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Contributors
Preface

Darrell Tryon

The New Pacific Review / La Nouvelle Revue du Pacifique owes its initial impetus to the vision of the late Pierre Garrigue-Guyonnaud, French Permanent Secretary for the Pacific 1996-2002, who died in Marrakech in March 2006. This volume is dedicated to his memory.


The second volume was the fruit of another major French-Australian symposium, 'L'Etat des États/Pacific Island States Today', held at the Australian National University in 2003. In the second volume contributions were published in the language in which they were delivered, either English or French, with bilingual abstracts at the end of each chapter, following the tradition of the major French anthropological journal L'Homme.

This third volume of the New Pacific Review / La Nouvelle Revue du Pacifique consists of the proceedings of the 16th Pacific History Association Conference, held in Noumea at the end of 2004. This is particularly noteworthy in that this was the first time that the Pacific History Association held its annual international conference in the Francophone Pacific. Significantly, the editors of the volume are also French.

Until now, most Pacific history has been in English and the substantial contribution of French scholars to Pacific Studies has been somewhat overshadowed by the dominance of English as the predominant language of most students of the Pacific. This unfortunate situation, highlighted during the Assises de la Recherche Française dans le Pacifique
colloquium held in Noumea in August 2004, is being addressed, as this volume attests. Indeed it may be seen as a harbinger of things to come and a welcome taste of the benefits of closer collaboration and exchange between Anglophone and Francophone scholars.

This is one of two volumes to come out of the conference. It has a distinct purpose and logic in seeking to bridge the colonial linguistic and academic divide between the Anglophone and Francophone Pacific, and especially to reach out and bring the research of Francophone scholars to a wider English-speaking readership. Nine of the contributors are from the Francophone world, and four of the eighteen contributions are in French. The rest are in English. Each chapter has both French and English abstracts.

The contributions are organised around three interdisciplinary clusters: History and Anthropology, History and Archaeology, and History and Images. It is interesting to observe that the two worlds of Pacific scholarship combined here have both been moving independently towards these associations. The three sections also vary considerably in length, with 169 pages for the History and Anthropology section, 47 for History and Images, and 41 for History and Archaeology. These figures roughly reflect the strengths of the disciplines within Pacific Studies.

Diversity and individuality have been favoured over imposing one single style throughout, as this volume, while seeking common ground, is also about celebrating diversity, diversity of subject-matter and diversity of approach, reflecting the richness which a combined French/English prism can bring to the study of the Pacific. For the sum of the whole is certainly greater than the sum of the parts.

The Pacific Centre of the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies is delighted that ANU E-Press, into which Pandanus Books was recently folded, is to be the publisher of future volumes, since Pandanus was the publisher of the first two volumes of the New Pacific Review/la Nouvelle Revue du Pacifique.

Darrell Tryon
Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies
Australian National University
Prologue

Frédéric Angleviel


Du 6 au 10 décembre 2004, cette conférence a réuni une centaine de chercheurs en provenance de la région Pacifique, mais aussi d’Europe et des Amériques. Le comité local avait organisé neuf ateliers : Histoire et anthropologie ; histoire et archéologie ; histoire et géographie ; histoire et sciences politiques ; histoire et images ; histoire et littérature ; histoire et religion ; histoire et Franconésie ; histoire de la Nouvelle-Calédonie.

Sans conteste, les deux ateliers qui furent les plus réflexifs furent le premier et le dernier. L’atelier histoire et anthropologie, dirigé par le professeur Paul de Deckker, était significatif de l’importance de l’oralité dans la région Pacifique. L’atelier histoire de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, coordonné par Christiane Terrier, a permis aux chercheurs locaux de confronter les résultats de leurs recherches monographiques aux travaux généraux des chercheurs d’Australie, de Nouvelle-Zélande, d’Hawaii ou de France métropolitaine.

La conférence se déroula durant quatre jours à Nouméa sur le campus de l’université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie avant de se clôturer par une journée à Koné, journée dédiée aux difficultés et aux particularités de l’histoire locale au siège de la province Nord de la Nouvelle-Calédonie.

Nos remerciements vont tout d’abord aux différents partenaires institutionnels qui ont permis la réussite de cette manifestation scientifique : le Ministère des affaires étrangères de la République française à travers le Fonds de coopération économique, sociale et culturelle pour le Pacifique, le gouvernement de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, les provinces Nord et Sud de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, la ville de Nouméa, les ambassades françaises de Fidji, de Nouvelle-Zélande et du Vanuatu, l’université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, la Pacific History Association, ainsi qu’un mécène, l’office des postes et télécommunications de Nouvelle-Calédonie.
Nous remercions aussi tous les membres du comité d'organisation, qui avaient pour tache d'animer les ateliers : Paul de Deckker (anthropologie), Christophe Sand (archéologie), Gilles Pestana (géographie), Michel Perez (sciences politiques), Max Quanchi (images), Sonia Faessel (littérature), Claire Laux (Franconésie), Christiane Terrier (Nouvelle-Calédonie), ou encore les personnes qui ont assuré l'intendance de cette manifestation, soit Alain Funel et Methilda Souceradjou.


La 16th Pacific History conference a permis pour la première fois une rencontre équilibrée entre chercheurs anglophones et francophones. Gageons que la vision des uns et des autres a évolué grâce à ces rencontres fructueuses, qui ont ouvert de nouvelles perspectives de travail en commun sur des thèmes aussi porteurs que les outils de la recherche, l'historiographie ou l'analyse comparée de la transportation tant en Australie qu'en Nouvelle-Calédonie.

Frédéric Anglevieil,
Convenor de la 16th Pacific History conference,
Professeur des universités en histoire,
Université de la Nouvelle-Calédonie.
History and anthropology

Histoire et anthropologie
Orality, Literacy, Tradition, History

Antony Hooper

Without doubt the Pacific Ocean is aeons older than the Atlantic or Indian Oceans. When we say older we mean that it has not come to any modern consciousness. Strange convulsions have convulsed the Atlantic and Mediterranean people into phase after phase of consciousness, while the Pacific and Pacific peoples have slept... And, oh heaven, for how many thousands of years has the true Pacific been dreaming, turning over in its sleep and dreaming again: idylls: nightmares. The heart of the Pacific seems like a vast vacuum, in which, mirage-like, continues the life of myriads of ages back... It is a phantom, illusion-like trick of reality: the glamorous South Seas.

D.H. Lawrence

Lawrence of course knew little or nothing about the Pacific and its peoples. I begin with him because he raises fairly directly the notion of 'historical consciousness' and, indirectly, how that can be known. It is, I think, a slippery concept, rather like 'personality' and 'identity', two other words with fairly respectable antecedents in Psychology, but which have been taken over into the discourse of social and cultural contexts. More often than not the effect has been to essentialise the argument and elide the complexities involved in describing the 'thoughts' and practices of various collectivities, be they societies, cultures, classes or whatever. Nevertheless, I find to my discomfort that 'historical consciousness', or something like that, is really what I want to talk about.

My paper is concerned with an old Tokelau manuscript that I think is manifestly 'real history'. I shall summarise it briefly and then point out why I think it is real history and not just the usual myth or legend which Tokelauans, like many other island Pacific people, customarily call upon to represent their pasts. By 'real history' I mean simply the sort of account that would be accepted by the professors on the Faculty Board, or perhaps published in the Journal of Pacific History. My usage here is of course ironic. Following Munz (1971), Dening (1991) and others, I take history to be a culturally-defined, characteristically Western practice, and not by any means the only legitimate way in which the past can be
depicted — or even, in many instances, the most fruitful way. This should become clearer as I go on to describe the Tokelau context, the manner in which I gained access to the manuscript, how it came to be written and what, specifically, is remarkable about it.

The Manuscript Book

It was passed to me in 1970, during my second visit to the island of Fakaofo. I had at the time been on the atoll for about twelve months, doing most of the things that ethnographers usually do. The people had a very good idea of what I was up to, in between joining in the compulsory cricket, fishing and asking all the foolish questions that they had never ever thought of asking.

In the early 1970s, little had been published on the history of Tokelau. But in the late 1960s my colleague Judith Huntsman and I had discovered both the LMS and Western Pacific High Commission archives. We copied out everything we could and got a fair idea of some of the events of 19th century Tokelau. Then when I got to Fakaofo on this third visit I wrote down a more or less coherent account of some of what we had learned about the island. The headmaster translated it all into Tokelauan, giving it the title of Tala Tukuafakaholopito o Fakaofo, 'Fakaofo History'. I typed up stencils and we ran off 50 copies on the school duplicator, which I distributed quietly to the 50 or so family heads. They seemed pleased, but that was the last I saw of any of those copies. Furthermore, nobody approached me on the following days to make any kind of reference to the little booklets. I was puzzled, and I must admit, a little dismayed by this. Later, however, it was evident that they had indeed been read, but had then been stuffed into the lavalava boxes which contained the family Bible, good church clothes and the old and venerated family manuscript books which were often spoken of but which nobody admitted to having in their possession, or even having ever been able to read, but which were believed to contain the arcane springs of all Tokelau knowledge.

Then very early one morning a couple of months later, I was visited by an elder with a little worn cloth bundle under his arm. As he unwrapped a coverless old quarto handwritten exercise book and laid it before me, he told me in a quiet and rather offhand way that it was simply 'an old thing' he got from his father, that he wasn't sure who had written it, but said that he thought I might be interested in it because of some of the questions I had been asking. I looked at it in wonder. It was written with pen and ink in a single legible hand and was in Samoan (which until recently was the only written language of Tokelau.) I could tell at once that it was the genuine article, an old family book, the first I had ever seen, and it was left with me with no particular instructions as to what I was to do with it. I had with me a 35 mm camera and some document-copying film, so I went through it all, a frame to each page, and then went through the whole thing again at a slightly different exposure — and then got the book back to the owner. All that I have now is my photocopy.
The manuscript takes up 151 pages of the exercise book, with the last 56 manuscript pages given over to a genealogy centred on the aliki ‘royal’ line. The whole thing looks very much as though it had been written down more or less in a single session. There are no erasures or crossings out, and no interpolated notes in the margins. From internal evidence, it was written down in the late 1930s, at a time before there were government schools in the atolls and the only formal education available locally was from the Samoan pastors and the priests on the island of Nukunonu. There had been, however, a number of Tokelauans, both men and women, educated at mission schools in Samoa, and some of them had gone on to serve in missions elsewhere in the Pacific.

The manuscript is divided into sections, and the following is a brief synopsis of the structure and some of the content of the first 95 pages:

(1) A table of the Tokelau lunar months, corresponding English months, the ascendant stars and the species of fish in season. There are 12 lunar months named. This is followed by a list of the ‘nights of the moon’, 29 of them, in three series of ten, and then a list of the named wind directions, 14 of them, from south counter-clockwise, each characterised by the islets from which the wind comes. This section appears to have much the same function as the Book of Genesis — the setting in place and naming of the cardinal features of the natural world such as stars, nights of the moon and the winds. Order is imposed and established.

(2) Origin of the people of Fakaofo. There are two main stories, differing in only few particulars. An ulua (a species of Caranx) beached on the village islet. A seabird pierced the fish’s body with its beak and from this there grew two youths (maggots in another version) called Kava and Sigano, known as ‘spirit men’. There is no further news of Sigano but the name of Kava became the supreme title of Fakaofo, held by a number of aliki down to Kave-vase-fenua ‘Kava the divider of lands’ who had two wives, one a woman from the Fakaofo aliki line and the other a slave woman taken from the neighbouring atoll of Nukunonu. We thus have humans born of earth, sky and sea.

(3) ‘Fakaofo in heathen days.’
‘Fakaofo was a village of honour in the old days. It was known as the ‘land of chiefs’ since the ways of the people were noble and gentlemanly and their respect and concern for one another was unbounded. Thus nobody on the island acted without consideration: everything was ready and prepared to maintain the honour and majesty of the land. Everyone maintained good behaviour, with the families showing mutual concern — even though this was in the days of heathenism and foolishness. They did things together and nobody thought only of themselves. Children respected their parents and the men respected the chiefs and elders, neither answering back nor complaining. Noise was strictly prohibited and nobody could call out within the village.
Fakaofo set up a stone idol of the great god of Tokelau, namely the idol Tui Tokelau, which means ‘Supreme Ruler of Tokelau’. There could be no doubt about the dignity of the island once Tui Tokelau existed to mark and embody it. Fakaofo was not an idle village but one which was always ready and prepared for any disaster, and was closely guarded against enemies coming to wage war. The enemies of Fakaofo in the days of darkness were Toga, Atafu and Nukunonu.’

The most striking feature of this passage is probably its naked, overweening chauvinism. The passage reads like a vision of the Fakaofo Eden, male and hierarchical, with no women to speak of. In spite of this, it is not completely fanciful. The idol of Tui Tokelau was indeed impressive, a stone monolith some 14 feet high by the testimony of the US Exploring Expedition, and one of the largest such monoliths in Western Polynesia. And the welcome given to the members of the US Exploring Expedition in 1841 shows quite unequivocally that this was a controlled, tense and hierarchical place — very clearly so by comparison with accounts of the other two Tokelau atolls during the same period.

The manuscript then goes on to describe some very valuable ethnographic facts, in a much calmer, less chauvinistic manner. In particular, it gives a description of the male-centred institution of the Fale Pā, which seems to have been obliterated by the missions and the depopulation by slavers in 1863.

‘There were houses established all round the village. These houses were called fale pā and only men dwelt in these houses. Each puakāiga [large cognatic descent unit] dwelt in its own fale pā and could not live mixed up with others. These houses were somewhat like work camps. Each house had a name. Also each fale pā had its own aitu [spirit] which was worshipped and which protected them from aitu from other villages who came to raise conflict. Certain fishes of the sea (but not stones) were worshipped as aitu. Each individual fale pā had one or two fishes of the sea which they worshipped and prayed to.’

There follows a description of a number of customs and institutions that characterised the old heathen regime, and which were either transformed or completely wiped out by the introduction of the churches in the early 1860s. Among the points mentioned are the policing of the village and the penalties imposed on wrongdoers. There is also further material on Tui Tokelau: a physical description of the idol, the annual reclothing with mats, the tribute brought from other islands in the group, and the full prayer to the god, said by the aliki in a formulaic fashion, including the customary phrases of debasement like eating ‘piss and shit’ of the god and pleading for an increase of the natural products of the land and sea. Some 200 species of fish are named, beginning with large species of the open ocean and coming down to echinoderms and shellfish of the lagoon, and then on to plants and birds of the sky. All in all, they make up a substantial menu.
Then begins a chronicle of major events, centring on relations with disruptive outsiders of various sorts, beginning with the prophesies of a local woman called Faleata, who became insane after having been beaten by her husband, and spent a lot of time swimming round in the lagoon. One day she stood and shouted out that ten ships would arrive from beyond the horizon and carry away part of the population. Then there will be conflicts that will carry away another part of the village. According to the manuscript these prophesies were fulfilled in two ways: '(1) In the year 1861, four ships came and took the majority of the men and women, leaving only a few behind,' and '(2) In 1862 a shipload of church people arrived, bringing with them a sickness which killed a lot of people. These two tragedies which came together destroyed the people of Fakaofo.'

The manuscript has both the dates and the sequence of events a bit confused here, since the dysentery epidemic was brought by passengers on the John Williams in early February 1863, to be followed only 12 days later by the first of the slavers. But the basic facts are surprisingly accurate. The exploits of the slavers are widely known through the well-known and authoritative work of Harry Maude, who based his account of events in Tokelau mainly on letters and journals in the LMS archives. But then the records of this Tokelau manuscript are in many respects identical to what Maude wrote: furthermore the local account was presumably done without recourse to contemporary records of any sort, and seventy years after the events themselves.

The following is what the manuscript has:

'When the ships came to Fakaofo, an American named Peni was already there as a trader for the German Company in Samoa, and so were the two pastors, Mafalā and Sakaio. From the first ship some Europeans came ashore to Peni's house and told him to inform the village to go aboard the ship to trade because there were untold goods there which would be traded for anything. So some men went aboard and the captain told them all to go into the hold to do their trading. Most of the men were thus tricked into the hold and were trapped there, at the same time the lines attaching their canoes to the ship were severed. Those still on the deck of the ship leapt into the sea. Ships boats were lowered and pursued them. Only three managed to reach a canoe and escape to shore. [This, according to Maude's account was the Rosa Patricia which captured sixteen men.] Two ships together came next but left without taking anyone when Peni said that no one remained because all had already been taken. [ Maude has no record of these two ships because no account of them appears in LMS records.]

The next ship appeared to accept Peni's word too, sailing off toward Nukunonu and Atafu. But there was a man called Lautaki who travelled on that ship. This is his story. Lautaki was the son of Punakoa from Manihiki [Peni had brought with him
several labourers, some from Manihiki] who lived with Teopua the mother of Lonise. Lautaki told the captain that there were many people out of the village gathering copra at the time his ship had called. The ship then returned to Fakaofo. The crew came ashore with nets when the men returned to the village and gathered the population in a place called Lalotiale, next to Manave. They were driven into the nets by the Europeans and their wild dogs. It was like the Israelites in Assyria because of their disobedience to God and his prophets. This ship took most of the remaining people of Fakaofo, leaving only Foliga and a small number of men and women. While they were sailing to Samoa the captain decided to leave some of the weaklings in Samoa: they were Tui Aperaamo, Tetaulu, Vaiala, Vaopuka and others... [This, according to Maude, was the Rosa y Carmen, which took 44 men]

When the fourth ship arrived there was no one left. So they took Foliga and most of the women, while others hid themselves. Some hid in Peni's house, and they were the ones who were saved. It was only Galu, Lea etc who were left behind. [This was the brig Micaela Miranda]

According to Maude, relying on mission accounts written by Samoan teachers, it appears that only 60 people, 9 men, 30 women and 21 children, were left on the island out of the 261 who were said to be there when the mission ship arrived early in February 1863. Many died of the dysentery brought on that mission ship, including some of those that were taken by the slavers.

The manuscript gives only a brief account of the epidemic before going on to tell the story of the arrival of the infamous Jules Tarel with the Catholic bishop from Samoa and the ‘evacuation’ of large numbers of the population to Uvea because of supposed ‘famine’, and the burning of the god-house on Fakaofo. This whole episode was a very shady business indeed. It has been misrepresented in the published Catholic records, and Judith Huntsman and I only learned of it in full in the 1980s from records held in the Vatican (Huntsman 2004). The events actually all took place in 1852, long before the establishment of any Christian missions in Tokelau. But the manuscript misplaces the episode chronologically and sets it during the 1860s, where it is included in an account of the establishment of both the Protestant and Catholic churches in Tokelau. This is a complicated story, but the manuscript does a fair job of dealing with the tangle of events. It also manages to give a fairly accurate account of the many difficulties brought about by Peni’s supposed purchase of the islet of Fenuafala, as well as the disruptions caused another trader (Antonio Pereira, a Portuguese national from the Cape Verde Islands in the Atlantic, who had established himself in Samoa) and his attempts to buy another large islet on the atoll, called Fenualoa. Tokelau was by this time under the oversight of the Western Pacific High Commission, based in Suva, and was the supposed responsibility of visiting consuls and captains of warships who could be appealed to either by going to Apia, or by writing to them (always
The manuscript gets a lot of this correct too, even naming some of the more important and significant visitors such as Pulu Sakisimeti (Cusack-Smith) who came to judge both the Fenuafala and Fenualoa cases on August 30th, 1891 (actually 31st August 1892 according to Cusack Smith and as set out in Hooper and Huntsman 1996: 275). It also records the time when Tokelau was governed from the Gilbert Islands, the transition to New Zealand administration in the 1920s and the visits of Governor Richardson and other New Zealand officials through the 1920s and 1930s. The manuscript ends with an account of the deeds and (mostly) good works done by successive Protestant pastors of Fakaofo, 12 of them, together with their wives.

The last 56 manuscript pages are devoted to an extensive genealogy covering 15 generations from Kava Vasefenua to the present. In the first five generations only males are recorded. In the 6th generation there are some females recorded, but none of their issue. It is not until the 9th generation that females are recorded, together with their issue. Entitled 'The Origins of the People of Fakaofo', this section is introduced by a brief disclaimer explaining how some names have inevitably been lost, and setting out an index of the marks used throughout to indicate male, female, deceased, 'taken by slavers' and 'died without issue', etc. In Tokelau such genealogical accounts are called gafa, and like the Samoan accounts known by the same term (Epling 1970) they contain both more and less than a formal pedigree. They are in effect charters of the social and political order, implying claims to land and precedence that are always contestable.

From a comparative perspective, though, the gafa is an archetypal Polynesian descent genealogy, one which relates groups by reference to a hierarchically-ordered series of agnatic ancestors and invoking a whole grammar of power, control, seniority and religious sanction. It differs significantly from the basic descent genealogies of the two other islands, in part by obliterating them and in part encompassing them, so that both the other islands appear as subsidiaries, subserviant to Fakaofo.

Commentary

I think there is little doubt that the book was written by a person from Fakaofo. Who else, after all, could have been bothered to gather together all the diverse elements of the account, and who else could have set down (presumably with a straight face) that panegyric about the majesty and dignity of 'the land of chiefs'? The author was also probably someone who had had some experience outside of the island, and even some education elsewhere. I don't know, however, whether it was copied from an earlier manuscript or not. I know that there are other manuscript books on the island which have at least some of the same material in them, but whether they are copied from this one or all copied from some other is uncertain. In any case it seems certain that it (or else the original) was put together from oral testimony rather than any outside written documents. Some evidence for this point

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is given by the spelling of Pulu Sakisimet i, which would not have been written by anyone who had seen a written record of the judgement of Cusack Smith. Although circumstances would seem to suggest that the author had some church education (that being the only one available) or affiliation, I doubt if it was written by any of the pastors — partly because it lacks any of the customary Mission rhetoric about the graces and mercies of the Almighty or the darkness of the days of idolatry. The author does not moralise. It is the facts that are important.

Again, it is not in any sense a scrapbook, as many family books tend to be, with all sorts of disparate bits and pieces added, and greater emphasis on one particular family line. From the outset, it sets out to be complete and comprehensive, beginning with the establishment and naming of features of the natural world, working through the creation of humans, the god Tui Tokelau and elements of the pre-Christian social order, though major historical events right up to the present.

Importantly, the manuscript completely leaves out all those local stories of the past which are obviously fabulous or improbable. There is no mention at all of the basic myth telling of relations between Fakaofo and the neighbouring Nukunonu. This involves a spirit of Fakaofo going to Nukunonu to steal the water, carrying it off in a half coconut shell and on the way spilling some scraps on a couple of Nukunonu islets (which now have decent groundwater). In retaliation the spirit of Nukunonu went to Fakaofo and stole that island’s good weaving pandanus (which now grows only in Nukunonu and not on Fakaofo) The story is important because everyone in Tokelau knows it, and because it sets up a paradigmatic relationship between the atolls, giving Fakaofo the water, source of all productivity including the male-cultivated pulaka, and leaving Nukunonu with the pandanus, used by women for weaving. This relationship is elaborated in other, more probable traditional tala, bringing in the third island, Atafu, as well. These tala are not usually told as though they form any sort of chronologically ordered set, though they can be put together in a logical order, as in the volume Matagi Tokelau. Judith Huntsman and I have seen them, together with the genealogical records, as creating an order of things at once economic, social, political and cosmological in its implications that bound together the atolls in a set of structured relationships that motivated their world through at least the first half of the nineteenth century — with transformations of it persisting to the present day. This, however is an interpretation which rests upon Structuralist premises which it would be impolite to try and foist upon an audience of historians. There is a summary of the argument in Hooper and Huntsman (1996: 325-328).

Finally, I should like to point out the main way in which the manuscript bears upon the notion of a Tokelau ‘historical consciousness’. Around 1980 Ron Crocombe put forward to the Tokelau Administration a proposal to publish a volume on the atolls to be written by Tokelau authors. The specific topics to be covered were not prescribed, but following the example of the volumes on other Pacific islands initiated by the Institute of Pacific Studies,
it was expected that the history of the islands would be a major part of it. This was to be another ‘insider history’ of the kind that was somewhat in vogue at the time, supposedly free of the bias and prejudices of ‘outsiders’ and an opportunity for the people to tell their own story in their own way.

The proposal was put to a regular general meeting of representatives from the three islands in mid-1981. It was agreed to with some enthusiasm, and a decision made to ask Judith Huntsman and me to act as general ‘facilitators’ of the project. We readily agreed. Following this meeting each atoll appointed its own Book Committee, and arrangements were made for us all to meet together early the following year to work out how the book was going to be written. This meeting of the individual Book Committees began with some anxieties about how they were going to resolve the well-known differences between the three versions of the traditional past that were current on the three islands. This was an intensely political topic, but it was resolved with tact, diplomacy and one ingenious stroke of expediency. A general list of the topics to be covered was agreed upon, and a decision made that no part of the book would be attributed to individual authors: it would all appear as an expression of the general will, in accordance with ‘the Tokelau way’. To resolve the differences between the three separate island versions of various traditional tales, it was decided that each Book Committee would write up its own version, and then send them to us to stitch together in an acceptable way. ‘In this way’, they said, ‘if anything goes wrong we can blame you!’ It was in fact not particularly difficult to resolve all the differences. Progress was, however, slow, and the Tokelauan version was not eventually printed until late 1990, with the English version available a few months later, when they were both launched together as *Matagi Tokelau* (Huntsman 1996).

In 1980, in preparation for our role as facilitators, Huntsman and I arranged for a number of important historical records of Tokelau, both published and unpublished, to be typed up for distribution to the Book Committees. Although we hoped that they could be translated, that proved impossible in the time available. Twelve bound copies (Hooper and Huntsman 1981) each of some 300 pages, were eventually produced and distributed. Our intention in making these records available was of course to allow the Committees to make use of them in any way they pleased in putting together accounts of the past. We know that a few people in each of the Committees devoured the books from cover to cover, and at a meeting in early 1986 (which we did not attend) it was decided to translate all the *palagi* accounts and simply incorporate them into the proposed book along with the body of traditional tales. That, however, proved to be unacceptable because of the costs that would be involved, and the Committees quite cheerfully abandoned the idea, deciding instead to include only a few of the more significant outside accounts such as Maude (1981:63-73). They then got on with writing up their traditional stories and the 12 books, like the copies of my earlier *Tala Tukufakaholopito o Fakaofo*, simply disappeared.

Apparently none of the Committees were really interested in exploring the parallels
and overlaps between the written palagi accounts and their own traditional tales. Indeed they seemed to be regarded as quite separate exercises. The written accounts were labelled simply as tuhiga, 'writings' — which indeed is all they were. My own much slighter version of events in Fakaofo, on the other hand, was a tala tukufakaholopito, a compound term doubtless derived from the Samoan tala fa'asolopito and meaning literally 'a series of tales strung together in sequence'. Both were to be contrasted with their own well-known, mainly oral, accounts of the past which they labelled variously as tala o te kaloa 'ancient stories', tala anamua 'stories of times past' or tala tuku 'stories handed down'.

What is really significant about this whole episode, though, is that the manuscript book that had been given to me to copy was never at any stage brought forward to the Book Committees. Nor was any other manuscript book, a few of which, I am aware, contained some of the same material as well as other similarly 'factual' local accounts (Hooper 1975) of very direct relevance to any view of the Tokelau past. They all remained in their lavalava boxes. Huntsman and I could have drawn attention to the books and what they contained. We chose not to, however, simply because this was 'their' book, telling their own story in their own way.

I have little doubt that most people would accept that the extensive body of tala in Matagi Tokelau are in some way an expression of the 'Tokelau historical consciousness'. (They certainly don't express anyone else's.) However, in granting this, it seems important to realise that at least 60 years ago, and probably for a long time before that, there were those on the island who were setting down radically different sorts of record of the past — and then hiding them away. The thought naturally arises as to why they should have concealed them from others. That, however, is a different question.

Note

Several people, including Michael Goldsmith and Margaret Jolly, made valuable comments when this paper was delivered, and I am most grateful to them all. I owe especial thanks to David Hanlon for bringing his article on the Book of Luelen to my attention. My colleague Judith Huntsman has over the years worked with me through almost everything in this paper, and I remain indebted to her for all the discussion and cooperation. Huntsman and Hooper (1996) is an overview of Tokelau society and history. The epigraph is taken from Lawrence (1961:132-133).

Orality, Literacy, Tradition, History 15
Abstract

In many island Polynesian societies, there are manuscript records of the past which are regarded as especially privileged knowledge, not made accessible to others. What is generally recorded is the basic stuff of Polynesian intellectual discourse — myth, genealogy and historical tales. The outlines might be very generally known, but what distinguishes the written records is their systematic nature and their age, both of which confer a mystique of authenticity. Anthropologists and historians have generally been reluctant to see these records as chronicles of ‘real’ events, and have interpreted them rather as constructions of cultural verities that embrace both past and present. Occasionally, however, such
manuscripts describe events that are also known from archival records. Here ‘tradition’ impinges upon ‘history’, sometimes to the benefit of both. This paper is concerned with such impingements in the Tokelau records, paying particular attention to a local document from the 1930s which describes the visits of slave traders in 1863.

Résumé

Dans de nombreuses sociétés polynésiennes insulaires, il existe des manuscrits relatifs au passé qui sont perçus comme formant un ensemble de connaissances privilégiées, non rendues accessibles à d’autres. Ce qui est généralement consigné porte sur les matériaux fondamentaux du discours intellectuel polynésien – mythe, généalogie et contes historiques. Les grandes lignes sont sans doute bien connues mais ce qui distingue les matériaux écrits provient de leur nature systématique et de leur âge, tous deux leur conférant une mystique d’authenticité. Les anthropologues et les historiens sont habituellement peu enclins à percevoir ces matériaux comme étant la chronique d’événements réels. Ils les ont interprétés plutôt comme des constructions de vérités culturelles embrassant à la fois le passé et le présent. Occasionnellement toutefois, de tels manuscrits décrivent des événements qui se retrouvent aussi dans des archives écrites. Dans ce cas-ci, la « tradition » déborde sur « l’histoire », parfois pour leur bénéfice mutuel. Cet article traite de telles collusions dans les archives de Tokelau, en portant une attention particulière à un document local des années 1930 qui traite des visites des négociants esclavagistes en 1863.
Cultures, langues, patrimoines et enjeux historiques

Serge Tcherkezoff

Les sociétés du Pacifique-sud : sans doute l'exemple le plus net au monde de communautés linguistiques extrêmement nombreuses, de dimensions où la population se compte bien plus souvent en centaines de mille (et parfois en dizaines) et pas en millions, et où la langue fait vraiment la communauté.

Ce n'est pas parce que ce serait une région de petites îles. Oui, bien entendu, les cas de ce genre sont nombreux. Mais pensons aussi aux grandes îles, comme ici la Grande Terre, ou les îles qui composent les Salomon, le Vanuatu, et mieux encore la Papouasie-Nouvelle-Guinée : là, chaque vallée ou presque est une île du point de vue linguistique et communautaire. On le sait, la famille linguistique austronésienne est, au monde, la famille qui comporte le plus grand nombre de langues différenciées. Bien entendu, il y a des langues communes et produites par l'histoire des rencontres, comme le Tok Pisin ou le Bislamar. Mais elles n'effacent pas les langues de chaque communauté : certains États comme la PNG ou le Vanuatu comptent des centaines de ces langues. D'autres États, comme le Samoa ou Tonga, ont une seule langue. La dimension identitaire n'est donc pas tant l'État ou le Territoire, lequel fut parfois le produit de découpages coloniaux, mais la communauté linguistique.

Car ici en effet, souvent, la langue fait la communauté, comme je le disais au début. Permettez-moi de prendre des exemples en Polynésie occidentale, région que je connais mieux. Prenez l'éponyme, si l'on peut dire : « Samoa », ou « Tonga » ou « Fidji », placez devant un préfixe causatif « Fa’a » (« Faka- ») et vous obtenez un terme qui, littéralement, signifie en quelque sorte « ce qui fait que Samoa est Samoa » (ou que « Tonga est Tonga » ou « Fidji ») et qui, dans ses emplois, désigne à la fois « la langue de Samoa (Tonga, Fidji) » et « la coutume de Samoa (Tonga, Fidji) », au sens le plus large de cette notion (incluant tout ce qu'on peut imaginer dans le domaine de l'organisation sociale, de la culture, de la vision historique, etc.).

Peut-on imaginer façon plus nette de dire que, pour ces locuteurs, « être soi-même » c'est s'exprimer dans sa langue ? Voilà je crois une caractéristique très importante de la
région Pacifique. C'est mon collègue Darrell Tryon qui tracera pour vous le bilan des études linguistiques. Pour ma part, ce qui m'intéresse dans le phénomène que je viens d'évoquer, c'est l'idée de source d'identité.

L'identité : précisons. Plaquée de l'extérieur, par le savant, ethnologue ou autre, par l'« observateur » regardant ceux qu'il « observe », cette notion est fortement condamnable. Elle ouvre la porte aux définitions eurocentriques, coloniales, aux inventions « ethiques », elle affuble la communauté d'etiquettes (« les Samoans sont ceci, cela »), elle réifie cette communauté, elle lui dénie son historicité et son dynamisme social. Non, quand j'emploie la notion d'identité, je veux faire référence aux discours des membres de la communauté linguistique, donc à leur revendication d'identité.

Or, j'observe car la notion est acceptable : c'est mon expérience de dialogue « sur le terrain » — j'observe donc que les revendications d'identité passent souvent par cette référence à une notion qui est à la fois la langue-et-tout-le-reste. Le Fidjien, le Tongien, le Samoan qui a émigré à Auckland, à Honolulu ou ailleurs, trouve néanmoins le moyen de se définir, explicitement, vis-à-vis d'autres émigrés, comme « Fiti », ou « Toga » ou « Samoa » par le fait de conserver l'usage de sa langue avec ses compatriotes émigrés.

Cette observation implique que cette notion d'identité revendiquée accompagne tous les changements les plus profonds : l'émigration par exemple, pour un individu donné au cours de sa vie, ou la vision historique d'une communauté. Les émigrés Samoans en Nouvelle-Zélande revendiquent du moins ceux qui ne sont pas nés là-bas le « Faa-Samoa », et, déjà en 1830, quand le premier missionnaire de la London Missionary Society mit le pied à Samoa, il nota qu'on lui expliquait diverses choses, qu'il ne comprenait pas, en ponctuant le discours par cette expression : « Faa-Samoa ». Nous pouvons donc suivre cette notion de 1830 à 2004.

C'est dire aussi que l'étude du changement social et de l'histoire ne peut ignorer la notion d'identité (l'identité revendiquée), comme divers collègues et nous-mêmes l'avons souligné dans une entreprise collective publiée par le CNRS en 1997. Prenons l'exemple d'un changement majeur dans un État : la modification profonde de la loi électorale. En 1990, par referendum, l'État de Samoa passe d'un système où seuls les chefs coutumiers votaient pour élire les quarante et quelques députés du Parlement national (Samoa est, depuis l'indépendance en 1962, un système parlementaire) à un système de suffrage universel (pour les votants, car l'éligibilité est demeurée limitée aux chefs coutumiers). Or les partisans du oui, comme ceux du non, ont tous axé leur campagne électorale sur la meilleure manière de préserver la chefferie coutumières, celle-ci étant considérée comme le pilier de tout le « FaaSamoa » (la chefferie est à la base du système clanique et villageois lequel assure une tenure foncière disons communautaire, incompatible avec un système de propriété privée). Ainsi, dans le discours des uns, le fait de désengager la chefferie coutumière du processus électoral la mettait mieux à l'abri de la politique « politicienne » et en préservait le rôle « coutumier » précisément ; dans le discours des autres, au contraire,
il importait que la chefferie continue d’être le support du système de gouvernement moderne afin de rester vivante et ne pas risquer de devenir un objet de musée. Ou encore, à Tonga, la critique des partis dits « démocratiques » vis à vis d’une royauté accusée de monopoliser tout le pouvoir et de faire du parlement une caricature (plus de la moitié des membres dépendent directement d’un processus de nomination royale) ne va pas jusqu’à demander simplement l’abolition de la royauté, car, dans le discours des deux bords, cette institution représente l’origine « millénaire » de la langue et de la société « tongienne » et le symbole d’une histoire qui a préservé le pays de toute colonisation formelle (ce qui ne veut évidemment pas dire que le pays ne fut pas fortement en contact avec missionnaires et marchands au XIXe siècle, comme Samoa d’ailleurs ces deux pays comme le reste de la Polynésie sont ainsi de religion chrétienne, mais la population y voit une forme « traditionnelle » de religion, un aspect du « fakaTonga » ou du « faaSamoa »).

Il faudrait détailler bien davantage, mais je peux renvoyer à des séries de publications effectuées au sein de notre centre de recherche sur ces questions. Que ce soit un ouvrage collectif, publié par le CNRS, qui avait pour sous titre précisément « identités et transformations culturelles » (dans le Pacifique) (voir ref. ci-dessus) et qui va sans doute paraître en traduction anglaise à l’ANU, ou des études spécifiques concernant, entre autres, Tonga ou Samoa (pour cela et pour tout ce qui est évoqué dans les paragraphes suivant, voir listes bibliographiques aux noms des membres du CREDO sur le site http://www.pacific-credo.net).

Ce qui m’amène à évoquer très brièvement un bilan des recherches françaises récentes, dans ces domaines socio-historiques. Il faut distinguer. Paul de Deckker nous a parlé en séance plénière de ce qui se fait et se fera à Nouméa et à Papeete. Je ne reprendrai pas et il me revient donc de mentionner ce qui se fait en France métropolitaine. Là, il faut encore distinguer. D’un côté, sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie, des études ont été conduites depuis longtemps, sous l’impulsion d’Alban Bensa, et Michel Naepels en parlera peut-être puisqu’il appartient à un laboratoire du CNRS (le GTMS) devenu certes généraliste mais qui, pour l’Océanie, perpétue le groupe ancien d’études sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie ; en outre, lui et d’autres ont demandé récemment au CNRS la création d’un GDR (groupement temporaire sur programme précis) dédié aux questions concernant la Nouvelle-Calédonie. D’un autre côté, il y avait déjà au début des années 1980 des chercheurs travaillant sur les régions non francophones du Pacifique : en PNG, autour de Maurice Godelier et Pierre Lemonnier, en Polynésie occidentale aussi, ce qui fut mon cas avec d’autres comme Françoise Douaire-Marsaudon et Paul van der Grijp (volonté affirmée, dès le départ, d’inclure dans la recherche française des zones extérieures à l’influence politique et linguistique française).

Ce sont ces chercheurs qui ont petit à petit formé le vu de voir le CNRS et les Universités constituer un Centre de recherches pérenne sur le Pacifique, en SHS, et non plus seulement des GDR à durée et programme limité. Le projet a été porté par Pierre Lemonnier, représentant le CNRS, et moi-même représentant l’EHESS. Le principe en a

Résumé

Au moment où les théoriciens occidentaux des sciences sociales se complaisent souvent dans un discours «post-modern» qui entend critiquer la possibilité de concevoir des identités culturelles, les diverses sociétés océaniennes affirment de plus en plus nettement leur revendication d'identité spécifique. On analysera cette tension, en prenant quelques exemples «sur le terrain», puis en présentant un état des lieux de la recherche française animée par le CNRS en sciences humaines et sociales SHS, dans ces domaines (d'autres orateurs parleront d'autres domaines SHS), en insistant sur la complémentarité des recherches en anthropo-sociologie et en histoire.

Abstract

While Western theoreticians in social sciences often delight themselves in a 'post modern' framework which aims at criticizing the possibility to perceive cultural identities, the diverse Oceanic societies assert more and more clearly their claims for their peculiar identity. We shall examine this tension by taking a few examples from the fieldwork and then by presenting what is presently going on in French research as organized by CNRS in the fields of human and social sciences (other speakers will focus on other topics of the same field), insisting upon the complementarity of research in anthropology, sociology and history.
Teaching the Pacific in the Pacific: Awesome Anthropology and Pacific History for undergraduates

Grant McCall and Max Quanchi

All of us who teach about the Pacific Islands in universities around the world face the problem of the most effective means to get our course material across. In the discussion of an undergraduate fieldwork class taught cooperatively between two universities (and disciplines) in Australia, I assume that I am addressing colleagues whose institutions are not located actually in the Pacific Islands.

Those tertiary institutions (see McCall 1981 for an early discussion) such as the French universities in New Caledonia and Tahiti, the Universities in Papua New Guinea, the extensive University of the South Pacific system, Ateneisi in Tonga, the National University of Samoa, the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE), the University of Guam and College of Micronesia all are located firmly in the region. Tertiary institutions in the American state of Hawaii and Aotearoa/New Zealand, along with those in Australia, are on the rim of that huge area.

When we plan our courses, we try to find readings that will appeal to our undergraduate audience, if not to educate them about the complexities of the region. There is an old tradition in university teaching of using audio-visual materials such as sound recordings, either our own or commercially available, along with films and, today, video/DVDs. Others of us use realia of various kinds such as artefacts we have collected during our own fieldwork, or obtained from other collections, perhaps a local university or other public museum. A few more adventurous might use Pacific island beverages, such as kava/yaqona to provide a taste or feel of the Pacific Islands.

It is relatively rare, though, to actually conduct an undergraduate class in the Pacific Islands.

The main reason for this is the cost involved, not to mention the logistics of transporting a class of mostly young students to a distant place.
Our colleagues in archaeology have a long tradition of organising groups of students as hired hands who instead of having to be paid, actually take care of their own expenses and may, even, contribute a share to finance the research work itself. There are a number of examples of students assisting their lecturers in this way from rim institutions. Classes in social anthropology and Pacific history, though, are rarely found being conducted as field schools.

Grant McCall (University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia or UNSW) decided in the mid-1990s to commence the process at his institution to get approval to offer a Pacific Islands fieldwork course in social anthropology but with an abiding interest in Pacific history (See e.g. Sahlins 1985).

The first class took place in 1997 and was not only short, but designed to cater for its undergraduate audience. The period away from Sydney was only 9 nights and the core of the syllabus was to participate in the Pacific Science Association Inter-Congress, held that year at the University of the South Pacific (USP), in Suva. The idea was that students would be on familiar ground: they stayed in the student accommodation of USP, ate with other similarly aged students in a university dining hall and, for their project reports, attended the professional papers and panels. The VIII Pacific Science Inter-Congress, held in July.

The students who took part rated positively the experience (using a questionnaire designed by McCall, after marks had been awarded). Typically students went beyond the lecture/paper format and made contacts with USP students, some even visiting nearby villages.

In 1998, Max Quanchi (Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane - QUT) joined McCall travelling to the Solomon Islands; and the two organised what has become the format for the course since: McCall's students in social anthropology and Quanchi's in Pacific history mostly travel together, but their assignments are marked according to criteria clear from their enrolment in their home institution. Owing to airline schedules, the two groups of students did not go to the same fieldsite together. This was due largely to transport problems to Nukukaisi, a Tikopia village on Makira (San Cristobal). There only was a small (scheduled) airplane between Honiara and Makira. As well, there was a limitation on how many students Nukukaisi could receive, as well as the limited capacity of local transport using small boats.

There was another reason that only four nights were spent in Nukukaisi: whilst the Tikopians were very welcoming and did their best to be excellent hosts to the two groups of students, there were many elements that challenged the (mainly) urban students. There was a manageable hazard of malaria and, so, medical and behavioural precautions had to be taken: the groups bought treated mosquito nets for sleeping, all were urged to 'take prophylactics recommended by travel medicine specialist doctors, sleeping arrangements were as a group in an especially constructed hut in the middle of the village. During the
day, host families would take students either singly or in small groups around the village and surrounding areas. Students were introduced to a very different kind of diet, which the people of Nukukaisi tried to adapt to outsider tastes. The feature of Nukukaisi life that impressed many students was the toilet arrangements: people assembled in sex segregated groups along the beach and whilst in the water, timed their urination and defecation to the waves as a natural flush. The students adapted well and in group meetings, both in Nukukaisi and in Honiara, they demonstrated their willingness to take on new experiences. Most students were sad to leave the village, in spite of its challenges to their sense of self and what was proper behaviour. Both males and females mostly adjusted to standards of modesty and decorum and those who didn’t were tolerated fondly by their hosts.

As with the first fieldwork class, there was a part of the activities that revolved around a conference, in this case, a Pacific History Association conference being hosted in that year by SICHE, the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education. There had been a murder in a bar near the hotel where the students stayed that was the only hint of the violent troubles that were to come only a few years later in the Solomons. Again, students from both institutions rated the experience very highly, many recommending to their friends to take the course next year, and some few even repeating the experience.

1999 remained in Melanesia, with the focus being on New Caledonia. Owing to other associations and projects pursued by both McCall and Quanchi, a two part fieldwork class was organised. The first part of the experience was organised to take place in a Kanak mountain village, just in-land from Hienghene. As was the case in the previous year, students slept communally in specially constructed huts in a Kanak village that largely consisted of modern housing. Students did make friends with individuals, but mostly it was a group experience of research, sleeping and, as before, dining. The last few days of the class took place at the Jean-Marie Tjibou Cultural Center, in Noumea. The Tjibaou Centre has accommodation for around 30 persons, intended to receive New Caledonia based school groups. Again, sleeping was in dormitories and dining was from ‘gamelle’ or New Caledonia delivered food, brought in large, insulated basins. Students used the ‘mediatheque’ of the Tjibaou Center to write their papers and visited museums in Noumea.

The 2000 fieldwork class took an entirely different turn, with the focus being partly on touring significant cultural sites and living in inexpensive hotels, and a village stay, with each student or pair of students staying with a host family, in a village. This was perhaps the most intimate of the fieldwork classes so far, owing to the home stays. Students developed strong ties with their host families, in a couple of cases continuing correspondence for some time after the class.

As McCall was on research leave in 2001, there was no fieldwork class that year. In 2002, the classes took place in Samoa, but this time returned to the pattern of communal (although village based) accommodation and group dining arrangements, and it was coupled with a conference, this time the Pacific History Association in Apia, hosted by
the National University of Samoa. For the village stay, an 'eco-tourism' lodge on Manono Island was the venue for 10 days. Students did explore the island and made friends, along with doing their projects. A couple of students even brought home a souvenir tattoo! Owing to some organisation difficulties, the students made quite an impact on the Pacific History Association: their numbers (and youth!) dominated the opening ceremony.

The use of Manono was required because it was clear that no other village was willing to take on students for home stays. It is not that the 2000 village had had a bad experience; but that it did involve a lot of work. We will speculate more on this below.

So, a simple accommodation option in Samoan style houses on a small, intimate island seemed the best option of those available. As in 2000, a brief excursion was undertaken to neighbouring Savai'i island, the focus being the megalithic monuments called today 'Pulemelei'.

The short stay in Fiji in 1997 was successful, but in a very limited way since accommodation was in university dormitories and the focus was a conference, a recurring feature, the reader will note, of these classes. 2003 was again in Fiji, but the most experimental so far. McCall and Quanchi used their contacts to organise home stays for their students on rarely visited Naviti Island in the Yasawas. It is true that there were a few small 'eco-tourism' resorts on Naviti, but they were distant from the village where the students had their homestays. A couple of students did manage the hike to one of the resorts, but most were content to stay in the village itself, with their hosts. The 5 hour sea journey itself to Naviti on a local transport barge was novel in itself; the village with its elaborate rituals was very welcoming and except for some difficulties with sea insect bites, most students were very confident during their stay. The main innovation for this fieldwork, though, was the organisation of homestays with Indo-Fijian ('Indian') families in the week before the Naviti experience. As far as we know, no one ever has organised homestays with Fiji Indian families. Those homestays were organised through a Fiji Indian educational foundation, the Shri Sanatan Dharam Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji. To finish off this long fieldwork class, the students were taken to a cultural centre (with group accommodation) and ended with a couple of nights in a motel near the airport. The 2003 fieldwork class was the most varied of all of them so far.

2004 saw a return to New Caledonia and to an association with a conference of the Pacific History Association. In many ways, this was similar to the 1999 class since it began in a village and ended with the school accommodation at the Tjibaou Center once more. There were some last minute organisational difficulties, but in the end students stayed in pairs in homestays, the organisation of that accommodation being through the local mayor and his town hall staff. Again, student participation in the Pacific History Association varied from those who had to do it as part of their assessment, to older students — mainly from UNSW — who attended because they used the material in their work. Since homestays were in pairs, the students were scattered over a wide area. And, for the
first time, language became an issue since most of the fieldwork students had no knowledge of French, let alone the local language.

Nevertheless, the level of satisfaction from students was high; there were a few repeat students, especially from QUT, which demonstrates that the fieldwork course is successful in offering undergraduate participants a high and altogether different level of educational experience).

‘Discoveries’ and undergraduate research

As mentioned at the beginning, the fieldwork courses are not of the kind often organised by archaeologists. The students are not unpaid research assistants. The work that they do is for their own assessment and it is not used by the fieldwork class leaders, McCall and Quanchi. Whatever fieldwork materials result from the class, are owned and used by the students themselves. Apart from periodic class meetings, there is no attempt to coordinate the student work into any kind of group work. Cooperation between students is encouraged and often pairs of students, sometimes across institutions, will work together at the research phase and, even, write papers together. Because all students must report to the group what they are doing, this does encourage helpful critique amongst the students. As far as we are aware, no participant in these fieldwork classes ever has published their work professionally. So, what they do in terms of data gathering, either by observation or in libraries and archives, remains work for their class assessment.

Nevertheless, fieldwork, even with set exercises (see appendix below, referring to New Caledonia, the fieldsite) can involve ‘discovery’. That is that in the course of research students through their group and individual enquiries can come across material never published before and feel the excitement of such discovery as would a professional researcher.

For the carefully managed first Fiji trip, students discovered on their own how staff and students at USP worked in the town, but often lived in the village. They found for themselves that the categories ‘village’ and ‘urban’ could be traversed every day; that the ‘rural to urban drift’ that they had read about in their campus based courses was neither absolute, nor permanent: the concept of commuting, known to them as urban dwellers in Australia, was one which people in Suva understood as well.

We have said that the thrust of the course is social anthropology and Pacific history, not archaeology. Nevertheless, students have come across archaeological remains in the course of their fieldwork experiences, sometimes not known, even, to the local population. The 1999 first New Caledonia fieldwork in Tendo village featured one such discovery.

I Since this paper was written and presented at the PHA in Nouméa in 2004, the fieldwork classes took place in North Efate, Vanuatu, again with high student satisfaction. The 2006 courses likely will be located on Rabi Island, Fiji, the home of the Banaban community.
As we mentioned, the students were living in groups in newly constructed, but traditional design Kanak huts. One day, a week or so into the stay, a small group of students were sitting on a rock, near their hut/dormitory, talking about their work. McCall was writing some notes and preparing for the departure in a week or so, when a student came to him very excited! The flat rock outcrop on which the students had been sitting turned out to contain a concentric circle petroglyph of the kind they had seen in a popular guidebook (Logan & Cole 1997, colour plate facing page 48). Several people in Tendo were quizzed about the petroglyph, including the clan chief of the area where we were staying, but none had seen it before. It had been covered with earth and some slight vegetation which one of the students had removed to make it a more comfortable place to sit! So, discovery in this case, was through seeking a more comfortable place for a group discussion.

Samoa 2000 was the first time that we had been able to organise proper homestays in the village of Savaia Le Faga. Before arriving at the village, we took the group on a quick bus trip around Savai'i, including a stay at a beach front hotel in the former but by then largely abandoned timber town, Asau. In the course of that bus tour, taken in part to lessen the amount of time actually spent in the village, to ease the burden there, we visited the thousand year old site of Pulemelei, a structure just inland on the southeast corner of the island. The site was in a poor state and professional archaeological work had not been done there for some time. We were told that local schools sometimes would take parties of children with bush knives to clear the area around this megalithic and little studied construction. Many Samoans never have been to Pulemelei and seem to have little curiosity about the place. Our student group did not disturb anything at the Pulemelei site, but in the course of walking over the top of the flat topped pyramid, one by one, they discovered post holes. This led to a rough mapping and discussion of just what the place might have looked like in the past, its orientation and purpose. Again, this was not part of any on-going study by us, but integral, we think, to encouraging our students to use their observational skills and powers of argument as they discussed as a group what they had seen.

The next fieldwork class also went to Samoa, but this time staying at a eco-tourism 'resort' situated on the small island of Manono. Manono, along with even more remote Apolima, is located in the strait between the two main Samoan islands of Upolo and Savai'i. Manono receives reticulated water from the mainland and is home to about a thousand people. Children commute daily on small boats to school and there is a good deal of privately provided (for a fee) transport. Manono, like Apolima, has no motor vehicles of any sort and no dogs, both of which are unusual for contemporary Samoa. Whilst we would have liked to have repeated the homestay, it just was not possible. Instead, we booked out an entire 'eco-tourism' accommodation, with our students living in 'beach fales' and dining communally. After a few days on the island, both McCall and Quanchi had taken groups of students to various parts of the small island and one evening, there arose a dispute about the nature of the
highest point on the island, Tulimanuiva (meaning ‘nine pointed thing’). Indeed part of the logo of the resort where we stayed was a nine pointed figure. McCall had seen one structure with his group and Quanchi had seen another. After some discussion and debate over the evening meal, it became clear that two very different places had been visited, since there was such a divergence. We decided to both go with any students who wished to inspect the area and make measurements. Indeed, we did discover an entirely new structure which was not as all held ‘nine pointed’, but clearly featured twelve points. We asked a number of people on Manono about this, but all insisted that the highest point of the island was some kind of a very old structure called ‘Tulimanuiva’; some did know that it might have had more than nine points, but that did not alter their naming of it. McCall on separate occasions spoke to the two pastors on Manono at the time, both of whom were from elsewhere in Samoa. And both of them had had the same experience: ‘tulimanuiva’ has more than nine points!

The following year was a return to Fiji and the discoveries were more subtle. In the course of the class, they had had homestays with both Indo-Fijian (around Nadi) and Fijian families, providing them with a unique understanding of life in contemporary Fiji. Not all students, of course, immediately grasped the complexity of what they had found, but all did remark in their group discussions and written work that Fiji today had a good a deal more to it than their understanding prior to visiting had led them to believe. For example, they knew about the emnity often discussed between Fijians and Indo-Fijians, but they discovered that one of the favourite teachers at the local primary school on Naviti was Indo-Fijian. As well, some students actually had stayed with a retired Indo-Fijian who had spent his entire career teaching in Fijian schools. Perhaps of deeper significance, the students learned that people often say one thing and do another and whilst the experienced researcher may not find such a fact particularly revelatory, the novice students did because they could observe it in action.

The last fieldwork class before this paper was in 2004, to Canala village, New Caledonia, at the invitation of Gilbert Tuyenon, the dynamic young Mayor of the area. As in the 1999 New Caledonia fieldwork class, the last five days were spent in the school accommodation at the Jean-Marie Tjibaou Cultural Centre. Students were struck constantly by the contrast between European and Kanak views of Canala. For Europeans that they met, Canala was a place of suspicion and terror, whilst the students’ own experience was welcoming and friendly. Even for those who said that no French people could live in Canala without danger, the students had met, for example, French school teachers who had resided for more than two decades in the municipality. Students discovered also the complexity of Kanak relations with the mining that goes on all around them, despoiling the environment hideously, but providing employment and royalties on which they all live. Kanaks would talk about the pain of seeing their countryside scarred by open cut mines and students felt with them the dust that hangs over much of the town from nearby mining operations. But they also saw the consumer durables, the motor vehicles and other goods that such mining exploitation can bring. One
group of students did discover a puzzling social practice and that was that there appeared to be an order of marriage amongst siblings: they each should marry in their turn by order of age. If an older sibling did not take their ‘turn’, others in the family might cohabit, but they did not feel that they did not feel that they could marry until their senior siblings had done so.

Student Views

All students, whether social anthropology or Pacific history, were required to submit a final project paper, based on their fieldwork. The QUT Pacific history students often had to report on the conference papers they attended. Social anthropology students from UNSW were required to keep a field diary and notebook which was submitted for assessment. McCall is under no illusions that as students knew they had to submit their diaries, they may have been far from candid accounts of their fieldwork research and feelings.

Because we travelled with the students and stayed in the same accommodation throughout the travel, there always was discussion of student views of the fieldwork class. It is likely that some may have seen the courses as a way of earning credit towards their degree and having a holiday at the same time. We were light in our supervision and students were not closely invigilated: they were expected to carry out their projects with our guidance if they needed it, but if they chose to not do so, or to do so with slight commitment, we did nothing about it. Whilst not a feature of the QUT students, every year from UNSW there was at least one student who just did not submit any work and, so, failed the course. Some students who proved unskilled at fieldwork, or uncommitted during their stay, were able to achieve good marks in the end through library research once they had returned home.

Students varied in their degree of commitment to their research projects. Some (a minority) took careful and well-organised notes, often making video and film recordings of their research materials. Some read in local and Australian libraries to the depth of their research reports. Others, inevitably with any group of students, did the minimum and received the minimum grade, of course.

With very few exceptions, and these were temporary, students were very enthusiastic about the fieldwork class. During the travel itself, they commented constantly to one another about how they never had experienced anything of this kind before. The courses that featured homestays were particularly valued, students often referring to their hosts by kinship names (‘mum’, ‘dad’ and so on). They reflected on their roles in these families, carrying out appropriate tasks for their age group, perhaps in ways that they would not have done in their own homes. As well as tending to their own laundry and cleaning, they always took part in family tasks around the house, in local gardens and in other aspects of the food quest, whether in a supermarket or a small boat fishing. As well as being full participant observers in the anthropological sense in the economic life of the family, they also took part in any leisure activities available. It is true that for the most part, host families did
make special efforts for their guests, and students were aware of that. In general, though, the students experienced their host families in conditions very near to how their hosts lived normally.

There was no such intimacy, of course, when accommodation was in commercial establishments, such as student dormitories, hotels and 'eco-resorts'. There the arrangement was familiar guest and host: the guest paid for a service and the host provided that at a commercial rate. Half way between the hotels and homestays were the occasions in the Solomons in 1998 and New Caledonia 1999 when the students slept and ate as a group. There were some family liaisons made on individual bases during those visits. The students did report they felt very well cared for, but these visits lacked the consistent intimacy of homestays.

'Culture Shock' discussion

Although hardly discussed in the early classes, this feature of travel has taken on greater importance as time has gone on. McCall commencing in 2002, started to discuss openly Oberg (1960)'s concept of 'Culture Shock' as a process of adaptation experienced by all travellers (and host populations!). Sometimes 'Culture Shock' is mild, a slight homesickness, or desire to experience the familiar. Oberg summarised the Culture Shock as a process very well:

Culture shock is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. These signs or cues include the thousand and one ways in which we orient ourselves to the situations of daily life: when to shake hands and what to say when we meet people, when and not to give tips, how to give orders to servants, how to make purchases, when to accept and when to refuse invitations, when to take statements seriously and when not. Now, these cues which may be words, gestures, facial expressions, customs, or norms are acquired by all of us in the course of growing up and are as much a part of our culture as the language we speak or the beliefs we accept. All of us depend for our peace of mind and our efficiency on hundreds of these cues, most of which we do not carry on the level of conscious awareness (Oberg quoted in Cleveland et al., 1960: 27)

Oberg is not the only commentator on 'Culture Shock', but he was the first to use the term and to define the sources and phases of development. Missionaries have found the concept useful in their work (Loss 1983), as have poets wishing to make a point about modern life (e.g. Moore 1999). The most complete compilation about 'Culture Shock' comes from psychologists (Ward et al., 2001), with one study focusing on the development of Culture Shock amongst American university students travelling abroad (Pedersen 1995). One travel guide company even used 'Culture Shock!' as its series title for overseas situations
in general (Pang & Barlas 1996), as well as a series of country guides (e.g. for Mauritius, NgCheong-Lum 1997).

Culture Shock often begins with a sense of euphoria at one's new setting, a hyper-delight at every detail of difference. Whilst this is common in travellers, someone with Culture Shock exaggerates this savouring of change: all is better than at home!

The next stage of Culture Shock is a peeling back of those positive feelings and their replacement by equally strong negative ones. All now becomes wrong, incorrect, dirty, unsuitable and, even, threatening. In this second stage, sufferers of Culture Shock typically feel that others around them intentionally are doing things wrong to test them or, even, to irritate them. Severe Culture Shock sufferers may feel physically threatened, in danger; they may become sullen, uncommunicative and secretive in this second stage.

The third stage is crucial for here either the Culture Shock sufferer becomes dysfunctional and requires drastic treatment or the victim recognises the ailment and begins to correct for it. Thus, the third stage of Culture Shock is either the commencement of cure or of catastrophe.

Those who have read Arnold van Gennep (1960)’s on ‘rites of passage’ will recognise that this is very similar to the three stages of status transition: Rite of Separation, Liminality and Rite of Incorporation. It is the liminal stage that is the most distressing.

A fourth stage is that the sufferer realises that they are in the throes of a psychological and cultural disorder: Culture Shock; that their hosts are not demons and their travel companions not tormentors; that they are not hopelessly ill. This is the coming to terms stage when people recognise the temporary nature of their discomfort and how it has come about. Whilst people may not embrace completely their new experience, they can at least deal with it. The fourth stage equally can be one of despair and disaster, of failure to adapt and unnerving neurosis.

A fifth stage of greater or lesser severity is when travellers return home. Their friends are not interested really in their adventures and they now have to resume their usual lives. Again, sullenness and withdrawal from social interaction may characterise this final stage which resolves itself simply because of the overwhelming familiarity of the context in which it takes place: home.

In the end, either the sufferer resolves Culture Shock by adjusting to the local context or needs to return to familiar surrounds, both being Stage Four. In both cases, Culture Shock is coming to terms with change. Thinking about Culture Shock as a process rather than a disorder is helpful because however difficult the Culture Shock, it will evolve and, eventually, pass.

Now, whilst some might think that setting out Culture Shock in this way pretends to a clone of clinical precision, we have found it useful in group discussions. Students can confess themselves to being at one or another of the stages and can observe others. It offers an external referent for discussions about the kinds of discomforts that most people
experience in overseas travel. It provides a vocabulary of exchanging ideas and for lending support to one another.

One severe case of Culture Shock involved a student whose partner had deceived her before the travel took place: he was undergoing serious surgery, but had not informed her of this prior to her departure. It was only when she telephoned her home and discovered that he was not there, but in hospital, that she became agitated and, finally, had to return home without completing the fieldwork class. Provision was made for this student to complete a library report.

Another severe case actually required hospitalisation in the capital city of the fieldwork class site. The student, who was in his 20s, had extensive travel experience, indeed had been born in an English speaking country overseas from Australia. He exhibited exactly the stages of Culture Shock as outlined above, culminating in his threatening violence to his host family, resulting in his eventual sedation, hospitalisation and repatriation to Australia. Afterwards, this student who was a very good one, wrote an insightful piece about his experiences, using the Oberg framework.

Every fieldwork class has had a few people who have come to tears during the time away, but most recover quickly and throw themselves into the fieldwork experience which never is more than three weeks, owing to costs.

Host views

Most communities who have hosted these fieldwork courses see them as ventures in tourism, either as part of their on-going participation in that global industry, or because they hope that by receiving the class, it will be the beginning of some kind of new income and activity. People throughout the Pacific Islands, and probably in most parts of the world, have had their governments brandish at them the desirability of tourism and its potential for income production. Whilst the hosts may never have had a group of students before, they are familiar with or have heard of other groups travelling for various purposes together.

This means that whilst we the lecturers may see our classes as educational and instructive, the hosts see the reception of this group of people as tourism, albeit at a low key and with minimal investment in infrastructure on their part. That the students, and the lecturers for that matter, are seen as a kind of tourist emerges in early discussions for the reception of the group with village leaders and government officers, where relevant. Sometimes hosts are amused that the students apparently do not wish special treatment but to participate in everyday life, but this usually is accepted as another kind of traveller want, like wanting to ride horses or climb canyons. Pacific Islanders endlessly are amused as adult pink skinned outsiders bake in the sun or frolic without practical purpose in the sea: such are the mysterious wants of tourists.
Before each fieldwork class takes place, we make contact with the tourism office (if relevant) or representatives of the village selected for the class. Discussion by post, FAX, telephone, sometimes even e-mail takes place, setting out what it is that we are seeking: ideally home stays, what our budget is and what sorts of services we require, such as airport collection and drop-off. Copies of the syllabus are sent to the village involved and brought for personal discussion so that hosts are aware that students have assignments to do and will be asking questions about a variety of topics.

In many instances, villagers are well used to receiving cultural tour groups and have developed their responses to enquiries. Few fail to be even mildly flattered that their village has been chosen, either by us or some knowledgeable local colleague, to represent an authentic way of living. In those first contacts, we enquire what sorts of requirements the hosts have for guests, such as standards of dress and comportment, language or other local features. The main difference for students, particularly the majority female ones, is that standards of modesty in dress are normally much stricter than Australian university students know. Sometimes there are restrictions on alcohol consumption that require some invigilation on our part. On the other side, smoking is much more common in the Pacific Islands than in Australia, leading to some discomfort on the part of some of the students, but elation on the part of others who are (at last) able to smoke where and when they please!

Some university students have food restrictions, for religious, health or ideological reasons. In the syllabus, we make it clear that each student must be responsible for the management of their own food taboos: hosts cannot be expected to cater for food consumption habits so very foreign to their own. When accommodation is through hotels or similar, then, these sensitivities can be achieved, but rarely during homestays.

Only once was tourism development not an overt motivation for receiving our classes and that was in 2004 in Canala. The mayor of Canala made it clear to both of us that his motivation in hosting Australian university students was to bring out his own people and to make them aware of the outside world, since Canala is rather off the beaten track. As well, he felt that the example of young people seriously pursuing university education would be a good model for the youth in his own population.

**Institutional regulations and impediments**

The interest of our respective institutions in these fieldwork classes and their growing desire to regulate and control them has become much more apparent over the last few years. It is fashionable to say that increased concern for safety and security flows from ‘911’ and the threat of terrorism. We think it more likely that it is just the bureaucratisation of university study in Australia, subject to monitoring and high modernist surveillance that are apparent throughout the system.

Since 2002, the ‘Risk Management Unit’ of UNSW has required an annual clearance of
the fieldsite, including a detailed checklist of hazards and concerns. Universities in Australia typically have rules and regulations for fieldwork, but these normally relate to classes in geology in remote areas, apprenticeships of various kinds for teachers and social workers, even visits to penal institutions. The fieldsites chosen for our classes are no more hazardous than any rural environment and are in no sense 'remote' since all are inhabited: that is why we have chosen them for the classes! Nevertheless, there is a persistent intrusion of our institutions into how these courses are to be conducted, often citing provisions appropriate for other circumstances and merely a nuisance for the field sites we have chosen.

For example, telecommunications vary considerably throughout the Pacific Islands, from nonexistent to mobile telephones and the internet. Perhaps more to the point, these sorts of facilities can change rapidly. A sudden storm can destroy the one telephone line into a community, as happened the day before we arrived on one trip. But, things can improve rapidly as well. In the space of six months, the eco-tourism resort without a telephone, acquired not only a phone but a fax, owing to an aid project. On another trip, an island that had minimal radio telephone communications was able to receive a highly precise mobile phone tower signal on a nearby five star tourism island that had set up such a facility for its well-heeled guests. Not knowing that, we had hired (at my university's insistence) a cumbersome satellite telephone, which never was needed.

Along with real and imagined safety monitoring, there has been an increase in the activity of institutional 'Ethics Committees'. Ethics committees and the need to apply for ethics clearance to carry out research has become increasingly common in Australia. No university researcher today can get access to any funding unless an ethics clearance process has been undergone. These committees typically are for groups of disciplines, so their membership may or may not be familiar with modes of research other than their own. In McCall's experience, these committees consist of senior academics who often have little recent practical fieldwork experience and junior ones eager to gather kudos for promotion. Basically, in Australia in general and at UNSW in particular, such ethics committees grow out of requirements originally directed at those in the medical sciences and allied fields sharing similar paradigms. As the 21st century developed, these requirements have shifted from medical and psychological research to the social sciences and humanities, sometimes with amusing but nevertheless demanding outcomes. Typically, these committees are not accountable to anyone but themselves and there is no appeal against their determinations.

From the blanket requirement on all sorts of staff research — even archive and library projects must be inspected! — this has been extended to include the detailed examination of student thesis research in the first instance and in the last couple of years, includes even student projects carried out as part of undergraduate teaching.

So, these fieldwork classes have come under scrutiny and are required to have clearance, lest their activities disturb the villages who are the hosts for this travel.

Recourse to reason has not been successful to date and the argument that hosts see
these student classes as a form of tourism, which can be demonstrated easily, has not been accepted. McCall included in one of his applications that informed consent would be obtained not only from people in the village, but also from any librarians interviewed in the course of the research, so that no librarian would be adversely affected. The committee chair responded po-faced in 2004 that informed consent from librarians probably would not be needed: we were relieved to hear!

We would like to make it clear that Quanchi's institution, QUT, never has posed difficulties and impediments for these fieldwork classes; McCall's UNSW annually does so in various ways.

**Future directions**

In spite of well-meaning, but poorly understood (by the administration), inappropriate (to the class) requirements for safety and ethical clearances, we probably will continue to offer our fieldwork classes, including making them available to students at other universities in Australia, which cross-enrolments have been a small number of those coming joining the classes. We shall continue to insist on homestays and try to minimise the time spent in commercial accommodation. Whenever possible, we shall try to visit the fieldsite prior to the arrival of the group so that our intentions and those of our students are clear. We believe that these classes will continue to be seen as tourism ventures by our hosts.

In 2005 the venue was a village in North Efate, Vanuatu, a coastal one, to balance inland venues of the recent past. Whilst still very much in the planning stages, 2006 should take place on Rabi Island, the relocated home of the Banaban people forcibly removed for commercial reasons from their homeland over fifty years ago.

Both of us are committed to working together in our respective fields of anthropology and Pacific history, to fulfill the vision of Jim Davidson (1966) for the latter and to bolster the importance of 'being there', fieldwork, for the former (Bradburd 1998). The focus on research training (e.g. Scheyvens & Store 2003; Ruane 2005), the recording of observational and archive data will be a core activity for our students for whilst our hosts may take us as an eccentric kind of tourist, they (and we) do these classes because we think that they are intellectually important and offer people enrolled in them chances to experience and learn about research that never could be achieved in the campus classroom, no matter the sparkling audio-visuals or complex computer graphics and programming.

In that sense, we are unabashed empiricists, believing in our engagement with a real world. Fortunately, our students are similarly inclined.
Fieldwork Exercises

Ethnography

Triangulation
- Observe/record something more than once
- Check your data with a colleague
- Check with a local or perform the act to see how people react

Patterns
- Repetitive, meaningful acts
- Careful notes and comparative observations

Writing
- Note George Orwell's five points of good writing for your report (from 'Politics and the English Language (1945)'):
  1. Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print;
  2. Never use a long word where a short one will do;
  3. If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out;
  4. Never use the passive where you can use the active;
  5. Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent;
  6. Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.

Exercises, Home and Away

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>Student's home</th>
<th>Fieldsite</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mapping social life</td>
<td>Draw a map of a small shop. Where are the major features of the shop? How do these features control social life?</td>
<td>Draw a map of the hamlet, dividing the task between the group. Your task is not to survey, but to locate various social features and show how they affect social life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocabulary, learning and using language</td>
<td>Produce a list of 15 words and three phrases that you think are the most important for conducting social life.</td>
<td>A consolidated phrase and vocabulary list will be produced. The group will divide up various social activities and question people to get a small vocabulary, to be compiled into an English-Vernacular dictionary.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ritual</td>
<td>Attend a religious service you do not normally attend. Describe what you see and what you think is happening in about 100-150 words. You must identify the leader of this group and ask permission to attend and observe.</td>
<td>Attend at least one church service. Each is to observe what people do in this service. No questions allowed; just observation. All conclusions must be justified with fieldnote observations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work Activity</td>
<td>Find someone performing a task; sewing; gardening; building; mechanical work. Observe how they carry out the task and the elements involved. Is there a special order in this activity? Is there more than one person doing this work? What do you think the value of this work is?</td>
<td>Observe a work activity in the field such as planting, fishing, hunting, carving, building, cooking, food preservation or any other task you can identify. Name the significant objects involved in this activity.</td>
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Ask a knowledgeable practitioner the names for the parts of a complex of objects, such as under the bonnet of a car, a tool box, architectural features of a house.

Ask for the vernacular names of the different parts of a traditional hut; a plant; a traditional item of technology.

Do a simple six generation kinship diagram of your own family.

Interview a family about their kinship and relations to their immediate neighbours.

Choose a history or cultural museum. In at least 100 words, what story is the Museum attempting to tell and how does it accomplish its task?

There are a couple of museums at our fieldsite. For each one that you visit, write in your Field Diary at least 500 words minimum about the stories they are trying to portray. How do these institutions differ in their stories and presentations?

Find a site where you can remain for 30 minutes without being obtrusive. Examples would be places on campus where there are a dozen or more people interacting. Observe how these people interact. Note how they stand or sit relative to one another. Try to understand without asking why you think the people are in that space. Can you say anything about their appearance? Are they similar? In what ways? Be certain to note the date and time of your observations.

Observe the surrounds after the Church service, the roadside in the morning or afternoon; the area around the School. Observe how people move about this space; how they greet one another and depart from one another. What sort of body language do they use; proximity, positioning. Do people incline their bodies to listen; stand erect; lean against something solid; touch one another; how and where?

There are a number of markets in any settlement. Visit any of those (or one of the smaller ones) and observe both customers and sellers. Who are the stall holders? How do they sell their wares? What sorts of wares do they have on offer.

There is one main market in the capital city. Visit this market and observe how business is conducted there. Remember: markets begin early. Do you see any differences between the markets that you observed at home and the ones at the fieldsite? Sydney and the ones in Nouméa?

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Abstract

In his 1953 Inaugural lecture, Jim Davidson founded the principles on which the new field of 'Pacific history' was going to operate to 'maintain Pacific history as a subject of living interest' (Davidson 1966: 21), principal amongst these being his advocacy of historical research in the field as well as in the archive. This confluence in the now defunct Research School of Pacific Studies at The Australian National University meant that social anthropology and Pacific History were natural allies, sharing common interests, research, bibliography and, even, conferences. Grant McCall (social anthropology) and Max Quanchi (pacific history) have sought to extend this collaboration, but at the level of undergraduate teaching, offering students at their respective institutions (University of New South Wales and Queensland University of Technology) the opportunity to study those disciplines in the Solomon Islands, New Caledonia (twice), Samoa (twice), Vanuatu and Fiji (twice). Didactic experiences and suggestions for pedagogy are presented out of this experience since 1997.

Résumé

Uvea-Wallis: Tradition vs Modernity?
A community torn apart

Paul de Deckker

Introduction

The Island of Wallis ('Uvea in the locally spoken Polynesian language') is fairly unknown within English speaking communities interested in the Pacific Islands. Only one linguist from an Australian university, Dr Karl Rensch, published on the island in the 1970s and 1980s, mainly dictionaries and a method to learn faka'uvea.

Mythology, archaeology and linguistics present consistent evidence that Wallisian people originate from Tonga. Indeed, social hierarchy and political stratification in 'Uvea-Wallis are, indeed, of the Tongan type'. Today, Wallis is a kingdom within the French Republic. This fact partly explains Wallis' marginal status among anglophone scholars.

Looking outward to the Anglophone Pacific, we can compare through different levels of reality the kingship politics of the island of Wallis with that of Tonga. We can also compare Wallis with either Samoa or the Cook Islands, amongst others, in terms of labour migration. It would also be of great interest to present analytically how French colonialism influenced Wallis through comparisons with the Anglo-American influence on the other Polynesian archipelagos. All these elements would eventually integrate Wallis into the Polynesian region's history and sociology.

This paper is divided into three parts. The first presents the traditional reality in today's 'Uvea kingdom'. The second attempts to determine how a massive 20th century migration

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* I wish to thank Professor Armand Hage, Dr Michel Pérez and Marston Morgan for their help and judicious remarks. We shall use Wallis and Wallisian as far as denominations are concerned to refer to the use by the inhabitants about themselves while speaking French or English. They do not use 'Uvea or 'Uvean to avoid confusion with the island of Uvea in the Loyalty Islands, New Caledonia.


3 Apart from E. G. Burrows, Ethnology of Uvea (Wallis Island), Honolulu, 1937, Bishop Museum,
Wallisian people to New Caledonia constitutes important external influences on Wallisian traditions and customs that support its kingship institutions. The third and final section outlines a deep institutional crisis the Uvean Kingdom of Wallis has experienced over the last few years, and asks, 'what is at stake in how we perceive the social and historical dimension of this crisis?'

**Tradition**

Wallis is a kingdom within the French Republic. The ‘monarch’ (hau: traditional supreme chief) bears the title of lavelua. He or she is chosen among the aliki (aristocratic) families that counted a lavelua among their ancestors; he/she needs to be perceived by voting aliki families as a person competent to manage public affairs and warrant custom. Should this not be the case after his/her appointment or when getting older, the lavelua would be dismissed or killed and replaced.

Lavelua Tomasi Kulimoetoke became king on 12 March 1959. He is an old man (86 years old today). He is the 50th holder of the hau title. His very long reign is exceptional. Four main dynastic families, originating from the Tongan aristocracy, have been sharing supreme power over the past centuries in ‘Uvea-Wallis. Lavelua Tomasi Kulimoetoke is from the Takumasiva line.

Aside from the lavelua the government is ruled by a kivalu, or prime minister. There are two other ‘full’ ministers of the same customary rank as the kivalu and their respective portfolios deal with fisheries (fotuaika) and land tenure. Three other aliki are ‘under secretaries’ if we can dare the comparison. These six ministers and under secretaries are all from aliki families. Each of the three pairs minister/under secretary always originates from one of the three Wallisian districts which are thus evenly represented, geographically speaking. Each district is ruled by a faipule, also of aristocratic descent in the past but not necessarily today, as decided by Lavelua Tomasi Kulimoetoke. There are 20 villages or

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4 There are two kingdoms in Futuna, the sister island of ‘Uvea-Wallis located South West and distant from Wallis by some 230 km.
5 Concerning the question of titles in Wallis, see the very instructive memoir by Sophie Chave, La cérémonie du kava à l’île Wallis (Uvea), Paris, 1992, mémoire de DEA, EHESS, 214 p., p. 32-47.
6 Like Lavelua Kapeliele Tufele who was destituted on 16 November 1953 or Aloisia Lavelua who was forced to abdicate on 12 September 1958
7 There are four dynastic lines in Wallis: Kehekehe, Takumasiva, Vehi’ika and Kulitea. It is among them that the lavelua is designated.
8 The six ministers bear the following titles in decreasing order according to traditional protocol: kalae kivalu, mahe fotuaika (fisheries at the origin, rather adviser to the lavelua today), uluimonua (natural resources: land and fisheries), kulitea (in charge of the lavelua’s protection), fotuatamai (well-being), muko ifenua (youth). Today, these titles are less determined by comparison with the past. They became more fluctuant, showing again the Wallisian community’s capacity to adapt to changes. See also Eric
fono on Wallis, each ruled by a pulekolo, elected by the male adult village members. Only one position exists within this political stratification for which there is no need to be an aristocrat: puluivea, i.e., war lord. This man is a mediator. He is normally remarkable owing to his physical strength so that people automatically respect his mana and let him manage and solve conflicts which occur from time to time amongst districts or villages. The power system in Wallis is thus pyramidal and quite rigid as far as titles are concerned: the hau is above the six ministers (fa’a’aliki i.e., aristocrats of the government) who are superior to the three faipule, who themselves are above the matu’a fenua (pulekolo). This aristocratic inner circle of traditional and customary power is called the loto. When a royal kava ceremony is organized on Wallis island, the presentation order of the kava shells to the participants expresses the traditional hierarchies of the day. In the assembly, the aliki form a symbolic circle: the loto.

Decisions are made at the ministers’ council which is presided by the lavelua and also attended by the three faipule (district chiefs). Decisions are then transmitted to the village chiefs for implementation by the people, called tua.

Tua are the commoners in Wallis. This word has two meanings: outside or exterior on the one hand, commoner on the other one. Tua are all part of an api, an extended family which claims a common ancestor and lives on the same piece of land, owned by the lineage (kutuga). Villages are thus formed by several api. Tua work for the aliki and produce what is necessary for feasts, be they ritual (baptism, wedding, funerals and so on), customary (kava ceremonies, etc.) or religious (Assumption, etc.).

French Catholic missionaries came from New Zealand to Wallis and Futuna in the mid-1830s. They were rapidly successful in securing to the Catholic faith the hau who saw how to benefit from the French missionaries in his opposition to his brother, the latter being in favour of the Protestant faith and the British missionaries in Tonga. Baptism spread all over the island and Wallis became a Catholic kingdom where power (customary and spiritual) was shared by the two recognized co-princes of the island: the lavelua and the Catholic bishop. As

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9 As in Tonga.

10 Bishop Pompallier sent Father Bataillon to the Central Pacific Islands in order to counter Protestant missionaries (Wesleyans). Bataillon and his colleagues found their way to Wallis and Futuna. Bataillon’s personality was such that he was quickly able to impress the hau, lavelua Vaimua, and the loto. He was soon to be appointed bishop by Rome. Hundreds of Wallisians were massively converted. Some Protestant aliki and tua went to Tonga under the guidance of the lavelua’s brother, Po’oi. People on Wallis island were more and more exclusively catholic. Father Pierre Chanel’s martyr in Futuna in 1841 is at the origin of the island population’s conversion to Catholicism. People were persuaded that they would avoid French retaliation if they accepted to be baptized.

11 This rivalry between the two aliki brothers was to be played both on the religious ground and between the two main European Powers. In adopting Catholicism, the lavelua intended to get full support from the French Navy against his brother Po’oi who was on the side of the Protestant missionaries and thus on the side of British and Tongan influence.
everywhere in Polynesia, Christian Order intertwined with customary rules and produced very religious communities, respecting traditional authorities. As Jean-Claude Roux\textsuperscript{13} expressed it at that time, Catholicism in Wallis solidified the traditional power structure and vice versa.

The Island was to become a strict religious kingdom in which tradition and Catholicism organized everyday life in all its aspects. The Wallisian language was favoured against the French language; education was in Wallisian as well as religious cults and traditional ceremonies. By the end of the 19th Century, Wallis appeared as an untouched community as far as tradition was concerned regardless of syncretism and the very real material and structural changes experienced by this 'traditional' society. Catholicism was perceived as a fully integrated part of it.

The rhythm of everyday life was thus based on this duality. In the late 1880s Wallis was to become a French Protectorate like Futuna. Both the lavelua and the French bishop had applied for this in the 1840s but Paris refused, so as not to affect the entente cordiale with London after the 'Pritchard Affairs' in Tahiti\textsuperscript{14}. In the late 1880s, the situation had changed: there was a new struggle or scramble for virgin colonial lands after the 1884 Berlin Conference. There was a danger of seeing either Germany or another colonial power take over Wallis and Futuna.

A resident was appointed by Paris to represent France in the Protectorate; he was usually a Navy medical doctor and the only medical person present on Wallis. The lack of political and economic interest resulted in the island being left very much alone, without any attempt to open it to the rest of the Pacific. Only Catholic expansion was pursued from Wallis to Tonga, Samoa and Rotuma\textsuperscript{15}.

While remaining under the aegis of custom and Catholicism, Wallis Island relied upon itself. There was no affecting interference from the outside world on its everyday life which centered on religious cults, school education and agricultural production as well as fishing by tua. That order was to change with the Second World War when thousands of American soldiers came into Wallis after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Wallis was to be a meteorological station in the central Pacific, like Bora Bora in the Eastern Pacific.

Change

During the Second World War, about 4,000 American soldiers were positioned on Wallis Island from 1942 to 1946. The GIs brought with them dollars (tala), consumer goods and massive

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{12} Bishop Bataillon was to write the 'Uvea Code of Law.
\bibitem{15} When Father Pierre Chanel was sanctified by Rôme, the Catholic cathedral in Poï on Futuna became a sanctuary where Catholic pilgrims from all over the Pacific came to see his relics. In a
\end{thebibliography}
military equipment which impressed Wallisians very much. They discovered salaries and small personal profits. In a sense, the United States brought about a cargo cult in Wallis. Some families which had access to the dollar got rich; social and customary order was partly shaken in the sense that tua joined the workforce and were able to possess money for themselves.

After the War, the nickel industry in New Caledonia required workforce to build up a dam in order to produce greatly needed electricity. By the hundreds and then by the thousands, young adults came to New Caledonia where they could enjoy personal salaries. They were mainly tua who could quickly pay an airfare ticket to bring along a future wife, then a brother, later a cousin and so on16. They also sent back home part of their salary. Remittances are common among Polynesian migrants, be they in California or in New Zealand17.

Of course, the French colonial administration tried as much as possible to manage these migrant movements from Wallis. From time to time there were rebellious reactions as food was judged insufficient in quantity or living conditions too poor, either on the dam construction site in Yate, rural mining sites, or in Noumea at the Doniambo nickel smeltery.

Aristocrats (aliki) realized that they had to be part of the migration trend if they wanted to maintain not only social cohesion but also their own power over the expatriated Wallisian community. Good salaries also made them realize the advantages of spending a few years in New Caledonia. Bit by bit the aliki and the tua attempted to reproduce and reconstruct, either at Saint-Louis or Pa'ita, the social and religious life they had left behind.

Marist missionaries had created at Saint-Louis a village to receive indigenous Melanesian kanak people who had been forced into exile after the 1878 and 1917 rebellions in New Caledonia. The Marists set up tribal structures with high chiefs. They also welcomed Wallisians at La Conception in the 1960s and settled them above the kanak village, up the hill. Both Kanak and Wallisian communities, although living separately, were on good terms. Mixed marriages were common. People in New Caledonia have to choose where they stand and, as political and ethnic realities cannot be mixed, mixed blood sense, it corresponds to Lourdes in France.

16 Wallisians went also to the New Hebrides to work in coprah plantations owned by traders and merchants from New Caledonia (Ballande, Lafleur, etc.). There is still a Wallisian community in Vanuatu. A parasite (oryctes) destroyed coconut plantations in Wallis as from 1933. Coprah exports declined rapidly and, of course, export earnings: 1930-35 596 tons; 1946-50 135 tons; 1956-59 53 tons. In the meantime, revenue by coprah exports were divided by three from 1938 to 1959, in Jean-Claude Roux, ‘Migrations et mutations dans la société wallisienne’, Bulletin de la Société d’Études historiques de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, n° 40, 1979, p. 20-25, p. 22.
18 Heavy ethnic tensions between the two communities became exacerbated in the past few years so that the French administration, after several murders and many injuries by guns on both sides,
people in Saint-Louis are identified either as Kanak or Wallisian, not as 'mixed race' .

At Païta, today a town located 20 km north of Noumea, the Catholic seminary of Saint-Leon, was founded in the late 19th Century. It is in Païta that the first Marist brothers and priests from Wallis were educated. Young migrants obtained assistance from their kinsmen to buy land there and they and received official permits to build their houses. Païta has a Wallisian flavour with its gardens and its bucolic appearance even though more and more low-cost housing is being built in order to ease demographic pressure on the Noumea outskirts. The first and sometimes the second Wallisian migrant generations who came to New Caledonia, and Païta in particular, do not speak French. They were and still are dependent on younger relatives in dealing with the outside world.

Wallisians do live in other parts of New Caledonia but their settlements are not as densely concentrated as in Païta, and until a short while ago in Saint-Louis. Squats have flourished in and around Noumea. Indeed Wallisians often consider that renting costs too much, so it is proper to recreate housing conditions as in Wallis. With ni-Vanuatu and Kanak, Wallisians reformulate tribal structures beyond ethnic exclusiveness. Hundreds of people dwell in squats in or around Noumea.

Catholicism is the cohesive element which cements Wallisian identity in New Caledonia. Mass, prayers, religious ceremonies solidify them, just as on the island from which they originated. With the clerics’ support, all Wallisian generations in New Caledonia are embedded in Catholicism. A gigantic statue of the Virgin Mary was erected in the early 1990s on one of Noumea hills. Around that statue are now gardens, lights, concrete walls; it has become one of the high spots of pilgrimage for Wallisians in Noumea and the suburbs. There are also large crosses in Païta which light up at night too. Large sums of money are spent at Catholic cults as family prestige is still dependent on the money that is ostensibly given at religious ceremonies.

Lavelua Tomasi Kulimoetoke sent an emissary, Father Sagato, in the late 1960s to become his personal representative within the Wallisian community based in New Caledonia. This old man now is the referee, the person in charge of solving problems and presenting forward-looking perspectives. Alikì in Noumea and Païta had expressed the wish to implant in New Caledonia an exact reproduction of the existing hierarchy on Wallis. To strengthen social cohesion among the Wallisian community which amounts to 20,000 people or so today, they wanted to have their own lavelua as well as fa’u’aliki. From the royal palace at Mata ‘Utù, the capital of ‘Uvea-Wallis, came the answer to that request: ‘there is only one kava root!’ . This constituted an absolute refusal to have more than one lavelua.

For Wallisians in New Caledonia the Catholic parish resembles the fono in ‘Uvea-Wallis. It has the same social structure with people gathering together to go every week to mass, to pray or to cover the Virgin Mary’s statue with flowers. In times of ceremonies (baptism, communion, wedding, 15th of August (Feast of the Assumption), etc.) Wallisian people meet in traditional dress, very colourful indeed, to exchange, sing, dance or eat...
together. The amount of money which is given to the head of the parish in these occasions is phenomenal. Custom and religion are closely mixed within Wallisian communities both in 'Uvea-Wallis and in New Caledonia. It is not possible to separate one from the other.

Faipule titles were eventually set up in New Caledonia with the lavelua’s permission. Thereby parishes now are integrated into a district which has a recognized leader. The obligations they can impose on the people are not work obligations, as on Wallis, but money obligations. Formerly, obligations were for building or church rehabilitation in Noumea or Paita. Today subjects are forced to provide hundreds of thousands of French Pacific Francs for the construction of a huge building to accommodate Carmelites on the heights of Wallis Island at an estimated cost of about US $ 5 million. About half the Wallisian community in New Caledonia belongs to what is called 'le Tiers-Ordre', i.e., the Third Order following the aristocracy and the clergy. It is in fact a Catholic army of people who follow instructions given by Wallisian authorities; they would provide an essential part of the money needed for the Carmelites’ settlement on Wallis. Why is such a monastery needed and wanted?

A Samoan Catholic father who has been living and working in Wallis for many years expressed the necessity for it as the Carmel in Samoa could not accommodate any more Carmelites for lack of space. He was able to convince Lavelua, Kivalu and the Fa’u’aliki. He even got the Territorial Assembly’s approval which voted overwhelmingly in favour of it. The Assembly also decided that all elements for the Carmel’s construction project should be imported duty free. As 94% of the income of Wallis comes from import duties, we can appreciate the influence of the Catholic religion on political leaders who strikingly agreed to weaken their island’s financial position for the benefit of such a project. Politics is thus subdued to religion and tradition.

When Wallis and Futuna’s adult population voted overwhelmingly in the 1959 referendum to remain French, Paris granted a statute by organic law in 1961 to the archipelago19. This law organized the island’s legal framework. Amongst many points, it indicates clearly that custom and the Catholic religion shall be totally respected by the French administration and its representatives. Lavelua Tomasi Kulimoetoke was instrumental in obtaining these specific recommendations. His aim was to favour both tradition and modernity in combining them.

**Modernity**

In the 1960s and the 1970s local leaders were able to maintain their traditional authority within local institutions while representing Wallis in the Paris National Assemblies20. Some three years after relocation, numerous Wallisian families are still in temporary housing. 19 Law n° 61-814 of 29 July 1961 which confers upon Wallis and Futuna its status as an Overseas Territory of the French Republic.
Schooling was still organized by the clergy; the Wallisian language was largely predominant and very few people went outside the Territory. Only young people who joined the French army or children from the elite who went to metropolitan universities left Wallis, and only for a few years. When they came back, they provided new air, new oxygen which slowly but surely transformed the local mindset. Soon also Paris decided to favour secondary education in the French language run in cooperation by the Catholic Church and the State. More young Wallisians thus went to secondary school and, as soon as they got their *baccalauréat* (*i.e.*, UE), used it to go to universities in the French Pacific or in France. When coming back home they considered that their academic degrees entitled them to get well-paid jobs in the public service or legitimacy to get political positions. Moreover, some of the public servants joined trade unions and became active in contesting some aspects of the traditional rule as well as standard labour regulations. All this transformed the everyday life reality and, consequently, some of the traditional aspects of life faded away.

A major event occurred in 1986 when, on a state visit to the archipelago, the then Minister for Overseas Departments and Territories, Bernard Pons, made the decision to provide the island with a television network21. Very rapidly the French national broadcasting corporation for Overseas (RFO) opened the television network. The attraction, power, and impact of this medium was, and still is, tremendous. Day after day, it opened Wallis on the outside world and, in the meantime, included the archipelago in it. People’s mental spaces rapidly changed: on the one hand, they still show respect towards tradition and the church; on the other, they want to be part of modernity by joining the salaried workforce and getting into fashionable consumer goods and so on22.

More or less 1,800 people are employed and receive salaries in the archipelago (*i.e.*, 10% of the whole population). Two-thirds of the employees are civil servants. The private sector is highly volatile, especially as construction work depends upon administrative and political decisions. A lot of people get money from social aid or benefits as well as from remittances sent by brothers and sisters from the outside23.

The new elite is the educated one. Its members are involved in politics, trade unionism, public service, and mainly education. Their salaries are high24 and they can move between

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20 One in the French national Parliament, another in the Senate and a third one on the Social and Economic Council.
21 A radio broadcasting station was set up in 1979.
22 To my point of view, the best example remains the first election of Miss Wallis in 1998. To have young females presenting themselves in bikini in front of the traditional crowd was a rather surprising event to attend. When bishop Lolesio Fuhea was asked what he thought of the election of the first Miss Wallis, he replies: ‘As far as I am concerned, there is only one Miss Wallis, Virgin Mary…’
24 Public servants’ salaries in Wallis are increased by a correction factor of 2.05. This means that someone earning 2000 Euros in Metropolitan France as a secondary teacher will have a salary of
two worlds. They keep close links with families abroad and, if need be, send their own children to their brothers and sisters in New Caledonia to pursue education. Scholarships are generously provided to go to universities in either New Caledonia, French Polynesia, and even Metropolitan France if necessary.

Since the implementation of the 1961 organic law, Paris pays a monthly salary to all customary chiefs: the lavelua for example gets a monthly allowance of 1,800 Euros or so, the fa'u 'aliki 900 Euros and the pulekolo 420 Euros. An elected member of the Territorial Assembly gets some 4,000 Euros a month. These salary differences imply automatically that the educated elite will prefer to join the political arena instead of being lowly paid for being in charge of heavy customary duties. We shall come back to this point below.

Slowly but surely Wallis has become a society in which money is taking on more and more importance. When Prime Minister Michel Rocard visited the island in 1989 he realized that hundreds of young educated people had no jobs. So he decided to provide temporary employment for them with the idea to give them a more professional education; for six months or a year they got the minimum wage to plant flowers along the roads to embellish the island. Rocard meant well, but his lack of understanding of Polynesian reality as far as gardening is concerned remains astounding! That very example explains quite well the fact that French political and administrative authorities, whatever they are, perceive only one way to respond to all problems in Wallis: they throw money at them.

In the meantime Wallisian authorities, in all spheres of everyday life, are increasingly demanding from French State representatives: more aid, more assistance, more money. Wallisian citizens understand the rules of the game: France is an egalitarian Republic and every citizen can claim and should be able to get the same treatment as all other citizens. This is the main reason for which Minister Pons provided the RFO television network we mentioned earlier, for about 15,000 people. This is also the reason why there is a lycée in Wallis, i.e., an senior high school with full boarding25. More than two hundred Metropolitan people come to Wallis for two or four years to teach either in 'colleges' (junior high schools) or the lycée26, as well as at the teachers' training college at Mata Utu, another two hundred work in the public and civil administration. By their very presence in the island with their families and their way of life, these people from France also affect the general balance of the traditional community. New aspirations, in particular among young people, appear and these young Wallisian people are also reinforced in their expectations by

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4010 Euros while he works in Wallis where there is no income tax revenue. Wallisians employed as public servants get the same correction factor.

25 Some of the Wallisian authorities complained to the French administration when the building was finished that girls could see boys from their room and that the girls' building should be demolished and reconstructed at another distant place... To no avail.

26 They were 1,748 pupils in 'colleges' in Wallis (4) and Futuna (2) in 2003 and 613 at the lycée in Wallis that same year, in Institut d'Emission d'Outre-Mer, Wallis et Futuna 2003, Paris, 2004, p. 20. Altogether, more than 4,500 pupils are at school in Wallis and Futuna (primary schools are run by
what is known about the conditions of their brothers and cousins' lives in New Caledonia, French Polynesia and France.

All these factors of 'modernization', slowly but surely, bring about major changes in mentalities and people's appreciation of the realities around them.

Wallisian cultural identity (based on custom and the Catholic religion) was, and still is, officially preserved by provision 3 of the 1961 Organic Law which provides:

The French Republic hereby gives guarantees to the people of Wallis and Futuna as to the free exercise of their religion as well as to the full respect of their beliefs and customs in so far as they do not run counter to the general principles of the law and to the provisions hereafter developed.

The traditional elite in Wallis positions itself through this legal framework. Firstly, the ali'i consider that their power and privileges stemming from custom are fully recognized by the French Republic, i.e. administrative and executive authorities. Secondly, the ali'i's attachment to France remains total as the traditional leaders are paid every month by the State. The political elite, which comes from the loto, also adhere to these principles. The 20 members of the Territorial Assembly (including Futuna) are elected through universal franchise; until recently, only the ali'i were entitled to stand for elections. So the traditional elite was, and still is, able to win on both counts through a legal basis and, since the implementation of the 1961 Organic Law, the ali'i have constantly expressed their will to maintain a complete status quo.

But, more and more frequently, antagonistic interpretations of this part of the 1961 organic law emerge. Let's take an example which occurred in Futuna about ten years ago in order to understand how inappropriate this law might be today due to changes, to 'evolution'.

The two kings of Futuna, Tuiaigaifo and Tuisigave, decided in June 1993,27 to prohibit fishing on Sundays as they claimed Sundays (aso tapu: taboo day) should be exclusively dedicated to religious activities. In Futuna, the deputy to the prefect of Wallis informed the Euro-French public servants (mainly teachers) that the two kings' prohibition should be respected. The Euro-French teachers complained to the prefect on the basis that freedom is explicitly guaranteed in the French Constitution. The Prefect agreed with them and requested his deputy to comply with French law in his statements. Opposition between the two kings and the Euro-French public servants increased, each pleading their own legal legitimate bases. Tensions became so high that the prefect's deputy was physically assaulted. It took more than five months to find common ground which was achieved via the mediation of the French High Commissioner in New Caledonia who came to Futuna.

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27 An earthquake early in the year devastated Futuna; two Samoan Catholic priests living on the
early in November 1993, at the request of the Minister for Overseas Departments and Territories. Some people claim that a separation between the State and Religion should be clearly identified and enforced. This case exemplifies the difficulty of interpreting that very fundamental part of the organic law. Its importance is even more complex in instances that involved only Wallisians.

Driving a car on Wallis roads while he was drunk, one of the Lavelua's grandsons killed a man. He was sentenced to jail by the court of Mata 'Utu. The young man took refuge at the royal palace where his mother lives permanently near her father, the Lavelua. When the prefect sent the gendarmes to ask people in the royal palace to present the grandson in order to put him in jail with the assistance of the magistrates, the palace's reaction was virulent. The palace indicated that the Lavelua wanted Paris to recall both the prefect and the magistrates. In response, the prefect decided to suppress the money allowances given to the Lavelua. In the meantime, some of the other dynastic families decided that it was time to destitute the old king, who, in their view, was no longer capable of running the country. They received the prefect's support. They set up a government (fa'u 'aliki) led by a kalae kivalu, a mahe, etc. and were prepared to vest powers in a new Lavelua. They called themselves 'reformists'. To clearly indicate his consent to this move, the prefect decided to grant recognition to the new ministers and, once the new Lavelua was officially chosen, he suspended the allowances that were formerly granted to the previous fa'u 'aliki's. Supporters of both sides decided to react. They blocked the airport to prevent armed forces from coming from Noumea, set barricades on the road in the central district of Hahake so as to keep out the new fa'u 'aliki supporters who mainly live in the other two districts (North and South). Heavily armed, people prepared themselves for a general confrontation. As soon as the airport tarmac was cleared, Paris decided to send a mediator from Noumea with military forces: the prefect was disavowed, the new Lavelua did not get official recognition and was not enthroned and the new fa'u 'aliki lost their newly gained status. Lavelua Tomasi Kulimoetoke continues to reign.

This episode shows again how difficult it is to have that dual line of conduct. Lots of concerned people agree about the necessity to bring changes to the 1961 Organic Law so as to adapt it to present-day reality.

island declared that God needed more ample evidence of the inhabitants' faith and that all people should pray more to obtain God's clemency.
28 But the decree of 16 January 1939, still valid today, stipulates: 'in colonies and protectorates depending upon the ministry of colonies and not placed under the regime of the separation of churches and the State...'.
29 Etua's influence is considerable and, in fact, she is the person who takes decisions on behalf of the Lavelua, her aged father.
30 1961 Organic Law clearly states that all penal matters are dealt with by French Courts.
31 The Secretary General of the High Commission in Noumea was sent to Wallis with the specific mission to disavow the prefect and reinstall Lavelua Tomasi. Not being a prefect himself, but an
Conclusions

Wallis opened itself to the outside world for employment reasons, for education purposes and for statutory obligations. When the first migrants went to New Caledonia and the New Hebrides with the help and support of the French administration, the Lavelua and the fa'ui'aliki expressed a willingness to get financial compensation for the loss of tua commoners, i.e., part of their labour force, going out to New Caledonia. Paris accepted and the aliki in position of authority got their monthly allowances. In doing so, Paris reinforced the hierarchy's dependency. In the 1960s and 1970s, to become a Catholic priest was prestigious, as power was as much in the hands of the clergy as with the aliki. Custom provided clergymen with their needs and, in terms of social and political position, priests were as high as the aliki, if not higher. Educated people who had gone to metropolitan universities or to French Pacific ones, came back home to take positions in the civil service. They got high salaries and they brought with them new attitudes and new ways of life. Today, 1,500 or so Wallisian people are employed and get monthly salaries while around 10,000 are still involved in subsistence farming. That means that a small part of the society (mainly aliki and their relatives) have access to 'modernity': travel, consumer goods, and so on. Meanwhile the other part (tua) remains confined to the 'ancestral' way of life. Being a French Overseas Territory, Wallis and Futuna is automatically the recipient of what Paris decided for all its overseas territories in terms of 'evolution', 'egalitarianism' or 'sustainable development'. This does not account for custom or tradition.

If we examine the general conclusions of the latest French parliamentary missions\(^3\) in or on Wallis and Futuna, we can appreciate what is always underlined: the role of custom, the necessity to reform the statute, the economic and social situation. In the meantime, these senators and members of the French parliament do not suggest any measures to remedy the problems they have perceived while they were visiting the archipelago.

Isn't that the final paradox or the ultimate contradiction, i.e., the problem is perceived but there is no attempt to solve it?

\(^{3}\) under prefect', Wallisian aliki were confused to note that hierarchical structures were not respected in terms of rank, status and title...
32 October 1985, July 1992, as well as Rapport fait au nom de la Commission des Finances, de l'Économie
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Abstract

Traditional reality in today's 'Uvea kingdom' is presented through social, religious and political hierarchies. The massive migration of Wallisian people to New Caledonia after Second World War constituted important external influences on Wallisian traditions and customs that support its kingship institutions. The deep institutional crisis the Uvean Kingdom of Wallis has experienced over the last few years is outlined.

Résumé

La réalité traditionnelle de Wallis est présentée au travers de ses hiérarchies sociales, religieuses et politiques. Un important mouvement migratoire de Wallisiens vers la Nouvelle-Calédonie s'est produit après la deuxième guerre mondiale, affectant les cadres de fonctionnement traditionnels et coutumiers et, par voie de conséquence, l'institution monarchique. Wallis connaît aujourd'hui une crise grave qui est loin d'être terminée.
New Zealand, like every other complex modern nation, consists of a patchwork of ethnic identities, groups, boundaries and categories. Social scientists (including historians, anthropologists, sociologists and demographers) conceive one of their tasks as the recording and analysis of such identities, groupings, boundaries and categories. In so doing, they are subject to political pressures, buffeted by changing theoretical fashions, and bemused by the sheer creativity of humans re-imagining themselves over time.

The process of theorizing these phenomena, then, is one in which in different trajectories cut across each other. First, the phenomena that we as historians and social scientists want to investigate constantly retreat from our grasp. It’s not that they elude us entirely but that they are inherently slippery and difficult to keep hold of, in part because of course the phenomena under scrutiny move through time and change just as we do. Second, precisely because the historical phenomena under scrutiny keep slipping from our grasp, we feel impelled to keep going back to the past in order to ‘tidy it up’ so that it conforms to our present set of understandings and feelings of how the world is and should be.

It’s tempting to see the first process as moving forward in time and the second as backward, but in fact of course they are both activities carried out as actors move along time’s arrow.

The process of ‘tidying up’ means that ‘history’ inevitably overlaps with ‘myth’, understood here as the conventional stereotypes and incontrovertible truths by which human collectives imagine themselves. (By the way, this is all that I mean by the use of the term ‘mythistory’ in my title. I am aware that it was used and perhaps even invented by Serge Latouche, the historian of Kiribati/Tungaru (1984), but he used it in a much more specific way to refer to the interweaving of Gilbertese genealogies and worldviews.)

One more theoretical point, which I take from Ferdinand de Saussure’s seminal Course in General Linguistics (1966). Language, he contended, is composed of two axes: the associative (subsequently often called paradigmatic) and the syntagmatic. Most social
analysts, including demographers and anthropologists, concentrate the bulk of their efforts on the first axis – the associative – and not enough on the syntagmatic. The former axis consists of semantic concepts associated together as the paradigm of the possible terms that could slot into a phrase at any one moment in time, but only one of which can be chosen at that moment. The latter axis exemplifies the notion of meaning that travels through time or space as a 'string' in which the sequence in which things occur is as important to our understanding as the semantic features of a supposedly timeless dictionary definition.

Applying the notion of a syntagmatic axis to the understanding of ethnic identities (which are more usually analysed as paradigms) means that we should regard those identities, both for individuals and groups, as constructed not simply as 'nouns' (or names) but as 'sentences' that constitute a discourse in and through time. (Fortuitously, Paul de Deckker’s opening speech to the Nouméa Pacific History Association conference illustrated this metaphor well as he recapitulated his own identity-history in a wonderfully complicated statement, full of dangling participles, qualifying phrases and relative clauses, so to speak.)

The history of census categories

Now to briefly discuss the first process I mentioned above, that is, the persistent slipperiness of the ethnic labels applied by demographers and other social scientists over the course of New Zealand’s history of official statistics. Which terms have achieved official status and has that status changed over time? Just how long has the label ‘European’, in particular, been around and when has it had official status? To answer these questions, we need to fall back on that trusty instrument of ethnic and racial classification, the New Zealand census. The quickest way to summarize the historical changes and continuities in question is in the form of a very basic chronological table. Phrases in quotation are taken directly from the census reports and instances of ‘European’ are highlighted.

Table One: Chronological Summary of Ethnic/Racial Categories in New Zealand Censuses (1861 – 2001), with particular reference to the label ‘European’:

1861 ‘People of European Descent’/’Europeans’
1871 Population ‘exclusive of Aboriginal Natives’
1874 ‘Birthplaces of the People’ ‘(exclusive of Maoris)’
1878 As for 1874
1881 ‘British and Foreign Subjects (exclusive of Maoris)’
1886 As for 1881
1891 As for 1881
1896 As for 1881
1901 a) ‘Population (excluding Maoris)’ [plus Maori, Moriori]
b) Birthplaces of the People, 'Showing (exclusive of Maoris) the Numbers and Relative Proportions of British and Foreign Subjects'

c) References to 'Half-castes living amongst Europeans' and the numbers of 'Maori women... married to Europeans'

1906 As for 1901; (a) includes 'Population of Cook and other annexed Islands'

1911 'Distribution of European Population'; otherwise as for 1906.

1916 'Population... (excluding Maoris and residents of Cook and other Pacific islands)'.

Reference to 'Europeans' in section on Maori enumerations.

Birthplaces, length of residence and 'allegiance' combined in usual opposition between 'British (subjects)' and 'foreign (subjects)'.

1921 Part I as for 1916, but:

Part III on birthplaces discusses 'native-born' ('indigenous') and 'foreign-born' ('exotic') and the need for 'racial purity'.

New Part VI on 'Race aliens': 'a person of other than European descent';
'maintenance of the pure European or 'white' standard of population has been invariably a consideration of immigration legislation'.

'European' and 'Maori half-caste' grouped under 'total European'.

1926 Much as for 1921 except that 'European' ('equivalent to the 'white' population') now includes 'European-Maori quarter-castes'). Also an admission that Europeans 'are not necessarily 'pure' Europeans'.

1936 Vol. IX. Race maintains tripartite division: 'European' (including quarter-castes', 'Maori' and 'Race aliens' subdivided into Asiatic and category including Polynesian, Melanesian, Negro, etc.

1945 Same as for 1936.

1951 Same as for 1945 except 'Race aliens' category replaced by 'Other races'.

1956 Same as for 1951.

1961 Same as for 1951.

1966 Same as for 1951 except 4th category of 'Polynesian' inserted.

1971 'Other races' now 'Other ethnic groups' and racial calculus in full swing.

1976 Similar to 1971 except 'European' admixtures listed and other categories now called 'NZ Maori', 'Pacific Island Polynesian' and 'Other Ethnic Origin Groups'.

1981 Highpoint of hybridity (European has 33 variants, NZ Maori 48, etc.) and other categories added in own right (Chinese, Indian, Melanesian, etc.).


1991 Very similar to 1986.

1996 'European Ethnic Groups' has subcategories including 'NZ European'.

Other main categories 'NZ Maori' (no subdivisions), 'Pacific Island Ethnic Groups', 'Asian Ethnic Groups' and 'Other Ethnic Groups'.

2001 Same as for 1996, except change to 'Pacific Peoples Ethnic Groups'.

Being Pakeha then: the genealogy of an ethnic Label in New Zealand mythistory 57
There is insufficient space here to do justice to the full complexity of the terms and classification systems employed by government statisticians over the last century and a half. Some basic conclusions can be drawn, however. The most interesting finding is that the term 'European' has not only never fallen out of favour but it has generally been the preferred label, right from the early police censuses of Auckland (1843 and 1846) through to the introduction of nationwide enumerations of the non-Maori population from 1861 onwards. There was a 30-year period when it did not appear but then nor did any other specific term relating to whites, perhaps because the basic category was taken for granted and the Maori population was counted separately. More startling still is the fact that 'Pakeha' has never been a term applied in census reports. This absence is despite the recent political and cultural salience of 'Pakeha' as one half of the pair of hegemonic terms in the New Zealand binary system of biculturalism. Respondents have been allowed to record their ethnicity under this label since at least 1986 and it may be that the term will surface in future reports. The official strategy, however, has generally been to conflate it with 'European' and to use the latter as the cover term.

Even as the terms 'Pakeha', 'European' and 'New Zealand European' have been artificially lumped together, more detailed inspection of statistical records shows that 'European' has itself come to be split between two usages: one where it's a synonym either for white (racial) or for British (cultural); and one where it means someone who migrated from, or descended from someone who migrated from, continental Europe since the Second World War. Thomson (1999) refers to the latter as 'ethnic Europeans'. Interestingly, migrants from the United Kingdom and their descendants do not seem to be included in this category.

For a final quick demonstration of how the inconsistencies in official statistics bedevil the deliberations of policymakers, take the influential New Settlers' Policy announced by Manukau City Council in 2003 and taken as a model by other urban authorities. Manukau City in south Auckland is one of the most ethnically diverse urban areas in New Zealand and the drafters of the document attempt to do justice to that diversity. To that end, the Policy document contains statements like the following: 'With over 160 different cultural groups, Manukau's population is made up of European, Maori, Pacific Islands and Asian people along with people from Europe, the Middle East, Africa and all corners of the world' (Curtis 2003: 1; emphasis added). And: 'At the 2001 Census 51% of residents were from European-only backgrounds (including South Africans and East Europeans), 27% were Pacific Peoples, 16% Maori and 15% Asian' (MCC 2003: 3; emphasis added). Note that in these summaries the Pakeha category is absent and the European category is self-contradictory.

Similar aporia can be found in the collection and use of official statistics in educational and medical bureaucracies (Goldsmith 2004). There is no need to belabour the point but by now it should be very clear that the changing contours of the New Zealand ethnoscape elude the policymakers' attempts at tidy classification.
New Zealand Europeans

At the heart, then, of my historical dilemma is the rather odd category of person called 'European' (or sometimes 'New Zealand European') in New Zealand ethnic discourse. It is a category that illustrates very well the two processes referred to earlier: the continual disjunction through time between ethnic categories and academic analysis; and the obsession with dipping back into history in order to 'tidy up' what was previously 'misunderstood'. Depending on context or purpose, the term 'European' contrasts or overlaps with the category of 'Pakeha'. This difference between 'contrasting' and 'overlapping' is politically crucial because it highlights the issue of whether groups of citizens see themselves reflected in and the beneficiaries of government policy. 'Pakeha' is the term that has achieved official imprimatur in the discourse of government, education, churches and mainstream mass media; 'European' is ostensibly used as a synonym (e.g. in censuses) but is actually systematically patterned as a term complementary to 'Pakeha' in its distribution.

That distribution has a historical dimension. In some recent texts on the history of New Zealand, for example, there is a clear pattern in which the term 'European' (if used at all) is really considered appropriate only for an former era, one presumed to be well over by now and that may even have been over as early as 1840, the year of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. Though the various authors I deal with do not examine this temporal limitation in any detail, it is worth doing so, for it is a powerful trope in the rhetoric of New Zealand nationalism.

There is insufficient space here to present a lengthy demonstration of my point but even a small amount of material is sufficient to give a taste. The two texts chosen almost at random to illustrate my argument are not works of primary historical scholarship, but this makes them all the more suitable for discussion as mythistory. One is a magisterial study, using techniques of discourse analysis, of the racist language of white New Zealanders: Margaret Wetherell and Jonathon Potter's Mapping the Language of Racism (1992). The other is a more overtly political collection of essays, Honouring the Treaty (Yensen et al. 1989), designed to remind Pakeha of their responsibilities as partners to the Treaty of Waitangi and published in time for the 150th anniversary of its signing.

First, Mapping the Language of Racism. While reserving the term 'Pakeha' almost exclusively for the sample of white New Zealanders interviewed for the discourse analysis, Wetherell and Potter deliberately resort to the label 'European' in only one section of their book. That is in their discussion of the historical context of racist discourse in New Zealand. Here they refer to the 'fifty years of European interest in New Zealand' before 1840 and to the 'European visitors' during that time, as well as to the few 'Europeans' who resided in the country before the Treaty. They describe James Busby, the first official British Resident, as a man who tried to portray himself as the representative of a 'neutral force whose concern was largely to govern, control and regulate the behaviour of those Europeans who visited
and settled in New Zealand'. And they note that the Colonial Office in the phase leading up to the signing of the Treaty had 'concerns that the situation and control over European renegades would degenerate' (1992: 106-107). For the record, I do not know whether 'European' was the term used in the sources they cite. (Salmond [2003: 8] refers to Cook's men on the third voyage as 'Europeans' but those are her quote marks and she deploys the term only to suggest that the crew 'were no longer purely 'European'' because their tastes and beliefs had been altered by the contact with Polynesia.)

This pattern I have outlined also stands out in most of the contributions to my second text, Honouring the Treaty, but it is accompanied by an additional usage that is subtly different. This is the assumption that Pakeha became Pakeha almost instantly after 6 February 1840, the day the Treaty received its first signatures. I argue in contrast that the birth of the category in a contemporary sense was the endpoint of a much longer and more difficult pregnancy than is recognized in the kinds of text represented here. The latency period lasted well over a hundred years. This is not to say that the term 'Pakeha' did not exist before 1840 or that it did not figure in the text of the Treaty (it did both). But the vagaries of its meaning in that context are still unresolved, as I have argued elsewhere (Goldsmith 2004).

Yensen and her co-contributors explicitly define the term thus: 'We use the word Pakeha to denote the original British settlers, their descendants, and subsequent immigrants of mainly European descent' (1989a: 8). They unabashedly take the view that one can retrospectively apply the term Pakeha across the board and that it is a term that applies to 'us' then as well as now. They refer to 'our Pakeha forerunners'; the way that 'We Pakeha are way behind in our obligations'; the fact that 'We believe it is a collective Pakeha responsibility to honour the Treaty: it is our side of the agreement which has been dishonoured, and it is we who must put it right' (1989a: 7-8; emphases added). In other words, the opening salvoes of their work foreground the applicability of the term Pakeha to Europeans in New Zealand from an early stage.

A subsequent chapter, however, draws back from this assertion and assertiveness, possibly because it seems largely to be based on J. M. R. Owens' essay in The Oxford History of New Zealand (1981), where he uses the term 'European' almost exclusively. My quotes are from the historical chapter in Honouring the Treaty (Yensen et al., 1989b: 18-19):

After the European explorers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, whalers and sealers from Britain, the United States and Australia regularly called for provisions, and established several shore stations in the 1790s. [...] The first of the missionaries arrived in 1814. They contributed to the growth of agriculture in the north and to the introduction of European technologies.... In 1830 there were only about 300 Europeans in this country, most of whom were in the North. By 1840 their number had grown to about 2000. [...]
Pakeha observers failed to understand Maori culture and its response to the European challenge. [...] 

The influence of European culture and technology varied in degree according to area and Pakeha presence. [...] Though significant political, social and economic changes took place in Maori life before 1840, European influence was generally still minimal. Early European settlers were absorbed in tribal structures and responded to control by Maori. [...] 

Maori were particularly vulnerable to diseases introduced by Europeans... 

Finally, Yensen's own essay makes the transition explicit: 'Indeed, things went well for the Europeans who colonised this country in the last century - and for their inheritors, the Pakeha section of our population' (Yensen 1989: 56). And yet there is immediate slippage: 'As a group we came mainly from the United Kingdom and turned this country into an outpost of British society. Early Pakeha settlers worked hard and many suffered great hardships. But as a group they succeeded...' (1989: 56).

My point in demonstrating this slewing of reference back and forth in time is that there is a fundamental uncertainty in the terms for designating white New Zealanders both in the past and in the present, an argument that is central to the larger research project of which this essay is simply a small part (Goldsmith 2004a).

To be fair, not all contributors to Honouring the Treaty embrace the same terminological conventions. In her chapter, Jane Kelsey draws the main contrast between Maori and the Crown and makes almost no reference to Pakeha. Where she does mention it, it is not as the part of the book's standard 'us/them' trope but in relation to specific individuals or to 'Pakeha courts' (Kelsey 1989: 137, 139). Not until the end of her chapter does the term Pakeha make a concerted appearance in the same vein as the editors' contribution and it does so only in the context of present-day obligations and is used interchangeably with Tauwi (Kelsey 1989: 140).

Overall, however, these texts clearly demonstrate the second of the two processes I outlined above, that is, the 'tidying up' of historical messiness with the consequent construction of mythistory. In these instances, we can observe a kind of retrospective use of labels that have currency in the present on the assumption that we can apply them unproblematically to the past. This particular take on New Zealand history shows a desire to push the contemporary definition of Pakeha (as the term for those of British or European ancestry) further and further back in time.

A brief conclusion

In my introduction, I highlighted two crosscutting processes of historiography and mythmaking: a 'prospective' one of trying to grasp an ever-receding object, and a
‘retrospective’ one of tidying up the inevitable problems that ensue. I illustrated these processes with material schematically presented from New Zealand census reports and from overviews that unproblematically consign the term ‘European’ to an early period of New Zealand and the term ‘Pakeha’ to a later period (either beginning with the signing of the Treaty or emerging at some unspecified moment in time).

Perhaps a third process is also at work, that is, bureaucratic inertia. In terms of my main thesis, this process helps to explain why the term ‘Pakeha’ does not appear in New Zealand census reports while the term ‘European’ predominates and persists through time. But it is a kind of willed inertia, a perceived need to maintain the comparability of categories across time in response to the statistician’s nightmare of incomparability. More broadly, it lends weight to attempts to discipline an inherently messy reality.

Some readers may question that amount of attention I have directed to clarifying what is after all ‘only’ a matter of terminology. It is my contention, however, that unless New Zealanders are encouraged to understand the history of their systems of ethnic classification in all its complexity, public policy in the area of race relations will continue to encounter resistance and foster simplistic solutions. The kind of unified nation envisaged over a century ago by Renan may or may not be desirable; in the circumstances of post-colonial settler nations with indigenous minorities, however, it may not even be possible.

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Abstract

History, it has been said, belongs to the victors. It is probably more accurate to say, however, that history remains a battleground for competing interpretations of the past, and that the process of wilful forgetting, so famously deemed a part of nation-building by Ernest Renan (1996), sometimes fails.

This paper contrasts opposing trajectories of ethnic classification in New Zealand nation-building myths and histories. On one hand, it will examine certain kinds of historical sources for the presence of labels, such as 'European', which have survived (though in an unmarked fashion) into the present era; on the other hand, it will examine instances, uses and periodisations of the term 'Pakeha' ('white person' or 'someone of European descent') as a signifier in some recent attempts to make sense of the New Zealand past in light of its present. There are important lessons to be drawn from this dialectic as to how history can be written and how actors in the past should be represented. There may also be important implications for New Zealand's political future.
Résumé

On a dit que l'histoire appartient aux vainqueurs. Il serait toutefois plus exact de dire que l'histoire demeure un champ de bataille pour des interprétations du passé en concurrence, et que le processus d'oubli délibéré, censé faire partie de la construction nationale comme l'a dit à merveille Ernest Renan (1996), connaît parfois l'échec.

Cet article met en contraste des trajectoires contradictoires de classification ethnique dans les mythes et l'histoire qui entourent la construction nationale en Nouvelle-Zélande. D'une part, certaines catégories de sources historiques seront examinées afin d'y relever la présence d'étiquettes telles que « Européen » qui ont survécu (quoique de façon peu marquée) jusqu'à l'époque présente. Par ailleurs, des exemples et usages du terme « Pakeha » (« personne blanche » ou « personne d'origine européenne ») à diverses périodes seront examinés en tant que signifiants dans quelques tentatives récentes de donner du sens au passé de la Nouvelle-Zélande à la lumière de son présent. Il y a des leçons importantes à tirer de cette dialectique sur la façon dont on peut écrire l'histoire et dont les acteurs du passé devraient être représentés. Il peut aussi y avoir d'importantes implications pour le futur politique de la Nouvelle-Zélande.
Like Moths to a Light: Misunderstanding the Process of Pacific Labour Migration

Cluny and La'avasa Macpherson

Introduction

This paper is, in part, a response to the frustration of a Samoan delegate to a labour migration conference who, tired of the ways Samoans were being characterised by non-Samoan academics, stood and protested that successive speakers had portrayed Samoan migrants as 'moths to a light' drawn inevitably by higher wages, when in fact, as he argued, their movements were outcomes of a much more complex, culturally-bound reasoning process which conventional economics could not readily comprehend. He was reacting to a model which denies human actors a significant role as conscious, purposive actors and which substitutes another which supposes that movements can be explained in terms of some universal desire to maximize individual economic advantage.

Social scientists have parallel concerns about the economic models used to explain Pacific migration. The examination of migration flows within the Pacific and the explanation of these movements in terms of wage differentials in various parts of the Pacific is poor social science. While none would deny the significance of economic factors in these movements, most social scientists would want to know more about the ways in which sociocultural and historical variables also influence these flows. None would be satisfied with a simple-minded explanation which represented thinking individuals as passive individuals drawn to higher wages: like electrons drawn inevitably to a nucleus to which they remain attached in a constant state forever. Like all models, economic models draw our attention to certain features of the movements, but as with all models they obscure or distort our view of other parts of the reality under study.

Historians might note the need to see these movements in their historical context, to understand the ways in which contemporary movements are linked with earlier ones which created the nodes of a migration system between which people now move. Historians and political scientists might also want to know how colonial relationships
shaped current constitutional relationships and limited contemporary movements to paths that were set by colonial and post-colonial political history. Geographers would want to know more about the patterns of movement and whether these movements are permanent relocations or part of a pattern of circulation which sees people moving at various times and for different reasons between nodes in a system to achieve various goals. They would, as pioneers of circulation theory have argued, want to know whether the movement from low wage to high wage zones are permanent moves or simply sojourns to gather capital for re-investment on their return. (Chapman, 1991) They might also want to know how such things as new roads, airstrips, and new forms of public transport and routes influence flows. (Chung, 1988) Anthropologists would want to know who moves and how decisions to move are made, and by whom, the rationales which underpin these, and how these movements influence the ways in which expatriate members and the now dispersed groups are conceptualized. Sociologists would want to understand how ideas, personnel, resources travel between the various nodes of the dispersed groups, and how these flows transform the social organization in both the originating (Shankman, 1976) and expatriate communities. (Va'a, 1995; Macpherson, 2001; Macpherson, 2002)

This paper seeks to explore some of the limitations of an a-historical, economistic view of Pacific migrations, and to indicate the constraints of a model of migration which views humans as individuals who are bent on maximizing personal opportunities and advantage, in a narrowly economic way. The paper argues that while Pacific migration can be, and has been, studied from an economic perspective, the most comprehensive understandings of movements will come from multidisciplinary approaches which acknowledge the importance of human agency and of complex and sociocultural context of their actions.

The Political Economy of Migration

Economic theories of labour migration seek to explain the ways in which labour moves in response to the differential rewards for labour at various regions in the capitalist world-system. Theories start from the economic premise that there are, within the capitalist world-system, zones in which labour is relatively highly, moderately and poorly paid. These wage differentials are the consequences of the history of the incorporation of regions into the capitalist world-system, and resultant unequal development. Labour movement between these zones is not unrestricted. It is constrained by political decisions, taken within nation states, which reflect historical linkages between various nations, attempts to influence domestic labour markets, and beliefs about social distance between 'peoples' and the prospects of their 'assimilation' or 'integration' into a receiving society. These decisions are, in turn, reflected in states' immigration policies.

According to these theories, within the parameters set by these economic and political realities, individuals make decisions about where to reside and work. These decisions are
based on their evaluation of the relative advantages of working in one or other wage zone at a given time. Within these contexts, 'rational' actors use a 'model' based on the 'costs' and 'benefits' to the individual of moves between these zones, in an attempt to obtain the highest material standard of living attainable. Thus, most movement tends to occur between low wage zones and higher wage zones as individuals migrate to areas in which their labour will be better rewarded to 'improve' their 'standard of living'. This approach is typified in a monograph on Pacific migration which concludes that,

Many paradigms have been used to explain migration (Sahota 1968; Bedford 1980; Chapman and Prothero 1983, Connell 1984a). By far the most successful, and the one used in this study, is the economic or human capital explanation of migration (Sahota 1968; Sjaastad 1962; Greenwood 1975; Lucas 1981). Basically individuals or families migrate to increase their well-being, principally their economic well-being. More formally, an individual will migrate if

\[ PDV_m = \sum_{t=1}^{T} \frac{B_t - B_{ot}}{(1+r)^t} - C > 0 \]

(Ahlburg D and Levin M., 1990, 87)

Within this type of model individuals, the typical unit of analysis, use public and private information to establish economic costs and benefits of moves to various domestic and international destinations to which they have access and move to those in which their labour is likely to be most highly rewarded. This logic is reflected in the structure of the formula above where the probability of migration is determined by the following pieces of knowledge,

- \( PDV_m \) = present discounted value of migration
- \( B_t \) = the utility derived from the new location in year \( t \)
- \( B_{ot} \) = the utility derived from the original location in year \( t \)
- \( T \) = the length of time in years one expects to live in the new location
- \( r \) = the rate of discount
- \( C \) = the utility lost (sic) in the move itself (direct and psychic costs); and
- \( \Sigma \) = a summation over the yearly discounted net benefits over a period running from year 1 to year \( T \) (Ahlburg and Levin, 1990: 87).

There may be a slight delay between the awareness of the most 'rewarding' site in which to deploy their labour and the movement to that place, which results as would-be migrants engage in forms of economic activity to provide the capital necessary to travel. Migrant
are, in this model, rational individuals, or rather reactors, to various political and economic constraints and opportunities. Only occasionally is political intervention necessary to limit or reverse labour flows when individuals’ ‘imperfect knowledge’ of the labour market leads to an unacceptably high level of over-supply.¹

Many of these models are generated from studies of the flows between points, and the characteristics of flows of migrants, which are then searched for patterns which become the bases of certain hypotheses about the reasoning which could have produced these trends. This is a reasonable way to proceed if these propositions are then checked against empirical realities in ethnographic studies which seek to establish whether the hypotheses are supported by evidence.² Often, however, it appears that they are not, and that as long as the relationships between variables are statistically significant it is considered fair to make the assumption that the phenomena are linked, until such time as evidence is produced to show that this is not the case. Arguments which use models derived from statistical correlations, rather than ethnographic evidence to propose linkages must always remain suspect.

The best studies of the political economy of labour migration are more theoretically sophisticated and make serious attempts to understand migrants’ sociocultural values, and the ways in which these are incorporated in individuals’ decisions. These are more useful because the models which they embody resemble more closely those used by people contemplating migration. But these often comprise a set of generic factors, all of which are included because they modify the way in which what is seen as an individual economic decision is made.

While it is quite true that political and economic factors constitute a matrix of constraints and opportunities, within which migrants must make decisions about movement, models of this type have three sets of limitations. Firstly, they presume a universal rationality and a uniform basis for the assessment of costs and benefits which focuses around individual gain. It assumes, implicitly, that all are motivated by personal interest and gain, and that all will weight various factors, and will incorporate them in their equations in similar ways. Secondly, they presume that people have access to similar information, models for computing ‘values’, and that they use this information in systematic fashion to determine which courses of action to take. Thirdly, they presume that individuals, rather than groups to which they belong, make decisions based on a calculus in which the costs and benefits to the individual who moves, and not to kin groups or other corporate bodies with which individuals are affiliated, are central.

¹ Some degree of over-supply is generally accepted because it creates an ‘industrial reserve army’ which depresses wage levels which might otherwise rise, and which allows employers to exercise greater industrial discipline over a work force.

This chapter shows how Samoans determined who would migrate and where during the period between 1960 and 1980 when Samoan migration was at its height. It argues that neither material gain nor individual choices are sufficient explanations of the patterns of Samoan migration. It focuses on the social calculus which shaped decisions about who will be encouraged to migrate and to where, and shows that, while the factors combined in various ways, there is a heavy emphasis on economic benefits accruing to the kin group as well as the individual.

**Toward a Model**

Some years ago an economist and a geographer set out to understand Pacific Island migration to New Zealand and devised a model of migration which they used to explain the basis of labour movement. (Bertram and Watters, 1985; Bertram and Watters, 1986) Central to this model was the kin group which, as they correctly noted, was extremely influential in Pacific islanders' decisions to move from and to return to their islands of origin. Thus, although individuals actually moved, they did so at the behest of, or at least with encouragement from, their kin group or āiga. This meant that to understand decisions that shaped the patterns of migration, one attended not only to the individuals, but to the interests of the kin groups which sent, or at least actively encouraged, them to go abroad.

Once the focus of attention was shifted to the kin group, a different model became evident. The group was likened by Marcus (1981) Loomis (1984a) Bertram and Watters (1985) to a transnational corporation which has a given amount of capital, in this case human capital, a range of investment options, a number of possible investment sites, and must determine how its capital will be deployed at any time for the maximum benefit to the corporation. The kin group, like an effective and profitable transnational corporation, must monitor the shifting markets and make periodic readjustments to the distribution of its capital investment as market conditions change. As locations yield more or less from a given amounts of investment at a given time, resources will be re-located to take advantage of the differentials. But where this occurs, it is because the interests of the corporation, and not its individual employees, are paramount. So complete was the comparison, that Bertram and Watters coined the phrase 'transnational kin corporation' to describe the role and operation of Pacific Island kin groups in migration in the 1970s and 1980s.

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3 The verbatim material provided originally in Samoan has been translated into idiomatic, colloquial English rather than literally.
The comparison, in the Samoan case at least, was an apt one. Matai, or chiefs, acting on behalf of both villages and kin groups, had always controlled decisions, and had always sought to determine how those groups’ resources might be most advantageously employed. (Pitt, 1970:113-153) Matai in council, and acting on behalf of the village, have always determined collectively how to use its resources to its greatest advantage. Similarly, matai, acting on behalf of their kin groups, have always had to make two types of decision: about the regulation and organisation of production, and about the use of the outputs of that production to the family’s advantage. These decisions focus, not on solely or even primarily on economic costs and benefits of given actions, but rather on sociopolitical ones. Nor do they focus solely or primarily on the returns to the matai, but rather to the āiga or kin corporation. What Bertram and Watters were observing was the extension of that principle, to a new set of political and economic circumstances. This article now seeks to trace the evolution of the process to show how and why migration decisions tend to be controlled by collectivities.

Production Decisions in Pre-capitalist Samoa

In the pre-capitalist mode of production, matai had to decide how much labour was to be invested in different types of productive activity. The council of chiefs, fono a matai, acting on behalf of a village, had to determine whether its resources were employed in fishing, construction projects, or as a touring entertainment troupes, how each activity would be organized, and how each option would advance the village’s interest. Similarly, a matai acting on behalf of an āiga had to determine how much labour would be employed in open water fishing, and in the building of fish traps respectively; how much labour was to be invested in planting and gathering crops respectively; how much labour was to be employed in the creation or improvement of physical capital such as track and plantation walls. They had then to determine how the supply of labour for the chosen activity was to be organised.

4 The matai was elected by and could, in certain circumstances, be deposed by the kin group. A matai’s authority depended on affective management of the āiga’s human, physical, and socio-political capital because well-managed āiga expanded as individuals chose to move to and identify with such groups. In the process these groups gained political and economic power and those who benefited by association with the group accepted the authority of the matai.

5 Earlier the council used village labour in direct production and harvesting of food needed for village purposes. More recently, councils have sent groups of villagers overseas to engage in wage labour for specific periods to raise money for village purposes.

6 Construction projects traditionally involved the building of council meeting houses or fale fono, guest houses or fale tali mālō and fish traps or pa i’a but have more recently come to include church and plantation access road construction.

7 These originally developed a troupe that toured villages performing to raise funds for village projects. More recently these troupes have toured New Zealand, Australia, and the US to raise funds for village projects.
These matai, acting on behalf of their āiga, had then to make a second set of decisions about the use of production: what part of their production would be employed in subsistence, what would be stored as a contingency against war, famine, or natural disaster; what would be invested in the creation or maintenance of a group's physical capital such as building of guest houses; what would be reserved for activity which would increase the group's socio-political capital such as hospitality and provision for ceremonial exchanges.

Decisions in an Emerging Mixed Economy

Samoa's gradual incorporation into the capitalist world-economy commenced in the mid-nineteenth century, and increased the range of opportunities available to the kin group and required matai to incorporate new variables in their production and investment decisions. Matai, acting again on behalf of their aiga, had to make the same types of decisions about the use of resources in the organisation of production. They had still to determine what part of an āiga's labour would be reserved for its own consumption and what would be made available for sale on emerging national and international markets; what part of labour would be reserved for the use of the āiga and what would be made available to the emerging wage labour market; what proportion of productive activity would be devoted to cultivation of traditional crops and what part to introduced cash crops; what part of a group's land would be reserved for its exclusive use and what part would be temporarily or permanently alienated for the use of the churches and foreign plantations, and on what terms.

Matai had also to determine how their group's production, and now the cash revenue available from sale of agricultural production and the wages of members who were released to work in plantations and in the service of foreign interests, was to be employed for the āiga. This new calculus involved decisions about what was to be reserved for subsistence; what would be sold into the national and world markets; the relative advantages to the āiga of various alternatives, what part of the cash revenue was to be consumed and what was to be invested by the āiga; how the income earned by individuals would be deployed, and how it's use by the kin group would be 'justified', if indeed it was believed that justification was called for. This accounting requirement became more significant as the formerly absolute power of Samoan chiefs (Meleisea, 1995) was progressively constrained by social, political and economic forces. (Tcherkezoff, 2000)

Despite the transformation of the mode of production which occurred as foreign trading and commercial plantations became established in Samoa, and as churches encouraged production of commodities for sale into a world market to support the churches' growth and missionary activity, decisions about production and investment remained in the

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8 These became established as commercial copra and cotton plantations were established from the 1860s on.

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hands of the matai. And, because of their co-dependent relationship with their āiga, matais' decisions had still to be taken in the interests of their āiga rather than their own. (Macpherson, 1997)

**Decision-making in a Diversifying Economy**

The rapid growth of a domestic labour market during the Second World War, and the emergence of an international market for Samoan labour in the period after the war, was no more than an extension of the range of opportunities available to the matai and the āiga for the deployment of resources in ways which might benefit the āiga. It was only an extension of the wage labour market which had existed since the middle of the nineteenth century and which had grown rapidly since the beginning of the twentieth century with the establishment of commercial plantations and formally constituted government bureaucracy. It was, for those reasons, logical that its control would remain, at least initially, with the matai which had traditionally controlled such decisions and that it would be employed in the interests of a group rather than those of individuals.

In fact, however, several significant trends were occurring which would transform in practice, if not in principle, the ways in which production was organised. Around the time that opportunities for international migration began to open up, Western Samoa became an independent sovereign state. The new state adopted a constitution which made provision to the consolidation of the power the matai by enacting provisions which ensured that only matai were enfranchised and that only matai would represent all but two electorates in the post-independence parliament. (Davidson, 1967) This decision generated pressures to 'split' existing titles to allow people to stand in elections for parliament. (Meleisea and Schoeffel, 1983:100)

The splitting of existing chiefly titles and creation, in some cases, of new ones, was intended to increase villages' and families' electoral base to ensure that related, and sympathetic, matai were elected to represent them in the nation's parliament. The members' indebtedness to the families who had supported their election ensured that their interests were well represented in the parliamentary process. (So'o, 1998; Meleisea, 1983) This led to the proliferation of matai titles and to the creation of smaller kinship sub-units which now had their own matai. While most āiga acknowledged that one of the several holders of their title was the 'senior' one and enjoyed greater power, or pule, than others

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9 The presence of significant numbers of US troops in forward bases in Samoa during WWII produced a demand for Samoan labour both on and off military bases.

10 Two electorates out of a total of 49 were created to ensure that the interests 'independent voters' that is a group of people, often of mixed descent, who did not live under the authority of a matai were represented in Parliament.

11 This agreement was by no means universal and was increasingly contested in the Lands and Titles Court as time went on and the substance of initial agreements about seniority and its associated rights became the subject of dispute within āiga.
who held the same title, control of certain areas of the āiga activities passed inevitably to other title holders and led to some degree of fragmentation of control.12

As a consequence of this process, decisions about resource deployment were still taken by matai but now more than one matai, and in some cases many, were involved in many Samoan āiga where formerly one had exercised control. In most cases, the decisions taken by matai related to the affairs of that part of the āiga which had supported their appointment and which, in so doing, accepted their reasonable authority in family affairs. Thus, many decisions about what we have loosely termed 'production' were taken in, and on behalf of, somewhat smaller groupings. Decisions about migration into both the national and international labour markets which fall, as we have argued above, into this category were still taken by matai on behalf of the part of the āiga under their control, and with its interests in mind.

Work Permits as Commodities

To understand how a matai in a Samoan village gained control of a decision which would, on the surface at least, seem to be a matter for the immigration service of a receiving government requires one further step. The first Samoan migrants who left a village and found work overseas without very much assistance. As they became established, in New Zealand in this case, they came under considerable pressure to sponsor the migration of other kin. Sponsorship required that they find approved accommodation, an approved offer of accommodation and a fare for the intending migrant. (Pitt and Macpherson, 1974) Of these the most difficult condition to meet was the location of an offer of employment.

Working migrants were well-positioned to identify pending vacancies in businesses in which they worked and knew, often from the experiences of others, that if they proved themselves effective and able employees they might be offered an opportunity to find a relative to fill a vacancy.13 Once they had nominated the relative, the company provided the official offer of employment, required to complete the remaining immigration formalities and occasionally even a loan to pay a fare. In this respect, the opportunity to obtain a guarantee of employment from an employer was a commodity with a value which increased over time.14 Many young Samoans treated such 'offers' in the same way as they treated other commodities: they passed them up to their matai and or parents, who were in

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12 The degree of fragmentation varied significantly. Some āiga chose to elect only two title holders, to represent the tamara’ne and tamafina’ne respectively, while others chose to distribute titles very much more widely and generated, in the process, a higher probability of subsequent disputes over the rights of titleholders and of still further fragmentation.

13 Firms employing labour from this source saved numerous costs of such things as advertising and training and were ensured a guaranteed source of labour whose conduct was effectively 'guaranteed' by the sponsor.

14 The longer the nominated relative worked in New Zealand and remitted all or part of his or her income the greater the 'value' of the initial offer of employment which allowed the person to migrate.
many cases, as Shankman (1976) noted, the same person. (Shankman, 1976) Offers were thus considered resources and rightly matters for the authorised makers of such decisions to make.

Migrants accepted the right of others to make those decisions, and the decisions themselves, even when they personally would have preferred others.

'I would really like to have brought my friend because she was like a sister to me while I was in Samoa, but I can understand why my parents want to use the permit to bring my first cousin. It is too hard for the first cousin's family, and it is also hard for my parents who have to help them at present.'

They did not, however, accept this 'right' unconditionally and in this respect the process was forever changed. Migrants were free to avail themselves of opportunities, and were also free to fill these with people of their own choosing. Migrants who were dissatisfied with decisions made by their matai could, and in some cases did, remind their families of their power by extending offers to non-kin, to make their point.

I had already got six offers of employment and they [parents] had used them to bring first cousins on both sides of the family to New Zealand. That meant most of my uncles and aunts had someone here to support them. I wanted to bring my best friend because her family had no one to help them but my family wanted to send more of my cousins, and so I got angry and sent the offer to my friend and she came here. My family was angry when they found out, but I had already given them the opportunities.

The interesting point about this reasoning is that even when individuals chose to challenge the authority of their own collective, it was not out of a sense of developing individualism, but rather out of the recognition of the needs of other collectives.

Migrants retained a right of veto and could and did exercise it from time to time as the following cases indicate.

I knew my parents wanted to send my brother, but I was not happy about that, because I knew from my sisters that he had been playing up to them so that they would send him. But I knew he just wanted to come so he could be with his girlfriend who was from Apia and was already here. He would have got together with her and would have been no help to me or to them [the family in Samoa]. He was never much of a worker anyhow, and I didn't want to risk my reputation [at work] for him. But they thought he could do nothing wrong and believed all he said. I just said they had taken too long deciding and the job had already been taken.
But while migrants reserved the right to influence decisions, and indeed to veto them, they were for the most part prepared to allow others to make the decisions on the grounds that they had 'eaten their sweat'\textsuperscript{15} and this was a way of repaying their debt.

When families in Samoa were informed of the existence of an offer they had to choose which of a number of people who were qualified and would meet New Zealand's immigration entry criteria would be awarded the opportunity. It was at this point that they had to decide, often relatively quickly, who would be awarded the opportunity. The second part of the paper deals with variables which were considered in arriving at these decisions.

The Bases of Decision making

Some of the factors considered have been discussed in passing elsewhere (Macpherson, 1997) but are dealt with in more detail here because they reflect the ways in which Samoans drew on a number of 'knowledges' to make decisions within a set of constraints imposed by the political and economic structures. The ways in which these were combined only makes sense in the light of the overall objectives of resource deployment strategies pursued by āiga: that is by recalling the parallels between āiga and transnational corporations outlined above.

These objectives can be understood as an attempt to deploy resources in the most effective, and profitable, way possible and to thus limit the āiga's dependence on any single source of 'revenue'. This diversification strategy made sense to a group whose crops were periodically devastated by hurricanes or constrained by drought. The value of deployment of people in international labour markets was, however, only realised if those people continued to regard their income as a resource on which the āiga had some call, and continued to remit some part of that income for its use. In picking those who would be offered opportunities to migrate then, the āiga had to locate people most likely to remit all or part of their income, in either cash or kind, for the longest possible period. They had then to identify the characteristics which were associated with a willingness to serve, or tautua, the family.

The following issues arose in discussions about migration\textsuperscript{16}, and reflect the sorts of factors which entered these discussions and the ways in which these were connected in the Samoan world-view of the time. These factors can be divided into two categories: identification of persons who will make suitable migrants, and the identification of those sectors of the family who most need access to the international labour market. These are analytically distinctive but are of course related in practice.

\textsuperscript{15} People are believed to succeed because of the historical contributions of others, they have benefited from 'eating the sweat' of others, which they are bound to recognize and repay.

\textsuperscript{16} These were collected from discussions with people in Samoa who were involved with decisions, and with people who were working in New Zealand and whose work was generating the employment offers. They consist of solicited and unsolicited statements all of which were made initially in Samoan and which have been translated. These were captured from statements about and discussions of the process, rather than a systematic study of the decision-making process.
Personal Attributes

In many respects, the attributes sought are similar to those which are considered important in discussions of what makes individuals more or less reliable servants of the āiga. What differs in this case is the need to identify what attributes might ensure that people continue to serve when they are removed from the immediate control of their parents and matai.

Enterprise

Families looked to those whose conduct and work displayed some evidence of commitment and energetic application. To establish which of the available candidates had the necessary qualities their recent past was reviewed for evidence of a commitment to work and of enterprise. Those who had shown evidence of perseverance in work, to'aga i le galuega, were most likely to be considered.

This was related to the awareness that an opportunity to migrate could have different values in the hands of different people. Energetic people were more likely to find ways of maximizing the return from the opportunity for the family, and less energetic people were less likely to do this. Thus, people would discuss and compare migrants’ employment history to illustrate the various possible outcomes of the decision.

I met that girl .......... at the picture theatre [in New Zealand]. She was working there in the snack bar. She also had another job at the [hospital] laundry. She is very clever. When she was on night shift at the laundry, she worked days at the theatre and when she’s on days at the laundry she worked nights at the theatre. She always works with her sister [at another company] when she has a holiday from the laundry. She complained to the company about the cleaning of the snack bar at the theatre. She told them that she could do it better and now she cleans the snack bar for the cleaning company after the night shift. She’s very committed worker and she has really been able to help her family. She was like that in the island [Samoa] too. What a strong woman!!

This paragon of virtue was compared with her brother who apparently showed rather less enterprise.

Well he’s ok, but he has really wasted his chance. He goes to work and has always worked at the same place. He must be well-regarded there because he has been given some offers of employment. But, his uncle, with whom he works, said he does not always work overtime and when his sister found him a part-time job he said he was too tired to take it up. I think he just wants to hang around with his friends and play rugby. A lot of boys are like that. They get a bit lazy and start to get a bit
self-centred after they have been there a while. He was like that in Samoa too. He would always work but he was never as enterprising as his sister……

Thus while evidence of enterprise and commitment to work was central to decisions, this was only valuable as long as it was in the hands of people who used their enterprise for the collective. This last statement raises the question of whether women are better remitters than men, or whether this is merely coincidence.

Gender

As early as the 1960s people in Salani and Malie villages were telling David Pitt that men who went overseas were less reliable and less well-behaved (Pitt, 1970:188) and Paul Shankman reported shortly afterward that women were regarded by the people of Sa‘asi as being the most reliable and most committed remitters and that this perception was supported by his data (Shankman, 1976:61-2). This belief also lay behind the clear preference for women in a number of families whose migration histories we reviewed as part of a study of Samoan migration in the mid-1970s.

Samoan decision makers had to make decisions about gender within constraints which were set for them. At the time, New Zealand labour legislation prevented women from working in certain industrial areas, and where law did not do this, convention did. Thus, certain segments of the labour market were divided along gender lines and offers of employment reflected that. Later, this changed as equal opportunities legislation removed a lot of the legislative provisions which were held to be discriminatory.

Samoans may have believed that women were more reliable remitters, but they also acknowledged that wage rates were higher in areas in which men were principally employed. These sectors of the labour market, were frequently heavy, dirty work places which were increasingly vacated by local labour, and had high labour turnover rates and produced large numbers of opportunities which they could expect to fill.

There were, however, other reasons for sending men, despite the existence of some reservations about the durability of their commitment to their families. Samoan proverbs note that some coconuts fall from the tree and bounce in the undergrowth while others fall, crack and are spoiled for all time. Men were seen as the coconuts which bounced: women as those which could crack and become spoiled. In this case, women could be diverted by men from their duty to their family. Men were sent to protect their sisters from the predatory attentions of other men who might persuade them into a premature marriage. The brother and sister mentioned above fell into this category. The family, reluctantly, 17 The Nuffield Foundation Migration Project was based at Waikato University and led by Professor David C Pitt. The authors conducted a significant part of the field research in which some 1,000 Samoans residing in New Zealand were interviewed.
sent the woman first, but sent the brother as soon afterwards as possible to look after his sister. The parents did that because they were concerned that if their daughter succumbed to the attentions of unworthy men, or was to marry she would be increasingly drawn into the husband's kin group's affairs, and that this would test her loyalty to her own family.

Gender was, to some extent, irrelevant because of the sets of arrangements which were made before migrants were allowed to leave. These have been described elsewhere (Macpherson, 2002) and usually involved the choice of a migrant household founded by senior members of the family who would act in loco parentis, and would impose the same standards and sorts of discipline with which would-be migrants were familiar. The creation of these households, in which remitting was the norm, and in which it was common for migrants to hand unopened pay packets to the heads of households to manage, ensured that most if not all remitted initially. Furthermore, when migrants left the household in which they had resided on arrival, they frequently replicated the sets of arrangements which they had encountered there and, in so doing, continued the cycle of discipline.

Indeed some opportunities were turned down because the right conditions were not available. One man whose son worked in a remote power construction project with a high labour turnover explained that only certain sorts of people could safely be sent there because,

The men there lived on a ship and worked in the tunnels on land. There were only men on the ship and it was not a good place for people who were weak. There was a lot of drinking and a lot of gambling on the ship after work, and a lot of people lost a lot of money in the games. One man lost a motel [in a card game]. There was also fighting and so it was alright for people like E..... but it would have been no good for weaker people like F....... and T....... They would have lost everything and got into trouble. We had to wait until my brother found them positions in the company where they worked and they could go to live with him.

Strategic Decisions

Families frequently found that the appropriate personal qualities might be found in a number of people within the āiga and those who controlled the decision had then to decide which of these persons would 'get the nod'. This involved a second set of decisions which can best be described as strategic decisions and which took account of longer term and social considerations. These cases exemplify, but by no means exhaust, the range of what might best be called sociocultural issues which influence choices about the deployment of individuals. In these one can see some of social values and issues, and group interests, mediating decisions which were made.
Equalising Opportunities

Families who would have benefited materially from sending most of their children abroad as soon as possible did not. Migration histories show significant gaps between the arrival dates of siblings which cannot be explained by the operation of the labour market. These are best explained in terms of strategies which were shaped by social and political considerations. A matai explained how he had decided who got the migration opportunities which became available in the following way,

My son T........ was one of the first Samoans to work in that company just after it started in Auckland. He was a hardworking boy and was made head storeman after 18 or 15 months. He could get many offers of employment because the company was growing very fast..... not just in his area, the store, but also in the factory. First we sent his brother to work with him in 1965. Then he got a job inside the factory. I thought about sending their sister to join them, but than I thought people would think we were mean and would get jealous. You know how the Samoan thinks about these things. In the end, we sent my sister's daughter to help her. My sister had no husband then and the girl supported her family. Then there was a job again in the store and we gave the opportunity to my wife's nephew so that side of the family had some help. We gave one chance to one side, and then one chance to the other side because that's the fa'a samo a. It went on like that for some years until many of our family worked in that company.

This arrangement suited migrants because it meant that as their cousins arrived and assumed responsibility for their own immediate families, the burden of remitting was more widely distributed, and their shares of the load declined proportionately. One young woman who was the second member of her family to arrive describes her reaction to the strategy.

I was glad when my cousins started to arrive to work with me. It was partly the companionship and having people to go around with, but it also meant that instead of me supporting my parents and their siblings' families and all their fa'alavelave, I would only have to support my own family. It was better than just bringing brothers and sisters because we would all still have ended up supporting our parents' sibling families. When my parents brought the others it meant it was much easier for me.

Another strategic decision, which was again unrelated to economic advantage, was evident in the following case. A young woman went to work in Auckland. She was a diligent employee, a reliable remitter and lived well. But, separated from her best friend, she became increasingly unhappy over time. Her parents were unaware of this, but relatives who visited New Zealand and met her, told her parents they were concerned that she was becoming
sad and withdrawing into herself. Her parents immediately offered her the opportunity to return to Samoa, despite its economic consequences for them. When she chose to remain in New Zealand to support them, they obtained a job guarantee for her unrelated friend to join her, even though they had planned to send a nephew when a guarantee became available to them.

In another case, migration was used as a means of resolving a family embarrassment. A family whose daughter was married to a man whom they considered immature, and whose reluctance to work and actions toward both his wife and her family were a source of ongoing embarrassment, chose to use a job guarantee to get the husband to migrate to New Zealand. Their reasoning was that his absence would, at worst, remove a source of embarrassment, and might, at best, also yield a wage to assist them, until such time as he matured and they felt it appropriate for the daughter and her children to join the husband.

In another case, the economic benefits of migration were considered less important than the psychological well-being of members of a family. A young woman who had grown up with her grandparents and was close to them, went to work in Wellington. From there, she supported both her parents and grandparents very conscientiously, and generously, for some years. As her grandmother became ill, she fretted for the missing grand-daughter and became increasingly distressed. The family wrote to the daughter and asked her to return to stay with her grandmother, which she did immediately effectively ending the family’s sole wage income stream. A number of similar cases were recounted which led us to conclude that this was not uncommon.

In another, a family ‘re-called’ a gainfully employed son from New Zealand to manage a family business which was becoming increasingly unprofitable as it struggled to compete with new businesses being established in the district. The son’s labour which was better rewarded inasmuch as it was paid at a higher rate in New Zealand, was re-deployed in a struggling business in which he was paid what amounted to a subsistence wage. The return to the family was, in strictly economic terms, reduced significantly, but within socio-cultural terms makes good sense. The son’s account of the decision was that the continued operation of the store was important because of his father’s political aspirations in Samoa: the store was used to extend credit to villagers in the district in the belief that this indebtedness could be used to secure their votes in a forthcoming parliamentary election. Similar strategies have been reported in the historian Asofou So’o’s important work on Samoan elections and electoral practices, (So’o, 1996; So’o, 1998) and by others which leads us to believe that such re-deployments are not unusual.
Conclusion

This paper accepts that general proposition that migration takes place within sets of economic and political parameters as economists and political economists assert. It accepts that there will generally be movements from low wage zones to higher wage zones within the world system. It also argues that the volume of migration will be shaped by economic and political constraints which will in turn be shaped by nations' political and economic interests. It does, however, argue that economic arguments about migration oversimplify explanation of migration by reducing actors to isolated, self serving individuals seeking to optimise their own economic situation. While it can explain outward movement it cannot explain return movements and circulation which are, at least in their terms, irrational.

To argue in these terms is to misunderstand the nature of Pacific societies and to fail to comprehend the social rationales which form the bases on which decisions are made. The social calculus which underlies the process by which Samoans are chosen for migration defies the simple-minded logic employed by many economists. The lengths to which Samoans go to enter and remain illegally in countries defies political scientists' approach to the discussion of formal parameters set by states. A comprehensive explanation of the choices which lie behind migration figures requires a competent understanding of history and high quality ethnography which captures the intentions and aspirations of the migrants which can clarify, elaborate, or challenge the motives imputed to them by economists. Only such an approach can accurately represent the complex reasoning which lies behind the choice of who will migrate and where within the Pacific.
Bibliography


Abstract

This paper contends that while the study of the political economy of migration will reveal the general constraints and opportunities which shape the volume and character of labour migration flows in the Pacific, it will not reveal the ways in which actors understand and act within these. While the study of political economy portrays the migrants as reactors to economic forces, closer study of these people reveals people making active, purposive choices using information from a variety of sources to establish the optimal ways of exploiting choices available to them. This chapter examines the case of the Samoans but may have broader relevance for other labour movements within the Pacific.

Résumé

Alors que l'étude de l'économie politique des migrations peut révéler les contraintes et les occasions générales qui donnent forme aux volumes et aux caractéristiques des flux migratoires liés au travail dans le Pacifique insulaire, cet article soutient qu'elle ne donnera pas les clés pour comprendre les motivations et les agissements des personnes concernées. Alors que l'étude de l'économie politique dépeint les émigrants en fonction de leurs réactions vis-à-vis des forces économiques, une étude plus approfondie de ces populations dévoile des gens faisant des choix pro-actifs en recourant à des informations provenant d'une variété de sources afin d'établir les meilleures voies pour exploiter les possibilités de choix dont ils disposent. Cette étude examine le cas des Samoans mais possède aussi une pertinence pour d'autres mouvements liés au travail dans le Pacifique.
The Hazards of Colonial Patrol: Wounding of Thomas Alfred Hough in Wantoat, Morobe District, Papua New Guinea

Sam Kaima

Introduction

Many Pacific islands communities have had intense problems with interpretations of the Europeans and in particular the first arrivals. In Papua New Guinea (PNG) first contact situations were interpreted based on traditional beliefs and values of the people. There were language problems with the villagers and the patrols did not know and understand each other. The villages did not know why and who these foreign visitors were. Many of the people readjusted their creation stories to fit in these new arrivals.

This paper discusses the problems encountered during one of the first visits to Wantoat, a central highlands part of the present Morobe Province of PNG. The paper discusses wounding of a young patrol officer (Kiap) in 1936, in Wantoat. The Kiap was later carried by village men to the nearby airstrip at Kaiapit before being airlifted to Salamaua Hospital. He died on December 20 at the age of 23.

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1 I heard a story about the wounding of a Kiap in Asindan village some time back in Primary School in 1970's but did not do research into the topic until in 1989 when I read an article in Pacific Islands Monthly. This encouraged me to investigate further and after my own election defeat in 2002 Elections. I was able to continue further research among the village concerned and this paper is the result of this. This is a research-in-progress paper and it seems like there are two events related to the same incident. This paper is based on limited written sources supplemented by oral testimonies and interviews during my research. There seem to have been two patrols after the death of Hough, One is that of the wounding of the Kiap at Isat Tang village and the other is the event about the Repercussion taken in January 1937. Oral testimony about the event has yet to be confirmed and researched. I wish to thank Stephen Mambo who first introduced me to the event and possible Informants and Michael Waterhouse led to some important sources about the event. James Sinclair, who was a patrol officer based at Kaiapit soon after the War, also gave valuable information on the Event and suggested some useful references. Indeed he patrolled into Wantoat in 1949 as reported in; Sinclair, James. 1982. Kiap: Australia's Patrol Officers in New Guinea. Sydney: Jacaranda Press.
Aside from Tom Hough few patrol officers were killed during the 1930s when New Guinea was then a Mandated Territory of the League of Nations being administered by Australia. According to Ian Downs; one of the patrol officers at that time:

Hough’s death was the first since my arrival in New Guinea. The death rate of patrol officers was roughly one each year. Ian Mack was killed not long before I arrived and Elliot was to be the next after Hough.\(^2\)

For comparative purposes there is more research to be done to find out where were the two Kiaps Ian Mack and Elliot killed. I hope this can be done in the future, but it was a reality that kiaps often risked their lives patrolling into ‘untouched and unexplored areas’ of the Territory.

Colonial administrative patrols into remote and isolated parts of New Guinea had been a problem and hazardous for the village people, the policemen and the colonial officials (kiaps). Compounded by hostile tribes, lack of a common language for communication and difficult terrains the patrols took; there were bound to be misunderstandings about the problems encountered. In first contact situations, nobody knew why the kiaps were there; there was no common language for communication purposes. Communication became necessary in an instant when villagers were chasing policemen before the wounding of any party member, as was the case in this paper.

This paper focuses on one of the early patrols into Wantoat who had only seen a dozen patrols before then. The villages had not been fully brought under control of the administration and mission influence and many have not seen a European before. To make matters worse for the patrol it was taken by a new patrol officer, who had just graduated from University of Sydney and a new policemen who had just passed out of the police training depot in Rabaul. Thus, it would seem that all of them were new and for many this would have been their first administrative patrol into the remote interior of Morobe District. They all had limited patrol experience on New Guinea mainland.

The paper looks at the problems of first contact, and then discusses Tom Hough, the patrol and the incident. Having discussed these I will then discuss written sources, which seem to be inconsistent with each other. I will then interpret these written sources with help from oral sources I collected during my interviews.

The Problems of First Contact

The Pacific islanders often wondered if these new arrivals were gods and or spirits of the dead ancestors. According to Wantoat creation mythology all human beings were created in Wantoat and sent off to populate the world. Why have these people returned to the

\(^2\) Downs, Ian. 1989, p. 54.
original place of creation? The first contact situations between natives and Europeans in many remote island communities still remain to be documented. In the midst of contact people developed their own interpretation of whom they have met and how and why these foreigners have come to their areas. While doing so those who were able to write wrote about these encounters while those who remembered it passed on the information through word of mouth. What was written about first contact had been written by Europeans often to suit their own interpretations and bias for their reading public. In doing do views and opinions of the natives have been ignored or misrepresented due to language problems.

Australian patrol officers often risked their lives working for the colonial administration in Territory of Papua and New Guinea. Many of them had to patrol the 'untouched areas'. There are examples of such patrols in the highlands in particular that of the Leahy Brothers3 and the Fox Brothers4. The natives had to understand the new arrivals based on their own traditional values and religious belief systems. Many of them would have gone into unexplored areas putting themselves into very difficult situations amidst language problems. Information about early patrols and 'first contact' situations can be sketchy and misrepresented. The Whiteman had different views of natives and so did natives viewed of the whitemen differently. Reports and documentation about events would have been written amidst communication problems. There were several languages used, and written documents would have been misinterpreted or distorted in the process.

The geography of the area prevented early patrols from reaching far. In fact Wantoat on the slopes of Finisterre Range and Saruwaged Mountains made it impossible for patrols to reach the area. Aside from geographical isolation, there were hostile tribes on the fringes, which encircled the central Wantoat valley. Directly south were the hostile Leron River people, to the west were the mountain Rai Coast people of Nankina and Teptep tribes who were also hostile. To the east were the Yaros tribe, who were enemies to the Awara in Wantoat. Thus this restricted penetration into Wantoat until 1927 when the first missionary arrived at Ewok village5. This particular trip avoided the entire enemy and hostile tribes mentioned above, as the missionary came in from Kabwum. In fact it would have been easier and quicker if the missionary had walked through the Leron valley. (Refer to map) He never did because of hostile Leron river people.

The arrival of first White man in Wantoat was referred as nguzit waak (son of the sun).


4 Numerous papers have been written but Chris Ballard is currently researching on the two brothers and the people's perceptions of these men at the time of contact.

This 'son of the sun' had returned to the original place of creation. By 1936 where there was very limited patrol into Wantoat and perceptions and views of the European had not changed much. The people still feared and revered the Whiteman as the son of the sun. The people of Wantoat never saw a whitemen during the period of German colonial rule (roughly 1884-1901) in New Guinea. It was during the gold rush in Wau and Bulolo of 1920's that the Wantoat may have heard of Europeans and associated stories about foreigners.

Salamaua was the District Headquarters and patrol officers were very much concerned with the activities of the gold miners in Wau. Plantation owners would have settled much of costal areas of Morobe and Madang and labor recruiters have visited on few occasions. The hinterland parts remained untouched and unexplored including Wantoat.

In 1936 District Officer Edward Taylor wanted to patrol hinterland areas, but could not because of lack of patrol officers. The Leron Watershed; gateway to Wantoat was a hostile country and patrols into Wantoat had been limited to only six patrols before Thomas Alfred Hough. Six months before that in July 1936 LG Vial visited Wantoat before Hough.
took the patrol in November. Vial was able to pacify people and bring them into larger villagers and appointed tululis and laluais of some villages. Vial had on this patrol observed and wrote about dam building ceremonies in Wantoat amidst communication problems. Three languages were used in order for him to grasp the idea of dam building festivals and therefore his conclusions were not conclusive. Only few people understood Tok Pisin at that time. Thus, he gave his own view of the ceremony despite him bribing the leader of the festival with a brand new knife. The process of attempts to get information about dam building ceremony was done in three different languages. The Kiap asked in Tok Pisin, which was later translated into Kote and then into Wantoat language, the answers came in the reverse order. Certainly in the process information about the dam building ceremony would have been distorted. This is all possible in any other similar situations in any part of New Guinea at that time.

Three patrol officers, Thomas Hough, Ian Downs and John Milligan were ordered to patrol hinterland areas of Morobe east of Salamaua They were instructed to issue village books and take censuses before returning to Salamaua on the coast. The patrols were expected to take two to three months.

**Thomas Alfred Hough**

Like many patrol officers who worked in New Guinea, there is not much biographical data about Thomas Hough. However, there is limited information about him by those who met him during his short lifetime in New Guinea. He was born in 1913 and graduated from Teacher's College in Brisbane in 1933.

WC Groves, the government anthropologist in New Guinea at that time, wrote an obituary soon after Hough's death. Soon after graduating from Teachers College in Brisbane, Hough had written to WC Groves; enquiring about working for the colonial administration in New Guinea. WC Groves replied to his letter and advised Hough to apply for Cadetship. Unfortunately, for Hough there were 1,200 applicants for the cadetships. The colonial administration only wanted 12 for the cadetship and Hough being 18th on the list was not successful in the first instance. Perhaps this goes to show that the department of Education was not hiring teachers during the Great Depression years in Australia and young people were looking for jobs.

This did not discourage Hough, within a short period of time he was in New Guinea and while Groves was in Buki near Finschaffen Hough arrived there with Patrol Officer Aitchison on Government Schooner Wandera in the middle of 1934. Groves did not meet Hough then, but his 'cook boy' saw Hough who reported; 'long fella master', 'e young fella

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8 I am grateful to Anne Philp who highlighted the issue while commenting on the paper at the conference.
man too much'. (a very tall young fellow)

They both did not meet in New Guinea until May 1936 when Hough was at Sydney University to attend lectures of W.C. Groves. In writing about Hough, Groves continued

'He turned out to be a clean cut, tall, keen young gentle man a fine type of an Australian secondary school product'. We spent an hour or two together in my room, while he told me of his interesting experiences around the Morobe hinterland, and showed me some of his excellent photographs of native life.5

Ian Downs had only met Tom Hough while is Salamaua and did not spend more than a week together before they both went on their patrols in 1936 wrote:

I can remember Tom Hough; a tall rangy fresh-faced young man with fair surf-bleached hair and pale blue eyes. I think he was studying architecture before he came to New Guinea: he spoke quietly and was fond of music, owning one of those portable wind-up gramophones that were still the latest thing in 1936. There were few photographs of family, and one of a girl, that he put in the patrol box with his bush clothes. On that evening the last time I saw him in Salamaua, he was playing gramophone records. I can’t remember why I wanted to ask him why he had come to New Guinea — he seemed a most unlikely person to be there—but I never did.10

Another person who met Hough was Jack O’Neill. Jack O’Neill a prospector in New Guinea between 1931 and 1937 had briefly met Thomas Hough. On Christmas day in 1935 while O’Neill was in Wampit. Hough turned up. 'On the twentieth of the month Cadet Patrol Officer Tom Hough called inspected my line of boys and stayed overnight; a very nice young feller.11 O’Neill was still in the District when he received message of wounding of Hough some months later, as he wrote:

'Word arrived from George Clark saying that the young Cadet Patrol Officer, Tom Hough who was through the Lower Watut some months earlier, had stopped an arrow in the lung, up in the mountains behind Kaiapit. It took four days to get him in, so he didn’t stand a chance, poor kid’12.

This is all we know about the patrol officer based on what has been written, there could be more from his relatives who may want to add to this. However, I will now proceed to discuss the patrol and the incident below.

The Patrol

According to Ian Downs account of 1989, Edward Taylor was District Officer in Charge of Morobe District in 1936. He was finding it difficult to cope with flood of missionaries, labor recruiters, and gold prospectors on mainland New Guinea at that time. The discovery of the highlands meant more gold prospectors and their desire to move into the region, Morobe administration had to meet their demands. In November 1936 there were only three patrol officers based in Salamaua, who were available for regular administrative patrols. The other patrol officers were at the established police post, which consisted only Wau, Bulolo and Finschaffen. The other areas of Morobe District were untouched or unknown including Wantoat.

In November 1936 the Montoro arrived from Sydney with two patrol officers, John Milligan and Thomas Hough; both have just completed a year of study at University of Sydney after two years in New Guinea. On board the ship were twenty constables from Bougainville who have just had also just completed their training at Rabaul Police Training Depot.

Soon after DO Taylor summoned Hough, Milligan and Ian Downs and told them that they were to go on patrol within a week. Hough was to patrol the watershed of Leron, Milligan to patrol Irumu and Erap, and Ian Downs to cover Wain, Nabak and Momalili areas inland from Bukaua. Downs had to patrol the largest area, but with a more civilized population, while:

'Hough had the smallest, but the inhabitants had only experienced half a dozen patrols'. We had to record a complete census, visit every hamlet and village and would probably be away for two or three months'.

Downs left for his patrol earlier while Milligan and Hough were later flown to Kaiapit to start their patrols. Hough and his team of police and carriers walked from Kaiapit and had arrived at a village on December 7, which was Sunday. This is when the wounding took place.

On December 17 a week later Downs received message from a runner telling him of wounding of Hough and that Milligan had abandoned his patrol in Irumu and Erap to go to assist Hough. Milligan later bought Hough out of Leron having been carried with the arrow still in his lung to Kaiapit after four days of walking. Hough was airlifted to Salamaua where he was admitted to the Hospital and died nine days later from complications he received from an arrow wound to his lungs. 'Arrows heads do not have to be poisoned tipped; if they are dirty, they will kill you if you don’t get them out in time', wrote Downs.

The colonial administration did not allow the event to pass by without any reaction. There was a retaliatory trip to the village to find the culprits and bring them to the justice. At least to teach the villagers who was in charge and to show them the law and order. As a result soon after the burial of Hough a first patrol was launched back to the Leron Watershed.
After the burial Alan Roberts and John Milligan returned to the Leron, where 17 men implicated in the attack gave themselves up and friendly contact was successfully established. Only the man who fired that arrow at Tom Hough was committed for trial in the Supreme Court. He was ultimately sentenced to five years imprisonment for manslaughter. The defense counsel paid for by the government argued that the man who fired the arrow at Hough had not even aimed at him. He said he was firing at the police.

Did the villagers give themselves up and was friendly contact re-established? Or was it as simple as that? Ask the villagers this and there is a totally different view. According to information gathered during my research it was not true. The villagers of Isat Tang had fled and the girl involved in carrying water to the kiap was exiled from the village. She was later married to a man from a village in Irumu area and now have descendants who also remembered the story.

According to information gathered the villagers had fled the original site before the arrival of Alan Roberts and John Milligan in December 1936. The village was deserted, when the patrol arrived, which in my view was a punitive expedition to take revenge for the death of Thomas Hough. The villagers knew well that the administration would take revenge. Having seen that the village was empty, the houses were set on fire and several native pigs were slaughtered. Many informants have been told of this and confirmed it with me during my research.

The Incident

As mentioned above there are two versions of the story, PIM reported an ambush took place, and after a struggle Hough was wounded and four natives were shot. The patrol arrived in a Suenda village on a Sunday. In this case Sunday too was a new concept for the people of the area, the Lutheran evangelist had just brought them under the new religion from the Markham valley. Thus, not all the village people have been fully converted to the new religion at that time. Thomas Hough had with him 12 new Buka policemen who recently graduated from Rabaul police training depot. The Buka in this case were a new race for the people of the area, they have never seen such people before. Thus for the people the Buka do not belong to the Lutheran church, they must have their own religion.

The start of miscommunication was a three-way factor; accordingly to the police

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13 The name Suenda is mistaken identity of the village. The village concerned is Isat Tang, while Suenda is a generic name for red betel nut plant and because several villages in this area were famous for the red betel nuts they were usually called the 'Suenda'. My investigations reveal to me that the original village in which the wounding took place was Isat Tang, and the descendents are now living along the Leron/Wantoat at Gapma Bum village. Note also that Suenda is a generic term and refers to several villages.
have been misinformed that the 'Kanaka provided young women' at will to the patrolling policemen. This was a false rumor that led to the wounding of Thomas Hough. There was also the role of the new religion, and that it must be remembered that nobody at that time understood any language that was to be used, by the villagers, the patrol officer and or the policemen. In the end no body understood anybody at that time when it was needed.

The village headman had instructed a young girl to fetch water and give to the *kiap*, including the policemen. The policemen had wandered off without their guns and soon approached the girl who was bringing water to the camp. Having heard stories of the kanaka giving girls to policemen, they attempted to entice her, in what language of communication is not known. The girl did not understand the police nor they her. The difficulty in communication led to the policemen being chased by villagers who were on their way to church service.

The chase of the policemen without their guns led directly towards the *Kiap* rest house, and as policemen ran past the *Kiap* who was up and attempted to stop the pursuit with his hands up. The policemen ran straight pass him and the firing arrows were in the midst. In an instant the *kiap* was between the policemen and the arrows. Unfortunately for the police, the one that they were supposed to protect was now injured, with an arrow in his lungs.

The report of the wounding reached the colonial administration late, Milligan who was patrolling Rumu and Erap was the closest and received message through village telegraph and went into help Hough. The policemen and villagers had started to carry wounded *kiap* to Kaiapit a long four-day's walk, still with the arrow in his lungs.

The Repercussion

The versions of the event discussed have inconsistencies. The villager’s side of the story is not included; the policemen side of the story is never there as well. If there was a girl on her way to deliver water to the camp, why it is not sure? Was there any punitive expedition taken after the burial? In an incident such as this it is not possible for the people to simply: ['gave themselves up and friendly contact was successfully established']. Surely some form of revenge must have been taken and not accounted for in the written records. Thus, I tend to agree with Robert Nicole who said 'Archives can not be politically neutral'. This is the reason why this event has to be studied and a more balanced account written. The colonial administration would have responded swiftly to show the natives who was in power. The villagers too on the other hand must have also reacted after the wounding of the *kiap*. In fact the villagers seem to have prepared for the party as in January of 1937 when they were approaching Kasindan [Asindan] village there were skirmishes as the villagers tried to kill

the officers.

On January 25, 1937, a special patrol was attacked while endeavoring to get in touch with the people of Kasindan [Asindan] village who had sown their tracks with sharp bamboo stakes. The natives threatened the patrol from hiding places behind the trees and actually fired two flights of arrows at the party while its interpreters were trying to induce them to adopt a more reasonable attitude. Ultimately just as the natives were preparing to fire a third flight of arrows, the officer in charge found it necessary in defense of his police and carriers to open fire. One of the attackers was killed and the remainder fled. This shows that the people were expecting a 'pay back' attack by the administration and they were ready for it. The villagers have made traps along the track of the patrols. They had planted sharp stacks of bamboo were planted along the track was a usual trap made by the people to capture wild pigs. It does also goes on to prove that it was not as easy to make peace with the people, but there was a tussle before the natives were brought under control.

We now have a version, which tells of an involvement with the people of another village [Asindan]. According to oral traditions, this confirms that the village of Isat Tang was first attacked soon after the death of Hough and the nearby Asindan village was raided again the following year in January. This was part of a punitive expedition that also wanted to arrest others involved in the wounding of the patrol officer. Asindan village had to be visited because relatives were seeking sanctuary with the relatives in this village. The villagers who fled Isat Tang village sought assistance and support from their relatives in nearby villages. Asindan being the closest village to the site of the wounding saw many of the relatives move there to hide from the colonial administration. Having hidden their relatives, the Asindan villagers knew very well that the administration would return to capture the culprits. As a result, they were prepared for the party knowing that the patrol would return to revenge, as the bamboo stakes along the track indicate. Deadly traps were set for pigs along the tracks with sharp bamboos in the pits along the track and often covered with dead branches and leaves. It could have been a disaster if the patrol had walked through this pits on the bush tracks leading to the village.

We know that four people were killed in the first patrol and the next patrol of January 1937 also saw another native killed at nearby Asindan village. This indicates to us that there had been a punitive expedition and people have died as oral testimonies all agree. All the informants did tell of me attacks by the colonial administration soon after the death of Hough. Supported by oral testimonies and evidences, the people of Isat Tang village must have sought sanctuary among their relatives in the nearby Asindan village. This was the main reason why Asindan villagers attacked the next patrol in January 1937.

16 It should be noted here that the former residents of Isat Tang village have sought refuge with their relatives in Asindan village, as they have always done in the past.
The Punitive Expedition

Was there a punitive raid after the death of the Patrol Officer? It seems that the written sources indicate there were two patrols into the area, one in December 1936 and the other in January 1937. The visits are discussed in brief in the written sources. There are no written evidences to tell us if there was indeed a punitive expedition to the Leron after the burial. However, there is evidence that there were two trips taken back to the Leron. Information about the two trips taken is also sketchy. There is oral tradition, which has been used to provide a villager perception of the trips taken. In light of this it is viewed as a punitive expedition, as there was resistance against the first and the second patrols.

According to PIM soon after the burial District Officer (DO) Ian Roberts and Assistant District Officer (ADO) Milligan with a well-prepared party left to visit the Leron again. There are practically no official reports of what happened on this return trip. But there are oral testimonies of what took place and the repercussions the people faced as a result of wounding Hough.

Knowing pretty well that the police and kiap would return to avenge the death of Hough no one remained in Isat Tang village. The people account for the return trip to Leron and there is enough evidence to support that there was a punitive expedition and the village was burnt down, and pigs slaughtered at will. The role of the police in wounding of their kiap should also be looked at and analyzed, as they were the initiators of the melee. According to Downs that police were ill prepared having just came out of training in Rabaul.

His police were inexperienced and still suffering from the elitists attitudes that Colonel Walstab fostered among the recruits in the police training center in Rabaul. …and Hough had no time to bring his police into gear…and the police who caused the trouble were returned to Rabaul with their services terminated. When they arrived in Rabaul, Walstab reinstated them\textsuperscript{17}.

It generally then showed that the policemen also lacked discipline and understand their role in attempting to bring law and order to the people. Villager memories and oral traditions of the event are also limited, as most eyewitnesses have died. However, the story had been transmitted from one generation to the next through the word of mouth. One of my informants is Stephen Mambon, the son of the paramount luluai of Nginonga village. Stephen Mambon would have heard these stories and information about the event from his


\textsuperscript{18} Stephen Mambon is now a respected elder of the villages in the area and had been a provincial member and later became the national Member for Markham between 1987-1992. He is a respected politician as a well versed with the history of the area. While interviewing to write his own biography I have collected numerous versions of the story relating to the wounding of Hough.
own father who was involved in apprehending and assisting the patrol. According to Stephen Mambon\textsuperscript{18} Isat Tang village was deserted before the arrival of the patrol that came later to capture the culprits and show the power of government. Mambon's father himself being the \textit{iluaia} of the area was involved in negotiating with the people to bring in the culprits.

The Written Sources

There are several written versions, which must be retold before I discuss the event using information collected during my interviews: Version one of the story reads:

Patrol Officer T.A. Hough was brought to Salamaua hospital by the Lutheran mission plane on December 11, with an arrow in his right lung. The patrol officer with eight native police went into the semi-controlled district near the Leron River in pursuit of a native murderer. The party on December 7 was suddenly attacked by a large number of natives. Hough though severely wounded by an arrow and by spears, continued to direct defence, and the natives were beaten off, after four had been shot. The native police with great difficulty conveyed him to a mission station, and the Lutheran plane on December 11 picked him up at Kaiapit aerodrome, on the upper Markham. District Officer Taylor and ADO Roberts have gone out to the Leron River district with a strong police party\textsuperscript{19}.

A month later PIM again wrote of the same event as follows:

Thomas Alfred Hough, a patrol officer in New Guinea administration who was admitted to Salamaua Hospital on December 11 with an arrow in his right lung died on December 20. He was 23 years of age. Hough with a party of native was seeking a native murderer in the semi-controlled country near the Leron River, in the Markham River district. On December 7 a large body of natives ambushed the party. In driving off the attack the patrol officer was severely wounded by an arrow and by spears. Four hostile native were shot. His police 'boys' carried Mr. Hough to the Lutheran mission station where the missionaries took him in their aeroplane to Salamaua hospital. A well equipped police party under DO Taylor and ADO Roberts was sent out to the Leron area to arrest the savages connected with the murderous attack. Early in January, Mr. Roberts returned to Salamaua with a native alleged to be the murderer of Hough. Roberts left again for the Leron to escort other natives said to

have been implicated in the affray.20

After fifty-three years in 1989 Ian Downs wrote another version of the story:

Thomas Alfred Hough was wounded on a Sunday morning, while lying in his hammock outside his tent and reading a book. He had twelve Bougainville police with him, none of who had ever been on a patrol before. They all wandered off unarmed to Suenda village, about 300 hundred meters away, to go to church. From evidence presented at the trial, it appeared the police have been refused entry into the Lutheran church because they were Catholics. They then tried to negotiate for a woman but had been refused: they had been led to believe at the training depot in Rabaul that it was normal for 'bush kanakas' to provide women for police on patrol. Finally one of them tried a direct approach to a girl carrying bamboo water containers, apparently on her way to deliver them to Hough's camp. The rest of the police gathered surrounding the young woman who began to run, dropping the bamboo containers and called for help. Village men grabbed bows and arrows and started to shoot. The police were unarmed, and ran to the camp with the bowmen sending showers of arrows behind them. The police rushed past Hough... and kept on running. Tom scrambled out of his hammock and for a moment was between the police and Suenda bowmen. He held up his arms, calling on them to stop. They shot at him and ran on after the fleeing police. Eight of the Bougainville police never returned. Some of them however managed to find Milligan, who had already learnt of Hough's wounding by 'village telegraph'. The Suenda people and Hough's cook did their best to look after the injured man until Milligan arrived. Tom Hough was the only person wounded in the whole affair: not much more than a month earlier he had been surfing at Manly21.

Another version is reported in Report to the Council of the League of Nations on the administration of the Territory of New Guinea 1st July 1936-30th June 1937 22. This seem to be the 'official' version of the incident:

As a result of hostilities, which occurred in the Leron Valley in December 1936, the service lost a promising officer in Patrol Officer Hough. After completing a successful in the northern section of the heavily populated Leron Watershed Mr Hough entered a small pocket in the mountains inhabited by the Suenda people, a group hitherto unvisited, to investigate tribal matters, which

had been reported to him, and to complete the consolidation of the area. The patrol met with opposition, however, and had to fire in self-defence. Three of the attackers were shot and Mr Hough received an arrow wound in the lung, which resulted in his death at Salamaua Hospital.

A patrol, in charge of the Assistant District Officer at Lae, immediately proceeded and succeeded in apprehending seventeen natives implicated in the attack on Hough's party. Before leaving the area, friendly contact was successfully established with the remaining natives of the group who were induced to resume their ordinary life.

The native who fired the arrow, which killed Hough, was committed for trial to the Supreme Court and ultimately sentenced to five-year imprisonment for manslaughter.

Subsequently on the 25th of January 1937 a special patrol was attacked while endeavouring to get in touch with the people of Kasindan [Asindan, village adjacent to the isatang village] who had sown their tracks with sharp bamboos stakes. The natives threatened the patrol from hiding places behind trees and actually fired two flights of arrows at the party while its interpreters were trying to induce them to adopt a more reasonable attitude. Ultimately, just as the natives were preparing to fire a third flight of arrows, the officer in charge found it necessary in defence of his police and carriers to open fire. One of the attackers was killed and the remainder fled.

In June, the Suenda natives brought before the court were taken back to their villages by a special patrol. Their people were friendly to the Administration party and, as the patrol moved on helpful relations were maintained throughout the Leron and Irumu watersheds.

I will attempt to discuss the three versions of the story below to show inconsistencies and how possible factual errors (if any) that has been reported in each of these versions above. Again this will be discussed in relation to oral testimonies from interviews conducted during my research.

Interpreting Written Sources

According to above one story tells us that the patrol was to arrest a murderer in the village. The next version tells us that it was a normal administration patrol to take census of all the
villages in the area. Hough had gone in with 12 Buka policemen who enticed a village girl who was bringing water to the camp. The girl fearing for her safety yelled for help. This led to the chase of the policemen who ran past Hough. These arrows were fired hitting him in the right lungs.

What happened later when DO Taylor and ADO Roberts return to Leron is a subject of further research. But surely this would have been a punitive expedition led to avenge the death of Hough. This will be provided by eyewitness accounts that had been passed on from one generation to generation through the word of mouth. In this case the story spread further north to central Wantoat valley where I heard it during my school days in the 1970s. Villagers often talked about killing of the kiap and later punitive expedition to show the power of the colonial administration.

People have been killed and injured during the episode. Thus to claim that Hough was the only person injured in the incident as quoted in versions above is not true. Village informants also confirm this during my research. While above reports claimed that only four natives were shot, the villagers told me more than four people were killed. We know from oral testimonies that spread among the Wantoat that the entire village was wiped out by a punitive expedition soon after death of Thomas Hough in December 1936. The other patrol in January 1937 that got attacked was because the people had sought refuge in Asindan village.

Analysis of Data

According to traditional belief system Wantoat was the centre of creation, all other human beings were sent from here to populate the earth. Only the natives nearby and Wantoat trade partners were included and identified in the myth until the arrival of Europeans, which meant reorganization, and shifting of the creation myth to include the new arrivals. Even the Japanese who arrived during the Second World War have been included in the reworked creation myth of the people of Wantoat. Thus the first visit of the white men to Wantoat had an impact on the traditional creation story and challenged beliefs and values of the people. The European was explained in terms of ngu‘it wa-ak; the son of the sun.

The ‘son of the sun’ was much powerful than the inhabitants left in Wantoat valley. He had returned with power. When the son of the sun arrived no one ventured close to him in fear of being burnt to death. The Wantoat elders then applied their goya23 to cool down the son of the sun before the people could approach him and had a chance to exchange for

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23 Goya is a generic term and that people often apply it to cool down any tension among the village people. If applied it is believed that the once tension would have cooled down between possible enemies and normalcy would have returned among the enemy people.
the valuable knives and axes.

It was amidst this situation that Hough went into the area, as there had been limited patrols before him. They were often seen dead spirits that had returned to the original place of creation. The patrol officers who arrived later must have been included in their belief systems and that the view of them as spirits of the dead must have waned. The wounding of Hough in this case seem to show that the people have come to realize that he was not a spirit but human like all of them. The punitive expedition was to the people 'a might of the power of the son of the sun cursed on them as a result of wounding of Hough.

The wounding of the 'son of the sun' has its own implications for the believers and thus created a form of spiritual and possible negative expectations among the people. The people did not expect the kiap to die and or be wounded in the first place. The kiap was a powerful spirit of the dead, impossible to be wounded. Having seen the result of the arrow wound the people knew that there was going to be revenge or a 'payback' by the colonial administration. The type of payback the people had expected and thus the village was deserted when the 'punitive expedition' were launched.

While the traditional beliefs played a role, the understanding and problems of communication would have also played a part. There were not many people who knew and understood Tok Pisin. It would have been difficult for the people to understand each other.

The Research Problem

Much of unexplored New Guinea remained as it was before 1930's and Wantoat was one of the 'untouched' areas of the District. Morobe District at that time would have been the coastal areas and the Morobe Patrol Post, which had been established by the Germans for replenishments of their ships en route Samoa in the South Pacific.

Written archival sources about early patrol work in much of hinterland of Morobe is not existent. The coast from Morobe Patrol Post through to Madang and Siassi islands would have seen Europeans and attempts made to pacify the people. The hinterland areas of mountain of Saruwaged, Finisterre and interior of Huon Peninsula remained to be explored.

For the Wantoat administrative patrol reports and documents are limited before 1936. As mentioned above my research showed that only Vial's reports have been written about Wantoat amidst language problems. The language and communication problem was still a major obstacle for the patrol taken by Hough as well. The new Buka policemen did not understand the language, so did the girl who was carrying water to the kiap. The news items in PIM too would have been biased, as people who went with the patrol did not write it and no views from the villagers were sought. For example, why did the girl yelled

for help? And who was responsible policemen involved in trying to entice the young girl?
What did the policemen say about the incident? Even the Supreme Court file needs to be
read (if it exists) to account for what took place in court.

It was written for a specific audience and had its own biases. Thus, the two versions
of the patrol indicated that one was a normal census patrol while the other states that the
patrol was in pursuit of a murderer. And because of this the patrol was ambushed. We now
have two different versions as to why the patrol officer was wounded. PIM, a monthly news
magazine reported items of interest to the reading public about events in the Pacific islands.

While PIM was doing that the people within the vicinity spread stories of the wounding
through the word of mouth. The story about this event has been recorded and passed on
through the word of mouth to the north into Wantoat valley and to the south along the
Leron. This had become an epic story and a 'myth' that has developed about the wounding
of the Kiap and I have heard of it during my school days in the village in 1970's,

I never thought seriously about studying the event until I read another article in
PIM by Ian Downs in 1989 fifty-three (53) years after the death of Hough. 24 This was
when I started researching for more information in the National Archives and read New
Guinea Annual Reports. This was supplemented by interviewing people. The interviews
with descendants were done to compliment written records during the years I was in the
village (2002-2003). The administration must have thoughtfully ignored that the event
took place. In a similar token after burial the Minister for External Territories wrote a
letter to the relatives of Thomas Hough expressing condolences and admitting it was an
occupational hazards of Patrol Officer's in New Guinea; as Downs writes:

As was customary there was a press release from the Minister for External Territories
and a letter of condolence to Hough's family. In those days it was generally
accepted that death or injury by violence from natives might be considered one of
the occupational hazards of a patrol officers' life. 25

The written sources must be complemented with oral traditions and testimonies of the
people. Stories about the wounding of the kiap and the resultant punitive expedition
would have been told and passed on from generation to generation among the villagers of
Leron/Wantoat.

The story had remained with the people to the present day and informants of the
former village easily relate to the event and identity descendants of the people involved.
It has become an 'epic story' that had spread among the people. The repercussions had
also showed how powerful the colonial administration was in challenging those who
'misbehaved'. There are practically no eyewitnesses left as they would have died, the story
had been passed on from generation to generation and it has now become a mythic event

with the people. We still therefore have yet to write a good and balanced history of this event. This is why there is a need for oral testimonies about the event so that it can shed more light to the event and that the villager views are taken into account. In the end a more balanced history of the event will be written.

**Conclusion**

Unfortunately historians and social scientist often neglect and refuse to use oral traditions and belief systems of many illiterate and 'unwritten societies'. Yet at the same time when we are faced with limited written sources, we are forced to use oral testimonies and interview people to if possible get first hand information about an event that took place in the past. We are now left with a challenge; do we rely on written sources, when there is none or limited written documentation about the event? At the same time do we rely on oral traditions and eyewitness accounts if there are no written sources? And so how far do we go into oral traditions?

This is the problem with the Wantoat in this case; there is not much written about Wantoat before the arrival of this patrol. There are no records of past events; there is however limited information about the incident in PIM, but no mention of it in official patrol reports and or District Reports and eventual court case that resulted after the arrest of the culprits. The reports were written by Europeans to suit their reading public. Furthermore, PIM gives two versions for the reasons for the patrol and two versions of the event that led to wounding of Hough, thus there is inconsistency.

There is no villager perception and views of the incident. According my investigation it revealed that what has not been documented in records and archives of colonial administration. Who are we suppose to believe, there is however enough oral sources and information about the incident and information has been passed on from one generation to the next and are still in the minds of descendants as my investigation found out. The descendants of the village of the original wounding of patrol officer now live along the Leron Wantoat road at Gapmabum village not too far from the original village site.

Several issues come to light in view of problems with written sources at the time of first contact and role of oral traditions and information that have been passed on from one generation to the next. Perhaps this goes on to show that archives and records about first contact situation on the island of New Guinea should not be taken as factual, but questions have to be asked before conclusions are drawn of any written accounts.

Why had there been no reports by colonial administration on the wounding of the *kiap*? Certainly the incident was a blow to the administration that had been careful not to cause any harm to the people. At the same time the colonial administration had to defend their activities against possible condemnation by the League of Nations. However, the wounding of the *kiap* and eventual death meant the administration had to respond in a way that the people are taught who was in power. In light of these views the administration had to be very
careful not to expose the event. The villagers suffered at the hands of the punitive expedition but had no option to revolt as there was no one to bring the complains to at that time.

The fact that news about wounding of Kiap and a punitive expedition that was taken to the Leron after the burial, shows that the colonial administration was not willing to expose their weakness to control the ‘savages’ and that the fear of condemnation was present as well. It further invites the problems for the written record, which was written to suit the needs of the colonial administration and to their own taste.

Historical evidences and reliance of written sources for historical studies comes into conflict with such incidences. There is therefore a need to look at oral traditions and stories that have developed around such events when studying them. There is a need to use both oral and written sources to supplement each other. Inscriptions on the burial grave of Hough at Salamaua cemetery remain and reads: In loving memory of my dear son T. A. HOUGH, P.O. Who died of wounds from a native arrow 19th December 1936

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Abstract

An Australian Patrol Officer (Kiap) Thomas Alfred Hough was wounded on December 7th 1936 in his right lung by bowmen from Isat Tang village located between central Wantoat valley and the Leron valley. After four days of walking on 11 December the carriers carried him to Kaiapit mission station where he was airlifted to Salamaua Hospital. He died on 20 December with complications he received from the arrows aged 23 years old.

I heard about the event while in Primary school in 1970's and read excerpts in 1989 when a former Kiap Ian Downs wrote some 50 years after the event. My investigations led me to limited written sources and in depth interviews with relatives of the villagers between 2002 and 2003. There are limited written sources about the event. Villagers who witnessed the event have died but oral testimonies have been passed on from one generation to the next. Based on these limited sources the paper attempts to write a more balanced account of events that took place after the death of the patrol officer using oral testimonies and limited written sources.

Résumé

Un agent de police australien (Kiap), Thomas Alfred Hough, fut blessé le 7décembre 1936 au poumon droit par des archers d’Isat Tang, village situé entre la vallée centrale de Wantoat et la vallée du Leron. Après quatre jours de marche, le 11 décembre, il fut transporté à la mission de Kaiapit d’où on l’évacua par avion vers l’hôpital de Salamaua. Il décédé le 20 décembre, en raison des complications consécutives aux flèches reçues, à l’âge de 23 ans.

L’histoire en anthropologie. Controverse néo-calédonienne et étude de cas (Maré, Îles Loyauté)

Charles Illouz

Les théories anthropologiques issues de l’ethnographie calédonienne ont propo"sé des hypothèses relatives à la dimension historique des sociétés kanakes sur la base de chroniques, fragmentaires et d’importance inégales. Toutefois, ces travaux, réunissant souvent une riche information ethnographique, n’éclairent que peu ou prou les processus qui conduisissent aux ruptures régulières de la reproduction sociale et qu’on ne saurait confondre avec une simple causalité événementielle. De manière assez générale, ces approches ne se défèrent pas d’un positivisme, qui prend souvent la forme d’un fonctionnalisme reformulé dans un langage moderniste, celui des « stratégies ». Elles sont ainsi placées dans l’impossibilité d’envisager le caractère processuel des échanges sociaux commandé, comme je propose de le montrer, par une configuration hautement conflictuelle des rapports sociaux, au premier rang desquels sont les rapports de parenté agnatiques. Ainsi, l’essentiel de la problématique guerrière qui traverse toute l’histoire des chefferies de Maré ne peut s’envisager en dehors de l’examen d’un système d’échanges asymétriques, reconnu sous la forme d’une loi – la loi du *puce* –, recelant en tant que telle les conditions de sa transgression. L’intelligibilité du régime d’historicité maréen dépend ainsi de l’analyse des modalités de reproduction des rapports sociaux telles qu’elles peuvent être observées aujourd’hui. Afin de comprendre en quoi cette approche se distingue de celle qui a longtemps dominé, et domine encore dans une certaine mesure, l’anthropologie de la région, il ne semble pas inutile de revenir rapidement sur les positions et les pratiques scientifiques qui ont marquées le plus significativement la recherche en sciences sociales sur les sociétés mélanésiennes de Nouvelle-Calédonie.

La « marche » de l'anthropologie néo-calédonienne

Celui qui eut longtemps le plus d'influence institutionnelle sur le développement de l'ethnologie de cette région est sans doute Jean Guiart. Défenseur d'un pragmatisme méthodologique qui s'appuyait sur l'érudition d'un comparatisme du proche en proche, il prétendait décourager toute tentative d'envisager des principes sociaux réguliers à quelque niveau que ce soit de l'analyse. Passé maître dans l'art du contre-exemple rédhibitoire, il ne voulait accorder grâce qu'aux *faits* et à la *réalité* invoqués comme *ultima ratio* disqualifiant toute perspective théorique ou la construction d'un quelconque « idéal type » provisoire. Sa thèse d'État (1963), fidèle à cette orientation, est un modèle d'ascèse laborieuse. Le plan du chapitre qu'il consacre à Maré obéit ainsi au principe de l'inventaire méthodique : village après village, il énumère les clans et les lignages en révélant, les alliances fondaterices, les titres et fonctions et leurs modalités cérémonielles d'actualisation. Il prononça une défense vigoureuse de son approche dans un article important chargé de répondre aux critiques qui lui furent adressées par Lévi-Strauss lors de la soutenance de sa thèse. Il ne s'agit pas ici de présenter une critique des conditions d'« équilibre » éminemment contestables, qu'il assigne à l'enquête de terrain, mais de montrer combien la relation que cet ethnologue nouait avec ses informateurs et le type de portée qu'il accordait à leur parole furent reproduites dans les mêmes termes une génération plus tard par les recherches d'Alban Bensa. L'exercice de comparaison linéaire entre l'article que Jean Guiart publia en 1966, pour ne retenir que ce texte, et ceux qu'Alban Bensa publia entre les années 1980 et 2000 est particulièrement édifiant.

Ces deux chercheurs s'opposèrent pourtant avec une certaine âpreté à propos de leurs hypothèses respectives et de leur portée heuristique dans le champ de l'ethnologie néo-calédonienne. Mais les désaccords ainsi formulés dissimulaient à peine un accord plus fondamental dont il est possible de retrouver la substance, et d'envisager ainsi le champ de recherche duquel l'un et l'autre se détournent. Tous deux défendent l'idée que les conditions de l'enquête, si elles sont dominées par l'ethnologue débarrassé de tout idéalisme sur la « tradition », permettent d'appréhender l'intention qui détermine les déclarations d'un

2. La diatribe récréative qu'il a publiée sous le titre Sociétés Canaques, Idées fausses, Idées vraies (2002) rend bien compte de l'humeur comminatoire qui régnait dans le séminaire qu'il assura de longues années à l'École pratique des hautes études.
5. Les conditions d'équilibre consistent à « mettre tous les informateurs possibles en concurrence publique » (*idid.* : 107). De quel droit ? L'ethnologie disputerait-elle ses buts à l'investigation policière, qu'il faille que les informateurs sollicités pussent passer aux aveux ou se disculper d'un projet sournois en amenant la preuve de ce qu'ils disent ? Sans compter que les versions consensuelles auxquelles on parvient « en concurrence publique » relèvent de la langue de bois qui caractérise toutes les vérités officielles. Mais l'auteur, il est vrai, avait prévu l'objection, à laquelle il n'apporte néanmoins pas de réponse.

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informateur, d’orienter alors pertinemment l’entretien et de décrypter des revendications, que le discours des intéressés camoufle finement.

« [...] j’aboutis à constater que tous les informateurs mentaient, plus ou moins, par omission, quand ce n’était pas plus grave. L’idée naïve de la noblesse d’âme de l’ethnologue qui veut préserver une tradition menacée livra bientôt la place à une volonté entêtée de rechercher l’inexprimé au-delà de ce qu’on me livrait [...] (je souligne. Guiart, 1966 : 110). »

Cette volonté entêtée de Guiart de se départir d’une naïve noblesse d’âme pour rechercher au-delà des mensonges des informateurs la vérité dissimulée recouvre exactement la conviction d’Alban Bensa :

« Cesser de considérer les discours canaques comme des expressions de la « pensée mythique » ou des indices d’une vision philosophique du monde, mais y voir des fragments, formalisés ou non, de projets narratifs qu’il s’agit de rapporter au champ social et politique que les narrateurs souhaitent modifier à leur avantage, c’est du même coup remettre en cause tout une conception fixiste, traditionaliste, de la société (Bensa, 1995 : 260). »

Et plus loin :


Guidés par un sens subtil de leurs intérêts qu’ils sentiraient sans cesse menacés, les gens – les Kanaks réels –, recourant à des discours symboliques et usant de manière experte d’une rhétorique qui répondrait à l’attente intelligente de leurs congénères, ne prendraient la parole que pour préserver ou conquérir un avantage (statut, nom, terre, que sais-je ? ...).

« La manipulation d’un code dont chacun connaît les règles dépasse cependant le simple jeu de société pour entrer dans le domaine opératoire. Le langage et la syntaxe des noms et des symboles constituent un moyen essentiel de communication, dans un subtil affrontement d’esprits où l’informulé se transmet aussi bien que ce qui est publiquement proclamé. Il y a, bien sûr, des artistes en ce genre. Mais tout adulte a intérêt à suivre ce qui se dit, quand cela ne serait que pour tenter d’éviter que, par touches minimales, son statut social ne soit remis en cause par autrui (Guiart, 1966 : 110). »

À plus de vingt années d’intervalle, les deux ethnologues se rejoignent en accord parfait :

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« Le narrateur parvient à ses fins au prix d’un audacieux détournement du système symbolique qui code les positions et les stratégies politiques du clan rival (Bensa, 1988 : 279). »

Et :

« On en arrive ainsi à reconnaître l’existence d’une espèce de code, dont une partie du signifié reste informulée, ne pouvant être décryptée que par rapport à la constellation des rapports sociaux propres au sujet parlant (Guiart, 1966 : 110). »

En rapportant l’enjeu informulé des confrontations entre les individus ou les groupes sociaux à un objet disputé, l’ethnologue – pris au piège des sollicitations auxquelles son enquête le pousse auprès de ses informateurs peu enclins à formuler – recueille, derrière des aveux « euphémiques », dit-il souvent, ce qui fait sens dans sa propre configuration culturelle. Il reste persuadé qu’un « narrateur » ou un « sujet parlant », déployant qui plus est une subtile maîtrise oratoire de la communication solennelle, vient expressément et à mots couverts désigner l’objet de sa convoitise. Il croit que la raison vraie, la finalité de la démarche du sujet réside effectivement dans l’objet convoité. Il ignore ainsi le poids de la prédisposition qui pèse sur un sujet social sollicité l’obligeant à la seule orientation discursive qui lui soit possible d’envisager, celle qui indexe un rival objectif situé pour cela à l’extérieur de son groupe. Or, toute la coercition qui dynamise son action sociale est forgée dans son groupe, et c’est envers et contre son propre groupe qu’il prend la parole. Les enquêtes que j’ai menées à Maré me conduisent en effet à estimer que si un « sujet parlant » entreprend de défendre un intérêt objectif, il demeure soumis à un ordre d’autorité, et partant de coercition, qui échappe pour l’essentiel à sa lucidité. L’orientation qu’il donne à son action ne relève pas, en effet, de ce qu’il laisse entendre vouloir faire, ou de ce qu’il croit vouloir faire. N’y a-t-il pas d’ailleurs un certain retour à la « vision philosophique du monde »5 que de penser que le but objectif – fut-il politique – qu’un Kanak s’assigne recouvre la totalité du champ subjectif dans lequel il se meut ?

Il est assez curieux de retrouver sous la plume de Bensa un reproche qu’il adresse à Guiart dans des termes qui pourraient tout aussi bien s’appliquer à sa propre recherche :

« Guiart, qui, retranché dans l’intimité insondable d’un prétendu discours indigène dont il se veut le greffier fidèle, nous révèle sur le tard que ces matériaux « touffus, fuyants » sont fournis par une « civilisation de quasi-faussaires » engagés dans les « manipulations » individualistes d’une réalité qui « se rit de tous les efforts de classement ou de définition »..., bref de toute clarification scientifique5. »

Au demeurant, les difficultés d’analyse de cette approche sont soldées par le doute,

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laudateur, qu'il suffit de jeter sur l'intention des agents locuteurs - « faussaires, menteurs, bluffeurs » -, qualifiée d'intention hautement politique, de stratégie, en tant que telle valorisée par l'ethnologue, et révélant la malléabilité des règles, dont en tout état de cause on ne nous dit jamais ce qu'elles sont... Il s'agit là in fine d'un positivisme qui, voulant se soustraire à toute tentation insidieuse d'un retour au structuralisme ahistorique, produit une forme d'essentialisme masqué : l'invocation d'une prétendue réalité qui relèverait de l'action, « pratique » précise-t-on, venant ainsi tirer d'affaire l'anthropologue anti-structuraliste prévenu par ailleurs de la désuétude théorique de toute philosophie de l'histoire.

Sur le terrain néo-calédonien, les sciences sociales sont ainsi soumises à un perpétuel examen de conscience laborieux qui pousse curieusement les leaders du parti anthropologique à anticiper sur tout soupçon de participation indirecte à la reproduction de la domination coloniale, en s'engageant par exemple dans la production d'énoncés que ne reconnaîtraient pas les « dominés ». La sympathie que l'ethnologue porte ainsi aux sujets dominés l'expose souvent à la tentation d'inscrire sa recherche dans la perspective d'une validation éthique. Le chercheur produit alors un discours idéologique de plus, quel que soit le succès d'estime qu'il rencontre... Ce reproche à peine voilé, Pierre Bourdieu l'avait déjà adressé de vive voix à Alban Bensa :

« La vision coloniale enferme le colonisé dans une essence ; le renversement anticolonialiste, qu'il soit opéré par les colonisés eux-mêmes ou par des « sympathisants », ethnologues ou pas, peut les enfermer dans une forme inversée de l'essence, qui n'en reste pas moins une essence, une nature. Peut-on promouvoir la particularité à la dignité de valeur, comme porte à le faire le souci de « réhabilitation », sans toutefois la consacrer, la canoniser et, par là, l'éterniser ? (Entretien avec Pierre Bourdieu, in Bensa, 1985 : 281). »

Le positivisme bien partagé de Guiart et Bensa prétend ainsi rendre aux Kanaks une autorité sur le sens sociologique et historique qu'ils entendent eux-mêmes donner à leur pratiques, autorité d'autant plus complète qu'elle conduit l'anthropologue éclairé sur ce point à se poser les seules questions qui lui reviendraient alors de droit, celles qui portent sur les conditions d'exercice de sa discipline. Bernard Juillerat observe ainsi que, pour certains anthropologues aujourd'hui, la recherche a opéré, à la suite de toute sorte de rejets, une conversion volontariste de ses paradigmes, au rang desquels l'anthropologie apparaît elle-même comme objet de l'anthropologie :

« En ce nouveau tournant de siècle, et depuis une vingtaine d'années, l'anthropologie a tendance à quitter du regard son objet habituel, les sociétés autres ou même nôtres, pour s'interroger sur elle-même, sur sa façon de penser et

de rendre compte de son objet, sur les résidus idéologiques issus de la colonisation qui l’habitent encore parfois, sur ses méthodes mises en œuvre sur le terrain, sur la relation bireférentielle entre l’ethnographe et son « informateur », mais surtout sur ses écrits « scientifiques » destinés essentiellement aux confrères de la profession et où ce nouvel anthropologue — qui a choisi de délaisser l’objet extérieur de l’anthropologie pour l’anthropologie elle-même comme objet de réflexion — se plaît à repérer les « lapsus » ethnocentriques ou phallocentriques, mais aussi les pièges que tout commentaire sur l’autre suppose et dont les textes de la littérature ethnologique classique sont générux, mais qui ne sont pas pour autant totalement absents des études récentes.

On reste également perplexe à la seule lecture d’un titre comme L’ethnologie en marche, dont il faut comprendre, outre que l’ethnologie en question va peut-être sauver le monde, qu’elle ne cesse, sur le terrain néo-calédonien, de marcher sur des œufs. Assez récemment la déontologie de l’ethnologue poursuivait sa percée en ces termes :

« Il faut immédiatement ajouter que la posture compréhensive, adoptée très fréquemment par l’anthropologie, […] est elle-même problématique : si elle ne manque pas de part en part les Kanaks comme le fait l’ignorance colonisatrice, on peut se demander si elle ne procède pas également d’une dépossession, en parlant à la place des Kanaks, alors qu’ils pourraient eux-mêmes raconter leur histoire, en étant mieux placés que nous pour cela. »

De ce point de vue, la « décolonisation de la recherche » relèverait bien d’une validation éthique sur laquelle les colonisés auraient à se prononcer en priorité. On peut objecter, comme on l’a déjà fait, que les « Français », par exemple, ne sont sans doute pas les mieux placés pour faire l’histoire de Vichy, et partant, pourquoi pas, n’importe quel moment de l’histoire de France, puisque toute histoire est celle d’une division. On ne sait d’ailleurs pas très bien ce que veut dire « Français » des lors qu’il s’agit de l’écriture de l’histoire, ni, dans le cas qui nous intéresse, « Kanaks » ! Les Kanaks — ou l’instance que ce vocable semble vouloir évoquer : une communauté parlant d’une seule voix ? — auraient donc pouvoir de proferer indubitablement une parole de vérité parce que portés par la volonté de secouer le joug de la colonisation… Même sous ce rapport, on voit mal ce qui, justifiant que les « Kanaks » entreprennent de « faire leur propre histoire », rendrait la démarche de l’historien non kanak particulièrement « problématique » ou suspecte de « dépossession » ? Une des conditions de la recherche historique, quelle que soit l’identité communautaire ou nationale du chercheur, c’est qu’elle est libre — la condition éthique

n’étant ici que le pendant d’une condition méthodologique –, ou du moins aspire à se réaliser comme telle sans répondre aux attentes d’une communauté quelle qu’elle soit, et, faudrait-il dire, sachant qu’elle ne peut les ignorer, en les ignorant.

L’actualité de l’information ethnographique

Un exemple peut venir illustrer utilement ce retrait réflexif de l’anthropologue « stratégiste » ou « greffier fidèle » devant son objet d’étude. Ce mouvement de décrochage intellectuel auquel il veut parfois donner un caractère de consternation ou d’indignation morale procède par dénégations qui traissent les nostalgies scientocratiques du maître d’école. Cet ethnologue12 met en doute avec la dernière énergie une information qu’il a lui-même jadis recueillie et recouverit aussitôt d’un voile pusillanime. Il est vrai que l’information en question a de quoi heurter la sensibilité mondaine d’un fonctionnaire de la République puisqu’il s’agit de pratiques touchant aux excréments et à l’usage symbolique, de ce simple point de vue, réel, qu’en fait un personnage particulier dévoué à la protection magique de l’Aïné ultime13 de la chefferie.

Au-delà de l’anecdote, qui offre l’occasion d’apprécier la consommation du jugement de l’ethnologue, je voudrais poser la question de l’actualité de pratiques sociales qui semblent marquées, suivant la formulation qu’on préfère, du sceau du paganisme le plus ancien ou de celui d’un mode de publicité sociale visant à la réactualisation de la position singulière de l’Aïné ultime. Il s’agit ainsi 1) de répondre à l’objection selon laquelle la pertinence ethnographique actuelle de l’information incriminée, sa portée performatice dans le champ des rapports sociaux contemporains, serait fortement écornée dans un contexte culturel où, progressivement depuis cinq ou six générations déjà, l’expérience des sujets sociaux maréens déborde les limites de l’univers strictement « traditionnel » ; 2) par ce biais, de soulever la question de l’historicité du présent ou autrement dit de la mise en forme de la connaissance historique par les gens de Maré eux-mêmes, du régime d’historicité maréen, pour reprendre la formulation de F. Hartog14, porté au cœur des procédures de reconduction de l’autorité sociale.

Rappelons tout d’abord l’objet du litige. Il existe au sein de toutes les chefferies de Maré un personnage nommé acania kug(o) ou acania mekug(o), littéralement « maître du mal souillé ». Pour s’élérer comme figure sociale redoutable et conquérir la foy des sujets de la chefferie, ce personnage se présente aux regards des gens de Maré comme porteur de l’abjection absolue. J’y reviendrai en détails. Cette fonction à la cour de l’Aïné ultime

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13. Je traduis par « Aïné ultime » le terme maré retok, littéralement « les-aïnés », désignant d’un pluriel le personnage que l’administration coloniale évoque sous le nom de « grand chef ».

Telle est donc la valeur du service proposé : la « crise » que ces « étrangers » s’engagent à traiter est celle qui affecte un lien social élémentaire. Ce lien est placé sous le signe d’une dette qui oblige sa vie durant un cadet envers son aîné. Les procédures définissant les modalités d’acquittement de cette dette, qui ordonne les fratries masculines aux différents niveaux de production des rapports sociaux (section de fratrie < fratrie lignagère < fratrie clanique < « fratrie » de chefferie), constitue sans doute l’objet le plus riche de l’analyse anthropologique sur la société de Maré. Bien qu’il ne me soit pas possible d’envisager ici l’exposé de chacune de ces procédures cérémonielles, je présenterai le principe général qui les gouverne de façon synthétique en précisant qu’un tel principe réunit du même coup toutes les conditions de sa transgression.

Un homme trouve les fondements de son être social dans la position qu’occupe celui qui le précède dans l’ordre théorique des naissances, il y a toujours un aîné avant lui. Ainsi les aînés situés aux différents niveaux de l’ensemble social configuré en sections de fratrie, en fratries lignagères, en fratries claniques, en « fratries » de chefferie voient tôt ou tard leur statut se dérober sous eux : l’aîné de section de fratrie s’acquitte d’un « don de reconnaissance » (puiec) envers l’aîné de fratrie lignagère, lequel s’en acquitte auprès

17. Puisqu’il faut préciser pour couper court à la critique de fort mauvais aloi du même ethnologue : Guiart, ibid. : 79-sq.
de l’aîné de fratrie clanique, lequel dépose le sien devant l’Aîné ultime de la chefferie. Tous les sujets sociaux « dépendent » ainsi, à quelque niveau, d’un aîné. Le lien social élémentaire prend donc la forme de la relation immédiate – indécomposable – aîné-cadet, relation fondamentalement ambivalente : l’aîné est toujours le cadet d’un aîné supérieur. Ce lien seul se matérialise à de multiples niveaux de l’existence sociale individuelle par cette « imposition », impérative et régulière, que le cadet doit acquitter auprès de son aîné, et que la glose locale invite à traduire par « don de reconnaissance » (puec). Il n’est pas un moment important de l’existence du cadet qui n’appelle l’attribution d’un puec. À chaque occasion de mariage dans la fratrie clanique, par exemple, il prend part à la constitution des biens matrimoniaux en s’acquittant d’un puec placé derrière celui de son aîné immédiat. Ce puec n’étant pas directement reçu par l’aîné immédiat mais venant se fondre dans la compensation matrimoniale, il est nommé « don » (eo). Comme « don de reconnaissance », il constitue l’acquittement personnel et impératif d’une dette qui établit le statut de son aîné. Une telle dette revêt un caractère cursif, elle court de génération en génération pour constituer toute la réalité masculine de l’organisation sociale à Maré.

Cette dette, en effet, est engendrée par le service obligeant du « père » (cecen) prenant en charge, de la naissance au mariage d’un fils cadet, sa représentation cérémonielle. Le « père » inscrit ainsi son rejeton dans la position hiérarchique qui lui revient dans sa section de fratrie, position qu’il incombera à ce dernier de tenir après son mariage en s’acquittant du puec auprès de son aîné immédiat chaque fois que la fratrie clanique sera convoquée pour une tâche cérémonielle. L’entrée en scène autonome du cadet se fait, si l’on peut dire, à retardement, et l’on conçoit bien l’obligation qui lui est faite alors de se soumettre en personne à la loi du puec puisque parfois s’accompagner de quelque réticence à observer, comme les rituels de flagellation des jeunes gens le montrent, une réserve de parole en présence de son aîné18. La relation d’obligé/prébendier trouve en effet sa confirmation dans la prescription des attitudes : un cadet doit se taire en présence de son aîné. Ainsi la loi du puec, le régime de dette congénitale qui assure la position de chacun dans la fratrie, est une loi d’ordonnancement des prises de parole.

Or, il n’est pas évident que le puec dû à l’aîné apparaisse clairement aux yeux du cadet comme le retour fait au service prévenant qu’il reçut du « père », dont le fils aîné prit la position19. En effet, bien qu’ici l’intérêt ne soit pas au principe de la dette, dont la vertu réside dans son effet reproducteur de l’ordre des choses – la hiérarchie sociale des « pères » devenant celle des fils –, on conçoit qu’une telle loi de transmission du recouvrement de la dette, qui

19. Faut-il prévenir le contre-exemple, dont les occurrences ne manquent pas, de quelque cadet qui vint reléguer son aîné et se substituer à lui pour tenir la position du père ? Objection qui ne manquerait pas de trahir une certaine naïveté sociologique. Peu importe en effet qui « est » l’aîné, puisque la bonne raison invoquée pour justifier cette inversion suffirait à constituer la proclamation de la force arbitraire de la règle qui veut que la position d’aîné est une position d’excellence et qu’à ce titre il vaut mieux un bon « cadet » qu’un mauvais « aîné ».
oblige de manière univoque le cadet, puisse renfermer en même temps les conditions de sa transgression. Que le cadet obligé, auquel aucune alternative n'est offerte, vienne à douter du bien-fondé de son obligation, vienne à n'accorder que peu de crédit à la parole de son ainé, un incident quelconque lui sera prétexte à signifier son manque de foi, à émettre les signes d'une non reconnaissance, bientôt, à donner libre cours à son insoumission. La structure diachronique de la loi du puec inscrit la possibilité de sa transgression dans le cadre des opportunités historiques. L'aléa de l'insoumission affleure ainsi à l'horizon de chaque génération... Tout un versant de l'histoire sociale pré-coloniale de Maré, dont le dossier a longuement été constitué par le travail monumental de Marie-Joseph Dubois, s'éclaire ainsi : les guerres sont le produit d'une structure « explosive », celle de la relation ainé-cadet20.

C'est ici que les acania répondent aux sollicitations des Ainés ultimes. En effet, une structure si fortement asymétrique présente un angle béant par lequel des groupes « étrangers », prestataires de répressions auprès des Ainés ultimes solliciteurs, s'introduisent. Pour le maintien de la loi du puec, ou sa restauration si elle vient à être « en panne », les acania libèrent la puissance (nene) « courroucée » du kaze, qui parvient à abattre les récalcitrants et les rebelles, dit-on, à distance. Encore faut-il convaincre que la mort relève toujours de l'action du kaze. L'acania s'employait ainsi à inscrire au crédit du renfort occulte de la magie qu'il détient la mort des hommes tombés sous le casse-tête ou la lance des guerriers ; il se laisse aujourd'hui volontiers désigner comme l'auteur d'un grand nombre de décès inexpliqués ; ceux de fautifs présumés, dont la rumeur rappelle l'insolente publique qui un jour les désigna. Mais cette fois encore, l'efficacité du kaze repose entièrement sur la foi que les sujets sociaux nourrissent à son sujet...

L'exposé des différentes fonctions d'acania et l'analyse des rapports entre les spécialités reconnues à chacun d'eux à la cour de l'Aïné ultime ne peuvent être envisagés ici en détails. Retenons néanmoins la complémentarité duale de manipulations symboliques qui construit le pouvoir de ces personnages. Une catégorie d'acania détient la magie kaze qui permet de frapper tous ceux qui tombent en disgrâce, une autre s'empare de tout ce que le corps de l'Aïné ultime produit de dégradations organiques et d'immondices. C'est l'exposé des œuvres de cet acania dit « souillé » qui produisit l'irritation de l'ethnologue Guiart. Voyons donc cela de plus près21 :

L'« os de cadavre » (du-re-kaze), l'instrument meurtrier des acania, était (est) prélevé

20. On trouve dans l'important corpus ethnohistorique constitué sur Maré (Dubois, 1975, 1977, 1978a, 1978b) les témoignages multiples de cette tension incessante, structurale, entre ainés et cadets. On y trouve les relations mythico-historiques qui exposent un tel motif pour justifier la segmentation des lignages, la constitution de chefferies fraternelles rivales. L'enquête récente, dans le contexte colonial qui a mis un terme aux procédures guerrières de règlement des tensions et des conflits, confirme néanmoins que l'organisation sociopolitique et territoriale des chefferies de Maré est historiquement établie sur des alliances militaires dont la structure relève du modèle agonistique ainé-cadet.

sur le cadavre même d’un Aîné ultime. Sa dépouille était pourtant rendue introuvable, ou presque, par les soins experts de l’acania-souillé. Attaché intimement à la personne de l’Aîné ultime, il s’appliquait à en absorber les excréments, d’une manière générale tout ce que son corps libérait. Si l’Aîné ultime était blessé ou malade, il consommait ses crachats, son pus, son sang. « Il touche les saletés de l’Aîné ultime » (ci ru(e) kug(o) o doku), il est « celui à qui échoit le paquet » (la « poubelle ») (ngom cili ke-re-ael). Il mange les restes de ses repas. S’il est seul à supporter le contact de l’Aîné ultime, seul l’Aîné ultime supporte son contact. Il fait ainsi disparaître dans son estomac tous les déchets de l’Aîné ultime, jusqu’aux chairs putréfiées de son cadavre. On assure, en effet, que l’acania-souillé va, dans la grotte secrète où il a caché (ulan) le corps de l’Aîné ultime qu’il lui revient de confisquer, « boire » le cadavre avec un roseau tout au long de sa décomposition (ci kua bi re tango ne guashow). Depuis que les évangélistes ont convaincu les gens de Maré d’ensevelir leurs morts, l’acania-souillé est enterré hors des cimetières, et personne aujourd’hui n’ose manger dans une assiette qu’il a touchée. Par l’escamotage complet dont son corps, vivant ou mort, fait l’objet, l’Aîné ultime devient proprement intangible au commun des mortels. Il ne subsiste de lui, constitué sur ses excréments et son cadavre, qu’un double mortifère, l’acania-souillé lui-même.

Comment faut-il comprendre l’exposé de cette macabre besogne ? Tout ceci est aussi notoire que, bien entendu, invérifiable. L’objection de l’ethnologue incrédule est d’autant plus plaisante qu’il recueillit lui-même disais-je ce donné ethnographique en ces termes : « [Les acania-souillés] disposent des restants de ses repas [du chef] et du fruit de ses selles22. » Curieuse expression, n’est-ce pas, qui ne suscite de la part de l’auteur aucun commentaire particulier, comme s’il estimait en avoir déjà trop dit… Pourquoi donc ce que l’on recueille de sources multiples sur le « travail » (ruac) de l’acania-souillé ne pourrait constituer une information digne de figurer au dossier des pratiques symboliques de la chefferie ? Parce que, nous dit l’ethnologue positiviste, « … les Mélanésiens connaissaient le danger médical du contact avec les bactéries développées au cours de la décomposition du cadavre. Ils savaient le danger mortel d’absorber les toxines du cadavre. Il suffirait d’une micro-plaie de la bouche pour entraîner une septicémie mortelle23. » On reste quelque peu interloqué par autant d’érudition gagee par tant de naïveté. À coup sûr, l’ethnologue adorateur d’inventaires et de vraisemblance refuserait d’envisager le christianisme par exemple comme objet d’étude historique sérieux parce que les Évangiles affirment que Jésus marchait sur l’eau, ce que l’ethnologue adorateur de la réalité ne peut croire24… Devant les

récriminations de ce positivisme naïf, il n’est pas inutile de préciser que ce à quoi nul n’a jamais assisté, en l’occurrence l’œuvre abominable de l’acania-souillé – qui n’est peut-être pas ou sans doute pas réalisée « concrètement », peu importe – n’en est pas moins vrai et n’en produit pas moins son effet concret et réel, dès lors qu’il s’agit de ce que les sujets sociaux disent et répètent entre eux, reprenant ainsi le discours symbolique que l’acania-souillé leur adresse. L’essentiel réside dans le fait qu’il offre une réponse adéquate à leur attention imaginaire. Quant à savoir s’il fait ce qu’il laisse croire qu’il fait, c’est là une autre question à laquelle, encore une fois, personne ne peut répondre, et qui n’a d’ailleurs aucune incidence sur les suites de l’analyse anthropologique.

Ceux qui en parlent n’ont donc aucun doute sur la vérité de ce qu’ils ont entendu… On le rapporte à voix basse, c’est aussi là que se joue la force sociale de la macabre figure de cet acania. Ainsi, ce qui est vrai pour l’acania-souillé l’est forcément pour les autres. On raconte ainsi que la première tâche de l’acania dit « enceinte de demeure » (core’mna) ou « gronde contre le manque de respect » (capidru) consiste à découvrir des sépultures d’Aînés ultimes. Il ne fait encore de doute pour personne que les acania, quelles que soient leur spécialité et leurs pratiques secrètes, ont partie liée. Abandonner les os d’un Aîné ultime, aussi bien dissimulés soient-ils, c’est les livrer à celui qui fait profession de découvrir de telles cachettes. L’alchimie morbide des acania consiste donc à transformer l’Aîné ultime, en instrument homicide infaillible. C’est parce que la masse immergée de ces pratiques flotte dans le courant des croyances, que les acania mènent à bien la répression promise aux incartades imprévisibles des cadets grands guerriers peu enclins à déposer muettement leur « don de reconnaissance » devant leurs aînés.

**Le régime d’historicité maréen**

On le voit, rien dans tout cela qui n’exige que l’on interroge les « intentions stratégiques », que l’on s’inquiète de dévoiler les mensonges, les bluffs, les contrefaçons, pour cerner les logiques de l’action sociale, dont le produit est soustrait au regard de l’observateur stratégiste puisqu’il réside dans la présence muette de la quasi totalité des sujets sociaux.

Il est remarquable que le paradigme du conflit – foncier le plus souvent mais pouvant 24. Il est vrai que le positiviste tracassé par la ratiocination de ses propres arguties ajoute pour protéger ses arrières : « S’il y avait aspiration des jus du cadavre par l’acania, ce ne pouvait être que figurativement, de façon à accentuer la « saleté », c’est-à-dire le danger surnaturel extrême que sa présence impliquait (Guiart, idem) ». Tout est dans le « ce ne pouvait être que figurativement ». Encore un effort, on y est presque.

25. Idée que Maurice Godelier présente en ces termes : « Tout serait simple si la pensée se bornait simplement à refléter, à représenter la société, mais toutes les difficultés de l’analyse scientifique de la part idéelle du réel viennent de ce que la pensée non seulement représente la société, mais est elle-même productrice de société (1982 : 352). »
affecter d'autres objets – que certains ethnologues privilégient, les amène à prêter une attention extrême aux motivations des différentes prises de parole, lesquelles deviennent l'objet effectif de leur commentaire et de leur analyse. Mais apercevant un rapport de contiguïté entre objet supposé du conflit et prise de parole, ils pensent saisir le rapport essentiel sous lequel les ressources dynamiques – stratégiques – des interlocuteurs sociaux sont mobilisées, sans imaginer un seul instant devoir s'interroger sur ces étranges conditions qui, à l'extérieur du cercle des loquaces, obligent la plus grande partie des intéressés à se taire.

En même temps, l'attention portée aux stratégies, si elle s'enquiert des alliances matrimoniales parce que celles-ci relèveraient justement des stratégies, ne fait que peu de cas des modalités de circulation des biens produits et des différents niveaux où opèrent les échanges26. On sait combien de travaux ont été produits sur ces thèmes pour lesquels la Mélanésie, depuis Malinowski, se présente comme un terrain particulièrement fécond27. Le primat accordé aux stratégies pour tenter de dégager la logique des investissements discursifs au sein des rapports sociaux conduit à rabattre toutes les observations sur cet ordre de signification, faisant ainsi l'impasse sur les signifiants qui mettent en ordre la parole de ceux qui y accèdent comme sur les possibilités « d'expression » envisagées par ceux que le protocole oblige au silence. Car tous ceux, en effet, qui ont pu assister sur la Grande Terre ou aux îles Loyauté à ces prises de parole solennelles, lors desquelles de toute évidence quelque chose de l'autorité se joue, ont pu remarquer la force contenue du mutisme qui relie tous les autres. C'est sur ces sujets peu diserts qu'il m'a semblé nécessaire de déplacer le regard de l'ethnologue et auxquels mes enquêtes à Maré ont tenté de redonner une place.

Ainsi, l'examen des sources écrites produites à partir des premiers contacts complétées, dans leur registre spécifique, des sources orales constituées depuis par les différentes enquêtes ethnographiques ne constitue pas une entrée suffisante à l'analyse de l'histoire sociale de Maré. Le caractère narratif de ces sources, même quand l'information revêt l'aspect sériel des inventaires, expose des faits sociaux selon des propriétés sémantiques de discours, ceux des témoins, des « acteurs sociaux » ou des observateurs... L'interrogation historique, en effet, ne saurait envisager d'ordonner des « événements », et les gloses qui les accompagnent, selon l'enchaînement des conséquences qui auraient chronologiquement conduit à la société actuelle. L'événement, dont le « sens » (et s'il ne fait pas sens pour celui qui le rapporte, il ne peut tout simplement pas être rapporté par lui) est directement forgé par le discours du sujet qui le porte à la connaissance de l'enquêteur, occulte le consentement du sujet à demeurer soumis à l'ordre qui a produit l'événement dont il parle. L'analyse historique nous semble devoir en premier lieu solliciter l'analyse anthropologique

26. Jean Guiart, rendons lui cette justice, est sans doute celui qui a tenté de restituer ces modalités, surtout pour les îles Loyauté, qu'il voit s'inscrire dans des cycles d'« allégances », sans en dégager le caractère de règle, quelle qu'en soit l'application empirique (1963).
susceptible de dévoiler les conditions sociales de ce consentement subjectif. Ces conditions constituent le châssis sur lequel l'événement relaté est tendu.

Le caractère subjectif de la narration de l'événement ne justifie évidemment pas que le doute soit jeté sur la réalité factuelle de l'événement, tout comme la causalité événementielle invoquée, voire défendue, par le discours subjectif ne justifie pas que le doute soit jeté sur la vérité du discours du sujet. Il n'y a pas de discours subjectifs mensongers, il n'y a pas de coup de bluff, il n'y a que des sujets aveuglés par le consentement que la reproduction sociale leur impose. Si la réalité factuelle des événements ne peut être niée, elle reste prise néanmoins dans la trame imaginaire de l'opinion. L'événement apparaît ainsi comme l'idole sans cesse magnifiée par les discours subjectifs, lesquels lui offrent une actualité sociale sans rapport nécessaire avec le contexte historique où il s'est produit. Il est frappant à Maré d'écouter les plus autorisés personnages de la chefferie si Ruemec raconter sous le sceau du secret la « disparition des Têtes-âgées » (hna atakoni ore Eletok), la déposition violente de toutes les anciennes chefferies de l'île intervenue au tournant du XVIIIᵉ et du XIXᵉ siècle, comme si, deux siècles plus tard, l'exhumation narrative d'un tel événement aurait pouvait de ramener le chaos dans les chefferies ...

En observant ainsi ce qui ne se donne pas à voir, on comprend combien l'attente sociale d'un projet subjectif de violence repose sur un fondement imaginaire, à Maré sur un véritable complexe de subordination aîné-cadet. La violence produite dans la chaîne des fratries masculines se déplace alors hors de cette chaîne pour peu que lui soit désigné un objet de convoitise dont une autre fratrie, ou toute autre instance, s'entend à lui disputer la jouissance. La futilité du motif peut en l'occurrence se révéler opportune au déploiement d'une violence, dont l'entendement clair, peut-on insister, se dérobe à la conscience de ceux qui la libèrent. Parce qu'elle gif en un lien de parenté, et ressort donc d'un fait irrécusable, cette violence, éprouve d'un obscur objet, se manifeste sous des formes hautement valorisées socialement.

Ainsi, les changements qui ont traversé la société de Maré depuis les débuts de la colonisation, comme toutes les sociétés kanakes, ont installé de nouveaux objets de désir dans le champ des subjectivités sociales qui, dès lors qu'il s'agit du champ proprement maréen de la parenté, ne peut pas avoir fondamentalement changé. L'ambivalence aîné-cadet, en effet, continue de courir parmi les membres de la fratrie clanique. Néanmoins, la guerre est remplacée par les affaires, et l'on prend proscément position dans la fonction publique, le salariat de toute sorte ou dans le petit commerce de « tribu », pour s'élever socialement, comme jadis on l'envisageait en investissant le champ de bataille. Cela étant, la rumeur sur les pratiques occultes des acania continue de rouler bon train, comme leur présence toujours requise dans les occasions publiques à la cour de l'Aîné ultime suffit à rappeler le mutisme attendu des cadets et la répression de sa transgression ...

La structure sociale actuelle peut ainsi servir de télescope historique qui saisit celle

d'hier moyennant une correction de focale qui ajuste le contour disparu de la guerre sur celui récemment dessiné des affaires et du salariat. Il ne s'agit pas évidemment de remplacer la pratique guerrière (révolue avec la colonisation) par les positions professionnelles (introduites avec la colonisation) comme dans un jeu de chaise musicale. La substitution s'impose du seul point de vue que nous avons retenu jusqu'ici : l'ordonnance hiérarchique de la fratrie clanique. La guerre, en effet, constituait la seule circonstance où cadets et ainés s'alignaient les uns à côté des autres selon une stricte égalité. Toute présence sur le champ de bataille étant susceptible de plonger les guerriers de la fratrie dans un atterroissement fatal, la hiérarchie des sujets devait s'effacer devant les prouesses guerrières des individus. La guerre constituait ainsi la seule occasion offerte aux cadets de rivaliser avec leurs ainés. C'est dans cette concurrence que se dégageait la valeur militaire du groupe. Sur le champ de bataille, l'ennemi supposé n'était alors que le truchement d'une rivalité hautement plus délicate, celle qui oppose sa vie durant un cadet à ses ainés. Ainsi, les exploits des cadets devenus « grands guerriers » (toa eat) fragilisaient les ainés dans la fratrie, parce qu'un cadet couronné de gloire guerrière accédait à une liberté de parole que la relation cérémonielle aux ainés lui interdisait formellement. La réussite professionnelle réactualise cette possibilité de voir se délitter une partie de la préséance des ainés. Comme hier sur le champ de bataille, le respect dû aux ainés ne saurait justifier l'inhibition des cadets sur le marché de l'emploi. L'essentiel de l'offre professionnelle néanmoins est localisée à Nouméa, où reflue la convoitise moderne des cadets épris de libre parole. La loi du puec trébuche alors là où un cadet réussit, dans « le public » ou « le privé », sous le regard confondu de son ainé. Il est curieux de voir ainsi un frère prodigue, tout auréolé de réussite bourgeoise, revenir à la « tribu » pour y tenir sa place dans « les travaux coutumiers » et exposer non sans ostentation une certaine manière de parler. Il s'attache volontiers à faire l'éloge de la coutume et des « Vieux », manière de s'emparer d'un rang particulier, un peu à la façon on l'imagine des grands guerriers qui jadis, sur les sentiers de la gloire, donnaient libre cours au flux exubérant de leur parole.

De même, les formes d'engagement politique qui s'offrent aujourd'hui aux « Kanaks de Maré » peuvent être lues dans les termes de la loi du puec, ne serait-ce que parce que les cadets qui accèdent à la parole sur le mode immédié de la liberté d'opinion savent qu'ils s'y soustraient, que ce soit à distance dans les meetings, les manifestations, les réunions de bureau, ou de proximité dans les discussions de cellule, non sans produire quelque inquiétude familiale indicible. Mais l'expérience du verbe démocratique ne se réalise pas uniformément dans toutes les circonstances, et il n'est pas rare d'observer combien le respect de l'étiquette impose sa forme et son contenu à l'ordre du jour des réunions politiques qui se tiennent à Maré. Qu'il s'agisse encore d'une de ces fréquentes rencontres nocturnes dans la cuisine en têles onduelées autour de la longue table et toile cirée d'un militant hospitalier, les cadets sont toujours là, lovés à l'extérieur du cercle que projette une ampoule électrique incertaine, voués au même silence assourdissant, une sorte de recueillement que l'on peut
mêmes aimer… Une voix, autorisée celle-là, rompt ce concert muet, presque désolé semblé-
t-il d’en venir à cette extrémité sonore, et délivre une phraséologie familière, où demeure quelque chose de « coutumier ». Le langage des Vieux, et la hiérarchie des énonciations qu’il suppose, opère déjà dans celui des jeunes qui objectivent dans un « combat politique » quelque chose de ce grand frère bienveillant et loquace qui se dérobe à leur lucidité de cadets.

Trouvent-ils alors dans les faubourgs de Nouméa les conditions détendues de la synthèse du politique et de « la coutume », dès lors que la diversité des origines kanakes des militants et sympathisants de l’émancipation, quelles que soient les voies envisagées, impose un « Nous, Kanaks », repris à la face des Blancs ? Mais ce « Nous », liant les paroles kanakes dans les programmes, les mots d’ordre et les positions des partis, n’est possible qu’en vertu de la fiction de cette « coutume ». De quelle coutume s’agit-il, en effet, si l’on considère qu’elle relève essentiellement à Maré de la loi du puec, des ordonnancements de la parole qui commandent l’acquiescement muet à la parole des aînés ? Dans la libre expression supposée des débats politiques ou des associations sportives, la division du sujet n’en est pas moins prégnante. Ce « Nous, Kanaks » se dévoilerait plutôt – car il s’agit à n’en pas douter du sujet métonymique, « adhèrent » dit-on en politique – dans des rapports que le mot « Kanak » curieusement masque. Ces rapports en effet se dégagent de cette organisation coloniale combattue qui attire les Kanaks dans ces banlieues et déploie devant eux l’arsenal de ses diplômes, de ses offres d’emplois salariés et de ses statuts socioprofessionnels désirables pour lesquels ils entrent en concurrence. Les conditions de la prise de parole politique, au sens où elles ont été définies historiquement par l’offre de la démocratie coloniale, ne seraient donc réunies qu’au prix d’un délètement des ordonnancements « coutumiers » – c’est-à-dire des logiques de reproduction des fratries masculines – et d’une recomposition de nouveaux liens sociaux que l’on n’observe pas, ou pas encore, à Maré.

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Résumé

Les théories anthropologiques issues de l'ethnographie calédonienne, dont quelques formulations sont rappelées dans cet article, ne sont pas parvenues à se défaire d'un positivisme qui les place dans l'impossibilité d'appréhender le caractère processuel des rapports sociaux des sociétés kanakes, caractère qu'on ne saurait confondre avec l'exercice des « stratégies » discursives de quelque sujet social que ce soit. Maré (Îles Loyauté) offre ici l'exemple de rapports sociaux produits à partir d'un régime asymétrique d'échanges reconnu sous la forme d'une loi, qui contient donc les possibilités de sa transgression. Les prestations cérémonielles (de leurs formes élémentaires dans la parenté agnatique à leurs formes plus complexes dans la construction de la « chefferie ») expriment la reconnaissance publique d'une « dette » (puec). Cette dette — véritablement « congénitale » puisque postulée et ordonnant les rapports de parenté, de ce fait objet d'un investissement imaginaire considérable — manifeste le lien étroit qui unit des sujets de statuts rigoureusement hiérarchisés : ainé-cadet. C'est sur ce point que s'articule pour l'essentiel la problématique guerrière qui traverse toute l'histoire des chefferies de Maré. Les instances de la reproduction sociale actuelle ne sont pas différentes de celles d'hier moyennant une correction de focale qui ajuste le contour disparu de la guerre sur celui récemment dessiné des affaires et du salariat.

Abstract

Anthropological theories drawn from New Caledonian ethnography — some formulations of which are recalled in this article — never succeeded in getting rid of positivism, which makes them unable to grasp the process-like character of social relationships in Kanak societies, a character that should not be confused with the exercise of discursive “strategies” by any social subject, whoever they are. Here, Maré (Loyalty Islands) offers the example of social relationships created from an asymmetric system of exchanges recognized by a law that contains thus the possibilities of its own transgression. Ceremonial services (from their elementary forms in patrilineal relationships to their more complex forms in the construction of “chieftaincy”) express the public recognition of a “debt” (puec). This debt — a truly “congenital” one since it is given as a premise and orders relationships between kin, thus being the object of a considerable imaginary investment — expresses the narrow tie that unites individuals with strictly hierarchized statuses: elder-younger. The issue of war that runs through the whole history of chieftaincies in Maré hinges basically upon this point. The processes of present-day social reproduction are not so different from those of yesteryear provided the focus is corrected and adjustments are made to consider the now extinct outline of war and the recently emerging one of business and the salaried class.
Missionaries, Evolutionism and Pacific Anthropology: the correspondence of Lorimer Fison and Robert Codrington

Helen Gardner

Missionary anthropologists of the late nineteenth century were deeply engaged in the metropolitan theories relating to their neighbours and congregations. Missionaries were assiduous in returning schedules and queries to theorists in America and England. However they were often concerned by the implications of the investigations, particularly when scientific analyses threatened their belief in the parity of humankind. The following chapter investigates the correspondence of two key missionary anthropologists in Oceania.

Throughout the nineteenth century Protestant missionaries serving in the Pacific islands were drawn into metropolitan debates on the nature and extent of the differences between themselves and their congregations. Some of the investigations initiated by the new science of man were a threat to theological principles on the unity of humankind. In the early 1860s James Hunt left the Ethnological Society of London, which drew from a long tradition of claims of the essential unity of humanity, to form the highly successful and overtly racial Anthropological Society that positioned black Africans as a distinct and inferior subspecies.1 In America, the Civil War and large-scale migration were the political imperatives behind debates on cross-racial fertility and new theories that the development of humankind led to immutable racial sub-species that could be defined by differences in intelligence and ability.2 With the unification of the Ethnological and Anthological Societies in the early 1870s the debate on whether humankind was a single species from a single origin was largely settled in favour of monogenesis. Yet many continued to believe that the intellectual potential of different ‘races’ was directly linked to their rung on the evolutionist ladder. Armchair theorists continued the nineteenth century tradition of

sending schedules and 'queries' sent around the world to colonial frontiers and as yet uncolonised lands. Missionaries were at the forefront in providing this data and some were deeply engaged in the new science of Anthropology, but they were often highly critical of metropolitan theorists. The following chapter examines the early responses to evolutionist theories of the missionary anthropologists, Lorimer Fison of the Australasian Methodist Mission, and Robert Codrington of the Anglican Melanesian Mission.

American lawyer Lewis Morgan's schedule was to prove especially influential on the early anthropology of Oceania. While investigating the customs of Iroquois Indians, Morgan was surprised by their complex system for determining their relationships. Believing it to be an aberration, Morgan then found similar systems among other Indian peoples. Convinced that he had found a means through which he could classify the movement and development of the worlds' peoples, Morgan devised a schedule for the collection of kinship details that was sent around the world. In Oceania, his 1859 schedule went first to the American missionaries of Hawai'i, Artemas Bishop and Lorrin Andrews as well as the American proconsul Thomas Miller. From Micronesia, Hiram Bingham and Benjamin Snow identified similarities with the Hawaiian system. Anglican missionary, Richard Taylor in New Zealand returned the schedule in 1862. The most important of Morgan's correspondents in Oceania was Lorimer Fison, missionary to Fiji, who received a copy of the 15-page schedule in 1869 via his sister's brother-in-law, Goldwin Smith, former Oxford Professor of Modern History now at Cornell University. The revised schedule included preliminary findings from other respondents. For Fison, the similarities between the Fijian kinship traditions and those of Southern India were electrifying and he reported his astonishment by return post:

I was quite startled by my first hasty glance over the pamphlet. Even now I can scarcely believe my eyes, for all that is said of the Tamil and Teluqu [sic] system (pp. 9-10 of the pamphlet) may be said of the Fijian also. The systems are not merely similar they are positively identical. It made my heart leap to read 'the principal features of the Tamil and Teluqu system' set forth, one after another, in the very words which one would use in describing the Fijian system; &c, so startling are the facts disclosed that, before I got to the end, I actually turned the pages back again, in order to assure myself, by looking at the preliminary remarks, that I was not reading an account of the Fijian system (emphasis in the original).6

5 Ibid., 454-6.
6 Fison to Goldwin Smith, 18 December 1869, Letterbooks 1867-1883, Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, (hereafter PMB) 1039, Reel 1.
Fison, trained in mathematics, though sent down from Cambridge before his conversion to Methodism, came to share Morgan’s belief that that kinship systems were palin genetic — reproduced in their ancestral form without modification — and could be classified in a scientific model; Morgan had devised a Linnaean ordering to catalogue the world’s kinship systems into ‘species’, ‘genus’ etc. Thus the evidence of kinship was as significant for evolutionist development as of the typographical analysis of weapons and containers. Kinship systems could define the racial movement of peoples around the world and was evidence for the development, or stagnation, from one form to another. Fison’s enthusiasm for Morgan’s thesis was such that within two weeks of receiving the letter from Smith, he had sent ‘blank Schedules to Samoa, Rotuma and the Moravian Miss’s who are working among the Australian aborigines’.7

While Fison’s ready engagement with Morgan’s thesis was probably the result of his mathematical interests, he may also have been drawn by the benign implications of the study. The argument for development through marriage classes, systems and forms of kinship was a challenge to the measurements of the physical anthropologists, who preferred to classify human difference by the shape of the nose and the curl of the hair. Skin tones, skull size and technological advancement were irrelevant to Morgan’s system, which, while allowing for distinctions between human groups, was a claim for essential human unity. Morgan’s insistence in ancient society (1877), that the ‘history of the human race is one in source, one in experience and one in progress’, identifies him with the social evolutionists and his system of ‘Ethnical Periods’ with its ‘lower’, ‘middle’ and ‘upper’ ‘status’ of ‘savagery, barbarism and civilisation, was typical of evolutionist inquiries.8

Yet the investigation differed from most other European inquiries, which were based on the abstracted ideas of European theorists developed far from the subjects of their inquiry. Collecting of data on kinship demanded the close questioning of informants on issues that were directly relevant to their lives and experiences. Filling the detailed schedules on relationships such as ‘the brothers of the grandfather and those of the grandmother’ required the investigator to be alert to cross-cultural complications, for English kinship terms often lacked direct equivalents in other languages. Further, the clarity and regularity of the foreign kinship systems — that were strictly adhered to by all — indirectly countered metropolitan assumptions that ‘native’ peoples were essentially chaotic groups that were unconstrained by reason or laws.

In early 1871 Fison, now in Melbourne and seeking details on Aboriginal kinship forms, had his own schedule printed. Describing how his investigations had confirmed the relationship between the Tamil kinship systems and those of the Fijian and Friendly Islanders, with ‘unmistakable traces thereof among the aborigines of Queensland’,

7 Fison to the Rev F. Tait, 1 January 1870, PMB 1039, Letterbooks 1867-1883, PMB 1039, Reel 1.
Fison sought for Morgan the details to work out the system of 'Polynesia, Micronesia, Madagascar, and the Papuan Islands'. In May he sent a copy to the Anglican Bishop John Coleridge Patteson, whose linguistic skills in the Solomon Islands and northern Vanuatu [then the New Hebrides] were legendary. Patteson never received the schedule for he had left a month earlier on the journey that ended when his body, wrapped in the mats of the Nukapu people one of whom had attacked him while he rested, was set adrift in a canoe across the lagoon towards the mission ship. Instead the schedule came to Patteson's temporary replacement, Robert Codrington, headmaster of the Melanesian Mission School on Norfolk Island.

Well connected in Oxford where he gained his undergraduate degree in theology and later spent five years as a Fellow in Wadham college, Codrington returned from his first visit home after ten years in the mission with a copy of Edward B. Tylor's the early history of mankind (1865), a gift for Patteson from Friedrich Max Müller, inaugural professor of comparative linguistics at Oxford. Codrington maintained a well-stocked library on Norfolk Island where students from the large Anglican circuit in Melanesia trained for a number of years before being sent to minister to heathen Islanders. Through his knowledge of the literature on human institutions, manners, laws and morals, many of which began with a chapter on 'primitive origins', Codrington was aware of the status of his students in the minds of many learned men. At best was the developmentalism of British anthropologist Edward B. Tylor, who compared civilized children with contemporary 'savages' to argue human development using the metaphor of the human life span: the rational adult state had been achieved by the civilized, while the mental development of 'savages' was akin to that of a child. At worst was the polygenism of men such as James Hunt, or those for whom modern day 'savages' formed the 'missing link' between man and ape.

Fison’s first letter to Codrington in the early 1870s was principally concerned with the south sea labour trade. Most missionaries believed the trade to be a form of slavery and argued that Bishop Patteson’s death was revenge for the kidnapping of Islanders for the cane fields of Queensland or Fiji. Codrington’s response gratefully acknowledged Fison's 'exertions against the pernicious labour trade' but he was more interested in the methodological questions raised by Fison’s schedule. By now Fison had become deeply engaged in the evolutionist analyses of Morgan’s thesis and while he argued the points with the American

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10 Fison to the Right Reverend Lord Bishop of Melanesia, 25 May 1871, Letterbooks, 1876-1883, PMB 1039.
12 Codrington to Fison, 10 June 1871, Letterbooks, 1876-1883, PMB 1039.
13 Hilliard, God’s Gentlemen, 65-75.
theorist, he was convinced that human social organisation had developed through 'group marriage' or a communal phase to that of 'mother right' and the eventual patriarchy of modern Europe. From the beginning of his anthropological inquiry, Codrington was wary of universal theories and alert to cross-cultural complications. Warning Fison that amongst the Islanders represented in his school there was no simple translation for the English terms 'son', 'daughter', Codrington also insisted that 'the promiscuous use' of the words 'tribe' and chief were similarly fraught. He believed 'there was no notion of a tribe properly so called in all the Melanesian islands'. Fison agreed, noting that he had been forced to 'discard the word "tribe" altogether in my various memoranda'; though he explained this absence through the developmental argument that kinship divisions were simply nascent tribes 'in the earliest stage of tribal development'. Seduced by evolutionist analyses on the gradual development of sexual morality from earlier systems of 'extremist intersexual licence', Fison believed Codrington's evidence of marriage classes from the peoples of the northern New Hebrides (Vanuatu), and southern Solomon Islands, provided a neat fit with the material he was then drawing from the schedules he had sent to missionaries in the Australian colonies and which was to form the basis for his monograph, co-authored with magistrate A. W. Howitt, Kamilaroi and Kurnai. As with the kinship divides in Aboriginal cultures, Fison believed that Codrington's 'two divisions appear to be the result of the first step out of early communism'.

While Fison was clearly attracted by the evolutionist arguments of the British and American theorists whom he read avidly, he was also clear on the shortcomings of their data and the subsequent problems of their inferences. Codrington and Fison were in agreement that Sir John Lubbock, friend to Charles Darwin, Charles Lyell, Francis Galton and Thomas Huxley and the great populariser of the theory of gradual and uniform human development for whom modern day 'natives' were exemplars of the early state of civilised man, was the most dangerous opponent. Lubbock's origin of civilisation, published in 1870, was so successful that the second edition appeared in the same year and five subsequent editions were steadily fed to a public keen for amusing anecdotes on other cultures that also confirmed their place in the hierarchy of human development. Lubbock's debate with the Archbishop of Dublin Richard Whately marked the difference between theological theories of human unity and many anthropological analyses of the distinctions between human groups. Against Whately's insistence on the separation of man from primates on the grounds of the universal mental ability of Homo sapiens, Lubbock replied, arguing from the animal kingdom, that

genera with the most different mental powers and instincts are placed, not only in the same Order, but even in the same family... It seems to me, therefore,

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14 Codrington to Fison, 22 March 1871, Tippet collection, St Mark's theological college, Canberra.
15 Fison to Codrington, 31 January 1876., Letterbooks, 1876-1883, PMB 1039.
illogical to separate man zoologically from the other primates on the ground of his mental superiority, and yet to maintain the specific unity of the human race, notwithstanding the mental differences between different races of men.\textsuperscript{16}

Differing intellectual abilities across the 'races' of the human species was now a tenet of the evolution of man from ape: it was an incremental step from the skills of the great apes to those of 'primitive' man, followed by the graduated march through barbarism to civilisation.

Codrington and Fison were less concerned with Lubbock's belief in the evolution of man from apes, than with his unsubstantiated claims and the shortcomings of his method. Fison had argued just such issues with Morgan on his findings from his Fiji material that was published in systems of consanguinity and affinity of the human family.\textsuperscript{17} Yet Fison was especially scathing of Lubbock's populist analyses that were based almost entirely on published travellers’ tales and lacked any systematic evidence. He complained to Codrington that

\textit{The man whose knowledge of his subject is really deep and wide is cautious in his inferences, modest in his statements and respectful to those whose opinions he contests; while the other, who knows just enough to make himself ridiculous, lays down his theories as eternal truths, dogmatic with far more than a theologian's dogmatism, and pours contempt upon all who differ from him.}\textsuperscript{18}

Codrington agreed and broadened his complaint to include all the armchair investigations of the period. The problem was the lack of empirical observation and the development of hypotheses based on untested premises. After reading the origin of civilisation Codrington complained to his brother Tom that

\textit{To my mind it seems after reading Lubbock that the savages of the scientific men recede farther and farther from my experiences and my belief is that if you could get the evidence of people who really know and live with these savages who are considered the lowest you would find that the savages of the very low type do not exist in the world. Scientific men fit their evidence to their preconceived ideas of how things ought to be.}\textsuperscript{19}


\textsuperscript{18} Fison to Codrington, 31 January 1876, Tippet collection, St Mark's theological college, Canberra.

\textsuperscript{19} Codrington, R. to Tom Codrington, 20 August 1873, Australian joint copying project, M865.
Missionaries went to the field with their own preconceived beliefs in human similitude. Many believed that the best explanation for unequal civilisations was degeneration. As a result of their absence from the Word of God, following the dispersal of the tribes of Israel, human groups deteriorated into a primitive state: ‘Man deteriorates — not advances as time rolls on. He loses the knowledge of God and goes on and on in useless superstition’ noted George Pratt, missionary to Samoa, after reading Lubbock. But their congregations did not lose their intellectual capacity. Missionary ideas on the parity of human potential, were confirmed by their daily experiences. Through teaching, translation and preaching, they proved their belief that intellectual and moral abilities were universal across the human family. The reiterated claims of missionaries on this point show their attempts to challenge those anthropologists for whom incremental intellectual development was a cherished tenet of evolutionism and the explanation for unequal civilisations. Fison’s Methodist colleague George Brown, informed Tylor that schools on the Duke of York Islands produced children who could read and write well, with ‘good composition and good spelling’. This, from boys ‘who were little wild savages in 1875 … speaks much for the intelligence of the people (Papuan or Melanesians)’. George Pratt, believed intelligence was an inherent human characteristic regardless of race and, in reply to a questionnaire from Brown, insisted that Samoans ‘were able to advance beyond the elements and that when Aborigines give their mind to learning they make rapid progress’. Codrington wrote to Fison that his efforts to teach his students arithmetic convinced him there was ‘no general incapacity’, though ‘there are some, naturally enough, who seem impenetrable’. However he was intrigued by possible cultural differences in the mode of learning and believed ‘that we use language about figures which confuses the boys, and that if we could make out how their minds approach the matter we should do better’. He believed that scholars from the island of Mota in the Banks Group, whose language had become the lingua franca for the mission, were at a distinct disadvantage to boys from other islands who more readily grasped the processes and symbols in the foreign languages of Mota and Arithmetic.

While Codrington’s linguistic acumen did not match that of Patteson, — ‘In a language I know pretty well, my pen goes faster than my tongue’ — he was more systematic than the Bishop and was determined to survey the languages and cultures of the Melanesian peoples: ‘what is wanted, & very much wanted for the understanding of an Archipelago like ours, is a general acquaintance with all the dialects and customs’. Throughout the 1870s Fison and Codrington maintained an extensive correspondence on anthropological

21 Brown, George, Papers 1879-1917, Mitchell library, Sydney
22 Codrington to Fison, 16 September 1876, Tippet collection, St Mark’s theological college, Canberra.
23 Codrington to Fison, 29, September 1877, Tippet collection, St Mark’s theological college, Canberra.
issues and Fison sent Codrington metropolitan publications on Pacific Islander customs and languages. Codrington was deeply concerned by the methodological problems of almost all of them. He dismissed Staniland Wake on the separation of Melanesia and Polynesia and was convinced that A. H. Wallace's book Australasia, was based on a similar ignorance: 'In fact these people don't seem much better than the Antiquaries who read papers on some little find: there is this difference though that Antiquaries deal with what no one now positively knows, whereas there are people who know whether Polynesians have beards and bows and arrows'.24 By the late 1870s Fison was corresponding with E. B. Tylor as well as Morgan, and he urged Codrington to submit anthropological papers to relevant journals.25 Codrington was eventually persuaded to publish 'Notes on the customs of Mota, Banks Island' in the transactions from the royal society of Victoria, 1880. The paper was heavily annotated by Fison, who added either general comments on the customs described, or provided further examples, primarily from Fiji.26

Codrington became more directly engaged in metropolitan discussions when he returned to Oxford for a furlough in 1884 and joined Baldwin Spencer, future professor of Biology at the University of Melbourne and anthropologist of Central Australian Aborigines, for E. B. Tylor's inaugural lectures in Anthropology for 1884 and the Hilary and Easter terms of 1885.27 Tylor was then still focused on the question of 'primitive' religion that he had first considered in his paper of 1867 where he expounded his thesis of Animism — that belief in spiritual beings was universal. In his book primitive culture (1871), he asked one of the key questions then being pondered in the nascent discipline of Anthropology 'are there, or have there been, tribes of men so low in culture as to have no religious conceptions whatever'.28 Codrington had published on 'Religious beliefs and practices in Melanesia' (1880-1881), and wrote an extensive chapter on religion in his 1891 publication, the Melanesians, studies in their anthropology and folklore, in which he anticipated issues of cross-cultural analysis and methodology but his primary interest while attending Tylor's lectures was his forthcoming survey the Melanesian languages (1885).29

Comparative linguistics in Britain had long been dominated by the founder of the discipline Friedrich Max Mülller, who was a devout Lutheran a firm believer of the unity of humankind. He maintained an intermittent correspondence with missionaries around the

24 Codrington to Fison, 10 June 1881, Tippet collection, St Mark's theological college, Canberra.
25 Codrington to Fison, 13 March 1881, Tippet collection, St Mark's theological college, Canberra.
26 Codrington, Robert, 'Notes on the customs of Mota, Banks Islands; with remarks by the Rev. Lorimer Fison, Fiji', Transactions from the Royal Society of Victoria Vol. XVI (1880), 119-143.
27 Anthropology lecture Book, miscellaneous notes and register of those who attended Tylor's lectures 1884-1902. Tylor papers Box 8A, Pitt Rivers museum manuscript collections.
29 Codrington, Robert, 'Religious beliefs and practices in Melanesia', Journal of the Anthropological Institute, 10:261-316.
world, in particular Codrington’s former bishop Patteson, as well as Fison.\textsuperscript{30} Codrington acknowledged to Fison that part of his reticence to publish was because of Müller’s failure to respond to a personal letter.\textsuperscript{31} In the early 1880s Codrington read introduction to the science of language by linguist and professor of Assyriology A. H. Sayce, who was acknowledged as the ‘deputy to Müller’, though he clearly disagreed with his mentor’s belief that linguistic ability was universal. Sayce made the standard argument that ‘modern savages’ and ‘young children’ were the best example of ‘primeval man’ based on the glacial advance of human society: ‘It is the lesson which geology has taught us, applied to the stratification of the human race’. Thus the languages of ‘savages’ matched their undeveloped intelligence: The ‘dialects of savages, which most resemble what all languages originally were, have few words, because they have few ideas to express’. For example: ‘the New Caledonians cannot be brought to understand such ideas as those conveyed by yesterday and tomorrow, and the jungle Vedahs of Ceylon are unable to remember even the names they give to their wives, unless the latter be present’.\textsuperscript{32}

While in Oxford, Codrington finally published his first clear argument against those who insisted that intellectual and linguistic ability was developmental. ‘The language of a savage People is the most conspicuous product of their mental power’, claimed Codrington, “A people found in the stone age of civilization are not found in a stone age of language. There is indeed no stone-age of language existing... it is not by their language that a people are judged to be savage”. In a passionate conclusion he wrestled with the contemporary theories of anthropology, the debates on human unity, concepts of the dying race and scientific investigations of ‘savage peoples’. He drew the line firmly between the investigation of custom, culture and language — ‘It is one thing to examine and record their religious beliefs and practices, their arts and ways of life, with the observation and description of anthropological science, or to do the same for their language with the view of philology’ — and those who argued against the parity of human intelligence — it is another thing to try to estimate sympathetically their mental power, their intellectual faculty, their human character, as shewn in their language. The proof for the parity of humankind for Codrington, was in the subtlety, depth and breadth of Melanesian languages:

they may be crushed out of the world by the forces that are beginning to act upon them, and they may perish from among mankind; but they will not perish before, through their language, they have been seen in their place in the human family;

\textsuperscript{30} Müller, Friedrich Max, Introduction to the science of religion, Langman’s Green, London, 1873; see also G. Stocking after Tylor: British social anthropology 1888-1971, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1995, 18, 34, 44.
\textsuperscript{31} Codrington to Fison 13 March 1871, PMB 1039.
they will have been recognized as members of the common brotherhood, partakers of the aspirations and capacities which other races have been enabled to develop and exercise, not always by better qualities but by better fortune. 33

While all the missionary anthropologists of the period sought to argue the issue of human similitude with their anthropological correspondents, Fison and Brown were constrained by their deep entanglement in evolutionist theory. While wary of the implications inherent in theories that positioned their congregations on the lowest rungs of the ladder of human development they accepted the logic of evolutionism and argued their points within the paradigm. Brown believed in the hierarchy of Polynesia over Melanesia and Fison agreed with the development of marriage systems from 'mother right' to 'father right'. Codrington was never swayed.34

While some missionary anthropologists were drawn by the elegant — though flawed — logic of evolutionism, they did seek to set the terms of the debate and the boundaries by which human difference was to be determined. The first principle was human similitude and the capacity to come to the full potential of human ability within the single life span. Thus there was no contradiction for most missionaries of that generation in the Islander who was born a cannibal and died a clergyman. Yet missionaries rarely persuaded their anthropological interlocutors that their new converts were their equals in intellectual ability and potential. Pessimistic about the future of Island populations, which were being decimated by epidemics and the labour trade, Codrington none-the-less, strenuously argued, based on the incontrovertible evidence of Island languages, that his flock were members of the ‘common brotherhood’.

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33 Codrington, Robert, 'The language of a savage people as shewn by a dictionary', this article is among Codrington's papers in Oxford but it is wrongly attributed to the journal of the anthropological institute. I have been unable to place the article in any of the contemporary journals.
34 George Stocking wrote a short biography on Codrington in after Tylor in which he pondered his distrust of evolutionism and attributed it to an “anti-positivist” counter-current that bubbled up here and there during the era of classical evolutionism', 45-46.
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Abstract

Oxford graduate, Robert Codrington, was headmaster of the Melanesian mission school on Norfolk Island from 1867 to 1887. His Oxford connections led to an interest in the developing discipline of anthropology and his first anthropological articles appeared in the Journal of the Anthropological Society, and the Journal of the Philological Society. During a furlough home in the 1880s Codrington attended E. B. Tylor’s first lectures in anthropology at Oxford University. His monographs and papers on Melanesian languages and cultures reveal his uneasy relationship to the evolutionism of metropolitan theorists and his dissatisfaction with the historicism and materialism of late nineteenth century anthropology. The paper examines the points at which Codrington’s theology and knowledge of Christian history challenged anthropology’s analysis of human development and society.
Résumé

Bose Vakaturaga: Fiji's Great Council of Chiefs, 1875-2000

Colin Newbury

Often referred to by historians of Fiji, the Great Council requires an institutional study to correct the view that it was solely a product of British administrative initiative and to explain its composition, functions and longevity. As constituted by Sir Arthur Gordon within a system of Fijian councils it was a product of the inter-dependence of the British and Fijian governing hierarchy in a colony understaffed, weak in financial resources and reliant on much of the indigenous social and political structure inherited from pre-Cession government. From the beginning the Fijian chiefs as recognised and stipended officials of provinces used the Council to entrench their own position in the new order, setting their own agenda to cover a wide range of administrative topics and keeping discipline over the lengthy and crowded sessions of annual and biennial sessions through the nineteenth century. For their part governors and senior British officials used the advice of the Council to formulate the Regulations of Fijian Administration, land, tax, labour and social policies. By 1904 the possibility that governors might ignore the Council's advice by not calling it to meet was lessened by the constitutional requirement to use it to nominate Fijian representatives on the Legislative Council. Thereafter, it served as an important recruitment source for the legislature, the Native Regulations Board, the Native Lands Commission. From the 1940s these precedents and the Council's own initiatives led to further entrenchment of Fijian Administration as a distinct branch of Fiji's government and an expansion of Council business through statutory bodies and through the political debate over forms of ethnic representation and the pace of decolonisation in Fiji. After independence in 1970 Fiji's Council of Chiefs exploited further its relationship with central government as defender of Fijians' rights and ethnic values without devising policies to meet the challenges of rural administration and social change, though it has expanded its representation of commoners. Consequently, it supported strongly policies of preferential treatment for Fijians through the funding policies of the Ministry of Fijian Affairs in the 1970s and 1980s and many of the aims of those who turned to military intervention in civil politics during the period from 1987. This has placed the status of the institution in doubt, though not its constitutional position.
‘The Governor is the root of the Council.’ Regulation No. 1/1877

‘It is a Fijian Council of State’, Governor Jakeway, 1965.¹

‘I respect the Chiefs. I do not like the composition of the Great Council of Chiefs. There are so many non-Chiefs there who will try to dictate the resolutions of the Great Council of Chiefs.’ Brigadier-General Sitiveni Rabuka.²

The Council as an Imperial and Fijian Artefact, 1875-1880

Fiji’s Council of Chiefs was a product of local hierarchy and Crown Colony government. There had been occasional assemblies of high chiefs in pre-cession Fiji as when, for example, Cakobau was elected ‘president’ of a confederation at Levuka in 1865. Cakobau gathered chiefs formally into a privy council under the 1871 Constitution. But there was no formal gathering of chiefs in the months leading up to annexation in 1874, though a group of them assembled for discussions in July and certain of them were signatories to the Deed of Cession in September and October, followed by others later.³

From the outset, Council chieftainship was based on the status of hereditary chiefs within their own political units (vanua) and on British recognition of their role as a source of authority. The chiefs who signed at Levuka represented provinces as territorial groups of clans.⁴ A number of other provinces had disputed paramountcies or were signed for by ‘outsider’ (vulagi) chiefs set over them by Bau/Tailevu, with British approval.⁵ Nobody signed for the interior valleys of Viti Levu.

² Rabuka: No Other Way. Eddie Dean and Stan Ritova eds. (Sydney, 1988), 141.
³ For Cession details, W. P. Morrell, Britain in the Pacific Islands (Oxford, 1960), 167; and for the preliminary administration under Sir Hercules Robinson, Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, Correspondence Respecting the Cession of Fiji & the Provisional Arrangements made for Administering the Government, 1875, liv, C. 1114.
⁴ The major political chiefdoms represented were: Bau/Tailevu, Rewa, Lau, Bua, coastal Nadroga, Namosi, coastal Macuata. For a discussion of clans within ‘provinces’, centred on chiefdoms under early settler and Fijian government: David Routledge, Matanitu: Struggle for Power in Early Fiji (Suva, 1985), 145 ff; Deryck Scarr, The Majesty of Colour, Vol. 1, I, the Very Bayonet (Canberra, 1973) chap. 1; Simione Durutalo, ‘Internal Colonialism and Unequal Regional Development: the Case of Western Viti Levu, Fiji’ (Ph. D diss., University of the South Pacific, 1985), 91-2. See the boundaries in Commodore J. G. Goodenough’s map of the twelve ‘Provinces in Fiji, 1874’ which left much of Ra, Ba, the ‘Colo Hill Country’ and the Yasawa group in western Viti Levu outside of any Fiji-wide authority. Correspondence Respecting the Cession of Fiji, 1875.
⁵ Serua by Tui Namosi (Ratu Matanitobua); Ra (by Ratu Isikeli Tabakauccoro who was not a hereditary chief in Ra); Kadavu Island (Ratu Kinivuii Nacagilevu, a chief of Tavuki district in Kadavu); Ba and Nadi (signed for by Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, eldest son of Cakobau and so-called ‘Lieutenant-Governor of Ba and the Yassawa’); Macuata (signed for by both Ritova and Katonivere — rival claimants to the paramountcy of the province). The Seaqaqa people in Macuata recognized no chief of Macuata - certainly not Katonivere when appointed roko tui in 1875 — and revolted against both the roko and the British in 1897 over the issue of taxation.
On the Fijian side of the new hierarchy, as defined in Robinson’s provisional government in 1874, the notion of preserving rank and enlarging privilege was a strong motive for acceptance of the Cession. Thurston’s notes on draft proposals reveal chiefs pre-occupied with the status of themselves and successors as clients of British over-rule.\(^6\) Cakobau was pensioned off, but his sons were given positions — superintendence of Viti Levu on £800 a year, while the Tui Cakau would rule over Cakaudrove on £600 a year, with boundaries expanded to include Bua and Macuata. Thurston as a former minister in Cakobau’s government and a leading official under Gordon argued strongly, moreover, for association of chiefs with the government executive and their employment as administrators of Fijians. European commissioners would administer to Europeans. Thus, both Robinson and Thurston proposed continuity of Fijian aristocracy and its governance within a British dispensation. There was to be a cession not an annexation.\(^7\) What was on offer in 1874 was a joint government of Fiji, not possession of all the land or people. There were strong inducements to accept. In Robinson’s provisional budget at the end of 1874 nearly a third of total expenditure was earmarked for stipending twelve chiefs, as rokos of provinces, eighty-two district buli as subordinate chiefs, a dozen Fijian magistrates and an armed Fijian constabulary to back them up.\(^8\)

With sovereignty transferred to the Crown the islands fell under the provisions of the British Settlements Act of 1843 by which Parliament empowered the Queen’s representatives to set up courts and prescribed for a governor and an executive council assisted by a legislature in which officials predominated. The government was in theory an autocratic hierarchy, but severely under-funded and with little in the way of coercive force beyond a locally-recruited armed constabulary. An additional burden placed on the governor was supervision at long range of illegal activities of British subjects in islands where there was no European jurisdiction. To support this outpost of British over-rule, growth of taxable trade through local production was essential by encouragement and control of immigrant settlement and local Fijian agriculture, as foreseen by Thurston and sponsored by Gordon.\(^9\) The formal structure of governor, officials, magistrates and clerks looked more impressive in the first Blue Books of the colony than the realities of isolation, uncertain markets and Treasury parsimony warranted. It would not be allowed to go bankrupt; it could call on Imperial forces in emergencies. But, as elsewhere in the new Empire, its economic and political fortunes depended on the cooperation of local societies. Fiji became, therefore, by necessity as well as by design, an early example of ruling through

\(^7\) Ibid., Vol. I, 292-4.
\(^8\) In all, nearly £9,000 out of a projected expenditure of £17,900. For the salary scales, Correspondence Respecting the Cession of Fiji, 1875, Schedule B.
\(^9\) Rhodes House Library, Oxford (RH) 919 s. 5, Fiji Miscellaneous. John B. Thurston, 'Memorandum upon the establishment of District Plantations in the Colony of Fiji for the purpose of enabling the Native Population to provide their Taxes in a manner accordant with Native customs' [1874].
a co-opted indigenous hierarchy. The reasons for this solution to local administration lay in practical limitations to the power of the first administrators — Robinson, Gordon, Thurston, and in the bargaining ability of chiefs who already had some experience of the advantages of codified regulations and formal conciliatory structures for reinforcement of their own position.

By far the best introduction to the establishment of their Council of Chiefs as part of that system is Gordon's neglected article published at the end of his governorship. This enthusiastic account claimed continuity for village, district and provincial assemblies under colonial regulations and completion of the chain of authority between Fijians and government 'by the institution of an annual meeting of the Roko Tuis themselves, and of representatives chosen from all districts of Fiji, presided over by the Governor. This assembly has, however, been called into being almost undesignedly, and has assumed its present social and political importance rather by natural development than of set purpose.'

There was a 'design' to the assembly, however, which lay in the need felt by Cakobau and the leading chiefs to establish protocols for receiving a supreme 'chief' of Fiji and assuring their place in the new order. Shortly after Gordon's arrival on 24 June 1875 the Vunivalu, Cakobau, made his own unprecedented tama, or salutation to a superior, at Government House, Nasova. The chiefs of provinces followed this example and met with Gordon, 9 September, for a yaqona ceremony and ceremonial obeisance. Sir Arthur Gordon, ever the aristocrat, rose to the occasion and laid down his own protocols, lecturing the chiefs on their duties and administering an oath to the queen from each recognized chief (roko tui) as a mark of appointment to provincial office. Gordon does not say whether this opened the first Council of Chiefs (it was a week before the full assembly). But he took the opportunity to ask their advice on communal services (lala), marriage and divorce, taxation in kind, recruitment of village labour — all of which had been brought to his attention in memoranda from Wilkinson and Thurston.

The proceedings of the first Council show in much more detail that the provincial rokos and their subordinate chiefs took this agenda further and displayed considerable initiative in exploring questions that preoccupied themselves and in devising a format for keeping order in a very large gathering of some 300 chiefs, officials and followers. They imposed discipline on meetings that lasted longer than either side envisaged, 16 to 29 September.

10 Sir Arthur H. Gordon, 'Native Councils in Fiji. ("Na Veimbose Vaka Turaga.") 1875-1880', Contemporary Review, 43 (1883), 712-31. It is noted, however, by J. D. Legge, Britain in Fiji, 1858-1880 (London 1958) and by Morrell.
11 Gordon, 714; the point is reinforced by David Wilkinson's account of the first meeting at Draiba. RH 919 5.5, 'Notes of the Proceedings of a Native Council', in which he remarks on its 'freeness and candour of speech which is uncommon in an Assembly of so many High Chiefs, the Fijian customs being that High Chiefs seldom, if ever, meet each other in Council.'
12 CO 83/6, Gordon, 20 September 1875.
before they reconvened at Government House and read their memorial of conclusions and resolutions for Gordon's judgment. What worried them most was not commoners' services or taxes, but the status of chieftaincy itself in a society where sanctions could no longer be so rigorously applied, where there were alternative sources of authority in magistrates' courts and missionary churches. Labour recruiters offered escape from village life and its communal obligations to social superiors. Clarification about ways of keeping order vakaturaga in changed circumstances was called for. After Gordon withdrew, the immediate agenda of the roko, the provincial buli and magistrates was to determine status and privilege, who could be present and speak and who could not. Much of the first two days of open discussion was taken up with reasserting forms of respect for chiefs and their right to services. It became clear that Gordon was treated as a 'high chief' by incorporation at the upper level of the Fijian hierarchy. He was therefore, expected to rule 'Vaka Viti' through chiefs and people and enforce laws against 'disobedience' — a term of considerable elasticity, given the vague line (as chiefs admitted) between orders issued for the general good and a chief's personal benefit. Suitable punishment was agreed to be forced labour for two or three weeks.

But not all could be chiefs benefiting from the governor's protection, though many might have high social rank, even hereditary titles, without holding public office. On 18 September official chiefs were defined as 'Rokos, Magistrates, Bulis, and all chiefs owning land and people called Turaga Taukei, or Turaga ni Mataqali and Chiefs of Towns.' This inclusive set of the privileged would cause difficulty later, as duties and rewards were disputed. But on one point all were agreed: there was a need to check the insolence of commoners and put a stop to their excuse that only European magistrates were to obeyed. This could be done, it was decided, by regulations incorporated into the printed Native Code of Laws inherited from the previous regime. Having settled matters of precedence to their satisfaction, they turned their attention to marriage and divorce which exercised them over three days; they accepted Gordon's plan for a 'culture system' which was


15 Literally, chiefs of landowners, sub-clan chiefs and chiefs of hamlets (qali tributaries or kora villages) — an incomplete denotation of the relative grades of turaga, as distinct from 'landsmen', 'true owners' (taukei) and kusi ('people', 'inferiors'). Michael H. B. Walter, 'Aspects of Political Evolution in Fiji' (D. Phil. Diss., University of Oxford, 1966), 245-6.

16 Resolution 8, Proceedings, 29 September.

17 Contentious divorce issues were not settled at this assembly, though chiefs made an interesting survey of reasons (failure to consummate and 'living apart' were the more usual). The problem of Fijian women living with Europeans they passed to the governor. A detailed discussion of all aspects of the Council's Proceedings will not be attempted in this paper. For a useful survey of topics in the early assemblies, Dayna Dias, 'The Influence of the Fijian Council of Chiefs in 19th Century Colonial Fiji 1874-1897' (BA diss., University Hawai'i, 1977).
strongly preferred to taxes in cash 'as obtaining it threw the people more or less into the hands of unprincipled traders.'

When Gordon heard their 'memorial' — in essence their answers to the agenda he had proposed — it contained much else besides in other resolutions. Limitation of communal services to rokos and bulis was accepted, while other cases were left for the roko to decide (which added to his power of patronage over Fijian magistrates and scribes). Nasova itself as the 'high chief's' residence' was deemed to be 'a sacred spot on chief's land.' For the rest, Gordon agreed to their recommendations on punishment for disobedience, their wish to retain current codes of laws and regulations, the need to regulate labour recruitment and their acceptance of a produce tax. Importantly, they approved the governor's selection of a roko for Macuata Province and advised how he was to be installed; but they allowed his rival to be returned to the province. As would become more frequent, they permitted rival chiefs within a cluster of villages to form a new settlement by segmentation from a wider group to end a local intra-provincial dispute.

Clearly, it had not been a one-sided encounter between governor and Fijian representatives. To give effect to their request for a civil law code, Gordon expanded the membership of a Native Regulations Board (NRB) to include Cakobau and three other chiefs, the chief justice, two members of the Legislative Council, a missionary and Carew, Thurston and Wilkinson. A steady flow of Council resolutions aimed at order and social control built up a body of new laws and amended old ones. With some justification Gordon felt he had helped to create an institution which was more than an administrative rubber stamp. He acknowledged there were practical reasons for this solution to provincial management and supervision: 'when a native population also outnumbers, by more than fifty to one, the strangers dwelling among them, it is not safe, even if it be practicable, to deny to the natives a large measure of self-government.'

The wisdom of this pragmatism was borne out, moreover, when the support of chiefs was required to help Gordon confront 7,000 Kai Colo 'mountaineers', of the Viti Levu interior in April 1876. To avoid sending for West India regiments or Indian sepoys, the rokos were enlisted to raise 2,000 volunteers. By July, the campaign was over; thirty-seven prisoners had been tried by a court of two rokos with Fijian assessors, fourteen were executed, and Gordon was considerably indebted to his auxiliaries. The sons of Cakobau had already begun to further the political ambitions of Bau over the Wainimala and upper Sigatoka, before the campaign began. They were joined by the coastal chiefs of Serua, Namosi and Nadroga provinces to subordinate the Kai Colo and enforce the Christian

18 Proceedings, 23 September 1875; see, too, RH 919 s. 5, Fiji Miscellaneous. Thurston, 'Memorandum.' Thurston estimated taxable males at 23,000 and the tax at about £11,000 — not far from returns of produce sales after 1877.
19 Fiji Royal Gazette, 1877, 60.
20 Gordon, 713.
21 Durutalo, 92, 107, 115.
At the end of the campaign, clients of Bau and the governor were appointed as official chiefs and stipendiary magistrates to provinces of western Viti Levu, while collaborating leaders among the Colo themselves were placed over defeated clans. If Gordon was adroit in settling this war, so were his chiefs.

As a result, there was a change in the rokos present in the Council of 1876. Gordon did not refer to the politics of chiefly alliance in his article, but the bargaining position of the Council underlay the major topics of his governorship until his departure at the end of 1880. These were taxation, the definition of Fijian land tenure, indentured labour, casual labour, industrial schools and a series of lesser resolutions covering the conduct of local courts and councils. There was much that he did not mention such as the use of prisoners for provincial labour, the reluctance of rokos to accept inspection of provinces by European officials, the increasing difficulty of prescribing suitable produce tax crops, payment of minor district officials, depopulation and health, wrangles over the definition of ‘fornication’.

What impressed Gordon more than the variety of business were the ways in which the Council conducted itself. From 1876 meetings were held in different provinces and followed a set procedure. Gatherings opened with yaqona followed by a speech from the governor which raised topics, but did not always lay down a fixed agenda. Assemblies lasted as long as a month, often with three sittings a day to deal with provincial reports in great detail, local grievances and inter-district or provincial disputes, and any resolutions arising from those discussions. From 1876, too, the Council took care to record its own report and prepare a letter to the queen signed by the rokos. From its second meeting the problem of numerous and noisy representatives and their friends was dealt with by constituting a sub-committee for bulis, scribes and minor chiefs — ‘an elementary separation of the assembly into two ‘houses’ — the more remarkable because perfectly natural and spontaneous.’

This probably owed something to the fact that only rokos voted on the rare occasions a vote was called for; and it was difficult for bulis to speak their minds in the presence of high chiefs, especially if they were critical of affairs in their provinces.

From the beginning, too, governors replied to resolutions on the concluding day, making an immediate decision on minor matters and referring others to the NRB or the Legislative Council. Gordon claimed this enabled the Council to influence Fijian affairs more immediately than a minority presence of Fijians in the legislature. He cited as prime examples the Native Lands Ordinance of 1880 which contained material from the resolutions of three annual meetings, the Native Labour Ordinance of 1877. He might

22 They now included Ratu Vuki, a Bauan ally appointed over Ba and Yassawa; Ratu Isikeli Tabakaucoro appointed roko tui over Ra; Ratu Matanitobua appointed over Namosi; Ratu Luke Natulanikoro appointed Roko Tui Nadroga.

23 Gordon continued to receive copies of Proceedings and other despatches. CO 83/25; 83/33.

24 Gordon, 716.
have added the Native Taxes Ordinance of 1876 and supplementary regulations on tax assessment and collection arising from provincial complaints in Council about how the system worked in its early years.

Two other features of the Council impressed Gordon: its ability to find ways of reconciling provincial disputes arising from boundaries and the segmentation of clans into mobile groups who transferred their settlements and allegiance to other chiefs; the ways in which it handled 'delinquent chiefs'. 'Above all, the questions are decided. They are not left to fester and rankle, and break out subsequently in perhaps serious disturbances.'

Secondly, Gordon recognized (as few of his successors did) that the formal business of the Council was accompanied inseparably by ceremonial and solevu exchanges.

‘The guests or strangers present goods to their entertainers, the entertainers present goods to their guests. This portion of the Bose is looked at with very jealous eyes by those who do not understand it; but, not to mention that it would be almost impossible to render intelligible to Fijians the severance of an interchange of property from the interchange of ideas at the Council, it should not be overlooked that these interchanges lead to the manufacture of a vast number of articles, and a corresponding increase of what to the Fijians represents wealth.’

In addition, as Gordon pointed out, provinces were responsible for provisioning this assembly, guests and entertainment — a task that became more burdensome in later years, requiring restriction of the numbers of chiefly followers and occasional subsidies from Fijian administration funds.

‘A large deputation brings in the contribution from each village, piles it up on the ‘rara’, or public square, goes through the usual ceremonies attending the presentation of food, dances a formal dance, and withdraws. A High Chief and the Governor’s Mata-ni-vanua [spokesman] superintend the division of the pile into sixteen or seventeen heaps for the Governor, the ex-king, the constabulary, etc. The Mata-ni-vanua of each province superintends the further division of each provincial heap into portions for the Rokos, Magistrates, and Bulis of the province, whose own attendants again subdivide each minor heap among those dependent upon them. It is astonishing with what order, regularity and speed, these distributions are accomplished, and how much less waste than might be expected takes place.’

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25 Ibid., 722.
26 Ibid., 722-3.
27 Ibid., 728.
Accordingly, Gordon took pains to defend the institution and its procedures against criticism from settlers and missionaries.28 His final justification for its existence, unusual in a Crown Colony, was a practical one:

"its maintenance is a necessity if the system of government through natives is to be kept up. It acts as a safety-valve to many a grievance that might otherwise rankle and swell to dangerous proportions; it furnishes a touchstone of feeling of the utmost value in gauging the tendencies of the native mind, and it is a most powerful auxiliary in carrying out the wishes of the Government."29

Decline and Revival; the Council as Broker of Fijian Resources, 1880-1940

The corporation of Fijian leaders and officials that gained experience in the formal ceremonial of annual meetings with the governor and his representative in the 1870s was, therefore, a novel artefact of Crown Colony administration. Its prescribed role under Fijian Regulations did not derive from Fijian custom, but from interaction of Fijian leaders with settlers and administrators and from the need for chiefs to speak as a body in dealing with foreign representatives.30 Up until 1900, the existence of the Council depended largely on governors' judgment of its usefulness. But if the governor was its 'root' (as the Regulation of 1877 put it), the institution also enabled Fijian chiefs to extended informal influence into the formal sources of power in colonial government at the level of the Provincial Department, the Legislature and Executive Council through the governor as 'supreme chief' and his talai, the Native Commissioner.31

The primary purpose of the Council from 1880 was to monitor regulatory control of a rural Fijian population through Fijian magistrates and bulis, while acting as guardian of their lands and use of their manpower in conditions of settler pressure and demographic decline. To achieve this, Gordon's three layers of councils provided a mechanism for representation and a chain of command and redress. Tikina (district) councils under bulis were designed to

28 For chiefs' relations with the Methodist Church, Andrew Thornley, 'Fijian Methodism 1874-1945: the emergence of a national church' (Ph. D. diss, Australian National University, 1979), 107, 108, 124, 184, 210-12.
29 Gordon, 731.
30 The formal prescriptions were set out in Native Affairs Ordinance No. 35 1876 which constituted the NRB, the Fijian judiciary and defined councils and their composition under Regulation 1/1877.
31 The title of this official changed several times after 1916. The post was left vacant 1921-23, and then was restored as Secretary for Native Affairs under the Colonial Secretary's Department with an Acting-Secretary, while Fijian provincial and district officials, except for six provinces, came under provincial commissioners. In 1934 there was a restoration of the Secretarieship with a 'Native Section' in the Colonial Secretary's Office. In 1936 it was down-graded to Adviser once more and then restored with expanded functions as Secretary for Fijian Affairs after 1944.
keep headmen accountable for the order and cleanliness of the villages; provincial councils
met once a year and set rates and taxes to meet a budget of expenditure, but the management
of that budget was handled by provincial commissioners, European magistrates (as tax
inspectors) and scribes attached to the Provincial Office. As long as Gordon’s produce tax
continued till about 1912, senior Fijian officials were paid through the Provincial Office from
central funds as part of the budgets for the Provincial Department or the Secretariat for Native
Affairs. Neither district nor provincial councils exercised judicial functions. Stipended rokos,
either as hereditary chiefs, or in their subordinate position as assistants to commissioners,
were, therefore, not exactly ‘Native Authorities’ with prescribed judicial and executive
powers, courts and councils of elders, as in African protectorates. They did not have ‘native
treasuries’. But they had authority and status to influence application of Fijian regulations
through bulis, headmen, magistrates and lesser officials, if they cared to apply themselves to
routine affairs, agricultural projects or fund-raising. More often they did not. Within this
structure there was room for manoeuvre, but not much for initiative at village level, unless
the vanua chief of. the district gave his support. As responsibility for district and provincial
affairs passed increasingly into the hands of commissioners in the later nineteenth century,
the hierarchy of official chiefs and buli executives became less effective in administration
and more defensive in complaints about status, pay, pensions and appointments in Council
Proceedings.

The greatest weakness of Fijian administration was that Gordon’s prescribed system left
a number of loose ends that did not mesh with extended family and sub-clan leadership at
village level.12 Provincial councils meeting infrequently were a gathering of district bulis,
appointed village headmen, magistrates and scribes under the chairmanship of the roko
or the commissioner. Their purpose was general ‘welfare and good order’, as laid down in
a detailed list of questions to bulis. In districts under bulis there were, in theory, monthly
meetings of tikina councils consisting of appointed village headmen to regulate general
matters of health, the conduct of officials, census registrations. Their relations with family
and village leaders as heads of i tokatoka and mataqali were left vague. Nearly a century after
Gordon’s prescriptions, when the system of rural administration came under pressure for
further bureaucrat isation, there was still a wide gap at grass roots between village headmen,
as agents of the buli and village and family elders and titled chiefs of mataqali.13

For one thing, the neat demarcations of districts and provinces on the maps of the
Colony did not keep pace with changes in the population of rural settlements. Frequent

32 Subordinate to rokos and bulis were native magistrates (usually rau), qali (‘town’) chiefs or
headmen of large hamlets nominated by tikina councils and better known as turaga ni koro; scribes,
overseers of tax gardens, village police under the turaga of a hamlet and the district chief of police
(ovisa). Lesser officials below magistrates and bulis were paid after 1912 not from central funds but
locally-raised rates (set by provincial councils) from which an annual ‘tax’ (set by government) was
extracted for central treasury funding of senior Fijian officials.
requests through the Council for approval of migration by sub-clans segmenting from the main stock to other districts or provinces suggests 'boundaries' were porous. Mataqali could expand into yavusa clans with a common ancestor, but the kin components of a yavusa might be concentrated or spread among different village settlements. Furthermore, there was a sub-hierarchy of family heads, ranked mataqali chiefs (sometimes acting as village heads) who might or might not provide the 'official' village headmen and buli personnel. If they did not, there was a disjunction between official and customary leadership. To complicate matters further in the subordinated interior provinces and districts of the Kai Colo the idealized pattern of local administration existed as a layer of 'foreign' (vu lagi) appointees well into the next century; and there the gap between official and grass-roots authority was even greater. Other forms of Fijian mobility such as a steady defection by young men and some women from the obligations of communal village life were regulated but did not stop. By the end of the century, a number preferred to earn wages and pay their fines. There were lesser issues confronted by the Council, concerning relations with missionary societies, health and education in conditions of population decline. But these required intervention and resources outside the immediate command of the chiefly hierarchy, until the period of post-war welfare spending and central planning complemented Fijian political aspirations in the 1950s.

What concerns us here are the practical effects of the inability of the administrative hierarchy to translate its policies through enforceable regulations all the way down to village level with assurance they would be carried out. The problem of effective authority in action was continuously reflected in the Proceedings of the Council of Chiefs. Through the reports of bulis, there were rumblings of discontent from below, usually about taxes, constant revisions of regulations on marriage, divorce, public health, mission recruitment and absenteeism from villages which headmen could not deal with. From time to time, and more especially in the 1890s, there were undercurrents of religious and political resistance in the tuku and luve ni wai cults and a search for better methods of marketing produce in response to the challenge of the 'Viti Company' movement from 1914.


Disputes over the division of solevu and other presentations between provinces and debate on whether they should be banned altogether considerably modifies Gordon's portrayal of ceremonial harmony in the circulation of goods during Council meetings, when bulis and lesser officials failed to deliver. At a basic level, therefore, in nineteenth century Fiji the gap between regulation and executive action was usually laid at the doorstep of the unfortunate turaga ni koro, unpaid, untrained, unsupervised, and caught between a layer of official bulis and mataqali and family heads. Councils and governors failed to resolve this fundamental difficulty; and administrators turned more frequently to supervision through commissioners. In Council Proceedings chiefs and governors concentrated their agendas instead on the main topics inherited from the 1870s: use of land resources and creation of rents and revenue; the authority and status of chiefs in the face of this intrusive administrative supervision.

Underlying much of the co-operation of Gordon and the chiefs had been a common resolve to determine who could alienate limited areas of Fijian land. Instructions on holding Fijian lands in trust given by Lord Carnarvon in 1875 and the pronouncements of the Council of Chiefs on the ownership of Fijian lands by mataqali,1878-9, were reinforced by Gordon's 1880 Ordinance according legal tenure by custom to Fijians. One of the reasons why Council chiefs entered willingly into this complex exercise of definition of territory and social groups was that a letter from Cakobau at the end of 1878 had called their attention to the work of the earliest Land Commission set up by Gordon to investigate European pre-Cession claims and which promised a division of monies from sales of Crown land between the government and Fijian owners. A second was the question whether chiefs' own lands would fall under the provisions of the produce tax of 1876. On both these points chiefs were in the dark. They were reassured on the methods of examining European claims pre-Cession; and the question of taxation and shares of rents concentrated their minds, when they set about basing their definition of territorial 'ownership' by mataqali sub-clans and elaborated a procedure for handling registration after settlement of disputes in 1879 and 1880, formulating, in effect, the draft land Ordinance

36 For example, Proceedings for 1896.
37 Proceedings, 13-14 May 1885; July 1894.
39 Proceedings 1878, Resolutions 8, 23. Claims were settled by 1883 and Crown grants were issued for some 400,000 acres. Morrell, 389.
40 Proceedings 1878.
No. 21 of 1880. Des Voeux, as lieutenant-governor, took part in the council session at Bua and made it clear there would be no alienation without consent. But he saw no obstacle to Fijian sales through the Crown, with provision for a share of the price to the owners. On any count, the recommendations were generous to the political chiefs of provinces and to government. Gordon made only a perfunctory minute on all of this and did not enter into detail. At the end of the 1880-81 Council held in the Lau group at Mualeva on Vanuabalavu, Gordon took his leave on his way to his New Zealand governorship, confirming that land alienation would be curbed and registration of lands would begin, as required under the regulations formulated by the chiefs. It is worth noting, however, that on 28 March 1881 he gave an opinion on mataqali lands, questioning whether they were quite so 'inalienable', as decided by Council resolutions. Such resolutions, Gordon observed, were not laws but 'merely declarations of Native Custom.' Gordon minuted that the Crown was free to sell Crown lands as 'the property of a Mataqali not then making use thereof.' But this was special pleading for a special case: on this tenuous ground Gordon covered his decision to make a sale to the Colonial Sugar Refinery before the Ordinance came into force, though no further concessions would be made thereafter.

As a consequence of the Council's long-debated definitions of territorial ownership based on agnatic social groups, chiefs in the provinces were now saddled with the difficulty of finding out what the boundaries were for lands whose usehold rested not on territorial demarcation, but a bundle of land rights acquired by farmers, rights vested in descent groups — with contingent rights for non-residents — and important tributary rights arising from the incorporation or conquest of mobile clan and sub-clan groups. Having decided that the lands of hamlets and villages fell under tikina councils and boundary disputes between districts were the business of provincial councils, the chiefs exempted their own private lands from any such arbitration. Indeed, for a while they seem to have aimed at making their Council into a court of appeal for disputes at provincial level. A case involving the Province of Serua and the interior of Colo in 1884 was examined and referred by their resolution to the NRB for decision. In 1885, the Council felt confident enough to judge a

41 Proceedings 1880-1881, report by bulis and Resolution 18, 10 December 1880. Bulis recommended a rent share-out of 10s. in the £1 to the mataqali, 8s. to the vanua chief, 1s. to the roko, 1s. to the buli. Proceedings 1881, Resolution 8 (money from sale of Crown lands — two thirds to government, one third to two villages under a common roko tui, the provincial roko was the most likely to benefit in his dual capacity as 'customary' and 'official' chief.

43 Ibid., Gordon, 28 March 1881. For the CSR concession arranged by Thurston at Sydney 1880 for a 1,000 acres on the Rewa, Morrell, 384.
land dispute between Moala district and Lakeba and set up a small commission to deal with the case. By 1888, however, the Council recognised (and Governor Thurston agreed) that the 1880 Ordinance did not provide ready ways of settling Fijian boundary disputes. Indeed, the Council could hardly bring itself, after two hours of debate, to decide the land rights of Tongans in the Lau group, following the death of Ma'afu as paramount of the group, when local resentments at their presence surfaced. To their credit the chiefs resolved to respect Tongan claims to remain as integrated and historic settlers. That charitable attitude did not extend to Indian settlers in May 1888, when for the first time the consequences of the end of indenture were raised. Some village chiefs and buli had been fined for harbouring Indians; and most agreed with the warning of Magistrate Jonacani: 'They will stamp us out.'

But a resolution to end settlement of Indians in Fiji merely resulted in a long explanation from Thurston that they were British subjects, few in numbers, and would have to pay taxes.

Thurston steered the agenda back to the topic of land in 1892, when he outlined his objections to paying anything more than a token rent from government for 'waste lands' taken over by the Crown. In return for continued communal services for chiefs, the Council caved in on this issue. On the other hand, Thurston amended Gordon's Land Ordinance in 1892 by requiring commissioners to sit with provincial councils to settle boundaries. At the same time he slipped in a clause making it easier to lease Fijian-owned lands with the consent of councils and the governor. But little more was done for the next decade. Thurston's attention was taken up from 1894 by a major tax revolt on Macuata led by two cult movements in the Seqaqa hill villages combined with a secession movement from the authority of the Roko Tui Macuata to Cakaudrove Province. In addition, he had an important dispute with Ratu Epeli, Roko Tui of Tailevu and surviving eldest son of Cakobau.

Following Thurston's chiefly paramountcy, the Council entered the lowest period of its influence, as the practice of using provincial inspectors spread — condemned by the 1902 Council as 'enemies of the Rokos'. Inspectors interfered with the chain of command and complaisance running from bulis to rokus and their mantanivanua personal officials. There had been dismissals of bulis without consultation of the hereditary chief. Inspired by the Roko Tui Tailevu, Penaia Kadavu Levu, the Council solemnly debated replacing all European commissioners and inspectors by chiefs on the grounds that they had not

45 Proceedings, 11 May 1888.
46 That is land of extinct mataqali reverting to the Crown as 'ultimus haeres' (later known as Schedule A lands) and land declared by the Native Land Commission to be unoccupied at the date of Cession (later known as Schedule B lands). Lloyd, 28-31.
47 CO 83/55, 2 March 1892. At that date some 25,000 acres of Fijian land were under lease about a third of which was pre-Cession contracts.
48 Proceedings, 1 and 5 July 1902. Behind the increased supervision through commissioners lay a deeper issue of accounting for taxes increasingly paid in cash rather than produce.
given Fiji to the queen in order to be eased out of authority. Commissioners were to be
limited to judicial work. Surprisingly, the Assistant Native Commissioner who accepted
their resolution agreed to lay the matter before the incoming governor, Sir Henry Jackson.

Jackson took the Council seriously. He thought it should meet annually, although it
was 'a rather tedious and costly proceeding' to assemble at Suva.49 For the first time since
Gordon he began an appraisal of the chieftaincy system in relation to Fijian taxation,
communal services and land availability for lease.50 The taxation system he planned to
'modify' further in the direction of cash payments. The communal system of prestations for
chiefs and other officials might stay in place, if not pressed too far and encouraging defiance
of chiefly authority as had happened in Colo districts and in Lau, where food donations to
officials were resisted. Lala services were in some confusion in the Regulations of 1877
and 1892 by requiring commoners' labour for house-building, road-building, planting
gardens, feeding strangers, making canoes, turtle-fishing and works of 'public good.' The
English version made it clear that only rokos and bulis could exercise such authority. The
Fijian version was vaguer leaving interpretation open to 'local custom'. The injunction to
obey was backed, however, by fines and prison for disobedience.51 Persons complaining of
excessive lala might appeal to the governor, but that was very unlikely to happen in Fijian
society. There were undoubtedly abuses of the system; and some chiefs added considerably
to their official incomes by forced services.52

Moreover, Indians and Pacific islanders were free from communal services and the
produce tax. This was deeply resented, Jackson argued, by young men who abstained
from communal labour as much as possible by periodic absence. But Jackson saw the
main obstacle to such 'individualism' in the land tenure system. The Land Commission
had made some progress in registering family lands of mataqali. At family levels, plots
were individually worked and trees were individually owned. This tendency might be
strengthened, he concluded, by making tax refunds payable to individuals. But policies
in different spheres — chieftaincy, taxation, land, labour — although connected, had
been discontinuous in detail; and Fijians played off several authorities against each other.
To remedy this defect Jackson proposed to reform the Native Department by reinforcing
the Native Commissioner's role through touring inspections as the governor's talai
(spokesman), and in this way to circumvent resentment of provincial inspectors. Thus, a
direct link from provincial rokos to the source of power might be restored. Finally, Jackson
planned to transform the produce tax by commutation into cash payments, because the
Revenue Department had zealously required production of crops not always suitable to

49 CO 83/77, Jackson, 18 June 1903.
50 Parliamentary. Papers. Correspondence Relating to Native Taxation and the Communal System in Fiji,
1905, liv, Cd. 2240, Jackson to Chamberlain, 23 April 1903.
51 Anthony J. Chapelle, 'Land and Race in Fiji: the Administration of Sir Everard im Thurn, 1904-
52 Correspondence Relating to Native Taxation, Jackson, 23 April 1903, 8.
different districts and provinces. The result had been travel over long distances to find suitable plots hired from other districts. Tax had been harshly administered. Above all, tax work conflicted with subsistence production. Fijian objections took the intelligent view that they were subject to Customs on goods like everybody else, in addition to their special tax in produce. Jackson agreed with Fijians that many areas were over-assessed in terms of population and production.

Thus, he edged towards a graduated tax according to types of production with greater reductions in assessments for minor crop producers and the poorest provinces. In all, Fijian taxation would be reduced from over £19,000 to about £16,000 a year. Individual cash payments would end gifts to rokos from the annual refunds of tax money and outright retention by some bulis. The Council had already made a request in Resolution 22 of 1902 for payment of all assessments in cash; and Jackson agreed with rokos on how to apply this. The Colonial Office approved these proposals.

With this programme circulated to chiefs in advance, Jackson took a relaxed attitude towards the Council when it met in September 1903. He agreed to reinstate some of the chiefs and officials dismissed by predecessors. He supported Nadroga Province in its request for a young roko, Ratu Tavita Makutu. A bargain was clearly in the making. For, in this atmosphere of goodwill he secured government control of more unused lands with the consent of the Council. In return, he accepted the Council's division of rents. And this was followed by his acceptance of a panel of Fijian names for selection for the Legislative Council. The Colonial Office allowed all this to stand, accepting a reduction in produce tax, because it was clearly a trade-off for the Council's Resolution 6 'which practically hands over to the Government the entire control of the whole Waste Lands of the Colony' and Resolution 13 'which in adopting the family sub-divisions of the Mataqali, as the proprietary unit in registering the Native Lands, makes a very long step in the direction of individual ownership.

That conclusion was over-optimistic. But Jackson’s successor, Sir Everard im Thurn, reluctantly had to accept the reduction of tax as well the scale of rents and call the Council together for a few days in 1905 to confirm nominations of Fijian Unofficial Members of his legislature. That was about as far as that devious governor was prepared to consult the chiefs.

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53 Ibid., 16.  
54 Ibid., 17-18 for the details of this method.  
55 Proceedings, 1903. The scale of rents adopted finally in 1906 was: 12s to the mataqali; 1s each to the provincial roko, district buli and the turaga ni taukei; 2s to the qali and mataqali chiefs. The balance to the mataqali could be further sub-divided to pay tokatoka. There was still a possibility of receipts for dual chiefly functions and altogether 30 per cent went directly to chiefs, while mataqali monies were invested on behalf of members. Lloyd, 148-50.  
56 Requested by the Council of Chiefs as early as 1881.  
57 CO 83/77, Minutes on Jackson, 7 October 1903.
chiefs. Consequently, they played no part in the minor drama over the Native Lands Ordinance of 1905 intended to make Fijian lands freely alienable on perpetual leases, end the work of the Lands Commission and end registration of mataqali boundaries. As is well known, the legislation was scotched by Lord Stanmore (Gordon) amid mutual recriminations, but not before a number of the high chiefs had taken advantage of the opportunity to obtain Crown Grants and Native Grants which provided a good income from subsequent leases. There is also evidence that several of the highest chiefs were alive to the possibilities of extracting improved incomes from rent and sales monies by exploiting their positions as titular heads of political matanitu and laying claim to the shares accorded to former qali as tributary dependencies.

The long-term result of im Thurn's abortive attempt to 'reform' land tenure by more flexible conveyance was to 'traditionalise' a flexible system long subject to group mobility and extraction of tribute from the most basic Fijian resource. But that process took time — at least until the 1940s; and in the meantime the Land Department and Commission officials proceeded slowly to enshrine 'ancient' land rights into a form of protection accepted by Fijians, without meeting future difficulties over contingent rights of Indians to extended leases or suitable Fijian units for land management. In the shorter term, the immediate effect was to hold up the registrations and boundary surveys begun through commissioners and provincial councils under the provisions of the amended Land Ordinance of 1892. The new governor, Sir Francis May, set about reviving the Lands Commission in 1911 and continued Jackson's policy of encouraging Fijian provinces to release lands for lease, while extracting a hefty ten per cent fee from the annual rents (some £23,000 a year) to cover the work of Native Department and Land Department officials. On both counts it became necessary to recall 'the Great Council (or gathering) of Chiefs' to approve selection of two Fijians for the new Commission and the new method of channelling rent monies and tax refunds more frequently through the Native Deposit Account — less administration fees. There was a further motive for consultation: without fixing ownership and boundaries,

58 Im Thurn has been fairly re-assessed by Tony Chapelle, but the impression remains that he listened more to some of his officials than to Fijians; and his claim that the Council of 1905 resolved to abolish lala was untrue. CO 83/80, im Thurn, 14 April 1905. Nor did he forward the Proceedings of that Council.
59 For the details, France, chap. 9; Lloyd, 135-6. Lloyd claims many chiefs were not opposed to lease or sale of unoccupied lands, but no mataqali chose to divide lands among members, as im Thurn's Amendment Ordinance of 1907 enabled them to do before it was withdrawn in 1912.
60 Chapelle, 'Land and Race in Fiji.' 340.
61 Ibid., 264-8 for the claims and counter-claims of Ratu Kadavulevu and Joni Madraiwiwi. The matter was decided by Native Lands Commissioner, Allardyce, who refused to allow shares over several provinces to the highest Fijian title-holders.
63 CO 83/101, May to Harcourt, 11 May 1911.
the government could not introduce a land tax, as May planned, or progress towards individual ownership on the model of the governor's very partial understanding of Maori land ownership in New Zealand. 64

When the Council met once more at Suva in 1911 and 1912, it nominated for the first time rokos as members and assessors to the Land Commission, but it conceded no more than five per cent in fees for handling rents. May accepted this for the moment, and with easy revenue in mind the Council agreed to persuade provinces to make over more unused lands for lease. 65 There was a battle over the size of the rents committee (the Council wanted thirty-three chiefs to carve up the income), but it was kept to a few officials and nominated Fijians. The argument continued into future sessions, raising chiefly claims to 'ownership' of all lands as clan trustees. As a consequence, by 1917, very little of Fijians' land was handed over for further lease. The work of the Lands Commission slowed down, even as it expanded into one of the largest departments of government by the early 1920s. On two other matters the Council won and lost points. The government wanted to tap into land rent monies as a source for funding forestry officials. This was refused (the Council preferred to share any costs). Secondly, there was constant pressure from Council for reversion of the lands of extinct mataqali to remaining sub-clans of a maximal descent group (yausa) and not to the Crown. In 1928 the governor of the day laid down that the purpose of mataqali had been to provide protection for families of land users. This function had been taken over by the Crown: 'It follows that right of overlordship as well as the right to the extinct mataqali land passed at the same time to the Crown.' 66

For the time being the Council was content with this, so long as it was able to increase its official representation within the Lands Commission and among the employees of the Land Department. Mataqali lands continued to revert to the Crown and Fijians fell into arrears of payments for the Commission's surveys. 67 More Fijians were extending their own land use by leasing. The trend by the 1930s was towards protecting the stock of expiring leases, rather than renewing them. To counter this trend Ratu Sukuna as a high chief in the Council and Member of the Legislature proposed to the 1936 session at Bau that:

'all lands (including leases) not required for the maintenance of Fijian owners, be opened for settlement; that to further this end a committee be appointed to

64 May had paid close attention to the work of Judge F. E. Maning, but not enough to the workings of the Land Courts. See Alan Ward, A Show of Justice. Racial 'Amalgamation' in Nineteenth Century New Zealand (Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1974): 181, 107-8, 151-2, 186-7. By 1911 Fijian lands under lease amounted to 140,974 acres. Lands held by the Crown ('waste lands') amounted to 160,608 acres yielding a small rent of £643; and the government held unconditionally a further 160,000 acres. Fiji Legislative Council Papers (CP), 1911.
65 In 1912 May insisted, however, on the original ten per cent fee.
66 Proceedings, 1928, Resolution 7; see also CO 83/185/9, Hutson, 10 November 1929.
67 By 1937 the provinces owed £58,278 to the Commission. CP No. 42/1938 Secretary for Native Affairs Report for 1937.
enquire into and determine the amount of land needed for the proper development by native owners; and that all land (including leases) not so required be handed over to the Government to lease on behalf of the Fijians.\(^{68}\)

On the evidence of Sukuna's previous career, this was a strange initiative for such a prominent Fijian to take.\(^{69}\) He had supported chiefs' petitions against further Indian settlement in 1921; his views on the development of Fijian society were, according to his biographer, 'amazingly static'; and after the entry of the first elected Fijians into the Legislative Council in 1929, he had allied himself with the principal European Members to oppose easier conditions of access to land.\(^{70}\) Moreover, his proposal to the Council of Chiefs was opposed by at least two of the high chiefs present and was not approved by resolution immediately until the text of Sukuna's proposal had been circulated to provincial councils.

Provincial councils supported the idea of government-administered leases with the promise of more rents, as it became clear that Sukuna's proposal was less generous to Indian lessees than it seemed. Seen in the context of legislation in 1933 to allow extension of leases and compensation for improvements at the end of expired leases, the initiative was a preventive measure against the government taking powers for extended control of 'surplus' Fijian lands.\(^{71}\) In 1938, therefore, the Council of Chiefs in Resolution 40 asked the government to take Fijian lands 'in trust', as suggested by Sir Arthur Richards in his opening address. On this basis Richards drafted and forwarded a Bill for approval in London.\(^{72}\) The details of the new proposal lay in the Regulations of the Native Land Trust Ordinance, 1940, which created the category of Fijian Native Reserve Lands with no possibility of lease to non-Fijians by direct negotiation with owners. The remainder of Fijian land available for lease (pre-Cession 'waste' lands and land from mataqali held by the Crown) came under a new statutory body, the Native Lands Trust Board, staffed by officials and Fijians, including some from the Council. The terms of leases were laid down. Proceeds from sale of leases, after deduction of ten per cent by the administration, were divided 8s. in the £1 to chiefs and provincial funds and 12s. to mataqali owners. Thus began a centralization of Fiji's land leasing system under an institution which became a target of criticism for its lengthy procedures, its lack of qualified staff, its 'deplorable' land-filing system, and lack of personnel training.\(^{73}\)

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68 Ibid., Sukuna at this date was among the governor's appointments to the Council. There was very little recorded discussion of his proposal.


70 Ibid., chap. 12.

71 Lloyd, 166.


The more immediate question here in the context of growing Council influence before and during the 1940s is just how the originator of the measure, Ratu Lala Sukuna, managed to sell to Richards and the Colonial Office the idea of a seemingly liberal and rational method of opening Fijian lands for further settlement, while vesting all control over Fijian lands in a statutory board which made settlement difficult through its monopoly over leases. The issue of land, moreover, is a sensitive indicator of the changing structure of administration and politics of Fijian society, where other new statutory bodies paved the way for a concentration of executive and civil service power and authority in the decades leading up to independence.

Sukuna had more experience than most Fijian chiefs or administrators of the variety and difficulties of Fijian tenure, so his knowledge of the factors inhibiting Fijian small-holder development of cash crops is not in question. He was aware of the relative shortage of good farm land in Fiji in relation to population. And he was aware, because of his unusual education, practical training in the Secretariat, the Native Lands Commission, and as administrator of Lau Province, that there was a wide gap between his conviction that Fijians were happiest in their ascribed roles as rural farmers and the quality of chiefly leadership needed to guide them in that desirable status. Rokos were not able administrators, even as assistants to commissioners. Provincial finances had been under fire from the Audit Department for a decade; provinces fell consistently into arrears on tax collection and payment of fees to the Land Commission over the period from the 1920s to 1940; and in 1931 there had been the spectacular dismissal and imprisonment of Ratu Joseph Mataitini, Roko Tui Rewa, for misappropriations from provincial funds. He had dealt with dangerous cases of chiefly mis-rule and opposition to custom arising within the chiefly hierarchy between Verata and Bau in the 1920s and 1930s. He was also aware that many of the hereditary chiefs were far from opposed to freeing up Fijian lands for sale or lease, against the best interests of commoners. Some of the governors, too, had begun to tire over the denial of land to Indian settlement and recommended the outright sale of areas held under government lease. By birth, upbringing and by experience a natural autocrat, Sukuna's reaction to the challenges facing Fijians by the end of the 1930s was to safeguard their interests within the institutions of Crown Colony government, if necessary by creating

74 Ibid., Davey's main criticism was that the NLTB was founded as a 'trust', but confused its role by adding other functions.
75 See Ward's comments on this restrictive factor: 'Land in Fiji', 51-2.
76 Macnaught, 62-4; Scarr, Ratu Sukuna.
77 Proceedings, 1930, Resolution 9; CO 83/95/5, J. McOwen, 'Memorandum' (he had been twice dismissed before in 1901 and 1914 for similar offences, but was reinstated as a near relative of Cakobau); for taxes, Blue Books of Fiji; Audit Reports in Council Papers, No. 36/1935, No. 31/1936, No. 30/1937.
78 Macnaught, 73-4.
79 For the debate on leasing policies in the 1920s and 1930s under pressure from Indian farmers, Brij V. Lal, Broken Waves: A History of the Fiji Islands in the Twentieth Century (Honolulu, 1992): 98-9, 100-102.
80 CO 83/1859, Hutson, 10 November 1929. Desire for outright sales applied particularly to his predecessor, Sir Cecil Rodwell (1918-1925).
new ones, using the Council of Chiefs to staff them. Moreover, by the early 1940s, Sukuna had the political weight to do this. He had been singled out for promotion quite early in his career and his selection for the Legislative Council confirmed the confidence of governors in his influence (as well as confirming the unusual practice of using Fijian officials as legislators). 81 By persuading Richards to take Fijian Reserves into trust, Sukuna removed leases from the informal market for 'auctions', bribery, and negotiation between Indians and Fijians into government management under the NLTB in which chiefs could establish a monopoly of expertise. It was the first step towards centralization of other functions of Fijian administration, a re-establishment of provincial rokos and a confirmation of the Council of Chiefs as a source of nominated legislators and officials of statutory bodies.

The Council as a Political Caucus, 1943-1970

As in many other territories the exigencies of wartime administration and post-war planning initiated a re-examination of Fiji’s Constitution. In response to a survey begun within the Colonial Office Governor Sir Harry Luke supplied a perfunctory account of the communal electoral and nominating system for the Legislative Council and accorded an important place to the Council of Chiefs as the principal assembly for Fijians. 82 But he had few ideas to offer. It was left, instead, to Sir Philip Mitchell, transferred from service in East Africa in 1942 to take in hand mobilization of Fiji’s manpower and production and commit his officials to serious thinking about an overhaul of multi-racial representation and local administration. Mitchell’s own thinking took him in the direction of promoting communal leaders to the Executive Council on the model of Fiji’s wartime ‘Cabinet’ which co-opted European Members of the legislature. 83 But first he had to assess the communities he was dealing with.

Mitchell’s initial impressions in July 1942 were not all that favourable, after ceremonial greetings on the lawn of Government House and a lecture to a rather ‘bored’ assembly of chiefs on the business of his appointment — war and work, by compulsion if necessary. 84 But he did meet Sukuna in the first few days and was ‘much taken with him.’ 85 It is clear, however, that once he got around to drafting his ‘Fiji Reorganisation Report’ in mid-August, the ideas in it were his own, based on his African experience and his briefing from C. E. de F. Pennefather, Adviser on Fijian Affairs. When he met with the Council of Chiefs at Nadroga, 16 September, there was a full turn-out of seventeen rokos and notables, nominees of the Adviser and nineteen representatives of the provinces,

81 See Colonial Office minutes on the reorganization of Fijian administration in 1943, where Sukuna is described as ‘the most outstanding Fijian figure since Thakombau the ‘Tui Viti’ (King).’ CO 83/236/15, Trafford-Smith, 19 May 1943.
82 CO 83/235/4: ‘Memorandum for Lord Hail ey’s Committee on Post-War Problems.’
85 Sukuna explained to him the outlines of Fijian social structures.
with a full exchange of courtesies and a taqa (military parade).\textsuperscript{86} Once more his spoken message was short and to the point: the governor required a thousand more men for the army and a labour corps. His written and circulated address dealt with education, forestry, agriculture, welfare and demarcation of Fijian reserves. But it was too soon to announce any constitutional programme. His decisions on the 1942 Council's resolutions revealed, instead, a cautious policy of toning down the aspirations of chiefs for annual assemblies, official recognition and payment for the Vunivalu of Bau, increase of salaries, exemption of Fijian soldiers from tax. There was an unusual resolution, however, put forward by Sukuna and Ratu George Cakobau supporting his 'proposal' for 'Provincial Financial Autonomy' (which does appear in his address). In fact, this was merely an indication on Mitchell's part that there would have to be a rationalization of central funding and provincial finances. To further this, the Council resolved to set up a committee and Mitchell agreed.\textsuperscript{87}

This was a straw in the wind, rather than a revelation of his thinking about the relationship between government and Fijian administration. The council meeting was short — no more than five days. Privately, Mitchell was disappointed in the chiefs and called off a dinner for them, when '6 out of 10 got tight & failed to turn up'.\textsuperscript{88} Indeed, he did not call the Council together again during his governorship. His priorities were his War Council, Production Board, the Fijian Defence Force. It was only in May 1943 that he again discussed some of his draft on reconstruction with Sukuna who liked the 'new big plan' and agreed at once to accept the post of Secretary for Fijian Affairs. The following day he outlined its details to a full meeting of district commissioners and district officers:

'\textquote{They were all strongly in favour, and as they explained the existing system it could be seen to be even better fitted to my plan than I had realized. But we were agreed that we must keep posts for the men now at the war, & needed not to be in too much of a hurry to appoint Rokos.' \textsuperscript{89}

More surprisingly, Mitchell revealed that some of his model for change was based on an out-dated Native Authority Ordinance for Tanganyika fairly irrelevant to the circumstances of Fijian provinces, districts or villages.\textsuperscript{90} If there were any dissenters, they kept quiet. But all were agreed that a larger government subsidy would be needed to make his reforms work.

\textsuperscript{86} C.P No. 11/1942, 'Report of the Proceedings'.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., Resolution 27. The committee consisted of Sukuna, four rokos and the Adviser on Native Affairs as chairman. There is no full record of the 1942 Council's discussions in CP No. 11, or in the NAF volumes of Proceedings.
\textsuperscript{88} Mitchell, Diaries, 16 September 1942.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 15 May 1943.
Mitchell's despatch on Fijian affairs in July 1943 contained two main ideas: existing local government structures would remain intact but would be tied more closely to central government; and, secondly, confusion over Fijian finances and departmental expenditure on the provinces would be clarified by combining accounts in a new Secretariat for Fijian Affairs. Both of these intentions would be met by reconstituting the Native Regulations Board into a Fijian Affairs Board (FAB) under the new Secretary with five Fijian Members of the legislature as officials, assisted by a legal adviser.

'This will automatically tie into the Legislative Council in one direction and to the Great Council of Chiefs, from which the Fijian Members are derived, in the other; while the Secretary for Fijian Affairs, as a Member of the Executive Council, will hold what will amount to a Ministerial Office in the Government of the Colony, and will be directly responsible to the Governor and, in appropriate matters, to the Legislative Council, for Fijian local government in all its aspects.'

It may well be that the 1942 committee set up by the Council of Chiefs had some input into this. In any case was a bold move to make the new Board into a virtual extension of the Council through its nominated legislators. At a stroke, too, Fijian leadership won back direct access to the seat of power in the Colonial Secretariat which now housed the Fijian Office and to the Governor's Executive Council where Sukuna took his place. The Board, moreover, would have wide quasi-judicial and executive powers over Fijian legislation, over all appointments below the grade of roko and over Fijian revenues and expenditure. There would, in short, be two administrations in rural Fiji, one falling under the Colonial Secretary, departmental officers and the Accountant-General, and one responsible to the Secretary for Fijian Affairs and his Board. Indian affairs were left, as before, to commissioners and district officers. But commissioners were also responsible to Fijian Affairs for supervision of the provinces and their councils. Fijians living in peri-urban 'villages' and all Pacific islanders would come under the Secretary 'for local government purposes.'

How to finance this new model Fijian administration was left unclear. Mitchell recognized that his theoretical separation of 'Fijian Affairs' could not be watertight in practice, when commissioners or district officers carried out rokos' functions in some provinces and other departmental officers carried out common services such as public works and agriculture. How would allocations be decided? Nor did Mitchell touch on education funding, partly departmental and in part supported by Fijian tax-payers. The work of the Medical Department was common to all. Where did that leave support for Fijian Medical Practitioners?

His rough assessment of Fijian-sourced revenue amounted to some £53,200. This was based on a variable Provincial Rate, in fact a male poll tax levied by councils 'according rather to the enthusiasm of the moment', and it included a central government tax of about £10,000. There was some revenue from court fees and fines. Total expenditure on Fijian administration Mitchell calculated at a gross figure of £58,249 covering all personnel emoluments from rokos to minor officials and 'other charges' (left unspecified). Net expenditure by government on Fijian administration was given as £9,402. This left a large part of expenditure on Fijian affairs unaccounted for, because of the difficulty of assigning salaries of departmental officers (judicial, treasury, public works etc.) to provincial accounts.92

This lack of clarity made the Colonial Office nervous about Mitchell's proposal to make the Fijian Affairs Board 'a self-accounting body for which the Accountant-General need have no responsibility.'91 Otherwise, officials welcomed his plan and approved of the appointment of Sukuna. But they could not see how centralization of finances would do anything to encourage responsibility in provincial administration and they insisted on making the Fijian Affairs Board subject to the Director of Colonial Audit. Defensively, Mitchell argued that Fijians deserved the measure for their war effort and that the operation of a centralized board by Fijian members of the legislature was a matter of politics and not of great constitutional or financial significance.94 In any case the final Ordinance was approved without difficulty by the Legislative Council in 1944, and Mitchell was obliged to concede that the FAB would operate its 'Central Fijian Treasury' subject to audit control, before it came into force.95

Mitchell's measure also replaced Gordon's Ordinance and Regulations of 1876 and 1877 that had consolidated the Fijian conciliar system, but indicated that the Council of Chiefs would continue to meet at least once every two years with its current proportions of chiefs as official or nominated members plus provincial representatives. Its immediate business was a meeting under Sukuna at the end of 1945 to give a laudatory approval to his paper on the new Ordinance and agree to his lists of amalgamated provinces and districts. This reconfiguration reduced provinces to fourteen by enlargement of Ba, Naitasiri (which

92 For a critique of these figures, Shanta Davie, 'Accounting for Imperialism: a Case of British-imposed Indigenous Collaboration', Accounting, Auditing and Accountability, 13, 3 (2000), 19-24, 39-40. Lack of any financial series for provincial administration in this and other studies make it difficult, however, to reach conclusions about this aspect of government in Fiji. But Mitchell's low level of central funding was wildly optimistic. See the rising levels of provincial emoluments and government subsidies reported in CP 24/1943, 22/1944, 4/1947, 52/1948. For a general survey (also without a section on finance) see Ropate Qalo, Divided We Stand. Local Government in Fiji (Suva, 1984)

93 CP No. 24/1943, 3; CO 83/236/15, Mitchell, 16 July 1943 and enclosed Bill for the Regulation of Fijian Affairs and CO minutes.

94 CO 83/241/3, Mitchell to Gent, 29 November 1943.

95 Ordinance No. 3/1944 'For the Regulation of Fijian Affairs'. See, too, Sukuna's 'Reconstruction Paper', CP No. 22/1944 which repeats much of Mitchell's 1943 despatch.
swallowed up Colo East), Ra and Tailevu which took over tikina from Colo East. A combined province of Nadroga and Navosa took over the remainder of the Colo interior. The four geographical divisions (Northern, Central, Western and Southern) in place since 1938 and grouping provinces under commissioners with responsibility for Indian advisory committees, towns and townships, as well as Fijian affairs, were not changed. But all provinces were part of a separate 'Native Administration' for the Fijian population with councils, courts, treasury and executive officers, retaining the whole of the provincial rates and the central tax assessment, separately from personal rates and taxes levied on other social groups. More vaguely, it was stated local treasuries would be 'co-ordinated' under the FAB's Central Treasury, but apart from fixing an annual tax once a year provincial councils and their rokos did not manage these funds — paid into commissioners' sub-treasuries. The line of authority now ran from the Secretary through the commissioners of the western, southern, eastern and northern divisions to the rokos, 181 bulis, 28 Fijian magistrates, scribes and 17 agricultural assistants — for the most part centrally funded. But Mitchell's promise of posts for servicemen was honoured. Five of the new rokos appointed had served as commissioned officers overseas and they moved into posts formerly occupied by provincial commissioners.

On the whole, the reform of 1944 strengthened the position of the Fijian chiefly hierarchy within central government. As Mitchell had intended, Sukuna's secretarieship provided a direct link to the governor's Executive Council — the equivalent of a 'ministerial office' and gave Fijians an extra ex officio representative in addition to the three Fijian, Indian and European representatives selected from the Legislative Council from the late 1940s. The Council of Chiefs now had to be consulted on any regulations touching Fijian affairs. But effective power lay not in that consultative body, still meeting once every second year, but in the Fijian Affairs Board, meeting five times a year and charged with financial as well as general executive powers. The FAB, moreover, did not take long to record opinions on a highly political topic in a resolution of 19 July 1946, expressing alarm at Indian settlement and influence and requesting protection from 'domination.'

Clearly, over the next two decades the issues of deciding and defending the conditions of legislative representation and the authority of statutory bodies — the FAB, the NLTB, the Land Commission — took priority, at the expense of further reform of local government. The Council closely reflected this shift towards dealing with the problems of constitutional advance to greater internal self-government, rather than the concerns of its provincial membership with the more mundane problems of financing rural development.

96 Income tax applied to all social groups, though very few Fijians reached the required threshold in the 1940s.
97 CP No. 4/1947, Report for the year 1945.
98 In addition to its five Fijian Members there were two Europeans — G. K. Roth as secretary and Sir Henry Scott as legal adviser.
99 CO 83/244/Grantham, 28 August 1946.
development. Yet the two — local development and the politics of central decision-making — were closely connected, as visiting specialists and local administrators made clear in the numerous reports and planning conferences of the 1950s and 1960s. On the whole, the conclusion of the economic and political surveys of the period lay in the direction of modification, even abolition, of the edifice of 'Fijian Affairs', in favour of greater integration of common services, an end to separate divisional and provincial taxes, and encouragement of inter-ethnic local government councils for rural populations, as existed for urban populations. By the end of the 1950s divisional commissioners and district officers supported such integration, as did the governor, Sir Ronald Garvey. Most Indian and Fijian political leaders did not, fearing a loss of influence over their provincial constituencies in the villages and the cane fields. Garvey's reluctant conclusion was that 'local government' through mixed rural councils would be resisted: 'I think it fair to say that Fijian hereditary chiefs and senior officials are opposed to such change as they fear it would not be best for their people, as well as undermining their influence and eroding their privileges.' Coming from a governor who from 1956 favoured a majority of unofficial members in the legislature and direct elections on a common roll, this was a significant warning, reinforced by evidence from his Special Branch of hardening resistance among Fijians to any suggestion of open electoral competition.

Thus, the paradox in Fijian Administration from the late 1940s lay in its vastly improved administrative position at the heart of central government coupled with its failure to meet the challenge of rural development and reform of Fijian councils at the periphery. As Garvey well knew, the mounting dilemmas of Fijian ethnic politics and constitutional advance stemmed also from the consequences of placing Fijian finances under the FAB. The problem was how to pay for the separate structures of rural administration, while, at the same time, channeling departmental expenditure for infrastructure and developmental services into the divisions and provinces. From 1946 to the early 1960s Sukuna's promise of autonomous management of 'our funds' was undermined by mal-administration at provincial level and by lack of supervision from above. Increased demands by provincial councils for higher rates — up to £3 per head — were met by greater arrears and a high level of embezzlement. Nearly £900 disappeared in this way in 1946, despite new pay scales for bulis. As explained by Sukuna in his report for the year, scribes were supposed to inform

101 Papers of J. A. C. Hill; Garvey to CO, 29 August 1958. A notable exception to the opinions of European provincial officials was Ratu Penaia Ganilau who as a district officer feared 'that the general administration of the Colony would become increasingly Indianized.'
sub-treasury accountants or commissioners about such leakages — 'but this is just what a Provincial Scribe of lowly status is loath to do against officials having high rank.' Cost of entertainment and requests for financial assistance were blamed instead. An example was made of the Roko Tui Lomaiviti, dismissed from office in 1949. The consequences were accumulative and compounded by shortage of local auditing staff and by loading onto councils a large share of provincial teachers' salaries. The short-term remedy was to increase government subsidies to the FAB to cover its own costs, salaries of provincial officials and subsidies to councils. At the same time, there was considerable 'hoarding' of unspent monies (called 'surpluses') among councils because of their lack of authority to draw down on provincial accounts held by the FAB and inability, therefore, to plan ahead for a realistic budget once a year.

The problem was not aired much in the Council of Chiefs, though the provincial representatives knew what was going on. They were lectured instead by the FAB's financial adviser in 1950 on the need for a better understanding of monetary values ('a weak point in your armour'). That did not prevent the FAB venturing into schemes for the development of Fijian lands, housing loans for Fijian officials and arranging tax exemptions for servicemen in Malaya. But they could not hide the growing crisis in Fijian local administration funding because it surfaced in Legislative Council debates, where Fijian pressure to permit deduction of provincial rates against income tax was disallowed. By 1955 the provinces had to meet a gross expenditure of some £85,000, requiring a subsidy of no less than £75,400. An expert in local government finance was called in to examine the reasons for this seeming penury which contrasted with record returns from sales of Fijian produce and from rents in 1956. R. S. McDougall who had much experience in West Africa advised application of a land tax supplemented by levies on produce sales.

While much of McDougall's report was welcomed by the Council of Chiefs and in the provinces it was sidelined by the FAB which resented it as an attack on its centralized management. Sukuna's administration ended in 1954 and fell into the hands of G. K. Roth and his deputy C. R. H. Nott who were equally unwilling to make changes. Worse followed. For much of the early 1960s the secretaries for Fijian Affairs failed to deliver annual reports to the legislature in order to conceal the extent of widespread resistance to any taxation in the provinces. As Fijian Affairs entered a critical phase, they were administered by A. C. Reid, 1960-65, together with his deputies Ratu E. T. T. Cakobau and

103 CP No. 18/1948.
104 Proceedings 1950.
105 CO 1036/259, 'Fijian Administration Finances'.
106 CP No. 35/1957, R. S. McDougall, 'Fijian Administration Finances'.
108 Sukuna's time had been largely taken up with Land Commission investigations and demarcation of Fijian Reserves.
Ratu P. K. Ganilau (who replaced Reid in 1966). By then, the auditors confessed that 'the majority of the Provinces collected less than 50 per cent of the rates actually due for the year.' Rural Fijians refused to meet the rising costs of provincial government, especially for salaries of minor officials and a share of the salaries for provincial schools. Provincial tax mattered for a Fijian population in which 61 per cent of adult males were employed in agriculture. There were signs that the taukei felt they had to 'reassert themselves in their own country'. But that observation by Reid failed to explain why the taukei came in ever-increasing numbers before tikina courts, where well over half of the 19,000 criminal offenders were tax defaulters. The line was held, however, against what amounted to a crisis of Fijian confidence in their leaders and a near-collapse in provincial funding by the costly expedient of increasing subsidies for expenditure on current account in the 1960s and by suspending the very large debt of £131,000 owed by provincial councils to the Education Department. In 1969 it was written off altogether.

It was against this background of deterioration in the management of the Fijian Administration and rising political tensions that the Council and its leaders were asked to make decisions on administrative and economic questions raised by the Spate Report and the Burns Commission and on Fiji's system of government and its future constitution. From 1956 chiefs and provincial representatives held their meetings, after the usual ceremonies at Government House, suitably entrenched in the Board Room of the new Native Lands Trust Building on Victoria Parade within the bulwarks of Fijian affairs—the Land Commission, the Fijian Treasury, the Fijian Office, the Fijian Development Fund Board, and, of course, the labyrinthine NLTB itself. In 1960 rokos, notables and elected representatives were afforced by 'four representatives of workers in the industrial areas', in order to co-opt Fijian unions into the political caucus of Fijian representation.

Their main business was to confront some of the choices put before Fijians as a result of Colonial Office pressure for political change, as Governor Maddocks and London officials toyed with electoral models from Tanzania and elsewhere in a search for an acceptable compromise between a common roll and a communal franchise. Like officials in London they were wary of the recommendations in Professor O. K. Spate's report, and they would certainly have rejected (as did the Colonial Office) his unpublished submissions urging an end to 'tradition' and the introduction of direct elections. Governor Maddocks did not

109 CP No. 17/1966, 3.
114 As Secretary for Fijian Affairs, A. C. Reid's nominees. CP No. 33/960. They attended until 1967.
115 CO 1036/307, minutes; Maddocks, 24 June 1959; Norton, 136-8.
support a common roll either. Nor did he perceive local politics solely in ethnic terms, but attributed hardening Fijian attitudes to the formation of the Fijian Association strongly backed by the chiefs and to commoner discontent with taxes paid for so little in return.117

Having rejected Professor Spate (whom many Fijian leaders liked personally), the Council turned its attention to dealing with the triumvirate who prepared the important Burns Commission report of 1960.118 For the first time since 1877, the formal address to Sir Alan Burns and his colleagues was presented in English by the Hon. Ravuama Vunivalu. He laid down entrenched political positions — communalism and custom centred on the mataqali, not the individual; protection of resources coupled with development of Fijian lands for Fijians. He repeated the demand of the 1954 Council for NLTB control of former mataqali and other Crown lands, provision for more Fijian leases outside the reserves, better care of lands under Indian leases and control of immigration (including Pacific islanders). As part of this manifesto, the Council also demanded more generous financing of loans through the NLTB and the Development Fund Board, marketing through registered companies, an increase in Fijian scholarships.119

As the rift between Indians and Fijians grew wider during the strikes and riots of December 1959, there was an even more hostile reaction to Burns following the report’s publication, particularly its recommendation to scrap Fijian Administration and its criticism of the FAB.120 Refusal to pay rates, even at the risk of prison, continued, especially in Macuata and Ba Provinces.121 There was growing resistance to renewal of Indian leases. The situation was not helped by hostility to the appointment of the first Indian district officer in November 1961. In the face of this reaction the Colonial Office judged the local response to Burns ‘rather embarrassing’.122

At a different level the Council also had to grapple with its own provincial administration. By 1962 the shortage of revenue from the failed rating system was sufficiently serious for both Governor Maddocks and Acting-Secretary Ganilau to make it a major issue. Maddocks refused any further rise in subsidies and threatened the existence of Fijian Affairs.123 The Council was asked to consider ‘which of the functions of the Administration are still essential and which can now be shed.’ For the moment a chastened Council made no proposals, except to set up a committee.

120 CO 1036/700, Maddocks, 14 March 1960. Maddocks, however, endorsed much in Spate and Burns.
121 CO 1036/701, Intelligence Report, April 196; CO 1036/791, District Commissioners’ Reports, 1960-62.
122 CO 1036/817, minutes 2 November 1961. See, too, Proceedings 1959, Resolutions 3, 10, 12-14, for the main points of the Council’s opposition.

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In effect, the problem was handed over to the FAB and the upper layer of the Fijian hierarchy to investigate, while the Council was drawn by Maddocks into the protocols of ministerial visits and the timetable for constitutional talks and full internal self-government. The governor had begun to regard the assembly as a possible mechanism for safeguarding entrenched Fijian rights. It was clearly a political body and would influence the choice of candidates in district constituencies in elections planned for 1963. The Colonial Office, too, began to cast around for solutions to the problem of representing Fijian interests in what might be a minority government. Officials looked to the example of Malaya's Council of Rulers with built-in privileges under the Constitution for land holding and civil service positions. Maddocks in a secret despatch stressed that there was no demand for self-government in Fiji, though he recognised that British over-rule would not last more than ten years. He warned against pronouncements about a 'multi-racial' state. It would be possible to have a First Minister, if Fijian, but a mixed local government system he now considered impossible outside urban areas. On the other hand, demarcation of Fijian reserves was complete. Assurances on their restriction to Fijians might harness enough goodwill for a timetable leading to a full ministerial system followed by full internal self-government shortly after.

In pursuit of this agenda the Council of Chiefs spent good deal of time in official ceremonies for a procession of colonial under-secretaries in the 1960s and the FAB acted as its executive committee to lobby them about a special relationship with the United Kingdom (on the model of the Channel Islands), Fijian land ownership and 'parity' in the civil service. Such concessions were not ruled out. In return, the Fijian leadership accepted the proposal for a constitutional conference in 1965. Moreover, when Maddocks took his leave of the Council at the end of his governorship he charged it with the responsibility for approving the Fijian agenda for negotiations in London and required that Fijian politicians would report back to them on the compromises they reached. For this reason and the intelligence reports summarised in Maddocks' despatches, the Colonial Office was reassured about Fijian acceptance of constitutional change. The new governor, Sir Derek Jakeway, confirmed this policy of working to persuade Fijian commoners through their own leaders in the hope they might even accept a common roll, if a large measure of communal representation was included in the electoral system. Fijian leaders, in his view, were readier for this kind of change than Fijian commoners. It was essential, therefore, that both Mara and Ganilau as senior chiefs should have their status confirmed in top positions within the ministerial system to counter any internal opposition. After the 1963 elections,
they were brought into the Executive Council as Member with the portfolio for Natural Resources and as Deputy-Secretary for Fijian Affairs. Reid then vacated the secretaryship and Ganilau became Secretary for the joint office of Fijian Affairs and Local Government, and a full minister from 1968.

That gradual elevation left Ganilau, the FAB and the Council (with Ganilau as chairman) free to deal with their promised 'reform' of Fijian administration and its finances in their own way. The committee set up in 1962 combined its work with a survey of rural government by Fiji's only anthropologist, Dr. Rusiate Nayacakalou, employed as a Rural Planning Officer and made a temporary Council member. He wrote two reports in 1964. One contained a proposal for multi-ethnic local government, and this was delayed for revision within the FAB. Governor Jakeway insisted, too, that none of his recommendations should be discussed at the London Conference. On the whole, Colonial Office officials welcomed the idea of mixed councils and approved his central proposal to apply a graded system of rates with a land tax. Fijian chiefs and politicians in the FAB, however, excluded any consideration of mixed councils from the final report delivered to the Council of Chiefs and they limited the land tax experiment to a trial in three provinces only on the unimproved capital value of mataqali lands. In effect, too, provincial rates dwindled further, though provinces still organized voluntary contributions for specific projects. For the rest, Nayacakalou's final report retained district councils and proposed election of provincial councils by local franchise in the same manner as elections for Fijian Members of the Legislative Council. Councils would elect their own chairmen and appoint their own staff from rokos downwards. Bulis would be abolished.

When all this was introduced to the Council of Chiefs in 1965 by Ganilau, the main proposals were left intact, but 'rural district councils' responsible to a Fijian provincial electorate stopped at the provincial council level. Tikina councils under their headmen were to be phased out, along with the bulis and minor officials. Moreover, staffing of the provincial councils with officials — rokos, assistant rokos and scribes — would be on the advice of the Secretary for Fijian Affairs. Other officials — commissioners, medical officers, teachers — might attend by invitation. The task of councils was defined as administration of social and public services; and for this they would have to rely on central government funding. The Fijian magistracy and district courts were abolished. Surprisingly, the Council accepted all of this without questioning its effects at district and village levels. Twenty years later, when the operation of the new system had revealed a deterioration in district

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129 Ibid., FAB Minutes, 5 April 1965.
130 RH collected Ministry of Fijian Affairs and Rural Development reports for the years 1971-79. No series are given for rates or voluntary contributions, but there is a series for subventions. See, too, Fiji Parliamentary Papers No 36/1983, No. 59/1984.
law and order and a disjunction between provincial council management under ministerial
direction and grass-roots participation at village level, an examination of Fijian rural
government would have to undertaken again.\textsuperscript{131}

The Council then dealt with politics and lands. It laid down in recommendations for
the London Conference that Fijian delegates were to argue for association rather than
independence; and it requested guarantees on keeping communal rolls for electing equal
numbers of European, Fijian and Indian legislators, plus two elected by the Council of
Chiefs. They agreed with the proposed membership system in the Executive Council. If
there was to be a chief minister eventually, he should be a Fijian. For the rest, the role of
the FAB was to be retained; and they agreed with phasing out Fijian civil servants from
elected memberships by retirement with the exception of the Secretary for Fijian Affairs
who could remain a civil servant in a highly political role. For the time being they saw no
need for an Upper House. Finally, the Council dealt at great length with the clauses of
lands under customary tenure under the Native Lands Ordinance and provisions for leases
under new Agricultural Landlord and Tenant Legislation.\textsuperscript{132}

In all, it was a mammoth session crowded into five days and made possible by the
technique of handing down outline papers prepared in advance by Ganilau’s secretariat
and the FAB. The short length of sessions and the bureaucratic method of pre-
formulating material for resolutions during the 1960s marked a considerable change in the
management of Council business from above. More effectively than any of the governors
or his predecessors, Ratu Penaia Ganilau turned the Council of Chiefs into a caucus for
amendment and approval of policies formulated by senior Fijian politicians within the
statutory bodies of Fijian Affairs. For that reason it is hard to agree with Governor Jakeway’s
judgment in his report on the 1965 session that the chiefs and commoners represented
had become ‘a Fijian Council of State’.\textsuperscript{133} More accurately, the Indian politician, S. M.
Koya, discerned that effective authority over Fijians had passed since the late 1940s to
the Fijian Affairs Board ‘which…amounts to an official political party’, passing judgment
on constitutional affairs, handing down regulations and authorising by-laws of provincial
councils.\textsuperscript{134} Greater representation from below had been effectively managed ever since

\textsuperscript{131} CP No. 18 1966, Council of Chiefs 1965; for the revision of 1985, Rodney V. Cole, Stephen
I. Levine, Anare V. Matahau, \textit{The Fijian Provincial Administration: A Review} (East-West Center,
Honolulu, Hawai‘i, 1984; and for a critique of this revision Fiji Parliamentary Paper No. 70/2002,
comment on this outcome is outside the scope of the present paper.

\textsuperscript{132} For the historical background to ALT A under the Native Lands Trust Board, John Davies and
Courtney L. Gallimore, ‘Reforming the Leasing and Use of Agricultural Land in Fiji’, 8 June 2000:

\textsuperscript{133} CO 1036/216, Fiji Intelligence Committee report and governor’s report.

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Mitchell’s and Sukuna’s reforms by greater centralization from within the offices of the NLTB on Victoria Parade and greater dependency on government subsidies, after the collapse of Fijian administration finances.

There is no indication that the Council objected to this dependency on central government. In 1968, as a consequence of the advance to a ministerial system there was a re-constitution of the Great Council (as it was now officially titled). All fifteen Fijian Members of the Legislative Council replaced the provincial rokos, reinforced by fifteen notables appointed by the governor or the minister. Twenty-eight members elected by provincial councils attended as a mixture of ratu and commoners along with half a dozen other invited commoners and chiefs. Jakeway regarded this as a triumph of the elective principle. Fijian members of the Council preferred to see it as entrenchment of their hierarchy and a path for untitled notables into higher office by patronage, given that well over half of provincial representatives, half of the politicians and all of the governor’s appointees were ratu. They voted accordingly to have Ganilau’s post of Minister for Fijian Affairs and Local Government recognised as a political, rather than a public office and Jakeway could hardly refuse. The combination of Fijian Affairs and Local Government under one minister was a curious hybrid, but an endorsement of Fijian rights to separate administration. It was allowed because it was in line with a Foreign and Commonwealth Office interpretation of past promises made to Fijians for separate treatment within general administration and was urged on local officials. More immediately, such ‘pledges’ were applied in new legislation on land leases and by refusal of the governor, backed by a resolution of the 1968 Council, to make nominations of non-Fijians to the NLTB.

By 1968, therefore, officials in Suva and London sensed that Fijian leadership would go along with the final stages of Fijian decolonisation. They had consolidated their hold on key institutions and reformed (they thought) provincial government so as to relieve the burden of taxation and entrench their control over lands. Although a persistent Indian boycott of the Legislative Council forced by-elections in 1968 and hardened Fijian attitudes at the outcome, feelings were kept in check by Mara and Ganilau. Jakeway reported that ‘self-government with a built-in Fijian paramountcy should be sought as quickly as possible.’ As the Federation Party forced the pace by building on Indian solidarity, the Alliance

134 Leg. Co. Debates 1966, 87. Two other points were also features of the final legislation. In future, provincial councils might act as corporate bodies with powers to own property, deal in land and raise loans. Finally, too, the Council was titled in law ‘the Great Council’ as an acceptable translation of the more modest Fijian phrase — Bose Vakaturaga. (Chiefly Council). See Ratu Mara’s explanation, ibid, 92.
135 CP No 5, 1968, Recommendation 8.
136 FO 32/410 ‘Pledges to Fijians’.
137 CP No. 5, 1968, Recommendation 1. An Ordinance of 1968 did make provision for non-Fijians, but was suspended until after British departure: FO 32/406.
agreed to early independence, before Jakeway adjusted the number of seats on communal rolls in favour of cross-voting (as he indicated he might). The Council of Chiefs, too, became openly a much more a political organization, issuing press releases and policy papers (through the FAB) on the theme of total ethnic control of government.139 The theme of 'paramountcy' was repeated in its recommendations on constitutional matters at a second session in November 1968.140

Moreover, the Council began to turn its attention to remedial measures to improve the competitive position of Fijians in education and commerce. But it looked for financial remedies at the tertiary, rather than the primary end, of Fijian education through scholarships and in-service training overseas for ethnic Fijian students and civil servants.141

And in business it focused not on small-scale entrepreneurship or technical training, but on corporate investment through an ethnic Fijian parastatal with shares open only to 'Provincial Councils, Co-operatives, or any other purely Fijian corporate bodies.' The Fijian Development and Investment Corporation was to be registered as a public company with a capital of F$ 2 million. The Council nominated its first board of chiefs and notables, including Ratu Mara’s wife and Rusiate Nayacakalou.

On constitutional issues there was still much unfinished business at the end of 1969 and wide differences between party leaders of Alliance and the Federation over safeguards for Fijian ‘rights’ and types of electoral systems. The Council’s policy over this period was to consult ‘Fijian public opinion’ through the mechanism of a special committee of the FAB and the provincial councils. But there is not much evidence that this committee played a part in the talks between Mara, Koya and Sir Leslie Monson, sent by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in October 1969 to rough out a timetable for a handover of power.142 By the end of the year there was agreement on a conference followed by formal independence in 1970 and elections afterwards. The electoral system would only be settled shortly before or after the conference.143

But the Council did play a role in this end-game of manoeuvres during the more public talks conducted by Lord Shepherd at the beginning of 1970.144 Its anxiety over the future of Fijian lands still held by the Crown was met by the reply that this would be a matter for the future government of Fiji. Shepherd was more convincing about the continued existence of a Ministry of Fijian Affairs. But on many of their other points and search for

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139 Special Branch copy of Conference paper, Council of Chiefs, FCO 32/401, encl. in G. P. Lloyd to Morgan (FCO), 15 Nov. 1968; Special Branch report 30 Sept. 1968 ‘1968 By-Elections’.
141 Ibid., Recommendation 8; CP No. 24/1969, Recommendations 1, 2.
142 Koya had replaced A. D. Patel as Leader of the Opposition.
144 Ibid., Shepherd to FCO, 18 Feb. 1970. For full minutes of Shepherd’s meetings with the Council of Chiefs, Feb. 1970 in the Council Board Room (without ceremonial) FCO 32/594; and also the list of public bodies heard, local settlers — the sensible and the cranks.

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reassurances, he was unable to help. Altogether, it was a worrying confirmation of the uncertainties of political power. Finally, the Council of Chiefs made it clear that if they did not get a large quota of nominated seats in an Upper House they would demand seats in the Lower House; and this was conceded.\footnote{FCO 32/570, Minutes, 2 Feb. 1970. The Federation had supported this concession.}

The final constitutional conference took place in April 1970, after the Legislative Council had endorsed the official report of Lord Shepherd’s visit. It was agreed to retain a large number of seats on a communal roll and three general seats on a general communal roll plus five on a national roll.\footnote{The formula was: 12 Fijians to be elected on communal roll; 10 on national roll and same for Indians. FCO 32/572 Conference report.} There was to be a Senate of twenty-two members with eight nominated by the Great Council of Chiefs, seven by the Prime Minister, six by the Leader of the Opposition and one nominated by the Rotuma Council. The Council, therefore, would have a role under the new Constitution of Fiji, though it was still defined by ministerial regulation and the Ordinances of 1944 and 1966, rather than by constitutional enactment.\footnote{Constitution of Fiji 1970. Apart from appointment of senators on the advice of the Council, there were no other formal functions defined.}

Epilogue and Conclusion

For the remaining three decades of the century the quality of the sources available for the Council decreases. Much can be gleaned from primary published material produced for the MFA which enlarged through its subsidies to the FAB and other statutory bodies the range of services in business and agricultural finance available to Fijians, as the Council had intended in the late 1960s.\footnote{For the fate of early investments, Fiji, House of Representatives Debates, 1984, September; 1986, April-May (loans to the NLDC).} It became possible to raise money for any Fijian project from a beauty salon to a wholesale firm. Popular choices in the provinces and urban centres were small retail businesses, garment manufacture, sea-going vessels, machinery and ‘working capital’ (unspecified).\footnote{NAF, Ministry for Fijian Affairs and Rural Development, Reports, 1971-79.} This was serious investment of up to F$1 million annually, without much indication, however, of success and failure rates in MFA reports. In addition, the Development Fund Board (derived from Sukuna’s scheme for compulsory savings from Fijian sale of crops in 1951 and endorsed by the Council) handled over 10,000 applications and F$8 million for every type of personal investment in the three decades after its foundation. The Council left the details to the FAB which continued to hand down policy papers for formal discussion and approval and was in the hands of Fijian parliamentarians. In effect, the FAB acted as an executive council, subject only to its paymaster — the Ministry of Fijian Affairs, allocating funds to the provinces, appointing

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\begin{enumerate}
\item FCO 32/570, Minutes, 2 Feb. 1970. The Federation had supported this concession.
\item The formula was: 12 Fijians to be elected on communal roll; 10 on national roll and same for Indians. FCO 32/572 Conference report.
\item Constitution of Fiji 1970. Apart from appointment of senators on the advice of the Council, there were no other formal functions defined.
\item For the fate of early investments, Fiji, House of Representatives Debates, 1984, September; 1986, April-May (loans to the NLDC).
\item NAF, Ministry for Fijian Affairs and Rural Development, Reports, 1971-79.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
and paying their senior chiefs and officials. But it was not responsible in any formal sense to the Council of Chiefs in which it had a strong presence.

Consistent, too, with its entry into corporate investment in the late 1970s, as a way of encouraging Fijian capitalism, the Council at its meeting, 16 February 1984, discussed and approved a ministry plan to raise F$40 million to purchase 50 per cent of Burns Philp through provincial councils and other groups and use the Native Land Development Company as a holding corporation. Unfortunately, the NLDC did not have the skills to do this, so Fijian Holdings Limited was incorporated with participation of Australian capital to manage investments and take shares in trust for Fiji’s statutory bodies — the FAB, the NLTB, the provincial councils and for private Fijian clients from the upper reaches of the hierarchy. But it would be too much to claim that the venture was a responsibility of the Council. The line of power and responsibility lay, as it had since 1944, through the FAB to the MFA; and this continuity can be seen in the grandiose, but abortive, ‘Corporate Plan’ constructed within the MFA and approved by the new minister, Adi Litia Samanunu Cakobau Talakuli, on her first day in office as part of ‘the newly-formed and strengthened Chiefly Fijian Political party-dominated government’ in 1992, in the aftermath of the coups of 1987.

For, from 1987, the Council was taking its orders more than ever from those in command of military and civil government. After the first coup in May 1987 which removed Prime Minister Bavadra and his Fiji Labour and National Federation Coalition from office, Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka convened a Council for 10 July 1987. Meeting under the chairmanship of the relatively unknown Meli Vesikula, as minister, they brought together an ad hoc assembly of fifteen appointees, and some thirty of the elected provincial council members. It is not known how many of the Fijian ex-parliamentarians attended the single meeting convened to support Rabuka’s actions. From then on their composition changed. Before 1987 in the last pre-coup assemblies there had been only 45 chiefs out of a total of 110 present. But once Penaia Ganilau, after considerable resistance, resigned his governor-generalship to become President of the Republic and Commander-in-Chief, he and Ratu Mara as head of the Interim Administration, December 1987 to May 1992, took care to re-affirm the position of the chiefly hierarchy by re-constituting the FAB and selecting a new Minister of Fijian Affairs, Ratu V. S. Navunisaravi (a military man who had not been in Rabuka’s Military Government). By 1990, there was a pronounced predominance of chiefs over commoners elected by provincial councils. Similarly, in the slimmed-down Council of 1991 nearly three-quarters of elected provincial members

151 NAF, MAF, ‘Corporate Plan, 1994-1996’ (with detailed flow-charts and projections for the Fijian Development Fund Board, the Fijian Commercial Development Unit, and much else including 100 per cent government funding of provincial councils by 1996.
were chiefs, while all of the members appointed by president or minister (with the sole exception of Rabuka) were chiefs, including Ganilau, Mara and other high-ranking title-holders. Compared with pre-coup Councils and prior to the elections of 1992 and 1994 which brought in a new batch of Fijian parliamentarians, the republican Council had all the hallmarks of a 'packed' assembly.

Did it matter in a patently illegal regime, before Ganilau and Mara’s ‘regularisation’? Probably not during Rabuka’s regime. The approval of his programme on one day in 1987 carried no legal authority (though it was confirmation of Rabuka’s support among Fijians). But the Council took no part in drafting a new Constitution in 1988 or 1989 and met for only two days to confirm FAB business. While the 1990 Constitution was being drafted, the MFA took over Rural Development once more — thus ensuring restoration of grants and subsidies to provincial supporters. It was not until 1990, 21-25 June, that the Council got sight of a draft of the Constitution already passed by an advisory committee and by Mara’s Cabinet and endorsed it.

As well it might, for the Council features for the first time in the Preamble with its full Fijian title. The appointment of a president and acting-president (or their removal) required approval of three-quarters of its members; its advice was required for appointment of nine senators; entrenchment of laws on Fijian Affairs, Development Funds, lands and customs was further strengthened; along with other Fijian statutory bodies, the Council was excluded from any probing by the Parliamentary Ombudsman.

There was only one small hitch. The legal position of provincial councils (and therefore their corporate standing) was in doubt 1987-1994, and for that period they received their MFA subsidies illegally - a matter rectified by inserting a notice in the Fiji Gazette much later in 1996.151

But the Council was not called together any more frequently in 1991 or 1992, when its political wing — the Soqoqo Ni Vakavulewa Ni Taukei (SVT, or ‘Fijian Political Party’) founded as a demonstration of Fijian unity — did well in the May elections with Rabuka as leader and formed a coalition in government with the Fiji Labour Party.154 Meetings were brief — for one day only in 1992 in the less dignified location of the National Gymnasium, rather than the Trade Winds Centre. On the other hand, the avenue for advancement for chiefs and elected commoners through Mara’s patronage now included seats in the Senate,

as well as the usual statutory bodies and corporations. But manoeuvres between parties in 1994 to agree to a Constitutional Review Commission and subsequent recommendations of the Joint Parliamentary Select Committee were simply endorsed, rather than debated by the Council.

What is clear is that there were divided views on the actual and potential role of the Council arising from its performance in these years. Rabuka in his tense relationship with Mara was very ambiguous in his views about the composition and value of the Council as a support for government. Submissions to the Review Commission that prepared the way for the 1997 Constitution were also divided between those who thought (mistakenly) that the Council embodied some kind of ‘sovereignty’ to speak and act for all Fijians, and those who thought it should keep out of politics with no more than symbolic functions under the Constitution. The further cultural shock of the Speight coup in 2000 and the patent failure of the Fijian army to contain and end it for so long, further tested the Council and found it wanting in political gravity, when it deliberated for three days, before making major concessions to Speight’s demands. Although the chiefs formally backed Mara as a way out of the political impasse, they ruled out a return to office by Mahendra Chaudhry’s elected Fiji Labour Party government and accepted the need for substantial revision of the 1997 Constitution — in the direction of a return to the more discriminatory instrument of 1990. Like Fijian political parties, the chiefs were fractious and fragmented, capable of descending into obsequious parleying with the rebels. On the whole the evidence of the Council’s conduct during this period suggests it would do well to keep to its advisory and constitutional roles, rather than serve as a platform for populist politicians. While retaining their hierarchy’s role in high office, constitutionally and politically, the chiefs sacrificed mana.

That, too, was the conclusion of the investigation conducted by Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2001-02, that the Bose as part of a reformed Fijian Affairs structure should keep to management of Fijian’s cultural heritage. It is more likely the Council will remain a part of the ‘protective paramountcy’ established by the Review Commission, accepted by Rabuka, the Parliamentary select Committee and embodied in the Constitution of 1997. And it can be argued that such protection implies allocation of resources to the Council and other Fijian statutory bodies — which is one definition of political action. Those who claim a role for the Great Council in ‘reconciliation’ in times of crisis are on weak

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155 Rabuka, 141. Which did not prevent him accepting honorary membership in the hope of using the institution.
158 ‘Culture and Heritage. Review of the Fijian Administration’, Vol. 2 for the evidence of provincial and other workshops, 148-50, 204-6, especially the workshops of Cakaudrove, Tailevu, Nadroga, Rewa Councils. Macuata Provincial Council thought the Bose should only have a cultural function.
historical ground, given the record of the chiefs and provincial representatives, 1987-2000. It is true Rabuka did rely on their legitimation, though the value of that expedient is questionable. The fact that Jai Ram Reddy as leader of the Federation Party was invited to address the chiefs in Council in 1997 is a tribute more to his and Rabuka’s brokering skills than to any willingness to enlarge representation to include other ethnic groups. Furthermore, the Council is only partly-elected and has contained a large proportion of government-appointed chiefs and notables placed there as acts of patronage in return for political support in the provinces. It was not and never has been a constitutional forum or a substitute for the Parliamentary Senate. It is in no sense responsible to the House of Representatives. Under British over-rule the governor was the ‘root’ of its establishment and continuity. To some extent its position has been improved by constitutional recognition of its functions. But the Fijian President and Minister of Fijian Affairs have taken over much of the governor’s patron role, so far as the chiefs are concerned.

But it has developed and survived after more than a century of variable fortunes. Fijian chiefs were fortunate that their first governor saw a complementarity between local British and Fijian hierarchies, and they were quick to exploit this for their own benefit. In return, Fijian leaders formed a military reserve drawn on more fully later in local campaigns and overseas. At the same time, they established their bargaining power over the use of Fijian lands, in return for commutation of taxes, continuation of communal services and adaptation of the Council of Chiefs from 1904 and 1911 as a form of electoral college for representation in the legislature, the Lands Commission and other statutory bodies. In 1927 the chiefs had the good sense to enlarge this advantage by opening the Council to more provincial councillors, and this enabled them to find favour with an otherwise hostile Public Service Committee of 1936. By then, the Council was well placed for Mitchell and Sukuna to use it as a centre piece within their reformed edifice of Fijian Affairs, while ensuring that real power passed to the FAB and other bodies under the control of Fijian legislators, and an executive secretary, promoted within an emergent ministerial system. The Council’s survival then became a matter of politics, rather than administration where it failed to meet the organizational and financial challenge posed by separate rural Fijian government. Unlike ‘Native Authority’ councils elsewhere, Fiji’s hierarchy embraced protective centralization, rather than the devolution of responsibility to local assemblies with judicial and financial functions. Through the Council and the FAB they concentrated instead on safeguarding ‘paramountcy’ of Fijian interests at the centre of power in a rapidly developing political argument over the details of decolonisation and on preparing the way for forms of ‘affirmative action’ through public funding. By 1970 the Council was part of the new Constitution and even more so in 1990 and 1997, far exceeding in longevity similar assemblies in French Polynesia, the Hawaiian Kingdom, Buganda, Asante, Nigeria,

159 Reddy was the first Indo-Fijian to address the Council as part of his deal with Rabuka to promulgate the 1997 Constitution and contest the 1999 elections in coalition with Rabuka’s SVT.
the Princely States of India.

Notes

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Abstract

This article analyses the origins and transformation of an advisory council that has now become entrenched within the Constitution of Fiji since 1990 and 1997. It is argued that this longevity depended both on the willingness of governors to consult the assembly on an annual or biennial basis and on the ability of the hierarchy of chiefs and provincial officials to exploit their bargaining position over control of the Fijian population and the exploitation of its lands and manpower. From its beginnings in 1875, the Council of Chiefs represented an official and titled hierarchy intent on maintaining rank and privilege within the approved structure of Fijian clans and sub-clans. In return, chiefs mobilized Fijians for military campaigns, locally and overseas, assured the collection of taxes, made over some lands to the British administration, while securing the balance as Fijian reserves. The bulk of legislation concerning Fijians was either revised or originated within the Council. The Council maintained and widened its links to the colonial legislature and the executive's statutory bodies as an electoral college for unofficial members and members of the Lands Commission and the Native Regulations Board. It widened its representation from both chiefly and commoner elements in the provinces after 1927. Thus the Council was in strong position to defend ethnic Fijian interests following the centralization and expansion of Fijian Administration from 1944. During the period of debate and electoral competition of the 1950s and 1960s it acted as a political caucus for Fijian legislators, senior civil servants and ministers and took an informed part in the acceptance or rejection of changes to Fiji's dual system of local administration, its electoral system and the timing of self-government. That political role continued after 1970. But under the dominant structure of the Ministry for Fijian Affairs and the Fijian Affairs the Great Council was directed towards 'affirmative action' for ethnic Fijians, expansion capital ventures and protection of their cultural heritage.

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Résumé

History and archaeology
Histoire et archéologie
De la recherche archéologique à l’histoire océanienne : quel passé pour le Pacifique ?

Christophe Sand, Jacques Bolé et André Ouetcho

Introduction

Le concept d’histoire, c’est-à-dire de discours sur le passé, est probablement né avec les premières sociétés d’hommes modernes, il y a 150 000 ans. Mais durant la grande majorité de son évolution, du chasseur-cueilleur à l’agriculteur, Homo sapiens sapiens a développé un sens du passé ayant principalement vocation à servir, légitimer et structurer le présent, sans recherche d’une « vérité ». L’émergence de fonctionnements plus centralisés du pouvoir au cours des derniers millénaires a été de pair avec une nouvelle utilisation du passé dans les sociétés à écriture. Certaines traditions orales transmises de génération en génération dans les sociétés paysannes, comme les récits de la guerre de Troie datée vers 1200 avant J.-C., ont servi 500 ans plus tard de mythes fondateurs aux premiers états grecs en étant rédigés. Les Césars romains ont manipulé en l’écrivant l’histoire de leur dynastie afin de valoriser et légitimer leur puissance. Enfin, l’introduction du Christianisme en Occident a pérennisé le concept de temps linéaire et enraciné l’idée de fin du monde (Renfrew et Bahn 1996).

Au cours des derniers millénaires, le monde a ainsi vu se développer différentes visions du passé, liées à des organisations sociales et politiques multiples. L’implantation occidentale en Océanie à partir du XIXᵉ siècle, a introduit le concept de temps linéaire dans une région où le passé avait principalement vocation à servir le présent. La colonisation des différents archipels océaniens a fait l’effet d’un point de référence, avec un « avant » et un « après » l’arrivée des religions chrétiennes et/ou d’un pouvoir étranger. Malgré près de deux siècles de coexistence dans certains cas entre groupes autochtones et groupes papalangi, popa, demi ou pakeha, la perception du passé de l’Océanie reste marquée par une opposition entre un passé « traditionnel » (ex. : Trask 1991) et un passé qui se veut « scientifique » (ex. : Kirch 2000). Notre article se propose de montrer l’évolution parallèle de ces deux formes de
discours spécifiquement autour du passé pré-colonial, avant de voir comment la recherche archéologique a au cours des dernières décennies influencé la perception collective de la longue histoire humaine du Pacifique.

La reconstitution du passé de l’Océanie dans un contexte colonial

Les premiers occidentaux à s’aventurer dans le Pacifique à partir du XVIᵉ siècle ont tout d’abord été frappés par la diversité des cultures qu’ils rencontraient. James Cook a été un des premiers à se poser longuement la question des origines des océaniens, après avoir défini pour la première fois l’existence d’une gigantesque « nation » polynésienne répartie entre Hawaii, Rapanui (Île de Pâques) et Aotearoa (Nouvelle-Zélande), peuplée d’une seule et unique « race » (Beaglehole 1961). Si différentes théories ont vu le jour sous la plume par exemple de missionnaires, cherchant à lier leurs nouveaux convertis à la tribu perdue d’Israël, les premières synthèses plus détaillées ont été rédigées durant la deuxième moitié du XIXᵉ siècle.


Une évolution autour de ce discours se fait jour après la deuxième guerre mondiale, avec l’apparition d’un rajout qui peut paraître aujourd’hui farfelu: celui du lien à l’occident. Ainsi J. Avias, géologue à l’IFO (futur ORSTOM-IRD), propose à la fin des années 1940

Traditions, écrits et politique dans les discours océanien sur son passé

Les sociétés traditionnelles océaniennes, comme toutes les sociétés du monde, ont de tout temps développé leurs propres visions de leurs origines et de l'histoire de leurs ancêtres. Il n'est pas possible dans le cadre de cet article de synthétiser ces différents types de traditions, spécifiques à chaque région, liées à un besoin de structuration des racines de la société locale et justifiant les équilibres ou déséquilibres politiques et coutumiers en place à un moment donné. La démarche de constitution des différents mythes d'origine océaniens s'apparente à une justification des questionnements fondamentaux de l'homme, et n'ont rien à envier à la genèse de la bible par exemple. La constitution de généalogies à partir d'un ancêtre prestigieux, pouvant couvrir quelques échelons dans certaines régions mais atteignant plus de 20 niveaux généalogiques dans d'autres archipels, servait de base aux prérogatives politiques et foncières. Tout changement dans le fonctionnement interne du groupe social, entraînait une manipulation de l'arbre généalogique, qui n'avait pas vocation à produire une « histoire vraie » au sens cartésien du terme (ex. : Tjibaou 1976).

Les contacts avec les navigateurs occidentaux ont eu un impact massif sur les sociétés océaniennes, bien avant les processus de colonisation. L'introduction de maladies nouvelles a entraîné le développement d'épidémies meurtrières, dues à la grippe, la rougeole ou la tuberculose par exemple, déstructurant les fonctionnements sociaux et politiques.
traditionnels (ex. : Rallu 1990 ; Sand 1995). Ce processus a nécessité une reconfiguration des traditions, en particulier dans les archipels où les chutes démographiques ont entraîné le développement de guerres menées par des personnalités cherchant à s'accomparer le pouvoir ou à étendre leur domination, contribuant de ce fait à des mouvements de groupes hors de leurs terres ancestrales. En Nouvelle-Calédonie, de nombreux clans kanaks ont disparu dans ce processus, emportant avec eux leur passé. Ce sont principalement ces traditions partiellement amendées et recomposées, dans un contexte coutumier local changeant, qui ont été enregistrées par les premiers ethnographes envoyés dans le Pacifique, formant la base des travaux de synthèse sur « l'histoire traditionnelle » écrits par des auteurs occidentaux. Les exemples les plus structurés sont probablement ceux de la royauté de Tonga (ex. : Gifford 1929) et des lignées royales de Hawaï (ex. : Kamahau 1961). En Nouvelle-Zélande, l'amalgame de différentes traditions maori aboutit à créer le mythe d'une arrivée unique d'une « grande flotte » de pirogues, chacune menée par un ancêtre glorieux, dont seraient issus les différentes chefferies polynésiennes de l'archipel. En Nouvelle-Calédonie les premiers habitants sont décrits comme des petits nains de la forêt à partir des traditions kanakes. À la lecture de ces grandes fresques épiques, il ressort une volonté de structurer le passé océanien véhiculé par les traditions orales, dans une format cartésien linéaire et académique. Ces premiers écrits, à la portée de tous, sont encore aujourd'hui souvent vus par le grand public et en particulier certains océaniens, comme des « classiques scientifiques » porteurs de « la parole des vieux », alors qu'ils portent surtout tous les errements d'une interprétation simpliste des traditions orales par des occidentaux.

Les discours des océaniens sur leur propre passé ont indirectement été influencés au XXe siècle par ces écrits européens vulgarisés et accessibles. Pour autant, l'idée même d'une histoire structurée précise et surtout d'une arrivée extérieure des ancêtres, a été rejetée vigoureusement dans certains cas. Ainsi, le jour où Peter Buck, Te Rangi Hiroa, premier anthropologue polynésien, vint présenter dans les années 1930 sa théorie des migrations polynésiennes à partir de l'Asie, un chef samoan lui répondit : « les autres polynésiens sont peut-être venus d'Asie, mais les Samoans, non. Les Samoans viennent de Samoa » (Hiroa 1930, p. 5). Pourtant une partie des thématiques des écrits occidentaux a été rapidement reprise par les élites océaniennes, comme l'idée d'un peuplement récent de Hawaï par des Tahitiens, qui aurait provoqué la disparition des « premiers occupants » (Dye 1989). La légitimité historique du discours « coutumier » fidjien contemporain repose en partie sur la « migration de Kaunitoni », alors que cette fable a été rédigée par un militaire colonial britannique (Sorovi-Vunidilo 2003). Les vieux Maori continuent à développer des affirmations sur les anciens Moriori, qui auraient peuplé la Nouvelle-Zélande avant l'arrivée des grandes pirogues polynésiennes. Cette globalisation du discours a eu pour effet au cours du XXe siècle, dans les familles océaniennes progressivement urbanisées, d'entraîner souvent la déperdition des savoirs localisés sur le passé au niveau du terroir, de

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la famille élargie ou du groupe clanique.

Le renouveau des revendications autochtones face au contexte colonial de la deuxième moitié du XXᵉ siècle, s'affichant sur la scène politique de façon plus ou moins violente, a structuré un nouveau discours sur le passé grâce à un renversement du « rapport de domination, à travers un discours philo-coutumier qui n’est rien de moins que le reflet inversé du discours colonial et missionnaire sur l’indigénité » (Graillé 1999). Ce processus a vu émerger le concept de « premier occupant », avec un aplatissement de la notion de temps, considéré comme non pertinent. Pour se faire, la notion même d’histoire est critiquée, en étant présentée comme simplement « un autre outil de domination coloniale ». La légitimité autochtone change de nature, passant d’un discours ancien spatialement localisé développé à travers des traditions orales ancestrales, à une revendication globale ayant vocation à définir le « peuple » (ex. : Foster 1995 ; Kohl 1998).


Comme le note F. Douaire-Marçodon, « la question de la légitimité de l'accès au « vrai » passé (…) paraît finalement assez vaine car le rapport que les (indigènes) tissent avec leur passé – qui est un rapport organique (…) – ne peut être identique à celui que les (anthropologues) entretiennent avec le passé de ceux qu’ils étudient et qu’ils essaient de comprendre d’un point de vue scientifique » (Douaire-Marçodon 2002, p. 26). Néanmoins, l’impact du processus d'accaparement du discours sur le passé par les élites océaniennes, a entraîné une diminution massive des travaux sur le passé « traditionnel » des Hawaïens ou des Maori par exemple, les groupes autochtones mettant en place une sorte de veto sur l'étude de leur propre passé par des chercheurs extérieurs. En Nouvelle-Calédonie, la description proposée du passé kanak publié avec ce mode de pensée dans des ouvrages grand public, met sur le même plan culturel des poteries Lapita fabriquées il y a 3 000 ans et les poteries traditionnelles apparues il y a environ 1 000 ans, ainsi que la tradition des terrasses de tarodières qui n'ont commencé à apparaître qu'il y a environ 1 500 ans (ex. : Galipaud 1984 ; Bensa 1990). Certains auteurs kanaks du courant post-modère se sont même posés la question de l'utilité même de l'étude historique, affirmant que « mythes, textes récités,
chantes, discours anciens n’ont peut-être plus leur raison d’être » (Pidjo 2003).

Les travaux archéologiques dans le contexte océanien

L’archéologie scientifique a commencé à prendre véritablement racine dans le Pacifique il y a un demi-siècle. L’objectif de cette science est de définir le passé sous forme de chronologies, avec des dates, donc à partir d’une perception linéaire occidentale de l’histoire. L’archéologue travaille sur des vestiges et des objets, des traces matérielles abandonnées volontairement ou involontairement par les générations passées. Il s’agit dans le cas des objets préhistoriques océaniens de vestiges réels, que l’on peut toucher, mais muets, sans écrits. Leur interprétation peut donc être facilement manipulable, encore plus que dans le cas de vestiges pouvant être associés à des données orales et/ou écrites.


La profession s’est trouvée confrontée dans certains archipels durant cette période à la montée du nouveau discours autochtone sur un passé glorifié ne recoupant pas les reconstructions faites par les archéologues, qui se trouvaient caricaturés dans certains cas extrêmes comme de simples pilleurs de patrimoine. La défiance envers l’archéologie aboutit à une chute massive de travaux sur les sites pré-historiques à Hawaii, mais surtout en Australie et en Nouvelle-Zélande. Le Vanuatu a imposé un arrêt complet des travaux archéologiques.
jusqu'en 1994 (Bedford et al., 1999). Paradoxalement, la baisse de programmes de fouilles dans ces archipels a dynamisé dès le début des années 1990 des recherches dans les îles plus petites, comme les îles Cook, Tonga, Fidji et la majorité des archipels mélanésiens. Cette décennie a vu un accroissement massif des connaissances sur le passé du Pacifique sud-ouest, aboutissant à une vision plus globale de l'histoire et montrant que les dynamiques ont été autant internes à chaque groupe culturel que marquées par des influences venues d'autres îles. Des travaux détaillés ont été menés sur les premiers peuplements, mais également sur la période traditionnelle et l'impact occidental (ex.: Sand et al., 2003). Ces recherches de fond se sont mises en place en parallèle à l'émergence parfois embryonnaire d'une archéologie de sauvetage, face à un développement économique et des programmes de mise en valeur comme les mines et les exploitations forestières (cf. Spriggs 1997). L'archéologie préventive a dans les archipels industrialisés comme la Nouvelle-Zélande et Hawaï, été laissée aux mains d'entreprises privées, posant des problèmes spécifiques nouveaux en lien avec les groupes autochtones.

En ce début de troisième millénaire, l'archéologie océanienne peut proposer un canevas relativement clair de la longue histoire humaine du Pacifique (ex.: Kirch 2000). Seule la partie ouest, jusqu'aux îles Salomon, a été peuplée il y a plusieurs dizaines de milliers d’années. Le sud de la Mélanésie et la Polynésie occidentale ont été peuplés il y a environ 3000 ans, par des groupes Austroniens ayant une partie de leurs racines en Asie du Sud-Est (ex.: Green 2003), avant que leurs descendants ne peuplent la Micronésie orientale 1 000 ans plus tard. La Polynésie orientale n'a été peuplée qu'il y a un peu plus d'un millénaire, les ancêtres des Maori découvrant la Nouvelle-Zélande vers 1200 après J.-C., soit moins de 400 ans avant le premier contact avec des navires européens. Partout, l'archéologie a montré l'existence lors du premier peuplement, de traditions culturelles différentes des traditions autochtones locales contemporaines, bien qu'en étant la source à travers différents stades d'évolution (Sand 2003a).

**Analyse et conclusion**

Cette courte présentation a tenté de montrer comment le développement de trois discours différents sur le passé pré-contact des sociétés océaniennes, chacun avec ses évolutions internes, a aujourd'hui abouti à une confrontation de visions complémentaires et parfois opposées. Le point de litige majeur repose sur le sentiment d'une partie des sociétés autochtones, qui cherchent dans le contexte contemporain de la mondialisation à s'appuyer sur une image cohérente de leur passé, que toute remise en cause de leur discours sur leur histoire – que nous avons pourtant vu avoir été fortement transformé au cours des deux derniers siècles – menace les fondements de leur légitimité. Comme le disait un chef coutumier à l'archéologue fidjienne Tarisi Sorovi-Vunidilo : « notre structure sociale à Fidji est basée sur la migration de Kaunitoni, ce qui veut dire que si la recherche archéologique
contredit l'histoire de la migration, alors notre structure sociale va s'effondrer ou ne sera plus d'aucune utilité » (Sorovi-Vinidilo 2003, p. 372). L'idéalisation d'un âge d'or ancien par l'élite autochtone moderne a été qualifiée par certains chercheurs « d'invention des traditions » (ex. : Hanson 1989 ; Keesing 1989). Cette dynamique discursive, qui s'inscrit dans un projet politique de création d'État, s'est néanmoins profondément enracinée dans les jeunes générations océaniennes au cours des dernières décennies comme « l'histoire vraie ».

Comment, dans ce cadre éclaté, peut-on faire évoluer les perceptions dans un sens constructif ? La question de la rédaction d'une histoire scientifiquement satisfaisante tout en prenant en compte les perceptions des océaniens sur leur passé se pose aujourd'hui pour l'ensemble du Pacifique (ex. : Sand 2003b). Les archéologues sont en première ligne dans ce débat, souvent malgré eux, pour contribuer à définir les grandes lignes d'une chronologie pré-historique. Il apparaît évident que le processus sera lent à se structurer, avant de voir acceptés les résultats les plus déstabilisants de la recherche scientifique, surtout ceux liés à la société traditionnelle et au foncier. Mais la notion du passé est un concept évolutif dans chaque culture, loin d'être figé par une quelconque « coutume » ou « certitude ». Nous avons tenté de montrer les évolutions des discours jusqu'à aujourd'hui – en partie portés par le contexte politique – et il n'y a aucune raison de penser que ceci ne continuera pas dans le futur. Pour avoir une utilité, cette évolution de la perception du passé doit être néanmoins acceptée par les peuples premiers comme étant « leur perception », au risque sinon de continuer à être vue comme simplement une idée « étrangère » déstabilisante. L'émergence d'archéologues océaniens en complément d'historiens océaniens ayant les moyens de leur recherche apparaît dans ce cadre comme une nécessité absolue au cours des prochaines générations. Leur travail ne sera pas simple, car comme le disait E. Leach, ils « n'explorent pas le passé dans un cadre scientifique détaché et objectif. Ils sont dans un processus de création lié au présent politique et au futur politique de leur peuple » (Leach 1984). Ils seront ceux qui légitimeront l'enseignement sur l'histoire délivrée dans les écoles. L'enseignement est, en particulier aujourd'hui en Océanie, un outil participant à faire aboutir un projet de société. Comme dans tout processus politique, il y a besoin de création de « mythes fondateurs » pour rassembler autour d'un projet d'avenir des groupes culturellement dissemblables, par un processus de « romantisation » de l'histoire (Woudjo 2004). Se le cacher serait nier l'évidence de la manipulation de tout discours historique en fonction de son contexte du moment. Cet article a tenté de montrer qu'il n'y avait pas de malhonnêteté dans cette démarche, juste une logique justifiant les recherches menées par les scientifiques pour servir le plus grand nombre.

Bibliographie

Nota : Un nombre important d'articles sur des sujets liés aux questionnements de cet article a été publié au cours des dernières décennies, avec des points de vue divers. Il n'était pas envisageable dans le cadre de cette courte présentation, de multiplier les renvois...
bibliographiques, qui ont donc été gardés au minimum. Nous nous excusons auprès des personnes qui ne se trouvent pas cités dans ce travail malgré leurs écrits parfois nombreux.


Green, R.C., 2003. 'The Lapita horizon and traditions – signature for one set of Oceanic


Résumé

Au cours du dernier siècle, les travaux archéologiques réalisés en Océanie ont mis en lumière la complexité du passé pré-européen de la région. Les découvertes ont été interprétées de façons diverses suivant les époques, en particulier dans un contexte colonial tentant de nier les droits historiques des populations autochtones. Les populations océaniennes ont de leur côté depuis toujours eu un sens propre de leur passé, à travers les données de traditions orales, les généalogies et les toponymies foncières, se souciant peu des écrits publiés sur eux par les occidentaux. Le renouveau culturel océanien des dernières décennies et l’apparition d’un processus discursif régional, qualifié suivant les auteurs « d’invention » ou de « romantisation » des traditions, se heurte aujourd’hui à une reconstitution de plus en plus précise et détaillée de la longue histoire océanienne obtenue par l’archéologie scientifique. L’archéologie fait en effet apparaître des dynamiques culturelles diversifiées au cours des millénaires, dans un processus d’évolutions sociales, politiques et foncières des populations océaniennes, loin de l’image synchronique figée de « sociétés froides » caricaturée par certains écrits ethnographiques. Cette vision diachronique mettant en avant les changements, ne correspond pas à la perception traditionnelle du passé, mais est celle de plus en plus enseignée dans le cadre de l’enseignement scolaire. Ce papier se propose de développer la réflexion sur ce sujet.
Abstract

Archaeological research carried out in Oceania during the last century has highlighted the complexity of the region's pre-European past. The prehistoric data have been interpreted in various ways according to outlooks/perspectives current in different historical periods, especially in a colonial context that attempted to deny historic rights over the past to the autochthonous populations. On their side, Pacific populations have since time immemorial had specific ways of relating to their past, through the data provided by oral traditions, genealogies and land names, paying little attention to what Westerners published about them. Cultural revival in Oceania during the last decades, and the emergence of a regional discursive process, qualified variously as an 'invention' or 'romanticizing' of traditions, today confronts the ever-more precise and detailed reconstruction of the long history of Oceania achieved through scientific archaeology. Archaeological data highlight diversified cultural dynamics over the millennia, in a process of social, political and settlement evolution of Pacific populations that is at odds with the static synchronic picture of 'cold societies' inaccurately portrayed in much ethnographic writing. This diachronic vision, highlighting changes over time, does not correspond to the traditional autochthonous perception of the past either, but is the one becoming predominant in the school curriculum. The present paper proposes to foster discussion on this topic.
Grande et petite histoire sur les atolls : l'exemple des Tuamotu

Jean-Michel Chazine

Big and small History on the low atolls and especially the Tuamotu

Talking of History, for an archaeologist, is something like entering in the 'Forbidden City'... As he used to dealing with a limited amount of data, themselves often spread over a so long a span of time whose links are so tiny, that the word History, by itself, is almost an inaccessible dream. But, nevertheless, the temptation of the attempt may be sped up. As a part of the construction of our human environment and the possible structures which would have framed it along the time, the archaeological research process may contribute too. In bringing his information bag, he shares with other human sciences, the responsibility of expressing post dated or even sometimes predating future updated analyses. As a simple example: the discovery/confirmation by archaeologists of the regular and ancestral use by all inhabitants of atolls of the discrete fresh water lens present upon all the islands although they were -and often still are- said as lacking of fresh or drinking water.

Thus, persevering in that attempt, and passing through the numerous previous articles and communications describing the difficulties encountered for the archaeologists to overpass the poorness of our data, I will present some impressions gathered from some fieldworks gained from atolls.

The first concerning and reluctant fact is that all over the Oceania and Polynesian islands is practised what is usually called 'oral tradition'. That expression invented for and by the European newcomers at least in that part of the world, has been an easy artefact to substitute the absence of visible writings and fix the determining way of expression and development to these communities. The fact they do not possess the writing expression would concentrate the common and particular knowledge into very limited and fragile proprietors. In orality was concentrated all the possible expressions of the past, the present having thus a completely limited existence. The European descriptions and writings of the first contacts during and after the preliminary discoveries, are clear on the subject (seminar PICS 2002/03). They provide in the best cases, only punctual descriptions of the communities they encountered on that occasion, and being convinced they were having a
non-consistent past, they almost had eventually an even present, but they obviously could not even have a real possible future. The use of that oral tradition by islanders themselves did not appear clearly in the mind of the discoverers. The constant mixing between mythical or legendary tales, combined with genealogical ties were not easy to understand, and moreover if one considers the linguistic problems and the translations difficulties encountered at that time. Moreover, the sociological use of oral tradition involved only for the great meeting, events or land tenure conflicts, was a tool whose recourse was not visible to superficial foreign visitors. Even now, in present times these subjects are evoked only after confidence has been settled enough.

Writing history of these different events was just concentrated in the discovery tales completed later by prominent family stories who became immediately the privileged contacts between local communities and new comers and new settlers. The example of Tahiti where the first settlers were literally adopted by reigning — or trying to — high rank families, the Taaroa, Pomare and followers. If one considers the Pacific Islands as a whole — and I am limiting myself to an area in which I have been more involved into, the first historical accounts have concerned the biggest islands. Not because of their intrinsic interest — some calls during the first mid 19th century were more important for whalers and traders — but because they had already seen some institutional structures of power appear and look like the premises of a kingdom. Polynesian structures appeared thus immediately as kingdoms, compared and indirectly opposed to the Melanesian bands or gangs considered at first sight as tribes conducted by a more or less 'big' Chief. That quite simplistic description was to disappear progressively during the continuous contacts established with the local authorities but prevailed for long.

That difference of consideration between the western and the eastern side of the Pacific, which has now been often described and analysed elsewhere, has nevertheless faded the archaeological investigations conducted in these two areas until recent periods. It is not only by chance that the first archaeological investigations in Vanuatu have followed ethnographic studies. At the time of the arrival of a more organised and structured Archaeology in the Pacific, the standard belief was that all the local communities were 'cold societies'. They had not evolved since the beginning or so, being frozen in an everlasting past-present, which would not display much differences with living present populations. In fact, the first investigators who tried to produce a more or less description of these insular societies, were missionaries, often followed by some high Marine Officers, who not less often, became local administrators. The arrival of ethnologists, boosted by the central Government to manage with the best chances of success some of the remote and still unknown 'Colonies', helped to start a better understanding and deeper 'historic' knowledge of some communities. Then, the first aims of Archaeologist Garanger's involvement and works in Vanuatu, were initiated by Anthropologist J. Guiart's field works. The main purpose was to seek and confirm if the oral tradition expressed by local people he had
gathered, would be true. It was the first attempt to test the validity of such a field of data, which until that period were considered just as mythologic or fairy tales.

Verifying the oral tradition or very old tales and stories had already been tried concerning the veracity of the Mythologic legends like Iliad and Odyssey. Schlieman's hypothesis which, although partly wrong and slightly re-organised afterwards, seemed true, has showed that a part of the past reality could leave tracks and be revealed by archaeological process. That half random success lead also to investigate the Holly Bible as soon as the Christian rules and beliefs had been smoothed. In the same mood, Herodotus' tales have been used and often verified by archaeologists for the Scythes funerary practices for instance. In many other countries like America, Africa and Asia whose recording of facts and events process differed but were not at all totally 'written' in the same way, archaeologists more or less late, involved themselves in related investigations. The intention to verify or to confirm the reality of the oral tradition concerning some aspects of the past has been the first logical reason to undertake archaeological investigations. There was not any identified first grip to start an imprecise or independent research concerning the possible, but quite approximate Prehistory of that region. A region which, as already noted, had probably or possibly no real nor deep Prehistory. Let us remind that until the 60', the Meso-American origin of Polynesians was not yet definitely rejected, the ancestry of the human settlement in Oceania and the Pacific was not considered as very old and the expected results of eventual investigations would not bring any particular appreciated knowledge...

Thus the so-called clue of oral tradition to be verified was a good first occasion to test both validities: ethnography and archaeology, and by the way to enhance some regards towards population whose cultural credit had never been yet much appreciated. The ethnological and ethnographic demonstration having proved valid (see Garanger's masterpiece: Archaeology of Nouvelles-Hébrides), the experience was then reproduced by Garanger again in Tuamotu and extended to Tahiti. That time it was following the ethnographic research and ethnological data, collected and analysed by Paul Ottino on the atoll of Rangiroa, that these investigations were to be conducted later in Tautira area, in the Peninsula of Tahiti. Results tied to that specific goal did not reach the same evident results although the general knowledge of human settlements in the remote valleys of Tahiti has been largely enhanced. In western Melanesia the researches conducted by Vienne and Frimigacci, respectively anthropologist and archaeologist, have also set the first steps confirming the confidence which is possible to be put upon oral tradition correlated with archaeological remains.

While a general survey and inventory of sites had been undertaken in many parts of French Polynesia, thanks to the means of Bishop Museum expeditions from the 20' to the end of the 50' (Emory, 1930 & 1975), they did not engage into excavations. They mostly produced inestimable ethnographic data still surviving from the contact period, associated
to already mostly vanished monumental remains, i.e. the maraes. These late were still to be investigated and before being reconstructed -or sometimes re-interpreted for tourist purposes-, excavated. Green and his team’s work in Mo‘orea remains a model. At the same period, the first global survey of an island completed by extended excavations, were conducted by Verin in Rurutu. The use of oral tradition, came there after the excavations of some remarkable sites inasmuch as the places where sole test pits were conducted. Relation between oral tradition or culture and archaeology was not the prime motivation. Practically it must be said that thanks to the variety of components entering into the archaeological process, trivial or unexpected remains were recovered and began to show the possible space freed by the excavations. Remains of precise activities, stone tools or fishhook workshops, spatial distributions of material culture for instance, could be thus materialised. The interest of Archaeology as a separate and efficient discipline began to take consistency, at least in Tahiti and the main places where information could be shared.

The link and the difficulties to use ‘oral tradition’ as a support to construct a real History, in reconstructing as much as possible of the past has concerned many searchers. The precise study of the different aspects of the sources, their possible and even probable, if not determined transformations has clearly been expressed. Scholars like Vanista, mostly upon Africa, or Gunson for Polynesian part of Oceania, have detailed all the obstacles which led to impeach or limit the use of ‘oral tradition’, as a useful mean or way of presenting a credible historic reconstruction.

External data have always been used and exploited to reconstruct the past in Oceania with various success. The thinnest the material culture and the environmental context appeared, the more the oral tradition has been employed to try to fulfil the apparent gaps. And even when the maximum of data had been gathered and pressed as much as possible, the results have always until now been limited.

Transforming a set of events into a linear expression that we, Europeans are calling History to answer to some questions is still puzzling. The opposition between hot and cold history which has mostly concerned French and European scholars confronted to criticizing the final expression of differentiated data, was based upon referenced written sources, as it has recently been largely reproduced and detailed in recent Conte’s survey (L’Archéologie Polynésienne: esquisse d’interprétation). The only post-contacts written sources available in Oceania are of limited use. Although being, often the only remaining and thus necessary recent descriptions of states, activities or tiny events concerning the last two centuries.

Especially on the low islands, where thanks to the ethnographic and historical data collected and studied by some scholars, a rather large set of punctual facts have been sorted. Some investigations in Human Sciences involving data from the past have later been conducted in Tuamotu (Danielsson in Raroia, Hatanaka in Pukarua, Ottino in Rangiroa, Ravault in Tatakoto for the most known). As the purposes of Danielsson and Ravault were more oriented towards analysing islandic economy, their investigations into the accessible
past has practically been limited to technical and quantified inasmuch as sociological data. Thus only Hatanaka who had collected ancestry chants and legends providing some clues for contacts with the neighbouring Reao atoll, organised expeditions in 76' and 80', to test the validity of the content. Results there too, did not reach the expected goals. Although we have confirmed in Reao, the oldest settlement age for the whole Tuamotu Archipelago (i.e. 11th century AD), it was absolutely not in the area predicted by the chants (Reao Reports, 1976; 1982). There is also on the sea side, an extended group of structures evoking clearly a cemetery build with regular slabs, comprising almost 20 burials which were totally unknown by the locals in 1980. I experienced late 2002, the similar gap in Tatakoto, with burial cists which have been radiocarbon dated of less than 200 years, which are already unknown by islanders (Chazine 2003).

The same paradox had been experienced in 1984 in Napuka by Conte, who discovered a large and important cemetery which although rather recent as dated from mid 19th century, was already totally forgotten by the local community. It would mean, at least that current or non-exceptional events like regular death(s), is not by itself a memorable event. It would have the same absence of importance than daily activities which by themselves do not need to be registered in the memories.

Once again, concerning relations between neighbouring atolls and Tatakoto for instance, which are said to have been more than conflictual — the Tatakoto islanders used to proceed regularly to deadly razzias — there is a grave in Makemo atoll which is attributed to a Tatakoto Chief warrior. He would have been killed during one, or perhaps, 'The only battle'. In that case the event has been memorised showing that the structure of the burial which is almost of the same building structure as those found elsewhere on the same atoll, has no meaning by itself. There, as it has been inscripted in the common memory, its markings on the ground takes its value. Although being carried and conserved thanks to oral tradition, we have a point of grasping a knot of History.

The best successful case of Vanuatu shown by Guiart's and Garanger's complementarity, would thus have somehow been biased. First because, apart the fact that it happened in a cultural Melanesian area, it concerned an important funerary ceremony which had involved many co-'participants' or 'escorts' into death with their wives, who had been slaughtered or sacrificed on the same occasion. Then, because of the possible observation and determination of archaeological remains (skeletons, ornaments and stone structures). It is the only case known, studied and testified thanks to the archaeological procedure of funerals associated with a group of 'morts d'accompagnement' ('accompanying toll?') as Testart (2004) has called them.

Thus, the question of the reliability of remains from oral traditions is puzzling. If, as Ottino observed and quoted in Rangiroa (op. cit.), the depth of memory would not last more than four generations, what is before being crushed into an indefinite past, then the use of oral tradition itself would be very limited: at least for archaeological purposes.

In Reao, for instance, where investigations have been deeply conducted by Hatanaka
and her two successive teams (op. cit.), it is still difficult to extract from interviews, any real emerging fact. Tales of moves from one island to another is intermixed within familial corner-stones, as far as the family of the interviewed is concerned. The ancient and previous conflicts between Reao islanders, with their neighbours from Pukarua and, further with the Tatakoto peoples does not appear to be very precisely memorised. As far as I could check myself from archaeological and somehow archaeo-historical surveys, both in Reao, Makemo then Tatakoto, there are some contradictions between the reputed aggressors and the victims. Seen from Makemo's point of view — the usual supposed victim - Tatakoto's associated with Reao's (and probably Pukarua's) were always the invaders. Expressed from Reao's, Tatakoto's were also often agressing if not invading them...Two hundreds of years later, how is it possible to re-organise and sort more precisely these opposite opinions?

Apart the grave attributed to a Tatakoto chief warrior, which may be observed in Makemo, and some religious structure more similar to the Eastern than North-western style, there is no clue remaining to attribute clearly the who's and how's. Nevertheless, if one considers the possible past potential of atolls and especially, the distribution of cultivation pits (called maite in the West and kauwai in the East), there is at least one common feature between the traditionally — let's say historically — aggressors. If one includes observations from the North-western area of the whole Tuamotuan Archipelago, Ana'a, a reputed aggressor, contains many maite. Takapoto also, on a lesser level, compared to its neighbours Takaroa and smaller nearest atolls, has many cultivation pits. Then, there is almost no cultivation pits in Makemo but a very, if not exceptional, large number in Reao and Tatakoto. The second common feature, possibly the main parameter, is that all these islands having a large number of cultivation pits, which would also indicate a higher population rate and possibly a higher level of common social organisation, have no open pass (hoa) to the ocean. Their lagoons are closed. It is obvious that technically, it is in no way an obstacle for the Polynesians to have a free access to the open sea anyway. Carrying their boats upon the reef is not a problem. But the fact is noticeable. There would be an apparent correlation between the presence or absence of open channel (hoa), the high number of cultivation pits and the aggressiveness of its occupants. Does that mean that the social organisation in these atolls, strict enough to manage a high level of food production, would 'produce' also an excess of possible 'warriors' to be exported and/or intended to bring back slaves who would themselves, be used for forced working in the cultivation pits?

That late version has clearly been expressed during our investigations in Tatakoto. And many tales explaining the presence of a located and limited of very neatly constructed structures circling some cultivation pits, are described as made by slaves brought back by Tatakoto's. There would thus also be an opposition link between the clearly materialised free access to the sea, thanks to the hoa (which incidentally means 'friend' in many Polynesian languages) and those who have none. Living in a 'no hoa' i.e. 'no friends' place, would have provoked an increase into a more struggling attitude and particularly against the other in
others islands, who would have the chance of benefiting of these natural opportunities. It is possible to think that somehow psycho-socio-technologic hypothetic interpretation may be considered as not just a simple coincidence. Then a part of my previous analyses based upon the unity of the natural situation of all the atolls should be modified. I expressed long time ago, the interpretation that as far as the islanders were able, to set at will their boats or any kinds of canoes, wherever on the sea, there was no theoretical necessity for having a pass, or no at all. All the low islands, possessing a hoa or not, would thus have been equal, and confronted to the same practical questions, once put on the same level, as far as their specific technical aptitude was free to express itself. The insularity, which has been described by A. Moles as 'îléité' ('insularism'), would thus nevertheless have reproduced or at least recorded the natural differences between the natural distribution of resources. The equality of inhabitants of atolls would be nevertheless subdivided into (at least) two classes. Beyond the fact that there is no difference at a simple technical level, natural differences could have been interiorized. It would although probably be interesting to check if there is really absolutely no technical differences in the management of the whole sea resources-between the with and the without opening channel atolls.

This could enhance the tentative correlations links which I tried to set out from the consideration of simple natural factors (presence/absence of open pass, number of pass, orientation... etc) and cultural human or technical settlements proofs (cultivation pits, socio-ceremonial structures like maraes... etc). At a psycho-cosmological level, the cultural appreciation of natural differences would be interiorized and reproduced in the mean attitude of islanders. An unlucky distribution of natural resources would be compensated by higher aggressivity towards the lucky others.

Back to the Tatakoto's example, we would have an 'official' and valorising image of the past of some islanders. They were the 'winners', opposed to all the others considered as the 'losers'. That aspect of the local tales and stories function is important for these small communities who have to manage their past History and sometimes are obliged to re-organise it so that they can be 'proud' of their valiant predecessors. Being somehow discarded from real and economical centres of decisions, their self-acknowledgment has to find out grasping points whatever they would be. The combination of small communities, long distance from other contacts and isolation, when they are combined and bent towards bad directions may provoke intensive reactions. Social control, which is also linked to economical and moral structures, within these small communities, is a very fragile climax. The awful — the word is still too weak- events which happened in Fa'aite atoll, in 1986, may show, after retroactive analyse, that the isolation associated with numerous frustration parameters, may lead to dramatic events. There, on that atoll, were suddenly gathered all the ingredients leading to the split of all classical and mean human rules. If the main explanation which has been presented (see the Bruno Saura's: Les bûchers de Fa'aite), was of religious order, and it really was involved, other parameters, some based upon ethno-historical data selected by Conte,
but much others have been involved. In particular the feudal state of transfer of power and the hierarchical relations between generations was acted. The dependence of the atoll in its binominal association with Ana’a, who, after the 1983’ hurricanes damages, had gathered almost all the material and financial grants, and was presented as a showroom for the solar and architectural technologies, was badly suffered, even not clearly expressed. Fa’aite then had the chance, not to be too much destroyed by hurricanes, thus the ‘survivor syndrome’ or a non-victimisation state, compared to Ana’a, which being a real victim, had nevertheless a much better reward, was also operating.

In the same time the copra production which had badly decreased, had led the cargoes to reduce of two third, their calling frequency (pers. comm. S. Grand), leading also to some lack of resources, food shortages and low consumer capacities. Then, as it had been expressed by some catholic priests on spared atolls, only the good religious attitude of the people had been recognised and let them be spared by God. Thus, associated to the absence over more than 6 months of the Christian priest of Fa’aite because of personal reasons, health and family (pers. comm.), combined with the arrival of the ‘new religion’ carried by three so-called semi-sectarian priestesses, broke all the previous rules.

Supposed to be able to produce some miracles, they appeared with their new practices, as being able to solve all the problems of the rocked community. In introducing the public confession process, leading and expressed by public trances, which is known as being totally de-structuring the management of secret life necessary to own’s individual equilibria, they entered in and made apparent the world of representation of the devil. As said us a totally upset, desolated but still not understanding what happened, priest: his talks were only symbolic ! Thus, when he described in the Church, the devil, its manifestations and how to fight against it by fire, it was just an image for him, he had never thought that it would be taken as a true description of the reality (pers. comm., ibid.).

Get rid of the devil which was thought to have seized some of the peoples of the community, by burning them, was the only logical defending response to the massive attack. One may also quote that the first eliminated persons were from the ‘old’ generation and then those who disagreed with these unusual procedures. Back to Ana’a just a few days before the explosion, one of our near friend woman — a very cool and kind person — told us that ‘the real religion’ was arrived in Fa’aite. She added that, apart the fact that there were also many attractive chants, the people had got access to the true religious expression, and interpersonal ‘love’ could freely express itself. I could not meet her again after the incident and check her appreciation of such a free ‘love’.

So, how would or will that amazing and totally unique event, be included in the construction of islanders’ own history, is still a pendant question. Of course, a bad joke would be to say that future archaeologists would be able to imagine some anthropophagic procedure if they ever find the remains of the cremation.

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They probably would be able to tell about the age, sex, maybe some unknown illness, but the real story, the underworld network of parameters will remain hidden. I am afraid to be obliged to predict that the reconstruction of any history for these tiny groups of communities will remain definitely blurred. Apart punctual dots of facts, only an unstructured History will be available. It has to be taken in account by authorities to compensate that unavoidable situation.

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Abstract

There is no need to comment on the geographical scattering of the small islands of the different Oceanian archipelagos, nor is it necessary to describe the different administrative carvings to which they have been submitted since their successive discoveries. The atolls, which constituted specific human groups owing to their environmental differences, do not fit in the descriptive diagrams of the high islands. Their scattering is often so intense they have never really built up any sufficiently co-ordinated or united wholes to form truly distinct entities. And none of them has ever had any influence on the others. Data collected by archaeology do confirm an original cultural and technical unity directly linked to a limited environment, but they provide virtually no 'historicizable' elements. If the focus is restricted to the Tuamotu archipelago, two atolls in particular were the carriers of a warlike reputation that earned them a definite mention in the oral traditions that reached the western ethno-historian collectors. The narrations of their acts of violence, associated to the few genealogies available since the beginning of the 19th century, as well as the few specific descriptions or even the news items that punctuate the last two hundred years, are currently used as History. It would now seem that 'small' cumulative history and static uprooting, due to a lack of steady economic resources, are no longer sufficient to maintain an autonomous cultural and social cohesion in these micro-societies. The framework that a structured past provides to all human communities with, proves here, as elsewhere, to be essential.

Résumé

Le morcellement géographique des petites îles des différents archipels océaniens n’est plus à décrire, non plus que les différents découpages administratifs auxquels ils ont été soumis depuis leurs découvertes successives. Les atolls qui ont constitué des ensembles humains spécifiques dus à leurs différences environnementales, ne s’inscrivent pas dans les schémas descriptifs des îles hautes. Leur éclatement est souvent tel qu’ils n’ont quasiment jamais constitué d’ensembles suffisamment coordonnés ou unis pour former des entités véritablement distinctes. À plus forte raison n’y en a-t-il aucun à avoir eu une quelconque influence sur les autres. Les données recueillies par l’archéologie confirment bien une unité culturelle et technique originelle directement liée à un environnement limité, mais ne
fournissent quasiment pas d'éléments « historicisables ». Si l'on s'en tient au seul archipel des Tuamotu, deux atolls en particulier, ont été porteurs d'une réputation guerrière qui les a inscrits d'une manière forte dans les traditions orales parvenues jusqu'aux collectes des ethno-historiens occidentaux. Les récits de leurs exactions, associés aux quelques généalogies disponibles depuis les débuts du XIXᵉ siècle, ainsi que les quelques descriptions ponctuelles ou même faits divers qui ponctuent les 200 années passées, tiennent actuellement lieu d'Histoire. Il semblerait maintenant que petite histoire cumulative et déracinement statique, faute de ressources économiques stables, ne suffisent plus à maintenir une cohésion culturelle et sociale autonome à ces micro-sociétés. La charpente qu'un passé structuré fournit à toute communauté humaine, là, comme partout, s'avère essentielle.
Oral tradition in Vanuatu and its importance from an historical perspective

Richard Shing

Introduction

As we enter an era of technological expansion, transformation and change, the way of life of the indigenous people of Vanuatu, and the Pacific as a whole, is ever changing to adapt and cope with introduced ideas, belief systems and practices. In this transitional process, people tend to adopt new introduced ways of living and in turn, some practices that made up a substantial component of survival before the arrival of the Europeans, are now gradually being replaced. One of the practices that was an essential part of life for the people of Vanuatu and of the Pacific before the arrival of Europeans, and which is now fading away, is the means by which information vital to the well-being of the indigenous population is passed on from generation to generation.

Oral tradition, which can be crudely translated as 'opinion, belief or custom that has been handed down from generation to generation through word of mouth,' used to be the dominant form of transferring information, knowledge, wisdom, lore and other factual data before the arrival of Europeans. As is common knowledge, our ancestors did not possess any form of writing and so information was passed on through word of mouth.

Oral tradition is important to the people of Vanuatu. It is the means by which people communicate with their ancestors; it is the means by which both sacred and communal knowledge can be passed on. Codes of ethics, morality and correct manners of respect are all obtained through the passing of knowledge through word of mouth. Thus, oral tradition, to an indigenous Ni-Vanuatu does not only provide instructions as to how one could live a better way of life, it is also the means by which we live and survive day by day. It is our definition of life.
The Importance of Oral Tradition in the Written History of Vanuatu

Oral tradition plays a significant role in the recreation of the past. With the use of oral accounts we are able to piece together missing links in trying to determine certain aspects of our unwritten past. Vanuatu is full of classic examples of how knowledge passed on from our ancestors has assisted in the explanation of the past. Oral tradition can also assist us in the scientific study of the past. The following are two examples of how researchers have combined oral tradition with archaeological investigations.

a) The Roimata Burial

A classic and often cited example of oral history’s important role in deciphering the past is that of the burial of Chief Roimata. During the mid-1960's, after preliminary work by anthropologist Jean Guiart (Espirat et al., 1973), José Garanger, a French archaeologist doing research in the central islands of Vanuatu, became familiar with the story of a great chief who had brought peace to the central islands of Vanuatu. The burial of this chief was said to be one of great splendor. The story described how people were buried alive in shallow graves, how the men drank kava which made them sleep while the women were literally thrown in and were buried alive. The combination of oral tradition and archaeology was a form of research which greatly interested Garanger and he set out to excavate on Retoka Island, where Roimata was believed to be buried. He was shown the exact location of the burial, due to the fact that oral accounts of the burial site were still alive. During the excavation, more than 50 elaborately adorned skeletons were uncovered (Garanger 1972).

From the positions of the skeletons found in this burial, one could instantly distinguish the males from the females on account of the male skeletons lying straight while those of the females in the burial resting in contorted positions, clutching their male counterparts. These two different positions can be explained through the data collected from the oral accounts that go with the burial of Roimata: the men drank kava to the point of being almost unconscious, thus most male skeletons were found resting in a straight position, while the women were thrown in without any kava, thus were found in contorted positions.

Oral accounts in this example have assisted in explaining what the excavation conducted by José Garanger revealed. Without the oral accounts available on Roimata, archaeologists would not have been able to locate the burial and account for the various details uncovered during the excavation.

b) The Teouma skeletons

Another example of how we can use oral tradition in pursuit of furthering our study
of history, is associated with the headless skeletons found at the Teouma site that was excavated in 2004. During the months of July and August 2004, an archaeological excavation was conducted at Teouma, a Lapita site recently uncovered on the island of Efate (Bedford et al., 2004). During the process, 13 skeletons, associated with Lapita pottery, were uncovered. They are believed to be as old as the associated Lapita sherds, dating around 3,100 to 3,200 years before the present. The fascinating aspect of this burial was that all the skeletons had no skulls attached to them. Now how can we explain this? According to traditions in certain islands in Vanuatu, people of high rank would have their skulls removed to be placed in allocated sacred areas. On the island of Aneityum, for example, prior to the arrival of Europeans, the chiefs would be the only ones who were buried but with their heads sticking out of the ground. After decomposition, the skulls would be removed and placed in a sacred area with skulls of other chiefly ancestors (Spriggs 1997:217). This was done on account of the belief that a man’s head is the most important part of his body: to remember and honor him, the head was kept in a sacred place for his legacy to live on. Similar practices were also fulfilled on the island of Santo, in southern Malakula and on the islands north east of Malakula.

We may correlate this type of information obtained for oral accounts on these islands with the headless skeletons found at Teouma, and assume that probably similar customary practices were carried out at the time of the arrival of the first people on our shores. The Teouma skeletons were probably not all chiefs but may have been of some rank. Oral accounts in collaboration with archaeological methods in this example have enabled us to have a vivid illustration of the cultural practices of Vanuatu’s first inhabitants.

Factors affecting Oral Tradition in Vanuatu

The importance and use of oral tradition in Vanuatu today is diminishing at a steady rate. One of the main contributors to this decline is formal education. The learning of information or knowledge through reading and writing has had some critical effects on the oral tradition.

— First, a lot of people who have attended formal education view it as a more superior learning process to the traditional learning process, thus diminishing the status of oral traditions. Their perception of oral tradition is that of something ancient that should be left in the past. This perception is daily nourished by the newly introduced ideas, cultures and ways of living that they see, interact and come into contact with. This mentality, found abundantly in the urban centers, has led to a decline in the status, importance and application of oral tradition.

— Secondly, since the learning process of oral tradition is based mainly on memorizing, the more one dwells on the need to put ideas and information down on paper, the more they loose the technique of storing information in the brain. By introducing people at a very young age into writing things down, they will find certain difficulties in the latter part
of their lives in storing information through memorization.

— Another factor that has contributed to the decline of oral tradition in Vanuatu, has been the drastic depopulation subsequent to the arrival of Europeans. During this time, a lot of new diseases were introduced to the islands, both accidentally and in some cases intentionally, resulting in a drastic reduction in the number of people of most of the islands. A lot of traditional knowledge including a lot of oral traditions, was lost at that time, for many guardians to certain oral traditional knowledge died without passing them on. Christianity, during its first decades of arrival, tried to eradicate part of the indigenous cultures and customs, thus a lot of oral tradition was said to be the work of the devil and were banned. Today, numerous villages around urban areas or areas where Christian missions has been concentrated have lost a substantial amount of their oral traditions.

What has been done by the Vanuatu Cultural Centre

One of the main aims of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre is to conserve, preserve and promote custom, culture and tradition in Vanuatu. As most of our culture, custom and tradition are conserved and passed on through oral tradition, we are in a very critical position in that if those people who store and use oral tradition die, and most of them are the elders in their society, a lot of oral tradition will be lost forever.

The Vanuatu Cultural Centre therefore has set up different units and projects to cater for the need to store oral tradition. The Vanuatu Cultural Centre has nearly 100 volunteer fieldworkers throughout the islands of Vanuatu (Bolton 1999; Tryon 1999). Their main task is to record anything about their custom, culture and tradition and in most occasions they record this through the means of oral traditions. It is mostly through our network of fieldworkers that we have in our archives an ever growing collection of oral accounts. The fieldworkers also promote their own customs and cultures within their own areas, by carrying out mini art festivals where a lot of custom orientated activities take place, including story-telling. This enables us to teach the younger generations about the importance of their own custom and culture, enabling them to respect the knowledge passed down from their ancestors.

The Vanuatu Cultural and Historical Sites Survey is a section under the Vanuatu Cultural Centre formed in the early 1990s, whose task is to undertake surveys on sites of cultural and historical importance. In doing so, we have been collecting stories associated with these sites which provide further histories of the sites, which are subsequently archived by the Vanuatu Cultural Centre. Those sacred or tabu are kept in a special tapu room, in order to restrain access.

Last year the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, with the assistance from the European Union under its Non State Actors Fund and the Alliance Française set up a project, entitled the Oral Arts Project. This project has the objective of promoting custom stories. Those involved in the project record and collect custom stories, publish them in books and also go around schools telling and acting these custom stories. One of their main aims is to make the general
public interested in their oral tradition and in turn learn to value their oral tradition.

Conclusion

The first part of this paper began by referring to the importance of oral tradition in its original state; as orally transferred knowledge that can for example be used in archaeological research. The latter component of the paper mentioned methods applied by the Vanuatu Cultural Centre in preserving oral tradition, especially by recording and archiving oral tradition, thus removing the original method of transferring the information. For the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, due to the fact that it is impossible for one person or a group of people to store all oral traditions mentally, we had to resort to digitally record oral tradition in order for the younger generations or those who live in the urban areas, to have access to oral traditions from their respective areas. We have reached a critical stage where, if we try to get the younger generation to embrace oral tradition and use it to pass on information only orally, a lot of knowledge will be lost in the process. In order to slow down the process of oral tradition loss, we have to archive those oral traditions. This allows to accumulate oral data and also to promote the importance of oral tradition. All this being said, I am of the firm opinion that for oral tradition to be appreciated, it has to be transferred in its original form; being by word of mouth.

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**Abstract**

In Vanuatu, as in all Pacific Island countries, oral tradition plays a significant role in the lives of the indigenous people and has been doing so for thousands of years. Prior to the arrival of European, survival depended on what knowledge was passed down from generation to generation, thus the means of transference of this knowledge was essential. The knowledge contained in oral tradition is vital to the people of Vanuatu in that the history of the people before the arrival of Europeans comes in this form and as we get more and more exposed to outside cultures, there is a danger in that our own traditional methods of passing knowledge from one generation to another may eventually lose its importance. This paper attempts to address the historical importance of oral tradition in Vanuatu and the role that the Vanuatu Cultural Centre currently plays in promoting the use of oral tradition. Examples will also be given on the different types of oral tradition existing in Vanuatu with the different factors affecting the status of oral tradition in Vanuatu.

**Résumé**

À Vanuatu, comme dans tous les pays insulaires du Pacifique, la tradition orale joue un rôle considérable dans la vie des autochtones, comme c'est le cas depuis des milliers d'années. Avant l'arrivée des Européens, la survie dépendait du type de connaissances transmises de génération en génération, si bien que les moyens de transmission de cette connaissance étaient essentiels. La connaissance contenue dans la tradition orale est vitale pour les gens de Vanuatu en ce sens que l'histoire du peuple avant l'arrivée des Européens vient sous cette forme et comme nous sommes de plus en plus exposés à des cultures extérieures, il existe un réel danger que nos propres méthodes traditionnelles de transmettre la connaissance d'une génération à l'autre puissent finir par perdre de leur importance. Cet article tente de jauge l'importance historique de la tradition orale à Vanuatu et le rôle que le Centre Culturel de Vanuatu joue actuellement dans la promotion de l'usage de la tradition orale. Des exemples seront aussi donnés des différents types de tradition orale qui existent à Vanuatu et des divers facteurs qui affectent le statut de la tradition orale à Vanuatu.
Lapérouse à Vanikoro : tradition orale et histoire

Jean-Christophe Galipaud

Une histoire tragique

La disparition soudaine des 2 navires de l’expédition Lapérouse après 3 ans de navigation à travers l’Océanie a été pendant près de 40 ans entourée de mystère. La collecte par Dillon de vestiges du naufrage à Tikopia puis son séjour à Vanikoro ont apporté les premiers éléments de cette tragique histoire (Bellec 1985 : 25). Peu de temps après, Dumont d’Urville complète ce qui est aujourd’hui la base historique sur laquelle l’histoire du naufrage s’appuie (Bellec 1985 : 242). Pourtant, lors du passage de ces deux marins à Vanikoro, les rapports complexes qu’ils entretinrent avec la population et les difficultés de compréhension influèrent sur la qualité de l’information recueillie.

Pour remettre ces informations dans le contexte de Vanikoro à l’époque du naufrage, j’ai cherché à identifier à travers les écrits, les acteurs locaux de cette tragédie. Ceci m’a amené à proposer une histoire à deux vitesses qui met en lumière les rivalités et intérêts locaux que ce naufrage a éveillé.

Je débuterai par une rapide description du contexte géographique et culturel, et une présentation des acteurs. Je m’attacherai ensuite à une relecture des traditions dans leur contexte pour en dégager et en discuter les éléments marquants. Je terminerai par quelques propositions et hypothèses sur le devenir possible des marins et la nature des relations qui s’établirent à Vanikoro en 1788.

L’expédition Lapérouse

Lapérouse quitte la France le 1er août 1785 pour un voyage d’exploration qui doit lui permettre, entre autre, de découvrir et explorer les îles du Pacifique que Cook n’a pu visiter. L’expédition est composée de deux frégates à bord desquelles, outre les officiers et les marins, ont pris place les plus grands esprits de l’époque. Ce sont plus de 200 personnes qui vont naviguer ensemble pendant trois ans (Bellec 1985 : 50). Le 26 janvier 1788, après un épisode sanglant à Tutuila (Samoa) qui a profondément marqué Lapérouse et ses
hommes (Bellec 1985 : 176), les deux frégates mouillent à Botany Bay sur la côte est de l’Australie, où elle rejoints les anglais de la first fleet arrivés quelques jours auparavant (Bellec 1985 : 191). Pendant le mois et demi que durera cette escale, les français remettent en état les bateaux et construisent plusieurs chaloupes pour remplacer celles qui avaient été perdues à Tutuila. Les nombreuses lettres qu’ils écrivent et transmettent aux anglais sont le dernier témoignage de cette expédition. Ils quittent Botany Bay le 15 mars 1788 pour la dernière étape de leur périple (Bellec 1985 : 195), qui doit les conduire à Tonga puis le long de la côte ouest de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, aux Santa Cruz puis, après avoir longé les îles Salomon, à travers le détroit de Torres vers l’île Maurice. Il faudra attendre près de 40 ans pour que l’on ait de leurs nouvelles.

C’est au capitaine Dillon que l’on doit d’avoir localisé le lieu du naufrage. Dillon est un irlandais né en 1788. C’est un bourlingueur dont la réputation n’est pas excellente mais qui connaît bien le Pacifique et ses habitants. Il vit un temps à Tahiti avant de reprendre la mer pour son commerce. En 1813, aux commandes de l’Elisabeth, il débarque 3 personnes (Martin Buchert, sa femme et un métis indien nommé Joe) à Tikopia. En 1826, il repasse à Tikopia pour prendre de leurs nouvelles et découvre qu’il y a sur l’île de nombreux objets de facture européenne et en particulier une garde d’épée en argent fleurdelisé. On lui dit que ces objets proviennent de Vanikoro où un navire a sombré il y a quelque temps. Il comprend alors qu’il doit s’agir des restes de l’expédition Lapérouse.

Il quitte Tikopia pour Vanikoro mais les vents l’empêchent de s’approcher de l’île et il décide donc de faire route vers Calcutta où il arrive en août 1826. Il repart en janvier 1827 sur un bateau affrété par la « British East India Company » avec à son bord un représentant de la France, M. Eugène Chaigneau. Après de nombreuses péripéties, il arrive à Tikopia le 5 septembre et repart aussitôt avec à son bord un tikopien nommé Rathéa qui a proposé de lui servir de guide à Vanikoro. Il arrive à Vanikoro le 7 septembre et y réalise jusqu’au 8 octobre une enquête approfondie sur les circonstances du naufrage (Davidson 1975 : 172).


Les descriptions et les commentaires de Dillon, de Dumont d’Urville et des officiers de ce dernier sont les témoignages les plus précis du naufrage. Ils ont été utilisés pour la rédaction de cet article.
Vanikoro

1. Le contexte géographique

Vanikoro est l'île la plus au sud de l'archipel des îles Santa cruz, dans le groupe des îles Salomon. C'est la seconde plus grande île de l'archipel avec une superficie de 190 km² et une hauteur de 900 mètres environ. L'île la plus proche, Utupua se trouve à 30 km au nord-ouest, Nende (ou Ndeni) est à 130 km dans la même direction. Au sud se trouvent les îles Torres à 170 km et les îles Banks à 210 km. Tikopia est la plus éloignée, à 230 km dans le sud-est (Fig.1).

Vanikoro est une île volcanique composée de 3 cônes, 2 sur Banie, l'île principale et un sur Teanu, une île plus petite au nord-est. L'île est entourée d'un récif barrière protégeant un lagon particulièrement profond de près d'1 km et demi de largeur (Fig. 2). Darwin a montré en utilisant les informations recueillies sur place par Dumont d'Urville que ce récif barrière, particulièrement peu fréquent autour d'une île volcanique est dû à une subsidence rapide de l'île (Darwin 1846).

Vanikoro a des précipitations moyennes annuelles au niveau de la mer comprises entre 5,6 m et 7,9 m. A titre de comparaison, la plupart des îles volcaniques polynésiennes ont des moyennes comprises entre 1,5 et 2,5 mètres par an.

Ndeni fut découverte en 1595 par Mendana ; en 1606, Quiros dresse une carte situant également Tikopia et Taumako (Beaglehole 1966 : 59). Carteret en 1767 décrit ces îles sous le nom de îles de la Reine Charlotte et nomme Vanikoro « île Oury » (Beaglehole 1966 : 209). Laperouse qui dispose de sa carte, ne peut néanmoins la situer exactement et vu la route qu'il a suivi, il ne s'attend probablement pas à rencontrer de terre avant son arrivée à Ndeni.

À l'époque du naufrage, des tikopiens visitent régulièrement Vanikoro et il semble même que certains soient installés dans cette île (Firth 1961 : 135).

2. Les acteurs locaux

Il y a deux sortes d'informateurs, les premiers entretenant des relations privilégiées avec les enquêteurs et les seconds rencontrés lors des visites dans les villages. Il est clair que les habitants de Vanikoro, peu habitués au monde occidental ont dû considérer avec méfiance ces blancs qui venaient, 40 ans après réclamer des informations sur le devenir de leur compatriote. Méfiance et peut-être même crainte si la confrontation en 1788 n'a pas tourné à l'avantage des marins.

Les informateurs n'ont pas tous la même connaissance de l'histoire et livrent le témoignage de ce qu'ils ont entendu de leurs aînés plutôt qu'une tradition structurée. Ces témoignages varient donc en qualité et en précision suivant les individus. On note ainsi
pour Dillon, Rathea dont nous reparlerons plus loin, Nero chef de Davey (Tevai), Ouali, Battie et Maou chefs de Dennemah et Pakeley du même village, et enfin Serou, beau frère de Ta Faou du village de Davey. En dehors des chefs de Dennemah pour lesquels il est difficile de se prononcer, si l'on considère leurs noms, ils sont tous tikopiens.

Dumont d'Urville pour sa part utilise surtout des indigènes des villages proches de son mouillage et probablement d'origine tikopienne ou culturellement proches des tikopiens : Nelo (Nero) chef de Davey, le même informateur que Dillon, Tangaloa de père tikopien et de mère Vanikoro vivant à Mannevai, Valiko et Kavaliki à Dennemah (Durville 1830).

Il est risqué aujourd'hui d'émettre une opinion tranchée sur la distribution des groupes tikopiens à Vanikoro à l'époque de Dillon et Dumont d'Urville. Il ressort néanmoins de cet inventaire que la délimitation de l'île en deux districts opposés, Whanou au nord-ouest et Mannicolo au sud-est semble correspondre aux régions que se sont partagées les deux ethnies : les mélanesiens à Whanou et les Tikopiens ou assimilés à Mannicolo. Paëiou occupait une position limitrophe entre les deux districts.


Rathea ou Pu Rathea, de son vrai nom Saifanga, était un tikopien né ou arrivé très jeune à Vanikoro. Il est à Tikopia lors du second passage de Dillon et l'accompagne à Vanikoro. Sur place il tente d'orienter à son avantage ou à l'avantage des siens les recherches de Dillon au point que ce dernier finit par s'apercevoir de son manège. Les rapports de Dillon et de Rathea se dégradent rapidement à mesure que Dillon se rend compte du parti pris de celui-ci. Rathea était enfant ou adolescent à l'époque du naufrage et à donc vécu, sur place, la rencontre avec les naufragés. Il est un personnage important du clan Taumako à Tikopia, clan ayant entretenu des relations suivies avec Vanikoro avant le naufrage (Firth 1961 : 158). Le chef de ce clan, Matakai II vient à Vanikoro très peu de temps après le naufrage :

« Il me dit encore [Rathea] que Thamaca était venu à Mannicolo très peu de temps après le naufrage et avait vu les membres des naufragés épars sur le rivage. »

(Dillon 1830 : 81)

Le témoignage de Rathea est un témoignage intéressé visant à se ménager les bonnes grâces des blancs plutôt qu'à les aider à découvrir la vérité. Il en va probablement de même pour un certain nombre des informateurs.

3. Le contexte linguistique

La barrière de la langue a été contournée à chaque fois en utilisant les services d'interprètes polynésiens, ces derniers ayant plus de facilités à se faire entendre des blancs. De plus, Dillon parlait le tahitien et avait une bonne connaissance des habitants des
Iles. Il pouvait donc, dans le cas d’interlocuteurs polynésiens, se faire comprendre sans intermédiaire. Malheureusement, pour comprendre les indigènes de Vanikoro, il a fallu passer par des intermédiaires Tikopiens ayant connaissance des langues locales. Nous n’avons pas d’indication sur ces échanges et devons donc imaginer que le dialogue avec les mélanésiens de Vanikoro fut plus laborieux qu’avec les tikopiens. Dumont d’Urville est moins au fait des coutumes locales et sans expérience du monde polynésien. Il incite Buchart à le suivre à Vanikoro mais ce dernier se désiste au dernier moment. Il eut probablement plus de difficultés que Dillon à comprendre et traduire les récits indigènes. Les témoignages qu’il a recueillis sont donc à priori moins fiables.

Les traditions

Les traditions, ou plutôt les témoignages sont de natures diverses suivant les interlocuteurs mais on peut néanmoins y discerner un certain nombre de motifs récurrents. Ces motifs concernent principalement le lieu et les conditions du naufrage, l’installation à terre des rescapés, les luttes avec les indigènes, le départ des naufragés et le devenir de 2 français restés dans l’île.

1. Les conditions du naufrage

La nuit du naufrage est une nuit de tempête, de cyclone même si l’on en croit le chef Oualie du village de Dennemah :

« Le vaisseau avait été jeté sur les récifs pendant la nuit ou il y avait eu un ouragan terrible qui brisa un grand nombre de nos arbres à fruit. » (Dillon 1830 : 109)

Ce fait est confirmé par des chefs de Whanou :

« La nuit ou le vaisseau se perdit, il s’était levé un ouragan qui avait brisé les arbres à fruit, abattu des maisons et causé d’autres ravages. » (Dillon 1830 : 135)

Vanikoro est une des très rares îles volcaniques à avoir un récif barrière bien développé, ce dont Lapérouse, habitué aux îles volcaniques polynésiennes, ne pouvait se douter. En perdition lors d’un cyclone, il tenta probablement de chercher un abri près de cette terre inconnue.

2. La situation des épaves

La situation des épaves est correctement décrite par la plupart des informateurs quelque soit leur lieu d’origine. Pendant des années, ces épaves ont été des mines où récupérer les métaux pour en faire des outils.

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Les deux navires ne se brisent pas simultanément sur le récif, l'un probablement plus avancé voit le récif trop tard alors qu'il s'approche de cette île volcanique inconnue pour y chercher refuge et s'y fracasse. L'autre navire tente d'éviter, s'échoue, est tiré au large mais s'échoue de nouveau.

Le premier navire touche devant Whanou et se perd corps et biens. Le second,

« naufragé à Paiou avait d'abord été retiré du récif et halé au large mais il avait échoué de nouveau. » (Rathea dans Dillon 1830 : 31)

ou comme l'exprime un vieux chef de l'est de Vanikoro,

« il toucha sur le récif pendant la nuit et ensuite revint à flot et dériva jusqu'à une bonne place. » (Dillon 1830 : 70)

Tous les récits s'accordent sur les étapes du naufrage et la précision des discours retranscrits par Dillon laisse peu d'incertitude sur la réalité des faits. Seul Dumont d'Urville, par la bouche de Valiko, un chef tikopien de la côte est, réfute le naufrage de l'un des deux navires à Vanou :

« En définitive, aucun navire n'aurait péri devant Vanou, mais l'un aurait échoué devant Paiou [et l'autre à Tanema] à l'endroit même où sont encore les ancrés et les canons et de ce bâtiment proviennent tous les objets que les naturels ont livrés à Mr Dillon et à 'Astrolabe. L'autre toucha et s'engloutit devant Tanema... » (Dumont d'Urville 1830 : 188)

Les épaves sont bien localisées aujourd'hui, l'une dans une faille du récif en face de Paiou et l'autre dans une fausse passe à quelques milles plus à l'ouest, lieu appelé Whanou par les indigènes. Il n'y a pas d'épave à Tanema comme le suggère Dumont d'Urville et cette divergence d'opinion sur le lieu montre à la fois la difficulté de compréhension des membres de l'expédition Dumont d'Urville et l'interprétation ultérieure, au moment de la rédaction de faits mal compris (Dumont d'Urville ne voit qu'une seule épave, alors que Dillon voit et décrit les deux gisements). Un fait néanmoins doit être mentionné. toutes les sources ou presque situent à Whanou la destruction du premier bateau et à Paiou l'échouage du second. L'échouage pourtant eut lieu de toute évidence à Whanou, une passe peu profonde où les restes de l'épave, bien visibles ont pu être cartographiés par Dumont d'Urville. On peut penser que Dillon qui a correctement localisé les deux épaves a interverti lors de la rédaction de son livre les noms des deux endroits.

3. Les survivants

Les rescapés proviennent du navire échoué dans la fausse passe. Le bateau coulé dans la faille s'est perdu corps et biens à l'exception d'un petit nombre d'individus. D'après Rathéa,
ceux d'entre eux qui parvinrent à regagner la terre à Whanou furent pris pour des esprits malfaisants et massacrés par les naturels (Dillon 1830 : 30). Un chef de l'est de Vanikoro précise qu'il y eu deux blancs tués à Whanou, deux à Ammah et deux à Paiou. Il doit être noté que toutes ces indications sont fournies par des Tikopiens. Ouallie, le chef de Dennemah pour sa part indique que :

« 4 hommes échappèrent et prirent terre près d'ici. Nous allions les tuer, les prenant pour des esprits malfaisants quand ils firent présent de quelque chose à notre chef qui leurs sauva la vie. Ils résidèrent parmi nous pendant un peu de temps, après quoi ils allèrent rejoindre leurs compagnons à Paiou. » (Dillon 1830 : 110)

Cette information est reprise plus tard par d'autres habitants de Dennemah qui accompagnent Russel sur le récif en face de ce village (Dillon 1830 : 180).


4. Le camp à terre

Le lieu du camp à terre, comme le lieu du naufrage fait l'unanimité : il s'agit de Païou, une baie bien irriguée par la rivière Lawrence, en face du lieu du naufrage. Cette baie est l'un des seuls endroits plat et sec de cette côte sud-est particulièrement humide. Elle ne semble pas occupée en permanence par les indigènes en 1788 mais les gens d'Ammah y avaient des jardins qu'ils venaient périodiquement entretenir. Rathéa est peu désireux de se rendre sur place. Son malaise, perceptible à travers les écrits de Dillon ainsi que les paroles du chef Nero qui indique que les gens de Païou sont perpétuellement en guerre avec eux, confirme que Païou est un lieu sensible, probablement sur la limite des districts de Whanou et Dennemah.

Si tous les informateurs s'accordent pour situer le camp des français à Païou, seuls les gens d'Ammah (venus travailler à leurs plantations) en donnent une localisation précise :

« Quelques-uns des plus vieux me montrèrent un enfoncement de la rive ouest, m'assurant que c'était là. Cet enfoncement se trouve à environ 50 brasses au dessus de l'embouchure de la rivière, et d'après l'aspect général des environs, il y a tout lieu de croire à la vérité de cette assertion. Excepté ce seul endroit qui était déboisé jusqu'au bord de la mer, toute
la côte, sans la moindre interruption, offrait à l’œil une forêt presque impénétrable. Le
terrain en question a environ 70 brasses du nord au sud en longeant le bord de la rivière
et de 100 à 120 brasses de l’est à l’ouest, c’est à dire dans une direction transversale. »
(Dillon 1830 : 167)

Un officier qui prospecte le long de la rivière trouve même les traces d’un abattage
d’arbres.

« J’ai vu, néanmoins vers le haut de la rivière les souches d’arbres qui avaient été abattus,
très anciennement, à coup de hache, et je ne doute pas que ce fussent ceux qu’on employa pour
construire le bâtiment dont parlent les naturels… Dans le cours de ma conversation avec
Ratheà, les deux jeunes gens de Dennemah et Pakeley, j’avais appris que le bois employé
à construire le bâtiment avait été coupé dans le haut de la rivière, où on en avait formé des
trains flottant pour le faire descendre. C’est d’après ce renseignement que j’ai remonté la
rivière et trouvé les souches dont je viens de parler. » (Officier dans Dillon 1830 : 130)

On peut émettre quelques doutes sur l’interprétation de cet officier. Après le naufrage,
les indigènes ont tous des haches de fer et la végétation a eu largement le temps de repousser
à cet endroit.

Les français s’installent donc à Pa’iou, le long de la rivière et construisent un camp
fortifié comme ils l’avaient déjà fait à Botany Bay quelques mois auparavant. En 1999,
la découverte des vestiges du camp à terre à Pa’iou confirmait ces témoignages (Galipaud
1999).

Ratheà le décrit ainsi :

« Les naufragés avaient plantés à une certaine distance alentours une forte palissade qui leur
formait une espèce de camp retranché où ils se tenaient constamment. » (Dillon 1830 : 32)

Les indigènes les considéraient comme des esprits et les observaient sans comprendre :

« leur nez s’avancait de deux palmes au delà de leur visage. Le chef était toujours à regarder le
soleil et les étoiles et leur faisait des signes. » (Chef de la côte est dans Dillon 1830 : 74)

Plus loin Rathéà indique :

« ils ne mangeaient pas comme des hommes, un petit morceau de nourriture gros comme
le bout des doigts leur suffisait. Après l’avoir avalé, ils se remettaient aussitôt au travail. »
(Dillon 1830 : 32)

Ces informations précises montrent que les blancs étaient soigneusement observés, voir
épiais et que leurs attitudes étaient discutées et commentées.
À la question combien de temps restent-ils, la réponse est le plus souvent 5 à 6 lunes bien que les informateurs ne s'accordent pas sur ce point. Le séjour fut donc de courte durée. Deux blancs restèrent parmi les indigènes de Païou. Ils étaient connus des indigènes sous le nom de Marah et n'étaient pas mariés. Lorsque le premier mourut, quelques années avant le passage de Dillon, le second partit s'installer à Paucarie, un village abandonné situé près de l'actuel village de Lale, autrefois appelé Ammah. C'est encore Ouallie, chef de Dennemah qui raconte le mieux cet événement :

« Deux hommes blancs restèrent après le départ de leurs compagnons. L'un était un chef et l'autre un homme qui servait le chef. Le premier mourut il y a environ 3 ans. Le chef du canton où résidait l'autre homme fut obligé de s'enfuir et l'homme blanc partit avec lui. Le district qu'ils abandonnèrent se nomme Paucorie. » (Dillon 1830 : 109)

5. les luttes avec les indigènes

Le séjour des français ne fut pas sans conflits. Les témoignages de ces conflits, nous allons le voir, fournissent des éléments importants pour une relecture critique de l'histoire. En effet, alors que les descriptions des lieux et des gens ont fait le tour de l'île, ces faits plus sensibles ne sont pas racontés sans raisons.

Il semble que les conflits aient été nombreux entre européens et indigènes.

Le premier à les mentionner est Rathéa (Dillon 1830 : 30).

« Quelques uns des insulaires étaient bien portés pour eux tandis que d'autres leur faisait une guerre continuelle. »

Il précise encore que :

« Plusieurs des étrangers ont été tués par trahison. Les insulaires sous prétexte d'en faire des Tihouas (amis), les attirèrent hors de leur camp et les massacrèrent. »

Des informations plus précises encore sont données par Serou, à Davey, le beau frère d'un tikopien nommé Tafaou qui vivait à Ocili à l'époque du naufrage :

« les hommes blancs vinrent de Païou, dans un bateau, jusqu'au récif près de Dennemah, et tuèrent le chef de ce village qui s'appelait Naourey. Ils mirent un instrument dans leur bouche, soufflèrent du feu et l'on entendit un grand bruit. Naourey fut blessé, tomba en dehors de sa pirogue et mourut. Naourey était alors à pêcher. On a jamais retrouvé son corps. C'est ainsi que sa mort fut racontée par ceux qui étaient à pêcher avec lui... »

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« Serou et un autre insulaire racontèrent qu’il y avait eu, à Whanou, un grand combat entre les hommes blancs et les habitants de ce village dont tous les chefs avaient été tués, au nombre de 5, à savoir : Valeo, Oley, Amea, Feto et Tabinga ; que presque tous leurs gens avaient été tués également, ainsi que dix des hommes blancs dont les têtes furent offertes à la divinité. » (Dillon 1830 : 150)

Dumont d’Urville rapporte un témoignage similaire d’un vieillard de 70 ans au moins à Mannevai :

« Ceux qui avaient abordé à Vanou avaient été reçus à coups de flèches par les naturels : alors les blancs avaient tiré sur ceux-ci avec leurs fusils (et il faisait le geste d’un homme qui souffle la mort) ; ils en avaient tué plusieurs ; ensuite ils avaient tous péri eux-mêmes, et leurs crânes étaient enterrés à Vanou. » (Dumont d’Urville 1830 : 154)

Le chef de Mannevai lui raconte une histoire similaire :

« il avait entendu dire que les habitants de Vanou allaient au vaisseau échoué pour le piller, mais qu’ils furent repoussés par les blancs qui firent feu sur eux et leurs tuèrent vingt hommes et trois chefs ; à leur tour, les insulaires tuèrent à coup de flèche tous les blancs qui voulaient descendre sur leur territoire. Suivant lui, deux hommes seulement descendirent à terre à Paiou et n’y vécurent pas plus de trois lunes. » (Dumont d’Urville 1830 : 181)

Qu’en pensent les habitants de Whanou ? Leur témoignage est succinct :

« On affirma qu’aucun homme des vaisseaux naufragés n’avait été tué à Dennemah, ni à Whanou. » (Dumont d’Urville 1830 : 184)

Qui devons nous croire ? De nombreux auteurs ont pris ces témoignages pour asseoir la sauvagerie des indigènes. Il est troublant que ce soit eux-là même qui vont accueillir les deux blancs chez eux pendant plus de 20 ans qui soient à l’origine des massacres (si massacre il y a eu). On comprend la position des gens du district de Mannicolo : ils sont les interlocuteurs privilégiés de Dillon et Dumont d’Urville et sont les premiers à bénéficier de leurs cadeaux. Ils ont donc tout intérêt à diaboliser leurs ennemis de toujours.

**Conclusions**

Il n’est pas simple d’analyser les textes de Dillon et Dumont d’Urville en tenant compte d’une géographie locale qui ne fut pas toujours bien perçue par les auteurs de ces textes. Cette analyse même succincte montre que les habitants du district de Mannicolo sont plus sollicités et désireux de faire valoir leur version de l’histoire alors même qu’ils n’en sont à priori pas les acteurs principaux du fait de leur éloignement géographique et politique.
Les témoignages des habitants du district de Whanou sont plus rares. Les difficultés de communication, le choix des interprètes et les lieux de mouillage l'expliquent en partie. Ces derniers quand ils ont été recueillis diffèrent dans leur explication des faits. Il y a donc à Vanikoro au moment du naufrage plusieurs groupes locaux dont les intérêts diffèrent et qui ont dû s'opposer pour bénéficier de la faveur et des largesses des français.

J'espère avoir montré que Vanikoro au moment du naufrage et plus tard lors de la visite de Dillon et Dumont d'Urville est déjà, comme aujourd'hui, une île aux populations diverses et que les réseaux d'alliance traditionnels en particulier vers Tikopia influencent l'attitude des habitants lors du naufrage.

Ce naufrage a dû provoquer des transformations notables des équilibres locaux. Certains groupes tikopiens ont pu profiter de cet événement pour affirmer leur position dans l'île voisine de Vanikoro tout en renforçant le prestige de leur lignée à Tikopia. Les indigènes de Vanikoro ne sont pas pour autant perdants dans cette histoire puisqu'ils ont bénéficié en premier lieu de la mine de matières premières que représentaient les épaves et ont pu, grâce à cela, acquérir une position dominante dans les échanges avec les îles voisines. Les grands perdants de l'histoire sont peut-être bien les rescapés du naufrage qui n'ont pu apprécier assez vite les intérêts locaux et en ont sans doute été les victimes.

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Résumé

Le naufrage de Lapérouse à Vanikoro a provoqué des bouleversements importants dans l'équilibre des sociétés locales. Avant de pouvoir fouiller les épaves et de localiser et fouiller le camp des rescapés, les seules informations dont nous disposions étaient celles fournies par les indigènes. Ces informations orales furent publiées par Dillon puis Dumont d'Urville et quelque autres européens après eux. Dans ce papier, nous allons montrer qu'elles racontent deux histoires différentes selon qu'elles ont été transmises par les mélanésiens de Vanikoro ou les Tikpiens qui étaient présents à Vanikoro au moment du naufrage. Ceci nous amène à poser la question du rôle qu'ont joué les Tikpiens dans la destinée des membres rescapés de l'Expédition.

Abstract

The wreck of Lapérouse in Vanikoro provoked a major upheaval in the balance of local societies. Before the wreckages could be searched and the survivors' camp could be localized and searched, the only information available was that provided by the natives. This oral information was published by Dillon and then by Dumont d'Urville and a few other Europeans after them. In this paper, we will show that two different narratives are told depending on whether they were transmitted by the Melanesians of Vanikoro or the Tikopians who were present in Vanikoro at the time of the wreck. This leads us to raise the question of the role played by Tikopians in the destiny of the surviving members of the expedition.
History and images

Histoire et images
Illustrating the New Zealander: London exhibitions of Maori in the 1840s

Robin Skinner

In 1846 George French Angas exhibited paintings and artifacts of New Zealand and South Australia for three months in a rentable space at the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly.1 This exhibition gave a wide section of the London public one of their earliest views of New Zealand. It was well attended and appears to have been something of a metropolitan sensation. From responses recorded, it seems likely that the show significantly influenced people’s perceptions of New Zealand, and of the Maori, at that time.

Angas was the English-born son of the Chairman of the South Australian Company, This was a body which worked to colonise South Australia in much the same way as the New Zealand Company that was then operating in New Zealand. The New Zealand Company attempted a process of ‘systematic colonisation’ that had been formulated by Edward Gibbon Wakefield. This was intended to create a stratified community in the antipodes that emulated English society. People from a wide breadth of social classes — excepting the very wealthy and the very poor — were to be represented. It was theorised that this would bring all the roles deemed necessary for the development of a healthy and balanced community into the colony. The New Zealand Company negotiated the sale of land with Maori and then on-sold this land to the colonists and to speculators in order to fund the operations of the Company, and to return profit to the investors in Britain.

In mid-1844 Angas came to New Zealand where, over the remainder of the year, he visited the region near Wellington and he traveled through the North of the North Island venturing through the Waikato area as far south as Taupo. Throughout the journey he made a series of drawings and watercolours that later formed the basis of an exhibition in Australia and in London. Many were later printed as lithographs and were progressively

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1 The exhibition was held in the large room at the Egyptian Hall, 6 April-23 June 1846. ref. advertisements in The Times, 4 Apr 1846, p. 1; 23 Jun 1846, p. 1.
published in his book *The New Zealanders Illustrated*.² Angas's stated aim in his writing and illustrating was 'to describe faithfully impressions of savage life and scenes in countries only now emerging from a primitive state of barbarism.'³ The exhibition was reviewed widely.

Of the items relating to New Zealand that are listed in the catalogue to the exhibition, almost all relate to Maori.⁴ While most of the subject matter was portraiture where Angas, thirty-five of the approximately one hundred and forty paintings specifically illustrate Maori pa, monuments, houses, stores, and tombs.⁵ In addition, many of the surviving portraits, or those that were subsequently reproduced as lithographs, also include images of pa or of individual buildings in background illustration. Maori artifacts, birds, and a young Maori man named Hemi Pomara, who was identified variously as the orphaned son or grandson of a Chatham Islands chief, whom Angas had taken to Australia in 1844, were also on exhibition.⁶ He was specifically mentioned in the advertising.

**Angas’s exhibition reviewed in The Times**

The reviewers in the press found the exhibition a revelation. The reviewer in *The Times* explicitly noted that 'hitherto but few persons have had any definite ideas' about New Zealand and the New Zealanders.⁷ Even though there had been numerous illustrations and descriptions of the material culture of Maori in European publications since the return of Cook, this does not appear to have been appreciated by a large number of people.

The popular perception of the New Zealander appears to have formed out of memorable, sensationalized accounts of war and anthropophagy. Many English house museums at this time appear to have exhibited items from the Pacific including the 'the inevitable curios from Cook's voyages'.⁸ The so-called 'Wairau massacre' was widely reported in 1844, as was the conflict between British troops and Nga Puhi in the North of New Zealand the following year. The names of the Maori leaders Hone Heke, Te

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⁴ The catalogue to the exhibition comprises a title inventory of the exhibits with translation of Maori and Australian words, and commentary for some individual exhibits. A Catalogue of paintings by George French Angas, illustrative of the natives and scenery of New Zealand and South Australia: also sketches in Brazil, Cape Verde Islands, New South Wales, &c. &c., London: W. Nichol, 1846. I am grateful to Sylvia Carr, Pictures Branch, National Library of Australia for making a copy of this available.
⁷ 'New Zealand, Australia, &c.', *The Times*, 6 April 1846, p. 3.
Rauparaha, and Rangihetia, appear to have been well known through demonizing accounts in the British press.9

The reviewer in The Times praised Angas’s achievement, however perhaps the greatest contribution to the exhibition’s success was the striking presence of Hemi Pomara. Displaying people who looked unfamiliar to a typical English person was common in London in the first half of the nineteenth century.10 Sanid ‘Bushmen’ from Southern Africa, and people from North America had been exhibited at the Egyptian Hall shortly before Pomara and were the subject of mixed commentary.11

It appears that these people were looked upon as novelties rather than in ethnographical terms.12 However the accounts in the press suggest that this was not the case with Pomara. He appears to have made a strong and favourable impression of those who met him. Newspaper writers made repeated reference to his advanced intellect13 and significantly reported that he had attended a meeting of the Royal Society with Angas.14

As well as noting with a hint of fascination that his father had been slain in battle and ‘devoured by the warriors of a hostile tribe’, The Times reported that he was ‘exceedingly intelligent’ and that he exhibited ‘strong proofs of intellectual capacity.’15

In this review, the repeated adjective used to describe the work is ‘curious’. There are listed ‘buildings, temples, tombs, and curious buildings... curious specimens of warlike weapons, some specimens of rude yet not inelegant manufactures of the countries explored...’ The reviewer also referred to the catalogue to the exhibition as a ‘curious document’.

9 ‘His late acts of cutting down the British flag-staff, and the destruction of the settlement of Kororika, with the determined manner in which he has held out so long against the British troops, have caused the name of Heki to be known throughout the globe.’ Ref. Text accompanying item 44, A Catalogue of paintings by George French Angas, illustrative of the natives and scenery of New Zealand and South Australia: also sketches in Brazil, Cape Verde Islands, New South Wales, &c. &c., London: W. Nichol, 1846, p. 6. The ‘refractory chief also receives singular mention in review in the Illustrated London News, ref. ‘The New Zealand and South Australian Exhibition’, The Illustrated London News, 18 April 1846, p. 253.
10 See Chapter 20 The Noble Savage Reconsidered, in The Shows of London.
12 Dr John Conolly, who was a leading expert on the treatment of the insane, gave a lecture to the Ethnographic Society where he observed that these people were looked upon ‘as objects of curiosity or of unfruitful wonder, rather than as manifestations of human development in various parts of man’s unwritten history or progress’ and that they depart, ‘having gained small notice from the ethnologist, and excited no interest even among the most serious or the most philanthropic portion of our countrymen.’ John Conolly, The Ethnological Exhibitions of London: Read at a meeting of the Ethnological Society, London: John Churchill, 1855. Quoted by Altick, p. 490.
15 ‘New Zealand, Australia, &c.’, The Times, 6 April 1846, p. 3.
Nicholas Thomas has written of fascination for the curious in the previous century. He wrote,

‘In the eighteenth century, … it is notable that travel writing is pervaded by the idea of curiosity, that the nature of curiosity is not fixed but morally slippery, that the legitimacy of curious inquiry is uncertain, and that this area of semantic conflict is directly associated with responses to ethnographic specimens, since ‘curiosities’ were frequently characterised as being ‘curious’ and as arousing the curiosity of people to whom they were exotic.’

The exhibition was also similarly reviewed in The Spectator where the reviewer pronounced it the most interesting exhibition of the season. Again the quality and accuracy of Angas’s representation was praised — although one wonders how this could reasonably be adjudged.

The writer wrote,

‘nearly all the principal chiefs of New Zealand — including the renowned John Heki [Hone Heki] and the infamous Rauperaha (sic.) and Ranghiaeta (sic.), with other celebrated characters — are portrayed with minute fidelity; and the picturesque costumes and scenery of the islands; as well as the dwellings of the Natives, are depicted with vivid force and exactness…’

And he later added,

‘Besides these pictures, which fill about three hundred frames, some containing four or more sketches, Mr. Angus has brought home a little museum of curiosities: Native weapons, utensils, implements, dresses, carvings, and models of canoes, specimens of birds, minerals, &c.,…’

The reviewer in the Illustrated London News that week was also positive. As well as writing favourably on Pomara, the beauty of Maori women, the quality of Maori handwriting and the images of the New Zealand landscape, the reviewer also wrote on the Maori buildings. He wrote, ‘The carved houses of the natives are, also, minutely delineated, and impress us with the resemblance to the carving of the ancient Mexicans and inhabitants of

17 ‘New Exhibitions: Mr Angas’s pictures of New Zealand and Australia’, The Spectator, 1846, p. 346.
18 ‘New Exhibitions: Mr Angas’s pictures’, p. 346.
Yucatan.' The suggestion that Maori had a past that extended back into antiquity was also made by Angas in his folio volume. Collectively these reviews in the secular press suggest that it is the opinion of the reviewers that Maori will have a continuing presence in the future as they had in the past.

**Angas's exhibition reviewed in The Builder**

The first notice that appeared in *The Builder* — the revolutionary weekly architectural magazine that had been established in 1842 — described the exhibition in a short item occupying the end of a column.

In full the item read,

"Arts of New Zealand
A very interesting exhibition of drawings by Mr Angas, illustrative of the arts, country, and manners of the New Zealanders, is now open at the Egyptian Hall. We will say a little more about it next week."²⁰

In the next issue it was deemed to be important enough to receive a longer notice that appeared on page two where it to be placed between horizontal bars separating it from adjacent items.

It read,

"Illustrations of New Zealand
Mr. French Angas's exhibition at the Egyptian Hall, of drawings illustrative of the natives of New Zealand and South Australia, to which we referred last week, should be visited, not only by all who are desire to obtain clear ideas of the people and the country, but by all who are willing to reward energy, perseverance, and ability. There are above 200 drawings, the result of a journey of 40,000 miles. We may note, that the exterior woodwork of some of the houses is seen to be elaborately carved."²¹

His advice that the exhibition should be visited by those who want 'clear ideas of the people and the country' suggests that, like the reviewer in *The Times*, he perceives there is a good deal of ignorance about New Zealand and the New Zealander.

The review in *The Builder* neither referred to the display of artifacts nor of Pomara, who may not have been in attendance when the writer visited. It would have been very unusual

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²⁰ 'Arts of New Zealand', *The Builder*, v. 4, 11 April 1846, p. 178.
²¹ 'Illustrations of New Zealand', *The Builder*, v. 4, 18 April 1846, p. 182.
for that journal to comment upon the artifacts as these issues such as these tended not to be explored in its pages. Its focus was what it described as the building arts.

Ignorance about the architecture of the New Zealander is not surprising. While travelers wrote of buildings of Maori the references tended to be disparaging, although there were some exceptions to this. Maori made few incursions into architectural literature and when they did, the references were not positive. In his much read volume entitled *An historical essay on architecture* from 1835, Thomas Hope wrote that the purpose of shelter was to provide comfort, security and space for possessions. It was developed he wrote with respect to climate, materials, the influence of soil and atmosphere. It was an indigenous response to needs, and to the opportunities available to meet those needs. He wrote that the receptacle would ‘however primitive and simple, offer a distinctive form and character, evidently suited to these contingencies, and different from the architecture of other nations not similarly situated.’

Of the Maori he made early mention.

He wrote,

‘The savage, on the shores of New Zealand, possessed of no goods; indifferent to wife and children; with no care beyond that for his own hideous person, and for that person merely requiring, during the hours of repose, shelter against the fury of the blast or the bird of prey, digs in the sand, for his living body, a hole little larger than that which he might require for his grave.’

In light of this, the concluding sentence of the reviewer in *The Builder* is significant. In his comment on the ‘exterior woodwork of some of the houses’ in the final sentence in the item in *The Builder* quoted above, the writer indicates that there is some interest in the work displayed. The exhibition is worthy of attendance, and the houses are worthy of attention. There is none of the scorn shown by Hope eleven years earlier. This is a significant occurrence. It is also noted that such an observation on indigenous habitation was unusual in this journal at this time. While occasional articles on Indian architecture did appear, there was little attention paid to the buildings of Oceania.

However, there appear to be few associations with which the reviewer was able to frame further comment. The observation that the buildings were elaborately carved was tentatively made and was left unexplored. There is no reference to earlier civilizations, nor to the work of early Britons, nor to the writing on the grotesque that was part of the writing of many colonial commentators. It seems that for the reviewer in *The Builder*

24 This latter point has been discussed by Sarah Treadwell with respect to writing on drawings by Angas, see Sarah Treadwell, ‘Tracing the grotesque: Angas and Kaitangata’, *Fabrications*, v. 11 n.2, Sep 2001, pp. 60-72.
the houses of Maori, were beautifully disposed, appeared to be the work of an experienced
craftsman, but beyond that they were somewhat impenetrable.

**The New Zealand Journal**

Another magazine's response to the exhibition is finally worth noting. The London-based
*New Zealand Journal* was effectively the unofficial magazine of the New Zealand Company.
It was a fortnightly publication that served to boost both, the operations of the Company
and, New Zealand as a site for emigration generally. Initially when the exhibition opened,
the journal reported Pomara's Royal audience, and it noted that, 'The drawings are executed
with great taste, and we would recommend all who are interested in our Australian colonies
to go and see them.'

In the next issue, the exhibition was the subject of a more lengthy item. This extended
for several columns and it is by far the longest 'review' that has been identified. Despite the
title of the item, there is remarkably little mention of the works on show. Rather than
describe or comment on the exhibition, the writer instead chose to discuss the resources of
New Zealand and the possibilities for its colonization. The writer used the exhibition title
to attract attention, and then effectively directed discussion away from the show.

The brief mention made to Maori there was written to counter any impression that the
culture of Maori would have an active ongoing future. The writer wrote,

> 'We would fain call attention of our readers to the above collection, containing
> a mass of ethnographical and geological information of the very highest interest.
> So skilfully has the enterprise of Mr Angas been directed to each of these ends,
> that we reflect that the manners, costumes, and habits of the people, so well and
> faithfully depicted, are rapidly passing away, and that every day is witness to their
decline under the influence of a rapidly increasing civilization, it follows that every
successor of Mr. Angas, be his talents and attainments as they may, will have less to
communicate.'

Such a reference to the demise of the New Zealander was not uncommon and had been
made by members of the New Zealand Association, the predecessor to the New Zealand
Company, as early as 1837. It was one to be repeated often through the remaining years of
the nineteenth century.

What is interesting in these comments in the *Journal* is that it suggests that Angas's

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25 *item, New Zealand journal*, v. 6 n. 164, 11 Apr 1846, p. 83.
26 'Mr Angas's New Zealand and Australian Gallery: Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly', *New Zealand journal*,
v. 6 n. 165, 25 Apr 1846, pp. 91-92.
27 'Mr Angas's New Zealand and Australian Gallery: Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly', *New Zealand journal*,
v. 6 n. 165, 25 Apr 1846, p. 91.
exhibition of the people and the culture of New Zealand, in its own small way, appear to have been a threat to the colonial project. The culture and the person that were presented, and that so excited London society, ran counter to the widely-held version of the primitive people who would be improved by colonisation. Demonised warring chiefs were shown to be men of noble stature with fine-handwriting. Pomara was found to be intelligent and charming. Material artefacts were seen to be the result of highly skilled production.

In May the New Zealand Company published a belittling account of Maori building taken from Edward Jerningham Wakefield's *Adventure in New Zealand* (1845). Here the writer described the sleeping houses to be 'most repulsive to a European'. From the timing of this item, one can argue that this item was published to curb the enthusiastic response to the images of the buildings of Maori presented by Angas. The published text appears to be an attempt to invalidate the impact of the exhibition and to undermine the redefined perception of Maori generally.

In the mid-1840s the New Zealand Company was in some financial and political difficulties. In addition to the press reports of Maori resistance and with increasing financial loss, Angas's images and exhibits redefined notions of Maori civilisation as sophisticated and operating with its own well-developed traditions. There was much excitement and enthusiasm for the exhibition in the Egyptian Hall in 1846, and for the young man, Hemi Pomara. Such was the impact of the display, it appears that actions were taken to counter its effect. To an extent, one can argue, Angas's images, and the other exhibits, had a somewhat destabilising effect on the greater project of colonisation.

**Abstract**

'We may note, that the exterior woodwork of some of the houses is seen to be elaborately carved.' Through the late 1830s and 1840s two exhibitions by Augustus Earle (1838) and George French Angas (1846) gave many Londoners their first exposure of the culture of the New Zealander. This paper discusses the reception of these shows in the British press against a background of the widespread propaganda for colonisation, political debate and the sensationalised accounts of altercation between European and Maori. The paper argues that the images, examples of material culture, and Pomara - the Maori youth exhibited by Angas - challenged the prevalent attitudes then extant in Britain. The paper analyses how the conflicting and at times incompatible narratives, that appeared in the media, served to frame colonial discourse. The paper concludes identifying actions of the colonisers in the
New Zealand Company to undermine the positive impact of the exhibitions.

Résumé

« Nous notons que les poutres extérieures des maisons sont sculptées de manière élaborées ». Les deux expositions de Augustin Earle (1838) et de George French Angas (1846) ont fourni aux Londoniens leurs premières visions de la culture maorie. Cette contribution porte sur l'accueil fait à ces expositions par la presse anglaise alors que cette même presse participait à la propagande en faveur de la colonisation et qu'elle publiait en les dramatisant les différents qui se multipliaient alors entre colons et maoris. Il semblerait que les images, les objets et la présence du jeune maori Pomara à l'exposition Angas aient été en contradiction avec l'image dominante de l'époque. Aussi, la compagnie de la Nouvelle-Zélande développa des actions spécifiques afin de contrecarrer l'évolution négative de l'opinion publique à son égard.
Buariki is the northernmost village of North Tarawa. In the oral histories it is also the most ancient. Standing on the ocean side with a young pastor, Tateti Tauma, and his daughter, I looked across the Straight of Naboika towards the neighbouring atoll of Abaiang. A small island was visible perhaps a couple of kilometres out to sea. ‘That is the place of The Creation’, said the pastor. ‘Where the top of Te Bo ma te Maki was raised by Riiki, the great eel’. Te Bo ma te Maki is the Darkness and the Cleaving Together, the world before the world, a shape like the turtle and its shell which had to be separated to release the earth and heavens and the spirits trapped between them that, would in time, become the human ancestors of the I Tunganu people. ‘There are lots of stories of the Creation’, I said. ‘They are a little different on each of the islands.’ ‘Yes’ said the pastor. ‘But it is only here you can see the places’.

Later I spoke to Biribe Bwaate. Biribi is an influential man in Buariki. Educated and articulate, he has represented Kiribati in international forums. In Buariki he is at a stage of transition. Too young to be an unimane (an old man), too old to be a rorobuaka (warrior). Old enough though to tell stories. He pointed at ancient stone footings. Roots of old trees grew over the stones; some forced their way between them, opening cracks. ‘This is the floor, the kitchen of King Kewe’, Biribi said. ‘There is nothing else left’. ‘Kewe’, I said — ‘Didn’t he float out to sea on a tree where there was a woman, I think, Nei Aromaeao, who took him to Mone under the sea’. Biribi looked surprised. ‘You know this story?’ he asked. ‘Only a little’ I said. ‘It was in a book of stories by Ten Tiroba who came from this village’.

‘Come’ said Biribi, ‘there is more’. ‘I will show you the place where the King floated out and where he returned’. The place was on the lagoon side. Nothing I could see distinguished it from any other place. Biribi and I traced Kewe’s steps. He pointed out the place where the tree had returned, and where the villagers had chopped it up, killing Nei Aromaeao. ‘Until

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1 Ten Tiroba, p. 12.
a few years ago' Biribi said, 'you could dig here and you would find blood'.

Kewe was a real chief, a true man (aomata). Nei Aramaeao was a spirit (te anti), but also a daughter of Bakoa, the shark, whom we shall meet again.

In this paper I wish to further an argument that in the Kiribati cosmology, the experience of place and object exhibits a multivalent thinking. Cognition by non iconic metaphors and various forms of narrative, (oral, visual and kinaesthetic), provide individual and particularly group identity, which is continuous into the present by a highly adaptive and accommodative mechanism of synthesis that I call multilectic. Further, that this epistemology is not so adaptive in literate societies.

**Observed Space as Epistemology — Non iconic signifiers in Kiribati**

Ethnohistoriography, in the main, studies words of the present and of the past as uttered, written or passed down orally. It attempts to bridge the gap between history (the past) and anthropologies of the present. Observation of the present and speculations of how the past might have been experienced is tempered or overshadowed by the interpretation of words.

The philology of the 18th and 19th century developed into the linguistics of the 20th, and that linguistics has been developed on structuralist and semiotic lines that sees the words themselves rather than the experience of them in the context of place and occasion, as being the key to the cognitive processes of the human mind. Used in this way language and its function fits itself easily into the scientific European mind and describes that mind much better than that of those it attempts to study. This process is facilitated by literacy with its fixity of referents which define things easily, places with more difficulty and spaces with great difficulty. Only the greatest writers seem to be able to convey the significances of the perceptions of space and its articulations.

In attempting to understand the importance and ramifications of articulations of space in individual and group consciousness then, there must be considerations beyond the semiotic. In 'Representing Space in Oceania' edited by Giovanni Bennardo, (which exclusively utilises linguistic analysis), Bennardo in a footnote to his introduction notes that the book is not about space as metaphor which is its second domain, but about its primary domain of the knowledge of domain of space.

This paper is about the metaphoric domain, particularly the perceived distinction between the European container view of space and the point field concepts of Oceanic

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2 Bennardo 2002.
3 Lehman and Herdrich in Bennardo 2002, p. 179.
peoples. The container view defines a point's relative location and is thus confined, and the point field view defines fields relative to points whose fields extend infinitely. Boundaries become the intersections of such fields. This is exemplified by the European who draws a map starting with boundaries e.g. the outline of an island's coastline, then drawing topographical features and finally with the points of significance — towns, villages and so forth. Pacific islanders more often commence with their own village and move outwards, sometimes omitting the coastline altogether.

In European thought then, the individual is cognitively separated from the extended environment that the traditional Pacific Islander is cosmologically connected.

In my study of European - Kiribati interactions, in order to investigate the encounter situation I have considered the cosmological implications of the point field view within the domain of the metaphoric articulations of spatial relationships.

Empiricism and the scientific are facilitated by writing and the fixity of referents. European languages in this literate tradition remove the mind from experience by abstracting it in a mode of separation that emphasises the individual, and the separation of the individual both from other individuals and from the exterior world.

The identity of self and the relationship of that identity with those of others, kin and strangers require an extension of epistemology beyond that of the abstraction of the observed physical world to include a primacy of metaphoric cognition of sensed phenomena.

**Iconic and Non Iconic Metaphors**

In European societies things stand for other things or for ideas. That is they become, by definition, symbolic and that symbol if not written is usually iconic. The shape of the crucifix in Christian symbolism, is an iconic metaphor for the religion itself and its manifestation carried in wood or stone is transformed from the actual experience of tree or landform into an instrument of power.

It has long been considered in the literate mind (including that of non-European societies such as in China & India) that the non-literary implies either not knowing or an inferior way of knowing. With literacy, cognitive use of symbols declined.

In the investigation of non-literate knowing and the interconnection of the cognitive mechanisms of differing epistemologies it becomes useful to investigate fundamentals.

The epistemology of experience is replaced by a form of abstraction in the mind that is placed in a compartment sealed off from the phenomenal world.

To see this other knowing, that of the non-literate and its relationship to identity, culture and development over time; non-iconic representations need to be analysed.

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4 The speed of road travel in the 20th century necessitated use of visual symbols and this reintroduction has expanded exponentially with the ubiquitous use of computers.
In West Central Oceania before the intrusion of Europeans to Tungaru societies that inhabit the coral atolls of what is now the Republic of Kiribati, the people utilised a non iconic epistemology, not of position defining space but of space defining position. That position then is symbolic, metaphorically associated with memory and evoked by story (karaki).

**Stories & Space**

In Kiribati, identity of self, utu, kainga and the wider atoll community, is known by the karaki, the stories of the past, communicated from one generation to the next, from grandparent to grandchild or by unimane and waine (old men and women) to the maneaba community.

The intrusion of Europeans fulfilled prophecy of the return of the pale ancestors from the West, the people of Matang, thought by Grimble to be in Indonesia. The white strangers were immediately called I Matang and they still are.

The poetic language of the King James Bible was readily acceptable by I Kiribati. In telling their stories, orators competed to produce the most lyrical language.

The stories are reinforced or even principally expressed by abstract metaphors of spatial relationships.

The karaki are a special form of knowledge that can be associated with power and privilege. Many are by secretly confined to particular utu or boti (clans). Particularly notable are the karaki of the boti Karongoa that became dominant in the entire group (except the most northern Butaritari and Makin) due to the dominance established by the Beruan warriors Kaitu and Uakeia around 450 years ago.

The secrecy surrounding many of the stories partly explains their persistence.

The I Kiribati of today are, via mission and government schools, largely literate themselves, but the oral and performative still form a major contribution to (Te Katei ni Kiribati) 'The Style of Kiribati'.

The austere atoll environment has produced an epistemology of stories, symbols and ritual far too complex for outsiders to penetrate to any depth. Further, I Kiribati knowledge is often retained secretly by specialist groups such as navigators, builders and sorcerers, or particular clans or families.

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5 Perhaps Mattang (Sarawak), Majeing (Kalimantan), Madan (Sumatra) or Mutan (Celebes). (Grimble 1989, p31).
6 They were generally welcomed and respected but not worshipped. If they behaved badly they were treated according to custom. Stranded ships were looted. Others not sharing goods were attacked, possessions were confiscated. Rapists, intruders on tapu spaces, and other trouble makers were killed.
7 Particularly in the form known as the kuna but any excellence of performance results in accolade.
8 Muana Haia in Talu (et al.) 1979 p. 11.
Karaki, spells, ceremonies, interpretation of symbols may be held by particular descent groups, passed on perhaps only by grandparents to grandchildren, or within Umu, or boti. Previous I Matang ethnographers — Eastman, Grimble, Maude, Stevenson, Sabatier and Pateman feared loss of knowledge because of changed circumstances and segmentation. Some I Kiribati, particularly the Western educated in South Tarawa, share this view. Many of the outer islands do not. On Butaritari I was told how a child would be woken at two in the morning and told stories until four. This particularly happened within the families of sorcerers. During the day the child could be seen wandering along mouthing the lessons of the night. As a child grows up, knowledge is imparted progressively. Some might not be given until the teacher was dying. I asked would this not mean that knowledge was lost if it was not passed on due to the death of the teacher. There is no fear of that’ I was told ‘In that case the anti will come in the night and give the missing knowledge in dreams or in the Whistling Speech’.

Time and Space

The metaphors that allow leaps of understanding, connecting experience with idea, being non iconic, loosen not only the phenomenal from fixity in space, but time which forms a fluid relationship to the present. Europeans for instance know time past as before, and time future as after, in a progression from past to future in segments divisible by the apparent movement of sun, moon and clock hands or in the present by the rhythm of increasing numbers on a mobile phone or computer screen. This progression is often associated with the teleological concept of ‘progress’.1

Pacific Islanders refer to the past as the time ahead, and stress more the cyclical change of seasons, stars, day and night, life and other natural cycles. Sequence is important but not time, which is replaced in importance by place ie. space not position in a past known through to the present. An extant place existed before, the two connected by karaki.

In Tungaru society the past is known and in the present. The genealogy of antecedents starts with te anti of the totally spirit world of the deep time creation. They are followed by

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10 The same has been said for many traditional societies. It would seem however that if not physically devastated by guns, germs and steel (Diamond, 1997) or removed from the land itself complexity of society ensures continuation. Bali is a good example.

11 Bokati of Butaritari.

12 This teleology existing as both a religious and secular concept has been challenged by Nietzsche in the 19th century and post modernists in the 20th century.

13 Epli Hau’ofa refers to the existence of lineality particularly in genealogy (Borofsky P459) but considers that shallow in Western Oceania. This would seem not to apply to Kiribati where some genealogies (nki) extend in some case 400-500 years ie back into the kanongoa tradition in Samoa, prior to the Urakin Te Kaintikuabaa (or Breaking of the Resting Place (of the frigate bird)) (Urium 1995, p. 134) and the great return along the Star Paths to the atolls. Hua’ofa say’s that the concept of the past being ahead is common throughout Oceania (ibid. p. 459-461).

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Observed Space as Epistemology — Non-iconic Signifiers in Kiribati
the anti ma aomata, who are part spirit and part human. Finally, the aomata who are true humans named in the genealogies and in the karaki of believed historical events. The anti period features largely in cosmogonies particularly concerning those present at the time of the Creation, some of which are also claimed to be actual ancestors. All can exist in the present with varying degrees of power over the lives of humans and the phenomenal world of plant, animal, land, sea, stars and natural forces. Anti, though, of actual ancestors form the distant past eg. the founders of a village, to spirits of the recently dead, are a constant presence.

Sometimes this may be known via a stone pillar or a particular arrangement of leaves or a tattoo. At other times, and usually simultaneously, they are known by spaces which are very difficult to remove or damage, which helps to explain the resilience of I Kiribati culture.

Power Encounters Space

Epeli Hua'ofa reminds us of the story of Machiavelli to his Prince --- Machiavelli said that 'when you kill someone, kill everyone else connected with him so that no one survives to revive the memory and plot to do you in'15. There is a corollary implicit in this. If the central source of ideas is destroyed, it will return unless every multivalent connected fragment is destroyed. This of course never happens. In a multilectic cosmology destruction is difficult, resurrection and adaptation always likely. This is the situation in many subaltern cultures, which have a habit of reasserting themselves after suppositions of oblivion by those ostensibly in control. Sometimes this is only manifest when the control of power wanes as in Russia when the persecuted icons of orthodoxy emerged immediately after the

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14 The anti present at creation are mainly extant in karaki of Butaritari, Makin and Banaba (Urium, p. 22). Described as small and dark with tightly curled hair they have been considered to refer to a very early population (Grimble 1984, p. 32) originating in Melanesia, particularly in the Bismark Archipelago and Northern Vanuatu. Subsequent dominance by people of SE Asian origin resulted in anti stories of atua, light in skin and tall of stature. In this tradition the light skinned Auriaria and Nei Tiubine and others may refer to actual leaders of the great voyages from near to remote Oceania.

15 Borofsky (ed) 2000 p. 464. Hua Ofa was probably referring to discourses I 2-3 and III 3-4 (Machiavelli 1970, p. 392-395) which refer to the maintenance of power, not ideas, but the two are connected as missionaries well knew as they turned a blind eye to the power seeking and law making of their 'teachers'. A closer reference would be Machiavelli II 4-5 (ibid. p. 288). 'Change of religion and language, ----, obliterates the records of the past' where Machiavelli refers to Christianity's methods of dealing with Paganism by abolishing Pagan institutions and rights and destroying records of the theology of the ancients. This the 19th century missionary emulated. Apart from the idol search and destroy operation, nakedness was termed bekman (pagan) and clothing enforced, eriki (marriage of man to wife's sisters) and tinaba (sexual and other obligations to spouses aunts or uncles) were banned (also by the government) as was dancing (believed pagan, but argued against on grounds, largely spurious, of immorality). Maude notes 'by 1892 when the British Protectorate was declared, there was not a great deal left to destroy' (Maude 1993 p. 50).
collapse of the Soviet Union that had drummed an anti-religious sectarianism into three generations of Russians.

The missionary and colonial authorities in Kiribati were forced to change as they influenced the I Kiribati to change. The Europeans in attempting to eliminate the I Kiribati power structure were themselves changed. There was no new dominance, instead a new equilibrium that itself was not fixed but in a state of continuing flux.

The flexibility of cultures to rapidly encompass new influences has some curious outcomes. As I have pointed out new religions can be absorbed quickly, and for often pragmatic reasons. For a century it was the LMS and the MSC that competed for souls. Lately the mainstream churches compete with Charismatics, Jehovah's Witnesses, Baha'i and others. Some villages have been known to change affiliation en masse every few weeks as transient missionaries offer gifts for conversion.

Perspective of the Non Iconic Metaphor

Even today in I Kiribati society there are few paintings drawings or sculptures that are the precursors of the pictureglyph and writing.

The early European intruders in the 19th century found none.

The images they describe in their logbooks and diaries are of tattoos, mat patterns, buildings and significant objects such as stones that did not form recognisable shapes.

This was particularly frustrating for missionaries intent on destroying 'idols'. With no Tiki's or Moai they chopped down trees, smashed rocks and buried bones, hoping to eliminate the knowledge they seemed to represent ie. if representations were iconic they might destroy gods and beliefs themselves.

Roman Catholicism was accepted both for its familiar style of sacramentalism and the wide range of services offered to health and education. The American Board of Foreign Missions offered mainly austerity and largely failed to introduce Protestantism in the northern islands. The London Missionary Society in the south was successful due to a believed historical connection with its Samoan pastors who utilised approaches of orality and custom familiar to the I Kiribati. They also offered resistance to labour recruiting (blackbirding) That was much more prevalent in the south than the north.

This is not to suppose the capacity to adapt is always beneficial. Rapid adaption to foreign foods in the austere atoll environment, especially fatty canned meats and sugar has led to wide spread heart disease and diabetes. The genetic disposition to rapidly increase adipose tissue is largely genetic. Dening points out that to survive the voyage from Near to Far Oceania required the ability to ingest and metabolise 2% of body weight per day. (Dening, 2004, p. 7). This is a very rapid absorption. Those who could not do so died. Pacific Islanders from Kiribati to those in south and east thus possessed the genes to do this. Further, in Kiribati the frequency of droughts and subsequent famine meant that those who survived could increase fat rapidly and utilise meagre diets of fish, pandanus and coconut. Availability of low quality fatty foods such as the ubiquitous 'Ma Ling' luncheon meat and 'Pacific Quality' mutton flaps consumed with increasing lethargic lifestyles, especially on South Tarawa has led to rapid body weight increase.

\[\text{Observed Space as Epistemology — Non-iconic Signifiers in Kiribati}\]
They wanted to find what they knew — symbols of objectification that fixed idea into space-time co-ordinates.

What they could not understand or destroy was the spaces between the points of objectification or the places where objects were. Spaces and non iconic signifiers though have other advantages. They can absorb. It is this absorption that enables the culture to be dynamic and to come into a fluid equilibria with changing conditions, ideas and power relationships as they had previous to the intrusion of I Matang.

**Land**

The word for land and people is the same, ‘aba’. The land is covered with indicators of symbolic spaces.

Every village has its bangota, a sacred space for the performance of ritual and magic led by its ibonga or sorcerer. Some bangota may not be entered except by the ibonga, or by her/his invitation. I was told if I entered one on North Tarawa I would die. Bangota usually enclose boua (significant monoliths) that connect to anti, usually of village founders. Boua are not confined to bangota but may be found anywhere. Missionaries exhausted themselves smashing rocks. They would have had to deconstruct whole atolls and then the ocean itself where sacred spaces are recognised by certain meetings of waves and flotsam or swarms of sharks. Mind and environment (natural or constructed) cannot be separated for an I Kiribati.

The space under and surrounding the vast maneabas (meeting houses) are known as marae. The marae is a sacred space, originally places of worship and ritualistic sacrifice. Today the marae still demands the same respect as the manaeba itself, which is an extension of the marae. The missionary idea of the church as 'house of God' demanding behavioural protocols and ceremonies symbolic of the drinking of blood and eating of human flesh within such structures would not have been a difficult concept. These were the sorts of things pale ancestors would be expected to do.

The borders of land owned by utu (extended families) or kainga are closely guarded with precise borders re-inforced by spells. Kainga and other sacred spaces are positioned

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18 Maneabas were probably built on spaces with prior metaphoric significance.
19 Coconut trees near this bangota lean away from it.
20 A word probably originating with the Samoan invasion, as the word is common in Polynesia.
21 Many church edicts had similarities to island rituals. These also include the covering of the head (the head is tapu in Kiribati) and separation into defined spaces of men, women and priests. Catholic rituals had more appeal than Protestant austerity. The Protestant anti smoking attitudes did not help either.
22 The Kainga is a grouping of families with a common ancestor living on a defined land space. Both the extended family (utu) and the land they live on is known as kainga. The physical occupation of the kainga was disrupted in the colonial era by the regulation of dwelling in ordered lines along a central road. Since independence a form similar to the kainga has been re-established on the outer islands but as smaller units of utu.
between markers that are, as Bokati of Butaritari informed me 'placed by our grandfathers, put deep into the ground with magic. To move the stones is to die. There are still people who know how to place the stones'.

Many significant places are unmarked but are known, avoided or respected as having supernatural significance, inhabited by anti. Even on crowded South Tarawa there are places no-one would build.

In that most I Matang construction, the Otintai Hotel on South Tarawa, before consuming a shout of drinks, some of the beer is tipped out with the exclamation 'Te Tekorai' — 'To the Spirits of the Land'!

**Sacred Sand and Deep Time**

When I underwent the rituals of introduction to the anti of Tebon tibike, Nei Mai, the sorcerer, asked me to put sand on my face both at the lagoon and ocean. Before dancing, the girls place sand on their cheeks. The sacred use of sand goes back a long way. In stanza 14 of the ancient kuna, 'The Song of Moiuia'

> 'Drive off the Bird' that is the heavens command  
> My rigging set, canoe prepared for sea  
> So I shall deck my cheeks with magic sand  
> And make a spell to trick the enemy.'

The invasion of the Tropic Bird People was tentatively dated by Maude to the 13th century and is the earliest known oral narrative finally written down by Arebaio of Beru. The writer is of the autochthonous people of the old gods Taburimai and Arawai who are mentioned in stanza 1 and probably connected with Bakoa the shark people that were on Abamama at the time of the invasion.

The sand is known as Te Bakoa. Although the connection between Moiuia's story and Bakoa is tenuous, the magical significance of the sand would seem to be with the dark deep time gods that came with the earliest settlers from North Vanuatu or the Bismark Archipelago perhaps 3000 years ago.

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24 Translation by Reid Cowell of text narrated by Ten Arebaio of Beru. See Maude 1994 p. 252.  
25 From Samoa. The descendants of the Tropic Bird people are the boti Keaki whose place in the Tebon tibike maneaba is by the boua of Nei Tituabine.  
27 Reid Cowell in Maude HC & HE 1994 p. 252.  
28 The chief atua and ancestral anti of Bakoa was Taburaki the Thunderer. Grimble in Maude (Ed) 1989 p. 289.  
29 Denoon, p. 56, 64. Bellwood p. 106, 126, 130, mainly linguistic evidence.
Dress and Decorations

Weddings, funerals, first birthdays, welcomings, departures, sports days and all manner of occasions see long preparation periods where new mats are woven, head dresses are prepared, costumes sewn together, bodies oiled. Pandanus leaves are separated into groups of bundles of similar tone and colour, stripped into narrow bands and formed into decorations. Some are simple bows and knots, some extremely complex.

When attending a feast held for the departure of two senior teachers at Tebwirol Catholic Secondary College on Abaiang I noticed a strange object incorporating diamond shapes and hanging strips being hauled up into the central roof space of the maneaba. They only make that one on very special occasions I was told. It hasn’t been seen for several years. I had no further explanation of this strange object, which undoubtedly was highly significant and occupied a sacred space. Its origin was unlikely to have any connection with the hymns that we were singing or the prayers offered before the feasting began. The limitations of my research became obvious. The more I looked the more there was to see, more connections were obvious but the complexity and depth of the multilectic layering of symbolic significance expanded exponentially.

The String Figures

String figures are complex constructs in space formed by a series of finger and hand manipulations. The final figure is associated with a single phenomenon, such as star groups. Some are iconic. Te Bata (The House) is reminiscent of elements of the Sky Dome discussed later in this paper.

Like European grouping of star clusters and arrangements into imagined shapes, such as Libra, Virgo etc. the shapes of story figures may also have rudimentary resemblance to the actual relative positions of the stars. Within the shapes constructed stories can be imagined. The spatial relationships connect to the Skydome, (The Roof of Voyaging) to the Star Paths, associated with the great voyages of the past.

Other shapes produce metaphoric relationships to key points of other stories (karaki). Some are produced in sequences and have defined or creative relationship to extended stories. The karaki and the symbolic forms reinforce each other.

The final figures may also be kinaesthetic. One figure, where a circular shape is reduced to closure by pulling the hands apart, is used by children in observing the sunset. Its meaning may now be lost but it appears to be connected to the story of Bue, a mythical figure who by trickery forced the sun to rise and set. This story is probably of very ancient form and has similarity to the stories of Maui in Polynesia indicating common origins.

30 The object was similar to some I have seen in photographs of secret ceremonies recorded in some rare unpublished photographs taken Central Australia in the early 20th century.
There is way no we can be sure though if the story was bought from Samoa or has a more distant authochonous origin.

The art of constructing string figures is attributed to the dark atua, Naubwebwe.31

Prior to the introduction of Christianity the value of the string figures and the importance of the knowledge of their construction was reinforced by a series of complex forms32 that had to be remade exactly in order to satisfy Naubwebwe.33

Today string figures are an occupation mainly of children and older women, often constructed with snatches of nursery rhyme like chants. Their past had more serious applications. String figures are called wau and played (play?) a part in magic, particularly te wau or wawi, the killing magic.34

I asked a man on Butaritari if the wawi was still known. ‘No’, he replied, ‘It was from the Old Time, and has been forgotten. Furthermore, I would not teach it to my children, or they might misuse it’

Tattoos and Mats

Associated with Nabwebwe was the bird beaked black hag Nei Karamakauna who used her beak or long finger nails to scrape away the tattoos of the dead. If the deceased had no tattoos she removed the eyes and the spirit would wander blindly for eternity, unable to find the ancestral home. Although this was an excellent reason to be tattooed35 efforts by missionaries have been largely successful in its decline. Symbolic of power and identity it is undergoing a mini revival. In Kiribati its appearance in the traditional form is rare. Drawings of tattoos for the 19th century indicate each island had a distinctive pattern of tattoos, which may well follow the design of mats, whose markings are very similar. The mat and tattoo designs significance may be similar to the Maori designs36 in Aotearoa where the zig zag lines and circles represent ocean and land and like other forms of abstraction act symbolically with orality.37
European sailors, themselves mainly non literate, adopted what were seen as signs of savagery, replacing the non iconic with the iconic representations of the sea and the women they desired. Those that became beachcombers often had themselves tattooed in the local manner. After a century of trying, the missionaries had almost eliminated the tattoo by the 1950's, but as I Kiribati seamen joined the ranks of the world’s merchant navies they bought back the sailors tattoo of anchor, ship and women. Cultural encounters have unforeseen outcomes.

In the village of Tebontebike on Abaiang I observed a circular black face tattoo on Nei Mai, the ibonga, which consisted of a filled circle similar to the facial incisions common in the Solomon Islands that are there related to the sun and/or by extension, the entire cosmos.18

Tebontebike is the name of the maneaba bought from Beru by the warriors Kaitu and Uakia four hundred years ago. It was introduced there by the now dominant clan, Karongoa te Uea, two hundred and fifty years before from Samoa where they were the sorcerers and sacrificing priests to the High Chiefs of Sav’i, and the war god Rongo. They bought with them the most powerful of their atua. Auriaria — ‘Au - continually - rising — over - the - Horizon’40. Sorcery is an hereditary business. Nei Mai would almost certainly be a direct descendant of the warrior priests of Karongoa te Uea.

When missionaries attempted to supplant traditional island power structures they focused on male power and knowledge. They ignored the mat weaving and string figures as harmless leisure pursuits of women and children. Margaret Jolly has pointed out41 that by this omission much traditional knowledge was passed on by women in the metaphors of their meaning and the stories associated with them.

In the now Parliament house (te Maneaba ni Maungatabu) on South Tarawa traditional mat designs of each of the atolls are displayed high on all the walls encircling the President and politicians.

The Maneaba and the Bata

The most significant, central and persistent use of the metaphor in articulation of space in the I Kiribati world is the Maneaba42, the vast building central to every I Kiribati village.

38 Conversations between the author and various tattooists on Malaita, Solomon Islands.
39 Literally ‘to make (it) of Rongo to the Chiefs’.
40 Grimble Manuscript, Maude Collection E/36. Karongoan translation from Tekawakwa of Tabiteueua, 1919. Special collection, Barr Smith Library, University of Adelaide. Translation is a difficult process. An I Kiribati translation of Auriaria is ‘Rising, Coming from Afar — The Essence of Light’ (Talu et al. 1979 p. 3).
42 Maneaba comes from manea, to accommodate and aba, which means both the people and the land (Tabokai, Wakibae in Van Treese (Ed) p. 23.)
Known to early European intruders as Meeting Houses or Speak Houses they are masterpieces of architectural design, construction technique and complex metaphoric significance.

The detailed analysis of the purposes, functions and significance of the maneaba would be encyclopaedic and impossible for any one person, let alone an I Matang to comprehend. In addition there are several types of maneaba and the interpretation of its metaphors differ from island to island and from boti (clan) to boti. The significance also change with time. Old knowledge becomes renewed with new circumstances. As the Samoan invaders suppressed the people of Bakoa, so the Christians suppressed the rituals of Auriaria, Nie Tituabine and company. The spaces in the maneaba adapt. Story, tradition and knowledge centres in the maneaba. (The maneaba is a place of ceremony, dance, law making, refuge and recreation.)

The articulations of space within the major forms, the Muangatabu, Tabontebike and Tabiang maneaba were extant into the 20th century but stretch back into deep time. Instructions for the construction of the first maneaba, the Muangatabu were attributed to the ancestral Bue by his father Te Tai; The Sun, referring probably to a very ancient and now forgotten cult of the sun. Well being is still referred to by 'The Sun is in the Maneaba'.

'The Story of Moiua' refers to an invasion which 'shook the ridgepole from the sky' that is, the destruction of the maneaba is the destruction of the knowledge and society of the people.

Every piece and space has multiple significance. To observe the ceiling is to observe the night sky. 'The Roof of Voyaging'. Traditional navigators of the great ocean voyaging bua could, by looking at the roof construction define the positions of hundreds of stars at any day of the year and at any time and by reciting metaphoric stories describe navigational routes across thousands of miles of ocean.

The supporting pillars are boua, vehicles of access to I Kiribati cosmology, cosmogeny and continuity. The central eastern boua is called Te Taai (The Sun). The north eastern

43 See Maude, 1980 p. 7 and Hocking 1989 p. 203. In the traditional maneaba (not some recent concrete and corrugated iron travesties) there are three main forms, Tabontebike, Tabiang and Muangatabu and three subdivisions of each of these. They are distinguished both by the ratios of width: length: height and distinctive boti (clan) protocols (Maude 1980 p. 11).
45 Takeuta of Marakei in Grimble (1989) p. 200 & 222. Bon rokin Tai ma Namakaina te maneaba. (The maneaba is indeed the screened enclosure of the Sun and Moon). Bue may be connected with the Samoan Maui (Grimble, unclassified notes, MMS 003 Series L3 (6), held in Barr Smith Special Collections, University of Adelaide.
46 iata Tai namon te maneaba.
47 Reid Cowell in Maude HC & HE, (1994) p. 253 The ancestral atua of the Tropic Bird people, Keiki, is Nie Tituabine.
corner Tabakea (The Turtle). Tabakea is connected to the old black atua of the small dark people of deep time who feature more in Banaba, Butaritari and Makin who were not affected by the Beruan expansion around 1650 that made dominant the pale atua led by Auriaria and Nei Tituabine. Tabakea though becomes in the Nui myth, a minor god of Auriaria and represented by the Turtle (and in deep time, the crocodile) is symbolic of the emerging from sea to inhabit the land. Opposite the boua Te Tai is the boua Nie Namakaina (The Moon) that supports the roof plate (tatanga) of Bakoa, (The Shark) totemic to the autochthonous people defeated by the exodus of Karongoa from Samoa around 24 generations ago (1400CE.). Nei Tituabine, the beautiful female atua whose eyes flashed like lightning is represented by the south eastern boua. Diagonally opposite Nei Tituabine is the Boua of Ng Koangkoa, The First of All, who was the first spirit in the Bomatemake released by Nareau, The Creator. The other boua are conduits to the ancestor anti of the boti who sit near them.

The boti whose anti was Bakoa were living on these coral atolls when the invasion by the Karongoa clan occurred, about 16 generations ago. The Karongoa-te-Uea became dominant throughout the islands except Butaritari and Makin, but they feared the magic of the people of Bakoa, the dark god of the malevolent sea. The western tatanga of the Tebontebike maneaba which is called Te Bakoa had to be suppressed by the eastern side by the powers of the land where the main boua were Tabakea, Te Tai and Nie Tituabine.

One of the great advantages of abstractions of space is the variety of interpretations possible. Lack of iconography facilitates complexity and adaptation. Nei Tituabine, possessed female nurturing and protective functions that were easily fused with those of the Virgin Mary.

The floor space of the maneaba is divided according to the Skydome above, with each boti having a spatially defined area, which is now only used on ceremonial and other important occasions. The central space is a place of power and is not occupied by any boti but by speakers, performers or government or village elders. Accommodation of change is facilitated by shifting metaphors. The vast pantheon led by Auriaria and Nie Tituabine could easily accommodate Jesus, Mary and a host of angels and saints. Biblical stories add to the ever increasing stories told in the maneaba and are easily understood in that context; the return from Samoa is not dissimilar to the Exodus from Egypt. The journey of the Stations of the Cross in Catholic Churches are reminiscent of the six stopping places of The Sun, three of which are ritualised in the construction of the Muangatabu maneaba. Bue was the son of The Sun by a virgin mother. Miracles however are understood as

49 Hocking, p. 227.
50 More detail on constructional significance of parts of the maneaba in Maude, He 1980.
51 Tautuana Bakoa — keep Bakoa buried (Maude 1980 p. 20) See also Hockings p. 227-230.
52 Old men (uniname) and old women (uanie).
metaphors, not actual occurrences. An old man told of the Virgin Birth in the 20th century said 'That could not be!' but he would have accepted the metaphoric significance of the story.

The bata or sleeping houses are miniature replicas of the maneaba, so going to sleep, or walking or plaiting mats or playing cards are always covered by the Skydome and surrounded by their ancestors.

The first churches in Kiribati were by necessity, small, following the forms of small rural churches in England, United States or France. As Christianity grew, so did the size of churches which approached the volume of the maneabas. Vast cathedrals grew in small villages, especially those of Roman Catholic persuasion. The Catholics well knew the associations of space, power and the sacred. Ultimately the Catholics and other church groups built their own maneabas. Government officials were also influenced. Arthur Grimble, who was either Acting or Substantive Resident Commissioner for much of the 1920's built a huge house on Beru. Church and Empire both challenged maneaba power. Empire collapsed, church and maneaba survived. Many churches now incorporate or sanction the once detested I Kiribati dance, and the history and stories they attempted to stamp out. With independence the new parliament house and its replacement were of the Muangatabu form, which is ‘the peoples maneaba’, not the form Tebontebike form of the dominant boti, Karongoa te Uea, known as ‘the maneaba of chiefs’. Ultimate power still resides in the skydome of the maneaba the endless space above it, the land below it and the ocean surrounding it.

Afterthoughts

The way in which time, space, place is understood by observation and performance is whittled down to fundamentals in the austere atoll environment of the Gilbert Group of Kiribati. Despite the fears of the I Kiribati themselves, Te Katai ni Kiribati persists despite two centuries of encounter with an essentially alien way of knowing and interpreting the world. If the seas are really rising the ancient struggle of the peoples of Tabakea, Auriaria and Nie Tiubine over the watery world of Bakoa will continue. This might be reinforced and strengthened by vehicles of knowledge that connect future to past by highly adaptable mechanisms utilising abstractions of spatiotemporal metaphors in daily life. This indicates that a recognition and deeper understanding of the thought process involved might increase the interpretive ethnographic process in both historical analysis of the encounter situation and in assisting more successful interactions between differing cultures, and to changing conditions, that has happened in the past. This paper is offered as a contribution to these endeavours.

54 Macdonald, 1971 p. 266.
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Abstract

Consideration of the observed has been concerned mainly with the visual in terms of neurophysiology with its attendant psychophysics and psychometrics or as evaluation of the icons triadic relationship to phenomena, author and audience. In the literate societies that control academia, little work has centred on the interpretations of non-iconic representations and their multivalent relationships with epistemology. This paper takes an overview of some of the relationships in a society, traditionally non literate, that makes use of non iconic signifiers of place and space given meaning by performative mythistory. In Kiribati, it is agued, an epistemology of abstract experiential metaphors facilitate evolution of cultural continuity through highly adaptive mechanisms. This has implications for revaluation of the visual and an expansion of the parameters unravelling encounters of differing cosmologies.

Résumé

The Question of Samoan Femininity: Reverend George Brown’s Photographs, 1898-1903

Prue Ahrens

Reverend George Brown (1835-1917) was an Australian Methodist missionary who produced hundreds of photographs of Samoan people during his visits to the islands between 1898 and 1903. Of these, many pictured women either within a family group or as individual portraits. One approach to Brown’s photographs may be to view them as an attempt to construct a stereotype for Pacific femininity. In this paper I will contend that Brown’s concept of Pacific femininity is clouded by an attempt to reconcile exoticism and its associated eroticism, with European feminine ideals, namely Ruskinian femininity and Cameronian beauty. The ambivalence at the base of these pictures, the tension between exoticism and European feminine ideals is, I believe, a reflection of Brown’s position as a Christian agent in the Pacific. As a missionary photographer, Brown sought to incorporate indigenous Otherness within a humanist framework. Thus what Edward Said (1978) would call ‘Orientalist’ concerns, are competing with the Christian tenet of shared humanity, the ‘one blood’ of all men, in Brown’s effort to create a stereotype.

George Brown’s Woman and Girl was photographed in Apia in 1900. It pictures two Samoan women partially clothed in traditional costume, seated on matting in front of their fale or house. What is striking about this image is the focus on the body, particularly the naked skin of the two women and the bare breast of the younger girl. The associated text amplifies rather than diminishes the scrutiny on the body, where the caption merely states Woman and Girl, rather than ascribing any individuality or personality to the women.

Myths surrounding the exotic and erotic nature of Pacific women had become firmly entrenched in European consciousness by the late nineteenth century, when Brown’s photography entered circulation. Jeanette Hoorn (1998) has traced European exoticism to John Webber’s painting Poedua produced during the late eighteenth century. Hoorn describes the ‘myth of Tahiti’ as a recurrent tendency for writers over the centuries to ‘attest to the willingness of “the women” to entertain European visitors’ (Hoorn, 1998, p. 50). Consequently there grew a legend of the ‘rapacious appetites of the Tahitian women-folk’
(Hoorn, 1998, p. 51) and Poedua, Webber's female subject, leads them all as the 'great harlot of the Pacific' (p. 55).

With its focus on the female body, to some extent Brown's Woman and Girl falls into this category of thought. The bare breasts of the younger female connote sexual availability, whether Brown intended it or not. The precedents that came out of the islands, the erotic images of island women established in 18th century rhetoric and compounded by 19th century tourist, trader and commercial photographers, set a visual code. Brown's female subjects, through their unabashed exhibition of skin, engage with this code.

Skin is not the sole signifier of sexual availability in the image. In Franz Fanon's analysis of Algerian women he sees the 'unveiling of Algerian women as a process of revealing... baring... breaking her resistance... making her available' (cited Ashcroft et. al., 1995, p. 347). One could make a case that the same dynamic is at work in Brown's photograph. The Samoan club is disconnected from the women's bodies. It is not engaged in use, it is not explicitly tied to the subjects, instead it is strategically placed as a compositional prop to lift the foreground of the picture. It might be argued that the Samoan club in Brown's photograph functions in a similar way to the Algerian veil in Fanon's analysis. The surrender of the club 'breaks' the women's 'resistance' and 'makes them available'.

A gentle and appealing rendering of the women softens the sexual confrontation of Brown's image. This kind of pictorial treatment is rarely found in images of island women taken by tourists and traders. The Kerry and Co. image Samoan Fruit Seller represents the sexualised stereotype of a Samoan woman common in advertising and commercial photography. The photograph was taken by either George Bell or Charles Kerry for distribution in Australia by the large commercial photography firm Kerry and Company (Nordstrom, 1991). Like Brown's Woman and Girl the focus is on the female body, however Kerry and Co.'s photograph pictures the more sexually assertive and provocative female stereotype. The Samoan woman reclines bare-breasted in a sexually provocative pose with a particularly fierce facial expression. According to Kanneh, civilisation and Christianity lie on the road to 'covering up, concealing, neutralising and taming the body' (cited Ashcroft et. al., 1995, p. 347). While Brown's bodies are not completely 'covered up' one might argue that they are significantly more 'tame' than the explicit sexuality of Kerry and Co.'s Samoan Fruit Seller.

The relative naturalism of Brown's portraits contrasts with standard European traditions of portraiture. Nineteenth-century Australian cartes-de-visites reveal those strict pictorial codes (Ennis, 2000). Subjects were photographed in studios decorated to resemble a middle class domestic interior. Formal dress was worn and subjects were often represented in full figure to display their complete dress. Accessories such as a book, fan or top hat were used to signify social standing. In its composition, Alfred Burton's A Fijian Girl c.1884 conforms to these pictorial codes. The studio setting, controlled light, props and centered subject follow the conventions for portraiture of the era. The stiff and formal character of the
portrait is in keeping with European tradition unlike the relative naturalism of Brown's Woman and Girl.

Michael Hayes argues that the rigidity of images like Burton's is not so much a byproduct of genre constraints, but a 'placing of the indigenous subject within the emerging category of the criminal mug shot' (cited Capon, 1997, p. 32). Photographs like these, Hayes argues, are examples of ethnographic caricatures which, like mug shots, were intended to display the physical characteristics that defined personal traits. Hayes argues that Burton's Fijian Girl, signals a specific genre of nineteenth century photography in which a sexualised stereotype of a Pacific Islander can be circulated without questioning the Western spectator's morality. That is to say, an image of a semi-naked Islander presented as a 'study' sanitises the sexual references and thus distances the Western spectator from the crudities of voyeurism.

Rather than legitimising his naked subject through science, Brown has appealed to art through visual reference to Cameronian beauty. The softness and appeal of Brown's subjects visually resembles Julia Margaret Cameron's portraits of Victorian women in the late nineteenth century. Cameron began taking photographs in 1863, producing one thousand images over the following fifteen years. Carol Mackay describes Cameron's work thus:

The body of her photography reveals three deliberate and consistent principles: the use of soft focus in the service of portraiture, a personalised (even narrow) range of subject matter, and an almost obsessive, seemingly unphotographic iconography...

In an intuitive yet increasingly self-conscious manner, Cameron repeatedly explored the relationship between the individual self and its apparent opposite — the transpersonal, divine, allegorical, or collective self. (cited K. Hoving, 2003, p. 47)

Brown's photograph mimics Cameron's aesthetic. Both photographers employ a soft focus. Both photographers position female subjects seated and leaning in to one another. Many Victorian photographs of mother and daughter picture female subjects in this pose. Brown's photograph, like Cameron's, transcends the individual, goes beyond the personal, and creates an image of feminine beauty. In this portrait of Samoan women, Brown mirrors the Cameronian ideal of beauty, which Ford argues, is like that of the Pre-Raphaelites, 'essentially an unsmiling, melancholy one,' (Ford, 2003, p. 57).

In Woman and Girl Brown uses the extraordinary weaving of the walls of the fale as a backdrop for the portrait. The craft and design in this photograph attests to the pre-existing industriousness of the native women. In nineteenth century Europe it was important, from a moral viewpoint, that women should not be viewed as either frivolous or idle and the profitable use of their leisure time was strongly encouraged. Embroidery and 'useful and ornamental accomplishments' were considered appropriate pastimes for they signified gentility with their royal and noble associations (Parker, 1984, p. 11). The act
of embroidery for the purpose of providing comfort was visible proof of the woman’s love and devotion for her husband, family and friends. As Patricia MacDonald states, the ideal vision was of a ‘gleaming head bent over the embroidery frame and lifting modestly to re-thread the needle or answer a question’ (cited Toy, 1988, p. 34). In keeping with this stereotype Brown has created a ‘lifestyle narrative’ around Woman and Girl, evidencing the profitable use of the subjects’ leisure time through their costume, mat and wall of the fale, all useful and ornamental accomplishments. The Samoan women become figures of morality, in European imaginings, through their association with craft and design. In this sense, Brown’s stereotype alludes to the Victorian feminine ideal championed by John Ruskin as the ‘angel of the house’. (Ruskin, 1913, p. 114-115)

Towards the late nineteenth century within the missionary movement there was growing demand to preserve indigenous culture. By the third quarter of the century, London Missionary Society (LMS) missionaries were being instructed

Do not anglicise your converts. Remember that the people are foreigners. Let them continue as such. Let their foreign individuality be maintained. Build upon it, so far as it is sound and good; and Christianise, but do not needlessly change it. Do not seek to make the people Englishmen. Seek to develop and mould a pure, refined and Christian character, native to the soil. (cited Bonk, 1984, pp. 19-20)

In Senni and Young People the representation of the male subjects reflects the contemporary belief in preserving native culture. They represent Samoan culture with all their visible signs of difference. The exposure of their black skin, their sarongs, their poses, all signify difference from the colonising culture and their self-confident expressions make no apologies for this difference. The central figure Senni, however, is Anglicised; her clothing especially is a signifier of European culture. Assuming the central focal point of the image, she becomes a matriarchal Victorian ideal championed by Isabella Beeton in 1861 and described as ‘a formidable leader with a responsibility to teach, nurse and above all exemplify … proper morality, charity, cleanliness, frugality and self-sacrifice’. (cited C. Ford, 2003, p. 57)

To some extent Senni and Young People illustrates the reality of changed in the gender roles in indigenous societies as a result of missionary activity. William Ellis of the London Missionary Society recorded in the nineteenth century that

Although the circumstances of the females were considerably ameliorated by the abolition of idolatry, yet the cultivation of the ground, and other kinds of labour unsuitable to their sex, were still performed by them. During his (1825) visit, Mr. Bourne, at a public meeting, proposed an alteration to their established usage in this respect, which was alike derogatory to the female, and inimical to an improvement in morals. Each chief present expressed his sentiments in favour of the proposal, and the result, was an unanimous declaration ‘that, from that day
forward, the men should dig, plant, and prepare the food, and the women make cloth, bonnets, and attend to the household work.' The change thus introduced, by instituting a suitable division of labour, has proved favorable to domestic virtue and social happiness, while it has augmented the means of subsistence, and the sources of comfort (cited Thomas, 1987, p. 268).

Brown's female subjects reflect their respective roles as deemed appropriate by European missionaries and the European spectator is strongly persuaded that Brown's women, having adopted the appropriate gender role, have experienced an 'improvement in morals'.

The Anglicization of Brown's female subjects, it might be argued, reflects the double oppression that Gayatari Chakravorty Spivak identifies in colonial representations of indigenous women. Spivak asks of colonial representation of the Other 'can the subaltern speak?' and argues that if in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the female subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow (cited Ashcroft et al., 1995, p. 29).

...within the effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject, the track of sexual difference is doubly effected... as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. (cited Ashcroft et al., 1995, p. 28)

Though the 'formidable leader' Sienni is freed from the constraints of patriarchal chiefdom in Samoa, she is silenced by the authority of the colonial culture Brown represents.

Brown's photographs of Samoan women are a dynamic site upon which Victorian notions of femininity and beauty compete with popular mythology surrounding Pacific women. For contemporary spectators the photographs could be understood as imperialist propaganda evidencing Brown's control as a coloniser to 'tame' the female body. They could be consumed as art, part of a wider movement of Pictorialism in photography, or social history. Most importantly perhaps, these photographs articulate the intersection of gender in Europe's creation of the Other, and are clouded with the same ambivalence that seems to pervade all colonial representations of Pacific people
Bibliography


Abstract

Reverend George Brown (1835-1917), an Australian Methodist missionary, produced hundreds of photographs of Samoan people during his visits to the island between 1898-1903. Of these many pictured women, within a family group or as individual portraits. This paper explores how the photographs of Samoan women reveal a relationship of control between Brown and the female subject. The photographs are read in terms of Gayatri Spivak's theory on the double oppression of the female subaltern (Ashcroft et al., 1995). It is argued that the silence of female subject from her place within the patriarchal system of chiefdom in Samoa is increased two fold by the coloniser Brown. A case evolves that Brown struggled to create an image of femininity in pictures of Samoan women that would reference exoticism, yet remain within the bounds of Victorian gender ideals. To support the conclusion that Brown's female subjects became imitable English stereotypes, the photographs are closely compared to Julia Margaret Cameron's portraits of middle-class English women in the late nineteenth century.

Résumé

Le révérend G. Brown (1835-1917), missionnaire méthodiste d’origine australienne, a réalisé des centaines de photographies des habitants des Samoa durant ses séjours dans l’archipel entre 1898 et 1903. Parmi ces photographies, nombreuses représentent des femmes. Cette contribution porte sur les relations établies alors entre le missionnaire et ses modèles à partir de la théorie de Gayatri Spivak sur la double oppression des femmes de conditions modestes. La place subalterne des femmes dans la société samoane est-elle doublée d’une subordination à la vision esthétique de G. Brown ? Ce dernier a en effet amené ces femmes à prendre des poses mettant en valeur de manière exotique leur féminité, dans les limites de la décence victorienne.

Figure 1: Reverend George Brown, Woman and Girl, 1898. Gelatin silver photograph (16 cm x 12 cm). George Brown Collection, The Australian Museum, Sydney
Figure 2: Kerry and Company, Samoan Fruit Seller, c.1890. Albumen print (29.3 cm x 34.4 cm). Peabody Museum, Harvard University
Figure 3: Alfred Burton, A Fijian girl, c. 1884. Albumen print (20.2 cm x 14.3 cm).
Collection Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa
Figure 4: Julia Margaret Cameron, Sisters, 1873. Albumen print (36.5 cm x 25.3 cm).
Wilson Center for Photography
Figure 5: Reverend George Brown, *Sienni and Young People*, 1898. Gelatin silver photograph (16.5 cm x 12 cm). George Brown Collection, The Australian Museum, Sydney.
The photographic moment
George Brown
in New Britain 1875-1880

Jude Philp and Helen Gardner

This chapter examines the interactions between George Brown and his photographic subjects on the mission field of New Britain in the 1870s. This analysis required very close attention to Brown’s written records which, while rarely detailing the photographic moment, described either his relationships with many of those who sat for his portraits, or broader political concerns that may have provided the motive for exposing a plate. By bringing the textual records to an analysis of the image, this article argues that the making of a photographic plate, particularly in the 1870s when photographers were subject to the clumsy wet plate process, can be investigated as a moment of negotiation where the agency and motives of both the subjects and the photographer can be glimpsed.

Brown exposed his first photographic plates en route to establishing the New Britain mission at Port Hunter in the Duke of York Islands where he landed a mission party of 18 Samoan and Fijian teachers and their wives in August 1875. Over the next five years in which he was intermittently resident at the mission station at Kinawanua, Brown took at least 80 images using the wet plate collodion process.

Photographic portraiture is the result of the relationship between the subject and photographer. In the early years of photography the relationship was essential to the success of the image given the technical constrains in the period before the introduction of the dry plate process in the 1880s.1 In the 1870s the photographic process was cumbersome and complicated. All chemicals and equipment had to be carried to the point where the photograph was exposed, for between 10 and 90 seconds, and developed. The plate was first coated with gun cotton and ether, then immersed in a bath of silver halide before being exposed and immediately developed in the travelling darkroom while still wet with the emulsion.2 While the print was not developed at this stage, subjects could be shown

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1 The wet plate process forced a level of cooperation that was changed forever by faster shutter times, less intrusive cameras and the easier development processes of dry plate photography.
their ghostly image on the glass plate. The time and effort required for exposing a plate, and the display of the plate evokes an ethnographic scene that revolved around Brown, the sitters, the equipment and an entire audience of interested locals who witnessed the performance of photography as well as the results.

Brown used his collection of plates for later display: as illustrations of the mission field, for scientific evidence and for lantern shows. Yet his journals reveal that he also used photography in his immediate engagements with Islanders. One description of the taking of a photograph suggests, both Brown’s motives for exposing a plate, and local responses to the image. On an early visit to New Ireland Brown sought out Le Bera from Kalil on the advice of the big men Waruwarum and To Pulu, from whom he had purchased land for the mission on Port Hunter and who were the subjects of a number of his photographs. Brown took a photograph of Le Bera and was gratified when the villagers ‘crowded round to see it and were quite excited when they recognised the likeness’.

The villagers of Kalil readily incorporated Brown and his impressive new technologies into their own economies and big men relationships. Delighted by the photograph, one man placed a small branch on Brown’s shoulder, another handed him a bread-fruit leaf. Brown accepted the small ‘gifts’ but found to his dismay, then anger, that he was expected to respond with a return ‘present’ and that ‘such a present would be preferred in the shape of beads and tobacco’. The moment of Brown’s photographic triumph was spoilt and Brown was reflexive enough to recognise it, wryly noting ‘Alas for my satisfaction and pride’. While the photograph did produce the expected awe this response could not then be turned to the service of mission. Far from leading the villagers to a sense of transcendence and the earthly benefits that might flow from conversion, Brown’s photograph had created what appeared to him to be a base desire for material goods. Yet it is almost certain his actions were understood within the Melanesian customs of reciprocity that accompanied economic exchange in the region and determined interpersonal power relations.

While Brown’s description of the events at Kalil suggest he was attempting to impress the unsophisticated for his own purposes, Brown’s motives were perhaps more complex. Raised as a Unitarian before he converted to Methodism, Brown was well versed in the fideism of nineteenth century Protestant theology. All knowledge, including scientific

3 See Aherns, this volume.
4 Brown, George Brown Pioneer missionary and explorer Autobiography, 136. Such descriptions further challenge the suggestion that recognising images in photographs is entirely dependent on the perception conventions of the culture and that those raised outside the realist representations of Western painting and photography will not easily recognise realist images. See T. Wright, ‘Photograph: theories of realism and convention’, in E. Edwards (ed.), Anthropology and Photography, 15-29.
5 Brown, Autobiography, 136.
6 For a discussion on the recent literature on the gift, reciprocity and the partibility of the self in the anthropology of Melanesia see Mark Mosko, ‘Syncretic persons: Sociality, agency and personhood in recent charismatic ritual practices among North Mekeo (PNG). (Part 1 agency, creativity and

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knowledge, was gained through God's gradual revelation: 'under the shadow of the cross, and under that shadow alone, flourish literary and scientific institutions of the highest character. Only in lands where the words of Christ give spirit and life do we find the grandest discoveries and the most useful inventions', preached American Bishop Simpson to the Ecumenical Methodist Conference of 1881. Photographs, therefore, represented the wealth of Christian knowledge to which those who converted would have access. This conflicting cultural interpretation of an event, in this case the making of the photograph, was typical of mission encounters throughout the islands.

Despite the apparent failure at Kalil to bring villagers to God through the technology of photography, the range of images from around the mission field suggest that Brown persisted and became more familiar with the economic mores of the people and more accepting of attempts to incorporate him into local relationships. Indeed he became adept in the use of the shell money of the islands in the service of the mission. The display of the photographic plate may well have been a common and expected element of Brown's visits. Many of the images from the New Britain collection are of unidentified groups of people in village scenes with no clear indication of their Christian purpose. Yet villagers were probably gathered for a range of activities connected with the missionary such as trading for food or artefacts. There are no photographs where the subjects are identified either as heathen or convert and it is therefore impossible to identify heathen villages from those who had accepted a teacher.

Images of Foreigners in New Britain

This section investigates photographs of Europeans and Polynesian teachers in the region, to elucidate the social or political motives for exposing specific plates, or the particular historical circumstances behind certain images. A small selection of photographs, taken in the final year of his residence, is investigated through his journals and letters to identify the political and personal tensions surrounding the mission.

Brown's journal recorded the exposure of some plates in the early years, however, most of the surviving plates and prints were taken during his final year of residence in the islands. The presence of Brown's wife Lydia and their child Geoffrey in the plates, but not their other children Mabel and Wallis, is proof that these images were taken after Brown's convalescence in the colonies, during which the younger children died of malaria. Early images of Lydia show her within the confines of the mission compound with South Sea island teachers. After Brown returned in early 1880 to the news of his children's deaths the couple, and their remaining child Geoffrey, travelled together around the islands for Lydia's grief precluded her from spending long periods alone in the mission house. The


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remarkable image of Lydia surrounded by women in an inland New Ireland village was exposed during this period. Seeking an overland route from the south to north coast of New Ireland Brown ventured beyond the coastal regions where traders and other Europeans had become commonplace. On the arduous journey across the rough New Ireland terrain Lydia Brown became ill with fever and had to be carried the fifteen miles between the coasts.\textsuperscript{9} It is tempting to use the distinctions between Lydia and the New Ireland women most potently by the different styles of dress, as a sign of civilisation versus savagery and vice versa. Our point is that by reflecting on the circumstances surrounding the production of the image we are led away from such dichotomies. Texts reveal that Lydia was taking harbour in the village because she was both sick and grief stricken and indeed was only present because the mission was almost destroyed by the endemic malaria of the region.

During his final months at Port Hunter Brown became involved in the first of the four landings of immigrants from Western Europe on the New Ireland bay of Metlik or Likiliki. Backed by 20,000 subscribers in Europe who raised nearly 5,000 francs for the venture the scheme, led by the Marquis de Ray to begin the ‘Free colony of Nouvelle France’, enticed nearly 800 immigrants to the unsuitable coast of New Ireland between 1879-1882 when it was abandoned.\textsuperscript{10} The first party was landed from the Chandemagore with meagre stores and no medicine to fight the malnutrition, malaria, dysentery and ulcers to which many succumbed. Brown and his missionary colleague, Benjamin Danks, brought all but eight of the 50 original settlers back to Port Hunter where most of them recovered.\textsuperscript{11} Brown’s three photographs of these men and their attempted settlement comprise the only images of the colony described by Danks as the ‘maddest of all the mad schemes of the Nineteenth Century’.\textsuperscript{12} While they have been much reproduced as iconic images of European naivety about New Guinea they may also have served a political purpose for Brown at the time. Alert to the growing imperial interest in the region and determined that his nascent field should not fall to German or French hands, Brown wrote a series of articles against German colonisation in the Sydney Morning Herald in the early 1880s. He may well have used the photographs in his talks to rouse the British or the Australian colonists to the dangers at their doorstep.\textsuperscript{13}

Brown recruited missionaries from Tonga, Fiji and Samoa for the New Britain field. The photograph titled ‘Tongan teacher wife and natives’, can be dated to 1880 through the presence of the lone figure of Geoffrey and was probably taken in July when George, Lydia and Geoffrey arrived at Kabakada on the Gazelle Peninsula to take Benjamin Danks down the north coast of New Britain. The Tongan teachers were almost certainly Mesaki and his wife (unnamed) who lived at the nearby village of Vunairoto. The other teacher may

\textsuperscript{8} Brown, Autobiography, 381.
\textsuperscript{9} Brown, Autobiography, 382-396.
\textsuperscript{10} J. L. Whittaker, \textit{et al.}, \textit{Documents and Readings in New Guinea History, Prehistory to 1889}, 398-498.
\textsuperscript{11} Brown, Autobiography, 354-370.
\textsuperscript{12} J. Whittaker, \textit{et al.}, \textit{Documents and Readings in New Guinea History}, 403.

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have been Sanapalati who had been sent to Kabakada following the death of the previous missionary to the town, the Reverend Saliasa Naukukidi, at the hands of the inland people in 1878.14 Kabakada had become known throughout the colonies as the mission station of the martyred Naukukidi.15 Here was the photograph to prove the success of mission and to justify Brown's highly controversial raid on those he deemed guilty of the attack on the mission party. Standing by their sold home of native materials Geoffrey Brown and the south sea teachers presented a peaceful tableau in the heart of the town that had become famous for its cannibalism and savagery. While Mesaki was dependent on his hosts at Vunairoto for food and for some measure of protection he was a formidable presence. Dank's described a fight between Vunairoto and Kabakada men that ended when the Tongan beat the protagonists with the flat of a spear saying 'Go home you bad fellows, go home I say'.16

It is probable that images of Fijian, Samoan and Tongan teachers were sent back to their home villages: in 1891 Brown reminded himself to send a photograph of a teacher who had died on the Duke of York Islands to his widow in Samoa. Photographs could be more useful to Methodist mission among the 34,000 Pacific Island communicants than the mere 6,000 Methodists of the combined districts of New South Wales and Queensland.17

Although Brown was one of the first Europeans to live in the Bismarck Archipelago, by 1878 there were nine new traders around the coasts. In October 1875, only weeks after Brown arrived, German trader Eduard Hershein, along with his employee Bhlom and his Samoan wife, established the first successful copra station in the region. The image captioned 'three Samoan women' is one of many photographs of Samoan women in Brown's collection. Despite the much smaller presence of Samoans in the mission party their photographs greatly outnumber those of Fijian women. While this might be explained by Brown's fluency in Samoan after 14 years in that group, this is not a particularly satisfactory explanation for this gap in the collection. One of the women can be identified as Tatera, the wife of Malate. The couple worked on the islands from 1876-1880. The unidentified women could have been the wives of mission teachers or copra traders, Nernshein had noted that all of the traders were accompanied by a 'sturdy Samoan wife'.18 The image is unusual for the Samoan women are dressed in gardening attire whereas Samoans were more commonly photographed by Brown in formal clothing (both 'missionary' dress and voluminous Samoan leaf skirts). The image, like that of the French would-be colonists, is a visual reminder that Brown was far from alone with the villagers. For the people of the region, Brown was one of many foreigners.

14 B. Danks, In Wild New Britain, 90-91.
15 H. Gardner, 'Assuming judicial control: George Brown's narrative defence of the 'New Britain Raid', in D. Kirkby and C. Coleborne (eds), law history colonialism, the reach of empire, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 156-173.
16 B. Danks, In Wild New Britain, p. 104.
17 Wesleyan Chronicle, 20 February 1874.
The Big Men Photographs of 1880

By 1880 Brown had developed a fledgling mission with some fervent supporters yet most villagers were unmoved by the Christian message. The relationships most easily identified through the photographs are those where the sitter is identified on the photographic plate in Brown's hand. Those villagers named by Brown, are almost exclusively local leaders or 'big men'.

Throughout the early years of the mission the Christians were dependent on the support of alliances of Waruwarum and his brother To Pulu. The big men from the Port Hunter region had grown wealthy in St Georges Channel by controlling trade with navy vessels, whalers and other ships seeking water and food on the route between the Australian colonies and Asia. Through his connections with Waruwarum and To Pulu, Brown was drawn into their trading bloc that extended to villages in New Britain and New Ireland. While the relationship was often strained, for the big men tried to direct Christians within their own alliance, Brown was farewelled from the field in December 1880 by a large feast organised by the big men of Port Hunter to 'show that they loved him'. Danks celebrated the gathering of people from villages previously at war as proof of the success of mission. Yet Waruwarum and To Pulu were never moved by the Christian message although their nephew Kaplen was among the first converts. Most of the photographs of those islanders named in Brown's collection of plates were taken during this feast, which drew 400-500 islanders. Waruwarum and Kaplen from Kinawanua, Liblib from the affiliated village of Waira, To Pulu from Makada and Maruwaruno from an unidentified Duke of York village made up the big men Brown photographed from the region of the mission. Danks described them as 'real live Duke of York celebrities — men who had played no unimportant part both in the history of the island and in our own work — whose favour it was necessary to secure in the early days of this mission'.

Texts reveal that the relationship between the big men and the mission, while essential to the success of the latter, was based more on Duke of York economies and alliances than on Christian principles. Five years after Brown's arrival To Pulu remained a threat to the faith. In August of 1880 Brown discovered that To Pulu and an armed party had recently lured enemy villagers to their deaths by dressing his party as Christian teachers. Brown, who was unable to completely separate himself from To Pulu's control of the region, or the perception that he was affiliated with the big man, 'paid' for the deaths to avoid future

18 P. Sack and D. Clark, Eduard Hemsheim: South Sea Merchant, 29.
20 B. Danks, In Wild New Britain, 144.
bloodshed\textsuperscript{22}. The image of To Pulu, accompanied by two wives and holding a pipe\textsuperscript{23}, could be read in a number of ways. To Pulu was aware of Brown's distaste both for polygamy and smoking. It is possible he deliberately included those elements in his portrait as a gesture of defiance to the missionary. It is also possible To Pulu sought to portray his wealth, his two wives, the shell money around their necks, his European clothing, and access to tobacco are all on display in this image. Of course Brown may have invited To Pulu to include the pipe and the wives to create an image of heathen evil and the dangers of the trader. Danks' acknowledgement that To Pulu was a 'celebrity' and the evidence that villages allied to him were the first to accept Christian teachers, reveals the complexity of this image of an important heathen who, while he directly contradicted Methodist doctrine, was none-the-less a primary figure in the establishment of the faith in the region.

Portraits of the few big men who did convert might become a record of mission success although there is nothing in the captions to suggest any distinction between heathen and Christian; the evidence comes from the texts and one important difference between the images. Kaplen was both big man and Christian. The nephew of To Pulu and Waruwarum and son of deceased big man Tamantiant, Kaplen held considerable status both in Duke of York society and amongst the emerging Christians. He was Brown's frequent companion on his voyages around the region, protecting, translating for him and collecting specimens.\textsuperscript{24} One of the first five converts in the region Kaplen was an important link in Brown's relationship with his uncles. In contrast to the images of his uncles who are portrayed with wives and kin Kaplen is alone. Attempts by Evangelical Christianity to establish a metanoia in the heathen was essentially a process of negating the moral order of the heathen culture and asserting the autonomy of the individual in order that this 'new' person might articulate the new 'truths' of the faith separate from traditional relationships and morality. Kaplen's status as a Christian can not be identified by his clothes, for many coastal Islanders were wearing European clothes by then, nor by his gun, though its presence in the image suggests how much he valued it. The most powerful visual clue for Brown's view of his most important convert is that he is photographed alone.\textsuperscript{25}

Similarly Ilaita, the 'New Britain chief', is photographed alone though in almost every other respect the image is visually similar to To Pulu's portrait. Both are dressed in European clothes and both are posed against the same tree at Kinawanua. Yet again texts

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 146.
\textsuperscript{22} Brown, Autobiography, 382.
\textsuperscript{23} To Pulu's pipe was almost certainly the result of Hernsheim's 'smoking schools' set up to introduce villagers to tobacco. S. Firth, 'German firms in the Western Pacific Islands', Journal of Pacific History, 8 (1977), 13.
\textsuperscript{25} This topic has been covered extensively in theological and anthropological literature but is perhaps less closely examined in the literature of photography. For a theoretical discussion on individuation

\textit{The photographic moment George Brown in New Britain 1875-1880}
reveal distinctions between the two and the spread of the Christian message. Villagers from Kinningunan, on the Gazelle Peninsula, had requested a teacher soon after Brown's arrival but the missionary was constrained by the directives of the big men of Port Hunter to stay within their trading alliances. Peni Raivalui was finally posted there after Brown returned to the field in 1877. Ilaita was one of the first converts and was baptised in March 1880. He began to hold services in his own village and Brown arranged for him to preach in the neighbouring villages of Davaon and Karavia. Accustomed to the stumbling efforts either of Brown, who only preached in New Britain with the help of translators or in Pidgin, or the south sea teachers, the congregations were astounded by Ilaita's sermon given in Kuanua. Instead of his own services where the congregation asked questions, talked among themselves and wandered in and out, Brown reported that those hearing Ilaita preach on the 10 Commandments listened with 'ears, mouths and eyes'. While this is an image of mission success and Ilaita is remembered among the Christians of the Gazelle Peninsula, he is not identified as a convert in the caption. The portraits of Kaplen and Ilaita are suggestive of Brown's visual representation of conversion which would have been accompanied by verbal explanations in his lantern slide lectures.

Conclusion

In this article we have argued that the photographs provided little explicit information on Brown's relationships with his subjects, although they depict many features of mission life. Indeed there is little to separate the images of Christians from those of heathens. Yet texts reveal much more on the considerable motivation Brown required to set up his bulky photographic equipment and go through the rigmarole of explaining the process to his subjects, persuading them to stay still, and then exposing and developing the plate. We have argued that by looking closely at the moment of photography, when the missionary and the subject are brought together for a single purpose — the taking of the image — the social and cultural expectations of both are made explicit. By 'reading' images in conjunction with textual accounts we are also given unexpected glimpses of the agency of the sitter, such as in the photograph of To Pulu, who, while actively opposed to the Christian message, posed for a portrait and was acknowledged as 'a celebrity'.

in relation to Christian mission see K. L. Burridge, Someone, No-one, 192-212.
26 Neville Threlfell, One Hundred Years in the Islands, 50.
27 Brown, Autobiography, 381.
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Abstract

George Brown photographed the new Methodist Mission on New Britain from 1875-1880 using the wet plate collodion process. His letters and journals detail his relationships with many of his photographic subjects, both local people and foreigners. This article brings his textual records to the analysis of his photographs in order to elucidate his motives for exposing a photographic plate. The article focuses particularly on Brown’s relationship with the big men of the Duke of York islands. These men were essential to the success of the mission and all were photographed, yet they were never moved by the Christian message. It is the contention of this article that particular technical aspects of this process — the images were exposed for between 10 and 90 seconds and the negative was developed immediately — required photographer and subject to work together in order to achieve a successful image.

Résumé

G. Brown réalisa des photographies au collodium dans le cadre de la mission méthodiste de Nouvelle-Bretagne entre 1875 et 1880. Ses lettres et son journal précisent ses relations avec ses modèles, qui furent à la fois des autochtones et des étrangers. Cet article cherche à éclaircir ses choix, en particulier dans les compositions concernant des «big men» de l’archipel du duc d’York. Ces notables étaient essentiels pour la réussite de la mission et tous furent photographiés bien qu’ils ne se convertirent jamais. Or, les sujets ayant l’obligation de ne point bouger durant 10 à 90 secondes et les négatif devant être immédiatement développé, il est patent que le photographe et ses modèles devaient obligatoirement travailler en bonne harmonie.
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