie. settler and indigenous) by the late colonial administration. Independence brought a greatly increased measure of political power to the local, primarily indigenous, capitalist class, power which has been exercised to try to enlarge the land area occupied by largeholdings and in other ways undercut the smallholder predominance. There has been a continuing tussle over funds advanced by international agencies through PNG state branches, including the Development Bank/Agbank. The tussle centres on whether the funds are to increase household production or fuel concentrated largeholding land ownership. In

marketing authorities, where the colonial state acted to hold domestic and international capitals at bay, the tide has been turned by reforms which 'free up the market', that is enable trading capitals to operate less encumbered by a range of restrictions.<sup>17</sup>

However the international price reductions, as well as specific domestic conditions, including the revolt on Bougainville, also have acted against largeholding operations. State coordinated cuts in wages, for both rural and urban workers, have been joined with increasing lawlessness. In East New Britain and the Highlands, security constitutes a major component of the cost of operating largeholdings. In the North Solomons, only a settlement of what commenced as a revolt at one mine site will show how many plantations have been carved up by local households as a means of extending their ownership of land and export crop plantings. The major downturn of the current period has weakened considerably the largeholding section of local capital.

This weakening is of considerable importance for PNG politics, for the relative strengths of sections of indigenous capital are being rearranged. As economic power shifted to the capitalists who engage in the more profitable areas, including mining, the earlier political ascendancy of the owners of largeholdings and export crop trading firms has been challenged. Whether representatives of the latter can arrange a compromise which would maintain some political power for the agricultural bourgeoisie while recognising the economic superiority of the former remains to be seen.

What is not yet clear is whether the growing importance of mining will further undermine the predominance of smallholder agriculture or provide the basis of reconstructing the scheme. The usual and commonsensical argument is that mining is detrimental to agriculture, since it keeps the price of the currency high and reduces any international price advantage which would accrue to producers of export crops produced under lower domestic costs of production. However, as the previously cited position of Prime Minister Wingti suggests,<sup>18</sup> there is a view that a considerable portion of the substantially increased state revenues extracted from the mining boom can be used to reinforce smallholding agriculture. If this occurs, it will involve a reassertion of one element of the idea of development, of creating social order through the state, over another. In as much as Wingti is the inheritor of traditions from the past, his emphasis upon rebuilding 'village life'

through revitalized state practices places him firmly in the same lineage as many Australian officials, including Hasluck.

The odds, however, currently are against state power being arranged to support the direction advocated by the prime minister. Without a major international boom for the agricultural commodities PNG currently exports, or a heavily state directed and supported move into the production of other crops, reform of the earlier scheme will be constrained. Further land redistribution, as one element of reform, without either price increases for existing crops or the widespread adoption of new crops would only result in further impoverishment as households found production from smallholdings an inadequate basis for purchasing commodities previously inserted into domestic consumption. Increased state action also would require ditching of the current fashion, that markets operating unencumbered by state restrictions instead ensure a more rapid development of capitalism. This form of development, runs the contemporary argument, constitutes the desired form of social order. It seems likely that the present fragmented revolt of the dispossessed will have to take a more systematic form, in PNG as well as in other countries, before ditching will occur.

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# Socio-Economic Performance in Post-Colonial Papua New Guinea

*Desh Gupta*

There is the issue of when the colonial phase ended and the post-colonial era began. Though PNG gained independence in mid-September 1975, the colonial period effectively ended and the post-colonial phase began when Michael Somare became Chief Minister following the 1972 elections. Even though Canberra had the final say, until independence decisions by the Somare government during the self-government period were never substantially challenged.

The exceedingly small share of productive assets and incomes for Papua New Guineans during the sixties led the then Somare-led government to emphasise redistribution rather than growth. Essentially the aim here was to redistribute assets and income from non-nationals (mainly Australians) to nationals. This paper demonstrates that Papua New Guinea has been fairly successful in this respect. But despite having been bequeathed (by nature) an extremely rich natural resource base, PNG's economic growth has been sluggish and the changes in its economic structure have been relatively small. Part of the reason for PNG's poor economic performance is tied up with the need to wind-back the high budgetary aid overhang with which it was saddled at self-government. PNG has continued its steady march towards fiscal self-reliance. The restraint in economic growth imposed by the restraint on government expenditure and certain structural characteristics of the PNG economy, have impacted in turn on the slow improvements in the health and education indicators.

At independence PNG was also bequeathed a high cost-structure (Baldwin Report, 1978) and an expensive bureaucracy of around 50,000. It inherited a wage and salary structure and terms and conditions of employment (of a short working year) which were suitable for a high income Australia, but were totally out of kilter with a low income and low productivity economy that PNG has. PNG's high cost structure has meant that despite a high outlay on education of 6% to 7% of GDP, the dent in illiteracy in the post-colonial period has been relatively small.

Foreign ownership (excluding non-monetary and small holder agriculture) was probably at the end of the sixties around 90% of the total, with Australian ownership in most sectors exceeding 70% of the total (National Investment Development Authority, *Notification Census*,

December 1974). Since then, there has been a dilution of foreign ownership in a number of sectors:

- (i) small-scale transport has passed almost wholly into the hands of nationals - this has been achieved through the licensing policy, restricting foreign entry into this sector;
- (ii) Air Niugini has been wholly nationalised; in the colonial period, Qantas, Australian Airlines and Ansett Airlines shared in its ownership;
- (iii) Burns Philp and Steamships, two out of the three large trading companies operating in PNG (the third being Carpenters) have had a steady dilution in foreign ownership. The PNG Investment Corporation and the Superannuation Board have bought shares in them. Nationals have made inroads in retail trading through increased access to funds and training and the share of the 'big three' has fallen, probably to around 9% of the total retail trade.
- (iv) Burns Philp has withdrawn from estate agriculture, where it was quite a significant player in the colonial period. In cash cropping, there has been an increase in the share of small holder production. The combination of these two developments has increased the share of agricultural production going to nationals.
- (v) The establishment of the government-owned PNG Shipping Corporation as well as Niugini Insurance has reduced somewhat the hold in shipping and insurance of foreign operators.
- (vi) The more significant developments have been in the banking industry. The Australian-owned Commonwealth Bank was passed to PNG ownership under the name of the PNG Banking Corporation. Other commercial banks have also made available their shares to the PNG public. The Bank of South Pacific (a subsidiary of the National Australia Bank) was in 1993 sold to a Church-based group in PNG.
- (vii) The financial sector has responded to the aspirations of nationals to acquire an increasing proportion of the assets located



in the country. Steadily through the credit guarantee scheme, under which the PNG State assumed eighty percent of the risk of lending to Papua New Guinea businesses and through a steady shift - by moral suasion - in the volume of commercial bank lending to nationals, the proportion of assets owned by Papua New Guineans has been increased. From a situation in the early seventies when some 10% of the commercial bank lending was allocated to nationals, by 1990, around 60% of such lending was made available to them.

- (viii) At self-government, there was only one major mine operated by BCL at Panguna in the North Solomon's. The PNG Government had 20% of its equity. The PNG Government has somewhat larger equity holding in Kutubu Oil (22.5%) and from 1993 in Porgera gold (25%), and in OK Tedi gold/copper (30%) but 20% in Misima gold and silver. But such equity holding has required large-scale finance from the multi-national banks. Therefore, in the mining sector since most of the revenue generated during the production phase ends up in loan and interest payments to the banks, equity ownership on its own inadequately determines foreign ownership and control.
- (ix) Dependence on foreign labour has declined with increased output from the educational institutions within PNG and through technical aid, mostly from Australia, but also from New Zealand and USA. All the key line departments, including in the Bank of PNG, have been localised. In 1971 the non-indigenous population was 54,526 while in 1990 it had dropped to 27,500. PNG continues to remain dependent on foreign technical labour in electricity, telecommunications and in mining.

The sixth of the eight aims proclaimed by the Somare government in 1972 was concerned with meeting government spending needs from locally raised revenue. But PNG at self-government was highly dependent upon foreign (Australian) aid flows. The fiscal self-reliance index i.e. the share of internal revenue in total government expenditure in 1971/72 was 36.4% (Table 3). In the same year real Australian aid flows at (1966/67 prices) were more than A\$111m (Table 2). They peaked in 1973/74 at A\$121m. Through several agreements

between Australia and PNG, such real aid flows have been reduced at an average annual rate of 3% per annum between 1973/74 and 1991. From 1985 following the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between Australia and PNG, there has been a gradual shift to project/program aid (through a 2% per annum increase in the latter). In 1992/93 such aid was A\$46m. and for 1993/94 it is (budgeted) unchanged, but from then on for every year it is planned to increase by \$36.3m. and in 2000/1 to reach A\$300m. The budgetary aid component for 1992/93 was A\$259m. and for 1993/94 it has been budgeted at A\$249m. and from then it is planned to decline every year by A\$35.6m. and by the year 2000/1 it is eliminated totally. These changes to aid arrangements have in turn forced a number of changes on Papua New Guinea. There was a sharp increase in company tax in the early seventies. The Company Tax rate was raised to 25% in the 1971-72 budget; the Dividend Withholding Tax of 15% was introduced in the same budget, while in 1974, the Company Tax Rate was further raised to 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ %. There were similar successive increases in individual income tax rates; sharp increases in excise and import taxes on luxury goods. Export taxes were, also, introduced from 1974-75 onwards. The Bougainville Mining Agreement was renegotiated and the Company became liable to Income Tax in 1974. In 1973-74 tax revenue formed 16.7% of Market Gross Domestic Product, but this ratio jumped to 22% by 1975-76. It stagnated subsequently rising with the upturn in commodity prices, particularly of gold and copper and falling again later. In 1989 following the 1988 rise in copper and gold prices it was estimated at 22.5% of GDP. In 1990 (following the Bougainville crisis of 1989 and the closure of the BCL mine in May 1989) with a recessed economy, it was less than 18% of GDP. The Bougainville (1989 to date) crisis and the revenue imperative explains the speeding up of the push towards further mineral resource exploitation and the renegotiation of the Porgera Agreement under which the PNG government has increased its holding from 10% to 25%. There was much greater bunching of the Misima, Porgera, Hides (Gas) and Kutubu (Petroleum) mines than previously. Similarly, there are pressures on RTZ/Kennocott, the lead company for the Lihir mine (potentially the largest gold mine outside South Africa) to bring the project into the construction/production stages more speedily. Construction is planned to begin towards the end of 1994 and production is to commence at the end of 1996. At the time of writing (early

October 1994) the equity issue was still unclear. Given the security problems around the mine area and the continued operation of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army, the future of the BCL (Panguna) mine is uncertain.

Since the fiscal self-reliance index has continued to improve, it has involved some other adjustments. There has been a reduction in the share of capital expenditure in total government expenditure (see Table 1) and a restraint in government consumption, through a restraint in public sector employment in the period after 1975.

Given constraints on government expenditure, it is not surprising that improvements in social indicators in the post-colonial period have been somewhat slow (Table 12). At the same time the budgetary situation has continued to deteriorate over the 1989-1992 period. The budget deficit as a proportion of GDP rose from 1.2% in 1989 to 5.5% in 1992. It has tended to stabilise over the 1993 and 1994 periods at around 5% of GDP (The Papua New Guinea Handbook Update, Feb. 1994, p.3). The more serious problem is connected to the failure of PNG to utilise concessionary loans; this has meant lost development opportunities and heavier pressures on foreign exchange reserves (*Ibid.* p.6).

Before independence, PNG was a part of the Australian monetary system. Therefore, though independence gave the country the power to determine its own currency and priorities, it also created a balance of payments or foreign exchange problem which was not there before. The question that had to be answered in 1975 was whether or not the balance of payments problem which had emerged with independence could be resolved by kina devaluation. PNG authorities with a highly open economy and an import propensity of around 0.7 and with the Minimum Wages Board deciding on full indexation, felt that devaluation would lead to a price-wage spiral. Since PNG lacked flexible and diversified production structures, import substitution was not expected to follow from a devaluation. It was also expected that low supply elasticities of exports and the rising cost of imported plant and machinery and of consumer goods would mean that exports would not be stimulated. In addition, since the bulk of the wealth holders were foreigners, there was a need to build confidence in the currency. PNG, therefore, went in for a hard kina policy. The kina gained in value against the A\$. From 1976 to 1986 the appreciation of the kina was reflected in the A\$ falling in value from an exchange rate of 1:1 against the kina in 1976 to 1:0.6 by August 1986

(Table 13) For this period and in order to ensure the broad stability of the kina against the major currencies and to ensure the success of the hard kina policy, PNG used fiscal policy to target the balance of current account. This meant that, if there was a tendency for the current account to deteriorate, PNG had to cut Government Expenditure (see Table 4).

This policy came under enormous stress with the onset of the Bougainville crisis in 1989 as the Panguna mine closed and the government suffered substantial losses in revenue and faced an increase in defence and police expenditure. A strategy of bringing into being new mines and of curtailing expenditure was set in place. In addition the appreciation of the kina over the 1987-89 period (see Table 13) was reversed through a 10% devaluation in 1990.

In 1994, the PNG authorities found the hard kina policy under threat through unstable speculation in the context of a fiscal policy which was seen to be lax and which as we have seen above deteriorated over the 1989-92 period. On 12 September 1994, the kina was devalued by 12% and it was floated on 10 October 1994 following which it depreciated by a further 10%. The hard kina policy was only sustainable as long as the expenditure policy was targeted at it. Nevertheless, it is worth observing that despite the September/October 1994 depreciation, the kina's value remains greater than the A\$.

With around 40% of PNG's GDP taken up by Government Expenditure, Government was a leading sector. Given the agreement between the PNG and Australian governments to wind back budgetary aid, the peaking of the real flows from the Panguna (BCL) mine in 1974 and the OK Tedi fiasco (PNG Government faced large outlays for its 20% equity without any dividends for twelve years), it was not surprising that Government expenditure has remained constrained. In turn, it has constrained the growth of GDP (Table 5). Given the rate of increase in population of around 2.3% per annum, per capita income has not changed in the post colonial period.

The constraints faced by Government outlays have in turn limited improvements in health and education. Health and education are notoriously labour-intensive activities and, therefore, for expansion require an increase in government outlay (assuming that real wages and staff:student ratios remain unaltered). Despite such constraints, enrolments in primary schools have increased at around 4% per annum, while those in secondary schools have increased at an even faster

rate (Table 6). Nevertheless enrolment rates in PNG are considerably below those of the average for developing countries as a whole (Table 7). In addition, it is important to distinguish between actual attendance rates and enrolment rates reported by the Education Department. Against the enrolment rate of 60% (reported by the latter), the 1980 census put the actual proportion of students attending primary schools at 38%. Recorded figures may have to be discounted substantially and the dent in illiteracy is likely to be much slower than the current enrolment rate of 70% implies. The adult literacy figures for 1989 are placed at around 47%, up from 32% in 1975 (1992 Budget Papers, Volume 1:1). Nevertheless, one important achievement has been the reduction in inter-provincial and gender educational inequality (Tables 8 and 9). One-fifth of the government budget goes on education (Table 10) and around 6% to 7% of the GDP is expended on education.

The infant mortality rate declined sharply between 1966 and 1980, but has stagnated at that level in the eighties (Table 12). Improvements in life expectancy have, consequently been slow in the eighties (Table 12). One reason is that malaria has been on the increase (*Post-Courier*, August 1993). The Highlanders who until 1950 had little exposure to malaria, had by 1990 around 80% of the population exposed to it. Modern diseases, with changing food habits (coke, lolly water, meat pies, hamburgers and fried foods) are, also, on the rise. Unlike education, the share of the government budget going on health has been cut-back somewhat since 1978 (Table 10).

Average per capita food production is tending to fall and an increase in the rate of population growth will quicken the rate of fall. The drop in average per capita food production is confirmed by an increase in dependence on food imports. The UNDP Food Import Dependency Ratio, which measures the proportion of food imports to total food available for internal distribution, has risen from 19.6 in 1969-71 to 25.5 in 1986-88 (1992 Budget Papers, Volume 1:27); though daily calorie supply per head was reported at 2,236 up from around 2,000 at independence (World Development Report 1991, Table 28).

As Table 11 shows, there has been an increased importance of mining and to some extent of manufacturing during the seventies. But during the eighties the structure of the PNG economy has remained unaltered. Essentially in the cash cropping sector, apart from oil-palm, there has been stagnation in the production of such crops. There is, also, a reduction in food production *per*

*head* in the eighties (Table 12). In the nineties, the expansion of mining, may give some stimulus to manufacturing. In addition, the competitive position of the commercial agriculture and manufacturing sectors has been enhanced somewhat by the September/October 1994 depreciations of the Kina, the 1993 jettisoning of the urban minimum wage and the 1994 freezing of public sector wages. The effects of these developments have still to show through in the data on changes in the structure of production.

PNG's socio-economic performance in the post-colonial period has been severely constrained by a number of factors. At independence, it inherited a high cost-structure and an expensive bureaucracy, which was bolstered by a high level of Australian aid and large revenue flows from the Panguna mine. As real Australian aid flows were wound back and real revenue flows from the BCL mine fell, Government expenditure had to be adjusted. There were cuts in Government investment; options for the use of concessionary aid flows though available were often not utilised. The Government's equity investment in OK Tedi was a drain on government resources. Panguna mine's closure in 1989 cut into government revenue and the Bougainville crisis forced an increase in unproductive government expenditure. Government deficit increased raising the cost of servicing government debt. Government expenditure has, therefore, failed to provide a stimulus to the PNG economy and in turn the sluggish growth of the economy has failed to provide revenue growth and thus enable growth in government expenditure in a virtuous circle. Despite constraints in government expenditure, there has been some, though slow, improvement in educational enrolments and in the socio-economic indicators, including reductions in regional and gender educational inequality.

The Bougainville crisis has led the government to allow a speedier development of new mines. This has kept the relative importance of the mining sector unchanged. It has also led to the jettisoning of an urban wages minimum in 1993 and of the substantial softening of the hard kina policy in 1994.

The share of money income going to Papua New Guineans has substantially increased. There has been an increase in fiscal self-reliance and PNG's dependence on Australian budgetary aid has been substantially reduced. PNG's capacity to absorb project aid remains low, which explains the lack of utilisation of concessionary non-budgetary aid.

**Table 1: Share of Capital Expenditure in Total Government\* - Expenditure**

Fiscal Year	Capital Expenditure as a % of Total Government Expenditure
1950/51	29.6
1954/55	42.4
1956/57	36.9
1959/60	28.6
1962/63	28.9
1965/66	31.7
1967/68	32.7
1970/71	20.6
1971/72	17.2
1972/73	14.6
1973/74	9.9
1974/75	8.8
1975/76	11.0
1976/77	13.0
1978	16.7
1979	15.2
1980	18.4
1981	15.9
1982	16.6
1983	12.8
1984	15.3
1985	6.7
1986	10.9
1987	10.0
1988	10.1
1989	13.9

**Sources:**

Calculated from:

- 1) I. Downs, *The Australian Trusteeship: Papua New Guinea 1945-1975* (Canberra, 1980) Table 9.1
- 2) World Bank (Baldwin Report), *Papua New Guinea: Its Economic Situation and Prospects for Development* (Washington, 1978) Table 6.1
- 3) R. Garnaut, P. Baxter in consultation with A. Kruger, *Exchange Rate and Macroeconomic Policy in Independent Papua New Guinea* (Port Moresby, 1983) Table 7.2
- 4) Department of Finance

\* Definition of capital expenditure varied, therefore, figures may be used only to compare broad trends.

**Table 2: Real Australian Aid Flows to PNG (At 1966/67 Prices)**

Year	Amount at 1966/67 Australian Prices A\$'000	%Increase (+)/ %Decrease (-)
1966/67	84,321	
1967/68	89,321	6.1
1968/69	95,122	6.3
1969/70	106,260	11.7
1970/71	109,627	3.2
1971/72	111,549	1.8
1972/73	111,173	-0.3
1973/74	120,789	8.6
1974/75	98,676	-18.3
1975/76	109,638	11.1
1976/77	102,899	-6.1
1977/78	91,054	-11.5
1978/79	90,984	-0.1
1979/80	82,042	-9.8
1980/81	78,008	-4.9
1981/82	72,908	-6.5
1982/83	71,074	-2.5
1983/84	72,495	2.0
1984/85	71,770	-1.0
1985/86	68,182	-5.0
1986/87	64,773	-5.0
1987/88	55,057	-15.0
1988/89	52,855	-4.0
1989/90	52,536	-1.0
1990/91	49,710	-5.0

- Source:** 1) Up to 1982/83 recalculated from D. Gupta, 'The 1984 Jackson Report, comparative Advantage, the Dutch disease and Fiscal Self-Reliance in Papua New Guinea', *Yag l-Ambu*, 11, 3 (1984) Table 2
- 2) Figures for 1983/84-88/89 calculated from AIDAB's Submission to the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Inquiry into Australia's Relations with Papua New Guinea (August 1989) Table 2
- 3) Figures for the latest years calculated from Australian Government Budget Paper No.4 (1991) Table 3

**Table 3: Fiscal Self-Reliance Index**

Fiscal Year	Fiscal Self-Reliance Index (%)
1967/68	33.4
1970/71	36.2
1971/72	36.4
1972/73	37.2
1973/74	44.4
1974/75	48.0
1975/76	53.5
1976/77	55
1978	59.3
1979	54.7
1980	57.4
1981	58.6
1982	55
1983	52
1984	52
1985	61
1986	63
1987	67
1988	66
1989	69

**Source:**

- 1) World Bank (1978) Table 6.1
- 2) PNG Budget Papers, Vol.2, Economic Policies (1991) Table 1

**Table 4: Exchange Rate and Increase in Real Government Current Expenditure**

Year	Effective Exchange Rate Index#		Real Increase in Govt. Exp.#
	Nominal	Real	%
1971	89	75	
1972	101	86	12
1973	118	104	2
1974	105	103	6
1975	100	100	12
1976	101	103	
1977	97	98	-9
1978	96	96	3
1979	98	98	3
1980	105	102	7
1981	109	105	1
1982	112	105	-5
1983	110	106	-8
1984	112	106	4
1985	107	97	2
1986	107	97	3
1987	108	92	-1
1988	112	91	2
1989	121	95	8
1990	110	90	-5
1991			-6

# Figures have been rounded.

**Source:**

- 1) Exchange rates calculated from IMF and World Bank Data by the author.
- 2) Government current expenditure figures from BaldwinReport (1978), GLM (1985) and PNG Budget paper 1991 and 1992, Garnaut et al (1983).

**Table 5: Average Annual Rates of Growth in Government Expenditure and Gross Domestic Product:**

Period	Average Growth rate in Government Expenditure		Average Growth Rate in GDP	
	Nominal	Real	Nominal	Real
1960/61-1969/70	18.0	16.55	9.5	8.0
1969/70-1980	11.3	2.55	11.95	3.2
1979-1984	6.2	-1.1	5.9	-1.4
1985-1990	4.5	0.4	6.0	1.9

Source: Calculated by the author from various PNG Government sources.

**Table 6: Growth of Educational Enrolments, by Level Papua New Guinea**

	Community Schools	Provincial Sec. Schools	National High Schools	Vocational Centres
1960	92,029	1,947		576
1967	204,509	11,864		3,208
1972	220,193	23,523		5,998
1975	238,267	28,916	846	5,415
1977	258,608	31,486	1,094	4,704
1979	277,301	34,626	1,521	4,299
1981	299,588	37,987	1,631	4,691
1983	322,254	41,702	1,610	5,457
1985	351,171	46,317	1,639	6,843
1987	373,999	49,766	1,648	6,651
1989	407,748	53,494	1,986	6,064
#	(415,974)	(54,161)		
Av. Annual Growth Rate 1975-89(%)	3.9	4.5	6.3	0.8

Notes: Figures without brackets apply to the National Education System. #Figures in brackets are for 1989 and include national students in International and SDA schools.

Source: Department of Education.



**Table 7: Community and Secondary School Enrolment Rates 1975-89**

	Community School (%)	Secondary School (%)
1975	56.4	12.7
1977	56.3	13.3
1979	59.7	13.4
1981	59.9	13.0
1983	60.8	13.6
1985	63.4	14.1
1987	64.7	14.7
1989	67.5	15.1
1990*(A)	65(68.5)	14(15.5)
(B)	99	44

\* (A) PNG figures; figures in brackets are excluding North Solomons Population of relevant school age.

(B) Average Gross Enrolment Rates for Developing Country; figures extracted from UNESCO data.

Source: Calculated using 1980 census, 1990 Preliminary census and Department of Education figures.

**Table 8: Community and High School Enrolment Rates, by Province (including SDA Schools) (%)**

Province	----- Grades 1 - 6 -----			----- Grades 7 - 10 -----		
	1972	1982	1990	1972	1982	1990
Western	68.6	68.6	74.4	14.1	17.1	14.5
Gulf	67.5	70.6	70.5	7.2	14.3	15.5
NCD		82.2	84.5		29.4	32.5
	72.5			16.7		
Central		72.2	74.5		21.3	21.2
Milne Bay	67.6	70.1	70.1	15.8	13.9	12.5
Oro	67.6	64.7	66.7	12.9	12.9	15.5
S. Highlands	35.7	49.4	52.5	3.0	9.3	11.5
E. Highlands	29.9	59.5	59.5	6.6	12.4	16.5
Simbu	52.5	56.4	59.5	6.7	12.4	16.5
W. Highlands		53.8	60.5		11.4	13.5
	33.6			4.8		
Enga		48.2	54.5		8.5	10.3
Morobe	46.1	61.1	63.5	7.8	10.3	12.5
Madang	57.2	55.9	57.3	12.1	10.5	10.9
West Sepik	47.1	64.4	69.2	6.5	12.0	12.0
East Sepik	56.1	65.6	62.5	11.3	10.3	10.7
Manus	89.6	94.2	90.5	27.7	26.1	28.2
New Ireland	90.6	81.8	79.8	19.3	29.9	26.6
East New Britain	112.7	87.6	88.5	34.4	31.0	29.5
West New Britain	76.1	78.5	75.5	3.9	15.9	16.1
North Solomons	90.0	75.4	n.a.	13.1	17.2	n.a.
<b>PNG</b>	<b>53.9</b>	<b>63.1</b>	<b>68.5</b>	<b>13.1</b>	<b>13.4</b>	<b>15.5</b>
<b>Coefficient of Variation</b>	<b>0.42</b>	<b>0.19</b>	<b>0.17</b>	<b>0.62</b>	<b>0.54</b>	<b>0.42</b>

Notes: (i) Figures for 1972 are based on 1971 census, figures for 1982 on 1980 census and figures for 1990 are estimates based on the 1990 preliminary census. Western Highlands and Enga and National Capital District and Central Province were not separated in 1972; this explains the single figure for both of them.

(ii) All enrolment rates are gross enrolment rates and are subject to error because of under-age and over-age children being included. They should be used with caution, because of the discrepancy between enrolment and attendance data and other data problems.

**Source:** Calculated by the author from Department of Education data.

**Table 9: Percentage of Enrolments who are Females:**

Province	Grades 1 - 6			Grades 7 - 10		
	1972	1982	1990	1972	1982	1990
Western	37.8	43.4	47.3	25.3	31.3	39.3
Gulf	39.1	40.8	41.8	35.6	36.7	37.2
NCD	41.4	46.3	46.5	36.8	43.8	48.7
Central		44.2	44.6		37.0	41.6
Milne Bay	41.4	45.3	47.6	48.7	50.5	57.4
Oro	40.0	43.3	44.9	15.7	20.8	31.6
S. Highlands	24.2	41.6	44.8	18.3	32.3	35.8
E. Highlands	22.8	42.2	44.7	24.4	25.0	31.8
Simbu	23.6	39.3	39.9	14.1	26.7	30.6
W. Highlands	16.7	43.7	42.7	25.6	32.0	34.1
Enga		36.5	44.6		25.3	32.4
Morobe	33.6	42.8	43.5	22.7	32.2	36.2
Madang	37.1	39.4	42.6	26.7	28.4	35.8
West Sepik	33.8	35.9	40.1	20.3	25.5	33.2
East Sepik	32.2	41.7	45.8	30.4	39.6	40.7
Manus	43.8	46.9	48.1	46.0	40.1	47.0
New Ireland	46.6	46.1	47.2	41.4	41.7	45.6
East New Britain	44.7	47.1	46.2	33.4	54.2	44.7
West New Britain	43.8	45.0	44.0	20.8	34.0	42.1
North Solomons#	45.7	46.6	48.3	32.3	39.2	44.2
<b>PNG</b>	<b>35.3</b>	<b>42.8</b>	<b>45.5</b>	<b>30.8</b>	<b>35.8</b>	<b>39.0</b>

Note: Figures refer to the National Education system Only.

# North Solomons did not report any figures for 1990; figures shown in that column against it are for 1989.

Source: Calculated by the author from Department of Education data.

**Table 10: Health as a Proportion of Government Expenditure**

Year	Total Budget Goods & Services ( <sup>'000</sup> )	% on	
		Health	Education
1951	12,773	20.8	6.2
1954	16,670	16.3	5.6
1957	27,453	16.1	6.4
1960	38,665	12.2	8.0
1963	59,873	11.4	10.5
1966	103,577	9.1	10.9
1969	152,860	8.0	10.8
1978	441,700	10.2	20.9
1982	615,000	9.4	20.8
1988	851,000	9.0	20.5

Source: Calculated by the author from various PNG Government sources.

**Table 11: (Distribution of GDP by Broad Sectors) %**

Sector/Year	1969	1980	1985	1988	1990
Agriculture					
Forestry & Fisheries:Cash Cropping and Subsistence	44	33	32	32	33
Subsistence only	27	15	14	13	14
Mining	1	13	12	15	10
Manufacturing	5	10	11	10	11
Construction	12	4	5	6	7
Rest. (Services)	38	40	40	37	39

Source: (1) World Bank (Baldwin Report) 1978 : Table 3.2.

(2) Calculated by the author from various publications PNG's National Statistical Office.

**Table 12: Change in Social (Health) Indicators**

	<b>1946</b>	<b>1966</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1988</b>
Total Fertility Rate	n.a.	6.2	5.9	5.7
Crude Birth Rate (%)	n.a.	4.2	4.0	3.9
Infant Mortality Rate	250	160.0	72.0	70.0
Life Expectancy at Birth	31	45.0	51.0	54.0
Food Production Index per Capita (79-81 = 100)	n.a.	105.0	100.0	93.0

Source: World Bank Statistics.

**Table 13: Kina Value Against A\$ and US\$**

Date	A\$ : PNG Kina (1)	A\$ : US\$ (2)	PNG Kina : US\$ (3)
6/8/84	.768	.837	1.09
5/8/85	.69	.71	1.03
1/8/86	.595	.606	1.0
4/8/87	.64	.69	1.0
29/8/88	.703	.819	1.16
4/8/89	.662	.76	1.16
1/8/90	.769	.791	1.03
1/8/91	.747	.779	1.04
1/8/92	.716	.745	1.04
3/8/93	.667	.682	1.02
30/9/93	.641	.646	1.01
2/8/94	.697	.737	1.06
12/9/94	.713	.746	1.05
14/9/94 *	.806	.744	0.92
30/9/94	.805	.739	0.92
12/10/94 °	.894	.740	0.828
14/10/94	.926	.737	0.796

\* Kina devalued by 12% on 12/9/94.

° Kina floated on 10/10/94.

Source: ° *Australian Financial Review*, Various

$$° (3) = (2) \div (1)$$



# Pathway to Modernization: Fiji's Garment Revolution<sup>1</sup>

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In February 1990 Navitilai Naisoro, the Permanent Secretary to the Fiji Ministry of Trade and Commerce, outlined to students at the University of the South Pacific in Suva his vision for Fiji's future. 'My hope', he said, 'is that one day instead of seeing the greenery of sugar cane fields, we see the greenery of well engineered factory complexes'.<sup>2</sup> In 1990 he had every reason to believe that his dream was well on its way to fruition. As one of the self-proclaimed 'New Fijian' economic managers appointed following the 1987 military coups,<sup>3</sup> Naisoro had been at the forefront of a radical redirection in Fiji's economic policies. The coups had precipitated a massive currency devaluation of 35 per cent, 12 per cent inflation (unofficial estimates placed inflation at 26 per cent), a new wage freeze, an upsurge in unemployment, and growing levels of poverty and destitution. Investment capital had dried up and the economy contracted, affecting Fiji's predominant import substitution industries in a way that high protective barriers could not assist.

Claimed Naisoro, 'We realized that if we were to survive in the long term, the solution lay with the export sector. [And] we needed an unequivocal signal from government to businessmen: now is the day you're really going to make money.'<sup>4</sup> That signal came in December 1987 - Tax Free Zones (TFZs). Since TFZs were costly to establish and could not be introduced overnight, the government permitted individual workshops to be declared Tax Free Factories (TFFs). Such status permitted industries exporting 95 per cent of their production, 13 years holiday from company tax, as well as duty free entry of raw materials and equipment. Some government ministers gloated at the supposed opportunities TFFs offered foreign investors. Apisai Tora, Fiji's Minister for Public Utilities, reportedly bragged to an Australian businessperson: 'This place is ripe for carpetbaggers. You better get your guys in here if you want a slice of the action, as it were. Where else have you heard of thirteen years tax-free, man'.<sup>5</sup>

The TFFs were declared an instant success. In early 1989 Finance Minister Josefata Kamikamica anticipated that they would lift exports by 25 per cent or F\$100 million by the end of that year. Employment in the new factories was expected to rise from 4000 to over 6000.<sup>6</sup> Although initially optimistic, the projections were

achieved in the following year when garment exports alone grossed \$161 million (22% of all exports by value).<sup>7</sup> By 1991 Tax Free Factory employment exceeded 9,300 (10.4 per cent of total paid employment), a far cry from the situation five years earlier when garment exports only just topped the \$2 million mark and employment approximated 2,500. Little wonder that Naisoro described the rate of change as 'breathless':

Now people are thinking of take-off again. But the really important ingredient is devaluation plus the fact that we don't have a democratic government... Businessmen don't care about the voting structure... We go for businessmen who want to find a place where it is profitable to make money. What he makes is his own business.<sup>8</sup>

Devaluation, deregulation, privatization, and foreign investment quickly became the catch words of the postcoup regime. According to Kamikamica, Fiji had become too reliant on government, on state enterprises and state-oriented development. The coups had the advantage of permitting Fiji to 'sever the apron strings which tied us to inherited colonial characteristics'.<sup>9</sup> By means of the corporatization of selected government enterprises (for example Post and Telecommunications, the shipping fleet, and ship yards), the abolition of import licensing, tariff and excise reductions, and an expansion in TFFs, Kamikamica hoped to raise employment by 6 per cent and economic growth by 7 per cent during 1989. Such expectations were largely dependent upon the continued expansion of production in TFFs.<sup>10</sup>

At the beginning of 1989 there were 46 TFFs, expected to produce over \$100 million in their first year of operation, over half from food processing and 32 per cent from garment production. The Fiji Trade and Investment Board (FTIB) was bullish, expecting production in the TFFs to double that figure and to increase employment from 5027 to some 16,000 by December 1989.<sup>11</sup> In fact by early 1991 there were



104 TFFs employing 9,327 people. Of these 78 per cent were employed in garment factories and 13 per cent in food and related factories.<sup>12</sup>

Tax Free Factories, in particular those of the garment sector, became the show piece of postcoup Fiji's economic planning. Many publications, including *Islands Business*, reinforced the regime's desire to distance itself from the past by regularly referring to the events of 1987 as 'the Fijian revolution' and to its architects as 'the new kind of Fijians ... coming to the fore' to transform Fiji into a new entrepot centre, the South Pacific's version of South Korea, Singapore or Taiwan.<sup>13</sup>

The irony is that these initiatives by so-called 'New Fijians' did not place the Fiji economy on a new trajectory.<sup>14</sup> Nor of course did they owe much to the coups' declared objectives for Fijian people. Such objectives were largely abandoned on 5 December 1987 when coup leader Brigadier General Rabuka dismissed his own Taukeist military government and reinstated the former Alliance Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara. The Taukeist regime had planned to introduce radical new land legislation and to transform the distribution of land rents. Both goals threatened the privileges of many chiefs and bureaucrats, the retention of which some would argue had been the real motive for the coups. Since December 1987 efforts to promote Fijian economic activities have rarely addressed commoner aspirations and focused instead on measures which strengthen the activities of the Fijian elite. This point is occasionally lamented by Rabuka. On 23 June 1991 he declared that his objectives in the 1987 coups were different from those of the interim regime, and added: 'I am disillusioned by what is going on but [it] is too late; we'd sort of handed power over and they are running the country now'.<sup>15</sup> Even as Prime Minister after 1992, Rabuka found his Taukeist past catching up with him. On a trip to New Zealand in April 1993, he advised investors against manufacturing and instead urged investment in 'Fijian' companies. Two months later he argued, 'I think we are doing well with local investors. Who needs overseas investors?'.<sup>16</sup> Rabuka's confusion distracted government; it did not reorient policies.

Contrary to Kamikamica's assertion above, the coups did not mark a fundamental break with colonial characteristics. Rather they reaffirmed neocolonial principles particularly in the immediate aftermath of the coups.

Fijians were deemed too immature or too self-seeking to

handle democracy and required the attention of a strong 'neutral' force such as the military to guide them and to protect their country's supposed traditional systems and values. This essentially meant reinforcing the very policies found wanting in the past: a greater emphasis on production for export markets, calls for austerity and sacrifice (the army - now consisting of over 5000 soldiers - is conveniently excluded from such calls even though it might be reasonable to suggest that its huge expenditure contributes to the need for such calls), and additional foreign investor access to the country's resources and labour.<sup>17</sup>

In addition, these policies were deemed imperative to counter the growing economic crisis generated by the coups. Yet, despite expansion in exports, investment and building activity remained relatively depressed, and much of the country's increased production came from the utilization of existing capacity rather than the creation of new capacity. Nor did the TFFs guarantee substantial foreign investment. Most garment industries require little initial outlay, one reason they are traditionally the most mobile of all transnational manufacturing activities. Since 75 per cent of 1988's garment TFFs were joint ventures or fully foreign owned,<sup>18</sup> 28 per cent in existence before becoming TFFs, foreign investors have been able to borrow much of their capital locally, thus potentially removing capital needed for other domestic investments. David Ogilvie, the British Executive Service Overseas consultant to the FTIB, noted in 1989 that foreign investors were not buying land or buildings and that most of their investments (in only 39 per cent of TFFs) were in plant and equipment, representing in effect a foreign exchange loss to the country of some \$22.5 million in 1988.<sup>19</sup>

During the immediate postcoup years, tighter economic controls, reduced imports, and a low demand for funds, left Fiji's banks awash with money. The Reserve Bank attempted to mop up the excess with two special issues at 5 per cent interest. Such was the demand, that the issues were quickly over-subscribed. But vast sums were

still sitting idle. Surplus liquidity and low interest rates, as the former Governor of the Reserve Bank - Savenaca Siwatibau - noted at the time, merely attracts fly-by-night investors. They did not necessarily produce foreign investment.<sup>20</sup>

Postcoup economic initiatives were also designed to entrench the power of the Fijian establishment. The premises behind their specific programs remain rooted in the class project of their Alliance predecessor and its clientelist strategies and rentier complex. They did not address the very structural problems (for example, urban and transnational biases) or distributional problems (rents, wages, etc) facing the country which had assisted the Coalition's electoral victory in April 1987 and which are still the underlying cause of continued political instability.

The garment TFFs bear this out. Despite all the hype of heralding a revolutionary era of prosperity for Fiji and creating a new pathway to modernization, the industry continues to offer Fiji labour little more than poorly paid wages under less than perfect working conditions. The government turns a blind eye to this industrial reality even when, as in May 1989, its own officials reported that nearly 70 per cent of garment factories were grossly overcrowded and lacking hygiene, ventilation and safety provisions. On this occasion, the government recommended only that companies be given more time to effect the necessary improvements.<sup>21</sup> Even this most gentle of nudges, proved too much for some garment employers who responded by threatening to lay off workers; one company dismissed a fifth of its workforce of 500 for two weeks in protest at allegations of overcrowding. Ironically, this was Classic Apparel of Suva, the country's first TFF.<sup>22</sup>

'Who is benefiting from this so-called boom in the garment industry?' asked Mahendra Chaudhry, National Secretary of the Fiji Trades Union Congress (FTUC). 'It is obviously not those poor women who toil long hours in squalid conditions for a pittance.'<sup>23</sup> Even Ogilvie argued that 'the garment industry as a whole (with some notable exceptions) is not a particularly good showpiece for Fiji's TFZ/TFF Scheme.'<sup>24</sup> Yet it already employs over 80 per cent of the TFF workforce and does not appear likely to lose its dominance within the scheme.

The government could have ensured greater national benefits from its TFFs, but the rapidity with which it launched the scheme made such results more difficult. Since no local value added preconditions are stipulated, and little in the way of local raw materials are utilized, much

needed backward linkages to the rest of the economy are unlikely to develop. Further, the poor remuneration its predominantly female workforce receives ensures that few benefits spill over to the community beyond the injection of subsistence wages. The government has established a special training school to upgrade the skills of garment workers, and believes that increased skills will eventually drive up garment industry wages. But, given the vast number of people seeking paid employment, this may not occur.

The government has committed itself to establishing a TFZ at Navutu in Lautoka and at Kalabu in Suva. Indeed, in March 1989 300 squatters, some of whom had lived at Kalabu for 15 years, were evicted from the Suva site. Since then high costs of development (estimated at over \$13 million)<sup>25</sup> have slowed its development. So too have Fijian perceptions of its value, at least in terms of indigenous rhetoric. Most local investors are Gujeratis, but 90 per cent of the workforce are women, now almost equally composed of poor Fijians and Indians whose wages seem designed to lock them into poverty. Ema Druavesi, whose formation in mid 1989 of a Fiji Garment Workers' Association received less than enthusiastic endorsement from the interim regime, maintained that Fijians were becoming aware of how the plight of exploited garment workers is merely a mirror to the wider society. 'The social implications of domestic violence, marriage break-ups, neglected children of the urban drift, and the neglected and overcrowded homes has never been looked at by the government', she argued during a spate of factory strikes in late 1990. '[And yet] our workers are just expected to slave away.'<sup>26</sup> Clearly few benefits accrue to Fijians, unless they happen - like Navi Naisoro's family - to hold shares in garment factories.

With the return to democracy in 1992, the new Rabuka government has been forced to acknowledge that there are political dangers inherent in policies which promote sweatshops and employ Fijians, and not just Indians. Consequently in 1994 it signalled greater tolerance for import substitution strategies which permit higher local wages.<sup>27</sup> However some export manufacturers view the problem differently. Fiji's reliance on the cheap cut, make and trim activity leaves it wide open to Asian competition. They believe Fiji should change its focus from volume to exclusive upmarket production.<sup>28</sup>

Unfortunately, Fiji economist Roman Grynberg argues, the government 'does not have the will to experience the necessary pain' such a

transformation would entail,<sup>29</sup> even though its new Minister of Finance, Bernado Vunibobo, concedes that the only real potential for job expansion lies in exploiting external markets.<sup>30</sup> With 13,000 new entrants in the workforce each year, the government knows job creation must assume greater and greater importance, more so perhaps since recession and trade liberalization in Fiji's main markets have dramatically reduced the usefulness of its low valued garment exports. Exports fell from \$131 million in 1991 to \$105 million in 1992, thereafter recovering slowly to record \$129 million in 1993. However, initial returns for 1994 are not encouraging, with exports down 26 per cent in the first quarter.<sup>31</sup>

Exports alone have not absorbed the growing workforce. In fact, aside from a brief flirtation with a wholly inadequate poverty alleviation scheme, the government has given the urban poor little attention. Politically marginalized by the 1990 Constitution, the urban poor are occasionally referred to by politicians as a weapon to enforce the racial divide. Rabuka warned Parliament in June 1994 that poor urban Fijians were a destabilizing force.

They feel disadvantaged. They feel they are starving. They may look well but their very soul is starving. As long as this happens, I cannot guarantee nor can anyone guarantee that there will not be another coup in this land.<sup>32</sup>

A red herring perhaps, but undoubtedly a convenient one. It reinforces Indian responsibility for the coups and blames them for Fijian poverty. Yet, no one race has a monopoly on poverty, even if the policies put in place since the coups have seen poverty among Fijians grow rapidly. The real issue facing the poor is not race but their exclusion from meaningful participation in the economy. Some 50,000 school-aged children are not educated every year because their parents cannot afford school fees. Over 70 per cent of the labour force earn less than \$5000 per annum or \$96 per week.<sup>33</sup>

As far as the director of Fiji's Council of Social Services, Nassan Khan, is concerned, the recent decline in exports merely reinforces his view that the focus on export production as a strategy for development is simply not working. He wants the poor to be included in the economy, to be involved in buying and selling, 'not [to] be isolated through poverty alleviation schemes'.<sup>34</sup> The mass

production of export garments cannot achieve this, since it depends on sweat shop conditions (ie. poverty) for its survival. Nor can import substitution industrialization provide a solution. Once the darling of an independence generation seeking to distance itself from its colonial past, import substitution has far too narrow a base to overcome the poverty and unemployment which reinforces its limited capacity. Fixated by its own communal logic, the government has no ability to resolve this dilemma. Indeed, Rabuka sees himself as only a Fijian prime minister, not a prime minister for all of Fiji. He argues that his Fijian heritage makes it impossible for him to 'turn on the universal Prime Minister picture'.<sup>35</sup> In terms of economic development and communal interaction this attitude may well prove disastrous. Yet as long as the Constitution permits a government to represent only Fijians, Rabuka will inevitably focus on those communal interests which will win him electoral support. Strangely, even in this very narrow regard, postcoup governments demonstrate little imagination.

There is a familiar pattern to most efforts to assist Fijians. Those who benefit most are establishment Fijians. During the period of the Alliance government, the Fijian elite used access to the state to enrich itself. It also utilized traditional relationships and obligations to gain access to the finances of state corporations. In this respect nothing has changed. One early and much publicized initiative by the Rabuka-Mara regime was a special \$20 million allocation in 1989 to help Fijian business people and enable Fijians to control 30 per cent of the corporate sector by the year 2000. In reality this was an extension of an existing plan for provincial councils to obtain shares in the Great Council of Chiefs' Fijian Holdings Ltd whose capital is invested in existing profitable and often transnational businesses such as Carlton United Brewery, Burns Philp, Carpenters, and British Petroleum joint ventures. Ratu Mara supported a similar but apparently abortive initiative in July 1987 when he reportedly assisted in negotiating an American loan to enable the Great Council of Chiefs to acquire shares in the Burns Philp and Carpenter transnationals.<sup>36</sup> In 1991 the Great Council of Chiefs approved the sale of shares to Fijian individuals but the change received little publicity. It was later claimed that only people with access to loan facilities or who possessed 'insider' knowledge benefited.<sup>37</sup> Even if it expands a dependent Fijian middle class, participation through passive shareholding will not create Fijian economic development.

Nor necessarily is continued reliance on rents to generate income. In 1988 land rentals earned \$8,628,000, nearly half of it generated in the Western Division. But without changes in the distribution and utilization of such monies, land rentals are unlikely to promote active Fijian economic participation. Income earned from economic activity must be productively utilized, not squandered on personal fortunes, if it is to have a self-generating impact.<sup>38</sup> Part of the problem is that government still wants the bulk of Fijians to remain subservient to old structures of power. Hence its efforts to strengthen the power of chiefs in the Constitution and to create new Fijian laws to maintain the authority and role of villages. In short, it wants economic change but without social and political consequences. This is why Fijian investor companies linked with transnationals prove so seductive.

Since the coups no major reorientation of economic strategy has occurred. Despite a massive increase in commercial loans to Fijians (\$80 million from 1989 until 1993 compared with \$26.5 million for the 14 year period 1975-88), Fijians are still encouraged to invest in areas such as commerce and transportation where competition from established companies is stiffest, rather than in 'real productive activities'. Of Fiji Development Bank (FDB) loans to Fijians from 1980 to 1985, 49 per cent went into commerce, 29 per cent into transport, but only 12 per cent into manufacturing, 6 per cent into the timber sector, and 1 per cent into tourism.<sup>39</sup> During 1989 and 1990 little changed: 32 per cent of investments went into the transport sector, and 25 per cent into commerce with a large 31 per cent into associated real estate purchases or refinancing schemes. As before, actively productive investments in manufacturing, tourism or forestry are extremely low.<sup>40</sup>

Rabuka's own novel economic intervention took the form of an Army Auxiliary Unit, justified on the grounds that it enabled the military to reduce its burden on the economy (7 per cent of the 1990 Budget), generate greater economic activity in outer islands, and retail food at below market prices. 'A military force dedicated solely to internal security and defence is a luxury which only developed nations can afford', Rabuka argued in 1988. 'This would mean an army controlled economy, for the time being, until we recovered. At the moment we are working on a 10 year plan.'<sup>41</sup>

The Auxiliary Unit formed part of Rabuka's attempt - albeit short-lived - to develop an independent power base. But like other postcoup initiatives, it did nothing to address the nation's

structural problems. It failed to alter the pattern of internal trade for outer islanders, only substituting one group of traders for another, and thereby restricting further the possibility for local initiative. Its own agricultural activities had a similar effect by undercutting the value of goods produced by many villagers for sale in the Suva market. By 1991 the Unit had collapsed, allegedly leaving a trail of debt.

Despite Naisoro's claims to the contrary, Fiji's lack of stability is regarded by many economic commentators as a major cause of its present problems. In 1988 Westpac's Pacific general manager, John Stone, argued that local growth would always remain frustrated until such time as people saw 'a democratically elected government in place.'<sup>42</sup> For Saveneca Siwatibau, the absence of democracy spelt instability, already evidenced by the failure of the postcoup regime to produce an acceptable constitution, to enforce the law equally with regards to the Sunday Observance Decree, or to provide firm details on deregulation and a proposed general services or value added tax. Investor confidence suffered accordingly<sup>43</sup> and Fiji soon found itself in deregulated limbo without financial stability, without an equitable distribution of income and wealth, and without restructured rural relations. Nevertheless, following the first postcoup election, the FTIB went of its way to publicize Fiji's return to democracy and even cited Rabuka's abortive government of National Unity proposal as a step towards creating a better business climate. However, Vunibobo remains unconvinced. 'Businessmen are normally more concerned about business prospects than political nicities',<sup>44</sup> he claims, despite evidence that pressing political issues such as the Constitution and ALTA do impede investment, especially local investment which has always been more significant in its long term impact on the mass of Fiji's people than foreign investment.

Disregard for reality is not new, according to sociologist Satendra Prasad. He maintains that Fiji's decision to implement the TFF strategy was not the result of serious economic planning. The coups threw up a new cadre of planners, many of whom lacked academic training and public service rigour.<sup>45</sup> They believed they needed a sufficiently high profile policy to attract foreign investors, who could then be utilized to compensate for their own obvious lack of success in retaining support at home. As Naisoro admits, that policy was lifted from the Alliance's Ninth Five Year Plan (1986), itself heavily based on World Bank recommendations. The planners appropriated its

tax free zones, deregulation, and abolition of protection for local industries<sup>46</sup> and paid little attention to issues concerning 'the availability of land... mechanisms for policing customs regulations, regulations for labour relations, identification of priority sectors for investment, environmental and ecological regulations and other issues.'<sup>47</sup>

Nonetheless, the bureaucrats' decision to implement a tax free scheme by utilizing existing companies certainly contributed to the TFFs' rapid growth profile. So too at another level did the FTIB's shift to new premises at Civic House (formerly the site of the British High Commission) on the Suva waterfront, a move designed to project through its office 'an image of the country that is very appealing indeed.'<sup>48</sup> What Fiji got, to quote Naisoro, was 'breathless' accelerated action,<sup>49</sup> or - in Prasad's words - 'the long term stability of the national economy...sacrificed for short-term gains.'<sup>50</sup>

But that sacrifice was not initiated by postcoup bureaucrats. They accelerated the process, yet its origins lay in decisions taken by earlier Alliance governments of Ratu Mara, often in response to pressures from international lending agencies, like the IMF, to boost manufacturing through export processing. This is the argument of a precoup analysis of the garment industry by Fiji political scientist Claire Slatter. She outlined the dual pressures on the Alliance government to attract fresh foreign investment and to increase urban employment.<sup>51</sup> The problem for the Alliance government lay in Fiji's relatively high wages. Hence export processing could 'only be feasible if wages were kept competitively low... [suggesting] an intention to preserve a low wage segment within the labour market... consist[ing] primarily of women workers.'<sup>52</sup> For Slatter, 1986 was the most crucial year, consolidating what still remains the industry's most controversial aspects and long term weaknesses: growth built on female exploitation and dependent upon insecure markets.

Since 1983 the government had deferred introducing a Wages Council Order to provide minimum wages for garment workers. But in 1986 the Order was finally released, guaranteeing workers a minimum of 90 cents per hour and learners 70 cents. Garment manufacturers immediately protested. Garment Manufacturers Association president, Padam Lala of Lotus Garments, argued that unless the government accepted an hourly rate of 50c some 100 factories employing nearly 3000 workers would close in

protest.<sup>53</sup> The government quickly withdrew the Order.

Industry pressure was not difficult to apply because the government had already accepted that the garment industry deserved special treatment. Its proposed rate of 90c was 23c lower than the minimum rate for other forms of manufacturing. This, according to Slatter, was the 'hidden dimension of the Alliance government's industrialisation strategy'.

It would appear that the growth of a low wage sector in Fiji was, in the eyes of that government, not a problem but rather an advantage and one it intended to preserve... The Alliance government's support for the garment manufacturers in 1986 clearly legitimated what ... had been a conscious practice among local companies of employing women, especially from poor households, at appallingly low wages... In the name of national development, women workers from poor urban and rural households were to be sacrificed, it seemed, on the altar of industrialisation.<sup>54</sup>

Given that the garment industry was far from the fledgling sector its owners claimed, gender prejudice or disregard and sacrifice were the only possible explanations for the decisions of 1986. Garment export sales had already risen rapidly from \$250,000 to over \$2 million within 3 years. But such promising expansion, together with the wages controversy, brought the industry under close public scrutiny for the first time. The unwanted exposure irked manufacturers, particularly those who found themselves accused of some of the worse forms of exploitation possible, and in a political environment considerably less conducive to exploitation than that which would be established in the following year.

Their clothing workshops, many of which had begun to service the local community in the mid-1970s, were characteristic of the new wave of entrepreneurial activity which swept postcolonial Fiji. Employing a small workforce, sometimes initially made up exclusively of family members, these new enterprises tapped into a growing and

now protected home market. They survived internal competition with transnationals like Carpenters and Burns Philp because their workforce remained nonunionized and poorly paid. Consequently, by the 1980s the foreign-owned giants divested themselves of many manufacturing activities, such as furniture production, and contracted work to the new factories instead.

Conditions in these small factories were far from satisfactory. Even the chairman of a specially appointed garment industry tribunal, Raman Nair, felt compelled to call upon factory owners to humanize the workplace. In 1986 he cited many cases of substandard conditions:

In one instance a factory which employs 189 workers had one toilet and that too was locked. The workers had to seek permission to go to the toilet. The proprietor said the women did not know how to use the facility.

Other factories lacked clean environments and proper ventilation; few possessed tea room facilities. Because inspectors of the Ministry of Employment and Industrial Relations rarely visited factory premises, garment workers 'have no means of seeking orderly redress for their ills and complaints', Nair noted.

In some factories the workers were completely disorganized, mentally and physically frustrated by the owners and bosses.<sup>55</sup>

But the tribunal's findings were far from new. In 1985 the local press reported one factory owner paying 'a girl in a wheel chair three times more because she doesn't have to move away from the machine'.<sup>56</sup> In 1984 police raided a sweatshop for employing women after hours and sustaining them during nights with pep pills.<sup>57</sup>

Yet despite compelling evidence of exploitation, the tribunal chairman did not believe that workers were poorly treated. Nair declared the proposed minimum manufacturing wage (\$49.72 for a 44 hour week) unacceptable for the garment industry, and suggested instead \$28.60 or 65 cents per hour. In short 'female' occupations

justified low wages; women were deemed to be 'simply supplementary earners in male-headed families'.<sup>58</sup> Yet this was not the case; solo parenthood and destitution drove women into exploitation and silence.<sup>59</sup> Although the Fiji Food and Nutrition Committee declared \$35 the absolute minimum for providing basic needs to a Suva family of five [in 1989 \$70, in 1991 \$115],<sup>60</sup> that counted for nought when the industry itself saw discrimination as a major advantage when seeking export markets or foreign partners.

A five man Australian team representing the American Farah Manufacturing, Bonds Coats Patons, Salco Manufacturing, and Waltons Bond companies toured Fiji in June 1986 and concurred. It proclaimed low wages a major factor for attracting Australian investment. Machinists in Fiji might earn just over \$20 a week but in Australia \$230 was the norm. Said David Enfield of Farah Manufacturing Ltd, 'I've walked through some of the factories and seen very happy staff ... and they seem very pleased and proud of their employers.'<sup>61</sup>

But a passive workforce is not necessarily a contented one. Absenteeism was high and many factories experienced rapid staff turnover.<sup>62</sup> Then Assistant National Secretary of the FTUC, Mahendra Chaudhry, argued that workers not only faced severe economic problems but were also demoralized and often sexually harassed. He believed the industry could afford to pay more; indeed it had increased rates to 50c per hour so as to frustrate implementation of minimum wage legislation, recognizing that it could no longer get away with rates as low as 18 to 23 cents.<sup>63</sup>

The picture constructed for the public in 1986 was of a rapidly growing industry in which half the workforce belonged to the country's poorest 7 per cent of wage earners. Ironically they were also the country's most productive workforce, adding - as economist Wadan Narsey's 1985 study of the industry showed - three times the amount of value per dollar of capital stock compared with other manufacturing workers. But they were paid only half the latter's wage. In addition, their wages had increased only 7 per cent between 1980 and 1984; wages for manufacturing workers rose 26 per cent. Both were well below the 34 per cent increase in the consumer price index. It was not surprising then that relative profits in the garments sector were 3 times higher than in manufacturing<sup>64</sup> although little of that seemed to be ploughed back into the industry. Owners invested little in modern machinery, \$367 per employee compared with \$8412 per employee in manufacturing. A visiting South Korean garment expert, Dong Jin Hu, argued

that the industry was desperately lacking in quality control and modern production methods.<sup>65</sup>

These matters did not deter the government. Employer protest was sufficient to have the minimum wage legislation for garment workers dropped, although - as critics later alleged - not without favours being sought in return.<sup>66</sup> Henceforth, the government toed the industry line on wages. Asian competition made low wages a necessary evil.<sup>67</sup> Then Minister for Economic Planning and Development, Peter Stinson, noted that 'While the government abhorred the wage rate of 20 to 25 cents an hour, it [the clothing industry] was one of the greatest hopes for employment in the medium term.'<sup>68</sup>

In reality the question of wages - then whether the industry could afford a rise to 90 cents per hour in the face of potential competition from cheaper Asian producers - was misleading. By 1986 the Fiji clothing industry was on the brink of a major boom. Export values had already jumped from \$2.1 million in 1985 to \$4.7 million in 1986. [In 1987 they were to rise to \$5.7 million and during 1988 to well over \$15 million.<sup>69</sup>] The phenomenal growth was due to two factors: first, Fiji was producing high quality and reliable merchandise according to deadlines set by overseas buyers,<sup>70</sup> and second, Fiji had access to Australian and New Zealand markets through the 1980 South Pacific Regional Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement (SPARTECA).

SPARTECA is the key to the garment industry's remarkable expansion. Signed at Tarawa in 1980, it became the South Pacific's equivalent of the Lome Convention. Its goal was to redress unequal trade relationships between the island states and the two Australasian countries.<sup>71</sup> The unequal relationships remain a decade or more later, despite phenomenal growth in Fiji's garment exports. SPARTECA - with its total emphasis on trade - has not by itself promoted national economic and social well-being. Indeed it has frustrated it.

SPARTECA permitted duty-free and unrestricted access to Australasia for a wide range of commodities, but garments still faced restrictions. Fifty per cent of the value of a finished product had to originate in the exporting country and/or in Australia and New Zealand.<sup>72</sup> Australia's quota system provided further restrictions. Initially Australia's imports from the South Pacific were restricted to 66,000 units, those from Fiji being between 34,000 and 45,000 units.<sup>73</sup> This imposed severe limitations. Potential access was one thing; convincing quota holders to switch from traditional suppliers to the largely untested

and smaller Fiji producers was quite another. In the event what saved the Fiji garment industry was not SPARTECA per se, but an arrangement decided upon by the Fraser government in Australia to permit unlimited access through a special sampling quota of 400,000 units from the Pacific, although importers had still to operate within the country's international quota system. Once Fiji's standards improved and were accepted by Australian distributors (a process began in 1985), the way was open for a major expansion in exports. During 1988 nearly A\$10 million of Fiji garments entered Australia; in 1989 approximately \$18 million, and \$55 million in 1993<sup>74</sup>.

Similar factors enabled an expansion in exports to New Zealand, with one exception: New Zealand dismantled its import licensing regime in January 1988 and Fiji gained the kind of access it had always hoped for in the Australian market. Garment exports rapidly rose thereafter, reaching approximately \$20 million in 1989.<sup>75</sup> By 1990 17 of the 29 wholly foreign owned garment TFFs were New Zealand companies and more than 45 per cent of garment exports went to New Zealand.<sup>76</sup> Access and acceptability in the two Australasian markets provided their own dividends - \$100.7 million of garment exports in 1989, \$161.2 million in 1990.<sup>77</sup> For a regime battling to maintain stability and economic credibility following the coups, the garment industry was *the* success story. Its promoters saw it as the logical outcome of their new deregulation, privatization, and export oriented strategies and promoted it as such. But the issue they always disregarded - the role of the garment industry as a basis for national economic expansion and Fijian economic equality - soon returned to haunt them.

TFFs are clearly an extremely vulnerable form of economic promotion. Economists Rodney Cole and Helen Hughes acknowledge that

Tax holidays are typically 'give away' incentives that encourage foreign investors interested in quick profits, not the establishment of long term business. Once tax holidays are exhausted such 'fly-by-night' operators leave. If tax holidays are successful they become very costly, resulting in loss of revenue for education, health and the physical infrastructural investment that investors need.<sup>78</sup>

Given the very mobile character of the garment trade, such comments are far from idle speculation. There is nothing to prevent other Pacific producers utilizing SPARTECA and attracting foreign investment with tax incentives and low wages. The Solomons, Vanuatu, Western Samoa and Tonga have established clothing industries, although at this stage they do not threaten Fiji operations. But their mere existence is a reminder that what Fiji has achieved can also be achieved by others. And if SPARTECA is the vehicle for Fiji's achievement, it might also be for others as well.

SPARTECA's value therefore is simply as a window of opportunity. But it provides no long term guarantees. Structural adjustments in Australia and New Zealand - in particular lower import tariffs - have reduced the advantages it once bestowed on the Forum island countries. In addition rising textile and export costs make it difficult to invest in new technology and labour-saving devices and at the same time meet the stringent local content regulations on which preferential access to Australasia depend. Since 1992 Fiji has tried to make SPARTECA more user friendly. But only in 1994 did New Zealand agree to reduce local content from 50 per cent to 45 per cent and Australia to include more manufacturing costs as part of local content. Ultimately Fiji wishes to replace SPARTECA with bilateral agreements and to move into the production of electronics, white goods and computers - the high-tech dreams of Naisoro's 'well engineered factory complexes'. Meanwhile recessions in both New Zealand and Australia have emphasized the export strategy's major weakness - market dependency. Their impact on the clothing industry has been immediate. Exports in 1992 and 1993 fell dramatically, forcing the government to seek new preferential markets in North America, Europe and Japan.<sup>79</sup> But market diversification alone provides no panacea.

During 1989 Fiji garment exports to the United States rose five fold. These were all largely night wear garments and they immediately disrupted the local market. The US reacted swiftly and forced Fiji to self regulate its exports.<sup>80</sup> The European Community proved more accommodating. In 1991 it waived rules of origin to enable Fiji to export duty free fixed amounts of tuna and garments.<sup>81</sup> The Fiji regime hoped that this breathing space would be sufficient to interest EC investors in Fiji, although it is difficult to see how any reimposition of rules of origin or duties would allow Fiji products to remain competitive, with or without European investment, unless it

moved rapidly into niche production. The same will undoubtedly apply to the FTIB's next target, the already over supplied Japanese market. The imposition of compulsory International Labour Organization employment standards might well complicate matters further.

The latter is a sore point for the government. While it feels helpless to counter calls for voluntary export restraint from foreign businesses affected by their exports, it has no such qualms concerning union objections. Fiji's former Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Taniela Veitata, regarded union protests as constituting 'direct interference in the sovereignty of the nation'.<sup>82</sup> Nonetheless Fiji unions held their ground on the need for the insertion into SPARTECA of a social clause to guarantee freedom of union activities and minimum wages and conditions. Indeed Ema Druavesi approached the International Garment and Textile Union in Brussels for assistance in getting a similar clause inserted into Fiji's agreement with the EC.<sup>83</sup> She also attacked the Australian intention to cut back Fiji imports in favour of other Pacific imports, saying that it missed the point. A new wave of cheap garments into Australia would do nothing to improve conditions in the clothing industry wherever it might be sited, but it would quite specifically reduce the beneficial industrial impact of unions in Fiji.<sup>84</sup> For unions it is an uphill struggle at the best of times. Only 6 of 113 factories were unionized in 1993, and while the Fiji Garment Textile Workers Union claims 1000 members it is probably far less. Certainly the union has had little success in obtaining either voluntary or compulsory recognition orders from individual factories.<sup>85</sup>

For the Fiji government there are two possible lessons; the first, that no advantage will ever be permanent. SPARTECA is unlikely to provide many new advantages or guarantees. Fiji's Multi Fibre Agreement access to North America will eventually be phased out under the new GATT. Already a new international tax regime deprives New Zealand capitalists of any tax advantages gained from investment in Fiji's TFFs. The United States currently withdraws trade preferences from countries which fail to observe minimum labour standards, the base line of which is whether workers are permitted to organize or bargain collectively. Cheap labour is held to be an unfair trade practice like dumping or subsidies. US efforts to incorporate such a mechanism into GATT may well eventually impact upon Fiji, particularly if it seeks to expand further the export of garments



to the US as a way to sustain garment growth once Australasian markets are saturated.<sup>86</sup> As late as 1994 US authorities were threatening to withdraw Fiji's preferential access unless basic human rights were restored.<sup>87</sup> At least since May 1992 the Fiji government has recognised the Garment Union, although its regulations and inspection facilities make difficult union effectiveness. In any case without a firm and consistent government commitment to closer industrial cooperation, there is no guarantee that highly mobile foreign investors would agree to employ a strongly unionized workforce. With newer markets harder to find, whatever dilemma the government faces in this regard will certainly be of its own making.

The second lesson is that Fiji's focus on tax free activities brings little income for the country beyond that of low wages for its employees. (Ogilvie claimed a total of \$25 million in wages for 1988, but made no reference to its distribution.<sup>88</sup>) It provides no minimum local content, it restricts the development of local design expertise, and it ensures that the bulk of income from garment manufacturing leaves the country as payment for its duty-free inputs or as repatriated profit. The removal of customs duties alone cost the country revenue of over \$3.5 million on imported equipment in 1988. A report prepared in 1991 for the FTIB by a United Nations Industrial Development Organization adviser, Bjorn Eidsvig, recommended a complete revision of the TFF strategy. It proposed slashing the tax holiday from 13 years to 5, retaining minimum wage rates, and enforcing local working conditions. Wages and employment were the main benefits of the scheme to the country, the report argued. 'If employees are not paid decent wages and salaries, the TFFs may even become more of a burden than an asset'.<sup>89</sup> Despite the promise of economic redirection which accompanied the launching of TFFs, it would appear that their reliance on the exploitation of cheap labour makes them little more than a new manifestation of colonial and postcolonial strategies.

TFFs are a form of protection which have replaced the postcolonial strategy of import substitution protection, itself the successor to colonial enclave protection. According to Hazel Brown of Trinidad's Price Commission, 'Free Trade Zones import everything they need and export everything they produce. In effect, they remain protected parasitical enclaves within the domestic economy'.<sup>90</sup> She believes there is little evidence that they can act as catalysts for industrialization, contrary to the expectations of

Peter Stinson, now Ambassador to Australia, who regards the garment industry as the beginning of Fiji's industrialization. Yet the Fiji experience appears to bear out Brown's prognosis. TFFs do not direct Fiji towards new international demands for greater investment in education and for new work practices and organization that promote worker initiatives. 'Human capital', one writer recently noted, 'is becoming the key to economic growth and the ability to compete at home and abroad'.<sup>91</sup> With an education system still reeling from neglect, and with a growth strategy bent on denying skills and creativity, Fiji seems determined to exclude these increasingly important long term growth factors. Nor can its technocrats claim that labour intensive industrialization generates rapid returns able to be reinvested in more capital intensive growth areas. The very nature of their TFFs deny this possibility.

There are other costs as well. Fiji wishes for a manufacturing-led boom based upon an Asian export model, but it has none of the aid or market-access advantages which proved so important for initial Taiwanese and Korean growth. Indeed market vulnerability has reinforced in Fiji characteristics common to all cheap labour economies - political authoritarianism and labour repression. Prior to 1992, decrees periodically restricted union activities and intimidated union leaders. Even today workers confront new government-sanctioned forms of exploitation: extended working hours without additional or overtime pay, body searches, reduced lunch breaks, payment in kind, and illegal night work.<sup>92</sup> In addition government has permitted companies to import labour. Between 1987 and 1993, 17,014 work permits have been issued to Asians,<sup>93</sup> with disastrous consequences for local building and construction as well as garment employment. In some factories Asians are a majority of the workforce; in others they occupy supervisory or skilled machinist positions.<sup>94</sup>

The government's ability to compensate workers by income distribution has also diminished with deregulation and privatization. Even a doubling of social welfare expenditure in 1991 represented less than one per cent of the government budget and was hardly adequate for a nation in which close to 40 per cent of urban households live in varying degrees of poverty.<sup>95</sup> In 1992 \$7 million was put into a special Poverty Alleviation Fund, as part of a VAT compensation package, but only a small proportion was spent as originally envisaged and the Fund was discontinued at the end of 1993. Value Added Tax, introduced

in July 1992, further disadvantaged the poor across the country. In addition the government has all but abandoned its former regional strategies. The result is the centralization of wealth and employment. Suva, which contains 20 per cent of the population, now controls close to 55 per cent of paid employment.<sup>96</sup>

Finally, there are political costs. Deteriorating labour conditions and rising levels of poverty have accelerated popular discontent and impacted on the country's still unstable politics. In June 1991 Rabuka declared the then interim government 'reactionary' and called upon it to resign.<sup>97</sup> Rumbblings are also evident among the very influential private interests which prospered under import protection and which now find deregulation a threat to their continued influence and prosperity. They received unexpected support in the UN TFF report which argued that 'the time is not right to cut duties on imports of finished goods' unless the government wished to see all import substitution industries close down entirely.<sup>98</sup> Discontent reactivated the struggle between establishment and radical Fijians. Although supportive of economic restructuring, many of the former view the rapidity of change under the new economic managers with disquiet, particularly since rising social unrest presents as much threat to their future after the 1992 General Election as it did back in 1987. That some new managers openly identified with the Taukeist coup against the establishment in September 1987 has not been forgotten. Certainly it motivated Navi Naisoro's hasty departure from the Ministry of Trade and Commerce in late 1990. It is likely, therefore, that the future of his vision for a Fiji dominated by 'the greenery of well engineered factory complexes' may be settled, perhaps no less dramatically, by the social impact of TFFs and economic restructuring on already unstable Fijian groupings. Certainly the Fijian elite view with concern the rise of an urban working class whose loyalty after the 1987 disaster is suspect. 'The political logic', Grynberg asserts, 'is that a nation of barmen and chambermaids is to be preferred over that of factory workers.'<sup>99</sup> At least it postpones resolving the place of Fijians in the economy and strengthens the role of traditional power structures, the goal of many postcoup initiatives. And it sets aside the urgency for constitutional review, thereby invalidating the criticism of many political opponents. Hence the way forward is by muddled retreat. Indeed since 1987 Fiji has been at the crossroads and has yet to deviate from the well worn neocolonial path.

## References

1. A version of this paper was originally published in the *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 25 (2:1993).
2. 'Reflecting on the Fiji Experience and USP', no. 23 (4: 2 March 1990), p.2.
3. In 1987 Fiji suffered two military coups led by then Lieutenant Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka. The first coup on 14 May overthrew the reformist Coalition government which had been elected to office only a month earlier. Under the leadership of the late Dr Timoci Bavadra, the Coalition comprised the multiracial Labour Party and the predominantly Indian National Federation Party. It had fought a campaign on issues of poverty and corruption. But in a country where two races - Melanesian Fijians and Indian Fijians - dominated in roughly equal proportions, appeals to race often dominated politics. Rabuka publicly justified his coup on racial grounds, accusing the Coalition of being Indian dominated. Following the first coup, the Governor General, Ratu Penaia Ganilau, established his own government, made up largely of members of the defeated Alliance Party of Ratu Kamisese Mara. It failed to bring stability to the country and in September, Ganilau brought the Coalition and Alliance together to form a government of national unity. But before the new government could take office, Rabuka led a second coup, formed his own government, and declared Fiji a republic. Many members of his government belonged to a semi-terrorist group called the Taukei (Fijian) Movement which had earlier agitated for the overthrow of the Bavadra government and against the proposed government of national unity. They claimed to represent Fijian (as opposed to Indian) interests, but ironically some among them - like members of the Labour Party they helped overthrow - realised the need for structural changes if the perceived disadvantages facing Fijians were to be effectively addressed. Their agenda was much too radical for the then politically inexperienced and establishment-minded Rabuka who promptly overthrew them on 5 December 1987 and reinstated Mara as prime minister and Ganilau as president. For a brief account of the coups see R.T. Robertson and A. Tamanisau, 'Fiji: Race, Class and the Military', 20 (2: 1989), pp. 203-234; for more detail see B.V. Lal, *Broken Waves: A History of the Fiji Islands in the Twentieth Century* (Honolulu, 1992) pp. 268-333.
4. R. Callick, 'Fiji Grasps for a Bonanza', *Financial Review*, 30 November 1988, p. 13.
5. S.L. Malcomson, *Tuturani: A Political Journey in the Pacific Islands* (London, 1990) p.129.
6. R. Keith-Reid, 'The New Fijian Takes Charge', *Islands Business (IB)*, February 1989, pp. 8-9. Unless stated otherwise all dollars are Fiji dollars. One Fijian dollar approximates US\$ 0.67.

7. *Fiji Times (FT)*, 10 April 1991, p. 1; sugar accounted for 33%, gold 9%. Total exports were valued at \$730.8 million, and gross tourism earnings at \$335.9 million.
8. *IB*, February 1989, pp. 15, 17.
9. *FT*, 3 June 1989, p. 3.
10. *Ibid.*, 5 June 1989, p. 1. During 1988 and the first quarter of 1989, the government approved 51 non TFF proposals predominantly in the manufacturing and tourist sectors. Most were local or joint ventures. They were expected to employ between 819 and 1351 persons and provide investment capital up to \$36 million ('Fiji Trade and Investment Board (FTIB): Post Coup Performance', FTIB Report, Suva, 1989, pp. 11-12).
11. *FT*, 10 January 1989, p. 3.
12. *IB*, March 1991, p. 16. Employment in manufacturing in general had increased to 23,400 or 25.6% of paid employment; see C. Slatter, 'Economic Policies, Women's Work, Women's Lives' in Jean A. Maybin (ed.), *Women and Work*, Suva, Fiji Association of Women Graduates, 1994, p.28.
13. *FT*, 3 June 1989, p. 3; *IB*, February 1989, p. 10.
14. However, Slatter argues that since 1987 Fiji's governments have focused on export-led, market-oriented economic growth to the exclusion of rural development and economic redistribution ('Economic Policies', p. 26). I would argue change is more a matter of degree than of substance.
15. TVNZ 'Frontline' interview, quoted in *FT*, 25 June 1991, p. 3.
16. *FT*, 2 April 1993, p.5; 3 June 1993, p.3: Rabuka added, 'if they are looking for a perfect paradise, they can wait until they die and go to Paradise and see the other place'.
17. Robertson and Tamanisau, 'Fiji: Race, Class and the Military', pp. 228-229.
18. In 1988 TFFs as a whole were less foreign owned (26%) than the garment sector alone. Joint ventures (with more than 20% local capital) comprised 28%; wholly local owned factories 46%. Most factories (57%) were small and employed fewer than 50 staff. Only 8% employed over 200 staff and the majority of these factories were either foreign owned (57%) or joint ventures (28%). Together they accounted for one third of all TFF employment. By comparison 20% of the TFF workforce were in factories of less than 50 staff (43% in locally owned factories, 27% in joint ventures). Eighteen per cent were in factories of 50-99 staff (63% in locally owned factories, 16% in joint ventures), while the remainder (29%) were in factories of 100-199 workers (83% being in locally owned factories, 17% in joint ventures). Claire Slatter's 1991 review of TFFs argues that foreign ownership has since increased ('Economic Recovery on the Backs of Women Workers: Women and Tax Free Enterprises in Fiji', *USP Review*, no. 19 (May 1991), pp. 18-28). Preliminary FTIB figures for 1990 may reinforce Slatter's argument. The proportion of wholly foreign owned TFFs has increased from 26% in 1988 to 32%, although the proportion of joint ventures has fallen from 28% to 17% (*Pacific Islands Monthly (PIM)*, November 1991, p. 46).
19. D. Olgivie, 'Fiji's Tax Free Zone/ Tax Free Factory Package: An Assessment of the First Year's Results', Report to FTIB, 1989, p. 9.
20. *FT*, 22 April 1989, p. 24.
21. *Ibid.*, 8 May 1989, p. 3; the survey covered 57 factories employing 4,500 workers.
22. *Ibid.*, 3 June 1989, p. 3; *Fiji Voice (FV)*, April/May 1990, p. 6.
23. *Ibid.*, 3 April 1989, p. 3.
24. Olgivie, p. 7.
25. *IB*, March 1991, p. 16. In 1991 the army began building houses in Nasinu to accommodate some of the displaced squatters. The housing scheme appears to have been abandoned after Rabuka left the army in mid 1991. Meanwhile the TFZ itself now appears more certain with its development costs being met substantially by the EEC (*FT*, 30 January 1992, p.6).
26. *Fiji Voice (FV)*, December 1990, p. 4-5.
27. *FT*, 27 Aug 1994, p.13.
28. *Ibid.*, 20 March 1993, pp. 10-11; *Review*, July 1994, p.50.
29. 'Economic Killing Fields', *FT*, 16 July 1994, p.12.
30. *Ibid.*, 17 September 1994, p.11.
31. *Ibid.*, 24 September 1994, p. 11; 5 August 1994, p. 13. In March the President of the Textile and Footwear Council reported a 30 per cent reduction in workforce and a 10 per cent cut in hours (26 March 1994, p.1).
32. *The Australian*, 17 June 1994.

33. C. Slatter, 'Economic Policies', p.32; G. Chand et al., *The Woes of Structural Adjustment in Fiji: The 1994 Fiji Government Budget* (Suva, 1993) p.23.
34. *FT*, 30 July 1994.
35. *Ibid.*, 4 August 1994, p.5.
36. *Ibid.*, 30 July 1987, p. 1; 31 July 1987, p. 3.
37. *Ibid.*, 22 May 1993, p.9.
38. R.T. Robertson and A. Tamanisau, *Fiji: Shattered Coups* (Sydney, 1988) p. 103.
39. W. Sutherland, *Beyond the Politics of Race: Chiefs, Classes and Coups in Fiji* (Canberra, 1992) p. 131; see also *FT*, 13 July 1994, p.12.
40. *Ibid.*, 30 April 1991, p. 1.
41. E. Dean and S. Ritova, *Rabuka: No Other Way* (Sydney, 1988) pp. 128-129. In November 1987 the Unit seized four Marine Department vessels and two Fisheries vessels donated by the Japanese government. The seizures were to enable the Army to replace existing produce merchants trading with outlying islands and provide government authorities with essential commodities, supposedly at lower prices. They also formed part of the Army's then proposed strategy of replacing Mara's Interim government with a military regime lasting for a period of 10 to 15 years. The strategy was first mooted in March 1988 and repeated in May 1989 after Mara suggested that he might not seek office when his government's two-year period ended. However, during 1989, the viability of the Army's economic project, in particular its Auxiliary Unit, appeared increasingly doubtful. A proposed joint venture to produce chop sticks at Vatuwaqa collapsed (*FT*, 3 May 1989, p. 9) and at Labasa it came under attack from Macuata chiefs for occupying buildings on a site which the chiefs wished to develop into a new shopping complex. Former Taukeist spokesperson, Ratu Meli Vesikula, claimed that the Unit was simply a device to permit the Army's increased size to be maintained (Interview with author, Melbourne, 9 August 1989). By the end of 1991 the Unit, which had merged with the National Marketing Authority, was under attack for alleged mismanagement of funds. Rabuka's military successors seem keen to scale down its operations (*ibid.*, 9 November 1991, p.3; *Labour Lines*, December 1991, p. 5).
42. Callick: 13. In May 1991 when Stone returned to Australia, Westpac joined its hitherto Suva-based Pacific Island Division with its Asia-Pacific group administered from Sydney and reduced the number of expatriate staff in Suva accordingly. When asked 'if the shuffle reflected the bank's opinion of future stability in Fiji [a bank representative responded with] ... a giggle' (*IB*, June 1991, p. 8).
43. *FT*, 22 April 1989, p. 24.
44. *Ibid.*, 17 September 1994, p.11.
45. S. Prasad, 'Tax-Free Zones and National Development', in S. Prasad (ed), *Coup and Crisis: Fiji - A Year Later*, Melbourne, Arena, p. 44.
46. *IB*, February 1989, p. 9.
47. Prasad, p. 44.
48. FTIB Report, 1989, p. 1.
49. *IB*, February 1989, p. 15; see also Olgivie, p. 10.
50. Prasad, p. 45.
51. C. Slatter, 'Women Factory Workers in Fiji: The 'Half A Loaf' Syndrome', *Journal of Pacific Studies*, Suva, 13 (1987), pp. 55-56.
52. *Ibid.*
53. *FT*, 26 February 1986, p. 1.
54. Slatter, 'Women Factory Workers in Fiji', p. 56.
55. *FT*, 23 August 1986, p. 3.
56. *Ibid.*, 25 October 1985, p. 1.
57. Robertson and Tamanisau, *Shattered Coups*, p. 23.
58. Slatter, 'Women Factory Workers', p. 54.
59. C.E. Harrington argues that in some factories over one third of women are sole income earners supporting families ('The Empire has no Clothes: The Experience of Fiji's Garment Workers in Global Context', MA Thesis, University of Hawai'i, 1994, p.54).
60. *Fiji Sun (FS)*, 9 August 1986, p. 8; J. Bryant, *Urban Poverty and the Environment in the South Pacific* (Arncliffe, 1993) pp. 74, 80-81.
61. *FT*, 27 June 1986, p. 9.
62. Classic Apparel reported 20 % absenteeism in 1990 (*Business Review Weekly*, 18 September 1992, p.67) while Harrington records a 50% turnover for Singapore based Ghim Li Fashions, Fiji's largest garment manufacturer after 1990 (Harrington, p. 35).

63. *FS*, 3 June 1986, p. 9. An accountant reported to the Garment Tribunal that wages comprised only 19 per cent of costs (or 10 per cent of the retail price) compared with 54 per cent for materials. The remainder was due to finance, administration and marketing. His report was based upon an investigation of 18 manufacturers, 16 of whom has never had their accounts audited. He claimed that most manufacturers retained their profits, giving loans to shareholders rather than reinvesting in the industry (*ibid.*, 4 June 1986, p. 9).
64. W. Narsey, 'What's the Plight of Women Garment Workers?' *FS*, 10 November 1985, pp. 6-7.
65. *FT*, 26 January 1987, p. 8.
66. Mahendra Chaudhry alleged that the government had been wooed by the factory owners; Mara was said to have dined with a group of garment manufacturers prior to the government backdown (*ibid.*, 25 July 1986, p. 3). Lautoka Lawyer, Bhupendra Patel, claimed in March 1987 that garment manufacturers had funded the Alliance's re-election campaign to the tune of \$52,000 in return for its dropping minimum wage legislation (*ibid.*, 27 March 1987, p. 9).
67. *FS*, 4 June 1986, p. 9.
68. *FT*, 13 May 1986, p. 3.
69. R. Chandra, 'Fiji and the New International Division of Labour: A Study of the Tax Free System', paper delivered to the 1988 International Geographers Union Congress, Sydney, 20-25 August 1988, p. 23.
70. These reasons were given by David Enfield of Farah Manufactures Australia Pty Ltd and Andrew McGrouther of Waltons Bond Ltd (*FT*, 27 June 1986, p. 9).
71. W.M. Sutherland, 'Microstates and Unequal Trade in the South Pacific: The SPARTECA Agreement of 1980', *Journal of World Trade Law*, 20 (3: May/June 1986), pp. 313-328.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 327. Because most of that 50 per cent value is made up of imported fabric costs, producers tend to restrict wages in an effort to maintain the rules of origin.
73. *FS*, 7 June 1986; The FTIB claimed in 1989 that its quota had been increased to 87,000 units (FTIB Report, 1989, p. 13).
74. Interview with William McCabe, South Pacific Commissioner, Sydney, 18 August 1989; *FT*, 23 April 1994, p.11.
75. *FT*, 4 May 1989, p. 1; *Pacific Islands Monthly (PIM)*, July 1989, p.32. At the end of 1988, 27 companies were exporting \$150,000 of garments to New Zealand each week (FTIB Report, p. 13).
76. *FT*, 13 May 1991, p. 1. See also *PIM*, November 1991, p. 46.
77. *FT*, 10 April 1991, p. 1; 13 Jan 1992, p. 2.
78. R. Cole and H. Hughes, *The Fiji Economy, May 1987: Problems and Prospects* (Canberra, 1988) p. 74.
79. In 1990 44% of all garments went to New Zealand, 24 % to the United States, and 22 % to Australia. During 1991 New Zealand's proportion fell to 29% and that of the US rose to 36% (*FT*, 13 January 1992, p. 2). Between 1989 and 1992 exports to New Zealand fell 65% (*ibid.*, 15 May 1993, p.13).
80. *Ibid.*, 9 April 1990, p. 3, and 13 January 1992, p. 2; Exports of night wear to the US rose from 14,382 dozen garments in 1988 to 75,010 in 1989, and to 135,000 in 1990. US retaliation was successful even though Fiji is not a member of GATT's Multi Fibre Agreement which enables such settlements.
81. *Ibid.*, 22 May 1991, p. 1.
82. *Ibid.*, 25 June 1991, p. 1.
83. *FV*, 18 (May/June 1991), p. 11.
84. *Ibid.*, 17 (Mar 1991), p. 7.
85. *FT*, 20 March 1993, pp. 10-11; Ema Druavesi claims that the Union now has 2000 members, although not all are financial members. Because the union has been unable to visit members regularly and attend to their needs, it has lost support and given employers greater opportunities to abuse Fiji's employment laws, see Druavesi, 'Women in the Garment Industry: Problems and Progress' in Maybin, *Women and Work*, p.86.
86. M.E. Hurtado, 'US Trades on the Work Ethic', *South*, August 1989, pp. 29-30.
87. *FT*, 30 April 1994, p. 11.
88. Ogilvie, p. 8.
89. *FT*, 19 June 1991, p. 2.
90. L. Mackoon, 'Planned Free Trade Zones Under Attack', *ibid.*, 21 July 1988, p. 2.
91. M.E. Hurtado, 'The Human Factor', *South*, July 1989, pp. 37-38.

92. C. Joe, 'Industrialisation and the Garment Industry in the South Pacific', unpublished manuscript, University of the South Pacific, 1990, pp. 10-11; *FT*, 17 September 1994, p.1; Slatter, 'Economic Policy', p.29.

93. *Ibid.*, 11 August 1994, p.5.

94. *Ibid.*, 7 August 1993, p.9; *Business Review Weekly*, 18 September 1992, pp.64-67.

95. *FT*, 9 May 1991, p.3. A 1985 study found that 50% of the nation's income was earned by only 10% of its population, 76% by 30% of the population. In contrast 60% of the population earned less than 9% of income, with the bottom 10% earning only 1% of income.

96. R. Chandra, 'Fiji's Tax-Free System', Pacific Islands Development Program Report, Hawai'i: East-West Center, 1990, p.174.

97. *FT.*, 8 June 1991, p. 1.

98. *Ibid.*, 19 June 1991, p.2. Eidsvig argued that reducing duty rates without first obtaining similar concessions from major export destinations has 'only negative effects. That cannot lead to anything else but higher imports, increased consumption of foreign goods, increased pressure on the trade balance and weakened industry. Consequently one may also expect imports to increase'. Eidsvig also argued that the isolation of TFFs from internal markets should be ended by abolishing or significantly reducing the high minimum export qualification. 'One therefore would like to promote and give incentives in the same degree to industries manufacturing for the local market as to export-oriented industry'. His comments appeared to give weight to criticisms from the import substitution lobby about the extent and rate of deregulation. Hari Punja, boss of the Fiji Flour Mills, predicts 'an end of industries in Fiji ... we'll be left with only mines, sugar and timber'. He believes that deregulation has a place, but only within the national economy. His opponent in this regard is the biscuit manufacturer, Robert Lee, who argues that in the past protection created expensive and inefficient monopolies which inhibited the growth of manufacturing (D.Sharma, 'Punja versus Sharma: The Great Deregulation Debate', *IB*, March 1991, pp. 16-18).

99. *FT*, 27 August 1994, p.13.



# Does Independence Make a Difference? Land Policy in PNG, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Fiji

*Peter Larmour*

By comparing land policies in four countries before and after independence I will try to answer the question, does independence make a difference? By 'independence' I mean the formal transfer of authority from a colonial government to a local successor (recognising that various other forms of dependence may continue, and new ones be created). The differences I am looking for are in the outputs of government (land legislation and other activity), and their impact on the pattern of land ownership in society.

Nationalists, almost by definition, expect that independence will make a difference, and allow the expression of national, rather than foreign, ideas, and the satisfaction of national interests. Others look for more structural reasons for continuity. Perhaps persistent class conflict made constitutional changes superficial. Maybe underlying resource constraints, or the country's subordinate location in the international system, reduced the room for manoeuvre. But it may be that independence was never meant to make a difference, as in the principle of the 'through train' that governed British agreements with China over the transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong. Or it made a difference to state structures, without affecting particular policies, or the wider economy and society.

To ask if independence made a difference may be the wrong question. It may be better understood as a symbolic or expressive event, than as something that would lead to changes in particular government policies, or something as fundamental as land tenure relationships, at least in the short term. 'Independence' was quite a different thing in each country: it reflected local circumstances, and so cannot be talked about in a general way. Or it may simply be too soon to tell. Fiji, for example, only started registering customary land in 1911, after false starts that went back to 1880, but took decades to complete.

I am particularly interested in land and independence for the light it might shed on the role and character of the state, and its relationship to the local society. Liberals typically believe state and society can and should be kept distinct. There is a long running debate among Marxist scholars about the 'relative autonomy' of the capitalist state in general,<sup>1</sup> and in the third world particularly.<sup>2</sup>

Scholars in a Weberian tradition have recovered the idea of the state as an actor, with its own distinct interests, relating sideways to other states as well as downwards to the society it governs.<sup>3</sup> Independence may change the relationship between state and society, by making state elites more, or less, able to achieve their purposes against local resistance.<sup>4</sup>

These classical social scientific perspectives need to be supplemented with others that have arisen in response to them, or from different intellectual traditions. Rather than liberalism's separation of state from society, nationalists tend to invoke a more organic or expressive relationship between the two. Outside the European tradition, paternalistic or familial models of state-society relations are often invoked. What Manor<sup>5</sup> calls the 'theatrical and imaginary dimensions' of the state-society relationship are particularly significant at independence, which is - if nothing else - a moment of high political drama.

Land policy was a salient issue during colonial rule and at independence in Melanesia. Marxist and liberal political economy agree that the creation and destruction of property rights are a profound form of state intervention in society. Weberians like Migdal see customary land tenure as a site of resistance to state elites. Nationalists see land as the site of conflict between indigenous and foreign interests. Land also involves kinship, and symbolism - 'the mother of the people'. Hence it is a policy area in which we might expect independence to have made a difference, and it would be significant if it did not.

In each of the four countries, colonial policy had created three broad categories of land: customary or native land; freehold; and land owned by the government. Alienated land had been bought or taken from customary, traditional or native ownership, and was now held according to statute. However, intermediate arrangements, such as leases of customary land, or trust boards in dealing in land on behalf of traditional owners, tend to blur the distinction between custom and statute. Kamikamica, for example, describes the process whereby Fiji's Native Land Trust Board leases native land as a process of 'alienation of land from customary tenure for leasing',<sup>6</sup> and so Table 3 shows two figures for land alienation in Fiji,



including and excluding the NLTB leases. Registration of native land, most extensively in Fiji, also blurred the distinction between custom and statute. Meanwhile, some alienated land is now owned by Melanesians, but they are not necessarily related to the traditional owners, and do not hold it according to custom.

The comparative method uses countries as cases in several ways. It can illuminate a particular country, by reference to others. Or it can show how the case is an instance of a general tendency, such as 'development', or the effect of an encompassing system ('colonialism' or 'the world economy'). Or - most difficult - it can use a number of cases to look for patterns of variation among their characteristics. Thus for example we can understand land alienation in country X by comparing it with its neighbours, but our main interest remains country X. Or we can see land alienation in country X as the instance of a more general tendency (displacement of indigenous people) or as an effect of a more encompassing system (the British and French empires). Finally we can treat country X as just one of a number of cases in which land alienation may be causally linked with other factors within that country, such as the type of political system. We would be interested in the relationship between these factors, rather than country X as such.

The evidence in Tables 1- 5 allows us to use comparison in each of these ways. It helps to make sense of what happened in Vanuatu, for example, by comparing it with Fiji or Solomon Islands. We can also explain what happened as instance of a general tendency ('development' or 'indigenous revival') by reference to more encompassing systems - 'the French empire', or 'the world economy'. Or we can treat Vanuatu as one of a set of cases that allows us to test propositions like 'independence makes a difference', but any correlations we find need some theory of independence to explain them.

Table 1 shows whether and when particular policies were adopted in each country. Policies adopted after independence are shown in bold. Table 2 shows the proportion of land alienated in each country, and Table 3 the proportion of native or customary land that was registered. Table 4 shows the distribution of ownership of alienated land in three periods: colonial, just before independence, and just after (the precise dates were determined by the availability of data). Table 5 presents the data in Table 4 as 'winners' and 'losers' from the

redistributions of ownership between these three periods.

The categories 'Melanesian' and 'foreign' in Table 4 are adaptations of earlier, racist, official distinctions between natives and Europeans which were enforced in land policy. Colonial land policy in Fiji similarly distinguished between indigenous Fijians and others. Official statistics also do not generally allow us to make distinctions of equal political or theoretical importance, as for example between the class position of owners, the region they come from, their chiefly rank or their gender.

Generally, Table 1 deals with the outputs of government - policies adopted and laws passed. Tables 2-5 deal with the impact of these policies on the ownership of land, but other factors, such as commodity prices, bank lending policies, would affect the outcome. Policies were sometimes quite irrelevant to what was happening on the ground, particularly at independence.

Some alienated land in each country was simply taken directly by Melanesians, in PNG, Solomon Islands and particularly in Vanuatu, in spite of government policy.

**Table 1: Late Colonial and Independent Land Policies**

	Papua New Guinea	Solomon Islands	Vanuatu	Fiji
Registration of Customary Land	YES from 1950s	YES 1959 - 1970s	NO	YES since 1880
Surrenders undeveloped alienated land	YES	YES	YES from 1970s	NO?
Subdivision controls on freeholds	1 case (Wuvulu)	YES from 1972	YES from 1971	NO?
Trust Boards	NO	YES (1962-5)	YES (1974-80)	YES from 1940
Compulsory Acquisition of native land for mining etc	YES (Bougainville)	YES (Rennell & Guadalcanal)	NO	NO
Plantation Repurchases for Traditional owners	YES from 1974	YES from 1971	1 case (Bonkovia)	few cases (eg Lovoni)
Plantation Distribution to Smallholders	YES (eg Popondetta)	YES (eg Fiu Kelakwai)	NO	NO
Prohibition on foreign ownership of freehold	YES for new purchasers after 1974	YES 1977	YES 1980	NO
Compensation to Traditional Owners	YES from 1970s and by law after 1977	NO	NO	NO
Substitute leases for Freeholders	YES on dealing after 1976	YES automatic in 1977	YES but only automatic in towns	NO
Compensation for Freeholders	YES but not for conversion to leases	NO	YES but very limited by law after 1982	YES strong legal protections
New leases from Traditional Owners	NO	YES from 1970s	YES (eg cocoa on Malakula)	YES through NLTB (eg Uhusaivou, Yalavou, Pine Scheme)

Source: P. Larmour, 'The return of Alienated Land in Independent Melanesia' in H. Reynolds and R. Nile, (eds) *Indigenous Rights in the Pacific and North America: Race and Nation in the Late Twentieth Century* (London, 1992) p. 181; Kamikamica 1987.

**Table 2: Alienated Land Before and After Independence**

	before (% total)	after (% total)
Papua New Guinea	3	3
Solomon Islands	12	13
Vanuatu	41	0
Fiji		
(a) not including NLTB leases	17	18
(b) including NLTB leases	34	35

Sources: Larmour 1992, p. 182; Kamikamica 1987, p. 226; R. Ward, 'Land, Land Use and Land Availability in Fiji' in H. C. Brookfield et al *Land Cane and Coconuts: Papers on the Rural Economy of Fiji* (Canberra, 1985) p. 29.

**Table 3: Registration of Native or Customary Land**

	Number of Titles Registered	Registered land as % of Native Land
PNG	737	less than 1 %
Solomon Islands	576	less than 1 %
Vanuatu	none	none
Fiji	na	nearly 100 %

Source: Larmour, 'Customary Land Registration in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu' Occasional Paper 86/4 (Port Moresby, 1986); Kamikamica 1987

**Table 4: Ownership of Alienated Land (as percentage of total alienated)**

	Colonial	Before Independence	After Independence
<b>Papua New Guinea</b>	(1965)	(1973)	(1978)
Foreign	17	11	7
Melanesian	0	0	3
State	83	89	90
<b>Solomon Islands</b>	(1956)	(1974)	(1980)
Foreign	71	14	0
Melanesian	0	19	33
State	29	67	67
<b>Vanuatu</b>	(1968)	(1976)	(1981)
Foreign	88	82	0
Melanesian	1	4	100
State	11	13	0
<b>Fiji</b>			(1981)
Foreign	na	na	(....
ethnic Fijian	na	na	( 46
ethnic Indian	na	na	(....
State	na	na	53

Sources: Larmour 1983: 183; Ward 1985, p. 29.

Table 5: Winners and Losers of Alienated Land

	Late Colonial		Independence	
	Winners	Losers	Winners	Losers
Papua New Guinea		Foreign (-6)		Foreign (-4)
			Melanesian (+3)	
	State (+6)		State (+1)	
Solomon Islands		Foreign (-57)		Foreign (-14)
	Melanesian (+19)		Melanesian (+14)	
	State (+38)			
Vanuatu		Foreign (-6)		Foreign (-82)
	Melanesian (+3)		Melanesian (+96)	
	State (+2)			State (-13)
Fiji	na	na	na	na

Source: Table 3. Some percentages do not total 100 because of rounding

Table 1 shows quite a limited repertoire of policies. Of the 12 policies identified only one (retrospective compensation to traditional owners) was not tried in at least one other country. Some of this similarity is explainable by borrowing or contagion of ideas, or the countries' relation to an overarching system of British colonial rule, with its own orthodoxies. Once the pattern was set by early colonial land alienation, and official attempts to restrain it, state elites seem to have been presented with a relatively narrow range of possibilities. Possibilities exhausted before independence were not available afterwards.

Fiji shows the narrowest range of policies adopted (ie the most 'NO's), and the fewest changes associated with independence itself. Vanuatu also had a fairly minimal colonial policy of protecting freehold rights and (unlike Fiji)

ignoring customary land. But Vanuatu broke absolutely with its past at independence, when the government deliberately interpreted the constitutional provision that 'all land belongs to the indigenous custom owners' as if it abolished all precolonial titles. It left former freeholders with the tenuous right to be first in the queue to negotiate substitute leases with the custom owners, if they could be identified, and the ultimate right to limited compensation for improvements, if negotiations failed. The Vanuatu government's approach was largely determined by urgent political circumstances: widespread, irreversible occupations of plantations on the one hand, and settler backed secession on the other.

PNG and Solomon Islands fell between these two extremes. In PNG there was considerable conflict over land legislation, and

violent confrontations around Rabaul. Settler interests were still powerful. In Solomon Islands the state reached an accommodation with the largest foreign freeholder, Unilever, that essentially exchanged loss of freehold rights for government investment in a joint venture project to rehabilitate plantations. Solomon Islands had also begun a plantation purchase program several years earlier, taking the heat of particular pieces of land.

Independence brought some new ideas: PNG and Solomon Islands toyed with different forms of registration. Fiji devised more inventive joint ventures on customary land. Vanuatu probably made the sharpest intellectual break with its past, devising new forms of title such as 'public land' and insisting on reconstructing its title system from the ground up, rather than (as in PNG and Solomon Islands) tinkering at the edges or (in Fiji) leaving well alone. However the interpretation of Vanuatu's constitution and land legislation, through routine official and judicial action, seems to have become more conventional, though the hybrid Anglo/French/customary basis of law in Vanuatu makes unorthodoxy easier.

Table 4 shows the magnitude and direction of precolonial changes in land ownership that anticipated the changes that took place at independence. Data is not available for Fiji. Foreign ownership was already falling fast in PNG and Solomon Islands (and to a much lesser extent in Vanuatu). The state was emerging as the major player in Solomon Islands, and its share survived independence.

Melanesians had a much larger stake in the system of alienated land before independence in Solomon Islands (67%) than in PNG (0%) and Vanuatu (4%).

There was less change after than before independence. In PNG the national government made minor amendments to land legislation in 1987, making it easier to register customary land and use it as security for loans, while the East Sepik provincial government introduced legislation for a strongly state supervised system of customary land registration.

Table 5, 'winners and losers' tries to show the directions of flow of ownership in these two periods. Everywhere except Fiji, for which the figures are not available, the flow of ownership was from foreigners to Melanesians. The flow was already established in Solomon Islands, and independence only really made a difference in Vanuatu, where a shift of 3 percentage points before independence became a massive transfer of 96 points afterwards, and PNG where there was no

shift before independence and a shift of only 3 percentage points afterwards.

The state was a beneficiary of transfers of alienated land before and after independence in PNG, before independence in Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, and a loser after independence in Vanuatu. In PNG state ownership stayed high, and even grew to 90% of all alienated land after independence. In Solomon Islands it started lower, but grew to two thirds of all alienated land before independence, and kept that share afterwards. In Fiji the state owned about half of all alienated land after independence (figures before are not available). In Vanuatu, state ownership was much lower, and fell to zero at independence. 'The state' is not like a smallholder, or a plantation company. Here it becomes important how we conceptualise it.

'The state' is not an owner like others. In some ways its ownership is simply formal, as lessor to a company or small holders who are the effective beneficiaries of ownership. In some cases, such as Solomon Islands at independence, state ownership is transitional. The government presented itself as holding land on behalf of its traditional owners, until they could be properly identified and handed it back. Or more generally, it claims to be owning land in a wider public interests, which may include a public interest in lower taxes, which would have to be raised if the state gave up leasing its land to raise budget revenue.

Preoccupation with formal ownership may underrate the role of the state in land ownership. Fiji's Native Land Trust Board, for example, is indubitably a state instrumentality, and while it consults traditional owners, and pays them some of the rents it raises, it is in many important ways the effective owner of the land it leases. If these leases are counted in, then 'the state' in Fiji effectively owns about a third of the land. State banks with mortgages over freehold land also have some of the attributes of owners. More generally, as MacWilliam<sup>7</sup> argues, 'the state' was involved in providing the conditions for subsistence production, and reproduction, on customary land - labour regulations that tried to conserve village life, education and (latterly) technical assistance, and infrastructure.

To explain the differences we need to turn to the more general theories of state-society relationships introduced at the start of this paper. Patterns of variation do not speak for themselves - they require explanation. Different kinds of explanation highlight different parts of the pattern.

Liberals would notice the persistence of property rights through independence, in spite of shifts in who owned them, and the continuing state interest in registering customary land. The transformation of complex, ambiguous and overlapping rights to land into simple, clear and distinct titles, backed up by courts, is a classic liberal project. It facilitates liberals' preferred regime of self interested private trading, in which the state only get involves to correct market failure and enforce contracts.

Marxist scholars have always been reluctant to ascribe much independent agency to 'the state', preferring to see it implicated in overarching class conflicts. Like liberals, they would notice the persistence of property rights through independence, in spite of changes in ownership. They would Marxists be surprised that PNG's plantation redistribution scheme was starved of support, and eventually halted, in favour of encouraging the sale of plantations as going concerns to Melanesian capitalists. Similarly the Solomon Islands state protected Unilvever's vast plantations from being handed back to traditional owners in Solomon Islands, and instead invested in a joint venture to redevelop them. In these cases the state was clearly acting in the long term interests of capital-in-general, even if it meant a few particular capitalists lost out.

However, there was no simple determination of policy by bourgeois class interests. It was a close run thing in PNG and Solomon Islands, where there was strong pressure to break up plantations, or simply return them to descendants of the original owners, who might not have the desire or ability to redevelop them. In Vanuatu and to a lesser extent Solomon Islands many plantations were simply taken over, and the government had neither the desire nor the ability to evict squatters.

Marxist explanations are also sensitive to the big picture - changes in the world economy that may affect the outcomes in particular countries (thus Marxism involves the third type of comparison referred to above of explaining particular cases as effects of a more encompassing system). It may be no accident that independence was during the 1970s, the high water mark of the post war boom, while the period of post colonial policy inactivity was the 1980s when, throughout the world, markets were favoured over states.

Weberians often identify the state with the elites who seek to direct it. Studies of the implementation of (precolonial) land registration schemes<sup>8</sup> and (post-colonial) plantation

redistribution schemes in PNG show an enormous gap between what state elites propose, and what junior officials do in the field. Policy is frequently captured by local sub-elites, and systems of decentralisation adopted at independence in PNG and Solomon Islands (but not Vanuatu and Fiji) allow this capture. So much so that the initiative for customary land registration in PNG during the 1980s passed partly to provincial level, with one Provincial government introducing its own legislation. A Weberian focus on state elites also raises questions of public and private duty, the relationship between bureaucratic culture and the surrounding societal culture, and the temptations available to officials to use state power to benefit themselves and their families. In PNG and Solomon Islands there have been allegations of corruption in the allocation of government land, particularly high value sites in urban areas, or during sell-offs of government housing.

Weberian theorists of 'bringing the state back in' also note the relationship between the state's external relations and its domestic relations with society. The end of budgetary transfers, and the rise of foreign aid after independence put pressure on the states to raise more domestic revenue, and hence brought them into potential conflict with taxpayers. Revenue is a clear example of the state having interests of its own that may be different from particular taxpayers, or even 'capital in general'. Much of the expansion of the role of the state as landowner in Solomon Islands particularly had to do with the perceived urgency of securing land for revenue raising. Similar pressures came from Vanuatu's National Planning Office at independence, but were resisted in favour of fulfilling constitutional requirements and political pressures to 'return land'.

There were strong nationalist reactions to liberalism: Solomon Islands started no new land registration schemes after the early 1970s, and in Vanuatu a widespread rural revolt led the government to abandon support for statutory property rights outside the two towns.

A nationalist would notice that Melanesians benefited from once-off transfers of alienated land from foreigners in PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. But it is less easy to see a nationalist explanation for the inactivity thereafter. Here we might distinguish three aspects of the nationalist picture of state-society relations. First, as we have seen, nationalists see the state in expressive terms, and expect the independent state to express 'our ideas'. Another aspect of nationalism is more material: foreigners had the

good life, now its 'our turn'. Nationalists tend to explain lack of change in personal rather than structural terms, as the consequence of betrayal by an unauthentic or corrupt leadership, excessively influenced by its foreign advisers. Or they look to a smaller political unit that will be better able to express the aspirations of the society the state claims to govern.

While there is much of this disappointed nationalist talk in Melanesia, the evidence from land policy is of a substantial shift in favour of Melanesian ownership of alienated land, on the basis of 'our turn'. And it may be significant that the pressure for 'our ideas' - particularly new ways of registering land - came from the provincial rather than the national level, particularly the East Sepik Provincial Government.

Why were changes in land policy before, or at, independence followed by so few changes afterwards? There are several possible explanations.

First, land policy may have been displaced from the agenda by more pressing concerns, such as forestry or mining policy, where there was considerable legislative activity. The late colonial activity in (particularly) Solomon Islands suggests that in some ways Independence was the culmination of the colonial period of land policy, rather than the inauguration of a national phase.

Second, independence itself may have had a conservative effect, bringing the separate colonies under a common international regime. The 1980s, as we have seen, were a period of global retrenchment of state activity.

Third, there are a number of possible political explanations for policy inactivity. Governments in PNG and Solomon Islands have always been coalitions. Vanuatu, formerly the exemplar of party government, has become increasingly governed by coalitions, and Fiji looks to be heading in the same direction. Coalitions are perhaps less likely to embark on controversial initiatives. Even if they embark on them they may not be able to follow through. Turnovers of governments, individual ministers, and department heads have been high, particularly in PNG, encouraging the reversal and abandonment of predecessors' initiatives. The introduction of systems of provincial government, and the uncertain location of 'land' in the division of powers, has also not encouraged central initiatives, though it has made local initiatives, like the east Sepik's, possible.

MacWilliam<sup>9</sup> explained the absence of new legislation in PNG in political terms. Apart from

tidying up the legislation passed just before independence, there has been no new legislation proposed in Vanuatu since the early 1980s (though the return of freehold has been floated in election campaigns, Van Trease: pers comm). Nor has Solomon Islands legislation been changed since 1977, though as in PNG there have been proposals for new forms of customary land registration.<sup>10</sup>

Independence was a constitutional change, but also it was often associated with a political crisis, not exactly contemporary, in which the withdrawal of colonial government forced new domestic alignments (as between a national bourgeoisie and smallholders, in MacWilliam's account). It also might shake loose established interest groups, such as Chambers of Commerce, until they made their peace with the new leadership. In Vanuatu independence was much more of a clean break, but early decisions may establish coalitions of interests that are hard to dislodge in future. The Fiji coups have provided a opportunity for political realignments, such as the collapse of the Alliance Party, and the support of the Labour party for Rabuka's candidacy as Prime Minister.

The idea of an historic compromise expresses the idea that state structures reflect underlying social and economic forces, but that these have to be expressed (by parties etc) in a form that can admit of compromise. It also suggests that there are pressures to keep to the agreement once reached, but that at some point it may need to be renegotiated. The idea of an historic compromise also appears in accounts of land in Fiji's independence constitution, at least until the 1987 coup that let loose some muffled Fijian criticism of the role of the NLTB, and the renewal of (mainly Indian) leases. It may be better to look for Fiji's historic compromise over land back to the 1940s, and the establishment of the NLTB. If so, the events of 1987 perhaps marked the breakdown of this historic compromise, and the beginning of a search for a new settlement between of the forces at work in Fijian society.

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# Institutional Transfer and Industrial Dispute Settlement in Independent PNG

*James Gissua*

Like most other countries with a colonial past Papua New Guinea inherited many social, economic and political institutions from its coloniser, Australia. The introduction of these institutions was made under the pretext that they constituted a more 'civilized' form of behaviour and thus were good for the colonized. It was only after independence that indigenous governments were able to free themselves from the shackles of colonialism and decide for themselves what they wanted of those institutions. One of these institutions in the case of PNG is the industrial relations system based on the Australian model. Of particular interest here are the workings of its dispute settlement mechanisms, how they appear on paper and what actually occurs at the work place.

The paper has four sections. In the first the concept of 'institutional transfer' is investigated with a view to showing that colonial transfer of institutions was usually based on a common assumption of 'solving' certain problems. The second part relates to the adoption which this institutions underwent in its new environment. The third section focuses on contemporary development involving some examples of disputes in which the formal system is seen at work, which the formal system was seen at work, while the final section presents some tentative conclusions about the dispute settlement process in the post colonial milieu.

## **Institutional Transfer**

While there might be several perspectives on the concept of *institutions* it is generally understood as basic to sociology (Friedland, 1964, 1969: 4; Toynbee, 1947; Maclver, 1942; Parsons, 1960). Definitions of the concept might include a number of approaches, particularly from the disciplines such as politics, anthropology and sociology. Daniel Lerner's (1964: 3), obviously from a sociological perspective, considered institutions as: 'behavioural patterns performed by people whose goal is to enhance as much as possible the values which they hold important.'

Lerner states that the process of creating an institution or an aspect of it involves the use of available skills and knowledge upon 'raw materials' at hand. The main object of this process essentially

is one of conversion. Accordingly, an institution is a finished product of this process. In other words, it is an end product of a particular raw material after it has undergone an adjustment process and forms a set pattern of behaviour in a society. In short Lerner states, 'an institution is a code of rational, routine activity'. In this sense Western and all other cultures had their own respective social institutions. Given these distinct behavioural patterns, an imposition of Western institutions on other cultures often causes great difficulties.

Apter (1955: 274) and Lerner (1964: 8), state that the use of the concept 'institutional transfer' might be misleading in that so often the concept is treated by scholars as if recipient cultures accept Western institutions readily. Instead Lerner preferred the phrase 'communication of codes' as more appropriate. The basis of this argument was that the process by which behavioural codes of one socio-culture are communicated to another is an act of intrusion. The term transfer was rejected because it failed to convey the disruption and often the violence that took place in the process. This is an important point in the sense that the industrial dispute settlement process, as part of the industrial relations system, was established in Territory of Papua and New Guinea (TPNG) by the colonial administration to protect the interests of industry and a handful of capitalists although many of them argued that there was no need for such legislations (Department of Labour and Employment, 1962: 8-9). Obviously, this development took place with little regard for the views of the small percentage of indigenes in employment at that time.

Friedland (1969) analysed the early development stages of the British model of trade unionism in Tanganyika within the context of institutional transfer. He saw institutions as consisting of well established, understood, and organized patterns of behaviour that fulfil certain functions for groups in society as a whole. Both Friedland (1969: 4) and Lerner (1964: 7) mention the fact that while Western institutions were codified, those of most non-Western cultures were the products of centuries of 'lived through experience'. Obviously, PNG's institutions fitted in the latter group.

The process of institutional transfer occurs when institutions are taken from one socio-cultural context to another. Many former colonies have inherited the institutions of their colonisers through this process. When interpreted into physical material, institutions become buildings, machines and personnel. When interpreted as non-physical material however, the concept relates to rituals, structures, ideas, rules of conduct and behaviour. For my purpose the important point is that it is specifically the non-physical elements Friedland saw as being subject to transfer:

it is not the institution that is transferred but the idea that actors have of the institution. ...unions were not brought from England to Africa; instead a set of ideas about a constellation of roles organised to carry on particular activities and solve certain problems was transferred (Friedland, 1969: 4).

A major problem for such a concept, and more specific to the industrial dispute settlement process, is that the possession of institutions or indeed ideas was not just the prerogative of the colonial 'mastas'. The colonised had institutions of their own, as well as ideas about practical activities and problem solving which had evolved over centuries before the arrival of colonial administrators. For some 'western' scholars this is easily explained by way of convergence theory, which holds that the more nations 'develop' the more similar they became until presumably they all become no more than adaptations of the American model (Kerr *et al.*: 1962; Kerr, 1983). Alternative paradigms vary from the intricacies of the *New Left* debate on the articulation of the modes of production (Foster-Carter, 1978) to a dual history of institutions in colonial situations driven by both the necessities of colonisers and the colonised (Rey, 1973).

Here two major points need to be carried forward. The first is that the Australian industrial relations system was transferred to the TPNG as part of core institutions of colonial administration. The core institutions vital to the process of transfer obviously pertain to the legislature, judiciary, military, administration and the economic system. An important point however, is that these institutions are part and parcel of the over-all

process of transfer and hence, an institution in a new environment ought to be viewed in the context of the existence of others. Lerner (1964: 26) makes an important point that there is little chance of one institution surviving in a new environment without the existence of all others. In this sense the industrial relations system was part of the overall socio-political and economic development process formulated by the colonial administration. Obviously, it was intended to settle potential industrial disputes in the capitalist production process. Hence, its effectiveness depended on the existence and prosperity of other institutions such as the schools, judiciary, legislature, police, plantations and economic system.

The second point is that the formal industrial dispute settlement process, within the industrial relations framework, is a Western institution that most PNG workers come into contact with in a tangible way in the course of their employment. Every worker at one time or other finds himself/herself in situations where concerns about hours of work, overtime, rates of pay or annual leave become the focus of attention. Many unskilled and semi-skilled workers have encountered the formal dispute settlement process for the first time when a grievance occurs between themselves and their employer. Of course given PNG's diverse ethnic and cultural differences, many of these workers were accustomed to their own traditional methods of resolving disputes. They were often confronted with much confusion and uncertainty as to which of the approaches they should adhere to. The term 'cognitive dissonance' often used by psychologists to describe an emotional state of the mind when two conflicting beliefs pose a challenge (Tiffin and McCormick, 1965: 345-346; Reber, 1985: 129) appropriately describes this situation. In this sense it means that PNG workers often find themselves in a confused psychological state between two different socio-cultural modes of behaviour.

### Industrial Dispute Settlement Process

In the history of industrial regulation we often see major changes coming about as a result of confrontation. So in Europe, Australia and New Zealand new industrial relations systems were established after periods of major disputation (Bamber and Snape, 1987: 42; Lansbury and Davis, 1987: 112-113). In PNG the earliest record of collective industrial action by workers comes from Rabaul in 1929 (Willis, 1970; Gammage, 1975). Although a major event, the Rabaul Strike

did not cause the colonial authorities to seek special industrial legislation. A possible explanation for the inaction could lie in the disbelief that such sophisticated behaviour could ever be the making of an unsophisticated group of native workers. The colonial authorities could have considered the strike as a 'one off incident' instigated by foreign sailors on transit in Rabaul.

In PNG rather than a sharp confrontation it was gradual social and economic change which created the conditions for the introduction of specific industrial legislation (Hess, 1983: 58-64). In terms of international comparisons the TPNG Administration's view of this lack of legislation in the 1950s is similar to the response of the Donovan Commission in Britain or the Hancock Committee in Australia. That is to say it was a response to slow structural change rather than to a particular crisis. Australia had not clung on to the Territory for economic reasons but rather for strategic interests (Mair, 1948: 112). There was no industrial activity of any significance that might create potential industrial problems and thus, there was no impetus to review existing colonial labour policy.

So in the case of TPNG there were no clear reasons for the introduction of the conciliation and arbitration system. In fact most submissions in response to Administrator Donald Cleland's invitation from the public reflected this perception (Department of Labour and Industry, 1962: 9). Most submission came from expatriate groups such as planters, settlers, businessmen, industrialists and organisations such as the Highlands Farmers Association. Arguably, these were Australian employer groups who expressed no desire to deal with trade unions in the Territory. However, there were no worker organizations or informed individuals to represent the interests of indigenous workers. Hence, it seems that the invitation for submissions was a mere formality so that Hasluck could be seen in Canberra as having consulted the 'people' of the Territory.

The Australian system of industrial relations was introduced to TPNG as a result of Hasluck's own determination (Gissua and Hess, 1992: 39). As already indicated, in the absence of any major industrial development programs or capital intensive industries or major industrial unrest in the Territory, one could only associate the promulgation of the 1962 industrial relations and industrial organisations legislations with Hasluck's administrative and expansion policies (Downs, 1980: 93). Influenced by international and Australian domestic politics he ignored bureaucratic

advice as well as settler opinion and departed from the existing indenture labour system and pushed for modern industrial relations legislations to be introduced in the Territory. Hasluck stated that the legislations would pave the way for the Papua New Guineans to develop a system suited to their own conditions. He would 'clear the path but let them walk it' (Department of Territories, 1961: 6).

If the introduction of the institution of the conciliation and arbitration system was in response to social and economic demands by the various ethnic organisations during Hasluck's 'visiting people' tour of the Territory in 1959 (South Pacific Post, 18/12/59: 1), as was commonly perceived (Hennessy, 1964; Metcalf, 1968: 116; Patterson, 1969: 27; Hess, 1990: 94), then the initiative could be seen as one of over-reaction. Perhaps there was no need for such legislation given the under-developed state of the Territory's economy. However, if there was a need it could only be concluded that Hasluck had seen the necessity to 'fill the gap' in view of what he envisaged for the immediate future in the Territory. Such a rationale again is difficult to comprehend in view of the primitive state of all spheres of development including the fact that close to 100 per cent of the indigenous population was dependent on subsistence agriculture.

At the centre of the formal dispute settlement process lies its conciliation element. The proactive procedure requires all parties concerned in an industrial dispute to ensure that everything possible be done to avoid any occurrence of industrial unrest. And if a dispute were to occur despite all preventive measures the system provides that the prescribed procedures be adhered to for a possible settlement at arbitration. Unlike the Australian system, in PNG rights and interest disputes in the private sector follow the same process. However, compliance by disputants rely inevitably on the conciliator's persuasive skills. A conciliator has no power to compel disputants to attend conferences and where a party refuses to attend then there is little a conciliator can do (Daly: 1983: 33-34). Although there exists provisions for prosecution in a common law (District) Court, the general course of action is for the Minister for Labour and Employment to refer the matter directly to arbitration.

Daly (1983: 85) provides some statistics on industrial disputation in PNG between 1963 and 1982. A total of 1, 278 disputes were recorded by the Department of Labour and Employment. Out of this total only 18 per cent went to arbitration. A similar trend is noticeable in the following decade

(Gissua and Hess, 1992: 47). This development raises the question about the suitability of the system from another perspective. An orthodox explanation is that such a trend is expected of the institution because it emphasises conciliation first and arbitration only as a last resort. However, the argument here is that this trend could also reflect a development beyond the mere 'voluntary arbitration' which is supposed to be the norm of the dispute settlement machinery. If this trend indicates a new development then it is suggested that the present dispute settlement machinery ought to facilitate this.

The past initiatives by principal parties to bring about *inter alia* changes to the two industrial relations have failed. It was a shared view by the parties that close consultation was needed in an endeavour to resolve problems which could cause industrial conflict or inhibit economic and social development (Kern, 1981: 14). The Labour Advisory Council (LAC) of Papua New Guinea was disbanded in 1974 three years after it was established principally because there was no agreement among the parties to the proposed amendments. In 1982 another attempt was made by the Department of Labour and Employment in which a tripartite working party worked on possible amendments but this only reached first reading stage in parliament. The trade unions considered the proposed amendments to be harmful to the growth of the trade union movement so they withdrew co-operation and the process collapsed. Another attempt was made in 1989 with the establishment of the National Tripartite Council (NTCC) by an Executive Direction with similar objectives as those of the LAC. However, already the NTCC is faced with some difficulty in getting legal recognition. The point is that the initiatives to 'improve' industrial relations taken at political and bureaucratic levels appear to have failed and so future proposals ought to consider workplace views as a vital component.

A number of typical industrial disputes in PNG over the last eight years have been examined in another study<sup>1</sup> to show how the formal dispute settlement mechanisms actually work in an industrial dispute situation at a work place. While the object of that study might be different it is somewhat related here in the sense that the case studies might provide information so that the working of the formal industrial dispute settlement process from this angle might provide a better understanding about formidable difficulties, attitudes and the chance of consensus between the managers and the managed.

### Dispute Settlement in Practice

Although occurring at different times and in different industries between 1987 and 1991 the disputes were analysed from a number of common stand-points, two of them appear relevant here. Firstly, the study looked at the negotiation process by the parties in dispute at the shop-floor level. This approach was intended to ascertain if in fact parties have actually exhausted all settlement means, formal and informal, at their disposal. This is an important consideration in view of the insistence by Industrial Relations Officers of the Department of Labour and Employment that disputants explored all possible options before seeking third party intervention. Secondly, it took an overview of settlements reached at the end of disputes with a view to showing if efforts by parties were commensurate with the outcomes.

The 1988 Ok Tedi industrial dispute between Ok Tedi Mining Limited (OTML) and Ok Tedi Mining Construction and General Workers Union (OMCGWU) first emerged in July. It started as a grievance and was followed subsequently by a wild-cat strike by mine pit operators in protest over a management proposal for a third shift but eventually led to a full scale industrial dispute involving the entire blue collar workforce. After having raised his concerns with the operators regarding the importance of upholding organizational interests the union president assumed responsibility for the dispute. However, two additional but on-going demands were also included in the list of issues for negotiation with the management. The issues then were the union's demands for more housing and a review of training and localization program (TLP), and the final immediate issue was the 'sudden introduction' of a third shift.

The union blamed the Executive Manager (Mines) Rick Gazzard and Employee Relations Manager Bebea Konie for lack of consultation about proposed shift changes and demanded the termination of these members of management. This issue became the central focus of the dispute and caused the major disruption to OTML's operations since its formation in 1981.

The background to the dispute was that negotiations with management by the union over the years for more housing for union members had produced little result. Much of the available housing was allocated to staff and senior members of management most of whom were expatriates. Many union members had been separated from their families for years due to the shortage of

housing. Another factor was that most mine pit operators had formerly been employees of Panguna's Bougainville Copper Limited (BCL) where they had better wages and conditions including housing. Having been deprived of hard fought conditions they once enjoyed at Panguna the operators knew the 'path' towards achieving what they wanted at the Ok Tedi mine.

In the case of the long running issue of training and localization the union had accused OTML of having failed to adhere to its TLP. In particular the union provided examples of how OTML would make internal transfers of foreign employees within the company without first obtaining necessary Department of Labour approval. This, the union claimed, was a deliberate attempt by management to stall promotion opportunities for its members, particularly the tradesmen. These issues triggered one of the most difficult disputes PNG's industrial relations system has had to face.

It took well over six months from mid 1988 before a solution was found. The wild-cat strike by operators and continuous union pressure for management to act on the demands provided little opportunity for the conduct of any sensible bipartite negotiations. Based on management's failure in the past to respond favourably to housing and TLP grievances, the union perceived that bipartite negotiations would be a waste of time. The whole gamut of formal conciliation had been exhausted and little was achieved. A first and major reason being that management and union had little flexibility. Secondly, the process of conciliation was too long with no proper 'signposts' to point the parties towards what was expected of them in terms of the 'proper' operation of the dispute settlement machinery. The notion held by Industrial Relations Officers of the Department of Labour that unlimited conciliation conferences should be conducted as long as there was optimism that a settlement could be reached outside arbitration had proved to be futile in this instance. An obvious difficulty was the non-industrial nature of the termination demand but the legislation gave the officers no precise signal as to what needed to be done under such circumstances.

The dispute which had attracted the attention of politicians, the government, BHP executive and the involvement of riot police and Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF) soldiers concluded in a mundane procedure with the establishment of a Board of Inquiry (BOI) provided for under the *Industrial Relations Act*. The trade union movement referred to various industrial

actions staged by the union as 'the only way to attract attention of management to address union demands' (Interview, Titimur and Futengim).<sup>2</sup> Perhaps it might have been the only way but it was rather expensive in view of the limited resources available particularly for the union and the Department of Labour and Employment. However, of fundamental importance is the question of whether or not the end result equates with the costly efforts employed. Given that the inquiry merely endorsed the October 1 agreement by the parties in which OTML agreed to build 250 new houses, affirmed a 10 grade structure and called for more consultation with the union on major industrial relations issues in future, one would have to conclude that its real use was a face-saving device for the parties directly involved. It added nothing new to the discussion of the issues.

Like the Ok Tedi dispute, the 1989 Postal and Telecommunications (PTC) dispute had a spectacular beginning. The Post and Telecommunications Workers Union (PTCWU) had submitted its first ever log of claims to PTC management in November 1988 - it covered a broad range of employment conditions. However, a first major hurdle before negotiations commenced was the refusal by management to accept the fact that PTC's own Welfare and Counselling Manager Andonia Lynch was appointed by the union as part of its negotiation team. Management and union differences over this issue resulted in a number of violent industrial actions staged by the union after which the matter was referred to the National Court for a ruling. Before the Court made a decision the union removed Lynch from its team. The controversy had taken six months before it was resolved while little had been accomplished in terms of the actual negotiation of the claims.

When negotiations resumed in the latter half of 1989 the union's central claims were 15 per cent wage rise across the board, housing for all employees, 12 weeks maternity leave, 2 weeks paternity leave and industrial allowances<sup>3</sup> (Post Courier, December 20, 1989). These claims in terms of cost to PTC were considerable. Successive negotiations between the parties on the issues failed to achieve any progress partly because the parties constantly issued threats to each other and simply had no trust in the other's good intentions. Obviously, little could be achieved in such an environment. Hence, the utilization of negotiation avenues at the shop-floor were never fully explored.

The other important matter which complicated negotiations was the procedure

involved. Being a public corporation meant that PTC management could not independently deal with the log of claims particularly where salary and conditions were involved but had to consult the Salary and Conditions Monitoring Committee (SCMC) before an offer was made. The SCMC is a statutory body established by government to ensure parity in salaries and conditions throughout the Public Service. So management had to first consult its Board of Directors, then go through the SCMC and only then could it deal directly with the union on wage issues. This process has proved in this case to be cumbersome, time consuming and costly.

The conciliation process was exhaustive but little progress was made. A major difficulty faced here was the refusal by parties to adhere to conciliation meetings organised by the Industrial Relations Officers of the Department of Labour and Employment. Under the current procedure there was little the conciliator could do in terms of compelling the parties to accept notices for conferences. It is clear here and at the Ok Tedi dispute that persuasive skills of experienced Industrial Relations Officers were not sufficient to compel disputants to comply with statutory requirements.

When the dispute reached the arbitration stage in May 1990 another significant development took place. The parties apparently had struck a deal in which the union accepted a K10 wage rise across the board for all workers. An interesting aspect of the deal was that the union had conceded to management's condition to withdraw all outstanding claims in the dispute.<sup>4</sup> Further, the union had also agreed not to lodge any fresh claims during the four year life time of the agreement. From the management's perspective the K10 payment may be seen as a good way out of the dispute. So for management the end of the dispute could be seen as a win because it was settled on the terms set by management. From the union's point of view, on the other-hand, the acceptance of K10 could also be seen as victory on a number of fronts. More particular is the fact that it favoured lower paid workers rather than the already well paid technically skilled and clerical personnel. In this sense it appears to be a win-win situation.

However, when analysed from the perspective of costs and benefits it appears that the costs out-weigh the benefits for the union. The union had staged an up-front battle to ensure its place within the operations of the corporations. Compared to the small gain of a one-off wage increase the costs seem to have been unnecessarily

great. The solution appears simple but the method of achieving it was unnecessarily complex.

### Conclusion

This paper has looked at the industrial dispute settlement procedure in PNG and provided two examples of its recent operation. The purpose of this has been to show some of the difficulties presently existing in the operation of the dispute settlement machinery. With many more indigenes workers now in the labour-market compared to the 1960s and 70s, it is suggested that any change to the machinery without input from management and the managed could only exacerbate further the existing difficulties. The disputes cited would have never occurred if effective mechanisms were used at the shop-floor level. The solution appears to be two-fold. Firstly, the present industrial dispute settlement procedure needs 'tuning up' in order to respond to present day requirements but, more importantly is the need to define the procedure more precisely. The conciliation process is vague and time consuming. Secondly, management must accept the inevitability of trade union interests. If management has the attitude of 'playing down' the interests of workers then the present trend of wild-cat strikes and violent forms of behaviour by workers could continue. In a situation in which trade unions are openly stating that these extreme measures must be taken to get management to the negotiation table there is little chance of industrial harmony.

### References

1. James Gissua is currently working on a Ph D thesis that examines the formal industrial dispute settlement process. The industrial disputes examined in both the private and public sector include those in Air Niugini, Post and Telecommunications Corporation, Burns Philp Ltd. and Higturu Oil Palm Ltd..
2. Interviews conducted at Tabubil in September, 1988. Lawrence Titimur was PNGTUC General Secretary and Mathew Futengim was President of OTMCGWU.
3. Letter by PTCWU acting General Secretary Jimmy Malai to PTC Executive Manager (Personnel and Administration) John Wagambie, Ref. GS2-7, May 22, 1989. Appendix 3 of letter contains the union's log of claims.

4. Memorandum of Understanding between PTC and PTCWU registered with the Industrial Registrar for safe-keeping.





# From Colonial to Independent Unionism: The Case of the PNG's Public Employees Association

*Madiu Andrew*

Unionism in Papua New Guinea has its origins in the colonial past when Papua New Guinea was under the administration of Australia. Unionism was one of the institutions transplanted as part of Australia's good intentions toward modernizing the society and the economy of the territory.<sup>1</sup> Some have seen this as a paternalistic attitude aimed at protecting natives first and very slowly introducing them to civilization and western institutions.<sup>2</sup> Other commentators suggest that the transfer of unionism was not simply a paternalistic gesture but was a conscious effort to lay the foundations of capitalism.<sup>3</sup>

Whatever the reasons behind the transfer of unionism, well before independence Papua New Guinea had already shown an interest in some form of union activity.<sup>4</sup> Initially workers formed organisations such as the Methodist Welfare Society and the Kerema Welfare Society.<sup>5</sup> These societies provided the opportunity for workers to organise and to pursue their interests within the colonial environment. However the aims of these societies were not specifically industrial, ranging from pastoral care to organization of recreational activities and provision of accommodation.<sup>6</sup>

These organisations were significant because they revealed the desire of the workers to belong to bodies that would provide both services and representation and this naturally led to the adoption of unionism. Equally, because of these societies, the colonial administration recognized the fact that unionism in Papua New Guinea would be inevitable and therefore moved to formally and legally create the environment for unionism to exist. Moreover, colonial unions, particularly those in the public sector which predominantly had *dimdim* (white) membership, began to open the door for *natives* to join unions and therefore created the inevitability of union growth in Papua New Guinea.<sup>7</sup>

Some qualifications need to be stressed. First, this is a descriptive attempt to present developments in Papua New Guinea unionism over time with emphasis on its existence and survival. Secondly, the assumption is made that capitalism is here to stay and therefore so is the labour force, but that this system will co-exist with the 'traditional' subsistence economic system. Thirdly, cultural practice, in particular family relationships, will remain strong. It is within the confines of

these assumptions that Papua New Guinea unionism shapes its nature and its characteristics.

Colonial unionism is a reference to the transfer of unionism from Australia to Papua New Guinea before independence on the 16 September, 1975. The unionism that was practised in Australia and later transferred to Papua New Guinea, is about 'a continuous association of wage-earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their working lives',<sup>8</sup> Jackson 1988:1-2, Martin 1989:8). Although various definitions have been developed since, the distinctive feature of this definition, developed by Sidney and Beatrice Webb in 1894, is that the existence of trade unions has to do with *wage-earners* and that the purpose of unions is *maintaining and improving the conditions* of their members.<sup>9</sup>

However the form and nature of Australian unionism were based on the compulsory conciliation and arbitration system.<sup>10</sup> This system of Australian unionism was brought about through the enactment of the conciliation and arbitration legislation, both at State and Federal levels, as methods through which labour disputes were prevented and settled, and to encourage the formation of representative trade unions.<sup>11</sup> The encouragement of the formation of representative trade unions was through political initiative. So there is a political dimension to the nature of Australian unionism which is shown by the relationship between unions and the Australian Labour Party - the latter being the vehicle for legislation.

On paper, it was this Australian form of unionism that was transferred or transplanted<sup>12</sup> and was the most influential model for unionism in Papua New Guinea.<sup>13</sup> However, Papua New Guinea unions were not simply replicas of their Australian counterparts.<sup>14</sup> The reasons for this will be examined in the discussion on independent unionism.

Colonial unionism went through a process whereby welfare societies (not entirely for work related matters) for workers were first established. These societies were encouraged by the colonial authorities because the *natives* were assumed not to be able to form proper unions.<sup>15</sup> These societies also facilitated and provided the opportunity for many political activists to pursue political and industrial concerns of workers. Many of these

political activists were employees in the public service which at that time had unions already in existence although their members were predominantly *dimdim* employees.

During the process of transplanting Australian unionism what may have also encouraged the creation of unionism was the fact that there were already unions in existence in Papua New Guinea that were based on Australian union models.<sup>16</sup> It was the pre-existence of these organisations that seems to have encouraged the colonial Administration to pass the Industrial Organisations Ordinance and Industrial Relations Ordinance in 1962 legalising unions in Papua New Guinea for the first time.

Independent unionism, from Papua New Guinea's perspective, is simply defined as the unionism that was inherited and its subsequent development consistent with the industrial legislation that governed the existence and the operations of unions. Independent unionism is therefore about Papua New Guinean unionism which has since independence tried to develop a character of its own. The inherited unionism was based on Australian union models.<sup>17</sup> In practice, this meant that unionism in Papua New Guinea was less related to work needs and more related to the needs of labour policy. Or as Hess puts it, 'the course of union development has been affected by both the needs of the workers and those of the state'.<sup>18</sup>

The basic role and characteristic of Papua New Guinea unionism are primarily seen in its industrial bargaining because of the industrial legislation inherited from Australia. Despite attempts to amend this legislation from time to time, it remains largely unaltered. There has been no real departure from the compulsory conciliation and arbitration nature of the system aiming for the prevention and settlement of disputes between workers and management.

While this system has helped unions become established - by 1990, 70 unions had been set up - it has not helped them become strong. Many of these unions have small membership and therefore have difficulty in raising funds and establishing offices with full time officials.<sup>19</sup> It is fair to say that the majority of the unions are weak or inoperative.

Whilst this situation is a serious concern for the development of an effective and active unionism, it has to be appreciated that unionism in Papua New Guinea is only in its infancy. It was only in the last thirty years that the first non-expatriate unions were established and it was only

in the last seventeen years that the first unions had to learn to survive and develop without paternalistic colonial protection.

In summary then, unions in Papua New Guinea were established under legislative protection, primarily to pursue the industrial concerns about wages and conditions of employment directly affecting their members. But when overall union development is examined, it may be that Papua New Guinea unionism has also from the start been based on welfare and political concerns as well as industrial matters of wages and conditions of employment. These welfare concerns also relate to social, cultural and religious interests. This attitude or expectation of unions playing a welfare as well as an industrial role developed from the initial welfare societies of the 1950s. Politically the unions directly confronted the authorities to raise matters of national interest and benefit that will also benefit the workers. This may also be observed in the post-independence development of unionism where unions may claim to represent the interests of the nation as a whole. It was estimated that by 1992 there were 268,000 workers in the formal employment in Papua New Guinea<sup>20</sup> and given the approximate extended family dependence ratio of ten to one for each worker, the workers would have been responsible for about one-half of the population of the country. This situation of a broader union constituency applies with particular force to the Public Employees Association (PEA) because of the dominant role of the public sector in Papua New Guinea's economy.

The PEA is the largest union in the country and its history goes as far back as 1947 when public servants, employed by the separate administrations of Papua and of New Guinea, decided to form a single union, the Public Service Association of Papua and New Guinea (PSA).<sup>21</sup> The PSA was formally recognised by the authorities in 1948<sup>22</sup> and had only *dimdim* membership until 1957 when it technically inaugurated unionism among Papuans and New Guineans by extending its constitutional coverage to local employees in the auxiliary division of the public service.<sup>23</sup> Martin points out that the auxiliary division was a natural sequel to *localising* the public service<sup>24</sup> and it also involved Papua New Guineans becoming union members. Both localisation and unionism were seen as part of a wider development agenda in which access to economic opportunities and to political rights would go hand in hand.

The PSA started off with a membership of some 1,500 expatriates and by 1963 had a membership of 2,064 with the indigenous membership numbering up to 918.<sup>25</sup> After large scale recruitment of local members in 1966/67, the total membership of the PSA reached 9,544 of which three-quarters were indigenous members.<sup>26</sup>

The PSA was registered on the 17 January 1964 following the enactment in 1962 of the two pieces of industrial legislation,<sup>27</sup> and by 1972 the PSA had a total membership of 16,134 of which 13,000 were indigenous officers and 3,134 were overseas officers.<sup>28</sup> By this time other public sector unions, such as the Police and the Teachers associations, were being formed and although PSA membership was growing, it was witnessing the break-away of occupational groups.

The most significant break-away came in 1973 when the PSA decided to become a specifically Papua New Guinean union. The Overseas Staff and Assistance Association was formed to look after expatriate employees and the old PSA's funds and assets were equitably shared between that organisation and the new local PSA. The local PSA also employed an Australian union advocate (lawyer/economist) whose task was to train local union staff to run the PSA. Within two years of that move, the PSA had a membership of local officers only and its office was staffed by full time local union officers.

The local PSA then moved to establish four regional offices in Lae, Mt Hagen, Rabaul and Port Moresby, and set up branches in all the headquarters of the government's main administrative districts. By 1975 the PSA had a total membership of about 25,000 public servants and by 1979 the membership peaked at just over 31,000 with a staff of 68 full time union officials located at headquarters and at regional offices.

From its formation the PSA had been pre-occupied, through the collective bargaining process, negotiating on behalf of its members on wages and conditions of employment. It also assisted other workers with the technicalities of the industrial relations system.<sup>29</sup> However, between 1960 and 1970 some of the union leaders of the PSA began to pursue political interests under the union umbrella. These leaders included Michael Somare, Paulus Arek, Lepani Watson, Boyamo Sali, Gavera Rea, and Albert Maori Kiki. They began to participate in wider political debate that would lead to Papua New Guinea seeking and achieving self government followed by independence in 1975. These unionists were later to gain political power

and several of them were ministers in the first Somare Government.<sup>30</sup>

The PSA also felt that as a union, it needed to respond to the social welfare concerns of the members, over and above industrial welfare matters. Thus it moved to establish the PSA Savings and Loans Society for PSA members only. This Society was among the fastest growing financial institution owned by workers and during its peak in the mid-seventies PSA assets were valued at about A\$40 million. The Society provided loans facilities for the members and was able to establish automatic deductions from salary which were processed by government departments. The PSA and the PSA Savings and Loans Society also constructed a seven-storey complex to house their offices with five floors being fully tenanted by the Education Department and the Tourism Office.

In 1979 at the biennial congress of the PSA, the Association felt that it should vigorously move to pursue the possibility of developing further socio-economic activities with the intention of providing more services to the members. It was at this time that the flat rate subscription fee arrangement was abolished and the percentage rate subscription fee was introduced; the rate being one per cent of the gross salary of a member. Three major reasons seem to have emerged to encourage socio-economic activities. Firstly, union subscription fees were not to be increased in the immediate future and therefore other sources of union income would have to be identified. Secondly, it was thought that the success of the PSA Savings and Loans Society had been encouraging and therefore members thought other socio-economic activities should be explored. Finally, socio-economic activities outside of industrial activities would bring direct benefits not only to the members and their dependents, but also to the union as well.

In 1981, the PSA constitution and rules were amended which led to the name PSA being changed to Public Employees Association of Papua New Guinea (PEA) and membership extended to cover employees in statutory authorities. Even within this amended constitution, one of the general guiding principles requires that the Association endeavour to secure better working conditions for its members and ensure that its members receive better service in order that they may better serve the nation and its people.<sup>31</sup>

It can be deduced that the PEA's existence as a union is explained in part by its colonial inheritance. As observed, when the PSA was predominantly a white fellows union, it seemed to

have a task of assisting modernize the society and the economy of Papua New Guinea.<sup>32</sup> The PEA constitution and rules suggest that it shared a common goal with the employer, the government. The relevant rules provide that the Association shall endeavour;

- (a) To improve, protect and foster the best interests of all members by any means consistent with the laws of Papua New Guinea.
- (e) To formulate and pursue schemes for the industrial, social, educational, cultural or vocational welfare of all members and/or their dependents.
- (h) To invest any monies of the Association as the Association may deem fit.<sup>33</sup>

These objects have been maintained despite later amendments to the constitution and rules.<sup>34</sup> It is these general aims that have determined the type of unionism that the PEA pursues - it is based on industrial and socio-economic as well as political activities - it is holistic unionism.

In the last decade the PEA started a number of socio-economic activities besides the Savings and Loans Society. Recently, the PEA established a private superannuation fund which also has life insurance and health insurance components. It had gone into supermarket operations and has established a number of social clubs at branch and sub-branch levels. The concept behind the development of these socio-economic activities had been the pooling of financial resources of the members and investing in ways that would bring return directly to them rather than depending on the employer to provide benefits by way of improved wages and conditions. The activities have not only contributed direct benefits to members and their dependents, but they have increased the Association's income as well.

The PEA as an individual union, in its endeavours to participate in the political life of the nation, had in 1987 attempted to sponsor candidates for the national elections. However this proved a dismal failure. No serious post-mortem was carried out but it would appear that this result may have been due to the fact that the membership was not fully involved in discussions. Nevertheless, the PEA continues to be a powerful union both industrially and politically and this is clearly demonstrated in the size of its membership, and its political influence. For instance, the PEA vigorously opposed the 1989/90 Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of the government

which included massive cuts in the public service and wholesale privatisation of public services. A major submission was presented to the government seeking a negotiated settlement with 'the objective of minimizing the detrimental effects of current revenue short fall on medium and long term conditions'.<sup>35</sup> Whilst the government did carry out its SAP, major concessions were made due to the PEA's opposition and constructive input.

On industrial matters, the PEA continues to display professionalism and responsibility in the pursuit of claims for its members and to set the pace for union development in the country. One of its major achievements was the introduction of wage indexation of salaries according to cost of living increases, and this has helped provide economic stability in the country. Other achievements include numerous improvements and reclassifications of salary levels for many occupational groups such as nurses, fire-fighters, electricity workers, and so forth.

The above PEA achievements are the result of a committed membership which now stands at about 22,000 despite a fall in 1986 from 31,000 to 18,000 members. Its membership includes officers ranging from departmental heads to the lowest classified employees in the national public service, provincial departments and statutory authorities. The Association has branches and sub-branches in all parts of the country and members participate in the running of the union through elected leaders at sub-branches, branches, the national executive level and at the national congress.

Another reason for the PEA's success is that its staff are full time employees. It is one of the few unions that has employees who possess tertiary qualifications in economics, law, accountancy, arts and education. This enables the union to research thoroughly issues confronting it before submitting them to the employer. Further, because the Association has lawyers, individual members can have access to these lawyers to represent them in court on civil and criminal matters.

The other main reason, as implied earlier, is the union's unique ability to muster political power through its network of members located in urban and rural areas. PEA members are the first line of contact the people have before they meet the government and government services. Thus it has the ability to influence and mobilize grass-roots

opinion on political matters affecting the nation and therefore an ability to influence government policies.

The case of the PEA illuminates the type of unionism practised in Papua New Guinea. Papua New Guinea unionism has been, to a major extent, influenced by its colonial past. It is unionism that was transplanted from Australia together with Australian industrial legislation. However Papua New Guinea unionism has since tried to develop a character of its own - a holistic and encompassing unionism which reflects Papua New Guinea attitudes and aspirations. The existence and survival of Papua New Guinea unionism is therefore dependent not only on how well unions can deliver the services that will meet the needs of the members, but also on the attitudes of the members towards their unions and to their country.

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# The Colonial Inheritance and Labour: Structure, Conditions and Identity in Fiji

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In this examination of the changes in the structure, conditions and identity of labour in Fiji between the early 1970s and the early 1990s, three dynamics are stressed. The first is the tension between labour and the state, the latter usually, but not always, bolstering capital. Most recent studies of labour in the Pacific and elsewhere recognise this antagonism but differ in the degree to which they acknowledge accommodation between labour and capital.<sup>1</sup> A vital issue is the role of the public sector, essential to colonial labour development but too often glossed over by scholars. The second dynamic is the articulation between organised and unorganised labour. This involves the need to emphasise the role the domestic, subsistence, or 'informal' sectors had in colonial and post-colonial<sup>2</sup> labour policies and practice. The third dynamic in this comparison of labour at the time of Fiji's independence and two decades later, is the relationship between class, and other identities, such as gender, ethnicity, region and clan. It is impossible to put any measure on such constructs and although the question of working identity has many contradictions, it is still an aspect of labour that needs to be raised. Labour policies and practices were a cornerstone of economic and political control in most colonies. These had implications not only for the development of Fiji's subsequent industrial relations but also for the structure and conditions of labour and class identity. Colonial policies which ensured political control also fostered other identities such as ethnicity and region, so that analysis of class structure and identity is fraught with contradictions.<sup>3</sup>

## The Structure of Labour

As Fiji prepared for political independence, the question of economic development was paramount. Economic stability depended upon political stability. A crucial issue was not only the industrial but also the political role which workers might play in an independent state. Before considering this, some discussion is needed of the structure of Fiji's labour force and the extent to which this changed after colonial rule ended.

Fiji's labour market was markedly different from that of other newly independent

Pacific Islands states. It had, and still has, the largest and most diverse proletarian and industrial base. Sugar was the mainstay of Fiji's colonial economy and the legacy of this has not just been its central place in post-colonial development but it also has been significant for Fiji's demographic and ethnic mix, as well as the structures and identities of labour. The sugar industry was labour intensive and for a number of reasons,<sup>4</sup> the state turned to migrant labour. Initially, sugar and copra plantations were worked by indigenous labour as well as by other Melanesians and Gilbertese immigrants, but from 1886 indentured Indian labour became essential to sugar production. The shift partly reflected the increasing cost of imported Melanesian labour as well as colonial policies which attempted to restrict indigenous labour to the communal production of crops in villages.<sup>5</sup>

Unlike other Pacific Islands states, in Fiji a large proletarian base had been established almost from the beginning of colonial rule. Colonial land and 'native' policies determined that these workers would have restricted land and political rights. As well as being ethnically distinctive, a notable feature of sugar plantation workers was their gender composition. Legally at least 40 per cent were female migrants and while most of these women and their descendants became unwaged domestic and rural workers, many also worked for wages.<sup>6</sup>

Sugar remained paramount in Fiji's economy but by the time of independence the workforce in this sector had undergone substantial changes. After the abolition of indenture in 1916 the organisation and burden of cane production were transferred from plantation to small farm production. Although the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR) restricted its activities to milling, it still dominated the sugar industry and Fiji's political economy throughout the colonial period. State labour policies were geared to protect this industry but by the 1940s the company's resistance to recognising workers' associations came into conflict with colonial policy. The sugar industry became the centre stage for many of the industrial battles in colonial Fiji which left a tremendous legacy for Fiji's industrial relations and labour organisations.



An important pattern laid during the colonial period for labour in Fiji was the thin line between small-scale 'independent' cane farmers and the proletariat, wholly dependent upon wages. The CSR continued to dominate labour in farm production by leasing land and determining cane prices. Family production usually involved unpaid labour, including that of women and children, while cash contributions from outside work made a crucial difference to household economies. This pattern intensified during periods of inflation, such as after World War II, in the early post-independence period and during the recession of the mid-1980s. The crunch came in the latter period when employment opportunities began to shrink severely and partly due to this cane farming communities supported alternative political options.

The ethnic bias in Fiji's labour market was a result of colonial policies although upon closer examination the demarcation of Indo-Fijians as dominating the formal waged sector and indigenous Fijians, the subsistence sector was never clear cut. Such contradictions left a considerable legacy for the post-colonial period. As noted, unpaid Indo-Fijian labour was crucial to the development of the sugar industry particularly after large plantations were abolished. Fiji's first governor, Sir Arthur Gordon, established early colonial policies, which attempted to segregate indigenous Fijians from Europeans, Indians and other ethnic groups, to ostensibly preserve the 'Fijian way of life'. Chiefs took an ambivalent role towards external labour demands, at times recruiting but also opposing the extraction of wage labour from their villages.<sup>7</sup> From the late 19th century until 1908 indigenous Fijians were levied a Produce Tax on crop production, so that within the so-called subsistence sector, colonial policies established 'disguised proletariats' who 'although they possess the means of production, the earnings of these producers from the sale of their crops may be viewed as ways needed for subsistence.'<sup>8</sup> Money also became necessary for paying a provincial tax, village, church and kin obligations and for various commodities. Fijians living in regions where crop production was not widely established were compelled to migrate and seek work on copra and sugar plantations. A legacy of the colonial labour structure was that village labour formed a reserve with many of the costs of maintaining and reproducing workers being passed on to the kin group and not to the employer or the state.

During the colonial period indigenous labour came to dominate the goldmining and stevedoring sectors. Initially chiefs and

administrative officers procured this labour but increasingly Fijians migrated independently. Throughout much of the colonial period both the official authorities and many chiefs were concerned that a permanent indigenous proletariat did not develop.<sup>9</sup> A marked change in the labour market by independence was the acceptance and awareness of the need for a permanent multi-ethnic workforce, although the 'informal' sector, comprising both urban and rural workers persisted as an integral part of post-colonial capitalist development in Fiji. After 1970 the workforce was increasingly ethnically, industrially and occupationally heterogeneous with more skilled and educated workers.

The pace of localisation of Fiji's workforce was a major concern of both the state and organised labour in the immediate years before and after independence.<sup>10</sup> Many of these positions were localised but the continued employment of expatriates was attacked by the Fiji Public Service Association (FPSA). Twenty years after independence expatriate staff are still employed in some senior positions in both the public and private sector. Recent advertisements use the 'freedom to repatriate capital and profits' as a selling point for investment in tax free factories.

A major structural change in Fiji's workforce at independence was the expansion of the public sector. As in many newly independent states, this came to dominate a large sector of Fiji's labour market and economy<sup>11</sup> but because of the established industrial and agricultural base, the labour market in Fiji was not as centred around the public sector as it was in other Pacific Islands states. The growth in the number of established posts<sup>12</sup> had important implications for the development of organised labour and class identity in post-colonial Fiji. The dramatic expansion of the public service led to the growth of powerful public sector unions, especially the FPSA,<sup>13</sup> which by the early 1980s played a dominant part in Fiji's industrial relations and political scene. Just as the expansion of the public service helped shape aspects of labour so did the contraction of the public sector. Twenty years on, partly precipitated by the 1987 coups, but also as a reflection of international economic and political trends, the size of Fiji's public sector fell. The industrial strength of the FPSA has also been tested by the corporatization of several public services since 1990.

By independence a manufacturing base to Fiji's labour market had been well established. This continued to grow especially during the late

1980s. The service industries, particularly tourism, have represented another important component of Fiji's labour force cemented by the colonial state.<sup>14</sup> A major structural change has been in the gender composition of the workforce. By 1970 women represented around 14 per cent of those the work force but two decades later, although employment for men had shrunk, the proportion of women in the paid work force increased to over 21 per cent.<sup>15</sup>

### Conditions of Labour

Labour conditions relate to the structure of the labour market and the perceived ideologies of workers. It could be argued that labour conditions reflected the contemporary standards of colonial and post-colonial society and the degree to which colonised and 'free' workers could contest this.<sup>16</sup>

The literature on the conditions and relative 'humanity' of indentured labour in the Pacific Islands and elsewhere is contested<sup>17</sup> both in terms of its acceptability according to the international standards of industrial and indigenous societies, and in the nature of the engagement. The record of labour conditions in Fiji<sup>18</sup> is replete with examples of both extreme exploitation and beneficent acts by patrons. The colonial state demarcated its role in regulating labour conditions, which later embraced a limited concern for some provisions for workers in areas outside employment. This included, for example, education, health, housing and the establishment of the Fiji National Provident Fund in 1965. The record of labour protest and attempts to form workers' associations is also indicative of the contest between workers and employers over labour conditions in both colonial and post-colonial Fiji.

The earliest regulations to impinge upon the conditions of labour in Fiji concerned indigenous workers. Like most labour regulations, they were as much about the control of the workforce as they were to maintain an assured supply and the satisfactory performance of labour.<sup>19</sup> While the rationale was that the state was 'protecting' native labour 'Atu Bain<sup>20</sup> notes that since the late 19th century the majority of ethnic Fijians were recruited under the same conditions as Indo-Fijians. These were the invidious Masters and Servants' Ordinances of 1888 and 1890, in which the balance of the law was tilted heavily in the employers' favour.

Similar regulations concerned the recruitment and conditions of work of the girmityas. Not only these labour regulations, but also the actual treatment and conditions of work, as

well as workers' resistance and accommodation to this has left an indelible legacy from Fiji's colonial period which had implications for class and ethnic identity.

The colonial labour systems left an inheritance which encouraged the exploitation of cheap labour with wages and conditions far below those acceptable in metropolitan countries. In post-colonial Fiji, the advantage of cheap and docile labour has continued to be pushed as a selling point for foreign investment, most notably since 1987 with the promotion of tax-free factories, particularly in the garments industry. Although critics condemn garment workers' wages which in 1990 were reported to be as low as Fijian \$25 a week,<sup>21</sup> there are others who argue that such disparities are inevitable if the third world is to 'develop'. During the colonial period contemporaries also denounced the wages and conditions of workers.<sup>22</sup> Labour costs during the girmitya period were estimated to be a seventh of those paid to white field labourers employed by CSR in Australia.<sup>23</sup>

While organised labour has had an image of indifference to wage disparities among workers, in practice this was a major anomaly raised by the Fiji Trades Union Congress (FTUC). By the mid-1970s the FTUC became increasingly critical of the exploitation of non-unionised workers<sup>24</sup> but rather than endorsing industrial action, it advocated a minimum wage. Government opposed this and instead laid down minimum wages and conditions under wages councils in certain selected industries. The wages councils were established in 1961 to enforce some minimum standards in industrial sectors, which were increasingly important in Fiji's economy.<sup>25</sup> It took over two decades for a wages council to be introduced within the garments industry, although women workers at G.B. Hari's clothing factory struck over low wages in 1960.<sup>26</sup> Nineteen years later, FTUC general secretary, James Raman, drew attention to inadequate wages there alleging collusion between employers and government.<sup>27</sup> Such allegations resurfaced during and after the 1987 parliamentary election campaign when labour leaders highlighted deploring conditions and wages in Fiji's garments industry and in the mines at Vatukoula.<sup>28</sup>

From the indenture period the state attempted to lay down regulations concerning the medical and living facilities for workers. Tension between employers and state authorities over the regulation of working conditions is a legacy from the colonial period. So is the memory of the frustrations workers faced when trying to lodge

complaints of breaches of labour regulations. Workers did not meekly accept deplorable living and working conditions<sup>29</sup> but most survived by acquiescing into a pattern of avoiding open resistance.<sup>30</sup> It was usually only after workers' associations were established that collective improvements were made. As in most colonial states, work-sites such as plantations were usually enclaves<sup>31</sup> in which the employers' actions were law. Distance from main centres and ignorance of legislation but more often the brute reality of physical and financial coercion, mitigated against workers successfully registering complaints or seeking medical attention. State-backed penal regulations made it difficult for a worker to obtain permission for absence from a plantation.<sup>32</sup>

The inheritance of enclave production as an institution for labour conditions in post-colonial Fiji cannot be under-estimated. Labour enclaves persisted in long-established sectors such as copra and goldmining. While most of the big copra estates broke up, economic returns and conditions of work continued to deteriorate. In the early 1990s copra workers and their families were among the poorest in Fiji.<sup>33</sup> They also did not organise collectively but in another labour enclave, at the Vatukoula goldmine, workers did struggle to improve wages and conditions.<sup>34</sup> This has been the site of Fiji's longest running strike, since early 1991, where workers have collectively resisted employer domination and state indifference to their plight. Tax free factories established after the 1987 coups represent a new type of enclave production but with similar employer domination, which has opposed collective organisation by workers.<sup>35</sup>

### Labour Control and Labour Identity

A heated debate in the discourse about labour and the state is whether the introduction of labour legislation and improved working conditions was a means of biting labour militancy in the bud, or whether it represented the state and employers' recognition of the power of labour. Supporters of trade unions acknowledge the limitations of trade union legislation but interpret its introduction as a victory for the working classes, an assertion of an institutional base to working class identity. This debate examines the nature of colonial rule and the changes in labour control, especially as a skilled workforce became significant in economic development in the post-World War II years. This debate also concerns the way in which nationalism and development are invoked to harness labour and conflicting interest groups within the state.

Fiji was marked by a long history of workers' struggles to improve working and living conditions and to establish collective organisations. The most basic response to this was force. The colonial record of handling labour unrest shows a propensity by the state to resort to force, imprisonment and various forms of victimisation, as in response to attempts by workers to form the Fijian Wharf Labourers' Union in 1916,<sup>36</sup> to strikes by public sector and sugar workers in 1920-1,<sup>37</sup> and when the army was despatched to cane-fields during the 1943 cane farmers' strike.<sup>38</sup>

By World War II the state began to encourage labour management tactics that were not ostensibly dependent upon force. This was in response to directives from the Colonial Office, the demand for labour during the war and the growing assertiveness of labour. Stuart Reay, Fiji's first Commissioner of Labour, warned employers against victimising striking garage workers and printers.<sup>39</sup> Simultaneously during a brief strike in 1943, involving mainly carpenters from the Public Works Department, a labour officer advised the workers to consult his department before resorting to industrial action. Although this reflects a tendency by the state to attempt to placate unrest through guidance and conciliation, it did not see an end to the use of brute force or victimisation by employers or the state.

During the 1959 oilworkers' strike and the 1960 cane farmers' strike the state again reinforced capital through resorting to force by calling upon the army and in 1959, promulgating Public Safety Regulations. After independence, the introduction of the restrictive Trade Disputes Act<sup>40</sup> suggests that the colonial legacy of force as a means of control over industrial unrest had not been abandoned but rather entrenched in labour legislation. In 1977 the penal sanctions of the 1973 act were invoked when Taniela Veitata, and other leaders of the Fiji Waterside Workers' and Seamen's Union were sentenced to six months imprisonment for taking illegal strike action. Apisai Tora, secretary of the Fiji Sugar and General workers union, supported Veitata's union and was sentenced to a year's imprisonment under the Sugar Industry Act.<sup>41</sup>

During the 1980s the use of force in controlling labour was even more glaring. In 1985 the Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara threatened to declare a state of emergency, call upon the army and sack civil servants if workers went ahead with a national strike.<sup>42</sup> The unions' threat was a response to the state's imposition of a unilateral wage freeze.<sup>43</sup> It is perhaps less surprising that after the military regime had

installed itself in 1987, it resorted to force and other forms of direct coercion<sup>44</sup> to intimidate union leaders and workers and to impose drastic wage cuts. Labour legislation also contained severe penal sanctions. For example in 1991 the interim government introduced the extremely restrictive Sugar Industry (Special Protection Amendment No 3) Decree and the Protection of the National Economy Decree.<sup>45</sup> Penalties for preventing an industry from operating were fines of up to \$F10,000 or imprisonment for 14 years, or both. Although these decrees were lifted new 'labour reforms' introduced in November 1991 to tighten up on the activities and functioning of trade unions also included penal sanctions.<sup>46</sup>

Force and direct coercion as a means of labour control was one inheritance of colonialism but another legacy was the less brutal, but still restrictive, legislative framework for the management of industrial relations. By World War II the colonial government following Colonial Office directives, began to implement labour legislation and policies designed to contain and preempt militant industrial action. Such strategies were in line with British domestic industrial relations policy which favoured 'responsible trade unionism' based on collective bargaining and dispute reconciliation.<sup>47</sup> The Industrial Associations Ordinance and the Industrial Disputes (Conciliation and Arbitration) Ordinance were introduced in 1942, to make provisions for the recognition of trade unions, collective bargaining, conciliation and arbitration.

There is also considerable debate over whether changes introduced by the post-colonial state to labour legislation, particularly for trade unions, represented a gain and greater power for workers, or whether it indicated that workers' organisations were under greater state control. Two of the most controversial changes were the introduction of the 1973 Trade Disputes Act and the establishment of the Tripartite Forum in 1977. Tora and the Fiji Council of Trade Unions (FCTU) (a rival national centre to the FTUC) denounced FTUC's acceptance of the Trade Disputes Act as having 'sold out the workers of the country' and that the FTUC had become an 'official agency' of government.<sup>48</sup> Academic commentators have also cast divergent interpretations on this act. Hence regards it as formalising 'a role for unions in the processing of wage bargaining and the settlement of disputes, while the subsequent Trade Union Recognition Act 1976 established a formal process for the legal recognition of unions as the collective representative of workers and the right of that

collective to bargain.'<sup>49</sup> The 1973 act did establish restrictions on strike activity and demonstrated that the post-colonial state was willing to impose penal sanctions.<sup>50</sup>

Critics also dismissed the establishment of tripartite industrial relations machinery, comprised of representatives of government, unions and employers, as another step in the post-colonial state's cooption of workers.<sup>51</sup> Much of the impetus for this came from the FTUC which in the early 1970s did adopt a cautious and conciliatory stand. It also was inspired by the example of conservative labour movements in other post-colonial states such as Singapore.<sup>52</sup> The establishment of the Tripartite Forum in 1977 appeared to herald a brave new era of consultation and contained wage increases as the cornerstone of Fiji's industrial relations. Committees were set up, with representation from government, the unions and employers to determine remuneration guidelines, redundancy, dispute settlement and ability to pay. Even Raman recognised that this implied another trade off: 'the very involvement of the FTUC in the Tripartite system connotes the suppression of trade union militancy and wage demands based on the capacity of each employer to pay.'<sup>53</sup>

### Workers' Organisations and Labour Identity

Class identity is the most difficult area to discuss in relation to the colonial inheritance for labour in Fiji. Given the methodological,<sup>54</sup> theoretical and cultural limitations of such an exercise I will not present any answers but raise questions concerning class and identity in Fiji. Of relevance here is the extent to which the contradictory actions and policies of the colonial state created structures which may have moulded working class institutions. To what degree did the state's attempts to control these institutions, provoke the emergence of a stronger sense of class identity? I am trying to avoid a positivist, causal explanation and also question analyses which attribute class identity purely to the legacy of the historical super-structure of state and capital. Emergent class identities conflated with other identities such as ethnicity, gender, clan and locality. In turn the colonial state, especially in its control of emergent labour organisations, frequently promoted ideologies, such as chiefly deference, which mitigated against questioning authoritarian structures in Fiji. A further issue is that the colonial state not only tried to shape organised labour but instigated practices which led to the development of a large 'informal' sector and the

persistence of subsistence labour. It is too simplistic to dismiss this by suggesting that unorganised workers have no class identity or that there were neat demarcations between organised and unorganised labour.

By independence wage-earners and producers in Fiji were beginning to be aware of the common bond among those dependent for survival on their own labour. Despite strong opposition and divisive forces, this consciousness emerged painfully and slowly, during a century of small, usually undocumented struggles and larger confrontations with employers, the colonial state and the indigenous elite.

Effective working class organisation and identity was inhibited by both external and internal dynamics among workers. Ethnic divisions, especially between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians, and also between Europeans and those of mixed ethnic descent, could be to the detriment of working class unity but so too could divisions within ethnic categories. While sustained resistance and organisation was limited in the early colonial period, partly due to internal cultural, social and religious divisions among the *girmitya*, the shared experience of *Girmit* became a potent memory<sup>55</sup> which helped to forge a common consciousness among Indo-Fijians as workers.

After the abolition of *Girmit*, Indo-Fijian struggles, particularly within the cane industry, left a legacy for class identity in Fiji. Economic and ideological divisions emerged between bigger and smaller growers and those dependent upon waged labour as reflected in the formation of the *Kisan Sangh* and the *Chini Mazdur Sangh*. Simultaneously the militancy of Fiji's canegrowers became a potent memory in the identity of not only many Indo-Fijians but also became part of the labour history of Fiji. Actions such as cane-harvesting boycotts or arson, remained powerful bargaining threats which sugar farmers and workers resorted to on several occasions in the post-colonial period.

A persuasive ethnic stereotype perpetuated by certain colonial administrators, chiefs, academics, politicians and some working people, was that working class organisations were alien to Fijian culture. Reay stated in 1949 '...that Fijians have not the same need for industrial organisation as Indians and Europeans.'<sup>56</sup> The historical record shows otherwise. In the early colonial period Fijians attempted to resist unacceptable conditions by, for example, refusing to renew contracts or absconding and engaging in other forms of covert action. More organised responses such as the *Tuka*

movement of the 1870s and the *Viti Kabani* formed in 1912 could be interpreted as partly a response to unacceptable colonial labour practices.<sup>57</sup> As noted, indigenous Fijian wharf labourers attempted to form one of the first trade unions in the Pacific Islands in 1916.

In much of the discourse on labour and the state in Fiji, particularly in relation to 'class consciousness', the test has been that of industrial organisation and militancy. I would argue that this has led to a distorted emphasis upon manual labour and an equation of this with labour identity. The colonial state fostered a large white collar and public sector which played a prominent part in the post-colonial state. Two points require comment. The first relates to ethnicity and labour organisations. Ethnic Fijian participation was very strong in public sector working organisations. The membership of the Fijian Teachers' Association and Fiji Nurses' Association was almost exclusively indigenous Fijian, while the FPSA is probably Fiji's oldest multi-ethnic workers' association.<sup>58</sup> The executive was structured so that Fijians, Indo-Fijians and Europeans each occupied a third of the executive posts. Several prominent indigenous Fijians served on the executive.<sup>59</sup> This relates to my second point. The state quite deliberately encouraged the establishment of responsible public sector organisations, dating from the Association of European Servants formed in 1921.<sup>60</sup> Prior to independence the Controller of Organisation and Establishments was concerned about the weak organisation of the FPSA and advocated government strengthen it to avoid facing

a pack of trouble in the future. It is much easier for us to negotiate with a sensibly led main union than to withstand the claims from a horde of splinter unions some of which, as in the case of the Tele-communication Employees Union, could lay a fairly firm stranglehold on Fiji's economy.<sup>61</sup>

Instead during the following decade the FPSA grew to become Fiji's most powerful union, and on several occasions threatened and took industrial action. It led the other civil service unions in successfully defeating the government's attempts to restrict salary increases during the 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>62</sup> The relationship between government and public sector unions was severely strained during the 1980s. In 1985 teachers broke their stereotype

of industrial passivity by taking strike action for two weeks. Public sector unions, with the exception of the Public Employees' Union were at the forefront of the formation of the Fiji Labour Party.

### Union Structure and Identity

It was not only government officials which assessed Fiji's labour movement to be sensible and stable by independence. Kevin Hince, an industrial relations academic, wrote in 1971 that 'the trade union movement in Fiji is now established on a firm basis and is well poised to meet the challenges of the future.'<sup>63</sup> Fiji's rates of unionisation were high not only in comparison to countries within the Pacific Islands but with Australia and New Zealand.<sup>64</sup> Around 40 per cent of manual workers were estimated to be unionised in 1968.<sup>65</sup> This was not just a result of policies of the colonial state but also of past struggles by Fiji's workers to organise. Despite criticisms of the weakness of many unions, a major legacy of the colonial state was the high rate of union participation and a recognition by the state that unions were an established part of Fiji's society. This is in marked contrast to many other independent Pacific Islands countries. In post-colonial Fiji conflict arose with employers and government over the identity and actions workers' organisations would take. Twenty years after independence and under the severe threat to unions following the 1987 military coups, there were still 47 unions, representing around 43 per cent of workers. There were also 79 industrial associations.<sup>66</sup>

The colonial state encouraged unions but did not want them to follow a political or militant path. Partly because of this, it deliberately discouraged large general unions which left a legacy not only for union structure but for the consolidation of a concerted working class identity in Fiji. By independence there were 31 unions, many with under 250 members.<sup>67</sup> At the other extreme were a small number of older bigger unions. Although the colonial state discouraged large general unions, in 1951 it actively supported the formation of a local national centre of affiliated unions, the Fiji Industrial Workers' Congress (FIWC).<sup>68</sup>

Critics have implied that the colonial policy of encouraging a national centre left an inheritance which weakened and coopted organised labour in Fiji. This contrasts with colonies such as the Cook Islands, where although a large general union was encouraged by the New Zealand Labour

government during the 1940s, this took a paternalistic turn with a stipulation that the Cook Islands Industrial Union of Workers be affiliated to the New Zealand Federation of Labour.<sup>69</sup> This did not promote a strong labour movement in the Cook Islands. It could be argued that a positive legacy for organised labour in Fiji, which although threatened by factionalism and colonial paternalism, was the state's support of a relatively independent local national centre.

From the late 1950s until the early 1970s organised labour took divergent paths. FIWC leaders, particularly Mohamed Ramzan, encouraged responsible union development<sup>70</sup> and attempted to influence state policy through dialogue. A new 'radical bunch' led at various times by B.D. Lakshman, James Anthony, Tora and Michael Columbus operated in a more militant fashion outside the national centre. The last three were leaders in the militant 1959 strike.<sup>71</sup> This became an icon in Fiji's labour history representing a form of cross-cultural working class solidarity. The state clamped down on this through the use of direct and legislative force, appealing to chiefly authority and labour leaders to quell the unrest. Brij Lal identifies the 1959 oilworkers' strike as a missed-turning point in Fiji's labour history:

The once-promising foundation of a racially integrated working class movement slipped. What appeared once to have the potential to become a turning point in modern Fijian history remained an aberration, at least for the next two decades, until the emergence of the Fiji Labour Party in the mid-1980s.<sup>72</sup>

Instead ethnically based unions briefly re-emerged during the 1960s and the state and national centre instigated the deregistration of large general multi-ethnic unions, which had the potential to consolidate a strong class-based labour movement, such as the Wholesale and Retail Workers' General Union.<sup>73</sup> The strength of the FTUC also built up during the 1960s with the formation of new unions endorsed by the state and the FTUC such as the National Union of Factory and Commercial Workers. By 1970 industrial relations appeared stable but conflict within organised labour and between labour and capital would be reasserted.

Hince describes the years between 1970-84 as 'one of consolidation and steady

development<sup>74</sup> for the union movement. The early post-independence years revealed that this was not without tensions. Post-colonial Fiji was not guaranteed an industrial relations honeymoon especially as economic conditions for workers rapidly deteriorated.<sup>75</sup> Although inflation rose from 3.9 per cent in 1969 to 14.4 per cent in 1974, the country's economic performance was relatively positive.<sup>76</sup> Workers sought wage increases but the new government strongly resisted this. A test for the relationship between labour and the state came in 1973 with the introduction of the Trade Disputes Act and Counter Inflation regulations. The FTUC reached an agreement with government<sup>77</sup> and secured official recognition which considerably enhanced its national and international representation. A second trend which had implications for the development of class identity were the splits within organised labour. This became articulated through an attempt in late 1972 by Tora to form the Fiji Council of Trade Unions.<sup>78</sup> The FCTU advocated industrial militancy, but its appeal was limited due to conflicting political, ethnic and personal<sup>79</sup> loyalties among organised labour in Fiji. It is difficult to neatly categorise these identities and within the life-histories of some union leaders, such as Tora and dockworkers' leader, Veitata, there are ideological shifts over time. FTUC leaders were also not united in their political loyalties. Some became Alliance parliamentarians<sup>80</sup> and openly took a conservative stand against labour. Others, such as Raman shifted from being an Alliance candidate, to supporting the National Federation Party (NFP), to a brief stint with the Fiji Labour Party, to becoming a NFP member of parliament in 1992.

Veitata's labour identity shifted from being a militant trade unionist to becoming Minister of Employment and Industrial Relations in the post-coup regime. His career also reflects the persistence of ethnicity and racialism in post-colonial labour relations in Fiji. Howard<sup>81</sup> suggests that ethnic tensions were one reason for the FCTU's demise. Ironically, the FTUC, too often dismissed as the stooge of government, came to have an ethnically diverse representation, while many of the unions outside it took a much stronger Fijian nationalist and pro-Alliance line. Allegiances were never clear-cut. The most strongly nationalist union, the Fiji Dock Workers' Union, led by Veitata, remained within the FTUC until after the 1987 coups. The Public Employees' Union, a large union representing waged public sector workers left the FTUC in 1982. It was

dominated by Alliance stalwart, Joveci Gavoka, but had a multi-ethnic membership.

By the early 1980s splits within the FCTU led to the defection of most affiliates to the FTUC. The colonial state's legacy of promoting one national centre was realised with the ascendancy of the FTUC over the FCTU by the late 1970s but this no longer guaranteed a compliant labour movement.

An important change was the widening of the FTUC's representation. In 1978 it facilitated the establishment of a rural workers' industrial association, the National Farmers' Union (NFU).<sup>82</sup> This step forged important links between urban and rural workers. It also indicated that a sizeable portion of farmers identified their collective interests along similar lines to that of a trade union. The main organiser was Mahendra Chaudhry, FTUC's assistant general secretary and general secretary of the NFU and the FPSA. Chaudhry played a pivotal role in forging ties between urban and rural workers' organisations which became an important foundation of the Fiji Labour Party. Such links have not rested just upon individuals but reflect Fiji's workforce where many families comprise urban and rural, public and private and white and blue collar workers. This has helped to articulate a class identity but it has also been a source of contradictions, played out in the political sphere. The FLP's strength in 1987 was urban based while the 1992 general elections revealed the rural support behind labour, especially in the cane-growing districts.

A second change in the representation of the national centre, as discussed elsewhere, was the growing dominance of powerful white collar unions.<sup>83</sup>

As organised labour widened its representation and took a more assertive role against employers and the state, so government authorities invoked the rhetoric of nationalism where labour should follow 'responsible development'.<sup>84</sup> By the late 1970s workers faced increasing redundancies, unemployment and a rising cost-of-living. The FTUC became critical of the limitations of tripartite machinery and the failure of government and employers to stem the deterioration of the employment market.<sup>85</sup> While workers were asked to accept wage restraints and redundancies government leaders and conservative unionists invoked the need for the now mature union movement to act responsibly. For example at the annual conference of the FTUC in 1977, Jonati Mavoia, the Minister for Urban Development and Housing emphasised the part that trade unions,

employers and government had to play in the economic development of Fiji instead of union leaders pursuing 'narrow sectional interests'.<sup>86</sup>

Mavo'a's rhetoric smelled of the 'labour aristocracy thesis', a favourite label dished out by leaders in newly 'developing nations'<sup>87</sup> to restrict wage increases, especially among public sector workers. This points to the problems the post-colonial state faced in reconciling the economic interests of different sectors but too often it has been a ploy to impose unilateral state development policies. The labour aristocracy in Fiji became associated with the significant salary gains achieved in the early 1980s by professional public sector workers. Government accused civil servants of 'getting for themselves a bigger and bigger slice of the reducing family income.'<sup>88</sup>

#### Conclusion: The colonial inheritance and contradictions for labour

By 1985 the broadening role of organised labour led to it articulating an overt political identity when the FTUC promoted the formation of the Fiji Labour Party. Several commentators have interpreted this as indicating the emergence of a political party which cut through ethnic and class hegemonies.<sup>89</sup> Indeed, this was the FLP's platform.

A major irony in an assessment of the colonial inheritance and labour is that the FPSA, and other professional public sector unions considered 'sensibly main-led' and by some to be coopted by the state at independence, were a leading force behind the emergence of a labour party. So also was the FTUC, again partly a construction of the colonial state. That colonial state structured an economy which required both a proletarian and a subsistence base. This inheritance continued to play a powerful part in the post-colonial period. It threw up contradictions between these sectors which forged cohesive and divisive dynamics among workers.

A common theme has been the way in which ethnic divisions and racialism have appeared to dampen working class identity. That bite has not been as big as it appeared. One example of the emergence of post-coup ethnic-based unions is the Viti Civil Servants' Association. It appeared to be a threat to the FPSA and a voice of the post-coup regime. Evidence indicates that many defectors to this union soon returned to the FPSA<sup>90</sup> while in 1992 the VCSA was deregistered by the state. This does not downplay the persistence of appeals to ethnic identity in the post-colonial labour history of

Fiji. I argue however that the colonial state also formalised union institutions, too-long dismissed by academics as coopted arms of the state, which have provided a means of fighting against racism. This does not overlook the continued factionalism within organised labour<sup>91</sup> or dismiss the exploitation of unorganised workers and especially women.

Fiji represents a microcosm of the contradictions of the inheritance of colonial policies towards labour. On the one hand there is the persistence of sweat-shop conditions, in for example, several garment and other factories; the sub-standard living and working conditions of mineworkers; women employed as domestic workers who are not recognised as part of the 'formal' workforce and the growing numbers of workers living in poverty or considered unemployed. This is the inheritance of exploitation and force; whether the force is through labour legislation or the pull of commodification. On the other hand through the domineering and regulatory industrial relations administration and also the contradictory laissez faire attitudes of the colonial state towards various sectors of labour, structures were instigated which provided a powerful base for fighting unacceptable working conditions and through which a democratic workers' identity could emerge. This is partly a legacy of colonialism - but there has been a heavy price which many workers have paid. That has been as much due to the efforts of the colonised, as the colonisers.

#### References

1. See M. Hess, *Unions Under Economic Development: Private Sector Unions in Papua New Guinea* (Melbourne, 1992) pp. 29-39; Ronaldo Munck, *The New International: An Introduction* (London, 1988) pp.165-183.
2. The term 'post-colonial' is problematical. It refers to the period after independence from colonial rule, although it is recognised that this does not denote an absence of aspects of colonial power and ideology. Indeed that is a question for this conference.
3. cf. E. Laclau, 'New Social Movements and the Plurality of the Social' in D. Slater (ed.) *New Social Movements and the State in Latin America* (Amsterdam, 1985) p. 31 for the notion of contradictory consciousness.
4. e.g., Gillion, *Fiji's Indian Migrants: A History to the End of Indenture in 1920* (Melbourne; Oxford,



1962) pp.1-18; Brij V Lal, *Grinnyas: The Origins of the Fiji Indians* (Canberra, 1983) pp.6-12.

5. See Leckie, 'Workers in Colonial Fiji, 1870-1970' in Clive Moore, Jacqueline Leckie and Doug Munro (eds), *Labour in the South Pacific* (Townsville, 1990) p. 48.

6. Lal 1983, pp.97-114; Shiasta Shameem, 'Gender, Class and Race Dynamics: Indian Women in Sugar Production in Fiji', *Journal of Pacific Studies*, Vol. 13 (1987) pp. 10-35.

7. See 'Atu Bain, 'Vatukoula - Rock of Gold: Labour and the Gold Mining Industry of Fiji, 1930-1970', *South Pacific Forum*, Vol. 23, no. 2 (1988) pp. 119-136.

8. S. Durutalo, 'Internal Colonialism and Unequal Regional Development: the Case of Western Viti Levu', MA thesis, University of the South Pacific (1985) pp. 196, 222.

9. See Leckie 1990b, p. 51.

10. e.g., E60/106 President, FPSA to director, localisation and training, 3 November 1969; 4 November 1969 [Fiji National Archives (FNA)]. See Jacqueline Leckie, 'The Functioning of Public Service Unions During the colonial Era in Fiji', *South Pacific Forum*, Vol. 2, no. 2 (1986) pp. 28-29.

11. See fn.18 which gives an estimate of c.17% in social and community services in 1970. Treadgold, 1992, pp.11-12 estimates that in 1986 public sector workers accounted for 16% of the estimated total employment or 39% of those in paid employment (excluding canecutters and temporary workers).

12. From 7135 in 1965 to 12548 in 1973, Michael C. Howard, 'The Trade Union Movement in Fiji' in Michael Taylor (ed.) *Fiji: Future Imperfect?* (Sydney, 1987) p. 112.

13. When the FPSA was founded in 1943 there were 133 members. In 1970 there were 2980. The highest levels were 7463 in 1984 while after the 1987 coups numbers plummeted. In 1992 (partly as a reflection of government's withdrawal of the automatic deduction of union dues) membership stood at 4084.

14. Department of Statistics, Report of the Employment Survey, 1970 and 1989 gives the following comparative percentages for those in formal employment in 1970 and 1989 respectively: 17.7 and 21.2 in manufacturing; 16.9 and 16.4 in the wholesale, retail, restaurants and hotel work and 26.9 and 34.3% in social and community services.

15. Malcolm Treadgold, *The Economy of Fiji: Performance and Prospects*, International Development Issues, no. 25 (Canberra, 1992) pp.51-2.

16. See Robert Miles, *Capitalism and Unfree Labour; Anomaly or Necessity* (London, 1988) for a discussion of free and unfree labour.

17. See Clive Moore, 'Labour, Indenture and Historiography in the Pacific' in Brij V. Lal (ed.) *Pacific Islands History: Journeys and Transformations* (Canberra, 1992) pp. 129-148.

18. Leckie, 'Workers in Colonial Fiji...' 1990; Brij V. Lal, *Broken Waves: A History of the Fiji Islands in the Twentieth Century* (Honolulu, 1992).

19. 1876 Native Labour Ordinance, 1895 Fijian Labour Ordinance, 1912 Fijian Employment Ordinance. See 'Atu Bain, 'A Protective Labour Policy? An Alternative Interpretation of Early Colonial Labour Policy in Fiji', *Journal of Pacific History*, Vol. 23, no. 2 (1988) pp. 119-136.

20. Bain 1988.

21. *Fiji Times*, 3 November 1990. Janet Cole, Report in *Service Worker* (Southern Region) Vol. 8, no. 34, 21 September, 1991 cites a report by the Ministry of Employment and Industrial Relations (MEIR) which found that almost two-thirds of surveyed factories paid less than 51 cents an hour and four-fifths avoided paying overtime.

22. Shameem 1987, pp. 11-14.

23. Warden Narsey, 'Monopoly Capital, White Racism and Superprofits: A Case Study of CSR', *Journal of Pacific Studies*, Vol. 5 (1979) p. 95.

24. Raman, Fiji Trade Union Congress, *Reports on Activities. 1978-1979* (Suva, 1979) p. 26 suggested that this included around 50% of workers.

25. By 1968 around 7,500 low-paid workers in hotel, catering, building, civil and electrical engineering, road transport, wholesale and retailing trades and industries were covered by the minimum wage legislation which for 'unskilled' workers was 2/6d per hour.

26. *Fiji Times*, 28 July 1960.

27. FTUC, 1978-9, p.6.

28. Michael C. Howard, *Mining, Politics and Development in the South Pacific* (Boulder, 1991); Jacqueline Leckie, 'Trade Union Rights, Legitimacy and Politics under Fiji's Postcoup Interim Administration', *Pacific Studies*, Vol. 16, no.3 (1993).

29. See Leckie, 'Workers in Colonial Fiji....', 1990.
30. Brij V. Lal, 'Murmurs of Dissent: Non-Resistance on Fiji Plantations', *Hawaiian Journal of History*, Vol. 20 (1986) pp. 18-214.
31. Munck 1988, pp.48-53 discusses labour enclaves 'old and new' in the third world.
32. e.g., C.S.O.,F36/8/2, Monthly report of District Commissioner, Taveuni, December, 1938 (FNA).
33. See Kevin Barr, *Poverty in Fiji* (Suva: Fiji Forum for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, 1990), p.69.
34. Bain 1986.
35. Detailed in Jacqueline Leckie, 'Industrial Relations in Post-Coup Fiji - A Taste of the 1990s', *New Zealand Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 17 (1992) pp. 5-211992. The video, *Na Ma'e! Na Ma'e! (We Stand Until We Die)*, written and directed by Bain is a vivid depiction of the continuities between colonial and post-colonial labour conditions at Vatukoula.
36. Kevin W. Hince, 'The Earliest Origins and Suppression of Trade Unionism in the Fiji Islands', *New Zealand Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 10 (1985) pp. 93-101.
37. K. L. Gillion, *Fiji Indians: the Challenge to European dominance 1920-1946* (Canberra,1977) pp.18-65; Lal 1992, pp.129-134.
38. Gillion, 1977, pp.172-187.
39. C.S.O. F/36/39/3; F36/39/4.
40. This sought to constrain conflict between workers and employers, making it very difficult for workers to take industrial action, especially in essential services and to take solidarity action.
41. *Pacific Islands Monthly*, December 1977, p.78. Veitata received a further nine months sentence.
42. *Fiji Times*, 10 January 1985.
43. See Jacqueline Leckie, 'Development for the Workers? The Reaction of Civil Service Unions to State Policies in Fiji' in Michael Howard and Edward Wheelwright (eds) *The Struggle for Development: Essays in Honour of Ernst Utrecht* (Burnaby, 1990) pp. 92-5.
44. Jacqueline Leckie, 'State Coercion and Public Sector Unionism in Post-Coup Fiji', *New Zealand Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 16 (1991) pp. 49-71; 'Industrial Relations in Post-Coup Fiji...', 1993.
45. *Fiji Republic Gazette* 5(37), Decrees No. 18 and 19.
46. These were a \$2,000 fine or 12 months imprisonment and being barred as a union official for two years. These reforms restricted the industrial activities of industrial associations, deprived categories of workers in middle management from the right to form or join trade unions and employers were not compelled to deduct union subscriptions. The reforms introduced state supervised strike ballot procedures and new legislative procedures before industrial action could be taken. Restrictions were also placed upon invoking international solidarity support.
47. See W. Bowen, *Colonial Trade Unions*, Colonial Research series no. 167 (1954).
48. Fiji Trades Union Congress, *Onward Labour, 1961-1976: Silver Jubilee* (Suva, 1976) p.15.
49. Kevin W. Hince, 'Trade Unionism in Fiji in 1990', *International Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 27, no. 1 (1991) p. 54-68.
50. A strike or lock-out was declared unlawful if procedures for settling disputes, as stipulated in the registered agreement, were not exhausted or where an agreement or award was still in force.
51. William Sutherland, *Beyond the Politics of Race. An Alternative History of Fiji to 1992* (Canberra, 1992) presents the strongest case for state cooption of workers' organisations.
52. Address by Devan Nair, general secretary of the Singapore Trades Union Congress to the FTUC's annual conference, *Fiji Times*, 22 December 1975.
53. FTUC, 1978-79, p.25.
54. See Michael Emmison, 'Conceptualising Class Consciousness' in Janeen Baxter, Michael Emmison and John Wetern, (eds), *Class Analysis and Contemporary Australia* (Melbourne, 1991) pp. 246-305, for a critique of methodology and 'Conceptualising Class Consciousness'.
55. Ian Watson, 'Class Memory: An Alternative Approach to Class Island', a paper presented to the Australian National Conference for the Study of Labour History, Newcastle, 24-7 June 1993, discusses how class memory may be part of a person's recollected identity even if they may not give this much importance in their present lives. His evidence is from Australia. Vijay Mishra, Introduction in V. Mishra (ed) *Rama's Banishment: A Centenary Tribute to the Fiji Indians*

- 1879-1979 (Auckland, 1979) pp. 1-11, reiterates the importance of memory and identity for the *Girmitiyas* and their descendants in Fiji. Virtually no research has discussed the significance of class and work identity among Pacific Islanders. Instead academics seem rigidly stuck to institutional moulds with the result that workers are castigated for their lack of 'class consciousness' or the 'state' is simplistically blamed for coopting this.
56. Commissioner of Labour's report, 1949, p.3. Legislative Council Paper, 31/1950.
57. See Martha Kaplan, 'Meaning, Agency and Colonial History: Navasavakadua and the Tuka Movement in Fiji', *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 17 (1990) pp. 3-11 for the Tuka movement. The Viti Kabani (Fiji Company) was a cooperative of banana and copra producers founded by Apolosi Nawai. See Lal 1992, pp.48-54.
58. Jacqueline Leckie, *The Struggle for Social Justice* (Suva, 1993).
59. e.g., Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara Alliance cabinet ministers Jonati Mavoia, Charles Walker and Chief Justice, Sir Timoci Tuivaga.
60. Fiji Legislative Council papers, 11/1921; 14/1921.
61. E60/106, Minutes Controller of Organisation and Establishments to Colonial Secretary, 25 July 1968.
62. Jacqueline Leckie, 'Confrontation with the State: Industrial Conflict and the Fiji Public Service Association During the 1970s and its Aftermath in the 1980s', *South Pacific Forum*, Vol. 4, no. 2(1988) pp. 137-139.
63. K. W. Hince, 'Trade Unionism in Fiji', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 13, 4 (1971) p. 387.
64. Leon Heron, 1974, *Industrial Relations in the South Pacific Region: Some Issues and Approaches* (Geneva, 1974) p. 4.
65. Hince, 1971, p.56. This excludes dockworkers or seamen.
66. Numbers from the provisional report for 1989 of the Ministry of Employment and Industrial Relations. The union density estimate is from Hince, 1991, p.57 and includes 35,336 workers (excluding cane farmers) in 1990. The South Pacific and Oceanic Council of Trade Unions estimated a higher figure of c.44,000 unionised workers in Fiji in mid-1992. The industrial associations included The National Farmers' Union and the Fiji Association of Garment Workers which operated along similar lines to trade unions.
67. Report of the Secretary and Commissioner for Labour, 1970, Parliamentary Paper 3/1972.
68. FTUC, 1976, pp.39. The FIWC changed its name to the FTUC in 1967.
69. Jacqueline Leckie, 'Nurturers or Watchdogs of Labour: New Zealand and Trade Union Internationalism in the Pacific Islands' in Pat Walsh (ed.), *Pioneering New Zealand's Labour History: Essays in Honour of Berth Roth* (Palmerston North, 1993); Herbert Roth, 'Albert Henry as Labour Organizer: A Struggle for Power in the Cook Islands', *Journal of Pacific History*, Vol. 12, nos. 3-4 (1977) pp. 176-187; Dick Scott, *Years of the Pooh Bah: A Cook Islands History* (Rarotonga/Auckland, 1991) pp.223-269.
70. A comment made by Hince in 1971, p.381.
71. Report of Inquiry into the Disturbances in Suva, December 1959. Legislative Council Paper, 10/1960.
72. Lal 1992, p.169.
73. In 1962 the Fiji Sugar Employees Association, led by Lakhman and in 1968 the Airport, Hotel and Catering Workers' Union led by Tora were deregistered.
74. Hince 1991, p. 54.
75. According to the report of the Secretary of Labour, 1973, in that year there were 69 strikes, representing 116,998 lost work-days. This compares with 8 strikes and 752 work-days being lost in 1970.
76. Hince 1991, p.112.
77. See FTUC, 1976, pp.7-15.
78. Documentation in Jacqueline Leckie, 'Conflicts, Continuities and Challenges within Fiji's Labour Movement'. Paper presented to the Pacific History Association Conference, Christchurch, 1992.
79. See Robert Kumar, 'The Role of Tripartism in Labour Migration Relations and Socio-Economic Development in Fiji'. Diploma in Industrial Relations, unpublished paper, Wellington, Victoria University (1974) p.24.
80. Such as FTUC general secretary Ramzan and FTUC president Sakiasi Waqanivalagi. In contrast in 1972 Tora became a NFP parliamentarian.
81. Michael C. Howard, *Fiji: Race and Politics in an Island State* (Vancouver, 1991) p.106.
82. International Labour Organisation, 1982.

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83. Hince 1991, p.55 estimates that in 1968 public sector workers were 39.4% of aggregate union membership but that by 1988 this had risen to 62.8%.
84. See critique in Leckie, 'Development for the Workers?...', 1990.
85. e.g., FTUC, 1978-79.
86. FTUC, 1978-79, p.5.
87. The term labour aristocracy referring to a strata of skilled, higher paid workers was first used in the late nineteenth century (e.g., Hobsbawm, 1984) but was reasserted by politicians and in academic studies of the post-colonial African state. It has been highly criticised, e.g., Peter Waterman, *Aristocrats and Plebeians in African Trade Unions? Lagos Port and Dock Workers' Organization and Struggle* (The Hague, 1983) pp.13-16.
88. Leckie, 'Development for the Workers?...', 1990, pp. 92-3.
89. See Stephanie Lawson, *The Failure of Democratic Politics in Fiji* (Oxford, 1991) pp. 234-46; Sutherland, 1992.
90. Leckie, 'Industrial Relations In Post-Coup Fiji...', 1992, pp. 61-64.
91. Leckie, 'Conflicts, Continuities and Challenges...', 1992.



# Literary Legacies: Faltering Feet; Dancing a Pen to a National Beat

Paul Sharrad

One of the most prevalent images of indigenous Pacific writing is the schoolroom. From Vincent Eri's 'Village, Church and School' through story (Rowley Habib's 'Motu'), poem (Konai Helu Thaman's 'Uncivil Servants'), autobiography (Zoloveke's 'Man from Choiseul'), play (John Kneubuhl's 'Think of a Garden') and film (Albert Toro's 'Tukana') the motif is insistent. These examples span time (1950 to 1990) and place (Papua New Guinea, Solomons, New Zealand, Tonga, Samoa and Bougainville) and one can ring the changes on them quite readily (Subramani's 'No Man's Land': story, Fiji; Mihela Peleti's 'My School, Tialeniu': poem, Tokelau; Kama Kerpi's 'Voices from the Ridge': drama, Papua New Guinea; Wendt/Sanderson's *Flying Fox in a Freedom Tree*: film, Samoa, etc.). In Melanesia, where culture-contact has been relatively more sudden and recent, the literary fixation on schooling as a central trope for negotiation of identity, colonisation, status enhancement, national formation and transition to modernity is quite clear.

This should not be surprising. In real life, the kiap came and went, but the teacher or catechist stayed. The kiap brought the law and one effect was that one's children had to go to school. Schooling meant increased reliance on cash to pay for fees and books and uniforms. It also meant uprooting of children from the village, not just by exposing their minds to the world beyond, but by transporting their bodies to places outside of the clan boundaries.<sup>1</sup> School was also the vehicle through which one might arrive at some understanding of what the kiap was all about and thereby some possibility of control over the distribution of the goods that seemed to follow in his wake. In literature, school was the basic condition for the writer being able to write; it had to be cited as a point of origin and authorisation, as a modern talisman of *mana*, an icon of the new self and the new society within which such a self could be meaningful.

Paulias Matane has produced an autobiography that makes this quite clear. The book, *My Childhood in New Guinea*, is intended as a social studies handbook, with pictures of traditional customs on New Britain, as well as an inspirational story for students striving to better themselves in a new nation. It opens with a full-page photo of a sorcerer and closes with one of Matane at his office desk. The narrative is a

success story based on the progression from village boy to school student to teacher to bureaucrat. It is school that is the print-story medium of change and as part of schooling it is the widening of vision from village to nation that allows such change to be meaningful: without the intervening aerial photo of the New Guinea landscape and the colonial-induced mental vision to go with it, there is no significant narrative or cognitive connection between the two portraits. The story itself becomes an educational text about the place of education and the formation of a modern educated consciousness within a concept of nationhood.<sup>2</sup>

The questions I want to address in this paper include: what was the legacy of colonial policies for the Papua New Guinean school system? How did it shape the development not just of literacy, but of literary expression? To what extent, as a consequence, has a literate culture to come into being? My doggerel title for this paper is modelled on a contemporary Papua New Guinean poem, 'Dancing yet to the Dimdim's Beat'<sup>3</sup> which uses the language and the modes of literacy of the coloniser to critique the legacy of colonialism and question its own function in a supposedly independent nation.

We are dancing  
Yes, but without leaping  
For the fetters of dominance  
still persist  
Yes, still insist  
On dominating  
Holding us down

We have been dancing  
Yes, but not for our own tune  
For we are not immune  
Yes, for our truly, our own truly  
Music of life is erodin  
Yes, the mystic tune holds  
Us spellbound  
Our independence abused

....  
We have been dancing  
Yes, but the euphoria has died  
It is now the dull drumming  
Yes, of the flat drums —  
Thud dada thud da thud dada thud  
Yes, it is signalling, not the bliss,

But the impending crisis. (Vincent Warakai)

The usual literary history produced by a post-colonial society is constructed as a triumphalist evolution from imitation of the colonial models and self-denigration, through rebellious counter-assertion and nostalgic reconstruction of the pre-colonial to cultural self-possession within an internationally informed autonomous national 'industry' of writing, publishing, classroom instruction, public debate and scholarship. Papua New Guinean literature can be viewed in this way, but if it is, we must have certain reservations about its success, even at this relatively early stage of its history. I want to argue, along with the poet above, that in terms of generating a culture of literacy, some things have not changed much, or have not developed in the way they were expected to. This, I argue, is because the optimistic years of decolonisation and the busy years of early independence carried over in different guises the same pattern of colonial thinking about education, and this continuity, among many other factors, has limited the growth of a real print-culture and literary cultural infrastructure.

I am prompted to consider the whole issue by three facts. Firstly, my work in written Pacific literature suggests a miraculous decade of decolonisation accompanied by a literary outpouring that then dwindled to a desultory set of small, one-off publications and less than a handful of writers who have continued to publish, not infrequently positioned as somehow eccentric. Secondly, the acknowledged instigator of most of the early Papua New Guinean creative writing, Ulli Beier, following his string of publishing successes and literary protégés of the seventies, prefaced his 1980 collection *Voices of Independence* with a complaint that the education system had abandoned literature. He points to a general decline in literary output, and focuses on the institution he himself was associated with:

The decline of the university's role is tragic....The secretary of education refers to the university as 'our chief manpower training institution'. Accordingly, most students are channelled into education courses.... The sciences are obviously encouraged, but subjects like

literature, history, and political science are being regarded as both superfluous and potentially 'dangerous'. ...There is even talk in the University Council and the Ministry of Education of abolishing the Arts Faculty altogether.<sup>4</sup>

Thirdly, I understand there was a change of policy in Papua New Guinea around 1986 to re-emphasize the teaching of literature and creative writing in schools.<sup>5</sup> This has been reflected in a number of education staff being sent abroad for higher degrees in literature in recent times where once 'development' studies were 'the go' and linguistics the closest anyone got to departments of literature.<sup>6</sup> I take the shift to imply an admission that the schools have somehow not been adequately positioned to develop a culture of literacy or a literary culture in the modern nation, despite, and maybe because of, all the effort of the three decades, 1945-1975 and the educational practices before the War.

To see some of the complicated network of forces surrounding the emergence of a literary culture in Papua New Guinea, I want to take a case study of a particularly fascinating figure, one that brings together in his own poetry and life the growth of modern schooling, the several theories of education that held sway, the decolonising period of literary boom led by Beier, and the post-independence disillusionment signalled above by Vincent Warakai. In surveying this poet's career, it becomes possible to sketch a rough answer to my questions.

Allan Natachee was born Avaisa Pinongo in the Mekeo District of Papua in 1925. His mother died when he was five and he was taken in by nuns of the Inawaia Catholic mission. It was there that he found a fragment of Tennyson and was 'hooked' on poetry.<sup>7</sup> One of the nuns 'christened' him Natachee after an Apache Indian figure because, like him, he was always leaping around. He dates his writing from 1935 when he was ten and wrote, 'I am a poor beggar and roam around the world to find a shade to dwell' — prophetic lines when we think of Russell Soaba's extended fictional portrayal of the 'Odd Man Out' forty years later, notably in his novel *Wanpis* (1977).

When he was 16 in 1940, Natachee wrote 'Law and Lore of Nature':

According to law and lore of our nature,  
 Man is bound to go on and on,  
 Solving adventure after adventure,  
 With an endlessness leading him on!  
 And for that cause that which is yet  
 unseen,  
 And that which is yet unknown:  
 On the morrow it shall be seen!  
 On the morrow it shall be known!  
 Around and above the margin of earth's  
 airy space,  
 There shall for evermore revolve,  
 A man-made world for his problem to  
 face,  
 And his problem of space to solve!  
 A man-made world shall indeed be strong,  
 To stand against mighty attacks,  
 From debris of lost world — but not for  
 long;  
 Man shall again repair the cracks.<sup>8</sup>

When War came, Natachee volunteered as a carrier, but was rejected as too young. He worked as a 'bosboi' on the mission's rubber plantation and after cessation of hostilities got a job as a joinery machinist in the Department of Lands from which he was discharged with eye trouble. In 1950, Percy Cochrane, Senior Broadcast Officer and later editor of the *Journal of the Public Service, TPNG*, was alerted by his friend Barwick in Native Affairs to the presence 'of a Mekeo...always writing in a big black book' in the 'boihouse' of a friend.<sup>9</sup> Cochrane took him on as a translator and journalist for Territory broadcasting (Natachee spoke Roro, Kuni, Motu, Mailu and Mekeo as well as English, and there was a post-war shortage of educated workers). Sent off to produce news items, he would write them up as 'sonnets',<sup>10</sup> and he was eventually dismissed from the Broadcasting section because he would disappear to collect material from old relations, especially sorcerers, who had come to Moresby to sell betel. Cochrane tried to get him into the government anthropologist's department, but that figurehead was ageing and ill. Natachee eventually became a clerk for a building company.

In the meantime he had been championed by Percy Cochrane and his wife Renata so that his poems got into *Oceania* in 1951.<sup>11</sup> As a result, he was contacted by a Philippines poetry society and given a laurel crown and a certificate declaring him poet laureate of Papua! After that he was much republished: in *Journal of the Public Service, Australian Territories, Westerly*, Gavin Souter cited

part of his work in *New Guinea, the Last Unknown*, and the *South Pacific Post* ran his poem celebrating the House of Assembly elections in 1964; he even had ABC radio readings and a television appearance.<sup>12</sup> When he was interviewed in 1972, he had returned to his village to 'work in the rice fields and help the people fix fences ...or work on the roads'. He also continued to record traditional songs and poems for the benefit of the next generation, served on the Local Government Council and advocated self-government in 1973, with independence 'six or eight years after'. He still wore his silver crown from the United Poets Laureate International.

Natachee's literary career was clearly shaped by his upbringing on the Yule Island-connected mission. For most of post-contact history, education was run by the missions, starting with the efforts of four Pacific Island catechists of the London Missionary Society sent to Moresby by Lawes in 1873, and they obviously had an influence on any literary products that emerged from the schools. Vincent Eri contrasts the Catholic and LMS systems in *The Crocodile*.<sup>13</sup> Leo Hannett invokes his experiences in Catholic seminary to mount an attack on colonialist Eurocentrism,<sup>14</sup> Russell Soaba recreates his time at Martyrs' Memorial, Popondetta in his novel *Wanpis*,<sup>15</sup> which depicts the tension between missions wanting mostly to instil holiness and discipline in a protective environment and students wanting to acquire knowledge that would bring material advancement and a chance to 'see the world'. Overall, however, the pidgin term *skul*, which conflates the meanings of 'mission' and 'place of instruction' is a fair reflection of the role played by churches in Paupa New Guinean education.

Within mission education, however, there were differences of educational opinion as well as creed. The LMS, while favouring English, did use Motu and local languages (Toaripi, Hula, Suau, Orokol, for instance) as vehicles of instruction in junior school. They also put some emphasis on trade training and developing rural-based skills. The Catholics, on the other hand, pushed a more assimilationist policy, in keeping with French colonial practice as introduced by the Yule Island priests. Bishop de Boismenu records confrontations between catechists over 'poaching' students from one school to another<sup>16</sup> and boasts in 1916 that: 'It is the will of the Church that Catholic children taught in her schools be in no way inferior to children educated elsewhere.'<sup>17</sup> This argument was used during the decolonisation of the New



Hebrides, when the French said that if they were supported, any ni-Vanuatu could get an education that would allow equal relations with anyone in Paris, whereas under the British and supporters of the English-language system, natives would be schooled only in their own tongues and acquire a smattering of English.<sup>18</sup> In Papua, it became a case of LMS pastors teaching in the major language of the district, and the Catholics teaching in English.<sup>19</sup> It will be recalled also that it was a French order which produced the first Papuan ordained priest, an event that caused Hubert Murray to pen his famous opinion of the native intelligence.<sup>20</sup> In any case, the missions had the ability to sequester students in a 'total learning environment'. Greg Denning's comment on Marquesan history is as true for Papua New Guinea:

The missionaries never discovered a sure way to persuade children or adults to give time or be regular in the giving of it...[They] were convinced that boarding schools offered the best chance of discipline and distance from distraction....literacy was itself a vehicle for the new abstractions of the civilized....The boarding schools were effective total environments for the reconstruction of a new reality.<sup>21</sup>

As a 'mission boy', Natachee was part of the more concentrated assimilation of the Mekeo district missions and later, the Bomana De La Salle school.<sup>22</sup> As such, he might be expected to rise reasonably high in life, within the limitations of the time. But as a mission scholar, he was unorthodox. He refused the catechist role and he failed to stay in the village or on the land. He celebrated modern secular knowledge (the 'fix-it' optimism of his youthful poem is matched by a later exhortation, 'Advance Atomic Age') and he also retained a close connection to old 'pagan' knowledge before it became 'trendy' as part of a (re)construction of national identity.

Natachee also became an unwitting pawn in the often strange relationship between the missions and the government.<sup>23</sup> Despite the best intentions of the missions, they could not be everywhere at once, and they were saddled with the task of training their own teachers and setting up

schools from overseas donations. The Administration, while it introduced taxes to promote habits of capitalist labour and to develop schools of its own, had to spread limited revenue across a wide area of land and social issues. Pre-War educational development was at best isolated, unsystematic and in most places just not there. Until the late sixties, the government never really had the cash or the will to push state schooling,<sup>24</sup> and at one stage even sought to foist all responsibility for schooling onto the missions!<sup>25</sup> In 1939 there were only 600 students in Administration schools in New Guinea.<sup>26</sup> Hank Nelson points out that 'there were virtually no Administration secondary schools for indigenous students before 1957'.<sup>27</sup> By 1963 there were still only 3,700 secondary students in the whole country.<sup>28</sup> The Administration was in a bind of having to allow the missions carry the burden of educational development in a 'cloistered' village subsistence context, while increasingly wanting skilled labour in secular, urban and cash environments. It also had at its back a white lobby wanting trained help, but only as domestics, lathe operators, book-keepers etc., so even its own needs for medical orderlies, agricultural advisers, teachers, co-operative managers, local council leaders and so on were met under constraint.<sup>29</sup> Government subsidies to schools up to the fifties only went as far as standard 5 and were paid according to exam results in basic maths, geography and English competency. F.E. Williams in *Papuan Villager*, 1932, makes abundantly clear the rural, artisanal, small-scale capitalist, and racist context in which education was to be conceptualised for many years:

The white men know far more than you do. They make and do a lot of things that are quite beyond you. You cannot be the same as the white man; and there is no reason why you should. It is true that there are many of the white man's ways you can copy; you can learn to work hard and save money; you can learn to read and do arithmetic; you can learn to buy and sell and be 'business-like'; you can learn to look after your health and guard your villages from sickness; you can learn to use tools in your gardens; and there are all sorts of

useful things you can buy in the stores. But you can never be the same as the white men; and you will only look silly if you try to be.<sup>30</sup>

D.J. Dickson summed up this early phase of educational development: 'in theory and in fact, Murray placed literary or academic education as last on the list of educational priorities.'<sup>31</sup> This has remained true ever since, despite momentary appearances to the contrary.

In this context, Natachee was too highly educated; he had a love of words and ideas for their own sake, and could be seen as socially useless and a classic case of the mission-educated 'bikhet'. He was well versed in English long before the Administration approved a pro-English policy for schools in the fifties. He was too good a mimic and his mimicry could be construed as a threat of potential indigenous competition for a share of white jobs, wealth and knowledge. It also had the potential to expose some of the fallacies of development policy (the Atomic Age might well roll on, but for the average Papuan, it was not going to get him a high-paying job or even into a white's-only bar, or on to Ela Beach<sup>32</sup>) even as it could be paraded as a success story for paternalistic colonialism. In this context, Natachee had to be contained, by paternalistic tones of wonder and self-congratulation. These implied both the educability of the native but also the uniqueness of this particular case of accelerated development, and could be matched by polite smiles over the sentiments and style that kept this fellow in his place as merely a mimic, a poor imitation unconscious of his own shortcomings.<sup>33</sup> Just as his Native American namesake had been 'contained' within a Eurocentric Romantic literary frame by poems like *Hiawatha*, Avisai had been 'framed' firstly by the nun's imposing on him that identity, (a singular one amongst all the Stephens and Aloysiuses, or the Rudyard Kiplings and Gordons of the more jingoistic Anglican system) and secondly by the gradualist liberal paternalism of the *Australian Territories* magazine and fifties colonial policy. Natachee as anything more than a curiosity, becomes an early example of the 'hot-house' argument applied to the literary boom of the seventies. Insofar as there was no climate for literary nurture outside of the boarding school or the university, it was a valid argument; but it was also a colonialist discursive ploy that threatened to become a self-fulfilling prophecy. There was no

institutional place for Natachee, even though, unlike later writers, he was construed as saying what the advocates of 'controlled progress' wanted to hear.

The system's inability to use or develop Natachee's skills was also because he was not 'educated enough' for late colonialism; he did not affect the tie and long socks of the new breed of Papua New Guinean students; he chewed betel and 'went bush' to talk to the old sorcerers instead of keeping office hours; he 'did' oral history and anthropology, but his fieldwork was his own and not mediated into academic structures or supervised by a white expert as so much other material was. Nor did he seem to be part of the general indigenous interest in schooling as a vocational, materialist enterprise — even as he trumpeted the virtues of Western knowledge, he used it to preserve the old traditions at no evident gain to himself in either town or village.

Natachee revealed his skills at a turning-point in educational as well as political history. Vincent Eri, basing his opinion on the oral history from which he built his novel, distinguishes between the World War Two carriers who got some school and more 'on-the-job' training in modern ways<sup>34</sup> and the generation one or two removed who became the first University and college graduates.<sup>35</sup> This generational shift spans the change in policy from gradual democratised development on a shoestring budget with a strong lobby to make the native useful but keep him out of competition with whites ('It was deliberate government policy not to educate an elite.' Smith, 1987: 17), to accelerated growth in the number and levels of schools open to indigenes in order to train the administrative elite of a new nation. The break in general policy came with the United Nations' anti-colonialist interest after the War. The Minister for Territories in 1955 declared a policy of universal primary education, and then in 1962 a United Nations' enquiry led by Sir Hugh Foot urged the development of tertiary training under a program of increased administrative and political self-determination. A national system of education came into force in 1970, two years after the foundation of the University of Papua New Guinea. But this change was primarily at the macro-political level.

Whether schooling occurred under the mission or the government, it was never schooling for the love of learning *per se*; it was schooling for some collective functional purpose — 'manpower management' of souls or hands or both. Traditional education had been the same: survival

skills learned by imitation of adults and esoteric knowledge, both at the service of enhancing one's own wealth and status and the general well-being of the community.<sup>36</sup> In modern times the range of operation had merely widened, from clan to nation. For literacy development, to see oneself as a reader, one must be able to imagine oneself as a writer, and vice versa. In the context of literature, this entails a certain degree of individual enjoyment of the processes of reading and writing and in entertainment for its own sake. It also implies the acceptance of a separation between reader and writer. Village oral tradition, on the other hand, operates in a mode that assumes the close connection of speaker and listener and which serves the communal need. (This is one reason why writers rehearse their childhoods in the village: it's not just romantic political ammunition against the corrupting effects of colonialism, it's a confession/celebration of the disjunction of modernity — embodied in the classroom experience — which is the condition for their entry into print culture.) The 'double bind' that the decolonising process introduces for cultural production is the contradiction of invoking a set of icons of identity (village, vernacular, orality/dance, 'magic', agriculture) in the name of the nation (represented in terms of town, English, writing, science and the office). 'Literature' becomes a problematic construct, produced in the name of the nation but under a definition that negates its modern form. It repeats obsessively, not just the political problems of the time but its own difficulty in coming into being. Eventually that repetition assumes the shape of a tradition itself and generates new developments within its own print-culture context, but in a country like Papua New Guinea, this may be a longer and more troubled process than the materialist-political emergence of the nation. In the meantime, the contradictions are ideologically 'papered over' by the continuity of an unexamined assumption about education. Writing, like storytelling, is at the service of the community; the scale is different, but the function is the same, and the cultural arena remains public and pragmatic, rather than allowing for the privacy and aestheticism that seems to be required for a literary print culture. Education is schooling; schooling is training; training is for material gain. So for Warakai, the pen continues to dance to the beat of a drum and the nation to the tune of its former masters. It is this kind of discursive circle that inhibits the reception development and of Natachee's work.

In 1965, Oscar Spate, contemplating 'A Territory University', saw the need for its offerings

to be related to 'the local environment if it is not to be an artificial veneer' and adverted to a planned localisation of the secondary curriculum. He went on:

Oxbridge and ivory towers are out, the real issues are in the marketplace and must be met there; but we shall very ill serve New Guinea and ultimately ourselves, if we adopt nothing but a meanly utilitarian approach.<sup>37</sup>

In 1980, that was exactly what Ulli Beier accuses the University and its political controllers of doing. But even at the height of benevolent decolonisation, when indigenous culture was being frantically put into writing and creative writing was being promoted in schools, a Director of Education chose to discuss curriculum only in terms of cost-efficiency and productivity and English teaching as a tool related to conveying maths concepts.<sup>38</sup>

With all the changes in policy, from top-down westernisation, to Ivan Illich's grass-roots 'deschooling' theory, only a very few people seem to have questioned the rationale for literacy training; parents wanted it; politics demanded it; it was done. Many, like Nelson Giraure, reflected wryly on the alienating effect of school and literacy on village students and 'The Need for a Cultural Programme'.<sup>39</sup> Vincent Eri, two years earlier in 1972, was also expressing dissatisfaction:

The whole of English teaching could do with some reshaping. Composition writing from primary and secondary schools has not produced much creative thinking. ... There's no use in knowing all the parts of grammar if you can't write creatively.<sup>40</sup>

Paulias Matane, one of the most literary people in the country, dared to ask 'Education for What?',<sup>41</sup> but his replies were as rhetorical as the question, amounting to more practical training to produce 'people who were happy to work on the land', 'service of the nation' and little more.<sup>42</sup>

With the development of the University picking up on the Administrative College as

training-ground for the leaders of the future, there was an obvious push towards a highly literate and English-language literate group of people. African affairs had influenced educational thinking in Papua New Guinea since Murray had looked to Nigerian policies and UNESCO had sponsored a plan for Third World educational development at conferences in Madagascar, Tanganyika and Pakistan. (African affairs had also influenced Papua New Guinean political opinion; both Somare and Kiki attended conferences in East Africa; Tom Mboya had been a prominent member in a delegation to Papua New Guinea, and the die-hard highland planters with a mixture of fear and aggression christened the UPNG the 'mau mau factory').<sup>43</sup> It is logical then, that cultural elements in the curriculum should be taken from the decolonising nations of Africa as well. Chinua Achebe's fiction was on the English syllabus; several of the university staff came from service in Africa.<sup>44</sup> One of these was Ulli Beier, who had worked with Yoruba art and literature in Nigeria and began to teach creative writing at UPNG, generating in a few years *Kiki* and *The Crocodile*, (independently authored and published but produced under his tutelage) a small-press poetry series (Papua Pocket Poets), a journal of literature and the arts (*Kovave*) and a significant interest in Papua New Guinean writing in Australia and abroad, notably through the anthologies of the University of Queensland Press, *Black Writing from New Guinea* (1978) and *Voices of Independence* (1980).

During the new phase of proto-nationalist decolonisation, Beier, the promoter for people like Kumalau Tawali, Vincent Eri, Kama Kerpi, John Kasaipwalova and others, encountered Natachee. Protégé of another, and paragon of a less politically correct era, Allan comes in for a roasting:

Contempt for the past goes hand  
in hand with admiration for the  
white man....For black  
nationalism Natachee has no time  
at all....His praise of Britain is  
embarrassing in its naivety....  
Future generations of Papuans  
will undoubtedly despise him for  
such sentiments.

....

What is interesting about  
Natachee is not that he is a bad  
poet, nor that his bad poetry  
brought some success. The  
question that intrigued me from

the start was: what made this  
charming man, who is sincere,  
but without the gift of language,  
want to write?<sup>45</sup>

Only when Natachee turns to 'englished' versions of traditional Mekeo chants, does he find favour with Beier and a place in his stable of published literary names.<sup>46</sup> And what spontaneous music is tapped by his 'return' to authenticity? what literary energy is released? what traditional elegance of form?

Aia on the road he walks!  
Aia all naked,  
On the road he walks!

Aia my hand is faultless!  
Aia all naked,  
My hand is faultless.

Aia you shake your spear!  
Aia all naked,  
You shake your spear.

Aia in war decoration!  
Aia all naked,  
In war decoration!

Without suggesting any inadequacy of the original expressive material, I dare to assert that this 'beautiful "stone age poetry"' is no less wooden or, to use Beier's word, 'trivial' than any of Natachee's own verse, despite its having been tidied up into a formal regularity and dredged up from childhood memories innocent of mission interference.<sup>47</sup> Though it may be an accurate literal translation, it is certainly bad cultural translation; the text is emptied of significance and resonance by being stripped of its performative and ritual context. The erasure of the music of Mekeo syllables and tune, and of the accumulations of situational and cultural association leave the text bared of all save an impression of childishness that is potentially more damaging than the kind of mixed admiration even a local readership might feel for a poet who had attempted 'big words and rhyme' in English verse forms. How could it happen that an otherwise well-intentioned and competent literary critic could skew our reading of Natachee in this way? And I do not mean to single out Beier for blame — Nigel Krauth also labelled

Natachee a misguided eccentric, largely for writing and especially for writing in English.<sup>48</sup>

As already suggested, Beier himself was contained, like Natachee, in a discursive operation that prevented certain definitions of cultural production from being considered. In a sense, paternalism had merely changed its politics, radical anti-colonialist gurus replaced missionaries and kiaps. This is a simplification, of course, but in education whether official curriculum policy was to blend traditional and modern ways (Groves) or offer a choice between old and new (McKinnon),<sup>49</sup> to promote smart farmers in the village or bureaucrats and businessmen in town, institutional practice functioned to keep the reins of power in the liberal, western and national epistemological camp that emphasised materialist development. Ulli Beier, benevolent, non-directive, anti-colonialist cultural agent though he may have been,<sup>50</sup> was still part of this system and his literary judgement functioned within its network of forces. So when in 1980 he complains of the University betraying the cause of the arts, he is merely noting a shift in priorities in a system that was no more pragmatic or politically interested than the one which had allowed his cohort of UPNG students a few years of literary glory. That literature had been at the service of the emerging national community and the community found it expedient to emphasize folklore but necessary to package it within modes of modern print-culture production. So Beier refashions Natachee and becomes, yet again, his 'discoverer'. Once the nation had arrived, literature had fulfilled its function; writers could go on to other things. There was no established culture of literacy or literary production, no infrastructure, no readership to sustain a tradition.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, the tradition was that schooling was a means to practical social ends and writing simply a modern adjunct to this, operating in a special social sphere of its own.<sup>52</sup>

Russell Soaba has a Chemistry lecturer mouthing the 'official cultural line' in his novel *Wanpis*:

What they, the Papuans and New Guineans should write about... were stories that helped shape and developed the nation; a writer's duty is to provide national consciousness, to stimulate national unity; to educate the village masses; to guide those promising young

writers who are lost to come back to the right path of creative writing; to go through the right kind of training and ultimately take over from their expatriate counterparts as the future literary leaders of this country; to make one plus one equal two and not five or ten, no not even x..... (164-5)

But he points out the impossibility of this 'policy for the arts' of developing a truly literate culture. Under such a pressure of expectation and literalism, the writer feels crushed, and demanding something greater for art than literalist social engineering, retreats to anomie and defeatism:

Even now while planning this novel, while treating it as a spare-time hobby, I am afraid. Afraid because I am too young to attempt an effort as ambitious as this: and since I am too young and underdeveloped I feel as if I am fooling over two and a half million people.

....

there are no definitive enough forces to help create that self-determination in me; every book I read is simply a dream which automatically gets crushed by the next book I pick up. I am all confusion.

....

I torment myself by being alive. The others are just simply blinded by this dawn, and thereafter have only the dreams of a pot-bellied future and beer-stained independence to resort to. (118)

It is ironic that Beier, who helped to start Soaba, was unable to recognise or praise the truly educated, genuinely literary aspects of Natachee's work until he had packaged him as a 'native informant' trading in folklore that sounded authentically exotic to the onlooker ('purity' and 'simplicity' are words Beier uses), which could be mediated by the white decolonising agent, and that looked acceptably indigenous in a programme

aiming at national cultural identity. Russell Soaba's career has in many ways echoed that of Natachee, save that he has the aid of an international post-colonial consciousness to carry him tenuously along. Institutionally, not much has altered in developing a widespread and well supported literary culture.

After the early sponsorship by Cochrane, the picture seems to be one of an older Natachee hanging around the University campus writers group, attracting a mixture of respect and derision. He is presented as even more a figure of pathos than Somu Sigob, former politician then university security guard.<sup>53</sup> This is something of a convenient construction, though Natachee can be pitied for the scant support given to developing his personal creative talent. Both Cochrane and Beier talk in terms of tragic inhibition of potential; the one by an inflexible bureaucracy that denied him material comfort and professional development, the other as a cultural cripple who 'takes no pride in being a Mekeo and 'whose spirit was crushed by an insensitive missionary effort'.<sup>54</sup> While it is no doubt true that his education and his historical moment have hampered the full expression of his talent, it is not true that Beier rescued Natachee from a pathetic alienation and set him on the path to recovering his native authenticity. Before Ulli 'discovered' him, Natachee was painstakingly recording Mekeo lore in decorated manuscript.<sup>55</sup> He is, but is not only, someone caught between the cross-fire of culture-contact and decolonisation; he is also one trapped as a seemingly genuine literate, educated person, within systems of educational thinking — village and national, mission and government, pre- and post-independence — which define schooling as training, writing as functional, English as public, official and Western-dominated. It is because of this that his Stone Age appears to have passed, even as his literary Atomic Age glimmered and proved a false dawn, despite and also because of the arc-lights of cultural nationalism.

This pattern of metaphor is, however, perhaps misleading in itself. Natachee has written verse that is reminiscent of mid-nineteenth-century Australian or turn-of-century Indian poetry in English, and certainly, from the perspective of print-literate, English-speaking, street-wise modern readers, it seems at first reading clumsy in technique, culturally alienated, fawning in politics, and fatuously optimistic in its clichéd rhetoric of progress. It is out of this kind of thinking that we must agree with Nigel Krauth that literary culture after a brief efflorescence, faded to dust.<sup>56</sup> But in

a fully developed literary culture, to regard Natachee's work or its colonial counterparts elsewhere merely as an incompetent imitation of British literature to be superseded as quickly as possible is uncritically to dehistoricise it within its own sphere of cultural politics and literary history. Indeed, the forces behind Natachee's production seem still to operate today. English is still the means to a job; education is still schooling and schooling a ritual aimed at getting access to material benefits and social status, or at least to the bright lights of the city. Most of the poetry coming out of the Pacific, when it is not 'chopped-up-prose' statement, has the same inflated diction, formal or forced metre and rhyme, moral exhortation and public tone. Seen in this light, Natachee is indeed, as Beier termed him less positively, a 'Pilot Poet'.

Seen as transitional negotiations rather than poor imitations or hesitant beginnings, Natachee's poems become quite interesting as both hybrid literary texts and examples of intelligent use of education to express a personal vision. Given the contradictory forces at work in the institutions shaping his career, it is hardly surprising that his poetry is shot through with inner tensions and that the formal elements threaten to collapse under the strain. It is often this strain, however, that energises the writing in a more authentic literary manner than the folkloric concoctions of his 'Mekeo Songs'. Though he characterises tradition as a dark age of 'worthless heathen rubbish' ('What ancestral wealth and knowledge?'), the terms in which he represents the inexorable onrush of western modernity (the Horishima/Nagasaki blasts) are as much redolent of horror as of admiration, and the dialogue in 'Advance Atomic Age' is by no means a paean to progress. The new age is urged to advance 'cautiously' as well as 'courageously' because its heavy tread is painful to a stubbornly resistant 'groaning' stone age that, despite its inevitable fall into the pit of history will, in the admission of the very force crushing it, 'live and die for evermore'.<sup>57</sup> Equally, in 'Our land of countless dark ages'<sup>58</sup> with its alternate rhymes and quatrains, the first three stanzas depict a 'long dark night of savagery' (to cite Achebe), but the second half of the poem turns into a dramatic celebration of warrior life, as does his poem 'Fear',<sup>59</sup> which, after the opening six lines, has all the marks of his translated traditional material in *Aia*. In fact, it is the survival of traditional literary conventions of ritualistic incantation in his verse that gives it drive but also makes it sound emptily repetitious or strange.<sup>60</sup> It is as if the rhythmic rehearsal of the

white man's ideas in the white man's language will bring the modern world into possessed consciousness. From one point of view, this is the magical partial understanding of the cargo cultist, but it is not out of keeping with certain romantic notions of the western artist; and the vision of progress that informs his strategic depiction of Papua New Guinean tradition as the darkness of savagery is equally informed by a relentless evolutionary drive that is not always the triumphalism of colonial will, but much more akin to Russell Soaba's modern Melanesian existentialism. In his 16-year-old poem 'Law and Lore of Nature' Darwinian theory via space comics transmutes into an uneasy combination of fifties 'space-race' technological optimism and the echoing void of Spencerian thought found in other early post-colonial writers. In any case, it is a complex literary vision that is more than the kind of slavish self-denial Beier castigates. 'Sweet and Kind Voice' does allow the narrator to refer to himself as 'an unworthy native', but the rest of the pithy two-stanza poem is a Blakean attack on charity and paternalism that is problematically but powerfully double-edged:

For my other fellow-children of my race indeed,  
Sweet and kind voice is part of their  
encouragement,  
But for me an unworthy native, I do not need,  
For sweet and kind voice, I call my  
discouragement.

We all know that sweet and kind voice is good in  
some way,  
But we know also it never makes one  
succeed,  
So please whoever you may be, for now and for  
aye,  
I tell you that sweet and kind voice, I do  
not heed.

This may sound quaint to modern ears, but anyone who can come up with the line, 'A river that bickers down a valley'<sup>61</sup> is clearly no more devoid of a sense of language and its expressive capacities than Nigel Krauth's hope for the literary future, Apisai Enos,<sup>62</sup> even if Natachee's colonial education has imposed a cultural double vision that sees 'lads' and 'lassies' 'for aye' in the village gardens of the Mekeo and inserts Old Testament images and rhythms into *The History of the Mekeo*. Where traditional incantation and modern verse

form come together to wonderful effect is in the poem 'Merry-go-round and Balls and Dolls'.<sup>63</sup> After the heady rush of ideologically sound decolonisation that found such a piece 'trivial', this post-colonial critic has the luxury of recuperating for an even *more* ideologically sound reading of that very triviality. Apart from a stray 'And lo!' (which arguably is reflexively critiqued by the vapid content and unusual prosiness of the rest of the poem), the insistent repetition of lines and rhymes (only 'ground/ round' and 'dolls/ balls' for four stanzas) emulates the endless turning of the merry-go-round and the knock-em-down, set-em-up routine of the fairground sideshow until it comes to suggest the absolute fatuousness of this kind of modernising 'bread-and-circuses' colonialism.

Two weeks for Europeans in Konedobu ground,  
Where they have set up a thing called a merry-go-  
round,  
Besides merry-go-round are many balls and dolls,  
Prizes are won by hitting down dolls with balls.

.....

Come then my fellow-children and gather around,  
Let us yell at dolls and balls and merry-go-round,  
For here we go in wild merry-go-round with dolls,  
Round and round in merry-go-round with dolls and  
balls.<sup>64</sup>

The first indigenous Director of Education, Alkan Tokolo, ended a speech asking a necessary question: 'What are our Melanesian values, and which ones do we want to keep?'.<sup>65</sup> He failed to ask the next important question: 'How do we keep them under a new regime of national collectivity, institutionalised knowledge and print-culture transmission?' Tokolo himself offers some hope of an answer akin to Eri's championing of creativity when he begins his talk with folktales and anecdotes. But his lead seems not to have been followed until the putative shift of schools curriculum policy towards literature in the mid eighties. Certainly, while schooling continues to function as vocational training in a national frame of economic development, students will fail to develop a literary consciousness that will allow them to see themselves as producers of their own culture rather than frustrated consumers of someone else's and they will continue to drift to the bright urban lights of global materialism.<sup>66</sup> Writers will continue to be flashes in the pan unless they find a recipe that sells to the multinational publishers. And under the glamour of the high-tech and the

foreign, local culture will be steadily eroded. As I have shown, the post-independence system has not found a counter to this phenomenon because it has not really changed its thinking from pre-contact or colonial conceptualising of education. People like Natachee or Soaba, who have tried to negotiate a real cultural shift and inhabit a literary culture that is genuinely of its time and place, have been caught and marginalised by this.

In a sense, they have been caught by this paper as well, in that I have looked at official institutional treatment of cultural process and have thereby concentrated on print-culture literature. (As a teacher of literature I also have a vested interest in seeing new literary traditions emerge.) There is a non-formal cultural infrastructure and tradition being generated in Papua New Guinea in which street theatre and string bands connect village performance tradition with radio and video technology. John Kasaipwalova linked into this network when he moved from written poetry to his folk-opera, *Sail the Midnight Sun*.<sup>67</sup> When we shift the focus of our gaze away from the schoolroom, then the writer becomes a necessary but limited component in a larger movement, and his or her limited edition, one-off production may start to constitute a tradition of its own, a local mode of literary culture. In this context, literate culture becomes one in which the success-figures (Eri, and all those 'one-off-wonders') are peripheral and the eccentrics (the ones wandering the street, producing hybrid texts like Natachee and his contemporary counterpart Soaba) are central.

## References

1. It was also the indentured labour schemes that enforced movement and induced the attitudinal and economic shifts which opened up a 'space' in the village for schooling. Geoffrey Smith, *Education in Papua New Guinea* (Melbourne, 1975) pp. 2-3.
2. Vincent Eri's novel, *The Crocodile* (Brisbane, 1970), is a case of the text recording the historical growth of such a consciousness during and after the War as it also rehearses in its own construction the growth of a national citizen that is the precondition for the existence of novel readers in Papua New Guinea. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London, 1983), for an extended exploration of this idea.
3. Vincent Warakai, 'Dancing Yet to Dimdim's Beat', *Ondobondo*, 4, 1984.
4. Uilli Beier (ed.) *Voices of Independence* (St Lucia, Queensland, 1980) pp. xii-xiii.
5. PNG Commission for Higher Education, *Higher Education Plan: A Strategy for Rationalization 1986-1990* (Port Moresby, 1986). This document specifically refutes Beier's charges: 'University teaching is not identical to manpower training....Manpower approaches universally downplay reflective critical studies in the humanities....Such studies are however, vital if Papua New Guinea is to preserve and enhance a distinct identity.' (pages 1,5). As the title suggests, however, the bulk of the report is directed at achieving institutional 'efficiency' and in fact works by the principles of manpower training it purports to eschew. There is another 1986 government document issued by the Committee on Philosophy of Education that addresses more fully the development of a literate culture. Significantly, this was produced under the direction of Paulias Matane.
6. It seems to be as true of educational policy as of other colonial systems in Papua New Guinea that 'Colonial governments have tended to define "development" in two broad ways: as an economic phenomenon, or in terms of their own administrative convenience.' Edward P. Wolfers, *Race Relations and Colonial Rule in Papua New Guinea* (Sydney, 1975) p. 23.
7. Uili Beier, "'Cautiously Advance Atomic Age": A Papuan Pilot poet', *Kovave* (1.1 1968) p. 42; P. Cochrane, National Library.
8. 'Natachee, Distinguished Poet of Papua New Guinea' (interview plus three poems: 'Law and Lore of Nature', 'Aia', 'Red Leaf'), *Papua New Guinea Writing* (7, 1972) p. 13.
9. According to Cochrane, the book contained a recipe for beer, jottings from other books and poems. The beer recipe is of interest, since alcohol was prohibited to natives and became one of the earliest bones of contention in the burgeoning movement towards self-determination in the sixties. (The Cochrane collection in the National Library contains a compilation of radio listeners' questions to the 'Native Session' in which the issue of unequal drinking laws feature.) It certainly renders problematic Natachee's supposedly subservient relationship to white authority, as does the fact that when he was away compiling *The Legendary History of the Mekeo* (a title which indicates its predating the fashion for 'oral history'), he would send Cochrane letters of rebuke for speaking harshly to his workers. The biographical information here is collated from the Cochrane papers in the University of Wollongong Library the *New Guinea Writing* interview and Beier's article.



10. Percy N. Cochrane, Typescript memoirs; Natachee MSS; photocopies material. Archival holdings at the University of Wollongong. District Files 9.10, Mekeo II: Allan Natachee.
11. This is of interest in that the journal was predominantly an anthropological one in which literary expression of this kind was no more than a curiosity, and it was to this same context that Natachee was returned by the more radical Beier two decades later.
12. The Cochrane collection in the National Library Manuscripts Collection #3670 contains two cuttings, one from the *Age*, the other from 'Weekend News', the *West Australian* 23 January 1965, virtually identical, regarding the ABC broadcasts. Here, Keith Adam, producer of the poetry programme joins the list of people — Barwick, Cochrane, Adam, Beier — who 'discovered' Natachee. The broadcasts led to the editor of *Australian Territories* asking permission of the Cochranes to reproduce the poems and at one point there were plans for Oxford University Press, Melbourne, to publish Natachee's work (John Holmes to Renata Cochrane, 1966) Cochrane, NL. For Souter, see *New Guinea The Last Unknown* (London, 1963) page 258.
13. Vincent Eri, *The Crocodile* (Brisbane, 1970).
14. Leo Hannett, 'Disillusionment with the Priesthood', *Kovave*, 2.1 (1970) pp. 22-24.
15. Russell Soaba, *Wanpis* (Port Moresby, 1977).
16. Peter Smith, *Education and Colonial Control in Papua New Guinea: A Documentary History* (Melbourne, 1987) p. 77.
17. Smith 1987, p. 79.
18. Cited in Walter Lini, *Beyond Pandemonium* (Wellington, 1980).
19. See Vincent Eri, 'Village, Church and School' in Albert Wendt (ed.) *Lali: A Pacific Anthology* (Auckland, 1980) pp. 137-8.
20. Smith 1987, pp. 83-4. Sir Hubert Murray, *Report on the Administration of the Territory of Papua, 1937-38*. 'Papua and Europeans overlap, that is, ...the best Papuans are superior to the worst Europeans, but...the Europeans as a whole have an innate superiority over Papuans'.
21. Greg Denning, *Islands and Beaches* [1980] (Chicago, n.d.) pp. 265-6.
22. His manuscripts as late as 1951 are inscribed 'Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam': Cochrane, NL.
23. Though I don't have documentary evidence to back me up, I do have an impression of strong ties between Administration and the LMS/Ekalesia as opposed to other missions (Chalmers and Lawes at one end and Chatterton at the other). Nonetheless it was the Catholics who seemed to work harder in the early phases of getting into higher education to attract government subsidies.
24. In 1921, for example, in the New Guinea Mandated Territory the annual expenditure on native education totalled a whole £12! (Smith 1975).
25. Smith 1975, p. 21.
26. Smith 1975.
27. Hank Nelson, 'The University's First Year', *New Guinea*, 1.8, Dec.1966-Jan.1977 p. 20.
28. O. H. K. Spate, 'A Territory University', *New Guinea*, 1.1, (1965) p. 23.
29. All histories of education in Papua New Guinea mention the planters' hysterical opposition to students being sent to Australia for advanced training. e.g., Smith 1975, p. 9.
30. Smith 1987, p. 9.
31. E. Barrington-Thomas, *Papua New Guinea Education* (Melbourne, 1976) p. 33.
32. Wolfers, p. 52.
33. The editor of the *Bulletin* closed his letter to Renata Cochrane: 'As poetry...his work leaves much to be desired.' (Peter Hastings to R.C., 18 June, 1964. Keith Adam is reported in the *West Australian* as saying 'much of his work is of little value but some of it carries the stamp of genius.' 23 January, 1965. Natachee's own letters, however, reveal that he was both painfully aware of his own limitations and buoyed up by the promise of fame if he worked at overcoming them: letters to PN Cochrane and Barwick, 1951. (Cochrane, NL)
34. See Natachee's translation 'Songs of War' in *Kovave*, 1970 and Corporal Amos Tamti's letter of 1946 in Smith, 1987, entry 5.3.1. In the same year, ANGAU set up Sogeri College, but it catered for a generation younger than Tamti's. Natachee was rejected as a carrier for being too young, had to work on a plantation during the war and only made it to standard 5.
35. Barrington-Thomas, pp. 170-76.
36. Smith 1975, p. 2-3.
37. (Spate, 26)The quote makes an interesting companion piece to a *Post Courier* editorial of 1938,

which voices similar sentiments about Oxbridge and impractical education, but from a diametrically opposed set of attitudes. See Smith 1987: entry 2.6.7.

38. (McKinnon in Barrington-Thomas: 52-3). Geoffrey Smith notes that from the mid-sixties, 'Criteria of relevance had been transformed...into questions of efficiency.' (Smith 1975, p. 50).
39. Barrington-Thomas, pp. 61-66.
40. *PNGWriter*, 6, 1972, p. 13.
41. Barrington-Thomas, pp. 57-60.
42. Matane's solution flies in the face of his own story of triumphal rise away from the land and the fact that his home region of New Britain had long since had its land alienated to plantations, so that already in the fifties his kinsmen had agitated against practical, village-oriented schooling. (Smith, 1975, p. 7-8)
43. One of many examples of the Africa connection is Bruce Roberts, director of the Pacific Literature Bureau that produced low-cost simple readers with Pacific content. Roberts was recruited by the South Pacific Commission after doing similar work in East Africa. (R. Thompson, 'Books for Papua New Guinea', *Journal of the Public Service*, 4.3, (1962) p. 11). Cochrane's radio typescripts of legends for the 'Native Session' also contain an unlabelled story that turns out to be an Ananse story from *Fanti-land* (Cochrane, NL).
44. See, for example, Don Maynard's introduction to *Writers and Readers in Papua New Guinea*.
45. Ulli Beier, "'Cautiously Advance Atomic Age": A Papuan Pilot Poet', *Kovave*, 1.1 (1968) p. 41.
46. It is noticeable that another Papua New Guinean artist juggling traditional and western literary forms with an ostensibly pro-colonialist, or at least pro-gradualist paternalism is allowed into Beier's second anthology, but he is an oral story-teller in the vernacular (thereby able to be labelled as 'folkloric'), not someone 'pretending' to literary status as a *writer* in English. See Iriye Diaya, 'A Successful Marriage at Last' in Beier *Voices of Independence*, 1980: 49.
47. Beier 1968, pp. 43-44.
48. Nigel Krauth, "'Unfolding Like Petals": The Developing Definition of the Writer's Role in Modern Papua New Guinean Literature', *ACLALA Bulletin* (1978) p. 5.
49. Smith 1975, pp. 26, 47.
50. He receives these commendations from interviewees in Powell's study. (Kirsty Powell, 'The First PapuaNew Guinean Playwrights and their Plays', unpublished MA thesis, UPNG (1975-6) pp. 40-41). In Natachee's case, only two poems — 'What Ancestral Knowledge' and 'Unerring Hand' — are at all modified by Cochrane, and then only on points of grammar. (Cochrane, NL)
51. See Krauth for an extended lamentation on this theme.
52. Geoffrey Smith notes the ritualised place of schooling as part of a cargo mentality, which is a transitional form of ritual knowledge as a means of obtaining power, goods and status (Smith 1975, pp. 2-3, 6). Beier claims Natachee was part of a cargo cult modernising of his village after the war (Beier 1968, pp. 40-41) though Cochrane does not mention this.
53. See Somu Sigob, 'The Story of my Life' in Ulli Beier (ed.), *Voices of Independence* (St Lucia, Qld, 1980) p. 15.
54. Beier 1968, pp. 41, 43.
55. Beier also tells a 'romantic' tale of Natachee's letting his marriage go to pursue his dream of poetry, but in interview the poet says he never married. [Beier 1968, p. 41; Alan Natachee, 'Natachee, Distinguished Poet of Papua New Guinea' (interview plus three poems: 'Law and Lore of Nature', 'Aia', 'Red Leaf') *Papua New Guinea Writing*, 7 (1972) pp. 12-13].
56. Krauth, 19.
57. Alan Natachee, 'Mekeo Poems and Legends', *Oceania*, 22.2 (1951) pp.148-61.
58. Natachee, 1951.
59. Alan Natachee, 'Fear', *New Guinea Writing*, 1 (1970) p. 8.
60. This function is mentioned by Cochrane as 'separate word pictures...repeated until the mental image is fixed' and is referred to by Albert Maori Kiki in his autobiography as a way of bringing to mental life the figure of an ancestor-hero in times of emotional stress. (Albert Maori Kiki, *Kiki: Ten Thousand Years in a Lifetime, a New Guinea Autobiography*, (Melbourne, 1968) p. 7.
61. From notes in the Cochrane archives.
62. See Krauth 1978 and Apisai Enos, *High Water* (1971).
63. Renata Cochrane, biographical notes, NL: 'One of Allan's first jobs was to go out and write a news story about the very first fun fair ever to be set up in Port Moresby. He came back with a poem. In fact he so often

slipped into poetry that he was taken off news writing and assigned to writing down the legends of his people.'

64. Natachee, 1951, p. 152.

65. Barrington-Thomas, p. 222.

66. In fact, the policy makers who favour the village-and-agriculture curriculum could do worse than disseminate Natachee's 'localised' bucolics, 'Our Papuan Garden' (Natachee, 1951, p. 151).

67. John Kasaipwalova, *Sail the Midnight Sun* (Trobriands, 1980).

# Creative Writing in West Polynesia<sup>1</sup> - Development, Themes and Trends

*Sina Va'ai*

In the Pacific Islands, literature in its oral form goes back to the beginning of memory and the spoken word as exemplified by the Samoan saying 'E fafaga tama a manu i ia ma fuga o laau ae fafaga tama a tagata i upu ma tala' which translates as 'animals and birds feed their young with fish and the bloom and berries of trees but the young of humans shall be fed with words and stories'. Even today the emphasis on orality and the spoken word is seen in the importance given to oratory and performance. With colonisation came a shift in emphasis and the effects of the shift to a written creative literature is now seen in the widespread use of these local texts in Pacific school and university curricula, in the interest in creative writers associations, in the steady output of fiction published locally and internationally by South Pacific Islanders and the fact of increasing local readership of newspaper publications both government and private sponsored.

The cord that tied the introduction of the written to the colonising impetus of the imperial nations from Europe resulted not only in translations of the Bible into island tongues but also in the translations of the values of things homegrown which were then relegated to second place after things European. It is interesting to note that in 1993 the United Nation's Year of Indigenous Peoples, the focus on indigeneity in the mosaic of countries which form the South Pacific, has come at a time when issues of race, class, nationalism and multiculturalism are also in the foreground of debate.

Pacific literature had its genesis in the islanders' need to address the legacy and impact of colonialism - to liberate and understand themselves in a rapidly changing world. Pacific Islanders who had been educated in New Zealand and Australia, returned to their homelands as part of the new professional, administrative and academic elites. The two Pacific universities, one in Papua New Guinea and the other in Suva, Fiji, were to provide a forum for writers and artists to gather and form associations for publication of these Pacific texts.

At the University of the South Pacific a group of committed individuals 'saw the need for a loose voluntary organisation' <sup>2</sup> to achieve these goals and they were instrumental in forming the South Pacific Creative Arts Society in 1972. Key among these was Marjorie Crocombe, a Cook Islander, who was to become the editor of *Mana*,

which began as a section published in the *Pacific Islands Monthly* (PIM) in March of the following year. *Mana* was described in the PIM as 'an upsurge of creative talent that has remained passive for generations (and which is) breaking forth across the whole Pacific' <sup>3</sup>. This upsurge was attributed to the factors of independence or self-government and the successful first South Pacific Arts Festival held in Suva the previous year. These factors, it was stated, had 'heralded a new wave of confidence among the Island peoples and visions which formally lay dormant are now being expressed' <sup>4</sup>. *Mana* was described as the 'new vessel which would contain and transport the best of this creativity' <sup>5</sup>. Pacific writers and personalities on the editorial committee included Albert Wendt, Futa Helu, John Saunana, Ken Arvidson, Radike Qereqeretabua, Nicolai Michoutouchkine, Walter Lini, Maunaa Itaita, Sione Tupouniua, Satendra Nandan as well USP students like Vanessa Griffen, Ata Ma'ia'i and Neal Engledow. The first president of the South Pacific Creative Arts Society was Ratu Jo Nacola <sup>6</sup>, the vice-president was Raymond Pillai and the secretary Howard Van Trease. Most of the founding Pacific islanders involved, represented a wide range of island nations and they published in the first and subsequent editions of *Mana* which stayed with the PIM until 1976 when it became a separate publication under Mana Publications. A few individuals like Albert Wendt, Marjorie Crocombe and later Subramani, the editor of the first *Mana Review* in January 1976, have exerted an enormous influence on the development of South Pacific literature from the 1970's up until the present time. At the University of Papua New Guinea, Ulli Beier was to have a similar influence in promoting writing from Melanesia.

Albert Wendt, from Western Samoa, probably the best known Pacific writer, stated that 'any real understanding of ourselves and our existing cultures calls for an attempt to understand colonialism and what it did and is still doing to us.

This understanding will better equip us to control or exorcise it so that in the words of the Maori poet, Hone Tuwhare, 'we can dream good dreams again', heal the wounds it inflicted on us and with the healing will return pride in ourselves - an ingredient so vital to creative nation-building' <sup>7</sup>

### The Role of USP in Developing and Promoting Pacific Literature

In describing the role of the University of the South Pacific as a catalyst in the development of creative writing in the region in 1979, Raymond Pillai, a noted Indo-Fijian short story writer and academic, noted that, 'a catalyst speeds up a process without itself undergoing permanent change during this process and this is precisely how USP may be characterised' <sup>8</sup>. There was initial resistance in the early 1970's within the university to the establishment of creative writing courses.<sup>9</sup> This was countered successfully by student and staff pressure in the 1970s. Further development was seen with the pioneering of creative writing and Pacific literature courses taught by Wendt, the first to be given a personal chair as Professor of Pacific Literature in the 1980s, and now, in the 1990s, with Subramani occupying the chair, Pacific Literature is an even more established degree course both on campus and through extension studies.

Notwithstanding these developments, it is significant that the last writers conference, promoted by the USP, was held in 1984 <sup>10</sup> and it could be said that nine years is far too long a gap and that more initiatives are needed to push South Pacific literature into a more recognised position. Indeed, in his silver jubilee anniversary lecture, the USP Vice-Chancellor, Esekia Solofa, made it very clear that he felt that Pacific literature was one field, integral to our identity and being as Pacific peoples, which could be explored in the teaching of the university. He added, 'what better way is there in the department of literature and languages to assert our humanity as Pacific peoples than to teach about and promote our literatures. How can anyone disagree with that? Well, if the university calendar is any indication, then I will have to admit that I am wrong'. <sup>11</sup> Taking the broadest interpretation of Pacific literatures to include the literatures, both oral and written, in the mother tongue of Pacific Islanders as well as the literature written in English by Pacific Islanders, it seems that there is a 'felt need' to offer more courses in this area. Solofa also noted that these courses needed to move beyond the anti-colonial perspective or colonial bashing (so prevalent at the time of USP's founding in the wake of independence and in the midst of decolonisation in the Pacific, which had pervaded other fields 'especially area studies such as history and politics' <sup>12</sup>) to examining Pacific Islanders, as 'free,

decolonised, independent citizens of independent states' <sup>13</sup>.

Albert Wendt, Subramani, Vilisone Hereniko and Sudesh Mishra have been instrumental in promoting creative writing courses at the University and were often mentioned in my interviews <sup>14</sup> with writers in West Polynesia, as people who had encouraged and challenged them to write. Since creative writing is such a personal and often painful exercise, it was no surprise that charismatic, sensitive and sympathetic role models were needed to inspire other Pacific islanders to write and believe in themselves. 1993 is the 25th Anniversary or Silver Jubilee of the University of the South Pacific. I was informed that one of the honours to mark this occasion would be the presentation of an honorary degree to a writer from the Pacific, namely Jogindar Singh Kanwal, who has written prolifically in Hindi (four novels, one 'Savera' translated into English, two works of non-fiction, one poetry and one short story collection) <sup>15</sup>. His novel, *The Morning* <sup>16</sup>, is based on the indenture system of Fiji.

### Creative Writers from Tonga

Of the many Tongan writers who have published locally in *Faikava*<sup>17</sup> and abroad in other publications, four writers stand out as having persisted - Konai Helu Thaman, Epeli Hau'ofa (both at USP), Pesi Fonua and Tupou Poesi Fanua. Thaman's poetry is found in her four poetry collections - *You the choice of my parents* (1974), *Langakali* (1981) reprinted in 1991, *Hingano* (1987) reprinted 1991 and her latest, *Kakala* (1993). <sup>18</sup> When the USP Silver Jubilee celebrations were held in Nukualofa at the USP centre at Atele in September 1993, over nine hundred secondary school students came to hear Thaman speak about and recite her poetry. The USP Director of Extension Services, Clare Matthewson, reported that the overwhelming response demonstrated the popularity of this national poet and also the interest from young Tongans in creative writing <sup>19</sup>. Thaman herself felt that the response reflected the tremendous potential that is there to be tapped and developed for the future of creative writing in Tonga <sup>20</sup>. Added to this is the fact that Thaman's poetry is firmly enconced in the secondary school curricula in West Polynesia and is used in other countries in the Pacific. She is also one of the major poets studied for the USP Pacific literature course and at the National University of Samoa in its literature courses at the preparatory and degree level.

Epeli Hau'ofa, currently Professor and Head of the School of Social and Economic Development at USP, has published one collection of short stories, *Tales of the Tikongs* (1983) and *Kisses in the Nederends* (1987)<sup>21</sup> which is not available in Tonga because of its subversive satire. Hau'ofa's sketches, which hold Tongan social practices up to close ironic scrutiny, have antagonised many Tongan readers and he openly admits, even many of his own family.<sup>22</sup> Given the many commitments he has in his academic career, he has found it very difficult to pursue creative writing as much as he would wish but he hopes to find time for this in the future.

Pesi Fonua, manager of the Vava'u Press and editor and publisher of *Matangi Tonga*, is in the business of writing for a living. He was awarded the 1993 Pacific Journalist of the Year,<sup>23</sup> the first to be presented by Pacific Islands News Association (PINA). He has published *Sun and Rain: and other stories in English and Tongan*,<sup>24</sup> a collection of six short stories translated from their original Tongan. In the preface to his collection, Fonua observes

For many years the only form of creative writing that we found here in Tonga was the work of our ancestors and that of papalangis ... Most of the stories are printed in the English language and relate to people and ways of life remote from ours in the Tonga of today ... For most Tongans, then, reading is not a pleasant past-time but a struggle ... However, in the last few years we have started to read the work of Tongan writers, in our own languages and in English, relating to our lives in modern Tonga. Creative writing has a new breath of life, and we are once again the actors and not merely the audience.<sup>25</sup>

This feeling of taking charge, being the 'actors' and not the 'acted upon', is seen in the current interest in journalism. As Fonua explained, there is a great increase in applications for cadet journalist positions in Nukualofa. In the past, journalism was not so popular among young school-leavers and job applicants and it is an interesting development which augurs well for creative writing in Tonga.<sup>26</sup>

Tupou Posesi Fanua turned eighty this November. She has published two bilingual collections - *Po Tatala* and *Po Fananga*, (both in 1982)<sup>27</sup> - and is in the process of publishing a short novel on *The Love Story of Tokanga-Fuifuilupe and Fotofili*. Although elderly, Fanua is extremely energetic and is still invited to literary meetings overseas to discuss her writings. Having worked as secretary to the late Queen Salote for many years and with her unique upbringing with her foster parents - (her foster father was Tonga's Director of Education and principal of Tonga College in her youth) - she felt she had been very fortunate in being able to publish her creative works to date but was still concerned and rather impatient that her latest novel had done the rounds of publishers in Tonga and was no nearer publication than a couple of years ago when she first handed it in for editing.<sup>28</sup>

Other Tongan writers are still hopeful of publishing more of their work. One example is short story writer, Vili Vete, principal of St. Andrews College who is in the midst of publishing a sequel to his short story 'For Change'<sup>29</sup> which has been dramatised into a play called *Ana mo Sione*. His short story sequel is titled 'For Change, Part Two'<sup>30</sup>. Leta Havea and Elaiona Tongilava are young women writers who aspire to put more of their work into print; they have published in *Faikava*, the Tongan literary journal which started in April 1978 but lapsed in December 1983. Barbara Hau'ofa was the publisher and assistant editor and Epeli Hau'ofa, Futa Helu, Konai Helu Thaman as well as Thomas Schneider formed the editorial board of *Faikava*. This endeavour was supported by the USP centre in Nukualofa and even though publication has lapsed, creative writing workshops in the 1980s and the promotion of Pacific literature in the school curricula have helped to foster an interest in creative writing which is still supported by many writers and academics in Tonga. I was informed that in 1993 there was an attempt to revive the Creative Writers Association with a view to resurrecting the publication of *Faikava*.<sup>31</sup>

According to Professor Futa Helu of Atenisi University in Nukualofa, it was the development of independent newspapers (four in all) that had created a reading society in Tonga but still not much creative writing effort is being seen. However, he felt now that a reading public had been created all that was needed was to produce the writers. Tonga, in his view, was now right for the reception of writers because people are interested in reading materials and this had come about in the

process of Tonga's conversion from an oral society to a reading one.<sup>32</sup>

Commenting on the situation in present day Tonga, Kenneth Bain noted 'Discontent and pressure for constitutional and structural change in parliament, government and society is no longer concealed beneath the surface of life ...'<sup>33</sup> and this is most obviously witnessed in the pro-democracy movement led by Akilisi Pohiva, a politician in Tonga's present government and until recently by Bishop Patelesio Finau who died in October 1993. Much of the creative writing already mentioned from Tonga has focussed on the themes of change and the adaptation of traditional society to western influence, of treading a fine line and finding a balance or blend between the old and the new. Thaman's poem 'Different Eyes (for Ron)' eloquently spells out this dilemma. The poem begins with a description of the cross-cultural contact situation which is part of the modern Pacific -

this global life  
gives us light  
and love  
but it also gives us death.

Further on, the poet describes the *salusalu* as 'lost' and the soft scent of the *heilala* 'drowned' by the 'strenuous sounds of our rational minds'. She then addresses the concerned, empathetic outsider with the sentiment -

you came  
took away our fears  
heard our silent songs  
felt our pain  
of not being able to go back .

And is le  
fit to conclude -

now we look at tomorrow  
with different eyes  
the truths about us  
weigh us down.<sup>34</sup>

### Creative Writers from Western Samoa

The Creative Writers Association of Western Samoa, like those of Fiji and Tonga, has had a staggered history. Prominent writers such as Albert Wendt, Momoe Von Reiche, Ruperake Petaia, Tate Simi, Noumea Simi, Tunumafono

Apelu Aiavao and Makerita Va'ai have been the initiators and promoters of creative writing in Western Samoa. As Tunumafono Apelu stated in discussing the place of Pacific literature in the school and university curricula, 'People are becoming very nationalistic - we want to do our own thing. We want to do the things we know'.<sup>35</sup> It is clear from the imaginative writing of many Samoans, that one of the things they know from their own cultural experience and grounding, is the power of the word. As Aiono F. Le Tagalao, Professor of Samoan Studies at the National University of Samoa, explains, 'In Samoan, the term for Culture is *Aganuu*. Aga is the basic nature of being. Nuu is the total sum of the learned social experience as evident when the Samoan language describes a momentous occasion as 'a meeting within the most humane milieu' - 'Ua tatou feiloai i luma o le *Nuu*..'. The Samoan word for culture therefore speaks of a world that recognises the ideal as a 'complete whole' - like the circle of the full moon - le atoa lio o le *Masina*. In other words, the basic nature of man that he inherits genetically is as important, as powerfully influential as his cultural inheritance through his language and other activities of Samoan society. The Samoan way of life is very aware of the all powerful influence of man's genetic inheritance - hence the insistence that the proper diet for the human young are WORDS. For the words or the mother tongue will transform the young animal into a human (literally). Words will shape the mind, the soul and even the sight of man.. Words will colour and organise his specific world: because words have the power to control and channel into socially acceptable ways the biological inheritance of man'.<sup>36</sup>

The fact that Albert Wendt has published so prolifically and is widely recognised has boosted interest in the Creative Writers Association. His published work includes five novels - *Sons for the Return Home*, *Pouliuli*, *Leaves of the Banyan Tree*, *Ola* and *Black Rainbow* - two collections of short stories: *Birth and death of the Miracle Man* and *Flying Fox in a Freedom Tree*, as well as two personal poetry collections,<sup>37</sup> and these texts are increasingly studied at the secondary school and university level in the Pacific. At present, Momoe Von Reiche and Makerita Va'ai, themselves published poets,<sup>38</sup> are promoting monthly readings at meetings of the society in Apia.

Other writers like Agafili La'au Tuitolova'a, Fepai S. Kolia, Emma Kruse Va'ai, Leua Latai, Tamari Mulitalo and Meleisea Isitolo, are newer writers coming to the fore<sup>39</sup> and most of

them are part of the core that forms the Creative Writers Association which is under the umbrella of the USP Extension Services at Malifa, Apia. Last year, Tate Simi, Ruperake Petaia, Noumea Simi and Fata Sano Malifa, published bilingual poetry collections with the *Samoa Observer*.<sup>40</sup> The debate about which language (either Samoan or English or both) to use in creative writing had been discussed at the Creative Writers meetings in the mid-1980s so this development in the early 1990s of bilingual publications is very significant. It points to a desire on the part of these established writers to be heard, read and appreciated locally in the mother tongue as well as internationally in the 'other' tongue of English. Albert Wendt discusses the same feeling when he describes listening to a series of taped lectures by the Kenyan novelist Ngugi wa Thiong'o who now promotes plays and writes seriously in his mother tongue of Kikuyu and also advocates that if you are committed to your people, you must write in their language. Wendt comments 'that made me feel guilty because up to now I've been writing in English. Right now I'm seriously debating where I should go from here. It would be ideal for me to write in Samoan and English, or translate my published work into Samoan. I believe that the most authentic Pacific literature will be in the mother tongues because that is the way into the souls of our peoples.'<sup>41</sup> In a more recent interview in 1992 in Hawaii, Wendt stated 'If I decided to write a novel in Samoan, it would take me a long time. My facility in the language is still good but it would take me a long time to use it again as well as I use English.'<sup>42</sup>

Previously published collections of poetry by writers like Fata Sano Malifa and Ruperake Petaia<sup>43</sup> in the late 1970s and early 1980s, had provided much needed material for schools which were and still are looking for appropriate and relevant material especially at the senior secondary level. Three novels are in process, two by Sano Malifa, titled *After the War* and *Alms for Oblivion*, being published in America and one by Meleisea Isitolo, subtitled *A Novel of Samoan Passion*, planned for publication either in Apia or New Zealand in 1994.<sup>44</sup>

The development of support networks as well as individual writers from West Polynesia sharing and motivating others in the region is an interesting fact which can be seen as part of the overall philosophy of Pacific regional cooperation. Recent examples of these in Western Samoa are Makerita Va'ai who was instrumental in setting up the Nauru Writers Association. This was in relation to her role as Centre Director at the USP

Centre in Nauru for the last eight years before she returned to Apia in 1993. The Nauru writers published a small collection of eight short stories in a short story collection edited by Larry Thomas.<sup>45</sup> In the Foreword to the collection, commenting on the origin of the collection which stemmed from a creative writing and drama workshop organised by the USP Centre in Nauru in 1990, Va'ai notes 'it was organised so that a conscious effort would be made to encourage Nauruans to write and record their folklore in the attempt to build up a Nauruan literature.'<sup>46</sup> In a similar way, Momoe Von Reiche has inspired young writers from Tokelau (mainly women) in the creative writing workshops that she has conducted for young writers from Tokelau under the auspices of the USP Centre in Apia. The result has been a collection of poetry from nine Tokelauan poets called *Nuanua of Tokelau*.<sup>47</sup> Several of these Tokelauan writers resident in Apia, like Tiga Galo and Teresa Manea Pasilio, are active members of the Western Samoan Writers Association.

Universal suffrage was introduced in Western Samoa in 1991 after many long years of public and parliamentary debate. The political developments and changes that have happened in all three countries - Western Samoa, Tonga and Fiji - mark a new phase which will inevitably have an impact on the issues and subjects addressed by creative writers in their writing if as many believe like Rushdie that 'writers and politicians are natural rivals'.<sup>48</sup>

### Creative Writers from Fiji

Fiji presents a most interesting mosaic of creative writing which is understandable when one considers the following factors; the multi-racial background of its inhabitants, the fact of relatively recent textuality of Fijian literature and the long history of written literature of the Indo-Fijian population, the political situation which developed there post-1987, and the existence of the University of the South Pacific at Laucala Bay in Suva, providing a focal point for the academic study and criticism of South Pacific texts. In a very real sense, writers in Fiji speak of a post-coup as well as a post-independence period for creative writing in Fiji which may have implications of self-censorship for the individual writer. Subramani, Professor of Pacific Literature at USP, has, since 1988, become a speechmaker and is planning to publish his collection of speeches titled *Reconciliations*, the thread of which is the theme that indigenous Fijians will have to think more of human rights and Indo-Fijians will have to



think more of indigenous rights<sup>49</sup>. He, along with Satendra Nandan, Raymond Pillai, Pio Manoa, Vanessa Griffen, Ratu Jo Nacola and Vilisoni Hereniko, are foundation writers of the 1970's and except for Griffen and Nacola, they have continued to publish.

Most recently published fiction from among this group of foundation writers, are Satendra Nandan's novel *The Wounded Sea* and Vilisoni Hereniko and Teresia Teaiwa's play *Last Virgin in Paradise*.<sup>50</sup> New writers that emerged in the 1980's include the playwright Larry Thomas whose plays *Just Another Day*, *Outcasts*, *Yours Dearly* and *Men, Women and Insanity*<sup>51</sup> have been very popular because of their local context, topical social comment and use of local idioms and inflections which Suva audiences recognised as their 'own inner dialogue'.<sup>52</sup> Thomas' enthusiastic use of Fiji English (or 'Finglish' as it has sometimes been labelled) makes his dramas immediate and relevant. His next play, *In Search of a Smile* and a collection of stories, which are yet unpublished, deal with the situation of post-coup Fiji.<sup>53</sup> Joseph Veramu is another writer who published *The Black Messiah*<sup>54</sup> in 1989 and is at present working on the final drafts of his next novel, to be published in 1994. He also writes short stories in Fijian for the local Fijian newspapers and as a lecturer in Education in the School of Humanities, is very keen to keep on writing about what he sees as the dilemmas facing the peoples of Fiji.

He believes that the 'writer has a social, moral and political role in bettering the society of which he is a part'.<sup>55</sup> Sudesh Mishra has published two collections of poems, *Rahu* and *Tandava*,<sup>56</sup> and his production of the drama *Ferringhi*, staged by the USP Drama Society in December 1993, points to a new creative direction. Pat Craddock, the director of the play, described it as a play in which Mishra 'looks at the Indian indenture system, the exploitation of women in the garment industry, the coups, capitalism, the losing of national identity and the gaining of personal identity which suggests that there will be a new identity for the people of Fiji.'<sup>57</sup> The play is also unusual in that the audience form a circle around the actors who sit around a kava bowl on a large mat and listen and interact with two storytellers. Mishra has been a prominent figure in the Fiji Writers Association until he departed for Flinders University in mid-1993. Emerly Chang Lee, Nemani Mati, Seona Smiles, Teresia Teaiawa and Nancy Byrne are writers who are beginning to publish more.<sup>58</sup> In addition, a recent novel by a Fijian woman,

Elizabeth Tuiqilai, called *The Little Lost Giants*<sup>59</sup> has been well received and is the first in her new collection of books entitled *Album of Yesterday's Sunrise*.<sup>60</sup>

An interesting development for creative writing in Fiji are the plans for the establishment of a Fiji National Cultural Centre in Suva<sup>61</sup> where writers may have the opportunity to come for short spells to work on their writing with a view to publishing and adding to the corpus of Pacific literature. At present there are cultural centres in various parts of Fiji but it is hoped that one on the national level will provide a productive meeting and publishing point in the future.

In a country where questions of national identity and even a national name are being debated<sup>62</sup> as well as calls made for unity and healing in the midst of 'genuine multi-racialism',<sup>63</sup> this would be a very fruitful exercise in creativity as well as human understanding.

The most recent published play from Fiji by Vilisoni Hereniko and Teresia Teaiwa debunks the colonial imaging and myths of the Paradise of the Pacific. *The Last Virgin in Paradise*<sup>64</sup> is a 'serious comedy' looking at the search for innocence and simplicity in the post-colonial Pacific. In a note to the director, the authors suggest that 'Casting that brings together people from different Pacific Islands is encouraged and where possible vernacular expressions should be used and a way found to communicate their meanings in English. Another possibility is to have the non-English dialogue in the native language of the local inhabitants wherever the play is performed, for example, using the Hawaiian language in Hawaii.'<sup>65</sup> They add that the anticipated audience should influence language choices, that the success of the wedding scene will depend on the talents of clowns who know how to make people laugh, and involving the audience in the singing of popular songs and in the dancing in the play is also important.<sup>66</sup> This improvisation, flexibility and innovation adds a Pacific flavour to the play which should make each performance (since it is dependent on the ethnic composition of the audience) unique.

The action centres around Helmut, Hina, Jean and Temanu. Helmut Klinghorst is of unknown European origin and arrives on the imaginary Pacific island of Marawa ('Marawa' means happy in Fijian), in search of a virgin (intimations of Rousseau's quest for the noble savage). He finds Hina with the help of the clown, Jeke, and thinks that his quest is complete until his life is complicated with the arrival of Hina's

cousin, Temanu, herself an islander, educated at the Australian National University. The inevitable anthropologist is a woman, Jean, who has come to study sexual harassment among the Marawan people on a Fulbright grant of \$20,000. The comedy of the play hinges on the fact that Helmut is searching for a lost paradise, Hina and her people seem simple and naive but they are all well aware of the issues and they are just as quick-witted, manipulative and shrewd as others are. They are all very aware of what they want out of life and the advantages as well as the limitations that their small island existence places upon them. Hina sees Helmut as a ticket out and while Temanu tries to discourage her cousin from this marriage, Hina is intent on leaving to discover what lies outside of Marawa.

Ironically, it is Jean, the anthropologist, who is the virgin and not Hina (these confessions are made to Temanu).<sup>67</sup> Jean is depicted as a very naive outsider with pre-determined expectations and little experience of island life. She tells Helmut in Scene Three 'I came here expecting Marawa to be primitive and what do I find? Natives dressed to the ankle, a fledgling feminist from ANU and a toupeed alcoholic from a continent called Europe. We all think that Paradise is a place when all the time it's a state of mind'.<sup>68</sup> This play illustrates many of the conflicts that come from expectations not grounded in the reality of the present day Pacific. If these conflicts are to be described as post-colonial, we should be clear that 'post' 'does not mean simply "after" but instead refers to a continuous engagement with the effects of colonial occupation',<sup>69</sup> an ambivalent and demanding position.

### Themes and Trends in Creative Writing in West Polynesia

Creative writing in the Pacific is obviously on the increase as Pacific islanders focus on education (reading and literacy), and the national development of their own peoples. Creativity is a very personalised matter and this is seen in the fact that often creative writers associations flounder without committed individual or individuals who are prepared to give up their time to promote the Pacific and its literary representations. This sentiment was supported by Marjorie Crocombe who felt that the South Pacific Creative Arts Society suffered from the fact that editing is very much a voluntary affair which depends on a few committed individuals.<sup>70</sup> In fact, when one considers the concept of centre and

margin/periphery (used in relation to colonial and post-colonial situations), it could be said that much of the creative writing of West Polynesia and even throughout most of the Pacific, is not even in the margin, it is literally off the page, either unpublished or left in its oral form.

In the early 1970's the major thrust of Pacific writing was regional and looked at the enemy without - the former colonisers and the impact of colonisation on the islanders and their cultures. Increasingly in the late 1970's, 1980s and 1990s, Pacific writing has become nationalistic, looking inward at the enemy within - at the neo-colonial practices continued by island elites who have come to political power since independence. This has coincided with the drive fostered by the South Pacific Creative Arts Society and the University of the South Pacific to encourage literatures in the indigenous languages. Indeed, in 1976 and 1977, through the extension services of the USP and their local extension centres, creative writing workshops in the vernacular languages were held. Out of these workshops came the indigenous literary periodicals like *Moana* in Samoa, *Faikava* in Tonga and *Sinnet* in Fiji. Interestingly enough, creativity and publication in the mother tongue has long been a concern of writers and academics in Western Samoa, most notably the Professor of Samoan studies of the National University of Samoa, Professor Aiono Fanaafi Le Tagalao, her colleague, Koke Aiono, and other writers such as government journalist Tunumafono Apelu and teachers Agafili Tuilotova'a and To'oto'o Pulotu.<sup>71</sup>

Of the many constraints to publication for Pacific writers, the most obvious and most important one is financial. Most Polynesian writers, even Albert Wendt, do not make a living from their writing. While this may not be uncommon in other parts of the world, in the South Pacific economic barriers are often insurmountable and many local writers now are actively seeking avenues for funding their publications. To this end, writers like Sano Malifa of the Samoa Observer Press and Pesi Fonua of the Vava'u Press in Tonga, feel a certain satisfaction that they are in charge of the means of production, though this does not mean that they have no financial problems. What it does mean is that they are able to publish their own material more easily.

The publication of a collection of poems and stories of the Pacific, *Te Rau Maire*, which came out of the Sixth Festival of Pacific Arts, held in Rarotonga in 1992, looks to be the first of many in this series. As the Prime Minister of the Cook

Islands stated at the beginning of the collection in his official message, 'the written word is now so much part of our culture that it is fitting that we complement the traditional arts by this publication to mark the hosting of the Festival of Pacific Arts in our small nation'.<sup>72</sup> This is a significant development for creative writing in the Pacific.

Writing from women, examining their place, status and treatment in the modern day Pacific, is also increasing noticeably. In West Polynesia, Thaman, Von Reiche and Noumea Simi stand out in this regard. Simi's recent collection<sup>73</sup> has four poems under the heading *On Women's Issues*. In 'Misconceptions' there is the powerful stanza -

O man  
from behind the walls  
you will hear my song  
that women and property are not friends  
and that in your oppression  
I will rise to hold the skies<sup>74</sup>

In 'I remember', a tribute to the women of Samoa on the 25th anniversary of Independence in 1987, the following lines have a resonance for many women of Oceania -

I remember  
seeing you rise to lead and guide  
while the world cried for equality  
I remember that  
in the global awakening of womanhood  
development for you was already  
a passing tune.'<sup>75</sup>

Noumea Simi has already recorded some of her poems from this collection for a German radio program which was interested in broadcasting them in English, Samoan and German.<sup>76</sup> This interest from international sources looks like highlighting the already growing interest in Pacific women's writing.

Eveli Hau'ofa, in a paper, 'Our Sea of Islands'<sup>77</sup> based on his lecture delivered at the University of Hawaii at Hilo in March 1993, puts forward a very challenging and I believe, very relevant theory both for Pacific Islands generally and for any one engaged in academic study of the Pacific. He suggests that in the past the peoples of the islands conceived of their universe as comprising 'not only land surfaces but the surrounding ocean as far as they could traverse and exploit it, the underworld with its fire-controlling and earth-shaking denizens, and the heavens above

with their hierarchies of powerful gods and named stars and constellations that people could count on to guide their ways across the seas. Their world was anything but tiny'.<sup>78</sup> Colonisation divided the region into 'islands in a far sea'<sup>79</sup> which bound colonial and post-colonial administrators to notions of smallness which often bred a sense of dependency and despair. Hau'ofa, in turning this notion of smallness around from tiny 'islands in a far sea' to the vast expanse of a 'sea of islands', makes for a shift in emphasis which is supported by the belief held by some in the Pacific like the Samoans that they did not originate from anywhere outside their own island groups, that in fact their homeland is the centre from which other migrations occurred. This theory which is advocated by most Samoans and supported by its oral history and traditions<sup>80</sup> is represented by a response from a Manua orator to a statement by Sir Peter Buck about Polynesian migration. 'The Polynesians may have come from Asia, but the Samoans, no. We originated in Samoa',<sup>81</sup> the orator told the Maori anthropologist. The concept of a sacred centre denoted in the name *Samoa* - (Sa meaning sacred, Moa meaning heart or centre) adds further credence to this view. Hau'ofa's paper stimulated responses and discussion within the USP community during its Silver Jubilee, an important year for the USP and for the Pacific region which it serves. The debate is an on-going and important one because it involves the horizons of minds and imaginations of the peoples of the South Pacific and the desire to free them from past colonial constraints imposed from without and newer neo-colonial and post-colonial constraints imposed from within. The debate is also an attempt to remind the peoples of the Pacific of their origins in a vast ocean whilst not forgetting the present challenges of development in a modern world.

Creative writing in the Pacific is often thought to have gone through a 'boom-full stop or comma' cycle from the initial flowering in the early 1970s to a very slow growth in the 1980s and 1990s, and in terms of production, this may well be true. The 'golden', optimistic time of independence produced a fruitful response in the writing of many Pacific Islanders throughout the 1970s. Many of these writers are now approaching their 40s or middle age and hold responsible and influential positions in governments, private enterprise and academia in the Pacific of the 1990s. Many writers in West Polynesia, interviewed as part of my fieldwork, expressed the desire to write more if they could. Often however, this is just not possible because of time constraints connected with

family and career interests. The fact that the Pacific of the 1990s is in the midst of great social and political changes which involve an examination of what makes them peculiarly unique as Pacific Islanders, together with the changes associated with literacy and modernisation, provides a challenge for the Pacific writer of the 1990s. With the development of relevant curricula at the secondary and university level, many of the Pacific island texts are included in the literature courses for study at this level. As Pacific creative writing becomes more recognised and accepted by Pacific educational institutions, the most obvious consequence of this will be that much greater numbers of writers from the Pacific will emerge into print.

**Acknowledgments:** Many thanks to the writers and teachers of West Polynesia who made time to see me during my fieldwork in Fiji, Tonga and Western Samoa from 23rd August to 25th November 1993.

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76. Personal communication, Noumea Simi, Apia, 24th October 1993.
77. E. Hauofa, 'Our Sea of Islands', Paper based on lectures delivered at the University of Hawaii at Hilo and the East West Centre, Honolulu, in March - April 1993 in *A New Oceania: Rediscovering our Sea of Islands*, (Suva, 1993).
78. Ibid. p.7.
79. Ibid.
80. Samoans refer to their legends of the creator of Samoa as Tagaloa and the absence of stories of migration



## Reporting From Port Moresby

*Sean Dorney*

Two weeks ago last night, I was working back late at the Australian Broadcasting Corporation office in Port Moresby preparing a radio current affairs report on Amnesty International's 'Under The Barrel Of A Gun' report into human rights atrocities on Bougainville over the past two years. The item I was working on was intended for the ABC's flagship public affairs program, 'AM'. I rang 'AM's night reporter to alert her to the fact that I'd be transmitting the piece to her via satellite in the following hour or so.

'Is this the first Amnesty Report since the funeral?' she asked.

'What!' I replied.

'Is this the first report since the funeral?'

'Look,' I said, not having a clue what she was talking about. 'It's Amnesty's Report on human rights atrocities allegedly committed by both the Papua New Guinea military and the Bougainville Revolutionary Army over the years from 1991 to '93.'

'Yes, but what I need to know,' she said with a hint of exasperation in her voice, 'is whether this is the first report since that funeral procession!'

I exploded with rage. 'That was East Timor! I'm talking about demands by Amnesty for Australia to review all its military aid to Papua New Guinea, not Indonesia!'

I cooled down enough to complete the item and send it through. But as those who listened to the main edition of 'AM' that next morning, Friday, November 19th, 1993, could testify it was not used. It did get an airing on the early morning edition but not on the main program at 8 o'clock. I begin my address with that tale because I feel that both the reaction of the journalist on the night shift for 'AM' and the decision by the program's acting executive producer to put it aside when the main edition of the program came along both illustrate what John Kaputin, Papua New Guinea's Foreign Minister, described to the National Press Club here in Canberra a month ago as the 'drift' in interest in Australia in affairs in what is Australia's nearest neighbour and what was its only major colony.

In passing, might I say that it is impossible to imagine that the same confusion between East Timor and Bougainville ever occurring if I was attempting to file from the ABC's London office on an Amnesty Report - and Amnesty has produced two reports in Europe within several months of each other dealing with allegations of ethnic

atrocities in Northern Ireland and Bosnia. That may seem a weird comparison but Belfast and Sarajevo are, if you check the map, closer to each other than Dili is to Arawa.

I cannot whinge about the overall usage I get on the ABC, especially on other public affairs programs such as 'The World Today' and 'PM'. Nor about the number of stories run on radio news bulletins and the ABC TV news. 'Foreign Correspondent' ran a 31 minute story on Bougainville which, I understand, was the longest single item they ran all year. Radio National's specialist programs are always interested. And Radio Australia and Australia Television International have insatiable appetites and would like me to do more. I also do regular chat segments with a number of ABC Metropolitan Radio stations including, for example, weekly segments of 10 to 15 minutes with the station here in Canberra and the one in Townsville covering North Queensland. However, all of these outlets seem to be out of step, and AM in step, with the general downgrading of stories about or from Papua New Guinea to the status of being of minor to marginal interest to the Australian public.

The ignorance of Papua New Guinea amongst many in the media in Australia is matched by the antagonism of Papua New Guinea politicians towards Australian journalists in general. Just this week, Papua New Guinea's Deputy Prime Minister, Sir Julius Chan, told Australian International Development Assistance Bureau's PNG Aid Forum in Brisbane during his keynote address that: 'People in Australia have been fed a steady appetite of negative images of PNG by your (Australian) media for so long that, at times, getting the message successfully across seems almost impossible.' The message he was talking about was 'promoting' PNG 'in the best possible light'. Sir Julius went on to say that to some extent he didn't blame the media because most of those writing about PNG had very little knowledge of the country themselves. 'Their views,' he said, 'are thus frequently narrow and insular, upsetting not only PNG but also others in the Asia-Pacific region.' Sir Julius's point was inadvertently reinforced by one journalist covering the Aid Forum who mistook the definition of tied aid and led his story by saying Australia had decided to tie future aid to PNG to the issue of human rights - a scoop so exclusive that not only did he have it on



his own, but none of the ministers or officials from either country knew about it.

I remember being quite appalled back in 1980 when Michael Prain (who was the last Papua New Guinea based correspondent for the then Herald and Weekly Times group) told me that all his editorial bosses back in Melbourne were interested in Papua New Guinea for were stories on plane crashes, tribal fights and rascals. That slotting of PNG into the minor interest category covering the awful, the weird and the exotic has, unfortunately, expanded not shrunk in the past dozen years. For instance, the only story that the executive producer of 'AM' has rung me about this year - rung me because I hadn't filed on it - the only story that he felt he needed for his program relating to PNG that he had read in the morning papers but did not have from me, was a 'Lost Tribe' story. There have been a few 'lost tribe' stories this year, I know. But this was the Liawep of the West Sepik who have been lost and discovered on a number of occasions now - several times since 1990 by the PNG media.

Writing about the Eurocentric media fascination with lost tribes a few years ago, Rowan Callick told the story about how the *Daily Mail* in London had run a breathless report about how an intrepid group of British students travelling the world led by the magnificently named Colonel Blashford-Snell had discovered a lost tribe in the Eastern Highlands. Of course this group was said to have had absolutely no knowledge of or contact with the white man before. Rowan said that when this report landed on his desk at the *Times of PNG*, William Williando, one of PNG's best news photographers - who incidentally had just had a photo he had taken used in *Time* magazine's international edition - looked over his shoulder and said in some disbelief, 'That's my tribe! That's my tribe they've named!'

In attempting to satisfy myself that this 1993 'discovery' of the lost Liaweps was, at best, a rediscovery of a group already recorded in the Australian colonial days, I put a call through to the nearest district station, Telefomin. It took two days for the PNG Posts and Telecommunications Corporation to connect me, via Wewak and PTC's high frequency, two way, outstation radio network, with Telefomin high up in the remote mountains near the head-waters of the Sepik River and the junction of the West Sepik, East Sepik and Enga Provinces.

'Hello. This is Telefomin. Over,' the distant voice on the other end of the phone eventually said.

'It's Sean Dorney from the ABC calling from Port Moresby,' I shouted, spacing out my words in the hope that whoever had answered in that supposedly primitive, isolated spot would understand me. 'I'm trying to find anybody who might be able to tell me something about a new tribe claimed to have been found near Oksapmin, over.'

'Oh, good morning, Sean. I'm the headmaster of the Telefomin High School. I know who you are. We watch you on Australia Television International each night.'

Papua New Guinea has leap-frogged its former colonial boss, Australia, when it comes to public access to the world's electronic media. For those who can afford it - and in the major towns it costs barely one kina a day - you can link yourself up to a cable network and have the choice of CNN, ESPN - the global sports channel, the ABC - Queensland, QTV - North Queensland (essentially Channel 10), SBS, ATVI, Malaysian Television, Indonesian Television, a Philippines channel, even French television and for subscribers to the one I am connected to, for instance, two home movie channels. A K20 attachment also delivers, through your FM radio, the ABC out of Townsville, Radio National, ABC FM and Radio Australia.

Accurate figures on the Papua New Guinea audience size for this smorgasbord of international electronic entertainment are exceptionally difficult to obtain because of the very deregulated nature of it all. But one of the cable operators has given me a guesstimate that up to 200,000 people in PNG watch satellite television. There has been a substantial increase, too, since independence, in the range of media produced locally in Papua New Guinea. But I will come back to that later in this address when I move onto the issue of what the colonial inheritance is in PNG as far as the local media is concerned. But first, let me continue with the subject of the Australian media's treatment of Papua New Guinea now compared with what it was in 1975.

When I arrived in PNG for the first time in April 1974, about 17 months before independence, there were more than half a dozen journalists earning their living writing or broadcasting about PNG to an Australian audience. The ABC had two Australian journalists, Don Hook and Jim Hall, and a complete ABC television camera team all based in Port Moresby. Barry Wheeler was the AAP Correspondent; Gus Smales, represented the Herald and Weekly Times group - that included the *Herald*, the *Sun*, the *Courier Mail* and many others; Pat Boyce was there for the *Age*

and the *Sydney Morning Herald*; Chris Ashton wrote for a range of publications including the *National Times* and the *Financial Review*; and, if my memory serves me correctly, Margaret Wilson, was stringing for the *Australian*. Peter Hastings was always ducking in and out as well. I was not reporting for Australia then. I was on secondment to the newly formed National Broadcasting Commission, the NBC of PNG.

With such a contingent of fine journalists competing with each other - and driven by the suspicion of many of their editorial chiefs back home that Australia was helping hurtle an unprepared PNG towards a disastrous independent future - there was plenty of copy generated from Port Moresby then that found its way into the Australian media.

Four years after independence, in 1979, when I returned to Port Moresby to take up the ABC correspondent's job, there had been no dramatic collapse of the new nation into blood spilling chaos and the ranks of the Moresby Foreign Correspondents Club had thinned to four. Another year and a half later, there were just two. And that is the number still today, another twelve years further on: myself and the AAP Correspondent, Belinda Goldsmith. The dreadfully high costs involved in basing anybody in Port Moresby these days is perhaps the main reason the rest of the Australian media is no longer represented. But two other journalists have shown how this problem can be side-stepped. Mary-Louise O'Callaghan has fought a valiant battle to get the *Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* interested in Papua New Guinea again and she visits regularly from her base in Honiara from where she also covers the rest of the Pacific. Mary-Louise does an extraordinarily good job and I suspect that if the ownership of the Solomon Islands/PNG telecommunications link was based on who paid for its use, she would be the controlling shareholder. The other journalist who covers PNG exceptionally well from a distant base is Rowan Callick. Rowan spent ten years in PNG, started off the *Times of PNG* and writes for the *Australian Financial Review* from Melbourne.

But just the same as there are fewer and fewer Australian academics with recent hands-on experience in Papua New Guinea we four are a tiny breed. All four of us get criticised by PNG Government Ministers occasionally - Rowan is probably ahead in that contest but I'm confident I lead the field when it comes to hostility from the PNG Security Forces. But the 'drift' in Australian interest in PNG that John Kaputin spoke about and

that Andrew Peacock mentioned [in his opening speech] is undoubtedly a reality. When was the last time any of the commercial television news bulletins ran a story on Papua New Guinea? Would I be far wrong if I said it was Paul Keating's Pope-like embrace of the earth at Kokoda well over a year and a half ago? Getting visas to get into PNG is always a problem for journalists but now is the time, I believe, for the Australian media to take up John Kaputin's challenge and demand easier entry.

With luck, the redirection of hundreds of millions of dollars of Australian aid to programs aimed at putting more money into the pockets of Australians will help spark a resurgence of more general interest in the country - even if it fails to achieve its most lofty aim of not just checking the decline in PNG's rating on the social indicator scale but, somehow, send it soaring. Being an optimist, I hope that the 400 or so hungry eyed consultants, NGOs and others who turned up in Brisbane for the PNG aid forum earlier this week marks the beginning of this public re-embrace of PNG. The media, I trust, will follow.

Let me now turn to what the internal media is like today in Papua New Guinea compared with what it was like at independence. Back then, there was the daily newspaper, the *Post Courier*, majority owned by the Herald and Weekly Times, the Tok Pisin newspaper, *Wantok*, kicked off by the Catholic Church and coming out of Wewak, and the National Broadcasting Commission, formed at Self Government in 1973 out of what had been the PNG Branch of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, the Australian Administration's district radio service and the broadcast transmission arm of the Posts and Telecommunications Department. There was no television.

Now, as well as the downpour of television signals from the satellites mentioned earlier, there is a PNG television station, EMTV, owned by Kerry Packer. There are two vigorously competing national dailies, the *Post Courier*, now 62.5% owned by Murdoch, and *The National*, funded by Malaysian logging interests. There are two national weeklies, the *Times of PNG* in English and *Wantok* in Tok Pisin, both owned by the Church-backed, Word Publishing (60% Catholic, 20% Evangelical Lutheran, 10% Anglican and 10% United). The NBC has a commercial FM service, Radio Kalang, broadcasting from almost 20 transmitters around PNG, as well as its national medium wave and short wave service, Radio Karai, and its 19 provincial radio stations. There is a range of new publications: *PNG Business* and

*Weekend Sports*, both products of Word Publishing, a rugby league newspaper that now comes out weekly off the *Post Courier's* presses during the football season; and a couple of magazines. There are also a number of provincial newspapers, the best being the *Eastern Star* in the Milne Bay province edited by a retired Australian newspaper man who is in PNG with his wife as a volunteer.

The late Peter Henshall did an extensive study a few years ago into the possibility of setting up an indigenous national newsagency in Papua New Guinea and he turned up some very interesting facts about the number of people employed by Provincial Governments in information offices. There are at least 220 such people, about half of them involved in journalistic type endeavours - putting out at least 21 publications some on a weekly but most on a monthly basis. While Peter commented that they may have slightly exaggerated their productivity - 'For example,' he wrote, 'people in the offices visited did not generally seem to be as busy as one would have expected them to be in order to get through the amount of work claimed' - he found many of them had a very liberal idea of their roles. In a questionnaire he circulated he found about half responded either positively or very positively to the suggestion that 'an Information Officer should uncover corruption and other malpractice in the organisation' they worked for.

All in all, it is a very healthy media scene considering the size and literacy of the population - one that is far livelier than it was when Australia left. On the first day of this conference, one of the speakers mentioned that the Internal Security Act was passed with very little debate in the National Parliament earlier this year. That was true. But there has been enormous debate on the Act in the PNG media since - so much so that Paias Wingti has announced he will review it and his Police Minister, Avusi Tanao, told the NBC recently, in some anger, that he would repeal it and when he did he would take no further responsibility for containing the breakdown in law and order! Within days of the Bill being passed, the *Times of PNG* ran a front page story explaining its implications and the paper reprinted the entire Bill in a two page feature spread. Numerous stories and articles have appeared since in the *Post Courier* questioning the Act including one detailing the wonderful about-turn by the Housing Minister, John Jaminan. After being beaten up at two in the morning by traffic police, Mr Jaminan told a *Post Courier* reporter he had changed his mind on the Internal Security Act and it was a dreadful piece of legislation!

Roger Hau'ofa on his Monday to Friday, nine till noon, talkback show on Radio Kalang has done a remarkable job focussing public attention on issues such as the Internal Security Act. Sir Buri Kidu, the former Chief Justice, has become a star radio performer on Roger's show. Sir Buri has not only poured immense scorn on the Act but he has also examined in detail for Kalang's considerable nation-wide audience the implications of several of Prime Minister Wingti's proposed constitutional changes - like switching the presumption of innocence in serious criminal matters to a presumption of guilt and the scrapping of bail. The news and current affairs programs on the Karai service of the NBC have increased in number and quality in recent years and the NBC is quite robust in defence of its independence.

The most recent development in the PNG media, and one that has raised several interesting questions about media ownership and control in Papua New Guinea, is the launching of the majority Malaysian backed daily newspaper, the *National*. It came into being on Armistice Day, November the 11th, but the deal to set it up was done ten months before that, on January the 19th, 1993, at the home of the Papua New Guinea High Commissioner in Malaysia when Paias Wingti dined with Datuk Tiong Hiew King. Datuk Tiong is the Chairman of the Rimbunan Hijau group. 'Rimbunan Hijau' is Malaysian for 'Green Jungle' and the company and its many subsidiaries in PNG are extracting logs from Papua New Guinea's green jungles at an alarming rate. Datuk Tiong also owns the company that prints *Sin Chew Jit Poh*, the largest selling Chinese newspaper in Malaysia. At that dinner in Kuala Lumpur Paias Wingti invited Datuk Tiong to set up a newspaper in Port Moresby.

While Datuk Tiong has provided most of the money for the establishment of the *National*, there are Papua New Guinean shareholders - the two most prominent being Highlands businessmen, Simon Korua from the Western Highlands, and Peter Kama from Simbu. Korua and Kama are both firm backers of Mr Wingti and his Peoples Democratic Movement Party. The only other non-Malaysian member of the Board is the PNG based expatriate lawyer, Michael Wilson. The Deputy Editor of the *National* is Frank Senge Kolma, Mr Wingti's former Press Secretary.

The *National* has spelt out its mission. It says: 'The newspaper will be nationalistic in outlook, putting the country above all else. We will actively support,' the paper proclaims, 'any effort that improves the welfare and security of the

people; that brings progress and advancement to the country; and that enhances and enriches the quality of life in the nation.' Amongst its goals it lists 'communal peace and harmony' and 'political stability'. It says it will 'not lend itself to be used by any person or group who want to cause disunity, disaffection or dissension'. It does say that it intends to 'challenge and expose any abuse of power and position, any misuse of privilege, graft and corruption, nepotism and all forms of unhealthy practices'.

The paper has been going less than a month and, unlike some of my colleagues, I am not rushing to judge it. Some have already condemned the *National* as a propaganda sheet for the Wingti Government and the logging industry. However, I have considerable faith in a number of the Papua New Guinean journalists the *National* has employed. Already in one editorial we have had the paper calling on Paias Wingti to 'belittle' himself in the national interest and go to Arawa to negotiate directly with Francis Ona. Let me just say I suspect the owners of the *National* and the Wingti Government may not find the paper to be as tame as they may - and others do - expect.

The media in PNG has come under a lot of pressure from various PNG governments since independence. The most threatening period - apart from Iambakey Okuk putting the NBC off the air one night in the early 1980s during its evening current affairs program - was during the attempts by the former Communications Minister, Gabriel Ramoi, to restrictively licence the media through a Mass Media Tribunal. The media won great public support during that period. The Catholic Church, for instance, told the Government it was confident it could get a million signatures on a petition against the Bill - not bad in a country where there are not a million literate people! Incidentally, Ramoi is now in jail where he is helping fellow prisoners file appeals against their sentences.

I am not sure just how much credit we as Australians can claim for what I consider to be the quite healthy state of the media in Papua New Guinea. But it is interesting to compare the media's record in PNG over the past 18 years with that of other developing countries and their first 18 years of independence. As far as the Australian media goes, I welcome this sudden surge of interest since John Kaputin's speech but as with much else that is going on in our former colony, Australians will have to accept that the PNG media will go its own way and grow ever less dependent on Australia.



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