

Getting Under the Skin: the Bougainville Copper Agreement and the creation of the Panguna Mine

Donald Denoon, 2000, Melbourne University Press, 264 pp, maps, notes, appendix, index, ISBN 0 522 84877 X

On 30 August, the people in and around what is left of Arawa, once Papua New Guinea's model modern town, gathered to dance, sing and whoop it up as they hadn't felt like doing in a log time—to witness the end of the first stage in the long march back towards life approaching normalcy in Bougainville. Every party with an interest in peace, signed the agreement that provides substantial autonomy now and a referendum in which independence is an option, 10–15 years down the track. The agreement is similar to the Matignon Accord of 1988 between the French Government and the pro-independence Kanaks of New Caledonia.

Francis Ona, the individual most responsible for the condition to which Bougainville has sunk today, decided long before that he was not interested in the settlement and did not come down from his village near the desolate Panguna mine site to sign the agreement, despite strong invitations including that of Moi Avei, the Minister assigned the task of resolving this issue by Sir Mekere Morauta. Francis Ona's world of the last dozen years has been one that stands outside that of governments, elections, schools, clinics and jobs (he is a graduate of Lae's University of Technology, and worked for the copper mine until his world view was turned on its head). The peacemakers had no alternative but to work (and talk) their way around him and the people of mountainous central Bougainville that still hear him.

Getting Under the Skin is a clear-eyed account of the painful birth of the vast Bougainville copper mine before it began production in 1972. The Bougainville story has been re-told so many times over the years,

it is extremely valuable to have this reference. The author was granted unique access to Australian Federal Government archives, against which to calibrate these other perspectives.

Bougainville has been described variously as

- a technological triumph, constructed in highly challenging circumstances—that provided the model that led to the other great mines of Papua New Guinea (Ok Tedi, Porgera and Lihir)
- the spearhead of modernity in a new country. The mining company was viewed by the young Government of Michael Somare as a model trainer, employer and spur to myriad spin-offs that helped turn Bougainville into the country's most progressive and successful province
- an example of successful integration of people from all over Papua New Guinea and beyond, working towards a common goal
- a source of much of the capital Papua New Guinea urgently needed to fund infrastructure and service development
- an environmental monster, destroying the land of people who had withheld their approval and polluting areas further afield
- an infiltrator, with Bougainville's then burgeoning tree-crop plantations, of troublesome groups of young men from other tribes and countries, only on the island to make money and cause trouble (the removal of such 'foreigners' can be accounted as the clearest success—or at least outcome—of the war)
- a stealer of mineral wealth that should have remained available to the owners of the land from which it came.

Take your pick. The 'lessons' of Bougainville are as unclear as these contrasting perceptions of the mine. Papua New Guinea continues to court enclave resource developments as its chief source of revenue.

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But today it gives tax credits for infrastructure work it licenses to mining and oil companies, and it includes landowners and provincial governments at every stage of resource ventures, from negotiations through to ownership and returns. No Port Moresby administration would today simply ignore the sort of issues constantly raised by Bougainvilleans in the years leading to the 12 years' rebellion turned civil war there.

Whether the mine was a motivating force or a mere catalyst in the Bougainville secession movements that have troubled Papua New Guinea since the 1970s is endlessly debated. But it was the prime lever that opened the way to provincial government there and elsewhere in the country soon after independence in 1975. Whether the increased autonomy of 2001 will lead a nationwide trend remains to be seen.

Getting Under the Skin includes a useful bibliography that demonstrates the extent to which this ground has been dug over—a broad and deep pit, like Panguna's—by writers ranging from the disinterested to the highly engaged, with high marks for sanity going to, amongst others, James Griffin, Ron May, Matthew Spriggs, Douglas Oliver, John Connell, Hank Nelson, Anthony Regan, Glenn Banks, Chris Ballard, and that reflective mine manager Paul Quodling.

And Donald Denoon himself now joins this list, with his humane and well-modulated account of the birth of the mine. The organisation of the vast material at his disposal is impressive. He begins with masterly chapters on 'Bougainville before the BRA' and 'Australia's Mandate' (the United Nations-circumscribed settings of its rule in Papua New Guinea), and on 'Mining Before Panguna' and 'Prospecting' before getting down to the heart of the matter—the negotiations, the Rorovana incidents that hurled the mine into international headlines and continue to inform many people's thoughts on the matter, and the creation of the mine. The mine's immense good fortune

in coming on stream as the copper price was roaring, then enjoying the windfall from the unpegging of the gold price in the wake of the oil shocks, added greatly to the stakes and helped entrench positions on all sides.

The interplay of the interest groups that Denoon relates is absorbing, with the colonial administration in Port Moresby, the *kiaps* or patrol officers in the field, the geologists and managers of Rio Tinto Zinc, and the Commonwealth in Canberra all taking variant positions at different times. The most determined pressure to create the mine clearly came from Canberra which was adamant that, once the decision was made to exit Papua New Guinea, it must be provided a sound, independent source of revenue. Observers of the current proposals for the development of the Timor gas field to fund the brave but impoverished emerging nation of East Timor may profitably contrast and compare.

The Bougainville conflict inevitably spilled over into adjoining Solomon Islands, and the entropy there can be attributed in part to its demonstration effect, and to the seepage of small arms throughout the archipelago. The issues addressed by Denoon may well be rehearsed if and when a massive class action taken by a group of Bougainvilleans against Rio Tinto reaches the courts in California—when a reading of his book may temper some of the more millenarian claims, while yet recalling the muted manipulateness of some of the mine's proponents.

Denoon concludes: 'If blame must be allocated, it should attach less to Australian individuals than to Australian principles, the transcendent value of the nation-state and the valuation of land as a commodity. The longer-term tragedy was that these principles survived Papua New Guinea's independence, making it all too easy for landowners to be ignored until they turned to violence.' This raises the further, anguished question, however—in parts of

Australia, as well as in Papua New Guinea and other Pacific island states—whether the legitimate material aspirations of the owners of the land can indeed be met, without commodifying their land, their main or often only asset apart from their own skills and labour: a question that requires more skilful and honest political handling than we have yet observed, but one which cannot ultimately be avoided.

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Developing Cultural Criminology: theory and practice in Papua New Guinea

Cyndi Banks (ed.), 2000, Institute of Criminology, Sydney, 252pp, ISBN 1864873213

Developing Cultural Criminology provides a fascinating range of contributions from authors of diverse perspectives and cultural backgrounds, while attempting to define and differentiate Papua New Guinea's cultural criminology from theoretical, practical and empirical evidence. It presents some balancing arguments on practical case studies in Papua New Guinea in order to substantiate theoretical viewpoints, with the reality of dominance of local knowledge in a cultural criminology with culturally diverse settings.

But why would criminal reactions or 'cultural criminology' in a society such as Papua New Guinea's be different to those in Western society? In the Papua New Guinean context, most people would agree that acts of crime are reactions to actions by an individual or a group of persons. These are perhaps no different to similar cases involving households or street-culture reactions in Canada, Israel, the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom, or even Latin America, Africa, China, India, Sri Lanka and Indonesia. The contributors of the

case studies have analysed the criminological issues only in certain parts of Solomon Islands, Fisheries Division, 2001. Papua New Guinea, where the cultural behaviour of the inhabitants are reflected in their criminal reactions.

In the Islands Region of Papua New Guinea, one would not necessarily encounter these sorts of criminal activities with the frequency of the incidents in the city of Port Moresby or Mount Hagen, Enga in the Highlands Region, or Lae in the Momase Region. Therefore, it should be the cultural specificity of the communities in these regional localities that reflect important aspects of criminal actions in the eyes of an observer. The state has responded and is continuing to find ways to curb criminal activity. A project is currently planned, involving both the Attorney General and the National Research Institute to find ways of devolution, and to improve the criminal justice system at the community level.

Contributors undertake critical analyses of State and judicial responses in dealing with violent crimes. The approach of community policing is one of the more interesting sociological models, and is consistent with the cultural milieu of Papua New Guineans. The militaristic approach of the state and the development of a culture of violence within the police force, and the community generally, are Western approaches to the issue of crime and violent behaviour. One approach which is gaining currency is the 'restorative approach', whereby a community is encouraged to participate in various stages of rehabilitation. In recent times, the level of acceptance of violence within major towns and cities in Papua New Guinea points to the need for police to respond less violently to crime. The state has encouraged the police force, and the judiciary, to enhance police-community relations, and develop systematic reforms of the criminal justice

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system, which blend societal values and customs. And it is right that these should be separated from Western practices.

Conceptualisations of violence from Western perspectives are discussed by Banks, but are rejected in favour of a search for Papua New Guinean definitions, with cultural specificity of 'violence' as the main theme. It is argued that crime and violence are interrelated in Papua New Guinean society, and an analysis is provided of responses to injury, linking court interpretations from serious to less-serious crimes that are caused by activities such as sorcery and traditional beliefs.

A number of contributors explore practical examples of contextualisation of crime—and Melanesian perceptions of discipline and law—in the form of the prison system, with a description of prison life and the formation of gangs within the prisons. The use of violence by prison warders, and the effect of assaults and beatings of prisoners, is described in relation to discipline, social order, and law, in a society similar to that of Papua New Guinea.

Youths in Papua New Guinea have emerged as a new influence group in the late 1990s. This generation's acts of violence, property theft, and destruction have been well documented and explained as frustrated desires, social breakdown, and political and economic resistance in the form known as '*raskol*-ism'. Similar to *raskol*-ism is the emergence of another cultural reaction in the form of street beggars. In an examination of begging, employment, and the possible formation of a Papua New Guinean underclass through a series of case studies of beggars and street vendors in the capital city of Port Moresby. Such activities have spread to cities such as Lae and Rabaul. As seen in India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Thailand, this is evidence of urban poverty. There is a serious need for effective legislation

that would protect those persons without lawful means of support.

An analysis of the social relationships implicated in the events surrounding two plane crashes in 1994 in one of the highlands provinces of Papua New Guinea is illuminating. The incidents afford a comparison of the perspectives of several actors, particularly the management of the mining company responsible for the flights and the employer of some of the deceased, and the local villagers whose relatives were killed in the crashes. After the second crash, the mining company closed the mine in response to threats of disruption by local villagers. For this, the villagers were accused in the media of criminal conduct. Again, this criminal conduct reflects the perceptions and behaviour of inhabitants blended with Western conception of insurance or compensation in that part of Papua New Guinea.

The chapter draws upon traditional beliefs of the villagers to explain the nature of their perception and why the incidents remain unresolved, as far as they are concerned, despite the payment of compensation. The approach of the mining company's management and contrasts its view of the two crashes as isolated discrete incidents involving only limited connections with the local people, with the conceptions and expectations of the local villagers. It concludes by emphasising the importance of relationships in Melanesian culture, which require the mining management to focus on perspectives that are more appropriate to an ongoing relationship, both between and within the conflicting parties. If there is to be a final resolution of such disputes, and avoidance of criminal conduct, perspectives must be more closely aligned.

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The New Guinea Volunteer Rifles NGVR 1939-1943. A History

Ian Downs, 1999, Pacific Press, Brisbane, ISBN 1 875150 03 X

The New Guinea Volunteer Rifles was a civilian militia unit raised in Australian Mandated New Guinea on 8 September 1939. Detachments were established at Rabaul, Wau, Salamaua, Lae and Madang. By July 1940 more than 520 men had enlisted, but more than 150 had been lost as volunteers to the Australian Army and the effective strength was probably never more than 350. The officers and men of the NGVR were mostly Australian civilians, public servants, merchants, bankers, missionaries, plantation owners or managers, miners and prospectors and traders. Members of the NGVR were unpaid, supplied their own uniforms, and in peace-time, served only part-time. Papua New Guineans were not recruited into the NGVR on the grounds that the role of the Territorial Government was to protect them, not involve them in military operations, but a Chinese Auxiliary Ambulance Detachment was raised at Rabaul. Members of the NGVR were the first Australians to go into battle against the Japanese forces and were involved in actions at Rabaul, Lae, Salamaua and in the Wau-Bulolo area. The unit ceased to operate in September 1942 and is thus probably the shortest lived military unit in the history of the Australian Army.

Ian Downs has produced a well-written and straightforward military history of the NGVR, in the style of other unit histories, with details of individuals, command structures and actions fought. The book is well presented and is particularly well illustrated with many photographs not previously published. Like Down's own military career, the military history of the NGVR is unusual because the NGVR was a civilian volunteer unit in which the troops frequently knew each other well in civilian life and because, abandoned to fight on their

own in very small groups in the face of the large and experienced Japanese Army, the NGVR became more of a guerilla unit than a regimental unit.

Ian Downs was a navy officer before becoming a patrol officer in New Guinea in 1935 and was a member of the Black-Taylor Hagen-Sepik Patrol. In 1942 he led a party in covert operations behind Japanese lines for the Australian Intelligence Bureau in the Watut Valley, where he met members of the NGVR. He was later the District Commissioner of Eastern Highlands District and an appointed member of Papua and New Guinea Legislative Council. In 1956 he resigned to become a coffee planter and was an elected member of the first multi-racial House of Assembly. He is the author of an official history of the Australian trusteeship in Papua New Guinea, among other books. So we can assume that he has got his facts straight and that this volume will serve as a useful source of information about individuals and events in New Guinea before 1946. It has less to offer those interested in relationships between Australians and other races, between the Australians themselves, and between men and women in the Mandated Territory.

The first part of Down's history of the NGVR covers Rabaul, the establishment of the unit and its training. The critical experience of Great War veterans to the training of younger NGVR soldiers is clear. Most of this section is taken up with detailed first-hand accounts from NGVR members of the Japanese landings in the early morning of 23 January 1942. The rather laid back and loose operational style that was to characterise the NGVR is illustrated by an account from George MacClennan, then an NGVR private by night and a carpenter in the Department of Public Works by day. Approached by his sergeant, a school teacher, in the New Guinea Club around 5pm on 20 January where he was enjoying a few beers, he was asked if he could possibly parade as

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soon as possible. Two days later he was involved in an action that stopped all but about 12 Japanese troops out of 60 in two landing craft from getting ashore. Together with MacClennan, members of the NGVR then became involved in the chaotic and unplanned withdrawal from Rabaul along the north and south coast of New Britain.

The second part of the book, 'Escape from New Britain' presents individual's accounts of how they got back to Australia or Port Moresby and the people who helped them escape. Of the 1,035 Australians captured at Rabaul, 37 are thought to have been NGVR troops. Almost all died when the *Montevideo Maru* was torpedoed off Luzon. A further eight NGVR members were killed at Tol Plantation when Japanese troops tied up and killed 158 Australian prisoners.

The third part deals with mainland New Guinea. In contrast to Rabaul, there were no regular Australian army units based at Lae and Salamaua in 1942 to oppose the Japanese landings there. Following the bombing of the town of Lae, the NGVR withdrew 16 km up the Markham valley, using trucks to transport supplies and fuel to hidden camps. They assisted in the evacuation on foot over the mountains to the south coast, of civilians unfit for military service, and at one point rounded up cattle on plantations around Madang and drove them overland to Wau. On 8 March 1942, Japanese troops landed at Lae and Salamaua. An NGVR legend, born at that time, is that upon discovering the only Australian military unit on the north coast of New Guinea was the NGVR, 8 Military District in Port Moresby signalled an order that read 'prevent enemy crossing mountains'. The approximately 200 NGVR in Morobe District found this order particularly amusing. However instead of moving rapidly inland, the Japanese began consolidating, building airstrips and patrolling from their bases. The NGVR, from

the Markham Valley and from observation posts above Salamaua, ambushed patrols, captured maps and documents and reported enemy activity back to Port Moresby. Downs argues that this activity led the Japanese to believe they were opposed by a much larger force until the arrival of the 17th Brigade on the very day that they did attack Wau.

In June 1942, commandos from 2/5 Independent Company joined the NGVR outside of Lae and above Salamaua. NGVR members worked well with the commandos and made a number of highly successful combined attacks on Japanese positions, but they did not take kindly to attempts to enforce regular army discipline on them. Downs tells the story of an NGVR member who at great risk, had entered Lae and contacted Chinese in a prison camp. After walking from Lae to the Independent Company's HQ in Wau with his detailed information of troop numbers, ammunition dumps and camps, he was dressed down by a senior officer for not wearing army boots. He had never been issued with a uniform, let alone boots, and his beard was protection against sunburn and insects. The NGVR were also very unhappy about the destruction by regular army units of their homes in Wau and Bulolo when it was thought the Japanese would capture the area.

Downs is a good storyteller, and seamlessly weaves first-hand accounts from NGVR members into his own discussion. However he makes few attempts to go much beyond the events themselves. He does not for example, dwell on the relatively strong racial distinctions that were commonplace in Rabaul and elsewhere in Papua New Guinea in 1940, or on the class distinctions that existed between administrators and miners, for example. The reader can observe the formation of the Chinese Ambulance Detachment and wonder why Chinese (who had a distinctly ambivalent place in pre-war Rabaul) were not enlisted as combatants.

Elsewhere, however, a photograph of Shui Hong from Kokopo who joined the NGVR as a rifleman at Bulolo and was later promoted to lieutenant indicates that this was not a universal restriction. Nor does Downs explain why it took 50 years for Leo Kam On to receive his 'long overdue' service medals. Leo tended the wounded in Rabaul under heavy bombardment and stayed behind after the landings and provided information on Japanese dispositions to the Australians at great risk to his life. It would be of interest to have Down's views on these matters.

Even less in evidence are Papua New Guineans. We must assume the NGVR were given considerable assistance by Papua New Guineans, beyond those in a number of photographs who are clearly labourers or servants. On page 226 Geoff White is shown with 'his native guide Kumu' and we are told that when the officer who had infiltrated Lae was ticked off in Wau, his wild looking and heavily armed side-kick Joe Anawa and 'his friends' were another cause for critical comment. So they were there. It is a pity they could not have been included to a greater extent.

It is clear however, that Downs has written this book for the ex-members of the NGVR and their families and he has done them proud. He makes public the considerable bravery of a small group of mostly Australians who, says Downs, even in the darkest days of 1942, 'never lost their composure, never left the Markham Valley and never retreated from the hills above Salamaua and contained the Japanese forces at a vital stage of the Pacific War'.

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Fiji before the Storm: elections and the politics of development

Brij V. Lal (ed.), 2000, Asia Pacific Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, 218pp, ISBN 07315 3650 9, A\$35

This edited volume addresses the issues of elections and the politics of development. The book is a collection of eleven chapters around the historical, political, social and economic perspectives of the military coups and Fiji's future development prospects. *Fiji before the Storm* was written before the coup of May 2000, the editor briefly incorporates the political crises of the coup.

Chapter 2 by Sitiveni Rabuka a personal reflection of the Fiji Islands in transition. The chapter is a 'partial account, to be sure, a glossy retrospective designed to accentuate his role and rationalise his actions' (p.3). As national reconciliation is a precondition of Fiji's economic progress, the actions of the May 2000 coup further elongate the chance of Fiji's progress. The papers by Brij Lal, Robert Norton, Alumita Durutalo and Teresia Teaiwa offer a variety of perspectives on Fiji's future based on the results of the 1999 election. Lal outlines the policies of a march towards 'a time to change' of the People's Coalition government with the challenges of the ousted President Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara's message to 'further strengthen the bonds of unity in our multiethnic and multicultural society' and to 'promote economic growth and social progress', these however as stated by Lal became 'fate willed otherwise' (p.45).

Norton's paper focuses on the results of the 1999 election and why 'a rebel group who masked their agenda for power and economic opportunity in the old familiar rhetoric of indigenous rights under threat from an grab for political power' (p.76). He further states that 'the violent usurpation by Rabuka and Speight might well be in future Fijian power struggles' (p.71). Many observers of Fiji's politics echo this

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sentiment, which may lead to political instability and its adverse impact on growth. Durutalo presents a thorough assessment of the long-term challenges to ethnic politics in Fiji, especially in an era of globalisation. The issues here give a clear indication of class consideration and regional interests in Fijian politics, thus 'there was more to the coups than the ethnic explanations suggested' (p.80). Teaiwa indicates how the peripheral islanders of Rabi have little influence on the workings of the government, however the policies become an integral part on the lives of Rabi people.

The chapters by Padma Lal, Joeli Veitayaki, Chandra Reddy and Biman Chand Prasad discuss the economic and social policies for growth and development. Sugar, the backbone of the economy, land that people associate with identity and livelihood, and the Lomé agreements that benefit the island economy by accessing the European Union markets, Lal links these various important issues to those of policies required to achieve the potentials of the sugar industry. However, land being a critical issue that can only finally be a decision of the landowners, therefore productivity depends not only on research output but overall land use and people who live on it. Veitayaki discusses the fisheries resource sector and highlights the major problems of this industry. He recommends that the private sector hold a key management role in the fisheries sector along with selective government intervention (p.148). This clear message for the success of this industry, which may be useful for other sectors, calls for an evaluation but the present political crises will override most of the urgent calls for efficiency and effectiveness. Reddy in her chapter acknowledges the challenges of the woman's role in politics. Education and experience in the international arena will, in time, open up the opportunities for an enhanced role for women in the development of Fiji.

Prasad in outlining the economic policies of Chaudhry's government, notes the importance of recovery with a 'strong social agenda was laudable' (p.173). On the other hand, Chand notes 'that it was same old song with a slightly differing tune' (p.174). It should be noted that the economy was teetering on the brink of collapse from the workings of the previous government, a budget that can steer the economy out of the problems can only be done with policies and regulations conducive to Fiji's traditional system. However, the present political crises only envisage the missed opportunities. The final chapter by Lal 'Madness in May' is a brief analysis of the Speight coup and why yet another turning point was missed. Lal points out that 'there is no alternative to co-existence' (p.193). While the state of affairs in Fiji have once again changed with the May 2000 crises and the recent election, *Fiji before the Storm* provides a background to some of the events before the coup that will be useful to researchers and general readers.

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